

MEWS VIEWS



Magazine of the South African Falconry Association
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Editorial

Welcome to the 2006 edition of South African Falconry's annual publication. This year's serving contains a spread of serious and light hearted articles which range from technical information to "tongue-in-cheek" hunting tales, with other articles concentrating on conservation and ethical issues. I believe that it represents the wide diversity of personalities in our ranks. Foreign readers should remember that, for many of our members, English is not a first language. I salute these contributions and wish to point out that I have limited my editing of them because they add a uniquely South African flavor to our offering. I am grateful to all contributors. The readiness with which articles have been submitted is a measure of how our membership has taken ownership of this publication and this makes the task of Editor all the more enjoyable. So, with my thanks to all who have contributed, keep 'em coming for next year!

This year may prove to have been a water-shed in South African Falconry. We have consolidated our place in the international falconry community and have been invited to host the International Association for Falconry's Annual Meeting in 2008. This is a challenge that we must prove equal to.

We have also consolidated our standing with conservationists and it is particularly satisfying that we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with EWT's Bird of Prey Working group. The year has not been without its challenges, which we have decided to confront. As falconers, we justly believe that that our activities are more than simply "of no harm" but that we are a force for good in the struggle for the conservation of raptors and of the environment. We must be seen to be such a force, and not accept gratuitous criticism lying down. Comment is made regarding our response to such criticism in a following article. The relevant issue is that this criticism attacked our right to a limited wild harvest of falconry raptors. This criticism is incredibly short sighted. Such a wild harvest ensures the falconers' dedicated involvement in raptor conservation, limits the use of exotics and hybrids, and furthermore, limits the trade in raptors. All are laudable goals. This would also be the appropriate time to announce the establishment of the SAFA Website. Go to www.safalconry.org.za

One of the most exciting events, for me, as well as SAFA, over the past year, has been my involvement in the effort to present Falconry as an Intangible World Heritage. To this end, I attended a conference in Abu Dhabi in September 2005, to present on "The Southern African Falconry Heritage" to the Director of Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. This conference was fascinating and the drive to establish falconry as such a heritage is of immense importance to our art. Much work needs to be done, particularly in defining and developing our heritage and in promoting its relevance to our authorities. For further information, please visit our web site.

The cover picture again features the work of a South African Falconer. This is a sculpture by Thys Walters and rejoices the involvement of our loyal and indispensable partners, The Pointing Dogs.

Good Hawking

Adrian Lombard.

The opinions expressed in these articles are not necessarily the opinion of the editor or of SAFA

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Contributions are welcomed, as are photographs and artwork.
Please send articles as a word document attachment.

Regional Reports

Cape Falconry Club



Looking back over the past year, I had the impression that not a great deal of hunting had taken place in our club, but the 2005 hunting reports prove me wrong. A fair number of falconers were out there in the field – they just failed to support our annual meet. This is a pity and their loss, as we stayed at Laatson Chalets near Porterville, an area blessed with gorgeous Cape winter scenery – green, green, green undulating wheat fields, mountain backdrop, river with waterfalls, and sufficient dams to also keep long wingers happy. This venue has reasonable accommodation in an area where the farmers made us most welcome, and there is a wealth of game birds in accessible terrain.

A mere handful of practicing falconers pitched, and, including one spouse, one girlfriend and 4 children, we only had a party of 16, but we had a good time, and will use the same venue again this year. An image that stays in my mind was Edmund Oettle up to his waist in the middle of a dam chasing a hapless duck who had attempted to take refuge there from Adrian's tiercel peregrine, not realizing just how determined some falconers can be! (I don't think it was caught in the end, but not for want of trying). Suzette's Harris earned herself the dubious honor of the Dung trophy by catching a guinea in a trap, somehow managing to get both feet through the netting and neatly grabbing the head. Fortunately she exonerated herself later that day with another legitimate guinea kill. It was interesting to see Reiner Kraus fly his 2 Harris in a caste, although they had no luck on that occasion. Edmund's gyr/peregrine tiercel, Lancelot, provided the finest falconry of the meet, taking excellent pitch and treating us to some exciting duck hawking.

At our small hawk meet in Stellenbosch in June, Alexander Prescott whose afgos caught an owl (it was released), was awarded the trophy. Criteria for judging the hawks present at this event are best condition, best handling and hunting success.

CFC membership hovers at around 60, comprising 15 A grade falconers, 9 B grade, 11 C grade, 2 graded apprentices, 6 apprentices, 6 honorary members and 10 associate members. This season there appear to be about 27 falconers actively flying their hawks. Among them are some up and coming younger and C grade falconers and we will watch their progress with interest.

It is such a privilege to be able to practice this wonderful sport of ours, so let's all make the most of this season – good hawking!

SUZETTE DU TOIT

Eastern Cape Falconry Club

There has been some change in the Eastern Cape over the past year. Our club membership stands at six with three members having been active. Our dealings with nature conservation have at last yielded some positives. Our policy document has been accepted by the Alan Southwood, who is the only scientist left in the department. The holdup now seems to be the MEC at provincial government.

Alan Stephenson and Aiden Zimmerman have been inactive this past season. Andrew Pringle is flying at Black Spar at his new farm in Tarkastad and Arnold Slabbert is flying a female peregrine at Redwing in Port Elizabeth.

This past season I flew my twice intermewed passage female. Peregrine and a first year passage female I trapped courtesy of the Western Cape club. The intermewed bird had a good season taking 57 assorted ducks and 15 greywing and orange river francolin. The new passager took to ducks with no trouble and ended the season with 32 ducks and 9 partridges. This bird was exceptionally wild and would not take a good pitch and I released her at the end of August.

On the breeding front Kayla produced two fertile eggs which died in the incubator courtesy of Kerscom. She did not lay a second clutch

Alan Harvey

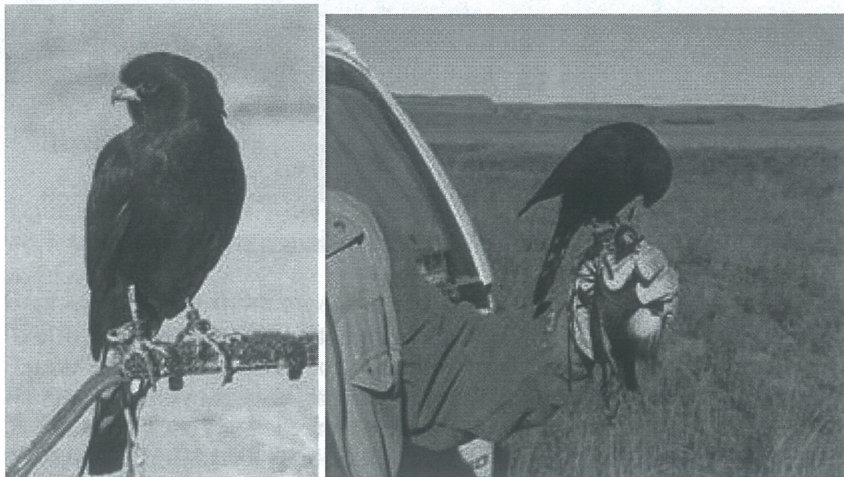


Breeding and hacking peregrines in the Eastern Cape

Free State Falconry Club

We have seen our club grow by fifty percent over the last year from eight to thirteen members. The new members are a blend of youth and experience and include Louis de Jager, back after an absence of a few years, Trevor and James Oertel, now residents of Vrede, James du Toit also of Vrede and a much prized lady member in the form of Carlette Joubert.

We held our 2006 field meet in the De Wetsdorp area and as usual it co-incided with the first of the really cold weekends of the winter. Despite the inclement weather only three members could not make the meet and it was rewarding to see so many young falconers attend. Falcons were flown by Francois, Angelo, Tim and the Chairman, while the austringers were entertained by the efforts of Captain Jack Sparrow, alias Black Jack, a melanistic Garbar Goshawk tiercel flown by Anton Muller. Captain Jack flies at a top weight of 135g, and had the crowds on their feet as he pursued larks high into the air in the teeth of an icy gale. It eventually fell to the Chairman to demonstrate to the unsuccessful Angelo how dikkop should be hawked, and Black Jack was rewarded with a kill on an ant eating chat early on Sunday morning.



Captain Jack Sparrow, before and after action.

Game was finally found for the two black spars on Sunday morning and they both looked menacing, with James Oertel eventually taking a guinea fowl while James Du Toit's bird was kicked off on the ground after a hard chase.

In all a successful but cold field meet.

The following activity details were received from various members.

Francois Breedt continued to fly ZinZan, an intermewed Gyr Prairie hybrid, with devastating effects on the local duck population. He also trained a peregrine female early in the season, but released her after a few months due to the prolonged wet summer. He continues to fly ZinZan during the 2006 season.

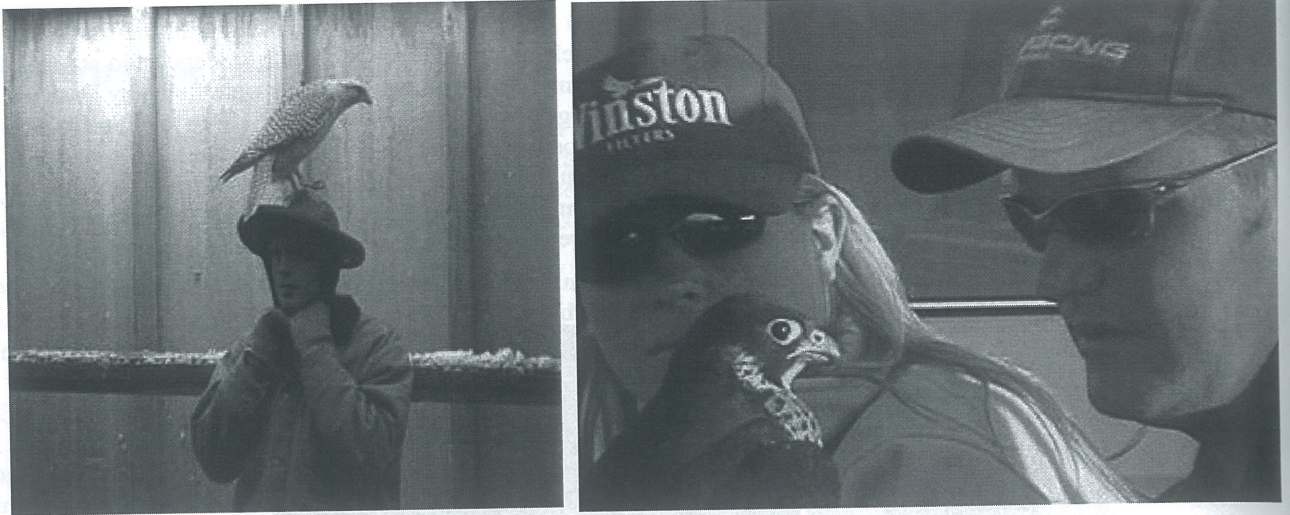
Nadine Breedt is learning to walk so that she can hold a falcon too. Sky masters look to your laurels!

Louis de Jager has taken and imprinted a female Red breasted Sparrow hawk and is showing early signs of success taking a number of small birds with her.

Carlette Joubert has just received a rehab Afgos from the Cape club as her first bird, and has so far taken one fantail pigeon with it.

Carel de Jager continues to enforce the old Free State legislation by killing Mynahs in Bethlehem with his Afgos, but claims he needs a new bakkie because all the survivors can read the words Link Pharmacy on his current bakkie and flee at the sight of it.

Angelo Grobber is flying his self bred gyr peregrine hybrid on ducks, and claims to have received complaints from NASA about it muting on their satellites while sleeping out. I can confirm two facts about this story, one that the bird does sleep out and the second that Angelo makes his living as a salesman. He also claims to have taken several ducks this season but is still outwitted by the mysterious diving dikkop. He does however make superb hoods and has gained insight into the art of artificial insemination of raptors. It is clear from the accompanying photo that Angelo is a "wide receiver" and has a predilection for long raincoats.



Cathy, pictured in the next photo with Angelo and peregrine however claims not to be jealous.

Anton Muller is flying Captain Jack Sparrow as described above, and has made a superb job of the imprinting and training of this miniscule raptor. He has taken cisticolas, mousebirds, shrikes, larks and ant eating chats with him. Time will tell if he made a mistake by bringing his young bride to a Free State falconry field meet. We the older members of the club fear that it may leave a nasty scar on the mind of a beautiful and demure young woman, turning her into another rabidly anti-falconry wife. We hope that Anton handles her with the same tact and skill that he shows on his hawks.

Steve Lodge continues to fly his African Hawk eagle Blade with increasing success. Reports from Bloemfontein indicate he has taken hares and two Cape fox with his bird this season. The Martial eagle Zulu, pictured below unfortunately succumbed to disease last year, and the Black Spar that Steve flew was electrocuted by Escom.

Steve has developed an interesting technique for hunting Blade. He scouts his hunting ground, a military range, with a Rooivalk attack helicopter shortly before flying the eagle and logs the position of all likely quarry. He then grabs the eagle and rushes back to these spots and usually finds the hare, still recovering its hearing, in the same place. I write this not to suggest that it should become a common hunting technique but to assure all you falconers out there that your tax money is being put to good use doing falconry in the Free State.



The two Steves showing the breadth of Free State Falconry.

Tim McPherson is flying an imprint African Peregrine Falcon which is just recovering from a nasty collision with a fence. She needed 32 stitches to tie her together again, but is back on the wing and starting to fly strongly. Tim clocked up an impressive three hours of sleep for the entire field meet weekend, and can recommend the De Wetsdorp bar as a destination for the energetic.

Greg Mousley has flown an Afgos and rehab Lanner last season but has failed to indicate any sort of results or further direction. Greg are you out there?

James Oertel is flying and intermewed Black Spar and will soon be learning the art of imping, while his partner in crime James du Toit is flying an eyas Black spar. We look forward to sparkling performances from both these young men.

Trevor Oertel is flying peregrines at the abundant Greywing population around Vrede as well as trying to re-write South African jurisprudence in his spare time. We wish him strength to his arm.

Steven Squires continues to fly his cast of peregrine tiercels at a wide variety of quarry, and has produced four peregrines from his breeding facilities this year.

Leigh Strapp has taken the year off due to business pressures, but still managed to attend the field meet.

The club has had a very successful year without any complaints from Nature Conservation or any known misconduct from any of its members. Between the members we have 11 pairs of peregrines, 3 pairs of Black Sparrow hawks as well as exotics in breeding chambers. All but one of our members successfully flew hawks in 2005/06 and we continue to host the annual SAFA field meet.

Falconry in the Free State has never been in better shape.

Limpopo Falconry Club



Limpopo Falconers enjoying the beginning of the hunting season.

At least, David Botes could brag with a kill. His Harris took a young Gyppo that was released again afterwards.

After a very bad hunting year the conditions this year looks promising. We had some good late rains and the traditional hunting farms could offer us some excellent hunting opportunities. Paul Venter is celebrating his 50th year of falconry with a peregrine falcon.

The LFC held its AGM and Field Meet on the 8th of April 2006.

The elected Committee for 2006:

Dawid Botes – President

Trevor Oertel – Secretary

Richard Harper-Ronald – Assistant Secretary

Paul Venter (Hon. Member)

Ruan Botha

What started off as a potentially great season, after the good rains and excellent game bird breeding, was thwarted by the tragic death of Richard Harper – Ronald. A membership, that a week previously had elected their committee and hunted hawks together, found themselves mourning a friend and fellow falconer.

On behalf of Richard's dad Jake, and his brother Paul, I would like to thank fellow LFC members and other South African falconers for their condolences and kindness.

Trevor Oertel and Paul Venter

Mpumalanga Falconry Club

Mark Holder (A Grade)

Mark flew a female peregrine, which he obtained from Tim Wagner, with great success. She, at the end of her season, had a tally of 21 kills. He is presently flying a captive bred musket spar.

Mark Bett (A grade)

Mark flew a spar and a gos last season (2005) with limited success. He is now flying a captive bred tiercel peregrine and has taken a number of kills with this particular bird.

George Mc Alistair (A grade)

George flew a passage lanner falcon for most of last season and took a number of redwing with her. She was ringed and released back into the wild at the end of the season. He is at present flying a stunning female peregrine falcon.

Steve Van Rensburg (A grade)

Steven flew a captive bred saker/gyr female (Trinity) at redwing and greywing last season. She caught many in fine style. A memorable occasion was when she killed 2 franks in a single stoop. She was returned to her owner and her future at the moment is uncertain! He will be flying his 8 year old Male lanner (gunslinger) and a peregrine falcon (male) during the 2006 season

Mark Botha (B grade)

Mark attempted flying a spar last season but his passionate affair with lanners got the better of him, needless to say he now has a gorgeous lannerette and a permanent smile on his face.

Willem Breytenbach (A grade)

DNF 2005 but will fly a hybrid in 2006

Fanie Burger (C grade)

Fanie has a passage female gos. She is at present in the moult and we expect to see some good hunting with her in 2006.

Ross Leslie (C grade)

Ross flew a fantastic captive bred goshawk last season and took numerous head of quarry. These included feather and fur (squirrel, mongoose). Can't wait to see her in action in 2006

Jaco Joubert (C grade)

Jaco had 2 fantastic seasons with his musket afgos. He is at present flying a female rock kestrel.

Willem Burger (C grade)

Willem is at present flying a huge female captive bred goshawk (450g). She will be flying free in a couple of weeks' time and look forward to her "doing her thing"

Rowan Murray (C grade)

Rowan joins us from the Gauteng Province and is flying a captive bred musket gos.

Gideon Stemmett (C grade)

Gideon is flying a female afgos. She is a gorgeous looking bird and has taken numerous quarry. (dikkop, plover, natal spurfowl)

Natal Falconry Club

Angus Burns

Our present membership stands at 28 members. The past year saw some of the more active members hunting with a variety of hawk species:

John Bamber: Red Naped Shaheen, North American Peregrine and now a Gyr / Lanner

Greg McBey: Gyr / Saker, Passage Peregrine, cast of tiercel Peregrines (to name a few)

Kyle Solms: Cast of Peregrines, Lanner falcon and African Goshawk

Bruce Padbury: Black Sparrowhawk, Lanner, tiercel Peregrine and Peregrine falcon.

Angus Burns: Lanneret, tiercel Peregrine

Elton Arnot: Lanner falcon, musket Black Sparrowhawk and now Red Breasted Sparrowhawk

Tom Davidson: Peregrine Falcon

Jens Gevers: Musket Black Sparrowhawk

A few members are also flying African Goshawks and one (Charles Woods) is flying a Rock Kestrel.

The standard has remained high with some excellent falconry taking place throughout the province.

Our relationship with KZN Wildlife (the provincial conservation authority) remains good and we are hoping to implement the "passport" card system in KZN as soon as possible to bring us in line with other provincial approaches towards movement of hawks in and out of other provinces.

The 2005 SAFA meeting was well attended from KZN with a total of 8 members supporting the event.

Our contact details are:

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084 400 1234
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Transvaal Falconry Club

Tim Wagner

Hawking

This season started off slowly with very few Gauteng falconers flying new eyasses, rather waiting for the cooler weather and intermewed birds. Tim Wagner did start two tiercel peregrines after the two clutches of eggs from the Witch/Wizard pair failed to produce any females (7 tiercels instead). One tiercel was passed on to Shane Phitidies early in the season when his anatums recently from the States started to moult. Unfortunately, this bird was lost soon after the transfer. The second tiercel was then transferred to Shane who is concentrating on dove hawking. The tiercel now named Rocket, takes very good pitch and is very impressive with the rate at which he can climb to these pitches. Shane hopes to get his anatum going in time for the SAFA meet now that it has finished moulting. Tim Wagner was lucky enough to obtain a passage peregrine female from the Western Cape and is now flying this with his intermewed Gyr/peregrine hybrid, Winston. Winston is flying with great zest catching the odd Sandgrouse and francolin.

Ray Thompson is flying an intermewed female peregrine ex Tim Wagner/ Mark Holder. He hopes to take up his tiercel Peales peregrine as it is nearly hard panned after a protracted moult.

