

The

Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

Autumn '92

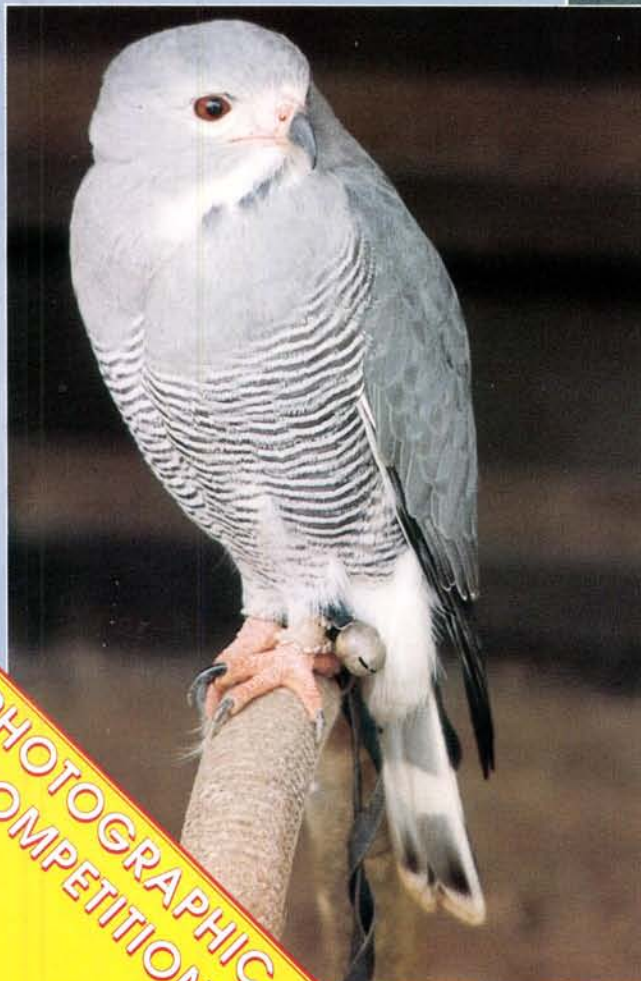
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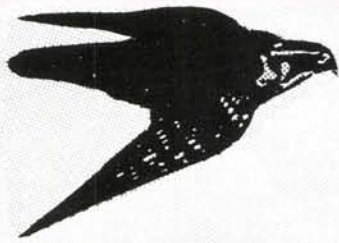
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The Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

The last 12 months has seen the loss of three well respected members of the falconry world. Ken Wood, John Haywood and Colonel Nick Faithfull. They will be sadly missed and our sympathies go out to their families.

The Falconers Fair was an overwhelming success with more people than ever turning out. Among the regulars were quite a few new faces. Also, it was nice to see someone from nearly all the clubs.

The Shropshire Game Fair gave us a welcome chance to meet a gentleman with whom we have had quite a long telephone relationship. A regular contributor to the Magazine, Philip Snow.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
The RSPB taking a look at the White-tailed Eagle.
The ancient art of Falconry in KAZAKHSTAN.
Raptors in Turkey Part Two.
A day hawking in the Isle of Mull.

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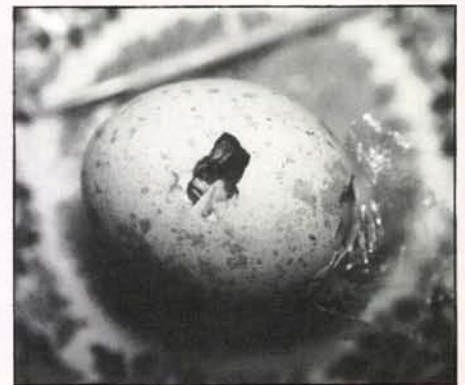
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HAWK BOARD NEWS

The Hawk Board elections are currently well under way and the results should be known by mid-August.

Mrs Sue Dewar is the new Hawk Board Secretary and can be contacted at 6 Glendevon Road, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4PH, telephone 0734 696501. Sue takes over from Liz Chick who felt it necessary to hand over due to pressure of work. Thanks go to Liz for the sterling work she gave.

Just over 1,000 hawk keepers registered on the Hawk Board electoral roll and were thus eligible to vote at the election. Some keepers missed the point that it is necessary to re-register every third year and were thus unable to vote; even with this excuse the total number registered represents a pathetically poor performance by hawk keepers. Once again the conscientious minority make an effort whilst the majority expect proposed legislation to be moulded to suit hawk-keeping in spite of their apathy.

The outgoing Hawk Board would like to urge all hawk-keepers to make a point of joining one of the recognised clubs (see

list below). Only recognised club members can help the Hawk Board financially to fight for hawk-keepers' interests, as the Board is funded by a *per capita* head levy from the recognised clubs. Many hawk-keepers who do not belong to a recognised club are benefitting from the efforts of the Hawk Board whilst contributing nothing towards this often time consuming and expensive work.

In the light of recent attacks on falconry and hawk-keeping, the Hawk Board has proposed setting up a fighting fund, the revenue from which will be held as a contingency fund and used only when absolutely necessary to defend our position. The recognised clubs have already been asked to look at ways of raising money for the fund, and it is hoped that non-recognised clubs and individuals will also play a full and active part. Suggestions for fund-raising activities should be directed initially to the Hawk Board Secretary. On election of the new Board, a member will be appointed to take special responsibility for co-ordinating such activities.

In the past few months, the

Hawk Board has been formulating a response to the final draft of an E.C. consultation document which attempts to reconcile European legislation with C.I.T.E.S. The D.O.E. have received our views and there will be a meeting with those responsible for formulating the British reply.

Following the recent threats to falconry made by the League Against Cruel Sports, it is more important than ever that falconers in the public eye should take special care when displaying their birds, particularly when attending shows. All display birds should be protected from the elements, in first class condition, manned to the public and displayed in accordance with the B.F.S.S.'s guidelines.

The Hawk Board are seeking good publicity for the staunch work done by hawk-keepers in the field of rehabilitation. Publicity heightening the public's awareness of the broader issues of hawk-keeping, particularly good work undertaken by falconers, may be critical if further threats are raised.

The B.F.S.S. Falconry Committee is formulating a code of management practice for

hawk-keeping and falconry, with assistance from the Hawk Board. Please contact one of the following recognised club representatives if you wish to contribute:

British Falconers' Club
John Fairclough
Tel: 0543 481737

Raptor Breeders Association
Robin Pote
Tel: 0584 874874

Welsh Hawking Club
Adrian Williams
Tel: 0443 206333

North of England Falconry Club
Peter Mulholland
Tel: 0652 678492

Hawk and Owl Trust
Dr Mike Nicholls
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BUILTH WELLS

A new fair appeared this year at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, this Easter, organised by Border Country Fairs. The sun shone brightly for everyone. The Falconry demonstration was provided by Geoff Dalton, who delighted everybody, falconers and laymen alike, with a display which included a marvellous flight from a beautiful peregrine falcon, who kept Geoff on his toes to say the least. Geoff took along his Golden Eagle, see above, whose manners were absolutely perfect. We were also treated to a display by a group of people who looked just as if they had stepped out of a story about King Arthur, and they demonstrated the art of jousting. The horses were dressed, as were the people in period costume, giving you the impression that you had been transported back in time. Although in its' infancy, the fair went well and if it continues in such a manner I can see it becoming a permanent annual event, and one to mark on the calendar.

C lubs



The Northern England Falconry Club

The Northern England Falconry Club was formed in the late 1960's and is one of three falconry Clubs recognised by the Department of the Environment.

The aim of the Club is to bring together people of all ages and social backgrounds for the furtherance of Falconry and the sport of Hawking.

In the early years membership centred around the old West Riding of Yorkshire but in recent years membership has increased and now covers the whole of the North of England.

Field meets are organised during the season in addition to monthly meetings when members have a chance to comment on all aspects of Falconry, or to listen to various invited guest speakers.

Should you require any further information about the N.E.F.C. please contact:

Dave Hughes

Telephone 0748 834314.

NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

Our current membership include Falconers with more than 25 years experience, beginners, breeders and supporters (those with lots of interest but not the time or facilities to keep or fly birds). They include students, housewives, teachers, doctors, business men and also a number of very young beginners.

We now meet the first Wednesday of each month at "The Elm Tree" Ringwood. At our meetings we have included talks by various people connected with Falconry i.e. "Griff" from Welsh Hawking Centre, Martin Jones, Peter Scott (vet). We have included videos and also make available various books for reference. We have put together "Falconry Questionnaires" to help the beginners and also have a "Club Newsletter."

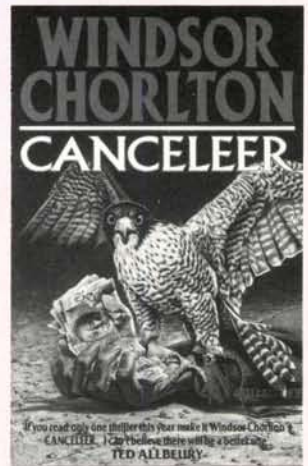
For more information telephone 0202 478862.

LIST OF CLUBS

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| AVON & SOMERSET | Derek Smith 0373 812950 D. Sutton 0225 837530 |
| BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB | John Fairclough 0543 481737 |
| CENTRAL FALCONERS & RAPTOR CLUB | B. Dalton 0276 67008 |
| CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB | P. Rowland 0625 22299 |
| EAST LONDON FALCONERS CLUB | 0708 756015/081 517 9362 |
| HEART OF ENGLAND | Steve Wright 0789 298365 |
| LONDON HAWKING CLUB | Paul 071-515 7754 Rusty 081-980 2373 |
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R eview

WINDSOR CHORLTON 'Canceleer'



Windsor Chorlton's fascination with birds of prey developed in childhood. As a schoolboy in Hampshire he trained kestrels and had some success with a male sparrowhawk called Pistol. At Aberdeen university his limitations were exposed by a haggard female gos from Austria. Nick Fox, a contemporary at St. Andrew's, was flying a hawk-eagle called Oddjob at the time, but even with the benefit of his advice, Windsor couldn't get the gos going.

Whereas Nick went on to achieve great things in raptor research, Windsor took the low road to London and a career in publishing. Pursuing his interest in birds of prey, he spent most of his holidays in Morocco's Atlas mountains, studying lanners, barbaries and lammergeiers. Six years' searching produced only one occupied lammergeier's nest (shepherds took the young for soup), and then he went off to the Himalayas and watched bearded vultures every day for three months.

In 1982 he wrote a story for the *London Times* on grouse hawking in Sutherland, where he was fortunate to meet such masters as Tony Walker (then flying Melody, a wonderful performer) and Stephen Frank. Some of the scenes in *Canceleer* were inspired by this and subsequent visits. Last year, having moved to Dorset, he obtained his first peregrines, Beth and Morgan. House renovation scuppered his plans to enter them at grouse, but since he hates to see falcons kept idle, he flew them at tame hack for six months.

Although they failed to connect with prey, he witnessed some terrific flights — especially with or at local buzzards and a wild tiercel that took up winter quarters on the downs above his farmhouse. Occasionally Morgan, the more independent of the two, had to be left out overnight, and eventually she took herself off completely. By great good fortune she was recovered a week later, having been lured down by the Naval falconers of the Bird Control Unit at Yeovilton air station. Now, both peregrines have almost completed their moult, and Windsor is planning to head north in the autumn for his first proper season of game hawking.



Windsor Chorlton

Canceleer, falconer Windsor Chorlton's second novel, has already attracted high praise. Bestselling spy writer Ted Allbeury has said, "If you read only one thriller this year, make it Windsor Chorlton's *Canceleer*. I can't believe there will be a better one." It is also very unlikely that you will find another novelist who writes so powerfully about birds of prey. Set mainly in Scotland and Morocco, *Canceleer* boasts a hero who is a falconer and features some stunning falconry scenes, testament to the author's lifelong interest in the subject.

Available from:

Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, 47 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP.

£15.99

MARSH HARRIER

by Mike Everett



Photo: W. Suetens

During the second half of the 1960s, I was closely involved with the Scottish Ospreys. By the end of the decade, there were seven nesting pairs and, although it had actually doubled in the space of a few years, the population was still regarded as very small and very vulnerable. In those days, we used to talk about the Osprey as our rarest breeding bird of prey; unknown to most of us at the time, that dubious title had actually passed to the Marsh Harrier.

In 1971, a pair of Marsh Harriers reared two young at the RSPB's Minsmere reserve in Suffolk: they were the only pair that year and I remember how we all thought that extinction as a British breeder was imminent. Things improved in 1972, however, when two nests at Minsmere produced a total of 8 young. Since then, the Marsh Harrier story has largely been a happy one. We now talk in terms of 70 or more nests per annum and when I totted up the total number of young reared in the UK from 1972 onwards I was astonished to find that it passed the 1,000 mark in 1989! Nobody likes being proved

wrong, but we were very wide of the mark with our 1971 pessimism - and we were very glad about it!

Why did this change in the Marsh Harrier's fortunes come about? To answer that question, we must go back and look at the bird's history in Britain in detail. My old friend and colleague John Day has done just that and our present understanding of the Marsh Harrier situation owes a great deal to his painstaking research over a number of years.

