

The

Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

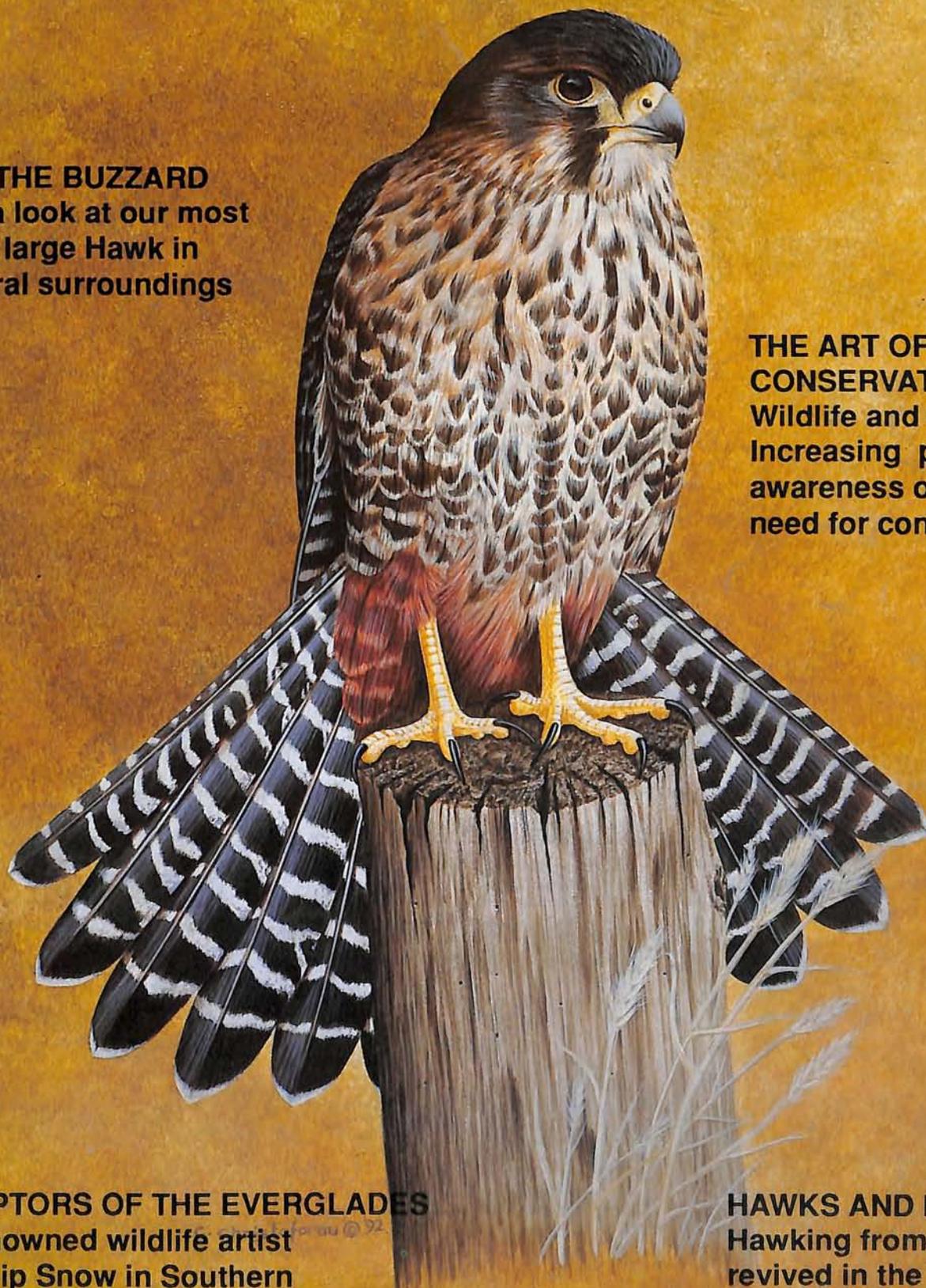
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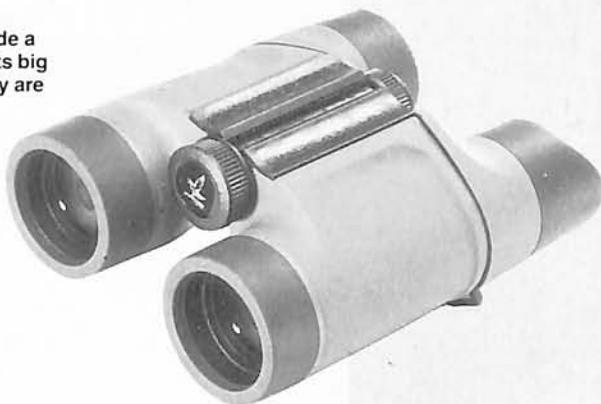
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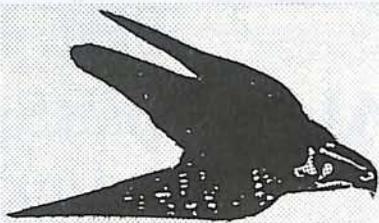
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The Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

The beginning of the year got off to a very worrying start, February 14th saw the rejection of the Wild Mammals Bill by a very small margin, just 12 votes. When the Bill resurfaces, AND IT WILL, please make the effort and write to your MP. There are over 5,000,000 sportsmen and women in the country and only a small amount bothered to write. Don't leave it to other people, it is your sport as well.

On a lighter note, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to the magazine over the last two and a half years - keep the ink flowing. We would also like to receive more of your letters and would like to hear of ways in which you think we could improve the magazine.

In our last issue we mistakenly reported that there was to be a celebrity opening at Muncaster Owl Centre on the 19th May. This in actual fact took place last year.

We would like to thank Chris Christofou for painting this issue's front cover picture of a New Zealand Falcon. Chris is very concerned about Raptor conservation. If you wish to see more of his work, he will be exhibiting, along with other artists, at the Falconers Fair at Stoneleigh.

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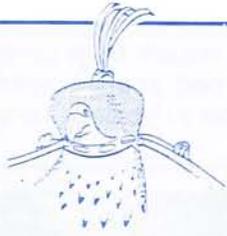
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falconry fully covered. The fair
will follow its previously
successful formula, which has
been expanded to provide more
entertainment, and will also
include some new items. There
really will be something for
everyone that has even the
slightest interest in raptors or
falconry.

The display of raptor orientated art will be a great deal larger than last year and a lot more artists will have their work on show. There will of course be a tinge of sadness to this part of the fair as both John Haywood and Ken Wood have passed away since last year. Fortunately, their work remains and will serve as a permanent memory to them. They will both be sadly missed.

Raptor Rescue will be in attendance again and will put on a static display as usual. This organisation does a tremendous amount of work in re-habilitating raptors and should be supported in their endeavours.

The flying displays will be given by Bryan Paterson, Terry Large and various friends, and are sure to be up to their normal very high standard. There will be several displays each day in the main arena, and also a superb static display on the shaded weathering ground. Most species of raptor used in modern falconry will be represented. But a word of warning, please do not bring a hawk or falcon with you unless you have been asked to do so by the organisers. To turn up with a hawk on the fist will only lead to a refusal of admission.

Another main arena attraction that proved a massive success last year was the Falconers Dog talk and display by Gordon Ayers. Practically all the breeds currently used by falconers for their sport will be there. Gordon's light-hearted and informative talk went down really well with the crowd and should prove equally popular this year. It is hoped to have a Bracco Italiano present. This is a little known Italian breed of

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BRITISH and RAPTOR FAIR review

Hunter, Pointer/Retriever of which there only about twenty or so in the country. Also look out for "Lady", a lovely little Brittany Spaniel that is really enthusiastic and happy dog.

New to the fair this year will be a series of half hour talks covering just about everything connected with raptors. Dr Nick Fox will be speaking on captive breeding in general. There will also be talks on Barn Owl breed and release, veterinary aspects, incubation and the breed and release scheme covering the Red Kite. These seminars will take place on both days so that no one need miss any of the talks to take in something else.

Amongst the stands there will be three significant newcomers to the fair. "Cage and Aviary Birds" Magazine. The Department of the Environment and the Hawk Board. The DoE and the Hawk Board will be there to answer any questions covering legislation concerning birds of prey.

One of this years innovations

will be a two day ticket. These will include access to limited camping

facilities and to the entertainment that has been laid on for the Saturday night. Normally, this is for stall holders only, but these two day tickets are limited and are on a first come, first served basis. Those that are interested should ring Organiser Ron Morris on 0588 672708 as soon as possible.

As with the previous two years Lorant de Bastyai will be visiting the fair and chatting to falconers young and old. This grand old man of the sport always has an encouraging word and a warm smile for fellow falconers, whether they be old hands or complete newcomers.

As well as all the stands connected with falconry there will also be the normal array of country sport related stands and entertainments. Plus, of course, plenty of refreshment stands, both liquid and otherwise. All in all, just about everything has been allowed for and taken care of. This years fair should prove to be as popular and as friendly as ever. *So make sure you are there.*

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DOGS IN FALCONRY

A GORDON

By Bob Trueman



"Biggles"

Those falconers thinking in terms of obtaining a setter to assist in controlled quarry location and subsequent flush will undoubtedly appreciate the added satisfaction gained in utilizing the "available" abilities of a suitably trained canine assistant. They are not without precedent; as early as 1387 Gaston Phoebus wrote of "les chiens d'oyse" and two hundred years later in George Turberville's "The Book of Faulconrie or Hawking" we read "How necessary a thing a Spanell (setter) is to falconrie and for those that use that pastime, keeping hawkes for their pleasure and recreation, I deem no man doubteth as well as to spring and retrieve a fowl, being flown to the mark, as also divers other ways to assist and ayde falcons and goshawks."

Contemplating preceding that earlier word "available" with a qualifying "readily" would not strictly be accurate, since potentially good dogs are neither effortlessly procurable nor particularly cheap, which may well account for the fact that some falconers use slightly flawed material, in that the dog may have a fault or indeed several faults which might preclude their use in trial competition but would not prevent the dog being a useful worker and would understandably reduce the cost of a dog to perhaps more acceptable levels for this particular purpose. There are as those who have followed the articles by Guy Wallace will be aware, several

breeds of pointing/setting dog from which to make selection and since I have been associated for over forty years with the Gordon Setter and their working consideration I would hope to acquaint the reader with the more relevant facts concerning this particular breed.

Whilst hesitating to suggest that the Gordon can trace origins back in time as distant as the ancient and honourable sport of hawking, certainly they were around well before firearms, probably known as the Black and Tan Setter, when the net cast over the covey was the alternative to hawking, and some dogs to this day will still go down

representatives of the breed which have over the last two decades risen again to the top of the league in field trials as well as in the shooting situation where dogs are used to locate game and are shot over; a convention in which, incidentally there is a pronounced revival.

The origins of the conventional colouring black with tan points, are lost in the mists of time and in fact for many years the fourth Duke of Gordon who gave the breed the name, introduced a good deal of white, producing tri-coloured specimens which can still occasionally be seen today.

Known also as the Scottish Setter, rather more ruggedly built than the Irish and English setter, examples of this breed are well known as a one man dog that will work all day and every day at a steady rate to produce game.

My experience of working these dogs for the falconer is confined to the grouse moor but reports from others indicate that the combination also works very well on all low ground game and this breed can also be trained to readily point fur. There was doubt at

one stage as to their suitability for hawking when considering the occasional difficulty encountered by handlers not easily marking a point because of the subdued colouring of the dog, thus implying that a falcon waiting on may have the same problem, but experience suggests that in fact the darker dog appears to stand out from the ground cover quite starkly from above and is easily seen, somewhat illogically contrasting with the reaction of the quarry bird which will often lie to the darker colouring of a Gordon, but flush wildly at some distance to a dog carrying more resplendent coat



Gawcott Aviator "Biggles". An unusual tri-coloured Gordon Setter.

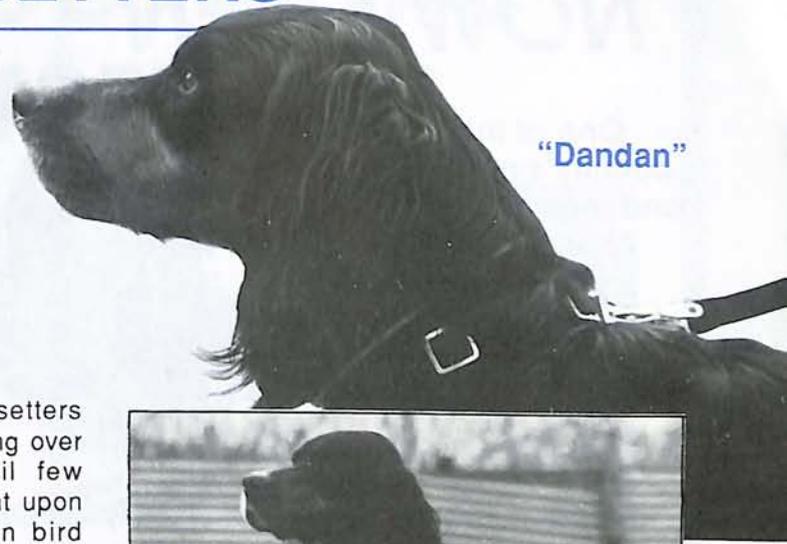
at the point/set as if to allow the net to be the more easily thrown over and in front of them.

