

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Seventy-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 6–10 November 2023

Species conservation and trade

Fauna

WEST AFRICAN VULTURES (ACCIPITRIDAE SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.192 to 19.196 on *West African vultures (Accipitridae spp.)*. The complete set of Decisions are included in Annex 1 to the present document.

Decisions 19.192 and 19.193

3. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/049](#) of 19 April 2023 to collect information from West African vulture range States, Parties and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the implementation of Decisions 19.192 and 19.193.
4. The Secretariat also reached out to the West African range States for *Gyps africanus* (Whitebacked vulture), *Gyps fulvus* (Griffon vulture), *Gyps rueppelli* (Rüppell's vulture), *Necrosyrtes monachus* (Hooded vulture), *Neophron percnopterus* (Egyptian vulture), *Torgos tracheliotus* (Lappet-faced vulture) and *Trigonoceps occipitalis* (White-headed vulture) through electronic means to inform them about the Notification that was issued. The Secretariat received four responses from Parties (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana and Guinea) and shared these responses with the Animals Committee for consideration at its 32nd meeting (AC32, Geneva, June 2023) (see [Annex 4](#) to document [AC32 Doc. 29](#)). The Secretariat summarized the responses in information document [AC32 Inf. 8](#).

Decision 19.194, paragraph a) and b) – enforcement related aspects

5. Based on seizures reported in Annual Illegal Trade Reports (summary in Annex 2), 37 seizures involving six species of vulture [*Gyps africanus* (Whitebacked vulture), *Gyps fulvus* (Griffon vulture), *Gyps rueppellii* (Rüppell's vulture), *Necrosyrtes monachus* (Hooded vulture), *Neophron percnopterus* (Egyptian vulture), and *Torgos tracheliotus* (Lappet-faced vulture)] were made between 2017 and 2021 (Figure 1). Two of the 37 seizures were reported at the genus level (*Gyps* spp.). A total of 168 specimens were seized and a breakdown of the type and number of specimens is provided in Annex 2 and Figure 2. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the number of specimens of each of the six species seized. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the number of seizures involving each species. It is important to note that only three of the 16 West African range States for the seven vulture species referred to in Decision 19.192 submitted annual illegal trade reports (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria) and none of these range States reported seizures for these vulture species. The seizures reported by other Parties included 23 records where the source country was not recorded and only one seizure reported a West African range State as a source (Mali).

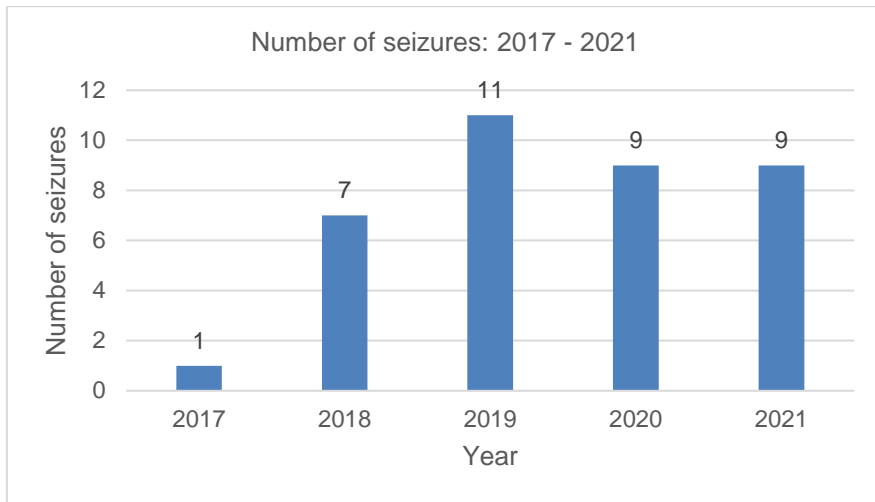
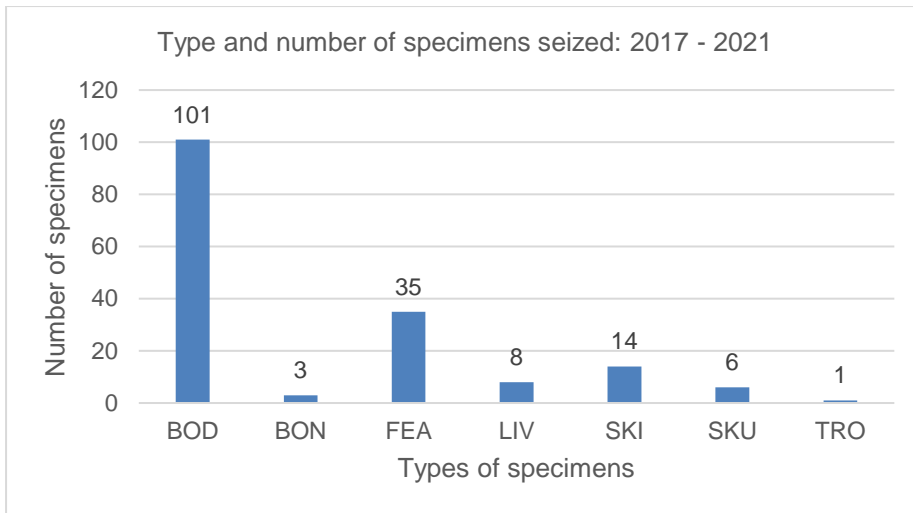


