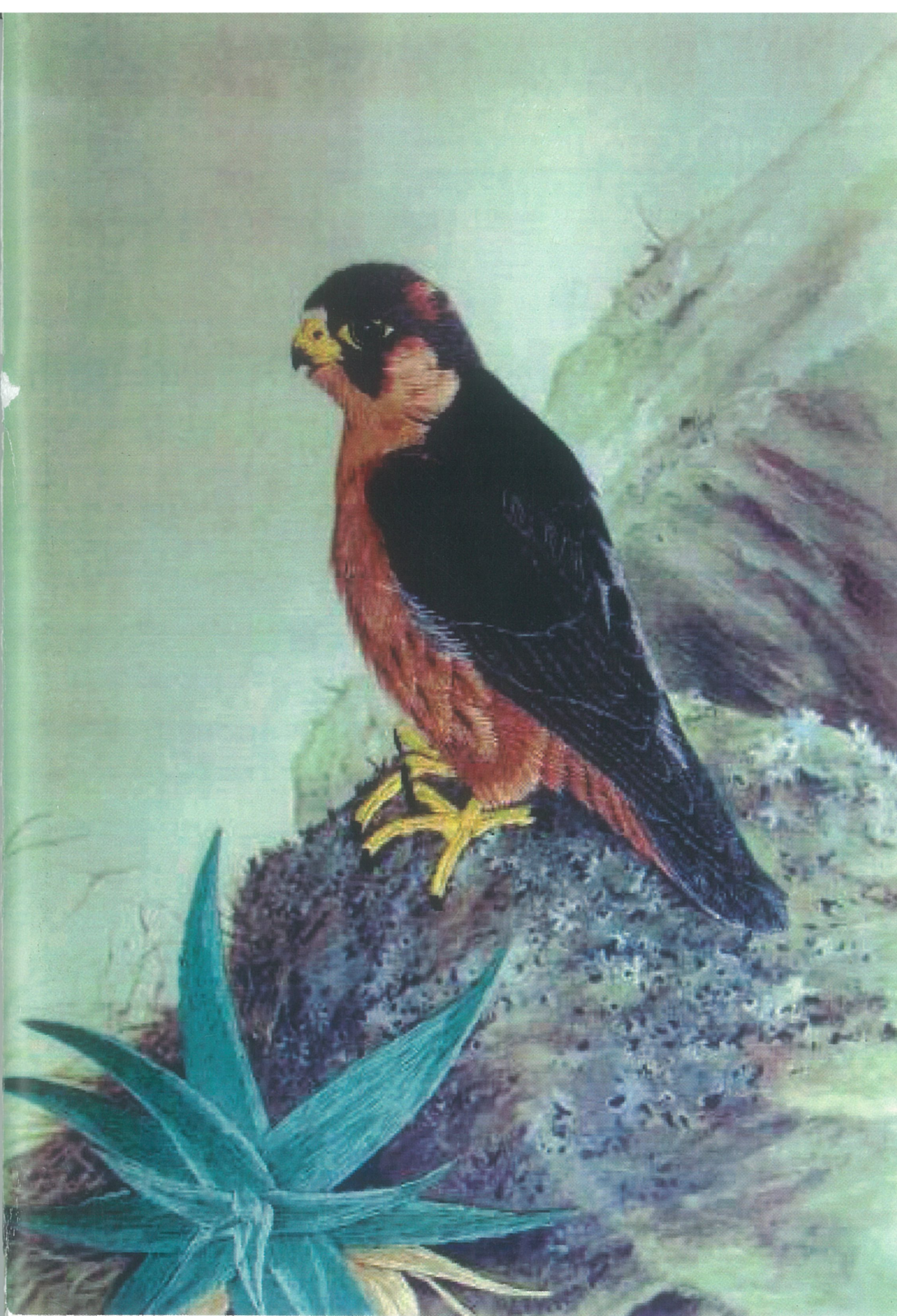


Vol. 9 2011

**Journal of the
South African
Falconry
Association.**



MEWS VIEWS

Cover Picture: Needlepoint embroidery of a Taita Falcon by Lucy Beukes – Mother of Bertus and Lizette Beukes and generously donated for SAFA fundraising in 2008.

Please note that the views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the opinions of SAFA or of the Editor. Thanks are expressed to all contributors, without whom this publication could not exist. Thanks also to those who have contributed photographs. Please note that that the source of photos is not generally acknowledged in this publication. This said, we offer a special thanks to **Mark Williams** who attended the 2010 SAFA Meet and has allowed us to make use of some of his magnificent photographs for the Centerfold (also below – “Tim Wagner releasing his Falcon”)- also check www.canadianwildlifephotography.com for more information.

We also thank **Dr. Dave Kettles** for his “Study of a Lanner Falcon” on the Back Page.

Adrian Lombard – Editor.



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Editorial

2010 – What a year that was! At one point Aldo Beruti of AGRED said to me that he had never seen anyone take lightning-strikes like SAFA! This is not all bad – out of adversity comes strength! We are on the way to developing a position for Falconry within South Africa, with the support of impending legislation, which we have never enjoyed previously and which could be the envy of many Falconers around the World. We are not there yet; we must be vigilant and there is still hard work to be done.

2010 saw the recognition, by UNESCO, of Falconry as an Intangible World Cultural Heritage – a Treasure of Humanity. What does this mean? It means that the next person you hear sneering at what you do can be informed that he is seriously out of step with the rest of the World who do recognize Falconry as an activity to be valued and call on Governments to preserve and encourage its practice. Certainly this is of enormous importance to Falconers in countries where Falconry is challenged by “Green” organizations and Animal Rightists or places where it is simply withering away as its practitioners die out. It is important to us in South Africa where we take pride in our “Rainbow Nation” and respect each others’ cultures. Falconry is part of my culture and your culture – embrace it!

We have faced challenges in terms of new legislation that will affect the practice of Falconry in South Africa. The Norms and Standards have now been published. Falconry is now defined in law with recognition of our Grading System and our Wild Harvest of Raptors. We have faced Animal Welfare issues and have seen acceptance of our specialist knowledge and tried-and-tested practices. We have confronted the ToPS regulations and reasonably expect to see the Peregrine Falcon and the African Crowned Eagle removed from the ToPS List as a result of our representations. These achievements are the product of a significant team effort by the leadership of SAFA, supported by the excellent standard of Falconry of our membership.

Finally, 2010 saw a shuffle in the leadership structure of SAFA, no less surprising to those involved than to our members. SAFA remains a dynamic organization, committed to the advancement of South African Falconry and the conservation of our Biodiversity. Tim Wagner remains very much involved and we thank him for his invaluable leadership for many years.

2011 will be the year of the 3rd International Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi. This promises to be a spectacular event and we are working hard to get as many South Africans there as we can. We have three South Africans invited to present papers in the Falconry Conference which will be part of the event – an enormous achievement for our small community!

Adrian Lombard - May, 2011.

Regional Reports:

Boland falconry Club

As the world global village and multimedia communications are becoming more of a common entity through cell phones and the internet, its now so part of our daily life that we would struggle to get along without it.

This new exposure in itself poses new challenges. The BFC setup a website for those interested in falconry in South Africa to interact with.

Soon we were challenged by the internet medium for membership. At the time, except for the constitution and rules and regulations of the club, no statutory rules were available, or laid down as guidance to facilitate international membership. Legally we sought opinions for criteria taking current legislation into account. On legal advice it was decided that all foreign falconers wanting to be active members of the club will at all times be a guest of graded club members. In principle due to non residency foreign members would not be permitted to posses and/or own raptors for falconry purposes.

All the formalities and structures were finalized and set up. Then we received an application from an Arabian falconer for membership. Soon following his membership approval, a request, to import his own falcon was received. Again we had to facilitate the application and set standards. It was agreed that any raptors imported for falconry purposes would become the property of the club

Qualified club members would then train and fly these imported birds and be accompanied by the "guest" members. Legal documents were drafted in the form of an agreement between the member and the club.

This Arabian member through his South African representative signed all the relevant documents accepting the club's terms and conditions.

A peregrine/gyr hybrid was imported and quarantined. Despite the agreement in place, the member continuously through his representative tried to bend the agreement, clearly to suit himself. Soon it became clear that the application was only a smoke screen, to get falconry trained raptors into South Africa, wanting to do falconry and hunt independently. This was not acceptable.

The member through its agent on several occasions tried to revoke the agreement, wanting to

gain possession of the already imported bird. We stuck to the agreement. Several attempts were made by the member and his agent to put pressure on us by publicly trying to put our club into a bad spot. After no consensus could be reached we consulted our legal advisors which maintained that we had the full right to keep the falcon as in terms of the agreements in place the falcon was club property, to which parties agreed. Despite our rights in the matter and legal advice we decided to return the falcon to the owners, on the condition that the falcon be returned to Abu Dhabi only.

The falcon was exported back to Abu Dhabi, as a gesture of goodwill. At the SAFA 2010 the issue of Arabian falconers and their status was raised, and unanimously agreed by member clubs of SAFA that Arabian falconers will not be accommodated within South Africa falconry on their terms.

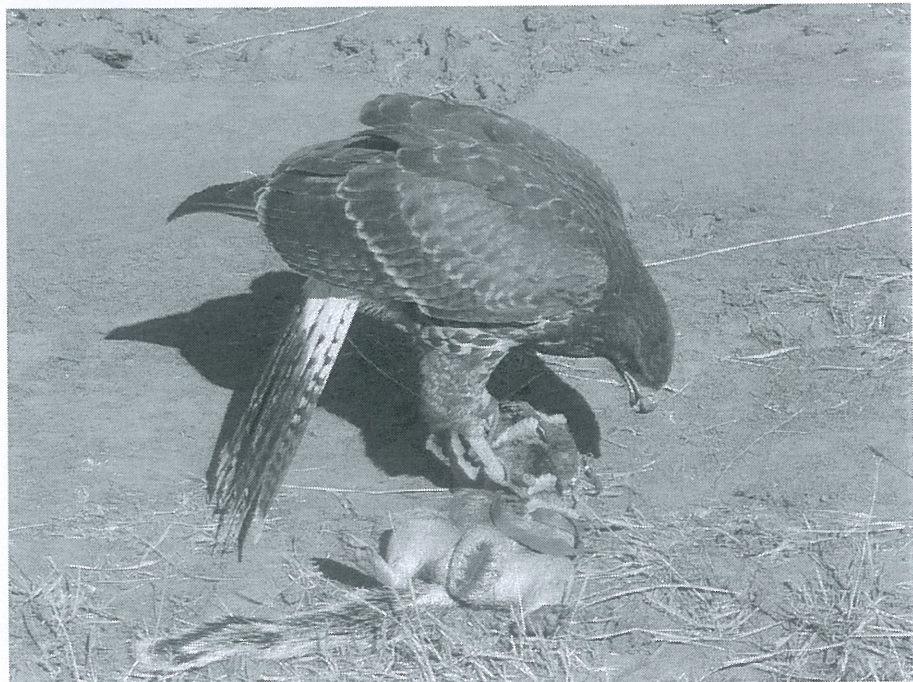
To prevent this incident from repeating itself, I raised the possibility with Adrian Lombard to officially approach SAFA to approach CITES stating the SAFA position and request that should any application be received by CITES for any trained falconry raptors to be exported to South Africa for falconry purposes, pre-approval must first be granted by SAFA before such imports would be facilitated and authorized by CITES.

Fortunately this incident was a good learning curve as sometimes events have to turn bad before it becomes good.

Johan Botes flew an African Peregrine falcon, using a kite to improve her pitch. She took Shovellers, Yellow-bill duck and Teal as well as a Darter. He also flew a young Harris Hawk female on Guinea fowl.

Wehahn Geldenhuys flew an African Peregrine, a Gyr/Saker/Peregrine and a female Harris Hawk. He had great fun with the Harris Hawk whose nature surprised and pleased him and he found her to be an exceptional bird.

Wehahn Geldenhuys
Chairman.



Cape Falconry Club

This past year has seen further growth in the CFC, with a contingent of dynamic young falconers coming through the ranks. Our members continue to fly birds across the entire spectrum of available SA raptors, with a handful flying exotics (Harris Hawks) and one hybrid falcon.

We are grateful for our local population of African Goshawks, as this bird continues to be the mainstay of the novice falconer. Our immediately local terrain is not well suited to long wing hawking, but those falconers flying longwings are usually die-hards who make regular trips to the Swartland, the Bokkeveld and the Koue Bokkeveld, which are abundant with Cape and Greywing Francolin.

Semi-urban falconers are able to hunt their Female Black Sparrowhawks at the abundant Guinea Fowl that have 'moved in with us', and of course there are also many opportunities to fly shortwings at semi-urban exotics such as Eurasian Starlings and Sparrows. In short, we have no shortage of quarry, but sometimes creativity (and subtlety) needs to be utilized to be able to exploit them!

Our annual Field Meet was again held at Eselfontein Farm, Ceres, where we can hunt and run our dogs, and daily trips were also made to the Kouebokkeveld where we have access to a good selection of farms. The scenery in this area is spectacular, and the game is plentiful. Members flew Peregrines, Lanners, Harrises, Black Sparrowhawks, African Goshawks and a hybrid falcon at the game. The largest quarry caught was a cock Guinea Fowl and the smallest, a locust. Adrian Lombard and Edmund Oettle even managed to make a potjie with some of the quarry, and smiles and full bellies sent us to bed on the Saturday night.

Not many CFC members made it to SAFA 2010, possibly due to the economic climate, but more are planning to visit the SAFA Field Meet this year. Let's hope the petrol price does not keep on increasing!

Some highlights:

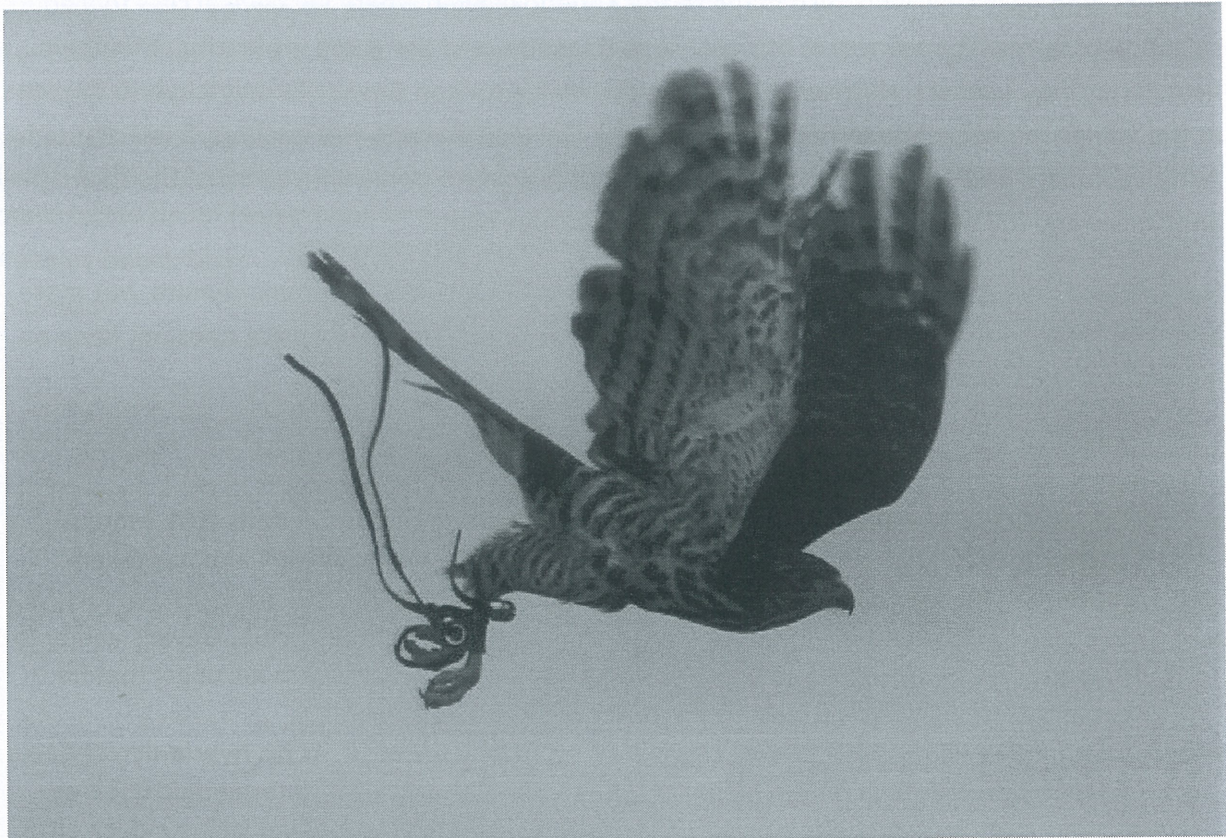
- CFC produced the youngest ever First Year Austringer: Marcus Carstens (18). Marcus successfully waked and trained a female passage Black Sparrowhawk and has taken more than 20 open field kills with her thus far.
- CFC welcomed a new member, Gavin Goldblatt, from the gun dog club. Gavin's ability to find coveys of Francolin is so well developed (thanks to his skill with his dogs) that he can practically give you GPS coordinates in the Koue Bokkeveld!
- Edmond Oettle received the prestigious Dung Trophy for 2010, as his hybrid decided to go for a bath during a hunt. Fortunately, the following day his bird redeemed itself by leaving the glove, powering-up to 1,000 ft, doing a vertical stoop and killing a duck all in the space of 1.5 minutes!

