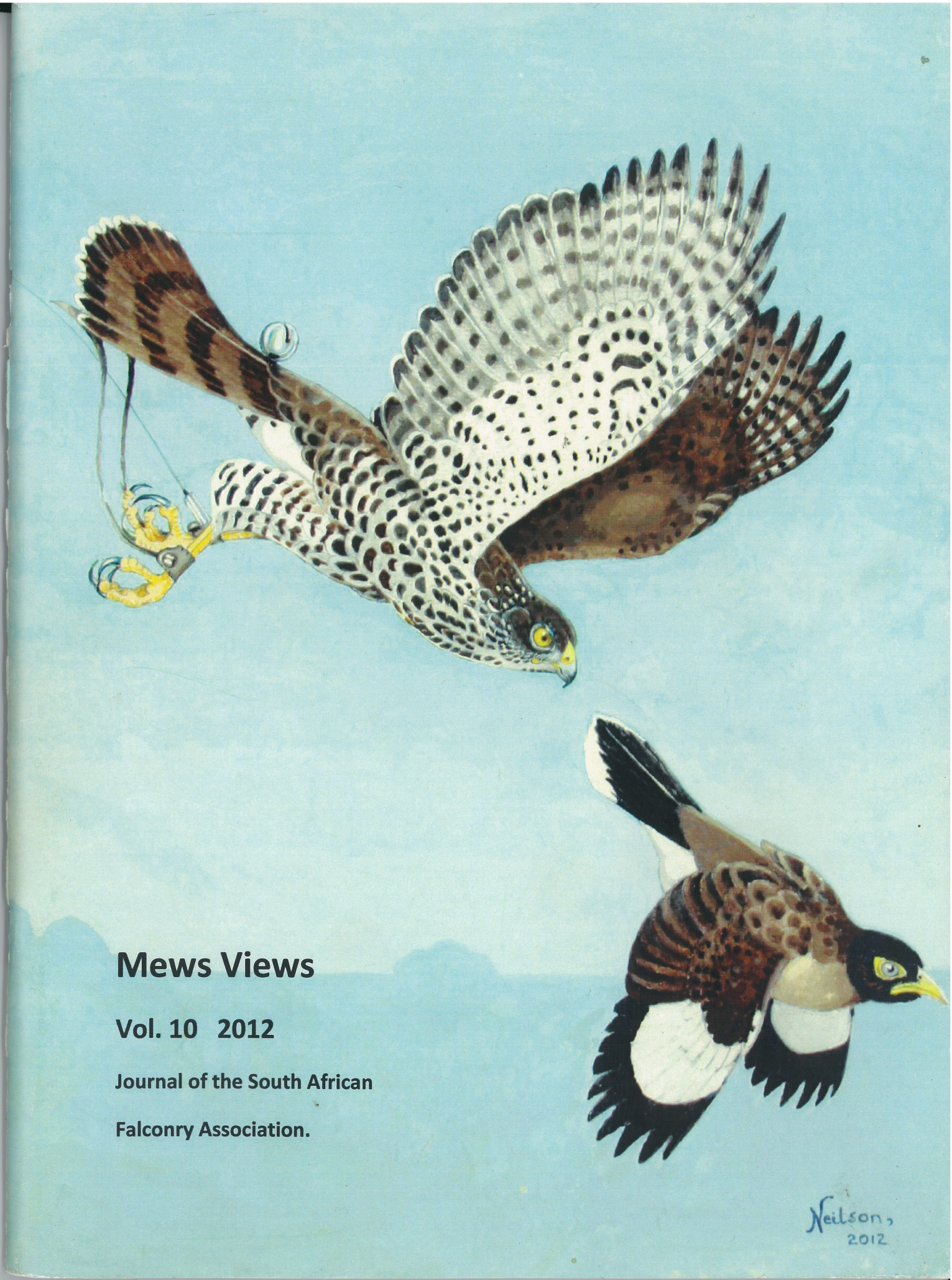

Mews Views

Vol. 10 2012

Journal of the South African

Falconry Association.



The SAFA representatives did us proud at the Falconry Festival in Al Ain!





Shane McPhersen and Mia Jessen hunting with eagles. Simon Thomsett's breeding pair of Crowned Eagles – Kenya. (See Page 50)

Please note that the views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the opinions of SAFA or of the Editor. Thanks are expressed to all contributors, without whom this publication could not exist. Thanks also to those who have contributed photographs. Please note that that the source of photos is not generally acknowledged in this publication.

Adrian Lombard – Editor.

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Editorial:

Once again we have a selection of articles that hopefully will entertain, amuse and give pause for thought. The subject matter ranges from hunting tales to hawk training and management to conservation and it accurately reflects the activities of SAFA.

Three articles contain mention of Ron Hartley and these arrived unsolicited, but their timing is appropriate. SAFA collected funds to transport Ron's papers to The Archives of Falconry in Boise, Idaho. These funds were seen as a donation to The Archives on behalf of Ron and, in February 2012, a plaque was placed on the Wall of Remembrance at The Archives to commemorate his life and his contribution to our Art. Thank you to all of you who contributed to this

This is the tenth edition of Mews Views, which makes it a bit of a landmark. I hope that you will enjoy this edition and continue to provide support in the form of articles and photos into the future.

Adrian Lombard,
Editor.
June, 2012

Chairman's Comment:

Over the past year a number of issues have arisen which involve use of the internet. These have either been inappropriate comment on Internet Forums or efforts to discuss contentious issues by email. These have created some problems and it is important that we learn how to handle these issues just as any other organized group has to in these times. The Internet is of undoubted value in that we communicate quickly and we can organize events or mobilize ourselves for defense or activism far more easily than ever before. These are undoubted benefits but there are also enormous risks. The internet is not concerned with privacy, ethics or decent behavior. It is up to the users of the net to apply these constraints themselves. This can be done through self discipline and personal moral standards or through a code of behavior established and enforced by the organization (SAFA) if this is necessary.
Behavior on internet forums will obviously need both forms of constraint. Where the standing or reputation of South African Falconry is at risk, SAFA has a duty to act. Where personal rights and reputation is affected, the individual has the right to seek legal redress. These aspects must be remembered by those who use these forums. Essentially, Falconers should try to uphold the standing and image of South African Falconry when participating in chat on a Forum.

Many of us, who have worked hard to establish the well deserved reputation of our Falconers, will be angered by ill-behavior and all South African Falconers will be harmed by it.
Email correspondence and discussion is also not without its issues. The problem that we have is that some people are better at articulating their thoughts than others and that we have different first languages amongst us. This means that what is written in emails can be misinterpreted or misunderstood and cause anger or offence where none is intended. It is also a problem with the internet that things can be written in haste or without careful thought and then these things stand forever. This is why the SAFA Field Meet is so important to our organization. We can meet there, get to know one another and discuss issues informally. We can then meet formally in the AGM and deal with these issues face to face. The AGM is structured and has a Chairman. This limits conflict and misunderstanding, but the Chairman's duty is to run the Meeting. This cannot always be done to everyone's liking. If the Chairman makes a decision regarding the running of the Meeting, we must respect that decision. If we don't like the way he does his job then we have the option of voting him out of office. I need to tell everyone, that I do appreciate that the SAFA Field Meet is a significant expense. We - all of us - have to take time off work, travel considerable distances and pay fees and accommodation. However, it is the attendance at this Meet which has made SAFA what it is and the Meet is one of the best in the world. There have been numerous people who have travelled from the far corners of the earth to attend our meet - some more than once.

SAFA represents about 150 South African Falconers. There are no individual members; it is an association of Falconry Clubs. **It is a democratic organization and seeks to find consensus from its membership. In turn, the member clubs undertake to uphold and be guided by the decisions of SAFA, as the decisions of SAFA reflect the collective wisdom of all of South Africa's Falconers.** We may not always like those decisions but the only way to change them is through persuasion and the democratic process. The strength of South African Falconry lies in its unity. The decisions of SAFA, representing as they do, all of South Africa's Falconers, carry significant weight with DEAT, Provincial conservation authorities and a range of NGOs. The best way to destroy Falconry in South Africa will be to destroy the cohesion of SAFA.

The work of SAFA is done by a small group of volunteers who work very hard to support, defend and develop Falconry in South Africa. It is very important to also recognize that the achievements of SAFA are underpinned by a broad membership of good and dedicated falconers who practice outstanding Falconry and who follow the law. Without these guys, the work of the volunteers would be nothing and meaningless. If we need confirmation of this (beyond the achievements at the last Falconry Festival in Al Ain) look at the latest edition of the International Falconry Journal which many of us have received, look at the outstanding article by Anton Muller and also the comment about it in the Editorial. Back to the volunteers - these include a variety of people, a number are professional people, as well as farmers and people in senior management, many of us run our own businesses. This places constraints on our time and does mean that things may not be done on time. I am certainly guilty of not getting the

Minutes out at the time required by the Constitution in previous years and this means that SAFA has not run as efficiently as it probably should. I cannot help this as I have to prioritize my tasks and fit the work of SAFA around my "day job" (which often involves nights as well) so I have done my best and so have the other officers of SAFA. If this is seen as a problem, the solution is to find someone equally competent for the job but who has more available time or to employ a full time professional secretary.

The Constitution is essentially the rules by which an organization (A Government, a multinational NGO or a club) is run. The important thing about a Constitution is that it should be understood by the membership of the organization and that it should achieve broad consensus and have the support of that membership. The larger the organization and the more money that that organization controls, the more important it is that this constitution must be a water-tight legal document. For SAFA, the Constitution reflects the way that we - all the Falconers in South Africa - chose to run our organization and manage falconry throughout the Country. The only part of the Constitution that is relevant to Provincial Conservation Authorities is the Grading System. Member Clubs agree to accept the SAFA Grading System as a minimum standard for the mentoring and accreditation of their membership. This reflects the Animal Welfare function of SAFA as it is the way that we try to ensure that Falconers are competent to manage their birds. Many Falconers around the world envy our system but it is not unique as similar systems exist in Zimbabwe and in North America and most Falconers in European countries must complete Hunting Exams. It is the duty of the Provincial clubs to present revisions in the Grading system to their Conservation Authorities and to seek inclusion of the changes in the Provincial Falconry Policy if this is necessary.



As Chairman, it is my job to regulate the way that changes to the Constitution are made in practice. I have followed the process that is widely accepted by similar organizations. When changes to the Constitution are planned, I notify the Membership that there will be a "Special Annual General Meeting" to consider the changes and I circulate the proposed changes at least 1 month before the Meeting. This is what happened last year and it gives the membership time to consider the changes that are proposed. Some discussion can then occur before the Meeting. At the Meeting, we can only consider the proposed changes as notified to the membership. We can accept or reject these changes and we can make minor alterations to the wording of these changes. It is not possible or fair to consider changes about which, the membership have not been informed prior to the Meeting. The Constitution remains a living document and will be subjected to changes over time. I have placed it in the hands of a lawyer for his advice and was informed that it was a perfectly adequate document. Anyone can propose changes to the Constitution but the proposal must come through the Chairman and will follow the process that I have just outlined.
Despite our small size and our accepted inefficiencies, SAFA has made very significant achievements for Falconry in South Africa. These achievements reflect the efforts of many people. They reflect the very significant efforts of Provincial clubs which are out membership.

They also reflect the excellence of our Falconers and their willingness follow the law and the rules we impose. So, what are these achievements?

- Falconry is legal in every Province of South Africa and most Provinces have a Falconry Policy which reflects an understanding of the needs of Falconers and which facilitates our Art.
- Falconry is recognized and defined in National legislation. Furthermore, this legislation recognizes our Grading system and SAFA as the organization to provide accreditation. It also recognizes our access to wild taken raptors. (This legislation is currently "on hold" and we are watching further developments with care.)
- We are recognized and respected by the management of those conservation NGOs which are relevant to us, EWT and BirdLife. We are active participants in the Bird of Prey Group of EWT and participate in most regional Raptor Conservation Forums.
- We are recognized and respected by a range of Hunting Organizations, a number of whom envy some of our achievements.
- We are recognized internationally and enjoy significant status amongst international Falconers and specifically the IAF.
- We achieved significant representation at the International Falconry Festival at Al Ain, with 7 sponsored delegates (potentially 8) including 4 speakers in the Conference.
- We have an annual falconry magazine (Mews Views) to which our membership contributes and which stands up well against similar publications from around the world. This is a showcase of our activities.
- We hold an outstanding Annual Field Meet which acts to set the standard of our Falconry and which will match any other similar Meet around the world. This Field Meet has contributed very significantly to raising the standard of South African Falconry.
- We have an admirable Code of Conduct which is lodged with the Dept of Agriculture.
- We participated in the review of the ToPS Species list and obtained agreement to down-list both the Peregrine Falcon and the African Crowned Eagle. At the same time we managed to avert the inclusion of the Lanner Falcon. This was a very significant team effort
- We have an excellent website.
- We have a Peregrine Breeding Program which produces a surplus of birds and we are shortly to engage in a conservation-directed program to breed Taita falcons.
- We have developed a culture of conservation awareness amongst our membership. Most member clubs are involved in conservation projects and most falconers contribute to conservation in one way or another.

Despite this list, there are still many tasks to do and Falconry is not secure. These tasks will include:

- Ensuring that falconry is included on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, when South Africa signs the Convention, and obtaining recognition by UNESCO.
- Organizing the permanent marking of all falconry birds, preferably by tamper-free rings and obtaining agreement from all provinces to allow free movement of our birds around the country.
- Ensuring that each Province has a Falconry Policy that incorporates a pre-negotiated quota for a wild harvest, including the issuing of permits for that harvest.
- To develop increasing numbers of falconers qualified as Animal Welfare Inspectors, using existing training programs.
- To develop a system to facilitate falconers to obtain Dedicated Hunter status.
- Ongoing review of our Constitution and Code of Conduct and the management processes of SAFA.
- Improving communication between SAFA and its membership as well as with the general public and with interested parties.

To end, I must tell you that I do have some very major concerns regarding Falconry in South Africa:

- Our Membership is static. This goes against the trend in the western world and reflects and reflects apathy at best, or resistance or obstruction to new membership at worst. This is not healthy.
- Unity is often the product of external threats. As we appear to overcome the challenges to Falconry in South Africa, dissention will grow amongst our ranks. This will be the result of people who feel constrained by our rules and processes without appreciating that these are in fact our strength. We must, at every level, engage with those who feel like this. We need to persuade them that SAFA is not rigidly autocratic and is managed by consensus.
- Animal rights organizations and thought are gaining strength and popularity around the world and in Africa. Despite the obvious benefits to Conservation of Sustainable Hunting, many oppose this and will continue to challenge our Art. This will be an ever-increasing threat.

I appreciate that this has been a rather long dissertation but I hope that it gives some clarity on the management of Falconry in South Africa and on the policies and practices of SAFA.

I would wish all of our membership - Good Hunting for the coming year! Please fly your birds to the very best of your abilities and enjoy the privileges that we have won for our Art.

Adrian Lombard
SAFA Chairman.

Provincial Reports:

Boland Falconry Club Report

In general as a club we had a good year. Individually members had wins and losses, but were constant throughout the year. No incidents of malpractice were reported and looking at the individual hunting reports good numbers were bagged.

On request a peregrine nest box was put up at Parow municipality. A different design was followed and already peregrines were spotted by the box. The response from the City of Cape Town was promising for more nest boxes to be put up. Al nest boxes remain the property of the donor through the club, should relocation be necessary due to future structural changes to buildings. New sites have already been identified as part of our ongoing conservation effort.

Financially the club money matters are sound and as good as it can be, with the current membership. One new member joined, totaling 5 active flying members. There are no outstanding membership fees. Through our club Facebook page and website 74 foreign enquiries for membership were received, but were deferred until SAFA reports on foreign membership, resulting in a substantial loss of income.

Wehahn Geldenhuys

Chairman

Johan Botes

Grade: A

Birds: African Peregrine, Harris Hawk

Die seisoen het 'n bietjie stadig begin omdat ek met die aanvang van die jagseisoen besig was om terug te trek Kaap toe. Toe ek eers vir Lara begin optel was dit prêt om weer op die deurstoep van my jag gronde te bly.

Die enigste terugslag wat ek gehad het was die feit dat ander klub valkeniers nie hulle eie jag gronde het nie en roof maak van ander se jag gronde, die plobleem kom in waar jy net daai een lang werksdag gehad het, by die huis kom, jag gronde toe jaag en daar niks is om te jag nie, om net die volgende dag te hoor dat ander jou jag grond betree het.

Nou raak dit n algemene storie, ek weet die jag gronde raak min, maar een of ander tyd gaan daar n lyn getrek moet word, anders gaan ons baie gronde verloor.

Ek is en sal n valkenier bly. Ek probeer almal bystaan waar nodig en geniet my jag elke keer as ek my valk optel, dit is my sukses en ek moedig ander aan om dieselfde te doen.

My Peregrine het ek 35 eende (Shovelers, Geelbekke en Teal) gevat die jaar met 'n paar komorante tussen in.

My Harris het ek 15 tarentale mee gevat.

My jag gronde is Spes Bona, Durbanville, Klipheuwel, 24 Rivier Porterville, Droë Klip

Sondagsfontein en Okkalsdale.

'n Nuwe lid Wynand Myburg het as 'n Grade D (Novice) op 1 Julie 2011 by die klub aangesluit en sorteer onder my as vakleerling.

Lizette Botes

Grade C

No birds were flown due to work commitments

Elmari Meyer

Novice Falconer

No birds were flown or kept, assisted with rehab birds in the club

Wehahn Geldenhuys

Grade : A

Birds: African Peregrine, Peregrine/Gyr/Saker Hybrid and Female Harris Hawk

Quarry: Guinea Fowl & Cape Francolin

My young pointer and Brittany were stolen off my smallholding, a substantial loss. My annual Karoo hunting trip was magic and challenging due to the more than normal rainfall for the region. The long grass had its challenges for both longwings and especially the Harris, which had orientation difficulties getting through the grass at the guineas.

Wehahn Geldenhuys.



Cape Falconry Club Report For 2012

The Cape Falconry Club had a relatively quiet year with regards to activities. We took on six new members: Mark Cook, Andre van Sittert, Ryan Lee, Pierre de Villiers and Riaz Abrams. Alan Clemo was graded from D grade Austringer to C grade Austringer and received the Eagle Encounters Appi of the Year Award. His grading was on a passage musket Afros.

Our annual meet was held in Ceres again and, as always, was a huge success. We had a number of Black Sparrowhawks, African Goshawks, Lanner and Peregrine falcons. The weather was good to us and many Cape Spur Fowl, Guineas and duck were taken. For our main meal we had a spitbraai, which consisted of a sheep and a porcupine. The sheep was pretty good, but the porcupine was brilliant! It's a pity we can't catch them with a bird, as they would be a nice change to the deep freeze.

The SAFA meet was awesome and again there was some world class falconry. I really must encourage everyone to try and make it to SAFA. It is a place to see good falconry and also interact with a whole bunch of like-minded people. The quarry availability is crazy, with a large variety for all types of hawks.

I was very fortunate to go over to Abu Dhabi to partake in the 2011 Falconry Festival. It was an eye-opener to see how the "other side" live and do falconry. I was always under the impression that the Arabs were bad falconers, but I must say their falconry is just different. They are hard on their animals, that's for sure, but as I watched the interaction between falconer and falcon, the birds seemed happy and content. They showed us how they do fitness training with the use of an aeroplane. A lure is pulled behind the plane and the falcon chases it until it is tired, then the falconer releases the lure for the falcon to catch. This might sound strange, but you have to see it to understand what a good workout the falcon gets. We also saw some kite flying, balloon flying and watched them race their falcons. The race is over what seems to be a quarter mile, to a lure that is being swung by another Arab. The falcon's speed is recorded by radar and the winner gets a brand new 4X4. I think this is something we should do in South Africa, and the winner can get a six-pack. One of my highlights was doing some desert hunting with large falcons on Camel back. We did about a 10km tour through the desert, caught two Hubara and had a pretty good chase on desert rabbit and gazelle. The only negative side I have is the absolute pain that my ass went through! These Arabs must either have steel butts or they gave us bad Camels.