Figure 1: The number of seizures from 2017 to 2021 involving six of the seven species referred to in Decision 19.192 (Note: Two seizures in 2019 reported at the genus level.)



Code	Description
BOD	Body
BON	Bone
FEA	Feather
LIV	Live
SKI	Skin
SKU	Skull
TRO	Trophy

Figure 2: The type and number of specimens seized from 2017 to 2021 as reported in Annual Illegal Trade Reports.

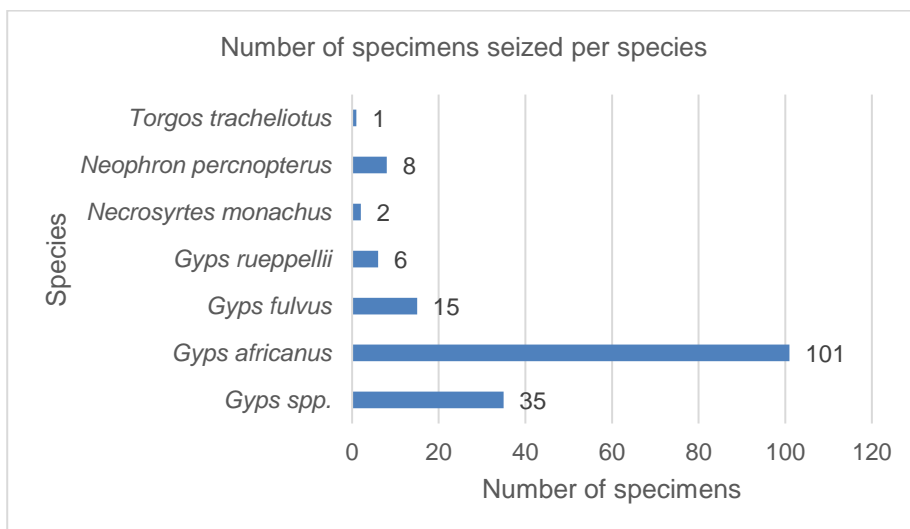


Figure 3: The number of specimens seized involving six species (note: two seizures reported at genus level) (Annual Illegal Trade Reports 2017 – 2021).

