

THE VULPRO FLYER

NEWSLETTER

January to March 2022

Protecting African vultures through collaboration and innovation



VulPro NPC - Vulture programme for the conservation of vulture species in southern Africa

Registration no.2011/127419/08 (The Companies Act 2008, Sec.14)

The VulPro Newsletter

1

Contents

A Word from Our CEO	2
Vulture Rescue & Rehabilitation	3
Education Update	6
Sponsors' Profile	7
Eastern Cape Report – Kate Webster	8
Research & Publication	12
VulPro's Captive Breeding Programme	14
Mitigation of Threats to Wild Vulture Populations	15
Our Long-Term Student – Bhekinkosi Sibanda	18
Our Volunteer – Laura Nelson	19
Our Adoptions	20
VulPro's Monthly Open Day	21
VulPro Wishlist	22
VulPro Facilities	23
With Thanks to our Sponsors	24



A Word from Our CEO

2

Executive Summary

There are a lot of negativities surrounding the world as we speak; for the past two years, we have focused on Covid-19 and now, the war between Russia and Ukraine is also resulting in the loss of human and animal lives, destruction of the environment and severe price hikes. We are living in unprecedented times but, sometimes, we need to look towards the sunrise and find the beauty that still exists as each morning beckons us to be and do better. There is still so much beauty that exists within each one of us and the possibilities to make changes, every day in our, our neighbours' and species' lives are abundant.

VulPro continues to strive to do more, be more and excel in all we do, believing that every single individual counts and every single individual needs to be treasured. We continue to focus on our rehabilitation and release efforts, our captive breeding for population supplementation programmes and extensive research and educational work. We are a small staff complement, but our work is felt across the globe and our impact on African vultures is well recognised for its positive impact.

Each section below will give you some insight into our daily lives during the first three months of 2022, where we have given so much of our time, our passion and dedication to preventing the ongoing decline of Africa's vultures. This newsletter is a glimmer of hope and a tribute to YOU, as you continue to carry us on your wings, enabling us to speak for those misunderstood magnificent beings we call Vultures.

With gratitude, yours in conservation

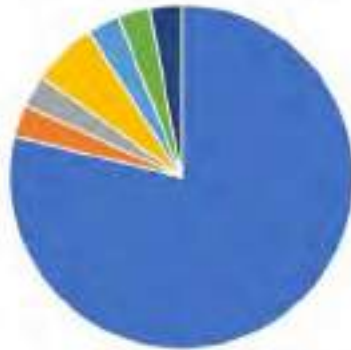
Kerri



Vulture Rescue & Rehabilitation

The first months of the year are very busy with rescues and 2022 was no different. Once again, our rehabilitation programme continued to work at full steam to get these birds healthy again and back into the environment, if possible. Between 1 January and 31 March 2022, we admitted 33 vultures and other birds of prey to our programme. As usual, our most prevalent species was the Cape Vulture, with 26 individuals admitted to our care in this time. The other 12 individuals were made up of an African White-backed Vulture, a Hooded Vulture, Secretarybirds, a Spotted Eagle-Owl, a Wahlberg's Eagle and a White Stork.

Species admitted to VulPro's rehabilitation programme between 1 January and 31 March 2022

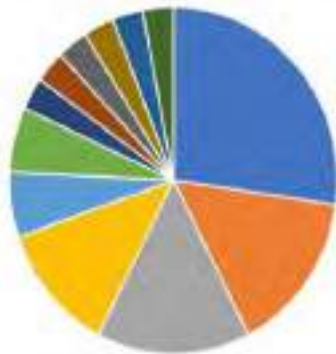


- Cape Vultures
- African White-backed Vulture
- White Stork
- African White-backed Vulture
- Hooded Vulture
- Wahlberg's Eagles
- Secretarybirds
- Spotted Eagle-Owl

Species admitted to VulPro's rehabilitation programme between 1 January and 31 March 2022

Species	Number of admissions
Cape Vultures	26
African White-backed Vulture	1
Hooded Vulture	1
Secretarybirds	2
Spotted Eagle-Owl	1
Wahlberg's Eagles	2
White Stork	1
Total	33

Reasons for admission between 1 January and 31 March 2022



- Power line collisions
- Captured or trapped
- Grounded
- Electrocutted
- Barbed wire
- Habitat destruction
- Hard landing
- Weather
- Vehicle collisions
- Gunshot
- Unknown
- Captive breeding programme

Reasons for admission between 1 January and 31 March 2022

Reasons for admission	Number of admissions
Power line collisions	8
Captured or trapped	7
Grounded	5
Electrocutted	4
Barbed wire	2
Habitat destruction	2
Hard landing	1
Vehicle collisions	1
Gunshot	1
Weather	1
Unknown	1
Captive breeding programme	1
Total	33

Vulture Rescue & Rehabilitation

The reasons for admission were also to be expected, as we saw the largest group of admissions caused by power line collisions. These admissions were then followed by individuals that were captured or trapped and individuals that were grounded as the next largest groups, followed by electrocutions. Once again, the dangers of power infrastructure are highlighted with nearly 40% of the admissions in the last three months being caused by power line collisions or electrocutions.

