



ARE VULTURES VERMIN?



by Imogen McDonald 8EJBR

LOTS OF PEOPLE THINK VULTURES ARE DIRTY, OMINOUS, UGLY AND DIM.
WELL I'M HERE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND!

From a young age people believe vultures are bad because they are influenced by films. For example, in Disney films, vultures usually appear to add a sense of foreboding to the movie or to foreshadow something bad would happen later.



Vultures may look strange and even a bit ugly but the reason behind this is because they have adapted over time so that they have hardly any feathers on their heads and necks. Rummaging through carcasses makes vultures messy eaters and because of their bare heads, necks, legs and feet the blood and flesh doesn't stick to it. If the meat did stick then the poor bird would smell and carry diseases around that would infect animals and people.



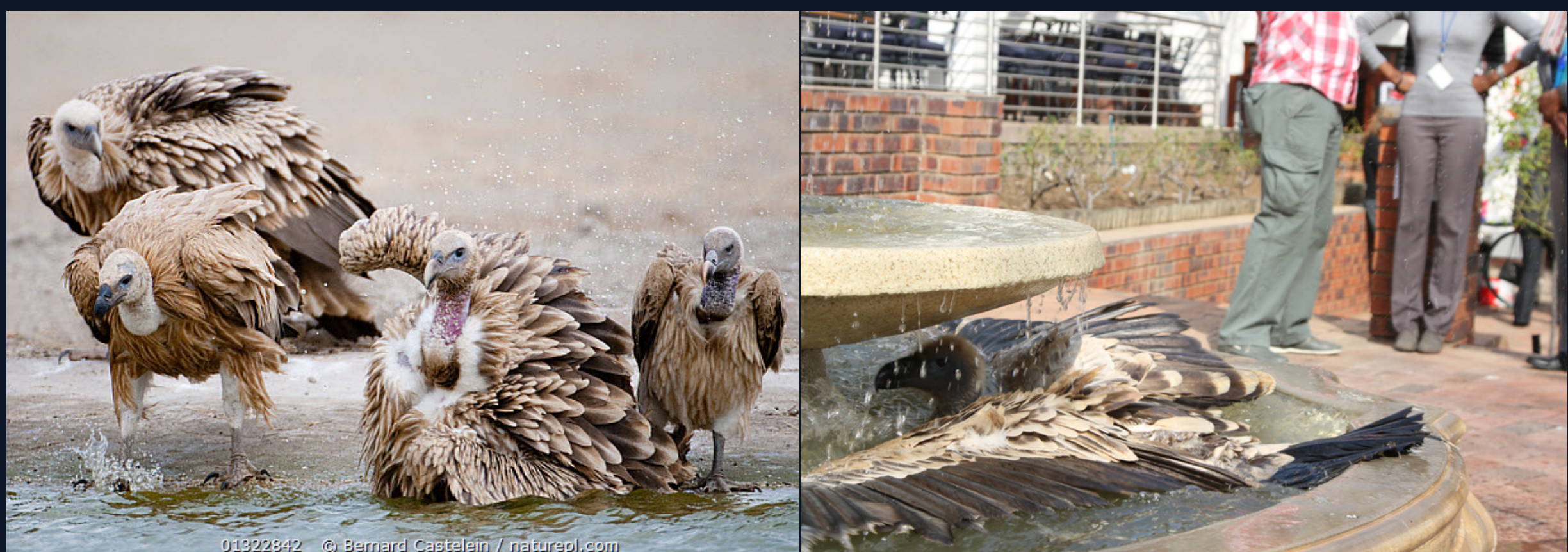
Quite a lot of people also think vultures are dim but they couldn't be more wrong. Recently I've been to a Falconry Centre and one of the people flew a Black Vulture called Sweep in the display. Sweep is the only bird at the centre clever enough to play with a dog toy filled with meat. What Sweep had to do was find the hole in the ball and get the meat out. She was very quick to find the hole and got to the food easily, she has also discovered that if she put her beak inside and tipped the ball upside down then the food would fall straight into her mouth.



Although vultures eat carcasses which are sometimes rotten, they actually prefer fresh meat. They can eat rotten meat that may be contaminated with a disease such as Cholera, Anthrax and Botulism because the corrosive acid inside their stomachs is much stronger than other animals' so it can destroy the disease completely and no trace of it is left behind.



Some people think vultures are dirty creatures which I think is totally wrong. In fact vultures, after eating, take flight in search of water or, if it's raining, then spread out their 2m long wings and enjoy a shower! With their easy to wash bare skin vultures love keeping squeaky clean after every meal which stops them from becoming poorly or developing skin sores.



So when you next see a vulture, in a film or in real life, forget how strange they look and what messy eaters they might be and be pleased that they help clean up nature.