

VULTURES & FARMERS

AASVOËLS & BOERE



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reaching new frontiers



Vultures & Farmers

Since time immemorial vultures have roamed the skies of the southern African sub-continent. Although our vultures are only a small part of the incredible richness of biodiversity, they are held in high esteem by many people of different cultures. Man's impact, though, has had a devastating effect on vulture populations and it is our task as custodians of Planet Earth to conserve these unique creatures with everything to our disposal.

Due to the Vulture Study Group's and sponsors' promotions of vultures as key ecological factors in the chain of life, a unique relationship has developed between vultures and farmers. This is most encouraging since farmers control the larger part of southern Africa and basically hold the future of vultures in their hands.

More ecologically sensitive farming practices, less irresponsible use of poisons against problem animals and a much better attitude towards wildlife has already shown positive results for vultures in some of the agricultural areas. This booklet will give you, the farmer, some insight into the lives of vultures and how you can assist with their conservation.

The Cape Griffon (Cape Vulture) is the flagship of the Vulture Study Group. We hope that the concerted conservation efforts of farmers will assist us to stabilise the population of this species, as well as the other vulture species.

Cherish these birds – they are yours to protect for now and forever.

Gerhard Verdoorn
Vulture Study Group

Aasvoëls & Boere

Sedert vervloë tye sweef aasvoëls oor die suider Afrikaanse subkontinent. Alhoewel aasvoëls slegs 'n klein deeltjie van 'n ryke biodiversiteit uitmaak, word hulle deur baie mense van verskillende kulture hoog geag. Die impak van die mens het egter 'n verdere negatiewe effek op aasvoëlbevolkings gehad. As beskermers van die Planeet Aarde, is dit ons verantwoordelikheid om hierdie unieke wesens met alles tot ons beskikking te bewaar.

'n Unieke verwantskap het tussen aasvoëls en boere ontstaan – 'n direkte gevolg van die Aasvoëlstudiegroep en sy borge se bevordering van aasvoëls as belangrike ekologiese skakels in die bestaan van lewe. Hierdie verwantskap is baie bemoedigend aangesien boere die grootste gedeelte van suidelike Afrika beheer en eintlik die toekoms van aasvoëls in hulle hande hou.

Meer ekologies sensitiewe boerderypraktyke, minder onverantwoordelike gebruik van gif teen probleemdiere en 'n baie beter houding teenoor die natuurlewe, het reeds positiewe gevolge vir aasvoëls in sekere landbougebiede getoon. Hierdie boekie sal u 'n brakke insig in die lewe van aasvoëls gee en verduidelik hoe u kan help om hulle te bewaar.

Die Kransvoël is die Aasvoëlstudiegroep se vlagskipspesie. Ons hoop dat die daadwerklike bewaringsaksies van boere hierdie, sowel as die ander aasvoëlspeesies, se getalle sal laat stabiliseer.

Koester hierdie voëls – hulle is u eiendom om te beskerm, vir nou en vir altyd.

Gerhard Verdoorn
Aasvoëlstudie Groep

Why conserve vultures?

Vultures and their scavenging companions are one of the most persecuted groups of animals. In the recent *"Eskom Red data book of birds of South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland"* (Barnes 2000), eleven of the region's fourteen scavenging birds are listed as being rare, vulnerable or endangered.

Vultures are the 'big-game' of the bird world and take up a key position between mammals and birds in the wildlife spectrum. Whether wheeling around in a thermal above the African veld, or fighting and jostling at the carcass of a dead animal, vultures certainly provide one

of nature's most awe-inspiring sights.

Everyone is affected in some way by the sight of a vulture, and stories of them abound, even to the extent of their magical properties. Africans may use vulture brains for clairvoyance, Parsees in India use vultures to dispose of human corpses, and vultures will be called to the aftermath of the battle of Armageddon according to several prophetic verses in the Bible.

Vultures need to be conserved, not only for their important ecological functions but perhaps also for their impact on mankind's consciousness.

Photograph: Albert Frohman

Cape Griffon

Hoekom aasvoëls bewaar?

Aasvoëls en hul aasvretende vriende is een van mees vervolgte groepe diere. Die onlangse uitgawe van die *"Eskom Rooi databoek vir Voëls van Suid-Afrika, Lesotho en Swaziland"* (Barnes 2000) lys elf van die gebied se veertien aasvretende voëls as skaars, kwesbaar of bedreig.

Aasvoëls is die 'grootwild' van die voëlwêreld, en neem werklik 'n skakelposisie in tussen soogdiere en voëls in die natuurlewespektrum. Of hulle nou om en om sirkel op 'n warm lugstroom bokant die Afrika-veld en of hulle al bakleiende en stampende om die karkas van 'n dooie dier vergader, aasvoëls is bestis een

van die natuur se mees indrukwekkende besienswaardighede.

Almal word op een of ander manier geraak met die aanskou van 'n aasvoël, en stories oor hulle is volop, selfs dat aasvoëls oor magiese eienskappe beskik. Afrikaners gebruik die brein van aasvoëls om hulle heldersienende te maak, vuur-aanbidders in Indië gebruik aasvoëls om met hul dooies weg te doen en volgens verskeie profetiese verse in die Bybel, sal aasvoëls geroep word nadat die slag van Armageddon verby is.

Aasvoëls moet bewaar word, nie slegs vir hulle belangrike ekologiese funksies nie, maar miskien ook om die mens se gewete aan te spreek.



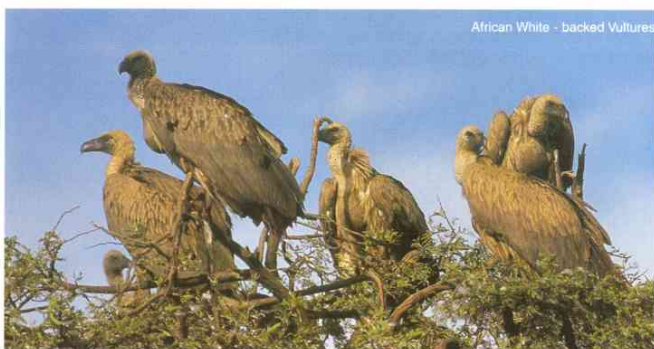
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How can vultures help farmers?

