Welcome to issue "Vulture!"

We're very excited to have this issue focusing entirely on vultures! Inside, you'll find articles focusing on conservation and education programs relating to vultures around the world.

In this issue you'll also find an introduction to the new African Vulture SAFE program!

International Vulture Awareness Day
This issue was timed to come out just prior to International Vulture Awareness Day, which is always the first Saturday of September. This year, that falls on Saturday, September 1, 2018.

The goal of IVAD is to raise awareness about vultures and their conservation issues around the world.

Get the Toolkit
We are happy to announce there is a new IVAD 2018 Toolkit available on the Raptor TAG website. You'll find information about vultures, activity lesson plans, and more included in this kit that pairs well with the SAFE program, but can also be used for non-SAFE vulture education!

Are you planning on participating? Last year, over 100 organizations worldwide participated in IVAD! Let's keep growing that number this year!

Please let us know by registering on the Raptor TAG website, so that we can better coordinate partners and provide them resources we're developing.

Additionally, please register directly with VultureDay.org. Due to new European information sharing laws, we are restricted from directly sharing our registration and contact lists with each other.

Cover Photo: Lappet Faced Vulture at VulPro, by Gwen Harris.

This issue layout by Jacque Williamson.
INTRODUCING AFRICAN VULTURE SAFE

What is African Vulture SAFE?
SAFE—or Saving Animals From Extinction—is an AZA initiative intended to coordinate and focus the conservation efforts of AZA institutions on specific taxa in order to increase conservation impact. African vultures were officially selected as a member-sponsored SAFE species in March 2018.

Who is involved?
Dr. Corinne Kendall, the Curator of Conservation and Research at North Carolina Zoo, is heading up the African Vulture SAFE program. To date, we have 13 program partner zoos that are all actively contributing to the program.

What are the focus species?
Endangered: Cape Vulture (Gyps coprotheres)-Red Level SSP; Lappet-faced Vulture (Torgos tracheliotus)-Red Level SSP
Critically Endangered: Hooded Vulture (Necrosyrtes monachus)-Red Level SSP; Ruppell’s Vulture (Gyps rueppelli)-Yellow Level SSP; White-backed Vulture (Gyps africanus)-Red Level SSP; White-headed Vulture (Trigonoceps occipitalis)-No SSP

What are the threats to African vultures?
Three of the most pressing threats to vultures are poisoning, collisions with man-made structures, and lack of food availability. Each of our field partners are actively involved in combatting those threats directly and spreading awareness to those who share an ecosystem with African vultures.

Who are the field partners?
The African Vulture SAFE Program has partnered with four field projects.

Kenya: The Peregrine Fund
Tanzania: North Carolina Zoo & WCS
Botswana: Denver Zoo, Kalahari Research and Conservation, and Raptors Botswana
South Africa: VulPro

What are we doing to help vultures in-situ?
The AZA African Vulture SAFE program is supporting the in-situ conservation work of several organizations in four African countries: Peregrine Fund in Kenya; VulPro in South Africa; North Carolina Zoo and Wildlife Conservation Society in Tanzania; and Raptors Botswana and Kalahari Research and Conservation in Botswana.
Raptor TAG Annual Report
The Raptor TAG 2018 Annual Report is now available on the AZA Raptor TAG page as well as the TAG website. Check it out for updates on your favorite SSP programs, what they're currently working on, as well as what their future plans are.

It's available on the About Page of the TAG website.

Secretary Bird Call for SSP Expansion
Michelle Handrus, Senior Keeper, San Diego Zoological Park  SSP Coordinator/Studbook Keeper for Secretarybirds (mhandrus@sandiegozoo.org)

The Secretary Bird SSP is looking for institutions interested in expanding their collection to include Secretary Birds (Sagittarius serpentarius). Currently, in this Red Level SSP there are 28 Secretary Birds held across 11 participating AZA institutions. This carnivorous, diurnal species is native to the grasslands of Africa, is tolerant of temperatures from to 20°F up to 110°F. This species has a medium lifespan for large raptors, reaching up to 20 years. They mate for life and reach sexual maturity at 3–4 years of age. Secretary Birds are currently listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN.

