

Restaurant News

Issue #1 December 2014



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 Naser.

Produced by:



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 farm was a challenge. There were occasions where trespassers came to take some meat and another time when it was too 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)

(Vultures at Bakoven, Cont from Page 1)

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.

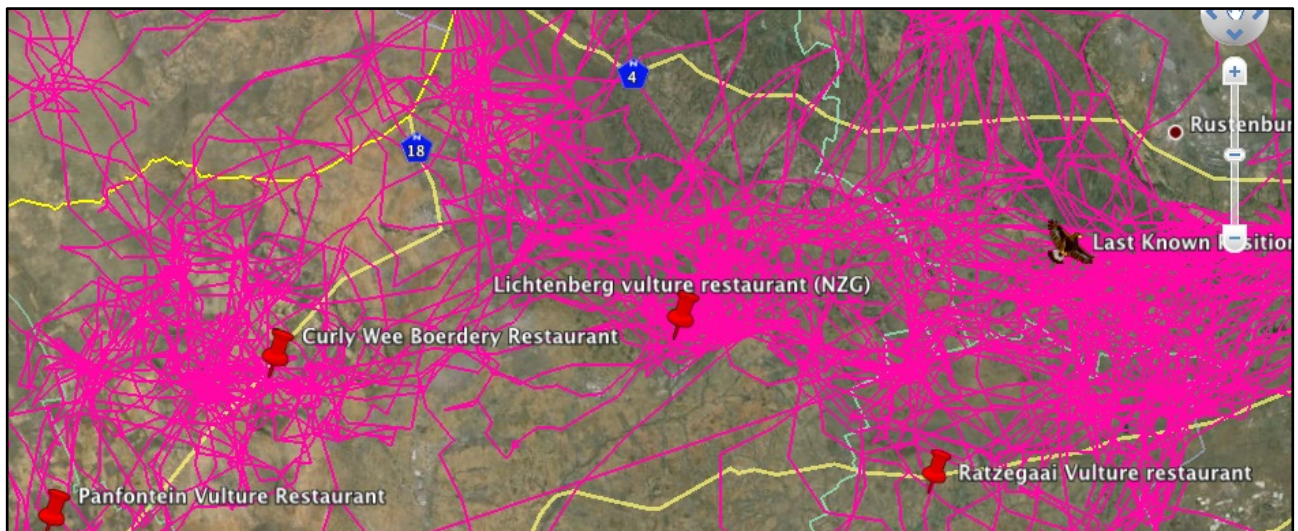
There are a few responsibilities after you have established a vulture restaurant to keep the birds safe and healthy. Our consulting vet's at the piggery helped us with the safe use of medicine and also advised us to keep the restaurant free of any plastic material.

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.



Cape Vulture Tracking around Curly Wee

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)

Southern African Vultures

Range and Status

Capo Vulture <i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	African White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps africanus</i>	Rüppell's Griffon <i>Gyps rueppellii</i>
 Status: Vulnerable Habitat: Open savanna, woodland, and grassland. It is found in the open areas of the savanna, woodland, and grassland. Range: Southern Africa, from the Cape to the north. Length: 100-110 cm Wing: 180-200 cm Weight: 10-12 kg	 Status: Vulnerable Habitat: Open savanna, woodland, and grassland. It is found in the open areas of the savanna, woodland, and grassland. Range: Southern Africa, from the Cape to the north. Length: 100-110 cm Wing: 180-200 cm Weight: 10-12 kg	 Status: Vulnerable Habitat: Open savanna, woodland, and grassland. It is found in the open areas of the savanna, woodland, and grassland. Range: Southern Africa, from the Cape to the north. Length: 100-110 cm Wing: 180-200 cm Weight: 10-12 kg
		
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For further information contact Vulpro at: vulpro.npo@gmail.com <http://www.vultureconservation.co.za> © Vulpro 2013

Dangerously Close to Losing our Vultures

Importance of vultures:

- They keep our environment free of carcasses and waste thereby restricting the spread of diseases (such as anthrax and botulism) and aid in reducing the number of pests such as rats and blow flies.
- Vultures alert landowners of any dead animals on or surrounding their land.
- Vultures are of cultural value to African communities.
- Have an important eco-tourism (bird watching) value.

Threats:

Humans have made astonishing advances in technology and communication in recent years, however we are dangerously close to losing valuable species in our continent due to ignorance and mismanagement.