Vultures and other avian scavengers play a very important ecological role in clearing the veld of carcasses. By rapidly consuming the remains of dead animals, vultures can prevent these carcasses from acting as host to various diseases that may spread to livestock. Burning or burying dead stock is an unpleasant, time consuming and often a costly exercise. By making use of the vultures' ability to perform this task effectively, you save yourself the trou-

ble, and allow the birds to feed in a safe environment. Vultures that are seen circling above, or feeding upon a carcass, can alert the farmer to dead stock, affording one the opportunity to have a post-mortem carried out. In this way, potential disease outbreaks can be avoided.

Vultures and vulture restaurants have considerable value for ecotourism. They also provide an opportunity to observe and photograph feeding vultures, and to collect valuable scientific information.



African White-backed Vultures

Hoe kan aasvoëls boere help?

Aasvoëls en ander vlieënde aasvreters speel 'n baie belangrike ekologiese rol deurdat hulle karkasse uit die veld verwyder. Omdat hulle die oorblyfsels van dooie diere vinnig verorber, kan aasvoëls voorkom dat hierdie karkasse as broeiplekke dien vir verskeie siektes wat na lewende hawe mag versprei. Om dooie diere te verbrand of te begrawe is onaangenaam, tydrowend en dikwels 'n duur metode om te volg. Deur gebruik te maak van die aasvoëls

se vermoë om hierdie taak op bekwame wyse uit te voer, kan u uself die moeite spaar en terselfdertyd die voëls toelaat om in 'n veilige omgewing te vreet. Aasvoëls wat in die lug sirkel of wat aan 'n karkas vreet, stel die boer in kennis van 'n dooie dier. Sodoende kan 'n na-doodse ondersoek uitgevoer word, wat weer die potensiale uitbreek van siektes verhoed.

How can farmers help vultures?

Vultures depend entirely on carrion for food and you could, where practical, leave or place stock carcasses unfit for human consumption in the veld so that the vultures can use this vital food source. Any animals that have been euthanased by barbiturates or treated with antibiotics up to 14 days prior to death are lethal to vultures, so dispose of these carcasses, so that they cannot be scavenged. If an animal has been treated with livestock dips, they must be skinned before being put out for the vultures. Any bullets must be removed from carcasses in order to prevent lead poisoning.

Vulture restaurants

If you prefer, carcasses can be placed regularly at the same site, known as a vulture restaurant. The birds will become accustomed to feeding at these 'safe' areas and visit them often. When selecting a site, try to incorporate the following important points:

- Choose a remote part of your farm, away from human activity, but accessible for carcass delivery by truck or tractor.
- Select an open area which is on a gentle slope, this will allow adequate space for landing and take-off. Perches in the form of a few large trees would be an advantage.
- Where possible fence off the area, which should not be smaller than 200 x 200 metres,



Cape Griffon Colony at Aasvoëlberg - Zaairoon

Hoe kan boere die aasvoëls help?

Aasvoëls maak uitsluitlik staat op aas vir voedsel en u kan, waar prakties moontlik, karkasse in die veld los sodat hulle hierdie lewensbelangrike voedselbron kan benut. Enige dier wat met behulp van barbiturate uitgesit is of met antibiotika behandel is, is dodelik gevaarlik vir aasvoëls, raak dus ontslae van die karkas sodat dit nie gevreet word nie.

Aasvoëlrestaurante

Indien u dit verkies, kan karkasse gereeld op dieselfde plek gelaat word, ons noem dit 'n aasvoëlrestaurant. Die voëls sal gewoonde raak om by hierdie 'veilige' plekke te vreet en dit gereeld te besoek. Wanneer u 'n terrein kies, probeer om die volgende belangrike punte in ag te neem:

- Kies 'n afgeleë deel van u plaas, weg van menslike aktiwiteit, maar wat bereikbaar is vir 'n vragmotor of trekker om karkasse af te laai.
- Kies 'n oop gebied met 'n effense helling van-

to prevent jackals or stray dogs from stealing carcasses, and to keep cattle from chewing the bones.

- As a general rule, vulture restaurants should be situated as far away as possible from any powerlines. It is not possible to give an exact distance, as the risk does not necessarily decrease with distance (if there are no alternative perches, the birds will seek out the pylons anyway). The risk pylons pose is two-fold: Vultures can electrocute themselves on dangerous structures and they can interfere with the electricity supply. Many structures in south-

ern Africa are still dangerous to vultures, and will remain so for many years to come until they are modified or replaced with new ones that are bird-friendly and thus prevent electrocutions. However, the problem is not only related to electrocution. Recent research has found that vultures can have a significant impact on the electricity supply through pollution of electrical hardware, and through the so-called 'streamer' problem. The latter refers to long streams of excreta projected by the birds while perching on the electricity pylons. These streamers can cause a short circuit in certain



waar aasvoëls maklik kan land en opstyg.

- Waar moontlik, kan die gebied afgekamp word, nie kleiner as 200 x 200 meter nie, om te verhoed dat jakkalse en rondloperhonde die karkasse steel of dat beeste die bene kou.

- Oor die algemeen moet aasvoëlrasterante so ver weg as moontlik van enige kraglyne beplan word. Dit is nie moontlik om 'n gegewe afstand aan te dui nie aangesien die risiko nie noodwendig verminder hoe verder weg nie (as daar geen alternatiewe sitplekke is nie, sal die voëls in elk geval op die kragmas gaan sit). Die risiko wat kragmaste inhou is tweeledig: Aasvoëls kan hulle teen gevaarlike strukture doodskok en hulle

kan ook kragonderbrekings veroorsaak. Baie strukture in suider Afrika is steeds baie gevaarlik vir aasvoëls en sal nog jare lank so bly totdat hulle aangepas of met nuwes, wat voëlvriendelik is, vervang word wat elektriese skokke verhoed. Die probleem is egter nie beperk tot slegs elektriese skokke nie. Onlangse navorsing het getoon dat aasvoëls 'n aansienlike impak op kragtoevoer kan hê deur besoedeling van elektriese toerusting en die sogenaamde "streamer" probleem. Laasgenoemde verwys na lang stringe uitseksie wat deur die voëls uitgewerp word terwyl hulle op die elektriese kragmaste rus. Hierdie "stroom" uitskeiding kan onder sekere

omstandighede 'n kortsluiting veroorsaak as gevolg van die geleibaarheid daarvan. Daar word sterk aanbeveel dat die Aasvoëlstudiegroep gekontak word (of direk of deur die plaaslike Eskomkantoor en/of Natuurbewaringsdepartement) voordat 'n gebied vir 'n restaurant afgebaken word, om die risiko's wat kraglyne mag inhou te bepaal.

