

## Vulture updates No. 23: November 2025

### Around the World of Vultures & VSG activities

We are again pleased to provide a separate PDF to this newsletter listing all recent peer-reviewed (and some other) vulture publications listed by region. Our thanks again to Cat Taras for compiling this valuable resource for which many of you have already expressed appreciation. Also, a reminder that recent and all issues of the VSG journal, Vulture News, are available [here](#) and we encourage you to submit your future articles to chief editor [Volen Arkumarev](#).

There are multiple headlines from all regions, but the mass poisonings from South Africa and the Gambia are especially disappointing. Meanwhile, International Vulture Awareness Day ([IVAD](#)) September events almost certainly increased globally, and some are mentioned within the regional round-ups, but we're aware that we will have missed many. We know it was celebrated in at least 40 countries, with 139 events registered on the website. Social media campaigns emphasised understanding the cultural value of vultures and the threats they face worldwide. [A photography competition](#) was also launched in association with the event this year which saw more than 170 entries from across the range. The journal Bird Conservation International curated a [collection of vulture papers](#) to celebrate IVAD, and BirdLife posted a related blog rounding up [recent key vulture news](#).

**VSG & Conventions:** The VSG was asked to comment on an important proposal for the up-listing of two African Gyps vulture species from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I. If successful, this would bring with it significant government focus and potentially resources. The proposal was submitted and supported by 13 West- and Central African countries. The VSG queried why only these two species were considered and, in particular, why the Hooded vulture (HV) as the species currently most severely impacted by belief-use trade, was excluded from the proposal. These concerns were also captured in a [report compiled by TRAFFIC](#) for submission to the CITES Secretariat.

A [Letter to Science](#) on 4 Sept flagged the CMS Resolution ([see point 5 here](#)) regarding the urgent need to regulate toxic veterinary NSAIDs and for safety-testing of similar drugs BEFORE they are licensed for veterinary use – something that no country currently practices. It urged all signatory countries to comply and discuss ahead of the March 2026 CMS CoP.

## Asia

In September, the annual four hour SAVE Online Open Day event for 2025 had 120 attendees from 35 countries – and [all presentations](#) are now available. The focus was of course on SAVE South and SE Asian partner countries, **Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar & Cambodia**, but also included speed talks from the pharmaceutical industry plus from other parts of Asia: **Saudi Arabia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Bhutan** and even **Spain**. In early October, the [Central Asian Conservation Network](#) (CACN) held a Vultures of the Central Asian Flyway webinar – talks included important new initiatives from **Armenia** and are available [here](#).

### South & SE Asia:

During the 2024–25 breeding season in **Bangladesh**, nesting success showed a modest increase, with nine successful nests recorded in the Rema-Kalenga WS and one successful nest in Pabna. A poison bait survey, conducted based on tagged vulture movements, revealed that 4.17% (n=21) of 500 participants admitted using poison to protect livestock from predators such as dogs and jackals. In June 2025, a poster titled “Final Insight into the Movement Pattern of Rescued Himalayan Griffon (HG)” was presented at the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) held in Australia. Of special significance and [reported in the SAVE Open Day](#) Bangladesh presentation, the ketoprofen ban from 2021 has been found through under-cover pharmacy surveys to have almost completely removed this vulture-toxic drug from veterinary use, BUT alarmingly it has been replaced more by flunixin (also vulture-toxic but not yet fully tested) than by the safe drugs meloxicam and tolafenamic acid! This further underlines the importance for governments to only license known and tested safe drugs...

Annual road transects of [BCN](#) the length of **Nepal** again showed positive trends for the 8<sup>th</sup> successive year! 20 WRV were GPS tagged this year in the Dang area - work that supports the Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) program and provides key information in relation to the proposed 400 KV transmission line and existing transmission infrastructure. An additional 5 WRV were tagged in Shuklaphanta (SW Nepal) making total of 14 WRV being tracked in that area, all towards declaring a future VSZ. A record total of 799 vulture nests (748 WRV), were monitored of which 580 were successful (72.6%). BCN and partners conducted 45 IVAD events in 20 districts across Nepal, included drawing and speech competitions, quizzes, vulture safe feeding sites (Jatayu restaurant) observation tours, poem competitions, online art competition program, sanitation program and documentaries. Nine local conservation partners from Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs)—

