



# MEWS VIEWS

VOL. 7 2009

JOURNAL OF THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY  
ASSOCIATION

*Sickle, sickle  
in the sky  
if you fall  
who will die?*

81 *Shy Walters 2008*



**CONTENTS**

## Page

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Contents   |
| 2  | Editorial  |
| 3  | Regional Reports   |
| 13 | Penryn College Falconry Club Report  |
| 14 | Hawk Eagle Interest Group Report.  |
| 15 | Conservation through Sustainable Use – A Role for Falconry                                     |
| 20 | The SAFA Report to the IAF – 2008.   |
| 24 | A Falconry Highlight in a Boring Day.  |
| 25 | An Introduction to Lift & Soaring Principles (for falconers) Part 1                            |
| 29 | Arabs and Bustards: Symbiosis or Extinction?   |
| 35 | Beware the Drug Pushers and Pimps.   |
| 36 | From the Mouth of a Girl Falconer  |
| 38 | Out In Africa - IAF AGM and SAFA International Field Meet                                      |
| 40 | FALCONRY TERMS ..... A long suffering wife's point of view                                     |
| 43 | SAFA's Association with CHASA  |
| 44 | A Few Memorable Flights  |
| 46 | Comment from Kazakhstan.   |
| 47 | A Falconer's Tale  |
| 50 | Peregrine and Saker Falcon Restoration Program in the Czech Republic Using Falconry Techniques |
| 55 | Cape Falconry- shortening my wings...  |
| 57 | Bonelli's Eagle "An African Hawk Eagles Big Sister"  |
| 59 | Last Hunt of the Season.   |
| 61 | African Raptor Network   |



*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. Particular thanks in this regard to Frank Bond, Yukio Asaoka, Keiya Nakajima, Mike Du Puy and Fritz Boehm Editor.*

## Editorial

The past year has been a fantastic one for SAFA. The hosting of the IAF "Assembly of Delegates" was a considerable achievement and a real credit to all those who have set the standards of Falconry and Falconry Husbandry in Southern Africa. There is no doubt that Falconry in South Africa is currently enjoying a level of practice that has never been seen in this region before. This is a credit to the leadership of SAFA and of the Provincial Clubs as well as to all those Falconers who get out there and do justice to our Art. We were able to host representatives of 21 nations virtually without incident and I know that all who came were shown exemplary hospitality and were thoroughly impressed by the Falconry that they saw. This event has raised the profile of Falconry amongst the various Hunting organizations in South Africa as well as with the Conservationists interested in Raptors and in Conservation through Sustainable use.

We realized that this is an opportunity that must be grasped with both hands. We have long believed that the Endangered Wildlife Trust, with its policy of conservation through sustainable use, is the most significant conservation organization in Southern Africa. We were proud to host its CEO, Yolán Freidman, who gave the key-note speech at our banquet.

The publicity surrounding the event raised our awareness of the need to address animal-welfare concerns. We established an Animal Welfare committee, registered with the local magistrate and required that our falconers signed an Ethical Hunting Declaration. This strategy ensures ethical practice and strengthens our position in the face of criticism. We took the opportunity to publicize our activities to the local hunting community. This has generated considerable interest in Falconry among the hunting organizations and has gained their support in confronting various recent legislation processes.

We invited and managed to ensure the attendance of representatives of all 9 Provincial Administrations, as well as eliciting the interest and co-operation of the relevant officials in DEAT. A meeting of the falconers and these representatives was held and a Communicating Forum on Falconry issues was established. This is a considerable success for us and this is currently functioning well.

A meeting was held to consider the conservation of the Taita Falcon and specifically the captive breeding projects in the region. This meeting brought together the Zimbabwean and South African falconers involved in breeding projects with this species, the Provincial Authorities responsible for the administration relating to this species, as well as the scientists and conservationists involved with the Taita. The outcomes were: co-operation and sharing of breeding stock between the Zimbabweans and South Africans, acceptance of the merits of a breeding project and agreement that surplus progeny would be flown by falconers.

A Hawk Eagle Forum was established to promote the flying of African Hawk Eagles. There are discussions looking to bring Namibian and Zimbabwean Falconers into a closer relationship with the South African Falconers and establish the Southern African Falconry Association, without loss of autonomy for any party.

These are significant gains and worth the effort involved. It remains only to thank all of the Falconers who attended, who prepared their birds so well, who all made the tremendous effort to look after our guests and make sure that they got out, saw birds flown and made new friends. **Thank you all so much!**

Adrian Lombard; June 2009.

## REGIONAL REPORTS.

### Boland Falconry Club

In review, members were not so active the past season as expected, due to work and personal commitments. Growth in membership is expected due to foreign falconers coming home and applying for membership.

During the past season several raptors were received for rehab purposes. In the majority of cases the birds had to be put down due to broken wings that were so severe due to collision with motor vehicles that rehab was practically impossible

A matter of concern that needs to be addressed by us as falconers is the interactions between the racing pigeon fraternity and raptors in the surrounding environment. Rumors have it that where pigeon racers experience problems with raptors, preying on their racing pigeons they are shot. On several occasions this was brought to my attention but unfortunately no one is prepared to submit statements or evidence in this regard. Due to our social responsibility as falconers to raptors we need to take note of what is happening in our environment. Unfortunately pigeon racers do not take easily to falconers but over the past few years I have built up good relations with some racers and assist them where they experience problems with raptors. It's interesting to note that when pigeon racers lose some of their birds they perceive that the loss was due to raptors. When debating the issue of environmental factors like weather wind and the fitness of their pigeons they often admit that they have never actually studied their losses, but perceive raptors as their biggest threat. Apparently pigeon racers are convinced that the cell phone towers are a major problem as they have found that the radiation affects their pigeons homing ability. A study is currently being conducted.

In the area where I reside peregrines and black spars seem to be the problem birds to local pigeon racers.

On a visit to one loft the black spars actually wait in a blue gum for the trainer to open their loft, when they attack. In the majority of cases its young raptors that follow the easy prey to survive. It was suggested that the trainer change their training times constantly to have a continuous changing training program to avoid set training patterns for preying raptors to adapt to. In the majority of cases this works.

One trainer informed that he welcomed the raptors pursuing his pigeons as raptors force pigeons to learn evasive techniques to survive which on the one hand makes them evasive fit and skilled and he believes his racers perform better in races due to this exposure. Pigeon racing is a huge sport that is expensive and are clotted with perceptions on raptors that we need to address as falconers.

Peregrine/Gyr/Saker) hybrids were purchased from James Buttle from Gyrtec (Pty) Ltd but not flown for the season due to non-holding permits.

We are the custodians of our art, practice and skill and need to apply our specialized knowledge beyond our interest to further the conservation of raptors.

Wehahn Geldenhuys

### **Cape Falconry Club.**

2008 was an interesting year for the Cape Falconry Club. A few of us decided to fly some Black Sparrowhawk imprints. Most of us chose muskets and focused our hawks onto small grass birds, as there are always plenty to find. The flights are incredible, as some of the prey try to ring up and out-fly our birds. A fit Black Sparrowhawk is a formidable killing machine and it is really awesome to watch one fly another bird out of the sky. The down side is a fit Spar knows no boundaries and, if he can see it, he can kill and eat it. What we also found is that, although we never introduced our birds to Guinea fowl, they would fly them at any opportunity and over any distance, taking them down with relative ease. Although a full-grown Guinea is almost three times the weight of a musket Spar, these birds were latching onto finding the head. The other great thing about flying your hawk at grass birds is that your bird eats his whole kill and it takes quite a few to full a crop.

We had a few young members coming through the system and starting to fly their own birds. Most flew African Goshawks, hunting starlings and grass birds. The one youngster is trying to hunt Guinea fowl with a female Jackal buzzard, and is getting it right, too.

I had the privilege of flying an African Hawk Eagle, male, for almost a year. This is the first Hawk Eagle I have flown and I was incredibly excited. This excitement slowly turned to dismay as I started to realize this bird was way more eagle than hawk. Being a Black Sparrowhawk man I enjoy flying a bird at bolt and watching it fly its prey down with incredible speed. This eagle would fly tree to tree, following me or the covey of Guineas, waiting for the perfect opportunity and then most of the time messing it up. I can now see why most Hawk Eagles are flown at night, as during the day they are slow and lazy.

Our annual meet was held in Ceres which, as always, was a great success. One of our members found a new area which absolutely heaved with Cape Spurfowl. We also found lots of Greywing and quite a bit of Yellowbilled Duck for the duck hawkers. Although the cover was high, the weather rainy and it was very, very cold fun was held by all. We even had two Martial Eagles going and enjoyed watching them take down some hares.

Our committee stayed the same for 2009 and hopefully we will be able to secure a stay at our new found Ceres area. The aim for 2009 is to improve the standard of falconry and establish ethical and traditional hunting methods.

Good hawking!

Hank Chalmers

**Eastern Cape Falconry Club.**

Chairman: Alan Harvey

Members: Arnold Slabbert

Russel Moore

Jonathan Arnott

The past season saw fewer members but the guys that were active had good sport. Our relationship with Nature Conservation remains good. The only problem was the listing of the Peregrine as Tops species which necessitated a different permits system and an unnecessary payment of monies (a tidy sum!) for the privilege of breeding a rare species which we have funded out of our own pockets for the past 15 years!

Arnold flew his intermewed female Peregrine to good effect around Port Elizabeth taking a good bag of redwing. He continued doing rehab work through his Wildlife centre.

Jono Arnott joined the club recently and has trapped a passage female Lanner. He is hoping to fly her at partridge in the Kenton area.

Russel Moore has joined the club and has yet to take a bird.

I flew my 6 times intermewed passage female Peregrine mainly on duck ending the season on 68 assorted species. She is an absolute master at the game with her sometimes killing two duck with head shots in a flight. Her tolerance of me is getting less every year and methinks the time to part company is looming!

I also flew one of my hacked female Peregrines from the 2007 breeding. She was very aggressive and killed 42 duck and a few partridge. I released her at the end of the season as she was not the most consistent or highest flyer.

My breeding project produced two tiercels and one falcon that were hacked. The two tiercels went to falconers in the Free State and Gauteng. I received two Peregrines from a new nest on some towers in PE. They had ended up in the streets as a lot of urban Peregrine fledglings do. They were placed with my babies in the hack box and subsequently successfully hacked back.

Birds held in the Eastern Cape

Peregrines 7

Af Gos 1

Lanners 1

Birds taken from the wild take quota 1 (Lanner)

Alan Harvey

### Free State Falconry Club

The season of 2008 certainly was a highlight in our falconry careers. To host the IAF meeting in the Free State was a privilege and great experience. Thanks to all the falconers of all the other provinces, their hawks and our excellent hunting grounds we presented the international delegates with great falconry. As the FSFC we would like to thank everybody involved, for the opportunity of hosting this event.

For the 2009 season we have an assortment of hawks that is being flown, for longwings, kestrel to hybrid, for shortwings from a gabar to a harris. We have quite a few new and upcoming members in our club that expands our horizons of falconry in the Free State.

A number of rehab birds have been handed to club members, some of which is being used for hunting for the season and others has been successfully rehabilitated and released. A particular Lanner tiercel with a wing injury that was flown by Kobus Bezuidenhout made a number of kills before being released back into the skies. As a club we are currently involved with the putting up of nest boxes for falcons and hope to draw in peregrines or lanners.

We are in good standing with the authorities of Nature Conservation and hope to further this relationship by sharing our wealth of knowledge on the raptors we fly and contribute to the conservation of raptors and nature in general. As a club we were represented at the founder meeting of the Free State Biodiversity Forum and had a meaningful contribution to the discussion.

As falconers in the Free State we are very privileged to fly our hawks. We have to protect this privilege by our responsible conduct as falconers whether we are new or old members and always maintain a high standard in this magnificent ancient sport.

Happy Hunting.  
Anton Muller.

Anton Muller with the two Passage lanners that he flew to great effect

*Photo: Yukio Asaoka*



### **Gauteng – Transvaal Falconry Club**

I would just like to point out that next year (2010) the TFC will have been going for 25 years. It was established at Joe de Beer's home with just 5 falconers present. Needless to say the critics predicted it would not even last to the end of the year, given the history of the old Transvaal Falconry Association and the events leading to the banning of falconry in the then Transvaal. A special TFC meet will have to be arranged to celebrate this occasion next year.

#### Hawking

Very few eyasses were started this year in Gauteng. Most falconers opting to take passage or fly their intermewed birds.

Grant Neale started a new eyass peregrine from Tim Wagner. The bird started off well but soon took to raking off on every occasion leading to a very frustrated falconer. Grant is now flying his intermewed eyass peregrine female.

Tim Wagner started a new female hybrid gyr/pere but it was soon apparent he did not have suitable quarry for such a powerful bird. The bird was passed on to Alan Harvey who is in a much better position to do the bird justice. Tim is currently flying his intermewed female peregrine falcons. The experienced birds along with experienced dogs can make falconry look simple on occasion and he is having an enjoyable season. He has also started a new dog courtesy of Alan Harvey.

Graham Anderson started a new female Black Spar and it sounds like he is having the season of his life taking multiple head almost every day. Graham has good access to game in the area he lives for shortwings. Swainsons, Crested francolin and swempie abound in the light bushveld surrounding his house.

Alex Glyphis also started a captive bred imprint female Black Spar. When last seen it was well mannered and in very good feather. Alex has taken a good number of head with the bird. Alex has now kite trained the bird and from all accounts the improvement in stamina and speed is noticeable.

There was a big interest in passage lanners this season with six falconers applying for trapping permits. Four birds were taken up – Lizette Beukes, Brian Anderson, Johan van der Merwe and Paul Strydom. Paul has passed his bird onto Andre Glyphis. Great things are expected from these falconers and hopefully they will be in attendance at the SAFA meet to strut their stuff.

Mark Labuschagne is flying his intermewed Gyr/shaheen and peregrine. His hybrid is not particularly interested in ducks and Mark has reverted to good old partridge hawking. Dirk Verwoerd has just taken up his Gyr/saker hybrid as well as flying an African Hawk Eagle.



Ronnie Watt is flying his intermewed peregrine female while Leon Havemann is flying a female peregrine inherited when Charles Jones left the province due to work commitments. Leon has been doing lots of kite work to get the bird steady and improve pitch.

African Goshwks are being flown by Jennifer Prytz, Colin Williams, Pieter Rabie, Stuart Hancock, Bertus Beukes, Johan Smith and Danie van der Merscht.

#### Breeding

As the demand for captive bred birds was very low peregrines were produced to order this passed season. Tim Wagner produced 5 peregrines that went to George Mc Alister, Mark Holder, Mark Brett, Grant Neale and Alan Harvey. No Black spars were hatched from 7 eggs although one female was hatched and imprinted from a clutch produced by Mike Thompson. Exciting progress was made with Artificial Insemination and some birds were produced with this technique.

Leon Havemann again produced some African Goshawks that went to falconers in Gauteng and the Free State.

#### Tim Wagner

Some great dog-work.

*Photo: Yukio Asaoka*



#### Limpopo Falconers' Club

In Limpopo life is still the same with very little happening unless you make things happen. The falconers live so far apart that events like social gatherings run into several logistical problems/challenges. Every falconer tends to practice his sport and enjoy it either on his own or during weekend outings.

Among Steven van Rensburg, George McAllister and myself, we managed to organize a

Field meet in Mpumalanga on Paul Malone's farm during May 2008 for the LFC and Mpumalanga falconers.

It was a great experience to see how the falconers had interaction on every falconry topic you can think of. At one stage, the guys were on the large stoep cutting jesses "and all", out of a large well tanned buckskin. Wow my man.....and all the advice! Flip Blignaut, thanks for the skin and George, with his gadget macro box of goodies. Paul's farm provided enough game for everyone. Most of the hawks were just out of the molt and not fit enough to really perform their best. Thank you falconers in Mpumalanga for a great field meet. You guys were excellent hosts for a lovely field meet.

George, Steven and their brave men joined LFC again for a field meet on De Wets farm in Limpopo during July. Limpopo did not offer the luxuries we experienced in Mpumalanga. This was more camping in the bush style without all the normal city trimmings, but falconry and hunting like almost desert conditions at its best. It reminded me of the pleasant hunting conditions I experienced with my great falconer friend, the late Ron Hartley. There were enough game for the falconers and a fair bag was taken. Thanks Dawid and the LFC men who organized the meet. I however could not make the meet due to ill health and hospitalization.

The Louis Trichardt falconers mostly concentrate on short wings because the hawks are available and obviously the habitat and environment lends it self to their hunting style. At present they mainly operate with Black Sparrow hawks and African Goshawks. Down the lowveld area, Flip Blignaut and sons are also flying shortwings. Flip however was brave enough to rear an African Hawk Eagle and train it for hunting. I think Flip and the AHE are still trying to decide what communication style is best for both. However, Flip successfully bred two Harishawk females this year and he and his sons are flying them. Dave Holliday is also training and flying an AHE and African Goshawk. Dawid Botes is flying an AHE male with great success at various quarries. Barend Botes had a good season flying a Lanner regularly at doves. My Peregrine falcon had her worst season with only a few head of quarry due to me not being able to hunt her properly. Due to late rains, most of the game birds bred later than usual. The ground cover on most of the hunting farms are excellent for the 2009 hunting season. It is amazing but my Lanner falcon and Barends Lanner falcon started to molt again in March. Dr Lourens decided to immigrate back to Limpopo from the North West, welcome back Lourens. Tokka who hunted successfully with an Afr Gos also experienced Zimbabwean bush and hunting. More reports when available. Enjoy your falconry this year.  
Paul Venter.

### **Mpumalanga Falconry Club**

Wow, another year-end club report! 2008 has come and gone and 2009 has arrived at a rapid pace. Although the MFC remains a small club, 6 active members, all are optimistic with regards to the 2009 season. Some of the more senior members of the MFC have been involved with the MTPA in nest counts of various B.O.P in our area. These include,

Crowned Eagle (24 nests, 10 active) Peregrine Falcon (10 nesting sites, 10 active) and 8 Black Spar sites (5active)

Our C grade and mini-field meet were combined and held on Paul Fallone's farm in May 2008. An invitation to attend our meet was extended to the LFC, which was accepted and 8 of their members enjoyed an exciting week of falconry. The invitation was reciprocated in August 2008 and a few of our members spent an exciting weekend in Pietersburg hunting bunnies and francs.