I have already qualified the breed lines under discussion by mentioning working consideration and this is a most important factor, since there are considerable numbers in this breed that have seen no work for many years, are totally unsuitable for finding and holding game or indeed for training since they appear to have lost the ability to absorb and retain instruction together with partial or complete mental aberration at the first whiff of game scent.

Fortunately there is however, a core of handsome aristocratic

GORDON SETTERS

FOR YOU



"Dandan"

colouring.

Gordons appear to be singularly well suited to working in conjunction with the falconer; every handler working within this context is well aware of the difficulties in persuading game birds to lift readily when there is a raptor on high and Gordons seem to be possessed of the patience and tenacity to bring about the flush despite this understandable reluctance. Shakespeare was obviously well acquainted with such obduracy when he had Warwick say:

*"Neither the king nor he that loves him best,
The proudest he that holds up Lancaster,
Dares stir a wing if Warwick shake his bells."*

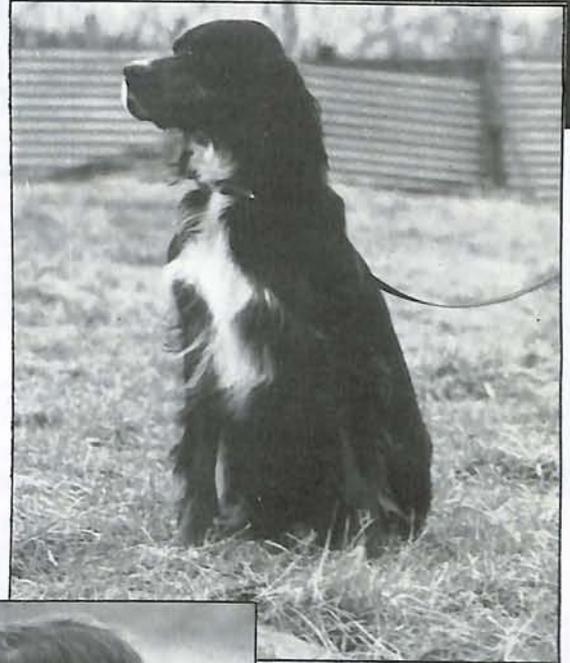
Puppies of this breed are the slowest to mature of the setter breeds and do not develop full potential until their fourth year, creating the need for an early alliance with one person to whom they are able and willing to give their full and unqualified allegiance.

Ease of training is on a par with the other breeds and variations in extremes of learning ability are not normally experienced.

The gene pool of working dogs is not large, having declined since the beginning of this century when large

numbers of Gordon setters maintained for shooting over dogs dwindled until few remained, consequent upon the arrival of driven bird shooting as popularised by the Prince Consort, thus making pointing and setting dogs virtually redundant.

Imports from Norway and the U.S.A. over the last decade have ensured stabilization of bloodlines, but there are very few breeders who specialize in the true working dog, including a small number in Ireland and it may be necessary to wait for a puppy for several months. Young stock vary in price, but the usual cost of an eight week old registered pup with parvo vaccination might be £200 - £250 at the kennel gate, whilst a started dog could be double that amount. Trained dogs are rarely



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available and because of the intensive training involved, expensive; you could be looking at four figures. All breeders will be anxious to provide a pup that will fulfil your expectations and you can assume full and frank co-operation to achieve a mutually satisfactory

"Foego"

result. I leave you with Whyte Melville's lines:

*"There are men both good and wise
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Dumb creatures we have cherished
here below*

*Shall give us joyous greeting when
we reach the golden gate;
Is it folly that I hope it may be so?"*

If you require further information about the Gordon setter availability, training techniques etc., please feel free to contact me through the Editor of The Falconers Magazine or by telephone 0993 811854.



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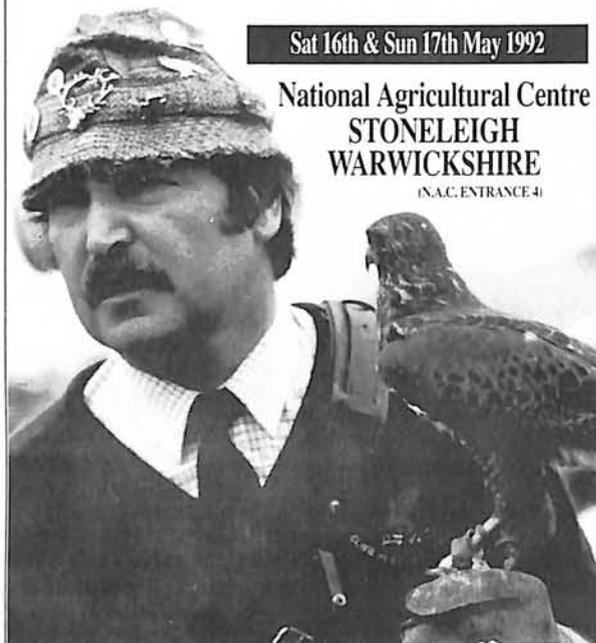
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He has exhibited in many of London's top venues, i.e. THE SOUTH BANK, THE BARBICAN, ASS. OF ILLUSTRATORS, SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS, THE TRYON GALLERY, THE DESIGN CENTRE, OLYMPIA, and in the R.A. exhibition of BRITISH ART in Saudi Arabia. He specialises in raptors in landscape, particularly in flight and welcomes commissions. The illustrations in this issue, of Scottish raptors; are closely

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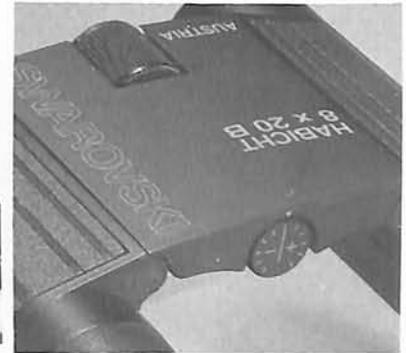
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Results for Spring Issue

for the family

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Mr C. M. Raynor - Surrey.
A. J. Cooke - Formby.
S. Packham - Okehampton.
R. Mitchell - Bucks.
Brendon Lally - Kent.

THE ART OF CONSERVATION

by Kim Thompson

Conservation is an issue with which most people in this country have become familiar in recent years. Public awareness of the destruction of the natural world has led to greater interest in the need to protect threatened environments and the birds, animals and insects living in them. It has also promoted interest in wildlife art as people come to admire and respect nature's myriad species.

The role of today's wildlife artist has changed dramatically from what it was in past decades of 'animal art'. Today, wildlife artists have a deep affection for their subject, their careers rooted in conservation and a fascination with nature. Often they are involved in conservation schemes to preserve threatened habitats. It seems to be a natural progression for their interest in conservation and zoology to lead to painting careers. For example, Alan

wildlife painters.

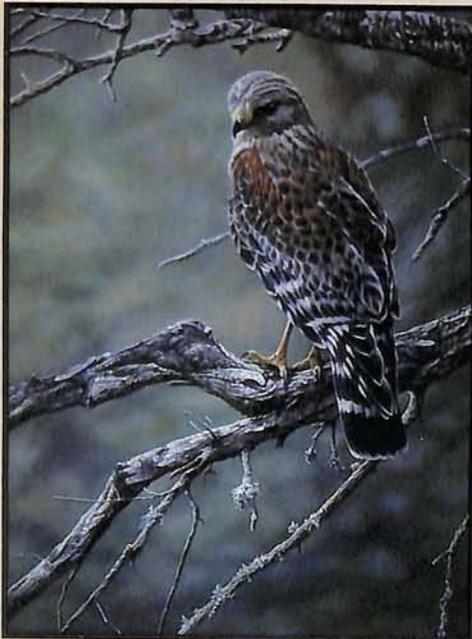
Raptor painting features strongly in the work of some established and up and coming wildlife artists. Some devote their careers to this subject and, as with all areas of painting wildlife, raptor art is a demanding field. Some raptor

wildlife, raptors have possibly suffered more than most from the persecution of man. Raptor artists have helped highlight the need to protect these birds and preserve their habitats by producing works which capture their tremendous grace and beauty,



PEREGRINE ON THE HUNT by COLIN WOOLF.

A watercolour artist who lives in North Wales and paints many birds of prey, but also has a passion for painting woodcock and other game birds.



RED SHOULDERED HAWK by artist & conservationist ALAN M. HUNT, who has found great success painting raptors and other wildlife subjects, especially for the American market.

artists are also keen falconers, keeping their own birds and spending as much time on this pursuit as they do on painting! Their knowledge of falconry is extensive, based on the first hand experience of flying their own birds. This enables them to achieve the sort of accuracy in painting raptors which is so important.

Raptors are also one of the most popular subjects in wildlife painting. The appeal of birds of prey is undeniable, both for

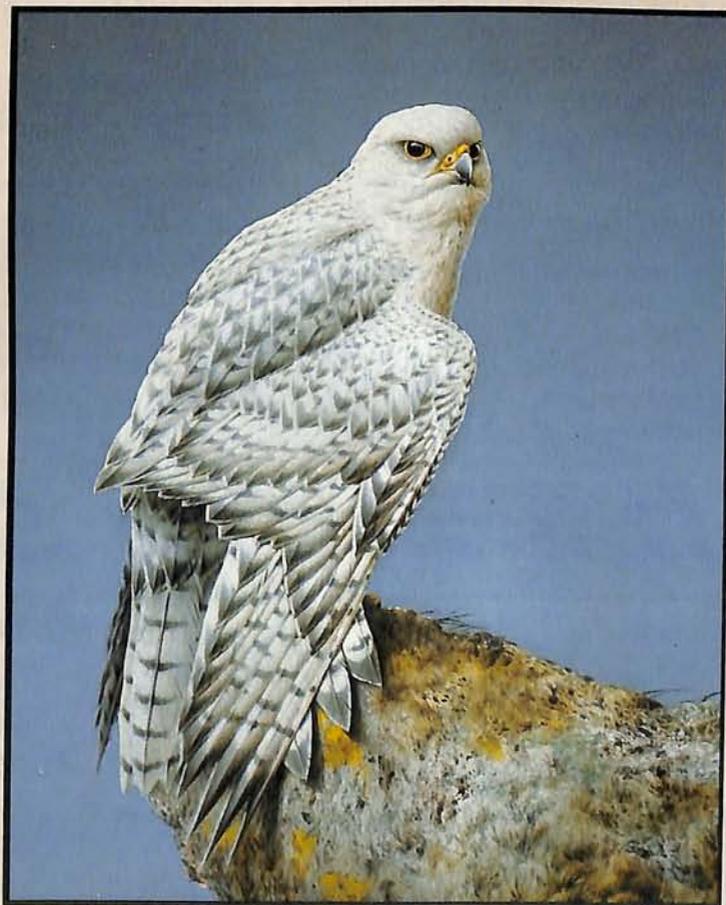
the artist and for those buying wildlife art. Inspired by the elegance, power and ferocious beauty of one of nature's supreme hunters, artists continue to produce works of art which will always find an appreciative market. Of all

elements which continue to attract and inspire the public.

As interest in wildlife art grows in Europe and America, it can be seen that wildlife paintings have considerable investment potential. Already in America wildlife and raptor artists, many from Britain, command high prices for their work. In this country wildlife art, and especially raptor painting, is well represented at a number of country shows.

Chief among these is the popular Falconry and Raptor Fair, held annually at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, which is a showcase for all aspects of falconry and includes a large exhibition of the work of some of Britain's established and developing wildlife art talents.

Wildlife and raptor art has increased public awareness of the need for conservation although, sadly, this continues to be an uphill struggle and there is still a long way to go in the battle to protect the natural world and its many threatened species.



GYR FALCON by ANDREW BENFIELD.

A young wildlife artist who has developed an interest in conservation due to the nature of his work, which includes wildlife art & sporting themes for limited edition prints.

Hunt, a British artist of international renown, describes himself as a "zoologist painting wildlife". It is this understanding of their subject which is the foundation of the work of the most successful and internationally admired



RED KITE COUNTRY by **STEVE KINGSTON**.

Steve has been a commercial artist for many years and has now turned his artistic attentions to wildlife art, especially "The Predators", birds of prey and big cats.



HEADING FOR COVER by **CHRIS**

CHRISTOFOROU. A raptor and wildlife artist for a number of years. He has contributed to many books and magazine articles and has paintings in many private collections.



HARRIS HAWK by **MIKE DONNELLY**.

A skilled graphic designer & illustrator, Mike has worked on several nature publications since graduating from Liverpool College of Art in 1979. Mike is also a keen falconer.



GOSHAWK by **ELIZABETH HALSTEAD**.

Elizabeth's knowledge of wildlife and the countryside is extensive. She has a great love for Scottish wildlife and travels to Scotland several times a year.



BARN OWL by **ANDREW ELLIS**.

In 1986, Andrew won the Junior Section of the B.A.S.C. 'National Wildlife Artist of the Year' award. Since then he has had a book published in 1991 featuring his fine paintings of game shooting.



BALD EAGLES by **DAPHNE BAXTER**.

Daphne lives in a 17th Century cottage in Hertfordshire, set in woodland which provides her with many subjects for her wildlife paintings. She has had many exhibitions in this country and her work is very sought after by private collectors.

