

RECENT LITERATURE AND BOOK REVIEWS

P.J. Mundy

ANON. (2014). Sudan 'killer line' disconnected. *World Birdwatch* 36 (1): 5.

The power line goes from Port Sudan to the Red Sea coast, and has electrocuted hundreds, or thousands, of Egyptian Vultures, and maybe other migratory raptors too. It has been switched off (early 2014?) following years of pressure by three NGOs. A parallel line has been constructed.

ANON. (2014). Vultures - the bold, the bad and the beautiful. *Greenline Africa* 4: 38-42.

A pot-pourri of topics, with many photos. Uses texts from the recent Birdlife Zimbabwe poster. Finishes with a short page on restaurants.

ANON. (2014). Vulture breakthroughs. *Nature's Home (RSPB) Winter*: 39.

Over 100 youngsters have fledged from the captive breeding programme, and one of the first progeny, in 2008, has fledged a youngster of her own. [species not stated, but Asian]

ANON. (2015). Major breakthrough in fight to save vultures in India and Iran. *World Birdwatch* 37 (4): 7.

Human formulations of diclofenac have been banned from veterinary use in India, and Iran has also banned the chemical. Meanwhile an Italian company is permitted to produce diclofenac for veterinary use in Italy and Spain, "...truly shameful".

(www.birdlife.org)

ASEFA, A. (2015). Bird observations in Muktar Mountain Forest, eastern Ethiopia: a previously unidentified Important Bird Area. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 22: 36-42.

Field work was done at the end of 2013, and at altitudes between 2000m and 3000m. Five species of vulture were seen: Bearded (rare), Egyptian (rare), Hooded (frequent), White-backed (common) and White-headed (uncommon) Vultures.

(email: adde_bird@yahoo.com)

BENSON, P. C. (2015). A survey of Cape Vulture breeding colonies in South Africa's northern provinces (Transvaal Region) - an update 2013. *Ornithological Observations* 6: 31-36.

Eleven sites in the old Transvaal province were counted for active nests (i.e. where a nestling is seen) in 1985, 2000 and 2013. Blouberg, Kransberg and Manutsa are now the three largest colonies, in that order. Total numbers of nestlings counted were 2741 (1985), 2169 (2000), and 2616 (2013), with about 3000 breeding pairs estimated for 1985.

(email: pbenson.rsa@gmail.com)

BREWSTER, C. A & TYLER, S. J. (2014). Summary of category B records. *Babbler* 59: 52-53.

Many sightings are listed for the Cape, Hooded, White-headed, and Lappet-faced Vultures. At Mannyanong, 191 Capes were counted on 1 December 2013. On p.48, an immature Egyptian Vulture is listed for the Central Kalahari Game Reserve on 20 February 2013. On p. 60, many sightings are listed for the White-backed Vulture ("all records...are welcomed"), from singles up to a group of 177.

BUIJ, R. & CROES, B.M. (2014). Raptors in northern Cameroon, December 2005 - December 2010. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 21: 26-63.

These were surveyed mostly by road transects, and some point counts, and included six species of vultures. Egyptian Vulture: >121 birds seen, 44% being adults. White-headed Vulture: pairs seen. Hooded Vulture: nearly 3500 counted, max. 81 together at a slaughter house, some nests in Maroua town. White-backed Vulture: >300 counted, but suffers from poisoning and harassment. Rüppell's Griffon: about 650 birds counted, nests in the Mandara Mountains but no longer on Waza Rock. Lappet-faced Vulture: two nests found in Waza National Park (and nestling photographed) and a group of 26 with other vultures seen in Waza in February 2008.

(email: ralph.buij@gmail.com)

DEMEY, R. (ed.) (2014). Recent Reports. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 21: 93-111.

Botswana, July-December 2013: 191 Cape Griffons seen "near" to Mannyelanong; at least 1000 vultures were poisoned in the period! Ethiopia: a juvenile Eurasian Griffon photographed east of Robe in May at 7°23'N. Ghana: three Rüppell's Griffons were photographed in Mole National Park in December. South Africa: adult Egyptian Vulture seen near Ixopo in December, six Hooded Vultures north of Mkuze, and a Rüppell's Griffon at Blouberg Nature Reserve "repeatedly".

