**Gyps rueppelli**, Rüppell’s Vulture


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Scientific Name: *Gyps rueppelli* (Brehm, 1852)

Synonym(s):
- *Gyps rueppellii* (Brehm, 1852) [orth. error]

Regional Assessments:
- Global

Common Name(s):
- English: Rüppell's Vulture, Ruepell's Griffon, Ruppell's Vulture, Rüppell's Griffon Vulture
- French: Vautour de Rüppell

Taxonomic Source(s):

Identification Information:
85-97 cm. Medium-sized vulture. Overall dark brown plumage with extensive pale creamy edging to body feathers. Dark flight feathers. Has a white ruff, dark neck and pale head. Distal half of the bill is pale. Juveniles have an all dark bill and paler body plumage. The centres to their body feathers are altogether less dark. **Similar spp.** Within its range this species could be confused with *G. fulvus* or *G. africanus*. However, both of those species are less mottled and have uniform light brown body plumage. *G. africanus* has an all dark bill.

Assessment Information
Red List Category & Criteria: Critically Endangered D ver 3.1
Year Published: 2022
Date Assessed: October 25, 2021

Justification:
**Mediterranean regional assessment: Critically Endangered (CR)**

This species appears to have been colonizing the Mediterranean region in the last 10 years. The
population size in Algeria is estimated at 20 mature individuals. It occurs in an area occupied by a close relative, the Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), but at the moment, there are no records of hybridization between the species in the area. It is also regularly recorded in Morocco and Spain, although not as breeders. Therefore this species’ Red List status in the Mediterranean matches that of its status in North Africa (Garrido *et al.* 2021), and it is listed as Critically Endangered under criterion D. Further research should be conducted to ascertain the real breeding numbers, the population trend and the importance of North African population to the global conservation of the species.

**Geographic Range**

**Range Description:**
This species occurs in a wide belt of savanna in the Sahel from Senegambia to Eritrea, Ethiopia and Western and Northern Somalia, and south in the east to central Tanzania (Clark and Davies 2018). In North Africa it was considered casual or a vagrant (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt) (Goodman *et al.* 1989, Clark and Davies 2018). However, in the last 15 years, the species has been recorded far away from its breeding colonies, reaching the Iberian Peninsula through Morocco and the Strait of Gibraltar with migrating *Gyps fulvus* (Botha *et al.* 2017). Ramírez *et al.* (2011) suggested that these movements could be an expansion of the distribution range due to the establishment in Europe as a breeding species, where there are evidences of adult Rüppell’s Vultures occupying breeding colonies of Griffon Vultures in the Iberian Peninsula and exhibiting breeding behaviour. Recently it has found Rüppell’s Vultures showing breeding behaviour in Griffon Vulture colonies in Andalucia, south of Spain (Elgorriaga *et al.* 2020), where species may now even be considered a resident species (CAGPDS 2019). In this context, the species has been sighted frequently in Morocco, especially near the Strait of Gibraltar during migration (El Khamlichi 2016), with about 50 individuals observed during the spring migration of 2020 (R. El Khamlichi pers. comm.). It has also been seen in the Sahara (Díaz-Portero *et al.* 2014, Bergier *et al.* 2017). According to these data, Ramírez (2012) suggests that the species should not be considered casual or vagrant but with regular non-breeding populations both in Morocco and Spain. Immatures also migrate with Griffon Vultures through Morocco and Algeria (Botha *et al.* 2017).

It could be also breeding in the *G. fulvus* colonies in Algeria now. Although the species was considered extinct in Algeria by Botha *et al.* (2017), J. M. Thiollay (in litt. 2016 per BirdLife International 2017) indicates that there are some very limited populations of breeders. Moreover, according to Si Bachir and Abderrahmani Said, in 2012, two juveniles captured from the nest in Aures Mount (région de Babar) were given to the Belezma National Park. One of them died and the other is still in the park. Since 2014 personnel from the park confirmed the presence of adult Rüppell’s Vultures in the area and local shepherds say that the species has been seen there since years (M. Saheb pers. obs.).

