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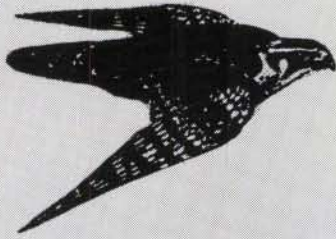
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Front Cover: Back Juvenile Female Goshawk. Foreground Adult Female Goshawk.
Photograph: Ray Aliker

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The Falconers Magazine

Welcome to the second issue of The Falconers Magazine.

We have a varied selection of articles for you again, some informational some controversial and some just plain good reading. Also we have an amateur photo competition on page 8. So get your cameras out everybody, as you can win some great prizes.

We have received a lot of letters, a few of which have been printed but unfortunately we do not have room for them all.

I would like to say that all the articles that have been and will be published in The Falconers Magazine have had a great deal of thought given to them, especially as beginners will be reading them. If some Falconers will insist on not admitting to making mistakes, then how can others (beginners and experts alike) avoid making these same mistakes. Once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody for their help and support. Please keep the articles coming. Happy hawking and a prosperous 1990.

David Wilson

Editor

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IMPRINTS

FRIEND

OR

FOE

by

Tiercel



*A Four year old imprint Prairie Falcon
Note:- Loose Feather Stance and
Food Soiled Front.*



Gyr/Peregrine Hybrid.

With the advance in recent years of captive breeding, the imprint has become an integral part of the modern falconers life. Previously the odd Sparrowhawk would be deliberately imprinted so as to make it's training easier.

But in the days when young hawks and falcons could be taken from the nest, under licence, great care was taken not to imprint them. What could be worse than a mantling, screaming bird. They are not a pleasure to handle or fly and no amount of sport could make up for these dreadful short comings.

But now captive breeding has changed all that. Not only do we now understand the imprint more fully, but we recognise the different types and the uses to which they can or can't be put.

The Mal or food imprint is probably the one we are all most familiar with. It is also the one which most of us detest. It will scream non stop when hungry, it snatches its food and mantles when eating. Imprints can nearly always be spotted, even when not screaming, by their dirty chests. Their eating habits are truly frustrating, apart from the mantling, which sooner or later leads to broken feathers, they try and gulp down food as if they haven't eaten for weeks. Should you be foolish enough to try and help them they will foot or bite you. Whilst eating their eyes go to slits and they look like they are about to expire.

Because the bond between bird and falconer is a food one they are extremely

jealous and are dangerous in the extreme to other hawks or falcons. They can also be dangerous to people. Unless you have ever had a food imprint Red Tailed Hawk come hurtling towards your head because you are slow to produce food you do not know what panic really means. Another trait is that as an imprint gets older it can often take an intense dislike to other people and will attack them. In short and broad wings this often takes the form of hatred towards women. Quite why I don't know, but I do know of several instances of this.

It is the Mal imprint that is probably the greatest threat to falconry at the moment. Sooner or later someone, probably a member of the public is going to get hurt. The press, by their very nature, will not want to know the truth. They will merely want a good story. A bird of prey deliberately attacking a person would, in their eyes, make very good copy. Three years ago I was indeed attacked by a female American Bald Eagle, purely and simply because I couldn't get the food out of my bag fast enough. She attacked, fortunately for me, more with beak than with feet. I knew why she had done it and that it was not really her fault, but that didn't make the stitches any less painful. But imagine the uproar if she had attacked an onlooker/not me. It is a very frightening thought.

With the use of artificial insemination becoming more and more prevalent,

more and more imprints are appearing on the market. Because most people do not want imprints, they tend to be sold cheaper to the less experienced. So the nastier, more difficult birds to handle are tending to go to the people that understand them the least. It is a trend that can only lead to future troubles for the sport in general.

The Americans, under their falconry legislation, have to imprint hybrids. The idea being that if they get lost and go feral they can not inter breed and therefore threaten indigenous species. But what the Americans do is to socially imprint their birds. This is a totally different situation. The birds are bonded, not by food, but by affection. This also has the advantage, in later life, that the bird will think of the falconer as its natural mate. If a male it will give semen and if female will present itself for copulation.

Social imprinting is started when the bird is around the ten days old mark. No food is ever given directly, the bird is allowed to eat as much as it needs in it's early life. but it must always be allowed to come across it. As if by accident. By the time training commences the bird is already bonded, but not by food. Therefore no screaming or mantling or any of the other nasty habits.

Social imprinting is also used for birds that are going to be kept purely for artificial insemination projects. Males will give semen without having to be striped



MARGARET. *The bald eagle coming to the authors fist.*

and females will present themselves for insemination. Therefore there is no need for them to be handled in order to overt the oviduct.

Deliberate Mal imprinting is still useful in the case of the Sparrowhawk, as it is so small and by nature nervous. Some falconers like to imprint Merlins, but I personally could not live with a screaming Merlin. For such a small bird their voice is extremely powerful and goes right through you. And as for a screaming peregrine or Goshawk they are surely the quickest way of making you take up another sport.

Social imprinting and the use of artificial insemination has got a lot of advantages. Not the least being the various hybrids that are now available to our sport. But again the uneducated can be duped. How many people have bought a bird, being assured it is parent reared, have found on cutting its weight down that it screams and is definitely an imprint. Creche reared birds also leave a great deal to be desired.

Now that the price of birds has dropped dramatically the more established and responsible breeders are aiming for quality not quantity. But to be fair these are the same breeders that have been sounding the warning bells for several

years and no one has been listening to them.

As with many things in life, you only get what you pay for. A breeder has to establish his breeding pairs, house and feed them and spend a great deal of time on them before any chance of a financial reward comes into sight. This should be



Imprinted Black Gyrfalcon

borne in mind the next time you enquire as to the price of a bird.

The amount of breeders using natural breeding and full parent rearing is very low indeed. But if you want quality birds then these are the sort of people you are going to have to turn to. If their birds are slightly more expensive than their competitors then it is only as it should be. Quality has never been cheap.

I am sure that no true falconer genuinely enjoys flying imprints more than parent reared birds. But in the case of the falcons it is not too bad. But with short and broad wings it is thoroughly unpleasant and, as already discussed, in some cases dangerous.

In the case of Owls the whole thought process is turned around. An imprint is decidedly more desirable. They are easier to train and keep in good health. Do not scream and mantle and are difficult to lose. In fact a great many non-imprint owls would sooner starve to death than give in and be trained. But, as with all imprints, imprint owls in particular know no fear. My wifes' Bengal Eagle Owl will give a full threat display to the Bald Eagle and means it. He once actually tried to attack the Eagle in earnest, but fortunately got pulled up short.

But imagine and imprinted Eagle on



An imprinted Sakret. Note:- The damage to the ends of the primaries, caused by mantling.

Below. European Eagle Owl.

started training an eyass Tiercel peregrine of the year as soon as it was possible. Once the bird had reached the stage where it could sit out and weather unhooded, it was put on a lawn with three adult Peregrines. It was hungry and there it sat with three adults. To this day the falconer concerned cannot understand why the Tiercel started to scream.

