

(VulPro NPC [Vulture Programme for the Conservation of Vulture Species in southern Africa]  
Registration No. 2011/127419/08 [Section 14, Companies Act 2008])  
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**VulPro Annual Report 2017**



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## 1. **SUMMARY**

### 1.1 **Executive Summary**

Having started on its second decade of existence, VulPro is growing from strength to strength, and is making a name for itself in all aspects of vulture conservation.

After being established on New Year's Day, 2007, at that time based at Skeerpoort on Nyoka Ridge, VulPro moved its rehabilitation centre and vulture restaurant to Hartbeespoort, Rietfontein, in February 2009. Originally operating under the Rhino and Lion Wildlife Conservation NPO umbrella, it became independent in October 2011 by registering with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission of South Africa as a non-profit and public benefit company in its own right.

VulPro has continued to garner interest through its achievements in the fields of vulture conservation, research and rehabilitation and its captive breeding programme, both within South Africa as well as globally, over this relatively short period. Its CEO, Kerri Wolter, has been nominated for many awards over the past years, pocketing some of them, and thereby drawing more attention to VulPro. The challenge will be to maintain the local and global public interest which lead to the growth of VulPro. Vulture numbers are still very fragile, as a result of anthropogenic threats, with more species upgraded to critically endangered. The importance of their existence to help keep our ecosystems healthy cannot be stressed enough, and it is VulPro's goal to keep these birds alive in viable numbers for future generations.

VulPro is proud of a new collaboration and united front aimed at saving Africa's vultures aptly named "Vulture Alliance" (VA), that was formally launched on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017. The launch of VA took place in the UK with Her Majesty, Princess Anne, in attendance, where she learnt about the plight of vultures in Africa. Kerri Wolter attended and announced the launch to 200 guests who attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Centre of Birds of Prey. The support and enthusiasm received from supporters, friends and followers in the UK was unbelievable and VulPro has been highly acknowledged for its efforts in saving vultures.

VulPro is also pleased to announce that the VulPro facility was inspected by the NSPCA and has been accredited as one of the 'go-to' rehabilitation centres for vultures, large birds of prey and any other species needing immediate care and safety.

In this report, as is the norm, rescue, rehabilitation and release figures are provided as well as the progressing view of the health of breeding colonies and of populations determined from monitoring programmes. The educational outreach programme is still going strong, albeit requiring a lot of effort and time. The Roots and Shoots after school programme, initiated with the Jane Goodall Institute, is of utmost importance to educate young minds in the surrounding community, and is proving very successful. Once a week the children spend 2 hours after school at VulPro to learn about conservation, environmental respect and general responsibility to everything around them. There is a strong media interest whenever VulPro has an interesting event, such as the simultaneous release of 35 birds in November 2017. Although the interest outside of such major events is not as much, it continues on a regular basis nonetheless. The conservation breeding programme where non-releasable vultures are being given a new lease on a life as close to normality as possible, has had good successes, and is continually being improved upon. 2017 Proved to have a bumper crop of eggs, and more fledglings. The captive bred chicks from previous years have been released in the mass release of November, and some are travelling throughout South Africa and bordering countries, where perhaps eventually they will be expanding local colonies, helping to stem the decline of their species.

The work done at VulPro lends itself admirably to many research projects, all for the greater good of protecting and saving vultures across the globe. These are printed in relevant peer reviewed publications when possible. Such research in 2017 is outlined in this document.

Income and expenses are discussed at the end of this report as usual. Without the assistance of all

the donations and sponsorships and supporters that provide the income required to run VulPro, it would not be possible for us to continue with our all-important work. VulPro sincerely wishes to thank everybody for their continued contributions, that are the lifeline of VulPro. It is not easy to convey our heartfelt appreciation in words that can show our intense gratitude, and we hope that all these individuals/groups/trusts/foundations/organisations sense that we truly mean what we say. We hope this report outlines and showcases how much needed funds are used to conserve our vultures.