- Young Joshua received the Eagle Encounters 'Apprentice of the Year' floating trophy for his excellent handling and flying skills with a passage Jackal Buzzard.
- Kevin Hearshaw behaved himself and stayed out of trouble!

The CFC faces the same challenges as falconry in the rest of the country, and indeed, the world. The anti-falconry lobby will not stop until they have wrested our ancient sport away from us, and every effort needs to be made to resist this encroaching threat. We currently enjoy good relations with the conservation, NGO and academic communities, and intend to do our best to maintain this rapport. Rehabilitation and input into conservation will be part of this, but also the continued practicing of our sport at the highest ethical standards. To this end, every member is required to do their bit to maintain the image and status of falconry. I'm happy to report that no serious disciplinary issues took place in 2010 and we aim to keep it this way. We could, however, increase our input into conservation issues and this will be one of our goals in the coming year.

Hank Chalmers,

Chairman



Eastern Cape Falconry Club

Club Chairman: Alan Harvey

Members: Arnold Slabbert
Darren Kleinhans
Mathew Hardwick
Jonathan Arnott

The 2010/2011 season saw some good falconry enjoyed by the active members with the inactive members inactive again. Arnold Slabbert's intermewed peregrine was flying well at redwing francolin taking her usual high pitch when she was lost after a long flight. The transmitter was beeping and then went dead. Arnold searched in vain for the following couple of weeks.

Arnold is now flying a rehab tiercel peregrine that comes off the buildings in PE. This bird is doing well on redwing.

Darren Kleinhans has applied for an Af Gos to do his grading.

Mathew Hardwick still has to take a bird and do his grading.

Jono Arnott lost his passage lanneret out of the moult. The bird was recovered a week later in Alexandria. Jono wants to do his grading at SAFA with this bird so we hope it sticks around. He is flying quail and sundry birds in the Kenton area.

I had a good season flying two new passage female peregrines at duck. Both birds took impressive numbers of duck and partridge. I released the one at the end of the season and am flying the other now intermewed bird. She has come out of the moult hot having taken 14 duck without a miss so far. Her pitch is also much improved with large number of binocular range flights. I am also flying a hacked wild taken female peregrine that I trained using Ed Pitchers techniques as a guide. She is flying huge and has 5 duck and one partridge so far. The technique definitely works but it will be interesting to see what happens when I start hunting in areas where there is more check.

Alan Harvey



Free State Falconry Club

At the time of typing this report it is still raining and the petrol price is still climbing. Times are getting tougher and to continue practicing our art remains a constant challenge. Well here in the Free State we like to concentrate on leaving the politics out of our sport and try to aspire to a high standard of falconry.

The new proposed grading system will definitely help falconers to enjoy every bird they fly and not use it as a stepping stone to acquire a certain grading.

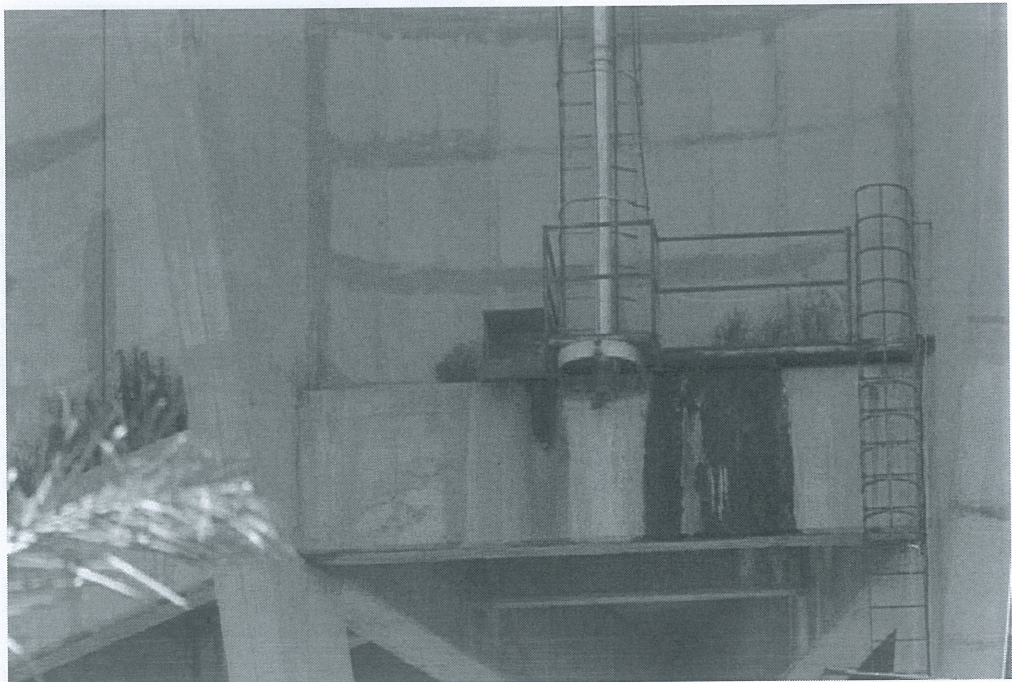
During 2010 the FFC became more involved in conservation, by initiating a nest box project for Peregrine and Lanner falcons in and around FS city centres. Two mature peregrine falcons and one lanner falcon have taken up residence on some of the sites in Bloemfontein. We are monitoring these sites with help from the FS Bird Club; so watch this space.

At a recent get together falconers commented that from their observations it seems as though raptors in the Free State are thriving. Sightings include Ayres Hawk Eagle in Hoopstad, Ovambo Sparrowhawks in the Bethlehem area. The record to date being a count of 24 Lanners seen in one afternoon!

We have 19 members currently and growing by the year. We hope to have a good attendance for SAFA 2011.

Happy Hawking.

Francois Breedt



This photo shows one of the nest boxes erected by the FSFC in Bloemfontein. The female Peregrine is present in the box. This effectively extends the breeding area of the species.

Limpopo Falconry Club

Falconry hunting conditions in Limpopo during 2010 were exceptionally favorable. With good summer rains, the grass cover was ideal for our game birds and hunting with hawks. Conditions also favored snakes lurking in the thick cover and especially nesting in old anthills. You therefore dare not go out hunting without the protected attire like long jeans and quality boots. In Polokwane alone, five serious snakebites were recorded.

Our traditional Field Meet and AGM for 2010 were held at De Wet's farm, near Polokwane. This is an event that no falconer in Limpopo wishes to miss. Time to share falconry news; compare notes and hunting jokes; not to mention the campfire and braai. Falconers live far apart in the Limpopo and personal contact on a daily basis is non-existent. We communicate mainly per E-mail and SMS.

The habitat in most areas is excellent for short wings. At present most falconers are flying Black Spars, African Gosses and Harris Hawks. Only two of our members are flying falcons and only two are flying African Hawk Eagles. We tend to operate on our own during the weekdays and get together over weekends for a hunt.

More about our members:

Louis Trichardt Area.

Etienne Hendricks successfully bred his first African Goshawk. The pair had three chicks but only raised one. The Jackal Buzzard pair is looking great but yet no eggs. The Harris took hares but Etienne is now busy entering him on Swainsons and young Guineas for the 2011 season.

Gerhard Harmse is flying a Black Spar and doing most of his hunting at the Air Force Base on the landing strips. Guineas are a menace on the landing strips but offer excellent hunting opportunities. At present Gerhard is training a Lanner tiercel. The tiercel collided with a game fence and injured a wing.

Marius Botha also favors the Black Spar as a hunting companion. Having the Air Force Base landing strips as hunting ground, you cannot really wish for more. Guinea Fowl and Swainsons are the main quarry.

Gideon Smit: How did you guess? Black Spar! Same setup as the previous falconers. Unfortunately he was very involved in the 2010 FIFA Soccer Fever so he could not fly his hawk all the time. Ernest Blignaut offered to fly her and she went to the Lowveld for more hunting.

Lowveld Area.

Flip Blignaut and his two sons, Ernest and Errol is a father and sons tough unit. They live in a Game Reservation with Lions and Elephants on their doorstep. Flip has been flying an African Hawk Eagle for the past four years. Successful in taking hares. The eagle is an eyas and full of the normal eagle tricks but Flip survived it thus far. Ernest flew and hunted the Black Spar with great success, taking mainly feather game.

Errol also did well with his Harris Hawk on game birds. Flip and sons successfully bred Harris Hawks and they hunt with their own hawks.

Potgietersrus Area.

Gerrie van Niekerk settled in nicely into Limpopo and the LFC. Gerrie was fortunate enough to obtain an African Goshawk female. He hunted small birds and pheasant during the season. Unfortunately a snake ended its life and Gerrie was very upset. Another African Goshawk is available and Gerrie is starting all over. Good luck next time Gerrie. Look out for the silent smooth danger!

Polokwane Area (Pietersburg)

Dawid Botes. Dawid had a fantastic season with a Lanner falcon and bird kills. He unfortunately lost his Saker falcon to TB, identified. (Refer article in this issue) She was a fantastic falcon with a fantastic nature. She was originally flown by me (Paul) and Dawid hunted her. She was an agro hunter and would take off, from the glove and give chase at Rock pigeons at great height, crossing over the farm where we were hunting. What a loss!

The African Hawk Eagle, Gus, is still hunting hares without any hassle.

The Harris Hawk pair produced one chick this year.

Paul Venter. Paul trained and hunted a Lanner falcon at game birds and pigeons. Laura Lee was a great flyer and loved going to the blue sky when conditions were favorable. My Pointer bitch went lost on a game farm and only returned a day later with a front leg ligament injury. Being my only pointing dog I switched to pigeon hunting. Had great fun and prima stoops from great heights with her. She was flown in good condition and was lost during December when we had heat waves and strong up drafts.

Amor, the Saker falcon, did well flying at 1050grm. She would fly Guinea fowl out of the hood without any hesitation. It is important to enter the falcon well to install maximum confidence. She just started hunting well when the temperatures reached 36C then she started molting all over again. She will now only be ready to hunt, by May 2011.

The 2011 hunting season should be a great one for the Limpopo falconers.

Happy Hawking to all the falconers in RSA.

Paul Venter.



Above:

Barend Botes with his Lanner.

Right:

Peregrine Camping.



Mpumalanga Falconry Club

Yes! It is that time of the year, falconry season has begun! After last year's disappointments with lost hawks in all kinds of ways we can forget about the past in start with a new experience.

Thomas Holder started early with his new Black sparrow hawk musket and has taken quite a number of quarry. George McAllister trapped a peregrine falcon which he swapped for a captive bred falcon from Tim Wagner. The bird will be used later in Tim's breeding program. George will also be flying a peregrine teircel taken from his breeding pen, and Cilla who is looking really good. The Falcon from George's breeding program has been passed on to Charles Sadler who will take her up after the molt. Charles is flying a lanneret that came from Ben Hoffman. The youngster had a broken wing and is doing quite well. Steven van Rensburg is flying his Black Spar musket. Marile Sadler was given an Afgos musket from George whom she will use in a breeding program with her Afgos female of last year. Mark Bett is flying his peregrine falcon for a 3rd season and said he really had a good season last year. Mark Holder will be flying his black sparrow hawk musket. Paul Felone got a new African goshawk from Mpumalanga nature conservation. The bird was in a small accident but is doing well now with Paul. Ross Leslie, Richard Hay and Hannes Grobblor are flying Jackal buzzards. The "Porra" Romario Consalves will be flying Jacqueline the famous jackal buzzard for a second season. Jacqueline made name by taking spring hare and out doing the hawk eagles at the last SAFA meet. Nathan Cook will be flying an afgos. Graeme Shutler is flying a greater kestrel that came from Dullstroom bird of prey centre.

We have a few new members in the club and we hope to see them succeed.

We have started a hunting dog interest group last year. This year we had our first get together on the 12 of March. Our aim is to get together and help each other and new members train and appreciate our hunting buddies (ok yes and to drink beer and braai). We have a big interest group and even a lot of people not related to falconry or the club. At our last get together we had a guest speaker Evett Fraser who is a field trial judge and competitor she is also the chairlady of the Central field trail club. It was a great day with dogs and owners having fun and gaining a few pointers. Thanks to Thomas Holder who is the organizer of these events.

Our clubs Mini meet will be held on the 23-25 of June at Paul Felone's farm.

Regards

Mpumalanga Falconry club

Natal Falconry Club

The Natal falconry club has leveled out with 21 members; of this we have 11 active members. For the first time in 49 years there are more passage Peregrines' than African Goss hawks and Black Spars held. That said, the guys with the Goss hawks are still doing the short wings proud.

Derren Coetzer broke the clubs 22 year old record (21 kills) killing 23 "Natal Curb Partridge" (Indian Mynahs) with his female passage Goss. Chris Lourence is keeping Derren on his toes and is not far behind with his Goss. Stuart Pringle, apart from making children, is flying his musket Black Spar LB (left Ball) at everything that gets up and has notched up some great kills with fine style. Kyle Solms has taken his trusty old t times intermewed imprint lanner, Morgan, out and is warming her up for another awesome season. Kyle finished off last year with a respectable duck count of 40 odd and some other bits and pieces. Ashton is flying a musket Black Sparrowhawk. Ross Kramm has trapped a passage Peregrine and is aiming at a bit of duck falconry, he has knocked up 4 out of 4 so far, and he will also be flying his captive bred male Peri. Greg will be flying his intermewed Hybrid at duck and, unfortunately, lost his other falcon on a kill to a Genet. He is busy shaping up his imprint Peri as a backup. Darrel also had a turn of bad luck losing his awesome male lanner to a garden boy. He continues to fly his old African Hawk Eagle. Jens has his trusty old Goss, now well over a thousand kills, up and running and will be disturbing his farm's Guineas with Bruce's old imprint Spar. Rowan Mattig is catching bunnies with a bit more regularity, at the same time running his new falconry web store "East Coast Falconry". Elton Arnot also managed to get himself a passage and is hoping to try some off the fist falconry. John K managed to breed a couple birds this season. Mike has his traps out for a short wing for the coming season. Martin Alborough has restarted his falconry with a female Goss and a new pooch. Bruce is flying his old Peregrines and keeping the "club hawks" in condition and is hoping to thermal his passage African Hawk eagle. Tom Davison, Mark, Andy and Ben continue to help in an advisory capacity.

The NFC is continuing to liaise with EKZN Wildlife over restrictions and new permit requirements that could affect the falconry we are used to. Better communication and verbal assurance has put us slightly at ease for the future but we will continue to make sure that falconry thrives with not too much red tape in the future.

The NFC had a very good turnout at the AGM with family and friends turning out at the Eston Country Club. KZN Wildlife attended and gave positive feedback and clarity on permits. Kyle has planned the club hunt for June in Swartburg. The NFC will be having a "Mynah Derby" in September -if anyone is keen to join us for the day, please let us know.

The NFC will be turning 50 this coming year, watch this space!

We would like to thank members of SAFA and other clubs for their continued assistance and camaraderie.

See you at SAFA 2011.

Regards

Bruce Padbury

SEC. Natal Falconry Club.



Stuart Pringle's Black Spar parks a Spur-winged Goose! Any more records from Natal?



North-West Hawking Club

The NWHC is responsible for the ethical practices as well as conduct of its members as well as to ensure all parties are familiar with the policy and procedures that the club adheres to. We have regular meetings and gatherings as well as inspections and a mentoring system that ensures the welfare of the hawks is always the most important objective. The NWHC is committed to the conservation of the raptor community using acceptable methods developed by falconers in order to offer the hawk a quality of life for the Birds Of Prey we love. The NWHCs input in the rehabilitation and monitoring of local raptors only strengthens our standing with the local Nature Conservation department as well as provides justification for certain wild take policies for which we wish to cultivate for future falconry practices.

