



# THE VULPRO FLYER



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## RESTAURANT NEWSLETTER

**DECEMBER 2018**

“ To advance knowledge, awareness and innovation in the conservation of southern African vulture populations for the benefit and well-being of society.”



VulPro NPC - Vulture programme for the conservation of vulture species in southern Africa  
Registration no.2011/127419/08 (The Companies Act 2008, Sec.14)



# Executive Summary

Attending the IUCN wildlife reintroduction workshop and conference was both inspiring and educational. Listening to passionate and enthusiastic conservationists, scientists and biologists talk about their respective projects from frogs, birds, tigers as well as flora gave me such hope, a sense of pride and of honour in being awarded a full scholarship to attend the 2018 meeting in Chicago. The room was filled with individuals willing to make personal sacrifices all in the name of saving species for the greater good of our environment and our heritage.

I was blown away by the talk given by Michael Mace from San Diego Zoo Global showcasing how they, together with project partners, brought the California Condor back from the brink of extinction. All interested parties united for the common good of the species and personal agendas were put aside with conservation actions incorporating both in-situ and ex-situ strategies adopted. It still is, to this day one of the most successful and influential reintroduction programmes known in the vulture world.

VulPro faces many challenges and we are often asked questions about our ex-situ programmes and whether funding should not be better spent preserving the species in the wild. It has always been the great debate whether we save the species or allow them to die in dignity. VulPro believes in a multi-faceted and all-encompassing strategy where conservation action is needed both in the wild as well as in captivity. A holistic approach is the future of many conservation programmes and VulPro is extremely proud to be at the forefront of leading this holistic vulture conservation approach.

The California Condor reintroduction programme started with just 22 birds, all of which were brought into captivity. To-date, the population stands at 507 and the wild population at 301. Imagine with VulPro's founder populations of Cape Vultures as well as African White-backed Vultures what impact we could have on the wild populations and their sustainability into the future. In the words of Michael Mace "It is not an easy task to reintroduce and attempt to save species but it is so worth the effort. Everything we know is integrated and when we start to destabilise these ecosystems there are consequences to pay. We have the ability to affect change, now all we have to do is do it"

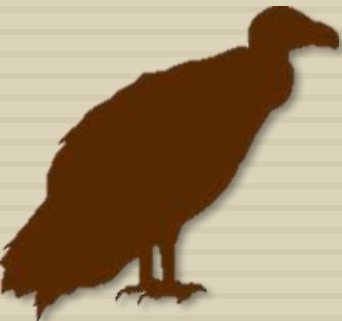


# Executive Summary cont.

I am proud to be a part of the generation that is 'doing it' and I am proud that VulPro is indeed recognised for our conservation work on a global scale. We continue to grow and expand our efforts in order to uphold our mission. It is however, due to YOU that we are in fact able to continue our fight for the plight of vultures and it is because of YOU that we are making headways into saving Africa's vultures.

This newsletter is filled with passion, dedication and a willingness to go beyond the line of duty. The volunteers we have met along the way and their dedication in being apart of the change is commendable and inspiring to me. I am truly honoured to have the opportunity of meeting such awe-inspiring individuals in our daily struggles to see change. Change where I hope our world will adopt vultures and find a passion as well as a love for what I believe, is one of our most majestic bird species in Africa.

As the year draws to a close, I would like to a pay a tribute to YOU. Thank you, for your support in both kindness and financial as well as in believing in VulPro and standing together with us, hand in hand in saving Africa's vultures. Merry Christmas and may you be blessed with love, peace, kindness and goodwill towards men.



# The VulPro Flyer

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# Rehabilitation Update

In barely the blink of an eye, we find ourselves at the end of 2018, with most companies starting their close of business, and families planning where they will be spending their Christmas Holidays. VulPro staff on the other hand, are preparing for what is affectionately known as our “crazy” season. This refers to the time of year when young vultures start leaving their nests, and occasionally end up in less than ideal situations, needing our assistance.

In addition to the annual influx of patients to the centre, VulPro has decided to take on an even bigger task. Due to the lack of rehabilitation facilities in the area, VulPro has opened our doors to all species, avian or not. We are then able to provide triage care to any animal brought in, before relocating them to the most suitable centre to ensure the best possible future for them. Thus, in between Vultures, Eagles, Owls, Robin-Chats, Swifts, Green Pigeons, Jackals and tiny little birds which are barely the size of a vulture’s foot, we have certainly been keeping busy.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2018, to the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, VulPro rescued a total of 35 vultures and released 14 back into the wild population.

