Vulpro

NEWSLETTER
July - September 2024

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contents

A word from our CEO

"Alone, we can only do so much. But together, we are safeguarding the skies, ensuring that future generations will witness the majestic flight of vultures, and that their presence remains a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity."

Kerri Wolter

As I reflect on this year and our achievements so far, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the groundbreaking milestones we have achieved together at VulPro. Our continued strides in vulture conservation are a testament to the collective commitment, passion, and unity of our entire team. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the unwavering support of our extended family – our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, partners, friends, and colleagues across the private and public sectors, as well as the provincial bodies that stand behind us and our mission.

VulPro's work has set a benchmark for vulture conservation not only in South Africa, but across the African continent, where our methods are being adopted by many non-governmental and rehabilitation organisations. This recognition, both locally and internationally, affirms our position as leaders in vulture rehabilitation and pioneers in the captive breeding of African vultures. Through these efforts, we are actively assisting in slowing the decline of several endangered African vulture species and reducing vulture losses. Our holistic approach to conservation integrates cutting-edge scientific research with meaningful community engagement, addressing the critical challenges these vital birds face.

I am also humbled to mention my nomination for the 2025 Indianapolis Prize, often referred to as the 'Nobel Prize' of animal conservation. This nomination reflects the profound impact of our collective efforts in wildlife conservation and underscores the importance of our mission to save vultures from the brink of extinction. It is a tribute to the dedication of everyone involved in VulPro's work – from our staff and volunteers to our supporters and partners. Together, we are making significant strides in ensuring a future for vultures and their habitats.

Our community-driven educational and awareness programmes continue to grow, creating ripples of change. It is an honour to engage with new communities, particularly in areas that were not previously exposed to vultures, let alone vulture conservation efforts. We remain committed to inspiring change in these often-overlooked communities while enhancing our work in Limpopo, North-West, and Gauteng Provinces. One of our proudest initiatives this year is our continued campaign to address the use of lead ammunition in game reserves and hunting communities in the Eastern Cape Province where we have the potential of making over 100 000 hectares of reserves safe from the use of lead ammunition. Lastly, our educational outreach work extends far beyond South Africa and includes countries such as Nigeria, where there is a shared desire to protect vultures and reverse their decline.

As I look back on our progress, the recognition and respect VulPro has received in just the first three-quarters of this year, is evident of the incredible commitment and selflessness of our entire team. I take immense pride in what we have built together, and I am inspired by the legacy we are creating — one that supports vultures and wildlife today and ensures that future generations will witness the soaring wings of Africa's vultures.

Thank you for believing in this cause and for your continued support.

Kerri Wolter
Founder and CEO

Quarterly Report: July to September 2024

By Alistair Sinclair, General Manager, VulPro Hartbeespoort

The Hartbeespoort facility has been bustling with activity this quarter, staying true to its mission of rescuing, treating, and rehabilitating injured and grounded vultures. Thanks to vigilant community members, 37 vultures were admitted to our centre over the past three months. Power line collisions remain the leading cause of these injuries, underscoring the necessity of our involvement in environmental impact assessments to help prevent future incidents. As South Africa continues to expand its energy infrastructure, particularly with solar and wind projects, the threats posed to vultures and other wildlife by high-voltage power lines and wind turbines are increasing. VulPro remains committed to addressing and mitigating these risks.

Wildlife rehabilitation is more than just a job – it is a vocation. Our team often travels hundreds of kilometres to retrieve and treat injured vultures, and the greatest reward is seeing these majestic birds returning to the wild. This quarter, we successfully rehabilitated and released both Cape and African White-Backed Vultures. The emotional impact of watching a vulture soar back into the sky is profound for both our team and the veterinarians involved, serving as a powerful reminder of why we do this work.

At VulPro, adaptability is one of our core strengths, and this quarter was no exception. Our enclosures are continuously adjusted to cater to the specific needs of each new patient, and we regularly source specialised food for birds that require tailored diets. In response to the growing demand for our services, we are also expanding our capabilities to rescue and rehabilitate other raptors. With our expert team and state-of-the-art hospital facilities, we are well-equipped to support not only vultures, but also a wide variety of birds of prey.

We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved at VulPro's head office and the Hartbeespoort facility. We warmly invite visitors to experience our work firsthand. Our tours include an audiovisual presentation, a guided tour of the facility, and a visit to our birdwatching hide where Cape Vultures are the star attraction. Guests are also welcome to enjoy a picnic or braai at our lapa, where they might spot some rare bird species, such as the crimson-breasted shrike.

"The passion and dedication of our team remain central to everything we do, and we are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our partners and the community."

Alistair Sinclair

Rescue & Rehabilitation

As we progress through the latter half of 2024, VulPro's rescue and rehabilitation efforts remain essential to wildlife conservation. From July to September, our dedicated team treated 36 patients, encompassing a diverse array of vultures and other birds of prey. Each species presents unique challenges that require specialised care, underscoring the perilous situations these birds face in the wild.

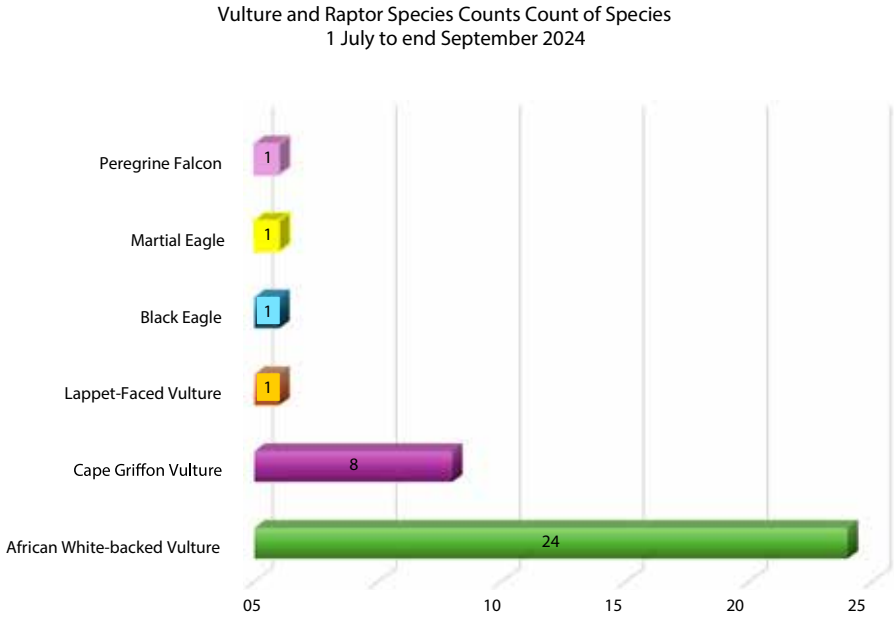
Current Quarter Summary
(1 July – 30 September 2024)

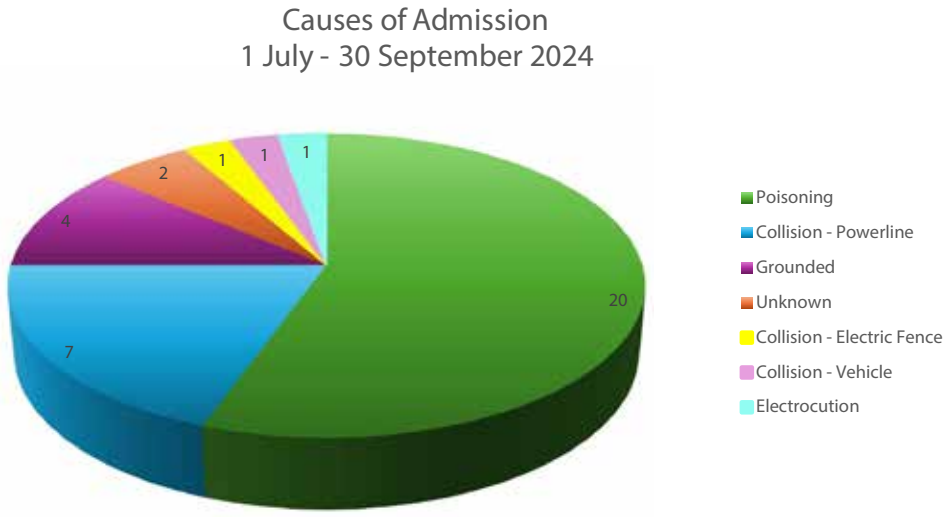
Species Admitted to VulPro

- 24 African White-backed Vultures
- 8 Cape Griffon Vultures
- 1 Lappet-faced Vulture
- 1 Black Eagle
- 1 Martial Eagle
- 1 Peregrine Falcon

Reasons for Admission

- 20 birds poisoned
- 7 birds collided with power lines
- 4 birds found grounded
- 2 birds with unknown causes
- 1 bird collided with an electric fence
- 1 bird collided with a vehicle
- 1 bird electrocuted





Case Study: Successful Rehabilitation of an African White-backed Vulture

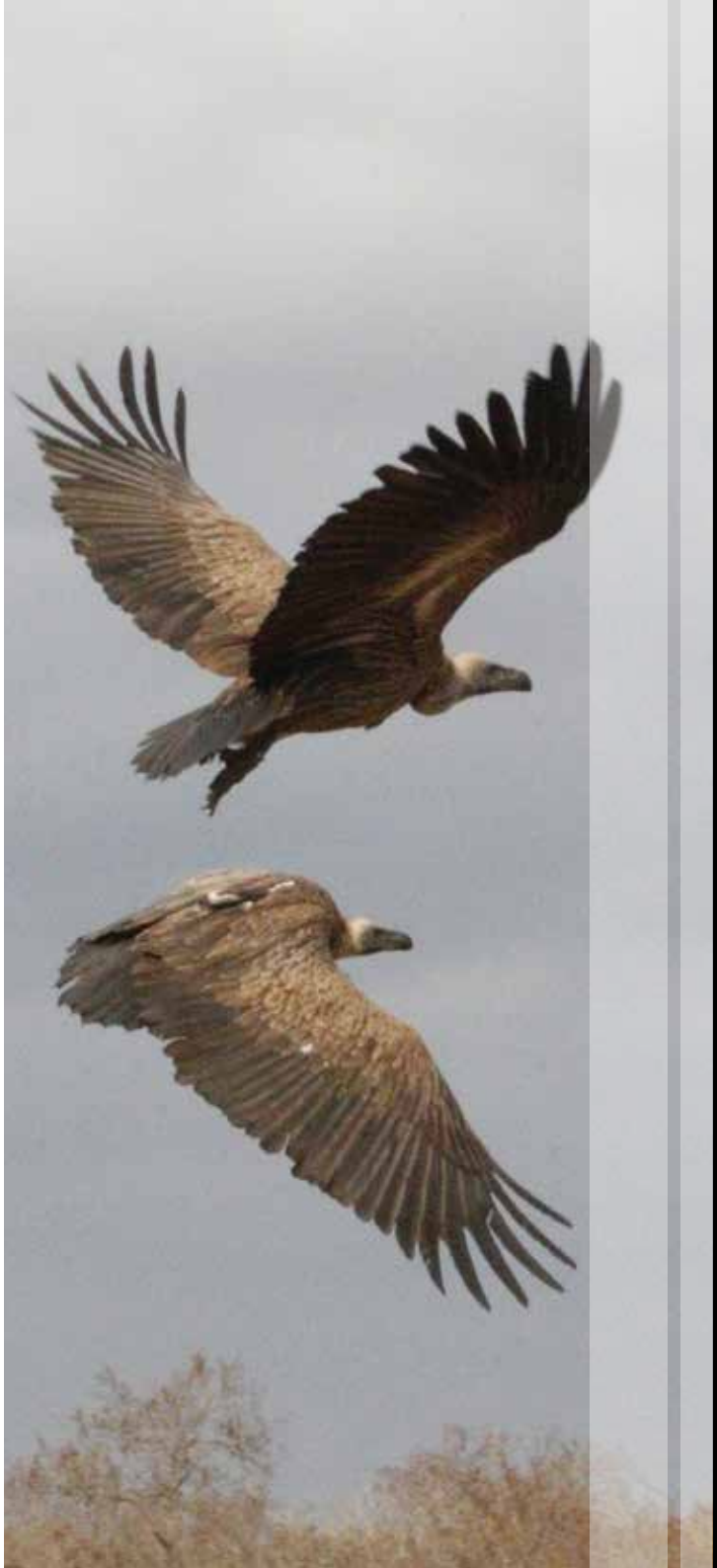
One remarkable case this quarter involved an African White-backed Vulture that was found incapacitated due to poisoning from a baited carcass. Upon arrival, it exhibited severe symptoms of distress. Our veterinary team promptly initiated treatment protocols, including intravenous fluids and anti-toxins. After two weeks of intensive care, the bird showed significant improvement and was able to regain strength. On 15 September, it was successfully released back into its natural habitat, equipped with a GPS tracking device to monitor its movements. This case underscores the critical need for prompt intervention and the effective rehabilitation practices employed by our team.

Comparison of Admissions (Quarterly)

Quarter	Total Admissions	Poisoning Cases	Collisions (Power Lines)	Other Causes
April - June 2024	32	3	4	7
July - September 2024	36	20	7	5

Note: Other causes include birds found grounded, collisions with vehicles, electric fences, and unknown causes.

This quarter has seen a notable increase in admissions, particularly due to a significant rise in poisoning cases. Of the 19 birds affected by the mass poisoning event in Marloth Park, 17 were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild, demonstrating the swift and expert care provided by our team. Overall, of the 36 admissions this quarter, 19 birds have already been released, while 7 are still undergoing rehabilitation. Unfortunately, some of the remaining admissions suffered severe injuries, including amputations and critical conditions that prevent their release into their natural habitat. However, these birds will become residents at VulPro and are likely to contribute to our captive breeding programme, with their offspring eventually being released into the wild to aid in the recovery of vulture populations.)



Rescue & Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation Highlights

Reviving Hope:
The Journey of Poisoned Vultures Back to the Skies

On the night of 18 July, VulPro responded to an urgent call following a mass poisoning incident at Lionspruit Nature Reserve in Marloth Park. Several African White-backed Vultures had ingested a poisoned carcass, and Deidre from Wild and Free was already on-site managing the emergency. Recognising the scale of the situation, VulPro swiftly deployed a response team, arriving by 2:30 am to assist.

