



CONSERVATION & WILDLIFE FUND

PROJECT OUTLINE

CONSERVATION OF VULTURES

This proposal is about the **CONSERVATION OF VULTURES** but has direct links to the commercial poaching of ivory and rhino horn, organized by international criminal gangs, and the retaliatory killing of predators by keepers of domestic livestock. Vulture conservation is one vehicle through which these diverse and deadly threats to Africa's iconic wildlife can be addressed simultaneously.

Background

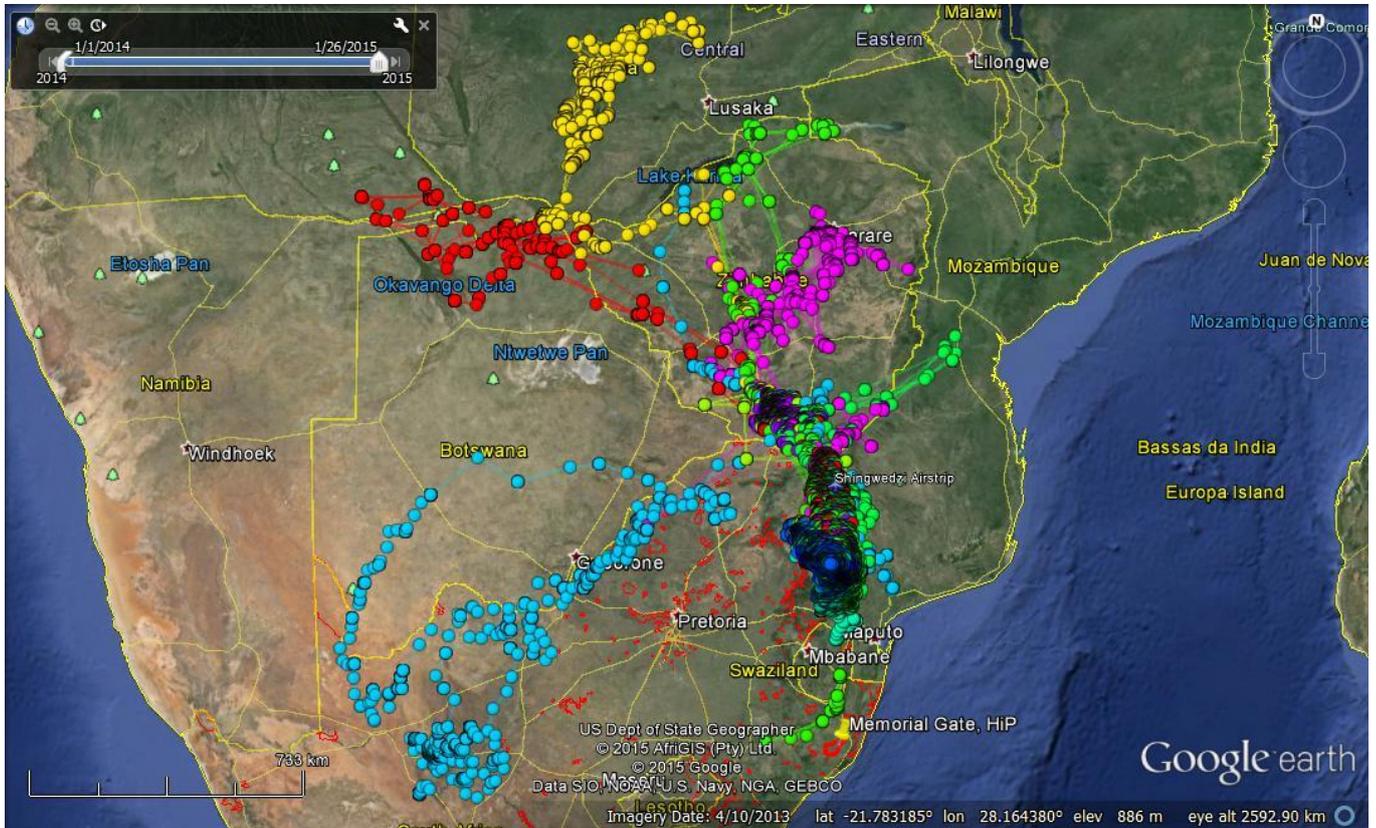
Catastrophic poisoning events across southern Africa are driving populations of globally threatened vulture species towards extinction. Vultures are a distinctive, iconic and charismatic component of much of the African landscape. They provide critical ecological and ecosystem services, which stem from the birds' unique way of life. Vultures are 'obligate scavengers' - more efficient at cleaning up animal carcasses than most, if not all, other scavengers. To succeed as such obligate scavengers, they must be specialised: vultures can resist bacterial toxins in rotting flesh that would kill other organisms.

