



Vulture updates No 19 - Oct 2023 - Around the World of Vultures & VSG activities

Many VSG members will meet in person at the European Vulture Congress (including from all the vulture continents) to be held in Spain next month (see below for more). There will be several VSG-related talks and a round table. We hope to meet many of you there at what could be the nearest we've yet come to a global vulture meeting.

We plan to update our [VSG position statement](#) on 'Vultures & human health' and we are also developing a new one on 'vultures & livestock predation'. We will be contacting relevant VSG members on developing these, but if you want to ensure we get your inputs, do please contact the co-chairs to express your interest.

CMS Vulture MsAP Mid-term Implementation Review – we have received excellent feedback from across the flyway with 97 responses submitted via the [SurveyMonkey platform](#) created for this purpose by the deadline. We are currently in the process of consolidating submissions received and have commenced with the drafting of the Mid-term Implementation Report that will be submitted to the CMS CoP15 at Samarkand, Uzbekistan in Feb 2024.

International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) 2 Sept 2023 – this event has become an institution on the global conservation calendar and this year 96 organisations from 38 countries registered their participation on the [IVAD website](#). Many activities are reported in the regional roundups below, and [VCF](#) and [HCT](#) further promoted IVAD by activating the IVAD social media accounts on [FB](#) and [Instagram](#) (launch and content) with 27,781 responses plus 500+ views of the IVAD website. There are plans to further update the IVAD website, logo and other comms tools for 2024 and we'll keep VSG members updated on this.

Vulture News Editor: Sadly, we have accepted the resignation of the current editor of Vulture News, Dr Louis Phipps who had to relinquish the role for personal reasons. We would like to thank Louis for his contribution in producing several editions of the journal and for committing to complete at least another two editions thereof before stepping down. This does however provide us with an opportunity to invite applications from especially early- or mid-career VSG members to take on this challenging, but very important, role. The Editor will receive a small stipend per edition produced and will gain valuable experience in this role. Interested members can contact either [André](#) or [Chris](#) to apply. Kindly submit a resumé reflecting your background and experience in this field with your e-mail of application. Applications will be reviewed by the VSG Steering Committee before a final decision is made.

Asia Roundup:

South & SE Asia: The biggest news in the period came from **India** where the Government took the huge and significant [step of banning two more known vulture-toxic veterinary drugs](#) from veterinary use – **aceclofenac** and **ketoprofen**. News came through that the government's [drugs technical committee had approved the ban in July](#), but it was commendably quickly after this that the measure was [Gazetted](#) into Indian law in early August!! Although the safety-testing and peer-reviewed publication of research results by the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and other SAVE Partners has been available for many years, only **Bangladesh** had previously taken such key steps,