On arrival, the VulPro team found Dr. Peet Venter and Deidre hard at work treating the poisoned vultures, suspected to have ingested Temik, a highly toxic substance. VulPro's team took over the treatment, setting up IV drips, administering medication, and monitoring the birds through the night, allowing the initial responders to rest after their exhausting efforts.

Local rangers continued to search the area throughout the day, recovering more poisoned vultures and transporting them for immediate care. Nineteen vultures in total were stabilised on-site. Once their condition was under control, the team arranged their transfer to the Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty in Pretoria, with two volunteers assisting with transportation that evening.

Despite still being on IV fluids, the vultures were carefully transported through the night, arriving at Onderstepoort just after midnight. A team of veterinarians and veterinary nurses was on standby to assess the birds upon arrival. After ensuring they were stable, the vultures were moved to a specialised ward equipped with infrared lighting to support their recovery.

Thanks to the combined efforts at Lionspruit and Onderstepoort, most of the vultures were fit enough to be transferred to VulPro's Hartbeespoort facility the next day. There, they continued their treatment and recovery.

Within days, the vultures began showing signs of full recovery, becoming active, alert, and ready to resume their role in the wild. They were closely monitored, and once they displayed clear signs of improvement, they were prepared for release.

This operation demonstrates the power of collaboration in conservation. The combined efforts of field responders, veterinarians, and volunteers ensured that these vultures were given the care they needed to return to the skies – continuing their vital role in supporting healthy ecosystems.

Release Highlights

Marloth Park
5 August 2024

The release of 17 vultures on 5 August 2024 marked a milestone in VulPro's ongoing efforts to protect these vital scavengers and restore their place in the ecosystem. Each bird had been fitted with a tracking device prior to release, enabling us to monitor their movements, track potential threats, and gather data essential to safeguarding their long-term survival. This technology not only allows us to intervene if needed but also helps inform future conservation strategies to protect these endangered species. With the first light of dawn spilling across the landscape, the VulPro team assembled to begin preparations for this momentous event. The process of catching each vulture and carefully placing it into its crate was carried out with meticulous care. These birds, each with a unique story of rescue and recovery, were given the highest level of care, reflecting the dedication of our staff and volunteers. Without the invaluable support of these volunteers, the task of loading the vultures into vehicles and preparing them for the journey to Marloth Park would have been impossible.

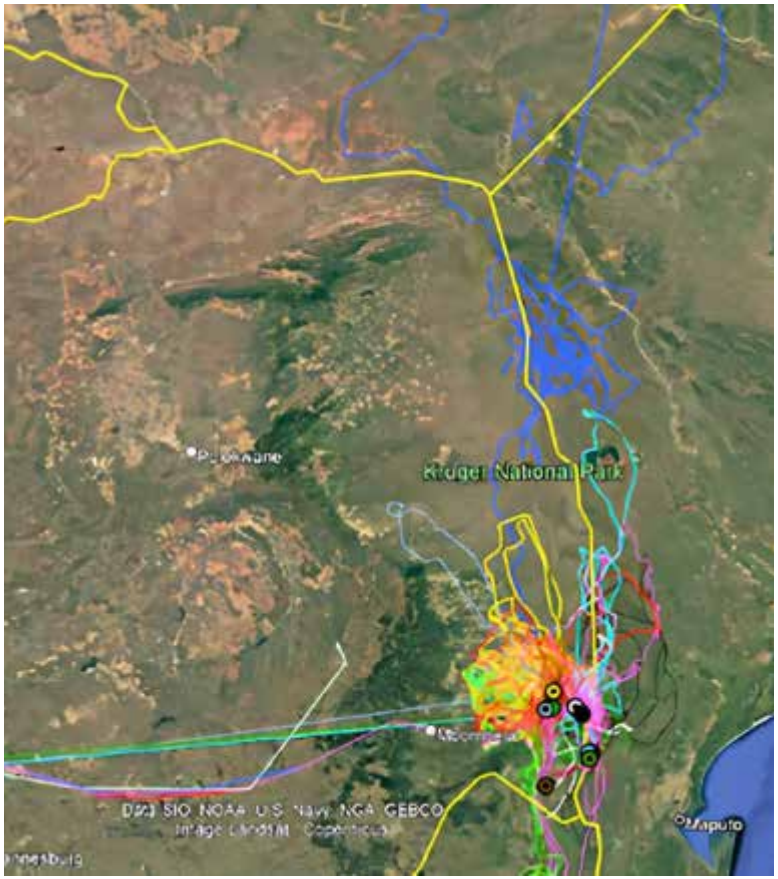
The drive to the release site was undertaken with the birds' welfare as the highest priority. The team made several well-timed stops along the way to ensure the vultures remained stable and stress-free. Upon arrival at Marloth Park, we were warmly welcomed by representatives from Wild and Free Wildlife Rehab, Dr. Peet Venter, and a team of rangers – each of whom had played a pivotal role in rescuing these birds. This shared moment of accomplishment highlighted the importance of collaboration across conservation efforts, reinforcing that every organisation and individual has a part to play in saving wildlife.

At the release site, the team noted increased activity from the vultures in their crates, signalling their readiness for release. When the crates were opened, the birds took flight, ascending above the treetops. They circled briefly to assess their surroundings before flying off to embrace their freedom. This release marks a significant milestone in our rehabilitation efforts, highlighting the successful recovery of these vultures after overcoming their injuries. Such moments emphasise the importance of our conservation initiatives and the positive impact of our work on wildlife recovery.

This release represents not just the culmination of weeks of hard work but a powerful symbol of hope for the future. Each vulture that returns to the wild contributes to restoring balance in our ecosystems, playing a vital role in maintaining the health of our environment. At VulPro, moments like these inspire our passion and commitment to protect these magnificent birds. They remind us of the importance of preserving a world where vultures can soar freely for generations to come and inspire a collective effort to safeguard their future.

Tracking Data:

The tracking data from the vultures around Marloth Park indicates that many remained in the area, likely due to the abundance of food and suitable nesting sites, suggesting a strong attachment to this location. While some vultures ventured north or south in search of new food sources or to minimise competition, the majority returned to Marloth Park, highlighting its significance as a vital habitat.



Release Highlights

Emergency Assistance for Injured Vultures and Large Birds of Prey

Gerhard Verdoorn: +27 82 446 8946
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Vulpro @ SHAMWARI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

1 Assessing the Situation:

- Check the bird's status (dead or alive).
- Count and observe: Note behaviour and location details.
- Take pictures and videos for documentation.

2 Recognising Symptoms:

- Note symptoms like wing drooping, fluffed feathers, or difficulty flying.
- Pay attention to any signs of distress.

3 Prompt Action:

- Contact VulPro immediately for assistance.
- Provide precise location details and GPS coordinates.
- Stay with the bird until help arrives.

4 Handling and Transportation:

- Approach the bird calmly and minimise noise.
- Consider weather conditions and provide suitable shelter.
- Consult VulPro for guidance on safe handling and transportation.

5 Emergency Response:

- Act swiftly to save birds lives.
- Your quick response could be the lifeline for vultures in need!

Vulpro's Permits and Registration:

- Fully authorised and registered as a vulture specialist conservation organisation and rehabilitation facility.
- Permits cover multiple provinces within South Africa and provide advice and consultation across Africa and beyond.
- Specialises in the rescue, treatment, and release of vultures and other large birds of prey.
- Only facility specialising in both in-situ and ex-situ vulture conservation strategies.
- Achieves a 75% survival rate post-release.
- Releases 64% of all cases coming into the facility.
- Incorporates individuals unable to be released into a captive breeding programme.
- Offspring from the breeding programme are released, preventing species extinction by replenishing wild populations.

Vulpro @ SHAMWARI
PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Captive Breeding

As of the end of September 2024, we had achieved significant milestones in our captive breeding conservation efforts:

- Fourteen Cape Vulture chicks with their parents at VulPro@Shamwari
- One Cape Vulture chick with its parents at VulPro in Hartbeespoort
- Two Cape Vulture chicks at our small satellite site in Bronkhorstspruit
- Three African White-backed Vulture chicks with their parents at VulPro@Shamwari
- One Cape Vulture egg of unknown fertility at VulPro@Shamwari

In total, 20 chicks have been produced so far, meeting our target for the 2024 breeding season. This achievement reflects a 31% increase from 2023, when we raised 16 chicks for release.

Breeding Insights and Challenges

While the 2024 breeding season represents significant progress, it has not been without its challenges. In previous years, we observed occasional bone abnormalities in some chicks around fledging age (approximately five months). Although bone chips were made available to ensure sufficient calcium intake, accurately monitoring their consumption has proven difficult.

To address this issue proactively, we have introduced a tri-weekly calcium injection protocol, commencing at just over 2 months of age for all chicks. This initiative aims to reduce the occurrence of skeletal abnormalities and promote healthier fledglings.

Performance Trends and Production Data

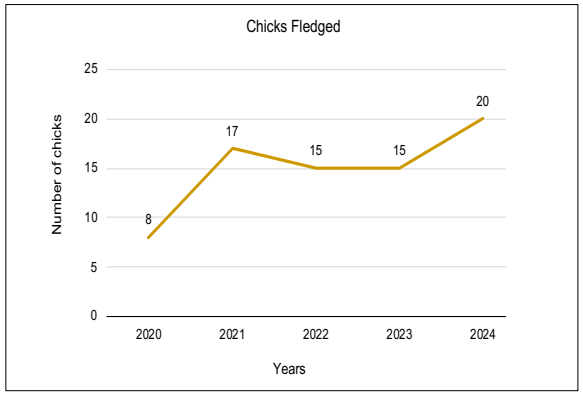
The following data provides insight into the growth and productivity of our breeding programme from 2011 to 2024.

Since its inception, egg production has steadily increased, reflecting both the expansion of breeding pairs and improved breeding conditions.

- The Cape Vulture captive population has been the most productive since 2018, consistently yielding over 30 eggs annually.
- Our African White-backed Vulture pairs have also shown strong growth, especially with the addition of new breeding pairs.

The line graph below illustrates the upward trend in fledged chicks from 2020 to 2024, with a record 20 chicks fledging in 2024. This achievement reinforces our growing ability to supplement wild populations and plays a vital role in vulture conservation efforts.

This steady growth underscores the success of our programme and affirms our capacity to contribute to sustainable populations in the wild.

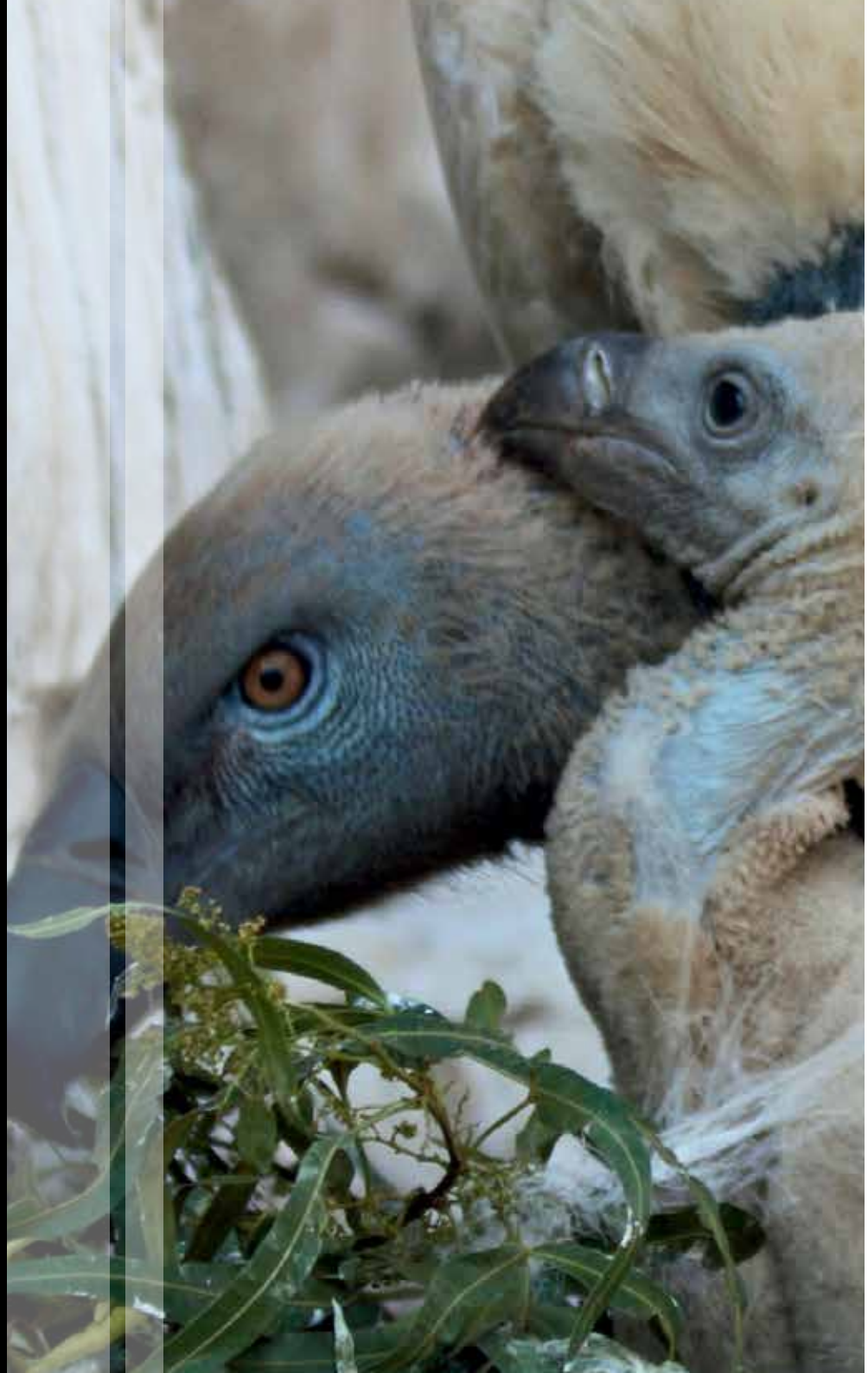


Conclusion

The achievements of 2024 not only highlight the dedication and expertise of VulPro's breeding teams but also offer measurable evidence of the programme's sustained progress. Through data-driven strategies and continuous refinements – such as calcium supplementation and enhanced breeding environments – we are improving breeding outcomes and reinforcing population recovery efforts. These advancements underscore our long-term commitment to safeguarding endangered vulture species and contribute meaningfully to global conservation objectives.