#### Breeding

George McAllister's 2 pairs of peregrines laid a combined total of 8 eggs of which only 2 hatched. These unfortunately died 72 hrs later. George remains optimistic and expects a better result in 2009.

#### Birds flown by falconers 2008/2009

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| George McAllister  | (2x African Peregrines, captive bred and Cilla, 27 year old AHE)                               |
| Mark Holder        | (1 <sup>st</sup> year imprint Black Spar)  |
| Mark Bett          | (1 <sup>st</sup> year captive bred African Peregrine)  |
| Charles Saddler    | (1 <sup>st</sup> year African Goshawk)   |
| Paul Fallone       | (2 <sup>nd</sup> year African Goshawk)   |
| Steve Van Rensburg | (2 <sup>nd</sup> year passage Black Spar/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> year captive bred African peregrine) |

#### Committees 2009

|                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| George McAllister           | (C)                   |
| Marelise Van Der Westhuizen | (S)                   |
| Mark Holder                 | (grading, discipline) |
| Mark Bett                   | (grading, discipline) |
| Steve Van Rensburg          | (grading, discipline) |
| Paul Fallone                | (add. Member)         |



Mpumalanga and Limpopo Clubs get together.

### Natal Falconry Club

With membership sitting at 25 and 12 of these with hawks, falconry is still alive and well in Natal. The club is driven by a strong active committee that has been kept busy with the KZN Wildlife animal Ex-Situ policy that could put some serious curtailment on falconry and related activities if implemented. Our thanks must be extended to both Tim Wagner and Adrian Lombard from SAFA for all the help and assistance on the aforementioned.

The SAFA /IAF attendance from the NFC was at an all time high in 2008. Members enjoyed great falconry with various hawks and falcons. They also somehow managed to take home most of the prizes. We will be back for more this year.

At present we have Greg McBey flying his trusty old passage amongst others, Tom Davidson flying a passage peregrine at duck, Daryl Twiddy still flying his old Hawk Eagle along with a peregrine, Kyle Solmes' imprint Lanner has taken her first Yellow bill amongst a couple of other water fowl, Mark Wynn sadly lost his trusty, old, well-mannered Spar after being chased by a local Spar, he's now got chickens in the mews. Ashton Musgrave sadly had his imprint Spar killed on its Guinea fowl by a local man. Uninformed rural people pose a huge threat to Falconry Black Spars in KZN. We have it on good authority that that perpetrator won't be doing that again! He (Ashton) has also been having some fun with a Little Spar. Elton Arnot is flying an imprint Black Spar female at anything from Quail to Crows and a large hare for good measure; a fantastic well-mannered hawk. Rowan Mattig is flying a little musket Black Spar and a one-eyed Male Goss, both doing well. Chris Lourens is flying his new Af goss and frightening his first Indian Mynahs. Charles Woods is warming up a longwing for the season and hopefully one of a few we hope will grade this season. John Korston bred his first Peregrines this year - well done! Danny Veness has his first hawk-a Kestrel from Ben Hoffman. I am flying my second year hack tiercel from Harvey, imprint Black spar female and 5 year old female Af goss that keeps everyone with food for the off season.

The NFC is backed up by some non-flying members who assist with all sorts of things such as mentoring, trapping or just carrying the beer. Big thanks to them all: Kevin, Andy Alan, Wayne, Ben and big thanks to Ian for his work on "the policy" and lastly a big thanks to the wives and girlfriends for putting up with it all.

On a sad note we lost Paul Lamoral recently and our thoughts are with his family. We will miss you, you bugger.

A number of our members have been assisted in various ways by other provinces and their members, a big thanks to all.

Best regards and happy hawking

Bruce Padbury

### **North-West Hawking Club**

The North West Hawking Club (NWHC) has had a productive year with a few developments and changes in various aspects of the club but we continue to enjoy the age old art of falconry. Our membership comprises of 4 active members and 2 apprentices. Mr. Rodger Neilson was voted the first honorary member of the North West Hawking Club as a result of his efforts and contribution to the club since its inception. He acted as chairman for the first two seasons and was instrumental in the formation of the club and for this we are grateful. Unfortunately he has had to leave these African sands for the highlands of Scotland and we wish him well, last correspondence revealed he was looking into acquiring a goshawk from a reputable breeder.

The NWHC has a current membership of 4 active falconers and 2 apprentices and our honorary member. The committee Dylan Freeman (Chairman); Ronnie Gorrie (Secretary/Treasurer); Oscar Olen (Committee member) The other club members include Dr Laurence Coetzee and two apprentices. Unfortunately Dr Coetzee had to return to Limpopo where he will continue to practice falconry under the LFC but wishes to maintain his membership with us.

I will continue to fly my once intermewed imprint eyes African Hawk Eagle female at feather as well as fur and hope to enjoy many more fantastic afternoons out with her with a beer or two to finish the day off after a good days hawking. She has a liking for gamebirds and in recent months has been giving the local guineas and gamebirds a hard time. With some effort I have been finding the odd hare or mongoose which she mowed down in fine style.

Ronnie Gorrie will also continue to fly his Adult female African Goshawk at mynas and plovers and has enjoyed his time with her. Jade is a good bird to show the apprentices how things work and she is rock solid. Ronnie hopes to add to his mews in the coming season by including a Pale Chanting Goshawk into his hawking party and it will be interesting to see what he can do with this species.

We will be approaching the Northwest Nature Conservation (NWNC) Officials for our annual quota for a wild take and hope to be successful in our applications. We have a good working relationship with the local conservation bodies and are regularly contacted for assistance in raptor related activities and incidents. The NWNC officials are very helpful and we hope to continue this fruitful relationship with the department.

We have had a number of hawks brought in for rehabilitation from various sources including the NWNC officers. All rehab birds were if possible were released in suitable habitat. The birds received by the NWHC for rehabilitation are as follows : Barn Owls, Spotted Eagle Owl, Yellow billed Kite, Amur Falcon, Black Shouldered Kite, Brown Snake Eagle, Long Crested Eagle to name a few. We were also bale to maintain our nest site monitoring and in the last breeding season had the following nests monitored by our membership: 2 African Hawk Eagle, 1 Walberg's Eagle, 2 Fish Eagle, 2 Black Sparrowhawk, 1 African Goshawk and 1 Gabar goshawk. These nests will again be monitored in the coming season.

Our Club is still very small but is growing in strength and we are on our way to be seen as the authority on Birds of Prey by many in our province. We all have a passion for the age old art of falconry and will continue flying our hawks into the future.

May your hawks fly high inspired by the spirit of *Horus*!  
Good hawking

Dylan Freeman

### **Penryn College Falconry Club.**

2008 was a relatively quiet year with regards to falconry at Penryn College. Gideon Stemmet (Chairman of the club) and Steven Van Rensburg were the only active falconers for most of the year. Gideon flew a musket African Goshawk (passed onto Gorge McAllister for breeding) with good results and a wide range of quarry was taken with this bird. Quarry taken ranged from long-claw, cisticola, mouse birds and quail. Steven Van Rensburg flew a 5 year old female African peregrine (Yzma) with moderate success (was hacked at the end of the season) and a 1<sup>st</sup> year passage musket Black Spar. The spar was passed on to Steven by Zayin Vermaak, from the Cape Falconry Club. He (spar) arrived in July with 100 kills to his name and ended the season with 250. Quarry taken included Arrow Marked Babblers, mouse birds, quail, fiscal shrike, thick knees, coucals and francolin (Shelly, Coqui and Swainsons)

After writing their D grade exam, 15 new candidates entered the falconry programme in 2008. Only 5 of these candidates successfully wrote and passed their C grade exam, which now allows them to take up a C grade bird for falconry in 2009. Two of the new falconers, Justin Hood and Nathan Cook will be taking up Jackal Buzzards which have been kindly donated to our club by Hank Chalmers (Eagle Encounters)

Our breeding goshawks laid 3 eggs of which only 2 hatched. The chicks were unfortunately killed by their parents. The pair has since been passed on to George McAllister. Our peregrine pair was also returned to Paul Venter, Limpopo Province.

Besides flying birds and writing falconry exams, the Penryn falconers have also been quite busy in the field and have recorded a number of nesting sites with regards to birds of prey. These include 4 active peregrine sites, 3 active Black Spar sites, 2 Little Sparrowhawk and 2 African Goshawk sites.

As mentioned earlier, we (Steven Van Rensburg) successfully flew and released 2 peregrines back into the wild. The peregrines were sent to us by Hank Chalmers (Eagle Encounters), flown for a couple of seasons, ringed and then released back into the wild. It's always a pleasure giving something back to Mother Nature.

Steven Van Rensburg.

### **Hawk Eagle Interest Group.**

As a result of the recent interest into the hawk-eagles and in particular the African Hawk-Eagle it was discussed and decided that a group of like minded Hawk-eagle falconers should get together and form a group specific to the hawk-eagle species. These discussions came about from conversations at the SAFA/IAF Meet in 2008 between the many hawk-eaglers that attended the meet. This meeting had a total of 6 hawk eagles and their falconers at the meet and this is the most found in one place on record. Dr Dirk Verwoerd, Dawid Botes, George McAllister, Dylan Freeman, Steve Lodge, Laurence Coetzee and Hank Chalmers were the initial members but in the past year it has grown internationally. We are amazed to see how many of these birds are being used for falconry around the world from Africa to Europe to the USA and all accounts are a testament to the ultimate performance of the hawk-eagle.

At this point we have a group membership emailing list that facilitates sharing of information as well as a way of comparing styles and asking advice on all aspects of the use of hawk-eagles under falconry conditions. The ultimate goal of the hawk-eagle group is to produce a publication that is dedicated to all aspects of this species and by drawing on experiences and knowledge of all the falconers working with these hawks we are able to have a broader understanding of the workings of these amazing eagles. This publication would include breeding (natural and AI) imprinting do's and don'ts as well as training tips and advice. It will also include some research and conservation information and will be compiled by a number of authors that have experience with the hawk-eagle species and are our long-term goal. By the time this issue of Mews Views is published the Hawk-eagle group would have published 3 newsletters that have numerous articles regarding experiences with hawk-eagles written by some of the members together with old publications that have been included. These newsletters get sent out to over 60 falconers. We have also been asked by a Spanish falconer if some of the articles could be published in their local falconry club magazine. As well as the newsletter we have started an internet group on YAHOO! That acts as a database for all newsletters, pictures and information the link is <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawkeagle> as a result of our efforts we have been included in an international group of eagle enthusiasts and have been included in the INTERNATIONAL EAGLE AUSTRINGERS ASSOCIATION. Our newsletters have been included on their groups ste.

The African Hawk Eagle together with the other hawk-eagle species has drawn the attention of many of falconers, even if not flying them, and we hope to create a positive environment for these hawks so that they can reach their full potential. The Hawk Eagle group is dedicated to the conservation and understanding of these birds so they can be the ultimate eagle under falconry circumstances. Our group is open to anyone who wishes to join and take part in our discussions and publications. Please email [dylfreeman1@yahoo.com](mailto:dylfreeman1@yahoo.com) for assistance.

Good hawking

Dylan Freeman

## **SAFA Report to the Bird of Prey Working Group - 2009.**

### **Conservation through Sustainable Use – A Role for Falconry.**

**Adrian Lombard.**

#### **Introduction:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for this opportunity to address this forum. I wish to examine sustainable use as a conservation tool and see how this can be applied through falconry. I shall present a classification of conservation related activities in which falconers are involved. I shall cite some examples of our conservation efforts as well as including a few from around the world to make this more interesting.

#### **Sustainable Use as a Conservation Tool.**

The historical approach to conservation has been one of “*protect and reserve*”. This has been successful in changing attitudes to wildlife but has been less successful in preventing dramatic declines in wildlife populations. (1) While some 8.8% of the world’s terrestrial surface is in reserves, and a target of 10% may be politically practical, it is calculated that the retention of Biodiversity requires the application of conservation measures to some 50% of land surface.(2) This understanding has introduced a second approach of “*incentive driven conservation*”. This is an approach that has been pioneered in Southern Africa (3) (4) and is supported by the Convention on Biological Diversity.(5) This Convention has made the sustainable use of components of biological diversity one of its 3 main objectives in Article 1, defined it in Article 2 and considered it in a further 11 of 19 substantive articles. The concept has been developed in subsequent IUCN Conferences and was, most recently, further developed in Resolution 4.026 at its 2008 conference in Barcelona. The International Association for Falconry (IAF), as a full member of the IUCN subscribes to the Convention on Biological Diversity. We also contend that Falconers, despite their small numbers, have a disproportionate value in the conservation effort.

#### **How does Sustainable Use through Falconry influence Conservation?**

Sustainable use is not limited to the access of Falconers to a harvest of wild raptors, although we believe this to be an essential and invaluable factor in the encouragement of Conservation through Falconry; but also relates to their access to wild quarry and to the natural environment. The influences on conservation can be categorized:

- a) **Conservation through Sustainable use:** The concept which is envisaged in the Convention on Biological Diversity is that sustainable use adds value to the resources used and this extends a measure of conservation to area and biological diversity beyond the boundaries of formally conserved areas. Getting Falconers out in the Field, practicing their art sustainably, is fulfilling the concept of this Convention. In this Falconers may be similar to other diverse “Sustainable use” groups such as other hunters, fresh-water anglers and birdwatchers
- b) **Involvement in specific conservation activities:** It is clear that the contribution of Falconers is disproportionate to their numbers, however, and this is through involvement in additional specific conservation activities.



One can then further categorize the types of conservation activity in which falconers participate:

- a) **Scientific Studies of wild raptor populations.**
- b) **Population surveys of wild raptors – counts, surveys, nest records, bird ringing.**
- c) **Sentinel function.**
- d) **Captive breeding – with or without release programs.**
- e) **Wild Raptor Management Programs**
- f) **Veterinary aspects of Raptors and Rehabilitation.**
- g) **Involvement in Legislative and Conservation Policy processes.**
- h) **Involvement in land and prey-species management**
- i) **Education and outreach – influence on the public, other resource users and land managers.**

#### South African Context.

In order to put this issue into perspective I shall provide you with a table detailing the numbers of active falconers in South Africa and listing the numbers of raptors harvested in 2008:

| <b>PROVINCE</b><br>▶              | East.<br>Cape | Free<br>State      | Gauteng              | Limpopo | Mpumalanga | Natal | North.<br>Cape | North<br>West | West Cape |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------|------------|-------|----------------|---------------|-----------|
| No. of active<br>Falconers<br>107 | 4             | 12                 | 24                   | 10      | 6          | 12    | 1              | 4             | 34        |
| <b>SPECIES,<br/>No▶</b>           |               |                    |                      |         |            |       |                |               |           |
| Peregrine 1                       |               |                    |                      |         |            | 1     |                |               |           |
| Lanner 4                          | 1             | 1                  |                      |         |            |       |                |               | 2         |
| Black Spar.<br>5                  |               |                    |                      |         | 1          | 1     |                |               | 3         |
| African Gos<br>7                  |               |                    |                      |         |            | 2     |                |               | 5         |
| African<br>Hawk Eagle<br>1        |               |                    |                      |         |            |       |                |               | 1         |
| Jackal<br>Buzzard 0               |               |                    |                      |         |            |       |                |               |           |
| Greater<br>Kestrel 5              |               |                    | 5                    |         |            |       |                |               |           |
| Common<br>Kestrel 0               |               |                    |                      |         |            |       |                |               |           |
| Other 2                           |               | 1<br>Gabar<br>Gos. | 1<br>Ovambo<br>Spar. |         |            |       |                |               |           |

This table demonstrates the very small number of active falconers who are dispersed over a very large area. It also demonstrates the very small number of wild raptors that are harvested. It could certainly be argued that more falconers and a larger harvest would, in fact, be better for Conservation.

### **Examples of Conservation Involvement:**

Time constraints preclude me from examining the activities involved in each category. I will limit this discussion to highlighting a few examples or issues:

**Sentinel function:** This is an area where Falconers are most able to contribute and are probably under-utilized. Changes in Raptor and quarry populations and behavior may be noted by them and it is important that they are able to present these observations. Involvement in the Regional Raptor Conservation Fora is one such opportunity. In the recently published First Newsletter of the African Raptor Network, it is proposed that two species of interest to falconers be listed as "Near-Threatened" in a regional context. These are the Lanner falcon and the Ovambo Sparrowhawk. The local falconry community is generally well informed and observant of these species and formal involvement of Falconers in the monitoring of these species could be valuable.

**International example: United Kingdom** - British Falconers were permitted a limited harvest of wild Peregrines until the decline in Peregrine populations due to pesticides in the late 1950s. Good evidence shows that it was the Falconers who first noted the deterioration in breeding success in this species and voluntarily declined their harvest. (6) (7) On recovery of the British Peregrine Population to levels that exceed those ever previous, the Falconers are still denied a harvest. This signifies the end of an era of sustainable use of British peregrines that had lasted for some 1500 years

**Captive breeding programs:** South African falconers have been involved in the breeding of raptors, predominantly peregrines, for many years. Experience has been gained in the breeding of at least 10 different indigenous species. Surplus birds have been released to the wild.

Since the meeting on the Breeding of Taita Falcons held at Thaba 'Nchu during the SAFA International Falconry Meeting in July 2008, we have undertaken a co-operative venture with the Zimbabwean falconers to gain further experience in the captive breeding of Taita falcons.