and its hoped India's move will prompt similar steps throughout the region and more widely. Encouragingly, **Nepal's** National Vulture Recovery Committee met in early Oct and invited SAVE and all relevant Ministries, so hopefully this may result in similar bans there. Both newly banned drugs are painkillers, frequently used by vets to treat cattle across the region in place of the earlier banned diclofenac which almost completely wiped-out vulture populations across Asia since the 1990s. The only downside in **India** was that a third drug, nimesulide, which is increasingly being sold and used by vets across the country was not included in this latest legislation, and its puzzling why not. Particularly after publications demonstrated its toxicity, and indeed, one further publication by IVRI (in *Env. Tox. & Pharmacol.*) published in Sept emphasises the urgency of such a measure with testing in India. A Delhi High Court case ruling prompted by petitioner Mr Gaurav Burman certainly played a key role in achieving these bans and the case for banning nimesulide is still open and subject to followup. In Tamil Nadu, [some innovative artwork by Arulagam](#) promoting vultures, and the Segre supported work there has increased activities for developing a Vulture Safe Zone around Mudamulai NP. In **Nepal**, the updated [National Vulture Action Plan](#) was formally released and made available – with extremely close alignment to the SAVE Blueprint and CMS MsAP. [IVAD participation](#) in Nepal continues to grow. 12 years monitoring of nesting trend and breeding success of WRV 2010-2021 shows a [stable breeding numbers trend and productivity](#). But the threat of [poison baits was reviewed for 2011 to 2023](#) showing a slightly worrying increasing trend in incidents and vulture casualties. The **Myanmar** Vulture Working Group partners developed a map of all vulture records 2002 – 2022 with predictive distribution models highlighting vulture stronghold areas in Myanmar. Using this, safe food has been provided in two areas, the Indawgyi Lake in Kachin State and in S Shan State (E Myanmar). Cattle carcasses were bought from slaughterhouses only after assurance that no diclofenac was used. Between Mar-June 2023, 5 active and 2 inactive WRV nests were located in S and N Shan State, linked to the feeding site work. Awareness work was carried out in all three areas, nominating two local organisations as species champions in Shan state through lectures and vulture restaurant activities. This resulted in Apr reports of 4 species and estimating 115 individuals: WRV 50, HG 50, SBV 14 & RHV in S Shan State. Scarcity of food (changing local practices and meat consumption habits) means that restaurants at Indawgyi Lake attracted birds, and FB publicity used to good awareness effect. Pharmacy surveys and safe veterinary drugs promotion involved Community Animal Health Workers, Govt Livestock and Breeding Dept plus Forest Dept in discouraging veterinary diclofenac use. In **Cambodia**, 2 [RHV were satellite tagged](#) by [Rising Phoenix](#), a relatively new member of the Cambodia Vulture Working Group, and of SAVE. The first, a juvenile, was caught and tagged on 29 July 2023 in Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary N Cambodia, and a second soon after. In **Pakistan**, an important study [demonstrated diclofenac toxicity in Black Kites](#), a study that has been long awaited, although it was not lethal at the lowest levels tested. [IVAD participation](#) in all six SAVE countries, **Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia** was at an all-time high. Finally, two [very interesting films](#) were produced...one on the [last release of vultures from the breeding programme in Nepal](#), and a second one on the [Vulture Safe Zone work of BNHS in Assam](#), India.

Central Asia: The [3rd Int. Conference](#) 'Eagles of the Palearctic: Study and Conservation' held in Almaty, **Kazakhstan** in late Sept included [a round table on the vultures of C. Asia](#) and the Central Asian Flyway. Threats, collaboration prospects and capacity building were key topics covered among numerous vulture presentations. [The C Asian Vultures Project](#) with [BiodiversityRes & Cons Center](#) tagged 4 more EVs in late July/early Aug in **Uzbekistan**, bringing the [total tagged in the region to 19](#) (13 in Uzbekistan, 6 in Kazakhstan). New congregation sites were identified suggesting [Uzbekistan may be a stronghold](#) for EV in Central Asia. During the expedition, a training workshop was also organised and new breeding sites of EV, BV & GV were found in the south of the country. One 2021 tagged EV from Uzbekistan died in late March in **Yemen** but unfortunately no option was found for someone on the ground to locate the bird to determine the cause of death. [A paper](#) documented the number of the EVs in the Karatau mountains area of **Kazakhstan**, suggesting EV populations there are stable (91 territories so far), despite deterioration in habitat quality and reduced breeding success in recent years. Drastic declines in GV and CV populations in Kazakhstan were also reported: Occupied nests of GV in Karatau decreased by 95% between 2010-2022 (Kapyonkina et al., 2023 In print). After 20 years of discussions, these species are now in line for inclusion in the Kazakhstan Red Data Book. Further C Asia EV updates are available [here](#) and on [FB](#) but movements of tagged Kazakhstan EVs [are available](#) on the Russian Raptor Research & Conservation Network website.

West Asia/Middle East: The Environment Society of **Oman** celebrated IVAD with 3 initiatives: releasing an infographic about resident vultures of Oman, in both [English](#) and [Arabic](#) (both available free on the [ESO website](#)); publishing a short [video](#) about the release of illegally captured Lappet-faced Vulture back into the wild and thirdly, publicising an awareness campaign on resident vultures of Oman on ESO's social media channels. [100 more hazardous electric poles](#) for migratory EVs were insulated in **Turkey**. Note there is also an ongoing small project for the conservation of EV in Southern **Iran**. [Insulations](#) in **Saudi Arabia** earlier in the year (over 200 electric poles) will likely save many kites and wintering steppe eagles as well as vultures.