Vulpro @ SHAMWARI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Captive Breeding Tracking



To date, all captive-bred birds released at Shamwari Game Reserve have been fitted with GPS tracking devices to monitor their movements and behaviour. These tracking efforts are essential for gathering real-time data on distribution, survival, and potential threats, enabling VulPro to evaluate the success of its captive breeding programme.

Unfortunately, the trackers that we used this year, have proven somewhat unreliable, and only five devices are still actively transmitting data to VulPro's servers. Despite these challenges, these five individuals continue to provide critical insights into the development and movement patterns of young Cape Vultures. The devices transmit data daily, capturing multiple readings when the birds are within range of UHF radio transmitters. Each data point records longitude, latitude, date and time, temperature, speed, and altitude, allowing for detailed analysis.

Movement Patterns and Insights

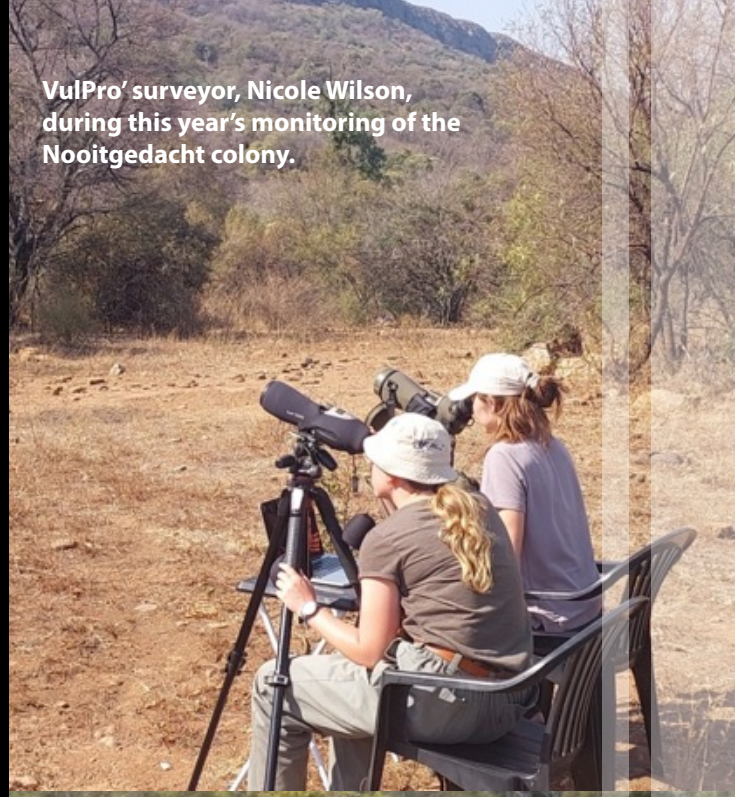
Since their release, each bird has followed a distinct path, yielding valuable insights into their exploratory behaviours:

- Purple White 78 has remained close to the release site, exhibiting cautious movements.
- Khaki Black 83, after an initial slow start, has travelled along the coast and is currently located near the southern border of Lesotho. Its movements overlap with those of Purple White 47, which has ventured northwards into the Maloti-Drakensberg range, an area recognised for vulture breeding and roosting.
- Purple White 18 has moved north into KwaZulu-Natal, pausing near Richards Bay.
- Purple White 70 undertook an ambitious journey immediately following its release, flying north towards Gauteng and the North West province, before subsequently venturing westwards into Botswana.

These movement behaviours align with the natural patterns observed in wild Cape Vultures, indicating that the released chicks are successfully integrating into their natural environment. The diverse trajectories reflect their ability to explore extensive areas and locate essential resources, underscoring the effectiveness of the release programme.

Research & Monitoring

Nesting Activity



VulPro' surveyor, Nicole Wilson, during this year's monitoring of the Nooitgedacht colony.

VulPro's surveyors Juliana Pinto and Jessica Young, monitoring Cape Vulture nesting activity at the Skeerpoort colony.

In alignment with our holistic conservation strategy, VulPro prioritises four essential areas: Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release; Captive Breeding; Education and Awareness; and Research and Monitoring. A fundamental objective of our research and monitoring initiatives is to enhance existing knowledge and deepen our understanding of vultures – an often-misunderstood species that plays a critical role in ecosystem health.

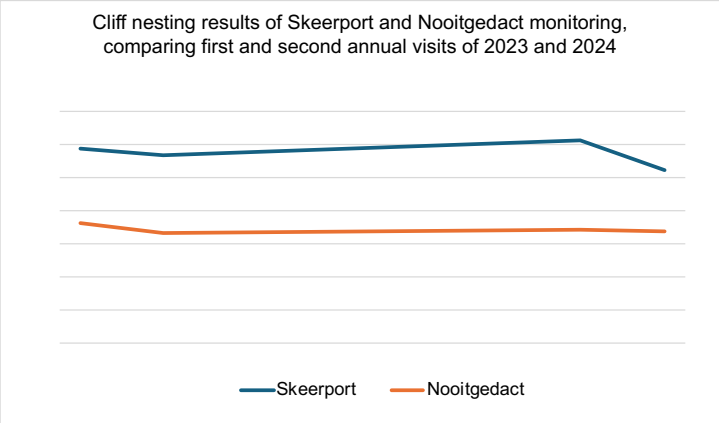
Monitoring – Nesting activity

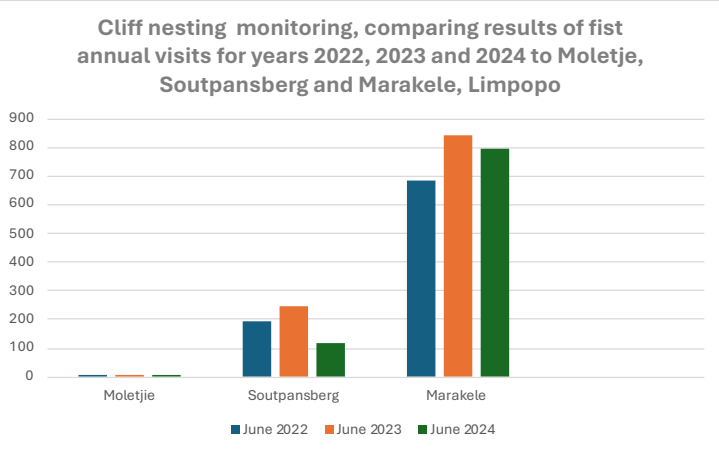
For over a decade, monitoring the reproductive rates of wild vultures across southern Africa has been a cornerstone of VulPro's efforts. Vultures face numerous external threats, including power line collisions and poisoning, which, combined with their naturally slow reproductive rates and delayed sexual maturity, render them particularly susceptible to fluctuations in breeding success. Even a minor decline in reproductive output can have severe implications for the viability of entire populations.

VulPro has dedicated more than ten years to monitoring both tree-nesting and cliff-nesting vultures, amassing extensive data to identify breeding hotspots, track reproductive trends, and discern threats to nesting success. This information is vital for informing and implementing effective conservation strategies.

Our monitoring protocol involves surveying all nesting sites a minimum of twice a year — once at the commencement of the breeding season and once at its conclusion. This systematic approach enables us to compare nesting activity, evaluate annual breeding success, and identify factors influencing population dynamics over time.

The 2024 monitoring season is currently in full swing. The initial visits to all sites have been successfully completed, and the second visits are now underway.





Cliff nesting

To date, we have completed the first round of visits to all four cliff-nesting sites under our observation. These sites include the Skeerpoort and Nooitgedacht colonies, situated within the Magaliesberg mountain range near our facilities in Hartbeespoort, as well as the Kransberg colony in Marakele National Park and the Moletjie and Soutpansberg colonies in Limpopo Province.

Our methodology for monitoring cliff-nesting vultures employs telescopes and detailed site maps developed during previous visits, where all active nests were identified and documented. By referencing these established nests, we can track their activity and monitor changes over time, thereby contributing to our understanding of breeding behaviours and success rates.

Out of our monitoring sites, only the Skeerpoort and Nooitgedacht colonies have so far undergone two visits this year. These cliffs are monitored three times annually, owing to their proximity to VulPro's facilities and ease of access. While the third visit is scheduled soon, a brief comparison between the first and second visits from 2023 and 2024 reveals a slight decrease in overall numbers. Specifically, Skeerpoort experienced a decline from 293 active nests in May 2023 to 262 this year, while Nooitgedacht decreased from 180 to 168 during the same period.

This reduction in active nests is concerning and underscores the necessity for ongoing monitoring and intervention. The factors contributing to this decline could be multifaceted, including environmental changes, food availability, and increased mortality from human-related activities such as poisoning and habitat destruction. By continuing our research efforts, we aim to identify the underlying causes of this decrease, enabling us to develop targeted conservation strategies that address these challenges effectively.

As we prepare for our upcoming third visit, we will conduct a thorough assessment of the nesting sites, documenting any changes in nest status and reproductive success. This comprehensive approach will not only enhance our understanding of the current population dynamics but also provide crucial insights into the overall health of these vulture colonies. Ultimately, this information will inform our broader conservation efforts, ensuring that we can take proactive measures to protect and support these vital species in their natural habitats.

Although the decline in active nests is slight and not yet a cause for major concern, it remains crucial to monitor these trends closely to determine whether the numbers continue to decrease over time. Should this downward trajectory persist, we will investigate the factors affecting reproductive success and explore potential new breeding sites in the event that the birds have relocated.

Research & Monitoring

Tree Nesting

Young African White-backed chick in its nest at tree nesting site in Mareetsane, Limpopo.

The remaining three monitoring sites – Moletjie, Soutpansberg, and Marakele – have also received their first visit for the year, with preparations for the second surveys currently underway. A preliminary review of this data indicates a similar trend of slight decline in breeding activity. Specifically, when comparing the first visit data from 2024 across these three Limpopo sites to figures from 2022 and 2023, we observe a decrease in both nesting sites and reproductive rates.

Several factors, frequently linked to human activities, are likely contributing to these declining trends. Habitat loss, power line collisions, electrocutions, poisoning, and the wildlife trade create less favourable conditions for nesting. Such challenges can significantly hinder the breeding efforts of vultures, sometimes prompting them to abandon nesting sites in search of more suitable breeding grounds. This displacement not only delays reproductive efforts but also complicates their ability to sustain populations.

Moreover, like many avian species, vultures typically form lifelong bonds with their partners. When one partner succumbs to these threats, the surviving bird must seek a new mate. Depending on the timing of this loss, the bird may miss an entire breeding season, which further detracts from reproductive success and overall population growth.

Tree nesting

In addition to our cliff-nesting surveys, VulPro has been actively monitoring tree-nesting activity across southern Africa for over a decade, establishing and refining globally recognised protocols for nesting behaviour.

Our efforts so far have primarily focused on three key sites: Mareetsane in the North-West Province, along with Dwaalboom and Roedtan in Limpopo Province.

To achieve both accuracy and efficiency in our monitoring, we employ a combination of walking, drone, and driving surveys. Walking surveys are particularly effective for minimising disturbance and eliminating biases related to road accessibility; however, they may not always be practical on large properties. Vast distances, bush encroachment, and the presence of dangerous wildlife can pose significant challenges. Therefore, we utilise a tailored mix of surveying methods designed to accommodate the specific layout and characteristics of each site, thereby maximising the precision and effectiveness of our data collection.

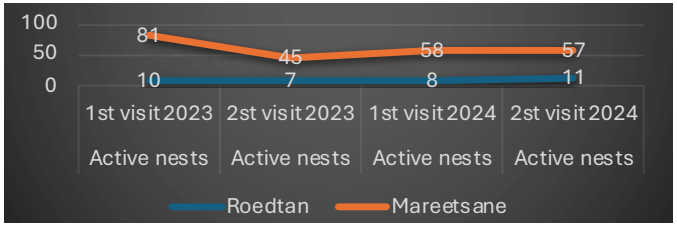
This comprehensive approach allows us to gather critical insights into tree-nesting behaviour and reproductive success. As we continue to refine our methodologies, we remain committed to enhancing our understanding of the factors influencing nesting success, thereby contributing to the conservation of vulture populations across the region.

All surveys adhere to a consistent methodology, which involves following a map of nests identified during previous visits to assess current activity at those sites. When vultures are observed at a nest, we meticulously record the parents' behaviour, noting activities such as incubating or nest building, as well as the nest's contents—whether it contains an egg in the early stages or a chick later in the season.

During each survey, we also prioritise the identification of new nesting sites, which are systematically documented in our database. This documentation includes essential details such as GPS coordinates and tree species, enabling us to enhance our understanding of nesting preferences and distribution patterns. By maintaining rigorous data collection standards, we contribute valuable insights to vulture conservation efforts and ensure the efficacy of our monitoring initiatives.

As our 2024 monitoring efforts progress, we have successfully completed the second visits for Roedtan and Mareetsane and are preparing for our upcoming trip to Dwaalboom. The monitoring results from the first two sites indicate a slight decrease compared to the first season of 2023; however, they align closely with the findings from our initial trip in 2024. Notably, at Roedtan, we observed a modest increase in overall numbers during our last visit, although the relatively small sample size may limit the conclusiveness of these findings.

In regard to Dwaalboom, a preliminary comparison between the first annual visits of 2023 and 2024 suggests a slight increase in overall nesting activity this year. This uptick is likely attributable to the expansion of our monitoring efforts to include new breeding sites. Our final annual visit will provide



Nesting results of first and second annual visits in 2023 and 2024 to African White-backed vultures breeding grounds in Mareetsane, NW, and Roedtan, LP.

VulPro's surveyor, Clarence Mabasa, operating the drone to aid monitoring efforts and check nest.

critical insights into the overall breeding success for 2024, enabling us to make more definitive assessments regarding the threats and pressures faced by the birds in the region.

In addition to expanding the number of farms and nests surveyed at each site, VulPro is broadening its efforts to include entirely new areas that have not previously been monitored. One area of particular interest is the region surrounding Marloth Park in Mpumalanga province, renowned for its extensive vulture nesting activity. This site is home to several elusive species, including Lappet-faced and Hooded vultures, about which there is limited knowledge. Our goal is to deepen our understanding of these species and their habitats by extending our monitoring efforts and attempting to trap individuals for GPS tracking. The data obtained from these devices will provide critical insights to inform the most effective conservation measures.

