

# 336 MALATI PARK NATURE RESERVE

By J. H. Grobler

NINE MILES west of Naboomspruit, on the Pretoria-Pietersburg main road, the Malati Park Nature Reserve has been established on 1 300 morgen of excellent bushveld.

Initially, when the fences were first erected, there were only three species of antelope left on the farm. These were bushbuck, klipspringer and duiker, and there were very few even of those. Later more species were bought and eventually kudu, sable, oryx gazelle, gnu, blesbuck, eland, impala, steenbuck, waterbuck and zebra were all established in the reserve. In the past two years there has been a considerable increase through births. The reserve was also able to obtain four white rhinos and since then a calf has been born, which is now five months old.

Eight giraffes were obtained from the Department of Nature Conservation. These animals had to be kept in quarantine for six weeks before their release and in consequence they became very docile. This favours the visitor, who can get very close to them.

One of the giraffes was very young and I had to keep her confined for longer than the others, so that I could feed her until she was old enough to be released. Now, after being free for more than eight months, she still comes galloping towards my jeep whenever she hears the engine. She knows that she will get a drink of fresh milk.

Pythons, cobras and puff adders are some of the snakes seen in the park.

Sixty-two different species of birds have been identified, including secretary birds, which breed in the reserve. The rare fruit pigeon and emerald spotted dove can also be seen.

The park is open to the public every day of the year from 6.30 a.m. to sunset.



Chanting goshawk (*Melierax muscus*) in the Wankie Game Reserve.

(Photo: J. Wightman.)

## Goshawks, Ratels and Wild Honey

By R. D. Guy

IN HIS BOOK, "The Honeyguides", Herbert Friedmann writes "when I went to Africa in 1950 . . . this symbiotic relationship between the honey badger and the honey-guide . . . was one of the main points on which I hoped to obtain some real information".

The result of his search was definite proof that the honey badger, or ratel, does accompany the honey-guide to bees' nests, and that on such occasions the bird is the guide and the ratel is the follower.

Andrew Sparrman was the first writer (1785) to inform us that not only does the honey-guide lead Africans to bees' nests, but that it does the same with ratels. His report, like so many subsequent ones, was not apparently from personal experience.

That humans successfully and consciously follow honey-guides (*Indicator indicator*) to bees' nests is unquestionable. And so, in the light of Friedmann's researches, do ratels. However, the honey-guide relationship is not the only one in which the ratel is involved.

During July, 1969, we found the chanting goshawk (*Melierax muscus*) to be a very common bird in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park. The ratel is also well known there, and is quite commonly seen making its purposeful way through the veld, poking its nose under logs, in holes in the camelthorn trees, and digging vigorously at promising ground-squirrel holes.

And about eight times out of ten, according to Game Ranger Le Riche, of Nossob, there will be a goshawk, either watching carefully from the top of a nearby tree, or circling close overhead - waiting for any pickings. Furthermore, adds Mr. Le Riche, as likely as not there will also be a jackal in the vicinity with the same motive. I would give a lot to see a goshawk following a ratel following a honey-guide, with a jackal in attendance.

Is it not then possible that the guiding habit did not evolve through ratels following honey-guides, but with honey-guides following ratels? And later, anticipating the arrival of ratels at bees' nests, contriving to arrive there before them?

Would anyone with first-hand information relating ratel/honey-guide/bushman or Bantu to the honey-bee please let me have it?

### REFERENCES

- SPARRMAN, ANDREW, 1785. A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope . . . and round the world. 1772-1776, vol. 2, p. 186.  
FRIEDMANN, HERBERT, 1955. The Honey-guides. U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull. n. 208.