News

EAST OF ENGLAND FALCONRY CENTRE.



A new centre is all set to open this Easter in the East of England.

It is the idea of businessman, Peter Bridges who has put a lot of time, thought and energy into it.



Falconers - with cast of SAKER -FALCONS.

It is not the largest centre you will ever visit but it is well designed, with the welfare of the birds being the main consideration. There are 18 aviaries containing a variety of birds, all the aviaries are beautifully designed and constructed. There is a lecture room, tea rooms and a gift shop and a large flying area.

The centre also incorporates a hospital for The Raptor Trust a registered charity established in 1984. The hospital will be mainly manned by Graham Page who devotes much of his free time to this work. In charge of the birds at the centre is Micheal Raphael a dedicated falconer of ten years experience who quite obviously knows the birds inside out. And training under his expert eye is apprentice falconer Paul Mander.

School visits can be arranged as can outside displays and any enquiries should be made to their Administrator, Nigel Carrie on 0986 798844.

Also the centre provides full access for the disabled.

FIRST SKY TRIALS IN SPAIN

by J Saez

Last year saw the very first sky trials in Spain, and to my knowledge in Europe. The event was held in the picturesque town of Ecija situated in the heart of the Andalucian countryside. Ecija is well known for it's monuments, palaces and churches, and yet more to the point it's very flat and open countryside. This quality makes it ideal for flying longwings.

Ecija was long ago the favourite hunting ground of His Highness Prince Juan Manuel of Spain. He and his court hunted the flat expanses with Peregrines and Sakers. Their intended prey, the Red-legged Partridge, was and still is plentiful as are ducks and Bustards. Now almost two centuries later, the same countryside has been host to this international event featuring classic waiting on flights.

The event was organised by the Andalucian delegation of the Spanish Association of Falconers. Olympus were sponsors for the event with the town of Ecija and it's "Alcaide Major" as hosts. I must highlight the fact that without the experience and organisation of the President of the Sky Trials, Diego Pareja Obregon, this event may not have been possible. Diego, a close personal friend of mine, has travelled to the United States for birds and information and put these Sky Trials together.

The trials were held on the 6th, 7th and 8th of December 1991, a National holiday in Spain and a very appropriate break for the purpose. Unfortunately the weather was not at all friendly with gusts of up to 25 knots and a few thunderstorms and heavy downpours. Nevertheless the turn-out for the event was impressive, much more than expected, with over sixty birds

and their respective falconers inscribed and a total of about three hundred falconers attending as spectators, participants and salespersons. Various countries were represented namely United States, Italy, France, Mexico, Gibraltar and of course Spain's provinces.

Friday the 6th in the evening saw the reception at the Hotel "Ciudad del Sol" where the formal presentation and opening of the trials took place. This was followed by the draw for the allocated times for flying the birds over the next two days. The latter were spent flying from 9.30am to dusk and despite the inclement weather, most of the participating falcons and their falconers did rather well. Although the pitch attained by the falcons was not very high, there were some spectacular stoops and tail chases.

The falcons used were mainly Peregrines of various subspecies, hybrid gyr/peregrines and a couple of Lanners. The Peregrines outclassed the other falcons as they were more prepared for the field than the rest and some of the finer flights of the two days were had by them. The Lanners faired well but were no match for the Peregrines in the air although one caught it's pigeon. The hybrid falcons did not fair well, raking downwind and in one case chasing a distant and obviously more interesting prey. Personally I feel that these birds are not well understood and possibly the falconers handling them will improve given time as they are just too different to the normal Peregrines. None of the falcons or falconers were lost although some of the latter were quite tipsy after they had competed due

to the abundance of red wine and anisette.

The intended quarry, the Racing Pigeons, were at most times more than an equal match for the falcons and of over two hundred used only 5% of the total were taken by the falcons. Saturday evening was spent at the private club at Ecija, an enormous and beautiful palace in Medieval architecture. There was a video show featuring captive breeding projects in Andalucia and an exhibition of paintings and sculptures of birds of prey by painters and sculptors of renown in Spain. A special mention here for sculptor/artist Alfredo Fillol's talents whose marvellous work was the source of much admiration and who donated two pieces from his collection as trophies to be awarded on Sunday. There were also various falconry furniture stands of exceptional quality rivalling names such as Ben Long and Gene Johnson. Hoods, gloves and so on and even some birds were up for sale.

Sunday evening saw the presentation of trophies at the aforementioned hotel with the discotheque being commandeered for the purpose. Points were awarded as per the American Sky Trials Regulations.

First prize went to Mr Miguel Lopez Gil flying Peales Peregrine intermewed eyaess tiercel called "Tormenta" meaning

storm, a very appropriate name for the winner given the weather conditions.

Second prize went to Mr Isiahs Martin flying brookei peregrine intermewed eyeass falcon called "Stojer".

Third prize went to Mr Carlos Torres flying brookei peregrine eyeass tiercel called "Jeremias".

Mrs Amparo Saez (no relation to myself) took the prize for the best lady falconer this being a large sculpture of an eagle in it's nest by an unknown artist. The prize for the participating falconer coming from furthest away went to Mr Etienne Carole from France. Juan Orta the renowned falconry bell maker gave an exotic touch to the evening selling his wares dressed as an Arab sheik.

On the whole it was a splendid long weekend spent talking birds, making new friends and meeting old ones. I must thank my falconer friends

for their hospitality and for all my falconry which would not be possible without their cooperation. A special mention to Alfredo Fillol for his talent, hospitality and his wife's cuisine.

Hoping to be there this year at the 1992 trials I send out an open invitation to those who wish to participate and see these spectacular Sky Trials of Ecija.



Falconers at the Trials

For more information write to J. Saez, 33/B Catalan Bay, Gibraltar.

C Clubs

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A TWENTYFIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT SWAROUSKI

Thursday, 19th March, saw a visit by the Duke of Kent to Swarovski UK to celebrate their 25th anniversary. The visit lasted 50 minutes during which time he was taken around the showrooms displaying Swarovski binoculars, telescopes and Swarovski crystal. He was also shown around their warehouse and was given a chance to view things from a different angle, behind the lens of a Habicht AT 80 telescope and various types of binoculars, including Swarovski's tiny pocket size binoculars. All of which He was very impressed with. Before the Duke left a presentation was made of a piece of Silver Crystal Sculpted into the shape of a giant diamond and a pair of binoculars.

His Royal Highness was attended by Commander R Walker, RN and was received by the Lord Lieutenant, Mr Simon Bowes Lyon.

His Royal Highness, together with Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, was



His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent with Mr J. Harris.

presented to several local dignitaries including The Mayor of Watford, Councillor M Singh Chhina, The Ambassador of Austria, Dr W Magrutsch, The Austrian Trade Commissioner, Dr G Kerntaler and The Right Hon. Lady Es'terhazy and was escorted on the tour by Managing Director, Mr J Harris.

After His Royal Highness had left the remaining guests were provided with a superb champagne lunch.

Speeches were made and toasts drunk and a huge cake in the shape of the Swarovski Swan was cut and donated to the local hospital.

THE BUZZARD

by Mike Everett

Buzzards are probably not very highly rated in falconry, but I have never met a raptor enthusiast of any sort who didn't have a soft spot for them. Watching the effortless soaring technique of this thick-set, broad-winged bird is always a joy - more so when there are two or more together and on those memorable occasions when territorial or courtship display is in full swing. Like many raptors of their size, they frequently surprise the watcher with their speed and agility.

Versatility of another kind is the key to the Buzzard's success as a species and to its wide distribution across Europe and Asia. It is generally a bird of semi-open country of various kinds, almost always with some degree of tree cover, only extending into woodland and forests where these include ample clearings or adjoining patches of open terrain. In parts of Britain, and throughout Europe, it is commonly found in cultivated areas. Buzzards are not really mountain birds and where we see them in hill country in Britain there are always trees somewhere to hand: in other countries they are not normally found far beyond the tree line. Like many raptors, they commonly hunt from a perch, employing the classic watch-and-pounce technique, or launching a short-range flying attack. Prey is not necessarily taken only at close quarters, though, and on longer sorties Buzzards often make clever use of cover and dead ground in approaching their target. Another common hunting technique is searching for prey while soaring and circling, generally at no great height, with the quarry often followed up on the ground if the first strike is unsuccessful. Buzzards hover too - perhaps not as expertly as Kestrels, nor as habitually as Rough-legged Buzzards, but very



Buzzard landing at rabbit.

Photograph by Dennis Green

effectively nonetheless. This technique seems to be used most often in very open terrain where, like Kestrels, Buzzards are effectively using a "perch in the air". An impressive variation, commonly seen over exposed hillsides, is facing into the wind and just hanging there, almost motionless. Buzzards also forage on foot, searching for earthworms or insects.

Invertebrates feature as prey quite frequently and birds are taken fairly often - very regularly by some Buzzards - but in Britain small mammals are generally the favoured prey. Where they are common, Rabbits are particularly favoured and it was this source of prey, or rather the sudden lack of it, that caused a major change in the Buzzard's fortunes in the middle of this century.

Although there are large areas



Pair at nest with young.

Photograph by Robert T. Smith

of Britain where it is something of a rarity, the Buzzard is our third commonest raptor, after the Kestrel and the Sparrowhawk. The most recent estimate puts the UK population at 12 to 15,000 territorial pairs. Along with



almost all the raptors and owls, Buzzards were relentlessly persecuted as vermin during the 19th century in the supposed interests of livestock farming and, in particular, game -

of Wales, the New Forest and the extreme south-west of England. The Great War brought a respite from persecution and the considerable social changes which followed it led, among other things, to reduced numbers of gamekeepers. Buzzards were able to regain much lost ground, but even by 1954, when it was thought that there were some 12,000 breeding pairs, they had failed to recolonise the whole eastern side of Britain and, in Ireland, had established a toehold in Ulster. A small bonus had been the colonisation of the Outer Hebrides.

Then came myxomatosis and the crash of the all-important Rabbit population. The effect on Buzzards varied from area to area, but there was a marked overall fall in numbers and a general reduction in breeding



rearing. Two hundred years ago, there were breeding Buzzards in suitable areas virtually throughout Britain and Ireland, but by the First World War they were practically confined to parts of the western Highlands, Galloway, Cumbria, the uplands

success. In due course, Buzzards increased again, more slowly in some areas than others, and by 1970 their numbers had recovered to around 8-10,000 pairs. The increase has continued, but when a national survey was carried out by the British Trust for

Ornithology in 1983 it became clear that the birds had been returning to areas occupied earlier this century, and increasing there, rather than expanding their range to any great extent. Subsequent observations show that, nearly ten years on, the position has hardly changed at all. If you look at a current breeding distribution map, you will see that the Buzzard has failed to re-establish itself in virtually the whole of central and eastern England and parts of eastern Scotland, despite the fact that there is much suitable habitat available.

It is not entirely clear why Buzzards have been unable to recolonise these regions. While it is true that substantial areas must have changed almost beyond recognition since the Buzzard's heyday two centuries ago, there is undeniably a lot of country which ought to have breeding pairs. It is widely believed that continued persecution is implicated. This view is supported by quite a lot of circumstantial evidence and is strengthened by the results of RSPB investigations into the illegal persecution of all birds of prey and owls. In the years 1979-89, there were 679 confirmed incidents, involving a total of 814 birds. No fewer than 367 of these were Buzzards; 228 were the victims of deliberate poisoning (Buzzards come all too readily to carrion) and 139 were either shot or trapped. For obvious reasons, only a small proportion of persecution incidents ever come to light and probably not all of those are reported. Furthermore, many reports never get beyond the "suspected" stage to become "confirmed incidents". In other words, the figures for Buzzard persecution must represent only a fraction of the true total.

Some of you reading this have the good fortune to live in Buzzard country. The really sad part of the Buzzard story is that we are not all so lucky.

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RAPTOR

E S S E N E W S

by
Ron Jones
L.R.K

Fortunately, not many birds have come to me with injuries caused by being shot, but in one case a Tawny Owl came into my care with severe damage to its plumage. After close examination I found shot gun pellets just under the flesh of one wing.

These were quickly removed and the wounds treated with potassium permanganate to control the bleeding.

Because of the damage to the primaries the owl would not have been able to fly and this meant that it automatically became a long stay patient.

Once the wounds had

healed the owl was placed into an aviary ready for when she had moulted the damaged feathers.

During the convalescence a young Tawny came in, which had fallen from around its nest area and had caused slight damage to both wing tips (2nd digits).

The obvious concern of imprinting presented the usual problem, so the answer was to put the owlet into a closed nest box, in with the injured (shot) owl so the immature had permanent visual contact with its own species. On first sight of the adult the owlet called incessantly all night and every night!

They both progressed until it was time for training for release using "hack board" method.

Because they had been together in the aviary I

decided to train and release them together.

As soon as they were coming 6' to the fist the training went out to the area I had chosen for the final release.

After 12 days the owls would bate towards the board on entering the field and fly to it from 50 yards at any angle. Three days later their jesses were removed and both released, For 3 weeks the mature Tawny returned for food and the immature for a further three months until the food

provided was not taken at all.



An organisation dedicated to ensuring that all injured and sick birds of prey are cared for by suitably qualified persons and whenever possible released back into the wild.

