

GPS vultures swoop down on illegal dumps in Peru

January 12 2016



A black-headed vulture is trained by a falconer in Lima on January 9, 2016

The lowly vulture is a dirty scavenger to many, but Peruvian environmental authorities have recast the birds as superheroes and outfitted them with high-tech gear in a bid to crack down on illegal garbage dumps.

Wearing GPS trackers and mini video cameras, 10 vultures with

mythological names have been dispatched to lead authorities to the illegal dumps whose runoff pollutes the rivers and Pacific coastline of the Peruvian capital Lima.

In a public service announcement that looks like a Hollywood action movie preview, a "vulture" describes the campaign as a life-and-death battle between the teeming city's human population and the ominous menace of disease-carrying trash.

"Fourteen thousand years have passed since this struggle began," he says in a gravelly voice.

"On one hand, pestilence and disease are hidden among the filth. On the other hand, humanity is placidly ignoring the danger that threatens."

Lima is known for the flocks of vultures that feed at its four landfills and the countless illegal dumps where an estimated 20 percent of its trash ends up.

They are often seen as pests by the city's nearly 10 million inhabitants, who according to officials throw away 2.1 million tonnes of garbage a year.

But Captain Phoenix, Captain Aella and the other vultures drafted into the environment ministry's program are now the protagonists in a creative social media campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the problem and get Lima residents to report illegal dumps and throw away less trash.



A scavenger is pictured at an illegal garbage dump in Lima on January 9, 2016

"Vultures are our allies in the reduction of organic waste," program coordinator Javier Hernandez told AFP.

"In their search for food, what they're really doing is identifying places where there is organic matter and garbage. We're using that... to get the GPS coordinates and monitor these sites."

The 10 [vultures](#), which have all been certified disease-free, are specially trained to fly back to their keepers after each outing. Video footage they take along the way will be posted online.

The campaign website and video with English subtitles are at www.gallinazoavisa.pe .

© 2016 AFP

Citation: GPS vultures swoop down on illegal dumps in Peru (2016, January 12) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-01-gps-vultures-swoop-illegal-dumps.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.