(email: rondemey1@gmail.com)

DEMEY, R. (ed.) (2015). Recent Reports. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 22: 97-114.

An immature Egyptian Vulture was seen in Tuli, Botswana, in November 2014. Two Hooded Vultures were seen at Yaoundé, Cameroon, in December. A so-called Lappet-faced Vulture was photographed with other vultures in January 2011 at Sigui, Guinea - the photo depicts a juvenile Eurasian Griffon, also a first for the country. A Rüppell's Griffon was

seen at Gadafawa, just south of the Air, Niger, in October. A Palm-nut Vulture near Polokwane in November, a juvenile Egyptian over the border from Tuli and an immature at Klaserie in November, and Lappet-faced Vultures at Hekpoort and near Cullinan in August, all were seen in South Africa.

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DEMEY, R. & OKONI-WILLIAMS, A. (2015). The birds of the Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 22: 43-63.

Field work was done in February 2008 and at altitudes between 400m and almost 2000m. Palm-nut Vultures were seen throughout, but Hooded Vultures were not seen, though recorded in previous years.

(email: rondemey1@gmail.com)

GIL, J. A., BÁGUENA, G., SÁNCHEZ-CASTILLA, E., ANTOR, R. J., ALCÁNTARA, M. & LÓPEZ-LÓPEZ, P. (2014). Home ranges and movements of non-breeding Bearded Vultures tracked by satellite telemetry in the Pyrenees. *Ardeola* 61: 379-387.

Nine birds were captured, 1999-2005, but three trackers stopped working prematurely. Areas were computed by minimum convex polygons and fixed-kernel density methods. All birds stayed within the Pyrenees and all included 'restaurants' in their areas. Average home range was 12 000km² (range 5000-21 000km²).

(email: Pascual.Lopez@uv.es)

KANE, A., JACKSON, A. L., MONADJEM, A., COLOMER, M. A. & MARGALIDA, A. (2015). Carrion ecology modelling for vulture conservation: are vulture restaurants needed to sustain the densest breeding population of the African white-backed vulture? *Animal Conservation* 18: 279-286.

A population dynamics P system model was used, with data on both vultures and wild ungulates (not livestock). The population in Swaziland is a presumed 300 pairs. Present carrion is enough, but eventually food will become a limiting factor.

(email: kanead@tcd.ie)

KIBUULE, M. & POMEROY, D. (2015). Avian mortality rates on a power line near Kampala, Uganda. *Scopus* 34: 52-55.

Two power lines, 240kV and 33kV, run parallel and “close” to the town’s rubbish dump. In counts from November 2012 to October 2013 an average of 26 Hooded Vultures (range 9-59) were on the dump, but none were found dead below the lines (in contrast to Marabou Storks).

(email: derek@imul.com)

LOTZ, C. (2015). The most urgent bird conservation priorities in Africa and its islands. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 22: 92-96.

On the basis of EDGE (evolutionarily distinct and globally endangered), the Hooded, Lappet-faced, White-headed and Cinereous Vultures are included in the list.

(email: info@birdingecotours.co.za)

MABHIKWA, N. T., MUNDAVA, J. & MUNDY, P. J. (2014). Vulture poisoning incident: Fort Rixon. *Honeyguide* 60 (2): 5-6.

In August 2014, a tagged (and stationary) Cape Griffon was found, along with 35 White-backed Vultures, one Lappet-faced Vulture, and (unusually) three White-headed Vultures. All dead and presumably poisoned. No mutilations of the carcasses. Article includes three colour photos.

(email: nolmatm@gmail.com)

McGRADY, M. J., RAYALEH, H. A., DARA, A. M. & ABDILLAH, E. (2014). Migration of raptors across the Bab el Mandeb Strait, Djibouti, March 2013. *Bulletin African Bird Club* 21: 64-71.

Watching the spring (return) migration in 2-10 March. In total, 4562 birds were counted; this included 1167 Egyptian Vultures, which varied from 15 (5th) to 309 (8th). Many birds were identified (1272). Only three non-adult Egyptian Vultures were seen, all estimated at three years of age. The vulture was always the first seen per day, from 08h00.

