

Spring '94

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The **Falcons**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

**HOOD
MAKING
IN THE
1890's**

THE 
GOSHAWK

**THE
PRICE
OF A
GOOD
DOG**

**HOW
TO
FEED
YOUR
BIRD
PROPERLY**





BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

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UNITY OUR ENDEAVOUR**

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THE HAWK CONSERVANCY

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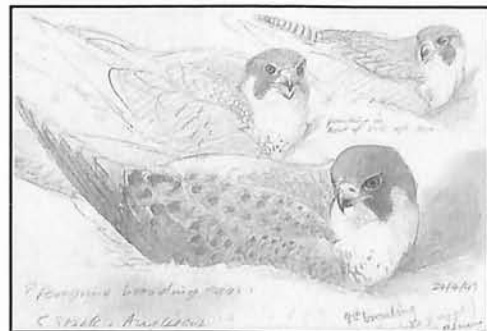
PHILIP SNOW BA Hons.

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

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

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

2 Beach Cottages, Malltraeth, Gwynedd, LL62 5AT.
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COVER: Ornate Hawk Eagle, Andrew Knowles-Brown

COMMENT

First we must thank Andrew Knowles-Brown for the splendid front cover photograph, taken while he was in the U.S.A. See page 28.

On page 18 we have an interview with Liam O'Broin, we are hoping to make this a regular feature and would like suggestions from you as to who we might put 'in the spotlight'.

Our 'experts' are still available to answer your questions, we have some coming up in the next issue. We are aware that most of your problems are solved either down the phone or by an immediate visit to the vet, but we would appreciate it if you could write and tell us about them anyway.

There is no room in this issue for a large piece about subscription details but if you look to the left you will see all the information you need.

We have a nice article on page 22, kindly sent in by Taff Hinge and reprinted with permission from 'The Field', about hood-making, showing just how little it has changed in a hundred years. Let's hope falconers are still making hoods a hundred years from now. Eds

A lot of hot air has been generated as a result of the Cook Report and it is perhaps worth taking a moment or two to examine some of the points and to take a wider view of the situation. A criticism raised by Graham Dangerfield in the Cook Report, and by Chris Neal subsequently, was that the Hawk Board should play a larger role in self-policing and in reporting wrong-doers. One thing should be made perfectly clear on this. Throughout the years the Hawk Board has always taken any reports of illegalities very seriously and has reported any factual information to the various authorities. The Department of the Environment, the Police and HM Customs and Excise will bear us out on this, as will the non-government organisations such as the RSPB Investigations Unit and the RSPCA and also enforcement agencies

in other countries.

A substantial proportion (in some cases, the majority) of their successful prosecutions have relied on information passed on from hawk keepers. Obviously we do not divulge any details, nor do we normally claim credit for it. We believe that the proper channels for this are the recognised authorities, not trial by media. As far as we can, we try to avoid passing on malicious gossip or unsubstantiated rumour. Nor do we believe that it is ethical to offer money for stolen wild birds. If we did, there would soon be complaints. Therefore we do not support Chris Neal's approach to the problem. Chris Neal queries that we did not report the egg thieves on the Cook Report to the authorities. Members of the Hawk Board have been helping the authorities with their enquiries on these people for over ten years on a number of incidents. In August, when we were approached on this particular incident, the Cook Report had already taken the film weeks before and the police had already been involved. Apart from the programme's unethical approach to the problem, we have a more major complaint. That is that the programme makers ignored information given to them and presented the programme in a way which does not portray the true situation. In the course of his 'investigation' Graeme Thompson visited Qatar for a few days in early April. He was shown around by Dr Faris Al-Timimi who gave him specific information as to the market prices of peregrines there. Dr Al-Timimi tells us that the average current price for a passage peregrine in Qatar is about £600. The best peregrines, already catching houbara, go for £1200. The Cook Report claimed peregrines cost £10,000. We believe that this inflated claim does not help the conservation of wild peregrines but is likely to encourage ignorant people to steal them either from the wild or from hawk keepers. Graeme Thompson was unable to find anyone at all willing to buy British peregrines at any price. So the programme makers decided that if they couldn't find a market they'd have to make one. So they posed as an Abu Dhabi Sheikh, Sheikh El Nomani staying at a London Hotel. The Hawk Board with the Abu Dhabi Sheikhs, the Al Nayyhans, who confirmed that the man was an impostor. Abu Dhabi is the only CITES signatory country in the middle east and has a major commitment to the conservation of both wild and domestic falcons. For the Cook Report to pose as sheikhs portraying them as criminals as insulting. Both in the middle east, and in the UK by three members of the Hawk Board, the Cook Report was given information on the status of wild peregrines, prices of domestic ones and the real problems faced by wild peregrines, such as shooting. The Cook Report chose not to use any of this material because it made their sen-

sationalist approach look childish. Somehow, spending £15,000 to make a programme showing some unemployed Judas stealing peregrine eggs for £30 seems a little over the top. Think what you could do with this kind of money for genuine conservation work. The Cook Report, unfortunately, was ten years too late. While it is important to keep on top of illegal thefts of wild birds (and DNA sampling has been a major step forward in this regard), the Hawk Board has to cope with broader issues. Britain has now joined a free trade zone with 11 other EC countries and with 5 EEA countries. This has far reaching implications on the movements and regulations covering both domestic and wild source birds. Although this was due to start on 1 January 1994, the different authorities have been unable to reach a consensus

and we are left in a regulatory

A PERSPECTIVE ON PEREGRINES

limbo. The Ministry of Agriculture, lacking clear guidelines from the EC Commission, has just done a about face and decided to continue quarantining imports from EC member states for an indeterminate period. It seems unlikely that we will be able to retain our current registration scheme as we now know it. This, despite its imperfections, has been the best in the world. We are worried about the lack of controls on identifying individual birds in the EC. On top of this we are seeing UK raptor populations at an all time high after the pesticide era. There is mounting pressure from shooters and pigeon fanciers for legal controls of some raptor species. The RSPB is holding out for full protection status, even to the point where they are feeding mice to nesting kestrels to stop them preying on rare birds. Falconers are in the middle.

In the 1960's to 70's falconers released about 70 Goshawks and lost a further 300, of course this was in pre telemetry days when Goshawks were inexpensive and readily available. Local population became established at the sites and now the total population is between 500 - 1,000 pairs according to Dr Robert Kenward. Now that the goshawk is once more widespread in Britain and

THE HAWK BOARD

the shooters, who exterminated it in the first place, are calling for legal control methods. Falconers are often approached by keepers with the message 'Either remove this nest of goshawks or I'll shoot them'. This is an impossible situation. The law is being flouted and the people who get caught are the ones in possession of live birds, not the ones who simply kill them. The only way forward in the end is for both shooters and protectionists to give a little ground and plan for the sustainable management of wildlife populations rather than total protectionism. There needs to be a legal framework for control of specific problem birds which preferably involve only trapping and release elsewhere or to hawk keepers, rather than killing. The annual killing of thousands of goshawks, such as was carried out in Sweden, does not solve the problem, on the other hand over tight protectionism just encourages the law to be broken. The goshawk population is increasing all over Europe and we are theoretically now in a situation where a goshawk can be taken from the wild on a quota system in parts of the EC and brought to Britain without further control. Here in Britain there are game keepers claiming to kill up to 40 goshawks a year each, goshawks which are the descendants of those we re-introduced. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a television programme showing the achievements we have made in the conservation of wild hawks and in the breeding of domestic ones, instead of a sensationalist trial by media, which seems to be our daily diet these days?

ALTHORP TO HOST FALCONERS FAIR FOR '94

A chat with Ron Morris, who organises the fair, along with Maj. Peter Wainwright, soon confirmed that the Fair will once again be held at Althorp House, in Northamptonshire. The dates are 29th and 30th of May. All enquiries should be made to Ron Morris on 0588 672708.



CONVICTIONS

First of all we would like to try and trace the following birds. If anyone has one of them will they please contact me.

PEREGRINES 1) Ring No. 1593V
2) Ring No. 2716V
3) Ring No. 1976V
4) Ring No. UK77780
5) Ring No. UK00110

KESTRELS 1) Ring No. UK80893
2) Ring No. UK81793
3) Ring No. 11743S
4) Ring No. 11605S

The following convictions are now available for press release:-

1) Andrew Owen JONES of Withingwood, Bristol appeared at Bristol Magistrates Court on 22nd September 1993 for the following offense:-

1) Possession of Unregistered Common Buzzards (2 counts)

Conditional Discharge 1 year on each
Cost £102.00 Forfeiture of Birds

2) Paul HYMEN of Bridlington, North Humberside appeared at Bridlington Magistrates Court on 1st September 1993 for the following offense:-

1) Transporting a Sick Animal (Snowy Owl)
Fined £80.00 Costs £125.00

The circumstances of this were that the Snowy Owl was reported to have been sent by road carrier from Yorkshire to Essex. It was found to have most of its tail feathers broken, dirty plumage, an eye infection, lesions on its body and damaged feet.

3) William DOUGLAS of Larkhall, Lanarkshire appeared at Hamilton Sherrif Court on 20th October 1993 for the following offense:-

1) Possession of Peregrine Falcon
Fined £1,500.00

The Scotsman's newspaper reported on this case stating that DOUGLAS was in a Kilmarnock Pub when someone offered him a Peregrine. Douglas claimed he paid £250.00 and agreed to pay the same again when the documentation was handed over; which might have confirmed the bird was legally bred in captivity. The documentation however did not appear.

4) The following three persons appeared at Rossendale Magistrates Court on 18th October 1993.

1) Jason DARWEN of Edge Side, Waterfoot-Lancs

2) Nicola RAWSTRON of Edge Side, Waterfoot, Lancs

3) Christopher MURPHY of Stacksteads, Lancs.

The circumstances were that on Sunday 30th May 1993 volunteer site watchers were watching a Peregrine eyrie when they saw the above persons arrive and go to a position above the eyrie. A rope was thrown over the cliff and manoeuvred until it was only a foot away from the nest. The parent bird present was alarmed throughout the incident. The above persons were removed by Police and later charged. They were dealt with for the following offenses:-

DARWIN:-

1) having articles capable of being used to commit an offense Fined £200.00

2) Disturbance of Schedule 1 Birds
Fined £400.00

MURPHY:-

1) As (1) above Fined £200.00

2) As (2) above Fined £300.00

RAWSTRON:-

1) As (1) above Conditional Discharge

All persons ordered to pay £75.00 costs

Forfeiture ordered of rope and rucksack

5) The following three persons appeared at Stranraer Sherrif Court on 26th October 1993

1) Joseph Karl SEIGA of Tarbock, Merseyside

2) Keith SHERRY of Kittgreen, Wigan

3) Martin Francis SHANNON of Liverpool

The circumstances were that on 8th May 1993 the above persons were seen behaving suspiciously at a Peregrine Site and a rope was being used to gain access to the nest. The Police were called and the person caught. Herring Gull eggs were recovered from a vehicle. SEIGA at the time gave a false name and address. They were later dealt with for the following offenses:-

1) SEIGA:-

1) Disturbance of Peregrines

Fined £2,000.00

2) Possession of items for committing an offense
Fined £250.00

3) Attempting to pervert the course of justice (giv-

ing false name & address)

Fined £150.00

TOTAL £2,400.00

SHERRY:-

1) Disturbance of Peregrines

Fined £2,000.00

2) Possession of items for committing an offense

Fined £250.00

TOTAL £2,250.00

SHANNON:-

1) Possession of Herring Gull eggs

Fined £150.00

2) Taking of Herring Gull eggs

Fined £150.00

3) Possession of items for committing an offense

Fined £250.00

TOTAL £550.00

Latest news

1 Redtail Ring No's 1997X and 0993Y.

In November 93 a private address in Lincs was visited by 2 persons stating that they were Inspectors of Wildlife and asked to see the Raptors in the garden. After viewing the birds they then left. Later that day a Spar was found at this address with a broken neck and the Harris Hawk was missing but later recovered. The 2 persons visiting were not D.O.E. or Police. Can anybody help us to identify them? They are described as follows:

1 White Male, 45 years, 5' 2"-3", Fat, Ginger hair.

2 White Male, 5' 7", short dark hair, slim build.

Believed to be driving a Blue Transit type van with windows. From conversation with them it was obvious that they had knowledge of Raptors.

Stolen December 1993

1 Essex area

1 Pair Mexican Striped Owls

2 Pair Boobooks Owls

2 Stolen Nottinghamshire area

1 Pair Mexican Striped Owls

2 Pair Little Owls

A reward is offered for information leading to the return of these owls.

Stolen from Cheshire overnight 29th/30th December 1993

Female Goshawk UK81780

Secondary feather missing from left wing.

Reward offered for the return of this bird.

If you can help in any way with the above birds or any others Please phone Paul Beecroft on:-0734

536257.

WORLD OWL TRUST

HELPING TO SAVE THE WORLDS OWLS

After 21 years of research and conservation work with British and European owls, the British Owl Breeding and Release Scheme (BOBARS) has now recognised that the problems facing wild creature and wild places are global, and can no longer be looked at solely on a local basis. Consequently, its 1,000 members have voted to change the organisation's name and constitution to place more emphasis on providing and co-ordinating conservation work and research on owls throughout the world. To reflect these changes BOBARS has now become the WORLD OWL TRUST, with its headquarters at The Owl Centre, Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria, where one of the world's largest collections of owls is on view to the general public. Amongst its many objects the WORLD OWL TRUST will aim to:-

Promote the survival of all owl species and the welfare of individual birds. Co-ordinate regional conservation efforts aimed at specific species of owl. Educate the general public about the worldwide threat to owl survival in order to enlist their interest, concern and support.

And most important of all - take action to protect, conserve and, where appropriate, recreate the natural habitat of owls and other forms of wildlife. This side of the Trust's work can also be seen at The Owl Centre. One of the Trust's most urgent tasks is to encourage and develop demo-

graphic co-operative breeding programmes for owls, and as part of this initiative the Trust's Director, Tony Warburton, has recently been appointed Chairman of the Owl Taxon Advisory Group for the Joint Management of Species Committee of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland. This Group will co-ordinate all owl breeding programmes in the British Isles while for the rest of the world the Trust's WORLD OWL PROJECT will be the vehicle used. In all its work the WORLD OWL TRUST will liaise with and support international programmes for the benefit of owl species worldwide.

For further information write to The Executive Administrator, WORLD OWL TRUST, The Owl Centre, Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria, CA18 1RQ or telephone 0229 717393.



BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

Nicholas Kester

A SEASONAL ADVERT

As another hawking season draws to a close I think we should look to the future and I intend to do this with an unashamed advertisement for two organisations. I could have added a third but that would be an abuse of the generous space afforded to the British Falconers' Club by this magazine. Let me start with a plea to all those clubs that so regularly claim their concern for our sport. What do you contribute to the Hawk Board? Given that this is a body funded by falconry for falconry, it saddens me that so few clubs make any contribution to its operation. When the next piece of dreadful legislation is foisted upon us by Brussels. When you find that your plan to import a couple of goshawks for a breeding project founders on a CITES subparagraph the knowledge of which would have saved you a fortune of hard earned fund raising. Don't complain. Remember who you should have called and why you might have got a dusty answer because of your failure to contribute. In fact the people who act on your behalf are enormously willing, and we owe them a considerable debt. They rarely turn away an enquiry. So here is a proposal for your next club meeting: "That

this club makes an annual donation to the Hawk Board to ensure the relationship between falconers and legislators remains sensible with bureaucracy kept to a minimum." Alternatively you could join a recognised club like the... No, I promised no self publicity. The second plea is far closer to home. What are we all doing to protect our sport from those who would see it banned altogether? Come on. Let's be really honest. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Because it won't happen will it. Are you certain?

Let me quote from a recent edition of the League Against Cruel Sports' newspaper "Wildlife Guardian". It reads as follows:

"League calls for public protests at falconry displays

Following Central Television's August exposure in The Cook Report of the criminal operations in the world of falconry, the League Against Cruel Sports appealed to the public to boycott bird of prey centres, falconry displays at country shows and to protest to show organisers if such displays are advertised."

The report continued with the claim that "there was often great cruelty in transporting captive

birds of prey round country shows where birds were tied to wooden perches on display to the public" Not an organisation in support of falconry, would you not agree. So what can those of us who believe in the future of the oldest field sport do to see it continue? One simple answer. Join the British Field Sports Society. This is the only organisation with the political clout to protect your sport. They badly need your funds to ensure that falconry stays as it always has been. Safe. In the words of Benjamin Franklin: "We must either hang together, or hang separately." Alternatively you could always join a club that makes a point of being represented on the BFSS falconry committee like the... There I go again. So sorry.

NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

DISCLAIMER

"THE NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB WISH IT TO BE KNOWN THAT THEY ARE NOT CONNECTED IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER WITH THE NEW FOREST OWL SANCTUARY"

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

I would like to take this opportunity to thank David and Lyn for our representation in the last edition of Falconer Magazine. I was delighted with the excellent response from applicants not only from the UK but from as far afield as Germany and the USA. Many members have expressed their opinions on things they would like to see changed and improved. Some suggestions are very controversial and it is only by careful consideration and discussion that these problems will be resolved and implemented to improve the conditions within our sport.

At our last Club meeting which was held on the 2nd of December 1993, the question arose about grading. As the evenings debate rolled on it soon became apparent that the term "Apprenticeship" was a very apt description of our grading policy. We have a good number of Senior Full Members who have many years of valuable experience with all types of raptors, and who are situated in all parts of the country. These falconers are instructors in their own right and it is these people that our grading system will evolve around.

When members are accepted as novices, they will be given the opportunity to gain experience both practically and theoretically, by being assigned to a Senior Full Member who will instruct, tutor and look after their general knowl-

edge of hawking husbandry. In subsequent years they will be able to specialise in their choice of either longwing or shortwing or indeed both.

Consequently over a period of five years each novice will gain a degree of experience with five different tutors. They will then be presented to the committee and hopefully receive their certificate of proficiency. By then they will have gained the appropriate grade of Full Member, the grades consist of-

Junior and Adult Novice Member
Junior and Adult Associate Member

Full Member

Senior Full Member

New members with a limited amount of experience will join a tutor at the required level and at the conclusion of their training will receive their certificate of proficiency. As from the first Thursday, March 1994, the venue for our monthly meetings will be changed to the Shipley Boat Inn, Nottinghamshire, and has easy access from both junctions 26 and 27 of the M1

Tel 0773 530313.

I look forward too meeting old and new faces, and wish you all good hawking;

Chairman

Secretary

G Roach

J Paxton

0623 751339

0602 309734

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

The Scottish Hawking Club held its first 2 day meet of the season on October 9th and 10th at Lauder near Edinburgh, this coincided with our A.G.M. on the Saturday night. The hawking took place on 2 of the 5 keepered shoots, as well as a 2500 acre grouse moor that the host estate runs, with 2000 pheasants and 750 partridge put down this year there was no problem finding game. With 20 birds expected 3 groups were formed and went their separate ways on a damp Saturday morning. The group that went to the moor found conditions particularly difficult with wind, rain, and low cloud, and although plenty of black and red grouse were seen no game was brought to book. The windy conditions suited the Golden Eagle but no ground game was prepared to bolt under him so it was decided to retire early back to the Hotel bar, the other 2 groups though sheltered still got wet but everyone had flights and some rabbits and pheasants ended in the game bag. The next day dawned bright and dry but

with some people having to leave 2 groups went to the low ground shoots. Game was plentiful in the dry and multiple flights were had by all, some of which were extremely exciting, the day ended with bulging game bags and general agreement that this was a particularly good venue, with the owners wishing us to come back. We bade farewell vowing to return. The third meeting was held at Carlops on the 14th November, courtesy of Mr Stan Robertson. It was a cold and windy day that saw a field of 2 Harris hawks, 2 Redtails, 2 Goshawks, a Peregrine and a Golden Eagle meet at the Allan Ramsay Hotel at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning. It was decided that Andrews Knowles-Brown would take his Golden Eagle up onto the hill to satisfy a birthday wish of a local resident and let her see him fly. Five rabbits were claimed in the morning and Gorby was fed up and allowed a well earned rest in the afternoon. Meanwhile the rest of the field proceeded to some steep gullies where there were some rabbits to be found. The first kill of the day came within 5 minutes of starting when a rabbit was walked up at the bottom of the gully and was taken by a female Harris. We continued to get some flights until we reached the end of the gully and then decided to start ferreting our way back. Some good flights were had and the next kill was quite spectacular when Tim Richley's male Harris caught a rabbit and then continued to fly another 20 yards tenaciously holding onto his prize. The next and final kill of the day was another bolted rabbit which was taken by Peter Kirk's Goshawk in another down hill swoop. There was some more flights obtained but unfortunately the ferret, which had turned in a star performance by working about five hours, was starting to tire and so an adjournment to the bar was called. All in all a bag of 8 rabbits and thanks go to Stan for allowing us onto his land and also to Tim without whose ferret we would not have had very much sport. The fourth field meeting was held at Leuchars on the 5th December, courtesy of



Iain Campbell. A small but enthusiastic band arrived for the meeting which was to be held on 200 acres of absolutely flat, rabbit infested, lowland moor. It was a bright, crisp, clear day with a moderate north westerly breeze which took the temperature down enough to make standing around a little undesirable and so, after a short wait for latecomers we made our way to the hunting ground. The field consisted of 2 male Harris hawks, a male Redtail and a female Harris. It was decided to begin ferreting and some good flights were obtained quite soon after we began. Unfortunately some of the rabbits refused to bolt and the ferret had to be dug out on several occasions. Stuart, Stephen and Tim Richley regarded the sandy soil almost a pleasure to dig and not too much time was lost. Colin Mitchell's Redtail was yet to be entered and he was given a good flight at a bolted rabbit, unfortunately the rabbit knew more about stock fences than the hawk did and so made a quick escape, a good flight all the same and the bird was wiser but not injured from his experience. Another rabbit was quickly bolted and after a short flight the Redtail made his first kill which he was fed up on. While Colin proudly tended to his bird we all had a lunch break before continuing the days hunting. Several more good flights were achieved with the Harris Hawks and it was getting dark before we finished for the day. All in all the bag was a respectable 6 to the hawks and 8 to the ferrets, shame the rabbits didn't bolt a bit better though.

Thanks to Stuart and Tim for bringing their ferrets and congratulations to Colin on his first kill, it's probably the most fun you can have with your clothes on.

FLYING A HYBRID



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

Perhaps many falconers aspire to the idea of flying a gyr hybrid seeing it as a logical step to attaining power and speed from a gamehawk. However gyr hybrids although being spectacular can be difficult to get on terms with during their first flying season.

"Edmund" the gyr peregrine hybrid, was such a character being a concoction of power flying and remarkable sloth. Remarkable merely because the moments of inertia would occur when one least expected it. A typical example would be the initial slip off the gauntlet into a good wind, career round the sky in abandoned excitement then go and sit on a telegraph wire resembling a parakeet.

From this unbecoming vantage point he would sway rhythmically back and fourth indolently watching the lure swung to coax him down. Eventually as the mood took him he would cast himself off and with breathtaking speed arrive overhead to be rewarded with the lure. In those various moments one could see the potential of the falcon yet getting him to be

consistent was going to present some problems.

This falcon was totally parent reared and was left in with his brothers and sisters until he was 3 months old, the idea being that he would be a strong confident flyer once training began. His easy going attitude was very like that of imprints. Of course it didn't have to be telegraph wires, there was always a change in pattern available. He might conversely hit the right chord first time, climbing and mounting with utter determination making the whole scenario appear as if a falcon of maturity was sky bound, often going out to the far horizon still climbing. The return surely would provide the most devastating stoop. Quite often it did but hunting wasn't on his mind. He would land

right beside you and immediately begin to foot tufts or tussocks of grass then look you straight in the face with "there what do you think of that?" These episodes usually called for a return to base to gather ones own wits.

Of course these recreational flying periods were a learning process for him and he learnt to interpret the human world so that he no doubt found his falconers fairly predictable. He was aware that cars always took him to a flying area and furthermore he could recognise the car. Often as his flying powers increased he would take in vast territories of the sky in momentous flying exhibitions. During such feats he often unsighted himself from the falconer whereupon he would fly his way back to the car and land on the ground next to the door. He brought this to a fine art one afternoon on the grouse moor when he had a particularly difficult flight and was returning over some considerable distance he noticed our car being driven along the moorland road. The driver was a falconer friend intent on trying to

locate him. Imagine his surprise when the falcon landed in front of the car which had now stopped. The hybrid then ran a few paces towards the vehicle. The driver leaned over and opened the passenger door, to which the falcon jumped in and sat on the seat. Both sat staring in admiration of each other.

This particular episode was repeated by the hybrid on several other occasions as he had by now become aware of the benefits of human transport.

The period of time in which Edmund was developing his physical and mental skills was far longer than any other type of falcon that we have flown. I'm quite sure that the gyr factor is a predisposing entity and that it requires approach to producing a falcon of quality.

Edmund really dictated the learning process. He was quite obviously in need of far more recreational flying than other falcons in his peer group. In order to allow this form of 'tame hack' to happen, Edmund would be taken each day to his usual flying grounds which are wide open areas of favourable hill country. Socially he was

extremely well adjusted to his falconer and had formed a very strong bond. Once this was evident then he could be allowed unlimited freedom (with telemetry attached). During these periods either Leonard or I would busy ourselves doing work in the pheasant pens which were in the lower reaches of the flying ground. This generally meant feeding hoppers and checking that the nets were secure or clearing areas of undergrowth which would eventually allow free movement for the young poults. These would soon be arriving and once installed Edmund would be taken to other areas of the ground to fly as his presence in the sky would unnerve the young pheasants.

During these periods of work Edmund would resort to wall sitting or wire swinging or walking about playing with tufts of grass. Yet whenever he felt the need to locate you he would fly over the ground searching until he'd spotted you then come and sit beside you. A special relationship was developing which although frustrating was to show benefits later on.

Flying was an effortless skill for him. He could accelerate, stall, twist and turn with alacrity. His ability to take higher pitch was also beginning to show promise. These combinations were put to good use on the grouse moor in his first year which helped to encourage him out of moments of monumental boredom into a persistent determined hunter. His following season saw a change of attitude and purpose. No longer were there periods of abandoned play, here was an individual that when unhooded, roused, looked purposefully around and when leaving the gauntlet immediately began to

mount up for a commanding pitch. His persona was more business like, the attitude was right, he wanted to go hunting. Edmund has enormous courage and will tackle anything that is within striking distance. At present his one disadvantage is his weight. At 11lb.9ozs, if a cock pheasant gets underneath him he simply bounces off them no matter how high he has pitched. This will present less of a problem once he has developed better footing skills and learned to strike at the head. However from hen pheasant size down he is masterful.

The most memorable moment for me this year was the taking of a pheasant in tremendous style. He was at a very impressive commanding pitch with the pointer staunchly in front with a bird for him. On the flush a cock pheasant rose from the snow cover as if fired by a missile. Edmund immediately responded and came into a classic stoop. He struck the bird squarely across the shoulders which tipped it off course momentarily as it headed in top gear towards cover and dived in. Edmund had learned by now to persist with futile attempts at getting quarry out of cover. He hovered for a second or two whilst Leonard encouraged and called him back to continue flying. The dog was back on point. He immediately responded to the calls and began to take wide sweeping arcs into the sky narrowing them down as he climbed over the dog. Once again he was beautifully pitched in a commanding position. On the flush this time a rabbit broke out of the snow. He dipped his wing acknowledging the quarry. The dog was immediately hastened on to find another point. As the disappointed curses rang out, Leonard ran forward

to beat some cover. In doing so he trod on a snow covered tussock from which a hen pheasant rocketed out. She too flew towards the same wood as the previous bird. Once again the falcon plummeted into a precisely engineered stoop and struck the pheasant hard. It appeared to absorb the impact and tumbled through the air several times before correcting itself and flew on. The hybrid from the throw up followed through and dropped in behind the pheasant which went one way round the side of a large Oak tree, whilst he went the other. He caught up with his bird on the other side binding to it; whereupon they fell to the ground in a cloud of snow. Arriving at the point of impact we found our hero leisurely plucking his dead bird.

Today the hybrid approaches all his work with enthusiasm and good humour. He doesn't sulk if luck isn't with him or if he's made a miscalculation whilst hunting and loses the quarry. He is no where near as aggressive in his attitude as many other falcons we have flown, but it is the style of his approach to hunting that makes him a very special character. His brother who is flown at rook in France is equally gifted and was equally demanding and frustrating to fly in his first year. Gyr hybrids need a lot of time to make into a stylish gamehawk. Their need to play in their first year is very important and instrumental in their development of social, mental and physical skills. The playfulness doesn't ever entirely leave them.



Edmund, a Gyr x Peregrine hybrid, tiercel. Weighing 11lb 9oz.

This morning as Edmund was being put out onto his block the new snowfall attracted his attention. Jumping into the white carpet he snuffled down into its powdery ice almost as if taking a bath and immediately followed this up with footing large balls of snow. Satisfied with that he jumped back onto the block, roused vigorously letting the wintry snow warm his back and took stock of his world.

