

First confirmed record of Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* from the Gorongosa National Park, central Mozambique.

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Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* is a large, cliff-nesting species of Old World vulture which occurs across sub-Saharan west-, central and east Africa and extends as far south as the extreme north of Mozambique. It is also considered to be an irruptive and local migrant (Bildstein 2006) and the species is now regularly recorded in small numbers in Spain, presumably following migratory immature Eurasian Griffons *Gyps fulvus* returning to their natal areas in Europe at the start of the northern summer (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, De Juana 2006).

Individual Rüppell's Vultures have also been recorded on several occasions at various sites in southern Africa (Kemp and Kemp 1998), with the best-known example being of an individual that has been frequenting the Blouberg Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* colony in Limpopo, South Africa for several years and which is rumoured to possibly be breeding with an individual of the latter species. However, it can in no way be regarded as a regular visitor to the southern African sub-region where it is regarded as a rare vagrant (Mills 2005). We are not aware of any previous records of this species from southern or central Mozambique. Gorongosa National Park, located in the Sofala province of central Mozambique is therefore not an area where Rüppell's Vulture has been recorded previously.

As part of a study on the vultures of Gorongosa National Park, the Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO) from Boise State University, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Hawk Conservancy Trust and Wageningen University are looking at the extent and rate of consumption of carcasses by the suite of five resident vulture species that frequent the Park. Camera-traps are regularly placed at carcasses of varying size in different habitats for this purpose. On the 15th of November 2017, camera-traps were

placed at two separate carcasses, that of a Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* (18.89599S 034.37322E) and Common Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum* (18.89036S 034.36866E) in the vicinity of the Musikadzi-river.

When IBO biologist Juan Ramírez Román reviewed the images taken at the carcasses on the day, he noticed what appeared to be an immature Rüppell's Vulture feeding among the African White-backed *Gyps africanus* and Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotos* and Marabou Storks *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*. The bird was photographed (Figs 1-3) at both carcasses about five hours apart. What appeared to be the same bird was again captured on camera at a Common Reedbuck carcass on the 16th of November 2017 (Fig. 4).

Initial confirmation of identification and age was made based on plumage and other characteristics from a recent publication by Rodríguez and Elorriaga (2016). The images were sent to vulture experts with extensive experience working with the species in the field who confirmed the identification and age of the bird and substantiated what seems to be the first confirmed record for this species from central Mozambique and for the Gorongosa National Park.

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Figure 1. First-year Rüppell's Vulture feeding with African White-backed Vultures and Marabou Storks at a Waterbuck carcass in the Gorongosa National Park, central Mozambique.



Figure 2. The difference in size between the larger Rüppell's Vulture and smaller African White-backed Vultures is clear in this image.



Figure 3. The Rüppell's Vulture was photographed here feeding on a Common Reedbuck carcass with African White-backed Vultures.



Figure 4. The Rüppell's Vulture was again captured on a camera-trap at the Common Reedbuck carcass on the 16th of November 2017.

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