Most importantly, they do well in mixed species exhibits. They have been mixed with: storks (including Maribou), ibis, Kori Bustards, Spoonbill, Guinea fowl, waterfowl, and okapi.

If you're considering adding one of these marvelous birds to your organization, please contact SSP Program Leader Michelle Handrus.

Check out more information on Secretary Birds here:
https://www.hbw.com/species/secretarybird-sagittarius-serpentarius

Ambassador Animal Guidelines: Eagle Owls
Jacque Williamson, Curator of Education, Brandywine Zoo; Raptor TAG Education Advisor; Ambassador Animal Scientific Advisory Group Steering Committee (jacque.williamson@state.de.us)

The Mission of the Ambassador Animal SAG is to develop cooperative relationships between the education, research, animal management, and animal welfare interests of the zoo and aquarium community around the topic of ambassador animals. A new initiative of the SAG has been the development of Ambassador Animal Guidelines (AAG) for species used as ambassador program animals. This was covered more thoroughly in the Raptor TAG Talon Volume 1, Issue 1.

It is a goal of the AASAG is to have an AAG in every ACM that has ambassador species, but the AAG is also designed to stand alone in the instance that a full animal care manual is not available for that species. Ultimately, though, it can function as a “chapter” insert to a full manual. The first species to be completed, with the final draft out for review, was the Tawny Frogmouth. Since then, the AASAG team has begun a number of additional AAGs, including serval, tamandua, cheetah, and penguin.

As the Education Advisor for the Raptor TAG, and a member of the AASAG, I'm in a great position to help spearhead AAGs for commonly used ambassador raptors. With the help of co-AASAG member and IAATE board member Helen Dishaw, Tracy Aviary, we've selected Eurasian Eagle Owls and Milky Eagle Owls to begin simultaneous AAGs, as we feel there is a good deal of overlap between the species. We're additionally working with what we've lovingly deemed “Team Owl” - a group consisting of the TAG's two Education Advisors for owl species, Lily Mleczko, WCS Queens Zoo (Burrowing Owls) and Sarah Gemmer, Buffalo Zoo (Spectacled Owl), Eagle Owl Program Leader Ashley Graham, National Zoo, and Milky Eagle Owl Program Leader Justin Eckenberry, Zoo Atlanta, as well as a number of other “owl experts” from both inside and outside of the TAG.

Our first step is a survey assessing husbandry, training, and program usage for these two species. If you currently work with, or have worked with, either of these species, please contact Helen Dishaw (HelenD@tracyaviary.org) for access to the survey.
We are accepting submissions for the next edition of The Talon! The theme for the next issue Trending Topics is Foot and Beak Care.

If you would like to contribute an article, please contact the point person listed below by November 30, 2018.

Check out the sections below; these sections are not meant to be restrictive – so if you have something else you’d like to contribute, feel free to contact this issue’s editors.

Please Visit RaptorTAG.com/Newsletter for full section descriptions.

**Trending Topics—Fall Issue: Foot & Beak Care** Point People: Taylor Rubin (trubin@zooatlanta.org) and Jacque Williamson (Jacque.Williamson@state.de.us)

**Field Updates** Point person: Erin Stotz (EStotz@denverzoo.org)

**Species Spotlight** Point people: Molly Maloy (mmaloy@denverzoo.org) and Erin Stotz (EStotz@denverzoo.org)

**Education, Engagement, and Ambassador Animals** Point People: Taylor Rubin (trubin@ZooAtlanta.org), Chniss Kmiecik (cdk@clevelandmetroparks.com), and Sarah Gemmer (sgemmer@buffalozoo.org)

**Enrichment and Training** Point person: Taylor Rubin (trubin@ZooAtlanta.org)

**Conservation Action** Point people: Erin Stotz (EStotz@denverzoo.org) and Lily Mleczko (lmleczko@wcs.org)

**TAG or SSP Program Leader Updates & Supplementary articles** Point person: Jacque Williamson (Jacque.Williamson@state.de.us)

**Cover Photo** If you have a great photo that you think would make a great cover, add to one of our Trending Topics, or just want used for filler in future issues, please send it our way! See the Call for Photos for more info.