RAPTOR

**RON
JONES
L.R.K.**

RESCUE

My suspicions were aroused when I received a telephone call saying that two immature kestrels had been found on waste ground. Normally I would expect four or five to have been found rather than only the reported two. This led me to wonder if the nest had been plundered and the other youngsters removed illegally or whether it had just suffered at the hands of nature. I went to collect the kestrels and briefly examine them to check for any injury that they may have sustained. At the same time I obtained the details as to where they had supposedly been found, the name and address of finder etc... and I completed the form DOE 141000 as required by the Department of the Environment. I decided to contact the police to report this incident, to enquire if they had received any other similar reports recently and to ask them to forward any other such reports to myself.

Once collected, I arrived home and put the kestrels into the hospital shed for a more thorough examination. This examination included checking for any

broken bones, weighing and glucose solution administration for treatment of shock and dehydration. The birds were then force fed a small amount of chopped meat with a pinch of SA 37. An extremely restless night followed. I was happy that the two kestrels were safe but still had an uneasy feeling about the circumstances of finding these birds. Were there any other kestrels

and if so, where were they? I felt a compelling urge to go to the area where the two were found but I could not understand why. As soon as I could, I decided to venture to the place where they had been found to see whether there were signs of any other young kestrels. While exploring the area I noticed that my dog had taken an interest in something beside a nearby tree. I followed her, much to my pleasure and surprise, to a third young kestrel that was still alive after having probably been on the ground all night. Once it was found I felt a strong sense of relief and quickly placed the youngster inside my coat as it had become chilled. I returned home and carried out the necessary examination, completed the relevant paperwork as with the other birds, then placed this third kestrel with its siblings. All three birds were quickly approaching the stage where a decision had to be made as to whether the birds would be put out using "group hack" or to keep the birds for a while longer and train hack each bird individually. My concern was whether the birds were healthy enough to be released for hack due to the short time that they had been in my care. I decided that that birds progress was satisfactory and so chose to release them as a group. In preparation a hack box was put into the hospital cage to allow the birds to become accustomed to their man made "nest". After a few days of care and close monitoring of weight increase and general development, the time was now with us to place the birds in the selected releases area. The chosen site was in my father's garden which has open countryside adjacent. This was ideal as my father could later continue with the required efforts needed to complete the release and he could easily observe he birds development using binoculars from the house. I began the daily feeding programme and then after a few days my father continued as planned. The birds accepted the feeding routine and my father took photographs and noted their activities until all were fully fledged. The kestrels began to explore their surroundings only returning for food daily. Their visits to the hack box for feeding eventually became less frequent which indicated that they were hunting and finding their own food.

The highlight of this release was that one of the kestrels returned the following spring to the hack box with its own food and so had, thankfully, survived the winter, as for the other two we can only hope for the best.



Young Kestrels surveying the area from the hack site



One of the young Kestrels after its maiden flight.

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EAGLE

By Gary Balchin

ON

FOX

Oh how I long for the first frost of winter. After the boredom experienced by all falconers during the moult, it is a relief to pick up my birds and head for the flat lands of Lincolnshire. The conditions that prevail on the fens are excellent for flying eagles, firstly the abundance and variety of quarry, and secondly because of this abundance, the eagles attain their peak much sooner. In my first season with Hanna and Hogan, two golden eagles that were imported from Germany six years ago, I soon realised that they had an appetite for hunting foxes. A friend and I were heading back after a morning flying, when Hogan started to bate. We were about a thousand yards from a small wood, and obviously he had seen something. Hanna soon picked up the signals and we released both birds as we made towards the wood. The eagles soon reached the trees, and shortly afterwards we arrived and started to beat the cover. Hanna was the first to stoop as the fox broke cover, but she missed. Hogan took up the challenge but unfortunately wedged himself in the branches of an ash tree. The quarry was gone, alas, probably due to the inexperience of my two young hunters. The scene was set for the future. It took ten flights at foxes before Hogan had his first strike. We were working some plough when he started to get agitated. When the fox broke from the cover of the furrow, Hogan struck immediately, but unfor-



Hanna on first fox. Jan 1993



Hanna on 2nd fox. Feb 1993

unately Reynard had luck on his side and escaped, leaving Hogan to vent his frustration on his handler. Hanna's first fox kill was short and deadly efficient. We were out working the fields when the fox emerged from a hedge and made for the safety of a small wood, it was all over very quickly, Hanna left my fist with only one thing in mind. The quarry tried to dodge and turn but to no avail. The eagle's strike was swift and sure, the fox died instantly. On the next outing it proved a little more difficult. I was working a disused airfield, there was a strong wind and the temperature was very low. As I worked up and down the old runway, Hanna started to bate, she had obviously seen something, but what? Then I saw it, it was a large dog fox in full winter coat, moving stealthily through some long grass about three hundred yards away. As I released my eagle, to my surprise she flew in the opposite direction to the quarry, but then I realised her method, she had deliberately flown into the wind to gain height, what a spectacle as she banked and gained velocity. As the fox cleared the runway, negotiated a fence and made for a small plantation, Hanna's wings closed, her legs stretched, her talons opened and then she struck. After a brief but fierce struggle Hanna emerged the victor. I made my way back to where some friends were ferreting. They to had, had a good day, so the journey home was in good humour, and the evening spent in reflection of a good day "Hunting and Hawking" in the flat lands of Lincolnshire. Hunting in Scotland is of course more suitable to the eagle, after all the terrain is their natural habitat. With the height gained by using the thermals that exist in this kind of country, the stoops are more spectacular and the sport is much more exhilarating. Enough of these dreams however, The responsible eagle owner must bear in mind, the less wild the terrain, the more need for greater control. Flying eagles from the fist in these conditions reduces the falconer's field of view and so increases the liability and safety aspects assumed by everyone who takes on the responsibility of owning and flying raptors.

THE GOSHAWK

MIKE
EVERETT

Although I was involved in organising the protection of nesting Goshawks for several years, they remain the British breeding birds of prey I know least well. Thirty years have passed since I saw my first wild Gos, in a valley in southern France, but I have not encountered a great many since. Most of those have been only half-seen.

Looking back, I seem to have seen the heads of incubating females more often than complete birds. The one thing I remember about them, more than anything else, is the penetrating glare from that amazing yellow eye.... People talk about birds of prey "looking fierce" - in that department, not many raptors can compete with a Goshawk! Other memories include watching one flying around a Scottish glen, in the course of which it met and briefly jousted with a tiercel Peregrine; a nest I was taken to see in Germany which was so big that it was at first thought to belong to Black Storks; and a fearsome-looking female who escorted a friend and myself through her nesting wood in New England, often landing very close and screaming at us all the while.

For all their size, Goshawks can be remarkably unobtrusive birds. This is probably why most British birdwatchers - other than the dedicated few involved in local studies or nest protection schemes - see so little of them. They are reasonably widespread, however, with concentrations of numbers in certain areas, and with patience it is possible to see them frequently and well, especially early in the season when they display high above their nesting woods. Population estimates are rather vague,

but are now generally given as 200-300 pairs, with a strong indication that the higher figure is nearer the mark.

Our knowledge of the past history of the Goshawk in the UK is fragmentary and inconclusive, but it is generally assumed that they bred until sometime in the 18th century in England and in the Scottish Highlands until the 1880s and that they disappeared at least partly through human persecution. There were scattered breeding records, however, up to 1967, including regular nesting in Sussex (up to three pairs) from at least 1938 (possibly much earlier) until 1951. From 1968 onwards, breeding has been recorded on a regular basis and numbers have increased fairly steadily.

Our new Goshawk population almost certainly derives entirely from falconers, releases and escapes, some of which are documented. The pattern of recolonisation does not fit that which would be expected from a natural return involving continental birds, and in any case its first wave came at a time when European populations were at low ebb any expansion would have been highly unlikely. The earliest breeding records were from areas of falconry activity and known releases. Another interesting point is that most wild Goshawks are larger than would be expected if they had arrived naturally from the most likely sources in Europe. It is no coincidence that during the 1970s imported Goshawks were usually big birds from north-eastern Europe (especially Finland), while in the 1960s they were somewhat smaller birds from sources in central Europe.



Like Sparrowhawks, Goshawks are not tied to particular prey species and will take whatever is available locally. They also readily take mammals such as rabbits and squirrels, so they are quite versatile predators which should be very successful. Furthermore, their habitat needs are not particularly rigid and, in theory, they could be very open country with no suitable nesting woods. At present, though, there are large areas of the country which are eminently suitable for Goshawks but which have no breeding pairs at all. In one area, the protozoan parasite (*Trichomonas gallinae*) has been found to infect and kill nestlings, but over most of the country the principal threats to Goshawks are persecution and nest-robbing. Gamekeepers are known to persecute Goshawks heavily in some areas and, fearing the worst, many people whose interests involve

gamebirds are less than enthusiastic about the possibility of having Goshawks around. It is a fact that nest-robbing is rife in some Gos areas. Some of this is down to egg-collectors, but, sadly, much of it is carried out by falconers and by unscrupulous characters who know they can make money out of providing Goshawks for falconry. In some ways, it is a pity that the Goshawk's comeback was not as carefully orchestrated and documented as was the case with our two other "man-made" restorations, those involving Red Kites and White-tailed Eagles. Be that as it may, the Gos is firmly established. Even if the process was as much accidental as deliberate, we have the falconry world to thank for that. It is a great shame that some of their numbers have persistently hindered this fine bird's spread and increase by their illegal activities.

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

amy

NO ORDINARY HAWKING DOG

A sheep farmer is useless without his collie, and in his old age 'Ben' my present collie was prone to go on strike for days at a time, and with eight hundred Ewes spread out over 1300 acres of hill it was becoming a real problem. I needed a replacement and I needed one fast, and a glance through the local press showed a litter of well bred pups over on mainland Scotland. I phoned and ordered a bitch. I hadn't time to leave Mull and see them, so I relied on the breeder to pick me one and send her over on the next ferry. She arrived two days later in a tea chest. Six weeks old, black and white, rough coated, alive with fleas and stinking, but adorable none the less, and very pleased to be picked up and cuddled. I left the tea chest there and put her in the land rover and drove home to the farm. She sat in the passenger seat and watched the world go by like a veteran, I was sure she would do fine.

I got rid of her little unwanted guests, gave her a bath and sorted out some decent food for her and then set about introducing my new pup to the other dogs, hawks, chickens and goats that lived around the farmhouse. I started her basic training straight away and within a few days she was housetrained and had learned to sit, stay and walk on a lead. Collies really are a dream to train, but they need sensitive handling and do not cope well with harsh words and rebukes.

I remember her first encounter with sheep. It was July and I was in the middle of shearing, 'Amy' was now about 12 weeks old. I let her inspect the penned sheep, and she was interested and excitable, which was a good sign. Then I told her to go and lay down with Ben in the corner on the straw while I got on with my work. She did as she was told and I got the first sheep out of the pen. I turned it over, ready to start shearing its belly, only to find the pup hanging off its back end. Well, she was brave, if nothing else!

I've never been one to wait until a dog is fully grown before starting to work it, and like I said I needed another collie working the farm, her training went well and by the time she was six months she was very useful. She knew her left and right commands, she would gather, speed up and slow down when told to do so, she would face, and, as she got older and heavier, learned to hold an irate Blackface Ewe if necessary. Ben taught her the 'subtle' collie traits of 'Eye' and 'Balance' and saved me months of work with her. The farm had a healthy population of rabbits and hill hares and I would take Amy along with my old Lurcher at night, lamping them. She enjoyed it and learned fast, and what she lacked in speed she made up for with brains, and between them they filled the freezer.

In the evenings I would take her out on the hill with the Redtail or the Sparrowhawk. Amy never got in the way, but she never got involved with the hunting either. She would only chase a rabbit or a hare when told to do so, and that's the way I liked it. Then one day while out with the Redtail she came on point. Tail rigid, ears up, one foot raised, staring at a clump of heather ahead. I told her to stay, and walked up to her with fist, and hawk held high. I sent her in; a fine hill hare burst out of the heather and away went the Redtail in hot pursuit. Amy just stood and watched. The Hawk caught it easily and the two of them rolled down the hill. I ran over to assist and dispatch the hare. I called Amy over to see the results of her point, and she walked over, interested, but keeping a respectable distance from the mantling hawk. So from then on, when not working on the farm I took her out with the hawk and encouraged her to point, and then to quarter. I already had a good amount of control over her so it was easy enough, and she pointed rabbits, hares, pheasants and grouse and then would hold that point indefinitely. And so our quarry tally mounted. Amy enjoyed our evenings hawking every bit as much as our sheep work, and she knew the difference, never pointing when working ewes, and ignoring sheep when out with the hawk. She learned to work cover well, and to follow and enjoy the hunt, finding the lost hawk down in thick cover, saving me lots of time and worry. Soon after that I left the Island and moved to the East coast for a similar type of work, and I began to worry a little that I was working her too hard, so I bought myself a young German Shorthaired Pointer, which I trained and worked with the Goshawk I was flying at the time.

The G.S.P. was useful and enjoyed its work, and although it covered a lot more ground than Amy ever did, it was never as easy to control and prone to give chase when flushing ground quarry. She was, I suppose a young dog and I should have expected it for a while, but after working the collie I found it infuriating.

So for almost a year Amy didn't work with a hawk, she just did her farm work and seemed happy enough with that. I felt a little guilty when she watched me weighing the hawk and getting ready to go hunting out of the corner of her eye and she would 'sigh' when I left without her. One day while working the G.S.P. a hare got up and ran across the open moor into the distance, away went the G.S.P. after it, despite my whistling and cursing, only to return half an hour later with a badly torn pad, ending the hawking that day, before it had even started and the next day I promised to fly a friends Harris Hawk for him, while he was away. The G.S.P. was out of action, I would have to use Amy. Amy watched me weigh

BY DAVID RAMPLING



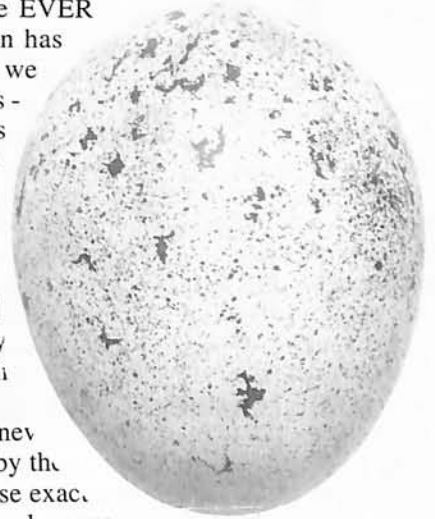
the Harris Hawk next morning, it was almost an ounce over its flying weight, and the day was warm so I didn't expect too much from it. Amy was a little surprised when I called her out of the door to come with me. The G.S.P. was surprised too, and infuriated, and I could see her doing cartwheels at the living room window as I drove away, angry at being left behind. Amy, the Harris, and I arrived at the fish farm, in hope of finding a moorhen or two. I sent Amy along the river bank adjoining the trout loch. She waded into the river and worked the reeds, and came on point almost straight away. I let her hold it for a while, then sent her in. Away went the moorhen and away went the Harris, a short flight and the Harris nailed it on the far bank. I waded across, bagged the moorhen, gave the Harris a tidbit and looked back to find Amy, only to see her on point again twenty five yards upstream. I cast the Harris into a tree and sent Amy in to flush. Another moorhen and the Harris just missed it as the moorhen plopped into the river ahead of the hawk. Amy swam across and found it again. She was almost swimming and pointing at the same time as the water here was deep and fast flowing. She flushed when told, the moorhen tried to make the loch and the Harris caught it almost at the feet of an angler.

