



Vulture Research Consortium & Drylands Project

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Dear researcher,

We are two postdoctoral researchers (Dr. Anne Scharf and Dr. Martina Scacco) at the Max-Planck Institute for Animal Behavior in Radolfzell, Germany.

Together with Prof. Dr. Martin Wikelski and Dr. Kamran Safi (MPI-AB) we would like to start a collaborative project aimed at understanding how water availability affects the movement patterns of vulture species, globally. Below you will find details about this specific research project called the “Drylands Project” (section 2).

In addition, and after consultation with existing collaborators, we decided to use our necessity to reach out to the global community of vulture researchers as an opportunity to build a consortium or an interest group of vulture researchers interested in collaborative work (practically a simple mailing list). We are aware that other similar groups have or do exist, but hope that this could function as a central place where all members in the consortium could suggest collaborative projects through the same channels, particularly in relation to vulture movement (see more details below). We want to specifically assist with the formation of the *Vulture Research Consortium* where our experiences and infrastructure to facilitate collaborative work and information exchange between the entire community can be of use. We see this as a first step that hopefully will grow into a community driven larger initiative.

We therefore would like to present you **two** independent initiatives, the call for joining the “**Vulture Research Consortium (VRC)**” as such, with no obligation tied to participation, and a first (our) call for a collaborative research project, the “**Drylands Project**”. Participation in either of these initiatives (or both) is completely independent.

Below you will find more details on the two initiatives. Please, feel free to share this document to anyone who might be interested in joining either of them.

1. Vulture Research Consortium (VRC)

1.1 Background

We would like to bring together the global community of vulture researchers to facilitate future collaborative research and conservation efforts on vultures. This will be done mainly and at this moment by creating a mailing list of people active in vulture research globally. Its purpose is to build a central place to suggest collaborative projects and submit calls for participation. Participation in the VRC mailing list is completely independent from any commitment to join any specific project. Any member of the VRC mailing list can use it to share information and/or ask



other members to share their data or expertise for future collaborative projects regarding vultures. You can think of the VRC as a market place for vulture researchers to initiate and engage in collaborative research activities. We will initially formalize the procedure of how calls to the VRC should be structured. We also invite anyone wanting to support us in organizing and running VRC to step forward as we welcome all the support we can get. Later and depending on the reception of this call in the community, we can foresee expanding this initiative involving parties interested in building on this initial information and communication channel.

1.2 How to join the VRC

This initiative only requires providing your email address, which will be shared with the other members of the mailing list.

If you are interested in joining the **VRC mailing list**, please sign up at the link <https://listserv.gwdg.de/mailman/listinfo/VRC>, or simply by sending an email to vr-join@ab.mpg.de.

2. Drylands Project

2.1 Background

We would like to reach out to the future members of the Vulture Research Consortium (VRC) to suggest a first **collaborative research project**. The ***Drylands project*** aims at bringing together a large amount of tracking data of multiple vultures species, at global scale, to study the relationships between vulture communities and drylands. In particular we are interested in how vulture movement patterns are affected by and change with different dryland indicators, such as change in water availability and other biotic and abiotic desertification-associated processes.

Large scavenging birds inhabit a wide range of areas with varying degree of dryness. Their need for atmospheric subsidies (uplifts) for their efficient soaring flight ties them to specific “energy landscapes”: areas in the landscape which provide these uplifts, owing to specific combinations of land-use and cover, water availability, topography and local atmospheric conditions such as wind and temperature. As scavengers, vultures occupy the top of the trophic pyramid and are prime candidates to show and observe changes in ecological and environmental dynamics. We thus plan to investigate, in addition to the movement characteristics, how the species composition and distribution can be tied to dryland-specific environmental factors .

By bringing together a large amount of tracking data of various species, covering the largest possible temporal and spatial scale, we also aim at finding gaps in spatial knowledge, i.e. areas where we know vulture populations exist but where currently we lack tracking data. This will help to inform future foci in bio-logging efforts for large scavenging birds.

