



## **Vulture Newsletter No 16 – March 2022 - Around the World of Vultures & VSG activities**

Headlines during the period included further confirmation that nimesulide is highly toxic to vultures, with renewed calls to ban this along with aceclofenac and ketoprofen. Renewed hope with a Saudi Arabia holding a high-level meeting to discuss banning diclofenac is encouraging that steps may be taken there soon. The CMS Vulture MsAP group met recently and discussed ideas for a mid-term update due in 2023. The NSAIDs working group also met and plans factsheets and other outputs to be available via [CMS Raptors MOU](#) later this year. Meanwhile poisoning events continue, red list discussions prompted strong engagement by VSG members, and full updates on meetings, events and publications is covered below by region after some general items.

**Red List:** BirdLife requested comments on their online Red List Forum concerning the potential downlisting of Hooded Vulture (HV) from Critically Endangered to Endangered. The impetus for this was a recent review of the generation length for this species, and particularly its age of first breeding, which, when recalculated, placed the species' rate of decline in the lower Endangered category. The forum post elicited a good number of invaluable responses, both for and against downlisting, many of which came from VSG members. The conclusion was to maintain HV as Critically Endangered primarily based upon replies from West Africa where the species is under huge pressure due to belief-based use and where an estimated 70% of its global population occurs.

**Events Announcements:** The [Egyptian Vulture \(EV\) New LIFE project](#) will be announcing a global EV online conference to be held online 8-9 Nov 2022. Themes include threats, population monitoring, latest research methods, as well as best practice conservation activities. An online meeting on 10 Nov will then finalise the [EV Flyway Action Plan](#) mid-term review. Bookings will be taken in Sept when the full programme will be announced, meanwhile check [the project channels](#) regarding talk abstracts etc by early May. Contributors from the whole EV range are welcome and applications from early career researchers are particularly encouraged. To register interest to present please contact [jenny.weston@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jenny.weston@rspb.org.uk) cc [stoyan.nikolov@bspb.org](mailto:stoyan.nikolov@bspb.org)

**General publications:** A [paper](#) evaluating negative perceptions of vultures with particular reference to where historically vultures have been blamed for killing livestock, highlighting how damaging to conservation efforts fake news or the magnification of one-off incidents and shared videos through social media can be. It suggests how this issue can be addressed with a body of scientific evidence. Another [paper](#) evaluates veterinary pharmaceuticals that threaten vultures and proposes mitigation actions.

### **Africa Round-up:**

**North Africa:** 12 Rüppell's Vultures (RV) were fitted with satellite transmitters at the Jbel Moussa Vulture Rehabilitation Centre, northern **Morocco** in Nov 2021. This ongoing project, led by Dept. Water & Forests in partnership with GREPOM/BirdLife Morocco plus Moroccan Association for the Protection of Raptors and Spanish experts, aims to identify potential threats within Morocco and the Western Mediterranean in general. [Monitoring](#) so far shows most birds are staying around the Jbel Moussa release site, one bird died in a windfarm, but another travelled south and is in Guinea-Bissau.

**West Africa:** An Action Plan to understand and address belief-based use trade in vultures in West Africa completed its initial threat assessment. The team (composed of individual VSG members, IUCN CPSG and BirdLife International) is planning a regional workshop in **Nigeria** to develop the action plan later in 2022 with funding secured through the EV LIFE project. In Nigeria, [NCF](#) held a [three-day national training workshop](#) on “Combating Illegal Trade and Trafficking of Vultures and Other Wildlife”. The training concentrated on the practicalities and best practices for strengthening enforcement, investigation, and intelligence in the fight against wildlife crime. In **Guinea Bissau**, two traders dealing in vulture parts were arrested and are under interrogation as following the efforts of many stakeholders including [ODZH](#) and [IBAP](#). Also in Guinea Bissau, Mohamed Henriques together with ODZH and IBAP recently concluded a [1-year project](#) funded by the Rufford Foundation to reduce the impact of vulture threats, especially to HV. Activities were awareness-raising actions aimed at key players and training up a network of key people from national conservation institutions and universities in vulture ecology and conservation. The project directly reached < 700 people in the 4 main cities, and through intensive radio campaigns indirectly reaching a far wider audience. An important impact was the integration of vulture conservation becoming a priority for two national conservation organisations that are now starting new projects and activities related to vultures. With support from WABSA, Brandenburg Tech Uni, The Peregrine Fund and Dallas Zoo, Michael Bode Agunbiade, a Nigerian PhD student has begun assessing the ecosystem services provided by HVs at abattoirs in the **Gambia**. An [EV was rescued from poachers](#) in **Niger**, and [accommodated by SCF](#) for future release once fully recovered. In **Ethiopia**, the ‘[Food chain game](#)’ with focus on the ecosystem function of vultures, was introduced at schools in Metahara.