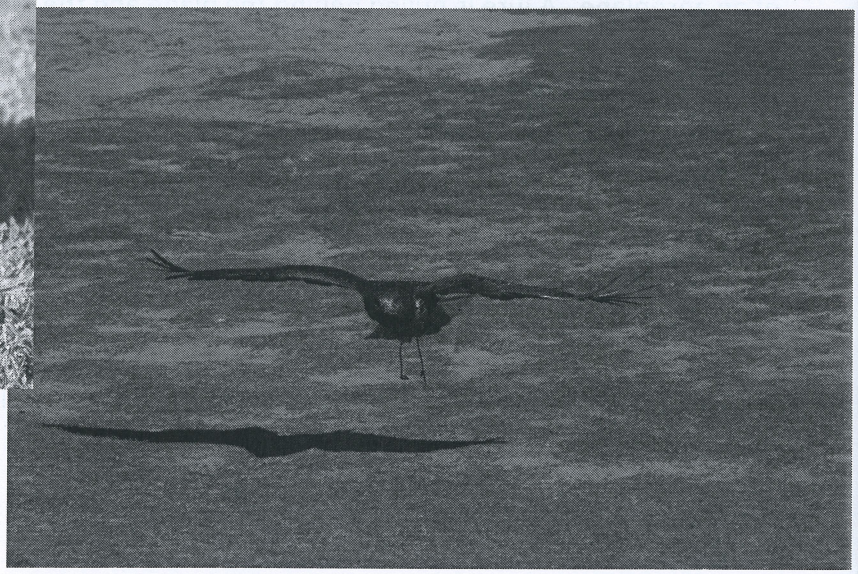
The office bearers for 2012 remained the same, except for the addition of Oliver, who will be handling the nest finding and GPS logging. I am hoping for 2012 that we can make some headway in our projects and also organize some additional meets.

Good Hawking,

Hank Chalmers







Eastern Cape Falconry Club Report

Chairman: Alan Harvey

Members: Jono Arnott. Brian Reeves. Arnold Slabbert. Willie Coombs.

The 2012 season saw club numbers staying the same. A number of people showed an interest in taking up falconry but as usual none came through.

Jono flew his intermewed passage lanner with good success. He did his provisional A grading at SAFA with this bird and now has a peregrine tiercel that he will fly over the 2012 season for his full grading.

Brian Reeves has taken over an intermewed af gos from Willie Coombs. Willie had a change of situation and could no longer keep the gos.

Arnold flew an assortment of rehab peregrine tiercels that come off the urban nest sites in PE every year. The two tiercels have subsequently been hacked back. Arnold continued to do good work through Wildline doing rehab and public relations work especially urban owl populations and the effect of rodentacides.

I had a full season flying a hacked female peregrine and a once intermewed passage peregrine. I fly mainly ducks and both birds did well. The hack bird was trained using Ed Pitchers ideas and I was very happy with the pitch and flight style. I have subsequently hacked her back as I will be flying my old Red Nape this season and the passage.

Alan Harvey.

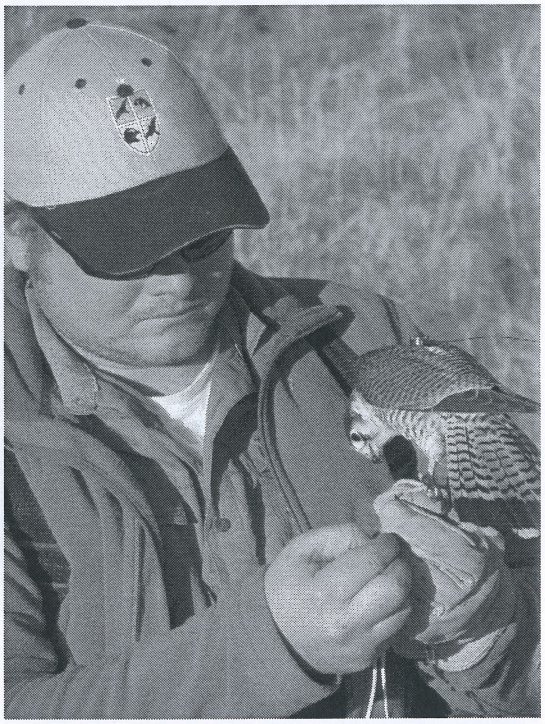


Free State Falconry Club

The Free State, open grasslands, abundance of game birds and waterfowl, falconers with no political issues and what do you get the perfect province for high quality falconry. The 2010 summer produced above average rainfall and numbers are great due to good breeding conditions.
At the time of writing the club has a membership of 19 active falconers flying a variety of hawks from Gabar goshawks to Peregrine falcons.
The FSFC have decided to simplify our grading system to place more emphasis on the role that the tutor plays and the well being of the birds. This has caused the standard of entry level to be raised and we continually strive to raise the bar.
Telemetry is now compulsory for all new members.
Our permit system has also been simplified to make the control within the club easier.
We are currently working on a project to satellite track mature peregrine females to assess their movements in conjunction with the bird club, nature conservation and other interesting parties.
We feel that SAFA has played a major role in getting falconry were it is today, but that does not mean that we have to leave all the hard work to a few individuals we all have a responsibility to make work of falconry related issues and promote our sport.
Another great idea on how to get our birds in great shape has arrived in the form of remote control planes, gone are the days of criticism let's welcome new technology and employ it to get our birds to fly as close as they do in nature. Watch this space the proof is in the pudding.
To the committee in particular Anton Muller I would like to thank all of you for keeping with the laws and not let politics get in the way of the bigger picture.
Happy hawking

Francois Breedt





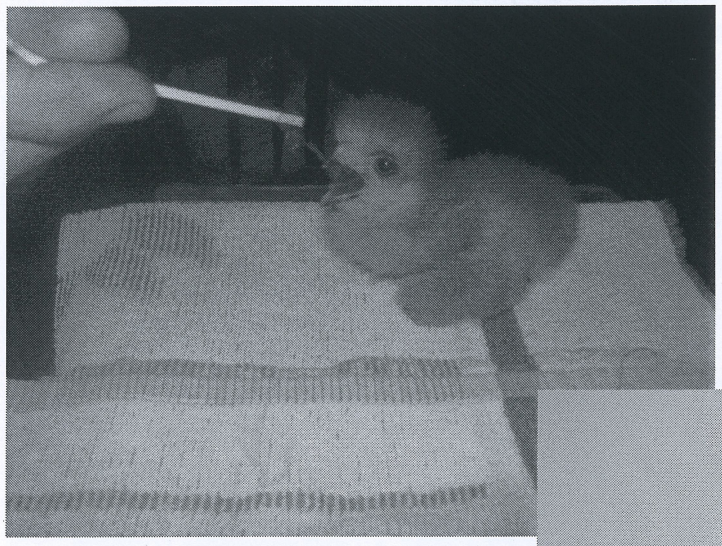
Limpopo Falconry Club

The Limpopo club has 10 active members and new leadership.

"The Morming after a Night out" –

Charlie the Af Gos spent a night out and kept Barend Botes and his dad awake , but all ends well



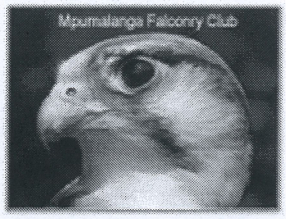


Flicka - Then (left) and now (below).

What a journey!



Mpumalanga Falconry Club



2012 – Yes the hype of the year 2000 has been long forgotten and we are already 12 years into the next millennium. With all things changing it is also our responsibility as Falconers to keep up with the latest technology and innovations, no for the sake of living up to the Jones's but to give both ourselves and our hawks the best possible chance of success and survival. This being the use of Telemetry, Satellite tracking, state of the art satellite dog collars, and also new and innovative training methods.

Mpumalanga although being one of the smaller clubs within South Africa, is definitely that has enthusiasm and is a mixture of both decades of experience and the exuberance of youth and willingness to learn all the secrets this wonderful art of Falconry has to offer. We also want to congratulate Charles Sadler who was elected as the club's new chairman, and Thomas Holder as the club's new secretary.

The membership of the club is as follows:

- George McAllister, this year flying a Peregrine tiercel and Falcon. It is also very sad to report the passing away of Cilla during this year
- Steven van Rensburg flying a passage Peregrine Falcon after he has successfully raised and hacked three Peregrines
- Charles Sadler imprinted a pair of rescued Black Sparrow hawks and is flying one of the females as well as his Peregrine Falcon
- Thomas Holder has taken on the other one of the imprinted Black Sparrow hawk females
- Marilé Sadler has just received her fresh caught Lanneret
- Mark Holder still has his Black Sparrow hawk musket
- Dave McAllister is flying his Gabar Goshawk
- Ross Lesley is flying an Afgos
- Hannes Grobler is flying Jessica, the well-known Jackal Buzzard
- The Penryn boys; Nathan Cook, Richard Hay and Romario Goncalves are all flying African Goshawks

- Members that are not flying this year are Greame Schluter and Paul Fellone
- We also welcome our new apprentice Falconers in Elizabeth Kruger, Zoe Holder, Adriaan Kruger and Kuda Moaneni

We as a club are also very involved in monitoring some nest sites, and we thank Steven van Rensburg for his enthusiasm regarding this. Another project that the club has initiated is the trapping of problem pigeons at a mine site and are planning to erect Falcon nest boxes as a means of natural control.

Our club's Mini meet was held on 27 – 29 April, this proved to be a bit too early to have decent game available. We had some good fun over the weekend and thanks to the Limpopo, Natal and Gauteng representation at our club meet, we shared friendship and camaraderie with fellow falconers from other provinces visiting.

We as a club would also like to thank the management of SAFA especially Adrian Lombard, Ernest Robinson and Tim Wagner as well as the rest of SAFA committee for their unselfish service to the South African falconers and for their effort in ensuring that we can share this passion of ours with our children and grandchildren.



A good attendance at our Mini Meet.

Natal Falconry Club.

The Natal falconry club turned fifty this year and it caught us by surprise. If it wasn't for KZN wildlife asking how long they had been issuing us a permit I think it would have snuck past.

Over the years we have seen some interesting and colourful characters. As we stand at the moment over half the club has been members for over fifteen years and some have been around for over thirty. This gives the club a healthy stance on many fronts. With membership sitting at 22, we are not seeing too many new people seeing it passed two years. A bit of a worry.

KZN wildlife has been proactive in seeking our advice and knowledge in producing the falconry "Norms and Standards" and what looks to be a falconry permit. A far cry from two years ago, things seem to have calmed down with both them and the Anti's. All interaction with authorities was positive.

At the time of writing most flying members were abuzz with the 22nd SAFA meet looming. Kyle dusted off his old Lanner, Darrel and Ross have acquired two hybrids from Tim. Greg has trapped himself a fresh passage, Bruce is flying the passage he stole off Ross last year, Elton is flying his old imprint female Black Spar along with a Male Peri, Stu and Ashton are flying their imprint musket black Spars, Derren, Martin, Mike, Greg west, Gareth, Chris are all flying African Goshawks. Rowan is chasing bunnies with his Harris hawks. Tom Davidson continues to assist with grading of the novice members and advice to the committee. A number of members are taking some time out but continue to be proactive in assisting the club with its various activities. These include SAFRING banding of BOP. Assistance to UKZN with its students in various BOP studies. Shane McPherson is up and running with his Urban Crowned Eagle Project. http://kzn-ce.blogspot.com/2012/05/crowned-eagles-may-update.html

A successful ringing day was held in conjunction with SAFRING, UKZN, SA Birdlife and NFC members. 18 birds were rung on the day. Our thanks to Dr Mark Brown for all his assistance throughout the year.

A large turnout was also achieved at the Christmas function, AGM and last year's SAFA and Ross and Bruce attending the Falconry Festival in Al Ain, UAE.

All in all a healthy status for the Club going into the 2012 season.

Our thanks to all involved in the running of SAFA including Adrian Lombard, Robbie Robinson Tim Wagner and all the others that quietly get on with it.

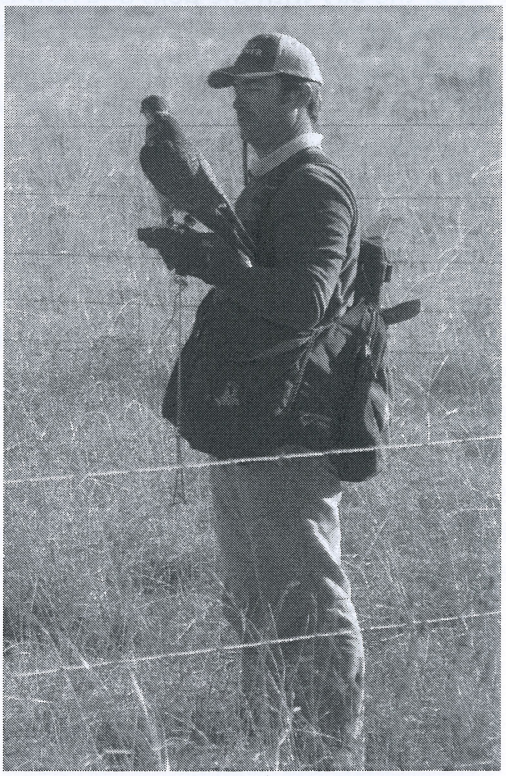
We look forward to SAFA 2012 for some good flying and healthy banter.

Best Regards

Bruce Padbury



NFC contingent at the SAFA Meet 2011.



Kyle with his lanner- set to go.

North West Hawking Club Annual Report 2012

The NWHC ensures provincial falconers implement ethical practices as agreed upon by the falconry community and conservation officials as per our agreed policy. We hold meetings and gatherings that ensures the welfare of the hawks is always a priority. The NWHC is committed to the conservation of the raptors and as a result is active in many aspects of raptor management (nesting activity and success monitoring, captive breeding, rehabilitation of raptors and educational efforts). The NWHCs input in the rehabilitation and monitoring of local raptors only strengthens our standing with the local Nature Conservation department as well as provides justification for certain wild take policies for which we wish to cultivate for future falconry practices. The North West Hawking Club has again been invited to sit on the North West Nature Conservation Wildlife Forum and as a result is involved in many aspects effecting ornithology and falconry in the province and thus are able to have comment on issues relating to birds, raptors and falconry together with role players in the Nature Conservation Community. I see this as a vital step in securing the future of falconry in the province.

Our membership to date is as follows

- Dylan Freeman *Chairman*, I will continue to fly my Female African Hawk Eagle "Five times intermewed (Able) eyeas" and Female Peregrine Falcon (three times intermewed captive bred eyeas). My falconry birds are keeping me active and a true pleasure to spend the best part of the day with the dogs and hawks. I have been active in rehabilitation of some falconry species and busy with some of my breeding birds as well and I hope this is fruitful so as to supply our hawk requirements.
- Johan Smith has continued to fly his Female Black Sparrowhawk and has taken on a male lanner (lannerette) the lanner is still in its early stages but is developing quickly and should afford Johan some enjoyable moments. The spar has turned into a great hawk and is very tolerant of activity and has come into her own.
- Adri du Toit is flying a female Lanner falcon and has been thermal flying her with exceptional pitches as well as a female African Goshawk and has been doing well with this bird harassing the Indian mynah, francolin and plover population with wonderful results. She has also been involved in assisting in rehabilitation cases at the Aran vet clinic.
- Bryan Anderson has taken on a Tiercel Gry-Peregrine, due to personal and work commitments has not been as active as he hoped but is hoping that he will still enjoy some success in the coming months.
- Rodger Nielson is flying a captive bred female African goshawk and by all accounts is having success and well into double figures at the time of writing this report. He has taken both

large ground quarry and birds. According to Rodger she has taken squirrels, a mongoose and guinea poults to name a few.

- Marko Hogendoorn is flying a captive bred female African goshawk. We will monitor his developments to ensure that his practices are on standard with the requirements.
- Ronald *Gorrie* has taken a break from his falconry commitments due to personal issues and so is without a hawk.
- Theresa Hodgkinson is waiting for a new hawk to progress up the ranks and improve her abilities.

There are a number of falconers involved as well as external bodies working together on various conservation and rehab projects. Ongoing monitoring programs around the province by falconers are essential in understanding the local raptors needs and distribution not only from a falconry stand point but also in the larger conservation effort. NWHC is making a notable effort in the research opportunities in the field of raptor conservation, *i.e.* Sightings, nesting activities as well as prey species accounts. Some species we are actively monitoring are Peregrine and Lanner falcon, African Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Fish Eagle, Walberg's Eagle Vulture species, Black Sparrow hawk, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk, Little Sparrowhawk and Roosting habits of migratory Kestrel species to name a few. We are active in nest site recordings and make regular visits to see ongoing progress of the breeding season and this is in line with research and nature conservation obligations. It is evident that falconry has a major role to play in the rehabilitation of raptors and that the practices developed by falconers can be implemented to ensure that as falconers we have an effective influence on the hawks we are entrusted to rehabilitate. A register of such cases is be kept by the club and rehab centers and include this information in the reports submitted to the North West Nature Conservation. Hawks not suitable for release can still undergo rehabilitation using falconry conditions effectively or alternatively may be used in breeding or falconry programs. 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. We have been lucky to be an influential body in the raptor community of the province and as a result are ambassadors for our beloved art.

Good hawking

Dylan Freeman

Transvaal Falconry Club

Overview

The Club had another successful season in 2011/2012. In spite of increasing loss of flying grounds to the, apparently inexorable spread of urban development in Gauteng, members were active in hunting throughout the season. Eighteen members flew 24 birds, taking a good number of quarry of a wide range of species, as is expanded upon below.

Club Administration

The Annual General Meeting was held on schedule and was attended by 18 of the 25 paid-up members, family members and three persons who were interested in becoming involved in falconry. The following were elected as Office Bearers:

Chairman: Tim Wagner – unopposed

Secretary: Lizette Beukes – elected by majority vote

Committee: Mark Labuschagne, Robbie Robinson, Paul Strydom, Colin Williams

In addition to the Annual General Meeting, two general meetings were held during the year. Most of the management issues of the Club were dealt with via email and by meetings of Committee members. At the end of February Lizette Beukes found herself unable to continue as Secretary due to personal commitments. Robbie Robinson was asked to take over the portfolio of Secretary until the next Annual General Meeting.

Membership

For most of the year member numbers remained stable at 25 full members, but in early 2012 a number of new members joined. As at the end of May there were 31 members.

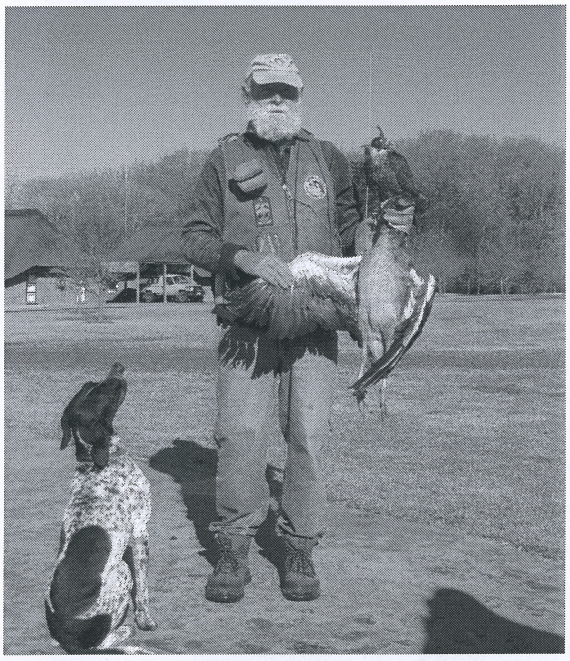
Falconry

Eighteen members flew birds during the year. Longwings were in the majority, with 3 Lanner tiercels, 5 African Peregrine tiercels and 6 African Peregrine falcons as well as a few exotics being flown. These took a wide range of gamebirds, ducks and other quarry, with the season being generally very successful for most of the birds flown.

Austringers also had rather a successful year. The three Black Sparrowhawks took mainly gamebirds, with almost equal numbers of guineafowl and Swainson's Spurfowl being caught.

The Black Spars also did good work on Indian Mynas this year, with 19 of these beasties being reported as having been caught. The 6 African Goshawks also made life miserable for some flocks of Indian Mynas, accounting for 102 Mynas. Notably some Swainson's Spurfowl were also taken. Only two Ovambo Sparrowhawks were flown this year, a musket and a female. The musket managed a modest score of 128 birds, although this included a Coqui Francolin, three African Quail and a fully-grown hen Orange River Francolin that he brought down and held through quite a tussle on the ground until he could be assisted. The female had somewhat higher score, taking 178 birds, including guineafowl and Swainson's Spurfowl juveniles as well as Ethiopian Snipe. Graham Anderson continued flying his Harris'Hawk at whatever came in view!

Robbie Robinson.





Events at the SAFA Field Meet.

The Editor was presented with the accompanying photos. George McAlister, when asked for the story, replied "We did it!" After all, what more need be said.



Penryn College Falconry Report

The last year has been a very eventful one for our small but very active club. Our current falconers are as follows:

Nathan Cook (C grade): Nathan hacked the infamous "White Goshawk" at the end of the 2011 season and has taken on a captive bred, second year musket African Goshawk, much to the detriment of the local bird population.

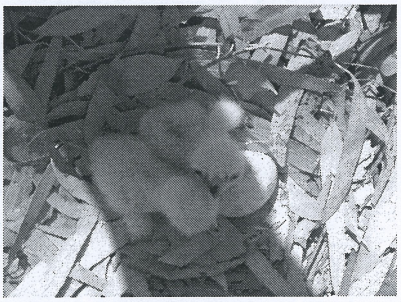


Romario Gonsalves (C grade): Romario has passed on his bunny-slaying Jackal Buzzard, Jacqueline, to take on a passage (rehab) African Goshawk musket. The musket is proving to be an efficient killer and has taken a number of small birds.