Additionally, we also rescued five other bird of prey species, of which 2 were released, whilst one had to be humanely euthanized, and 2 were transferred to other centres. We also took in four species of small birds, namely Weavers, Robin-Chats and a White-rumped Swift, as well as a beautiful Green Pigeon. These have been transferred to another facility to prepare them for release.



# Rehabilitation Update

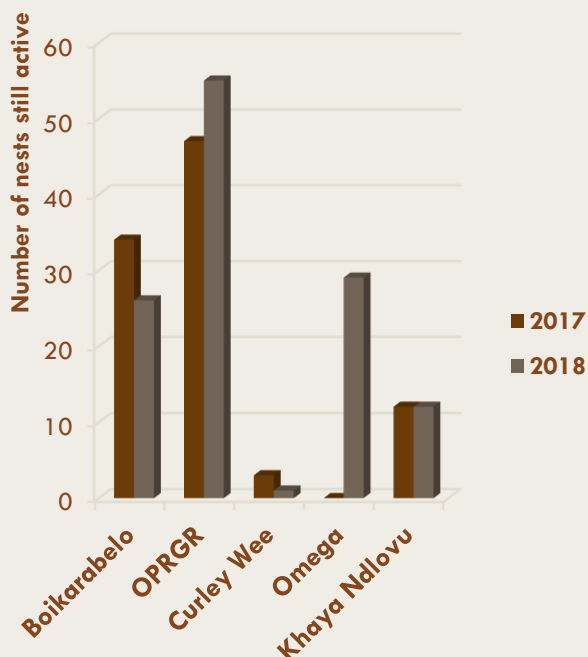
	<u>Rescued and brought in since June 2018</u>	<u>Released</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Euthanized</u>	<u>Transferred donated</u>	<u>Number resident at VulPro December 2018</u>
<u>Cape Vultures</u>	21	13	1	0	0	167
<u>African White-backed Vultures</u>	2	1	0	0	0	53
<u>Lappet-Faced Vultures</u>	0	0	1	0	0	7
<u>White-headed vultures</u>	0	0	0	0	0	2
<u>Palm-nut vultures</u>	0	0	0	0	0	3
<u>Black Vulture</u>	0	0	0	0	0	1
<u>King Vulture</u>	0	0	0	0	0	1
<u>Andean Condors</u>	0	0	1	0	0	3
<u>African Fish Eagle</u>	0	0	0	0	0	1
<u>Small Banded Goshawk</u>	1	1	0	0	0	0
<u>Marsh Owl</u>	1	0	0	1	0	0
<u>Steppe Buzzard</u>	1	0	0	0	1	0
<u>Sparrow Hawk</u>	2	1	0	0	1	0
<u>Hooded Vulture</u>	1	0	0	0	0	1
<u>White-faced Owl</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Spotted Eagle owl</u>	1	0	0	1	0	0
<u>Other Species</u>	5	0	0	0	5	0
<u>Total</u>	35	16	3	2	7	239

# Vulture Breeding Monitoring 2018

## Vulture Tree Nesting Surveys

Throughout 2018, VulPro continued with our vitally important Tree-Nesting Vulture population surveys. All four existing sites were surveyed, and an additional site was incorporated, located in the North-West Province. Comparisons between the number of nests active during September/October in 2017 and 2018 are depicted in the graph below. As you can see, there has been a slight decrease at both unprotected sites, Boikarabelo and Curley Wee. Khaya Ndlovu remains stable, whilst Olifants River Private Game Reserve, which is a protected site, has shown an increase.

**Tree- Nesting Surveys: Comparison in number of nests still active in September/October during 2017 and 2018**

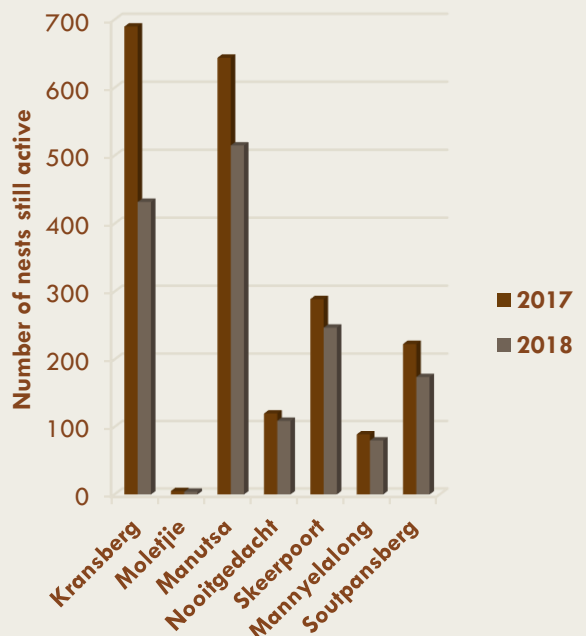


## Vulture Cliff Nesting Surveys

VulPro continued to undertake annual Cape Vulture population census at our seven cliff-nesting sites throughout the North-West, Gauteng and Limpopo Provinces of South Africa. We also continue to monitor one breeding colony in Botswana.