**East Africa:** The anti-poisoning programme implemented by [Nature Kenya](#) in southern **Kenya** gained further momentum with 65 vulture volunteers now engaged in reporting on human-wildlife conflict, responding to poisoning events and raising awareness with communities. Thanks to coordinated efforts on the ground with The Peregrine Fund, Kenya Birds of Prey Trust, Kenya Wildlife Service and several other stakeholders 4 vultures (3 WBV, 1 LFV) were rescued, rehabilitated and released safely following a mass poisoning event that led to the sad death of 31 vultures & 7 Steppe Eagles. Also in Kenya, over the past 6 months TPFs Coexistence Co-op conducted 40 day-long Coexistence Training sessions involving over 300 community members and rangers. A poisoning incident in Oct 2021 killed 7 vultures and 1 Kori Bustard. A [paper](#) was published showing large declines in Kenya’s raptors over 40 yrs with all vultures and large eagles examined having declined. Through support from [AZA SAFE](#), National Vulture Action Plans are planned over the next two years in both Kenya and **Tanzania**. N Carolina Zoo (NCZ) in partnership with the WCS have conducted surveys in southern Tanzania for 8 years. Historical data is lacking but these surveys suggest declines for WBV & WHV starting in 2018. In addition, high annual mortality rates (25-40%) were detected based on tagged birds. Six satellite tags were deployed in Ruaha-Katavi landscape with a total of 21 tagged birds in Tanzania currently being monitored. These were subjected to one mortality event (retaliatory poisoning) in the last 6 months with an unconfirmed second mortality reported. NCZ expanded its work to Kafue NP, **Zambia**, in 2021 five WBV were tagged in collaboration with Panthera. Surveys in 2021 showed similar vulture abundance in Kafue to 2016 figures. In **Uganda**, NCZ’s community-based conservation program (UNITE) is expanding into Queen Elizabeth NP for conflict mitigation, promoting sustainable activities as well as tagging vultures to monitor poisoning. A further 11 vultures were fitted with tracking devices in three Ugandan National Parks in March 2022. A [paper](#) found that toxins and trauma (collisions, electrocutions) were the most common causes of vulture mortality globally. Another [paper](#) demonstrated the value of teacher training for behaviour change. In **Ethiopia**, HawkWatch International led on two papers: [one](#) modelled the distribution of vultures to identify the most important sites for vulture conservation in the country, whilst the [second](#) analysed 5 years of in-person survey and camera-trap data to assess carrion-removal services by scavengers at abattoirs around Addis Ababa. Vultures declined rapidly over the study period (73% for Gyps vultures and 15% for HV), whilst dog numbers more than doubled, leading to an estimated reduction in the overall carrion removal rate of 12%. 12 EVs have been fitted with transmitters in **Djibouti**, of which 7 are still active. Also, information on vultures is being collected in relation to wind energy and electricity transmission developments in Djibouti.

