



# **MEWS VIEWS**

**Vol. 8 2010**

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

## PEREGRINE FALCON

Riding the air on sickle wings above the heathery brae  
The Pointers work beneath you; you hold your pitch and stay.  
Waiting on above the Field little escapes your gaze,  
You read the language of the dogs and by instinct know their ways.

Your buoyant cycles in the sky and faintly tinkling bell,  
Gives hardly a hint of your turn of speed as you stoop into hell.  
The Pointer freezes into point, the Grouse explode from cover,  
Tightly do you fold your sails as you race to meet a lover.

Six seconds is all it takes to plunge eight hundred feet,  
I hear the hiss of your slotted bell as flesh and talons meet.  
The popping of a paper bag, a drifting cloud of feather,  
Limp and lifeless tumbles the Grouse into the purple heather.

**Roger Neilson**

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### Front Cover:

**Peregrine Falcon** by Roger Neilson, which accompanies the verse above.

Roger, an old Falconer of Zimbabwe and South Africa is now living in Scotland where he flies an imprint musket Goshawk to the detriment of the local crows.

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## Editorial

While most South Africans will look back to 2010 as the year that the World came to South Africa for Soccer, there are reasons for Falconers of this country to look back on 2010 as a year of huge significance for Falconry:

- This year we made a stand, along with a number of other Conservation and Hunting organizations, against unsustainable falconry practices and actions which would compromise the conservation of the Biodiversity of our land. This is particularly significant as it has served to unite these diverse organizations in a common cause. What is also significant is that the press statement released (and included in this publication) is as much an endorsement of the activities of South African Falconers as it is a condemnation of the activities that we oppose.
- After a massive international effort, the Cultural Heritage Directorate of UNESCO has unanimously accepted Falconry as a **World Cultural Heritage Activity**. This is a momentous decision and will be officially announced at their next Meeting in November. This will effectively call on all nations to preserve and encourage Falconry as part of the Cultural Heritage of the World. This has been the purpose behind the Falconry Festivals at which we have been represented. To celebrate this, I have included The Falconry Heritage Timeline of Southern Africa in the Centre-fold of this Newsletter. This is our Heritage and, as such, helps to define who we are and what we do.
- We have struggled to have Falconry included and defined appropriately within the new regulations governing Norms and Standards for the Hunting Industry in South Africa. This has been a real roller-coaster and we have yet to see the final result. Through this process we have received the support of all the Hunting organizations in South Africa, the Provincial Conservation Authorities and officials of the National Department of Environmental Affairs. We now await the final decision which rests with the Minister of Environmental Affairs. It is a culmination of years of effort to gain recognition and acceptance for Falconry in South Africa – so hold your thumbs guys!

It is my pleasure to, once again, thank all who have contributed to this publication,  
Good Hawking –  
Adrian Lombard – July 2010.

## Regional Reports

### Boland Falconry Club

At the beginning of the year I started to put my old falconry and raptor documentary video footage over to DVD format. In my study I set up my recorders, PVR's and writers and whilst working started with the dubbing. Although I originally wanted to get the conversions over and done with as soon as possible, I slowly more and more enjoyed watching the old footage at hand. As I was watching this old raptor and falconry footage I again realized how fortunate we are to still practice the art of falconry. Several programs I recorded years ago again had new meaning and significance. Lord of the Eagles I recorded in 1992 showing in detail how the Kazaks trained their eagles in Mongolia was a refresher on their skills. In 1991 I recorded a Wildlife on One named Skyraider documenting the peregrines off the coast of Scotland showing their breeding, collective hunting and the raising and the training of their young. Just to check whether these programs are still available via the BBC I contacted the concerned parties, only to be informed that the footage was archived many years ago and not available anymore. Eventually we will all one day pass on and taking my book and video collection into account as part of my estate I am still challenged how I will address it in my final will and testament.

When watching this old footage I reminded myself of how fortunate we are to still be in a position to trap and train wild caught raptors.

Looking at the globalization of nations, the world is truly becoming a global village. This in itself will influence everything including the falconry as we know it. We will have to review membership options to accommodate foreign falconers wanting to become active members. Any active membership will have to be evaluated in terms of club grading and norms.

The Boland Falconry Club has 4 members, 2 of whom were active, flying two African Peregrines, a Harris Hawk and a Peregrine/Gyr/Saker Hybrid. A number of quarry were taken including Cape Francolin and duck. They were active in rehabilitating several raptors.

Wehahn Geldenhuys  
Chairman

## Eastern Cape Falconry Club

Chairman : Alan Harvey

Members : Arnold Slabbert  
Andrew Pringle  
Jonathan Arnott  
Russell Moore

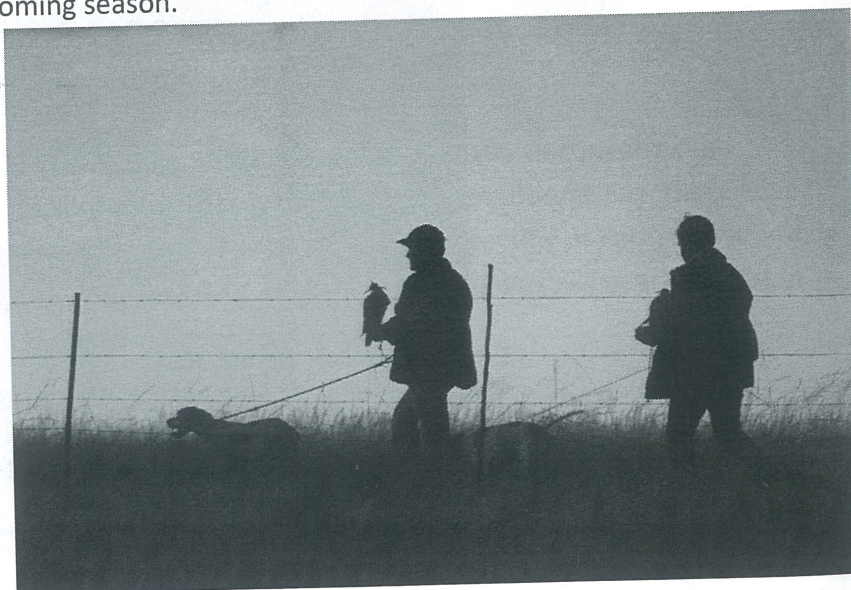
Arnold flew his many times intermewed hacked female peregrine at redwing and duck in the Port Elizabeth area taking a good bag in spite of the drought in the area. He plans to fly her again next season. Arnold is also flying a rehab tierce that came off one of the urban eyries in PE. This bird will be released once it is hunting well. Andrew Pringle plans to fly a passage lanner in the Tarkastad area this coming season after being inactive for the past year.

Jonathan flew two passage lanners the past season with both being lost for a variety of reasons.

Russell has been inactive this past season.

I had a good season flying my 7 times intermewed passage female peregrine mainly on duck. She took 72 assorted species. I have put her out to hack as she has had a good innings and provided me with the best falconry of my career. She accounted for over 500 head of quarry over the years. She has been at hack for three weeks now and seems to be reluctant to go. My other female, an unhacked eyas peregrine from Tim was showing great potential with big pitches and 6 duck when she took out her patagial membrane on a fence. She is recovering well and should fly again, if not I will use her for breeding. I had a brief flirtation with a black hybrid from Tim's project. This Gyr/Peregrine was an awesome flyer and took 26 duck. There was no love in this relationship so I have past her on to Greg. I am a peregrine addict! I have started two new passage females and am looking forward to getting them up to speed for this coming season.

Alan Harvey,  
Chairman.



## **Free State Falconry Club**

The Free State Falconry Club is continuing to grow at a steady rate and our current membership stands on 20. This includes a number of youngsters still in school. As demanding as falconry can be these youngsters are proving to be very devoted, to their hawks and are learning the ropes of falconry through the grading system. By the simple nature of falconry the longtime members are still doing what they love best and are flying their hawks to the fullest. It is encouraging to note, that the practice of falconry is not stagnant and that even the most experienced falconers are still in the process of learning and are forever seeking new ways to extract more from the practice of falconry.

With a membership that is widely dispersed over the Free State, the practice of falconry is mostly a solitary affair. This offers a few challenges to function as a club. Apprentices especially have to communicate via email and the telephone to their tutors. All are encouraged however to make the effort to meet up with other falconers and fly their hawks together, as this is where the most valuable experience and knowledge is gained.

The Free State offers excellent hunting on large tracts of land, the landowners are friendly but the safety situation in regards to farm murders and stock theft does put tension on the minds of all involved. It is of the utmost importance to have clearance with the landowner on the property you fly. We appeal to all falconers visiting the Free State and elsewhere for that matter, to keep in mind the changing times and have consideration for everybody that is involved. The good rainy season filled the duck dams and the gamebirds are flourishing. This promises to be a good hunting season for all.

Our revised grading system is working well and the standard of flying is high. The afgos is the preferred apprentice bird. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Gauteng club for the afgosses imported from them. To establish our own breeding pairs of afgosses is of the highest priority, to be self sufficient in hawks for apprentices.

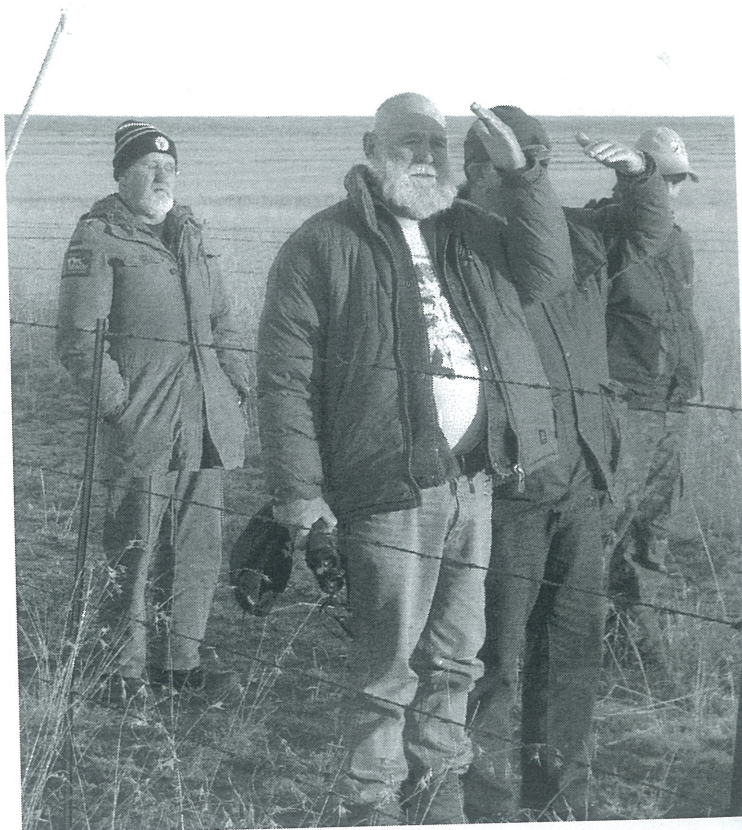
Our falcon nest box project is still underway, too early to measure our success but peregrines have taken up residence in some boxes. As club we attend the Biodiversity Forum of the Free State and this single nest box project has had a big impact on the conservation authorities. As a club we are involved with rehabilitation and have taken in birds ranging from a kestrel to a vulture. As a club contact has been established with the local bird watching fraternity. A talk has been given and a field excursion to watch falcons fly is on the calendar. This contact has changed many skeptical and negative perceptions to the positive side of falconry. There is a lot more that can be done in this regard.

We wish all a thrilling season with their hawks.

Chairman's report 2010

F.Breedt / A Muller

Early morning at the  
SAFA Field Meet – hosted  
in the Free State.





## Limpopo Falconry Club

Limpopo province had an excellent rain season this past summer which made nature prosper with game birds breeding twice (double clutching) in a four month period. Game was therefore plentiful with excellent opportunities for entering young hawks and getting the old hawks fit.

Harris breeding projects within the club also prosper with both Dawid Botes's and Flip Blignaut's Harris pairs producing 2 chicks each. Flip's Harris pair produced 2 males that he kept and Dawid Botes' Harris pair produced a fine male and female chick. The female is flown by Lourens Coetzee and the male by Etienne Hendricks.

Dawid Botes is still flying his male hawk eagle and his female lanner. Paul Venter's female Saker is taking to the skies in Nylstroom. Strange behavior has been noticed in the Guinea fowl at Palaborwa. They were all walking around with a nervous twitch. It was later realized that Gideon Smit's Black Spar flown by Ernest Blignaut was the cause of this phenomena.

The guys in Louis Trichardt are also doing well, they only complain about the short days during this winter with the sun setting quite early behind the Soutpansberg mountains. Marius Botha is flying his Black Spar and as mentioned previously Etienne Hendricks is flying a male Harris.

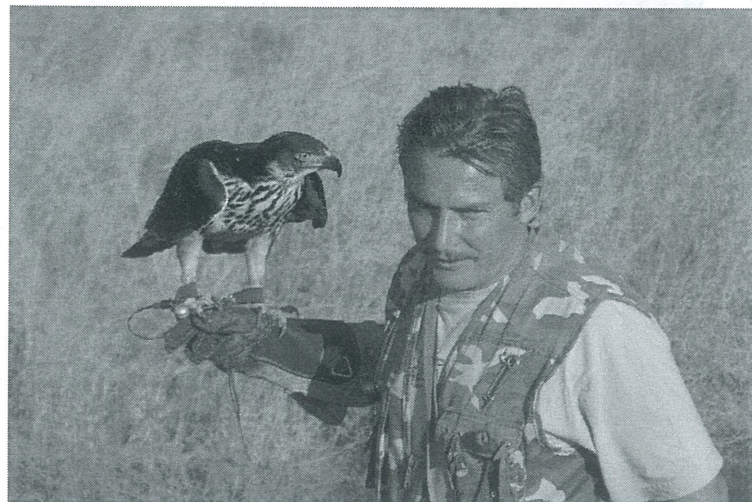
Flip Blignaut and sons are flying their flock of HARRISES while Flip is still being trained by his Hawk eagle. Dave Holliday is also flying a hawk eagle and afgos.

Limpopo province wants to welcome Gerrie van Niekerk to the club and hope he will enjoy falconry in Limpopo.

The club hopes to be successful this year in their various breeding projects which include a pair of Sakers, two pairs of HARRISES, a pair of Jackal buzzards and a pair of African Goshawks.

Greetings

Lourens Coetzee  
Secretary.



## Mpumalanga Falconry Club

Since last year till now the MPFC has grown a lot. We are now 17 members. The year did not start of well for some of the guys as they lost their hawks to accidents and unforeseen circumstances. But for the rest the year and season has started of quiet well.

George McAllister is flying Cilla and African peregrine falcon. George managed to breed a falcon African peregrine that was given to a follow falconer.

Mark Holder will be flying as usual a Black sparrow hawk

Mark Bett is flying his captive bred African peregrine falcon

Stevin van Rensburg is flying a peregrine falcon which he got from Trevor Oertel

Charles Sadler is flying an African hawk eagle and a lanner falcon

Thomas Holder is flying an African goshawk which came from George.

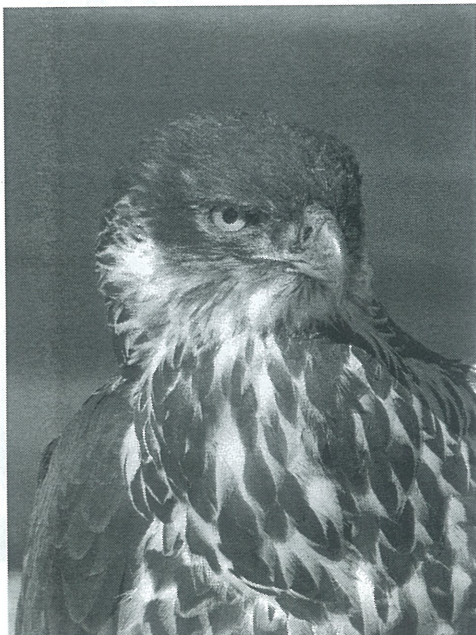
Marile Sadler is flying an African goshawk.

Dawid van der Merwe is flying a greater kestrel from bird of prey centre

The mini-meet was held in May in Chrissiesmeer. It was an eventful weekend with the usual Saturday husbandry day. And then the most memorable moment when a jackal buzzard caught a spring hare. Read more about this in the Penryn College report.

George McAlister,

Chairman



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## Natal Falconry Club

With membership sitting at 21 and 10 of these with hawks, falconry is still alive and well in Natal. The club is driven by a strong active committee. Our thanks must be extended to both Tim Wagner and Adrian Lombard from SAFA for all the help and assistance on the aforementioned.

At present we have Greg McBey is flying his usual plethora of birds, Tom has taken a break for the season but continues to help on and advisory and grading capacity, Daryl Twiddy still flying his old Hawk Eagle (25 odd years) along with a peregrine, Kyle Solmes' imprint Lanner up and hammering the duck, Mark Wynn is still doing nothing Ashton Musgrave is flying the club imprint black spar female. Elton Arnot is flying an imprint melanistic Black Spar female. Rowan Mattig is flying his new Harris hawk male. Chris Lourens is flying his new Afgoss well and is hoping to grade any day now. Stuart Pringle has joined us from the UK and has taken up an imprint Black Soar female and is going well. John Korston bred his Peregrines along with some lanners this year-well done! Bruce is flying a third year hack tiercel from Harvey, a four year old passage male Peri 5 year old female Afgoss that keeps everyone with food for the off season. Ross, Kyle and Bruce took Red spars this season, the quail disappeared early leaving LBJ's the main quarry for these pocket rockets. Ross is also flying a Male captive bred Peri, Graham Young hacked his Afgos on his farm in Swartburg. Ben continues to do rehab and educational work.

Some good dogs have been acquired from various breeders over the last season or two so we should be seeing some good dog work coming through.

The club had a very successful AGM at the Nottingham Road Rifle club next to a trout dam. One of the biggest turn outs in recent times. This was held over two days with family members staying over and enjoying the awesome scenery and a company. Parks board was well represented with both Bill Howells and Brent Coverdale joining us.

A number of our members have been assisted in various ways by other provinces and their members, a big thanks to all. A big thanks to Tim and Adrian and the other EXCO committee members for all the behind the scenes work.

Best regards and happy hawking

Bruce Padbury

Sec. NFC



## North-West Hawking Club

The NWHC is responsible for the ethical practices as well as conduct of its members and to ensure all parties are familiar with the policy and procedures that the club adheres to we have regular meetings and gatherings as well as inspections and a mentoring system that ensures the welfare of the hawks is always the most important aspect. The NWHC is committed to the conservation of the raptor community using acceptable methods developed by falconers in order to offer the bird a quality of life that will impact the ecology and biodiversity of the Birds Of Prey we love. It is evident that falconry has a major role to play in the rehabilitation of raptors and that the practices developed by falconers can positively influence the rehabilitation community in and around the province. A register of such cases is kept by the club so as to include this information in the reports submitted to the North West Nature Conservation. It was also important that the NWHC must make a concerted effort in the research opportunities in the field of raptor conservation, *i.e.* Sightings, nesting activities as well as prey species accounts. The NWHCs input in the rehabilitation and monitoring of local raptors only strengthens our standing with the local Nature Conservation department as well as provides justification for certain wild take policies.

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

Dylan Freeman Chairman, I have continued to fly me Female African Hawk eagle with great success and she has taken a large bag as I fly her through the molt and often she supplies the freezer with fresh quarry on a regular basis. I have also taken on a once intermewed Female Peregrine Falcon from G. McAllister. She is flying well and been a true pleasure, she has taken a few head of quarry and I hope to have her in action at the meet.

Ronald Gorrie V-Chairman, has taken on a female Black Sparrowhawk in her fifth season. This bird originally came from O. Curtis. Oscar Olen Committee has been too busy to take on a hawk but continues to monitor raptor activity in the Potchefstroom area and has been heavily involved in club committee activity. He hopes to take on a hawk in the coming season. Johan Smith has recently joined the club as an associate from the TFC and is awaiting approval of his import permit to fly his African Goshawk female in the province.

Theresa Hodgkinson and Adri Du Toit, Danie Huyser, De Wet Naude, are members involved in the club. Tanya Stone Campbell is a rehabilitator who uses our knowledge for advice on cases she is involved with.

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

acknowledged this as a pseudo-permit in the field. A membership contact list is published and attached to facilitate communication within the club membership.

Good hawking

Dylan Freeman



### **Transvaal Falconry Club (Gauteng)**

#### **Falconry**

Brian Anderson received a peregrine tiercel from the breeding project – 3 eggs from one of Tim Wagner's pairs were put under an infertile egg laying pair at Grant Neale's facility. This resulted in two tiercels being fledged. The second tiercel went to Grant. By all accounts Brian's tiercel is flying well and has even put foot to a couple of sandgrouse.

Grant started the season with the above tiercel and another large tiercel ex Tim Wagner's project. Both birds were flown for a while and then put down to be retained for Grants breeding project. Grant has a number of infertile egg laying pairs and hopes to replace the tiercels of two pairs with these young tiercels in years to come. He is currently flying two intermewed female peregrines.

Mark Labuschagne has his intermewed Gyr/Shahen hybrid and a new female

peregrine on the wing. Mark's perseverance seems to be paying off as his hybrid is starting to take duck.

Paul Strydom started the season with a new female peregrine ex Mike Thompson which showed early promise but was unfortunately lost when he forgot to switch the transmitter on and the bird went AWOL. He is currently flying a Gyr/saker/pere hybrid which by all accounts is a high mounting bird. This bird hit a fence a couple of weeks ago hurting a leg in the process but it now appears to be fine after a couple of weeks rest.

Leon Havemann has a female peregrine of the year from eggs ex Tim Wagner but hatched and raised under George McAlister's pair of peregrines. He has also recently taken up his intermewed female peregrine.

