

The

Falcons

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

Winter '93

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HEN HARRIER

● **BREEDING RAPTORS**

● **ENTERING YOUR HAWK**

● **HAWKING OVER FERRETS**

● **35 YEARS WITH AN EAGLE**

● **FEEDING RAPTORS**

ISSN 0967-2206



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BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

Formerly the Sherwood Falconers Club Established 1967.



ASSOCIATION MOTTO: EQUALITY OUR STRENGTH UNITY OUR ENDEAVOUR

- 1) Our objective is to eliminate unethical attitudes and practices that exist in the hawking fraternity today.
- 2) Embrace unity for all.
- 3) Secure you and your children's future in hawking.

If you are an aspiring falconer tell us about it, you will get the recognition you deserve with the 'British Hawking Association'. If you are a dedicated falconer, a novice falconer or simply a falconer who wants to aspire to a higher 'pitch', social status wealth or poverty, it's just commitment and dedication that secures your membership, provided that you have not committed any offences under the 'Wildlife and Countryside Act'. Whether you fly a Kestrel or a Golden Eagle we at the B.H.A. can assure you of a warm welcome and the considerate understanding you equally deserve at all levels of the sport. If these few principles apply to you, please send a stamped addressed envelope to: B.H.A. Membership Secretary, Kennel Farm Cottage, Old Kennel Lane, Annesley Park, Annesley Nottingham. NG15 OAU

THE B.H.A IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ORGANISATION

B.H.A. CODE OF PRACTICE

- Will be to improve the standard of hawking within the British Isles, to improve the welfare of hawks, dogs and quarry. All quarry must be despatched as humanely as possible. All landowners property and livestock shall be respected, with the utmost courtesy and understanding.
- Members giving public or private displays: In the view of the B.H.A., the term Falconry as used today, indicates falconry displays at public gatherings. Hawking is deemed by the B.H.A. to mean traditional hawking in the field, flying trained birds at wild quarry. Members wishing to give public displays must not bring the B.H.A. into disrepute. Members breaching this rule will be disciplined by the executive committee.
- All members will make themselves conversant with the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, copies of which can be obtained from the secretary.
- It is expected that all senior members will look after the welfare of Junior Members with regard to their training and well-being.
- Slander towards a fellow member will not be tolerated.
- All members will be subject to the B.H.A. inspection scheme.
- The association shall consist of the graded membership as follows: 1. Junior & Adult Novice Member. 2. Junior & Adult Associate Member. 3. Junior & Adult Full Member. 4. Senior Full Member. 5. Master. 6. Grand Master. Grading conducted annually. All gradings will be based on the due members honesty.
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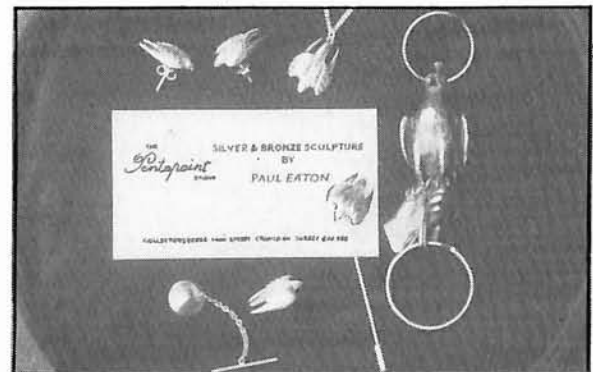
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The Falconers

& RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

The most talked about subject in the last three months must surely be the Cook Report, I am sure everybody would welcome a means whereby illegal practices involving birds of prey could be stopped but many people are certain that this is not the way to go about it. Sensationalism, is not warranted and leading people to believe that all peregrines are worth £15 -£20,000 each is not really in the interests of our wild peregrine population. Also official figures show that peregrines, in the wild in this country, are now at pre-war levels. The other unfortunate element about the Cook Report is that the general public will be misled into thinking that what was shown was about Falconers and Falconry when in reality Falconers are conservationists and have a love of birds both in captivity and in the wild. If it was not for the need for falconry birds, captive breeding would never have been perfected and breed and release schemes would not exist.

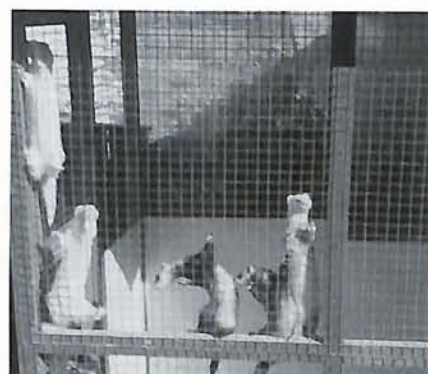
In this issue we have an account of Bob Haddons' cycle ride for Cancer Research and we would like to congratulate him on raising a substantial amount of money, incidentally, if you have not given yet there is still time.

Details can be obtained from the Falconers Magazine.

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THE HAWK AND OWL TRUST

Farmers who are keen to bring barn owls back to their land are getting a helping hand from a group of agrochemical merchants, backed by supplier Farm Protection and environmental charity The Hawk and Owl Trust.

The firms, which work together through the marketing organisation, Thistle Agronomy Ltd, have given farmers nestboxes to put up where there is suitable feeding habitat for barn owls. The scheme involves 60 nestboxes distributed throughout Scotland, the North-West, the West Midlands, the South-West, Yorkshire and Humberside. The boxes have been donated by Farm Protection, which is a part of Zeneca Crop Protection. Where appropriate, the firms are also helping farmers to improve habitat by offering them grass seed mixtures to increase the food supply for owls. The plan is to develop the rough grassland corridors advocated by the Hawk and Owl Trust, which is spearheading efforts to save the endangered Barn Owl. This rough grassland is excellent for the voles and other small mammals which Barn Owls need to catch to feed their young.

There are fewer than 5,000 breeding Barn Owl pairs throughout Britain, compared with 12,000 in the 1930s. Changes in farming practice have had a major impact, with traditional rough grassland feeding areas and nesting sites in trees and farm buildings rapidly disappearing.

The project is the brainchild of Peter Clare, a member of the Hawk and Owl Trust and director of Thistle Agronomy. In his work as managing director of Cheshire-based Environmental Crop Management he visits farmers to advise them on how to grow the best crops and at the same time manage their land for wildlife.

"We felt that offering nestboxes and other guidance was a way we could put something back into the countryside," he explained. "We are very careful to assess the habitat before offering a nestbox to a farmer, otherwise it would be a waste of time and people would be disappointed. We have been dealing with most of our farming customers for at least 10 years and we know which farms are suitable for Barn Owls."

The idea has been taken up by the other six members of the Thistle Agronomy: BCW Agriculture, Shropshire; Agrochem (Northern) Ltd, South Humberside; May & Dawson (Agrochem) Ltd, North Yorkshire; Robertson Agrochemicals (SW)Ltd, Devon; Wallace of Kelso, Roxburghshire; Robertson Crop Services Ltd, Ross-shire. Most of the new nestboxes will be in place by the time the owls start looking for nest sites, which can be as early as September or October.



Young Barn Owl

Photo. Dennis Green

ART EXHIBITION

Mark Chester will be holding his third one man exhibition on Sunday 5th December 1993, 2.00 - 6.00 pm at The Moat House, London Road (A41), Bourne End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

The theme this year is 'British Wildlife' and will predominantly feature paintings from Mark's travels around the country this year, together with some endangered big cats.

A donation from the exhibition will be made to the Hawk and Owl Trust's Barn Owl conservation project.

GARDEN VILLAGE BIRD OF PREY AND FALCONRY CENTRE

Under new Management

Garden Village Bird of Prey centre has now re-opened under new management, after being closed all year. The centre is now run by Nick Pinson, and has no ties with any previous owners. There is a range of owls, falcons and hawks also a kiddies corner comprising of a vietnamese pot bellied pig, ducks, rabbits and hopefully some goats, more to come no doubt! Flying displays will go on daily, weather permitting. We can also cater for large parties, lectures and film shows. We also stock quality falconry equipment and hawk food. We look forward to meeting you.

For more information telephone 0902 701359

STOLEN BIRDS

A Falconers glove was left behind following the theft of a Harris Hawk and Common Buzzard at The Lakeland Bird of Prey Centre 7/8.9.93. **The identifying feature of the glove is the bright green thread by the D ring.**

Harris Hawk 4 years old - Female, Ring No. 7932W

Buzzard 9 weeks old - Female, Ring No. UK84743

Anyone with information as to the identity of the owner of the glove please telephone:- Tel: **0734 536257** or **0734 321243** (Answer Phone) or to D.C. Lee Johnson, Appleby Police, Penrith **07683 51333**

There is a colour photograph of the glove on page 28 to help you see exactly what it looks like.

Recent Stolen Birds

1. Harris Hawk - Female - Ring No. 10540W

2. Harris Hawk - Male - Ring No. 10531W stolen August 1993. Derbyshire Area.

3. Goshawk - Male - Ring No. 8543W stolen August 1993. Warwickshire Area.

4. American Kestrel - Male - Ring No. 5680R stolen September 1993. West Sussex Area

5. Harris Hawk - Female - Ring No. 9435W

Harris Hawk - Male - Ring No. UK82450 stolen September 1993. Liverpool/Merseyside Area.

It doesn't stop does it?

Also could anyone help me out with the following ring numbers in an effort to find the owners.

1. Ring number 6PSD80X found on a Hawk. I am aware of who is the breeder is but it doesn't help.

2. Ring number 393-10A - 89U found on an Owl.

Many thanks for your help
Paul K Beecroft.
Thames Valley Police

RSPCA UNVEILS STATE OF THE ART WILDLIFE HOSPITAL

Environment Minister John Gummer opened the RSPCA's new £1.7 million Norfolk wildlife hospital at King's Lynn on Friday 17th September.

Hospital vet Ian Robinson said: "We are expecting to treat over 2,500 casualties in the coming year and this should increase in future years. We'll deal mainly with local casualties but animals will be sent to us from all over the country for treatment."

Top wildlife vets and rehabilitators across Europe pooled their knowledge to design a state of the art hospital fully equipped to cope with all wildlife casualties. Any species from any habitat can be treated in the new hospital.

A fully equipped x-ray room and operating theatre are expected to be in regular use and there are even on-

site facilities for a variety of blood tests.

Intensive care facilities provide individual cubicles that can be adapted to contain land animals, seals or birds.

Peep holes allow close monitoring, without disturbing the sick animal and adjustable light levels are used to create even less stressful environments.

Some cubicles can have variable water levels to help in treatment of aquatic animals.

A series of seal rehabilitation pools allows casualties to progress from the close supervision of an intensive care unit to bigger indoor pools. They are moved next to a huge outdoor pool where the seals can exercise properly so they are fully fit for their release back to the wild. The pools have their own environment friendly water treatment and recy-

cling plant.

The specialist oiled bird cleaning centre can deal with all sizes of birds from swans to guillemots. It has three washing areas with specially designed sinks and shower units for the thorough cleaning needed. There is a thermostatically controlled drying room which wafts warm air over drying birds as they recover.

A 14-acre field has paddocks with loose boxes fitted out to house deer, badgers or foxes.

There are two large pools for swans and other water fowl and two aviary blocks, one for birds of prey and a separate one for other species.

This ensures possible prey species are not suffering stress from constantly seeing predators in a next cage.

The centre in Station Road, East Winch, will open to visitors between 1.30 and 4.00pm seven days a week.

C CLUBS

A DAY AT GROUSE

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB held its first Meeting of the season on September 12th at PITLOCHRY. This was advertised as a "Day at Grouse" and the few members who fly longwings showed great modesty in not wanting to boast of the prowess of the falcons and made suitable apologies for not coming, so it was that on a glorious sunny calm morning we stepped onto a carpet of brilliant purple heather, bee's humming, larks singing, and a truly wondrous vista ahead of us and the anticipation of some sport. The only bird to make the meet was Andrew Knowles-Brown's male Golden Eagle who had not had a chance at grouse before. What would this bird do in Eagle country? We walked uphill until we felt a light breeze so the bird was cast off, he made a few circles close to the hill face trying to make height but progress was slow. He landed on a large rock for a few minutes, and then headed out straight over the centre of the glen, he then started ringing up the glen, within moments he was out of sight blending in with the background colours. Only those with binoculars could follow his progress, he making way up

to the head of the glen until he came to the sheer rock face and found lift. Half way up and a covey got up below him he started to dive at 45 degrees across the rock face but was interrupted by half a dozen Ravens who tried to mug him. He then went out of sight, a small knoll ahead of us obscuring our view. We moved up to see where he was; when we next saw him he had broken the sky line and was heading towards us. Soon he was above but had lost a lot of height, a tiercel appeared from nowhere and dive bombed him. Taking no notice he landed on the ridge dove, we moved forward, the English Pointer ranging well. Suddenly a point and the covey flushed immediately, the Eagle made for them and as a late comer flushed almost beneath him, he closed his wings but then changed his mind and soared back to land on a deer fence post. Moments later he was looking up so we did likewise and 200ft above us was a Female Golden Eagle looking down to see who this interloper was, disturbing her grouse. She moved over the ridge and



Andrew Knowles-Brown's Golden Eagle

disappeared. We continued but, although there was plenty of scent, no birds. The Eagle set off again over the glen bottom this time crossing over to the other side and down the glen, I didn't see him again until he broke the skyline and then he was only a dot. Ian who keeps the moor reckoned he was at least 3 miles away and 1000ft above us and rising, too far for Andrew's liking, so he decided to try and bring him in. Up went his fist waving the chick, no change, he tried again. The Eagle seemed to stop circling and after about 30 seconds the spot started getting bigger. We soon saw him coming, with wings closed and, at tremendous speed. At about 150 yds out he dropped his under carriage, flared his wings and wiffled into a perfect landing onto the rock next to Andrew where he claimed his reward. We continued for a while longer but as all

grouse had long left, the Eagle was beginning to lose interest so we decided to move down to a local hotel that was over run with rabbits to provide a kill to feed the bird up on. He showed remarkable agility flying through the trees and put in some very good stoops before nailing his tea in a field of horses next to the hotel. After he consumed the Bun we retired to the Hostelry for a well earned drink and a chance to put falconry to rights. This was for the purist perhaps not as falconry should be but at this meeting we saw six wild Eagles. Peregrine, Sparrowhawk and Buzzard in the perfect setting of the Highlands and, with the weather and the company, what more could one want? THANKS must go to Ian Webster who put on this meeting.

THE CUMBRIAN FALCONRY CLUB

Just a short note to inform the readers of a newly formed falconry club. The Cumbrian Falconry Club was formed by a small group of enthusiastic falconers in March of this year (93). Our aim is to promote the interests of falconry and birds of prey in our area, as Cumbria is large and quite sparsely populated and falconers often feel isolated especially in Cumbria, we hope to create a supportive, friendly club to benefit all.

The club is also open to anyone from outside the county. If anyone is interested in more details phone Colin on 0900 68063 or Geoff on 0900 817516.

Colin Taylor

THE RIDINGS FALCONRY AND HAWKING

We have recently started a Falconry Club in the Doncaster area in the County of South Yorkshire and we would be very grateful if you could add our Club name in your magazine. Therefore enabling the club to acquire more interest and to gain more members.

For further information please contact:

Chris Lawson (The Secretary),
2 Prospect Villas,
New Inn Lane,
Stainforth,
Doncaster. DN7 5AS.

TURNING FUN INTO FUNDS: DISPLAY AND OTHER COMMERCIAL ISSUES

Nicholas Kester, Press Officer, British Falconers' Club

In 1871 there was some debate about the future use of Alexandra Park, London's newest recreation facility and, rather surprisingly, even falconers had their say.

