



Vulture updates No. 25: October 2026

Around the World of Vultures & VSG activities

Our second VSG global online seminar simply entitled “Poisoning” encompassed the key poisoning threats faced by vultures globally, attracted 243 registrations from 54 countries, and recordings of these valuable summaries from global and regional experts on the topic are now available [on our website](#) - do catch up if you missed this! Our special thanks to the IUCN office and Justin Birkhoff for providing the zoom platform, as well as our meeting moderator Cat Taras for the excellent running of the event. Key talks from Andre Botha, Evan Beuchley (USA), Rubén Moreno-Opo (Spain), Vladimir Dobrev (Bulgaria) and José Tavares (Portugal), followed by a panel discussion also involving Martin Odino (Kenya) and Krishna Bhusal (Nepal). The recording provides a valuable reference resource on the poisoning topic which remains freely available on the VSG website.

VSG membership and leadership succession: We are pleased to confirm that the IUCN SSC portal became fully functional earlier this year, finally allowing long-pending memberships to be formalised. We now have a fantastic 600 of you registered as Friends of VSG in addition to the 171 formally registered experts. Our co-chairs met with the new head of SSC, Vivek Menon, who congratulated us on our flourishing group, its achievements and growing membership. Indeed, he recently issued his [own special message for IVAD](#) – showing his personal interest in publicising the importance of vultures. He has encouraged all the specialist groups to more proactively recruit younger members, and for succession planning, and we will be planning to appoint new co-chairs during this quadrennium. We’re very pleased to welcome Krishna Bhusal as our Asia Regional Co-chair.

Global/Multi-regional News

This year, [International Vultures Awareness Day](#) (IVAD) was celebrated in at least 37 countries, with 182 events registered on the website. The [social media](#) campaign focused on understanding the relationship between vultures and other species.

The World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) has published [an NSAIDs factsheet](#), for vets everywhere, highlighting the risks posed to vultures - which is also available on the [SAVE resources page](#).



CMS Vulture MsAP Review and Update – 2027-2028

Registration for the [16th Pan-African Ornithological Conference](#), which will be held in Marrakech, Morocco from the 12th-17th of April 2027 is now open. Early Bird registration will close on the **31st of October 2026**. The VSG has registered a 3-day Symposium to be conducted during the Conference and which will serve as the African Regional Workshop for the review and update of the CMS Vulture MsAP which will be completed and submitted for adoption at the next CMS COP in 2029. Conservationists and Researchers who have contributed to the conservation and research of African vultures over the last decade are encouraged to consider attending and presenting on their work at this Symposium. We look forward to seeing you there!

The [European Vulture Conference](#), which will also serve as the European Regional Workshop for the review and update of the CMS Vulture MsAP, will be held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria from the 14th-17th of October 2027. You can register via the above link to be kept updated on developments and to be notified when registration for the event opens.

Regional Round-ups

Asia

The annual online SAVE Open Day took place online on 29 September. Recordings will shortly be made available on the [SAVE](#) website. Technical guidance and rationale for the establishment and running of vulture safe-feeding sites in Asia (for Gyps vultures) was posted [on the SAVE website](#). An [infographic aimed at farmers](#) and the general public explaining the value of vultures and the threat posed by NSAIDs has been very popular and widely circulated.

South & SE Asia:

The government of **Nepal** formally restricted any production or veterinary use of three vulture-toxic drugs [nimesulide](#), [aceclofenac](#) and [ketoprofen](#) on 23rd April 2026 with fully gazetted bans (which carry higher fines and greater legal force) eagerly anticipated later this year. SAVE partners published two important protocols, one (in Vulture News) on the criteria in the South Asia context for declaring full [Vulture Safe Zone](#) status, as well as a regional protocols guidance for how and whether to establish [Vulture Safe feeding Sites](#). The publication of long-term monitoring results for large numbers of tagged [white-rumped vultures](#) (WRV) as well as standardised road-transect surveys across Nepal shows the continued population recovery and high annual survival rate after removal of diclofenac from veterinary practice. Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) published the