Mark Labuschagne started the season with an intermewed Red-naped Shaheen and Gyr/prairie hybrid. Unfortunately the Red-nape was lost after suspected transmitter failure despite Mark returning to the area on a number of occasions to swing lures and put up the kite. The hybrid continues to tally up the duck while Mark seeks a second bird.

Grant Neale briefly took up a female peregrine but passed it on when work pressure started to interfere with the amount of time he could spend in the field.

Gary Warren is again flying his peregrine tiercel after it spent a successful breeding season in a pen producing three young.

Ronnie Watt has his intermewed Lanner falcon on the wing. Last year at the TFC Field meet, after Ronnie complained that his bird did not go up very high, a couple of high spirited (read slightly intoxicated) fellow falconers convinced him to allow his bird to thermal. The bird being a passage took to it like a duck to water and by the second day went so high Ronnie needed Valium. Now Ronnie complains his bird goes so high it is impractical for general hunting. I have not heard many falconers complain of this problem.

Greg Jean Jacques by all accounts has got one of his Black spars going, but like most shortwingers must be missing the Peach Tree Farm now that it has become yet another exclusive golfing estate. I know the longwingers miss the farm as it had the perfect windward slope for training young birds to mount.

Colin Williams has taken up his many times intermewed Af Gos, Kwaaitjie, and the Mynah population in his area are living on borrowed time. Leon Haveman has also taken up a new Af gos ex Dullstroom Bird of Prey Centre now that his old birds are a successful breeding pair. Rohan Hayes has a captive bred male Af gos from Leon's project and has obtained permission to have it at Boarding school in White River.

Breeding

The peregrine project was again successful producing 16 young. Tim Wagner produced 14 birds and Grant Neale another 2 birds. Grant's pair actually hatched 3 chicks but on the day after the chicks hatching, Grant found the adult tiercel dead on the ledge. He appeared to be in perfect health with no apparent reason for his un-timely death. We made the call to remove two chicks and see if the female would continue to raise the remaining chick. If she did, we would return the two we had removed. By the next day the chick had disappeared despite the fact that this was a many times proven breeding female. These peregrines have gone to falconers countrywide.

Tim Wagner's black spars produced two clutches of fertile eggs. The first clutch produced one musket that was imprinted and given to Mark Holder. The second clutch was lost during an extended power failure the day after being put in the incubator. This after a clutch of eggs from Grant Neale's spars had been put under Tim's spars for natural incubation so Grant's birds could re-clutch. These eggs proved to be infertile.

Leon Haveman's new pair of African Goshawks produced 3 eggs and hatched 3 chicks. Unfortunately, the youngest died after a few days. A second chick was euthanased when it did not develop properly and was deformed. The third chick fledged successfully and is being flown for falconry. Leon expects a better success rate this next breeding as both he and his birds will have more experience this time round. Ray Thompson's Af Goshawks produced infertile eggs.

Sky Trial Results 2005

Twespruit Eastern Free State.

Time Slot	Draw Sequence	Judges Score			Average Score
07h30	Francois Breedt 5th Year Gyr/Peregrine Hybrid Tiercel (Zin Zan)	50	59	57	55.3
07h40	Alan Harvey Passage African Peregrine (Passage 2)	80	78	77	78.3
07h50	Dirk Verwoed 5 th year Gyr/Peregrine Hybrid (Shamal)	Withdrawn			
08h00	Adrian Lombard 1 st year Captive Bred Peregrine Falcon	Withdrawn			
12h30	George Mc Allister Passage Lanner Falcon (Ruby)	55	62	63	60.0
12h40					
12h50	Angus Burns 1 st Year Captive Bred Lanner Tiercel (Horace)	57	63	57	59.0
13h00	Kyle Somes 1 st year Captive Bred Imprint Lanner Falcon (Morgan)	75	76	70	73.7
13h10	Bruce Padbury Passage Lanner Tiercel (Gypsy)	Withdrawn			
13h20	Greg Mcbey 5 th year passage African peregrine falcon (Skyquake)	Withdrawn			
13h40	Richard Harper Passage Lanner Tiercel (Gizmo)	65	70	70	68.3
LUNCH					
16h00	Dirk Verwoed 3 rd year Captive Bred Peregrine Falcon (Pezula)	Withdrawn			
16h10	John Bamber 2 nd year Captive Bred Anatum Peregrine Tiercel (Slim Shady)	83	84	85	84
16h20	Gary Warren 5 year old Captive Bread African Peregrine Tiercel (Wizard)	Withdrawn			
16h30	John Bamber 2 nd year Red Naped Shaheen (Shaheen)	Withdrawn			
16h40	Tim Wagner 2 nd year Gyr/Peregrine Hybrid Tiercel (Winston)	94	93	94	93.6
16h50	Richard Harper 1 st year Captive bred Peregrine Tiercel (Thor)	65	70	70	68.3
17h00	Mark Labuscagne Red Naped Shaheen (Tasmin)	Withdrawn			
17h10	Greg Macbey Gyr/Saker Hybrid (Mojo)	Withdrawn			
17h20	Mark Labuscagne 7 year old Gyr/Peregrine Hybrid Tiercel (Snake)	87	79	83	83.0
17h30	Alan Harvey 4 year Passage African Peregrine Falcon (Passage 1)	92	93	92	92.3
17h40	Anton Muller 3 rd year Passage African Peregrine falcon (Avalon)	83	87	73	81.0

Falconer Choice was Kyle Somes Lanner Falcon (Morgan)

S.A.F.A. Sky Trials 2005 Results

Greg Jean-Jacques

The inaugural sky trial event in S.A. was held in May 1995 in Bloemfontein, with seventeen falcons fielded, last season 2005 saw twenty one falcons entered for the eleventh consecutive sky trial, in the scenic eastern Free State surrounds of Tweespruit.

Over the years we have been privileged to see some very fine falcons in action, and the overall standards that have been attained I believe can be compared with the best the yanks have to offer. This is a credit to the small core of really dedicated falconers, who attend the field meet and participate in the sky trial every year, and show everyone how it should be done.

The sky trial event has come of age and is now a traditional fixture at the field meet and of great spectator value. The social interaction and the baiting of the competitors by the spectators are enjoyed by all. We have also been privileged to have had several prominent falconers from overseas visiting us over the years and partaking in our South African falconry and sky trial experience and their broad experience has been put to good use by inviting them to judge the sky trials. We have had Dave Scott and Nic Farrant from the U.K. who have come out to S.A four years in a row to attend our field meet and Dave has judged the sky trial on three occasions. Good on you mate. The year before, 2004 we had Dale Guthormsen visiting our African savannahs. Dale hails originally from California with its temperate climate and good hawking areas. He however made a conscious decision to move to Saskatchewan in Canada where he could pursue his passion of flying Gyr falcons in their natural habitat and on their natural quarry, as he puts it, in his own back yard. He became a schoolteacher by profession in order to afford him the time for his falconry pursuits. Once he got going there was no stopping him relating his falconry experiences and anecdotes, at the same time extolling on the attributes, virtues and remarkable abilities of the mystical Gyr falcons which are held in such high esteem by falconers, in particular the wild Gyr's on passage that he sees hunting back home. Falconers have been known to conjure up elaborate schemes and thrown caution to the wind, in conducting dubious dealings in their fixated pursuit of acquiring these most prized falcons, and in the process, compromising long standing friendships and tarnishing their reputations, so I am told. Dale by the way is also renowned for owning some of the finest pointers and pointer bloodlines in Canada and North American. He was one of the judges for our 2004 sky trial and he said he was really impressed by the prowess of our diminutive African Peregrine falcon which is a compliment coming from an experienced falconer like Dale.

The sky trial sight, I thought afforded all the falcons' good opportunity to perform, with some nice ridges not far off for the Lanners to use for lift. The conditions on the day were good and most falcons did not disappoint. We had eight withdrawals which was rather a pity.

By way of background here are the first place results of the last eleven sky trial events.

1995 Tim Wagner	1 st year captive bred African Peregrine falcon (witch)	97.6
1996 Francois Breedt	1 st year captive bred African Peregrine falcon (penny)	99.0
1997 Francois Breedt	2 nd year captive bred African Peregrine falcon (penny)	95.6
1998 Kenny Pinnock	once intermewed passage Lanner tiercel (Rasta)	96.3
1999 John Bamber	1 st year Gry/Peregrine hybrid tiercel (magnum)	89.0
2000 Greg McBey	3rd year captive bred imprinted African Peregrine tiercel (J.D)	86.3
2001 Grant Neale	1 st year captive bred African Peregrine falcon (one way)	95.3
2002 Greg McBey	once intermewed passage African Peregrine falcon (sky quake)	84.5
2003 Grant Neale	2 nd year captive bred African Peregrine tiercel (fly away peter)	93.0
2004 Anton Muller	once intermewed passage African Peregrine falcon (Avalon)	92.0
2005 Tim Wagner	2nd year Gyr/Peregrine hybrid tiercel (Winston)	93.6
	Average score for the last eleven events	92.6

What is noteworthy about the results is that the African Peregrine falcon has come out tops in eight of the eleven events. This is a credit to our own Peregrine sub species, which can certainly hold its head high amongst the fancy hybrid varieties, which we are starting to see fielded.

Another encouraging observation from the sky trials is that we are seeing new falconers entered for the event and some young and really enthusiastic falconers who will hopefully improve on the standards we have grown accustomed to.

I have been fortunate to have been part of the proceedings of all the previous events as well as having logged all the results to date. I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone an enjoyable field meet and an exciting and spectacular sky trial for 2006.

Herewith are the individual results of the 2005 sky trials, which took place on Friday 15th July. A special vote of thanks to our international panel of judges who did a great job on the day.

Dave Scott - England.

Dave Jones - Wales.

Jim French - Ireland.

It was noted that one of the judges was partaking in a lot of free drinks at the bar the night before the sky trial. You guess whether he was English, Welsh or Irish and if you had seen him first thing in the morning on the day of the sky trial you will know whom we are talking about.

All in all another fun filled day under the Free State winter skies was had by everyone.

UNTIL NEXT TIME.

GOOD LUCK.

Falconry, a Southern African heritage in the making

Dr A.P.F. Lombard

This article was first published in "African Indaba", and e-newsletter for hunters and conservationists that can be accessed at www.africanindaba.co.za, this is a site that I would recommend to all falconers. I have included it here because the article deals with a number of the issues that have occupied SAFA and me over the past year and which are very relevant to our membership.
Editor.

Near the centre of Zimbabwe, and close to the town of Masvingo, there exists a sprawling ruined city built of dressed but un-mortared granite stones, known as the "Great Zimbabwe"; its purpose and origins lost in the mists of time. It was in the Site Museum of these ruins that I found, several years ago, a metal object identified as an Arab Falconry Bell. I have been unable to trace the provenance of this object but it is fascinating to speculate that, at some time in the distant past, a falconer visited this city where he left, lost or gave away a bell, thus leaving tantalizing evidence of his presence. If this, indeed, were the case, then many centuries would pass before falconry was again practiced in this region.

In September, 2005, I was privileged to be invited to attend a conference, held in Abu Dhabi, to present falconry as an "Intangible World Heritage Activity" to the Director of Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. The purpose of my invitation was to present The Falconry Heritage of Southern Africa. This appeared a somewhat daunting task as I would stand before nations that have a falconry history which stretches back over thousands of years and state my case. This caused me to examine the history and practice of falconry in Southern Africa and I came to the realization that we do have a falconry heritage which we should value and cherish.

Falconry is integral to the heritage of diverse peoples inhabiting Asia, the Middle East and Europe, where it has been practiced for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Falconry was not practiced in Southern Africa, within recorded history, until immediately before the Second World War. At this time, falconry was enjoying the start of a renaissance in Western Europe. It was settlers from this region who imported it to Southern Africa. I have identified three distinct "generations" of falconers in the Southern African context:

The First Generation spans the years 1945 to 1965. These were the first falconers who brought knowledge of falconry to the region, settling in different areas and gaining experience with indigenous birds.

The Second Generation spans the years 1966 to 1985. These falconers learnt the art from first generation falconers and consolidated the practice. They formed the regional falconry clubs, including the Zimbabwe Falconry Club, The Natal Falconry Club and the Transvaal Falconry Club. They started

the process of dealing with legislation and falconry "policies". They became involved with research, conservation issues and the captive breeding of falconry birds.

The Third Generation spans the years 1986 to 2006, and is represented by the 200 South African falconers and the 35 Zimbabwean falconers that exist today. Established falconry policies, negotiated between the conservation authorities and falconers, exist in both these countries. Falconry is currently prohibited in Namibia and there is no policy regarding falconry in any of the other countries in the region, although falconry has been practiced sporadically, by a very small number of individuals in Botswana, over many years.

What then are the characteristics of Southern African falconry?

Falconers in Southern Africa often come from a naturalist, rather than a hunting background. We see falconry as a minimally consumptive sustainable use activity which promotes the conservation of both raptors and quarry species. Indeed, falconry is an activity that well fits the concepts of the Convention of Biodiversity that envisage the extension of conservation through the principle of sustainable use.

Falconers in Southern Africa enjoy a small harvest of wild raptors for use in falconry, based on a negotiated quota. This process encourages their involvement in conservation and population monitoring activities and reduces the need for trade in raptors. It also stimulates the use of indigenous birds, rather than exotic or hybrid raptors.

In terms of the negotiated policies, the falconers are self-regulating, so reducing the administrative burden on the conservation authorities. The administration of the sport is performed by the regional falconry clubs. An apprentice system has been established and there is a grading system that determines the type of birds that a falconer may fly, dependent on his experience.

Falconry is practiced with "longwings" including Lanner and African Peregrine Falcons and with "shortwings" which include a variety of sparrowhawks and goshawks; the dramatic Black Sparrowhawk is probably the flagship species of our region.

In terms of feathered quarry we are spoilt for choice. Guinea fowl, a variety of spur-fowl species and a variety of duck species are hunted. Our champagne falconry is to be had under the big-skies of the High veldt grasslands where Greywing, Redwing and Orange River Francolin are hunted.

Falconers in the region participate actively in scientific research. The late Ron Hartley, of Zimbabwe, set the tone in this regard with a prodigious 150 publications. The contribution from others in South Africa is less well recognized as many contributors are scientists first, and falconers second, but this amounts to an impressive bibliography.

Falconers contribute to a wide range of conservation-related activities. This involvement has been recognized and encouraged. We are currently in the process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bird of Prey Working Group of The Endangered Wildlife Trust.

Over the years Falconers in Southern Africa have had to counter a number of threats and challenges from a variety of quarters. These have included Scientists, Conservationists, Legislators, Animal Rightists and the purely ill-informed. We have dealt with these by keeping our house in order and engaging with our critics when-ever possible. Our present acceptance is proof of the success of this policy. To our amazement, our latest challenge comes from an unexpected quarter. Prof Gerhard Verdoorn, Director of BirdLife South Africa, has a regular column in a South African Hunting magazine "SA Wild en Jagter". In the October 2005 edition he contributed an article on the Peregrine Falcon. This article contains a number of inaccuracies and within it he states:

"Some individuals in the falconry circles are constantly looking for nests to collect young from and this, as far as I am concerned, is unacceptable. There is nothing wrong with the principles of falconry but nest robbing for falconry will never be acceptable to conservationists."

This statement is patently untrue.

Firstly, Peregrine falcons are harvested in very small numbers by falconers, in accordance with negotiated quotas that apply sustainable use principles. In the year prior to his article, three Peregrines were taken from the wild. No nests were "robbed". In fact, none of these were taken from a nest; all were free flying first year birds (known as passage birds) which have a particular attraction to falconers as they have already developed flying and hunting skills. Most of the peregrines required by falconers were produced by captive breeding and, indeed, a surplus is released to the wild.

Secondly, whatever his personal views, it is untrue to state that a wild harvest is never acceptable to conservationists. Apart from the aspersion that he casts at the capable conservationists who have accepted this harvest in southern Africa and, indeed in other nations which include the USA and Ireland, we would like to ask him how he correlates this statement with the Convention on

Biodiversity, that guides current conservation thought. Specifically how he correlates it with Articles 10 and 11 of that convention.

Our attempts to take him to task through the medium of that magazine have met with no response. A letter to the Chairman of the board of BirdLife South Africa has not been given the courtesy of a reply.

Falconry in Southern Africa must look to the future. We need to consolidate our efforts in contributing to scientific research and to the conservation effort. We have taken our place within the international falconry community and are confident that our standards of falconry match the best in the world. We look forward to hosting the International Association for Falconry Meeting in 2008.

We need to extend an appreciation of falconry to all members of our society and encourage them to value falconry and the raptors that we cherish. One of the greatest statesmen in South Africa's recent history is the Archbishop Emeritus the Rev. Desmond Tutu. It was he who coined the phrase "Our Rainbow Nation" to characterize the rich mix of colors, creeds and practices that comprise our national heritage. Thus I can stand before my nation and say "I am a falconer. This is the bright fragment that I contribute to the patchwork. It is my heritage that I bring to you."



Thys Walters with apprentices, teaching the art of imping; The Intangible Heritage in action.



BoPWG – SAFA relationship strengthened

Since 2004, the Birds of Prey Working Group (BoPWG) of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the South African Falconry Association have discussed the possibility of closer ties and the establishment of a formal relationship between the two organizations. This is in line with the BoPWG's new approach of inclusivity of all role players in raptor conservation work, even if we do not always fully agree with all the methods and principles of such organizations. The BoPWG believes that there is room for different approaches to the same issue and would rather listen and learn from other individuals and organizations than blatantly criticize and ignore the existence of such opinions and approaches. We are therefore proud to have entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding between BoPWG and SAFA and trust that the terms agreed in the said document will be to the mutual benefit of both organizations.

Some more information on BoPWG

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Birds of Prey Working Group is one of the largest EWT Working Groups and focuses on the conservation of diurnal and nocturnal raptors, vultures, and their habitats. The Group has been actively involved in conservation under the Endangered Wildlife Trust for several years, albeit as two separate groups, namely the Raptor Conservation and Vulture Study Groups. In early 2005, a merge saw the groups being fully integrated under new management and strategic direction.

A strong scientific component adds authority to the dedicated efforts of the large network of field coordinators. Methodologies are shared, ideas communicated and solutions reached through a collaborative effort that combines science with practical efficiency in order to not only identify problem areas in the conservation of raptors and vultures, but to also reach informed conclusions and act decisively in order to timeously address conservation threats.

Our Mission

To action, support and coordinate conservation projects for nocturnal and diurnal raptors and vultures in southern Africa and to achieve measurable results through considered and informed implementation strategies.

Our Objectives

- To combine the efforts of all individuals and organizations interested in or associated with raptor and vulture conservation in southern Africa in order to strengthen conservation efforts.
- To identify gaps in the conservation of birds of prey and their habitats, and to implement relevant projects in order to fill these gaps.
- To set achievable and measurable goals for each project undertaken, and to manage the achievement of these goals, keeping in mind the bigger conservation picture.

Birds of Prey Working Group Projects

Vulture Monitoring in southern Africa

Covering every province in South Africa as well as the northern and southern parts of Namibia, the **Sasol Vulture Monitoring Project** focuses on the endemic Cape Griffon *Gyps coprotheres* and has been in existence for 12 years. The aim is to gather sufficient data around the nesting locations and movements of Cape Griffons in order to determine their conservation status and act accordingly. This large project is the only one of its kind in southern Africa and much invaluable information has already been gained through its existence. We have also in recent months expanded our activities in this regard to all the other species of vulture occurring in southern Africa and monitoring of birds has expanded to include the ranges of these species. Recently, a Cape Vulture Task Force and Bearded Vulture Interest Group were established to focus specifically on conservation issues facing these two species.

Owl Projects

One of the smallest projects geographically speaking, our first owl project. The **Nashua Central Owl Project** has been a tremendous success. It focuses on a stretch of road 10km in length outside Springs in Gauteng and is just 3 years old. The project coordinator approached the then Raptor Conservation Group after noticing an unusually high number of dead owls on the road. A student soon did her MSc on the reason for the mortalities and discovered that the primary cause was the high incidence of rodents along the road, attracting owls, specifically the vulnerable Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* and Grass Owl *Tyto capensis*, but also the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Spotted Eagle Owl *Bubo africanus*. The rodents were after the grain that was being spilt from transportation trucks in the area, and this is therefore the focus of the solution to the problem.