**Country Occurrence:**

**Native, Extant (seasonality uncertain):** Tunisia

**Native, Extant (resident):** Algeria; Morocco; Spain

**Extant & Vagrant (seasonality uncertain):** Egypt; Libya; Portugal
Population
There is no direct population estimates for the species. The number of reproducing mature individuals is likely to be extremely small, with probably fewer than 10 breeding pairs in north-eastern Algeria (M. Saheb pers. obs.). Appropriate monitoring is necessary to accurately its population size.

Current Population Trend: Unknown

Habitat and Ecology (see Appendix for additional information)
This species frequents open areas of woodland, grasslands and montane regions, and it is gregarious, congregating at carrion, soaring together in flocks and breeding mainly in colonies on cliff faces and escarpments at a broad range of elevations, and sometimes in trees far from cliffs in West Africa. It locates food entirely by sight, subsisting almost entirely on carrion (Clark and Davies 2018). It follows other vultures and migratory game or stock herds to locate much of its food (Del Hoyo et al. 1994). The species is considered an irruptive and local migrant by Bildstein (2006). Movements across the Strait of Gibraltar to Europe are in the company of migrant Griffon Vultures (Botha et al. 2017).

Systems: Terrestrial

Use and Trade
The trade of the species in Moroccan markets has been reported (MaghrebOrnitho 2014).

Threats (see Appendix for additional information)
The species faces similar threats to Griffon Vultures, due to similar habitats, behaviour and potential breeding distribution. It is almost entirely dependent on livestock carcasses due to the almost complete absence of wild ungulates (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, Abdelguerfi and Ramdane 2003, Garrido et al. 2014, Orta et al. 2020, Andevski 2017). Thus, its scavenging behaviour makes it vulnerable to farmers that use poisons for predator control in Morocco, but poisoning does not seem to be a problem in Algeria. It is sensitive to mortality from collision and electrocution on power lines, which has been found in south of Spain (I. Fajardo pers. comm.), and at least one electrocuted vulture has been found in Morocco (Monchaux 2018). It could be highly vulnerable to the effects of potential wind energy development (six Rüppell’s Vultures died because of that in Spain, I. Fajardo pers. comm.) so the increase of massive wind energy projects in north Morocco could be a significant threat to the population migrating through the Strait of Gibraltar.

The entire North African region faces the problem of raptor poaching for illegal trade (Emile et al. 2014, Brochet et al. 2016, Andevski 2017, Botha et al. 2017), which also affects Rüppell’s Vulture specifically at least locally in Morocco (MaghrebOrnitho 2014). Additionally, in Morocco, Rüppell’s Vultures have been found drowned in artificial water ponds where they go to drink or bath during the summer months (R. El Khamlichi 2020 pers. obs.) Finally, this small and isolated population could suffer a reduction in genetic diversity in the long term because inbreeding but also because hybridisation with Griffon Vulture. Interbreeding behaviour has been observed in Spain (Ramírez et al. 2011) and could influence breeding success and the long-term survival of such populations unless they are carefully managed.

Conservation Actions (see Appendix for additional information)
Conservation and Research Actions Underway
CMS Appendix II. CITES Appendix II. Bern Convention Appendix II. There is a Multi-species Action plan for the conservation of African-Eurasian vultures (Botha et al. 2017). In Morocco, the species is included in a national programme for monitoring populations (UICN and DEF 2020). An initiative to identify dangerous power lines and action plans to their correction has also started in Morocco with the collaboration of governmental bodies and NGOs (Godino et al. 2016, Martin Martin et al. 2019). There are also initiatives to recover and release sick and hurt wild individuals and tagging eagles (including GPS loggers) in Morocco (MaghrebOrnitho 2016, AMFCR 2018). In north Morocco a vulture restaurant and a rehabilitation centre have been set up, which capture and mark individuals with wing tags and GPS loggers (R. El Khamlichi pers. obs.).

Conservation Actions Proposed
There is an only small breeding population in Algeria, so it is important to try to conserve it because its global Red List status (see BirdLife International 2017). So, effective protection of breeding sites it is necessary and as are areas with a plentiful supply of food (which often includes the carion of domestic animals). The provision of feeding stations is also beneficial, particularly when food is scarce. The ban on poisoned carcasses should be enforced and the leaving of dead animals encouraged. The construction of wind farms in key areas for the species should be avoided, and where they are already built, wind farm staff should be trained with regards to bird monitoring. Also the population should be surveyed to determine, protect and manage potential breeding sites and key dispersal areas. Finally, and more broadly, awareness in biodiversity conservation should be increased.