Just as a final footnote I was invited last year to see a young falconer fly his newly acquired Prairie Falcon loose for first time. Having a particular soft spot for the Prairie Falcon I made arrangements to see the bird flown. It circled the young lad once then landed on the ground. Where it then sat screaming and mantling. The young lad ran off

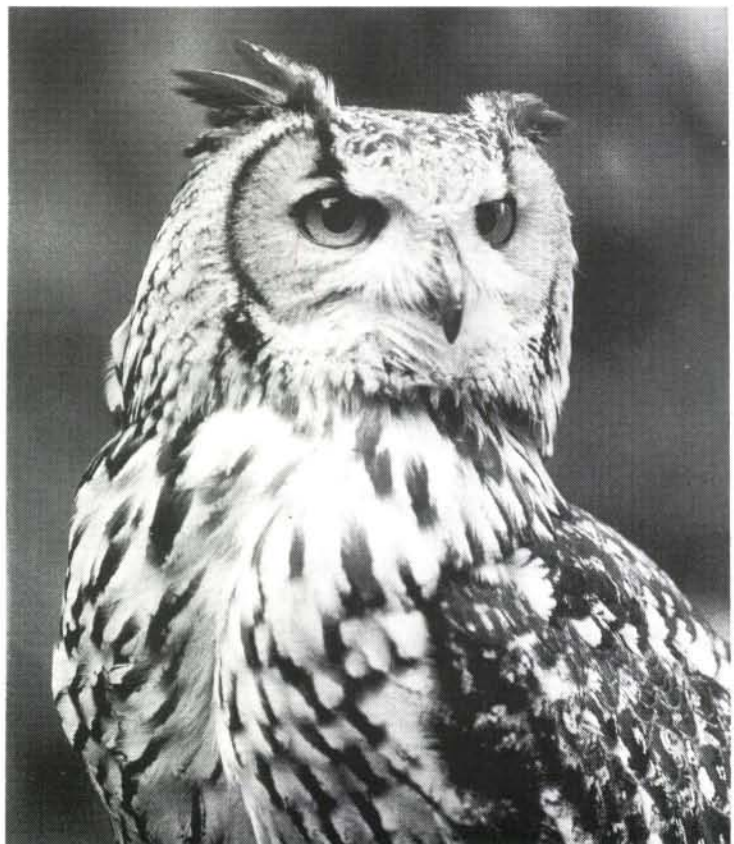
fifty or sixty yards and called his bird. The Prairie ran the whole way, to the young falconer, vocalising all the time. He knelt down and held out his fist with food on it. The Prairie ran up his arm and bit him several times in the face and neck before spotting the food on the glove and switching it's attention to it.

All in all I think I can live without imprints.

the loose, it has no fear, whether it be man or beast. A lost imprinted Eagle or Ferruginous would be a very frightening thing. We as falconers have a job understanding the fear felt by some people of our birds. But it would take a very brave man not to be scared of an imprinted Eagle that was trying to land on him and calling the whole while, in the hopes of getting fed.

I have nothing against imprints, providing they have been imprinted for a purpose, other than the breeders greed. And providing they are going to be handled and flown, or used for breeding by someone that specifically wanted an imprint. I have flown various imprints myself and they can prove useful, such as in display work etc. But on the whole, when it comes to sport, I could happily live without them.

It should also be remembered that it is easy to imprint a parent reared bird if care is not taken. A great many Harris Hawks become imprinted because they are handled much too soon. Also I can think of one reputable falconer who the





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FOREVER AMBER

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We still give the odd driver a shock on the M25 when travelling to and from work. Amber likes to sit on the back of the rear seat and look out the window, not what the average motorist expects to see on the way to work.

Amber is a two year old Bengalese Eagle Owl and has completely changed my entire outlook on life. Before his arrival life was neat and orderly and everything had its place. My time was my own and I was free to go away for weekends and holidays, on the spur of the moment, like everybody else.

Just under two years ago I, foolishly, thought it would be nice to have another Owl to fly. In the past I had trained and flown Tawny Owls and Barn Owls purely for fun, and had thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I had been without a bird for several years and missed the enjoyment that flying your own bird brings.

I have always been interested in Falconry, but prefer to train Owls. So I thought that this time I would get myself one of the larger Owls that I could fly at quarry occasionally. The thought being that I could have the best of both worlds.

Scanning the for sale column of Cage and Aviary birds, it soon became clear that my choice would be between a European Eagle Owl or A Bengal Eagle Owl. I felt that for my first large Owl the European would probably prove to be too large. So I happily plumped for a Bengal.

Several phone calls later I had made arrangements to go and view a young Bengal. Needless to say it was love at first sight and home I trundled with my new found companion in a cardboard box. My pocket was lighter but my heart was much happier.

Amber, named after his gorgeous eyes, was just a month old and I was pleased that I got him young enough to imprint on myself. At this age, obviously he could not fly and was a lovely fluffy ball that seemed to be permanently hungry. Being a big softy at heart the cardboard box, complete with Owl, spent the night beside the bed. Being self employed, he was able to come to work with me and actually enjoyed the car ride to and fro.

This is how he grew up. At all times with me. When it got to the stage that he started to take short testing flights around the house I decided he was ready to have his jesses fitted. He took this very personally and sulked with me for a couple of days. Being well and truly imprinted, he would always come to me without hesitation for his food, but he liked to take it away and eat it somewhere else.

It was at this point that I decided that his serious training should start. I purchased an indoor and outdoor perch from Ray Prior and fitted Amber with a leash and swivel. The resulting sulk lasted slightly longer and actually had me feeling guilty. But I hardened my heart and training contin

ued. Bearing in mind that at night the indoor bow perch was placed beside my bed. Perhaps you shouldn't treat Owls as pets but I get genuine pleasure from Amber's company, and want as much of it as possible. Also of course the constant company helps to keep the bond between us strong. At least, that is my excuse for being soft and I'm sticking to it.

Training proceeded in the normal way and Amber was soon flying to the fist outdoors and was very obedient. Unlike hawks and falcons that have been imprinted, Owls that have been imprinted do not scream at the top of their voice or mantle when feeding. Much nicer to handle.

In fact quite the opposite is true. They do call to you on sight, but it is a pleasant call and seems based more on joy than hunger. Amber never bites or foots me but will on occasions gently nibble at a finger or preen my hair.

When flying Amber always gives a call just before landing on the fist. This habit has proved handy on a couple of occasions. Twice now Amber has come to the fist when I hadn't expected him to and it was his little call that alerted me in time.

The stage of training when Amber was on the creance went very well indeed, but the period was not without incident. One evening he had come to the fist, well, three times and I decided this was enough. I was in the process of removing the creance when two burly policemen appeared. They said I had been

Flying a large Owl has proved to be tremendous fun and I would unreservedly recommend it to anybody

reported for trapping a wild bird and should let it go immediately. I politely pointed out that the bird wore jesses and I was in the process of training it to fly free.

We had a long discussion, which on occasions got very heated, and finally I convinced them that it wasn't a native Tawny Owl. It was in fact a Bengal and it had been bred in captivity. One of the constables then returned to the car to check what I had been saying. When he returned he said that the bird should have a ring if it was captive bred. Again I explained the situation and again he returned

to the car for advice, care of the two way radio.

At last he seemed convinced. But he said conclusive proof would be if the bird flew to me of its own choice. So back Amber went to the post I flew him from and, thankfully he came a final time, to the fist immediately. At last the law was satisfied and Amber and myself were free to go.

Not long after this incident I got a visit from the RSPCA saying that they had received a complaint that I was keeping a wild bird against its will. But fortunately this time the inspector was very clued up on birds of prey and had come more out of interest than duty.

