



## VulPro ANNUAL REPORT 2015

(VulPro NPC [Vulture Programme for the Conservation of Vulture Species in southern Africa]  
Registration No. 2011/127419/08 [Section 14, Companies Act 2008])

CONTENTS	Page
1. Summary .....	2
2. Performance reviews .....	3
2.1. <i>Rescue and Rehabilitation</i> .....	3
2.2. <i>Monitoring of breeding levels in principal Cape Vulture colonies</i> .....	5
2.3 <i>Management and associated work around vulture restaurants</i> .....	6
2.4 <i>Community outreach, interaction and education</i> .....	6
2.5 <i>Involvement in research projects</i> .....	8
2. 6 <i>Regular output of information and profile through the media</i> .....	9
2.7 <i>Breeding of non-releasable vulture species, Cape Vultures in particular, for     reintroduction purposes</i> .....	11
3. Administrative issues .....	11
3.1 <i>Board, staff, volunteers, students</i> .....	11
3.2 <i>Travel</i> .....	12
4. Costs .....	12
5. Fundraising, sponsorship, acknowledgements and sustainability ...	13
6. Report from the honorary treasurer .....	13

## 1. SUMMARY

### 1.1 Executive Summary

The past year, 2015, saw VulPro in its eighth year of existence and sixth year in the present purpose-adapted premises but still growing and expanding. It remains, however, strictly faithful to its mission statement (1.2 below), which has remained unchanged since it was first formulated seven years ago, with its principal activities also unchanged. Performance reviews and achievements for these activities are given in section 2. The demand for VulPro's rescue, palliative care and release services has resulted in yet another rise in the number of long-term residents in its enclosures (Table 1). The pressures this would otherwise have resulted in have been alleviated by the successful establishment of the satellite station set up on VulPro's behalf by, and under the auspices of, the Highlands Country Estate, Belfast. Selected groups of non-releasable birds can now be transferred to that site, relieving the pressures for space on the enclosures at the Hartbeespoort site and enabling an expansion of the captive breeding programme to now include African White-backed vultures, recently classified as critically endangered. We are extremely grateful for this extremely generous and noble undertaking by the Highlands Country Estate.

The highly positive contribution VulPro's rehabilitation work has been able to make to the regional Cape Vulture communities is made clear in Table 2. In the world of endangered species, *'every little bit counts'* becomes a very pertinent slogan.

One of 2015's signal moments was the first successful release of captive bred Cape Vultures, 10 in all, 7 raised at VulPro and 3 at the National Zoological Gardens, Johannesburg (Table 4). This represented the overcoming of a large number of initial difficulties and teething problems; it is hoped that it is just the beginning of a major contribution by the non-releasable vulture community to maintaining healthy populations in the wild.

The above reference to the health of the vulture populations leads on to VulPro's important monitoring programme (section 2.2). This has been going for 5 years now (Table 3) and inevitably must remain a principal VulPro function for the indefinite future.

Also vital for the indefinite future are VulPro's educational initiatives. As stated in section 2.4, it is probably unquestionable that education is the absolute route to public awareness of the value of vultures to the ecosystem and of their threatened status. The enormous educational workload of VulPro in 2015 is made clear in section 2.4.

As has been the case since VulPro's inception, another substantial workload has resulted in 2015 from interaction with the Media (section 2.6). Being seen as a major contributor to public awareness and supplement to the educational programme, this is welcomed rather than in any way resented.

Much of the value of data generated from the veterinary aspects of the rescue and rehabilitation work and the monitoring activities would be wasted if not collated and published for the scientific community. Involvement in research projects (section 2.5), with associated output of publications, is another function regarded as vitally important by VulPro, and again an essential supplement to its educational programme.

Needless to say, money and its acquisition are always background considerations to all other roles, projects, activities and programmes. It goes without saying really that without the generous contributions and support of our sponsors, donors, adoption parents, volunteers and friends, VulPro would be very limited in what it could achieve. Section 5 expresses our warmest possible thanks to these individuals, groups and organisations. It also states our recognition of the demands on these contributors from many other causes worthy of support and our attempts, albeit gradual, to become less dependent on sponsorship and donations for at least the basic operations (section 5.2).