Rajapani CF (Kapilvastu), Pratibha CF (Kapilvastu), Uchanimbu CF (Dang), Samjhana CF (Dang), Kalika CF (Dang), Khairani CF (Palpa), Adheri Chharchare CF (Palpa), Ankuran Adarsa CF (Nawalpur), and Sinhale Sallaghari CF (Tanahun)—all integrated vulture conservation activities into their operational plans. Lumbini Province government (hosts the world's first declared VSZ) allocated budgetary support for vulture conservation, reflecting growing local govt. commitment to the cause. A book chapter [Raptor Conservation in East and South Asia](#) was published in "[State of the World's Raptors](#)", identifying priority species for conservation. This prioritisation led to [Himalayan Raptors](#) signing an agreement with the [Peregrine Fund](#) to carry out Red-headed vulture (RHV) and Egyptian vulture (EV) work in **Nepal**. Initial plans are to tag 10 RHV, followed by population estimation, identification of hotspots for species occurrence and threats, and initiating conservation activities in hotspot areas to tackle these threats. Work by [Bird Conservation Nepal](#) with RSPB support to develop a second Vulture Safe Zone in Western Nepal was given an important boost being [awarded a major three year Darwin Initiative](#) (UK Govt) grant. The work will focus mainly on developing local cow shelters and vulture and pharmacy monitoring. The Pokhara Bird Society (PBS) [celebrated IVAD](#) with awareness raising and monitoring. Further monitoring of HG and Cinereous vultures (CV) is planned, as well as tagging of Slender-billed vultures (SBV). On 6 Nov. PBS also hosted a rearranged National Vulture Symposium of over 20 presentations.

The Tamil Nadu government in South **India** again led by example through [prosecution of over 100 pharmacies](#) and drug companies not complying with the January [nationwide nimesulide ban](#) - the vet drug having been proved highly toxic to vultures consuming cattle carcasses of recently treated animals. Also, another positive step was Tamil Nadu Forest Department issued formal [guidelines to allow wild animal carcasses](#) to be left out for vultures rather than being buried or burnt as often otherwise happens, and so making the meat unavailable as scavenger food. Further north, in West Bengal, the first wild vulture (a HG) death was confirmed ([published](#) in Sept) demonstrating prominent gout symptoms and with high flunixin levels detected in the tissues – something so easily missed as for other NSAIDs deaths. Meanwhile, over [8,000 vets across India](#) directly engaged in a novel awareness-raising event organised by Intas Pharmaceuticals Ltd. The events and interactions highlighted the environmental importance of vultures as well as the toxic effects of many NSAIDs - and achieved an official World-record breaking photo-collage size of all 8,000 involved! [Vets were also engaged](#) directly through 3-day awareness workshops in vulture centres at Pinjore, Haryana, and Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh with

BNHS and respective state forest departments leading these initiatives to persuade vets to ‘nurture the guardians of the sky’ and use vet-drugs responsibly. Videos were produced to celebrate IVAD and can be found on YouTube [here](#) and [here](#). The Rani Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (BNHS) in Assam, among many events across India organised a large scale [drawing competition](#) for IVAD and commended six ‘Vulture Friends’ for services to vulture conservation. The [Wildlife Institute](#) of India [published](#) a catalogue of vulture nesting sites (with coordinates) for all India - by far the most comprehensive breeding site record for the four CR vulture species to date. Despite not being a replicable method, it provides important baseline information on the breeding distribution with minimum numbers. Large scale road transects (by BNHS) remain the best index along with eBird data via [SolB](#) and remain the main indices for vulture population trends in India. Vulture populations remain at best stable or still declining for all four CR species. See for example recent [Indian Vulture](#) (IV) & [White rumped vulture](#) (WRV) trends. Preparations are underway for further releases by the end of the year, mainly in Maharashtra, but also a pilot small-scale release is planned in Assam. Progress by BNHS towards establishing India’s first Vulture Safe Zone is underway around Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, Rani in Assam (to be verified in this case by analysis of NSAIDs, still the main threat, in 800 cattle carcasses), but less than half the samples have been collected so far. SAVE issued an opinion piece highlighting the need for an overarching [plan, to secure safety-net populations](#) of the three CR Gyps species held and carefully managed in the main breeding programme in India (currently over 700 of 3 Gyps species in India, with 34 WRV held at Changamanga in **Pakistan**), recommending such a plan should follow the IUCN 5-step process, to agree minimum overall numbers to be managed, and linked to the release planning.

In **Cambodia**, a [publication](#) updated population trends from synchronised vulture restaurant counts recording 78 WRV, 48 SBV but worryingly a drop to only 14 RHV. Although for WRV this is a small increase, overall figures suggests stabilisation, following declines over the past decade. The main conclusion of the study however was demonstrating that vulture populations are now dependent on supplementary food.

