

Project Update: December 2016

In November 2016 we completed our project on vulture feeding in the territory of Ustyurt State Nature Reserve. From April to November 2016, more than 600 kg of offal was distributed among three feeding stations, each of which was visited during the course of 11 field trips. In June 2016, the location of one of the stations was changed due to low vulture attendance. Two camera traps were mounted at each of the feeding stations. During our observations we received thousands of photos, about 80% of which proved to be informative – these included images of mammals as well as birds. Among other species recorded, we obtained many photos of Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) with one or two birds in the pictures and a few photos of black vulture (*Aegyptius monachus*) and griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) with one bird captured in the frame.

The most numerous bird species that visited feeding sites was common raven (*Corvus corax*) with up to 14 individuals in one frame. Occasional visitors were black kite (*Milvus migrans*), steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) and eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*). Other bird species captured by camera traps included chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), several species of wheatears of the genus *Oenanthe* and a hoopoe (*Upupa epops*). Among mammals recorded at the feeding sites were wolf (*Canis lupus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), caracal (*Caracal caracal*), wild cat (*Felis silvestris lybica*), Brandt's hedgehog (*Paraechinus hypomelas*), Tolai hare (*Lepus tolai*), Libyan jird (*Meriones libycus*), Ustyurt urial (*Ovis vignei arkal*) and goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*).

Currently we are writing up the results of the project and preparing a publication for the journal "Raptors Conservation" as well as the layout for a poster "Vultures of Ustyurt State Nature Reserve".

