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Verreaux's Eagle (Aquila verreauxii) was previously known as the Black Eagle, until its recent name change. The name derives from Jules Verreaux, one of 3 brothers who visited southern Africa in the 1800s to collect specimens for their natural history business in Paris. This magnificent eagle inhabits mountainous or hilly country where there are cliffs on which to breed. It flies with consummate grace and invariably occurs in pairs that maintain their bond for life. Dassies (hyraxes) are their favourite prey, which in the Matobo Hills in Zimbabwe comprise 98 per cent of their diet. Two eggs are normally laid several days apart, and Cainism occurs, i.e. the first-hatched eaglet viciously attacks its weaker sibling until it dies from a combination of injuries and starvation.

Photo and text: Peter Steyn
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