Rev'd Gage Freeman: "Now speaking in the interest of Falconry, of its public display, there is something to be said for and against. In favour of it, this may be advanced, that a thoroughly good thing is sure to gain publicity".

But did his honourable sentiment ring true? Freeman appears doubtful. But more on the grounds of space available and, in those days, the necessity of using bagged quarry, which he finds distasteful as being inconsistent with the provision of good sport. I think we can conclude that the Cleric was of the firm opinion that the new park was not suited to public displays of falconry. Although somebody else did.

Captain F. Sandys Dugmore took a far more commercial view establishing a subscription club/school in the park. His hawks were regularly on public display and flown to the lure to entertain the public. He also did something that really upset the old guard. When his hawks were flown at quarry in Wiltshire he charged a cap. The establishment was outraged at such commerciality and a brisk correspondence took place through the columns of the sporting press.

There is nothing new under the sun. If you want to know more then you should read Roger Upton's splendid book "O for a Falconers Voice" from which this story is taken.

Establishment versus commerciality; traditionalist versus modernist. It still holds good today.

This year at a BFSS/BFC static display a non-member, who ran a display team, came up to me and asked whether the club still had its ridiculous policy on commercial flying displays. My answer was simple. All he had to do was to make certain that he did not damage our sport (hunting) then I felt that he, and the BFC, would be quite comfortable with his displays. But, I added, he should include an explanation that what he was doing was not falconry. Rather a demonstration of some of the methods used by him, a falconer, in the training and exercising of hunting hawks. We had some amicable discussion about the need for so many owls and hawks of the same species on display; the ethics of keeping smaller owls jessed; and the risk of involving the public too closely in the handling of his exhibits. I then asked if he was a true falconer and of course, he was. I imagine that few display givers fail to hunt with a hawk in the winter when displays are less frequent. Unfortunately he added that he would never mention this to his admiring public as he was afraid of losing their sympathy and, I suspect, their contributions.

That is the root of a lot of the misunderstanding, now and in 1871. The BFC has no problems with commercial falconers or public displays. People are entitled to turn their love into their living. What we do find inconsistent with our aims and ideals is that people shy away

from the reality of the field sport or turn it into some sort of circus act to satisfy an audience ever greedy for quick thrills on a day trip to a country house, zoo, country fair, etc. To help keep this in check the Hawk Board and the BFSS have produced an excellent series of guidelines for the display giver and the event organiser. The guidelines are not, as some might imagine, stuffy and dictatorial but sensible and conscious of the welfare of the hawks on display, the public and the future reputation of the sport of falconry.

The BFC does not seek to regulate the activities of its members on many of the issues of commerciality. We gave that up long ago. We have many members who are commercial and professional. They have the most to lose by losing the right to keep and fly hawks and as a result they are some of our most loyal and supportive members. What we cannot support, and neither should anybody, are those who put our future at risk either by sensationalist displays or a failure to stand up and be proud of falconry as a field sport.

Did the old guard of 1870 care any less about the future of falconry than we do today? Of course not. With guidelines and willingness to discuss the needs of the new age of hunting the professional falconer will stay in business for sure.

As an after thought, in the last issue of this magazine it was suggested that we should expose the bad falconry courses and praise the good ones. How about doing the same for displays?

THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION.

Gary Balchin.

The Need for Change. Over the last few months George Roach and myself have talked about the general discontent amongst the hawking fraternity with regards to the present conditions that exist in some clubs today. We are amazed at the amount of people airing their views on these matters.

I well remember how I felt in my younger days, while some things have changed, not all have changed for the good of our age old art and I feel somewhat frustrated at the present conditions that prevail today. With these rumblings of discontent in mind we decided to reform the "Sherwood Falconers Club", and with greater things in mind, to rename it The British Hawking Association. (B.H.A.)

As the B.H.A. we intend to set about righting the situations that have developed over the years, it's not going to be easy, it cannot be changed over night. It will of course take time and effort on all our parts, but with the unity of good, conscientious and dedicated hawking people we can achieve our aims.

so with these aims in mind we must talk, we must discuss and no doubt we will argue and disagree, but let's not forget our motto, EQUALITY OUR STRENGTH, UNITY OUR ENDEAVOUR. We can do it, I know we can.

The B.H.A. office telephone no. is 0623 751339. Monthly meetings are held at The Bridge Inn, Bridge St., Ilkeston, Derbys. On the first thursday of every month, from 8p.m.

VIRTUAL REALITY

BY
DIANA
DURMAN-WALTERS

THE SCOTTISH ACADEMY
OF
FALCONRY
& RELATED STUDIES

One of the main causes of anxiety in training a young hawk is its seemed inability to comprehend taking quarry. Take training a Harris Hawk for instance. This is a case of virtual reality. A pleasant state of what could be exists up until the moment of truth, the fact that it appears disinterested in game, in particular, rabbits.

They make a prospective falconers life look easy. Manning quickly, coming to the fist readily and given to do this in a fairly high condition. So it's no wonder that the inexperienced falconer is undecided what to do when this paragon of virtue simply lets rabbits run past with no attempt at pursuit.

There are several reasons as to why this happens. It could be the hawk is too high to be in a hunting frame of mind. It could also be that not enough time has been given to lure work, which is the next step to focussing attention on game. If it is the latter then there is a lot more work to be done in order to give the hawk confidence in the hunting field. When the hawk, be it a Harris Hawk, Buzzard or Red-tail, is at the stage of coming readily to the fist over 60 - 80 yds then it is time to introduce it to the lure. These are nothing more than simulated fur objects which to my way of thinking look nothing like a rabbit, but they are animated by someone pulling them along the ground. The object is to get the hawk to respond instinctively to movement at ground level. It's not supposed to make it think that this is any way a true behavioural response of a rabbit. If the time taken to train with the lure is too short then the hawk on seeing a rabbit bolting for home is unable to equate the lure training to this fast departing mammal!

Very often this frustrating state of affairs induces unnecessary dieting

of the hawk which when found not to be the answer either will have the hawk immediately on a weight increase diet giving rise to lack of responses from the hawk and increasing the likelihood of more failure.

When using the lure the hawk should be carefully brought down to a weight from which it indicates that it will chase the lure. This initial work need only be from a distance of three feet. It will require two people, one will hold the hawk whilst the other gently drags the lure in front of it. Both correct weight and appetite are determining factors as to how the hawk will behave. It is no good attempting this lesson in the morning if the hawk was flown in the afternoon the previ-

ous day; it's appetite simply will not be there. Equally trying to fly inexperienced buteos or para-buteos a couple of hours earlier than yesterday is probably going to make hard work of it.

Once the hawk comes readily for a chick on the glove then the same type of food is tied to the lure. In the beginning once they are prepared to jump readily off the fist onto the dummy rabbit, they should be given their food for the day as an added inducement. It should be secured tightly onto the lure so that it can feed up on it. It puts the hawk into a frame of mind that this brings the maximum rewards therefore is worth attempting again. These lessons don't need hurrying. Throughout the week the distance that the lure is dragged should gradually increase, away from the hawk. The objective is to get the hawk that is being held to leave the fist readily and fly hard and fast in order to catch it. It knows it will always find a meal there. Once it is confident of this it can feasibly be



You must spend at least 2-3 weeks having your bird chase the rabbit lure in all types of conditions, from the fist and out of trees
photo :- R W L Bowerman

expected to attempt a chase twice in the training session which requires the food being divided into two feeds. Once the hawk will do this it can be tempted to do so out of trees.

The next stage will come several weeks after lure training. That is attempting to get the transition from animated dummy to the real thing. Often if the dummy has been pulled through grassy areas the hawk, when out in the hunting field, seeing rabbits bolt from such cover will give automatic chase. Cover always provides an interest for the hawk, as well as putting into practice stealth tactics by simply dropping onto unsuspecting quarry. To the hawk it would now appear that the situation has potential. It is often better to attempt this type of entry as fast bolting rabbits in the open may well be too difficult for an unfit hawk to catch. It takes a young inexperienced hawk many futile efforts and plenty of opportunity to tackle quarry in order to be successful and in particular take on long slips. When they begin to show a degree of skill and are able to account for their first few rabbits it is advisable to feed them up on their



The end result, a Buzzard on her first rabbit being allowed to feed up on it

Photo:- R W L Bowerman

kill. Just as has been done with the initial lure training so the young hawk begins to equate taking rabbits with large rewards available.

It really doesn't pay to hurry the training of any young hawk. It's wild cousins would have parental support

in order to succeed and in the filial relationship between you and the hawk you must ensure that your support is designed to educate and promote a skilled, competent hunter.

OBITUARY

LORANT DE BASTYAI. 1910 - 1993

PRESIDENT WELSH HAWKING CLUB.

Falconers all over the world are mourning the passing of Lorant de Bastyai who died on the 14th of October. Lorant, who would have been 83 years of age on 5th November was one of our oldest and best loved Falconers. Born in Szeged, Southern Hungary, Lorant was, as a schoolboy, interested in all wildlife, but especially Birds of Prey. It was, however, not until the Falconer, Col. Biddulph visited Hungary, that Lorant was able to develop, what was to become, his lifetime interest. He spent all his spare time with the Col. and his Falconers and very soon was accomplished at the sport. He went on to start the Hungarian Falconry Club, Magyar Solymasz Egysulet, in 1939.



Later he was to teach Falconry at the Budapest Zoo, where he was Curator of Birds and also formed a pest control service for the Ministry of Agriculture, which included using mounted Falconers against the Herons, which were taking fish from the rice fields. This was Lorant's most active hawking period. When the Hungarian uprising took place in 1956 Lorant left his beloved Hungary. He was, by this time, already well known internationally, having corresponded with falconers worldwide and attended the field meetings of many clubs. He travelled in Europe for a while before coming to South Wales and founding, with a few sporting friends, the Welsh Hawking Club. Lorant was a colourful figure and was dubbed 'the poor man's Peter Scott'.

He worked for some time as a taxidermist where he met his best assistant Falconer, his wife Nancy. His life was spent with Falcons and Falconers and he will be sadly missed, especially by members of the Welsh Hawking Club, who regarded him as a very dear friend.

We send our condolences to Nancy and members of the family.

35 YEARS WITH AN EAGLE

BY GERALD SUMMERS

IF today, someone asked me what he should do if offered a young Golden Eagle (all be it a highly unlikely possibility) I would give the same advice that Mr Punch is supposed to have given to those about to marry. (i.e. Don't). Once you are owned by an Eagle you become a slave - a bondsman, your life is no longer your own. I should know because it happened to me.

I shall never forget that sunny June morning in 1958. When I answered a knock on the door of my small house in Bermondsy to find an old friend, carrying a large wicker basket, standing on my doorstep I invited him inside and he heaved the basket onto the table. "I know you are interested in birds of prey and thought you might like to relieve me of this object" he said, as he opened the basket lid. There squatting on a thick layer of much soiled newspaper was a downy the size of a football with a wicked looking beak and an already serviceable pair of feet which even at that tender age could grip like a couple of gin traps. It appeared that this bloke, a keen ornithological photographer, had been on holiday in central Spain and in the bar of a local hostelry had enquired of a national park warden, if there were any eagles about, as he would like to photograph a pair at the nest. The warden said that he knew of a pair but that my friend had better get a move on as he (the warden) had orders to shoot the pair, which were supposed to be killing young Chamois. It was agreed that if the eyasses were taken the adults would be spared. The net result was that my friend arrived home with two hefty young eagles which he had no intention of keeping himself. However, he soon found a

home for the male "Lochinvar" (the first of several homes) Lochinvar did not live very long and was, apparently, a rather dicey character. I called my bundle of fun and fluff "Random" because that was what she had arrived at, and anyway, she has always had a rather wild and chaotic temperament and the name seems to suit her.

The news that a young Golden Eagle was living in SouthEast London soon spread and people began arriving in scores to see her (it has been much the same ever since). In those days there were far less restrictions as to what you could bring into London Parks (only swine, geese and apes being banned) so Random took her first hesitant flights in Southwark Park to the amazement of the populace.

Before long a T.V crew appeared and filmed her winging her way from a distant goal post to my well padded arm over the heads of her growing crowd of admirers. However, London is not the ideal habitat for a queen of the air so we sold up and moved to the south coast town of Emsworth near Chichester with its creeks and marshes, close to the South Downs, all splendid Eagle country.

It was while living in Emsworth that Random first proved her worth as a "guard dog". She used to spend the day in my small garden, on a running leash that enabled her to use as much space as possible and she slept in my, otherwise disused garage. (I did not possess a car) One night some local yobs (who should have done their homework better) broke into the garage in search of a non-existent vehicle. What they found instead was a very indignant eagle, furious at having her beauty sleep disturbed. I knew nothing of this until a neighbour woke me at dawn to say that



GERALD FLYING RANDOM OVER THE SOUTH DOWNS

Random was on the roof of the garage and that the door had been forced open. Having called her down and installed her on her perch in the garden I investigated the scene of the crime, finding a blood stained piece of what appeared to be a trouser leg. Nothing more was heard of the villains who I trust were suitably chastened.

A Welsh friend, an R.A.F. type stationed at near Emsworth invited Random over to chase hares on the air field (airfields are always infested with hares) and later on drove the pair of us down to his home near Llandovery in Carmarthenshire. The very first morning of our visit Random took off and sailed away down wind with us following as closely as we could. After a while we heard the mobbing sound of Magpies

and Jackdaws and soon found our fugitive perched on a low stone wall in the garden of a cottage a few miles from Llandovery. Being by nature both courteous and polite, I knocked on the cottage door and when the lady owner appeared, asked if I could go and collect an eagle from her garden. She looked at me in horror, gazing wildly round for my keeper, while explaining that eagles are not found in Wales. However, when she saw Random in all her glory her attitude changed, and she asked us (my friend had reappeared) in for coffee. The upshot was that we found we had much in common (apart from raptors) and a few months later we were married. That was nearly thirty years ago and we are, all three, still together which must prove something, tho' I don't know quite what.

LOST AT HACK

I wander alone
Thru' fields overgrown
Under racing, grey leaden skies
' Cross expanses of wheat stubble
Over piles of concrete rubble
Stray visions, flash 'cross my eyes
The wind roars blue steely
And I wander freely
Thru the last of a February day
In the dimming twilight
So soon to be night
Lapwings peewit their lost soulful way
For I'm deep in a dream
Where the thoughts are all clean
I'm sailing, in a sea so clear
My mind has become numb as I circle the sun
My consciousness, a bright burning sphere
While I'm tracking this hawk
There's no - one to talk
Nothing to distract my mind
I walk and amaze
At the dying suns' rays
A vision in the land of the blind
So close in the evergreen
Sits the spirit of my dream
Secreted in some dry nook
Pressed close to soft bark
In the ivy shadowed dark
Hacked Merlin where are you? I look and I look ...
Out there, somewhere near
I feel it so close
A Merlin is roosting serene
As I push through Bramble
On my planetary ramble
I realise, that it is but a dream
So real that I could reach out and touch it.

Graham Woods

A DAY ON THE MOOR

Walk and walk on Camster Moor
A land of sheep and trees
Hard walking to hill and vale
With heather up to your knees

The vastness of the land you fill
Surrounded by the sea
Then you look around again
A forest of Christmas trees

No sound do you hear
Nor song in the sky
But the coldness is there
Like the stones piled high

With the dog's working hard
No grouse to be seen
The falcon's getting restless
Our heart's lost its dream

Ros Jenkins

Falconry.

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BREEDING BIRDS OF PREY AND OWLS

By

JEMIMA PARRY-JONES

These days the breeding of diurnal birds of prey and owls has been pretty much cracked. In fact its nice to know that Britain leads the world in the number of species bred. However, we should not sit complacently congratulating ourselves and continuing to breed, without thought of the future.