In actual fact we have since become very good friends and he has been of help to me on more than one occasion.

Once Amber was flying well loose I went about trying to get him to catch something. Easier said than done. He would fly along after rabbits but wouldn't attack them. He would fly into the top of a tree and watch the squirrels scurrying around. I hadn't done what every falconer would know to do. I hadn't put that extra edge on his appetite.

Once I did he was a different bird. He actually attacked a rabbit with gusto. But he was easily kicked off. But his first squirrel he killed with ease. But without doubt his favourite prey is the poor old moorhen. He catches them with relative ease and has taken a fair number up to now. His most successful style of hunting is when he pretends to be a Goshawk. I throw him up into a tree and then walk off in a big circle to the other side of the pond where we regularly hunt. Sooner or later a moorhen will try and slip away from me unaware of the Owl in the tree.

As soon as Amber spots it he drops down out of the tree in a long shallow glide. But his glide is very deceptive. It appears slow, but in actual fact he is picking up speed all the time. Should the moorhen spot him and try and make a run for it, then Amber starts to flap his wings and puts on a spurt. For those who have never seen an Eagle Owl flying flat out they would be very surprised at their turn of speed.

Like a hawk, he can't keep maximum speed up for long, but it is normally enough to take all but the most resilient moorhen. He has also taken a few small birds, but these are taken purely by surprise. Again he glides out of a tree, and approaches them from behind. Because of his silent flight he is not often beaten. The prey only escapes if he

bungles his footing. It is when he has killed that the one bad side of his imprint nature comes out. He does not mantle, nor does he try and carry, but he also does not want to share his kill.

If I try and approach him too quickly he just turns his back on me. If I try going round him he just keeps on turning so that his back is always to me. If I allow him a few minutes to get over his elation then he will allow me to make straight in. The one thing he won't

do is try to eat his prey till he is back on the fist.

Amber still sleeps in the bedroom with me and still comes to work with me everyday. People are used to seeing us together and seem to expect it. We still give the odd driver a shock on the M25 when travelling to and from work. Amber likes to sit on the back of the rear seat and look out the window, not what the average motorist really expects to see on the way to work.

Flying a large Owl has proved to be tremendous fun and I would unreservedly recommend it to anybody. The only thing to remember is that Owls do not have crops and they do not cast as regularly as hawks or falcons.

I am sure that hunting with Amber could not be called falconry, but it is fun and we do catch the occasional head. Amber gets his daily exercise and I get my enjoyment and companionship. It suits us nicely.



Amber a two year old Bengalese Eagle Owl

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TWO CAN BE FUN

by Pauline Bloomfield

Jessica and Jonah are two Canadian Harris Hawks that came into my possession just over fifteen months ago. They fly nicely, take quarry on a regular basis and are occasionally flown in a cast at rabbits. Nothing unusual in that, except perhaps that these are the first hawks I have ever trained.

Just over three years ago, I attended a Falconry course, more as a means of seeing if Falconry was for me, than expecting to learn the ins and outs of the sport in a week. The course itself was, on reflection, very poor, but it did have the effect of making me get in touch with a good falconer and persuading him to teach me properly. I was, perhaps, fortunate in that the falconer I latched onto was happy to share his knowledge with me and helped me in every way possible. He allowed me to go hunting with him and I was lucky enough to witness Partridge Hawking with Peregrines and plenty of fun at more or less anything with a Tiercel Goshawk.

Circumstances dictated that my first bird should be a shortwing, I did not see the point of starting with a Buzzard and obviously a Goshawk or a Sparrowhawk were out of the question, due to my inexperience, so a Harris or Ferruginous was to be my choice. On the advice of my Falconry mentor, I decided on a Harris Hawk. The Ferruginous is, undoubtedly, a splendid bird but better suited to more open country than I have available for hunting. I started to look round for a suitable Harris Hawk; the last thing I wanted was an imprint or someone else's problem child. As always happens with these things, I found the sort of bird I was looking for at the same time that my friend was offered a suitable bird. (Not knowing that the same day I had found what I wanted, he bought the second Harris on my behalf). He also managed to get me a very good deal and this bird cost considerably less than the one I had purchased. Suddenly, I was in the ridiculous situation of having gone from hawkless to over hawked in one day. After much deliberation I decided that I would like to keep both the hawks, but obviously as a beginner one was more than enough. Again, fellow falconer to the rescue. We trained the hawks in tandem, which also meant that I got a good insight into training methods and learnt a few of the little tricks that are not mentioned in books. Both birds were made to the hood, even though it is not normal practise

with shortwings. My mentor always makes a point of making all his birds to the hood in case an emergency should crop up that he has to deal with single handed. Both birds progressed well and were soon flying loose. They spent every day near, but not too near, each other on the weathering ground and, after a discussion about flying a cast of Tiercel Peregrines at magpies, I asked if it would be possible to fly my Harris Hawks in a cast, (that is together). Apparently no problem, providing they are not imprints and great care is taken. I must admit to being very nervous the first few times, but things worked out well. So far, so good. When being flown together the Hawks are not allowed to follow on as is the norm with one Harris. After each flight they are called back to our fists. We have only had one small incident so far and that was when Jessica killed and Jonah seemed jealous. He did not try and attack her but instead made several passes and shallow stoops at her, completely ignoring the fist until his fit of temper was over. Other than that one occasion everything has been okay.

We have had some kills and a great deal of fun. I must admit that I am still learning and probably have a long way to go before I can truly call myself a Falconer, but at least my birds are in good condition, fly well and take quarry.

I also admit that I have been very fortunate in meeting up with a Falconer who was enthusiastic about helping and teaching me when he could. So many other beginners, that I have spoken to, seem to have come up against a brick wall when asking older, more experienced Falconers for help. The older Falconers seem to forget that they were novices themselves at one stage. All being well and providing I haven't lost either Jessica or Jonah, I will put them together in an aviary in two years time and keep my fingers crossed for some new arrivals.

Just as an afterthought, when I obtained my Harris Hawks, Jessica hated dogs and would not tolerate them. Now she happily works with a pointer. The cure was really very simple. I have a friend with five working dogs. He had Jessica at his place for a week and fed his dogs around her in a circle at the same time. She is now completely dog proof, providing they do not try and come too close when she is on a kill.



Frustrations of Breeding Buzzards

by
HAWK

In late 1983 I obtained a wild, disabled, female buzzard from a friend who knew that I wished to try and breed them. On arrival she had virtually no flight feathers, (even now she has not got a full set, but every year she manages to retain more). She was very well mannered and very friendly. I housed her in a 12 x 8 x 6 open fronted aviary. In January 1984 I received a three year old wild, taken male from a friend who had taken it under licence then, as it happens, moved onto another bird. He was put in the aviary with the female, normally, he would have been put in first but, as the female was very much impaired in flight, the male was well able

to stay out of reach if he had to. But there were no worries as by the end of the day they were perched side by side and things looked very good. Over the next few weeks things developed well and by late March nest building was under way. This was made up of twigs up to three feet long and three quarters of an inch wide, it was then lined with leylandii. It was built on a wooden platform four feet square. Then at the beginning of the second week in April the female pulled the nest to pieces, "that's it" I thought "end of story for this year, at least" but no, two days later she laid an egg, three more were laid on the bare planking at two day intervals. After the