I picked them up and walked on, the day had turned much colder but Amy worked well, with point after point, and had the Harris been keener we would have caught a lot more. But that did it for me, who needed a G.S.P. anyway? And when I returned home to find my living room in tatters, I made a phone call to a shooting friend who was very pleased indeed to be the new owner of a G.S.P. where she resides to this day, a much loved, hard working companion for him. Amy and I left Scotland in 1992, I gave up Farm Management to be a shepherd on an Island off the coast of Devon for a year. The Island is a nature reserve so I was unable to fly and hunt with the hawk, and I missed it dreadfully. Amy more than earned her keep there, working the sheep and keeping me company, and living on an Island with a resident population of twelve that was very important. And it was always nice to know that when I returned to the mainland Amy would be ready to start Hawking, and I always knew she wouldn't have forgotten a thing, but then, she's never been a 'Run of the mill' working dog.

REPRODUCTION BIRDS EGGS A WORLD FIRST

This is the first time EVER that such a collection has been offered. Both we and the manufacturers - Emerald Collectables - are most anxious to prevent the disturbance of birds' nests and the taking of their eggs, which is - in any case - banned by law in this country under Acts passed in 1954 and 1967.

It is hoped that the new opportunity offered by the Collection to purchase exact reproductions will go a long way towards helping to stop this illegal practice.



ASTONISHING ACCURACY

This remarkable collection - of which the Golden Eagle egg is the magnificent flagship - will feature no fewer than fifty eggs of Britain's best-loved birds, from the Blue Tit to the Eagle itself. Apart from the common garden birds such as the Avocet and charismatic and picturesque creatures such as the Puffin are included.

FOR MORE INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EMERALD COLLECTABLES, P O BOX 60, ROMSEY,
HANTS SO51 9ZB

BORDER COUNTRY FAIRS

Further expansion is planned for the new season by Border Country Fairs. As well as adding to and improving existing shows, The Wales & Border Counties Country Fair at the Royal Welsh Showground on Easter Sunday & Monday April 3rd & 4th and the Yorkshire Dales Country Fair Nr Skipton on July 30th & 31st, two new shows are planned. The Cheshire Country Fair at Capesthorpe Hall Nr Macclesfield will be on Sunday the 26th of June 1994 and the Welsh Valleys Country Fair at Margam Country Park, Nr Swansea will be on the 13th & 14th of August 1994.

All the fairs are run with the intention of demonstrating that all field sports are a legitimate and worthwhile activity. The new sites have been selected because they are in areas where good field sports publicity is required.

For more information, or to help spread the message contact Mike Crump on 0386 - 48971.

BRITISH FIELD SPORTS SOCIETY

There is a code of Welfare & Husbandry of Birds of Prey & Owls, compiled by a sub-committee and the Hawk Board. Commitment of Birds of Prey & Owls.

If you would like a copy please send S.A.E. to The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP

The light was fading, it was a late October afternoon, 1987, the sky was a pale, somnambulant water-colour of fading intensity, tranquil, dreamlike. Tassa, an 11 year old female Peregrine falcon, (or to be more precise an 11 year intermewed eyass falcon!) was on one of her early flights of the year. She had undergone her enseaming, been cleaned of superfluous internal body fat and seemed keen to get into her true domain. Convenience had meant using a local airfield, an ex - RAF base, long since abandoned to mother nature. A magical, peaceful area, of some 1,500 acres. The vegetation was mainly tall grasses, about a metre high, surrounded by small copses of 5 to 20 acres apiece, between which were cultivated fields of wheat, barley and beans, 50 to 60 acres apiece, now stubble. Tassa, now unhooded, bobbed her malar - striped head, shook all her blue - grey, almost reptilian, feathers into place and surveyed the landscape. She roused again, there was an accompanying dry tinkling of her Lahore tail bell. For whom does that bell toll?... A cock pheasant, slinking into a grass covered tractor track, about 200 yards away? She was cast off into the wind and started to mount up into the pale lemon blue sky. On her first circuit at about 100 feet, a small, sharp silhouette was seen to slip out of a distant copse on the periphery of our arena. With a flight as keen and as straight as an arrow, Hacked Merlin arrived on the scene. Swearing profusely, she mounted strongly, 8 ounces against 28 ounces of awakening Peregrine falcon. The first attack, from below and behind, was parried with a quick yellow flash of well experienced talon. Tassa the ever ready, unbeknown to myself, had played this game at the outset of the season for the last 3 years! She carried on her business undaunted, almost casual about the whole affair.

Miss Merlin was defending her territory vigorously. A sharp pull to the right avoided the slashing razors. Still climbing, Missy inverted then stooped back into the fight for as far as she was concerned this was HER airspace. Survival, through the fast-approaching winter, relied upon this factor. She again vocalised her rage, in high pitched needle - like screams. "It's that bloody Merlin again" cussed Ray. "Didn't know there were any in these parts" I replied. "There weren't until we lost that bugger at hack a few years ago, I'm surprised the local Sparrowhawks haven't got her yet". Meanwhile, the seemingly one - sided combat was becoming more balanced than I had expected. It was agility verses power.

Tassa, on her second circuit some 200 feet high, momentarily stopped pumping her sails and in what seemed like suspended animation, quivered and shook all her feathers into place. I'm sure I saw her casual

scratch herself behind her ear as well! As far as she was concerned the Merlin was just a nuisance. Missy continued the attack from above and behind, she actually made contact with Tassa, hitting her on the back. Fortunately no feathers came off and that final blow seemed to satisfy Missy, she'd made her point. She side slipped and arrowed away, back to her favourite perch on the topmost dead branch of a stag-horned oak, from where she kept a sharp eye on the proceedings. "So that Merlin has got a close ring on then?" I said "Sure has, cost me £400" replied Ray "Didn't you try to get her back?" I asked. "Only half heartedly, we were busy with all the Peregrine eyasses and didn't have time. It's a shame because the Sparrowhawk will get her one day". As a casual afterthought Ray added, "If you can get her back you can have her, she'd make a lovely hawk - hacked for 3 years! She sure knows her stuff!" (That's another story)

Tassa by now was a small crossbow

image high in the sky. She'd been encouraged all the way by Ray, who was watching her every motion and calling, "Go up, go up!" which came out more like "Kwup! kwup!"

It had been a regular pumping for several minutes and I marvelled at her stamina. The near setting sun's orange light illuminated her underside. Her pale white breast almost shone, the V-shaped markings on her body stood out like some ancient heraldic symbol, on a medieval shield. This was England, this was my heritage, this was timeless. How many men, in times gone by, had craned their necks to the sky and felt that deep-rooted feeling, a oneness of spirit? Whose consciousness had left their mortal bodies and there for a brief moment, were flying, pinions outstretched over the smooth expanses of southern Suffolk? I could feel them around me peering down from the realms of immortality. I could smell the steel of chain mail and felt the horses' breath. Ghost riders in the sky! A thousand years of heritage and now at the near end of this millennium, there are those who would try to rob us of this!

Tassa had reached her pitch, her wings were rigid and she circled expectantly in the clear autumn sky. Having played her part it was up to us to serve her. Andrew directed me to a point which he had somehow divined as the best place for viewing. Why that point? Well, years of experience, as Ray's falconer and friend had served him well. "Don't take your eyes off the hawk!" he warned. A small area of tussocky grass was three quarters encircled by Ray, Andrew and Cally, the English Springer Spaniel bitch. "Wait for it, steady, steady, wait, wait" commands Ray, eyes rivetted to the hawk. Cally's tail is a blur and she is almost bursting with enthusiasm. Tassa swings round and glides along behind, when she is directly

above us, the silent Suffolk scene explodes. "Go!" shouts Ray. In a blur of activity Cally piles in, Andrew leaps about and Ray shouts "Hey! hey!" as a large bronze cock pheasant erupts out of the cover, in a great cloud of dust and grass seed husks that sparkle in the setting sun. He's heading straight for me and he hasn't noticed me.

My one eye that was watching Tassa saw the instantaneous reaction, in a sudden flick she had changed from horizontal flight to vertical. Not content with free fall she was pumping her wings like crazy. I subconsciously counted, one thousand, two thousand, at three she half closed her wings. She knew she couldn't accelerate any faster by flying and at four seconds fractionally moved the three-quarter-closed wings, to slightly alter her course, from a directly vertical stoop, towards the exiting pheasant. I could just see her eyes and they were getting larger. At five seconds her wings were tight to her body and she took on a bullet like appearance, no feather moved, she had now become an elongated blur about 20 feet long. It suddenly occurred to me that this bird was going TOO fast to pull out of her stoop, which was only a few degrees less than vertical. Surely if she opens her wings they would tear off? If she doesn't then she will smash into our slowly spinning sphere. Six seconds... seven seconds...

The cock pheasant had flown past me at 20 paces. I saw his startled face, as he veered up and away from me. He had made about 150 paces and was going hell for leather toward a copse, only another 100 yards away. Tassa fractionally moved the leading edges of her wings, moving her from a near vertical to a horizontal plane and in a motion which seemed to defy all that I knew about 'g' force and airframes, streaked past me. The accompanying noise I can only describe as a searing, renting of air, her hard almost metallic wings were like a fast knife through sailcloth. The only sounds I could begin to liken it to are:- a) A slightly subsonic bullet going past your ear, or b) A rather rare occasion when I saw and heard a meteorite falling to earth, except that was followed by a sonic boom. Well this avian 'meteorite' was followed by an almighty crack as she punched the cock pheasant from below and behind. He somersaulted several times, in a cloud of feather scale shrapnel. By the time he had bounced once on the ground, in a flurry of feather and dust, Tassa had looped

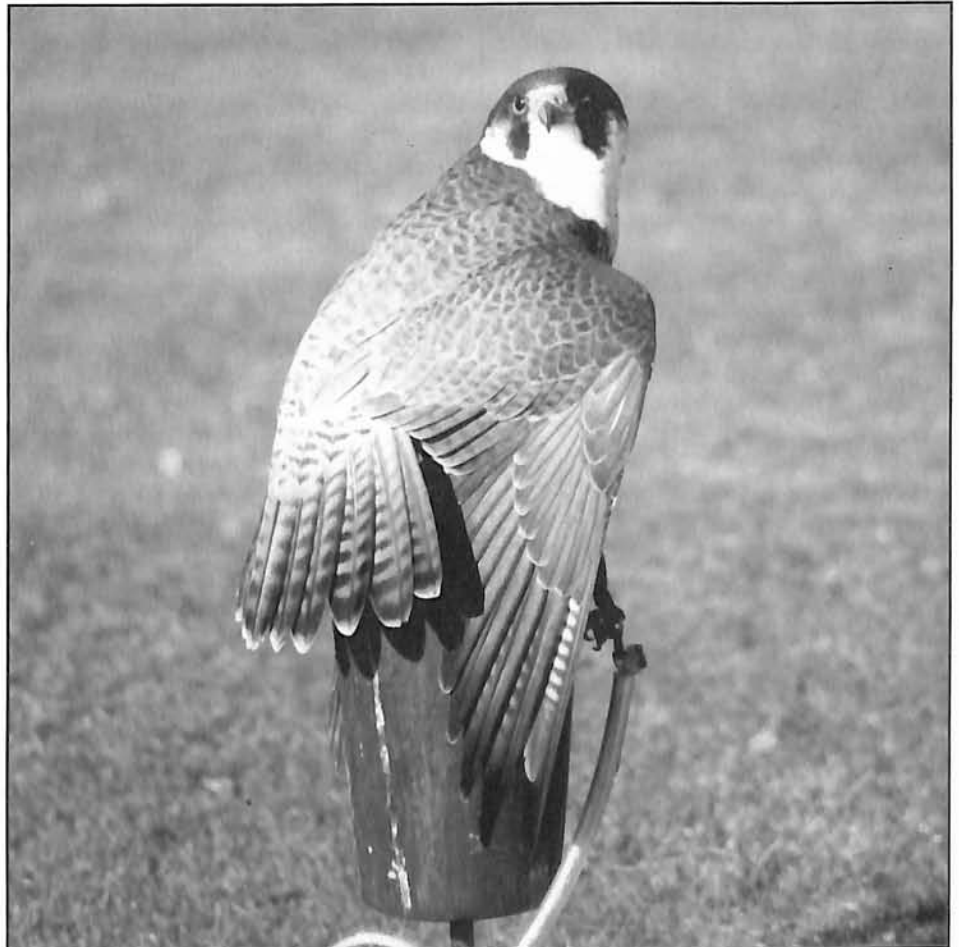
the loop and was on him. Andrew had made in and a stunned silence was all around. There was a gentle falling of small soft feathers which, drifted across my vision, I caught one and watched the rest festoon the tall grasses. The sun had set on Suffolk and a strange mixture of feelings engulfed me. A slight sadness at the death of such a magnificent burnished bronze bird, (even though there were 5 million released in Britain that year!). The sense of, neither achievement nor triumph, but accomplishment at having caught ourselves a fine dinner. A scenario that mankind has played out, for who really knows how long?

I was awoken from my reverie. "What do you reckon to that then?" grinned Ray. I opened my mouth to speak but no sound came out, my mind had not yet descended into the realm of words. I just felt my jaw move up and down. Dumbstruck! "Boy!oh boy! he's a fine one, couple of bottles of Rioja at home, let's go!" said Ray eagerly.