We have requests for membership from some new falconers and apprentices and these will be investigated and membership issued accordingly. But to date our membership is as follows

- Dylan Freeman *Chairman*, I have continued to fly my Female African Hawk Eagle “Four times intermewed (Able) eyas” with great success and she has taken a large bag as I fly her through the molt, I prefer flights at game birds and diurnal mammals as well as the occasional night hawking scrub hares (under which circumstances she is devastating) and often she supplies the freezer with fresh quarry on a regular basis. I will continue to fly my Female Peregrine Falcon (twice intermewed captive bred eyas) She is flying well and been a true pleasure, she has taken a few head of quarry, as she took longer to moult than usual, but we have already been giving the local game birds and sand grouse a hard time and I hope to have her in fine action at the meet. Can’t wait!!! I have been active in rehabilitation of some falconry species and busy with some breeding birds as well and I hope this is fruitful.
- Ronald *Gorrie V-Chairman* has taken on a female passage Lanner falcon that is finishing her molt and he has been assisting in rehabilitation efforts with Adri and local vet. He is hoping to take on a Sparrowhawk in the coming breeding season.
- Rodger Nielson is our honorary member and is between Scotland and South Africa and has not taken on a hawk but has joined some of us on many hunts.
- Bryan Anderson Has continued to fly his Tiercel Peregrine falcon (once Intermewed eyas) and has taken on another tierce for this season. He has been active in locating sand grouse spots and by all accounts been busy on them.
- Adri du Toit has taken on a female African Goshawk and has been doing well with the bird harassing the Indian mynah population with wonderful results. She has also been involved in assisting in rehabilitation cases at the Aran vet clinic.
- Johan Smith has taken on a rehab eyas Female Black Sparrowhawk that suffered bad frounce and a severely cracked beak as a result was brought to the club for rehabilitation. The training developed well and her instinct to chase is powerful and she will be an efficient falconry bird.

- Oscar Olen has been too busy to take on a hawk but continues to monitor raptor activity in the Potchefstroom area and has been heavily involved in club committee activity. He hopes to take on a hawk in the coming season.
- Theresa Hodgkinson continues to fly her female Rock Kestrel and is bonded nicely with the bird.
- Gareth Norris has recently joined the club from working in bird shows and is flying a Male rock kestrel and has taken on a Male Jackal Buzzard and hopes to have them flying hard soon.
- Danie Huyser has been too busy to take on a hawk but continues to monitor raptor activity in the Potchefstroom area
- Tanya Stone Campbell is a rehabilitator who uses our knowledge for advice on cases she is involved with.
- James Du Toit has recently joined the club from the Free State and I am sure we will see more of him in the future, welcome.

Research activities that will positively impact due to the study of the ecology and biodiversity of raptors include the ongoing monitoring of the local raptor population in order to better understand the effects seen on these Raptors as a result of environmental, economic, natural and human impacts on species. There are a number of falconers involved as well as external bodies working together on a number of projects. We are in the process of setting up an intensive study on local populations and with the assistance of these contributors we hope to better conserve the hawks we love. Ongoing monitoring programs around the province by falconers are essential in understanding the local raptors needs so as to better assist the raptor population and in so doing protect the future of falconry. It was also important that the NWHC must make a concerted effort in the research opportunities in the field of raptor conservation, *i.e.* Sightings, nesting activities as well as prey species accounts. Some species we are actively monitoring are Peregrine and Lanner falcon, African Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Fish Eagle, Vulture species, Black Sparrow hawk, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk and Roosting habits of migratory Kestrel species.

It is evident that falconry has a major role to play in the rehabilitation of raptors and that the practices developed by falconers can positively influence the rehabilitation community in and around the province. A register of such cases is to be kept by the club so as to include this information in the reports submitted to the North West Nature Conservation. We are lucky to have many members interested in this field and as a result have been able to positively impact individual birds by offering assistance and conditioning them for effective release options. As can be seen by the individual reports, that birds not suitable for release can still undergo rehabilitation under falconry conditions effectively.

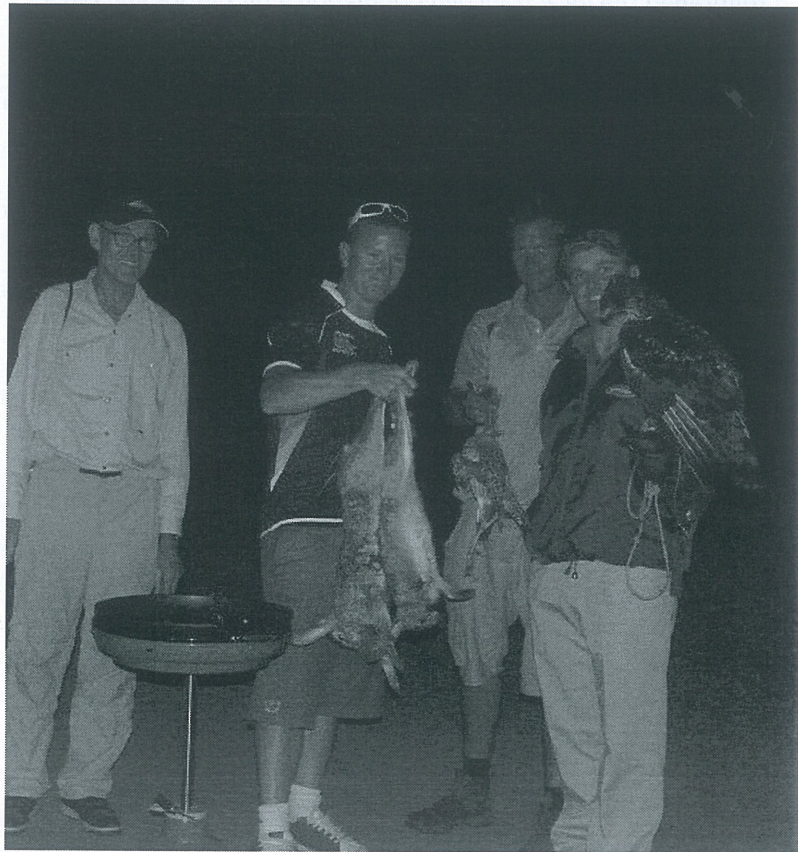
We are active in nest site recordings and make regular visits to see ongoing progress of the breeding season and this is in line with research and nature conservation obligations. We have also been able to establish a few breeding pairs of certain species so this will benefit the falconry community if (after a lot of work and effort) we are successful.

The North West Hawking Club has again been invited to sit on the North West Nature Conservation Wildlife Forum and as a result is involved in many aspects effecting ornithology and falconry in the province and is able to have comment on issues relating to birds, raptors and falconry together with role players in the Nature Conservation Community. I see this as a positive step in securing the future of falconry in the province. Pest Control has been an interesting avenue explored as some local farmers and companies have requested assistance in problem bird control and as a result some falconers have been offered quality hawking areas to practice their art.

The annual wild take Quota will be addressed and the falconers wishing to acquire new hawks will be included in this, otherwise captive bred hawks will be sourced. All members receive a certificate of membership of the NWHC as well as the membership card for use as identification and acknowledgement of membership. This will ensure that our membership is able to practice falconry with the correct accreditation and training. The main benefit of the card system is that Nature Conservation has acknowledged this as a pseudo-permit in the field. A membership contact list is published and attached to facilitate communication within the club membership.

Good hawking

Dylan Freeman



Anyone for a Braai?

Transvaal Falconry Club

Falconry

Brian Anderson received a 2nd peregrine tiercel from the breeding project courtesy of Grant Neale. The bird has proved more difficult than Brian's first tiercel and coupled with Brian's work load has not met his expectations. His intermewed bird is however flying well

Grant started the season with a new female peregrine he bred (sister to Brian's tiercel). Having seen it flown on occasion it is a very big strong bird and it takes very good pitch. Grant has taken a number of head with it but a bad bout of pneumonia and a partially collapsed lung has put a damper on his hawking season.

Mark Labuschagne has his intermewed Gyr/Shahen hybrid, an intermewed new female peregrine and a hand me down European peregrine on the wing.

Paul Strydom decided to try flying an imprinted peregrine. The bird came from Tim's "Cape Pair" and Paul did an excellent job on the imprinting. Unfortunately, Paul discovered that having such a brilliant imprint has its problems in built up areas. On occasions the bird nearly came to grief from uninformed people when it went walk about or chased a pigeon out of sight. Paul then received a musket Black Spar ex Bertus and frightened the local francolin population a bit before and old leg injury flared up and the bird was put up to recover.

Leon Havemann is concentrating on his three times intermewed peregrine female and has decided to hack back his second female due to her bad traits.

Tim Wagner started the season with a home bred Gyr/peregrine tiercel. The bird has proved to not be typical of Gyr/Peregrine tiercels and is a slow developer that is easily distracted. Recently he has become more reliable but still a far cry from previous birds. Tim is also flying two intermewed peregrine females, one already strong on the wing and the other just getting going.

Lizette Beukes has a new female peregrine from the breeding project and despite the normal teething problems the bird has been flying very well the last few weeks and gets better almost daily. Lizette has taken a couple of head already and is anxious to strut her stuff at the field meet.

Alex Glyphis received the sister to Lizette's bird and it showed lots of promise early in the season but was unfortunately permanently lost after a wild peregrine hammered it one afternoon. This, despite an intense effort by Alex and a number of other falconers to find the bird and the use of an airplane. Alex is now flying another female peregrine on loan from the breeding project. The bird was unfortunately lost early in the season and was recovered in very low condition 7 days later. The bird seems to have just recovered after many weeks of flying. Andre Glyphis has got two tiercel peregrines, one on loan from the breeding project and the other captive bred in Natal. The loan tiercel is flying well and is very impressive on pigeons often putting in a couple of stoops before binding or having the pigeon put into a tree.

Bertus Beukes has passed on his a hot Black Spar musket and taken up a lanner tiercel. The bird is flying pretty well but is refusing quarry, may require a bit of weight management. Graham Anderson is flying his intermewed Black Spar female and continues to take multiple heads of quarry on every outing despite the bird having been badly injured when flying into a fence early last season. He also has a Harris hawk that is not shy about putting quarry in the bag.

Ronnie Watt has donated his female peregrine to the breeding project as he has travel commitments this year and cannot do her justice. We hope to see Ronnie back on the scene when he stops gallivanting with a new bird.

Mark informs Dirk Verwoerd has a Gyr/saker on the wing and has a recently imported a Gyr/peregrine Hybrid.

Adam has a new Gabar goshawk that initially proved a problem to get entered but is apparently doing fine now. His Af goshawk was passed on to a new member, Malcolm Harding who by all accounts is catching everything in sight. Fritz, François, Gideon and Colin are also flying Af goshawks this season.

Breeding

Leon Haveman's African Goshawk project was again the backbone of the shortwing breeding and he fledged two chicks. He has now given up on the breeding donating the pairs to the Beukes and Free Stat

Grant Neale's peregrines produced two chicks from a 3 egg clutch, one tiercel and one falcon.

Tim Wagner's peregrines produced 6 fertile eggs from 1 pair. Five chicks were fledged, 3 natural and two imprinted. Two hybrids were produced from 4 fertile eggs and 1 pure gyr falcon was also produced.

Bertus and Lanner



Penryn College Falconry Club



Sadly we have no report of the activity of this Club although we know the enthusiasm is there.

Af. Gos. Passage Visitor

The late Tim Hartley wrote a report of his experiences with a Passage Af. Gos. in his suburban garden in Cape Town. He had recently accommodated the pair of Af Goses that Brian Voster had held for breeding for many years: *"It was early evening in January this year when I heard the weirdest sound coming from the enclosure. I noticed a commotion on their wire mesh roof. Closer inspection revealed a wild immature Af Gos grappling with the breeding musket through the roof. I ran back to the house, grabbed half a pigeon and tossed it on top the roof next to her. She broke off the fight, gasped the pigeon and flew off. At the same time, the following evening, there she was again. This time, I tossed a whole pigeon onto the roof. She carried it off with difficulty to a low branch in a tree in my garden where she ate it. She was a beautiful specimen and I was proud to have her in my garden.*

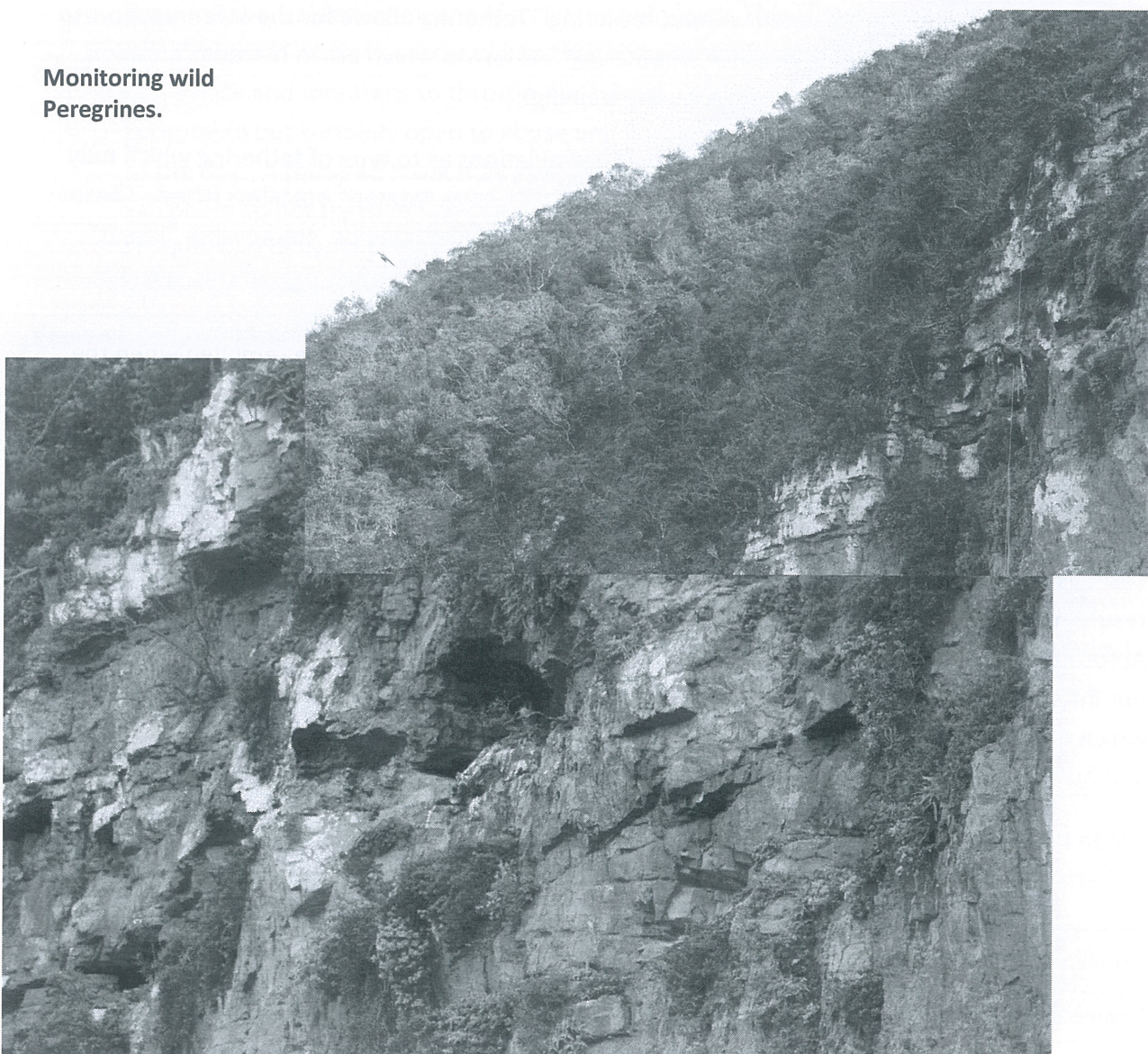
I had a yearn to trap her and train her, but she was a guest in my garden. I decided to try to man her without trapping her. The next evening I waited for her with a dead laughing dove tied to 10 meters of string. When she landed on the enclosure roof, she paid no attention o the breeding hawk, her attention was focused on me and the laughing dove. I lobbed the dove onto the ground near the enclosure and when I jerked the sting she flew down and grabbed the dove, trying to carry it off. I left her to feed on the dove.