(email: mikejmcgrady@aol.com)

McNUTT, J. W., BRADLEY, J. & HANCOCK, P. (2014). Report on a Kwando vulture poisoning investigation 16 November 2013. *Babbler* 59: 40-46.

This is the same article (with an extra author), dated March, as published in *Vulture News* 66, dated July. Has two more photographs. Why was it published in two journals?

(no email address)

MOLINA, B., PRIETA, J. & LORENZO, J. A. (2014). Noticiario Ornitológico. *Ardeola* 61: 197-231.

A census in November of Eurasian Griffons in the Hoces of Riaza came up with 846 individuals, with 924 estimated (p. 210). In Extremadura, 879 pairs of Cinereous Vulture were counted, with 806 breeding and 590 chicks produced. In Andalucía, 330 pairs produced 155 fledglings, being an increase of 3.7% over the previous year (2012). A pair of Egyptian Vultures produced two chicks in the province of Valencia (p.209).

(email: noticiario@seo.org)

MUBOKO, N., MUPOSHI, V., TARAKINI, T., GANDIWA, E., VENGESAYI, S. & MAKUWE, E. (2014). Cyanide poisoning and African elephant mortality in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe: a preliminary assessment. *Pachyderm* 55: 92-94.

At three sites, 135 dead elephants were counted. No carcasses of vultures were observed except for three Hooded Vultures.

(email: nmbok@yahoo.co.uk)

MURN, C. (2014). Observations of predatory behavior by White-headed Vultures. *Journal Raptor Research* 48: 297-299.

Four incidents are described - preying on a slender mongoose, monitor lizard, tree squirrel, and another squirrel which escaped. Six adult plus one juvenile vultures were involved; two Bateleur Eagles also arrived.

(email: campbell@hawkconservancy.org)

ONOJA, J. D., TENDE, T., OMOTORIOGUN, T. C., OTTOSSON, U., MANU, S. A. & MWANSAT, G. S. (2014). Raptors in Yankari Game Reserve and surrounding unprotected area, Nigeria. *Malimbus* 36: 67-75.

Between April and July more than a thousand raptors were seen in nearly 2000km of transects. These included 69 Palm-nut Vultures, only five Hooded Vultures, 14 White-backed Vultures, and 12 White-headed Vultures in the game reserve. No vultures were seen in the neighbouring areas. Vultures have declined “markedly” in the reserve.

(email: oj_daniels@yahoo.com)

PARNELL, E. (2015). Saving Africa’s vultures from extinction. *World Birdwatch* 37 (3): 16-19.

Poisoning is the main threat, as non-targets from carnivore poisoning. Also direct harvesting for “traditional medicine”, and deliberate poisoning by poachers. Birdlife International has started an “African vulture campaign” from its Nairobi office.

(email: birdlife@birdlife.org)

PARNELL, E. (2015). 2015 Red List update. *World Birdwatch* 37 (4): 24-28.

Six species of African vulture have their threatened status worsen: Hooded, Rüppell’s and White-backed Vultures move from Endangered to Critically Endangered; White-headed Vulture from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered; and Cape and Lappet-faced Vultures from Vulnerable to Endangered.

(email: birdlife@birdlife.org)

PARSONS, I. (2015). Griffon Vulture population growth in Spain. *Peregrine* no. 102: 16-17.

The author of *A birding miscellany* has summarised some statistics, e.g. between 1999 and 2008 the number of breeding pairs increased by 58%. Nest “takeovers” are now happening.

SHEKHAWAT, D. S., BHATNAGAR, C., KOLI, V. K. & AGARWAL, S. (2014). First record of Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (Falconiformes: Accipitridae) from southern Rajasthan, India. *Journal Threatened Taxa* 6 (4): 5675-5676.

A “mature male” and a “female” were sighted at Ubeshwer (24°37’N, 73°33’E), 15 km north-west of Udaipur City, in 2011/2012. The male was said to have “pale areas on head”. But the photograph shows two juvenile vultures! Also Naoroji (2006: 277) states that it winters “commonly” to Rajasthan.