The graph below compares the number of nests still active during September/October for both 2017 and 2018. As can be seen, there has been a slight decline at all sites and further investigation into this needs to be undertaken.

**Cliff Nesting Surveys: Comparison in number of nests still active in September/October during 2017 and 2018**



# Ex-situ Conservation Breeding

## Different Strokes

VulPro has had another successful breeding season, one in which we had the opportunity to truly witness how adaptive and devoted vulture parents are to their offspring. During the later part of the season, we noticed that one of our African White-backed Vulture breeding pairs had lost all interest in incubating, and thus, realised that they would not be capable or committed to rearing a chick. This left us with a bit of a dilemma, as we had two African White-backed vulture chicks on the way, with no parents to rear them as we had double-clutched one of the pairs which managed to produce 2 fertile eggs and had their first chick already. We did not want to hand-rear them, as we felt parent-rearing was a more conducive method as they are to be released into the wild. Thus, we decided to break all the rules, and find a foster pair... To raise both individuals simultaneously. Oh, and did we mention it was a completely different species?! We gave both African White-backed Vulture chicks to a pair of Cape Vultures! And they have thrived! The foster parents have done an amazing job in rearing not one, but two chicks! The “twins” were affectionately dubbed “Mark” and “Kerri”. It was not known before whether vultures could in fact raise two chicks at the same time and I am pleased to state that VulPro’s birds handled the challenge with flying colours.

What makes this pair even more extraordinary is that 2018 was their first breeding season, and both the male and the female have wing amputations. We are all very sure that with the next breeding season, when only having to deal with a single chick, they will feel that life is a breeze!

VulPro continues to advance and grow our breeding programme for the purpose of population supplementation, in line with the Multi-Species Action Plan (MSAP) to save African-Eurasian vultures and AZA Vulture-SAFE (Safe Animals From Extinction) group.





# Ex-situ Conservation

## Breeding cont...

VulPro's 2018 breeding season was once again fruitful, with four Cape Vultures, and three African White-backed Vultures successfully being produced and parent reared this year. As the year draws to a close, these individuals have started to fledge and move away from their nests. They are all destined to be released, as part of our population supplementation pilot study programme. These youngsters will be relocated to the purpose built release enclosure in early 2019. After a short acclimatization period, we hope to watch these individuals spread their wings and soar through the African skies as. We also plan to fit each individual with a GPS tracking device, in order to monitor their movements and gain greater insights into range dispersal, foraging, breeding, and water utilisation behaviours. It is nothing less than a privilege to be apart of saving such a magnificent species in such an extraordinary way



# Eastern Cape Report

## Rehabilitation:

The second half of this year is normally a quiet time with regards to rehabilitation and birds to be collected, however, I have had two birds come in to Rookwood. Both birds have been quite local, within 100km from Rookwood strangely enough. The first was a bird that had been found near the main railway track near Imvani. This is the main line that runs down to East London. She was a magnificent specimen of a bird, estimated to be beyond 10 years of age. The sad part is that she presented with a brood patch, which meant she was most likely still feeding a chick. She continued to present a bad limp on her on leg, and it was then decided that it would be best that she be sent to VulPro for further assessment.

The second bird was a sad case, with nothing that could actually be done to save the bird. I got a call from the neighbour who was standing over a 1<sup>st</sup> year bird in his camp. A group of Cape Vultures had been feeding off a cow that had died and he found this bird lying upside down next to a barbed wire fence. External injuries were those of the barbed wire fence (two punctures in the wing and one on the back) however, there was evidence of interaction with the power lines with singed feathers presented on the one side. Despite treatment, the bird died a day later and a post mortem was done. The birds right breast showed extreme trauma, with extensive damage to tissue, clearly indicating a negative interaction with the power line. Sadly this bird had probably only been on the wing for a short period of its life.

