

The *Falconers*

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

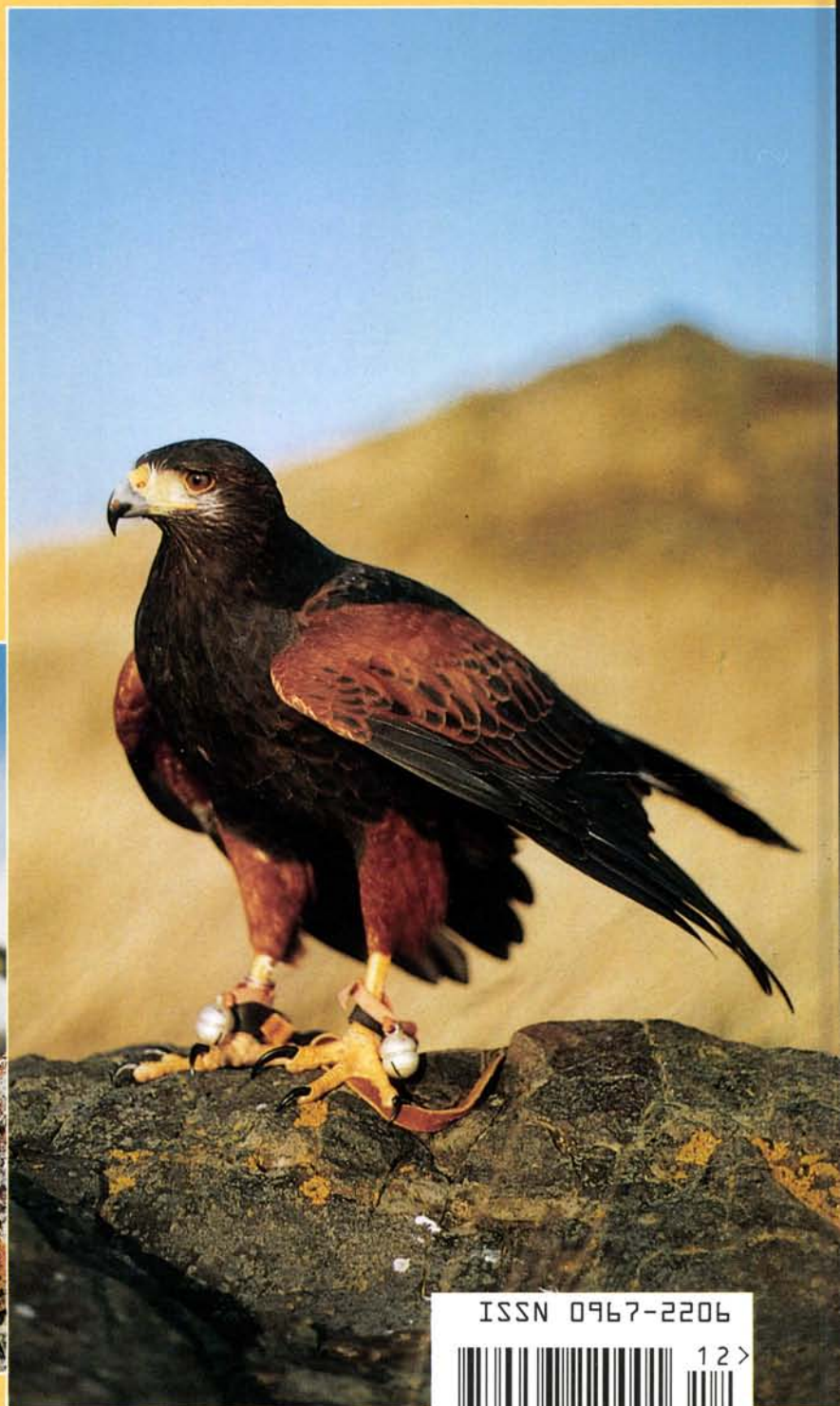
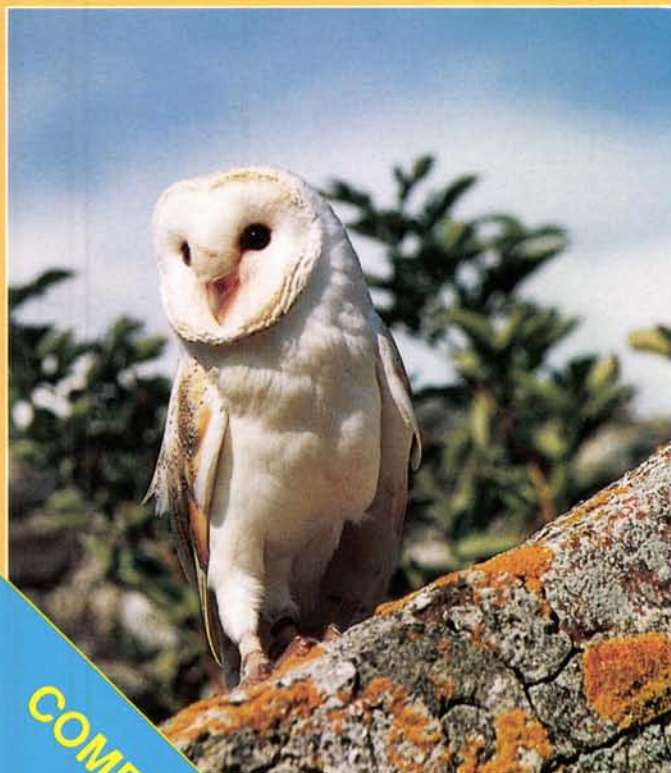
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THE SPARROWHAWK

A Manual for Hawking

LIAM O'BROIN

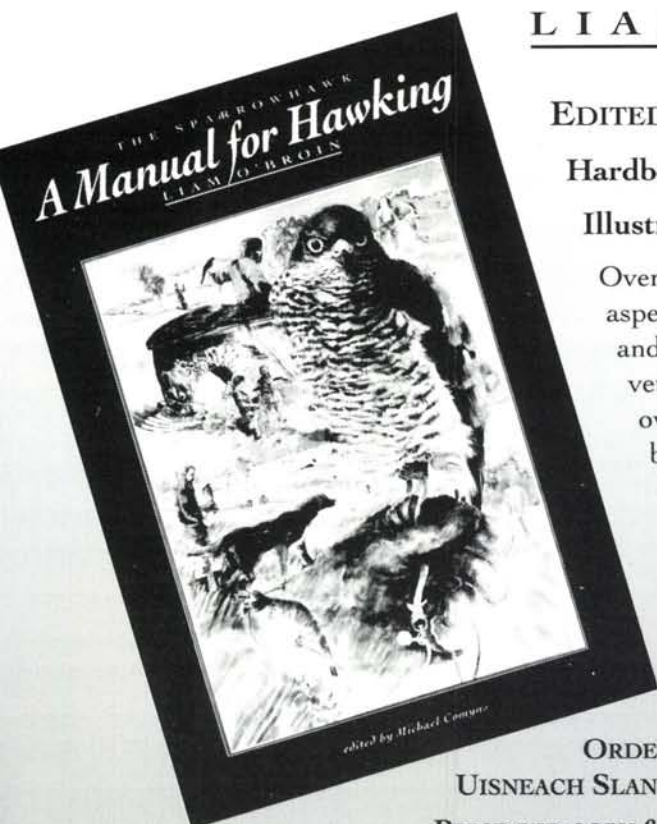
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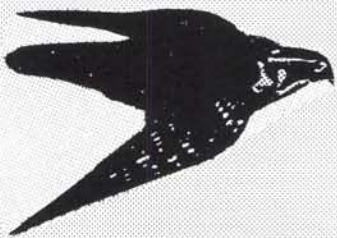
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Inset: Adult Barn Owl by Paul Brown

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The Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

This edition sees us celebrating our 3rd Anniversary. In this issue we have another anagram competition to keep you all busy for a couple of hours and the results of our Photographic Competition which once again attracted a large response and was ably judged by Biff Norman and Jess Garton of Hawksport who were both extremely impressed with the quality of photographs. Many thanks to Swarovski for another superb prize of a pair of Habicht 8 x 20 Binoculars.

We have a varied selection of articles from home and abroad. It's nice to see that our number of overseas subscribers is growing and even more pleasing that they are contributing to the magazine. We have a couple of falconers requiring help and I hope someone out there can come to their rescue, details on letters page.

The Hawking season is now in full swing and most of you will be flying your birds. If you are a beginner and are having problems, please feel free to write or telephone.

On that note we will wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and look forward to seeing some of you in 1993.

David & Lyn Wilson

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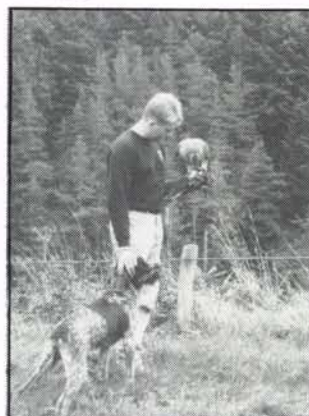


Photo Gary Coker

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Raptork 35

HARRIS HAWKS

Female Cable Tie UK78175 - Close Rung RW081929

Both ankles swollen from Squirrel bites
Male Close Rung 4121W. Right leg twice normal size plus scar below knee.

GOSHAWKS

Male Cable Tie UK78744

Female Cable Tie UK80445 - Badly swollen right leg

Male Close Rung 2359V - Imprint & Screamer (Dec 91)

Male Cable Tie UK81465 + NL91FCJ517.

This bird is microchipped. Also has Harris Hawk feathers in tail

REDTAIL

Female Close Rung 0574X - Light phase

COMMON BUZZARD

Female (?) Close rung 7320W

NEW ZEALAND FALCON

Female Close rung 0123W

EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL

Female plus two 5 week old chicks. This bird is tattooed on inside of wing. Perhaps all purchasers of Adult Females this year would examine them.

RAPTOR CONVICTIONS

Walter William Taylor of Elsemere Port, Chester. Appeared at Chester Magistrates Court on 2.4.92.

Handling Stolen Property (Snowy Owls)
Fined: £500.00 Costs: £75.00

Clubs **GWENT HAWK, OWL, FALCON ASSOCIATION**

We are a newly formed club, having our first meeting in May 92. Our very name has encouraged a large number of people from beginners to others with years of experience.

At the moment we have a following of approx 40 interested people, and we are hoping to increase our membership's as each meeting takes place.

The aims of the club are to help beginners and to support each other in breeding and flying raptor's from little owl's to goshawks.

We meet on the first Monday of every month at 7.30pm at the Penllwyn Arms, Ponllanfraith, Blackwood, Gwent.

Anyone interested in attending or joining the club please contact:

Mr Glyn Evans (Chairman) 0495 229756

Mr Chris Morris (Sec) 0443 830822.

A DAY OUT WITH THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

by Rob Graham

On Saturday 12th September 1992 at the invitation of Andrew Knowles-Brown, Chairman, I attended the Scottish Falconry Club's field meeting held prior to their A.G.M. at Carlops, West Lothian.

Since my knowledge of falconry is on par with my ken of the dark side of the moon, I was somewhat apprehensive about the reception I would receive from Club Members. After all, my purpose for attending was to gather information for this article but I had to ask the most basic questions, and I do mean basic, for instance, "What kind of hawk is that?" However, I quickly realised that my fears were completely unfounded as the Club Members could not have been more helpful and happy to offer advice to this greenhorn in their midst.

In my ignorance I had assumed that all birds of prey were flighty, nervous creatures which required to be hooded at all times when out in public otherwise they would fly into flapping paroxysms of terror at the slightest provocation. So imagine my astonishment when a car drew into the car park and sitting calmly, unhooded, on the passenger's fist was a Harris Hawk. It was explained to me that the Harris Hawk's rather phlegmatic temperament and willingness to forgive the occasional faux-pas by the trainee falconer is one of the reasons for its popularity as a first bird.

The range of birds present on the day included Harris Hawks, red-tailed Buzzards, Goshawks (including a one-eyed female which had come off second best in an encounter with a peahen with chicks as a youngster, though she did not appear hindered by her partial blindness).

LIST OF CLUBS

AVON & SOMERSET	Derek Smith 0373 812950 D. Sutton 0225 837530
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WOLD ASTRINGERS & FALCONERS CLUB	Jonhathon Foster 0724 733482

Also present was a young peregrine falcon, not there to be flown since the quarry was to be rabbits and hares, but to be "manned" her owner informed me. I didn't immediately understand this term but quickly realised that it equated to what I would refer to, with young dogs, as "socialising". Birds of prey are very sensitive to anything out of the ordinary, survival in the wild depends upon it, and they can be extremely chary of flying in the presence of strange people, objects, for example walking sticks and even unfamiliar breeds of dog. Hence the more manning they receive the less likely they are to be fussy about the conditions under which they will fly.

The two dogs used at this particular meet were Brittany spaniels and I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to see the breed working. The Brittany was originally a tracker and retriever but he was said to lack nose until, by design or accident is not entirely clear, English Setter blood was introduced and breeders undertook to fix a single type, retaining the original Brittany quantities ameliorated by improved nose and a strong pointing instinct. They have an effusive spaniel-like working style and their exuberance for their work is a delight to watch.

The morning was extremely windy and whilst a number of rabbits were located by the dogs the hawks lifted far and wide in the gusts. The wind, according to the weather forecast, was due to drop in the afternoon and for once the Met. Office got it right. Just before lunch a rabbit bolted by the ferrets was caught fairly and squarely. This bodied for an afternoon's flying with an eventual total of 9 rabbits accounted for, 5 located by the dogs and 4 bolted by the ferrets.

Many of my preconceived assumptions about birds of prey and falconers were proved to be totally out-dated and false, I am sure you will be aware of the notions I had prior to my day out, they are commonly held beliefs amongst those who know nothing of the sport, and I can only say to the Scottish Falconry Club's Members that this is one time I was delighted to be proved wrong - can I come along again!

For more information about the club: Secretary George Walker 0506 872071 evenings.

RSPB NEWS

RED KITE

79 pairs raised a record 93 young in Wales. Four pairs in England raised ten young and one pair in Scotland raised one young - this was the first breeding this century, following re-introduction.

MARSH HARRIER

In eastern England 45 females raised at least 86 young in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk with a record total 23 young raised at the RSPB Minsmere reserve, Suffolk. Elsewhere in the UK they have been very successful with breeding on a number of RSPB reserves.



HEN HARRIER

Very good season in Wales, 21 pairs raised 54 young, compared with 16 pairs raising 36 young in 1991. Co-operation with landowners, farmers and gamekeepers has helped the success. A poor season elsewhere in England and Scotland, with continued persecution.

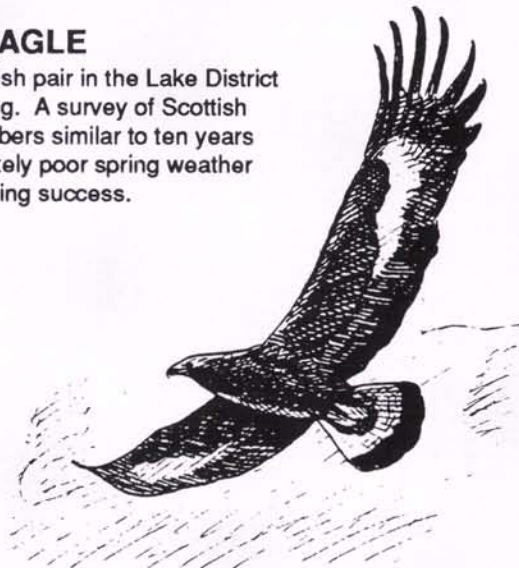


RECORD BREEDING SEASON FOR RARE BIRDS

1992 has been a good year for many of the UK's rare breeding birds

GOLDEN EAGLE

The single English pair in the Lake District raised one young. A survey of Scottish birds show numbers similar to ten years ago. Unfortunately poor spring weather led to low breeding success.



MONTAGU'S HARRIER

Five pairs in W Norfolk and Lincolnshire raised 13 young and one other pair raised young in south west England. Co-operation from landowners and farmers has helped with this success.

OSPREY

At least 74 pairs attempted to breed raising at least 100 young (1,000th young reared since return). In 1991, 60 pairs attempted to breed, 43 successfully, raising only 81 young. This is the first time that 100 young have been reared for 200 years.



HAWKBOARD NEWS

A girl of five was awarded £3000 damages at Morpeth County Court after being injured by a Harris Hawk. The hawk mistook the yellow pompom on the girl's hat for a dead day-old chick and swooped on her and clawed her face. The hawk was being exercised by its owner at the time, but had previously been used for school visits.

There has been an increasing tendency for display-givers to involve children in bird of prey demonstrations, even including the hawks taking pieces of chick from a child's head. The Hawk Board considers this is an unacceptable risk which does nothing to enhance the reputation of falconry or of hawk-keeping in general. The BFSS' Guidance to Show Organisers' covers this as follows:

19. For a variety of reasons public participation in Displays is to be discouraged. Under no circumstances should children be involved.

