

MEWS VIEWS

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SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY ASSOCIATION

Front cover: "Tiara" by David Reid-Henry
(Reproduced per kind permission of Bruce Henry)



D.M. Henry. Falcons in Flight - Merlin and Peregrine. Pencil.

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Photo: H. von Michaelis

EDITORIAL

In 2008 SAFA will host the International Association for Falconry AGM, in conjunction with the SAFA Field Meet, and we expect an influx of foreign falconers. While working on plans for the meet I realized that there is a characteristic of recent Southern African falconry that is a great source of satisfaction. This characteristic is the number of young falconers, particularly school kids, who are coming up through the ranks.

The last SAFA Field Meet will stand out because of the youngsters who were there; their successes and their barely averted catastrophes. We are hoping to have a good contingent of Zim falconers in 2008 and that these will include the Falcon College boys. Falconry is often perceived as a medieval sport which is kept alive by a group of eccentric "nutters" and which has no real place in today's modern world, rather like playing the Harpsichord or dancing the Madrigal (whatever that might be). Indeed these youngsters give the lie to that perception. Because of them, falconry is a vital and thriving activity, with significance in today's world, albeit practiced by a relatively small group of dedicated individuals.

Falconry is of significance, and has a definite role to play, in the conservation of raptors and of the natural environment. The loss of contact with the natural world by westernized children is a disaster for effective nature conservation. It provides fertile ground for the woolly thinking of the Animal Rights activists. These activist groups are well funded and are increasingly threatening to good conservation principles as enshrined in the Convention on Biodiversity. Falconry can distract young minds from play-stations and virtual chat-rooms and introduce them to the real principles of the natural world. Falconry is a minimally consumptive, sustainable use activity that encourages involvement in outdoor life and the conservation of nature. As such it should be lauded and promoted by conservationists. Whilst this is not the case worldwide, it is becoming the case in South Africa.

I hope that articles in this edition mirror these aspects of South African Falconry. Following the tradition of previous years, I have selected a Falconry Artist who is of significance to the heritage of this region, David Reid-Henry. Permission to use some of his art was kindly given by his brother, Bruce, to whom we are indebted.

This edition also contains a number of articles by younger falconers, including the boys of Penryn College, detailing their experiences, and I welcome this input. These young guys are the future of falconry. They will build on our achievements as well as inheriting our problems. It is a great pleasure to see them attending the SAFA Meet and contributing to the magazine. Nowhere else in the world can claim to have schools that include falconry in their activities and nowhere else are young falconers so evident. We need to encourage and grow this asset. We also need to see it extended to all the population groups in our country and truly share our heritage in the Rainbow Nation.

Adrian Lombard

June 2007

Please note that views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the opinions of SAFA or of the Editor.

Thanks are expressed to all contributors, in particular Francois Breedts for use of his photographs. The source of photos is not generally acknowledged in the publication.
Ed.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Boland

In review of the current world status of all hunting practices, which include falconry and the "onslaught" we face from concerned "green" interest groups, it's time for all concerned to re- evaluate structures, practices and principles to ensure that we maintain and keep our hunting tradition.

Daily, hunting traditions and structures are globally challenged in the media, by well-funded "green" groups, regarding their methods and practices. Despite the reporting often being subjective, the negative interpretations could have devastating effects.

Locally it will only be a matter of time before we will have to endure the same challenges.

The first step for every falconer and falconry club is to evaluate his/her/their own methods of practice, management and the possible interpretation thereof.

All South African falconry clubs and their respective members need to look beyond individual differences, find common ground, stand together, interact proactively in a constructive manner that's fair, not subjective, and transparent to secure and ensure the continued practice of falconry nationally.

Not only do we need to be responsible in our practices, but also accountable as our actions could finally be negatively interpreted by public opinion, that could determine a doomsday future.

As a small club with limited resources we have had a good year.

Personally for me big has never been beautiful and if we continue the way we are, currently we will soon be leading the way in club management. We first need to crawl before we can walk.

The fact that beside our Constitution and Club Rules, we can be proud of our Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Code, Policy and procedures.

Due to the sensitive nature of falconry we have ensured effective and efficient management and a code of good practice.

Our Policy: The Boland Falconry Club undertakes to maintain disciplinary and appeal procedures, which are fair, just and equitable for all its members without any discrimination or victimisation.

The main purpose of the disciplinary procedure is to provide guidelines for correcting unacceptable behavior or unsatisfactory performance by any member and to ensure a high standard of falconry ethics and practice that will not bring the art or practice of falconry into any form of disrepute.

Members are advised to study all club protocols. Should you require any documents or help in the interpretation of documents and protocols, contact me and I will do my utmost to assist to ensure good governance and understanding.

Maybe it's time to review in essence falconry and maybe, if we move away from the concept of practicing falconry as a sport and practice falconry more as an art, the connotation of a cruel blood sport will fade. Possibly through these efforts acceptance will follow.

Personally I believe falconry is a dedicated art. Factually all conservation efforts ever initiated and implemented to protect and conserve raptors were initiated by falconers. These conservation roots needs to be understood and respected.

Finally members need to evaluate themselves and through their actions behave in such a manner that their actions will be seen as responsible and accountable. Being responsible and accountable in the field will in the long run protect falconry as a whole. Just remember your club is your falconry passport.

Johan Botes flew a female peregrine to good effect taking mainly duck. Lizette Botes flew a once intermewed Black Sparrowhawk , hunting Cape Francolin and Dikkop. Wehan Geldenhuys obtained a Gyr Saker Hybrid from Ryan Hartley. After initially receiving the wrong bird, the hybrid was obtained in exchange, but this bird lacked stamina from the outset and eventually died, the autopsy showing the cause of death to be aspergilosis. Etienne Venter obtained a female Jackal Buzzard.

Wehahn Geldenhuys

Cape Falconry Club

The Cape Club has now been in existence for 15 years, since falconry was legalized in the Cape Province. These years have not been uneventful but have, on reflection, included a great deal of fun and excitement. They have seen a strengthening of our relationship with CapeNature (our conservation authority), involvement of falconers in Raptor Conservation with our inclusion in the BOPWG Regional Raptor Forum and entrenchment of our involvement in raptor rehabilitation with the formal establishment of the Raptor Rehabilitation Forum. They have also seen the development of mutual respect and co-operation, I believe, between falconers and the principle raptor researchers in the region. More recently we have seen the emergence of animal rights sentiments which may have an impact on falconry activities. To address this issue we have had two members, Suzette Du Toit and Jackie Furno, qualify as Animal Welfare Inspectors.

We have had 22 active falconers in the province over the past year. We are also pleased to see Julius Koen active again in the Northern Cape where he flew a peregrine bred by Steven Squires. Ed Oettle has continued to fly his Gyr/Peregrine tiercel, Lancelot, to good effect and provided some stunning flights on duck. Hank Chalmers flew his imprint Black Spar, Tundra, who is a superb bird and lethal to the local gamebirds. He also flew a cast of peregrines about which I will say more shortly. John Neumann continued to fly his Black Spar, Saskwatch (Big-foot) and kept his larder well supplied with guineafowl. Bryan Vorster Flew a number of birds including a female Gyr/Saker with which he had quite a bit of fun and managed to put some pressure on the Egyptian Geese. Bryan has now left Ratanga Junction and has set up his bird display at a new venue just outside Cape Town and we wish him luck with this new venture. Alan Woodford continues to

quietly get the job done. He has flown a passage peregrine falcon to considerable effect on duck over the past season.

Suzette Du Toit has flown her female Harris Hawk; aptly name Mortitia to the detriment of the local guineas. In one particular hunt, Mortitia took a long chase on a flock of guineas into a thicket. When Suzette arrived on the scene, she found the flock standing nervously silent around the thicket. She found a dead guinea lying on the ground and a trail of spotted feathers leading into the thicket. Following these in, she found her hawk holding two other guineas by their necks. One was already dead but the other made good its escape. This flock had learned the error of trying to mob Mortitia off her kill. Reiner Kraus, a recent addition to our club, is also flying Harris Hawks and has a very effective male and female cast, which have just bred.

One of the more unusual events of the previous year involved the arrival, in Cape Town docks of an oil rig from off the coast near Saldanah. I was contacted by the captain and informed that some hawks had nested in the rig and had chicks. The parents had followed the rig down the coast but deserted when it entered the harbor. Hank was sent to investigate and found 3 peregrine chicks at brancher stage. These were rescued. Hank kept a tiercel and falcon which he is now flying as a cast. The third, a falcon, went to Thys Walters, in his mountain retreat in the Koue Bokkeveldt where he flew her before passing her on to me as he wished to concentrate on the Black Eagle which he is training to slope soar and enter on Egyptian Geese.

It has been good to see a number of young falconers progressing through the ranks. Zayin Vermaak and George Buttery both flew effective African Goshawks and were awarded their B Grading and have subsequently taken up Black spars. Kevan Hearshaw has gained his hard-won A Grading and is flying a Peregrine falcon bred by Steven Squires. John Stuart has graded as an apprentice and is flying a common kestrel which he is attempting to enter on birds.

We have had some breeding successes. Both Reiner Kraus and Bryan Vorster have bred their Harris hawks and produced some promising youngsters. Mala Malan produced one Gyr/Saker hybrid. Bryan Vorster also produced one African Goshawk chick. Sadly, my productive pair of Af. Goses were killed by a genet cat in a pen that I believed was critter-proof.

One of the projects of the club over the past year has been the finding and monitoring of Black sparrowhawk nests, with considerable effort from a group of falconers which included Tony Pitzer, Hank Chalmers and myself. Some 22 nests were monitored, from which we finally harvested 2 chicks.

Adrian Lombard

Reiner's Sally with eggs



Suzette with Morticia



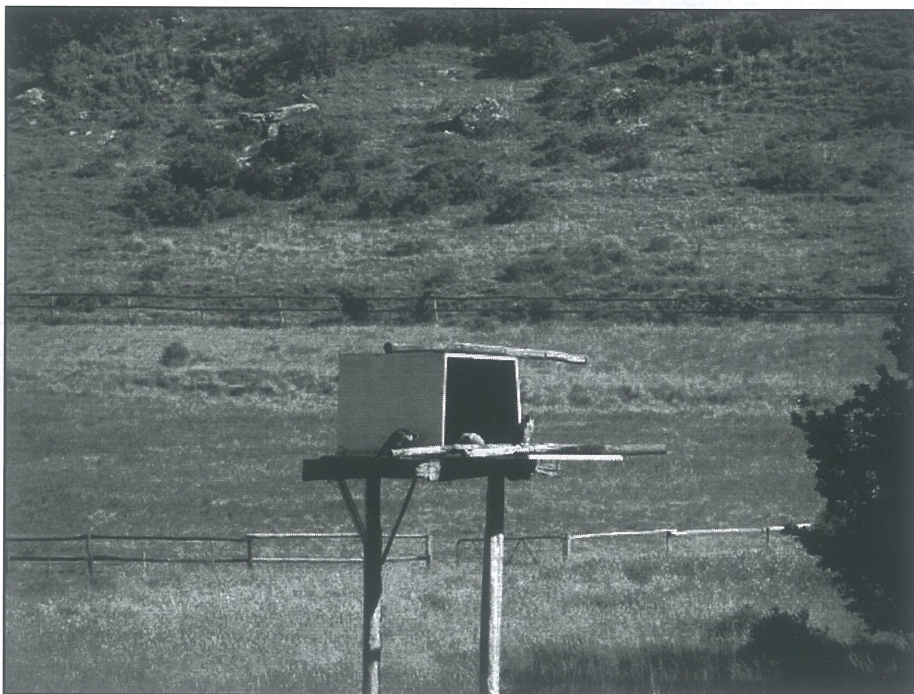
Eastern Cape

There has been some positive movement on the legal front in the past year. Conservation has finally accepted the policy document we have put forward. They have agreed to most of what we have asked for except they still have an issue with allowing hybrids and exotics. We are working on this. Our members have also attended the regional raptor group meetings with some positive feedback, however we also have some individuals in the raptor conservation group who are rabidly anti-falconry and we need to do some work here. The club helped with the rehabbing of two broods of peregrines that come from urban eyries. This is a yearly occurrence with the fledglings ending up in the streets. Alan Stephenson and I spent a week in Mpumalanga with the Teita survey group looking for new breeding sites and doing raptor population counts. This survey was run by Dr Andrew Jenkins.

Our club membership now stands at six. New members are Mathew Hardwick who has recently joined and has to still pass his apprentice exam. Darren Kleynhans is also a new member and will be flying a rehab Af Gos. Aiden Zimmerman is flying a rehab tiercel Peregrine getting it ready for release. Arnold Slabbert flew a once intermewd imprint female Peregrine at redwing francolin in Port Elizabeth with great success. This bird will be used for breeding this season and Arnold will start a new bird, probably an eyas Peregrine. Andrew Pringle had a slow start with his musket black spar as it was a bit

short on feathers. He had some success on small birds and hopes for a good molt and a more productive season next year. My two peregrines, one an eyas female and the other a 3 times' intermewed passage female did well on the ducks. The eyas started doing the eyas thing mid season but came good in the end. My breeding project produced three eyas Peregrines of which two were hacked back unintentionally (they decided to disperse the day before they were to be taken up) and the other one went to the Gauteng club.

Alan Stevenson



Eastern Cape Peregrines at hack.

Free State

Francois Breedt is still flying Zin Zan at ducks with great success and had taken up two captive bred peregrines this season. Both were bred by Steven Squires in the Free State. One he released due to the difficulties associated with flying in extreme heat, and the second, Chicken Licken, is zooming round the sky.

Steven Squires continues to fly a cast of home bred tiercels at small game, and has recently obtained a European peregrine to fly at big quarry. Stay tuned to the station.

Anton Muller lost Captain Jack Sparrow, alias Black Jack to a marauding meercat and has since taken up a passage lanner tiercel.

Leigh Strapp, Carel de Jager and Johan Cronje are all flying Af. gosses in the Eastern Free State.

Trevor and James Oertel are both flying peregrines this year while James Blond continues to prey rapaciously on the Vrede wildlife in the company of a Black Spar

Angelo Grobelaar is still flying his intermewed hybrid and has settled with NASA out of court on the subject of the soiled satellites. His bird continues to refuse ducks and dikkops from immense height. He has therefore taken an Af. gos to fly at low altitude where we hope it will actually kill things.

To all those who are owed hoods and were looking forward to a weekend with Cathy in exchange therefore. The good news is that she is still gorgeous, the bad news is that she is about to produce infant number one. Unless you are into changing nappies I would advise pursuing the hood option.

Steve Lodge still flies his Hawk eagle, and has taken up a Gabar hacked by Anton Muller for this season.

Gert Pretorius is still our member at large and was last heard of in North Dakota but is planning on returning to the more temperate climes of Koppies in the near future. We look forward to hearing from him again.

Steven Squires bred five Peregrines this year and Francois Breedt has three pairs of Black Spars that are looking promising for the new season. His Gyrs are also looking good but are still too young for definite results.

The Free State Club continues to flourish and we have maintained a very cordial relationship with our Nature Conservation throughout the year. Well done guys!

Gauteng: Transvaal Falconry Club

Hawking

The season started off with the normal crop of new eyasses and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the warm weather, lack of gamebirds and diminishing flying areas around Johannesburg and Pretoria soon put a bit of a damper on the enthusiasm of some falconers. However, with perseverance and lots of traveling most eyasses are flying relatively well and starting to tally up a head count.

