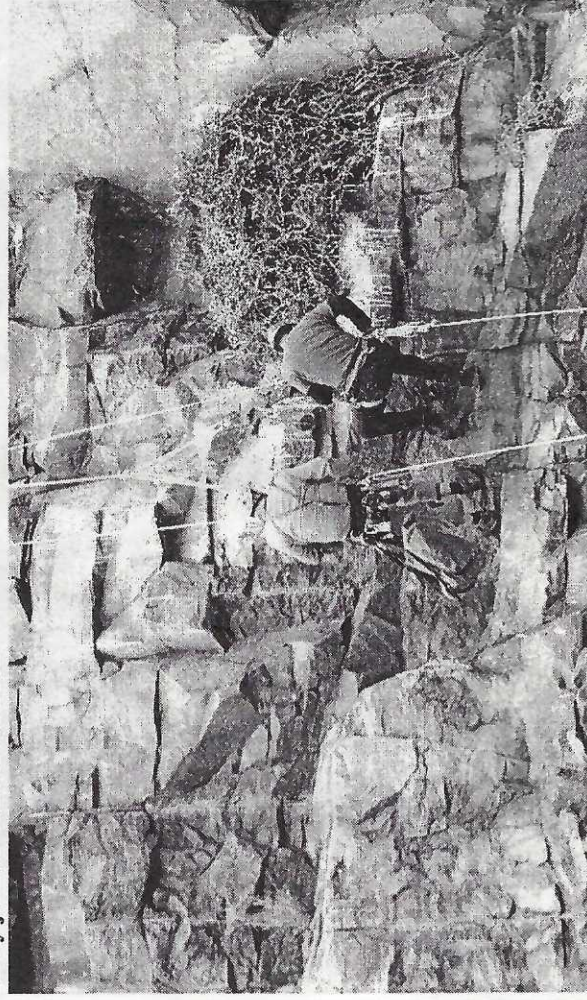
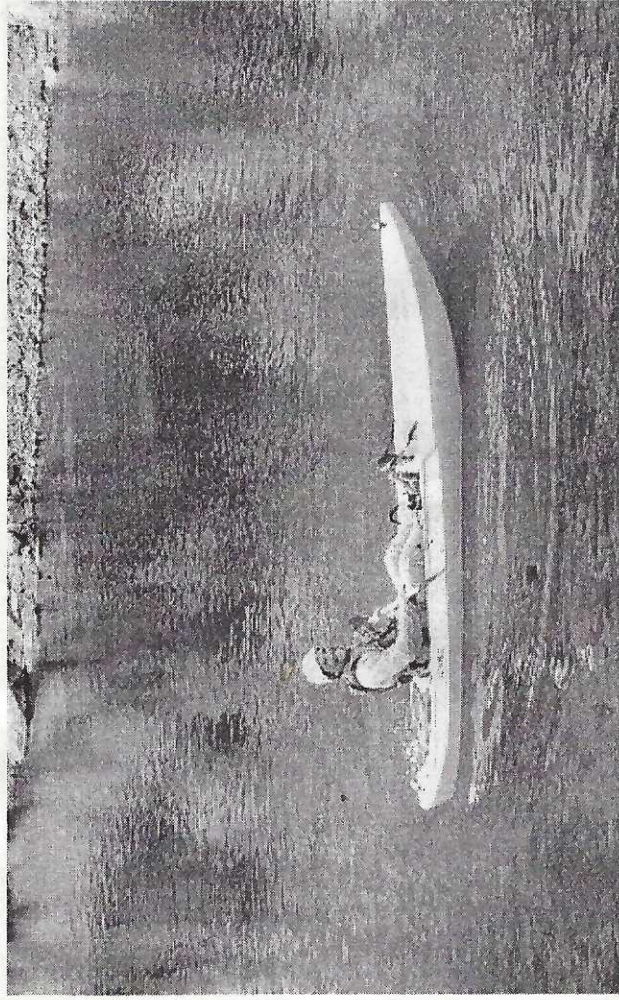


*Ring
ing
of a
Verreux's
Eagle
chick near
De Aar*

DE AAR – Since 2009 the Absail and Rescue team of De Aar did absailing to help me to ring Verreux's Eagle chick near the town. As far as we know, all the chicks survived until they edged and left the area.

