



## PRESS RELEASE

### International Vulture Awareness Day

#### Save vultures, Save our garbage collectors

Accra, **1 September 2018-** “*Save vultures, Save our garbage collectors*” is the theme for the International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) 2018 in Ghana. On the first Saturday of September each year, several countries hold events to commemorate this day.

International Vulture Awareness Day celebrations aim to highlight the importance of vultures, create awareness on the plight they face and garner support for their conservation.

Vultures play significant ecological and economic roles in our environment. They act as nature’s garbage collectors by cleaning up carcasses and other organic waste found in the environment. Vultures also lessen the number of other scavengers that gather around carcasses and serve as important disease reservoirs. Without them, we are likely to face outbreak of diseases like cholera, rabies, botulism etc., which are mainly transmitted from wild and domestic animals. Without vultures, “decomposing dead and decaying matter” will litter our environment and pose high risk to public health.

In Ghana, the leading causes of deaths of vultures include deliberate persecution and trade in vulture parts for traditional medicine and magical powers (“juju”) which sometimes occur across our borders, poisoning by poachers for use as baits during hunting, destruction of their roosting and nesting sites through vegetation removal, collision with energy infrastructure such as large pylons and wind turbines, and the inappropriate disposal of pharmaceutical drugs such as diclofenac.

Among the species of vultures existing, the most common in Ghana include the Hooded (*Necrocystes monachus*), White-backed (*Gyps africanus*), White-headed (*Trionoceps occipitalis*), Rüppell's (*Gyps rueppelli*) and Egyptian (*Neophron percnopterus*) vultures.

The global response to the vulture crisis was the International Vulture Multi-species Action Plan developed under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The plan aims to prevent further declines by suggestion of actions to address imminent threats.

The Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS) is calling on the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission and the Ghana government to commit the needed financial and human resources towards the implementation of the international vulture multi-species action plan in Ghana. The Ministries of Health, Environment, Energy, Food and Agriculture, Works and Housing and other relevant ministries must mainstream the plight of vultures in their strategies and plans to help recover the populations of the vultures in Ghana. Civil society and pro-conservation groups need to join the Ghana Wildlife Society’s efforts sensitize the public on the need for conservation of vultures. The

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use of robust scientific research and technologies in monitoring vulture populations with collaborative international conservation efforts will also help to conserve our “garbage collectors” for future generations.

**Note to editors:**

**International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD)** was created through cooperative efforts of the Birds of Prey Programme, South Africa and the Hawk Conservancy Trust, England. Their local Vulture Awareness Days grew into an international event aimed at increasing awareness of vulture conservation.

For more information and a list of registered IVAD events, please visit:

<https://www.vultureday.org/activities/>

**The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals worldwide through the negotiation and implementation of agreements and action plans.

For more information on CMS please visit:

<http://www.cms.int>

**The Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS)** was formed in 1991 as a non-governmental, non-political, non-profit membership-based conservation organization (NGO) aimed at conserving wildlife in all its forms for the benefit of all people. The Society initiates and supports biodiversity conservation research and sensitization programs for policy and advocacy to ensure sustainable utilisation of natural resources and the environment.

For more information on GWS please visit:

<http://www.ghanawildlifesociety.org>

**The Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP)** was unanimously adopted by 128 range states at the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP12) of the Convention held in Manila on October 2017.

For more information on MsAP and participants at COP12 kindly visit:

<https://www.cms.int/en/document/multi-species-action-plan-protect-african-eurasian-vultures-vulture-msap-0>

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