

June, 1972

In April 1964 the occurrence of black-throated forms in Zambia was brought to my attention by W. V. Moroney and D. F. Vesey-Fitzgerald. Evidently a few birds had been seen in this and previous years in various places in the Abercorn District. On visiting one of these localities, the Uninji Pans, on 1 April D. Bromfield collected an adult male showing no traces of red on its throat. The specimen remained in Vesey-Fitzgerald's collection. It seems likely that these Abercorn birds are a peripheral extension of the mixed Tanzanian/Malawian population.

However, another black-throated male was caught and banded at a Kitwe roost on 19 January 1965, this being the only one out of many hundreds banded there by D. Bromfield and myself. Nor have we seen this or any intermediate form out of the many thousands seen over three and a half years in Western and North-western Provinces where this species is especially common. R. K. Brooke (*in litt.*) also mentions seeing a similar black-throated male at Borrowdale, outside Salisbury, in the early 1950's. Both these populations appear to be quite stable. Therefore it is a matter of conjecture as to whether these latter two birds were members of the race *concolor* or whether they were merely melanistic individuals of *E. A. Ardens*.

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Notes on a Cape Vulture Colony in the Gamka Mountains, Oudtshoorn District

The Gamka Mountains extend approximately 25 miles, east to west and rise to 1 106 m at their highest point at Schyns Ganskop. Oudtshoorn is about 12 miles, as the crow flies, from the most easterly point of this range. The colony of Cape Vultures *Gyps coprotheres* is situated between the Gamka Hill and the Gantoesberg, approximately 10 miles from the western end of the mountains in the Slangrivier Annex. Both gorges (1 and 2) where the vultures occur cut deeply into the mountains. The two gorges are separated by a ridge approximately 900 m wide. Both colonies (A and B) are situated on the cliffs facing towards the west and they are about two-thirds of the way up the gorges. (See Figure 1).

The ledges in the gorge farthest from Oudtshoorn (1) appear to have been abandoned as a breeding area, but are still used for roosting and resting during the day. Eighteen nests were counted, but none had been used for some time. It is possible that there may have been many more nests, judging by the amount of nesting material lying at the foot of the cliff and the slashes of bird-lime from almost every usable ledge. Several vultures were seen to land here during the day. As many as 30 vultures have been observed circling in a group above the gorges, but were more commonly seen in groups varying between four and 10 in number.

Several vultures were also seen landing in the gorge on the Oudtshoorn side on the ridge (2) and this gorge was, therefore, investigated. This turned out to be the main colony and we watched it, from across the gorge (2) for some time. Thirty-two nests were counted. Some, however, appeared to be very old. Two of the nests, the lowest in the colony, were very large, dwarfing the vultures perched in their vicinity. It was estimated that there were between 80 and 100 Cape Vultures in the area, but it will not be possible to estimate the numbers nesting there until eggs are laid between May and July. Some of these nests merely consisted of a few twigs on ledges. It is possible that a smaller colony is situated in a side branch of this gorge, as Cape Vultures were seen to land there, but it was not possible to see if there were any nests. In the main colony (B) the nests are situated on all the descending ledges, especially where the rocks form slight overhangs.

When the vultures left the ledges they usually flew up the gorge (2) and then above the far ridge, gliding above the slope at great speed, and then when about half way, they started circling until they were tiny specks in the sky, moving away from the gorge, presumably in search of food. Fourteen birds were counted on one small ledge in colony (B), and could be heard squabbling on the western side of gorge (2). Several birds still clad in the juvenile brown plumage, were observed flying above gorge (2), but it was difficult to make an accurate count. An interesting point which has yet to be investigated, is what the Cape Vultures feed on. In the vicinity of colony (B) it was known that a Klipspringer and a baboon had died on the hillsides in open areas, but neither had been touched by the vultures. It is possible that there is an easily accessible source of food available to them; if so, one wonders what it might be? There are a lot of sheep, goats and donkeys in the

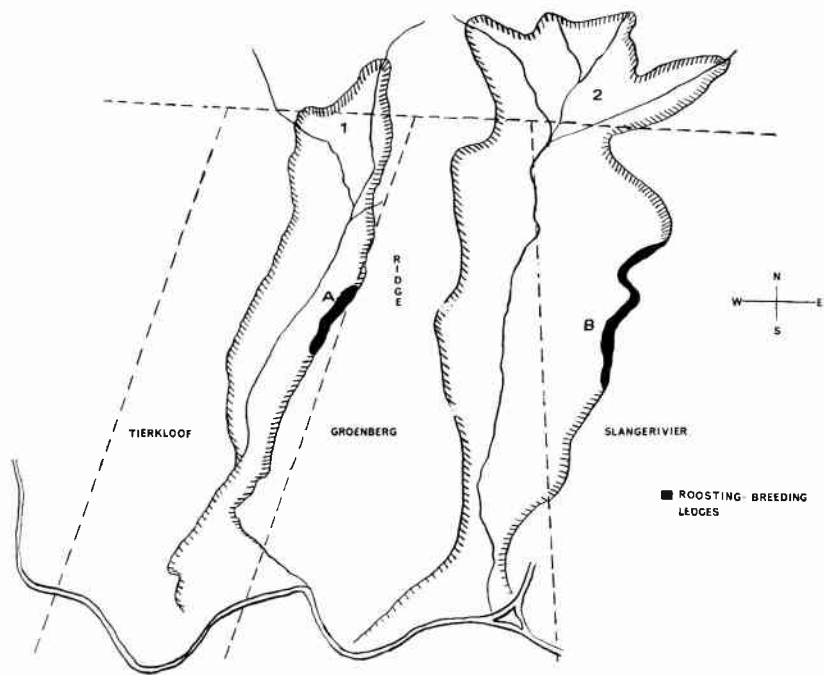


FIGURE 1

Sketch map showing approximate positions of the roosting and nesting cliffs of Cape Vultures in the Gamka Mts.

area and there is possibly a fairly high mortality because of the lack of water. In conclusion it is interesting to note that the colony is very near the proposed Mountain Zebra Reserve. Hopefully this could mean better protection for a once common species.

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