



WAYPOINT

SUCCESS STORIES FROM ABOVE

June 2008, Issue 18

LightHawk's monthly update, WayPoint, was created to share some of the good news we on staff learn about daily. These success stories illustrate the critical role we play in conservation efforts throughout North and Central America through the unique perspective of flight. We hope you enjoy WayPoint and will share with others our success stories from above.

Birds of a Feather How LightHawk Inspired Africa's Eagles – the Bateleurs

Many of us can point to a mentor or role model who played a pivotal role in our development or we can recall an event that triggered a desire to "give back" in some way. For LightHawk's volunteer pilots, soaring above the earth and sharing that perspective with LightHawk's partners helps them to give back and make a difference in the world.

While LightHawk provides a vehicle for pilots who care about our planet, it has also played the part of role model and mentor. When they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, few greater compliments can be made to LightHawk than through its African counterpart, the Bateleurs.

The relationship between LightHawk and the Bateleurs began more than a decade ago when LightHawk Advisory Board member and its first Alaskan pilot, Michael McBride, suggested to his friend Nora Kreher in Johannesburg, South Africa that he could help her create a group in Africa modeled on LightHawk. The group born of that collaboration takes its name from the Bateleur Eagle which is to Africans what the Bald Eagle is to Americans: a magnificent and stately bird whose sight inspires awe and pride.

At the time, McBride had just seen the completion of a \$25 million buy back of clear-cut logging rights in the Kachemak Bay State Park which surrounds his Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge. "I had called LightHawk and told them the story of our struggle. After completing a test ride with them, I landed back at the lodge as LightHawk's first Alaskan pilot.



A section of the Wild Coast on the eastern seaboard of South Africa threatened with industrial open pit mining. The Bateleurs monitor this imminent threat which poses great danger to this wilderness and its biodiversity. *Michael McBride/LightHawk*

I then flew our first Alaskan passenger, David Brower who was celebrating his 80th birthday with us at the Lodge. After the flight, this patriarch of the conservation movement went on to help us win that epic battle for Kachemak Bay."

Thousands of miles away, Nora Kreher and her conservationist friends in Africa were engaged in a similar epic battle to save the St. Lucia wetlands from industrial mining of titanium sands. Advisory Board member, Will Parish and McBride believed the LightHawk model of environmental stewardship could help Kreher in her fight for St. Lucia. Together, they organized pilots to fly the press, opinion leaders and decision makers over the wetlands which are home to crocodiles, hippos and a vast array of other wildlife. As they say, the rest is history. St. Lucia is now iSimangaliso Wetlands Park and is a United Nations World Heritage Site.



Open pit mining to extract titanium sits on the very edge of the World Heritage Site at St. Lucia/iSimangaliso Wetlands Park disrupting water tables and wildlife movement. *Michael McBride/LightHawk*

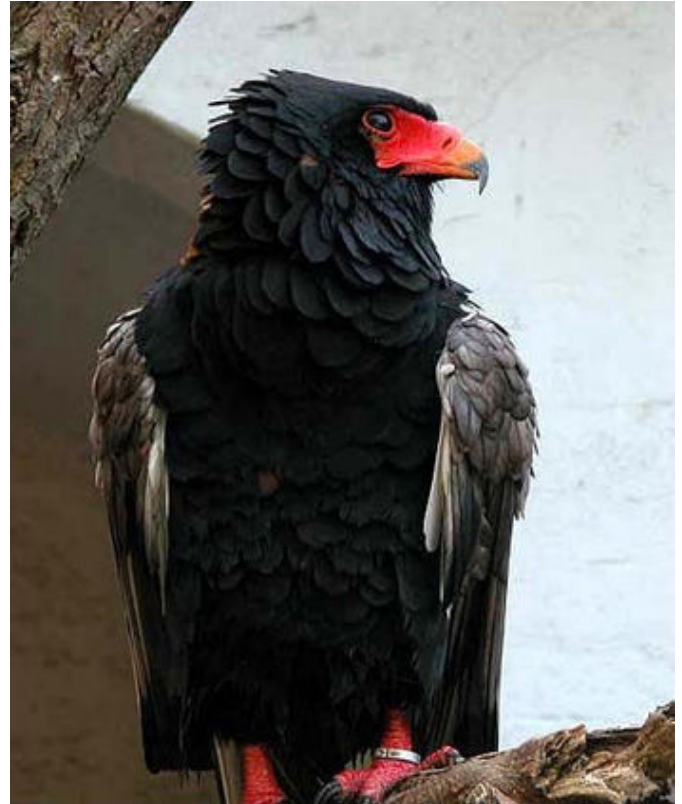
Today, the Bateleurs continue their LightHawk-inspired mission by flying lions, hyenas and other large animals to veterinary care or translocation; monitoring and calling public attention to mining threats on Transkei's "Wild Coast" south of Durban as well as supporting National Geographic's Explorer in Residence, Mike Fae during his "Mega-transect" flights over Africa. The group's more than 125 pilots fly all over the continent and Kreher has garnered national awards and been featured in Africa Geographic for her singular success with the project.

In September 2005 the Bateleurs and LightHawk co-hosted a workshop at the world's longest running international public environmental forum, the World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska. The event was attended by 1,200 delegates from 60 nations and throughout the gathering, LightHawk conducted education flights for 37 key delegates over the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. LightHawk volunteer pilots McBride and Dr. Kirk Johnson were awarded "Ambassador of the North" awards from LightHawk for their exemplary service and dedication. McBride was also presented with the Bateleurs Silver Medal.

About LightHawk

Founded in 1979, LightHawk is a nonprofit, volunteer pilot-based organization that flies environmental missions in collaboration with with a large network of pilots and hundreds of partner organizations throughout Central and North America. LightHawk flights provide a powerful and effective platform for research, groundtruthing, environmental awareness, and education. Receive this from a friend? Subscribe by sending an email to info@lighthawk.org.

As LightHawk and the Bateleurs fly twin courses to champion environmental protection through a birds-eye view, the flight paths of these environmental eagles will again intersect at the 9th World Wilderness Congress in Merida, Mexico, November 6-13, 2009. There these two organizations which share a singular passion, manifested on separate continents, will soar together over the lush jungles of the Yucatan peninsula.



The stately African Bateleur Eagle. In French, "bateleur" means "tight-rope walker" which describes the bird's characteristic habit of tipping the ends of its wings when flying, as if catching its balance. *Wikipedia Commons*

For more information on the LightHawk-inspired Bateleurs, visit their website at www.bateleurs.co.za