Regrettably, we were once again shown the damages of human effects on wild animals and environments. In late March, we admitted a White Stork to our care after he showed signs of malnutrition and lethargy. We were unsure as to the reason behind his terrible condition and he was sent to the vet for x-rays and further observation. These observations revealed a large mass in the bird but it was still not clear what the mass was or where it had come from. The decision was then made to remove the mass and on opening up the bird's stomach the problem became very clear; the bird had consumed hundreds of elastic bands which were completely indigestible and had become lodged in the stork's stomach. This had caused a blockage which meant the bird could not eat or digest any food which had led to its condition. The mass was removed but, unfortunately, the damage was too far gone and the stork died a few days later. We are so saddened by the constant threats that wild birds face every day. Whether it be power lines or elastic bands, we see how human behaviour has negatively affected these animals, and it fuels our fire to keep fighting to protect these important species.

However, the hard work we put in pays off, and we were able to see 20 individuals from our rehabilitation programme released between 1 January and 31 March 2022. This was highlighted by three big release events in the last three months. The first two events in January released six and five Cape Vultures each and the third event in March released six Cape Vultures. We are so pleased to be able to give these individuals a second chance at life, once again flying free with their wild counterparts.



Above: Elastic bands removed from White Stork's stomach

Species released from VulPro's rehabilitation programme between 1 January and 31 March 2022

Species number of releases:

Cape Vultures	17
Spotted Eagle-Owls	1
Secretarybirds	1
Wahlberg's Eagle	1
Total	20

Vulture Rescue & Rehabilitation

5



A young Cape Vulture was brought to VulPro with what appeared to be a gunshot wound in his leg. Here he is pictured in a sling which helps with therapy to help him regain the ability to stand and walk.



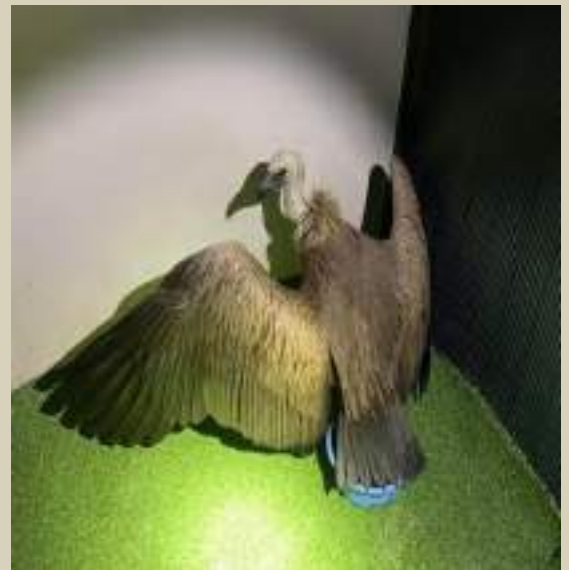
In the first three months of 2022, 20 birds were released by VulPro back into the wild, including this young rehabilitated Cape Vulture.



A secretarybird was collected near Tosca, North West Province, after colliding with a barbed wire fence. One can see the damage caused by these fences on this poor bird's foot.



Unfortunately the damage to the secretarybird's foot was irreparable and a decision was made to humanely euthanise her.



A young African White-backed Vulture arrives at VulPro after being hit by a car outside Kathu, Northern Cape. He was given round the clock care in one of our ICU camps, and has improved immensely. He is currently being monitored for release.

Education Update

6

166 individuals visited VulPro between 1 January and 31 March 2022, through private tours and events and school tours. A further 25 060 individuals visited two of our other birds on loan at the Cango Wildlife Ranch, helping us to continue to expand our reach within the public..

Presentations:

- Dallas Zoo, United States of America (online): Caroline Hannweg presented to approximately 10 people on some of the research work being done by VulPro, sponsored in part by the Dallas Zoo.
- Rhino Connect, South Africa: Caroline Hannweg presented to approximately 10 people on vultures and their importance, and what VulPro is doing to protect them.
- Future Wildlife Conservationists Club, Nigeria (online): Caroline Hannweg presented to approximately 20 people on vultures and their importance, and what VulPro is doing to protect them.
- The Tusk Conservation Symposium, Kenya: Caroline Hannweg presented to approximately 70 people on some of the struggles VulPro faced during COVID, and how we overcame them.



Two rangers from the Cape Vulture Lodge in Manutsa, Limpopo, joined VulPro for a month to receive training on vulture husbandry and rehabilitation.



VulPro presents to the Tusk Conservation Symposium in the Masai Mara, Kenya



Wednesday & Pugsley, on loan from VulPro at Cango Wildlife Ranch.

Sponsor's Profile: Outliers Coffee Roasters

7

We are proud of the coffee that we roast and the feedback we get from our customers confirms that the coffee we produce is of a high standard with unique flavours.

