



## Cape, African White-backed and Hooded Vulture breeding surveys: 2017

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### Summary

VulPro has continued with their annual surveys of several Cape Vulture breeding colonies as well as a few sites of African White-backed and Hooded vultures. The surveys cover the Gauteng, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces as well as one Cape Vulture colony in Botswana. We are planning to cover the Free State and some of the Eastern Cape vulture colonies during the 2018 breeding season. As it stands, we are covering approximately 50% of the entire Cape Vulture breeding population globally.

Success rate for the 2017 breeding surveys shows positive results and all within the range or even above the acceptable breeding success rate for the tree nesting vulture species. Some of the Cape Vulture colonies continue to show slight upward trends which we associate it with the mitigation of power lines as a direct result from VulPro's work, as well as the supplementation of safe, reliable and uncontaminated food sources within the vultures' foraging range.

## Survey Overview and Methods

All Cape Vulture colonies were monitored according to the Cape Vulture monitoring protocol which VulPro has been following since inception. The tree nesting vulture surveys were undertaken according to VulPro's ground-walking tree nesting protocol which has been followed for 5 years. In this way, data obtained annually is comparable from year to year and populations can be analyzed and trends monitored and recorded.

African White-backed and Hooded Vulture surveys were focused on 4 properties with three different land-management practices, i.e. protected area (Olifants River Private Game Reserve (ORPGR), Limpopo Province) non-protected, commercially owned areas (Boikarabelo, Limpopo Province), and privately owned (Khaya Ndluvo in the Limpopo Province and Curly Wee piggery and vulture restaurant, in the North West Province). The Cape Vulture colonies were once again monitored on mostly privately owned land with one exception being the Kransberg Cape Vulture colony which is on the Marakele National Park and protected land.

Specific terminology is used for both surveys. VulPro deduces the total number of breeding attempts and the percentage of (un)successful attempts using these descriptions of behaviors:

- Tenanted = a pair or individual bird is present at a nest where, based on the behavior of either the pair or the individual bird, breeding is suspected.
- Chick = a chick / nestling is seen, a pair or individual bird is seen feeding a chick but the chick is not actually seen, or a pair or individual bird behaves in a manner indicative to there being a chick present.
- Fledgling = a large chick/nestling, which is ready to fledge, is seen, or when a fledgling is seen.
- Brooding = an adult is seen on the nest in a guarding or shading posture, denoting the presence of a chick.
- Copulation = a pair is seen mounting and/or copulating at a nest or suitable ledge for breeding.
- Incubation = an individual bird is laying in a manner indicative of incubation behavior, different from a sleeping posture.
- Working = an individual bird or pair is actively building a nest on a ledge.
- Hidden = there appears to be breeding behavior at a ledge or crevice but the observer can't accurately see to record the data.

### Cape Vulture Breeding Surveys 2017

<b>Colonies</b>	<b>Breeding Pairs</b>	<b>Nestlings</b>	<b>Fledglings</b>
<b>Manutsa</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 644</u> Tenanted - 47 Working - 5 Incubating - 583 Copulating - 2 Hidden - 8	<u>Total Active Nests: 588</u> Chick - 229 Brooding - 355 Incubating - 1 Tenanted - 0 Copulating - 0 Working - 0 Hidden - 3	-
<b>Kransberg</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 690</u> Tenanted - 64 Working - 3 Incubating - 607 Copulating - 7 Hidden - 0	<u>Total Active Nests: 562</u> Chick - 328 Brooding - 234 Incubating - 0 Tenanted - 0 Copulating - 0	-