The success of this project recently led to the establishment of another similar owl project on a larger area along the Platinum Toll Highway north of Pretoria. The **Bakwena Owl Project** has a research component focusing on road mortalities of owls, and an educational component, working to overcome barriers to conservation of raptors amongst the local community.

SA Eagle Kalahari Raptor Project

Covering a vast expanse of the Kalahari, one man, Abrie Maritz, spends much of his time monitoring the area and educating land owners and farm workers in an attempt to prevent the senseless persecution of raptors in the area. The Bateleur Eagle *Terathopius ecaudatus* and the Lappetfaced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, in the past largely absent from the area except for the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, has returned in recent years and are now breeding in good numbers on private land, a thrilling success story for the project.

Algoa Raptor Project

The Eastern Cape has many farmers oblivious to the damage they inflict upon nature when they persecute so-called problem animals. A full-time employee of the Raptor Conservation Group, Adri Barkhuysen, monitors the Black Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* as a flagship species in the area, spending much time educating and persuading farmers and farm-workers in his area to reduce their environmental impact and to value and conserve these magnificent birds.

Bushveld Raptor Project

This project has in the past gathered significant data concerning the occurrence of raptor and vulture breeding sites in the operational area, while also informing the public, in particular farmers, about the importance of these species so as to encourage involvement in conservation programmes. Under new coordination from Arnaud le Roux, the project is set to develop into a significant conservation effort for raptors & vultures.

Hoogland Raptor Project

A small but effective project, the Hoogland Raptor Project focuses largely on the rehabilitation of birds of prey in the area. The coordinator, Pieter Koornhof, receives only his personal satisfaction as

compensation. To date several Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Marsh Owls, *Asio capensis*, Blackshouldered Kites *Elanus caeruleus*, Spotted Eagle Owls *Bubo africanus*, Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, Lanner Falcons *Falco biarmicus* and several other raptor species, have been successfully treated for broken limbs and wings, poisonings and more, allowing them to continue to exist as part of a viable breeding population in the wild.

South Western Cape Raptor Project

Koos de Goede, a tireless pensioner runs this project that focuses on amongst others the Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* in his area. The project works in conjunction with the Eskom Powerlines Strategic Partnership of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, as much of the work involves preventing the unnecessary electrocution of birds on powerlines.

Platberg Karoo Project

Ronelle Visagie, the wife of a farmer from the Strydenburg-area in the Greater Karoo has been working actively on a number of issues affecting raptors in that part of the world.

Migrating Kestrel Project

The coordinator of this project, Anthony van Zyl, focuses on the movements of 3 small raptors, the Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, the Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* and the Western Redfooted Falcon *Falco vespertinus*. This is a project with considerable potential for international cooperation that has expanded its coverage of roosts extensively during the past summer to almost 80% of the known roosts of these species.

Free State Raptor Project

Focusing on rehabilitation and monitoring, the coordinator of this project works on both vultures and raptors, largely at her own expense. Alma Fuller furthermore spreads the word about conservation to the farmers and schools in her area.

Zululand Raptor Project

Johan Esterhuizen addresses conservation of raptors and vultures in the Zululand region. This project is still fairly new; however Johan has started a muthi interest group to focus on the use of raptor and vulture parts in traditional medicine and divination, something that we currently know very little about.

Vulture Restaurants

A project started by the Vulture Study Group many years ago, the vulture restaurants incorporate the goodwill of farmers who are willing to not only establish a restaurant on their property, but also continually supply fresh carcasses for the vultures in their area. These restaurants provide safe feeding grounds for vultures as well as ideal educational opportunities, and wherever possible are used as such.

A Regional Approach

The BoPWG has also established a number of Raptor Conservation Forums in the sub-region and are planning to expand this network to obtain coverage of the entire region by the end of 2007. The aim of these Forums is for organisations and individuals to meet regularly to address areas of mutual concern related to raptor conservation in the region and to find areas where they can work together to share and use resources optimally to the benefit of our birds of prey. The following regions have been established to date and include representatives from the falconry fraternity active in the relevant area of focus:

- Northern Cape/Free State
- Western Cape
- Eastern Cape
- Gauteng

Please visit our website www.ewt.org.za to read more about the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Birds of Prey Working Group.

How SAFA members can contribute to BoPWG activities

Falconry has a rich heritage of knowledge and skills in the effective handling, training and hacking back of various species of raptors worldwide. The BoPWG is in the process of drafting a National Protocol for Raptor Rehabilitation Norms and Standards. This knowledge, if used appropriately, can be used to ensure optimal chances of successful release of rehabilitated birds from rehabilitation facilities. This is currently not the case through most of southern Africa and research done on the survival of released birds from some facilities are not encouraging and, in some cases, very poor. We believe that the use of an accredited and skilled local falconer by such institutions would certainly help in ensuring that birds that are released are:

- In optimal condition to hunt effectively and fend for themselves after release.
- Released in areas where densities of the relevant species are such that the bird has a fair chance to establish a foraging range for itself.
- Monitored after release to determine where the bird disperses to, etc.

Falconers like Ron Hartley and others have left a proud tradition of research and conservation action related to their falconry activities in southern Africa. This tradition needs to be carried forward by present and future generations of falconers to ensure that the species that we all are so enthralled with, enjoys the benefit of applied conservation action supported by appropriate research of wild populations throughout the region.

We look forward to working with SAFA to achieve this.

André Botha
Manager: Birds of Prey Working Group
Endangered Wildlife Trust



Falconry at Penryn College, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

Steven van Rensburg

In January 2001 falconry was implemented at Penryn College. It has attracted a number of pupils and in November 2001 these novices took a final entrance examination where a pass mark of 85% qualified them to practice the ancient art of falconry. They can now house and fly one of the goshawk species as C-grade falconers.

Although falconry is frowned upon by many because of misconceptions such as, "it is a blood sport, making use of beautiful birds permanently tethered to a perch", it is embodied in a unique relationship between man, bird and often dog, where the falconer has a brief insight into the splendor of birds of prey, the tactical evasive techniques of their quarry and the enjoyment of outdoor experience.

An accomplished falconer must have the knowledge and experience to provide his bird with the best possible environment, housing, food, equipment, as well as expertise in husbandry, health and possible diseases. Furthermore he must study the art of leather craftsmanship for the construction of gloves and hoods, metalwork and woodwork for perches and pens, biological interactions between predator and prey and the approach of sustainable utilization of wild game species.

The student thus becomes a craftsman, an ecologist and an environmentalist with hands-on experience. The educational spin-offs are immense to the student his peers and the surrounding community. The qualifying course is intense and designed to produce an individual dedicated to the well being of the bird entrusted to him.

The birds, often passed on to the falconers by the Mpumalanga Parks Board or rehabilitation centers, are often released after a season's "hawking", when they are able to integrate successfully into the wild, having gained experience in hunting techniques and the fitness necessary to survive environmental stress. (Only about 30% of these birds otherwise survive their first year).

Upon graduating from novice to C-grade falconer, the students become affiliated to the Mpumalanga Falconry Club and the South African Falconry Association (SAFA). At meetings during the falconry season (winter months) students can experience various techniques as well as the variety of species flown and integrated into the South African falconry family.

The long-term prospects of a captive breeding and research program have come to fruition on the Penryn College campus where we have for 2 successive years, bred our own goshawks. Students are actively involved in biological aspects of bird propagation as well as the study of general bird populations of the area surrounding the school. We have recently put up breeding pens for both lanners and peregrines. We wait with baited breath!!!!!!!!!!

Cheers

The “Jack Russell” of the Hawk World – Gabar Goshawks

Angus Burns



Photo: A.Burns – mature female Gabar Goshawk

Despite the diminutive size of the Gabar Goshawk, they truly have a lot of heart and often take on prey items that are way beyond their means. I therefore like to refer to Gabars as “Jack Russells” of the hawk world – full of the desire to tackle much larger opponents and a tad lacking on the brain power component.

My first experience of this fearless nature involved my socially imprinted musket Gabar. The incident took place over 3 years ago and involved my bird flying after some small quarry item and then breaking off to go and perch directly above a wild Wahlburgs Eagle. I thought that perhaps his imprint nature was what had caused such fearlessness and thus kept a beady eye on the surroundings whenever I flew him after that incident.

Alas, when I acquired a parent raised female Gabar Goshawk a few years later, the same attitude prevailed. “Are they just stupid birds?” is what I would ask myself and then I realized that they are not actually stupid but simply examples of crowned eagles trapped inside miniature hawk bodies!

As with the musket Gabar, my female decided that she could catch anything. I started her on mousebirds, mynahs, LBJ’s and the odd button quail but soon this changed to much larger quarry items.



Photo: A.Burns – Juvenile female Gabar on more “reasonable” barbet kill (SAFA 2004)

I read in the Roberts Birds book that there were records of Gabar’s catching cock Swainson francolins – but only in the falconry context. Maybe the human presence spurs the little blighters on to greater things? Whatever the reason, I witnessed this incredible bravery (or stupidity) first-hand on numerous occasions.

One afternoon I decided to hunt some mynahs in Newcastle and took my Gabar out to a sports field. I always hunted mynahs in large open fields because Gabar’s are very tenacious birds and will often fly after a prey item for hundreds of meters. Hunting an essentially urban quarry item thus puts the Gabar

at risk of injury or worse when hunted in built up areas. I would therefore be very "picky" about where I hunted mynah birds and large open fields seemed the most appropriate.

Soon I spotted a small group of 3 mynah birds and prepared for a "drive-by hawking." When I was about 30 meters from the flock, I let the Gabar out the bakkie window and she was off like a rocket. I then noticed she was veering off to the left of the mynah flock and flying with great determination. The mynahs erupted into a series of alarm calls and I spotted what she was after. There on the mowed lawn were two Crowned Plovers quietly going about their everyday feeding. I thought that my Gabar wouldn't stand a chance of catching one but to my surprise, the Plovers just stood there and looked totally disinterested by the approaching Jack Russell hawk. When the Gabar was 10 meters from them, they seemed to decide that just maybe something was up and took to the heavens. Unfortunately for one of them, the Gabar was now at mach 3 and close enough to apply some talons. In a kung-fu like maneuver, my Gabar snatched at the Plover and latched onto the head of the now doomed bird. I was already running towards them to hold the struggling Plover down and thereby minimize any damage to my hawk's tail feathers. In a few seconds the Plover was dispatched to Plover heaven (where the fields are green and wide and no Gabars reside).



Photo: A.Burns – Camera-phone photo of female Gabar on Plover

After that entry onto Plovers, I had a hard time stopping her from hunting them. If I let her hunt mynahs and a Plover was nearby, she would opt for the Plover and most times successfully catch it. I could even walk them up with the hawk and she would still catch on most occasions. I suppose the smallness of the Gabar was what made the Plover think it was safe and thus not react until it was too late.

Of course, for the Gabar, confidence was soaring and having thought it was invincible before, it now thought itself to be omnipotent and all-powerful. The result was that one pleasant day, my hawk decided to chase a Spotted Dikkop. I noticed that she was crouching on the glove whilst walking through a section of grassland. I thought maybe she had seen a Cysticola or something similar but to my surprise, she took off at great speed towards a Dikkop. The Dikkop seemed more wily than the Plover and started to run (but admittedly without obvious panic). At the last minute, it took off but it was too late and the Gabar was on it. At first, the Gabar bound to its back and was shrugged off. The Dikkop then ran and the hawk repeatedly grabbed at it and lost grip until finally she latched onto its great big head and stuck her talon into the poor bird's eye (which was hard to miss if you asked me). The Dikkop made a terrible moaning sound and I ran over as quickly as possible to help my hawk and alleviate the Dikkops suffering. Something rather unpleasant about Dikkops is that they often defecate everywhere when stressed and I thus walked away from that afternoon hunt covered in Dikkop blood and worse.



Photo: A.Burns – Camera-phone photo of Gabar on Dikkop kill

My hawk now thought itself an ace Dikkop killer and 3 more fell to her “mighty” talons over the ensuing weeks.

The word must have got out to other concerned Dikkop as one afternoon, my Gabar met her match. I was driving through a patch of grassland looking for a button quail covey when I spotted a Fiscal Shrike. I let her go and she veered off in another direction. I jumped out of the bakkie and ran after her only to find her bound to another Dikkop. As I ran over to assist, the Dikkop must have struggled somewhat and shrugged her off. She attempted to attack again and that’s when it happened – the “prey” delivered the most perfect side-kick I have ever seen a bird perform and my poor Gabar went flying in the opposite direction. She hit the ground and lay still. I ran over to her, picked her up and was relieved to see that she was still breathing. I then gave her “mouth to beak” resuscitation and she came around from her first K.O. unscathed but clearly dazed. The “hired assassin” had successfully diminished the Gabar threat to Dikkop’s throughout the Newcastle area because my hawk never chased another one after that incident!

My hawk did however still enjoy Plovers and continued to catch them up until I put her down for the moult. I think I need to make a submission to Robert’s Birds of Southern Africa and update their records on what Gabar’s are capable of catching!

-o0o-



South Africa represented at the World Heritage Conference, Abu Dhabi.



Frank Bond is thanked for his work as IAF Vice President, in Czech

Hawking with a male Gabar Goshawk

Anton Muller

My interest in falconry started at the age of thirteen, and it was the Gabar Goshawk that captured my imagination and devotion. Living in Gabar habitat I was fortunate to see a lot of these little hawks in the wild and observe their habits. With courage enough to tackle and kill Red-eyed doves and persistence to fly down larks over hundreds of metres they are absolutely a falconry bird. However, being a boy with only one falconry book, no scales and no guidance, my falconry consisted mostly of begging and tempting Gabars down from trees and haggards, I might add!

Progressing in falconry to a Peregrine Falcon is a wonderful experience, but looking back, I feel like I missed some falconry opportunities along the way, especially when I see a wild Gabar in hot pursuit after a bird. Commitments and time prevented me from training a falcon for the 2006 season. Instead I opted to take a Gabar and fly it with the experience I now have. Like doing the same job I did when I was thirteen but with a lot more tools, experience and common sense.

Two downy chicks were socially imprinted in the house and later moved out to the veranda. A basket placed on a table served as nest and contact with family members and dogs were frequent. When they got to the size of branchers they moved freely from the nest to an adjacent tree and spent most of the day there climbing, preening and flapping. Food was always given on the nest, which forced them to come down. When I started to put out whole plucked sparrows, I tied them down to prevent them from taking it into the tree. This was done, to keep physical contact with the birds, like touching the feet and stroking them lightly and familiarizing them with human movement around and over them. They do have a tendency to become wilder and independent as they get bigger, but with food, contact can be kept up.

For a couple of weeks the hawks flew around the house getting stronger by the day and flying greater distances. It is a wonderful falconry experience to sit and watch the hawks fly around and to call them

back with some food. Although I didn't do it, I think it would be a good idea to bring the lure into use at this stage.

When the hawks disappeared for longer times they were starting to hunt for themselves. They must be taken up before this time as bad habits can quickly be learned, like feeding only in the safety of trees thus resulting in 'carriers'.

I entered my little male Gabar on cisticolas to build up confidence, which he took fairly easy. No baggies were used. He progressed to Mousebirds, Shrikes, White Browed Sparrow Weavers, Wattled Starlings and even Larks. The latter seems to be the ultimate challenge and a fine balance must be kept between failure and success as the little hawk can give up chasing them. Easy slips out of a car can keep the hawk keen. The keyword is confidence which is just as important as fitness. If they believe they can catch it they will.

To fly my little Gabar gets me just as excited as flying a Peregrine. Flights are spectacular and can be very diverse, from a long tail-chase to a zigzag flight or a scramble in a thorn bush depending on the type of quarry.

A big advantage of a little hawk like this is the availability of quarry. But effort must also be made to find the right set-ups especially in the beginning. The disadvantage of these little hawks is that they need just as much dedication and time as a falcon to get the best out of them, but if they do get it, they certainly make it worth your while!

Where have all the Hawk-Eagles gone

Roger Neilson

The 6th June 2004 was a red letter day for me. I was travelling North West out of Mokopane towards Groblersbrug about 15 minutes after sunrise and about 15 Kilometres out of town when I spotted a brilliant white dot on the crossbeam of a power pylon about 250 yards west of the main road. I immediately pulled over and brought my Pick-up truck to a halt and reversed back to the closest point from the road to the pylon, thinking all the while Augur Buzzard most likely, African Hawk Eagle a strong possibility, female Black Sparrowhawk unlikely to be out in the open but still a possibility. When I reached the closest point I was able to rule out Augur Buzzard – which would have been a Southernmost record for this species by about 150 Kilometres – as the white breasted bird had a longish tail protruding below the spars of the pylon, so that left female Black Spar or a very pale Hawk-Eagle. I locked the cab of my pick-up and began to walk in. I was really non plussed by the apparently pure white breast. I managed to approach the bird to within 25 yards, by which time I had ruled out female Black Sparrowhawk as I could see a brilliant golden iris and feathered tarsi which left me looking at the first wild African Hawk-Eagle I had seen up close since I left Namibia in 1991. It was a thrilling experience and all the while I was 'making in' I spoke softly to him (it was a musket) "don't go little brother I won't harm you." Eventually I was so close that I could see the colour of his irises and that he did have a few very thin black longitudinal splashes on his thighs, but his crop, breast and belly were snow white. Strangely he continued to sit with one foot up for two or three minutes as I observed him from a point that I considered being as close as I dared to be without pushing him. Eventually he lowered the foot, leaned forward and dipped steeply off the pole and skimmed low over the ground like a silent cruise missile to the multiple alarm calls of Grey Loeries. It was a really wonderful sight and I walked back to my truck thinking that Africa still has that special something that makes it all worthwhile.

I didn't have far to go before I received another surprise. I rounded a bend in the road, on the left hand side was a derelict Victorian Style Farm house with its windows and doors chopped out and its corrugated iron roof mostly stripped off. On the right a magnificent Thatched Gate proclaiming a new Game Reserve, run by a Tribal Authority. As I was taking this in I noticed a line of Gum tress planted as a windbreak beyond the derelict farm house. In one of the Gums, clearly visible was a huge stick nest, very probably that of an African Hawk-Eagle. As I had already 'borrowed' about 20 minutes of my employer's time investigating the Hawk-Eagle on the power pylon and my destination was still another 60 or so kilometres distant I had to leave investigating the nest in the Gum tree till after I visited the drill rig I was monitoring and had loaded up the drilled core and was on my way back to base camp.

On my return trip that afternoon I was rewarded by seeing a female Hawk-Eagle – a larger and darker bird than the male I had spotted that morning – add a stick to the nest. I left my parked truck on the side of the now rather busy highway – locked up and hoped to high heaven that my vehicle would not be stolen or broken into whilst my back was turned and walked in about 600 yards to the nest. The nest I found was very vulnerable, seven or so metres off the ground in a very climbable secondary growth Gum tress, and worse still a scant 11/2 kilometres from a reconstruction and development housing project that appeared to be developing in the direction of the nest. The nest itself was in good repair with a lot of recently added fallen material beneath it. There were no mutes, castings or prey remains from previous seasons kills so I was convinced I had found a Pioneer Pair.

Back at camp I perused a copy of a property 1:50,000 topographical map of the area and found the property to be called 'Witfingier Farm' and that at the time of the maps publication it had been white owned farm land. On the map it showed the line of Gum trees to have extended several hundred yards across the main Groblerbrug/Mokopane road into what was now the new Game Reserves. The trees on the Game Reserve side of the road no doubt had been felled in accordance with the Nature Conservation policy of not allowing exotic vegetation on ground that is designated a Game Reserve or National Park (which does not augur well for Birds of Prey that have found sanctuary in the tall smooth barked very difficult to climb Australian Blue Gum that are now a feature of our South African landscape). In all probability the Hawk-Eagles had nested in a large gum on the Game Reserve side of the road for a long time and had recently moved across to the smaller tree on the old farmstead side after the National Parks Department Advisor to the Tribal Authority managing the reserve pronounced a death sentence on the exotic tress. I doubt any one (except the labourers who cut the trees down) was aware of the nest or its significance when the order was given. I decided to 'go public' on this nest – something that from bitter experience I am reluctant to do as it often means that every Tom, Dick and Harry, Bird Egg collector, skin collector, Brother Falconer or professional Naturalist gets to know about your nest- to see if this nest could be protected or if that was hopeless if the chick could be harvested for Falconry. I contacted the chairman of the Limpopo Falconers club, Dennis Leisegang and told him about the Hawk-Eagles and that I considered this nest to be vulnerable due to its visibility from the main road, its proximity to the reconstruction and Development Housing project and the easy climb that it presented anyone who might want to get at it. Dennis promised to contact someone in Nature Conservation to come and view the nest, true to his word Dennis phoned me a few evenings later. The earliest date his contact from Nature Conservation had a vacant appointment was 10AM on the 27.7.2004. I was worried that this might be a little late; the 27th of July was a Monday.

