

ECUFPA



Eastern Cape Vulture Fires 2016

As landowners, it is our responsibility to our part for both the preservation of the threatened bird species and for the prevention of veld fires.

On Sunday, 28 August 2016, two veld fires were caused by Cape Vulture collisions in the Eastern Cape.

In the Penhoek Pass area, a landowner had lost a cow across a valley from a power line. He reported that vultures had been feeding on the carcass three days prior to the fire incident. Vultures are known to be "poor flyers" on the best of days and being fully engorged made flight a severely difficult task for one such a vulture. The vulture, unable to gain enough altitude over the valley, collided with a power line and started a fire. The fire burnt approximately 1200 ha which affected in the region of four farms.

On the very same day, in the Henderson / Cathcart area, a lamb carcass, which was left by predation, made an easy mark for the nearby kettle of vultures.

One descended to the carcass and collided with a power line, also resulting in a fire. In this case, the fire burnt approximately 700 ha and affected 3 farms.

Eskom, in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), has committed to proactively mitigating power lines in identified high risk areas. Regardless thereof, the EWP reports an increase in the number of reported power line mortalities in 2016.

As landowners, it is our responsibility to do our part for both the preservation of threatened bird species and the prevention of veld fires resulting from these collisions. The communication between landowners and the EWT is crucial.



Mitigated Structures

*The above image shows an old T-Structure that has been mitigated through installing **raptor protectors**, **bird flappers** and a **gapped earth wire**.*



MITIGATED STRUCTURES

There are various forms of mitigation that can be done on structures. T-Structures can be replaced by the cross structures as in the image above.

Short of replacing the structures, raptor protectors, which are essentially plastic sleeves, should be placed over the conducting lines.

The earth wire should be gapped which prevents the bird from being earthed if it

touches the earth and conducting wires, but allows a lighting strike to jump the gap.

Bird flappers should also be installed on the wires in areas that are prone to collisions.



FARMERS & VULTURES

IN MANY AREAS, FARMERS HAVE PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE CAPE VULTURE.

Landowners are crucial role-players in mitigating these mortalities and as such there are three major steps that landowners can take to play their part.

Firstly landowners should identify and communicate all poles, power lines and other Eskom structures that pose a risk of collision or electrocution in their area. Eskom have undertaken to changing these structures and therefore have a responsibility to do so. Reporting suspect structures will provide EWT with the data they need to better encourage a proactive response from Eskom. Alternatively, all reporting can be done through Vulpro, who work in close conjunction with EWT - Eskom partnership and are also able to follow up on reports and encourage proactive mitigation.

Secondly, landowners are encouraged, where possible and/or feasible, to move known carcasses away from power lines in an attempt to keep feeding limited to safe areas. Carcasses need not be directly close to or under a power line to pose a risk, it is in cases where the vulture cannot see the power line that a collision is likely. In the Penhoek Pass collision, for example, the power line was hidden by the skyline. Understanding that in most cases it is not always feasible, but choosing a set location as a 'restaurant' and moving carcasses there can aid in preventing collisions resulting from feeding.

Lastly, report all collisions and electrocutions to either Vulpro or EWT. A field agent will be sent out to investigate the collision and request the necessary action, if any, from Eskom. Providing the EWT with as much data as possible will further empower them to pressure Eskom for intervention and mitigation.

In many areas, farmers have played a crucial role in the survival of the Cape Vulture and it is only with your added input that mitigation is possible. Kate Webster, from Vulpro, stated that Vulpro is always available to assist and advise landowners where requested and landowners who have questions are urged to make contact with them. Should you find an injured vulture please contact Vulpro who will assist.



IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS

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