

2021 Report

IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group



CO-CHAIR

Andre Botha

Endangered Wildlife
Trust, South Africa



CO-CHAIR

Chris Bowden

Royal Society for the
Protection of Birds,
The Lodge, Sandy,
Bedfordshire SG19
2DL, UK, c/o Jakkur,
Bangalore, India

RED LIST AUTHORITY

COORDINATOR

Darcy O'gada

The Peregrine Fund,
Boise, Idaho, US

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

125

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/254944394619396>

Website: <https://www.iucnvs.org>

Mission statement

The IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group (VSG) aims to advocate and create greater awareness of the plight of vultures and coordinate and support effective conservation activities to their benefit.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Improve the conservation status of all Endangered and Critically Endangered vulture species and improve awareness of the plight of these birds globally.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-002 Develop and expand the scope of Wildlife Poisoning Databases to include Asia and the Americas.

T-008 Publish at least four editions of the VSG journal *Vulture News*.

PLAN

T-001 Support implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) at a regional and sub-regional level.

T-007 Promote and share national and regional updates to Action Plans when finalised and published.

ACT

T-004 Publish at least one agreed position statement on a relevant topic annually.

T-006 Submit letters of enquiry/concern related to issues of concern that affect vultures to relevant target audiences.

T-012 Act as a key partner in promoting the CMS Multi-species Action Plan for African-Eurasian Vultures.

T-016 Engage members and others to implement the CMS Vulture Multi-species Action Plan for all Old World vultures.

NETWORK

T-013 Build and develop VSG membership.

T-014 Develop links with other relevant SSC groups, e.g. Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), African Elephant Specialist Group, Canid Specialist Group.

T-015 Participate in and support the work of the SSC CPSG.

COMMUNICATE

T-003 Produce best practice guidelines in terms of the monitoring, research and conservation of vultures.

T-005 Provide support letters for projects and activities as requested and agreed.

T-009 Promote International Vulture Awareness Day each September.

T-010 Produce two newsletters annually.

T-011 Maintain and improve VSG website presence.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Research activities

T-002 (KSR 5)

Number of established, functional databases, access to said data, interaction between database managers: 1

Result description: We have provided guidance and examples to the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) consortium of formats that can be considered for a mortalities database that will include poisoning mortalities.

T-008 (KSR 5)

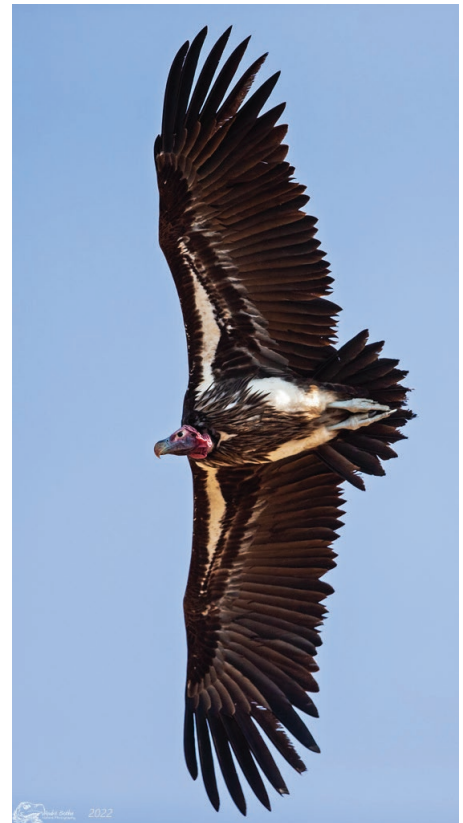
Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 2

Result description: Two editions of *Vulture News* were published in 2021 and we had a successful transition between Dr Campbell Murn, who stepped down as Editor, and Dr Louis Phipps, who took up the position. Volume 80 (<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/vulnew/issue/view/20426>) was published as a joint effort between these

Critically Endangered Ruppell's Vulture (*Gyps rueppelli*), Kidepo NP, Uganda
Photo: Andre Botha



Endangered Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*), Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe
Photo: Andre Botha



two colleagues and Volume 81 (<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/vulnew/issue/view/20714>) was Dr Phipps' first solo effort as editor.

PLAN

Planning

T-001 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 8

Result description: Most of our members in Africa, Asia and Europe are actively involved in implementing or supporting various actions contained in the Vulture MsAP in their day-to-day activities. VSG members have also provided input into the drafting of national vulture conservation strategies in Nepal, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya and Zambia.