last egg was laid it was noticed that the female was spending more and more time off the nest so, on day twelve of incubation the eggs were pulled and candled, these were found to be infertile. The female then laid a second clutch which were broken by one or both parents early in the incubation period. The same year the male was lost whilst on loan to a friend for flying. I was very lucky to obtain a wild, disabled male who's wing had been broken, leaving it with impaired flight. This was put into the aviary with the female at the end of Feb. 1986, this being very late I was not optimistic about anything happening that year, but again, two clutches

were laid, the first was infertile and removed, the second was left with the pair but again one egg was found broken, another was cracked so the clutch was removed and three duck eggs were substituted. The cracked egg was repaired with silicone sealant and put in the incubator with the remaining two eggs. Over the next few days the three duck eggs were also smashed. Ten days later the eggs were candled, two were fertile and the third one, which was impossible to candle owing to the amount of silicone on it, was opened as I was worried that it was rotten and did not want to endanger the other two eggs, this proved to be a mistake as it contained a live embryo. This taught me a very important lesson: always have a spare incubator, a new one was ordered straight away. Had I had a spare, maybe this chick would have hatched, this is something I will never know. The other two eggs hatched and resulted in two healthy, but imprinted, birds. The following year the result was the same except that three young were reared, but this time it was noticed that the birds were breaking the eggs alighting on the nest, as all the perches were situated above the level of the nest ledge, resulting in the birds landing awkwardly. So that year the aviary was completely rebuilt, with a different perch and nest ledge arrangement. The ledge was constructed with sides, one foot high and two inches thick, wide enough for the birds to land on. Then all the perches were lowered below the height of the ledge,



this forced the birds to fly up to the nest, instead of down, as they had been able to do before. Also, this time the base of the ledge was made of three inch square twyweld for strength, covered by half inch chicken wire, then a two inch thick layer of tightly packed straw was laid over this. The reason being, if the female again destroyed the nest, at least the eggs would remain insulated from below by the straw. This worked, sure enough, the nest was built then, all the twigs and leylandii were discarded prior to the first egg being laid on the 15th of April. By the 20th there were three eggs in the nest. That weekend I had to go away, I returned on the monday afternoon to find only two eggs in the nest, it seemed my ideas had not worked so, once again, the remaining eggs were put into the incubator and I awaited a second clutch. This was not forthcoming and the female continued to sit on the now supposedly empty nest. She was still sitting when the first egg pipped in the incubator so the egg was returned to

the female and I then waited to see what would happen when it hatched. The following morning it had hatched and she was feeding the chick, by this time the other chick had hatched so this was also put in the nest, with no problems. Whilst returning the chicks another two eggs were found under the loose straw, she had known they were there and had continued to sit them, though on removal they were found to be infertile. So my ideas had worked after all, I know they were the first two eggs laid as I had marked them. It seemed 1989 was to be a good year, I had solved the problem of the egg breaking, I had two parent reared chicks and the added bonus of a video film of the parents tending the chicks, as the parents allowed me to enter the aviary and film them standing at the side of the nest. Then on Nov. 5th disaster struck, the male died as the result of a fit I believe to have been caused by fireworks.



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Lanner Falcon



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During last year when Milton Holdcroft joined the company as a partner a new Owl Park was constructed. This houses 15 pairs of owls including Snowy Owls, Mackinders Eagle Owls, Bengal Eagle Owls, African Spotted Owls, European

Eagle Owls, Tawny Owls, Barn Owls and Little Owls.

Chris believes prevention is better than cure and has his birds and premises checked over regularly by veterinary surgeon Mike Williams.

The centre is open every day throughout the year with the exception of Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Whichever day you decide to go you will be guaranteed (weather permitting) to see a variety of birds being flown by Chris Neale or Milton Holdcroft. The display area is very well positioned. So, wherever you stand, you will be guaranteed a good view of the speed and agility of these spectacular birds being flown. There are approximately 24 on the weathering and every one is flown.



Common Buzzard

Photographs:- Jeff Wilson



Chris Neale with Redtailed Hawk, Milton Holdcroft with Harris Hawk



Saker Falcon

THE CENTRE LEY



Kestrel



European Eagle Owl

They consist of Lugger, Lanner and Peregrine Falcons, Kestrels, Harris, Redtailed and Sparrowhawks, Barn and Tawny Owls, European and Bengal Eagle Owls.

Members of the audience (both young and old) are asked and encouraged to participate in the flying of some of the birds. With such a large number of birds being flown, the flying displays are held continuously throughout the day. So, as soon as one bird has finished flying and the audience has asked all their questions, the next one is prepared. For those who want to do more than just watch, Chris runs Falconry courses throughout the year and from the beginning of Sept. to the end of March you can go along and see birds

hunting in their natural environment. Within the Centre there is a large shop selling a full selection of Martin Jones quality falconry equipment, books on falconry and wildlife and a large selection of souvenirs, posters, postcards and the like.

If you are a bit of a horticulturist as well, then you will be able to spend some of the day in the Hurrans Roseacre Garden Centre, which is large and well stocked with seemingly something for everyone. It also has toilet facilities and a tea shop which provides a selection of well prepared hot and cold snacks and drinks.

During 1990 the Centre is already booked for 60 days for falconry shows at such places as Woburn Abbey, Blenheim Palace, Broadlands (Hampshire), Carisbrook Castle (Isle of Wight), Highclere Castle, Maple Durham House, Reading etc.

For more pictures See Page 19



Peregrine Falcon



Birds on Screenperch in Mews

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For further details ring or write to us at the above. Admission to the Falconry Centre - Adults £1.45. Senior Citizens & Children 90p. 10% discount for parties of 25 or more.

FALCON LEISURE



COURSES:-

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Again due to demand we are offering hunting trips for those that would like to see if falconry is the sport for them, or if they would like to fly their bird somewhere different. Depending on season and quarry availability, the birds flown are Gyr, Peregrine, Prairie, Merlin, Lanner, Goshawk, Harris. Trips to Scotland for Grouse hawking also available.

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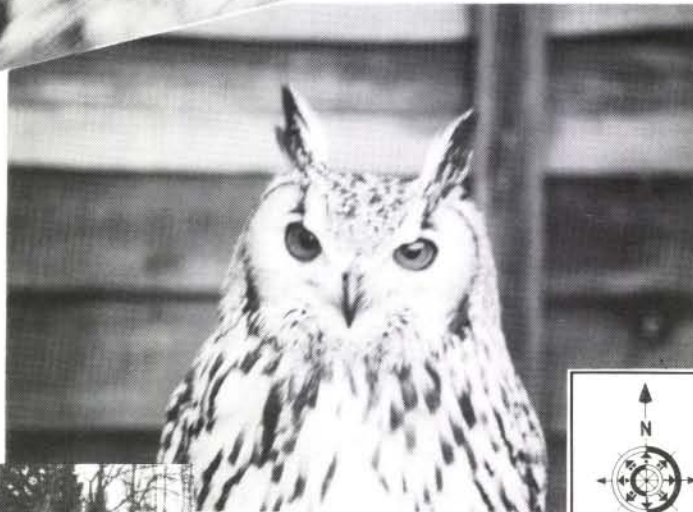
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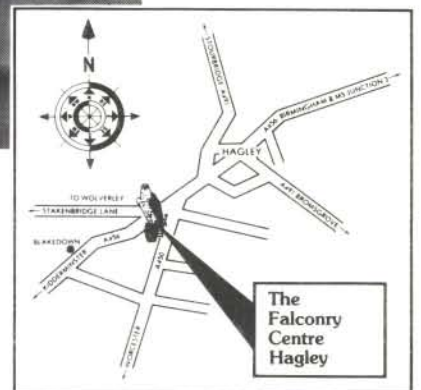
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The Falconry Centre

