

The

Falcons

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

Spring '93

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- Le Rocher des Aigles – EAGLES ROCK –
- NATURE KNOWS BEST



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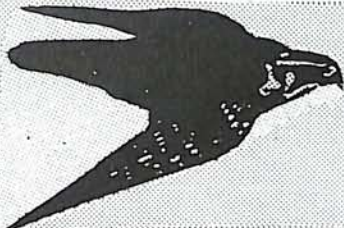
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SPRING 1993 No. 14

Front cover photograph:
Peregrine Falcon in flight by Jon Day.

Published quarterly by:
**THE FALCONER & RAPTOR
CONSERVATION MAGAZINE**

D & LR Wilson
20 Bridle Road,
Burton Latimer,
Kettering,
Northants.,
NN15 5QP.

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Subscriptions:
Rates: UK & Eire £12.50
Europe £16.00
Airmail £24.00

Distributed by:
MONARCH,
The Publishing House,
Highbury Station Road,
Islington,
London N1 1SE
Tel: (071) 226 2222

Cheque/Postal Order payable to:
The Falconers Magazine.
For more details phone:
0536 722794

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The Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

In this issue we have a poster for you of a female Peregrine Falcon in flight.

We have an apology to make: In the last issue we credited a photograph of a female Finnish Goshawk on the photographic competition page to Barry Watson, It should have been Barry Malcolm.

We would like to ask you, our readers to keep contributions coming in the shape of problems, stories, funny or otherwise, poems, etc. Also your views on how we may improve our magazine.

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Welsh Hawking Club

N ews

On August 24th, together with my Vice-Chairman, Mick Cunningham, and our Treasurer, Bert Stone, I visited Neil Forbes at the Lansdown Veterinary Surgery in Stroud, Glos.. I am sure many readers will know of Mr Forbes and some may have already availed themselves of his services. In October 1991 Mr Forbes gave a talk at our A.G.M. in Wolverhampton, in the course of which we realised his practice was dealing with more than its fair share of injured wild raptors. Wild creatures taken in to a veterinary surgery usually means their treatment has to be provided free. Whilst my experience has always been that vets carry out this work willingly, they also have to pay their way, and inevitably, must reach a point where enough is enough.

The Committee Members of Raptor Rescue felt that it would be a legitimate use of our central fund to offer to meet part of this cost, albeit a fairly small percentage.

I was delighted to be able to present Mr Forbes with a cheque for £500 which Raptor Rescue intends to be a minimum annual donation, dependent, of course, on our own financial position. We were able to place a small framed notice in the surgery waiting room giving details of the charities aims, and we hope we may gain a few members by doing so. More members means more funds, so enabling us to help greater numbers of injured raptors.

Another fairly radical venture for us took place in October 1992, when we will be running a raptor "First Aid and Emergencies Course" at a venue in Lichfield, Staffs. Thirty five of our members will be attending a full days course of instruction given by Neil Forbes and Greg Simpson (also from Lansdown Vets). Raptor Rescue will be partly funding the cost with the balance shared out equally between those attending. Again, we feel that proper training is essential for rehabilitators, and meeting the cost of that training a proper use of our funds. My personal view is that attendance on such a course should be compulsory for any person seeking L.R.K. status. Those who have already gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in their practical dealings with injured raptors would, no doubt, benefit from being kept up-to-date with current treatments and techniques.

The cost to each member for this course is quite low, and represents excellent value for money, not to mention what will be an enjoyable day out. This, combined with our regular free issue of medical supplies to rehabilitators, and our financial assistance with legitimate rehabilitation expenses must make it sound sense for any rehabilitators not already a member to join us - **NOW**.

Michael Robins
Chairman

Sharp eyed readers of the Autumn 1992 edition will have spotted a brief announcement of our intention to assist, financially, a vet in his treatment of wild injured raptors. I am very pleased to confirm that we have now done so.



Michael Robins, and Neil Forbes,

HAWKBOARD NEWS

On Wednesday 30th September 1992, the newly elected Hawk Board met. The following are its current members:

CHAIRMAN: Jim Chick0980 610594
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PUBLICITY OFFICER: Diana Durman-Walters 045086 666 (Tel/Fax)

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Raptor Breeders Association: Mike Fountain0858 880733
Welsh Hawking Club: Aidrian Williams0443 206333

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OTHERS:
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 Joint Nature Conservancy Council.
 Consultant: Nick Fox (Dr)0267 233864
 Veterinary Advisor: Neil Forbes (B.Vet. Med MRCVS)04536 72555

As ever, the topics that are dealt with by the Board are varied and diverse but undisputedly evolve entirely from matters concerning birds of prey in all forms. Sue Dewar, our newly appointed Secretary can be approached for items on the agenda by writing or telephoning her: Mrs S. Dewar, 6 Glendevon Road, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4PH. Tel: 0734 696501.

If there are matters that you need discussion and action, then telephone any of the members above and give them the details.

The Hawk Board meet again on Wednesday 3rd February 1993.

C lubs

The participants of the thirtieth anniversary field meeting at Pwllhelli listened to the weather forecast the night before it began with more than usual interest. All the previous occasions that it had been held the weather had been atrocious. High winds of a force that had the falconers having difficulty standing and rain like one would expect in tropics on a bad day made the Meeting a force to be reckoned with. Once again Mr McGaskill told us the inevitable gale force winds would be with us. South Wales was left with the inevitable feeling that the next five days would be spent in the pub recounting tales of past flights and past meetings when what we all wanted to do was get out and fly those birds.

The day of the 10th dawned and we could hardly believe what was happening. The weather man had got it wrong!! The sky was blue, there was a light, puffy breeze just right for lift. A quick pinch to make sure we were not dreaming, bird and dog into the car and off to register at Bodvel Hall where we were met by our host Gary Morris, who together with Terry Large, had put in an enormous amount of work arranging for over 20,000 acres of land to be flown over. Free coffee was drunk while we looked at the boards to see who our group leader was for the day and where we were going. At ten thirty sharp a long line of cars formed and off we went with the Long Wings (Falcons). We had with us six birds ranging from a large female Peregrine to a tiny Red Shaheen male. We had a strip of game cover to work which the local keeper said held a lot of partridge and pheasant. Ian Blantern was prevailed upon to fly first even though he was field master and said that it seemed to be a good idea as his bird never flew at check and there were a lot of both crows and pigeons about. His Saker/Peregrine male mounted well to about 200 feet and then raked off in a grand manner. Ian said not to worry, she never flew at check and would be back in a minute. Five minutes later a sharp eyed spectator with binoculars spotted a Falcon stooping at pigeons about 1/2 a mile away so it was out with the telemetry and a

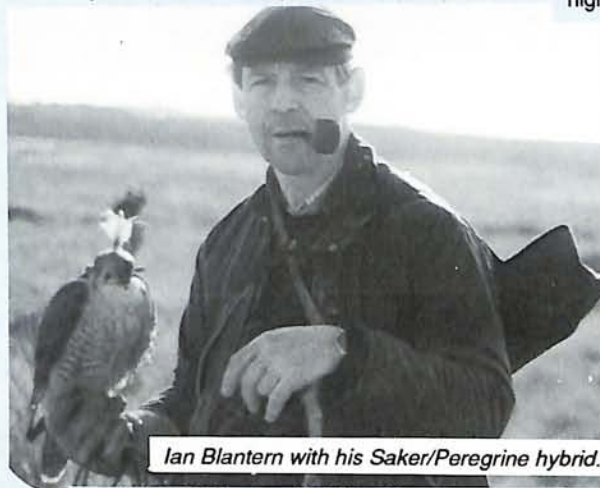


Mike Coupe and his super Tiercel Peregrine.

The Welsh Hawking Clubs Field Meeting at Pwllhelli

Report by Griff Griffiths

short wait 'till an embarrassed Ian came back with the non-checking Hybrid and a wood pigeon! The female Peregrine was tried next and the dogs which had been held up with the scent of game in their nostrils for nearly an hour could contain themselves no longer and started to run in. The keeper was right, the strip of game cover did hold a lot of birds. Before the Falcon could make height an old cock was flushed. Away they both went, the pheasant was seen to gain a wood about 1/2 mile away as soon as the Falcon came back more birds where flushed, a fiasco that was enjoyed by everybody but the falconer! The field master drew everybody together and decided to run one pointing dog at a time with some stops put at the bottom of the game covey. Mike Coupe flew his 3 year old tiercel Peregrine which quickly



Ian Blantern with his Saker/Peregrine hybrid.

mounted to 300 feet and held position over Mikes head like a Kestrel hovering. The command was given and the partridges exploded and we had the first 'proper' kill of the day from a fine stoop. We then moved to a fresh strip of game cover where the female was again flown and just as she was making her pitch a flock of rooks and crows rose and unable to contain herself she raked off, cut out a crow and killed him about 1/2 mile from the watching spectators. The rest of the birds were flown and some exciting flights took place but on the day the quarry and the close countryside proved too much for them, so back to the warmth, drinks and good company at Bodvel Hall.

The weatherman proved to have made a bad projection for the whole week, day went into day, it becoming harder and harder to decide which of the six groups to go with. The calculating skills of the falcons, easy going Harris Hawks, adrenalin pumping Goshawks, dashing Sparrowhawks or the laid back Red Tails and Ferruginous Buzzards.

Several flights will stay in peoples minds for a long time. A Ferruginous Buzzard that 'waited on' for a rabbit at several hundred feet for a

good ten minutes. What a pleasure to see one of these magnificent birds being flown properly rather than adorning its owners fist in a pub. The long, long flights of Jeff Llewelin and Paul Jones' super-fit Goshawks at pheasant, and what fit follows they are to be able to chase their Gos's all that way! Peter Blackerby's deadly Sparrowhawk at Magpies, I understand that he topped a hundred Magpies with it last season. Adrian Williams' flight at Teal, Rob from Bristols tiny little black Shaheen/Peregrine male, which after two stunning, but unsuccessful attempts on grouse, listened to that well-known Saheen expert Bob Dalton who advised him to keep it flying (now known to all and sundry as "keep it up" Bob) only to see his bird rake away not to be seen again to the next day. After an all night search that nearly had the party locked up after a farmer reported an extremely odd group wandering about the Welsh Moors in the dead of night, it was safely found. I suppose the incident

that will remain with me longest was the little Tiercel Peregrine of Mike Coupe's who, after an unsuccessful stoop at a hen pheasant was determined to have a re-flush, Mike was equally determined he wouldn't and was trying very unsuccessfully to bring him to the lure. After five minutes of this the tiercel, who had been waiting at a couple of hundred feet, rolled over in a beautiful stoop straight onto Mikes head and without pausing, whipped off his fancy head gear and flew off across the heathland with it!

Abiding memories of the meeting were not the 90 head that were taken (including 60 rabbits and 12 pheasants) by the 54 birds (15 falcons, 20 Harris, 20 Goshawks, 5 Redtails, 3 Sparrowhawks and 1 Ferruginous Buzzard) but the camaraderie of the falconers, the condition of the birds and the fact that all the birds were there to be flown. I did not hear once the kind of excuse that used to be so prevalent a few years ago like, "It's not manned to dogs," "It's too windy," "Too wet," etc., etc. I suppose that even allowing for the great increase in captive breeding (and therefore availability of birds) and the common use of telemetry removing the worry of lost birds (not one bird was lost at the meeting). One must conclude that the overall standard of falconry is getting higher and higher in this country which can only auger well for the continuance of this sport which we all love so much.



Jeff Llewelin with his Goshawk and pheasant.

C lubs

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

The Scottish Hawking Club had its 4th Field Meeting of the season on the 21st and 22nd of November held at the Tweed Valley Hotel, Walkerburn, the party consisted of 3 Harris Hawks, 1 Red-Tail and 3 Golden Eagles. After a week of very wet and windy weather Saturday morning dawned dry with no wind but cold. The forecast was a warm wet front to come in the evening, our quarry was to be rabbits and the odd hare. On our way up the hill Rab Steels Brittany Pointed in a patch of rough by the first covert and a strong cock pheasant got up going uphill through the trees, Rab's male Harris already up a tree just missed a fist full of feathers in a good chase, next we ferreted some rabbit buries on the open hill side, the rabbit reluctant to bolt far, but George Walker's first year male Harris chased a hard-running bun putting in 3 stoops, getting up and chasing again before he brought it to book. If you think a dog with two tails looked pleased you should have seen George. It was now the leg pulling began comments like "but it only had 3 legs" and "I'm sure it was almost dead from Myxy" were only two of the clean ones. We moved on round the hill putting the dogs into a patch of willow scrub with Colin Grieve and Rab's Harris's being flown in a cast. After we had flushed a Woodcock and a Musket a cock Pheasant got up heading downhill fast. The two Harris's followed with that lazy-looking flight they have, Colin and Rab

following, like scalded cats. They all disappeared into the first covert we had come from. After about 20 minutes, they returned having found both Harris's on the pheasant, pluming it, a flight of over 1/2 a mile!! I think it was an inflatable pheasant sticking out of their game bag but they assured me it was real. We moved on to an old stand of Scots Pine and walked this through for Gary Balchine's female Eagle. A hare got up and ran back through the line with the Eagle in hot pursuit, but the hare was too fast and the Eagle put into a tree. We worked our way down a young plantation with mature trees at the bottom, a pheasant got up through the trees and my male Eagle took it on but soon gave up as he was too far behind, took a sharp left at the bottom and landed in a beech tree, turned straight away and dropped onto the rabbit in a clamp. This turned out to have the first stages of Myxy so not that good a kill. More fun was had with the Harris's ferreting in the bottom corner of the wood but by this time it was snowing, so by 2.45pm we had to retire to the hotel for a good stiff drink.