You could communicate with your neighbours and establish one communal vulture restaurant in your area.

If you are fortunate enough to have vultures

breeding on your farm, these sites should be left undisturbed and protected. Disturbances are major factors in abandonments of breeding activities. In the case of breeding colonies of Cape Griffons and African White-backed Vultures, these may also be registered with the South African Natural Heritage Programme, which has many advantages for you and the vultures (details at the back of this booklet). The survival of the Cape Griffon in parts of Gauteng has been largely due to the responsible and sympathetic farmers.

Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn



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In samewerking met u bure kan u een gemeenskaplike aasvoëlrasterant in u area op die been bring.

Indien u gelukkig genoeg is om aasvoëls op u plaas te hê wat broei, moet hierdie terreine ongestoord gelaat en beskerm word. Steurnis is een van die hoofredes waarom broei-aktiwiteite gestaak word. In die geval van broeikolonies van Kraansaasvoëls en Witruigaasvoëls, kan dit by die Suid-Afrikaanse Natuurreserfiesprojek geregistreer word, wat baie voordele vir u en die aasvoëls inhou (besonderhede agter in hierdie brosjure). Die oorlewing van Kraansaasvoëls in gedeeltes van Gauteng is grootliks te danke aan verantwoordelike en simpatieke boere.

Cape Griffon (*Gyps coprotheres*)

The adult is predominantly beige in appearance, the eyes yellow and the thick, naked neck, blue. The immature is a dark brown streaky bird, with a conspicuous pink neck and dark eyes. Preferring more open, hilly and grassland regions, it is most frequent in the central and eastern parts of the country. Nests are built on ledges of high cliff faces, where many pairs may form a colony.

Kransaasvoël (*Gyps coprotheres*)

Die volwasse voël kom hoofsaaklik beige voor, die oë geel en die dik, kaal nek is blou. Die onvolwasse voël is 'n donkerbruin voël met strepe, met 'n opvallende pienk nek en donker oë. Hulle verkies oop, heuwelagtige en grasveldgedeeltes en kom meestal voor in die sentrale en oostelike dele van die land. Neste word op lyste in hoë kranse gebou, waar baie pare 'n kolonie vorm.

African White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*)

Adults are generally darker than the larger Cape Griffons, but very old birds are almost pure white. The eyes are dark, the sparsely feathered neck is black and the conspicuous 'white back' can only be seen when the wings are outspread. The juvenile is dark brown with white streaks on the chest and has a greenish neck, mostly covered in white down. Nests are built in tall trees, often along river courses, and several pairs may form a loose colony. This is the 'common' vulture of the bushveld, lowveld and dry west, whilst largely absent from the central and southern grasslands. Birds may gather in hundreds at large carcasses.

Witruugaasvoël (*Gyps africanus*)

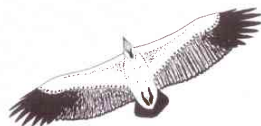
Volwasse voëls is oor die algemeen donkerder van kleur as die groter Kransaasvoël, maar voëls wat baie oud is, is bykans spierwit. Die oë en die yl-geveerde nek is swart en die opmerklieke 'wit rug' kan slegs gesien word as die vlerke oopgesprei is. Die jong voël is donkerbruin, met wit strepe oor die bors en het 'n groenerige nek wat meestal met wit dons bedek is. Neste word in hoë bome gebou, dikwels langs riviere, en verskeie pare kan los kolonies vorm. Hierdie is die aasvoël wat algemeen in die bosveld, laeveld en droë weste voorkom, maar is grootliks afwesig in die sentrale en suidelike grasvelde. Hulle drom soms in honderde saam by groot karkasse.



Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn



Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn



Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*)

This massive bird, the largest vulture in Africa, is unmistakable in adult plumage. Black with distinctive white 'trousers' and a white-streaked chest, the adult is able to flush its face deep red when excited. The immature bird is a uniform dark brown with a paler pink face. The large flat nests are built at the top of trees. Once common throughout the Karoo and the formally known Transvaal bushveld, it is now mostly restricted to the large game reserves, preferring the more arid regions. Lappet-faced Vultures often dominate other vultures at carcasses.

Swartaasvoël (*Torgos tracheliotos*)

Hierdie massiewe voël, die grootste aasvoël in Afrika, is onmiskenbaar in sy volwasse verkleed. Swart met 'n duidelike wit 'broek' en 'n witgestreepte bors, kan die volwasse voël sy gesig 'n dieprooi laat bloos as hy opgewonde raak. Die jong voël se hele lyf is donkerbruin, met 'n bleker pienk gesig. Die groot, plat neste word in boomtoppe gebou. Eens algemeen dwarsoor die Karoo en die ou-Transvaalse bosveld, is hulle nou meestal beperk tot die groter natuurreservate, waar hulle die droër dele verkies. Swartaasvoëls domineer dikwels ander aasvoëls om 'n karkas.

White-headed Vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*)

The most attractive of all vultures, this species is frequently the first to arrive at carcasses. Adults are predominately black with a white head, belly and 'trousers'. The pink face can be flushed red in excitement. The female differs from the male in having white, not ash-grey, secondary flight feathers. The immature is dark brown with a brown head, but like the adult has a distinctive orange and blue bill. The large nest is built at the top of a tall tree, often overlooking the surrounding bushveld. The range of this bird has decreased appreciably and it is now rarely seen outside the eastern bushveld and dry Kalahari.

Witkopaasvoël (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*)

Die aantreklikste van alle aasvoëls, is hierdie spesies dikwels die eerste om by 'n karkas op te daag. Volwassenes is grotendeels swart met 'n wit kop, maag en 'broek'. Die pienk gesig kan rooi bloos van opgewondenheid. Die wyfje verskil van die mannetjie deurdat sy wit, en nie muisvaal, sekondêre vlugvere het. Die jong voël is donkerbruin met 'n bruin kop, maar net soos die volwassene het dit 'n kenmerkende oranje en blou snawel. Die groot nes word in die kruin van 'n hoë boom gebou, dikwels met 'n goeie uitsig oor die omliggende bosveld. Hierdie voël se gebied het aansienlik gekrimp en hy word nou selde buite die oostelike laevelt en droë Kalahari opgemerk.