Although the recent growth in the population has led to more and more records of wintering birds, Marsh Harriers are primarily

summer migrants. As their name implies, they are basically wetland birds, most closely associated with the reedbed habitat in which the majority of them nest. Like all generalisations, the one about Marsh Harriers and wetlands needs to be treated with some caution: it is by no means unusual to find birds hunting over farmland, for instance, and a few of our birds even nest in growing crops. They take a wide range of small to medium-sized prey, mainly mammals and birds, either around wetlands or from field margins, ditches, track edges, verges and the like. In some situations - probably less so in

the UK than elsewhere - they may feed widely on amphibians and reptiles; I have seen them carrying snakes in southern France, for instance. The classic harrier hunting technique is used - rather slow, low-altitude quartering, sometimes varied with occasional bouts of hovering or hunting from a perch. Harriers have a particularly well developed sense of hearing and this is clearly important in locating small prey in dense vegetation.

The bird's clear link with wetlands partly explains its decline during last century, when there was extensive drainage of marshes and fens,

but this was also the period of the heaviest persecution of our raptors: the Marsh Harrier, like all the rest, was hard hit. The last breeding birds, in Norfolk, had gone by 1900. There was no further nesting record until 1911, when the birds were robbed by an egg collector; occasional breeding was then recorded until 1928, after which nesting became regular again, with one to five pairs in Norfolk up to 1945. This period, 1911-45, was one of low numbers and very limited distribution. Continuing heavy persecution brought about this state of affairs: that the Marsh Harrier survived at all was due almost entirely to the efforts of a handful of people - landowners and their helpers - in Norfolk.

A second phase dates from 1945. After the War, a decline in keepered estates led to much less persecution; in addition, new reedbeds had appeared, as a result of either deliberate wartime flooding to aid coastal defences or the abandonment of low-lying coastal areas following the severe winter floods of 1953. Some of these sites - including Minsmere - became nature reserves. All this boded well for the Marsh Harrier, which, in 1954, also became a fully protected bird for the first time. The years to 1958 were a period of increase and expanding range: during the 1950s, as many as 36 young were reared in a single year. From 1958 until that low point in 1971, however, we see a period of decline and retreat - a complete reversal of the earlier trend.

To cut a long story short, it now seems that this crash in the population was not caused by habitat problems, as was once supposed.

The years to 1958 were a period of increase and expanding range: during the 1950s, as many as 36 young were reared in a single year.

Instead, the evidence points to a pesticide-related decline, very like those we saw in Peregrines and Sparrowhawks around the same time. The fourth phase of the Marsh Harrier story - its recovery and expansion - more or less follows the pattern and general timing of the recovery of other raptor populations, dating from the introduction of bans and severe restrictions on the use of the toxic chemicals concerned. The revival in the fortunes of the Marsh Harrier

Photo by: R. Williams



Marsh Harriers hunting for small to medium-sized prey, mainly mammals and birds, either around wetlands or from field margins, ditches, track edges, verges and the like.

was slightly delayed, however; it may have been helped initially by immigration, probably from the Netherlands, and in that case would have been held up until the population there had recovered from its own pesticide-related crash.

We are now in the happy situation of having a population which is still growing and has spread beyond its East Anglian toehold as far as Wales, northern England and even Scotland. Nevertheless, disturbance, egg collecting and - despite the sympathetic attitude of the majority of landowners - even persecution remain as real threats: we must continue to be vigilant if we are to ensure that this fine raptor has a secure future with us.

RED KITES BREED AGAIN IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Red kites have bred successfully in England and Scotland for the first time in more than a century, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have announced.

The major breakthrough for these rare birds of prey has come with at least nine young flying from nests in the past few days, including eight in England and one in Scotland.

Red Kites were once common in England and Scotland but had disappeared by 1890 as a result of persecution by man. In a joint re-introduction scheme, young Red Kites from Spain, Sweden and Wales have been released in England and Scotland by the JNCC and the RSPB to re-establish breeding populations.

Young birds have been released over the last three years. Many have now become adults and several have formed pairs and nested some distance from the release sites. Breeding locations are being kept secret to avoid endangering the success of this important project.

Dr Mike Pienkowski, a director of JNCC, said "We have achieved a major target in the recovery of Red Kites in Britain more rapidly than we dared hope. Our goal is to ensure that self-sustaining populations are established which enable this magnificent bird to spread over large areas of the British countryside."

Barbara Young, RSPB chief executive, said: "We are delighted that our actions to conserve Red Kites are showing such early success, despite the loss of several birds to illegal poisoning. Close teamwork with the JNCC has been a major factor in co-ordinating international action to help this globally threatened bird."

The only native Red Kites in Britain are confined to central Wales where 70-80 pairs are breeding. Persecution is still a major threat to Red Kites and is one of the factors preventing Welsh Kites increasing their range. The re-introduction project has already been jeopardised by the death of five birds from illegal poisoning.

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PHILIP SNOW BA Hons

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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 painting of raptors in this issue are for sale, and closely based on his own field sketches and photo's and he has studied birds in many countries. For details of limited prints or commissions please contact:

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Obituaries

Lt. Col. Nick Faithfull T. D., 1911-1991

COL. FAITHFULL, of Penkridge Hall, known as Nick to his innumerable friends, was born in Shropshire and educated at Ludlow and apart from the war years lived within the county for most of his life.

Commissioned in a Territorial Regiment of the Royal Artillery before the war, he served with distinction in North West Europe, taking part in the 'D' Day landings, and was later awarded the Territorial Decoration. His career was in banking and he spent the last ten years as manager of a branch of Barclays Bank in Newport where he was granted the title of Lord of the Manor. He was a true born countryman, and often said with mischievous pride that he was probably the only bank manager in the British Isles to ride to work on a horse.

Nick had been a keen falconer since his youth. He even wanted to take his sparrowhawk with him on his honeymoon but Barbara, his wife to be, sensibly forbade him to do so. I first met him when he was Treasurer of The British Falconers' Club, a post which he held from 1954 to 1964.

Nick belonged to a bygone age of falconry, and was one of the chosen few who regularly used to visit Pole Cottage on the Longmynd where Ronald Stevens, the doyen of British falconry, held sway. Nick flew a wide variety of hawks, including a Peregrine Falcon called Kate which he released, after flying her very successfully for several seasons, so that she might enjoy her retirement to the full, free from the shackles of captivity. This is the key to understanding his character; he was a man of exceptionally generous spirit bounded with enormous enthusiasm.

When birds of prey came under threat he became a Trustee of the newly formed Hawk Trust, (subsequently the Hawk and Owl Trust). He devoted the latter part of his life to working for the Trust. For twenty years, aided by his wife Barbara, he ran a highly effective bird of prey hospital, rehabilitating over six hundred sick and injured raptors which were returned to the wild - a remarkable achievement. Nick was a born raconteur and enjoyed nothing more than telling stories about the bizarre behaviour of his friends, notably the artist, the late David Reid Henry, who often stayed with him while painting birds and that most eccentric man-of the Shropshire moors the late William Humphrey, the dog trainer of renown. His tales were never malicious but always droll. I remember him, with great affection, acting like a jovial country squire, as he played host to members of the BFC at the Game Fair when it was held at Weston Park, Shynal. Nick will be missed by many, far beyond the boundaries of his cherished Shropshire. I can only reiterate the words of one of his colleagues. He was "a veray parfit gentil knight".

Reproduced by kind permission of the Hawk and Owl Trust from their 1992 Members Journal - The Raptor.

R. B. Treleven



Col. Faithfull with Goshawk

John Haywood, 1936 -1991



All those in the raptor and art world will have been saddened to learn of the death of John Haywood late last year. John was born in Coventry in 1936 and as a child it was discovered that he had a remarkable talent for music and portrait painting. He won a scholarship to the Coventry College of Art but it was not until later in his career that he put raptors to canvas.

After college he learnt to play the flamenco guitar whilst travelling abroad and combined his talent as a pianist to make a living at painting. On his return he trained falcons for films and TV whilst working at Twycross Zoo, later becoming curator of one of the largest privately owned collections of raptors in England. It was at this time he started painting birds of prey and exhibited widely.

John's knowledge of these birds was such that most of his works were painted from memory combining the birds themselves with the landscapes he loved. Most of his paintings are better known in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and today they adorn walls from the White House in

Washington to those of palaces and private aircraft.

Sadly, I knew John for only the last ten years but long enough to enjoy his friendship and kindness and to realise his commitment to the conservation of birds of prey and indeed to the work of the Hawk & Owl Trust. Although perhaps better known in Britain for his portrait studies of birds of prey, his pictures of landscapes depicting them were even more outstanding. His hunting scenes in Arabia made you feel that you were part of the action right down to the dust storms which seemed to pervade the air around the pictures. I consider John's paintings of raptors to be the best since George Lodge, my only sadness is that there are not more of them to see here in Britain. I will personally remember John not only for his talent but for his lovable nature and kindness and in particular for the Peregrine and Merlin paintings which grace my own walls and the cover of this 'Raptor'. Warmest wishes go out to Minette and his family.

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Colin Sawyer

Kenneth James Wood

SWLA 1936 - 1992

A dedicated falconer and member of the British Falconers' Club since the sixties, Ken's skills and knowledge of the sport were always generously shared and it was through his enthusiasm and encouragement and then support that I became involved in the sport that was to become a passion and a source of so much pleasure.

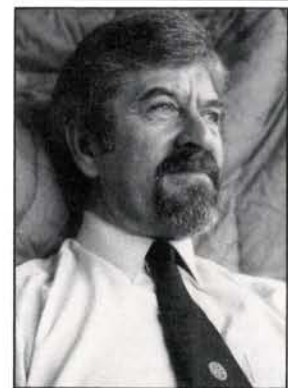
A firm taskmaster, "hawk first" was his oft repeated phrase which continues to echo in my head. It is typical of his attitude and the standards he so rigorously upheld that when he was taken ill he promptly made arrangements to give his Red-tail to a friend so that it should be flown that season. Falconer that he was, he could not be completely parted from the birds he so dearly loved and kept his falcon to the end. Even then, the instructions for her future welfare were clear.

Painting the minute wren or the magnificent eagle with equal skill and accuracy, Ken's abiding passion was birds of prey. An artist whose talent was a true gift not art school training, Ken's knowledge of the birds he painted was amassed by anatomical studies, hours spent watching and sketching in the field and detailed research.

His paintings have been exhibited and sold all over the world and used to illustrate many books and whilst it is as a bird artist that he will be remembered, the landscapes and flowers amongst which his subjects were set were painted with the same eye for beauty and detail and would have made beautiful paintings in their own right.

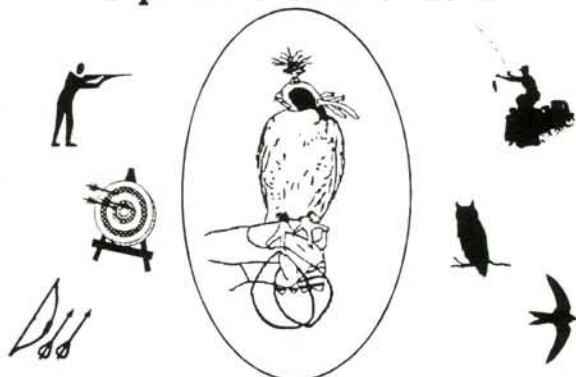
A true gentleman, loyal friend, amusing companion, wise councillor, generous of spirit, Ken's untimely death leaves a blank space in many lives and a lasting place in many memories.

Joanne Swift Secretary, British Falconers' Club - Southern Region.



Kenneth James Wood

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THE SOOTY FALCON

by
Dr T. Petit



The Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) is a small and little-known falcon, sharing with Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonora*) the singularity of breeding during late summer. This late breeding season allows the parents to feed their young with palearctic migratory birds. Furthermore, both species usually live in colonies.

Length: 32 to 36cm
Weight: slightly over 200g.
Wingspan: near 1m

It is a dimorphic species with a pale phase mainly grey and a

rarer dark phase. The prominent yellow cere is contrasting with the featureless head. The juveniles are dark brown above and heavily spotted below with a pale throat and dark tail.

This falcon is quite common along the shores, on the islands of the Red Sea and on the coasts of the Persian Gulf. Some birds penetrate into desert areas as well, in Egypt, Libya and Israel, where they remain around cliffs and canyons.

The whole population migrate in November to the coasts of East Africa, south to the Equator, and specially on the island of

Madagascar (and even Mauritius) where it inhabits a much more hospitable environment. There, groups of up to twenty birds are seen catching insects at the edge of the forests.

The Sooty Falcon is active during the hours of twilight, sometimes even before first light and after sunset. It manoeuvres very adroitly, often in pairs, and catches its prey in the air. Normal method of hunting is from perches on rocks or small trees. It catches birds flying below it with a short swift swoop and if flying high above, leaves perch, gains height till above its



Adult Sooty Falcon in flight



Adult Sooty Falcon feeds her three young



Bee-eaters are larger prey taken by the Sooty Falcons. They also take small birds and insects such as dragonflies and locusts



Quail



Hoopoe

prey and then attacks. Insect preys may be dismembered in flight, but birds are taken to the perch for plucking. It normally feeds on flying insects such as dragonflies and locusts, and on small birds. However, sandpipers, quails, hoopoes and bee-eaters and larger prey are taken by this raptor. Some Sooty falcons are also known to feed primarily on bats and some

others were observed eating fish stranded at low tide on coral reefs.