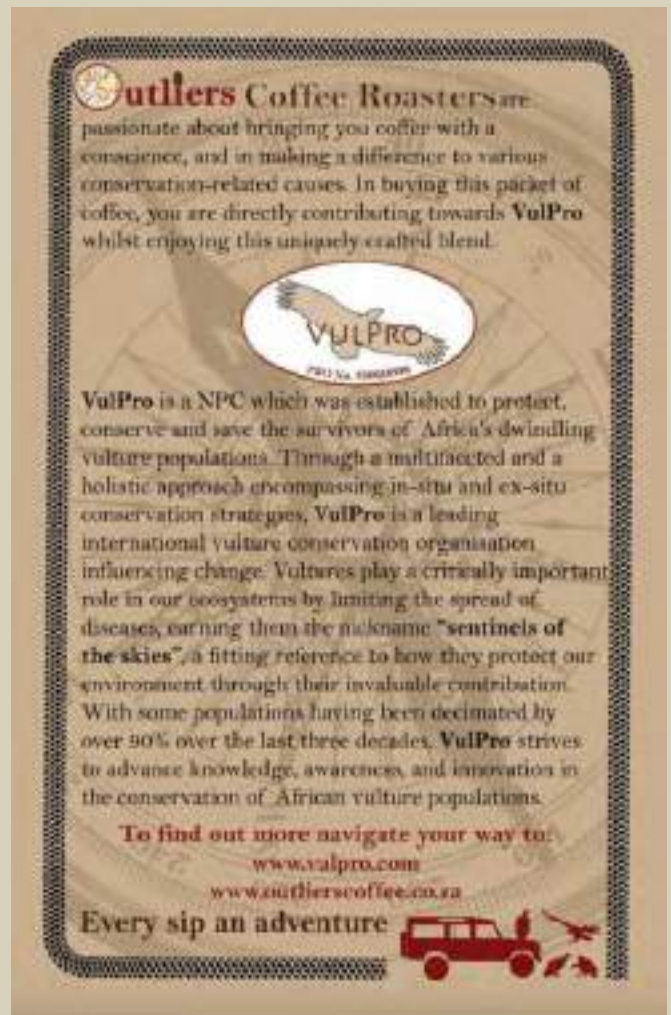
However, what makes us different and what makes us even more proud is the fact that our Sentinel Blend exists for the sole benefit of VulPro. For every 250 gm packet of coffee bought, R10.00 per packet goes straight back to VulPro to help with their ongoing efforts in the preservation of our beloved vultures.

For every 1kg packet purchased, R40.00 per packet goes straight back to VulPro. So, the more coffee you drink the more you can help our sentinels of the sky.

We pride ourselves on our attention to detail, which flows from our roasting right through to the final packaging and product. If you look at the bottom right of the front label you will see our very own Landy – each separate cause has an interaction with the Landy. VulPro's label is unique in that the vultures interact with the Landy.

Our coffee has a unique and distinctive flavour, achieved through the personal attention of our master roaster John Kinghorn, who oversees each and every roast.

The Sentinel Blend has been specifically created for and chosen by VulPro to represent their cause. This blend has undergone vigorous tasting sessions at VulPro which has resulted in one of the finest coffee blends been chosen to represent their ongoing efforts to help preserve and protect our beloved vultures.



Eastern Cape Report

Kate Webster



8

REHABILITATION

To date, I can say this has possibly been the busiest vulture rehabilitation year so far, with calls coming in from far and wide within the province. Sadly, in some cases some of my original areas where I initially started collecting birds for rehabilitation are calling me back. I am talking about 10 to 15 years ago. One needs to ask the question – is this a cyclic occurrence? Middle of January, I was called out by Chris Blignaut a farmer in the Stormberg area to a badly injured vulture. She had collided with a transmission line: her wings were badly damaged and she was in a very weak condition. She unfortunately did not survive, one of more to come, sadly. It was approximately a week later when the same farmer called me for a second bird which was also found near power lines with a permanently damaged joint in her wing. Fortunately, this bird is still alive and will ultimately join the breeding group up at VulPro. Interestingly, I had been called to this same farm in 2016 for two vultures and had found nine dead Blue Cranes under the power lines! My second call came from Ms V's origin (part of Kate's pair that breed in the cave at VulPro), Mr Danie von Litsenberg in the Burgersdorp area (also Stormberg range). This bird was found wandering around in the veldt after colliding with a power line. Fortunately, the injuries are not too severe and she has joined the group at Rookwood in the aviary.

Ms V was one of at least three other birds that Danie had found injured under power lines way back in the late 2000s. If I remember correctly, Klein Danie (X007) was one of the first tracked birds we released in the Eastern Cape. Sadly, he died after being electrocuted about four months later. In that same week, literally the same day, I drove through to Somerset East to collect a badly injured Cape Vulture from the Bosberg Vets (thanks to Drs Brendan and Ria Fannel for treating her and putting her on a drip) that had been found on one of the wind farms in the Cookhouse area. This bird had to have the wing amputated (thank you to our local Drs Werner Wentzel and Elriza Klopper for performing this operation) and has joined the big group in the aviary now. More captive breeding birds.