### **Central Asia:**

Five GPS-tagged Cinereous vultures (CV) tagged in **Kazakhstan** and **Uzbekistan** 2024 returned to Central Asia spending spring and summer in Kazakhstan. The [BRCC](#) team in **Kazakhstan** tagged 4 EVs with GPS/GSM transmitters and ringed 13 EVs in total. Two of these were tagged in the Chu-Ili

Mountains (SE Kazakhstan), currently the northernmost known EV breeding location. The team in **Uzbekistan** had a successful season too, tagging two more EVs and two more CVs with kind support from the Institute of Zoology and the Nuratau State Reserve. The [Central Asian Vultures Project](#) team also monitored 5 EV congregation sites in the south of Uzbekistan and mapped more EV and Bearded vulture (BV) nests and breeding territories, supported by the Institute of Zoology and **Tajikistan** Nature Foundation. The team met with Wildlife Rescue Centre staff of the Zarafshon NP, and in the summer one exhausted Griffon vulture (GV) and one EV with a broken wing were treated at the rescue centre.

For the first time in **Kyrgyzstan**, two juvenile EVs were tagged in their nests with GPS/GSM transmitters, with partners from the Nature Foundation Kyrgyzstan. A cluster of 12 EV nests was mapped and breeding outcomes monitored in a small sample area in the region of Osh. The project was [presented at the Global Bird Fair](#) (UK) by supporters from the Hawk Conservancy Trust. Also, a summary of the results from tracking EVs and CVs was presented at the Annual [online SAVE](#) meeting in Sept. In **Armenia**, 4 CVs were tagged in Vayots Dzor region by NABU Armenia, with 2 of the tags provided by the VCF. Work with local stakeholders continues.

### **West Asia/Middle East:**

In **Oman**, with funding from [OSME](#), the [Environment Society of Oman \(ESO\)](#) completed Lappet-faced Vulture (LFV) nesting surveys in the Hajar Mountains. Two nestling LFVs were fitted with transmitters and are being tracked, bringing the number of LFV tracked in the region to 14 (6 still active). ESO celebrated IVAD with a social media campaign. A new ESO paper shows a stable [EV population on Masirah Island](#). In **Saudi Arabia**, Sharaan Nature Reserve has recently confirmed the [first breeding of EVs](#) and recorded the [second sighting of a RV](#). [King Salman Royal Nature Reserve](#) continues its Vulture Conservation Programme including monitoring vulture breeding, [live nest camera broadcasting for LFV & GV](#), managing a safe feeding station, raising awareness through [social media](#), and cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration to support efforts to [regulate the use of diclofenac](#) - it has now been restricted (illegal without prescription) across the Kingdom, as a first step toward completely banning its veterinary use nationally. The reserve celebrated [IVAD](#) on social media. The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Royal Reserve has released [a summary of tracking data](#) from two released Griffon vultures (GV). Unfortunately, authorities in **Lebanon** have reported the ongoing illegal trade of EVs smuggled from **Iraq** and **Syria**.

## Europe

In April, **Albania**'s Ministry of Tourism and Environment officially approved the [Action Plan](#) for the Protection from Poisoning of Endangered and Endemic Species of Wild Fauna in Albania, 2025–2035. This is the result of seven years of relentless effort and collaboration among the Albanian Ornithological Society (AOS)—a key national partner in the BalkanDetox LIFE project—the Ministry, and a broad network of partners. In early May, the *LIFE Safe for Vultures* project in partnership with VCF held a [three-day technical meeting](#) to evaluate the feasibility study for the reintroduction of BVs and CVs in **Sardinia**. Both species will benefit from the reintroduction, monitoring, and protection project for GVs. In June, the WildLIFE Crime Academy [trained a new cohort](#) of [37 professionals](#) from **nine European countries**, including [representatives](#) from **Portugal** and a [veterinary physician from Green Balkans](#). The *LIFE Rhodope Vulture* project held a [youth conservation and education camp](#) in **Bulgaria** in June.