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**Call for Articles: Nov. 30, 2018**

Every month, we take hundreds of photos of the awesome raptors in our zoos and aquariums. We would love to feature them here. Please send featured photos with subject line “photo submission” to: RaptorTAGroup@gmail.com

Or drop them here: https://tinyurl.com/yb5uls6u

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**Call for Photos**

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**Coming Events**

**August 26-29, 2018**

**Association of Zoo Veterinary Technicians**

Columbus, OH

Hosted by Columbus Zoo & Aquarium

azvt.org

**September 1, 2018**

**International Vulture Awareness Day**

**September 7, 2018**

**Threatened Species Day**

**October 8-12, 2018**

**Ecology of Conservation of Migrating Birds**

Front Royal, VA

Hosted by Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation

2-week workshop on bird migration research methods and applied conservation strategies.

SMConservation.gmu.edu

**September 23-27, 2018**

**AZA Annual Conference**

Seattle, WA

Hosted by Seattle Aquarium and Woodland Park Zoo

AZA.org

**October 4-8, 2018**

**AAZK Annual Conference**

Denver, CO

Hosted by the Rocky Mountain AAZK Chapter

aazk2018.webs.com

**October 7-11, 2018**

**The Wildlife Society Annual Conference**

Cleveland, OH

Wildlife.org/2018-conference

**October 8-12, 2018**

**From Good Care to Great Welfare**

Detroit, MI

Hosted by Detroit Zoological Society’s Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics

CZAW.org/Events

**October 22-24, 2018**

**The Working Bird Husbandry Workshop**

Atlanta, GA

Hosted by Zoo Atlanta

Contact Rebecca Young for details and a registration form: ryoung@zooatlanta.org

**November 13-17 2018**

**Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation**

Kruger National Park, Nombulo Mdluli Conference Centre, South Africa

RaptorResearchFoundation.org

Submit your upcoming events to: RaptorTAGroup@gmail.com with the subject line “Events”
Since 2015 the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) has, through Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, has supported work by International Avian Research (IAR), the Bernd Meyburg Foundation for Raptor Research and Conservation, and the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) on endangered scavenging birds in Oman. During 2015-2017, four Egyptian vultures and two Steppe eagles were fitted with GPS radiotags. In January 2018, tags were deployed on 13 Egyptian vultures (12 adults and one 2 year old) and a hybrid Spotted-Lesser spotted eagle. Since their capture, the vultures have been ranging over large areas in the hills and mountains of NE Oman, and the eagle is now in Saudi Arabia. In due course, it is expected that at least some of these birds will migrate, and it will be interesting to see where they spend their summers.

You can find out more about what is going on by visiting the project blog (https://egyptianvultureoman.blogspot.co.at/), where updates are posted every so often. This project needs more support to continue and GLAZA's support is an excellent example of in situ conservation work.
Volunteering for VulPro; what I did on summer vacation, zookeeper edition

Gwen Harris, Senior Bird Keeper, Oregon Zoo (Gwen.Harris@oregonzoo.org)

If you did not know how incredible, important and imperiled vultures are before reading this issue, surely you do by now. Working with vultures has been one of the highlights of my zookeeping career. Once I learned that VulPro, a South African non-profit and a leader in vulture conservation, had a volunteer program, I knew a trip was in my future.