My next bird was found grounded on the Tarkastad side of Queenstown and being chased by cattle in the camp. Another sub-adult bird with no obvious injuries to the wings, however, there seems to be some problem with either the hips or back, and will soon be heading for VulPro to be assessed for specialised treatment. Another potential wing amputee was collected from Mrs Daphne du Plessis after being found under transmission lines and, fortunately, captured by her husband. This one, like the Cookhouse bird, is a first year fledgling, sadly grounded for life. This rescue was followed by call from one of our neighbours who found a young fledgling under transmission lines with a broken leg. Sadly, this bird somehow managed to get back up into the sky before being caught and most certainly will not have survived wherever it went. My last bird (so far), was again a bird from an area from where I had once before received a bird (now living and breeding at VulPro), the van Heerdens of Hofmeyr area. This poor bird had suffered extreme burns from powerline electrocution and, in consultation with Dr Wentzel, we decided to let her go as both wings were beyond repair and the potential of survival was very nominal in the long run.

Interestingly I have had equal number of sub-adult birds to juveniles (four out of the eight). This equates to 50%. Does this tell us something? I must also mentioned that I was contacted by a farmer from the Barkly East area who rehabilitated and re-released (yes another sub-adult bird) after it had been found grounded and weak in the camp. He did send me footage of the release and the bird flew off well. Another call with very mixed messages, was of another grounded vulture that had been fed dassies in a camp, however, when I made plans to collect the bird had miraculously flown off. I do not think it survived though, but at least, the landowners now have my contact details if they find other birds.

Eastern Cape Report

Kate Webster

Eskom Reports

My first call was combined with a search for a young captive bred that we had released. The tracking device indicated the bird was static and possibly dead. Despite two searches, we could not find any trace of this bird and can only hope that the device had failed and the bird is still flying free in the skies. However, the call was for two power line incidents in the Golden valley area of Tarkastad. The first was a horrific incident where more birds could have possibly lost their lives due to a live wire hanging meters from the ground. This line was the direct result of the loss of four cows (electrocuted when coming into contact with the live wire) and the vultures had come in to feed on these dead cows. How only one bird was electrocuted, is beyond amazing.

After writing a report on this, I went on to another incident in the same area where three birds had been electrocuted. I revisited the site in the Stormberg range of Chris Bignaut and found evidence of more electrocutions. I followed up with a site visit in the Sterkstroom area where vultures have collided and were electrocuted, setting the veldt alight and causing fires and potential losses for the farmers in the area. I have not been able to visit some of the other sites but have received enough information to be able to submit this to the Eskom data base. I would like to thank all landowners who report incidents and collect injured birds, in particular, the farming community who are so willing to do so. We have built up a good network and wonderful mutual understanding over the years and, hopefully, can expand this network: this I regard as a privilege as it is a wonderful collaborative effort.

Date	Infrastructure type	Comments
10.01.2022	Distribution lines	1 x Cape vulture electrocuted with low live wire 3 x Cape vulture electrocuted on another line
14.01.2022	Distribution line	1 x Cape vulture collision (steel structure)
20.01.2022	Distribution line	2 x Cape vulture electrocution 1 x Cape vulture permanent injury same line
23.02.2022	Distribution line	1 x Cape vultures – collision All these lines have been fitted with raptor protectors
24.02.2022	Distribution line (not sure if it is Eskom or Nojoli wind farm as no access is allowed)	1 x Cape vulture collision
27.02.2022	Distribution line	1 x Cape vulture collision
05.03.2022	Transmission line	1 x Cape Vulture collision
16.03.2022	Transmission line	1 x Cape vulture collision (broken leg)
24.03.2022	Distribution line	1 x Cape vulture electrocution – euthanised

Eastern Cape Report

Kate Webster

10

Media and Talks

Once again, I was interviewed by Mariska Spoomaker on RSG 360 about new group of captive bred fledglings that arrived at Rookwood towards the end of February. Marion Edmunds from CNN Africa covered this story. I continue to represent VulPro at the Predator Management Forum meetings of the NWGA of the Eastern Cape and have recently been appointed to run the environmental section of the Stormberg Branch of the SA Hunters Association, with support from the members assisting the vultures in this province.

Captive Bred Fledgling Partnership Programme

This is now the second year we are continuing with this partnership. On 25 February, the DHL Express truck with the drivers, Thembinkosi and Sikhumbuzo under the leadership of Theo, loaded 20 young fledglings (all fitted with tracking devices) and drove throughout the day to Rookwood. Despite treacherous conditions (especially on our very poor and wet gravel roads in our area), they delivered this precious cargo of birds safely. We offloaded them late that night in the pouring rain, and some were reluctant to leave their crates but eventually were coaxed out. They have settled well with the group of permanently injured birds, and my enclosure, presently, has an instant colony of vultures. Weather permitting and after sorting out the tracking device readings, I will commence releasing them quietly three at a time, over the next couple of weeks. Hopefully, if they follow the same pattern as the first group we worked with, they will hang around, acquaint themselves with the surroundings before heading off into the skies of the Eastern Cape. This is the largest group of vultures ever to be released into another province, which is history on its own and proves that VulPro is certainly working hard to sustain the Cape vulture populations in Southern Africa. Once again, I feel honoured to be part of this programme and to have the trust bestowed upon me, as this is a huge conservation move for vultures.