While release programs are not necessary in South Africa at this stage, there are a number of interesting international projects of this nature in which falconers are active:

**Czech Republic:** The Czech Falconry Club is involved in a project which aims to re-introduce Tree Nesting Peregrines. The project involves cross-fostering Peregrine Chicks in Goshawk nests with the aim of imprinting the young peregrines on these nest structures and using this as a method of release. Initial rearing of the chicks is performed by the natural parents to ensure sexual imprinting on their own species. So far rearing has been successful with no aggression from the Goshawks towards the peregrines even after the chicks have left the nest. Initial studies suggest that this method of release is superior to either traditional hacking or falconry training followed by hacking. (8)

**Germany:** A joint project was undertaken by the DFO (German Falconry Association) and the German Peregrine Protection Society to re-establish Tree-nesting Peregrines in Germany. This involved the hacking of captive bred peregrines as well as young birds that had fallen out of nests on cliffs and buildings, from suitable structures in trees to develop nest site imprinting. In 2007, 30 young were produced from 18 established pairs in tree nests. (9)

**Management of Wild Raptor populations:** This area is probably controversial and has not been a recognized feature of Raptor Conservation in South Africa. It is an area where some thought can be given. Falconers have noted that there is common for African Hawk Eagle nests, outside of conserved areas, to be destroyed or robbed. (10) This may be an area where we could learn from local and international experience and look to some means of rewarding communities or landowners for the successful fledging of the chick. Falconers would be interested in involvement in this with the incentive of harvesting the second chick.

**Mongolia:** We are aware that there is serious concern regarding the conservation status of the Saker Falcon. Mongolia is the largest exporter of wild Sakers. There is currently a breeding population of some 1000 – 1200 breeding pairs, 68% of which nest on artificial structures. There is a large floating population and breeding numbers are limited by nest sites. Threats to the population include electrocution, rodent extirpation and poisoning, predation by Eagle Owls and trapping. (11) There is a project currently underway encouraging sustainable use and providing artificial nest sites. (12) Local communities will receive a financial incentive based on nest site productivity which will establish harvest quotas. Currently there are some 250 occupied nest boxes from this project. The aim is to provide some 3500 nest boxes. It is hoped that there will be an additional 1500 young birds from which to determine the harvest quota. (13)

**Involvement in Legislative and Conservation Policy Processes:** There has been a plethora of new legislation dealing with Hunting and management of Bio-diversity. SAFA has put considerable effort into this process and have taken a positive and pro-active approach to this. We have recently provided input on proposed legislation dealing with Management of Damage-Causing Animals and also National Norms and Standards for the Regulation of the Hunting Industry. We have produced an extensive Code of Conduct for Falconry as a requirement of the Dept. of Agriculture.

A meeting held at the SAFA International Falconry Meeting in July 2008, resulted in the development of a Falconry Communicating Group which is composed of informed representatives of each Provincial Conservation Authority, representatives of each provincial Falconry Club as well as a representative of DEAT who can work together on legislative issues and the standardization of Falconry Policy.

**Involvement in land and prey species management:** There is very limited involvement by anyone in this area in South Africa with respect to Gamebirds. Falconers have assisted with the determination of hunting seasons through monitoring of the breeding status of prey species (14). This is a potentially valuable role and needs further encouragement.

**Britain and Europe:** Falconers are prepared to rent grouse moors that are uneconomic for shooting, thus extending preserved natural habitat. In a National Park in the north of England, falconers have been given rights to fly Falcons in exchange for managing the habitat for grouse (15). The hunting by Falconers on land which is marginal or unsuitable for shooting is a common phenomenon in Europe. (16)

**Education and outreach:** I remain convinced that this is the main area where falconers can have an impact on conservation. Through a variety of contacts we are able to have a significant impact on the knowledge and attitudes of the general public. Similarly we are in daily contact with hunters of other disciplines, farmers and other land users and land holders. At the end of the day, we can only conserve the bio-diversity of South Africa through education and attitudinal changes in the broad population of our nation.

**Conclusion:**

Falconry is demonstrably a minimally consumptive sustainable use activity and the practitioners of this art are passionate and committed to conservation of Bio-diversity and the environment. This involvement is disproportionate to the numbers of Falconers and is enhanced by acceptance of their activities and access to hawks, quarry and the natural environment. There is certainly room for increasing the understanding and knowledge of conservation issues amongst falconers as well as their involvement in these activities but it must also be recognized that there are very few falconers and that they are widely dispersed. Within the limits of Sustainable use, a larger number of Falconers and a larger wild harvest would make the conservation influence of Falconers in South Africa a greater beneficial influence. Discussions of sustainable use amongst Conservationists are often polarized but the *IUCN Policy statement* gives clear guidance in this regard (17)

- **The use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them;**
- **While using wild living resources, people should seek to minimize losses of biological diversity;**
- **Enhancing the sustainability of uses of wild living resources involves an ongoing process of improved management of those resources;**
- **Such management should be adaptive, incorporating monitoring and the ability to modify management to take account of risk and uncertainty.**

May, 2009.

**References:**

1. Pain, D.J. & M. W. Pienowski (Eds) (1997). Farming and Birds in Europe. Academic Press, London, UK.
2. Soule, M.E. & M.A. Sanjayan (1998). Conservation Targets: do they help? *Science*, 279, 2060-2061.
3. Child, G. (1995). Wildlife and People: the Zimbabwean success. Wisdom, Harare and New York.
4. Bigalke, R.C. (2000). Functional relationships between protected and agricultural areas in South Africa and Namibia. pp 169-201 in Prins et al (2000)
5. Kenward R.E. (2004) 329-339 in Chancellor, R.D. & B.-U. Meyburg (Eds) *Raptors Worldwide*. World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls, Berlin
6. Treleaven, R.B. (1958) The Non-Breeding of Peregrines in the West of England. *The Falconer* Vol.3 No.5 158-159
7. Mavrogordato, J.G. (1961) Editorial. *The Falconer* Vol5, No1. P5-6.
8. Zvolnek, P. (2009) Peregrine and Saker Falcon restoration program in the Czech Republic using Falconry techniques. *Journal of International Falconry* Vol.1, in press.
9. Prinz, A. (2008) Personal communication.
10. Neilson R. (2006) *Mews Views*, Vol. 4 26-28.
11. Nyambayer Batbayer (WSCC, Mongolia) Current Knowledge of Saker Populations in Mongolia. Proceedings: Specialist meeting on the Conservation of the Saker Falcon. Abu Dhabi, April 2009. Unpublished.
12. Dixon, A. et al (2008) Development of the artificial nest project in Mongolia. *Falco* 32.8-10.
13. Choikhand Janchivlamdan (MNE, Mongolia) (2009) Sustainable use and artificial nests in Mongolia. Proceedings: Specialist meeting on the Conservation of the Saker Falcon. Abu Dhabi April 2009. Unpublished.
14. Oetlé E. E. Assessing the reproductive status of yellowbilled duck in the Boland, Western Cape. *South African Journal of Wildlife Research* 30 (1) 62. (2000)
15. Kenward, R.E. & Gage J.G.M. Incentive based conservation of gamebirds through falconry.
16. Segrt, V. & Kenward R.E. (2008) A comparison of falconry and hunting with guns with respect to the distribution of local game. *Wildlife Biology* 14.1 125-128.
17. Dixon, A. (2008) Editorial. *Falco* 31.p3.

**SOUTH AFRICAN FALCONRY ASSOCIATION REPORT TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY, 2008**

**Adrian Lombard.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Welcome to South Africa and to The Free State. Your visit is the culmination of a dream for many of us here and I welcome you on behalf of all South African Falconers. I hope that this visit to our land will be everything that each of you have hoped. We are proud to be your hosts and we ask that you let us know if there is anything that we can do to make the visit more interesting and enjoyable.

There are a few brief notices regarding meetings taking place during the course of this Meet which may be of interest to you.

On Thursday at 13.00hrs we will have a Meeting with conservationists involved with Vulture conservation and this Meeting will take place in the Boardroom. I have asked them to give members of the IAF who have an interest in this area, an overview the situation regarding vultures and also the research and conservation measures that are being undertaken. I have anticipated that many of you may not want to attend and we are expecting only a small group but all are welcome.

On Friday at 12.00 hrs (midday), we plan to hold a meeting on the Taita Falcon in the Boardroom. The purpose of this meeting is to examine the captive breeding of this species in the region and plan for future breeding. This is essentially a parochial issue but those of you who are interested and feel that you have a contribution to make may certainly attend.

Following this, at 13.00 hrs we will be holding a meeting with South African Conservation Officials who are attending this Meet. This meeting is dealing with local issues and is not of great interest to the IAF. I must indicate, however, that we are benefiting from your presence in enabling us to set up this meeting where we bring together representatives of Falconers and Conservationists from all the provinces in South Africa in one venue.

Finally, on Friday evening we will hold our Meet Dinner, which will be addressed by Yolán Friedman, who is the C.E.O. of the Endangered Wildlife Trust. She is a very dynamic person and heads an organization which we are pleased to be associated with. I see this as the foremost N.G.O. in South Africa involved in Raptor Conservation. The dinner will be only semi-formal and those who may wish to wear National dress are welcome to do so. On the other hand, I must warn you that most South African Falconers do not own a tie and will probably be fairly casual.

Now, I shall take this opportunity to introduce you to South African Falconry and at the same time to combine this with the report for the Pan African Working Group and for South Africa.

The foremost task of the IAF at present is to develop and promote Falconry as a World Cultural Heritage. Does it, then, make any sense to meet in South Africa? Well, my family always accuses me of starting at the very beginning when asked to explain anything. On this occasion I will do so without apology because South Africa comes at the very start and the end of the story of the World Heritage of Falconry.

#### IN THE BEGINNING:

Not 500Km from where we sit is one of South Africa's World Heritage Sites known as Maropeng or, alternatively, The Cradle of Humankind. It is given this name because some of the earliest pre-human fossils were found here and indeed, more pre-human fossils have been found in this region than anywhere else on Earth. So, it is believed that man has his origins in Africa and very possibly, in South Africa.

The latest evidence, derived from DNA studies, suggest that Modern Man also arose in Africa. Representatives of modern man very probably left Africa, for the first time about 80,000 years ago and the descendents of these people dispersed and colonized the rest of

the World. To those of you for whom this is the first visit to Africa – “Welcome Home!” In the course of these travels, Man developed new practices and customs and so expanded the Human Heritage. One of these practices was Falconry. Falconry, as you all know, probably developed in the plains of central Eurasia and the practice of this Art has now spread to almost every corner of the Earth and has become ingrained in the culture of many different and widely dispersed peoples.

FALCONRY IN AFRICA (Here I apologize for encroaching on the ground of the representatives of other African nations whom we are delighted to have in our midst at this AGM.)

Falconry has been brought to Africa via two separate routes.

1) It has developed in North Africa through the influence of Arabic culture. It may well have been a more widely practiced than it is currently and the Moroccan delegate, Abdehak Chaouni, raised the possibility of ancient Arabic treatises on Falconry in the Libraries in Timbuktu.

2) In Southern Africa there is the possibility that Falconry was introduced in a similar manner, very long ago. In the region of the modern day Zimbabwe, there is evidence of an ancient civilization that built towns and fortresses of un-mortared stone, the largest of which is the Great Zimbabwe, near the town of Masvingo. This culture developed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and flourished until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There is evidence of trade with Arabia, Persia and China. In the Site Museum at the Great Zimbabwe are some metal objects identified as Arab Falconry Bells. Indeed, there is reason to believe that there were at least two Arab Sultans in this region, at that time, who had moved inland probably from Zanzibar and settled, one in the vicinity of Quilimane and Tete in the Zambezi valley, and the other on the Save River.

A number of carved Soapstone Birds were found by excavators within the Great Zimbabwe. The significance of these objects has been lost in the mists of time, although they are used as a symbol of that Nation today. If examined with a Falconer's eye, they may assume a hither-to unexpected significance.

The first “westerners” in this region were Portuguese explorers who arrived in the 1600s, by which time the civilization in Zimbabwe was waning. I have uncovered no evidence that these people practiced any falconry.

Modern Falconry in Southern Africa has arisen far more recently and was brought from Europe by settlers in the time immediately before and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War at the start in the current resurgence of Falconry, worldwide.

In terms of more recent contribution to the Falconry Heritage, there are aspects of South and Southern African Falconry of which we are particularly proud.

i) The concept of Conservation through Sustainable Use has been championed in this region and may well have had its origins here. We believe that Falconry is a shining example of sustainable use conservation in action. Involvement of Falconers in conservation activities is well accepted in this region. It is encouraged and stimulated by our privilege of a sustainable Wild Harvest of falconry raptors

ii) There is a well developed apprenticeship and grading system which ensures the transmission of skills through generations in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, fitting the

concept of Intangible Heritage. I am delighted at the presence of a number of younger falconers at this Meet. They are our future and require nurturing,

iii) A number of raptor species or sub-species, new to falconry, have been introduced from this region. These would include the local Peregrine subspecies, the Black Sparrowhawk and a number of other accipiters including the Gabar Goshawk and the Pale Chanting Goshawk. Other species have seen their use developed by the local falconers. I would site the thermaling of Lanner Falcons and the night-hawking of Hares with African Hawk Eagles. There is certainly room for further development of underutilized species from this region.

#### CURRENT PRACTICE:

There are relatively small numbers of falconers in Zimbabwe and South Africa. I am delighted that we have good representation from Zimbabwe as well as a representative from Namibia where the sport is currently banned. Falconry has been practiced in Botswana and Zambia but there are no Falconers in either country currently. I have heard of a Falconer in Mozambique but have not made contact with him as yet. Over the past year I have been in contact with individuals practicing falconry in Burundi and Kenya. Morocco is represented in the IAF but we have much to do to incorporate the falconers of North Africa into our organization.

I think that there is no need to describe South African Falconry to you as you will have the opportunity to see this for yourselves.

Falconers in Southern Africa have a proud history of involvement in the conservation effort and we enjoy a good relationship with Conservation NGOs and with Conservation Authorities. This is true of South Africa and we are very pleased to welcome various representatives of these groups to this meeting. You will all have the opportunity of meeting with them. Recent legislation changes and pressure from Animal Rights groups has encouraged us to formalize our ties to the hunting community in South Africa. We have been accepted as a member of the Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa and we hope that there will be representatives of hunting organizations at this meeting.

Our current major concern is new legislation entitled: The Threatened and Protected Species (or TOPS) Regulations. This legislation has inadvertently affected our rights to breed and transport Peregrine Falcons which are listed under these regulations. We intend to seek de-listing of the Peregrine.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN LESSONS:

Our philosophy, based on the small number of active falconers has, in the past, been to try to practice our sport covertly, so as to avoid attracting attention in the hope that we would be ignored by legislation. This principle is the norm in nations where there is a poorly developed appreciation for the Heritage of Falconry and where the hunting ethic is not strong in sections of the population. I would site other southern hemisphere nations, notably Australia and New Zealand, where the few falconers that exist pursue this policy. In South Africa, we have changed our philosophy in recent years as it is bound to fail. The current problems that we have with the TOPS regulations are a result of a lack of



appreciation for their effect on Falconry and failure of lobbying on our part. We are forced to engage with those who can influence Falconry and we need to carry our heads high. Falconry is a respectable pursuit and Falconers must assert their right to practice their Art.

July 2008.

### **A Falconry Highlight in a Boring Day**

**Andre Cilliers**

My day just started wrong. I was nearly late for my first class, my bicycle had a flat tyre and my brain had a huge puncture (It's a Thursday, the day after Klein Saturday). I made it through the first two classes, bought a bottle of chocolate milk just to fortify me for the next two. It's a good thing I did that... I get into the public development class where the lecturer shows us a short DVD and then informs us he wants a two page essay on it tomorrow. My heart dives down to China, what about my hunting this afternoon? I haven't been able to fly the spar for 4 days now. After what seems like an eternity the clock strikes one (I have worked out my timetable so that I only have morning classes) and I head home. I put the spar out to weather, and get started on the #\$\$%^\$ essay. At about 4 I really start to get bored, and the essays first draft is finished. I go and weigh the spar.

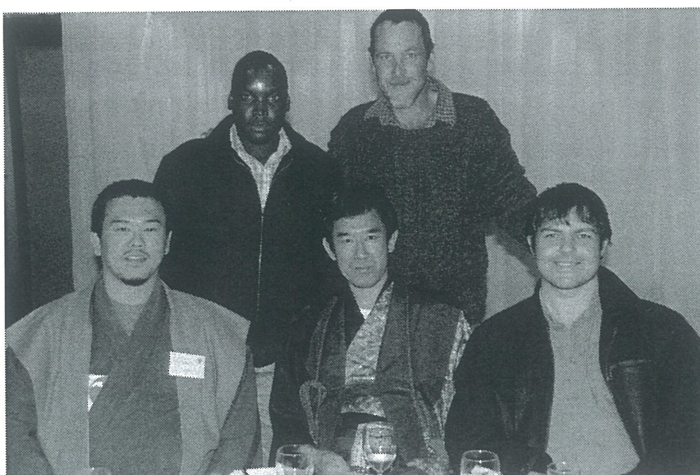
430gr. This is good to go, although I fed him a big crop quite late last night, so he is under-hours. I box him, prepare his food and load the bakkie.

We get to the field, and for once the wind isn't blowing. I debox the boy, wait for him to settle down after doing his bat crossed with a screaming baby routine and beep him up. We hit the field and we hit it hard. With quite a few flights on small birds. Ember is focused for the most part, but his recovery is a bit slow as he does not want too much to do with me (the appetite not that sharp). After 40 minutes I see a cock Greywing bump and fly into the bushes, so I start walking to where he bumped. Hawking cisticolas all the way. I am stalking a LBJ in a bush when all hell breaks loose around me. About 6 greywing hens and one pullet flushes. The spar is off, but inexperience gets the better of him, and he can't decide. He chases a hen, changes his mind and chases the pullet into a bush. I start running towards him to reflush, but he does it himself, and chases the pullet into another bush. Another reflush and my spar is dancing on the pullets back before the pullet dumps yet again. Now my spar has him in a solitary bush, and he flushes, flies the pullet down, and just creams it in mid air. Best of all, he waits for me to come and pick him up before he starts plucking.

I watch the sunset with that contentment glowing inside... until I realise IT'S BACK TO THE BOOKS NOW!!!!

SAFA – IAF Meet 2008  
-a real mixing of cultures  
Brought together through  
Falconry.

*Photo: Frank Bond*



### **An Introduction to Lift & Soaring Principles (for falconers) Part 1**

**John Stuart**

Hank originally suggested I write a short article dealing with some basics of lift and soaring. The topic is quite broad and I'll probably follow up with a part 2 in the next edition of Mews Views.