The purpose of this project is to write scientific papers for peer reviewed journals and we offer to all participants/data owners the opportunity to contribute to, and co-author, these publications (see data sharing agreement).

This collaborative project, led by the MPI-AB, would require the MPI-AB and each of the prospected participant/data owner to sign a “scientific cooperation and data sharing agreement”. This agreement is for owners of vulture tracking data exclusively for collaborating through contributing their data to the *Drylands project*. The text of the data sharing agreement can be found



below (section 2.3). However, for organizational and logistical reasons, **the actual signing of the agreement will only be possible via a survey that each participant is kindly asked to fill out.** This helps us (and other future VRC collaborative projects) to ensure we obtain all the relevant information from all contributing partners.

We want to highlight at this point, that committing to the project and signing the data sharing agreement is at the very end of the online survey (see below).

2.2 How to join the *Drylands* project

Below you can find our invitation to the online survey with explanation and specification for participating in, and contributing to, the ***Drylands* Project**.

Please feel free to explore and read the survey, complete it where only at the very end you will be asked to decide whether or not you want to join and contribute your data to the *Drylands* Project. In the case that you should agree to the collaboration conditions, **the completed survey would serve as an official "Scientific Cooperation & Data Sharing Agreement"** for the *Drylands* Project. If for documentation and legal reasons you (the data provider) require a copy of the agreement signed by the project leads (data user), we are happy to provide it after receiving a completed online survey.

This initiative would require your tracking data to be on **Movebank**. If your data is not yet on movebank.org, but you would like to join the project, you can follow the instructions provided in the survey to upload your data on the Movebank platform.

Click on the link below to complete the survey/data sharing agreement:
<https://survey.academiccloud.de/index.php/744794>

You can save the uncompleted survey at any time ("Resume later" button on top right corner) and continue to fill it out later. Remember, the agreement is not binding until you accept the conditions at the very end of the survey and click on "Submit participation agreement".

After completing the survey and clicking the "Submit" button, we recommend using the option "Print your answers" to obtain a copy of the completed survey/sharing agreement, for your own records.

A summary of the project and a list of the participating members (PI name and institution) will be published and updated (as members join) on this website:
<https://www.ab.mpg.de/500689/Drylands>

Please contact *Dr. Martina Scacco* (mscacco@ab.mpg.de) and *Dr. Anne Scharf* (ascharf@ab.mpg.de) with any questions you may have.

2.3 Data sharing agreement (copy of the online survey content)

This agreement is between you (data provider), and us (data user), the Max-Planck Institute of Animal Behavior Radolfzell (MPI-AB) represented by Dr. Kamran Safi and Prof. Dr. Martin Wikelski.

This cooperation and data sharing agreement organizes the privileges and responsibilities in sharing data for scientific use for and between the data provider and the user. Both user and data provider



agree to follow the terms of this cooperation and data sharing in good faith and abide by the conditions contained in the mutual agreement herewith. Naturally, such initiatives are also open for contributions other than or in addition to sharing data, however this specific agreement is intended for data providers sharing their data with the data user. Data sharing, as well as all other forms of scientific contribution to this initiative fall under the regulations defined by the Max-Planck Society's rules of good scientific practice, particularly section 6 (<https://www.mpg.de/16404553/rules-scientific-practice.pdf>).

2.3.1 Terms of participation

We require the data contributed to this initiative to be uploaded to Movebank (details on how to do this can be found below). However, contributed data do not need to be made public. We strongly encourage data owners to make completed datasets public or to define a future date on which they may be made public. However, we will support inclusion of controlled-access data for cases in which data cannot or are not wished to be made public, for example due to conservation concerns, legal restrictions or in-progress research efforts. All participating data owners maintain at all times ownership of and control over access to their data through the "Permissions" settings in their contributed studies on Movebank.

All participating data providers, data users, and data are subject to Movebank's user agreement, general terms of use and privacy policy, set by the data owner. Further expectations are described below.