24. The Display Team should be covered by adequate Public Liability Insurance and every effort should be made to ensure the public's safety.

A copy of the BFSS Guide has been made available to the National Association of British Insurers. In the light of the Morpeth case, display givers are urged to take note that their Public Liability Insurance would not cover children invited to participate in a display and in the event of an accident they would be personally liable for any claims.

R

review

BIRD OF THE FIST

by David Parry

This video was filmed over 4 years, it shows a Female Goshawk, INGA flying weight 2lb 8oz taking her first steps in training from hopping to the fist, to catching her first rabbit. INGA is also accompanied by EMMA another Female Goshawk flying at 2lb 6.5oz. There are over 100 shots of the Goshawks flying at rabbits. Some superb close up shots showing the manoeuvrability of both rabbit and hawk. The video runs for approximately 55mins and has been well filmed and tastefully put together.

Available from:

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c/o The Falconers Magazine
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Price in UK: £25.00 inc p&p



THE WHITE TAILED EAGLE



Photograph by: H. Arndt

by Mike Everett

THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS



When I first started work with the RSPB, more than 25 years ago, the walls of our little basement office in Edinburgh were covered in pictures of White-tailed Eagles. My boss, the late George Waterston, was seized with the idea of a reintroduction project that would restore this big, spectacular raptor to its former haunts around the northern and western coasts of Scotland. We had a thousand-and-one other things to do, but the "sea eagle" was never far from our minds.

To cut a long and involved story short, George managed to procure four young birds from Norway in 1968 and to arrange for their rearing and release on Fair Isle, halfway between Shetland and Orkney. Sadly, the experiment failed. He lived to see part of his dream realised when a much more extensive scheme was launched in 1975, spearheaded this time by the then Nature Conservancy Council, in close cooperation with the RSPB and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Over a ten-year period, 82 young Norwegian birds were released from the island of Rum in the Inner Hebrides. Over the years, the birds spread far and wide. Pairs were formed and the first eggs were laid in 1983. In 1985, the first eaglet took wing - the first reared in Scotland for 70 years. I was involved in the arrangements to protect that first successful nest: for me, the only thing that spoiled the happy event was that George had died a few years earlier. How pleased he would have been!

As I was writing this, it was confirmed that seven eaglets were reared successfully this year, bringing the grand total to 29. After a hesitant start, things are going well with this long-running

scheme, but it is still too early to judge whether it will be completely successful. Survival rates have been good, as far as we know and breeding success has improved - but are the birds doing well enough to sustain a viable population? This is the key question. White-tailed Eagles are big, long-lived birds with a slow rate of reproduction and it is dangerous to jump to conclusions after only ten breeding seasons. It may yet be necessary to bring in more young birds to top up the numbers.

If the Scottish scheme is successful, it will have the effect of establishing a new population centre in western Europe. This is important in world terms. The White-tailed Eagle is a Red Data Book bird, one of only 29 in Europe, where its recent history is one of very mixed fortunes. With perhaps as many as 1300 breeding pairs, Norway has by far the largest numbers; the much smaller populations in Sweden and Finland, after years of decline, are picking up again and there are still good numbers in Poland and what used to be East Germany. Further south, there are small numbers in several countries, but around the Mediterranean seaboard the White-

tailed Eagle is very rare in the east and long gone from the west. The present state of affairs in what was Yugoslavia does not bode well for the population there which, with some 50 pairs a few years ago, was the best in southern Europe. The problems have been much the same throughout the bird's range: persecution, poisoning and habitat pollution and destruction.

Concerted efforts in many countries are slowly improving the situation, but in several areas it is still necessary to mount round-the-clock protection schemes to guarantee the safety of breeding pairs.

The old name "Sea Eagle" is actually rather misleading outside north-west Europe. While it holds good in, say, Norway, it is totally inappropriate in much of eastern and central Europe where the White-tailed Eagle is very much a bird of inland lakes, rivers and marshes. It is not unique in being both a coastal and freshwater raptor - Ospreys are similarly adaptable, although interestingly they tend to be mainly inland birds in the north (Scotland, for instance) and coastal in the south (Mediterranean, Middle East).

DOGS IN FALCONRY



English Setters on their daily exercise

Falcons, like dogs, are without price to those who have suffered so much expense, time and trouble in purchasing, breeding, training and experiencing them. Whilst dogs and falcons do get to know and respect each other, and form a working team, falcons are vulnerable to dogs whilst on blocks, fists, cades, kills, ground, in cars, mews etc. and it pays to be a jump ahead of all dogs - and assume all will run in and are hard mouthed. (Falcons can also wound a dog). They seem to require the mornings on their blocks unhooded, for preening and bathing before weigh in. Is this just part of the reason for the afternoon start, or do falconers suffer from hard days nights, and have bells in their ears when they wake? The falcons clean aquiline appearance, all beak and talons, riding shotgun on gloved fist, their anchoring swoop, climbing loop, rushing stoop and noisy strike are all exciting and impressive. Whilst short winged hawks may appear slower and less dramatic, their work is no less interesting or intelligent, and is complementary to falcons work - each more effective and efficient in its own terrain. Kills to cartridges ratio seems higher with hawks. Wind seems to make for difficulties

in handling both long winged and short winged (as it does with dogs, horses and ladies hair)! Both seem responsive to lure, whistle and voice, neither seem to fly well when plumage is wet, but mist does not seem to worry them - you just lose them more easily.

I was pleased and surprised that my dogs seemed to adapt to Falconry so well and so quickly. They soon got to know the name of the game, and when the falcon was a wing, they didn't seem to want to chop it, and indeed were a bit wary of it (good!) There was the odd false point, and some difficulty in getting them to flush on command at the critical moment, solved by arrangement with the Falconer as to whether he or I should flush each time if this happened. In Field Trials it is frowned on for a dog to rush in and flush, and encouraging a dog to do this, or someone near it doing this could generate unsteadiness or stickiness in a young dog, it is true. But if the handler is right on top of the dog, and/or runs it on a short loose cord, or slips a lead on it and leads it in, much of this risk can be avoided. Will Cagney, my latest pup, accept training to do different flushes to different commands? I will avoid "Now" as it is a bit too

close to "No". I do not now run spaniels for trials or shooting, but I find my older and lamer English Setters fairly good for picking up on Estates, whom I am delighted to help in return for the training facilities they so generously allow me. They cannot compete with retrieving breeds at this, but if I go through the coverts after everyone else has been through, and cleared most of the unwounded game, I will get points (mostly on unwounded game) and pick up, (with the devils pitchfork), (less effective on grouse moors), up to a dozen birds a day that would otherwise have been missed. Unwounded game is set free. The Setters get exercise and enjoy the day (as do I). Being trained, trialled and extensively shot over, and adapting their range to the conditions, they are easily handled and they will still do this for a full to half day per week at 12 years. These are the dogs I ran and found (I thought) suitable for use with the short wing hawks, though inevitably it was necessary often to flush the game with a flushing dog or other means. Using them for hawking and picking up extends their use during the season and their useful working life. The younger Setters of two to six years that I ran on the grouse moors for the falconers, whilst trialled and shot over extensively, are still a bit hot for use in woodland (stocked coverts especially). They want to range, will flush from dense cover, and sometimes chase, getting hotted up by the presence of too much scent and game. Parrot-Bells and Bleepers are a help to keep track of them, but a setter in sight is worth six in a shrubbery! They do benefit

SETT ON

by Gord

from attending driven shoots, and being allowed a limited amount of experience of this type of work, and it is training for their old age work. The use of a flushing dog to clear their points could make them sticky or unsteady.

I feel that if I could attune myself and my dogs to be of use to falconers, and if you, after what you have seen and read of me, agree what I did, then there is a small body of Triallers with suitable dogs who could perhaps be



Anna. Glenmorgan 1991

encouraged to give you some of their time, to the advantage of all concerned, dogs and hawks included. Some are already involved in falconry, but may still have time to spare. Occasionally dogs appear who do not fit the Trials and/or shooting scenes (Gun nery, Gun shy, Crowd shy, nervous of strange dogs etc). Whilst not the best of bets, these, when available, may do better at falconry. There are horses for courses. Dogs differ in suitability for slopes, crests and broken ground and downwind beats and in all cases, it is best to run them down to their running weight rather than diet them to it, or they will have lost too much weight by the end of the season. Field trials for pointing dogs are held for a week in late March in N. Scotland, ten days in early April in England (Newmarket area), and in Northern England and



Ricky at 12. Woodland Point, Pakingham 1992

ENGLISH SETTERS

SETTERS

on Clarke

Scotland for a month mid July - 12th August, and it might be worth more Falconers looking at them (some do, and run dogs and judge).

Breed comparisons done for their own sake are both odious and meaningless. Setters set, Pointers point and Poodles pooh by inheritance, not by training. Setters all do much the same job. You pays your money and you takes my choice (English Setters)! One hawk's meat is another



Rusty. Auchmafrer, Glendrumond 1987

English Setter dog flew out upon an Irish Judge and tried his SILVA manners)!

Whilst unusually bold, nervousness does occur and such dogs I have never done very well with. I have not come across P.R.A. or hip dysplasia. They are normally ready for trialling and light shooting over by eighteen months to two years, in full work from three to eight, slowly declining and then, till they are finished for full moor work by ten, and for hawking and picking up by 12. (Exceptions prove the rule). To me, as much because of their feathering as because of their will to work, I find their manner of going 'like poetry in motion'! The sun may shine from behind them, highlighting this feathering, or full face, giving a les sombre picture. "Danny Boy" in Sunshine or in Shadow". comes to mind. If the dog shows tail action when quartering, this is an added bonus.

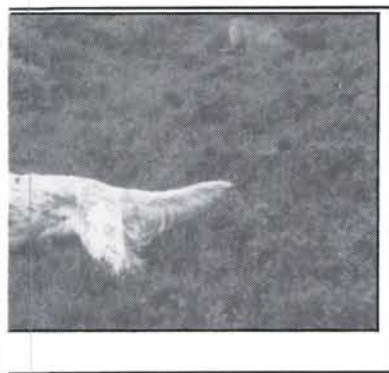
For the benefit of those who have had no experience of pointing dogs, I make the following observations. Pointing attitudes can vary from intense, head up, tail up, (some ask for a cocked tail, which I do not care for), head up tail down, sitting or dropping flat, and maybe leaning away from game. Bunched up points occur on ground grass. Sometimes, whilst going, a sudden change of speed or direction will indicate detection of game at a distance, as may a slow or fast march upwind in a straight line. The dog firms up on point as it defines the exact position of the game. Head down attitudes may occur on dead game, ground game, or their lines, small birds, or haunt of recently departed game. Head

turned, eyes turned, glazed look, ear back, mouth open, tasting scent, body rigid, with back straight or dished, hind quarters quivering, a foot, or two feet up, are all signs which tend to give affirmation of a true point. Testing by whistle, trying to see if the dog will pull off may 1) make a dog pull on and flush, 2) be ineffective, suggesting a true point, 3) pull dog off point when one is left wondering. (Try the dog again or another dog). To attempt testing, you must know your dog - without trying to know better than it. Mixed points occur, with hawk/lark/game together. Do not reprimand the dog as soon as a lark/hawk/rabbit gets up - let it work out the point lest there be game there also. When in doubt trust the dog and his nose. If you don't, you might as well not take him out with you - or is it for the dog to make that observation about you. But I find I still make this mistake often enough, every year, even after years of experience and after eight or nine weeks of training, grouse counting, trialling, dogging for guns and Falconers. Each year I mistrust the dog so it fluffs, say the last point of the last day, and its "Oh well, another day, another time, another place, another year, maybe",

and its time for the trip to the mill for tartan tweeds for the family, and the long journey home to my wife who has been sport enough (was she given any choice?) to let me away for so long; to a welcome warmer than expected, (or deserved), and something from the freezer that has been there since Easter.

The narrow margin by which the Bill to ban fox hunting was defeated (it would have been a "dear" bill if it had been passed), confirms the present and increasing vulnerability of it, and other Field Sports including our own. Continued joint efforts by all Field Sport organisations and their members are now required "Now", or, as the Porpoise might have said, "The time may come to only talk of all such things - of hawks and bells and well gloved fists, and swinging lures and things". If it does, (and I hope it does not), I shall be sad, but glad that I had my first four forays into this field before it did. Claverhouse would have said "Ere the Falcons go down there are crowns to be broke" - and rung the bells backward! I will say only "Adieu, lest our old bells trill more freely than our new."

hawk's poison, as the Osprey might one day say. Pointers stand the heat better, and seem a bit more phlegmatic (sometimes). Setters seem a bit more "Gunga Din" when it comes to cold weather, water and cover. They should be better for picking up and Shortwing hawk work, especially when older that they do not go out of their way to avoid finding trouble and mischief is one of the joys of life - (theirs and mine) - hence my love/hate relationship with the breed (we thank thee Lord, that all our joys are touched with pain)! They can be noisy in kennel and car, need grooming twice a year (before trials), are expensive to keep, (5p/dog/day, on fresh or frozen chicken carcasses), good natured with children, adults and each other, (the exception proves the rule, and I do recall one Trial at which a Saxon Roc of an



Rena. I can do on two legs what most can only do on 3/4. Glenmazeran 1991

RAPTOR

RESCUE

by
Ray Turner
L.R.K.

Should you be taking your dog out for a walk in the late evening, the very last thing that you expect is for a hungry barn owl to land on your shoulder! This is what happened to a gentleman near here. To cut a long story short the owl was lodged in his shed for the night. In the morning after making a series of telephone calls to various agencies - it seemed that Jasmin was without an owner. This was the point where we were contacted and asked to pick Jasmin up.

The first thing that was noticed that apart from being a very personable owl indeed was that she was sporting an elegant pair of Aymeri jesses. From which it seemed obvious that Jasmin was used to being flown. So when we returned with her and placed her in a large aviary on her own this was what it was decided to do. After all - what DO you do with

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.

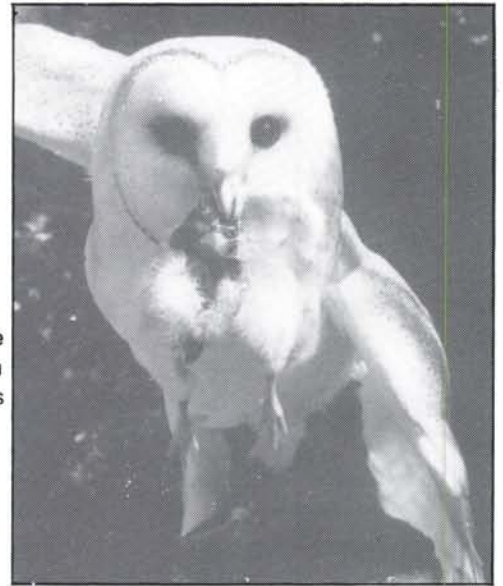
FEMALE BARN OWL "JASMIN"

a female barn owl? One answer being to breed from her. Although one is left with the impression that there are more barn owls in captivity than there are in the countryside. Apart from that consideration it seems that there is little point in breeding such owls unless there is a suitable habitat in which they can be placed.

So most days Jamsin is flown to the lure in the form of a piece of dismembered day old chick over a distance of about 35 yards. Having collected the tit-bit she then to fly an equal distance to a low wall where she eats. This process is repeated several times and means that frequently she covers a distance of about 700 yards or more. Not a lot perhaps - but it keeps her in good condition. As a rule she is very responsive though occasionally she may be 'spooked' by an odd noise which makes her depart in a panic. It is for this reason that Jasmin is flown on a light creance. However, there is no doubt that she enjoys her daily sortie and the close contact with us that this entails.

It would be nice to think that Jasmin

could be released back to the wild, though to do so would be almost certain to mean a slow death for a very endearing little creature. The least that can be done is to ensure that she is fed, has sufficient exercise and that she has an 'interesting' life other than the boredom of being in an aviary on her own for the rest of her life.



FEMALE BUZZARD "BIANCA"

Bianca had indeed made a poor start in life in that having been bred in captivity she was purchased by a young man with dreams of flying her. It would appear that she had not risen to this aspirations so much so, that she was consigned to a '6 by 4' shed in which she spent 18 months solitary confinement.

As a result of a telephone call from a local wildlife refuge centre the owner was contacted. It seemed that he was all too willing for her to be collected and the responsibility taken off his hands. At least he had fed her with the result that

she was seriously overweight and her plumage was a little "tatty".

With proper care however and exercise she has improved beyond all measure and is now quite a handsome bird. She was initially

taken out into a field and exercised on a creance, and it was only a short time after that she was allowed to fly free. The result is that almost every day (providing that it is not blowing a gale or raining hard) she is taken out on an exercise flight together with "Blaise" my Welsh Border Collie. Bianca is a most responsive bird and flies well to the lure and delights to catch food that is thrown high into the air. The latter is most pleasing to watch as she demonstrates

her aerial expertise.