Regarding the previous group, one of the last vultures, no 39 took to the skies finally (after roof sitting for more than a year) on 15 February 2022 and is presently foraging in the Free State launching from the Zastron roost. Number turquoise 04 that flew back to VulPro, returned to the Eastern Cape and is presently foraging between Burgersdorp and the Orange river area. Sadly, number 14, another of the final roof sitters, died after colliding with the power line here at Rookwood, but my feeling was that this bird was not a good flyer (somehow compromised in flight) and once number 39 had left, it attempted to fly off, too, even though the next group of captive bred fledglings had just arrived.

Our fledglings



Eastern Cape Report

Kate Webster

11

In all, this has been a mind boggling experience, and something I will treasure for the rest of my life. For me, being able to watch the vultures fly off with the wild birds and being able to observe/monitor their movements (often with my heart in my throat particularly when they fly around those wind turbines!!!) as they attempt to ultimately be able to reach maturity and to supplement the Cape vulture populations, is a

priceless gift.

General

2022 certainly has been the year of the 'raining vultures' for me. As I have said before, I will continue to assist and support the plight of the Cape Vulture, not only in this province but generally. As part of the General Council of Agri EC, I get further opportunity to interact with the landowners who are really the guardians of these birds. The support of my children, Kevin, Miche and Joy, and staff cannot be underestimated. My vets Werner and Elriza of the Queenstown Vets, who have come a long way in assisting with these birds, even being prepared to do amputations...I am extremely proud of you. To Brendan and Ria Farrel, a big thank you, too, and for showing interest in assisting the injured birds down Cookhouse way (that is if they are not in pieces lying under those turbines already). The food supply from No 2 Piggeries through Vivian (Lindie) and Abraham (Willem) plays such an important role, and I would not be able to keep/hold/treat any birds without this supply. Lastly, a big thanks to Tim de Jongh (especially), Dean Ricketts, and Div de Villiers from DEDEAT for your back up and support regarding permits, power line issues and compliance. Kerri, Ryno and Caroline of VulPro thank you for your continuous support and backup. I thank my sponsors Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust and DHL Express as I would not be able to do the work without their funding and support.

In conclusion, as I receive another call of a downed vulture in the Penhoek area, I wonder when these birds will ever overcome all these challenges they face on a daily basis. May these birds continue to show the chutzpah that last Hofmeyr bird did, despite her injuries and burns, and the will to try and outlive all the odds thrown at them. These birds will continue to amaze me, always.



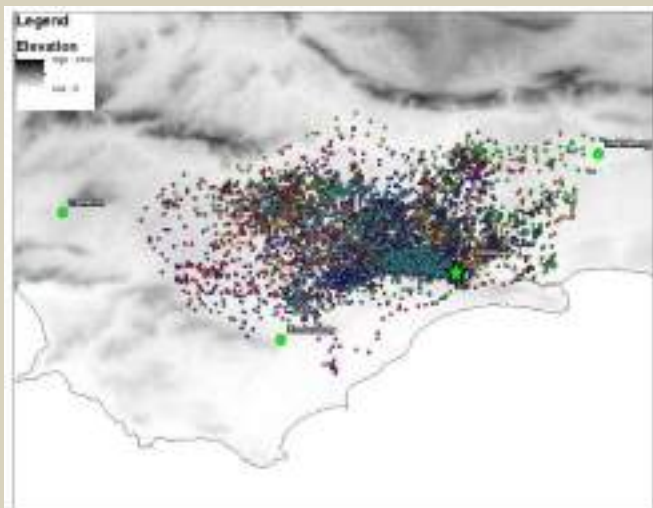
Research & Publications

12 At VulPro, we aim to publish impactful research articles that support the protection of African vultures and contribute to implementing more robust conservation strategies. This year, we have already published one scientific article, with another three submitted to various journals. Further, we have another four scientific publications in preparation ready for submission in the next couple of months. Our work has also already been cited 61 times this year, and we expect to surpass last year's citation numbers in 2022.

Throughout 2021, VulPro collaborated on various exciting projects. A project in collaboration with the University of Cape Town that modelled the encounter risk for Cape Vultures to guide wind energy development used available tracking and known breeding and roosting sites. This manuscript has recently been submitted and is expected to receive positive feedback from reviewers in the upcoming months so that environmental organisations can make informed decisions on the placement of proposed wind farms.

Another project that we are very excited about is in collaboration with the University of Pretoria. This study aims to identify high probability roosting areas on powerlines that will allow for pro-active mitigations. This study will use VulPro's entire tracking database to model heat maps across the country to help ESKOM identify important areas that require pro-active mitigations to minimise the impact of anthropogenic threats. Lastly, a project that is of utmost importance is looking at the successful integration back into the wild of rehabilitated and captive-bred fledglings.

The initial phase of the study is to release our 15 captive-bred Cape Vulture fledglings and 6 rehabilitated Cape Vulture fledglings back into the wild. These 21 birds will be released within the upcoming months, and we will monitor them daily. This pilot study will lead to the main study that involves wild, rehabilitated and captive-bred birds to understand whether the captive-bred and rehabilitated birds can successfully integrate back into the wild population.



