

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Falconiformes
Scientific Name: *Sarcoramphus papa*

Family: Cathartidae
Common Name: King Vulture

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Lives in forested areas, will travel to grassland for food.

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other Can tolerate the 40's with access to heat.

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other Can tolerate 100's with access to shade

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Scavengers. In forested areas carcasses tend to be smaller animals, in grasslands will eat from large carcasses.

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: 25 or more years, not well documented Females: 25 or more years, not well documented

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 30-50 years Females: 30-50 years

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BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 6-7 years Females: 5-6 years

Courtship Displays: Courtship includes preening around the head, neck, and caruncle. Males will do a walking display with spread wings and head low next to chest. Occasionally food will be shared.

Nest Site Description: In the wild, nests include tree holes, hollow stumps, cliff faces, under bushes, and on bare ground with little to no added nest material added. In captivity birds have used wooden boxes, flat platforms, hard plastic baby pools, large/deep rubber tubs, and dog house igloos. These sites may be set up be high or low and are chosen based on bird preference.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: 1 egg, off-white in color

Incubation Period: 53-58 days

Fledgling Period: 72-105 days, 120 days independent of parents but staying close until a year old

Parental Care: In most cases both male and female will incubate the egg and provide care for the chick. Some males act as guardians of the nest and chick, leaving the female to incubate on her own. Parents carry food in their crop and will regurgitate it for chicks.

Chick Development: Hatchlings have grey skin, bare necks and heads, and white feathery down. Food is regurgitated directly to the beak of hatchlings by adults, as chicks get older food is regurgitated next to the chick for them to pick up. Chicks grow quickly, walking a little by 10 days old and picking up food on its own by 30 days. The caruncle begins to appear by day 35 and they start developing a collar of feathers around 54 days. Fledging occurs between 72 and 105 days of age. Around 4 months of age chicks are independent of parents but remain close until they are a year old. Their down is replaced by all black-grey feathers around 80 days old and remains for the first two years. The growth of adult white feathers can be used to estimate age. At three years white feathers begin to grow on the chest and belly and around the fourth and fifth year white feathers begin on their backs. Around six and seven birds are mostly white with some speckles of black across the wings.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Usually solitary or in pairs. They have been seen in small family groups and in larger groups at carcasses.

Social Structure in Captivity: Birds held in pairs and family groups with yearling offspring.

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Minimum Group Size: 2

Maximum Group Size: 2 + offspring

**Compatible in
Mixed Species Exhibits:**

Varies

Comments:

Mixed species exhibits depend on each individual bird's personality. They have been housed with a variety of species including: Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures, Collie's Magpie Jay, Crested Caracara, Greater Rhea, Wattled Curassow, Crested Screamer, Green Jay, Various Waterfowl, Lowland Tapir, and Capybara.

Optimal Habitat Size: Large netted exhibits are optimal with privacy for nesting. However, these birds are flexible and can be housed in a variety of enclosures. With some institutions birds are kept with trimmed feathers and housed in open topped yards with hoofstock.

Management Challenges: The captive population has not been growing in recent years due to a decrease in hatches, imprinted chicks, and more birds being used for education (which leads to trouble re-introducing to a breeding situation).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Males and females are not sexually dimorphic and should be DNA sexed. These birds are extremely sensitive to frost bite and are known to lose toes in temperatures below 50°F. Also, the shape and size of the caruncle is unique to an individual bird and may be used in identification if it varies from cagemate.

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REFERENCES:

King Vulture SSP and Studbook- Shelly Collinsworth

Animal Diversity Web http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Sarcoramphus_papa/

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COMPLETED BY:

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