VulPro has been collaborating closely with local authorities and landowners to secure the necessary permissions for this research. We are excited about the potential discoveries that these partnerships may yield. Furthermore, we remain committed to sharing our findings as they emerge, thereby contributing to the ongoing conservation of vultures.

VulPro's surveyor Juliana Pinto taking GPS coordinates of newly found White-backed vulture nest in Mareetsane, Limpopo.

Research & Monitoring

Research & Monitoring

Fieldwork and Community Outreach

VulPro Operations Officer, Clarence Mabasa, and SANParks People and Conservation Officer, Sarah Letsoalo, at Marakele National Park.

Fieldwork and Community Outreach

The collaboration between VulPro and local landowners and communities is critical to establishing new monitoring sites and successfully overseeing existing ones. Local residents often serve as the first observers of emerging nests or the disappearance of established ones; their insights are invaluable for detecting changes in vulture populations and identifying potential variables that may explain these fluctuations.

VulPro strongly believes in the power of monitoring as a means of engaging with local communities that share their environments with these important species. Such collaborations not only provide a clearer picture of current trends affecting vulture populations, enabling timely interventions, but also foster a sense of stewardship among those closest to the vultures. This ensures their ongoing protection, even in our absence.

In alignment with this approach, VulPro is dedicated to nurturing existing relationships in the field while seeking to establish new connections to promote awareness. As part of our community outreach and education programmes, we are committed to sharing knowledge with neighbouring communities by engaging with schools and learning environments. We hope that by increasing understanding of vultures, we can inspire the necessary change to effectively address the many threats these birds face.

Monitoring – Tracking Data

A vital component of our overall monitoring efforts is facilitated by the use of GPS tracking devices. VulPro currently operates 79 devices actively transmitting data to our servers—an increase of 16 devices since our last update. We remain committed to expanding our GPS dataset, which is instrumental in our conservation strategies. These devices are fitted to a variety of species, including Cape, White-backed, Hooded, and White-headed vultures, as well as two Martial Eagles. Our tracking dataset comprises rehabilitated and released individuals, wild-captured birds, and captive-bred vultures, all of which provide critical information essential for the protection of vultures in southern Africa.

GPS Tracking – July to September 2024

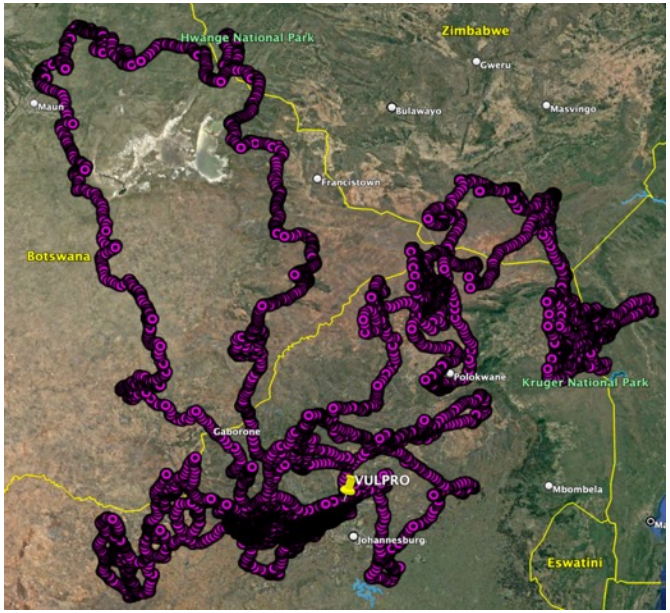
Red-Black 98

Red Black 98, a wild Cape Vulture from the nearby Skeerpoort colony in Hartbeespoort, was captured during a trapping expedition conducted on 15 October 2023, which involved the successful capture of 20 Cape Vulture fledglings, each fitted with GPS tracking devices. The operation took place on the cliffs themselves, where a team of five experts abseiled down to capture the fledglings in their nests. Each bird received a GPS tracking device, a Safring metal ring, and a VulPro coloured leg band before being promptly returned to its nest.

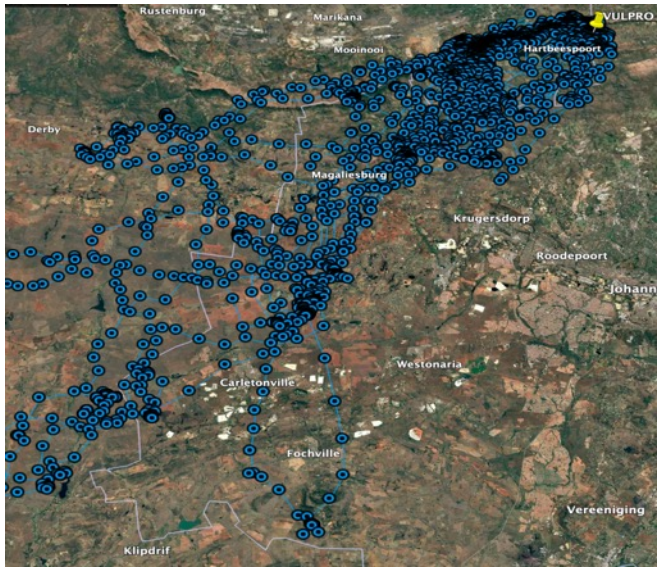
Red Black 98 is one of the few remaining birds from this group whose tracking device continues to transmit data today. Funded by the Max Planck Institute for Animal Behaviour, Tusk Trust, and the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, the study has generated nearly five years' worth of insightful tracking data on these rarely observed Cape Vulture fledglings. The data produced by Red Black 98 is particularly fascinating, as it highlights the stark differences between the juvenile and adult behaviours of this species.

During the early stages of their lives, Cape Vultures tend to explore much further afield before eventually settling down. For Red Black 98, this exploratory phase from January to June 2020 included travels to Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, before returning to the Skeerpoort colony. Since then, Red Black 98 has predominantly remained local, frequently visiting VulPro's vulture restaurant in Hartbeespoort.

The data collected from Red Black 98's GPS device, along with that from the other 19 fledglings fitted with trackers, underpins a recent collaboration between VulPro and Knowsley Zoo in the UK. This partnership aims to examine the survival rates and behaviours of wild Cape Vultures, providing a benchmark against which we can compare the behaviour of our captive-bred birds. The findings will be instrumental in evaluating the success of our breeding programme and enhancing our reintroduction efforts.



Red Black 98 GPS tracking between January and June 2020, still a fledgling eager to explore its surroundings.



GPS tracking between July and September 2024, clearly more set in its ways and reluctant to leave home.

Research & Monitoring

Tracking Data

Research & Monitoring

The Importance of Tracking Data

Tracking devices are integral to our holistic vulture conservation programme for several key reasons. Firstly, they enable us to monitor rehabilitated birds post-release, ensuring their health and adaptability to the wild, and facilitating timely interventions when necessary. Secondly, through meticulous analysis of our tracking data, we can identify hotspots and high-risk areas, which allows us to implement targeted, evidence-based mitigation strategies. Thirdly, this data provides valuable insights into the success of our captive breeding programme and population supplementation efforts, ensuring continuous improvement and effectiveness of our release strategies.

Moreover, tracking data plays a crucial role in our educational and community-based conservation initiatives. By highlighting the presence of vultures in the communities we engage with, we foster meaningful connections between people and wildlife. Finally, our tracking data serves as an essential component for various research projects, supporting a broad spectrum of studies related to vultures and other wildlife issues on a global scale.

Our Research Projects and Collaborations

Our extensive vulture datasets and expertise represent a vital resource for researchers addressing a wide range of questions beneficial not only to vultures but also to the broader ecosystem they inhabit.

One notable ongoing project is a collaborative effort between VulPro and the University of Calgary, Canada, focusing on the gut microbiome of several vulture species. Comprising bacteria, archaea, viruses, and fungi, the microbiomes of vultures are believed to play a critical role in protecting the birds from infections and helping them withstand various toxins. This study aims to investigate the roles of bacterial and fungal species known to degrade harmful environmental toxins, such as diclofenac and lead, thereby enhancing the natural resilience of vultures and mitigating the risks these substances pose to critically endangered populations.

Another significant initiative is a partnership between VulPro and various South African conservation organisations and institutions, aimed at deploying GPS tracking devices on several vulture species that remain poorly understood. This project, part of VulPro's broader efforts to extend monitoring into the Mpumalanga province, specifically targets Lappet-faced and Hooded vultures. Currently in the planning phase, this project has secured funding to cover the costs of tracking devices, ongoing operational fees, and logistical fieldwork expenses, including accommodation and fuel. Efforts are underway to liaise with local authorities and landowners to gain access to critical areas, enabling the collection of valuable data on the movements and behaviour of these species. The insights gathered will be pivotal in enhancing our understanding and shaping future conservation strategies.

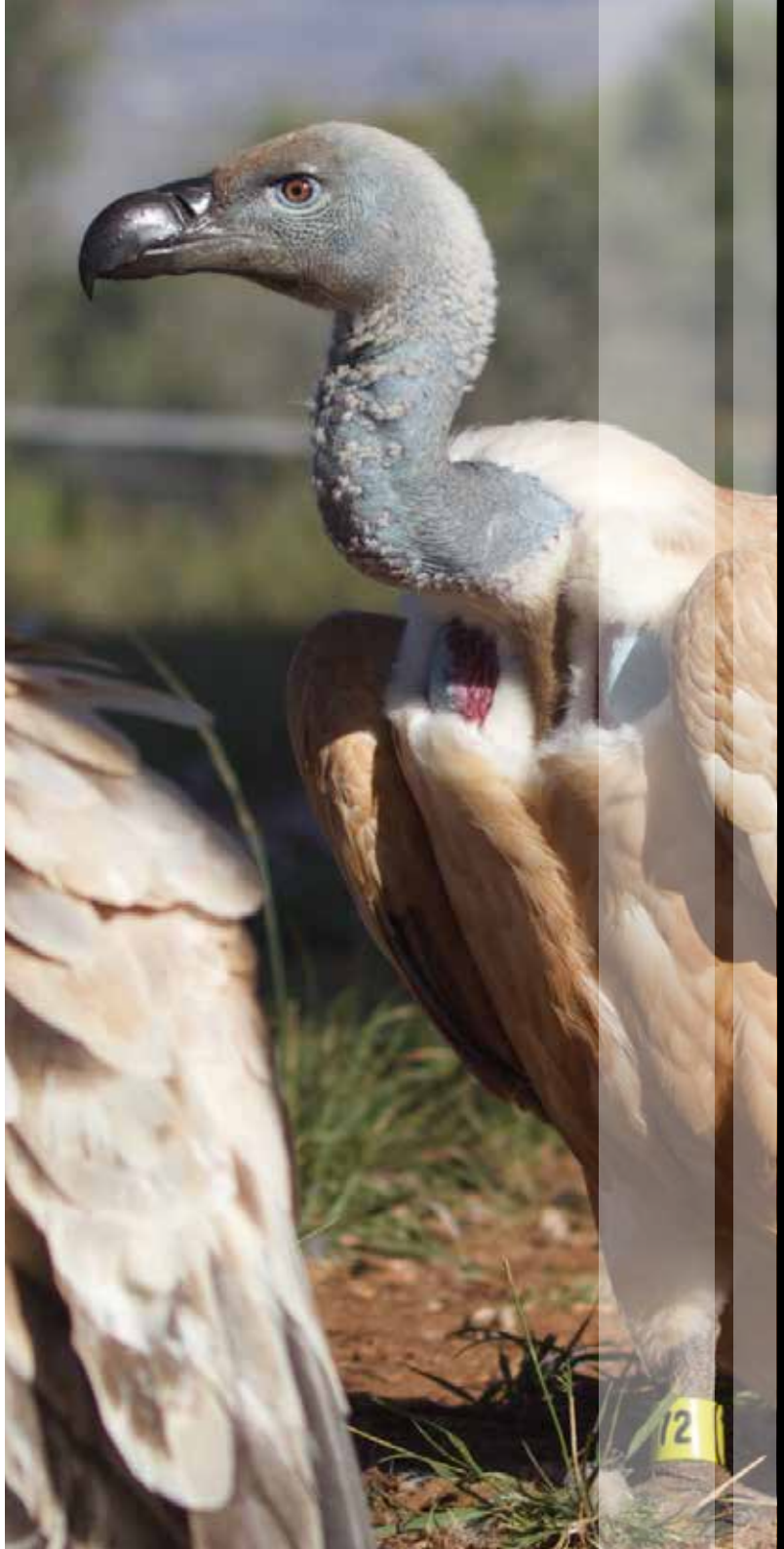
Submissions and Publications

Our research initiatives consistently yield significant scientific literature that underpins the ongoing conservation of vultures and other wildlife species. One of our collaborative papers, which investigated the effects of lead on avian thermoregulation in heat, using pied crows as the study species, was published in September in the Journal of Environmental Toxicology and Pharmacology. This followed its initial submission in March and subsequent minor revisions by the lead researchers.

Additionally, a collaborative manuscript exploring the influence of land cover and powerline density on the movement patterns of endangered Cape Vultures has been finalised and submitted for peer review to the Journal of Raptor Research at the beginning of July. We anticipate feedback once the peer review process has concluded.

Another recent publication, titled "Validation of the Lead Care II System in Cape Vultures (Gyps coprotheres) in Comparison to ICP-MS Using Pure Standards," investigates the effectiveness of rapid diagnostic tools for assessing vulture exposure to lead poisoning. This study, published in the Journal of Environmental Toxicology and Pharmacology, provides crucial insights into diagnosing one of the most pressing threats facing vultures in Southern Africa.

As we engage in numerous projects and initiatives, VulPro remains steadfast in its mission to protect African vultures through collaboration and innovation. We are committed to fostering new and ongoing partnerships with institutions and research units worldwide, aiming to advance our understanding of the threats facing vultures and to implement evidence-based conservation measures to safeguard their future. We welcome new collaborations and have a range of exciting projects ready for interested individuals. If you are a student or researcher with an interest in our work, we encourage you to reach out to us.



Research & Monitoring

Fieldwork and Community Outreach

"I grew up going to VulPro and vultures have always had a special place in my heart."

Sarah Biesman-Simons

My introduction

I am a fifth year veterinary student at the University of Pretoria. My love for wildlife dates back further than I can remember and has developed into a deep passion for conservation. I grew up going to VulPro and vultures have always had a special place in my heart. I admire the work Kerri does in breeding these magnificent birds, and I look forward to developing an updated breeding protocol that can be used by a variety of sanctuaries to aid in repopulation efforts.