## **1.2 Accomplishing the mission of VulPro**

VulPro's mission statement:

*"To advance knowledge, awareness and innovation in the conservation of African vulture populations for the benefit and well-being of society",*

This mission statement is still the driving force to achieve these all-important goals, using the evolving methodology and strategy gained over the years, by:

- ongoing rescue and rehabilitation service for vultures and other raptors
- Monitoring of breeding levels in principal Cape Vulture colonies within Southern Africa and colonies of Hooded and African White-backed Vultures in the Limpopo and North West Provinces in South Africa.
- its vulture restaurant co-operatives
- community outreach, interaction and educational programmes
- farmer and landowner awareness and educational extension activities
- involvement in research projects
- collaborations with other NGOs and government, both locally and internationally on vulture related conservation activities
- regular output of information and profile through the media, and
- the breeding of non-releasable vulture species for reintroduction purposes

## **2. Performance reviews**

### **2.1 Rescue & Rehabilitation**

The most important of VulPro's missions is still Rescue and Rehabilitation. The rescue numbers are provided in Table 1. There were 205 birds in residence (182 non-releasable) at the end of 2017. Due to some individuals failing their release in November, the number of Cape Vultures that are non-releasable are up by a larger percentage than before. Other types of raptors were also collected more often than previously, although unfortunately many of those were too seriously injured to be rehabilitated.

As the cost of feeding a single vulture equates to approximately R28 per week (see 2.1.3), the increased number of birds means that VulPro's food bill will show an increased cost of R30576.00 in 2018.

The rescue, palliative care and release services that VulPro offers are in as much demand as always, and the release figures emphasise the value of this work. Over the last 9 years, 202 Cape Vultures, 26 other vulture species and 50 other raptors were successfully re-integrated into their threatened or declining communities, to continue with sustaining the species by breeding and raising chicks after being rehabilitated at VulPro.

The conservation breeding programme, as set out in section 2.7, is becoming more successful in supplying vultures to supplement wild colonies.

**Table 1: Up to date rescue and release data**

Species	In 2017						
	In residence at 1.1.17	Collected/ brought In	Released	Died	Euthanized	Transferred or donated or on loan	In residence at 31.12.17 (non-releasable)
<b>Cape Vulture</b>	118 (106)	88	64	6	2		143 (125)
<b>African White-backed Vulture</b>	36(36)	15	4	1	2		44 (41)
<b>White-headed Vulture</b>	2(2)						2 (2)
<b>Lappet-faced Vulture</b>	8(7)	3	3				8 (8)
<b>Palm-nut Vulture</b>	3(3)						3 (3)
<b>Condors</b>	2(2)						2 (2)
<b>Other Raptors</b>	7(5)	24	2	3	11	7	3 (1)
<b>Total number of Vultures and Raptors, including breeding pairs and captive bred vultures resident at VulPro</b>							<b>206</b>

**Table 2: Summary of rescue and release data since VulPro established itself in its Hartbeespoort, Rietfontein, location**

Year	Cape Vultures		Other vultures		Other raptors	
	Rescued	Released	Rescued	Released	Rescued	Released
2009	40	12	7	2	19	0
2010	25	13	5	0	14	4
2011	38	15	1	0	17	7
2012	53	31	5	0	15	6
2013	42	24	4	0	13	7
2014	54	12	18	3	8	9
2015	52	17	23	4	22	12
2016	52	8	21	8	9	3
2017	88	64	20	8	24	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>50</b>

**Vultures and other Raptors at Other Facilities or Satellite Stations**

VulPro assists other facilities from time to time. Occasionally some of the permanent residents at VulPro are loaned to other facilities, or a bird may be loaned to VulPro for breeding or other purposes. Below is a list of the species currently at some of these other facilities, as well as noting the assistance VulPro has given.

**Table 3: Vultures and Other Raptors outside of VulPro but with VulPro's assistance**

<b><u>Other Facilities in Southern Africa</u></b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Facility</b>	<b>Aid provided/Loan</b>	<b>Birds</b>	<b>Result</b>
2016	Belfast	Birds on loan	2 Lanner Falcons 2 Spotted Eagle Owls 1 Yellow Billed Kite	Resident at Belfast
05/01/2017	Blouberg Nature Reserve	Tagging & Release	6 Cape Vultures	Released
01/02/2017	Lori Park Zoo	To VulPro for breeding	1 AWB vulture	In residence at VulPro
21-22/02/2017	Zimbabwe	Assisted with rehab & fitted tracking device	1 AWB vulture	Released
19 & 28/05/2017	Skeerpoort	For Release	3 Barn Owls	For release
04/07/2017	Dullstroom Bird of Prey Centre	On loan while feathers regrow	1 Lanner Falcon	Resident at Dullstroom
12/11/2017	Brits release site	For release	1 Black Sparrow Hawk	For release
15/11/2017	Brits release site	For release	1 Gabar	For release
27/12/2017	Dullstroom Bird of Prey Centre	For release or shows	1 Black Eagle female	Resident at Dullstroom