If you find a Raptor in trouble and need help and/or advice please ring - 0920 463649. If you would like to join you can write to Miss A. Rossin, 3 Highwood Road, Hoddesden, Herts EN11 9AJ.



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-HAWKBOARD NEWS-

The Hawk Board has had a very busy three months and our resources are stretched to the limit.

There was a meeting of 103 signatory countries in early March to discuss CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which involved us in considerable preparatory work. One of the major issues for hawk-keepers was the international trade in wild birds which had been brought into the limelight by the RSPB. After much discussion we decided on our standpoint and produced a document detailing it. We have two major points: first, we want a clear differentiation in CITES and the European legislation between wild-caught birds and domestic ones. We circulated world authorities to establish an international checklist of domesticated species of diurnal raptors (see separate article) and provided graphs from Dept of the Environment data outlining the major progress achieved in hawk-breeding. Secondly, we want a change of emphasis within CITES away from the designation *commercial*, which is undefinable in the context of hawk-keeping, towards the use of *sustainable*. For example, the import of wild-caught European goshawks, if sustainable because they are in pest numbers, should be allowed.

Martin Jones, Jemima Parry-Jones and Nick Fox attended a pre-Japan meeting with Ian Muchmore who represented the Dept of the Environment in Japan, and Dr Fox attended a further meeting with Tony

Baldry, Junior Minister for the Environment, who was also going to Japan. This meeting included representatives from ICBP, TRAFFIC, RSPB, RSPCA, Greenpeace, Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, and the Joint Council for Nature, many of whom were busy button-holing Tony Baldry to curtail the trade in wild birds. Fortunately, because of our efforts and success in breeding, and because of registration, we are in a moderately secure position, especially when you see what is happening in the cage-bird world.

Finally, we helped fund Mr Christian de Coune, President of the International Association of Falconers, to go to Japan to beat the drum for us and we woke up Mr Nakajima of the Japan Falconiformes Center in the middle of his night by Faxing the information to be circulated to delegates!

There is shifting sand in Brussels. We now have the final draft of the European Consultation Document which is an attempt to reconcile CITES with European legislation. We are now preparing a discussion document for the DoE, giving our views. There is every chance of The European Consultation Document being adopted during the British presidency of the EC, which starts in July, and this means we have a better chance of sorting out any anomalies.

Hawk-keeping is legal in Denmark but falconry isn't. There has been pressure there to ban hawk-keeping entirely in the forthcoming review of hunting legislation. Obviously this would set a bad precedent in Europe.

Therefore the Hawk Board, and the recognised clubs, have sent letters to the Danish Prime Minister and senior ministers, protesting against this move and giving reasoned arguments on why it would be a bad step. We have received courteous replies promising to take our points into consideration, and it was obvious that the ministers had been unaware of the true situation with regard to hawk-keeping and falconry. Keep your fingers crossed for the Danes!

The MacNamara Bill was defeated by only 12 votes and Labour have promised to resurrect it if they get in. Many MPs received very few letters from fieldsportsmen. Did YOU write? When this Bill re-surfaces we want 100% of hawk-keepers to write. DON'T leave it to others.

Owing to the increasing extent to which we are having to use the media to try to pressurise for hawk-keeping, the British Field Sports Society kindly gave us a media training day on March 13th at John Fairclough's house. It was well attended by members of the Hawk Board and representatives of the recognised clubs. This was a very positive and useful day and now each club has its well-briefed spokesman. Thank you BFSS.

By the time this magazine comes out, the Hawk Board elections should be in full swing. If you are not already on the electoral roll (you should have received notification from the DoE) contact the new Hawk Board Secretary: Sue Dewar, 6 Glendevon Rd, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4PH. Tel (0734) 696501.

The production of registered aviary-bred diurnal raptors in UK 1980-1991.

Dr Nick Fox, Hawk Board, UK, compiled from Department of the Environment statistics.

The first efforts to breed diurnal raptors in aviaries were made by falconers in the 1960's and 70's. In 1980 the UK Department of the Environment initiated a ringing and registration scheme for this group of birds, supported by a verification system of inspections and checks. We thus have good records covering the early domestication period for 37 species and can discern trends over an eleven year period.

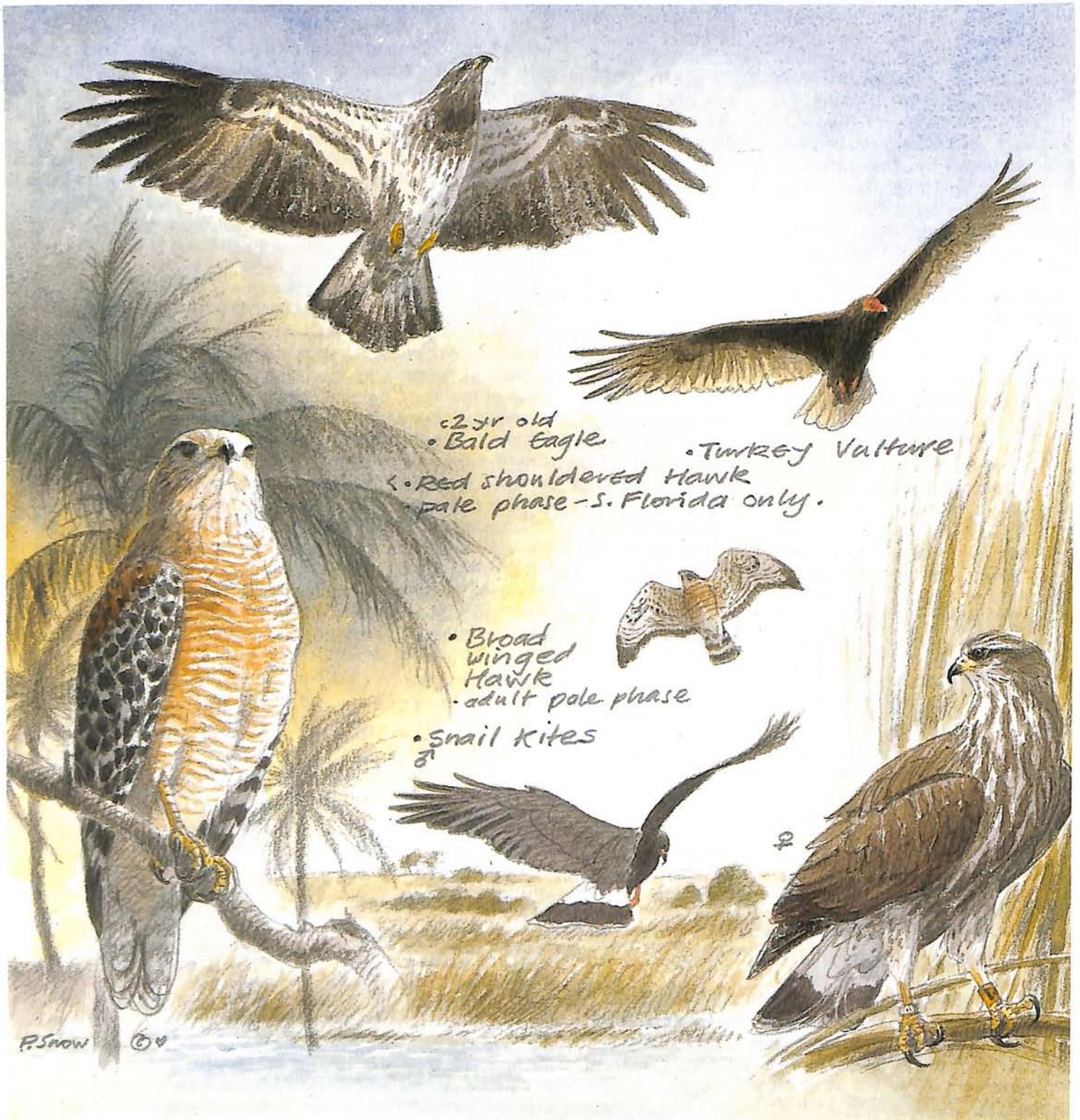
Early attempts were with three common indigenous species (figure A), *Falco tinnunculus* the Common Kestrel, *Accipiter nisus* the European Sparrowhawk and *Buteo buteo* the Common Buzzard. These were widely held in captivity at that time, being available under licence from the wild and also frequently rehabilitated. They are of mild interest to falconers and breed fairly easily. Many breeders learned their skills on these species. By 1986 kestrel production peaked; breeders could not dispose of the young and began to switch to other species. Sparrowhawks and buzzards followed suit soon after.

The three indigenous species of most interest to falconers, *Falco peregrinus* the Peregrine, *Accipiter gentilis* the Northern Goshawk and *Falco columbarius* the Merlin are shown in figure B. These started from a much lower base and are slower or more difficult to breed. The peregrine and Merlin have probably now nearly satisfied market demand, particularly the male peregrine. The goshawk is a less reliable breeder and until 1990 surplus continental birds were imported to augment breeding stocks. The supply and demand for this species will probably be erratic for some time to come. A fourth species of interest to falconers *Parabuteo unicinctus*, the Harris Hawk, was heavily imported in the 80's from American breeders and has yet to satisfy a large market demand, it is shadowed by a similar exotic *Buteo jamaicensis* the Redtailed Hawk (not shown).

Figure C shows exotic species of mild or limited interest to falconers which have started from a small existing base and which are approximately in balance with demand. They will probably continue to increase at a slow rate.

Figure D shows, or lists, nine primarily exotic species which have started with a fairly restricted population and gene pool and

RAPTORS OF THE EVERGLADES



Sketches & text by PHILIP SNOW

Southern Florida's famous Everglades National Park is a sub-tropical 'River of Grass', consisting of wet sawgrass prairie, pine isles (hammocks), Cyprus Swamps and coastal mangroves. Inevitably it faces the same ecological problems as other major wetlands of the world: pollution, drainage and 'improvement'. Happily, many people are fighting on its behalf.

One reason is its rich and often easily accessible birdlife, including many prominent birds of prey. Florida is one of the few states left with a good population of BALD EAGLES (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and this slightly smaller southern race is relatively common around Flamingo, in the south west corner of the park. (On my January visit they were drinking from the camp site water fountain)! OSPREYS (*Pandion haliaetus*) also love the fish rich waters, with at least three pairs breeding at the tiny port and are generally seen around Florida's coast.

Both BLACK and TURKEY VULTURES (*Cathartes aura* and *Coragyps atratus*) soar and scavenge widely here; and a possible ten different 'hawks' (mainly buteos) can be seen, although only four are common.



- Red tailed Hawk
- pale phase
- Ferruginous Hawk

• Swallow-tailed Kite

• Birds not to scale

• American Kestrel

• Osprey

- Short tailed Hawk
- dark phase
- Coopers Hawk ♀
- Bald Eagle

adult

The distinctive RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is widespread in America, preferring drier ground to the locally abundant RED SHOULDERED HAWK (*Buteo lineatus*). This strongly marked raptor can be VERY confiding in the protected park, alongside masses of posing pelicans, herons, egrets, ibis's, darters, alligators and racoons etc!

The migratory and rare BROAD WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) has both light and dark phases and the handful that winter in the Everglades could be confused with similar plumages of the SHORT TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*), a tropical raptor with its whole tiny North American population in South Florida. But don't expect either to be noticeably broader winged or shorter tailed than the other Buteos and uncommon hawks; which include FERRUGINOUS, SWAINSON'S, ROUGH-LEGGED and the odd escaped LESSER CRAB HAWK.

Two accipiters, the SHARP SHINNED and COOPERS HAWKS (*Accipiters striatus* and *Cooperii*) also breed here, with the tiny dashing 'Sharpie' the commoner. Also there are two rather special kites, the graceful migratory SWALLOW TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*) and the uncommon SNAIL (formerly EVERGLADES) KITE (*Rosthramus sociabilis*) now confined to a few sites in Florida. happily, though, a recent cyclical increase in their numbers means that its languid harrier type flight can be seen over open wetlands, like Shark Valley, seeking out their specialist Apple Snail prey. The superficially similar NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*), formerly MARSH HAWK), hunts these areas to a winter visitor like the familiar PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus*) and MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*). The AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*), still sometimes confusedly called 'Sparrowhawk' is the smallest North American falcon. It is a strikingly pretty raptor, similar in habits to our own Eurasian kestrel.

The Everglades is justly famed for its spectacular wildlife, but needs our constant attention to preserve it from damage and over exploitation by agriculture and the many thousands who yearly flock and retire to America's sunshine state.

THREE WAYS OF INCUBATING

THERE ARE THREE BASIC WAYS OF INCUBATING EGGS, EACH WITH ITS OWN ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES THEY ARE :-

1. Natural. i.e. Let the parents lay and sit their own eggs.

Advantages.

- Providing that both the parents are known to be good, (and that can be a big if!) then there is little doubt that they will make a better job of it than any box!!
- No problem with power cuts.
- Very little trouble to look after, (apart from mental strain and worry of not being able to help if things are going wrong.)

Disadvantages.

- Difficulty in knowing if they are sitting fertile eggs.
- Disturbance may cause them to break the eggs.
- If the nest ledge or the eggs themselves are dirty this may cause disease to enter the eggs and prevent them hatching.
- Only one clutch may be taken, as most birds will not recycle if they are allowed to sit full term. (Most Harris Hawks are the exception to this.)
- Good sitters may not be good raising parents and one may have to move quickly to remove the young before disaster strikes.



