



# SIDE EVENT: 'MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN VULTURES'



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT (DFFE)  
MOS3, DUBAI  
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# PRENSETATION OUTLINE

- **BACKGROUND**
- **NATIONAL VULTURE TASK FORCE**
- **BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN**
  - Objectives
  - Anticipated outcomes
- **ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY**
- **CONCLUSION**



# BACKGROUND

- **Adoption of the Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) in 2017 needed local implementation – CMS COP 12**
- **The Vulture MsAP urged national governments to:**
  - Utilize the Vulture MsAP to develop a tailored National Vulture Conservation Strategy focused solely on the **species that occur within their jurisdiction and to address the specific threats each of these species are facing**. This is a critically important step to be taken by countries hosting internationally **important breeding, wintering or migrant species**
  - National Vulture Conservation Strategies should be developed **to complement and support existing** National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans already in place under the Convention on Biological Diversity



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# BACKGROUND (cont)

- In 2018-South Africa initiated a process to develop a Biodiversity Management Plan for 7 breeding vulture species
- **Conducted a stakeholders consultation:**
  - on a way to nationalise the adopted plan in curbing the dire situation of the African vulture species contained in the MsAP
  - South Africa opted to develop a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) as it is provided for by the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) and it is **prescriptive and will hold organizations accountable**
  - A **National Vulture Task Force (NVTF)** established which developed a Multi-Species BMP in support of the adopted MsAP for the conservation of vultures in South Africa



# NATIONAL VULTURE TASK FORCE

## Objectives:

- Bring together representatives from relevant government departments and other stakeholders for the benefit of vulture conservation
- Develop and coordinate the implementation of a Multi-Species BMP for Vulture species – outworking of the MsAP
- Promote the implementation of other relevant policies and plans that contribute to the conservation of vultures
- Advise on vulture matters in the country
- Facilitate resource mobilization
- Report on the progress on the implementation of the BMP; and
- Monitor the implementation of the BMP



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# THE DRAFTING TEAM



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# BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

South Africa is home to nine vulture species, seven of which have established breeding populations, and these vulture populations continue to face varying degrees of threats of extinction

**Vision :** ‘Healthy, growing populations of vultures in South Africa fulfilling essential ecosystem services ‘ which envisages healthy growing vulture populations in South Africa

**Desired state:** is to see all vultures fulfilling their essential ecosystem services through the achievement of a safe and secure environment in which all the components of a vulture’s life cycle are fulfilled



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# VULTURES OF SOUTH AFRICA

MOUNTAINS

SAVANNAH

COASTLINE



**BEARDED VULTURE**

*Gypaetus barbatus*

pot-hole nester

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



**CAPE VULTURE**

*Gyps coprotheres*

ledge nester

ENDANGERED



**AFRICAN WHITE-BACKED VULTURE**

*Gyps africanus*

tree-top nester

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



**LAPPET-FACED VULTURE**

*Torgos tracheliotos*

tree-top nester

ENDANGERED



**WHITE-HEADED VULTURE**

*Trigonoceps occipitalis*

tree-top nester

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



**HOODED VULTURE**

*Necrosyrtes monachus*

sub-canopy

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



**PALM-NUT VULTURE**

*Gypohierax angolensis*

palm tree nester

NOT ENDANGERED



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# KEY THREATS

- Poisoning (intentional and unintentional)
- Electrocution (collisions interactions with energy infrastructure)
- Habitat change
- Traditional medicine use



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# OBJECTIVES OF THE BMP

- To reduce and eventually halt the practice of intentional poisoning of vultures and its impact
- To work alongside traditional medicine practitioners to ensure the implementation of responsible and sustainable practices that will contribute to the conservation of the species
- To ensure that veterinary and human pharmaceuticals and with a proven or suspected likelihood of impacting wildlife are kept out of the food chain
- Provide environmentally friendly alternative measures to control damage causing animals to avoid causing harm to non-target species
- Reduce the impact of lead on vultures to acceptable level
- To substantially reduce vulture mortalities caused by existing energy infrastructure and mitigate any losses to vultures from new energy infrastructure.