Tim Wagner has had a season of mixed emotions. Hawking time has been severely curtailed due to work commitments; and the female peregrine he retained in his breeding project turned into a large tiercel while he was in the USA. This bird was then given to Grant while Tim tried to source a new bird. A bird obtained late December was unfortunately lost early in the season despite a telemetry chase of 5 days involving a number of falconers. He currently has two new birds in training.

Lizette Beukes, Hennie Grobler, Pieter Rabie, Johan van der Merwe and Alex Glyphis all have new Lanners. Lizette's bird has started taking quarry on a regular basis but still needs to work on pitch. Hennie's bird is taking decent pitch but at present is not particularly interested in gamebirds. Pieter's bird is slightly behind the rest but he assures us it will be ready by the SAFA meet. Alex bird is flying well and has taken the odd gamebird. It is really good to see this revival in lanners especially as the guys are giving them a good bash and not viewing them as an obstacle in the race to their A grade and a peregrine. Alex is also helping train and fly a Taita falcon. Very few have ever been trained for falconry and this bird is a first for us. He also finds time to hunt his intermewed Black Spar. Andre Glyphis continues to fly his intermewed lanner that can be encouraged with warmer air to take real decent pitches.

Bertus Beukes has a hot little Black Spar musket that has accounted for a decent number of gamebirds and also provides entertainment with long and high chases on pigeons. Graham Anderson is flying his intermewed Black Spar female and continues to take multiple heads of quarry on every outing. He had a very unfortunate incident when his spar flew into a fence while chasing. This resulted in the bird's beak breaking off just below the cere. Lesser falconers would have given up at that stage but Graham has persevered by hand feeding the bird and continuing to fly.

A couple of new falconers, Ruan Rabie, Rian Hatting and Adam van Rensburg have their first birds. The Af gosses of Rian and Adam are harassing the local populations' of Plover and mynahs. Ruan has a kestrel and will grade soon to move on to his next bird.

Colin Williams has his intermewed Af Gos and will soon be crawling the neighborhood in search of mynahs and plovers.

Ronnie Watt has a female peregrine and the bird is waiting on at good height and flying pigeons but has yet to take wild quarry. Ronnie had a big scare recently when his bird refused to eat and lost condition. After investigation it was found the bird had a No 7 shotgun pellet lodged in its digestive tract causing all the problems. With treatment and patience the bird eventually passed the pellet and has made a full recovery. This pellet resulted from some pigeons donated to Ronnie in good faith but it emphasizes how careful one needs to be with the quality of your hawk food.

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

### **Breeding**

Leon Haveman's African Goshawk project continues to be the backbone of the shortwing breeding and he fledged two chicks the past breeding season. His young pair that was successful last year failed to hatch and raise chicks this year.

Pieter Rabie still holds a pair that produced two chicks this year after 7 years of patience. The birds have been transferred to an old school falconer Koos Els. Koos has been absent from falconry for many years but has decided to get involved again. He intends taking up a Black spar this coming breeding season

Grant Neale's peregrines, failed to produce, but one pair raised chicks hatched from fertile eggs out of Tim Wagner's project.

Tim Wagner's peregrines produced 12 fertile eggs from 3 pairs. Two clutches of 3 fertile eggs each were donated to Grant Neale and George Mc Alsiter respectively. Tim incubated 2 fertile eggs and the rest were disposed of as there were no firm commitments for the eyasses.

No Hybrids were produced

Tim Wagner.  
Chairman.

## Penryn College Report

The Penryn Falconry Club celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. We continue to remain a small but active club with various C grade birds being flown with varying success by our falconry boys. At present we have 4 active falconers and one apprentice.

The falconers are as follows:

### Nathan Cook (C grade)

Nathan is flying a 4<sup>th</sup> year passage female African Goshawk. He has had a number of exciting chases on various species of quarry. Nathan is a most keen and positive falconer and I am quite sure that his tally will increase as the hunting season progresses.

### Justin Hood (C Grade)

Justin is flying a passage female (rehab) gos. This bird was kindly given to Justin by the Bird of Prey Centre. She unfortunately only has one eye and some feather damage, but this impediment does not seem to have any negative impact on her enthusiasm with regards to chasing quarry.

### Romario Gonsalves (C Grade)

Romario is a first year falconer who is presently flying an imprint female Jackal Buzzard. Romario is hugely enthusiastic about his bird and falconry in general. At our recent C Grade meet his bird caught a Springhare in fine style.

### Richard Hay (C Grade)

Richard is flying a male Jackal Buzzard (rehab) which was given to him by the Bird of Prey Centre. Richard is an exceedingly keen falconer and I am quite sure that both bird and falconer will look forward to an interesting season.

On a sad note, Willem Burger, an old school boy falconer, was tragically killed in a car accident in February.

Willem was known for his enthusiasm and dedication towards falconry whilst still a learner at Penryn. He flew a number of passage and captive bred goshawks successfully at various species of quarry. Some of the best gos flights I've seen were with some of Willem's birds on quail and francolin.

After matriculating in 2008, Willem moved to Pretoria and attempted a BSc degree



at the University of Pretoria. After an unsuccessful year in Pretoria, I was able to find a job for Willem at the "Cradle of Life" in Badplaas working for Charles Jones.

It was whilst working there that Willem found his niche in life working with birds of prey and helping Charles maintain his menagerie of snakes. It was also whilst working at the centre that Willem was killed in a tragic car accident. Willem will be sorely missed by all whose lives he touched.

Stephen Van Rensburg.



Willem Burger.

### **Report to the Bird of Prey Working Group.**

The 2010 BoPWG Conference will be held in August this year. This is considerably later in the year than previous conferences because of the 2010 Soccer World Cup. SAFA will be represented and Adrian Lombard will present a paper concerning the threat to Falconry and Conservation posed by Arab Falconers who wish to hunt Bustards in Southern Africa. This paper will be published in Mews Views 2011. See also the article in African Indaba Vol.7 #6 Nov/Dec 2009. On: [www.africanindaba.co.za](http://www.africanindaba.co.za)

## **Report to the International Association for Falconry (IAF)**

*Presented at the 40<sup>th</sup> AGM of the IAF, held at Wokefield, near Reading in the United Kingdom on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009 in conjunction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Falconry festival at which SAFA was also represented.*

The South African Falconry Association wishes to thank the IAF for allowing it to host the AGM in 2008. This has given a significant boost to Falconry in the Southern African Region and Southern African Falconers must grasp this opportunity to cement the gains for our Art.

There are significant Animal Rights pressures on Falconry and Conservation in general, evident in South Africa. Our concerns are that international Animal Rights organizations, principally from the USA, are exporting their principle of "Non-consumptive Conservation" through donor funding of conservation organizations in developing countries and South Africa is a target. In this way, Conservation NGOs and those working within them may have their projects and plans perverted, despite clear evidence that sustainable utilization and hunting benefits conservation and despite the support for sustainable utilization enshrined in the Convention on Biological diversity.

Evidence of these pressures can be seen in the legislation faced by Falconers in South Africa. There is currently real concern over Ex-Situ Wild Animal Regulations that are being promulgated in KwaZulu Natal Province which, in their present state, would end Falconry in that province. SAFA is mounting a considerable effort to address this legislation.

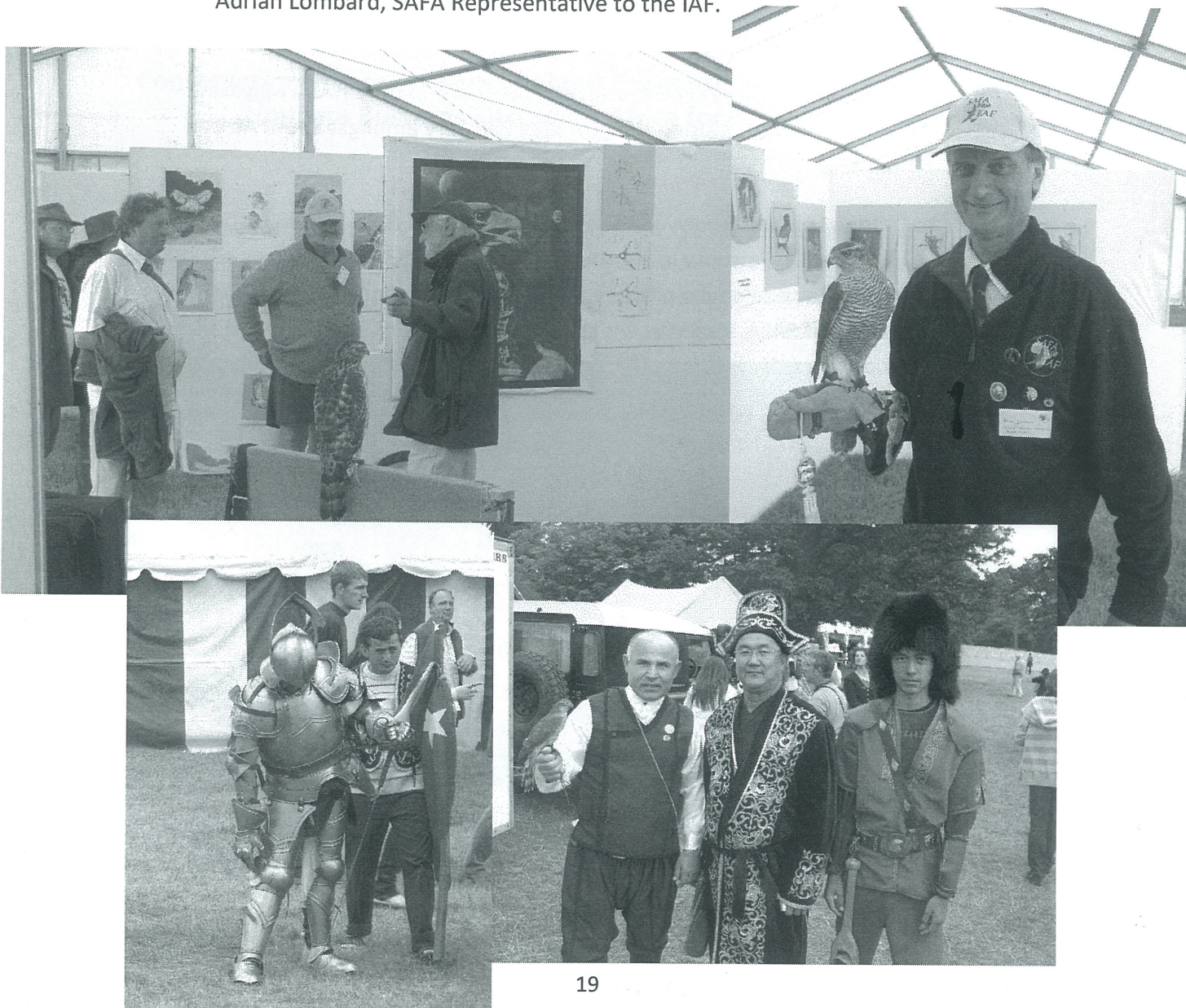
In March 2009, I attended the Bird of Prey Working group Conference. I met Simon Thomsett of Kenya, previously employed by the Peregrine Fund as its representative in East Africa. From him, I learned of the effects of the "Non-consumptive Conservation" principle that has been applied in Kenya, effectively preventing Falconry in that country and creating the conservation disaster that Kenya will face.

There is concern in South Africa over interests by Arab Falconers to hunt bustards in the region. Conservation concerns state that this hunting would be very difficult to regulate and would constitute an additional threat to already embattled Bustard populations. Unless addressed, this does constitute a real threat to the continued practice of Falconry in South Africa and, indeed is the reason cited why Falconry is prohibited in Namibia and is discouraged in Botswana. Certainly this will put pressure on the use of exotic and hybrid raptors by South African Falconers.

In the absence of a representative of the Zimbabwe falconry Club, I would like to inform the Meeting that Falconry of a high standard continues to be practiced in Zimbabwe, despite economic and "land reform" pressures. We are very sad to inform the meeting that Keegan Langley, the son of Ade Langley who attended the IAF Meeting as one of the ZFC representatives last year, was seriously injured in a motor accident. The proceeds of the raffle held by the British Falconry Club at the Gala Dinner for the IAF Representatives will be donated to the Keegan Langley Fund and we share their call for all representatives to dig deep and assist with this cause.

On a positive note, we would like to mention that Dr. Neil Deacon, a prominent Zimbabwean Falconer, has been elected to the post of Deputy Director of BirdLife Zimbabwe.

Adrian Lombard, SAFA Representative to the IAF.

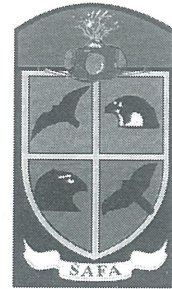


## **Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa.**

SAFA received significant support from CHASA over the course of the past year.

- The Norms and Standards for the Regulation of the Hunting Industry in South Africa. These regulations are still under consideration. Falconry was initially included with definition of Falconry and Falconers and entrenchment of the Grading and Apprenticeship system. It was then removed from the regulations. We received unanimous support from all Hunting organizations, orchestrated by CHASA, and were reinstated. Currently we believe that Falconry is again excluded from these regulations but we are working hard to reverse this.
- SAFA has been supported by CHASA in its efforts to prevent Bustard Hunting by Arab Falconers in South Africa. Please see the Press release that follows.
- SAFA and Falconry received several mentions in the CHASA Magazine – Game and Hunt, raising the profile of Falconry amongst South African hunters.
- Adrian Lombard received the President's Award from CHASA for Services rendered to Falconry in South Africa. This award can be seen as a tribute to all the Falconers who practice their Art with excellence and support the efforts of SAFA.





## MEDIA RELEASE

### Houbara Bustard threat to conservation in South Africa

#### **Conservationists are concerned about the conservation threat of releasing Houbara Bustards into South Africa for hunting purposes**

We, the organizations listed below, react with dismay to the receipt of information suggesting that there is interest in the hunting of Houbara Bustards by means of falcons in South Africa. According to information received, there is intention by Arab falconers to establish a Houbara Bustard breeding facility in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa and to release and hunt these bustards with large exotic falcons. We wish to state, in the strongest terms, that we are vehemently opposed to this suggestion.

We understand that there may also be an intention to hunt indigenous bustards and korhaans with exotic falcons, which we also strongly oppose.

The basis of our opposition to any such proposals would be that:

- The release of exotic species into the natural environment to be hunted is contrary to existing biodiversity legislation and could be detrimental to the conservation of indigenous birds.
- Falconry is the art of hunting wild quarry with a trained hawk. The practice of “put and take” hunting where quarry species are released into the natural environment and then hunted does not fit this definition and would, in our opinion, be unethical.

- We are of the opinion that the captive breeding of Houbara Bustards in South Africa on a scale that permits their hunting by falcons is impractical and, probably, not feasible. We have real concern that this activity may be used as a front to enable the hunting of indigenous bustard species.
- Ten species of bustards occur in South Africa, of which six are endemic (or near-endemic) to southern Africa (in other words, found nowhere else in the world) and of which six are listed in *The Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. The Denham's Bustard and Blue Korhaan are also listed as 'Near-threatened' internationally.
- Whilst we strongly support the concept of sustainable utilization, including the sustainable hunting of natural resources, and view this as a significant conservation tool, we believe that hunting of indigenous bustards and korhaans is not sustainable, in line with their current legal status within South Africa. -Hunting would be an additional threat for these species, all of which breed slowly and are threatened by many other human-induced factor
- The South African Falconry Association (SAFA) has very strict regulations regarding the use of exotic raptors for falconry. With the application of these regulations, the loss of a free-flying exotic raptor into the environment becomes a very rare event. In this way the use of exotic raptors for falconry is not a contravention of existing biodiversity legislation and does not threaten the natural biodiversity of South Africa. In practical terms, only exotic raptors can be used to hunt Houbara Bustards. We would oppose, in the strongest terms, the possession of exotic raptors, which may be used for falconry, by any persons not affiliated to SAFA and not subject to these SAFA regulations.
- We take pride in the history of co-operation by hunters, including falconers, with South Africa's conservation authorities with particular regard to sustainable utilization issues in general and falconry in particular and we would oppose any practices which would not conform with acceptable sustainable utilization standards of practice and ethics.

We question why the Northern Cape Government is considering this application, which may pre-empt the national translocation policy under discussion by the national Department of Environmental Affairs, provincial conservation authorities and the hunting industry, given that such a policy may apply very strict controls on the movement of non-indigenous animals including the Houbara Bustard and exotic falcons.

We question the failure of the Northern Cape Provincial Government to inform and consult with established stakeholder organizations about this application.

We call on the Northern Cape Government and any other provincial administration to reject any application for permits to captive-breed Houbara Bustards or hunt any bustards and korhaans by exotic falcons.

**For further information, please contact:**

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*This Press Release was produced in response to reliable information that we had received that indicated that there was a real intention to breed Houbara Bustards in the Northern Cape, to be released and hunted with exotic Falcons. The content of the Press release was also supported by SA Wingshooters and CHASA.*

## Imprint Jackal Buzzard on Springhare

Steven Van Rensburg

### Penryn Falconry Club

Our annual C grade meet took place in Chrissiesmeer (Mpumalanga Province, South Africa) from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Four of my falconry boys attended the meet with me included. Two of the boys were flying Jackal Buzzards - one, an imprint female and the other a passage rehab male. The other 2 falconers were flying African Goshawks (all 4 are C grade falconers) Anyway, we went out bunny hunting on the Friday night with a Juv. male African Hawk Eagle and the imprint female Jackal Buzzard. A number of slips were offered to the AHE, which he refused! We then switched to the buzzard. A few unsavory remarks were made by senior falconers with regards to the capability of the buzzard taking on hares; they were soon to regret their words. 4 slips were offered to the buzzard which she flew with gusto. The first was a rather difficult slip at a single springhare which she missed (narrowly). The next 2 were incredibly long slips at scrub-hare which she also missed. By now her blood was boiling and she was particularly excited!!! The 4th was a reasonably long slip at another springhare (60m) which she flew at, at a rate of knots, and directly at the hare. She bound to it with one foot on the head and the other just behind the neck, in so doing, subduing the hare immediately. When the falconer arrived on the scene, she already had everything under control, and the senior falconers who initially had lots to say, were standing around with their mouths agape uttering absolute disbelief. As far we know this is a first for SA falconry, that is, a Jackal Buzzard successfully being flown at springhare. She was fed up on her kill and not flown again the next evening.





## Take of Passage Peregrines – a Reality Again in the USA.

*One of the greatest success stories for Falconry and the efforts of Falconers, in recent years, has been the reinstatement of the harvest of Passage Peregrines in the United States of America. It is seldom that a privilege once lost is ever regained. The enormous effort of North American Falconers has paid off and the trapping of these peregrines on the eastern seaboard of the USA was permitted again last year. The following letter and article are published by kind permission of **The Archives of Falconry** and poignantly illustrate this. What is so wonderful about this story is how clearly it illustrates the falconer's role in borrowing a Falcon from the wild, for a little time, then releasing the bird to continue its life. We retain this privilege in South Africa. We must take full advantage of this privilege and we must fight to maintain it against those with closed minds and ill-conceived ideas who would prevent this ancient practice of sustainable utilization .(Ed.)*

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January 28, 2008

Chief, Division of Migratory Birds

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 634

Arlington, VA 22203-1610

Dear Sir,

I would like to submit the following comments concerning the Draft Environmental Assessment and Management Plan (DEA) for take of migrant peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) in the United States for use in Falconry.

I have been an active falconer since 1963 and began working for The Peregrine Fund in March of 1976 to the present time as a raptor biologist. I personally supervised the release of over 2,000 captive breed *anatum* peregrines in the western US from 1978 through 1997 when The Peregrine Fund quit releasing peregrines. Through the years I have been involved in numerous trapping and banding studies involving migrant peregrines on the gulf coast of Texas where there have been dramatic increases in the numbers of migrating peregrines observed through the years. I have also participated in many of The Peregrine Fund studies of nesting peregrines on the West Coast of Greenland where numbers of nesting pairs have also increased dramatically through the years. The recovery and eventual delisting of the peregrine falcon in the United States in 1999 represented the most successful species restoration effort in history. All states have far exceeded the original recovery goals and peregrines are found nesting throughout the world in numbers far greater than

were ever known historically. For these reasons I believe that the trapping of migrant immature for use in falconry is totally justifiable.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the proposed management plan.

Sincerely,

Bill

**-by William Heinrich, Species Restoration Manager, The Peregrine Fund**

First of all I would like to say how pleased I was to hear that all of our letters paid off. I had planned all along to be among the first falconers to apply for a Texas non-resident trapping permit as soon as it became legal, which I did immediately. On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 I received a letter from Texas Parks & Wildlife stating that I had successfully drawn a permit. It was like winning the lottery! I have never had the chance to fly a passage Peregrine and this was an opportunity of a lifetime for me after having worked with Peregrines for over 40 years.

In mid-October I headed to the beach. I was joined by photographer Rob Palmer who ended up taking some wonderful photographs of our trapping experience. I ended up keeping a dark tiercel with stunning yellow feet and perfect plumage which was just what I had hoped for. From the beginning I planned to continue the age old tradition of just borrowing this falcon from nature for a single season before seeing him return to the wild and hopefully begin producing offspring as perfect as himself. For this reason I could never give him a name. I was able to fly this beautiful bird for a little over four months and it was one of the best falconry experiences that I have ever had.

As the weather became nicer near the end of February I began flying him without telemetry, bells, or jesses. On a beautiful spring like day we parted ways as he went up out of sight and did not return. The wonderful thing about flying a passage bird has always been the mystery of where they came from, and where they will end up going. Something tells me that this Peregrine must have come from a wonderful place. I will be applying for another permit one of these years.

Passage Peregrine Take.



Bill Heinrich on South Padre Beach



The Stoop



(Above) At Boise.

(Left) on the beach.