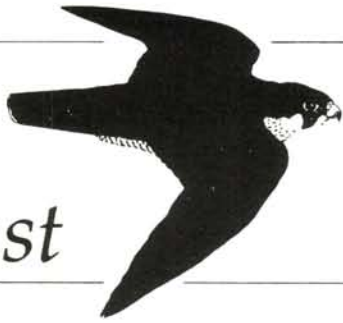
Coming back from the wintering quarters at about the end of April, the Sooty Falcons choose a nesting site not before June or July. They prefer cliffs where the nests are several hundred metres apart or the islands of the Red Sea (where they breed in loose colonies under the euphorbias (nests 40-50

metres apart). Shelter and shade seem to be essential, as the heat on the nest sites is intense in August. A nest in the heart of the Libyan desert was under low cairn stones.

The female lays 2 or 3 eggs in July or August, but clutches have been found as late as September. The incubation lasts 27-29 days and the chicks fly from the nest one month after hatching.

This late breeding season is timed to coincide with the autumn migration of most other bird species and the parents depend entirely on these migrants for feeding the young.

Hawk and Owl Trust



by SUE M. DEWAR

The Hawk & Owl Trust recognised the necessity to continue to monitor the Barn Owl population, and a follow-up national survey is due to commence in 1993). As for the previous survey, record cards will be issued requesting information on sightings, nest sites, habitat types, evidence of breeding etc. and it is hoped that the survey will be completed in 1995. All those who took part in the last survey will be invited to submit their latest sightings in order that the Trust can ascertain how those birds reported in 1982 are faring. If you have not submitted information to the Trust in the past, but have information on Barn Owl roosts, nest sites or hunting territories, the Trust would be delighted to hear from you.

BARN OWL SURVEY

In 1932 the first Nationwide Census of the Barn Owl in England and Wales was carried out by George B. Blaker, prompted by the suspicions of naturalists that the species had been declining. The survey took seven months, and confirmed that whilst the population had been in decline, due mainly to climatic events, 12,000 pairs + 1,000 non-breeding Barn Owls were reported. In addition to the drought of 1921, the wet summer of 1927 and the severe winters of 1928 and 1929, other contributory factors to the Barn Owl's decline were noted as human interference, declining rodent populations due to changed farming methods, and the loss of many suitable nest sites.

Fifty years later no attempt had been made to repeat the census, but

reports did suggest that the species had continued to decline sharply, and in 1982 the Hawk and Owl Trust, along with the Country Landowners' Association and the World Wildlife Fund, funded their Barn Owl Survey of Britain and Ireland, which continued until the end of 1985. The survey's objectives were to ascertain the geographical spread and numbers of Barn Owls across Britain and Ireland, the extent of the population change since 1932, the reasons for the species' apparent decline, and to provide a basis on which population trends could be based in the future. The Survey resulted in the receipt of over 5,000 acceptable records from farmers, gamekeepers, foresters and landowners, etc. and showed that the Barn Owl population had indeed dropped dramatically to an estimated 5,000 remaining

pairs in the British Isles, with around 1,250 single birds.

The Survey resulted in the publication of Colin Shawyer's book *"The Barn Owl in the British Isles - Its Past, Present and Future"*, described as "one of the most detailed and thorough reports ever made of any British bird". The book identifies many of the reasons for the decline in Barn Owl numbers, including prolonged snow cover, changing agricultural practices resulting in a decline in prey availability; these factors combining to result in a lower fledging success in than in 1932. Following the survey the Hawk & Owl Trust launched the Barn Owl Conservation Network, co-ordinated by Paul Johnson, its aim being to secure the future of the Barn Owl and its habitat through a countrywide programme of creative conservation,



Photo: Derick Scott

practical research and imaginative education. Habitat restoration is being conducted under the Trust's Farmland, Riverside and Forestry link initiative which aims to protect existing Barn Owl communities whilst providing a countrywide



Line drawing by John Haywood

NEW BOOK ON

The Hawk & Owl Trust is shortly to publish the results of a three-year study on Merlins in Scotland. Britain's smallest and rarest falcon, the Merlin breeds in the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere from eastern Siberia to Iceland, and from Labrador to Alaska. It is found wherever forests and scrublands are broken by expanses of open ground. A bird of the forest edge, it usually lays its eggs in old corvid nests in coniferous trees. In Britain and Ireland the

Merlin is known as the "moorland falcon", often found above the limits of enclosed land in largely deforested landscapes. Here the densest breeding population is found on grouse moors where management of the heather provides ideal nesting and foraging habitats for the Merlin. In these areas it often nests on the ground near the headwaters of moorland streams. The Merlin in the UK preys on species such as the Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Wheatear, its long pointed wings enabling it to outfly these and other small birds.

Merlin numbers declined dramatically in the 1950s and '60s as a result of the use of organochlorine pesticides which caused eggshell thinning and breeding failure. With the demise of such chemicals, numbers of other bird-eating raptors, such as the Peregrine and Sparrowhawk, recovered rapidly; however this was not the case with Merlins and as late as 1988 the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology reported that the Merlin remained "the most heavily polluted of the British raptors". Conversion of heather moorland to plantation forest, increased natural predation, recreational disturbance during the breeding season and nest robbing all contributed



network of habitat corridors and nest sites. Valuable work involving habitat creation and nest box schemes is already under way in locations including South West Scotland, Mid-Wales, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Kent/Sussex borders, Yorkshire, Avon,

and Somerset. Erection of pole-mounted nest boxes on grassland corridors in Lincolnshire has already attracted breeding pairs of Barn Owls and proves just how adaptable this bird can be, given the necessary habitat.

MERLINS IN SCOTLAND

to the failure of the Merlin population to recover.

Concern about these factors prompted a major study in South West Scotland, an area of intense afforestation. The Hawk & Owl Trust organised the study in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and forest management companies and supported by the Country Landowners' Association. The results of this important study, undertaken by Jack Orchel, are about to be published by the Trust as a book "*Forest Merlins in Scotland - their Requirements and Management*" ISBN 09503187-4-4. It will contain about 130 pages and consist of colour plates from photographs not previously published, and line and wash illustrations by Donald Watson and John Haywood.



Young Merlin

Photo: Paul Johnson

The Trust is offering this book at a special pre-publication price of £10 to readers of the *Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine*.

To receive your copy which will be despatched in September, please make a cheque or postal order payable to "The Hawk & Owl Trust" for £10 plus £1.50 post and packaging (total £11.50), and send to **Hawk and Owl Trust (books)**, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.



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Training Gundogs For Falconry

By Guy Wallace

Part Five

In this issue's Training Gundogs for Falconry Guy Wallace will be taking a look at the basic lessons for your puppy starting with "SIT" and "DOWN".

Basic Training

Many years ago an eminent spaniel trainer remarked that 50% of spaniels needed pep pills and the other 50% needed hearing aids! And not a lot has changed with the hunting breeds of gundog since then! By 9 or 10 months old when serious training should start you will know whether you have a 'wimp' or a 'hooligan' on your hands. They require completely different training methods and programmes. (The most difficult of all dogs to train is the soft dog with the hard streak or the hard dog with the soft streak but most tend to be either one or the other). The 'wimp' will need a lot of the proverbial carrot in front and you would do better to encourage it to 'open out' and to hunt and point first and then put brakes and steering on it later when it has acquired more confidence. However the trick is to recognise when to 'hook it back' before it gets the bit between its teeth. If the trainer puts too much HEEL and SIT into a sensitive dog too early it becomes the devil's own job to get it out and hunt later

you give a 'hooligan' too much rope he will hang both of you! A potential 'lager lout' should be taught the BASIC lessons of SIT, DOWN, HEEL, HERE and to turn THOROUGHLY before being allowed anywhere near the merest sniff of game.

To teach the basic lessons take the dog to a quiet and preferably enclosed field or garden with no outside distractions in the shape of game or game scent, humans, other dogs or livestock.

The SIT is the kingpin of training and is the basis upon which all other training is built. Dogs do not speak or understand the English language (or for that matter, profane four-letter-word language!) - they merely associate a particular noise or signal with an

dog with a wave of the hand at the same time. Let him have a scamper round as a reward. Do NOT ever give titbits. It is essential that the dog remains seated until specifically released from "the drop". While the dog is down watch its quarters like a hawk and if they begin to come up before the command "GO PLAY" immediately push them back down again repeating the command "SIT". Should at



Pointer in the "Down" position.



Springer Spaniel sitting to the whistle.

on and the dog becomes 'screwed down' so that a one-legged man with a stick could find more game!

That does not mean that any dog should not be taught 'domestic manners' about the house, kennel or garden right from square one. On the other hand if

action. In this case the noise is saying rather than bawling the word SIT or HUP - a corruption of the old shooting term 'Hold up'. it does not matter which word you use. Choose one and then stick to it for evermore. And in this case the action is placing its backside on the deck. So put a nylon slip lead round the dog's neck and hold the

other end in your left hand. With your right hand push the dog's quarters down and simultaneously say "SIT". Leave the dog down for about 20/30 seconds then remove the lead and give a specific word of command "GO PLAY", releasing the

any time now or in the future a dog ever breaks its drop (i.e. gets up) unbidden, take it back to the *exact* spot where it was originally dropped and repeat the word of command "SIT". The other side of the BLACK/WHITE coin is that all the time the pup is sitting as told fondle its head and tell it what a good person it is so that it associates pleasure with an action as done well. It is always far better to do any exercise well over a short time or distance than get it wrong over a longer time or distance. A total of fifteen minutes of "SIT" and then scampering around is plenty for one evening. The 20/30 seconds can be gradually increased over successive evenings until the dog is sitting for several minutes. The next stage is to leave your end of the lead trailing on the ground (you can put your foot on it!) so that the dog *thinks* that it is still held and finally, remove the lead altogether.

At this stage you can follow the command "SIT" with a single blast on

your dog whistle (which should be different from your hawk whistle). A whistle disturbs game less than the voice and most dogs react to it better than the voice. I recommend a plastic whistle (ACME 2101/2 from gunshops) as, should you lose it, you can replace it with an identical whistle and sound. Later you can hold your hand up like a policeman stopping traffic at the same time as saying "SIT" or the single blast on your whistle and the dog will come to associate that action also with the action of "SIT". Hold your palm out to one side of your body or it will merely blur against your face. When you eventually come to take up your hawk after the moult every time you call the hawk off (or cast a falcon off) you can drop the dog so that, again, the dog associates the hawk flying with the action of sitting. An invaluable lesson on occasions! Alternately, you can incorporate this last lesson with the command "DOWN" rather than "SIT".

There is no race or hurry to training a dog. Like a hawk a dog masters a lesson when it has mastered it and not before. You do not remove the creance to call a hawk off from 20 yards until you are certain it is coming 40 yards on the creance five times out of five!

Having taught lesson 1, the "SIT" you can now teach lesson 2, the "SIT" while you walk away. "SIT" the dog as normal, face the dog holding the lead and slowly back off one pace. DO NOT stare straight into the dogs eyes as this will upset it. Instead look at a spot in the middle of the dogs "forehead". After 5/10 seconds take one pace forwards towards the dog, make a fuss of him and release him with "GO PLAY".

Again, gradually increase the time and distance that you have backed off. It is very important that you return to the dog three times for every once that you call the dog to you. If you always call the dog to you, you will soon have an unsteady dog.

You will note that I do not use the word "STAY". This is because when I tell a dog to "SIT" I do not expect it to do anything else until I tell it, so "STAY" is a

superfluous word of command in my book. Having backed off facing the dog you can then turn your back on the dog and walk away but at first I always keep an eye on him with a small mirror held surreptitiously like a car wing mirror!

Having taught the "SIT" you can then teach the command "DOWN" which tells the dog to lie in the prone position. As with the "SIT" push the dogs hind quarters down and collapse the front legs with the other hand and place your hand over its shoulders (with a decently bred "English" pointer puppy, a growl is enough to make it go down). When you stand up pass the lead under the instep of your boot and if the dog tries to get up prematurely a sharp jerk on the lead with the command "DOWN" will force the pupil back into the prone position since the pull is coming from below. When later you walk away a longer line passed through a ring of a screw-in dog tether (obtainable from a gunshop) will have the same effect.

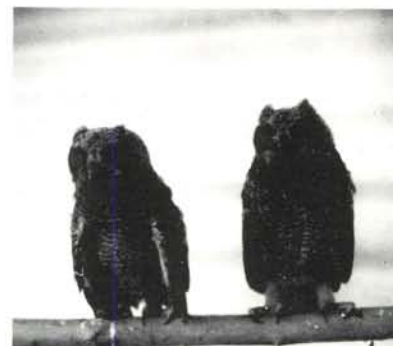
Remember life to a dog is black or



Author with Pointer and Falcon.

white with no shades of grey and equally important is never to let a pupil get away with anything.

Next issue - Basic Training Continued...



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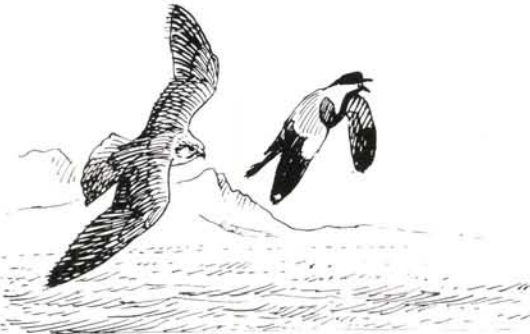
Raptors In Turkey

Part 1 of a 2 part article

Text & sketches by Philip Snow.

In Western Turkey, the ancient city of Istanbul bridges Europe and Asia, funnelling migrating birds towards the narrows of the Bosphorus; whilst at the far eastern end of the country huge numbers of birds also use the eastern Black Sea route! Raptors figure prominently in this twice yearly passage, and although Istanbul has long been famed for this spectacle, by far the greatest north Mediterranean migration is via the largely unwatched (by non-Turks) eastern mountain passes near Armenia, just below the Black Sea. For instance, in Autumn 1976, some 380,000 raptors passed this way, compared with about 75,000 via Istanbul, and 190,000 through Gibraltar.