Recently there was a programme done by that, so charming, investigative reporter Roger Cook, on the stealing and laundering of illegal Peregrines. Have no doubt that I heartily condemn anyone for being so utterly stupid to steal wild birds or eggs, particularly as we can breed them these days. However, there are a number of

things that should be considered as a by product of this programme and these may well affect those of us breeding birds of prey and owls.

I should state that I feel the way the information was collected for the programme was totally wrong. I find it odd that investigative journalists are allowed to get away with this sort of

thing when it is illegal for the police and law enforcing bodies. Encouraging people to steal birds by offering bribes is pretty low, particularly just to get material for a Television programme. It certainly does absolutely nothing for the wild population of the peregrines whatsoever. The programme has continued the myth that I hoped we were just beginning to dismiss, of peregrines being worth up to £15,000. That old apple will now keep going for another decade - again being totally detrimental not only to wild peregrines but to people who have and breed birds. The knock on effect of the programme is just starting to come to light - the League Against Cruel Sports is now printing reports and opinions on the programme and suggesting the public boycott of 'so called' bird of prey centres and public displays - this is just the start, they have to attack the more public side of falconry, as they will get more publicity and these are easier targets but private falconers and breeders will get their turn. Therefore it is time for all breeders of birds of prey and even more so, those of the common species of owls, to make sure that public opinion is not turned against them - and believe

me - it could happen. Some species of birds are being bred in pretty high numbers and as soon as that happens the offspring start to get into the wrong hands.

I would hope that anyone who breeds birds and sells them, or gives them away, checks first that the new owner has a reasonable amount of knowledge of how to care for the bird and a good standard of housing. It is not exactly difficult. By asking a few questions you can quickly find out if the prospective buyer knows anything or not and its very simple to ask them for a photograph of the housing they intend using. This is what we do and we find it works well.

Only if you are breeding birds of which there is an over abundant surplus will you have problems disposing of the young. In which case you should be questioning yourself very strongly as to whether or not you should continue breeding from that particular species. Some potential buyers may well get angry at being vetted before allowed one of your birds - so what! Do you really care, or is the welfare of the birds you have spent time and effort on more important, also the continuation of falconry and breeding. Your credibility will definitely be far greater



There are enough birds being bred in captivity to supply the demand

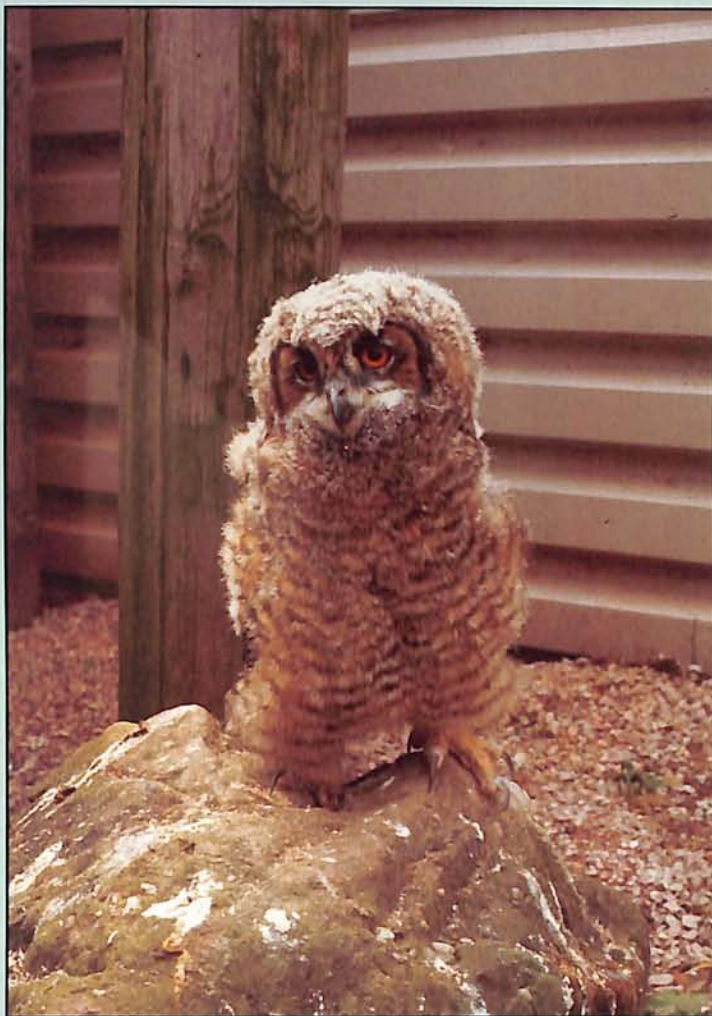
and as far as the public is concerned they would far rather see you using some discretion rather than selling birds to the first person who comes along.

Barn Owls and Kestrels seem to be suffering the worse excesses with European Eagle Owls. Some of the other more common eagle owls and possibly even Snowy Owls are coming up fast for being over produced. It is perfectly possible to buy some of these species from Bird Farms, you can even do it over the phone and have the bird Amtracked to you so there is no way the Bird Farm has any idea of the capabilities of those they are selling to. I have had many complaints from the general public about Barn Owls being sold in tiny cages in pet shops and what I hear can only be the tip of the Iceberg.

Some people will advocate that if they don't breed and sell the birds to the less informed then someone else will - that is a really good way to cover yourself and have an excuse for doing it. Does it work the same way with selling drugs, I ask myself. Its the 'someone will sell drugs whatever I do so I might as well do it' syndrome. It's a pathetic excuse and one I don't consider accepting that's for sure.

There is a very simple answer to this problem - don't breed from Barn Owls, Kestrels or any other species, that is over produced, for the wrong reasons. I would doubt that anyone in their right minds breeds from their cat on purpose, unless it is a pedigree or they have a special reason for doing so.

Yet there are thousands of unwanted kittens each year. The RSPCA I believe, quote figures of 1000 dogs per day put down, unwanted. What a



Make sure that the potential new owner of one of your birds knows how to look after it and has the correct housing. (Baby Mackinders Eagle Owl.)

dreadful thing it would be if that started to happen with birds of prey or owls. It would undoubtedly be kinder to some of the birds that I have seen brought to us after being removed from someone who has not

a clue how to care or house the bird.

The responsibility lies with people who breed birds of prey and owls not to produce too many birds, not to let them go to uninformed homes and definitely not to

dealers or pet shops and garden centres, Although it is not possible to get it right every time and occasionally you will find that you let someone, who sounded knowledgeable and who had good housing, have a bird and subsequently discovered it was a mistake. Nevertheless by doing all you can to ensure the right birds go to the right homes you, as the breeder, can be seen to be doing all you can to get it right. Not only will this attitude eventually mean that people who have birds will be more educated in their care, maintenance and housing, but also that we are seen to be trying to improve falconry, captive or domestic breeding and the lot of birds of prey in general.

At the moment the law does not do this. The Wildlife and Countryside Act which is under review at the moment, is there to stop wild birds being taken or killed illegally or disturbed in the wild. It does not protect wild birds in captivity. The Cruelty to Animals Act was written in 1911 and is so outdated it is unbelievable. For the time being the only remedy for improving that standards of bird of prey/owl keeping lies in the hands of those already do it.



Discretion must be used when breeding and selling your birds, not to over produce, as these can end up in the wrong hands.

(Kestrel)

HEN HARRIER

BY MIKE EVERETT



MALE HEN HARRIER.

PHOTO BY C.H.GOMERSALL

I remember a conversation with a Scottish falconer friend, many years ago now, in which we wondered about the oddest or the most unlikely birds ever flown after quarry. If I remember correctly, this all came after I told him about some American research which had involved shrikes launched after flying insects - not falconry, of course, but intriguing all the same. He reminded me of a photograph in our own magazine, *Birds*, showing a young man with a vulture on the fist, jesses and all, and we amused ourselves dreaming up a hunting scenario for those two..... Neither of us knew of anyone ever flying a harrier. To be honest, I have not looked into the matter in any detail, but I would be surprised if anyone ever has - seriously, that is. It is difficult to imagine a less suitable bird. Nevertheless, harriers are magnificent fliers and, it goes without saying,

very efficient hunters. In size and bulk, the Hen Harrier falls more or less between our other British species noticeably smaller and lighter than a Marsh Harrier and a touch larger and heavier-looking than a Montagu's Harrier. All three are similar in shape, with long, quite broad wings, long tails and long, slender legs. They also have rather owl-like faces, with quite pronounced facial discs concealing relatively large ears, clear indications that particularly acute hearing is important to them when hunting.

A hunting Hen Harrier is normally the very picture of patience and persistence. Moving quite slowly, at no great height, it quarters open ground systematically using the flap - and - glide technique common to many birds of prey and showing wonderful control and manoeuvrability, even in the strongest winds. In gliding

the wings are lifted in a shallow "V", the classic hallmark of the harriers. There is another side to Hen Harriers, though. I have seen them in determined aerial pursuit of both Skylarks flushed from the ground and Thrushes disturbed from low trees on a mountainside. I have also watched them hunting for finches and larks along winter sea - walls with all the dash of a Sparrowhawk and the same clever use of cover and dead ground. In all these circumstances I was impressed, above all else, by the harriers' speed. Anyone who doubts their wonderful agility on the wing should see a male Hen Harrier displaying high above his territory in spring. I always think the term "sky - dancing" is inappropriate (and undignified) when it is used to describe a Golden Eagle's display flight: it describes a Hen Harrier's performance perfectly.

Our Hen Harrier population is augmented in winter by immigrants from northern Europe. Many of us know the Hen Harrier best as a winter visitor to wetlands, heaths, coastal marshes and, quite often, farmland bordering all these habitats. They are above all birds of wide open landscapes, dispersing over considerable areas from their communal and often traditional roosts. Small mammals, especially voles and mice, normally make up the bulk of their prey, but a variety of small birds are hunted too.

As a British breeding bird, the Hen Harrier has a somewhat chequered history. Thanks largely to heavy persecution, it was virtually confined to last refuges in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides by 1900. There was little change until the 1930's, when Hen Harriers began to spread back into mainland Scotland helped by the increase of new forestry plantations which were both rich in vole prey and almost persecution - free. England and Wales were recolonised from the late 1960's and by the mid 1970's it was thought that there were about 500 breeding pairs in Britain (and perhaps 200 more in Ireland). Within a few years,



FEMALE HEN HARRIER. PHOTO BY C.H.GOMERSALL

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

though, a decline was noted in Ireland (probably largely habitat - related) and then, during the 1980's, numbers fell in Britain too, much more severely in some areas than others.

The British decline probably has several causes. Some of these relate to habitat change - the loss of heather moorland through conversion to improved grassland, and blanket afforestation of upland areas. Huge new forestry plantations may have helped Hen harriers enormously while the trees were young, but mature forests simply obliterate suitable harrier land. Another factor in the decline has certainly been persecution - which is rife in some areas, despite the fact that the Hen Harrier has been fully protected by law for almost 40 years. The plain fact is that Hen Harriers are killed because they nest on grouse - moors, where, inevitably, they take Red Grouse, especially chicks. Few grouse - shooting landowners and probably even fewer of their gamekeepers have a kind word to say about the Hen Harrier. To be fair, many of them go no further than grumbling, or suggesting that it is high time for the bird to be removed from the protected list. Some, though, resort to shooting adults and destroying nests and their contents. The RSPB report on illegal killing of birds of prey Death by Design and subsequent annual figures show that almost as many Hen Harriers have been killed in the last 14 years as Peregrines - a much more numerous species; only the far commoner Buzzard and Kestrel suffer more than these two. The report also showed that one third of all raptor nests

illegally destroyed were those of Hen Harriers. There is no excuse whatsoever for breaking the law in this way - but do the sportsmen have a case when they argue (as many do) for some form of legal control of Hen Harriers to protect their grouse? Research by the Game Conservancy suggests that where Red Grouse occur at low densities, their breeding success (and therefore the size of the autumn bag) is likely to be reduced by harrier predation. On well - managed moors with good densities of grouse, however, the evidence points to little impact - an acceptable level of predation, in fact.

Hen Harriers are comparatively rare birds and their inclusion in both the First Schedule of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and the UK "Red Data" list of threatened species underlines the fact that we have a special responsibility to protect them. The case against them as "vermin" is very shaky, to say the least. In those situations where they do seem to be causing some problems the answer, surely, is not to persecute them but to produce higher grouse numbers through better heather management. If that involves taking a fresh look at the economics of the management of heather moors for grouse - shooting, so much the better. It is high time that the sort of financial support provided for upland farming and forestry was available to grouse - moor managers too. A healthier future for heather moorland would help a whole range of important birds and not just the Red Grouse: one of them would be the Hen Harrier.



HEN HARRIER WITH LARGE YOUNG AT NEST
PHOTO BY DENNIS GREEN

RARE BREEDING BIRDS UNDER THE WEATHER

Rain, wind and snow wrecked hopes of record breeding for many rare birds this summer, reports the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Heavy rain across the UK affected Merlins and Red Kites while summer snowfalls affected Golden Eagles in the northern Scottish Highlands. However, in southern England Marsh Harriers did very well. Bad weather caused a number of nest failures among merlins in moorland areas of the UK. The only pair of English Golden Eagles fell foul of the weather and many pairs in the northern Scottish Highlands failed to rear young after summer snowfalls. Wet weather in Wales hampered both Red Kites and Hen Harriers. More than 100 pairs of Red Kites bred for the first time this century, but produced just 79 young. Red Kites, brought into England and Scotland as part of a reintroduction project, produced 14 and seven young respectively.



Torrential rain prevented 27 out of 37 pairs of Hen Harriers in Wales raising any young. However, the remaining 10 pairs produced 37 young. In Scotland the Hen Harrier suffered from heavy persecution with many nests and young deliberately destroyed.

Marsh Harriers, almost extinct by 1971, raised more than 100 young in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Further south, Montagu's Harriers also fared well with six pairs raising 18 young.

Graham Wynne, RSPB director of conservation, said: "Bad weather during the breeding season is unfortunate but nevertheless some of our rare breeding birds continue to make good progress. We are now beginning to see the results of successful partnerships between conservationists, farmers and landowners and hope that next year will bring more favourable conditions."

BREEDING RESULTS FOR RARE BREEDING BIRDS OF PREY IN THE UK WERE:

White-tailed eagle - Five young raised this year from a small population of reintroduced birds in the western islands of Scotland.

Merlin - About 600 pairs nesting in moorland areas of the UK

Training Gundogs For Falconry

By Guy Wallace

Part Ten

HEDGES AND HEDGEBASHING

Much as we might like it to be so, apart from grouse moors, hawking ground is seldom a vast tract of open country in which we can work a dog and fly a hawk from one horizon to another. Since The Enclosures Act the British countryside has, in the main, been split up into parcels of land divided by field boundaries.

OBSTACLES.

Depending on where you live in Britain your dog will come across different types of obstacles in the field - stockwire fences topped with barbed wire, stone walls or 'dykes', deep ditches or 'rheens', blackthorn hedges etc. etc. and the more of these that your dog is trained to cope with, the better it will be at its job. With pointers and setters "breaking fence" is a cardinal sin but in an everyday working situation a dog frequently has to do just that. To me the command OVER simply means "get to the other side of" whether over, under or through! Pups under, say, six months old should never jump anything as it jars joints and causes malformation of limbs. Most dogs in the field come to grief either over rickety

obstacles or when their owner panics as the dog approaches a fence and start 'flapping' and shouting "Steady" or "Be careful" and other 'commands' that the dog does not understand thus putting it off its stride and taking its concentration away. Start with a low version of a particular obstacle in a place where the dog cannot get round it and encourage it over with the command OVER. (An iron bedstead firmly fixed on its side is good practice for stockwire fences as the metal frame gives the dog confidence.) There is no reason why a fit dog should not jump barbed wire but a good idea is to lay your arm over the wire and teach your dog to jump over your arm. Once it has mastered the simple version keep practising over larger and larg-



Stockwire fencing can cause problems when getting your dog to flush

er obstacles until it is competent. Some dogs are particularly 'thick' about gates, not realising that the bars are closer together at ground level than higher up. If you have a 'tame gate' at home nail planks across the bottom bars. Otherwise keep persevering..... Never help a dog

over any obstacles that it could physically manage or it will soon become idle and expect to be lifted over.

