EDITORIAL:
*Restaurant News* was conceived at a meeting of Vulture Conservationists held at VulPro in November 2014. The newsletter gives the opportunity for the exchange of information and sharing of stories and photos by individuals and organizations who operate vulture feeding sites and other interested parties. You can contribute, subscribe (or unsubscribe) to the newsletter by sending an email to: wneser@gmail.com Anyone is welcome to submit stories, photos, ideas, Questions etc for inclusion and advertising opportunities are also available. Edited by: Walter Neser.

---

**Featured Restaurant: Bakoven**

By: Willem de Chavonnes Vrugt

Our farm, Bakoven, is situated 60km South-west of Mahikeng in the direction of Vryburg in the North-west Province. We established a vulture restaurant in 2004 to dispose of the mortalities from our then newly built piggery and haven’t had to use any other method since.

There have always been white-back vultures in the area and we did see large numbers whenever there was a mortality in our commercial cattle herd. When we decided to start the restaurant we waited for mortalities in the cattle herd and used the cattle carcass to attract the vultures to the desired location. We were extremely fortunate to have instant success with this method and have seen numbers in excess of 300 birds on regular occasions.

Finding the right location on the on the farm was a challenge. There were occasions where trespassers came to take some meat and another time when it was to close to my house and we decided to move the restaurant because of the odour. Moving the restaurant was easy though, it was as simple as deciding on a new spot on the farm and giving the instructions to the guys that are responsible for the disposal where to place the carcasses. The birds just followed the meat.

In 2009, five years after establishing the restaurant, we saw the first breeding pair of White-back vultures on top of a Camel-thorn tree. The numbers of breeding pairs have grown to more than 20 over the last couple of years. Some ten lappet faced vultures have also joined the white-back vultures at the restaurant.

*(Vultures at Bakoven, Continued on Page 2)*
These vultures help a lot with the management of the restaurant since it is their job in nature to open-up carcasses with their specific beak design that cuts and tears through animal skin. We stopped opening the carcasses with a butcher’s knife, after their arrival.

There are a few responsibilities after you have established a vulture restaurant to keep the birds safe and healthy. Our consulting vet’s at the piggery helped us with the safe use of medicine and also advised us to keep the restaurant free of any plastic material.

The disposal of the bones after the birds finished eating is necessary once in a couple of months but there I am so lucky that somebody in the area comes to collect the bones every 3 months.

The vulture restaurant is a joy to have and always draws a lot of attention when we get friends or family for a visit. I can strongly recommend it to all farmers that experience difficulties in disposal of the mortalities on their farms. Get an expert to advise you on the basics and enjoy these magnificent birds while they work for you.
Vulture Restaurant Posters

VulPro has produced a series of informational and educational posters which are available to download to print free of charge, you can also order laminated A1 or A2 sizes of these posters from VulPro, which can be shipped to you for a fee. These posters are ideal to put up if you have a hide at your restaurant. Posters can be viewed and downloaded from VulPro’s website under the Media Tab at http://www.vulpro.com

The following Posters are available at the moment:
- Southern African Vultures
- Threats (Dangerously Close)
- Tags

Booklets also available are:
- Let Vultures Soar (Info for Farmers)
- Here’s Looking at You Kid (Children’s)
**Interesting Resightings:**

**B081** was originally tagged at Rhino and Lion Nature reserve in Feb 2007, there are eight resightings since then, all in the Magaliesberg area, the latest being at VulPro in July 2014, seven years after it was tagged. Both Wing Tags are now missing, and only the metal ring on the Leg remains.

**C176** was rehabilitated and released as a fledgeling at Blouberg Nature Reserve in Dec 2012 by Johan van Wyk and resighted one month later near Kimberly (750km as the vulture flies) at Dronfield by Beryl Wilson.

---

**Vulture Rescue**

This is the time of year when vulture chicks fledge and start to test and develop their muscles and co-ordination for flight. Unfortunately due to their habitat being modified by people, they often find themselves in the type of trouble that they would not naturally encounter. Fences, power lines, dogs and urbanization all spell trouble for a young vulture. They need large open areas to take off, so if they end up in a fenced area, garden, overgrown area or even an orchard, they become ‘grounded’. In addition, many of these fledglings are unaware of the dangers of power lines and either use them to roost on, which often leads to their demise due to electrocution, or fly into the overhead wires which often causes permanent and life threatening injuries. If these birds are left unassisted, the situation spells certain death.

Luckily there is help for them if they are discovered in time. VulPro – The Vulture conservation Project deals extensively with the rescue and rehabilitation of grounded, injured and poisoned vultures and raptors.

VulPro will collect grounded vultures from all over the country, rehabilitate them and release them, with patagial (wing) tags for visual re-sightings, once back to full health. They have the facilities, knowledge and passion to deal with just about any problem that vultures face.

Experienced in captive breeding and hand raising vultures as well as rehabilitation, they will accept vultures and large birds of prey of any age or health problem. It is vital that grounded vultures are collected and assisted as quickly as possible, kept as quiet and relaxed as possible to ensure their best chance of survival.

The staff at VulPro are on call for assistance and advice 24 hours a day, and are more than happy to give advice and respond to calls for help.

South Africa’s vulture numbers are dropping at an alarming rate in spite of the conservation methods put in place to try and stop this. Power line collisions, agricultural poisonings, loss of habitat, loss of safe food and poisonings by poachers have all had a horrific impact on our vulture population.

Vultures mate for life and lay only one egg each season a year. Naturally, chances of a chick surviving to breeding age (7 years) are already slim; in our modern world they become even smaller. It’s becoming hard for a breeding pair to even replace themselves in their own lifetime, leading to declines in the population, making every chick vitally important. Losing an adult has even more devastating effects, as a chick with only one parent cannot survive, plus, the mate has lost its partner and may no longer breed. A little known fact is that when colony numbers drop too low, the colony disbands and the remaining pairs relocate to an area with higher population numbers, resulting in the extinction of the colony, which is very difficult to re-establish.

Every vulture counts!

Please help us to help them; it costs a phone call to have VulPro on their way to save a vulture.

**Kerri Wolter:** Cell – 0828085113,  kerri.wolter@gmail.com

**Walter Neser:** Cell – 0765939849,  wneser@gmail.com

**Eastern Cape:** Kate Webster at 082-702-5942

If you would like to assist with support in any other way, please visit [www.vulpro.com](http://www.vulpro.com) to find out more about the work that VulPro does and what you can do to help. One person can make a difference!