## 1.2 Accomplishing the mission of VulPro

It is pertinent, as in past annual reports, to set the stage at the outset of the report with VulPro's mission statement—*“To advance knowledge, awareness and innovation in the conservation of African vulture populations for the benefit and well being of society”*

VulPro seeks to achieve the targets embodied within the mission statement through its:

- ongoing rescue and rehabilitation service for vultures and other raptors
- monitoring of breeding levels in principal Cape Vulture colonies within southern Africa and colonies of Hooded and African White-backed Vultures in the Limpopo Province in South Africa.
- its vulture restaurant cooperatives
- community outreach, interaction and education programmes
- farmer and landowner awareness and educational extension activities
- involvement in research projects
- collaborations with other NGOs both locally and internationally on vulture related conservation activities
- regular output of information and profile through the media, and
- programme of breeding of non-releasable vulture species, Cape Vultures in particular, for reintroduction purposes

## 2. Performance reviews

### 2.1 Rescue & Rehabilitation

Rescue and rehabilitation remains a primary reason-to-be for VulPro. The numbers are given in Table 1 in which it can be seen that the annual increases seen in previous years in numbers of birds 'in residence' is again apparent in this last year with the numbers of

- Cape Vultures up 15% over the numbers in 2014 (non-releasable ones up 7%)
- Other vultures (though numbers smaller) up 58% (non-releasables up 54%), but
- Other raptors down by half (again numbers small).

**Table 1. Up to date rescue and release data**

Species	In residence (non-releasable)				In 2015					In residence at 31.12.15 (non-releasable)
	1.1.09*	1.1.13	1.1.14	1.1.15	Collected/brought in	Released	Died	Euthanised	Transferred or donated or on loan	
VULTURES										
Cape	22	72 (65)	76(75)	113 <sup>†</sup> (96)	52	17	2	7	1	130(121)
African White-backed	4	4 (4)	4(4)	14 (14)	16	3	1	3	0	24(23)
White-headed		1		1(1)	1	0	0	0	0	2(2)
Lappet-faced	2	5 (4)	4(4)	4(4)	1	1	0	0	0	5(5)
Palm-nut		2 (2)	3(3)	3(3)	1	0	0	0	0	4(4)
Condors				2(2)						2(2)
OTHER RAPTORS	7	15 (13)	16(12)	14(13)	22 <sup>‡</sup>	12	0	7	10 <sup>†</sup>	7(5)

\*At the time VulPro moved from its initial farm site in Skeerpoort to the present site. <sup>†</sup>Plus 12 captive bred. <sup>†</sup>7 to satellite station at Belfast. <sup>‡</sup>Also 3 non-raptor species, two rehabilitated and released, one transferred.

As stated in last year's report, it is clear that the demand for VulPro's rescue, palliative care and release services is not reducing. The considerable value of the work VulPro does beyond just care for sick or injured birds is apparent from Table 2, which shows that, since VulPro took possession of its present premises, 124 Cape Vultures (41% of those rescued), 9 other vulture species (14% of those rescued) and 45 other raptors (42% of those rescued), which would have been lost to their already threatened or dwindling communities were successfully returned there to continue breeding and maintaining those communities.

**Table 2. Summary of rescue and release data since VulPro established itself in its Boekenhoutkloof Road, Rietfontein, location**

Year	Cape Vultures		Other vultures		Other raptors	
	Rescued	Released	Rescued	Released	Rescued	Released
2009	40	12	7	2	19	0
2010	25	13	5	0	14	4
2011	38	15	1	0	17	7
2012	53	31	5	0	15	6
2013	42	24	4	0	13	7
2014	54	12	18	3	8	9
2015	52	17	23	4	22	12
Total	304	124	63	9	108	45
Non-releasable but with many available and active for captive breeding	121		37		N/A	

As covered below (section 2.7), the captive breeding programme, utilizing non-releasable birds, is beginning to prove successful and contributes more releasable birds to the wild communities.