HEDGE BASHING.

This is not really what pointing dogs are all about but if your ground has a number of thick hedges so beloved by game, it is folly to ignore them. Pointers are like those labradors that are used for hunting! The difference between a hunting Lab. (or pointing dog) and a spaniel is that generally the former will go into cover if it knows that there is something there whereas, a spaniel will go into cover on the off chance that there might be something there! This requires two completely different techniques. You put a spaniel in a hedge at one end and do not expect to see it until it appears at the other! With a pointer



There is no reason why a fit dog should not jump barbed wire. Encourage the dog with the command OVER.
Photo. D Wilson

the technique is to run it parallel with the hedge on the DOWNWIND side until it winds game and comes on point. On command it then flushes the game out on the opposite side. It works best with two astringers, the handler being on the downwind side. It can be done with only the handler flying but which ever side he is on (and it takes quite a bit of training to persuade the dog to hunt on the opposite side of you) he either cannot see the dog or cannot see the game! Unfortunately, many hedges have stockwire fence along one side so either the fence prevents the dog getting in to flush (which is great for dogs that will not hold point forever) or the game is 'pegged' against the netting on the far side.

(When I become a wealthy man all the stockwire fences on my estate will be



The advantages of using a pointer are you can get into position with your hawk before telling your dog to flush.
Photo. D Wilson

erected upside down with the large holes at the bottom!) With practice dogs get extremely effective at working hedges, if they hold sufficient game in the early stages to make the dog realise that hedges

actually hold game. All dogs have to learn from their own experience that game lives in cover of all types, rather than in the middle of a grass field (which is why good beaters' rides tend to make

dogs idle!).

The more training that you put into a dog and the more eventualities that you are both prepared for, the greater your confidence and the greater the chance of success.



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RAPTORS IN SENEGAL.

Text and Studies by Philip Snow

Senegal is a rather flat, but very interesting ex-French colonial country on the west coast of Africa, completely surrounding the narrow riverine community of Gambia. Whilst it cannot quite boast the huge variety of wildlife of other African countries like Kenya, it is nevertheless a great place for raptors, with up to 62 species just possible. Roughly speaking, the south west of the country largely consists of deeply indented mangrove watercourses; with the north and east far drier, segueing into the sahel and sudan deserts. My own visit was in March, 92; during the latter half of the dry season; to the Basse Casainance in the extreme south west. This is a very attractive and comparatively bird-rich area of lagoons, marsh and sirious mangrove waterways, interspersed with the traditional villages and their crops: Palms (dates, oil and wine), rice, millet, sorghum, maize and groundnuts (peanuts). Here, also is one of the countries few remaining tropical forests: the Basse Casainance National Park, and endless breezy beaches down to Cap Skirring and the border with Guinea Bissau. Although extensive logging of bird migration is carried out in the north, and many birdwatches visit the Gambia; little is known of the south west birds by 'first worlders'. Therefore my own minimal observations are heavily supplemented by the Morel's 'Les Oiseaux de Senegambie' and the Birds of Africa. Many of the following raptors may well be commoner in other parts of Africa and simply unrecorded here. Of the seven vultures, The WHITE HEADED VULTURE (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) is probably the rarest, distinguished by its white head and secondaries from The GRIFFON VULTURE (*Gyps fulvus*). This is a very uncommon western palearctic migrant like the smaller EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*); although a few are also rare residents. The large LAPPET FACED VULTURE (*Aegyptius tracheliotus*) is the third of the rare vultures, and found largely in the north. At only half the size, the HOODED VULTURE (*Neophron necrosyrtes monachus*) is usually the most commonly seen, and usually around human habitations, sometimes accompanied by WHITE BACKED VULTURES (*Gyps bengalensis africanus*), or RUPPELS GRIFFON VULTURES (*Gyps ruppellii*). These are both also fairly common and widespread in Senegal, their essential street cleaners!

The VULTURE FISH EAGLE or PALM NUT VULTURE (*Gypohierax angloensis*) is an unsatisfactorily named oddity; only locally common, but not shy; whose range coincides with that of the oil and raffia palms on whose fruits it largely feeds. It does, however, also eat fish, crabs and carrion, and its distinctive black and white plumage and talon grappling display shows a much closer affinity with the world's other fish eagles than vultures. No african visit is complete without seeing AFRICAN FISH or RIVER EAGLES (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) perched prominently above the many fresh or marine water habitats. They are also not shy, with a distinctive yodelling call; plunge diving for fish, robbing other birds of theirs, or occasionally taking birds like herons or flamingos. One swooped right past our pirogue (elegant local boat) to rob a Caspian Fern of a large fish, and river eagles are fairly widespread throughout Africa. The OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) is supposedly only a rare and sporadic western palearctic migrant, suspected of breeding along West Africa's many large waterways and fish - rich coast; but most visiting bird-watchers to coastal Senegal and Gambia seem to see them.

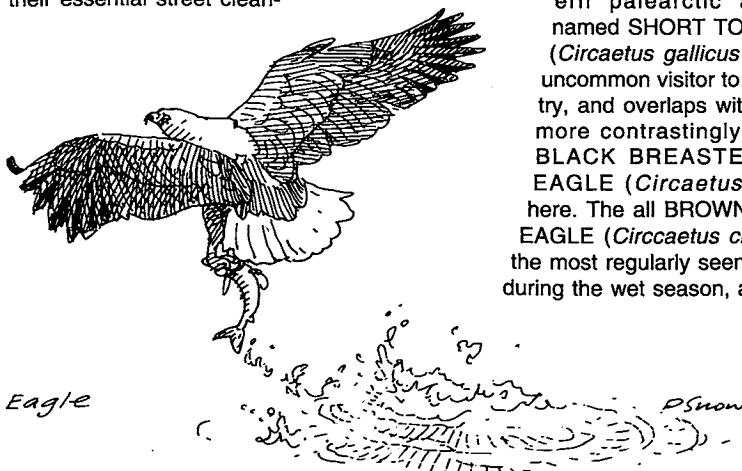
Three of the four migrant western palearctic harriers are recorded here, with MARSH HARRIERS (*Circus aeruginosus*) the most abundant. They favour rice paddies, as do MONTAGU'S HARRIERS (*Circus pygargus*), but the marginally more elegant PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) prefers the drier north and east. The HEN or NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) is only accidental, with just one record. By contrast, the HARRIER HAWK or GYMNOGENE (*Polyboroides radiatus*) is widespread and common, displaying rather different conformation of broad wings, black and white zoned tailed, yellow face and those famous long double jointed yellow legs, so useful for extracting prey from tree holes and rock crevices.

Even more distinctive, the colourful and aptly named 'tumbler' or BATELEUR EAGLE (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) is a widespread but declining resident of the drier savannah of the north and east. Its acrobatic canting flight and tailless silhouette are fairly unmistakable, more than can be said about the confusing snake eagles! Our familiar western palearctic and sillily named SHORT TOED EAGLE (*Circaetus gallicus*) is an not uncommon visitor to open country, and overlaps with the much more contrastingly plumaged BLACK BREASTED SNAKE EAGLE (*Circaetus gallicus*) here. The all BROWN HARRIER EAGLE (*Circaetus cinereus*) is the most regularly seen, especially during the wet season, and not dis-

similar to the rarer BEAUDOINS HARRIER EAGLE (*Circaetus beaudouini*). The occasional presence of the partial migratory BANDED HARRIER EAGLE (*Circaetus cinerascens*) further muddies the waters and as for juveniles and the random interbreeding of the other three...!

Moving on to the sparrow and goshawks, we find a possible eight to seek out, so lets start with a comparatively easy one. The BLACK or GREAT SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) has been recorded only in the Basse Casainance in Senegal, and this large and striking black and white accipiter shares a similar arboreal habitat and rare resident status with the WEST AFRICAN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter toussenellii macrocelides*), and possible confusion of juveniles. SHIKRAS (*Accipiter badius*) are usually the most commonly seen and widespread small hawk, with a dashing flight and general similarity to our own EUROPEAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*), also recorded here once. A rare allied species is the OVAMPO SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter ovampensis*) also with a single sighting here, again in the southern woodlands. The Ovampo could possibly be confused with the following two 'goshawks' as they all share certain handsome plumage details: grey head and upperparts, barred below, with bright red cere, eye-ring and long red legs. The DARK CHANTING GOSHAWK (*Melierax metabates*) is a fairly common, widespread and noticeable savannah and scrub resident, whilst the smaller GABAR GOSHAWK (*Melierax garbar*) is less so, showing a white rump and more northerly bias. The WEST AFRICAN LITTLE or RED THIGHED SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter erythropus*) is another uncommon Senegal hawk with a southerly bias, but tiny, and with striking black, white and rose plumage.

Five buzzards are represented here, but the lovely LIZARD BUZZARD (*Kaupifalco mongrmmicus*) shares more plumage characteristics with the forementioned 'goshawks' than it does with buteos. Its stockier upright stance, black throat streak and preference for dropping onto ground prey from tree perches, however, in cultivated areas largely marks it out from these. Patial migratory GRASSHOPPER BUZZARDS (*Butastur rufipennis*) are fairly small, slim and rufous hawks of drier areas, often attracted by bush fires. These rather harrier like birds are regular and largely common on Senegal. They contrast well with the large LONG LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo rufinus*), a rare western palearctic migrant; itself to be distinguished from the probably uncommon RED NECKED or RED TAILED BUZZARD (*Buteo auguralis*) by the latters red throat and breast. The French wisely called the COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) the 'Buse variable' and fortunately it is only occasionally seen here in its reddish 'STEEPE BUZZARD' (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) phase. Finally, the migrant western palearctic HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis aviporus*) has been sighted about three times in recent years.

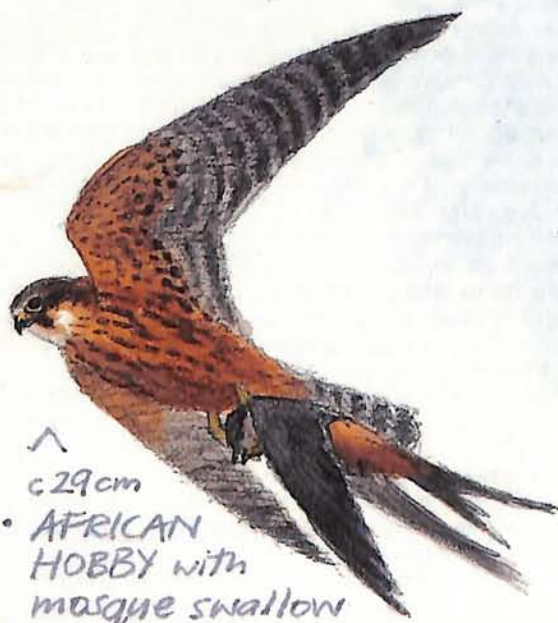


Fish Eagle

Continued overleaf



>
• AFRICAN
• SWALLOW TAILED
KITES adults
c 37cm



^
c 29cm
• AFRICAN
HOBBY with
masque swallow

• Swallow tailed
Bee-eater
>



^ adults
• LIZARD BUZZARD c 36 cm
• GABAR GOSHAWK c 32 cm ^

All birds not to scale



RAPTORS IN SENEGAL

Part 2

• Imm. TAWNY EAGLE
c 69 cm



^ HOODED VULTURE c 70cm
• LONG CRESTED EAGLE c 56 cm >
• SHIKRA c 29cm
v



A line of BLACK KITES drift over Kingfisher rich mangrove creeks or 'belongs'

adult
• AFRICAN FISH EAGLE c 68cm © P. Snow



THE RIDE

By Bob Haddon

On the morning of Monday 24th May I left my home in south west Scotland at 0715 hrs to cycle through Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England with the aim of raising £6,000 for Cancer Research Campaign. The idea was prompted by the untimely deaths of two old friends, artists and falconers John Haywood and Ken Wood. I was to do the easy bit and Bob Stanley had the difficult task of following up driving a Bedford caravanette kindly loaned to us by Mr and Mrs Jim Adair of Kirkcowan.

Our plan was that Bob would give me half an hour start and then follow at a steady pace, overtake me for a few miles and wait for me either to collapse or give him the thumbs up as I biked past. Initially we were both very surprised how many miles I covered before he caught up. In fact after an hour of riding and with over 20 miles under my wheels, I began to worry that Bob had had a mishap. I needn't have worried; after five minutes wait the Bedford came sedately round the corner and I resumed my pedalling.

We arrived at Stranraer with time to spare before checking in at the Hoverspeed Seacat office where complimentary tickets awaited us.

I had travelled on Seacat before on a day trip to Belfast and I was looking forward to the trip. Bob, I knew, would enjoy the crossing but I also knew that both he and his wife Lynne were somewhat apprehensive about time spent in a city too often associated with violence.

A few minutes out from Stranraer the captain's voice came over the P.A. and to our surprise it was to announce that we were travelling on board, why we were doing it and wishing us well. Bob and I looked at each other but were too choked to speak.

Apart from the high speed of the twin hulled Seacat, another advantage is that it goes right into the heart of Belfast at the head of Belfast Lough. The city was until recently one of the major ship builders of the world and the ferry takes you right through the heart of the yards which once were a hustle and bustle and now stand almost silent.

Seacat had just slowed ready to berth some mile or so ahead and we were just passing the derelict wharf of one of the most famous names in ship building Harland and Wolf when a tiercel peregrine flew by at eye level and landed on a ledge on the side of the building and some forty feet above the water. Other passengers looked on me as though I was crazy when I shouted, "Bob a tiercel peregrine carrying ! "Hardly had the words left my mouth before the female carrying a pigeon took

the same flight path and landed by her mate. Obviously they had young but we didn't see them due to the large amount of vegetation growing on the ledge.

What a start to our journey.

There are a number of roads going south out of Belfast and to avoid losing contact so early in our trip I decided to ride in the Bedford until clear of the city.

I had cycled ten miles or so on the A1 to Newry when an adult male sparrowhawk clutching a chaffinch flew across the road and missed my front wheel by inches. It was so close that I could see the bloom on his feathers and the dark pupil of his orange eye. A lovely sight (unless you are a chaffinch).

We crossed the two borders of the customs post and the army checkpoint without seeing anyone. However no doubt they saw us and in retrospect we may have been pushing our luck parking fifty yards or so from the border just to plan the rest of the day, fill my drinking bottle and eat a banana.

By the time we reached Dundalk the weather had changed and the rain got heavier by the minute. Somehow I lost Bob in Dundalk and as I was travelling light and carrying no map, I decided to call in at a house and ask the way, a gentleman was making his way from a house towards a Transit van parked at the gate. He obviously was a local and the man to ask. As we closed, he spoke first, "Excuse me sir, can you be putting me on the road to Ardee?" "This," I explained, "was just the question I was about to ask you!" Together my lost traveller friend and I eventually found someone to direct us to Ardee. Before we left Dundalk we passed each other a number of times, a thumb up or a pip on the horn to communicate that we were on the right road. This "repartee" developed until we came to the junction with the N52 where with a long blast on the horn and a smile, he disappeared in a cloud of diesel smoke leaving me with two observations. First how friendly complete strangers can be and how efficient is a cycle crossing a town or city in busy traffic. A mile or two out of town Bob and I were reunited. The rain had worsened, and I was soaked but had already cycled over 70 miles so I climbed into the van and called it a day.