### **2.1.1 Age and reason for admission**

*(Both tables included)*

Of the 108 vultures brought in and cared for by VulPro during 2017

- 28(26%) were specifically described as young fledglings. Of the remaining 82 vultures, 41(38%) were adults, and the rest (39) (36%), were described as immature and sub-adults. Most of the fledglings were found in January 2017.
- 37% had some level of mechanical injury, 62.5% of these attributed to power line collisions
- 5.5% showed evidence of poisoning
- 5.5% were victims of electrocution

### **2.1.2 Travel**

Rescue and field work such as population monitoring surveys; power line surveys; ground trothing and visits to artificial feeding sites, accounted for an approximate 108,000 km's travelled.

### **2.1.3 Feeding costs**

Feeding the vultures in the enclosures cost on average R4500 per week. This cost does not include staffing, maintenance and other costs incurred in running VulPro. Providing food for the visiting wild birds at the VulPro vulture restaurant amounts to about R1800 per week.

## **2.2. Monitoring of breeding levels in the principal Cape Vulture colonies**

The role of VulPro in vulture conservation is emphasized by the fact that its monitoring activities covers approximately 50% of the Cape Vulture population in the world. From this data it is clear that the Cape Vulture community is still fragile, and that VulPro has taken on significant responsibility in working to improve the status of the species.

Table 3 summarizes the overall data gained from the monitoring programme over the past 7 years. No dramatic changes have taken place and it appears that the health of most colonies is stable at

present, with the exception of Moletjie which is on the verge of extinction. There is also great concern for not knowing what the results are of the smaller peripheral colonies as we suspect many have or are going extinct.

**Table 4: Summary of monitoring of the principal Cape Vulture colonies.**

Colony	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Blouberg	572	851	1015e	NR	900e	NR	NR
Kransberg	638	661	611	632	580	NR*	690
Magaliesberg	332	273	309	319	344	390	289
Manutsa	539	434	444	563	558	621	644
Moletji	NR	20	13	17	18	19	5
Soutpansberg	NR	182	168	187	196	213	223
Mannyelanong	NR	NR	NR	62	93	NR	81
Moremi Gorge	NR	NR	NR	NR	194	NR	NR
Kammelspruit	NR	NR	NR	44	NR	NR	NR
Nooitgedacht	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	120
Roberts Farm						0	0

*e - estimate; NR, not recorded;*

*\*breeding pairs not recorded but 635 active nests were counted*

As stated previously, VulPro does not have the capacity to take on additional monitoring. Only limited success has been had by recruiting other groups or individuals for monitoring the smaller colonies.

### **2.3 Monitoring breeding success in tree-nesting vulture species**

Several tree-nesting species were upgraded to 'critically endangered' with many being data deficient. Through our breeding surveys we are trying to improve on this lack of data, as well as finely monitor these populations that depend very much on land management practices and habitat selection. In 2017 we continued to monitor our chosen field sites at least twice.

**Table 5: Breeding counts of African White-backed Vultures at 4 sites across South Africa.**

Location	Breeding Pairs July	Total Active Nests Aug/Sept	Estimated mid-season success (%)
Boikarabelo	36	34	94
Khaya Ndlovu	13	12	92
Curly Wee	9	3	50
Olifants River PNR	48	47	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>96</b>	93 (Average)

The Hooded Vulture survey in ORPGR in July revealed 20 active nests. In August there were still 18 nests active, and 15 nestlings were confirmed in October, which gives an estimated breeding success rate of 75%. This is a very encouraging increased trend from both the 2015 and 2016 surveys inside the Reserve.

### **2.4 Powerline surveys to mitigate dangerous lines and prevent electrocutions and collisions from occurring**

Power lines have always had a detrimental effect on South Africa's avi-fauna species, most markedly, vultures. Vultures travel vast distances in search of food, water sources, and breeding sites. They often utilize power-line structures to roost on, as these offer a safe, elevated, vantage point from where they can easily lift-off and climb thermals. Power lines are allocated right across South Africa, and electrocutions and power line collisions remain the biggest threat to this species.