Photograph: Duncan Butchart



Photograph: Chris van Rooyen



Photograph: Duncan Butchart



Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*)

A small, thin-billed vulture; this is a uniform dark brown bird with a pink face and the adult has white 'trousers' and 'hood'. It waits around the outskirts of a group of feeding vultures, grabbing morsels dropped by its larger relatives. Nests are placed under the canopy of large riverine trees, and are very difficult to locate. This once numerous species is now virtually restricted, in South Africa, to the Kruger National Park. It is common further north throughout Africa, where it may live in close proximity to humans.

Monnikaasvoël (*Necrosyrtes monachus*)

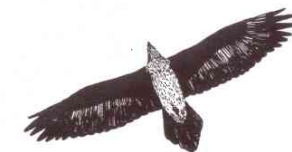
Hierdie is 'n klein, donkerbruin aasvoël met 'n dun snawel en 'n pienk gesig. Die volwassene het 'n wit 'broek' en 'n wit 'kappie'. Hierdie voël wag buite aan die rand van 'n groep vrelende aasvoëls en gryp stukkie vleis wat deur groter aasvoëls laat val is. Neste word onder die kruin van groot bome by rivieroewers gebou en is baie moeilik om op te spoor. Hierdie eens talryke spesie is nou in Suid-Afrika beperk tot omtrent net die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin. Hulle kom algemeen verder noord dwarsoor Afrika voor, waar hulle soms naby mense hou.



Photograph: Tim Snow

Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)

This large bird feeds exclusively on carrion – specialising on bones, which are carried into the sky and dropped to smash on the rocks below. In flight, the long narrow wings and wedge-shaped tail are diagnostic. The adult is a striking bird, with a dark back, rufous underparts and a bright red ring around the eye, set in a black 'mask'. Once common along the eastern escarpment of the southern Cape mountains, the Bearded Vulture is now restricted to Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Lesotho Drakensberg.



Baardaasvoël (*Gypaetus barbatus*)

Hierdie groot voël vreet uitsluitlik aas, veral bene, waarmee dit hoog die lug in opvlieg en dan op die rotse onder laat stukkend val. In vlug is die lang, smal vlerke en wigvormige stert duidelik uitkenbaar. Die volwassene is 'n treffende voël met 'n donker rug, 'n rooibruin onderkant en 'n helderrooi ring om die oog wat dit laat lyk asof hy 'n swart masker op het. Dit het eens algemeen langs die oostelike platorand en in die Suid-Kaapse berge voorgekom, maar tans is die Baardaasvoël beperk tot die Natalse en Lesotho se Drakensberge. (Die ou naam 'Lammergeier', word al hoe minder gebruik, want hierdie onskadelike voël is nie in staat daartoe om lam-mers dood te maak nie en baie verwarring met die Afrikaanse woord 'Lammervanger' ontstaan sodoende.)

Photograph: Duncan Butchart



Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)

When adult, the Egyptian Vulture is best identified by its white body and back, feathered neck, yellow face, and black flight feathers. The diamond-shaped tail is diagnostic. The juveniles are plain brown and easily confused with a number of other birds. Carrion and scraps are the main food, but the eggs of flamingos, pelicans and even ostriches, are also favoured. To break open the large ostrich eggs, the vulture throws small rocks at the shell until it cracks. Once widespread over the region, the Egyptian Vulture is now considered extinct as a breeding species. Recent sightings appear to have been mostly of vagrant birds from further north.

Egiptiese Aasvoël (*Neophron percnopterus*)

Die volwasse Egiptiese Aasvoël kan uitgeken word aan sy wit lyf en rug, geveerde nek, geel gesig en swart vlugvere. Die diamantvormige stert is kenmerkend. Die onvolwasse voël is bruin en word maklik met 'n aantal ander voëlsoorte verwar. Aas en kosbrokkies is die hoof voedselbron, maar die eiers van flaminke, pelikane, en selfs volstruise word ook geëet. Om groot volstruiseiers oop te breek, gooi die aasvoël die dop met kleinerige klippe om dit oop te breek. Waar die Egiptiese Aasvoël eens wydverspreid voorgekom het, word daar nou aanvaar dat die spesie nie meer broei nie. Onlangse waarnemings in die streek blyk alleenlopers van verder noord te wees.

Palm-nut Vulture (*Gypohierax angolensis*)

This is the smallest of the African vultures and is often mistaken for an African Fish Eagle. The adult has a striking black and white plumage and is fully feathered except for some bare skin on its face and jaw. The head and body are wholly white and the feathers on the back of the head and on the nape are longish and can at times be fluffed out into a small crest. Their diet consists mainly of palm-nuts from the Oil Palm trees which they are frequently seen perched on.



Photograph: Duncan Butchart

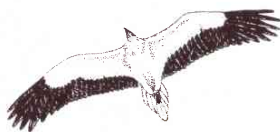
Witaasvoël (*Gypohierax angolensis*)

Hierdie is die kleinste van die Afrika-aasvoëls en word dikwels verkeerdlik vir die Visarend aangesien. Die volwassene het 'n treffende swart en wit veredos en is ten volle geveerd behalwe vir 'n bietjie kaal vel aan die gesig en kaak. Die kop en lyf is heeltemal wit en die vere aan die agterkop en -nek is langerig en kan soms in 'n kuif uitgepof word. Hulle dieet bestaan hoofsaaklik uit die palmpitte van die Oliepalm-bome waarin hulle dikwels opgemerk word.



Photograph: Chris van Rooyen

Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn



Some facts about the Cape Griffon

The Cape Griffon is found only in southern Africa and its continued survival lies in the hands of the farming community.

It is the second-largest vulture in Africa, with a wingspan of over 2 metres. It specialises in feeding quickly on the carcasses of large mammals. The narrow head, long bare neck and shovel-shaped tongue are characteristic.

Once common and widespread throughout the region, this vulture is now concentrated in two core areas: the large mountains of the Limpopo Province and the Transkei-Lesotho highlands. Two isolated populations exist at the Waterberg in Namibia and at Potberg in the south Western Cape – both are mere remnants of once large colonies.

