

Ranging Behaviour of Juvenile Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis*) in Southern Africa: A Pilot Study

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The Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis*) population has declined drastically in southern Africa over the last century, resulting in a single isolated population restricted to the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. At its current rate of decline, there is a probability that the Bearded Vulture population in southern Africa will be extinct within 100 years. As evidenced by a previous modeling study, it seems to be crucial to reduce the mortality rates of juvenile birds to reverse the negative population trend. However, there is little data on the causes of juvenile mortality. To identify possible factors affecting juvenile survival, the ranging behaviour of two Bearded Vultures was investigated by means of satellite telemetry. This paper presents the spatial and temporal use of the home range of a male and a female bird during the six month summer period following their release. The home ranges of the two birds were 12,216 km² and 21,734 km² respectively. Both individuals ranged extensively across Lesotho and the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The ranging behaviour of the birds was compared with the location of known threats, nest sites and feeding sites within their home range. This study provides the initial data required to identify the factors impacting on these birds which will be used to establish mitigatory measures to reverse the decline of the species.