European Round-up: *Compiled by Barbara Pais*

Over 330 conservationists, researchers and vulture experts have so far registered for the [European Vulture Conference](#) (EVC), 14-17 Nov 2023, in Cáceres, Spain. This major vulture gathering is a unique opportunity for collaboration and knowledge exchange with a diverse programme. The World Wildlife Day prompted a [special VCF article](#) about CITES - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, celebrating its [50th anniversary](#). The new Bulgaria EV Species Action Plan was endorsed for the period 2023-2032 (Summary [in English](#)).

Fighting threats: The [Wildlife Crime Academy](#)'s Level 3 Supreme Course on Wildlife Crime Analysis and Intelligence successfully concluded in Apr 2023 in Málaga (Spain), with participants from 9 European countries obtaining qualifications in this [advanced and specialised field](#). The ultimate aim being for prosecuting and convicting more wildlife criminals in their countries, and this is gaining momentum. In **Bulgaria**, a dedicated police sector within the Min. of the Interior was formed. Designated "[Crimes against the Environment and Wildlife](#)", it is set to combat various offences related to wildlife and environmental conservation. In **Cyprus**, a [man was issued a €21.000 fine](#) for wildlife crime, the first-ever conviction in the country – he had killed a Bonelli's Eagle and a Goshawk, poisoned by highly toxic Carbofuran, banned in the EU since 2008. In France, a man will [stand trial for fatally shooting](#) two protected vulture bird species, a CV and a BV. An [animation video](#) produced by the BalkanDetox LIFE project illustrates the vicious cycle of death by poisoning and is being used as an [awareness-raising tool](#) with respect to the poison baits threat. A Conference was organised in **Sardinia, Italy**, sharing best practice for mitigating electrocution and collision risks, with over 100 participants. [Key take-aways of the Conference](#). In **Croatia**, the [LIFE Support](#) project is implementing measures to [modify pylons and secure power lines](#) to reduce GV mortality in the Kvarner islands. The mosquito-transmitted West Nile Virus (WNV) poses a growing threat to captive BVs in Europe. Though often not directly deadly, the impact of the virus on the BV's immune system causes chronic health issues that can ultimately be fatal to wild and captive birds. To tackle the threat of WNV for the [BV Captive Breeding Network](#) (BV EEP), the effectiveness of a [vaccine against the WNV is being studied](#), led by Ursula Höfle from IREC (Institute for Game and Wildlife Research). In **Spain**, a BV that died of electrocution [tested positive for pentobarbital drugs](#) in the toxicological analyses. The intoxication might not have killed the bird directly but could have affected its equilibrium and reflexes, concluded the authors of a [recently published study](#) led by Spanish researchers.

Bearded Vulture (BV): A new project started, co-funded by the EU's LIFE Programme, the "[Life for the Bearded Vulture](#)" project, aims to restore the former range of BV & CV populations in the Balkans and help the genetic flow between W Europe, Africa and Asia. In Austria, 9 pairs attempted to breed, setting a new milestone in the country as 2 new pairs were established this season, including [one in Eastern Tyrol](#). In total, [8 fledglings were produced](#) in 2023, the breeding success doubling in Austria, a new milestone for the reintroduction efforts across the Alpine countries since 1986. The BV [captive breeding season of 2022/23 set a new record](#) for the number of eggs laid and chicks hatched. [Pairing birds in captivity](#) is a complex task, involving more than 40 organisations within the BV Captive-Breeding Network, managed by the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) on behalf of EAZA's Ex Situ Programme (Bearded Vulture EEP). The coordination is fundamental for [reintroducing and reinforcing wild populations](#). Of the 35 offspring produced this year, [21 were released in nine different locations](#), whilst 14 were kept in captivity for genetic diversity and pair renewal within the network. In Switzerland, [two captive-bred BVs](#) were released in

