

FACTSHEET – Lappet-faced Vulture

The Lappet-faced Vulture has had a long history of persecution in Southern Africa; the very first specimen known to science was collected by Francois Levallant in a flagrantly brutal manner that seems to have set the stage for others to follow, and the birds have been purposely and accidentally killed ever since.



Photo: J Liversedge

Currently we do not know the precise population size of Lappet-faced Vultures in Botswana, but it is clearly not a common bird. At most, two or three individuals are seen at a carcass, as opposed to dozens of White-backed Vultures. The largest aggregation ever recorded in Botswana was a mere 39 individuals seen at the Lesser Flamingo breeding colony at Sua Pan by wildlife filmmaker Tim Liversedge. Surprisingly no nests of this species are known from the Okavango Delta, although adult birds are frequently seen foraging in

this area. It prefers the dry, semi-arid parts of Botswana, and the Makgadikgadi Pans seem to be the stronghold for this species with many pairs nesting there.

Like other vulture species, the Lappet-faced is threatened mainly by poisoning, but also by illegal killing for traditional medicine. The fact that it is a protected species in accordance with the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act does not seem to have secured its numbers, and concerted conservation action will be needed to ensure its future. A National Lappet-faced Vulture Action Plan needs to be developed with widespread stakeholder participation to identify and rank the threats to the species, and to prioritise mitigation measures.

Photo: M Muller