What motivates this article is the desire to improve the understanding among falconers of what it is that gets their birds high in the sky and keeps them there. The same thermal lift that can take your bird to a great pitch can also spirit her far away from you. As to the reasons why a bird may not return – based on weight – I'm by no means an expert and I'll defer to the conventional wisdom. As to the other reasons, your bird may simply not want to come down in a hurry because it's decidedly cooler up there. Even ER Michel said something along the lines of "she may well take the opportunity to enjoy stretching her wings and take advantage of a free ride to the clouds". If your bird is not highly motivated to hunt and it's also a hot day, getting up to where it's cooler and where she can enjoy a spectacular view of the terrain may be enough motivation.

First some definitions and a principle. Wind is caused primarily through temperature and/or pressure changes. These two factors are related, but on a macroclimate scale wind is solely seen as being determined by atmospheric pressure differences between locations. On a microclimate scale, however, wind direction, speed and stability can be influenced by a variety of factors.

I'm assuming that falconers would be mainly interested in what causes 'lift', or rising air, which is in the end what their birds would make use of to gain pitch and potentially place themselves in a good hunting position. Alternatively, if the falcon is not entirely focused on hunting or on the falconer then the presence of a strong lift source offers it an easy escape route to the heavens. That is also a concern.

There are a variety of sources of lift, but the two primary sources that would be of interest to falconers are:

**Ridge lift:** This is lift that is generated when an air mass moves up against an obstacle such as a ridge, a mountain range, a dam wall, a large building or even a line of trees.. The air must rise to move over the physical obstacle. The type of lift that is created depends on how steep the obstacle is and how strong the wind is. As those two determinants rise, so too does the strength of the lift.

One good way to see how ridge lift is utilized best by birds is to watch sea gulls at an urban coastline, such as Mouille Point in the Cape. You will see them using ridge lift for a 'free ride' on everything from multi-storey buildings to a small sand embankment a few meters high.

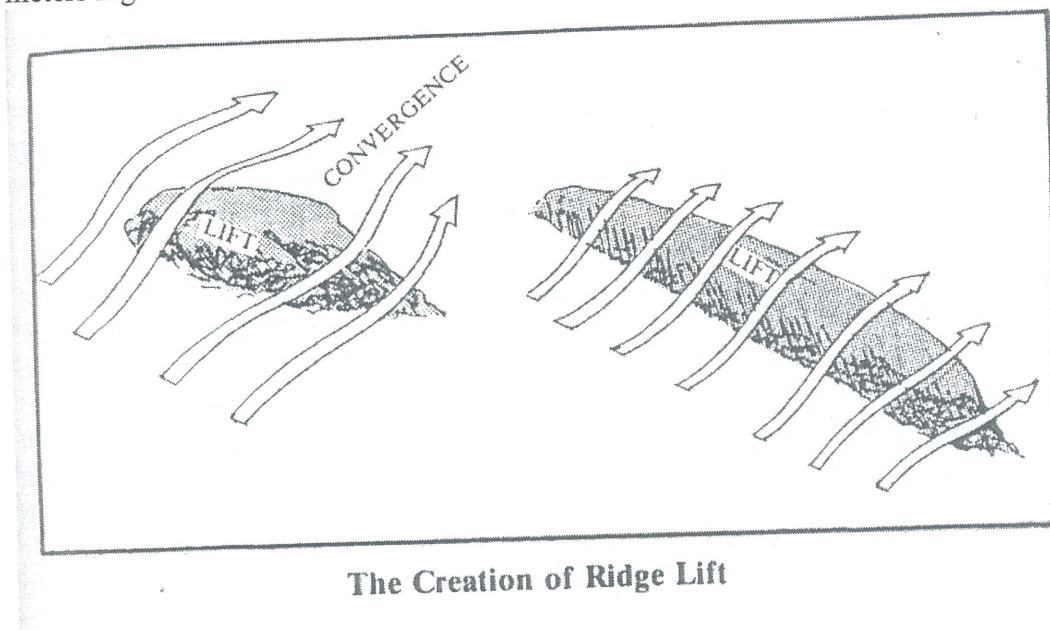


Figure 1: Ridge Lift (Source: Pagen)

To determine the extent of ridge lift around you:

- ❖ Firstly ascertain the strength and direction of wind. Ridge lift only forms when the wind is at least moderate (i.e. greater than about 5km/h) and consistent (i.e. from one direction only). Consistent, moderate to strong wind usually only occurs near the coast.
- ❖ Take note of all obstacles facing the wind, including lines of trees.
- ❖ Assess whether the wind could 'flow' around the obstacle like a stream flows around a rock, if that is the case, lift won't form. The wind has to be pushed over the obstacle.

Things to remember with ridge lift:

- ❖ Just as there is lift in front of and on top of the obstacle, there is also sinking air behind it. Don't expect your bird to want to take a pitch anywhere in the lee of an obstacle downwind.

**Thermal lift:** this type of lift is far more complicated to read. However, it's still possible to give some pointers here on how to make use of it.

A thermal can be defined as a mass of air rising through the body of air, because it is lighter than the air surrounding it. Thermals are created through the heating action of the sun's rays, and form when a particular area becomes more heated than the areas around it. The best thermal generators are those materials that are good conductors of heat, such as rocks, concrete and steel roofing sheets. Darker materials also conduct radiation heat better than light, but this is still conditional on the type of material. Light rock will generate better thermals than dark trees.

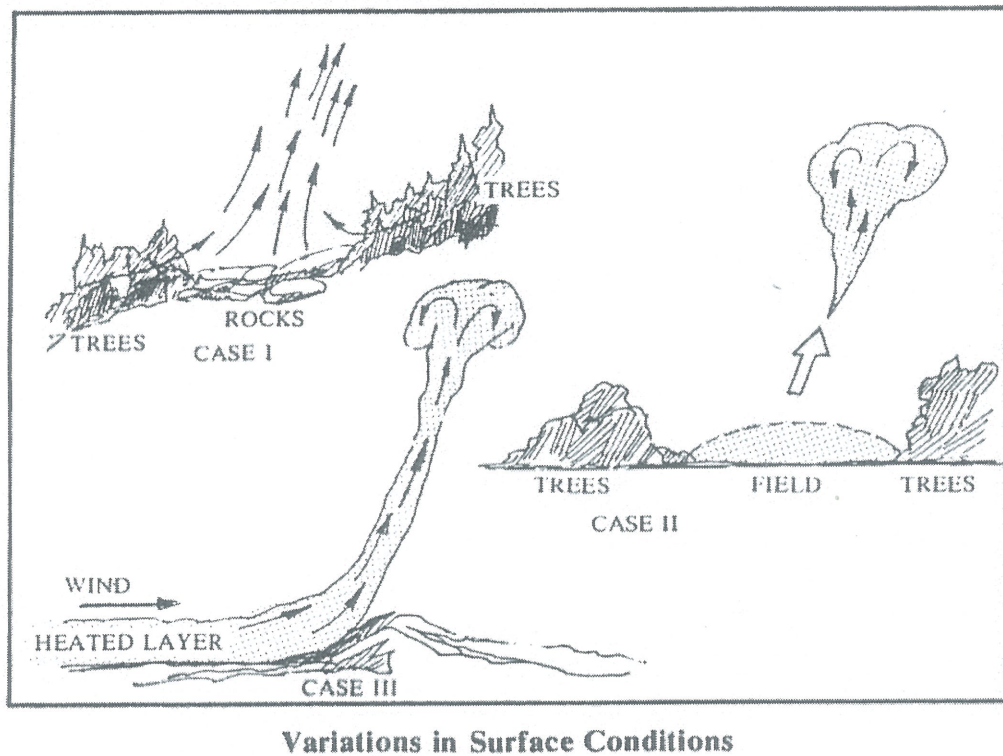


Figure 2: Thermal Lift (Source: Pagen)

Thermals are nothing more than heated bubbles of air until they *trigger*, which is what happens when they are released and start rising. A trigger can be anything from a car passing by, a gust, a person walking or even a falcon stooping. It's a disturbance in the air that is sufficient to release the bubble. From a falconer's perspective, a triggered thermal will feel like a quick acceleration in the wind, often warm. It will be preceded by a relative calmness in the air. Once the thermal has triggered, the falcon can use it to gain pitch rapidly, but in fact soaring birds are excellent at finding thermals and will usually find one and fly into it if one is around.

Conditions indicating thermal presence, we refer to it as 'unstable air':

- ❖ Clear day, with high visibility
- ❖ After about 10h00 and a few hour before sundown
- ❖ Cumulus clouds present, but not a necessary factor. You can get 'blue' thermals (clear thermals with no cloud formation) where the moisture content of the air is low enough
- ❖ Presence of dust devils. This usually indicates strong instability.
- ❖ Variable wind on the ground from calmness to stronger wind. Not necessarily though, because thermals can also exist in wind.
- ❖ More common throughout the year inland, coastal air is often 'stable' and not prone to thermal formation.

The presence of these factors would indicate thermal presence. That said, the lower-wing loaded birds are more likely to use them effectively to soar than higher wing loaded birds such as Peregrines. Eagles, Buzzards, Lanners and Crows will make great use of thermal and ridge lift. Peregrines on the coast will make good use of strong ridge lift, and can be seen at places like Cape Point, riding out the South Easter.

Some conclusions:

- ❖ If you want your hawk to increase its pitch, try to fly it at the time of day and in places where thermals are generated.
- ❖ If your hawk is a 'flight risk', you may want to avoid high lift conditions.
- ❖ In very hot conditions your hawk may just want to soar to cool down, so avoid flying a bird in the heat of the day in summer.
- ❖ A good way to get broadwings to get pitch is to use ridge lift; thermal lift may be too high for them. Broadwings in fact resent being made to 'flap' too much; it's not how they are designed. They will expect to be flown only when & where there is some form of lift to help them.
- ❖ Be aware that other hawks or eagles may be using the same thermal or ridge lift.

**Reference**

Pagen, D (1992) *Understanding The Sky*



Above:  
The IAF Advisory Committee  
with Yves Le Cocq  
Director of FACE.

Right: Frank Bond, President of the  
IAF with the delegates from  
Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

*Photos: Frank Bond.*

**ARABS AND BUSTARDS: SYMBYOSIS OR EXTINCTION?**

**Steven Squires.**

Modern falconry as practiced in the Arab world has received much bad publicity over the last few decades. While some of this is undoubtedly deserved, a great number of other Arab falconers fly their falcons with great skill and enthusiasm, and have little impact on the long term health of bustard or falcon populations.

Those that have tarnished the reputation of Arab falconry are the ultra wealthy elite who have embarked on industrial scale hunting expeditions, far from home in countries with lax or non existent conservation laws. These expeditions undoubtedly place a heavy pressure on the local wildlife and the unsustainable harvesting of slow breeding birds such as bustards takes place. Once the population of quarry is exhausted the hunters

move on to the next place. It is a typical slash and burn utilization of a resource by what are essentially “nomadic” hunters.

There has recently been a fluttering in the dovecot of the guardians of our wildlife (some official and others self appointed). The cause of this discomfort has been the persistent rumors that “the Arabs are coming” and the rumor is that some gentlemen of middle-eastern origin (GMOs) have purchased large tracts of land in the Northern Cape and are now going to exterminate the national bustard populations.

The concomitant riders to this rumor are that falconers are to blame, hybrids and exotic falcons must be banned, and best of all falconry should be banned just in case an Arab slips in disguised as Bin Laden or the Dali Lama. The mounting hysteria is palpable.

Now before we rush to agree with them on all these points except perhaps the last, we should leave rumor and speculation aside and consider five hard facts.

- The first is that very few of these conservationists have ever seen Arab falconry firsthand.
- The second is that very few local falconers and even fewer local conservationists have tried Arab style falconry themselves.
- The third is that most Arab falconry takes place on land that is either state land or tribal land.
- The fourth is that modern Arab falconry is almost entirely vehicle based.
- The fifth is that the most common species hunted, the McQueen’s Bustard, is a migrant bird that is nomadic in its winter quarters and under threat from habitat destruction in its summer breeding grounds in Central Asia.

Now what, one may ask, do the above facts have to do with the coming extermination of our South African bustard populations?

Let us look at the issue from our local perspective and analyze the threats to our resources and wildlife. Let us first elucidate fact number four.

Modern Arab falconry is almost entirely vehicle based. Groups of falconers drive line abreast through open desert using the vehicles to disturb the bustards into flight. Once the bustard is airborne a falcon is cast off at the departing quarry and the vehicles set off in pursuit of falcon and prey. Most of the bustards are taken on or near the ground and a rough and tumble fight is often ended by the falconer interceding on the falcon’s behalf. Think of a giant dikkop of three kilograms and you get some idea of how formidable this quarry is. Bustards regularly put in and face up to the falcon. When they do this they are immediately pressed into flight again by the close proximity of the vehicle and its excited occupants. This tips the balance of the flight in favor of the falcon. Most quarry is taken



Original family of goshawks. Here goshawk female is feeding her two young goshawks.



Later the same goshawk female in the same nest provides the same care to three adoptive young peregrines. In certain aspect, the care is even above-standard. She brings fresh branch in the nest helping to repel insects (native peregrine parents would not do it).



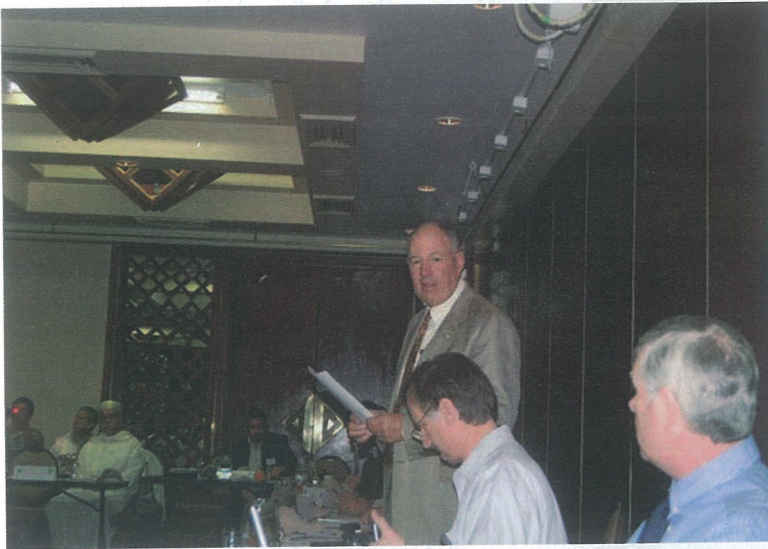
Example of successful cross fostering. Here the goshawk female is feeding the adoptive young peregrines just like her own.



The goshawks supply food until all young peregrines leave the nest and then even after they leave nest. Here the goshawk female brings food (squirrel) for one remaining peregrine (other two already left the nest).



## SAFA/IAF 2008 – We did some work....



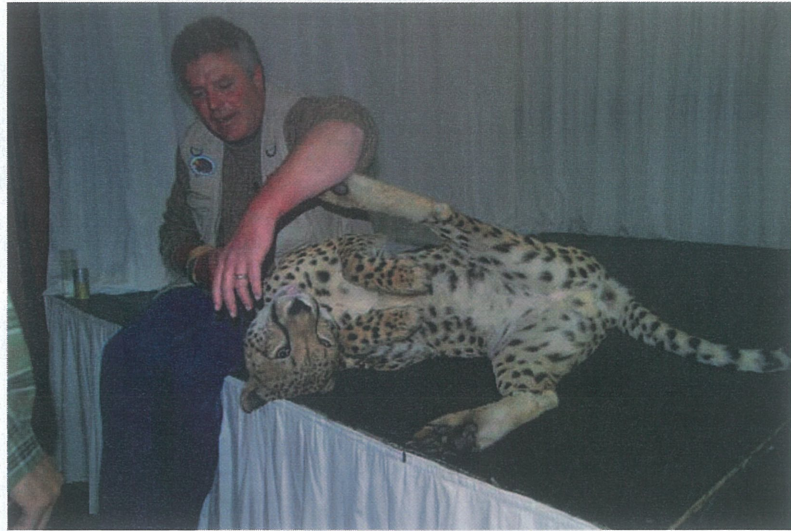
Frank Bond, President of the I.A.F. addresses the Council of Delegates at the I.A.F. AGM.

Delegates from 21 Nations attended the Meet – this is undoubtedly the largest and most varied gathering of Falconers in the Southern Hemisphere.

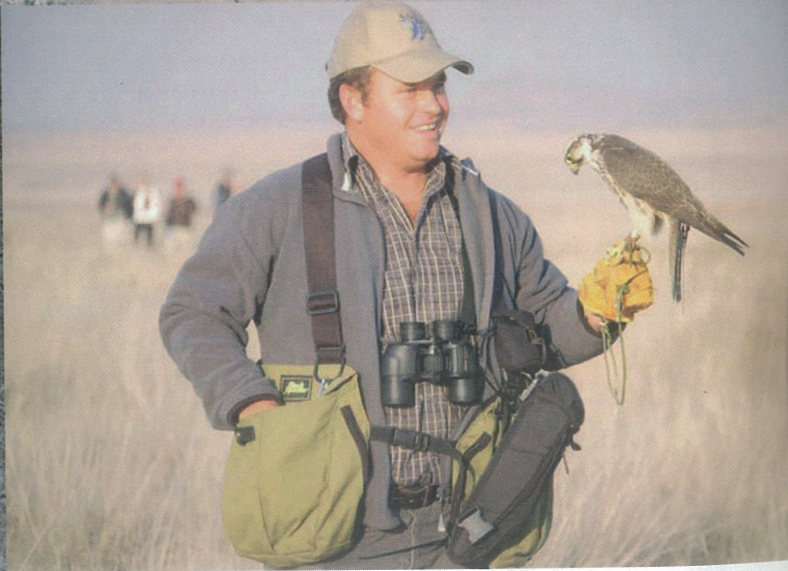


Yolan Freidman, C.E.O. of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, addressed the gathering at the meet Dinner and alerted us to the challenges facing Conservation and the World. We are grateful for the support and interest shown by the EWT as well as a variety of Hunting Organizations, including CHASA, SA Wingshooters and the Game Ranchers' Association of South Africa

SAFA/IAF Meet 2008. , - we had a great time....