These numbers give us some idea about the birds of prey we share annually with the Near East and Africa, as 24 out of the 46 western palearctic species are truly migratory.

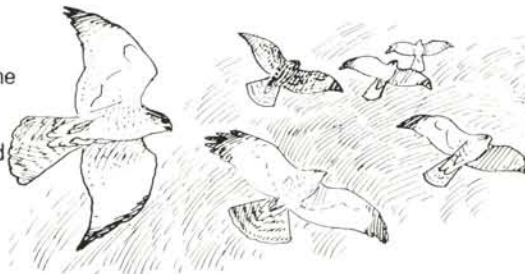


Lanner chasing Spur-winged Plover

In addition, of course, many others fly through on a broad front, or are unrecorded and Turkey also has good numbers of resident raptors amongst some of the most stunning montane, steppe, semi-desert and wetland scenery to be seen anywhere.

During Autumn migration, as elsewhere, the BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) and HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis apivorus*) numbers dominate, with up to 237,000 and 164,000 respectively, largely via the east. The Buzzard picture is slightly complicated, though as in the east the passage is basically the slightly smaller 'Russian' STEPPE BUZZARD (*Buteo b. vulpinus*); not dissimilar to the larger resident sub-species of STEPPE BUZZARD (*Buteo b. menetriesi*); and in the west, both, or intermediate birds! (The nominate European race *Buteo buteo* is largely non-migratory in its southern quarter and not usually seen here). The secretive Honey Buzzard only breeds sparingly in Turkey, with up to 500 pairs. Fortunately the largely resident LONG LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo rufinus*) is a much larger, distinctive and very reddish bird, longer-winged and with a clear pale orange tail; rather similar in plumage pattern and habits to the northern ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo lagopus*), which however, is only a rare winter visitor.

Up to 33,000 (late 80's) LESSER SPOTTED EAGLES (*Aquila pomarina*) pass through, mainly via the west, but only a maximum of 50 pairs of this 'damp forest' bird



Migrating Levant Sparrowhawk - adults & one juvenile

breeds. They, along with Honey Buzzards, are classic migration sights from east Istanbul's pleasant hilly parks, often accompanied by lines of White Storks against the exotic backdrop of the teeming city and its myriad of soaring mosques. BLACK KITES (*Milvus migrans*) reach about 8,500, with roughly a 60% bias to the east and a handful of RED KITES (*Milvus milvus*) trickle through with them via the Bosphorus. The Black Kite's breeding status is declining in Turkey, with a maximum of 1,000 pairs left by 1979 and it isn't clear whether the Red Kite breeds or not.

The striking 'Black eyed' or LEVANT SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter brevipes*) has numbered up to 7,500 on passage, with a preference for the Bosphorus and perhaps up to a hundred scattered pairs still breed. Often with very pale underparts, and a longer and more pointed dark 'hand', it can appear very falcon-like and the juveniles differ from *Accipiter nisus* by having strongly streaked and blotched underparts.

SHORT TOED EAGLES (*Circus gallicus*) in the main also prefer the western route (up to 2,380) and their typical hovering form over reptile-rich scrubby slopes is not that uncommon in Turkey, although only a maximum of 1,000 pairs breed. The familiar SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) is both resident and migrant here, with observations of about 1,000 birds via the eastern and 500 by the western route and probably up to 1,000 pairs breeding. These are very conservative estimates, however, as it is commonly used as a falconer's bird and 'pet', especially near the north eastern Turkish flyways and more on this later. The smallest BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) in both light and dark phases is next in line, numerically, with about 1,000 birds almost equally divided 'twixt the east and west. Again, a smaller breeding population of up to 500 pairs is found in suitable wooded, hilly areas, although generally, numbers are declining. About 600 unmistakable EGYPTIAN VULTURES (*Neophron percnopterus*) pass over the Bosphorus with a handful in the east, and up to 1,000 pairs breed. A maximum of 5,000 pairs of the ubiquitous KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) breed throughout the country, but

only about 500 birds were seen to pass through, mainly to the east.

Hailing from the old USSR, potentially confusing STEPPE EAGLES (*Aquila nipalensis*) logically use the eastern route to Africa and the Near East, 430 being seen in Autumn, '77, 76,000 were later counted over the southern Red Sea in 1987. Also recorded at all times and seasons over Turkey's central plateau, typical breeding habitat, but no real evidence of breeding. The languid questing flight of the MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aenuginosus*) is locally common on large wet lands, although no more than 280 pairs are thought to breed (1982). 385 have been recorded passing in the east, but no more than 10 via the Bosphorus. Like wetland flora and fauna worldwide, they are always threatened by drainage and 'improvement', and unfortunately indiscriminate and senseless shooting in Turkey, as elsewhere in the Mediterranean. (In 1989, we found shot Marsh Harriers alongside dozens of slaughtered Ruddy Shelducks and others left to rot around Kulu Lake, near Ankara).

The beautiful little RED FOOTED FALCON (*Falco vespertinus*) had a maximum count of about 270 birds passing mainly over via the Bosphorus, but is a non-breeder in Turkey.

Again in autumn, '89, we saw a small roost party at dusk that contained some of the eastern 'Manchurian' race (*Falco amurensis* — with white underwings) below magnificent snowclad Mount Ararat, by the Russian border.

About 1,000 pairs of GRIFFON VULTURES (*Gyps fulvus*) nest in Turkey and around another 230 have been noted on passage, mainly in the west. The dashing HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) is also both resident and migrant, with a maximum of about 300 easterly biased birds flying over. Equally magnetic and a good deal rarer, is the elegant PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) which, like the Steppe Eagle, is near the Western limit of its migration route here, wintering in



Pallid Harrier ♀ · Montagus ♀ · Pallid immature

both India and Africa. Although only one or two pass by the Bosphorus, 133 individuals were logged passing near Borka, north east Turkey in autumn '76 and were delighted to see about 10 birds of all ages, with seven together on Lake Varis western shore by Ahlat. Confusable, in female and immature plumages, with MONTAGUS HARRIERS (*Circus pygargus*) which both breeds here (up to 100 pairs) and passes through with similar numbers and easterly bias. The larger, stockier HEN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) is mainly a winter visitor, via the north east, of uncertain breeding status, but about 50 have been seen passing south.

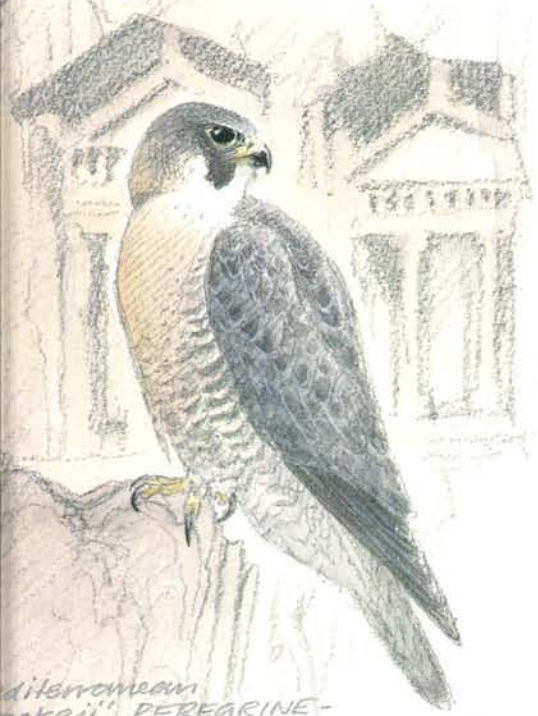


BEARDED VULTURE
 adult
 immature -
 emirkeazite alps.
 EGYPTIAN
 VULTURE ad.

(a)

(b)

(c)



Mediterranean
 "rookeii" PEREGRINE -
 against Lycian rock
 tombs at Dalyan,
 W. Turkey.

LESSER
 SPOTTED EAGLE -
 - 1st yr bird.



RED FOOTED FALCONS (a) 1st yr (b) adult ♀ (c) adult ♂
 LESSER KESTREL adult ♂



(a)
 SAKER
 FALCON -
 central
 plateau
 (a) adult
 (b) 1st yr.



(b)



^ OSPREY
BLACK KITE

^^ DARK
STEPPE
BUZZARDS

Mt. Ararat,
nr Dogubeyizat.
c1600 ft



^ LONG LEGGED
BUZZARD -
@ adult
b 1st yr



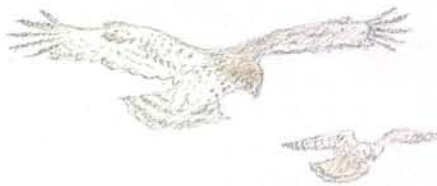
^ SPOTTED
EAGLE
1st yr



RAPTORS in TURKEY

^ Sowluk - a popular prey!

SHORT TOED
EAGLE & KESTREL



♀ SPARROWHAWK & ♂ QUAIL



^ DARK
SHORT
TOED
EAGLE @ P. SNOW

BIRDS NOT TO SCALE

RAPTOR

RESCUE

By Ray Turner
L.R.K.

Male Kestrel "Jic-jac"

Jic-jac was singularly unfortunate when he crossed the A38 and came into collision with a furniture removal van. The injuries sustained as a result of this mishap were a broken leg, a broken wing and worst of all, both upper and lower mandibles were broken off almost to the base. Our local veterinary surgeon treated

both the leg and the wing injury by pinning the fractures back into place - although there was nothing at all that could be done about the beak. Doubt was expressed at the time as to whether this would ever mend in terms of the beak growing again.

For the first few days poor Jic-jac had to suffer the ignominy of being swathed in a piece of towelling and laying on his tum on the carpet indoors. He had to be fed, of course, whilst the injured areas repaired themselves.

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.

This was achieved by the use of a pair of forceps, small pieces of meat were popped down his throat, and perhaps it is of interest that this seemed to cause him little stress.



Male kestrel "Jic-jac"

The first part to recover was the leg. After a few days he could flex his feet and a week after being wrapped up we removed the towelling and found that he could stand unaided.

However, we did not want him to try and fly at this early stage so the ends of the primaries were stuck together with a piece of brown sticky paper. It was two weeks after this that we thought perhaps the wing had

now mended sufficiently to remove this paper binding. At this stage he could now walk around and grip with the injured leg, it appeared that the wing had set to what amounted to a perfect knit so that this could be flexed in the normal manner. We fitted a pair of light jesses and provided a log on which he could stand. The feeding by hand continued for several months. Gradually, the ends of the beak started to grow and, at last, he could feed himself. From time to time it was necessary to trim the beak with a nail file.

Some six weeks after he was eventually released, I saw him one evening sitting on a telegraph pole near our house. His facial markings and his subsequent flight proved to me that it was indeed him, after six weeks in the wild, it was nice to know that he had adjusted to the outside world.

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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"JACKS"

Show of Strength

All over the world, pigeons have been shot, poisoned and even electrocuted but it has made no impression on the ever increasing population. But in Limburg, in the Netherlands, Jack Van Aerts has solved this problem with the help of Itha, Star and Speedy



Itha 'female peregrine'

Jack Van Aerts is one of only two professional Falconers in the Netherlands. He has been flying Birds of Prey for over 20 years and is employed by the province of Limburg to help reduce the large flocks of birds which were damaging the towns' buildings. Jack had to work a two year probation and then a further three years to prove his worth, he is now recognised all over the world where his methods are currently being used. Jacks' job is to disperse flocks of pigeons, gulls and crows, with Birds of Prey, in the same way they are used on airfields in Britain.

Jack will fly his birds, two Goshawks, Star and Speedy and a female Peregrine falcon, Itha, separately, throughout the day in the places where the flocks congregate. After such a show of strength the birds will not return to the area for up to a week.

Telemetry (radio tracking) is a very important part of Jacks' equipment, as the birds spend most of their time out of sight.

This way of controlling vast numbers of birds in Limburg and other countries has proved to be the most successful and humane to date.

I am sure Star, Speedy and Itha, with the help of Jack Van Aerts, will be a common sight in Limburg for many years to come.

Tips for incubating and hatching RAPTOR EGGS

By C. J. Griffiths of The Welsh Hawking Centre.

So you have decided to chance it and take your valuable raptor eggs and see if you can do as well, if not better, than their natural mum!! Unless you are very rich, or very silly, you made your decision on what incubator to buy, at least four months ago, before the start of the breeding season. You sited it in a temperature stable room, away from any windows where direct sunlight would fall on it. You have read "Peregrine Propagation" by the Peregrine Fund "The Incubation Book" by Dr Anderson Brown, "Practical Incubation" by Rob Harvey. You have hatched several clutches of chicken eggs successfully. Of course you have! You are only reading this at the last minute to check to see if I know how to hatch eggs. Great! If by chance you haven't, then read this article, then do all the above before you even think about taking those eggs from mum, or you will be later wishing that you had left them where they were.

Then and only then start to put the tips below into practice.