The Club saw a bit of a surge in membership with a number of new people joining and taking up birds.

Bronwyn Prytz, a veterinarian student successfully completed her entrance exam and took up a captive bred female African Goshawk. Bronwyn has taken a good number of head with her Gos to date consisting of the normal fare of Indian minors, feral pigeon, plovers etc.

Amanda Judson also received a male Af Gos from the breeding project. The bird was unfortunately lost shortly after being entered but was recovered 3 weeks later none the worse for the unplanned "hack". Amanda is now relocating to the Western Cape and taking her bird with her.

Gavin Phitides flew an eyass male Af gos that came in as a rehabilitation bird and was kindly passed on by the Dullstroom Bird of Prey Centre to the TFC. The bird proved an

excellent hunter and made numerous kills in the suburbs providing lots of fun for Gavin and his dad, Shane. As the Phitides family is moving back to the States the bird has been passed on to Brian Anderson. Brian is an old TFC member who has become active again. From all accounts Brian is having a field day with the bird taking numerous head every outing.

Johan van der Merwe and Dion Karsten took up kestrels and they are due to grade in the near future. Alex Glyphis has completed his exam and as soon as his trapping permit arrives will take up a kestrel. Other new members still waiting for birds are Dave Mitchell and Andre Glyphis.

Longstanding members flying Af gosses this season are Leon Havemann, Pieter Rabie, Colin Williams and Roger Nielson. At the time of writing these birds have just been taken up from the molt but are already making life for the urban Indian minor and plover population's hell.

Ray Thompson took up a male Black Spar ex Grant Neale. The bird took readily to the kite and chasing the lure dangled behind a speeding vehicle. It unfortunately suffered some scale damage on the legs after getting tangled on the perch and is currently being free mewed while it recovers.

Ronnie Watt lost his intermewed lanner recently and is busy trying to trap a new bird in time for the field meet in July.

Immature peregrines were taken up by Tim Wagner (1x female), Mark Labuschagne (2x females), Gary Warren (1 x female), Dirk Verwoerd (2x tiercels) and Grant Neale (1x female and 1x tiercel). Dirk has subsequently passed his tiercels on to Paul Strydom. Most of the young birds are starting to steady up, taking some wild quarry and hopefully will be putting on a decent showing by the field meet.

Dirk and Gary will also be taking up their intermewed peregrines in time for the meet.

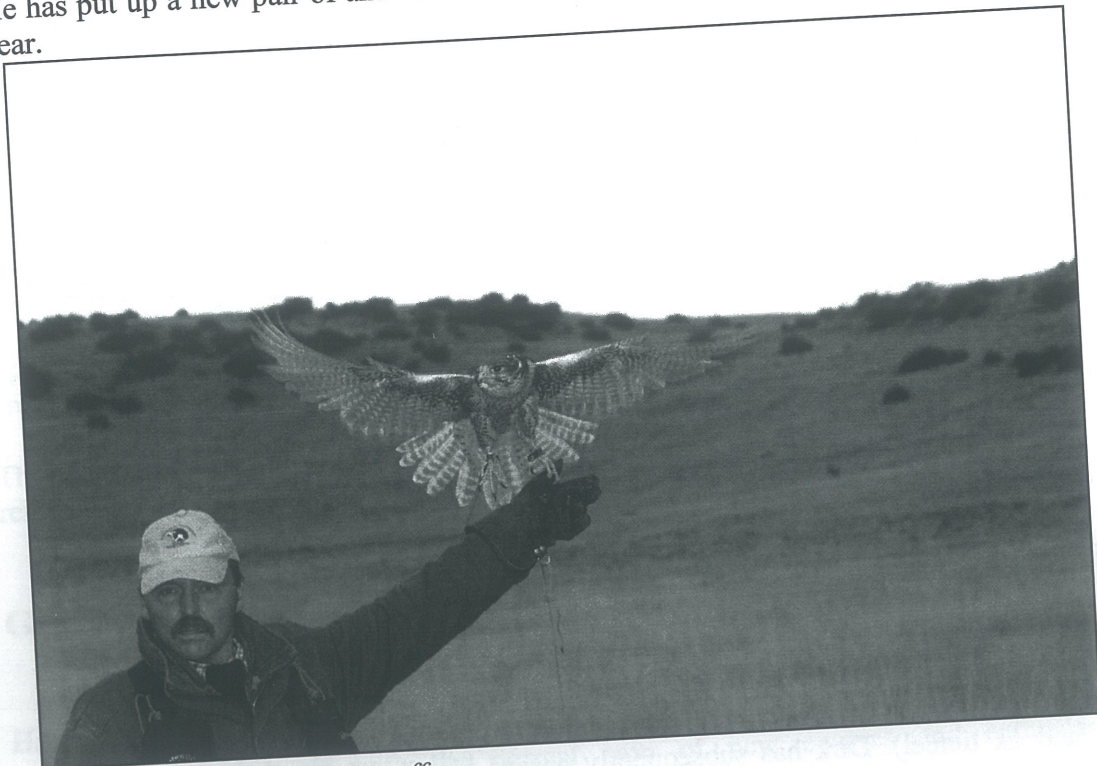
Breeding

The breeding project of Tim Wagner produced 10 eyass peregrines that were distributed to various falconers around the country. The imprint falcons – peregrines and prairies - produced numerous eggs but Tim was unable to get any fertile this time round. Hopefully some of the young jerkins and male peregrines will come on line this year to enable the production of some pere/prairies and gyr/peregrines.

The Black Spars again produced fertile eggs but the chicks died at pip.

Leon Havemann fledged four African Goshawks from his two pairs of birds. A male and female went to new members Amanda Judson and Bronwyn Prytz respectively. The other two chicks were donated to the Free State Falconry Club.

Pieter Rabie's pair of African Goshawks produced three unfertile eggs. He hopes for better results with this year's breeding and is also getting back one of the TFC's old pair of Goshawks that had moved to Mpumalanga. Grant Neale had a disappointing breeding season and was unable to produce any chicks. He has put up a new pair of anatums ex Shane Phitides and hopes for some success this year.



Mark Labuschagne casting off.

Kwa – Zulu Natal

The frosts have hit with a vengeance, the maize crops are coming down and duck flocks are arriving; a good time of the year for falconers. Here in Natal, falconry is in full swing as falconers dust off proven fowls or frantically try to acquire new birds for the season.

Nine longwings [3 Lanners and 6 Peregrines] are already strong on the wing and a good number of African Goshawks are already denting the Mynah population. Several new members have taken up hawks for the first time and this is always a positive sign.

Bruce Padbury had bad luck when his once intermewed Peregrine falcon was electrocuted. He is now starting a 2nd year passage male that he got from up North. Kyle Solmns is flying his cast of imprint peri tiercels and his third year imprint Lanner. His Lanner is flying really well and has taken 8 White-faced duck thus far; she still needs to be convinced that other duck should be added to the menu. Greg McBey is flying a new passage Peregrine falcon and a once intermewed wild hacked Lanner [8 month tame hack], he is also putting in some air time with his 3rd year Black eagle. Tom Davidson is

flying his 5 year old passage peregrine and is once again clubbing quackers. Last year Tom and Wary took about 40 duck. Considering the fact that Tom can now be considered as one of our more senior members and lives in less than perfect hunting country [middle of Hillcrest], this was no mean feat. Daryl Twiddy is putting his female peregrine into a breeding chamber but will continue to scare bunnies with his African Hawk eagle that must be at least 20 years old. Greg Jean Jacques has started a female Peri and is also targeting duck. Unfortunately many of our members are less active this year due to increased work pressures. John Bamber, Angus Burns and Alan Howell are a few of those thus afflicted.

Hopefully Natal will have a good turnout at the S.A.F.A. meet this year and will at least kick some butt seeing that we can not play rugby. Looking forward to a good turn out at Dullstroom. May the falconry Gods smile upon you all.

Greg McBey

Kyle with cast.



Limpopo

The 2007 season for the Limpopo Falconers Club started with a Field Meet at De Wet's Farm Polokwane from the 13 – 15 April 2007 with almost a 100% membership attendance.

What was very encouraging was the amount of future budding falconers at the meet, we can only hope that with the modern distractions like Computer Games, Play Station and the discovery of the opposite sex as they grow older won't divert them from their interest in falconry.

The LFC 2007 AGM was held during the course of the field meet in the early afternoon of the 14 of April 2007. At present the LFC has 19 paid up members.

The Office Bearers and Committee for 2007 are the following:

President – Dawid Botes
Secretary – Trevor Oertel

Paul Venter (Hon Member)
Lourens Coetzee (Ass. Secretary)
Etienne Hendricks

The “exclusive club of father-son falconers” was joined by Dawid Botes and his son Barend who joined the LFC – welcome. Again I think this is encouraging and can only help secure the future of falconry. Do we have a father daughter or father, son and grandson combination in South Africa? If not I sure it’s just a matter of time.

The bulk of the LFC membership is actively involved with the collection of data on birds of prey. Amongst others, this includes a grid of the Limpopo Province where all sightings and nest records are recorded. Data is also collected on the general condition of quarry species hunted and other interesting observations made. This information is passed on to the Conservation Authorities through Mr. Kobus Pienaar of the Department. This cooperation between the LFC and Kobus has gone a long way to cement understanding and appreciation for our raptors between various conservation disciplines. The help and assistance from Kobus is appreciated and the LFC can only hope that her membership will become more actively involved in raptor conservation under Kobus’s guidance.

The Limpopo Province, surprisingly, had a fair amount of rain last summer and the veldt on the whole is looking good. There does not seem to be a shortage of Quarry, so this hunting season should be interesting.

Trevor Oertel

Mpumalanga

2006 was a relatively successful year for the club. Various species of birds (peregrines, AHE (African Hawk Eagle), sparrowhawks, lanners, hybrids and African Goshawks) were successfully flown at various species of quarry. These included spurfowl, francolin, quail, plover, mouse birds, guinea fowl, squirrel, and mongoose.

We had 5 falconers attend the 2006 SAFA Meet, of which 3 were from Penryn College. The College falconers thoroughly enjoyed the experience and took a few head of quarry with their AGHs (African Goshawks). A notable flight was a 150m slip after a Swainsons Spurfowl which was taken in the air. The college falconry club membership has grown from 3 in 2006 to 7 in 2007. All are flying AGHs.

We have also gone to great lengths to strengthen our ties with the Mpumalanga Parks Board. We are, at this point in time, on a good footing with their officials. With the help and guidance of George Mc Allister, all 13 falconers had their mews inspected and had them repaired where necessary.

Breeding

Steve Van Rensburg's AGH's failed to breed in 2006. We have acquired 3 pairs of peregrines and hope to breed with them in 2007.

Members and their birds

George Mc Allister	A grade	2 x peregrine and 1x AHE
Steve Van Rensburg	A grade	2x peregrine falcon
Mark Holder	A grade	1x Black Sparrowhawk
Mark Bett	A grade	!x peregrine falcon
Mark Botha	B grade	1x Lanner
Rohan May	C grade	1x AGH
James Hertzermeyer	C grade	1x AGH
Gideon Stemmet	C grade	1x AGH
Willem Burger	C grade	1x AGH
Wentzel Burger	C grade	1x AGH
Josh Meaker	C grade	1x AGH
Duncan Roberson	C grade	1x AGH
Ross Leslie	C grade	1x AGH
Vitzent Vd Linde	A grade	1x peregrine

Steven Van Rensburg

*George McAlister with
Peregrine.*



PENRYN COLLEGE FALCONRY CLUB REPORT

Penryn College is a private school situated in the heart of the Lowveld and is located on the top of a hill overlooking the picturesque town of Nelspruit. Penryn is about 15 years old and was established when the team of founders walked into the veldt and saw a long crested eagle thermalling above the proposed site for the school. The decision was made that it must be a sign from God and that the school was to be built on that particular location. So, since the inception of Penryn, birds of prey have played an important role and, till today, are kept as the symbol of the school. Therefore it is not surprising that Penryn has a falconry club of which we are very proud. Penryn College is the only school offering Falconry in South Africa and one of three in Southern Africa.

The Penryn Falconry Club started about six years ago under the auspices of Dr. R Jansen and Mr. Van Rensburg. With a steady interest from learners, the club started small and has grown to what it is today. At Penryn the learners have to write 3 exams before they qualify for a bird. Once they have qualified they are given no slack and are routinely inspected by Mr George McAlister and Conservation Services.

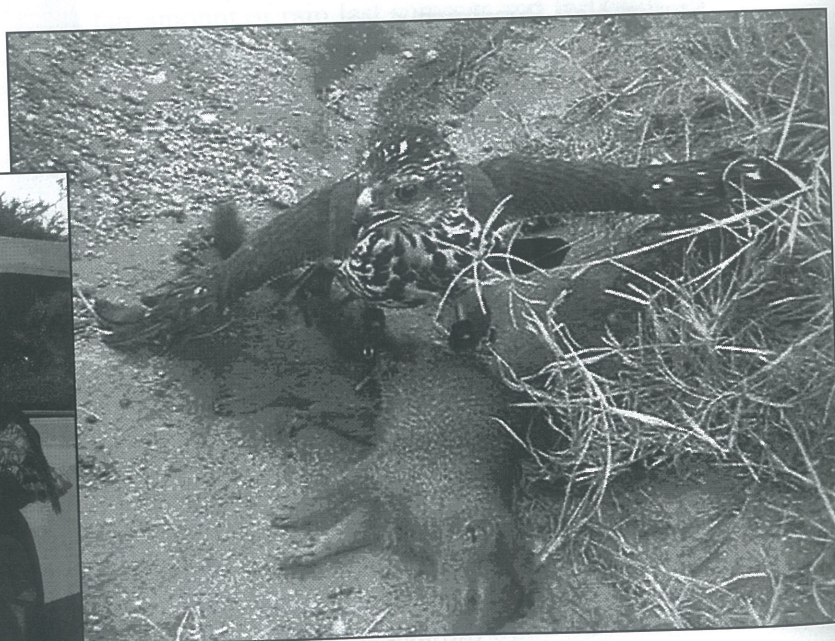
The club now consists of seven falconers and Mr Van Rensburg. We now officially have our first female falconer and looking forward to a few more in the future. All the falconers at this stage are at c-grade and are all flying African Goshawks (AGHs). We have five females and two muskets. We also have 2 small breeding programmes which includes AGH and African Peregrine Falcons.

Together the guys have tonnes of fun in the bush and on our daily outings to the various farms. Two of the Gosses are exceptionally large and thus they tend to go for bigger quarry and provides hours of enjoyment. Breeze, the one female, surprised us one afternoon when she took down a slender tailed mongoose. Jezebel, another huge bird, was flown at francs (Swainson's Spurfowl) at the 2006 SAFA field meet. She took them down one after the other. Bullet, a small female, started 2007 off with a bang. Her tally to date is 24 kills, which include 2 guinea fowl taken in the air.

The club is also a rehab facility and we regularly get in injured birds which we care for. These birds are assessed to see if they can be released back into the wild. If so, they are trained under falconry conditions, flown for a season or two and then released back into the wild.

Gideon Stemmet

Penryn Club Chairman



Breeze on a Slender Mongoose

"Rouges Gallery", Willem Ross and Gideon with their Af. Gosses..

- Mews Views -

*Right: Capt Jack Sparrow in the field.
See "Free State Report".*



Left: "Saskwach". See Cape Falconry Club

*Breeding falcons
In the Eastern
Cape.*



SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY ASSOCIATION: 2006 REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY. KEARNEY, NEBRASKA.