Movement of eight Cape Vulture fledglings tagged at the Potberg Cape Vulture colony as part of study in collaboration with the University of Cape Town.



A Cape Vulture fledgling is fitted with a GPS tracking device. Research on how our captive bred and rehabilitated fledglings are moving will help us better understand how our youngsters are integrating wild populations.

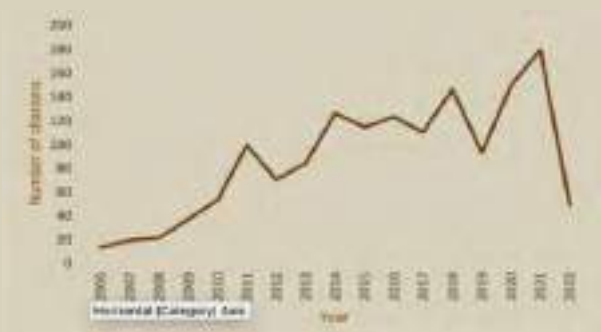
Research & Publications

Publications for 2022

1.) Kane A, Monadjem A, Bildstein K, Botha A, Bracebridge C, Buechley ER, Buij R, Davies JP, Diekmann M, Downs C, Farwig N, Galligan T, Kaltenecker G, Kelly C, Kemp R, Kolberg H, MacKenzie M, Mendelsohn J, Mgumba M, Nathan R, Nicholas A, Ogada D, Pfeiffer MB, Phipps WL, Pretorius M, Rösner S, Schabo DG, Spiegel O, Thompson LJ, Venter JA, Virani M, Wolter K, Kendall C (2022) Size doesn't matter, it's how you use it: Using continent-wide variation in ranging behaviour of vultures to assess the feasibility of Vulture Safe Zones in Africa. *Biology Conservation*.

Publications Submitted/in Prep

- 1.) Aspenström S, Kemp R, Howard A, Hannweg, CG, Chetty K, Briers RA & Wolter K. (submitted) The threat of power lines on two African Vulture species.
- 2.) Hirschauer MT., Hannweg CG., Kemp R. and Wolter K. (submitted) VulPro: An overview of Africa's Vulture Conservation Center
- 3.) Cervantes F., Murgatroyd M., Allan D., Kemp R., Kruger S., Maude G., Mendelsohn J., Rosner S., Schabo DG., Tate G., Wolter K. and Amar A. (submitted) A partially explicit collision risk model for the Endangered Cape Vulture to guide wind energy development.
- 4.) Casey, J., Kemp, R., Hannweg, CG., Hirschauer MT., Naidoo, V. & Wolter, K. (In Prep) Lead poisoning may not contribute to power line collisions amongst African Vultures.
- 5.) Brink CW, Zimunya T., Kemp R., Wolter K. and Thomson R. (In Prep). The effect of supplementary feeding on breeding success in the Endangered Cape Vulture, *Gyps coprotheres*
- 6.) MacLeod N., Kemp R., Hannweg CG., Wolter K., Warren B. and Keith Mark. (In Prep) Examining the foraging ranges and behaviours of two African vultures in Gauteng and North-West Provinces of South Africa.
- 7.) McKechnie, AE., Kemp, R., Freeman, MT., Wolter, K. & Naidoo, V. (In Prep) The impact of lead exposure on the thermoregulatory capacity of Pied Crows.



Number of citations of VulPro's publications since 2006



Number of publications produced by VulPro since 2006

VulPro's Captive Breeding Programme

14

At the end of last year, we reported on our final numbers of successfully fledged captive bred offspring. Since then all 15 Cape Vulture captive bred offspring have been moved to the Eastern Cape in preparation for their release. Kate Webster is once again taking charge of them and will be releasing the birds in a staggered fashion to allow the released birds time to adjust and remain at the release site, if they choose, amongst their friends. This is a tried and tested method, and has worked extremely successfully in the past. The releases will begin in early April, and we look forward to keeping you all up to date as to its success. The single captive bred African White-backed Vulture was released on 21 February 2022 in Bela Bela and is doing extremely well. He initially stuck close to his release site but then figured out his wings and decided to test them. Herewith the map showcasing his movements up until the end of March 2022 and, as you can see, he is thriving out in the wild, behaving like a true wild bred vulture. This is exactly what we had hoped to see and achieve, and we now hope 2022 will see more captive bred White-backed vultures produced for release. . In addition to sorting out the 2021 offspring, we have spent the first three months of the year undertaking much needed maintenance in the breeding enclosures, in preparation for our 2022 breeding season. We have replaced all perches with new rough perches to avoid bumble-foot. We have constructed two new Hooded Vulture breeding enclosures to give these pairs the best chance of successfully breeding although we are not expecting anything this year given they have recently joined us from the USA. We have reshuffled some of our Lappet-faced Vultures and have formed a new breeding pair so we are holding thumbs for this year's season and we have completed all health checks on every single breeding bird, making sure they are healthy and are of ideal weight to give them the greatest chance of breeding success. Once again, we are hoping for a very successful breeding year. We will continue to keep you updated on these developments.