Richard Hay (C grade): Richard hacked his male Jackal buzzard (who has since taken up residence around the school grounds and surrounding farm lands) and taken on a female passage (rehab) African Goshawk.

Kuda Maoeni (C grade): Kuda is a new addition and has recently passed his C-grade exam and is lined up to get a juvenile, captive bred Jackal Buzzard from Dylan Freeman.

We have also had a large group of new apprentices who joined us this year and we watch with interest to see how many will continue our fine tradition at Penryn.



On our environmental front we have been involved in locating and monitoring the local Peregrine and Black Sparrowhawk nests. Once thought to be a rarity in the Lowveld, an astounding number of active Peregrine eyries have been located in the surrounding areas. We have also found an abundance of active Black Sparrowhawk nests.

Sadly one of the Black Sparrowhawk nests was targeted by bandits set on ensnaring the female in a net laced with fish hooks. Luckily Steven van Rensburg was surveying the nest through a scope at the time and managed to chase the intruders off the nest. The two chicks (only a few hours old) were rescued the following morning and are now being flown by Charles Sadler and Thomas Holder.

Richard Hay

Report on SAFA Participation in the 2nd Festival of Falconry held in Al Ain, UAE, in December 2011.

Bruce Padbury.

With thousands of people from 78 countries around the world converging on Jahili fort, Al Ain, we knew we were in for an amazing eight days. Our hosts (The Emirates' Falconers Club of Abu Dhabi), had gone all out to extend a warm welcome to all.

From our arrival at Dubai International Airport it was apparent that attention to detail and organisation had been of utmost importance to the Falconry Festival Team.

In all, nine South African falconers attended- Adrian, Dirk, Hank and Robbie giving talks and Julius, Ross, Mark, Roger and myself all representing SAFA in the Stand with Roger being chosen for his art. Many of us received full sponsorship. Every country had to deck out and man a stand representing the falconry going-ons in their country-traditions, hawks, quarry and so on. Of popular interest with regards to South African Falconry was the Black Sparrowhawk, Red-necked Falcon and our grading system.

The First three days were spent out in the desert camp where we bumped into some familiar faces from the 2007 IAF Meet. Socializing was top of the agenda and conversations ran late into the night. The organizers had gone to great lengths to make desert life comfortable for everyone with local food and drinks on tap in Bedouin style tents. Traditional life was displayed in many ways

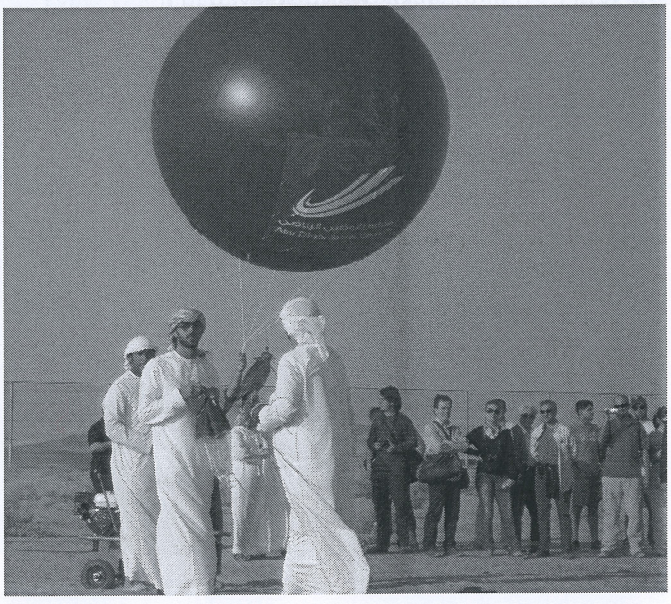


Daily entertainment ranged from Falcon and Saluki racing; hunting from Camel back; fitness training using remote control planes and balloons; and eagle demonstrations. Many of the world's famous falconers had been flown in to assist with training and manning or to give talks. It was a daily occurrence to share a cool drink with someone like Nick Fox, lunch with Steve Chindgren or dine with Bruce Haak. I must, however add that many of these guys were just as interested in SA falconry as we were in the theirs!

Saluki, Camel and Falcon Racing competitions carrying a first prize of a VXR 200 Toyota land Cruiser station wagon valued at over a million were hotly contested.

The Falcon racing was an event on its own. Hundreds of falconers with their prized, extremely fit falcons all converged at the "Race track" -a four hundred meter levelled piece of desert with an elaborate Bedouin tent decked out with large flat screens, chandeliers, fancy carpets and food and drink stations on one side and not too much on the other. Each falconer had been allotted a number which was clearly displayed on a board.

Once your number was called by the race coordinator you had less than a minute to pass camera crews and journalists to be in line and have your falcon ready two to three falconers ahead of you in the line crouched down. On the signal you move into position in a secluded area. The "falconer's appie" on the other end would start to swing his lure. Hood removed, the falcon would take off, crossing an electronic timing device and starting the timer. These huge powerful falcons would fly, sometimes inches above the ground, covering the four hundred meters in seconds, crossing the second timing device, where upon the appie (some with decades of hunting experience) would pick up the falcon with speed and skill and move off swiftly to feed ,hood and block the falcon for his master. In the mean time the next falcon was on the wing and half way across. The time would immediately be portrayed on one of the big screens. We timed the intervals at every thirty seconds. Very few falcons went wayward and as I was later to find out, if this happened the falconer would be scrutinised for entry into the next event. Dedicated 4,5litre Toyota Tundra 4x4 Marshall tracking vehicles with staff were on standby to fetch errant hawks.

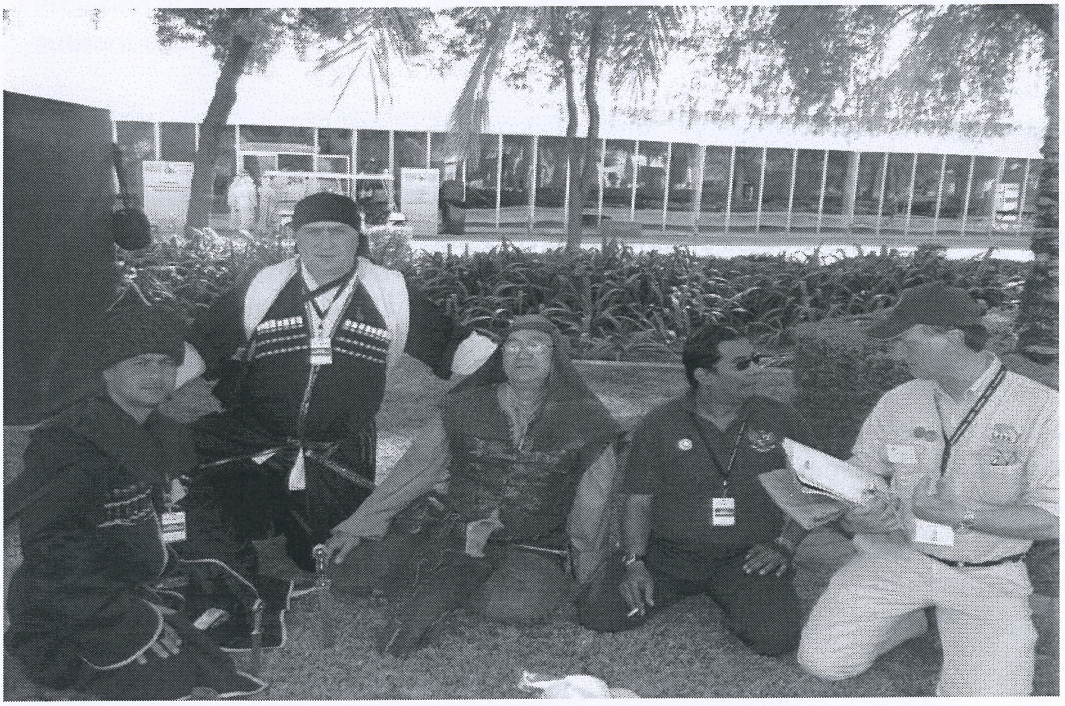


Back at camp one of the activities that had much attention was the Radio controlled planes that had been set up to train and make fit pursuit falcons. Something that has now taken the world by storm for fitness and strength training.

The plane fitted out with a lure and release mechanism would take off with a falcon in hot pursuit. The pilot, having knowledge of the individual falcon and its capabilities, would get the best out of it by performing some amazing moves. I must add that the pilot kitted out with DC glasses and Ralph Lauren sandals was every bit a showman and kept the crowd on their toes. Once the lure was released, the falcon would parachute to ground where it was picked up by an extremely hard- working Pakistani falconer, who within a minute would have the previous falcon blocked and hooded. The next falcon to fly would be with the "larney" the plane in position and if necessary fuel up and ready to go.

With the festivities in the desert over, it was time for the main event. Al Ain hosted the festival itself around the Jahili fort. There were shops selling every conceivable thing to do with falconry -some with phenomenally exorbitant price tags while others were so reasonable that most of us found bags on the way back full of gloves, hoods and books. Other attractions were conservation organizations, artists and local curios. At the same time there were trips organized to the falcon hospital, Houbara breeding facilities and much more. Along with some of our falconers, guest speakers had been invited to give talks on various aspects of international falconry including: husbandry and care; breeding; trapping; first aid and the list went on. Some of the world's leading authorities were there to share their knowledge including Margret Moeller, Mike Yates and Hank Chalmers. Well most anyway.

To finish off with, all the nations paraded along with their spokesman and did displays in the main arena this was viewed nationally and internationally on television. Our thanks to our hosts and sponsors.



Report to the Bird of Prey Program of EWT Conference – 2012.

Adrian Lombard

The Activities of the South African Falconry Association

- **Hunting Organization**: Proponents of sustainable utilization. We are proud of the recognition of our hunting art as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.
- **Animal Welfare Role**. Mentoring and accreditation role recognized by the gazetted "Norms and Standards for Hunting" legislation. This was the reason for the formation of SAFA – to ensure that people in South Africa who wish to practice Falconry know how to look after and train the hawks in their care.
- **Conservation Organization**.

Conservation Activities

- Falconry – Sustainable use activity – The importance of Sustainable Utilization is recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity - this role is explained in the Addis Ababa Guidelines – Falconry promotes conservation through sustainable utilization of raptors, quarry species and of the environment.
- Quote from the Addis Ababa Guidelines: "Sustainable use is a valuable tool to promote conservation of biological diversity, since in many instances it provides incentives for conservation and restoration because of the social, cultural and economic benefits that people derive from that use. In turn, sustainable use cannot be achieved without effective conservation measures."

The Role of SAFA

- Creating a "Conservation Ethic" among Falconers
- Promoting an awareness of Conservation issues among Falconers
- Taking a stand on Conservation-related issues.
- Engagement in the process of formulation of Conservation-related Laws, regulations and Policies
- Participation in the Bird of Prey Program of EWT
- SAFA Conservation Projects

Taita Scientific Breeding Project

- Historical Involvement of Falconers in the conservation of the Taita Falcon in South Africa and elsewhere
- Status of the collaborative venture between the Zimbabwe Falconry Club and The Peregrine Fund

- Current situation – The Zimbabwe Falconry Club has offered to release their breeding stock to SAFA and these will be combined with the captive Taitas already in South Africa. We await permits from the National Parks Board of Zimbabwe to allow release of these birds to us.
- Rationale:
    1. Preservation of genetic stock
    2. Development of breeding experience and method
    3. Biological data

Lanner Falcon Project

- Examine Lanner Populations in South Africa following concerns expressed about their status in Birding circles.
- Study the seasonal movement in Lanner Populations in Southern Africa
- Generate biological data on this species.
- Early planning stage. Planning will include discussions with the Animal Demographic Unit at the University of Cape Town.

International Electrocutions Database

- IAF Project proposed and accepted at the IAF AGM in Al Ain in 2012.
- To be developed from South Africa
- Plan to involve experts – Megan Diamond of EWT /ESCOM and Richard E. Harness, researcher currently working on Raptor Electrocutions in Mongolia.
- Primarily reporting electrocutions of Falconry birds and extending this to include reporting of all raptor electrocutions
- Provision of information to mitigate events and provide support to pressurize authorities.

SAFA – International Presentations

- 2nd International Falconry Festival – Al Ain – December 2011.
    1. Novel Therapeutic Agents and Modalities for Falcons
    2. The Conservation Activities of Falconers in South Africa
    3. Mentoring in Falconry and the Role of the Grading System in South Africa
    4. Rehabilitation, Education and Outreach by Falconers
    5. Poster Exhibits – including promotion of the activities of BoPP
- Economics of Wildlife Conservation – CIC – Cape Town – May, 2012
    1. Falconry in South Africa.

Biological Studies by SAFA Membership

- Crowned Eagle Monitoring – KZN and Mpumalanga
- Peregrine Population study – Mpumalanga
- Ovambo Sparrowhawk population study – Gauteng

- Magaliesberg Raptor monitoring Project – Gauteng
- Raptor Nest Monitoring Project - NWP
- Field Observations: Ayers Hawk Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, Lanner Falcons.
- Co-operation with others

Mitigation Projects

- Artificial Nest Platforms for Egyptian Geese
- Owl Nest Boxes
- Rodent Mitigation Project - EC
- Falcon Nest Boxes – FS and EC
- Interactions with farmers and Pigeon fanciers.

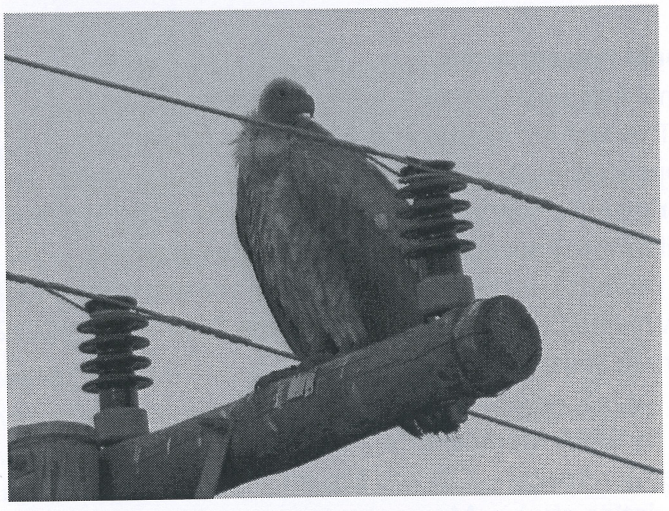
Outreach by Falconers

Over 250,000 people in South Africa are reached by 150 falconers each year – encouraging changes in attitudes and behavior to the benefit of Conservation.

Final Thoughts:

- We are taught that Conservation is Biology – and thus not adequately considering the economic, legislative and social aspects
- Policy is often driven by poorly informed public opinion (and funders) and not by facts.
- Conservation through sustainable utilization has achieved significant success in South Africa while "non-consumptive" conservation is still championed in many countries despite the evidence.

Thank You.



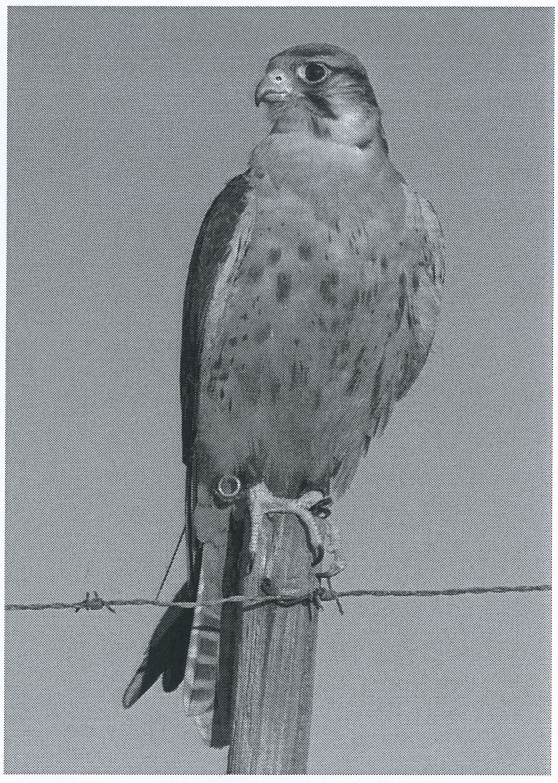
Free State Falconry Club - Lanner Falcon Rehabilitation

Terence Elliott

The 20th of January 2012 was supposed to be just another Friday for me. Not that Fridays are taken for granted, it's just that I didn't expect Francois Breedt's phone call as I was driving home from work.

Alma Fuller from the Free State Raptor Project had just taken in a passage tiercel Lanner that was picked up wet and bedraggled on a farm close to Bultfontein and she was looking for someone to help her rehabilitate the bird. Francois would go to Alma the Saturday morning to have a look at the tiercel and would let me know if he thought I should have a go at it. I couldn't believe it. I was going to get my first Lanner! Rehab or not, I couldn't care less. I had been looking forward to this for a very long time!

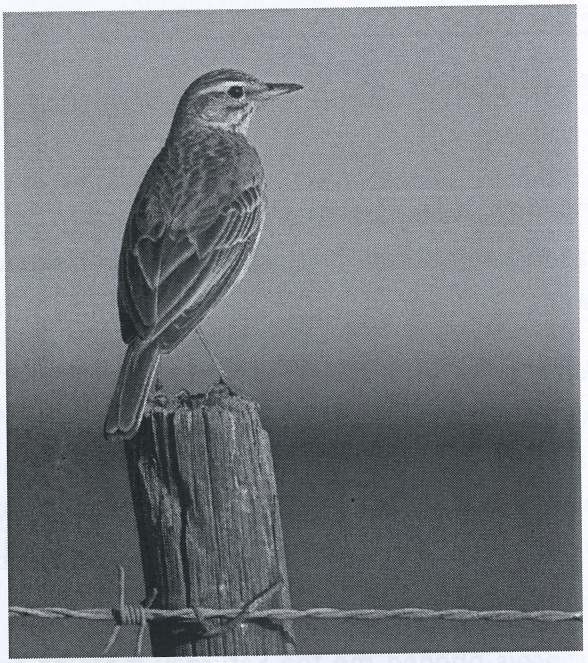
Francois phoned me the Saturday morning and I went to his place, where the new guy was awaiting me. The tiercel was very low in weight and looked weak and under the weather, but other than that and some lice all seemed right. We checked him thoroughly for any damage to wings, legs and feet and his feathers also seemed in good condition. He was given medication for worms and lice and a shot of Vitamin B12 as well, just to get him going again. Two hours later I was on my way home with my first passage Lanner.



The rehabilitation was done under Francois's supervision and I started the process by feeding him well and manning him a bit get his weight back up before I would start training him. He quickly climbed to 560g in a matter of days and then we started training.

Through February and March we gradually got him going again. It went slower than we had hoped for. It seemed as if the tiercel lacked a bit of confidence. Some days he would do well and other days he appeared unenthusiastic. By middle March he made a bit more progress and showed

more endurance, requiring a tracking session one Sunday afternoon. At this point we decided to start hacking him back to the wild and his transmitter was removed. The last time we saw him was a few days later on 25 March after he had caught a Laughing dove. He had never carried before and this time he did. He flew away to a far-off telephone pole and we left him there as darkness fell. I returned to the area a few times that week to check if he was still around, but I never saw him again. It was a great introduction to flying Lanners and I can't wait to start flying the next one.