Peregrine feeding naturally incubated eggs.

2. Foster Parents.

These may be other hawks of less value who are proven good sitters or broody hens .

Advantages.

- No power cut problems.
- It seems that they do better than most incubators over the first five days of incubation.
- No humidity problems to deal with, I do not know how they do it but I have had a broody successfully hatch two eggs at the same time, one that needed to be hatched very dry (Lugger) and one which needed to be relatively wet (Mackinders Eagle Owl).

Disadvantages.

- If using other raptors they may not be broody at the right time and they will not often sit long over their time unless you can give them a succession of eggs which have been incubated long enough for the female to feel movement in the egg, these can be chicken eggs, but be careful not to let them hatch under the bird or she will stop sitting immediately.
- Broody hens. There is undoubtedly a skill that is almost an art. In working Broodies it is not just a case of finding the nearest farmyard broody and popping the eggs under.

3. Incubators.

Advantages.

- The eggs can be monitored right through their incubation time which can let you "look" after problem eggs easier.
- With proper care less chance of disease and egg breakage.
- Problem eggs can be helped to hatch.

Disadvantages.

- Every incubator needs a technique to operate it which cannot just be learned from reading a book, even incubators of the same make and model differ slightly.
- Warning systems need to be built in and a standby generator needs to be on hand. They need to be monitored closely (at least twice a day) before problems become fatal. They need to go into a room with a stable temperature and humidity to give good results. Good ones are relatively expensive.

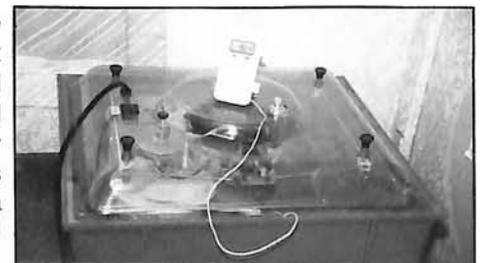
Now that we know the different ways it can be done let us look at the individual techniques necessary for success.

It may sound trite but no matter what system you decide to use it can only be as good as the fertile egg that you start with. So how do you get good strong and as disease free as possible eggs? No later than Christmas make sure that the whole aviary has been given a good clean and wash down, we use a weak bleach solution, we also remove all old nesting material or gravel on the nest ledges and replace with fresh. Pay particular attention to the food that you are feeding. On the good advice of our vet, Dick Best we now try to feed food approximating what the wild bird would get i.e. Redtails, ground quarry (rats), Lanners/Sakers, mixture (rats pigeon and grown on chicken), Peregrines avian, (pigeon). You will note that no mention is made of day old



Top of the range Curfew Incubator. A lot of incubator for the money.

chicks. I feel that they are a maintenance diet only and whilst some birds will produce eggs that will hatch, others certainly will not. Four years ago because of a shortage of pigeons, I had to feed my A.I. hat peregrines a chick diet. The semen that they produced was of a very poor quality, after consultation with the vet, the diet was returned to pigeon and after four weeks the semen quality was back to normal. I mention this because if I had not been checking this semen on a daily basis I would not have known of the problem. If the birds had been naturally copulating I would have had either non fertile eggs or ones that were so weak that they would have died early on in incubation with no idea as to what had caused the problem. It is possible to use a combination of the three techniques, like, let the parents sit for seven days, then put the eggs



Super Rolex Incubator being used as a hatcher.

RAPTOR EGGS

by Ceri Griffiths

under a broody or in an incubator. Pick up the eggs as soon as they are laid, put under a broody for seven days then put into an incubator. Why do I keep talking about eggs having seven to nine days natural incubation? It is generally agreed that the most critical time for an egg is the first seven to nine days of incubation and unless you are very sure of your incubator and your own technique then it may be advisable to let nature do it for you, either under the parents or a broody hen.



A.B. Newlife Incubator showing egg turning movement.

NATURAL PARENTS SITTING.

There is very little you can do here to help. If the birds you have sitting are expensive ones we always check out their sitting ability with a clutch of Kestrel eggs first. Be careful not to under feed, this makes the female aggressive and restless. Do not overfeed. Some males insist on putting all the spare up on the nest ledge, some females will put spare food (particularly day old chicks) under them and sit them along with the eggs which leads to major disease problems with the eggs.

BROODY HENS.

The chicken that you intend to use as broodies must be hand fed from Christmas onwards to make sure they are super tame. At the same time the purpose built broody boxes are cleaned out and the hens given a good coating of "Johnstons Anti Mite." Here at the Centre we use Silky X Game Bantams and these are prized and looked after for years. They are calm and can easily be lifted off their eggs and returned to them. They will sit for over twelve weeks without a



Inside of Broody Hen box.

break, although this we regard as the absolute limit and we have never had one break being broody. I find the handling of broodies harder than learning to use incubators so do not regard this as a easy option - although it is, however far cheaper!!



Strip of eight Broody Hen boxes.

INCUBATORS.

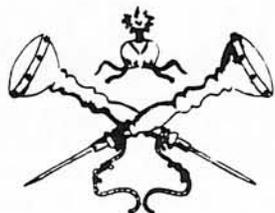
For an egg to hatch it needs a correct temperature for its type over its incubation time and to lose between 12 and 18% of its fresh laid weight by the time of its hatch. This sounds easy and no doubt for the eggs, mum, or a broody hen it is. Over the centuries man has built more and more sophisticated warm boxes for doing just this. An Incubator is

a box which can be kept at a steady temperature. They come in two basic types, still air and fan assisted. For our eggs, only the fan assisted is good enough. The incubators that we use at present are Marsh A. B. and Curfew.

If it is sophisticated (and expensive) then it will also turn the eggs and be able to control how wet it is. It will also have back up systems and warning alarms built in. All they are striving to achieve is this steady temperature within 1/4 degree fahrenheit. An accurate means of controlling the humidity. A change of air (eggs breath and need oxygen). A means of moving the egg through 90 degrees about every hour. Hawk eggs are, I do not have to tell you, rare and expensive so we breeders try to hatch every egg laid (an impossibility). It is a fact of life that eggs laid in an aviary situation are not as viable as eggs laid in the wild. The wild bird has a better diet, is stronger and lays in fresh places (no disease), we try by all means to improve the quality of our eggs, but until we can match our birds wild cousins, our incubation techniques must be spot on. As the hatch rate can only be as good as the egg, so the incubator can only be as good as the thermometer in it. It will be necessary to either buy (about £50), or borrow a Master thermometer. These are the only ones that are checked accurate!! You can then calibrate all your thermometers against the master by putting the tips in a ball of plasticine in the incubator. Expect up to a three degree error! This does not matter so long as you know and can allow for it.

If the incubator has been used before wash in a weak solution of washing soda, then fumigate using potassium permanganate and formalin. Do this outside as the fumes are noxious. Allow to stand for 20 minutes then run up for 30 minutes. Place in the incubator room. This room should have a stable temperature of about 70 degrees, this is easily obtained using a fan heater and a wall thermostat. The incubator should then be run up for at least seven days to settle down before you think of putting eggs in it. Before you collect your eggs, wash your hands, people think that egg shells are solid, they are not. Disease can all too easily permeate through the shell. So before you touch the eggs always wash your hands, or better still, wear polythene disposable gloves. When you pick the eggs up, handle them with care, do not shake or handle roughly. Place them one at a time in an egg box round side up. Go into the incubator room, black it out and candle the eggs, if they have been sat for more than seven days you should be able to tell if they are fertile, note the size of the air sac. Place eggs in the incubator, most eggs hatch best if stood upright with their blunt end uppermost, some of the smaller ones (like Barn Owls) hatch best on their side. I will let you know which as I do more research. Check the incubator at least night and morning for main temperature. The wet bulb should be set initially for 85 degrees and the eggs candled every three days to compare the air space with the diagrams below. If you feel that the space is too big then increase your humidity and if too small dry it out a little. Make all adjustments very slowly.

In the next article I will show you how to control the weight loss of the egg very accurately (humidity of incubator) and how to get the best from the three makes of incubator that I have mentioned. Also how and when to get into problem eggs, help out weak chicks and how best to feed and raise young birds in brooders.



FALCONRY EQUIPMENT

by Giancarlo Pirrotta



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Cotswold Falconry Centre

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RAPTOR CONVICTIONS

A list of stolen raptors still outstanding from 1991. The descriptions (where possible) are as they were at the time of the theft.

PEREGRINES

- 1. Male Ring No. UK64916
- 2. Female Ring NO. UK 76338
- 3. Male Ring No. 6755W. Also wearing metallic blue WHC ring. Part imprint. Two centre deck feathers impeded.

RED-TAILED HAWKS

- 1. Female Ring No. 0015X. 8 years old.

HARRIS HAWKS

- 1. Female Ring No. 3648W. 1 year old. Scar on back of right leg. Squawks a bit but is not an imprint.
- 2. Male Ring No. 4865W. Has had a broken right leg.

GOSHAWKS

- 1. Male Ring No. 2359V. 5 months old. Imprint and screamer. 1/2 Harris Hawk feather impeded into deck.
 - 2. Female Ring No. 0550W plus UK79696. Aged 7 years.
 - 3. Male Ring No. UK76402. Aged 5 years.
- N.B. Nos 2 & 3 are a breeding pair.

NEW ZEALAND FALCON.

- 1. Female Ring No. 0123U.

THE FOLLOWING OWLS ARE ALSO OUTSTANDING:-

- 1. Pair European Eagle Owls. Age 6 years plus.
- 2. Pair of Great Horned Owls.
- 3. Turkmanian Female.
- 4. Bengal male.

During 1991 a large amount of raptors were stolen and there is no

indication that these thefts will not continue. The list of stolen birds is longer than given, but some have now been recovered and it is not worth mentioning the others as there is no description and the owners have not bothered to get back to me with even the ring number in some cases.

The good news is though, in respect of the raptors recovered there has or will be prosecutions to follow. Police Forces throughout the country are now aware of these thefts and are working hard in an effort to eliminate them. I feel a mention should be made in particular to Chester Police, York Police and Lancs Police who have between them recovered 10 stolen raptors including owls for which prosecutions will take place.

The following persons have recently appeared at court:-

Walter William Taylor of Ellesmere Port, Chester. Appeared Wallesley Magistrates Court on 20.12.91.

- (a) Selling wild kestrels Fined £100
Costs £50

Lawrence Martin Cook of Harperhey, Manchester. Appeared at South Ribble Magistrates Court on 29.1.92.

- (a) Receiving stolen property (Peregrines & Lanners)
Fined £200 Costs £100. Compensation of £1000 to be paid following the death of one of the Peregrines.
- (b) Illegal possession of Peregrines/Lanners.
Fined £200.

I would once again appeal for any information in connection with theft of raptors or any offences connected with them. Any information received will be treated as confidential. I am contactable at Twyford Police Station Tel: 0734 536000 ext 6257 or by telephone answer phone 0734 321243 for anyone who would like to leave a message only.

GARDEN VILLAGE Bird of Prey & Falconry Centre

Introducing the Bird of Prey and Falconry Centre at Bridgnorth.

At the centre we have a varied variety of birds to see. Owls, Falcons, Hawks, and a six month old Tawny Eagle. We open at 10 - 5.30 7 days a week, flying birds daily (weather permitting).

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The Falconry Centre is set on a 10 acre site with other attractions such as, Seasons Garden Centre, The Candle Workshop, one of the largest pet shops in Europe, an arcade which boasts many Crafts Shops and a licenced Gardeners Rest eating house, all set out in the countryside.

For further information please contact us at The Falconry Centre on 0902 701115.

PEREGRINE KEEPERS

Dr D. Parkin of the Nottingham University has approached the Department of the Environment for assistance in contacting Peregrine Falcon breeders to help in his research into D.N.A. tests (genetic fingerprinting). He requires blood samples from groups of related peregrines (e.g. parent and offspring) to extend his research.

RAPTOR IN THE EVERGLADES

Philip Snow has produced another superb centre spread painting exclusively for the Falconers and Raptors Conservation Magazine and is offering the original for sale.

If you are interested please contact Philip on

0248 351223

HAWKS AND HORSES

An article in *The Field* (September 1991) by the President of the British Falconers' Club, Anthony Jack, mentioned that the Old Hawking Club last hawked rooks with a mounted field in 1926 on Salisbury Plain. Although I was born in Salisbury and spent my early years up on the downs at Ashmore I have never hawked rooks there. However, over the last 22 years I have used horses in falconry from time to time, both in UK and in New Zealand, with varying degrees of success.