**Southern Africa:** In **Zimbabwe**, 3 vulture support groups (over 50 people) in the Gwayi Intensive Conservation Area (bordering Hwange) completed poison-response training via a [BirdLife Zimbabwe](#) programme. In **Zambia** around 100 community members engaged in interactive meetings focusing on

learning from them on some of the drivers of human wildlife conflicts and wildlife poisoning in their respective areas, and sharing with them the value of vultures and vulture conservation – run by [BirdWatch Zambia](#). From [VulPro](#) in **South Africa**, a juvenile vulture was admitted in 2019 after an electrocution that burnt both wings, leaving the tips missing and making this bird non-releasable. At first, it was believed to be a CV, but as it aged, the plumage appeared much darker than the other CVs. A DNA sample sent for analysis confirmed that it is a RV/CV hybrid and an important example for understanding the hybridisation between these two species. Also, VulPro has successfully rehabilitated 49 vultures releasing them back to the wild during 2021. The ‘Vultures for Africa’ Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, working with a range of partners in South Africa, **Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi** and **Uganda** conducted 19 wildlife poisoning response workshops to 654 learners from a various conservation departments, NGOs and other institutions between Oct 2021 & Mar 2022. This included the first such training under the banner of the USAID ‘VukaNow Project’ in the Gonarezhou NP in **Zimbabwe** in Jan. In addition, tracking of vultures was expanded to a number of known gap-areas Southern Africa with 6 birds fitted with devices in the Nyika Plateau NP in **Malawi** in Nov 2021. Finally, an important [tracking paper](#) focusing on Gyps vultures across Africa was published in March 2022.

### **Asia Round-up:**

**South & SE Asia:** [Publication](#) in Jan 2022 of nimesulide safety-testing carried out in South Africa further confirmed its severe toxicity to vultures, and together with [already published](#) evidence of its toxic effects on wild vultures, this further raised the calls for a ban in veterinary use – something further endorsed at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual SAVE meeting in Dec which [can be viewed](#) online. Follow-up work by the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) also progressed in India in March 2022 which is likely to further endorse this urgent need. This comes soon after the recent announcement that [tolfenamic acid](#) is a second safe alternative veterinary painkiller along with meloxicam. The SAVE meeting attracted 250 participants/viewers and the updated regional Blueprint recovery plan and full reports will appear on the save website during April. [Talks](#) at the meeting covered a broader range of topics than previously, extending to Uzbekistan EVs and captive Red-headed vulture breeding as well as the extensive updates from across the six SAVE core countries. There was a major poison-baits mortality incident in March 2022 in central Assam, **India**, which [killed 100 Himalayan](#) Griffons, apparently aiming to target nuisance feral dogs and the publicity also prompted [a petition](#) demanding more action against the perpetrators. Two further incidents occurred in the period when 7 and 12 vultures were saved and released following rehabilitation. A consignment of 7 [smuggled EVs](#) was intercepted in central India in Jan 2021 – an apparently new threat, and hopefully an isolated incident. More positive in Apr 2022 was news that the Tamil Nadu Government has [filed cases against 100 drug outlets](#) and manufacturers for contravening laws to restrict diclofenac vial size. This step is welcomed as the first such legal action in India to protect vultures from these deadly drugs through discouraging their illegal use. The prestigious Prani Mitra [Award was given to Vibhu Prakash](#) by the Indian Government (Minster of Environment) in Dec 2021, highlighting the success of the BNHS vulture conservation breeding programme, despite the ongoing and increasing challenges of the flow of regular funding. In **Nepal**, the [first formally recognised Vulture Safe Zone](#) (VSZ) in the world was approved for the Gandaki-Lumbini VSZ and [announced as the centrepiece](#) of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual SAVE meeting! This recognition based on data from surviving tagged wild-caught White-rumped vultures (WRV) along with results of undercover pharmacy surveys data is a landmark step and further emphasises how the successful removal of toxic veterinary drugs is key to conserving vulture populations in Asia. Watch the announcement and background justification [here](#). Also in Nepal, two [further releases](#) of 8+9 birds (all GSM tagged) were carried out in Nov 2021 and Mar 2022 respectively, and their survival has been relatively high. Further milestones for the programme, include the first successful fledging of a wild chick from the nest of captive bred birds, adding to the earlier fledging success of captive-reared birds in the wild! These and further details [here](#). Release methodology was slightly modified with more rotation between supplementary feeding sites to avoid any build-up of nematodes as well as ensuring greater exercise within the extended release aviary to improve the condition of the birds before their release. 10+10 more wild birds were also trapped, tagged and monitored. In Tanahu District, Gandaki, Nepal, the active nesting tree, *bombax ceiba*, of a Slender-billed vulture (SBV) [was felled](#) for widening of the Pokhara-Mugling road despite requests to prevent this. The nest was

