

23 January 2026

SAPO issues unique stamps to draw attention to critically endangered vultures

To highlight the drastic decline of African vulture populations over the past 30 years, the South African Post Office has issued a unique collection of B5 rate stamps, accompanied by a Commemorative Display Card ('CDC'). The striking images featured on both the stamps and the CDC were captured by André Botha, co-chair of IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group.

Concerns over the rapid decline of vultures led to the development of the international Multi-species Action Plan for African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) in 2017, aimed at reversing population losses through targeted interventions. Poisoning, in its various forms, remains the most significant threat to vultures in Africa and continues to impact other wildlife species.

South Africa has more than five decades of dedicated vulture conservation. Ongoing efforts focus on reducing threats such as wildlife poisoning and energy infrastructure, while improving data collection on vulture populations in key areas. These actions are being implemented through the National Biodiversity Management Plan for Vultures, with government, NGOs, and communities working together.

Thanks to sustained conservation efforts, the near-endemic Cape Vulture was down-listed from Endangered to Vulnerable in 2021. Its population is currently stable to increasing, with several formerly abandoned breeding colonies now re-established and thriving.

Despite this progress, serious threats remain. Since 2013, wildlife poisoning incidents in the Greater Kruger National Park and elsewhere have killed more than 3,000 African White-backed, Hooded, White-headed, and Lappet-faced Vultures. Additional pressures include belief-based trade, loss of nesting trees, disturbance, and habitat fragmentation.

Vultures play an essential ecological role by rapidly removing carcasses and organic waste, helping to prevent the spread of disease. No other animals perform this function as efficiently or effectively.

Joint BR Practitioner, Anoosh Rooplal expressed his appreciation for the Post Office's role in drawing attention to the conservation of these important birds and commended the stamp collection. He further noted that "there has already been an overwhelmingly positive response to this stamp issue, both from the global philatelic community and postal museums, including a special recognition from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in Washington, DC".

Resident vulture species featured on this stamp set:

- Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)
- African White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*)
- White-headed Vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*)
- Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*)
- Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*)
- Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*)

These stamps and the CDCs will be available at selected post office branches and from Philatelic Services at sa.stamps@postoffice.co.za

Orders can also be emailed to Proof.manganyi@postoffice.co.za or Mmama.Phalatse@postoffice.co.za

ENDS

Louise Brugman 083 504 1186 on behalf of Joint South African Post Office ('SAPO') Business Rescue Practitioners (BRPs), Mr Anoosh Rooplal and Mr Juanito Damons

For more information on the conservation of vultures globally, visit:
IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group (<https://www.iucnvs.org>) and
International Vulture Awareness Day (<https://vultureday.org>).

The IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group aims to advocate and create greater awareness of the plight of vultures and coordinate effective conservation activities to their benefit.

The Vulture Specialist Group will support and work closely with BirdLife International as the Red List Authority for birds, but with particular reference to the global status of vultures.

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