I have trained six horses for hawking, two light cob types, a thoroughbred, a New Zealand station hack, an Arab and a half-Arab. The thoroughbred was too excitable, but the others proved satisfactory. My current horse, Peter, is a 15.3 Arab cross Cleveland Bay who has been raised with hawks and now, at 13 is in his prime for hawking. My wife's horse, Henry, is pure Arab and has also been reared

rather than the pommel where it would be in danger of being crushed if the horse moves. Since 1974 I've used a purpose built hawking saddle and my wife uses a Syd Hill Australian stock saddle. These allow good contact with the horse along the whole leg, together with a very secure seat. The horses need to be very light mouthed and we use jointed snaffles. I cannot cope with a double bridle one-handed. They are taught to neck rein and to stay in an even pace on a loose rein with leg aids only. In my experience stock work is the best way of achieving this although mounted games are probably just as good. The horses need to be patent safety in traffic, with dogs etc and with other horses and hunting is a good preparation for them. They are taught to stand still when one has to get off to attend to the hawk and a leather-covered 6 lb weight attached by a six foot line to the bit rings is an effective portable tether. They must be able to jump cleanly and go cross-country at an even pace.

by Dr Nick Fox

it. I then work the horse in all paces in figure of eights, shaking and waving the towel all over the place until he is completely reliable and will not flinch or change pace. Usually one lesson is sufficient. Then I continue but carry a hooded falcon. One could if necessary use blinkers but I have never had to.

There are three main aspects to using a horse with the hawks. The first is manning. Never being one to walk if I can ride I've found that in the summer a hack out with a young falcon, hooded, settles the bird down well and starts to get the horse and the dogs fit for the forthcoming season. The next aspect is looking for a slip. I loath driving round in a car. I hate the feeling of being all warm and comfortable one moment and then being spat out into a freezing wind with a fast-disappearing hawk the next. Also I hate the mind-numbing monotony of driving around for hours looking for the perfect slip and getting more and more fussy. Once I drove for over five hours without finding a good set-up. With a horse one hears and sees a lot more and can get in position better. Once the flight is in progress it is much easier to keep in touch. This is the third aspect and obviously the most fun. To be able to go like stink, devil take the hindmost, after the falcon on a horse which will look after you is, I believe, the most exciting falconry there is. To reach them, as falcon and quarry come down locked together is an experience forever etched on my memory.

Not having anyone from the old days to teach me I have had to work it out as I went along. This has meant making quite a few mistakes, some hilarious and some potentially dangerous. When galloping over rough ground, all ones hawking gear takes a hiding. You could as well tow the radio on a piece of string behind for all the jolting it gets. Erecting a yaggi on horseback in a stiff breeze on top of a Welsh mountain is character-forming stuff, not improved when you think you hear a bleep and decide to start swinging the lure as well! The receiver is fitted in an interior pocket of the hawking bag and the bag is secured by a belt and a shoulder strap. Threaded



Crow hawking in Wales

with hawks but at five years old this is his first season out with the hawks.

In my experience the best hawking ponies are not too big; 15.3 is about as high as I can get on carrying a hawk without groin strain or split breeks. One mounts from the 'wrong' side so that the hawk goes over the cantle

When the horses are young they get used to hawks whizzing around being given a pipe-opener in the same field. The horses are initially introduced to hawking using an old towel covered in fresh hawk mutes and with bells attached. This is rubbed all over the horse and he is allowed a good sniff at

up the shoulder strap is some fishing trace connected to the antenna socket. This acts as a simple, line of sight, not very directional, aerial— effective up to a mile. It is connected all the time and at a flick of a switch I can tell if the hawk is line of sight or not. If the situation warrants a yaggi I have one made by Tony Owens which folds right up into my hawking bag. One strapped to your back is unsafe in the event of a fall.

All the other gear must be well stowed. I have had the lure bounce out at speed and tangle in the horse's back legs. I have also inadvertently hit the horse on the head with the lure while at speed. I've slipped the hawk and been just about to gallop after it when I've dropped the hood onto the ground. I always use a belt block and carry a spare hood in the saddlebag. You cannot easily ride with an unhooded crow hawk. I also carry fencing pliers and sometimes, hobbles.

Obviously for rook or crow-hawking the ground needs to be as open as possible and preferably rideable at speed without the risk of running into bogs or having to go round them. The best ground is permanent pasture but this is often in the form of large fields with wire fences. In this case the system we use is that once the flight is under way, one of the Field must reach the gate and open it for the falconer to go straight through and he will then kick on and try to get up with the falcon. If the hawk is down one needs to be cautious galloping up the last couple of hundred yards because of beaten rooks flushing from some small place right under the horse. On one occasion I managed to get right under the flight only to have the crow dive down and try to hide under the horse, with the falcon right behind. Another time I had to use the horse to chivy the crow out from where it had come down among some cows and calves. Finally,



Nick Fox, Bruce Cameron, Diana Durman-Walters & Sandy with a carrion crow.

once on a hot day I got up to the hawk and picked her off the kill. Unnoticed by me she muted straight into my hard hat lying on the ground. I put the hat back on and went on my way, thinking how warm and sticky the weather had become!

This year my wife and I treated ourselves to a few days on the Scottish Borders on some ground which Diana Durman-Walters kindly lined up for us. We boxed up the horses and took with us a young hacked falcon 'Sandy' out of one of my sakers using semen from Martin Jones peregrine junior. We got the horses fit and Sandy killing crows here in the Welsh hills before we left. On our best day Bruce Cameron joined us on Baxter. Leaving Bonchester we took in the down wind side of Mr Hamilton's Moss above Hawthorn Hill and slipped Sandy at a pair of moor crows on passage 450 yards up wind. Sandy went hard at them and they all climbed. We had a good run up the side of the moss. Sandy bested the crows and they tried to outmanoeuvre her in the air with twisting dives almost to ground level. We covered the

ground as best we could to try to head them off as the crows were making progress across the wind to Chapel o' Cross Plantation about 400 yards away. The crows stuck together which effectively meant that Sandy was flying two at once. Whenever one crow was free for a moment it climbed and

went for cover. We couldn't make it in time to help Sandy and we pulled up two hundred yards short of the plantation when the crows put in and she threw up. We took her down, covered the remainder of the moss with no further crows and then headed out over Hoggfield Hill. From the top of Hoggfield Plantation we spied a good lot of rooks only about 300 yards into the wind. Sandy went hard at them climbing and I pulled out all the stops on Peter. Bruce followed me up and my wife kept along the ridge in case they went right-handed over the hill. The flight was a melee for a while driving upwind considerably faster than we could gallop. I have no recollection of what ground we covered. I left Peter to do his best on a loose rein while with eyes streaming I tried to see how Sandy was faring. They weren't high up, only about two tree heights, and in the confusion I caught glimpses of brown as the falcon flicked over. I got caught at a gate which I daren't jump. I slid off, yanked it open and as Peter pushed past I swung back on, leaving the gate for the others. On we went, the rooks trying to make the trees at Eastside Farm Steading. Out of sight of the others we clattered down past a drystone wall. Some of the rooks had made the wood and then I saw them spiral up and knew that Sandy was down on a kill. I trotted down through the yard past the hayshed, listening for her bell. I jumped off Peter and let him go. The others, coming up over the brow of the hill caught him up and led him back down. I heard the chink of the bell but being deaf in one ear I couldn't locate it. I sorted it out with the radio. She was discussing an old rook in a small patch of nettles just twenty yards short of the trees.



Sandy with a rook in a small patch of nettles.

L etters

All letters should be addressed to:-
THE EDITORS, THE FALCONERS AND RAPTOR
CONSERVATION MAGAZINE,
20 BRIDLE ROAD, BURTON LATIMER,
NR KETTERING, NORTHANTS., NN15 5QP

ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS, FROM A BEGINNER

Dear David and Lyn,

Due to a change in my work I am now looking forward to training and hunting my first bird next season. I've been reading up and I thought I would attend a course on Falconry to further my knowledge and get some practical experience. I rang or visited as many falconry centres as possible, all over the country enquiring about courses.

It soon became apparent that many were lacking in experience themselves, so I decided to ask the following questions:- Who would actually be teaching me, what experience my teacher had, how long he had been hunting with birds of prey, what birds had he hunted with, how many people would attend the course with me etc. All the more experienced people would quite happily answer these questions, some were a little abrupt, probably having never been asked these questions before. But after all, I would be spending my hard earned money with them so I felt within my rights to ask, (must be my Scottish ancestry).

It soon became clear that some courses were run by people with little or no hunting experience themselves. I even spoke to someone opening a falconry centre and offering courses having only attended a brief course himself,

three years ago. Although there must be some exceptions I do not consider many people can acquire enough knowledge and experience to teach falconry after such a short time. Please don't think that I am getting at everyone, there are many experienced falconers throughout the country who offer excellent courses, but when my car needs repairing I go to the garage mechanic, not the forecourt attendant, so why not the same principal with falconry.

Going back about four years ago, I was so impressed by someone who had a hawk tethered on his lawn. When I saw someone fly his hawk I thought he was 'God!' Now I've watched falconers hunting these hawks I realise that the first two were either beginners or posers. (Don't forget that beginners can so easily be impressed). It is very easy to confuse bird of prey flying demonstrations with falconry. Done properly, a flying demonstration is an art unto itself, a lot of demonstration people do practice falconry as well, some don't though. As in my case you must sort the latter from the former. The same could be said of falconry equipment makers, unless they train and hunt their own hawks, how can they advise you and sell the correct equipment for your own bird? Ask them, I've found most to be very helpful.

Let us, the beginners, remember, falconry is the art of flying a trained hawk at quarry in its natural environment. (If not, you're not).

Name and address supplied

Dear Editor's

I am putting pen to paper in response to various articles and letters which appeared in the Spring '92 edition of your magazine.

Falconry in Britain has two things which really should be strengths but seem to be quite the opposite.

The first is the passionate enthusiasm of all those partaking in this ancient art. I am sure that most people like me would vote for higher taxes and interest rates in any election where the alternative was a loss of our sport. The second is the room for individualism allowed us by present legislation.

Sadly, our passionate enthusiasm seems to make us talk from the heart, not the head which is something we blame the antis for. Surely no falconer would like to see our sport threatened yet we still feel we can make ourselves look good by knocking others.

Mr Hawkins letter I thought made a lot of sense but it would have been better to say "many falconers do not rate lanners, luggers, etc but my experience is this. . ." Instead he brands all those with views different to his as "so called falconers." They are not "so called falconers" but genuine enthusiasts with their own individual view.

Like-wise, Ceri Griffiths article was a joy to read. I have met Griff a few times and respect his experience and have had the good fortune to fly many birds which have lower moulting than flying weights.

The sad thing is that his article would have been of just as much interest to the enemies of our sport as it was to the supporter.

Another case of our room for individual views causing weakness.

I too have met falconers who make my stomach turn usually for no more reason than a personality clash or a strong difference of approach.

I feel it is time we buried the hatchet and started to be more objective. If a falconer you dislike has completely different views and techniques to you and his birds are as healthy as yours, he is your friend. I don't mean we should not speak our mind or that we should go around patting each other on the back.

What we should be doing is, no matter how badly someone annoys you by his views, always bear in mind that you and he have too much in common to allow these things to divide you, so for that you will jeopardise falconry in order to make your argument heard.

Before writing this I spoke to a few falconers that I do get along with (yes, there are one or two) and all agreed to make an effort to be more united in 1992.

*Yours sincerely
Ian McCheyne
Banff.*

Dear Editor,

In reference to the article in the Spring '92 Edition "Hawking in the District of the

River Isak-Kul" (translated by Lorant de Bastyai). It stated that the bird would fly back to the lure as far as 10-12 verst, but Lorant did not know how far a verst was.

I was recently going through an old book and it stated:-

3 ARSHIN = 1 SOJEN
500 SOJEN = 1 VERST
1 ARSHIN = 2' 4"

Therefore 1 verst = 3500ft or 1.067 km. So a bird returning 12 verst to the lure is flying some 42000 ft (7.95 miles) or 12.8 km. I'm sure this would test most falconers nerves.

*Yours sincerely
Andy Cotton.*

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

The Barn Owl, once a common sight in our countryside, is now gravely threatened, due to the loss of traditional hunting grounds and nest sites. The Buckinghamshire Barn Owl Group, which is part of the Hawk & Owl Trust's Barn Owl Conservation Network, is desperately seeking information of sightings of Barn Owls in the county, so as to extend their conservation management programme to save these beautiful birds.

All reports would, of course, be dealt with in the strictest confidence, on our "Hootline" number (0296) 415474.

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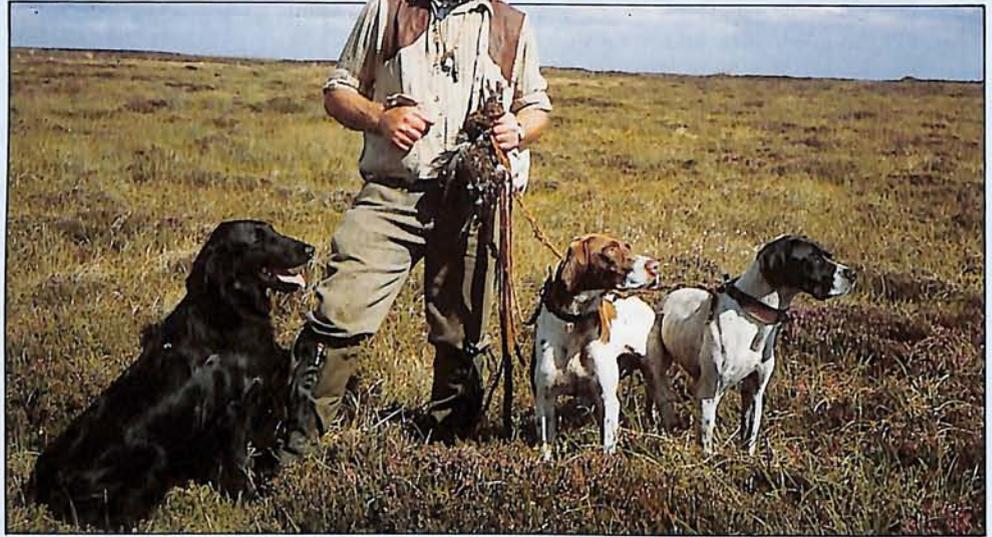
Training Gundogs For Falconry

by Guy Wallace

Part Four

What It Is All About

Falconers tend to think that a dog is an automatic game finding machine. Handler removes lead. Dog finds game. Dog points game. (Falconer eventually ready.) Dog flushes game. Hawk catches game. Home for tea. Absolutely correct in an ideal world but with the proviso that the handler trains the dog first! Before anyone sets about training a dog to do anything it is vitally important that, first, he knows what objective he is trying to achieve and, secondly, he knows how to go about achieving it. All very elementary stuff but if the trainer does not know what he is meant to be doing, what chance has the poor dog got?



