



Creating Vulture Safe Zones:

An initiative to recover Cape Vulture populations in the central Karoo

Karoo | Camdeboo | Mountain Zebra
National Parks



CAPE VULTURES

Historical records show that Cape Vultures once bred on the Karoo's cliffs, and were regularly seen foraging along the mountain slopes and flats across central parts the Karoo.

Sadly, the region no longer supports a population of vultures, with very infrequent sightings of birds over the last 40 years.

Our project's long-term goal is to encourage and ultimately recover populations of Cape Vultures back to the central Karoo through the establishment of a Vulture Safe Zone that links key protected areas.

Why are we focusing on Cape Vultures?

The endangered Cape Vulture is among our most threatened wildlife. Of Africa's 11 vulture species, 7 are listed as either Endangered or Critically Endangered.

In South Africa, vultures have suffered rapid population declines over the last decade and have disappeared across large portions of their historical distributions.

Vultures quickly and efficiently clean up carcasses which is likely to reduce the spread of diseases. We simply cannot afford to lose vultures and the cleaning services they provide. Vulture conservation has never been more critical than it is today.

The Great Karoo hosts 4 historical Cape Vulture colonies. We want to encourage these birds back to these colonies, by offering them a safe haven, which will benefit other wildlife, and people too.

WHAT IS A VULTURE SAFE ZONE?

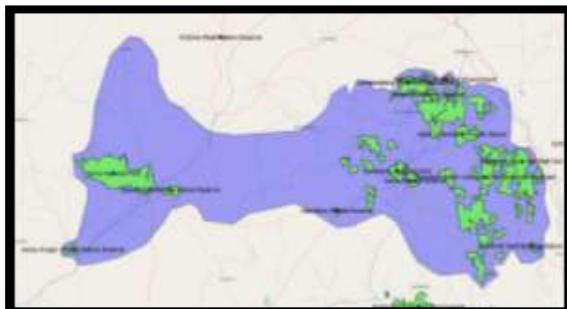
A Vulture Safe Zone is an appropriately-sized geographic area in which targeted conservation measures are undertaken to address the key threats relevant to the vulture species present.

Within the Vulture Safe Zone, our work will directly tackle the following threats to Cape Vultures:

- Poison is not used in the control and killing of mammalian predators such as jackals and caracals;
- Lead-free ammunition is used to cull/hunt game/livestock;
- All agricultural and electrical infrastructure in the VSZ is vulture-friendly;
- Water reservoirs are modified to prevent drowning;
- Breeding vultures (whether cliff or tree nesting) are protected from disturbance;
- All carcasses provided as supplementary food at vulture restaurants are lead- and contaminant-free;
- All vulture populations are monitored;
- All known vulture mortalities are reported to the EWT.



The current project aims to establish a Vulture Safe Zone that spans across 23,571 km² in and around three major protected areas: the Karoo, Camdeboo and Mountain Zebra National Parks and spans from Beaufort West to Cradock.



We will actively work with landowners, parks and reserves to mitigate and where possible, remove identified threats to vultures on each property to ultimately declare them as a VSZ.

Dr Gareth Tate
Manager – Birds of Prey Programme
THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST Building K2,
Pinelands Officer Park
Ardeer Road, Modderfontein, 1609
Tel: 011 372 3600
Cell: 082 447 3619
Email: garetht@ewt.org.za

Dr Lindy Thompson
Project Co-ordinator: Vulture Conservation and Research – Birds of Prey Programme
THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST Building K2,
Pinelands Officer Park
Ardeer Road, Modderfontein, 1609
Cell: 072 241 4611
Email: lindyt@ewt.org.za

WHAT IS THE KAROO VULTURE SAFE ZONE?

Karoo farmers and other landowners have partnered with SANParks, the Mountain Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environment (MZCPE), Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the SANParks Honorary Rangers to create a Vulture Safe Zone in the Great Karoo. This Vulture Safe Zone covers 23,571 km² in and around 3 protected areas (the Karoo, Camdeboo and Mountain Zebra National Parks) and the MZCPE.

Our long-term goal: To encourage Cape Vultures back to their historical ranges in the Great Karoo by establishing a Vulture Safe Zone linking key protected areas.

Phase I: The project team will conduct an assessment of current threats in co-operation with over 400 farmers, game breeders and private reserves in the area.

Phase II: The project team will actively work with committed landowners to address the threats identified in Phase I.

The Karoo Vulture Safe Zone Initiative is one of the largest conservation initiatives where farmers partner with conservation organisations like SANParks, SANParks Honorary Rangers, EWT and the MZCPE.