Bob had been in contact, over the last few weeks, with Liam O'Broin of the Irish Hawking Club and we had decided to accept his kind invitation to stay with him and his wife Margaret on our first night in Ireland. We were wined by Liam and dined by Margaret, listened to stories of

hawking in Ireland and generally had a most pleasant evening in charming and hospitable company. The following morning Margaret set off early to her teaching job leaving Liam to provide us with a "good Irish breakfast". Upon placing the feast before us Liam said, "enjoy your Irish breakfast" and added with a twinkle in his eye "of course it's just the same as an English one but it's cooked by an Irishman!"

Not wishing to cheat on my cycle ride, we said our farewells and drove back to where I had boarded the caravanette the previous evening and set off, pedalling along a road which, by now, seemed strangely familiar.

The journey to Dublin was uneventful and I met Bob at the city outskirts where I boarded for the trip across Dublin and the few miles to the Stenna Sealink terminal at Dun Laoghaire.

Both my knees were playing up by now, a combination of getting cold and wet the day before and "overdoing" it on a hill a few miles north of the border. The hill, I was later told, was nearer ten miles long than five and as I had earlier vowed to ride every hill and not walk, I had stuck at it and was now paying the price.

I called in at a chemist's just outside Dublin to purchase a pair of elasticated knee bandages but due to the price of £5.60 each and the reluctance of the salesgirl to take English currency, I came away without them.

After liberal applications of Ellimarcos embrocation my knees felt better and the vapour also cleared Bob's sinuses.

The sky darkened and the wind strengthened as we passed time at the ferry terminal watching crew after crew from the yacht club capsized, take a ducking, and right their craft, only to go over again. It was difficult to believe that they were doing this for pleasure.

Like many others, Sealink had been very generous and gave us free passage to Holyhead. We left Ireland at 2100 hrs, with some trepidation as the wind was almost gale force by this time. Our fears were without foundation however as due to the direction of the wind and the fact that the vessel was fitted with stabilisers, we had a pleasant uneventful crossing. We were lucky, as the next two crossings were unable to berth due to the weather conditions.

Arriving at Holyhead at 0030 hrs we drove a few miles, found a quiet lane and parked in a farm gateway. Sleep was not easy due to the violent shaking of the van which Bob Stanley insisted was due to the gales.

The weather did not improve the following day and my knees were still giving cause for concern. We had plenty of time to arrive at Northampton on the Sunday so we decided to make Wednesday May 26th a rest day.

The opportunity to visit Robin Crossley who farms near Llanrwst and had been our host for a number of weekend field meetings, was too good to miss. I knew that

barring or indeed, in spite of any agricultural crisis, we would receive a warm welcome and so it proved to be. Robin gave us the run of the house as usual and just as important to me at the time, two knee bandages. Being a skier and ex rugby player he has collected a considerable quantity of medical bits and bobs over the years. That evening Robin insisted on taking us out for a meal. He and his friend Martin even went to the trouble of arranging a surprise reunion with Jim Wash, another old falconry friend who lives nearby. Needless to say we were somewhat late in leaving the hostelry.

In retrospect I was doing exactly the opposite to my original plan which was to have early nights, little, if any, alcohol and eat nothing but pasta and bananas. Not according to plan but very, very enjoyable. The following morning Robin and his dairyman saw us off. Robin gave us a very generous donation from his mother and himself, and his dairyman presented us with a margarine container in which he put his small change for some months and which, when counted later, amounted to over £11.

Anyone who knows the A5 between Capel Curig and Corwen will know that it is extremely narrow winding and dangerous. I intended to cycle almost every mile of the journey but this stretch was absurd and it was a very relieved Bob Stanley when I met him at the next appointed stop and said 'That's it, it's not worth this kind of risk'. I rode in the caravanette for about twenty miles, content that I would make up the mileage with some detour cycling later on and that I would be all in one piece to tell the tale.

In fact the chance came sooner than I had expected as after a "tour conference" we decided to pay a surprise visit to Ben and Alison Long at Ruthin. The distance to their home and back to the A5 would just about equal the miles I had ridden in the Bedford.

Yet again we were made welcome and fed. We were then dragged unwillingly to the local where we were held against our will until almost midnight, when Ben became increasingly uneasy lest he turn into a handsome prince.

The best was yet to come. Anyone who stayed overnight at any of the Game or Country Fairs attended by Ben will know that he is a talented player of the Irish pipes and the tin whistle. A fact appreciated to varying degrees; depending on your musical inclinations and the time of night (or morning). What I did not know was that Alison plays a mean piano. She played soft mellow music for half an hour or so until she was joined by Ben on the whistle and they played almost non stop 'til after 2 am. I know I speak for both Bob Stanley

as well as myself when I say "that evening alone was worth the journey".

Friday saw an improvement in the weather, my knees had eased considerably and I was keen to get cycling again.

There was a lot of holiday traffic on the road but due to wider carriageways and the occasional cycle lane, the rest of the journey was smooth and uneventful. However there was one very emotional moment when I was riding along in a semi-trance and suddenly a hundred yards away I saw a sign "Welcome to England". I'd done it! With a lump in my throat I crossed the border punching the air with both hands (an act I had been perfecting for weeks for such an occasion) and cheered and shouted "I've done it". I got a lot of strange looks from passing motorists. Saturday I was able to pick up quite a few more "lost" miles and it was with a lovely feeling of satisfaction that I went to sleep at the home of Bob and Lynne Stanley that evening.

The journey from Coventry to Althorp Hall is only 30 miles but due to the appalling

humour and Bob and I had put all the rain down to the pair of them washing out their brushes or worse and so I felt it only fair as I picked myself from the nettles to look skywards and say out loud "thanks both!" I arrived at The Falconers Fair to be greeted by my very old friend Bryan Patterson who together with Ron Morris the show organiser has made it the first event of its kind and very successful.

Due to Bryan's articulation on the P.A. over the two days a sum of over £320 was collected by representatives of Raptor Rescue. I was also presented with a beautifully inscribed tankard, for which I am most grateful and which I will cherish. Has it been worth the effort? Well, from my point of view it wasn't too much effort anyway as it was something I wanted to do and although I rode in the caravanette through Belfast, Dublin and dangerous sections of the A5 I still clocked up 315 miles and with that I am happy.

Bob Stanley and Mandy Nutt have done all the hard work of writing to different organisations and falconry orientated groups

throughout the British Isles and I know Bob has lost a lot of sleep, if not weight, in the process.

The initial aim was to raise £6,000 for research into cancer, that cruel disease that took John and Ken from us much too soon. It was also an opportunity for all the bird of prey and raptor orientated organisations to pull together and show a united front. It was also a rare opportunity to give falconers a good press instead of the usual adverse publicity of court cases and innuendo.

However despite sending out over 1,000 forms, despite a donation of £400 from one couple

and £100 from another (neither of whom knew John or Ken personally); despite a number of forms raising £50 - £100 in 50p, £1 and £5 donations, the total at the time of writing is around £2,521.

I will say no more, especially as I know that I could have and should have raised more. However if you have relegated your sponsorship form to the waste bin and are hopefully now feeling somewhat guilty, it is not too late. If 100 people ask 20 of their friends, relations, workmates for 50p even; that will raise another £1,000. It really is that easy. Of course those of you who knew John Haywood and Ken Wood can make an extra special effort.

Money is still coming in and hopefully will continue to come in for some time, it is not too late.

I am sure it would give us all great pride and pleasure to see a substantial amount given to the Cancer Research Campaign on behalf of the Falconry and Raptor organisations of Great Britain in the memory of two falconers, artists and friends.



3rd day Nr Abergele, N Wales. Receiving donation from Gareth Hughes, dairyman to the watching Robin Crossley.

weather on Sunday May 30 I allowed myself plenty of time and give us a "buffer" to arrive at the Falconers Fair during one of Bryan Patterson's flying displays. Bob and I lost each other in Rugby and I added a few more unintended road miles to my total.

Prior to that I had the only real near miss of the whole journey. I was leaving Binley Woods, the rain was straight into my face driven by a very strong east wind and making progress difficult so when I hit a downhill stretch it was a case of head down and pedal as fast as I could. All was going well until a sixth sense caused me to lift my head and I saw the large black and white sign denoting a very sharp left hand bend. Now cycle brakes in the wet are as effective as trying to extinguish a petrol fire with a cup of tea and I knew that I had no chance of stopping or to take the corner at speed in the wet. Luckily no cars were coming so I went straight across the road and finished in the ditch. I say "luckily"; however:- John Haywood and Ken Wood had a great (sometimes sick) sense of

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JED

By Rod Hughes

'I thought readers may be interested in an incident that occurred whilst flying my 2nd year male Redtail 'Jed'. I picked him up after the moult and was flying him in his "new " adult plumage at 2lb. He was going great and had made about 15 kills in six weeks.

One day while ferreting on a very steep hill, he was carried by the increasing wind, over the brow and out of sight. By the time my friend and I reached the top (a good ten minutes), there was no sign of him. We searched for the remainder of the day in worsening conditions but to no avail. Next day refreshed, raring to go and complete with search party we continued the search, but had no luck. I continued on my own for another few days and told all the neighbouring farmers. I also put ads in papers and had the local radio inform the listeners of my loss. I received a good response from the public but it all turned out to be kestrels, buzzards etc, and I began to come to terms with the fact I wouldn't see him again.

About three weeks later my 'new' eyass female Redtail arrived, a beautiful bird weighing well over 3lbs. She was a formidable warrior with a crushing grip. After a week her training was going well. Then one evening the phone rang! A farmer at the opposite side of the hill had heard bells after disturbing a bird in the trees. My hopes were raised, but I didn't expect too much after all the previous false alarms and disappointments.

Early next morning my brother and I were crossing a field at the rear of the farmer's house when suddenly, I heard a tinkle of bells. We turned round, and there he was..... flying past about fifty yards away. My heart soared, I was overjoyed and could hardly believe my eyes. In my head I could visualize us shortly returning home with 'Jed' on my fist.

Unfortunately he had other ideas. He wouldn't come for food or respond to my lure or whistle and I couldn't get within fifty yards of him. The fir trees were too high and dense to catch him while roosting. After a couple of unsuccessful days with a bow - net I managed to borrow three crow traps from a helpful gamekeeper. I carefully placed them about 400 yds apart

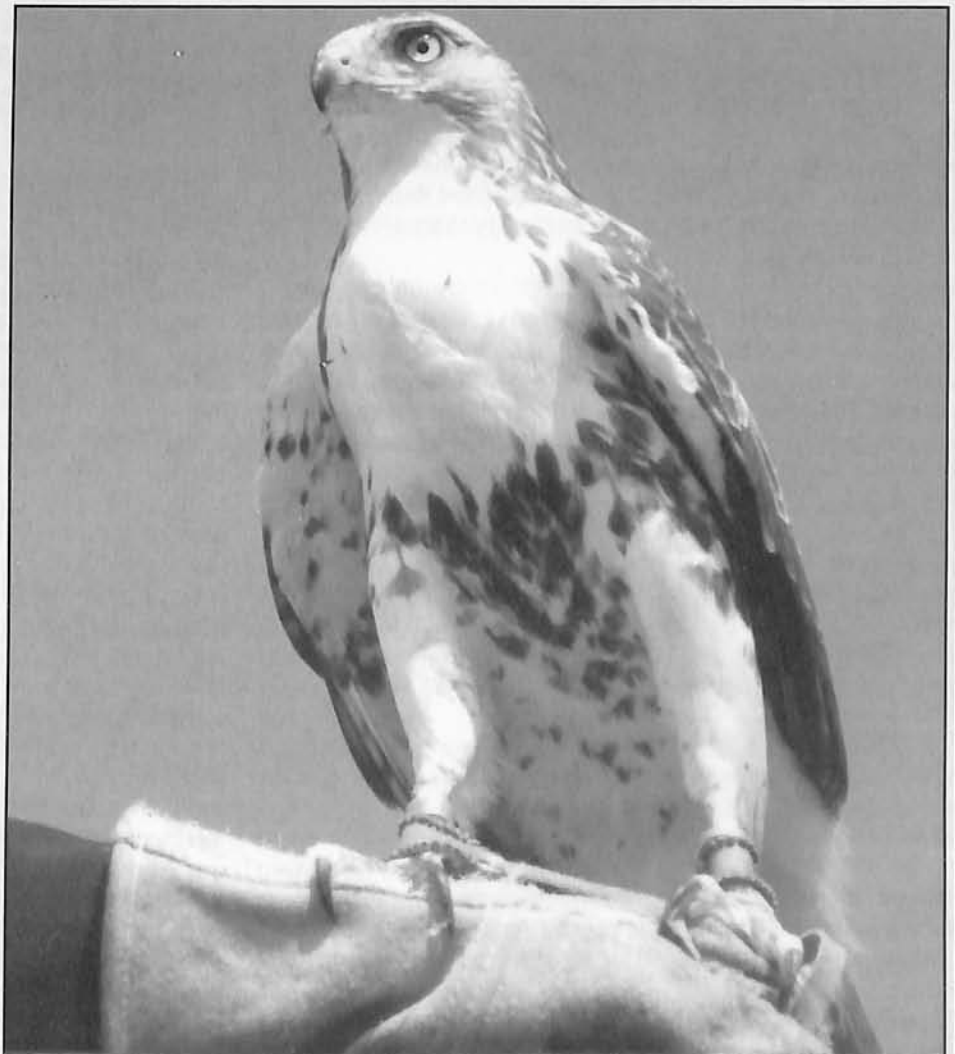
and baited them each with a dead rabbit. The traps had been out for two days and I checked them as usual, repositioning the dead rabbit in the last trap trying to make it look more appetising. Occasionally I had spotted 'Jed' soaring round the hill hunting or being harrassed by rooks so I set off after him with my binoculars hoping to catch a glimpse of him. There was no sign of him and I desperately hoped he was still in the area. It had taken a few hours to go round the hill and I realised I was back where I started, in fact I could just see the last trap hidden amongst the gorse bushes 100 yds away. Suddenly I saw a movement in the trap I quickly raised the binoculars up to my eyes.....YAHOO! I yelled, I couldn't believe it, there he was pacing back and forth. I raced down the hill to the trap and there he was still complete with bells and flying jesses, and cowering nervously in the corner hoping I hadn't seen him. He looked

in good condition and I reached in and wrapped his jesses around my fingers a few times before carefully removing him and wrapping him in my jacket to exchange his jesses for mews jesses, swivel and leash. I put his flying jesses (which smelt very strongly of stoats) into my pocket and marched back to the car with 'Jed' on my fist, I was the happiest man in the world.

The next day I put him on the scales and he weighed 2lb 2oz so he'd obviously been doing alright for himself, and that same morning he was flying 25 yds to me on a creance.

It was a difficult decision but I sold the female Redtail. And five days later 'Jed' and I were back hunting up the same hill.... this time with a transmitter on his tail.

Since then we've had many successful hunting days with 95 kills to his credit this season. There's no doubt-ing he learned a few tricks in his five weeks of freedom.



Jed in his immature plumage, weighing approx 2lb.

ANGLING FOR AN 'AWK

**The story of a lost redtail, and
vampires fishing in an urban
cemetery.**

By a Hawking Widow

On Saturday a couple of weeks ago, I decided that a trip to the supermarket was required. The fridge was bare as usual. Talking of which, have any of you other hawking widows noticed your frozen meat supply diminish for no explicable reason, or that your microwave switches itself on occasionally and aside from a strange 'eggy' smell there's no trace of what's been cooked?