### *2.1.1 Age and reason for admission*

Of the 75 vultures collected or brought in:

- 31 (60 %) were specifically described as young fledglings and another 17 (27%) as immature and sub-adults.. Most of the fledglings were found in December.
- 64 (85 %) had some level of mechanical injury, 29 of these attributed to power line collisions
- 5 (6 %) showed evidence of poisoning
- 6 (8 %) were victims of electrocution.

### *2.1.2 Travel*

Journeys amounting to a total of 38 000 km were required for rescue work (this excludes field related work and travelling) and compares with 21 400 km in 2014, 17 456 km in 2013, 28 365 km in 2012 and ~50 000 km in 2011.

### *2.1.3 Feeding costs*

The average cost of feeding vultures in our enclosures has risen to R12 000 per week from R10 500 per week in 2014, R5 920 (US\$592) in 2012, R6 512 (US\$650) in 2013. This cost does not include staffing, maintenance and other costs incurred in running VulPro. In addition, the cost of food for the wild birds at the VulPro vulture restaurant amounts to R5 000 per week on average.

## 2.2. Monitoring of breeding levels in the principal Cape Vulture colonies

Of the 32 recognized historical Cape Vulture breeding colonies in southern Africa just half are still active. A major component of VulPro's activities over the past 5 years has been monitoring the health and productivities of the principal ones of these which, together, comprise some 61 % of the world's Cape Vultures. The monitoring is carried out according to the "Standard Cape Vulture Monitoring Protocol", developed under VulPro's leadership in 2010.

Table 3 summarises the overall monitoring data from the 5 years this programme has been running. No dramatic changes appear to be taking place. It remains unknown whether, as suggested in last year's annual report might be the case, whether the numbers in these larger colonies are being maintained at the cost of birds leaving smaller colonies elsewhere to settle in these larger ones. If this were to be the case, the apparently stable numbers would be masking an actual decline in the overall the population. For logistical reasons, VulPro cannot take on additional monitoring so we are trying to source other options for monitoring the smaller colonies, attempting to encourage other groups or individuals to carry out this task.

In last year's report we referred to disturbance by climbers, base jumpers, hang gliders and other aviation as one of the threats to some of these colonies and that VulPro had recommended that the Magaliesberg Protectorate Act be updated to cover these threats. Greater awareness and media coverage have increased pilot awareness and pilots generally avoid the colonies now. A few pilots have even asked for VulPro's own map for flight monitoring and have distributed it to their respective clubs. In addition, the Magaliesberg has now been declared a UNESCO Biosphere reserve which will help us legally challenge the perpetrators of various threats around the Magaliesberg.

**Table 3. Breeding pair counts since monitoring by the Standard Cape Vulture Monitoring Protocol began**

Colony	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Blouberg	572	851	1015e	nd	900e
Kransberg	638	661	611	632	580
Magaliesberg	332	273	309	319	344
Manutsa	539	434	444	563	558
Moletjie	nd	20	13	17	18
Soutpansberg	nd	182	168	187	196
Mannyelanong	nd	nd	nd	62	93
Moremi Gorge	nd	nd	nd	nd	194
Kammelkspruit	nd	nd	nd	44	nd

e, estimate; nd, not done

### 2.3 Management and associated work around vulture restaurants

VulPro continues to receive reports of sightings of tagged vultures from many of the  $\pm$  160 vulture restaurants around South Africa. In addition, annual surveys and questionnaires sent to all vulture restaurant owners and managers are revealing positive attitudes towards vultures and, in some areas where feeding is regularly taking place, vultures are now breeding on some of these farms, especially the large farms which hold piggeries and feedlots.