The following day she was back again. She came down quicker, did not try to carry it off and ate it while I sat dead still. The following day the same pattern of events occurred. Gradually I pulled the pigeon towards me and after a week I could pull the pigeon to within 3 meters of me.

The following day I had a business engagement that made e late for my rendezvous. When I arrived in the garden, the hawk was flying from tree to tree looking for me. When she saw me, she dropped onto a branch just above my head, stared at the pigeon in my hand and made a soft, high pitched sound that I had never heard before. I cast the pigeon onto the ground a couple of meters away. She was onto it like a flash and, without attempting to carry it, immediately started to eat."

This relationship continued for some time but was unfortunately cut short by Tim's death. (Ed.)

Monitoring wild Peregrines.



equitably, we must consider other practices that are considered acceptable and normal within the society in which they are practiced.

- In rural societies it is common for a bull to have a metal ring fixed through its nostrils. A lead can be attached to the ring and the bull can be controlled because resistance to the handler will cause pain
- Similarly, it is common within rural societies to see chickens secured by their legs to prevent them from walking or escaping. This is often a prelude to slaughter of the chicken and no consideration is given to the comfort or well-being of the chicken

There are other examples of this nature, including the “hobbling” of donkeys, so the list is not intended to be exhaustive. The point is that practices by one group within society make evoke shock and horror within another group. Little is to be gained by criminalizing the actions of one group that do not stand comparison against the actions and norms of another group. Indeed, the emotive responses and actions of either group are based on ignorance and a lack of understanding of practicalities. Here it is impossible to compare like with like.

The practice of Falconry is accepted internationally and has been recognized as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Its practice relies on the tethering of raptors as the art of horsemanship relies on the tethering of horses. Never-the-less, Falconry practices are not hidebound by tradition. Modern scientific method, new materials and adhesives as well as a better understanding of animal behavior and psychology has revolutionized the practice of Falconry. The South African Falconry Association and its membership will continue to review its norms and standards of practice in the light of developments, both nationally and internationally. We ask that those in authority within society recognize our intent and goodwill as well as our expertise in the field of Raptor Husbandry and Welfare.

Tethered Lanners
after a successful
hunt.



Web-Master's Report.

Since being commissioned to revamp the SAFA website, the aim of the website was to publicly have an up to date official domain where the activities of South African falconry, through SAFA could be accessed via the internet. Secondly and most importantly for me was to put a website into place for all the clubs to use, as not all clubs want to have a website but might want to have public access or exposure to the activities of their clubs.

Up to October 2010 our original site was linked to the domain of SAFA.org.za. To ensure smooth transition another domain SAFA.za.net was registered and the new site built within the new domain. The two domains were then combined.

Since going live and setting up the monthly web statistics, I was amazed by the amount of internet traffic on the site. Our webhost after the first month contacted me and commented that as per their statistics SAFA attracted the most attention and traffic of all their sites they host. Initially I thought that the high traffic volume could be that of our member clubs and their individual membership visiting the site. To date this high hit rate has continued.

The SAFA website attracts attention from all over the world. The USA, Europe, Russia are frequent visitors. Most recently there has been an increase of visits from South America. Of all the traffic 65% of the traffic to the site is via search engines, 19% via direct traffic and 16% via referring sites.

Taking all of the statistics into account, we have a very successful site. In review of the contents of the current site, there is huge room for growth and improvement. What does this mean? Having a successful site means that trading possibilities emerge, that could attract advertisers which in return could mean revenue for SAFA, which we need. Extra revenue means that the extra income from the website could subsidize our SAFA activities, lightening the financial burden on clubs where membership fees are concerned.

PrimePetCare Supplies.CC is the current sponsor for the SAFA website and webhosting, and is glad to be associated with SAFA.

Wehahn Geldenhuys.

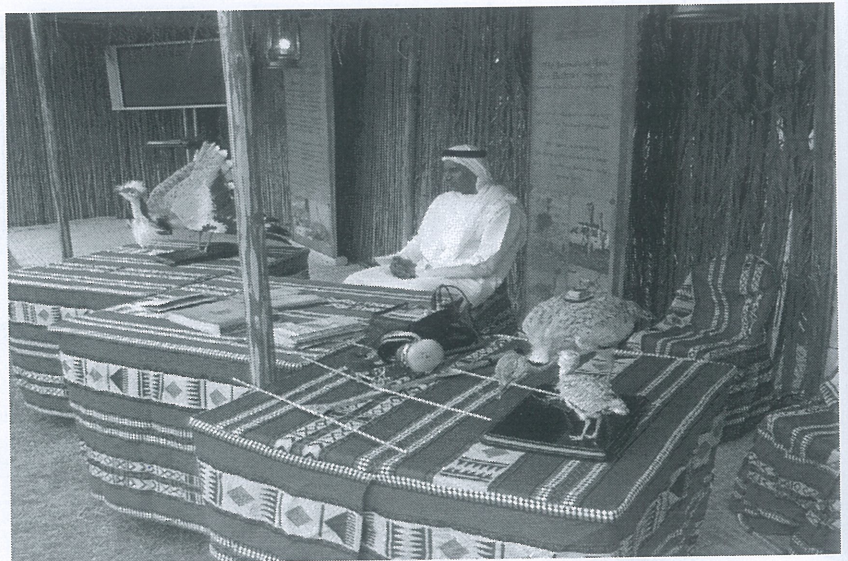
Please visit www.safalconry.org.za - Editor

Presentation to the Bird of Prey Program of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

SAFA was represented at the Annual Conference of the Bird of Prey Program of the Endangered Wildlife Trust in 2010. This is the new title of the Bird of Prey Working Group. SAFA has participated in these conferences since the inception of the Group/Program and it is fair to say that our organization and activities are now well known to the Program and we have gained broad acceptance. It is important to maintain this presence and to contribute to the programs aims and to its projects.

I presented to the Conference on the issue of proposed Middle Eastern Falconry activity in South Africa. South African Falconers are proud to practice sustainable hunting and thus contribute to the conservation of our countries natural resources. It is important, then, that we examine and challenge activities which may not be sustainable. We do not have firsthand knowledge of the proposed activities and have serious concerns regarding the uncontrolled release of exotic species into our environment on one hand and the sustainability of hunting indigenous bustards on the other. It is important to note that Bustards will not qualify as "Game Birds" in the draft legislation regarding the Norms and Standards for the Regulation of Hunting in South Africa which awaits gazetting. This is an issue which has had the effect of uniting Hunting and Conservation organizations in this country.

That having been said, it is also important to recognize the very significant contribution made by the United Arab Emirates to Conservation. Thus the Conference was also informed of the huge Houbara Bustard restoration program which is taking place in Morocco. This is the largest restoration project for any species ever. Some 16000 Bustards are being released each year.



The Conservation status of South African Bustards was reviewed using the data released by the Bustard Working Group in its report of 28th February 2010:

Species	No. of Major Threats	No. of Moderate Threats	No. of Main Threat Categories	Current Red Data Status
Denham's Bustard	1	11	4	National – "vulnerable" Global – "near threatened"
Ludwig's Bustard	1	5	3	National – "vulnerable"
White-bellied Bustard	-	6	1	National – "vulnerable"
Kori Bustard	-	5	3	National – "vulnerable"
Southern Black Korhaan	-	3	3	-
Blue Korhaan	-	3	1	National – "near threatened" Global – "near threatened"
Karoo Korhaan	-	2	2	-
Northern Black Korhaan	-	1	1	-
Red-crested Korhaan	-	1	1	-
Black-bellied Bustard	-	1	1	National – "near threatened"

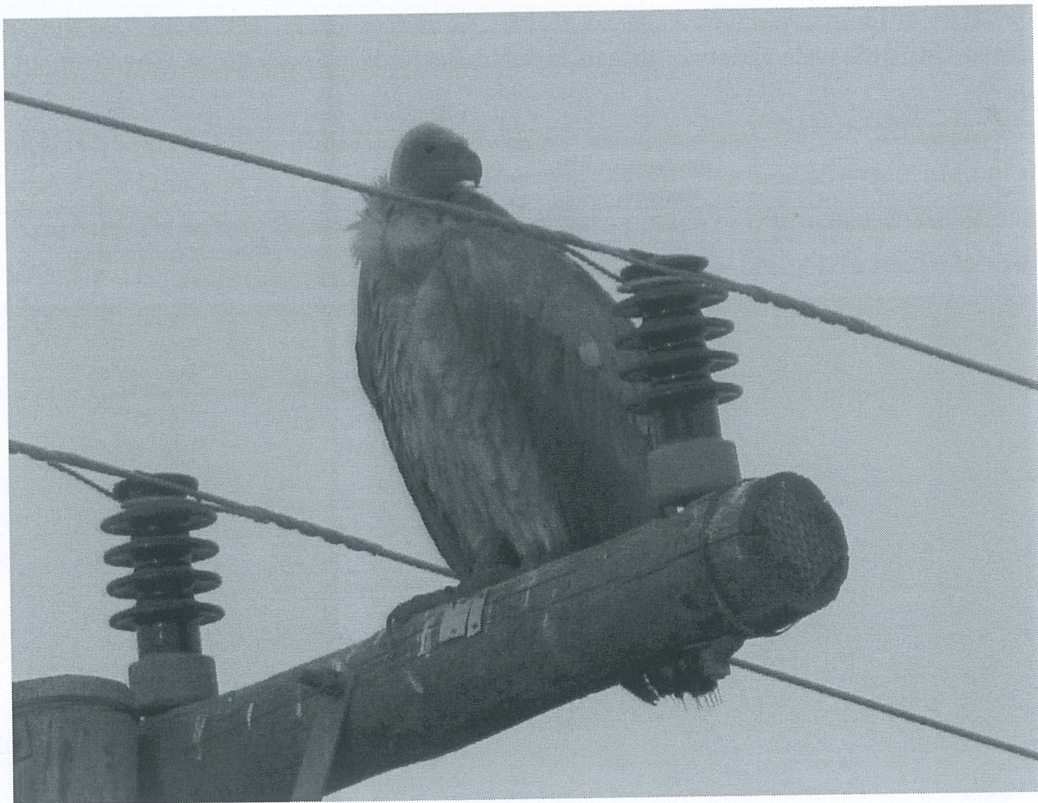
This report also lists the wide variety of threats faced by Bustards in South Africa. These do not include Falconry:

Species	No. of Major and Moderate Threats	Types of threat
Denham's Bustard	12	Habitat: destruction and degradation from afforestation, mining, crop farming, human settlement and burning. Mortality from overhead lines and fences. Disturbances from general sources, during nesting, from road building and from dogs. Climate change.
Ludwig's Bustard	6	Mortality from overhead lines, fences and poisoning in locust control. Disturbance from general sources and during nesting. Climate change.
White-bellied Bustard	6	Habitat: destruction and degradation from afforestation, mining, crop farming, human settlement, overgrazing and bush encroachment.
Kori Bustard	5	Habitat: destruction and degradation from bush encroachment. Mortality from overhead lines and fences. Disturbance from general sources and during nesting.
Southern Black Korhaan	3	Habitat: destruction and degradation from crop farming. Disturbance from general sources. Climate Change.
Blue Korhaan	3	Habitat: destruction and degradation from crop farming, mining and human settlement.
Karoo Korhaan	2	Mortality from poisoning in locust control. Climate change.
Northern Black Korhaan	1	Habitat: destruction and degradation from crop farming.
Red-crested Korhaan	1	Habitat: destruction and degradation from woodland clearing.
Black-bellied Bustard	1	Habitat: destruction and degradation from crop farming.

In Conclusion it was noted that a number of opportunities have arisen as a result of this challenge:

- ▣ The formation of a coalition of organizations with a real concern for conservation and shared interests.
- ▣ Supporting and recognizing the importance of sustainable utilization as a Conservation tool, as envisaged by the Convention on Biological Biodiversity.
- ▣ Seek to extend the influence of conservation beyond the 6.1% of formally conserved areas and the 16.8% in private Game ranches to at least 50% of South African land surface area.
- ▣ Defend our biodiversity against “non-consumptive” conservation and animal rights agendas.

Adrian Lombard
SAFA Representative to the Bird of Prey Program of EWT.
2010.



“In the Killing Field”. This vulture was photographed just outside the gates of the gates of Mokala National Park, where the Bird of Prey Program Conference was held.

The following is the text of the IAF Press release following recognition of Falconry as a World Intangible Cultural Heritage in November 2010 – Ed.

United Nations declare ancient hunting as global cultural heritage

“FALCONRY is a Living Human Heritage”

Today in Nairobi, Kenya, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage added Falconry, a traditional hunting method, to its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since before the time of the pyramids, over 4000 years, falconry as a hunting method has retained an unbroken thread of tradition. Fathers have been passing down skills to their children for nearly 200 generations in a chain of intangible heritage, bringing this art to us, the 21st century.

Today's modern lifestyle and rapid urbanization have restricted opportunities to practice falconry. This has been leading to a dangerous decline in many countries. Migration from countryside to towns is a major threat to rural-based traditions and UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage lists ensure signatory governments protect traditions such as: traditional skills, knowledge and rituals, handicrafts, song, dance, art and poetry or practices related to nature. "Traditional Falconry is exceptional in that it fulfils all of these," said Frank Bond, President of the International Association for Falconry.

This is the largest ever nomination in the history of the UNESCO convention and was presented by eleven nations: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage took the lead in coordinating this massive submission and UNESCO officials wrote during the inscription process that "...this is an outstanding example of cooperation between nations".

From its ancient beginnings in the Middle East falconry is now practiced on all continents and has given the entire world so much. Bond pointed out, "There are a thousand falconry words in common language, some common to many languages. For example: even the universal term 'gentleman' is derived from falconry vernacular implying a man who could fly a female peregrine, the 'falcon gentle'; falconers gave the world the first scientific book on nature '*De arte venandi cum avibus*'; wars have even been avoided and stopped by diplomatic gifts of falcons." Mme. Veronique Blontrock from Belgium noted that: "In Belgium today children use a book on falconry to learn to read Flemish." Dr. Bohumil Straka of the Czech Republic said: "Flights out of major airports are protected by falconers who prevent bird strikes and save human lives.

The UNESCO submission stated "Falconry is one of the oldest relationships between man and bird, dating back more than 4000 years. Falconry is a traditional activity using trained birds of prey to take quarry in its natural state and habitat. It is a natural activity because the falcon and her prey have evolved together over millions of years; their interaction is an age-old drama. The falcon is adapted to hunt the prey, and the prey has evolved many ways to escape from the

falcon. This leads to a fascinating insight into the way nature works and poses an intellectual challenge to the falconer in his understanding of behavior. His task is to bring the actors together on nature's stage. To do this the falconer must develop a strong relationship and synergy with his bird."

Falconry is considered a low-impact activity; falconers understand that their hawks and quarry species must be preserved and have been practicing 'sustainable use' for centuries. His late Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan said, "It is not what you catch that is important; it is what you leave behind". Professor Tom Cade of the Peregrine Fund pointed out: "Falconers have been instrumental in the worldwide recovery of the endangered peregrine falcon and are involved in many conservation projects."

Falconers share universal principles. The methods of training and caring for birds, the equipment used and the bonding between man and the bird are found throughout the world. It is these common shared traditions and knowledge that make falconry universal and keep it alive, even though these traditions may differ from country to country. "This is wonderful recognition of the value Art of Falconry as part of the human Cultural Heritage. This recognition is no less important to us here in **South Africa** where we share our heritages in the spirit of our Rainbow Nation." – Adrian Lombard, Chairman of the South African Falconry Association.

In the 13th century Marco Polo described an assembly of 10,000 falconers at the court of Khublai Khan (a grandson of Ghengis). To celebrate this exceptional achievement 10,000 falconers from around the world are expected to assemble again, this time in Abu Dhabi in December 2011. See www.falconryfestival.com .



How fast does your bird fly?

Erin Wreford, Mark Brown and Colleen Downs

School of Biological & Conservation Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Flight speed of raptors has been studied relatively extensively in recent years. However, these studies generally rely on calculations based on different factors such as time and distance, taken from external measurements. These measurements are indirect. Until now the hunting flight speed of raptors has not been directly measured. We conducted an experiment to determine maximum and average hunting flight speed for several southern African raptor species. We also determined wing area for each species and correlated maximal hunting flight speeds with both wing area and maximum height above the ground. We hypothesized that wing shape and area affects flight speed. Long wing species included in this study were Lanner Falcons (*Falco biarmicus*) and Peregrine Falcons (*F. peregrinus*). Short wing species studied were the Black Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter melanoleucus*), African Hawk Eagle (*Aquila spilogaster*) and Jackal Buzzard (*Buteo rufofuscus*). Only one individual of both the African Hawk Eagle and Jackal Buzzard were flown and therefore these species could not be included in statistic analyses.

