

## FACTSHEET – Cape Vulture

The Cape Vulture was one of the first Southern African vulture species to be regarded as a candidate for the Red Data Book, because it is endemic to the Southern African Sub-region and occurs nowhere else. The epicentre of its population is in South Africa, where poisoning, collision with powerlines, electrocution on powerlines, direct persecution, the traditional medicine trade, and a host of other factors have contributed to its demise.



This vulture breeds colonially on cliffs, and is thus tied to a limited number of breeding sites for a major part of each year. In Botswana, there are two breeding sites, both of which are regarded as Important Bird Areas: Mannyelanong Hill near Otse in south-eastern Botswana, and the Tswapong Hills east of Palapye.

The Mannyelanong site is protected as a game reserve under the Dept. of Wildlife and National Parks, and was the first game reserve in Africa to be declared for the primary purpose of protecting a vulture species. Mannyelanong derives its name from the



accumulation of white vulture droppings on the cliff face, which can be seen from miles around. The population at Mannyelanong has been well monitored over the past few decades, and has increased slowly from about 60 pairs breeding there during the 1980s. Tswapong Hills are unprotected and less accessible, and it is not known how the birds are faring there.

Cape Vultures range over enormous distances, and must be safe from the prevailing threats at all times if their numbers are to recover to levels where the species may be removed from the Red Data Book.

Photos: W T arboton