Research introduction

The Cape Vulture (Gyps coprotheres) has a current population of 9600-12 800, and numbers of mature individuals are continuing to decline. There are several risks that are threatening Cape Vulture populations, including electrocution, toxicosis, and loss of habitat for foraging. Vultures play an important role in the environment through the removal of decaying matter. This decreases the spread of disease drastically, and prevents the buildup of waste.

Cape Vultures are endangered, and every effort should be taken to conserve the species. One such initiative is to breed the birds in captivity and release the adults into their natural habitats to increase population numbers. A formal captive breeding protocol is necessary to allow more organisations the opportunity to attempt their own breeding programme with the highest possible success rate. Our project aims to develop one such protocol that can be used by various stakeholders in ensuring the highest success and survival rate when rearing Cape Vultures. This will include a step-by-step method as well as common problems encountered when rearing Cape Vultures and how to avoid them.

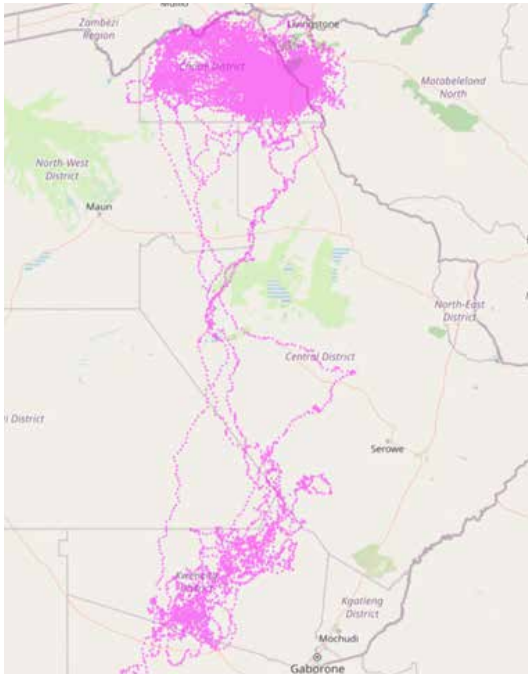
Project update:

Assessing the effects of thermal factors on the spatial ecology of a Critically Endangered African vulture.

By: Caroline Grace Hannweg

Since June 2024 we have been working tirelessly on finalising the chapter on the effects of temperature and precipitation on breeding success and working on the next step of the project, which is working on the chapters focussed on the effects on home range, foraging and roosting. As we finalise the breeding chapter and complete the analysis, we look forward to having a completed manuscript ready for publication in the next few months. This work will help us put together the pieces and understand how temperature and rainfall may be affecting the breeding success of African White-backed Vultures in southern Africa, giving us important information as to what we can expect for the future of African White-backed Vultures in southern Africa as climates continue to chage.

As we move into the next steps of the project, we are focussed on how temperature and precipitation may be affecting home range sizes of African White-backed Vultures in southern Africa. Through funding for this project we were able to attach 21 GPS tracking devices to African White-backed Vultures, starting in 2022, and in the next few months a number of them will be reaching two years of data. This means we now have data from these birds for two full seasons, and this will allow us to have recent and up to date data to add to the datasets of these chapters. This will be added to other data from devices fitted by VulPro over the years, as well as data from other organisations with tags on individuals. This will give us data from over 100 individuals ranging from as early as 2016, giving us a fantastic opportunity to look at data from multiple seasons on multiple individuals, and therefore obtain accurate results in our analysis. We are excited to venture into this section of the project and understand further the impacts of climatic variables on African White-backed Vultures.

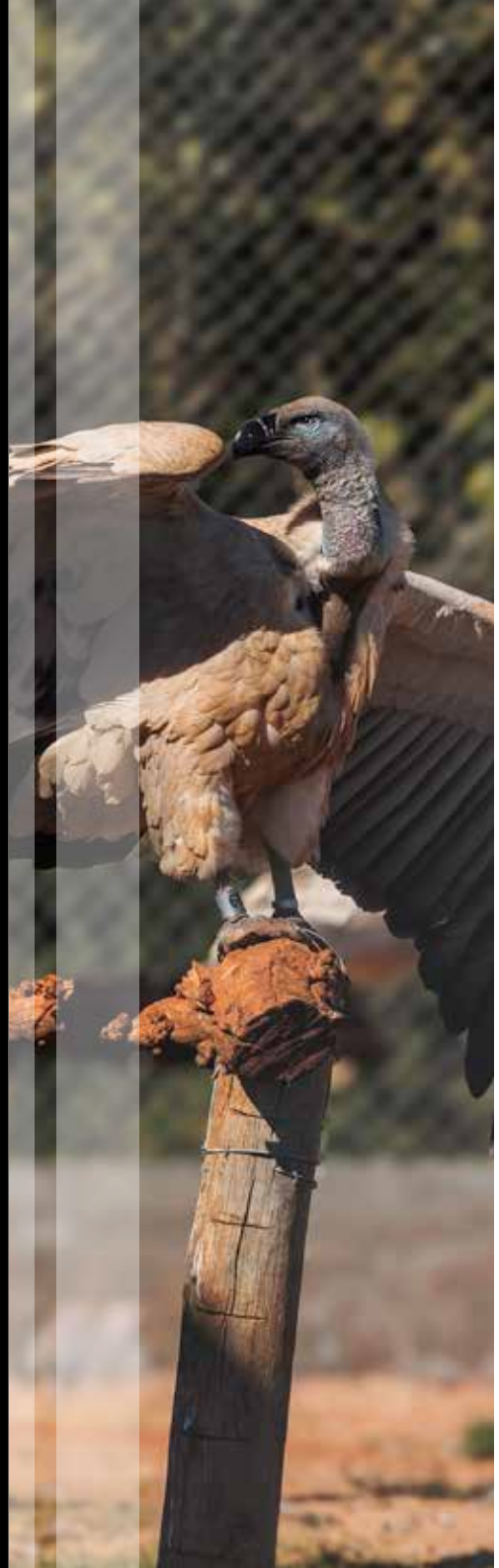


Some of the tracked movements of Green White 87, and individual tagged in November 2022. Green White 87 is an example of the huge distances that these birds can travel, sometimes covering hundreds of kilometres in just a few days.

Our thanks as always go to our collaborators and partners who have made this project possible up until this point, including Dronfield Nature Reserve, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Leibniz Institute, National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe, Max Planck Institute, North Carolina Zoo, Raptors Botswana, University of Eswatini, University of Pretoria, Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, and Wildlife ACT. We are extremely grateful for the part you have played in making this project successful.

An individual from our 2022 capture is released back into the wild after being fitted with a device.

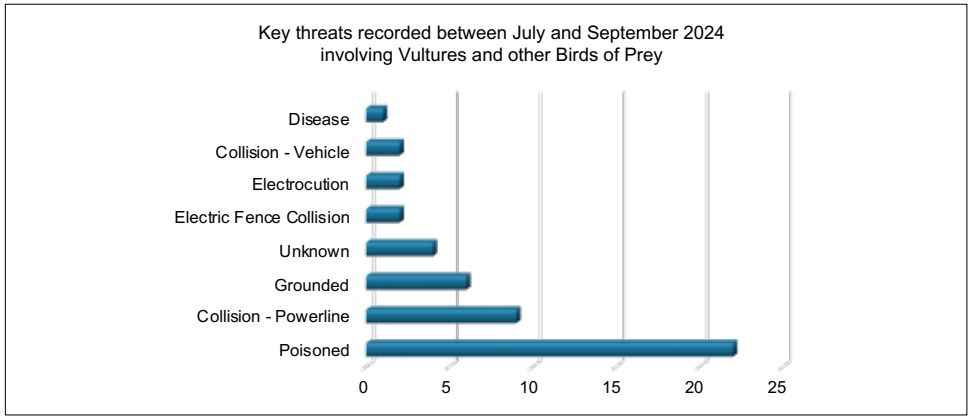
Threats



Threats to Vultures

Globally, vultures are increasingly threatened by human activities, which are escalating in both frequency and severity. In southern Africa, vultures are particularly susceptible to various dangers, including poisoning, collisions with power lines, electrocution, illegal wildlife trafficking, and a diminishing food supply. These issues are compounded by broader environmental challenges such as climate change and habitat degradation.

From July to September of this year, VulPro recorded 37 vulture-related incidents, each resulting in the admission of birds to our care for various reasons, including vehicle collisions and disease. Notably, the three most significant causes of admission during this period were grounding events, powerline collisions, and poisonings.



Groundings

Grounding events represent a persistent and troubling cause of vulture admissions at VulPro. While vultures typically spend time on the ground for activities such as feeding and bathing, their considerable size and weight make take-off challenging, particularly when they are unwell or injured. A grounded vulture, especially one unable to fly, usually indicates a serious underlying issue.

Numerous factors can lead to a vulture becoming grounded, ranging from physical injuries, such as those sustained in collisions, to more insidious threats like poisoning. One of the complexities in treating grounded birds is that the underlying causes are not always immediately apparent. What may initially seem like a simple inability to fly could mask more serious health concerns.

Upon admission, each grounded bird undergoes a thorough examination, often necessitating advanced diagnostics like X-rays to detect fractures or hidden injuries, and blood tests to identify lead poisoning or other toxins. Once the cause of grounding is determined, appropriate treatment can be administered, whether it involves rehydration, detoxification, or surgical intervention for injuries. Each case demands careful assessment to ensure the bird receives the most effective care for its condition.

Power Line Collisions

Power line collisions have emerged as the second most significant threat to vultures this trimester, largely attributable to the expansion of the renewable energy sector and its associated infrastructure in southern Africa. Vultures, known for their extensive flight ranges, are increasingly affected by habitat loss resulting from ongoing development. Consequently, there has been a notable rise in collisions with wind turbines and power lines, as well as related electrocutions.

When vultures collide with these structures, they often sustain severe injuries, including broken wings or internal trauma, which can prove fatal if left untreated. Electrocution occurs when a bird makes contact with two live wires or a live wire and a grounded structure, permitting electricity to pass through its body. Given their expansive wingspans, vultures are particularly vulnerable to these incidents. Electrocution typically results in immediate death or fatal injuries; however, in rare cases of survival, intensive treatment is necessary. This treatment includes stabilisation with fluids and pain relief, cleaning and treating burns to prevent infection, and addressing any fractures or internal injuries. Long-term rehabilitation, involving physiotherapy and supportive care, may be required before the bird is fit for release.

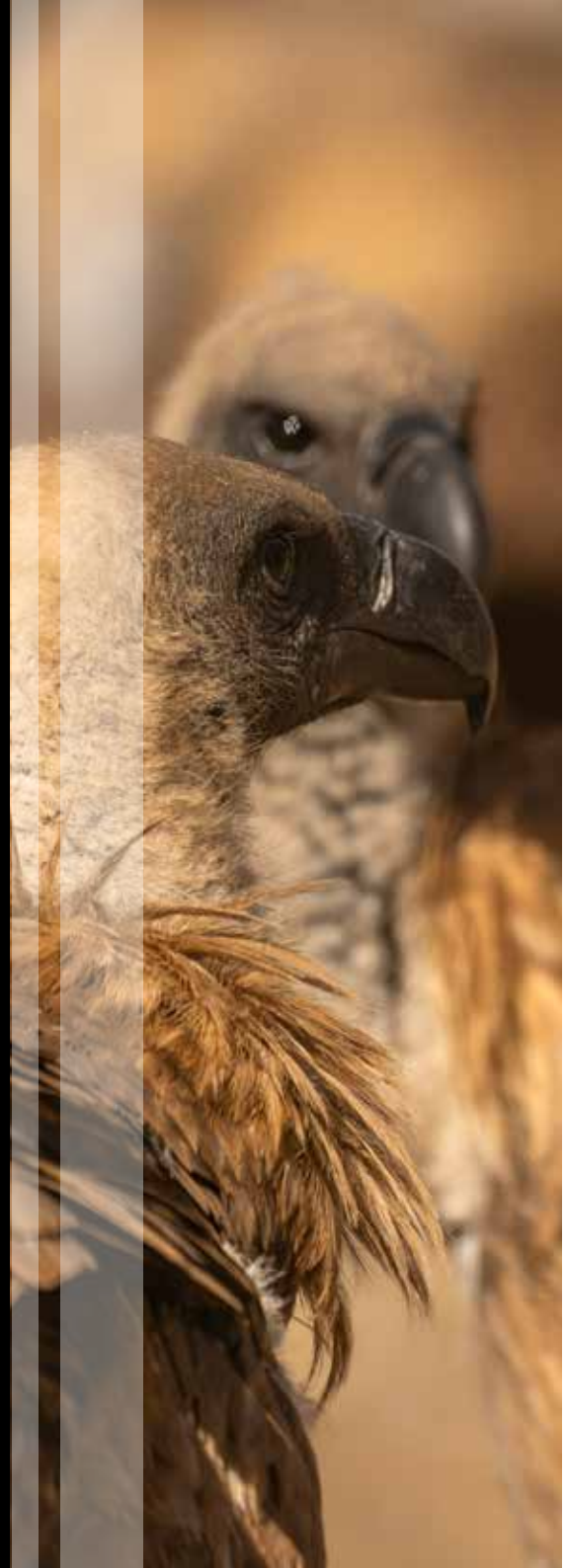
For vultures admitted due to collisions that do not involve electrocution, treatment typically focuses on external injuries such as broken limbs and concussions. VulPro's expanding veterinary clinic is equipped to manage much of this care in-house, thereby minimising the stress associated with transporting already weakened birds. For more severe injuries, we collaborate with the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science, where skilled veterinarians provide advanced treatment and recovery guidance. Unfortunately, vultures suffering from irreparable limb damage may require amputation. Once recovered from surgery, these individuals are integrated into VulPro's captive breeding programme, contributing to population supplementation by producing healthy offspring.