### Bearded Vulture (BV):

During the release season, [18 young vultures were released](#) across **Bulgaria, Germany, France, and Spain**. In **Spain**, [six BVs were released in Sierra Nevada](#), and the region also received six wild hatched chicks. A male and a female [were released in Maestrazgo](#). In February, a [BV chick successfully hatched and was tagged in the Moncayo massif](#) in **Spain**, marking the first successful [wild-hatched BV chick in over a century](#) in the entire Iberian System mountain range. The chick, which successfully fledged in July, hatched from two reintroduced birds of Pyrenean bloodlines. BV Esperanza, the first wild-hatched BV from a reintroduced pair in Andalusia, [raised her first chick in the wild in the same area she hatched](#). The Centro de Conservación de la Biodiversidad – Zoobotánico Jerez (Spain) [fledged its first ever BV chick this year](#), after almost 30 years of being part of the [BV EEP network](#) and housing various pairs. The [IBM](#) confirmed the presence of [over 100 BV pairs in the Alps](#). The species also returned to territories where it has been absent for 150 years. Recent research highlights the success of the Alpine BV reintroduction programme and the [drivers behind the species recovery in the area](#). In **France**, the *LIFE Gyp'Act* project confirmed that [both BV breeding pairs in Vercors](#) successfully reproduced this year. One of the two fledglings took its first flight at the end of June, but was found dead only three weeks after, on July 19. Three individuals were released in Grands Causses and [two in Vercors](#) within the *LIFE Gyp'Act* project frame. BV [Rei del Causse](#), monitored by the *LIFE Gyp'Act* project, was found dead in France at the end of January but the autopsy was inconclusive. The *LIFE GypRescue* registered six pairs in **Corsica** this season, four of which were breeding. [Only one chick hatched](#). It fledged at the end of July, marking the [first successfully wild-hatching for BV chick in Corsica in](#)



[four years](#). In **Germany**, [two females were released in Berchtesgaden NP](#). In mid-June, BV Vinzenz, released last year in Berchtesgaden NP, was rescued after a 1600km journey. He had lost weight but was unharmed. Once fully recovered, after two weeks at the Rastede Wildlife Rescue Centre, he was [re-released in Berchtesgaden NP](#). For the first time in fifty years, BVs returned to **Bulgaria**, thanks to the release of three young males named Boev, LifeBG and Balkan. The release is part of the *BeardedVulture LIFE* project. [Unfortunately, LifeBG died from a bacterial infection](#). Balkan also had to be brought back into care due to feather loss, but he is now recovered. Boev is now in the Central Balkan NP.

#### **(Eurasian) Griffon Vulture (GV):**

[Three GVs were found dead](#) in **Cyprus**: two males that were electrocuted, and a female died of unknown causes. [29 GVs were released](#) in **Sardinia** for the third release of *LIFE Safe for Vultures* at the beginning of June. In August, [GV presence at the Gennargentu Mountains](#) (Sardinia) was finally confirmed after months of tracking and sightings. This milestone is likely due to the project's conservation efforts and the expansion of the supplementary feeding stations network. The LIFE SUPport project, together with VCF, produced a [study on the ecosystem services of GV in the Kvarner Islands](#) in **Croatia**. The study highlights the importance of the species for the ecotourism sector. In **Bulgaria**, the BSPB team recorded 145 territorial pairs of GV that hatched 97 juveniles in the Eastern Rhodopes. However, high juvenile mortality was recorded with at least 14 dead chicks. Causes remain unknown. Two juveniles, rescued after fledging, were tagged with GPS-GSM transmitters. Two [GV chicks from Stara Zagora Zoo](#) were released.

#### **Cinereous Vulture (CV):**

A female CV was shot in **France** in January. [She was successfully rescued and released in the Verdon Gorge in June](#). In March, [six CV joined the soft release programme in the Douro International NP \(Spain-Portugal\)](#) to hopefully strengthen the local isolated colony. The *LIFE Aegypius Return* project, responsible for the release programme, reached another important milestone during the summer: a total of [50 CVs have been tagged](#) with GPS/GSM transmitters since the beginning of the project. The project also produced a [report analysing the ideal distance between CV nests and windfarms](#). The Sierra de Menera colony, which is the most recently formed of those monitored by the project, is expanding and represents a strategic breeding nucleus for the species in Iberia. Unfortunately, due to its location near the Alqueva dam and the existing infrastructure associated with renewable energy production, the [colony is under strong](#)

[pressure](#). During the summer, **Portugal** saw several severe wildfires. [On Aug 15, a wildfire started in the heart of the Douro International NP](#). Two CV nests were destroyed by fire, while six others were damaged to varying degrees. The six CVs that were being held at the acclimatisation aviary were rescued. One chick, tagged in June, died. Given the very small size of the colony, this represents a major setback for its conservation, and it is possible that the adults – even if they have survived – may abandon this territory, undoing several years of efforts to restore the colony. In **Romania**, a CV was [rescued from the Danube Delta](#), after travelling 10,000km over 14 countries. In **Greece**, almost two years after a major wildfire hit the Evros region, [the Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli Forest NP achieved a CV record](#), with 41 breeding pairs recorded in April, the highest total in 30 years of monitoring. At the end of July, one CV was found injured in a field at the border between **Greece** and **Bulgaria**. The rescue team suspected electrocution. The vulture, tagged and released in Bulgaria in April 2025, died shortly after being rescued.