Since our previous report, The South African Falconry Association has experienced a year that has been characterized by a number of events of significance to our sport. We have received welcome support and advice from the IAF and, for this, I wish to offer our sincere thanks. In particular, I wish to thank J. M. Rodrigues Villa, Robert Kenwood and Gary Timbrell for their willing and patient assistance with my various requests. I also wish to thank the CIC and in particular, their South African representative, Gerhard Damm, who has proved to be a real friend in need.

Historically, SAFA's first battles were to win the acceptance of the Conservation Authorities in the 9 different provinces of South Africa. This battle has largely been won with Falconry policies in place, or in process, in each of these provinces. The next battle was to win the acceptance of the Conservation organizations and NGOs. This past year has seen the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with The Bird of Prey Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa's foremost wildlife conservation organization. Furthermore, this Group has established Regional Raptor Conservation Forums and Falconers are represented on each and every one, as well as in the Advisory Committee of the BoPWG.

Our latest challenges have come in the form of new regulations which aim to govern and direct hunting within South Africa. These include the Regulations concerning the Norms and Standards of Hunting in South Africa, as well as Regulations Controlling the Hunting of Rare and Endangered Species in South Africa. These regulations were prepared by a committee that was tasked to deal with the scandal resulting from so called "Canned Lion Hunting", but the scope of the brief of the committee was expanded considerably to encompass any form of hunting. We have reason to believe that this was at the instigation of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, that was represented on the committee and which has become a significant animal rights organization.

In their initial format these regulations would have ended both falconry and wing-shooting in South Africa. We responded vigorously and were fortunate to gain the support of the Wing-shooters, represented by AGRED (African Game-bird Research and Development) and specifically their Director, Dr Aldo Berruti, who sponsored our cause on the committee as we had no representation.

Mindful of Christian De Coune's advice regarding the importance of "little words" we tried to get definitions of falconry in place in the regulations. In the final event, the scope of the regulations was considerably curtailed and as the quarry species of falconers were not included in the final draft, falconry was excluded. We can thus view this as a limited success and we should be very mindful that the fight is not over. Indeed a new set of regulations regarding the management of "Ex-situ Wild Animals" has been proposed on a provincial level, in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, by a committee, containing the aforementioned animal rights group, from a brief which initially called for regulations

governing the management of captive primates. It would appear that a pattern is emerging and we will have to be vigilant, vociferous and pro-active.

In an atmosphere where we would expect the support of other hunting organizations, a sinister development has been the criticism of falconry from within one of the larger hunting groups. Prof. Gerhard Verdoorn, Director of BirdLife South Africa, acts as Conservation Director for this group and has a regular article in their magazine, Wild en Jag, and through this vehicle he launched a subtle attack on the wild- take of peregrines by falconers. The magazine refused to publish our response and Prof. Verdoorn, himself, failed to give his presentation at the Bird of Prey Working Group AGM where I would challenge him, in terms of the Convention on Biodiversity. We were finally able to publish our response in "African Indaba", published by Gerhardt Damm, and had the satisfaction of knowing that a hard copy of our response was given to every delegate attending CIC Conference in Cypress. We believe that the significance of this stab at falconry is contained in the Draft Regulations for the Norms and Standards of Hunting in South Africa, which call for a central governing body for hunting in South Africa. Would Prof Verdoorn like to be the Director of this body?. Falconry may well be seen to be a weak group that can be thrown to the wolves as a matter of expediency. It is our task to block this and to persuade him otherwise.

We have gained the support of the South African Wing shooters Association and of the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa, and there is a need to consolidate these links.

The establishment of the Union of African Falconry has progressed and we provided extensive comment and advice regarding a proposed Falconry Policy for Botswana. This process has been blocked by BirdLife Botswana and is in limbo as there are no active falconers in that country at present. More effort is needed to develop the Union and to garner support from other African Falconers.

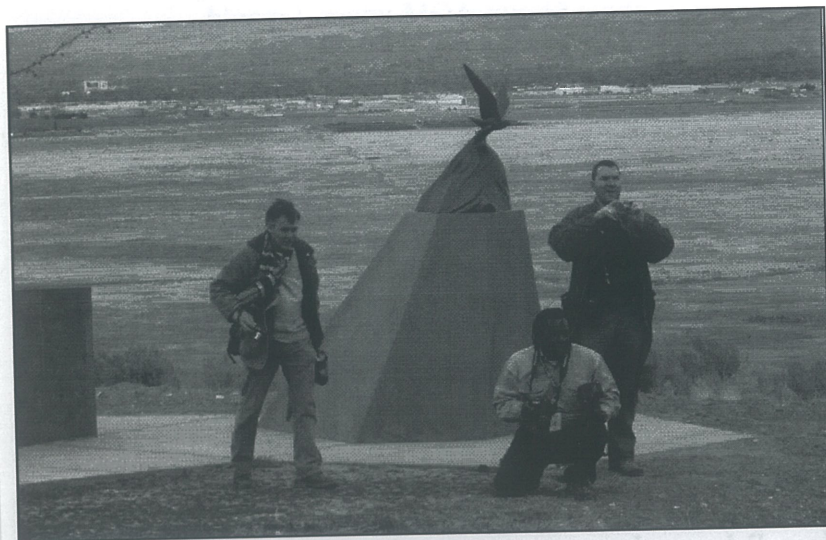
The total number of falconers in South Africa, as counted by club membership has diminished in the past year from just less than 200 to 157. This does not reflect an actual reduction in the number of active falconers but rather, a move by clubs to prune their non-paying members due to the increased cost to clubs of SAFA Membership. This cost reflects the activity of SAFA, on behalf of its membership, and this includes an extensive web site which may be visited at www.safalconry.org.za, membership of the IAF, as well as membership and attendance of a variety of organizations within South Africa. In essence, the South African Falconry Association has become "leaner and meaner" and is assuming an increasingly activist stance on behalf of its membership. We believe that significant battles lie ahead and we need to prepare ourselves for the challenge. We shall look to this organization for support and advice in the future.

On a positive level, we are pleased to have contributed to a number of research and conservation projects sponsored by the Bird of Prey Working Group. A number of our members continue to perform good research on a professional level. We believe that we have a significant contribution to make to the conservation effort, through education and outreach, as well as through our rehabilitation work.

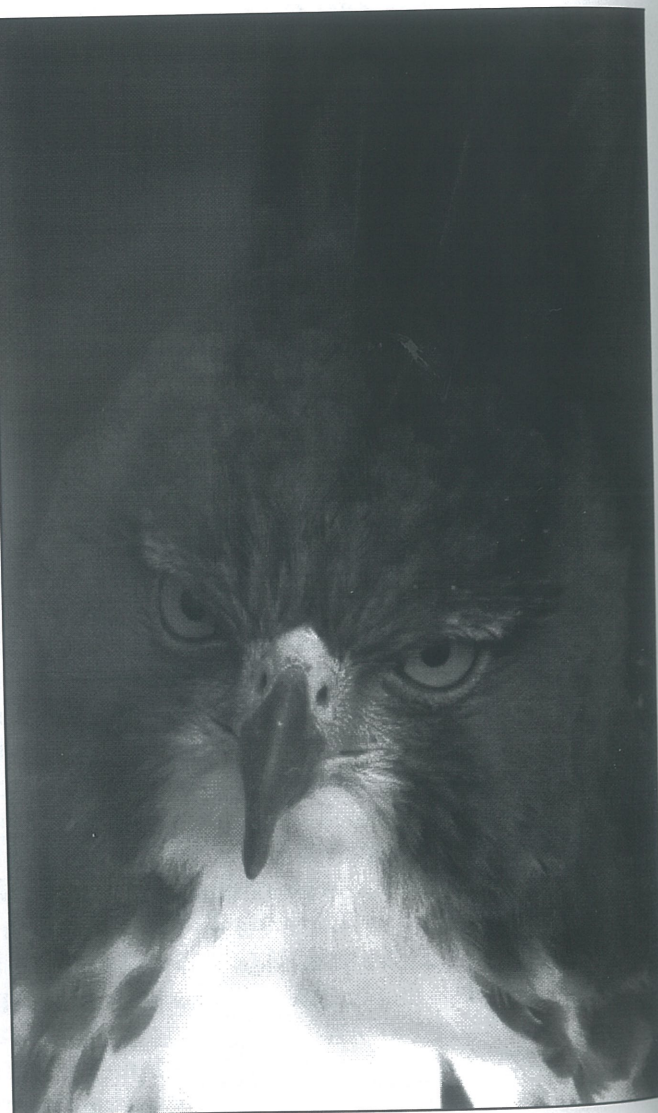
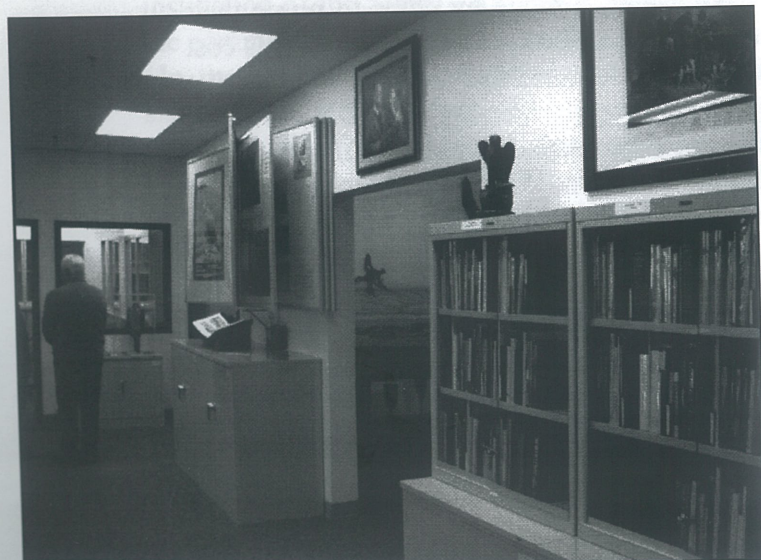
We are looking forward to hosting the IAF Annual Meeting in South Africa in 2008. Plans are progressing well in this respect.

Adrian Lombard

SAFA Representative to the IAF.



IAF Delegates at the Archives of Falconry and the Headquarters of The Peregrine Fund, Boise, Ohio.



Ornate Hawk Eagle at The Peregrine Fund Headquarters

**PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF S.A.F.A. TO THE BIRD OF PREY
WORKING GROUP, 2007**

Introduction:

The past year has been characterized by frustrations and successes for SAFA. The frustrations result from the number of challenges that have confronted South African Falconers and these have deflected SAFA from engaging more effectively in the conservation effort. I shall deal with these first.

Challenges:

I would like to preface this with some quotes from a statement made by Dr. Rob Little, Director of WWF-SA, as he confronts the very problem that has beset us and which this body must recognize and resist:

"As the population of the wealthy "developed" nations move ever further from their daily interactions with Nature, they move into a realm where simplistic "animal rights" approaches/solutions to mankind's' interaction with wildlife become ever more appealing to the "man in the street". WWF-SA believes that the conservation community completely underestimates how devastating this trend could be, if allowed to proceed unchecked.

By failing to recognize, and then face head-on, the enormous strategic challenge posed by the growth of the animal rights movement, the conservation community could seriously impair its ability to influence for the better the fate of the natural world in the decades to come."

To this I would add a further quote, that "for evil to triumph, all that is required is for good men to do nothing."

So, what were these challenges?

1) Falconers' Wild Harvest.

We were confronted by a subtle attack on our accepted wild harvest which emanated from BirdLife South Africa. This ignores the fact that our harvest is in keeping with the principles of the Convention on Biodiversity and the fact that both our international representative bodies, the I.A.F. and BirdLife International are members of the I.U.C.N. which is the architect of this Convention.

2) The Botswana Falconry Policy.

I was confronted with an "ill-conceived" proposed "Falconry Policy" for presentation to the Botswana Authorities at this forum, last year. This policy had been drafted by individuals who appeared to have a commercial interest and used the "carrot" of attracting high-paying Arabic Falconers to garner support from the Botswana Government. Suffice to say that this back-fired. I, and a working group of SAFA, extensively reviewed this document and prepared a comprehensive report in the hope that

we would be able to work with BirdLife Botswana and encourage the formulation of a sound Falconry Policy in that country. Our positive attitude was regrettably not matched by BirdLife Botswana.

3) Draft Legislation.

We were confronted by 3 sets of Draft Legislation during the course of the last year. These included:

- i) National Norms and Standards for the regulation of the Hunting Industry in South Africa.
- ii) Regulations Concerning the Hunting of Listed Threatened or Protected Species.
- iii) Regulations Governing the Management of "Ex-Situ" Wild Animals in KwaZulu Natal.

All of these pieces of draft legislation had certain common characteristics. These include:

- i) The committees appointed to draft the legislation wildly exceeded the scope of their initial brief.
- ii) These committees contained representatives of an animal rights organization who's Statement of Policy clearly indicates that it is opposed to all forms of hunting including fishing.
- iii) All of these pieces of legislation had the potential to render falconry and a variety of other accepted hunting activities illegal.
- iv) All were characterized by an apparent lack of research and understanding of the issues being dealt with, inaccessibility of the public servants responsible for them and a complete ignorance of the financial and administrative implications of the draft legislation.
- v) All required extensive work to formulate appropriate responses by working committees of SAFA.

The net result has been a "no win" situation where, certainly in the case of the first two, our understanding is that the scope of the legislation has been considerably restricted and in the final analysis, the only apparent implication is that breeding facilities for Listed Threatened or Protected species must be registered with the provincial authority. I would have liked to see acceptance of the case made by SAFA and definitions of falconry included in the legislation, which would have justified the expenditure of effort. This is not to be and we expect to have to fight another day.

I would like to note here, in stark comparison, a similar issue with which I was involved recently, through the IAF, where we dealt with draft legislation from Scotland which prohibited the intentional release of exotic or alien species to the wild. Here, the official responsible was accessible, responded to us and had, in fact, anticipated our objection which was resolved, pending ratification by the Scottish Parliament.

All these issues have amounted to an absolute waste of our valuable time and resources and have prevented those same resources being applied to the conservation effort.

Positives

South African Falconry continues to maintain a high standard of practice with appreciation of the importance of good husbandry and ethics. We remain committed to contributing to the conservation of raptors which are our passion.

The standard of South African Falconry has been recognized internationally with positive outcomes for South Africa.

- 1) South Africa has been selected as the venue for the Annual Meeting of the International Association for Falconry in 2008. This will be held in conjunction with the annual SAFA Field Meet in July of that year in the Highveld Grassland area. It is a wonderful opportunity for South African Falconers as it will attract a wide range of international falconers, including figures like Dr. Nick Fox and Dr. Robert Kenwood, as well as individuals who founded the Peregrine Fund, whom they would never, otherwise, have the opportunity to meet.
- 2) Further recognition of South Africa's standing was made with my election to the Advisory Committee of the IAF. This grants us direct access to the resources of Falconry world-wide, as well as other organizations and individuals at the highest levels of Nature Conservation and Animal Management. There has already been fascinating insight into the development regulations and policies as well as the management of issues such as an outbreak of Avian Influenza.
- 3) I attended the IAF Conference which was held in Nebraska in November 2006. I was afforded the opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Peregrine Fund and The Archives of Falconry in Boise, Idaho, and have developed contacts which allow us access to the resources of these organizations.