Other patients have included a sub adult Verreaux Eagle, which had come, via Dr E Kloppers to me. The bird had been found in the veld unable to fly, but upon inspection and after some x-rays, no obvious injuries were found other than a swelling in the joint on the wing which proved not to be infected. It was decided to give the bird an opportunity to recover, however, the injury did not improve and in consultation with Dr Kloppe, we humanely euthanized the bird.

The second non vulture patient we received was a good news story. It started out to be a 'bad Black Eagle' catching lambs and was brought to the local vets. This bird turned out to be a Jackal Buzzard, which had got caught up against the fence in the Baviaanskloof area near Bedford. The bird was declared fit to fly and I returned it to the area and watched it fly off quite comfortably.

One of my earlier birds (tagged 243) that I collected in the Bolotwa area, was soft released in July, while the second bird also from the area, is now flightable and should be fitted with a GPS device shortly.

# Eastern Cape Report – cont...

## Eskom reporting:

Eskom power lines remain a problem in this province with virtually not a single month going by where electrocutions and collisions are not reported to me.

Below is a list of the incidents I have covered since July.

Date	Infrastructure type	Comments
12.07.018	Distribution line	2 Cape vulture electrocuted (Zastron)
22.08.018	Distribution line	Tragic incident of two Martial Eagles in combat colliding with a power line (Kasouga). A report was sent to Eskom
19.09.018	Transmission line	Collision transmission line Cape Vulture seen in the camp with damaged wing. Despite a 2-hour search the following day, nothing was found
22.09.018	Distribution line	1 x Cape Vulture electrocuted (Maclear). I liased with Allison Scheppel. Interestingly, this bird had both wing and tail feathers pulled.
01.10.018	Distribution line	2 x Cape Vultures reported by Mr I Botha (Elliot). DEDEA also visited the site for a report
30.10.018	Distribution lines- Thomas River Area*	2x Cape vultures (electrocuted), and one Crowned Crane (collision). Visited the site and sent in two reports, one for each incident.
18.11.018	Ditribution line	1 x Cape Vulture (Hilton/Cathcart). Bird collided with the line and died from trauma to chest area

# Eastern Cape Report – cont...

## Eskom Reporting Continued...

Summary: (calculations done on the birds reported over 5 months)

Cape vultures affected in total:	11
(average 2.2 vultures/month)	
Other birds affected:	3
Cape vultures permanently damaged:	1
Cape vultures killed/dead:	10

I went back to all the incidents in the Thomas River area that I have reported over the years. Over the last 3 years, a total number of 18 vultures have been affected by power lines. This effectively means 6 vultures per year for this area alone. Shocking!!!!

As usual, all these incidents have had reports sent through to Eskom for attention. The numbers remain high and of major concern for this species in this Province. We continue to liaise with Eskom to try and improve and mitigate the problem areas as soon as possible. The continued support from Messrs Tim de Jongh, Assistant Management Biodiversity and Div de Villiers, Head of Green Scorpions of DEAT regarding the compliance issue and Eskom cannot go unnoticed. I am privileged to have this type of support from the Department of Environmental Affairs, showing their concern about a vulnerable species in this Province.

Sadly with the last bird, had Eskom complied with the requirements from a previous report done in the same area, this bird might have been spared the horrifying death it had to go through after colliding with the power lines.

## Meetings and events:

In August I was a guest speaker to an audience of about 100 individuals, as part of the Woman's Day celebrations at Callie Evans in Cathcart.

I again attended the bi-monthly PMF (a division of National Wool Growers) meeting in Komani, where discussions around the misuse of poisons and the issue of lead-poisoning were on the agenda.

## General:

Presently there are now 5 non-releasable birds in the enclosure. We hope to translocate them to VulPro when they are closer to breeding age. From time to time I do get individual visitors who can now observe and see what Cape vultures are all about.

I continue to feed birds at the vulture restaurant at Rookwood, when I have food available - supplied either by our farm or from Peace Abattoirs and would like in particular to thank Anton from the abattoirs for keeping me informed as to when there is food available.

The very special Cape Vulture named Thomas (tag 129), released January 2016 continued to fly in the Eastern Cape but his last reading came from Collywobbles in May. We suspect that the device has become faulty.





# Eastern Cape Report - cont...

Cape Vulture (tag 350) was released early in February this year has been sighted and photographed in the Kamberg area (end of August and September). She recently was foraging around the Dorper Wind Farm near Molteno area (phew!) but has subsequently moved back towards the Mzimvubu area.

Wind farms continue to be a threat for our Cape Vultures. I continue to monitor any new developments and provide inputs where required.