**SAFA/I.A.F. 2008 ... and the Hawks flew well!**



after an extended rat hunt often covering several kilometers and without a vehicle in close attendance this type of hunting would be impossible. A falcon, hunting a bustard on its own, will sooner or later get kicked off and give up hunting such big quarry. This is the reason that bustards do not feature very high on the natural quarry list of wild Saker falcons.

The use of falcons, for out of hood flights, has been largely neglected by South African falconers. Those who have access to large open spaces are usually too poor to write off vehicles at the required rate, and those from Gauteng who can afford the vehicles are stuck with them in the traffic and have no time to try this style of hawking.

In my youth I put some time and effort into trying this type of falconry on foot, and had moderate success. It would however have been impossible to do well without a poorly disciplined dog to chase the bustard off the ground and keep it in the air replicating in effect what the Arab falconer does with a vehicle. It also is very hard on the knees, ankles and hips as frequent falls into springhare and antbear holes occur while running flat out across the veldt watching two rapidly disappearing birds high in the air.

It was not uncommon for the flights to go over a kilometer in straight line distance and would often require telemetry to find the falcon if it did not kill. When the falcons did kill it was always at a great distance and had the effect of drawing the attention of every wild avian predator in the district, as well as on one occasion a black backed jackal. This is a serious threat to any falcon being flown in this manner, particularly when the large raptors are thermaling beyond our vision. If you cannot keep up with the falcon it is at serious risk from predation.

If one tries to follow these flights by vehicle they invariably cross a fence line and the vehicle has to find a gate, cut the fence or stop. This puts paid to any vehicle based hunting in a stock farming area. If one works out the distance one can travel in a straight line without encountering a fence, even in extensive stock areas like the Karoo and Namaqualand, it is seldom more than a kilometer. This poses an insurmountable problem to a vehicle based nomadic falconer who will find it impossible to follow a bustard flight without destroying much of the stock-keeping infrastructure in his wake.

If one does not own the land it is very difficult to persuade the land owner to remove his fences just to fly a few bustards that may or may not be there. I don't believe this kind of hunting can be done on an opportunistic basis on private farm land.

It is in order to remove the fences that the GMOs will have purchased the land in the Northern Cape.

Let us now look at the type of quarry these gentlemen may find on their piece of the Northern Cape.

There are four bustard species that may be of interest. They are the Ludwig's Bustard, the Stanley's the Karoo Knorhaan and the Blue Knorhaan. Of these the Blue Knorhaan most closely equates the Mcqueens Bustard in habits and size, but is found in more densely populated areas with even more fences and smaller and more expensive properties than in the Karoo. It is a grassland bird and very seldom found west of Kimberley. It is unlikely to be found in the western Karoo or Namaqualand.

The Stanley's bustard is likewise found in more densely populated areas of the Southern Cape and for the same reasons as the Blue Knorhaan will be very difficult to hunt on a large scale with falcons.

The Ludwigs bustard is a nomadic large bustard that has a male bird of formidable size, and a female that could be taken by a good falcon on a good day. They are able to travel huge distances daily and are alert and wily customers at the best of times. They can vacate an area where they are being pressured at short notice and move to safer climes with the beat of a wing.

They are common victims of power line and fence collisions and this is a far greater threat to the entire population than any hunting with falcons on a confined area could ever be.

I would be so bold as to say that if these GMOs remove both the fences and power lines from their properties they may even be net contributors to the welfare of these birds. They will certainly never be as destructive as Eskom.

The Karoo Knorhaan is the next species to attract attention. It is a highly territorial bird, and common in most parts of the Karoo. Now the fact that it is sedentary in habit makes it a fascinating species to debate and with which to make a point.

Imagine that you are wealthy enough to purchase 500 000 ha of Northern Cape. On this you would expect to find about 1000 territories each containing a pair of birds. These birds produce 1-2 offspring per year. This means that a sustainable harvest after natural attrition would be somewhere around 1000 birds per year. Anything more than this and your population would start to shrink and next year there would be fewer birds to hunt. Several years of continued over exploitation and there would be nothing left on your farm.

This is the point of fact number three. What is being experienced in Pakistan, North Africa and Central Asia is the classic tragedy of the commons. The resource is communally or state owned, so it is in no individuals interests to conserve it. If you don't take it someone else will.

In the Northern Cape the land is privately owned and the new owner will be very short sighted if he exterminates his renewable resource. If he conserves it he will have it available again next year. This is why private land ownership and stewardship of its resources go hand in hand.

Take the case of the game industry. When all wildlife was regarded as *res nullius* it was exterminated from vast tracts of private and public land. You shot the kudu before it went to your neighbor. Wildlife laws did little to protect the animals. Once the law made private ownership of the kudu possible the landowner put up a fence to keep it in; brought in some lady friends for it to play with; fed it Lucerne during the droughts; kept the water troughs full all year; patrolled his property to stop anyone else poaching it and finally when it had had a long and reproductive life, sold it to a fat, unfit but very wealthy man of far Western origin to shoot at. He then went to his neighbor and bragged how much he had made from that worthless kudu, and his neighbor then put up his own fence and started looking after his own kudu.

The net result of this change in law was that wildlife numbers are greater than at any time in the last 100 years, the glaring exception being some species of bird. Why? Because one is not allowed to buy and sell them and they are all protected by law.

Eskom is however excused from the law as they sponsor the custodians of our wildlife to count how many vultures, bustards, cranes, eagles, owls and Harris hawks they kill each year.

I am sure if the GMOs were to provide the same sponsorship they would be welcomed with cupped hands by their very critics, who would jostle each other in an unseemly manner to count the number of bustards they caught.

If they were paid per bustard caught these same critics would soon figure out how to farm bustards so there were more next year, and the bustards would multiply in number until there was a surplus and the market would collapse. Look at captive breeding of falcons and extrapolate.

The key to this happy state is private ownership of land and resources.

To return now to the first of the five hard facts. Very few of our conservationists have seen Arab falconry first hand. The few that have, have been surprised at the ruthlessness of it and by the cavalier attitude of the falconers towards the quarry. This is a value judgment, and is as relevant to the argument as is the Arab opinion on the alcohol consumption and women falconers at our falconry meets. (Their opinions of falconers that share beds with their pointers are better left un-translated).

The point is that the Arabs are masters of training and conditioning large falcons to take large formidable quarry. They take great pride in the bravery of their birds and do all they can to maintain its condition and confidence. We as falconers should not fault that.

With that in mind which of our local falconers or conservationists have even come close to achieving this kind of excellence with our own hawks? None that I know of. This is not because we are poor falconers, or don't understand the plan. It is because the effort required to take this quarry consistently exceeds the benefits. If you cannot drive after the

flight due to fences you have to run far and fast. This takes the fun out of falconry as you can ask any Gauteng duck hawkker. If you still don't believe me go try it yourself.

Facts number three and four are linked. If you wish to practice extensive, vehicle based falconry in this country you have to do it on privately owned land where the fences have been removed. Outside of our national parks we do not have unfenced public lands large enough to support this kind of hunting. Once hunting takes place on privately owned land it is in the landowner's interests to conserve the prey species for future use.

Fact number five is relevant to the nomadic Ludwig's bustard. This bird is distributed over the whole of the Karoo, Namaqualand and Western Namibia. A huge area of distribution. If pursuit of these birds by falconers is limited to fence free privately owned land they still have an enormous fenced area in which to range and breed, where hunting them with falcons is impossible. Massive rural depopulation as seen in the Northern Cape will further enhance their chances of successful breeding, unlike the McQueen's Bustard which is having its breeding areas ploughed up by ex communist farmers.

The message to conservationists in this article is concentrate your efforts where the danger is greatest. If you were to fine Eskom the regulation fine for each vulture, crane, eagle and bustard killed by them, as the law prescribes, they would quickly develop methods to avoid this destruction. Be careful from whom you accept money. Your image of integrity is at stake.

To falconers the message is this. Give up trying to make money out of falconry. Pam Golding is advertising for Arabic speaking estate agents in Uppington.

The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.  
Previous ruler of Abu Dhabi., an enlightened  
Conservationist and Falconer.



## **Beware the Drug Pushers and Pimps.**

**Ross Kramm**

About two years on a hunting trip to Pongola I found a Walberg's eagle in a water reservoir. Weak but still an awesome bird, I called a friend in Cape Town who runs a small rehab facility; she suggested I call Hank Charmers. Very friendly on the phone {1st drug dealer} he suggested I call Ben Hoffman. The next day with Ben waiting for me I arrived at the bird of prey centre (a lot of drugs go through his facility). He took the Eagle off somewhere for monitoring and quickly returned with an offer of coffee (not typical pusher style). So we sat down and I told him how I had always wanted to be involved in falconry, but probably didn't have enough time, as I was sure it must be a full time job. Not at all, he lied, sensing my weakness and smiling to himself with the knowledge that here sat another easy user. So with lots of overselling of the great lifestyle, the outdoors, he even threw in the one about it being too challenging for most lesser mortals. But he hinted that perhaps I had what it takes so he gave me the next pusher's cell no. And invited me to come and spend a day with him at the facility (just in case the next pusher didn't do a good job)

Enter pusher in sheep's clothing Bruce Padbury. Also very friendly and with an invite to the next club AGM and a promise to see some hunting I missed the first hook being set as I counted the days. Arriving at the berg I met more friendly people with "normal" families so I didn't recognize the serious addiction that was being well hidden. Off we went on a duck hunt, nothing too extreme I was told, but just an opportunity for Kyle Somes (another user and pusher) to spread his birds wings. The Lanner I think it was flew well to good height drifted so far off that I thought she was lost for sure. Then with Kyle flapping his hand she quickly came back, the duck didn't play the game so she was given an easy pigeon which she smacked hard to the ground (looking back I think this was all a setup to get me properly hooked) Then the drugs started to flow, first a few Indian mynahs with a fairly fresh user in Winterton (just to show me how easy it was I think). Then on to a free (I tried really hard to pay but Alison, Greg's co-conspirator flatly refused) flying display up at Falcon Ridge (another cesspool with lots of drugies and pushers). My fiancé was also mostly blinded by all the friendliness (we are ex Cape Tonians) and free hospitality, but when the mynahs weren't being caught on a catch and release basis she had started to smell a rat.

I can't be exactly sure when it happened, but somewhere in those early weeks of free use and excessive debauchery I became addicted. And this is where the trouble starts. With a free haggard (wild adult) African Gos from one of my pushers Ben Hoffman and tons of Charles Woods time (freebie again) I got in deeper. Hours and hours of conversation around fast flying birds and evasive quarry, days and days of hunting I started to show the signs of a typical addict. Weight loss, sleepless nights and a deep unreasonable hunger for any fix I could get. My family life had to be diarized to keep the peace. But it got worse. Books, begged borrowed, stolen and bought over the net were read and re-read. The buying of equipment started (pushers call it furniture) the building of cages (pushers call them mews). Pigeon lofts, quail breeding and pointer training



So now I'm seriously addicted, with equipment coming out of my ears (probably the price of a small car) and all my free time being dedicated to this obsession. Spending more on my petrol bill than any sane person would on a bond, I'm afraid I've reached the point of no return. My challenge now as with many druggies is to try and show a normal face to the rest of the world who haven't seen the light, I struggle not to let the most unrelated topics of conversation be swung back to falconry. On a recent bike rally I was asked if we came across a lot of birds, to which I replied mostly buzzards but sometimes a lanner or two, the guy smiled wryly and went off to the pub with high hopes.

So don't be fooled if you meet some friendly guy or girl for that matter hiding behind the façade of welcoming you to some special art form, be warned once you have that 1st hit its not easy to stop and I promise you that even if you do you will forever carry the scars and if the older users like Tom Davidson and Paul Venter are anything to go by this addiction will be forcing your body to go places most young men wouldn't.

P.S. If you are a bit interested give me a call, I'll bring some coffee and maybe a bottle of wine, some padkos and I'll take you anywhere you want to go and see birds hunt.  
P.S.S. It won't cost you a thing because I'm a friendly guy who just wants to help you.

### **From the Mouth of a Girl Falconer**

**Lizette Beukes**

I've been asked to write an article on being a "Girl Falconer" I've given this some thought I couldn't really understand what the difference is between a Girl Falconer and a Guy Falconer. Falconry is not just a sport; it's a passion, a way of life! So what's the difference being a girl and practicing falconry?

Actually, there's quite a big difference! Falconry in South Africa is mainly practiced by guys and let me tell you it was no easy task getting accepted into this "Old Boys Club." Here is my story of how I became a Girl Falconer.

After three years of unsuccessful phone calls to several falconers with replies and comments like "why do you want to become a falconer", "do you know you cant feed it mince or steak" "and I'm busy now, call me in a weeks time". Then finally, a breakthrough "If you are that interested then come to the falconry meet in Dullstroom" Not knowing what this was or where in Dullstroom this "meeting" was to take place I finally found the location and the dates, and promptly made the booking.

My husband and I arrived at Dullstroom. Having only spoken over the phone to some of the falconers I had no idea of who is who in the zoo and my real journey began.

I was very excited to see all the hawks and falcons sitting on their perches in the sun, I had never seen so many birds of prey together; it was breathtaking to say the least. The falconers on the other hand were a different story. There were a few friendly faces amongst them, some even demonstrated a few of the basics to me but most didn't take

much notice of me, they all spoke a different language which I have now learnt to understand and even speak myself - falconry terminology.

Besides the language I didn't understand some of the more experienced falconer's comments made me nervous. Comments like "take her out with Tim to see how fast and far he walks to do falconry, she will soon quit", "make the girl flush the duck off the pound, after all she is the new appy" and "let her gut the bird - lets see how tough she really is"

Looking back all the abovementioned comments are justified, cause, let me tell any girl out there, it takes a different kind of girl to do this sport. You do walk fast and far and often not in the best conditions, its cold and wet, the grass is long and trust me, it's no fashion parade out there. No white Nike air takkies will do, you need to find sturdy shoes and clothing that will keep you dry and warm. My French manicured nails are often made fun of. Trust me guys; they work great as a substitute for forceps' when feeding your wild caught lanner the first few days.

I stuck through all the comments, passed all the tests the guys put me through, but most of all I believe I have earned the respect of the experienced falconers as a person.

As a person who has been doing falconry for the last three years, I have successfully flown a kestrel, very successfully hunted with my African goshawk that took not one but two rock pigeons at last years field meet. I am currently flying a passage lanner male/female, we are not sure of its sex but we are having great fun with it. Let me tell you its hard work, you have to dedicate at least 2 hours a day, 365 days a year. The killing cannot affect you, like it normally would a girl and you have to earn respect, not as a girl but as a Falconer.

Today most of the guy's who tried to put me off falconry back then, are the most helpful with any questions or advise regarding falconry. I am always welcome to go out hunting with them, let's be honest; an open field in South Africa is no safe place for a girl to be alone. Being a girl falconer also has its perks, the guys are quite the gentleman in the field, I always get to climb through the barb wire fence first, I get to cry openly when I get footed by my goshawk which is very painful as you may know, and sometimes I just get to be me, a Girl Falconer!

It's been fun sharing my experience as a girl falconer with all of you and would also like to thank everybody (no names will be mentioned Tim) for helping me come this far, I learn something new every time and with every new bird I get. Falconry has become a huge part of mine and my husband's life, who initially wasn't interested in the sport at all, but is now flying his second goshawk with great success and having the time of his life.

It's something we do together and enjoy! I am a girl but I am also a falconer ..... A Girl Falconer!

**Out In Africa - IAF AGM and SAFA International Field Meet,**  
**Hilary White, Dublin, Ireland**

Thaba 'Nchu, Free State Province, South Africa

It was when we came to a third gateway that James and I began to worry. Our SatNav was now in a state of utter dementia, leading us along a network of seemingly identical dirt roads. As I opened and closed this final agricultural gate, I wondered to myself if this was what they meant by 'deepest, darkest Africa'.

We had been driving for some nine hours at this stage. My neck was sore from craning to identify roadside raptors, and my partner in crime was scrambling in the dashboard for a stray 43<sup>rd</sup> cigarette. We had spent the previous evening in Grahamstown, in the company of Alan Stephenson, one of the South Africa's falconry silverbacks. A biologist, and one man raptor university, he had directed us to a heavenly corner of the Eastern Cape to watch wild Lanner falcons imitate Andrew Ellis paintings and observe a regrettably derelict, but impressively huge, crowned eagle nest. The perfect man to provide a background to this land of huge horizons, abundant game and a fascinating range of niche-filling birds of prey.

Finally, we slumped into the Black Mountain Hotel in the wee hours, wishing a slow painful death to our GPS 'navigator'.

'Welcome to Africa', grinned Dr Adrian Lombard the next morning, handing me a bottle of Edmund Oettle's organic wine and a bag of biltong (shreds of addictive dried meat). Adrian seemed to be everywhere and nowhere throughout the week, helming the arrangements of SAFA's International field meet, co-coordinating the movements of foreign guests like ourselves and generally being on call around the clock. A busman's holiday for a GP like himself.

Speaking of doctors, falconry practice in South Africa is in rude health. Thanks to the efforts of Adrian and his contemporaries, particularly the late great Ron Hartley, falconers enter into the sport through an apprenticeship scheme which maintains enviable standards, before going on to reap the benefits of both wild take and widespread captive breeding. There's also the small matter of the environment.

Where we hawked over the course of the week was, apart from the miles of barbed wire, a paradise. The highveldt grassland was wide open, with few trees, duck ponds and a mat of shin-high golden meadow. Longwingers from the damper, more enclosed Western Cape rubbed hands excitedly on such land, and once their dogs had got used to the drier scents; their hawks reaped the abundance of game.

Take Edmund Oettle. The said winemaker led his Gyr/peregrine through a week of dazzling duck strikes, providing us with as many heady flights as he did bottles of cabernet sauvignon. The first time I saw this bird fly, he unexpectedly took pitch on a telegraph pole. 'Something's up', murmured Edmund. A minute later, two secretary birds

excused themselves from a nearby field, at which point the hybrid took off, mounted up and didn't mess around in doing so. He shimmered up and up, through the late afternoon blue, and came overhead. Before he was exactly above us, the order was given to flush, at which much roaring and cursing ensued. One spectator cried 'it's too early!' 'No, it's perfect', replied the winemaker. The ducks swept off the pond, into the field before returning towards their haven in a tight arc, at which point the hybrid plummeted down, tearing through the game and bringing the flight straight towards the spectators. It was something else.

And so it went that longwing men like Edmund, Trevor Oertel and Alan Harvey prospered that week, not only with duck but with francolin and partridge too. It was also hugely satisfying to see the lanner falcon doing what it was put on earth to do – hunt. It's unfortunate these fine, dexterous raptors are confined to display work in northern Europe, and thanks are due to Zayin Vermaak and XX for showing us that, armed with brains and a wide tail, they can be very deadly indeed.

Part of the intrigue of falconry in Africa is the exotic species at hand to utilize. Most people would consider night hawking with Africa's most ferocious eagle off the back of a speeding van a little unwise, but professional snake handler Bryan Vorster is not like you and me. His male crowned eagle was a monstrous lump of flamboyance, muscle and sharp bits, and its manners were a testament to his handling skills. This form of hare-hawking has its chaotic moments, but seeing the bird use its accipitrine single-mindedness was sobering. Unfortunately, Bryan was less successful in his attempts to cure NAFA's Shawn Hayes of his pathological fear of snakes during his after-dinner performance.

Belle of the ball for me however was Tundra. I had wanted to see a black spar off the fist for many years. Imagine a giant European spar, with proportions and that long bird-snagging middle toe kept in tact, but black on top, with white underpants, and finished off with eyes of claret red and the brain of a gos. Tundra was a calmly imposing presence on the busy weathering, despite being dwarfed by the African Hawk Eagles. In the field, she was a guided missile, exploding from the glove of her owner Hank Chalmers and mopping up game in her wake.

It is interesting times for the IAF. Those present at this 39<sup>th</sup> AGM heard how the organisation has applied to be officially recognized as an international NGO. Of the 49 member nations, 30 were represented, all giving presentations in relation to the drive to have falconry recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. At present, the UAE, Belgium and France have made submissions. If they're successful, the implications for the protection of falconry worldwide are great. As well as this, it has been revealed that China has somewhere in the region of 20 to 40,000 falconers, and it's the IAF's hope to incorporate them and further strengthen this most important institution.

Of course, I'm only touching on the events of that magnificent week. To do it justice, a small volume would be needed. SAFA and its people are due a great debt of thanks for the tireless hospitality and sport they provided. A hard act to follow.

**FALCONRY TERMS ..... A long suffering wife's point of view**

ANKLET – bracelet for above left foot or can be a baby Ank

ASTROTURF – Whacky Bakky

AUSTRINGER --- Austrian Poof

BAG – according to “them” a falconer’s wife / partner sometimes referred to as “old bag” or can refer to something carried by “the bag”

BAGGY – term used for eyes after being up all night with the baby and for husband who has spent all night under a tree waiting for his hawk to come down.

BLOCK – what his head will be on if he is late back from hawking

BUSTARD – a posh way of pronouncing it --- prefaced with either “lucky” {if home early} or “bloody” {if late}

CAST – ON, then knit one, purl one

CASTING – Participle of the verb to do above but have heard that it also has something to do with a rod and a fool at the other end

CERE – when accompanying husband when flying his hawk he asks “Where is she, can you cere her? “

CHECK – a small piece of paper that hubby wants to replace a hawk

COPING – what you have to do at all times

CRABBING – looking for parasites picked up on overseas Falconry meets

CRAY – goes with fish and is a bottom feeder

CREANCE – sticks of colored wax that the kids leave lying around

CROP – anything that turns up like hawk shit on the new carpet

DUTCHHOOD – contraceptive device, not to be left on for too long as it gives one a headache

EGG – what you put on sandwiches

ENTER – he needs permission for this if home late again

EYAS – what my mother from the West Country said while out walking on the moors  
“Eyas just met an austringer and he looks ever so queer!”

FEAK – a term the Irish often use and is followed by the word “off”

FLAG – a white cloth hubby waves on late return

FOOT – part of anatomy to be aimed at great speed on partner’s backside when late again

GORGE – dyslexic spelling for George

HACK – general term for falconers attempt at cutting leather

HAGGARD – what we all are at the end of the hawking season

HARE – downy covering on falconers head

HAWKING DIARY – a collection of fairy tales entitled “Porky Pies “

HOBBY – a relaxing pastime, excluding falconry

HOOD – also called a bonnet and used to cover head when it rains

JERKIN – a small waistcoat, not to be confused with the other word ending in “G”

JESSE – Jock the dog’s mate, or add James and you have an outlaw

LEASH – part of word used in the Country and Western song which goes “Please  
reLEASH me let me go ..... “This song was used at bondage meetings

LEG MOUNT – “I’ll shoot that bloody dog if he does it to me again “

MEWS – sound made by cat when it went too close to the Hawk eagle

MUSKET – what HE always says “Musket her weight down... musket some new  
batteries for this feak \*\*\* receiver... musket home early from hunting to-day {OH  
YEAH}

MUTES – to bite ones tongue when informed that another hawk is to join the menagerie

PANNEL—I have a good relationship with that nice man at the beaters, I’m one of his  
regulars!

PERCH – fresh water fish you could catch if only you had a sensible hobby.

PITCH – tone of wife’s voice according to how late he is

PREY – for divine intervention when producing another bird {not the feathered variety}

QUARRY – again in a posh voice “I want to quarry where you have been?” Another questionable term???

RABBIT – He doesn’t half go on about his conquests {refer to Hawking Diary}

RAKE AWAY – young falconer on a night on the town {sometimes has hare}

RANGLE –disputes between tardy falconer and partner

RING UP – pastime known as Mooning or brown eyes!

ROBIN – a male hobby, others include darts, pool, drinking beer, being sick and falling over

ROUSE – {pronounced ruse} excuse given for being late

ROUSE – {pronounced rows} what happens when wife does not believe the above

SHARP SET – slacks and jacket from Truworths

SLIP UP WIND – what husband saves for bedtime

SOAR – describes his head after too many lagers

SOARING -- a physical condition after eating a really hot curry

STOOP – where I have tea in the afternoon

TAIL MOUNT – position number 47 in the Kama Sutra

TAXIDERMY – foolproof way of never losing a bird

TIERCEL – from the French meaning “a third “. He lied, he told me it was 9 inches but it was only a tiercel of that!!! “

TIRING – waiting for spouse to come home in order to put the boot in

TRUSS – the chicken or surgical appliance needed by falconer after season hunting with a Black Spar

WAIT ON – what you do when he is with his mates in the pub

WEIGHT – refer to above and you can throw it around when he gets home

WEDDED – something falconers should avoid at all costs unless the chosen partner is Mother Theresa incarnated.

### **SAFA's ASSOCIATION WITH CHASA**

**Julius Koen.**

SAFA has been affiliated to CHASA (the National Confederation of Hunters Associations of South Africa) since 2007. Almost all Hunters Associations in South Africa are affiliated to CHASA, making it a powerful voice for the hunting fraternity in the country. Negotiations to get the remaining associations on board are at an advanced stage. On a national basis, CHASA is acknowledged by the Ministries of Safety and Security and Environmental Affairs and Tourism and is accredited by the SA Police Services with the designated powers to allocate Dedicated Hunter status to its members.

Since its establishment, however, CHASA has largely been an organization for rifle hunters as reflected in its member associations and the agendas of its meetings. Most of its work is also aimed at the coordination of rifle hunting activities. Lately, associations with other hunting tools such as the bow hunters, hand gunners and falconers have joined ranks with CHASA. Although it is still a constant struggle to get our different hunting methods established in the discussions during CHASA meetings, we definitely have the full support of the CHASA Executive for our activities as long as we subscribe to their mission of promoting sustainable and ethical hunting. Fortunately this is also supported and advocated by all the falconry clubs in South Africa. We have also submitted a chapter on falconry to the CHASA Hunting Manual, further strengthening the falconry cause.

How has SAFA benefited by its association with CHASA? Most importantly, we are recognized by a strong organization as the only association with the expertise to discuss and decide on falconry matters. This places a burden on SAFA to ensure that contributions at a national level (e.g. development of legislation) is pure and subscribes to sustainable resource use and current legislation, policies and strategies. A case in point is the recent discussion around the National Norms and Standards for hunting that is presently under development. CHASA requested SAFA to provide our own inputs, but with their full support. It would have been very difficult for SAFA (with our small membership) to provide inputs on our own and be taken seriously during such discussions. We experienced such difficulties when we provided our inputs to the Threatened or Protected Species Regulations. The end result is that we now have the Peregrine as a listed species with all its implications.

SAFA should continue to nurture the association with CHASA through attendance of committee meetings and support of their activities affecting our sport. This will ensure that our falconry will always have a strong backing.



## A Few Memorable Flights

Alan Harvey.

It's funny how some flights stick with you for years, while others just fade into a blur especially if you have two or more experienced birds flying every day. We tend to take good flights for granted, that is until you start a new bird and realize the time and work it takes just to get kills, even just average ones.

Over the past couple of seasons I have flown a particularly good passage female Peregrine, a good Red Nape and few other hacked eyases that have provided me with some spectacular flights that I will never forget. I don't keep a falconry diary so these memories stay in my mind and are dredged up on those days when I'm slogging home after a long drive looking for quarry or the flight has just gone pear shaped, again! And I am wondering why I practice this sport as opposed to being normal and playing golf or propping up the bar counter!

A few years ago I was flying the Red Nape at a small dam that had a mixed bag of shovellers, teal and yellowbill. It was a calm day for once. As I cast the bird off she started tailing a single duck that I had not seen that was heading down the valley. The yellowbill had a good start and easily made to the big holding dam a kilometer away. With the binos I saw the Nape throw up high and start some serious ringing over the valley. After an age of trying to call her over she finally started back arriving at a serious pitch. When she was vertical I sent my pointer Kell in to flush. As the dog raced around the perimeter of the pond the ducks got up and headed. As the falcon went into a full tuck, one shoveller lost its nerve and tried to get back in. As the duck came back over the dam wall going full taps the falcon arrived in a hissing rush and drilled the shoveller on the back of the head. The duck skipped twice on the surface of the water and came to rest with its head under hanging straight down in the water. The Red Nape coasted in after the strike and landed next to me on the dam wall and started chugging like mad. My dog dived in and swam out to the dead duck. As she got back to the bank with the duck, the falcon waddled down to the waters edge and unceremoniously grabbed the shoveller from Kell and proceeded to make sure it was finished. Kell, also an old pro of many duck hunts calmly accepted this treatment as she knew her place in the pecking order.

This flight was with my 4 times intermewed hacked Peregrine Kayla. She had been released the previous season but had hung around and occasionally coming in for food every couple of weeks. After an absence of two months she suddenly arrived at the hack site with a badly bruised wing. I picked her up and after a month she was as good as new. The day of this flight I had a guy and his son out with me who wanted to see what falconry was all about. The setup was a dam of about 2 hectares in the middle of a flat alluvial plain. The mist was coming in but the ceiling was high enough to fly, and besides the dam was chock full of a mixed bag of ducks! I cast Kayla off and she straight lined it for the horizon. My guests looked at me and said something like "look she's flying away". This was how she usually mounted so I told them not to worry she would soon turn and come back with big pitch. I had no sooner said this than the mist came rolling in with visibility at about 50 meters. After about ten minutes of standing around praying for the mist to lift the ducks decided it was time to go. The whole flock climbed steeply into the mist and disappeared. I was standing there swinging the lure dejectedly trying to decide what to do with this guy and his son while I tracked my bird down. As we started back

for the truck there was a loud thump in the mist over us and the next thing a very dead teal came plummeting down to hit the ground next to me followed immediately by Kayla who proceeded to chup like crazy as she started plucking. The relief was indescribable!

Topping the list is probably a flight I had last season with my old passage at what I call the Banana dam. This dam is actually a holding area for my local ducks and is too big to fly as it is about five hectares in size and is situated in a valley surrounded by some serious mountains in the 2000m range and when the wind blows, as it does most days the resultant wind shear and rotor are not for baby hawks. Towards the end of last season the dam had about 200 yellowbills on and I was running out of smaller ponds. I think I was taking pond burnout to a new level with the local ducks only moving onto flyable water after dark.

So anyway I decided to see what the old bird could do late one freezing and windy afternoon in August last year. I cast the hawk off and she was immediately whisked a way by the gale and I lost sight of her against the backdrop of the mountain shadow. The ducks started to form a raft in the middle of the dam as some of them had most likely seen this scenario played out before. After awhile I caught sight of the peregrine as she came racing back above the rimrock on the skyline behind me. She was tiny with her wings tucked right in trying to hold position. As I started for the dam she broke free from the rim lift and came flicking vertically over at a huge pitch. I got the ducks started with a few strategically hurled rocks. This big flock lifted easily with a roar of wings and climbing almost vertically into the wind. As they reached about two hundred feet they turned and started to break downwind. The passage shadowed them, holding off waiting for the flock to clear the wall. As the first lot of yellowbills straitened out heading down the valley she started the most awesome vertical stoop. There was instant pandemonium with ducks swirling around trying to get back into water. The peregrine drove through the stragglers and sliced a yellowbill into the water course where it hit the water with some serious speed. The experienced falcons throw up was huge and she was almost immediately back at her original pitch. The big flock had split up into smaller groups that were staying high over the sanctuary of the water. Whenever a group looked to put in the other flocks would suck them up into the sky again. I just sat back and watched this drama unfold. When one of the smaller flocks reached about 500 ft they tried to make a break for it. Instantly the Peregrine sliced through the yellowbills, cutting one down into the water and immediately remounting to the huge pitch over the rimrock. This scenario repeated itself for the next 20 minutes with ducks getting pounded down into the water at regular intervals. I was only a spectator at this stage of this incredible display of mastery of the air and the quarry by this experienced old passage falcon. She alone was controlling this flight and the destiny of this big flock of yellowbills. Finally she bound to a big drake high over the water and tried to fly him over solid ground. The pair finally came to ground on the steep rocky slope on the other side bank and I could see the drake was going to have his way with the falcon and get back in to the sanctuary of the water. I suddenly realized my role in this little drama and raced around the muddy perimeter of the dam arriving just in time to help the heaving peregrine who was hanging onto a bush with one foot and grimly holding onto the big yellow bill with other. I made myself comfortable next to the peregrine as she took a full crop. The wind had started to drop as the snow started falling gently and the weak winter sun glowed red against the ironstone on mountain tops as dusk set in.

### Comment from Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Bakyt Karnakbayev**

Vice president of federation "BERKUCHI" of Republic Kazakhstan Bakyt Karnakbayev

This year meeting IAF was spent in the republic of South Africa in silent and beautiful place Thaba Nchu. The truth of delegates from some countries was not.

It is a lot of the impressions, new friends. Meeting has spent quickly, have kept within on time one day. On a subject of hunting different questions were discussed with a bird of prey.

For Kazakhstan this meeting was remembered - Kazakhstan have switched on full member IAF with a vote. For me became great honor, that president IAF Frank Bond has suggested my nominee to enter into structure of officials IAF. All delegates have voted for my nominee.

All the days long stay in southern Africa, since morning till the night, hunted with birds of prey, it was very interesting. Have met hunters of the republic of South Africa, saw huntings with falcons, hawks and hawk eagles. Night hunting with an eagle on a hare which the oldest hunter from Africa with the same old hawk eagle has shown was remembered. These two hunters - the person and a bird, during hunting even have looked younger, there was a lot of delight and congratulations.

Would like to express the big gratitude to the African falcon hunters, led by Adrian, for the big job by which they do on protection and popularization of hunting with birds of prey.



Steven Squires readies his Peregrine, Lizette Beukes with her Af. Gos in foreground. Watched by Vladimir Zemblevski of Kazakhstan.

*Photo: Mike Du Puy.*

## A Falconer's Tale

By Roger Neilson

Firstly let me say that I don't expect any of you who may read this to believe that it ever happened. That's okay by me, call me a Bull Shooter and enjoy the yarn, I think it's a good one. Back in 1977 the South African based mining firm that I worked for decided to pull out of Rhodesia due to the worsening political and military situation. Very generously they offered me a position on one of their Coal Mines in South Africa, I thought about it for three weeks and finally decided that it would be a good career move and gave my Employers my answer.

I had no delusions about life on a Coal Mine in South Africa's industrial heartland, it meant that I would have to forego my Falconry and visits to wild bushy places for a considerable time, places like Rooikranz on the Umfuli River. Rooikranz was the most fascinating place I knew of back then, it was like a piece of the Garden Of Eden or like the Earth had been on the first morning of creation and I certainly was going to miss it in the three years I spent on Greenside Colliery.

Rooikranz is about sixty miles upstream from where the Umfuli River joins the Sanyati River and every square inch of it is fascinating, its Geology, its Flora and its Fauna could each be the subject of many an Article on their own. It is where the Umfuli River has carved a series of Gorges through the ancient Greenstone crustal rocks of the Earth and where the Umfuli River has been diverted 90 degrees by a huge deep seated Fault .The resulting Fault Escarpment has formed an almost sheer cliff face and a huge pool known as Corner Pool beneath it and on this Cliff from as long as Naturalists have been recording there have been a resident pair of Peregrine Falcons. As my departure for South Africa was becoming imminent I decided to visit Rooikranz one last time. The way things turned out, it could have been the last time I visited anywhere!

I spent the night at the house of a good Friend named Mike. My Friend farmed about forty miles from Rooikranz and was a Police Reservist, from him I learned that my intended destination was considered mildly dangerous from a security point of view and that if I applied to the District Commissioner for a permit it would most likely be refused. I took the view that no damn "Charlie Tango" was going to deter me from enjoying my Africa and that with due diligence I would say my Goodbyes to Rooikranz my own way.

I left my friends Farm a few miles outside Kadoma before daybreak and followed the narrow tar road past Golden Valley to the Dalny Mine turn off , where after the road became a track through the bush to the old deserted Gold workings marked as Frog Mine on my one to fifty thousand topocadastral map. Just beyond Frog Mine as day was breaking I parked my pick up in a dense grove of Masasa Trees, lopped off some under growth with a Machete and camouflaged the vehicle with these. I shouldered my Rucksack ( I was planning to make a weekend of it ) and trudged the three miles down to the Umfuli River on a course that would bring me to a point about five hundred yards upstream of Corner Pool and the red Shale cliff that had given "Rooikranz" its name.( Red Cliff in the Dutch dialect of the Elephant Hunter who had discovered this

corner of the Umfuli Valley fifty years before ) I dropped into the river bed unobtrusively and worked my way along the weird potholes and erosion features that the River had sculpted into the banded Greenstone formation and noted as I had done many times before that if one was prepared to desecrate these ancient potholes and pebble filled hollows one could win a small fortune in alluvial gold for your trouble.

On reaching Corner Pool with its huge sandbank opposite the 90 degree bend in the course of the River I made straight for the Giant Rock Fig Tree under whose leafy canopy I had camped many times before and discarded my gear between its massive white buttressed roots. I then scanned the sandbank for tracks as it is always a good idea to know who you are sharing a campsite with, several sets of booted human feet and several sets of crocodile tracks had marked its surface. I scanned the cliff briefly with binoculars, picked up the resident pair of Black Storks, watched several Trumpeter Hornbills sally forth from a grove of Pod Mahogany trees, no doubt on their way down stream to their feeding grounds. Thinking that I could meet up with the Peregrines later that afternoon or possibly in the early evening I too set off downstream around the bend in the River and into ( for me ) unexplored territory. Forty odd miles of glorious nothing between the second right angled bend in the river and a cluster of buildings marked as St. Ruperts Mission. It was just after seven A.M. When I set off.

The "unexplored Territory" past the second bend in the gorge system proved to be a bit of a disappointment within a mile the gorges flattened out and the river became less wild and untamed, there were many fine opportunities for a Fisherman and many fine old trees lining the banks, but the hills were less steep and craggy and there was less scope for finding a second peregrine eyrie, so after about five or six miles I retraced my steps.

On turning the final corner before Corner Pool and the red cliff, I realized that I had "Company" It was now about 3PM. I could hear excited human voices, laughter and the unmistakable sound of angry Peregrines screaming. I hastily scrambled over pools and potholes until I reached a point where I could see what was going on. There on top of the red cliff were two African Teenage Boys identically dressed in Blue Denim, rolling boulders over the cliff and laughing their heads off. The boulders were being chased vertically downwards by two Peregrines to a point where they were smashing on the ledge where the Peregrines nested. My initial thoughts were, "How dare these Hooligans do that to my Peregrines" I felt a flood of righteous anger fill my whole being, I thought of shouting at them but realized that at the distance -three hundred and fifty feet of altitude by at least that amount of lateral distance my cries would sound pretty pathetic if heard at all. I knew one way of instantly grabbing their attention and drew my 357 magnum revolver from its holster. (Rhodesia was rather like the Wild West during the Bush War ) went into a classic Gunfighters crouch and aimed at a point fifty feet above their heads. The report was like a thunder clap in the confines of the gorge!

Two things happened, the Boys in blue stopped rolling their rock and froze, and the initial report was duplicated a dozen times over as the bang bounced off walls of rock and cliff face so that it sounded like an entire platoon of Troops had let

rip. The last echo was not yet done when my Denim clad Teenagers “unfroze” and ran towards the skyline. As they disappeared from my view I saw etched against the sky the outline of two AK 47 assault rifles clutched in their hands. The enormity of what had just happened hit me, I had fired on two “Charlie Tangos” who were on sentry duty on top of the cliff who had become bored by inactivity and who had decided to have a bit of fun at the Peregrines expense! My warning shot had startled them into thinking that they were being attacked by Selous Scouts or some other Rhodesian Army unit and they had run for it. Had I not fired first I would have been cut to pieces by their fully automatic assault weapons from an altitude advantage that would have left me without any cover what so ever. All this went through my mind in about five seconds as I hopped over rocks and potholes like a Mountain Goat and then across the Sandbank to my Rucksack which I gathered up “en passant” and proceeded to break the World Cross Country Record for three miles of rough terrain to where my Pick-up was parked.

Back at my Farmer / Police Reservist friend’s house I recounted my story , he gazed at me with disbelief as has everybody I have subsequently told this yarn to. You don’t believe me either? “No skin off my nose”, as Michael Jackson says from time to time, I hope you enjoyed the telling of it! Very few Falconers can claim that they put two armed Charlie Tangos to flight whilst defending a pair of Peregrine Falcons. I wish you good and peaceful hawking, and don’t forget to include a 357 magnum to your Hawking Gear, you never know when it may come in handy!

-----

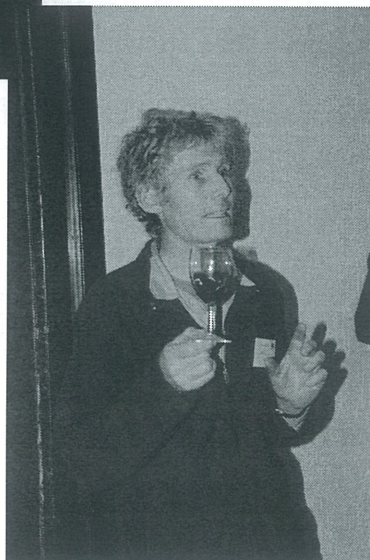


Left: Roger Neilson with a Japanese Hawk-food container.

Right: South Africans are introduced to Turkmenian food.



Right: Edmund Oettle introduces the joys of Cape Wines!



**Peregrine and Saker Falcon Restoration Program  
in the Czech Republic Using Falconry Techniques**  
by Petr Zvolánek

Lesy České Republiky, s.p.  
Přemyslova 1106  
501 68 Hradec Králové  
Czech Republic

Tel:  
+420 724 524 324  
Fax:  
+420 495 262 391

e-mail: [petr.zvolanek@seznam.cz](mailto:petr.zvolanek@seznam.cz)  
website: <http://www.lesycr.cz>

**Abstract**

*This paper describes and summarises a long term work and observations of the peregrine and saker falcon restoration program performed by the Forests of the Czech Republic. The main aim has been to improve endangered falcon populations in the Czech Republic, while examining falcon release methods alternative to the direct hacking method. Author found falconry techniques and practice very convenient for the falcon release programs. Author himself is an active falconer and president of The Czech Falconry Club. The successful adoption by goshawk parents and a long term survival of fully independent falcons show the potential of the cross fostering approach method as the good alternative to other release methods.*

**Key words**

peregrine, saker, falcon, peregrinus, cherrug, falco, falconry, hacking, fostering, release

**Introduction**

The Forests of the Czech Republic (Lesy České Republiky - LČR) is a state enterprise, which takes care of about half of all forest area in the Czech Republic. Before mid 90s, LCR already performed a long time management in order to protect habitats of peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and to create the new suitable nest areas. Since 1995 LČR has started its own peregrine and saker falcon release program. The main aim has been to help to re-establish stable population of the peregrine and saker falcons - species critically endangered in the Czech Republic. Individuals of the nominal subspecies *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* have been used for the release, which have been bred in captivity by Czech and Polish falconers. Several other release methods other than the direct fostering have been applied:

**Hacking** is probably the easiest and the most common method, which improves the flight and hunting abilities of young birds of prey. It employs the proven technique developed originally by falconers long time ago. The principle of this method is to put two to five growing young birds in a hack site box placed in a suitable location such as rock, tree or building. Growing birds of prey are regularly fed in the box while they can observe surrounding area from the box. When the birds are able to fly, the box is opened so that they can fly freely around and return back for the food until they become fully independent.

**Falconry training followed by hacking** combines advantages of the traditional falconry training with the hacking. Fully grown young birds with proper native parent imprinting

and with developed instincts are taken away from their parents from breeding aviary and special falconry training is applied consequently. It is only a short period to get such a bird temporarily tame - only for necessary manipulation and initial flight training. Bird is trained in the location of the future release. Gradually the bird is left at the location longer period, initially during the day and later also during night. At the beginning food is provided to the bird, but later it learns to chase live quarry. As the flying and hunting ability is increasing, the bird naturally becomes shy and it becomes gradually more independent and the tameness disappears. The essential advantage of this method is that the bird is under control during the independence process, which is also useful, if the bird becomes ill or injured.

**Cross fostering** is insertion of properly native parent-imprinted grown young birds in nests of other species birds of prey, while all the original young are taken away from the nest. This method employs ability of the parent pair to adopt young of other species as the replacement of their original offsprings. This technique was developed and proven by falconers already during first captive breeding attempts a long time ago. In the wild, the method was successfully implemented already 30 years ago in Germany and it became a common practice since that time. In the concrete, young peregrine falcons were adopted by pair of goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*). This method is also practiced in Poland since 1990 and it was also realized in The Czech Republic four times during period 2000 – 2003. Failure of the spontaneous adoption or aggressive reaction of adoptive parent goshawks towards young peregrines has never been experienced. Adopted falcons were fed properly and cherished by goshawks even when they left nest until they become fully independent.

Naturally the optimum method in case of the intention to strengthen wild populations is the direct fostering i.e. insertion of eggs or captive bred young in nests with insufficient amount. Of course, this requires certain conditions: existence of such nests, abundance of food etc. However, in our case we could not use the direct fostering because, the license was available when peregrine falcon pairs were not regularly present in Broumov region and later, when they were present, the license has not been granted by authorities.

#### **Survey of release programs of the Forest of the Czech Republic LČR**

It was necessary to release sufficient number of young birds using each method providing representative statistics in order to evaluate success rate of these methods. Since losses are quite common when the birds leave the location of the release, it was necessary to provide proper long term tracking via telemetry, which is currently the only effective way of systematic observation of animals such as birds, which move over long distance. In addition the success of release program cannot be measured only by number of birds surviving in the wild, but mainly by percentage of birds, which are reproducing actually and thus contribute to the population. The tracking of released raptors at least until the first breeding, which might be expected when they are about 3 years old, would be possible using the satellite telemetry.



**Tab.1:** Restoration of peregrine falcon by LČR in Broumov and Hradec Králové regions

| Year         | Method | Male        | Female      | Total        | Notes   |
|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---|
|              |        | rls/loss    | rls/loss    | rls/loss     |   |
| 1996         | FT     | 0           | 1/1         | 1/1          | injured by a wild raptor                                      |
| 1997         | FT     | 1/0         | 0           | 1/0          | 1 year old  |
| 1997         | H      | 3/1         | 0           | 3/1          | injured by a wild common buzzard                              |
| 1998         | FT     | 0           | 1/0         | 1/0          | migration to Poland   |
| 1999         | CF     | 0           | 0           | 0            | Licence not granted, 2 falcons provided in Poland for release |
| 2000         | CF     | 2/2         | 1/0         | 3/2          | 1 killed my marten, 1 killed by a raptor 8km away from nest   |
| 2001         | CF     | 1/0         | 3/2         | 4/2          | 1 fell down from nest, 1 killed by marten or fox              |
| 2002         | CF     | 1/0         | 1/0         | 2/0          | male migrated i NW of Poland, female migrated in Germany      |
| 2003         | CF     | 0           | 3/2         | 3/2          | 1 killed by marten?, 1 killed by eagle owl                    |
| 2004         | HC     | 3/0         | 0           | 3/0          | 1 male found in active pair in 2006 in Poland-Kamienne góry   |
| 2005         | FT     | 0           | 1/1         | 1/1          | remainders of body found on eagle owl nest                    |
| 2005         | FT     | 0           | 2/1         | 2/1          | electrocution followed by leg frostbite                       |
| 2006         | H      | 1/0         | 2/0         | 3/0          | male migrated to Slovakia, females probably in NE Poland      |
| <b>Total</b> |        | <b>12/3</b> | <b>13/7</b> | <b>25/10</b> | <b>mortality: ?25%, ?54%, ?40%</b>                            |

Note: FT-falconry training modification, H-hacking, HC-hacking in city, CF-cross fostering

**Tab.2:** Restorations of saker falcon by LČR headquarters in Hradec Králové

| Year         | Method | Male       | Female     | Total      | Notes  |
|--------------|--------|------------|------------|------------|--|
|              |        | rls/loss   | rls/loss   | rls/loss   |  |
| 2007         | HF     | 1/0        | 2/0        | 3/0        | migrated 14.7.2007 SW direction                              |
| 2008         | HF     | 2/0        | 1/0        | 3/0        | without tracking, returning for food in hacking box for 3wks |
| <b>Total</b> |        | <b>3/0</b> | <b>3/0</b> | <b>6/0</b> | <b>mortality: ?0%, ?0%, ?0%</b>                              |

Note: HF-hacking at the border of forest

#### **Cross fostering of peregrine falcons in goshawk's nest**

Currently we consider the cross fostering of peregrine falcons in goshawk's nest to be the most efficient of the methods we used. Based on recommendations of German and Polish experts, we verified this method in the Czech Republic four times in period 2000-2003. According to the recommendations of foreign practitioners, it is possible to use young falcons, both males and females, 2-3 weeks old, while their age should not be too different, neither mutually nor in comparison to the young goshawks. It was also recommended to replace the goshawks by the same number of falcons.

We used both males and females for the cross fostering. Their age was from 20 to 32 days, while the care was taken to set up fostering groups having minimum age dispersion. The replacement of young birds was performed in various day time, morning as well as evening. We did not consider as necessity to follow the recommendation on the equal number of inserted falcons and removed goshawks. All removed goshawks were added to other goshawk nests. All activities after the swap were intensively monitored personally as well as by cameras and video recorders and of course by telemetry.

#### **Parent's care on the nest**

All four cases of the cross fostering performed in 2000-2003 exhibited exactly the same behaviour pattern of the adoptive goshawks parents. Females came within various time

periods - from several minutes to several hours. They brought food and went on with feeding the falcons, adding the fresh small braches and heating the young falcons. Goshawk males were all the times outside the nest and they also passed the food to females outside the nest except a few times when female was away from the nest and when falcons were about to leave the nest. The food consisted most frequently of pigeons - domestic as well as wilds ones, jays, thrushes, sometimes long-eared owls and other small owls.

The nest was left by male falcons first despite they were the same age as females. It was observed that males left the nest about 3-4 days sooner than females. Once it was observed that male, which left the nest, came back next day to stay over night. A few times it was observed that falcon, which left the nest, came back being attracted by feeding of the other falcon remaining on the nest. Falcons, which left the nest, mostly did not return in the nest, therefore goshawks provided food to remaining falcons for certain period of several days. Falcons were observed many times having rest and lying down on tree branch, stump and once also in some other nest, which was not used. When the adoptive parents brought food, falcons reacted initially only with screaming, later, when they improved in flying, falcons came towards to meet their adoptive parents. After leaving the nest - within period of one week, it was observed several times that two falcons eat on the same quarry provided by parents, but usually they tried to cover the quarry for themselves or take it away.

#### **Mortality and health conditions**

In one case, young female falcon fell from the nest down second day after the adoption. It happened probably when goshawk female was leaving the nest. Area of growing feathers was too small to prevent from death when it hit the ground. In three cases, falcons died relatively short time after they left the parents nest (1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> day). Based on dissection, it can be concluded that they were probably killed by some small carnivorous mammal such as marten or fox. This conclusion is also supported by fact that in one case a separate piece of leg was dug about 10 cm under ground. In one case, a female falcon was killed by eagle owl 26 days after she left the nest. A bit of eagle owls plumage was found on a tree 10 m high and about 200 m from the nest. In one case a part of falcon skeleton was found 8 km away from the nest 2 days after the falcon left definitely the nest location (55 days after adoption). In all other cases no other injuries or health problems were observed, however one year falcons suffered from swollen eyelids due to high occurrence of biting insects. Excrements of falcons were tested in the laboratory several times and no endoparasites were found. In general, good plumage and condition of falcons give the evidence that the adoptive care was the proper one.

#### **Independence period**

Falcons usually left the nesting area within one month from the moment they left their nest. Falcons were regularly observed in this period, so valuable information about food and movement was obtained. In most cases the remains of their quarry, which they left, were identified as domestic pigeons, while many of them had breeder's rings or even racing rings. In one case attack to domestic pigeons was observed near some farmhouse in Poland. Namely, all observed falcons flew across the border to Poland and in one case at least they continued to Germany, where they remained in the moment when the

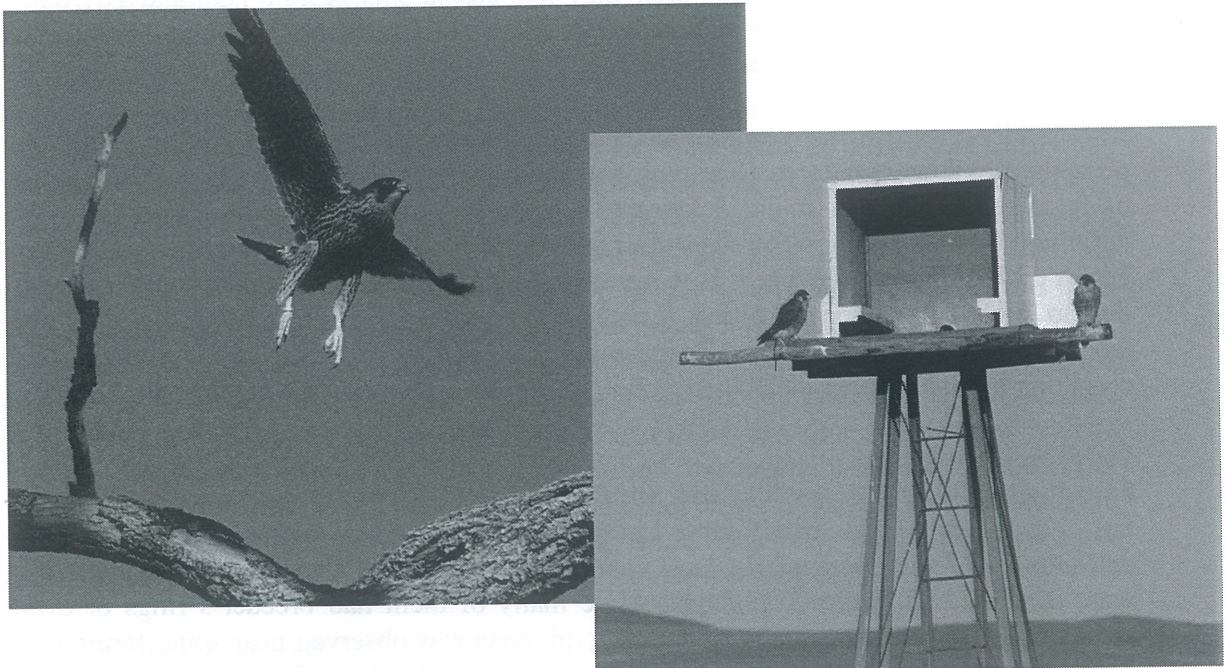
observation was finished. Only in one case a falcon returned back from Poland to nesting area after 10 days of independent life in Poland due to strong evening storm. This falcon stayed over night approximately 100 m from the nest and 30 m from his adoptive female goshawk. Next morning approximately 1.5 hour after sunrise the falcon returned back in Poland.

In the moment when observations of falcons were finished, the shortest distance measured was 18 km from the nest and the longest distance was 145 km. The longest observation period was 105 days from the adoption. Another interesting observation was a flight of a female falcon, which covered distance of 10 km during full moon night in August approximately from 23:00 to 0:30 o'clock.

### Conclusions

In full compliance with foreign results, our observations proved that in all four cases cross fostering, the young falcons were spontaneously adopted by pair of goshawks, while no hostile behaviour was seen until the last moment when they left their nesting location. The adoption process was so obvious that we have not seen even any difference in parent behaviour and care when the original young goshawks were replaced by the adoptive falcons. Similarly young falcons also exhibited no behaviour difference comparing the adoptive goshawk parents and original falcon parents. It appeared that it is not relevant to keep the same amount and age of young falcons as the original young goshawks. It has been proved that the cross fostering leads to a long term survival of fully independent falcons as a way of their successful reintroduction in the wild. It has been also proven that traditional falconry techniques and experience can be successfully used almost in all stages of such restoration program.

-----



Alan Harvey's Peregrines at Hack in the Eastern Cape.

## Cape Falconry- shortening my wings...

Andre Cilliers

I started my falconry career in Potchefstroom with a little passage greater kestrel. He was my one love, my first bird. My mentor at the time was flying a killer of a hybrid, and a quacker-clubbing female pere. So in my mind, my course was set. Longwings....

I dabbled around flying a bunch of rehab birds, whilst consistently flying a little rehab haggard kestrel, and a rehab imprint kestrel. At this stage I was not a real falconer yet, I just loved seeing the birds fly. I did have one intro to shortwings, a very bad tempered, nervous, highly strung (enter any other negative word to describe something of a neurotic personality) 2<sup>nd</sup> year pale chanting goshawk. Moving from sweet tempered kestrels to that was a big shock. I named him Stalin... Needless to say, this just made me want a shortwing even less (apprentice stupidity, I thought they were all like that).

My next bird was a female lanner. I fell in love. She was so sweet, gentle and completely calm an hour after picking her up and unhooding her. Free flying in two weeks, and first kill in 4. We did have the pole-sitting issues, but they sorted themselves out when I started thermalling, and boy, did she thermal. She used to speck out, and then come diving down. I lost her towards the end of the season when she scooped a sparrow and jumped back in a thermal, eating in flight. I managed to recover her 3 days later, and trapped her back about 70gr higher than what she was when I lost her. Unfortunately she just was too efficient after that, and was lost again when she made a kill behind a hill, and I didn't get there in time. She was spotted (anklets and bell) at the beginning of 2008, about 4 months after I lost her.

At about this time my dad decided that it was time for a spiritual adventure, and the spirits played along. He was asked to apply for a post as reverend in a Durbanville congregation. He took the job, and turned our world upside down. September 2007 we come down to look for a house. I pop in at Eagle Encounters to see Tundra fly, and while I am chatting to Hank he mentions a vacancy at the centre. Ditto....

I move down with my parents, and start working for Hank, January 2008. The first bird I pick up is a little rock kestrel, although I know there isn't really space to fly a longwing properly. I get him flying well, and he even takes a wagtail in fine style. Two days later a lady rocks up just as I am leaving the centre and says: "ek het 'n arend opgetel, dit is in my kar". Highly unlikely that she has a true eagle in her car, but I go and have a look. On the dashboard a gorgeous little passage female afgos is looking at me. I go in, grab her and check her over. Perfect, except for a mild concussion. Having watched Hank, George, Adrian and Zayin's spars fly, I am amped to fly a shortwing myself. So the next day I have a chat with Hank, and we jess her up. I name her Yasmin, and in temperament she is much like my lanner was. Free in 10 days, and now the fun starts. Trying to hunt a bird on small birds where Hanks musket spar has annihilated everything. Eventually she starts killing... rats. But hey, she's hunting, building muscle and scooping the odd small bird, so I don't mind. I'm having fun. One fine July day, Jason and I are out hawking when I flush a 900gr scrub hare. Little Yas is off, grabs it by the head, and shoves it

under a bush. She has it completely under control in the time it took me to cover 5m. This of course makes her invincible. I decide to go for grading, hopefully release her, and see what comes next.

My first trip out grading I don't get a slip. Alan says its fine; we'll try again next week. The next Friday we take a walk up a gully; Yas does a nice flight on a Pied Starling, comes back and perches in a tree a few meters in front of us. I walk towards her but when I am about 8m away a female yellowbilled duck flushes right towards her. Without a thought she goes for it, and disappears behind a fork in the gully. Alan, who is standing on the edge, sees everything and shouts "Hell, She's got it!". I run over, and there is Yas with the ducks neck in her feet...

About two months later Ember hops into my life. He is a 6 week old musket spar. Everyone I talk to just tells me to man as much as possible. So that's what I do. He is free in a mew, and every day I go in, sit with him, pick him up, and just being around the boy. This all goes fine until a few days before penning. He starts to fly around when I get close, and once I'm inside he starts alarm calling.

Once he is penned I pick him up and start training, or should I say manning? He is horrible. He just does not want to sit on the glove. Even when it is completely dark. The first 7 days I get only 8 hours of sleep, the rest of the time is spent manning. We both become blithering sleep deprived idiots, and poor George needs to put up with my calls about my spar at least twice daily... I fondly think of lanner falcons, and wonder why I didn't learn my lesson with the chanter. 3 weeks later the spar shows me why. It's his 2<sup>nd</sup> free flight, he has never seen a small bird before, but he takes his first kill, wild or otherwise. From there on the hunting demon is let loose.

I would like to thank Hank, George, Zayin, Adrian, John, Alan, and all the other CFC guys who made me feel welcome down here. You have really shown me what it's like to be on the dark-side of shortwinging and to fly our hawks in probably some of the most difficult and small hunting grounds.

Western Cape Falconry.  
Tundra, flown by Hank  
Chalmers, strikes a  
Guinea. Tragically, this  
awesome hawk died  
earlier this year. Many  
visitors enjoyed her flights  
at the Field Meet.



**Bonelli's Eagle**  
**"An African Hawk Eagle's Big Sister"**  
**Anonymous by request**

(Reprinted from African Hawk Eagle Interest Group Newsletter.)

Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*) is a medium sized eagle that it belongs to the family of Accipitridae. Sexual dimorphism is present and so the female weight 2700 grams and the male 1700 grams approximately. The young birds are brown/orange on the chest and dark brown in the back, the adult birds are white in the chest with light black spots, more in the females than in the males which appear far away totally white. Both are dark in the back with a large white spot in the middle of the shoulders. The young birds moult to the adult plumage after 5 years. There are approximately 1000 pairs in Europe, many of which in Spain and Greece, but it is also present in all the states that show oneself on the Mediterranean Sea, Portugal, France, Italy, Tunis, Morocco, etc...

Bonelli's eagle wants open calm and isolated hilly areas, with small wood from sea level until 1400/1500 meter above the sea level. They build, in her territory, many stick nests into holes and ledges in high rocks close to each other. In December, when the breeding season is starting, the pair chooses one nest that will come repaired and upholstered with green leaves that continuously will be replaced in order to maintain the nest clean during eggs incubation and young rearing. The eggs, one or two, exceptionally three, are placed in the middle of February and the young eagles will be born after 38 days. The young eagles will leave the nest around the end of May or early days of June. In Europe only the Portuguese populations choose to build the nest in trees.

In the country in which I live, there were in the past hundreds of breeding pairs up until 1950. In those years, mixomatosis virus started to destroy the wild populations of rabbits that it was the main food source. The increasing of human presence in the field and also poaching have decimated the numbers of this eagle. Unfortunately today there is no more than 10/15 breeding pairs.

For many years I have had the fortune to study and to know Bonelli's eagle in his natural environment. I was fascinated from their agility and their aggressiveness regarding all the other birds. During the breeding season they do not tolerate the presence of no other predator, from the kestrel to the peregrine falcon. Also jackdaws are welcomed, but often also they become quarry. In Spanish and German language Bonelli's eagle it's called "eagle-goshawk" for her agility and power. Her natural quarry, beyond the rabbits, is jackdaws, pigeon, woodpigeon, squirrels that she captures with aerial maneuvers worthy of the best falcons. Many times I have seen these eagles also enter into the forest in order to procure and obtain branches and leaves comparing and remembering the goshawks agility.

I have been a falconer since I was 10 years old and have had several falcons and goshawks, loving the native birds mainly; I decided to buy a Bonelli's eagle from a European breeder. I think that the maximum expression of falconry is to hunt wild quarry in their natural atmosphere by means of native birds of prey and, in my Sicilian situation,

having a bird that in the future can be used for breeding purposes to improve wild eagle population, was very important. This definition can be appreciated and be stated better in falconry.

"Luna", is this her name, it's a beautiful social imprint Bonelli's eagle female of 3 years old. Immediately I've been fascinated by her feet, really large, similar to the golden eagle's, but little bit smaller with slim and long fingers that can be possible to catch flying bird without problems.

After two days of manning, she was very quite and I started to lower her weight starting at the same time to call her to the fist. Every step was fast and her weight arrived from 2700 grams to 2300 grams so I decided to fly free this bird.

After a short period of training to the rabbit haired lure pulled ahead from the car or the horse, or calling her to the fist walking through wooded areas to improve her muscles and her ability to maneuver, I decided to bring her in the hunting area, also because her aggressiveness grown up day after day. I remember the first rabbit that she saw, escaped from her feet after a short chase and found his salvation into a small bush. Luna immediately has followed the rabbit walking into the bush without succeeding to take it out of its hiding place. Checked that bush Luna understood that the rabbits use the small bushes to hide so she went into another small bush and than another one, showing to me how this eagle use a lot his brain. Luna is an intelligent bird which are enough few lesson to teach her a lot of things.

Few falconer have the fortune to fly a Bonelli's eagle and use this bird principally hunt quarry from the fist, like a goshawk. This hunting style show how is strong and fast this bird used to hunt here in Europe mostly hares and rabbits and ,seeing her qualities, it's easy to understand why past falconers choose to call Bonelli's eagle "EAGLE-GOSHAWK".

But in "waiting-on" fly you can understand what means "Bonelli's eagle"!

For this reason I have carried Luna in a hilly place to encourage her to go up, but when she has left my fist immediately started to go up making small circles. In few second she having caught up a remarkable height (the weather conditions where perfect in order to concur this flight!!!). A mix of emotions and worry attacked my mind; she was a little point in the sky.... After a few minutes I decided to call her but she didn't want to come down thus I decided to take a male pheasant from my bag and release it. I have assisted her to perform a fantastic stoop ended with a great capture of the quarry. Bonelli's is a sky queen.

After this experience I decided to fly my eagle in "waiting-on" way, taking many rabbits, pheasants and some rock partridges. Unfortunately it's really dangerous to fly an eagle in waiting-on in my country, because many times I saw my eagle to catch chicken, cats, lambs in a bottom of the hill, or in a distant hill risking that the shepherds or the other animal owner would kill her. Consequently I decided to fly Luna in a classical style in Sicily and in the rest of Europe receiving great emotions and numerous captures. I could stay hours to tell her hunting abnegation and generosity, her courage and resistance.

Rabbit hawking in the wooded areas ended in few meters, or long chasing in open areas to hunt 5 kilo hares. A friend of mine in east Europe is also a Bonelli's owner that he use principally to hares hunting but often he go to roe deer hunting. In 2003 when I've been to him I was astonished from his eagle's boldness and courage that many times concurred to seize and to throw down roe deer about 14/16 kilos. At the beginning I could not believe to my eyes, but knowing this eagle I understood that all can happen. Of course is dangerous fly a 2300grams bird to a 15 kilos roe deer. I would not make it, but this is sufficient in order to appreciate this "African Hawk Eagle' big sister" able to capture from jackdaw up to a roe deer, using her power and her heart!!



### Last Hunt of the Season.

**Bill Johnston (IAF Vice-President for the Americas)**

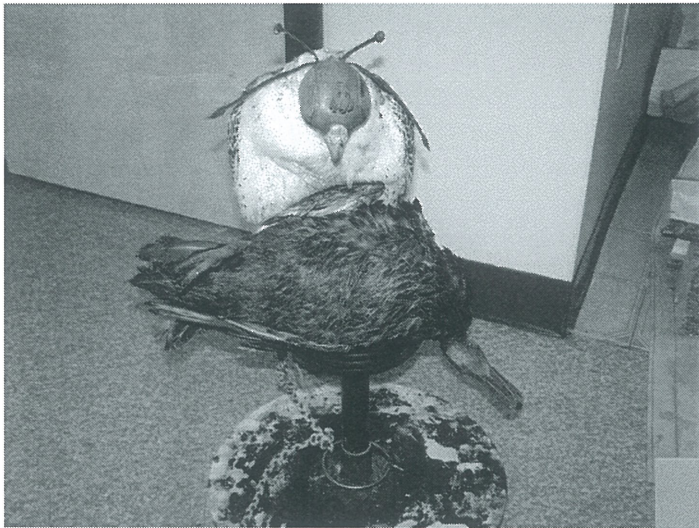
Last day of the season, last duck. Nice, but not remarkable. True, but it isn't the duck, it's the wet falcon. There is about a foot and a half of snow on the ground, the digital thermometer in the truck says its 9 degrees and the wind chill is well below zero. I put the bird up and proceed with my two dogs towards a stretch of open water where a stream enters a small pond. Sure enough there are about 20 ducks in a mixed flock of mallards and blacks. Unfortunately the falcon is a bit out of position when they flush and they make a clean get away. All except a hand full that are intimidated and bail back in about a quarter mile down in some more open water. Now, I'll be 68 on my next birthday and slugging through the snow is starting to get to me. I arrive and a duck takes off heading back to the other open water with the falcon in a tail chase.

I think, enough of this sh--, I'll call her down and go home. Except that she doesn't come back. I grab the telemetry and go looking. It's been about 10 minuets since she



disappeared, but the signal is strong and sure enough there she is sitting half frozen on the bank of the stream with a Black Duck floating nearby. Covered in snow and ice and shivering, I put the falcon inside my coat, collect the duck then head back to the truck. It's there that I notice that one of her transmitters had fallen off. I put the bird in the truck start it and turn the heater on full blast. Back tracking I locate the transmitter in about nine inches of water near the ice where I assume the falcon caught the duck before being drug into the drink. I should send a thank you note to Louie at L.L Electronics. Thank goodness both transmitters worked or the falcon would have died of exposure, I'm sure!

By the way, that's a wood stove off to the right of the picture.



Bill's Hawk and the duck.



Birds at the 2008 SAFA Meet.  
*Photos: Fritz Bohme.*

## African Raptor Network

*The following web-site may well be of interest to readers of this Journal:*

The African Raptor Network website is finally official!!

You may view the site at: [www.africanraptors.org](http://www.africanraptors.org)

I would like to thank Rob Simmons, Neil Deacon, Simon Thomsett, Laila Baha-el-Din, Robbie Whytock, Bethan Morgan and Christiane Trierweiler for their excellent contributions.

Please remember that this website is for African raptors and a platform to showcase your work so that productive discussions can ensue. This website will depend on your contributions so please let me have your articles, photos, anecdotes and anything relating to African raptor work.

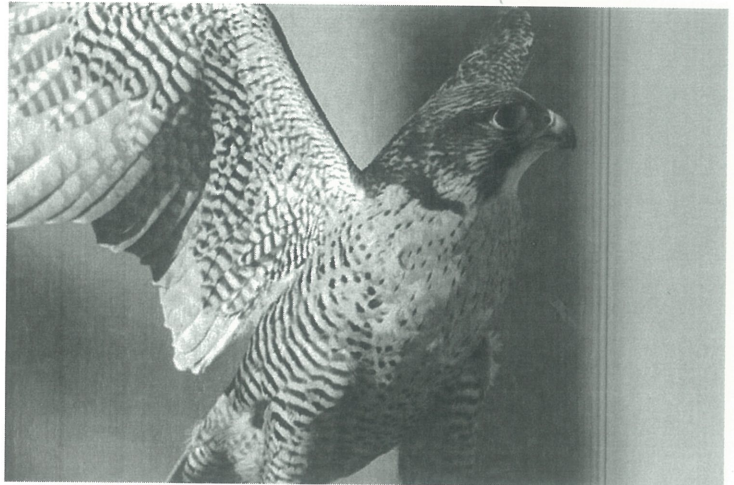
You are welcome to leave constructive comments on the website.

Enjoy :)

Munir Z. Virani, PhD  
Africa Program Director  
The Peregrine Fund  
5668 West Flying Hawk Lane  
Boise Idaho 83709  
USA

Current Address:  
Ornithology Section  
National Museum of Kenya  
P.O Box 45111  
Nairobi Kenya 00100  
Tel +254-733-748922 (cell)

[www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org)



*Photo: Fritz Bohme*

(The African Raptor Network also produces a biannual newsletter that can be obtained through contacting the website. I have circulated the first edition to the ExCo and will continue to do so. However, if you wish to ensure your own copy, I recommend that you contact the website directly. -Editor)

## **QUARTEL FARMS**

Suppliers of fresh quail eggs.

Hatchling quail.

Mature birds for food source (coturnix) frozen or live.

Dressed birds for the restaurant trade.

Also limited supply of exotics, Bob whites, bamboo quail & chaka.

**Contact: George McAllister • Cell: 083 419 841**

**P.O.Box 681**

**Waterval Bovin**

**Mpumalanga**

# Hawk Eagle Stamps of the World



African Hawk Eagle



Ornate Hawk-Eagle



Blyth's Hawk-Eagle

Mountain Hawk-Eagle



Crowned Hawk-Eagle