Using a sky diver Pro-Track altimeter, Ken Franklin determined the speed of a Peregrine Falcon, named Frightful, by sky diving with the bird. The speed was determined by measuring the distance Frightful travelled and the time taken to travel this distance. The first few dives done by Franklin and Frightful started at approximately 305 m and Frightful reached speeds of approximately 193 km.h^{-1} . This sky-diving falcon then learnt to time her dives to fall at the same speed as Franklin who was falling at terminal velocity for a human. Lures were then released that were made to reach speeds of 314 km.h^{-1} . After training Frightful to chase this lure, flight speeds of roughly 386 km.h^{-1} were recorded. These speeds were however reached from dives initiated at between 4267 and 5181m, well above the altitude of naturally hunting falcons. Although birds can reach high speeds ($<300 \text{ km.h}^{-1}$) when dropping from between 4000 and 5000 m, this is not natural hunting behaviour of these birds as they hunt successfully well

below such heights. Air density is much lower at these extreme heights which may have enabled Frightful to reach such extreme speeds, not normally attainable at the natural hunting flight altitude.

Flight dynamics of the birds included in our study were measured on falconry birds using a GEM – global positioning system (GPS) data logger (Figure 1a), which recorded latitude, longitude, altitude and speed every second. These loggers were attached onto the birds and the altitude and speeds was measured during falconry hunts. The loggers are 46.9 mm x 18.1 mm x 14.9 mm in size and weigh only 12.4 g. They were attached onto either the falcon's transmitter backpack or leg-mount, depending on the falconer's preference (Figure 1b). Once downloaded the recorded flight data interfaced with Google Earth (Figure 2). Interpretation of the data allowed the actual hunt duration and speeds from the entire flight to be determined. We recorded flights at the SAFA 2010 National meet, and on birds flown by KZN falconers in and

around Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

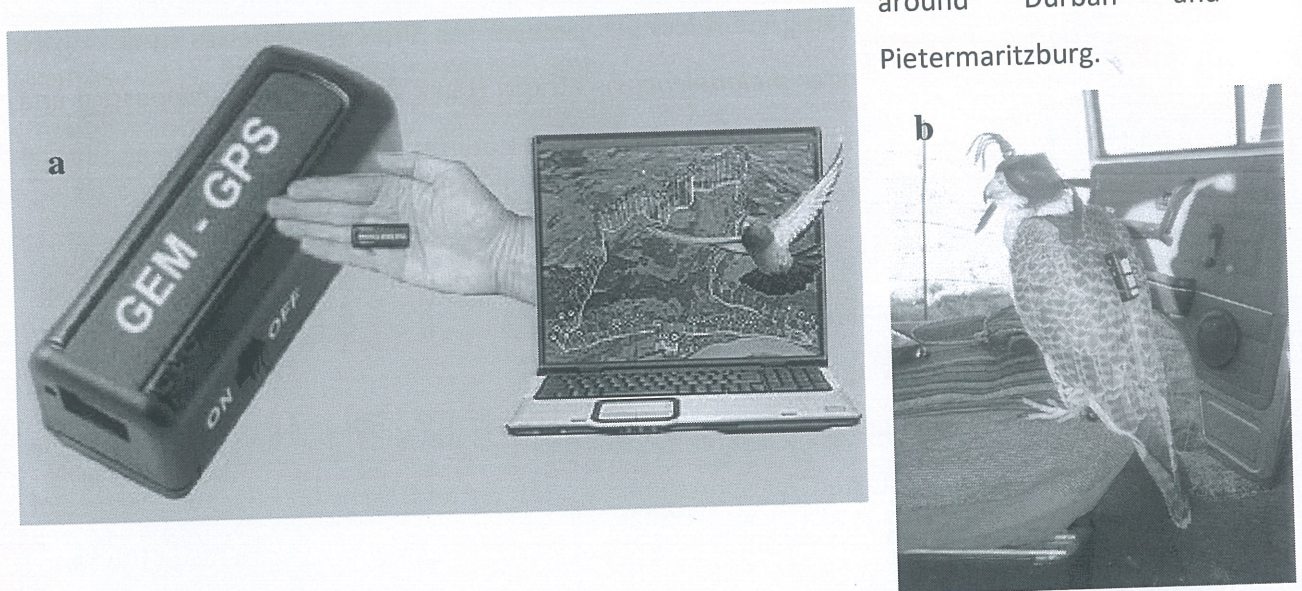
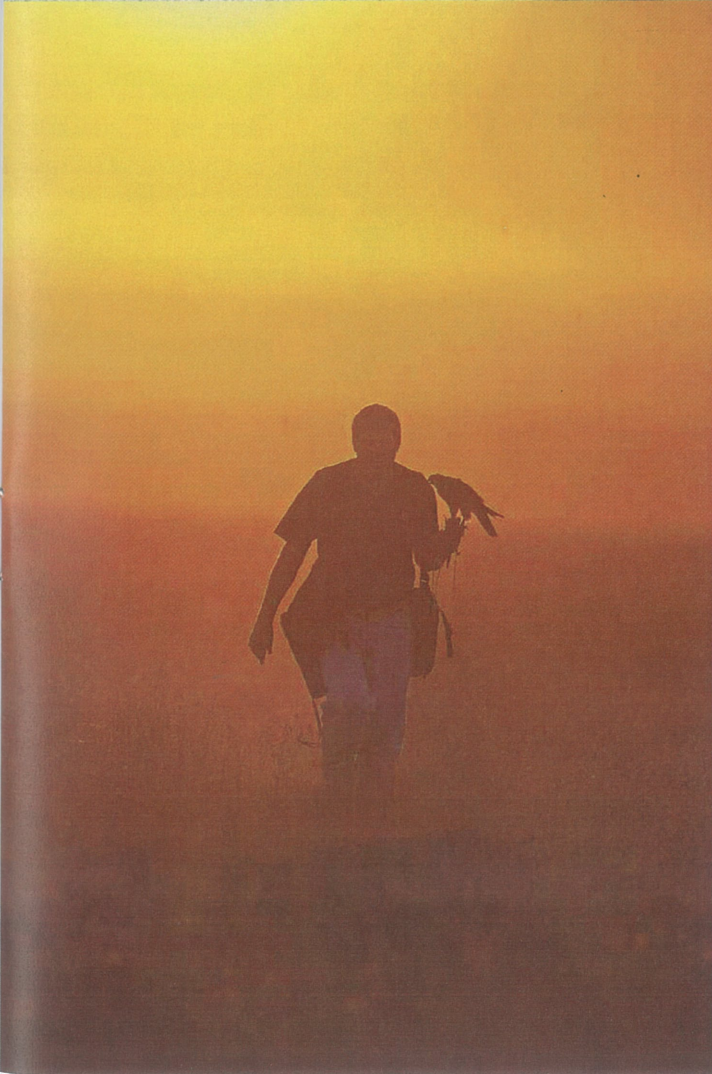


Figure 1: (a) The GEM GPS logger used to record latitude, longitude, altitude and speed of the raptors. (b) The attachment of the logger to a falcons transmitter backpack.

SAFA 2010

Photos by –

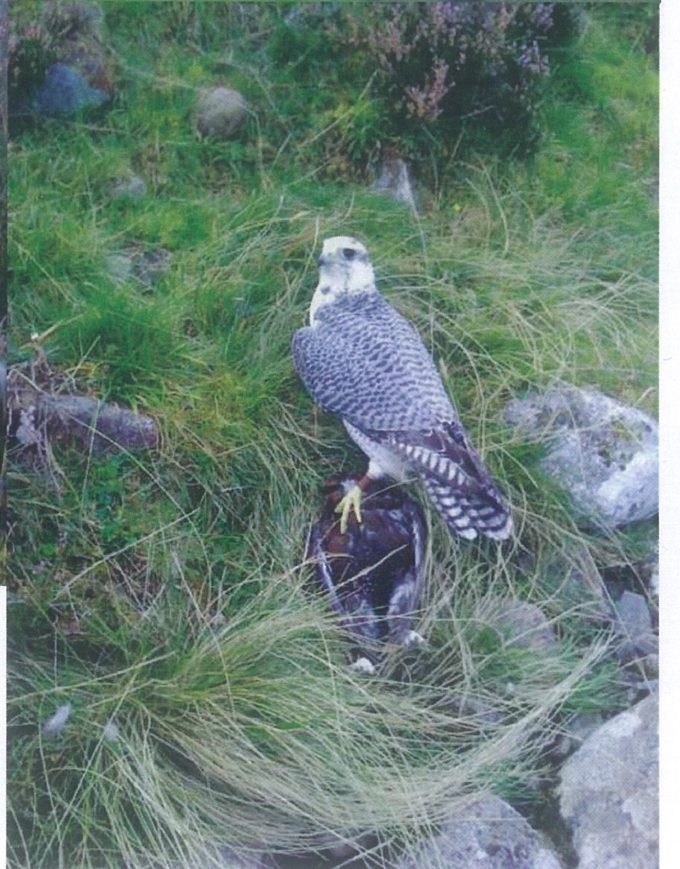
Mark Williams



South African Falconry

2011





International Falconry:

Eagle Hunters of Slovakia – Page 59

The Grouse Hawking Junkie – Page 42



Canadian Falconry – Photos by Mark Williams - canadianwildlifephotography.com

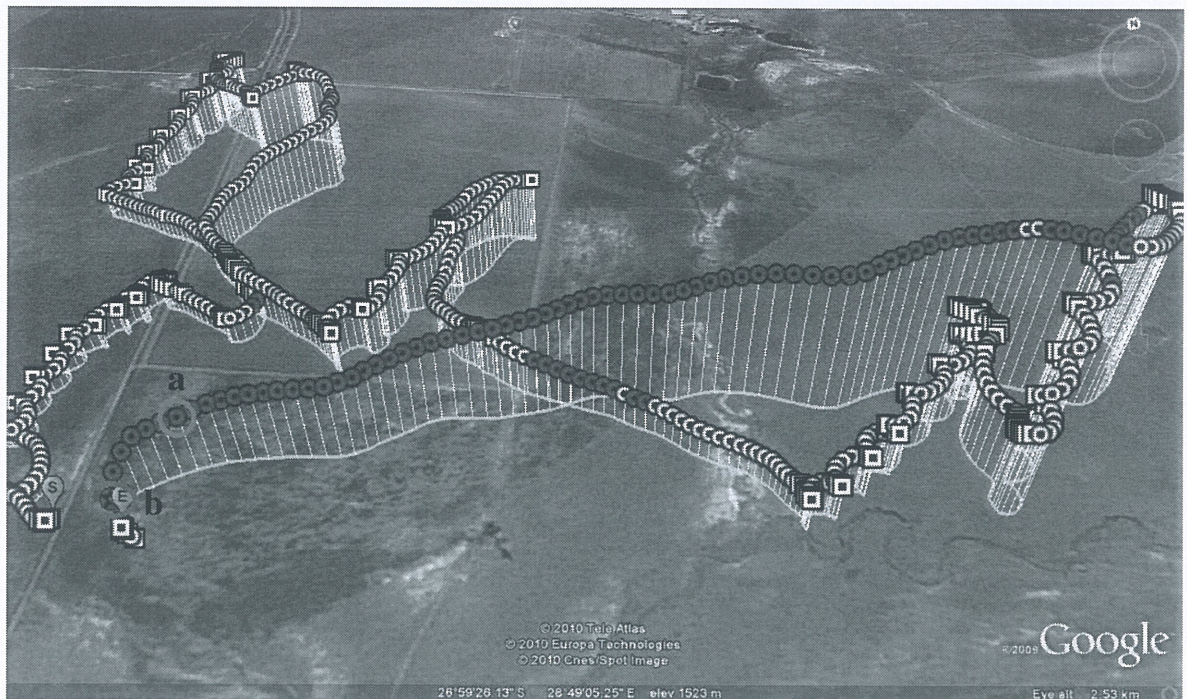


Figure 2: The flight map of a Lanner Falcon, showing the data points recorded every second for the duration of the flight. Point (a) indicates the initiation of the hunt and the maximum speed of $140.99\text{km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ was reached at point (b).

We have found no other data wherein the hunting speed of raptors has been directly measured, particularly using loggers attached to individual birds. Thus this is the first direct measure and comparison of various raptor hunt speeds. The fastest Peregrine Falcon speed recorded during our study was $195.97\text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ (similar to Frightful's initial flights) while the fastest Lanner Falcon speed was $140.99\text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$. However we found no significant differences in maximum or average hunt speed between the two species, although the Peregrine Falcon had a higher range in hunt speed than the Lanner Falcon.

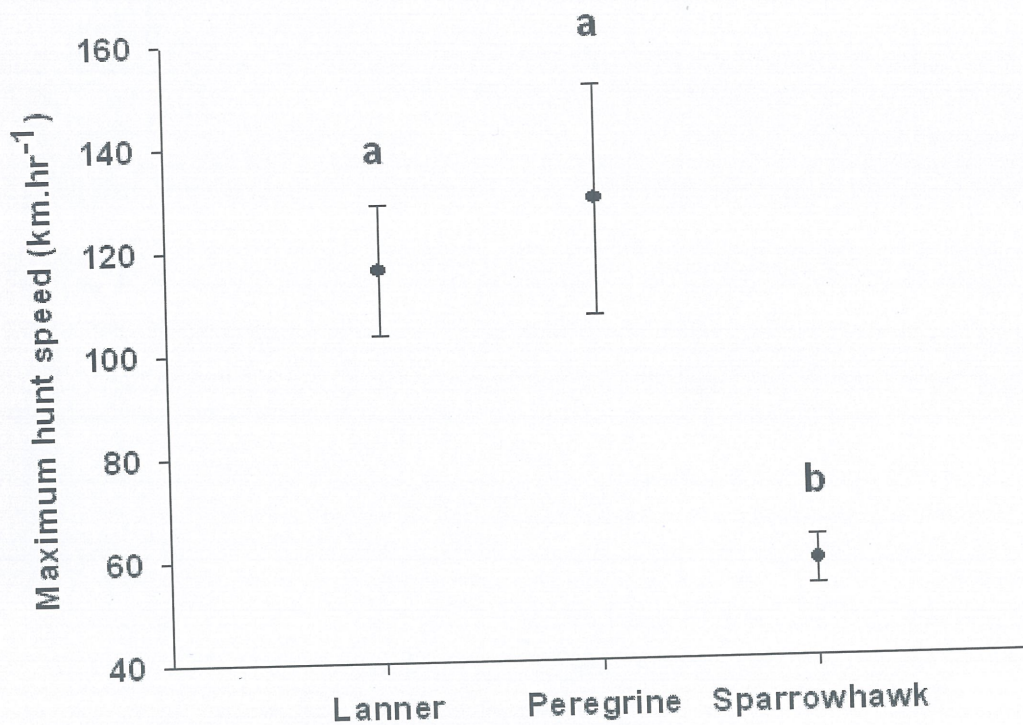


Figure 3: The maximum hunt flight speed (\pm SE) recorded for Lanner and Peregrine Falcons and Black Sparrowhawks.

Maximum hunt speeds in a dive are largely variable based on the duration of the dive, acceleration prior to the dive and the steepness of the dive. This may explain the relatively large variation in measured speeds for both the Lanner and Peregrine Falcons. Black Sparrowhawks however, have significantly lower maximum and average hunt speeds than both the Lanner and Peregrine Falcons with a range of maximum hunt speeds of 47.19 km.h⁻¹ to 68.3 km.h⁻¹ (Figure 3). This significant difference may be largely due to the different flight behaviour of the birds. Both the Lanner and Peregrine Falcons climb to high altitudes when hunting and will stoop from these heights. Gravity and aerodynamic design is therefore used to assist the hunt flight speed. Black Sparrowhawks are classified as short-winged and fly off the glove, where hunting is initiated from an initial speed of 0 km.h⁻¹. Hunt speed of these birds is therefore purely due to acceleration ability and not positively influenced by the force of gravity. Tucker (1998) states that the estimated top speeds of a Peregrine Falcon are approximately 565 km.h⁻¹, this is much greater than the maximum speed of 195.97 km.h⁻¹ that we recorded during

a Peregrine hunt. Alerstam (1986) however, recorded speeds of no more than 140 km.h^{-1} , which seem more realistic. Alerstam recorded these speeds from hunts initiated at heights between 1000 and 1200 m. Similarly, March et al., (2005) recorded the average speed of a Red-tailed Hawk to be between 32.19 and 64.37 km.h^{-1} and a top speed during a dive of 193.12 km.h^{-1} . The speed we recorded of 195 km.h^{-1} was a once-off top speed with the maximum speeds of the falcons ranging between 100 and 110 km.h^{-1} . There is no doubt peregrines can probably top higher speeds than this, but on the average hunt there is no need to do so.