On a national level, we are proud to have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with this organization, as well as forging links with a number of organizations including AGRED.

I preface my next comments with a further quote:

"Man and Nature must work hand in hand. The throwing out of balance of the resources of Nature throws out of balance also the lives of Men."

Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Role of Falconers in the Raptor Conservation Endeavour

The events, good and bad, of the past year have helped to clarify the role and benefit of falconers to the conservation effort. This I would classify as a **positive**, echoing my regret that so much of our effort and resource has been squandered. I shall run through the range of activities and examine our role.

- 1) Scientific Research. There are a number of falconers who are competent scientists and who are actively involved in research into raptors, gamebirds or ecological studies. There is a tradition of such involvement amongst falconers in this country, going back to Alan Kemp. SAFA is currently involved in an effort to compile a Bibliography, cataloguing the work of falconers as this is seen to be an important facet in the documentation of our national falconry heritage. I wish to

note that the South African situation is in contrast to that in Zimbabwe, as there are a significant number of active and able researchers in the field of raptor biology in this country and I would see the role of falconers as providing support and assistance to these researchers.

- 2) Contribution to Scientific Studies. This is an area where falconers are well placed to contribute. We are generally acute observers of raptors and nature and spend more time in the field than the practitioners of any other hunting activity. We are contributing to the Migratory Kestrel Study, and hope to expand this contribution. We were able to assist in Teita Survey. This is an area which I would like to see expanded, and would like to suggest the following strategies to promote this:
- i) Mentoring of falconers to assist with the publication of field observations.
 - ii) Seeking some means to expand the distribution of GABAR to the falconry community.
 - iii) Further negotiation to overcome the distrust related to the sharing of nest-site information.
 - iv) Broad acceptance of falconry as a respectable field activity and the encouragement of the involvement of falconers in observational activities across the board and including the activities of organizations such as BirdLife.

3) Raptor Rehabilitation. The role of falconry is now well recognized in this arena. A Raptor Rehabilitation Forum has been established in the Western Cape, with a protocol that includes falconers at the appropriate steps in the rehabilitation process. This is a formula which I would encourage Conservation Authorities to promote Nation – wide.

4) Raptor Breeding Projects. We continue to expand our experience in the breeding of both Falcons and Accipiters. The lesson of The Peregrine Fund has shown the value of this experience, but we fervently hope that timeous action in other areas will avert the necessity of such desperate measures.

5) Education and Outreach. At the end of the day, this is the area that I believe that falconers have the most to offer. The vital conservation challenges that we must confront are:

- i) Environmental Degradation and Global Warming.
- ii) The need for an understanding of the importance and the essence of nature conservation across our whole population in the broadest sense.
- iii) The loss of contact and hence the understanding of nature by that section of our population who have the education and the assets to effect the greatest influence on environmental issues.

Falconers, through a variety of different contacts with the public, ranging from day to day contact with farmers, presentations to underprivileged children, talking at Rotary Club meetings, and the list goes on, can impact the attitudes and understanding of Nature by our people.

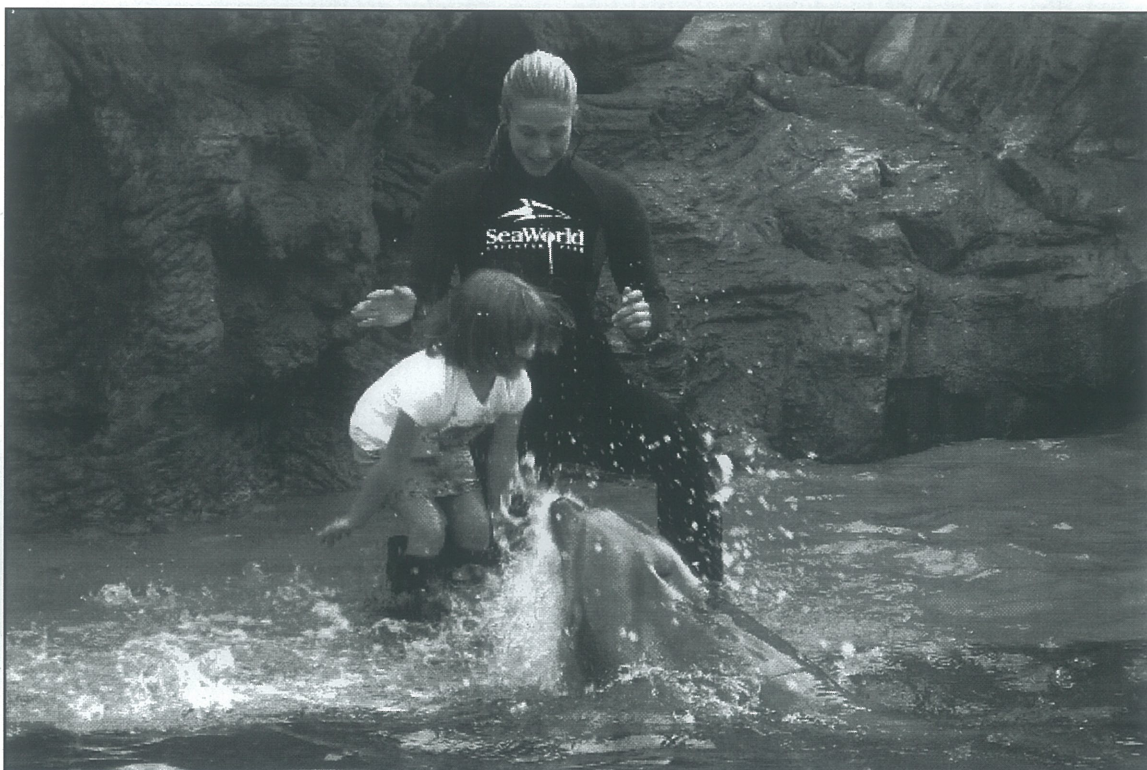
We need your encouragement, support and acceptance to go out and promote an understanding of environmental issues and an appreciation of the true forces of nature among our population by practicing our art and stimulating the imagination and interest of the greater South African public.

I end with a final quote:

“Falconry is a constant reminder to us of the forces of nature, of the inter-relationship between living things and the land they share, and of our own dependence on nature.”
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan.

Adrian Lombard

SAFA Representative to the Bird of Prey Working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.



“The loss of contact and hence the understanding of nature by that section of our population who have the education and the assets to effect the greatest influence on environmental issues.”

Falconry promotes real contact with Nature.

TEITA SURVEY

This year saw the first Teita Survey in South Africa. The Survey was organized by the Bird of Prey Working Group of EWT and supported by The Peregrine Fund. It was directed by Dr. Andrew Jenkins of The Percy FitzPatrick Institute. Alan Harvey and Alan Stevenson participated and represented the Falconry community. This is the first collaborative venture of its kind and we look forward to more fruitful undertakings of this nature.

Ed.

Alan Stephenson and I decided to head up to the Northern provinces to help out with a Teita Falcon survey coordinated by Dr Andrew Jenkins of the Western Cape Raptor Research Programme at the Fitzpatrick Institute. We traveled to the Blyde River area, over a thousand km away, taking us the better part of the day. That with Stephenson trying to break the land speed record in his wife's Corolla. We didn't, but we came close!

On arrival we were housed in comfortable modern chalets at Trackers, about 20 km from Hoedspruit. The team for the week we were there was Andrew Jenkins, Lucia Rodriguez, Andre Botha, Anthony van Zyl, Alan S and myself.

The aim of the survey was to find new Teita breeding sites on the escarpment between Mariepskop and Manoutsa. The two previously confirmed sites and previous sightings of Teitas were used as a guide as to which section of the cliff line to concentrate on. We were also to record any sightings and breeding of Peregrines, Lanners, all eagles and other raptors.

The modus operandi was to head out to allocated cliffs or sections thereof at four every morning and spend between five and ten hours doing passive observation, returning at about seven each evening. We would then collate all the info gathered during the day over supper provided by our host, Dave Rushworth, at Trackers.

It was really enjoyable spending time on the escarpment, but at the same time we did some serious hiking to get to some of the cliffs and at some even more serious hiking to get back home before it got dark. One day the mist descended on Al, Lucia and I while at a remote cliff with huge drop-offs on either side. At first there were some tears, then a lot of yelling and swearing followed by a heated discussion on GPS bearings and headings before we managed to get back to the vehicle. The mood while on the drive back to camp was sober with much muttering by our companion about these Eastern Cape rock jocks that got her lost. If the truth be told we had to stop her heading off into the mist straight over a 1000 ft drop!

We had a helicopter from 19th squadron Hoedspruit available to drop us off on isolated cliff tops but the mist spoiled that plan during the week we were there.

- Mews Views -

The survey ran from the 17 Sept to October 1 and 12 people participated with 58 person days of effort at 40 observation point. Two new Teita sites were found, doubling the existing known population in South Africa. Three Peregrine and 12 Lanner sites were also confirmed. Incidentals were 23 Rock kestrel, 5 Verreauxs eagle, 3 black stork and 5 Jackal Buzzard breeding sites.

We had a blast on this trip and hope to do it again next year.

Alan Harvey

Further good news on the Teita front is that Ben Hoffman has managed to produce the first captive-bred Teita chick in South Africa. Another first for falconers! Well done Ben.



Teita Country.

BIRDS OF PREY BEING BRED AT THE AFRICAN BIRD OF PREY SANCTUARY IN KWA ZULU-NATAL

The 2007 breeding season looks promising so far. We modified our eagle nest platforms in 2005 and had the female of one pair of black eagles construct a compact nest. Her 5 year old mate has for the first time shown some interest in nest building. Both our Black eagle pairs have built large nests but are two weeks late compared to other years. Our crowned eagle pair has been split up while the male is treated for a recurrent foot problem, which we hope is now sorted out. These will be moving to a new enclosure in a few months.

The Cape vultures have been carrying grass onto their cliff face but with only one sub adult female we are not holding our breath. The palm nut vultures and white headed vultures new facility is nearly complete and all the pairs are looking good.

All our Peregrine and Lanner pairs are very vocal and we can rely on these birds to breed. It is still early for the Teita Falcons, Saker falcons, Rock and Grater Kestrels. We also expect to breed American Kestrels this year

The jackal buzzards are once again busy building a low level nest and the pigmy falcons have two chicks. It is still early for the accipiters, but we will have a pair of African Goshawks, Little Sparrowhawks, Little Banded Goshawks, Gabar Goshawks, and if we can find a male, Red Breasted Sparrowhawks in the breeding program.

We are hoping to breed Wahlbergs Eagles this year and may put a pair of Long Crested Eagles together. The Secretary Birds have built a nice nest which is exciting.

On the owl side; the cape eagle owls have five eggs, the spotted eagle owls will breed in August, and the white-faced owls have 3 eggs, whilst the grass owl's second chick has just hatched. The pearl-spotted owls are quiet, as well as the Scops, but the wood owls are doing lots of talking, and the burrowing owls are as normal down a hole.

On the management side the stand by generator is in for service and the incubator room air conditioner will also be checked out. A new temperature probe for one of the Grumbach incubators has been ordered and the 4 sure incubator is in for repairs. Quail populations are being built up as are the rats and mice.

In conjunction with the University of Natal Data loggers to measure incubation temperatures have been placed under Peregrine, Lanner, Jackal Buzzard, Black Eagle, Cape Eagle Owl and African Grass Owls over the last two seasons. This data is now being analysed, and we have two MSC students collating the data for the grass owls.

In all it looks good for the year and we are looking forward to producing four or five Teita falcons after losing two of our three chicks last season.

Ben Hoffman



D.M. Henry. Lanner Falcon. Gouache. 1971.



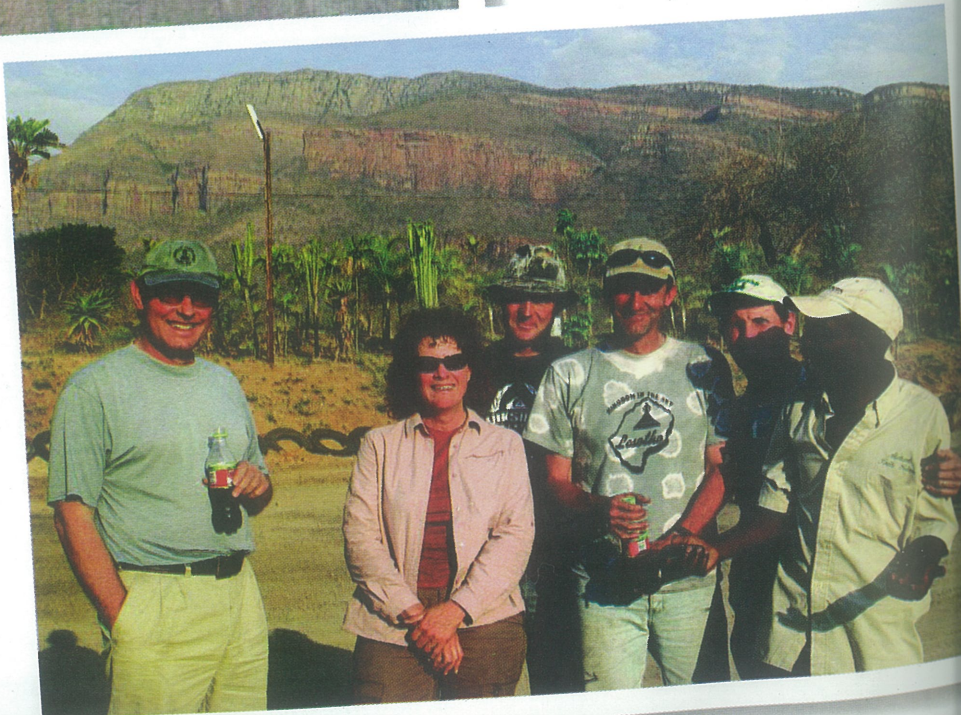
"Kite Hawking" by Joseph Wolf.

Teita Survey

*Falconers participated
in a survey for Teita
Falcon nests organized
by BoPWG and supported
by The Peregrine
Fund*



*Awesome county to
search for a medium
sized and secretive
falcon!*



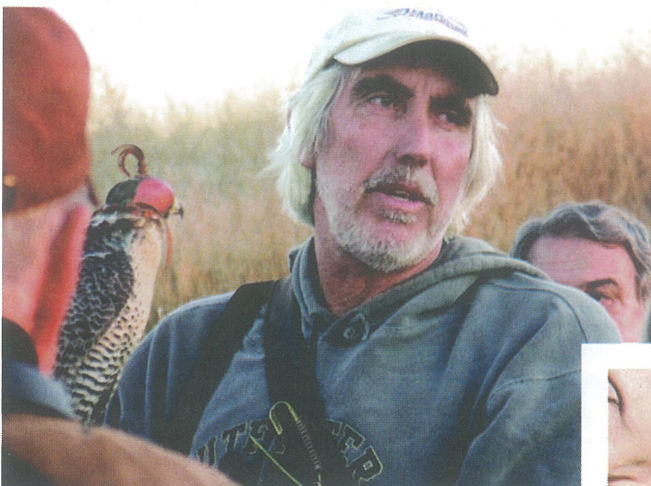
*The "A" Team
including our
two Alans.*



*One happy falconer –
NAFA Meet 2006.*



Bob Collins with a wild-taken eyas Gyr.



*Dave Cherry prior to a
flight on "Chicken".*



Steve Chindgrin with "Jomo", a famous Sage-Grouse hawk.

