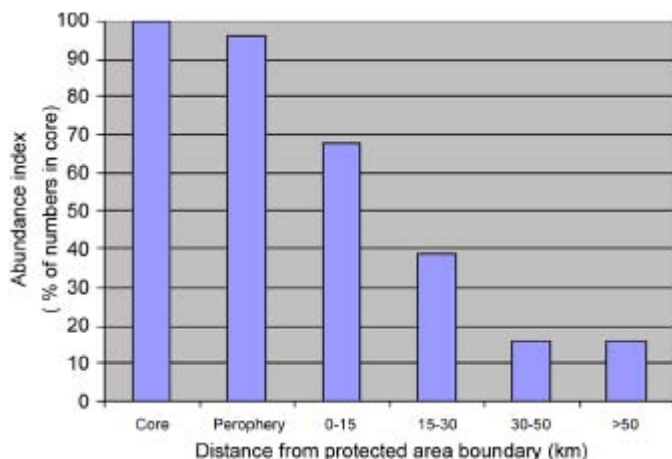




Reprinted from: *Bird Conservation Newsletter*
11 - September, 2006

RAPTORS FARING POORLY

The large wilderness areas in Botswana are one of the strongholds for raptors in southern Africa. Nevertheless, outside protected areas, many raptor species still have an unfavourable conservation status according to work done by Marc Herremans, former DWNP Ornithologist. A survey of raptor distribution in the country's woodlands between 1991 and 1995 found a notable decline in raptor abundance with increasing distance from protected areas, especially during the dry season.



The analysis was based on 9,964 records of diurnal raptors of over 40 species. Large (>2kg), non-migratory eagle species showed the most marked reduction in numbers away from protected areas, but similar (though less extreme) patterns were also observed among various species of smaller raptors (e.g. kites, sparrowhawks, kestrels). For certain species, there was also a clear 'edge effect' within protected areas, with the abundance of large eagle species almost 45% lower in the peripheral zone (within 30km of the boundary) than in the core.

The poor conservation status of raptors in Botswana seems mainly due to widespread depletion of biomass and biodiversity (including potential prey), as a result of structural changes to the vegetation caused by livestock grazing. The relative scarcity of woodland raptors outside protected areas is even more acute in more densely populated regions of southern Africa, with agricultural practices also implicated in these declines. Information from 'State of the World's Birds - 2004'.

Vulture rescue by USAID

A game drive by an USAID HIV/AIDS Team on retreat at Midgard Lodge on 26 October 2006 was disrupted by the sight of a vulture lying on the ground in distress, possibly having been poisoned. Gabriel Kalungi and Renee Liebenberg took pity on the bird and jumped to the rescue. Although it could not fly, the bird (in typical White-backed Vulture style!) put up a good fight, but quietened down when Gabriel took off his T-shirt and



The vulture being lifted from the bush by Renee Liebenberg and Gabriel Kalungi, who offered his T-Shirt to calm it down

to save this vulture. The good news we have heard is that it is able to eat and drink water at the place where it was taken."

Well done all, and thank you to Holger Kolberg of the MET for letting Raptors Namibia know about this positive story!

Ann Scott

covered the bird's head. The other members of the rescue team were Patel Sangita, Pam Foster, Madaline Feinberg, Mary Furnivall, William David Brown and the team leader, Kirk Lazell.

The bird was placed in good care at NARREC (Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre), and Liz Komen reports that it has recovered well and is due to be released in mid-November.

Gabriel says, "I must say, on behalf of our team, that it was our pleasure for us to save this innocent vulture that evening. It is also a pleasure for us to see that you are taking interest in knowing what actually happened that led us

The vulture chicks ringed and tagged during September, October and November, will be flying soon. Please report all sightings to: Holger Kolberg, holgerk@mweb.com.na, tele. 061 284 2254 giving your name and contact details, the ring or tag number and the date and place where you sighted the bird. If you cannot contact him, let Raptors Namibia know.

Update on Vulture rescue by USAID

Liz Komen, 22/11/2006

The vulture release was a great success. Together with Holger Kolberg of the Ministry of Environment, an ID wing tag was put onto the vulture (female I think) and I put a metal ring with an unique number onto the leg. We happened to receive a horse carcass on Wednesday and had about 75 vultures and storks at the carcass. I released Gabriel's bird about 200 metres from the carcass and she flew off with no problem and began circling with a number of other birds. It so happens that we have had 3 carcasses donated (two kudu and another horse) since the release and have therefore managed to keep food available and vultures in the area. This is always good for a newly released bird. Thanks again to Gabriel and his group for their efforts!

