

CR Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

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Justification**Justification of Red List Category**

This vulture is listed as Critically Endangered. Recently published evidence suggests the population is experiencing an extremely rapid decline owing to indiscriminate poisoning, trade for traditional medicine, hunting, persecution and electrocution, as well as habitat loss and degradation.

Population justification

Given evidence of recent declines in various parts of its range, this species's population is estimated to number a maximum of 197,000 individuals.

Trend justification

Recently published data shows that this species's population is declining rapidly with an estimated 83% decline (range 64-93%) over three generations (53 years) (Ogada *et al.* 2016).

Distribution and population

This species is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa; from **Senegal** (with higher densities in the West, for at least the southern part of the country, with possibly 2,350-2,700 pairs in the Ziguinchor Département [B. Bargain *in litt.* 2016]) and southern **Mauritania** east through southern **Niger** and **Chad**, to southern **Sudan**, South Sudan, **Ethiopia** and western **Somalia**, southwards to northern **Namibia** and **Botswana**, and through **Zimbabwe** to southern **Mozambique** and north-eastern **South Africa** (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). The species is generally sedentary, with some dispersal by non-breeders and immature birds, and movements in response to rainfall in the Sahel of West Africa (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). Data and observations of varying coverage and quality from various parts of its range suggest that the species is undergoing a very rapid decline in its global population (Ogada and Buij 2011, Ogada *et al.* 2016). Trends in Uganda are difficult to detect owing to strong annual variations (Pomeroy *et al.* 2012) whilst in coastal Gambia the species is reported to remain relatively abundant, and may have the highest densities left of this species (Barlow and Fulford 2013, Jallow *et al.* 2016). Following evidence of declines across its range, the total population has been estimated at a maximum of 197,000 individuals (Ogada and Buij 2011).

Ecology

The species is often associated with human settlements north of the Equator, but is also found in open grassland, forest edge, wooded savanna, desert and along coasts; and tends to occur at higher densities in areas where populations of larger *Gyps* vultures are low or nonexistent (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, K. Bildstein *in litt.* 2016). It occurs up to 4,000 m, but is most numerous below 1,800 m. It feeds mainly on carrion, but also takes insects (and will congregate in large numbers during insect emergences [Smalley 2016]). In West Africa and Kenya it breeds throughout the year, but especially from November to July. Breeding in north-east Africa occurs mainly in October-June, with birds in southern Africa tending to breed in May-December. It is an arboreal nester, favouring *Ceiba pentandra* in Senegal (B. Bargain *in litt.* 2016), and lays a clutch of one egg. Its incubation period lasts 46-54 days, followed by a fledging period of 80-130 days. Young are dependent on their parents for a further 3-4 months after fledging (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). Measurements of nesting success at the Oifants River Private Nature Reserve, South Africa showed, success of 0.44-0.89 offspring per pair per year in 2013 and 0.50-0.67 offspring per pair per year in 2014 (Monadjem *et al.* 2016).

Threats

Major threats to this species include non-target poisoning, capture for traditional medicine and bushmeat (McKean *et al.* 2013), and direct persecution (Ogada and Buij 2011, Ogada *et al.* 2016). In Nigeria, a survey of medicinal traders found that Hooded Vulture was the most commonly traded species of vulture, with 90% of all vulture parts traded belonging to the species (Saidu and Buij 2013). And across West and Central Africa the species is one of the most heavily traded, with an estimated 5,850-8,772 individuals traded over a six-year period in West Africa (Buij *et al.* 2015). Hooded Vulture meat is reportedly sold as chicken in some places. Intentional poisoning of vultures may be carried out in some areas by poachers in order to hide the locations of their kills, but in Senegal at least vultures to receive a form of cultural protection from such killing because they are the totem for some families (B. Bargain *in litt.* 2016). Secondary poisoning with carbofuran pesticides at livestock baits being used to poison mammalian predators is also an issue in East Africa (Otieno *et al.* 2010, C. Kendall *in litt.* 2012, Roxburgh and McDougall 2012). Declines have also been attributed to land conversion through development and improvements to abattoir hygiene and rubbish disposal in some areas (Ogada and Buij 2011), and, in Senegal, a decline in the number of their favourite nesting tree species (B. Bargain *in litt.* 2016). The species may also be threatened by avian influenza (H5N1), from which it appears to suffer some mortality and which it probably acquires from feeding on discarded dead poultry (Ducatez *et al.* 2007), although this is not well substantiated (C. Kendall *in litt.* 2016).

Conservation actions**Conservation and Research Actions Underway**

CITES Appendix II. This widespread species occurs in a large number of protected areas. The species is being surveyed in parts of its range, including The Gambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa with plans for larger scale monitoring. Movement studies have been undertaken in several countries to assess ranging behavior and impact of commensalism on range size (C. Barlow *in litt.* 2016, C. Kendall *in litt.* 2016). The Hawk Conservancy along with the Endangered Wildlife Trust are currently working on providing training and equipment for anti-poisoning teams so that field staff will have the skills and equipment to respond to a neutralise poisoned carcasses (C. Murn *in litt.* 2016). It is listed as Critically Endangered in the Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland (Allan 2015), and Endangered in Namibia and Uganda (Brown and Simmons 2015, WCS 2016). A multi-species action plan is in preparation for African-Eurasian vultures.

Conservation and Research Actions Proposed

Carry out systematic surveys throughout the species's range to acquire a more accurate population estimate and monitor trends. Raise awareness of the species's plight and the impact of hunting and persecution. Monitor rates of land-use change across its range. Monitor effects of poisoning on the species and its use in multi trade and for meat (C. Kendall *in litt.* 2012). Reduce human-carnivore conflict that motivates carrion poisoning, and monitor potential impact of lead poisoning from hunting activities on population - particularly targeted at farmers to reduce persecution and people in urban areas where the species can occur (C. Kendall *in litt.* 2016, K. Bildstein *in litt.* 2016). A number of recommendations were produced at the 2012 Pan-Africa Vulture Summit (Botha *et al.* 2012, Ogada *et al.* 2016): 1) Regulate import, manufacture and sale of poisons; 2) Legislate and enforce measures to prosecute those involved in illegal killing and trade in vulture species; 3) Protect and effectively manage breeding sites; 4) Ensure new energy infrastructure is 'vulture-friendly' and modify existing unsafe infrastructure; 5) Support activities to conserve vulture populations, including research and outreach activities.

Identification

67-70 cm Small, scruffy-looking, mostly brown vulture, with long thin bill, bare crown, face and foreneck, conspicuous ear-holes, and downy nape and hindneck. Perches hunched with wings drooping. Sexes alike. Juvenile usually with face pale blue and hood of short down dark brown rather than beige. **Similar spp** *N. monachus* is smaller and finer-billed compared to *Torgos tracheliotus*. Juvenile similar to juvenile *Neophron percnopterus*, but tail not pointed and head has down rather than contour feathering.

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