The leader of the absail group, Tjaart van der Valt, checked on the chick each year to make sure that it is okay until it leaves the breeding area. In the past, he saw them while teaching the chick to fly and he also saw the adults catching reedbuck lamb. This year was a different experience from all the other years. The quarry was dry during the past years, but this year it is full of water after the good rains and the group had to implement new measures. It is estimated that the depth of the water may be about 30 metres as it is currently fed by an underground mountain. The area in and around the quarry is used for 4X4 driving and many people go there for a picnic or braai. The eagles are used to people being in the area. We used two-way radios to communicate with each other.

To reach the other side of the water, we had a small kayak and a rower, Cleon Lameyer, that took me to the other side and brought all the other team members back at the end. We wore safety jackets while in the boat. As the quarry is very deep, the nest is not accessible without bsailing. The team uses rescuing techniques and that means that everyone and everything is



**FASD DAY
CELEBRATED
IN
SEPTEMBER**

WHEN one deals with public health problems like Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) day in day out, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the scope of the situation in South Africa.

One tends to become problem focussed. Since there is no doubt that FASD is a significant and pressing concern globally, but especially in South Africa, it is inevitable to speak about the related problems. It is however essential to take time to also acknowledge and identify the progress made to date. Compared to the first international FASD Day in 1999, attended by 9 participants in Cape Town, the number of people eager to help, willing to share the message and voicing their support has grown exponentially. In the substance abuse field government, NGO's and civil society have come together over the years bringing about meaningful change in some communities. Whilst doing so, we are however deeply aware of the lack of resources for those living with FASD, their families and the support needed by women and community members in most communities where there are still no programmes and hardly any resources.

Often focussing only on the numerous challenges linked to FASD, especially the management and prevention thereof, we need to step back to reflect on the impact of what we have achieved in our country since the first community research and intervention was conducted in 1997. At that stage FASD was an unknown condition in our country. Since the inception of the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) in 1997, and a couple of other NGO's after that, dedicated efforts has led to the increase of knowledge about FASD and the harmful effects of prenatal alcohol in some communities. The reality is unfortunately that there are so much more that needs to be done, so many community members do not have access to information, services and support.

This year we want to highlight the love, the caring, and the hope for the challenging road ahead when an affected individual is surrounded by those who care. While celebrating the positive, we cannot ignore the reality that South Africa has by far the highest FASD rate in the world. The World Health Organization estimates

able secured (attached at 2 places). The eagle chick was taken from the nest, put into a bag and covered with ropes to where we were waiting.

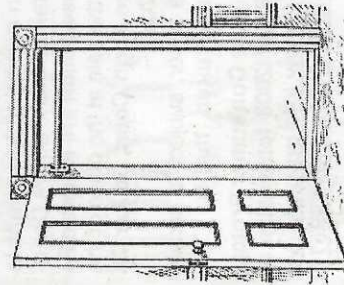
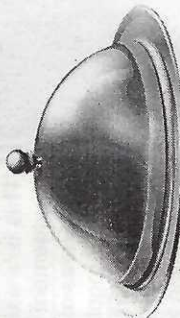
Over the years many people joined us on the ringing outing. It is always an amazing experience for others to see the chick and to listen to our conversations about the eagles and our experiences over the years. We used to publish it in the local newspaper and from there was shared in other newspapers and on the internet. We also have a WhatsApp group where we share the news about the eagles. After 14 years it is still worthwhile to spread information about the eagles to make people aware of their role in Nature.



Roger Adams held the chick while I was ringing it.



The Verreux's Eagle chick is about 4 weeks old with the first brown feathers coming out.


