

Raptor Rescue Newsletter

March 2015



Greetings!

I am sending this newsletter out from New Zealand, where I will be staying for the next two months, returning at the end of May. Apart from the holiday aspect, I am hoping to gain some exposure to the resident raptors, especially the unique and endangered New Zealand Falcon, and possibly assist with the Barn Owl monitoring programme set up in the north of the country. Although the next two months' newsletters may be thin on news due to my not being in the clinic, at least I can give an account of March's happenings...

Admissions:

This month we had 9 new admissions: 3 Spotted Eagle Owls, 1 Secretary Bird, 1 Amur Falcon, 1 White-faced Owl, 1 African Goshawk, 1 Long-crested Eagle and 1 Brown Snake Eagle.

The Secretary Bird was rescued as a chick from a damaged nest. It was sent in to a local rehabilitator in the Newcastle area where it originated, but after initial care and treatment was sent through to us to allow us to introduce it to the non-releasable Secretary Birds at the Sanctuary so that it can associate with its own kind again. When it arrived, it had a growth on the side of its face which had to be removed by the vet. Luckily it turned out to be a non-infectious pox transmitted through a mosquito bite.



One of the Spotted Eagle Owls that was brought in had been found stuck in a barbed wire fence. The injuries sustained by raptors colliding with barbed wire fences are usually horrific with flesh being torn, tendons and ligaments being sheared off and bones broken. Most often we have to have these birds euthanized. This was a lucky owl as nothing had been broken. Our vet very carefully cleaned the wound and stitched the torn skin closed again. We are hoping for a full recovery.



Releases:

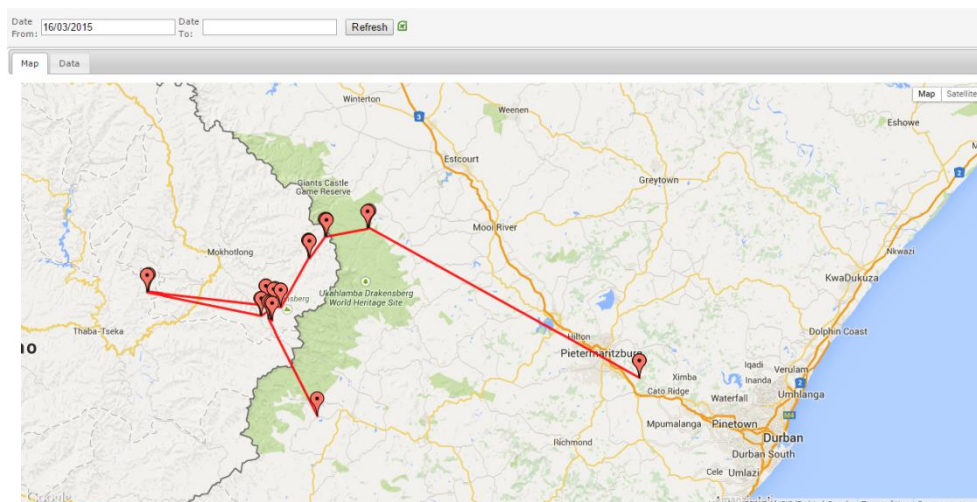
This month's releases include 5 Spotted Eagle Owls and 2 Cape Vultures.



The most dramatic release this month was the release of the Cape Vultures. The birds were ringed, tagged and fitted with transmitters in the clinic. The tags are yellow with numbers on them and are fitted into the patagium, which is a piece of skin in the wing. The transmitters were made and fitted by Ben and allow for the location of the birds and the tracking of their movements by GPS. Both birds came into the clinic as poison cases and both recovered. They spent a few weeks getting fit again in the flight tunnel and were taken and released near Giant's Castle in the Berg. Although photos of the release (which was facilitated by e-Kzn-wildlife) were promised, I unfortunately have not received them in time to send out with the newsletter. Thanks to the transmitters we know the vultures are doing well and we have been able to track their movements since release.

Research:

Having transmitters fitted on birds, such as was done on the vultures, is essential for research on the movements of birds, whether it be for migration, movement patterns, juvenile dispersal or the success of a release. Before the development of the technology that enables us to follow birds' flights, much was left to speculation. Below is a picture taken off the transmission site of one of the vultures post-release. Both birds will continue to be monitored over the next few months for research purposes.



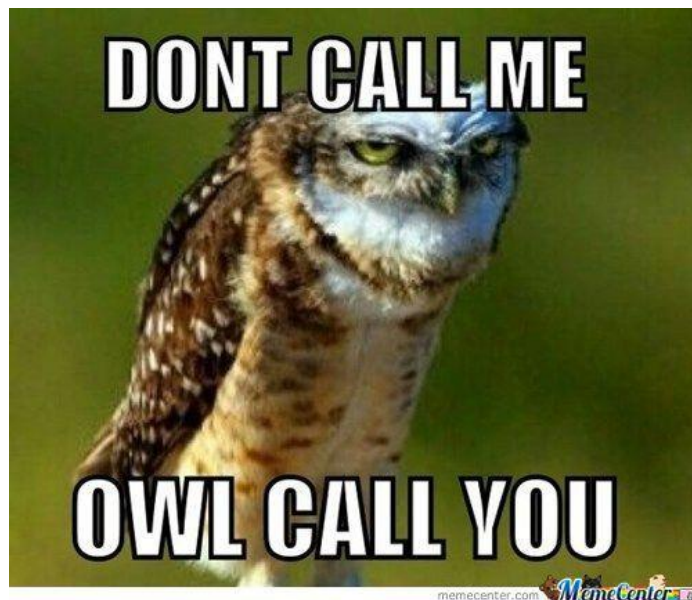
Donations/funding:

Without the help of the public we would not be able to do the work we do. Raptor Rescue relies solely on your generosity and support. Please find banking details below if you would like to contribute to our ongoing bird of prey care and conservation work.

It would be ideal to fit transmitters on more of our raptors post release to determine whether they are surviving, or not, and being able to intervene if they get into trouble. However it is the cost of the transmitters than does not allow for us to do so as each transmitter costs in the region of R 6 000.00. At the moment we have 3 Fish Eagles, a Black Eagle, a Secretary Bird and a Brown Snake Eagle that we would love to fit with transmitters prior to release. Please contact us if you would like to help fund transmitters for any of these birds.

We are extremely grateful to the people who do continue to support us, and for the donations that come in. You help save these birds, just as much as we do.

And to end:



Kind regards,

Tammy

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