# OBJECTIVES OF THE BMP

- To use a range of conservation mechanisms for increasing the land under biodiversity protection
- To support vulture conservation through cross-cutting policies, legislation and actions to enable mitigation of critical threats
- To monitor the status of all species of vulture that occur in South Africa at an appropriate interval to inform policy and conservation actions
- Develop a standardized marking and tagging system for all vulture species
- Identify research gaps and conduct research to generate knowledge, create a centralized data hub and provide information relevant to conservation management requirements, both in situ and ex situ
- Ensure appropriate ex situ management practices that benefit vulture conservation
- Promote vulture conservation through effective education, promotion, and awareness



# ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE BMP

- Collaborative and concerted efforts for the conservation of the seven vulture species of conservation concern in South Africa
- An understanding of the urgency for implementing the actions amongst the role players and stakeholders
- An agreed structure responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Clarity and acceptance of roles, responsibilities and accountability amongst role players
- Acceptance and support for the plan amongst stakeholders
- A plan that comprehensively and concisely covers all aspects related to the conservation requirements of the species and provides realistic targets for the five-year life of this iteration
- Achieving the conservation targets set for the species



# STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

- Standard outline according to the Norms & Standards for the development BMP-S
- Information on each species and the threats facing vultures
- Level of threat was ranked using the Open Standards approach and then actions needed to address such in terms of potential impact and feasibility
  - ✓ Potential Impact: Degree to which the strategy (if implemented) will lead to desired changes in the situation at the project site
  - ✓ Feasibility: Degree to which the project team could implement the strategy within likely time, financial, staffing, ethical, and other considerations.
- Action plan to address each Objective
  - ✓ Lead agents, collaborators, Required Resources and Outcomes



# Action plan to implement the Strategy

Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
<b>Objective 1: To reduce and eventually halt the practice of intentional poisoning of vultures and its impact * Cross-reference the NWPPWG work plan.</b>						
1.1 To ensure risks to vultures are included in the work of the Agricultural Pesticide Task Team of the NWPPWG - Report to the National Vulture Task Force Annually	DFFE DARDLA DoH A designated NVTf member	Provincial Conservation Authorities, NGOs Agricultural Pesticide Task Team	Time, funding, social capital, inter-governmental platforms for engagement	Annual feedback report on activities of the group.  A NVTf member is assigned to represent such on the Agricultural Pesticide Task Team.	Annually	Significant reduction in number of vultures poisoned each year as a result of agricultural pesticides (OBJECTIVE 1 and 2 of the NWPPWG Implementation plan).
<b>Objective 2: To work alongside traditional medicine practitioners to ensure the implementation of responsible and sustainable practices that will contribute to the conservation of the species.</b>						
2.1 Use existing platforms e.g., MoUs nationally for engagement with all parties including traditional healers, government, traders etc.	DFFE - Conservation Management/ BESU	DOH, NVTf Traditional healers Traditional leaders Communities	Funding	Minutes, agenda, presentations, TORs, constituted meeting, provincial structures, environmental monitors, traditional healers, and leaders  A committee of Traditional Healers, Traditional Leaders, conservationists, and Lawyers to be established to deal with regulations to outlaw poisoning (combine section 24 and NEMBA).	1-2 years, on-going after the publication of the BMP in the gazette	Relationship with communities, consumers, traditional healers, and conservation organisations;



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Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
2.2 Create a database of all Traditional Practitioners and investigate feasibility of compulsory membership	DOH	DFFE Provincial Conservation Authorities Traditional Healers	Funding	Functional and working database	1 year after publication of BMP	Accessible database to conservation officials.
2.3 Improve the understanding of the cultural value and demand for vulture parts and investigate the feasibility of sustainable use of vultures, through the formation of a sub-committee.	DOH	DOH, NVTF Traditional healers Traditional leaders Research Institution	Funding	Minutes of the sub-committee Awareness campaign implemented Demand and feasibility studies ( <i>Understanding the turnover, usage, alternative to vultures, body parts used</i> )	1-2 years, on-going after the publication of the BMP in the gazette	Completed feasibility and demand study

**Objective 3: Veterinary and human pharmaceuticals with a proven or suspected likelihood of impacting wildlife are kept out of the food chain. (Refer to the National Poison Prevention Working Group)**