The 3rd issue of our new, second, newsletter, *Restaurant News*, emerged in December 2015. *Restaurant News* was launched in December 2014, dedicated specifically to keeping vulture restaurant managers/owners in touch with and sharing experiences, sightings and other information with other vulture restaurant managers/owners, as well as keeping them up to date with the developing database. The newsletter is sent to vulture restaurant owners/managers biannually and is also accessible on our website ([www.vulpro.com](http://www.vulpro.com)).

### 2.4 Community outreach, interaction and education

It remains a truism that education is the absolute route to public awareness of the value of vultures to the ecosystem and of their threatened status. Consequently this remains an essential part of the VulPro's overall activities.

It is also beyond debate that reaching people when they are young makes for probably the most effective education. So, for VulPro, work with children has always been a high priority. As well as hosting school groups, or giving lectures at schools, the "VulPro Kids' Club", established December 2014, has been in full swing in 2015. The Club now has 12 members. At the meetings each month the children learn about vulture identification, the feeding, flight and breeding patterns of vultures and their roles and importance within the ecosystem. They do this by observation of events at VulPro's vulture restaurant and artificial cliffs and by carrying out volunteering jobs around the enclosures and by participating in planning and helping at special events, such as International Vulture Awareness Day. Hiking to colony sites with camping and other outdoor pursuits are part of the Club's activities. The Club members are encouraged to be ambassadors back in their home and school environments for the conservation message they acquire from Club activities, advocating positive conservation efforts and sharing their experiences obtained within the Club.

Children in the Kid's Club are inevitably relatively local, that is, living within reach of VulPro. For those beyond that limit, we have now established an online "Kid's Corner" featuring a child friendly easily identifiable and relatable vulture cartoon character and friends which, through cartoon strips highlight good conservation ethos

and important facts regarding a vulture's way of life. The Corner also hosts specially designed educational games, fun posts and articles aimed at engaging children and educating them on the plight of vultures.

At the higher intellectual level, VulPro hosted a 3-day formal seminar in October encompassing the following five workshops led by experts from around South Africa and Zimbabwe:

- Global perspective and conservation initiatives
- Trends in population levels
- Vulture movements and behavioural patterns
- Threats from poisons
- Captive breeding

Visits from and to schools, other groups and members of the public have taken place on a regular basis as in previous years as summarised below.

Over the year, 2015, some 20 family and 43 other small groups (1 to 10 individuals), amounting to a total of 280 individuals, were hosted at the VulPro centre. Among these were 13 disadvantaged children, 2 St. David's Marist School students doing community service and 9 international visitors.

More than 20 large groups either visited the VulPro site, or were addressed at their own locations, amounting to an educational exposure of approximately 1000 individuals. In addition, large numbers of persons were exposed to VulPro's message via stands at conferences and other gatherings.

- In February, April and July

- 45 farmers at their Farmers' Association meeting
- 23 Brosterlea Garden Club and farmers, Eastern Cape

- In March

- 20 Wits Bird Club members at VulPro
- 63 Pecanwood High School students at VulPro
- 50 Hartbeespoort residents
- 11 Scouts (community working weekend at VulPro)

- In April

- 24 students
- 25 farmers at the Farmers' Association in Burgersdorp, Eastern Cape

- In May

- 53 pupils from the Motheong Primary school for the disadvantaged at VulPro
- (In Zimbabwe, stand at ZITF; estimated 1300 visitors stopped at VulPro's stand)

- In June

- (Wildfees, Eastern Cape. Stand at the 'Walk on the Wildside' tent. >1000 visitors stopped at the stand)

- In July

- (Stand at the Veterinary Congress in KwaZulu Natal, Champagne Sports Resort in the Drakensburg. Approximately 500 delegates stopped at the stand)
- VulPro Director Robyn Howes gives keynote address at the Mail & Guardian Greening the Future award ceremony. 150 guests

- In August

- 16 Obo Cuckoo Bird Club members visited the VulPro site

- In September

- 60 Wits University students, staff and members of the public
- (265 St. Luke's Catholic School students and teachers, Indiana, USA. Addressed by former MSc student, Maggie Hirschauer)