destroyed and an outcry resulted – this was one of only six known SBV nests in Nepal (note the world SBV population is estimated at only c.1500 birds). In the same area, 70 vultures (mainly HG) were reported electrocuted since mid-2021. This appears to have been caused by the combination of cattle carcasses from a cow shelter being dumped by the municipality near to a 3300volt transmission line, resulting in high rates of collisions. Sometimes 2 to 3 vultures electrocuted per day – the authorities have apparently now agreed to relocate the disposal site. The IVAD awareness and coordinated count events mentioned in the previous newsletter for Nepal recorded 2312 vultures of all 8 species regularly seen in Nepal, from 38 Districts around the country. Awareness [events](#) included calendar distribution to 10,000 students around Pokhara. In **Bangladesh** on 2 Apr 2022, 19 HGs were successfully [released from the Vulture Rescue Centre](#) in the presence of Addn Secretary Ministry of Env't, Forest & Climate Change with other senior officials, organisations, locals, together with IUCN Bangladesh. During the 2021-2022 winter, 33 vultures were rescued from various parts of the country. , 149 HGs have been rescued since 2014, and steps are being taken to carry out tests to clarify why these birds are weak. Despite the challenges of Covid and civil unrest, pharmacy surveys were carried out in **Myanmar** and revealed that NSAIDs including some diclofenac are increasingly being used in veterinary practice there. Note that Myanmar is now the only SAVE country where no diclofenac ban is in place. Since the 2019 veterinary diclofenac ban declared in **Cambodia**, which followed survey findings that it was being sold for veterinary purposes in 2018, there had been no monitoring until 2021 when partners of the Cambodia Vulture Working Group together with Dept Agriculture & Fisheries carried out NSAID pharmacy surveys which showed that the diclofenac ban has been effective so far. Finally, the [SAVE consortium](#) welcomed BirdLife International as its 25<sup>th</sup> Partner in Dec 2021.

**West & Central Asia:** Two significant meetings were held in **Saudi Arabia** – on 31 March 2022 there was a review of the urgent need for a national veterinary diclofenac ban. This followed another meeting in Nov 2021 on power infrastructure threats. Both were organised by the National Center for Wildlife in Riyadh, attended with presentations by several key VSG and CMS persons. The latter included a [workshop with the Saudi Electricity Company](#), presenting outcomes of powerline bird mortality surveys in the area of Al-Qunfundhah, with detailed discussions of solutions. We hope to be able to report on positive outcomes of these meetings soon, possibly including a national diclofenac ban. In Nov 2021, the [wintering EV congregation in the Al-Qunfundhah region](#), Saudi Arabia was monitored and a total of 171 EVs counted - the number of adults was very similar to that recorded in 2019, but the number of immatures was c.30 individuals lower. A high-level [workshop developing a Road Map to tackle illegal killing of birds](#) across the Middle East was held in Oct 2021 in **Jordan**. A [report](#) on the magnitude of illegal trade in wild birds in Jordan, including vultures, was published by RSCN. Despite Covid-constraints, 70 Lappet-faced Vulture (LFV) nests were found in **Oman** in 2021, but only 18 produced eggs and 11 produced chicks - with ravens suspected of causing significant egg predation. Two 2021 fledglings perished, one probably due to electrocution. By early March 2022, 7 LFV nests with either an egg or chick have been found and there are plans to tag five fledglings with GPS devices in 2022. EV tracking (17 birds) in Oman is drawing to a close with analyses underway. The tagged immature EV from **Bulgaria**, which has been shot in **Lebanon**, couldn't be released but was [returned to Europe](#), to be included in the EAZA captive breeding programme. 3 [EVs were rescued](#) from a zoo in **Lebanon** thanks to the intensive work of the [Lebanese Anti-poaching Unit](#) (APU). In addition, APU was provided with equipment by SPNL and an [awareness session](#) was held for local authorities, sustainable hunters, and local community members about the hunting law in Lebanon. In Feb 2022, the NCE hosted a [webinar for the conservation of EV](#) attended by NCE volunteers, partners, Ministry of Environment, EEAA, Galala University, and managers from different protectorates in **Egypt**. Another initiative identified [Hazardous powerlines](#) in EV migration bottleneck sites in Egypt. Through collaboration with electricity companies, Doğa/BirdLife **Turkey** supported the [insulation of 59 hazardous poles for EVs](#) and other migratory birds in Mersin and Adana regions, Turkey. Also in Turkey, a [webinar](#) was held with stakeholders to discuss the poisoning as a threat to vultures and other birds in the country. Finally, numbers of migratory EVs and other raptors were monitored in the autumn of 2021 through [Sarimazi Raptor Count 2021](#) in Turkey and in [Antikythira Island, Greece](#), also in spring 2022 through [Galala Raptor Count 2022, Egypt](#).