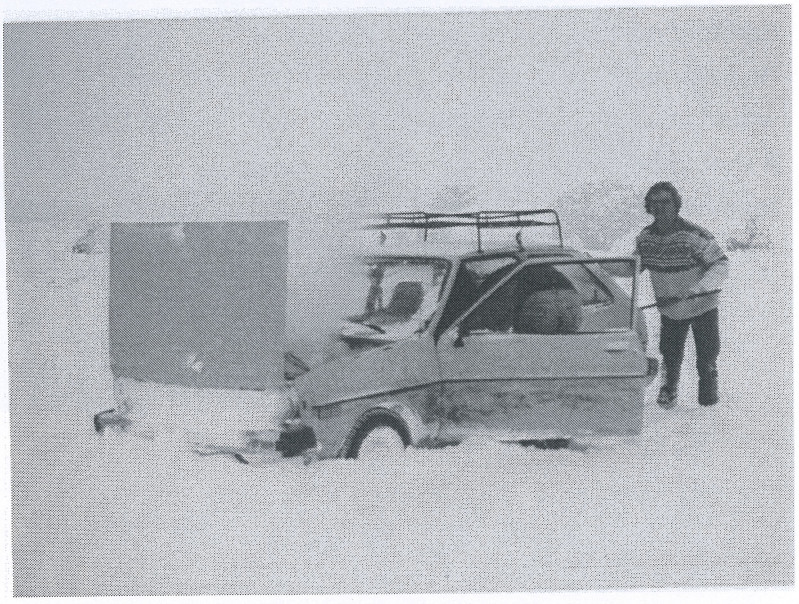
My Time with Ron Hartley

By Steve Chindgren



I first met Ron at the 1981 NAFA meet in Joplin, Missouri. Ron and I hit it off right from the start! You might say it was as if I had met a twin falconer from another part of the world. Ron was from Zimbabwe. We spent the meet together driving and looking for places to hawk ducks. It was not the best meet for long-wings. Ron and I did manage to find some ponds and my prairie x peregrine falcon "Kallikak" did manage to take two ducks. Turns out they

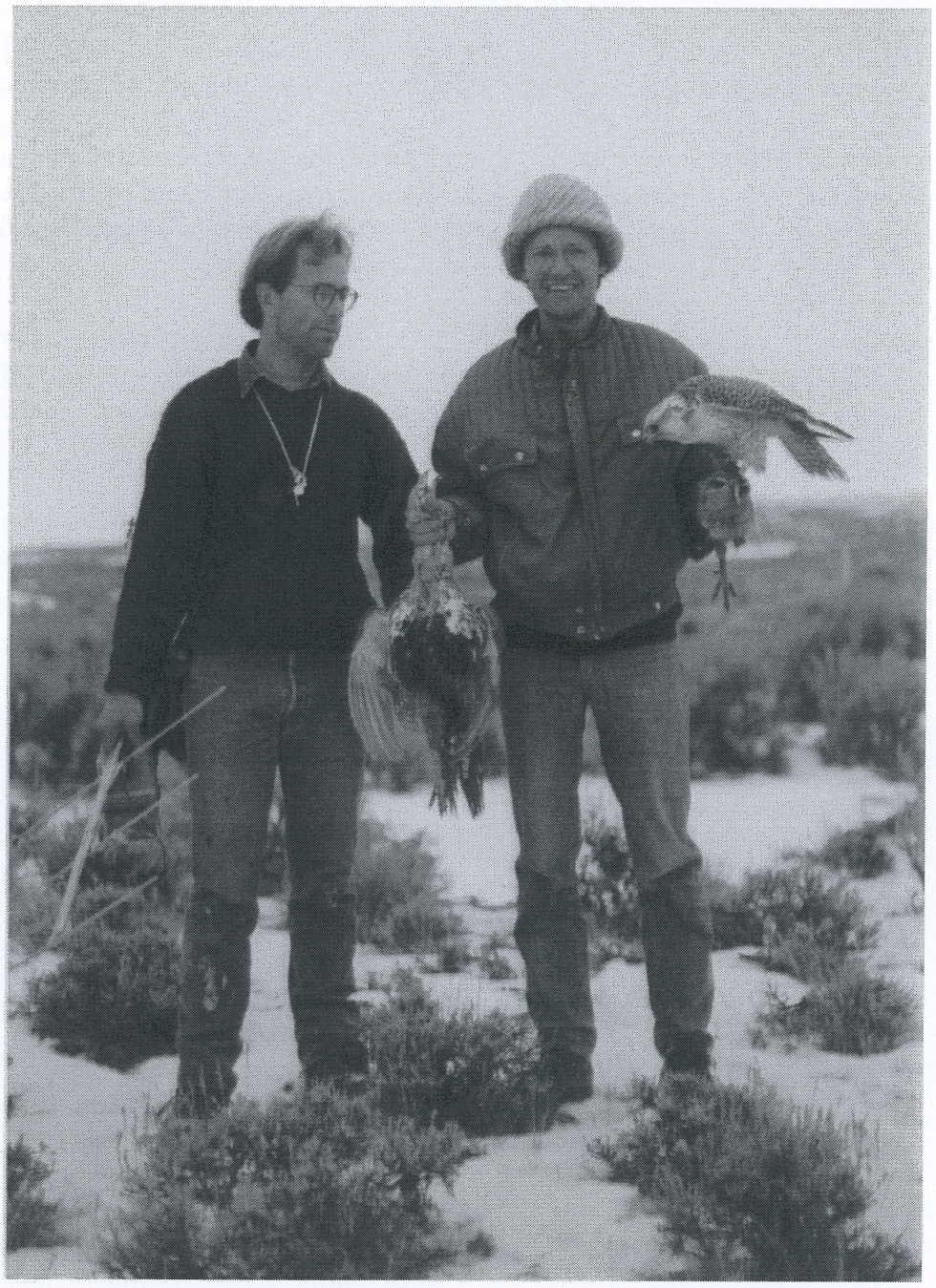
were the only ducks taken at the 1981 meet! We both knew right away that we were made from the same mold. We enjoyed each other's company so much that Ron returned to my home in Utah after the meet to do more hawking with me. In the two weeks that he stayed with me, Kallikak, took 16 ducks, 6 pheasants and a sage grouse! We made a trip to southern Idaho to meet a group of falconers. Ron had wonderful slides of African Raptors, which everyone enjoyed. We were staying with Charley Porter and that day all the falconers in the area had come to meet Ron. It was just after 2pm and I wanted to go hawking but it was a terrible snowstorm. The falconers from Idaho said you can't fly in this! That's all Ron and I had to hear; "Let's go hawking," I said. I learned after hawking with Ron that falconers from Africa were not afraid to get their feet wet! One of the falconers said I should bring my shotgun so we can get some ducks for dinner. Now that really made me want to show them what a good duck hawk could do in one afternoon. We drove to a place called Lincoln creek. We spotted some mallards and I put up Kallikak in the storm, she took a nice pitch and crushed the mallard stone dead. I have a routine that I always do when my birds make a kill. After the falcon has dispatched the quarry I take the quarry and turn it on its back break into it and remove the heart for the falcon. The falcon will take the heart and leave the quarry to eat it I then have the meal ready for it on the fist. I generally feed the falcon up after this but this day I wanted to go for it. After Kallikak ate the heart she jumped up to the fist. I offered her nothing. She soon roused and took to the sky again. Ron and I ran down the stream like mad men! We continued this and before Kallikak was hooded again we had three mallards and a drake pintail for the pot! The other falconers watched from the top of the hill from the trucks! We returned home and had a duck feast for all! I had never met anyone that had as much enthusiasm as Ron! It was a joy to have someone to hawk with that was just as crazy as me!



Another memorable adventure was a trip to Northern Utah to hawk sage grouse. A falconer from Provo, Utah accompanied us, Ken Tuttle. Ken had invited his father-in- law who lived in a town that was on the way to the grouse area. His name was Leo. I was driving a small car called a ford fiesta. The ford was front

wheel drive and did well in the snow. It was a 200 mile drive and as we headed north it began to snow. Old Leo started to get worried and wanted us to turn around. Not a chance, I was going to show Ron sage grouse hawking! As we continued north the snow was getting worse. The road was now completely white and we were the only vehicle traveling to this remote part of the state. Old Leo continued to whine. The Ford had over 100,000 miles, which is a lot for a ford. We finally made it to the turn off where I was sure we could find grouse. The little ford was pushing snow and it was so deep that it plugged up the radiator and we over heated. The ford had gone as far as it could go. Old Leo said "I told you we should have turned back, there are no grouse here!" Right then I spotted a few grouse heads directly across from where the car was stopped by the deep snow. I put up Kallikak and Ron and I plodded through the snow. The falcon was up nice and the grouse flushed! Kallikak killed one dead in the stoop with a blow to the head! Ron and I were so excited we grabbed each other and fell to the ground. It was a day I will never forget! On the way home the little ford came to a halt. We tried to get it to start but had no success. Old Leo was disgusted. We were about 100 miles from my home. Ron and I could have cared less we came to take a grouse and our mission was a success! We picked up the falcon and hitched a ride home with another motorist, never to see old Leo again!

The next time Ron came to visit I had become obsessed with hawking sage grouse. They were such a challenge. I had a camp on the Big Sandy River in Wyoming. Ron and I had great times hawking grouse. I let Ron fly one of my falcons. Ron was like a brother to me. The memories of Ron Hartley will always be with me until my last day. I miss him so much. He always wanted me to come to Zimbabwe and hawk with him. I am so sorry I did not ever make it to Africa. Ron told me so much about his life and how difficult the times had become in his beloved land. He told me of the war. He feared things would get worse in his homeland but he told me he would never leave Zimbabwe. I learned from Ron that the falconry in Africa was done the way it should be done with respect and passion. Although Ron and I only spent several weeks together I felt as if he was my best friend. We shared a love for falconry and a passion for life!



Centrefold Captions:

Page 1: Painting of an Immature Peregrine Falcon on Yellow-throated Sandgrouse by Elton Arnot and presented to Tim Wagner by SAFA for services rendered to South African Falconry.

Page 2: Scenes from the Falconry Festival - Clockwise from top left corner – 1) Caring for hawks at the Desert Camp. 2) The SAFA Team in the Southern African Stand. 3) Saluki races. 4) Bruce Padbury with an Emirati Falconer. 5) Robbie Robinson with Hilary White and Tony James at the IAF tent. 6) SAFA Falconers make friends with Bruce Haak.

Page 3: More Scenes from the Falconry Festival – Clockwise from top left corner – 1) Bruce Padbury presents South African Falconry in the Main Arena. 2) Not all play! – The IAF AGM. 3) The Jahili Fort. 4) Festivities! 5) South Africa in the Parade of Nations. 6) Adrian renews old acquaintances with Bakyt and son from Kazakhstan.

Page 4: South African Falconry – Clockwise from top left corner – 1) Anton Muller with Taita Falcon. 2) Alan Harvey releases his Falcon. 3) Two fine Pointers 4) Yellow-throated sandgrouse. 5) Tim McPherson with Red-necked Falcon.



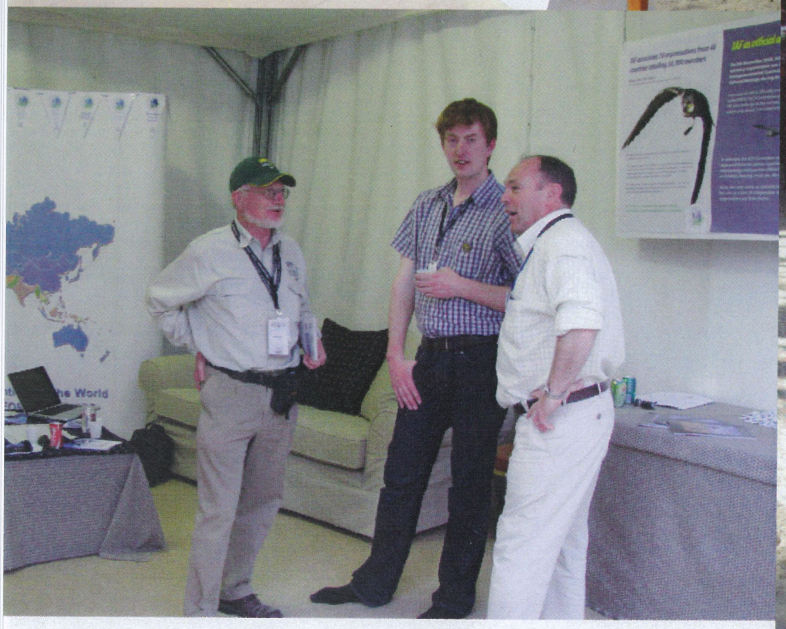

ELTON ARNOT

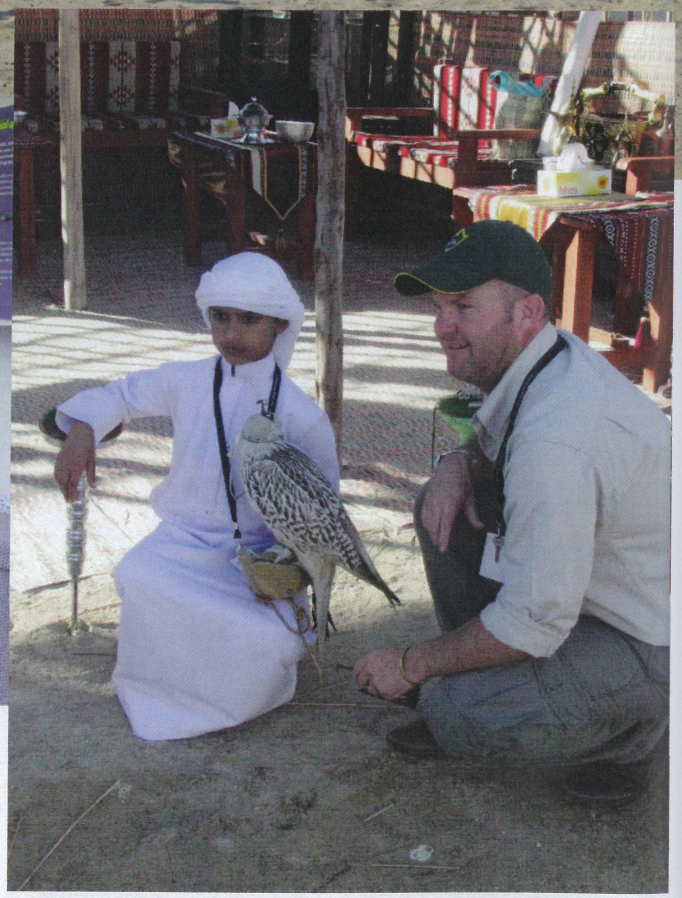






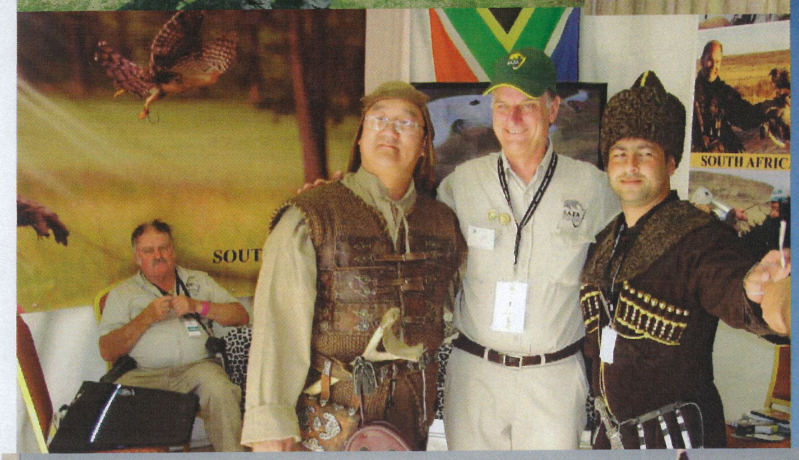









FRANK BOND
PRESIDENT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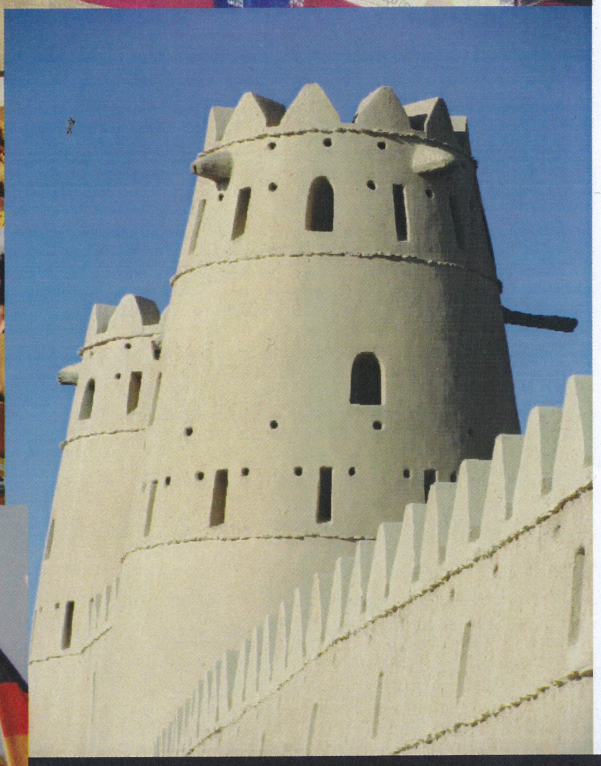
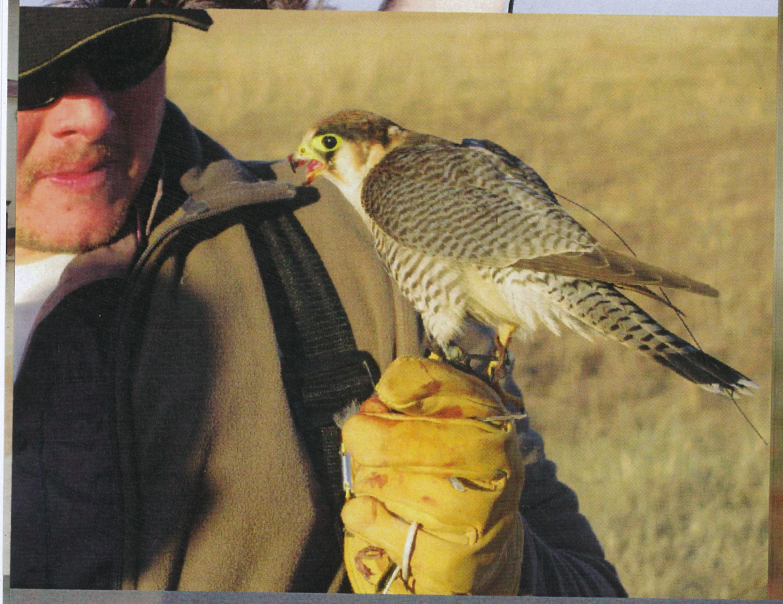
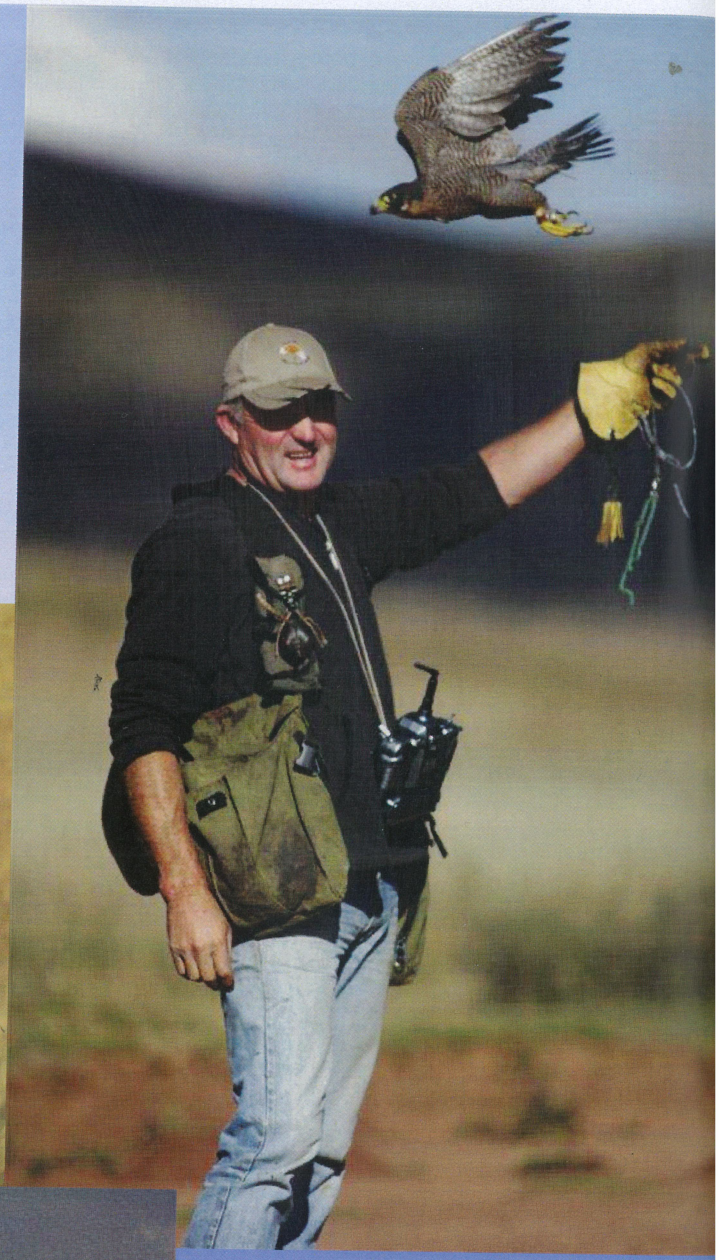
















A CROWNED EAGLE ATTACK ON A YOUNG CHILD

Whilst we were stationed with the Dept. of National Parks & Wildlife Management in the Zambezi Valley, a very unusual attack occurred on a young African child at Marongora (1 : 50 000 map 1629 A1, locstat gridsquare QN 3005), by a Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, in what would appear to be an attempt at predation.

The following account is based on eye-witness accounts, together with notes made from our reports at the time, and is worthy of record, despite the time lapse - some 16 years! Our apologies for not having divulged these facts earlier, as they would have spurred interesting comments.