1. Buy or borrow a master thermometer. This will let you set up all your other thermometers by putting the bulbs in a lump of plasticine in the incubator at its correct temperature and you will then be able to calibrate all your thermometers - expect some eye openers!
2. Map your incubator. All incubators have hot and cold spots. They may not matter with chicken eggs but for your more valuable raptor eggs only the correct temperature is good enough.
3. If at all possible, use a dehumidifier in your incubator room and drop the humidity to 40%. (Machine Mart Tel: 0602 411200). This is because it is much easier to put water back in an incubator (raising the humidity locally) than trying to get eggs to lose weight using silica gel or sanding (thinning the eggshell) of the egg you want to lose weight. Control the temperature of the room to 75°F using a wall thermostat and fan heater (any branch of Currys). This means the incubator does not have to work so hard to maintain a steady temperature and in the event of a short power cut or your forgetting to turn the incubator back on after looking at your eggs you have a bigger reservoir of heat.
4. Buy a small generator that will cope with the number of incubators you have, and an alarm system to warn you of power cuts. This is a standard on Curfew incubators and an extra on A. B. If you can not justify the expense of this, then on a standard Tee shirt, sew enough

pockets to hold all your eggs individually. In the event of a power cut or incubator breakdown, your body heat of 98.4 will keep those eggs alive if you can stop people walking into you!

5. Disinfect your incubator at least between clutches. If you have had an egg die in it, disinfect, straight away as well. Use 2 grams of Potassium Permanganate to 3cc of Formalin per cubic foot of incubator space. You must do this outside as the gas that this mixture gives off is extremely toxic. After disinfecting, run up the incubator outside before putting it back in your room, then run up for 12 hours to let the temperature stabilise.
6. Obtain a set of scales that are accurate to a tenth of a gram (Robin

Haigh, A. B. or Electromail supply these).

At the centre we incubate large eagle eggs at 99F, medium falcon and hawk eggs at 99.5F, and small eggs like Kestrels, Sparrowhawks and smaller at 99.9F. Unless we know better from past experiences we start the humidity off at 85F on the wet bulb or 50% digital

Eggs need to lose 15% of their fresh weight to hatch over their incubation time, ideally, if they are outside 12 to 18% then they are in real trouble and may need help. So to obtain this, we weigh the eggs as soon as they are gathered. It doesn't matter if they are part incubated; assume they are not for the purpose of the graph, then draw a line from the top of the graph down the number of days that you think it has been incubated. The graph is straight line so the weight loss should

be a constant. The graph shown is for an egg weighing 48.8 grams after 7 days of natural incubation. You can see that we moved it to a drier incubator to keep within the two danger lines of 12 and 18%.

The eggs are candled every three days (we use the candler from Brinsea Tel 0306 876767) and at the game time weighed. This way you can plot the weight loss on the graph and gently raise or lower the humidity for each egg, trying to keep the weight running up the straight line. If you have enough money, try to buy three incubators and run them wet, medium and dry. (It also gives you insurance in the event of a break down). If you only have one incubator the only way I know of of making eggs lose more or less weight is to gently sand (slightly thin) to lose weight more quickly, or



Dehumidifier. A great help in controlling egg weight.



A. B. Incubator. With optional Auto overheat cut out.

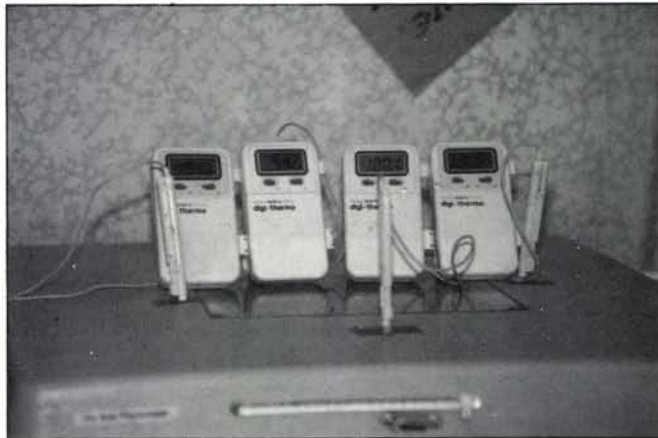
smear with Evo Stick wood glue to slow weight loss: in both cases over the air sac. Incidentally this wood glue can be used to repair cracked eggs if you get to them before disease gets through the crack first. The

candling will let you see the blood veins developing and pick up the odd 2% of eggs that have the air sac at the "wrong" end of the egg, (the pointed end), for, if this is incubated with the air sac down, it will die after about 15 days. More importantly it will tell you if an egg dies so that it can be

removed from the incubator before it starts to gas and eventually blow up covering the inside of the incubator with enough bacteria to kill everything in it. We have found at the Hawking Centre that small eggs hatch better if they are laid on their side (as nature intended) and not upright (as most incubator manufactures seem to think they should be!) A. B. now make roller mechanism to suit different size eggs if you prefer to set your eggs this way. If an egg dies, do not get despondent, nobody hatches 100% of fertile eggs (of course we all try to get as near as possible to this figure) and, if they say they do, they are telling porky pies! Even the wild birds do not achieve this with perfect muscles and diet, and the best we can hope to achieve in the aviary situation is to match the wild bird percentage. When the egg pips (the shell crazes as the chick starts to break out) remove it to the hatcher. We use a Rolex with a low noise low air capacity fan, with a ten turn digital temperature controller, available from Electromail 0536 204555, (this company supplies all sorts of electrical goods if you wish to repair or modify your incubator), with the bottom completely flooded with water. Each egg is in a plastic container, resting on a plastic ring to stop it moving, with the pip uppermost. I have found that

if the chick is weak, stopping all movement of the egg will often be enough to let it hatch itself. Once the pip has started, you can not run the hatcher at too high a humidity. The vast majority of chicks will hatch themselves from now on. From pip to hatch may take from as little as 24 hours (an

American Kestrel) to 96 hours unaided (Lugger Falcon). We keep a very close watch on the eggs at this stage. If we feel that the chick is becoming weak, and in any case after 60 hours, we put in a window in the blunt



A.B. Incubator showing the results of incubator "mapping". N.B. A similar result could have been taken with any make of incubator that I have ever used.

end of the egg. This window is a small hole about 1/2 inch across chipped out with a small pair of tweezers. The membrane can then be seen. If it is gently wetted with a small soft artists paint brush the veins can be seen if these are bright red. If you try to hatch the chick with the veins at this stage, it will bleed to death and so should be returned to the incubator, first covering the hole with a layer of cling film to stop the membrane drying out. Check every two hours till the veins are dark brown, which shows that the chick has shut down and needs to come out of the egg. If left there and it is not already turning to get out then it will die in the shell and must be removed. When the chick is removed, hopefully the yolk sac will have retracted and the chick will just need to be cleaned up and the umbilical swabbed with Savlon Cream and all will be well. If the yolk sac is unretracted, at first try to massage as much as possible of the yolk sac into the



Closed circuit T.V. The only way to really know what's happening in a seclusion aviary without disturbing the birds.

body cavity (do not forget to scrub your hands first). If there is only a little of it out, you may be able to get it all in. If not, you will have to tie off as close to the body as possible. We use sterilised wool as this is not as sharp as cotton or thread. The chick for the next few days will be in a dehydrated state and will need to be injected with Ringers Solution (from helpful chemists) using 32 gauge needles into the skin fold under the wings and between the thigh and body, inject every 4 hours in a different place. The dried up yolk sac will fall off after about 3 to 4 days. Because I have always been worried about birds kept alive this way, which would certainly have died, I have never sold them and so can report on them. This year we have successfully bred from an American Kestrel that was 4 1/2 grams at hatch with a distended yolk sac that was nearly as big as his body when he hatched three years ago. I have also, by knowing exactly when it should have hatched, hatched myself, (it didn't even pip itself) a Tawny Eagle which now appears to be perfectly normal.

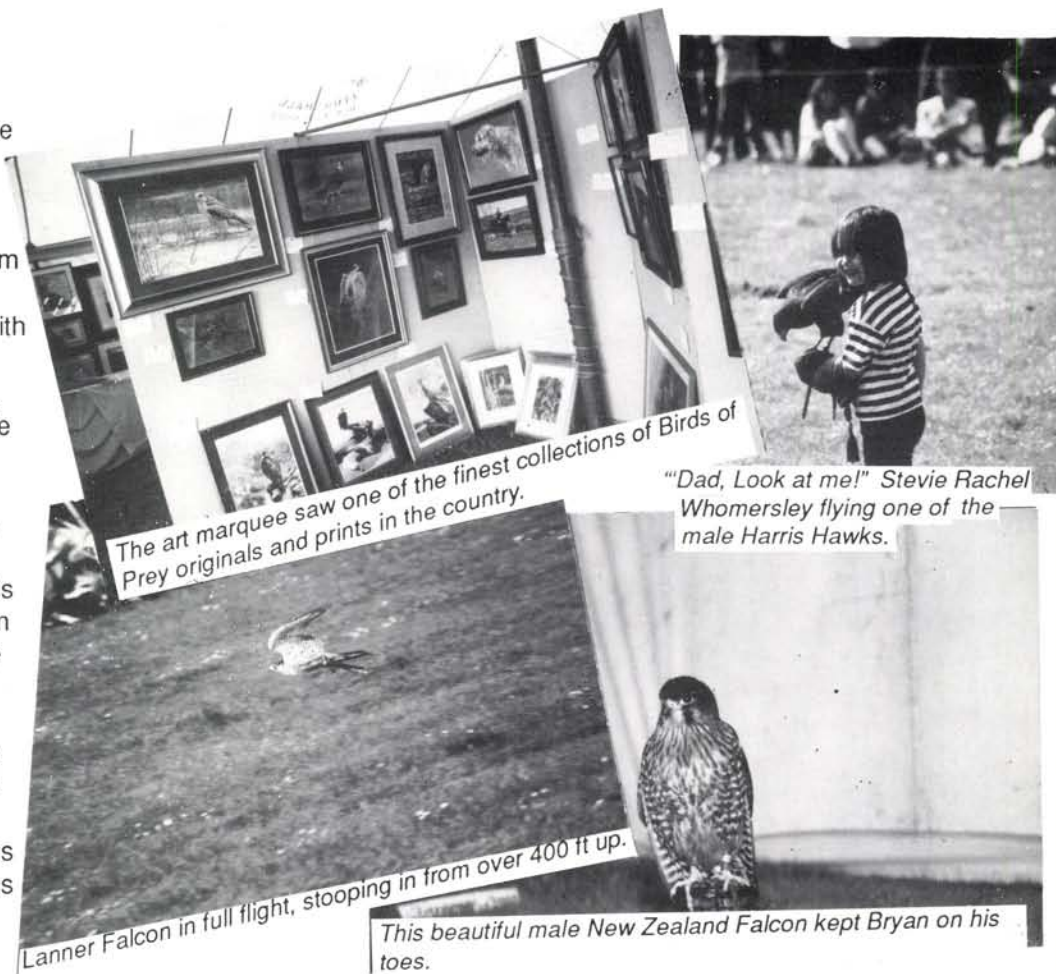


Windowed egg showing natural pip and window which will be covered with cling film when egg is returned to the incubator.

The food we feed all our chicks is skinned, eviscerated, head and feet off, food processed rats, with added SA37 plus bone meal (from your vet). The only exception to this is Snowy owls where I have had impacted stomachs with the SA37 and this is left out.

The Third British Falconers

Saturday 17th May dawned bright, much to everyone's delight and by 8a.m. the walled gardens at Stoneleigh Showground were a hive of activity. Every body was just about ready for 9.30a.m. when the gates opened. The main Falconry arena was constantly occupied, from 10.00 onwards by one person or another, sharing their knowledge with the interested spectators. Bryan Paterson and Terry Large on birds, with Bryan flying a superb little male New Zealand Falcon to the lure, which seemed to give him much more to think about than any of his lanners, and delighting a beautiful little girl by letting her hold his Harris Hawk. For which she rewarded him with a kiss. Gordon Ayer was once again talking to us about dogs, including the unusual H.P.R. the Bracco Italiano. Falconry Furniture makers were well represented, and the Falconer was offered a large range of equipment of varying styles and prices. Also this year there was a series of talks given on various



The art marquee saw one of the finest collections of Birds of Prey originals and prints in the country.

"Dad, Look at me!" Stevie Rachel Whomersley flying one of the male Harris Hawks.

Lanner Falcon in full flight, stooping in from over 400 ft up.

This beautiful male New Zealand Falcon kept Bryan on his toes.

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and Raptor Fair



Terry Large with one of his Lanner Falcons,



Ferruginous Hawk



Stevie saying "thank you" to Bryan for making her day a very special one.



The unusual Bracco Italiano seen in the parade of dogs.

subjects and a healthy question time ensued after each one. Where people with a problem could try and find an answer. The art marquee was positively buzzing all weekend, with most of the artists demonstrating their considerable talents at some time during the two days. It was a pleasure to watch and a further treat to see many finished paintings as well.

Alan Hunt and Chris Christoforou are to be commended for bringing together such an array of beauty for us to see and enjoy, and hopefully they will do the same for us all again next year. It was nice to see that a lot of the clubs had taken a stand this year, it is important for beginners to see that there is somewhere that they can go, that is reasonably local, for help and advice.

Finally a word to Ron Morris and Major Peter Wainwright, who must be thanked, for, once again, putting on such a good show. Hope to see you all again next year!!

County Fairs



SHOW DATES 1992

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 19 July (1993) | Sussex Festival of Transport St Michaels School, Burton Park, Duncton, 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, Duncton, 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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MASTER of the SKIES

By
*Diana Durman-
Walters*
of the *Scottish
Academy of Falconry
& Related Studies.*



Photo: Steve Rudi

Peregrine falcons are probably the best known, most talked about birds of prey known to the modern world. Their natural ability in the air, their physical beauty and their conquest of breeding territories globally mean that this falcon should be the most readily accessible bird to be seen in the sky.