The next morning about two inches of snow had fallen but it was already thawing so the roads were passable. Our venue was a steep heather hill with an extensive rush and reed bed following the burn in the valley bottom. It was decided to split up, the Eagles going up onto the hill with the Redtail and three Harris's working the reeds in a cast. Unfortunately, the wind was coming over the top of the hill so the Eagles were unable to wait on and had to be flown from



Top L to R: Charles Miller (guest), Malc Dean, John White, Andrew Knowles-Brown, Stuart Stephen, Lorna Stephen (guest), George Walker
Bottom L to R: Garry Balchin, Rab Steel, Colin Grieve.

the fist. There was a definite lack of hares on the hill which was surprising as we put up about 40 grouse, but they knew all about Eagles and only broke above us so as not to give the birds a chance. One highlight was a pair of Peregrines up a gully who dive bombed 'Malc' who was carrying Gary's male Eagle, the Tiercel passing within 6 feet of his head before disappearing at high speed. We moved downhill to a steep bank where we ferreted for the remainder of the afternoon, Gary's female Eagle catching two more rabbits. Stuart Stephen's Redtail was very unlucky not to catch anything as he put in some very fast, long slips but the rabbits always went down a hole at the last minute. The three Harris's which were flown as a cast had some very good sport chasing rabbits, pheasants and hares with the day finishing at about 4 o'clock. Thanks must go to John White who acted as guide, Lorna Stuart's wife for carrying cameras and ferret and also to Hamish who, without his help, we would not have had such an exciting 2 days, and if he had feathers and wasn't a ferret would have won the wooden spoon for catching the most head of quarry.



NEWS CONTINUED

THE FOLLOWING BIRDS HAVE BEEN STOLEN:-

1) Pair of Prairie Falcons from the Surrey area.
Both cable tied - UK77267 and UK77268.

2) Female Goshawk from the Staffordshire area.
Again cable tied - UK81010.

I do need your help with this though:-

I need to trace the owner of a Common Buzzard. The Buzzard in question would have been lost probably whilst being flown in the W.Yorks area (possibly Leeds). At the time it was fitted with a pale blue cable tie ring. Anyone who thinks this maybe was their bird would they please ring me.

MICROCHIPPING DAY

In the near future I am hoping to arrange with a vet a day's Microchipping. The more people that are interested the cheaper it will be. It will mean however, bringing your bird(s) to a pre-arranged destination that has yet to be decided. Anyone who is interested in having their birds chipped please contact me for further details. I cannot emphasise enough the need for this to be done. Once Microchipped it is then identifiable for life and if it is stolen we stand a better chance of proving the offence and more importantly returning it to the rightful owner.

For more information:- Please telephone (0734) 536257.

NEW DATE AND VENUE FOR THE FOURTH BRITISH FALCONERS FAIR

The British Falconry and Raptor Fair is set for a move.

Althorp, near Northampton is the prestigious new venue for the 1993 event to be staged on 30th and 31st May.

The move to Althorp House and Park, the family home of The Earl Spencer, comes after three years of staging this event at the Royal Showground, Stoneleigh.

Althorp is no stranger to the world of raptors, in the past it had its own resident falconer and mews which catered for the sporting needs of many royal visitors and their friends. Until recently, the present Earl Spencer lived in the Falconry on the estate until he succeeded his father and moved into Althorp House.

With the stately ambience of Althorp House and Park and easy access off the M1, the new venue should prove to be a great weekend for everyone, and it is hoped Althorp will become the permanent home of the British Falconry and Raptor Fair.



LAMMERGEIER

by Mike Everett



Lammergeier with young.

In idle moments, birdwatchers, like most other people, indulge in flights of fancy. One that I recall involved answering the question "What bird would you most like to go and see, anywhere in the world, if you won the Pools?" Implicit in the question was that the bird had to be one you had never seen before. My choice, invariably, was the Lammergeier.

I never did win the Pools and I had to wait until 1982 before I set eyes on my first Lammergeier. It was during a working visit to Israel and the place could hardly have been more spectacular - the edge of the Judaean Desert, above the Dead Sea. The bird was everything I imagined it would be and in my excitement I yelled out "(Unprintable expletives) - a Lammergeier!" My Israeli colleagues were much amused by this outburst, but not because of my colourful language: it was because I had used the name Lammergeier...

Earlier, we had been discussing the species, to all intents and purposes already an extinct breeding bird in Israel, and I had been describing how I had been on a Council of Europe committee working on endangered European birds. The Committee had resolved to try and change the accepted English name to "Bearded Vulture", for

good conservation reasons: to see the bird as the "lamb vulture" is to blacken its reputation unfairly. However exotic "Lammergeier" might sound to the English-speaking world, it is not a name used by other Europeans, except in the Dutch form "Lammegier", and, as far as I know, only occurs otherwise in Afrikaans. Few people have bothered to take up the suggested name change, however. My own good intentions dissolved in the heat of that magic moment in Judaea, as they have many times since. But I still believe it is time we laid "Lammergeier" to rest once and for all.

The popular name reflects old prejudices which played a large part in the bird's decline and extinction in parts of Europe where it was probably once fairly common, the Alps in particular. Make no mistake about it, the Lammergeier is now a very scarce bird indeed in Europe, where it is by far the

rarest of the four breeding vultures. France (including Corsica) and Spain still hold 60 - 70 pairs between them, most of them in the Pyrenees, and there are about 35 pairs in Greece (including Crete), but if we exclude neighbouring Turkey and the fringes of the former USSR we can virtually count the rest of Europe's pairs on the fingers of one hand.

Throughout its European range, the Lammergeier is a bird of high mountain country, depending in part for its survival on non-intensive livestock rearing and the carcasses this invariably makes available to all carrion-feeders and scavengers. All the European vultures have been in slow decline as standards of human hygiene and animal husbandry have improved in Europe, but perhaps the Lammergeier has been less affected by change than the others; like all of them, though, it is the victim of poisoned baits

(such as carcasses laced with strychnine) put down to kill foxes and wolves. It is probably no longer deliberately persecuted to any appreciable extent. Along with the other vultures and carrion-feeding birds, it has been helped by the establishment of "vulture restaurants" which provide safe, uncontaminated food - a rather nice variation on the bird-table theme! Captive-bred birds have been released in a long-term reintroduction experiment in the Alps. Furthermore, if the EC programme of Environmentally Sensitive Areas extends to the high country where the Lammergeier breeds and forages - guaranteeing the economic survival of old-fashioned hill farming - the bird's numbers could be stabilised and its future secured. I hope so. It would be a very great pity if Europe were to lose such a unique and spectacular raptor.

Although it is clearly a



vulture, and matches the largest of them in size and wingspan, the Lammergeier has no obviously close relatives among the Old World species. Its appearance is different, especially in flight when its relatively narrow, pointed wings and long wedge-shaped tail suggest an enormous falcon rather than a vulture. The impression often created is of a rather slim and elegant bird: it is not until you see a Lammergeier directly overhead, or at very close range, that you realise just how big and bulky it really is. As with many birds seen in mountain country, it may not strike you as particularly large when seen at a distance - until you see it alongside, say a flock of Alpine Choughs. In the Pyrenees I once watched an immature Lammergeier being buzzed by a Golden Eagle and was surprised at how small the latter bird appeared.

Lammergeiers forage over their large home-ranges by

soaring at a fair height or, more characteristically perhaps, by low altitude gliding. The most remarkable thing about their flight is this gliding - seemingly endless, always effortless, and seldom interrupted by even a single flap. Their mastery of the air and their use of even the slightest winds and upcurrents has to be seen to be believed: I doubt if any European land-bird can match the Lammergeier as a long range glider. Like many other huge raptors, though, they are also remarkably agile on the wing and produce spectacular aerobatics in display.

There are parts of the world, in Asia and Ethiopia for instance, where Lammergeiers are closely associated with primitive pastoral human communities and forage and scavenge around towns and villages. Their agility in flight is probably best seen in these circumstances, where they even come down among the houses and into narrow streets to pick up scraps. Otherwise (and

certainly in Europe), Lammergeiers are principally carrion feeders. It is easy to misunderstand what goes on at a carcass and see the vultures, eagles, kites, ravens and so on, but in reality there is some order. Broadly speaking, different species exploit different parts of the resource and who gets what is also decided by varying degrees of hunger and ability to dominate - as well as by who else is there at the time! The Lammergeier will enjoy flesh, but is basically a specialist which eats the toughest parts of the carcass (including the hide) and the bigger bones - all those things the other scavengers cannot tackle. Its most famous feeding habit involves carrying aloft those bones which are too big to be swallowed whole and dropping them onto rocks (often at traditional sites, some probably used for centuries, known as "ossuaries") to break them open.

Lammergeiers probably also

take very small quantities of live prey. This includes tortoises and the dropping habit extends to these too. The Greek poet Aeschylus is supposed to have been killed by an "eagle" which dropped a tortoise on his head; the culprit was for long assumed to be a Lammergeier and, if you believe the legend, it might well have been. It might, however, have been an eagle after all. We now know, from observations in the Balkans and Israel, that Golden Eagles kill and "open" tortoises by dropping them onto rocks...

Whoever was really guilty, it's a nice story!

Hawkwatcher

*On a silent wing
Oh! sacred flight!
Where under veil of death
Beats a heart light with love
And passion burns soul deep
Touching times past
Where blood of ages
Runs through veins of fear
Of fur and feather
No sweeter sight or sound than this
No greater bond with bird or beast exists.
Show me this life
And take me where
No Hoody Crow or Tawny Jack dare to linger
All reverence be
In awesome gaze skywards
Or God's speed earthbound
To forest floor
Where hook and claw reign eternal.*

L. Bower

"THE FALCON"

*She flies high and she flies low,
Always fast, but never slow,
She climbs, she soars, she goes up far
Then she drops from the clouds like a
shooting star.
She sees her quarry, she starts to chase,
stooping hard to make her case.
With hearts a-flutter, we all stand still,
Will she miss, will she kill?
We all wait, with adrenalin - running the
final stoop finally coming,
One last jink, one last turn,
Two birds drop in the golden fern.
We all sit around her watching her pluck,
Everyone smiles, her picture is took,
I feel so proud for she is mine
to cast her off and to see her climb,
For then she swoops to catch her prey to
brighten up the dullest day,
For what we see is the greatest thrill,
Is to see these birds chase to kill.*

BUMPS - BREAKDOWNS - AND -

As the title suggests, our trip north to Thrumster Moors was not without its drama, but despite the bump in Glasgow, the distributor complaining outside of Glasgow, the rabbits north to Glasgow were most obliging... as for the Grouse, please read on:

The New Forest Falconry Club held its "Scotland or Bust Works Outing" in September, carrying out the Clubs' first reccé on the beautiful moors just south of Wick amongst stunning scenery far beyond the Highlands in the distant paradise of Caithness. The Clubs fully fledged team of Falconers consisted mainly of Tiercels and just one Falcon, who together endured hours sardined in a Sherpa minibus, merrily chanting "For he's a jolly good driver etc., etc." whilst we followed in tandem with the other van carrying the precious cargo of the real birds.

After a hectic settling in, we split into three teams and into three cottages, then tucked heartily into a much needed breakfast. The birds seemed content weathering on the lawns, so we decided to set out to sight the boundaries of the moor and this welcome exercise would also give us an opportunity to stretch our legs. On our return to the cottages, plans were made for the forthcoming days.

Knowingly, we surmised that just one week on the moors was not really sufficient to make a mark, or indeed give the birds an opportunity to really shine, but it would most certainly give us all a better idea for future trips and prove some ideas of bird management that we had worked on since Easter.

The line-up was not unusual but looked formidable; 3 Falcons and 1 Tiercel, 4 Harris Hawks, 1 Redtail Hawk and a female Goshawk. All the birds were primed and were as ready to the point that no more work (except in the field) could be put in. The rabbits were readily abundant, but in true fashion took much hard work to oust from their warrens which were littered over the moor and surrounding areas like an earthen dartboard. Gorse bushes added greenery to the scene and also provided a sharp refuge. The two Springer Spaniels (Jay and Chough) and the pure black GSP (Sky) excelled themselves and worked the moorland with constant vigour and never let up.

Every evening, sore pads and ragged coats were licked and groomed, and by morning, they were raring to go again.

As our week progressed, so did the birds, their fitness toned to make the slips a sight to behold. One memorable occasion was given by Rhiannon (a 4 year old Harris), she at one time was practically "waiting-on" over a thick gorse bush, when Jay flushed a rabbit. Rhiannon stooped from 40 foot plus, missed the rabbit, then at full flight, steamed across cropped grass after the quarry. The chase was well over 150 yards, in and out of long grasses, through water, over sheep fencing and finally missing the rabbit by a fifth-of-a-gill-of-malt. Other chases were fruitful, some were not; We all jested that perhaps Scottish rabbits were not only web-footed, but also wore running spikes and kilts to put the Hawks off! However, when at the end of the week, we totted up the bag, in 5 days Hawking, a head of 131 rabbits and 2 voles (muscular) was a good entering of recently moulted birds.

The traditional Shortwing mornings and Longwing afternoons worked well. Hiking across the moors brought flashes of unique nature on a regular daily basis, the sights

of Hen Harriers and Short Eared Owls quartering the heather, a brief, unnerving glance at a Wildcat, the surprising raising of a Red Deer at very close quarters, one Golden Eagle (spotted by the boys up at North Yarrow Loch Cottage) and a wild Merlin which took brave stoops at one of our Peregrines - the whole act captured for prosperity on video, all added to the flavour and local colour of our holiday.

On day 2 (or was it 3?), a well known Welsh figure "Cam' skipping o'er ye brae".

"Hi Grif - where's the Grouse hiding?"

In his Celtic charm, he replied, "With hard work you'll find them".

We did!