Bianca has flown off on just two occasions, and in each case it is obvious that she has no idea as to how to procure food on her own. She just flies off and gets more and more hungry. In the first case she was retrieved from a town 8 miles away after a call from the local Police where she was trying to get into an aviary. On the second occasion she was retrieved from a wood 3 miles away after a period of 4 days, again she was not hungry. So it does seem that our Bianca is here to stay, happy to be fed and exercised.

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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Due to the enormous response to the last anagram competition here is another one for you to ponder over and win some superb prizes

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A print of a Goshawk on woodpigeon
donated by Mr O Sian

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Video - Bird of the Fist
55 action packed minutes of Rabbit
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HOW TO ENTER

Solve the anagrams, then using the first letter of each word find the mystery word. Write this on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send, along with your name, address and telephone number to: ANAGRAM COMPETITION, The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants NN155QP. Closing date: 31st December 1992 Results in Spring issue 1993

AFRICA - A FALCONERS PARADISE

by
Gerald
Summers



Photo: Kevin Carlson

Shortly after the end of the second world war I found myself demobilised from the army with no qualifications whatsoever. The only thing I possessed was my Kestrel Cressida, who I had rescued a half starved cripple at Camber Sands, on the Sussex coast, in 1942. She had recovered, had been accepted as the un-official mascot of my platoon of The Sherwood Forresters, had accompanied me to North Africa, where we were both taken prisoner and she shared my life in a number of prison camps. We had escaped and been recaptured together, before finally being released and repatriated at the end of the war.

Her photo had appeared in a number of newspapers and she had even been interviewed on television when there must have been all of 1000 sets in the country. This was all very well but it didn't help me to get a job!

I had always been attracted to the idea of Africa, where my father had served during one of the minor campaigns that Britain seemed to go in for between the two major conflicts. I visualised myself as Game Warden, a White Hunter or something equally exotic. I virtually camped on the doorstep of all the major shipping companies until I secured a cheap passage to Dar-Es-Salaam, on the coast of what was then Tanganyka. Naturally, Cressida came with me, and, as usual proved to be a great social asset and ice breaker. Within a few days I met a returning settler and his family

who lived near Dar-El-Salaam, in the highlands of Tanganyka where he farmed imported Hereford Cattle. He offered me a job as a sort of cowboy and general factotum, which I accepted without a second thought.

Africa, when I arrived was very much what I expected, green, humid and hot, but I was relieved to find that prides of lions did not lurk under every umbrella thorn tree, as I had been led to expect from the safari films that I had seen in years gone by. (During over six years of residence I only saw about half a dozen snakes, most of them

harmless. It was as a dedicated raptor fanatic that the country fascinated me.

Birds of Prey were everywhere.

I had hardly stepped off the ship when I became aware of hordes of Yellow-Billed Kites, (a handsome, richly coloured sub-species of the European Black Kite) these Kites, which seemed

to be almost ominous, would circle low overhead, putting shallow stoops to catch anything of animal origin (including bits of fried bacon) which they would consume whilst waiting for the next offering. To a visitor from the U.K. where such birds are absent (Red Kites don't behave like that) they were fascinating beasts. Later I discovered that they rested, unmolested, near every native village where they acted as an unpaid sanitary squad. Although fascinating to watch, they were not much good from a falconers point of view. The first real raptor worthy of the name was sitting on



Photo: Kevin Carlson

Pale Chanting Goshawk - Nellerax Pوليوپتيروس

the highest branch of a Euphorbia tree, and didn't bother to move as the train chugged slowly past on the long climb to the central Highlands, a good days journey from the port of Dar-El-Salaam. Having invested in a copy of Roberts, 'Birds of South Africa' before leaving the U.K. I recognised it as a Pale Chanting Goshawk, and there seemed to be one every few miles, which promised to be a good omen for the future.

The farm where I was to work was situated in what seemed to be a gigantic version of Salisbury Plain, and the whole area teemed with game of every description and the sky was full of exciting and to me, unknown raptors, ranging from the almost pterodactyl like Bataleur Eagle, with its' curious outline and matchless flight, looking almost like a pair of disembodied wings, sweeping the horizon, never appearing to settle, to the tiny Kestrel like Black Shouldered Kite, a Kite in name only, having the combined hunting techniques of both the Kestrel and Merlin, frequently hovering but also pursuing feathered quarry with falcon-like dash and panache.

There was also a wide variety of short-winged, true hawks, ranging in size from the Goshawk like Black Sparrowhawk to the tiny 'Little' Sparrowhawk of which the female was about the size of the European Kestrel and the male smaller still, to add variety there were the Shikrah, the East African Goshawk, similar in size and habits to the male of the European variety.

It did not take the local African population long to learn that the newly arrived 'Bwana' was a 'mad man', who was willing to pay good money (as much as ten East African shillings) for uninjured young hawks, birds that they saw every day of their lives and whose habits were of scant interest. The European settler on the other hand had much the same attitude as nineteenth century gamekeepers, and were inclined to blast off at anything guilty of possessing a hooked beak.

In those days, whatever the position may be now, there were no regulations whatsoever about the taking and keeping of any raptor, and, with the exception of the Secretary Bird, which, because it eats snakes and is regarded as Regal Game, nothing was officially protected. It was not long before a small posse of locals arrived at my rondavel hut carrying a Kikapu, or basket, made of dried reeds, in which reposed a small white downy object with outsized head and feet, "What is this repulsive creature?" I asked N'Jeroge, the leader of the deputation, "A bird Bwana" he replied, "I can see it's a bloody bird N'Jeroge, but what sort of bird is it?" He mentioned some unpronounceable Swahili name and departed, clutching his pieces of silver and I was left alone to contemplate my new acquisition. It was quite big for a downy eyas, with very useful looking feet and a few dark feathers just beginning to break through the down.

I thought it might be some sort of Hawk

Eagle but there was no sign of feathering on the legs and it certainly wasn't a long-wing. The main thing was that it needed feeding, sharpish, and although I had no suitable food, in Africa that is no real problem. There are always hordes of locust-like Grasshoppers for the taking, (everything from shrikes to hyenas eat locusts if they can find them) and they are very tasty. How do I know? I've eaten them, fried, they are a bit like shrimp, only more so. I also cadged a pound or two of venison from my boss, who was highly co-operative as I wasn't in business.

As the bird developed, I realised that it was a young Augur Buzzard, one of the most charismatic of all African raptors.

possibly unknown to science, but which Audax, the Augur gulped down with great gusto, growing in size almost as I watched.

She was soon at hack, where she remained for some weeks, in the course of which she wiped out an entire flock of small, bantam sized fowls, which cost me many shillings and much good-will from their African owners. However, it was worth it, she became one of the tamest and best tempered hawks I have ever had.

My only means of transport was a tough, temperamental Somallic stallion called Enzo, and I am no great horseman but I learnt to mount this restless beast, call Audax, to my left fist



Photo: Michael Gore

Black-shouldered Kites - Elanus Caruleus

The Augur is a bit like a tarted up Redtail, with a snow white breast, rusty red tail and sooty black upper parts. Its call unlike other buzzards, is loud for carrying, "Aug Aug Aug", to me the very spirit of the African wilderness, taking a wide variety of quarry, ranging from medium sized rodents to hares and Franklin Partridges.

After a few days I decided I had better things to do with my spare time than spend it collecting assorted arthropods, even in the best possible cause. I therefore invested in a few mouse traps from the local store or 'Daka'. These produced an astonishing assortment of small rodents, some of which were

from a convenient perch all with the reins in the other hand and canter off into the surrounding bush (neither hawk nor horse took the slightest interest in each other). In the year or so we were together Audax took a large and varied amount of quarry. Of course I lost her in the end, she was driven off by a pair of local Augurs, possibly her own parents. But at least I knew that she was able to cope in the wild, and in any case I was about to head North to Kenya, where I was to attend Agricultural college and form the Edgerton Shrike Club (Fiscal Shrikes make good stand-ins for small hawks) I eventually returned to the U.K. with an Eleanoras Falcon. But that is another story.

THE ANCIENT ART OF FALCONRY IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY
ALTAI ZHATKANBAYEV

The use of predatory birds is one of the most ancient types of hunting which is widely spread in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Currently this type of hunting has diminished to a select few individuals who plan to restore this art to their native land. Apparently it goes back to the time when man started to domesticate various animals as his helpers in getting food. One of the ancient Kazakh legends states that falconry had been a widespread occupation throughout all the regions inhabited by this people long before adoption of Mohammedism. According to that legend, Mohammed, the founder of Islam, on seeing for the first time hunting with predatory birds in Kazakhstan, ordered several hunting birds to be sent to Islamic leaders in Arabia, where the occupation was unknown but all requirements were available to learn falconry. However, they misunderstood his orders and cooked the birds! More birds were obtained, and subsequently this kind of hunting became widespread in Arab countries.

It is not by chance that people living on the territory of modern Central Asia and Kazakhstan are founders of this form of hunting. The region was inhabited by nomadic tribes who possessed herds of domesticated animals that moved from place to place for pasture and water. The boundless steppes, deserts and mountains contained suitable pasture for these animals. The nomads lived under ideal conditions for domesticating wild predatory birds. Due to the Kazakh's



Kazakh falconer on horseback, with eagle

natural keenness of observation and watching the variety and great numbers of raptors, he considered the possibility of using them for obtaining food and fur.

Today falconry in Kazakhstan has remained only in a few places. For the vast region of Kazakhstan (2,717,300 sq. km) the number of falconers has been reduced to less than ten. The remaining falconers are middle aged to old (aged 50 - 80). We believe that one of the most picturesque traditions of the Kazakhs may disappear, together with invaluable property related to falconry as well as centuries-old experience inherent with the last of the falconers if this tradition is not continued. It is not possible to train young people without tutorship from

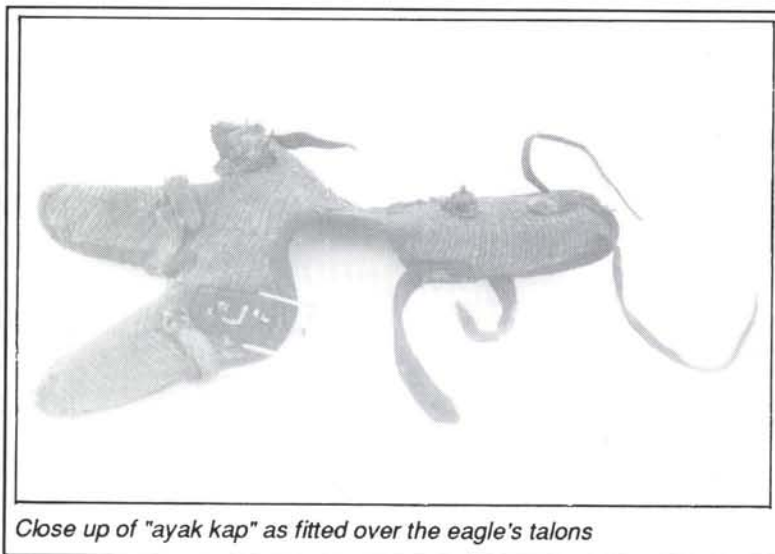
trained eagles mainly to catch red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes* .) and secondly corsac foxes (*Vulpes corsac* .) and hares (*Lepus tolai*., *Lepus europaeus*., *Lepus timidus* .). Sometimes they hunt Persian gazelles (*Gazella subgutturosa*), saigas (*Saiga tatarica* .) and roe (*Capreolus capreolus* .). With the help of a large trained eagle, they have caught wolves (*Canis lupus* .). As we see, the main targets for falconry are animals that inhabit open landscapes with low sparse vegetation. The hunting is carried out with the aid of a good horse capable of great endurance, and often with a Kazakh wolfhound called "tazy".

As a rule, hunting begins in October/November and continues through the winter months. In preparation for the main hunting season training of hunting birds is concentrated during September.

Apart from golden eagles, several species of falcons are also used. An arctic falcon (*Falco rusticolus* L.) is regarded as an unsurpassed hunter which is capable for catching any flying gamebird. A well trained arctic falcon can command the highest price if sold. Rich people would marry one of their daughters to man who owned such a bird. In the 1980's, members of a royal family from Saudi Arabia paid

\$120,000 for an arctic falcon.

Falcons (*Falco peregrinus* Tunstall, *Falco peregrinoides* Temminck) are used to hunt geese and ducks and, on rare occasions, other birds. Saker falcons (*Falco cherrug* Gray) are used to hunt ringnecked pheasants, partridges and hares. A well trained peregrine falcon can help harvest up to fifteen geese and ducks during one flight, which is similar to the damage a wolf could do among a flock of untended sheep. With a specially trained saker falcon and a "tazy" even



Close up of "ayak kap" as fitted over the eagle's talons

falconers who have hunted with raptors, even if written sources are available. Ironically, this type of hunting was fairly wide-spread at the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1950s, when people lost interest for various reasons.

Hunters use predatory birds of different species. The golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* L.) has been considered to be the main bird. It is according to the Kazakh name of the golden eagle that a hunter with a bird of prey is called "burcuthchi", i.e. a falconer. They use

Persian gazelles and saigas are hunted. The bird seizes the ungulate by the head, preventing it from running until the hunting dog catches up with the animal. Small species of falcons (*Falco columbarius* L., *Falco subbuteo* L.) are also domesticated for catching sparrows. The Columbia falcon (*Falco columbarius* L.) is also used to hunt for quail.

A lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni* Fleisher) has been used to catch small rodents after they are forced from their earth tunnels by filling up the holes with water. This method has been used to teach novice falconers who are acquiring skills of falconry.

A trained goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis* L.) is a good catcher of pheasants, partridges, geese, ducks, hares and even bustards. Quails are caught with a sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus* L.).

The following birds of prey are included in the Red Data Book of the USSR as rare species: arctic falcon, peregrine falcon, saker falcon, Temminck falcon and golden eagle.

The evolution of falconry since ancient times has progressed from a means of obtaining meat to a kind of national art demanding outstanding sporting proficiency. Such an occupation is not a whimsical amusement. It demands great responsibility and a lifetime's devotion to the sport. Falconry is a very serious affair on a par with carpet making or manufacture of national musical instruments. Not every Kazakh can be occupied with it, because the business requires exceptional knowledge of the biology of hunting birds, treating them as members of the family. In ancient times a nursing mother might give her milk to a golden eagle's chicks, despite the fact that her own child could not have enough food. This is one reason why the occupation is maintained only in individual families, being passed from one generation to the next, usually from father to son. During great tribal holidays the leaders would organise competitions in which hunters exhibited the sporting proficiency of their birds. There they received critical evaluation by fellow-countrymen of their falcon proficiency. If a bird failed to catch prey, it was regarded as a matter of shame to

the hunter, which was remembered for a very long time.

Due to the expense of feeding predatory birds, poor families are not able to afford falconry. The intensive training requires a lot of time, patience and persistence. Successful hunters were able to sell or exchange foxes and other valuable fur bearing animals harvested by the use of hunting birds for sheep and cattle.

There are more than 1500 words associated with falconry in the Kazakh language. The majority of these words are contained in historical manuscripts. Many special terms are connected with the equipment necessary to keep hunting birds. Every piece of equipment has been made in the process of keeping and training birds of prey. Every item for falconry has its purpose and special menu.

The main pieces of equipment are as follows:

"Biyalay" - a leather mitten and arm guard which is usually sewn for the right hand and serves as a safeguard from the bird's talons while perched on the arm of the owner. It is made of well tanned leather from various animals (elk, noble deer, roe, badger, mountain goat, or cow). The inside is lined with felt.

"Ayak bau" - boots of different sizes which are fastened on the bird's feet and help provide captivity on an arm, support or perch. They are made of tanned cattle leather. The boots are lined with soft felt to prevent rubbing against the bird's legs.

"Tomaga" - a small leather cap put on a bird's head to cover its eyes. It ensures protection from visual irritants and calms the falcon or eagle. Design of the "tomaga" is based on the size and form of the bird's head, and it is



Recently caught Eagle undergoing process of domestication

constructed from soft leather. They are often decorated with embroidery and ornaments, which accounts for this item being one of the most expensive.

"Tugir" - a support for the bird to perch on in the yard or an open air cage. It is made of a curved tree trunk. The top of the support is covered with felt. A ring is fastened on it, to which the bird is tied. There exist many forms of such support.

"Baldak" - a wooden arm rest in the form of a crutch, used to support the falconer's arm holding a bird while riding a horse. The arm is much less tired than an unsupported arm. The top part of the support has two branches and is covered with leather. The forearm with a perching bird rests on it. The base is fastened to the saddle by means of leather laces. The "baldak" is usually made of a trunk of a smallwood tree, or in some cases a horn of a mountain goat.

"Zhem ayak" - a wooden basin for feeding birds. There are many variations in construction of this item.