Credits
Assessor(s): Westrip, J.R.S., Garrido López, J.R., Saheb, M., Fellous-Djardini, A., Cuzin, F., Radi, M., Essetti, I., Onrubia, A. & Noaman, M.
Reviewer(s): Allen, D.J.
Partner(s) and Institution(s): BirdLife International
Authority/Authorities: IUCN SSC Bird Red List Authority (BirdLife International)
**Bibliography**


Emile, W., Noor, N. and Dereliev, S. 2014. Plan of Action to Address Bird Trapping along the Mediterranean Coasts of Egypt and Libya. Bonn, Germany.


https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T22695207A208734094.en
Citation


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External Resources

For Supplementary Material, and for Images and External Links to Additional Information, please see the Red List website.
Appendix

Habitats
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
<th>Import.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Savanna -&gt; 2.1. Savanna - Dry</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shrubland -&gt; 3.5. Shrubland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grassland -&gt; 4.5. Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Desert -&gt; 8.1. Desert - Hot</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use and Trade
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End Use</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>International</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Pets/display animals, horticulture</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Threats
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Impact Score</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture &amp; aquaculture -&gt; 2.3. Livestock farming &amp; ranching -&gt; 2.3.3. Agro-industry grazing, ranching or farming</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Minority (50%)</td>
<td>Slow, significant declines</td>
<td>Low impact: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.1. Ecosystem conversion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Energy production &amp; mining -&gt; 3.3. Renewable energy</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.1. Species mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transportation &amp; service corridors -&gt; 4.2. Utility &amp; service lines</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.1. Species mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Biological resource use -&gt; 5.1. Hunting &amp; trapping terrestrial animals -&gt; 5.1.2. Unintentional effects (species is not the target)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Majority (50-90%)</td>
<td>Slow, significant declines</td>
<td>Medium impact: 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.1. Species mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Natural system modifications -&gt; 7.2. Dams &amp; water management/use -&gt; 7.2.9. Small dams</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.1. Species mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Invasive and other problematic species, genes &amp; diseases -&gt; 8.2. Problematic native species/diseases -&gt; 8.2.2. Named species (Gyps fulvus)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses: 2.3. Indirect species effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Conservation Actions in Place
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation Action in Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-place research and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Recovery Plan: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-place land/water protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs in at least one protected area: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasive species control or prevention: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-place species management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully reintroduced or introduced benignly: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to ex-situ conservation: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-place education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included in international legislation: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to any international management / trade controls: Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conservation Actions Needed
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation Action Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Land/water protection -&gt; 1.1. Site/area protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Land/water management -&gt; 2.1. Site/area management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Species management -&gt; 3.2. Species recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; awareness -&gt; 4.2. Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; awareness -&gt; 4.3. Awareness &amp; communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Law &amp; policy -&gt; 5.2. Policies and regulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Needed
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research -&gt; 1.2. Population size, distribution &amp; trends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Data Fields
### Distribution
- Continuing decline in area of occupancy (AOO): Yes
- Extreme fluctuations in area of occupancy (AOO): No
- Estimated extent of occurrence (EOO) (km²): 2386
- Continuing decline in extent of occurrence (EOO): Unknown
- Extreme fluctuations in extent of occurrence (EOO): No
- Extreme fluctuations in the number of locations: No

### Population
- Number of mature individuals: 1-20
- Extreme fluctuations: No
- Population severely fragmented: No
- No. of subpopulations: 1
- Continuing decline in subpopulations: Unknown
- Extreme fluctuations in subpopulations: No
- All individuals in one subpopulation: Yes

### Habitats and Ecology
- Continuing decline in area, extent and/or quality of habitat: Unknown
- Generation Length (years): 18.8
- Movement patterns: Not a Migrant
- Congregatory: Congregatory (and dispersive)
The IUCN Red List Partnership

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