Unfortunately, we continue to bear witness to an ever-increasing number of individuals needing our assistance due to power line related injuries. More often than not, power line related injuries render the individuals maimed for life, with no chance of being re-released back into the wild. This is due to

the severity of injuries sustained. Collisions usually result in broken wings and legs which may need amputation and/or pinning, whilst electrocutions nearly always result in fatality.

Although these injuries are not limited to power lines, and some electric fences are just as lethal, there are more large power lines and pylons in the wild than any other type of man-made structure.

VulPro staff have been undertaking power line surveys for the past 4 years, with the main areas of focus being Gauteng, North-West, Limpopo, Free State and Eastern Cape Provinces. Although these provinces remain focal areas, it is of vital importance to undertake surveys throughout the country.

During the past three-year period, a total of 56 vulture fatalities were recorded during VulPro's power-line surveys. Since January-December 2017, another shocking 40 vulture fatalities have been recorded. This indicates that we are losing an average of three vultures per month due to power-line related incidents. In addition, 422 vultures (Cape, White-backed and Lappet-faced) have been found by members of the public, land owners, and farmers, dead or injured due to power-lines. These are only the cases which are reported to VulPro; the figure in reality will far surpass this.

A strict protocol has been developed in order to collect all the necessary data for each ground survey conducted. This is done by walking below the power lines, assessing each structure and collecting data relating to vulture and bird of prey usage (Signs of white wash, pellet regurgitation, feathers, bones etc.). Once a fatality or high-risk area has been identified, the above-mentioned data is used to compile an official report, which is then submitted to Eskom. Within the report, suggestions regarding the mitigation of these structures are provided, which can then also be utilised.

**Table 6: 2017 Power line accidents, injuries and fatalities through the VulPro Centre**

<b>2017 Power line accidents, injuries and fatalities coming in to VulPro</b>			
<b>75 CV</b> <b>10 AWB</b> <b>2 LFV</b> <b>3 un-id</b> <b>3 marabou</b>  <b>Total = 93</b>	Electrocutions	69	<b>93</b>
	Collisions	24	
	Wing Fractures	14	<b>16</b>
	Leg Fractures	2	
	Euthanized	1	<b>93</b>
	Recovered	4	
	Non-Releasable	14	
	Fatalities	74	

**Legend:** CV = cape vulture, AWB = African White-backed Vulture, LFV = Lappet-faced Vulture, un-id = unidentified vulture

**Table 7: Power line accident statistics overview for the past 4 years**

<b>Overview of vulture interaction with power lines from 2014 – 2017</b>							
<b>2014</b>				<b>2015</b>			
<b>CV</b>	<b>AWB</b>	<b>LFV</b>	<b>Un-id</b>	<b>CV</b>	<b>AWB</b>	<b>LFV</b>	<b>Un-id</b>
30	39	1	27	59	27	1	9
<b>97</b>				<b>96</b>			
<b>2016</b>				<b>2017</b>			
<b>CV</b>	<b>AWB</b>	<b>LFV</b>	<b>Un-id</b>	<b>CV</b>	<b>AWB</b>	<b>LFV</b>	<b>Un-id</b>
96	9	1	45	75	10	2	3
<b>151</b>				<b>90</b>			

**Legend:** CV = cape vulture, AWB = African White-backed Vulture, LFV = Lappet-faced Vulture, un-id = unidentified vulture

## 2.5 Management and associated work around vulture restaurants

VulPro has continued to provide advice and assistance, including site visits, to owners and managers of vulture restaurants to help set up new feeding sites. Presently, there are 381 known artificial feeding sites within South Africa, of these 145 are active on a regular basis. Managers and owners of these artificial feeding sites are regularly given relevant information to provide best management practices and feeding protocols to protect both them and the birds, in order to minimize problems. We are proceeding with our ongoing studies aimed at maximizing the value of vulture restaurants for conservation purposes.

We are proud that our vulture restaurant database is currently being used for both an MSc and a PhD study through the University of Cape Town.

## 2.6 Community outreach, interaction and education

VulPro remains dedicated to the belief that education is the route to public awareness of the value of vultures to the ecosystem, and that all people should be aware of their threatened status. How much VulPro is doing to further this, is evident in Table 7 showing that there has been an amazing increase in the numbers of people reached in this way. Part of this is the wonderful initiative of the Roots & Shoots after-school programme once per week, with the learners doing 2 hours at VulPro every Wednesday, and learning something new every day that they attend.