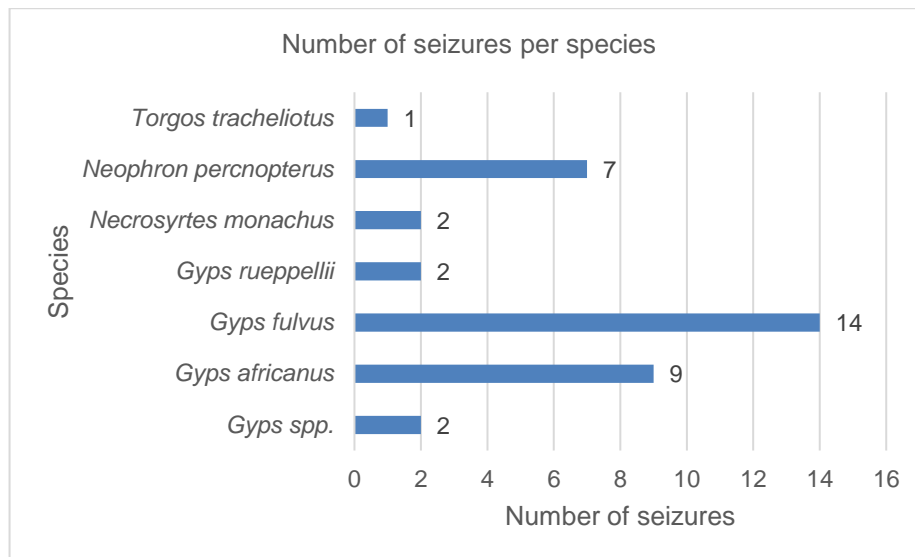


Figure 4: The number of seizures involving the four species reported in Annual Illegal Trade Reports (2017 – 2021).

6. The Secretariat brought Decision 19.194 to the attention of its partners in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), as well as to [focal points](#) of existing regional and subregional wildlife enforcement networks, and requested them to consider vultures, where relevant and feasible, in the context of enforcement and capacity-building efforts in West Africa. [Operation Thunder 2022](#), a month-long global operation targeting wildlife crime led jointly by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) in October 2022, brought together police, customs, financial intelligence units, wildlife and forestry enforcement agencies from 125 Parties (the largest number of Parties to take part in a Thunder operation since the series started in 2017). The Secretariat notes that none of the Parties that participated in Operation Thunder 2022 reported any seizures of West African vulture specimens traded illegally at international level. The Secretariat further notes that Parties from West Africa that responded to Notification No. 2023/049 noted that considerations regarding illegal trade in vultures have been integrated into the implementation of the West Africa Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Crime (WASCWC). Noting the above, Parties are encouraged to consider this matter in ongoing and future activities and operations at the national, regional and global levels, where relevant and feasible.
7. As pointed out in document [CoP18 Doc. 97](#) on *West African vulture trade and conservation management*, the most significant threats facing West African vultures are the mortality caused by intentional poisoning in the form of poisoned bait that is set illegally for the collection of vultures or their parts as fetishes for belief-based use, and by poachers deliberately targeting vultures to prevent them from drawing the attention of wardens to illegally killed elephants, so-called sentinel poisoning. The document further states that of nearly 8,000 vulture deaths recorded from 26 countries in the past 30 years, poisoning (both intentional and unintentional) accounted for 61% of the deaths, and belief-based use accounted for 29% of the deaths (as signified by headless carcasses or other parts being sold in markets). It continues to be likely that illegal activities affecting vultures are primarily of a domestic nature, with limited illegal trade occurring at international level.
8. With regards to paragraph b) of Decision 19.194, the Secretariat estimates the cost of the production of identification materials focusing on parts and derivatives of vulture species for use by law enforcement officials at USD 30,000 (see Notification [No. 2023/024](#) on *Status of funding for the implementation of valid decisions after CoP19*). At the time of writing, the Secretariat has not secured funds for the production of these identification materials. The Secretariat reached out to Parties and relevant stakeholders through Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/051](#) (*Request for materials for the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species*) inviting them to share any identification materials focusing on parts and derivatives of vulture species or any relevant information that will support the production of such materials. These will be made available on the CITES website on the [Identification Materials](#) webpage or on the [CITES Virtual College](#), when received.