To mitigate the risks associated with existing infrastructure, VulPro works closely with Eskom and relevant authorities to reduce the dangers posed by power lines. Each energy-related incident is reported to the appropriate bodies, who are responsible for assessing the site and deploying teams to ensure that the infrastructure complies with environmental regulations and is made safer for vultures. In 2024 alone, VulPro reported 37 power line-related incidents to Eskom, involving 27 Cape Vultures, 8 White-backed Vultures, and 1 Lappet-faced Vulture, in addition to a Grey Crowned Crane. Of these cases, only 9 have been addressed, leaving 28 pending action from Eskom.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Cape Vultures	3	17	49	62	57	99	60	50	68	59	34	56	27
African White-backed Vultures	0	0	15	7	4	5	1	12	16	6	8	7	8
Lappet-faced Vultures	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
Unknown vulture carcasses	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Other species	4	7	14	15	34	14	1	13	28	18	49	2	1
Total	7	25	79	85	96	122	62	77	113	83	93	66	37

Table 1: Number of Species affected by power line incidents between 2012 and 2024 so far

Threats

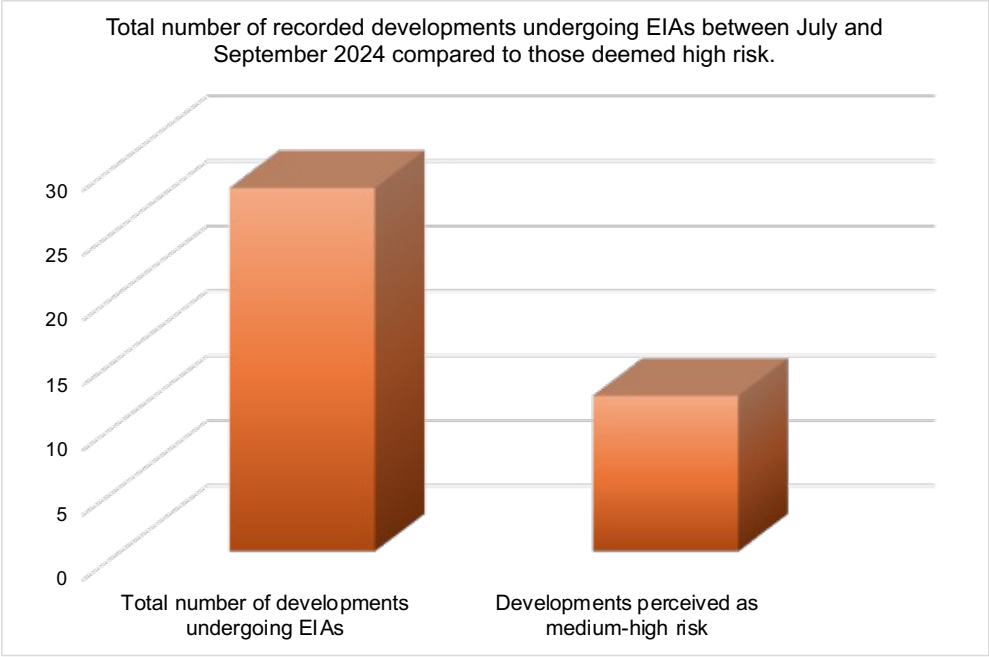


In addition to addressing existing challenges, VulPro plays a crucial role in shaping policy decisions and advocating for regulations that govern the construction of new power lines and wind farms. As a member of the drafting committee for the Biodiversity Action Plan for African Vultures, VulPro seeks to direct developments away from vulture hotspots while collaborating with the scientific community to promote effective mitigation strategies for infrastructure. These strategies may include installing wire markings to enhance the visibility of overhead lines, utilising underground cables, and implementing insulating techniques to prevent electrocution. Furthermore, we encourage the exploration of innovative solutions to address these issues.

Under South African regulations, all development initiatives must undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). During this process, environmental consultants evaluate potential risks to wildlife and the surrounding environment. This allows Interested and Affected Parties (I&AP) to express their concerns regarding the final reports. As a registered I&AP for many of these developments, VulPro is positioned to play a pivotal role in addressing the various infrastructure challenges that place unsustainable pressures on vulnerable vulture populations.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

In response to South Africa's escalating and often unmet demand for electricity, the country is witnessing a surge in the establishment of wind and solar energy farms. While VulPro acknowledges the importance of renewable energy sources and their potential benefits, we



are increasingly alarmed by the rapid pace of these developments and their detrimental effects on vultures and other wildlife. Within the timeframe covered by this newsletter, VulPro has identified 28 ongoing developments undergoing the EIA process across eight of South Africa's nine provinces. Among these, 12 have been classified as medium- to high-risk projects, prompting VulPro to submit comments to the environmental consultants overseeing these cases. Our objective is to articulate our concerns regarding the potential impacts of these developments on local wildlife, particularly vultures, and to advocate for the implementation of mitigation strategies or, in severe cases, complete relocations.

Two noteworthy projects warrant particular attention: the solar development of Crossroads Green Energy Phase 1: Southern & Eastern Electrical Grid Connections in the Northern Cape, and the Mokolo Solar 1-6 Photovoltaic Energy Facility near Lephalale, Limpopo.

The Crossroads project encompasses a 3-hectare area with 132 kV power lines extending up to 44 km in length and reaching heights of 60 meters in an area known for its high vulture activity. VulPro's tracking data has indicated that over the past year, more than 20 vultures have flown within a 30 km radius of the proposed project area, with five roosting clusters identified within a 15 km radius of the grid. Although no vulture restaurants were detected within a 50 km radius of the project, other attractions, such as nearby water sources and animal kraals, are expected to draw vultures to the area. In response to these findings, VulPro, along with its EIA advisor Meagan Bromfield, submitted a report expressing concerns regarding the project's location relative to known vulture flyways. The report proposed several mitigation strategies, including the relocation of nearby water sources that attract vultures and the regular maintenance of energy infrastructure to prevent potential hazards.

The second concerning development involves six neighbouring sites and features a 100-meter-wide, up to 8-km-long grid corridor for overhead power lines. This proposed development lies within 50 km of six vulture restaurants: Whitehaven (32 km away), Farm Wynberg and Cambridge Hunting Safaris (36 km), Richmond-Stockport (38 km), Kubu Safaris (44 km), and Ouhoek Safaris (48 km). Additionally, the proposed development is situated just 85 km from Marakele colony, one of the most significant breeding grounds for endemic Cape vultures. VulPro again submitted comments to the environmental consultants overseeing the project, hoping our concerns will be addressed in the final Environmental Impact Assessment.

As the demand for renewable energy continues to grow, it is essential to balance the need for electricity with the conservation of vulnerable wildlife. VulPro remains committed to actively participating in the EIA processes, advocating for comprehensive assessments that thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts of these developments on vulture populations and their habitats. Through effective planning, the enforcement of environmental regulations, and the implementation of evidence-based mitigation strategies, we can help minimise the adverse effects of infrastructure projects while still meeting the country's energy needs.

Threats

Threats

Poisoning

Poisoning remains one of the most alarming threats to vultures, significantly affecting their populations. Vultures are often deliberately targeted by poachers who poison carcasses to prevent detection of illegal activities. Secondary poisoning is also a growing concern, primarily due to lead ammunition and poisoned baits used in predator control.

Symptoms of poisoning include lethargy, weakness, and elevated heart rates. Treatment varies based on the poison involved, and early intervention is critical. Preventive measures focus on raising awareness among hunters and advocating for non-toxic alternatives.

VulPro collaborates with Hunting Associations to spread awareness and educate communities about the dangers of illegal predator control methods and the risks posed to vultures. By working together, VulPro aims to significantly reduce poisoning incidents and create a safer environment for these vital scavengers.

Conclusion

Vultures face a multitude of threats that necessitate urgent action. VulPro's ongoing efforts in rehabilitation, advocacy, and community education are crucial in mitigating these dangers and ensuring the survival of these essential species in southern Africa.

Powerlines

A Deadly Threat to Vultures and Wildlife

Powerlines pose a serious danger to vultures and other large birds, as well as livestock and wildlife. Collisions and electrocutions can lead to severe injuries or fatalities, threatening the survival of these vital species and disrupting ecosystems.

We need your help!

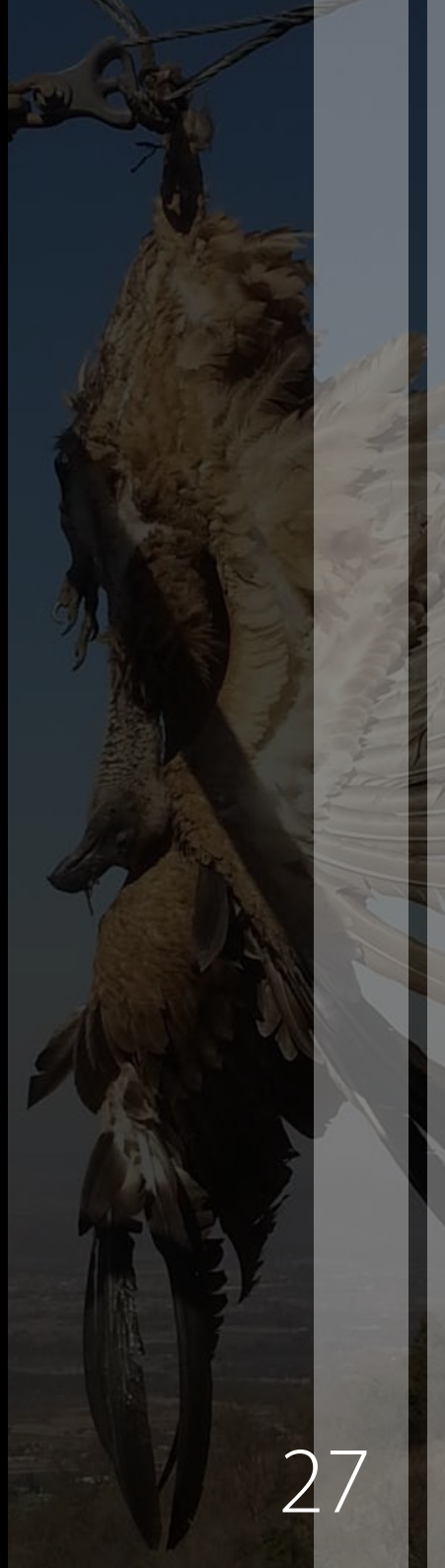
If you encounter any injured or dead birds of prey or wildlife affected by powerlines, please report it to VulPro.

082 808 5113 | kerri@vulpro.com

Together, we can protect our wildlife and preserve vulture populations. By doing so, you can help activate the Eskom Incident Management Process and prevent further harm.

https://www.vulpro.com/

Vulpro



Vulpro @ SHAMWARI
PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Eastern Cape Report

July – September 2024

Written by: Kate Webster
Eastern Cape VulPro Associate

The second half of this year has been relatively quiet with regards to vulture activity with only three power line cases. One in July, where a lovely adult Cape Vulture was found walking around in a camp below transmission lines in the Bolo area near Stutterheim, unable to fly. I collected the adult Cape Vulture which had sufferered permanent injuries due to the nature of the collision. I therefore decided it was best was to take it to Shamwari as soon as possible.

In early September I received a call from a farm manager in the southern Free State outside Rouxville, informing me of an injured Cape Vulture and two other electrocuted birds. I collected this poor bird which had a badly burnt right wing. This bird was in need of an urgent wing amputation so we did a relay transfer to Shamwari. Dr Joubert, under the watchful eye of Kerri, then operated on the bird on IVADay. This bird showed amazing resilience and bounced back almost immediately once the pain had subsided. We will still decide if this bird must come back to Rookwood as it is not a full adult yet.

The third and last electrocution is a rather sad one, when I received photographs of Grey Black 30 with a tracking device. This bird was found dead under powerlines on a farm in the Tarkastad area. This bird was one of the FIRST captive bred released birds in the Eastern Cape from VulPro. The details below:

- Born at VulPro Hartbeespoort.
- Transported to Rookwood on 23/09/2020 via DHL.
- Released together with Grey Black 26 and 39 (also captive bred fledglings) on 20/12/2020.
- The device stopped working on 14/07/2022.
- Found electrocuted/died on 17/09/2024.

Sadly, this happened just one year shy of GB 30 possibly becoming a breeding bird. Although, looking at it positively, this captive bred vulture has proven they do integrate with the wild populations.

All incidents have been reported to Eskom for mitigation to take place.

In the middle of July, I released two birds that had come in for rehabilitation. The one was an adult bird caught on the farm of Mr Kevin Miles in the Dordrecht area and was just unable to fly. The second bird, a young first year bird, had been found weak and dehydrated at the known vulture restaurant outside Elliot (Khowa) of Mr Murray Andrews. Both birds took to the skies quite comfortably with the adult bird hanging around at Rookwood for two days before leaving for the greener (or should I say snow ?!) pastures of KZN. Both birds were fitted with tracking devices.

I have been fortunate to be able to visit Shamwari at least twice during this period. On my second visit I was privileged to see the two Egyptian Vultures (although it was a very wet and rainy day) that had been flown in approximately two weeks earlier. I know that this is a huge milestone in conservation history and wish Kerri and the team all the best with the captive breeding program.

A highlight of this quarter was probably the arrival of one of the captive bred fledglings at Rookwood namely P/W78. This bird had been released earlier this year at Shamwari. What were the odds that it would find it's way up to Rookwood, it is just is mindboggling. Unfortunately, the tracking device is not functioning and I was unable to re-boot it due to no signal, while it spent a couple of days on the Rookwood holding enclosure. We can only trust as it moved on it is flying safely with all the other wild birds.

On IVAD day, I was able to present an overview of what has happened with the vultures in the Eastern Cape and the work that has been done over the past year at the AGM of the Stormberg Branch of the SA Hunters. It is always good to spread the word and expose people to the world of vultures and their importance.

Lastly although it might have been a relatively quiet period, I have been involved with the ongoing support and input in the wind (energy) farm developments and policies around this industry. Reports received have not been very positive, with 20 recorded Cape Vulture deaths on the Nojoli Wind Farm in the Cookhouse area, in the past five years. Note that this is only ONE of FIVE wind farms in that area and not all WFs release their statistics! Something we need DFFE to insist upon. Fortunately, VulPro has huge amounts of data which can be used (correctly) to assist in this industry.

Once again, I must thank my daughter Joy, staff and then Kerri and her team at Shamwari for their ongoing assistance and guidance. I cannot do this on my own and am grateful to have a team behind me.

Vulpro @ SHAMWARI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Eastern Cape Report

July – September 2024

Education

"Education is the foundation of conservation; by inspiring understanding, we empower action to protect our planet's precious resources."

Educational Tours Summary
VulPro, Hartbeespoort (July to September 2024):

- Total guests: 89 (87 adults and 2 children).

