



Egyptian Vulture

Egiptiese Aasvoël

Neophron percnopterus

The Egyptian Vulture occurs in southern Europe, central Asia, the Middle East and India, and is fairly common in the arid parts of Africa north of the equator (Brown *et al.* 1982; Mundy *et al.* 1992). Formerly widespread in southern Africa (Mundy 1978), it is now only a rare vagrant to most parts of the subregion, although recent information has confirmed its continued status as a breeding resident. This is a conspicuous vulture and the adults are distinctive, but can be confused with the Palmnut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* and the Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* (pale phase birds), and immatures resemble immature Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* and immature *Gymnogenes Polyboroides typus* (Mundy 1978).

It usually occurs singly or in pairs. It generally prefers open, arid habitats and it roosts and breeds on cliff faces (Brown *et al.* 1982; Mundy *et al.* 1992). It feeds on meat and offal at carcasses with other vultures, and scavenges around human settlements. It is also a regular predator of the eggs of other birds, including those of the Ostrich *Struthio camelus* (Mundy *et al.* 1992).

Historically, it probably occurred throughout the drier parts of the atlas region (Mundy 1978), but fewer than 50 reliable sightings have been recorded since 1945 (Mundy 1978; Clinning 1980a; Sinclair *et al.* 1984; Hockey *et al.* 1988b, 1990, 1992). Most recent records come from the vicinity of Etosha Pan (Clinning 1980a; Sinclair *et al.* 1984; Hockey *et al.* 1988b, 1990). An active nest has been located in the Kaokoveld mountains west of Etosha in the 1990s (C.J. Brown pers. comm.); this is the first confirmed breeding record for southern Africa since 1923 (Mundy 1978). A few sightings in the Transkei (Sinclair *et al.* 1984; Hockey *et al.* 1988b, 1992) have encouraged the belief that a remnant population persists in this area (Mundy 1978; Brooke 1984b; Mundy *et al.* 1992; C.J. Brown pers. comm.). The distribution of the small number of submitted records is not plotted.

The Egyptian Vulture is listed as 'extinct' in the South African Red Data book (Brooke 1984b). Food shortages resulting from the depletion of game herds and improvements in hygiene around towns and villages, poisoning and direct persecution by ostrich farmers, are all probable contributing factors to the decline and virtual disappearance of the Egyptian Vulture from southern Africa in the last 150 years (Mundy 1978; Brooke 1984b; Mundy *et al.* 1992).

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