

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)

The Egyptian Vulture is one of the smallest vultures in Oman and the Arabian Peninsula. It can be identified by its featherless head, bi-color, thin and long bill, dark iris, distinctive wedge-shape tail, and the contrast of the white and black wing feathers in adult birds. The two sexes are alike and encounter five phases (patterns) of feather replacement (moulting) during its life time. It soars over dump areas and coasts searching for carcasses and other potential food. It is classified as Endangered under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List and is protected under the second annex of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Objectives of the Egyptian Vulture Project in Oman

The worldwide population of Egyptian Vultures drastically crashed in the mid-1990s, mainly due to the contamination of carcasses with the diclofenac drug, which proved to be a toxic agent to vultures. Studies done in the early nineties, documented a decline of the Egyptian Vulture population throughout mainland Arabia. The objective of this study is to estimate the population size of Egyptian Vultures and identify the major threats in common distribution areas known in Oman, such as Masirah Island and around the governorates of Muscat, Al Dhahirah, Ad Dakhliyah, Al Batinah, Al Sharqiya, Musandam and Dhofar. Study results will contribute to an integrated species and habitat conservation plan at the national scale, and to the development of local capacity to control and preserve these raptors. The programme was initiated in 2012 on Masirah Island, and numbers concluded that the population is four times greater than 1980s estimation.

Working with the local communities

In addition to its core conservation objectives, the Environment Society of Oman has closely worked with local communities since the inception of the project to raise awareness on biodiversity. The Omani Women Association of Masirah has been part of a long term pilot study that provides women with training that could lead to business prospect. Under the project umbrella, female cadres from Masirah Island were trained on printing on fabric and recycling certain outputs of the local environment with the aim of giving women the leading role in preserving the environment and enhancing their income resources.

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Masirah Island – Oman
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