Korhaan for dinner

John Paterson

This anecdote dates back to October 1989 while working out of Opuwo. I was doing a trip in the Hartmann's Valley with David Coulson when, from a distance, we saw a Black Eagle bind with a Rüppell's Korhaan and plummet to the ground and out of sight. We drove closer in the hopes of getting a better view and, hopefully, some pictures, but when the birds were in view it was a Lappet-faced Vulture sitting on the now dead korhaan! This was most confusing, vultures do not take live birds on the wing. We scanned around and, thank goodness, the Black Eagle was still around circling not far off.

Presumably the eagle was disturbed and left its prey and the vulture quickly took over. Having a professional photographer with me we tried to get a bit closer, at this stage we were about 500 m away from the birds. Almost immediately the vulture left the carcass and started circling around. By this time the eagle had long gone. Since first seeing the eagle take the korhaan about 5 minutes had elapsed. We started to drive towards the korhaan, which was lying right next to the track, when suddenly a male Bateleur came flying in, landed and without further ado tucked into the korhaan. We approached to within 50 m and watched until there was nothing left of the korhaan. The Bateleur then flew off. This whole incident lasted about 15 minutes from start to finish involving three large (Mega) raptors.

We see Black Eagles sporadically in western Namibia, but they are not common. Lappet-faced Vultures are more common, but normally associated with larger prey when seen feeding. Bateleurs are extremely rare so far west. This incident took place about 56 km's from the coast in $\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$ square 1712Cb! Unfortunately I do not have a GPS reading.



Photo: Günter Woetzel

Lappet-faced Vulture chick

THE LAPPET-FACED VULTURE - A FLAGSHIP SPECIES

During 2007, BirdLife Botswana will be embarking on a study of the Lappet-faced Vulture. It is a globally threatened bird, but we know virtually nothing about its status in Botswana and whether the population is increasing, static or declining. To start with, before we can even develop an Action Plan for conserving the species, we need to gather basic information on the

Lappet-faced Vulture - its distribution, major source of food, breeding areas, potential and real threats and, finally, causes of mortality. Consequently we are requesting all concerned people in Botswana to send us information on the bird, as follows:

- ✂ All observations, with date, number of birds at each sighting, and GPS co-ordinates (in decimal degrees, WGS 84).
- ✂ Nest records with precise GPS co-ordinates (this information will be regarded as confidential and not made available to anyone else)
- ✂ Record of food items, and their origin e.g. giraffe carcass (killed by lions), dead donkey (road kill)
- ✂ Observed threats e.g. human disturbance, poisoning, collision with powerlines etc.
- ✂ Observed causes of mortality e.g. hit by car on main road, shot by farmer etc.

While collecting information on the Lappet-faced Vulture, we can also easily collect similar information for a wide range of other raptors, with very little extra effort or expense. In this way, the Lappet-faced Vulture will be a flagship for all raptor species in Botswana.

In the meantime, please send the information requested above to one of the BirdLife Botswana addresses at the end of the newsletter. If you would like a Lappet-faced Vulture poster to be sent to you, please indicate this when you submit your information.

BirdLife Botswana, PO Box 20463, Maun, BOTSWANA.
Alternatively, please e-mail us at:
birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

Not them again!

Peter and Marilyn, Vultures Namibia

The Lappet-faced Vultures in the Ganab area of the Namib-Naukluft Park, entertained several visitors to their home range on Tuesday, 14 November 2006. When the visitors inspected a few nests, last visited at the beginning of October, the Vultures probably sighed and said: "Not those crazy characters flogging cheap jewellery again"

The first victim was a chick last seen when it was about 50 days old. The senior seller of cheap jewellery, one Marc Dürr, inspected the wing where the patagial tag had been fitted. There were no signs of infection or any other problem. The young bird ignored the paparazzi and other assorted hangers-on who all had a field day with their cameras.

