

Cape Falconry Club

This past year has seen further growth in the CFC, with a contingent of dynamic young falconers coming through the ranks. Our members continue to fly birds across the entire spectrum of available SA raptors, with a handful flying exotics (Harris Hawks) and one hybrid falcon.

We are grateful for our local population of African Goshawks, as this bird continues to be the mainstay of the novice falconer. Our immediately local terrain is not well suited to long wing hawking, but those falconers flying longwings are usually die-hards who make regular trips to the Swartland, the Bokkeveld and the Koue Bokkeveld, which are abundant with Cape and Greywing Francolin.

Semi-urban falconers are able to hunt their Female Black Sparrowhawks at the abundant Guinea Fowl that have 'moved in with us', and of course there are also many opportunities to fly shortwings at semi-urban exotics such as Eurasian Starlings and Sparrows. In short, we have no shortage of quarry, but sometimes creativity (and subtlety) needs to be utilized to be able to exploit them!

Our annual Field Meet was again held at Eselfontein Farm, Ceres, where we can hunt and run our dogs, and daily trips were also made to the Kouebokkeveld where we have access to a good selection of farms. The scenery in this area is spectacular, and the game is plentiful. Members flew Peregrines, Lanners, Harrisers, Black Sparrowhawks, African Goshawks and a hybrid falcon at the game. The largest quarry caught was a cock Guinea Fowl and the smallest, a locust. Adrian Lombard and Edmund Oettle even managed to make a potjie with some of the quarry, and smiles and full bellies sent us to bed on the Saturday night.

Not many CFC members made it to SAFA 2010, possibly due to the economic climate, but more are planning to visit the SAFA Field Meet this year. Let's hope the petrol price does not keep on increasing!

Some highlights:

- CFC produced the youngest ever First Year Austringer: Marcus Carstens (18). Marcus successfully waked and trained a female passage Black Sparrowhawk and has taken more than 20 open field kills with her thus far.
- CFC welcomed a new member, Gavin Goldblatt, from the gun dog club. Gavin's ability to find coveys of Francolin is so well developed (thanks to his skill with his dogs) that he can practically give you GPS coordinates in the Koue Bokkeveld!
- Edmond Oettle received the prestigious Dung Trophy for 2010, as his hybrid decided to go for a bath during a hunt. Fortunately, the following day his bird redeemed itself by leaving the glove, powering-up to 1,000 ft, doing a vertical stoop and killing a duck all in the space of 1.5 minutes!

- Young Joshua received the Eagle Encounters 'Apprentice of the Year' floating trophy for his excellent handling and flying skills with a passage Jackal Buzzard.
- Kevin Hearshaw behaved himself and stayed out of trouble!

The CFC faces the same challenges as falconry in the rest of the country, and indeed, the world. The anti-falconry lobby will not stop until they have wrested our ancient sport away from us, and every effort needs to be made to resist this encroaching threat. We currently enjoy good relations with the conservation, NGO and academic communities, and intend to do our best to maintain this rapport. Rehabilitation and input into conservation will be part of this, but also the continued practicing of our sport at the highest ethical standards. To this end, every member is required to do their bit to maintain the image and status of falconry. I'm happy to report that no serious disciplinary issues took place in 2010 and we aim to keep it this way. We could, however, increase our input into conservation issues and this will be one of our goals in the coming year.

Hank Chalmers,

Chairman