I contacted Kerri Wolter, Founder and Manager of VulPro, to see what time of year would work well for a month-long volunteer. After spelling out my applicable skills (incubation, chick rearing, restraint of large birds and manual labor) and my interests (fieldwork, incubation, breeding), we decided on a timeframe and I booked my ticket.

VulPro is fast-growing, yet small, operation. They have a staff of about eight, which means everyone wears many hats: maintenance, commissary, veterinarian, zookeeper, research, marketing, education, finance, PR. Students and volunteers have numerous opportunities to learn new things and apply skills from many different industries. In fact, I was the only volunteer with an animal background. My fellow volunteers included a civil engineer, a London Metro driver and an artist.

VulPro campus lies about sixty minutes North of Johannesburg, near Hartbeespoort. Volunteers usually reside at the facility and pay a small accommodation fee to cover electricity and water. This includes a shared or private room, a kitchenette and shared bathroom facilities. They will also take you shopping in town at least once a week. The first few days were spent learning the basics—cleaning, feeding and record keeping. We also observed the wild vultures at the onsite vulture restaurant, counting birds and recording any re-sightings of tagged animals. Accompanying staff to Nooitgedacht was a biweekly duty; this is their off-site vulture restaurant and prerelease pen. Here we restocked the restaurant, checked the camera trap and cared for the birds in the prerelease pen. Once the basic duties were mastered, we were tasked with supplemental feedings for two white-backed vulture chicks. One set of parents were amenable to the situation, the other set...not so much.

My trip coincided with the end of chick season and the beginning of pen maintenance (mid-August through mid-September). We rebuilt huts for the hospital pens, replaced wire supports and shade cloths and added some new perching. As birds were moved around to accommodate work in the pens, we also did their annual physicals. Volunteers were able to help with bird capture, restraint, blood draws and running blood work, based on their skill set and willingness to learn.

Additional volunteer duties at VulPro vary from season to season, and may include: general cleaning, supplying nest materials, monitoring pairs during hatching and early chick rearing, enrichment, food prep (butchering), retrieving injured birds, restraining birds for treatment, retrieving donated carcasses, making and distributing bone chips and burning yard debris.

If you happen to be visiting during their fieldwork season, you might get lucky enough to accompany staff on nest monitoring trips. Volunteers sometimes have the opportunity to visit cape vulture nest colonies and help tally their breeding success. This is usually one to three days of glassing a cliff side to count the breeding pairs and chicks. I was able to accompany Charne Wilhelmi, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, to one of their fieldwork sites. We hiked along the Limpopo River, documenting African white-backed vulture nests and breeding success.
Over our weekends, we took a little time to be tourists. We went to Pilanseberg, a local national park, to check off the requisite African charismatic megafauna. Other local tourist stops included the Sterkfontein Caves, Maropeng, a local garden and the Hartbeespoort Dam. Any additional downtime was spent sitting in the blind, watching wild vultures at the restaurant, and getting to know the staff and fellow volunteers.

This volunteer trip was full of opportunities—working with new species, learning more about the conservation work happening on the ground, meeting fun and inspiring people and being surrounded by wildlife while working towards a cause that is close to my heart. I was able to contribute to VulPro with my labor, knowledge and expertise. My zoological experience helped me serve as a sounding board for Kerri, brainstorming about incubation and hatching issues, organizational structure and the culture of US zoos. Now I get to serve as another VulPro ambassador in the US, sharing the great work of this organization and helping to grow their international support.

Through the Oregon Zoo Foundation, I was awarded a small grant to cover travel costs. Thank you to the foundation and its many generous donors for helping turn this dream into a reality.

If you are interested in supporting VulPro, or learning more about their volunteer program, check them out at www.VulPro.com.
Most people in the zoo world should know of the Old World Vulture crisis originally across South Asia and now across Africa as well.

The International Centre for Birds of Prey has been involved with vultures, both breeding them and flying them for four decades. We have been most involved until recently in the South Asian vulture crisis. We work with SAVE as a core member, and the RSPB. We designed the conservation breeding programme and are also involved in the releases, and the inevitable politics that go along with any conservation programme.