"Zhem kalta" - a small sack (25 x 30cm) used to attract a flying bird back to the arm. It is made of felt covered with fabric, and a small piece of meat is put inside.

"Ayak kap" - special "gloves" to protect the talons from biting during the hunt when the predator grasps its prey. It is made of thick leather.

"Zhez tuyak" - copper claws which replace the broken claws of the bird.

"Syuzu" - cloth strips to tie tail feathers



Group of Kazakh hunters with golden eagles and dog

in a particular way to prevent a bird from flying to high altitudes. They are used during training sessions.

"Irggak" - a swinging perch used to train a newly caught bird during the initial period. As a rule it is a stick tied by both ends between two posts. While perching on it, the bird learns to keep its balance. The bird is forced to remain on the swinging perch even when exhausted. One of the purposes of this item is to accustom the bird to the moving arm of the hunter.

"Tyutik" - a special tube for pouring liquids, including remedies, into the bird. It is usually made of a small branch of wood, but a hollow bone of long-legged birds may also be used for this item. Both surfaces of the tube are made very smooth to prevent damage to bird tissue during use.

"Dalbay" and "Shirga" - artificial quarries used to train flying birds. There are two main types - "flying" and "running". The flying type, "dalbay", which is the primary training lure for falconers, has two wings of a duck, dove or partridge fastened to a felt framework which is covered with leather or cloth. Several strips of bright fabric, imitating a bird's tail, are sewn to one of the ends. On the other end a ring is fastened to which a firm cord is tied. Small pieces of meat are attached to the lures. A running lure, "shirga", is made of a piece of thick animal skin, stuffed with straw, with a fox tail attached. Golden eagles are trained with the "shirga". Both fledglings and adult birds are trained. Known nests are under constant

observation, with the observer often living near the raptor habitat from the beginning of egg laying until the chicks attempt to fly.

During that period the biology and habits of prey under natural conditions are being studied by the observer. Falconers know that chicks can become well developed in the parents' nest. That is why they endeavour to take chicks just before flight. When full fledged eyasses try to fly in the nest, they are frightened off and caught. In the wild the potential hunting birds are

baited by the use of a live bird (dove or partridge) or a hare, and caught with the help of a net. The falcon and eagle eyasses become accustomed to man sooner than adult birds. However, the latter are more valuable, especially when a fully moulted bird - "tastulek" - is located. The adult birds have already acquired more hunting skills, learned from their parents and perfected during the first three years of independent life, which is the time period required for the first complete moult. Upon being accustomed to man, they can be trained much faster than the young birds.

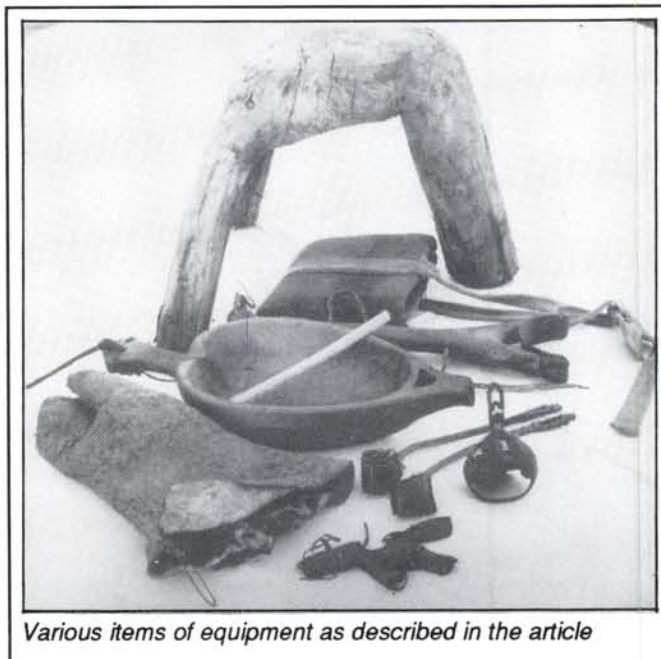
The first requisite for a hunting bird is to become accustomed to man. To achieve that goal, a hunter does not leave the bird during several days and nights. During that initial period the bird is put on an "iggrak" and not allowed sleep. The hunter strokes the bird's chest and sides. A tired bird gradually stops dashing away from people. To finish training, the falconer walks with the bird in crowded places including noisy bazaars. Step by step the bird is trained to be fed with meat from the hands of the owner. Then by tying the bird by the foot with cords of varying lengths, the falconer trains it to jump onto an arm from a 10 metre distance. He attracts the bird with meat.

Feeding is critical for a hunting bird. This is one of the main conditions for successful training and preparing for the hunt. It is very difficult to provide the bird with food similar to what it would obtain in the nature. At the same time, proper feeding guarantees its normal development and health. It is very important that the bird achieves a certain weight, because training of a hunting bird is based on a sense of hunger. Hunters feed their birds by hand, uttering specific sounds. As a result a conditioned response to the hunter's voice is established.

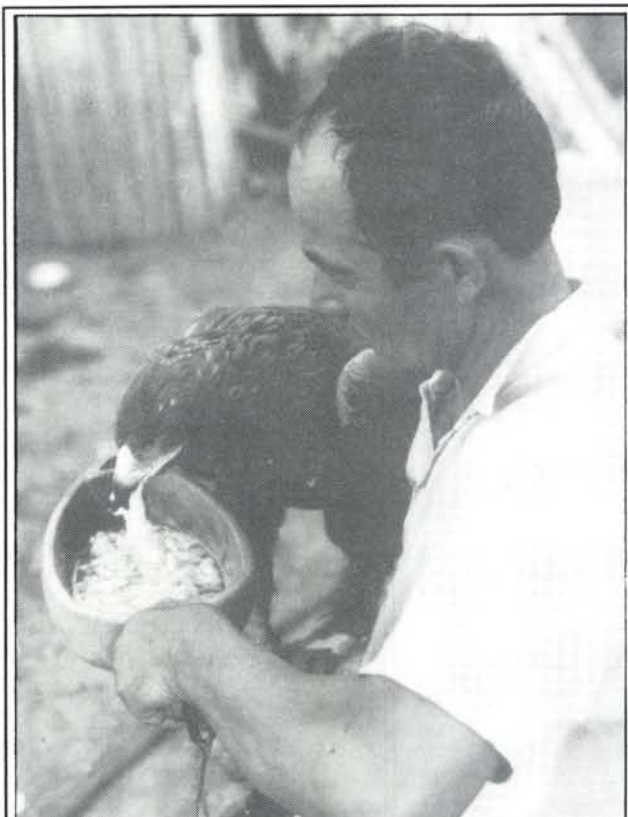
When determining the food allowance, the falconer takes into account that the bird is being held in captivity. Muscle strength for captive birds is much less than free living birds. Horse flesh, beef, mutton, and various birds are used to feed hunting birds. Meat must be fresh and never salted or spoiled. To force the bird to belch (cast) regularly it is given a special diet prepared from felt and pieces of wood. Bone flour and crushed eggshell are added to the chick's food. A golden eagle is usually fed with chopped meat free of fat and tendons which is soaked in water.

Falcons are trained with the aid of a "dalbay" which is turned on a cord in the air, while eagles are trained with a "shirga" which is dragged on the ground. During initial training sessions, the bird, tied with a long cord and wearing "boots", is allowed to reach the lure. Then the cord is shortened, then omitted. Only the boots are maintained. Upon catching the lure, the bird is called to the falconer's arm with a piece of meat and the falconer's voice. Upon capture of live prey, the training may be considered finished and the bird is ready for a real hunt.

A well trained bird can be used for several seasons. After five to seven years, such birds are set free because muscle strength of the wings and talons is weakened. Such released birds do not die, and are able to live independently for many seasons.



Various items of equipment as described in the article

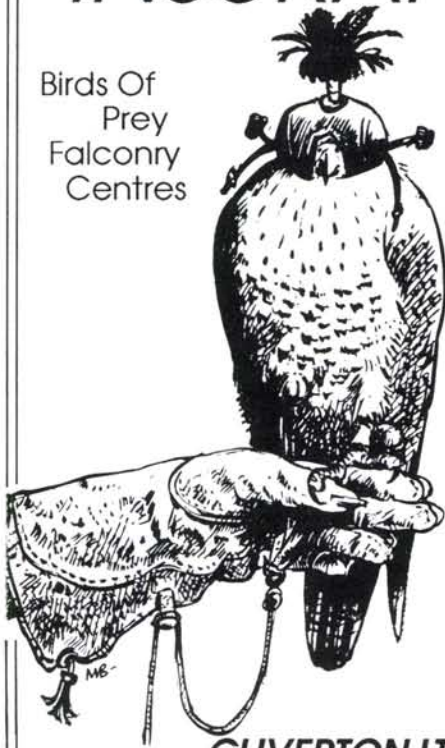


Kazakh falconer feeding eagle on the fist.
(This is the falconer who was featured in the recent television programme).

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FERRETS FOR WORKING OR PETS



by Brian Cockings

Ferrets can be fun, whether you work them for pest control or have them as pets they can give you hours of pleasure watching them play or indeed playing with them.

HOUSING

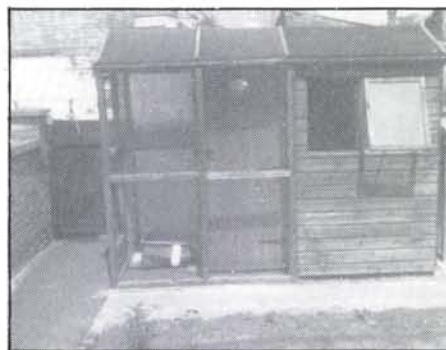
To own ferrets you must have somewhere to keep them that is escape proof as they are experts at escaping from cages that are not completely secure. To keep 1 or 2 ferrets you



need a cage in the region of 3 to 4 feet long and 2 feet high by 2.5 feet deep with a sloping lid approximately 1 foot for bedding and the rest for the run.

For easy cleaning I find it best to have a hinged lid using sawdust for the run and straw for the sleeping compartment you can also have a hinged front.

To keep more than 2 or 3 ferrets you either have more small cages or a larger one.



This is a 4 x 4 foot shed with a 4 x 6 wire run and a concrete base in this you could keep up to 10 ferrets.

This is a 10 x 3 x 3 foot wire and wood cage which can be divided into two (note the sleeping compartments top right and left corners).



PHILIP SNOW BA Hons

is a professional wildlife illustrator, whose work is regularly published worldwide in books, magazines, prints and cards etc., by such as BBC WILDLIFE, COLLINS, RSPB, AMERICAN EXPRESS, BIRDWATCHING, BRITISH BIRDS, CHESHIRE LIFE, INTERCONTINENTAL of N. York, Texas's OCEAN WORLD and Turkey's TURQUOISE magazine etc.

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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THE FALCONERS MAGAZINE

Raptors in Turkey Part 2

Text & Sketches by Philip Snow



Lanner

Because of their charming habit of colonial nesting, often in towns and villages, LESSER KESTRELS (*Falco nanmnai*) are easier to count; but large aggregations of hovering kestrels are not lessers! 2000 largely migratory pairs of this lovely little insectivorous falcon breed in Turkey, but with only about 47 being seen on passage, in the north east. OSPREYS (*Pandion haliaetus*) are thought to be only occasional breeders, in single figures; and only low numbers of passage birds (34) are reported as the majority of their w. palearctic population favour a more westerly mediterranean route.

The partially migrant race of the powerful IMPERIAL EAGLE (*Aquila heliaca*), whilst more widespread than its spanish cousins, is still rather endangered, but with a small stronghold of up to 150 pairs in Turkey. 27 have been recorded on migration in the n. east, and about 20 in the west. Its favoured prey is the locally common Sonslik (ground squirrel) Leverets and birds and some carrion in winter from low lying open land with some steppe and water: Somewhat similar to that used by SPOTTED EAGLES (*Aquila clanga*). These winter, are are suspected to breed, but identification problems with Lesser Spotted Eagles hinder observations of this somewhat mysterious raptor, and only about 20 and 10 respectively have been observed at western and eastern passage points.

Coming to the rest of the falcons, we find that numbers are comparatively low, with MERLINS (*Falco columbarius*) following small birds south, 21 being seen in the n. east in autumn '77; probably to winter in west and central Turkey. The magnificent SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) is fairly well known to falconers, and this declining bird of wild steppe has about 100 pairs breeding in central and east Turkey, with another 26 recorded on passage; roughly divided between east and west. It too has plumages that could be confused, with the largely non-migratory LANNER FALCON (*Falco biarmicus feldeggii*), another popular falconers bird that breeds very sparingly in Turkey, only about 20 pairs estimated in 1982. Unlike the more robust Saker, however, which takes a lot of ground quarry (including the Sonslik), the Lanner largely sticks to birds. The familiar PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus brookei*, breeding and passage here; with perhaps larger, paler northern birds also on

passage?) is also widely, if thinly distributed with up to 150 breeding pairs; and about 8 have been logged passing through the n. east in autumn 1976.

One of my very first Turkish views, directly above a riverside breakfast table at Dalyan, was of a rusty Peregrine, zooming from the cliffs overlooking the little town to snatch its own breakfast; a Collared Dove. Unfortunately unlike its largely thriving northern cousins, the southern population is in decline because of the environmental poisoning, shooting and falconry etc.

Last, but by no means least, of the falcons is the spectacular and migratory ELEANORAS FALCON (*Falco eleanorae*), breeding in the sea of Marmara and on the s.w. coastal islands, an estimated 30-50 pairs; and they can be widely, if thinly, seen throughout the southern half of the country, from May to November. Its glamorous streamlined image is enhanced by a liking for colonial nesting on precipitous island cliffs and fabulous formation hunting and aerobatics which however, makes one pity the exhausted passerines imagining that they have safely reached landfall. Possibly confusion with vagrant SOOTY FALCONS (*Falco concolour*) may occur?



Six other, largely migratory, raptors also feature on Turkey's bird list, with two very rare w. palearctic vultures enjoying precarious strongholds here. The huge broad winged BLACK VULTURE (*Aegypius monachus*) has between 100 and 800 breeding pairs, on mountainous plateaus like Kizikahaman. This fine forested national park, above Ankara, also boasts BEARDED VULTURES or LAMMERGEIERS (*Gypaetus barbatus*); a beautiful black and gold bird with slender nine foot wing span, and similar numbers to the Black. It has distinctly non-vulturine habits as well as looks, and has a typical habit of cracking large bones and tortoisés by dropping them hundreds of feet, and also killing weak and wounded montane animals like Ibex. I had a stunning view of one flying with flocks of Alpine Choughs at dusk, against a spring full moon rising over gold tinted snowy Demirkazik alps.

GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) number about 500 breeding pairs, and roughly 53 of these powerful raptors were recorded passing down the eastern route one



Pallid Harrier ♀ · Montagu's ♀ ·

autumn. Most of the northern hemisphere has GOLDEN EAGLES (*Aquila chrysaetos* homeyer, here) and there are probably a 1000 scattered pairs with a handful arriving each autumn; whereas the much more threatened and largely non-migratory BONELLIS EAGLE (*Haliaeetus fasciatus*) is only a rare and localised breeder, with no more than 50 pairs. I have only seen one pair, both surprisingly still on the nest ledge in late September, near Kozluk, west of Lake Van; and there are only a handful of records in the 'Birds of Turkey' booklets and bird reports. WHITE TAILED EAGLES (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) are also declining in most of their southern range, and only about 15 to 25 pairs were thought to remain by 1982. This usually coastal bird is associated with large wetlands like Bafa and Koycegiz lakes and the Goksii delta; and although some immigration is thought to occur, only 2 have been logged passing

south in autumn '79, via the n. east. Poisoned carrion baits for Wolves, Foxes and corvids take a large toll of raptors, here and throughout the world; combined with all aforementioned haphazard shooting; and recently at least one of a pair attempting to re-establish themselves at Dalyan was shot. Ironically this was within the very delta, only just saved from development and designated a "Specially Protected Area" by the Government, largely on account of its outstanding natural beauty and rare breeding Loggerhead Turtles. The Turkish Society for the Protection of Wildlife (D.H.K.D.) played an active part in this victory, and they are also concerned about the almost totally uncontrolled and largely illegal shooting throughout the country, and especially with the destruction of an estimated 25,000 various raptors each autumn in n.e. Turkey. About 10,000 SPARROWHAWKS (*Accipiter nisus*) out of about 15,000 caught each autumn for quail hawking, subsequently die; and about 15,000 other raptors are killed to feed them, and the Red Backed Shrikes used to attract the hawks! Obviously, the main issue here is not primarily with falconry, but with the indiscriminate and lawless shooting of huge numbers of raptors; some very rare. Both the D.H.K.D. and I.C.B.P. (International Council for Bird Preservation) have launched an education programme, and I am grateful to both them and O.S.M.E. (Ornithological Society for the Middle East) for publishing information on raptor numbers in this beautiful and wild country.

