

Report by the Rare & Endangered Species Trust (REST) for the Rufford Small Grant given in 2002.

Funds to the amount of 5,000.00 pounds were successfully deposited in the REST account and used as stipulated in the grant for the following. Please note that due to some mix-up, this report is being made in April 2006. The advantage to a current updated report is that over the last 4 years we have been able to monitor the huge long-term advantages that this grant provided and see that the one potential negative aspect (habituating vultures to a regular feeding site) proved to not be an issue at all.

Awareness and Education:

Our farmers predator ID laminated sheet has become quite popular. It has proven easy to use and beneficial to the farmers in Namibia. The sheet is reusable as it is laminated and provides a perfect avenue to record and supply information on a predation. The sheet is done with many pictures so that literacy in any language is not a requirement. Conservation groups in both Zimbabwe and South Africa have requested to use the information for their own populations. Within Namibia, the sheet has been adapted for education courses provided by the Cheetah Conservation Fund in partnership with the Smithsonian Institute in the USA. Farmers report a decrease in their use of poisons if they know specifically what predator they are targeting after a kill to their livestock has been made.

REST developed a children's activity sheet. It was originally planned to provide a children's activity/coloring book, but the funds proved to be insufficient. Thus a large A3 sheet – double sided – was designed. One side is coloring and the other side provides information and activities. REST was advised by teachers working in Namibia on the format and level of the activities. The final design has proven so good, that no changes have been made and REST is now in the 6th printing of the sheet. Children just beginning school can simply color the pictures, the next grades begin the cutting out of the circle designs in order to make and glue the circles for mobiles. The grades 4-6 can begin the memory games and puzzles. REST is currently totally reupdating the website and by the end of 2006, this coloring sheet will be available on the site to download anywhere in the world.

Vulture food provided for weekly food and building of waterhole:

The provision of food for the wild vultures feeding at REST has become crucial to many of our programmes. Originally it was believed that the regular supply of food to the wild birds could change their feeding behaviors and make them more dependant on the artificial supply. REST continued with plans anyway due to the absolute need to find a method of attracting the last 11 Cape Griffon vultures (*Gyps coprotheres*) to the site for crucial monitoring. Once the hide was completed by Raleigh International, monitoring of the last critically endangered Cape Griffons became very successful. In addition, we were able to monitor between 30-50 Lappet faced vultures and 350-500 Whitebacked vultures. Quite a few studies have been completed by students of REST dealing with issues such as bone/calcium intake, mating frequency, vulture hierarchy etc. None of these studies could have taken place without an established feeding site.

Most importantly, the feeding site allowed REST to initiate the first large scale captures of adult free flying vultures, anywhere in the world. Within a 15 month period, we were able to capture, ring, measure and sample over 800 vultures. The primary objective of the captures was to fit the first satellite telemetry on vultures in Africa. The data from the satellite project and the measuring and sampling done at all the captures, has made REST a core research centre for research around the world dealing with a variety of subjects. We helped the partnership between Professor Gerry Swan and the Royal Society for the protection of Birds with research into a drug alternative called Meloxicam supplied in lieu of Diclofenac in India and Pakistan, parasite identification, interbreeding between Cape Griffon and Whitebacked vultures and many more.

All of this information was collected due to the success of gathering high numbers of wild vultures to the site with both food and a supply of water for bathing and drinking. The massive discovery of wild vulture frequency of use of the site was a huge eye opener and the results will soon be published. Of the over 800 vultures ringed with distinguishing color bands for each individual, not more than 15-20 ringed vultures usually feed at the site per week. Many of the young birds are only observed 2-3 times a year. Our most frequent visitors use the site on average about twice a month. This result was totally unexpected as it has always been assumed, around the world, that the same vultures would become habituated to a regular feeding site which is certainly not the case at this site.

REST would like to once again thank the team of the Rufford Small Grant for the initial financial support for these particular projects. REST is very involved in both research and conservation. We strongly believe that one cannot be successful without the other.

Sincerely, Maria Diekmann