For many bird watchers the sighting of a peregrine is an all too often rare occurrence. The fleeting glimpse of this aerial master is generally given to checking with the bird handbook and then debating whether it was or wasn't.

Today the peregrine occupies more territories and breeding sites than at any time before the 2nd World War. This emphasises the enormous amount of work that has been done on its behalf particularly during the past 25 years, to prohibit the use of pesticides detrimental to its existence and to encourage colonisation of suitable habitats.

It's one of the few birds to induce the whole range of human emotion from anti-feeling to protectionist zeal. During the second World War when many messages of military importance were being sent via carrier pigeon the coastal peregrines were exterminated because they were quite happily feeding on these same pigeons which carried our nations destiny attached to their feet. Once peacetime prevailed then the business of securing enough food to feed a hungry war stricken nation got under way and the process of massive crop production swung into action. The whole process was 'revolutionised' by the new wave of pesticides. Few could guess the havoc that would be unleashed with its use.

Whilst the landscape changed to endless monoculture the rising toll of infertility among peregrines caused scientists to investigate the problem. At this point in time this falcon's future was hung in the balance as

indeed were many other species of bird of prey who remained at the top of the food chain.

The change in the usage of organo chloride pesticides was to be the turning point for birds of prey. It heralded a new period of enlightenment which was with the ensuing years to provide suitable environments for the peregrine in particular. With the increased focus on this bird by the R.S.P.B. and many like minded organisations the restoration was under way. Today the peregrine in the UK is established in all areas known pre-war including Southern coastal sites.

This falcon perhaps more than any other is indeed an extrovert. As its name suggests it is a wonderer, an explorer. To be so requires an enquiring mind and certainly they seem endowed with this. Perhaps some of the better areas to observe these magnificent birds are coastal and mountainous regions. Wales, Scotland and the North of England have between them some spectacular scenery that affords some of the best nesting sites as well as areas of beauty that natural observation of them can be made. Not all areas as one might expect harbour peregrines. One of the best times to view them in the wild is during the winter months where they have specific feeding territories. Traditionally they have occupied known wintering sites for centuries and although in the next valley may be equally good opportunities for hunting, peregrines might not be found there.

One of the reasons put forward for this

may be that as peregrines are fond of bathing (daily where possible) that suitable gravelly streams may be of paramount importance, plus the type of quarry that is to be found there. Although perfectly capable of taking a wide variety of quarry they do in fact show a marked preference for specific prey species.

One eyrie that I was able to note food intake in 1980 was located on a rocky scree on the edge of a well known grouse moor. This pair of peregrines had ample opportunity each day to feed on grouse which were abundant. This they did to a degree, but what was interesting was that 3 miles away there was a large Black headed gull colony which both peregrines visited daily in order to feed their young. In their case this was far easier pickings despite the journey, than tackling the equally accessible quarry on their doorstep.

Peregrine watching becomes obsessive. Once the eye is trained to detect them in flight and a 'feel' for the area where they might be, journeys to areas to see them (even though it may only be through binoculars) become compulsive holiday recreation. One of the best places to view are the islands off the west coast of Scotland. Here peregrines can hunt with fewer human pressures on them and indeed in these coastal areas they can specialise on waders and duck, which they often show a preference for.

However the most common food source is woodpigeon. The figures below are the culmination of a ten year study of 619 peregrine kills given as individual species.

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Woodpigeon. | 38% |
| Black-headed gull | 14% |
| Lapwing | 6% |
| Wigeon | 3% |
| Partridge | 3% |
| Fieldfare | 3% |
| Moorhen | 2% |
| Curlew | 2% |
| Golden plover | 2% |
| Rook | 2% |

35 other species made up the remaining 25% total
Represented as families by proportion:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Pigeons | 39% |
| Gulls | 17% |
| Waders | 16% |
| Duck | 8% |
| Game | 5% |
| Corvids | 5% |
| Small or medium sized passerines | 5% |
| Others | 5% |

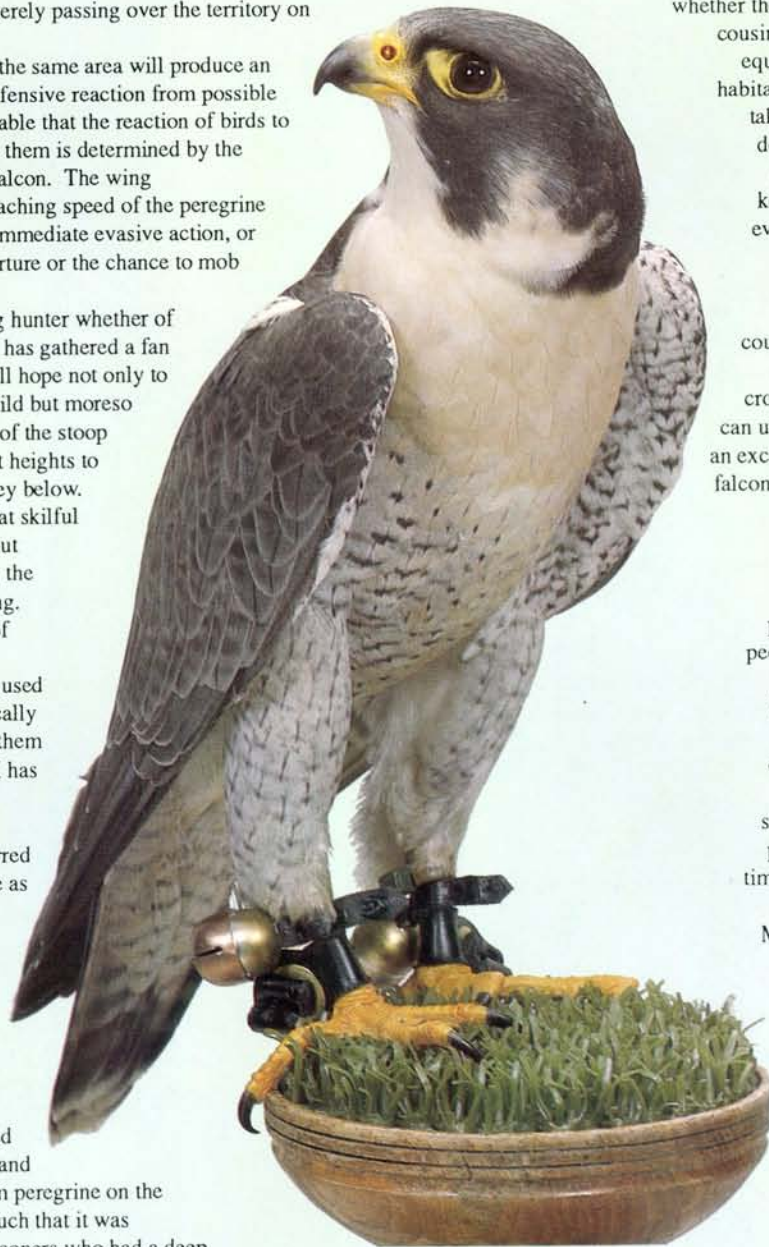
Conspicuousness of colour or pattern increases vulnerability and influences the peregrines choice of prey. Birds moving from place to place are always vulnerable, whether flying to and from their roosts along known ways, or merely passing over the territory on migration.

Regular hunting over the same area will produce an increasingly effective defensive reaction from possible prey. It is always noticeable that the reaction of birds to a peregrine flying above them is determined by the 'body language' of the falcon. The wing configuration and approaching speed of the peregrine signal either a need for immediate evasive action, or fairly unconcerned departure or the chance to mob the intruder.

This quite outstanding hunter whether of inland or coastal origins has gathered a fan club worldwide whom all hope not only to be able to see it in the wild but moreso to witness the spectacle of the stoop as they hurtle from great heights to strike their unwitting prey below.

Small wonder then that skilful falconers have throughout history made this falcon the bird of choice for hunting. Today with the advent of modern breeding programmes peregrines used in falconry are domestically bred. The need to take them from the wild in the UK has been superseded by domestic breeding.

This revolution occurred at exactly the same time as the effects of pesticides became known and prompted falconers in the Northern hemisphere to attempt what then seemed the impossible. In the USA the situation regarding the peregrine was indeed more serious than here and the status of the Anatum peregrine on the Eastern seaboard was such that it was considered extinct. Falconers who had a deep and profound interest in the preservation of this bird



set about developing a breeding programme that would (a) be productive (b) provide sufficient numbers to release into the wild.

This project which was started in Cornell University in the early '70s and spearheaded by Dr. Tom Cade was to become the masterplan that other countries to this day have successfully emulated. Dr. Cades team was made up almost exclusively of falconers and/or technocrats who had a strong falconry bias. They provided the necessary skills needed and the motivation required to succeed.

Today this breeding programme has put back into the wild 3,000+ young peregrines so that they are now breeding once again on their east coast ancestral haunts and have indeed colonised areas where they had not been seen for over 30 years.

With the new scientific approach to breeding, individual projects developed in all countries practising falconry. In the UK emphasis was placed on peregrine and goshawk programmes. These two birds more than any other were the mainstay of any falconers mews and required a great deal of time and skill invested into them.

So successful have many of these projects become that production may begin to outweigh demand. This extraordinary accomplishment has put falconers very much in control of their sport and has allowed many devotees of the sport access to hawks to fly.

Peregrines are traditionally flown at gamebirds. Although many other species are just as capable it seems that our indigenous falcon is better suited to the rigorous demands of our climate plus biologically more compatible with the quarry chosen.

One of the interesting facets of domestic breeding has been whether the offspring can match their (once wild taken) cousins. In many instances they are every bit their equal. Trained on testing contours and different habitats they have become as exciting to fly as any taken from a nest or eyrie. Telemetry (tracking devices) has been the modern element that has provided falconers with the technical skill to keep in touch with errant birds. The peregrine even whilst trained never loses the natural urge to look further afield and like it's name suggests his wondering nature can lead him further away than intended. Like his wild cousins he may be distracted by the gathering of pigeons on fields in the distance or a rook or crow on the horizon. Ever keen to investigate it can use it's speed and power to bring him closer to an exciting chase and perhaps a meal. Not what the falconer intended but like all trained hawks quickly reverting to natural instincts whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Falconry has through time, had moments of mass popularity followed by decline. In the period following the Second World War more people practise this sport than ever before. This can be directly attributed to the success of breeding programmes and indeed says a great deal about falconers as sportsmen/women conservationists. For them the ability to walk out into ones aviary in June or July and take stock of the years young, choosing carefully the peregrine you are about to take up for the first time and fly is well worth all the time, effort and energy that these projects demand.

Modern falconry has placed the peregrine very firmly back in it's place not only in the hands of falconers who can do justice to them, but moreso into the wild where they can be seen and enjoyed by so many.

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GOING UP IN THE WORLD

Hen Harriers have been seen nesting in trees in Ireland. Traditionally these are ground-nesting birds but loss of habitat is causing problems for them. This bodes well for the Merlin which has the same problem.

HOME COMING

Marsh Harriers have been seen carrying nesting material in Wales which is exciting as they have not officially nested in Wales for years.

RAPTOR'S - RESCUE FUND

In the next issue, Raptor Rescue hope to announce a scheme which will provide financial assistance for a vet specialising in Birds of Prey. The money will be put towards the cost of treatment for wild raptors.

BRIDGING THE GAP

A road bridge in Anglesey in Wales has become a nesting site for a pair of Peregrines.

PERSECUTION

It has been officially confirmed that 3 Peregrines - 1 on the nest - have been shot at the South Stoch Reserve in Anglesey. 1992 has been the worst year on record for Welsh Peregrines. 40 pairs have failed to rear their young due to interference. This is 15% of the Welsh population.

CHESTNUT TALE

When I first saw this bird from behind with its chestnut tail and very light back I thought it was a Red-tailed Hawk, but John Davies, the owner tells me that the bird is a nine year old common buzzard and that its unusual markings have been unchanged since its first year.



Raptor

HELP & HINTS

"FALCONRY, Wow, I have always wanted to do that!"

This phrase must have been spoken by people without number. But do they really know what it entails? Birds of Prey are beautiful, also they are time consuming and temperamental.

Daily care and attention is required in the form of feeding and manning. Suitable housing must be provided, usually in the form of a properly constructed aviary, also you must make sure that you have somewhere secure to put the bird in bad weather. Some birds, especially Harris Hawks, cannot stand extreme cold for long periods of time and must be duly provided for. Once you have purchased your falconry equipment things like jesses, swivels, and leashes must be checked regularly for signs of wear and tear. Baths, blocks, bow perches, and gloves must be kept clean as birds are susceptible to a condition known as Bumblefoot which is caused by bacteria. Bag liners must also be washed out after every usage and scales must be checked for accuracy. Food must be fresh and of good quality, it is important to vary the diet especially in young, breeding or moulting birds. A freezer is essential for food storage. Time is something else you should have, you should aim to spend at least two hours a day with your bird; there is no substitute for proper manning. The other essential is someone to turn to if you have any problems, find a falconer who will help and/or join a club. and last but not least, read, get yourself a couple of



good books on the subject and read them thoroughly. A bird of prey is not a hobby which you can put in the back of a cupboard when you are bored with it, remember, it is a serious commitment of time and money.

If you feel you can meet the requirements of this demanding sport then I wish you and your bird many happy hours together because when all is said and done Falconry, when practised properly, is an extremely enjoyable and rewarding pastime.