On the morning of Friday, 14 January, 1983, at approximately 1000 hours, Sergeant Towel Nyakashaya, a game scout, arrived at the hunting reception office, in an agitated state, clutching a dead Crowned Eagle. Accompanying him was his young daughter, aged seven. She was found to have sustained deep cuts and lacerations to her left shoulder and neck. Upon questioning her father, a rather extraordinary tale of events emerged. Apparently she had been playing with three or four other children of the same age, on the local soccer field, which was situated on open ground, but surrounded by some fairly tall trees, adjacent to the Marongora River.

The bird had been seen some time before, perched in the top of a nearby tree. Quite suddenly the eagle launched itself into a shallow dive towards the playing children. They immediately scattered, but the eagle was able to grab the child before she could run too far. She fortunately managed to get a grip with both hands on the nearby security fence. Her screams alerted her father and several others who rushed to the child's aid, but not before the eagle had made an attempt to become airborne whilst clutching the young girl in its talons. As many people are aware, talons of the Crowned Eagle are the largest of eagles found in Southern Africa - are there larger talons found on eagles elsewhere in the world?

The eagle was killed with a blow to the head, whereupon it was brought to the office together with the child. After first aid was rendered, Nyakashaya's daughter was weighed using an accurate platform scale, normally used for weighing elephant ivory. She was found to be 19,6 kg in weight. The child was then taken through to Kariba Hospital, where her wounds were treated and stitched.

Unfortunately the eagle was not weighed, but an estimate can be made by looking at the accompanying photograph, taken shortly after the incident. As the girl was nowhere near a nest, the attack is assumed to be an attempt at predation.

Peter Steyn (*in lit.*) reports a similar case in Zambia and the recovery of part of a human infant skull at a nest in Zimbabwe.

Adrian Read (*pers. comm.*) also reports in 1978, from the Lake Kyle National Park (Masvingo), of a kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*, calf (its approximate age was estimated to be 4 - 5 months) with a deformed front left leg, having been caught and killed by a Crowned Eagle. The calf was collected and weighed and found to be 112 lbs.(approximately 50 kg). This is the largest known prey item on record for any eagle species.

It would be interesting to know if anyone else has any similar reports.



The Crowned Eagle credited with an attack on a child in Zimbabwe.

The Black Sparrowhawk.

Mark Holder.

The existence of Black Sparrowhawks came into my life in the seventies. I can't be exactly sure when in the seventies, as it was such a very long time ago.

I do know however that my first encounter was through the NAFA journals that I used to beg steal or borrow from friends and read from cover to cover.

Ron Hartley used to write articles in these pages all about falconry in Rhodesia as it was then, and I was fascinated. Africa seemed so different from my native England, and the choice of birds of prey there seemed amazing. I wanted to go, but it was just a dream, I was still a naive kid, and after all it was the other side of the world.

In the seventies I used to fly Kestrels, and, buzzards and then a very old melanistic red tail that really brought my falconry world to life.

My first ever European Goshawks became my hawking partner in 1982, when I was convinced by my very close friend Mark Williams to go for a Welsh Hawking club bird that had become available.

Wow, I was never sorry for that bit of advice. The speed of a goshawk was amazing compared to the other birds that I had flown and hunted, and the nature of the passage bird was nothing like I had imagined, and once tame a joy to be around.

Over the years I flew four goshawks, one special bird "Sinead" for eleven years, my last to date was an imprint male bred by Harry Gilbert and imprinted by me. This was unexpectedly a short relationship, because fate had other plans me!

In 1997, I got the opportunity to fly out to South Africa to attend their annual field meet. I had been invited over the Internet via a forum. I was fairly apprehensive, as I didn't know anyone from Adam in South Africa, not to mention all the negative press we always get about Southern Africa back in the UK, but what the hell, you only live once and I was committed.

On arrival at Johannesburg airport I spotted a guy with a tummy that I would have been proud of holding up a board with my name on it. His name was Tim Wagner, a well-respected falconer from South African shores, and though I didn't know it then a friendship was born.

Tim is dedicated to falconry and everything that goes with it, and I know only two other guys that come close to the same dedication. I only wish I could be one of them, but I think at times I run them close.

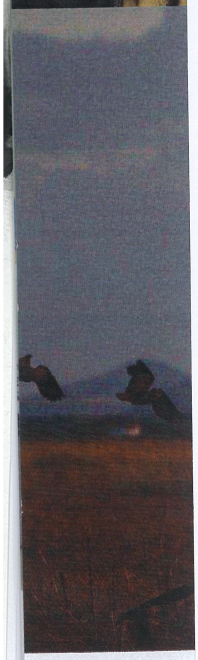
Over lunch, I told him that I had come over to see Black Sparrowhawks fly, and he told me that he thought I was mad! Flying Lizards, he snorted, watch the long wings instead.

That evening, I watched two of his birds fly, one took my eye, a home bred F. peregrinus minor, a falcon, and "Witch". This bird was to become legendry in South Africa over the next couple of years, not just for her wonderful ability in the falconry world, but because of the quality offspring that she would produce in the future.

The birds flew well in the oppressive heat and after one outstanding stoop and kill, and a very spectacular nearly; we relaxed at Tim's place over a very cold beer for me, and an equally cold diet coke for Tim. (To this day he still thinks they help shape his tummy)

We obviously talked falconry and I was left with my lower jaw reaching for my ankles as Tim told me tales of how wild Black Sparrowhawks quite often fly down the falconer's falcons. I couldn't imagine such a feat, and I just couldn't wait to see one in action!





The SAFA meet pulled in many falconers from around South Africa, it was held in a tiny place called Dullstroom, a little farming village in the middle of nowhere approximately three hours from the Kruger National Park. If you think Africa is always hot, you should visit this place. I went to Africa with shorts, t-shirts and running shoes, boy was I under prepared!

At night the temperature dropped well below freezing. Where we hawked the grassland was anything but dry, it was natural wetland as far as the eye could see, and boy did I moan, and I mean moan. Now I know where the South African people get the expression, whinging POM! You should have heard me.

To cap it all off, there was not one Black Sparrowhawk in sight. It was to be all falcons, not a sign of a bow perch anywhere.

To be fair, this was falcon country, wide-open spaces where you could see for miles. Looking over the veldt, it could have been the borders of Scotland, I should have done my homework, but still, I couldn't hide my disappointment.

That evening, the large amounts of food and beer on offer helped my mood and the great camaraderie of the South African falconers boosted it even further, and the next couple of days produced dogs and falcons of the highest order. The standard of falconry here was far beyond what I had expected, even if it was just long wings.

On the third day I was grinning from ear to ear. An apprentice falconer had turned up with a juvenile Black Sparrowhawk musket. My excitement numbed a little when I saw it, as I was very surprised at its condition.

It had broken feathers in its tail and wings, and its cere was damaged.

My first Black Sparrowhawk in the flesh so to speak, and it was in quite a sorry state.

When I commented on the bird's condition, it was explained to me that this bird had been lost whilst out hunting early on in the season, all hope of seeing the bird had been lost, when news came that a farmer had found the spar on one of his chickens, and when it hadn't flown away he had decided to keep it. Unfortunately even though the bird was now safe, its accommodation was appalling, hence the condition of the bird.

The young lad, Mike, had only just got it back a couple of weeks earlier, and was not to be perturbed and he was now here to do his thing as he proudly told me.

Over the next couple of days, the bird tried, but struggled. It had very little fitness, but it had great heart, and you really couldn't fault Mike for his commitment to this bird and the hunt. He was so enthusiastic, his flushing skill bordered on foolhardy at times, and he was often unrecognizable back at camp after an afternoons foray into the veldt, as he was normally caked in mud and wet to the core.

Weeks later, back home in Dorset, England, my trip was soon forgotten, I had ordered my imprint Goshawk and within a couple of months I was out hunting the Dorset countryside with my new-feathered companion.

I kept in touch with Tim, and a couple of the other guys via email and kept telling them I would come out again one day, hopefully to see some Black Spars. Then out of the blue, I was thrown a surprise when Tim informed me that he was coming over to the UK for a visit.

After a great deal of talking, fate was then to play a major role in my life. In 2000 I went to South Africa to run a new bird of prey centre for Tim, leaving my life in England temporarily behind.

I was to be living in Falcon paradise, yep back to Dullstroom, Mpumalanga, and now a changed village, no longer a sleepy hollow, now a weekend destination for city slickers. It even had a new logo "Dullstroom, a drinking town with a fishing problem"

Once I was settled, and the centre was up and running, Tim got his way and persuaded me to fly an eyass captive bred Peregrine that he very kindly gave me. This bird, partnered with a young English pointer dog, Bracken and my willing legs had a hit and miss season. This experience, though educating me to the Dullstroom countryside and game bird population, tainted me, and I was only to delve into the dark side of falcons one more time in my falconry career in South Africa thus far.

I am an austringer; falcons are just not for me. I simply just enjoy the hustle and bustle of hawking. Maybe it is the surprise of the unexpected flush; I love the idea of multiple flights, and I definitely do not miss the worry that you are not going to get a suitable set up before dark as you reach for the unsuspecting sacrificial pigeon.

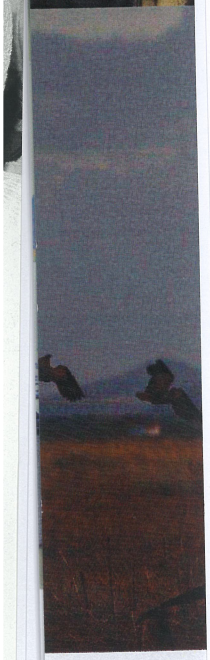
My first black spar was a passage female. She came to me via the local vets. She had been found emaciated, hiding in some reeds by a dam. She was amazingly enough feather perfect, and the vet had done a wonderful job to get her on the road to recovery with the use of fluids and liquidized quail. My job was just to get her back to full health, and get her hunting.

Her rehabilitation went the same as most emaciated birds we encounter here at the centre. In a weak state, she was an easy patient, just a little timid. As she got stronger any gratitude that may have been there went right out of the window as she turned into a torrent of feathers as her wildness returned.

D-day then arrived, to coincide with her recovery and newfound attitude. Her health was back and she was now much, much stronger, I fitted all of her furniture including a tail sheath, and commenced with the training.

The first few days went well, well better than I expected anyway. I think the habituation of my home during her treatment back to health helped with some initial tameness. She fed on the fist first day, and she was flying free within two weeks. Don't be fooled into thinking she was an easy bird however. She





was anything but. She was fiery, wild and vocal, but she was mine, for a while anyway. She was a dream in the making, my first Black Spar.

I didn't name her as she was on loan, I intended releasing her after the season.

Her initial flights on Red Wing Francolin were disappointing. They pulled away from her with ease, and she soon gave up. Fitness was the key!

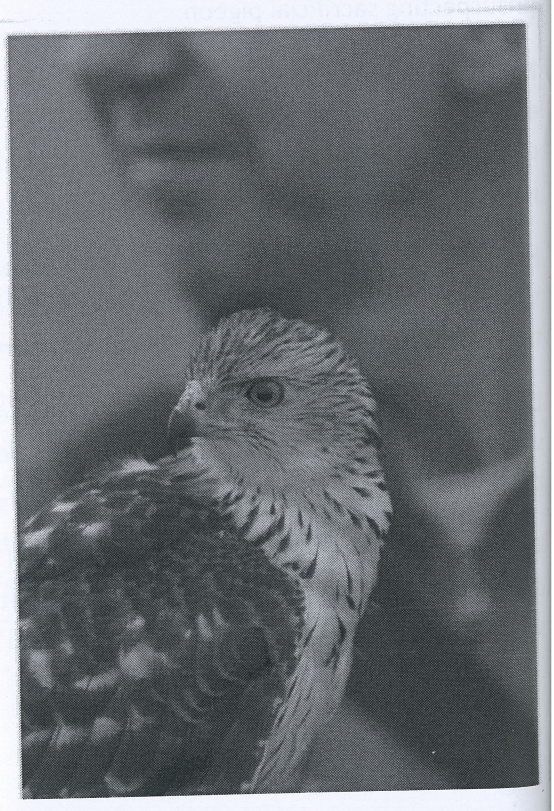
I flew her every day, plus jump ups and with some help from a friend I flew her from glove to glove over long distances.

Though all of this helped, the one thing I knew that I mustn't lose over this period was her confidence, and I topped her up with the occasional easy pigeon to let her know she could still catch quarry.

Eventually her fitness returned, enough for her to put her first Red Wing in the bag. It wasn't a fantastic flight, but it wasn't bad either. It was caught from a nice flushed point over about a distance of approximately seventy yards. This was the flight she needed, and thankfully she never looked back.

She ended the season with a commendable tally. 24 Red Wing Francolin, 5 Swainson, and numerous "various".

Her last kill with me was on June 22nd 2003, on a beautiful African winter afternoon. As she fed hungrily from her pick up piece, I watched in splendour as she took her fill. She hadn't been with me for that long, but she had always held my full attention whenever we shared each other's presence. She had me hooked from that very first day! As a species the Black Spar did not leave me with any disappointment **then, nor does it now.**



As she greedily fed she was initially oblivious to me as I unpicked her flying jesses from her anklets, but to my surprise she actually stopped feeding for a second or two when I reached to take off the tail sheath, and tail bell. She gave me a curious look, an intent stare, it was over in a second and then her attention was back with her food, if you had of blinked, you would have missed it. She couldn't have known what was in store for her, could she?

As she finished her meal, I took the discarded bones from under her feet and threw them to ground for one of Mother Nature's creatures to pick clean. She then took a second or two, had a good look around, feaked on my glove, and then gave a characteristic noisy rouse

that seemed to shake me with it. I gave a wry smile, and I am sure that I must have taken a deep breath before letting out a sigh at that moment. It was time; I walked towards a plantation of Blue gum, our parting place. To her, at that moment, it must have just seemed like any other day. For me, I knew it was goodbye.

We got about 100metres away from the plantation when and with a little gentle persuasion she took flight, and in typical accipiter style, as she approached the trees she flew vertically, almost to the top of one of the outermost limbs. As she alighted, she was gone, out of reach and out of sight, all in the blink of an eye. I gave myself a couple of minutes to take in the moment, reflect, and then turned and headed back towards the direction of the truck with Bracken at heel. Though this was the end of this relationship, I knew that the species and I had only just begun.

Ayres's Hawk – Eagle recorded over Penryn College, Nelspruit.

Stephen Van Rensburg.

The Ayres is a summer visitor to Nelspruit from as early as July to as late as February. Birds have in the past been recorded all year round in Nelspruit, which has led to the thinking that they might nest in the Lowveld. Subsequent research and meticulous searching for ideal nesting sites has come up empty, suggesting that these birds are probably part of the "floating " population and have not yet reached breeding maturity (interestingly enough, in the 12 years that I have been watching these fantastic birds, I have only recorded3 juv. birds). Scientific research indicates that birds migrate (intra African migrants) from as far as Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

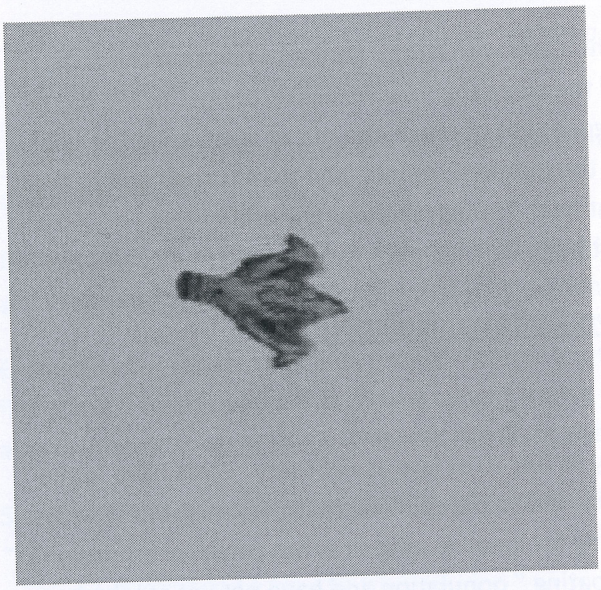
The hunting strategy of the Ayres is a rather interesting one. As we already know, eagles possess incredibly good eyesight and their distance vision is rather exceptional. It is this good eyesight which allows the Ayres to spot flocks (kits) of pigeons from great distances. The Ayres make exclusive use of thermals which allow it to climb to considerable heights above its intended quarry, in this case my homing pigeons. Once they have achieved the desired altitude from which to hunt (5000ft or more) they stoop, wings tucked in with its body a streamlined, heart – shaped configuration akin to a missile.

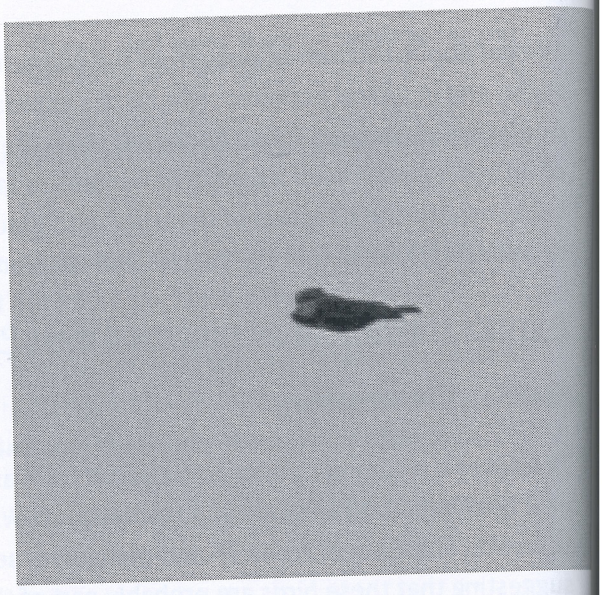
The speed of decent is incredible and a sight to behold. From the photographs it is interesting to note the length of the alula which can be seen protruding in the stoop. It has also been observed that the descending bird makes a very loud "ripping/ sizzling" sound which is generated from the protruding alula. The ripping sound alerts the pigeons to the eagle's intentions, and they in turn take the necessary

action, which is to panic and scatter in all directions so as to avoid capture. If unsuccessful, however, the eagle will thermal up again for another stoop. I have personally watched one particular bird stoop

16 times at my pigeons without a single bird being lost, and then another bird capture a pigeon on its first stoop. The longest stoop I've recorded is 32 sec.

(All photographs were taken by Garth Bachelor)

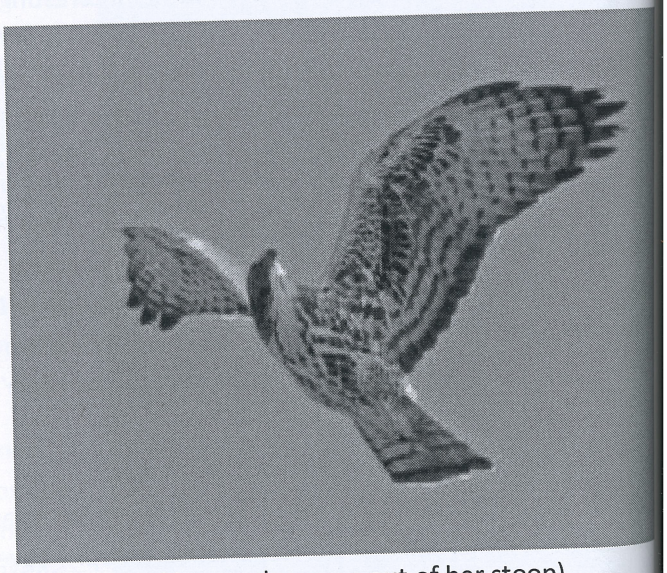




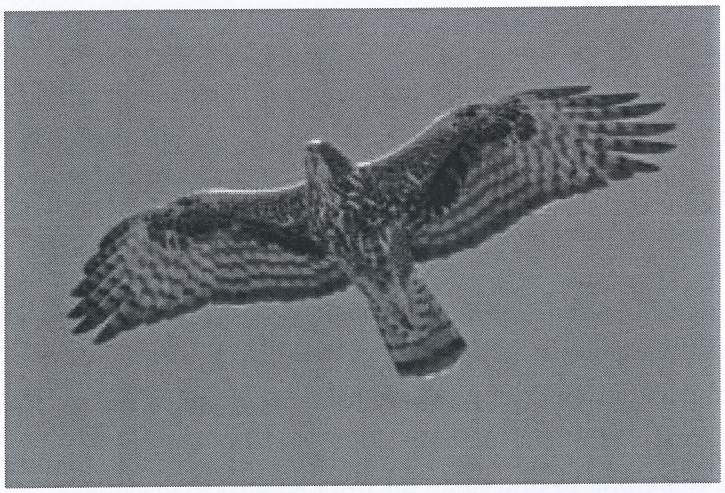
Full tuck, seen from above the loft (alula visible)

Attacking pigeons (very high)

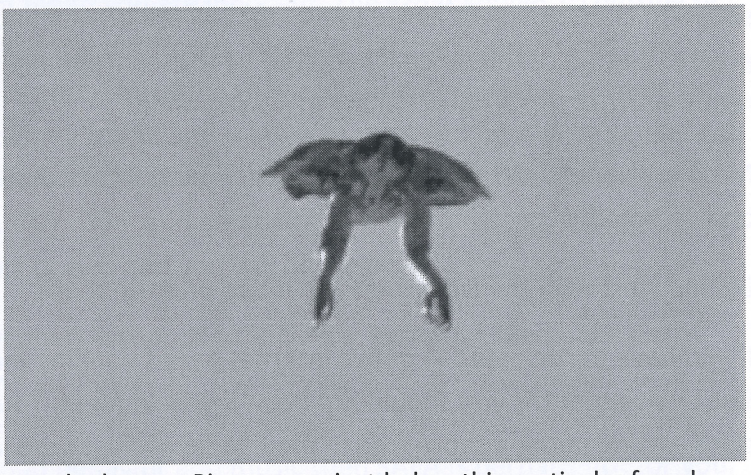




Adult bird over the house (watching a lanner which had revved her as she came out of her stoop)



Adult male (male and female occur in dark and light phase)



Over the house. Pigeons are just below this particular female.



