



CONSERVATION ACTION FOR THE CAPE VULTURE

Starts

The Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* is the most studied vulture species in southern Africa and yet, even after decades of conservation efforts for this endemic species, the population continues to decline. During the 2011 breeding season a total of only 2848 breeding pairs was recorded for the season, a drop from the previous estimated 2900 breeding pairs.

Said André Botha, Manager of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Birds of Prey Programme, "Threats such as habitat change and fragmentation, shortage of food, persecution, poisoning, disturbance at breeding sites, illegal trade and mortalities caused by electricity infrastructure have impacted on the population of this vulture species for many years. The potential impact of emerging threats such as wind-generated power infrastructure and climate change may contribute significantly to further changes in the fate of this species in the region."

To supplement ongoing conservation efforts, the Cape Vulture Task Force was therefore established in 2006 as a collaboration between the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Birds of Prey Programme (EWT-BoPP), the Vulture Programme (VulPro NPC) and several other prominent conservation organizations and concerned individuals. Its overall goal is to stabilise the global Cape Vulture population by increasing collaboration and cooperation among conservationists based on a conservation plan that was formulated to identify priorities for research and conservation action for the species.

Following on the 2010 Cape Vulture Species Plan review, the Cape Vulture Task Force held a two day workshop, sponsored by Tusk Trust and Sasol Limited, on the 1st and 2nd of March 2012 at VulPro in Hartbeespoort.

"The aim of the Task Force is to coordinate conservation efforts and monitoring for the species, collate the information and drive and implement new and existing conservation strategies with the overall purpose of turning around the trend of decline in the species. We completed the Conservation Action plan for the species and allocated action responsibilities and timeframes in order to ensure the implementation of our strategy to save the Cape Vulture," commented Kerri Wolter, the Cape Vulture Task Force Coordinator.

Participants representing government, NGOs, landowners, private individuals and other stakeholders, as well as representatives from Zimbabwe and Botswana, took part in the workshop to identify existing and emerging threats to the species.

"It is crucial that we address the threats to these birds at not only their breeding sites, but also throughout their foraging and distribution ranges. For this reason, the actions to protect the Cape Vulture should be applied throughout southern Africa and not just in South Africa. To further actively





conserve the species the Task Force will compile a Biodiversity Management Plan to be submitted to government,” concluded Botha.

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