**Table 8: Numbers of individuals (written in order of attendance within the month) hosted by VulPro or addressed by VulPro staff in 2017**

Month	Family Groups	Other small groups	Club, conservancy, etc. groups	School & scout groups	Totals
January	3.	1, 6, 6, 4, 1, 3	20	14	58
February	5, 3	4,2, 2, 1	50*	63, 29	159
March		8, 1	40, 60*, 40*	29, 29,	207
April		8, 1, 2, 10, 2, 5	15*, 12,	29, 200*,	284
May		2, 1,	40, 4, 70*, 25	32,10	184
June	3, 6	3, 19,	23, 30,13	1, 3, 2, 2,	105
July	3		26,	2, 32,	63
August		2	60*, 300*, 22*,	29, 2, 2,	417
September	5,	3, 3, 2	12,	29, 29, 23, 13, 41, 29,29	218
October			30*	29, 29, 29, 29,	146
November	14,	4, 10,	40,	350*, 4,	422
December		14, 11	60	4,	89
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>1177</b>	<b>2352</b>

\*Attending lectures on VulPro's activities in 2017

Young people are the leaders of tomorrow, and the knowledge they gain in their formative years will last them forever. It is therefore very important to provide them with effective education on conservation, and specifically vultures, during this period of their lives. The numbers of school and scout groups prove once again that VulPro is putting a lot of effort into providing the necessary tools to guide these learners on a life long journey to preserving our eco systems.

### **Worthy of mentioning are:**

- The establishment of the Root & Shoots after school educational programmed under the Jane Goodall Institute, where scholars spend two hours per week learning about conservation, environmental respect and responsibility, also towards themselves, their families, and fauna and flora. This commenced in March.

- A visit from a very special young girl known as “Pippie”. This little girl sadly sustained severe burns across her whole body when she was younger, which has limited her mobility. She thoroughly enjoyed the birds, as well as the horses at the VulPro facility.
- 20 Students from St. Stithians, King Edward, Parktown Girls High Schools did community service during June, July, August, November and December.

**Individual visitors and groups from outside South Africa were also hosted during 2017:**

- VulPro believes that in order to achieve change, we need to form partnerships in which all parties involved are working towards the same goal. Recently, we have started training fellow conservationists from Nigeria on how to conduct tree nesting surveys, fitment of patagial tags, vulture handling and rehabilitation protocols, as well as the establishment of artificial feeding sites. This training will contribute to the establishment of the first ever vulture conservation project in Nigeria. We aim to train as many personnel as possible, in order to enhance vulture conservation in our neighboring countries.
- An overseas rehabber visited VulPro to see the centre, and obtain ideas on setting up a similar centre in Botswana
- VulPro continuously hosts international volunteers throughout the year, with an average of 24 volunteers per annum. These volunteers travel from right across the globe including Australia, Germany, UK and America.

**2.7 Involvement in research projects**

The rescue, rehabilitation and release programme is extremely important, and provides a fantastic chance to have a clearer understanding and analysis of the multiple threats to Southern Africa’s vulture populations. This helps us to better understand the threats the birds are facing in their quest for survival. Research is therefore a necessary requirement in VulPro’s activities.

Some of the research projects lend themselves as graduate and post graduate projects, and others are more annual projects, all are vitally important to saving Africa’s vultures:

- The annual survey of the health of breeding colonies covered in 2.2 above.
- VulPro is currently hosting two students’ attachés from Zimbabwe doing their attachment year.
- The annual survey of the health and breeding success of Hooded and White-backed vultures in the Olifants River Private Nature Reserve, Boikarabelo Mine, Khaya Ndlovu, and Curly Wee farm, covered in 2.3 above.
- The ongoing vulture calcium study being undertaken by Lauren Naidoo in collaboration with VulPro, in order to complete her PhD.
- VulPro continues to conduct ongoing toxicity and safety trials related to NSAIDs.
- Expanding the vulture re-sighting database, which has grown steadily year by year with the associated bird ringing operations. As of December, including repeat individuals, there have been some 25 349 re-sightings reported,
- Following the movements of vultures fitted with tracking devices as these have become more available.
- Developing the population censuses from re-sightings at vulture restaurants and elsewhere.
- Power lines have been associated with high mortalities and injuries in one or two instances in recent years, and power line surveys are now an important part of VulPro’s monitoring work, with regular reports of incidences or clear threats being sent to Eskom.

