

BFA SEMINAR SERIES NO. 12

ZIMBABWE PROJECT

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WHO ARE WE?

- © Falconer-naturalists who have a passion for hands-on conservation.
- © Volunteers of all ages.
- © Focus on training the youth.
- © All licenced falconers contribute data to the programme.
- © 28/120 of current members involved in formal programme.
- © Over past 19 yrs at Falcon College 16/67 members participated significantly in national programme.

WHY ZIMBABWE IS SPECIAL.

- © 66 species of diurnal raptors and 12 species of owls.
- © Long tradition (by African standards) of studies on raptors.
- © ZFC-TPF-DNPWLM programme a unique partnership.

BACKGROUND

- © Work began in 1976 and liaison with The Peregrine Fund (Inc. USA) started in 1978.

WHAT DO WE DO?

- © Baseline work on key species - Taita, Peregrine and Lanner Falcons; Crowned Eagle, Martial Eagle, Bat Hawk; Secretary Bird and several others.
- © Community studies in selected habitats e.g. :-
 - Batoka Gorge (37 species diurnal 7 species owls). Decline in Taita Falcon.
 - Save Conservancy (51 species diurnal 10 species owls).
 - Bubiana Conservancy where we have studied influence of hyrax on distribution and abundance of Black, Crowned and African Hawk Eagle.
- © Captive breeding and release of Peregrine and Taita Falcons.
 - 247 Peregrines bred and 77 released since first successes in 1981. All costs borne by falconers.
 - 12 Taita Falcons bred from 2 pairs since first success in 1997. Still building up stock and have established 8 pairs. Goal - to establish minimum of 10 pairs with 5 productive pairs before releasing surplus juveniles.
- © Publishing results
 - 70 papers and short notes and 83 popular articles - see bibliography in Special Edition of Honeyguide in press (see draft copy).

- © Education including development of local capacity.
 - Schoolboy programme (certificate course in raptor field biology):
2 - 3 year course, based on practical exercises, lectures and continuous assessment. Candidate expected to write-up a research project, to publication standard.

OTHER ROUTINE TASKS

- © Archive nest record data from falconers.
- © Collect addled eggs and eggshell fragments, which are measured and added to the data base on eggshell thickness, part of the on-going monitoring of pesticide impact.
- © Dead raptors are preserved for the Natural History Museum as specimens.
- © Raptors that are trapped or recovered are weighed and measured and those fit for release are ringed.
- © Assist other raptor workers in Zimbabwe with projects.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

1. Zimbabwe's position as a leading proponent of wildlife conservation under threat from political instability and land invasions.
2. Significant levels of habitat destruction and poaching threaten key areas on private land, including conservancies (dedicated to wildlife utilization) - likely to negatively impact on raptor populations.
3. Need to monitor changes and emphasize importance of conserving wildlife habitats and raptor populations.
4. Wild lands and their wildlife considered a valuable national resource, subject to a national policy for consumptive and non-consumptive utilization.
5. For over 25 years the ZFC has established an effective team of volunteers to monitor raptor populations and promote raptor conservation. This needs to be consolidated and extended.