



MEET THE Griffon Vulture



LIRON SHAPIRA, SPNI

HEBREW NAME: נשר מקראי *NESHER MIKRA'I*

In Hebrew, vultures are called neshar (נשר), which might surprise people because neshar is translated as "eagle" in the Torah. But in modern Hebrew, it means vulture, coming from a Hebrew root that means "to shed" or "to fall off." That's because as baby vultures grow up, they shed the feathers on their heads—an adaption that actually helps them stay clean! A bald head makes it easier for vultures to stick their heads into carcasses when they eat, without getting messy.

WHERE THEY LIVE: GOLAN HEIGHTS, NEGEV DESERT, CARMEL MOUNTAINS

These areas offer vast, open spaces for vultures to glide for miles, using wind currents to travel without tiring. The rocky cliffs and high terrain provide ideal nesting spots and great views for spotting food.



SHLOMO WALDMANN, INPA

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *GYP S FULVUS*

pronounced jips FULL-vus

WINGSPAN: UP TO 2.65 METERS

That's as long as a couch!

DIET: CARRION (DEAD ANIMALS)

Vultures help clean up nature by eating carcasses before they rot.

SQUAD GOALS

When one vulture finds food, it signals for others to come eat.

STATUS: **ENDANGERED**

There are only around 230 Griffon Vultures remaining in Israel today.



Griffon Vulture

WHAT'S KILLING ISRAEL'S VULTURES?



GRIFFON VULTURE FLYING IN THE RAIN, MOSHE COHEN

POISON

In the 1950s, farmers used strong poisons to fight pests, but they also hurt vultures, other animals, and even people. Even though safer farming methods exist today, illegal poisoning still happens in some areas, and it continues to harm vultures.

ELECTROCUTION

Griffon vultures are massive birds, with wingspans that can stretch over 2.5 meters. But being so big comes with risks. When vultures land on power poles to rest or look around, their wings sometimes accidentally touch the wires, leading to electrocution.

OTHER THREATS

- There's less land where vultures can build their nests
- It's getting harder to find food in nature
- Some are killed by illegal hunting.
- Vultures only lay one egg a year, so it takes a long time for their population to grow back.



GRIFFON VULTURE WITH AN EGG. YIGAL MILLER, INPA

SO, HOW DO WE BRING GRIFFON VULTURES BACK TO ISRAEL'S SKIES?



Griffon Vulture

HOW SPNI IS HELPING BRING THEM BACK

BREEDING VULTURES AND RETURNING THEM TO NATURE

At Hai-Bar Carmel Nature Reserve, Griffon Vulture eggs are carefully taken from the wild and kept warm in incubators until they hatch. Then they're placed back in their parents' nests to be raised naturally. When the young vultures are two years old, they're released into the wild. Thanks to this program, Griffon Vultures are now flying again in their native Israeli habitats.

INSULATING POWER POLES

To protect vultures, SPNI works with electric companies to cover power poles with special insulation. This process involves adding protective material around the wires to stop the vultures from getting shocked when they land.



YIGAL MILLER, INPA

STRONGER LAWS TO PROTECT VULTURES

SPNI is working with the government to make stronger laws that stop people from poisoning vultures and other wildlife. They want to update the Wildlife Protection Law to hold landowners responsible for any poison on their land and make the penalties tougher to help protect these animals.



BARN OWL IN BOX, YUVAL DAX

NATURAL PEST CONTROL WITH FALCONS AND OWLS

SPNI teamed up with the Israeli government and farmers on a project that uses falcons and owls to protect crops without harmful chemicals. Instead of spraying pesticides, farmers invite these birds of prey to hunt and control pests naturally. SPNI and farmers build special nests where the birds can live and raise their young on the farms. SPNI also teaches farmers about these eco-friendly methods through workshops. For over 10 years, this project has reduced pesticide use, keeping the land safer for wildlife like Griffon vultures.



Griffon Vulture

AN ACTIVITY FOR YOU

In this activity, you'll compare yourself to a Griffon Vulture and explore how these creatures are different from humans. Write in your answers, learn about the vulture's special traits, and reflect on how we can help them survive!

Question	You	Griffon Vulture
What is your name?		The Griffon Vulture
What's your favorite food?		Carcasses of dead animals
What is your wingspan?		Up to 2.65 meters
How good is your vision?		10 times better than humans! I can spot food 7 km away.
How long do you take to get ready in the morning?		I like to spend 2-3 hours combing my feathers!
What's your idea of a fun day out?		Soaring in the sky with a partner, taking care of each other's feathers!

Humans may not be able to fly like vultures, but we do have the power to protect them. You can make a difference by supporting efforts that help conserve vultures, like donating to wildlife programs that help bring them back to nature.

Thank you so much for choosing the Griffon Vulture as your endangered animal!

Your interest and support can make a real difference in helping protect these incredible creatures and their future. Keep soaring like a vulture!