In the meanwhile I kept an eye on the Hawk-Eagle pair whenever I could. On the 9th June I watched a Hawk-Eagle bringing green leaves and found more freshly dropped sticks and a couple of mutes below the nest. On 20th June 2004 at 7AM my assistant walked in from the main road to the nest tree, whilst I stayed by the vehicle and watched through binoculars. The female sat tight and only flew off when my assistant accidentally stepped on a twig below the nest and snapped it. She sallied out and shifted to another Gum with an overhanging dead branch about 75 yards closer than the nest tree. I noted in my diary "she is a true 'spilogaster' heavily marked and behaving as though she has already laid an egg and is about to lay another" As my assistant walked back to the vehicle I watched her slip off the branch she had taken stand on, do a wide turn and slip back onto the nest. On 21st July 2004 I walked in from the main road (and fell hard over the road reserve fence which acted rather like a trampoline as I climbed over it!) On reaching the nest I found the female sitting very tight and I had to clap my hands six or seven times before she peered over the edge of the nest, juggled her chicks between her feet and flew off back towards the main road to take stand on the same dead branch that she had used on the previous visit. I approached her on this dead gum 'plucking stool' and she chided me softly with musical 'Klu Klu Klu Kluiee' sounds until I got the distance between us down to about 30 yards before she swooped low over my head and swept back onto the nest. I noted that she still had some rufus feathers on her thighs and tummy between the black teardrop markings and that I didn't think she was more than 3 years old. I also was certain that she had a chick in the nest. Only six days to go before Dennis Leisegang and Kobus from Limpopo Nature Conservations visit and I was getting nervous and worried for my pair of Hawk-Eagles there were human tracks other than my own beneath the nest tree on this occasion.

Entry from my diary 27th July 2004

"Met Dennis Leisegang (our Falconry Club Chairman) and Kobus of the Nature Conservation at Wimpy in Mokopne and drove out to the Witfingier nest about 10AM. Bad News! The nest is

deserted, the tree appears to have been climbed and we found very recent chick fluff clinging to the thorn bushes at the base of the nest. I tracked the path of where the chick had been dragged for more the 70 yards, it led towards the nearby housing development. VERY VERY sad, the chick will either have been eaten or chopped up and its pieces used for the Muti trade. I wonder if the parents will try again at this site? I hope not." End of diary entry.

I found another African Hawk-Eagle nest a week later on the Farm Gibeon about 40 kilometres North West of the Witfinger nest. Again I was a day or two too late, the chick had been eaten, this time by baboons, which had climbed an indigenous tree to get at the chick. Recently I returned to Zimbabwe to some Geological contracting work in the Gwaai River Valley near Kamativi. In one month in country where Elephant and Buffalo were skittish but still present in fair numbers, I did not see a single African Hawk-Eagle! Country that I might add in the 1970s and early 1980s I knew to be optimum African Hawk-Eagle habitat! The Botonka tribes people we hired to do our trenching and line cutting were thin and starving and subsisting on 'Bush Meat' (i.e. anything that walked, crawled or flew) African Hawk-Eagles with their huge stick nests that are so visible from far off and their chicken sized chicks just don't stand a chance. Unfortunately man is literally at the top of the food chain with Hawk-Eagles at No.2 African Hawk-Eagles once the most common medium sized Raptors in Zimbabwe are now rare in that country even in Game reserves! In South Africa I would think their gravest threat comes from the 'MUTI' traders but hungry people are also not averse to cooking pot sized nestlings. The Vulture that many African cultures believe has the power to reveal in dreams things like winners of horse races and lotto numbers is now so rare that any large bird of preys dried head is used as a substitute. The urbanised African who buys these Witch Doctor Potions does not know the difference. "Place this dried vulture under your pillow tonight my friend and millions could be yours by next Saturday's lotto draw!" A vulture head can sell for more than a thousand rand at time of writing.

Between well meaning conservationist cutting down well established nests in huge exotic Gums, this has happened a lot! and is still going on, young farmer's sons shooting anything with a hooked beak because it dares to hunt what he likes to hunt himself. I have had an Eyess male Peregrine wearing Jesses and balls shot by a 17 year old farmers son, hungry Africans harvesting 'bush meat'. I know of 2 Black Sparrowhawk broods and 9 A.H.E chicks that have ended up in the pot, and Muti merchants selling bird of prey parts to gullible urban Blacks. A visit to any Muti shop in down town Johannesburg should prove my point. The future looks extremely bleak for the continued use of the African Hawk-Eagle in Southern African Falconry!

And you think that Falconers who legally apply for permits to take nestlings are a threat! Don't make me laugh, nine times out of ten we are saving their lives.



Michelle Neilson blows kisses to an eyas African Hawk-Eagle

A Brief Overview of Raptor Emergency Care, Common Conditions, and Formulary

Edmund Oettle

Formularies do not make good bedside reading; however, knowing that your bird has received the correct dose of a drug can certainly lead to more peaceful sleep. Remember, vets are human and make mistakes. Many are not familiar with raptors' special requirements, and the vet may extrapolate doses from other avian species, which can be very dangerous.

The raptors that get brought into a practice usually fall into one of two categories: Falconry bird or wild bird.

Falconry bird: These come with an excellent history, good records, early anticipation of trouble, sometimes before symptoms are evident. I will cover only the common conditions of these birds.

Wild bird: Generally arrive with poor or no history, no records, in advanced stage of condition, often more than one condition present. I will cover only the emergency treatment and steps for the rehabilitation. Reference must be made to the protocol for raptor rehabilitation as underwritten by the WCRRF, comprising of CNC, CFC, vets, rehabilitators, etc.

Emergency care:

Perspective: One must apply human values in terms of rarity, enjoyment derived, emotional value etc. to natural systems. 75 % of birds hatched fail to make it through the first year. (Population is roughly stable, and birds breed 2-4 chicks per year.) Therefore the decision to treat or not will be influenced by these statistics. So, before embarking on great effort or expense, weigh up the options.

Ideal vs. Practically possible or cost realistic.

Ideal:

1. General Anaesthetic with isoflurane
2. Determine mass and body condition- scoring according to keel and between shoulder dehydration/ eye sunken
3. Physical exam and ophthalmology.
4. Radiographs
5. Complete Blood Counts
6. Cultures- trachea, pharynx, cloaca, open wounds.
7. Endoscopy- trachea, abdominal air sacs
8. Crop smear.
9. Faecal exam: gram stain, and wet prep for parasites.

Emergency treatment:

1. Fluids. I/v, s/c, some authors recommend intraosseous. Generally 10 % of body mass is a good starting point. Use Ringers Lactate, if s/c then between shoulders. Give over about 20 minutes to allow the bleb to be absorbed.
2. Steroids. Dexamethasone 2-4 mg/kg
3. Blood loss- iron dextran 10 mg/kg
4. Vitamins, esp. B1 10 mg/kg
5. Antibiotics if indicated. Be aware of the added stress to the birds system by the administration of unnecessary antibiotics. Baytril: 5% injectable, use 0.1 ml/300 g bd (=15 mg/kg). Newer quinolones OK (Danofloxacin, 5 mg/kg). Oral dosage OK, but drug bitter so hide well in food.
6. Warmth & dark NB. Raptors highly visual species, stress high if can see.
7. Specific treatment as dictated by the condition
8. Non-specific treatment- herbal support. Echinacea for immune suppression, Taraxacum & Lycopodium for liver support. E.g. Gyr with toxic liver due to Aspergillus Rx. These are alcoholic extracts, available at some pharmacies or else from Parceval Pharmaceuticals, Wellington. Dose is undefined: A drop of each per day is a good starting point.

Common conditions: also affecting falconry birds.

1. Eyes. Rule #1. Any visual defect = grounds for keeping in captivity. Good ophthalmological exam NB.
2. Fractures: Vetcast externally gives excellent results. Masking tape ditto, using feathers as splints. Internal fixation I'll leave for the brave orthoped. Wing bones are always compound fractures due to communication with air sacs, and thus need antibiotic cover even if "closed".
3. Concussion. Rest in dark for 24 hours often all that's necessary.
4. Bumblefoot. Rule # 2. Any one foot bird must not be released. (TH White The once & future king: Beasts of the foot- horse, hound & hawk.) Essentially it's a type of bedsore. Preventive Rx. Spirulina, perches with Astroturf. Surgical Rx: Methyl methacrylate bone cement with Gentamicin beads. Implant 2 beads per web under GA. Baytril inj for a week prior to surgery; continue for a week post surgery. Cast foot with vetcast with hole over lesion so no pressure there. Keep on for 3 weeks; keep clean, local Rx through hole possible. Remove stitches, keep cast on for another week to ensure wound doesn't tear open.
5. Aspergillosis. Shortness of breath. Excessive drinking, hunger yet inappetence. Rx nebulization with terbinafine (Lamisil). 20 mins tid. using 125 mg in 125 ml water, give for a week or until stable, then continue with oral Lamisil 15 mg/kg bd for a month. Severe cases reduce this thereafter to od, continue for 2-4 mts.
6. Frounce. Plaques in pharynx only seen in very advanced cases. Cytobrush crop swab, roll onto slide, cover with cover slip, turn condenser down for contrast, and look under low power for movement. Quite easy to see. Rx Flagyl dose varies, 50 mg/kg once, then 10 mg/kg daily /10 days. Can extend since drug resistance is becoming a problem. Transmission: unfrozen columbiforms (pigeons etc). Don't extrapolate from pigeon doses!!!
7. Poisonings: Low in W Cape, much higher in other parts of SA. Temik (aldicarb, black granules, potent carbamate). Treatment with atropine, given regularly (every 2 hours) try 2PAM, toxogonin, prognosis always guarded.
8. Electrocutions/cable collisions. Symptomatic Rx.
9. Parasites: Worms. Rx Panacur 1ml/kg daily for 3 days. Moulting NB! Feather abnormalities. If need to deworm during the moult, use Ivermectin at 1 ml/50 kg (0.02 ml/kg). Variable response, so either repeat at 10 days, or use another product. Tapeworms: Praziquantel 10 mg/kg, repeat after 10 days. Appertex 7 mg/kg/3d, monthly, sulfadimethoxine 50 mg/kg daily for 3 days, for coccidia. Captive bred birds especially at risk.

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In Memory of my Mentors

Thys Walters

At the age of twelve my love for fishing became the foundation of a new, lifelong fascination with birds of prey. A journey were in these creatures had a huge effect on the way my life has evolved. Looking back I now realize that they made me an artist, as there wasn't anything else I would rather draw. I badly wanted to own a hawk but all my appeals fell on closed ears, because falconry was illegal at that time in the Cape Province.

It seemed I would never get close to one except by spotting them along the roadside or in a zoo. I therefore studied the closest relative in our neighbourhood, the butcherbird or fiscal shrike, who had a reputation as a fierce hunter that could kill even birds and mice. They use to impale and butcher their victims on suitable objects like wire fences or thorn trees. The one I kept as a pet sat on a perch in my room. One day, while I was sitting on the bed, reading and listening to it's chattering, a wild one flew into the room through the window and grabbed hold of my tame bird. I managed to separate the two and set the wild one free again.

All this changed when I was at a school friend's party and saw a Black Shouldered Kite flying into a pine tree, instead of landing on a branch. Climbing that tall tree and finding its nest is still etched deep in my mind. That was the source of my first steps into falconry and also the path that led to my mentor.

I was a youngster of fourteen years old when I met him, an old man like my grandfather. But this man was different: he was a falconer. Heinie von Michaelis was born in Germany¹ in 1912 and spent the early part of his life there. He trained as an art student in Munich and Berlin and spent six years in Rome as a sculptor.

A German Army School of Falconry, maintained by officers who were interested in this knightly sport, fueled his interest in birds. They were only to willing to teach him the ancient art of falconry, in exchange for the young artist's drawings of birds. He and his wife Margaret came to South Africa in 1937, his mother's country (she was a Malcomess). After a childless marriage of eight years they were blessed with the birth of twin sons in 1943. AT about that time, they took up residence at Hawking – a comfortable thatched house at Somerset West, not far from Cape Town.

Heinie became known throughout South Africa as an amazing artist in sculpture, painting, Flying sailplanes, and even writing books on birds of prey². The first book Heinie wrote was "Birds of the Gauntlet", 1952. The following is a foreword from this book, written by Edward Roworth, a man whom von Michaelis calls "my guide, philosopher and good friend through so many years:"

Filled with admiration for the beauty and skill of these drawings, I exclaimed: "These drawings are so wonderful that we must have a special exhibition of them at the National Gallery!" "That would be fine" Michaelis said, "but I doubt if it could be arranged." To which I replied that he need not worry, seeing that I was the director of the gallery there would be no difficulties. "Good Heavens!" exclaimed Michaelis, "so you must be professor Roworth! When we were introduced the other day I did not catch the name, but merely you were one of our local farmers coming to waste my time!"

Roworth ends the foreword by saying, "I like to imagine that it may have been the exhibition of those drawings and paintings years ago, in our National Gallery that initiated a series of events which eventually gave rise to the publication of this superb book and the introduction of the work of von Michaelis to a great art-loving public."

¹ My ancestor Samuel Walter(s) was born in Czecho Slovakia (a neighbouring country of Germany) in a town now known as Bratislava and came to South Africa on 27 July 1696 working as a soldier with horses at the Cape Castle.

² The last book Heinie wrote was "Birds of Prey: A Kinship", published in 1987.

As a youngster, growing up in a university town like Stellenbosch gave me a rich foundation of arts and crafts, brought about by students and tourists. Although my dad lectured at the University, I always had a huge dislike of the school system and would probably not have made matric if I did not drop mathematics for another art subject in standard nine. My love for nature was always present and turned my room into a curiosity: there were animal skins, bones, skulls, and feathers arranged all over the place. This was my escape from normality, my territory, my muse for art to come, and also the place where my Black Shouldered Kite flew free.

As you can imagine, I had amazing parents that enabled me to be myself, although society forces one into a mold. The Kite brought me even closer to nature as I hunted for small birds and mice to keep it fed. I desperately needed someone to show me how to properly care for and handle this bird. To my amazement our neighbors at the time (1984) told me of an old falconer who lives in Somerset-West about half an hour's drive from Stellenbosch³.

My parents respected my desire to meet the birdman Heinie von Michaelis, and took me and Kimatchi (my kite) on an amazing journey. After meeting Heinie and his wife Margaret, I felt a bit disappointed at first, hearing that he had no Birds of Prey anymore, since old age made it impossible for him. When I introduced "Kimatchi" as a juvenile Black Shouldered Kite, Heinie remarked dryly: "I can see that", which made me realize that *I* was the one there to learn.

When we stepped into the house I noticed paintings of birds against the wall, which drew my attention to the sculptures. There was a bust of Margaret chiseled out of white marble at the age when her cheeks were still full and polished to a shine. This was so skillfully done that no one could mistake the now frail hunchback lady for anything else but the love which created it. I could easily associate with these people and even felt at home when Kimatchi made a dropping on the carpet, they said, "Not to worry - let it dry". My attention was then drawn to a sculpture of a flying falcon grabbing a duck, on its back, which forms the base it stands on. This piece fascinated me because it was made of metal and even though Heinie tried to explain how it was made and cast, I still had no idea how it was accomplished.

He was so helpful showing us how to cut long traditional jesses, where to make the slits and attach it to a homemade swivel where a leash goes through. The leash is then attached to a bow or screen perch, which he drew on paper. This was where my skillful and handy dad came in to make me such a perch, which kept Kimatchi from squirting all over my room.

As a youngster I had an obsession with making my own falconry equipment, hoods, perches, bells and gloves. These skills were a direct link to my first sculptures of small falcons, made from horn and bone. On one of my visits to Michaelis, I gave my mentor a small present carved from bone. His remark says it all: "I see, it's a falcon!". Now that he's passed away I have created more pieces I would have like for him to see.

Art was always a vital part of me as far back as I can remember. I do animal art with a mixture of the human, as we are part of the holistic sense of being. During high school I took art as a subject and I focused on sculpture from standard eight. We modeled mostly with clay, carved in plaster of Paris or, as I chose to do, chiseled out of wood.

After school and one year compulsory military service I tried to study industrial design, but I could not stand the precise measurements involved with such design and I left after a year and a half, in 1992. I wanted to become a full-time artist although a number of well intentioned souls warned me about the financial instability of such a choice that may lie ahead. Through the support of my parents, Piet and Petro, I had the glorious opportunity to develop self-taught skills in different media, working from home.

During this time I use to sculpt mostly animals out of warthog teeth, sandstone, and hard woods such as wild olive. When materials such as wood and sandstone are used, the inspiration of each piece of work is mainly determined by the natural shape and appearance, while the opposite occurs when casting in

³ This coincidence was mirrored years later when our previous neighbors (1974), Ernst Conradie (a student career counselor) gave me a set of Raptor Prints which he, years before, received from Helmut von Michaelis (Heinie's son) as a present for helping his son (Heinie's grandson).

bronze. In 1994, I studied the process of bronze sculpting while working for two months with Dylan Lewis. While Dylan uses clay to mold his original sculpture, I prefer to use wax, because more detail can be achieved when carving or molding the medium. This is especially true when the chosen subject is Birds of Prey, for they are very delicately structured, with feather groupings that differ over the body.

The years that followed brought a diverse income through art; pigeon control work, and training raptors for the film industry. An incident comes to mind when I trained three Harris Hawks for the television series, "Sinbad the Sailor". Most of my sculptures were displayed at my parent's house, because my place was too small. During a visit to my parents, I had Gretha, one of the Hawks on my fist, when, to my complete amazement, she dashed from my fist and grabbed the Guineafowl sculpture by the neck. Like Suzette du Toit said: "The stamp of approval."

The second incident was at the Hartley's, who had an old Setter dog. I took a bronze sculpture along of a falcon sitting on a dead francolin, which formed the base. This piece was displayed on the coffee table in the living room where we sat chatting. I realized that the old Setter was trying to get scent as he moved from this side to the other, and after about an hour he managed to sniff at the two birds. I was impressed that form could play such a trick on animal instincts.

Another old falconer who had a huge influence on my life was Rudi de Wet. He and his wife were both traveling landscape painters whom I met in 1994. They were like migrating birds, traveling by motor home all over the country, selling their paintings. He was a cheerful person, always ready with a joke, although money was clearly a constant struggle. He had been in fact a minister, forced to resign the clergy when he divorced his first wife and became a full-time artist with his new wife, Frieda.

At a dinner occasion I recognized a mystery photograph of Rudi, which I also had in a book, "Falconry", by Humphrey ap Evans, page 91. On a second visit he was kind enough to correct the photo by signing it this way: "Photo of me taken in the early 50's. I'm not Austrian but South African. The eagle was a Martial and not a Harpy. - Rudi de Wet 1994."

Three years ago, Michelle and I decided to have a fairytale wedding out in nature, and asked Rudi to lead the sermon. He agreed even to wear a long blue robe, which made him look like the Merlin character in King Arthur. Leading the procession were three fairies, with me leading a white horse carrying Michelle, seated sideways on its back. Rudi blessed the proceedings by laying his hands on our heads, which seemed to work for the Wahlberg's eagle, flying in with our love-token bracelets, landed safely on my glove.