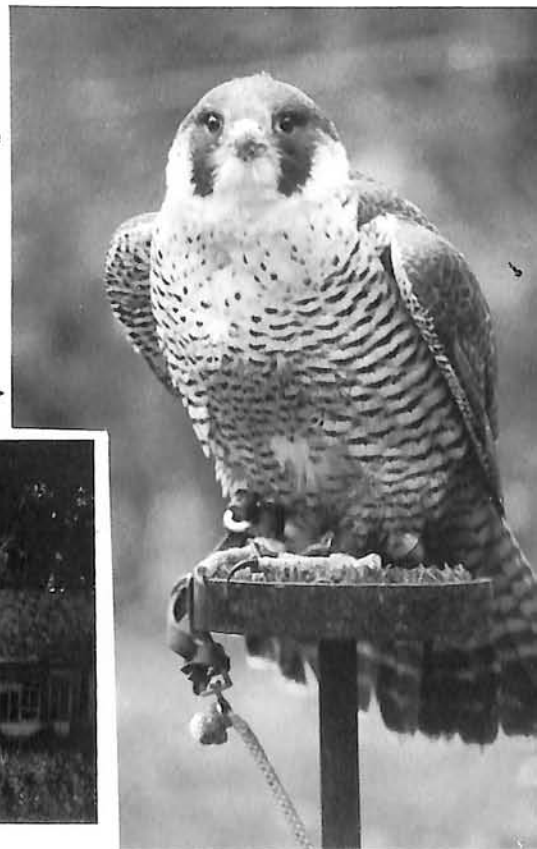
After a memorable luncheon, six of us headed North West across the heather, the Forest of Thrumster was to our rear. Armed with three falcons, 2 GWP's and an Irish Setter



▲ "...Andy casts off his Tiercel..." ▲



▲ "...the Cottages at Thrumster Moors..." ▲



▲ "...Blodwyn at 3/4 Hundredweight..." ▲

- BUNNIES - by TAFF HINGE -

the afternoon and evening lay ahead hoping it would bring to us our first grouse of the season. The wind was brisk, but not damaging, the rain mainly held off, but it did, on occasion, spit and was akin to an April shower, albeit in September. After about 30 minutes, "Asta" the GWP came on point. The first bird to fly was Chris' Peregrine "Ugly", a striking bird which had been successfully flown at hack in Hampshire. She has a particular liking for Magpies, Crows, Partridges and Pheasants. This, of course, was her first introduction to a landscape of no trees or hedgerows, vast expanses of heather and the Grouse. The scene was set. "Asta" steady on point. "Ugly" was cast off, circled and climbed. The flush came too soon and a head-to-tail chase ensued. The fitness of both birds was well matched, and as they both passed me by, the gap decreased to about 6 feet, then as the flight across the moor increased, the gap understandably widened. "Ugly" came back acknowledging a distant Snipe en route but faithfully returned to the lure. After one further well held point by "Kate" (GWP) and a very near miss by the Tiercel from a devastating stoop (or so I'm told - I was pulling my leg out of a peat bog at the time) I caught the end result by raising my eyes to see and hear a covey of 6 Grouse cackling and flying

defiantly away. Onwards we stomped.

At the end of a never ending climb, we finally rested and looked down upon what we called 'the Serengeti', a huge expanse of heathered landscape with conifers in the distance some four miles away. The wind was coasting up the gentle slope and would give good lift to the birds. The rain spat again. The Irish Setter came on point; somehow we all felt the same optimism and security at this stage. Hood off, and up went Blodwyn (a huge Peregrine flying at 3³/₄ hundredweight!), she circled well and rose up to a pitch at about 250 feet which was just below the level of closing mist. Slowly, we made around to the head of the point and then came the flush. We all re-enacted a hybrid of the Battle for Culloden Moor and a latent schoolboy lust for screaming, waving arms and other such nonsensical anecdotes; eventually the Grouse took the hint and broke cover, but this time, damn the text book method, it was a flight direct into the wind at a rate of knots which was inexplicable. Down rocketed Blodwyn and shaved low and close across the heather gaining all the time on the Grouse, both heads well into the breeze. We all cheered the pair on, then just before they disappeared over the purple horizon a ball of feather

erupted. Desperately hanging on to the hooded birds, dogs and chattles we raced to the scene, only to be casually met by a sprightly Celt, lying down in a nonchalant manner grinning from ear-to-ear, by his side Dog, Falcon and Quarry.

"ere mate, 'ave a taste of this Grouse"; the hip flask was flushed.

With one Grouse down, the rest of the week would be easy surely? - Wrong!

We flushed and flew, stomped and flushed, came so close with covey after covey, fell down ditches, became impaled on barbed wire and witnessed chase after memorable chase. On reflection however, that single Grouse was worth everything (let's face it, now it's recorded in copyright print we can't exaggerate the flight much further!) and its tale even gave us hope when our spirits dropped on the last night in Scotland. There we were returning from the Portland Arms

(having taken on a full crop) when miles from nowhere we ran out of diesel, left abandoned in thick Scotch mist.

"O.K. Boyos, who's in charge of the fuel, and why is the tank empty?"

"It's your responsibility Taff", came the reply.

"Boyos, did I ever tell you about that Grouse..."

Ah well! There's always next year to look forward to, and time to brush up the orchestrated combination of point, cast, flush and flight that is difficult to achieve and even more difficult to achieve successfully. We packed up, said farewell to our Scottish hosts and headed south, past Glasgow without a hitch or a bump back to the gentle landscape of Hampshire, there at least the Partridge don't laugh or cackle at you when you miss a slip!

As for the Grouse, they certainly can be elusive, but are an immensely satisfying quarry.



▲...a good entering of recently moulted hawks..."

▲...after the Battle for Culloden Moor & the first Grouse this season..."



RAPTORS in MOROCCO

SKETCHES & TEXT by PHILIP SNOW · 1



TAWNY EAGLE -
'Rapax'; now quite
rare, perhaps
20 pairs in Soud
valley.

1st yr pale form -

Aquila rapax 'belisarius'
in N. Africa, presumably
threatened by agriculture.

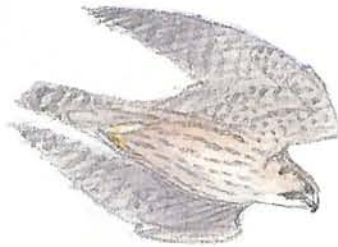


GOLDEN EAGLE ↑
Immature bird, of
A.C. 'homeyeri' race;
fairly common
resident.

OSPREY - common
passage migrant &
winter visitor, but
rare breeder ↓



adult



juvenile
Barbary Falcon

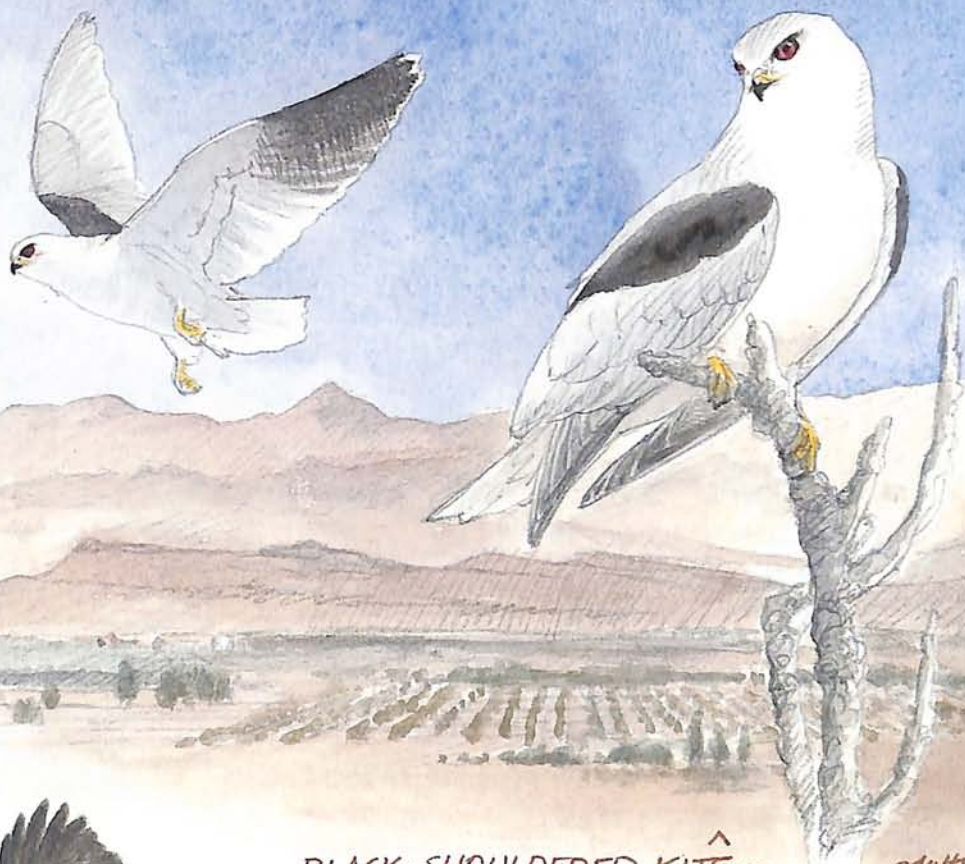


adult



adult
Bonelli's Eagle
chasing Grand squirrel

← BARBARY FALCON - Rather
a mysterious bird, thought by some
to be merely a race of Peregrine.
Can be very pale, only shorter tail &
heavier moustaches telling it from the commoner
Lanner falcon. As at least five races of Peregrine
occur in Morocco (in the winter), & overlap with the
Mediterranean race 'brookei' could occur, presumably o-
-why the paler southern Moroccan race are 'pure'. ?



^ BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE - adults

Uncommon localised breeder in three areas, shown here in the Soud Valley. Appears stable.

< BONELLIS EAGLE - fairly common resident breeder, up to 1000 pairs. Sub-adult shown here at Oued Massa, after waterbirds.

BLACK KITES - A common passage & migrant E breeder, prefers to frequent areas by water.



adults

^ LANNER FALCON - N. African race 'erlangeri' can be confused with the often equally pale Barbary Falcon, & is a common resident breeder in semi desert areas.

HOBBY ^ A fairly common migrant E breeder, mainly in northern Morocco.

Ye Olde Glovemaking

In 1667, Johan Man told his junior assistant to take over the 'Furniture Shop.' Jan Mears, the Junior Assistant, built the foundations for 'Ye Olde Glovemaking' as he called it and he passed it on to one of his pupils.



In 1969 it came to a Mr A. Van Arendank who created totally new designs based on the Old Masters' originals.

Marcus Staffhorst took over The Olde Glovemaking some years ago. While he was working at U.S.A.F. & R.A.F. bases in England he came into contact with Mr A. Van Arendank and they discussed the possibility of Marcus Staffhorst taking up an apprenticeship.

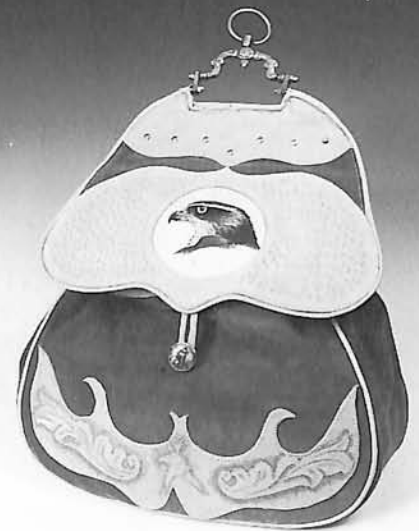
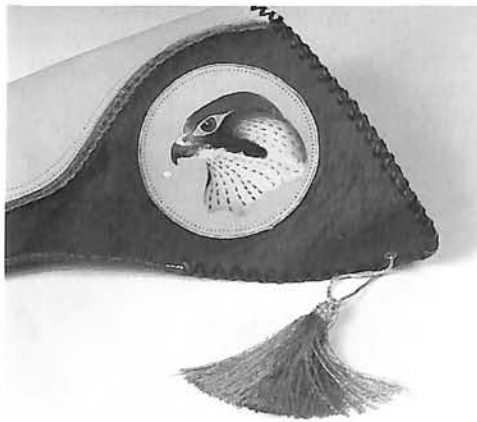
Things were settled and Marcus went and worked alongside Mr Arendank for 18 months, and when Mr Arendank passed away, Marcus inherited The Olde Glovemaking title.

Marcus lives in the forest near Bilthoven in the Netherlands at his home, Igabae Cottage. Further on in the forest he has his workshop. Mr Staffhorst's days are divided between making equipment and training birds for overseas customers.

In his cottage he has a room filled with over 75 paintings, etchings and engravings, all on the subject of falconry.

The furniture he produces is of a very ornate variety with his top of the range gloves having hand painted heads of either a falcon or goshawk on. This is called a Saffier or a Saffier Deluxe which has a hand painted picture of your choice on it. These gloves are for show rather than practical use, although he does produce furniture for everyday use. He also produces bags with hand painted pictures on so you can, if you wish, have a matching set.

His brass swivels are tested by one Volvo pulling along another and the swivel in the middle. His bells, like his swivels are manufactured to a very high quality with bells for hawks and eagles being made by hand.



Some of the decorative falconry furniture made by Marcus Staffhorst.

Photographs by Mr John D. de Uries.



THE OLDE GLOVE MAKER



A WIDE RANGE OF HIGH QUALITY FALCONRY ARTICLES

HAND MADE GLOVES

Model	Description
GENTILIS	A long double layered gauntlet glove with double layered thumbs (for broad and shortwings).
NISUS	A short double layered glove with 2 fingers and double layered thumbs; the special sparrowhawk glove.
COLUMBARIUS	A short single layered glove with 3 fingers and a thumb, especially designed for flying merlins and kestrels.
PEREGRINUS	A long single layered gauntlet glove especially designed for flying birds up to the size of a saker falcon.
TINNUNCULUS	A short glove specially made for smaller falcons, but also possible to use for larger birds.
SAFFIER	A perfect work of art, as far as gloves are concerned, our (what we like to call) "Parade Gloves". These gloves have a hand painted head of either a falcon or a goshawk.
SAFFIER DE LUXE	Comparable to the Saffier glove but this time with your own personal choice of bird head design. If you wish to order this glove you will be asked to send us a photo of the particular design you wish to have painted on your glove, and then we can send an absolute masterpiece of a glove.

OPTIONS:

DE LUXE

All of the models mentioned can be ordered in "DE LUXE" design. Which includes a bronze emblem from the Royal Loo Hawking Club. Every glove can be lined.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

Kits for people who would rather assemble their own gloves.

