Lappet-Faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos

Photo credit: Cathy Burkey

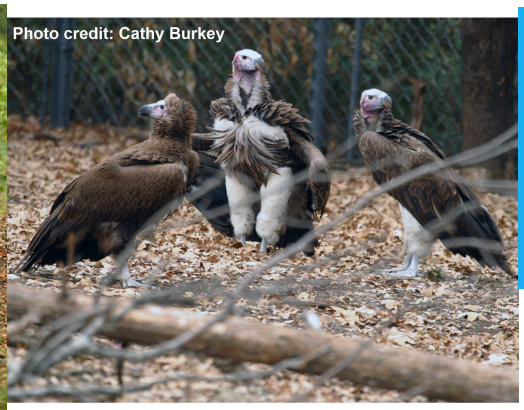
Photo credit: Cathy Burkey

Species Status

IUCN: Endangered
ESA Status: Not Listed
CITES: Appendix II
TAG: Raptor TAG
AZA SSP DESIGNATION: Red

GEOGRAPHIC REGION: Africa
BIOME: Savanna

EXHIBIT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

HUSBANDRY AND CARE

SPECIAL EXHIBIT CONSIDERATION	
Outdoor Climate Conditions:	kept outdoors except for severe weather (freezing rain or temperatures below 25F)
Substrate:	grass covered yards ideal; textured floor in indoor spaces; avoid rugs and bar matting due to tendency of vultures to tear these up; hay or wood used, and gravel, decomposed granite, and pea gravel avoided due to possible ingestion risk
Ideal Carrying Capacity:	typically kept in breeding pairs, but two pairs held at one institution ideal for improved pairing opportunities
Size of Space:	indoor stall minimum size 18' x 18' for a pair; outdoor space minimum 15' x 10' but larger spaces preferred; closed-top free-flight aviaries, to increase the number of facilities that could hold flighted vultures
Complexity of Space:	ground perching opportunities and sufficient ground space to build a nest (minimum 6' x 6') for flight-restricted birds; multiple levels of sturdy perches for flighted birds (hardwoods with plenty of texture for grip preferred); platform or building structure large enough to support a nest needed in place of nest building
Breeding Environment:	outdoor enclosure preferred for breeding; copulating, egg-laying, incubating, hatching, and rearing all possible in multi-species enclosures with sufficient space; large amounts of nesting materials needed for success
Enrichment:	boomer balls, sisal rope knots, hollowed pumpkins with prey/giant mealworms inside

OPTIMAL EXHIBIT FEATURES
Open space for free flight, Properly spaced nest sites

SPECIES APPEAL

- Well established husbandry
- Conservation significance
- Multi-species opportunities
- Warm weather tolerant
- Candidate species for AZA SAFE

MESSAGING OPPORTUNITIES

- Endangered species conservation
- Poaching/illegal take
- Habitat loss

Please see Disclaimer on Page 5

Lappet-Faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos

MULTI - SPECIES EXHIBIT OPPORTUNITIES

- Eland, Common
- Impala
- Hoofstock (Various spp.) - Small
- Secretarybird
- Gazelle, Thomson's
- Ostrich
- Gerenuk
- Kudu, Greater
- Hornbill, Northern Ground
- Duiker, Yellow-Backed
- Bird (Various spp.) - Crane
- Crane, Black Crowned
- Crane, Grey-Crowned
- Stork, Marabou
- Kudu, Lesser
- Hornbill, Southern Ground
- Bontebok

NON - SSP SPECIES THAT COULD BE SUBSTITUTED BY LAPPET-FACED VULTURE

- none identified

SPECIES BIOLOGY	
Activity pattern:	Diurnal
Potential risk to humans:	Sharp bill or beak, Talons
Diet	rabbit, rats, commercial diet, knucklebones, quail
Health and Veterinary	chicks prone to avian pox; Ascarids easily contracted by lappets
OFFSPRING HOUSING and REPRODUCTION	
Number of Offspring per Reproductive Event:	one egg per clutch; double-clutch possible
General Offspring Holding:	institutions expected to hold 6 months to 1 year
General Offspring with Parent:	until ~2 months of new breeding season
Weaning, Fledging or Metamorphosis:	fledging 120 - 135 days
Gestation or Incubation:	54 - 65 days

Please see Disclaimer on Page 5

Lappet-Faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos

SSP SUSTAINABILITY PROFILE

Current Size: 31 (16.15.0) at 12 institutions (0 non-AZA)

SSP Coordinator: Debbie Milligan (debbie.milligan@dallaszoo.com)

CURRENT POPULATION SUMMARY

The Raptor TAG has set a target population size of 50 animals in the Lappet-Faced Vulture SSP population. The managed population has been stable (**λ =** 1.00) over the past 5 years, and has retained 90.14% of its founding gene diversity.