Tassa fed on the neck meat and head. I

was slightly shocked at Rays' party piece, when he picked up the severed head, cracked the plucked, bloodied pheasant's skull open, using his teeth and then offered it to Tassa who devoured the brain eagerly. Our main meal was slipped away and given to me to carry, out of sight of Tassa. Andrew lifted her back onto his glove and as we turned towards home in the near dark, Cally snuck in and 'illegally' snuffled the remaining morsels left on the ground! I finally managed some intelligent appraisal like "Blimey!" It was the first of many flights I witnessed of Tassa, who was Ray Turner's hawk and heroine of the book "Gamehawk".

In the near darkness we trundled back to Great Lodge. I had witnessed my first experience of true falconry. I suddenly realised at that point, that I had just been 'buggering about with hawks'. There was a long way to go now, this was an aspect of falconry that I had never witnessed before and it was now a daunting task, to aspire to and stage manage, the vertical stoop of the "Gamehawk"



Tassa is a eleven year old inter-mewed, eyass, female peregrine.

FACTS ON FALCONERS



Liam O'Broin with his eyass teircel peregrine, 'McHugh'.

Liam O'Broin, 49, author of *A Manual For Hawking*, lives in County Meath, Eire. He is married to Margaret and they have three grown up daughters. He was born in County Dublin, his mother coming from Northern Ireland and his father from Southern Ireland.

It is, he assures me, as beautiful as it is reputed to be and nothing, in his eyes can compare. As I spoke to him, I was surprised to find just how small Ireland is, he tells me he can drive from west to east in about three hours, thus having almost the whole of southern Ireland as his hawking oyster.

How long have you been practising falconry?

20 years

What was the first bird you ever flew?

Kestrel.

What else have you flown?

Mostly sparrowhawks, in all their variations, imprints, eyasses, passage and haggard. Also a common buzzard, and peregrines.

What are you flying at the moment?

A passage peregrine falcon, you can still take birds from the wild in Ireland, under licence.

What is your favourite bird?

A tiercel peregrine that I have that catches rooks.

What is your least favourite bird?

The common buzzard as they are lazy and opportunistic. They lack motivation and drive that is so admired in Birds of Prey.

What inspired you to write your book?

It started off as being a history of falconry in Ireland, I spent 8 summers researching it, in the process discovering some original parchment documents to do with agreements between the original native Irish and Anglo Irish, written in both Gaelic and English. When I finished it I found it seemed to come to an

abrupt end so I decided to incorporate the hawking into it, sparrowhawks are the most commonly flown bird in Ireland so the theme remained the same, Falconry in Ireland.

Also being an artist I did all my own illustrations so I found I didn't have to ask anybody else to interpret for me.

What changes have you noticed since you started falconry?

Over the last 5-6 years peregrines have become available which is good, although it means less people fly sparrowhawks.

Harris Hawks have become very popular and all types of birds are now readily available including hybrids. These are the sort of bird I used to dream about, ones which would encapsulate everything you could hope for in a Bird of Prey.

Does Falconry in Ireland differ much from falconry in England?

Yes, quite a lot. There are very few Goshawks flown over here, the same goes for Harris Hawks and Redtails. There are more numbers being flown each year, but due to the fact that there is no captive breeding in Ireland this is happening very slowly. Also access to land in Ireland is easy, we can fly on most land, in the west and mid-lands of Ireland the farms are all very small so there is no one land owner to exclude you, you find that the farmers are very interested in the birds and welcome you readily. The same cannot be said for people with guns.

What is your favourite quarry?

Rooks. We make it a policy never to hunt songbirds, just rooks and magpies.

If you could fly any bird, anywhere what would it be?

The bird would be the one that would fly the highest and kill the most crows. Where I would fly would be split between Northumbria and Co Mayo.

Given the power what law would you change/introduce?

Anything which would encourage good falconry.

If you could go hawking with any body past or present who would it be?

For the present I would choose Nick Fox, who I have already been hawking with so that is one realised, the other would be Queen Elizabeth I, it must have been wonderful travelling from castle to castle stopping for a few days good hawking and then moving on, although I can't quite imagine myself wearing the clothes that were in fashion, I have never been one for high heels.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Yes, I would like to see the barriers come down between England and Ireland, I would like to see more English falconers coming over to fly their birds, until 1922 there were no quarantine regulations. The hunting is better in Ireland as it is very well accepted, mostly because the country is a lot more rural, with less large towns, more villages and a greater general awareness of what the countryside is all about.

RAPTORS IN SENEGAL

Concluding part

Text & Studies
by
Philip Snow

Coming to the other eagles, we find that the unmistakable LONG CRESTED (HAWK) EAGLE (*Lophoetus occipitalis*) is neither shy nor uncommon. These smallish, upright and uniformly dark brown raptors with very long and (uncontrollable!) crests and slender white legs perch prominently in wooded, cultivated and marshy country, frequently by roads. The massive CROWNED (HAWK) EAGLE (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*) is now very rare in Senegal, and declining elsewhere, due to destruction of its essential forest habitat, within which it preys on monkeys and bucks, like some giant sparrowhawk. I was therefore fortunate to see probably the only pair in Senegal, from a hide in the Basse Casainance Park, their huge broad winged and long tailed forms dwarfing the Palm nut Vultures they were soaring with. These forest, Harpy type, eagles are very different to the slenderer AFRICAN HAWK or BONELIS EAGLES (*Hieraetus fasciatus*) which are widespread, if uncommon, here in more open country. AYRES HAWK EAGLE (*Hieraetus dubuis* or *ayresii*), a slightly smaller and more spotted bird, has also once been sighted here. Africa's largest and usually most impressive eagle, the MARTIAL EAGLE (*Polemaetus bellicosus*) is a widespread bird of the savannah and bush to the north and east, and in decline here. Whilst in its pale phase, the relatively tiny BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraetus pennatus*) should not pose too many I.D. problems. This regular western palearctic migrant to the north unfortunately also has dark and immature plumages, and heat haze adds to the confusion. The uncommon WAHLBERGS EAGLE (*Aquila wahlbergi*) poses similar problems in open country here, but its different narrow winged and long tailed form hopefully helps!

The most commonly seen eagle in Senegal, and the rest of Africa, is the TAWNY EAGLE (*Aquila rapax*); both resident and palearctic migrant. As usual, colour and age variations abound, and one of its other two migratory STEPPE EAGLE (*Aquila rapax orientalis*) forms is also seen here in the winter. A word for the unwary, though: Initially I managed to misidentify a pale brown 1st year Palm nut Vulture for a Tawny, over open dry ground with no size comparison or clear head view possible!

Plentiful BLACK KITES, of two largely indistinguishable races abound: migratory (*Milvus migrans*) and the resident yellow billed (*Milvus migrans parasitus*). Usually the pretty little BLACK SHOULDERED KITES (*Elanus caeruleus*) are fairly common here, in cultivated and open country, but we unfortunately only managed to see two. The other, more unfamiliar Kite, is surely one of the world's most graceful and beautiful raptors; the communal AFRICAN SWALLOW TAILED KITE (*Elanus chelictinia riocourii*). Not to be confused with the larger american bird of prey, its dancing terrilike flight is 'regular but discreet' over the drier semi-desert areas of the north and east. Three raptorial oddities, the crepuscular BAT HAWK (*Machaeerhamphus alcinus*), the WEST AFRICAN CUCKOO HAWK or FALCON (*Aviceda cuculoides*), and the SECRETARY BIRD (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) have all been seen once or twice in the south. The Bat Hawk hunts its favourite food on pointed falcon-like wings, and the Baza-like Cuckoo Falcon is a skulking woodland bird bearing little resemblance to the lumpish field guide illustrations, and both fly in a rather leisurely kite-like manner! That leggy snake stomper, the Secretary bird, has probably not been recorded here for some time.

Raptor enthusiasts will doubtless be delighted with the twelve 'true' falcons possible here, starting with that fairly common and petit western palearctic migrant, the LESSER KESTREL (*Falco naumanni*), usually seen in Senegal in January. The COMMON or ROCK KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) is widespread as ever, a local resident and palearctic migrant. Only a couple of sightings of the larger reddish FOX KESTREL (*Falco alopex*) are credited to south Senegal, whereas the unmistakable and chic GREY KESTREL (*Falco ardosiaceus*) is regular and not uncommon here in West Africa. It is distinguished by its discreet all over grey plumage, offset by chrome yellow eye-ring, cere and feet, and habit of sitting prominently on trees or poles to drop onto its prey. It has a heavier build and stronger feet than other kestrels, explaining its main terrestrial diet of reptiles, rodents and birds etc. Another kestrel, so-called, is the RED NECKED FALCON (*Falco chicquera rufi-*

collis), still sometimes named RED NECKED KESTREL, RED HEADED MERLIN or 'TURUMTI' and supposedly fairly common and widespread in open country with palm groves. I was very thrilled to see my first wild one together with a buzzing male RED FOOTED FALCON (*Falco vespertinus*) a rather rare western palearctic migrant here; over the dried up rice paddies and dunes by the Guinea Bissau border. Both bird's lovely colour was rendered magical by the light afternoon light; as indeed were the numerous bee-eaters, rollers, kingfishers, sunbirds, barbets and glossy starlings etc! Both accidental western palearctic migrants, the SAKER (*Falco cherrug*) and MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) have also been sighted once or twice in Senegal. The HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) can be quite common on passage in Africa generally, although not necessarily here; whereas its bright rusty breasted cousin the AFRICAN HOBBY (*Falco cuvieri*) is largely resident, if uncommon, in the south. Lastly, but no means least, the two larger and best known falcons; the PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus*) and LANNER (*Falco biarmicus*). The adaptable Lanner is THE dominant african falcon; both fairly common residents and western palearctic migrant, with at least two sightings of the paler north african race (*Falco biarmicus erlangerii*). The tropical african race (*Falco biarmicus abyssinicus*) should presumably be the dominant one here; but having properly seen only one 1st year bird; I can't comment! The Peregrine, by comparison, is only an uncommon breeder, and relatively untouched by pesticides in most of sub-saharan Africa, but at least five races are possible. Larger migrant western palearctic races include (*Falco peregrinus calidus*) and (*Falco peregrinus peregrinus*); and resident north african races (*Falco peregrinus brookei*) of the mediterranean coasts; and 'Barbary Falcons (*Falco peregrinus pelagrinoides*) of the north african deserts join the resident tropical race (*Falco peregrinus minor*), although breeding is not confirmed in Senegal.

This can obviously only serve as a brief introduction to a fascinating country, (of largely friendly people and lovely landscape), and its beautiful birds. I, for one, will return!

(Red headed Merlin)

• 'Tumuti' or Red headed Falcon c.36 cm

• Western Red footed Falcon c.30 cm



over 'Savannah' & dried up rice paddies etc -

c.67cm

c.73cm

^ Adults >

77
• Brown E
• Black breasted Snake Eagles
• Grey Kestrel >



• Red headed Falcon

• Grey Kestrel > c.33cm.

- Basse Casamance - Cap Skirring



juv. >



^ adult

• Great or Black Sparrowhawk c.50 cm



BIRDS NOT TO SCALE



Forests
Basse
Casamance
N. Park

^
• Crowned
Eagle
c87cm

c. medium!
• Grasshopper
Buzzard

c81cm
• Martial Eagle >
S. east Senegal,
Savanna

PART 3
RAPTORS IN SENEGAL

P. Snow © 93



FALCONRY

INDIAN HOODS

Sir - As Indian hoods are by many falconers preferred to Dutch ones it may be of use to some of your readers to learn how to make them. They are simply and easily made out of a single piece of leather. Two instruments are only required for the purpose - a cutter of the size and shape shown in Fig.1; and a small chisel, shaped as in Fig. 2. The size of the chisel depends in the description of hood to be made for charghs (sakers) and peregrines.

The cutter when used is held upright in the palm of the right hand, with the long point furthest from the worker. The left hand guides the leather. The breadth of the chisel must be greatest at its edge. The edge must be

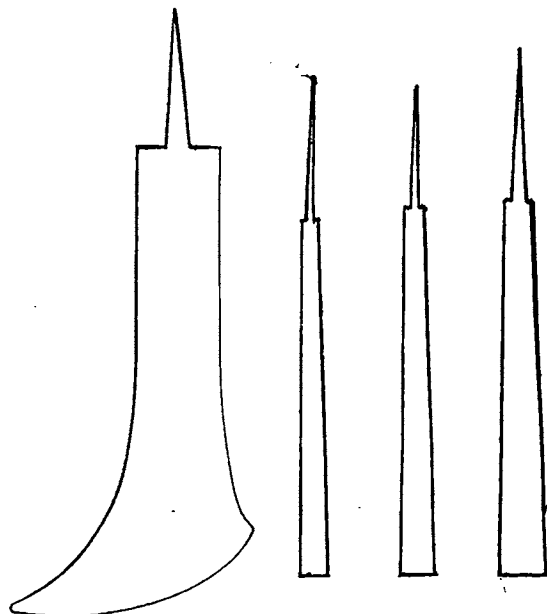


FIG.1 CUTTING-OUT TOOL
FIG.2 CHISELS FOR MAKING SLITS

square, and the corners sharp - not rounded. It should also be as thin as possible.

Natives make their tools of iron or soft steel, in preference to good English steel. The former can be sharpened in a few seconds on a stone when the edge gets broken, whereas a certain amount of time and skill are required to sharpen the harder metal.

The best leather for hoods is common bazaar cow, or calf hide, called by native shoemakers *dhanri*. It retains its stiffness and hardness even when scraped thin, though it tears as easily as brown paper. It should be scraped to a uniform thickness of about a sixteenth or a twentieth of an inch, and cut into small pieces, each piece sufficiently large for a single hood. These pieces should be wetted, hammered, folded double (smooth side outwards), slightly hammered again, and then placed in the sun to dry. Hammering leather when wet hardens and stiffens it. Patterns for hoods should be cut out of leather doubled, and kept between the leaves of a book to prevent curling. Supposing that a peregrine's hood has to be made. Take the pattern Fig.3, lay it on one of the small pieces of dried folded leather, the line A B of the pattern coinciding with the fold of the leather. Trace the outline of the pattern with a hard, fine pencil. Next, with the cutter cut along the inside of the pencilled outline. Care must be taken to keep the cutter at right angles while cutting. Now, with the largest chisel make the incisions from B to E and G to H. The actual number is immaterial, but should be even. By making the number of slits even (as shown in Fig.3) the hood strap will pass outside the blank spaces between each set of slits. The chisel must be held at right angles to the leather, and driven well through both

thicknesses. A slit must also be made near K. Next cut out of goat leather (technically called *nari*) a strap about 12in. long and a sixth of an inch broad. Point and thin about an inch of its ends. Open the newly cut out hood, and hold it smooth side downwards. The smooth side of the leather becomes the inside of the hood. For obvious reasons the rough side should not be next to the feathers. Opening out the pattern as in Fig.4, pass one end of the strap through the slits C and S, and draw tight. Thread the strap through all the incisions to EE, drawing it tight. Next pass it through the slits T and V, and draw it tight, so that the edges F E and F G are brought together. Then thread through all the slits to H. Treat the other side of the hood in the same way. The strap must be drawn tight after passing through every two or three slits. The smallest-sized chisel (used for making merlins and sparrowhawks' hoods), or a very thick packing needle, should first be passed through every pair or so of slits to open them for the strap. Next stitch the edges F E and F G together edge to edge (*Hindustani, munh ba munh*). On no account must the hood be first stitched and then fitted with the strap. Now pass the ends of the strap through the two slits on their opposite sides at N - V, the right hand end through the two left hand slits at n, and vice versa. Draw both ends tight, so that the two edges K H and K H meet. Stitch as before edge to edge. It will be noticed that seams are not stitched quite to the bottom, but that spaces equal to the breadth of the strap are left unsewn (see dotted line of stitching in Fig.4). By casing the strap at the seams the bottom of the hood can be loosened about a tenth of an inch at each seam. This is more than enough to suit any individual peculiarity of size.