The next victim was first seen when it was about three days old. On that occasion, the adult flew off the nest at their approach. One quick look at the tiny chick and the ringers had departed at speed. Now the adults were away and visitors invaded their home in a buffalo thorn,

Continued on page 3

Ziziphus mucronata. Marc ceremoniously brought the chick down from its nest and then it was photographed from all angles, while a cheap bangle was fitted around its leg. The paparazzi, Elma Robberts of the *Namibian* and Adam Hartman of the *Namib Times* each had to fondle the young chick and it retaliated by white-washing Elma's shoe. After all the excitement, the workers and press corps demanded a tea break (not that they had done much work) and management had to bow to pressure (i.e. threats) and the kelly-kettle soon had the water boiling.

The next stop was to a nest that on a previous visit had an egg in. Only broken bits of eggshell were found in the nest and on the ground. A long drive in Barry Lewis's air-conditioned Nissan and the vulture-mobile piloted by Günter Waetzold, took the ringers and press to Gemsbokwater water hole, where about 20 Lappets were drinking and bathing. Six weeks before, many springbok, gemsbok, mountain zebra and ostriches were seen, even some giraffe and several warthog. Now the game had almost deserted the area.

As it was 2 pm, the workers wanted to have lunch and to prevent a strike, the kelly-kettle was put to good use again. After the human vultures had been fed, the next nest was inspected. Backing the vulture-mobile up to the tree and placing the ladder in its special clamp on top of the railings, they reached the nest. As the chick was close to fledging, on the far side of the nest and the yellow tag could be seen, no one was brave enough to attempt to handle it. So the spectators had to climb the ladder to observe it.

The paparazzi, Elma and Adam, are thanked for their interest and participation. Barry sponsored the vehicle and fuel and says vulture ringing sure beats working. Thanks to Benguella Enterprises for arranging the transport. Marc and Günther, who had to be bludgeoned to participate, thanks.



Peter Bridgeford

Adam, on ladder, Elma, watching in safety, while Günter and Marc casually keep an eye on proceedings

News Flashes

❖ After reading Steve Braine's interesting article on Grey and Dickinson's kestrels, Grey Kestrel was one of the species we were specifically looking for on our recent birding trip to the Kunene. We spent the period 27-31/10/2006 in the area from Ruacana to Swartbooisdrif but failed to find the bird in either the Ruacana or Swartbooisdrif areas or anywhere along the river in between. The owners of Kunene River Lodge near Swartbooisdrif informed us that the pair that had been resident in the area for some time had not been seen since about three weeks prior to our arrival. Neil Thomson

❖ Remember that:

The *Raptors Namibia* and *Crane Working Group* (draft) websites are now 'live' as part of the NNF site. Please have a look when you can and let me know what you think and what changes/additions you would like.

They are accessed through the Working Groups page on www.nnf.org.na or directly through:

- www.nnf.org.na/RAPTORS/index.htm
- www.nnf.org.na/CRANES/index.htm

The CETN site is also there on: www.nnf.org.na/CETN/index.htm.

I am happy to make changes and continue to develop these sites - just let me know what you want. Alice Jarvis

Tel (00 264 61) 255930

email: tr_aj@mweb.com.na

❖ I found a White-backed Vulture chick on Wiese, sitting three meters from its nest last Saturday. It was ringed on 17 September this year (the first WBV fitted with a colour ring!) The adult bird was there and the chick was back in the nest on Saturday. The numbered colour ring was clearly visible.



DHPL

Dirk Heinrich

❖ Another White-backed Vulture ringed on Heiko Binding's farm Okanjesu on 18/9/2006, was found dead next to the road on the neighbouring farm Okatjasonjiva by Achim von Hacht. This bird was marked with a yellow Canadian ring. He saw two other birds with similar rings, but could not read the numbers.



Raptors Namibia is funded by the Namibia Environmental Fund through DANIDA
Raptors Namibia co-ordinators

Ann & Mike Scott
 Swakopmund
 Tel. / fax (064) 40 4866
 Cell 081 284 5130
 E-mail ecoserve@iway.na

Marilyn & Peter Bridgeford
 Walvis Bay
 Tel. (064) 22 0443
 Cell 081 260 7375
 E-mail pmbridge@iway.na

Raptor road counts and road count queries:

P.O. Box 90645
 Klein Windhoek
 Windhoek
 E-mail raptors@mweb.com.na

Raptors Namibia website: www.nnf.org.na/RAPTORS/index.htm