RAPTORS in TURKEY 2



1st year

adult ♂



♂
• LEVANT or 'Black eyed' SPARROWHAWK

• STEPPE EAGLE

1st year



HONEY BUZZARD
adult-typical



SAKER FALCON
top. 1st year



eastern
• IMPERIAL EAGLE
⊗ 1st year
Ⓟ adult

• Birds not to scale
by Russian border, (Azerbaijan)



♀
• PALLID HARRIER



♂
• MONTAGUS HARRIER



1st year Pallid.



Tatvan, Lake Van.
adult Pallid ♂



^ adult pale phase
• **BOOTED EAGLE**



^ 1st year
• **BONELLIS EAGLE**
with Chukar



^ adult
Bonellis

^ adult
• **WHITE TAILED EAGLE**



^ pale phase + dark phase
• **ELEANDRAS FALCON** (below)



Central plateau.



1st year
Lanner



^ adult Lanner
E. Gtr. Sand Plover



Coloured
Pratincole



Tuzla
Golm.



^ nominate race
LANNER FALCON



^ adult ♀ + ♂ (above)

ALLID CARRIER

“CHEAP DOGS”

Falconers do not need to be reminded of the advances in technology. Telemetry has revolutionised the sport. The other day I needed a stop watch for my photographic darkroom and took a very rare trip to the local jewellers. I opted for a digital watch at £4.40 which will suit my purpose but I could have paid a five figure price for a diamond encrusted Rolex! Both do the same job.

Anyone aspiring to game hawking is going to realise sooner or later, that he or she needs a dog. To get a falcon to mount and wait on at a good height requires a reasonable guarantee of game being flushed below. The act of mounting in the air makes a falcon work very hard. It will only do this because it believes it has a reasonable chance of a kill.

No one has yet invented a machine that will find game as efficiently as a well trained dog. Pointing dogs do this by freezing on point when they encounter the body scent of game birds. There is nothing particu-

larly unique about the pointing instinct. Many of my shepherd friends have sheepdogs that will find and point grouse, and they think it a damned nuisance! There is also the story of the New Forest pig that was trained to point partridges within a fortnight. Taken young enough, almost any breed of dog can be trained to point and I make this remark from thirty years experience of training many breeds of working dogs, not just bird dogs.

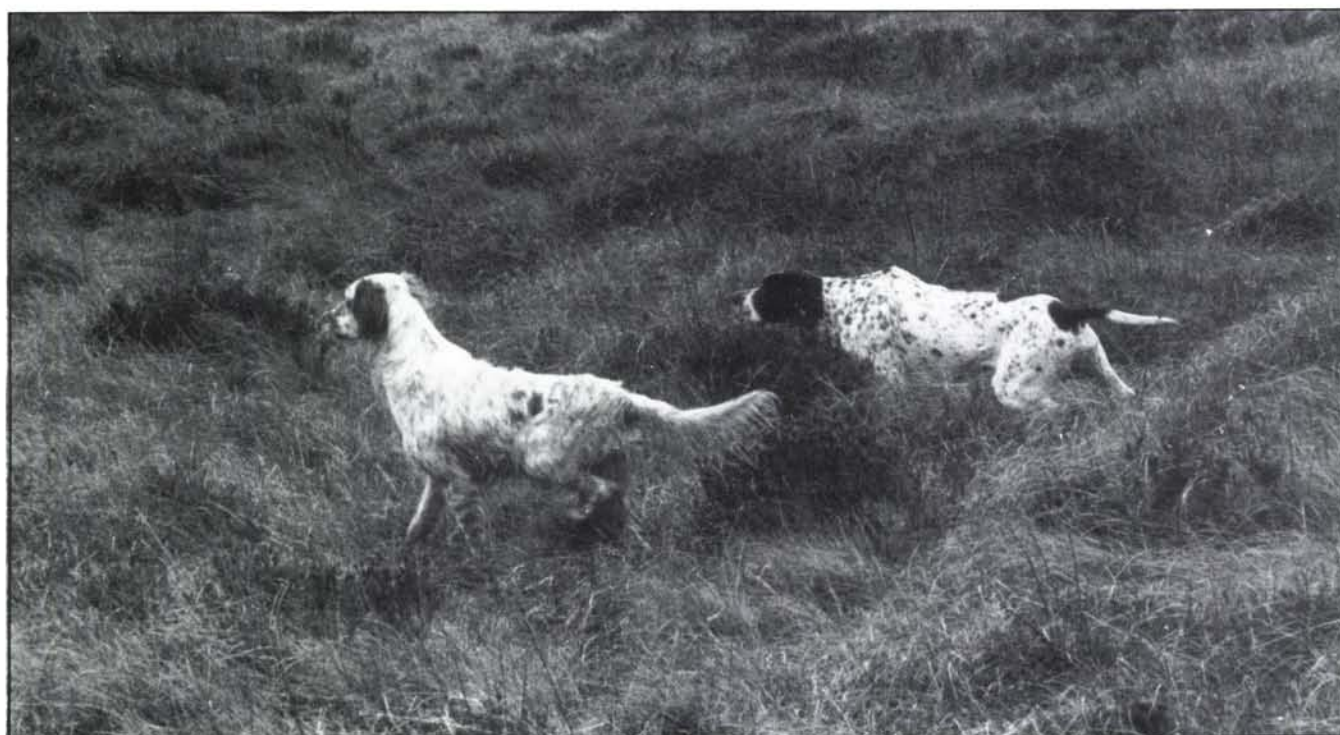
Many people express surprise that pointers and setters can cost so much. But you get what you pay for and the best of these are the race horses of the gundog world. My cheap watch will be left on the darkroom shelf and with kind treatment it will last perhaps a year. I would expect an expensive watch to last a lot longer and tough it out all the rough treatment I am likely to give it. The best gundogs are expensive because these are the dogs the purchasers with the money want to buy. The falconer is in the same market place as the

Greek ship builder and the Japanese industrialist. For some, the cheap dog will do, but if you aspire to the top in game hawking, there really can be no compromise.

The late William Humphrey achieved record bags with his falcons by having some of the best dogs in the country. This is what he had to say on the subject. "There is no question but that the best field trial dogs are not only the best shooting dogs, but are the best suited for falconry. This kind of ancient sport is far more exacting and dependable on the dog's sterling qualities than that required of a field trial dog. For this purpose the falconer must have the perfect dog that not only keeps contact with its handler but with the falcon, high in the sky. Not only must such a dog be of high courage and boldness but must be positive on point, and which possesses great scenting power, the dog must range over the ground at great speed with a high head, and never stopping to potter or foot scent, or waste time by

hunting over barren ground, but must bore out into the wind and go right to its game with the least uncertainty or effort. Nothing discourages a noble falcon more than waiting on high above a slow pottering, foot scenting, false pointing dog. Ever since I was able to support a hawk on my gloved fist, I have found that all the greatest setters and pointers that I have worked were always the best hawking dogs, and during these many long years my best field trial dogs have always been used chiefly for the sport. To have made the following bags which I have done with three peregrines, one tiercel and two falcons, thirty-seven brace of grouse in one day and three hundred and nine brace in five weeks, not only have I had to have three perfect game hawks, but I was fortunate in having at the time five of the best field trial setters that has been my pleasure to have owned at one period".

The best dogs for falconry will range fast and wide in country where game is scarce.



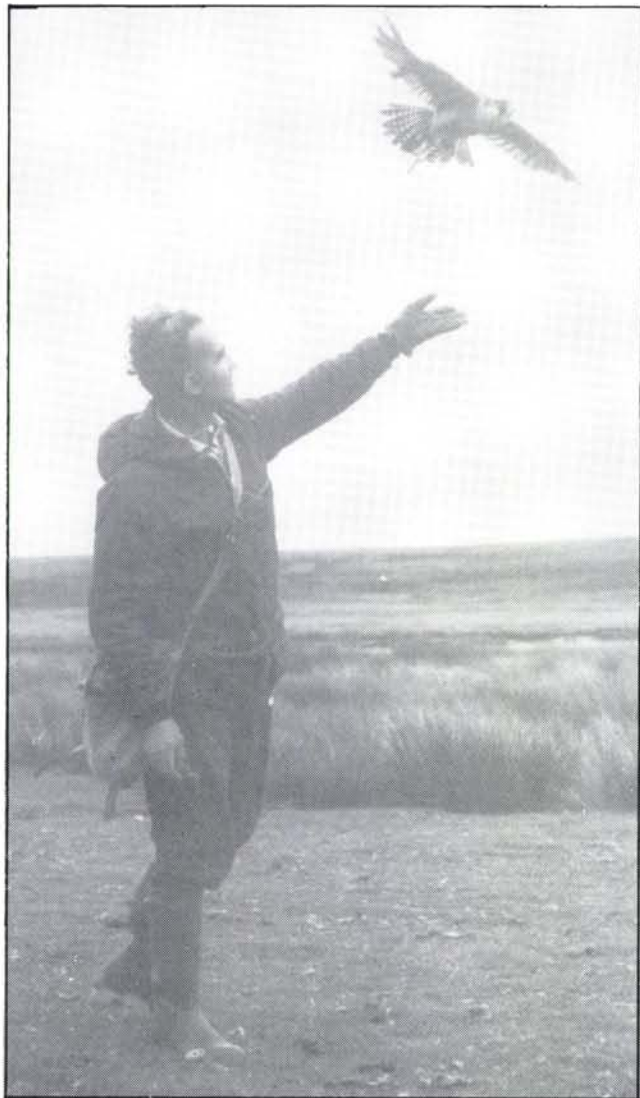
Setter and Pointer on grouse

By Derry Argue

Unless you can afford a team, the dog you work must have exceptional stamina which is something not tested in today's field trials where heats average about two minutes. When they point, you will know that they have game and they will not need a concerto of the whistle to turn them or a demonstration in semaphore to get them to drop or hold a point. Young dogs may take two or three years to achieve anything like this level of perfection and it doesn't need a mathematical genius to work out the cost of breeding and training such dogs today.

I frequently hear that for falconry a gunshy dog will do and

a sticky dog is preferred. This is not true. Such faults indicate defective treatment or training, often both. Making do with a cheap dog is false economy in game hawking. Take the total cost of a holiday on the Scottish moors and then divide that by the number of successful flights and you get to understand the cost of your sport. We did this minor mental exercise for an Arabian sheik's hawking trip many years ago and it worked out at £30,000 per successful flight. Even pheasant shooting works out at £15 - £20 per bird. So perhaps that "expensive" dog is cheap after all.



Geoffrey Pollard casting off a falcon over a point on grouse.
Photograph by Derry Argue

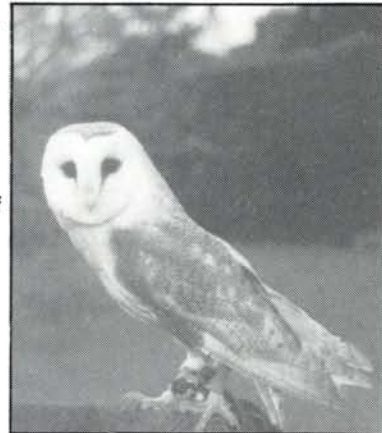
Hawk and Owl Trust



TRUST LAUNCHES NEW SCHEME TO HELP BRITAIN'S OWLS

by Sue M. Dewar

November 1992 sees the launch of the Hawk & Owl Trusts "Adopt a Box" scheme, and it is hoped that this will prove to be an ideal way for any owl-lover, young or old, to help. British owls have been having a hard time surviving in today's modern world. In 60 years the Barn owls have been having a hard time surviving in today's modern world. In 60 years the Barn Owl population has fallen by two-thirds to a current population of less than 5,000 breeding pairs (compared to 5,000,000 pairs of Robins). The decline has been caused by changes to the environment, with less rough grassland and fewer barns and natural nesting sites in hollow trees. As part of its conservation work, the Hawk and Owl Trust puts up nestboxes in areas which are capable of supporting a breeding pair of Barn Owls. These sites are monitored with permission from the landowner, and this year around 400 Hawk and Owl Trust boxes have been used.



Barn Owl

As well as Barn Owl boxes, which can be placed in trees, on poles or in barns, the Trust also puts up boxes for Tawny Owls and Little Owls. Boxes are often used by other birds, and one polebox was turned into "flats" when Barn Owls moved into the bottom, and Kestrels nested in the pitch roof.

For £7.50 a year adopters can now support this valuable work and enable the Trust to put up more boxes. In return for their contribution they will be sent an adoption certificate, together with information about Britain's owls. They will receive news about nesting activity in their boxes, and how their money is helping the Trust carry out its conservation programme. There will also be a special adoption package costing £30, for schools and other groups such as Brownies, Cubs, Womens Institutes or Young Farmers' Clubs etc.

It will not be possible to divulge exactly where nestboxes are situated, as it is vital that breeding birds are not disturbed. However, the Trust has to put up boxes in many parts of the country, and "adopters" can choose which region they would like to support.

Adoption forms and further details are available from "Adopt a Box", The Hawk and Owl Trust,
42 The Woodlands, Linton, Cambridgeshire CB1 6UG.
Tel: 0223 892335.

L etters

Dear Editor

I thought readers may be interested in an incident I shared with my female Harris Hawk, Kizzi, during the hawking season last October.

We had been out on my regular patch of ground for a couple of hours one Sunday afternoon, one rabbit had been accounted for and, as there didn't seem to be anything else around for the hawk to have a go at, I was thinking about feeding her up and heading for home.

While walking back up the little used lane that crosses our flying ground, with Kizzi on the fist and still wearing her flying jesses, I felt her suddenly tense up while at the same time intently watching a clump of nettles at the other side of the lane. I walked over to see what had caught her eye, up got a black rabbit, which, presumably feeling we were too close for comfort,

bolted off down the lane, stopping about eighty yards away. During this time, Kizzi didn't move a muscle, despite encouragement from me, she was reluctant to pursue this strange looking potential meal.

My theory for this, and other falconers will probably agree, was that she didn't recognise the rabbit as food, due to its colouring, for my knowledge she had never encountered a black rabbit before.

So we just stood there for a while watching the rabbit - the hawk obviously unsure of her next move. The intended quarry had now moved through the hedge and was sat about ten yards from the edge of the field. It was then that Kizzi decided she should do something about the situation. She left my fist and, after gaining a little height, put in a low, half hearted stoop at the rabbit, then had second thoughts and threw



My female Harris Hawk, Kizzi, now 2 years old and flying at 2lb 6oz

up a tree about twenty five feet from the ground almost directly above the rabbit.

I then tried to persuade the rabbit to run by throwing sticks in its direction, this worked and off it ran across the field with Kizzi in hot pursuit. She gained on her prey easily and made contact after a short chase and a couple of turns. Hawk and rabbit then tumbled over the grass together before coming to rest with Kizzi sat over her

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rabbit looking very pleased with herself if a little surprised.

By now I was about fifteen yards away and could see that she had a good hold on her quarry and thought 'another for the freezer' when suddenly the rabbit squealed, the Harris responded by releasing it, and just sat there in the grass watching the rabbit bolt for a secure looking patch of gorse nearby!

Well, as you can imagine, I was absolutely amazed, hav-

ing never witnessed such a performance before. After all the trouble taken to persuade the hawk to chase the thing in the first place, then to have her let go because it squeaked!

Of course the rabbit squeaking must have alarmed her enough to release her grip sufficiently to make good its escape, which it did - rapidly.

Mr C Bevan
Shropshire

FLYING FREE

Dear David and Lyn

For me the whole magic of falconry and birds flight was epitomized in a few minutes of an afternoon last year. I was walking down through a large undulating field with "Bonnie" my female harris on fist. As we walked there was a strong wind blowing into my face. Half of the way I threw "Bonnie" into the wind and with no more than a dozen powerful wing beats she was low over the ground and far in front of me. With a quick twist she turned on her side so that one wing was touching the grass while the other was pointing towards the sky. In this position she flew at an angle to the wind at an incredible speed, with her wings completely still, past me and back up the field. Receding rapidly towards the horizon in the shape of a toppled crucifix, it appeared as though the landscape was being sucked into the underside of her wings.

When her shape was just a tiny cross approaching the distant horizon I had left far behind me, she rose high in the air as if propelled by some much greater force than just good design. When she was high in the air, she tucked her wings into her body and did a long shallow stoop towards me, then landed on my fist as softly as if she had just stepped from one perch to another.

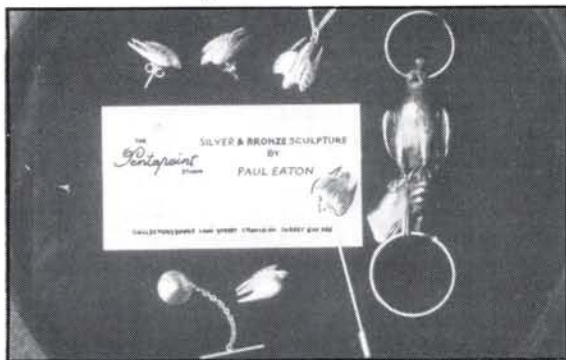
When I watch my bird soaring up on high, I imagine that I am up there with her, shrinking the world with the tilt of a wing. Every time she returns I am a little surprised that she is not bursting with joy at her wonderful ability. If only she could talk then I could find out what she really thinks of flying. Until then I'm content to stay on the ground watching her, trying to imagine, and feeling just a little bit jealous.