An Indian hood cannot be opened at the back like a Dutch one, but is made to slip on and off without being "struck" or "unstruck". The object of the strap is principally to stiffen the bottom of the hood. It should be as thin as possible, and nearly as stiff as the thin cover of an ordinary copybook.

The outside of the three seams should now be damped, and smoothed by being rubbed with the handle of a penknife or some other hard surface.

The point over the eyes should be rounded in the same manner, to give the hood a neater appearance.

In bought hoods, a tassel to hold the hood is made by passing through the slits at K K, from the inside, the ends of the small strap about eight inches long. Those ends are then passed through an incision cut in the centre of the two leathern discs about the size of a threepenny bit. They are drawn tight and each end slit in two. These four ends are then knotted in a peculiar manner. Each end is then

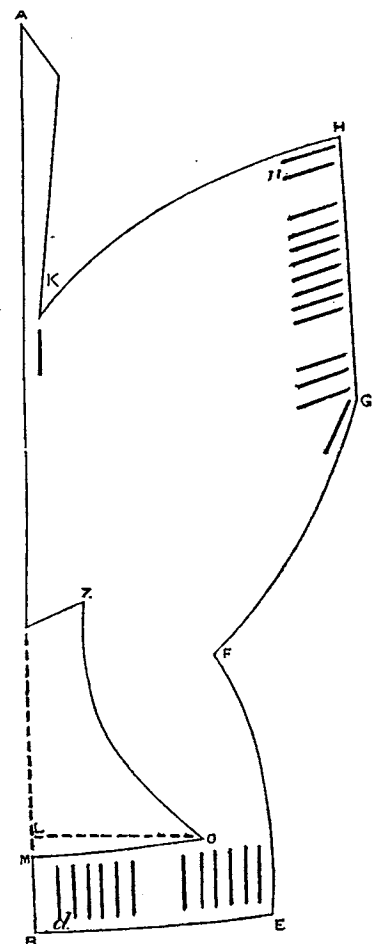


FIG.3 PATTERN FOR FALCONS HOOD (FOLDED)

again slit in two, damped, and twisted. If preferred, a plume can of course be bound with waxed thread and wire into the ends of a shorter strap, as in a Dutch hood. The hood is now finished; it only requires the end of a pocket handkerchief to be stuffed inside to open it out. Unused hoods when put aside should always be stuffed with cotton wool to make them retain their shape. A new hood may appear a little tight, and may not sit down well at first. If either too tight or too loose, the strap at the back should be loosened or tightened. If this is not sufficient, the strap near the side seams should be readjusted. A new hood should not slip on too easily. The tips of the fingers of the hand the hood is held in should be placed underneath the hawk's head at the side while the hood is being slipped on.

In breaking a hawk to the hood, which can be done to a great extent while the eyes are sealed (an Eastern practice not adopted by European falconers), a very loose hood is used - one that the hawk could get rid of if left to itself.

Hoods can be bought for a uniform cost of 2 annas each. Those made in Amritsar and Karpurthala are considered the best. As bought hoods have several defects, many natives prefer to make their own. One of the commonest defects is that the line K H is cut straight instead of curved. Not only does this make the hood press against the back of the head, but it is frequently the cause of baldness. Another universal fault is that the line O M is cut at right angles to A B, the natural result being that a hooded hawk is unable to move the lower mandible freely, and consequently finds a difficulty in eating.

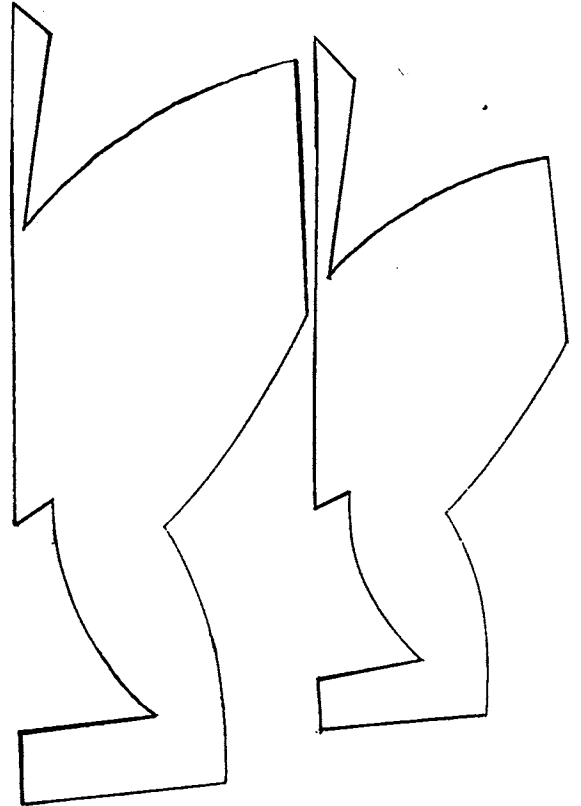


FIG.5. PATTERN FOR TIERCEL'S HOOD
FIG.6 PATTERN FOR MERLIN'S HOOD

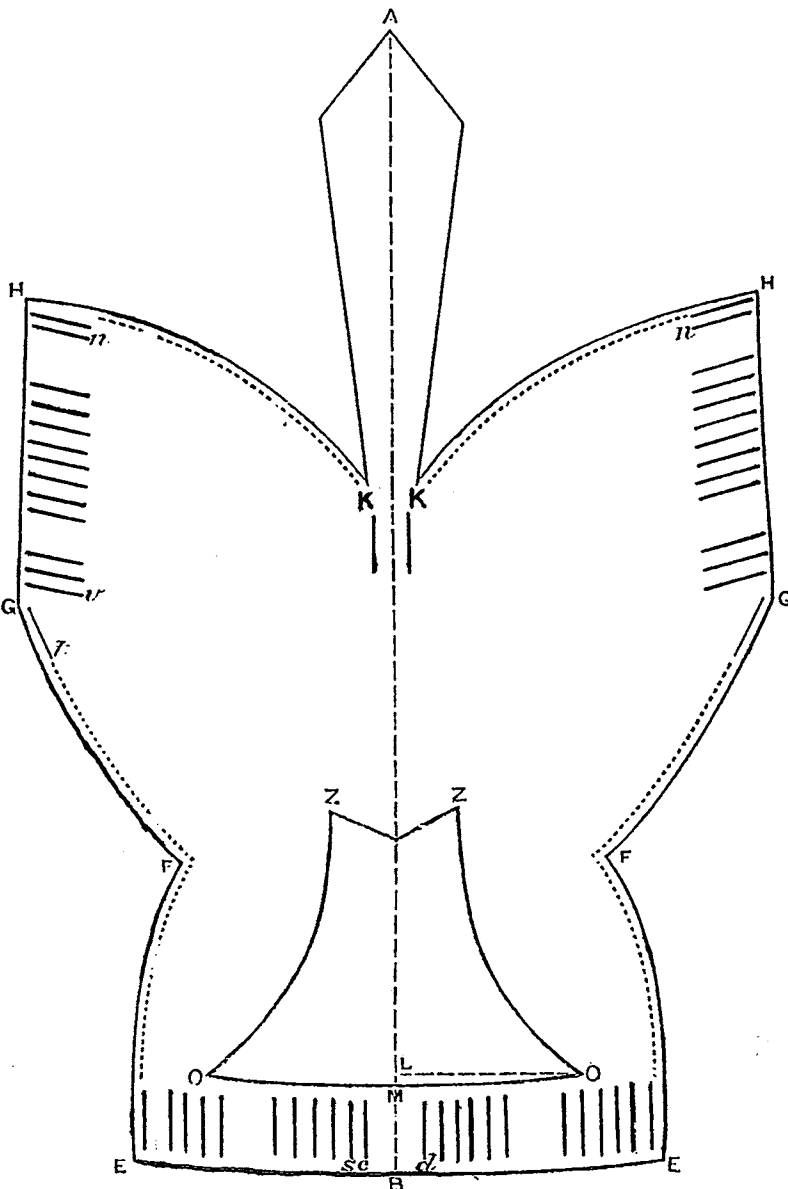


FIG.4 PATTERN FOR FALCONS HOOD (OPENED)
(DIAGRAMS ARE NOT TO SCALE)

The aperture for the beak also is often too narrow, and causes a swelling by the pressure against the sides. The little point of leather above the beak aperture is not merely ornamental; it hinders the tendency hoods have to open out after they have been in use some little time and the leather has become soft. The line K H may appear unnecessarily long, but if shorter, a restless hawk will quickly get rid of the hood. With a properly cut hood the lines O Z should clear the end of the gape, the feathers should not be injured in anyway, and the hawk should be able to eat readily when hooded, and eject a casting if the latter not be large.

Jesses are made from goat skin. A whole skin cost less than 2 rupees. When first bought it is hard and rough and requires to be well scraped on the inner side, to reduce it in thickness and make it smooth. The centre of the skin (i.e. the neck and the back) should be cut out, well washed to remove the salt, and softened with curds. As this is the only tough part of the skin, it should be kept for jesses; the remainder should be wetted, hammered, and made smooth on a slate or large flat stone, and kept for hood straps. Very neat hoods, too, can be made from it, after pasting two pieces together with common paste - the smooth or dyed sides outwards.

Scraping and softening leather is a very troublesome business, and in India should not be attempted by an amateur. A native shoemaker will do the whole thing for 4 annas.

Indian bells should be filled with cotton wool and kept in a dry place when not in use. When old and dirty they should be passed through warm wood ashes. (Reproduced with kind permission of The Field)

FERRETS FOR WORKING OR PETS

SHOWING THROUGH THE SUMMER

BRYAN COCHINGS

From Easter time through to late autumn there will be Game Fairs, Country Fairs, Dogs Shows and Village fetes every weekend up and down the country. One of the many attractions will be ferrets, some being shown, others racing down pipes, or some may even be there for children and adults alike, to hold or ask questions about, to show that they are not the nasty vicious, smelly animals they have been made out to be in the past.

There will be the working ferret, used to hunt rabbits and rats most of the year, pest controlling. The rescued ferret, that has been lost or abandoned to fend for itself, also the ferret that has been ill-treated, just one instance of a great many, is a ferret found wandering which was taken to a Ferret Rescue Society, in turn they took it to a vet who found it to be blind after being kicked and was covered in sores after having cigarettes stubbed out on it.

The disabled ferret will also be there in it's own class, but every single ferret is loved by it's owner. The show judge will check each ferret in turn for clear eyes, clean ears and good teeth, claws and feet will be checked, the coat will be looked at for cleanliness and parasites and marks out of ten will be given.



*Mr Shaun Dooley judging a pole cat jill.
Mr Dooley runs the London Ferret Rescue.*

The top three in each class will be given a rosette and the ones given first in each class will go for Best in Show and Reserve Best in Show, sometimes a trophy is also given.

A big percentage of the ferret shows and racing are organised by Ferret Welfare and Rescue Societies who take in dozens of unwanted ferrets each year, to raise money for food, vet bills, care and housing for these unfortunate animals.

There are, of course, a great number of people who rescue ferrets and meet the expenses out of their own pockets.



Mr Bill Sheppard judging an albino hob at a Lurcher, Terrier & Ferret show in 1993. Mr Sheppard runs the Animal Rescue Centre in Kings Lynn. (ABOVE)



An example of some of the plaques and trophies which can be won with ferrets.

A RAPTOR CENTRE IN ALASKA

SYLVIA KENT



Bald Eagles in bird housing

Hidden away in a remote corner of the north west of America is the Alaska Raptor Rehabilitation Centre in Sitka, on the west coast of the State.

During a cruise of the Inside Passage of Alaska, I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the Centre, though not so fortunate in the weather: heavy rain, as is so often the case there.

The Centre is one of the few out of 350 Raptor Centres in the US to work predominantly with the Bald Eagle, an endangered species. It was set up in 1980 and is a largely volunteer-operated organisation. Its main aim is to treat injured Raptors and for many years now, injured Raptors have been sent from all over Alaska.

It is committed to providing emergency medical treatment and rehabilitation for these injured Raptors and, whenever possible, releasing them back into their natural environment. Through its public education programme, the Centre is also dedicated to promoting appreciation and understanding of the important role of Raptors in the environment.

The Centre includes a large modern clinic, classrooms, an auditorium for courses and presentations, a photo gallery and a small gift shop, and there is bird housing next to the main building. Most of the Raptors treated are Bald Eagles, over 80% of them suffering from injuries caused indirectly by man, injuries that are generally preventable such as poisoning, gunshot, fish hooks, steel traps, and collisions with power lines, guy wires, windows, vehicles, etc. Any birds needing more extensive or specialists.

Those Eagles and other Raptors which are non-releasable are put into captive breeding programmes and the young resulting there from are used to re-establish the Bald Eagle population. Others are sent to educational centres and, once in a while, to a zoo, but the main aim of the Centre is to return as many as possible to the wild if they have recovered sufficiently and are once again capable of hunting.

During our visit to the Centre, we first watched a video on Bald Eagles and then one of the staff brought one in, Buddy, three years old and weighing 8lbs. An adult eagle weighs between 8-11lbs and has a wing span of 8ft. Buddy was too young to have a white head: Eagles only develop their white heads and feathers in their fourth or fifth year.

The staff member told us a little more about Bald Eagles than we learned on the video - their courting act and so on. Then in the pouring rain, we went outside to look at some of the eagles in the bird housing.