Two Himalayan Griffons (HG) [rescued](#) 17 Dec 2021 in Yunnan Province, south **China**, although only one survived the stress of transit. Two CV were found injured (trauma/collision) and/or weak during migration

in Liaoning Province, Inner Mongolia, presumably in transit from Mongolia to South Korea – sadly euthanasia was the only option. Further unverified [links](#) and [here](#) received [for](#) CV may be of interest. Finally, movements of tagged EVs from **Uzbekistan** attracted publicity as they made their way through **Pakistan** and around famous tourist sites of **India**. 3 of the 4 birds have successfully transmitted data for 9 months now showing their migration routes and wintering grounds. There will be also another project in **Kazakhstan** starting during 2022. All updates on the birds and projects [here](#).

### **European Round-up:**

**Egyptian Vulture (EV) in the Balkans** - In Jan 2022, online partners assembled from the 20 partners of the EV New LIFE project - to review 2021 achievements and work plans for 2022 for all 14 countries (in 3 continents) along the EV flyway (see [presentations](#)). Disney Conservation Fund funded a [new project “101 Vultures”](#) to support EV conservation in the Balkans. In the frame of the [EV New LIFE project](#), EV was a flagship for IVAD 2021 (celebrated in [Bulgaria](#), [North Macedonia](#) and [Egypt](#)) and WMBD 2021 (celebrated in [Bulgaria](#), [Jordan](#), [Syria](#), [Nigeria](#) and [Ethiopia](#)). In 2021, the [Balkan population of EV](#) continued to decline in Albania and North Macedonia, but compared to 2020 remains stable in Greece and Bulgaria. A [report](#) on the results from releasing captive-bred EVs in the Eastern Rhodopes 2021 was published and a [Restocking Strategy for Bulgaria and Greece](#) was developed. [EAZA continued to support the reinforcement programme for the EV](#) population in the Balkans in 2021. One EV released using the delayed-release method in Bulgaria [perished in the Mediterranean Sea](#). This is the first such case since the start of the programme four years ago. A [veterinary manual for wild vultures in distress](#) was published by *Green Balkans*. Anti-poison kits were distributed to local authorities and stakeholders in Bulgaria, [North Macedonia](#) and [Albania](#). Equipment to mitigate human-carnivore conflict and thus reduce the risk of poison use was distributed in [Bulgaria](#) and Greece. A [handbook for poisoning investigation](#) was published and distributed, and [regional meetings were held](#) to train local working groups for the implementation of the "National Action plan to combat the Illegal use of poisons in the wild (2021-2030)" in Bulgaria. [Surveys were conducted by AOS](#) regarding the illegal use of poison in Albania. Over 50% of the breeding EVs in the Balkans in 2021 were regularly provided with safe food by maintaining four supplementary feeding stations in [Greece](#), two in [Albania](#), two in [North Macedonia](#) and conducting an individual supplementary feeding scheme in Bulgaria. Bulgarian environmental [NGOs stopped a planned investment for gold mining](#) within the Byala Reka SPA, Bulgaria, which directly posed a risk to an active EV nest site. A [nest guarding programme 2021](#) for Bulgarian EVs was held by volunteers, and [meetings with the rock climbing community](#) were held to reduce the risk of disturbance. TV screens broadcasting livestreaming cameras and documentaries about EVs were installed in the [Regional History Museum in Ruse](#), Bulgaria. ‘Running for the conservation of EVs’ at [Tirana Marathon 2021](#) was implemented by PPNEA and AOS. EV was the focus of the [education programme of the Conservation Youth Club](#) of Gjirokastra and the awareness campaigns for local stakeholders held by AOS during the [Green Week in Gjirokastra](#). [Two signboards about the EV](#) were installed by AOS in the areas inhabited by the species in Albania. A [short-video about the EV](#) was promoted through an online educational platform in Bulgaria, reaching over 28,000 people. Another [video on migratory birds](#), including the EV, was broadcast during WMBD 2021 in Sofia Metro, reaching ca. 750,000 people. A [signboard about the EV](#) was installed in Sofia Zoo, expected to be seen by more than 380,000 people. A [photo exhibition on the EV](#) was installed in Trikala, Greece, [reaching ca 250,000 people](#). Under the slogan “Race for Survival”, the [HOS participated in the 13th Half Marathon "Kalampaka-Trikala"](#) appealing for a better future for EV.