This year, **Bulgaria** celebrates the [best breeding season](#) since the reintroduction of the species in the area with [12-13 pairs and 8 chicks](#). On June 2, [Kutelka, one of Bulgaria's most iconic CVs, was found dead](#). She was the mother of the first wild-hatched CV in the Western Balkan Mountains in nearly a century, and the second in Bulgaria since the species' reintroduction. She had a chick this year too. The chick was rescued by the *BeardedVulture LIFE* project team. A CV nest was recorded for the first time in the [Sakar Mountains](#). The *LIFE Rhodope Vulture* project [tagged and released the third group of birds](#), which came [from Spain](#) last year. Sadly, one drowned in the Aegean Sea and two others were rescued in **North Macedonia** and **Serbia**, respectively. In June, 7 more CVs [arrived in Bulgaria](#) from [Spain](#), and [were released](#) in late Oct in the Eastern Rhodopes.

### **Egyptian Vulture (EV):**

In **Spain**, EV consolidated their [wintering population in Cáceres](#): 359 individuals were counted across three roosting sites during winter monitoring. Last summer the Spanish NGO AMUS-Acción por el Mundo Salvaje tagged 12 EVs (10 nestlings and 2 adults) with GPS, in collaboration with the regional wildlife authorities of Extremadura, Castilla León, Aragón and Navarra regions. The goals of this project is to identify threats and increase information about spatial use by this species. Additionally, biological samples were collected in all the birds to identify potential exposure to toxins (heavy metal, antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs). The project will monitor these EVs for at least 4 years. **Sardinia** hosted a [successfully breeding EV](#) pair for the seventh year consecutively. In **Bulgaria**, the BSPB hosted another [another successful EV nest guarding campaign](#), registered a [new EV pair in the Eastern Rhodopes](#), and celebrated [another success](#) in



the restocking program. Six young EVs were [placed in the adaptation aviary](#), including two [donated by Prague Zoo](#). Two [rescued eggs successfully hatched in captivity](#), and the nest with the [online streaming camera also had an egg hatch](#). Five additional EVs were [tagged with GPS transmitters](#). Green Balkans continue to [support EVs in NW Bulgaria](#) with supplementary feeding. But less positive news was [two EVs were poisoned](#): A female died of poisoning in April, but her mate was successfully rescued and released in May. [Another female was poisoned in July](#), while taking care of her chick with her mate. The male is unharmed, and the chick was rescued and will be released after fledging. One EV released in 2024 was [electrocuted in Turkiye](#) during the autumn migration and another one released earlier in the season [was killed by a pair of Bonelli's Eagles](#) in **Greece**.

### **Rüppell's Vulture (RV)**

Two RVs, tagged in **Morocco**, were tracked to **Spain** and **Portugal** in May, with very [different outcomes](#): GR70 successfully reached Portugal, while GR67 attempted to cross the Straits of Gibraltar but fell into the water and was washed up on the beach in **Gibraltar**. Another tagged [RV was found dead in S Portugal in July](#) but the circumstances are still unclear.

## **Africa**

### **North Africa:**

In **Morocco**, 58 Rüppell's vultures (RV) and one African white-backed vulture (WBV) [were captured and tagged](#) at the Jebel Moussa Vulture Rehabilitation Center (AMPOVIS) between April and August, including 12 GPS tagged. This monitoring is carried out by AMPOVIS in partnership with Moroccan Govt ANEF, supported by IUCN-Med, and in collaboration with others. For IVAD, AMPOVIS, in partnership with ANEF and supported by IUCN-Med, organised the first [Jbel Moussa Ornithological Fair](#), 5-7 Sept. This event gathered ornithologists from Morocco, Spain, and India, and the Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of Raptors in Morocco 2024-2034 was launched, targeting 12 raptor species. Updates of the GV reintroduction programme in Morocco, 2020-2025, led by AMPOVIS and ANEF, were also presented.