In conclusion, the maximum hunt speed of the long winged (Lanner and Peregrine Falcons) was significantly higher than that of the short winged species (Black Sparrowhawk), as was predicted. Surprisingly however, no differences in acceleration or deceleration rates were found between species. We predicted that the acceleration and deceleration of the short wing species would be higher than that of the long winged species, due to the greater wing area of the short wings. However no significant differences were found to support this. Due to the different flight styles, when watching a short-wing species take off, they go from 0 km.h^{-1} to over 40 km.h^{-1} in two seconds and Lanners accelerate at the same rate but from speeds of about 60 km.h^{-1} to between 90 and 100 km.h^{-1} . The maximum hunting speeds were positively correlated with maximum height above the ground, rather than wing area, although this latter correlation is based on phylogeny rather than on adaptation. Our prediction that species with long, narrow wings will have a higher maximum flight speed than those with short wide, rounded wings was supported. The positive relationship between flight height and maximum hunting speed was supported. However the prediction that species with greater wing surface area will have greater acceleration was not supported.

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Scenes from SAFA

2010



The Ovambo Sparrowhawk. Grey ghost of the city.

Kenny Pinnock

An early yellow moon is just rising through the Eucalyptus plantation and I'm sitting quietly under one of the trees scratching my head. And not for the first time...

It sounds nice and peaceful but it's anything but ...the rush hour traffic roars past, someone is shouting at someone else relating to a bumper bashing and a house alarm is going off.....for the fourth time in half an hour.

It should be all systems go for the pair of Ovambo sparrowhawks (*Accipiter Ovampensis*) nesting in this particular plantation, but something has gone wrong.

I've been watching this particular pair for over three years now, and for two years in a row they reared chicks successfully, but this time it looks like it's come to nothing. I found an empty egg shell under the nest a week ago and came back expecting to see the tail of the female protruding out from the edge of the nest, indicating incubation of the chicks...but found zip....no nest, no nothing. I last saw the female circling over her territory an hour ago, and the male 20 minutes ago, flying against ridge over the Johannesburg Zoo. But no sign of him anywhere and it's getting dark. Could he be out hunting bats? I know they can catch them.

A nesting pair of crows are flying round the plantation in a desultory way and cawing gently. Not that I worry about the crows affecting the hawks in any kind of way. I watched a tiny male bombing of a pair of crows out the area two days back and have seen a female Ovambo, pack an adult male Vervet monkey, straight out of Dodge. So it seems that once they've got something to defend, size means nothing.

Nope, there's no funny business happening here. This is just another unexplained nest failure and most likely from a strong wind blowing the nest out of the tree, which occurs quite frequently when they build their nests in Eucalyptus trees. Indeed these birds seem to prefer exotic trees over indigenous ones, and of the (+-) forty-two nesting sites that I have observed on the Highveld, I only know of two that occur in an indigenous trees. This is partly because indigenous tree nests are easily overlooked and because they simply prefer exotic trees for reasons only known to themselves. Some of the Poplar plantations that they nest in have perfectly good, and sometimes even taller, indigenous trees in them, and yet they still seem to prefer the exotic tree.

The trees I've found them in include: Eucalyptus (of differing sp), Poplar, Casuarina (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) and recently White Stinkwood (*Celtis africana*). The latter was most likely used as their "staple", before the introduction of exotics. Indeed the introduction of exotics has, I believe, expanded their range and pair numbers to unprecedented levels. Fifteen years ago when I started looking for these birds, my hit ratio of plantations to birds, was much lower than it is right now, indicating to me that their number are on the increase. Accipiters like the Black Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) and the Little Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter minullus*) on the other hand, seemed to have maintained their levels in my opinion, as I'm finding far fewer *new* nesting sites of these birds than I am of the Ovambo Spars.

But having said that, the Little Spars seem to be few and far between these days, although they are easily overlooked, and I've never really found many nest sites of these tiny raptors.

As much as I can say about where these birds occur and what tree type they prefer, there still seems no exact formula to indicate this. I've searched in what I thought to be perfect habitat for them...a well established plantation with a clear stream running through the middle, in a quiet and undisturbed patch of farmland surrounded by drowsy fields....and found nothing. And then I'll be driving around one day and see a male Ovambo carrying food. I'll jump out to investigate and find a single Eucalyptus tree surrounded by mine dumps, pimps and knocked up teenagers. In the top of the tree I see a nest with two large healthy looking chicks...and in the shade of the tree I see that a family of ten are tucking into their morning ration of rum and incest.

I scratch my head again....

For years I was under the illusion that the Ovambo flew above the other common riff-raff, the sordid Black Spars who like nesting in Hillbrow or the skanky Af Gosses who own the Cape flats, the Red spars who hang around Francois in Bloem..... but I have been let down by the Witppoortjie pair and it feels like I've been kicked in the teeth.

When I look in the literature it says that the Ovambo Sparrowhawk in South Africa is confined to the north and north east. But it's certainly not an even distribution and is very patchy to say the least. There seem to be a whole lot down a bit further south along the Vaal River, but that seems to be where they stop. They don't seem to occur at all along the eastern escarpment. And then as you move north, they seem to peter out towards the escarpment and then come back strongly in the lowveld. This seems very strange because of the perfect habitat for them in all those areas.

The biggest problem lies in the fact that the poor Ovambo seems to get confused with everything else. I've seen African goshawks (*Accipiter tachiro*) displayed proudly as Ovambo

Sparrowhawks on prominent wildlife photographers' websites and I shudder to think of the poor sod who pays money for that image. Gabars are most often mistaken for Ovambos and vice versa.

But certainly not enough is known about the distribution of these hawks within South Africa especially and unfortunately, owing to the difficulty of identifying this hawk, miss-identification is a common problem. Strangely enough, the best place to see these hawks is not in the wilderness of the Kruger Park or at a peaceful waterhole in Botswana.

If one sits for long enough on a pavement drinking coffee in Parkhurst or even more likely in Hatfield, they will have a better chance than out in the wide blue yonder, and will in all likelihood be about three km as the crow flies from the nearest nest.

The nest proximity to each other varies in Gauteng but the closest two nests found are 3.16 Km apart and the furthest distance between nests was found to be 15.5 Km.

In an area of 300 square km there was a density of 6 nests. This didn't vary going from rural to urban areas.

But I had a bit of luck recently and thanks to a friend of mine, was taken to a hawk nest in an indigenous tree which turned out to be an Ovambo spar. I was beginning to despair of ever finding them breeding in them. This is, I believe, the closest I'll ever get to a "natural" breeding site on the Highveld, with no exotic tree to be seen for at least one kilometer. (You just can't seem to get away from them), but at least the birds had the decency to be nesting in an indigenous tree for once.

The site was perfectly situated for easy hunting as it was adjacent to a large walk-in aviary, which afforded the male easy pickings of all the Masked Weaver birds (*Ploceus velatus*) which abounded around the vicinity of the aviary. He caught these almost exclusively and they seemed to be wanting to get caught, lining up and shouting "Pick me Pick me..", and would even fly down and sit on top of the aviary while the male was sitting out in plain sight. Of course this was too much for him and he'd launch himself at them and invariably catch one after a few sorties. Here he caught mostly the Weavers and other small passerines. Of course when the opportunity arose he would catch the easy pickings, but having the highest wing loading of all the Sub Saharan African Accipiters, he was extremely capable of launching blistering attacks from a height, like a Falcon. In fact about forty percent of all hunting we saw over a period of a month and a half was executed from a thermal or pretty high up, even though the success rate of this type of attack was lower.

Usually from the time we watched him head out for the hunt until the he returned with a kill it would be about ten minutes. Interestingly enough, this seems to be about the average time it

takes for the males to go off hunting and come back with food and it's not only because this pair had such easy access to a food source. A nest that was observed in Kromdraai, which was in a Poplar plantation in open farmland with no easy access to food, had the male take the same average time to head out and return with a kill. Peregrine Falcons have a similar turnaround time when they go out hunting in breeding season.

It just shows you how efficient these little hawks must be, because if the male has to feed a hungry brood of three chicks (average brood size), he *has* to be highly efficient because a ten day old chick will need to consume about five weavers a day.

That's a total of fifteen weavers before he and his mate have even had a look in.

At this stage of the male does all of the hunting, and the female stays at the nest to defend the chicks, but the female surprised us one morning by going over to the "fridge" ... while he incubated, (it was while they still had eggs), helped herself to a weaver and then returned with the weaver to do a food exchange with the male....again the hand goes up to scratch the old cranium. As far as I know, female to male food exchange hasn't been seen before in Accipiters.

But the Ovambo Spar seems full of surprises and I'm sure that other strange behavior patterns will emerge over time.

So in due course, the three eggs hatched and three chicks emerged, looking beady eyed, fluffy and cute. The success rate is pretty good usually, and unless the birds have a great deal of disturbance around the nest site, it's not unusual to get a one hundred percent hatch. Of all the various nest sites that I know of, I know of only one Accipiter nest to fail out of pure disturbance, and that was a Black Spar nest that had been continually disturbed by people cutting down wood in their plantation for firewood. The poor birds seemed to be at the end of their tether and as soon as we entered the plantation she would jump off the nest and fly around the plantation alarm calling.

It's a fallacy that the birds will desert the nest if you touch the eggs or chicks and it's only in extreme cases of disturbance that they will leave the plantation entirely.

In fact the weather plays the biggest part in determining the success of the pair, and in 2009 I was terribly disturbed when we had a cold snap and a week of rain on the Highveld at the critical time in the chicks' development. It seems the females can sit through the heaviest hail and thunder storms, as long as the nest doesn't get blown out, and still be fine. It just takes a week of rain and the poor female just can't seem to sustain the chicks for that length of time. And in 2009 the pair nesting in the White Stinkwood was no exception. I climbed back up the tree with dread that first morning after the weather cleared and found that two of the chicks had perished from exposure. The last chick also looked a lot smaller than he should have been

had the weather been fairer, and I suspect that the male, for all his good qualities, just didn't manage to get to grips when push came to shove. But maybe I'm being a bit harsh on the poor guy.

So that was the end of a pretty poor season in general for these little hawks. The rain fell continuously for two weeks (at just the wrong time) and all the other nests that I had been watching bummed out too. A total of seven nests that I had been watching that got rained out in the 2009 breeding season.

In 2010 we observed a total of 11 nests and the rain stayed away for long enough to result in a bumper season for these hawks. At nine of the eleven nests at least one new Ovambo Sparrowhawk left to nest site, hopefully to survive the perilous first year and join the (happily apparently growing) population of Grey Ghosts



Ovambo Sparrowhawk flying a Masked Weaver – Kenny Pinnock

The Grouse Hawking Junkie

By Dave Jones

Do you have a compulsion?! Mine is "Grouse Hawking" and I'm hooked on it.

I travel thousands of miles a year just to fly Grouse; it's crazy and expensive.

Where did this compulsive hunting gene come from? I think it's buried within us all from the days when we had to catch our own food.

At the sight of my first hawk at a early age I was infected with a magical virus called falconry. I tried to shake it off by throwing myself into a business career and the normal things like buying a house etc. but the virus got worst when I bought a dog that wanted to hunt. I finally gave in and took up falconry then travelled the country in pursuit of game and sport.

My addiction to Grouse hawking started in the highlands of Scotland when I was hunting Blue Hare with my female Goshawk I flushed a covey of Grouse that exploded like a shotgun in all directions. I could not believe how fast they flew. My Goshawk bated and I thought if I come across another covey I'd fly them.

My Goshawk was very fit and I was convinced that she would catch a Grouse. A covey got up and flew downhill I cast my Goshawk she flew the Grouse with burners on at high speed. At that time I did not realize that a Grouse can reach speeds of up to 80 miles per hour. My Goshawk flew her heart out into the far distance and out of sight. I saw a long walk ahead with telemetry bleeping as my dog and I raced downhill bouncing over the heather. One hour later I found my fit and seasoned Goshawk sitting on a rock frustrated with empty talons.

I decided that my next challenge would be to fly a Long-wing and catch a Red Grouse.

Goshawks had set me up well as a hunter, and my steady German Shorthaired Pointer was a good start to find and hold a point on Grouse.

It took me several seasons to learn how to catch a Red Grouse. It was far removed from coming home with a brace or more of Pheasants, Partridge, Ducks or Rabbits. This Long-winging was almost impossible to start with but that was the challenge, it wasn't just a case of getting your Hawk fit and casting it.

You have to believe in your dog before you let your hawk go, as too many false points will ruin a long-wing. Also, learn not to fly in a down draft, wait for your hawk to climb to its maximum height then get your hawk into position before you flush the Grouse downwind to give your hawk a chance of catching one.

One autumn day I got it right and then I was hooked on Grouse Hawking and became a Grouse Hawking Junkie.

What's so different to hawking Partridge, Pheasant, and Duck etc with a long-wing! I didn't know that until I flew a Grouse.

Grouse are the ultimate game bird to fly in the UK they travel at speeds of 80 miles per hour that's why your long-wing needs to climb to a height to use the speed of the stoop to overtake the Grouse and have a chance of catching one. A Grouse will twist and turn like a flying Hare. They bail out into the heather and wait for your hawk to try and land on them and then they side step like a top class rugby player and take off leaving your hawk at the starting gate. They will also go underground to get away from your hawk and go into streams (burns) and hide up under the overhanging banks. They are the top survivors, mysterious and totally wild, not bred by man and released.

What more can I say about my addiction! My respect for this hardy moorland bird is immense. To catch your first Red Grouse with a virgin hawk is a celebration and when this happens you must celebrate by either going to your nearest Pub preferably with a driver or splash out on a bottle of Champagne on the moor and drink to the Grouse that gave its life up for your sport.

When I drive back home from the Grouse moors to Somerset my long-wing spirit is dampened. I try to get my enthusiasm back by hunting my local game ducks, pheasants, partridge etc. "It's alright, but not the real thing".

This hawking season has been good to me; I've caught Red Grouse in England, Scotland and Wales. (What I call "The Moorland Three")

Now my hawks are put away and my lasting images of the hunt for the Red Grouse will remain in my memory until late August arrives then the addiction will start all over again



“Where did all the Falconers go?”

Short stories- by the Limpopo falconry club.

Dog Tracks and Signs

-by Mark Labuschagne

How to Fry a Falcon.

A cook book –by George McAllister

Arab Relations in the Boland.

-by “The three wise men”

“Spading for Speed”

-by Paul and Kyle

Pig Hunting with Puppies.

-by Thomas Holder

Cast flying with One Bird.

-by Steven Squires

Territorial Disputes.

-by Brian Anderson

“Mutes Smell Awful”

A compilation of disgusting things experienced. -by falconers wives

(The author of the above is unknown and likely to stay that way! – Ed.)

Breaking a 22-year Natal Falconry record!!

(It is part of the editorial policy not to publicize “bag totals” but the following is included – not only because it is remarkable – but because it demonstrates how effectively Falconry can be used as a targeted control method for pest species and invasive alien birds – Ed)

The first cold front of the season had just moved through and falconry season was well and truly underway- well for me it was anyway. I had picked up my first African Goshawk 3 months ago and she was already sitting on 50 kills!

Because of the shocking wet weather over the past few days I was unable to get out and do some quality hunting. I don't know who was more frustrated by this, me or my gos! However, eventually the weather cleared and after checking her weight and gear we were off to PMB.

I didn't get off as early as I would have liked but eventually arrived at Oribi Industrial Area – Indian Mynah Utopia, just after 8am. The sun was shining and the little black and white buggers were all over the show, satisfying their hunger that they had been building up over the past few days, all blissfully unaware of the danger lurking within the white Ford Ranger just around the corner.

Within in minutes of our arrival jesses were on, telemetry checked and we were off to attempt to make a dent on the local PMB mynah population.

Within 20 minutes she had taken her 5th kill- neatly maneuvering over a hedge and effortlessly plucking a mynah out of the air on the other side - it was going to be a good day I thought. I still had a heap of time before my meeting scheduled for just after 11:30!! So I pressed on...

A number of awesome flights later the kill count stood at 23- all this in just over 3 hours! Incredible!! I was very tempted to postpone that meeting until the afternoon, but 23 kills was enough for one day I thought.