- In October

- 40 farmers from around VuPro's Belfast satellite station
- 100 members of the Four Wheel Drive Club
- (30 Indianapolis Zoo staff members, Indiana, USA. Addressed by former MSc student, Maggie Hirschauer)

- In November

- 99 King David's Primary school children and teachers
- 87 Laerskool Panorama students and teachers hosted at VulPro
- 30 pre-school children and accompanying adults hosted at VulPro

- In December

- 24 Wits Bird Club members hosted at VulPro
- (Stand at the musical freestyle show, Canterbrook Equestrian Estate)

## 2.5 Involvement in research projects

Ongoing projects include the monitoring and updating of the vulture re-sighting database, studying the health of breeding colonies, tracing the movements of vultures fitted with tracking devices and developing the population censuses from re-sightings at vulture restaurants and elsewhere. In addition to this routine monitoring, power line surveys were carried out in the Gauteng, North West and Limpopo Provinces below some of the Cape Vulture breeding colonies and at identified hotspot areas close to vulture feeding sites. The aim was to investigate the safety of power line structures around important vulture sites and make sure they are safe or put measures in place to mitigate the lines and structures to make them safe to avoid vulture fatalities and collisions. This also involved a comparative study on the relative efficacies of flappers and spirals for deterring power line collisions by vultures.

A paper entitled "The ecological consequences of inter-individual differences in behaviour for a social scavenger, the Cape Griffon vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*)" is in preparation from the PhD student's programme at Swansea University, UK, referred to in the 2014 annual report.

The Rhodes University MSc project on the breeding programme at VulPro and the release of captive bred vultures has resulted in an MSc thesis entitled "Release success of captive bred Cape Vultures (*Gyps coprotheres*) in the Magaliesberg Mountains, South Africa".

A paper on the project outlined in the 2014 annual report on movement ecology, feeding behavior, and conservation of Hooded Vultures has been submitted for publication and is entitled "Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) and African White-backed (*Gyps africanus*) nesting at the Olifants River Private Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, South Africa".

As a result of the collaboration with the RSPB referred to in the 2014 annual report, the RSPB have adopted VulPro's tracking technique and have trained the staff at the breeding centres on the correct fitting of wing mount harnesses. RSPB staff will be coming out again in the coming month.

The collaborative study with the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science on safety testing of the NSAID, Carprofen, again mentioned in the 2014 annual report, is still ongoing. A pharmacokinetic study and

analysis is still in progress and more tests are planned in 2016.

In a study on the breeding biology of Hooded vultures, more than 10 000 camera trap pictures taken in the period September 2014 to March 2015 are being analysed; two more camera traps have been set up to increase the data.

*Publications and submissions in 2015:*

Wolter K and Hirschauer MT. 2015. Southern African vulture breeding report 2015: Cape, African White-backed and Hooded Vulture breeding surveys. <[www.vulpro.com](http://www.vulpro.com)>

Hirschauer MT and Wolter K. (eds.) 2015. Proceedings of the Vulture Seminar: Looking Toward the Future. Rietfontein, South Africa. 6 - 8 November 2014.

Wolter K, Naser W, Hirschauer MT and Camiña A. *in press*. Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) breeding status in southern Africa: monitoring results 2010-2014. *Ostrich*.

Fourie T, Cromarty D, Duncan N, Wolter K and Naidoo V. *in press*. The safety and pharmacokinetics of carprofen, flunixin and phenylbutazone in the Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) following oral exposure. *PLOS ONE*.

Monadjem A, Kane A, Wolter K, Naser W, Kotze A and Naidoo V. *submitted manuscript*. Movements of foraging Cape Vultures in relation to the location of supplementary feeding points.

Hirschauer MT and Wolter K. *submitted manuscript*. Two young Cape Vultures *Gyps coprotheres* return to natal colony to breed.