We had already seen some Bald Eagles' nests from the coach during our shore excursions. They are re-built each year and last for 15 years or so, then fall out of the tree. The Eagle lays about three eggs, usually only one eaglet surviving. They eat dead things like fish rather than live things and, like the bears in that part of the world, they hang over rubbish bins.



Staff member with Buddy

There are more Bald Eagles in Alaska than in the rest of the States put together and we saw lots of them when cruising along. Not that we saw them close to, though: in the distance, they looked like golf balls on the tops of the trees. Binoculars were a must and I spent many a happy hour on deck looking at them. In my little corner of Dorset where Magpies abound and a crow keeps on hurtling against my Bedroom window, I often think of those Bald Eagles.

The Falconers Magazine

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ORGANISERS OF

THE BRITISH FALCONRY & RAPTOR FAIR

HAVE TEN TICKETS TO GIVE AWAY TO THE WINNERS OF OUR COMPETITION.

All you have to do is identify the birds to which these heads belong and send your answers, along with your name, address and telephone number to;

THE FALCONERS & RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE
20 BRIDLE ROAD
BURTON LATIMER
KETTERING
NORTHANTS
NN15 5QP

(None of these birds is a hybrid)

Entries to be received no later than 30th March 1994. Winners will be announced in the Summer issue.



A



B



C



D

Training Gundogs

For Falconry

By Guy Wallace

Judging from the large number of telephone calls that I, and presumably my colleagues, receive (evenings 8.00 to 10.00 pm for me, please!) it is good to see that the message - that if falconers are going to find quarry for their hawks they need a dog - is getting home. Frequently they have been out with other falconers and have seen how effective a trained dog can be.

YER PAYS YER MONEY...

As I have doubtless already said elsewhere, falconry is a three-legged stool and in order to be productive requires a falconer, a hawk and a dog. Remove one..... GOOD DOGS MAKE GOOD HAWKS. The next step is to rush out and acquire an instantly trained dog yesterday! Alas, if only life was that simple.

The first thing I should like to stress is that we professional trainers do not run "Gundog Supermarkets". We usually keep back a specific number of puppies from a litter for a particular purpose and that is IT for the twelvemonth. So if we do not happen to have a 7-week old liver and white GSP bitch or a 9-month old orange and white Brittany dog on the day that you telephone there is no point in asking "when are you getting one in?" because we cannot produce one from a shelf in the store room!

There are a number of ways of acquiring a trained dog:

1. Buy a puppy and train it yourself.
2. Buy a puppy and have it professionally trained.
3. Get an older dog (6-15 months) and train it yourself.
4. Get an older dog and have it professionally trained.
5. Buy a trained dog.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each method.

1. Adv: The cheapest method and the most fun both from watching it develop and from actually training it.

Disadv: You can never know how a 7-week old puppy, however well bred, will turn out. You will doubtless make mistakes through lack of experience (although dogs are fairly forgiving!). Training a dog takes up a lot of your spare time.

2. Adv: You have had the fun of watching your puppy grow up and develop. A professional obviously has more experience and better facilities.

Disadv: It is more expensive than DIY training.

3. Adv: You are not involved with four meals a day and messes on the floor. You are a season closer to actually flying over it. It costs less than buying and rearing a puppy (although anyone obtaining a dog from the breed rescue centres should morally pay somewhere near puppy price).

Disadv: You will not know its exact history or possibly even its pedigree. It may take a long time to settle down. You may



Buying a puppy and training it yourself is most satisfying but allow yourself at least two years before you expect the dog to be fully trained.

well have to undo someone else's mistakes.

4. Advs. Again no puppy rearing 'hassle' and you are still a season closer to flying over it. A professional will have more chance of ironing out some faults already acquired although none can wave a magic wand and completely alter a dog's character, experiences, ingrained major faults and habits overnight any more than he can alter the way it looks.

Disadvs. Yet another different home and handler for poor, confused Fido.

5. Advs. You can see what you are getting. (You should expect any trainer to demonstrate the dog in the field for an hour or two and I should be wary of one who would not.) There is also an "after sales service". Professional trainers have a reputation to maintain among the shooting/hawking community. You can fly over the dog within four weeks of buying it. (When taking over ANY adult working dog you would be extremely foolish not to give it a complete fortnight to settle in and a further two weeks of "dry" training without hawk or gun before taking it out "in anger".)

Disadvs. A fully trained dog is expensive. The dog may not be used to hawks and vice versa. (Especially Harris Hawks!) There are few trained pointers and setters available (except ones that did not make it in field trials) and even fewer trained HPR's available since few professionals can or will train them and most ordinary HPR folk hang on to their dogs for better or for worse. Private owners' "Genuine reason for sale" is very often a VERY genuine reason for selling the d..n thing!

The sixth way of acquiring a trained dog is to be lucky enough to be GIVEN one as happened to some friends of mine!

Now we come to the question of FINANCE. All these figures are 1993 approximate figures and obviously vary a bit but, by and large, you get what you pay for. Good dogs are not cheap and as the man who asked how much it costs to feed a dog was told, "If you ask how much it costs to keep it, you can't afford it!" I am continually being asked if I have a trained dog that is rock steady, quarters with a good pattern, holds its points, drops to flush, drops to the whistle and is generally the answer to every falconer's prayer. When I reply that I happen to have such a paragon for sale the next question is inevitably "How much?" When I say that I want, say, £1000 for it I either get a stream of invective down the 'phone or get told that the enquirer expected to pay £150 for a trained dog. In either case I seldom get the chance to ask how much



The price of a trained dog should be at least a thousand pounds.

his recently fledged hawk cost because he has slammed down the phone!

7-week old puppy (Pointer or HPR).....	£250 - £500
1st inoculation.....	£30
Booster inoculation (after 12 months).....	£20
Cost of keeping/rearing dog @£4 per week.....	£200 p.a.
Cost of keeping dog for second year @£4 per week.....	£200 p.a.

So the cost of buying and keeping it as a PET up to 24 months (the age at which the slow-developing pointing breeds can be said to be 'trained') is a minimum of £700 (without any veterinary treatment or other 'extras' i.e. a kennel, petrol etc.) which makes a trained dog at £1000 - £2000 extremely cheap and puts the professional trainer's time in at about 20p per hour's training! However, you will get a good ten seasons work out of the dog and it is less likely to drop dead or "sugar off" than a hawk!

The few professionals involved with pointing breeds charge £40 - £50 per week which includes boarding, feeding and training and will require the dog for 4 - 6 months. They are, in fact, having to put into those 4 - 6 months what an amateur trainer would expect to achieve within 12 - 15 months. So to buy a pup, rear it, inoculate it and to have it trained will cost somewhere over £1,000 and to buy a trained dog will cost much the same except that one is in installments and the other is a lump sum. "Yer pays yer money and yer takes yer choice."

BIRD TALK

REWARD

Offered for the return or information leading to the location of, A Falcon in the Field by Jack Mavrogordato.

Inscribed on the title page, signed 'Jack Mavrogordato, York 1978'.

Tel: 045 086 666

FALCONRY BULLETIN BOARD

The MEWS, The first UK 24 hour Falconry Bulletin Board is now available to you, free of charge. If you have a computer and would like to join in then telephone the following number for further details:- 0227 860649

For those unfamiliar with the Bulletin Board system, it is basically an electronic mailing system that allows you to post messages and hold discussions with other falconers by means of your computer using a modem on an ordinary telephone line. How does a BBS work? A BBS allows you to view them all and allows you to join in with any ones 'conversation'. With the right software, you can download all the mail from the BBS and then view it OFF LINE, (without your phone line being connected to the BBS). You can then reply to any messages you wish in your own time and upload them back to the BBS. The system has built-in security features to exclude any unwanted or dubious callers. Each user has his own security password and will not be allowed to log on BEFORE first contacting one of the System Operators (SysOps). All software (IBM Compatible) required for using the BBS is available to you, including an off-line mail reader. For further details please telephone 0227 860649

THE EYES HAVE IT

A new invention has been pioneered by pigeon men and has had a successful trial in Devon and Cornwall.

It involves putting large plastic eyes on the pigeons wings, which the pigeon men are satisfied scares away any peregrines.

Unfortunately, one of the men responsible for this invention is also getting up a petition to take to the Government, to get peregrines either relocated or culled.

SUNDAYS IN SCOTLAND

In our Winter '93 issue we said that it was illegal to take game on a Sunday, but we have been informed that it is not illegal to do so in Scotland providing it is with a hawk or falcon.

North American Falconers Association

ANDREW
KNOWLES - BROWN



David Leo's 5th season smaller & darker variant of the American Goshawk from North California



Bob Berry's 1st year Gyrfalcon

The North American Falconers Association held its annual field meet at Kearney, Nebraska on the 21st-26th November and for someone who has never attended this well known meet it was an experience I looked forward to. When I arrived on Sunday evening it was warm shirt sleeves weather, and this continued through Monday, but Monday night saw a low come down from Alaska which changed sunshine to snow, though only a sprinkling the 15-20 mph wind and temperatures down to 17°c gave a wind chill of -50° somewhat cold to put it mildly. Nebraska is thousands of acres of flat corn country with small areas of sand dunes and wetlands areas although most of the latter had dried up after the long hot summer leaving just a few pools, the quarry was mainly pheasant, prairie chicken and ducks and the method of finding it was for all members of the group to drive around determined areas hoping to spot "chickens" or pheasants feeding in the stubble close to the dunes or wetland areas where they lived and bred. Once quarry had been spotted the C.B.'s and walkie talkies informed the rest of the party who then converged at the given location, with one or more flights ensuing depending on the amount of quarry present, sounds simple but in practice, involved a lot of driving before finding quarry. Monday dawned bright and warm and I, with two friends went out to the weathering to view the birds and find a group to go out hawking with, we then discovered our first misconception which was that although the meet was arranged by N.A.F.A. it did not include hawking. Anyone bringing a bird has to find their own sport in the area, and as we soon found out about half of the birds were missing, their owners leaving before dawn to travel in some cases a couple of hundred miles to known hawking

grounds for their sport. We also found that being strangers others were unwilling to take us out in case we "split the beans" as to where the game and good hawking areas were, a little disconcerting we felt, but persistence paid off and we found someone to take us honest John's out. We had a lovely evening flight with Shaun Hayes at duck but although no quarry was taken, it didn't matter, to see fine falcons in the air, the familiar sound of bells jingling over head, the scenery and sunset made it an evocative first day to remember, and if the weather had remained the same some spectacular sport could have been seen. Tuesday being so cold we had to adapt to the different conditions with Ed and Gail Fitch from Illinois taking us out, spotting quarry was much as the day before except we stayed in the vehicles, going out for more than fifteen minutes was risking hypothermia. When any quarry was spotted and a bird flown, vehicles were positioned so we could remain inside to watch, the birds didn't really get above 150-200ft and the best flight of the day was by Ed's Gyr/Peregrine that pinned a "Chicken" down in some stubble stooping about 15-20 times knocking it down twice, but she had her concentration disturbed by a pheasant sneaking away that allowed the chicken to slip out the back door and escape. On Wednesday we were due a demonstration by Gerald Richards with his sky trial birds, a little competition had been arranged to see who could guess the true height of the birds waiting on but this had to be cancelled due to the weather and we saw no hawking that day. With the forecast giving the same weather for the next few days we decided regretfully to leave early. So after bidding our farewells we left Thursday morning for sunnier California and a visit to San Diego zoo.



Shaun Hayes with his Gyr/Peregrine hybrid



One of the two weathering grounds

Opposite: ORNATE HAWK EAGLE



DEALING WITH EYASSES IN SPRINGTIME

It is very easy to associate different bird species with the changing year here at The Hawk Conservancy. In the winter months, when it is time for guest hawking, perhaps five or six days a week, you become very familiar with the robin and the wren as they flit in and out of the bare hedgerows, the masses of fieldfares gorging on hawthorn berries, and, if you are very lucky, perhaps a flock of waxwings flies by. The spring however, is always associated with the swallow and the cuckoo, and of course with the school parties which will arrive at the same time. We take our education work very seriously here at the Hawk Conservancy. We do not of course teach Falconry to the children, I do not think that young people should take on the responsibility of a Bird of Prey until they are at least sixteen, mainly for the bird's sake. We do, however, teach the Natural History of Birds of Prey, with a strong emphasis on British species. This is always useful at a later stage, as invariably, a bad naturalist is a bad falconer. We try to encourage the children to observe the breeding birds in the aviaries and to read the identification labels. We limit our children here to two hundred a day, - any more would drive one completely mad. Every group has a lecture on arrival, when we talk to them about safety, and how to avoid being lost. The tiny children, five to six years old, make

friends very quickly with children of the same age group from other schools. On one never to be forgotten day a couple of years ago, a little girl from Newbury got on the wrong coach and ended up in Romsey. A small boy from Romsey went to Newbury. Frantic phone calls from both destinations about 5 o'clock sorted out the problem. The mum from Romsey was very nice about it and said she had always wanted a daughter and was quite pleased with the swap. The Newbury mum, however, became very aggressive and asked if (in her words) we were running a bloody Exchange and Mart for children here. The teachers disclaimed all responsibility, as they said they had brought the right number and taken home the same number. I had to put them right, - we invited the headteachers to effect an exchange and they used our car park as a battlefield. I retired for a cup of coffee. No blood was spilt but the screams from the car park were horrendous, neither child wanted to go home. Another important part of our work is to explain the numerous words on the labels with which they are unfamiliar. They are surprisingly good with 'Habitat', but 'Diet' is always associated with mum not eating any food. They are not familiar with 'Carion', - I asked one small lad - 'What do you call a poor old rabbit knocked over by a car in the road?' After giving it considerable

thought, he replied 'A gonner'. Child visitors are obsessed with wingspans. This was fine in the good old days, but when I reached sixty, I steadfastly refused to have contact with anything French, including centimetres, millimetres, etc. We now have plywood cut-outs of all our flying birds, with their wingspans indicated in centimetres, mainly for my benefit. Children's demonstrations are always held at 12 o'clock. This applies to most of the children; - however, accompanying mums are inclined to take their charges into the toilet block at 12 o'clock and stop there for about twenty minutes. Sometimes they even forget the time completely while drinking coffee in the cafe, and then demand that you go through the whole demonstration again, just for their benefit. One learns an awful lot about the different national characteristics while working here. French children are inclined to be a little on the excitable side, and the older ones lay around in pairs in obscure places, frightening the hawks and falcons. Spanish children shout 'Bravo' as the falconer swings the lure, and 'Ole' as the bird finally catches it. Arab youngsters have been known to jump over our protection barrier and try and kidnap a bird which has put on a particularly good flight. American children are the hardest of all to work with as they are much more extrovert than other



Young Ural Owls



Young Spectacled Owls

**BY
REG
SMITH**

children, and I am continually questioned on the demonstrator's every statement.

