

Phalcoboenus australis

Striated caracara

53-65cm tall, 1.18kg, 116-125cm wing span

Caracaras are birds of prey in the family Falconidae. They are sometimes considered to constitute their own subfamily, Caracarinae. Unlike other falcons in the same family, Caracaras are not fast-flying aerial hunters, but are comparatively slow and are often scavengers. The striated caracara breeds in several islands in Tierra del Fuego, but is more abundant in the Falklands, where it is known as the Johnny rook. It now only nests in the outlying islands where it breeds around penguin and albatross colonies.



The adults' plumage is almost black in colour, while the legs and lores are orange and the neck is flecked with grey. The first year juveniles have an orange or light red down, which they lose after their first molt. Full adult plumage is acquired only in the fifth year.



The Striated Caracara gives loud calls. These slightly raucous sounds are used for proclaiming a territory or in defence behaviour. While calling, it throws the head back, sometimes touching the upper back. When disturbed, they give grumbles, and make short clicks at nest.



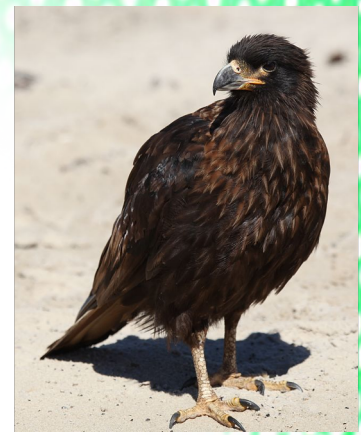
The striated caracara is primarily a scavenger, feeding mainly on dead seabirds and sheep, offal and food scraps. However it will also prey on weak or injured creatures. Its habit of attacking newborn lambs and weakened sheep has led it to be ruthlessly persecuted by sheep farmers. It is known to steal red objects such as clothing or handkerchiefs, possibly because red is the colour of meat. Often it will also raid dustbins and move rocks to get food from underneath, thus proving themselves to be one of the most intelligent of the birds of prey.



The nest is built on the ground or on a cliff ledge, where the female will lay up to 4 eggs. Their hatching is timed to coincide with the nesting season of seabirds, providing a constant food supply for the chicks. Once these have fledged, they gather into flocks and roam through the islands, often close to human settlements.



The Striated Caracara has been heavily persecuted for its ability to kill new-born lambs, but now the species is protected by law. The very restricted habitat makes this bird the rarest raptor of the world. The population is estimated at about 500 breeding pairs, or no more than 4,000 individuals. It is currently considered Near Threatened, but the breeding population is suspected to be increasing with the conservation legislation and the protection of the major sites.



Conservation status	
Extinct	Threatened
EX	EW CR EN VU
	NT LC
Near Threatened (IUCN 3.1) ^[1]	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Falconiformes
Family:	Falconidae
Genus:	<i>Phalcoboenus</i>
Species:	<i>P. australis</i>