Falconry can be a very time-consuming and frustrating sport. But if you have the determination and patience it can be very rewarding.

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.**

FLYING A HARRIS - REDTAIL CAST.



**ASH - Female Harris
Hawk**

For the past two seasons Steve had been flying a male Redtail with great success with 23 kills in his 1st season and 31 kills in his second.

This season in August Steve purchased an eyass female Harris and after a few weeks of basic training she caught her first rabbit.

The Redtail was picked up from his moult early October and the hunting commenced.

We started flying the birds together by accident one Saturday while flying pheasants, the Harris had just put a pheasant into cover.

I threw up the Redtail not realising Steve had called the Harris to the fist and then cast her back into a tree.

The birds took no notice of each other and when the pheasant was flushed they both gave chase but the pheasant got away.

From then on we have flown the birds together and they have proved a successful cast with the Redtail's tally standing at 39 and the Harris 72.

At first some crabbing did occur but the birds have got to a stage where when quarry is flushed and both birds give chase if the front bird catches the pursued quarry the bird behind will throw up into the nearest tree and is then called to the fist.

On one occasion while bolting rabbits with ferrets a rabbit bolted and the birds gave chase, the Harris went in first and missed, the Redtail coming up behind her, manoeuvred around her and caught the rabbit.

The hawking season is over so I look forward to the next season with the cast of Redtail-Harris...



Baldrick - Red-Tailed Hawk

Andrew Hulme
Essex

Dear David & Lyn

It has become apparent in recent years that several organisations, in particular, the League Against Cruel Sports and the R.S.P.C.A. appear determined to bring about an end to Falconry as we know it. The League being totally opposed to the hunting of live quarry in any form and the R.S.P.C.A. using the tack that birds should not be tethered.

I am aware that the B.F.C., W.H.C. and B.F.S.S. always respond to any such attack by presenting reasoned and cogent arguments in defence of our field sport, but is this enough in itself. I fear not. After all many do not belong to any organisation. In consequence, at the risk of incurring the wrath of many people involved in Falconry, I offer several suggestions which I hope will offer a more organised approach to the practice of our Art.

My first proposal is that all Falconers, Falconry Schools and breeders be licensed. I consider it essential that student Falconers, regardless of age, be graded at schools and only permitted to handle or own such birds as are commensurate with their ability and experience. Progress to a more difficult type of bird coming only after additional tuition and assessment. In other words some form of grading is required. Perhaps some form of apprenticeship could prove a viable alternative. We need to ensure that Falconers (including Austringers) abide by a strict code of conduct.

Falconry schools must be run only by people who are suitably qualified. Over the last eighteen months I have become aware of several instances of schools being opened by people whose knowledge extends as far as that gained on a single weeks course and perhaps a seasons hawking with someone else. Such a situation is not only intolerable but provides more ammunition for those who oppose us and determined to bring about a total ban on all forms of hunting.

With regard to breeders it is apparent that there are too many with the "puppy farming" mentality. Their only concern is making money without any concern for either the hawks or the gullible purchaser, as is evidenced by the increasing number of food imprinted hawks of which one sees or hears. I am not suggesting that all breeders are "cowboys", far from it, but the current situation needs to be rectified, and soon.

Having visited a number of Game & Country Fairs in recent years, in particular The Raptor Fair at Stoneleigh I have been appalled by the number of people who have taken to producing falconry furniture which is unsafe if not dangerous, badly designed and constructed and manufactured using totally unsuitable materials. Surely this cannot continue if we are to claim we care for our hawks. There is a real need for some form of regulation and standards.

Articles appear in the national press, field sport and "animal" magazines on a fairly regular basis and are usually accompanied by photographs. Unfortunately however they frequently not only depict hawks wearing unsuitable and or dangerous furniture but also regale the reader with detailed anecdotes of lengthy and gory encounters between hawk and quarry. I know this is what sells publications but it does not take much imagination to realise the impact upon

the mind of the uninformed reader. Not only that, what grist to the mill it must be for the anti-hawking lobby. Sad to say I have yet to read a letter or article that pointing out these mistakes.

You will, I am sure, be glad to know that I am more or less done, but there is one final item that requires addressing. The R.S.P.C.A. is in the process of preparing a report, if it is not already in existence, with regard to the tethering of birds, in particular hawks. To date, as far as I am aware, no authoritative body or person has explained the need for tethering. Were this to be done any allegation of cruelty in this respect would be shown to be unsubstantiated.

If by this letter I have created the impression that I consider falconry could soon meet its' demise then I make no apology. I intend no specific criticism of any individual or organisation. However more can and should be done. As falconers we need to put our house in order, to be above reproach and like Caesars wife be seen to be so. The high profile created by those active in anti-field sport activities demands that we adopt a united, constructive and organised approach. Let us not allow falconry to die by default!

Finally let me state that I am simply an austringer who cares for his sport and have no financial or professional interest to serve when I offer what I hope will be regarded as constructive criticisms.

Gordon A. AYER

All of the points in Gordon's letter, together with a number of other ones, are being addressed by the Falconry Committee of the British Field Sports Society. Most of the recognised clubs have already contributed their comments towards the production of a co-ordinated code of conduct and good management.

Readers with additional comments should write to Dr Nick Fox, c/o The Editor.

Aces High

*To spend a day with you on the wing
No wonder birds love to sing
The power and the glory you bring
Oh dear sweet Peregrine*

*With such grace and style in the sky
I would love to see with your eye
To feel with your wings in the air
The thrill of your hear: I would love to share*

*The only way I have found
Is with you in the air, and my feet on the ground*

*The splendour that you make me feel
Will have to be my only thrill*

*It is a great honour I would say
To spend some time with you each day
To watch you fly in this way
I hope somehow I can repay.*

J.J. Sor, Rainham

News continued



Hovering kestrel waiting to stoop.

Once again Ron Morris and team picked a beautiful venue for their Shropshire Game Fair. Bryan Paterson once again provided the Falconry captivating his audience by showing us the true grace and skill of a kestrel by getting it to hover above him.

Two clubs were represented, The Shropshire Hawking Club and the New Forest Falconry Club, whose stand is very impressive, with a large amount of Falconry and

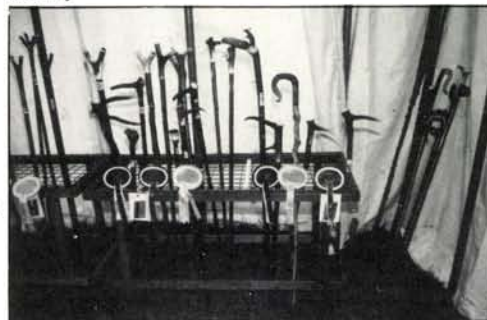
SHROPSHIRE GAME FAIR

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Some of the superb sticks at the Show

Guild held a competition and we were all able to appreciate the time and skill which goes into making these fine looking sticks, from a carved bird or animal head to a wooden or horn crook, there was one for every occasion.

And from one form of woodwork to another, the Chain Saw Group showed us just how accurate they can be by carving a stork and a squirrel from large blocks of wood.

When asked everyone assured us that they had had a good time and once again the Shropshire Game Fair

NEW WORKS ON SHOW



Over 500 works of art from some of the best wildlife artists and sculptors will be on show for the first two weeks of August. These will include work by well known names such as Keith Shackleton, Robert Gillmor and Bruce Pearson as well as a host of exciting new and talented artists working in a wide range of styles and media. Among this years exhibits will be a 7 foot bronze hippopotamus by sculptor Rosalie Johnson. Also on show will be the specially commissioned original paintings for the 1993 Lloyds/SWLA calendar, which will itself be on sale at the exhibition.

Conservation information on display and somebody on hand to answer any questions which may arise.

The crowd was kept amused by showing us the do's and don'ts of a shoot and although it was put across in a very comical manner we must not forget the seriousness of the subject.

The Stickmakers



Harris Hawk

FORTHCOMING FAIRS

Fri and Sat, August 7-8

Highland Field Sports Fair:
Mr D. Cant, Moy, near Inverness. Tel: (035) 03226.

Fri-Sun, August 7-9

Lowther Horse Driving Trial and Country Fair:
Major T. Riley, Penrith, Cumbria.
Tel: (09312) 378.

Sunday August 9

Herefordshire Country Fair:
Mrs B. King, Homend, Stretton Grandison.
Tel: (0981) 240168.

Lowther Working Terrier Show:

Mrs D. Savage, Lowther Country Fair,
Lowther Castle, Penrith, Cumbria.
Tel: (07687) 73321.

Sunday August 16

BFSS Country Fair:
Mr D. Peatfield, Peover Hall, Knutsford,
Cheshire. Tel: (0477) 34760.

Sat & Sun, August 22-23

Knebworth Country Fair:
Knebworth House, Knebworth, Herts.
Tel: (061) 231 3626 or Fax: (061) 231 3480.

Sunday August 23

Hampshire County Sportsman's Day:
Mr R. Colvile, The Grange, Northington,
near Alresford, Hants.
Tel: (0725) 22836.

Sat & Sun, August 29-30

Tayside Field Sports Fair:
Hallyburton, near Coupar Angus, near Perth.
Tel: (0350) 3226.

Sat-Mon, August 29-31

Town and Country Festival:
Mr R. MacKenzie, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.
Tel: (0264) 738318.

Sunday, August 30

Wentworth Annual Show:
Wentworth Hall, Rotherham, South Yorkshire.
Tel: (0302) 788626.

Sun & Mon, August 30-31

Fenland Country Fair:
Mr M. Hall, Quy Park, Cambridge, Cambs.
Tel: (0638) 742845.

Sat & Sun September 5-6

Chatsworth Country Fair:
Mr A. Cuthbert, Bakewell, Derbyshire.
Tel: (0328) 830367.

Whitbread Game & Country Fair:
Mrs T. Homewood and Mrs L. Walker,
Whitbread Hop Farm, Paddock Wood, Kent.
Tel: (0622) 872068 or (0732) 843018.

Sunday September 13th

BFSS Staffordshire County Fair:
Mr C. Kingston, Oakedge, near Rugeley,
Staffs.
Tel: (0543) 480368.

GENETIC FINGERPRINTING IN BIRDS OF PREY

by

DAVID GLYNNE FOX

Like human fingerprints, genetic fingerprints remain consistent throughout the birds' life and are unchanged by age, trauma or anything else and can be obtained from blood, saliva, or many other tissues.

This article has been written as a warning to would-be "breeders" who use a pair of hawks in an aviary as a cover to steal eyasses from the wild, subsequently claiming the "progeny" to have been produced from their own pair. For these miscreants, their days are well and truly numbered. Genetic

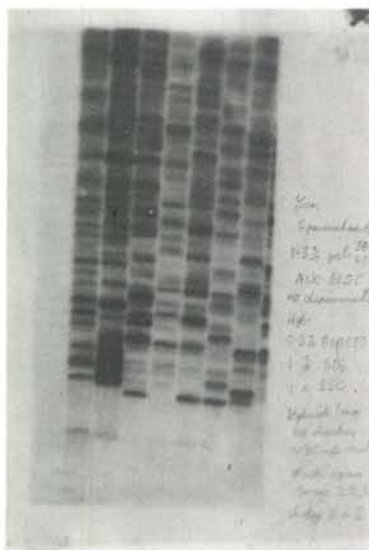


Fig. 1

fingerprinting is a unique scientific tool which has been developed that actually proves beyond doubt as to whether or not eyasses have been produced by a particular pair of birds. This tool, known as genetic fingerprinting, is now widely used by police forensic scientists, among others, to detect criminals by examination of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) in blood or tissue samples.

For genuine raptor keepers, genetic fingerprinting can be used to great advantage. Theoretically, it could be used to identify all birds of prey held in captivity in conjunction with the current cable-tie or closed ring system, for once a sample of blood has been fingerprinted from a hawk, the resulting auto-radiograph could be kept on file by the Department of the Environment or perhaps even the keeper. With this system, any hawk stolen and subsequently recovered, minus its rings, could be easily identified by the simple taking of a blood sample. Like human fingerprints,

genetic fingerprints remain consistent throughout the birds' life and are unchanged by age, trauma or anything else and can be obtained from blood, saliva, or many other tissues. How this would work in practice is difficult to ascertain, for it would require blood sampling of all hawks held in captivity, a mammoth task at best, but I feel that volunteer sampling would at least give the owner peace of mind in the event of theft or ring loss, for he or she would be in a highly favourable position to prove legal ownership. The following is an extremely over-simplified description of the methods used to obtain genetic fingerprints.

As far as hawks are concerned, a small blood sample is obtained, normally from the brachial vein of the wing. From this sample, the genetic material (DNA) is extracted and purified, then cut into fragments using an enzyme and subjected to electrophoresis. The fragments are filtered through a gel, propelled by an electric

current, allowing the smaller fragments to travel through the gel at a faster rate than the larger portions, all reaching certain positions within the gel matrix during a given period of time. After switching off the current the fragments of (DNA) are then transferred to a nylon membrane and then labelled with radio-isotope. For reasons of space, the minute description of the techniques has been briefly summarised, but suffice it to say that the resulting bars, or bands within the nylon membrane are exposed to a radiograph, or X-Ray plate where the radiation from the isotope exposes the photographic emulsion, producing an image of a series of these dark bands in vertical columns on the plate. Each column represents the sample from an individual bird. Placed side by side, the relative position of the bands in each column determines whether or not the offspring are related to the parents, for (DNA) is found in several chromosomes which occur in pairs, one inherited from each parent. Therefore, young birds will have bands in identical positions in the column relative to either one, or both parents. If none of these bands match, then the "offspring" are not related to the alleged parents and vice-versa. So nest raiders watch out", you

can now be detected with 100% certainty.