Since then we took up residence in a country house in the Koue Bokkeveld and invited Rudi and Frieda to stay over with us, as they planned to move back to the Transvaal. At that visit I realized that my old friend who taught me of humanity and that living from art was possible, had come to bid farewell. He could feel his body starting to fail and he therefore presented me with a book, "Birds of the Gauntlet", by Heinie von Michaelis, an old friend of his. This moving gesture brought back a flood of cherished memories. I recalled Michaelis telling me of a special Lanner Falcon he had named Florian, who used to fly free, play with wild Peregrines, and then always returned home, until one day when she was shot. What made this book such a treasure was that both my mentors signed it:

"To Rudolph de Wet, from whom I received Florian almost seven years ago, and with whom I also share a love for birds of prey. Sincerely H. v. Michaelis Des. 1952."

"To Thys Walters, a wonderful friend with whom I also share a love for birds of prey. I think von Michaelis would have been glad for you to have this book, as I also am. Rudi de Wet, 1 January 2003."

Since then I have tried my hand at oil painting, for life is too short to only do one thing. I phoned Rudi to ask advice on a big painting I had begun, and his remark made me think: "It will either be a big success or a big failure." As the painting progressed, Rudi's energy declined, until only Frieda could tell me news. And then he was no more.

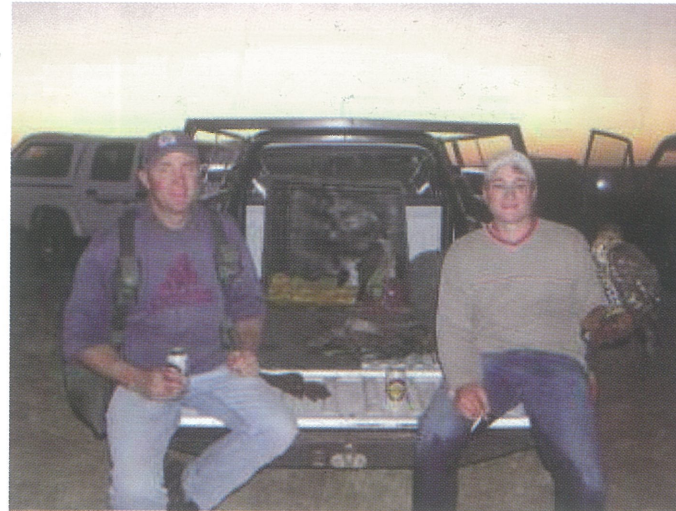
Another falconer with an amazing art background was Ray Black, whom I only met occasionally at falconry meets. He was a pleasant man who had skills in both sculpture and painting. Those dual skills



(From top left clockwise)
Capt. Jack Sparrow on Ant-
eating Chat.

Female African Hawk Eagle.
Howard Waller in Dubai,
making of the ideal hunting
falcon, 1 and 2.

Paul Venter with Sultan.



(Clockwise from left top)

Gathering of Limpopo Falconers, Richard Harper-Ronald second from left.

Alan Harvey and Tim McPherson relaxing.

Delegates at the World Heritage Conference. Director Gadi Mgonezulu of UNESCO is third from left.

Dawid Botes' dog and hawk. See Sometimes bad turn out good.

Falconry in KwaZulu Natal – Angus Burns



Gabar Goshawks, Jack Russel
of the hawk world.



The Czech Falconry Meet

Adrian Lombard

I must admit that the Czech Republic has never been high on my "to do" list. My preconceptions were of a cold and dull country, run down after years of miss-rule by its communist masters and who has ever heard of falconry in Czech anyway? When the International Association for Falconry elected to hold its Annual Meeting there and coincide it with the Czech Falconry Meet, I was obliged to reconsider and I was never so pleasantly surprised.

The Czech Republic is a rather beautiful country with gently rolling hills, interspersed with patches of woodland. It is fairly intensively cultivated and studded with quaint villages. The Czechs I met were cheerful, pleasant if rather formal people and hunters to a man. The country seemed to be full of really beautiful women and they make magnificent beer! Hunting is highly organized and falls under the auspices of the Czech-Moravian hunting Union, of which the Czech Falconry Club, our hosts, is a member.

We arrived in Prague, where we spent two days, which proved to be far too short a time. After being formally welcomed at the Czech-Moravian Hunting Union H.Q. we toured the city. This must be one of Europe's most lovely cities, draped over hilly terrain on either side of the River Vltava. It has never been burnt or bombed so one can walk through the medieval streets and buildings of the old town. Impressions include the awe-inspiring St Vitas Cathedral where Good King Wenceslas is buried, the "Micro Brewery" where we were instructed in the art of cold, bottom-fermented brewing and sampled some of the most delicious beer of my experience, the crowds of tourists and shops filled with displays of crystal and brightly painted marionettes, a medieval monument composed of a group of figures which included a falconer, stressing the heritage of the land we were visiting.

We then traveled northeast to the village of Opcorno where the meet was to be held. The IAF conference occupied a fairly intense day, and was held in the Chateau that dominated the village. A trio of buglers greeted us at the chateau and the meeting was conducted in an ornate room with walls covered in old paintings, mainly depicting scenes of armies doing each other, very bloodily, to death. That evening we were treated to traditional music and dancing in the Cultural Hall. We were asked to wear national costume and I am sure the Japanese delegates took the prize. I presented the host with a wooden carving of a bushman in loincloth to explain why, on a cool autumn evening; I was fairly conventionally attired.

The Czech meet started on the following day. The proceedings began in the village church with a St Hubert's Mass to which dogs and hawks were brought. We then proceeded to the Chateau courtyard where the opening ceremony was held. A festive atmosphere prevailed with a crowd of falconers and local townsfolk; schoolchildren were given the day off to attend. This began with a procession of medieval falconers, and then dignitaries were brought in horse-drawn coaches. Speeches followed and we were released to hunt.

I elected to join a goshawk group on the first day. We hunted in fairly thick woodland. The proceedings were started with a brief ceremony and a local hunter directed the hunting. There were a fair number of hares but no rabbits and some good sport was had. At the end of the hunt and a further brief ceremony, we repaired to a nearby pub to sample the local brew. Then, back to Opcorno were I was reunited with Sylvia and we went to a local restaurant for Wild Boar stew with dumplings. The food in Czech was delicious and inexpensive. Apart from boar we tried Red Deer stew and Yak stew (there was some debate and this was possibly European Bison, something off the red list anyway!)

The following day I went out with an Eagle group. I had not realized that, as one travels east across Europe, more Eagles are flown with increasing competence. The group consisted of about 16 falconers with Golden Eagles and, after the usual ceremony; we formed up, line abreast, across a huge fallow field and walked. When a Brown Hare was flushed, a cry of "Pomello" went out and the closest falconer released his bird. These birds accelerate deceptively quickly, overhauling the hare, which tries to jink and is caught or escapes, with the eagle ploughing into the ground in a cloud of dust and gravel. The falconers are remarkably well disciplined or such a hunt would be impossible. The birds were all immaculate and I saw no signs of aggression. Lunch consisted of a Czech "hot dog" and a beer, and then we were off again. One of the falconers was on horseback and he had taken a Roe Deer on the previous day, so I was keen to see a replay. In the event another falconer flushed a young buck from the undergrowth along a stream and his bird pulled it down, the falconer cut its throat and ended the drama.

On the final day I went out with a longwing group. Peregrines, Sakers and a variety of hybrids were flown. We hunted pheasant in the hedgerows that bounded fields of reaped maize and sugar beet. The best flight of the day came from a haggard tiercel peregrine flown by an Austrian Falconer. The dogs came on point in the trees bordering a small stream and the peregrine was released taking fair pitch over the falconer. The flush produced a feisty cock pheasant, which struck out for thick trees across the field. The tiercel stooped but the arc of his flight was not directed at the pheasant so I thought the quarry was too large and he had bottled, but he swung up striking from below. The two birds tumbled down to earth with the little tiercel successful.

The final ceremony was held in the Chateau courtyard, with an impressive array of quarry laid out. We then joined the falconers in a festive social evening at the Cultural Hall. Finally a group which was comprised, amongst others, of a selection of Japanese falconers, a Mexican a Bulgarian and two rather merry South Africans, gathered in the hotel foyer to exchange national wines and try Bulgarian goat's cheese, while swearing eternal friendship.

We set off for home on the following day, with a host of new memories and friends and with enhanced support for South African falconry from the international community.



Sultan

Paul Venter

This magnificent tiercel, a Peregrine x Prairie, was a hybrid imported from Scotland and bred by Diana Durman-Walters. Due to environmental constraints and being the first imported hybrid he was sent to the Freestate to be flown and hunted.

In the process he had various handlers and training styles superimposed on him. I took him over after he spend one year on a block perch without any flying. He was christened Sultan and I started training him as though he was never exposed to any training before. He would scream and perform very wild on approach the first time you pick him up. Once hooded and on the glove he became quite calm and manageable.

Sultan was soon in the air and it did not take long to get him fit. At first I gave him a few baggies and it was obvious that this man had no love for his quarry. He would stoop hard without any hesitation and take the quarry at maximum speed and full impact. One day he got stuck in an acacia tree after stooping into it at full speed following a bird. I had to phone Pierre at home to bring me a saw to cut him free, out of the tricky thorny branches. He was bleeding and damaged a primary feather. One had to see this tiercel performing to believe it.

The waiting on was also spectacular in that he was in a position directly above your head when you flush to serve him. It did not matter in witch direction the birds would brake. The height 200 to 300ft. This is absolutely ideal for circumstances hunting the savannah habitat. His main quarry consisted of Swempie, Cresteds, Shellys and Swainson hens. Sultan did not go for the bigger Swainsons cocks as he had his lesson during a few spur encounters.

Pierre and I hunted Sultan one day on a hill. "Cindy" found a covey of Swempie and Sultan waited on precisely above me. The Swempie flew down hill and we witnessed one of those perfect stoops from the top of the hill. On impact he went up in the air and then parachuting down. The damage inflicted by this long legged tiercel was incredible. He caught a Swainsons hen and the one leg was ripped off dangling only by a piece of skin. Sultan was fearless in the hunt and loved flying. The more you hunt him the better he was performing. For sure an excellent hybrid for our hunting conditions. I can absolutely recommend breeding them as I will most definitely love to be able to hunt another Peregrine x Prairie.



Ethical and scientific aspects concerning animal welfare and falconry

By Prof. Dr. Thomas Richter of the University of Neuringen in Germany and Dr. Peter Kunzmann

Every type of interaction humans have with animals at the moment is being tested and scrutinized by society. This is true for hunting and especially for hawking as well. The present paper shall evaluate whether hawking and falconry go morally and biologically together with the ideas of animal welfare. Morality, to our thinking, is advice for how to behave properly. Morality gives the answer to the question: "how shall we act?" In the Middle Ages at the times of pope and emperor, decision making was quite easy, decisions came from the authorities. In the present day there is no universal morality left. Everybody is forced to think by themselves whether his or her behaviour is right or wrong.

In the present day I am allowed to decide many various subjects by myself personally. If I don't like the taste of spinach, I am not forced to eat some. But if my aim is to regulate the living of other people by law, I have the duty to justify the way I think. The arguments have to be reasonable and without contradiction. How much better it would be if other people could agree with my decision; in case of spinach this would fail. One basic principal in philosophy is the principal of equality. Equal things should be treated equally; unequal things should be treated differently. A person is acting reasonably, when he or she makes decisions on comparable items in the same way (Wimmer, 1980, by Mueller, 1995, P.87). This means: If the ethical assessment is known for a possible option of acting, and if there is a second possible option of acting comparable to the first, the assessment has to be the same. By this means we will compare the keeping of Birds of Prey with other animal keeping and hawking with other hunting methods. Ethics is the part of philosophy which does scientific research on morals. The relationship between moral and ethics is comparable to the relationship between disease and medical science. Ethics is super-individualistic. To forbid spinach for the only reason, that I personally do not like it, would not fit into a critical overview by ethics.

In order to decide whether falconry and hawking fits to the principles of animal welfare, we have to do four steps:

1. An ethical and scientific overview concerning the quarry.
2. An ethical and scientific overview concerning the hawking birds, using the concept of Meet Demands and Avoid Damage, an ethological scheme accepted by most of scientists dealing with animal welfare in the German speaking countries.
3. Regarding the fact that there is no action done by human beings that has only positive or negative aspects, there is a comparison to be done to weigh the benefit by the human action (i.e. hawking) versus the harm it may probably cause.
4. A synopsis and conclusion.

I. Overview concerning the quarry,

To ask if falconry and hawking can be accepted morally, you have to first answer the following questions:

- 1 is hunting acceptable to all
- 2 Is killing of one animal by another animal to human benefit acceptable?
- 3 Is hawking less acceptable like other hunting methods?

To the first question:

What objections can be given against hunting? Hunting means the killing of animals. The first question is of course: is killing of animals acceptable? The killing of animals in our opinion is allowed, provided there is a justifying reason. What reason can be considered as justifying depends on the cultural context and the personal options of an individual. The range varies from no reason at all to self-defense, defense of human property, defense of nature (by pest control as well as by sustainable use of the quarry for sporting purposes) and consummatory use (especially for human nutrition) to any reason at all.

The most usual answers to the question of what might justify killing (while hunting) are:				
No reason	Just self defense	Self defense and	Self defense and	Any reason
		Defense of human property or	Defense of human property and	
		Nature conservation or	Nature conservation and	
		food	food	

Although there is no method to verify which is the one and only, but you may have a look at the consequences that occur, if you advocate one of these opinions.

- If there is no reasoning that justifies the killing of any animal, than you must not take a drug if you are occasionally infected with a tapeworm.
- If 'only self-defense' is acceptable as justifying reasons, you may kill the tapeworm and you may even kill the fox, if you can show that it endangers you with *Ecchinococcus multilocularis* or rabies.
- If the defense of property is acceptable as a justifying reason, you may kill different animal species causing problems, for example rats and mice, wild pigs, which are a big item of farmers concerning crops and wild rabbits that destroy railway installations, camp grounds or graveyards.
- If nature conservation is acceptable as justifying reason, you may control predators to avoid the extinction of rare species (like fox-control in Germany to protect Grouse-Populations) as well as saving white rhinos in Southern Africa for hunting purposes.
- If consumption of animal products (like meat, fur or skin) is acceptable as a justifying reason, then it must be allowed to use wild animals as well. By the way, harvesting wild animals usually does mean less suffering for the animals than the use of farm-animals, which mostly are kept under quite poor circumstances.

Now you can decide, what consequence you personally are willing to bear, and you can ask your compatriots what their opinion is. In Western Europe, to accept the killing of animals for self-defense, defense of property, nature conservation and nutrition supply is common sense for most of the people.

We are coming now to the second question, whether it is allowed to use an animal to kill others. The most common predator that kills animals for human benefit is the cat that catches mice. It is our duty to study if the mice-catching of a cat – lets say to a farmer benefit – is more acceptable morally than catching rabbits with a goshawk by a falconer. Indeed there are two substantial differences between these two cases – but in both cases the goshawk has an advantage over the cat. First the cat does not respect closed seasons and catches for example lactating mother-mice with the result that the dependent offspring will die. The second problem is that cats do not respect nature protections laws and do catch protected species like songbirds as well. If there is consensus among people, that catching mice by a cat is acceptable, we can see no reason, why catching rabbits with a goshawk (or partridges with a peregrine and so on) should be immoral.

In order to give the answer to the third question, if hawking is more immoral, than other hunting methods, we shall compare it with hunting by using a gun. This comparison leads to a better result for the hawking method. The hawk is part of nature and the quarry knows it very well. Both hawk and quarry share a long period of evolution. Hawking is silent, it disturbs only the potential quarry, and not other wild animals and it involves the human to a much lesser extent than shooting. Additionally it is worth mention that the absence of lead-shot leads to less pollution of the environment. From an ecological point of view hawking is the less disturbing hunting method.

Killing and injuring: while shooting quarry animals that are injured but not killed immediately escape occasionally. They will die after a certain time with significant suffering. This is very unlikely while hawking. The hawk catches the quarry properly or it will escape unhurt. Falcons kill their prey quickly; quarry captured by a short wing, can usually be reached and killed by the falconer within seconds.

There is no risk of humans being injured due to hunting, if hawking is the method. There is even no risk of human property becoming damaged. For this reason, falconers are quite popular if the aim is to reduce the rabbit-populations in graveyards, industrial areas or camping grounds. Another interesting possibility is to chase away crows, seagulls or herons from airfields, rubbish tips or fish farms. For this it is often successful just to let falcon fly. To cause the birds to leave the area.

II. Overview concerning hawking birds

In order to decide whether there are special problems in keeping and training hawking-birds, you have to deal with the following questions:

1. Is keeping of animals, especially of "wild animals" in the hands of man acceptable?
2. Is the special kind of keeping and training of birds of prey used by falconers acceptable?

"Wild" versus "domestic" animals

Most citizens do accept the keeping of animals. This is verified by the enormous number of pets that are kept, assessment tells that 100 millions pets are kept privately in Germany alone. Humans do have a big urge to live together with animals. The position "the one who loves animals does not keep animals" is only shared by a minority of our fellow citizens.

This leads to the sub question if the keeping of animals whose conspecifics are usually living in nature ('wild animals') is allowed or just the keeping of domesticated animals? This is also accepted by the majority of our compatriots; think of the huge amount of fish kept in aquariums, as well as parrots, reptiles and amphibians, virtually all of them wild. We need also to clarify whether the status of being member of a (sub) species²³ living usually in the wild constitutes a special status. Following the principle of equality – that means using moral principles – you have to refuse this idea. Every in human hands has to be cared for properly, with no difference between "wild animals" and "domestic animals". A special moral status of "wild animals" has to be refused as well, if you take biological points of view into account. There is no evidence that there have been behavioral patterns raised up by domestication, only an increase or decrease of intensity in existing behaviours. The criteria for animal welfare can not be how long an animal or its ancestors have been kept in the hands of man, but whether it is possible to fulfill the demand of the animal while it is being kept. In other words, whether the housing conditions suitable for the adaptability of the animal or not. To give an example: we can see no problem keeping an animal of usually free living (sub) species if there is no evidence of suffering, damage or pain. However, to keep a domestic horse that shows stereotypical behavioural problems like wind-sucking, or has injuries at the hoof, because of being reared in an impoverished environment is, in our opinion, a big welfare problem.

Meet Demands and Avoid Damage Concept.

As a tool for the decision whether falconry has a significant relevance to animal welfare, one can use the concept of *Meet Demands and Avoid Damage*. This concept was elaborated by a group of Swiss and German ethologists (ethological working group of the German Veterinarian Society, Tschanz et al. 1987) and first published in 1987. At present it is the most often used method to decide whether a certain phenomenon has an animal welfare relevance or not.

The concept of *Meet Demands and Avoid Damage* arises from the assumption that every organism is able to self-creation and self-maintenance. Whether an animal can manage self-creation and self-maintenance sufficiently can be evaluated if the animal is able to fulfill its demands and prevents itself from damage. The animal uses for these aims its physiological morphological and ethological equipment acquired by evolution and by individual ontogenesis. With this equipment animals use or avoid structures and conditions in their environment (if an animal is kept, the structures and conditions are ruled by men). If the adaptability of an animal is overstretched, physiological, morphological and/or ethological damage will occur. Physical damage can be seen easily with most, mostly even without knowledge about animal species and there is no dispute about the relevance of the injury to the welfare of the animal. Ethological damage will be recognized as disturbed behaviour like stereotypes. It is most often not so easy to detect, and there is much more discussion, whether disturbed behaviour does really indicate poor welfare. The concept of *Meet Demands and Avoid Damage* claims if there is

²³ By a biological point of view domestication creates no new species, the animal remains a member of the original species (dogs of the species *Canis lupus*, pigs of the species *Sus scrofa*), and therefore you just talk about wild or domesticated subspecies.

a significant amount of injured or damaged individuals correlating to a certain keeping or managing system, this system will be recognized as not compatible with the approach of animal welfare. For this judgement the seriousness of the damage is to be taken in consideration as well.

In order to answer the second question we shall have a view on the methods used by falconers typically. At first is to say, that during the moult period the birds are mostly kept in aviaries (or so called moulting pens). During the hunting season, especially previous to the hunting act, the bird will mostly be tethered at both of the two legs and fixed to a perch or the fist. The so called falconry method is only justified for birds engaged in hunting that are also allowed to fly freely and often during the season. (By the way: while keeping other species of pets, tethering is a very common method for leading an animal as well and is completely accepted morally. Nearly all dogs and a lot of cats are led by collars and leads, horses wear a halter and are steered by reins which force much more power to the sensitive mouth than the jesses to the legs of the hawk.)