Unlike most other vulture species in southern Africa, which nest in trees, the Cape Griffon is a cliff-nesting bird. They breed together in colonies, varying in size from half-a-dozen to several hundred pairs. A single egg is laid

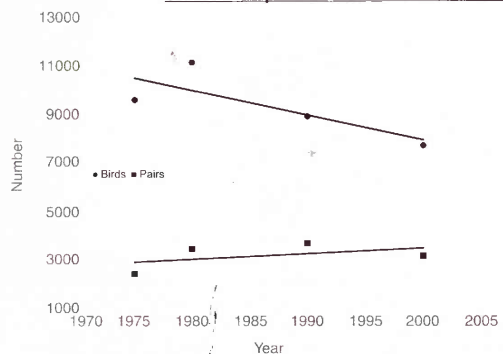
each year and both parents incubate and feed the chick. Once independent, the immature vulture moves away from the colony, often traveling vast distances and joining others of the same age in so-called 'nursery areas' where there is abundant food. The young vulture takes five to six years to reach sexual maturity and may return to its colony of birth to breed.

lifestyle, however, these birds are particularly vulnerable and large numbers may be killed at poisoned carcasses or by mass electrocutions on powerlines.

A steady decline in numbers has been noted over the past 40 years, with many colonies having decreased in size and others deserted.

It is estimated that there may be 3 200 breeding pairs and a smaller number of immature Cape Griffons left, with a total population of about 10 000 birds. Due to their communal

Status of Cape Griffons in southern Africa



suidelike Afrika wat hul neste in bome maak, maak die Kransasvoël sy nes teen 'n kran. Hulle broei saam in kolonies wat kan wissel van 'n halfdosyn tot honderde pare. 'n Enkele eier word elke jaar gelê en beide ouers broei die eier uit en voed die kleintjie. Sodra die jong voël onafhanklik raak, verlaat hy die kolonie en reis soms groot afstande om by ander aasvoëls van dieselfde ouerdom aan te sluit in sogenaamde 'kleuterskole' waar daar volop kos is. Die jong voël neem vyf tot ses jaar om seksuele wasdom te bereik en keer soms terug na sy

geboortekolonie om daar te broei. Daar word geskat dat ongeveer 3500 broeipare en 'n onbekende aantal jong Kransasvoëls oor is, met 'n totaal van ongeveer 10 000 voëls. As gevolg van hul gemeenskaplike leefwyse is hierdie voëls besonder kwesbaar. Groot getalle kan op een slag by 'n vergiftigde karkas vrek of dood geskak word deur kragdrade.

'n Geleidelike afname in getalle is oor die afgelope 40 jaar opgemerk, met baie kolonies wat gekrimp het en ander wat totaal uitgesterf het.



Adult Cape Griffon with chick

Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn

'n Paar feite oor die Kransasvoël

Die Kransasvoël word slegs in suider Afrika aangetref, en hierdie voël se voortbestaan lê in die hande van die boeregemeenskap.

Dit is die tweede grootste aasvoël in Afrika, met 'n vlerkspan van oor die 2 meter. Hierdie spesie spesialiseer daarin om vinning aan die karkasse van groot soogdiere te vreet. Die smal kop, lang kaal nek en skoffelvormige

long is kenmerkend.

Hierdie aasvoël, wat eens wydverspreid voorgekom het, is nou in twee kernareas gesentreer: die hoë berge van die Limpopo Provinsie en die Transkei-Lesotho hooglande. Twee geïsoleerde gemeenskappe kom in die Waterberg in Namibië en by Potberg in die Suidwes-Kaap voor – beide hierdie is blote oorblyfsels van wat eers groot kolonies was.

Anders as die meeste ander aasvoëlspesies in

Why is the Cape Griffon endangered?

Due to the Cape Griffon's habit of breeding on large cliff-faces, and since there are few of these in our large game reserves, they have no permanent home in undisturbed sanctuaries. They must therefore live and feed on privately-owned land and because of this they are more likely to be affected by the activities of man.

Several factors have been discovered to be causing a decline in the numbers of vultures:

Poisoning – Indiscriminate use of poisons has led to the disappearance of many vultures and other birds of prey from much of southern Africa. Birds are far more efficient in finding carcasses than jackals or hyenas and they are therefore frequently killed inadvertently as a result of unselective problem animal control measures. Poisons can wipe out an entire colony of vultures.

Food availability – The large herds of game on which the vultures traditionally depended and which used to migrate, have now been replaced over most of southern Africa, by

domesticated stock. In some areas, stock carcasses are buried and overall improvements in animal husbandry mean fewer mortalities.

Bush encroachment, caused by over-grazing, limits the visibility of carcasses to vultures, having serious implications for them, and of course, the farmer.

Direct persecution and disturbance – Through a misunderstanding of their habits and sometimes for so-called 'sport', vultures are sometimes shot, poisoned or even stoned on their nests. Sometimes, well-meaning people may

inadvertently disturb breeding birds by venturing too close to the nests. This leads to the parent birds deserting their eggs or nestlings.

Electrocution and collision – Cape Griffons are often electrocuted on medium voltage electricity poles. This problem is being addressed by the Eskom/EWT Partnership which, in association with the Vulture Study Group, has modified regularly used structures by fitting safe perches for them and insulating live conductors. Vultures may also die after colliding with overhead wires.



Modified powerlines

Waarom word die Kransaaivoël bedreig?

Omdat die Kransaaivoël teen die hange van kranse broei en omdat geen kranse in ons groot natuurreservate voorkom nie, het hulle geen permanente onversteurde hawe nie. Hulle moet dus leef en voed op privaatgrond en word daarom meer waarskynlik deur die aktiwiteite van die mens beïnvloed.

Verskeie faktore, wat verantwoordelik is vir die vermindering in hul getalle, is bepaal:

Vergiftiging – Onoordeelkundige gebruik van gifstowwe het die verdwyning van baie aasvoëls en roofvoëls uit groot dele van suidelike Afrika tot gevolg gehad. Voëls spoor karkasse baie makliker op as jakkalse of hiënas en word dikwels onopsetlik doodgemaak deur lukrake en nie-selektiewe probleemdiere beheermetodes. Gif kan 'n hele kolonie aasvoëls uitwis.

Beskikbaarheid van kos – Die groot kuddes wild wat eens oor die land heen migreer het en waarop die aasvoëls staatgemaak het, is nou oor die grootste deel van suidelike Afrika vervang deur plaasdiere. In sommige gebiede

word veekarkasse begrawe en as gevolg van algemene verbetering in veeteelt kom minder sterftes voor.