Melchsee-Frutt; 2 BVs were also released in [Berchtesgaden NP](#) in Germany. In Maestrazgo, Spain, [3 BVs were released](#) in Parc Natural de la Tinença de Benifassà, and the [reintroduction project in Maestrazgo is progressing well](#). In SE France, the new [LIFE Gyp'Act](#) conservation project aims to consolidate the BV population, ensuring the connection between the Pyrenean and Alpine populations. The project is building on the encouraging results of [LIFE GypConnect](#), implemented 2015-2022, which contributed to the establishment of 6 new BV pairs across the French Pre-Alps and the Massif Central. This year, [8 captive-bred BVs were released](#) in S France and E Pyrenees within the [LIFE Gyp'Act project](#). BV "Rei del Causse", captive-bred and released in France in 2022, was [rescued in Germany](#) and released back in France. Also within the Gyp'Act project, 16 GVs were captured and fitted with GPS transmitters, a "[proactive monitoring system](#)" to prevent mortality causes for BVs. In Spain, Junta de Andalusia reported [12 BV pairs attempted to breed this season in the wild](#). Only 10 pairs laid eight clutches, 5 chicks hatched, but only 2 fledged. 2 captive-bred juveniles [were released in Castril NP](#), 23 May and [another 2 juveniles released](#) in June in Sierras de Cazorla, Segura e Villas NP. A BV "Eglazine" having spent several weeks in Germany during the winter months, an uncommon behaviour for the species, [returned to France](#). Since May 2023, Eglazine's GPS tag signal was lost in Normandy, France, and despite several on-site searches, neither the bird nor the tag was found. Photographers or observers who might come across Eglazine are [requested to share their information](#) and photos to help find the bird. In the Netherlands, a [BV died after a train collision](#). This was female "Mojo", hatched in the wild in the French Alps in 2022. Another 2022 BV, "Roc", captive-bred bird released in France also died in the Netherlands after [colliding with a wind turbine](#). A [recently published](#) study confirmed the existence of a BV nesting site in Portugal 29,000 years ago. Through the analysis of coprolites (fossilised faeces), the archaeological site "Lagar Velho," a rock shelter in Lapedo Valley (Leiria – Portugal) used by Upper Paleolithic hunters-gatherers for short-term stays, becoming [the oldest place in the Iberian Peninsula](#) with the proven presence of a BV nesting-site.

Egyptian Vulture (EV): The EV pair that settled in Porte Conte RP, Sardinia in the spring of 2019 [returned this season and bred successfully again](#). The information was shared by the [LIFE Safe for Vulture partners](#), which have been monitoring the pair since its first breeding attempt. Although the current LIFE project aims to ensure the long-term survival of the fragile GV guild in Sardinia, with other scavenger species benefiting too. A recently published study sheds light on the [factors influencing nestling sex ratio variation in EVs](#). With a long-term assessment of populations from Spain's mainland, the Balearic and Canary Islands over 30 years (1995-2021), authors found that insularity influences offspring sex ratio, corroborating the island syndrome.

Griffon Vulture (GV): [14 GVs originally from Spain arrived in Cyprus](#), within the framework of the [LIFE with Vultures](#) project. The aim is to boost this nationally Critically Endangered GV population. Following soft-release protocols, the birds spent several months in the acclimatisation facility before being released into the wild. The first group of [7 GVs was released](#) at the end of Sept, all fitted with GPS transmitters. Of the 15 Spanish GVs [released in Sept 2022](#) in Cyprus, 4 have unfortunately died: two drowned, one was electrocuted, and another fatally [collided with a power line](#). Thanks to the data received by the GPS transmitter, one [GV was rescued](#). However, this season, the only GV [pair attempting to breed this season failed](#), possibly due to human disturbance around the nest. In Croatia, a new project to strengthen the endangered GV population there has started this spring. [LIFE Support](#) is a 5-year project co-financed by the EU's [LIFE Programme](#) that aims to create better conditions for the species to recolonise its historical breeding ground on the Croatian mainland. In Sept, 4 rehabilitated GVs were set free on the island of Cres [after being rescued and rehabilitated](#). In Sardinia, Italy, [12 juvenile GVs arrived from Spain](#) to support the recovery of the local population, the only remaining natural GV colony in the country. The young GVs travelled over 600 km by boat to join the restocking efforts carried out in Sardinia within the [LIFE Safe for Vultures project](#). The Sardinian GV population is showing signs of expanding range, as a juvenile [GV was seen in the SE corner of the island](#), where the acclimatisation aviary is placed. Also, a young [GV was saved](#) from drowning in Sardinia and rehabilitated. A study was [published](#) about the effect of release strategies on the survival and home range stability of GVs translocated to Sardinia which demonstrates advantages of soft-release strategies over hard-release methods that lack an acclimatisation period. Another [published study](#) analyses the results of a ten-year reintroduction project to restore the GV population in Vrachanski Balkan NP, W Bulgaria. Between 2010-2020, [61 rehabilitated and captive-bred GVs were released](#). The first

breeding success in the wild was in 2015, and the population has been growing since then. One more [published study](#) carried out by a team of Spanish researchers sheds light on [how vulture culture](#) (transmissible cultural traits) within a population influences the dietary variation of GVs.