With the help of various collaborators, the data of the re-sighting databases are being analysed. The restaurant database is being used to understand how vulture restaurants could be contributing to breeding success and population maintenance. The tracking and re-sighting data are giving an increasingly better idea of Vulture foraging ranges, survival success, preferred habitat types, and more.

VulPro’s goal is to improve the breeding success in the Captive Breeding Programme (2.7 below), and that it is showing great improvement which is clear from the data gathered in 2017. The calcium study of the incubating eggs in collaboration with the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, University of

Pretoria, and the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, using x-ray studies and chemical analyses after hatching is ongoing.

Every time birds are captured for ringing or tagging, biological samples are also collected for the SANBI's Biobank at the National Zoological Gardens. From this, a DNA databank for species and individual birds is being developed. It could also be used to forensically monitor trade in these endangered species.

### **2.7.1. Publications**

Research results are always put into the public domain in relevant publications wherever possible. A long list of publications has accrued over the 11 years of VulPro's existence from the results of research done at or with VulPro. The following papers have been published in 2017:

Wolter K, Underhill LG, López Gómez M, and Brooks M. 2017. Bird distribution dynamics 6 – Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. *Biodiversity Observations*. 8.4:1-11.

Phipps L, Diekmann M, Mendelson J, Yarnell R, Naidoo V, Wolter K and MacTavish L. 2017. A first assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on Cape vulture occurrence. *Biology Conservation*. Volume 210: 16-25

Hirschauer MT, Wolter K. 2017. High occurrence of extra-pair partnerships and homosexuality in a captive Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) colony. *Ostrich* 2017, 88(2): 173-176

Hirschauer MT and Wolter K. (submitted) Intra-specific competitive behaviours of captive and wild Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*). *Ostrich*.

Hirschauer MT, Wolter K, Galligan TG, Green R. 2017. Immature Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) breaks species range record.. *Biodiversity Observations* 2017 8.16:1-4.

Mabhikwa NT, Hirschauer MT, and Wolter K. Sexual dimorphism and plumage characteristics of young Cape Vultures *Gyps coprotheres*. *Ostrich* 2017, 88(2): 167-171

Naidoo V, Taggart MA, Duncan N, Wolter K, Chipangura J, Green RE and Galligan TH. 2017. The use of toxicokinetics and exposure studies to show that carprofen in cattle tissue could lead to secondary toxicity and death in wild vultures. *Chemosphere*, volume 190, January 2018: 80-89

Hirschauer MT, Zimunya T, Wolter K and Monadjem A. 2017. Sexing Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* based on head morphometrics. *Ostrich* (In press)

### **2.8 Media interest and Social Media**

VulPro's activities and campaigns have always attracted media attention. While VulPro's CEO, Kerri Wolter, attracted huge attention as a finalist in the Tusk Trust's inaugural Awards for Conservation in Africa, in 2013, she once again brought VulPro into the spotlight by being nominated for another prestigious global conservation award in September 2017 namely the Indianapolis Conservationist of the year award.

Notwithstanding these highlights, newsworthy items of VulPro's achievements and challenges continue to appear in many different media outlets every month. Table 8 shows a summary of the coverage for 2017.

VulPro acknowledges that every small article reflecting on its mission and activities provides more public awareness, no matter whether it appeared on the major TV channels, or in daily newspapers, or magazine, You-tube, the web, or the local club's newsletter.

**Table 9: Media coverage in 2017**

Month	Journals, Magazines	Radio	Television, documentaries	Local/corporate newsletters	Web, YouTube, etc
January					
February	1	1			
March	3		2	2	
April	1			4	
May	4		1	2	1
June	2			1	
July					
August	1	2		1	
September	4	1		2	
October	3	1			
November	5	2	1	1	2
December	1				
Totals	24	7	4	13	3

**Social Media**

The Facebook pages of VulPro and Kerri Wolter provide ongoing awareness and exposure with 8240 followers on VulPro's page, and 5000 followers for Kerri Wolter's profile. VulPro is now also on Twitter, where it has 1017 followers, and Instagram with 383.

