

# Afring News

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Afring News online accepts papers containing ringing information about birds. This includes interesting ringing trips, interesting captures, faunistic observations relating to ringing, and analyses of ringing data. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, and any other interesting or relevant material.



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## PROTOCOLS FOR MASS CAPTURING, HANDLING, AND FITTING TRACKING DEVICES ON VULTURES

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## PROTOCOLS FOR MASS CAPTURING, HANDLING, AND FITTING TRACKING DEVICES ON VULTURES

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VulPro is a vulture conservation organization in South Africa which has focused on vulture education, rehabilitation, population census, research and more recently captive breeding of the Cape vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) since 2007. These protocols are employed with four species of southern African vultures: Cape vulture, African White-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*), Lappet-faced vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*), and Hooded vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*), but may be applied to other similar species.

### **Walk-in trap for mass capture**

The 15m long x 5m wide x 3m high permanent walk-in trap described here has been used successfully throughout South Africa and Namibia. It can capture large quantities of birds, requires less man hours (per captured bird) than other techniques as around 40 large *Gyps* vultures can be processed in approximately three hours, and generally *Gyps* vultures exhibit little stress during the capture process. We discuss building materials, enclosure design, and advice for its successful implementation and function.

### **Vulture handling**

Our handling protocols detail the safest way to handle large vultures for both handlers and birds. We discuss protocols for catching, proper grips for securing the body and head, and environmental conditions to consider while processing. Binding a vulture with tape, rope, or covering its head is not recommended. We also discuss methods for collecting nestlings from cliffs and trees, various methods and scales used to weigh vultures, and blood collection methods.

### **The backpack harness: design and fit**

VulPro has tested this backpack harness design on four species of vultures and other birds of prey. We list harness materials and the equipment required for its construction. We discuss safety considerations of various materials and vulture age/size considerations when fitting the harness. We provide step-by-step instructions for acquiring the proper fit which is critical to the successful deployment and longevity of the tracking device as well as bird health.

### **Conclusion**

To view the full detailed protocol, please visit our website at <http://www.vulpro.com> (see box on p10), or contact Kerri Wolter at [kerri.wolter@gmail.com](mailto:kerri.wolter@gmail.com). We are more than happy to also assist with training one day one consultations in addition to being available to assist should the need arise.



Figure 2: The proper way to hold a large vulture. The head is secured in one hand while the body, wings, and feet are restrained by 'hugging' the vulture.



Figure 1: Securing a tracking device on a Lappet faced vulture using a backpack harness.

Direct link to pdf with full protocol:

[http://www.vulpro.com/publications/Protocols\\_for\\_mass\\_capturing\\_handling\\_and\\_fitting\\_tracking\\_devices\\_on\\_vultures\\_v1.1.pdf](http://www.vulpro.com/publications/Protocols_for_mass_capturing_handling_and_fitting_tracking_devices_on_vultures_v1.1.pdf)