Cinereous Vulture (CV): After extensive work coordinated by the [CV European Endangered Species Programme](#) (EEP) of the [European Association of Zoos and Aquaria](#) (EAZA) that involved experts from the Zoo Planckendael, GREFA, the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) and Parc des Oiseaux, the new [“EAZA Best Practice Guidelines for Cinereous Vulture”](#) was recently published. The aim is to encourage and promote the highest possible standards for husbandry of this species in captivity. In **Portugal**, within the [LIFE Aegyptius Return project](#), 2 juvenile birds that were rehabilitated in Wildlife rescue centres were released, [Zimbro](#) and [Gerês](#). Several [new nests were found](#) in the four Portuguese colonies, and 18 CV chicks hatched in the wild have been analysed and [ringed in the nest](#). 15 chicks were also [fitted with a GPS transmitter](#). To fight the main threats affecting CV survival, the project is [supporting hunters in transitioning](#) to lead-free ammunition and organised [capacity-building sessions](#) with police officers. A [paper](#) documented the chronology and details of reintroduction of the CV to **Bulgaria**. Listed as locally extinct since 1985, two breeding nuclei were established in the country after the successful release of 72 birds, between 2018-2022, with the aim of bringing back this critically endangered species of the [Vultures Back to LIFE project](#). In the Balkan Mountains of Bulgaria, a new breeding record, at [least 3 CV chicks hatched in the wild](#) this season, surpassing last year’s breeding success. The CV is one of the target species of a new LIFE project in Bulgaria, that aims to consolidate the species, also restoring the BV, [LIFE for the Bearded Vulture](#). In **Spain**, Rewilding Spain [released 7 CV](#) in the [Iberian Highlands](#) (Sistema Ibérico Sur) after 7 months in an acclimatisation aviary. In Greece, a [CV collided with a wind turbine](#) in the “Filiouri Valley” in Thrace, **Greece**. In France, Verdon, 3 CVs that had been in acclimatisation aviaries, after being rescued and rehabilitated, were released. Among them was [“Zappa”, a French wild-hatched CV](#) that was found in a weak condition on the beach in **Sicily**, in 2021. Zappa recovered in Sicily and was transferred to France to be released.

Africa Round-up: *Compiled by Darcy Ogada*

The [Mid-term review](#) of the implementation of the [EV Flyway Action Plan](#), as Annex 4 of the Vulture MsAP, was produced by the RSPB with conclusions and recommendations focused on updated needs, gaps and priority actions. A recent [study](#), led by Dr Adam Kane, Univ College Dublin, aimed to understand the [drivers of vulture home range size](#) and the percentage of overlap with African protected areas.

West Africa: In **Ghana**, IBCP published an [article](#) on abundance & breeding ecology of vultures in Mole NP. Samuel Boakye Yiadom continued his Hooded Vultures (HV) work in urban areas of Ghana, where they are persecuted for the fetish trade, as they are in **Togo**, where Olivier Boissier has been quantifying fetish market wildlife in Lomé. In **Benin**, Abiola Chaffra conducted wintering raptor surveys in southern wetlands, (to be presented at RRF). He is also documenting HVs in the fetish trade in Benin with HawkWatch International support. A new BirdLife International project ‘Behaviour-change approaches to address belief-based use of vultures’ started in June in **Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Senegal**. The project is supported by the IWT Challenge Fund. The focus is to test the effectiveness of Social Marketing as a tool to influence behaviour and practices by traditional healers and their customers to stop using vulture parts in traditional medicine. In **Sierra Leone**, Musa Kimbo is nearing the completion of 12 months of HV surveys at a feeding site in Freetown – pioneering work for this country. An article published in JNHAB by Clive Barlow: “An extreme weather event in Sierra Leone precipitates a mass slaughter of HV used for human consumption” documented a sad episode and highlights the need for awareness work there. In **The Gambia**, Eric Brouhaugh monitoring HVs use of telecommunication towers as roosting and resting sites found remarkably high HV usage in some rural locations. Louis Rondaut at the Reserve du Boundou, Tambacounda **Senegal** has initiated a similar project there. Asaph Brouhaugh used trail cameras at donkey carcasses outside his village in East **Gambia** which attract good numbers of Griffon Vulture (GV) in March. Bob Wilde, Mariama Sanneh & Clive R Barlow carried out field work throughout April and have prepared a report entitled: Findings when ‘scrapper’ HVs scavenge carcasses of large tern species during the first known