## Two South African Falconers visit the wilds of the USA

**Alan Harvey.**

On the evening of the 13 November 2009 Tim Wagner and I boarded Delta Airlines for the sixteen hour flight to the States. This trip was something I have always wanted to do, so after much saving and planning, visa applications, warming up old contacts in the States and most importantly making up Cabellas shopping lists we were on our way. After flying backwards in time we finally arrived in the early hours of the morning in Atlanta. This airport is a whole lot bigger than what I'm used to with three trains moving passengers around the building and seemingly endless queues of planes landing and taking off. Here we had our first taste of US customs officials. They are not your chums. In fact they seem to treat everyone as a potential Osama! Tim's one bag had not arrived so we boarded our next flight to Salt Lake City hoping it would catch up with us later.

We flew into SLC over beautiful snow capped mountains with the huge lake below. We descended steeply to land alongside the slopes of the mountains that run along the one side of the city. Here we were met by two of the Marshall guys sent by Robert Bagley to welcome us. They loaded our kit into the back of a bakkie the size of a house and whisked us off the Marshall factory where we had a shower and changed our clothes. They then took us out to a burger joint for lunch as Mr. Wagner was starting to feel a bit peckish after eating only airline food for the past few days. The size of the burgers and the huge cups of endless coke soon had him smiling again. When we got back to Marshall, Robert Bagley had arrived and he gave us the royal tour of the factory. The setup at Marshall is really state of the art and at the cutting edge of telemetry technology with many new developments in the pipeline. Robert took us through the whole manufacturing process of all the tracking equipment we use. It was impressive. By the way for those of you that order telemetry from Marshall, Chris Edmunds is a woman. Should have known no guy could be that efficient!

We had a whole heap of transmitters and receivers that we brought with us repaired free or replaced at a nominal charge while we waited. We also purchased some of new stuff. Mr. Wagner of course fried his credit card. Him with no kids to support.

Robert then loaded us up in his Mad Max black super cab Ford F350 and took us off to Cabellas. On the way there he phoned ahead to warn them that the recession was about to be officially over in SLC as he was bringing two South Africans that were going to do some serious shopping!

We tested our credit cards after getting over the shock of seeing the endless rows of lekker toys to be had. Robert then took us off to his home before we totally bankrupted ourselves. That evening Robert took us out to supper to meet with an international group of falconers including

some guys from South America. We got to meet Ricardo Valerde, Clayton White, Steve Chingren, Carlton Green and Ralph Rogers. By this time Jet lag was starting to set in so we left to spend the night at the Bagley residence only to awake two hours later to find it was still the middle of the night! I always thought jet lag was a myth. It aint. The next morning Robert drove us up to his ranch in the Malad valley where we were to stay for the next two days. We stayed in the Bunkhouse which is basically a falconry chalet in the middle of open farmland about 3 km from the main ranch house. The local Deputy Sheriff pitched up in his squad car and a license to shoot, but it turned out to be local falconer Darryl Peterson who was taking us out to fly that morning. Darryl's young son flew an Anatum tiercel at one of the few still unfrozen ponds down the road. The tiercel knocked a mallard down into a slough and came in to the lure. We were then scheduled to fly Darryl's golden eagle at duck out of a thermal, but the cloud cover came down and it started to snow so that was shelved. That afternoon Robert took us to meet Ed Pitcher who lives about 30 minutes away. Ed lives on an acreage (+\_ 400 acres) in a house he has just built overlooking a valley with his hack house in the distance.

From here we travelled to look for sharptails on some BLM ground adjacent to lands in wheat stubble. On the way there Ed flew his intermewed Cassini tiercel at some feral pigeons in a deserted barn. The tiercel got up very high and wide and dusted a pigeon which got back into the barn.

Ed then flew another tiercel on speck at sharptails. We all walked in a line with the dogs ranging ahead. We drew a blank and called it a day. That evening Robert took us out to supper at the Dude Ranch in the town of Malad. It was very similar to an old cowboy saloon. Darryl and his wife and two kids met up with us as did Roberts's wife and daughter.

Early the next morning we were off to the Arco desert to meet up with Hubard Quade in Idaho Falls. Hub who is a sculptor by profession had a freshly trapped Tundra peregrine that took a mallard we flushed off the strongly flowing river close to his home. We then loaded up Hubs intermewed passage female gyr and headed for the Arco desert half an hour's drive away. Here Hub unleashed his geriatric pointer on some BLM ground and we proceeded to follow it in the vehicle. Eventually we marked a big flock of sage grouse next to a pivot land of alfalfa. As the gyr was starting to mount a passing truck flushed the grouse and the passage tailed and caught a grouse. We then retired to Hubs abode for supper of duck, grouse and spuds. I could see Tim was scheming how far it was to the nearest Nandos! I'll admit feeling the same way!

After spending the night back at the bunkhouse we left early the next morning for Salt Lake City where Robert dropped us off at Steve Chingren's home where he gave us the royal tour of his bird display. Steve does a bird show at the local Zoo during the week-ends and then he heads off to his grouse camp in Farson for the week. He had kindly invited us spend the week with him flying sage grouse in the Red desert. We packed four gyr peregrine tiercels, two dogs and all our

kit in Steve's Toyota Tundra and headed for grouse camp in Farson Wyoming. We stopped for lunch at Evington where we had our first taste of Mexican food which came back to bite us later that night!

We arrived at the House of Grouse in time to go out with David Kennedy to fly his Gyr Peregrine tiercel Cobra at sage grouse over his pointer Earl. Earl had a cold and could not find a grouse so we retired to the log cabin for supper. Hub Quade and Robert Bagley arrived later that evening. Steve woke us at 5 the next morning with coffee and cinnamon rolls, a tradition here at the house of grouse. We loaded up and headed out towards the Wind River Mountains into a huge area of open BLM ground that stretches for hundreds of kilometers in all directions. This is public land full of sage grouse and pronghorn antelopes, coyotes and crystal clear rivers full of brown trout. There are twee spoor paaitjies heading out for miles and miles. Anyone can hunt, fish and camp anywhere here as long as you have the necessary permit. Truly the American dream or for anyone who loves the outdoors. Steve would put his main dog Tucker out whenever we arrived in an area that he knew held birds. The dog could pick up scent at a distance of 300 meters or more. Steve was flying three gyr peregrine tiercels, two immature and one intermewed. Steve had trained the two young birds using the method advocated by Ed Pitcher. They were both very impressive flying very wide and high, especially the black tiercel bred by Dave Jaimeson. The sage grouse occur in small groups scattered over a distance of about half a kilometre. When they start lifting off they suck the other groups up with them as they climb up into the sky flying right over the nearby mountains. They seem to fly very easily and buoyantly with a couple of strong wing beats and then gliding away. When the hawks closed with them at the end of the stoop they accelerated with amazing speed. None the less with Steve's tiercels flying so high and striking hard the grouse were going down. We ended up with two grouse before heading back to camp. On the way back from flying every morning we would stop at the Burger Hut in Farson for brunch. We were pleasantly surprised at how cheap the food was and how polite the waitresses were, especially when they heard we were from Africa. Of course the only country they knew outside the States was Zimbabwe, Iraq or Australia!

That afternoon we bow hunted around the camp for cottontails with Hub Quade. That evening we saw a huge herd of pronghorn antelope coming in to feed in the alfalfa fields behind the cabin. There were also many coyotes calling as the sun set over the sage prairies. We ended the day with a fine supper of marinated sage grouse steaks and Steve's secret salad washed down with a bottle of good wine. This was the daily routine for the next four days.

The next day we managed to talk Hub into flying his new tundra bird at sage grouse. He was a bit skeptical but in the end she caught a young cock after a long tail chase. This was a bit of history in the making. The first sage grouse ever caught with a trained tundra peregrine. We

continued to see some great flying through the week with Steve's tiercels. We also had a couple of close shaves with eagles that seem to be everywhere. The moment a bird goes down on a kill they come straight in at speed. Steve carries a flare gun and had to use it a few times. The mantelpiece back at the cabin has rows of photos of Steve's birds that have been taken by eagles in the last couple of years.

The weather the whole week was clear and cold with morning temperatures at minus 14 degrees Celsius and midday's at one degree. That's a bit colder than back home in Dodge! One morning it dipped to minus thirty and our soft little South African ears nearly froze off.

One evening we ran into some sheep herders in the middle of nowhere tending a flock of about a thousand sheep with the help of four sheep dogs and two Anatolians. These two guys were on horseback and slept in a little corrugated hut built on a wagon. Pretty tough characters.

Friday afternoon we caught a lift with David Kennedy down to Rock Springs to rent a car to get us to Montana. We pulled out of town heading north with Tim at the wheel, which is on the wrong side, and driving on the wrong side of the road. It took some getting used to but not before we had frightened a few fellow road users witless, especially when we went around a traffic circle the wrong way. A Joburg handbrake turn, squealing tires and a zap sign or two let them know that South Africans are no sissies!

We arrived in Jackson Hole late where we spent the night. The plan was to travel up through Yellowstone National Park. We travelled behind a snowplough for a while, but it soon turned off. Then we saw road closed signs. Seeing as we were in a two wheel drive Camry and a Joburg oke driving we thought we would give it a go. When we started ploughing snow we realized we were beat so we turned back to Riverton and then through Shoshoni land over the Wind River mountain range arriving in Billings that evening where we were met by Mike Vermeulen, an ex South African falconer from Gauteng.

Mike and his wife Nancy very kindly put us up for two nights. Mike organized for us to go flying with all the local falconers over the next couple of days. We got to meet Kevin Thomsen, Ray Gilbertson, and Bob Hollister. The quarry here was sharptails and what awesome quarry they are. Weighing in at around 750 grams they would be the ideal quarry for our African females. The terrain here was more grassland with scattered sage mostly privately owned but also some BLM ground. There was a lot more wheat land surrounded by rim rock hills. Ray Gilbertsons gyrfalcon caught a sharptail on the last day against the backdrop of the setting sun making for a memorable flight. Mikes imprint gyrfalcon flew very well but could not bring one to bag. Kevin Thompson's gyrfalcon was more experienced and managed to catch two that week. We went trapping hoping to get a passage Gyr for Kevin. We did not find any but nearly got a passage prairie. We also saw a number of Hungarian partridge. They are plentiful and a bit

smaller than our greywing, ideal for our tiercels. One afternoon Tim and I travelled down to Sheridan to hoping to see some of the breeding projects there but nobody was home so we hit Western Sporting where we met David Frank and Kenny Sterner. Sad to say the credit cards took a pounding again! Mainly Tim's!! Sheridan really is a beautiful town with its backdrop of snow covered mountains and grassy plains full of sharptails. Back in Billings we had thanksgiving dinner with Mike and his family before flying out to Salt Lake City, on to Atlanta and then the long haul home. The trip back was uneventful except for when we nearly fell in the sea over the Bermuda triangle. So ended a great trip, with many new friends made and, for me, it was the trip of a lifetime.





## The Pain in our Sport!

### Paul Venter

Flying hawks is not the easiest way to spend your lazy, relaxing hours during weekends. There are lots of nice things one can do to enjoy these happy hours like.....I am sure you too can think of a few nice ones.

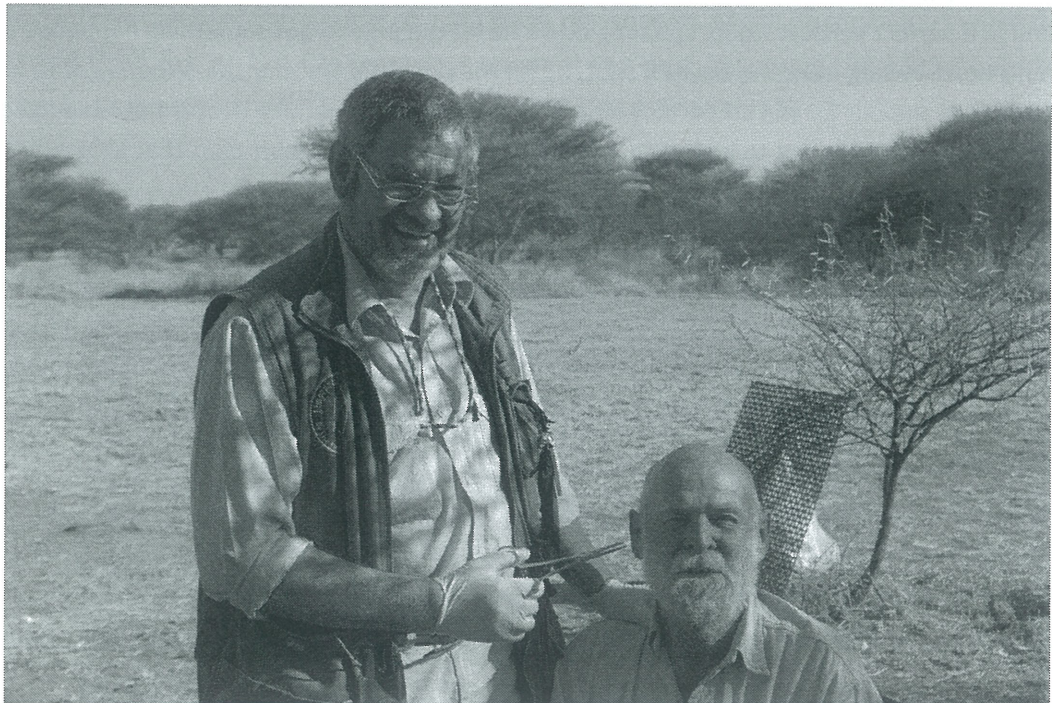
Now, if your name is George McAlister and your life style is falconry, pointers, hunting and camping and you arrive at a Limpopo Falconers Club field meet with a very bad toothache, then yes you are in for pain and lots of suffering.

George arrived at De Wets farm just outside Pietersburg on the Friday afternoon. I was there to welcome a comrade and immediately became aware of this man's agony and pain. See, flying hawks can be painful. Soon all the rest of the troop arrived and with the always handy and necessary cool drinks the severe pain was forgotten.

Next day the pain was back like a bad old mate you wish you never see again. Everybody in camp new all about Georges pain and sincerely sympathized with him. By lunch time George was not laughing anymore and getting quieter.

To relieve his pain I suggested extracting the loose front tooth with pliers at a very reasonable cost and he will receive a soothing cool drink before the procedure. To my surprise and total amazement George accepted the offer. What started off as a joke now suddenly became reality.

I started off to my vehicle to collect my tools. Dawid Botes, at that stage was occupied with a device for trapping hawks and said to me not to worry as he had the correct pliers at hand, similar to ones as used by the professionals. By now George positioned himself in a comfortable chair with a cool drink in his hand, ready to be relieved of his pain. Dawid made sure it was the problem tooth and clipped it with the pliers. One powerful pull and voila, out was the menace. George rinsed his mouth with the cool drink and that put a smile back on the face. I recorded the final stages of the process relieving George from pain and agony.



## Tribute to Charlie

### **Cobus Buzuidenhout**

Charlie came to me as a loan bird from Angelo. Picking up this Gyr/Peregrine I had so much expectations it was scary. Flying at 735garms he was just the size bird I was looking for. At first he would chase anything that moves and at the time it made me very nervous as I thought he would carry and I end up loosing him but soon I found that that was not the case. In the brief time I had him (one month) he caught the following:

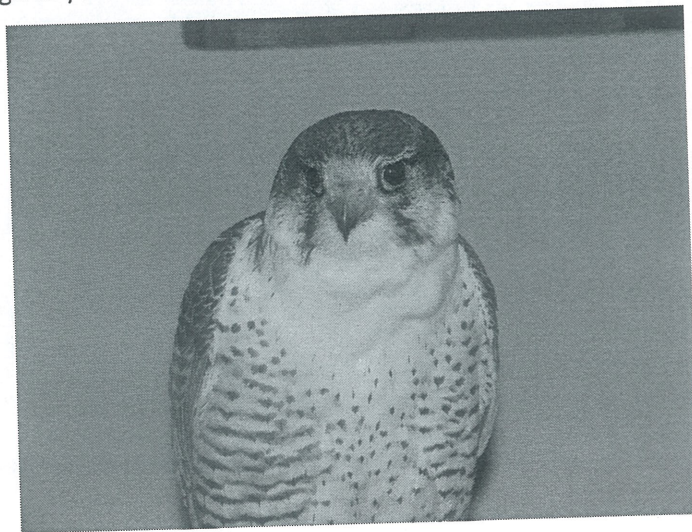
- 1\* Cormorant
- 2\* Orange River
- 3\* Guinea fowl
- 2\* Yellowbilled Duck
- 1\* Redeye Dove
- 3\* Laughing doves
- 2\* Rock Pigeons
- 2\* Dikkop

As you can see he turned out to be very versatile in his kills.

Charlie mounted better than any other falcon I have ever owned and being steady as a rock he was a pleasure to the eye.

Sadly I lost him due to a freak accident I have never witnessed before and hope to never again. We were flying at an Orange River and he made a stoop from about 700m up connecting very hard. As he turned to land the quarry got up in their usual style and he lost it in the long grass. Re-mounting again and this time with an attitude he went up even higher. I felt I had to reward him and flew a pigeon. He winged over and in a perfect vertical stoop, spiraling down he hit the pigeon but something happened and he hit it with his head. Falling from the sky as if shot; he hit the deck and lay very still. When I got to him he was concussed and out for the count. As I picked him up he was breathing deeply but I expected him to recover soon. Turned out not to be the case. Sadly he died two hours later.

Charlie, may you fly forever high as you will always be in my mind.



## Observations, Considerations and Nesting Behavior - African Hawk

### Eagle

#### *Heiraaetus Spilogaster*

Dylan Freeman, May 2010

**Introduction** The observation of a single pair of African Hawk Eagles (*Heiraaetus Spilogaster*) was carried out and extended over a period of four seasons in the North West Province. The Observation of this breeding pair was initially conducted to establish a justification for a wild take permit application from the North West Department of Nature Conservation, and I must acknowledge their assistance and cooperation in this. Details and comments on breeding habits as well as behavior will be discussed, together with notes on the development of the chick into maturity over an extended period. Study methods include Monitoring activity and nesting behavior as well as long term study using of the "Able" Chick under falconry conditions together with personal comments are noted.

Over the four year period an attempt to breed was made every season although only 3 attempts had chick fledge and one chick was taken for falconry purposes (this being the "Able" eaglet Taken in the second season) in total 4 chicks are considered to have fledged successfully (including the falconry bird). Observations were done from a site close to the nest and a small hide built and an average time of 16 hours a week spent monitoring the nest as well as monitoring activity away from the nest site which amounted to +/- 6 hours per week. This was conducted over an average period of a 150 days per season. More observations were done in the first and third season but the total days spent at the nest observing the eagles over the four year period amounted to 572 days visiting the site. As I write this the pair can again be seen in the nesting area and nest repair is underway.

Due to the well documented habit of *Canism* in the eagles and notably in the African Hawk Eagle, a permit was issued to take the eaglet from the nest for use under falconry conditions. In this respect I must again thank the North West Department of Nature Conservation for allowing this and issuing the permit, the department acknowledges the policy on falconry and their attitude to falconry is in positive thus allowing for the wild take permit to be issued as well as being able to practice falconry relatively freely in the province. A lot of effort went into locating a suitable nest from which to harvest and due follow up trips were necessary to ensure a bird was taken at the right time. As a result of the initial interest in taking a falconry bird future seasonal visits came from an interest in the ecology and behavioral habits of the species. The African Hawk Eagle is an efficient predator and rather than losing an eaglet to canism if a

suitably trained person is able to offer a chance of survival then a wild take is a positive component Falconry can offer to the species.

The chance to study an eaglet from the chick to eagle and into maturity offers a chance to document and study specific aspects of the development of the eagle into maturity. Factors such as plumage change, hunting development as well as breeding condition and mental developments can be monitored and noted with the canism survivor. Artificial insemination is a possible step forward provided the correctly managed birds are acquired and the suitable conditioning done by trained persons done in early development of the eaglet, Artificial insemination of many eagles is possible in many parts of the world and can be used to ensure species survival should the wild population be threatened.

The African Hawk Eagle has an extended longevity and as noted in captive birds of W Windsperger of Austria and G McAllister *i.e.* "Cilla" they can pass the thirty year life span in good hunting condition. This can be of benefit and should be the first consideration for the decision to take on a hawk eagle. The wild population has an extended lifespan as well and this pair has been in the area for at least 10years according to reputable sightings and a similar comparison from Peter Steyns studies on a pair for 12years.

#### **ADULT BEHAVIOR DURING THE BREEDING CYCLE**

- **Behavior to Humans**

This pair of African Hawk Eagles became very tolerant of my presence and movements; although a hide was constructed the pair would tolerate my intrusion. With time the pair became more aggressive whilst accessing the nest, but a wave of the hand or shout would change their flight path. These birds have a very strong personality and will challenge the observer should his actions be too bold but I never experienced any worrying activity in my observations. Their territory had some human activity but often the eagles took no notice and would just keep to themselves and often people did not realize the presence of the hawk eagle.

- **Behavior Toward Other Raptors**

The pair seemed tolerant of other raptors in the territory prior and after the breeding season but was notably defensive from the period following the nest building and egg laying. Less than 1kilometer away is an African Fish Eagles (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) Nest which is in plain view as well as another pair of hawk eagles that move in and out of the territory. The Fish Eagles and African Hawk Eagles would breed and raise the chicks comfortably together although boundaries were never crossed and prey species did not overlap. From about May the pair is seen more predominantly and will contest any intrusion into the territory. On one occasion the Pair were seen to be feeding off a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and on another occasion a Black shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) thus suggesting that the hawk eagles will feed on other raptors should the

chance arise. Other raptors seen in the area include Black Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, Lanner Falcon, and White Backed Vultures. One sitting saw two pairs of hawk eagles battling for the territory and nest site but the resident pair retained the territory. Talons locking as well as stooping at the intruder were extremely aggressive; even if the falconry bird was flown in the territory the adult pair would employ their defensive tactics.

