

GUIDELINE DOCUMENT

CERTIFICATE FOR NORTHERN CAPE LANDOWNERS WHO HAVE BREEDING BIRDS OF PREY ON THEIR PROPERTIES

Introduction

Throughout southern Africa birds of prey, and particularly the larger species, are becoming more and more uncommon. This is primarily a result of the destruction of their habitat, the indiscriminate use of poisons, direct persecution, reservoir drownings, and powerline electrocutions. In the Northern Cape Province (NCP), due to fairly extensive agricultural practices and thus relatively limited habitat destruction, some birds of prey are still relatively common today. Nevertheless, most species are threatened, with their present numbers being significantly less than before the European's arrival in the NCP.

In order to encourage landowners to conserve birds of prey in the NCP, the Northern Cape Raptor Conservation Forum (NCRCF) issues certificates to landowners who have certain species of breeding birds of prey on their properties. The aim of this initiative is to recognise their conservation efforts and thus encourage them and their neighbours to become more conscious of these threatened birds.

The NCP covers approximately 1/3 of the surface area of South Africa and stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to Kimberley in the east, from Sutherland in the south to the Molopo River in the north. Clearly, due to the large area and relatively large number of breeding birds of prey, it would be financially unrealistic to award a monetary "prize" to each landowner who has breeding birds of prey on his/her property (as is done in certain other areas). Alternatively the NCRCF decided that a very attractive certificate would achieve these same objectives.

Details of certificate

1. To increase the quality and visual appearance of the certificate, they have been printed in full colour with a sketch of one of three raptors (Martial Eagle, White-backed Vulture and Pale Chanting Goshawk) in faint pastel print in the background.
2. To increase the authenticity of the certificate it has the logos and names of the Raptor Conservation Group, Wildlife & Environment Society and Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, Environment & Conservation and the signatures of the Manager, Chairman and Director, respectively, of these three organisations. These three organisations have funded the printing of the certificates.

3. The certificate is bilingual (English and Afrikaans).
4. Three categories are awarded, distinguished by gold, silver or bronze rosettes (see categories below) as well as different illustrations (Martial Eagle – gold; White-backed Vulture – silver; and Pale Chanting Goshawk – bronze).
5. Each certificate will be identified by an unique number (on reverse side), thus facilitating record keeping.

Categories

The three different categories are defined as follows:

1. Gold award

- This award is for one or more of four raptor species that do not currently breed (or if so only in very low numbers) in the NCP. These species are Lappet-faced Vulture, White-headed Vulture, Cape Vulture, and Bateleur.
- Alternatively the gold award is also presented to a landowner who has (1) at least two of the raptors listed under the silver award breeding on his/her property or (2) at least five of the raptors listed under the bronze category breeding on his/her property.

2. Silver award

- This award is for any 13 raptor species which do currently breed in the NCP, albeit in relatively low numbers.
- This certificate is awarded to landowners with breeding Tawny Eagle, Martial Eagle, Black Eagle, African Fish Eagle, Wahlberg's Eagle, Booted Eagle, Black-breasted Snake Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, African Hawk Eagle, Secretarybird, White-backed Vulture, Giant Eagle Owl and/ or Cape Eagle Owl on their properties.

3. Bronze award

- This award is for any other indigenous raptor species which breeds on the property, but which is not listed under the gold and silver categories.

If the landowner qualifies for more than one of these awards he/she would then receive the highest category award, listing all the species for which the certificate is being awarded.

It must be emphasised that these categories are guidelines and thus, if necessary, the NCRFCF (or a panel appointed by the forum) can issue a higher category award to an individual if this is deemed necessary. Documented reasons for this will have to be stored in the NCRFCF's archives.

Issuing of certificates

1. The certificates will be awarded to all landowners (i.e. not only farmers) who have breeding birds of prey on their properties, for example, the SANDF, South African National Parks, Mining Companies, etc.
2. Each property will be visited (by, for example, a Directorate of Environment and Conservation nature conservator or Raptor Conservation Group volunteer) prior to the issuing of a certificate to make sure that the birds of prey do in fact nest on that property. During these visits a form (copy attached) will be completed.
3. An attempt will be made to award the certificates on formal occasions, such as at Agricultural Shows. However, it is up to the NCRCF member in that area to make appropriate arrangements for a suitable venue for the issuing of certificates.
4. If possible, the event should be publicised in the media.
5. All gold certificates should be framed and limited funds are available from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, Environment & Conservation and/or Raptor Conservation Group for this purpose.
6. If possible silver and bronze certificates should also be framed. Here it is the NCRCF member's responsibility to obtain funds for this purpose.
7. The issuing of certificates will be co-ordinated by Mark Anderson, ornithologist of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, Environment & Conservation in Kimberley.
8. A detailed register, in the form of a computer database, will be kept for each certificate issued (linked to the unique number on the certificate).
9. The certificates will be withdrawn should it become apparent that the birds of prey stopped breeding on their property due to negative conduct by the landowner.
10. If the ownership of the property changes a new certificate will be issued.

Drafted by:

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