Avian Influenza outbreak in The Gambia. A report by Barlow et al. in Vulture News 83 about tongue use in HVs while foraging for live food and blood has led to further enquiries on tongue use issues involving captive research centres and University laboratories. In **Guinea-Bissau**, [a man was sentenced](#) to over 4 years in prison for poisoning and killing 50 HV, the first conviction for an environmental crime in Guinea-Bissau.

East Africa: Preliminary [assessment of conservation priorities along the East African Eurasian Flyway](#) was conducted by BirdLife International, with the EV identified among the top 10 flagship species. [EWT's Vulture for Africa Programme](#) expanded its work to **Chad**, conducting wildlife poisoning intervention training with staff from the [African Parks Network](#) in the Zakouma NP, also spending time with the [Sahara Conservation](#) team in Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve. A workshop was held in June in Arusha, **Tanzania**, a step to establishing the East African Wildlife Poisoning Response Network (EAWPRN). 21 Participants from Tanzania, **Uganda, and Rwanda** attended the workshop. N Carolina Zoo (NCZ), WCS, and these collaborators published a [paper](#) documenting drastic declines in vultures in **S Tanzania** over the past ten years. In response, this team launched new efforts to reduce mortality in an identified poison-baits hotspot between Ruaha and Katavi NPs. Technical meetings were held in June and a first draft Tanzanian National vulture Action Plan was produced by TAWIRI with NCZ support. Reducing the use of vulture body parts for traditional belief practices, Nature Tanzania is engaging traditional healers to finding alternatives. A Community Revolving Fund (CRF) has been established in Makao Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The fund provides soft loans to the community to establish sustainable businesses that are environment friendly, reducing pressure to the environment and improving community livelihoods. 5 community groups have been awarded the soft loan where 56 people (23 males, 33 females) have benefited. In **N Kenya**, The Peregrine Fund's Coexistence Co-op reached 5000 people trained in 351 events since 2018. 818 predator-proof bomas have been constructed by trainees. A vulture restaurant at Mugie Conservancy was created and the viewing hide is ready to go. An early draft Nat. Vulture Multi-species Action Plan is being discussed in 5 regional stakeholder meetings for elaboration in the coming months. In the Masai Mara 10 predator-proof bomas were recently by Nature Kenya.

Southern Africa: Wildlife poisoning intervention training was conducted by EWT in **Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa** reaching 250 learners. A further 65 vultures of 4 species were tagged in these countries. In late Aug 2023, EWT also hosted the first workshop towards the establishment of wildlife poisoning sniffer dog capacity in the region at the Southern African Wildlife College with support from [Junta de Andalusia](#), Spain and [VCF](#). The Bearded Vulture (BV) Recovery Programme for Southern Africa, submitted to the CMS secretariat a 'motivation' by **South Africa** for the uplisting of the southern African BV from Appendix II to Appendix I of CMS. This was presented at the CMS MoS in July prior to the 14th meeting of the CoP. Overall, 85 BV territories were surveyed in the early breeding season. Breeding confirmed at 28 sites with birds present in/near 19 further sites - but no activity was seen at 38 sites. Occupied territories will be checked later in the breeding season to gauge breeding success. At 4 of the 12 nests, eggs were harvested and all 4 hatched and chicks are being hand reared with a puppet. Funding was granted to establish a permanent viewing hide at a BV supplementary feeding site. VulPro has rehabilitated and released over 575 vultures since its foundation including 29 in 2023 already, along with 69 new admissions so far. 18 captive bred vultures fledged this year and will be sent to the Eastern Cape for the supplementation programme there. The National Vulture breeding steering committee was endorsed and incorporated into the Vulture WG and the vulture BMP for South Africa. A successful sting operation rescued a White-backed vulture (WBV) nestling destined for the muti trade. Since COVID, VulPro reports a spike in trade for muti with any fallen juveniles being sold to the 'sangomas' (traditional healers) rather than being sent for rehab. It held classes for 4000+ kids already. Cliff and tree nesting surveys continued and over 150 tagged birds, monitoring work is ongoing. The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) will host a Birds of Prey conference 20-24 Nov 2023 – registration & info [here](#). In Sept, EWT in collaboration with partners, including PhD student Fiona Fern, Univ. Pretoria, started taking samples for their Vulture Health Project in South Africa's Lowveld area. EWT, the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC), the Univ. Maryland, and other USA, Mozambique & S Africa stakeholders, joined an Indaba (discussion forum) at SAWC under the TREPA project, seeking ways to reduce security risks from zoonotic diseases (focusing on vultures and anthrax) ([link](#)). EWT is working with avian veterinarian Jess Briner for training wildlife veterinarians and