- Mews Views -

very aggressive female. On one occasion I witnessed her actually binding to an Egyptian Goose and tumbling to the ground under the nest only to be beaten off by the goose's powerful wings.

Only 2 of the 3 eggs hatched, both chicks turning out to be Muskets so having not found a chick so far it looked like a Musket it was going to be. I took my chick as a brancher and had a lot of fun socializing it and watching it grow daily. Once my bird was hard-penned the real fun and games began which everyone having been in contact with these birds repeatedly warned me about. I must say extreme challenges were had during training and it is still a continual learning curve everyday with a Black Spar.

I hunt "Mo" as often as possible, which tends to curb his self-destructive nature to a degree. I entered him on Guinea fowl pullets, which he flies well, having built up a bit of confidence he is now taking large pullets up to a kilogram as well as having a few Cape Francolin under his belt too. Being early in the season I am sure he will go from strength to strength and turn into a great hunting hawk.

All I can say is it's a lot of hard work to get your Black Spar and train a good hunting hawk but the rewards in the end are truly worth it. I am having more fun now with my Falconry then ever before, and just want to thank all who have helped in getting me to where I am now. To Adrian Lombard especially who has been a true inspiration and a great teacher.

Good hawking!

Zayin Vermaak



DAVID REID HENRY – ARTIST AND FALCONER, A SOUTHERN AFRICAN HERITAGE

In a distant childhood, spent in what was then Salisbury - Rhodesia, I have a cherished memory of the original Queen Victoria Museum, an imposing two storey building which stood at the western end of Jamieson Avenue; (now Samora Michele Ave) surrounded by a grove of tall Jacaranda trees whose mauve flowers dominate the city, in season. The museum was heaven to a youngster, fascinated with nature and wildlife and the mounted animals and birds filled me with awe. It was here that I met, for the first time an individual who gave me an initial glimpse of what was to become a life-long passion. I clearly remember a tall imposing man with distinctive British accent who took me round the side of the building to see his eagle. The Eagle was huge and beautiful and stands out in my mind to this day. She was Tiara and the Man was David Reid Henry.

Most falconers are familiar with paintings by David Reid Henry. They graced books that we have poured over in our youth and longed to own, Mavrogordato's "A Falcon for the Field" and Brown and Amadon's "Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World". His distinctive style is reminiscent of that of George Lodge, also an outstanding wildlife artist and falconer. This is not surprising as David studied under George Lodge, as did his father, and learned his falconry from him. George Lodge was a central figure in British falconry, before and immediately after the war, when he served as Vice-President of the BFC. His role as a Bird of Prey artist is echoed by Andrew Ellis today.

David was born in Sri Lanka 1919, the second of two sons of George Henry who was himself, an accomplished wildlife artist. David studied at Mount Radford School in Exeter where he was able to develop his artistic abilities. Both brothers hero-worshipped the famous wildlife artists of their day, Thorburn, Lodge and Kuhnert. David was conscripted in 1940 and joined the Royal Tank Corps, and was sent, as an officer-cadet, to Sandhurst. This was not far from George Lodge's Home, the Hawk House in Camberly, and David lost no time in calling on Lodge. The old artist treated him with great generosity, giving him the freedom of his studio and teaching him the tricks of the trade. It was George Lodge who introduced David to falconry. At the end of the war, David renewed his links with George Lodge and was introduced to J.D.MacDonald, who with F.O. Cage, was writing "Birds of Sudan". They required a bird artist and his career was launched. He married in 1948 and had two daughters. In addition to illustrating a number of books he illustrated a number of postage-stamp series including sets for Mauritius and Botswana. In 1960 he was commissioned to go to the then Southern Rhodesia to paint African antelope. The project collapsed as payment was not forthcoming, but it introduced him to the region where he spent the next two years and during this time he obtained Tiara, who became a huge part his life.

David wrote a number of articles to "The Falconer", journal of the British Falconers' Club and these give insight into his falconry activities. His first article is published in December 1958. Here he describes the career of a female kestrel named "Squirt", whom he flew in 1952. Squirt appears to have been an imprint bird with some nasty habits, but

who showed interest in pursuing birds. David describes how he worked to foster this enthusiasm, with ultimate success as she finally took some 16 starlings before trying conclusions with his goshawk and tragically ending her career. What is of interest is that he was simultaneously flying a peregrine falcon, a tiercel gos and a buzzard, so despite being somewhat "over-hawked" he put in the effort to achieve results where few other falconers have succeeded. Interestingly, his gos is named "skellum" suggesting that there was already a southern African connection.

The next article was published in December 1963. It describes Hawking in Southern Africa, and coincidentally follows an article written by Paul Venter. He describes contact with Alan Savory. He discusses the variety of potential falconry birds, favorably comparing the Southern African Lanner to its northern counterparts, having watched them hunting in the wild but not seeing them used as falconry birds. He describes the peregrine falcon as being too rare to use as a falconry bird, which was then the perception in the region. He had gained experience with Gabar and African Goshawks and had seen Red-breasted Spars, Black Spars and Hawk Eagles flown by others. He gives sage advice regarding the use of larger eagles. He suggests the use of the Black-shouldered Kite as a beginner's bird which is not in keeping with today's thought.

In the December 1966 edition he writes of "Experiences with a Crowned Eagle". He obtained this bird in February 1961 when he was occupying a flat in the Queen Victoria Museum in Salisbury. The bird was a female and a young brancher in a nest where the parents had apparently disappeared, although this proved not to be the case. When an attempt was made to climb the daunting tree that contained the nest, the eaglet bailed and was picked up off the ground a couple of hundred yards away.

He fed her up for a month then started her training as one would a goshawk. He states that she never developed any bad habits although he does note that her grip was enormously powerful and his brother tells us that on more than one occasion she put David in hospital with lacerations to his arm. He had difficulty entering her; carrying a bird weighing 12 lbs. presents some problems! He solved this by letting her take stand in a dead tree and using line of beaters to flush a hare, which she dispatched in fine style. He notes that he learnt how to make in and take her up from a kill. She was not a fool and would not be deceived by a tit-bit. "She wants her reward from the kill and so it has to be." When her excitement quietsens the kill can be taken from her, but "I have to be very certain of my grip on the jesses when the robbery takes place".

He writes that working with a large eagle offers more trial of ones resources (material and spiritual), than pleasure. "Tiara inhibits every single aspect of my life". He could not go anywhere without planning for her as well. On railways, he had to travel with her, in the luggage van, throughout the journey.

His brother notes that Tiara became the dominating influence in his life. He alone could handle or manage the bird and she had to be taken wherever he went. She became the most photographed bird in Britain. She finally died in 1973.

His final article is a discussion of the painting "Kite Hawking" by Joseph Wolf. He describes this as perhaps the finest bird painting ever to have left an artists easel. This was finished and signed in 1856. The painting was sold for £600 but in 1942, when it

came up for sale again, it was bought for only &9. Many of us would recognize this great painting which depicts a cast of Gyr Falcons taking a Red Kite.(See colored page section in centre).

David's first marriage ended in divorce. He loved southern Africa and moved to Rhodesia where he took out citizenship. He married Dr. Louise Westwater, naturalist and medical doctor, in 1976.

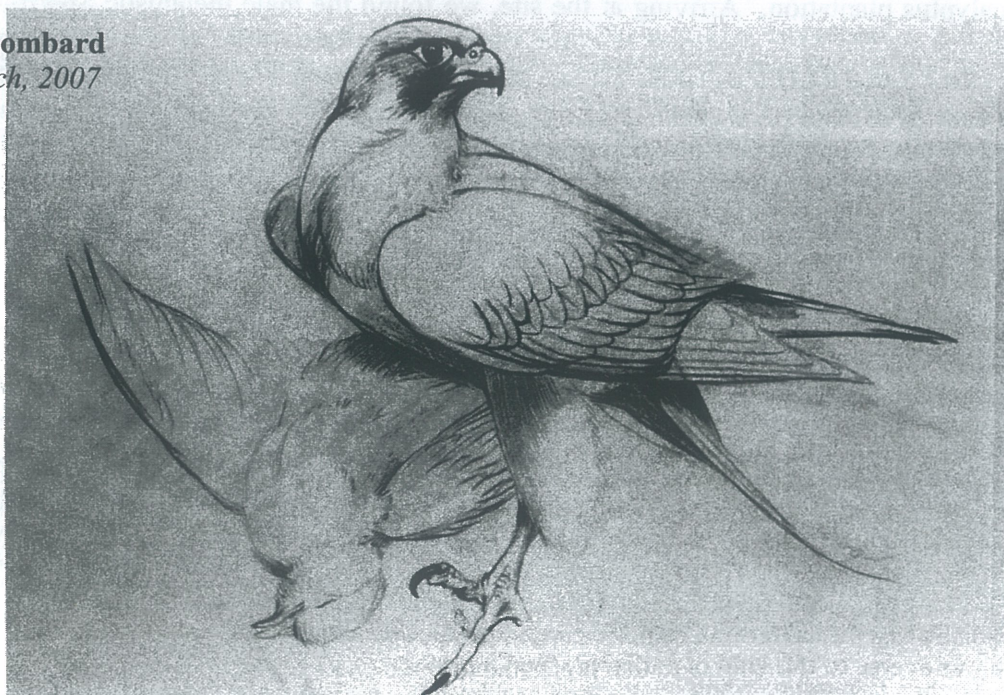
He was gregarious and was a good conversationalist. He was dogmatic and held strong views, particularly on politics. He was vitriolic about beaurocracy. His years in Zimbabwe were happy and productive. He had reached a position in his art where he could choose his own subject and could not satisfy the demand for his paintings. One-man exhibitions were sold out shortly after opening. I remember watching a television interview where he described the process of preparing for a painting. He would study museum skins, try to watch the birds in the wild and study captive specimens if possible. This care of preparation shows in his paintings. Falconers can be sharp critics of art, noticing quickly if the posture or proportions of the subject are wrong. I would be correct in saying that, to a man, we admire his paintings, seeing not only that the form is right but that he has captured the very soul on the bird. I recall a small painting of his that John Condy had obtained. This was of a peregrine, on its perch, in the snow. The very essence of the bird seemed to glow out of the picture. "You see", John said, "there is a feather out of place, on her breast, where she has just preened."

I met David for the last time at a Zim. Falconry club braai. We got on well, I thought, but that may have been because of the rather decorous girl friend I had at the time. David invited us to visit him and see his studio. I was a medical houseman, and had to find time to arrange the visit. Weeks went by, and I tried to contact him to set up the visit. I was shocked to find that he had just died. He had developed cancer and, after a short illness, passed away on 26th September 1977, aged only 58.

A competent fellow falconer and great artist; he is part of our heritage, who left us too soon.

Adrian Lombard

11th March, 2007



D.M. Henry. Study of Peregrine at kill. Pencil.

SHIFTING BORDERS OF REALITY

Starting with falconry twenty years ago at the age of fourteen, there where no Falconry club to provide foundational support and it was still illegal to keep raptors. I was eighteen when I managed to trap a young female Passage Peregrine falcon.

This incident caused quite a stir when Dr Edmund Oettle (founder of the Cape Falconry Club), found out about it and advised me to pass it on to Dave Pepler at the University of Stellenbosch who was actively involved in the research of these falcons. In those days Peregrine falcons were thought to be scarce and the trapping of such a bird created quite a stir. It also happened to be a sensitive time regarding discussions around the legislation of falconry in the Western Cape. Since then it was discovered that there is a healthy population of Peregrine Falcons, which would easily nest in man made structures like quarry holes and even nesting boxes fixed on suitable buildings. A member of our club, Ryan Hartley, has erected a number of successful nesting boxes on industrial buildings where pigeons intervene with the business's health regulations.

With the forming of the Cape Falconry Club, a grading system was put in place to determine if one may keep a bird and which species it should be¹. As I climbed the grading ladder, I finally had permission to take a Black Sparrowhawk for training. This happened at a time when no one knew the status of these hawks in the Cape Peninsula. No guide lines were available and I had to do a lot of legwork to find bird nests in wooded areas suitable for climbing and find a chick of the right age. I managed to find seven nests in and around the Stellenbosch area. This shed more light on the population density which occurred due to the planting of suitable trees.

An interesting observation in that area was that more than 60% of the adult birds seen comprised of melanistic or dark phased birds. One nest in particular stands out in my memory. Dr. Edmund Oettle accompanied me and we went to a nest, situated in a tall Eucalyptus plantation. Arriving at the site, we found the male melanistic Sparrowhawk brooding on the nest. I started to climb the rope and heard a lot of chirping above me. As I looked up a baby Egyptian Goose chick launched itself from the nest and fell past me with open wings and feet. A few seconds later another one jumped. Both survived the fall and Edmund became an instant surrogate mother. His explanation was that a goose laid these eggs in the sparrowhawk's nest and were chased off by the hawks who continued incubation. Since then it was a common occurrence to find Egyptian Geese breeding on Sparrowhawk's nests, when not in use.

Another amazing find was in the Franschoek area when Edmund, Dr. Adrian Lombard (current president of the Cape Falconry Club) and I, went searching for a Black Sparrowhawk's nest and eventually ended up finding a native Marshall Eagle nest which

¹ A person starts at grade (F) and serve a twelve month apprenticeship under a B or A grade falconer. Then pass a written test to move to grade D where he may fly a trained second hand bird if all his equipment and mews is in order. Only after a number of years would a falconer attain A grading depending on the skill at which he masters the sport.

produced at least one chick that we knew of. The nest was shown to Koos de Goede who was busy mapping Martial Eagle's nests at that time.

An African Hawk Eagle in Prince Alfred's Hamlet.

I have, for a long time, harbored the desire to try and hunt Egyptian Geese in a natural way with a trained raptor. In my opinion, an African Hawk Eagle, which weighs 1.2 kg (male) to 2 kg (female) would be ideal for this exercise. The size of a Hawk Eagle makes for easy carrying on the arm and the bird is agile enough in flight to attack and surprise geese. Their natural prey mostly consists of gamebirds. According to the book *Birds of Prey of Southern Africa* by Peter Steyn, the total Transvaal population of these eagles is approximately 1200 pairs.

An application letter stating my request to take a Hawk Eagle for falconry was sent to the Western Cape Nature Conservation board. The manager of Scientific Services, Guy Palmer, responded as follows: *To whom it may concern, the Western Cape Conservation board has no objections to Mr. Thys Walters receiving an African Hawk Eagle for falconry. He has been a member of the Cape Falconry Club since its inception and has given freely of his time with the rehabilitation of raptors for many years. Should there be any queries please contact me.*

Guy Palmer was a key figure in legalizing falconry in our province and saw falconers as a benefit that could fulfill a specialized role. As a boy, I often went to visit Guy Palmer at his conservation office in Jonkershoek and spoke about birds of prey and once mentioned an incident where a farmer shot Goshawks which caught his homing pigeons and the opportunity arose to rather trap them for falconry. This was not permitted then as falconry was illegal in our province. My next step was to send all the information through to the Cites and Permit management of Limpopo where these eagles occurred in healthy numbers. In November 2002 I received a reply from Mr. Von Wielligh:

Dear Mr. Walters,

Your application was discussed in our Department. We regret to inform you that we could not allow the taking from the wild any eagles or their eggs. Our Department is in the process of reviewing the removal from the wild raptors or their eggs for falconry purposes. The Limpopo Falconry Club has for this reason compiled a project which is currently under review. If it is determined that we will allow such removal of raptors or their eggs, you may apply again.