SWINVELS

The Olde Glovemaker supplies swinvels for birds the size of a merlin up to swinvels large enough for golden eagles. They are available either in stainless steel or brass. The exact prices are quoted in our price list.

MISCELLANEOUS

Leather leashes, shoes, False Aylmeries, the lure with feathers and bells. all to be found in our price list. We also stock several articles and materials for hunting dogs, also to be found in our price list.

Do you wish to receive up-to-date information on our products and offers?

Send your name and address to:

THE OLDE GLOVEMAKER, 'Igaba Cottage', De Genestetlaan 37, 3723 DN BILTHOVEN - The Netherlands.

RAPTOR

E
S
C
U
E

By
Ray Turner
L.R.K.

All members of 'Raptor Rescue' are only too well aware of 'problems' that arise as a result of a telephone call; a kestrel involved in a traffic accident, a very young owl is blown out of a tree, and so on. In one particular case my problem was a little unusual to say the least (or so it proved for me).

Whilst a lady was out for a walk with her dog, she came upon this tiny all white

creature laying in the grass.

At least she had the compassion to carry it home and place it in a box and in due course arrived at my door. I must admit that I had not really the slightest idea what it was - except that it was a 'raptor' of some kind and was probably not an owl. Examination revealed that there was a small lesion on the side of the neck, probably caused by squirrels, magpie or crow? Apart from this small wound it was quite well, though the eyes were not yet open and it weighed just 52 grammes. To cut a long story short, it was fed with small pieces of dead day old chick at frequent intervals and placed in a hospital cage.

At first I thought that it may be a Buzzard chick and in due course informed the D.O.E that a baby Buzzard had come

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.

- AN 'UNKNOWN' ARRIVAL -



into care. Feeding continued on a regular basis and when it weighed 127 grammes, the eyes started to open. It was soon after this that I noticed that the legs were really too long and thin to be a Buzzard, and that frequently, these long legs were used to strike out in defence when it was being fed. Perhaps it was a very young, I thought?

Feeding continued and at 270 grammes the feathers started to show and the down was gradually being sloughed off. The big give away at this point was that the tail feather growth was quite pronounced so that one day I noticed that there was a black edge to the tail. Now I KNEW that the 'unknown' was in fact, a Kestrel, and this was reinforced by the fact that there now was a little 'notch' in the beak that is

so characteristic of kestrels.

Now I am not quite sure what all this proves, except to say that even though I have been keeping and flying hawks for many years - that there is STILL a great deal more yet for me to learn.

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.

Training Gundogs for Falconry

by Guy Wallace

Part Seven

Teaching The Dog To Point

Before teaching a dog to point one needs something for it to point at and that mean live game (I use the term loosely) of one sort or another. One can do it the hard way and work the dog on a bit of farmland - and there is no patch of rural Britain over 100 acres that does not hold games of one sort or another - and hope for the best but this system has its snags. The dog may well not recognise the game as something that it has to point. The game may not lie to the point and get up prematurely. The dog may 'bump' it (flush it without pausing) and probably chase it. If the dog does something wrong it is probably too far away for you to do much about it. This somewhat haphazard system is also very time consuming for relatively little success.

A far more efficient method of teaching a dog to point is to have ones own live game which one has bought, begged or borrowed and the more varieties that you can teach a dog on the better. The whole lesson can be stage managed and the dog left in no doubt what is required of it with little margin for error. With each variety of game try and obtain sombre, neutral colours i.e. hen pheasants,

blue chequer pigeons, "agouti", brown or black rabbits etc., etc. rather than light, particularly white, colours so its becomes purely a scenting exercise rather than also a visual one. They are all cheap and simple to keep and you do not need their services for very long. A simple coop and run on the lawn or a box on the garage wall or an old commercial rabbit cage in the garage with a bag of corn or poultry pellets from the pet shop are all you need. Try to keep your "game" out of sight and downwind of your dogs if possible as familiarity breeds contempt. One of the great American pointer field trailers keeps his dogs kennelled on the balcony of his New York skyscraper 'apartment' twenty floors up, his pigeons on a box on the wall and his Bob White quail in a cage on top of the kennel and trains in Central Park at

5.00 am every morning before the city awakes - and he wins alot of field trials!

Racing pigeons are the best to start with and they can be hired from a local pigeon racer or obtained from him as cull pigeons. They have no game scent on them so any "boo boos" in the initial training will not be associated with game. They can be placed under a small floorless weldmesh cage or garden seive in the long grass and released by a long string, they can be placed in a specially designed trap cage and released manually, by an electric wire or by a state of the art electronic beam (like a TV remote control), or they can be 'dizzied'. (Placing them in a hole in the ground covered with a slate greatly reduced the amount of scent available to the dog.) To dizzy a pigeon



Bob White Quail outside Pen.

place its head under one wing and hold it over the back and wings. Swing the bird at the full extent of the arm three times clockwise and three times anti-clockwise and gently place it in the grass facing into the wind. Push a six foot long hazel wand (or similar) with a tiny marker tied to the top in the ground by the pigeon. (If the marker is too obvious a 'fly' dog will gallop straight to the marker!) Leave the dog in the car or out of sight while all this is going on. The marker show you where the bird(s) is and gives you something to flush it with when required.

Pheasants can be bought from a keeper or a game farm (in Yellow Pages under Game Breeders) either as ex-laying pen hens or as six-week-old poults. They can be placed in a wire cage and hidden or wing-clipped and released in a wire netting enclosure.

Taking a pointer into a pheasant release or laying pen 'to steady it' is more likely to put them off having anything to do with pheasants - particularly if it gets a belt from the electric anti-fox fence!

For serveral years I raised partridges from game farm eggs under a broody bantam and put them all into a square pen of four gamekeeper's rearing pen sections with a netting roof where four fields met. Every morning I released most of the partridges through a bob-hole in the corner and that night they returned through a lobster-pot funnel to 'mum' and their food. They were never far away and I worked dogs on them regularly.

Bob White quail are the best but most falconers have access to Japanese quail (Coturnix) and provided that some are left behind the rest can be released outside their pen and will eventually return through a 'lobster pot' type funnel back into the pen after being worked. However quail need 'training' to do this first and the evening is the best time.

Rabbits can be kept in a domestic hutch and placed under a wire cage but a better bet is to hire a few sessions in a professional gundog trainer's rabbit pen.

Some dogs will point from the cradle while others will not point to their

graves. However most decently bred dogs are ready to point by 9 or 10 months although the best pointer that I ever had never pointed until he was well over three years old! Do not think that a puppy "sight pointing" is necessarily a precocious pointer. It is a completely different, if allied, syndrome and most will gradually grow out of it anyway. One cannot MAKE a dog point game but you can give it the circumstances most likely to induce it to point 'on a plate'. If it is ready it should then point game.

The first requirement is ideal scenting conditions even if you have to wait several weeks for them. These are a steady, mild, warm south-westerly breeze (c. Force 2) without flocks of sheep, muck heaps etc. upwind to foil the scent. Remember that wind direction can vary between human and



Pointer - Pointing Pheasant.

dog head heights. Put the greyhound collar and line (not a slip lead which restricts breathing) on the dog and slowly walk up to the 'planted' game for downwind. You are not trying to hunt the dog at this stage, merely teaching it to point. When the dog encounters the scent of the game it should pause. If its nose starts twitching and it looks interested make it pause. In either case gently but firmly and without jerking restrain it with the line and quietly tell it what a good person it is (once it is properly on point it probably cannot hear you anyway!) ALWAYS stand to one side of any dog on point however experienced and eventually make sure that everybody else does so as well as a pointers hates people or other dogs immediately behind it and will often flush to game prematurely as a result. You now have the situation where the irresistible force of this mind-blowing scent of game is drawing the dog forward while the immovable object in the shape of the line is restraining it and the dog is 'squeezed' into the point. Once it is standing still slightly slacken the line and leave it just loose. Any attempt to 'catwalk' forward should be firmly restrained with the line and a gentle "WHOA" (as with horses). The dog is completely engrossed with this exciting new and wonderful smell so DON'T distract it with the ridiculous habit of 'styling it up on point' (stroking it, pulling its tail about etc.) but let it concentrate completely on the game in front of it. When you sense that the dog has been standing long enough physically pick it up - do not drag it away - and lead it off in the opposite direction. How long do you leave a dog on point? If it tends to be a 'flash pointer' (a dog that momentarily points

and then dives straight in) leave it on point for several minutes whereas if it tends to be 'sticky' (will not 'road' in and flush) do not leave it much longer than 30 seconds and you may have to vary these times as training progresses.

Everything at this stage ought to be pleasure and encouragement for the dog so be a bit 'easy' with it. If the game flushes itself just gently but firmly drop the dog without bawling and jerking the line or, with a really sensitive dog, merely restrain it with the line. Some young dogs get very 'hyped up' at the sight of game. If so pick it up and take it away. Whatever its age in terms of months old it is probably not yet ready for it and continuing the exercise only makes things worse. Try again in a few weeks time. Three ten minute sessions are better than one half hour 'bash'. The last thing that you want to do is to set up unpleasant associations with game or the scent of game or the

dog will start 'blinking' its game thinking "Last time I saw/smelled one of those I got a good hiding so I shall leave it where it is next time"! As always the trainer should put himself IN THE DOG MIND AND THINK LIKE THE DOG.

NEVER at this stage, or for a long time afterwards, flush the game yourself or allow the dog to flush its own game. When the time comes hold the dog firmly by the line, have the whistle ready in your mouth to drop the dog and flush the game with your food dropping the dog before it realises that the game has flushed. Only when the dog is automatically dropping to game flushed by the trainer can you consider allowing the dog to flush its own game. To 'road' a dog in to flush, click your fingers in front of the dog's nose with the command "GET 'EM UP" and walk slowly forward beside the dog until the game is flushed. Make slowly forward beside the dog until the game is flushed. Make the dog road in at your pace not the dog's and if it is a bit 'keen' command it to walk to HEEL. If I have an 'overzealous hooligan' I put on a light wire greyhound muzzle so that it soon realises that it cannot 'peg' its game (grab hold of it before it flushes) as once a pointer realises it can peg game no-one else is likely to get a lot of sport! If the dog is due to be shot over, once the dog has been properly introduced to gunfire, a blank pistol can be fired as the game flushes thus teaching the dog to drop to shot as well as to flush.

Once the dog is pointing under 'controlled' conditions the best place to continue the lessons is to hunt it (still trailing the line) in open ground interspersed with rough cover since the game is likely to be in the cover and the brambles or whatever will make the dog stand to its point.



G.S.P. Pointing a rabbit in a Professional Training Pen.

Reviews

BIRDS OF EUROPE with N. Africa & The Middle East:

Birds of Europe

with North Africa and the Middle East



Lars Jonsson

Lars Jonsson:
Hardback £25:
C. HELM - Publishers:

This is, quite simply, the finest ornithological field guide ever produced, since the revolutionary first guide by R. T. Peterson in the late 40's. The main criteria for a field guide are all exemplified here, although its very excellence ensures that it is bulkier than its numerous rivals.

Naturally, the very important illustrations by this young, highly respected wildlife painter fulfill both identification and artistic requirements — something never before achieved in field guides! Gone are the days of stiff comparative profiles, devoid of individuality and unaffected by local light and shade: These are vital, living birds going about their business, their essential 'jizz' perfectly captured in the main.

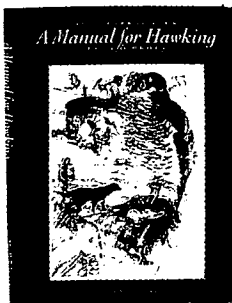
The text and maps are also succinct, accurate but brief and always relevant; even with the call and song renderings much easier to understand than other guides.

This volume will be of particular interest to raptor enthusiasts, with its 48 pages of excellent studies, largely in dynamic or graceful flight — just as they will be seen in the field. Difficult species are shown flying together and all the regular Palearctic Verreaux's Eagle, Lappet-faced Vulture and Shikra omitted).

Needless to say, his ornithological and artistic knowledge ensures that all birds are well depicted, although very occasionally one could pick faults if one were being ruthless! For instance, his male Sparrowhawk is a little on the round, but is one of pages taken from his earlier quintet of books on the Birds of Europe published in the late 70's. These highly acclaimed volumes have long been out of print (collectors items) and have led to the growing clamour for a one volume reprint. Hence the use of 120 plates from those early volumes, but with an additional 140 entirely new plates and another 40 reworked. One could say that this has resulted in a little inconsistency but this delightful volume can only enhance the reputation of Lars Jonsson, regarded by many as the finest living bird artist.

THE SPARROWHAWK: A Manual For Hawking

by Liam O'Brain



Anyone who collects and reads books on falconry should be pleased to possess a copy of this handsome work. It is large, 30 x 25 cms, amply illustrated with photographs, paintings and diagrams and its paintings, and layout reflect the care

and discrimination that have gone into its presentation. Sadly, only four of the author's paintings appear but he makes up for it with a series of stylish diagrams and stakes his claim to be ranked with other notable artist-falconers.

After the usual preliminaries and a valuable short history of the sport in Ireland come the instructions of all the stages in the training and flying of Sparrowhawks with descriptions of equipment, housing, health care and diet, all according to well tested principles. Despite many excellent tips and an original hood-pattern, there is nothing strikingly new, but the text brings Mavrogordato up to date, particularly on the handling of imprints.

A chapter on training Spaniels for their part in hawking is a valuable extra, but, oddly, the advice given in it is clearer and easier to follow than most of the hawking chapters, in which the advice wanders too much,

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"TRAINING GUNDOGS FOR FALCONRY"

Training day at The Warren Gundog Training Centre on Sunday 25 April 1993

Covering all aspects training a gundog for falconry including pointing live game.

Participants are encouraged to bring their own dogs.