### **West Africa:**

A series of at least five mass-poisoning events were reported from **the Gambia** between July-August 2025 causing the deaths of dozens of HVs, most likely for the harvest of body parts to be used in belief-use trade. Two suspects were arrested in early August, but investigations continue. The VSG, working with the VCF, CMS Raptors MoU, BirdLife International and WABSA were invited

by the Gambian Dept of Parks and Wildlife Management to assist with an intervention involving wildlife poisoning management training, sampling and response planning scheduled for November 2025. In **Nigeria**, Akinleye Isaac Oyegbami and the Osogbo Bird Conservation Project team continued vulture awareness activities, including installing an informational board at the entrance of the [Osun Osogbo Sacred Forest](#), seen by 20,000 visitors annually. Market surveys conducted by the [Nigerian Conservation Foundation](#) (NCF) found a decline in traders selling vultures, which may be due to either increased public awareness or a scarcity of vultures from population declines. NCF and TRAFFIC have initiated a study around demand reduction in belief-based use. In August, NCF signed an MOU with the National Association of Traditional Medicine Practitioners to [prohibit the use of vultures and their parts in traditional medicine](#). Demand reduction for belief-based use was also [covered on national news](#). NCF conducted surveys in SE Nigeria in July and August, which along with advocacy efforts, support Vulture Safe Zone strategies. In **Niger**, [Sahara Conservation Fund](#) worked with local authorities to [negotiate the release of an Egyptian vulture](#) tagged by the BSPB in Bulgaria. In **Benin**, Dr. Abiola Sylvestre Chaffra led the [publication](#) of a scientific article measuring the impacts of wildlife trade for the practice of voodoo on vultures across West and Central Africa. He also published a [blog post](#) highlighting findings from this publication. PhD student Irene Blondelle-Kenfack launched a project to assess the Hooded Vulture (HV) population in North-Central **Cameroon** and to also study the impact of belief-use trade on this species in the region. She successfully trapped and fitted a tracking unit to the first bird in early July. The project also conducts extensive awareness work on the need to conserve vultures among local communities.

### East Africa:

In **Tanzania**, [North Carolina Zoo](#) (NCZ) and [The Peregrine Fund](#) (TPF) deployed 11 satellite tags, making a total of 34 tags monitored by late Sept 2025. Two poisoning incidences recorded were linked to mortality of tagged vultures. A further waterhole poisoning led to the rescue and release of 15 vultures and the death of one. 1257 household interviews were repeated in Lukwati-Piti area of western Tanzania to assess the impact of the community trainings on Hazard of Pesticide Use in 2024. Initial analysis shows positive outcomes. Three poison response trainings were conducted with 88 wildlife authority rangers and ecologists. Standardised road transect surveys were conducted for Katavi and Ruaha NPs covering ~450km. In **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**, NCZ and TPF continued to monitor 17 vultures tagged in Kafue, North Luangwa, Hwange and Victoria Falls (end of Sept 2025), as part of a broader partnership with the Zambia Vulture Projects. Two

mortalities were recorded, one linked to poaching and the other unknown. In Gorongosa NP, **Mozambique**, Rebecca Bishop trained Research Technician, Diolinda Mundoza, in vulture breeding survey methods. Together, they surveyed more than 150 historical White-headed (WHV) and WBV nest sites, and Diolinda will continue to the end-of-season checks in Oct and Nov. In **Chad**, Djekadjim Djekillamber presented results from his vulture research at slaughterhouses in N'Djamena at a workshop sponsored by the [Sahara Conservation Fund](#). Since January, The Peregrine Fund has conducted 30 community trainings involving 500+ people and 4 ranger trainings to prevent predator conflict with livestock and reduce wildlife poisonings in northern **Kenya**. Building predator-proof bomas (livestock corrals) by community members has been phenomenal with 4000+ bomas built since project inception in 2018. Over the past three years only 3 vultures have been poisoned, compared to 77 poisoned during 2019-2021. In contrast, long-term monitoring of three Rüppell's Vulture breeding colonies in northern Kenya has shown an overall decline in the number of nests since 2018.

### **Southern Africa:**

Members of the BV Breeding Programme in southern Africa met with VCF (Europe) members to start discussions around reintroductions and release site guidelines in preparation for the supplementation of the in situ population in southern Africa. The launch of the SADC Vulture Conservation Strategy took place during a workshop hosted by the SADC Secretariat, IUCN ESORO and BirdLife Africa held in Sandton, **South Africa** 26-27 Aug 2025. The strategy promotes regional and cross-border cooperation to support the conservation of vultures across 14 states on mainland Africa in the SADC-region. This was followed by a SADC Belief-based Use Workshop that was held at the same venue 28th Aug which involved representatives from traditional healers' organisations across the region and other key conservation stakeholder groups, including governments. The Steering Committee of the VSG sent a letter to the South African Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in South Africa on the 5th June 2025 raising concerns on behalf of its membership about the impact of large-scale poisonings on wildlife populations in the Greater Kruger NP over the last decade. This follows two large-scale poisoning incidents that happened in northern Kruger and in the Marloth Park area bordering on southern Kruger, about two weeks apart in May 2025. These incidents caused the death of more than 200 vultures of 5 species, but more than 80 birds survived and were released back into the wild after successful treatment by response teams. The VSG, through its local members serving on South Africa's National Vulture Task Force will continue to promote the prioritisation of interventions to address