Full tuck coming over the house. Focused on pigeons only !!!





Falconry Field Meet Etiquette

Steven Squires.

If you are reading this article, chances are you're at the SAFA field meet, or have just been there. If you have just got there read this article before you start. It may smooth the way for a pleasanter meet.

As field meets have grown under the umbrella of SAFA it has brought together a group of people of all ages, from all walks of life and all parts of the country and even beyond our borders, united only by one common interest. Provincial falconry clubs are administrative bodies rather than social ones. You have to belong to one to do falconry legally. In provinces with high socio-economic diversity there is even room to avoid other falconers by forming a separate club. However at the SAFA meet all are invited and all are welcome. This means a greater degree of tolerance is required by those attending, and a better standard of behavior is required from those participating in a SAFA meet.

Most of the following issues are good manners, some concern ignorance and a few others just crass stupidity.

Let me start with the last group and move on from there.

If you have participated in public Internet based slanging matches with other falconers over the last twelve months you should not be at the field meet. You should be clad in smelly muishond skins, sitting under a thorn tree in the middle of the Karoo listening to your imprint Harris hawk scream in your face. It is trying to tell you what you have done is destructive, distasteful and totally uncalled for in this sport of kings. Listen to it, get the message and then come back next year. You may be forgiven but for now you presence will cause discord.

Other acts of gross cretinism from which you should entirely abstain include pointing a firearm at fellow meet goers, shooting wild raptors at the sky trials and waking up the chairman at 2am when you have fallen off a step in a drunken stupor and hurt yourself. (Despite his many years of medical practice the chairman does not stock pills for stupidity and can only offer rudimentary first aid at this time of night). If you struggle to hold your drink it is best to take up position on the floor of your bungalow before starting. This way you don't have so far to fall and are less likely to injure yourself. Don't however think you are going to befriend a pointer this way because most of the pointers seem to sleep on beds.

Breaches of etiquette based on ignorance or forgetfulness are more easily forgiven, but none the less disturbing for fellow meet goers. This includes omitting or forgetting to pay for services rendered. The result of this is often a late night search for the debtor by the creditor with resulting loss of sleep for everybody else. A falconry meet is only a few days long. If you can't hold out then take yourself off to the bright lights by all means. Do not however give the bungalow numbers of innocent sheep farmers to your service provider as your own address and expect them to settle the account on your behalf. Pay your bills in full and return. You can tell your Harris Hawk all about your exploits the next day while you wait for it to come down out of a tree. The rest of us are not really interested.

Chemically induced forgetfulness, generally caused by excessive alcohol consumption is a common problem at field meets. If the next morning you cannot remember puking in somebody else's bungalow it does not mean you are innocent. The same applies to putting out fires in indoor fireplaces instead of using the bathroom, showing passing young ladies your rhinoceros tattoo after dousing the fire and requesting they accompany you back to your camp bed which is too small even for your skinny frame and is anyway occupied by a large smelly dog of German decent. The best thing to do in these circumstances is to accept that amnesia is not an excuse; you have committed an indiscretion, and apologize to those affected. Most will see the humour in the situation after a day or two and you will be forgiven.

A falconry meet is held to give the falconers a chance to socialize, exchange ideas, see each other's hawks fly, learn new things and strategize for the coming year. It is not meant to be an alcohol-fuelled discotheque for adolescents who are not allowed out by their parents during the week. If your requirement is for loud behavior and music then SAFA is perhaps not for you. If your hearing has been impaired by the constant screaming of your imprint Harris then a hearing aid is a more socially acceptable way of listening to music than just turning up the volume. It might also just help you hear your mates telling you that you are about to fall off the step so you avoid having to seek medical help late at night. (See point above.)

Behavior in the bar after hours can also become quite problematic. Most falconers just want to get a drink and chat to their mates, but some testosterone-fired fellows, too tired or too poor to make it to the bright lights (see point above) feel they may get lucky with the bar tender. They then monopolize her attention depriving others of their well-deserved beer. If your imprint Harris has managed to take a pullet guinea before tea by all means go share your hunting stories with the bar girl, but when the rest of the lads come in after dark to share tracking stories just back up a bit and give the others a turn at the trough. It is bad enough



having to stand in a queue for beer, never mind being served by surly young lass who is trying to do her job while keeping you out of her knickers.

After alcohol, dogs are probably the most divisive factor at a falconry meet. A falconry meet is NOT the place to bring your untrained, half-trained or semi-trained puppy. It may be sweet, playful and good with children but it will in all likelihood spend the meet gamboling playfully around having the time of its life while being cursed by all but its owner. It is not nice to find your glove, hood or hawk chewed by some delinquent dog. Like the point on alcohol, just because you did not see your pup stealing food from somebody else's falcon does not mean it didn't or won't. Be aware that your idea of cute may differ from the next guy and this can cause tension.

Pointers are bred to have good noses. At a falconry meet most seem to employ this asset to sniff out food belonging to other falconers or dogs. If your dog hasn't learnt to leave other people's food alone it is best to keep it tied up or in your truck while not working. Nothing is more annoying than finding an unknown dog in your bungalow on its hind legs scoffing your biltong off the kitchen counter. If you find your dog limping unexpectedly this is a likely cause of the injury.

Caution should also be exercised when sharing accommodation with others. Some do not find it amusing to be growled at by a pointer that is occupying their bed when they arrive back exhausted from the pub at 2am. It is made even worse when the owner has changed the dog food a few days before, and a few packets of illicit biltong have been consumed. Given their Catholic feeding habits some pointers have surprisingly delicate stomachs and relieve pressure in an almost constant high-octane stream. They are also sensitive to chills and will fight tooth and nail to remain indoors when it is cold. This creates an unpleasant atmosphere in all senses of the word and can strain relations between falconers. It is best to let your dog sleep in the bakkie or in a room alone with you. Please do not let on to any visiting Arab falconers if you share a bed with your dog. They find the presence of dogs distasteful at best and Allah only knows what rumours will sweep the Gulf if it becomes known some of our members share beds with them.

When at a field meet where the plumbing is poor, as is often found in the Western Cape, strict bush hygiene should always be observed. There are few creatures more grateful than a freshly rolled pointer who has found somebody's bed to sleep in. The dog can be informed that it has sinned, but the damage has been done, and if you only have one sleeping bag with you in the

Bokkeveld winter it tends to spoil the outing. ALWAYS take a spade and cover up after. It may not be your dog but it may be your bed.

Male pointers like some of their owners run on testosterone. This is not their fault, they are made that way, and the presence of a bitch on heat disturbs the equilibrium of the entire meet. If your bitch is on heat please leave it at home. It is not fair on the others and causes unnecessary animosity between the dogs.

Dogs that don't know how to walk on a lead should be sent to doggie school before coming to a meet. If they can't walk in the field without retching, whining and pulling at the leash they should be left in the truck until needed. If they howl, yelp and yodel while left in the truck then perhaps they should be left at home. Enough about dogs.

The second most popular pastime at SAFA after drinking in the bar is holding meetings. Here too there are some important social niceties that should be observed.

The first is if you haven't been invited to a meeting, don't attend it. There is a rule which states that the time consumed by a meeting is directly proportional to the square of the number of participants. In other words the shortest meetings are those held by only one person. Unfortunately, those negotiating CODESA were not unduly concerned about SAFA meets when they decided to make nine provinces out of four. This oversight more than doubled the number of participants at meetings with a corresponding logarithmic increase in the time taken to conclude their business.

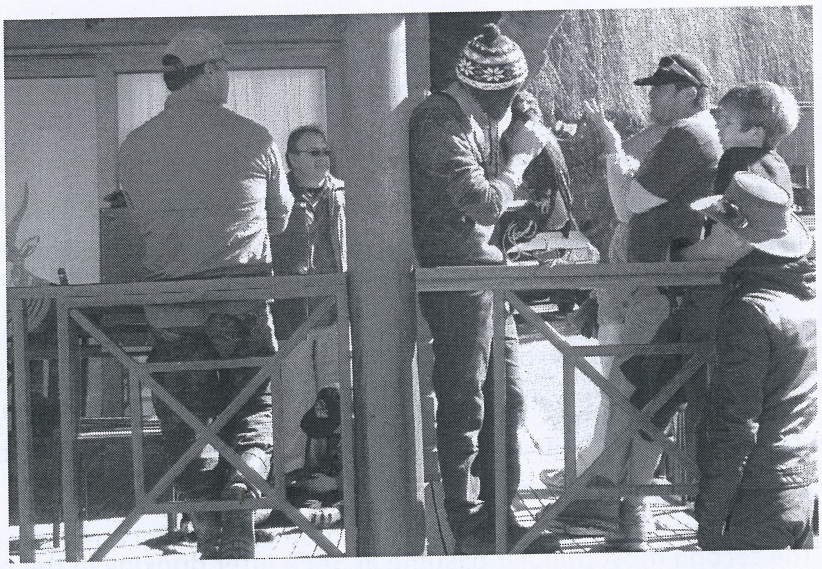
Secondly, this is SAFA field meet. You are here to fly hawks. If you come to the field meet to observe, rather than fly hawks, then stay out of the meetings too. Hawk free meetings can be held at leisure during the off-season when valuable hunting time is not being wasted. Your hawkless presence at a meeting serves only to prolong it.

Last but not least one must temper you expectations of fellow meet goers who are here to fly their hawks. For most professionals their trade is the last thing on their minds at these meets. Thus, it is not unexpected when vets over-anaesthetize hawks and kill them, plumbers break the water reticulation and flood the bungalow, doctors forget to show sympathy to the injured, church ministers swear, academics forget to write meeting minutes, law enforcement officers break the law and the habitually unemployed of no fixed address find employment eating biltong and drinking beer and take up permanent residence in the bar.

In all, be gentle on yourself, be considerate towards others and tread lightly on the environs. It will make for a great meet.



SAFA Meet 2012



African Goshawk, a Versatile Little Assassin

Roger Neilson.

I have had a total of five African Goshawks in my nearly 55 years of being involved with Birds of Prey. I have only in the last 29 years begun to realize that there is a lot more to this common easily acquired Accipiter than meets the eye. I think a large part of the problem stems from the fact that they are so easy to acquire, and that they are undoubtedly the easiest of our African short-winged hawks to man and train. They have been relegated to Beginner's Hawk status and are usually moved on from for the more glamorous species like Passage Lanners, Ovambo Sparrow hawks, and Black Spars that every Yuppie Falconer is expected to move up the ladder to. Well, I have long suspected and more recently proved to myself that one cannot get the best out of a single hawk; you do need a series of "individuals." I shall cite an example, in the early 1970s I trained two really beautiful nest taken African Goshawk females, I did not shape terribly well with either bird and on acquiring an English Pointer dog who showed a lot of promise I forsook African Goshawks for Black Sparrow Hawks and saw my kill rate treble . (I also became nervous and jumpy like the Sparrow Hawks I was flying. I am certain that one acquires certain traits from the animals and people one associates with!) I moved down from a recently independent Zimbabwe to Botswana, South Africa and Namibia ,Did my own thing Falconry wise until 1991 mostly with hacked Eyess Lannerettes until I met Trevor Oertel who persuaded me to join the TFC., To cut a long story short, the TFC would not recognize my A grading from Zimbabwe for various reasons and I had to start at the bottom of the ladder or quit Falconry altogether.(I seriously considered this, but realized that this would make my detractors happy, and the thought of bringing joy to that worthy body of men was enough to make me want to puke) You see we Falconers are imbued with 'Artistic Temperament' and we get very touchy if our pride or our vanity gets hurt!

I accepted a hand-me -down Passage Male African Musket, and I am very glad I did because I had 3 months of the most intense Falconry I have experienced in my Life! I found that with the extra years of experience that I had acquired with Hawk Eagles and a Black Spar or two since working my African Goshawk Eyesses, that little 205gm African Musket became a Killing machine! I have never had 73 kills in 90 days of hawking before or since. Multiple kills became the norm. Once the Musket was fit you had only to show him an Indian Mynah at anything under 45 paces and it was dead! It was not only Mynahs that succumbed to the "Yellow Eyed Assassin ", he took 8 laughing doves several Crowned Plover and a Pied Starling, developing a strategy of flying high to intercept these faster flying prey species at about 5m above the ground. The big turn-around came when I began flying the African Goshawk from a vehicle as I would have done with an African Hawk Eagle. It gave the little fellow the element of surprise that a wild African Goss uses to such devastating effect on wild quarry, and provided him a slipping distance equal to that which a wild hawk would take on when ambushing Doves at a water hole. Ray Black, who was a Master- Austringer with the Red Breasted Sparrow Hawk, and the legendary Jack Mavrogordato -who knew his European Spar like few people have ever done, - made the mistake of placing the African Goss in their " Sparrowhawk's shoes" as it were and then pronounced them to be "lethargic" when they were flown like the longer winged true Sparrow hawks. (I quote: The African Goshawk will not press home an attack unless it senses an overwhelming advantage" Raymond Black.) The true "Spars' hunt by patrolling low over the ground over moorland and will surprise avian quarry "speculatively" on the other side of hedges and dry stone walls etc as they patrol their regular beat, by contrast the African Goss is an Ambusher who lies in wait and captures quarry with a high speed but very short bursts of flight.

You can get an African Goss to take on longer and longer slips at favorite quarry after a few short distance successes, Indian Mynahs are an example. The term "nothing succeeds like success" is used by Master Austringer McEllroy in the "Imprint Accipiter II" when discussing the Coopers Hawk. It works well for the African Goshawk as well. (My current Eyess Female will take on Squirrel and Yellow Mongoose at 80 paces now that she is wedded to these as quarry!) The trick is to give encouragement with easy, first, second and third slips and the range increases dramatically! You will never be able to better the longer winged Accipiters who are built for the job, but you can dramatically improve the range of your "Af Goss" with success AND fitness.

Courage wise I don't think you can beat an African Goss, they are prepared to latch onto huge Quarry, and hold on for dear life! I think 99.something % of African Gosses have this gift, you just have to provide the right 'set up' for an initial kill and work the Goss hard in and out of large trees on the days that you don't go hunting. (and when she is too "pooped" to fly up into a high Gum Tree when you cast her off, make her do 'push ups' to your fist held high above your head when she sits on the ground at your feet) It really does work, two very recent kills of mine with "Amber" who is a captive bred Eyess Female, include a 640 gm Guinea Fowl Poult and a 465gm Yellow Mongoose. She has also pulled out a cushion full of feathers from a couple of adult Guinea Fowl, I have no doubt that one of these days she will succeed to hold onto one with all of her 340gms of muscle and determination.



Foot Note

My current African Goss is a captive bred female that languished untrained for very nearly a year before I bought her from the breeder. She is as bad mannered as a spoilt Human "Brat". But at the right weight and the right level of fitness will take on quarry at a fair distance and much larger than herself. She was conditioned for the flight at Yellow Mongoose by first taking a total of 4 Mopani Squirrel. I plan to take a couple more Mongoose just to prove it was not a 'Fluke Shot' The first two Squirrels bit her legs ,where-after she has learned to take "furred quarry' firmly by the head. I wouldn't advise flight at Mongoose without having taken a few Squirrel or domestic Rats beforehand, Mongoose are dangerous quarry.

Adventures with Crowned Eagles and other African Denizens.

Shane McPherson.

PART 1

A long time ago I met Danish lass in Mongolia. On starry nights out on the steppe, she would tell me stories of her days in Kenya, and of this friend of hers, a character called Simon Thomsett. At the time

Simon had a variety of raptors and a little house on the savanna; he rehabilitated injured birds, supported local research, and was supported by the Peregrine Fund. Apparently, because of his outspoken objections to certain housing developments and changes in the conservancy he was on, Simon had some worrying security issues. Mia wasn't allowed to return without a big strapping lad – and that was my ticket to Kenya!

In 2007 Mia and I (by now an item), arrived in Kenya and I was introduced to a juvenile Crowned Eagle on a bow perch. This was the first Crowned Eagle I had seen and that afternoon as I held her on an oversized triple-layered glove – a passion for this bird was ignited. Simon has had Duchess' father "Rosy" for some 35 years, and her mother "Girl" for some 20 years. Over the last two decades Rosy and Girl had produced 12 young, all of which were released into various wild locations. I was to train her over the next ten weeks to become a capable hunter, and prepare for her release. To accelerate this program she would be entered on springhares at night, and then tuned to day hunting later. Over that time she became a proficient hunter down the lamp, and then succeeded with more typical Crowned Eagle prey taking two young Vervet monkeys and a young Thompson's gazelle. In October 2007 she was successfully soft-released at Ol Donyo Laro.

PART 2

For many years we had heard of the South African Falconers Association, and particularly of the role model like status the rigorous apprenticeship scheme can play for other national associations (New Zealand has just achieved legalized falconry). We'd heard of the dynamite raptor and quarry diversity, and extraordinary hawking to be had and seen. In July 2011, arriving in Joburg three days before the field meet, we had to scramble finding our way to Lekoa Lodge. Over the course of the week, the SAFA members offered fantastic falconry, good humour, and invitations to see places all across the country... I am not sure how, but over the following 9 weeks we managed to make good of almost all of those invitations! A particular highlight was a week of spectacular hawking with Anton Muller and his tiercel. We even managed to squeeze in some 'touristy' visits to the flower-filled Namaqualand, raptor filled days in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, and Umfolozi and Kruger too.

While it was a brief four days visit in Durban, Bruce and Belinda Padbury had hosted us and encouraged me to talk with a certain Mark Brown at the university. The next day I climbed a bluegum on the Police department grounds and installed a nest camera for Erin Wreford's research on urban Black Sparrowhawks. Mark seemed well impressed and upon mention of his desire to have a student find out why the Crowned Eagles are also successful in the urban areas, my heart raced and there was nothing to it but to make a plan and get this thing rolling. That evening a Crowned Eagle showed up in the big fig beside Bruce's house in hillcrest, the first wild one I would see! After spending the end of 2011 in Denmark flying peregrines with Tage Jessen, and a few months early in 2012 writing project proposals and getting my enrolment and visa sorted, that plan is now a reality.

PART 3

Under the guidance of Prof. Colleen Downs and Dr. Mark Brown at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I plan to do a Masters of Science (and hopefully more) research on the urban Crowned Eagles in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. We will look at territory size and population density, verify if the annual breeding observed is due to positive or negative influences, study the diet using nest cameras, and investigate home range and habitat use with GPS transmitters. The research is off to a fantastic start. As of mid May, we have one juvenile ringed and three more to trap in the next few weeks, over a dozen nests already marked with many more still to be added, and a large network of locals excited about the project.

There is much to look forward to. A benchmark for me is September; Mia arrives after a hectic eight months breeding Gyrfalcons in Denmark, also it marks the onset of the Durban summer, and the months of fieldwork observing Crowned Eagles in the midst of bringing forth a new generation.





Crowned Eagle – trapped,

Measured and ringed!

A Tribute To Ron Hartley - Falconer Par Excellance.

Paul Venter.

Ron was a man's man.

I remember the first time I met Ron; he immediately made a good impression on me of a nature conscious person. The way he spoke of birds of prey and the passion he had for raptors was eminent in this man. He had an excellent rapport with everyone he connected to and his vibrant character was felt when he discussed a certain hunting experience and end it off with a contagious laugh. This was Ron at his best.

Living in Pietersburg, now Polokwane, I often crossed the border at Beit Bridge to Zimbabwe on a Friday afternoon to enjoy a weekend hunting with Ron at Falcon College, Bulawayo. On arriving the evening, his house would be a bee hive of hawking activities. Deidre, Ron's wife, was always ready with something to eat and drink and welcome you at their home.

"Now let's get ready guys Cilla's weight is perfect for a hunt tonight." Cilla was Ron's African Hawk Eagle taking hares and loving the hunt. There was no way out for me tired of working and driving all the way was no excuse. The bakkie was organized and all the enthusiastic falconers with the appropriate beverages ready to go with a very eager and willing Cilla on Ron's fist. Off we went in high spirit for the hunt.