VulPro@Shamwari (Year-to-Date, January – September 2024):

- Total guests: 2 690

Presentations Given: July to September 2024

- Total Guests: 520 (combined attendance from Hartbeespoort and VulPro@Shamwari) 87 adults, 483 children.

External Presentations:

- Onyx (Palm Nut Vulture on loan at Monte Casino) has reached 10 104 individuals.
- Cango Wildlife Ranch has reached 37 695 individuals.
- VulPro has established stalls and conducted external talks at markets, engaging approximately 128 individuals over the past three months. We are exploring opportunities to attend more markets and venues.

During the period from July to September 2024, VulPro actively engaged in educational initiatives, hosting tours at VulPro Hartebeestpoort and VulPro@Shamwari with a total of 89 guests in attendance. Furthermore, VulPro delivered presentations to 520 individuals, comprising 87 adults and 483 children. Our external presentations were significantly enhanced by Onyx, a Palm Nut Vulture on loan at Monte Casino Bird Gardens, which reached 10 104 people. At the Cango Wildlife Ranch, VulPro's outreach successfully engaged an impressive 37 695 individuals, expanding awareness of vulture conservation. Additionally, VulPro connected with approximately 128 individuals through stalls and external talks at markets, and we are planning to increase our participation in more markets and venues to further extend our outreach.

VulPro's educational initiatives this year have made substantial progress, supported by PACE and the South African Wildlife College. Our mission to educate communities, schools, landowners, and stakeholders about the essential role vultures play in ecosystems has proven impactful. Notably, we have observed a decrease in admissions from key hotspots, which we can attribute to our ongoing educational efforts. Through active engagement with farmers and landowners, we are fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for vultures, dispelling misconceptions and encouraging stewardship. This collaborative approach is essential in protecting these vital species and their habitats.

Blouberg Education

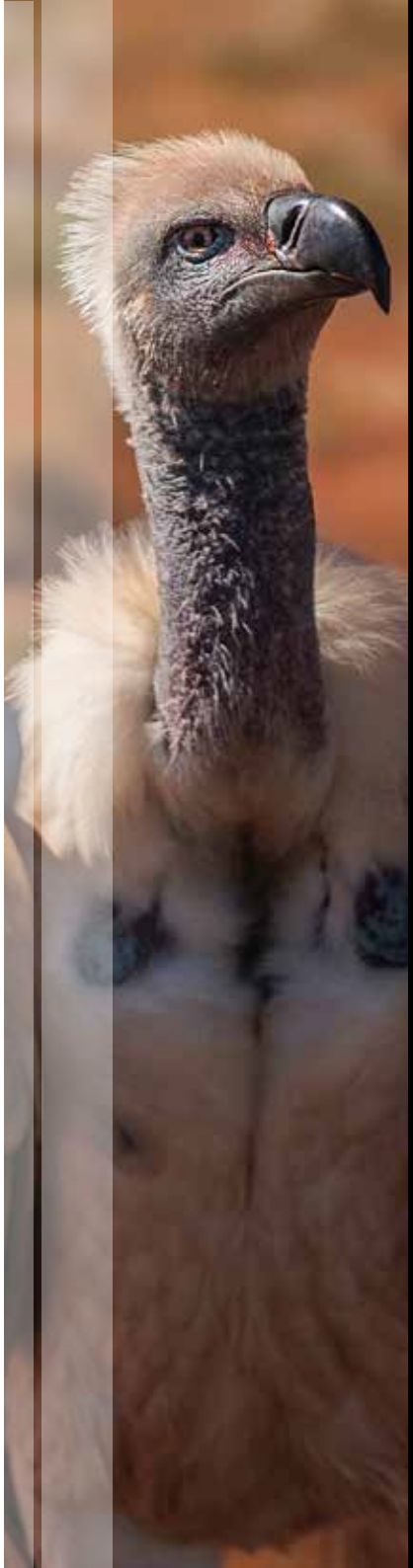
On 10 July 2024, our education team, in collaboration with the South African Wildlife College (SAWC), visited Boikhutso Primary School in Blouberg. This outreach event was attended by 46 enthusiastic students, three teachers, two rangers from Blouberg, and six interns. During the session, we distributed PACE workbooks and engaged in lively discussions about vulture conservation. This follow-up visit provided a significant opportunity to enhance community awareness and support for conservation efforts.

The following day, on 11 July 2024, we continued our outreach at Maromafase High School. This session saw the participation of 220 students and two teachers, along with local rangers from Blouberg. The visit proved to be immensely successful, not only due to the students' active involvement but also because of the valuable engagement with the rangers, who play a crucial role in protecting vultures in the area. By fostering connections with both the youth and local conservation professionals, we aim to build a stronger network of support for vulture conservation.

VulPro Teams Up with Shamwari Private Game Reserve for Community Engagement on 10 July

On 10 July,
VulPro@Shamwari engaged with the Alicedale community to raise awareness about the crucial role vultures play in our ecosystem. The event was highly successful, attracting approximately 100 participants, including 85 children and 15 adults, all eager to learn.

It was inspiring to witness such enthusiasm for these often-misunderstood birds. Many community members are unaware of the vital role vultures play, but their interest and curiosity were truly heartening. We look forward to continuing our outreach efforts and promoting the importance of vulture conservation.



Education

Education

Pecanwood College Supports VulPro

Pecanwood College has recently adopted a Cape Vulture, named Zazu. To support Zazu and his fellow vultures, the learners and educators collected and donated essential items from our wish list, which were delivered on 1 August. These generous contributions are vital, not only for Zazu's care but also for meeting the daily needs of all the vultures at VulPro.

On 5 September 2024, we had the pleasure of hosting 69 enthusiastic Grade 3 students and four teachers from Pecanwood College for a special visit to VulPro. During their visit, the students learned about the crucial role vultures play in our ecosystem and how young conservationists like themselves are key to ensuring their survival. They were thrilled to meet Zazu's extended vulture family and witness firsthand the impact of their adoption and support.

International Vulture Awareness Day

On 7 September, VulPro celebrated International Vulture Awareness Day with engaging events at both VulPro@Shamwari and VulPro Hartbeespoort. VulPro@Shamwari hosted 60 enthusiastic learners for an educational talk and interactive activities that the children thoroughly enjoyed. Meanwhile, VulPro Hartbeespoort held an open day, welcoming guests of all ages for a presentation and a guided tour of the centre. It was a fantastic day dedicated to raising awareness and appreciation for these vital and often misunderstood birds.

Presentations and Market Activities

This quarter, we delivered two external presentations aimed at highlighting the crucial role vultures play in our ecosystems and educating landowners on effective strategies to mitigate threats to these remarkable birds. Furthermore, our participation in a vibrant farmers' market allowed us to connect with a diverse audience, enhancing community engagement. Through these interactions, we conveyed important insights on vulture conservation, underscoring the ecological significance of vultures. Moving forward, we are committed to deepening community understanding and support for vulture conservation efforts, recognising that informed stakeholders are essential to the protection of these vital species.

Education

Uniting for Vulture Conservation:

On Saturday, 3 August 2024, VulPro@Shamwari proudly hosted its inaugural Landowners and Stakeholders Day at Shamwari Private Game Reserve. This vital initiative aims to galvanise local communities around the urgent need for vulture conservation, strengthening partnerships between VulPro and landowners, including farmers, government representatives, and nearby game reserves.

The day was marked by enlightening presentations from leading experts.

Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn, a specialist in addressing poisoning incidents, Kerri Wolter, CEO of VulPro, and Dr. Johan Joubert, Veterinarian at Shamwari Private Game Reserve shared their insights on a wide array of vulture-related topics. They discussed vulture behaviour, their ecological significance, and crucial conservation strategies, with a particular focus on how vulture-friendly farming and land management practices can benefit local landowners. Dr. Verdoorn specifically addressed the responsible use of poison in predator control and the ecological advantages of lead-free hunting, underscoring our collective responsibility towards wildlife.

A highlight of the day was the visit to the world-class Cape Vulture captive breeding enclosure at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre within the Shamwari reserve, allowing attendees to witness firsthand the remarkable efforts in vulture conservation.

With over forty participants, the VulPro@Shamwari Landowners and Stakeholders Day provided an invaluable opportunity for VulPro to engage with local stakeholders and reinforce partnerships within the community. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing a renewed commitment to vulture conservation.

This event marks the beginning of a series of similar initiatives that VulPro plans to roll out across various locations. We invite all stakeholders – farmers, game reserves, private landowners, and government and NGO representatives – to join us in our mission. Together, we can protect and conserve Africa's vultures for future generations. Your involvement is crucial; let's unite for this essential cause!

Vulpro @ SHAMWARI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Landowners & Stakeholders Day

Dr. Johan Joubert

Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn

Protecting vultures *together*

Vulpro

www.vulpro.com

Emergency contact numbers:

Gerhard Verdoorn: +27 82 446 8946
Kate Webster: +27 82 702 5942
Kerri Wolter: +27 82 808 5113

Vulpro @ SHAMWARI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Vulture adoption

Fostering Hope: The Impact of Vulture Adoptions

The success of VulPro's conservation mission is underpinned by the generosity of our adoptive vulture parents. Each adoption represents more than financial support – it symbolises a partnership in safeguarding Africa's vultures and restoring balance to our ecosystems. By investing in the care, rehabilitation, and recovery of these birds, our adopters become active participants in conservation, bridging the gap between communities and wildlife.

Every adopted bird is a beacon of hope, carrying with it the promise of survival, education, and change. Together, these individual commitments form the foundation of larger conservation efforts, helping to secure the future of vultures and the essential ecological services they provide.

Adoptive Parents (July - September 2024):

- Alexander H (Silke)
- Andrea Schreier
- Christina Elena Hanga
- Clive Vardakis
- Frank Schöppner
- Hanre Ferreira (Virbac)
- Hans and Ute Schute
- Katey Parson
- Kim Caldwell
- Mariza Hamman
- Mike and Amy Latimer
- Nicole Schöppner
- Peaconwood College
- Robyn (Rob Rankine)
- Rheinmetall Denel Munition
- Sascha Winninger (for Julie Edgley)

We are deeply grateful to each adoptive parent whose support fuels our efforts. Your involvement directly changes lives, not only for the birds in our care but for the species as a whole. Thanks to your belief in our mission, VulPro's vision of thriving vulture populations becomes more than just a goal – it becomes a shared reality.

Adopt a Vulture –
Save a Species, Change the Future

- **Adopt a Vulture for R4,500**
- **Name your vulture and receive an official adoption certificate**
- **Follow their journey with exclusive updates**
- **Unlimited visits to VulPro (by appointment)**

Your support provides vital care and protection, helping these majestic birds thrive.

This isn't just an adoption – it's a chance to secure their future.

Join Our Mission! Make a Meaningful Difference in Their Lives Today!

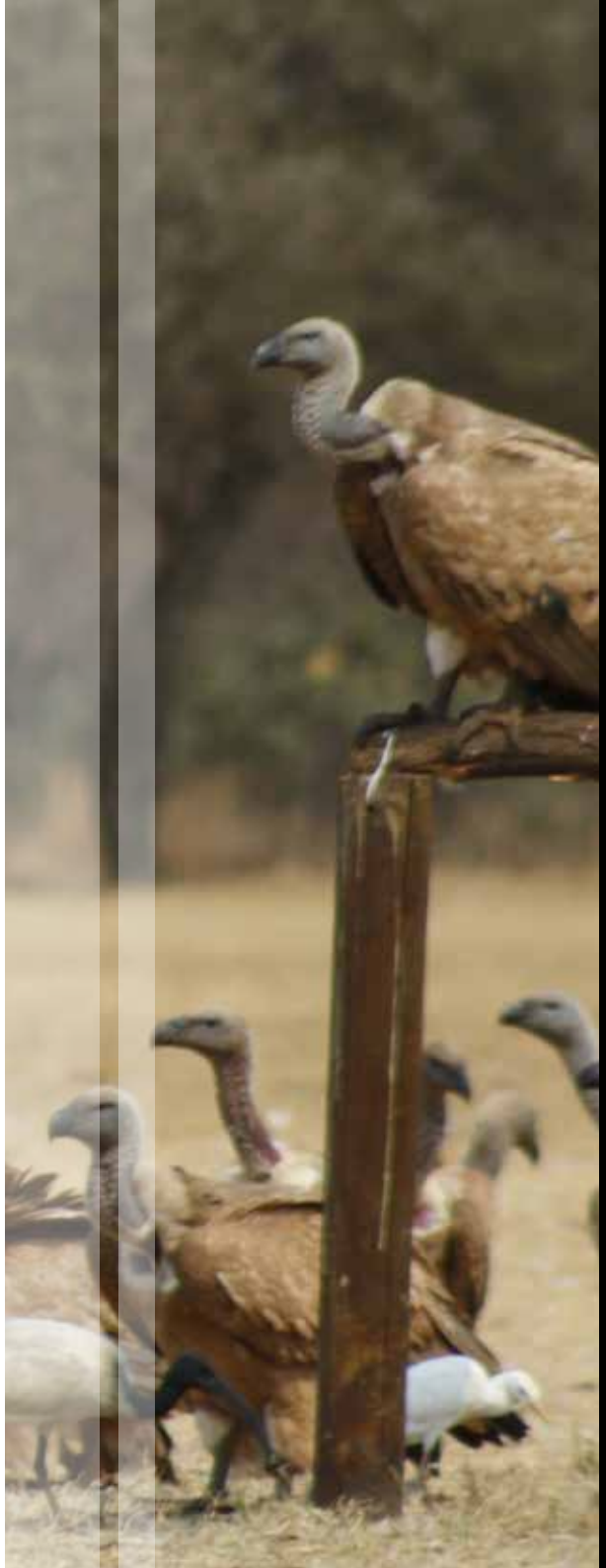
Indianapolis Prize Nomination for Kerri Wolter

We are immensely proud to announce that Kerri Wolter, our remarkable CEO, has been nominated for the prestigious 2025 Indianapolis Prize, often regarded as the "Nobel Prize" of animal conservation. This monumental recognition celebrates exceptional leaders whose unwavering commitment and innovative contributions have transformed the field of wildlife preservation. Kerri's nomination highlights her tireless efforts to rescue vultures from the brink of extinction and places her among only two nominees from this side of the world.