I would like to thank my family, as well as our staff in particular Kevin and Lungisile, for so ably assisting when working with the injured birds and fitting them with rings, devices and tags. Without their hands, I certainly could not help any of the Cape Vultures that come my way.

I also want to thank the DHL team, including Graham Geldenhuys, Nadia Opperman and the drivers for transporting the lovely adult girl to VulPro. They truly rock and are so solid in support. Thanks guys.

I too want to specifically thank Kerri and Charne of VulPro for their continuous support. I would also like to thank my sponsors **Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust** and **DHL Supply Chain**, without which much of this work would not be possible. Praise and gratitude must also be given to all landowners, who make the effort to contact us about any injured vultures and power line incidents.



# A Tribute to Our Founder - by VulPro Staff



VulPro is a small organisation, with a massive impact in the world of conservation. Our team is made up of only 6 permanent staff members, whom operate throughout southern Africa. Those who have had an insiders look at VulPro, will know that we do not only operate as a team, but also, as a family. Working in conservation is never easy. It entails long hours, back-breaking work and enduring many losses. And no one would survive in this industry for very long if they do not have an amazing team backing them; both personally and professionally. What makes VulPro's team unique, is that we have the key element that many teams lack... Great leadership. VulPro has been blessed to have had the guidance of our founder and CEO, Kerri Wolter. We are extremely proud of her accomplishments being recognised this year by being granted the Cellular Tracking Technologies Conservation Award, which included the donation of 21 GPS transmitters. Kerri remains humble, and continually makes a point of highlighting her team. However, we as VulPro staff just want to take a moment to highlight Kerri. She may be a woman of small stature, but to anyone who knows her, she is a force to be reckoned with. She leads by example, and has instilled her passion and love for vulture conservation in each and everyone of us. She has helped us progress and advance in our careers, but has also helped us grow as individuals. She has stood by each and everyone of us during our good days, and even more so during the bad; and is always ready with a kind word or advice that made us pick our heads back up and face the world head on. So for that Kerri, we want to thank you. You are accomplishing the impossible and leaving your mark on the world of conservation, and on us. Thank you.



# Comic Relief



I told you that circling over him  
would help the rescue party pinpoint his position!



# VulPro and Rookwood- Working together to advance Vulture Champions

During October 2018, VulPro in collaboration with Kate Webster from the Eastern Cape, pulled together in order to facilitate the training of two amazing vulture champions from the Eastern Cape., namely, Mfuneko Maxwebisa and Somwabile Daza.

Mfuneko lives relatively close to Collywobbles near Dutywa, while Sonwabile manages the Highlands Bird club at Mt Fletcher. Both these extraordinary gentleman travelled by bus from the Eastern Cape to VulPro in order to undergo training in various aspects of vulture conservation.

During their week at VulPro, Mfuneko and Somwabile were exposed to vulture handling, undertaking power-line surveys, and conducting population surveys of cliff-nesting vultures. Their enthusiasm and eagerness to absorb as much as possible was truly inspiring. Mfuneko and Somwabile did not have any backing or equipment for their vulture conservation endeavours, just a drive and a passion to make a difference.

Through amazing supporters such as Andre van der Spuy and Bernette Louw, as well as the Harties birdclub, we were able to equip them with binoculars and hand held GPS devices, vital for their continued conservation efforts. Both VulPro and Rookwood continue to advise and assist these individuals as they take on this mammoth task of making a difference in the world of vulture conservation.

Thank you to all those who have made this possible, and thank you to Mfuneko and Somwabile for being vulture champions!





# A Special Thank You to Jeff Wells

VulPro would like to give a special thanks to Jeff Wells. You have truly given us the most beautiful gifts with which to remember you by!

Not only was he a pleasure to have around during his time volunteering; he is also an amazingly talented and creative artist!

Jeff kindly painted two amazing pieces for us, and donated one of his pieces as VulPro's new mascot!

We wanted to share his amazing work with all of our followers, and we are sure that most will recognise "Nutsy" from the "Robin Hood" children's' animation.

Thank you Jeff! These pieces are all being displayed with pride!



# Meet our Volunteer- Emilie Barlier



My name is Emilie, and I am an animal care professional from the USA. I currently work with African mammals and birds including Cape Vultures, Lappet-faced Vultures, and Rüppell's Vultures. When dreaming up a career with animals, I never imagined I would fall in love with Vultures like I have.

