

## **Boland Falconry Club**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The member through its agent on several occasions tried to revoke the agreement, wanting to gain possession of the already imported bird. We stuck to the agreement. Several attempts were made by the member and his agent to put pressure on us by publicly trying to put our

club into a bad spot. After no consensus could be reached we consulted our legal advisors which maintained that we had the full right to keep the falcon as in terms of the agreements in place the falcon was club property, to which parties agreed. Despite our rights in the matter and legal advice we decided to return the falcon to the owners, on the condition that the falcon be returned to Abu Dhabi only.

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

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

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

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

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

Wehahn Geldenhuys  
Chairman.