annual newsletter [Vulture Bulletin](#) with 9 impressive papers on vulture topics from Nepal. A study of vulture interactions in the [Tanahun District supplementary feeding site](#) was published. BCN received BirdLife International's prestigious [Conservation Achievement Award 2026](#) for leadership in Vulture Conservation. A Slender-billed vulture (SBV) was tagged using leg-loop harness method (first time for the species) as part of Hemanta Dhakal's PhD research. It was placed under close observation at the Nawalpur Vulture Restaurant Aviary for 20 days before release. It had been rescued at the Vulture Restaurant in Ghachowk in December 2025. Work has begun on the [Darwin Initiative funded project](#) partnered by BCN and the RSPB. There is a plan to tag a further 9 SBVs. Research on Egyptian vulture [feeding ecology](#) (Nepal), [roost habitat selection](#) (Nepal) and [coprophagy](#) (India) were also published out during this time period. Pokhara Bird Society, together with BCN, The Rufford Foundation, The Peregrine Fund, Local government, the Forest Department, the Department of National Park and Wildlife Reserve, Annapurna Conservation Area Project and local stakeholders, [conducted a school campaign](#) with audio visual presentation on vulture conservation, targeting 1500 students from 6 Schools and colleges in and around Pokhara, as part of IVAD celebrations. They also organised one-day vulture monitoring in three districts in and around Kaski, with a total of 42 participants, who recorded a total of 509 individuals of 7 species: (red-headed vulture, slender-billed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Egyptian vulture, Himalayan vulture, bearded vulture, cinereous vulture).

The first successful [post-release breeding](#) in the wild of captive-bred WRV was recorded at Buxa Tiger Reserve, **India**. Vulture electrocution risk mitigation through [carcass dump relocation](#) in Sudhauwala, Dehradun, provided important lessons for safe feeding measures. A [project in Himachal Pradesh](#) hosted awareness programmes for IVAD across 15 schools located near WRV nesting colonies, reaching more than 700 students. The programmes focused on vulture ecology, their importance as scavengers, arts and crafts, slogan and painting competitions, along with a locally-based scavenger hunt game. They also conducted a 30-day social media campaign "[What's Your Story](#)", encouraging people to share their first vulture sighting and personal experiences. Vultures and vulture conservation efforts underway in Bandipur NP, Karnataka featured positively in a national [news story](#).

Bangladesh will be hosting the face-to-face SAVE meeting in late November. A country-wide vulture population census is planned in the remaining months of 2026, the first since 2023. This will be conducted using Stratified-Random Sampling and Vantage Point Surveys, with technical support from SAVE and RSPB. The development of a new 10-year National Vulture Action Plan was agreed at the 11th Bangladesh National Vulture Recovery Committee (BNVRC) meeting in September. The Bangladesh Forest Department agreed to provide 40 cattle carcasses per year for



the vulture feeding station during breeding season. IVAD was celebrated locally in VSZs and nationally in Dhakar, with activities including a football match, nest monitoring training, and an art competition. Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary recorded 17 nests in the 2025-6 breeding season, of which 11 were successful. [Vulture Rescue Centres](#) in **Bangladesh** took in 49 Himalayan griffon vultures, 1 WRV and 1 EV.

In **Pakistan**, the new National Vulture Recovery Committee of Pakistan (NVRC) moved closer to being confirmed, with coordination with the [MoCC&EC](#). Changa Manga Breeding Centre bred another WRV chick, bringing total fledged chicks in the centre to 23, and 2,000 students and officials visited the centre over the past year. Annual undercover pharmacy surveys in the Tharparkar district of Sindh found no diclofenac, 84% pharmacists knew about the ban, but 58% did not know the reason. However, other vulture-toxic NSAIDs were present in some pharmacies (35% Aceclofenac, 40% Ketoprofen, Flunixin 55%). By contrast, none of the toxic drugs were found in the 11 pharmacies within Nagar Parkar VSZ, where sensitisation activities have taken place. Vulture-safe meloxicam was found in 98% of pharmacies. population monitoring surveys in the VSZ observed 84 active LBV nests and 277 LBVs (171 adults, 22 sub-adults, 84 chicks). 4 WRVs were observed, and no active nests. 2 active RHVs nests (containing eggs) were found, and 2 adult RHVs were observed.

Myanmar has updated and published its Vulture Conservation Action Plan (2026-2030).

Cambodia has formalised its chairing role of the RSC (Inter-Governmental Asian Vulture Regional Steering Committee), convening a hybrid meeting on 5th October with representation of 7 countries from the region, planning a fully-in-person meeting for 2027. The 2025-6 vulture nest survey found 14 SBV nests and 6 RHV nests and recorded 85% fledging success.