(email: sdeependrasingh@yahoo.com)

THIOLLAY, J.-M. (2015). African vultures declining at a critical rate. *Malimbus* 37: 78-79.

This is a short comment that summarises the paper by Ogada *et al.* (2015), which suggests that “African vultures are heading towards extinction.”

(email: jm.thiollay@wanadoo.fr)

UNWIN, M. (2015). Vulture culture. *Travel Africa* 71: 138-141.

A general article, with several colour photos, some from Walter Nesar. Has a neat way of explaining the adaptations of vultures to scavenging.

(email: editor@travelfricamag.com)

VOGEL, S. M., HENLEY, M. D., RODE, S. C., van de VYVER, D., MEARES, K. F., SIMMONS, G. & de BOER, W. F. (2014). Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) impact on trees used by nesting vultures and raptors in South Africa. *African Journal of Ecology* 52: 458-465.

Knobthorn and Leadwood trees were surveyed in the Klaserie Pvt. Nature Reserve that had vulture/raptor nests. [Probably only White-backed Vulture nests - “on the very top of the canopy”]. Most trees had some damage, but overall, nesting was not affected. However, insect and fungus invasions of trees with damage would be detrimental.

(email: fred.deboer@wur.nl)

WELIANGE, W. S., KOLAWOLE, R. A., PRASANNAJITH, N. S., AFOLABI, A. S. & AMAECHI, E. C. (2015). Ethno-ornithological knowledge and uses of birds in Omi-aro and Labaka villages, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Malimbus* 37: 41-54.

Among vultures only the Rüppell’s Griffon is listed - “not eaten, and forbidden...” Vultures bring omens of death. Feathers can make a person invisible.

(email: ebubeamechi@yahoo.com)

YARNELL, R. W., PHIPPS, W. L., DELL, S., MacTAVISH, L. M. & SCOTT D. M. (2014). Evidence that vulture restaurants increase the local abundance of mammalian carnivores in South Africa. *African Journal of Ecology* 53: 287-294.

A restaurant was provided at Mankwe Wildlife Reserve from 2008 to 2011. Brown Hyenas and Black-backed Jackals increased in numbers then declined, whereas at Pilanesberg National Park where there was no restaurant these two species remained constant in numbers. The Mankwe restaurant was not fenced. Recommendations are made.

(email: richard.yarnell@ntu.ac.uk)

ZAFAR-UL ISLAM, M. & ISMAIL, K. (2014). Egyptian Vultures in the Farasan Islands, Saudi Arabia. *Phoenix* 30: 10.

It is a key breeding species on the islands, and the most important breeding population in the country. Surveys in 2011-2013 produced 76, 63, 69 and 56 sightings of vultures. The breeding population is estimated at 40-70 pairs. A national species action plan is recommended.

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BOOK REVIEWS

P.J. Mundy

del HOYO, J. & COLLAR, N. (2014). *HBW and Birdlife International illustrated checklist of the birds of the world*. Vol. 1: Non-passerines. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. ISBN: 978-84-96553-94-1. Price: €185.

Seven species of Cathartidae (in the Order Cathartiformes) are described on p. 516, and illustrated on p. 517 by A. Jutglar. Three species in the tribe Gypaetini (subfamily Gypaetinae, family Accipitridae, in the Order Accipitriformes) are described on p. 522, and illustrated on p.523 by I. Willis. Thirteen species in the Tribe Gypini (subfamily Accipitrinae) are described on pp. 526 and 528, and illustrated on pp. 527 and 529 by I. Willis. Each species has short text, a map of its distribution (in any of three colours: blue yellow and green), and a coloured illustration with a scale. The California Condor and four species in India are rated as Critically Endangered, four species as Endangered, and three species as Vulnerable (i.e. 13 of 23 are 'threatened' by IUCN standards). The texts also have 20 references (up to 2013), though I needed a magnifying glass to read the superscript numbers! The texts concentrate on names, taxonomy and distribution; the Rüppell's Griffon has changed its spelling to *rueppelli*. Altogether a marvellously comprehensive yet succinct account.