Flight path of African White-backed Vulture released on 21 February 2022 in Bela Bela

Mitigation of Threats to Wild Vulture Populations

15

VulPro's work centres around giving individual vultures a second chance at life, whether it be by releasing rehabilitated birds back into the wild or if they are not releasable, giving them the chance to find a mate and breed, contributing their offspring back into the wild. However, despite these efforts and the importance of these individuals for the wild populations of vultures in Africa, it is also critical that we help mitigate the factors that are affecting them in the first place. This is not only vital to ensure that birds do not end up back in our rehabilitation programme but also to ensure that birds do not come into our facility in the first place.

VulPro works hard to help mitigate some of the most pressing factors affecting vultures in southern Africa. One of the main ways it does this is through helping to mitigate power line incidents. This is done by both reactive and proactive mitigation measures. The first way that we assist with the mitigation of power lines is through the reporting of power line incidents. Eskom, in partnership with the EWT has taken on the responsibility of ensuring that where incidents occur, appropriate mitigation measures are put in place. This means that whenever a power line incident is found by or reported to us, the appropriate details are recorded and these details are immediately sent to Eskom for mitigation to take place.



A Cape Vulture is killed in an electrocution event in the North West Province



Power lines like these cause huge damage to vultures across the country. VulPro works with Eskom in order to mitigate sites where power line incidents occur.

These incidents are then logged by Eskom and we are sent reports on the action that has taken place regarding these incidents. We are then able to follow up and ensure that mitigation measures are put in place to stop vulture collisions or electrocutions. Where possible VulPro visits sites alongside the Eskom team to recommend the appropriate mitigation measures. In the first quarter of 2022, VulPro was able to report details on 12 power line incidents. This is added to our existing database, consisting of over 400 incidents in the last nine years, involving over 900 birds. Beyond this, we are working to improve proactive mitigation through conservation research. The research team at VulPro is working on numerous studies where high risk areas and lines are identified. By helping to determine where vultures and other species are more likely to have negative power line interactions, we are able to help organisations such as Eskom and Nature Conservation identify where it is necessary to start with proactive mitigations. In an ideal world all power lines that are erected would be automatically mitigated but unfortunately this is not possible with the resources available. It is therefore critical to start mitigation measures at the most urgent sites and work our way through all the lines.

Mitigation of Threats to Wild Vulture Populations

Another way in which we help mitigate threats is through providing safe food for wild vultures. Vultures in the wild are unfortunately under threat from a lack of safe food. This is because of decreasing wild spaces throughout their ranges, and modern farming practices often lean on burning or burying carcasses instead of leaving them out for vultures. On top of this, carcasses that are left for vultures often have a chance of being directly or indirectly poisoned, leaving very little food that is actually safe for them to eat. To counter this, VulPro has an active vulture restaurant with carcasses that are screened for any poisonous substances before they are put out for vulture consumption. VulPro also has a bone crushing machine which takes old bones from consumed carcasses and crushes them into smaller pieces for vulture consumption. VulPro puts out between one to two tonnes of safe food per week for wild vultures, with sometimes up to 200 vultures visiting in a day. This means that VulPro has helped supply approximately 20 tonnes of safe food to vultures and other scavenging birds in the last three months.

Cape Vultures feast on a carcass at the VulPro vulture restaurant



Crushed bones are an important part of a vulture's diet, supplementing their diet with calcium which is vital for strong bones and egg shells. However, the birds are unable to crush the bones themselves and thus would normally rely on large carnivores to crush them. Without these animals, it is almost impossible for these birds to get calcium elsewhere so it is important to supplement vulture restaurants with bone chips. This helps reduce broken bones in wild vultures and helps adult vultures lay eggs with strong shells so they can produce successful chicks. VulPro not only manages its own vulture restaurant but also helps with information and management advice for other vulture restaurants, including donating bone chips to other vulture restaurants when possible to expand our reach as far as possible. In South Africa there are approximately 140 vulture restaurants but VulPro is one of the key restaurants in the country contributing approximately 200kg of food in a day in comparison to the average restaurant which supplies 64.6kg a day (Brink et al.. 2020).

Mitigations of Threats to Wild Vulture Populations

17

Finally, two more of the main threats to African vultures are the wildlife trade and persecution. These two items are notoriously difficult to address as they stem from a long history and are deeply embedded in culture. However, VulPro works hard at mitigating these threats through education. VulPro conducts private and school tours through our facilities as well as talks at local community centres for various groups. Many of the people who attend these tours or talks have never previously experienced vultures up close; do not know the importance of the vultures' role in the ecosystem and why we are fighting so hard to protect them. By giving these talks and by handing out educational material to our visitors, landowners, farmers and communities that we come into contact with, we are changing the perspective of people and showing the positives of vultures by highlighting their importance in the environment.

These threat mitigations are not done in isolation: they are part of implementing management strategies at meetings with provincial Nature Conservation and local and municipal government representatives. VulPro is also part of various task forces and steering committees helping to guide authorities in the right direction to ensure wild vultures are protected wherever possible.

We are able to identify and work on mitigating these problems because of the hard work that VulPro has done for over nearly two decades. As we continue to grow and progress in our work, we will continue to expand our work to incorporate new methods of mitigation and to tackle new threats that arise. VulPro will continue to tackle these challenges to make our work that much more effective.