Now let's get back to the point in question; on returning from the trip, I emptied my mute-speckled car boot and refilled the fridge. I thought that my husband had gone for a well-earned snooze after a strenuous afternoon at Birmingham Public Library. But after hunting around for him and trying to lure him downstairs from his slumber with a cup of tea, I saw a brief note on the floor. 'BUZZARD FLOWN AWAY, LAST SEEN GOING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CEMETERY, YET MORE GOOD LUCK! xx MIKE'

My heart sank. Business has been tough since January, the recession biting fiercely. Losing his pride and joy would not help Mike feel any better. Our male Redtail, "Mac", was in the middle of his moult and not particularly used to being free. Mike and his bird are soul-mates (well Mike likes to think so!)

The least I could do would be to make a concerted effort to help find it. I rushed out to our pocket-sized back garden and dusted down my eighteen year old bike.

By the way, we live 5 miles south of Birmingham in a small terrace with a mews 'shed' (That gets bigger every year) and an ever decreasing rear garden. This backs onto allotments, a canal and then a cemetery with its own resident sparrowhawks and a million crows and magpies that mob like there's no tomorrow!

Wearing my short pink lycra mini and an equally short cropped top and a large sloppy jumper I jumped on my bike and raced along the pavement (not exactly your typical

hawking outfit). I arrived at the entrance to the canal tow path and cycled down it towards the graveyard, when suddenly to my amazement I heard bells. I looked up to see Mac (the bird) sitting in a large tree. I threw my bike onto the ground and yelled at one of my neighbours who just happened to be taking a Saturday afternoon stroll with his dog. He kindly agreed to go and find Mike, I meanwhile, took off



@!!*O='n Bird

my jumper and wrapped it around my arm (I hadn't had the foresight to take a spare glove) and then proceeded to try and lure the little toad down with fictitious chick-like fingers and some very obscene names. He was not interested. (Obviously fed-up). Mike finally arrived looking very proud of me. He then tried his own tricks but all to no avail.

I then foresaw a long night ahead. Bang went the quiet evening in with some friends and a good bottle.

I left Mike watching the bird and returned home to make some sandwiches and tell our guests that we would eat in the cemetery (They're VERY understanding friends). I returned about an hour later to find Mike had torn his trousers and a happy free bird, sitting in the tallest tree in the cemetery.

Mike ate his sandwiches and my friend and I waited while he went off to scrounge some ladders.

I won't bore you with details; Mike arrived home late after a harrowing evening, humping a heavy set of ladders around the graveyard as the bird decided where to roost. The classic theory is that the bird won't fly off once it has settled. But our Redtail "Mac" hadn't read the right books, and would fly to another tree just as Mike had got the ladders in position and was clambering up to try and recover him. So, having discovered that hawks can see just as well as owls in the dark, Mike had given up and returned home birdless and having to rethink his strategy.

At 4.00am the next morning Mike arose (exceptionally unusual as I can never get him up normally). He had an idea

that if he could get near the bird while it was fairly sluggish in the early hours it might just be sufficiently hungry to come to his fist. During the hunting season this might have worked, but in the middle of the moult, and at FAT weight, not a chance. The bird had flown off to another tall tree at the first sight of Mike. (understandable as my husband never looks his best in the morning!).

He returned hawkless and down-in-the-mouth. All day Sunday he went to and from the cemetery keeping an eye on the bird to make sure it didn't leave the area. In between times he made various lures and gadgets. By Sunday night I had given up hope and felt very sad for Mike. Even though the bird had not moved, only to higher branches, it seemed to have decided to stay liberated.

Monday morning Mike arose again at 4.00am and went off in vain, I thought, for his hawk. I got up at six as I start early for work. I looked out of the window and there I saw my smelly car pull up. Mike got out with a fishing rod in one hand and lo and behold Mac in the other.

How had he got him back? Apparently one of the gadgets he'd made had been a small nylon noose on the end of a fishing rod. The bird had flown to a lower branch near dawn and with the noose Mike had managed to attach and tighten the nylon around the birds permanent field jesses. With no help from the passer-by who sped off when asked for help, Mike managed to pull the bird down from his perch and grab the jesses while the bird was still wondering what had happened. We were lucky. With the bird safely back in the mews we had a good laugh about the whole episode. Especially when the local drunk, seeing Mike half-way up a tree, our waxed coat billowing in the wind behind him, had hurried off in the direction of the local constabulary. Would they have believed his tale of vampires in the cemetery?

On the Sunday, one of the local council workers pointed out to Mike that it is actually illegal to be in a graveyard after dark. A law which goes back to the days of the grave diggers.

So, if you end up in this situation, and don't want to be had up for grave robbing, or mistaken for a vampire, carry a pair of ladders and let the nearby householders know what you're up to. And don't be surprised if passers-by ignore your pleas for help when all they can see is an unkempt soul wielding a fishing rod into thin air (they won't hang around to see the hawk you've got on the other end).

Yours A Hawking widow (but a little more understanding).



"IT WAS A BIG BAT IN A TREE OFFICER"



"ER, NOW WHAT DO I DO?"

Definitions

mews - Bird's shed and husband's den

moult- Annual 5 month holiday for a hawk when it changes feathers - can make the lawn look like you've burst a pillow case on it.

FAT weight - The top weight a bird attains, it has to eat better than the rest of your family as your husband doesn't want it growing any funny shaped feathers due to an incorrect diet.

Conclusions;

A. Birds of prey will still fly at night and not sit quietly like pheasants, as many books suggest.

B. Only an extremely well-manned hawk is likely to tolerate the weight of a ladder and the swaying of the tree it is in as you climb up.

C. There is a possibility that a bird when disturbed in the depths of the night will only fly to the nearest VISIBLE branch and in summer these tend to be those larger branches at the base of the tree (and nearer the ground) as the rest of the tree is just a wall of leaves.

D. Persistence will win through in the end.

E. The fishing rod and noose works best as the bird only sees a small ring coming towards it from below. A sideways approach or use of a net would be more likely to spook it.

F. Make sure your mews door is firmly shut when weighing hawks and not liable to suddenly blow open.

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB. INTERNATIONAL

In 1968, Ridley MacPhail visited Austria and Germany for Falconry Field meetings and was so impressed that he and some members of the British Falconers Club council decided to do the same here. So in 1969 the B.F.C. held their first International Field Meeting at woodhall Spa, Lincs and have done so every four years, now with the help of Ridley's widow Sheila MacPhail.

This Years attendance figures were the largest ever, with 200 people and over 100 birds, including 40 Goshawks, 20 Harris Hawks, 26 Redtails, 21 Peregrines, 5 Gyrs, 2 Sakers, 2 prairies and 4

hybrids.

An invitation was extended to us, which we accepted, although we fully expected at one stage to be told it had been rained off but by the Friday the temperature had dropped and the sun came out.

When we arrived we had a choice of 16 different venues, on land which is organised by Brian Simpson.

We decided to go out with the peregrines, as the opportunity to go out lowland gamehawking does not arise very often.

We left at 11.30 and picked up our gamekeeper/guide for the day and off we went.

In the second field we came to a covey of partridge were spotted, there was a lot of humming and haing, until finally Marc Tucker volunteered to fly his tiercel peregrine. He took P.J. out into the middle of

the field next to the one holding the quarry. He put him up and P.J. got up to a good height, approx 600 feet. Marc walked his bird into position. When the scene was set two lads in the party ran in and flushed the partridge. We all watched P.J., none of us breathing and down he came, the partridge flew up over a hedge, making them perfectly positioned for what was a perfect strike and a brilliant start to the day.

The next flight was made by Steve Burton's peregrine falcon, once again in fine style. Upon talking to him we discovered that, although she had taken many grouse, this was her first Partridge and indeed her first attempt at this type of hawking. After this we moved onto a field with game cover. We were hoping it held some pheasant. The first peregrine put up didn't seem interested as there was too

much check and she was brought down to the lure.

Then Darren Chadwick flew Enya, a peregrine falcon, weighing 1lb.13.5oz, again she gained a good height and was served with a fine hen pheasant. Enya struck it, threw up and made in for her reward.

Steve Burton, again, put up his female, as we were sure there were more pheasant in the cover. Up she went, seeming, at first, to range out too far, then back she came waiting on, we were frantically searching for that elusive quarry putting one up only when we, and she, knew it



Steve Burton's female peregrine.



Above: Marc Tucker, with his tiercel peregrine P.J.



Andrew Knowles-Brown with his male Golden Eagle Gorby, who caught 2 hares & a rabbit on the Friday.



Darren Chadwick's peregrine falcon, Enya, on a hen pheasant.

FIELD MEETING 1993

was an impossible flight, then, all of a sudden, all set to give up and call her down, it happened, she was in position, the pheasant broke cover, there she goes, a perfect mid-air bind, never losing the pheasant for a second. With the end of the day drawing near and the light fading, a covey of partridge was spotted and Marc Tucker decided to put P.J. up for a final flight, he cast him off and when P.J. had reached his

pitch Marc headed out to flush, the partridge, almost demolishing a stone wall in the process, P.J. once again attained a tremendous height, Marc flushed, P.J. stooped, and what a sight. He missed but it was worth it just to see this magnificent little bird do what nature designed him for. A perfect end to a perfect day.

Thanks must go to all, but especially Nicholas Kester who arranged our day.



Steve Burton's peregrine falcon on a cock pheasant.

STOLEN BIRDS

Do you know who this glove belongs to?

It was dropped by thieves who stole a Harris Hawk and a Common Buzzard from the Lakeland Falconry Centre on the 7th August 1993.

If you can help please telephone; 0734-536257 or 0734-321243(answerphone) or D.C.Lee Johnson, Penrith. 07683-51333.

All calls will be treated in the strictest confidence.



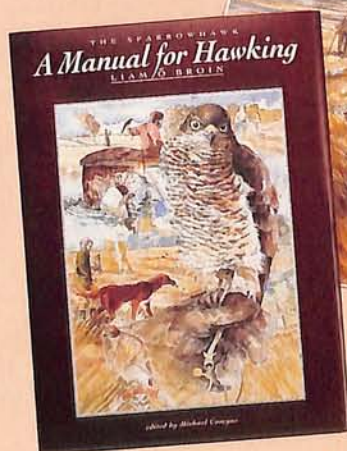
NOTE: green stitching on the D.ring.



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A Manual for Hawking

LIAM Ó BROIN

Ireland has a centuries old tradition and love of the hunt especially falconry. Now, for the first time in print, the author traces in text and illustrates with fascinating photographs, the history of falconry in Ireland from its earliest beginnings on these islands over a thousand years ago to the present day.

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MAGAZINE, 20 BRIDLE RD, BURTON LATIMER,
KETTERING NORTHANTS NN15 5QP

WHICH HYBRID?

Dear David and Lyn

The captions on some of the photos of my falcons in Graham Woods' article have got a little muddled! The bird on page 28 is not my grey jerkin, 'Reiver'. but a saker/peregrine called 'Green'. The one on page 29 labelled 'Sandy' is also 'Green'. She is a fine bird who took 26 crows in 21 days last season and is currently abroad. She is out of a female peregrine called 'Tracer' by a sakret 'Erin'. Although she looks very saker-like she is a fast bird with a bold, tenacious style. The bird labelled 'Snake' on the top of page 29 is actually a peregrine/saker called 'Aerial' out of a female saker 'Destiny' by Martin Jones' male peregrine 'Junior'. 'Aerial', as her name implies, would have made an excellent game falcon; her habit was to go out very high before putting in her first stoop. This was very devastating both to the crows and to my nerves. As you can see from the photos she is more peregrine-like than 'Green', taking more after her father than her mother. We are currently flying her half-sister 'Lilah' who has rewarded us with a number of very high and long flights resulting in several broken bones and fallen horses among her followers. 'Sandy' and 'Snake' were half-sisters to 'Aerial' although 'Sandy' was paler. 'Sandy' killed a lot of Houbara in Morocco and Pakistan and Sheik Zayed's falconers judged her faster than any of their team of peregrines

.Nick Fox

HELP!

Dear Editors,

I have been interested in birds of prey and falconry for 4 years, I am 14 years old and live near Woburn Abbey. I am looking for someone in my area who would be willing to spend time helping me to learn falconry.

If anybody could help please phone Paul on 0525 280424.

Dear David & Lyn,

I thought your readers might be interested in this photograph that my wife took of my male Merlin "Meep", who fell asleep on his block, in the garden.

Eric Armstrong.



Dear David & Lyn,

The East of England Carved Birds Exhibition 1st to 3rd October was extremely successful, we had nearly 80 exhibits of all styles and all species from flying life size duck carved from boles of trees to tiny detailed wrens. The visitors were really enthusiastic and the carvers also enjoyed themselves. The table displaying the awards seemed to attract as much attention as the birds.

Next year the exhibition will be larger and run from 3rd to 11th of September.

The Best Raptor category, for which you put a subscription as a prize, was won by Roger Jeeves, for his flying Kestrel. But it was a difficult decision for the judges, his Peregrine on Gadwall was much admired as was Ted Oxley's Kestrel.

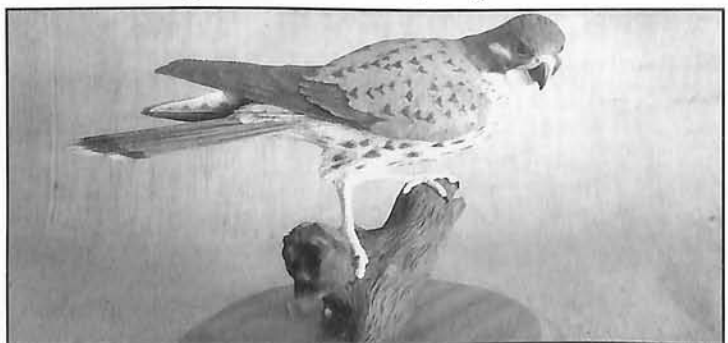
Judith Nicoll



Roger Reeves' winning Kestrel



Peregrine on Gadwall by Roger Jeeves



Kestrel by Ted Oxley

FERRETS FOR WORKING OR PETS

HUNTING WITH FERRETS

It is thought that the Egyptians were some of the first to use ferrets for catching mice, long before the cat came along. It is also said that the Romans brought the ferret to England to hunt rabbits, to supplement the meat rations for the troops.

Today, hundreds of years later, the ferret is still used to hunt the rabbit, as well as the rat, for pest control or sporting activities.

There are many ways for its use. One is shooting over the ferret with a shotgun where a ferret is put into a warren and the rabbits are shot as they come out. Also using the same method with a dog replacing the gun. Using a long net round a warren can get the same results but the long net (which can be up to one hundred yards long) comes into its own alongside a wood on a dark, windy night, setting it up with the wind blowing into it, with one man on the net and another (or a well-trained dog) going round the field running the rabbits back towards home and into the net. The best sport of rabbiting must be with the ferrets and purse nets where all the holes are netted and the ferrets entered, when the rabbits burst from their underground home into the nets it soon gets the adrenaline running as another rabbit is netted, then another. The equipment used in ferreting this way is of, course a ferret, something to carry it in, a wooden box is ideal with a shoulder strap, air holes in the side and straw in the bottom for the ferret to lay on. A sickle or long handled slasher, a narrow bladed spade, a knife for paunching the rabbits, a pair of secateurs for small brambles and nettles (handy but not essential) and purse nets. These nets (which can be as long as four feet) usually have a ring at each

end with a cord running up the outside, fixed to a wooden peg. The net is placed over the rabbit hole with the peg pushed into the ground. When the rabbit runs into it, the net closes like a purse with the rabbit securely enmeshed (hopefully).