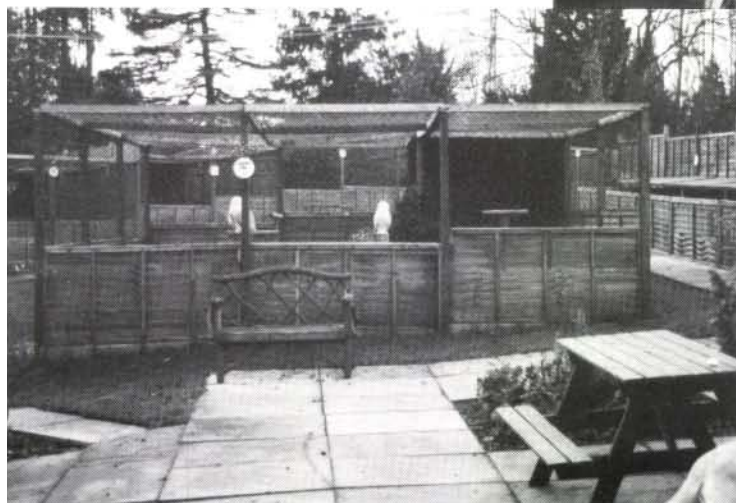
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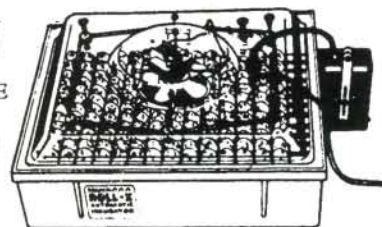
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Letters

All letters should be addressed to:-
**THE EDITOR, THE FALCONERS MAGAZINE,
C.T.C, DALKEITH HOUSE, DALKEITH PLACE,
KETTERING, NORTHANTS, NN16 OBS**

Dear Editor

Just a few lines to say how pleased I was to receive the first issue of The Falconers Magazine, I have been looking forward to it. I am impressed with the quality and format and, once established, it will be an 'excellent' quarterly magazine.

I wish you all the best for the future and look forward to receiving further editions.

A Cotton
Devon

Dear Editor

May I first of all wish your magazine every success for the future. I am sure there is room for a commercial falconry magazine, even though there might not be sufficient room for all the would be falconers to fly their hawks.

However, I feel I must complain at the article entitled 'Things always come in threes'. To fly a Sparrowhawk in company with Harris Hawks and to have it caught by them on three occasions is not accidental, as the author would have us believe, but bad falconry.

I would expect a responsible editor not to publish such articles in a magazine that will be read by many beginners.

Paul Gillot
Dorset

Dear Editor

Congratulations, an excellent first issue.

R Clarke
Leics

Dear Editor

Thankyou for sending me the first issue and may I add my congratulations. Well done to all and I wish the magazine every success.

C W Finch
Cornwall

Dear Editor

It is my considered opinion that we falconers should get together and either form or ask for formation of a proper registration scheme. My main concern is for the Sparrowhawks and smaller birds, which can now be bought for less money than ever before.

How many Sparrowhawks have to be lost, killed, inadvertently or otherwise murdered, or left in aviaries as screaming imprints before we come to our senses?

It is my belief that there should be a registration scheme and such birds as the Sparrowhawk and other similar species should not be sold, exchanged or given to anyone with less than five years experience. Even then this will cause problems as I have met so-called 'experienced' falconers, who should not even have a glove on their fist, let alone a bird.

If we don't ask for registration, it could be imposed upon us, much harder and more impossible than ever necessary. Falconry, to survive, must be self governing. Let those concerned enough to, do it now, before we are all forced to accept the impossible.

Derek & Sally Yates
Warks

Dear Editor

I was impressed by the magazine and I have enclosed a photo of my eyas German goshawk (Isabeau). She flies at 2lb 8oz and she will fly at all manner of quarry. She lives up to the reputation of a true goshawk.

In my 14 years as a falconer I have flown many species but still find the goshawk the best bird to hunt with. I also hope to purchase a peregrine/barbary hybrid. I have flown peregrines and expect this bird to fly in much the same way. I have found that with peregrine/prairie or saker hybrids, these falcons will put up a more rough and tumble flight, taking quarry on the ground as well as in the air.

Most falconers are keen to try all manner of birds but when it comes down to it you can't beat a goshawk or peregrine, for they both excel in their own particular style of hunting. One rule I strictly believe in is, whatever bird you buy, you must be in a position to give it proper exercise and always hunt it to the best of your ability. This could also help to save the birds' life, should it be lost. The one thing that really upsets me is, to see a bird being carried around, fatter than a spring chicken, by those who call themselves 'falconers'. What a sad situation this is when some excellent falconers are without birds. And I also believe in practising what I preach.

Keep up the good work. Great magazine.

W M Hawkins Pinchers
W Mids



"FOSTERING . A GOOD IDEA?"



Andrew Reeve and his male Goshawk

Dear Ed,

I feel this story will be of great interest to many falconers and breeders alike. In November 1987 I saw an advert in *Cage and Aviary Birds* for PARENT REARED GOSHAWKS, upon phoning this large breeder from the Manchester area he assured me the birds were parent reared. I decided to buy a female to fly, primarily and secondly to breed with my male goshawk.

So I made my way to Manchester and picked up my new goshawk. As she already had aylmeri's on, mews jesses were attached, along with swivel and leash and she was put in a dark mews. Over the next three weeks training went very well, as soon as she was reasonably manned she was placed on a bow perch six feet away from my male goshawk. The idea here was to allow both birds to get used to each other. The male goshawk at this time was four years old, parent reared and had flown every season since an immature bird, by myself.

Since the male was obviously in mature plumage I half expected the female to

call to him, especially now, as she was at her flying weight. In fact she was completely the opposite and appeared to hate my male, constantly bating at him. A peculiar thing happened, as I was about to take her out of my garden on a hunting trip she spotted a female Harris Hawk in the adjoining mews and screamed constantly until she could no longer see it. It was then I realised the bird could not have been parent reared, I immediately rang the breeder and confronted him about this problem, he fobbed me off as quick as he could, insisting that the bird was Goshawk reared.

I gave him the benefit of the doubt (foolishly) and carried on flying both Goshawks on alternate days. Then a terrible accident occurred; both Goshawks were weathering on my lawn as usual I returned home from work in the evening and was about to pick the birds up to put them into their night time accommodation, when I discovered feathers all around the garden and no female gos on her perch. Checking the male Gos's perch, I saw the female had killed my male and gone to roost on his bow.

On further inspection I discovered the Aylmeri anklets had torn around the eyelet. Before you all put pen to paper, I must stress that I make it a rule to regularly check and grease all my furniture. To say that I was upset is an understatement, this Gos was an exceptional bird and was well known by many falconers.

The following day I decided to do an experiment, my female Gos was held on the fist very close to a Harris Hawk, she begged the Harris for food in a typical mother-baby situation, this again confirming that the bird was Harris and not Goshawk reared. Once again I rang the breeder who assured me it was parent reared, after constant harassment from myself the breeder finally admitted the bird was reared by a Harris Hawk. This, by the way, was one year later, the fact that I had lost a highly prized bird did not bother him in the slightest and when I demanded my money back he offered to swap my bird for another of his confused Goshawks, which obviously I refused.