In 2026, 10 nests with 10 chicks were found in **Laos**. WWF Laos has added vulture species as conservation targets in the WWF-Laos' [Country Strategy Plan 2026-2030](#).

A reference genome [has been published](#) for RHVs in **Thailand**. Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary hosts one breeding pair, which successfully produced a chick in 2026. A planning meeting is scheduled for October 2026 to discuss improvements to breeding facilities and future reintroductions.

Bhutan has implemented first stakeholder consultations to support vulture conservation, begun social surveys to document threats, and trained forestry personnel and locals to survey vultures.

Central Asia:



Fieldwork in 2026 [was very successful](#) and the teams of the [Central Asian Vultures Project](#) (CAVP) and the Institute of Zoology in Uzbekistan, and BRCC in Kazakhstan tagged 13 more vultures with GPS/GSM transmitters. Dumpsite counts were carried out in Uzbekistan for Egyptian Vultures (EV). The CAVP published their [annual report](#) for the 2024-2025. One of the [Cinereous vultures](#) (CV) tagged in 2025 reappeared after a 6 months absence!

At the end of May, the [Central Asian Conservation Network](#) (CACN), Nature Foundation and the Raptor MOU held a workshop in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on raptor conservation, with the support of UNDP Kyrgyzstan and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Central Asia. In September, the CACN [launched Flyway Connect](#) in partnership with [Bird Count India](#) to encourage reporting of resightings of tagged birds across the Central Asian Flyway. This is hosted on the [Digital Hub](#), a newly launched online platform for storing and sharing data among stakeholders on the Central Asian Flyway, and is planning to store poisoning and vulture monitoring data from the region.

The CACN, CAVP, BRCC, Nature Foundation Kyrgyzstan and the Vulture Conservation Foundation initiated a joint effort to tackle the question of wildlife poisoning in the region. A shared questionnaire was developed by VCF and surveys are being conducted in Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The preliminary results were presented during the IUCN VSG Online meeting in September. CAVP was presented at the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) [Fellowship Conference in May](#). CAVP celebrated IVAD online, including launching a [limited-edition t-shirt](#) on their [teemill store](#).

West Asia/Middle East:

In **Armenia**, the first [adult and juvenile bearded vultures were tagged](#) in June. A [lappet-faced vulture chick was tagged](#) in **Saudi Arabia** as part of a collaboration between the Royal Commission for AlUla and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.

Europe

In April, the LIFE SUPport project [hosted a WildLIFE Crime Academy](#) training workshop. At the same time, **Cyprus** [formally approved](#) a National Action Plan Against Poisoning, developed within the [LIFE With Vultures framework](#).

In mid-August, the one-year-old Bearded Vulture (BV) 'Boev' was [found dead at a poisoning incident site](#) in **Bulgaria**, together with [five CVs and two Griffon vultures](#) (GV). Boev was released in Bulgaria in 2025 and he became famous in spring 2026 for exploring Europe, covering 14,100

km in 123 days. A man was [arrested a couple weeks later](#) and admitted the crime. In response, [protests in Sofia and Plovdiv](#) called for stronger enforcement of wildlife protection laws. The BSPB poison-response team are performing [regular patrols](#).

In May, the LPO [signed a partnership agreement](#) with the **French** National Gendarmerie under the umbrella of [LIFE GYP'ACT](#), to strengthen cooperation in combatting wildlife crime. This is part of a wider programme of capacity building in this area, including: supporting French participation in the [Wildlife Crime Academy](#), the introduction of a wildlife crime detection dog team, the continued use of the application Ornisave to monitor and document risks and mortalities for GPS-tagged vultures, and the development of an online training programme (MOOC) "[Magistrat de Biodiversité](#)" to strengthen magistrates' knowledge and understanding of biodiversity issues and environmental offences.