Poisoning has been directly used for ivory poaching and the scourge of elephant and rhino poaching, currently affecting several SADC countries is the primary source of vulture poisoning, with poachers lacing carcasses with poisonous chemicals to stop the circling birds from giving away the location of a poached animal. This threat respects no international boundaries with catastrophic events taking place in Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe where hundreds of vultures have been killed recent years. (Capon.2014; Groom *et al.*, 2013; Muboko *et al* 2014).

Vultures traverse all landscapes and feed just as much in agricultural land as in areas specifically protected for wildlife. So vultures also fall victim to poisoning with pesticides and agricultural chemicals when livestock farmers try to control predators like lions, leopards and hyaenas. The use of chemical poisons to kill vultures is also employed by people dealing in vulture body parts for the traditional medicine industry.

As of 2015, four species of African Vultures have been re-categorized as Critically Endangered, and two as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The changes have mainly been driven by the impact of poisoning incidents on vulture populations. Five out of the six species of vulture that occur in Zimbabwe fall within the above mentioned categories. This family of birds is one of most threatened group of birds on the African continent.

As a first step towards dealing with this threat towards Zimbabwe’s vulture populations, BirdLife Zimbabwe convened a regional stakeholders workshop in Harare in March 2015 to develop a National Vulture Action Plan. A Vulture Working Group was formed with various government institutions, academics and other civil society organisations. A broad plan was produced with various sections including a poisoning plan, education and awareness, policy and advocacy, and research. The Action Plan spells out the different actions to be undertaken in order to secure a future for African Vultures in the SADC region (ZPWMA&BLZ)



Courtesy of Andre Botha: Endangered Wildlife Trust, Birds of Prey Programme. www.ewt.org.za

This map shows the movements of White Backed Vultures tagged in the Kruger National Park in eastern South Africa – each colour representing the flight path of an individual bird. The birds travelled thousands of kilometres across South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Vultures thus do not belong to any one country but they face threats (mostly related to ivory poaching) that could kill them in any one of these eight countries. A conservation strategy across the SADC region is needed. This proposal is to carry out vital actions of Zimbabwe’s Vulture Action Plan 2015 – 2018. The Zimbabwe-based plan focuses on the Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) of the SADC in which Zimbabwe is a vital and centrally-located partner.

Project goal and objectives

The goal of the project is to improve the conservation status of vultures in Zimbabwe through improved information, public education and awareness, and enhance regulation of harmful chemicals and substances. This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- to reduce the threat posed to vultures by the use of poisons
- to improve the understanding of vulture population status and trends in Zimbabwe
- to increase public awareness about vultures, their contribution to human lives, and the threats facing them;
- to build capacity amongst government departments

Activities

- Identify the main poisons and toxins currently in use, which directly and or indirectly kill wildlife in Zimbabwe
- Condense the Poisoning Manual for Zimbabwe into a handbook
- Providing basic kits for testing poisons in the field
- Supporting relevant government institutions, particularly in investigating poisoning cases, crime scene investigation by promoting the use of standard procedures
- Working with legislators, prosecutors, magistrates to improve the prosecution process for offenders
- Estimate current vulture breeding populations in two National Parks: Hwange National Park and Mana Pools National Park
- Understand movement of vultures by satellite tagging a few individuals
- Work with traditional healers and communities to reduce the threat posed by the 'muti trade'.
- Produce a compact version for the Vulture Action Plan for circulation

Project Results

A monitoring and evaluation plan will be put in place to measure progress towards project results. The intended project results are:

- Possession or use of highly hazardous substances which impact on vulture populations is strictly controlled, or banned.
- State agencies have the capacity to collect, preserve and present poisoning evidence
- Updated baseline information on the status of vulture populations in project area; is obtained
- Robust monitoring programme in place for vulture populations and poisoning incidents
- Extinction risk of globally threatened vulture species in Zimbabwe is reduced
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Organisational Capacity

BLZ is a local non-governmental conservation organisation that ***promotes conservation of biodiversity using birds as indicators***. BLZ has implemented conservation and research projects across Zimbabwe for more than two decades. BLZ is a trusted convenor on issues of bird conservation. BLZ has strong relationships with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and Environmental Management Agency, amongst others. BLZ's many members contribute key data throughout the year through its well-developed citizen science programme on bird monitoring. In addition, BLZ is a member of IUCN and the national partner for BirdLife International, a global partnership of 120 membership-based organisations, all working to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

Partners

BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) will collaborate with government departments, local authorities, communities, academic institutions and other civil society institutions. These include Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Department (Department of Research and Specialist Services, Wildlife Veterinary Unit, Agritex), Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Environmental Management Agency, Rural District Councils, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, National University of Science and Technology, Tikki Hywood Trust.