If I had not owned a Harris Hawk at that particular time I would never have known that

this bird was Harris reared, as in the field with other Harris' she would not show the slightest interest in them.

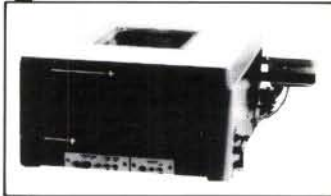
At the time of writing, the goshawk is now flying her third season, in her first and second season she had a habit of trying to bind other peoples Goshawks on the fist, which I can only put down to the way she was reared.

Before you all shout, 'I have got a Redtail etc. which was foster reared and breeds etc.etc.' I too have seen birds which were foster reared and have bred. But I have also seen many others that are ruined by selfish individuals who tell lies. I am certain that if the history of the bird is known you could overcome some of the problems, such as in this case, if you had two immature Goshawks and moulted them out together they might well be OK for breeding as the birds have had a chance to imprint on each other.

So next time you see an advert for parent reared birds, get it in writing and witnessed or you too could suffer the loss of a much loved bird, as I did in 1987.

ANDREW REEVE

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NORTH AMERICAN FALCONERS ASSOCIATION

Kearney Nebraska, the venue for the 1989 North American Falconers Association Field Meet is situated in the Heartland of America roughly half way between Denver and Omaha and is definitely not the easiest place in the world to get to.

Logistics apart Kearney is an excellent choice, as was proved when the meet was held here in '86. It has almost ideal terrain, plenty of suitable quarry, helpful residents, and the excellent facilities provided by the Ramada Inn meet headquarters.

The Ramada and the town of Kearney were so keen to host the '89 meet that they sent a deputation to NAFA at last years get together in Amarillo, Texas and offered the following...

The Chamber of Commerce would lay on a full programme of activities for the wives and children free of charge. The Ramada would again allow guests to bring their birds and dogs into the rooms as long as the falconers would clear up after them. The hotel would provide free beer on the first night and special discounted



Merlin/Peregrine Hybrid

breakfasts and buffet dinners during the week and reduce all room prices to \$30 for up to four persons!

The meet is now history and in hindsight the Ramada did all it said it would for the falconers and more. Virtually every request was agreed to instantly and cheerfully, the work force turned in on their days off, not just to work but to join in with the falconers, they even kept the pool and jaccuzzi open until the early hours. To the annoyance of some whose rooms were close by.

Although the meet officially opened with registration on Sunday November 19th, many falcon

ers and their families arrived during the preceding week to get in some early hawking while the organisers were making the last minute preparations.

The registration office was a very busy place for the first few days and Charlotte Freienmuth and her willing crew are to be congratulated on the way they kept everything running so smoothly as is Ken Filkings the meet chairman whose charm, expertise in handling his fellow man and unflapability contributed much to the success of the week.

The Ramada had also provided a weathering yard, which in the event had to be tripled in size to



Ken Mesch with Gyr Hybrid

CIATIONFIELD MEET NOVEMBER 1989

ROBIN HAIGH

accommodate the 300 plus various trained raptors.

Whilst weathering, the birds were under the care of Bruce Clements an eagle eyed Salt lake City police officer who spends all daylight hours during each meet ensuring the birds safety, whatever the weather, and it can be really cold when the wind blows, often as low as 15F below freezing, this is one good reason for not leaving birds out at night, the other is the danger of being attacked by Great Horned Owls!

Over three hundred attended including some from the UK and Europe. Around 300 birds were flown during the week with game abundant, easy to find and local, except for the Prairie Chickens and Sharptailed Grouse which often required very early morning trips of over one hundred miles into the sand hills to find them.

Each meet registrant received for his \$10 an official programme, a

signed and numbered meet print of a Peregrine painted by Heinz Meng, an enamelled metal meet badge and an embroidered three colour meet patch designed by NAFA's southeastern director Don Garlock. Pretty good value



Light Phase Redtailed Hawk



Grey Gyr Falcon

for £6.50!

The funding of the meet comes mainly from the raffle held at the end of each evenings session with the prizes getting better and better as the week goes on, culminating in the major prizes, including the meet print original, telemetry equipment a solid silver falconers paper knife and a magnificent falcon block all of which are raffled off after the friday night banquet.

No eagles or hawk-eagles were present this year in the weathering ground but there were large numbers of hybrid falcons and a few tri-bryd falcons plus pure Gyrs, Peregrines, Prairies, Redtails, Coopers Hawks and both American and European Goshawks, serenaded by large numbers of vocal Harris Hawks!

Even with many years experience it is unwise to try to identify most of the hybrids and it is a sobering experience to ask the falconer what kind of falcon he is carrying to be politely told that it is simply a pure *Anatum* Peregrine!

Among the most visually interesting of the weathering raptors was a female Cassinis Falcon from southern Chile, a 'Perlin', (you work it out!) a Peregrine Gyr Prairie tribryd, a very pale female Redtail that may in fact have been a Kreiders Hawk from the north-



Ed Freienmuth with Peregrine :- Note Neck Mounted Transmitter

ern prairies and a dark phase redtail plus many beautiful white Gyr hybrids.

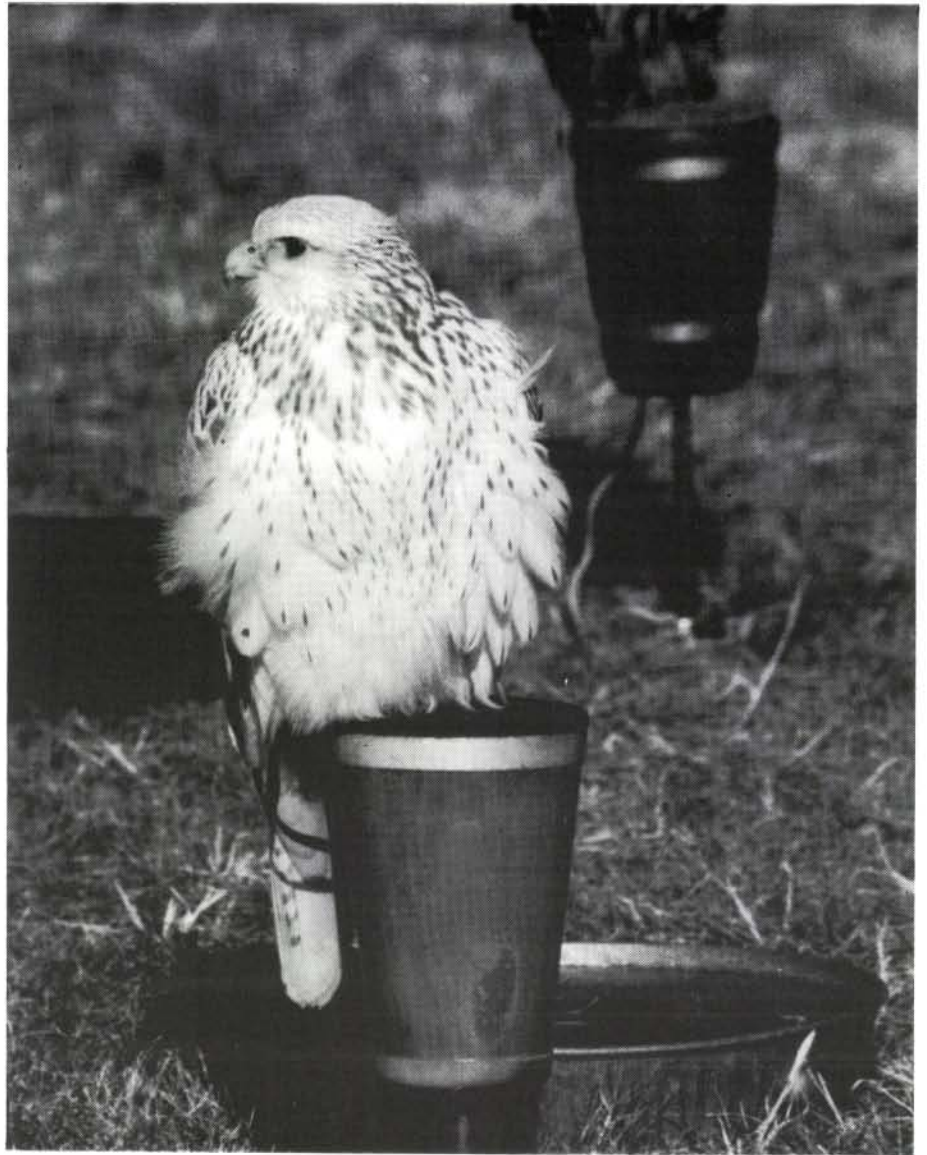
Each day parties of falconers were out from first light, some not returning until late in the evening. There was virtually no public land available to fly on and trespass laws are strictly enforced but the majority of local landowners were more than willing to allow hawking parties access if permission was politely requested.

