

Project Update: April 2015

Reporting period: August 2014- February 2015

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine breeding success of African white-backed vultures breeding at Mlawula Nature Reserve, north-eastern Swaziland.
- To produce growth curves of the chicks from data obtained from the wild.
- To monitor how food provision rate and brooding behaviour changes with the age of the chicks.
- To visit neighbouring schools and teach students about the conservation of vultures and ecosystem services provided by vultures.

On 13th August 2014 I visited a school which is close to the study site, Dlalile High School. I was warmly received by the deputy principal and he gave me three classes (form 1, 2 and 4). I was given 1 hour with the students and I gave a 30 minute presentation which was followed by a question and answer session which lasted for 30 minutes. The students were eager to learn about conservation of vultures and conservation of biodiversity in general. 78 students attended the presentation together with five teachers.



The next school visit was on the 28th February 2015 and this was at Shewula High School which is also a neighbouring school. In this school I was given a form 4 class with 40 students and the session was 30 minutes long. Students were taught about the conservation of vultures and ecosystem services provided by vultures. In general the students knew very little about vultures even though they live very close to vulture nesting sites. They were encouraged to share the information they gained from the presentation with friends and family members. Sharing information about the ecology of vultures is important because it help eliminate false beliefs which result in vultures being hunted for traditional purposes.



Breeding vultures at Mlawula Nature Reserve were monitored using camera traps from June 2014 to December 2014. During the same period, biometric measurements were taken which were measurements of weight, wing, bill, tarsus and tail. These measurements were taken every 14 days throughout the breeding season. Data is currently being analysed and findings of the study will come out in the final report.