Bosindringing, die gevolg van oorbeweidings, veroorsaak dat karkasse minder sigbaar is vir die aasvoëls en dit hou ernstige gevolge vir hulle in, en natuurlik ook vir die boer.

Direkte vervolging en steurnis – As gevolg van wanbegrip oor hulle gewoontes en soms vir sogenaamde 'sport', word aasvoëls soms geskiet, vergiftig of met klippe gegooi waar hulle op hul neste sit. Soms kan mense die

broeiende voëls onbewustelik steur deur te naby aan die neste te kom. Dit veroorsaak dat die ouers hulle neste met eiers of kleintjies verlaat.

Elektriese skokke en botsings – Kransaaivoëls word gereeld op hoogspanningskragpale doodgeskok. Hierdie probleme is nou grotendeels opgelos deur die Eskom/TBN Samewerkings-ooreenkoms, wat tesame met die Aasvoëlstudiegroep, veilige landingsplekke vir aasvoëls op die kragpale gebou het. Jong, onervare aasvoëls vrek ook soms deurdat hulle teen oorhoofse kragrade bots.



Electrocuted Vulture

How do vultures find their food?

Vultures and other scavenging birds are adapted to the task of locating and feeding on the carcasses of large mammals. Most of these are animals that have died of natural causes but vultures also regularly eat the remains of predator kills. Due to the unpredictable nature of their food supply, they may fly great distances in their searching.

The large vultures are heavy birds and rely on air currents and thermals to remain airborne. They soar to great heights scanning the ground and the movements of other scavenging birds below. The lighter Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, kites

and crows are able to fly at lower altitudes and, since they are independent of thermals, are up and about earlier in the morning. It is these birds that often find a carcass first and the vultures watch their movements carefully.

When perched in trees around a carcass, vultures are extremely cautious and often wait for an eagle or crow to land and feed first. Once sure that all is safe, the vultures will descend on the carcass, fighting amongst themselves to reach the food. A group of 50 vultures is able to reduce the carcass of a sheep or Impala to skin and bones within twenty minutes.



Hoe vind aasvoëls hul kos?

Aasvoëls en ander aasvretende voëls is aangepas vir die taak om karkasse van groot soogdiere op te spoor en dit te vreet. Meeste van hierdie diere het aan natuurlike oorsake gevrek, maar aasvoëls vreet ook dikwels die oorblyfsels van roofdierprooi. As gevolg van die sporadiese aard van hul kosvoorraad, moet aasvoëls soms groot afstande vlieg om daarvoor te soek.

Die groot aasvoëls is swaar voëls en maak op warm lugstrome staat om in die lug te bly. Hulle sweef tot groot hoogtes en fynkam die grond en bewegings van ander aasvretende

voëls onder hulle. Die ligter Berghaan, Roofarend, woue ('n soort valk) of kraai vlieg op laer hoogtes en omdat hulle onafhanklik is van warm lugstrome is hulle reeds vroeg in die oggend aan die gang. Dit is hierdie voëls wat dikwels die karkas eerste vind en die aasvoëls hou hul bewegings sorgvuldig dop.

Wanneer aasvoëls in 'n boom naby 'n karkas kom stil, is hulle uiters versigtig en wag dikwels dat 'n arend of kraai kom land en eerste begin vreet. As hulle seker is dat alles veilig is, sak die aasvoëls op die karkas toe en veg onder mekaar om by die kos uit te kom. 'n Groep van 50 aasvoëls kan die karkas van 'n skaap of Rooibok binne twintig minute afvreet tot net vel en been oorbly.

Vultures and water

Vultures are very hygienic birds and large groups of all species often gather around favourite water holes or on sandbanks along rivers, where they bathe, preen and drink.

Some farmers are unhappy about the vulture's habit of fouling drinking troughs, therefore a small, shallow dam could be provided. Provision for the birds' needs could be made at some remote part of the farm where stock is absent.

Vultures may drown after falling into circular reservoir tanks. This can be avoided by attaching a pole, branch, ladder or wooden plank to the side enabling the wet bird to clamber out.

Can vultures kill their own prey?

Stories of vultures preying upon domestic stock have been reported sporadically over the

years. Few events have ever been properly documented, however, and in the cases where the facts have been followed up, a misinterpretation of events has invariably led to the report. Vultures are specialised scavengers and seldom kill prey.

As can be seen in the illustration below, vultures are not adapted for killing, having weak feet, and being extremely cautious about approaching even a dead beast.



Aasvoëls en water

Aasvoëls is baie higiëniese voëls en groot groepe van alle soorte vergader dikwels rondom geliefkoosde drinkgate of op sandbanke langs riviere waar hulle bad, hulle vere glad stryk en drink.

Sommige boere is ongelukkig oor aasvoëls se gewoonte om drinkbakke te bemors, daarom kan 'n vlak dam voorsien word. Daar kan op 'n afgeleë plek op die plaas, waar vee nie kom nie, vir die voëls se behoeftes voorsiening gemaak word.

Aasvoëls kan verdrink as hulle in ronde opgaardamme val. Voorkom dit deur 'n paal, tak, leer of houtplank aan die kant vas te heg wat die nat voël in staat stel om uit te klout.

Kan aasvoëls hul eie prooi doodmaak?

Stories oor aasvoëls wat vee vang is sporadies oor die jare gerapporteer. Geen een van hierdie gebeure is egter ooit behoorlik opgeteken nie, en in gevalle waar die saak opgevolg is, is bevind dat 'n verkeerde vertolking van gebeure elke keer tot die verslag gelei het. Aasvoëls is gespesialiseerde aasvreters en maak selde prooi dood.

Soos uit die illustrasie hierbo afgelei kan word, is aasvoëls nie aangepas om prooi dood te maak nie, want hulle het swak kloue en is uiters versigtig voordat hulle selfs 'n dooie dier sal nader.

The use of poisons and their effects on vultures and farmers

While it is appreciated that problem animals such as Black-backed Jackal, Caracal and feral dogs, can cause considerable stock losses to farmers, attempted control by poisoned bait can cause great damage to your farm environment and kill many innocent species. One farmers' association estimated that about 100 non-target animals were killed for every jackal, when poisoned bait was used.

Vultures, Bateleurs and other scavenging birds are far more efficient at locating carrion than any mammal, and a poisoned carcass intended for jackals is very likely to kill these non-target beneficial birds.