VulPro's restaurant provides food and sanctuary for the whole ecosystem; a flock over 100 Marabou Storks touched down and have called VulPro home for most of the first quarter of 2022.

Our Long-Term Student

Bhekinkosi Sibanda

18

I joined VulPro in July 2019 after my year-long National University of Science Technology Internship (Aug 2016-July 2017). My main interest is sustainable natural resource use by society, promoting sustainable development where inclusive participation fosters admirable results.

I am an aspiring ecologist and researcher, and I believe being part of VulPro brings an important career opportunity. I am confident and excited to contribute to vulture conservation through this opportunity.



Our Volunteer Laura Nelson

19

I started volunteering at VulPro around 2012.

It became my second home where I could go to get out of the city and do something useful. It was also near my other hobby of flying paragliders.

Over the years, many pilots regaled their wonderful experiences of flying with the vultures. For many years it was also my unfulfilled desire to fly with the vultures, especially with a large number of vultures, first as a hang glider pilot, and later as a paraglider pilot. My first experience of flying with a vulture was around 1994, when I was lucky enough to thermal my paraglider with a single vulture near Brits.

I learnt about VulPro through another pilot, Walter Naser. The video 'Flying with Vultures' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuxMvufnhkA> became my favourite. After starting to help at VulPro in different areas by collecting carcasses, injured birds, cleaning enclosures, doing anything to help VulPro fulfill their mission of saving the vultures from extinction, it finally was my turn to fly with a gaggle of about twenty vultures. That was around 2014 in a flight from the Cable Way at Harties. It was an experience that is still holding a place of honour in my memories.

During the years I have met with many other fantastic volunteers at VulPro, local as well as from overseas. These days, after Covid lockdowns and changes in my lifestyle, it is not possible to go to VulPro as much as I would like. Luckily I can still collect injured vultures, especially during the week when other volunteers have to work. My Ford Bantam bakkie enjoys the outings as much as I do, and always tries to get the unlucky vulture to VulPro as fast as possible!



Our Adoptions

Our wonderful adopted vultures continue to do brilliantly at VulPro! We are moving into the breeding season now and many of our adult birds are beginning to nest and lay eggs. The first egg of the season came from Delilah, adopted by Tracey Robinson! We have a couple more adopted adults who have built beautiful nests already, and we are looking forward to many more adoption eggs in the near future. Watch this space!



Percy, adopted by Kim Caldwell



Sherry, adopted by Jonathan Chaplin



Tristan, adopted by Mariza Hamman



Conan, adopted by Jonathan Chaplin

If you would like to adopt a vulture or one of our other raptors please get in touch at info@vulpro.com. For an annual fee, you get the chance to help provide for a bird at our facility, helping us ensure they continue to get world class care during their stay at VulPro. Your adoption also gives you access to unlimited visits to the centre to visit your bird (by appointment only), an adoption certificate and access to our newsletters. With over 260 birds at our facility there are countless birds waiting to be adopted by you!

VulPro's Monthly Open Day

21



JOIN US FOR

VULPRO'S MONTHLY OPEN DAY

Every 2nd Sunday of the month | Open from 10:00 to 15:00 | Entry: R 50 per person | Dogs on leashes welcome
- No booking needed -



Amazing opportunity to tour VulPro grounds & facilities



Condor enrichment
11:00 - 11:30



Boerewors rolls & cooldrinks will be on sale



Guided tours available



VulPro merchandise will be on sale



Bring your own picnics, food & drinks

Please note: Masks must be worn at all times. VulPro is a non-smoking facility.

VulPro Wishlist

22



- * Vet wrap
- * Elastoplast
- * Iodine ointment
- * Wound superglue
- * Betadine ointment
- * Betadine disinfectant, concentrated solution
- * Swabs
- * 5ml syringes
- * Bactroban ointment
- * Cotton band
- * Cotton wool
- * Toilet paper
- * Clean Green
- * Sunlight liquid
- * Domestos
- * Paper towel
- * Cleaning mop
- * Hard and soft brooms



Please drop items off at VulPro directly.

Alternatively, we can collect (location dependant) – please email: kerri@vulpro.com

If you are not able to purchase items, monetary donations are always welcome.

Your support is hugely appreciated!

VulPro Facilities

23



- Opens up its doors -

- * Kids birthday parties
- * Baby showers
- * Kitchen teas

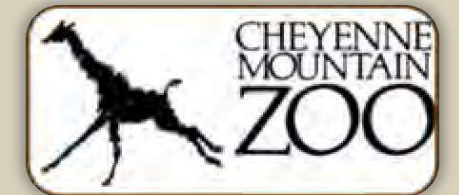
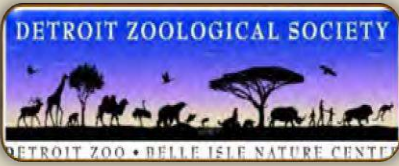
All in the safety of the VulPro facilities.
Outdoors, private and secure

kerri@vulpro.com for further details and bookings



With Thanks to our Sponsors

24



With Thanks to our Sponsors

24



Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust