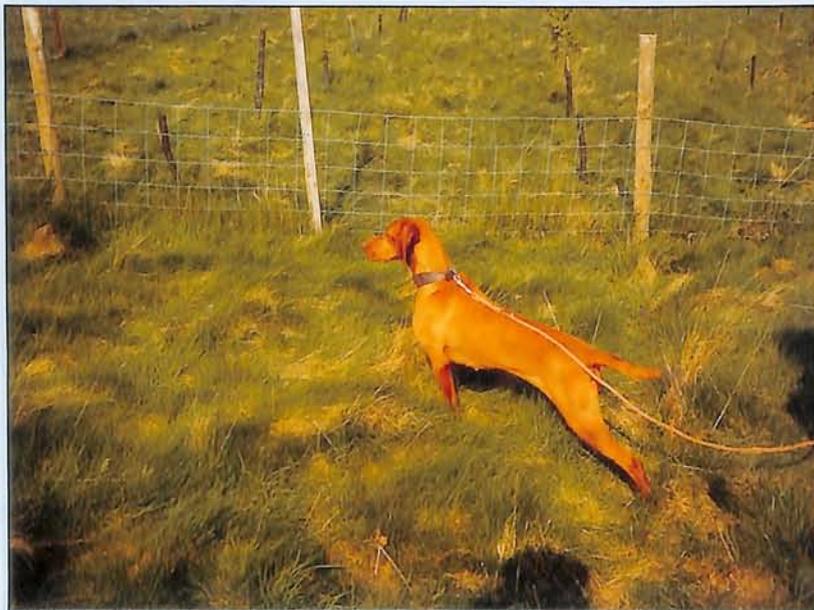
The author in Calthness

At the risk of teaching anyone's grandmother to suck the proverbial eggs I shall lay out the requirements of a falconer's dog and say a little about the two vital factors of wind and scent. The whole process of training any animal or bird to do anything is to teach it a simple action in response to a word of command (e.g. SIT [beside you]) and then, as it masters lesson 1, use lesson 1 as a platform to teach lesson 2 (e.g. Sit [while you walk away]) and that mastered, use lesson 2 as a platform to teach lesson 3 (e.g. SIT [at a distance from the trainer]) and so on. Each lesson or platform can be regarded as a row of bricks and the initial lessons are the foundations and the subsequent lessons are the house. No foundations - house falls down!

In addition to the normal basic lessons of SIT, DOWN, HEEL and HERE, the falconer requires a dog that will "quarter" the ground (i.e. zig-zag backwards and forwards in front of the handler), locate the game, point it, hold its point, road in and flush the game on command and then drop to flush.

Why does the dog quarter? I am frequently telephoned by falconers and the conversation runs along these lines, "My dog won't point. I saw a pheasant and the dog didn't point it."

"Which way was the wind blowing?"



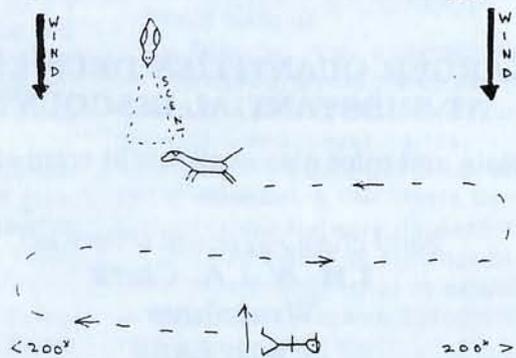
Viszla learning to point pheasants at the warren.

"What's that got to do with it?"

".... Clot (or similar words)!"

There is almost always a wind blowing in some direction. The Beaufort Scale for windspeed varies from 0 to 10. There is seldom a force 0 (and fortunately, seldom a force 10 - Hurricane!). The prevailing wind can be seen from the cloud direction but at ground level trees, hedges, hills, valleys, dips and mounds can make winds in the immediate vicinity blow in any direction and also change direction every few yards. Furthermore the wind direction at human head height may be different from that at dog head height. However for training we require a large flat expanse of ground with a constant wind direction and preferably a warm, moist South Westerly force 2 - 3.

Now a pointing dog locates game by the body scent of the game being borne on the air at about 18" - 24" above ground level towards and into the dog's nostrils. When the dog encounters this scent (which can be imagined as coming from the game in a cone shape) it's own experience will tell it that the origin of this scent lies upwind, i.e. into the wind, at the point of the cone. Now in order to find game if a dog "bores" upwind in a straight line it will only scent game directly in its path on a one yard wide front. However if a dog quarters backwards and forwards, say 200 yards either side of its handler, it will locate any game across a 400 yard front thus having a 400 times better chance of locating game.



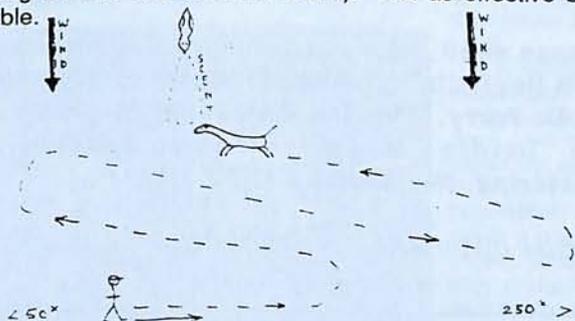
Having scented the game it can then point it (of which more later), the pointing instinct having been induced by several hundred years of selective breeding.

Therefore in order to locate game a pointer must have the scent of its quarry borne to the dog on the



Doug Morgan, a founder member of the Welsh Hawking Club, shooting over one of the authors pointers in Calthness. He never had a classic stance, (the dog, not Doug), but he never told a lie (the dog, not Doug).

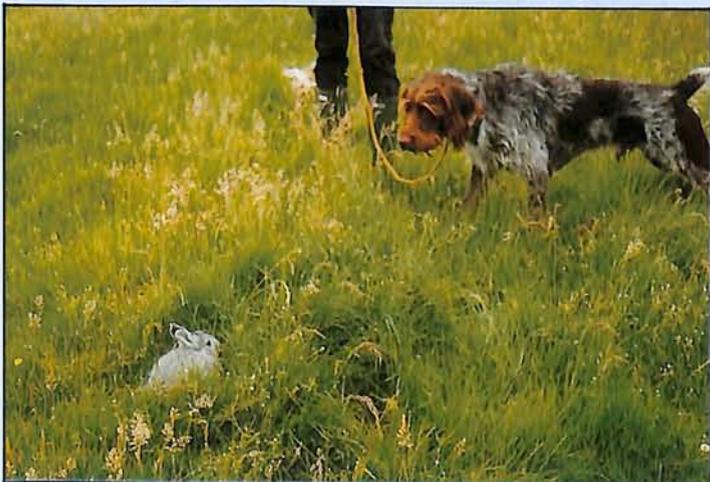
wind. But, in practise, one cannot go on hunting into the wind for ever or one is soon over the boundary. A compromise is to hunt the dog on a "cheek" wind i.e. a side wind (or a wind that is blowing on one cheek or the other). Not as effective but still feasible.



On NO ACCOUNT EVER hunt a dog downwind i.e. with the wind or you will end up with a long range spaniel because the dog will "bump" the game before it knows the game is there and will probably chase the game it has put up into the bargain! Put the dog on a lead and lead it back downwind to the starting point, move over one beat and start again parallel to the previous one.

How far either side of the handler should the dog quarter? How long is a piece of string? In the open i.e. a grouse moor, I like the dog to hunt as far on either side of me as it will go and let the dog turn when he wants to provided that the control is still there i.e. I can still turn it or stop it at maximum distance if I need to. Control is like a length of elastic - the longer it gets, the thinner it gets! In cover 15 - 20 yards either side of the handler is plenty. Take three sticks, push one in the ground and then pace out 15 yards either side of it and push the other two in. Have a good look at what 15 yards looks like and memorise it.

The other factor involved is scent. The scent of game is extremely unpredictable and variable due to relative ground and



G.W.P learning to point rabbits at the warren. (Rabbit is out of dogs sight).

air temperatures, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind strength and quality, etc., etc. "Nowt so queer as scent, 'cept its a woman" as the great man said. One day a dog may wind a pheasant at 100 yards and the next day the same dog may wind the same pheasant in the same place at 2 yards, so our imaginary cone is of variable length before petering out. If one dare generalise the specialist "English" pointers and the setters will wind game much further away than the continental Hunter Pointer Retrievers (HPRs) which have other qualities under the same scenting conditions. Therefore on each "beat" of its quartering a dog should take in as much ground i.e. cast forward before turning, as it can cope with according to the scenting conditions at the time. Putting it at its most ridiculous, if a dog can wind a bird at 20 yards one day it should turn into its next beat 19 yards on from the last whereas if a dog can wind game at 50 yards it should take in 49 yards. All very fine in theory. With experience a dog can adjust its beat and pace - the worse the scent, the slower the dog should run and the better the scent, the faster it can run - to suit scenting conditions but with a young dog the handler will have to do this thinking for him. Since all hunting breeds of gundog have infinitely better noses than us and an inbred hunting pattern, the essence of training one is TO LET IT TRAIN ITSELF BUT (paradoxically) NEVER LET IT GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING.

FOOTNOTE - Seeing your list a clubs in the last issue reminds me of the Bagshot Bypass Hawking Club when four of us flew goshawks three full afternoons a week, every week in Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Berkshire in the late '60s and early '70s. We flew our hawks from the BFC Falconers' Feast (first Friday in November) - leafall - until the Spring Meeting (first Friday in May - too much leaf. Although the rabbits had not made a full comeback following "myxy" we clocked up over 100 head per hawk per season but could never have done it without our GSPs and English Springers not to mention our ferrets.

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BARN OWL'S INCLUSION ON SCHEDULE 9

During regular meetings held since 1989 by the JNCC Barn Owl Liaison Group which discusses all issues relating to Barn Owls, the subject of Barn Owl reintroductions was raised, and the Barn Owl Working Group for the Department of the Environment was set up. It was composed of representatives of the British Bird Council, British Owl Breed and Release Scheme, Barn Owl Trust, British Trust for Ornithology, the Hawk and Owl Trust, the RSPB and the RSPCA. Recommendations from the Working Group resulted in the agreement of the Minister of State for the Department of the Environment that the Barn



Young in nest

The organisations represented on the Working Group are all committed to Barn Owl conservation. The Hawk and Owl Trust has been actively involved for many years, and following the publication of "The Barn Owl - its Past, Present and Future" (C. Sawyer, 1987) and other conservation booklets, has initiated many Barn Owl conservation projects. One of the most exciting has been "Operation Riverside Link" in Lincolnshire. A joint scheme with the National Rivers Authority, Anglian Region has resulted in the erection of 46 pole-mounted nest boxes within 50 km of grassland corridor on the South Forty Foot River and the Glen River. The project has already achieved a high level of success with Barn Owls and Kestrels breeding successfully in about 10 of the boxes each year.

"Operation Barn Owl - South West Scotland" began as a survey in 1982 which identified the rapid loss of natural nesting sites. In 1984 nestboxes (made for the Trust by the inmates of a local prison) were erected in the study area. At that time the population under study numbered around 20 pairs, two of which were nesting in Hawk and Owl Trust

Owl should be included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Whilst some concerns have already been voiced over this inclusion, the decision was the result of a unanimous agreement between the organisations represented on the Working Group, and is something that responsible operators of reintroduction schemes have themselves been calling for for a number of years.