The birds I work with have deeply impacted me; particularly a young female Lappet-faced vulture whose parents came to us from VulPro as they were deemed non-releasable. Every day in my role, I share the story of vultures with Guests from all around the world. This story includes the many threats they face in the wild, as well as all the work that is going into conserving them.

Having the opportunity to work with VulPro and to see it first-hand wasn't only eye-opening, but life

changing. VulPro will play an active role in my story-telling as I can share my work in South Africa with Guests and teammates alike.

It is clear that vultures need our help, and working alongside Kerri and her team was a privilege and honor. I had the incredible opportunity to travel and assist with a variety of field work including conducting tree-nest surveys, and power line surveys.

Completing field work in Africa has been a life-long dream, and having the opportunity to travel with Charne to complete surveys was a dream come true. Rising with the sun and working into the evening gave us the incredible opportunity to see African wildlife in their element, including vultures! I will never forget the first wild vulture I saw, particularly the very first Lappet-faced vulture. Although I get to see these types of birds' every-day at my job back home, seeing them in the wild changed me profoundly. Life in the bush is one that I could easily get used too, and one that has given me a new skill set. From learning animal tracking skills, to nest identification, as well as navigating using GPS co-ordinates. These are skills I hope to continue developing as future field work opportunities may present themselves.

I also had the chance to work back at the VulPro facility, along-side some of the hardest working people I have ever met. They were incredibly supportive, and made me feel a part of the team from the beginning. My days at VulPro involved many tasks and projects, some of which occurred daily such as feeding and cleaning, to restoring perching and shade cloth in some of the enclosures.

# Meet our Volunteer- Emilie Barlier cont.



I had so much fun getting to know all the birds and learning their personalities and quirks, PJ in particular was very memorable and quickly became a favorite of mine. As an animal care professional, I found a tremendous amount of fun and genuine interest in learning how the staff cares for the residents at VulPro. This work has given me insight into the care and husbandry of a variety of birds. This will ultimately improve my knowledge of husbandry and give me better animal care skills. One of my favorite tasks was recording re-sightings at the vulture restaurant. Vulture restaurants are a topic I chose to share with Guests, and being able to maintain one was nothing short of amazing.

VulPro is truly an incredible organization and place, and having the opportunity to play a small role in this larger than life project was an honor. I walked away knowing that the work I was able to complete contributed to a meaningful cause and is helping towards conserving these incredible animals. I am forever grateful for this experience and the lifelong friends I made along the way.

This is definitely not a goodbye but a see you later! I am eagerly awaiting the next time I have the pleasure of working with the VulPro Team!



# Vulture Restaurants-

## More than meets the eye

Vulture artificial feeding sites may seem a simple concept, however, there are so many varied interpretations thereof.

From a photographers view point, vulture restaurants provide an ideal setting to capture these massive birds in their natural element, forever etching a moment in time.

For land owners and farmers, it provides a low cost means of carcass disposal, minimising operational costs.

But from a conservation view point, there is so much more than meets they eye.

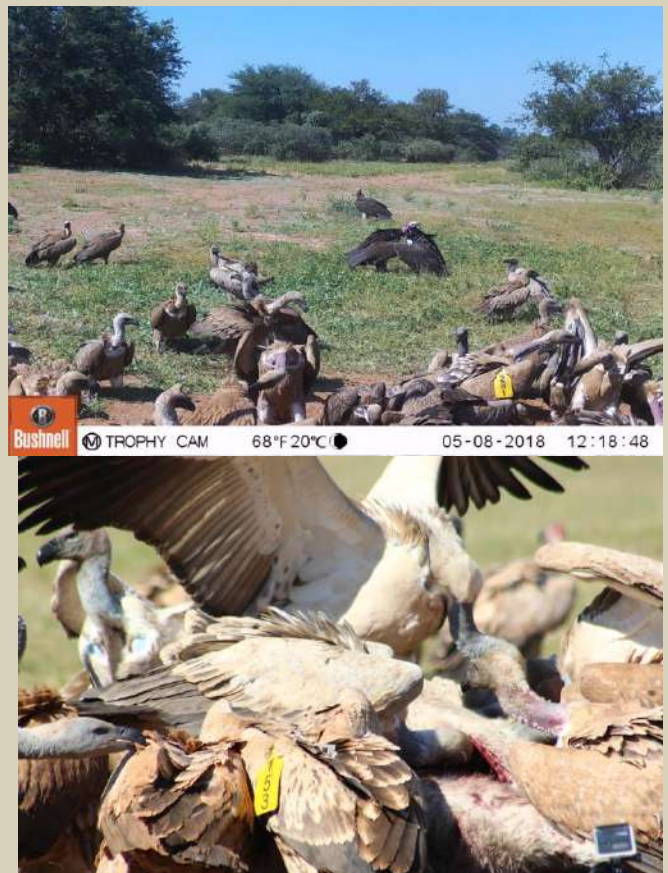
Vulture restaurants allow for the provision of safe, regular, toxin free food sources. In response to declining suitable foraging areas, as well as exposure to carcasses laced with poisons or toxic pharmaceuticals.