As one of just 44 outstanding conservationists selected globally, Kerri's recognition not only honours her individual accomplishments but also elevates VulPro's mission to protect these vital avian species. This nomination is a powerful testament to the critical role vultures play in our ecosystems and the urgent need for continued conservation efforts.

Kerri expresses her gratitude, stating, "My journey embodies the collective spirit of our dedicated team, passionate partners, and unwavering volunteers. It represents the tireless work of every member of my team who stands with us to ensure that vultures thrive in their natural habitats. This moment is not solely about me; it is a celebration of every member of my team who has believed in our mission and contributed to a future where vultures once again soar."

As we celebrate this achievement, we also recognise that it is made possible through the shared vision and commitment of our incredible supporters. Your belief in our mission fuels our efforts to create lasting change for vultures and the ecosystems they inhabit. Together, we are not just advocating for vultures; we are igniting a movement that champions the future of wildlife conservation.



VulPro Recognised Internationally

INDIANAPOLIS PRIZE

Media

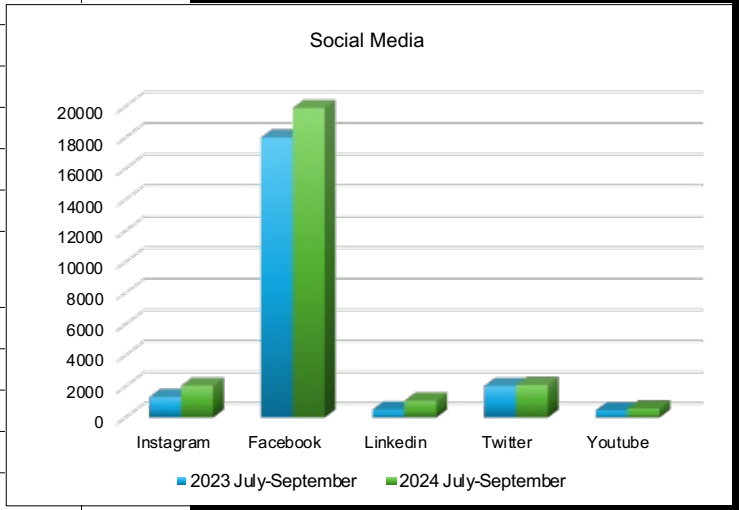
During the period from July to September, VulPro received extensive media coverage, highlighting key developments in our conservation efforts. Our work was featured across various platforms, including radio broadcasts, online articles, and print publications.

Significant coverage included updates on the Egyptian Vulture reintroduction efforts, vulture rescues and releases, and recognition of VulPro's role in protecting these essential birds. Key features also covered VulPro's ongoing conservation programmes and partnerships, raising awareness of the importance of vulture conservation.

2 July 2024	Major step in Egyptian Vulture conservation	Online
2 July 2024	VulPro and partners take major step in Egyptian Vulture conservation in South Africa	Online
11 July 2024	Extinct Vultures On Their Way To Hartbeespoort	Online
14 July 2024	Egyptian Vultures to be reintroduced to SA	Online
16 July 2024	Bid to Reintroduce Egyptian Vultures	Online
22 July 2024	Historic News from VulPro@Shamwari!	Online
8 August 2024	Marloth and border explorer: 'The Vulture rescue mission at Lionspruit Nature Reserve'	Online Magazine / Print Version
13 August 2024	Vulture News	Email Newsletter
14 August 2024	White-backed Vultures take flight once more after being rescued in Nkomazi	Online
15 August 2024	Kerri Wolter discusses vulture conservation and the Shamwari relocation project	Radio
30 August 2024	VulPro – Saving nature's clean-up crew	Television
31 August 2024	Heroes, not Villains	Online
6 September 2024	Birdorable Visits VulPro	Online
6 September 2024	Vulture conservation programme continues to soar: A look back at released vultures	Online
9 September 2024	The diversity of vultures	Online
11 September 2024	Vultures and healthcare among topics at the supply chain profession's spring conference	Online
13 September 2024	Local Vulture Whisperer up for 'Nobel Prize' of Animal Conservation	Online
19 September 2024	Kerri up for conservation 'Nobel' prize	Online
20 September 2024	Aasvoëls Dáárom so Noodsaaklik	Radio
20 September 2024	Kerri Wolter on the conservation efforts for endangered vultures	Radio
September 2024	The Birding Diaries: Kerri Wolter's Journey from Horse Lover... [Video]	YouTube

We greatly appreciate the media's interest and support, as their coverage plays a crucial role in raising public awareness and advancing vulture conservation.

Media



Scientific Publications

(Peer-reviewed)

2024

1. Lindner, K. L., Farwig, N., Albrecht, J., Botha, A. J., Downs, C. T., Höfs, C., Kemp, R., Krüger, S. C., Neethling, M. V., Neser, W., Pfeiffer, M. B., Ruffle, A. R., Spatz, T., Venter, J. A., van der Westhuizen, R., Wolter, K., Rösner, S., and Schabo, D. G. (2024) **Land cover and powerline density influence movement patterns of an African vulture species**. *Manuscript in preparation.*

2. McKechnie, A. E., et al. (2024) **Effects of lead on avian thermoregulation in the heat: experimental test with pied crows (Corvus albus).** *Journal of Experimental Biology. Submitted March 2024, reviewed by two experts and deemed acceptable for publication in ETAP, pending minor revisions based on referees' comments.*

3. McKechnie, A. E., Freeman, M. T., Kemp, K., Wolter, K., and Naidoo, V. (2024) **Effects of lead on avian thermoregulation in the heat: an experimental test with pied crows (Corvus albus).** *Journal of Environmental Toxicology and Pharmacology. Manuscript submitted.*

4. Naidoo, V., and Wolter, K. (2024) **Validation of the Lead Care II System in Cape vultures (Gyps coprotheres) in comparison to ICP-MS using pure standards**. *Environmental Toxicology and Pharmacology, 110, 104530.*

5. Pepler, L. F., Rautenbach, Y., Wolter, K., and Koeppel, K. N. (2024) **Leukocyte reference intervals and influencing factors in Cape vultures (Gyps coprotheres)**. *Manuscript in preparation.*

6. Serratosa, J., et al. (2024) **Tracking data highlight the importance of human-induced mortality for migratory birds at a flyway scale.** *Biological Conservation. Awaiting final manuscript from journal to input full citation.*

Publications

VulPro's commitment to vulture conservation is exemplified by our ongoing research initiatives, which have generated significant findings. One of our manuscripts, investigating the effects of lead on avian thermoregulation in heat using pied crows as a study species, was submitted to the Journal of Experimental Biology in March 2024. The manuscript has been deemed publishable, pending minor revisions currently being addressed by our lead researchers. We anticipate its resubmission and look forward to a successful second evaluation.

A second research paper, examining the influence of land cover and powerline density on the movement patterns of endangered Cape Vultures, has been finalised. By utilising GPS tracking data, our analysis highlights the vultures' preference for open landscapes and low-disturbance areas, providing crucial insights for land-use legislation and powerline distribution. This manuscript is scheduled for submission to the Journal of Raptor Research at the beginning of July for peer review.

Additionally, a third project focused on using tracking data to illustrate the significance of human-induced mortality for migratory birds at a flyway scale has been accepted for publication. We await the final manuscript from the journal to provide complete citation details.

In alignment with our mission to safeguard African vultures through collaboration and innovation, VulPro continues to build partnerships with various institutions and research entities. Our goal is to enhance our understanding of vulture ecology and behaviour, address the multifaceted threats they face, and develop effective, evidence-based action plans. We warmly welcome new collaborations and have several exciting projects and studies awaiting interested individuals. If you are a student or researcher interested in our work, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sponsors

We would like to express our appreciation to all our sponsors. Your loyal support and commitment are vital to advancing our conservation efforts and fostering significant progress in vulture protection. Together, we're redefining the future of vulture conservation and ensuring their survival.

Together, we're redefining the future of vulture conservation and ensuring their survival

PLATINUM

Tusk Trust

GOLD

AZA Conservation Grants Fund
Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden
DHL
Ford Wildlife Foundation
Holzman Wildlife Foundation
Olsen Animal Trust

SILVER

AE Solutions
AZA SAFE Project Partners
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
Colchester Zoo
Dallas Zoo
Detroit Zoo
Different Foundation
Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
Fort Wayne Children's Zoo
Hans Hohelsen Charitable Trust
Jacksonville Zoo
Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust
Max Planck Institute
Nashville Zoo
Natural Encounters Conservation
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
Wilhelma Zoologisch Botanischer Garten
Zoo Zlin/Lesna
Hair of the Dog Conservation Fund
WeWild Africa

BRONZE

Abraham Foundation
Animal Survival International
Blair Drummond Safari and Adventure Park
City of Little Rock
Cybercom
Designline Graphics
Duxbury Networking
First Consulting Alliance
Fresno Chaffee Zoo
Gauntlet Conservation Trust
GHB Farms Pty Ltd
Greenville Zoo
Hamman Donation GPS
Idea Wild
National Aviary in Pittsburgh
National Center for Birds of Prey
Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo
R&R Abattoir
Regal Security
Rheinmetall Denel Munition
Sophie Danforth Award - Roger Williams
Tandy Foundation
The Tax Shop
Tulsa Zoo
World Bird Sanctuary
Zoo Atlanta
Zoo Miami Wildlife Conservation Fund

BLUE

Akron Zoo
Chessington World of Adventures Operations Ltd
Darwin Chambers
Little Rock Zoo
Paradise Wildlife Zoo
Roger Williams Park Zoo
Southern Cross Solutions
Thea Erasmus
Veterinary Conservation Coalition
Wan4U
Zoological Society of Hertfordshire Paradise Wildlife Park

Support VulPro's vital work in treating and caring for vultures by considering a donation from our wish list below.

Stationary
- Laminating sheets
- Super glue
- Printer paper
- Printer ink (HP 912XL)
- Lithium batteries (AA)
- Pens

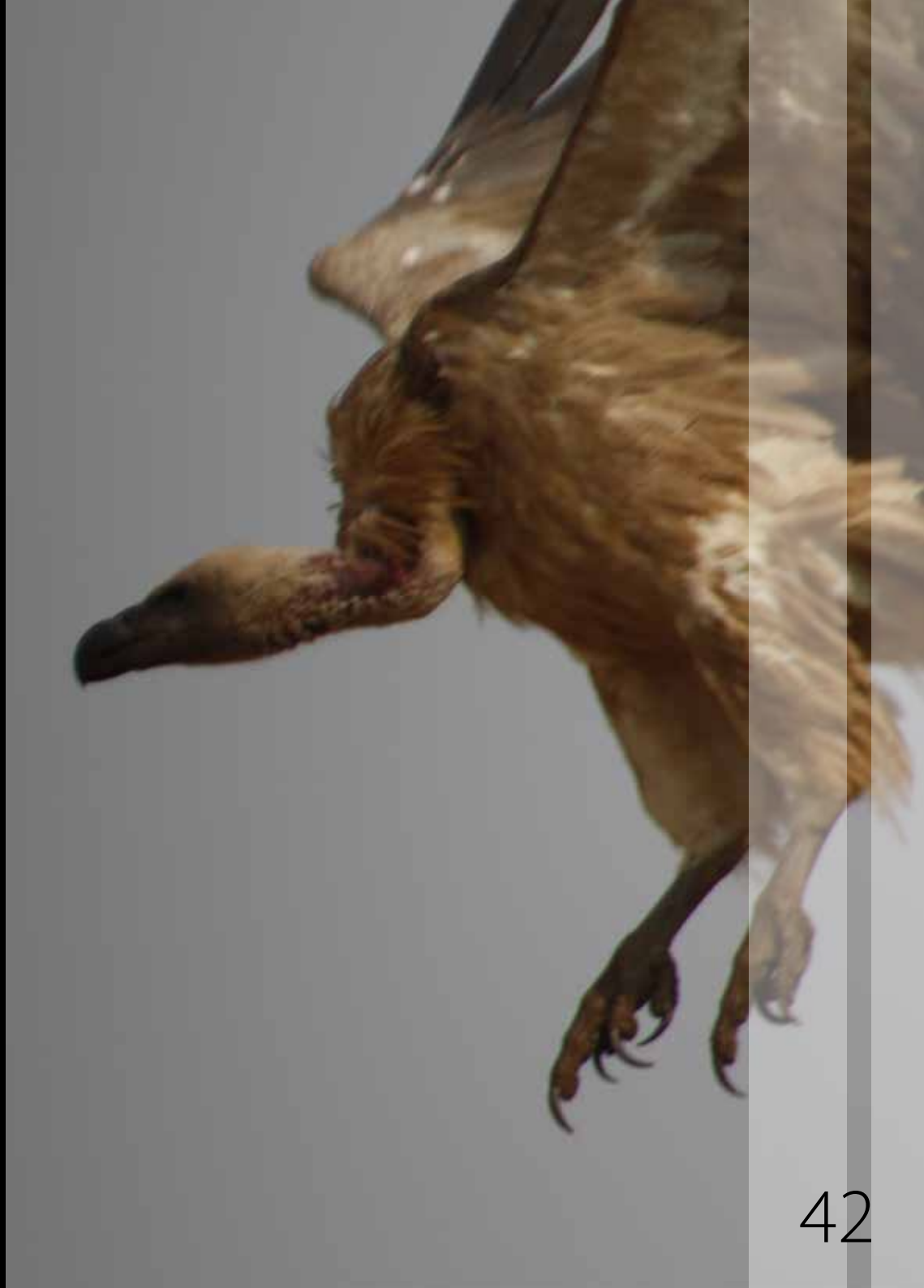
Cleaning Products
- Washing powder
- Clean Green
- Toilet paper
- Sunlight liquid
- Domestos and Savlon
- Dettol hand wash
- Scrubbing brushes
- Outside brooms
- Washing sponges
- Clothes pegs

Maintenance Equipment
- Large and medium cable ties
- Insulation tape
- Duct tape
- Garden rakes
- Garden shears
- Welding gloves
- Knives for cutting carcasses
- Wood oil
- Epoxy (green and white box)

Hospital Equipment
- Drapes
- Gowns
- Drill and hand chuck
- Ex Fix cement
- Suture material
- Cold sterilization trays
- Karbodust

Wishlist

Your support plays a critical role in saving lives and securing the future of vultures for generations to come.



The future of vultures is in our hands

"Every moment we hesitate is a step closer to a world we can't undo. Act now — save the trees, protect the vultures — before their absence becomes our irreversible loss."

– Orbert Phiri