Details from Guy or Marian Wallace

0874 754311



particularly between the different needs of the different types of eyass. They are classified as *sexual imprints*, those taken at about ten days old or less; *food imprints*, taken roughly a week later; and *branchers*, the latest to be taken. All three are recommended to be left loose and well fed for the last days before they are hard-penned, but when they are taken up their dispositions will be so different that it was a mistake not to deal separately with their training. There is no mention of social imprints, a serious omission, and, strangely, the treatment of tactics in the field is sketchy, and the quarry, its behaviour and the species flown, is very little mentioned.

Experienced sparrowhawkers will disagree with some of the recommendations, which are personal preferences, after all, but minor differences of opinion and training do not matter in the least provided that the end-product is a spar that is dependable and successful in the field. If anyone with the experience of the basic skills who persists in following this author's instructions fails to do just that, it will not be the author's fault.

ORDERS TO:

Old Abbey Books, Visneach Slane, Co. Meath, Republic of Ireland.

Price: £38.00 plus £2.00 p.p.

MULL RE-VISITED

By David Rampling

I left the island of Mull in the Summer of 1991, I had finally lost my patience with the weather and also the new job I had been offered looked too good to refuse, another farm to run but what swung it was the fact that incorporated into the farm, but run as a separate entity, was a Falconry centre. What spare time I had was spent down at the centre, getting to know everyone and the land over which they hunted. By November, with hunting well on the go, I had driven everyone mad with my tales of Mull and the flights I had there. So one weekend saw Ian McCheyne (the head falconer) and myself loading Peregrine Falcon, Harris Hawk and Irish Setter into the car to catch the Oban to Mull ferry. It would have to be a short trip and we prayed the weather would be kind to us, too much wind and we would fly nothing. Telemetry doesn't help much if your bird has been blown across a mile wide stretch of water!

We stayed the night in an hotel in Oban, and were kept awake by a karaoke night downstairs, but the food and beer were good so it didn't matter too much. It was still dark when we boarded the ferry the following morning, the sky looked clear and the wind was light, things seemed fairly promising. We had an uneventful crossing and on the way to our digs we stopped to watch a herd of Red deer in the heather just yards from the road. A Golden Eagle picked that moment to sail overhead, looking huge and dark, in a perfect setting, with the snow capped hills behind. We unloaded at a friend's guest house, now closed for the winter, and put the birds out to weather and recover from the journey.

After having some breakfast, we set off to my old farm in the hope of finding a Grouse



David Bennet & David Rampling with Hill Hare - Mull

or two to fly the Peregrine at. Unfortunately the only ones we did manage to find flushed before the Peregrine had time to even leave the fist, and we weren't able to find them again. But the Setter did point a rabbit lying out in the heather which the Harris Hawk caught in fine style. A mountain Hare, not yet in its' winter coat, got up some seventy yards in front of us, the Harris Hawk flew it well, only to get kicked off before we could get in to assist.

Still, Ian and I were pleased, it was the first hare that the Harris Hawk had ever encountered and we had had our doubts as to whether she would even attempt to bind to one. Sunday saw us up bright and early and heading across the island to an estate where a friend of mine, David Bennett, is the Gamekeeper/Stalker/Shepherd, and, luckily for us, a Falconer too. On the way there we saw a pair of Otters playing on the edge of loch Scridain and a pair of Choughs flying overhead. I pointed out to Ian the bay where I used to dive for oysters and scallops and I

showed him where I picked cockles. He was amazed by the number of Buzzards we saw and we stopped the car at a road casualty rabbit, where three Buzzards were scavenging a meal, they even allowed us close enough to get a few photo's. Finally we reached our destination and David gave us a tour of the estate. By the afternoon the Hawks were starting to feel very heavy. The Peregrine failed to connect with the pheasants that were flushed for her, we thought the land was perhaps too enclosed for her to get a fair crack at them. But a hare which got up in front of us was this time caught by the Harris Hawk. Walking back along the foreshore we saw a White Tailed Sea Eagle being mobbed by hooded crows, Ians first wild sighting, all the more interesting to him because he flies one at the centre in Aberdeenshire. Back to Davids house for soup and rolls prepared by his mother and finally a mad dash to catch the 3.30pm ferry home, the only ferry from Mull on a winter Sunday.

We only just made it too!



Ian McCheyne & immature Peregrine



Irish Setter on point

FALCONRY

A 'GREEN' FIELD SPORT

In Denmark this Spring, the 170,000 shooters voted against the ten or so falconers because to be seen to support falconry there might endanger their relationships with the 'green' organisations. This is despite one of the Danish falcon breeders being the major supplier of peregrines for the Swedish re-introduction programme.

Next door in Holland, it's the other way round. The 'greens' are backing falconry as an alternative to shooting! So what's the truth of the matter?

Falconry has got to be the most environmentally-friendly field sport and method of pest control. The bad old days when falconers were accused of stealing wild birds of prey are long since over. Instead, in recent years there has been an astonishing revolution in falconry. At least 37 species of diurnal birds of prey have now been bred in captivity and thirty have now been domesticated and are available on a substantial basis. This has been like condensing about 10,000 years of domesticating farm animals into just twenty years. The significance for falconers has been immense because, at last, their hunting birds are available on a secure long-term basis. A major spin-off has been the contribution to conservation this has led to; for example, the re-introduction programmes for peregrines in North America, Sweden and Germany, for Mauritius Kestrels, for Californian Condors, for European Sea-eagles and here in Britain, for the Red Kite. Most of these have been initiated and operated by falconers or use the techniques they have developed.

In the period 1980-91 in the UK alone, 23,804 diurnal birds of prey have been bred. The effort has been so successful that the production of kestrels, sparrowhawks and buzzards has been cut back in the late eighties owing to oversupply. Some of the other species such as peregrines, goshawks, merlins and Harris Hawks, have taken longer to build up because they started from smaller founder populations, but they too will soon reach market saturation. No raptors have been taken under

by Dr. Nick Fox

licence from the wild for falconry in Britain since 1988. Falconry is now entirely self-sufficient for birds of prey and has no negative impact at all on wild raptors. Over 2,500 injured wild raptors are tended by hawk-keepers in the UK every year and about half of these birds return to the wild, so the only impact falconry has on wild populations is a positive one.

But what is true falconry? Falconry is hunting of wild quarry in its natural state by means of trained birds of prey. As such it is really just



Author with 'Tom', a juvenile male Goshawk in Scotland 1973.

a controlled form of natural predation. This is what I find so fascinating about it. As a raptor biologist I have studied the hunting behaviour of several species of raptor in detail, usually by radio-tracking them. I remember on one occasion radio-tracking a wild Mauritius kestrel in a last remnant of the forest there. I ran along behind it in the trees while it searched for and attacked tree geckos. At the end of the day it went back to its nest area. If it had been a falconry bird I would have taken it home safe to its mews, but this was the only difference; otherwise it could well have been just a sequence in a normal day's hawking.

This close intimacy enables the falconer to see at first hand the way in which predators function and also to understand just how closely the prey have adapted to this predation. Studies by Dr Kenward at Oxford and by me on goshawks in Britain have revealed, not only how they hunt but also how they are to some extent selective and tend to act as 'nature's policemen'. Hawks are remarkably quick at identifying weakness in a prey. Any animal which is weak, moulting, diseased, pricked by shot, or simply an odd colour, is immediately targeted. I would say, from watching goshawks attacking flushing woodpigeons and duck, that an experienced hawk recognises a weak bird in a group within the first half a second of them rising. By the time the birds are waist height any odd bird has been singled out and the goshawk will fly it with much more conviction, almost as if it knows the outcome will be inevitable.

Falcons, such as peregrines, tend to be much less impulsive. They like to be in control of the situation. But studies by Rudebeck in Sweden and by German falconers hawking corvids, have shown that falcons too are selective. Initial attacks at flocks are often feints, designed to try out the prey and reveal any weakness. If the whole flock is strong then falcon may well lose interest, but if one of the individuals appears slower than the rest, or loses its nerve, then the falcon attacks in earnest. Of course, raptors are not selective all the time; they are perfectly capable of taking healthy prey. but studies reveal that the proportion of weak or handicapped prey in their tally is considerably higher than the proportion in a random sample.

By watching the way in which a raptor hunts its prey one comes to a much deeper understanding of the prey themselves. Their cryptic colouring, the way they go about their daily business, always alert, always near an escape route or in flocks with sentinels, their whole way of life finely tuned to predators. But when the predator actually arrives a whole new kaleidoscope of behaviour is revealed and one suddenly realises that the prey have got a lot more tricks up their sleeves

at first revealed. The falconer
his bird together discover that in
in situations prey are safe from
k and, as they get more
rienced, they learn to recognise
tions where an attack could be
essful. This breeds a respect for
prey to the extent that an animal,
as the crow, which to others
be regarded as a pest to be killed
every opportunity, to a falconer
s intriguing intellectual
ibilities and a physical
enge. To hawk it successfully
entail the use of four wheel
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ially-bred and trained falcons
access to large areas of open
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s away. And
, in a quiet
ment, you
denly realised
ve glimpsed him
n. This is what
onry is all about.
remember a day last season. A
owner called Graham was working
ne and it was his first day out
sue hawking. We were hawking
utherland with important guests,
uding Stephen Frank, one of
ain's doyens of grouse-hawking.
nam had helped hack and train
young falcon, called 'Snake', and
n my pointer locked on in a
d basin Graham was told it was
light. He unhooded Snake and
the shake of her bell she
bed effortlessly to a good pitch
ve us. I faced the dog and with a
k rush flushed a single grouse
er the falcon. She dipped a
ment and then ignored it.
believable! What could be up
a this bird? And then we realised.
ce as high Snake, in an unmarked
appeared the searing crossbow-

shape of a wild peregrine. In tight
rings Snake caught an updraught and
climbed to do battle. Not daring to
take our glasses off them for fear of
losing them, we watched the aerial
dogfight, silenced by distance.
Alternately stooping and locking
talons they drifted out of sight over
the hill. I could hear the radio signal
fade as Snake disappeared over the
ridge. Graham ran uphill through the
long heather, whistling and swinging
his lure. After ten minutes he was
almost exhausted and we lost sight of
him too. We were left, actors in an
unresolved drama, waiting for a
prompter.

Then I heard some very soft bleeps
on the radio. Like the faint pulse on
a recovering heart victim we sensed
that Snake was returning, coming

grouse had left him totally physically
and emotionally drained. He'd gone
from the heights to the depths and
back again and was now being eaten
alive by midges. Such is falconry!

The point of this story is not to
show how inefficient falconry is, but
to show efficient it is. Many, many
man-hours of interest, involvement
and enjoyment are obtained per head
of game taken. Indeed some
falconers go several years before
they manage to catch anything at all,
so absorbing is the sport.

This is not to say that falconry
cannot be effective at killing game.
Many professional falconers are
engaged in pest control, particularly
in places, such as towns and parks,
airfields and rubbish dumps, where
to discharge a gun would be
dangerous.

Goshawks and
Harris hawks are
quite capable of
accounting for a
dozen rabbits in an
afternoon without
making a lot of
noise or
endangering
anybody. Hawks
and falcons used in
pest control are also
used, not primarily
to kill the pest, but
to frighten it off.
And as it doesn't
pollute the
environment it is a
very 'green'
method of pest
control.

Finally, as well as
being self-
sustaining,

selective, natural and non-polluting,
falconry leaves no injured. The prey
is either caught or it escapes
unscathed. The kill, especially by
experienced falcons, is often
absolutely instantaneous. Hawks on
the other hand often hold their prey
until the falconer arrives. he may
then decide to kill it humanely or to
release it. But whatever happens the
falconer leaves the field with a clear
conscience that no animals are left
behind wounded and that the prey
have faced only a situation to which
they are naturally adapted. In the old
days falconry had a huge following
across Europe and Asia. Now, at the
end of the second millenium, with
increasing urbanisation and huge
pressures on the countryside, it is a
splendid way to renew contact with
nature and to come to understand
how natural systems work.



The skull of one of Tom's rabbits. This rabbit had had an abscess in the root of the lower right incisor. When the tooth rotted away, the other incisors kept growing.

back on stage. Graham suddenly re-
charged with energy, came bounding
down the hill, stumbling and
sprawling with exhaustion. We were
ready. The pointer, after twenty
minutes, was still absolutely
motionless on the remainder of the
covey, which in turn had stayed tight
due to the falcons overhead. Snake
came back over and resumed her
position of authority. The moment
we were in her killing cone I flushed
the grouse back up the hill over the
dog's back. Like a dark bee, one
skipped up towards the burn. Snake
peeled over and hooked down and as
the two dots merged they
disappeared from view into a small
gully. The falcon didn't come up
again and I knew she'd got it. When
I arrived I found Graham lying
beside the falcon under a bank. Steve
took a photo of them. Graham's first

FERRETS FOR WORKING OR PETS

by *Brian Cockings*

- Male Ferret:** "Hob"
Female Ferret: "Jill"
Castrated Hob: "Hobble"
Young Ferret: (Up to one year old)
 "Kit"

Even though "Kits" are fully grown at 6 months.

- Albino:** White or creamy coat; pink eyes.
Polecat: Dark coat; mask around the eyes and face, dark eyes.
Coloured: Sandy or gingery coloured coat, dark eyes.

With the housing completed it's time to think about getting the ferrets, (if the funds are available). It's much better to get two, as company for each other, having been brought up with a family, living, sleeping, feeding and playing together. One taken away and put into a strange place must be very frightening for an eight to ten week old ferret!

WHERE TO GET THE FERRETS:

The best place is a well known breeder in the area, someone who has kept ferrets for some years and knows how to look after them properly. Visit him, look at his stock, ask questions, what he feeds them on, what he uses for bedding, do the parents work at rabbit, does he show them and the price he is asking for kits. This can be between two and ten pounds each. If one or two kits are to your liking ask if he would get them out so that they can be handled, it's not a wise thing to put your hand into a cage of young ferrets, you could pick one up and finish

up with five or six clinging to your fingers - very painful!