A falconry friend, Steven Squires of the Free State wrote an article in our Mews Views magazine of 2004, communicating some of his thoughts on the subject matter. Part of it is as follows: *Unfortunately we do not live in a normal or rational country. For obscure political reasons our country is divided into provinces. However, in order to justify their existence to some higher authority, the officials make sure that they do not exactly duplicate the rules of the next province. This creates an ecosystem in which confusion and officials thrive and multiply. They, and only they, can interpret the provincial legislation. Their interpretation of the rules often conflicts with other set precedent and often lacks logic. For example, a province that routinely will allow the hunting and*

killing of rhino for trophies, will not allow the removal of the second chick of an African Hawk Eagle for falconry purposes without endless lobbying and paper work. My dream to fly an Hawk Eagle came to an abrupt halt and nothing more could be done because these eagles are not found in our province.

My wife, Michelle and I moved from Stellenbosch to a farm in the Koue Bokkeveld near Ceres at the beginning of 2004. Michelle's sister Anelle and her girlfriend Tina also moved to this area a few months later. They were interested in self sustaining farming and visited an elderly couple (both over 80) who did that at a farm in Prince Alfred's Hamlet, close to Ceres. A commotion was heard at the chicken coop and the old man went to investigate. Tina and Anelle were in the vegetable garden with the old lady when they heard a shot. The three women went to investigate and found the old man had already left. They heard a croaking sound and saw a flapping bird in the fenced off area. Anelle and the lady was confronted with a half dead bird. Tina ran off to find the old man. The lady's first reaction to relieve the bird was to club it on its head with a stick, but Anelle intervened and ended its life by breaking its neck. She finally broke down and cried as the dead bird lay in her arms.

Anelle phoned me as they returned home from their ordeal. She told me the whole story and ended by saying it must have been an eagle, for I had told her previously that an eagle usually has feathers down to the toes. To my knowledge a Booted Eagle fitted the description. She offered to keep it in her freezer for me to collect later that week. As it happened Michelle and I had to make a trip to Stellenbosch and planned to meet Tina on our way there, and pick up the specimen. When she gave me the rather big and heavy bag I peered inside and had the shock of my life to see the dead body of a female African Hawk Eagle.

I was completely in shock and could not understand why this would happen to me, here was a beautiful bird the perfect age for training and it was a shame that Anelle and Tina were not close enough at the time to save it from being shot. While driving I told Michelle how weird it was that even if the eagle was caught alive, how I explain to people how I got hold of such a bird in a province where they are not normally found. After some time, Michelle and I went to visit the old couple on their farm to see for ourselves where it all happened. We also wanted to talk to other people from the area as they complained of a bird snatching their chickens. In the back of my mind I hoped there would be more, as the area had lots of trees and guineafowl which makes it a small haven for raptors flying through the Karoo. At the farm we were shown the chicken coop where the eagle went in and was trapped inside while the old man hurried home to get his shotgun. A blast through the netting smashed bone and feathers, leaving a hole in an endless circle of survival. As we drove back home I told Michelle that even if there are any other eagles here, they would not live long in a populated area. Again, I felt, the shifting borders of reality, but with shock and a bitter-sweetness in my heart.

Thys Walters

- Mews Views -



Thys with the ill-fated Hawk Eagle.



Better news from the Eastern Cape – Peregrine falcon with Shelduck.

VIVA LE AFRICAN GOSHAWK

It is an early bushveld morning, with the sun just over the acacia trees and Guinea fowl calling in the long grass. Martin and I, with his intermewed African Goshawk, stood motionless and wait for the golden moment. She was an imprint and talkative but now she was only breathing. Next moment the bush exploded with guineas scattering in all directions away from us. Martin's reactions were perfect and the goshawk slipped low over the grass in pursuit. I, for one, thought no way, in these circumstances of thick and ample cover. Martin did not hesitate and like a well trained cross country athlete followed the chase. Not as agile as in my younger days, I waited, trying to bring the scene closer to me with the help of my binos. I could hear Martin returning through the bush and screaming with great excitement. There he was, breathless; a man holding a goshawk with a fully grown Guinea fowl! The smile on my face warmed the sun.

The African Goshawk became a household name with our falconers in the North. More than 50% of our members are flying the lovely tempered hawk. They are more rapacious than we can estimate. With conditioning in place you will have a hunter par excellence. What counts in favor of this hawk is the mere fact that you can hunt a variety of game in bush and open area. I witnessed several successful hunts by our falconers. It is a hawk that can be enjoyed and hunted by old and young. The imprint seems to be very brave and will take on game much bigger and stronger than itself. With the falconer near to assist the hawk it could be a lot of fun.

At the LFC (Limpopo Falconers' Club) we at one stage had the African Goshawk as a beginners hawk. This had no constraints. The problem occurred when the beginner wanted to move on for more experience. What next? After careful consideration and restructuring the grading process with proper grading criteria, the African Goshawk now is a C grade hawk. The Louis Trichardt falconers started off with Afr. Gosses and some of them are still flying them or in some cases their sons took the hawk over.

When you consider the vastness and open land in the Limpopo it will occur to any falconer that this is Eden for the falconer. When you are flying long wings your choice is not so great especially when flying the Peregrine. Game birds are normally found near food and they must have access to water. The result here is the game bird which is in abundance on farms is the Swainsons francolin. They are normally near cultivated lands and a tree line for protection. It is seldom that we find them in the open country. Swempie and Cresteds are likewise, always near trees and cover. When flying the long wing in habitat like this great pitches are not to be practical. You will get kills but often from a mediocre pitch. When hunting cattle farms the barbwire fences are a menace. The game birds also use them for protection against the pursuing falcon. As for Duck hawking we had success with the odd duck kill. After rains, when we get them, the small dams evaporate fast leaving only the large dams as an alternative. We are still flying long wings in Limpopo and are fortunate to catch game birds. The area, I think, is absolutely perfect for the short wing hawk.

When visiting Steven van Rensburg in Mpumalanga it was interesting to learn that his School falconers had similar successes with the African Goshawk. Maybe there are more falconers today flying the Afr. Goshawk and therefore we are now in a position to exploit their capacity to the full.

Paul Venter
Limpopo Falconry Club.



*Kailee en grootste tarentaal van 1148gm!
(Kailee with her biggest guineafowl of 1148 gm!)*

FALCONRY & REHABILITATION

Through the ages, falconry has proved itself to be a successful means to teach, train, re-motivate and re-habituate raptors. The rehabilitation of raptors is no easy task, as they are true predators, spending much of their lives conserving energy in a stationary position. This is primarily due to the fact that the act of hunting prey, which is essentially a means of maintaining or replenishing the raptor's energy levels, actually expends huge amounts of the raptor's energy. The question, therefore, would have to be: how do you get a raptor, whose natural instinct is to conserve energy, trained and fit? Fitness, especially in the pursuit hunter, is of the utmost importance. To release an unfit raptor is just to prolong the bird's inevitable death. Flight aviaries may work for certain raptor species, but certainly not all. Some species will merely wait for feeding time, and/or damage themselves against the mesh / shade cloth when spooked.

Raptor rehabilitation can be divided into three main categories, being the nestling; the perch hunter and the pursuit hunter.

The Nestling

Nestlings pose quite a challenge, as these raptors have no idea about flight, wind control or any form of hunting. For many years, falconers have 'hacked' birds in order to increase their flying and hunting abilities. Hacking is a process whereby a young raptor(s) of the same species are placed in a hack box, located in a suitable area, and fed daily. Once the youngster(s) are ready to fledge, the hack box is left open, where they can hang around the box whilst learning to master flight and hunting. During this process, food is still left at the hack box daily. As the youngster(s) become more adept at flying and hunting, they will venture further and further from the safety of the hack box, until they are ultimately self-sufficient and relocate themselves to new territories. This process only works on young birds who are about to fledge, or have just fledged, as it is natural for them to hang around the nest site. Most rehabilitators today have adopted this form of release, as it requires very little human intervention and, if done correctly, yields excellent release results.

Hacking can further be divided into the 'tame' and the 'wild' hack. Tame hacking is when young birds of the same species are raised with human contact prior to being placed in the hack box, however they are socially imprinted on each other. The benefit to this form of hacking is that the rehabilitator is able to maintain a reasonably close proximity to the young birds to monitor their progress. The detrimental aspect being that, if the birds are released in an unfriendly human area, they may become rifle or sling shot targets. Wild hacking is essentially the reverse, where the youngster(s) have no human contact either before or after being placed in the hack box. With both processes, the time period until release varies from one to several months.

The Perch Hunter

Perch hunters consist mainly of owls and buzzards, however certain eagles, vultures, harriers and kites can also be classified here. Owls and buzzards are primarily raptors that hunt from an elevated position, basically falling from a 'perch' in a tree or atop a

assisting a raptor to reach its full fitness potential in a captive environment.

Case Study

Rehabilitator	:	Eagle Encounters
Species	:	Male Peregrine Falcon
Age	:	Three years
Injury	:	Severe beak injury and laceration to the left wing
Received Weight	:	420 grams
Training Weight	:	460 grams

This young Peregrine was one of the few we have received with any traceable history. Andrew Jenkins, of the FitzPatrick Institute, rung the bird while it was still a downy and continued to monitor him over a three year period. The left wing injury was not too serious, merely requiring daily treatment. The beak, however, necessitated some serious work. Due to the splitting and breakage, we had to drill into the beak to prevent further cracking, and repaired with epoxy. Six weeks later the wing had healed and, thanks to Spirulina (a nutritional supplement), the beak was almost fully repaired. Through the recuperation stage, a hood was used to immobilize the bird and create a stress-free environment.

The marning stage progressed relatively quickly, due to us having to handle and medicate the bird daily. When training began, we were able to assess the bird's true flying abilities. We were horrified to note that he was only able to fly approximately 40 meters before landing on the ground, exhausted. Having being immobilized for six weeks had taken its toll on the bird's fitness and muscle tone. We introduced the lure and spent the following three weeks flying him every second day with the kite high overhead. The decision to only train him every second day was based on the same concept as our gym workouts, where the muscles are given a day to recuperate.

After the lure, he was able to spend approximately fifteen minutes in the air, gradually increasing his turning circles around the Centre. We then promoted him to the kite, attaching his lure to the kite at about 20 meters off the ground and increasing this height daily. Four weeks later, he was flying up to around one thousand feet (300 meters) in the air, flying hard and strong. We decided to take him into the field and fly him at some doves, which he did in fine style! There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a fit, strong killing machine in action.

He was now ready for release. We contacted Andrew Jenkins, who placed the Safrings on his legs, and we released him where he was last seen. It was a textbook release, with an interesting little twist. He flew off and landed on a cell phone mast, where there was a female Peregrine (also rung by Andrew), who started to talk to him in a very friendly manner.

I can honestly say that, without falconry techniques, this young falcon would have become just another statistic or another bird wasting away in a captive environment.

Hank Chalmers

HUNTIN' CHICKEN : MEMORIES OF THE NAFA MEET

The past year saw the IAF AGM being held in conjunction with the NAFA Meet in the town of Kearney, Nebraska. This is the home of the Prairie Chicken and I little appreciated the significance of this quarry before my trip

The NAFA Meet is somewhat reminiscent of our own SAFA Meet. An attempt is made at organization of the day's hunting but those flying hawks tend to do their own thing and hare off to the hunting grounds with little consideration for visitors and hangers on. This can cause considerable distress to someone who has traveled 10,000 Km to see the falconry but fortunately I was forewarned. Realizing that I had limited time to see as much as I could, I was up way before dawn to catch the early risers before they disappeared. My strategy was to go to the parking area and scout out falconers with interesting looking birds and ask if I could accompany them. They were, to a man, accommodating and delightful hosts. I managed to go out with some of the top names in North American falconry and saw some stunning hawking.

Other aspects of the NAFA meet were different from the South African experience. This was definitely a family affair, with wives and kids there for the holiday, if not actually out hawking. The evenings were far more structured than ours, with a nightly raffle, presentations and a "vendors' hall" where falconry related goods could be bought. The down side of this formality was that one tended not to meet with American falconers in a casual social setting and have a chance to relax and chew the fat. There were two huge feasts, Thanksgiving which a family lunch much like our Christmas lunch (and yes, I tried pumpkin pie!) and a more formal Gala dinner with awards and a presentation on Positive Reinforcement.

Birds were weathered in a fenced area and the weathering was carefully monitored. This was a great way of seeing the stunning array of raptors present at the meet, all in perfect feather and provided with excellent equipment. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks were notably absent from the weathering grounds, for good reason. North American falconers take great pride in the outfitting of their cars for their sport, with built-in perches, traveling boxes, for hawks and dogs, and built in equipment cupboards.

My first hunt was with an Alaskan Falconer, Bob Collins, who flew a wild-taken eyas Gyr. We went to find "Chicken". Kearny, Nebraska had been selected in large part because it is an area where Prairie Chicken can still to be found in fair numbers. Nebraska is flat as a table and wall-to-wall maize fields. Snaking through this are low sand-hills which are still covered with indigenous grassland. It is here that the Prairie Chicken hang out. Apparently they do not sit to a dog and your one chance of coming to grips with them is when they come out of the grass to feed in the maize stubble, in the early mornings and late evenings. So the first evening found me sitting in a car, staring at maize stubble waiting for a bird which I had never seen. And we waited, and waited. Bob was interesting company, a prosecutor in Noam, Alaska, He had taken up the law following Operation Falcon, that disastrous raid on North American falconers undertaken due to the erroneous belief that their trafficking in hawks had lead to the crash in peregrine populations (which was in fact due to DDT). His take on this was that, by becoming part of the legal system, he could ensure that this would not happen to him again. So we waited.....night fell and we went home.

The next few days were repeat performances with the chicken, I became an expert maize watcher but passed the time with a number of interesting people including Pete Widener, Steve Chindgren and Bob Bagley. We did have some excellent duck hawking and I saw some fine birds flown.

Finally I came right with the Chicken on an afternoon outing with Dave Cherry. We watched a flock of chicken fly out of the sand hills and settle in the stubble. Dave put up his Hybrid and this fine bird mounted to an excellent pitch, a tiny cross in the sky. I was about to learn something more about "chicken". With the hawk at pitch, we walked in a line across the field, the Prairie Chicken flushed and the falcon came down in a tear-drop stoop. It struck a chicken which folded and dropped into the grass some 50 meters from the edge of the field. Dave ran in with his dogs and the hawk remounted. To my absolute disbelief, the chicken re-flushed at pace, down the hawk came again and thumped the quarry back into the grass a second time. Surely this would be the end. The dogs and onlookers searched for the chicken, while the hawk, now tired, flew around at fairly low pitch. Up got the chicken, a third time, and struck out for the sand hills, showing us all a clean pair of heels and winning the day. Prairie Chicken were obviously a more challenging quarry than I had realized. Chatting later, Frank Bond told me that catching a "chicken" was the falconry equivalent of shooting your buffalo.

Shortly before Thanksgiving an event occurred which is the nightmare of all meet organizers. Prairie Chickens had flown into the field, the hawk was up a pitch and the falconer was about to run in to flush. Half of the IAF guests were present and watching. An irate and drunken farmer arrived on the scene and ordered everyone off and the hawk down, before he shot it with the shotgun that he was brandishing. The falconer called his hawk down to the lure and everyone moved off. As it turned out, the farmer was not on his own land and the falconer was acting correctly, with permission, but who argues with a drunk holding a gun! NAFA had done a brilliant job of publicizing the meet to the local community, including printed leaflets and personal visits. The community was incensed by this act of inhospitality and invitations to host delegates at thanksgiving dinners and have falconers on their farms poured in.