Genetic fingerprinting was developed at the University of Leicester, but for my information and for permission to photograph the autoradiograph plates I am indebted to Drs. David Parkin, Jon Wetton and Celia May of the Department of Genetics, Nottingham University who have done sterling work with the fingerprinting of raptors.

In Fig. 1, the autoradiograph plate shows several bands depicting samples from wild caught Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*) on a joint project with Dr. Ian Newton, author of "The Sparrowhawk" and "Population Ecology of Raptors" and a biologist with the Natural Environment Research Council. As can clearly be observed from this photograph, none of these wild-caught Sparrowhawks appears to be related.

The same applies to the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) in Fig. 2. Using the codes "P", relating to

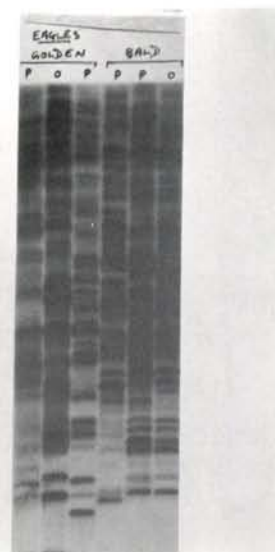


Fig. 2

"Parent" and "O" relating to "Offspring", it can easily be noted that this young eagle was certainly not related to the "parents" for none of the

parents (DNA) will always be found in the track of any genuine offspring. In Fig. 4, again with captive Gyrfalcons, it is interesting

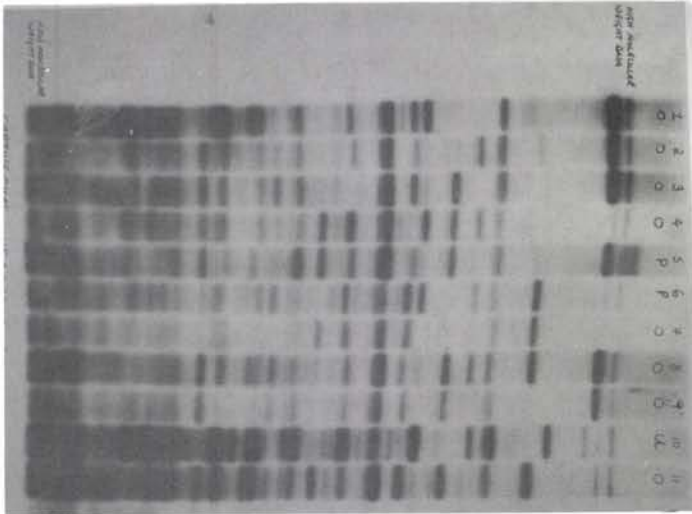


Fig. 3

bands match those of either adult, whereas in the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) on the same plate, the bands of the offspring match conclusively with the (DNA) of both parents, proving beyond any shadow of doubt that this particular eaglet is indeed the progeny of the two adult Bald Eagles.

The example in Fig. 3, concerns the noble high arctic Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) and shows

to note the positions of the bands in each track, relative to parent, offspring and unrelated birds.

I hope that the publication of this article will deter some of the deleterious element aforementioned, but if it only puts the frighteners on a few, my time will have been well spent. There are enough birds being bred in captivity now to render the illegal taking of eyasses quite unnecessary.

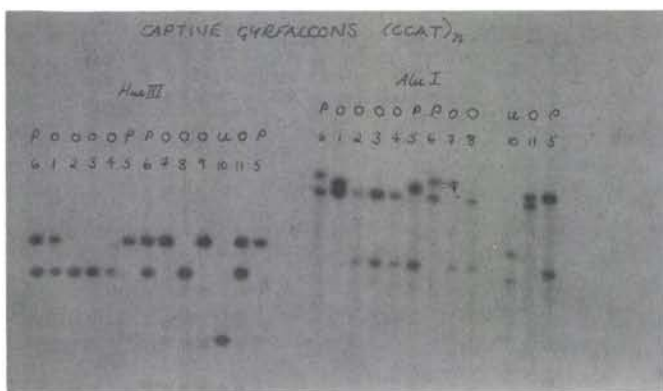


Fig. 4

eleven tracks, comprising two parents, one unrelated bird and eight offspring. As can clearly be seen, only the unrelated bird, (track ten) has no affinity with the (DNA) of the parent birds, whereas all the offspring can be traced to both parents by matching the bands horizontally. Some of the

But if there are still some of you out there who still feel the need to climb trees and cliffs for your "aviary-bred" birds, then watch out, genetic fingerprinting is very real and here to stay and will, sooner or later, catch you out!

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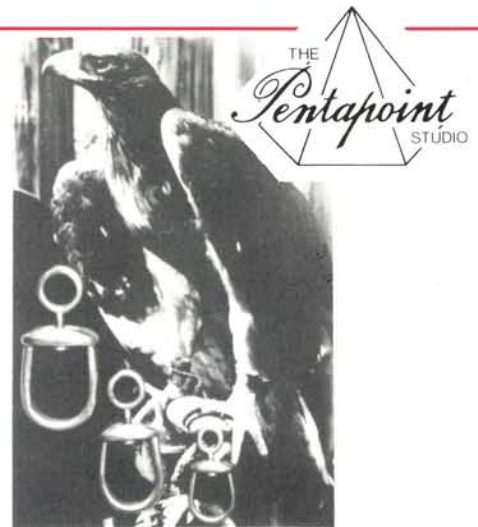
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Taking the Good

By Bob Dalton

Somedays when you are out hawking, everything goes right and things just seem to click into place as if it was meant to be. On other occasions everything that can possibly go wrong does exactly that. As often as not a day strikes the balance between the two with good and bad luck dished out in equal portions. One of the many joys of hawking is that no two days are the same and it is the infinite variety of flights that makes the sport so appealing.

On a recent day hawking with two friends we certainly had our fair share of ups and downs. But we did have some good fun, a kill and a pleasant day out. The simple fact that all the falcons ended the day back in the mews meant that at least all of our luck was not bad. My friends and I set out for the day with a cast of Peregrine Tiercels, a Peregrine Falcon and a lovely little Gyr/Barbary Hybrid Tiercel. We took along "Emma" the English Pointer and had high expectations of a good day's sport. The area we were going to fly on held Partridge, the odd Pheasant, occasional Duck and there

are always a few Rooks to be found. The land is bordered by old, well established hedgerows and has a few scattered bushes which between them always hold several magpies. Hence the cast of Peregrine Tiercels.

As we parked the cars and changed into our hawking gear and put the telemetry transmitters on the birds we spotted a couple of Magpies about four hundred yards away. They were both feeding and our presence did not seem to bother them unduly. It was decided if we could get onto our land, a matter of a few yards, without their taking flight we would give the Tiercels a chance at them. As we went through the gate onto our flying land the Magpies merely hopped into a small bush some fifteen to twenty feet behind them. There wasn't a breath of wind, so



Before the off! L-R: Cast of Tiercels, Gyr/Barbary, Peregrine

positioning did not matter too much. The Tiercels were unhooded and allowed to take wing at their leisure. As they are both very experienced birds and appreciate the chance to have a look round and weigh up the situation before leaving the fist. Both Tiercels started to mount nicely and in a few short moments were high enough to hold the Magpies in the bush by their presence. There is, obviously, a critical point when the falcons first start to mount when the Magpies could easily make their escape. But if they do not recognise the fact that they are the intended victim they will often sit tight and wait for danger to pass. Which after all is what they would do if a wild falcon drifted overhead. But by deciding to sit tight and allow the trained falcons to get into a

commanding position, they have committed themselves to the flight.

But our pair of Magpies, or at least one of them, was our intended victim and



now they dare not move for fear of being stooped at. When the Tiercels had reached their pitch, and showed us this by setting their wings, we all rushed to the bush yelling and screaming for all we were worth. One Magpie remained very cool and



The Peregrine on a more successful day

With the Bad

merely moved higher up the bush. But the nerve of the other one broke and it tried to make for another bush about sixty or so yards away. The closest Tiercel stooped and the Magpie somehow managed to avoid it and dashed back into its original cover. We again started to make a dreadful noise and sent the dog into the bottom of the bush. The Magpie took wing again to try and reach another patch of cover. One of the Tiercels was almost directly overhead at a height of around a hundred and fifty feet. As the Magpie moved for the second time the Tiercel turned over and put in a tremendous stoop. I was a good twenty yards away and heard the impact very clearly indeed.

The Magpie had been killed in the stoop and as the Tiercel threw up the

the day could only go from strength to strength.

Just how wrong can you be? We walked for what seemed like hours, probably less than one, without finding a single point. But we did spot a few Rooks, out in the open. As there was no wind and the Rooks were three times as far from cover as we were from them it was decided to slip at them.

The Peregrine Falcon was unhooded and allowed to look at what was going on around her. After a few seconds she muted, roused and then launched herself off the fist. The second her wings flicked the Rooks took flight, but the Peregrine was in hot pursuit. She was closing the gap rapidly when all of a sudden she put in a long shallow stoop at something off to our right. The object

Needless to say by now the Rooks were long gone. But the Falcon came back into the lure obediently and was taken up and hooded with at least the prospect of another flight later in the days proceedings.

Next up was the little Gyr/Barbary Tiercel. The dog was showing us that all was not lost with the Moorhen and that it was still in the reeds. As the Hybrid is still relatively inexperienced it was decided to give him, what on paper at least, should prove to be an easy flight. he was put on the wing and allowed to reach his pitch, which is not a great one yet. On reaching his pitch the dog was sent in to flush the Moorhen. Despite crashing around in a relatively small patch of reeds, running backwards and forwards it could not get the Moorhen

else. The swivel had broken. The Falcon flew off with the lure and disappeared into the distance. We tracked him down with telemetry and found him sitting in a tree with half a crop. Our friend borrowed a lure and brought the bird down to it. But with half a crop already inside him it was decided to feed him up and continue with the other falcons.

We walked some more and eventually found another Magpie in a good position. At least the Tiercels would not let us down and we would get some first class sport. They were allowed to leave the fist and mount as before. When in the right position and height we rushed at the bush to flush the Magpie for them. But it was another thinker instead of a bird that would panic easily. It simply refused to flush and while our attention was focused on it the Tiercels decided they had waited long enough and went off on their own.

By the time we realised they were not overhead anymore, they were nowhere to be seen. So it was out with the telemetry. It was obvious from the signals we were getting that neither was very far away but they had gone in opposite directions. We picked them both up. One decided to go off and have a bath and the other was sitting happily on a fence post. By the time both were safely back on the fist it was too late to fly again. So the Tiercels and the Falcon were fed up and we trudged back towards the cars. We were left wondering how a day that started with such promise could have fallen apart around us. Apart from the first few minutes we had not had a decent flight.

Such is falconry.

out. We could see the bird running about so the three of us decided to wade in as well and help with the flush. In the excitement one of us forgot he was not wearing wellingtons but walking boots. Now he was wearing a pair of very wet walking boots. Try as we might we could not get the Moorhen to flush and so it was decided to bring the Hybrid down to the lure.

This little Falcon always hits the lure two or three times before coming in and settling on it. On his first pass he hit the lure and flew off with it, leaving the falconer holding the lure stick and line, but very little

second one dashed in and caught the body before it hit the ground. Having bound to it he slowly 'butterflied' down with it. What a start to the day! We had not left the cars five minutes ago and we already had a good flight and a kill as a result. The general feeling was that

of her attention turned out to be a Moorhen creeping along the edge of a reedbed about three hundred yards away. On the Peregrines approach it merely ducked into the reeds and that was that. The Peregrine threw up over the spot and started back towards us.



Awaiting a turn!

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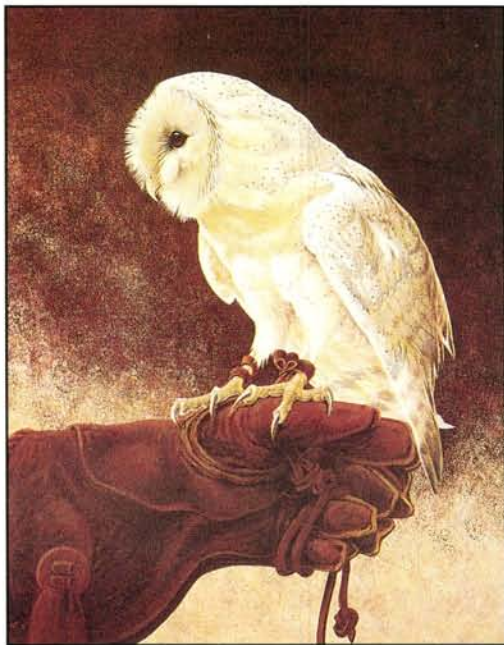
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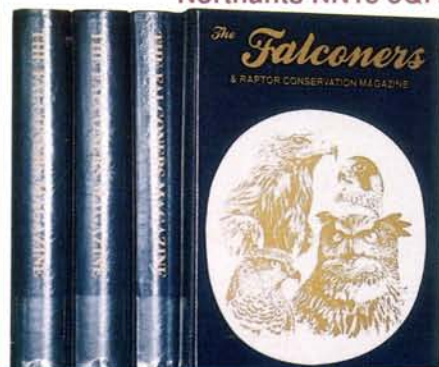
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