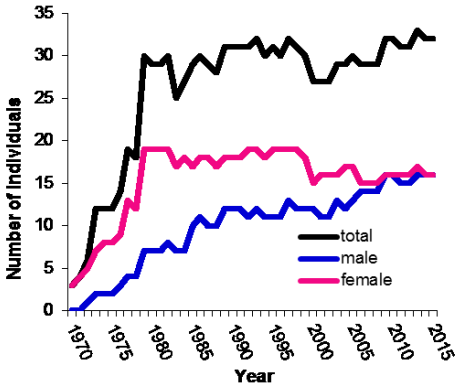

Figure 1: Census of managed lappet-faced vultures in the AZA population over time, by sex. Breeding and Transfer Plan 2015

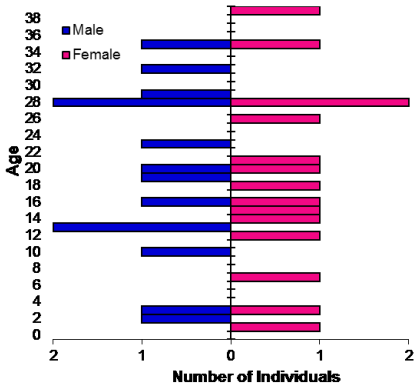

Figure 2: Age pyramid of the AZA lappet-faced vulture population. Breeding and Transfer Plan 2015

PROJECTED POPULATION SUMMARY

Population Viability Analysis has not yet been conducted for this population. Estimates indicate the gene diversity is likely to be reduced to 75% over the next 100 years under current management trends. The growth rate trend from 2010 to 2015 has been stable, but the overall historic trend has been decreasing.

No Image available

Please see Disclaimer on Page 5

Lappet-Faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos

CHALLENGES TO SSP POPULATION SUSTAINABILITY

CHALLENGE	GOAL	ACTION	NEED
Demographics	Stabilize age distribution	Adhere to breeding and transfer recommendations from the SSP	The SSP population contains very few individuals between ages 10 to 20, and reproductive maturity does not begin until years 8 to 9. An increase in breeding through fulfilling SSP recommendations is critical for a stable age distribution.
Reproduction	Improve protocols for natural reproduction	Relate husbandry practices to animal health or reproductive success	It is unclear why some breeding pairs have successfully hatched and raised chicks while others have not. The SSP continues to work to determine what factors affect reproductive success, and institutions are encouraged to record and communicate their practices.
	Increase reproductive output	Adhere to breeding and transfer recommendations from the SSP	The SSP is asking institutions to transfer certain individuals to be re-paired in the hope that breeding behavior will be spurred. Institutions are asked to fulfill all recommendations, and to communicate openly with the SSP Coordinator if transfers are not able to be made. With such limited reproductive success in a small population, improving breeding success is absolutely critical for population sustainability.
		Develop international collaborations and relationships	Imports may become critical for continuing the population, particularly if breeding success does not increase. Individuals in European institutions may be too old to be reproductively viable, but the SSP is investigating this option. Non-releasable birds from rehabilitation facilities in South Africa would be ideal, but export from SA is currently prohibited due to avian influenza restrictions.
		Incorporate recommended husbandry practices across institutions	Of the few successful pairs in the SSP population, all have been held in large spaces with minimal disturbance by keepers. Increasing breeding success is critical to population sustainability, and institutions trying to contribute to this effort may consider these factors to improve their success.

REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE

- None

MORE INFORMATION FROM THE SSP

- Very few lappets are housed in a flighted exhibits, as most are wing-clipped. The SSP asks institutions not to wing-clip their vultures and encourages placement in flight pens.

Please see Disclaimer on Page 5

Lappet-Faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos

ACQUISITIONS AND TRANSFERS

IMPORTS, EXPORTS AND REINTRODUCTIONS	
Exports	No exports are planned; no exports have occurred in the last decade.
Imports	Imports may be possible from EAZA facilities, if young enough founders are identified. South African rescue vultures would be ideal, but export from South Africa is currently prohibited (see below).

CHALLENGES TO ACQUISITIONS AND TRANSFERS	
Regulatory	Permitting from Europe would be straightforward. Export permits from South Africa are currently impossible due to avian influenza restrictions.

*DISCLAIMER: This report was last updated on 12/22/2015. The AZA Species Sustainability Database and SSP Sustainability Reports were developed through funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Content is based on Animal Program recommendations and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums or other collaborating institutions. Modeling results and analyses are based on the best understanding of the current population dynamics and should not be regarded as absolute predictions. The use of this report should be in accordance with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Some government laws and regulations may be referenced, but these are not all-inclusive nor is this report intended to serve as an evaluation tool. Please consult the SSP Coordinator if you are considering incorporating this species into a zoo or aquarium, or with questions regarding husbandry practices.