this threat that has significantly impacted vulture populations in the region. Also in **South Africa**, [Fiona Fern](#) is conducting a PhD investigating viral threats to vultures and, so far, has tested 20 CAV, 151 WBV and 1 WHV across 12 properties covering an area of approx. 13,000km. At [Vulpro](#), 95 vultures have come in for rehabilitation, of which 52% have been released so far. Many remaining individuals are not releasable and will join the captive breeding programme. This season, the breeding programme hatched 28 chicks (24 Cape vulture (CAV), 4 WBV), with 3 further eggs due to hatch (WBV/CAV/Lappet-faced (LFV)). Over 350 vultures have been tracked since 2007 and 20% are still active. Data analysis projects are ongoing, with plans for 50+ additional trackers. Nest surveys and monitoring of breeding pairs continue. Involvement with 96 Environmental Impact Assessments year-to-date has led to stronger mitigation measures on multiple energy developments, and the DFFE, with input from Vulpro, finally rejected a 2024 appeal preventing a proposed Wind Farm near Eastern Cape breeding colonies after a long review. An extensive education programme reached a total of 4,282 individuals directly, through Vulpro's educational, training and awareness platforms. The [southern-most WHV nest](#) was recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. It was confirmed to be located on a private farm during the Zululand Vulture Project's helicopter nest survey that is done every 5 years with [Wildlife ACT](#) and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The [Endangered Wildlife Trust](#) (EWT), working with KZN Wildlife and FreeMe Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre conducted a WPMT workshop with 24 learners at Midmar Nature Reserve in the KZN Midlands over the weekend of the 31st May 2025. Wildlife ACT and the Hawk Conservancy Trust conducted a similar workshop with 15 members of the BV Recovery Programme at Maseru in **Lesotho** on 6-7 August 2025.

## North America

As of April 2025, the California Condor (CC) population in Baja California, **Mexico** reached 53 individuals. Five wild-fledged juveniles have been confirmed from last year's breeding season, marking a continued positive trend in natural reproduction. Additionally, six breeding pairs exhibited nesting behavior during the current breeding season. Two CC from Chapultepec Zoo are scheduled for release in the spring–summer season of 2026. These efforts are part of the ongoing collaboration to supplement the wild population in the region.

Extensive research collaborations allowed a complex evaluation of an avian influenza vaccine for poultry in American black vultures (ABV) and subsequently for CCs; the study was published in

the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases. A second, associated project used X-ray fluorescence to evaluate lead levels in bones of ABV; this was published in the Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology. Collaborative research involving the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center, and several State Wildlife Agencies recently investigated impacts of highly pathogenic avian influenzas (HPAI) on ABVs. Historically, vultures have not been very susceptible to avian influenza, but in 2022 5,707 ABV mortalities were recorded during die-offs from 12 US states where HPAI was confirmed. In states where the largest dies-offs occurred, over [50% of sampled live vultures had HPAI antibodies](#), indicating that they had been infected but survived.

Collaborative research involving many of the same agencies, and Purdue University, led to a publication on the [effects of white-tailed deer hunting seasons on ABV movements](#). Vultures in the study area (Indiana and Kentucky, **USA**) switched areas in response to the pulsed resources associated with deer hunting (increased carrion/offal). Understanding how ABV space use varies with resource pulses from the white-tailed deer hunting season may help to reduce human-wildlife conflict, e.g., ensuring proper disposal of offal can minimize unintentional congregation of vultures near human infrastructure or livestock production areas.

[Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#) (HMS) in Pennsylvania, USA is tracking 8 Turkey Vultures (TVs) and 1 ABV fitted with satellite transmitters. HMS monitored 16 ABV nests in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey in 2025; 4 were in caves (75% success) and 13 were in human-made structures (94% success). HMS also monitored 1 TV nest which was successful. 26 ABVs were wing-tagged. In Southern California, USA, Dr. Peter Bloom, Dr. Andrea-Bonisoli Alquati and Dr. Miguel D. Saggese, together with students from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Western University of Health Sciences and California State Polytechnic University, and coinvestigators, are researching TV exposure to environmental pollutants (especially, lead and anticoagulant rodenticides), movements and natal philopatry, health and exposure to pathogens, breeding ecology, and the role of these birds as bioindicators. For more information please [contact Dr. Peter Bloom](#). Mississippi State University researchers have studies underway on ABVs, including microbiome, physiological processes, development of risk models predicting areas of issue for utility infrastructure and aeronautics, and the influence of orthogenic inputs on the distribution of various wildlife taxa.