These sites also facilitate many aspects of research, all of which contribute to the improvement of vulture conservation actions and approaches as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Re-sightings of tagged individuals, indicating range movements patterns and foraging behaviours. To date, including repeat individuals, we have recorded a total of 35 545 re-sightings.
- Understanding the conservation benefits of artificial feeding sites on vultures.
- Understanding how different food sources may affect nutrient, vitamin, and mineral levels within vultures.

Thus, we continue to emphasise the importance of the establishment and proper management of these artificial feeding sites, as not only does it have a direct benefit to the vultures utilising it; but also indirectly impacts vulture populations as a whole.

There are many key factors that need to be considered before establishing an artificial feeding site, thus, if you are interested in learning more about the establishment and management of these feeding sites, please feel free to contact us on [kerri.wolter@gmail.com](mailto:kerri.wolter@gmail.com) or +27 82 808 5113.





# Meet our Volunteer- Fran Fitzpatrick

I am an early career conservation biologist in the initial stages of a research project examining the social, ecological and economic values of Old World vultures in Africa. My particular interest is in holistic approaches to conservation and developing solutions to address the root causes of biodiversity loss as well as immediate threats to species and habitats. I initially hoped to volunteer at VulPro to gain experience in vulture husbandry, rehabilitation and management of released populations. However, I have learned so much more than I initially hoped from the expertise of the staff, conversations with Lara (head of research) and Charne (head of outreach), and from shadowing Kerri during her daily regime of treatments and diagnosis of incoming cases in her authority as a para-veterinary licensee.

One of the top highlights of my three weeks here was checking on a released Cape Vulture with a tracking device, whose location remained worryingly unchanged for several days in an area not regularly frequented by the other tracked birds.. Our first trip did not locate him visually, but we encountered 15 other Cape Vultures circling over a stretch of private fields and active mining sites. When his location downloaded we could also see that in the past 24 hours he had travelled far enough to indicate normal flight and health..

We revisited the site a few days later, as this individuals movements were once again limited. Arriving at the new coordinates, our hearts sank as we could see both local power lines and larger distribution lines with no flappers or

mitigation, which were not even marked on GoogleEarth. We could also see at least seven vultures perching on the horizontal bars of the distribution structures, as these were the highest point in this rather flat landscape. On being granted access, we were met by two guys who had not only noticed vultures in the area but told us of a group of around 80 Capes which frequent their land. Vulture feeding stations at intensive livestock rearing facilities theoretically provide a win-win for nature and the meat industry, as vultures strip carcasses quickly and thoroughly when they do use a restaurant, as is witnessed by the volunteers at VulPro on a weekly basis.

Without our photos and the testimony of the pig farmers, the evidence would have been far less convincing when making a case for the current danger posed by Eskom's power lines. For me, discovering a roost of around 80 Cape vultures in an area previously thought to be unsuitable for vultures, plus a vulture-friendly food and water source, was very exciting and made the 20 hours in the car very worthwhile.



# Power Line Updates

## Hitting vulture- power line incidents head on

VulPro and Eskom have been working together to combat power line incidents, through reporting of incidents and mitigation of structures and power lines to prevent injuries to other vultures. This year, Eskom asked us to see if we can identify any trends in vulture power line incidents. Through basic analysis of the incident data, we were able to ascertain spatial relationships between the high use areas of Cape Vultures (*Gyps coprotheres*) such as, breeding colonies, and whether this bore any relationship to recorded power line incidents. This work was conducted by mapping available information to analyse incidents. Initial results indicate that there is a relationship between the 50km buffer zones around colonies and power line incidents (Figure 1). Visually it is possible to identify a high number of incidents in the buffer zones, but this is still to be quantified. As adult Cape Vultures are thought to be primarily sedentary around breeding colonies, a focus on these buffer zones may assist in preventing issues. However, before the species are sexually mature they are known to travel much further distances. This may account for some of the incidents outside of the buffer zones. Identifying the age of an individual at power line incidents would substantially assist in assessing this data. Further research is being developed to identify trends of incidents within other species. We hope that this collaboration will make a significant contribution to reducing power line incidents for vultures.

