

Raptor Rescue Newsletter

September 2014



Greetings,

It is the first really cold day of the Spring season as I sit at my desk to compile the newsletter. It is to be expected following the long overdue Spring rains. I was fortunate enough to go to Zimbabwe for two weeks to help out at Kuimba Shiri Bird Park, managed by a friend of mine, on the banks of Lake Chivero, just outside of Harare. What a fantastic time! It was great to be working with the birds of prey there, to be helping with displays and research, and give advice on rehab work. I realised how fortunate we are here in SA to still have access to excellent vets and medications for our birds. It was wonderful to meet people there who still have such a passion and drive to preserve and protect their wildlife, despite the challenges they face every day.



Admissions:

This month we had 7 new admissions: 5 fledgling Spotted Eagle Owls, 1 Barn Owl and 1 Red-breasted (Rufous-chested) Sparrowhawk.

It is without a doubt Spotted Eagle Owl breeding season! We have had quite a few chicks and fledglings brought in. One of our recovery enclosures has temporarily been named: 'The Playschool'



This species will nest just about anywhere, and often simply on the ground. As the chicks start moving around and exploring their surroundings, people often stumble across them and mistakenly assume they are lost, abandoned or have fallen out of a nest.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to rescue them, the chicks are carried away from their natal area, often right under the watchful eyes of their parents, unseen in nearby trees. How sad. The best thing to do is simply to leave the chick exactly where it has been found. They never wander too far from their nest, and the parents are always somewhere close by. Obviously if the chick is in danger of being eaten by a pet, hit by a car or interfered

with by curious onlookers, then it is best to remove it from the situation. If possible, after dark, when pets can be locked away and people are not present, the chick can be returned and quietly observed from a distance. Most often, within an hour or two, the parents will return to find their wayward offspring. As with all babies, the parents do a far better job of raising their young than we possibly can!

Releases:

This month's releases include 1 Cape Vulture and 3 Cape Eagle Owls. The Cape Vulture was fitted with a tracking device and was released at a 'Vulture Restaurant' near Monk's Cowl in the Drakensberg. Releasing the bird at a restaurant makes it easy for her to find food as she re-adjusts to life as part of a wild colony again. Thank you to the e-KZN Wildlife officials who were on hand to help, along with enthusiastic Honorary Officers. I think it was a magic moment for everyone to see the bird wild and free again.



The 3 Cape Eagle Owls were settled into a hack enclosure on Tierhoek Trout and Nature Estate in the Kamberg. Thank you to Matt and Bronwyn Haden who manage the estate, and who are going to be the owls temporary custodians until the owls are ready to be released. So far the owls are thriving and have settled down well. They are due for release in the next few days. Good luck!



Research:

While I was in Zimbabwe, I accompanied Joshua Stafford on some nest surveys. There are quite a few resident raptor species breeding in the area around Lake Chivero. We saw an African Hawk Eagle chick and two Fish Eagle chicks on nests, but unfortunately the Crowned Eagle nest we looked at was unused for the second year in a row. I have never

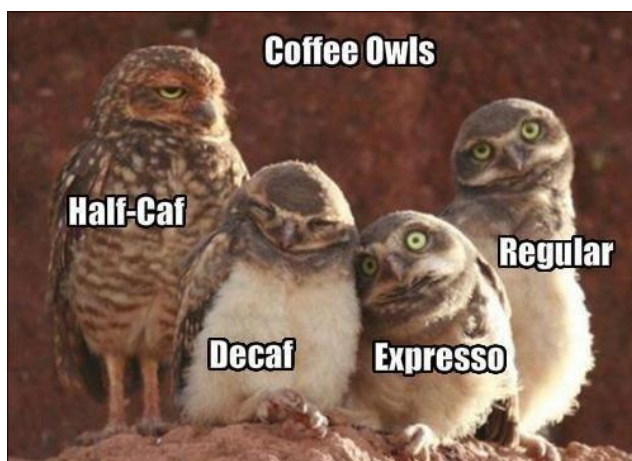
seen so many Fish Eagles in one place. The lake shore was literally dotted with them. On one section I counted 12 Fish Eagles just a few trees apart from one another. What a lovely experience to watch them swoop down onto the lake and pull fish from the water.



Donations/funding:

Once again, since we rely on the generosity of the public for support, please contact us if you have any materials you wish to donate or would like to make a monetary contribution to our work. Banking details are below.

And to end...



Kind regards,

Tammy

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