99.7% of the three indigenous species of Gyps vultures in South Asia have been lost due to the anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) diclofenac, which when given to cattle who subsequently die while on the drug kill the vultures that consume the dead animals. Upwards of 450 million birds died and some are still dying. We know that it affects all species of Gyps vultures, we suspect it also affects other Old World vultures and possibly eagles, however no testing on these species has been done, only carcasses with the same symptoms found in India.

The cause was discovered by Dr Lindsay Oakes in 2003 and announced in early 2004. By 2006 India had banned the drug as a veterinary drug, although it is still made and available as a human drug. Pakistan and Nepal followed suit soon afterwards. However, because diclofenac is still available for humans, it is still used, albeit illegally for veterinary purposes, consequently an unacceptable number of dead cattle are still available to vultures.

It appears that other drugs of the same category (NSAIDs) are likely to be, or already known to be as lethal. Ketoprofen is lethal, Aceclofenac metabolises as Diclofenac and so is lethal and there are others that we suspect will have the same result. To date the only safe drug for vultures is Meloxicam, although we are hoping to add another safe one in the near future.

In the meantime, the conservation breeding programme in India has been very successful, almost too successful as we are very pushed for space until the first releases happen. This we hope in India will be soon. However, in Nepal we have started the first releases. Nepal has led the way with the Vulture Safe Zones and has – partly because it is a much smaller country – been able to put large areas into VSZ’s and thus has stabilised the vulture population. So much so that we started the first release this November. Six birds that had been taken as chicks for the breeding programme, but had not produced – all female – were released.

The birds are all satellite tagged so we know how they are doing. So far they are integrating well with the wild population, feeding with them, allopreening, and even mating with the wild birds. They are learning to soar, but as yet have not travelled far. This was to be expected, particularly with the breeding season upon us. We have tags on 17 wild birds as well, so we have good comparison with their behaviours. Once the breeding season is over we will encourage the ex-captive birds to start to range further.

It is wonderful to see a conservation programme from the start to this point, for us at ICBP a total of nearly two decades. It is a long way from done, and funding is always urgent, but we are moving in the right direction.

A successful conservation programme is hard work has many setbacks and has to be viewed with passion, drive and optimism or it will fail. The people involved throughout South Asia as well as those internationally have been amazing.
North Carolina Zoo has been working to save African vultures for the last five years, focusing our efforts in Tanzania. When the Zoo decided to add a free-flight bird experience to its summer line-up for 2018, we wanted to highlight the zoo’s conservation work. To do this we created the “bird dome” with four interactive activities designed to extend the guest experience and the message they received. The main message for the bird dome revolved around the roles birds play in ecosystems. Two of the activities focused specifically on the Zoo’s bird conservation work in Africa and the Mariana Islands. The four activity stations are Mariana Islands’ mist netting and data collection (e.g., weight, wing length, and band number), Fill the bill from Flying Wild, vulture tracking, and estimating consumption. Below we go into more detail on the last two activities, which focus on roles raptors play.

Vulture Tracking
The North Carolina Zoo’s Curator of Conservation and Research, Dr. Corinne Kendall, has been studying African vultures for almost ten years and is now the Program Chair for African Vulture SAFE. Part of the zoo’s vulture research involves tracking the movement of African vulture species. This station highlights some of the zoo’s findings as well as the general role of vultures in the ecosystem.