Data providers commit to (details will be requested further on in the survey):

- Provide access to download their movement data by making the user "Drylands" a collaborator on their studies in Movebank.
- Certify that the data were collected with all the necessary permissions, and provide this information to the user (such as reference numbers or permission codes to the ethical approval of the animal welfare committee, the local and national research, experimentation and capture permissions obtained and all other required documentation for research on wild and captive animals). These information will be included in the prospective publication or provided to third parties when requested.
- Certify that they have obtained written permission and consent of all possible co-owners to share the data, and name all person(s) that should be included as co-authors or acknowledged in the scientific products.
- Take the responsibility for the integrity and quality of the data provided.
- Provide necessary meta-data relevant to the scientific project.
- Keep code and products obtained from user in relation to this project confidential.

The Max-Planck Institute of Animal Behavior will:

- Be in charge of the analytic efforts and lead the analysis.
- Use the data only for the above mentioned purpose.
- Not provide access to the data of provider to any third party.



- Grant access to the provider to all code and analytical procedures applied to their data.
- Give access to the provider to all products derived, if they do not violate the ownership of third parties.
- Involve the data provider in the writing and publication process throughout.
- Provide appropriate acknowledgment to the provider by co-authorship according the scientific rules of good scientific practice of the Max-Planck Society (<https://www.mpg.de/197494/rulesScientificPractice.pdf>).

2.3.2 Data and equipment

No data will be supplied to a third party. Similarly, no product, code or manuscripts provided by the Max-Planck Institute of Animal Behavior within this agreement is to be supplied to a third party or collaborator without prior consent from the Max-Planck Institute of Animal Behavior.

2.3.3 Scientific publications and authorship

Both parties agree that publications using the data will be discussed together and co-authorship will be provided in acknowledgment and accordance to the contributions (of all parties involved in the scientific process of publication). It is understood that scientific publications are initiated in an inclusive and collaborative way, inviting all parties to contribute to the study and publication process.

Authorship should be granted according to the following guidelines:

1. First-authorship shall usually be granted to the person(s) who lead(s) a publication initiative. This is also usually the person providing a first draft of the manuscript in question and also has usually at least conceptually contributed to the analysis of the data.
2. Co-authorship represents both a recognition of contribution as well as responsibility taken for the contribution that each of the co-authors provided. The guidelines of the Max-Planck Society for rules of scientific practice (<https://www.mpg.de/197494/rulesScientificPractice.pdf>, part 6) are binding in this collaboration.
3. Senior authorship should be granted to the supervising person in relation to the publication initiative ultimately taking the responsibility for the publication and its integrity. This may be the head of a research group, laboratory, or department under which the project was conducted, and/or the mentor or advisor to students or more junior scientists with a more direct role in executing the project.
4. Conflicts shall be resolved amicably and the final decision will be taken by the project leads and the senior author including the opinion of the majority of all authors of the publication in question.

2.3.4 Public relations

The parties inform and include each other on non-scientific publications, and media releases concerning the study and pertaining to the outcome of the efforts of the whole consortium. The partners can refer to the *Drylands Project* in non-scientific publications and outreach. All press and media releases shall be made available to all partners and can be used by all consortium partners for outreach and documentation of their collaborative efforts.



2.3.5 Disputes procedure

The agreements in this scientific cooperation are declarations of intent and best endeavors by both parties, and are not legally binding. In the event of any dispute, the collaborators agree to the heads of their institutions being the final arbiters.

Both parties agree that significant changes to these arrangements will only be made following mutual consultation and recorded agreement.

2.3.6 Benefits of participation

By storing your contributed data on Movebank, you have access to a variety of other services for managing, sharing, analyzing and archiving your data. Your data are harmonized with billions of other animal-borne sensor measurements and can be more easily discovered and re-used according to your preferred conditions for use.

We think that this initiative will additionally provide, to participating data owners, the opportunity to contribute to novel uses of their data, potentially including co-authored publications and the option to actively participate and provide expert input.