## 2.6 Regular output of information and profile through the media

Frequent Media coverage continues to be a welcome source of public awareness of VulPro and vulture conservation issues. The following media coverage occurred in 2015:

### *February*

- SABC3 – vulture trade for ‘muti’ and effect on vulture populations
- SABC News – live interview of traditional healer and Kerri Wolter
- Eastern Cape Platinum Weekly – release of captive bred vultures

### *March*

- Network 24 (Die Beeld, Cape Times & Die Burger) – Aasvoel kry hul danksy spoedpos

### *April*

- [www.oneearth.org/earthwire/traditional-medicine-threatening-vultures](http://www.oneearth.org/earthwire/traditional-medicine-threatening-vultures)

### *May*

- Brits Pos – Injured vulture gets wing amputated

### *June*

- Brits Pos – VulPro bags coveted PAAZA award
- Radio Today – breeding survey and threats to vultures
- Radio Pretoria – work of VulPro and threats to vultures
- Die Beeld – Aasvoels nou so beskerm

- [www.ee.co.za](http://www.ee.co.za) – protecting against powerline bird strikes
- MNet on DSTV – work of VulPro

### *July*

- Agence France-Presse – showcase VulPro’s conservation work
- Die Burger – ‘Geevleulde ‘Sir Adelaide’ hopelik op pad na O-Kaap’
- Andante Produksies – interview with Kerri Wolter

### *August*

- All highlighting the fragile relationship and aviation
  - Randburg Sun
  - Northcliff Melville Times
  - Natal Witness
  - Knyara Plett Herald
  - Aviator (Vol 7)
  - Radio Sonder Grense
  - Kormorant
  - Die Kwevoel
  - ITV
  - Hartbeesfontein Conservancy Newsletter
- [www.africageeographic.com](http://www.africageeographic.com) – VulPro’s gala dinner success
- Kormorant – ‘Missing vulture’

### *September*

- Platinum weekly – ‘Soldier to help save vultures’
- Randburg Sun – ‘Respect our vultures’
- NWK Arena – ‘Assvoels and ‘Voelnuus’
- Sappi Nature Journal (radio) – Vulture population numbers
- Radio 702 – update on VulPro conservation activities
- Sara Association (Swedish magazine and TV) – ‘VulPro and vulture poisonings and other threats’
- ‘Eskom carnage of vultures continues’ and power line threats by
  - Radio RSG
  - Laandbow.com
  - Amassfarminginfo.blogspot.co.za
  - Independent Media
  - The Mercury
  - Die Burger
- Etv News – ‘Vultures and muti
- Animal Talk – ‘Ten cool things about the Cape Vulture’
- Netwerk 24 – ‘Boer wat R2, 7m - bok teel, kry groter boete’
- Oxpeckers – ‘Poaching takes a toll on vulture populations

### *October*

- Olifants North Newsletter – ‘Hooded Vulture study’
- KZN For the City – ‘Vulture hatchlings need your help’

### *November*

- Radio Today – ‘VulPro and vulture conservation’
- Brits Pos – ‘Electrocution huge threat to vultures’
- Mercury Newspaper – ‘Vulture breeding boost’
- Radio Sonder Grense – ‘VulPro and landowners involved in vulture conservation’

## December

- [www.governmentdigest.co.za](http://www.governmentdigest.co.za) – ‘Vulture captive breeding internship 2016’
- Hartbeesfontein Newsletter No 80 – ‘Vulture fledgling season’

### 2.7 Breeding of non-releasable vulture species, Cape Vultures in particular, for reintroduction purposes

2015 saw VulPro in its 5<sup>th</sup> year of this programme. After initial teething troubles detailed in previous annual reports, real success was marked this year by the release in February of 10 captive bred Cape vultures, 7 bred at VulPro and 3 that had been raised at the National Zoological Gardens. Nine of these were recaptured in October for a health check and all were found to be in good condition.

Table 4 gives an update on the programme so far.