So engrossed in what I'm watching that my mind is set entirely free. I'm struck by the way she appears to make the landscape shrink to a more manageable size. While my bird is flying, I feel like an ant stuck on the bottom of an empty swimming pool. It makes me wish that she could talk just long enough to tell me what it's like off the bottom of this damn pool.

Alex Smith

THE FALCONERS COLLECTION

by Paul Eaton



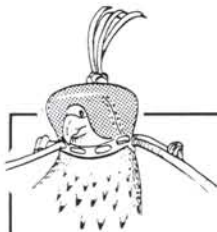
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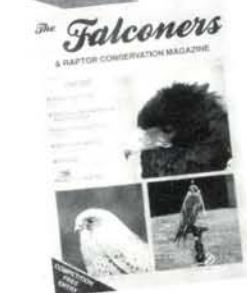
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A Countrymans Countryman*
by Alan Gates

I moved to live in North Yorkshire in April 1972, and my first priority was to contact any fellow falconers who may be living in the near vicinity. Luckily, such a fellow lived in the nearest town of Pickering. Bill Mitton was a representative for an agricultural seed merchants and in his spare time was an austringer and aviculturist. His main passion was his female goshawk, 'Kea', and through his job he was able to procure ample farming land to fly his hawk over. It was through Bill's generous hospitality that I was invited one evening to visit a retired gamekeeper who practised taxidermy and at one time had been a falconer. I remember being less than enthusiastic at the time, gamekeepers and birds of prey seemed to be at the opposite ends of the scheme of things. Although being at a loose end that evening I went along for the ride. Duncombe Park and the huge Helmsley estate of the Fevershams' was our destination, as we drove up the concrete road (which was laid by the Armed forces during the First War) one could not help but be impressed by the stately home of Thomas Duncombe. We turned off the drive in front of the main house towards a Yorkshire stone building which had possibly been built as a kennels, to house a pack of foxhounds perhaps. I was told that at the turn of the century this building had been a laundry, but since his return from the First War, our host now retired Head Keeper Adam Gordon had lived there. A tall straight backed gentleman

met us at the gate to his cottage and he was introduced to me as 'Gordon', although in his mid eighties he belied the look of a sprightly sixty-year old. We were cordially greeted and ushered into the outbuilding that had been the kennels/laundry, and was now Gordons taxidermy workshop. There were a number of finished specimens assembled on a bench, crows, owls, stoats, weasels etc., all unfortunate road casualty victims. Bill was presented with a fine specimen of a stoat with dark beady eyes, it still breathed the illusion of life that final accolade of the taxidermists art. I marvelled at a cocky yellowhammer perched on a sprig of gorse, not so much at the quality of workmanship, which was outstanding, but more at the large strong hands and slightly fading eyesight which had performed this work of art. The hospitality extended to supper in the cottage were I met Gordon's wife Minnie, a small silver haired homely woman with a round friendly face. On the sideboard was a mounted peregrine, hooded, belled and jessed, sitting on a block. This was one of Gordons' favourite tiercels and an exceptional partridge hawk. Sadly it had stooped through a bunch of pole mounted telegraph wires and was killed by the collision. These wires were a particular hazard to all birds, they often had corks threaded on them in an attempt to make them more visible to flying birds. Gordon joined me at the table, in his hands was an old biscuit tin, the contents were numerous photographs of hawks, falcons and people, together with a few bits of falconry furniture. This biscuit tin was to be the centre of many long and happy hours spent in the company of Adam Gordon. Gordon was born on March 25th. 1885 of Scottish parents, the eldest of two boys.

His father James was a keeper working in Ireland. He left home at the age of fourteen, to work as an apprentice taxidermist for Mr. Williams of Dame Street, Dublin. After two years of City life the call of the country became too strong, and a chance meeting with Mr. Gilbert with the offer of employment as apprentice falconer was just the sort of diversity that the young Gordon enjoyed. Mr. Gilbert rode around England and Ireland with his falcons, although initially when Gordon joined him he was flying a team of peregrines at rook on the Curragh. Who precisely Mr. Gilbert the falconer was I was never able to determine, however, he gave Gordon a sound grounding in the art of falconry. The year was 1906 and they shared the Curragh with fine company, at the same time

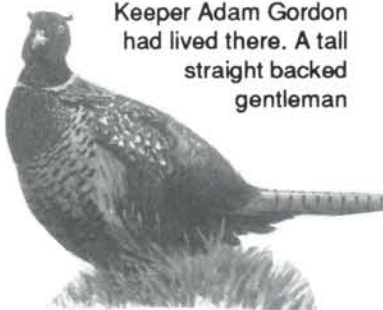
Gilbert Blaine and his fine team of peregrines were flying the rooks. Although in Blaine's opinion, the Curragh was too cramped for anything but a double flight. There were, besides, plenty of obstacles in the shape of carts, small parties of cavalry, racing strings, etc., which gave rooks opportunities for foiling the hawks. This is pure speculation, but I am in no doubt that Mr. Gilbert and Gordon met up with Blaine and his team and on occasions hawked together. In fact is it not just possible that Gordons Mr. Gilbert was Gilbert Blaine?. Gordon followed Mr. Gilbert and his falcons for two years before moving to work for the Duke of Portland at Welbeck. This was a large and extensive estate employing over thirty keepers under the guiding eye of

Mr. Weir the head keeper. Gordon moved onto Windsor in 1909 as assistant keeper on a beat of the pheasant shoot for King Edward VII. In 1912 Gordon answered an advertisement from Lord Helmsley for a man who could train falcons and gun dogs. He met Lord Helmsley at Nawton Towers and was taken by him for a short walk through the woods to see what he knew. They had only been walking for a few



Adam Gordon, with eyas falcon 'Erin' in the grounds of Duncombe Park

minutes when Gordon asked Lord Helmsley to make his dog sit and to walk back with him ten yards. Gordon pointed out a woodcock a few feet from the path, sitting on its nest and so well camouflaged as to be almost invisible. Gordon was given the job on the spot. Lord Helmsley had a sound knowledge of falconry gleaned from his time in the Sudan. Falconry had been passionately pursued by his predecessors, most notably Cecil Duncombe who was the 1st. Earl's younger brother. The 1st. Earl, Lord Helmsley's grandfather affectionally known as the 'old Earl' had been a Subscriber of The Old Hawking Club for many years, although never actually being a falconer he had a strong association. The 'Old Earl' lived in the large house in Duncombe



Park and Gordon recalls only meeting him once, when he was requested to bring the goshawk for the Earl to see. Peregrines were obtained from Ireland and Scotland as eyasses, the Scottish falcons came from the Duke of Portlands, Langwell Estate at Berriedale. These falcons were hacked at Nawton Towers and were trained as game hawks, flying at grouse, pheasant and partridge. Grouse hawking was mainly on Roper moor above Helmsley, but a huge area was available for hawking pheasant and partridge on estate farm land from Nawton Towers to Harome. Gordon would discourage his young falcons from flying pigeons by buying barn pigeons from the farmers at sixpence a time, and releasing them when the falcon was waiting on a little down wind. This would give the advantage to the pigeon, after a long chase the falcon would give up and return, only to have another pigeon released. Soon the falcon learned that chasing pigeon was unrewarding. The farmers were happy as most of the pigeons returned and could be sold again when Gordon needed them. Mr. St. Quintin of Scampston Hall, who in his younger days had been one of the most active members of the Old Hawking Club, gave Lord Helmsley and Gordon most of his falconry furniture. Gordon obtained a passage Goshawk from Karl Mollen of Valkenswaard and together with Lord Helmsley enjoyed some fine sport at the many rabbit warrens on the estate. This was the only hawk Gordon ever lost outright. It was at the insistence of Lord Helmsley that they try a flight or two at rabbits one windy afternoon. They visited the warren just above Nawton Towers, by the water filter beds. As Gordon stood on the hill the gos left the fist in pursuit of a rabbit in the field below. With the advantage of height it flew like a bullet and killed a rabbit, unfortunately the field contained young cattle which circled round the hawk. Startled by the commotion of the cattle the hawk left the rabbit and lifted into the air, whereupon the wind caught it and blew it down the dale. Gordon heard that it had killed a chicken

in a farmyard a few days later, but was unable to locate it. A few weeks later the First World War broke out. All the falcons and hawks were sold when war broke out, and Lord Helmsley formed the Yorkshire Hussars mainly from volunteers. Gordon volunteered and underwent two months training before being sent into action in France. Being a crack rifle shot, he was made sniper and often was left alone in 'no man's land' to pick off unwary Germans. His bravery was renowned; he was wounded twice and was awarded the MM and DCM and bar. Sadly the war claimed the life of Lord Helmsley, he was killed in action on the Somme. September 15th. 1916 was



Adam Gordon, with eyas merlins on the hack board, soon they would be ready to be sent to Capt. Knight.

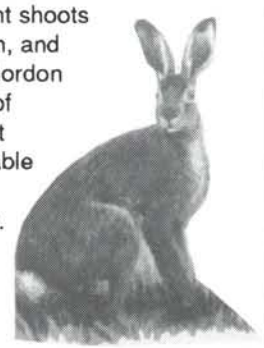
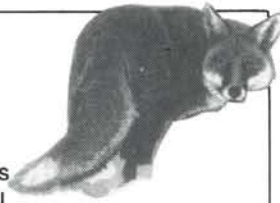
reported as one of the quietest days, the single round from a snipers rifle being the only shot fired. After the war Gordon returned to Nawton Towers under the stewardship of Colonel Duncombe. Charles William, Lord Helmsley's eldest son and now the third Earl, was only twelve years old. Gordon was made head Keeper and had ten keepers under him and several shoots to supervise, again he kept falcons and goshawks, a notable amongst these was Erin an eyas falcon from Ireland. Gordon moved from Nawton Towers to reside in the grounds of the main house in Duncombe Park, since

the loss of both the first and second Earl the house was passed into institutional occupation as a girls school. As the third Earl grew up he took an interest in falconry under the guidance of Gordon, and it was by chance that in the early twenties that Capt. C.W.R. Knight, wildlife film maker, naturalist and falconer visited the school to present a film and give a lecture. Capt. Knight returned to the school in the coming years to show films and fly his famous golden eagle, Mr. Ramshaw. A natural friendship developed, and Knight would partake of the hospitality offered by his Lordship at Nawton Towers. Mr. Ramshaw would likewise be

thankful for a shady corner for his block in Gordons walled garden. Capt. Knight particularly enjoyed flying merlins at lark and an arrangement developed which was to continue for many years. Gordon knew of merlins nesting on the estates moorland and collected the eyasses each season. They were hacked in the Park in the trees near Gordons house, as soon as they showed signs of independence they were caught with a bow-net. They were collected together and transported in a padded hamper by train to Sevenoaks. Capt. Knight and his brother Hugh together with a collection

of friends would all assemble at Avebury, on Salisbury Plain every season to fly the merlins at lark. At the seasons end the merlins were returned to Gordon in Yorkshire to be released on the same moorland. This was of great benefit to the local merlin population as it insured many more fledgeling merlins reached maturity. Knight had a great respect for Gordon and returned the hospitality by an invitation for Gordon and his wife and daughter, to his London film premiere of William and William's sister. A culmination of an expedition to the Grampian highlands to film the homelife of a pair of Golden eagles and their two eaglets. Although Gordons principle occupation was keeping the estate he still maintained a number of trained falcons and hawks. In 1928 the Third Earl joined the fledgeling British Falconers Club, he was nominated by Capt. Charles Knight. The Earl continued his membership until the Second War. After the Second War, with the estate returned to normality Gordon virtually created the Beckdale and Riccaldale beats, and along with Ashdale the shoot was let to a local syndicate. It all started as a fairly modest affair with 3000-4000 pheasants reared. In 1956 Lord Feversham saw the potential of combining the three valleys and he asked Gordon to plan out its future. Duncombe Park was developed later as a shoot and some would say in quality was the best of the lot.

Gordon planned and ran the Helmsley shoot for ten years until his retirement. It has been regarded by many as one of the best pheasant shoots in Britain, and Adam Gordon as one of the most remarkable Head keepers.



Photograph by: Alan Gates

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1ST prize of a pair of Habicht 8 x 20 B Swarovski binoculars has been won by S. Radford with his photograph of a Juvenile Male Kestrel - hovering.
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2ND. 14 months old Female Harris Hawk.
Photograph taken by Mrs Alison Smith



5TH. Lanner Falcon taken with a Minolta 7000i.
Photograph taken by D. Williams



3RD. Adult Male Red-backed Hawk (Females have a grey back). *Photograph taken in the Falkland Islands by Mr Les Peach*



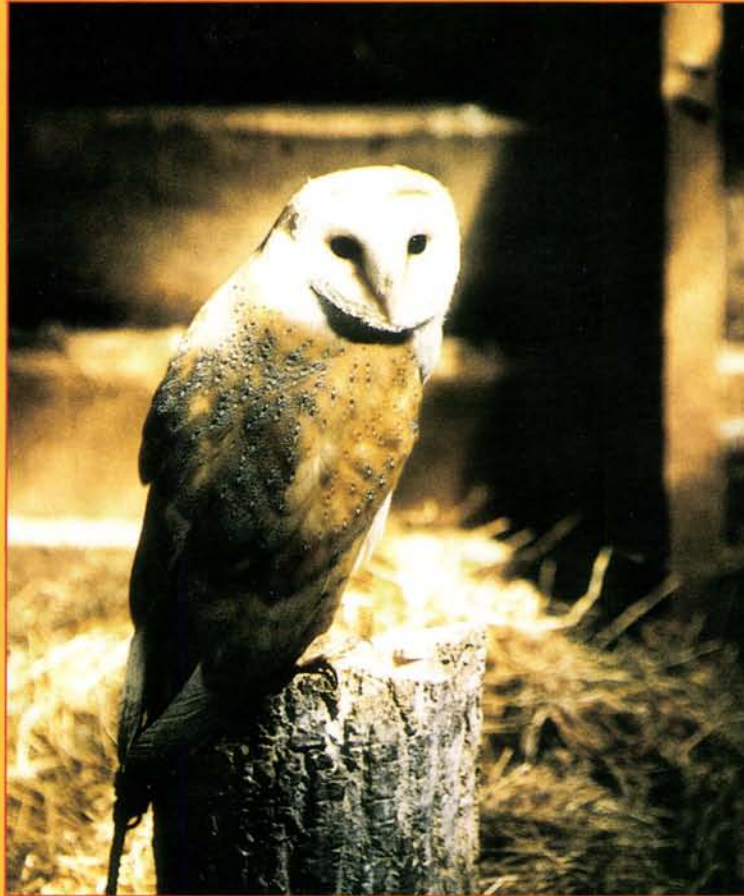
"Home Grown Falcons"
Gyr x Saker Hybrid
having a snooze
S. Miller



Female Finnish Goshawk
Barry Watson



Black naped Shaheen
Mohammed Ali



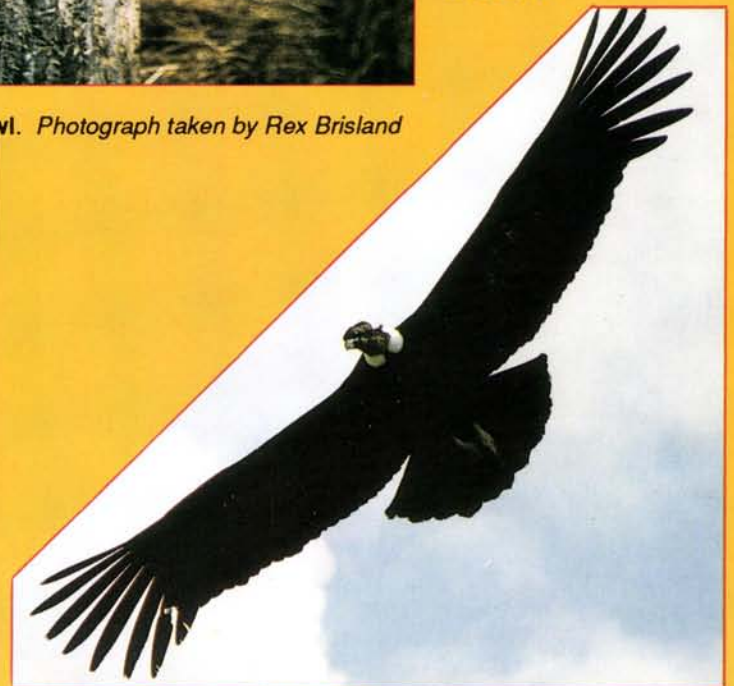
4TH. Adult Barn Owl. *Photograph taken by Rex Brisland*



Clarence.
Male Bengal Eagle Owl
9 weeks old
Mr S Ford



Immature Female Bald Eagle. *M. Allison*



Andean Condor. *G. S. Gelder*

Training Gundogs for Falconry

by Guy Wallace

Part Six

In this issue Guy Wallace will be taking a look at Basic lessons for your puppy "HUNTING"

BASIC TRAINING

Some trainers like to give a young pup in the early stages 10 - 15 minutes training every day teaching the same lesson until it is thoroughly learned. Nothing wrong with that. I, personally, tend to give a youngster, say, five minutes sitting, five minutes dummy work (for gameshooting pupils) and five minutes hunting with a lot of controlled scampering about in between. Young pups easily get bored and then the lesson becomes counter-productive. Although one naturally insists on every command being executed to the letter of the law, training at this stage must be FUN. If it is not fun for the pupil and fun for the trainer then you have got something

The secret of training a hunting dog is to let it train itself but never to let it get away with anything. They have better noses than we have and they have four legs to our two so, by and large, they are better suited to finding quarry than we are! We all know the dog that finds all the game in the next parish and we all know the dog that is so screwed down that the proverbial one-legged man with a stick could find more game. We want something between the two! One is continually walking the knife edge between enthusiasm on the one hand and control on the other. The process is not unlike playing a fish - one gives it a bit of line and then reels it in again.