Decision 19.194 paragraphs c), d) and e) – Support to range States on trade-related aspects of the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures ([Vulture MsAP](#))

9. Decision 19.194, paragraph c), directs the Secretariat to liaise with the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) to assist in the implementation of the trade-related aspects of the CMS Vulture MsAP 2017-2029 subject to external funding, while paragraph d) (also subject to external funding) directs the Secretariat to support the implementation of capacity-building activities aimed at providing support to the West African range States in implementing these trade-related aspects of the CMS Vulture MsAP. Decision 19.192, paragraph e), directs the range States to identify any trade-related issues associated with the implementation of the Vulture MsAP of CMS. The Secretariat notes that the range States that responded to Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/049](#) identified poisoning as the main priority to be addressed. Furthermore, based on the summary of direct international trade data covering the period 2000 to 2022 and presented to AC32 in Annex 3 to document [AC32 Doc. 29](#), the main sources of the specimens in trade are wild and captive-bred and the number of trade transactions seems to have declined over time.
10. As reported to AC32, the Secretariat had initial discussions with the CMS Secretariat to discuss potential trade-related aspects in the CMS Vulture MsAP and the CMS [Strategic Implementation Plan approved by the CMS Parties](#). In this regard, Objectives 4 and 11 in the CMS Vulture MsAP are relevant as well as one of the 11 project concepts (“Combating the trade in threatened vultures and their parts for belief-based use” – see details in Annex 2 to document [AC32 Doc. 29](#)) included in the CMS Strategic Implementation Plan to deliver the CMS Vulture MsAP. The project concept is a preliminary project outline and a full project document will have to be developed before it can be implemented. The total cost of implementing the entire CMS Strategic Implementation Plan of 11 projects was estimated in early 2018 at approximately USD 9 million. The project concept on “Combating the trade in threatened vultures and their parts for belief-based use” has the following two objectives: reduce the threat to vultures from belief-based use of the birds and their parts; and assess the threat to human health from the consumption of poisoned vulture parts. A list of potential activities has been identified (situation analysis, market surveys, population impact studies, awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagement and capacity building, strengthened policy, strengthened law enforcement) and the estimated implementation cost is USD 600,000. As with other potential flagship project concepts, a detailed project logframe has not been developed. As with other potential flagship project concepts, a detailed project logframe has not been developed. Some initiatives aimed at moving this project concept forward have been implemented, including the development and submission by Parties to CMS (Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal) of the suite of draft decisions on West African vultures that were discussed at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.
11. The Secretariat was also informed by the CMS Secretariat about the following processes that are underway:
 - a) a training of Guinea-Bissau authorities was implemented in May 2022 to improve preparedness and capacity to deal with wildlife poisoning incidents;
 - b) as part of a West African vulture persecution threat analysis report, a literature review and a threat mapping were compiled as a background analysis to support the development of a regional action plan (“West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan”).
 - c) the development of a West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan initiated in October 2022 through a workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria that brought together CMS national focal points, CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, other government representatives, as well as academia and non-governmental organizations from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The plan addresses the following threats to vulture populations in the region: i) killing of vultures for belief-based use; ii) trade and use of vultures for belief-based use; iii) cultural perceptions and beliefs around vultures; and iv) indirect persecution; and
 - d) the final report of the mid-term review of the Vulture MsAP to assess its implementation expected in early 2024. This process may assist in identifying and prioritizing trade-related aspects in the Vulture MsAP.
12. Paragraph e) of Decision 19.194 directs the Secretariat to work in collaboration with the CMS Secretariat to consider available trade data and conservation status information from the whole geographic range of the vulture species concerned for inclusion in its reporting to the Animals and Standing Committees. At its 31st meeting (AC31; online, June 2021), the co-chair of the intersessional working group on West African vultures introduced the report, *West African vultures – a review of trade and sentinel poisoning (2021)* prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) for the European Commission and the CITES and CMS Secretariats (see information document [AC31 Inf. 10](#)) ([AC31 SR](#)). This report includes a global overview of international trade in all CITES-listed vulture species.