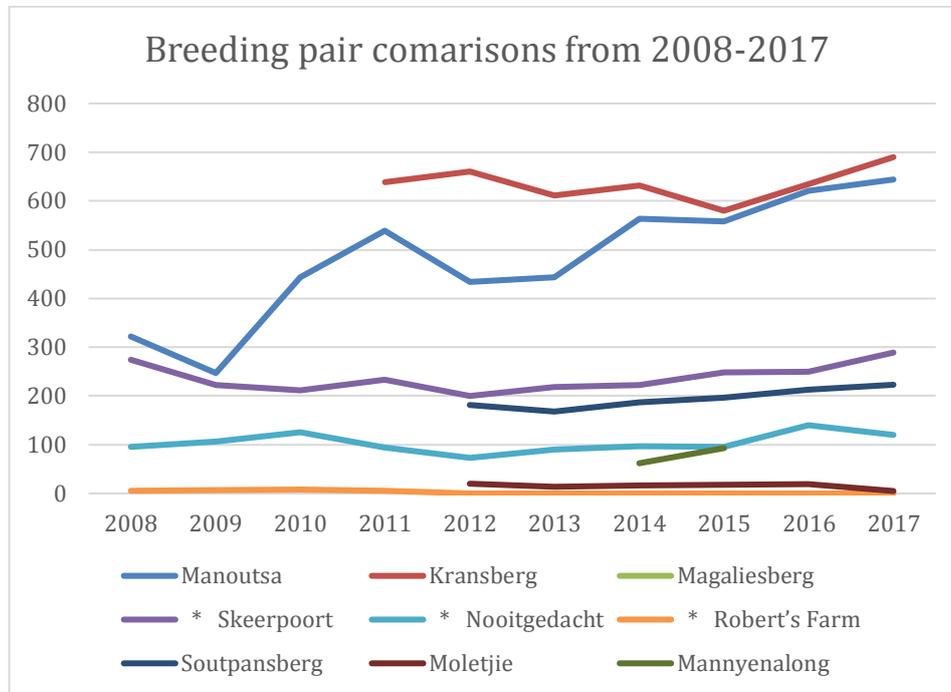
		Working - 0 Hidden - 0	
<b>Skeerpoort (Magaliesberg)</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 289</u>  Tenanted - 40 Working - 22 Incubating - 224 Copulating - 3 Hidden - 1	<u>Total Active Nests: 241</u>  Chick - 8 Brooding - 182 Incubating - 30 Tenanted - 20 Copulating - 0 Working - 1 Hidden - 0	<u>Total success: 237</u>  Fledgling - 67 Chick - 87 Brooding - 61 Incubated - 2 Tenanted - 20
<b>Nooitgedagcht (Magaliesberg)</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 120</u>  Tenanted - 15 Working - 6 Incubating - 99 Copulating - 0 Hidden - 4	<u>Total Active Nests: 121</u>  Chick - 5 Brooding - 87 Incubating - 14 Tenanted - 14 Copulating - 0 Working - 0 Hidden - 1	<u>Total success: 102</u>  Fledgling - 35 Chick - 52 Brooding - 5 Incubated - 0 Tenanted - 10
<b>Robert's Farm (Magaliesberg)</b>	EXTINCT Tenanted - 0	-	-
<b>Soutpansberg</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 223</u>  Tenanted - 14 Working - 10 Incubating - 188 Copulating - 4 Hidden - 7	<u>Total Active Nests: 163</u>  Chick - 61 Brooding - 99 Incubating - 2 Tenanted - 0 Copulating - 0 Working - 0 Hidden - 1	-
<b>Moletji</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 5</u>  Incubating - 5 Tenanted - 0 Working - 0 Copulating - 0 Hidden - 0	<u>Total Active Nests: 4</u>  Chick - 2 Brooding - 2 Incubating - 0 Tenanted - 0 Copulating - 0 Working - 0 Hidden - 0	-
<b>Mannyenalong</b>	<u>Total Pairs: 81</u>  Tenanted - 1 Working - 1 Incubating - 78 Copulating - 1 Hidden - 0	<u>Total Active Nests: 82</u>  Chick - 14 Brooding - 37 Incubating - 0 Tenanted - 31 Copulating - 0	-

		Working - 0 Hidden - 0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Total Pairs: 2052</b>		

\* Breeding pair count for the Blouberg Cape Vulture colony, not undertaken by VulPro is recorded at 1314

\*\* Breeding pair count for the Oribi Cape Vulture colony, not undertaken by VulPro is recorded as 94

\*\*\* Global population estimate of approximately 4,000 breeding There is an urgent need for an updated global survey to determine accurate current global population numbers.



### African White-backed Vulture Surveys

Location	Breeding Pairs June/July	Total Active Nests Aug/Sept/October	Estimated mid-season success (%)
Boikarabelo	36	34	94
Khaya Ndlovu	13	12	92
Curly Wee	6	3	50
Olifants River PNR	48	47	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>96</b>	93

In addition to conducting the breeding survey in ORPGR, 3 AWBV chicks and 2 adult AWBVs were ringed, tagged with patagial tags and blood samples were taken for sexing. One chick also received a 10 gram GPS-GSM tracking device mounted on a patagial tag.

To compare results from last year, both unprotected sites, excluding Khaya Ndlovu has declined by a handful of breeding pairs whereas Olifants has increased slightly. Breeding success is extremely high for each site with the exception of the small breeding colony at Curly Wee which may imply for successful breeding, a larger colony is needed for sustainability.

### Hooded Vulture Breeding Surveys

Our July survey in ORPGR revealed 20 active nests. Eighteen of these nests were still active in August and by October, 15 nestlings were confirmed and breeding success estimated to be 75% for the year. This number has once again increased from both the 2016 and 2015 surveys showing positive trends inside the Reserve.

### Conclusion

With African vulture populations declining at a rapid rate, it is really optimistic seeing favourable breeding pair counts and recording high breeding success rates at most of the monitored and surveyed sites by VulPro. This is a direct correction with the work carried out by VulPro and landowner involvement both in the public and private sector. These results proof that with positive and ongoing intervention, vulture populations can potentially be secured through threat mitigation, education, landowner extension programmes and involvements and collaboration amongst communities living amongst vultures. Africa's biggest problem remains that of poisoning where in South Africa, the biggest threat remains that of power line collisions and electrocutions. VulPro continues to address both these threats with emphasis on power lines as this is a tangible threat that can be effectively addressed which will ultimately have a huge positive effect on the vulture populations in South Africa.

### Acknowledgements

Vulture counts are only possible with the support of all landowners involved: Leopard Lodge, Ingwe Bush Camp, Griffon's Bush Camp, Boikarabelo Coal mine (Doornkopje, Boompan, Osorno, Kruispad, Klaarwater and Haardekraaltje farms), Wim and Willem de Chavonnes Vrught, Olifants River Private Game Reserve shareholders, South African National Parks together with Robert Waldron and Richard Ancker Simmons. In addition, this work would not be possible without the financial assistance from Colchester Zoo, Columbus Zoo, Boikarabelo, Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, Rand Merchant Bank, Tusk Trust and Zoo Atlanta - Reeder Conservation Fund