## **NESTING BEHAVIOR**

### **Breeding**

This pair of eagles produced four young in total, including the bird taken for falconry. The only year that the birds failed to produce was when they attempted to use Nest B and only one egg was laid that was infertile. The incubation of the eggs lasted 42, 39 and 41 Days respectively and incubation commenced after the first egg was laid therefore the first egg would hatch a few days before the second suggesting reasons for the extreme size difference in the young chicks this developmental advantage could participate in sibling aggression. Other than that the other three seasons had this pair of hawk eagles raise eaglets to fledging. As a result of canism two chicks were lost and one was seen in the nest malnourished with little damage to the body, suggesting sibling aggression is not the only cause of death. As the nest was exposed and open the pair would spend much time in the area until the chick was fledged and on warm days could be seen shading the chick. As the eaglet grew the parents would spend less time around the nest. The breeding cycle would start in May with nest repair and courtship and by June the eggs would be laid after which mid to late July would see a chick in the nest. The fledging period varied in 2006-63day; 2007-78days; 2009-69days. By October or September the eaglet would be about ready for fledging after which it would spend an average of 4 or 5 weeks near or around the nest site before moving off.

### **The Nest**

This pair of hawk eagles had two nests in the same hill slope not more than 25meters from each other the first nest (nest A) which was the most productive was 8,6meters above the ground and the second was 6meters. About 3 weeks was spent repairing the nest which is short in comparisons with the species average of 5 to 6 weeks. The second nest (Nest B) was repaired once and this repair work lasted just over four weeks and an attempt was made at breeding but that season failed to produce chicks as only one egg was laid and found to be infertile. The Nest A was the productive of the two; in that three seasons used had eaglets fledge. The nests were located on a hill three quarters of the way up and had a nearby watching post that the male would be seen overlooking the nest. Nest A recorded 1,1meters across, 93cm deep, with the nest cup being 45cm. this was lined with fresh foliage and this was maintained predominantly by the female. An Interesting note was made that despite the hilly topography of the area, the nest received sun light as soon as the sun rays at first light to warm the nest and chick.

### **The Eggs**

In the four seasons the nest was monitored a total of seven eggs were laid, 2 in 2006; 2 in 2007; 1 in 2008; 2 in 2009. Markings of the eggs were variable although a similar in each clutch. The eggs were colored a white with rusty blotches over. Six eggs were fertile and one infertile. Three seasons saw 6 chicks hatching, 3 were left with the parents to raise and fledge, 2 died as a result of canism and sibling aggression and 1 was taken for falconry

### **Development of the Chick**

Although 3 chicks were seen to fledge from the nest most of the individual developments of the wild eagles had many similarities to the bird taken for falconry and for this reason the captive bird was used as the main case study with comparisons drawn in connection with the wild birds. It can be seen that the eaglet gains weight quickly and will on occasion double in weight over a few days. The chick is

initially black for the first 25 days or so and after 4 weeks begins to change to a white down thereafter covert and flight feathers begin to quill. The timeframe for chick development to full weight takes about 2 months and a peak weight will be reached before a slow decline to normal weight is seen. In the first two weeks the female is notably active and brooding the chick constantly but by the third and fourth the time spent attending the chick decreased notably. By the sixth week the eaglet is almost fully feathered and time spent with parents is again less than the previous stage (3-4weeks). Development and growth rates were recorded for the captive eaglet.

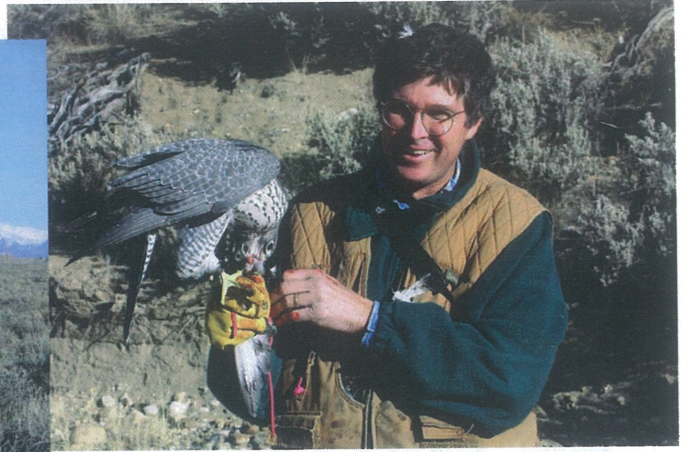
• **Table 1**      **Development of Eaglet in Captivity**

<u>Age in Days</u>	<u>Weight</u>		<u>Age in Days</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Day 0	Egg		Day 26	1245g
Day 2	In Nest		Day 28	1308g
Day 4	186g		Day 30	1372g
Day 6	238g		Day 32	1467g
Day 8	294g		Day 34	1507g
Day 10	360g		Day 36	1581g
Day 12	419g		Day 38	1598g
Day 14	510g		Day 40	1606g
Day 16	637g		Day 42	1669g
Day 18	735g		Day 44	1743g
Day 20	879g		Day 46	1760g
Day 22	991g		Day 48	1748g
Day 24	1160g		Day 50	1758g

### **Fledging and Post Fledging Period**

The fledging period varied in the eaglets. Fledging dates were as follows 2006-63day; 2007-78days; 2009-69days. The birds would be seen in the area for about a month and a half after fledging but by the second month out of the nest they seemed to be independent. On occasion the young would be seen in the area but not with the parents. On one occasion a sub adult in its second moult visited the area while the adults were away but left soon after. As the eaglet grew more independent then it would be fed further away from the nest site as well as lessons seemed to take place away from the nest site. Interestingly in the immediate area around the nest was not hunted until the eaglet had developed to a stage that it would attempt hunts itself in this location.

Two South African Falconers visit the Wilds of the USA.



# The Southern African Falconry Heritage

## Timeline



### Historical

Southern African Falconry developed initially in the years immediately preceding and just after the Second World War. The Falconers who started this practice came from Western Europe and settled here bringing the heritage with them.



Painting by Heinie Von Michaelis – First Falconer in the Western Cape – showing his two sons with “Tonka” their Yellow-Billed Kite.

### Pre-History.

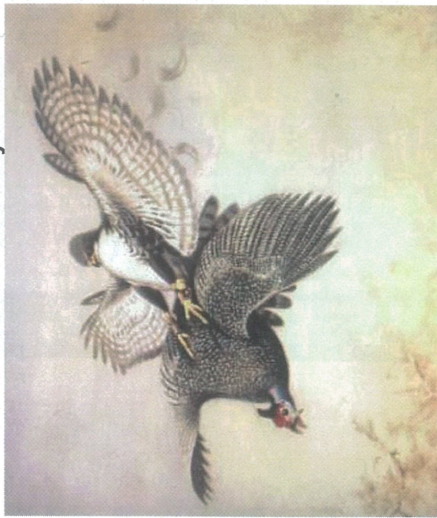
There is, in Zimbabwe, evidence of an ancient civilization with a system of walled cities and fortresses, based on gold mining. The largest of these cities was the “Great Zimbabwe” and it was here that a number of “Zimbabwe Birds” were found. The significance of these enigmatic Birds is lost in time but they remain a symbol of that nation today. A Falconer may see a different significance in these stone statues. Could Falconry have been practiced then?



To Hunt a Sandgrouse- The First Chairman of the Zimbabwe Falconers Club, John Condy, dreamt of flying a falcon on the Namaqua



In the late 60s it became apparent that falconry needed structure and organization to deal with developments in legislation and conservation concerns. The first clubs were formed including the Rhodesian (now Zimbabwean) Natal and Transvaal Falconry Clubs



Painting of "Black Spar on Guineafowl by Ray Black – a second generation Falconer

### Third Generation

The Art of Falconry developed based on the foresight of the founding fathers with increasing standards of excellence, innovative methods and a sound foundation based on an Apprenticeship and Grading System

### The Future – our youth-

The late Ron Hartley with the members of the Falcon College Falconry Club and the legendary Oswa, African Hawk Eagle at the finish of a "Bunny Hunt".



Sandgrouse. This was never to be as these swift gamebirds were to be found in the Cape Province of South Africa, and Falconry was illegal there at that time. John did fly Passage Lanner falcons on Grouse in Scotland, a practice which would be impossible today.



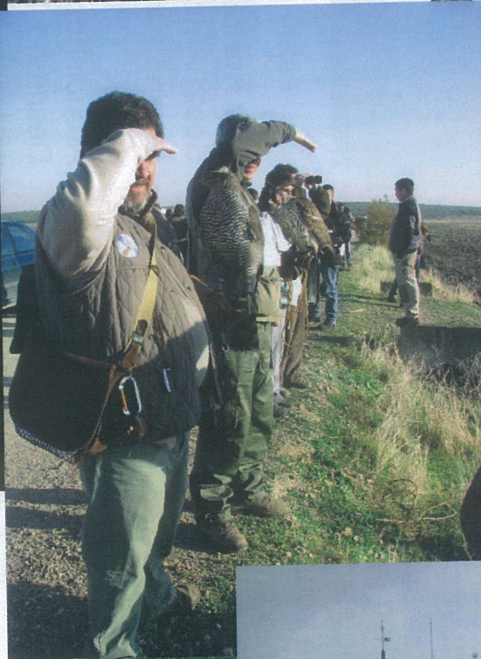
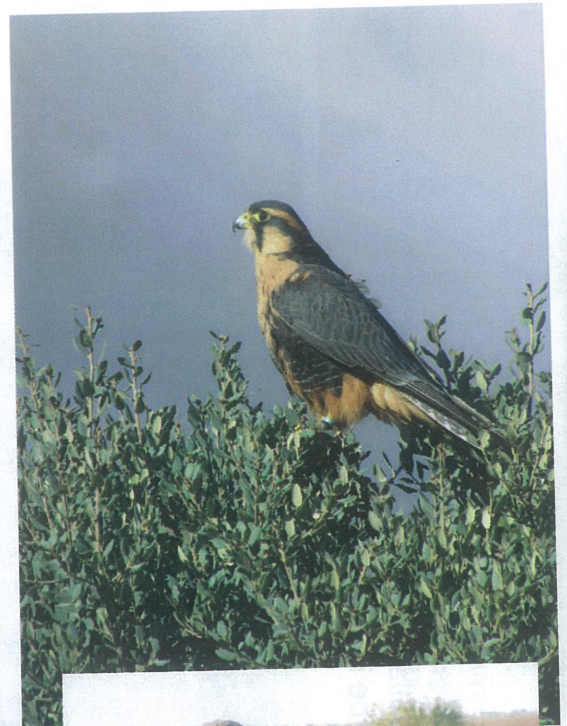
In May 2009, the first Sandgrouse was taken in the Western Cape, by Zayin Vermaak, flying a passage Lanner tiercel.

### Our Heritage -

South Africa has produced several statesmen over the years. One of these is the Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. It was he who coined the phrase "Our Rainbow Nation" to characterize the mix of colours, cultures, beliefs and practices that constitute the rich fabric that is our national heritage. So Falconry is part of our National Heritage.



**Spanish Falconry.**



### **The Moulting and Plumage**

As with similar eagles the African Hawk Eagle takes a number of seasons to reach full adult plumage and this can be a rough guide as to age in the sub adult Juvenile. From the study of Captive birds and from the photographs it is evident that an African Hawk Eagle will take three to Five years to reach the full adult plumage and this would take between three and four moults. Interestingly although these hawk eagles can have a particular moulting season, it was more commonly seen that (especially the wild pair) the birds would moult over eight to ten months of the year. One should also note the change in the color of the eye as it is brown in the first season and by the fourth the iris has changed to a yellow. I have also made note that the wild adult female seemed to grow darker on the chest as each season progressed which suggests a darkening with time as compared with Lendrums notes on the Ayres Hawk Eagle.

### **PREY SPECIES ACCOUNTS**

#### **Quarry Taken**

This particular pair of African Hawk Eagles seems to follow similar traits to prey species preferences as to most other accounts in that their preference is the feathered quarry although mammals will be taken regularly. 79% of the prey recorded was birds and 21% mammals as per TABLE 2. In four seasons of collecting, 64 prey species remains were collected and it was noted that they had a particular plucking post near the nest and on occasion the female would leave the nest with eggs/eaglet to feed away from the nest site. Carcasses were sometimes removed when the eagles had taken their fill and pellets/castings as well as mutes although seen were rare around the base of the nest. Feeding of the eaglet by the parents was studious and careful selection of the food was noticed. Carcass sections would be left in the nest suggesting an imprinting of prey species by the chick. Feeding was done by the female with food presented mainly by the male.

#### **Style of flight**

Most of the hunts have been conducted from a soaring position and most often the pair will be together, the pair employs a similar method to the Black Eagle, as described by V Garnet, in that one of the pair will distract the quarry while the other makes the kill after which the pair have been seen sharing the reward but the bird who secured the prey would feed first. The Eagles have been seen soaring high above feeding rock pigeons and making a falcon like stoop into the flock as it disperses and this pair have been particularly effective in this style of flight. Most of the hunting seen was done by the male while the female assisted out of the breeding cycle. Most often the male would take a crop before taking the quarry to the nest and should the need arise could be seen delivering the prey more than two times per day. The eagles were notably more airborne during the hotter days they would be seen soaring and gain a good altitude very quickly and on cooler days the birds would use a perch and pounce method of hunting rather moving through areas looking for an opportunity. In Hilly parts of the territory slope soaring and thermalling would be a preferred method while in wooded terrain would require the birds would take on an accipiter's style and use cover and agility. The hunting style would vary according to environmental conditions and terrain but the main factor that decided the location and style of the hunt would be the availability of the quarry. The eagles seemed to know preferred areas and use similar styles of attack for specific species.

Table No. 2 **Quarry Taken by Wild African Hawk Eagles**

<b>Quarry</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Number</b>	
<b>Birds</b>	Rock Pigeon ( <i>Columba guinea</i> )	15	
	Doves ( <i>Columba</i> )	4	
	Grey Lourie ( <i>Corithioxides concolor</i> )	1	
	Natal Francolin ( <i>Francolinus natalensis</i> )	9	
	Crested Francolin ( <i>Francolinus Sephaena</i> )	3	
	Guinea Fowl ( <i>Numida meleagris</i> )	2	
	Sacred Ibis ( <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i> )	1	
	Domestic Chicken	1	
	Barn Owl ( <i>Tyto Alba</i> )	1	
	Black Shouldered Kite ( <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> )	1	
	Unidentified Birds	13	
	<b>Total Birds</b>		<b>51</b>
	<b>Mammals</b>	Tree Squirrels	4
Scrub Hare		2	
Rock Hyrax		3	
Banded Mongoose		1	
Unidentified mammals		3	
<b>Total Mammals</b>		<b>13</b>	
<b>Total Quarry Recorded in 4 Seasons</b>		<b>64</b>	
<b>Total Quarry = 64</b>			
<b>Birds(51/64X100%) 79%</b>			
<b>Mammals(13/64X100%) 21%</b>			

**FALCONRY IMPLICATIONS**

- **Imprinting**

As a result of the removal of the "Able" eaglet that would normally suffer as a result of sibling aggression often the chick would have to be human imprinted. The imprinting process seems to involve more than just food association and parent species identification

but also includes a broad based learning and associative stage in the mental development of the eagle. This is of utmost importance when the consideration of working an imprint is discussed as it will have long term implications. Parent, Nest site, Prey species, Habitat, Species Behavior are a few factors that are imprinted on and early considerations and planning should be attempted before the acquisition of the chick. Basic suggestions for the imprinting process as used in the falconry eagle are discussed below. The first is to offer as much visual activity for the growing hawk and to incorporate new experiences and anticipated factors that will feature in the training of the hunting eagle. Another comment is on the presentation of the food, in that the chick should have food available at all times and never be allowed to go hungry for an extended period, the crop should be allowed to completely empty once a day and this is best done over night after the last main feed. The young bird should be encouraged from as early as possible to feed itself from an open carcass (thus the carcass is the feeding bowl) with the prepared meal inside (assisting in prey species imprinting). As suggested by R Hartley in a paper on hunting the species, it is advised to have assistance in the imprinting process as this allows the eagle to see a number of possible parents thus not imprinting on the falconer.

### Training

1. **Weight Control**- this is the most important factor in practically managing the falconry hawk eagle. If the bird is low in condition health and welfare is of concern, the eagle, if underweight can become increasingly aggressive and overeager as a result of the low condition. A low weight is not advised. In comparison one would expect the eagle to be easier to manage if high in weight but my experience shows that this is just as negative a situation as the low conditioned bird. I have noticed that a "FAT" eagle will be less focused on the quarry and become aggressive as a result of this, sometimes becoming overwhelmingly difficult to work with. Once a good weight is established many management problems will be avoided.
2. **Fitness** - without a fit hawk not much success will be achieved. The fact that so much input and commitment is required in reaching a suitable level of fitness in the eagle often deters falconers from using eagles. Unfit birds are the main reasons for failed hunting attempts, the more active and exercise the bird is involved with the fitter they become. There are many methods of getting a hawk like this fit and some of these include: drag lure work, distance flying using transport (horse, motorcycle, and vehicle), medium altitude kite training, rope training and high jumps. The best and most effective way of retaining suitable fitness levels is to offer the hawk suitable slips at quarry in a hunting environment.

3. **Encouragement** – on occasion the young eagle will require a certain amount of encouragement as repeated failed attempts at quarry will allow the hawk to become despondent. One must read and monitor the eagle's mannerisms and body language to ensure the bird is rewarded before interest is lost. If Bagged quarry is legal and permitted, then it will help in teaching the young bird hunting abilities, as well as keep it focused on the quarry. If a hunt is successful it is advised that the eagle should be allowed to take a full crop as reward and not fly the following day. In some instances a cycling program has benefited the hawk positively in that it will fly one day on one day off, in essence the hawk exercises on alternative days.
4. **Hunting** – There is no factor that should be encouraged more than the participation in a hunt. This builds fitness as well as encourages mental development of the eagle. Offering time in the field as well as an opportunity at quarry is the most effective way of teaching the hawk. More is learned in the field than in basic training so hawking time is an essential element to the creation of a well mannered eagle. Hunting quarry ensure that any aggression built up can be expelled onto the quarry and not falconer.

- **Hunting styles**

**Flying off the fist** –As with most other short and broad winged hawks, this style of hawking is well suited and possibly the most practical form of hunting, this style can be used in varying terrain as well as being versatile in the flying conditions. This is often the first step and a good foundation is established using an off the fist approach.

**Following On** – This devastatingly effective form of hunting is again borrowed from the austringers and as a result of the eagles height advantage many a quarry will be bagged. Another benefit is that should the falconer and hawk become separated the bird is conditioned to look for the partner. This can be used in conjunction with slips off the fist.

**Night Hawking** – this form of hawking is the most effective style offering quality and numerous slips. Often seen as an inferior form, night hawking should not be seen as such as suitable quarry is regularly available and often it seems that the prey species seen when lamping is perfect for this species of raptor. As a result of the nocturnal behavior of certain suitable prey species night hawking is a suitable opportunity to offer good slips at quarry regularly. Should the falconer be pressured with restrictions on flying time then night hawking is a suitable alternative.

**Thermalling and Soaring** –Not many falconers attempt this style of flight as the risks of loss are large. Specialized planning and commitment as well as consistency are essential. This can be an exciting way of exploring the African Hawk Eagles Abilities as they truly excel as this is a well used style of flight in the wild. Terrain, weather and training all come together when attempting this method and if the conditions for lift are not present then success is limited. Hilly terrain with good lift conditions should be found and due planning employed. It is advised to use an

imprinted hawk if this is attempted as the chance of raking away will be less likely. From this height the eagle can cover great distance and this should be considered.

**Hawking off Horseback** – Again not so commonly used in African falconry but this style of hunting has many benefits and has been used successfully by eagle falconers the world over. To my knowledge the only falconer in South Africa to attempt this with an eagle is D Botes of Limpopo and he has much praise to sing about this style and taken quarry with the eagle and horse. Benefits include the height advantage as well as the ability to cover a large amount of ground in search for quarry.

**Hawking with Dogs, Horses and Ferrets** - Provided the correct introductory training is conducted, the African Hawk Eagle is able to fly in the presence of other animals as hunting partners. It is best to incorporate these animals in early stages of training so as to habituate the eagle correctly. It can be noted that individual variation may cause an exception to the rule despite correct steps take. Dogs are a valuable asset to the falconer and should be encouraged as part of the hawking team. As described horseback hawking is very successful and falconers have had success like this. Finally a recent development from a falconer in the United Kingdom has shown that quarry can be taken using ferrets, the rabbits are bolted in the classic ferreting style and the African Hawk Eagle has been successful in this style as well.

**Hooding and Boxing** – The use of hoods is encouraged as the main benefits are well known from use with other raptors. The hood should be incorporated in the training from as early as possible and familiarity to the hood is essential. Some eagles do not appreciate the hooding attempt and personal opinion should be considered. Most prefer the use of a large travelling box and the eagles seem very comfortable in this accommodation. G McAllister has been hunting using a box with a drop door system with great success. Due to the relatively large size, consideration should be made for the transportation and temporary holding of the eagle prior to the required use and due conditioning attempted.

#### **The Companion**

It is of utmost importance that a strong bond be formed between hawk and falconer to achieve a quality relationship. Manning and daily interactions ensure a strong bond will be established and this benefits both hawk and trainer. The Eagle will take the partner as a hunting companion and will consider the partner as a possible breeding mate in which case Artificial Insemination is a possible outcome. I like to relate the hawk eagle and my relationship to a marriage.....For better or worse till death do us part!

