


To:	<ktes2008@yahoo.com>
Subject:	 Re: Birds of prey: Zimbabwe
Date:	Thu, 28 Feb 2008 16:34:49 +0200

1. What is your name? Dr Neil Deacon
2. If you have a job title, what is it? Research Co-ordinator
3. What is the name of your organization and country? Zimbabwe Falconer's Club, Zimbabwe
4. Based on numbers, what would you say are the top 5 raptors in your area? Zimbabwe has 71 species of raptors, including the owls and migrants. It also encompasses a variety of habitats, so species presence and abundance varies according to where about you are in the country. I would say that over the whole country the most common would be 1. Black Shouldered Kite 2. Spotted Eagle Owl 3. Gabar Goshawk 4. Little Sparrowhawk and 5. Black Breasted Snake Eagle. These are resident species rather than migrants, such as the Amur Falcon, which at times become very common.
5. Are there any endangered raptors in your area? If so, which ones are they and why are they endangered? The question depends to some extent on how you define endangered. There are many species that have declined in numbers and are now absent from part of their historical ranges. This is mostly due to changes in land use, although historically application of DDT for tsetse fly control had a hugely detrimental impact on raptor numbers. There has been good recovery since it was banned. Agriculture has expanded and continues to expand into wilderness areas as human populations increase. However protected wilderness areas, such as National Parks, hunting areas, conservancies and remote inaccessible areas still support stable populations of vulnerable species. Still there are a number of species which are declining despite the presence of suitable habitat. Our rarest and most threatened raptor is the Teita (also spelt Taita) Falcon. This species is extremely rare through out its range which extends from Ethiopia to northern South Africa. It is believed that this species is on the verge of natural extinction. It is highly specialized and perhaps is declining as a result of competition from peregrine and lanner falcons. There are 5 species of vulture, including African White-Backed, Lappet Faced, Hooded, White Headed and Cape, all of which are vulnerable and showing decline in numbers. As vultures are scavengers, they cover vast distances in their search for food and so are exposed to all sorts of dangers. Electrocutions on powerlines and poisonings, both accidental and intentional, directly claim many vulture lives. Hygienic disposal of dead animals has affected how many vultures can be supported in the environment as it has deprived them of a food source. The absence of Hyenas has also affected vultures as the bone fragments derived from their method of feeding are used as calcium source for young vultures. The Bateleur Eagle is another scavenger which has declined for much

the same reasons as vultures, but more so due to their sensitivity to human disturbance around the nest site. The Ayres Hawk Eagle is also very rare, however, there is not enough known about this species to judge whether this has always been the case or if they have declined in numbers.

6. Are there any programs in your area that help to protect raptors? If yes, briefly tell us what they are. Most of the programs are research based. These aim to determine the requirements of various raptor species so that their needs may be better met in future development of human land use. Research focuses on monitoring population densities and prey requirements of various species in disturbed and undisturbed habitats. In addition there is a captive breeding program for propagation of Teita and Peregrine Falcons. The latter was severely affected by DDT, but wild populations have subsequently recovered naturally.

7. Is your organization funded by the government or private donations? Our research efforts are supported by private individuals, local public and private companies and foreign organisations such as The Peregrine Fund.

8. Does your government recognize the importance of maintaining/improving the status of birds of prey? If so, in what way do they support it? There is legislation that identifies and protects certain raptor species by law. In addition Zimbabwe is a signatory and actively applies the CITES Convention. Whilst protection of raptors is probably not actively pursued, they benefit from the measures taken to conserve big game mammals such as elephant, rhino, lion.

9. Do you have programs to educate the public? If yes, what kinds or please give examples. We promote raptor conservation by exposing interested people to live raptors and do presentations when invited to do so. In a few senior schools there are supervised falconry clubs which encourage the sustainable and correct practice of falconry. One school in particular monitors wild raptor breeding as part of the natural history club. This is an ongoing project which has been running for over ten years.

10. May we have permission to print this email interview on our website? Yes. I have added one of my pictures of a captive bred teita falcon for your interest. You may also publish this on your website as it has not been used elsewhere. Good luck with your project.