Policy

T-007 (KSR 9)

Number of policies where SSC members provided technical input: 5

Result description: The SAVE consortium strategy to address the threat of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to vultures in South Asia was updated and shared with all stakeholders during the first quarter of 2021 by the VSG Co-Chair, Chris Bowden. VSG members provided input and

participated in the drafting of national vulture conservation strategies in Botswana, South Africa, Kenya and Zambia.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-006 (KSR 10)

Number of intervention letters addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: No new letters of enquiry/concern were sent to relevant target audiences during the review period. VSG was a co-signatory to a letter addressed to the government of Guinea Bissau expressing concern over the large-scale poisoning of vultures that happened in that country in 2020. This was an updated letter following a first that was sent in 2020.

T-012 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 7

Result description: Seven VSG members sit on the CMS Vulture MsAP working group that supports its implementation.

T-016 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: We are an Implementing Partner in the Vulture MsAP together with

CMS Raptors MoU, BirdLife International and the Vulture Conservation Foundation, and the majority of our members are actively involved in the implementation of one or more MsAP actions.

Policy

T-004 (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: A position statement – General comments on the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) restriction proposal on the use of lead in gunshot outside of wetlands, bullets in any terrain and in fishing tackle – was produced in September 2021.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-015 (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation planning: 2

Result description: See comments under target T-014. We are working with CPSG in the drafting of an Action Plan to combat belief-based trade in vultures in West Africa and on an Action Plan towards the conservation of Rüppell's Vulture (*Gyps rueppelli*) in the Mediterranean.

Three species of African Vulture,
Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe
Photo: Andre Botha



Ugandan Vulture Fieldwork Team,
Kidepo National Park
Photo: Andre Botha



Critically Endangered White-headed
Vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*),
QEP, Uganda
Photo: Andre Botha

Membership

T-013 (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 12

Result description: Membership has grown to 125 members worldwide.

Synergy

T-014 (KSR 3)

Number of mutually beneficial institutional partnerships established: 2

Result description: We have engaged with CPSG to assist in a planning process to combat the impact of belief-based use and trade on vultures in West Africa and are busy with discussions towards a formal planning workshop that will take place in 2022.

We are also working with the IUCN Mediterranean Regional Office and CPSG on the establishment of a working group and action plan focused on Rüppell's Vulture in the Mediterranean.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-005 (KSR 13)

Number of letters of support signed by Chairs: 9

Result description: A total of nine support letters for projects and associated funding proposals were provided by the VSG Co-Chairs to various stakeholders upon request.

T-009 (KSR 13)

Accomplished and recorded participation on the website: Ongoing.

Result description: A total of 107 organisations from 41 countries registered and participated in International Vulture Awareness Day 2021 (IVAD2021) on the website <https://www.vultureday.org>.

T-010 (KSR 12)

Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 2

Result description: Two newsletters were produced in March and September 2021 and distributed to more than 800 readers.

T-011 (KSR 13)

Number of websites/social media developed: 1

Result description: The website is functional, maintained and updated regularly (<https://www.iucnvsg.org/>).

Scientific meetings

T-003 (KSR 12)

Produce at least one best practice guideline every 2 years: 1

Result description: No guidelines were released in 2021 due to limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgements

We would like to again thank the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Endangered Wildlife Trust for enabling the Co-Chairs to continue in their roles and allocate substantial amounts of their time to the work of the IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group. Thank you also to our Steering Committee members/Regional Chairs Darcy Ogada, José Tavares, Sergio Lambertucci and Keith Bildstein for their continued support and input. Particular thanks are due to Campbell Murn who stepped down as Editor of *Vulture News* at the end of 2020 after a decade of service. We welcomed Louis Phipps as his replacement. Further acknowledgement is due to the Hawk Conservancy Trust, especially volunteer Lesley Jerome, for their continued administrative support and for initiating work on the VSG website. We continue to work closely with a range of other organisations, but would like to acknowledge BirdLife International, Vulture Conservation Foundation, the CMS Raptors MoU and IUCN SSC staff for their continued support.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 16

Geographic regions: 16 Global

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 2 (KSR 5)

Plan: 2 (KSR 8, 9)

Act: 4 (KSR 10)

Network: 3 (KSR 2, 3)

Communicate: 5 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