13. As indicated in paragraph 9, the Secretariat prepared a summary of direct international trade data covering the period 2000 to 2022 for consideration by AC32 (see Annex 3 to document [AC32 Doc. 29](#)).

Decisions 19.195 directed to the Animals Committee

14. At its 32nd meeting, the Animals Committee considered document AC32 Doc. 29 and an oral update provided by the Secretariat. The recommendations agreed by AC32 are contained in the executive summary of the meeting [[AC32 Sum.2 \(Rev. 1\)](#)].
15. The Animals Committee encouraged West African range States to undertake a Periodic Review of the vulture species referred to in Decision 19.192 pursuant to Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP19) on *Periodic Review of species included in Appendices I and II*, taking note of the offer of the Vulture Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to assist range States in such an endeavour. The Committee invited the representatives for Africa to reach out to the West African vulture range States to engage the IUCN on this matter.
16. The Animals Committee noted that Guinea requested technical and financial support and that this support will be provided through the Compliance Assistance Programme and further noted that poisoning remains one of the main concerns and that international trade transactions have declined over time.
17. The Animals Committee also noted the information submitted by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.194, paragraph e), but no recommendations were made for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Recommendations

18. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) encourage Parties, West African range States and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to strengthen efforts in mobilizing activities as anticipated by Decision 19.193; and
 - b) encourage West African vulture range States to strengthen and expand initiatives aimed at implementing demand reduction strategies concerning belief-based use and consumption of vulture parts and derivatives.

DECISIONS 19.192 TO 19.196 ON WEST AFRICAN VULTURES (*ACCIPITRIDAE SPP.*)

Directed to West African range States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo)

19.192 West African range States for *Gyps africanus* (Whitebacked vulture), *Gyps fulvus* (Griffon vulture), *Gyps rueppelli* (Rüppell's vulture), *Necrosyrtes monachus* (Hooded vulture), *Neophron percnopterus* (Egyptian vulture), *Torgos tracheliotos* (Lappet-faced vulture), and *Trigonoceps occipitalis* (White-headed vulture) are urged to:

- a) integrate illegal vulture trade considerations into their implementation of the West Africa Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Crime (WASCWC) and any decisions relating to Wildlife crime enforcement support in West and Central Africa adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting;
- b) ensure that national laws to protect vultures and control trade in vulture parts and derivatives are effectively implemented, and ensure that penalties for non-compliance are sufficient to deter illegal trade;
- c) ensure that any international trade in West African vultures is not allowed except in accordance with CITES requirements, and if international trade is found not to be in accordance with CITES requirements, consider implementing a zero export quota;
- d) follow Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) on *Non-detriment findings*, and, in cases where there is an interest in exporting globally threatened vulture species, consider submitting non-detriment findings for the export of vulture specimens to the Secretariat for inclusion on the CITES website and review by the Animals Committee;
- e) identify any trade-related issues associated with the implementation of the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) 2017-2029 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS);
- f) work with relevant experts and organizations for implementing demand reduction strategies for vultures and their parts and derivatives including for belief-based use and consumption and, where appropriate, expand the implementation of strategies that have been successful;
- g) work with relevant organizations to initiate wide-scale public awareness campaigns at regional, national and local levels about the impacts of trade in these species, including the importance of vulture species to ecology and human health, the negative impacts of belief-based use of vulture body parts, and existing national and international legislation that protects vultures; and
- h) provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of this Decision to assist it in reporting to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, as appropriate.