Bearded Vulture (BV):

During the BV breeding season 2025-26, 44 pairs from 25 different centres (7 of them in specialised breeding centres, 17 in zoos and 1 in a rescue centre), laid 44 eggs, of which 32 hatched and 28 survived and fledged. This year, the huge variation in hatching dates is particularly striking: the first chick hatched on 22 January, and the last on 10 May - the latest chick to hatch in over 50 years of the breeding programme. 6 of the captive-bred chicks were included in the EEP network, mainly due to their genetic value to create new pairs; 2 were given to [FCQ](#) to be released in [Picos de Europa](#) and 20 were released in 5 different project areas around Europe: 6 within the Gyp'Act LIFE project that released them in [Baronnies](#) and [Grand Causses \(France\)](#), 5 in [Andalucia \(Spain\)](#), 2 in [Maestrazgo \(Spain\)](#), 4 in the Alps (2 in [Switzerland](#) and 2 in [Berchtesgaden, Germany](#)), and [three in Bulgaria \(video, photo post, article\)](#). Green Balkans [renovated the BV breeding aviary](#). On March 26, a man in **France** was [sentenced to 18 months](#) in prison after shooting a five-year-old reintroduced Bearded Vulture named 'Pyrénées' in January.

(Eurasian) Griffon Vulture (GV):

The GV population in the **Bulgarian** part of the Eastern Rhodopes reached 157 pairs, marking another historical peak of its population. However, 6 mortality cases due to electrocution and/or collision and one possible case of a poisoned GV were also recorded. The [LIFE SUPport project](#) streamed a [GV nest](#) in **Croatia**. GVs have [successfully bred](#) in **Cyprus** for the first time in five years with five breeding pairs recorded, and three chicks confirmed. Four of those pairs include vultures brought over from Spain between 2022 and 2023 through the LIFE with Vultures project. For the first time in Cyprus, a GV chick [has been tagged](#) when it is still in the nest. In June however, seven [GVs were poisoned](#) with Carbofuran in **Austria**, a pesticide banned in Europe since 2008.

Cinereous Vulture (CV):

In **Bulgaria**, LIFE Rhodope Vultures, coordinated by the BSPB, recorded 8 pairs and two fledged chicks as a result of the restocking of CVs in the Eastern Rhodopes, the [first record of CV breeding in the region since 1993](#). The chicks were [ringed and tagged](#). 5 more artificial nests were built around the release site to try to keep the birds in the area. Unfortunately, two birds from the programme were poisoned – one in **Greece** in March 2026 during a mass poisoning event and another in the [poisoning that claimed Boev the BV in August 2026](#) in Central Balkan Mountains in **Bulgaria**. In May, the [LIFE Rhodope Vulture restocking programme](#) welcomed five Spanish CVs in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains in **Bulgaria**, with planned release in October 2026. In July, [eleven Spanish individuals arrived at the BV LIFE acclimatisation aviary](#). In **Greece**, the Evros Delta and Dadia National Parks Management Unit of N.E.C.C.A [recorded 44 breeding pairs](#) in Dadia NP colony. In July, a CV [died in a collision with a wind turbine](#) in the **Greek** Eastern Rhodope Mountains. In **Portugal**, the [2026 cohort of CVs](#) began acclimatisation in Douro Internacional Natural Park at the end of March. It consists of five CVs: four juveniles born in 2025 and a young male named 'Pousio', hatched in the Vidigueira colony in 2024. In August, the LIFE Aegyptius Return project [tagged 13 CV chicks](#), bringing the total to 56 chicks monitored under the project. In May, the Niš Police Directorate [arrested a man suspected of poisoning a CV](#) near Svrljig, **Serbia**. A study conducted by Linn Lembke, a master's student at the University of Coimbra, [revealed details on CV nesting site preferences](#). She analysed 938 nests in 10 breeding colonies across Portugal, Spain, France and Greece.

Egyptian Vulture (EV):

Bulgaria's "Egyptian Vulture New LIFE" project [won the LIFE Citizen's Prize](#) at the EU's most prestigious awards for nature conservation. For the 15th year in a row, an [online camera](#) followed an EV pair nesting. The 2026 breeding season achieved a [record number of EV chicks](#). After time [preparing in the "Vulture School"](#) in **Bulgaria**, the 2026 cohort of EVs, the largest cohort yet, were [released in the Eastern Rhodopes](#). For the first time ever, this included two vultures bred in the **UK** at the [Horstmann Trust](#). A [late-hatching young vulture](#) has been taken into captivity with the hope of release in the 2027 cohort. In other good news, a [wind power project](#) that would have endangered the local EV population, was prevented.