Does tethering cause suffering in the birds? Concerning the locomotion activities most people have a wrong idea. This idea may result from human dreams of freedom (see the advertising the Marlboro Tobacco Company does world wide) and from the behaviour of buzzards, who are sailing in the thermals. This ringing costs considerably less energy than the active flight of a peregrine or even a goshawk. And even the buzzards don't fly just for fun. They need to soar either to look for carrion as food or to mark out their territory. Scientific results show, that Birds of Prey are very keen on saving energy by resting and avoiding flying. Wild living peregrines at the shore in the Netherlands have been observed during the winter period when a lot of quarry (ducks, seagulls etc.) is available easily. They flew on the average one and a half minutes per day – just enough to catch a duck (Bednarek, 2002) then they rested, till hunger grew the next day and they hunted again for about one and a half minutes. Falconers are very interested that their birds are very well trained physically, because a less fit bird will not catch as much quarry, if any. They take a lot of care that their birds have a lot of flight opportunity and experience.

The training of the hawk firstly means taming. Even if this is quite different between the various species of Birds of Prey used for hawking, it just can be done by patience.

Negative sanctions like those used a lot in the training of dogs and horses for example, are deadly bad for the learning process in Birds of Prey. All birds have in common, that they are much less capable of learning than mammals. They are basically too "stupid" to understand sanctions. They would only become frightened as a result. If we accept the training of dogs or horses for human purposes, we have to accept the training of birds of prey even more.

Birds of prey no matter if they are living freely or together with men, do not hunt unless they are hungry (or mating, or rearing offspring). Birds of prey, like all predators, are capable to eat much more than the demand for one day, if they had the luck to hunt successfully. While hawking the falconer has to control the food intake of the bird carefully to keep it still motivated, but strong enough to hunt successfully. If this food management is done carefully, the bird is in the same condition like its conspecifics in the wild. If we are asking whether feeding a bird less food than it could eat as a maximum can be accepted morally, we have to compare the feeding of birds with the feeding of other animals and even of humans. A lot of animals have a controlled diet to get them at a maximum rate of fitness. We are not able to see a moral difference between feeding a diet that fulfils the demands but prevents from becoming too fat, to birds, or to dogs, horses or (wo)man.

Using the Meet Demands and Avoid Damage Concept we can state:

Successful hunting falconers' birds do not show physical damage in general. There is just a single pathological problem left that had been cause of a severe illness, the so called bumble-foot disease. This occurred especially in wild caught (passage) falcons. The reason is supposed to be a too rapid change in metabolism (Heidenreich, 1996) additionally are poor perches discussed (Trommer, 1992). Bumble-foot can be prevented by good housing, food and management in captive bred and wild caught birds. Successful hunting with birds of prey presupposes they are in perfect condition.

Disturbed, especially stereotypic behaviour (see Lawrence and Rushin, 1993), as we do know very well from domestic and non-domesticated animals kept under poor environmental circumstances, like weaving, wind-sucking and crib-biting in horses, bar-biting in sows or feather-picking in poultry and parrots has not been recognized in falconry birds. There is no evidence that their ethological needs are not met by the keeping and training typical for falconry.

And even if you face falconry from an aesthetic point of view, you will find no contradiction. As far as we know, animals have no thirst for freedom. Hawking is the very best example of a voluntary cooperation between an animal (whose conspecifics live freely) and a human being. I personally am fascinated by hawking, because the hawk has to be physically and by its behaviour fit at a very high level, to be a successful hunter. And this successful hunter accepts to cooperate with little me by a positive learning experience. The bird co-operates even if it flies completely free, it could fly away easily and – as a successful hunter-it could survive without problems in the wild. All keeping of animals requires resources of material and of knowledge. Successful falconers prove that they have access to these resources, otherwise they wouldn't be successful.

III. Advantages

There are no particular animal welfare problems with falconry. Furthermore we can see some significant benefits resulting from it:

1. Benefit for Humans: falconry is a great pleasure for a lot of people – in Germany it belongs to the constitutionally protected freedoms (by High Court Ruling). The tame hawk with undisturbed behaviour is a great chance for science. Most of the knowledge we have about the behaviour of hawks, especially of the reproductive behaviour, comes from trained birds.
2. Benefit for Nature Conservation: It was only the intimate rational and intuitive knowledge falconers have from their birds, especially from their ethology, gave us the chance to breed birds of prey successfully. This was the basis not only to serve falconers' own demands for their birds, but for many release programs worldwide. Especially the peregrine populations, both in Germany and in the US, which have had a great advantage from the several thousand captive bred birds that have been released to the wild.
3. Benefit for Animal Welfare: Injured or otherwise helpless birds of prey require proper medical treatment – after that they must not be released without special training based on the methods and experiences of falconers.

IV. Summary and Valuation

Weighting the pros and cons:

There is a long list of benefits from falconry.

For the falconers hawking is a source of fulfillment, challenge and delight.

Falconry is the most suitable hunting method from an ecological point of view. The stress for the quarry is, compared to other hunting methods, quite low.

Falconers' birds are indispensable for science, especially for ethological and reproductive research. Watching the natural behaviour of a bird of prey – and hawking means nothing else – is a basis of invaluable merit. The knowledge and the engagement of falconers made the new foundation of many populations possible that had been extinct. Falconers' knowledge and techniques are the basic requirements for successful rehabilitation of injured or otherwise helpless wild birds. Is there any obstacle? A moral disadvantage from falconry and hawking cannot be seen. From a biological point of view, there could no welfare relevance detected by the *Meet Demands and Avoid Damage Concept*. Compared with living in nature a tame hawk has a much more comfortable and secure life.

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The Dubai Connection

Adrian Lombard

Conservationists and Bird-Watchers, along with falconers, have voiced concerns over Falconry activities in the Middle East, with drastic reductions in the numbers of both Saker falcons and the Houbara (McQueen's Bustard). Whether the population declines can be laid at the door of the Arab falconers without taking into account environmental changes, particularly in the breeding areas of both species, remains to be seen, however, undoubtedly, the style of falconry in the Middle East must be a contributing factor. It is important to balance the bad news with the good. I reported last year, on the very positive activities that I had seen in Abu Dhabi, including the Houbara breeding facility and the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital. I have, more recently, had further news from our own Howard Waller, busy in Dubai with one of several Arab falcon breeding projects.

Howard is based in central Dubai and works under the patronage of Sheikh Butti bin Maktoum bin Juma Al Maktoum. Howard's passion is to produce the best possible birds for falconry. His project has been running for 6 years and he currently produces 100 to 150 birds per year. About 75 of these will be sold as hunting birds. There has been a considerable shift in attitude in the region. Ten years ago 95% of falconry birds came from the wild, now the statistics have shifted the other way round. Schemes like Howard's are assisting the conservation effort by reducing the wild take of Sakers.

He is involved in a separate breeding program to produce Sakers for release back to the wild. Captive bred falcons are to be released into the Al Maha Desert this May (at time of writing). This will be a precursor to a further release of birds into the breeding area in Uzbekistan. These birds will be fitted with tracking devices to monitor the success of the endeavor. This is hoped to be an ongoing project aimed at reversing the decline in the Saker population.

Howard is further involved in establishing a Houbara breeding facility in Dubai. Loss of quarry for traditional Arabian falconry is possibly even more serious for falconers in the region than the declining falcon numbers. From my observations last year, it will be appreciated that breeding Houbara is a demanding undertaking and we wish Howard well.

In the Gulf region, captive breeding is now producing an excess of birds and effort is going into producing the best quality hunting birds. The work of establishments and people like Howard, along with the vision of their patrons must not go un-noticed. With a fair amount of bad news coming from the region, we must appreciate that all is not "doom and gloom" and pass on the good news.



Falconry and Birds of Prey in Northern KZN

Angus Burns



Photo: Angus Burns

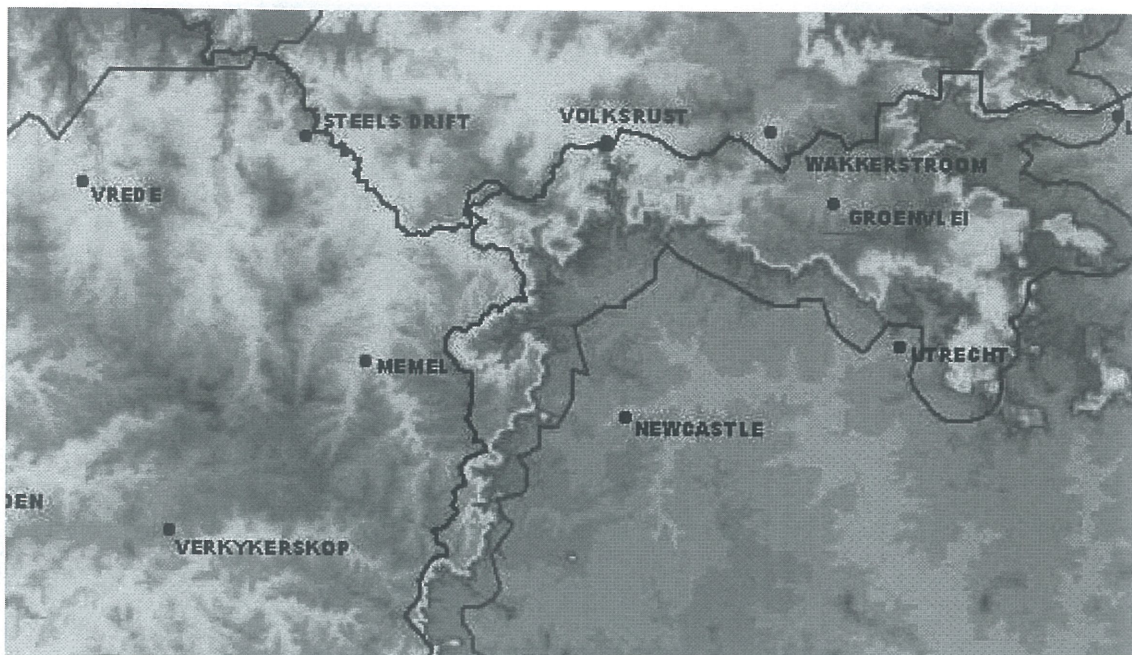
Photo of an infamous Newcastle afternoon storm with an Eastern Red Footed Kestrel fighting against the high winds that brought the storm in

Having relocated to Newcastle in Northern Natal to co-ordinate a high altitude grassland conservation project, I knew I was going to enjoy some fine falconry and be exposed to numerous birds of prey. I am happy to say that over a year & 1/2 later, all of the above materialized!

Having set up my new home and office, I proceeded to befriend as many local farmers as possible. I was lucky that my line of work enabled me to do this without much effort and in no time I had identified numerous viable hunting areas.

Let me paint my situation for you:

My conservation project (the Enkangala Grassland Project) focuses on 1.6 million hectares of high altitude moist grassland spanning three provinces – the area is rich in button & African quail, Swainsons, red wing, grey wing francolin and water fowl...not to mention the thousands of LBJ's that frequent such places. A falconry paradise? – Yes but it also has the same problems experienced by some of the Eastern Cape falconers i.e. high winds that can affect your hunting enjoyment (especially when training young inexperienced hawks). However, fortunately for me, the “good flying” days outnumbered the bad.



A map showing a section of the 1.6 million hectares of high altitude grassland that comprises the project that I co-ordinate (outlined in red)

When I began to look into viable hunting areas, I was exposed to some of the most breathtaking grassland habitats I have ever seen. It appears that Newcastle and its surroundings are much like a forgotten corner of the world – a corner that ironically has received other negative publicity because of the industries and coal mines located on its outskirts. I don't know the exact size and distribution of the mining and industrial developments around Newcastle but if I compare the enterprises located here to the Durban Southern Industrial Basin or even Pietermaritzburg, I would rather live here thank you!

One must remember that Newcastle is a hub for the many surrounding satellite towns located in KZN, Free State and Mpumalanga. These little towns as well as the land around Newcastle are prime game bird habitat and the areas I have been to have indicated high populations of particularly Grey Wing Francolin – all very exciting stuff!



Photo: Angus Burns
My Lanneret on a pigeon



Photo: Angus Burns

What amazing grass! – Just a tiny example of the type of game-bird habitat in and around Northern KZN

So what are the drawbacks? – Indiscriminant poisoning! Many landowners are stock farmers and as such experience stock losses to wild predators such as jackal. The result is that you *never* hunt on land without clearing it first with the landowner (even if you have permission to go onto the land at any time). If you choose to ignore such advice, you most likely will lose one or all your pointers to some piece of organo-phosphate poisoned meat left out for jackals. Anyhow, it is a minor inconvenience to call a landowner you are friendly with and gain permission for a specific days hunt.

Within a very short time, the word got out that I was a falconer and numerous sick, lame and injured birds of prey landed on my doorstep. Having some experience in rehabilitation of raptors, I would administer first aid and then contact Ben Hoffmann (African Predatory Bird Centre) before sending the bird / s down to him. Fortunately, Ben has an arrangement with Time Freight who transport any sick or injured raptors to Ben's centre free of charge – what an awesome service and well done to Time Freight for such an excellent attitude towards conservation activities! Over the past year, I must have sent 30 or more raptors to Ben's centre.



Photo: Angus Burns

An injured Black Shouldered Kite – one of many Raptors that went to Ben’s centre and was eventually hacked back into the wild

Thanks must go to a few of the local Newcastle inhabitants for being so diligent and helpful when it came to contacting me whenever an injured raptor was handed in:
Dr Barry Rafferty, Dr Anne Mckenzie, Madeleine Coetzee and our local rehab lady Silva Francis! It is great to see a “care network” developing here... long may it last!



Photo: Joanna Kopka

Close-up of my Gabar Goshawk - Isis



Photo: Angus Burns

An injured Grass Owl – was found hanging by its wing from a barbed wire fence (apparently a common problem for them)... unfortunately this one had to be put down.

Recently, 5 spotted eagle owls were confiscated from a local bird farm. The joint operation between EKZN Wildlife, African Predatory Bird Centre (Ben Hoffmann), myself (as Honorary Officer for EKZN Wildlife & concerned falconer) & the local EKZN Wildlife Honorary Officer chairman (Geoff Muller) was carried out one Monday afternoon. The bird farm owner claimed they were “rehabilitating” the owls but in fact were just holding on to them and charging the public to view them (all illegal activities and in addition to this, they had no permits to keep raptors). All five owls were removed and 4 were placed directly into a release program at a local private game reserve. One of the owls had a wing that was almost falling off (only held on by a thin piece of skin). The poor bird kept tripping over its own wing every time it tried to fly so it was put down and its carcass put to some good use by the local bird club who will have it stuffed by an expert taxidermist and then used for educational talks. The other 4 owls have all successfully adapted to their surroundings after release and have been sighted many times by the game reserve staff. This is an example of where falconers and other conservation organizations can partner together and achieve admirable results for conservation.

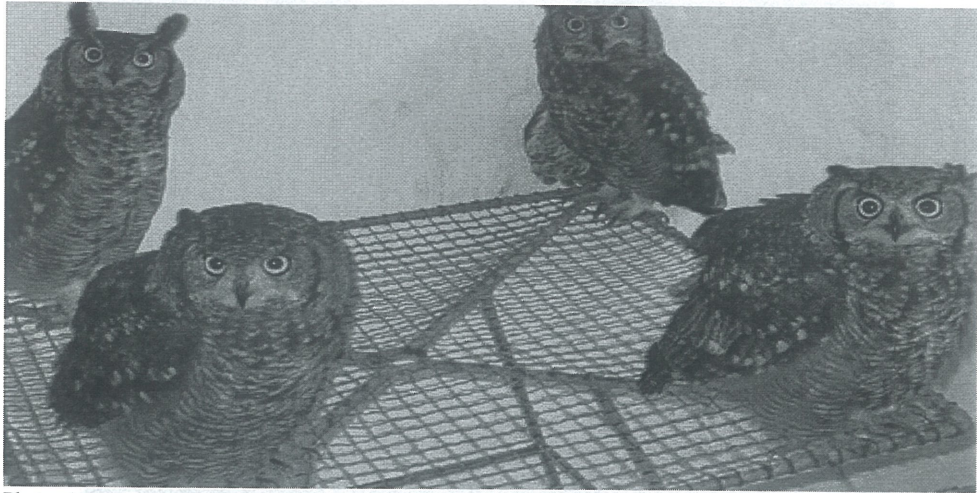


Photo: Angus Burns

Four of the five owls recently confiscated from a bird farm in Newcastle

In Oct / Nov 2004 I was approached by a local farmer who was plagued by a pair of nesting Black Sparrowhawks that were killing his chickens and he asked me to help him alleviate his problem. After acquiring the necessary permission and permits, I trapped and removed the juvenile female responsible. The bird was relocated 400 kms from its natal area and never returned – problem solved? – Not a chance! In 2005, the problem surfaced yet again and I obtained permission to remove the entire family. I caught the adult female and she was relocated nearly 1000 kms from her nest never to return. I also caught the juvenile male and this went to one of our up and coming junior members in the club – Jens Gevers. I believe it is a lovely bird and look forward to seeing it in action some day. The female juvenile was also recently trapped and relocated. I was thankful that the farmer showed such patience in the matter and we have struck up a mutually beneficial relationship in that he lets me use his land to train and hunt my hawks and I help him with any raptor problems. It was on his land that I trained my captive bred lanneret “Horus” in late 2004. The area I used for training is a magnificent stretch of open grassland surrounded by an amphitheatre of mountains – truly a beautiful setting for such labor.



Photo: Angus Burns

One of many young owls handed in to me this year and then passed on to Ben



Photo: Angus Burns

Jens and his new Musket Black Sparrowhawk

I must admit that training a falcon in such surroundings made the experience all that more enjoyable. Admittedly, excessively windy conditions did frustrate my kite training method on occasion but in no time Horus was waiting on nicely and at a decent enough pitch. I began developing his footwork by flying him at feral pigeons and doves and he has come a long way since his early days. Being a captive bred bird and not having hacked him at all, he took substantially longer to develop his foot work but this didn't worry me in the slightest as his obedience and fitness are excellent. I must say that hunting doves from small acacia trees is great fun and something I highly recommend!

Whilst training Horus in the afternoon, huge flocks of Eastern Red Footed Kestrels (now called Amure Falcons) would fly over the training area and I would often sit back and watch in amazement as Horus would try to gain pitch above these massive flocks of migratory falcons. He didn't have the wing command they had and try as he may, he just couldn't get above them but the aerial antics were most amusing. Once or twice he would get a little "carried away" and suddenly I would realize that he was at the other end of the sky and disappearing fast. A swing of the lure or a hand signal would alleviate my worry and in no time he was back over head.

As I mentioned, stooping at doves and pigeons developed his foot work well and the main quarry from his kills consisted of doves and quail. What follows are a series of photos showing Horus in a stoop.



Photo: Therese Brinkate

Preparing for flight

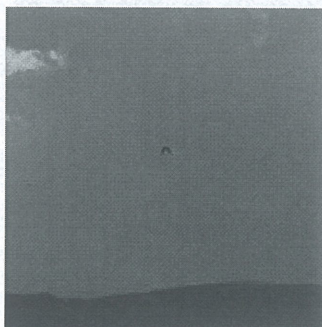


Photo: Joanna Kopka

Gaining pitch using ridging air

After Horus had set his wings. I signaled to him and watched as he moved in and waited on overhead. Then my pointers and I chased a dove from a low acacia tree.....

What resulted was a series of photos showing a long stoop ending in a clean kill – nicely done Horus!



Photo: Joanna Kopka

Wings are set



Photo: Joanna Kopka
The stoop



Photo: Joanna Kopka

And we have impact!



Photo: Joanna Kopka

The result: one deceased dove and one happy lanner!