Geographical Scope

Most of the activities involving support or training to state agencies and NGOs will be in urban centres (see budget details).

BirdLife Zimbabwe has identified three areas where most vultures breed. These are the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (popularly known as KAZA), the Zambezi Valley and the South East Lowveld. In this proposal, the vulture survey work will be confined to Hwange National Park (in KAZA) and Mana Pools National Park and surrounding protected areas in the Zambezi Valley.

Estimated Budget: US\$ 70 000 (see detail below).

Estimated duration of project: 18 months from receipt of funds.

Matching resources form BLZ: ,

Vulture Action Plan 2015

Extensive reference material

Staff

Vehicles

Office

Widespread voluntary membership available for data collection and reporting.

Established NGO with credible SADC and further international linkages.

References

Capon, S. 2014. Vulture poisoning in Southern Africa. Status, implications and Conservation. Malilangwe Trust/ Frankfurt Zoological Society Report

Groom, R.J., Gandiwa, E., Van Der Westhuizen, H.J. 2013. A mass poisoning of White-Backed Vultures in Gonarezhou National Park. *Honeyguide* 59: 5-9

Muboko, N., Muposhi, V., Tarakini, T., Gandiwa, E., Vengesayi, S., Makuwe, E. 2014. Cyanide poisoning and African Elephant mortality in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe: preliminary assessment. *Pachyderm* 55:92-94

ZPWMA & BLZ 2015. Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA) and Birdlife Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Vulture Action Plan 2015 – 2018.

Project Budget		
PROJECT TITLE	VULTURE CONSERVATION PROJECT	
ORGANISATION	BirdLife Zimbabwe	
Budget Categories	US DOLLARS	Notes
Professional Services		
Research and compile a list of poisoning substances that are used in the respective locations and their availability	US\$1,000.00	
Production and printing of advocacy materials	US\$1,000.00	
Condensing Vulture Action Plan and printing	US\$2,500.00	
Condensing the Poisoning Manual and printing	US\$2,500.00	to include prosecuting information - see 35, legal workshops below
Processing poisoned birds	US\$3,000.00	Paying for toxicology tests at laboratories
Distribution of all printed material and reports	US\$3,000.00	to national and regional (SADC) conservation interests, especially those combating ivory poaching
Professional Services Subtotal	US\$13,000.00	
Operating Costs		
Internet time for project communications	US\$480.00	
Mobile phone time for communications with stakeholders	US\$400.00	
Computer Anti-virus	US\$50.00	For the project manager's computer
Data storage and back up	US\$100.00	Database back-up at BLZ
Operating Costs Subtotal	US\$1,030.00	
Supplies		
Stationery and printing	US\$200.00	
Supplies Subtotal	US\$200.00	
Equipment and Maintenance		
GPS units for crime scenes	US\$1,000.00	10 units @ USD 120 per unit. To be issued to National Parks Staff for their use in the field
Digital cameras fro crime scenes	US\$1,000.00	10 units@US100. To be issued to National Parks Staff for their use in the field
Backpacks and crime scene kits	US\$2,000.00	To be issued to National Parks Staff for their use in the field
Equipment & Maintenance Subtotal	US\$4,000.00	
Travel		
Subsistence (accomm and food for Workshops)	US\$4,000.00	Total of 40 days at USD100/day
Fuel	US\$3,000.00	in BLZ vehicle
Mileage	US\$2,500.00	in BLZ vehicle
Travel Subtotal	US\$9,500.00	

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Meetings and Special Events		
Legislators, prosecutors, magistrates workshops	US\$2,500.00	
Development of Training workshops - Hwange (Investigating poisoning cases)	US\$2,500.00	Poisoning protocol training
Training Workshops - Mana Pools (Vulture monitoring)	US\$2,500.00	
Community workshops (Zambezi Valley)	US\$2,000.00	
Meetings with traditional Healers (Bulawayo, Chinhoyi)	US\$2,000.00	
Vulture breeding surveys (Hwange & Zambezi)	US\$15,000.00	design of surveys available on request
Meetings & Special Events Subtotal	US\$26,500.00	
Salaries/Benefits		
Project Manager	US\$7,800.00	BLZ employee - for management of the entire project
Project Assistant	US\$1,800.00	BLZ employee under project manager
Field Officer - Hwange	US\$2,400.00	Recruited by BLZ
Salaries/Benefits Subtotal	US\$12,000.00	
Miscellaneous		
Audit for project accountability	US\$300.00	Project contribution towards audit. BLZ is audited every year.
Miscellaneous Subtotal	US\$300.00	
Subtotal	US\$66,530.00	
Adminstration Costs 5%	US\$3,325.00	for BLZ
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	US\$69,855.00	

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