Africa

North Africa:

In **Morocco**, 61 Rüppell's Vultures (RV) and three African White-backed Vultures (WBV) were captured and ringed at the Jbel Moussa Vulture Rehabilitation Centre (CRV Jbel Moussa) by AMPOVIS, in partnership with the Moroccan Government's ANEF. Four Rüppell's Vultures and all three African white-backed vultures were fitted with GPS transmitters in collaboration with the Junta de Andalucía, GREFA and [VCF](#). One died [crossing the Strait of Gibraltar](#) and another [flew across Iberia](#) for a month. A notable result from the monitoring of Rüppell's vultures was recorded in 2026: for the first time, an individual ringed at the CRV Jbel Moussa in June 2025 returned to the site in June 2026, one year after its initial capture. The bird was recaptured and fitted with a GPS transmitter before subsequently moving south and returning to **Senegal** a few days later. This observation provides preliminary evidence of repeated seasonal movements between West Africa and northern **Morocco** by immature Rüppell's vultures. Continued GPS tracking and the detection of additional returning individuals will be necessary to determine whether such movements represent a regular annual migration pattern in this species. Three griffon vulture (GV) chicks were produced in the wild in 2026 in northern **Morocco**, further consolidating the reintroduced breeding population. New arrivals of adult GVs from southern **Spain** were also recorded, confirming the continued movement of individuals across the Strait of Gibraltar and the established connectivity between the Iberian and northern Moroccan populations.

West Africa:

A well-researched [BBC podcast](#) from Nigeria highlighted threats to African vultures and also mentions a planned regional workshop to be held in Abuja bringing predominantly 16 governments as well as the key NGOs and experts together to further develop the West Africa Vulture Action Plan process in early November. The workshop is hosted by NCF and BirdLife made possible by a grant from the Leventis Foundation.

In **Nigeria**, VSG members Michael Manja Williams and Bello Adamu Danmallam [appeared live on Nigerian Television](#) to discuss the ecological and public-health importance of vultures in August. The discussion on PRTVC's PTV Express focused on major threats to vultures, including habitat degradation, poisoning, poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and the use of vultures and their parts in belief-based practices. The one-hour programme called for stronger policy enforcement, habitat protection, scientific monitoring, public awareness, and community participation.



In **Niger**, 14 cliff nests were registered in the Koutous massif (6 RV and 8 EV nests), with chicks observed at 6. [Sahara Conservation](#) confirmed persistence of threats to vultures, including two cases of illegal capture of an EV chick reported in Niger. One could be intercepted and handed over to the relevant authorities, although sadly the chick did not survive. Two intact Hooded vulture (HV) carcasses were discovered in a hunter's possession, providing further evidence of ongoing exploitation and pressure on vulture populations. Two dedicated workshops with the participation of 100 customary and administrative authorities were organised in the Koutous Massif. The objective was to enhance their role and capacity to integrate vulture conservation into local decision-making and to respond more effectively to poisoning and poaching incidents.

IBCP **Benin** Research Fellow Dr. Abiola Sylvestre Chaffra continues his work conducting market surveys on vultures and other raptors in markets for belief-based use in southern **Benin** with support from [IBCP](#) and [Hawkwatch International](#). For International Vulture Awareness Day, he held an online mini-conference on Benin vultures, sponsored by [Eco-Care Benin](#), entitled, “Beyond poisoning: underestimated threats accelerating the declines of African vultures”.

IBCP **Togo** Project Manager Yendoubouam Kourdjouak continues to monitor vultures at slaughterhouses in Togo; his work was featured in a recent article in [Mongabay](#) and is the subject of a forthcoming article in the Journal of Raptor Research.

The next phase of a vulture conservation project in **Ghana** has begun, and there is a [summary of approaches and findings so far](#).

East and Central Africa:

In **Chad**, from the 29 tree nests monitored in the Ouadi Rlmé - Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve (20 Lappet-Faced (LFV) nests and 9 RVs) 15 of them produced a chick (11 LFV and 4 RV). IBCP **Chad** Research Fellow Djekillamber Djekadjim and team published the results of fieldwork on vultures in N'Djamena, Chad, entitled, “Abundance, distribution, and conservation status of critically endangered vultures in N'Djamena and environs, Chad, Central Africa,” in [Frontiers in Bird Science](#). Djekillamber is expanding vulture surveys to other areas in Chad with support from IBCP and [The Peregrine Fund](#).