It was only until later that evening when dropping the birds off for some of the other falconers in the club that I found out I had broken Bruce Padbury's 22-year Natal Falconry Club record for the most mynahs taken in one day!!! Sorry Bruce!

Who knows how long this record will last? Something tells me not that long!!!

Happy flying guys, enjoy the 2011 season.

Deren Coetzer.

7 April 2011



Five down, 18 to go!

Hawking From a Vehicle with the African Goshawk and Others

Rodger Neilson

If you are seventyish, not too steady on your pins to keep up with a pointer of far ranging hawk like the Black Sparrow Hawk or Peregrine, but desperately do not want to hang up your gauntlet (in short if you are like me) you could do well to take up an African Goshawk and hawk out of the window of your motor car at Indian Mynahs or Starlings. There are a number of advantages to be gained from this form of the Falconers Art. I shall list them before I discuss training methods or hunting tactics.

NO 1 Mynas and starlings inhabit the suburbs of South African Towns and cities. If you are seventyish you will most likely be a pensioner and be unable to afford the gallons of expensive fuel for that Yellow Throated Sand Grouse or Grey Winged Partridge are going to cost you. Mynahs can be found in your very own suburb if not in your back yard.

NO 2 Both of these two common quarry species are exotics like the "blackjack" "Khakibos" and "Black Wattle tree" Like these three members of the plant kingdom listed above there is little or no sympathy for them by householders and gardeners. *You might be applauded if you hunt them.* Also there is an open season on them all year round and so no permits are needed.

NO 3 by hunting the two unloved exotics out of your motor vehicle with the short distance sprinter like the African Goshawk you will 9 times out of 10 have a grandstand view of the action and kill. An aerial tackle by an accipiter on any quarry is thrilling stuff to witness. Many years ago I had a female Black Spar and a well drilled English Pointer. The "Duo" took 98 game birds between them in one season. I think I saw about 10% of the kills happen. The hawk would be cast off at a rocketing spur fowl and give chase. The dog would break point and chase after the hawk, Quarry, hawk and dog would vanish into the bushveld trees and I would find hawk and dog on quarry a few minutes later. I wouldn't know what caught what first as the dog would have "Frankie" or "Guinea" feathers stuck to his mouth even though the hawk was on the kill. Very effective but rather boring. By contrast I made 73 kills with a male African Goshawk in three months. All round heavily built up Eaststrand mining town of Boksburg. I think I saw every chase and more than 90% of the kills happened between 30 and 50 meters from me.

No 4 By hawking from a car you can cover a lot of ground in the suburbs and travel from one known hunting ground to another in a matter of minutes. (So achieve multiple kills on un-traumatized quarry at each spot) This is very advantageous in winter when short daylight hours often reduce falconers to flying over the weekends. I have often had 4 or 5 kills in an hour and a half in only 20 or 30 kilometers of driving.

As mentioned above the African Goshawk is a short distance sprinter. Chases seldom go more than 50 meters. If the gos has not overhauled its quarry in forty meters it will break off the chase. This is good for suburban falconry, as last thing you want is a kill in someone's backyard three rows of houses beyond your field of view. I would love to fly an European Spar or native Ovambo at this quarry but I suspect their greater speed and persistence in the chase could result in you losing your hawk a lot quicker in

suburban situations. My own experience with African Goshawks leads me to believe that "walking up on quarry" for the gos is not the way forward. I had rather dull hawking and a lot of unsuccessful chases to use a gos like a sparrow hawk. All this changes when you give the element of surprise by releasing the hawk out of an open window of a vehicle. It makes sense as the wild African Goshawk hunts using stealth. Do not feel bad about hunting from a vehicle as it is not very different from the days gone by where horseback hawking was common place. A modern adaption to an age old practice.

If you live in a wilder, more bushy situation where hares are numerous enough to be counted as quarry, another tried and tested candidate for hawking from a vehicle is the African Hawk Eagle. However this happens at night as the quarry is nocturnal in the lights of the vehicle or spotlight as hares are hard to find by day. Airstrips, golf courses crop fields, and irrigation schemes attract large numbers of hares, springhares, wildcats and small antelope within the capabilities of this hawk. "Night Hawking" is an artform of its own and deserves a separate article. It takes place from a vehicle and an elder falconer whos legs are not up to bashing through the bush anymore can apply the same logistics to hawking in this manner. The action happens right in front of you, but this time by night. Again it is wonderful thrilling stuff. You see the hawk and hare in deadly combat just thirty meters in front of you! Night hawking works in Africa and the American south west. My own attempts in Britain to night hawk hares with a male Finish gos were of limited success due to wet boggy fields frequently trapping my vehicle. Night hawking rabbits in the British Isles takes place on foot with a spotlight and battery. Not at all easy and I don't recommend "lamping" as they call it, our "night hawking" is socially enjoyable and we undertake it from our pickup trucks in Africa with friends and a few beers.

As with any branch of falconry one learns what slip to take and what to leave alone. Anywhere near fences should be left alone Quarry should also be a fair slipping distance from cover. If night hawking it is important to keep the light on the quarry. Potentially dangerous quarry should be dispatched quickly to avoid injuring the hawk or even damaging the train or flight feathers. Large quarry for the African Goshawk like Dikop or Francolin should be rendered harmless as soon as possible, and also a gang of mynahs can dive bomb and strike a small hawk to the point where brain damage can take place. This is where a well trained dog that is used to hawks can prove to be valuable. My black Spar was saved by the pointer on several occasions from cobras, jackal and genet cats.

(See also inside of the back cover – Suburban Hawking)





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Contact Lorna and Dave cell: 073 600 0991

'Killing' Namaqua Sandgrouse with a Falcon.

A. Muller.

It is midwinter in the Western Free State; the season has dampened the spirit of the veldt and all the living things in it. Thus the silence that surrounds me, it is as if all living things are resting after the busy summer and are now dreading the cold night that approaches from the east. An energetic rouse from a hooded falcon on the cadge disturbs the silence for a few seconds and holds promise to me of the events that will follow shortly.

Then the familiar but faint sound cuts through the silence of the cold winter afternoon. A high pitched "...too koo hoo..." of Namaqua Sandgrouse is repeated at five second intervals and is getting clearer on every repetition. The sound puts Julius, my English pointer in an excited pointer tremble that gets amplified to a vibrating sound by the load box of the Land Cruiser, so much so that I find it hard to pinpoint the direction of the sandgrouse. I lay my hand on his back to quite the noise while a smile breaks on my face as I look into his frowning face and worried eyes. "Yes Julius this is serious stuff but not that serious" I think to myself. Meanwhile I become aware of an anxiety, restlessness and excitement in me, which I can best describe as "sandgrouse fever". After four seasons of flying at them I still get this feeling every time I see or hear a sandgrouse. "I'm the one with the problem, not Julius he is a bird dog he was bred to be excited about gamebirds ..." I mutter as my eyes peer into the sky in the direction of the now crystal clear sound. Then I see them, a small group of less than ten approaching at a height of about 400 feet with their distinctive small profile, straight flight style and non-stop, motor-like wing-beat.

They are too high they won't land in the fallow field behind me; I think to myself, worrying for daylight is fading. I watch them fly by and just as my worry was about to turn into reality they set their wings and go into steep descent. At about 20 feet above the ground they leveled off, turned the motors back on to fly a wide circle and alight, in their characteristic chopper-like style about 200 meters from my position and then disappear in the sea of stubble. It doesn't get any better than this.

I keep my gaze fixed on the landing spot and make a mental note of the estimated distance they landed from me. Still looking I pull a five meter line in the sand with my boot in the direction of my gaze. I check for something recognizable in the stubble, and mentally mark a piece of stubble standing upright close by the grouse's position. Checking again and again for flying alone I have to make double sure of the sandgrouse's position to produce a timely flush or a flush at all.

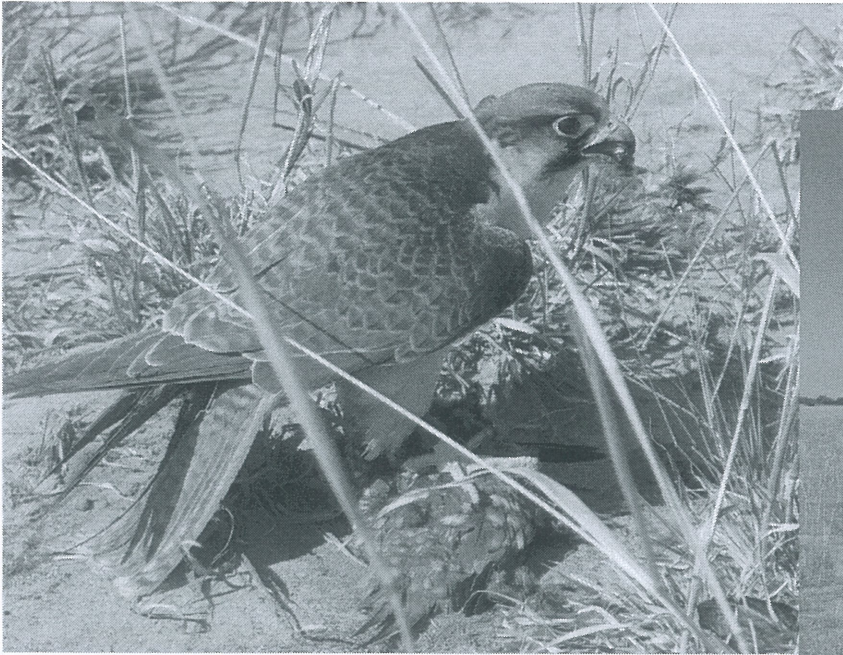
I turn my attention to the hooded falcon on the back of the Land Cruiser. Transmitter on, jesses loose, hood off- all happens in the matter of a minute. I go to the other side of the vehicle to cast off in the opposite direction of the grouse to prevent a premature flush should the falcon fly straight in their direction at low altitude.

On my outstretched arm sits an eyas African peregrine tiercel, breast feathers quivering from muscles readying for the flight and eyes gazing across the field looking for opportunity. A mute and good rouse completes the ceremony. Wings already open the falcon glance towards my face with indignant eyes that says; "who the hell are you?..." and off he goes. "Vlieg bliksem..." I mutter and take position on the line I draw in the sand with my boot to get the direction of the sandgrouse. With Julius at heel I slowly set off towards the sandgrouse, sure of my direction, distance and beacons that will enable me to find them.

Halfway to the grouse the falcon has climbed to a respectable height of about 600 feet, I proceed and feel my tension and excitement increasing with every step I take. Fifty meters to go and I check on the falcon again. Where is he? Is he after some check? Julius heel!! A sigh of relieve as I spot him almost directly above at about a thousand feet. Without caution I walk forward for the falcon is in position. Twenty meters to go and I check on the falcon again, his position is perfect; not directly overhead but to my left at a seventy degree angle. Not willing to let another second go by and let this setup over to chance, I rush forward shouting and clapping hands. Nothing happens. Where did they go?! I wheel around to check my distance from the vehicle and spot Julius rock solid on point 10 meters behind and 5 meters from my tracks. Without hesitation I rush in again- an explosion of wings and a couple of sandgrouse takes to the air. I let out a barbaric falconers' cry, which has been brewing in my chest since I heard the first sandgrouse for the afternoon- a diagnostic symptom of 'sandgrouse fever'. The sandgrouse leave; the first 30 meters clumsy but as soon as their bodies become horizontal, their small wings and big motors start working for them. I turn my eyes skyward and meet the tiercel halfway down, stooping, aligning, stooping, and adjusting and then leveling off with a hissing sound, 60 meters behind the fleeing sandgrouse now about 200 meters away from me. The gap is closed in an instant and all detail disappears in a flurry of wings, then the ripping sound of high speed contact between sandgrouse and falcon. With held breath I see my tiercel pull up with a sandgrouse in his claws. But before my breath can be expressed into a victory cry, the sandgrouse shrugs loose and the tail-chase is on. I yell out of frustration for I know the sandgrouse is gone. Although evidently hurt by the bind, the sandgrouse manage to stay ahead of the falcon for as far as my eyes can follow them in the fading light.

With the telemetry out and working for a while I see the tiercel returning low over the ground and alight close by. As I get to him I see the look in his eyes have changed from proud and indignant to perplexed and insecure. How do I build on this? How can I reward him for his great

effort? Frustrated I toss an opened rock pigeon carcass before him to feed. As I sit and watch my falcon feed, I relive the drama in my mind. Slowly I feel the frustration and tension, give way to contentment and bliss. I realize; ***"It is not about 'the kill'"***.



Eagle Encounters – Rehabilitation, Education and Outreach.

Hank Chalmers and Adrian Lombard.

The contribution by Falconers to the Conservation effort is far greater than the small number of Falconers would lead an observer to expect and is easily underestimated. Some activities are measurable and gain ready acknowledgement, such as scientific studies and population monitoring exercises. These activities are valuable and, indeed, are important in helping to justify our harvest of wild raptors for Falconry. Possibly more important in terms of conservation benefit is the education and outreach activities of Falconers. These efforts reach into a diversity of cultures and societies in South Africa, so change the attitudes of a wide range of the public towards raptors specifically, but also towards conserving our environment and all of its biodiversity.

All Falconers have daily contact with members of the public with whom they interact. These would include farmers, farm laborers, pigeon fanciers and others; all of whom have an impact on raptors, prey species and the environment. Almost every Falconer will do some education activities such as school talks and almost every Falconer contributes towards the rehabilitation of raptors. Some of our Falconers provide these services in a more formal and professional manner. There are now a number of Falconry Centers around the country which provide education to the general public and schools and reach into the underprivileged communities. This must be enormously important in creating conservation awareness and developing an appreciation for raptors so producing changes in attitudes and behavior.

It is of value to examine the contribution of just one of these Falconry Centers and quantify this contribution. Eagle Encounters is owned and managed by Hank and Tracy Chalmers and is situated between Cape Town and Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. It is run by full time staff but also calls on the services of local Falconry volunteers. There is a *quid pro quo* in that local Falconry apprentices benefit from hands-on experience and mentoring through participating in the activities of the Center.

EAGLE ENCOUNTERS

Rehabilitation, Education & Eco-Tourism Centre



The following demonstrate graphically the contribution of Eagle Encounters to Raptor rehabilitation in the Western Cape:

SUMMARY OF ALL REHABILITATION BIRDS TO DATE										
SPECIES	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Spotted Eagle Owl	12	15	6	3	23	43	47	55	40	68
Barn Owl	7	4	5	4	26	16	44	26	19	62
Rock Kestrel	4	11	3	3	13	21	24	18	22	35
Jackal Buzzard	2	7	1	4	12	4	15	11	8	10
African Goshawk	6	3	0	4	7	11	12	12	4	9
Peregrine Falcon	1	0	0	1	4	13	9	7	4	8
Black Sparrowhawk	5	1	1	1	1	9	8	6	4	8
Steppe Buzzard	1	3	1	5	2	8	4	4	9	5
Blackshouldered Kite	4	4	1	4	1	3	5	10	6	4
Yellowbilled Kite	2	2	1	1	2	3	0	2	2	2
Wood Owl	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
Martial Eagle	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pale Chanting Goshawk	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
Cape Vulture	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Cape Eagle Owl	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
African Harrier Hawk	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	3	2

CONTINUED SUMMARY OF ALL REHABILITATION BIRDS TO DATE										
SPECIES	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Lanner Falcon	1	1	0	1	0	4	2	0	0	1
Black Eagle	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1
Secretary Bird	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Greater Kestrel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Booted Eagle	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
Gabar	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Redbreasted Sparrowhawk	0	1	1	1	0	5	2	2	0	0
Lesser Kestrel	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
African Fish Eagle	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Black Harrier	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Forrest Buzzard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Hobby Falcon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Marsh Harrier	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
INDIVIDUAL TOTALS:	52	56	21	36	93	143	183	156	132	220
GRAND TOTAL:	1092									

These figures provide more information than simply documenting the work done by the center. They also provide some idea of the population size of the different raptors as well as information concerning the threats facing these birds through analysis of the causes of morbidity and mortality. The involvement of falconers in the process of rehabilitation of Raptors has become entrenched in the Western Cape through the development of a Raptor

Rehabilitation Forum in which Falconers participate and the acceptance of a Raptor Rehabilitation Protocol which incorporates the pre-release training of Raptors by Falconry method and this requires the involvement of accredited Falconers.