**2.9 Breeding of non-releasable vulture species, Cape Vultures in particular, for reintroduction purposes**

VulPro's conservation breeding program, a very demanding undertaking, has been in existence for 7 years. In November, as part of a contingent of 35 vultures in a mass release, 17 captive bred vultures from VulPro as well as 3 bred at the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria, were released.

VulPro's ex-situ colony had a bumper crop of 30 eggs in 2017, laid by 16 breeding pairs, some of whom were double clutched to obtain a second egg. Not all the eggs were fertile or survived, but they produced 10 fledglings who were raised by their parents, although some eggs were artificially incubated. Two of the fledglings are African White-backed Vultures. All the fledglings are doing very well and are being prepared for release at a later stage.

This correlates to a very meaningful increase in the breeding success rate, which has jumped from 14% in the first year, to 67% for 2017.

**Table 10: Summary of breeding by non-releasable Cape and African White-backed Vultures**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	10	10	10	10	15	17	16
<b>Eggs laid</b>	8	10	12	12	16	23	30
<b>No. hatched</b>	3	6	3	8	12	11	
<b>No. chicks fledged</b>	1	2	2	5	5	7	10
<b>Ready for release</b>	1	2	2	5	5	7	0
<b>Released</b>		1*	0	0	7 <sup>¶</sup>	0	17

\*chick from 2011 released and found dead a few days later, believed to have been Killed by a leopard

<sup>¶</sup>together with 3 bred at the National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria

### 3. Administrative issues

#### 3.1 Board, staff, volunteers, students

As an independent NPC since 2011, VulPro has been managed by CEO Kerri Wolter under the direction of the Chairman and members of the now 8-member Board (Table 10). The staff in 2017 are listed in Table 11.

**Table 11: The VulPro Board (first established in 2011 when VulPro registered as an NPC)**

Name	Role	From
Prof. Vinny Naidoo	Chair	2013
Adv. Matthew Welz	Legal adviser	2013
Mark Wolter	Treasurer	2016
Robyn Howes	HR & Marketing	2014
Beryl Wilson	Research	2017
Charlton Forsyth	Business management and fundraising	2017
Craig Natrass	Operations	2017
Kerri Wolter	CEO	2011

**Table 12: Staff at VulPro in 2017**

Name	Status	Role	Notes
Kerri Wolter	Permanent*	CEO	
Charne Wilhelmi	Permanent*	Fundraising, bookkeeping, communications	
Orbert Phiri	Permanent*	Operations manager	
Notice Phiri	Permanent*	Driver and maintenance	
Charles Banda	Permanent*	Maintenance manager	
Maggie Hirschauer	Graduate student	Masters Student	01.04.2016-31.03.2017
Kate Webster	Permanent Eastern Cape representative	Field officer and Eastern Cape representative	
Risto	Student (Nature conservation student)	Student project	01.08.2017-
Bheki Nkosi Sibanda	Student (Nature conservation student)	Student project	01.08.2016-31.07.2017
Anzelle van Wyk	Field assistant	Surveys and monitoring in the field	01.10.2016–31.12.2017
Barend Cravern	Builder	Building of student room	01.07.2017-01-10.2017

\*Salaried

VulPro is limited to how many salaried staff it can employ by the funds available for that purpose. VulPro therefore depends heavily on volunteers to assist with the workload, and also on persons from collaborating institutes to fund research projects. There are not enough words to express how much we appreciate the assistance from the many people who have volunteered in miscellaneous positions for differing time spans.

#### 3.2 Travel

As stated in section 2.1.2 above, collection of birds needing rescue and rehabilitation involved approximately 57 000 km of travel. Other activities requiring travel, as in previous years, were:

- Collection of carcasses from farms for feeding the birds

- Management and visitations to vulture restaurants
- Travel as required for research projects
- Travel as required for field work i.e. vulture monitoring
- Travel as required for transporting birds for veterinary attention
- Travel to schools, clubs, and other places for the Educational Outreach work
- Travel to meetings and conferences relating to vulture conservation aspects, funding, research projects, and media interviews etc.
- Travel for vehicle service and maintenance

In total, the distance travelled throughout 2017 came to 149, 000km.

