

White-backed Vultures nesting on electricity pylons in the Boshof area, Free State, South Africa

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During a SABAP2 (South African Bird Atlas Project 2: <http://sabap2.adu.org.za/>) survey on 13 – 14 June 2013 in the Boshof area, Free State, South Africa, the following observations of White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* nesting on electric pylons were made. On the morning of 13 June 2013, while doing a bird survey in the SABAP2 pentad 2825_2500, White-backed Vultures and their nests were observed on electricity pylons. The site were on the farm Oranjezicht (GPS: 28 29 22.9S; 25 09 42.7E) in open Camel Thorn *Acacia erioloba* woodland approximately 9 km NW of Boshof. A total of four nests and eight adult vultures were observed sitting on electricity pylons (Figure). It was, however, uncertain if any breeding activities had started. No vulture nests were observed on other

sections of Eskom line further west and north of Boshof.

Ledger & Hobbs (1985) first recorded White-backed Vultures nesting (only five active nests) on Eskom pylons in areas north-east of Kimberley in the Free State during helicopter surveys. Anderson & Hohne (2007) reported on additional surveys in areas of the Boshof – Hertzogville road of the Free State and around Kimberley in the Northern Cape. A total of 19 active nests (and nine inactive) were recorded during their August 2006 survey. It is possible that the Oranjezicht nest sites form part of the Grootkop-Kimberley 132 kV line where nests have been surveyed during 2006 (Anderson & Hohne 2007). Possible helicopter surveys should be considered to assess the rate of expansion of these pylon-nesting vultures.



Adult White-backed Vulture sitting at its nest on an electric pylon at Oranjezicht, Boshof, Free State.

References

Anderson, M. A. & Hohne, P. 2007. African White-backed Vultures nesting on electricity pylons in the Kimberley area, Northern Cape and Free State Provinces, South Africa. *Vulture News* 57: 44-50.

Ledger, J. & Hobbs, J. 1985. First record of African White-backed Vultures nesting on man-made structures. *Bokmakierie* 37: 99-101.