The following table provides unique figures as these detail the education and out-reach work done by this Centre in 2010 alone. Few targeted conservation organizations can claim to have direct interaction with nearly 50,000 people per year and we can note that these include a significant number of underprivileged children (over 4,500) who must be an important target group. Indications are that this total number will nearly double for 2011.

- Eco-Tourism ($\pm 27,000$ visitors)
- 86 Privileged School Groups ($\pm 7,750$ kids)
- 22 Underprivileged School Groups - sponsored by Eagle Encounters ($\pm 1,870$ kids)
- 14 Underprivileged Away Schools ($\pm 2,750$ kids)
- Off-Site Events ($\pm 10,000$ people)

The Center runs a number of other projects. Of particular interest is the "Owl Box Project" which seeks to encourage farmers to erect breeding boxes for owls in their lands as a form of biological pest control. The Center provides owls which can be hatched from these boxes. Apart from the obvious advantages of reducing pesticide use and increasing owl populations, this project has the additional benefit of changing the attitudes of rural people to owls.

AIM:

- To establish owls in areas where rodent control is necessary.
- To create awareness about organic farming methods.
- To provide suitable nest sites for badly-located owls.
- To provide information to the general public about owls & owl boxes.
- We erected 60 boxes in 2010.

Future projects planned by Eagle Encounters will include:

- Continuing with the Owl Box Project.
- Continuing with the Junior Volunteer Program
- Continue with Rural Outreaches.
- Collect Blood Smears for analysis of blood parasites.
- Study on Raptor decomposition time frames.

Falconers and Falconry Centers, such as Eagle Encounters, provide invaluable support to the conservation of raptors, prey species and the natural environment. This contribution has been variously ignored and belittled in the past. Examination of these figures clearly demonstrates that few if any other organizations can demonstrate an outreach and education footprint in "Raptor Conservation" to match that of the South African Falconry Community as represented by SAFA and facilitated through the day-to-day activities of its membership as well as the services provided by a few Falconry Centers which are owned and managed by SAFA members. This contribution can go ignored no longer. Falconers deserve the praise and encouragement of Conservation Organizations. It would be cynical to suggest that this may be slow in coming in the current economic climate where there is cut-throat competition for donor funding. Most of the work done by Falconers requires and receives no donor funding at all.



Above: Full attention for the Conservation Message.



Right: Owl Box installation.

The Eagle Hunters of Slovakia.

Adrian Lombard

The 2010 IAF AGM was held in Slovakia. I attended this and had the pleasure of being hosted by the Slovak Falconry Club and meeting up with old friends – Laco Molnar and Lubomir Engler – who had attended the IAF Meeting hosted by SAFA in 2008. The initial part of the Meeting, involving the IAF Advisory Committee Meeting, was held in Kezmarok-Vrbov, in the foothills of the High Tetras Mountains. I must admit some trepidation in setting off, via Vienna, for a place whose name I still cannot pronounce or spell! Never-the-less, set off I did, accompanied by my long-suffering spouse – who had been conned into believing we were going to an Italian seaside resort (well Venice and Vienna do sound similar) and who remains under the impression that somewhere our trip went irrevocably and dreadfully wrong! I admit that I would not have made the Meeting if we had not been met in Bratislava by Laco who took us on an amazing drive across Slovakia past lakes and forests decked out in autumn colors. The trip was interspersed by Medieval Castles perched on the most improbable kopjes and rumored to have been occupied by the villainous Counts and Countesses who bathed in human blood before breakfast.

We settled into the hot spring resort hotel which can be better described by my wife although her response contains a warning and parental guidance is advised. The company and camaraderie made up for any short-comings as well as the fact that the hotel grounds were littered with an array of Eagles and fairly rugged looking falconers including some from as far afield as Holland and Germany. The Eagle hunting Meet in Slovakia is recognized as the World's finest and this was attested to by Bakyt Karnakbeyev of Kazakhstan who was truly impressed by the events of the next 3 days. The birds were all Golden Eagles; several were the large central Asiatic "Berkut" subspecies. These are spectacular birds, huge and dark chocolate brown with golden highlights. Several were imprints but there was no sign of aggression towards their handlers. One of the Falconers told me that it is important that the birds are hunted frequently and kill regularly to focus the aggression. They were all in outstanding condition.

We spent 3 days going out to hunt. Hunting grounds were organized with the local hunting clubs. The target quarry was Roe deer and Red Fox although young Boar could be flown if seen. The Falconers were welcomed to take the Roe Deer, at €100 a head, as the Roe Deer numbers need to be controlled to increase the numbers of Red Deer. Red Fox were seen as vermin and could be hunted for free. Understandably, some of the falconers wanted to avoid too many roe deer and hoped for foxes. The method of hunting involved identifying a suitable valley with a vlei system containing reeds and bushes in its floor and surrounded by agricultural lands. The Eagle Falconers would position themselves, seated strategically on the slopes of the valley around the vlei. A very energetic and hard working group of beaters then made their way

through the vlei, singing and clapping their hands, intermittently a roe deer or fox would break cover and the eagle closest was allowed to fly it. The deer would run, twisting and jinking, while the eagle tried to get a foot to them. Ideally, a foot to the back and one to the head would bring the deer down, thrashing and kicking, and the falconer must run in and cut the deer's throat while it was subdued. The fox would run and the eagle would throw up and try to stoop onto them. The fox may then stop and try to bite at the eagle as it came in. Once again the falconer needed to get in quickly before injury was done.

All the action took place in beautiful surroundings. The rolling hillsides of the foothills of the High Tetras Mountains were covered with agricultural lands and patches of woodland in autumnal colors. Little villages were dotted around and were characterized by the wooden Churches with onion shaped steeples. The houses were painted in a variety of bright colors, pinks, yellows and greens. I was told that during the communist era, houses were not painted in different colors and tended to be drab and uniform. Certainly much is changing since the establishment of a democracy. Historic villages are being renovated, highways built and signs of development are everywhere. On one of the days, we hunted the slopes of a large hill which was topped by the ruins of an enormous medieval castle. It was the most dramatic setting for a hunt but I could not help thinking how fortunate I am, never to have been asked to assault those stone walls, struggling up the steep hillside while the inmates poured stones, arrows and boiling oil at my head. It must have made a strange picture as I, a South African stood on a boulder beneath those walls with two Arabic falconers while the autumn wind tried to freeze our butts off.

This was a wonderful experience and I have been extremely fortunate to share the hawking with these skilled and talented Eagle hunters. They were wonderful hosts and we were welcomed into their culture and homeland. The Eagle hunting was unique and dramatic; these Central European hunters have proved themselves Masters of the Art. Something was salvaged of my marriage with a stop-over in Istanbul and the purchase of a very expensive leather coat!



Notes on Training the African Little Sparrowhawk

Rodger Nielson

There are some hawks that come ones way once In a Falconers Lifetime that behaves so well that one wishes that one could have a series of them so as to thoroughly explore their potential, such a hawk was an African Little Sparrowhawk. I have had one perfect little spar come my way in my 50 years of Falconry. This little spar was one of a brood of three brought to me by African children in 1968 when I was working for Rand Mines Exploration near the Rhodesian/ Mozambique boarder near Nyamapanda. I had already started flying an Ayres Hawk Eagle and this got the word out that the white man (known as Chigara Makhuma) had a thing about hawk chicks and from then hawks would arrive on my doorstep quite regularly. To refuse them would have been signing their death certificate so I would either pass them on to John Condy of the Rhodesian Falconers Club or feed them at the hack table and thus allow them to hack themselves back into the wild in their own time..... Then the little spars arrived.

One look at these exquisitely crafted miniatures and I realized here was a bird worth the time and effort of training, Ayres or no Ayres Hawk Eagle! I am glad I did because with "Snowball" (hawk I kept for myself) I made 23 kills and I was introduced into a fascinating form of micro falconry. This is where everything happens close to you – the likes of which I have never had the opportunity to induce again.

The first thing I noticed about the three Little Spars was that when they hissed defiance at me their mouths were blue black. In this way and many others they were similar to the larger African Goshawk. The next thing I noticed was that when I weighed the chicks, all three were under 100grams. The heaviest "Snowball" was 98 grams, the lightest was 89grams. Their juvenile plumage was very similar to the first year African Goshawk, dark sepia under parts with a grey bloom, white down the front with blackish brown teardrop and valentine's heart marking, very short rather broad wings and a large tail. Clearly a hawk of dense bush. I had been led to believe that the Little Spar was a true sparrow hawk like the Red Breasted Sparrow Hawk, European Sparrow Hawk and Sharp shinned Hawk. I no longer believe this. All three chicks had outwardly rounded tails like the goshawk, the Coopers Hawk, and our own African Goshawk. Not the inwardly curved trailing edge of the European, Red Breasted and Sharp shinned sparrow hawks. Looking at these little beasties I was left thinking that because of their blue-black mouths, and strikingly similar plumage that the Little Spars, African Goshawk and the large Hengsts Goshawk of Madagascar could form a supra species. Later in training I was to find

another African Goshawk trait, my Little Spar was steady as a rock on the fist and despite not being an imprint wailed like a banshee (or like an AF Gos after seeing me for the first time each morning) And like the African Goshawk I was to train in later years would put on bursts of speed off the fist after sparrow sized quarry that lasted about 20 meters. If this was unsuccessful she would rapidly lose interest and glide, often to return back to the fist she was launched from.

Quarry was quite understandably small; Cisticolas, Grass birds, Common Waxbills, Golden Bishop birds and White winged Widow birds for the most part. Others were Scaly feathered Finch, tit, Babblers, and she excelled at the Hottentot Button Quail. I tried Harlequin Quail on many occasions but after a few misses she gave up on these. Many of the birds I took with her were at the distinct disadvantage of being taken wet with rain. Snowball I kept dry indoors and only took her up once the rain had finished.

Drawbacks I encountered flying this hawk were a 2-3gram weight difference had a drastic difference to performance. The hawk would check from avian quarry to grasshoppers if she saw these. Her top speed was a little slow; However the lovely nature and rapid Response far outweighed the disadvantages. I'm sure Little Spars would work well from a motor vehicle or car window. I am sad I have never trained another Little Spar.....Dynamite defiantly comes in small packages!!!

Book Review

Raptor Survey and Monitoring – Editor Gerard Malan.

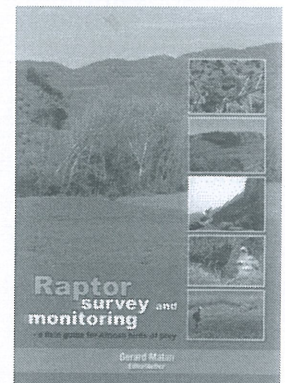
This long awaited publication is now available through the Bird of Prey Program of EWT. Written and edited by Gerhard Malan, it also has contributions from Andrew Jenkins, Bill Howells, Ara Monadjem, Anthony van Zyl and Rob Simons. The book contains essential information to assist with the planning of surveys and will be of real value to clubs that are planning projects. The book is written in a form that is easy to read. Much of the technical information may be more relevant to the scientist but there is plenty of information that will assist less academic researchers. There is information on how to find nests and how to survey various types of habitat. I would recommend that all the clubs should obtain a copy as should any Falconer planning to undertake a raptor survey. It is important that falconers continue to involve themselves in surveys as this information is necessary to justify our harvest of wild raptors.

(Editor)

Order from Tanya Fouche – BoPP EWT

tanyaf@ewt.org.za

Cost: R255.00



OBITUARY FOR CRAIG BLACKBEARD

15th October 1961 – 22 May 2011

I first met Craig 35 years ago while walking in Kloof Gorge with my children. This gangly teen soon took an interest in our activities –which included falconry - and became a frequent visitor to our home. He especially enjoyed our hunting trips inland.

Craig did his schooling at Kloof, finishing well above average. He took a job in a Durban sports shop and after a while landed a position at “BIG”.

Craig was always fascinated, not only with flying birds, but also airplanes. He managed to put any spare funds into flying lessons and, after a year or two, he achieved both his pilot and commercial licenses.

A little over 20 years ago he started flying for the government in Kwa-Zulu Natal, based at Ulundi, and staying in Melmoth. Around about this time he met Sharon, who was introduced to me while I was manning a falconry stand at a wildlife expo. Along came Craig with a lovely wife and a readymade family - two bonny boys, Jarred and Ashton - later on to be blessed with two lovely girls, Christy and Bianca.

From there Craig went up North Africa on contract and flew in a few war-torn areas. I recall some hair-raising stories of situations up there. Through all of his exploits, Craig never lost his love for raptors, even flying several birds at his second home in Tanganyika. Craig always had a preference for long-wing falconry.

Rest in peace, Craig, you will be missed.

Bill Chalmers.

OBITUARY FOR TIM HARTLEY.

Tim has been one of the more colorful characters of the Western Cape Falconry scene. He started his Falconry in the bad good-old-days when Falconry was illegal, by trapping a Lanner Falcon outside Stellenbosh using a chicken that survived the ordeal and grew into a cockerel of legend. I met Tim shortly after the establishment of the Cape Falconry Club, when I was asked to inspect his Mews. I visited his home and met Tim, his wife Imka and son Ryan who has gone on to be an enthusiastic falconer as well. A firm friendship ensued.

Tim had a fund of wonderful stories. He was schooled at Michaelhouse. His step-father was implicated in the failed attempt on the life of President Verwoerd. He made a career in engineering and eventually had a business installing garden irrigation systems. He was

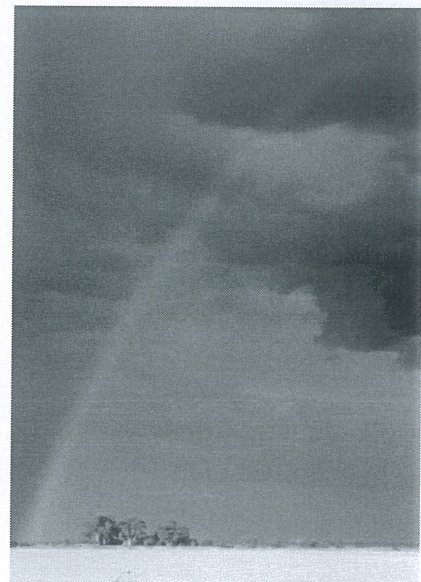
incredibly innovative and invented a number of gadgets and appliances to do with irrigation systems and swimming pool maintenance. Certainly he was not one to let the grass grow under his feet.

His first love was for African Goshawks. He flew a number of these to the detriment of the local pigeons and starlings. He always encouraged them to bigger and better things, taking Cape Spurfnwl with them over his beloved Pointers. I can always remember an almost incoherent cell-call to tell me that his female Af Gos had just taken an Adult guineafowl, subduing it against a chain-link fence. He involved himself in breeding Saker Falcons, watching their antics through self-installed cctv.

Tim was a dear and entertaining friend and we had some wonderful times together. One of the best was a trip we shared together to Botswana, to see Lake Ngami which had just re-emerged from the desert. By strange chance, we found our way to Baines' Baobabs and spent a night camped opposite these famous trees. It was a wonderful day. We watched thunderstorms move across the Makadikadi flats, blackening the sky and, for a while a huge rainbow held position arching across the baobabs. As night fell, the scene took on a mystical appearance, with the flat floor of the pan shining white in the moonlight and the Baobabs black against the star spangled sky. Our thoughts and conversation moved to the philosophical and eventually to the ridiculous as the level in the bottle dropped but it was a wonderful night to share. What I did not know at the time was that the ashes of my friend and mentor, John Condy, had been scatted at the Baobabs by his family. For me, this place will always be one to raise a tingle on the back of my neck and is inextricably mixed with memories of Tim.

Tim died of an illness, courageously born, and will be sadly missed by his wife, son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter as well as by his many friends. He was one of the early Cape Falconers and helped to make our community what it is.

Adrian Lombard.



Obituary for Blake Osborne.

Blake Osborne was a member of the ZFC before he moved down to Natal in about 1982. His experience and knowledge were soon recognised and he was elected on to the committee of the NFC where he had a big influence on club affairs. He was always willing to assist junior members, was instrumental in introducing a grading system and his influence ensured more emphasis was placed on club hunting week ends.

He was one of the first A grade Falconers in the club but his work in the Timber industry and other hobbies seem to detract from his interest in falconry and he left the club around 16 years ago. He then concentrated on his other interests of gun dog trials and go carts.

However a leadership crisis in the Club around 2006 resulted in him being asked to return to the committee where he was elected as Chairman.

His short tenure during this transitional stage was so successful that the Club quickly overcame the crisis and he was then able to pursue his other interests.

Our condolences go to Blake's family.

Tom Davidson.



Suburban Falconry – Roger Neilson.