**Europe: other vultures:** The [first successfully fledged Cinereous Vulture \(CV\)](#) in the wild for the region took place in 2021 following reintroduction efforts of LIFE14NBAT/BG649 project in **Bulgaria**, having been officially declared extinct 36 years earlier. A [recent paper](#) reveals the territory use and sojourn patterns of the **Griffon Vultures (GV)** in the Balkan Peninsula based on GPS tracking. Also, two technical reports were published - Annual [report 2021](#) for the reintroduction of the GV in the Kresna Gorge, Bulgaria and Biannual [report 2020-2021](#) on the reintroduction of the CV in Balkan Mountain, Bulgaria. This year’s **Bearded Vulture** meeting will be held 11-13 Nov in Parco Natura Viva, Italy.

*We hope to receive more material for western Europe for the next newsletter.*

### **North America Round-up:**

Four **California Condor** (CC) are scheduled for [release in the Pacific NW, USA](#) later this spring – the first time they will have been in the area for over 100 years. The CC population update as of end of 2021 is 537. This breaks down to 334 free flying, 15 wild chicks fledged, 24 captive-bred releases to the wild, and a total captive population of 203. In 2021, 22 CCs from the free-flying population died, 13 due to lead poisoning. From 1992 - 2021 lead poisoning was responsible for 51% of known causes of mortality for CCs in the wild. The Baja CC population in **Mexico** now has 40 birds in the wild and 4 in captivity. In 2021, the Baja flock suffered three fatalities, all wild-hatched juveniles. 2 were believed to be bobcat predation. 3 breeding pairs engaged in nesting activity during 2021, producing one confirmed wild-hatched juvenile. The last CC release into the Baja population was in 2018; 2 CCs hatched in the Chapultepec Zoo in Mexico City were released in Parque Nacional Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, in Mexico. The wild Baja population now has 13 female adults of which 8 are known to have a mate. Between 2014 and Jan 2022, the population increased from 34 to 44. Managers of this population expect to release 6 captive-bred condors this year. A number of CC studies have been published recently on topics including: [Drivers of flight performance, seasonal and age-related variation in daily travel distances, foraging behaviour and associated contaminant exposure/stress response](#), [unpaired individuals' viability as foster parents in captivity](#), [mortality in free-ranging CCs](#), and [feeding site characteristics in S. California](#). Several projects continue with a main focus on the issue of non-lead ammunition needed to promote CC conservation. Shaver's Creek Environmental Center in PA promotes non-lead ammunition to hunters, also educating the public with their on-site ambassador **Black Vulture** (ABV), an individual which survived lead poisoning. Researchers from Mississippi State Univ. are studying the spatial ecology of ABV and **Turkey Vultures** (TV) relative to U.S. Dept. of Defence Activities in Mississippi. They have wing-tagged 451 birds; 335 ABVs and 116 TVs. 131 individuals have been resighted (29% of the total birds tagged). 33% of total tagged individual ABVs were resighted and 16% of tagged TVs were resighted. The furthest sighting is 460 km (286 mi) from where tagged. This research team has also fitted 26 ABVs and 18 TVs with cellular GPS transmitters. They are exploring movement and resource use and evaluating the potential role in zoonotic disease transmission, and particularly avian pox. Records of either species presenting with pox are of special interest. Please email [scott.rush@mmstate.edu](mailto:scott.rush@mmstate.edu) with photos. Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (HMS) attached a GPS/GSM unit to a nesting ABV in Massachusetts to investigate juvenile dispersal at edge of their range. HMS tracks [16 TVs](#) and 3 ABVs fitted with satellite transmitters. They also monitored 17 ABV nests in Pennsylvania in 2021; 15 were in human-made structures (54% success rate) and, 2 in caves (5%). 7 ABV nestlings and 2 adult TVs were wing tagged. HMS and collaborators covered 4,474 kms (2,780 mi) of summer road surveys for TV and ABV spanning British Columbia (BC), Costa Rica (CR), and West Virginia to Tennessee (WV-TN). Compared to surveys run a decade ago the BC route showed a 264% increase in TV. WV-TN showed a 138.6% increase in TV and 550% increase in ABV. CR by contrast showed a 30% decrease in TV and 38% decrease in ABV.