Ferrets are carnivorous so they need feeding on meat - mince, tripe, chicks, rabbit or pigeons. It is unwise to feed them on bread and milk - milk to a ferret is a laxative and bread is a quick filler.

Feed them meat with plenty of fresh, clean water and you can't go wrong.



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Le Rocher des Aigles

Rocamadour

France

by Dr. J. Cox

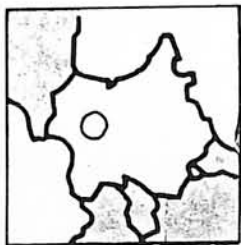
Flying Displays

Amazing! Outstanding! Breathtaking! Wow! These are the comments you hear from the tourists when you stand amongst the crowd on the sun-baked cliff-top edge of the canyon, as the Himalayan vultures soar in the August thermals at up to 3000m high in the cloudless sky. No, you are not far away in Asia or even in Arizona, but in a beautiful spot of the Dordogne valley in south-west France, at Rocamadour.

The **Rocher des Aigles'** flying displays of raptors are stunning. The opening act is the orbiting of the fluttering Black kites around the two wooden towers facing each other at opposite ends of the arena. Then the Himalayan vultures are released, straight from their perch (a quick-release hook is used) and over the ducking heads of the spectators set off for the steep canyon by the side of the rock, to start their ascending flight, which might last for the whole duration of the display. Whilst these are soaring, the falconers free the Griffon vultures, the Black vultures, the Ruppel's vulture, the Hooded African and the Egyptian vulture to circuit to and fro between the towers and over the gathered public, who, by now, feel they are in a giant frameless aviary. What strikes you is the sheer number of different types and sizes of birds flying around - all at once and in all directions - and the huge black silhouettes getting closer and diving back at great speed to the falconers' gloved arm with a 10 kg (20lb) thud.

Jean-Louis, the commentator - scientific advisor out of the ring - draws your attention to the fact that a single command from each of the five falconers, present simultaneously, brings back the birds to their trainers.

Before you have had time to recover from this visual extravaganza, the eagles appear. The Asian Tawny eagle darts off towards the sky, while Christian, the head falconer, sends the African fish eagle or the Bald eagle to fish in the centre pond. When the fishing is over and while



Return of Himalayan vulture

the Tawny eagle keeps on circling at 2000m other birds are brought in and perched on people's heads who have been transformed into South American cacti. These are the Chimangos, small insect-eating falcons, all bred at the Centre.

What you notice here is the relaxed atmosphere behind the frenetic rhythm of the displays - and there are 5 per day! Occasionally, a stubborn Black kite stays around to show off its natural fishing skills and steals the fish before the eagle can get to it! Or you are invited to observe the flock of migrating fork-tailed Black kites overhead on their way to Spain and Africa.

Then the Indian 'Laggar' falcon or the Lanner presents its agile stoops and speedy dives while, at the same time, 'Nestor', the 8kg (16lb) Griffon vulture walks around on the outstretched legs of the sitting visitors to demonstrate the gentle touch of the non-prehensile feet of the carrion-eating vultures.

These dazzling displays vary from season to season and you might see any species flying from the tiny Scops owl to the awe-inspiring Andean condor.

Protection and Conservation

A spectacular show indeed! However, there is more to the 'Rocher des Aigles' than a brilliant flying parade of varied raptors.

The site is situated in a tourist area and 150,000 exalted holiday-makers each summer enjoy being informed and educated about the preservation of all birds of prey. This is the reason why this zoo exists at all.

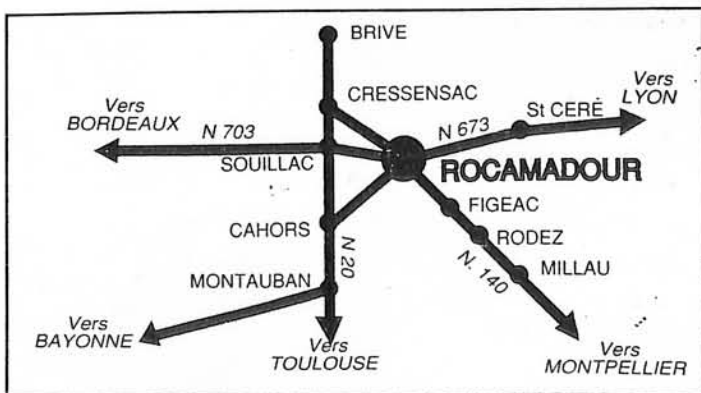
A dedicated raptor-loving Frenchman, Raphael Amaud, decided in 1977 to act upon his deep-felt belief that something should be done to combine the protection of birds of prey, and the conservation of species, with the education of the public. In true pioneer-fashion, with no financial help from the Government or counsel from existing organisations he opened a Centre on the site of a truffle wood at the top of 'Roc Amadour' with only thirty birds. His aim: to create a reserve of species to be available for re-introduction to the wild wherever in the world any species became endangered.

A present project of Monsieur Amaud's, in conjunction with the National Association of French Zoos (ANPZ) and the National Union of Wildlife Sanctuaries (UNCS) is the breeding of European Black vultures, now rare around the Mediterranean regions - impressive 1,10m high

continued overleaf



Young black vultures with Black kites





Himalayan vulture

birds with a 2.90m wingspan - once common inhabitants of the French Cévennes and Pyrenees. On a world-conservation scale Raphaël represents France at the World Congress for the Protection of Raptors every four years.

Breeding

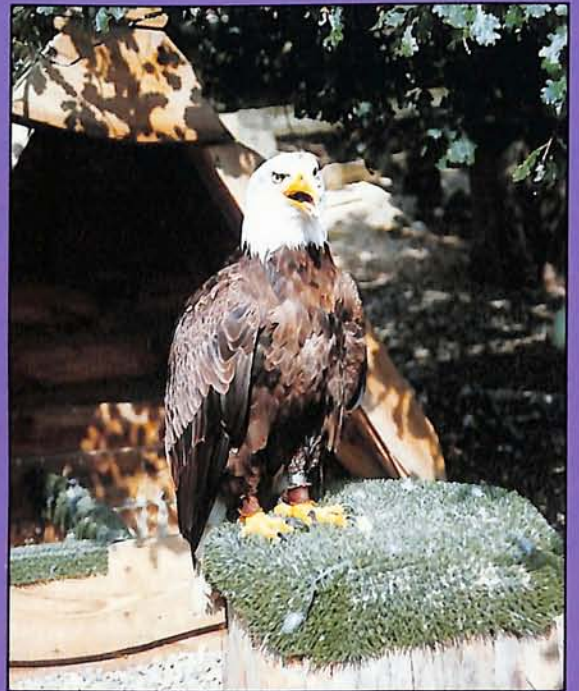
Five years after the opening of the 'Rocher des Aigles' the first success in the breeding programme for conservation was with a pair of American kestrels. Later, success was obtained with vultures, then eagles, and in 1992 80 young were raised across the whole range of species, amongst which 3 Tawny eagles, 3 African fish eagles, 2 Griffon vultures, 2 Black vultures, 1 Hooded vulture... to mention but a few.

Pairs are constantly being sought and formed. You will find eagles such as:

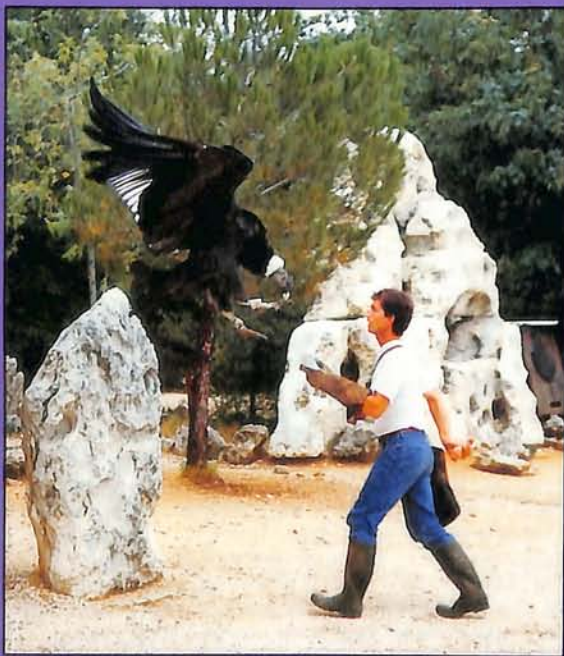
Golden, Bald eagle, African fish eagle, Tawny, White-tailed sea eagle, Imperial, Changeable hawk eagle (*Spizaetus Cirratus*) and African Martial eagle (*Polemaetus Bellicosus*)!

Vultures such as:

European black vulture, (*Aegypius Monachus*), Hooded (*Nechrosyrtes Monachus*), Black vulture (*Coragyps Atratus*), Griffon (*Gyps Fulvus*), Ruppel's vulture (*Gyps Rueppellii*), King (*Sarcoramphus Papa*), Himalayan (*Gyps Himalyenas*), Lappet-faced vulture (*Aegypius Tracheliotus*), Egyptian vulture (*Neophron Percnopterus*), and Andean Condor (*Vultur Gryphus*)!



American Bald eagle



Andean condor flying to the fist

Out of the 300 birds there you will discover more unusual ones such as Indian Laggar falcons (*Falco Yugger*), Chimangos (*Milvago Chimango*), Red kites, Scops owls African spotted eagle owls, Brown fish owls and even Honey buzzards.

This impressive array of breeding ability is a bit of mystery for incredulous onlookers. All types of birds breed here: small ones, big ones, casualties rescued from pollution and collisions and even imprinted ones! You have to see it to believe it! Captive breeding is definitely the speciality of the house!

80 aviaries, at the last count, reproduce the conditions necessary for the optimum quality of bird life. They are built around trees and are the right size for their occupants. Eagles' aviaries are 6m (18ft) high and 8m (24ft) square! Their concept of Nature microcosm and reduced visibility for the public is original, clever and reflects a genuine love for the birds and their welfare. Part of the front panel is replaced by netting, so that you can see inside, but the breeding pair can retreat amongst the vegetation when it so wishes or high up on the branches and top perches, rest on the wide mating ledges or even sit on the nest... Choice is at the base of the bird philosophy adopted by the staff. And it works.



Endangered European Black vulture

Scientific approach

Natural methods, although favoured, are not the only ones used in the work of the Eagles' Rock at Rocamadour. Scientific research is intensive. Artificial insemination and genetic printing are common activities when summer displays are over.

Strong effective links have been developed with the highly competent Museum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

Scientific collaboration is active with San Diego and Mexico zoos with valuable achievement on the safeguard of the Californian Condor for example, also with the National Foundation to protect America's Eagles with interactive and practical research on the preservation of the Bald Eagle, endangered in North America through mercury pollution of lakes and rivers. The Rocher des Aigles is rapidly becoming a highly sought-after advice centre for all serious conservationist organisations specialising in birds of prey.



Pair of displaying kites



African Martial Eagle

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

by Rob Graham

Today I returned home chilled to the bone after a days ferreting, however this had been a day with a difference and I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

The week before I had received a phone call asking if we (my ferreting partner Allan and myself) would like the opportunity to work our ferrets with a hawk. Never having had the opportunity to see a bird of prey in action we readily agreed.

After some discussion we decided that we would take the more wary of the two jills for we had no idea how steady the hawks were to ferrets and we wanted to ensure at all costs that there would be no unfortunate accidents. The two jills are litter sisters but they as chalk is to cheese, one very friendly and bold, always coming straight out of a burrow to hand without a murmur whilst her less confident sister likes to poke her head out to survey the lie of the land before venturing forth.

Locator and collars are checked, the ferret was boxed and off we set to our location, a Lanarkshire hill farm. On arrival we exchanged some worried glances when the 'hawk' was produced and later discovered we were having similar thoughts, along the lines of, "Good grief, I didn't think they were that big!" I had seen hawks and falcons at game fairs and none of them came anywhere near the size of this one.

Finally, curiosity won the day and I asked his owner what type of hawk the bird was to which he replied "Oh, he's not a hawk, he's a golden eagle!"

So this was our introduction to 'Gorby', a ten month old golden eagle hatched and reared at Moscow Zoo then imported onto Britain along with two others.

The darks brown colours of 'Gorby's' plumage was not what I expected of a golden eagle. However, Andrew, 'Gorby's' owner, explained that up until recently 'Gorby' had spent most of his life indoors or under cover and had not had the exposure to the elements that bleach the head and neck area of wild golden eagles to the aurelian-hue that gives them their name.

We set off up the hill as the day was very still and we needed the wind for the bird to gain height when he was flown.



A golden eagle has a wing span of some 2 - 2.2 metres, these wings are designed for efficient soaring, being rather long and narrow. The primary feathers, when fully extended, are well separated, like the fingers of a spread hand. He does not have the ability to soar like a wandering albatross but the albatross's 3.3 metre wing-span would hinder the eagle when pursuing ground quarry or when alighting in trees. The eagle's wing span offers a good degree of manoeuvrability close to the ground and proficient soaring flight.

A male golden eagle weighs some 6 kilos, which, when compared to the male goshawk at 600 grammes or thereabouts, explains why it is not viable to carry an eagle upon the fist. There would be the additional problem that if the bird was carried on the gauntlet and became suddenly angered or

alarmed that he would contract his feet in a killing grasp.

Andrew would be unable to release the crushing talons and would need to wait until 'Gorby' released his hold. Andrew carried 'Gorby' on a pole which was anchored through the shoulder strap of a game bag.

Golden eagles in the wild are fairly catholic in their diet, grouse, rabbit, hares, partly grown fox cubs and carrion. They prefer to feed on medium-sized mammals and if these are in abundance will kill little else. Golden eagles have also been recorded catching pike and salmon. Our quarry today was rabbit and, if we were lucky, blue hare.