One of the biggest aids to ferreting over the years is the FERRET FINDER consisting of a collar for the ferret with a small battery inside giving a bleeping signal, the ferreters above ground have a receiver, if the ferret is underground too long the receiver is switched on to full volume, when the signal is picked up the volume is turned down until the signal is just audible, crossed from north to south, east to west at the centre crossing, digging down to the ferret and rabbit.

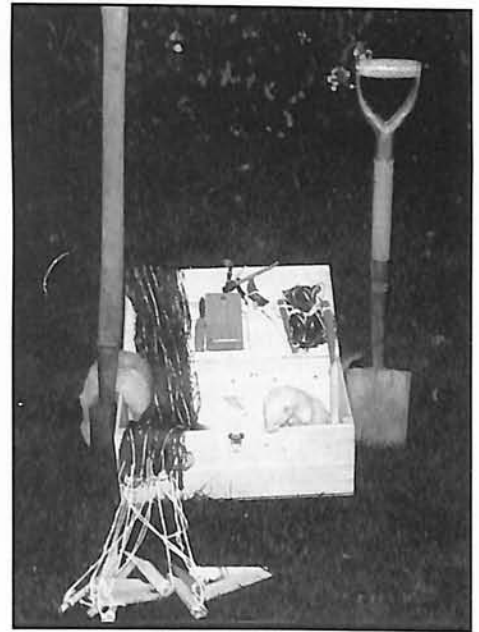
The old method (and still used by some today) is to enter a jill, if she is held up then a hob on a line knotted every three feet is entered, he sends the jill out and then it's digging at intervals until the hob and rabbit are reached.

If it's decided to ferret all day a flask of drink and a sandwich comes in handy not forgetting a drink and perhaps a bit of liver for the ferret.

HAWKING OVER FERRETS

When the hawk is flown over a ferret she must be aware that the ferret is not the quarry. The hawk should be introduced to the ferret at the beginning of training and see the ferret working and bolting rabbits from their holes before it is allowed to hunt. In this way the hawk should accept the ferret as part of the hunting team as it does with a pointer. Under no circumstances should you hawk with ferrets on your own as this can lead to problems because you can't watch both hawk and ferret at the same time.

By Bryan Cockings



Equipment needed before you start to work your ferret.

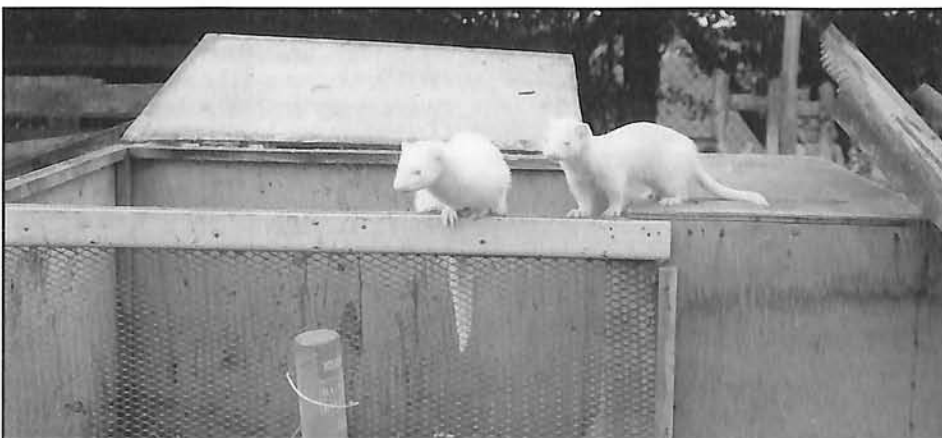
It is advisable to fly over white (albino) ferrets as this reduces the likelihood of your bird confusing it with a rabbit, as could happen with a pole-cat. Even so the hawk should never be trusted with ferret and the ferret should be picked up immediately it leaves the hole. This is why it is important to have someone along exclusively to work the ferrets.

The safest and commonest way to fly hawks over ferrets (especially from the ferrets' point of view) is from the fist as you have complete control of the hawk until the rabbit is bolted.

Position yourself a little way from the set and where the rabbit, hopefully, is going to run. This will give your bird time to see the rabbit. Any advantage that you can give your bird, e.g. height, will be useful, this especially applies to buzzards, so, where possible, try to stand above the set.

The other way to hawk with ferrets is to put the bird up high either above or near the set to be ferreted, this would normally be in a tree but could be a telegraph pole or building. This type of hawking should be done only with birds which are familiar with ferrets as you have little or no control over the bird, and you could end up losing a valuable hunting partner.

The advantages of hunting this way are obvious, your bird can gain much more speed using this method than off the fist.



Ferrets are a big help in finding rabbits when quarry is scarce above ground

HAWK BOARD STATEMENT

SUMMARY OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND FOLLOWING THE COOK REPORT.

Most people involved with birds of prey in the UK will by now have watched either the live transmission, or a recorded version of the much publicised Cook Report which was televised on Tuesday 17th August.

In late spring and early summer a number of people reported that they had been approached by Mr Chris Neil, of The Falconry Centre at Hagley, who was interested in acquiring peregrine eggs and eyasses, however, he was insistent that they must be from wild stock.

The suggestion was that the birds were destined for the Middle East market and that large sums of money were available for the right birds. To further enhance the illusion of wealth, Mr Neil often arrived in a large chauffeur driven Mercedes car which he claimed was one of his perks as the Arab agent. Several people that he approached reported his behaviour to the D.O.E. and the police, these reports were logged and recorded. By the end of June it was apparent that a Sting type operation was well under way and the programme makers were copying the Operation Falcon which had taken place in America. They had spent several weeks in the Gulf trying desperately to find anybody interested in buying eyass Scottish peregrines and failed completely. We subsequently spoke to some of the people from Qatar and U.A.E. who were approached by Graeme Thompson.

Having failed to find the vital yet non-existent Arab Sheikh, and with the main thrust of the programme in doubt, Roger Cook and another of the production team, suitably disguised by the make-up department, impersonated a Sheikh and his brother.

The Hawk Board had been receiving complaints about Mr Neil's behaviour throughout this period and in due course the Board was approached by the programme makers and asked to comment in a filmed interview. Two interviews were filmed without having seen the film footage, neither were used probably because we insisted that our opposition included and extended to all illegal acts regarding birds of prey and that included inciting other to commit such acts. This statement clearly conflicted with the

behaviour of Mr Neil and the policy of the of the programme makers and their advisers the R.S.P.B.

Investigative journalism, and programmes of this type, have a very useful function to perform and are often able to highlight and draw attention to problem areas that exist. The responsibility of the programme maker must be to insure that the finished programme is both balanced and factually correct in all details. This programme failed to meet either criteria.

We applaud the genuine research and surveillance undertaken in this programme and hope that the screening of such evidence prior to court proceedings will not prejudice the outcome. A failure to secure such a prosecution would be most unsatisfactory and counter productive to the declared aims of the programme.

The programme producer Mr Peter Salkeld, has stated that the programme, which was made in close collaboration with the R.S.P.B, seeks to further the protection of endangered wild birds. The grossly inflated prices mentioned both on the programme and in the newspaper articles relating to the programme will do nothing for the conservation of this or any other bird of prey species.

The main functions of the Hawk Board is to represent all sections of the hawk keeping fraternity and we have attempted to do this throughout our involvement with the programme makers. During the time the programme was being made a number of people asked for and received help and advice. One of these was Matthew Morrison who declared his innocence to the Hawk board and received assistance on that basis. During the course of our enquiries we discovered that he had helped his son steal peregrine eggs.

It is hard enough trying to support the good name of hawk keeping in these circumstances without this kind of blatant dishonesty. The Hawk Board would wish to make it very clear that under no circumstances will it condone illegal activities of any sort. It is the greedy, irresponsible actions of a tiny minority of people that cause these problems and regrettable though it may be they can be found in all organisations and aspects of life. It is, however, important to keep these matters in true perspective.

For the benefit of those new to falconry it should be emphasised that the programme was based on several falsehoods:-

1. There is no ready market for large

numbers of British peregrines in the Middle East, be they legal, domestic or wild. Despite extensive investigations the Cook Report failed to find any market and instead resorted to faking one.

2. The only falcons used in the Middle East are skilled hunters. Eggs, chicks, or unhacked eyasses, as shown on this programme, have no value at all to the Arab falconer.

3. The prices quoted are false and were dreamed up with the sole intention of enticing people to provide illegal birds.

4. The peregrine is not as endangered as the panda and the elephant. It is the most cosmopolitan falcon and in Britain is at peak numbers and is currently under consideration for downlisting from C.I.T.E.S. Appendix 1 to Appendix 2.

The Hawk Board deplore the way that Chris Neil approached a number of people enticing them to steal birds from the wild and we do not consider that paying people to steal peregrines is in the best interests of the birds, themselves or conservation issues.

The Raptor Research Foundation conference held in Sacramento was the biggest raptor conference ever held. There were 900 participants representing 36 countries from as far afield as Australia, India and Japan and the following resolution was passed unanimously.

WHEREAS. IMPORTANT RAPTOR CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES INCLUDING CAPTIVE BREEDING AND REINTRODUCTION OF RAPTORS HAVE BEEN PIONEERED AND DEVELOPED LARGELY BY FALCONERS THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY OWES FALCONERS A DEBT WHICH HAS SELDOM BEEN RECOGNISED AND ENCOURAGES THE CONTINUED PARTICIPATION OF FALCONERS IN RAPTOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS.

This was an important declaration made at an international conference and is just as valid today as it was in 1985 when wild raptor stocks were much lower than they are at present.

To finish on a lighter note, many of us were astonished to learn that it is possible to positively identify a wild peregrine eyass from a captive bred eyass in seconds by just observing the colour of the cere and whether it hisses when handled. I wonder just what other little gems Mr Neil has for the falconry world!

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**The South East
Falconry Group**

Chairman Mr G.A. Biddiss
Treasurer Mrs. S. Bell
Secretary Mr. D. J. White

The committee and members of the South East Falconry Group are pleased to announce that the S.E.F.G. has been awarded 'Recognised Club' status by the Department of the Environment. Founded in 1981, the Club has developed steadily over the past 12 years, establishing a sound and regular membership, achieving a place as one of the top four falconry clubs in the country by 1988.

The Club holds regular monthly meetings attended by in excess of 60 members and endeavours to provide an informal and approachable environment in which falconers and raptor keepers can meet to discuss current issues, pool expertise and practice falconry.

The Committee are keen to ensure that newcomers to the sport have access to a wide range of skills and experiences available within the Club and to this end arrange annual events such as Beginners Days and presentations by leading veterinary surgeons which are open to both members and non-members alike. Further presentations by Neil Forbes MRCVS are planned for January and April 1994.

Central to the Clubs activities are its journal and the various field meetings arranged on ground made available by Club supporters and these have proven to be highly successful.

Finally the Committee would like to express its sincere thanks to the members of the SEFG for all their hard work and loyal support, without which, this milestone in the Clubs' history could not have been achieved.

Anyone wishing further information should telephone

Mr. Gary Biddiss Esq. Chairman 0245 226057

Mr Dean White Secretary 0375 671302

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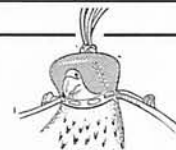
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RAPTOR

RESCUE NEWS

ERIK

BY MIKE STANDING
L.R.K.

Erik is a bird that should not exist. Erik is a rescued kestrel but Erik was bred domestically.

A few years ago I was the manager of a falconry centre in the south of England and it was here that I first encountered this tough little hawk. Even by the time I came to know Erik she'd had an interesting life.

She had been found beside the road, close to starvation, and handed into the Centre, but this was eighteen months after being lost in Kent! How she managed to cover 250 miles, surviving two winters and this after little training from a novice falconer, is anyone's guess. I have my own theories but I'm sure we'll never really know.

The kestrel's owner was notified of the bird's retrieval but could not be bothered to pick it up, or pay for transporting, so the Centre took over keepership. Here endeth the first adventure.

During my tenure as manager she was retrained and flown in display, proving to be a good lure bird. Against my advice she was moved to another department and shown to children as part of a conservation lecture. It was here that her nightmare began. She was allowed to escape wearing all her equipment and, having been fed up, would not return. Wearing swivel and leash whilst flying free is usually a death sentence for a lost hawk, a statement almost proved true.

Two days later we received a phone call from a local garden centre. Had we lost a bird as there was one sitting in a tree in the grounds and would it be alright if one of the staff climbed up to get it? By the time I got there Erik, for it was she, was back on *terra firma* but her condition was critical. She had become entangled by the leash in the top of a tall elm tree and by her futile attempts to get free had broken her leg. I have been treating and rehabilitating raptors for a few years now and I do not think that I have ever seen as badly a broken leg as Erik's. Both ends of the break were protruding from the leg but, to add to the injuries, she had eaten the flesh around the break indicating the pain she must have felt. She had also split her beak from festoon to cere and did not have an unbroken primary or tail feather.

When I first inspected her I did not hold much hope, the initial injuries were bad enough but the obvious problem of shock and secondary infection loomed large. I administered an electrolyte immediately

and got to the local vet as soon as possible. Here the wound was cleaned and the break set in a cast but my worse fears were confirmed. She had caused severe damage to the nerves in the area of the break by eating herself and had no movement in any of the talons in her right foot. Do you know, she remained bright

eyed and angry throughout all the handling she received. Not once did she sink into shock, a tribute to her indomitable spirit as much as the administration of the electrolyte I think.

The immediate problems dealt with, we had to consider the broader terms of the injuries. One of the problems with a cast on a small hawk is you cannot see what is going on with the wound whilst healing. Although antibiotics were given twice daily there was still the strong possibility of infection at the wound site. You tend to smell it first, and for a small hawk this is often too late. Blood poisoning from gangrene will be fatal for a kestrel if not arrested very early on, and what use is a one-legged kestrel? I was concerned that the right foot became pale in colour, indicating a poor blood supply, but on the whole Erik seemed to take her injuries in her stride. Unfortunately, as does happen occasionally, the ends of the broken bones moved in the cast - it is not possible to keep a feisty kestrel immobilised for any substantial length of time - and overlapped. This has resulted in her right leg becoming shorter than the other but this has never seemed to hinder her at all.

Now, two years later, Erik looks better than she has ever before. Her beak required months of careful trimming and filing into shape to allow the split to grow out and after two moults she is feather perfect. The damaged leg has become atrophied and the talons are markedly smaller than the healthy left foot, but apart from this she is normal, healthy kestrel. She has not been flown free this time due to our fear that, should anything go wrong and she goes flyabout, her survival chances are minimal. But now, after much deliberation, we have decided to fly her

RAPTOR RESCUE IS AN ORGANISATION DEDICATED ENSURING THAT ALL INJURED AND SICK BIRDS OF PREY ARE CARED FOR BY SUITABLY QUALIFIED PERSONS AND, WHENEVER POSSIBLE RELEASED BACK INTO THE WILD. IF YOU FIND A RAPTOR IN TROUBLE AND NEED HELP AND/OR ADVICE PLEASE RING 0920 463649. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN RAPTOR RESCUE PLEASE WRITE TO: MICK ROBINS, 122 WARE RD, HERTFORD, HERTS. SG13 7HR.



free and take the risk. Erik will live a few more years yet and it would be very unfair to keep her on the block, or in an aviary, any longer than necessary.

Hawks bred domestically should never require rescuing. When you take on a bird of prey it is an immense responsibility, needing total dedication and must never be entered into lightly. They must be treated with the respect they so rightly deserve. They rely upon you for care, housing, exercise and food - neglect them and it soon becomes apparent. It is your duty to give your hawk as natural an existence as is possible within the parameters of captivity, yet four of the birds we have the privilege to keep are domestically bred and due to neglect, ignorance or indifference, required rescuing. Sad but true.