Foreign falconers were instantly made welcome and speedily integrated into long or shortwing groups by NAFAs hawking party liason officer for days out hawking in the field.

Daytime meetings during the week included the development of ideas for NAFA's proposed book which will be written along the lines of why a falconer becomes a falconer rather than the standard 'how to' approach.

The North American Raptor Breeders association meeting on wednesday morning was hosted by its president Bob Berry and looked at the future with the accent on pedigrees and discussed the merits of line breeding, in breeding and cross breeding.

The Ramada provided a good Thanksgiving day buffet and a very adequate Falconers banquet on the friday evening which was followed by a talk from one of the USA's most famous old falconers, Al Nye, on the discovery of



Gyr Hybrid

Assateague Island. For it was Al who discovered this almost legendary resting place for Peregrines back in the nineteen thirties.

Here they developed the now famous methods of trapping peregrines by burying a falconer in the sand with a reed hood over his head and a decoy pigeon in his hand. The Peregrine would catch the Pigeon and the Falconer would gently shift his grip to hold the Peregrine!

Nowadays birds are only trapped on Assateague for banding and research purposes, in 1987 the last year for which figures are published around 800 birds were observed and over 200 were trapped, banded and released.

Each evening after the meetings, trade stands in the atrium provided the interest with books, prints,

beautiful hoods, telemetry and blocks, sculpture and a full range of equipment from many of the worlds top manufacturers. All NAFA members are encouraged to display their products in return for a fee or donation to the raffle. 1990's NAFA field meet is almost certain to be held in Stillwater Oklahoma as usual during thanksgiving week at the end of November. All UK NAFA members are welcome. Further details later in the year.

To become a member of NAFA and receive three copies of 'Hawk Chalk' and the superb colour 'Journal' each year write for application forms to NAFA, ABBEY BRIDGE FARMHOUSE, COLONELS LANE, CHERTSEY, SURREY, KT16 8RJ enclosing a stamped addressed envelope



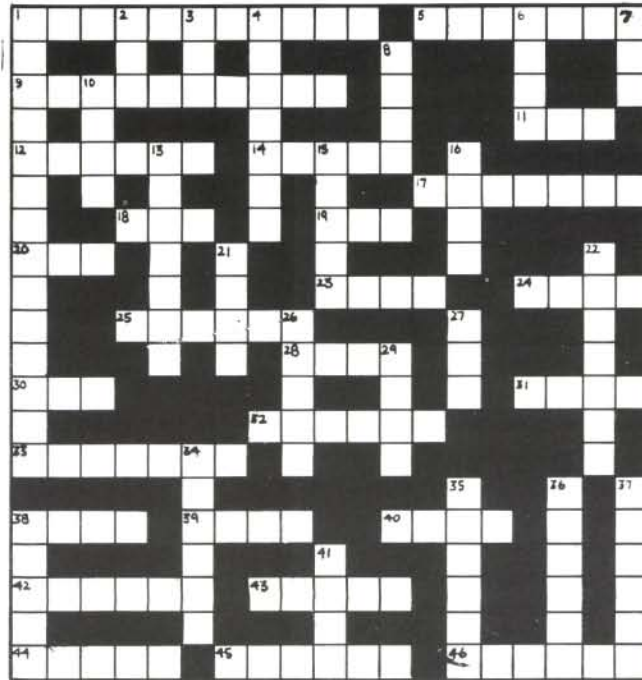
Dark Phase Redtailed Hawk

ACROSS.

- 1) A passing raptor 7, 4.
- 5) Eli mary goes round the leg 7.
- 9) This hat will do for now 6, 4.
- 11) The total of new feathers 3.
- 12) A quarry that complains 6.
- 14) Present lunch 5.
- 17) A fine old falcon 7.
- 18) What not to make a hawk 3.
- 19) Agincourt perch 3.
- 20) One of the ten ways to catch a hawk 3.
- 23) Nasal passage 4.
- 24) Chess piece or quarry 4.
- 25) Bell me? 6.
- 28) Call to 4.
- 30) Low flies at night 3.
- 31) I'm alright 4.
- 32) Little wizard 6.
- 33) W.S. lives to twist 7.
- 38) Old reporter or learning period 4.
- 39 and 40) clean lawn or ruin flight 4,4.
- 42) A tasty titbit 6.
- 43 and 2 down) Keen and ready to go 5, 3.
- 44) Hungry, in the east 5.
- 45) Bad mannered covering 6.
- 46) Len ran to fly 6.

CROSSWORD

by Tiercel



DOWN.

- 1) Trips to obtain hawks ? 14.
- 2) See 43 across.
- 3) Spinning falcon 3.
- 4) Coy with the cap 4, 3.
- 6) Muddled duck or hawk house 4.
- 7) Cheeky repair 3.
- 8) Hawk training without sleep 4.
- 10) Art of grabbing, to 4.
- 13) Red or black in the desert 7.
- 15) Batmans falcon 5.
- 16) A bit of fun for a merlin 4.
- 21) Keep a breast of the post 4.
- 22) Talons spring into action 7.
- 26) Does this bird rake 5.
- 27) Iniatially a good dog 3.
- 29) Means of propulsion 4.
- 34) Enticing 6.
- 35) Clears, the outermost primary 6.
- 36) Is this male stupid 6.
- 37) Arab dhow or falcon 6.
- 38) Falconers pastime 5.
- 41) Theatre line-up or operation 4.

SOLUTION IN NEXT ISSUE.



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Raptor

Falconry furniture, being largely hand made, is not cheap when purchased from professional manufacturers. I should know - mine is probably one of the most expensive! Much is written in the various falconry textbooks about equipment. Sadly, most of it is twaddle, and gives little practical advice about how to look after the various items of the hawk's furniture.