Andrew stood some way off, further up the hill, when the ferret was entered to the bury. Gorby had worked with ferrets before but better safe than

sorry! The ferret worked her way through the bury, showing at each entrance in turn. When she showed at the final hole she was not keen to leave and immediately returned below ground once more. We knew that there had been an outbreak of myxomatosis a few months previous and the ferret's behaviour convinced us that there were rabbits at home but being few in number in this large bury the ferret was having difficulty in locating them. This was confirmed when a rabbit was sighted passing a hole with the ferret in hot pursuit. Round and round



Andrew Knowles-Brown with his Golden Eagle

they went past the same hole half a dozen times until suddenly the rabbit exploded from below our feet, hot-footing it up the hill. Immediately the rabbit appeared above ground the eagle was airborne, having spotted the movement. The term 'eagle-eyed' is used to denote above par vision, for eagles have exceptional eyesight.

He had not gained sufficient height when he struck at the rabbit. While he failed to make a clean strike he did not bowl his quarry over. The rabbit quickly recovered its feet and kept going. This must have taken all of 30 seconds but it was adequate time for the eagle to find the wind, bank round and strike again. On his second strike he hit the rabbit but fumbled his lift and lost it again. Immediately he went in for his third attempt and this proved to be third time lucky.



When we reached 'Gorby' he was standing atop his catch which he was reluctant to leave to return to the pole. Andrew covered the rabbit partially with a tea towel and slowly moved 'Gorby' along its length until he was gently pushed off the end and the rabbit was entirely covered. Andrew then enticed him back onto the pole with the aid of a tit-bit and the rabbit was swiftly dropped into the game bag.

We continued to work the buries along the top ridge of the hill but there were no more rabbits to be had here so we moved across a burn to a small gully. Unfortunately, only one rabbit was prepared to bolt and it immediately popped down another hole. Nevertheless, 'Gorby' had seen it emerge and as it disappeared from sight he landed on the grass in front of the hole. He stood peering down the hole, making chirruping sounds and cocking his head from side to side. Andrew called 'Gorby' back to him and since both the bird and ferret were becoming rather frustrated we decided to call it a day.

Andrew released 'Gorby' for a final flight before we headed back and, with the jill safely boxed, I could give my full attention to watching this magnificent bird commanding the skies above us. As he passed overhead, I could see the white wing patches and white tail with a black outer band which indicate he is a juvenile, these patches become dark-barred grey when adult plumage is acquired within 5 - 7 years. His flight was effortless, 6 or 7 wingbeats followed by a few seconds glide, I watched in wonder as he fingered the imperceptible air currents with his primary feathers.

I have never read the bible but did as a child, under protest, attend Sunday School where we learned the Psalms parrot-fashion. As I stood gazing into the clear blue sky a line from Psalm 18 came to me; 'Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind' written by David, who, I feel sure, must have taken his inspiration for these words from seeing this master of the easy glide - *the golden eagle*.

RESULTS FOR WINTER 1992 ANAGRAM COMPETITION

With 250 entries to our anagram competition, we had our best response yet and our lucky winners are as follows;

1st Prize. Glove, donated by Martin Jones, was won by Paul Blackburn-Elliot, Higham Ferrers.

2nd Prize. Goshawk Print, donated by O Sian, was won by Miss C. Unsted, Somerset.

3rd Prize. Block or Bow, donated by Roger Weeks of Brittany Sporting Supplies, was won by Mr Gary Harrison, Middlesborough.

4th Prize. Falconry Bag, donated by Roy Hart, was won by Robin Jeffs, Cheshire.

5th Prize. Video, donated by David Parry, was won by John Flynn, Aberystwyth.

6th Prize. Lure and Line, donated by Mark Richards, Cornish Falconry and Conservation, was won by K. Brewer, Essex.

SOLUTION

S wainsons	Hawk
A plomado	Falcon
K estrel	Falcon
E leanoras	Falcon
R ed Tailed	Hawk
F erruginous	Hawk
A ugur	Hawk
L anner	Falcon
C oopers	Hawk
O sprey	
N ew Zealand	Falcon

NATURE KNOWS BEST

by
Bob Dalton

There are currently a couple of Falconry books around that make reference, either directly or indirectly, to terminal Peregrinitus. The inference being that those who would only consider flying Peregrines as a large falcon in the United Kingdom are suffering from a point of view that is severely limited. Also a recent magazine article on Falconry stated that it is harder to catch quarry with other species of large falcon and it is therefore a more rewarding exercise to do so. In certain circumstances this can be true, but at the end of the day the Peregrine Falcon is our only large native falcon, with the exception of a handful of Gyr Falcons that sometimes frequent Scotland.

This is not a situation that has occurred by sheer chance. The quarry species available, the type of countryside and relevant available nesting sites and climate are all suited to the needs of the Peregrine Falcon. The reason we do not have a population of wild Lanners, Luggers or Sakers is that our environment does not truly suit them. The same reasons are valid as to why we have the beautiful little Merlin here and not things like Aplomados, Eleanoras or Sooty Falcons. The Merlin is at home here, the others would not be.



Kestrel drying out after a bath.

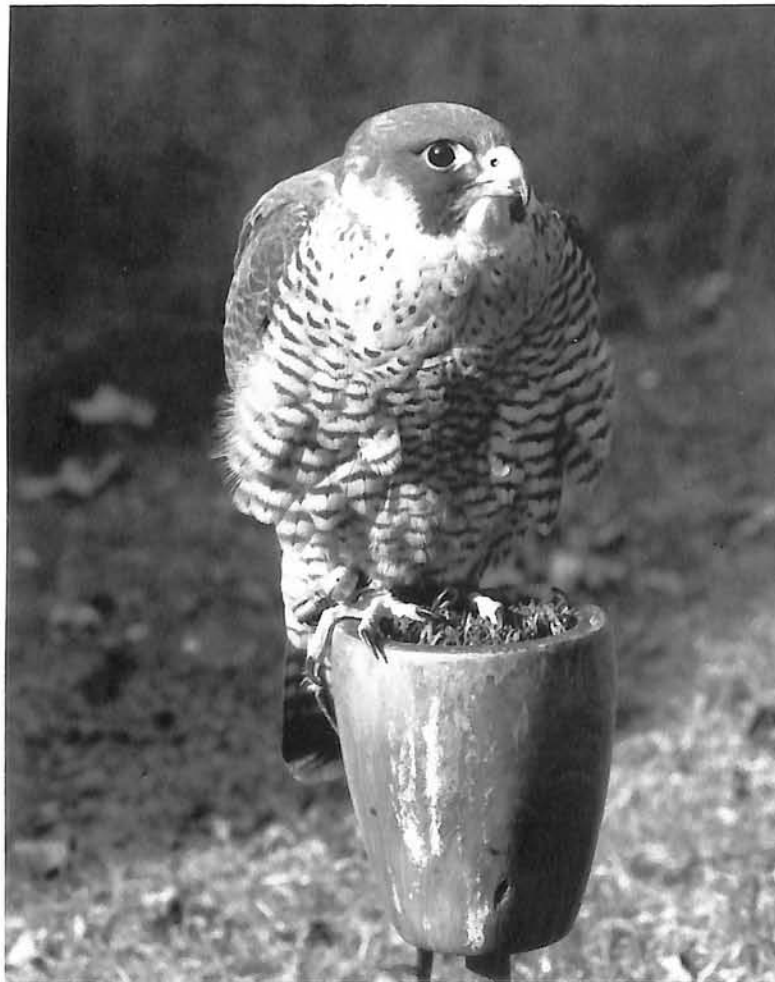
When it comes to the actual sport of falconry, that is hunting wild quarry with a trained hawk or falcon, the Peregrine and the Merlin have served British falconers very well indeed over the centuries. Whether the quarry be Pheasant, Grouse, Partridge, Duck, Rook or Magpie the Peregrine Falcon is a most competent and capable adversary. If you have ever seen Peregrines flown on a windswept moor at Grouse and

then seen Lanners and Sakers flown under the same conditions you will quickly realise there is very little comparison. The Peregrine is the tool for the job at hand.

For the ringing flight at Skylark, surely one of the prettiest and most taxing flights in falconry, what other falcon would ever come to mind than the Merlin? Its courage, dash and tenacity cannot be equalled by any other small falcon. Even Red

Headed Merlins from India and Africa, of which I am a personal fan and used to enjoy flying, cannot equal our own Merlin for quality sporting flights.

In the case of Shortwings the very same arguments hold true for using the Goshawk and Sparrowhawk above all others. Nature has honed them to be the efficient predator suited to the environment. Both species have again served British falconers very well over the centuries and they do their relevant jobs superbly well. In recent years we have seen an absolute proliferation of Harris Hawks and Red Tailed Hawks in this country. In the case of the Red Tail it gained in popularity as a cheaper alternative to the Goshawk. Although not having the same dash or fire as a Gos, it is still a good hunting bird and



3 year old Peregrine Falcon.

will take a wide variety of quarry. The case for the Harris Hawk is slightly different. They are a hawk that seems to evoke incredible passions in falconers. There are those that cannot abide them and decry those that would fly them. On the other hand those with whom the Harris has found favour think that they are the ultimate hawk and will not have a word said against them.

But whether you like it or not, the Harris Hawk is not in the same class as the Goshawk. Where the Harris has won favour in Britain is with ease with which they can be trained and flown. They will take an amazing selection of quarry and are not prone to sulking up trees as some Goshawks will. They are almost idiot proof and just about anyone can train one and enter one. Another factor that has helped their popularity is that

the current argument is that for a person with limited time to dedicate to training and hunting the Harris Hawk is the ideal bird. My argument would be if your time to train and hunt is so limited then take up another sport.

A very real and worrying prospect is what is going to happen when there are considerable numbers of Harris Hawks that have gone feral. I can see the day when wild Harris Hawks



Adult Jack (male) Merlin.

here are going to pose a serious threat to the balance of nature, particularly other raptors. Fortunately, the Sparrowhawk would appear still to be number one on the list for desirable small hawks and there does not seem to

diminutive little Musket at small fry, both are a joy to watch and no hawk will try harder.

All in all it would appear that nature really has got it right and that our native Hawks and Falcons can do all that is asked of them and do it well. The falconer that flies indigenous species will also have the knowledge that should their hawk become lost it will help to swell the wild population, as opposed to having a harmful effect on it.



Adult female Goshawk.

they are a social hawk and it is not unusual to see three or four being flown together. Not that it seems very sporting to the Rabbit to fly more than one hawk at a time at it. But if mugging is to your liking then multiple Harris flying is for you.

Personally, I think that they are far too easy to train and do not offer the serious falconer any real challenge or reward. The tyro that has trained a Harris Hawk as his first attempt at at falconry and then decides to switch to a Goshawk is in for a monumental shock. The Goshawk will require thorough constant manning and needs to actually be trained as opposed to just guided along. But

be a foreign replacement looming on the horizon. Not that any Austringer could ever ask for more than the Sparrowhawk willingly gives. It is a determined, brave little hunter that offers tremendous sport for a very small outlay. Whether flying a female at Magpies or Blackbirds, or the

Female Harris Hawk.



L^{et}ters



Raptor Rescue

(Birds of Prey Rehabilitation)

Reg. Charity No: 283733

As with all organisations, Raptor Rescue accepts that from time to time criticism will be aimed at it. We are comfortable with that, and feel confident that we can satisfy any enquirer that we are a well run charity, with the best of intentions concerning the welfare of any bird of prey in need of assistance. What we cannot adequately address are veiled hints of concern about our ethics or practices based on opinions formed many years ago by an aggrieved party. Also, because the individual words 'Raptor' and 'Rescue' are used by many individuals or organisations involved in similar work, we feel we may be attracting the occasional adverse thought which in fact should be aimed at another.

All letters should be addressed to:-
THE EDITORS, THE FALCONERS AND
RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE,
20 BRIDLE ROAD, BURTON LATIMER, NR
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I would ask, therefore, that if anybody wishes to express any opinion of a critical nature relating to Raptor Rescue, that they address their concerns to the organisations directly, when they will be promptly and fully considered. My telephone number and the address of our secretary are published in each edition of this magazine.

Michael Robins
Chairman

A Proposed National Display Unit

Albeit not a new idea, and following much lively discussion within the New Forest Falconry Club, we as a Club believe that the time is now right to establish, as part of a common aim, a "National Falconry Display Unit", to help promote our sport in the 90's and beyond.

We would ask readers to perhaps discuss amongst their Clubs and also pass onto non-subscribers of this magazine and their friends alike how they, as Falconers, would like to see and administer the make-up of a proposed unit.

NEW VENUE NEW VENUE

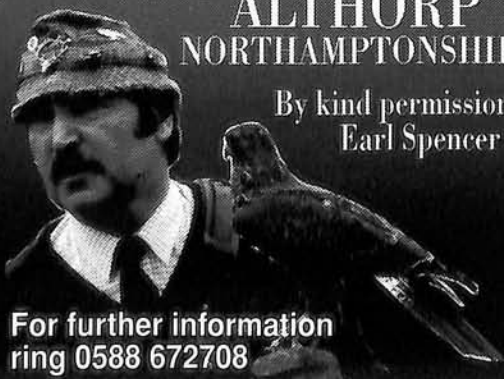
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Without wishing to dot "I's" and cross the many "T's", on how our first Club could see this unit develop, as a taster, may we float some first thoughts and pointers for consideration, expansion, criticism or whatever. Your responses either as a club or, indeed individually would be most welcome and will give a barometer of initial support.

NFFC thoughts

"A professionally constructed trailer, which could be used as a focal point or part of a Club or individual displays which would be centrally located in the UK for equal, controlled and administered distributions to local and established Clubs or indeed individuals alike for major and minor shows. This unit to provide a static display incorporating the history of Falconry, the sport itself, conservation, the countryside and laws alike, with future projections of the sport for the years to come. Funding to come (without commercial sponsorship) from Falconers for Falconry (e.g. 50p from all Hawk-keepers could raise £6,000!). Any monies gained in audited profit could be paid direct to the Hawk Board which is our voice of representation at the highest level of all Falconers in our sport. The unit would provide, for the first time, a base of common voice, presenting in a highly professional medium, our sport in an uncertain future. More importantly, giving a solid foundation for Clubs and individuals to build onto when impressions count and second impressions last".