Training, flying and hunting with your hawk is great fun. Enjoy your bird of prey but, please, look after it with your utmost ability and devotion.

Why is she named Erik? Seemed a good idea at the time. Happy Hawking.

FOOTNOTE

Earlier this year, Mr Terry Burden from Sheerness in Kent, joined Raptor Rescue as a member, and was subsequently authorised to use our charity status to raise funds.

Mr Burden is no longer a member of the charity and, consequently, not authorised to collect donations on our behalf. Micheal Robins (Chairman)

RAPTOR^K

HUNTING SEASONS

The birds and animals shown in this table may be taken or killed as indicated. All dates are inclusive, but exclude Sundays and Christmas Day in both Scotland and England.

PART 1 - Species Designated As Game Under The Game Act 1831

Grouse	12th August to 10th December
Ptarmigan	12th August to 10th December
Blackgame	20th August to 10th December
Partridge	1st September to 1st February
Pheasant	1st October to 1st February
Hare	No close season but may not be sold dead from 1st Sept to 28th Feb.

No game may be sold more than 10 days after the end of its' open season. (Part 2 is not applicable)

PART 3 - Birds In The Schedule 2 Of The Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 which may be killed or taken outside the close season and which may be sold dead from 1st September to 28th February.

Capercaillie		1st Oct to 31st Jan
Coot		1st Sept to 31st Jan
Common Snipe		12th Aug to 31st Jan
Golden Plover		1st Sept to 31st Jan
Woodcock	England & Wales	1st Oct to 31st Jan
	Scotland	1st Sept to 31st Jan
Tufted duck	Shoveler	Above the high water mark of ordinary spring tides
Mallard	Teal	1st Sept to 31st Jan
Pintail	Wigeon	Below the high water mark of ordinary spring tides
Pochard		1st Sept to 20th Feb.

All species in sections 1 and Snipe and Woodcock require a game license.

Grey Squirrels, Foxes, Stoats and Weasels are not classed as game and the Red Squirrel is protected.

Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Blackheaded Gulls all need a license which can be obtained from the Department of the Environment.

PART 4 - Birds In Schedule 2 Of The Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981

which may be killed or taken outside the close season but which may not be sold dead.

Canada Goose	Above high water mark of ordinary spring tides
Greylag Goose	1st Sept to 31st Jan.
Pink-footed Goose	Below high water mark of ordinary spring tides
White-fronted Goose (not Scotland)	1st Sept. to 20th Feb.
Gadwall	1st Sept to 31st Jan
Goldeneye	
Moorhen	

PART 5 - Birds For Which There Is No Close Season and which may be killed or taken by authorised persons at all times under open general license.

Note that only Woodpigeon may be sold dead.

Crow	Jackdaw	Rook
Collared Dove	Jay	House
Sparrow		
Great Black-backed Gull	Magpie	Starling
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Feral Pigeon	Woodpigeon
Herring Gull		

Authorised means owner, occupier or anyone with these persons permission. Also "general-license" means that you do not actually need to go out and get a license.

YOUR LEGAL QUERIES ANSWERED

BY PAUL BEECROFT

Question

I am (was) the owner of a pair of Goshawks which were kept in an Aviary in my garden. Recently a hot air balloon travelled very low over my garden as a result of which the birds became distressed, flew around the aviary colliding with the sides and roof which resulted in the death of my female. What can I do about this.

Answer

Under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 an offense occurs where unnecessary danger is caused to persons or property. Hot air balloons have a minimum ceiling height of 500 feet except in certain circumstances. It is worth reporting this matter to the C.A.A. for them to investigate with a view to obtaining compensation.

Question

I am out flying my Hawk/Falcon on land where I have permission when my bird flys onto neighbouring land and kills a Pheasant. Can I be held responsible for this and what offenses are committed.

Answer

If the bird is yours then it stands to reason that you are responsible for it. There is no simple answer to the second part. As far as I am aware no prosecution has taken place where a Raptor has been used for poaching. There is some grey area but I will try and explain it. If a persons Raptor kills on another's land then the act of Trespass may have been committed under civil law. If the Falconer enters the land and retrieves his bird leaving the Pheasant then no Criminal offense is committed. If the Falconer enters the land, retrieves his bird and takes the Pheasant an offense of poaching is committed. Now the grey area - the Raptor kills the Pheasant and the Falconer leaves the bird to feed on it for a period of time, then retrieves his bird leaving the remains of the Pheasant behind I believe the offense of Poaching is committed. As there is no stated case it would be up to a Court to make a decision. There are many other aspects of the Poaching Law but this cannot be explained in one answer.

FEEDING RAPTORS

Part one

General Aims :- to feed a diet as similar to the natural prey species that the bird would enjoy in the wild, whilst at the same time ensuring the correct food quantity, quality, wholesomeness and storage methods.

Feeding Neonates :- Young raptors are "immune incompetent" for the first ten days of their lives.

This means that they are very susceptible to infections, and find it hard to fight them off. Therefore the food must be prepared hygienically. In our experience the best way of tackling this problem is to feed a probiotic (some are better than others), for the first ten to fourteen days of life.

A probiotic is made primarily of "good & helpful" bacteria (*Strep faecalis* & *Lacto bacillus*), which will colonise the gut thereby avoiding the swamping of the gut by pathogenic (ie. harmful) bacteria.

The composition of the diet for growing youngsters is far more important than that of adult birds. It cannot be overstressed that the diet must consist of whole carcasses, and not simply muscle [ie. meat]. Many breeders are aware that one should be careful of giving roughage to young birds, however bone is not roughage, it can and should be fed. The whole carcass should be pulverised in a mincer such that no fragments are too large. Calcium deficiency will be considered in greater detail later.

When young chicks are parent-reared, the parent will, usually, carefully pluck any food items until such time as the young can cope with the casting. One situation to be careful of is when one is using a foster parent of a different species as she may not fully appreciate the capabilities of her fostered young. The result can be that she gives them too much casting at too young an age. More commonly it is the unsuspecting hand-rearer who gives excess casting. It is rough casting, such as rodent fur, which is found to be most troublesome, some species such as the merlin, seem particularly prone to the problem. It is certain that no merlin should be given any fur until it is at least 18 days old. Most chicks can and should manage a small amount of feather from day ten but no fur until considerably later. If a problem does arise the compacted fur blocks the

BY NEIL FORBES MRCVS

stomach. The chick slows in its weight gain, has a poor appetite and may have a swollen hard lump in its stomach (*proventriculus*). If the situation is realised at an early stage then repeated crop tubing with fluid therapy, every 2-3 hours, will often soften the casting and facilitate its return. If however the situation is advanced, surgery is the only option. The prognosis is not wonderful as one is operating on a small, weak and ill youngster.

DEFICIENCIES COMMONLY SEEN IN CHICKS

Calcium is the commonest and most significant deficiency which is encountered.

Calcium deficiency may arise for one of several reasons. Firstly the egg itself may have been deficient in calcium. It sounds bizarre that a female bird should manage to coat an egg with a large volume of calcium (its shell), but fail to put sufficient calcium in the egg itself, however, it does occasionally occur. A number of factors are important in the metabolism of calcium in the body. Firstly the diet must have sufficient calcium in it, secondly the bird must have sufficient activated Vitamin D3 in its body to absorb the calcium from the gut and thirdly the kidney should not be so damaged that all the calcium is lost from the bloodstream before it can be used. Activated vitamin D 3 can be supplied in the diet, however more typically Vitamin D is supplied, this requires the action of ultra violet light (ie part of day or some fluorescent light) to convert it to the active form. Typically calcium deficiency of eggs arises when additional calcium is required such as for species with large thick egg shells such as secretary birds, or where the adult birds are suffering from kidney disease (which is not uncommon in elderly birds). The consequence of this form of deficiency is chicks being born with bent keel bones (chest or sternum), or swollen painful ends to the long bones. Although if the condition is recognised additional calcium can be given, by this stage often

the damage has already been done. More often calcium deficiency occurs due

to an insufficiency in the chick's diet. The signs of deficiency are usually not seen until the chick is 14-21 days old, and may not even be recognised until considerably later. The bird is weak, has a poor appetite, weight increase ceases, is unable to stand, often the feet rotate inwardly. In severe cases the bird may show violent fits. If the condition is recognised, the bird should be x-rayed to investigate the severity of the damage. Many birds are already beyond repair, others will respond to just a change of diet, some will require bent legs etc to be straightened.

Supplements in Bird's Diets:-

All bird keepers will now be well aware that there are a whole range of different supplements which are available for addition to birds diets. The authors opinion is that supplements will only be required in exceptional circumstances if the birds are fed a good diet as a routine. Moreover supplements should not be used, 'as a let out', so that one can then feed a sub-standard diet. A good diet is varied and will be different depending on the size and type of bird being fed. Such a diet might well include rats, mice, day old chicks, grown on, poults, quail, rabbit, pigeon, squirrel etc. It is quite permissible to feed day-old chicks (with yolks removed most days), on 4-5 days of the week as long as improved food is given to 'pep them up' on a couple of days as well. On all occasions feed whole carcasses, ie. meat and bone, never remove meat from the carcass and feed that alone. It is appreciated that in some temporary situations the alternative supplies may dry up depending on the time of the year, availability etc., at such times it is sensible to use a supplement.

When choosing a supplement, pick one which has been carefully, correctly and accurately formulated with birds in mind. Whilst using it follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Do not follow the hypothesis, if a little bit is good, a little more is better, this is a dangerous and erroneous philosophy which can lead you sadly astray.

Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)

Deficiency:- Vitamin B2 should be present in sufficient levels in any quality mixed diet, which has not been stored for an excessive period. Deficiency is demonstrated by an inward curling of the toes, typically seen within the first 14

days of life. The problem is rapidly reverted to normality by supplementation by injection or by mouth with B2.

Vitamin E / Selenium

Deficiency:- This results in a backwards tilting of the chicks head, to the extent that the chick's head may be upside down. The condition is commonly termed 'star gazing'. It is seen most commonly in chicks fed on food which has been stored for too long, in particular food with a high fat content. Treatment is initially by injections of vitamin E and selenium, followed by further supplementation of the diet.

Dehydration :- Any bird may become dehydrated. Although it is generally accepted that few raptors drink, some do, especially when ill or exhausted. Chicks may become overheated or dehydrated as they are not good at moving into the shade, or controlling their body temperature. If after mincing, chick food is stored in a fridge, then it will, to some extent dry out. In view of this it is often necessary to add additional fluid (Hartmans, lactated ringers soln., or glucose saline) to the food. In particular if a bird's mutes are at any time more watery than usual it is essential that water is available. Never supply water to young chicks - they drown in it!

Food Requirements:- It is important for the keepers of birds, in particular those treating or looking after species from time to time, to appreciate the degree of variation in food requirements dependent on the size of the bird one is feeding.

Daily Food Requirements of Birds

Weight	Bird % of Wt Required daily
100 - 200g	18 - 25
200 - 800g	11 - 19
800 - 1200g	7 - 11
4000 - 10000g	3.5 - 6

The daily requirements will increase at times of stress, i.e. after injury or illness

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH FEEDING ADULT BIRDS

Source of food:- Irrespective of the food type, it is obviously essential that one is 100% certain as to the quality, source, method of killing, freezing and storage of the food. Any ex-wild source of food eg. pigeon, game, etc. must be considered to be potentially infected. Such birds can carry bacterial infections such as; TUBERCULOSIS, SALMONELLA or viral infections such as PARAMYXOVIRUS, ADENOVIRUS or ROTAVIRUS. Alternatively they may have been poisoned eg *alphachloralose*, *mercury*, *lead*, *DDT*. Any wild-sourced food should be in good body condition, have been caught and killed by physical means and on examination of the carcass should look, in all respects, to be thoroughly wholesome and free of disease. It is crucial that the abdomen of such birds is always opened and the surface of the liver checked. If any small white spots are presented on or in the liver, (often indicative of avian tuberculosis) the whole carcass must be rejected.

One should be wary of feeding road traffic casualties as one does not know why the animal or bird was so slow that it got hit, perhaps he wasn't feeling too good that day!! Any food such as rats, mice, squirrels or foxes, is less likely to cause any infectious disease to your birds. The reason for this is that most pathogens will only affect one family of animals, ie. a rodent virus is highly unlikely to affect birds. Conversely feeding any avian-derived foodstuff is a potential risk.

In recent years we have encountered several outbreaks, in particular of virus disease, (eg. Adenovirus & Rotavirus), where perfectly healthy commercially sourced quail, day olds, turkey poult etc., have been fed to healthy raptors which have then succumbed to disease and in several cases died. The problem here is that many viruses can be harboured by one species (eg. day old chicks), with out causing it any harm, ie the chick looks and is healthy, but when the chick is eaten the raptor is infected. There is no way of predicting or avoiding this, rare, problem except by avoiding feeding any avian-derived food.

Pigeons form a special risk to raptors on account of their high incidence of **Trichomoniasis** (frounce). Many falconers believe that if they only feed the breast there is no risk. Sadly this is not true. Stressed, old, young or ill birds will be most susceptible. Birds in perfect health may avoid the infection, otherwise most wild peregrines would suffer badly. However no risks should be taken, all pigeon which is fed should be frozen

completely and thawed before feeding. The duration of freezing is unimportant. **Rabbit & pigeon:-** many falconers feed ferreted, rifle or shotgun shot rabbits or pigeons. The author would strongly implore that shotgun killed quarry should never be fed. One is aware that some falconers have for many years fed such food and by feeding an increased level of casting have avoided lead poisoning. Some keepers swear they can find and remove every pellet, however in view of the number of lead poisoning cases that we still encounter, I can assure you it is not worth the risk. A further risk which cannot be avoided but that one should be aware of, is encountered when feeding rifled or ferreted rabbit or pigeon. On occasions some poor shot will have peppered such an animal at a prior date without killing it. So although you know that you put no shotgun pellets in the quarry, they may already be present. The food source is good and healthy and it is unreasonable to avoid it in view of the low risk, however, one should be aware of it, so that if any signs consistent with lead poisoning are seen immediate action can be taken. The signs of lead poisoning are weakness of legs and wings, inability to stand, often grasping the feet each in the other, inco-ordination, poor appetite, green mutes and weight loss. If these signs are present, the bird should immediately be seen by a vet and it is important that you do not insist to the vet that there is no possible chance of lead poisoning.

Rabbit:- just occasionally when feeding larger species on rabbit or hare a problem can arise. If the bird is sufficiently greedy it may take the whole thigh (femur) bone of the rabbit. On many occasions the bird will cope with this, however, sometimes it will wedge sideways in the crop or proventriculus. This may cause a perforation of the gut lining or an obstruction. The recommendation for such sized birds is to break the femur before feeding the carcass, if the bone is taken in two sections no problem will arise.

PART TWO

In part two Neil will be covering problems such as feeding birds in low condition, feeding vomiting birds, casting, hygiene, and calcium deficiency in adult birds.

If you have a problem and would like Neil to help please write to us at the address on page three and we will print your letter and his answer in the next issue

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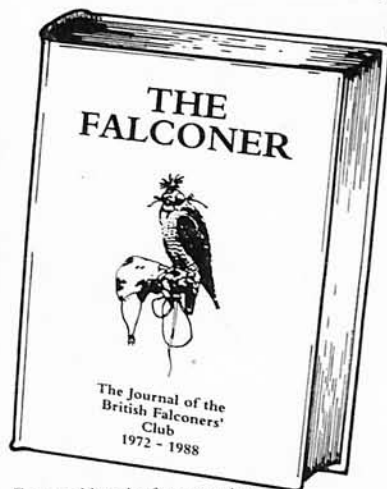


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