**Table 4. Summary of breeding by non-releasable vultures (all African species)**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Breeding pairs	10	10	10	10	14
Eggs laid	9	9	11	11	16
No. hatched	3	6	3	8	12
No. chicks fledged	0	2	2	5	5
Ready for release	1	2	2	5	5
Released		1*			8 <sup>¶</sup>

\*found dead a few days after release, believed to have been killed by a leopard;  
<sup>¶</sup>together with 3 bred at the National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria

## 3. Administrative issues

### 3.1 Board, staff, volunteers, students

As an independent NPC, VulPro is managed by CEO Kerri Wolter under the direction of the Chairman and members of the 6-member Board. During the year, Mr. Walter Naser left the employment of VulPro and Mr. Kerrow Miller was appointed. His main area of responsibility is assisting with the day-to-day running of the vulture Centre and assisting with field monitoring and carcasses and vulture collections. Mandy Schroder also joined the team to help with administrative workload around education, communications, media and writing.

Income to VulPro continues to cover the employment of CEO Kerri Wolter, assistant manager Kerrow Miller, media and communications liaison Mandy Schroder, and three general support staff, Orbert Phiri, Notice Phiri and Charles Banda who help with the feeding of the birds, cleaning and maintenance of the enclosures, rehabilitation and general farm management. The Ian Geary bursary in Ian’s memory supplied a small remuneration to intern student, Merlyn Nomusa Nkomo.

Available funds only permit this small quota of salaried staff and VulPro continues to depend greatly on dedicated volunteers and, in the case of research projects, persons from collaborating institutes. We are enormously grateful to the many persons who have given their time in various volunteering capacities for varying time periods, some very long term. All help is always welcome. In addition to ‘on site’ volunteers, the input from VulPro UK over the past two years, raising funds and awareness, and particularly for their help in the purchase of power line flappers, is most gratefully acknowledged. Sadly, for administrative reasons, VulPro UK is being wound up but the organizers have kindly undertaken to continue their invaluable support for VulPro and its work.

VulPro's 'satellite station' at the Highlands Country Estate, Belfast, was established 18 months ago. Under the management of Rob Bruyns and fully funded by the Highlands Country Estate, it is in the process of completing construction of two breeding enclosures, one with artificial tree perches and the other with an artificial cliff. These will house non-releasable African White-backed vultures, recently upgraded to 'critically endangered', for a captive breeding programme paralleling the Cape Vulture breeding programme at the VulPro centre.

Essentially, if unofficially, acting as a second satellite station is Kate Webster's farm in the Eastern Cape, where Kate carries out rescue and rehabilitation work with vultures from that region, gives talks to school and other social groups, interacts with the media, and so on, in parallel with the like activities of VulPro. Her reports are included in the VulPro monthly reports and serve to give VulPro a wider geographical perspective of the vulture 'story' within South Africa as a whole. We are very grateful to Kate.

### 3.2 Travel

As stated in section 2.1 above, collection of birds needing rescue and rehabilitation involved approximately 38 000 km of travel. Other activities requiring travel, as in previous years, were:

- Collection of carcasses from farms for feeding the birds
- Management and visitations to vulture restaurants
- Travel as required for research projects
- Travel as required for field work i.e. vulture monitoring
- Travel as required for transporting birds for veterinary attention
- Travel to schools, clubs, and other places for the Educational Outreach work
- Travel to meetings relating to vulture conservation aspects, funding, research projects, media interviews etc.
- Travel for vehicle service

All in all the total distance travelled throughout 2015 came to 80 000 km.

## **4. Costs**

Operational costs are broken down into:

- Salaries (section 3.1)
- Travel (section 3.2)
- Veterinary services
- Feeding
- Property maintenance
- Security
- Electricity, phone, etc.
- Office costs
- Research, including colony monitoring (2.5)

The major structural enterprises in 2015 included extension of one enclosure, previously housing the Giant Eagle Owl, now released, to twice its size, making it into a Lappet-faced Vulture breeding enclosure, constructions as mentioned above at the satellite station and construction of an incubator and brooder room for our breeding programme.