Another evening found me sitting watching maize stubble. The falconer on this occasion was Sean Hayes, a character of note. Sean's job is a Rodeo Clown. This is the guy who jumps into the ring and prances around to distract the bull which is about to trample the cowboy it's just managed to throw off its back. I think about Sean when I feel that I'm having a bad day at the office. Sean's bird is a superb Gyr/Peregrine hybrid. We got the luck. A small flock of chicken flew in and settled. Sean put his bird up and, when it had reached really good pitch, he made in carefully. The chicken were flushed and the hawk folded and powered down, striking a chicken to the ground. The chicken bounced and got up flying, but the hawk was not to be caught out and it reeled in its quarry and put a stop to any plans of escape. Sean had a smile that split his face as he picked up his successful bird on its quarry. I went to thank him for the hunt and, beaming, he said, "No, thank you for sharing this day with me".

The final evening found me out, again, waiting fruitlessly with Bob Collins, chatting about life in Alaska. The farmer came to pass time with us and informed us the son of his drunken neighbor had been driving past hooting and disturbing another group of falconers. "That's hunter harassment", said Bob, his legal background asserting itself, "Call the warden and he will be sorted out." "No we'll deal with it," said the farmer, "my

son was going to see him, but I had to stop him 'cause he was packin'. I said to him, 'You know the rule in our family. Don't you pack a gun if you don't aim to use it.' So I made him take it back, but we'll fix that guy." Who said the Wild West is dead!

Adrian Lombard



Sean Hayes at the successful conclusion of a "Chicken" hunt.



IN PRAISE OF THE FREE MEWS

When I started flying hawks of they lived in my room, usually on a block or screen perch. Due to the subversive nature of falconry at the time one did not have a visible mews for the Nature Constipation officer up the road to tell his friends about and the hawk was spirited out of the house in a box to go flying every day. Long suffering mothers and wives sometimes tolerate hawks in the house, but moulting however reduces this tolerance, as the hawk starts throwing feathers and down and the spouse fifty fits.

When the hawk starts spending long periods of time fanning around with their wings there usually appears an ultimatum from ones' domestic cohabitants with an unpleasant "or else" as a codicil.

When one has a small baby in the house this threatening behaviour takes a more intense form and if the reasonable family man who loves his spouse, child, hawks and dog more or less equally, has any sense at all he will move his hawks outside.

The question then is how you keep a hawk safe, untangled and tame and outside when it is not under your direct supervision for most of the day.

Some falconers have moved the hawks to the garden. Usually this terminates the bird's career with it being eaten by a dog, cat, mongoose, genets, snake, monitor lizard, fox, jackal, owl, black sparrow hawk or other hungry denizen of the suburban ecosystem.

In rural areas the expected half-life of an unattended tethered hawk is about one evening. If it really does not fly well let it go rather than leave it unattended outside. It will then at least have a half chance of survival.

Other falconers build a fort Knox like structure in which they tether their hawk and go on as before, but find the hawk wild and unfit and overweight when they take it up from the moult. Typically it takes two to three weeks to get the hawk hunting well again.

More experienced falconers that have been around the block a few times build a free mews. In this the hawk lives during the hunting season as well as during the moult. It learns that in order to go hunting it must come promptly to the fist to be jessed up. When it is moulting it can be kept tame enough to come to the fist to be fed, but if the situation demands it can be left to feed itself in its own time. If the hawk does not come to the fist to be fed it is usually better not to be flying it.

I have kept three casts of tiercels this way for the last ten or so years. The results have been good in so much as I have never had a sick bird, I have never had anything but feather perfect birds and with one unhappy exception I have never had a bird sleep out. The tiercels seem to sort out their pecking order in the mews and have never had any serious altercations with each other. I must note however that I have never tried to keep

- Mews Views -

males and females together when they are in hunting condition. I fear a small mistake could result in tragedy.

My free mews is an outside room with one half of one side covered with mesh, mosquito gauze, and wooden vertical bars on the inside. The birds can perch about 1.5m off the ground and look out at the activities outside. They can also fly up about four meters to a small narrow shelf just under the roof where they go when they are unhappy about things outside. They seem to feel very secure in this spot and roost in it at night.

The room is about 3.5 meters long, about 1.5 meters wide and about 4 meters high. There is a windowsill ledge of brick, a shelf perch of AstroTurf and then the high ledges of raw plank. To date I have never had any foot problems from this mews.

The birds have a bath in one corner and the floor is covered with fine gravel. It gets cleaned out about twice a year, and care is taken not to feed unplucked food otherwise the place becomes messy very quickly.

I feed mostly rock pigeons and doves, and very little is left over at the end of any meals. If the place starts to smell of rotting meat then you are feeding too much and must find where they are caching the excess food and remove it.

During initial training I tether my birds to a block or shelf perch while I teach them to come to the fist and lure. I then introduce high jumping to the fist which conditions them for the discipline of life in the free mews. When a fist is presented to them and they jump to it immediately then they are ready to be free mewed.

I then place them in the mew and call them to the fist at training time each day. While they pull at a bit of tiring, I jess them up, and once secured put on the hood. The whole exercise takes about two minutes per bird. If one used a travelling box the process could probably be reduced to a minute per bird. These minutes become important when daylight length is short and one has to work for a living.

Once the birds are hooded weighed and the telemetry switched on it is into the bakkie and off hunting. My current record from start to finish with a kill in between is about twenty minutes. This speed falconry usually occurs when one has to attend some social or cultural event run by non falconers who think that sunset is a good time to begin the festivities, and who don't understand that hawks have to be flown between knocking off work and sunset.

The downside of this system is that if your hawk is overweight, undermanned or sick you will waste a lot of time trying to get it to come to your fist. Discipline is the key to the system and a hawk that does not respond immediately should not get fed that evening and certainly should not go hunting. My tiercels learn this very fast and a greater problem is trying to deal with two birds both wanting to be taken up simultaneously. I now stick my glove through the door until one hangs onto it then withdraw glove and hawk from the

mews and shut the door in the other one's face. I jess, hood and weigh the first bird before repeating the process with the second.

The advantages over a traditional tethering system are enormous. The birds never get tangled, feathers don't get broken, muscle tone is kept during lay offs, hungry or restless birds can jump from perch to perch rather than bating incessantly and damage to legs and leg scales is non existent.

If you don't keep your bird this way already, try it, you will be amazed at the difference it makes.

Steven Squires



Above: Steven and his team.

Right: The captive breeding of African Goshawks.



CASE DISCUSSION: INFECTION

Background information

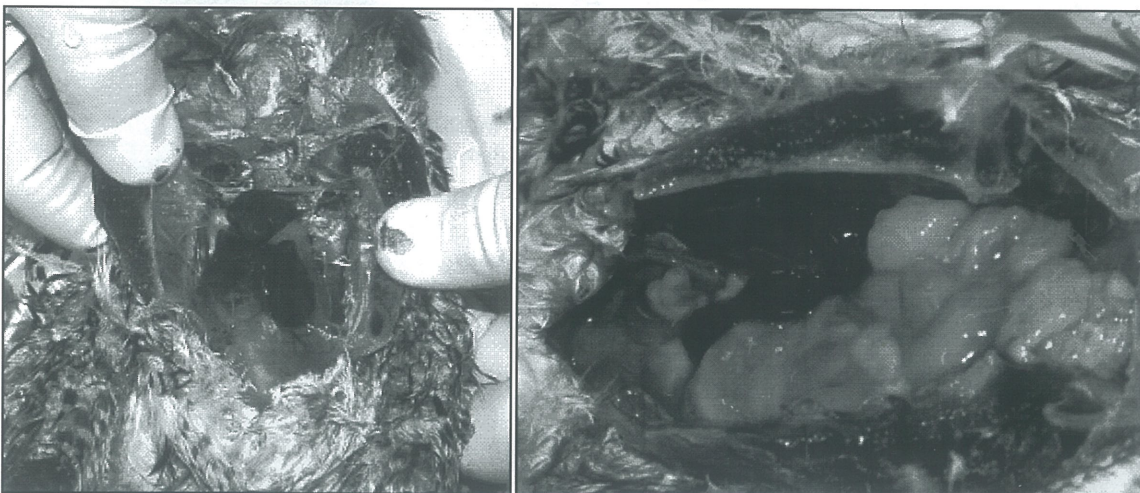
A musket African Goshawk was brought in for autopsy. According to the owner the bird was still flying the previous evening on a weight of 183gr. He did mention later that the bird did not respond entirely sharply. The next morning he found the bird dead. Its main diet was chicken.

Findings

Macroscopic evaluation:

The head was wet and sticky with signs of vomit around the mouth. The inside of the mouth was normal with no lesions. The skin showed signs of dehydration, otherwise there were no abnormalities on the rest of the body.

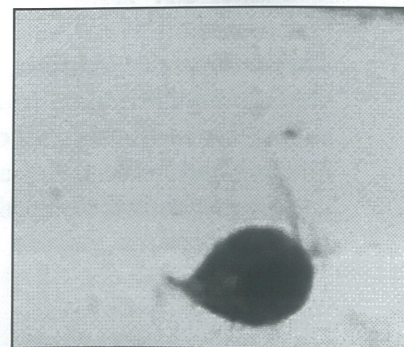
The breast muscle was thin, though not particularly underweight. The digestive track was practically non-existent. The esophagus, stomach and intestine were hardly recognizable and completely necrotic with whitish, yellow pus oozing from it.



Microscopic evaluation:

A wet preparation from the content of the digestive track revealed numerous bacteria as well as live *Trichomonas gallinae* parasites.

Trichomonas gallinae is a single-celled, pear-shaped protozoan with 4 whip-like anterior flagella and a fin-like undulating membrane that extends for approximately 2/3 of the total body length. The protozoan moves by undulation and flagellar action. Trichomoniasis is also known as Canker (in doves and pigeons) and as Frounce (in raptors). *T. gallinae* is a parasite of the upper digestive tract of many avian species causing accumulation of necrotic material in the mouth and esophagus. It is principally a disease of young birds and is often fatal. Nearly all pigeons and doves harbor the organism and can be a source of infection. In raptors, liver and abdominal lesions are the main pathological changes that occur. Recommended treatment is metronidazole 50 mg/kg, sid orally, 5-7d. It is further important to clean drinking bowls thoroughly



since the organism transmit easily via water.

Bacterial culture:

Pus from the intestine were cultured on various agar plates and incubated for 48 hours aerobically as well as anaerobically. The organisms isolated were *Escherichia coli*, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Actinomyces* species and *Clostridium* species (not *perfringens*).

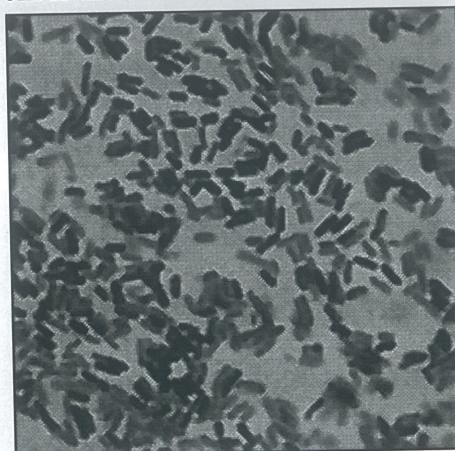
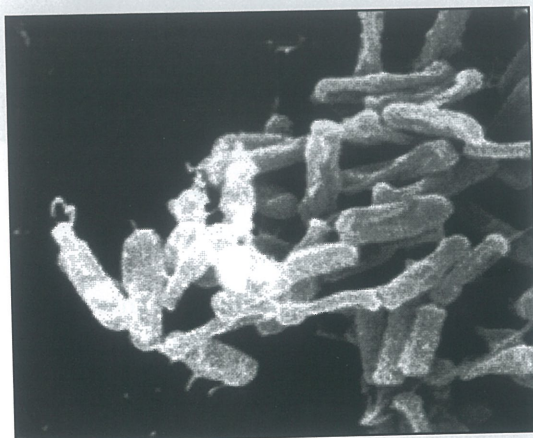
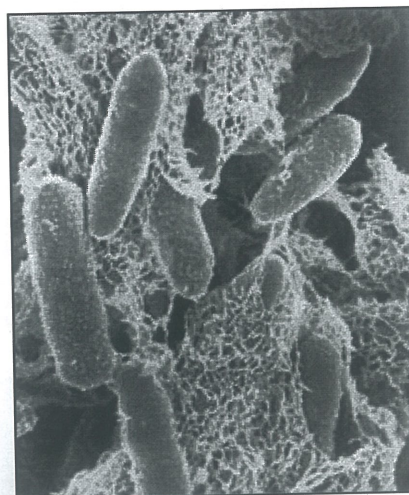
The most probable bacterial pathogens responsible for the acute death are the *E. coli* and *Clostridium* specie. The role of the *Actinomyces* is uncertain.

Escherichia coli are Gram negative bacilli that grow easily with little special nutritional requirements. It is one of the main species of bacteria living in the lower intestines of mammals and birds, known as gut flora. However, it can also be a deadly pathogen to mammals and birds and often responsible for septicaemia and shock. The enteric *E. coli* are divided on the basis of virulence properties into enterotoxigenic, entero-pathogenic; entero-invasive, verotoxigenic; entero-haemorrhagic and entero-aggregative *E. coli*.

Although the organism may become highly resistant to antibiotics, especially in a hospital environment, they are generally very susceptible to antibiotics like the quinolones. However, in very young birds this group of antibiotics may be contra-indicated.

Clostridium are obligate anaerobic gram positive bacilli.

Clostridium includes common free-living bacteria as well as important pathogens that cause enterotoxaemia and necrotizing enteritis. Different species causes different diseases. These organisms may be treated with any of the gram positive antibiotics with anaerobic action, but penicillin G with clindamycin is the treatment of choice.



Discussion.

This unfortunate African Goshawk had it all. Unfortunately, once the bird is in septic shock, very little can be done against the circulating toxins and death usually follows soon. The only way to combat infections is to act proactively. Take good care of the housing and make sure there is no leftover meat lying around. Meat must always be fresh and from a known source.

Dawid Botes

FLYING AN AYRES HAWK-EAGLE EYAS

In the winter of 1969 I was prospecting for Molybdenite in North Eastern Rhodesia. My base camp was near the Mozambique Border town of Nyamapanda. On a few occasions whilst driving to the Rhodesian town of M'toko through the Makaha hills I noticed a black and white hawk that I mistook for an African Hawk-Eagle flying to and from a forested hillside. One Saturday morning trip produced yet another sighting, this time of a bird with a spray of green leaves in its feet. I decided that come hell or high-water I had to investigate.

The next day – a Sunday – I borrowed the company land rover and took with me a man named Pauli whose home was in Makaha village. Pauli knew a man who made a living out of hunting 'bush meat' in the Makaha hills so we called on this fellow before we bashed off up the mountain. The 'poacher' when I told him what I was looking for knew all about black and white hawks with big stick nests and volunteered the information that there was just such a nest on the slope above us and another nest of the same kind some seven or eight miles away further along the Makaha range. When I asked him if he had ever seen the hawks take prey he replied 'no, but they bring many small birds to their nests' This was the first inkling I had that the bird I had seen was not an African Hawk-eagle. African Hawk-eagles prey on large game birds like red-necked spur fowl and guinea fowl and only occasionally resort to hunting green pigeons and turtle doves. However I was still pretty confident the bird I had seen was an African Hawk Eagle and my hopes were high I would be able to take an eye. The population of Rhodesia was comparatively well fed and had not yet taken to eating raptor chicks.