Several agrochemicals are used or abused for

problem animal control and these pose a secondary poisoning threat to vultures.

Remember to consider the long-term and environmental effects of poisons on your land. An understanding of the habits of the animals that share your land is the key to their continued existence, or in the case of problem animals, their control.

Many animals, including jackals and large birds of prey, are strongly territorial and will vigorously keep intruders out of their home range. By continually disturbing territory holders by killing one or more partners, you are far more likely to have roving, opportunistic individuals invading the area. It is often these inexperienced immature birds that prey on unguarded stock, which are far easier to catch than natural prey species.



Photograph: Gerhard Verdoorn

Die gebruik van gif en die invloed daarvan op aasvoëls en boere.

Hoewel daar begrip is dat probleemdiere soos Rooijakkalse, Rooikatte en rondloperhonde beduidende veeverliese vir boere kan veroorsaak, kan pogings om beheer deur middel van vergiftigde aas te verkry, groot skade aan u plaasomgewing aanrig en baie onskuldige spesies laat vrek. Een boerevereniging het geskat dat omtrent 100 ander diere kan vrek vir elke jakkals waarvoor vergiftigde lokaas gebruik word.

Aasvoëls, Berghane en ander aasvretende voëls is baie beter as enige soogdier daartoe in staat om aas op te spoor, en 'n vergiftigde karkas wat vir jakkalse bedoel is, kan maklik hierdie nie-teiken, voordelige voëls doodmaak.

Verskeie landbougifstowwe word vir probleemdierbeheer gebruik en misbruik en dit hou 'n sekondêre vergiftigingsgevaar vir die aasvoëls in.

Onthou om die langtermyn- en omgewingsgevolge van gifstowwe op u grond in ag te neem.

If you consider problem animal control methods, contact your local Nature Conservation personnel who will give guidance on problem animal management and effective control methods. You can also contact the Cape Wools National Problem Animal Helpline on 082 463 4104.

Do vultures spread stock diseases?

Anthrax is a spore-borne disease and these spores are able to survive in the soil for periods of up to fifty years. For the disease to break out however, certain ecological conditions are necessary and outbreaks may, for example, occur after a hot, dry spell following heavy rains.

Vultures eat dead animals, some of which may have been diseased. Anthrax spores are only able to form when a diseased animal has been allowed to lie open to the air and sun for several hours, so there is good evidence that vultures are important INHIBITORS of anthrax by consuming affected carcasses before spores have had a chance to develop.

In the same way, vultures help control blowfly epidemics by clearing carcasses which act as potential breeding sites for flies.

Vultures do not carry rabies or foot-and-mouth disease, but they and other harmless animals may be the victims of reckless control measures.

Begrip vir die gewoontes van die diere wat u grond met u deel is die sleutel tot hul voortbestaan, of in die geval van probleemdiere, die beheer daarvan.

Baie diere, insluitend jakkalse en groot roofvoëls, is baie territoriaal en sal hul gebied met alle mag verdedig. Deur aanhoudend die besitters van 'n gebied te versteur deur een of meer van hulle dood te maak, vergroot die moontlikheid dat swerwende, opportunistiese individue die gebied kan binnedring. Dit is dikwels hierdie onervare, ongewasse nes wat onbewaakte vee, wat baie makliker as natuurlike prooi gevang kan word, aankeer.

Wanneer u probleemdierbeheer oorweeg, tree met u plaaslike Natuurbewaringspersoneel in verbinding wat hulp aan u sal verleen oor probleemdierebestuur en effektiewe beheermetodes. U kan ook die Cape Wools Nasionale Probleemdierehulplyn by 082 463 4104 kontak.

Versprei aasvoëls veesiektes?

Miltsiekte word deur spore begin en hierdie

spore kan tot 50 jaar lank in die grond oorleef. Sekere ekologiese toestande moet egter gehandhaaf word voordat die siekte kan uitbreek, byvoorbeeld na 'n warm, droë tydperk wat deur swaar reën opgevolg word, kan 'n uitbraak plaasvind.

Aasvoëls vreet dooie diere, waarvan sommige weens siekte kan gevrek het. Miltsiektespore kan slegs gevorm word as die dooie dier vir baie ure in die buitelug en son gelaat is, daar is dus goeie bewyse dat aasvoëls belangrike ONDERDRUKKERS van miltsiekte is deur die aangeloste karkasse te verorber voordat spore 'n kans kan kry om te ontwikkel.

Op dieselfde manier help aasvoëls om brommerplae te beheer deur van karkasse ontslae te raak wat as moontlike broeiplekke vir vlieg kan dien.

Aasvoëls is nie draers van hondsdoelheid of bek-en-klouseer nie, maar hulle en ander skadelose diere kan die slagoffers word van roekelose beheermaatreëls.



What is being done?

The successful conservation of endangered species involves detailed research, management and the creation of awareness through educational extension work.

Aspects of the breeding biology, feeding requirements, general behaviour and distribution of all southern African vultures have been studied by the Vulture Study Group and other researchers in recent years. To determine pop-

ulation trends of the Cape Griffon, a colour-ringing scheme was undertaken and many individual birds can now be identified in the field by the unique colour-ring combinations they have on their legs. Emphasis is now on resightings and one can assist by recording rings seen either on flying or feeding vultures, or on vulture carcasses.

Active management techniques include the establishment of 'vulture restaurants', where food is provided and bone fragments are made

available for adults to collect and feed to their developing nestlings. Protection measures at certain colonies include monitoring and fencing-off at these vulture restaurants. An Eskom/Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) Partnership has been established and close liaison with Eskom has led to the modification of dangerous electricity pylons in certain key areas. For more information about powerlines, contact the Eskom helpline on 0860 111 535

Thanks to the regional representatives of the VSG across southern Africa, many hands-on projects have been established in conjunction with farmers for the conservation of vultures. The incredible success achieved so far is a tribute to the good will of many farmers, landowners and organisations, and strengthens our belief that vultures can indeed be integrated with modern farming practices.



Cape Griffon nestling being colour-ringed

Wat word gedoen?

Die suksesvolle bewaring van bedreigde spesies benodig noukeurige navorsing, bestuur en bewusmaking deur opvoedkundige voortligtingswerk.