Over to you...

The New Forest Falconry Club.



Dear Editor

So many people think that kestrel's are for the beginner and not much use for anything. Well, I would have to disagree as the weight of a female is about 8oz and a male 6 to 7 oz. I have a friend who has a male that flies at 5 1/4 oz, I have a female, the sister to the aforementioned kestrel. She flies at 6 1/2 oz. She did not like the lure very much, so I stopped it. I flew her to the fist and cast her to a post until I moved from the post and cast her on a school roof which she refused and flew about two fields away, and that started the nerves again. So I called her to the fist and she returned after two blows on my stag horn whistle and I tried again, this time leaving her there for a much longer time and watched her fly as she wanted, but she never flew too far away. If she did, I blew on the stag horn and she came back, sometimes with a little stoop now and then. but to see this fast, lovely looking and responsive bird that I have trained (this is a good time to tell you that this is not my first bird). Bird's that people pay through the nose for may get hunting but not a lot of glory, i.e. goshawk and Sparrowhawk of which I have flown both at game, but I love this little falcon when she turns tail and comes back to me.

I hope you print this short letter as more people may respect this so-called Common Kestrel that no-one wants

to fly. I am hoping to introduce her at small birds in her second year which may be tough being a hover hawk, but why not? If she's game, so am I.

Yours sincerely

Mark Springthorpe.

At The Sharp End A Professionals Viewpoint

To the Editors of "The Falconers' Magazine"

Dear Sirs

This letter has not been written with the intention of offending anyone, it is giving voice to a topic I feel needs a little airing.

Firstly, I am a professional falconer so I must declare an interest.

For years, firstly, as an amateur and for the past eight as a professional falconer I have listened to professional falconers criticised, some of this criticism was justified, much was not. I have seldom heard the professional praised, so to redress the balance I would like to speak in praise of these people whose life is dedicated to Birds of Prey.

The continuance of falconry is not likely to come about by how well your Goshawk, Harris Hawk or Peregrine flies or how much quarry it takes. It is more likely to be due to public relations i.e. the good will and relationship that falconry has with the general public. Who is it who deals mostly with the general public? The professional falconer, that's who. I am well aware that many amateur falconers do a stalwart job of promoting a good image for birds of prey and falconry and country shows and fairs like the CLA but a large part of that work is preaching to the already converted or at least to people who half way converted.

The real sharp end of falconry and bird of prey public relations is not at places like these but at The Birmingham Boat Show, Fulham Fun Day, etc., etc. These are the places the professional will reach the uninitiated and ignorant. There is more good done at one of these events than a great many country fairs put together.

I can't speak for all professionals but here at The Welsh Hawking Centre we come into contact with well over half a million members of the public a year here at the centre and at outside events where the vast majority of the people attending have never been near or in close proximity to a raptor in their lives before. They enjoy the experience and go away with a new understanding and sympathy for birds of prey and falconry. Many of these people attending are children, tomorrows conservationists (and voters) and perhaps the falconers of tomorrow. After all, how many how many of you non-professionals had your first experience of a bird of prey courtesy of a professional? How many of you, if you have a problem, turn to a professional for help or advice? Our phone rings constantly, as I am sure, does Brian Patterson's, Bob Dalton's, Roy Heart's Terry Large's, Lenny and Di Walters and all the rest. If we can help, we do so.

Hand on heart, how many of you have preached to half a million potential supporters of falconry this year, or last year, or any year?

Yours sincerely

Norma Griffiths.

THE HISTORY OF HAWKING IN HUNGARY from the 1800's to the PRESENT TIME

by Loránt de Bástyai

In 1901 the Hungarian Prince Zoard Odeschalchy started it again in his state Tuszer in the county of Szabolcs (North East Hungary). He brought professional falconers from Britain, the most noted being Mr Best, who was serving the old Hawking Club. Also the Prince brought eight completely trained falcons from Prince Radcliffe, but very soon he stocked his falconry establishment with Hungarian hawks as well; he had nearly always seventeen trained birds. Mainly partridge-hawking was the order of the day.

When the First World War broke out the Prince and his falconer tried to train the falcons to puncture the observation balloons of the enemy.

Unfortunately the Prince fell in the war and after his death the whole of falconry was "gone with the wind". The falconers returned to Britain and the falcons were either released or the British falconers took them back.

In 1903 the Hungarian Chief Hunting Inspector of the Royal Estates Hunting Grounds, Count Geza Kiss de Nemesker, was invited to Scotland for grouse shooting. Here he met a lady called Mrs. MacLean. This lady was a keen falconer and she had with her a peregrine falcon which she flew, and the Hungarian Chief Hunting Inspector saw it and liked it very much. So after he returned to Hungary he invited Mrs. MacLean, and when she saw the great Hungarian Plains she said "Why does nobody ever

hawk in Hungary?" The reply was "Because we have no falconers". She answered "Never mind, I will send you some". It so happened that Mrs. MacLean had a friend in Lahore called Colonel Biddulph, and in 1932 Colonel Biddulph arrived in Hungary with three Pakistani falconers. He was a retired officer of the British Indian Army and was then 72 years of age, but still going strong. They brought eight trained peregrines, and one black shahin and one goshawk, but not very long afterwards the hawks, together with the Hungarian peregrines, goshawks and sakers, numbered 27. Naturally Hungarian boys were also selected to be in the falconry school, which was settled in the small town of Gödöllő, about 25 kilometres from Budapest, at the Royal Hunting Lodge. A Hungarian Chief Falconer, Lui de Kaloczy, was chosen. He was a smallholder from north-west Hungary. After settling, the Pakistani falconers started hawking.

The first summer the Pakistani falconers, led by Colonel Biddulph, organised great heron-hawking parties, which had never been seen since medieval times in Hungary. Lots of interested sportsmen came from all over Hungary to watch.

My greatest luck came when the summer holiday was over and I travelled back from my parents' farm to school in Budapest. When I stepped into the train, there he was in the same coach, a man with jodhpur trousers, long jacket and a turban on his head. On the hook, on which in continental trains the passengers used to hang their



Geza Kiss de Nemeska, Chief Hunting Inspector of the Hungarian Crown Hunting Grounds with peregrine, Mrs MacLean of Scotland with male Goshawk, Loraint de Bastyai with female goshawk, both of them in very juvenile plumage. This photograph was taken in Gödöllő in the Crown Hunting Grounds in 1939.

coats, there was hanging a falconer's bag with glove and hoods. I sat, naturally, opposite to the falconer and wanted to start talking. Unfortunately, he could not speak Hungarian or German and I could not speak very good English, and had no Pakistani, but somehow when I showed him the photographs of my tame kestrels and hobbys, we slowly started to understand each other. He kindly invited me to see the falcons at Gödöllő and so the next Sunday I went to see the falconry school at Gödöllő, and from that day every Sunday and during the holidays I was there. I met Colonel Biddulph and the other falconers and also Geza Kiss de Nemesker, the Hungarian Chief Hunting Inspector, and Mrs. MacLean. I carried first some hobbys and then goshawks and sparrowhawks and, much later, the falcons. I went out one Sunday with Colonel Biddulph's falconer, the next Sunday with the Hungarian party, led by the chief falconer, Lui de Kaloczy.

After I could understand something about falconry, somehow I got the addresses of the falconers abroad in England, Germany and the U.S.A. Soon I was in contact with Captain Gilbert Blaine (at that time he was just Captain and not Colonel) and also Major Aylmer, and then the noted German falconers like Renz Waller and

Fritz Loges, and from the U.S.A. Harold M. Webster; and hawking started in a great blaze in Hungary. Any high ranking official visitor coming on a private or state visit to Hungary, apart from dinner parties, official meetings and other entertainments, enjoyed hawking as well.

I can remember, when the King and Queen of Italy were visiting, there was great hawking in Gödöllő. The professional falconers were standing in uniform with big plumes on their hats and Victor Emmanuel inspected them as he would an army. The hawking started with the Chief Hunting Inspector presenting a beautiful deerskin falconer's glove on which the Hungarian national coat-of-arms were embroidered with gold and silver thread, and naturally the "Hollycrown" of Hungary was on the glove as well. The Italian king took the glove and pulled it on his fist. It was a bit big because Victor Emmanuel was quite a short chap with a small hand, but not so small that the chief falconer could not stand a goshawk on it. The papers next day were full of pictures of Victor Emmanuel with a goshawk on his fist. They had quite a good time with ferreting rabbits, but after the second flight Victor Emmanuel just watched the rabbiting, and the professional falconer had the



goshawk. Then came the pheasant hawking with peregrines and sakers waiting on, and it was quite a success. At the state visit of the King and Queen of Siam there was again great hawking entertainment.

After ten months Colonel Biddulph went back to India with his three falconers, but the falconry was already strongly rooted in Hungary with the falconry school in Gödöllő. After we "commoners" had learned enough we started the very first club of falconry with the title "Magyar Solymasz Egyesület" – in English, Hungarian Falconry in Association. At our first meeting in the Hungarian Natural History Museum in Budapest we elected for the first President, Geza Kiss de Nemesker. I had the honour to be elected Vice-President and Herbert Nadler, the director-in-chief of Buda-Pest Zoo, the "Falcon Master".

The Second World War broke out and I was called up to the Hungarian Army, and because I could drive a car I was selected as a lorry driver (I had never driven a lorry before). This brought me luck, if there was any luck at that time, because my commandant was a great sportsman and allowed me to take a falcon with me. So I took my peregrine with me and it stood by my side in the cab when I was driving, and when we stopped for any length of time I had (with my colonel) a little fun hawking, but unfortunately this did not last long because I lost the bird just before we crossed over to the other side of the River Tisza and we could not follow her, but because she originated from this countryside I am sure she survived.

Before I left the Army I met, at an agricultural exhibition, a very keen sportsman, by name George Lelovich V. Galantha. He was, and still is, a very marvellous horseman, and because he was so very keen to learn the art of falconry he became my best friend. Shortly before I left for the Army I presented him with two eyas goshawks and asked him to look after my saker. Because, at that time in Hungary, no falconry books were available, I took the trouble, which was a pleasure to me, to instruct my friend in my letters "somewhere from the front", and he did really very well indeed. I also wrote articles in the very popular shooting magazine the "Nimrod Vadaszlap" of which the editor was a well-known African hunter and collector, Kalman Kittenberger, and his assistant



The Regent of Hungary is visiting Colonel Biddulph and his professional falconers at the Hungarian Plains of Hottobagy.

editor Janos Katona kindly gave me a place for my articles on falconry and birds of prey. I remember how I argued with the pheasant and partridge breeders about not shooting birds of prey, and the editors by this became unpopular with the "High Society" landowners who were shooting the falcons and other birds of prey. At that time there was no protection for birds of prey, not even for the saker and the peregrine.

During the war I met in Russia prisoners of war who came from Asia, and I made friends with some of them. It is my greatest pleasure that I met Mongolian falconers as well as those who were hunting with golden eagles in their country. They showed me photographs of their hunting birds and I showed them my pictures, but after nearly a year I became ill and so I was lucky enough to come back to Hungary in a Red Cross train. Naturally my first call when I got better was to my friend George Lelovich, and I was convalescing on his estate and started falconry all over again. After everything settled down and the war was over we went to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and put a plan forward to start a Birds of Prey Centre. We made the first in the great plain near my friend's estate, but later, because the complaint was made that it was too isolated, the Ministry moved it to Gödöllő where falconry started. Because my friend would not leave his home, I was the only manager and director of the State Birds of Prey Centre where we taught the recognition of birds of prey and gave lectures. I worked together with the Hungarian Forestry Commission and registered all the nests of the birds of prey, and ringed the young birds with the registered rings of the Hungarian Ornithological Institute and collected the food remains from the different nests. Contact was

again made with foreign countries, and also we corresponded with the French and Austrian falconers like Monsieur Aber Boyer and Count Friedrich Mensdorff-Pouilly from Austria. Hannes Schmidler and Michael Woodford of the B.F.C.



Several years later we read in the agricultural magazine that the Ministry was very worried about fish breeding (carp) in the rice fields because the herons did a lot of damage. The fish-keepers could do nothing because they could not shoot into the water at the standing heron because they would damage the rice, and the fish swimming in the very shallow water which covers the rice fields. Also the trouble with the shotgun was that the herons soon got "crafty" and got to know the range, and then went further away and flew down again to the water. My friend George Lelovich and I went to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and put our plan to form a falconry brigade on horseback against the herons. The Ministry said "Let's have go", we had great success, and started a Falconry School for the fish-keepers in different state farms who had rice fields for fish breeding.

Then we again started a Falconry Association, but this time not a separate one, but in the framework of the Magyar

Vadaszok Országos Szovetsege (The Country Association of Hungarian Shooting) and made a department for falconry. Hawking started to be in top form again. We made nature and falconry films with the Hungarian nature film producer Dr. Homoki Nagy, and so with these films, birds of prey and falconry were brought closer to the people. Books were published and the authorities really took it as their duty to protect birds of prey and falconry. When I left Hungary I left behind quite a good hawking community, including my two good friends George Lelovich and Joseph Finta, who were hawking in two different state farms on horseback against the herons.

Unfortunately into the ranks of the honest sportsmen came dishonest young "falconers" whose main object was not sport but to take illegally young sakers and peregrines from the nest and sell these birds to rich western falconers at a great profit. This was naturally a black mark against falconry and the Ornithological Institute and the Hungarian Nature Authority recommended that hawking in Hungary become illegal.

Later I heard that Frigyes Bogyai and Peter Dekany (who visited Britain at the British Falconers' Club Field Meeting in Woodhall Spa), together with my old friend George Lelovich, took in their hands the newly formed Hawking Section of the Country Association of the Hungarian Shooting, and gave a clean and new start in Hungary for hawking. They have published a year book as well, stating their results and successes.

I sincerely hope that the dream of the late director of the Hungarian Ornithological Institute, Jakab Vonoczky Schenk, comes true, and from the little spark of modern hawking in Hungary comes again a great flaming success.

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

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