Guests can take part in two activities. First, guests can track Swoops’, a white-backed vulture, movements and his story on an iPad as he flies through Africa (https://tinyurl.com/NCZooSwoop). Yes, we mean Africa. Swoop visited eight different countries! Guests can also attempt to put the tracking backpack on a plush representative of Swoops. We borrowed the second activity from the Raptor TAG team (http://www.raptortag.com/uploads/9/6/8/4/96841132/ivad_stomach_acid.pdf). We created a cutout of a vulture, complete with a clear plastic stomach and flexible esophagus. In the stomach is a weak acid (a dyed vinegar). The guests “feed” the vulture a food item (sodium bicarbonate tablet) and watch it being dissolved in the stomach. We use this demonstration to discuss the strong acids in the vulture’s stomach and their ability to even digest potent bacteria such as anthrax. In addition, to this station we also have a white-backed vulture wing span photo op outside the dome and another sign about the Zoo’s vulture conservation work in the Birds in Flight amphitheater.

Highlighting the North Carolina Zoo’s African Vulture Conservation Work through Hands-on Activities
Beth Folta, Ph.D. Curator of Education, Conservation, Education and Science North Carolina Zoo (Elizabeth.Folta@nczoo.org)
Estimating Consumption
This simple activity shows the impact a single owl can have on the population of crop pests such as mice. Three containers are filled with plush puff balls of various sizes and guests are asked to guess: 1) which one represents the number of mice a barred or a barn owl might eat in a year (assuming they only ate mice that year!) and 2) how many “mice” are in each container. It is an activity anyone can take part in, and competition between guessers can get interesting!
I think we can all agree that vultures are one of those species that have a little bit of a PR challenge! Vultures haven’t had the advantage of Disney or Warner Brothers or Pixar creating movies about them helping kids of all ages fall in love with them. (Although that really needs to happen!) Giving our guests and visitors a chance to meet real vultures up close at our facilities and helping them see the beauty, intelligence, curiosity and value these birds have, helps win that battle that we as vulture keepers have. Celebrating vultures during International Vulture Awareness Day (and really every day) has helped raise awareness and appreciation for these birds at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo (CMZ).

CMZ was one of the first zoos to celebrate International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD), joining over 125 other organizations around the world as they first collectively celebrated vultures on September 5, 2009. We have celebrated every year since and have reached thousands of guests, teaching them more about vultures and their conservation. I personally have seen a dramatic change in people’s attitudes toward vultures over the years. Guests now actively seek our vultures out in our African Rift Valley exhibit where they have to compete with a large herd of giraffe to gain the notice and attention of guests. It warms my heart when kids exclaim to their parents, “Look! Vultures!” as they excitedly point towards our Cape vultures behind the giraffe.

IVAD has evolved and grown over the years at CMZ. Some activities keep coming back each year because of their popularity and effectiveness in getting across messaging. Each year, I have added another activity to the list to make sure that guests who come each year for IVAD get to see and do something new. The goal is always to help people fall in love with our vultures and want to help protect them in the wild. We achieve this goal by helping vultures not be so unpleasant to people, counteracting stereotypes that vultures are ugly, dirty, diseased and disgusting birds. We all know that people react to messaging better when they are engaged and entertained. The activities we do are always meant to be fun as well as educational! Our zoo docents and volunteers help run the various stations during IVAD and their knowledge, energy and enthusiasm are the key to making the event a success with our guests!

IVAD Activities at CMZ Over the Years
One of our most popular vulture activities is our Vulture Stomach Juice Station. A coworker and I came up with the idea when brainstorming activities for IVAD in 2009 and have since shared the activity plan with dozens of keepers around the country. It seems to be a big hit everywhere! It’s a great way to demonstrate the disease-killing stomach acids that vultures have.

Another very popular activity that we do is allow kids to make vulture vomit (essentially slime) and then “hurl” it at vulture enemies/threats. Kids LOVE an excuse to get dirty and throw things! One of my younger volunteers loves to help with this activity every year as it gives him a chance to help other kids learn about vultures (his favorite animal) and he gets an excuse to be a boy and get messy!
An activity that I added a few years back after visiting the LA Zoo was a Condor Surgery Station where guests can learn about the dangers of micro trash to condors and vultures. Kids can perform “surgery” on a stuffed condor and remove harmful items from its stomach. We add in the messaging of picking up trash when we are hiking. There are always kids there whenever I am walking by, checking the stations and volunteers.

