

	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY	CAA Private Bag X08 Waterkloof 0145
Tel: (012) 346 5566 Fax: (012) 346 6059 E-Mail: mail@caa.co.za	AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION CIRCULAR	AIC 20-1 01-12-15

OPERATION OF AIRCRAFT

GENERAL

AVIATION DISTURBANCE OF CAPE GRIFFONS IN THE MAGALIESBERG

- 1* Indicates changes.
- 1* This AIC replaces AIC 20-1 dated 93-11-15.
- 11.* Cape Griffons are found in three localities in the Magaliesberg. Scheerpoort, which is situated above the Magalies River inflow to Hartebeespoort Dam, houses the largest colony numbering about 500 Cape Griffons, the Roberts' Farm colony at Olifantspoort near Rustenburg has more than 120 birds. At the Nooitgedacht colony, which lies between Scheerpoort and Roberts' Farm, there are now more than 200 mature Cape Griffons and the number is increasing at a steady rate. Cape Griffons are among those species in South Africa that are regarded as vulnerable, and this means that any negative influence on the species could give a serious blow to the total population and endanger the survival of the species. The birds are sensitive to disturbance at the nests and sleeping places and will often, after serious human disturbance, not use the nests again. This means that vultures that abandon their nests must contend for other nesting places in the colony and this creates stress within the colony. Factors that cause disturbance are, among others, direct human disturbance, heavy calibre rifle fire, explosions, nearby air traffic, stone throwing by people passing near the colony, vehicle noises in the valley below the colonies, and so on.
- 12.* The Vulture-study Group (VSG) has for years been working on the preservation and monitoring of the Cape Griffons in the Magaliesberg and are running a specialist project, namely the SASOL Vulture-monitoring project (VMP), in the Magaliesberg and surrounding areas. Monitoring the numbers and the food supply of the vultures, limiting disturbances, studying the influence of human activities on the birds, communicating with landowners and the public, and being engaged in various other activities, make up the functions of the VMP.
- 13.* The VSG believes that most of the disturbances by aircraft at colonies are caused unknowingly by the pilots and make an appeal to pilots to avoid the areas. The specific grid reference of each colony is given at the end of this document. The VSG also requests pilots not to approach and attempt to follow vultures in flight with aircraft of any kind. Observations by members of the SASOL VMP indicate that vultures clearly exhibit fear of aircraft, except gliders, and that this leads to perturbation and stress. It is actually astonishing that no great air disaster has as yet occurred in the Magaliesberg, considering that pilots often risk coming dangerously close to vultures in flight. Microlight aircraft, together with a few helicopters, are at present the main source of disturbance at the colonies.
- 4.* The VSG would be happy to provide any information and advice concerning the vultures to pilots and hopes and foresees that they will wish to co-operate in this regard. Pilots are invited to pass on to the VSG any observations on vultures, especially about flying heights, flying speeds and localities where they spotted vultures. Such information is not only interesting, but also very valuable scientifically.

SCHEERPOORT: A 2545S 2745E
NOOITGEDACHT: B 2551S 2733E
ROBERTS' FARM: C 2550S 2719E

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COMMISSIONER FOR CIVIL AVIATION