

# ABSTRACT

THE URBAN ECOLOGY OF CROWNED EAGLES IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

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**PRESENTATION TO BE HELD AT:**

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KENYA (Invert Training Lab)**

**WEDNESDAY 27 JANUARY 2016.**

**2 PM.**

The Crowned Eagle is Africa's largest forest eagle and an apex predator. Shane McPherson will present four years of research on a population of this endangered species which inhabits forest green-spaces in the city of Durban, South Africa. This research was conducted as a doctoral thesis at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, supervised by Professor Colleen Downs and Dr. Mark Brown.

Urban sprawl is irreversibly transforming large areas of land globally. It is increasingly important to develop functional ecosystem processes to make urban areas liveable and sustainable environments. As the majority of the global human population now live in cities, green-spaces can benefit people by enriching their experience and awareness of nature, and also provide conservation value of indigenous species. Keystone species, particularly large endangered predators are a useful indicator of functional ecosystems as well as a flagship species for public appreciation

The research used the latest techniques and technology including GPS tracking devices and time-lapse cameras at nest sites. After identifying the distribution and selection of nest sites, nest cameras were used to dispute a public perception that domestic stock and pets are important prey animals in the city. Many nestlings were tagged with ID rings, establishing citizen-science input as a method for a long term study on survival and dispersal. Public awareness included reporting of mortality which allowed us to identify causes of death - mostly attributed to human influences. This knowledge is being used to develop management strategies and public appreciation with the aim to reduce negative impacts to both human and eagle livelihoods.

The presentation is a feast of photos, videos, and time-lapse sequences providing an intimate insight, and an appreciation of the struggle of the 'urban Crowned Eagle'.