Directed to Parties, West African range States and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

19.193 Parties, West African range States and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged, subject to resources, to:

- a) collaborate in the conservation and restoration of West African vultures and support the implementation of the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) 2017-2029 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); and
- b) gather and exchange scientific knowledge and expertise on West African vultures, with a particular focus on:

- i) documenting the scale of vulture trade by surveying markets in and outside West Africa, and identifying inter-regional and international trade routes;
- ii) characterizing links between poisoning and trade in vultures, and contributing to the African Wildlife Poison Database; and
- iii) updating the conservation and population status information of West African vultures, and *Gyps africanus* (white-backed vultures), *Gyps rueppellii* (Rüppell's vultures) and *Torgos tracheliotus* (lappet-faced vultures) in particular.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.194 The Secretariat shall:

- a) cooperate with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) partner organizations, regional and subregional wildlife enforcement networks, and competent national authorities, where relevant and feasible, to consider vultures in the context of ICWC's enforcement and capacity-building efforts in West Africa;
- b) subject to external funding, support the production of identification materials focusing on parts and derivatives of vulture species for use by law enforcement officials;
- c) liaise with the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) to assist in the implementation of the trade-related aspects of the Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) 2017-2029 subject to external funding, and share information based on the work of the Animals Committee;
- d) subject to external funding, support the implementation of capacity-building activities aimed at providing support to the West African range States in implementing the trade-related aspects of the Vulture MsAP;
- e) in collaboration with the CMS Secretariat, consider available trade data and conservation status information from the whole geographic range of the vulture species concerned for inclusion in its reporting to the Animals and Standing Committees; and
- f) collect information from West African vulture range States on their implementation of Decision 19.192, and report as appropriate this and other information on the implementation of Decisions 19.192 to 19.194, paragraphs a), b), c), d) and e) to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, at their first regular meetings following the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties with conclusions and recommendations for their consideration.

Directed to the Animals Committee

19.195 The Animals Committee shall:

- a) encourage West African range States to undertake a Periodic Review of the vulture species referred to in Decision 19.192 pursuant to Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP19) on *Periodic Review of species included in Appendices I and II*, taking note of the offer of the Vulture Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to assist range States in such an effort;
- b) consider any reports or requests for advice submitted by Parties with respect to the making of non-detriment findings for trade in CITES-listed West African vulture species;
- c) consider the reports and recommendations of the Secretariat submitted in accordance with Decision 19.194, paragraph e); and
- d) make recommendations as appropriate for consideration by range States, Parties, the Standing Committee and the Secretariat.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.196** The Standing Committee shall review the implementation of Decisions 19.192 to 19.195 and make recommendations as appropriate to West African vulture range States, Parties and the Secretariat, and for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.

SUMMARY OF SEIZURES OF SPECIMENS OF THE SPECIES OF VULTURES REFERRED TO IN
DECISION 19.192 ON WEST AFRICAN VULTURES (ACCIPITRIDAE SPP.)

Year	Reporting Party	Scientific name (as reported)	Description of the specimen	Original quantity (all reported in the unit: numbers)
2017	IL	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2018	DE	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	FEA	3
2018	FR	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2018	FR	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2018	PT	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2018	PT	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2018	NZ	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	FEA	1
2018	NZ	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	FEA	1
2019	MT	<i>Gyps</i>	SKU	5
2019	US	<i>Gyps</i>	FEA	30
2019	FR	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BOD	1
2019	FR	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BOD	1
2019	MT	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	SKI	2
2019	FR	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	LIV	1
2019	MT	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	SKI	1
2019	MT	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>	SKI	5
2019	MT	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	SKI	1
2019	MT	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	SKI	2
2019	MT	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	SKI	1
2020	ZA	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BOD	50
2020	ZA	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BOD	40
2020	ES	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	BOD	1
2020	FR	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	BOD	1
2020	GB	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	BOD	1
2020	US	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	BOD	1
2020	DE	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	SKU	1
2020	FR	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	BOD	1
2020	MT	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	BOD	1
2021	ZA	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	LIV	1
2021	FR	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BON	2
2021	FR	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	BON	1
2021	FR	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	BOD	1
2021	PL	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	SKI	2
2021	MT	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>	BOD	1
2021	KW	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	LIV	1
2021	FR	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	TRO	1
2021	FR	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	BOD	1