Some dogs will quarter (zig-zag backwards and forwards in front of the handler) more naturally than others but in practice we want a dog that hunts in a defined area in front of the handler. The man who flies both longwings and shortwings wants a dog that will range over a considerable distance in the open but hunts reasonably close to him in cover. Fortunately HPRs seem to adapt naturally to the two different beats. While one's pupil is still at the puppy stage and long

a mental barrier of that particular distance. Allied to this "sideways" distance the trainer must imagine a permanent "semi-circle" moving in front of him. The base is the line of the three sticks and the furthest point of the circle is about 1/3 of the base i.e. 8 paces in front of him.

Everytime thereafter the dog reaches the edge of the "semi-circle" to the front or the side the trainer gives a PIPPIP on his whistle and walks or runs in the opposite direction 'drawing' the dog with him.

If I have a pointer solely for open country that does not get out very far I let the dog quarter and when it turns in on its own accord I then blow the turn whistle thus putting the cart before the horse. When it eventually gets out far enough I revert to normal.

How to actually teach a pup to hunt

This lesson is easier to teach along a corridor than in a large open space and should always be taught into the wind. Ideally the ground should be of vegetation about 6" - 9" tall and not bare ground. If you do not have a corridor of say 24 paces wide (and who has!) go to a farm sale and buy a couple of rolls of second-hand stockfencing and some push-in metal stakes. Run out the netting parallel to an existing fence and you have a corridor which may either be left up for a few weeks or taken down each time you use it. However far you eventually want the dog to range the trick is to teach it to turn and drop in a confined space where you have full control and then let it range further and further.

Sit the dog in the centre and send it off to, say, the left with the command GET ON (or CAST ON). The following day start it in the opposite direction and thereafter alternate the starting directions. Go with it and as soon as it approaches the left hand edge of the corridor PIP-PIP on the whistle and go to the right thus drawing it across to the opposite (right) side. As it approaches the right hand edge PIP-PIP and draw it back to the left and so on. Keep it quartering fairly "flat" and move forward slowly as eventually for every yard you walk forward the dog will have to run 40 yards (or 400 yards). All the time it is quartering correctly TELL IT IT IS DOING WELL but as soon as it fails to



Training should be fun for both the pupil and the trainer

wrong. Therefore if you got out of bed on the wrong side do not bother to train that evening or you will probably undo all the good done in the previous three sessions.

The primary role of a falconer's dog is to HUNT and the most successful falconry teams are when falconer, hawk and dog all have the 'killer instinct' - that will to succeed that separates the true falconer from the mere hawk keeper. It is no use bumbling along hoping that the dog will eventually stumble over some quarry and the hawk might catch it if it makes a mistake and as long as the sun is shining and the birds are singing all is well with the world. The attitude to take right from the start is that "there is game out there somewhere and we are damn well going to put that bacon in the pan". With dogs and hawks nothing succeeds like success.

before you start serious training cut 3 or 6 sticks and decide just how far you want your dog to quarter either side of you (a) in cover and (b) in the open. Push a stick in the ground and pace out that distance (c. 12 paces for in cover) either side of the centre stick and push in the other two. You then have three sticks in a line each 12 paces apart. You are the centre stick! Repeat for the open when the sticks will need to be about 50 - 60 paces either side of the centre stick for HPRs and 70 - 100 paces either side for pointers or setters. Take a long hard look at the three (or two sets of three) sticks and COMMIT THAT PICTURE TO MEMORY FOR ETERNITY. From about 5 - 6 months old and thereafter whenever your pup is out and about as soon as it gets to that distance give a PIP-PIP on your whistle and walk in the opposite direction and the pup will follow. The pupil then grows up enclosed within

BIRDTALK

PROTECTING CROP NESTING HARRIERS

Mike Everett, RSPB

Most of our tiny population of Montagu's Harriers nest in growing crops. Nesting is relatively late, so there are potential problems: the young harriers are usually still in the nest at harvest time. Traditionally, the solution has been to ask farmers to leave a portion of the crop uncut, offering them compensation in some cases - but this has some drawbacks, especially in making the site more obvious to humans and predators alike. During the last three summers, experienced RSPB harrier warden Bob Image has successfully pioneered a new approach in East Anglia, with the cooperation of local farmers. The young are temporarily removed from the nest (under licence) and carefully looked after in individual, ventilated boxes kept in the shade; meanwhile, the crop is harvested - but with the cutter bar or "header" on the combine raised in the area around the nest, so that an area of long stubble is left. The young are then returned to the nest. There is minimum inconvenience to the farmer, the long stubble is surprisingly inconspicuous at even a short distance and the harriers carry on as if nothing had happened.

BUZZARD SHOT

A Buzzard was found shot in Norfolk in October. This leaves just two pairs in the Norfolk Area. According to the RSPB the Buzzard is our most persecuted raptor with 428 having been killed this year.



turn on the PIP-PIP or takes in too much forward ground scold it with a harsh throaty "AAH AAH" sound. Should the pupil ignore this, run (not walk) across to it, grab it by the scruff of the neck without saying a word and drag it back to the exact spot where it was when you whistled and glare into its eyes, giving it a good shaking repeating the PIP-PIP whistle.



H.P.R.'s adapt naturally to hunting for longwings in the open and shortwings in cover

This must be done EVERY time the dog ignores you. It is essential that you do not tell it to SIT or COME HERE or anything else between ignoring the whistle or scold and repeating the PIP-PIP on the exact spot so that it is left in no doubt as to what it is being punished for.

If you have a dog that covers a lot of ground and is prone to giving you two fingers (Yes, we all know the type!) work it on a steep bank and when it is below you and ignores you you can leap down the bank in a few strides like the

just to remind it of the STOP whistle. Initially I stop it when it is passing across my front, then when it is approaching me and finally as it is going away from me all at increasing distances over several weeks. You will probably find that after 'x' number of times on the same bit of ground the dog will potter and become stale. Move the corridor to fresh ground and your pupil will hunt more keenly again.

Most dogs will turn naturally on a PIP-PIP if you walk in the opposite

direction. However some dogs need to be taught to turn with the use of a checkcord. (This is one reason why all my pointer pups always run loose with a whippet and subsequently a greyhound collar trailing 3 - 4 yards of nylon rope with the end burnt off). Clip or tie 10 - 12 yards of clothes line to a leather collar (not a slip lead) and hold the other end. Cast the dog off and when it reaches the



When teaching a pup to hunt ideally the ground should be of vegetation about 6" - 9" tall and not bare ground

Avenging Angel and grab it which has great shock value! Having corrected it by whatever means repeat the exercise and when this time the dog performs the exercise correctly as 99 out of 100 will make a big fuss of it thus emphasising the difference between BLACK and WHITE, GOOD and BAD.

If the dog takes in too much forward ground do not continually STOP it or you will end up with a "potterer" or else a dog that "tunes you out" on the stop whistle. Instead give the PIP-PIP and go backwards and sideways drawing it back. As a rule of thumb I only STOP a dog once during each hunting session,

end of the line PIP-PIP and a split second later pull the dog back towards you. Do the same thing in the opposite direction and so on until the dog gets the message. Checkcords are unwieldy items for the inexperienced and best dispensed with as soon as possible. The trick to prevent the all too frequent occurrence of ending up with the cord wrapped several times round ones knees is to pass it hand to hand over the top of ones head and you will probably still end up trussed up on the ground!

Next Issue: Teaching a dog to point.

Letters continued

Dear Editors

May I congratulate you on your wonderful magazine.

As I am undertaking an in depth study of sakers, if any of your readers have experience of flying these birds, I would be delighted to hear from them, including the quarry they are taking.

As artwork will be necessary for this project, I would like to borrow a mounted saker for this purpose, also any postcards, photographs, cuttings, badges, etc. that your readers may have available to assist me.

Yours sincerely

Chris Windsor
P84996
HMP Coldingley
Bisley
Woking
Surrey
GU24 9EX

HELP!

STRANDED WOULD BE FALCONER IN LIMERICK, REP OF IRELAND.

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Sparrowhawk

As some of our readers are well aware, the past thirty years or so have revealed a number of changes to this most exciting of sports and the vast majority of these changes have not been for the better for a variety of reasons, but often from direct conflict with conservation bodies such as the RSPB. It is no great secret that the RSPB, amongst others, have not been in the forefront in the support of falconry for a good many years, quite the reverse in fact and yet, reflecting on my years as a falconer and recalling events, there have been certain occasions where, to be perfectly honest, the RSPB have been all well justified in their attacks on our sport.

For years, falconers have been slated in the RSPB's journal "Birds", quite often bringing me to the point of exclaiming out loud to myself "Surely, they don't mean me?" Not literally of course, but one bad act on our part does seem to have the effect of tarring everyone else with the same brush. I used to read "Birds" avidly from cover to cover, but I found the ever more frequent jibes at falconers too depressing to continue. This of course has knock-on effects which sends unfavourable ripples right through the

RSPB membership, many of whom have never met a genuine falconer but still causing them to despise falconers in general to the point that on more than one occasion when I have been lecturing on the sport, the local RSPB groups who were invited, declined the offer en-masse, which is a pity, for they may well have learned something a trifle less distasteful about the true aspects of the sport. On another occasion when I was lecturing on general natural history, an RSPB group refused to attend simply because it was known that as well as being a naturalist for most of my life, I was also a falconer. It had the psychological effect of placing me on the same plane as a football hooligan, which is downright ludicrous.

Not all, but many falconers, believe it or not, are conservation-minded or at least, many of the falconers known to me personally are of this ilk and if any reader doubts that a falconer, who chooses to fly his hawks at wild quarry can ever be a serious conservationist except in a hypocritical sense, would do well to look back at some of the worlds accepted great conservationists who were also hunters or trappers of the species upon

which they doted so much affection. Enthusiasts such as the late Sir Peter Scott who was an ardent wildfowler and shot many of his beloved ducks before setting up the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust to preserve endangered species such as the Ne Ne, or Hawaiian Goose from extinction, or John James Audubon, probably America's most celebrated ornithologist and artist who shot many of the birds he painted (although admittedly, this was the standard, accepted practice in those day). Even Gerald Durrell and Sir David Attenborough used to trap numerous animals and birds for various zoological gardens, both writing many books highlighting their far-flung exploits. Today, both of these latter fine gentlemen are largely responsible for putting conservation on the map in a way that few others could ever hope to emulate. Through their television documentaries and books and their valiant efforts to preserve species on the verge of extinction, such as the Pink Pigeon from Mauritius and Partula Snails from Moorea in the Polynesian Islands, to name but two, they have brought to the average man in the street, the real

A VOICE OF REASON by David Glynne Fox

I feel I must put pen to paper over a recent revelation which has, to put it plainly, warmed the cockles of my heart, namely Mike Everetts contributions to our magazine.

message concerning the necessity for preserving our wild species and their habitats in an unprecedented way. Yet all of these now eminent naturalists, and many others too, began their careers in a very different style from how they operate today and I for one, salute them.

But back to the question in point. I have always felt saddened that falconers and the RSPB have been at such loggerheads, especially when the RSPB's sister organisation in the USA, the Audubon Society, who once attacked falconry with equal ferocity, now accepts and works regularly with falconers on breeding and re-introduction projects. I have prayed for years that a similar situation would eventually prevail in Britain. We have so much to offer each other. But in the past, getting the RSPB to accept that falconers even exist, hypothetically speaking, has been an uphill struggle. As I recall, the organisation even boycotted at least one Country Landowners Association Gamefair because falconers were present.

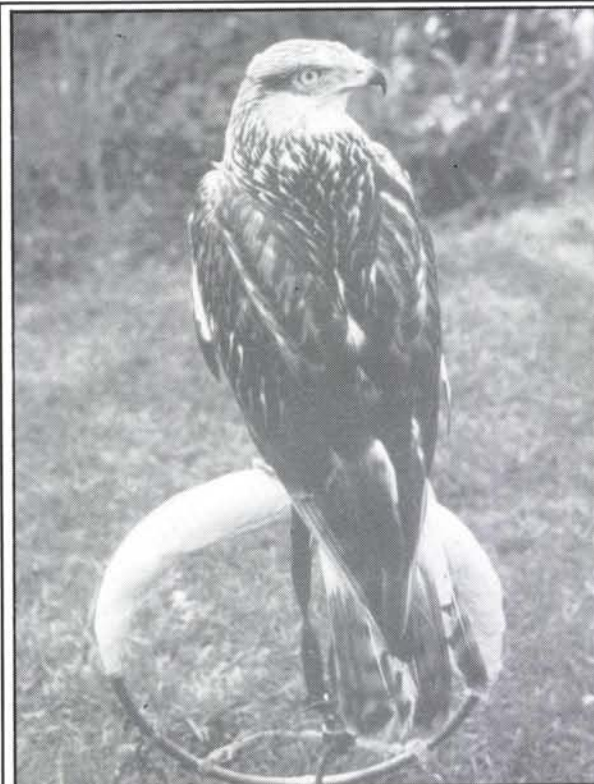
You can therefore imagine my surprise and delight when Mike Everett, PR man, author and raptor authority with the RSPB actually consented to write articles on a regular basis for the Falconers Magazine and, lo and behold, upon viewing the cover of my copy of this excellent journal, I saw something that I had never expected to see in my wildest dreams. There, for all to see, only

inches from the magazines title, was the RSPB's famous Avocet motif. Never in this wide world would I have thought that the RSPB would ever consent to this level of fraternisation with the dreaded falconer. The magazine also carried another excellent article by Mike Everett. For this, we also have to thank the efforts of our editors, David and Lyn Wilson, who informed me that the RSPB,

when consulted, raised no objections to being included in the Falconers Magazine, now retitled "The Falconers and Raptor Conservation Magazine".

Now, I am not so naive as to suppose that this represents a major about turn on the part of the RSPB, but it is, in my humble opinion, the best and most positive step forward in years. Whether the powers that be at Sandy, the RSPB's headquarters, will allow this to continue remains to be seen, but for the moment I, as a practising falconer and conservationist, would like to raise a glass and personally thank the RSPB and Mike Everett in particular, firstly for agreeing to write for us and secondly for the quality of the articles, which I'm sure we all enjoy and find informative. Thankyou very much, it is more appreciated than perhaps some of you realise.

Having said all this and before some of you other experience falconers take up your cudgels and beat me over the head for the foregoing statements, it may be worthwhile to consider the contents of my second paragraph. Falconers, it has to be said, like many other groups, are often a self-centred, back-stabbing lot and during the last fifteen to twenty years in particular, we have witnessed an influx in what can best be described as an infiltration of undesirables. In fact, I would go so far as to say that one of the major problems facing falconry today is the people who, allegedly, practise it.



Immature Ferruginous Hawk

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Lloyd Buck with Sacha

Dear David and Lyn

I am enclosing a recent photograph of a friend, Lloyd Buck with Sacha, a 16 month old African Tawny Eagle. The photograph was taken in the hot weather of late June and he decided that a spot of sunbathing was called for! Luckily I was able to catch it on film and thought you may be interested in publishing it in your magazine with maybe the caption underneath "Essex Man with Essex Bird" as they are both from Chelmsford!

Yours sincerely
Scott Wills

FALCONRY ASSOCIATIONS AND CLUBS IN SPAIN

by Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Villa



There are more than 30 Falconry Clubs and Associations. The Spanish Falconry Association has national character being all the rest regional.