## South & Central America

For the first time, the [possible NSAIDs threat](#) and consequences was raised in the South America context, the paper calling for proper investigation. In **Chile**, The Friends of the Condor Corporation (FOCC) (@amigosdelcondor), in conjunction with the Nat. Zoo of Chile and the Andean Condor (AC) Foundation of Ecuador, continues monitoring and tracking AC “Santiago,” an adult male rescued and released on Oct 10, 2024, who to date has travelled widely (over 18,245 km) between **Argentina** and **Chile**. Within this framework, and to celebrate IVAD, the FOCC carried out various educational and outreach activities, including a field trip on Sept 7 to the Farellones area (central **Chile**); plus two virtual lectures at the Cavall Academy, covering the biology, biometrics, taxonomy, and conservation of vultures. A talk at the Nat. Zoo of Chile (Parquemel) on the biology and conservation challenges of vultures; and a conservation workshop for schoolchildren at the Chiloé Forest Village in the Chonchi commune, with the support of FOCC.

In **Argentina**, the first reference genome of the AC was sequenced. This new [genomic resource](#) at the chromosomal level (1.19 Gb, with 97.4% completeness, 29 autosomes and the Z chromosome) opens up research options into evolution, ecology, and more effective conservation strategies. When compared with the CC and Old-World vultures, high synteny with the CC genome was found, but also differences in genetic diversity and the proportion of homozygous regions, reflecting contrasting evolutionary trajectories. The results also detected divergent patterns in the evolution of gene families related to detoxification metabolism, high-altitude adaptation, and immune response, while trends shared with other avian scavengers indicate instances of convergent evolution in metabolic pathways and stress responses. Overall, the genome constitutes a key resource for furthering biological understanding as well as informing conservation efforts for all scavengers. Another [publication](#) combined movement and genetic data to investigate how energy landscape characteristics influence ecologically and evolutionarily relevant dispersal patterns in the AC. The results show that topographic features are key determinants of gene flow patterns, while climatic variables primarily influence exploratory and encamped flights. In addition, condors increased their space use and connectivity during the summer. Although resource selection functions did not predict gene flow routes through trajectory-based analyses, whole-landscape approaches did identify connectivity barriers in flatter terrain. The study indicates the critical role of topography and life history requirements in habitat selection and population connectivity for AC. AC and other vultures are being trapped, sampled, and tagged in the central region of Argentina - being fitted with GPS tags



to study individual and collective movement, genetics, and to assess the health status of populations in this region, including the presence of resistant bacteria. We hope to bring more news from other Latin American countries in the next Newsletter.

### **Global/Multi-regional & Miscellaneous News**

Some beautifully produced CR Asian vulture mobile kits (3 species) are being produced by [Summerscribbles and now available](#) in India.

Finally... We are sad to share that Clive Barlow, Gambia-based highly vocal and active vulture advocate [passed away in early August](#).

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If you receive this newsletter indirectly, do please write and [let us know](#) if you would like to become a 'Friend of VSG' and be added to our mailing list, and so receive the newsletter directly.

Please send items for inclusion ahead of the next edition in March, or submit longer articles [to the editor](#) of the VSG journal, Vulture News.

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**Chris Bowden**

[chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk](mailto:chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk)

**Andre Botha**

[havewingstofly@gmail.com](mailto:havewingstofly@gmail.com)

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

<b>Editor &amp; Asia:</b>	Chris Bowden
<b>African Regional Co-chair:</b>	Darcy Ogada
<b>European Regional Co-chairs:</b>	José Tavares, Vladimir Dobrev
<b>Latin America Regional Chair:</b>	Sergio Lambertucci
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<b>North America Compiler:</b>	Zoey Greenberg
<b>Editor Vulture News:</b>	Volen Arkumarev
<b>VSG Admin/Newsletter Assistant:</b>	Cat Taras



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**Vulture** Specialist Group

**Our thanks to additional newsletter contributors:**

A B M Sarowar Alam, Ibrahim Al Hasani, Nico Arcilla, Rebecca Bishop, Claire Bracebridge, Enrica Calò, Hemanta Dhakal, Dobromir Dobrev, Stella Egbe, Rachid El Khamlichi, Fiona Fern, Alfonso Godino, Mike McGrady, Alyona Kaptyonkina, Chris Kelly, Sonja Krüger, Sachin Ranade, Anel Swart, Maia Sarrouf Willson, Ankit Joshi, Michel Sawan, Tulsi Subedi, Kerri Wolter.