Our Arts & Crafts Stations are the busiest stations of them all. Kids can engage in a variety of art projects from creating a handprint vulture painting to coloring pages from Birdorable to creating their own vulture puppet to take home. Our amazing zoo docents hold a fundraiser each year “Scavenger for Vultures” to help raise funds for IVAD. I use these funds to purchase the supplies for the crafts stations as well as the other stations each year.

Guests can also participate in a Scavenger Hunt around the zoo where they need to find certain animals that have connections to vultures around the world. They then bring their completed worksheets back to our biofacts station where they can then meet our vultures up close. I love seeing the excitement of the kids with their families when they learn that they are entering into our exhibit and get to be within feet of these birds that are almost as large as they are! You just know that they are talking about the vultures all the way back home!

Other stations at our IVAD event are Nest Building, Observation (looking for wild turkey vultures), Biofacts, a Recycling Run where kids can learn about Nature’s Recyclers and recycling and a Lucky Dip game that teaches about the dangers of poisoning.

Our zoo’s policy regarding offering fundraising items during awareness events has changed over the years, but a few years ago I had a station where kids could decorate vulture-shaped cookies to eat. This was a big hit and raised a few hundred dollars. I then added in an edible vulture vomit option in various animal flavors, ha! It was chocolate bark with various ingredients to resemble the colors of certain animals (zebra, giraffe, etc). It was also a big hit! So if your institution allows you to offer items for sale, a bake sale is always a hit with guests!

The positive change in attitude and increased knowledge about vultures over the years has been exciting to witness! My goal for IVAD each year is to make sure that no one leaves the zoo without at least thinking about vultures at some point during the day. I feel that with the number of stations that we offer each year that every single guest...
at least learns *something* about vultures, which is even better. We have the added benefit at CMZ for guests to directly have an impact on vulture conservation by voting for vultures at our Quarters for Conservation kiosk. CMZ has been supporting the work of VulPro in South Africa for 10 years now and our guests have repeatedly shown that they too support vulture conservation. I'm excited to see what our 10th year of IVAD brings!

Vultures need our help more than ever and we all have a great opportunity to help raise awareness and support for vultures around the world. Even zoos without vultures in their collection can participate in IVAD, focusing instead on native black and turkey vultures! Together we all can make a difference! Keep Calm and Carrion!
Zoo Atlanta’s staff is dedicated to educating our guests on vultures and their vital role in the environment. Our education, animal and marketing departments work to host and promote our annual Vulture Awareness Day each September. In addition to that yearly event, we have found success in incorporating vultures into numerous education and animal based programs held throughout the year. The programs span across all ages, are both fee and non fee based and range from vulture themed story book readings to engaging conservation carts that encourage guests to take action to save vultures.

We were very excited to accept The Peregrine Fund’s East Africa Vulture Project into our 2017-2018 Quarters for Conservation program. Through that, we’ve created an interactive activity led by interns/volunteers and education part time staff to engage visitors in vulture education and conservation. The goal of this activity is to educate guests on the important role vultures play in their habitat, the issues they’re facing and how we can do our part to save them. We do this via a mobile education station where staff/volunteers use pertinent biofacts, stuffed animals and other tangibles to educate. Guests can then use the interactive board to match the icons to the correct animal. For this program, we have all three Quarters for Conservation animals’ habitat displayed and guest place the correct icons in the correct habitat.

This program has been successful in not only teaching guests on how great vultures are and their vital role to our environment/safety but it has also increase our voting/attendance ratio for the Quarters for Conservation program. We’ve found that making the program mobile allows those leading it to move to an area of the zoo that has more guests at certain times. Having pertinent biofacts and items guests can touch and manipulate helps increase station stay time. Lastly, having an interactive activity that helps reinforce information learned helps increase likeliness to vote for the QFC program and be engaged in learning more about that project/conservation issue.