Photo: Angus Burns

My pointers at home resting after the hunt

Falconry can be dangerous to your health sometimes as I found out (yet again!) one late afternoon whilst flying Horus with a local gundog enthusiast (Andrew Fuller). We had traveled up the side of a steep hill onto the top of some very high altitude grasslands around Wakkerstroom and had found a sizable covey of grey wing francolin. I put Horus up and he found some ridging air. In no time he was a good 150 meters above us and hovering in the air as it ridged. I flushed the covey and down came my falcon. Both Horus and quarry disappeared off the edge of the hill and I ran after them. In my path was a low bush so I jumped over it to get to where the francolin had put in. As I made the leap, my left leg trailed through the bush and my knee met with very sudden resistance against a rock that the bush was growing over. I fell flat on my face and staggered to my feet but I was in agony. My falconry was over for that afternoon as I made it home with a torn ligament. A brace ensured that my mobility was severely reduced for a few weeks. Lesson learned!

Well that's all I have to offer for this story – hope you come to visit my part of the world some day for some good falconry!



Photo: Angus Burns

My pointer puppy and Andrew's looking for game birds

The Armchair Falconer

Kenny Pinnock

I recently had the pleasure of attending a small falconry meet out in the very depths of the backside of some small town in the eastern Free State. The town is called Vrede, which in English means peace. Although the locals tell me that since a certain falconer has moved there, the peace has come to end, and they're thinking of changing the name to "Vrees", which means pretty much the opposite.

This is all speculation though, nothing has yet been proven.

Now if I had been flying a bird right now I'd be telling you that the weather was terrible and that the franks and ducks were scarcer than a sane black spar or a "point" from a plumber's dog. Just so that you wouldn't all jump in your cars and come racing over to ruin a perfectly good hawking venue.

Unfortunately for me I wasn't, so I can honestly tell you that the weather was great and the franks and ducks were thicker than your average GSP. So there were plenty.

Look I have to admit that being the beginning of the season the birds weren't their best, but the venue and the setting more than made up for their shortcomings. Or long goings in Marks case.

But as usually happens at this sort of thing, when the fire has burnt low and the red wine has started to seep out of the pores, the reminiscing begins.

It's funny how ones birds always flew better in the good old days. Mine certainly did because I haven't flown one in anger for years. I'm a much saner person because of it, but that's the price I'll have to pay. In fact, most of the stuff said at that fire was true. It was far easier then, simply because most of us were a good deal younger and had more hair. It's very easy to tell wind direction if you have a good head of hair I've always maintained, so bending down and tossing grass into the air, never used to be the chore that it's become. But I seem to be confusing Buffalo hunting with falconry. This is another good indication of cerebral ageing.

A friend of mine told me that he sometimes gets halfway to work and can't remember if he's tied his hawks to the block, and then has to come grumping all the way back home to check (not a mean feat in rush hour traffic), only to find all in good order on his return. But I simply pointed out to him that he's been doing this ever since I've known him, so senility can't be to blame here. Something else perhaps, like too many hawks maybe.

But I've been pointing this out to him for years too.

So we've all definitely aged in some way or another, although sometimes it's hard to tell at the Falconry meets when the hair (what's left) gets let down.

Going out as I have been of late as an armchair falconer.....stop right there. Hell I hate that term. I used to look down in scorn at this sort of person and now I've become one myself. I even have the cheek to write an article for the magazine without having the driving force of some variety of feathered bliss bating in the middle distance somewhere, to give me inspiration.

I've found there's nothing quite like a contented hawk sitting, foot up with a full crop of whatever got up that day, to give one the inspiration needed to write a long winded article about the merits of some new worm medicine or a breakthrough technique of jumping a bird to the fist for hours, with you standing on a ladder and the poor hawk, wings drooping, getting ready for one last attempt at that confounded quail leg.

Although, let it be said that a bating black spar musket inspires nothing short of an extended bout in a quiet, padded cell.

But each to their own.

Getting back to the armchair thing, going into the veldt without a hawk on the fist, gives one the opportunity to reminisce fiercely.

That was the slope that your Ovambo caught its first lark or there was the tree where you stood under to take a pee while looking for your lost Ovambo, only to look up and see her sitting foot up, above you. Or more likely these days; there is the land that we used to hunt on, now filled with cluster homes.

In a way, by doing armchair falconry, you can actually practice falconry in your head, even though you aren't flying a hawk. And in some ways it can be better, because that way you can never be disappointed. Your hawk will always fly better in your imagination. Most of the time, mine seem to have done that anyway. Somehow though, it never beats the real thing. There's nothing better than going out and hoping that things will go just right, and then as you make into your hawk on a kill, realizing that the flight has exceeded even your imagination. Generally it's just after you thought that your bird would never come back, so it's probably more relief than ecstasy.

Of course you then tell whoever was lucky enough to witness the flight that the bird always flies like that, but the brown stain in your pants tells otherwise.

In the armchair, one has ample opportunity to peruse the yellowed pages of your old falconry journals; the one's which you can still find anyway. A certain bitterness always comes to the fore when you remember that you lent one of your journals to a particular bastard who goes by the dodgy name of "Swamp monster". Now the said bastard is languishing in Montana somewhere, flying Sage Grouse and generally having a good time of it. How the journal on my Ovambo Sparrowhawk is going to help him there I know not.

But getting back to the ones I still have, cannot fail to raise a tear for my lost youth or a chuckle for my lost mind.

Some of the stuff I wrote down there was pretty basic even for my standards. I mean what do you make of this?

27 May 1995

Eyas peregrine male, 471g. (In those days I still wrote down my bird's weight everyday, something I encourage all falconers to do.)

First flight free. Was keen for the lure + didn't stuff around.

And then.... (I was flying two birds it seems)

Intermewed P male, 465g. Flew nicely. 4th day flying free for the season. Flew hard at a bagged pigeon + caught it in a tree. Height +_ 25ft. (Flew nicely? 25ft? what the hell's that. Must have left out a zero there.)

This one's got huge potential... (Did I write that?)

A good day's falconry by the sound of it!

And then...

28 may 1995

Stopped flying eyas, sent to Germany. (Not me the bird! Now that must have been my fastest falconry season ever! One whole day!)

I did however keep flying the intermewed male, because it says in the journal..

1 June, 515g (So at least I wasn't starving him.)

And the last entry was ..

9 June... (That's it!)

And it had a whole page to itself.

I wish I'd actually written something down there, it would have been worth a laugh. Maybe the tiercel came down and struck a Swainsons stone dead. It does if I imagine it to.

Oh! Here's another page. Jonathan Haws Af gos that I flew for a joyful three weeks. It goes..

Kills

1)

2)

3)

4)

Just like that, empty all the way to eighteen

17)

18) Widow bird.

Apparently I'd killed seventeen other birds and forgotten what they were. Cisticolas maybe. No one bothers to write down all their cisticola kills. But if I'd just killed one bird and it was the widow bird then surely I would have put it next to the 1).

I'll bet no one's going to believe that I actually killed seventeen other birds. I'm not sure if I do even. Not with Jonathans Af Gos!

And here's another page of journalistic treasure headed "Red necked Falcon- training and flying"

It starts like this....

" Initially I got her as a brancher and not quite hard panned. She was very tame in the beginning and had no great fear of me. She roused in the car on the way home."

Sounds like the beginning of one of those great friendships, but this bird had the measure of me. She wasn't like this for long I can assure you. She must have been in shock.

I think of all the birds I've flown she was the one I came closest to giving up on, but looking back at the way she flew at the end of a long slog, (Six whole pages of slog.) I only seem to remember the good parts and the slog has been forgotten. I think she wracked up a total 350 kills in the end, because in the journal there's a couple of pages of empty numbers all the way up to 350 and then it seems she killed a widow bird. Mmmnn... interesting. Coincidence maybe?

The nice thing about falconry journals is that they start, end somewhere in the middle, start again and then end somewhere else again. All nice and neat. No loose ends as it were. Trying to make sense of a falconry journal is like trying to hunt snipe in the long stuff. Very fragmented and confusing. One definitely needs gumboots to wade through all the muck.

There's nothing that gives the armchair falconer more inspiration than hauling out the old falconry bag and smelling a well used lure or glove. The memories come flooding back along with a hefty dose of bile. Did my falcon actually come back to this thing one asks? The short answer would be no. I had to resort to the tried and trusted fresh dove, now not so fresh after an extended incarceration in the old falconry bag.

The armchair falconer who seeks some kind of fulfillment will even go as far as to turn on his battered receiver, just to see if it needs to be recharged. It does. Maybe a new glove wouldn't be a bad idea either.

Of course the true armchair falconer can only really get down to serious reminiscing if he's armed with at least two boxes of unsorted photographs. I just happen to have these with me right now, and I'll go through a few of the choicer pictures if you'll allow me.

Let's see...Nope; I don't think you'll be interested in goats.

Ahh.. Here we go. My first incubator, and here's one with me and ... good God, surely that's not a Black Spar on my fist!

That's enough to make any armchair falconer cut his losses, turf the pictures into the closest attic and then throw away the attic.

Now this one is better. A good afternoon spent at Nells farm. I remember this well because it was the first kill I made with my Red Necked falcon. What is it though? It looks a bit soggy after a thunderstorm. You won't believe this but it just happens to be a widow bird.

There's something seriously wrong with my journal. I think it's time I up dated it. I'm sure if I look in Roberts I can find 349 different convincing bird species that I can add to the 350 already in the journal. That way I can have 700 kills. 349 Cisticolas, (they must have been Cisticolas; accidental of course), 349 others, and 2 widow birds. One in the middle and one at the end, just to balance things out. And while I'm there I'll fill up the page describing the tiercel and his Swainsons kill. I can just see it now..The stoop.. The strike.. The kill. I almost make it sound too easy.

Falcon shoes for injured feet

Thys Walters

*"Without a sound, firm hoof, you and your horse will go nowhere."*⁴

I took on a young female Peregrine whose parents bred on an oilrig at Saldanha and abandoned their chicks as the rig was towed to Cape Town Harbor. She turned out to be, wild at heart, and had a nasty habit of chewing off the AstroTurf till only stubs were left.

She did this to three separate layers, till I designed a top layer of soft woven nylon rope, smeared with silicone rubber (hardware stores), which is woven through holes made into a round pурсpex disk. The rope follows a sequence of holes that spiral to the center. Each time the rope comes to the top, a loop of +/- 2cm high should be left. These loops are then joined at the top by another rope, which spirals

⁴ When I read this in the Farmer's Weekly (21 April 2006, p.63), I found it applicable to the disturbing encounter awaiting me a few months ago.

through each loop toward the center. Continue to weave in a zigzag motion and join the spiral from side to side, creating a spider web effect. This enables bird's claws to fit through these spaces while the foot rests on a soft uneven surface.

I can imagine that a flat surface will be very uncomfortable to sit on, and will definitely lead to foot problems. The web of rope should be covered with a layer of silicone rubber to join rope where it comes in contact with another. Keep in mind that an uneven surface is required with spaces in between of different sizes. Spaces where your little finger will fit into, some slightly bigger and some smaller. A layer of silicone should also be put at the bottom to prevent the top area from moving down through the holes. Thus creating a strong, comfortable web on stilts, away from dirt, ventilated and easy to clean.

Unfortunately this design came in too late and the damage was done. I did not notice my problem until the young falcon lay on her chest too often. A huge shock overtook me when both her feet had an injury of dark, dead skin in an oval shape at the bottom. This is one of the worst things that could happen to a bird as it sits on the injury constantly.⁵

If this goes untreated, bacteria will enter the cracked, dead skin and start an infection called bumble foot, where the foot swells up, filled with puss. Fortunately my falcon was at the beginning stage and my first plan of treatment was to use cotton wool with ointment under the wound and wrap plaster bandage around the whole foot. The bird constantly bit at the plaster bandage and got it off in a few hours. Hooding the bird is not an option as the healing process takes weeks to complete.

I therefore started to design a comfortable leather shoe that the bird can wear for a prolonged time. This method was such a huge success that new skin replaced the dead skin after a few weeks of treatment. No sign of the injury is visible anymore. This pattern is designed for a Peregrine of +/- 700g and should be adjusted to the size of the bird's feet (see figure).

With the shoe on, the feet underneath will stay clean, and new dressing can be put on with ease while the bird sits hooded. Dead skin has to be removed as the wound closes. The best way to accomplish this is with a very sharp, small gauge that artists use to carve wood with. I sharpened mine on very fine sandpaper, which you hold at a curve for the blade to follow. Be very careful, not to damage living tissue, otherwise bleeding starts. Carefully remove dead skin till you think you are close to living tissue and do not go further as there isn't much besides tendons and bone.

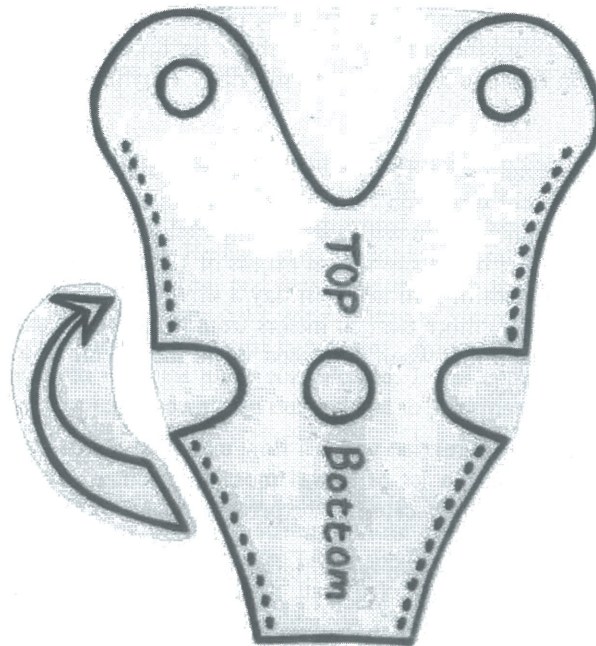
Use a good, healing ointment to soak into a bit of flat cotton wool. This can easily be inserted between the foot and the shoe with a flat, pointed object. Fold a bit of cotton wool over the point of the object as this part enters first and leaves the cotton in place when removed. Keep the shoe on till the next day to enable the dead skin to soften before you try to remove some of it. If you cut at it when hard, you will only do more damage than good. The back of the shoe opens when the jess is removed through the two eyelids, which is situated above the back toe. New dressing should be put on every day while old dressing can be hooked out with bent wire.

Dead skin should only occasionally be removed to enable new skin to grow back without hindrance. This could easily be accomplished by one person as the bird sits hooded on a screen perch enabling the falconer to work from below. Remove the jess from the eyelids and move the shoe forward without the toes slipping through the holes. Holding on to the shoe and the toes will keep the foot still while the falconer works. If the bird does not sit still, an assistant should hold it down. Make sure that the holes are big enough to allow the toes some movement without injuring the loose skin in-between the toes.

⁵ The foot structure ("Understanding the bird of prey", Nick Fox, p.52): "To perform tasks effectively the foot must be light in weight for maximum agility and with a surface that is easy to keep clean of blood, dirt, and bacteria. To meet these requirements the foot has evolved so closely to the physical limitations of living tissues that there is very little margin for error and it is not surprising therefore that the foot is so prone to disorders. The foot basically is a series of bones and sheathed tendons...The tendons slide in grooves in the underside of the toe bones and are held in place by tough sheaths. The sheaths are lined with fine ridges rather like the grooves of a fingerprint and engage with rough ridges on the tendons themselves."

The leather should be soft, thin and strong to enable the foot to open and close with ease, like a glove. Grease the inside of the shoe with the ointment to moisten the leather and aid in the healing process.

The pattern is 82mm by 70mm and suitable for a peregrine of +/- 700gm. The two sides should be sewn together. If you do this by hand, use an awl to make small holes before it is joined by needle and thread. If the shoe needs adjusting at a certain area, it can be wet with water and pushed or stretched with the back or sides of an ink pen. Two eyelids at the back of the shoe will help keep it in shape.



Falcons for the Bush (With Apologies to Mavrogardato)

Steven Squires

Often heard from the mouths of morose and introspective astringers is the lament "if only the country was more open I'd fly a long wing."

In my youth I had a few unhappy encounters with various short wings before opting for a second hand Lanner tiercel. I was lucky in that falconry was still illegal in the Western Cape so one could do just as one pleased as long as you didn't get caught. Not getting caught involved flying one's hawk out of sight of the general populace, generally deep in the dongas and vineyards of the Boland. Here the concept of sky-high pitches and clean flushing quarry were things like pornography and sex toys in the 1980's South Africa. One illicitly read articles about them on third hand photostats of American journals, or the roleo prints on the hard toilet paper of the ZFC. They bore little reality to the facts of life as I knew it.

Unburdened by the hype surrounding high flying falcons I went hunting with a boisterous but talented setter, a second hand lanner tiercel who didn't know his limitations and a whole lot of enthusiasm. Together we killed a lot of game, ranging in size from a white rumped swift +/- 20g to cock swainsons and guinea fowl of about 850g. The best score was in excess of 120 head of quarry in a season spread over about eighteen different species of bird and best day a dove and two francolin in an afternoon. Very few of these quarry were taken more than 50 meters from thick thorn bush, fences, vineyards or other cover. Quarry was most often lost when it flushed while the falcon was on the out run, or by employing the dump and jump tactic.

Some time later I obtained a tiercel peregrine which I flew mostly at doves. All of this falconry took place in enclosed scrub savannah and a lot of it was most spectacular. It was however a lot less productive than the lanner tiercel, mostly because of the peregrines lack of maneuverability.

If one peregrine was good I thought then two would be better. After much cajoling I managed to get Alan Harvey to part with two hacked tiercels which I tried in a cast. The results were mixed, but often enough they pulled off an incredible stunt which kept my interest focused.

Sadly Lance, the flashier of the two tiercels got eaten by a wild cat while sleeping out on top of the Kouebokkeveld mountains and so that cast came to an end. Kelgor, his teammate went into a breeding pen and has sired six offspring to date.

My next attempt was a cast of one hacked tiercel and one unhacked tiercel, both from Tim Wagner. Initially I obtained two birds from the same clutch to be hacked through the good offices of Alan Harvey. Unfortunately one flew into a wall and expired on impact leaving me with no choice but to obtain a much younger unhacked bird. These two birds were better at the tight waiting on required when bush hawking, but could not resist crabbing with each other at critical moments. They would often pin quarry in a bush or tree, ring up again and then go off down wind sparing with each other. Sometimes they would both come back together, sometimes separately and other times not at all. Eventually I flew them separately on alternate days and tempers improved all round.

In hind sight I think that the age difference between the birds (about two months) and the fact that they hadn't been hacked together made for a subtle aggression towards each other which was heightened by the excitement of hunting. Despite sharing a free mew with each other and flying for several seasons together they only occasionally jelled to give a tantalizing view of what a cast of small falcons can do.

My third attempt at flying a cast came the next season when I bred two tiercels myself.

I took them out of the pen at 55 days and trained them together as far as possible. From the outset they were more comfortable with one another than the previous casts and would often sit on the same ledge in the mews touching one another. They fought over food if hungry, but would eat in close proximity to each other if each had their own piece.

Training two birds together is more than twice as difficult as training one, as a minor problem with one would snowball into a major problem with two. Activities that include kites, balloons, strings, live pigeons, dogs and sometimes the unwanted attentions of passage black sparrow hawks often prove to be a bit unnerving, and tame steady falcons make things a lot less hectic. I have also found that teaching them to use the hunting vehicle as a base resulted in a lot less "cleanup time" after one of these mishaps.

One incident concerning all of the above springs to mind, and happened just prior to entering the third cast of tiercels. The kite that was supposed to take the bait up started falling slowly out of the sky, just as I unhooded the second tiercel. The first tiercel couldn't believe his luck and came shooting in from the low pitch he had gained to snatch the bait. The parachute line had wound round the kite line and wouldn't release the bait so he hung there flapping as the kite slowly descended. This attracted the attentions of a passing female black spar that came powering in to try and help. I let go the kite line and ran towards them shouting profanities at the top of my voice. The pigeon in my pocket, woken by this disturbance made a successful bid for freedom and was pursued into the distance by the second tiercel and the dog.