Tether vultures have major threats:

- Direct and secondary poisoning
- Power line electrocutions and collisions
- Loss of available safe food
- Calcium deficiency
- Disturbance of breeding sites
- Habitat destruction
- Overuse of land resources
- Illegal collection for traditional medicine and more recently, the killing and use of vultures for predicting the lotto numbers.
- The use of some non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs used to treat livestock which is deadly for vultures when ending up in the vulture's food chain.
- Inconsistent management of vulture restaurants
- Lead through bullets, via hunting or euthanasia of animals when being consumed by vultures.

Vultures need your help!

- Humans need to be aware of the good services vultures provide to them and participate in minimising these threats to vultures.
- Drugs that are toxic or harmful to vultures need to be eliminated.
- Educate the less informed about the need and importance of conserving these birds.

Our mission is to be the leading vulture conservation programme for advancing knowledge, awareness and innovation in the conservation of African vulture populations for the benefit and well-being of society.

For further information contact Vulpro at: kerrl.walter@gmail.com <http://www.vulpro.com> © Vulpro 2013

VULTURE TAGS

Vultures throughout Southern Africa have been monitored for decades with the use of colour leg-rings, DAPI tags, metal rings or painted wing tags. Vultures were also caught for research purposes and fitted with one or two of these marking methods, others were ringed as chicks on the cliffs while some have undergone banding before release. Chicks from captive breeding are also tagged before release. All these methods are for conservation purposes where conservationists, scientists, ornithologists, biologists and the general public can learn as much as possible about vultures in order to identify threats and protect them. We invite YOU to participate in these conservation efforts by reporting any marked sightings of any vultures to vulpro@kerrl.walter@gmail.com or www.vultureconservation.co.za. It is invaluable to the conservation of vultures and you never know, perhaps you have sighted a bird from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana or even a captive bred or rehabilitated vulture from VulPro.

What to Record:

- Tag Number & Colour
- Species (if known)
- Date
- Time
- Name of Locality
- Co-ordinates of Locality
- Landowner name and contact details
- Your Name and contact details
- Bird behaviour and condition
- Total number of birds present
- Additional notes
- Photograph tagged individuals if possible

This map shows some of the interesting movements recorded since the use of painted tags in South Africa. Clashes of over 100km have been recorded. Studies on feeding strategies, habitat use, and more studies are in progress. This would not be possible without public participation. Persons providing re-sightings data to VulPro will also receive tagging data of the individual for their interest.

Colour ring combinations were used from the 80's up to around 2000 when most researchers switched to DAPI typed painted tags which were easier to record accurately in the field. Some individuals fitted with colour leg bands are still around and can give valuable data if spotted.

Based in Hartebeespoort, South Africa, VulPro is a non-profit Vulture Research, Conservation and Rehabilitation organisation working to address the threats vultures face globally. VulPro is the only captive breeding facility in Africa breeding vultures for release back into the wild to supplement the dwindling wild populations.

VulPro is open to the public for appointment only. Educational talks and tours for school groups can be arranged.

VulPro was founded in 2007 by Kerl Walter who started working with vultures in 2002. VulPro is funded through opportunities and donations from animal-lovers and is a registered NGO. If you can support the work VulPro does in any way, please contact us.

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Vulture Restaurants

Feeding guidelines for a successful vulture restaurant

What is a vulture restaurant?

A vulture restaurant is a safe feeding site where vultures can safely consume their food without the risk of being shot or poisoned. It is a place where vultures can be monitored and their health can be assessed. Vulture restaurants are a vital part of vulture conservation and can help to increase the number of vultures in the wild.

Background

Although vulture restaurants can improve the wellbeing of vultures throughout Southern Africa, the recent crash in South Africa's vulture populations has raised major concerns as to the sustainability of vulture restaurants. Vulture restaurants are a vital part of vulture conservation and can help to increase the number of vultures in the wild.

Due to the crash of vulture populations, many farmers and conservationists are now aware of the importance of vulture restaurants. Vulture restaurants are a vital part of vulture conservation and can help to increase the number of vultures in the wild.

Reason vultures congregates at carcasses and vulture restaurants, significant percentages of the population can be exposed to whatever residues they may be in the carcasses. As this is an ongoing threat, it is important to ensure that vulture restaurants are managed in a way that minimises the risk of vultures being exposed to residues.

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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



Submit your Photo:

Want to see your restaurant photo featured here? Send us your favourite photo to: wneser@gmail.com

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 Naser: 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 to find out more about the work that VulPro does and what you can do to help. One person can make a difference!