It was not long and the bright eyes of a bunny said here I am and try me. Cilla was off the glove and at maximum speed in seconds. A rough and tumble ensues in a cloud of dust with the bunny screeching and kicking to get away. By now we moved closer and Ron is already at the scene. "Hey guys this is number one for tonight" with a smile. Great excitement amongst the gallery on the bakkie and this calls for a celebration. At this stage Cilla was well on her way to score her number one thousand bunny.

Next day on Saturday morning I was invited to join Ron on a dormitory inspection. Ron was in a great spirit and had friendly conversation with the boarding scholars as we made our way through the hostel. Obviously he was pleased with the standard and advised here and there. There was a close relationship between teacher and learners. Ron was a team player and lived for his family, teaching and the art of falconry.

Saturday afternoon Ron's young scholar falconers reported with their shortwing hawks to join our hunting party. Ron and I took two peregrine falcons and two English Pointers for hunting Swainsons francolin. As we drove we would drop a young falconer and his hawk at intervals

with the understanding that we will pick them up again on the return journey after flying the peregrines on open ground. It was great fun walking talking and following the pointers as they were searching for quarry. Ron got very excited as his falcon was making her way up to a wait-on position. Nice stoop and another Swainson for the record.

On the way back we collected the young falconers one by one, each with an exciting hunting story to tell. I looked at these young falconers and think what a privilege they enjoyed flying and hunting with a tutor like Ron. They were exposed to firsthand advice and can experience quality falconry. I never had these luxuries when I started. What a lovely falconry experience with a Master Falconer.

Sunday morning early, I would make my way back to Polokwane after a weekend of excellent falconry with Ron Hartley.

On another occasion I was invited to come and see the lovely Taita falcons with Ron. They were collected for a breeding project and Ron took care of them. Nice tame little falcons and I was even allowed to handle them and take photographs. At this stage they were on creance and it was nice to be able to assist in flying them on creance.

I was very fortunate to have known Ron in the hunting field and enjoyed the wonderful times we could enjoy as falconer friends. Ron touched the lives of many falconers all over the world.He will always be on my mind....a great friend and falconer.



Ron with two Taitas.

The Status of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco. p. minor*) in the Lowveld, Mpumalanga Province.

Stephen Van Rensburg.

It was long thought that the Falco.p. minor in the Mpumalanga Lowveld was quite rare with only 2 active sites being recorded in 2009. However, the number to date is 11 (2011) with the possibility of more sites being located in 2012.

It is thought that some of the sites located in our 2010/2011 survey might have been overlooked in the past, possibly fobbed off as a possible Lanner or other arbitrary raptor sites. Some of the cliffs which are now presently occupied by peregrines were, in the past, deemed as empty. We once again think that there is a possibility that these sites were probably scrutinized at the wrong time of the year, out of breeding season and incorrectly recorded as empty.

Many of the new sites (possibly old, due to misidentification etc) were located whilst monitoring African Crowned Eagle (ACE) breeding sites. Many of the ACE pairs were attacked by peregrines whilst displaying over their nesting territories. If there was any doubt as to where the falcons were coming from (cliffs), pigeons were tossed in the vicinity in which they were last seen and in so doing nesting cliffs were located and recorded. In some instances, cliffs were identified as good nesting cliffs and once again the pigeon strategy was employed and birds would be identified as they came off above mentioned cliffs to chase pigeons.

We don't quite understand the reasons for the increase of the peregrine population in the Lowveld (other than overlooked, monitoring out of breeding season, misidentification etc) over the past 3 years. We hypothesize that there might possibly be an increase in avifauna populations in and around outlying nesting territories. Some of the prey items recorded at some nesting sites were swifts, swallows, martins, doves and pigeons. Our town peregrines have been recorded predating on swifts, doves and pigeons.

We have no concrete evidence or indication of peregrine sites turning over to Lanners, or vice versa. This might be an indication of good niche partitioning between the two species, or alternatively there aren't as many Lanner sites as there are peregrine. We only have 5 active lanner sites in the Lowveld. These sites have been religiously monitored over an 8 year period without any decline or increase in other sites. We have noticed that there are differences in nesting cliff preferences with regards to the two species. We also think that the drastic change in farming practices, decrease in rural folk keeping livestock i.e. moving to urban centers, has counted in favour of the peregrine and possibly not the Lanner.

The following records have been kept with regards to the breeding success of the Falco p. minor since 2009:

2009 2 sites 4 chicks raised

2010 5 sites 7 chicks raised

2011 11 sites 14 chicks raised

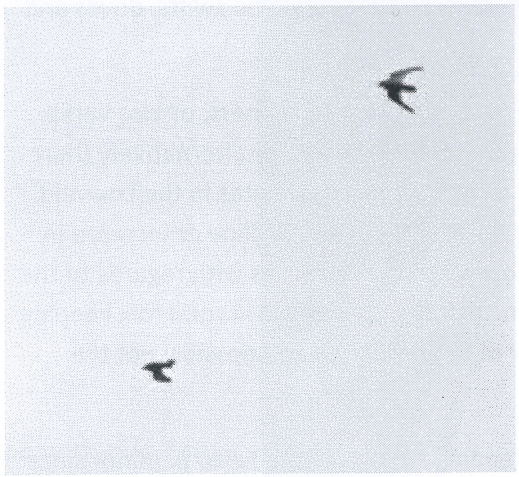
Nothing is known about the dispersal of juv. peregrines in the Lowveld. We can only assume that there must be some relatively long distance dispersal of young birds and non – breeders in the "floating" population in order for the peregrine population to remain genetically in touch. We suspect that there is a high mortality rate with regards to juv. birds (as high as 75%) and as few as 4 of the 14 fledged birds will survive into their second year (adult).

We will continue to monitor the existing 11 sites in 2012 (within a radius of 80km from Nelspruit) and hope to locate a few more sites before the end of the year.

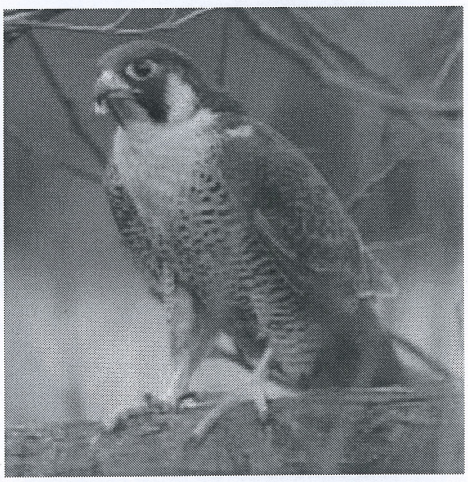
(All photographs were taken by Garth Bachelor)



A Wild female peregrine chasing my racers.



Wild female peregrine trying to fly a pigeon down.



Adult *Falco. p. minor* on cliff.

Practical Tree-Climbing, The Safe Way

Richard Hay

After hearing a few of the older falconers harrowing tales on how they used to climb to nests "back in the good old days" I decided to put together this short guide on prussocking. Prussocking is a basic way of ascending a rope using two lengths of cordage. This is, in my opinion, the safest and easiest way to climb trees, such a Blue-gums, that have very few branches.

Equipment:

1. 1 x Standard climbing harness
2. 1 x Standard climbing rope (I prefer to use static rope for purssocking as the strech of a dynamic and semi-dynamic affects the speed at which one can prussock) 60m is an ideal length for most trees
3. A minimum of 2 standard climbing carabeeners
4. 1 x Figure-of-8 (For abseiling down)
5. 2 x 1m lengths of 5-10mm cordage (While thicker cordage is more difficult to prussock with, the cordage should be thick enough to hold your weight)
6. A minimum of 1x 2m slings, however multiple slings are usefull for securing yourself to branches around the nest.
7. Fishing sinker with line and reel
8. "Katty"

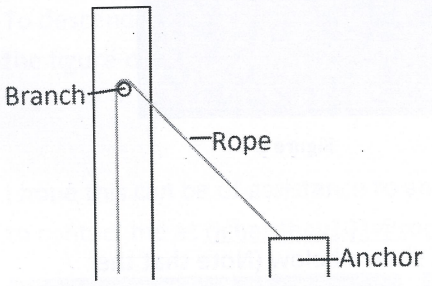


Figure 2 Basic set-up for climbing trees

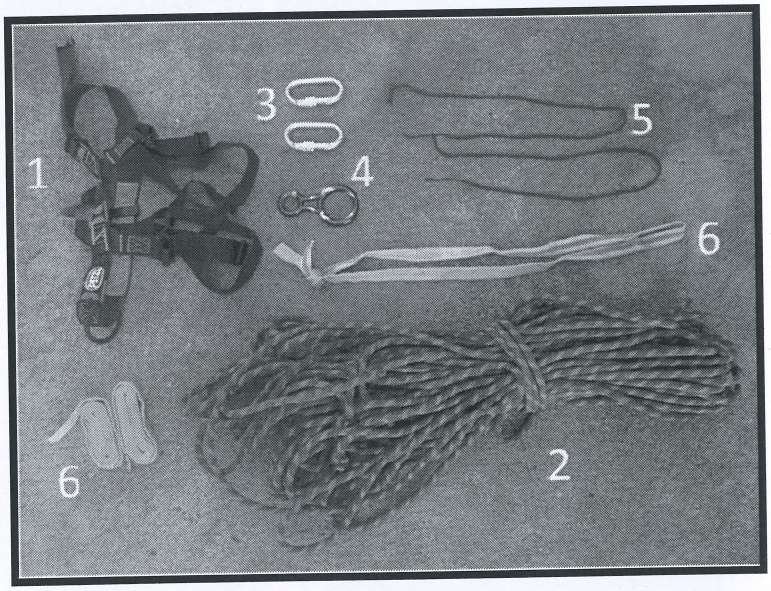


Figure 1 Basic equipment needed to prussock

The first step is to select which branch will be used to support you as you climb. The best branches to use are ones located above the nest. Ensure that the

branch is not dead wood and is thick enough to support your weight. The rope should be as close to the main trunk of the tree as possible to minimize the chance of the branch breaking.

Selecting an ideal anchor is of the utmost importance. Ideal anchors are the trucks of trees that have already fallen, or large rocks. The anchor should be more than heavy enough to support your body weight without moving a single inch. The rope should not, in any way possible, be able to slip off the anchor.

Securing the rope to the anchor is also very important. The method below is the safest way to do this. (Please note that the pole in the picture is NOT a safe anchor)

Tie two figure-of-8 knots in the rope, leaving enough space between the end of the rope and the first knot to go around the anchor, complete two double figure-of-8 knots and about 10cm extra. Wrap the rope around the anchor and complete the first double figure-of-8. Repeat the method with the second knot. Ensure that the knots are tight and that there is about 10cm of rope sticking out of the end of the second knot. Refer to figures 3-8 for visual aids.

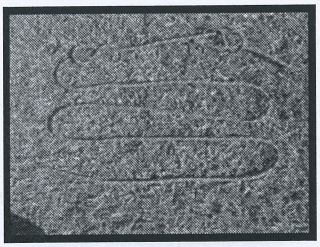


Figure 3

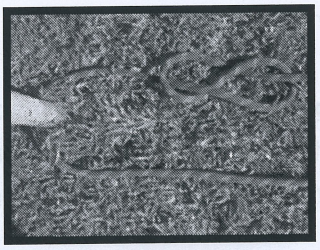


Figure 4

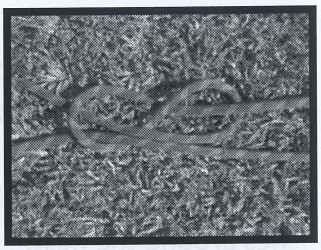


Figure 5

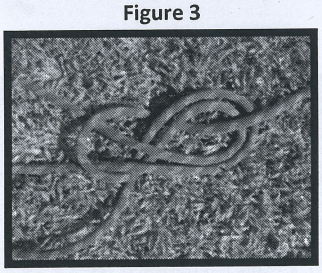


Figure 6

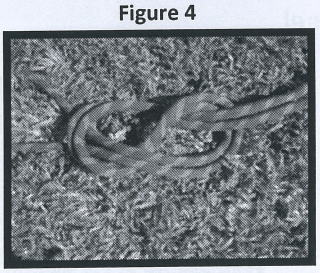


Figure 7

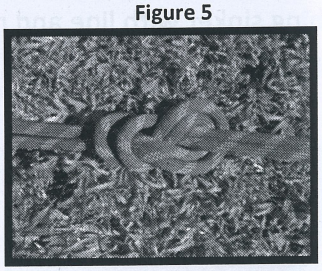
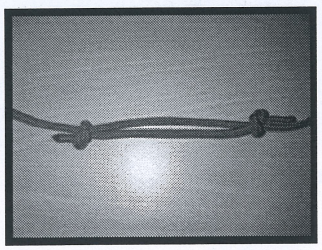
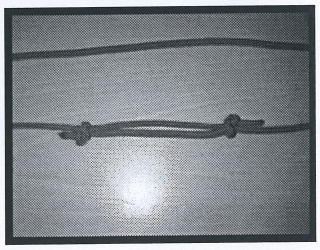
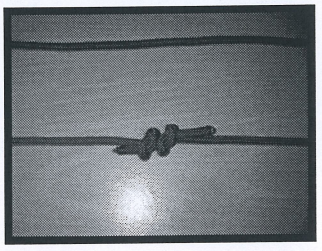


Figure 8

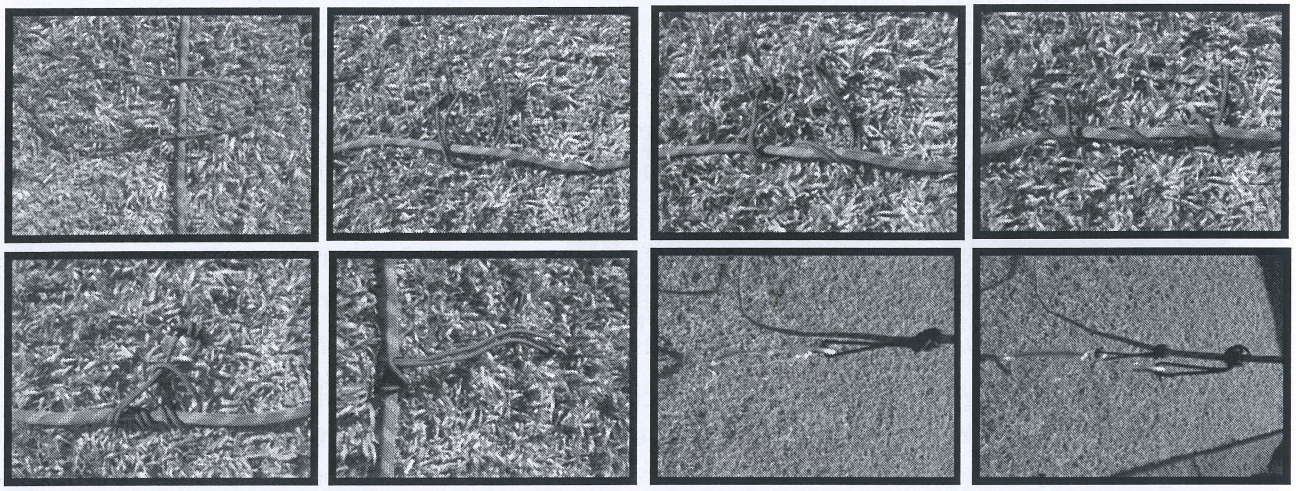
Assemble your prussocks by tying a figure-of-8 knot on either end as shown below (Note that the cordage goes through the knot to form a continuous, but adjustable, loop).







Harness-up and attach the prussock loops by wrapping them around the rope three times and pulling the end through the loop. Attach the carabeeners and slings as shown below. The top carabeener will attach to your harness while the bottom (with the sling) is for your feet.



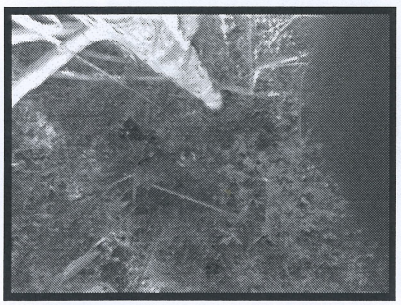
Ascend the rope my putting all your weight on the top carabeener and slide the bottom prussock upwards. Place your weight on the bottom carabeener and slide the top prussock upwards. Continue to repeat. Prussocking does require a bit of practice before-hand and it is important to not slide the prussocks too far apart.

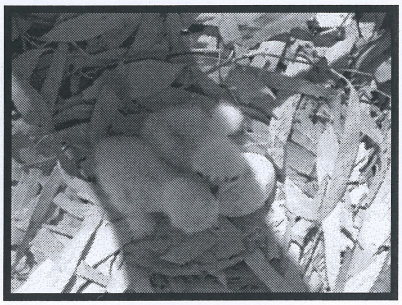
Once near the nest, disconnect from the rope and use the extra slings to secure yourself to the branches. This is only necessary if the rope is under the nest and it is impossible to stay connected to the rope while working in the nest.



To descend either prussock in reverse or, for a quicker descent, use the figure-of-8 to abseil down.

I hope this can be of assistance to anyone and for any queries feel free to contact me at richardhay101@rocketmail.com







Tree Nesting Peregrines are back in Poland.

The Tree-nesting Peregrine in Europe was exterminated by DDT and is the last group of Peregrines to recover. Tree-nesting peregrines would not return for a long time, if at all, without human intervention as Peregrines imprint on their nest structure and substrate. The German Tree-nesting Peregrines have been successfully reintroduced after a huge effort by the Deutschen Falkenorden (DFO) and other conservationists. Now we have news from Polish Falconers of their successful reintroduction of Polish Tree-nesting Peregrines with the first wild-bred birds being ringed after a break of 48 years. This significant success was achieved with collaboration from the DFO. I have received the following letter: (Editor)

"Friends

Tree-nesting Peregrines are back in Poland after 48 years!

Our first tree-nesting Peregrines ringed! Two chicks were male and female.
We ringed them in presence of Adam Mrugasiewicz - who ringed last know Polish tree-nesting Peregrines 48 years ago and Piotr Adamiok, who found this nest, our friends from German Falconers Order (DFO), Polish falconers and local hosts, foresters and ornithologists.
This day was a real milestone for our tree-nesting project
This is the result of reintroductions conducted by Polish falconers in cooperation with DFO (German Falconers' Order), supported by many falconers, ornithologists, hunters, foresters, protectionists from Poland and abroad.
The Peregrine Project in Poland was initiated by Czeslaw Sielicki and Zygmunt Pielowski in 1980's, with a big support of Gunther Trommer.
Unfortunately they are no longer with us to see the effect of their great idea.

Celebrate this great achievement with us!" – Janus Sielicki



Hungarian Field Meet

By: Marcus Carstens



Last year, September, I was in Europe. I had the opportunity to travel, and so I got around quite a bit. I had started out in England, staying with Steven Charlton: a falconer who became a very good friend, then moving on to Holland where I spent some time with the Falconcrest crew, from there I went to Switzerland where I stayed with family and friends, and met even more falconers (with some VERY odd practices), after mountaineering in the Alps I headed south into Italy where I was culturally shell shocked, but awed, and after that I went back to England, staying with Steve and his family again. Very much at the end of my trip I went through to Gloucestershire and went to the ICBP, Jemima Parry-Jones' center. It must be said that her birds, her facility, and her staff, are of the HIGHEST standard. She herself is quite the character as well, but a very nice person. While I was in Italy the invitation went out for SAFA members to go up to the Hungarian field meet. I jumped at the opportunity and got in contact with Janoz Toth, the former chairman of the Hungarian Falconry Association, who was incredibly welcoming. Thus, after my second stay in England I jetted off to Hungary, not before spending the night on a bench in the South wing of the3 Terminal in Heathrow Airport.

My flight went via Zurich, and the flight to Budapest was delayed by an hour. On arriving I met Janoz, waiting patiently. He took me for a drive around Budepest, which, with my lack of sleep, didn't impress me much at the time, but it is a Beautiful city! We went straight home afterwards, where I met his wife, who is quite possibly the best chef in the Northern Hemisphere. He showed me his birds for the season, an old female Peales Peregrine, and a brother and sister team of Gyrfalcons, all bred by his own birds. I got a very early night and was ready and amping for the next day when I got up. We had a beautiful breakfast! We fed all his breeding birds and did some hardware shopping in Balatoni Almadi, where he took me to the "big dam". Once we got back we prepped for flying and went out to his hunting grounds and flew his falcons. He wasn't very impressed and told me that they were fat, all three of them, so we went back home after tracking his male Gyr halfway around the globe. Again, as soon as we got back home, we packed our things and left, arriving in Fuszesgyarmat 4 hours later. After bridging the language barrier I was led straight to the dining hall, where I quite possibly had one

of the best meals of my life. After eating we went to the thermal baths, it was kind of awkward not being able to talk to anyone, but Janoz was a brilliant host and introduced me to everyone. There were some absolutely exquisite birds there.