3.1 To ensure risks to vultures are included in the work of the NWPPWG - Report from the Chair of the NWPPWG	DFFE - the coordinator of the NWPPWG Implementation Plan	DoH, DARDLA Provincial Conservation Authorities, NGOs Veterinary institutions Member of the NVTF that are represented on the NWPPWG	Time, funding, social capital, inter-governmental platforms for engagement	Annual feedback report on activities of the group. A NVTF member is assigned to represent on NWPPWG	Annually and ongoing	Significant reduction in number of vultures exposed to harmful veterinary and human pharmaceuticals and capture drugs (OBJECTIVE 4 of the NWPPWG implementation Plan)
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Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
<b>Objective 4: Provide environmentally friendly alternative measures to control damage causing animals to avoid causing harm to non-target species</b>						
4.1 To support the work of the NWPPWG	DFFE - the coordinator of the NWPPWG Implementation Plan	NGOs, Provincial Conservation Authorities, DARDLA	Time, funding, expertise	Information brochures, train the trainer/extension officer workshops	Annually	Proactive HWC mitigation tools and support in place. OBJECTIVE 3 of the NWPPWG Implementation Plan
<b>Objective 5: Reduce the impact of lead on Vultures to acceptable level (Refer to the Lead task team - the actual work to be carried out by the Lead Task Team)</b>						
5.1 To support the activities of the lead task team of the NWPPWG	The Chair of the Lead Task Team	DFFE, NGOs, Provincial Conservation Authorities Lead Task team	Time, funding, expertise	Annual report on activities of the lead task team as they pertain to vultures A NVTF member is assigned to represent on the Lead Task Team	Ongoing	Significant reduction in vulture blood lead levels across all colonies. Significant reduction in bone lead levels from vultures found dead OBJECTIVE 10 and 11 of the NWPPWG Implementation Plan



**Objective 6: To substantially reduce vulture mortalities caused by existing energy infrastructure and mitigate any losses to vultures from new energy infrastructure**

<p>6.1 Undertake a risk assessment of all new and existing energy infrastructure and implement mitigation measures</p>	<p>Eskom COGTA DFFE</p>	<p>DFFE, Municipalities NGOs, provincial authorities Eskom/EWT] Partnership (or appropriate independent body)</p>	<p>Time, funding, capacity</p>	<p>Distribution power lines within a 2.5km radius of breeding sites, roosting sites, foraging sites and registered supplementary feeding sites must have bird friendly structures and/or be mitigated as necessary and where possible. Transmission power lines within a 2.5km radius of breeding sites, roosting sites, foraging sites and registered artificial feeding sites must be marked with visible bird flight diverter devices. EIA specialist studies must be conducted by SACNASP registered ornithologists, for wind farms and power lines (132kv and above) within areas with vulture breeding sites, roosting sites, key foraging sites and Supplementary feeding sites and areas with flight corridors.</p>	<p>1-5 years, ongoing</p>	<p>Percentage of bird friendly Distribution structures, spans of marked Distribution and Transmission power lines, number of EIA avifaunal specialist studies done for Transmission power lines and wind farms.</p>
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Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
6.2 Assess the effectiveness of existing and proposed mitigation measures	Eskom COGTA	DFFE, Municipalities NGOs, provincial authorities	Time, funding, capacity	Comparing differences in fatalities and injuries between before and after a structure was mitigated; analysis of results	1-5 years, ongoing	Number of publications resulting from the analysis
6.3 Promote the consideration of vultures in planning, impact assessment and environmental management programmes for renewable energy infrastructure.	DFFE provincial authorities	Municipalities NGOs, environmental assessment practitioners, renewable energy industry (e.g., SAWEA)	Time, funding, capacity	Strategic Environmental Assessments, EIAs and Environmental Management Programmes (EMPrs) are informed by guidelines bird-friendly energy technology (e.g., CMS, IUCN guidelines and Birds and Renewable Energy Specialist Group endorsed guidelines). Commitments to protect vultures are reflected in environmental authorisations and EMPrs. Implementation of these commitments are audited and enforced so that all high-risk unsafe energy infrastructure is mitigated. Fatalities of vultures at renewable energy facilities are monitored and reported.	1-5 years, ongoing	Number of vulture fatalities per MW per year.



**Objective 7: To use a range of conservation mechanisms for increasing the land under biodiversity protection**

<p>7.1 Identify all known national nesting sites and key foraging areas which are not formally protected as well as areas for range expansion and then encourage participation in conservation stewardship programmes</p>	<p>SANBI</p>	<p>Universities, DFFE, SANParks NGO landowners, Provincial Conservation Authorities</p>	<p>Funding, time, capacity</p>	<p>Identification of previously unknown nest sites and key foraging areas, engagement with landowners, farmers and communities in areas surrounding nest sites and key foraging areas</p>	<p>5 years, ongoing</p>	<p>Number of individuals and communities engaged in key areas, number of nest sites and key foraging areas identified</p>
<p>7.2 Ensure that vultures are included in both provincial and national Protected Area expansion strategies and other key conservation planning tools</p>	<p>DFFE - Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Systems Management</p>	<p>SANBI SANParks, Provincial Conservation Authorities, NGOs</p>	<p>Time</p>	<p>Nesting sites and key foraging sites nationally form part of Protected Areas Network</p>	<p>5 years, ongoing</p>	<p>Percentage of key areas (nest sites and key foraging areas) protected</p>