[The Peregrine Fund](#)'s **Kenya** programme has been monitoring three of the largest RV breeding colonies in the country since 2018. This is likely among the most extensive datasets for this species with an average of 1000 individuals and 115 nests photographed and counted twice per year. Over the past 8 years, there has been little change in the number of individuals counted, while nests have declined on average by 15 nests per year, despite high year-to-year variability.



Also in Kenya, a partnership of the Peregrine Fund, Kenya Wildlife Service, Laikipia Wildlife Forum, Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs, and Mpala Research Centre, hosted an [IVAD event](#) at Likii Comprehensive school, with over 130 participants, including 110 students from four schools. Students took part in a debate about conservation issues, performed original songs, poems and skits, and produced vulture artwork. Educational materials, such as custom species posters, activity books, and storybooks were distributed.

In **Tanzania**, the Peregrine Fund and Lion Landscapes [hosted an IVAD event](#) which reached roughly 500 people in a remote area bordering Nyerere NP; some attendees walked up to seven hours to take part. The area is home to Wasukuma agro-pastoralist and Barabaig pastoralist communities, where poisoning linked to human–wildlife conflict is an ongoing concern. The District Game Officer of Rufiji attended as Guest of Honour, joining speeches from TPF staff. Programming centered on the importance of vultures and the hazards of pesticide use.

Southern Africa:

The **BV Task Force**, a structure established in 2006 and focused on the conservation of the southern-most population of this species confined to **Lesotho** and **South Africa**, celebrated its [twentieth anniversary](#) at a ceremony during their meeting at Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the 28 May 2026. The BV was successfully declared [Bird of the Year](#) for 2027 by Birdlife South Africa.

Three BVs were fitted with tracking devices in **Lesotho** as part of a project managed by LHDA (Lesotho Highlands Development Authority) to monitor their movements pre and post inundation of a dam in the eastern Highlands of Lesotho.

The BV Breeding Programme harvested six eggs from the wild. Five chicks hatched and are due to fledge in the next 2 months. This brings the total number of founders in the breeding programme to 31. For International Vulture Awareness Day 2026, BirdLife South Africa took a playful approach to vulture education at the South African Bird Fair, with a [vulture-themed scavenger hunt](#). Participants solved riddles about South Africa’s resident breeding vulture species to collect stickers and answered biology questions to enter a prize draw.

North America

As of 10 September 2026, the free-ranging California Condor (CC) population in Baja California, **Mexico**, numbers 54 individuals. Three wild-fledged juveniles were confirmed survived from the

2025 breeding season. The field team is currently conducting annual health assessments, with 15 CCs captured and examined to date. Two captive-bred CCs from [Chapultepec Zoo](#) are expected to be released during the last week of September 2026, and preparations are underway to receive three juveniles from the [San Diego Zoo Safari Park](#) for future release. A collaborative team of researchers published a new paper that suggests female traits such as senescence and individual variation are [factors shaping early-life traits in captive-bred CCs](#). This research was based on data from 499 eggs laid at [The World Center for Birds of Prey](#) in Boise, Idaho, **USA**. Thirty-nine captive-bred juvenile CCs were transferred from breeding facilities at Oregon Zoo, the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey, the Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Zoo and Safari park, to release sites in Arizona, and California, **USA**. Seven CCs were transferred to the Yurok Tribe on July 20. In early September, 10 condors were transferred to Central California and 10 to Southern California release sites, while 12 condors were transferred to the Northern Arizona release site. The Association of Zoo and Aquariums (AZA) has now established a [SAFE program](#) for the CC. This program will work in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other [California Condor Recovery Program](#) partners. SAFE California Condor has officially been approved by the AZA's Wildlife Conservation Committee as the 58th [SAFE species program](#). AZA SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) focuses the collective expertise within AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and leverages their audiences to save species.

Two papers focused on lead were recently published; one looking at [trends in lead fatalities for CCs](#), and another highlighting a way to [quantify lead levels in bones of American Black Vultures \(ABVs\)](#). Collaborative research involving the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center, six universities, and five Wildlife Services State Programs led to a publication [estimating survival and examining mortality sources for ABVs throughout the USA](#). Average annual survival was high overall (0.95, 95% CI: 0.92–0.98). The high level of estimate precision was due to combining wing-tag resight data with transmitter fate data in a single model. Mortality risk differed by season and age class such that vultures experienced 68.7% more hazard during the breeding season, and adults experienced 66.2% less hazard than juveniles. Amongst the mortality causes, 67% were anthropogenic, 4% were natural, and the remaining 29% were unknown. Researchers also found an unexpected result, in that greater land cover diversity reduced ABV mortality risk. [Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#) (HMS) in Pennsylvania, **USA** is tracking 6 TVs and 4 ABVs fitted with satellite transmitters. Juvenile ABVs were fitted with transmitters in New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Vermont, USA. This is now the first nesting record for ABVs in New Hampshire and the second nesting record for ABVs in Vermont. HMS monitored 10 ABV nests in Pennsylvania, 2 ABV nests in New Jersey, and one ABV nest each in New Hampshire and Vermont in 2026; 3 were in caves (67% success) and 11 were in