The black spar proved to be a surprisingly sensitive soul and recoiled at my invective. It made a dignified departure to more cultured climes while I now frantically tried to lure back the second tiercel that was fast becoming a dot on horizon. As it disappeared from view I heard a rustling sound coming from the direction of the first tiercel. He had now swallowed the dove wing attached to the parachute without first detaching it from the string and was now trying to tow parachute and kite towards the swung lure while avoiding disgorging its dove wing. Those of you who have caught fish hook line and sinker will know that unhooking such a beast is not easy. Add to this the fact that the "fish" has two sets of very sharp talons and life gets more complicated. I was compelled to stop luring the second tiercel for fear of the first ripping its own crop out and had to prioritise the rapidly escalating crises.

I ran back to the truck for a knife and returned to find the rather thoughtful looking tiercel, still attached to the kite by the parachute string. I cut the string as close as possible to its beak and watched as the end slipped into its crop. Freed of this restraint he stepped up onto the glove for a second snack and was jessed up and hooded. As I walked back to the truck I heard the sound of hawk bells approaching and with a delicate tinkle the second tiercel alighted on the roof of the vehicle having given up chasing the pigeon and returned to his base. I put down the first bird and called the second bird onto my fist where he too was jessed and hooded. All that then remained was to roll up the kite line. By the time that was done the dog had returned and we all went home to fight another day.

The initial entering of young birds can also become interesting as they collide with one another while stooping the same quarry, they hit fences and trees, get stuck in thorn bushes and have fights on the ground when one catches the quarry and the other is hungry. This often results in the quarry escaping and the two hawks mauling your hand as you try to separate them. I have found that about two to three fights is all it takes to sort out the pecking order, and if you make a habit of calling the second bird down to a lure or dead pigeon the moment the first one binds to the prey they soon stop trying to pirate food from one another and wait their turn. Once this habit is established it is often possible to leave the first bird on its kill and continue hunting with the second if there is more quarry around.

During the last season with my third cast I left one of the tiercels on the ground with his prey, a laughing dove, and went hunting with the second. After ten or fifteen minutes the first tiercel reappeared in the sky and joined the hunt again. When I finally stopped hunting I went back to the spot I had left him and found the dead dove hidden under a grass tussock completely untouched apart from the broken neck. He did this several more times in the season, particularly when he caught a small bird that flushed inadvertently.

This will possibly lay the groundwork for much longer multiple kill hunts, where the length of the hunt will be determined by the fitness of the falconer not the falcon.

It took some years and close observation before I really understood the aerodynamics involved when a flying quarry evades a stooping falcon. I now believe it works something like this. The quarry on being evicted from cover has two choices, dump and risk being caught by the dog or man, or stay in the air and evade the falcon. If it chooses the latter, which it will if the eviction has been forceful enough, it

has nowhere near the top end speed of a stooping falcon and it is quickly overhauled. To avoid being struck the prey can stall upwards, dive downwards and dump or roll to one or other side. Very often the stall or swerve maneuver is sufficient to evade the falcon which goes shooting past, leaving the slower but more maneuverable quarry time to regain cover. However when a cast is flown at the same quarry under the same circumstance the balance of the hunt changes in the following manner.

If the quarry stalls upwards it has insufficient air speed to perform any other maneuver. At this stage it is extremely vulnerable to a strike from a second falcon, following in the wake of the first.

If the quarry dumps and jumps, it often jumps up straight in the line of flight of the second falcon and is hammered back into the grass, usually DOA.

If it just dumps the dog catches it.

If the second falcon is following closely it will usually strike the quarry very hard, usually killing it outright. If it is a little out of position it is slower off the mark and will usually take the quarry by binding to it.

The only way the quarry escapes is by out flying both birds or finding cover so thick and thorny that the dog cannot get to it.

The use of the second falcon means hawking can be very productive in enclosed areas where one falcon would have little chance of making consistent kills. I think that the falcons also learn to use the cover to conceal their approach, and I have seen several doves taken as they dodged round a tree straight into the feet of the second falcon coming from the opposite direction.

A short excerpt from one of my hunting reports describes how even crafty and evasive quarry like pied starlings can be taken in enclosed surroundings with a co-operative cast.

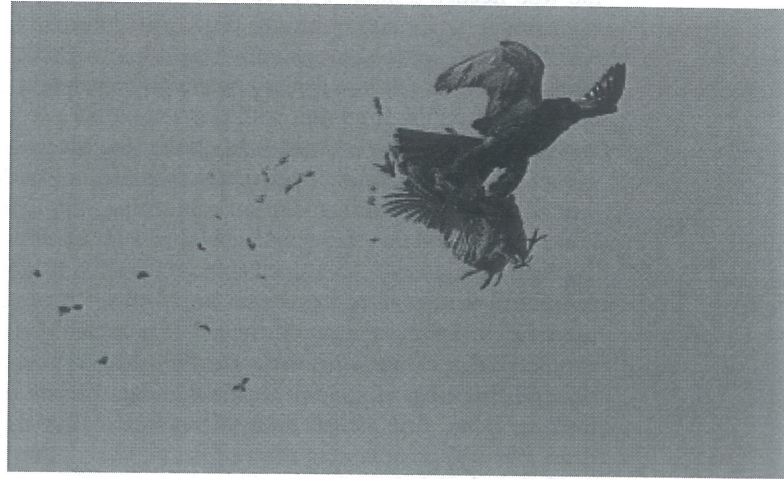
“We took a few more doves and then one day found a flock of pied starlings feeding with doves on some spilled peanuts. I put the boys up and instant pandemonium broke out with starlings shrieking and doves piling into cover. The majority of the starlings made a rapid exit down a line of thorn trees. One had however broken away from the main flock and was confined to several thorn trees about forty meters from the thick bush. A well aimed rock dislodged it from the thorn tree and it made a bid to cross the firing zone. It did a dump and jump to evade the first stoop, a very sharp turn back to the tree it had just left to avoid the second stoop, a momentary climb to avoid the gaping jaws of Ginger and smack, it lay kicking in the grass, the victim of a right angled strike by Paddy. The whole hunt had taken about three minutes and after some seventeen years of flying small long wings I had my first ever pied starling in the bag!”

Larger than normal quarry are also caught more easily with a cast, and with less risk to the falcons. The struggles of dikkop on the ground are cut short by the arrival of a second set of talons, and even the toughest cock swainsons are pummeled out of the air by two tiercels less than half its size. While neither of these species are regulars on my quarry list I am able to take them when the opportunity arises, adding to the variety of the hunting experience.

In summary it can be said that small game hawking in semi-enclosed bushveld works well with a cast of tiercels and can provide daily flights of high quality at common species of quarry.

It also expands the prey base in terms of huntable species and certainly tests the falconers organizational and fitness skills. I think larger falcons could also provide excellent sport in casts, particularly at swainsons and guinea fowl in bushveld conditions. It would also be a very interesting manner in which to pursue the Egyptian goose in the wheat lands of the Western Cape.

I hope this article will provide some food for thought for those frustrated astringers who don't have easy access to wide open spaces but who long to fly game with falcons. I would now like to hear from anyone who has tried two black spars hunting together from the soar. The road ahead beckons.



Howard Waller, our Dubai Connection. Start to finish: the production of a quality hunting falcon.

Sometimes Bad turns out Good

Dawid Botes

On the 23rd of March I had a late afternoon hunt with my friends. It was a cold afternoon and we haven't seen the sun for several days. Normally the hunting party includes Gielie the horse, Sproete and Dennis two of my eight favorite GSP's, and Harriett the Harris.

Now as you are well aware, a Harris does not like dogs much. They seemingly struggle with a constant temptation to rather take the dog and leave the guinea. Perhaps they conceptualize dogs as inferior beings. Harriet is two years old and is actually very well tempered. She does not mind Gielie at all. For her to run up and down his back is as normal as sitting on a branch.

Anyhow that day I luckily did not take Gielie with. We had a lot of rain and I was worried he might step on a collapsing anthill. Harriet was vibrant and ready. I was hunting for four days in a row and she really got the swing of it. Soon Sproete and Dennis were holding a point in long grass and Harriet was visual slicing the point to try and make out what they were pointing at. The next moment a 750 gram guinea took off and by its dropping, it was clear it sensed trouble. It flew about 30 meters then decided to rather dash into the long grass. Harriett did something she hasn't done before. She started to climb straight up in the air and the next moment she closed her wings and stoop into the grass. What a spectacular catch. I switched the kill with a titbit and continue hunting. It was then that things gone bad. Sproete suddenly gave a cry as she jumped sideways. I could barley see her in the long grass. She was cautiously investigating something in front of her. Harriett bated at something in front of Sproete but I held her back. When I reached Sproete I saw the two blood spots on her foreleg. I new it was bad. The holes were about 2 cm apart and were bleeding strong. She turned around and lay down, looking at me as if she wanted to say "I am in trouble". From then on things happened fast. I decided my dog would not die. There was no time to pray, I went over to a strait bargaining conversation with God. The landowner was on a nearby hill watching the hunt. I phoned him to come and pick me up. My cruiser was about 500 meters away. He immediately responded and was driving towards me through the veld.

As I was watching him and knowing this is my help to the vet, I saw how his bakkie was sucked into a hole. He was stuck. I didn't even phone him. I grabbed Sproete in my arms that by now was in shock with irregular breathing and dilated pupils. So I started to run, Sproete in my arms, Harriett on my head and Dennis in front. Although I am a young 50 years old I realized that I was not fit enough. After about 200 meters my spiritual bargaining shifted from Sproete towards myself. I soon realized it's now me who needed a miracle to reach the cruiser. Matters got complicated with Harriett not very used to my running while sitting on my head. She constantly fell off. That triggered a couple of swearwords, which I then had to apologize for because I was still in conversation with God. Anyhow you get the picture. So what felt like a year I eventually reached my cruiser in record time. I put Dennis in the back and Sproete on the front seat with Harriett on her perch. I let go of my grip that I had on Sproete's leg and strapped my belt around most of the leg. So with no breath I drove off to the vet that was about 20Km away. I phoned my wife so that she can notify the vet that I was on my way with Sproete. As I was driving I realized that Harriett was sitting very calm. She curiously looked upon Sproete. It was as if she understood that things had gone bad and therefore allowed Sproete so close to her.

The vet took a look and agreed that things do not look well. Only then he discovered that he had no cobra anti-venom so of I go again to collect it from another vet. I couldn't see what snake it was but according to the symptoms we agreed on a cobra. The vet anyhow gave both puff adder and cobra anti-venom. He gave her something for the pain and cortisone at the site of the injury. An hour later I decided that most of the poison should have reached her system and that the worst is probably over. I took her home, drip and all. I know how it feel if you get at the vet the next morning and find your dog dead. She was complaining most of the night and after severe vomiting in the early morning she started to sleep relaxed. I couldn't believe her condition the next day although limping, she was well and started to eat. The swelling was much less and I new she was going to make it. So, bad things can turn out good. Thanks to all who helped. I still pay my promises.



Inlay Imping

Thys Walters

Years ago at a falconry meet I was prepared to show an imping method of my design, when one falconer exclaimed: "We don't break feathers." Well, I did not show it then, though I have shown it to a few people, even abroad on a visit to British Columbia.

When a feather bends badly, the spongy material inside gets damaged, while the outer, stronger layer keeps it from breaking off completely. It only breaks off when it continuously bends from side to side till the outer shaft layer breaks.

As the saying goes: "Prevention is better than cure." When a feather bends, the falconer should, as soon as possible, secure the bird by hand and hold that feather above a boiling kettle's spout. Hold the feather at a 45-degree angle, with the bird lower than the spout, to enable the steam to rise safely away from the bird. Always keep your hand in between the bird's body and the steam, to rather burn yourself before the bird does. The steam repairs the spongy material at the center of the shaft, and when done after the slightest bend, can be so effective as to never bend there again.

The second stage is where the shaft continuously bends from side to side and will break off completely. The old method was to cut the feather off at that area and insert a needle into each shaft and push them together with glue in-between. This usually creates a problem when the feather does not line up, but is twisted at an angle. This will affect the bird's appearance and flight.

When a feather needs to be cut off as it hangs only by a thread, take care to not cut through the whole feather, but use the scissor point only at the shaft. A V shape is then created by the veins of each side of the central shaft, which should line up when impeded. I prefer to use Super Glue sparingly and sprinkle cement or plaster of Paris powder there on, while wet, to stop flow and build up the effected area. This is where my proposal comes in useful, to repair the feather before it gets damaged even further.

Secure the bird and steam the feather, as described above, to get the shaft straight as possible. Give the bird time to rest and the feather to dry before the bird is held again. An assistant would hold the bird in position, wrapped in a thin cloth with only that wing or tail exposed. Use masking tape to wrap around its extended toes and also combine both legs to prevent damage to the feet or yourself. Hood the bird if possible and if necessary put a bit of tape around the falcons slightly open beak, to prevent biting.

Make sure the bird can breathe easily and will not overheat. During the procedures the bird will lay on its back. A piece of paper can be woven through the feathers, to only expose the damaged feather. Make an incision at the central groove, along the length of the shaft, of approximately 13mm with the damaged area halfway in between. Use the point of a thin bladed knife to cut only two thirds into the shaft. With the back of the knife push one to three metal brush pins, cut to size into the groove. Let a bit of super glue run into the groove and sprinkle cement powder on it to suck up the glue, giving it strength while it dries fast to prevent other feathers from getting stuck.

This method works so well that the impeded feather would slide back into place, without a trace. A good idea would be to practice the procedure on a detached feather.

The falconer should keep in mind to discover the cause if a number of feathers break at a specific area.

Book Review

A. Burns

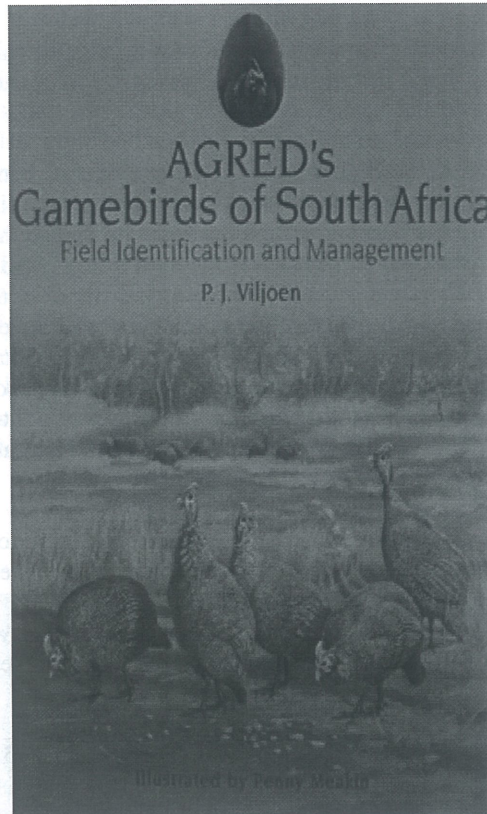
AGRED's Gamebirds of South Africa

Field Identification and Management

P.J. Viljoen

(Illustrated by Penny Meakin)

ISBN 0 - 9584943 - 3 - 9



The African Gamebird Research and Education Development Trust (AGRED) was formed in 1990 to research South African Gamebirds for the purpose of increasing and maintaining their populations. Obviously, as falconers, the sustainable use and availability of such quarry renders this recently released book of extreme interest.

The book consists of two parts. The first is a top-notch gamebird identification guide with magnificent paintings and diagrams (by Penny Meakin) of the different species classed as gamebirds (62 species). Some of those listed are also birds that are no longer regarded as game and their inclusion would be to enable the wingshooter /falconer etc to distinguish and identify those species that *can* be utilized in a sustainable manner from those that cannot.

The second part of the book focuses on actual management of gamebirds in South Africa. It contains some general ecological principles for the reader to digest and then moves onto such management topics as: harvesting of gamebirds, predator control, captive breeding, reintroduction and habitat manipulation. Obviously this section of the book is of great value to landowners / managers who wish to "farm for gamebirds."

If ever you were in need of book as a reference guide, to influence landowners to adopt "best management practices," or simply to increase your general knowledge then you must purchase this truly excellent product. In so doing you will also be supporting an organization that has the interests of gamebirds, their habitat and those who wish to utilize such resources, at heart.

AGRED's website is: www.agred.com
P O Box 87070, Houghton, 2041



A Falcon in the Hand – Bronze by Thys Walters

Obituary - Richard Harper – Ronald

28.06.1969 – 14.04.2006

“I have a hawk, a dog and friendship and lack nothing. May my spirit fly forever.”

The South African falconry community lost another of her falconry sons with the tragic death of Richard Harper – Ronald in the early hours of the 14th of April 2006 in an 11 car pileup on the N1 highway.

Richard was born in the United Kingdom and as a youngster moved to Zimbabwe with his family where he fell in love with Africa and his first love, falconry. As a young schoolboy his first introduction to falconry was through Reg Querl and later Richard was to mentor under Kevin Nicholson.

After school Richard joined the British Army where he trained as a recovery mechanic. He was based in the UK for a couple of years as well as a few years in Germany. During his time in the Army he did a tour of duty in Northern Ireland and served his country well during Desert Storm.

After his military tour Richard found himself on South Africa's shores for a short while. On returning to the UK he landed a job doing overland driving tours from the UK to Cape Town. With Richards's exposure of the overland business, he saw a niche in the market, and together with his father Jake opened a camp site "The Rocks" in Zimbabwe, catering for the needs of over Landers. After a couple of years of success but with the volatile situation developing in Zimbabwe, Richard sold up and moved across the "Boerewors Curtain." Richard arrived at WildThingZ Animal Park in Polokwane looking for a temporary job of no more than 3 months. After more than four years with us his time was cut short.

Richard was very involved in the formation of the Limpopo Falconers Club and served on the Committee of the LFC from its inception to his passing. His role from the beginning of the LFC was that of the Assistant Secretary and that of Club Secretary for the year 2005. Richard was very active with the LFC's younger membership and was mentor to many fine young falcons. To mention two youngsters that mentored under Richard, Tokka Lerm and Ruan Botha, are a testimony of Richards success not only by the outstanding hawks they fly but also by their dedication to the club and falconry, with Ruan been voted onto the LFC Committee for 2006. The Limpopo Falconers Club has decided in honour of Richard to create a memorial floating trophy for the most improved young falconer, the "Richard Harper – Ronald Memorial Trophy".

Richard flew a good hawk and ran a good dog (which as he informed many of us at the LFC's AGM and Field Meet on the 08.04.2006 never chased she just followed Bunnies to see if they would show her where the birds were at). Richards's first love was a Musket Black Spar. "Viper" and later "Vam" enthralled many of us with their flying skills, and accounted for many a full bag. Unfortunately both of these fine hawks came to an untimely end. "Vam" died four weeks before Richard and as he had a very special place in Richards's heart he was cremated with Rich.

Richard lived life to the full and will be missed by many. Much to his girlfriend Adel and non falconry friends disgust, a holiday for Richard was in the Free State either at SAFA Tweespruit or Vrede hunting his hawks. While sorting out Richards estate and packing his goods I came across a key ring from his step mother. This key ring summed up my, and Viv Bristow's staff member and good friend Richard to a tee –

"I'm immature, unorganized, irresponsible, lazy and loud, but I'm Fun"

Richards hawking journal ends on the afternoon of the 13.04.2006 with –

"Thor" (Tiercel Peregrine) Shit!! Needs more time on the Kite. "Blaze" (Female Bl. Spar from SANBOPC) great flight on young Guinea, far too easy a kill. Second flight on adult Guinea, long chase through trees ending in kill out of sight. "Gizmo" (Male Passage Lanner) Go on, best flight ever, great pitch stooping and cutting a Crested Frankie stone dead wow"





(Photo: Patrick Seeton)

“I wish to leave you with one final image. I find this an enormously evocative photograph that speaks of environmental degradation, global warming and the conflict of the progress of mankind with nature. But it says something else, as neither the newspaper, which published it, nor, in all probability, 99% of all readers knew what they had. Most people don’t even notice the peregrine in the picture.

So, over all, it is the falconers’ duty to keep alive that intangible spark, that empathy, within us, that unites man and raptor and which causes us to value and cherish them.”

From address to the Bird of Prey Working Group Annual Meeting, Sterkfontein Dam, March 2006.
Adrian Lombard.