DOORSTEP

Dinners

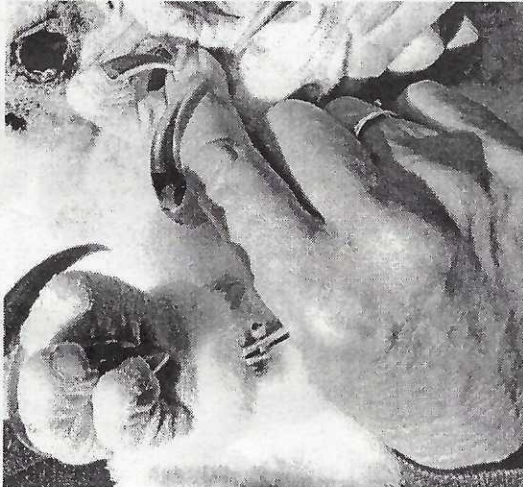
Draes:
083 446 8867

ONS LEWER AF!

Gewone "Home Cooked" maaltye

*Plaas u bestelling teen 11:00 die oggend,
Maandag tot Vrydag!*

*Ons bring dit na u "Doorstep" tussen
16:00 en 18:00 elke dag!*



This picture shows the length of the toenails of the chick at 4 weeks old.

We need to share the FASD prevention message early and often. It is tempting to make alcohol use during pregnancy merely an issue of personal responsibility, but that ignores the reality faced by millions in South Africa. We also turn a blind eye to the fact that South Africans are the highest per capita alcohol users in Africa and amongst the highest in the world. If children as young as 8 are using alcohol, and girls younger than 14 becoming pregnant, we must ask ourselves if we are doing enough. The recent Enyobeni Tavern tragedy, where 21 school pupils lost their lives, has shone a harsh spotlight on the relationship South Africa has with alcohol. "Just say no" is a catchy slogan, but it means little to someone battling with substance abuse, facing gender based violence, and more. It also ignores the lived reality of men and women, also pregnant women, trying to self-medicate while living with trauma, untreated mental health issues or who are just trying to cope with toxic stress. Given the scale of the FASD problem in South Africa and the effects thereof on the lives of individuals, families, and our country we need to take collective action in South Africa to raise awareness. We therefore call on all to reflect on this and to share the message of "no alcohol is safe during pregnancy" not only on International FASD Day, but to continue to inform and support pregnant women in our immediate circle of friends and family not to use alcohol during pregnancy.

This year on the 9th of September, commit yourself to spreading awareness about the risks of FASD, but also commit yourself to love and support mothers-to-be during their pregnancies. Understand their struggles and stand by them, that is how you do harm reduction!

the global FASD prevalence rate to be approximately 15 per 1000 live births (1,5%). In South Africa, research done by the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) in 5 of the 9 provinces, revealed rates as high as 282/1000 live births in some communities in the Northern Cape Province. The Western Cape Province has areas with rates as high as 250/1000 live births (25%) (FASER-SA report). FASD can only be caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy, so if we can prevent any alcohol use in the 9 months a woman is pregnant, we can prevent FASD. The harm that we can prevent includes organ damage, such as brain damage, leading to life-long learning and behavioural challenges. This often only becomes apparent when the child goes to school and, in South Africa, it is one of the leading causes of early school dropout. Even if a baby is born without obvious FASD, we cannot be sure that there was no damage done to critical brain functions. Therefore, our message is that "no alcohol is safe at any time during pregnancy". Even small amounts of alcohol have the potential to cause harm. We cannot say with any certainty that there is a time during pregnancy or an amount of alcohol that is risk-free.

To spread this message and to prevent FASD, FARR has completed 17 FASD Prevalence Studies in the Free State, Gauteng, as well as the Western, Eastern, Northern Cape Provinces since its establishment in 1997. At present FARR has 11 community project sites from where comprehensive FASD research, awareness, prevention, and training programmes are offered. The main objectives of these interventions are to increase the knowledge about alcohol harm amongst community members and service providers (such as health professionals, social workers, and educators) and to provide them with the necessary skills to address the multitude of problems caused by alcohol abuse in their communities.