### **South America Round-up:**

The International Congress for Conservation of Andean Condor (AC) will take place in Quito, **Ecuador** 24-29 Oct 2022 – please note the dates! Organised by the Andean Condor Working Group of Ecuador through its institutional members, the Andean Condor Foundation and the Zoological Foundation of Ecuador. The congress will focus on ex situ and in situ conservation/research, education and communication, and threats and mitigation strategies. Vulture experts from around the world will be especially welcome. A regional conservation priorities [document](#) was published for AC with emphasis on the confirmed spatial distribution. This updates on the historical range, clarifying systematically where expert knowledge is available. In **Colombia**, a joint study of Fundacion Neotropical and The Peregrine Fund is developing roost selection models, based on environmental and geomorphological variables. It indicated an area of 342 km<sup>2</sup> has >60% probability of being selected by ACs, but that for nearly 50% of that (164 km<sup>2</sup>) ACs are at high risk of negative human activities, whilst in only 20 % (70.5 km<sup>2</sup>) they are relatively safe within national protected areas. Additionally, threats and effects of socioeconomic and livestock management measures were identified including human-vulture conflicts and interspecific competition between increasing ABV and AC at local scales. AC breeding biology is being monitored in **Bolivia** apparently for the first time, since two active nests were recently located in national protected areas. One is in the central region of the country and

the other in the south. Both breeding events are progressing normally so far and seem to have started almost simultaneously, with both chicks estimated to be around 4 months old by Mar 2022. In **Argentina**, an [article](#) characterized the first mitogenome of AC, it reconstructed the phylogenetic relationships and evaluated possible footprints of convergent evolution associated with their life-history traits and distributional range. [Another article](#) showed how a disease outbreaks induced by humans led to AC abandoning a remote protected area. A collaborative project is searching for AC breeding sites to start tagging the chicks this year. Within the framework of the Action Plan for the Conservation of the AC, and as part of the ex-situ breeding efforts led by the AC Working Group of **Ecuador**, an egg hatched on February 10, 2022, at Amaru Bioparque, Cuenca City, southern Ecuador raising hopes to reinforce the national wild population estimated at around 150 individuals in the wild. This is the known first hatchling of the only breeding pair of condors in Bioparque Amaru. The father of this hatchling is from Southern Ecuador.

Let us know if you receive this newsletter indirectly and wish to be added to the circulation list as a 'Friend of VSG'. We have updated [guidance on the website](#) for anyone interested to formally join VSG, and a note to current members that we will be in touch separately to resolve issues for some of you who were so far unable to renew in the latest four-year cycle.

Do send news/items for inclusion ahead of the next edition by September. Or submit longer articles [to the editor](#) of the VSG journal, Vulture News. Reminder that the latest [Vulture News including back copies is available free](#) online – do read it!



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