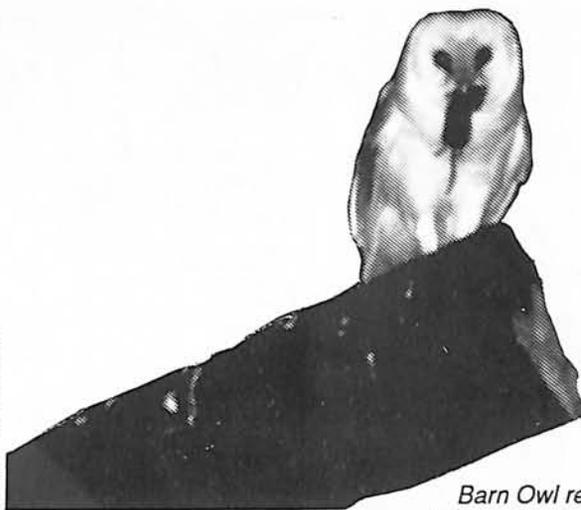
It is estimated that there are up to 30,000 captive Barn Owls in the UK, compared with a wild population of around 5,000 breeding pairs. Yet as many as 5,000 domestic-bred Barn Owls are released into the wild each year in an effort to bolster the declining wild population. Many reintroductions are carried out in a responsible manner, with sites being chosen which offer suitable habitat, sufficient prey and adequate nest sites, and records kept on the subsequent success or otherwise of the released birds. Even so, a large percentage of birds, which are released into unsuitable habitats using methods which are

nestboxes, and 18 at natural sites the majority of which were considered vulnerable. By 1991, 47 pairs were breeding in nestboxes with a further nine at remaining natural sites. Since 1984, 159 pairs have fledged 597 owlets from Trust boxes, and a large proportion of these have been ringed. In total at least 1,000 owlets have fledged from the Trust's study area, from both artificial and natural sites, making this the most successful conservation project in Europe.

The Hawk and Owl Trust's Barn Owl Conservation Network aims to secure the future of the Barn Owl and its habitat through a countrywide programme of creative conservation, practical research and imaginative education. The Network's advisory team consists of over 100 voluntary and experienced owl enthusiasts, researchers and professional ornithologists.

In the UK as a whole over 300 owlets have fledged from Hawk & Owl Trust boxes which have been placed on newly-created habitat corridors, and this work is proving so successful that it is continually being expanded into new areas.

The Hawk and Owl Trust is to hold its



Barn Owl returning with food.

inappropriate, are destined not to survive, and it is for this reason that inclusion of the Barn Owl on Schedule 9 has been recommended.

Annexing to Schedule 9 is unlikely to take place until later this year. In the meantime the Working Group is preparing and agreeing guidelines for Barn Owl reintroduction, adherence to which will form part of the eventual licensing conditions. All persons currently carrying out reintroductions will be invited to apply for a licence in 1993, and it is believed that almost all of those operating responsible schemes would be likely to receive licences for that year. It is anticipated that licencees will be asked to complete by an "End of Year Report Form", the content of which is currently under discussion.

It is stressed that the Working Group is not currently considering the possibility of changing the status of the Barn Owl by including it on Schedules 3 or 4 of the Act.

AGM at St. William's College, York, in April, followed by a day's field trip to the North Yorkshire Moors. Further details about the Trust can be obtained by writing to "The Hawk and Owl Trust, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY".

Sue M. Dewar
Hawk & Owl Trust

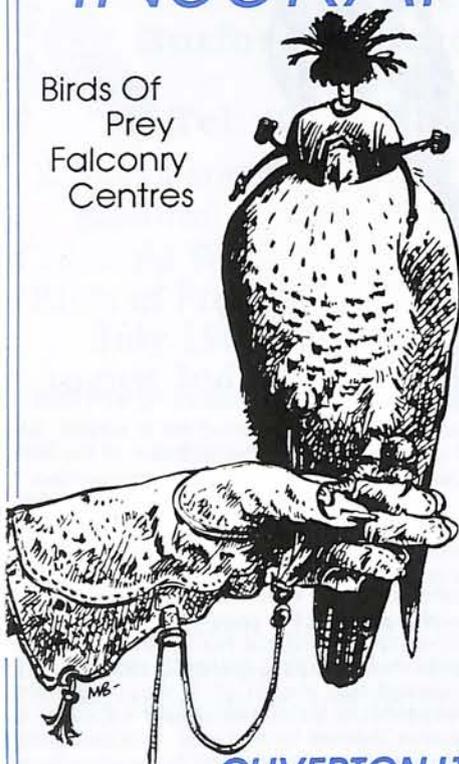


Hawk and Owl Trust making entrances to possible nest sites.

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R eview

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by Brian P. Martin

Paintings by Alastair Proud

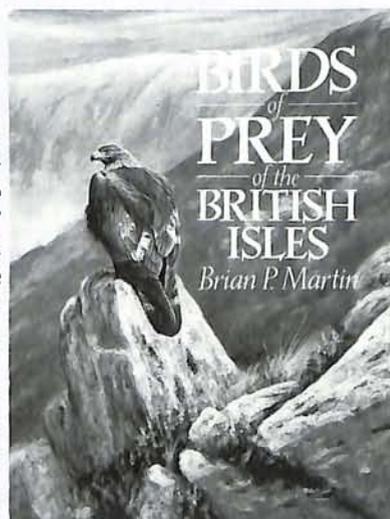
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By Robin Haigh

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The choice of housing for your bird of prey will be governed not only by species requirements but also cost and space available.

Accommodation will be required both for daytime weathering and night quarters.

Although I know of many falconers who weather their birds on blocks or bow perches on the lawn unattended I would suggest that this practice is inherently unsafe. Lawn weathering should always be supervised for there are far too many misfortunes that can befall a tethered bird.

Foxes both two and four legged have been known to take trained hawks and falcons from their perches in broad daylight, not to mention the attention that the smaller raptors may receive from the local Tomcat!

Leashes and jesses occasionally break and a bird loose with its jesses fastened together is in serious trouble, but if weathered during the day in a custom built enclosure equipment failure ceases to be a problem and adequate materials and locks should ensure that the bird is not easily got at by undesirables.

A simple outdoor weathering can be constructed in an afternoon and may be of the lean-to type. say 10ft wide with 8ft long sides and a 3ft flat or sloping roof. Height should be enough to allow comfortable access for picking up the bird and cleaning without stooping. The distance from perch to front mesh is critical and should be sufficient to allow the tips of the wings clearance.

Remember that birds on bow perches will require more space than those on blocks.

Materials for the day weathering can be half or three quarter inch ply on a 2 x 2" framework, with a ply roof covered with felt or simply painted with bitumen, which will last almost as long. I will never use plastic sheeting of any type again, for it usually becomes brittle and breaks off and blows away and if it doesn't it acts like a huge wing and can help the building to take off in a high wind.

The open half of the roof may be plastic coated chain link or weldmesh for the larger birds or 3 x 1 weldmesh for smaller species. A stout door and good locks will take care of security. It is as well to make sure the enclosure is securely fastened down so that it can not be blown over.

Ideally the weathering should face south so that the

bird has a choice of sun or shade, the roof and sides will protect the bird from wind and rain.

It has occurred to me that perhaps the whole weathering quarters should be mounted on a large turntable so that it could face in any direction you wish or even have a vane on the top rather like a windmills cupola so that the bird would always be out of the wind.

As an aid to hygiene I fit plastic bulldog clips to the back wall to hold large sheets of cardboard, from old cardboard cartons, to protect the timber from hawk mutes. Once or twice a week it is then a simple matter to replace the cardboard with new, burn the old and keep everything hygienic. I will often use cardboard on the floor underneath the perch also.

Apart from the bow perch or block the only other facility that may be required is a shallow (6") bath. These can be made for almost nothing from blue plastic lime juice or paint drums with the aid of a jigsaw.

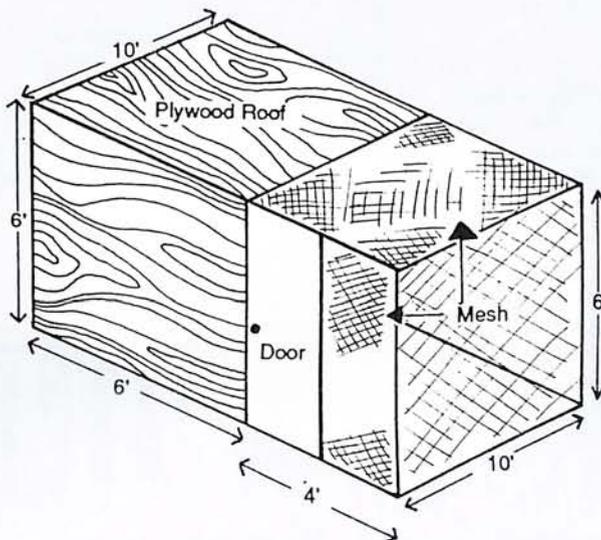
I am not happy to leave any bird tethered day and night and would never keep it in an exposed weathering tethered during the winter for this is simply asking for trouble particularly with some of the sub tropical species such as Harris Hawks and Lanners, which are both susceptible to frostbite and associated problems such as "blain", the old name for a bursitis of the end wing joint.

Instead I keep all my birds loose in enclosed aviaries, of at least 16 x 8 by 7ft high, where they can choose where they wish to sit. Turned loose in an enclosed aviary your bird will be comfortable, snug and unlikely to suffer any problems even in the coldest winter.

The advice in this article only applies to manned birds, any that have not reached the stage that they will not come to, and sit on the glove willingly should not be turned loose in shed or enclosed aviary but should be kept tethered to an indoor perch during training.

If space is a problem and you have nowhere to site and enclosed aviary then a large shed with a perch at either end, double entry doors and vertical barred window will do the job. Do make sure there are no hooks, nails or obstructions that can damage the bird.

There is of course a lot to be said for having your hawk in the home with you, for this can only improve its tameness and in my opinion a well trained bird must take everything from loud noises to sniffing dogs in its stride. And you should be able to walk up to it, around it and even step over it while feeding without the bird batting an eyelid.



County Fairs



SHOW DATES 1992

19 - 20 April	Yorkshire Festival of Transport Harewood House, Leeds, Yorkshire.
24 - 25 May	Kent Festival of Transport Chilham Castle, Canterbury, Kent.
27 - 28 June	Midlands Americana Show Himley Hall, Dudley, West Midlands
18 - 19 July	Devon & Dorset Game & Country Fair Allhallows School, Rousden, Nr Lyme Regis, Dorset.
19 July (1993)	Sussex Festival of Transport St Michaels School, Burton Park, Dunton, Nr Petworth, Sussex.
1 - 2 August	Chilham Castle Game & Country Fair Chilham Castle, Canterbury, Kent.
15 - 16 August	Sussex Game & Country Fair St. Michaels School, Burton Park, Dunton, Nr Petworth, Sussex.
29 - 31 August	Lexus National Carriage Driving and Country fair, Windsor Great Park, Windsor, Berks.
30 - 31 August	Midsummer Mania Chilham Castle, Canterbury, Kent.
26 - 27 September	Yorkshire Game & Country Fair Harewood House, Leeds, Yorkshire.
1 November	Firework Fantasia Chilham Castle, Canterbury, Kent.

For further information on any of the above, please contact:
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The Remorseless Hunt

The falcon stood on it's Master's fist:
Proud, e'en insolent, she stared around;
She tested the jess as she moved to the wrist,
And she pressed her claws down on the leather.

Slowly she turned her majestic proud head,
A full half turn without effort;
Disdainfully staring, no fear nor dread
of we mere mortals: her subjects instead.

The falconer turned slightly to face the bird,
The arm moved upwards on which the bird was perched,
The wrist turned briefly, the message received,
And the wings opened slightly, all ready to be used.

The great bird trembled, eager to fly,
Head stretched forward, releasing her grip,
The wrist moved upwards, remaining steady,
A gigantic wing thrust. . . the bird was in flight.

Languidly, it seemed, the bird flew away,
Then those powerful wings one thrust more they made,
And the bird drove in the sun's rays to stay,
Floating o'erhead with the freedom of play.

A mere speck in the distance the bird had become,
The dog was on point, three legs and a pair
held to go forward, ready to run,
At command o' the shaw's master, the maker of law.

A piercing shrill whistle, the bird seemed to hear,
For the speck became larger, transformed to the bird,
In circles o'erhead, its wings held clear,
Waiting the next call to return to the earth.

The next call came like the crack of a gun
"Flush, dog". The dog moved like a flash
Into the bracken, ignoring the brush,
And out came the quarry, forced to its run.
The closing stage of the drama begun.

The bird closed its wings as it started its dive,
Ahead of the pheasant it swooped to the kill,
Talons struck down and it stood on its prey,
Head proudly held high. The drama has ended.

W. Rhys Griffiths. (91 years young)

Photograph by David & Karan Thon

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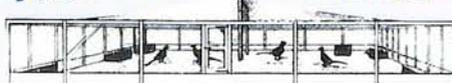
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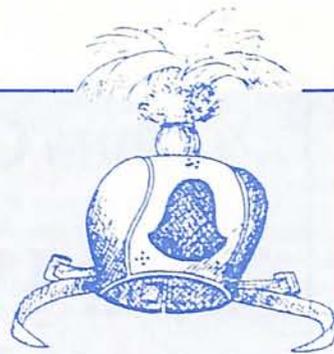
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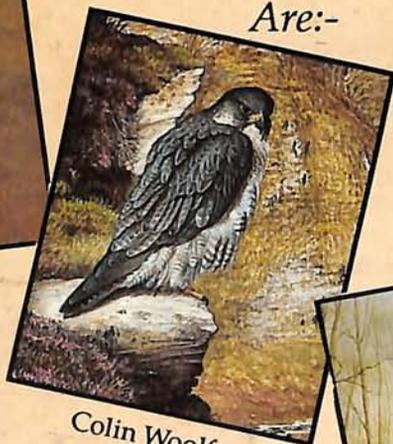
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