The three of us, Pauli, the Poacher and I, set off up the mountain – the base which supported a lush cocktail of brachestegia woodland with a thick bushy undergrowth that was shot with scarlet "Bauhinia Galpini" flowers, but once up the slope the silvery barked delicately foliated "Brachestegia Glaucosens" began to take over and the thick undergrowth gave way to short grassy under-story. In subsequent encounters with Ayres Hawk-Eagles, this leafy canopy with a clear under story has been present. If you come to think about it, those passage Ayres hawk-eagles that hunt along Parktown Ridge and Northcliff koppie stoop down after their domestic pigeon prey through a canopy of exotic Jacaranda trees and catch them above a clear "story" of lawns and asphalt!

On reaching the nest we found it to be in a very tall mature Mountain Brachestegia about 50 to 60 feet up in a major fork below the canopy, which in late June was still leafy, when I came back for the chick on August the 13th the canopy was shed. The female slipped off the nest and again I thought I saw a dark breasted African Hawk-Eagle, as I clearly saw her all black head. The only decent illustration I had seen of an Ayres Hawk Eagle at that point were photographs taken by Leslie Brown of a male with a white face and forehead. Not wanting to keep the female off her eggs for too long we did not dally. I offered a ten Rhodesian dollar reward for a live chick and the poacher said he would see to it that no one harmed the nest. A brief scout around found three or four mutes and feather remains of Brown hooded kingfisher, Burchill's Glossy starling and grey and

crested hornbills. Odd fare for an African Hawk-Eagle but to be expected of an Ayres Hawk-Eagle.

Six weeks passed and again Pauli, the poacher and I made our way up the mountain side, this time with a climbing rope and a satchel and string for lowering the chick to ground level. This time there were mutes radiating around the nest and there was white fluff adhering to bushes and branches all around the chick has not only hatched but was big enough to stand and mute over the edge of the nest and judging by the fluff it had lost its feathers must have been pushing through 'fast and furiously' By luck more than good judgement I got a perfectly aged chick. Caligula, as I named, her was about half feather and half snow white down. I noticed the chicks sprouting tummy feathers were like colour of old Ivory, a pale creamy fawn and nowhere was there any rufous or cinnamon as you would expect from an African Hawk-Eagle, and the realisation dawned that I had acquired a very rare Hawk-indeed. Caligula's feet were huge every bit a big as the feet of an African Hawk-Eagle female, but the bird herself was a lot smaller. Many years later when I made measured drawings of hawk feet I was to find out that a 950 gramme Ayres Hawk-Eagles foot was 2mm longer from point of contact on paper of back talon to point of contact of petty single talon that a female African Hawk Eagle, 500 grammes heavier than the Ayres. A falconer friend of mine in Salisbury paid Caligula a rare compliment by describing her as an airborne pocket battleship.

Caligula's training began with being put on a hack table constructed of local timber bound together with bark string that our building crew called 'Guzi Tambo' the table was built beneath a shady tree right outside my thatched bungalow where she could see me and numerous other people come and go. Since she could already stand I gave her one 'feed' by hand and gave her pieces of turtle dove that I shot on a daily basis - Game not keeping very well in a paraffin driven refrigerator to begin with I would break an egg and separate the yolk and mix this with her pieces of turtles dove in a saucer, later I let her tear at a plucked dove carcass herself, and reserved the egg yolk for times when doves were scarce and I had to feed venison. The venison was acquired in a very novel way I might add, about 4 kilometres from our camp there was a martial eagle nest with a chick in it. On two occasions I was able to remove a freshly killed $\frac{3}{4}$ grown grysbok carcass from the nest, cut off a back leg and feed this to my hawk suitably fortified with egg yolk. The martial chick duly fledged non the worse for the deprivation and I watched him for the next three months as he - it was a smallish male which I estimated would weight about 3000 grammes - ranged further and further from the nest.

Caligula's Hack table being right outside my bungalow made it easy to bring her indoors at sunset, this was most necessary as our camp was set in very wild country with numerous medium to large feline predators about and I frequently could hear the strange grunting 'duet' of a pair of giant milky eagle owls at night. Barely a month after acquiring Caugula I brought 15 pigeons back from Salisbury and ensconced them in a pigeon loft a scant 15 metres from my door, they lasted three whole days and three and a half nights until a caracal cat broke in a killed all these birds in the space of about 45 seconds. You will understand how necessary it was to bring the hawk inside at sunset! On being brought in I placed her on a shelf made of pine set into my 'pole and daga'

Bungalow walls with shelf brackets. It wasn't long before she found her way to the end of my bed where she would lie down flat like a broody chicken. I had a perfect arrangement for bringing up a young hawk (if one is a bachelor) however I found it is well nigh impossible if one is married.

I have striven to use this method of raising large downies – 2/3 feather 1/3 down is the ideal taking age I find – on both eyes African Hawk Eagles and young African Peregrines subsequently and it produced very tame well balanced chicks that know they are hawks but have no fear of their handler or a hawking party. The age of taking is critical and the subsequent three to four weeks of passive hawking on a strategically placed hack board provide lessons that go deep into the hawks psyche and are in place for the rest of the hawks life.'

Once Caligula was hard penned she was gently taken up – Jesses had been in place since day one – and made to the hood, I was surprised and delighted that the hood went on and off so easily. The hack table was demolished and a large wooden bow perch thrust into the ground at the same spot. Subsequently I have found that my African Hawk Eagles prefer a block perch to a bow. Being so tame it was not necessary to cut her weight by much. She was taken up at a weight of just over 1000 grammes and I cut her back to 900 a drop of 11% she responded well at this weight but once she was well made to her lure and flying free I allowed the weight to creep back up to 1000 grammes.

I made Caligula to both fist and lure, but once off the creance it became obvious that she could handle a swung lure like a falcon. (This despite her hawkish build and lemon yellow eyes) Caligula was incredibly 'aerial' for a hawk and this despite being flown in an African bush that supported numerous tall trees. She would stay on the wing and play in the wind for an hour at a stretch on occasions. My camp was on a promontory that overlooked a hundred square miles lowveld and river valley, most evenings this valley produced a lively breeze and one had only to walk sixty yards to launch her from a rocky crest that fell away dramatically to the valley floor which levelled out 500 feet below the launching point. Caligula would sweep out over this slope and tack back to the crest with its tree line. Sometimes she would half fold her wings and hang motionless in the breeze like a kite, extend some wing surface and rise straight up like a lift or furl one of her sails slightly and move sideways. All this was done with hardly a flap of a wing currents had to be seen to be believed. All the while I was with this hawk I could not help but notice how falconine the Ayres Hawk-Eagle temperament is. E.g. I could approach her on the perch and offer her a titbit, and this would be gently accepted by the beak. Try that with any time accipiter and it would be rudely snatched from your hand by her feet or worse still you would feel the pain of her pounces and back talon gripping your fingers. I've tried this direct approach to the bird on perch as a part of the manning procedure with all my hawks' lanners and peregrines and this lone Ayres Hawk-eagle would accept a morsel of food with the beak. All the others snatch with their feet. Another falconine trait shared by both Ayres and African Hawk eagle is their matter of fact acceptance of the hood, No hanging upside 'a la black sparrow hawk' just a flicker of the nictitating membrane as the hood goes on. Flying a bird that will not accept the hood can cause a lot of unnecessary stress. I could stroke the Ayres with the back of my right forefinger and not be bitten, I

could put my forefinger and thumbs around her neck and pretend to throttle her and she would look me in the eye with a kind of resignation that said 'I suppose I have to bear with you playful antics dad' In much the same way my teenage daughters have done when they have outgrown their playful childhood and I still want to play. I was left with an impression that the finest characteristics of Falcon and Sparrow-hawk had been distilled and decanted into the system of this exquisitely engineered, superbly finished European Goshawk sized bird.'

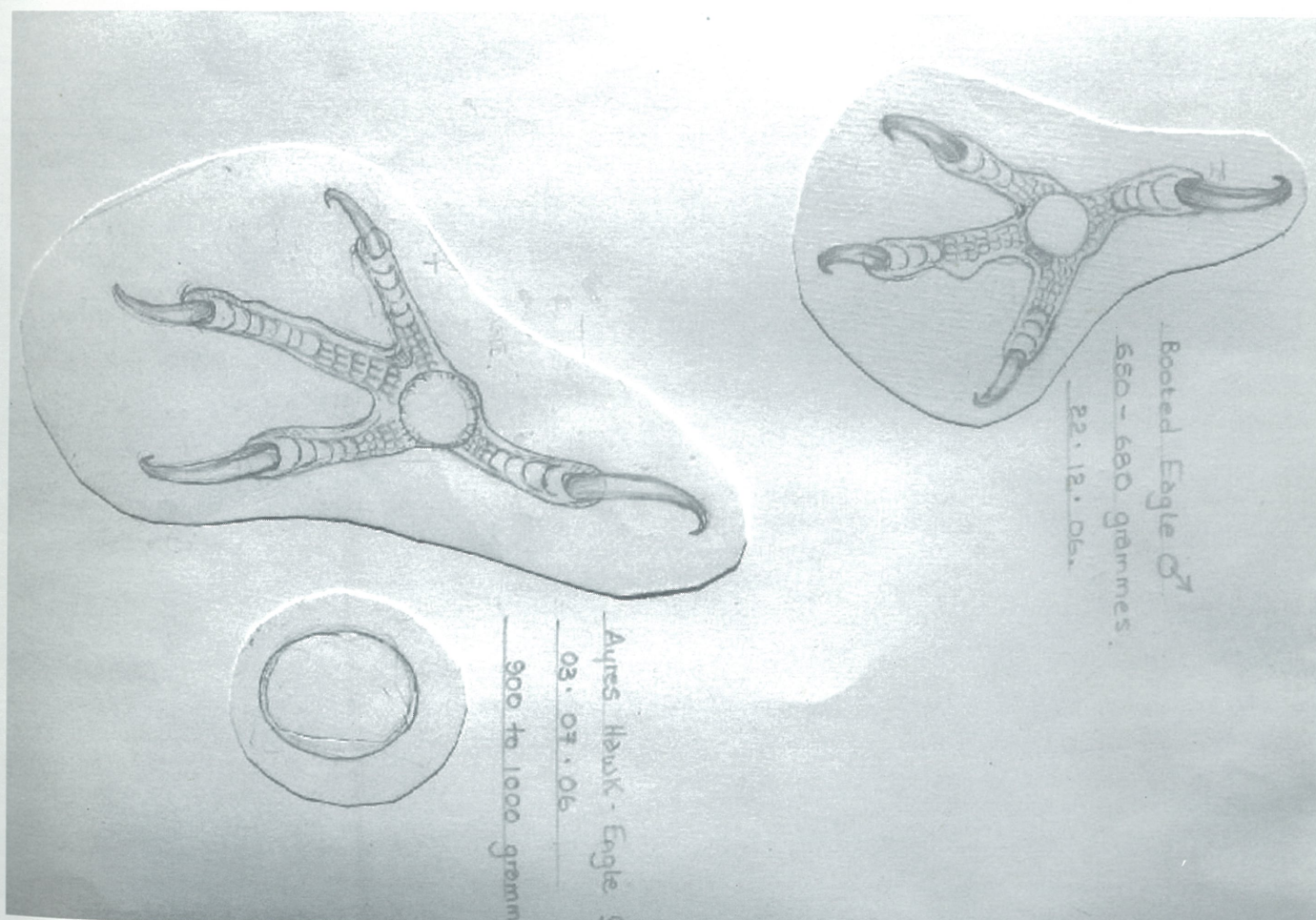
I never did get to taking a single head of quarry with Caligula, - not even a bagged racing pigeon thanks to the caracal cat mentioned above - but the flights I had to the lure were thrilling and incredibly different to those I've had from any other Hawk I've trained. At about 4:30 of an afternoon when the wind from Mozambique began to blow up the valley and I had changed out of my dusty work clothes, I would call her onto the fist for a titbit, hood and weigh her and then proceed to the lip of the escarpment and cast her off into the wind. She would sweep out over the valley and back to the tree line above me as I made my way down the slope to the valley floor. When I reached flat land I would make my way to a clearing in the bush from whence I could watch Caligula tacking back and forth over the ridge above me. When she lowered her pitch to plus minus 20 feet above treetop height I knew she was ready for a call to the lure, which I would then produce and swing as I would for a Falcon. (This would be about 5:15 pm) Caligula would fold up into a heart shape with her wing tips folded behind the tip of her train feet thrust forward and stoop down the 40degree slope like a cruise missile. Now and then a tree growing higher than its companions would get her way, and she would deftly avoid it by retracting a leg. This would cause her to veer toward the side of the extended leg, the tree trunk out of the way the retracted leg would be extended and the opposite leg would be withdrawn until she was back on track for the lure. The three hundred metres of liner distance from the crest line to the clearing - more if you took the slope into account - took a slow count of six. At the very last moment, about 10 metres out from the lure. She would open her wings and train with a noise like 'thwapp' and come to a dead stop with the lure in one of her huge feet. The hillside that had taken me half an hour to negotiate had taken her about six maybe seven seconds. I make that 180kph down a 40 degree slope of 300 m linear distance. I guess that is not impossible, but then I did not clock her with a stop watch. Believe me that hawk seemed to be overcoming terminal velocity as she shot down that hillside.

When my time with rand mines and the Cirwa Molybdenite project came to an end I left Caligula with a falconer friend in Salisbury, whilst I, who had been in the bush for 10 months apart from once monthly trips to Salisbury to fetch dynamite, caught up on some badly needed socializing in Johannesburg. Unfortunately she broke her Jesses whilst being on the lawn of another friend and was lost off the perch; fairly cleanly thank the Lord. I do not have any photographs of her and a single pencil sketch, which I made of her while she was snuggled up on the end of my bed, was thrown out and destroyed by the wife of an artist friend whom I had left it with for safe keeping. If you think poor old Vincent van Gogh had a tough time with his art you should listen to some stories of what happened to some of mine; white ants eating their way into a portfolio and eating holes into plus minus 12 water colour executed prior to 1969 etc.

I've never had the opportunity to take another Ayres Hawk Eagle so I'm left with impressions and memories. My five months with Caligula helped me shape my approach to a series of African Hawk eagle. One of these birds was fantastic and when the wind was right and we were working open sparsely treed country, would tack back and forth above the Hawking party and respond to shouts like 'Hey Rog, there is a cock Swainsons Frankie running through the grass ahead of me!' and go and investigate the cause of the excitement. Most of the African Hawk Eagles would follow the party from tree to tree from which they were fairly successfully at Swainsons spur fowl, and deadly at hare. I don't think the Ayres Hawk Eagle would be as good off the first as my African Hawk Eagle and definitely the shorter tail means they would have to build up higher airspeed to become manuverable.

However if any Falconer could get them to 'wait on' or soar in a midday then he would have a hawk as deadly as a Gyr Falcon. I wish I could have realized a lot more of Caligula's huge potential.

Roger Neilson



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Contributions are welcomed, as are photographs and artwork.

Please send articles as a Word document attachment.



Caligula Stopping to the Lure
(from memory) Neilson