their S Africa Lowveld teams in vulture handling experience, including treatment methods and future mass poisoning events preparations. A helicopter aerial survey for vulture nests in the Kruger NP in Sept assessed the impact of several poisoning incidents on breeding populations. Compilation is underway and work was conducted in partnership with Hawk Conservancy Trust, The Bateleurs and South African National Parks. **Zambia** is in the process of producing a national Vulture Conservation Strategy. In **Zimbabwe**, ongoing engagement with traditional healers and journalists to address belief-based use, identifying alternatives and raising awareness – through its engagement with the Traditional Medicines Practitioners Councils of Zimbabwe (TMPCZ), BirdLife Zimbabwe has directly reached 22 TMPCZ registered healers. In **Malawi** and **Botswana**, plans are under development after BirdLife conducted Nat Vulture Workshops raising awareness on the key threats, planning how to reduce exposure of these threats to vultures.

North & NE Africa: As a pilot activity in **Ethiopia**, based on [previous research](#) and the MoU signed between Ethiopian energy companies (EEU & EEP), the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) / BirdLife Ethiopia, in total [182 vulture-killer electric poles were insulated](#) in the areas of Koka/Modjo, Matahara and Logia (Afar). In **Egypt**, the NCE / BirdLife Egypt monitored raptor migration through Suez during spring 2023 at [Galala Bird Observatory](#), recording nearly 380,000 birds of prey (including over 1,200 Egyptian Vultures). In April 2023, a Hooded Vulture (HV) was tagged in N **Morocco** at the Jbel Moussa PA. It was the first record for Morocco and was later [reported in N Spain!!](#).

North American Round-up: *Compiled by Zoey Greenburg*

6 California Condors (CCs) were released in Baja May of 2023. 2 were captive-bred at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park (SDZSP) and 4 were from the Chapultepec Zoo. These releases increase the wild population to 47 birds. None of the Baja condors were infected with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza during the last outbreak. Nesting behaviour was detected in 6 breeding pairs. Research led by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services, and National Wildlife Research [published a paper](#) on spatial use by American Black Vultures (ABV) in the SE USA, demonstrating factors, such as % forest cover and % water cover influenced vultures similarly across study sites. Factors like road density and landscape richness varied by site. These collaborators, with Purdue Univ. also [published a paper](#) on livestock producers' perceptions of ABV and related conflicts in the midwestern USA. Losses due to ABVs were reported by 38% of cattle producers, 22% of goat producers, 24% of sheep producers, and 44% of mixed-livestock producers. Carcass disposal practice changes and having guard animals were options reported to be effective in reducing livestock losses by ABVs. Researchers from Mississippi State Univ. (MSU) are analysing the movements of translocated ABVs to test translocation as a management action to reduce vulture-human conflict in Mississippi. Working with collaborators from USDA-APHIS, Purdue University and State Univ. of New York, Plattsburgh, they produced [a paper](#) calling for the evaluation and standardisation of data collection toward better understanding ABV conflicts in North America. Through collaborations with the Mississippi State College of Veterinary Medicine they [published more](#) on the continued evaluation of pathogens, such as avian pox on the vitality of Turkey Vultures (TVs) as well as a [continent-wide analysis on the survival of TV](#) in collaboration with USDA-APHIS and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. The Carolina Raptor Center partnered with private, state, and federal organisations to [facilitate HPAI vaccine trials for CCs](#). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Incident Command Team has also been developing [conservation strategies for CCs](#) including [implementing vaccine trials on ABVs](#), field monitoring, and developing adaptive management practices in the era of HPAI