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Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
7.3.1 Coordinate the establishment of the Vulture Safe Zone Alliance	NVTF	NGOs/ Provincial Conservation Authorities	Funding, time, capacity	Vulture Safe Zone Alliance established though and MoU developed.	3 years and ongoing	Signed Vulture Safe Zone Alliance MoU
7.3.2 Coordinate the development and implementation of the Vulture safe zones	Vulture Safe Zone Alliance	DFFE- PASM (OECM) and the TFCA unit  Landowners and communities		An online tool (developed using GIS modelling) identifying areas covering key vulture habitat that should be established as Vulture Safe Zones  Establishment of areas identified in (1) as Vulture Safe Zones, including all protected areas that host vulture populations  In collaboration with regional country partners, TFCAs that host vulture populations are established as Vulture Safe Zones.		A Vulture Safe Zone concept, and the implementation thereof, that helps drive the threat mitigations identified in this document

**Objective 8: To support vulture conservation through cross-cutting policies, legislation, and actions to enable mitigation of critical threats.**

8.1 Ensure that vulture breeding and roosting data (and risk models) are included in DFFE's EIA screening tool	DFFE and SANBI	Provincial Conservation Authorities,	Funding, time, capacity	Spatial layer created Protocol for assessing and reporting impacts on cliff nesting vultures gazetted.	2 years and ongoing	The use of spatial layer in EIA process
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Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
8.2 Ensure that all national and provincial legislation is updated to address the current conservation status of all vultures.	DFFE and SANBI	Provincial Conservation Authorities, COGTA	Funding, time, capacity	Updated legislation	3 years and ongoing	Conservation status of all vultures assessed and legislation amended
8.3 Ensure that there is no conflict between the BMP and new proposed environmental and biodiversity legislation	DFFE	NVTF	Funding, time, capacity	Amended BMP (where applicable) or comment submitted when conflict exists.	Ongoing	Compatible legislation
8.4 Creating an effective information sharing service for information exchange on vulture conservation.	SANBI	NVTF	Funding, time, capacity	Effective information sharing service on vulture conservation developed and implemented	3 years and ongoing	Shared resources
<b>Objective 9: To monitor the status of all species of vulture that occur in South Africa at an appropriate interval to inform policy and conservation actions.</b>						
9.1 Review and assess current gaps of all existing monitoring programmes being undertaken in South Africa	DFFE and SANBI	Provincial Conservation Authorities, SANParks, Universities, NGOs	Time, funding	Expand monitoring programmes to address gaps (all species and locations) but continue with existing monitoring	6 months post publication of BMP	Assessment report
9.2 Develop a monitoring plan for all Vultures in South Africa	DFFE and SANBI	Provincial Conservation Authorities, SANParks,	Time, capacity, funding	Development of a monitoring plan for each species	5-year plan	Completion and implementation of monitoring plans for each species



Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
9.3 Create a national repository for all vulture monitoring	SANBI	Universities, NGOs, Provincial Conservation Authorities	Time, funding, networking, IT systems	National data spatially explicit data repository, with links to existing databases such as movebank (with protection options and restricted access to certain datasets)	Ongoing, December 2025	National functional, searchable database
9.4 Establish a monitoring subcommittee of the NVTF	DFFE, provincial nature conservation authorities	NGOs, Universities	Time	Establish a group of high reputable researchers, conservationists, and academics	1 year	Finalization of a monitoring sub-committee
<b>Objective 10. Develop a standardised marking and tagging system for all vulture species</b>						
Establish norms and standards (to be adopted by provincial conservation authorities who issue permits) for the marking (tagging) of vultures.	DFFE – (TOPS and CITES sections)	NGOs, Universities, Provincial Conservation Authorities, animal welfare Institutions, SAFRING, IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group	Time	Establish baseline sizes (dimensions and weight) of marking and monitoring devices per species Renew existing protocols based on published data Review the effects of monitoring techniques and methods on the welfare, survival, and movement of vultures	December 2022	Norms and standards are in place (and included as a condition in provincial permits).



Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
<b>Objective 11: Identify research gaps and conduct research to generate knowledge, create a centralised data hub and provide information relevant to conservation management requirements, both in situ and ex situ</b>						
11.1 Establish a research sub-committee of the NVTf	SANBI, DFFE	NGOs, Universities	Time	Establish a group of high reputable researchers, conservationists, and academics	Year 1	Appointment of research sub-committee
11.2 Develop a national vulture research action plan	SANBI, DFFE, provincial nature conservation authorities	NVTf, NGOs, Universities	Capacity, time	A research action plan document that identifies, lists, and regularly updates, priority research needed to fill important knowledge gaps (around key and emerging threats to vultures);	1 Year	Encourage research on vultures that addresses the identified priorities research areas and knowledge gaps
11.3 Establish central repository for all research data	SANBI	Academic and Conservation Institutions and NGOs	Funding, capacity, time	Central repository for all research and monitoring data established	3 Year and ongoing	A hub of available data to be used for research project to benefit the species
11.4 Investigate the feasibility of reintroduction of Egyptian Vultures	Research Sub-Committee	NVTf, Universities, Provincial	Funding, capacity, time	Feasibility assessment	2 years	Feasibility assessment either supporting reintroduction or not and timeframes for implementation if possible



Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
11.5 Co-ordinate the creation of genetic markers for all South African vulture species.	SANBI	Provincial Conservation Authorities Academic Institutions NGOs	Funding, Time Students	Complete genetic markers for all species Genetic management system, Vudis (Vulture DNA index system),	2 years	Complete understanding of genetic composition of South Africa's vultures VUDIS System in place and functional
<b>Objective 12: Ensure appropriate ex situ management practices that benefit vulture conservation</b>						
12.1 Develop vulture care and release protocols for rehabilitation facilities	DFFE	Provincial Conservation Authorities, CORE - Collaboration of all Rehab centres Welfare institutions	Funding, time, capacity	Basic minimum protocols workshopped and developed	Year 3	Rehabilitation and release protocols for all species in place
12.2 Establish a coordinated mechanism for the NVTF to receive and assess captive breeding proposals	DFFE, SANBI	NGOs, Provincial Conservation Authorities BVRP	Funding, time, capacity	Basic minimum protocols workshopped and developed	1 year	Protocols for assessment in place
12.3 Develop ex-situ breeding programmes that support in-situ vulture conservation.	DFFE, SANBI	NGOs, Provincial Conservation Authorities BVRP	Funding, time, staffing capacity, birds to breed with	Criteria to determine when a species requires captive breeding. Determine Identified species requiring captive breeding. Criteria as to when and how releases are planned	Ongoing	The number of species breeding pairs producing progeny to augment the wild population.



Actions	Lead Party	Collaborators	Resources Needed	Deliverables	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
<b>Objective 13: Promote vulture conservation through effective education and awareness</b>						
13.1 Establish an Awareness sub-committee to formulate an awareness strategy	DFFE and Sub-committee	NGO's, Provincial Conservation Authorities,	Funding, time, expertise	An awareness strategy with appropriate awareness material	1 year	Approved and implemented Strategy
13.2 Provide information for members of the Traditional Health Practitioners sector and communities regarding the conservation status of vultures and the role they play within ecosystems	DFFE	THO* and the National Vulture Task Force *There are about 44 organisations of Traditional Healers, but the THO is the largest organisation with 78 000 members. National Vulture Task Force, NGO's, Provincial Conservation Authorities	Funding, time and expertise	Ensure that new appropriate material developed by the awareness strategy about vultures is shared with Traditional Healers through formal engagements.  Ensure that new appropriate material developed by the awareness strategy shared with communities, through meetings, awareness campaigns and other initiatives	ongoing but reviewed annually	Awareness material available and displayed in communities and Traditional Healers meetings and establishments.
13.3 Celebrate International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) each year (1st Saturday of September each year), by holding outreach activities.	DFFE	National Vulture Task Force	Funding	The IVAD is integrated into the awareness strategy and celebrated annually with increasing number of participants.	ongoing but reviewed annually	IVAD Annual report compiled by the National Vulture Task Force to assess reach and number of participants.



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# CONCLUSION

- National Vulture Task Force will oversee implementation of the BMP
- **BENEFITS OF THE BMP**
  - ensures co-ordinated conservation action amongst all vulture stakeholders and will enable an environment of improved communication, access to resources and ensuring responsibilities are actioned accordingly through the implementation of the BMP
  - Consequently, the BMP provides the framework for South Africa to fulfil the obligations required within the CMS MsAP for Vultures.



# THANK YOU!



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