

Nepal to save vultures

by UPI

KATHMANDU, Nepal - Nepalese conservationists, alarmed by the near extinction of vulture population in the Himalayan kingdom, said they plan to breed the birds in captivity. Britain's Independent newspaper noted that two decades ago there were an estimated 50,000 nesting pairs of vultures in Nepal but now that number may be as low as 500. Conservationists blame the decrease on substances used to treat inflammation in cattle, which get ingested in the carrion-eating birds. The substances can harm the birds. The rescue plan involves setting up breeding center dedicated to rearing vultures that can be released into the wild, the report said. "This is just a beginning and more pairs will be subsequently trapped and released," Dev Ghimire, an official with Bird Conservation Nepal, told the newspaper. "It is a very important project and needs long-term commitment." A similar alarming trend is developing in nearby India and Pakistan where some estimate say the population of three species of vulture has fallen by as much as 97 percent in the past two decades. The Nepalese conservation group has set up several feeding areas for vultures, where only toxin-free cattle carcasses are used, the report said.

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