

IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group

2019 Report



Chris Bowden



Andre Botha

Co-Chairs

Chris Bowden ⁽¹⁾
Andre Botha ⁽²⁾

Red List Authority Coordinator

Darcy Ogada ⁽³⁾

Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ Royal Society for the Protection of Birds,
The Lodge, Sandy Beds SG19 2DL, UK,
c/o Jakkur, Bangalore, India
⁽²⁾ Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa
⁽³⁾ The Peregrine Fund, Boise, Idaho, US

Number of members

110

Social networks:

Facebook: IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group
Website: <https://www.iucnvsg.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 for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Completion and planned implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) aims to halt the decline in Old World Vulture populations in Africa-Eurasia over the next 12 years, commencing in 2018.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Research activities: publish four editions of the VSG journal *Vulture News*.

Plan

Planning: (1) engage members and others to implement the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) for all Old World vultures; (2) support implementation of the MsAP at a regional and sub-regional level.

Network

Membership: build and develop VSG membership.

Synergy: (1) develop links with other relevant SSC groups, e.g. Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), African Elephant Specialist Group, Canid Specialist Group, Wildlife Health Specialist Group; (2) participate in and support the work of the SSC CPSG.

Communicate

Communication: (1) produce outputs from the Abu Dhabi Meeting that assist with the implementation of the Multi-species Action Plan; (2) promote The International Vulture Awareness Day each September; (3) produce two newsletters annually; (4) develop VSG website presence; (5) act as a key partner in promoting the CMS Multi-species Action Plan for African-Eurasian Vultures; (6) develop a video communication tool to highlight the plight of African vultures and promote implementation of the Vulture MsAP to African governments.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Research activities

i. Two editions of the journal *Vulture News* were published and distributed to subscribers. Numerous key articles were included. (KSR #28)

Plan

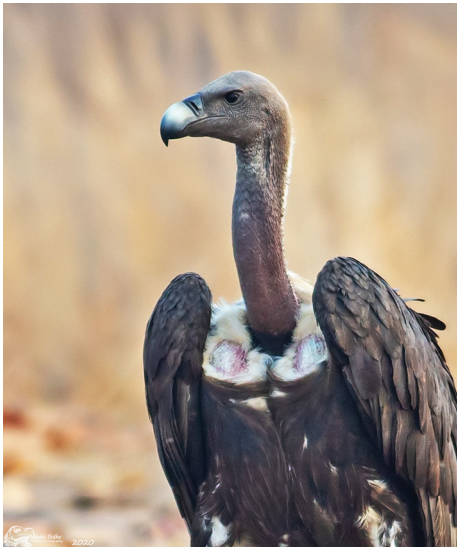
Planning

i. In Africa, we worked with a total of 32 partner organisations from government, private sector, NGOs and other organisations on a range of projects and activities in 14 countries. In Asia, we worked primarily through the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) Partnership (24 organisations including several governments). No government support has yet been granted for coordination of implementation. One highly successful international workshop was held (see reports) to develop best practice harnessing methodology for satellite tagging vultures. Also, one position statement was agreed with members' inputs on the role of vultures in human health. (KSR #15)

ii. We worked on various activities with government institutions in 14 African countries. We had active engagement with the SAVE Blueprint

Juvenile White-rumped Vulture, *Gyps bengalensis*,
Siem Pang Wildlife Refuge, Cambodia
Photo: Andre Botha

White-rumped Vulture, Siem Pang Wildlife Refuge,
Cambodia, 2020
Photo: Andre Botha



element of the Action Plan for all six key Asian range countries, including work on two national action plans. Activities in Africa included support with drafting on national vulture conservation strategies, training of staff and initiation or continuation of research and monitoring activities. (KSR #21)

Network

Membership

i. The global membership now stands at 110, with 29 members in Africa, 38 in Europe, 15 in the Americas, and 28 in Asia. Membership is expected to increase further in 2020.

Synergy

i. We participated in a workshop with the Wildlife Health, Canid, Cat, Bovine and Elephant Specialist Groups on 4 October 2019 in Abu Dhabi. VSG also hosted a wildlife poisoning discussion group on 5 October 2019 with representatives from these groups as well as the Crane Specialist Group. Meeting with the Crane Specialist Group resulted in us programming a joint participation in an event focused on wildlife poisoning at the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS CoP13) in India, in early 2020. (KSR #29)

ii. We participated in the drafting of National Vulture Conservation Plans in six African countries, i.e. South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Cabo Verde, and Rwanda, and also saw the approval of the Zimbabwe National Vulture Conservation Strategy in April 2019. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Communication

i. We arranged and participated in a successful side event at the 18th Conference of the Parties to CITES (CITES CoP18) in Geneva on 18 August 2019, which assisted with the adoption of the proposal submitted to the CITES plenary on 20 August 2019. (KSR #28)

ii. The Vulture Awareness Day took place on 7 September 2019 with contribution from 40 countries, of which 38 registered their participation on the website www.vultureday.org/activities. This event continues to grow in reach and profile. (KSR #28)

iii. Two newsletters were produced and circulated on time in March and September 2019. Both were also distributed to the wider SSC membership. The current distribution list now exceeds 700 subscribers (grown by 200 during the year). Note this newsletter is in addition to the journal *Vulture News*, which publishes longer articles. (KSR #28)

iv. The VSG website is running and functional and can be accessed at <https://www.iucnvsg.org>. Having this web presence is a major development, which has been eagerly anticipated. It has also been important for lodging a position statement (on vultures' role in human health). (KSR #28)

v. We completed a video product in partnership with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which is available in four languages and was launched at CITES CoP18 and on International Vulture Awareness Day. We report a total of 7,055 views on YouTube as of the date of this report. (KSR #28)

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, Keith Bildstein and Campbell Murn for their continued support and input. 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 would also like to acknowledge the excellent work by the team from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the production of the excellent video, which is available in four languages. 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. We also appreciate the IUCN SSC Internal Grant that made the harnessing workshop possible.

Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess	1	
Plan	2	
Network	3	
Communicate	5	

Main KSRs addressed: 15, 21, 28, 29

KSR: Key Species Result