



Egyptian Vulture

(*Neophron percnopterus*)

The Egyptian vulture is a small, Old World vulture with rather long, narrow wings and a wedge-shaped tail. The adult is white or pale buff with black flight feathers. Its head is mostly bald with a long beak. Both the head and legs are a deep yellow. The young vultures are completely brown and gradually molt into their adult plumage over five years. They have powerful feet for a vulture.

Habitat & Diet

The Egyptian vulture feeds mainly on carrion. Because it is smaller than the other vultures in its range, it is often the last to feed on a carcass. Its small beak is shaped for picking small bits of leftover meat from the bones. This vulture is very fond of eggs and supplements its diet with them, along with a variety of decaying fruit and vegetable matter. Living prey include insects and snails.

Fascinating Facts

The Egyptian vulture has developed a method of feeding on abandoned ostrich eggs. With rocks that it can lift in its beak, it strikes at the egg repeatedly until it cracks open. This use of tools was the first observed in any bird of prey. Smaller eggs are lifted in its beak and smashed to the ground. This vulture was also the first species ever to be protected. One of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt was very charmed by the bird, and passed a decree that it was not to be harmed. It is therefore nicknamed "Pharaoh's Chicken."



Height: 32 inches
Weight: 9 pounds
Wingspan: 4 feet
Habitat: Densely forested tropical lowlands
Range: Southern Europe, Africa & India



Status

Illegal hunting and direct persecution of this species still take place all over the vulture's habitat and migratory routes. In Spain, France, Greece, and Turkey, the vulture is intentionally poisoned by agriculturalists, who mistakenly believe it carries disease. Today, there are many groups dedicated to the conservation of the threatened Egyptian vulture.

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