

Theo Harms – BIRD ARTIST SUPREME

Wingshooters in Southern Africa are fortunate to have a specialist bird taxidermist of international standard in this country. Still relatively unknown internationally, Theo Harms of Kroondal near Rustenburg can hold his own against overseas taxidermists of repute — according to hunters from abroad who have seen his work.

What makes his work so special is the absolutely natural poise of the subjects — as if they might come alive any moment, perfect in every way. But this perfection does not come by itself, Theo says, it is the result of lifelong contact with nature, of study and careful observation.

In pre-school years in Skukuza, nature made its mark on his young mind. His father had a very intense interest in wildlife and taught Theo the values of nature and the joys of the outdoors and hunting at an early age. 'My dad and I spent many happy days in the veld, on various farms in the Old Northern Transvaal,' he says. 'I really got to love nature and its creatures more and more the closer I got to them. I spent a lot of very special time on my uncle's farm near Makoppa.'

After matriculating in Verwoerdburg and a few attempts at some animal related jobs, he was eventually accepted as an apprentice to a taxidermist in Rustenburg. 'I soon developed a special interest in working with birds and ended up doing specialised training at one of our country's finest bird taxidermists,' he says.

Today he runs his own taxidermy business, specialising in birds, in the beautiful countryside on the foothills of the Magalies Mountains outside Rustenburg. Contact Combretum Bird Taxidermy, 083 772 3089 or e-mail harms@mweb.co.za

How to prepare birds for mounting

1. Select a prime specimen.
2. Try not to damage plumage in any way, especially if open-wing mounting is desired. Choice of the right ammunition is of prime importance.
3. Avoid broken beaks, wings etc.
4. Do not leave the shot bird lying in

hot sun. This causes bacterial growth leading to feather slip which often only becomes obvious when the taxidermist starts working with the bird.

5. Try to clean any blood off feathers before it dries, using cotton wool, toilet paper or other soft, dry material. Do not try to wash it in any way.
6. Fill the beak cavity with toilet paper, tissue or cotton wool to absorb any draining blood.
7. Put the bird into a plastic bag and store in a cool place (e.g. cooler); then place it in a deep freeze as soon as possible.
8. Get your bird to the taxidermist as soon as possible to avoid deterioration of the carcass.

Taking care of your mounted trophy

Mounted birds need very little care. Your main concern is keeping them clean (free of dust). All they need is occasional dusting and it is a good idea not to place them in a place where they are exposed to prolonged sunlight, wind and rain.