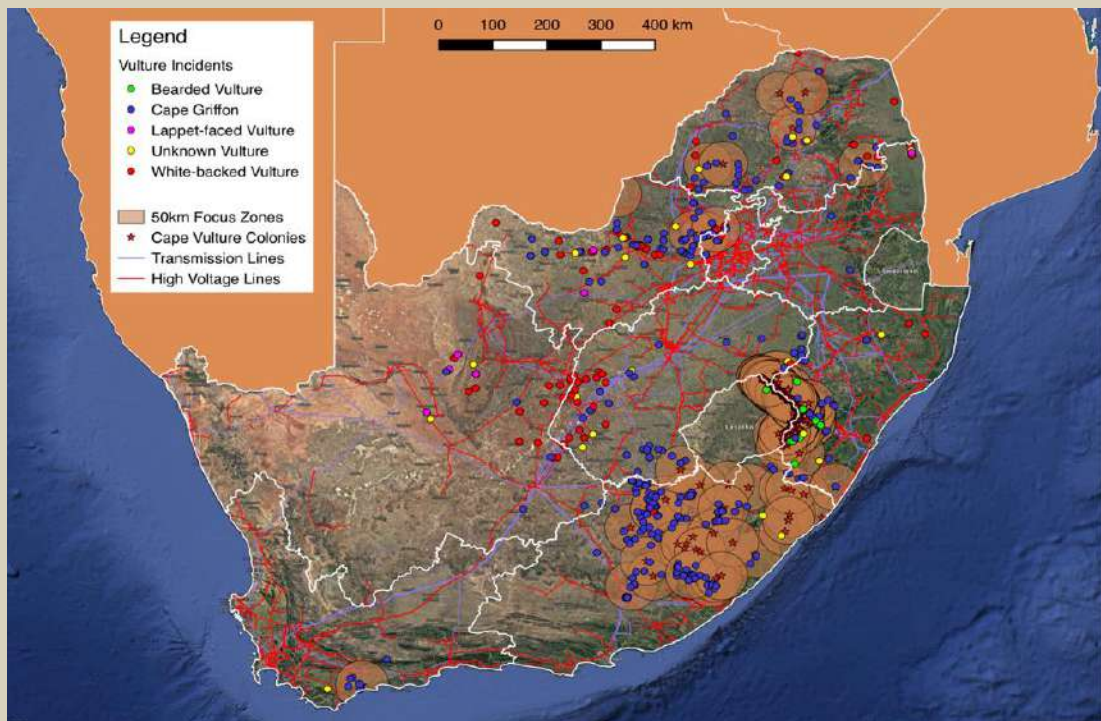


Figure 1. Power line Incidents of vultures across South Africa from

# Power Line Updates

Within South Africa, power lines remain the number one threat to vulture species. Reports continue to stream in of deaths and injuries, due to electrocutions and collisions. We continue to bear witness to an influx of patients suffering from electrical burns and broken wings as a result of these structures. The majority of these cases result in individuals having to undergo wing amputations, removing all hope of them being released back into the wild.

VulPro continues to undertake vitally important power line surveys in both a pro-active and re-active manner, in an effort to minimise this threat. From June 2018, up to December 2018, VulPro surveyed a total of 22.12km's of power lines, including 174 electrical structures throughout the Free-state, North-West, and Eastern Cape Provinces. A total of 11 dead vultures were found during these surveys.

Year	Date	Area	Province	Distance	Structures	Fatalities
2018	12/07/2018	Zastron	Free State	2.13	18	4
2018	19/09/2018	Skeerpoort	North West	0.72	5	0
2018	19/09/2018- 20/09/2018	Hartebeespoort	North West	1.52	18	0
2018	19/09/2018- 20/09/2018	Sunway	North West	0.84	6	0
2018	19/09/2018- 20/09/2018	Rietfontein	North West	0.85	6	0
2018	19/09/2018- 20/09/2018	Rietfontein	North West	4.49	23	1
2018	19/09/2018- 20/09/2019	Rietfontein	North West	1.2	16	0
2018	23/09/2018	Lichtenburg	North West	2.63	29	4
2018	23/09/2018	Lichtenburg	North West	1.24	15	0
2018	30/10/2018	Thomas River	Eastern Cape	3.5	12	2
2018	27/11/2018	Malu Piggery	North West	3	26	0
			Totals	22.12	174	11





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