A number of today's equipment makers are striving, by the use of newer materials and designs, to make their products safer and maintenance free. Take, for instance, the use of the plastic falcon block and the terylene leash. They follow the basic traditional shape

and design, but are stronger, infinitely more practical and are also more hygienic, being easier to keep clean. Unfortunately, this sort of thing may sometimes offend the sensibilities of tradi-

tionals, but it was probably the same when someone discovered the swivel, or the possibilities of a set of kitchen scales.

The most important task towards keeping your hawk's furniture in good order is simple - check it every day, particularly before you put the hawk out to weather. The jesses are most likely to be the weak link in the system, and should be scrutinised carefully. At all times, keep an eye out for any cracking of the surface of the jess leather, particularly next to the buttons of the mews jesses and near the eyelets of the anklets. Jesses should, in all circumstances, be of the Aylmeri type. The mews jesses, having slits in them (for attaching the swivel), can be interchanged with the slitless flying (field) jesses which cannot be caught on the various projections (twigs, thorns, etc.) encountered by the flying hawk. Anyone who continues to use the traditional type should, I venture to suggest, have their lone brain cell

checked at once, and the same applies to anyone who uses leather leashes. If Aylmeri anklets are well greased before fitting, they will usually last a season without further application, although they would certainly benefit from greasing every month. However, the mews jesses (which go through the eyelets of the anklets) frequently get wet and are apt to go stiff. They should be interchanged with a spare pair every week, so that they can be allowed to dry and be re-greased. Incidentally, if leather gets wet, never dry it

as they are frequently lost. Furthermore, don't be one of those falconers who, whilst they would not dream of fitting their hawks with anything but Aylmeris, ALWAYS FLY THEM WITH MEWS JESSES IN THE ANKLETS, which totally defeats the safety aspect.

Check your swivels regularly for wear, particularly brass ones, which, although relatively high in tensile strength, have less wear resistance than stainless steel. However, you will no doubt be comforted to know that most swivels are lost before they wear out. Leashes should also be inspected next to the button, even terylene or nylon

ones, and don't be tempted to use a leash with any form of knot for a button. If it comes undone, your bird is dead, so always use a leash with a traditional button. Make sure that the knot you

are tying every day is the true Falconers Knot. All falconers think theirs is but, alas, this is not always the case. Always be sure that the perch you have has a seamless ring to tie onto. Welds are notoriously unpredictable and can suddenly spring open after many months or years of service.

Little can be done for bells. No Lahore bells have ever reached a ripe old age, as they are very hard and their vibrations crack them up quite rapidly. There are much better bells now on the market, which, although considerably more expensive, sound better than the Lahore (which are these days of indifferent quality), and will not only outlast them by several times, but will improve their tone as the days go by. Leg bells should always be attached by bewits which will not go slack. Leather generally does, and the bells then hang too low. The chief cause of wear and damage to bells is from their repeated bashing against the ground and the perch when the hawk bates. If

FALCONRY FURNITURE MAINTENANCE

BEN LONG

with heat unless you intend to throw it away afterwards. It will invariably dry hard and may even become brittle. There are various concoctions on the market for applying to leather, although I don't think you can get anything much better than dubbin, saviour of many a football boot. Apply it liberally to your naturally dried jesses, and leave them for a few hours over a source of low heat, such as a radiator. This will allow the dubbin to liquify, and be absorbed fully into the leather. Whilst on the subject of Aylmeri jesses, always keep at least one spare pair of flying (field) jesses,

the bells are held up higher, this damage can be alleviated, and of course this damage can be avoided altogether by the use of tailbells. Incidentally, contrary to popular opinion, it is quite a good idea to use a relatively large bell on the tail. It will give good volume and will not impede the hawk, unlike large bells used on the legs.

Wooden falcon blocks have always been desperate things to maintain. They have to cope with extremes of dryness and damp, and a 6" diameter block will expand and contract up to 3/8" between winter and summer. Consequently, the carefully applied varnished finish which looked so beautiful when the block was new, after twelve months use is beginning to look distinctly distressed. The only remedy is to strip it and revarnish. Soaking in linseed oil and drying, before revarnishing, is helpful. It is also a good idea to bring the block indoors (not heated) at night, rather than subjecting it to dews, frosts and the like. It will give the timber a chance to recover from the rigours of the day outside. To minimise the risk of foot infections, clean and disinfect the block regularly, particularly the perching surface - which should be non-porous (not cork or wood).

Gloves are notoriously difficult to keep in good condition. Some advocate that they should be oiled at the outset, which will keep them supple and easier to clean. This may be true, but I personally feel that the result is similar to putting your hand inside a long-deceased cod. Ideally, your glove should be wiped over thoroughly after use, taking off as much of the gore as possible before it soaks in to far. Use a rag, damp but not wet, preferably incorporating a harmless

disinfectant such as Vircon. In extreme cases, a good quality buckskin glove can be cleaned with soap, a nail brush, and not much water and left to dry naturally. However, it is far better to use an old glove to feed the hawk, particularly when feeding chicks. Most gloves are furnished with a tassel. Apart from distinguishing the glove from the gardening or motorcycling varieties it serves very little purpose, but the thong to which

not stuff a hood into your pocket or bag, even in the heat of the moment. Firstly, it will in a short time ruin the shape of the hood, and secondly when you next pull something out, you will also dislodge the hood, which will consequently be lost and you will be on the phone to me the next day, desperate to spend another fifty quid. A hood should always be kept, when not on the hawk, in an open position. This will make it

much easier to put on, rather than it trying to shut itself when you are applying it to the hawk's head. It should be left standing in a safe place and never on a hook for any length of time. Hanging it up results in it taking on a peculiarly elongated shape, rather reminiscent of an upturned canoe and finding a hawk to fit it becomes difficult. When in the field and the hawk is off the fist, the hood may be hung on a small strap or clip. This should not be on the belt, where it is vulnerable, but higher on the shoulder strap of the bag or in a suitable position on the falconer's coat. Sooner or later all hood braces become slack. It is not usually necessary to rebrace them, as there is a cunning way of employing a small cable tie (the falconer's friend!) to impart exactly the desired friction to the braces. Telephone for further details.

To a great extent, as is the case with most consumer goods, with falconry equipment you get what you pay for. When obtaining your hawk's furniture, not only should you buy the best, because it is designed to last, but you must also treat it well. It will certainly save you money. It may even save your hawk.



it is attached should be used for hanging up the glove, out of harm's way. It has been written that this is to stop rats chewing the glove, but in my experience the falconer's dog is most partial to chick-flavoured glove thumbs - so beware! The subsequent damage is always totally irreparable. Hoods should really not need much maintenance. Make sure that the hoods you buy (or make) have a waterproof lacquer finish, which will at least make them showerproof. Do

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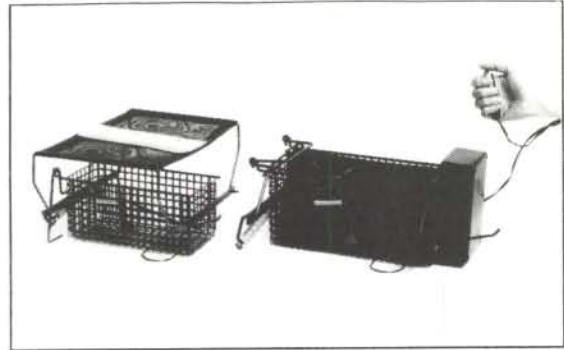
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