South America Round-up: *Compiled by Sergio Lambertucci & Hernan Vargas*

In **Ecuador**, a collaborative effort led by Fundación Condor Andino in partnership with Osa Conservation and The Peregrine Fund started to study the movement ecology of King Vultures, the first four individuals (1 juvenile and 3 adults) were tagged with GSM-transmitters on Sept 7-10, 2023, in W Ecuador. Andean Condor (AC) researchers from Ecuador and Argentina published [an article](#) integrating satellite with genetic data, showing the high risk of extinction for the small AC population in Ecuador. Recent AC Foundation's

information indicates that AC can lay eggs throughout the year in Ecuador, a pair monitored over a decade produced 0.88 nestlings/ clutch, and the female laid an egg on average every 15 months. In **Chile**, the AC conservation research program run by the Nat Zoo of Chile together with other institutions since 2016 has ongoing population studies in the N Chile (Arica and Parinacota regions) with new efforts in spatial ecology of the species. The AC Research and Conservation Group continues annual censuses in the Magallanes region in the South of the country, which is increasingly relevant due to the number of wind energy projects planned in the region. Several Turkey and Black vultures (TV ABV) tested positive for Highly Pathogenic Influenza Virus A (H5N1). In **Perú**, on July 19, within the framework of the National Congress of Ornithology (Huaraz), a symposium called "State of knowledge and conservation of the AC in Peru" was held where new information was presented. This was primarily for habitat preferences, presence of microplastics, etc. and demography (results of the 1st national census). There were 7 presentations ending with a round table on information gaps and solutions to problems facing the species in the country. Plastic contamination was also covered by [articles](#) with information on the exposure of AC to plastic debris in protected areas of Peru). Another [paper](#) describes the consequences of H5N1 in birds of Peru. Several TV and ABV and one AC tested positive to the Highly Pathogenic Influenza Virus A(H5N1). In **Argentina**, researchers from the Argentine Research Council CONICET sampled several ABV and one AC for Highly Pathogenic Influenza Virus A(H5N1) and all tested negative. Sampling for H5N1 will continue for ABV and TV. Two immature AC severely affected by lead contamination in NW Patagonia were treated, but one died. AC chicks were tagged with GPS devices in NW Patagonia to learn more on the movements of this species. Another [paper](#) describes movements of immature ACs with conservation policy implications.

Finally... on the slightly lighter side: In **Bulgaria**, an NGO is developing [3D-printed prosthetic legs and beaks](#) to help rehabilitate large-bodied birds. So far, tests have been made with white storks, which seem to adapt well in the wild, and the team at the Green Balkans NGO plans to use this technology on vultures. A HG in Meghalaya, N E **India** [started raiding meat stalls!](#) And one GV in **Spain** had [a bizarre collision then a ride](#) in a truck!!

Do [let us know](#) if you receive this newsletter indirectly and wish to be added to the circulation list. Do please send items for inclusion ahead of the next edition in September. Or submit longer articles [to the editor](#) of the VSG journal, Vulture News. Reminder that the VSG's journal [Vulture News including back copies is available free](#) online – do read it!



Chris Bowden

chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk

Andre Botha

andreb@ewt.org.za

Co-chairs: Vulture Specialist Group, IUCN Species Survival Commission

Editor & Asia: Chris Bowden

African Regional Co-chair: Darcy Ogada

European Regional Co-chairs: José Tavares, Stoyan Nikolov

Latin America Regional Chair: Sergio Lambertucci

North America Co-Chairs: Evan Buechley, Keith Bildstein (N America Compiler: Zoey Greenberg)

Editor Vulture News: Dr Louis Phipps

VSG Admin Assistant: vacant

Additional newsletter contributions: Thirisander Zaw, Krishna Bhusal, Vladimir Dobrev, Alyona Kapyonkina, Clive Barlow, Kerri Wolter, Corinne Kendall, Lindy Thompson, Nico Arcilla, Gareth Tate, Sonja Krueger, Fadzai Matszimbo, Lovelater Sebele, Barbara Pais, Eleni Karatzia, Hernán Vargas, Maïa Sarrouf Wilson.