We may find among these last ones the REAL CLUB DE CETRERIA (ROYAL FALCONRY CLUB) of which I am the Vice President and my friend Lorenzo Machin, the President. Its actuation area is Castilla-Leon region, the biggest EEC autonomic region, with more than 94,000 Km², extending Northwest of Madrid.

RCC has only 8 members, the two before mentioned, plus Jesus, Werner, Jose, Antonio, Leonardo and Miguel.

It was founded by old friends in 1988 with the aim of forming a reduced group to regularly practice falconry in the clubs own hunting grounds (that we did not have at that time) and also with the objective of developing in the future, incipient captive breeding programmes that some of its members had started some time ago. And all this without forgetting to share all our experiences in front of the delicious castillian gastronomy dishes, in endless and amusing dinners in a friendly and comradeship atmosphere, after the long hunting days.

I cannot lay aside the following clarification so that nobody can feel cheated: The titles of President and Vice President of this Club are just purely formal legal requirements and should they have another meaning, they would undoubtedly be for other much more representative members of the Club.

14 years ago, when we were 18, Lorenzo, and myself were tireless learners, and we still are in many senses, of Dr JESUS RODRIGUEZ CALLEJO (do not confuse with late Dr RODRIGUES DE LA FUENTE). Werner also did a lot of work in those days.

From now on I shall explain the most practical aspects of our sport in Spain. I shall logically center in the experiences of RCC members which are closer to me. This does not mean that other Clubs or Associations do not have an interesting falconry activity.

In fact all of them have high level falconers with whom we may say that falconry practice has appreciably improved in our

Left to right: Jose Manuel Rodriguez-Villa, Vice President of Real Club de Cetreria (Royal Falconry Club) with Northern European Peregrine Female (flying weight 940g), Lorenzo Machin, President of Real Club de Cetreria with Spanish Peregrine Female (flying weight 760g)

country in the last times.

BIRDS USED BY SPANISH FALCONERS

In this point there are also differences in comparison with falconry in the rest of Europe, since at present the range of raptors species used by the Spanish falconers is much more reduced here.

We mainly fly peregrines to partridge, ducks, magpie and occasionally to little bustard and crows.

Maybe I shall have another opportunity to explain in detail what kind of peregrine subspecies live in Spain, according to our opinion, either as breeders or as migration birds and the different average weights at which we usually fly our birds.

What we have indeed verified is that the less weighty spanish peregrines adjust perfectly to waiting on flight for the red legged partridge, maybe better than the european or north

american weighty females that we have seen flying to some german falconers, even though there is always an exception to the rule, should this exist on falconry. On the other side, the red legged partridge is for the Spanish peregrine tiercel in the limit of its possibilities and few hunt them with the females regularly.

Regarding Spanish goshawks our experience demonstrates us that their weight is inferior in a good 10/15% in comparison with the german ones. Their behaviour is good on rabbits but they are almost always overpassed by hares. In this sense we believe that mid european goshawks are more powerful and therefore probably more aggressive

than the Spanish with all kinds of preys. At least this has been evidenced with german goshawks that we have used here. They are generally flown to rabbits and hares and a few times to feathered preys.

At present, hybrids are started to fly in Spain. Upon its results in our circumstances we have then to wait, even though everything makes us suppose that they will be as good as in other parts of the world.



Pointer on the point. Where's the Falcon?

Raptor

HELP & HINTS

MANNING

by Diana Durman-Walters

The art of manning a hawk or falcon is one of the most crucial lessons in the disciplines applied to falconry. Incorrect manning will produce a hawk that remains in an independent state, wary of everything around her and a total anxiety to the falconer to fly.

Manning is: Carriage. Regulated feeding. The avoidance of stress factors:-

This process must begin slowly and indeed requires a great deal of patience. A "wild" hawk taken from the aviary for the first time although defiant will be stressed by the close proximity of another predator...MAN. This close contact for the first time needs to be countered by hooding the hawk. Whether this is hawk or falcon matters little as the hood acts as a safe haven from which she can exclude 'danger'.

For example: A young goshawk is being taken from the aviary for the first time. Having been carefully caught up, it is now hooded with a GOOD fitting hood, eyeliner, jesses, leash and stainless steel swivel. Bells are also fitted, as they are always a useful indicator of a hawk's activities. It is then weighed and a weight chart kept that will provide accurate reference for you. Assuming the hawk was fed the day before and not fed the day you arrive for collection then you will have the hawk's top weight. From this known factor you will need to lose 10%-15% in order to begin making headway. This weight loss cannot be achieved overnight. An average period of time for this is approx. 14 days. The young hawk is now put into the mews, hooded on its perch (a low bow perch or a ring perch: definitely NOT A SCREEN PERCH). It will now probably remain steady on its bow perch and shortly will be taken onto the gauntlet for carriage. This first walk, (still hooded) will be conducted with your dog on the lead, so that from the outset the young hawk will begin to hear sounds that will feature now in its daily routines. When the walk is over, the hawk is again placed on the bow. Feeding will be probably towards evening and in a darkened room with the lights turned low. The hood is removed. Food which has been cut into small portions in a dish are slowly offered with tweezers. This avoids fingers being 'bitten' and also means the hawk does not have to bend its head low to the glove to eat, which at this stage it would be unwilling to do. It may be that little food will be taken on this occasion, so the hood is placed back on and the hawk put comfortably back onto the bow. The next morning the hawk is again taken up from the perch, weighed and the carriage procedure begun once again. It will probably be noticed that already the hawk's balance on the glove is improving. The feeding

routine may show a willingness for the hawk to want to bend its head further down for food which may mean that you can now put a large item onto the glove and allow it to take it's food from here.

The process of feeding on the fist is learned quickly or slowly depending on the hawk. It may be content to be as close to people as possible during these sessions. However, once finished there is an immediate reversal to a "wild" state and a desire to be by herself once more.

Manning her whilst she is feeding can only begin outside once she will feed from the gauntlet readily. Here external distractions will be tolerated whilst she's occupied with something very pleasurable. To extend the period of eating, tiring are used. This can be rabbit back, with most of the flesh scraped from it (occasionally I use pigeon wings), or similar so that the food takes longer to pull at. The carriage process now allows her to see our human world and all that is in it, slowly allowing her to adjust to her new environment.

There can never be too much manning given in the hood. With nervous hawks spending one hour or more per day with this discipline will begin to produce a hawk that is settled and more at ease in its surroundings.

A certain train of thought exists that sitting with the hawk in front of the television is all that is required. The idea being that sounds and seeing moving pictures are the same as being outside. Hawks are highly adaptive creatures with the ability to identify 2D from 3D objects, therefore little is being learned constructively from this exercise, unless of course you would like it addicted to 'Neighbours'!

Whilst manning is in progress the hawk will no doubt have different ideas on the subject. Her desire to fly away from her falconer will be evident during these lessons and the need to persuade her that the perch you are offering is a safe one will only come about by the consistency of her lessons and the skill of the falconer involved. So much depends on the falconer's skill in manning and taming the hawk that it can aptly be described as a craft which will determine the excellence of the hawk.

Throughout this training there must be a clear goal that the desired results are the hawk or falcon will sit happily on the fist or on her perch and will allow her falconer to pick her up and approach without her bating away.

Once the hawk will tolerate being walked outside, whilst she is feeding unhooded the dog must be with you at all times. Initially the dog must be made to sit whilst the hawk is eating so that no sudden movements are made that will frighten her. Once this is a tolerable exercise then the dog will be

walked on the lead during these lessons on your right hand side always visible to the hawk. This is particularly important with Harris hawks as they adapt very quickly and if dogs have been excluded from the manning timetable then nothing is worse than having a hawk that will not tolerate a dog in its company and furthermore will not fly in the field with it either. This rule can be applied to any of the relative hawks being flown in the field and must not be overlooked.

In the case again of Harris hawks it may be that the falconer is not hooding his hawk. That being the case then the old adage that 'a hawk must always be on her master's fist' does not apply either. Carriage or manning must not be an annoying or painful process. It is a mistake to think that by carrying the hawk everywhere then by definition it will get used to its surroundings. If the hawk is too frightened to feed on the fist and consequently cannot satisfy her hunger there either, then the fist will have no attraction for her. The amount of carrying time allocated must be monitored by how much food she is prepared to eat on these occasions. In practice this means carrying her with an empty crop so that she is reasonably keen and only in places which will NOT ALARM her and so prevent her feeding.

Alarm behaviour soon develops into stereotyped behaviour at a later date. For instance goshawks that 'bate' whenever they go through doorways or along walled passages, or into cars etc: These impressionable hawks more than likely during their formative weeks of manning have been bludgeoned into accepting things they dislike or fear. What may be in your opinion quite unreasonable behaviour, (frightened of going through doorways) and then making her do it will then implant irreversible phobic reaction to which she will always respond when she sees these things, with furious bating. It is much easier when she is being manned for the first time to introduce her to these 'frightening' objects whilst she is feeding and gently walk her past, into and through these. One must never forget that the relationship between you and your hawk is one of partners, not master and servant.

A hawk needs to learn infinite details of our world. To do this takes many manning hours to get her to identify with them. Manning cannot be rushed and it will never be totally complete because something she's never come across before will always be there to greet her. For when all said and done there is nothing more satisfying than a well manned hawk that is a pleasure to be with.

THE HISTORY OF HAWKING IN HUNGARY FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE 1800's

by Lorant de Bastyai

The history of hawking in Hungary goes back, I believe, further than that of any other European country. Documents show that the Huns and the Magyars brought falconry with them, from their home country Western Turkestan, known as "Szittyia Country". At that time all the tribes of the Huns and Magyars migrated, and wandered with great "folkswandering", seeking a western country where life would be easier for resettlement. The Magyars had seven tribes which came at the same time as the Huns to occupy present Hungary. Naturally these tribes brought with them all their customs including their hunting methods.



The first discovery of hawking in Hungary occurred when Hungarian archeologists excavated in South Hungary in 1896. In the small town of Martely in the county of Csongrad, they found a great burial place of the ancient Magyar warriors and their families. In these graves they found the skeleton of a warrior with all the remains of his outfit, which time had not erased.

Arrowheads, brass buckles, skeletons of horses, and skeletons of some types of birds of prey. Ornithologists studied the skeletons of the birds of prey and found that they were saker-like falcons but slightly larger. Geologists found out that these remains originated from the fifth or sixth century. The ornithologists at that time could not make out why these skeletons were larger than the present nesting sakers in Hungary. It could be that the sakers were larger at that time, or that these nomads brought with them the Altai gyrfalcons (*Falco gyrfalco altaicus menzbier*), this bird being the legendary hunting-bird of the old country in West Turkestan of the Magyars and Huns.

The first documentation of falconry in Hungary was written in the Wiener Bilder Kronik (the Viennese Picture Chronicle) in the reign of King Lui the Great in the year 1350. This states that the brother of the Hungarian King kalman - called Almos (1093 - 1116) in the town of Csor, killed a crow with his falcon.

Later documents show and describe how the Hungarian Kings very often married Russian

Princesses, and when the Princess came over from Russia they brought with them the falconers and the hunting birds. It is very interesting to know that the Hungarian name for the saker is "Kerecsen", and the Russian name for the saker is "Krecset", but the Russians also often called the gyrfalcons "Krecset". So the "Krecset" came over from Russia in the years from

1047 to 1161.

The first kings came to Hungary from the "Arpadhaz". Arpad was the leader of the Hungarian tribes, and all the ancient kings came from Arpad's family, which were called Arpadhaz, which means "The House of the Arpads". Documents show that King Andreas II had many years of correspondence with his close friend Frederick II, who wrote in about 1250 "De Arte Venandi cum Avibus".

The Royal Horsemen, the Royal Houndsmen and the Royal Falconers were in high positions in Hungary in 1231. At this time the falconers settled in different villages having to this day names like "Kerecsend" (sakers), "Solymos" (falcons villages) and "Szokol" (this is a Slavic name for the peregrine). There were also some hills and other features named after the falcons, as in north east Hungary, where is the "Solymoko" (falcon stone). This reminds me that perhaps Folkestone near Dover could have some connection with falcons.

It seems that hawking in Hungary was in such a high and popular position in the twelfth century that the priests sometimes forgot that Holy Communion was waiting for them at church and went out for some good hawking. In the year of 1279 a convocation was held in Buda (at that time it was only Buda, Pest being only some little village by the Danube opposite Buda). The High Priests and their followers passed a law forbidding the priests to keep hawks, and to hawk. This law states that if

anyone meets a priest in the field with a hawk he can call the guards and confiscate the hawk.

Zsigmond, the son in law of Nagy Lajos (Lui the Great), when he ascended the throne of Hungary in 1395 (to 1437)



was already a very keen falconer. He knighted a lot of common people for being capable falconers.

In the reign of the greatest and most famous kings, Mathia the Just (Matyas az Igazagos) 1458 - 1590, falconry was as flourishing as it was here in Britain in Tudor times. The Hungarian High Priest, Janus Pannonius, wrote several poems about falconry. In these poems he mentions hawks of different species, and what was the quarry at the time. Several coins were also made with hawking scenes on them. King Matthias had his hawking lodge about twenty five kilometres from Buda (where his royal castle was). This village is still called Solymar (falconer) and whole families of falconers were settled there.

But then some anti social laws about falconry were passed, for example in 1504

section XVIII says that "for the peasant it is not permitted to keep falcons and hawks". From Transylvania the very best falcons were taken from nests, especially the blue-footed falcons (these were the young birds of the sakers). The documents say also that the Transylvanians paid the tax in falcons. In 1602 the ruler of Transylvania Zsigmond Bathory, lifted all the tax from the area of Gelence because of the fine falcons which were presented him from this area.

When in 1500 the Turks came and occupied Transylvania and captured eleven aristocratic officers, the Hungarian King Lui II offered gold and jewellery to the Sultan for their release. The Sultan of the Turks never replied, but when the Hungarian King sent him eleven gyr falcons, imported from Denmark, he released the prisoners at once.

Lui II was very unfortunate, for when the Turks attacked again he did not have a strong army. In the neighbourhood of the Danube town of Mohacs he lost the battle and also died in action. The Turks occupied the whole of Hungary after this battle. In 1526 his widow, Queen Mary, fled to Holland with her court. The documents show that her Archbishop followed her from the town of Nyitra (North Hungary, at present Czechoslovakia) and took with him the blue footed falcons and falconers to cheer up his Queen, by catching hares and wild duck.

Some of the Hapsburg kings were keen falconers, King Ferdinand (1526 - 1564) kept 70-80 falconers in his service. Later Leopold I, in the year of 1705, his successor Karl III (III Karoly) in the year of 1705, and the next King Joseph were really great and keen falconers. The hunting lodge near Laxenberg, originally built in 1390, became the state hawking lodge, having been rebuilt. All the senior officers and aristocrats came here not only from Austria but also from Hungary. The main quarry were heron and waterfowl.

The Austro-Hungarian Empress Maria-Theresa was

also a very keen falconer. During her reign she spent 24,000 gold guilden yearly for hawking expenses, and brought white gyrfalcons from Denmark for herself. The historian Takacs writes in his chronicle that the XVI-XVII centuries were very spectacular and flamboyant in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Professional falconers were brought from abroad apart from the Hungarian and Austrian falconers. The most favoured falcons were the blue-footed falcons but a lot of buzzards and sparrowhawks were used. (The goshawks were sometimes called buzzards). It is interesting to see that the



peregrine was never mentioned, perhaps it was thought that they were just another species of sakers. I do not think that a lot of time was spent on ornithological knowledge, but there was a great deal of knowledge in the training and manning the birds.

In an old letter written around 1750 to his brother, the writer says "The handling of the newly caught sparrowhawk is going well. I am carrying the bird till midnight, and afterwards my servant Horvath takes it over and carries it until morning". Sparrowhawks were very often used because quails were very plentiful at that time.

The Austrian Royal Hawking Lodge ended when Maria-Theresa's son Josphe II became Emperor. The people call him the "King with the Hat on his Head" because he never let himself be crowned. He demolished the Royal Hawking Lodge at Laxenberg because it cost a lot of money, and the falcons were sold and the falconers went home and the whole official Austro-Hungarian falconry went to sleep for nearly 100 years.

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*Spirits of the Gods chasing the winds
The birds of prey are the pride of the kings.
Diving and swooping, then soaring up high
The earth is their boundary
Their home is the sky.*

*With piercing eyes they scan the ground
Watching, waiting without a sound
They'll spy a movement, no matter how slight
You'll see, if you're lucky
The Lords of flight.*

*To be graced with their presence, so calm and bold
Would be an honour more precious than gold
To feel first hand the mighty power -
That compels us to stare
And their prey to cower.*

*With ghost-like aura on the therm's they glide
Guarding their domains with lordly pride
Velvet-like feathers and talons of steel
Near this image of beauty -
How humble I feel.*

*Spirits of the gods chasing the winds
The birds of prey are the love of the kings
Diving and swooping, then soaring up high
The earth is their boundary
Their home is the sky.*

Nikki Warren
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