The next morning I got up nice and early, had a shower, flooded the bathroom, had breakfast where I met Shane and Mia (the New Zealander and the Danish girl who were at SAFA last year). We had the opening ceremony which, although it dragged on for an hour, was a nice formality. I then teamed up with the female goshawk group, where I got together with Harry and Henri, two Dutch falconers. Here I must say that Harry was 61, had one arm, drove, and flew the best female Goshawk of the meet. The quarry which they focused on was hare and rabbit, and the days hunting frustrated me terribly, but in retrospect it was actually a good day. The birds weren't properly on in my opinion, and so we only went home with one hare in the bag after 5 hawks had about 50 slips each. But the hawks were stunning for sure. What got to me was the "hunting party" system, which was terrible. 5 falconers, 5 hawks, 3 spectators, 1 guy in charge, who hardly knew enough to be organizing a hunting party. The following day however, was one of the best days of my 2 month long trip. That morning I again had a good breakfast, and met up with Shane and Mia. We joined up with a group of longwingers after the briefing; there was a guy about my age tagging along with a tierce Euro Gos too. They were a brilliant group of guys (and girl), and this now felt like a proper meet to me! One Peregrine found a thermal and had the falconer swinging his lure for about half an hour before coming back in. the tierce gos took a pheasant in truly awesome style! Chalk and cheese when compared to the females from the day before. There was a Lanner x Cassini Peregrine hybrid who flew amazingly! But it was over a false point, so it was pulled down again. About this time too we spotted an Imperial Eagle perched on a tree in the distance. The next bird to go up was a peregrine, who put in some kick ass stoops (at a hare unfortunately). All the flights after that were ruined by wild sakers that kept coming in and harassing the falcons, admittedly I did quite enjoy this. One or two of the falconers in the group could speak English, so we started chatting together, and as soon as it was discovered that I had flown a Black Spar I was the talk of the town, the youngster with the gos kept asking if his gos was as quick as a BS. In the evening things got very social; I met a girl from America, working in Qatar at a falconry center there. I chatted with a bunch of local falconers, and helped one of them to Imp his hawk. During the day I drew the cash for the meet fee, and on paying it was given a nice package. After dinner one of the Hungarians asked to see some photos of falconry in South Africa, which I showed him. I had brilliant conversation with a whole lot of people, had a merry argument with someone about the "right" knot to use, and was invited to sit in on the AGM (since I didn't

understand I just took pictures of the pictures they were showing). Really, it was a nice evening, and a good days hawking.

The last day of the meet was an incredible event. We had the morning briefing on the lawn and I headed out with the Eagle falconers, I must say that I was very impressed. There were three eagles flown by three falconers, all owned by one of them, who was quite a showman. The main quarry was Roe Deer, which they came very close to catching a few times. There were a few slips at Rabbit as well. There were some VERY close slips; one which stood out was of the tiercel Golden doing a 10m vertical wing over on a hare! But we went on till dark and didn't catch anything. Back at the lodge we did the laying out of the quarry, which was quite a special occasion. I managed to get my hands on a few good souvenirs too. In the evening we had the meet dinner, and a raffle accompanied by live music (Hungarian bands aren't exactly the most impressive). The food was exquisite as had become the norm there. I ate together with Shane and Mia before they went to bed early; it was very nice to get to chat to them again. I became quite the envy of the meet at the raffle, as I literally cleaned them out. My name was called out five times, three of those times I drew my own tickets too. I won two annual journals, a badge, a pin, a DVD, and a hood. I also drew a ticket for a family voucher to a spa, which I gave to Janos as a thank you. I ended up chatting till the wee hours of the morning, arranging for future trips over.

That night was a brilliant end to my Hungarian field meet, which was also the end of my Euro trip. I left with a bit of a buzz on falconry; keen to get back and fly whatever I could lay my hands on!

In a word, the entire trip was exquisite! It was a once in a lifetime experience which I will treasure for a long time to come.

Janos Toth – Marcus' Host
-And his Family at the Falconry Festival in 2009.



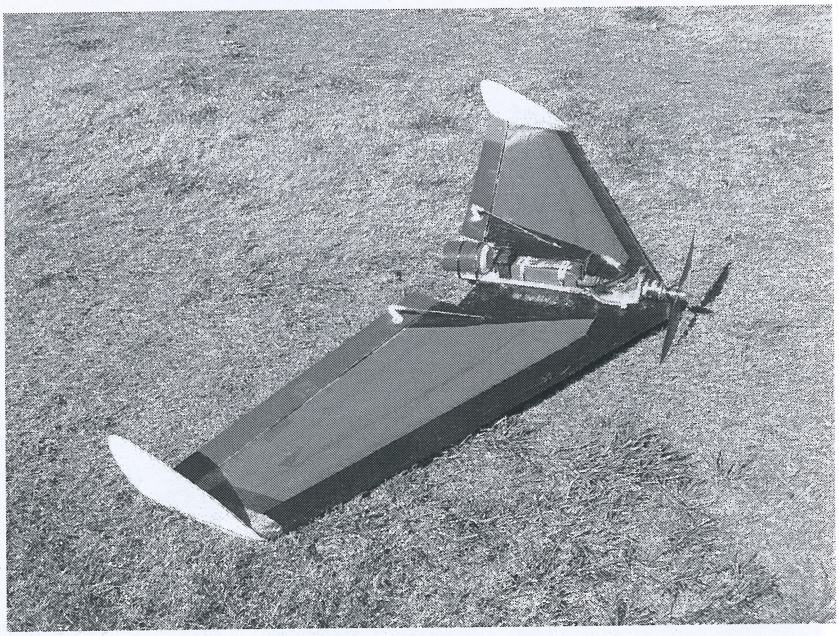


Preliminary impressions of the RC plane training method.

Alan Harvey

I have been using the kite to develop young falcons for the past 12 years with great success. This technique has also been used to retrieve lost falcons and to get intermewed falcons fit after the moult. It gets birds fit and if the changeover to mounting without the kite is done correctly it does result in a higher mounting bird that does not look in the bag to be served. The kite is a great tool for all the above but to me something was missing. With many birds it does not encourage intensity in flight style. The attitude of these birds towards the kite resulted in lazy flying. Other birds will fly away from the kite in a straight line and be at the same height as the kite on the return expending almost no energy. The kite is a static lure in the sky and once a bird has worked this out it knows the lure is going nowhere so takes its time to fly up to it.

The use of radio controlled planes in the training of falcons is relatively new on the scene. The basic idea is to use a plane to tow a lure that the falcon pursues up into the sky. The main difference is the bird has to hunt the lure as opposed to flying up to a static lure. This more closely resembles what happens at the wild eyries with the eyases chase the parents robbing them of prey. This gives the falconer more scope to manipulate the training to be closer to the natural maturation process of a young falcon. The falcon can be lured up to big heights at breakneck speed and then either allowed to take the lure or alternatively the lure can be dropped with small weight to initiate a full tuck stoop. The intensitivity of the bird's flight style is of full out flying very much like a passage falcon in hunt mode.



I have made a brief foray into the world of radio control planes which by the way is quite a big subject. The setting up of the system was a lot easier than learning to fly! This is probably the biggest hurdle for this technique to being commonly used. The equipment I am using is a Spectrum DX 7 transmitter and Bee 2 polystyrene delta wing with a pod fitted for propulsion. This plane is hand launched and belly landed so you are not tied to a runway. The pod has a 1050 kv electric motor with a 30 amp speed control running on a 2200mah 3s lipo battery and a 9x6 prop. The speed control has the brake set hard

so the prop can stopped in an instant if the falcon gets too close to the plane as the spinning prop is an obvious hazard. The pod carries a capsule that holds the folded parachute. Connected to the chute is 1.5 m of stretch cord and then 4 m of lure line ending in the lure which must a couple of swivels so no winding up occurs. The plane can fly at a rate of knots so this last point is pretty important. This whole system can be released with the flick of a switch on the transmitter.

I have been flying the plane and the falcon myself but it would work a lot easier if a second person is the pilot. Basically I prep the plane and first cast off the falcon. As the falcon is on her first circuit I launch the plane into the wind as the bird turns downwind. The falcon immediately gives chase. I then use the throttle and elevator to climb, keeping the plane about 50m ahead of the bird. As soon as the falcon starts lagging I slow the rate of climb to keep the bird at maximum flight intensity. You can keep doing climbing circuits or a long straight away and back overhead. When the plane is at the required pitch or the falcon is starting to flag I let the falcon catch up to the plane by slowly decelerating and then releasing the chute as the bait is grabbed. The bird comes down with the chute and the plane is put into a vertical dive, flared and landed on the ground next to me. The trick is to get the plane down as quickly as possible so you can concentrate on where the falcon lands. If I want the falcon to stoop as opposed to pulling the chute I replace the chute with a one ounce lead weight. I will release this when the falcon is at least 100 m from the plane to give the lure time to achieve full velocity. This allows for the lure to be taken close to the ground. If the lure is caught too high up the falcon can go a long way.

It takes good judgment and quick reflexes to keep the correct distance between falcon and plane. Every time the falcon is flown at the plane you can see it trying different techniques to get the bait exactly as it



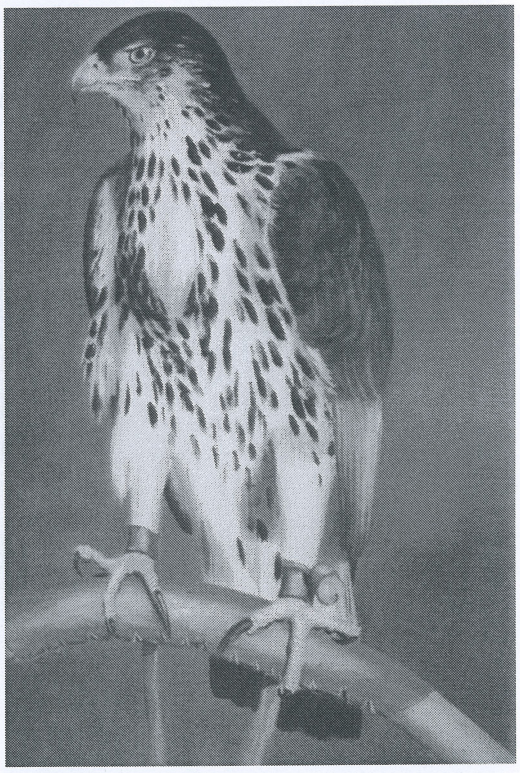
would when learning to hunt wild quarry.

As the title suggests the system for me is still at the beginner stage and I have only tried this on two previously kite trained peregrines. They flew the plane with no hesitation. I will try a fresh hacked eyas next season and see how it pans out, possibly introducing the plane while the babies are still at hack. My plan is to release bait birds without the chute for the youngsters much as the wild parents would. Like the kite this system is a tool to help develop a high flying game hawk and not an end in itself. It is much more spectacular than kite training and can probably become addictive!

Cilla African Hawk Eagle.

Paul Venter.

After Ron Hartley's tragic death Cilla was given to George MacAlister, an ex Zimbabwean falconer, now living in South Africa. George carried on hunting bunnies with Cilla in the style and fashion Ron hunted with her.



She was a fantastic comrade and hunter. During discussions with George at a Field Meet, it was clear that George had many fond memories hunting with Cilla. Unfortunately Cilla died in September 2011 (aged 32). George found her dead next to her perch where she died from a ruptured artery.

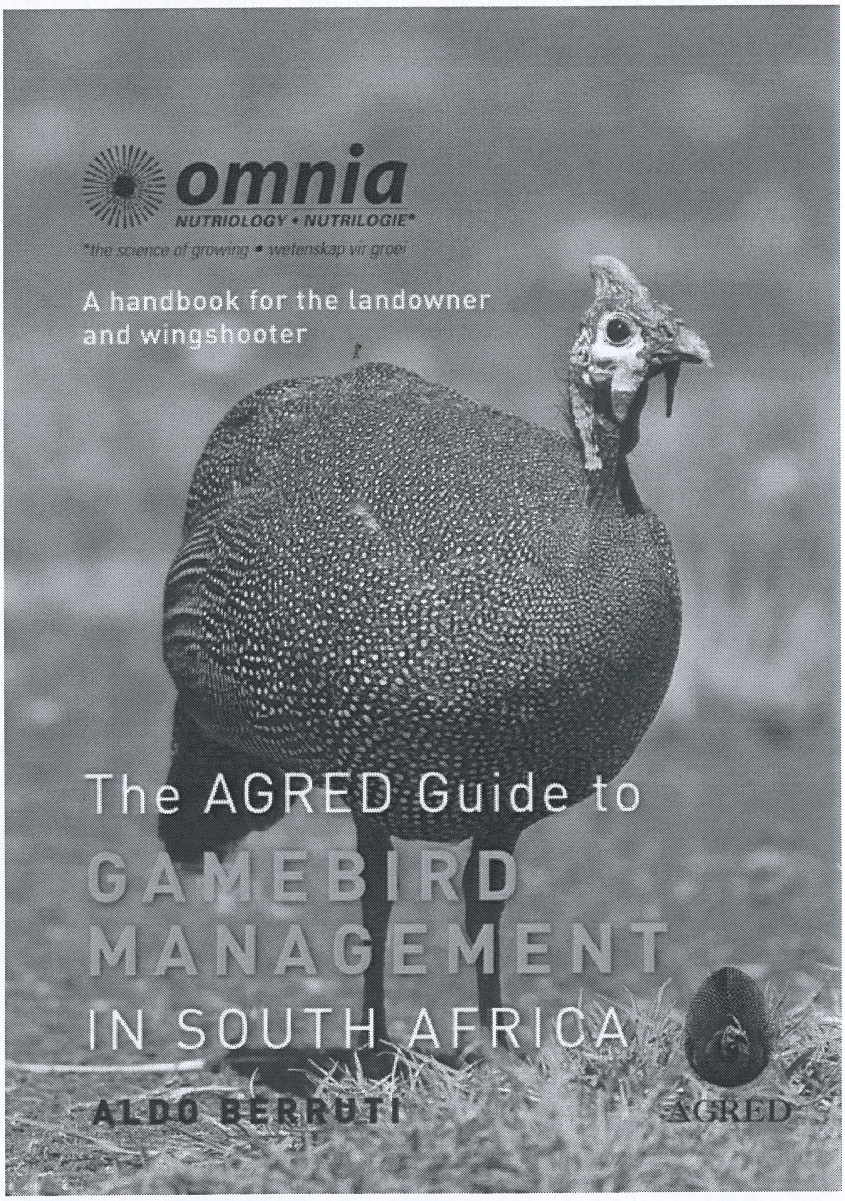
Cilla was a legend sharing her hunting skills with many falconers in Zimbabwe and South Africa. I photographed her one weekend at Ron's house and commissioned Rudi de Wet, artist falconer, to paint her for me in 1993. When I look at the painting today, I see Cilla as alert and ready as always to go out hunting. What a fond memory.

Cilla's death closed a chapter on three greats in falconry in South Africa; Ron Hartley, Rudi de Wet my tutor and Cilla African Hawk Eagle.

(MW does occasionally carry obituaries to well known birds. This is a particularly poignant article as many of us have known Cilla and been thrilled by her flights. Editor)

The AGRED Guide to Gamebird Management in South Africa – A handbook for the landowner and wingshooter.

(This book contains comment which is very favourable to Falconers and is available at a significant discount through SAFA. Please consider it as a very suitable gift for the farmers on whose land you hunt. – Editor.)



This is the first full overview of gamebird hunting in South Africa, including falconry and gundog field and in addition, provides a new philosophy on gamebird management. The book is geared for both the gamebird hunter as well as the landowner and makes wonderful gift for the landowner (in English and Afrikaans) on whose land you hunt.

The successful landowner must have multiple skills in order to be financially successful. The rich potential of gamebirds as an economic resource with social and conservation benefits is often unrecognised. The AGRED guide to Gamebird Management in South Africa is a detailed and practical guide to the management of gamebirds for landowners, especially farmers and game ranchers.

The principles of sustainable and ethical hunting of gamebirds, simple conservation techniques and how to run a gamebird shoot are explained in language that is easy to understand and well illustrated.

By understanding gamebird biology and using simple management techniques, any farmer or game rancher can easily increase the numbers of gamebirds on their land with little additional cost and effort, and without compromising their primary farming activity. The result will be a boost to their income, highly enjoyable social interaction on gamebird shoots and enormous personal enjoyment, while maximising the potential of their land.
Similarly, the falconer will gain understanding of their quarry and a range of issues which affect their abundance.

Dr. Aldo Berruti
Director, African Gamebird Research Education and Development Trust
083-4452685
017-7780299

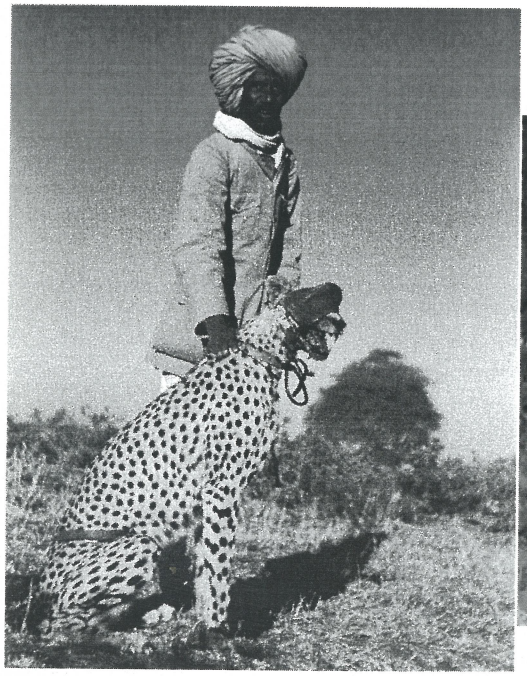
Hunting with Cheetah.- Falconry's Sister Sport.

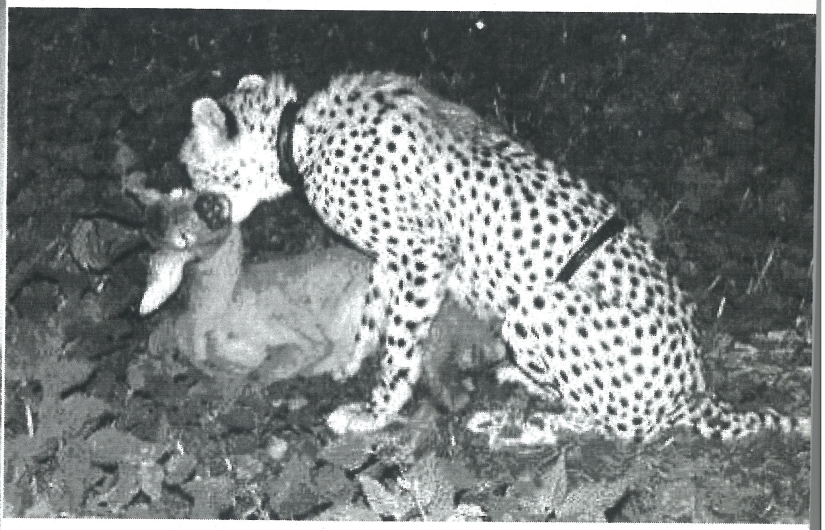
Adrian Lombard

In May 2012, I had the privilege to attend the CIC Conference in Cape Town to represent both the IAF and South African Falconry. I was asked to try to make my presentation interesting as it was one of the last presentations on the last day. I decided to throw in a short discussion on Cheetah hunting as I know very little about it!

Cheetah hunting may be compared to falconry as it is another "archaic" hunting Art. This also involves the intimate interaction with human and an apex predator and has been described as the "Sister Sport" to Falconry. This Art has enjoyed some popularity, mainly in the Middle East and India. Its resemblance to Falconry is more striking than would be expected at first glance. The practice involves the hooding of the Cheetah, as with a falcon, both to prevent premature release at quarry and also to aid the removal of the quarry once caught. Similarly "passage" cheetahs are apparently preferred as these are young animals which are receptive to training while having some hunting experience. The best description that I have found of this practice is provided by two young American brothers, the Craigheads, who stayed with an Indian Prince in the early years of the Second World War and which is described in their book – "Life with an Indian Prince". (See picture of hooded cheetah below)

I am led to believe that this hunting Art is not completely dead. I have heard of two practitioners, one from Czech and one from Spain who are using Cheetah to course Hares and other game. Having admitted that I know next to nothing about it, it is certainly something that I would love to see --- one day maybe and why not in South Africa?







Immature African Crowned Eagle.
SAFA motivated to have the Crowned Eagle removed from the ToPS List along with the African Peregrine Falcon and the motivations were accepted. South African Falconers have contributed to research and conservation efforts on this species. Shane McPhereson has come from New Zealand to South Africa to embark on a Master's Research Project on this species and has requested SAFA's support for this. (Photo – Shane McPherson)