## **5. Fundraising, sponsorship, acknowledgements and sustainability**

## 5.1 Fundraising, sponsors, acknowledgements

Communications liaison manager, Mandy Schroder, who joined VulPro this year has largely taken on responsibility for fundraising which, as will always be the case, is a major part of VulPro's overall operations and inevitably continues to occupy a considerable proportion of operational time. In addition to the conventional meetings, telephone discussions and correspondence with current and potential sponsors and voluntary collections at Educational Outreach events, this year's now annual Gala Dinner and auction at Leopard Lodge raised an unprecedented 225 000 Rand enabling VulPro to purchase a rugged rescue vehicle. The most welcome contributions made by 'VulPro UK' has been referred to in section 3.1 above; we again express our thanks to Tracey Murray and her colleagues running and assisting in that venture. It involved a great deal of work, which we sincerely appreciate.

As always, we thank all our friends, sponsors, donors, adoption 'parents', family members, volunteers and supporters for their ongoing commitment, enthusiasm and help towards enabling VulPro to continue achieving ever more of its aims and mission to stabilize the Cape, African White-backed and all other vulture populations.

Also as always, our special thanks to our long-standing donors, Also as always, our special thanks to our long-standing donors, AngloAmerican - Platinum, Bayer SA, Birmingham Zoo, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Boikarabelo Coal Mine, Cellular Tracking Technologies, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Colchester Zoo, Columbus Zoo, Computer Facilities, Copper Sunset Sand (Pty) Ltd, Dallas Zoo, DHL Supply Chain, Gauntlet Conservation Trust, GH Braak Trust, Highlands Country Estate, Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust, Monte Casino Bird Gardens, The Moore Foundation, National Bird of Prey Trust, Natural Encounters Inc., Prince Bernhard Nature Fund, Rand Merchant Bank, Royal Society for Protection of Birds, Rufford Foundation, Sacramento Zoo, The Hawking Centre UK, The Tusk Trust and SW Living Creatures Trust. In addition, special thanks must also go to all our supporters who give generously either via donations or through their time in order to support our work and contribute in their own special way and wherever possible.

As in previous years, we would like to remind our well-wishers that they can support us greatly at no cost to themselves through the MySchoolMyVillageMyPlanet programme, which helps to raise essential funds for schools, charities and environmental concerns throughout South Africa. In 2015, a valuable R14 600 was raised this way, which amounting to approximately R1200 per month. Warm thanks to those individuals who support us this way.

## 5.2 Sustainability

VulPro recognises that calls on the generosity and beneficence of donors and sponsors by a wide range and number of worthy causes are very substantial and that the philosophy of sponsorship is to enable a good cause, over the period necessary, to get itself launched and find its way to self-sustainability. VulPro has taken the approach of setting aside 5% of income in a range of investments (see section 6 below) with a view to building up a portfolio, the interest from which will eventually underwrite at least the basic operation such that, in lean years, the operation remains financially safe. The current variability of the ZAR makes it difficult to project a time point at which a stable operating income, covering the fundamental rescue and rehabilitation functions, will be generated but it is hoped that national financial stability will be established soon and the future of our own financial base become clearer accordingly.

## **6. Report from the honorary treasurer**

The financial year ending 2015 is looking very positive and healthy and we can expect to publish our results by the end of April 2015.

The financial year ending 2016 is once again looking extremely positive and despite the closure of Vulpro UK we are in a healthy position all round. Revenue for the period 1 March 2015 to 31 December 2015 is up 38.65% compared to the same period in the 2015 Financial Year with the Gala Dinner contributing R175k after expenses.

Some large expenses were funded over the past 10 months namely a new vehicle (R111k), veterinary and rehabilitation expenses (R52k), flappers (R27k) and tracking units (R158k). Solar power and new computer equipment have been earmarked for January and February 2016 as well as expenses related to the Captive Breeding project. Five per cent of all revenue continues to be added to the StanLib Investment Portfolio and cash flow is very positive.

Auditors have been booked for the week of 11-15 April 2016 which should enable us to publish results by the end of April 2016.