#### **NEST SITES**



THE FIRST AND MAINLY USED NEST (NEST A)



THE SECOND NEST - USED AND REPAIRED ONCE (NEST B)



CANE AND ABLE CHICKS PRIOR TO REMOVAL (*Note size difference*)

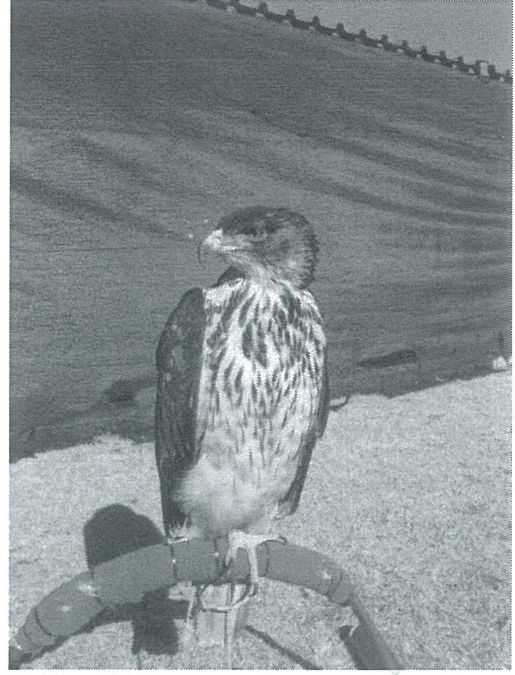


**HAWK EAGLE MOULT PROGRES**

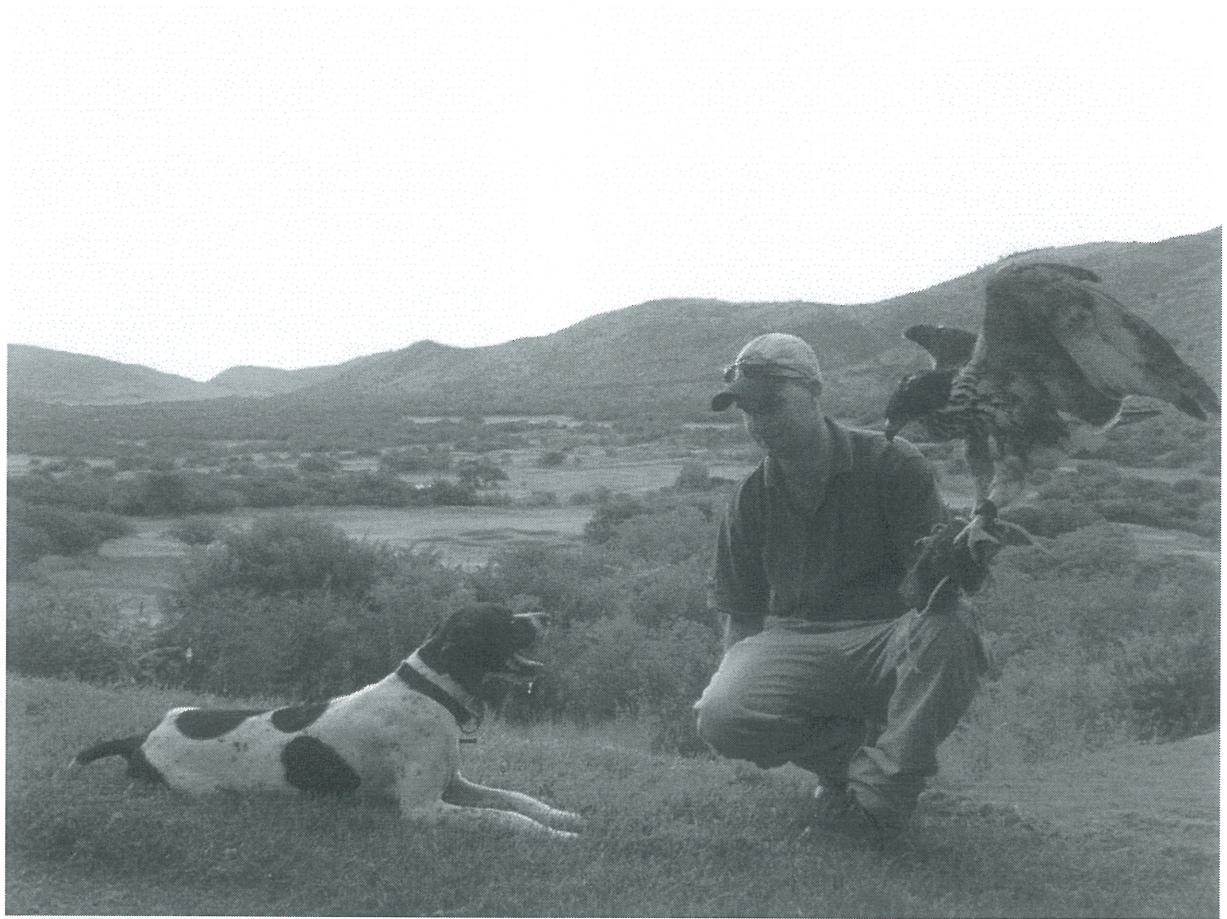
**FIRST SEASON**



**THIRD SEASON**

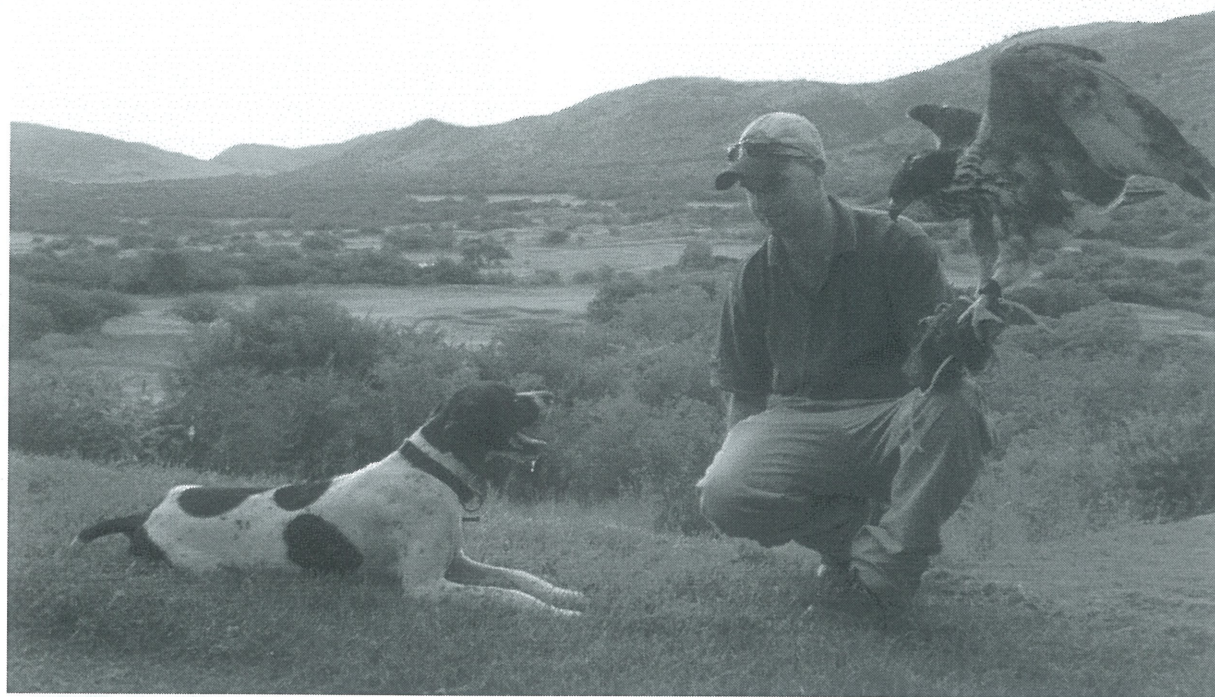


**FORTH SEASON**

**THE HAWKING PARTY: Dylan, Cleopatra & Zen****REFERENCES:**

- Brown L. & Amadon D. 1968, Hawks Eagles and Falcons of the World*  
*Garnet V, 1971, Observations at a Black Eagle Nest in the Matopos*  
*Hartley RR, 2008, Hunting With the African Hawk Eagle in Zimbabwe*  
*Hollinshield M, Hawking with Golden Eagles (imprinting and falconry)*  
*Johnson P, 1971, The African Hawk Eagle-an Insight*  
*Johnson P, 1971, Egg Hatching in the African Hawk Eagle*  
*Lendrum A, 1975, Observations on the Ayres Hawk Eagle*  
*Steyn P, 1973, Observations on the African Hawk Eagle*  
*Steyn P, 1973, Eagle Days*  
*Steyn P, 1982, Birds of Prey of Southern Africa*

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### The Strangest Lanner I ever had.

#### **Cobus Buzuidenhout.**

Out shooting hawk food I noticed an immature Lanner sitting on the ground. I looked at him for a while and then a dove walked past him. I shot and wounded it expecting him to jump on it but no go. I walked up, got the dove and tossed it in the field. Flying about 30 yards and landing in the open I expected the Lanner to chase it but again nothing. All he did was change position on to a gate. This really bogged my mind and all I could think of doing was to take out a dead dove and toss it to him. I walked closer and when about 25 yards from him, tossed it as close as possible. He immediately flew down onto the dove. By now I was clearly convinced this was a tame Lanner someone had lost. I walked slowly up to him and when about 10 yards off I started leopard-crawling. Getting close enough I grabbed him by the legs. What a feeling.

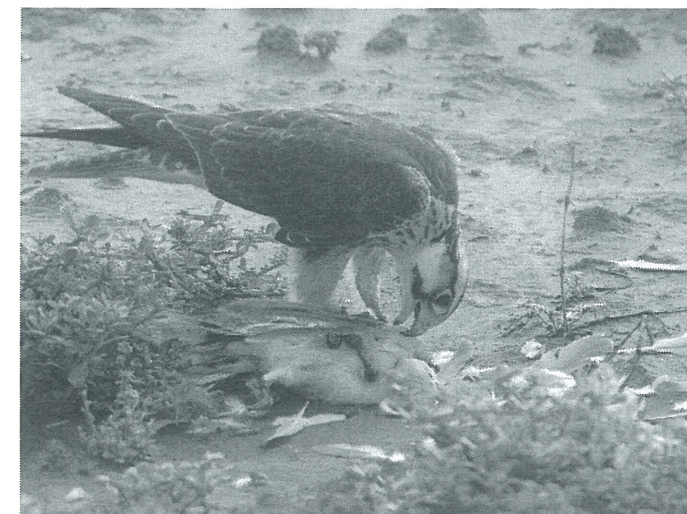
Getting home I check him over and found a swelling on the left wing. Other than that no damage He weighs in at 485grams, fat as pig. No sign of anklets and after jessing him up I see that he is just a very tame Lanner, maybe he never saw a human before.

Two days later I fly him on the creance and the response was immediate. The next day he flies free. Weight at 465grams. I flew him for two weeks and made several kills in fine style. He was a natural mounter and would fly in wind as well. The left wing had a bit of a droop in it but it did not seem to bother him. I lost him after three weeks after a stoop from very high on some bird and not flying him with telemetry I could not track him but all is well. I am sure he will survive.

What an honor to have flown such a bird.

#### **Kills made:**

- 3 Laughing Doves
- 1 Ringneck Dove
- 3 House Sparrows



## **Motivation for a Harvest of Wild Raptors for use in Falconry.**

**Adrian Lombard.**

*This document was prepared to support the SAFA Presentation to EKZNW in response to proposed Ex-Situ Animal Regulations. It provides a reasoned motivation to preserve the harvest of wild raptors for use in Falconry and is supported by population statistics with respect to the peregrine Falcon. It should be of value in supporting the case of Falconers to all Conservation Authorities.*

### **Introduction:**

Falconry birds have traditionally been harvested from the wild. Indeed this practice provides a number of examples of sustainable utilization which have been practiced for thousands of years. The captive breeding of Falconry raptors has only been routine practice for about the last 50 years and has both positive and negative aspects. If Falconers in South Africa were to rely on captive-bred birds for the practice of their Art, it would, in all probability, relieve some of the pressures on them from those who may wish to control or curtail their activities. Falconers believe that maintaining a limited and sustainable wild harvest is not only to the advantage of their Art but also is of the best interests of the conservation of Raptors and of the welfare of the raptors in their care.

### **Welfare Considerations:**

South African Falconers currently have experience in breeding some 8 different species of raptors but regular breeding programs are limited to those species which may be regionally uncommon or specially protected. Currently the species on which most focus is placed are the African Goshawk and the Peregrine Falcon. Given these special motivations, there would be a case for breeding Red-necked Falcons.

The Falconers are currently involved in a project to breed Taita Falcons but the primary motivation for this project is conservation and not for a source of Falconry birds.

If all Falconry birds were to be provided through captive breeding projects, this would dramatically increase the total number of birds held in captivity. Adequate numbers of each species would be required to provide genetic diversity and the "critical mass" of birds needed to maintain a viable captive breeding facility. Experience elsewhere has shown that a sustainable captive breeding population of medium-sized raptors provides a minimum of 15 young per year. At numbers less than this, the loss of 1 or 2 key breeding birds can result in the

## **Motivation for a Harvest of Wild Raptors for use in Falconry.**

**Adrian Lombard.**

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South African Falconers currently have experience in breeding some 8 different species of raptors but regular breeding programs are limited to those species which may be regionally uncommon or specially protected. Currently the species on which most focus is placed are the African Goshawk and the Peregrine Falcon. Given these special motivations, there would be a case for breeding Red-necked Falcons.

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If all Falconry birds were to be provided through captive breeding projects, this would dramatically increase the total number of birds held in captivity. Adequate numbers of each species would be required to provide genetic diversity and the "critical mass" of birds needed to maintain a viable captive breeding facility. Experience elsewhere has shown that a sustainable captive breeding population of medium-sized raptors provides a minimum of 15 young per year. At numbers less than this, the loss of 1 or 2 key breeding birds can result in the

collapse of the program (6). The individual birds in this breeding stock would possibly be flown and hunted for one or two seasons and then would be confined to breeding pens for the rest of their lives. It must also be recognized that captive bred birds are not generally readily releasable and require special effort to enable them to survive in the wild, even after falconry training.

Current experience shows that, within the South African system, the cost of production of one Peregrine Falcon, in terms of infrastructure and maintenance is about R6000.00. (7) This cost could be reduced to some degree if production capacity were to be increased. This would make more peregrines available to falconers but there are not enough falconers of the required standard to justify this. The membership of SAFA is currently able to limit the access of falconers to birds for which they have adequate experience and will vehemently resist any erosion of their ethical standards and requirements. We recognize that when someone has paid the production costs of R6000.00 for a bird, it is difficult to maintain control of their activities and management of that bird, even if the bird is nominally the property of the State or the Club.

Our current practice is to encourage graded apprentice falconers to use wild-taken birds under supervision and this is in line with current practice in other countries such as the United States of America (8) and Zimbabwe. They have no claim of ownership on the bird and have every incentive to comply with the regulations of their club and the instruction of their mentor. In the event of failure to comply with these requirements, the bird can easily be confiscated. The falconers who progress to a higher level have shown the necessary aptitude and enthusiasm and can be entrusted with a captive bred bird. This is a situation envied by many experienced falconers internationally.

We are opposed to the trading of Falconry birds and concerned about the potential for commercialization.

### **Sustainability – the Scale of the Harvest:**

It is appreciated that those responsible for the Conservation of our Biodiversity must apply the precautionary principle. It is reasonable to also expect that a principle of proportion be applied at the same time. In order to examine this issue, we must know the scale of the harvest and consider whether this constitutes any threat to the species harvested. The following table (1) gives the total number of birds harvested by Falconers in the whole of South Africa for 2008:

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

In assessing these figures it must also be recognized that a significant number, if not the majority, of wild –harvested birds will be released back to the wild.

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The total number of Falconers in South Africa has remained almost constant or declined slightly over the past 6 years. The number is difficult to quantify as record keeping did not initially differentiate between active and inactive Falconers. Provincial clubs have shown that about 1/3 of members are inactive in any one season although total numbers have declined slightly in recent years as a result of increased membership fees. The total number of Falconers in Clubs affiliated to SAFA (South African Falconry Association) in 2008/9 is 158 (190 in 2003) of whom 107 were active. (91 in 2003 (2))

The total number of birds of any one species that are harvested will vary from year to year but will fall into limits that are determined by prior negotiation with the Provincial Conservation Authorities. Only one of the species routinely utilized by Falconers is listed in terms of the Threatened or Protected Species Regulations. This is the African subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus minor*. We can provide accurate figures for discussion with respect to this species.

In the year under discussion, only one Peregrine Falcon was harvested, but more have been harvested in previous years, to a maximum of 5 (in the knowledge of the author). If we examine the population projections for Peregrine falcons in the Western Cape alone (3) it is estimated that there are some 200 to 400 pairs of Peregrines. If we take the lower figure and use a productivity rate of 0.93 young per nest (4) then a conservative estimate of some 186 young peregrines would be produced in the Western Cape each year. If one utilizes the projections based on the Environmental Impact Study that determined the harvest of Peregrines in the United States of America for Falconry (5), a harvest of 5% was determined to have no detectable impact on the *population growth* of this species. This would allow some 9 to 10 peregrines to be harvested from the Western Cape and this is in excess of the number of Peregrines required by Falconers throughout South Africa each year. The current negotiated figure of a maximum of 5 Peregrines per year in the Western Cape would appear to be a very conservative figure and this certainly suggests that the Conservation authorities have applied the precautionary principle and are competent in applying the limits to quotas permitted to Falconers.

We would contend that a harvest on this scale is entirely sustainable. Even if Falconer numbers were to double, although unlikely given the historic figures provided, and the projected harvest were to be doubled, it would still be sustainable.

#### Conservation Considerations.

Falconry is a sustainable use activity and, as such, promotes conservation of the environment and of Biodiversity. Falconers have shown themselves committed to conservation and to be well informed and well motivated in this regard. (1)(9) International experience has clearly

shown that denial of a wild harvest does not mean that falconers are not involved in active conservation. The wild harvest is none-the-less, an excellent incentive for focusing and encouraging conservation activities. Our experience in South Africa is that almost every Falconer is engaged to some degree in these activities, be it field observation, rehabilitation, outreach and education or the contribution to scientific studies and projects.

Experience in Britain is a useful example of the negative effects of denial of a wild take. In that country, falconers have contributed to the successful re-establishment of the European Goshawk and the Red Kite. However they are effectively discouraged from participating in nest monitoring for fear of allegations of nefarious practice. This means that their value as field observers and the role they could play, for example in reducing the persecution of raptors by game-keepers, is negated. Recent reports from that country indicate that there is pressure in the United Kingdom to allow either the culling of raptors or, possibly, the re-establishment of a wild harvest for falconers. (10)

Another negative aspect of captive breeding is the administration and control of such facilities, placing additional burden on already under-capacitated authorities. This is not to mention the genetic implications related to ecotypic variation and the maintenance of this integrity. For these and several other reasons the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board, for example, does not encourage captive breeding. (12)

Falconers in South Africa spend considerable time and money monitoring raptors and their nests. The first Taita nest in the country was found by falconers as was the first Black Sparrowhawk nest on the Cape Peninsula. More use could be made of this data by the scientific community. This effort and the significant financial expenditure would be deflected should captive breeding become the sole source of falconry birds.

#### **Falconry Considerations:**

The loss of the wild harvest would have significant implications for the practice of Falconry in South Africa.

To the untutored eye, one individual falcon or hawk will look much the same as another of the same species. The rearing and subsequent experience of the bird will make enormous difference to the behavior, flying and hunting ability of the hawk.

Passage hawks are birds, in their first year that are moving away from their nest site. These birds are still young enough to adapt readily to falconry training but have developed hunting and flying skills. They have an estimated mortality rate of some 80% before they enter the breeding population (11). As they have gained "independent" hunting skills, they will readily revert to the wild on release. For these reasons they are prized by falconers and, in previous



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centuries have formed the staple source of falconry birds. This falconry approach is challenging to the inexperienced Falconer but very suitable for hunting with Lanner and Peregrine falcons. This is one of the reasons for the standard of excellence attained by South African Falconers.

Falconry in many countries, where hawks and hunting rights must be purchased, is the preserve of the wealthy. Falconry in South Africa is practiced by and is accessible to youngsters and those who are not particularly wealthy. If we are to share this part of our heritage more broadly it must be kept affordable and this can be done through maintaining access to a wild harvest.

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## An Introduction to Lift and Soaring Principles for Falconers (part 2)

### **John Stuart, Cape Falconry Club**

In the first part of this article I dealt with the basics of lift in relation to soaring – that is: *ridge lift* and *thermal lift*. These forms of lift are generated by the actions of mechanical factors (ridge lift), relative temperature changes (thermal lift) or an interaction of the two (stronger thermal lift generated against a ridge). In this second part I'll be looking at other meteorological factors that may affect the flying of raptors, specifically micro-climate and direct environmental factors. I'll also try to relate the principles here to actual behavior observed in the field. Again I'll be drawing extensively on Dennis Pagan's book 'Understanding the Sky' for meteorological information.

### **Local lift and hunting considerations**

Basic falconry texts tell you to never expect your hawk to fly to the lure or glove downwind. All birds (and aircraft, if they are sensible), take off and land into wind, because this minimizes ground speed and is thus the safest option. However the same need not apply to your hunting approach. I'll deal with shortwing and longwing implications separately:

- **Shortwings:** flying from the glove. One is usually tempted to beat into wind, because the hawk sits more comfortably on the glove. However, there may be times when beating downwind is a better idea. The ability of the quarry to turn fast and mount fast is critical – if it has a high ability to do this, such as a lark, then it should be hunted upwind. This is because it will need to maintain its heading once flushed in order to mount, and the hawk will pursue it directly from the fist. On the other hand, if one beats downwind the quarry will flush and as soon as the hawk is close it will turn into wind and quickly mount. This combination of an extreme change in direction and height can be very demoralizing for a hawk and it may not persist.

On the other hand, a quarry species that cannot mount or turn very fast, such as francolin, could be flown downwind because once flushed it will need to start slowing down far sooner (due to the much higher groundspeed) as it approaches cover. The pursuing hawk will recognize that the quarry is starting to slow and will quickly close the gap and possibly tackle the quarry close to on the ground.

These considerations are compounded by the presence of lift due to uneven terrain. If you are working a slope and the wind is upslope, any upwind flush will allow both hawk and quarry to mount even faster. If the same slope has a downslope wind, neither an upwind or downwind slip will provide either hawk or quarry with lift to use. The pursuit will almost certainly be downwind/downslope, because an upwind flush will require tremendous effort due to the sinking air and rising terrain. The quarry will not be able to mount without considerable effort. This form of hunt – downslope wind, may favour

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inexperienced smaller raptors that are reluctant to mount and risk exposing their presence to other raptors. In fact the same applies to any situations of lift and sink. If your hawk does not like taking a pitch, hunt her downwind of obstacles and on slopes with downslope winds.

- **Longwings:** In his book 'Understanding the Bird of Prey'; Nick Fox discussed the role of wind direction and speed on the killing cone of a falcon at pitch. Since I have less experience with longwings I have not much to add, except that I believe that less experienced falcons will not be as successful when the slip is downwind and the wind is moderate to strong. This is because the stoop will be even faster than in still air or into wind. The falcon's ground speed will be very high, making the timing of its strike very critical. Any tiny misjudgment could lead to a fatal collision with the ground. This could also explain why less experienced falcons do not stoop to the lure from upwind. Any turbulence in the wind will exaggerate the danger, due to the unpredictability of the air. A combination of a moderate to strong wind, lots of ground obstacles such as trees and buildings, and an inexperienced falcon may mean it refuses a downwind slip altogether. Expect the quarry to understand this principle and the more experienced ones will flush downwind. The inexperienced ones may nevertheless not flush downwind due their own lack of confidence in high ground speed/turbulent conditions.

### Forest and field interactions

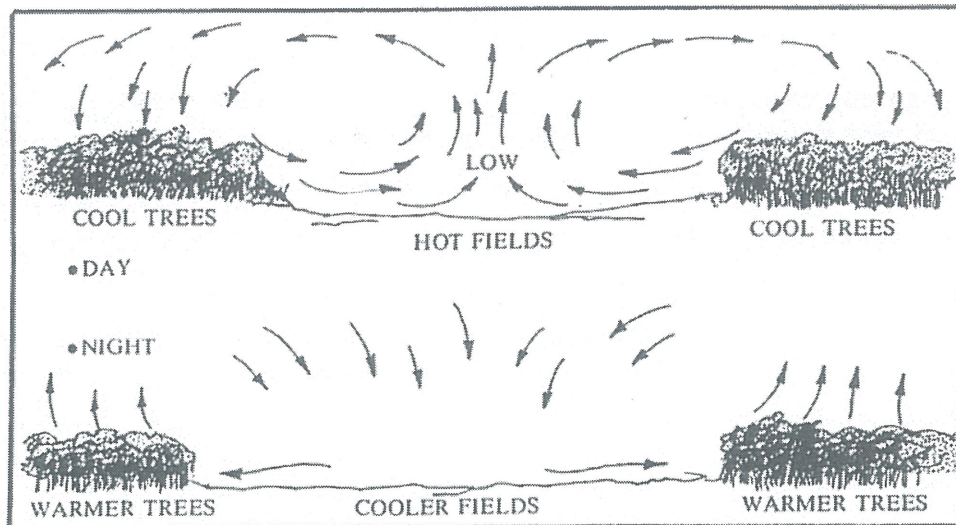
Although trees are 'darker' than fields, this does not mean that forests heat up faster than the lighter colored fields. In fact the opposite is true, with forests being cool relative to fields. This is because of the greater surface area presented by the forests, due to leaves and branches etc. This surface area absorbs more heat, and so too does evaporation of dew left on tree leaves.

This means that in an environment characterized by fields and copses or forests of trees, there will be lift over the fields and sink over the forest. Perhaps this is why wild African Goshawks have to work so hard doing their morning territorial display (if you watch this you'll see they have to flap to gain and maintain height over the forest, there is no natural lift to exploit).

### Figure 1: Forest and field airflows (source: Pagen)

This also means that if you are flying a falcon in the middle of the day, it will work to gain its pitch over the field and should not be expected to pass over the forest until it has gained full pitch.

The situation is reversed towards the end of the day, with the forests releasing more heat now than the fields, and so creating lift over the forest and sink over the field.



### Local winds: sea and land breezes

It's not often that falconers hunt along the shore, but gull hunting is one of the exceptions to this. Gulls are highly skilled at utilizing strong winds and their lift, and they also understand the difference between the sea and land breezes.

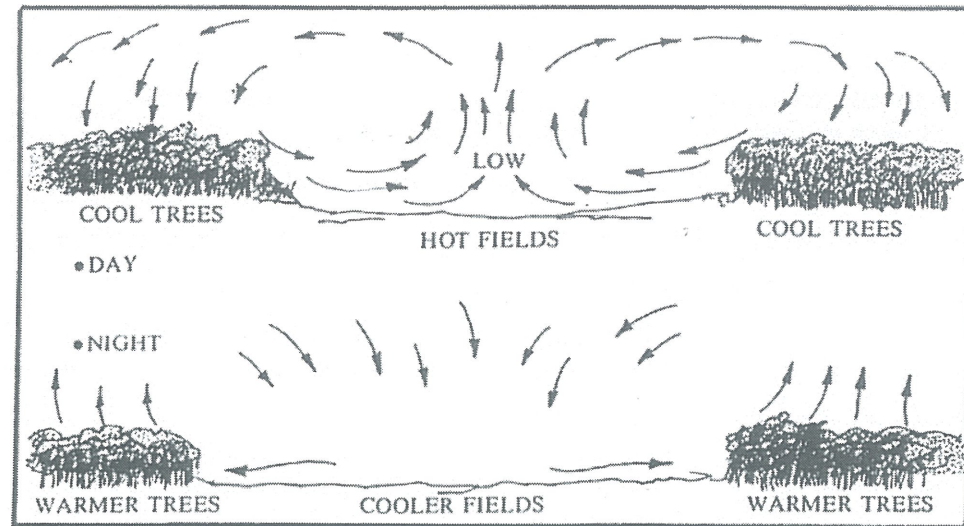
**Sea breeze:** In the morning the land heats up faster than water, which is a poorer conductor of heat but which also cools off more slowly once heated. This creates a pressure variation at the coast which causes air to flow from the sea landward. This 'onshore' flow is called a sea breeze. At night the process is reversed, since the land has cooled faster than the sea and the 'offshore' wind is called a land breeze.

The lesson for falconers is that towards the middle of the day, the sea breeze will create a lift band along any obstacle or ridge on the coast. This lift is exploited by sea birds, and can be used by your hawk too. Towards the evening this will dissipate, and sinking air may well be present – which will discourage your hawk from taking a pitch. This implies that gull hunting from a pitch should take place earlier in the day. Direct pursuit hunts should not be much affected.

### Figure 2: Sea and land breeze (source: Pagen)

Although this wind type is called a 'sea breeze', it also applies to any large mass of water such as a dam or lake.

A final point: any prevailing (macro) wind will affect the sea breeze by either reinforcing it (if it is in the same direction), or diminishing it (if it is in the opposite direction). The final wind direction will be a sum of the relative angles and strengths of the sea breeze vs. the prevailing wind.



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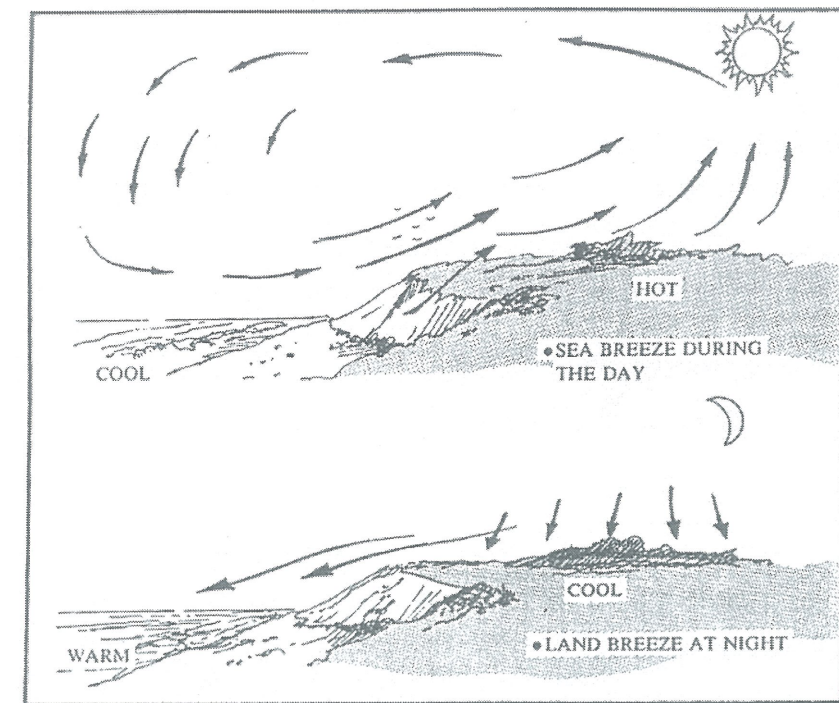
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### Further effects of water masses

Whilst a small dam or lake may not represent enough of a pressure difference to establish a sea or land breeze, small bodies of water can affect the amount of thermal lift or sink in their vicinity. This is because water absorbs heat in order to condense, so thermal heating of a water surface will not warm the water body up as much as the land mass adjacent. This also means that when thermal lift is being generated over the land mass, thermal sink is likely to occur over water masses, with a region of thermal turbulence in between.

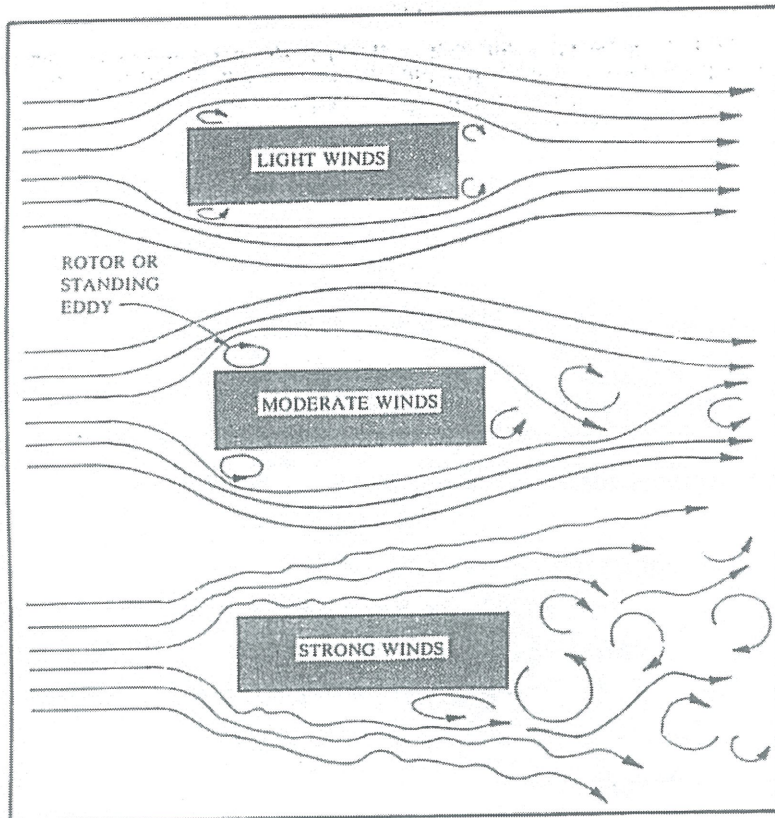
Anyone who assumes this is a minor concern should think again. I have flown low over a dam only 50m square and immediately felt my hang glider sinking out. This caused me to undershoot my landing and almost collide with a telephone line.

This has direct relevance for those interested in duck hawking. The falcon will not want to take a pitch directly over the water mass, but will rather work its way up over the land. It may even drift away looking for the strongest thermal lift it can find to make its job easier. Only once it has achieved the appropriate pitch should the falconer summon it back again and then flush the quarry.

### Wind strength and turbulence

The greater the wind strength, the greater the *turbulence*, which is defined as an interruption to the smooth flow of the air. Turbulence may affect your hawk if you are flying it in moderate to strong winds in an area with plentiful objects or uneven terrain. For example, a built-up area or an area with copses and stands of trees: the wind blowing over those obstacles will break up into turbulent rotors and 'eddies' on the downwind side. The area of turbulence is a 'wedge'

shape with its apex at the obstacle. This means that the turbulent air's range broadens as the air moves away from the obstacle; although it does also weaken the further downwind you go.



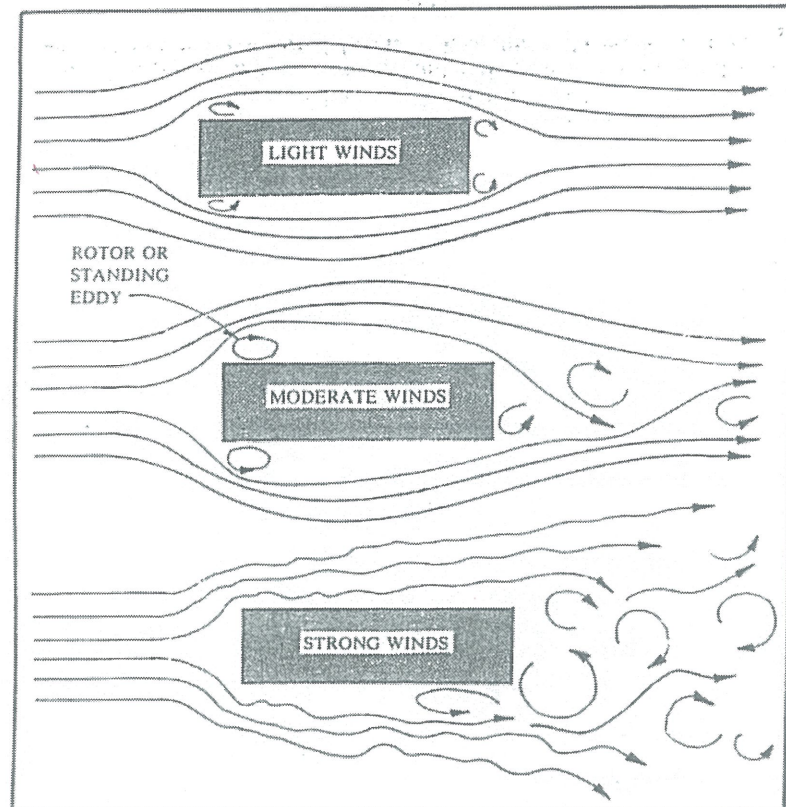
**Figure 3: Turbulence and wind strength (source: Pagen)**

For example, if you fly your hawk in an area littered with stands of trees, each time it flies behind one of them or into the trees it is likely to be affected by the turbulence. This will require it to make swift adjustments in order to maintain its heading and stay on the quarry's tail. Although the quarry being pursued will also have to make the same adjustments, bear in mind that it spends most of its day in that habitat, whereas your falconry bird spends most of its day on a perch. The 'experience gap' will be exploited by the experienced quarry. Obviously a passage bird will have more experience than an eyass, but the fact remains that a falconry bird spends a lot less time in the air than its quarry.

The ability to adjust to turbulence is also related to the design of the hawk. A shortwing is designed to make fast pursuits through forests, making frequent adjustments. A longwing hunts in more open spaces and is less adapted to such environments.

The fact is that turbulence, unlike foliage, cannot be seen by the hawk, it has to adjust to what it feels, meaning it is completely reactive. A local bird will understand the local turbulent factors

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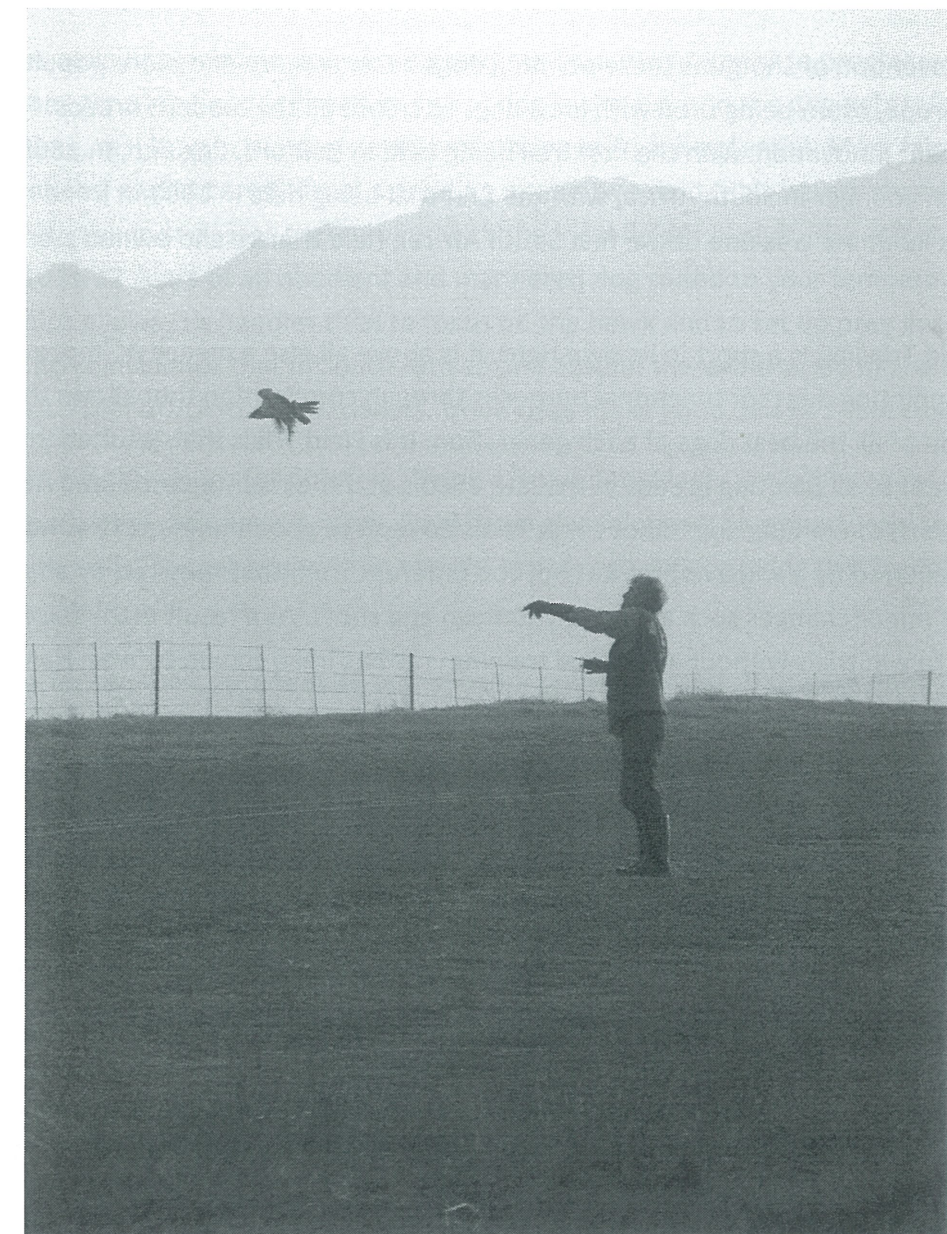
The fact is that turbulence, unlike foliage, cannot be seen by the hawk, it has to adjust to what it feels, meaning it is completely reactive. A local bird will understand the local turbulent factors

for different wind directions far better than your falconry bird. This is an additional form of 'experience gap'.

In summary: assess your hunting fields in light of this information and try to plan your hunt according to both the layout of trees, buildings and water masses; as well as the prevailing weather conditions.

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## **Falconry, Pointing Dogs and Field Trials**

**Gavin Goldblatt**

Falconry and Pointing Dogs have long gone hand in glove. Long before there were field trials, Falconers were flying hawks over Spanish Pointers, the ancestors of all modern pointing dogs. In 1734 Tüntzer wrote in *Der Dianen Hohe und Niedere Jagd-geheimnisse* "When the dog finds and points, hastily unhood the hawk, call warning to the dog, and as soon as conveniently near to him (holding the hawk with its breast to the partridges and the dog), call out to him: "Berr!" On which, the dog springs into the middle of the partridges. They scatter off like dust, and the hawk after them. Then the hunter rides till the hawk strikes, and falls with his quarry to the ground'.

With the invention of shotguns these pointing dogs became more and more popular and spread around Europe, often being bred with local dogs to create all the modern breeds. Field trials are a fairly recent innovation, with the first trial being held in Bedford, England, in 1865. The sport is not much younger in South Africa, with the first trial being held in 1908 in Irene next door to Jan Smut's land. He was one of the first South African field triallers and owned a brace of setters.

Whilst Field Trialling is a sport in its own right, it is above all else a means of improving the breeds of pointing dogs for functional purposes through competition that allows the comparison of all the best dogs of each generation. It is Field Trials that resulted in the rapid improvement of all pointing breeds in the late 1800's and the maintenance (and hopefully improvement) of working dogs since then. Trials do require good manners, beyond that typically required by a wingshooter but not too different from that required by a falconer – with a few minor changes such as "steady to flush and shot". As a result many falconers' dogs are ready to win trials without additional training – as has been shown by Alan Harvey's success in both sports.

Many falconers take a break from flying their birds when circumstances change (the arrival of young children often means losing the necessary free time) but keep running their dogs in field trials. Bennie van der Merwe, until recently the Chairman of the National Field Trial Association, is a case in point; and likewise many field triallers start flying hawks.

Falconers rely on field triallers for a supply of top quality dogs (and often support with training) whilst field triallers rely on falconers to maintain a broad gene pool – Alan Harvey's bitch, Trudi (Northwell Michigan) is a foundation of a very successful line of field trial pointers, and without Edmund Oettle and Odette Curtis, Brittanies would not have achieved their successes in field trials. As a result, the two sports are intertwined to the extent that it is difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends.



## **Falconry, Pointing Dogs and Field Trials**

**Gavin Goldblatt**

Falconry and Pointing Dogs have long gone hand in glove. Long before there were field trials, Falconers were flying hawks over Spanish Pointers, the ancestors of all modern pointing dogs. In 1734 Tüntzer wrote in *Der Dianen Hohe und Niedere Jagd-geheimnisse* "When the dog finds and points, hastily unhood the hawk, call warning to the dog, and as soon as conveniently near to him (holding the hawk with its breast to the partridges and the dog), call out to him: "Berr!" On which, the dog springs into the middle of the partridges. They scatter off like dust, and the hawk after them. Then the hunter rides till the hawk strikes, and falls with his quarry to the ground'.

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In South Africa there are two types of field trial: British Breed (often referred to "Pointing Dog") trials, generally abbreviated to "BB Trials"; and Continental Breed (or "Hunt Point and Retrieve") Trials, generally abbreviated to "HPR Trials". Both types of trials are open to all recognized pointing breeds, but the HPR trials are dominated (almost to the exclusion of any other breed) by German Shorthaired Pointers ("GSP's") and the BB Trials tend to be dominated by pointers (with a sprinkling of GSP's and setters and an occasional Brittany). The practical difference between the two trials is that HPR trials require the pointed bird to be shot and retrieved (so the dog has to be steady to flush, shot and fall of bird, and then on command retrieve the bird to hand before it can hunt on), and the dog to prove itself as a water retriever. In the BB trials birds are saluted with a blank fired from a shotgun, and when the dog has shown it's steadiness to flush and shot it is told to hunt on.

Often falconers acquire a pointing dog as an afterthought, a requirement to progress within their sport. Many times the wrong breed or line of dog is chosen, and the dog gets relatively little training time, resulting in the dog never performing to its full potential. Most falconers (and all apprentices) would benefit from attending one or two field trials before choosing a pup, followed by a year of classes and surveys with the local field trial club. This effort is rewarded by 10 to 12 years of an obedient and mannered dog suited to your temperament and conditions, which allows the handler then to focus on the hawk and to set up prey in controlled situations – is no coincidence that in South African and around the world some of the top falconers are also successful top field triallers. Good dogs make good hawks. (*How true! Ed.*)

Many falconers, by default, go for pointers. These are not necessarily the best dog for the handler's temperament, terrain and hawk. Field Trials give falconers an opportunity to look at different breeds, and different lines within breeds, in order to choose a dog that best suits their specific needs.

Pointers are by far the most common BB and falconry pointing breed. There are good reasons for this. They mature early, and generally require less training. They have less prey drive so are (as a general rule which is often proved by the exception) safe around hawks and other animals. Their short coat is easy to maintain and allows them to continue running in relatively hot conditions- although it does shed. They are, again as a general rule, the biggest running and hardest working of all the breeds – although a good setter will match them. But the biggest advantage is their ubiquity and conformity within lines. The gene pool is large enough that you can pick and choose between lines and breedings and be fairly confident in what you are going to end up with. It sometimes seems that in some of the other breeds there is a greater divergence in ability within a litter than pointers have across the entire breed. Pointers biggest disadvantage is their range – certain lines are very difficult to work in confined areas or dense cover. They are also a fair bit bigger than the other pointing breeds – they certainly can't curl up

by in the foot-well of a car by the passenger's feet on the way to a venue as Brittanies often do. Finally, whilst they make great pets and family dogs, they are not much good if you want a dog to walk next to you on leash or at heel – given half a chance they disappear into the distance.

Setters (both English and Irish) are probably the most underrated dog for a falconer. They are the classic and old fashioned falconry dog – for many decades they were a falconer's first choice. Unfortunately over the past few decades they have lost popularity – as far as I know Arnold Slabbert is the only falconer in SA running a setter. This is an immense pity as anyone seeing Arnold's Josie can attest – setters are a joy to watch working in open country, fast and agile and graceful. There is a myth in South Africa that they don't like to work cover. This is only a myth – in the US and Northern Europe they are regarded as the best dogs for heavy cover. They have a great ability to adjust between cover, where they work close and slow with noses to the ground, and open conditions where their range is comparable with the best pointers and they run with their noses up using wind scent. It is hard to get hold of a good working setter, but the Scotts in Tarkastad and Stuart Dewing in Cathcart are producing some lovely dogs.

Brittany's are becoming increasingly popular for both field trials and falconry – mainly as a result of Edmund and Odette's efforts. Technically they are regarded as "Hunt Point and Retrieve" dogs, rather than pure "Pointing" dogs, but there is a growing view that this is a misclassification, at least for the American lines. Like pointers and setters they can be trained to retrieve, and water retrieve, but their strength lies in finding and pointing game birds. They are great all-round dogs, equally happy in open grassland and dense cover. And like setters they generally are easier family dogs and pets than pointers or GSP's.

German Short Haired Pointers are even more common than pointers across the country as a whole, mainly because of their popularity with hunters. They are generally well represented at Pointing Dog Trials and it is rare to see any other breed at Hunt Point Retrieve Trials. They are the consummate all-rounder, able to bash through the densest bush, run well in open grasslands or mountainsides, track wounded game and swim out to fetch a shot goose. For a falconer who also enjoys shooting they are hard to beat. However, their strong retrieving and prey drive can cause problems when training for falconry.

There are also a number of rarer breeds that seldom do well at trials but can be suitable for falconry. These include Spinone's, Vizla's, Weimeraners and German Wire-haired Pointers. These vary considerably from breed to breed, but with the exception of the German wire haired (which is very similar to a German short haired apart from their coat length) tend to be close and slow working dogs with limited range and drive. This is not necessarily a disadvantage – they do tend to be easier to train and handle, lovely family and companion dogs that will go for a jog with you or for a walk on the beach and for someone flying a short wing in brush (like the Western Cape) they get the job done nicely.

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Amongst the more common breeds lineage is of immense importance. In all the breeds there are clear and significant differences between show and trialling lines – the former are of little value to a falconer and tend to have more genetic problems.

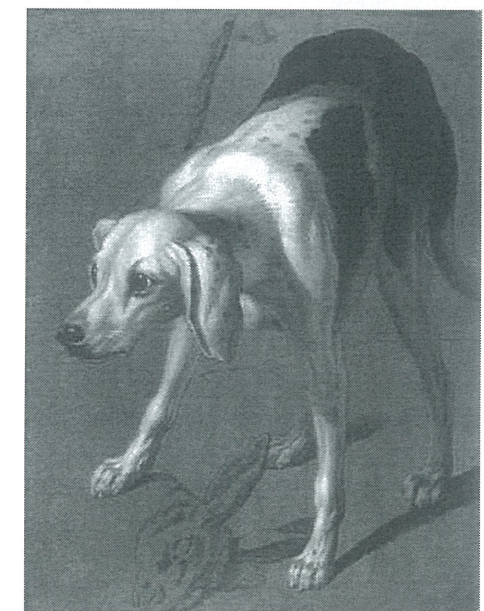
There is also a clear difference between American and other lines – although this is often over exaggerated. Americans have a saying, "A good pointer runs away...almost". And they have tried to turn all the other breeds into pointers, often by directly breeding pointers into their lines. As one would expect, the difference between the American and other lines is least marked amongst pointers, and more visible amongst the other breeds. As a general rule, American pointers are smaller and squatter, have "12 o'clock tails" and are lighter in colour – American dogs are often pure white or white and lemon. In the other breeds the Americans are taller (closer in height to a pointer) and also have the high tails and lighter colouring. That is about all that can be agreed upon. Some say that American dogs have more range and hunt by objective rather than mechanically quartering barren ground. Others feel they run to hear the wind whistle through their empty heads and that good South African and European lines have similar range and speed. Certainly US imports have helped expand gene pools and some of the dominant lines in most breeds have a strong American influence – but others don't. Most good breeders and handlers look at the dog and its lineage, not its country of origin.

There is probably more discussion around the different breeds' temperaments than any other point – if you ask four owners which is the easier dog around the house you will get five different opinions. Most experienced handlers who have worked with several breeds are of the opinion that they all have very similar temperament, with more variance within a breed than between breeds. All are good natured, reliable with children, non aggressive and eager to please. Of the more common breeds, GSP's tend to have higher prey drive and retrieving drive, so shoes are seldom safe, whilst pointers have more of a drive to run and are comfortable out of sight of their handler, which makes them difficult to walk in parks or on the beach. Otherwise temperament depends more on the individual than the breed.

Study of a Pointer.

Francois Desportes

1661.



## The Elusive Snipe

**Zayin Vermaak**

Ethiopian Snipe (*Gallinago nigripennis*) are medium sized birds, with a 24–28 cm wingspan and a weight of 80–140g. They have short olive legs and a very long straight dark bill. One bird in particular that I caught with my Tiercel Peregrine had a 10cm long bill. The body is mottled brown with straw-yellow stripes on top and pale underneath. They have a dark stripe through the eye, with light stripes above and below it. The wings are pointed, and in general a very pretty looking bird especially if you get a close inspection of one. It is a well-camouflaged bird and is usually shy and conceals itself close to ground vegetation and flushes only when approached closely or flushed by the dog. They fly off in a series of aerial zig-zags to confuse predators, giving a “hleep” sound on take-off.

The birds feed by probing deeply into mud with their long bills, feeling prey deep in the soil. Insects, worms, crustaceans and molluscs are all the morsels of choice for snipe, also eating some plant material.

Habitat problems facing Snipe are wet vlei areas that have been drained and converted to arable land or to improved grassland. Conservation bodies try to increase their holdings of vlei areas but reserves can only hope to save a small amount of what existed formerly, the continual battle for new land development mostly in and around growing urban areas will always be a threat to wetlands. There is a large concentration of breeding snipe found in wetlands on the Cape Flats. The population varies, but has been seen to be steadily rising during recent winters in protected areas.

In winter, snipe perform spectacular displays high in the sky. Each male, following a circular route, makes a series of power dives during which the outermost tail-feathers are held out almost at right angles to the bird's body. Feather vibration in the slipstream produces the remarkable throbbing known as 'drumming'. Many theories as to where the “drumming” noise actually originates from have been put forward. At the end of the Nineteenth Century German Ornithologists found this a favourite topic of discussion. Some like Bechstien, were convinced it was a sound that emitted from the Snipes bill; Naumann considered it a sound from vibrating wings and a theory from Herr Meves was that it came from the rapid force of air through the outer sabre shaped tail feathers of the Snipe. My personal opinion sides strongly with that of Capt. W. V. Legge, in the appendix to his work on the Birds of Ceylon. He says, “By closely watching the bird it could be distinctly seen that the vibrations falling on the ear coincided exactly with the beat of the wings, which, assisted by the downward rush through the air, were the primary cause of the sound. The tail, however, was spread as I have already remarked and to such an extent that it took the form of a fan, the lateral feathers being at right angles to the centre; and here in lies the secondary cause of the sound. During the drumming beat of the wing, the quills are more drawn back than in the ordinary strokes, so that the atmospheric

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wave or air propelled by the powerful stroke of the wing is drawn through the ridged, sabre shaped and opened-out feathers of the tail, thus making the peculiar noise. “

Therefore in the opinion of Captain Legge the sound is produced by the combined action of wings and tail, so a compromise between the “wing-theory” and “tail-theory”.

Drumming takes place throughout the breeding season, being nocturnally active during these months; moonlit nights are your best time to observe these diving display flights over the bird's territory.

Once a female snipe is attracted the male pursues her and dives with wings held above the body in a V-shape often rolling and turning upside-down. The male takes no part in incubation, continuing drumming displays over the nesting territory. He feeds mostly at night, spending much of the day resting in cover.

Snipe as a quarry in Falconry can be labelled, I think as one of the most difficult spices of game bird to hunt successfully. In the same breath I think they have all the qualities that make them an excellent quarry to hawk too. They will put the fittest Falcon through its paces in the most aerial ringing flights you will probably ever see, and leave the most explosive Shortwing trailing, shortly after it has left the fist.

Over the last few years I have hawked Snipe successfully with both Female and Tiercel Lanner, and now this season by far the most suited falcon for the job, a Tiercel African Peregrine.

My Passage Female Lanner who other than in thermal conditions never took great pitch, learned to use this to her advantage by quickly stooping and getting in under the Snipe, positioning herself between the Snipe and the cover. Kind of the same way a Black Sparrowhawk would fly a Francolin. Now not having its favourite option to dump straight back down to cover the Snipe is forced to ring up and try out fly the Falcon. She was a bird that was so confident in this style of flight that she would literally explode into action as if the flight had only now begun for her. A ringing flight that would have me standing gob smacked in the middle of the field, till the Snipe would be beyond my vision and the Lanner close behind. The whole time waiting for the critical moment that the Snipe feels it's under too much pressure, and bottles! The tables immediately turn, and the Falcon is in the driving seat. I got to see some really amazing stoops from this kind of flying; the down side is normally a long walk and a bit of tracking to find her on her prize, but so worth it.

My Passage Tiercel Lanner was a bird with impeccable footing, if he got foot to it, it was in the bag. He packed a punch that superseded his size by far, and the hunting skill of the Passage shone through in all his flights. He took an average pitch of 300ft – 400ft and would wait on directly over-head mounting in tight circles. Having caught a few Snipe the season before and changing tactic a bit, this I thought would be a perfect set-up for hawking snipe, off a point, bird tight over-head, I could taste success already! Well.... In practice it all went pear, the bird being so tight over-head intimidated the Snipe so, that it continually dumped in front of the falcon,

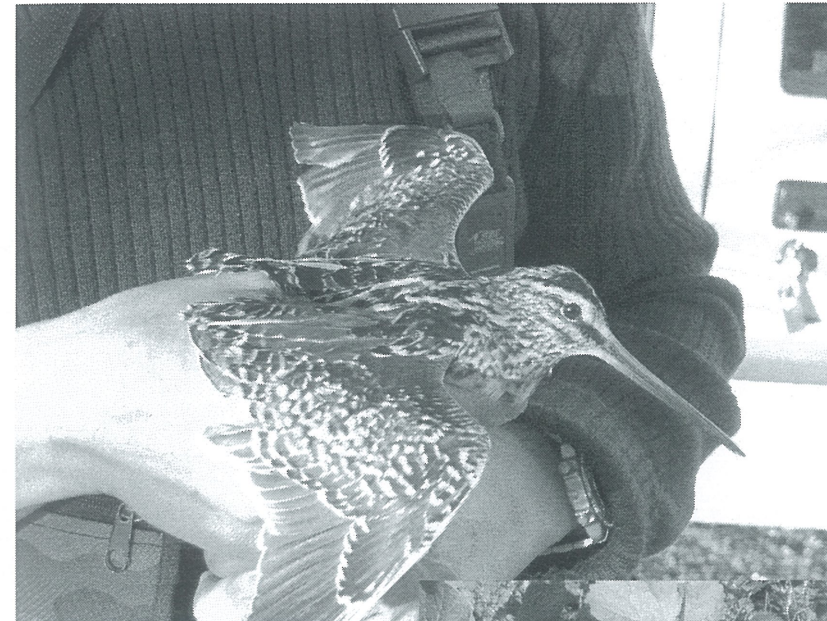
lowered his pitch and then would get up out the grass while the falcon was out of position and leave the county all together with the falcon trailing pathetically way behind. So back to the drawing board! I tried flushing when the falcon was out of position, this eliminated the intimidation and the Snipe not dumping but the falcon did not have enough pitch to convert into speed and would level out at the same speed as the Snipe, one or two spectacular evasive manoeuvres which only a Snipe can pull off had him out of the danger zone and gone. I worked on my Tiercels pitch through the season and started tasting success more regularly towards the end of the season. Having released my Lanner at the end of the season I pondered long and hard at the coming season and how in my third year of flying these little Houdini's, how I was going to get it right from the start!

Firstly, get the right tool for the job! Armed with a beautiful little eyass Tiercel Peregrine, I started the season with a clear picture of how I was to outwit the cunning Snipe. Waiting 4 months till I felt I had him flying in a style that would be a serious challenge for a Snipe to evade, I entered him in on Snipe. The sheer speed of my Tiercel from a 600ft stoop was enough to know this was going to be a totally different affair. The first Snipe I flushed for him was acknowledged immediately like he had been hunting them his whole life, a direct attack was made on his first attempt, and the Snipe being almost taken down by a strike-and-pass put in a life saving jinx at the absolute last moment, to save his skin and dump immediately, watching the Peregrine go screaming past. Calling him down to the lure and a good feed, I would see in the flight the following day how he would change his style of attack in the stoop and learn from this flight. The following afternoon was perfect weather; I went to my usual vlei and ran my dog, looking for a good point to work off, which I was rewarded with almost straight away. Steadying my dog I struck my little Tiercels braces, mute, rouse, bob of the head and off he shot. Mounting quick and strong he was at about 600ft in no time at all. Waiting for him to be slightly out of position so not to put too much pressure on the Snipe by being directly overhead and forcing it to dump, I positioned myself between the point and reed cover behind me to get a clean flush out and into the open vlei. With a quick glance to see that the Peregrine was in his turn back to us I gave my dog the signal to flush. With a flurry of action the Snipe burst into flight with its distinctive call and a series of erratic twists and turns in the first few meters of its climb, out the grass. It was noticeably feeling the predicament it was in and looking back at the cover of the reed bed behind it as it flew out into the open vlei. It was the perfect flush! With a quick glance up and over my shoulder I just caught sight of the Peregrine as he was winging over backwards and pumping his wings as fast as he could, putting himself into a powering dive vertically and almost disappearing in his teardrop stoop. Having learnt from the previous flight he had a plan to attack low, fast and strike on the throw-up to avoid the Snipe dumping and going home empty handed again! This is a clever little Falcon! He bottomed out his stoop just over my head at break-neck speed; it was like looking down the barrel of a gun! Shooting past and away from me at just above grass level it put the whole piece of action right in my sights. The Snipe being way ahead of the Peregrine thought it could turn back and head

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for the cover behind me, but very soon changed its mind on seeing the speed at which the gap was closing between it and the Peregrine. In a last desperate attempt to dump with the Peregrine just a second away, it was too late! The Tiercel having got under the Snipe pulled back hard on the stick and converting his G-force into smashing power, there was an awesome strike and bind with a flurry of wings from the Snipe, in vain, trying to escape, but a short glide and a gentle winnow to the ground with his hard earned prize, the Peregrine had figured out the elusive Snipe, and triumphed!



One for release.

...and one for a tiercel's dinner.



## Hacking a Blackshouldered Kite

### **Cobus Buzuinhout**

We received a Kite from Nature Conservation and decided to hack it back. He was almost hand-penned and after keeping him in the hose for a week I decided it was time to let go. Building a hack-box I placed him inside for a few hours and then opened the box. Like a natural he flew off and sat on the nearest telephone pole. I called and placed food on the box. It took him only twenty minutes to come in and eat. After that it was easy and he would call in the morning for food. If I don't feed fast enough he would fly over the box and sometimes land on the open front door. Living on a Gamefarm it makes it a joy to be able to do this. As I am writing this he is out there hunting. He still comes in for food but not as often as earlier. Another success story and I am hoping to be able to do more of this. What a pleasure to see him from my front porch, hunting like he should.



### Falconry's like that:

I had great fun flying a tiercel Peregrine, named Merlin, which I was given by Tim Wagner. I wanted to come right hunting snipe. I found a large vlei which held a number of snipe but was bounded on one side with tall Blue Gums, some light industrial sites and a scattered squatter camp. It fine day with a light wind, the dog worked well and came on a promising point. I put Merlin up and waited for him to take pitch. He started going up and things were looking hopeful, then he spotted a flock of starlings in the Gums and the game was on. He chased them through the trees, while I stood like an idiot flapping my glove hopefully, in the vlei. Finally, with the telemetry signal getting a bit erratic, I abandoned my hopes for the hunt and set off to track him down. I caught a few glimpses of him as he chased doves and starlings down the long line of Gums and then through the factory buildings. Then the signal disappeared. I guessed that he had dropped down into a valley behind a low hill, so set off up the hill.



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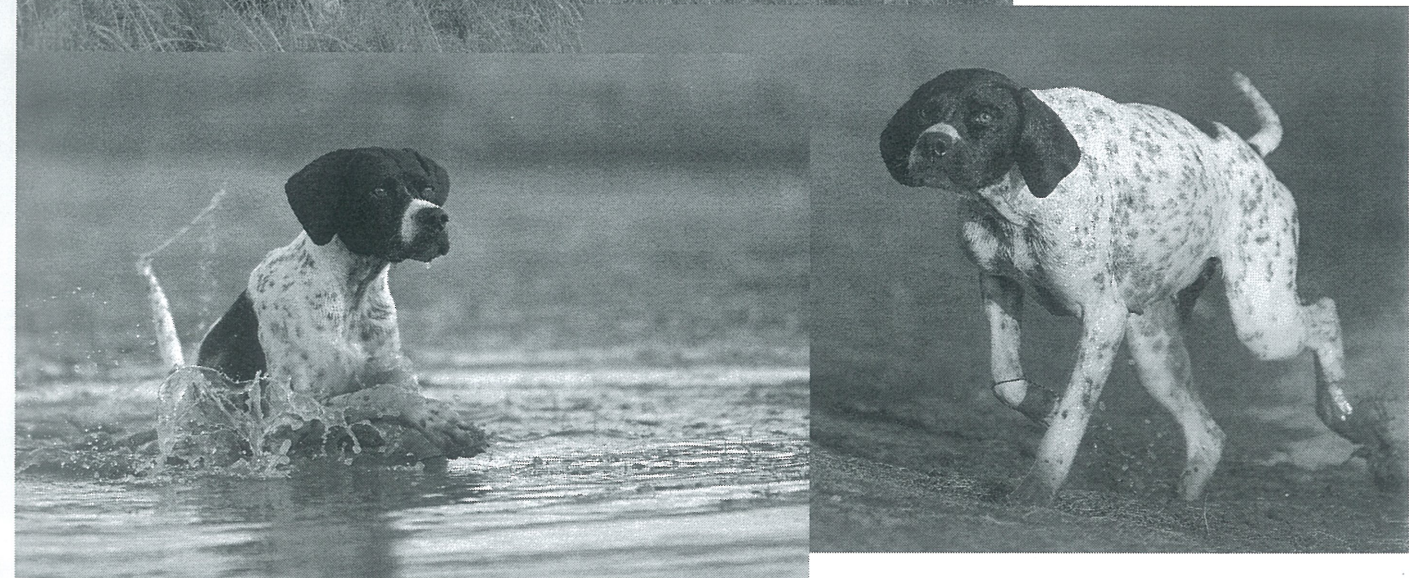
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At the top of the hill, I got a signal again. This was a very strange signal, rather weak but giving me a 360. I thought that he may have made a kill down a hole or a ditch, and then I heard his bell – above me. I had been tramping around beneath an old water reservoir set on concrete pillars, about 10 meters high. It was topped with broken tiled roof, and my hawk, having pursued a starling, was inside. Worse still, water was squirting under pressure from a pipe, stopping any hope that it was empty. I couldn't see any way up there and even intimidating my appie didn't help. I phoned a local farmer friend to see if he had a long ladder, but he was out of town, I tried and failed to contact a friend who is a prodigious rock climber but he was also unavailable. My last idea was to try the Fire Brigade, after all aren't they supposed to rescue kittens out of trees? I was saved from this final indignity when Merlin hopped out of the hole in the roof, covered in duck-weed and angry as hell.

He took some persuasion to come down to the lure and I have avoided those particular snipe ever since.

**Pointers:** (See "Falconry, Pointing Dogs and Field Trials")



## Falconers and Pigeons.

### **George McAlister.**

Most Falconers have a pigeon loft of some sort or another, in fact it's one of the requirements for a falconers grading. I have seen many lofts and spoken to a lot of falconers over the last 35 years. Most guys' lavish care and attention on their falcons and cost seems to be no object when it comes to the beloved falcon.

The mews is pride of place with the fancy screen perch, triple beam balance and full of every conceivable perch size, thousands of eyelets most of which will never be used. Fancy gloves imported from wherever, a row of hoods mostly purchased from people all over the world, again mostly never used, miles of leash material in a variety of colors, half a kangaroo skin imported from Australia, state of the art Telemetry receivers with extra transmitters, shock collars for dogs, deep freezers for food. The list is endless.

When you go round the back of the house you find the so called "Pigeon Loft" with a fist full of "dak kakers", there because they have to be.

I personally feel that this is wrong and it is just as easy to look after loft of good racing pigeons as it is to have Ferrell birds. I spoke at length with Mark Botha (Ex falconer now pigeon racer) so he knows what we require.

**Q:** What are the basics for a loft?

**A:** A smooth concrete floor which can be regularly cleaned.

Good ventilation is vital to a healthy loft.

A 'prisoner' section for your breeding birds.

A flying section for your homing pigeons.

**Q:** How many perches and which ones are best.

**A:** There should be 5% more perches in the loft than birds, no bird should sleep on the floor. The A shape perch is best because it only allows one bird, per perch, the square pigeon-hole type creates conflict in the loft as the dominant male birds like to roost higher and the birds fight constantly for prime place on this type of perch. With the A shape perch the birds cannot grab onto each other as happens with square hole type.

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**Q:** What about nest boxes

**A:** It is not necessary to breed blood lines etc. Old plastic fruit crates do well. The cock can defend his nest box and they can incubate and rear their chicks without interference from each other. Open nest trays are not suitable.

**Q:** What is the best and cheapest food?

**A:** A loft can do very well on a mixture of 50% yellow maize and 50% poultry layers pellets. Bear in mind sunflower is liked by the birds and ground nuts are like smarties to them. The nuts have a very high oil content which is very healthy and promotes body fat which is vital for long flight energy. Don't forget to supply a bit of charcoal and most important Grit. Poultry grit is adequate and can be put in a separate container for the birds to consume ad lib, especially the prisoner breeding birds.

**Q:** How do you sex a pigeon?

**A:** If you take an imaginary line from the break opening or grape the line of the female runs through the eye. The cock bird line runs below the eye. The largest squab in the nest is usually a male.

**Q:** When is the best breeding time for pigeons?

**A:** From June – December. The molt is then completed.

**Q:** How old are the youngsters before they breed.

**A:** After 3 – 4 months young birds will begin to pair off and breed.

**Q:** What are the signs of healthy pigeons?

**A:** Feet should be red and clean, dirty feet means that attention is required. The nostrils should be chalky white.

A healthy pigeon has a 'soapy feel' to it, due to slough. (White chalk)

The breast bone should not be felt at all; on parting the feathers of the breast the breast bone should be white in appearance. Chalky, grey or pink breast bone is a bad sign.

The droppings in the loft should smell sweet. If the loft smells sour at all there are problems.

**Q:** What parasites do pigeons have?

**A:** There are 5 major external parasites,

**Jockey fly and Mosquito:**

Both these parasites spread malaria through the bite. They are both blood suckers and drain a huge amount of energy from the birds. By both blood cell depletion and sleep deprivation.

**Feather Mite, shaft mite:**

These are only noticeable on close inspection & cause feather destruction & sleep deprivation because of constant irritation.

**Red mites:**

These are not obvious to the untrained eye & cause skin irritation; they are mostly around the vent and the oil gland. Also causing skin irritation.

Together these parasites cause very poor performance from the pigeons due to stress and anemia.

**Q:** How can we protect the birds from these parasites?

**A:** Regular spaying of the loft. To drip off point with:

5L of water

1ml Regent (Phipronil) ex co-op

45ml Fendona (Alfa Cypermethrin) ex co-op

2 caps of Detol

Clean out breeding boxes after squeakers leave the nest and before new eggs are laid. At least once every 3 months give the loft a complete spring clean.

Also use Ivomec(Oral Suspension) 50ml and Ambipor

25ml in 10 Liters water:

Added to bath water and offered to the pigeons in a bath once a week. External parasites will be a thing of the past.

*This can also be given to falcons / Hawks once a week in the bath water; it is completely harmless if taken orally by the birds.*

**Q:** What about internal parasites:

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**Q:** What about internal parasites:

**A:** Treat every pigeon at least once every 3 months. Medi worm is best because it is a tablet dose given manually (1 per bird). It also gives best results, do not deworm birds Dec / March as this is prime molt time and stress of deworming can interfere with primary feather growth. I.e. Stress marks, weakness, etc.

Multi spec can be used during molt period, but is not absolutely necessary.

Immediately after de-worming treat birds for coxi with Baycox, this is important. Because the lesions left in the gut from tape worm bites leave the bird very susceptible to infection Baycox has no side effects on the liver as normal Sulphmathazine has.

**Q:** What else must we keep an eye open for.

**A:** Green wet splat droppings which indicate crop cancer in loft. This spreads quickly especially from parents to squaker. It can be seen in the bird's mouth as cheesy lesion (known to falconers as frounce) the squeakers make a guttural squeak when infected. Treat with Medizole or Fladgel tablets (obtainable at your Pharmacy) regularly as a preventative. Once the loft is infected it is very difficult to get rid of and can infect your falcon as well.

Summery to a healthy loft:

BUILD IT EASY TO CLEAN.

MAKE SURE VENTALATION IS GOOD.

USE A SYSTEM TO KEEP FEED TRAYS THAT CAN'T BE CONTAMINATED.

FEED BIRDS ONLY ENOUGH FOOD THAT THEY WILL FINISH THE SAME DAY.

Food left overnight encourages Rodents. Rodent urine carries paratyphoid and ecoli which can be deadly to pigeons.

Make sure water cannot be contaminated clean water containers regularly.

Daily exercise is also important. About 1 hour per day around the loft is ok. Remember you want your pigeon to come home after he has exercised your falcon. He cannot do that if he is not fit and trained to your loft.

HEALTHY PIGEONS=HEALTHY FALCONS!!

## **Spanish Falconry.**

### **Adrian Lombard.**

I have been fascinated by accounts of Falconry in Spain and the Spanish Falconers that I have met in my travels have encouraged this interest through their enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment of practical Falconry. I have suspected that, language differences aside, the Spanish falconers share many common characteristics with those in South Africa. In December 2009, I received an incredibly generous invitation to visit Spain and to attend the Sky trial at Osuna, near Seville, in southern Spain. My hosts were Diego Pareja- Obregon who is the initiator and organizer of the Trial, and Fernando Feas whom I had met as the Spanish delegate to the IAF. They proved to be wonderful hosts, welcoming me into their circle of friends and sharing a positive feast of Falconry with me. This gave me a very privileged view into Spanish Falconry which matched all my hopes. I would like to share a few of these insights and I hope that this encourages further contact with the outstanding falconers of the Iberian Peninsula.

### **The Sky Trial.**

The Sky Trial was started by Diego, along with a number of other innovations to Spanish Falconry. Sky Trials are permitted in Spain where legislation does not restrict the practice. The Trial has become a significant and well organized spectator event drawing a crowd of falconers and other onlookers and receiving sponsorship to make this a vibrant and colorful occasion. An interesting element is the inclusion of a Short-wing trial which is based around the judging of real hunting on wild Brown Hares. A considerable quarry base is required, given the number of competitors, but the area around Osuna abounds with hares which lie out in huge open ploughed fields, making for a good spectator event as well as providing exciting flights with Goshawks and Harris Hawks. There certainly were quite a number of superb birds and, although chance plays an enormous part in this sort of event, there was hot competition and much excitement.

The Long-wing trial was run along the lines that we are familiar with but went through several phases, lasting for 3 days. The standard was excellent and the quality of pigeons outstanding. I can say that I did not see a single pigeon caught despite some superb flights. I am certainly glad that I was not one of the judges who must have had an extraordinarily difficult task.

It was certainly apparent that my Spanish friends preferred hunting and needed no persuasion to slip away and go hunting Red-legged Partridge with falcons and hares with Goses, Harris and a Golden eagle. The point was well made, however, that the Sky Trial does benefit the standard of Falconry and there are some lessons from the innovations of these Spanish Falconers. The judging of real hunting is practical and can bear consideration. The development of satellite monitors which measure performance in terms of altitude, speed and mounting time can be examined at our 2010 Field Meet and may make a form of Sky Trial which involves real hunting with longwings a real and exciting possibility.

### **Hunting Magpies with an Aplomado Falcon.**

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with Aplomados, Bonelli's Eagles and Peruvian Eagle-buzzards, managed by a Columbian falconer, Holmes; and here I met Lady Mclver. She is an imprint Aplomado falcon, weighing 200gms. She is named for the TV character famed for his innovative methods of getting out of dire situations, as her early rearing was beset by a series of disasters which she miraculously survived. She was the first Aplomado that I have seen flown and I certainly enjoyed the experience.

We collected the bird and piled into a Jeep to drive into his hunting area which incorporates the fields and farms surrounding Pozuelo del Rey. The quarry was magpies which are plentiful in the area and these wily corvids are tricky and challenging. We drove until a magpie was found in a relatively isolated tree or other perch, Lady Mclver was released and the chase was on. The Magpie would try to elude her through flight or by diving into any sort of cover, and we would try to re-flush it. The magpies are skilled acrobats and try to out-manoeuvre the falcon but the Aplomado is certainly their match. When a Magpie is caught the battle is far from over as it engages in a real rough-and-tumble with the falcon. The excitement and exercise were the perfect solution to the cold winter air.

The scenery, with ploughed fields and bare trees, was not unlike the Free State in winter.

Despite the barren environment, there was plenty of evidence of other wild quarry, with rabbits and Red-legged Partridge in evidence. Lady Mclver had some enthusiastic flights on Partridge which managed to make cover and we concentrated on Magpies. While out the hunting grounds we saw a fair amount of interesting wildlife including Red Kite, Eurasian Griffins and Great Bustard.

On our last evening, when I was packed and ready to fly back to South Africa, we went out for a final hunt. The first Magpie was taken down in text-book style so we decided to try for another. Our next few tries were less successful as there was too much cover available and the Aplomado started to get a bit wayward. She disappeared behind a barn and was nowhere to be seen when we ran around it. A few minutes later, her absence was explained when we saw pigeons erupting from the roof-tops of Pozuelo del Rey a couple of kilometers away. When we arrived there, the pigeons were ominously quiet and Madam Mclver was not to be seen. A really challenging tracking session ensued until we established that she was in a derelict building inhabited by pigeons. The building was locked and time was spent trying to locate the owner. Finally Holmes clambered into the rafters and Lady Mclver popped out with a bulging crop. It was now getting dark and she flew off to a nearby radio mast. The danger from Eagle Owls is very real and Fernando was reluctant to leave out exposed, so tried to climb the mast after scaling the security fence. As he approached her she flew off once more into the darkness. We finally located her in the top of a large olive tree where she had to spend the night. I had been planning to take Fernando and his girl-friend, Katherine, out to dinner before my flight, but these plans were now dashed – such is Falconry. I received an SMS the following day to tell me that he had recovered Katherine at 10pm. and Lady Mclver at 6am.

**Other Hunts.** I had the very real pleasure of going out with some of the best Spanish Falconers to see the Red-legged Partridge flown. It was interesting to see that, while the Sky-trial birds were predominantly hybrids, the choice of hunting bird was the local *brookei* race of Peregrine. These birds flew superbly, mounting well and high, focused on their falconer. The partridge

were very difficult to flush as the cover was exceptionally sparse and they tended to run. Never-the-less there were some great flights and a kill made in the last light of the day. Brown Hare were exceptionally common but I am still uncertain as to what they find to eat in bare ploughed fields and olive groves. We hunted them with Harris Hawks, Goshawks and a Golden Eagle. We had great fun on fast running and skittish hares. I met a falconer from Majorca who was flying a Bonelli's Eagle. These are very similar to the African Hawk Eagle, but bigger. The male Bonelli's is much the same size as the female AHE. I was unable to see his bird hunting but he showed a video of his Golden Eagle hunting feral goats on Majorca. He slope-soars the bird off mountain heights and she stoops into the small herds of goats on the rocky slopes. This was exciting falconry set in dramatic scenery. I developed a real respect for the stocky little man because you have to be really fit to manage that hunt!

**The Visit.** This was my first visit to Spain and I spent time in Madrid and travelled south to Osuna near Seville with Fernando.

Madrid is a large and beautiful European city. The Spanish appear to work hard and play hard. One can see them in their offices at 8pm. And they go out to restaurants at 11pm. To an early rising-early to bed South African this schedule is a real challenge. The effort is truly worth it as they make lively and amusing company even if one shares barely a word of a common language. They were incredibly hospitable and great hosts. I can also say that I am a dedicated fan of Tappas and I have never had anything less than excellent food in Spain. I was asked to give a talk on Black Sparrowhawks. They are very competent Austringers, fascinated by our Black Spar so I spoke to a packed room with Fernando translating and managed to get away with no rotten eggs thrown.

In our trip to Osuna, we passed through some wild and rugged mountains and saw a colony of Eurasian Griffins. This is also the region where the Spanish Lynx can be found. This is the world's rarest cat and is down to a population of some 225 animals but the Spanish are making a real effort to conserve it.

There is also a drive to conserve the Imperial Eagle and the Bonelli's Eagle. Fernando is working with an organization known as GREFA and I visited their facility. Fernando is assisting with the breeding of the Bonelli's Eagle and has brought them success with the raising of 3 chicks last year. They are also involved in breeding and releasing Lesser Kestrels and were very familiar with the work of Dave Pepler of South Africa.

This was an amazing experience and everything I had ever hoped to find in Spain. My early impressions of Spanish Falconers were well founded and there is a strong and active Falconry movement in Spain. Spain is one of the countries that participated in the successful bid to make Falconry a World Cultural Heritage and we should salute their efforts and their competence in our art.

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## Notice of Publications:

- AGRED is producing a book written by its Director, Dr. Aldo Berruti, entitled:

### **Everyone's Guide to Gamebird Management and Utilisation in South Africa**

This promises to be an extremely valuable publication for anyone involved in gamebird utilization. It contains a short but positive excerpt regarding Falconry. I would suggest that this is an essential gift for all land-owners who let us hunt their property. Dr. Berruti has promised a discounted price for SAFA Members (+/\_ R150.00) and I will be notifying the SAFA ExCo as soon as it becomes available. This will be a really useful investment and we need to get these books into the hands of our farmers. Editor.

- The long awaited BoPWG Publication is now available:

### **The Raptor Survey and Monitoring Field Guide by Dr. G. Malan**

This is invaluable for anyone involved in Raptor monitoring in Southern Africa and I would recommend that all the clubs, at least, should obtain a copy. These can be obtained from Tanya Fouche at E-mail: [tanyaf@ewt.org.za](mailto:tanyaf@ewt.org.za)

The total cost for the book + posting will be R255.00 (R230 for the book + R25.00 for packaging and posting.)

Payment can be made via credit card (by completing the attached form) or directly into our bank account:

Endangered Wildlife Trust

First National Bank, Rosebank, Branch: 25 33 05, Account number: 5037 1564 219

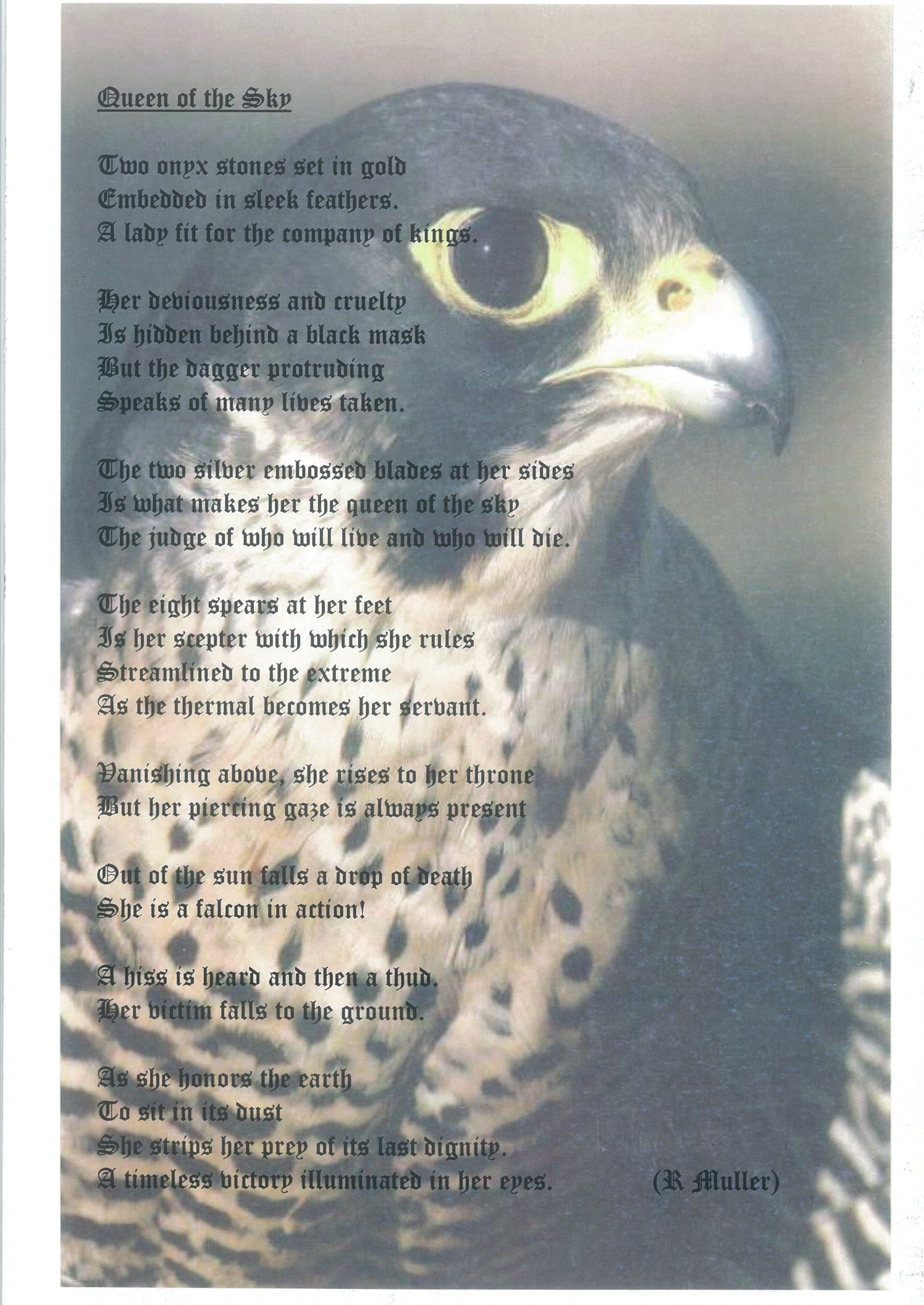
Reference: **BoP24RM**

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*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 the source of photos is not generally acknowledged in this publication*

South Africa represented at the  
Falconry Festival 2010.





## Queen of the Sky

Two onyx stones set in gold  
Embedded in sleek feathers.  
A lady fit for the company of kings.

Her deviousness and cruelty  
Is hidden behind a black mask  
But the dagger protruding  
Speaks of many lives taken.

The two silver embossed blades at her sides  
Is what makes her the queen of the sky  
The judge of who will live and who will die.

The eight spears at her feet  
Is her scepter with which she rules  
Streamlined to the extreme  
As the thermal becomes her servant.

Vanishing above, she rises to her throne  
But her piercing gaze is always present

Out of the sun falls a drop of death  
She is a falcon in action!

A hiss is heard and then a thud.  
Her victim falls to the ground.

As she honors the earth  
To sit in its dust  
She strips her prey of its last dignity.  
A timeless victory illuminated in her eyes.

(R Muller)