human-made structures (100% success). HMS also monitored 1 successful TV nest and tagged 25 ABVs and 2 TVs this year.

The World Center for Birds of Prey [celebrated IVAD](#) on 5 September, with 582 guests, and a variety of activities including a "vulture vomit" station using kinetic sand to illustrate defensive regurgitation, and a "What Vulture Are You?" personality quiz introducing different species and their traits. Guests also had a chance to meet and talk with CC propagation biologists.

South & Central America

Neotropical and Cóndor Andino del Ecuador Foundations, with support from the Corporación Autónoma de Santander (CAS), Colombia, and the Cincinnati Zoo, USA, worked on the institutional development of the Andean Condor (AC) Conservation Plan for Santander department. That process included the training of condor guardians, including the provision of binoculars and camera traps for monitoring. Provision of diverse supplies for sheep farmers and construction of greenhouses to promote and enhance food security. Also, the installation of fencing to protect water bodies. Training in nature-based tourism and sustainable management of sheep, goats, and cattle. This conservation plan was developed through a participatory process involving Páramo communities, rural schools, NGOs, and different public and private institutions. More than 40 people participated in a three-day workshop.

[Fundación Cóndor Andino Ecuador](#) continued tagging wild vultures. In recent months, three AC chicks were tagged in their nests before fledging. In addition, one King Vulture, one Turkey Vulture, and one ABV were tagged in the southern part of the country, near the border with Peru. All three of these vultures showed elevated blood lead levels, although the source of the exposure has not yet been identified. Fieldwork is also being conducted along the Ecuador–Peru border to determine whether ACs move between these two countries. Previous data, including GPS movement data, genetic sampling, and topographical analyses, suggest that these populations are not mixing. Finally, the AC captive breeding program is being reorganized to help safeguard the unique genetic makeup of what appears to be an isolated population.

Researchers at INIBIOMA-CONICET are starting to tag ABVs with GPS tags at rubbish dumps in Patagonia, **Argentina**. They are conducting microbiome analyses based on 16S rRNA sequencing to evaluate bird movements in relation to the potential dispersal of pathogens acquired at the rubbish dumps. ACs are being tagged in central Argentina to assess the population's health status, to investigate the potential impact of anthropisation, genetic structure of the population and connectivity. Two dozen ACs, plus TVs, and ABVs were already sampled. Cloacal swabs were collected from all individuals to test for *Salmonella* spp., which has a relatively high prevalence in



condors and smaller vultures. Although the isolates are still undergoing typing, these results warrant further studies to analyze their potential link to productive activities and to determine their significance for the health of condors, other species, and the wider environment.

Researchers in **Peru** are developing a socioecological and spatial assessment of AC poisoning risk in the Cotahuasi Sub-basin Reserve, southern Peru. The area remains poorly studied despite reported poisoning events. The project integrates information on condor distribution and conservation with the social and cultural factors potentially associated with poisoning risk. International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) was celebrated in Arequipa, bringing together public and private institutions engaged in vulture conservation and environmental education. The event strengthened regional collaboration around AC conservation in a region that includes the Colca Valley, one of South America's best-known areas for observing the species.

Requesting your help: PhD student Taruna Patidar at the University of Kota, Rajasthan, India, is asking VSG members to [complete a digital survey](#) about their experiences in vulture research and conservation. This should take no more than 15 minutes.

New funding opportunity: HawkWatch International have a [funding opportunity](#), open until the end of December, for projects led by researchers and NGOs in countries outside of Europe, USA and Canada.

Please send items for inclusion ahead of the next edition of this newsletter in March/April to vsg-cat-taras@outlook.com , or submit longer articles [to the editor](#) of the VSG journal.

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