#### **4. Costs**

Operational costs are broken down into:

- Salaries (section 3.1)
- Travel (section 3.2)
- Veterinary services
- Feeding
- Property maintenance
- Security
- Electricity, phone, etc.
- Office costs
- Research, including colony monitoring (2.6)

The major structural enterprises in 2017 have been

- Student accommodation
- Volunteer kitchen
- Enlargement of the White-headed Vulture enclosure
- Construction of the release enclosure at Nooitgedacht

#### **5. Fundraising, sponsorship, acknowledgements and sustainability**

##### **5.1 Fundraising, sponsors, acknowledgements**

Charné Wilhelmi has been welcomed into the VulPro fold on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 in the Admin/fundraiser/field assistant position. The high proportion of the time and effort that has to be invested in working with current and potential sponsors and donors, vulture adoption “parents”, volunteers, donations received at Educational Outreach events, and more, will not decline, making this a very important position.

VulPro is always extremely grateful for and humbled by the assistance, commitment and enthusiasm received from all our friends, sponsors, donors, adoption “parents”, family members, volunteers and supporters, enabling it to achieve ever more goals and fulfil its mission to save and increase all the vulture populations in South Africa and Southern Africa.

Also, as always, our special appreciation to our long-standing donors:

- AfriVet
- Bayer SA
- Banham Zoo,
- Blair Drummond Safari Park,
- Boehringer-Ingelheim,
- Boikarabelo Coal Mine,
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo,
- Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and Cleveland Zoological Society,
- Columbus Zoo,
- Colchester Zoo,
- Dabchick Wildlife Reserve

- Dallas Zoo,
- DHL Supply Chain,
- Different.org,
- Gauntlet Conservation Trust,
- GH Braak Trust,
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust,
- Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens,
- Lomas Wildlife Protection Trust,
- LUSH,
- MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT,
- Natural Encounters Inc.,
- Neil and Karen Homer-Forbes
- Olifants River Private Game Reserve
- Prince Bernhard Nature Fund,
- Rand Merchant Bank,
- Riverbanks Zoo and Garden,
- Rufford Foundation,
- Sacramento Zoo,
- The Hawking Centre UK,
- The Tusk Trust,
- SW Living Creatures Trust,
- ZK-Teco and
- Ziphi Nkomo Training Services Pty (LTD) (Lucan van der Merwe)
- Zoo Atlanta - Reeder Conservation Fund

Our well-wishers may also support us at no cost to themselves through using the My School/My Village/My Planet programme from Woolworths, that helps to raise money for schools, charities and conservation projects throughout South Africa. VulPro received a wonderful R14 400 in this manner in 2017, and cannot thank those individuals who support us through this programme, enough.

## 5.2 **Sustainability**

VulPro understands that there are many charitable institutions with a wide variety of services that call on the generosity and goodwill of donors and sponsors. It should be the philosophy of any sponsorship to enable a good cause, over a necessary period, to get itself established and become self-sufficient. VulPro has been setting aside 5% of its income in a range of investments with the aim of setting up a portfolio from which the interest will eventually be able to fund the basic operation, so that in difficult years the NPO will remain financially viable. The current instability of the ZAR and the economic downturn makes it difficult to forecast a reliable date at which it can be expected that earnings achieved from these investments will cover the basic costs of the business. It is hoped that the national financial situation will stabilise in the near future so that the prospects of VulPro's financial base can become clearer.

## 6. **Report from the honorary treasurer**

This report covers the period 01/03/2017 – 31/12/2017

**Income** for the reporting period amounts to R3.854 million. (50% growth from the previous year.)

The increased Income came from a combination of new funders both locally and internationally, increased fund raising- specifically the Gala Dinner and from donations received in advance for the 2018 financial year.

**Expenses** for the period amounted to R1,750 million. (6.3% growth)

### VulPro Wealth Link Investment Summary

Opening balance R 3,413 million

Net gain for the period R230k @ 8%

Closing balance R3,645 million

Despite the positive growth numbers, funding remains one of the biggest obstacles that VulPro faces. As a result of the global economic crisis, from which SA was not spared, we are continually experiencing funding difficulties as donations, particularly from corporates, are being diminished.

In 2017, a lot of effort and focus has been put into financial and administrative controls. Some of these factors include, banking & payment controls and improved expense management, allowing for more time in the field and focus on the various breeding projects etc.

This is all evident in the new breeding centres and the leverage financial position.