Aspekte van die broeiproses, voedselbehoefte, algemene gedrag en verspreiding van alle aasvoëls in suidelike Afrika is deur die Aasvoëlstudiegroep en ander navorsers oor die afgelope jare bestudeer. Om die bevolkingsneigings van die Kransvoël te bepaal, is 'n intensiewe kleurbeweringskema geloods

en baie individuele voëls kan nou in die veld, deur die unieke kleurringkombinasie aan hulle bene, geïdentifiseer word. Die klem lê nou op heropmerkings en u kan hier van hulp wees deur 'n aantekening te maak van enige ringe wat u aan vlieënde of vretende aasvoëls opmerk of aan aasvoëlarkasse.

Aktiewe bestuurstegnieke sluit die daarstel van 'aasvoëlrestaurante' in waar voedsel voorsien word en beensplinters aan volwasse voëls beskikbaar gemaak word om op te tel en hulle kleintjies te voer. Beskermingsmaatreëls vir sekere kolonies sluit monitering en afkamping

van hierdie aasvoëlrestaurante in. 'n Eskom/Trust vir Bedreigde Natuurlewe (TBN) Samewerkingsooreenkoms is in die lewe geroep en noue skakeling met Eskom het gelei tot die wysiging van gevaarlike kragpale in sekere sleutelgebiede. Kontak die Eskom-hulplyn by 0860 111 535 vir meer inligting oor kraglyne.

bewaring van aasvoëls. Die ongelooflike sukses wat tot dusver behaal is, is 'n huldeblyk aan die welwillendheid van baie boere, grondelenaars en organisasies, en versterk ons opvatting dat aasvoëls wel by moderne boerderypraktyke kan ingeskakel.

Die instelling van die baie praktiese projekte is te danke aan die streeksvertewoordigers van die Aasvoëlstudiegroep regoor Suid-Afrika wat saam met boere moue opgerol het vir die



List of useful contacts

Endangered Wildlife Trust
Private Bag X11, Parkview 2122
Telephone: (011) 486 1102
Fax: (011) 486 1506
www.ewt.org.za

Vulture Study Group
PO Box 72334, Parkview 2122
Telephone: (011) 646 8617
Fax: (011) 646 4631
e-mail: vsg@ewt.org.za

Lys van kontakte

Trust vir Bedreigde Natuurlewe
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Aasvoëlstudiegroep
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Faks: (011) 646 4631
e-pos: vsg@ewt.org.za

Suggested further reading Voorgestelde verdere leesstof

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Vulture News

The South African Natural Heritage Programme
Private Bag X477, Pretoria 0001

This programme was created by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism with the intention of helping to protect South Africa's natural resources.
By registering a significant area with the South African Natural Heritage Programme, you will be safeguarding the site against future developments and discourage others from disturbing the area. Where necessary, management advice from nature conservation organisations can be provided.
Cape Griffon and African White-backed Vulture breeding colonies would qualify for registration and we hope that all colonies may eventually be afforded this added protection.
Owners of these sites will derive many benefits, including a bronze plaque and a signed certificate. Write to the above address for a free brochure, in which details of the programme are provided.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Natuurerfenisprogram
Privaatsak X477, Pretoria 0001

Hierdie program is deur die Departement van Omgewingsake en Toerisme in die lewe geroep met die voorneme om Suid-Afrika se natuurlike hulpbronne te beskerm.
Deur 'n besondere gebied by die Suid-Afrikaanse Natuurerfenisprogram te registreer, beveilig u die gebied teen toekomstige ontwikkelings en ontmoedig u ander persone om die area te versteur. Waar nodig, kan bestuursadvies deur natuurbewarings organisasies aangebied word.
Kransaasvoël en Witruigaasvoël-broeikolonies kwalifiseer vir registrasie en ons hoop dat alle kolonies mettertyd hierdie bykomende beskerming sal kan geniet.
Eienaars van hierdie plekke sal baie voordeel daaruit trek, insluitend 'n bronsplaat en 'n ondertekende sertifikaat.
Skryf aan die bogenoemde adres vir 'n gratis brosjure wat besonderhede oor die program verskaf.

The Vulture Study Group (VSG)
Endangered Wildlife Trust
P O Box 72334, Parkview 2122.
Telephone: (011) 646 8617
Fax: (011) 646 4631
e-mail: vsg@ewt.org.za

The Vulture Study Group is a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and consists of part-time and volunteer workers who are concerned for the welfare of all species of vultures and their scavenging companions.

Established in 1973, the group has developed a solid base of field research and is currently recognised throughout the world, as a leader in vulture research and conservation.

Vultures range over areas administered by different conservation authorities in the southern African sub-continent, and as a non-governmental body, the VSG is ideally placed to move between these political boundaries, following the activities of the birds.

The VSG offers advice and assistance to all parties concerned for vultures. Any questions or problems you may have, concerning vultures, can be directed to the VSG whereupon assistance will be provided, or you will be put in touch with the relevant regional representatives.



Die Aasvoëlstudiegroep (ASG)
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Die Aasvoëlstudiegroep is 'n werkgroep van die Trust vir Bedreigde Natuurlewe, en bestaan uit deeltydse en vrywillige werkers wat die welstand van aasvoëls en hul aasvretende vriende op die hart dra.

Die groep is in 1973 gestig en het 'n sterk veldnavorsingsbasis, en word huidige dwarsdeur die wêreld as leiers in aasvoëlnavorsing en-bewaring erken.

Aasvoëls se gebied strek oor areas wat deur verskillende bewaringsinstansies in die suider Afrikaanse subkontinent bestuur word. Omdat die ASG 'n nie-regeringsliggaam is kan dit maklik oor en tussen hierdie politieke grense heen beweeg terwyl die aktiwiteite van die voëls doggehou word.

Die ASG bedien raad en bystand aan almal wat 'n besorgdheid in aasvoëls toon. Enige vrae of probleme wat u mag ondervind, sover dit aasvoëls aangaan, kan aan die ASG gerig word. Hulp sal verleen word of u sal met die betrokke streeksverteenwoordigers in aanraking gebring word.

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Tim Snow & Kerri Walter

(Sasol generously provided the funds for the printing of this fourth edition.)

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The future of our environment is also the future of our children. Sasol strives to secure this future by adhering to strict international safety, health and environmental standards, funding wildlife projects, supporting the publication of books on our natural heritage, and much more. After all, tomorrow may be too late.