We have an enormous variety of different schools coming here, including convent schools, all walking hand in hand in a crocodile, closely guarded by the accompanying nuns. One lovely Irish Nun, a few years ago, insisted that our Barnacle and Snow Geese should be shut up before she brought her girls in, because, as she put it "Sure, I remember dem from the old country and dey will bite the girls in the ass!" The same nun was the driver of the mini bus, and she would not drive it in reverse, so we had to park it for her, and then finally drive it out into the road for her.

Some 'special' schools require one teacher per child, and we had such a group this year, and at the same time, incidentally, we had a Women's Institute Group. We put on a beautiful flight for them both and at the very end one young man shouted out very loudly 'Wasn't that bloody marvellous!' A lady from the W.I. got up and walked over to him, I thought she was going to hit him, so I moved close to the lad to stop her, however, she put her arm around his shoulder and said 'I didn't like the way you said that, but it really does my heart good to see you appreciate the beauty of that magnificent bird'. Things like that make one realise that all the hard work you put into putting on a school demonstration is really worth the effort.

Children are very rewarding visitors to have here, you always get original questions from young people. This year, however, I had one small boy who informed me that his gran had told him 'in Scotland, where she came from, Golden Eagles have the habit of coming down and takin babies



Ashley with the Andean Condor.

out of pram'. He was a bit upset when I told him I thought she was not really correct in this. He stared aggressively at me and asked 'Can you take your teeth out?'. When I said 'No, I can't', he said 'Well my gran can, and she knows a lot more about Birds of Prey than you do!'

Ashley has been flying a Condor here this season for the first time. It really is very spectacular with a ten foot wingspan, - I really must learn how to do that on in centimetres. Such is the power of advertising, we had one little girl ask 'How big will the 'condom' grow to?' - You try and answer that one in front of 200 adult visitors without laughing and you see how hard it is.

Still, that's what makes the place tick here, and I believe we have another 150 children coming in tomorrow.



Young Brahminy Kite



Young Barn Owl



Young Kestrels, bred from injured parents.

RIGHT TO REPLY

Dear Editors

Is the Hawk Board failing to represent the interests of real falconers? I ask this question having read the statement issued by the Hawk Board following the screening of TV's Cook Report investigation into illegal dealing in birds of prey. The statement criticises me for helping expose those responsible for bringing the name of our sport into such disrepute. I am big enough (and no doubt some would say ugly enough!) to shrug off these personal remarks; although I have to say shrugging off some of the threats I have received since the programme was broadcast is more difficult. No, what really saddens me is in attempting to besmirch the programme the Hawk Board again sidesteps the real issue - what to do about those who steal wild raptors, and pass them off as captive bred. In one statement they say a father helped his son steal Peregrine eggs - did they report this to the authorities and when - if not, why not?

I agreed to assist the Cook Report having seen genuine film of a person stealing an egg from the wild in Scotland, and there had been several months of good intelligence work carried out by the programme researchers indicating that a number of eggs and chicks illegally taken from the wild were being harboured by so called 'falconers' in the UK; and the main object of the programme was to expose these thieves and then try and return as many birds as possible back to the wild. I further believed these thefts had indeed already taken place. At this stage I was also staggered to learn of the size of this trade and the numbers (including some well-known names of people some of us have grown up to respect) who were involved. It is this that should be the target of the Hawk Board's criticism.

There are many inaccuracies in the Hawk Board's statement but that is not the reason I was prompted to write to you. The real reason I write is to urge the Hawk Board to take action on behalf of myself and those true falconers who are fed up

with those who consistently give our sport such a bad name. It is time the Hawk Board removed its head from the sand, accepted that raptor thefts are widespread, and worked with the authorities to find ways (DNA seems a good start) to rid our sport of those who, from greed or stupidity, refuse to play by the rules. I am proud to have played a small part in Peregrine conservation and in getting this problem out in the open. I, and many other decent falconers like me, look to the Hawk Board for action; not cheap jibes and prevarication.

Yours sincerely
Chris Neal

ON RECORD

Dear David & Lyn,

I am a subscriber to your magazine and an LRK. I am friendly with quite a lot of falconers and I have been told by one or two that a lot of them think I am the Graham Thompson mentioned in the Cook Report article in the winter edition of *The Falconers Magazine*. I am writing to ask if you could put the record straight and say that Grahame Thompson of Grimsby, South Humberside has no connection whatsoever with the Cook Report.

Sincerely yours
Grahame Thompson

FOR THE BIRDS

Dear David & Lyn

Since the screening of Central television's Cook Report programme on peregrines the falconry and raptor keeping world has been in turmoil. Concerns have been expressed at the tactics used by the programme makers and comments made during the programme. As a serving police officer and practising falconer I would like to place on record my views which I know will not concur with those of many of my fellow sportsman.

As a police officer investigating bird of prey related offenses I have been privileged to have access to unused material from the programme and to read transcripts of conversations between Mr Chris

Neal and some very influential and well known members of the falconry world. I must say that they do make very interesting reading but at the same time it is enough to make an honest falconer despair. What must be of equal concern is what occurred after the programme was broadcast. I would not wish to prejudice any prosecution by going into detail but suffice to say that it involves the disappearance of birds!

The other concern I have has been the Hawk Board statement published in the previous issue. I agree with many of the comments and indeed some of the criticisms made but I felt that the criticisms of Mr Chris Neal was unfair. The programme was watched by 8 million people, most of who were ordinary members of the public. To them, Chris Neal was a "good guy" trying to expose people involved in the illegal trade in peregrines. He was also perceived as a man passionate about his sport, falconry, and willing to put his head on the block to help the makers of this programme. He was not paid to make this programme and as far as I can see did not benefit in any way. Neal was criticised for the tactics used, well let's just think about these for a moment. I understand that Neal made some phone calls, introduced a few people to each other and told known dealers that he had a buyer for wild peregrines. He then sat back and waited for people to crawl out of the woodwork which, of course, they did. Devious?, yes, of course it was devious but it was devious people who it was hoped would be caught. What can be more devious than one falconer passing off a wild bird as captive bred and selling it to another falconer?

It has also been suggested that Chris Neal enticed people to steal birds from the wild. Of course there is no evidence to support this. Every year eggs and chicks of birds of prey are stolen from nests in the wild and "passed off" as captive bred when being sold. The nest which 8 million people saw being robbed in the programme has been robbed for the past ten years! I am sure that the

nest would have been robbed again this year whether or not the programme was being made.

The amount of publicity generated by this programme and the resulting prosecution cases will do falconry a lot of harm, it could even be another nail in the sport's coffin. The registration scheme which was introduced twelve years ago to halt the taking of birds from the wild is simply not achieving that and unless we can show that the falconry world is willing and able to police itself then the government could find itself under pressure from the public and conservationists to simply ban the keeping of birds of prey. For the past three years I have collated and investigated the theft of raptors from captivity. It is a particularly difficult offense to detect and one which illustrates how easy it is for illegal birds to be "lost" in the registration scheme. Sadly these thefts are often being carried out by other falconers. The amount of information received following a theft can vary enormously. Unfortunately some of it is too old or too vague to be of any use but what it illustrates is the level of knowledge that many people in the falconry world have about illegal activity by fellow sportsmen. It really is about time that the attitude of not "grassing on friends" should be reviewed. People who supply information about the theft of birds of prey, both from the wild and captivity, are not "grassing" but protecting their birds and their sport. We must accept that there is a criminal element within falconry and expose it before it is too late.

As a falconer I look to the Hawk Board to represent my interests and that of all other honest falconers. Rather than criticising Chris Neal for getting involved in the making of the Cook Report programme surely they should be condemning those people who are involved in illegal activity and disassociating themselves from it. The police enquiries are continuing and hopefully will help to restore the respectability of falconry as a legitimate sport.

Yours Sincerely
Paul Beecroft

MOVED ON

Dear David & Lyn,

I am writing to take this opportunity to thank all my friends and associates who have supported Maria and myself during the last three years at The Butterfly & Falconry Park, but owing to a change of circumstances I wish to inform everyone that I now have no ties to the establishment.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely
Philip Gowdy

WAY FORWARD

Dear David and Lyn

First of all I would like to congratulate Gordon Ayres on a excellent and well written article. Gordons love for his sport is plain for all to see, as is his fear for its future. Many falconers, Austringers and hawking people of all kinds echo these sentiments to me time and again, and yet the hawking fraternity at large seem to disregard the strength of unity. There is a very real need for a brotherhood of falconry and hawking who stand together on a united front. This action could only offer us a solid foundation, enrich our sport and improve our art, after all, these must surely be the aims of everyone who flies hunting hawks, as Gordon Ayres said there has to be a Meeting of the Minds and a common policy. In the sixteen years that I have been hawking I have never been a Member of a club but I can tell you I have joined one now. One of the aims of our association is to unify the hawking front and in conjunction with the BFSS are helping to protect the sport we all feel so deeply for. We have also introduced a system of grading for all our membership, from junior, novice, associate and full member it is a system where with time and dedication everyone has the chance to advance through all the grades, guided by a gentle hand if required and their progress monitored eventually leading to a higher standard, perhaps a similar system could be introduced for all the falconry courses available and endorsement for those who meet the right criteria. For those who say this could

never work I should like to say this. How much better it would be for ourself as a like minded body for people to legislate for our own sport rather than some politician in Westminster we would then be yoked by act of parliament and the law of the land there will by then be no room for manouevre.

Sincerely yours
B Spurr

HAWKING RETURNS FOR 1889

Sir,

With reference to the Hawking returns '88-89', furnished by Mr Mann would he kindly state what are the "ten various" (birds) credited to his passage falcon Farthing? I quite endorse Mr Mann's remark about "footing" being as important an essential in a tiercel as "mounting". A young eyass this year, though a low flyer, killed twelve partridges straight off without missing one in September and October last; in November the birds had become very wild and two or three flights ended in a "put in;" but the tiercel, from footing and speed alone, killed sixteen partridges in nineteen flights, many being old, heavy birds, one being a French partridge heavier than the tiercel itself. But for a worthless dog, and several other hawks having to be flown, probably this tiercel's score would have been doubled. I sincerely hope that that skillful falconer, Mr W.H.St. Quintin, may be induced to give a short account of his successful flights at gulls with his famous passage tiercel, and of the large herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) killed by his red passage falcon single-handed last week. It has been said that young hawks of the year are best; it is therefore interesting to note the ages of the best hawks in England at the present day. The most successful game falcon of the Hawking Club last season was Vesta, eight years old; next best, Elsa, five years old. Major Fisher's celebrated game falcon Lady Jane is entering her eight season; his falcon Lundy, with which he killed last autumn sixty-four grouse and a teal is seven years of age. Mr Mann's good goshawk, Shadow of Death is, I believe, five years old, and the falcons Farthingale and Vic four years.

H.W. Aldershot.

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OBSERVATIONS ON

Having been involved in the manufacture of falconry furniture for a number of years, it has come to my notice that falconers and their attitude to equipment fall into three loose categories:

First we have the "I've just paid fifty quid for this Kestrel and I'm not parting with another penny" brigade. Their methods for extracting equipment can be pretty ingenious, ranging from threats to tears. Usually they end up getting something for nothing if only for the sake of the bird. All this takes place over a series of phone calls, by which time they've had a falconry course by phone and got lots of equipment. Then quite by chance you meet them a few months later, enquire after the health of the said Kestrel, to which they reply "Oh, I don't do falconry any more, I do scuba diving or power boating or anything other than falconry". I often wonder if they get their scuba diving/power boating equipment in the same way as falconry furniture.

Then we have the middle man or Mr Right if you like. He turns up about the same time each year with a list of needs, every piece of equipment is carefully examined and tested to see if it suits, he discusses the merits of birds and types of equipment, in about an hour's time he's gone. You'll only hear from him once or twice during the season to replace gear lost in the field, or lent to friends.

Last but not least we have the "Nothing's too good for my bird" chap. He's got two or three of everything, his bird is decorated like a christmas tree, the glove has a stooping falcon motif, a bag with hundreds of pockets and a hand-painted head of his bird on the flap. This bird wants for nothing, the mews are palatial, the bird itself is probably the largest and ugliest you have ever seen. It will more than likely never fly because he won't want to cut its weight, the idea of depriving it of anything doesn't enter his head and he loves it dearly.

For me the most important things in equipment are those things that actually affect the life of the bird; that is the hoods, jesses, swivel and leash, blocks or bow perches, bells or anything that's directly attached to the bird. Not many birds I've known have been all that interested in a particular style of bag, and the only sufferer from an inadequate glove is the falconer.

Language, too, plays an important part when talking to people about falconry equipment, hoods are a particular. I like to talk to, and help a man or woman



When making your own hoods, make ten and maybe you will find one or two that fit well

who has a bird that's been made to the hood, but if someone tells me theirs is broken to the hood, then this takes on a whole new meaning and I mourn the loss of the good, old-fashioned notion that you make a hawk, you don't break it.

The Anglo-Indian suits me, it's a good all round hood and relatively cheap to

buy, but no amount of Heron feathers stuck on top will make your bird fly higher or faster, again, it's for the comfort of the bird. If they will readily accept the pink hood with the lime green eye pieces and a hand-full of peacock feathers on top, then this is one for you.

A plea to all those falconers just about to embark on their own hood making, don't make one, make ten and when you've done that you can set about the task of finding one or two hoods out of the ten that will give maximum comfort to the bird. In my experience with hand sewn hoods no two ever come out the same, there's a world of difference between a hood that fits and a hood that fits well.

Bells never seem to cause much of a problem, they are either cheap or expensive, you pay your money and takes your choice.

Bewits on the other hand cause a lot of heartache, for a start many people seem to call them Beewits. Traditional bewits seem to be the best although I do use button if I have a hawk with me for 24 hours, as it's easy to remove the bells at night because they keep me awake. I have seen bells put on in many and varied ways but I have to say the traditional bewit strap takes a lot of beating.

Jesses aren't much of a problem, the general rule of my thumb is Aylmeri, but I don't think that it matters as long as you don't fly with

anything that has got slits in, however, I never use false aylmeri, having once seen a hawk that had caught it's back talon in the eyelet, not an aesthetically pleasing sight so seeing it once for me was enough.

Now to swivels, just lately I've heard of a number of people using dog lead clips as swivels, the only thing I can say is

FALCONRY FURNITURE



Traditional leather bewits are the best way to put bells on your bird. Button bewits can be used if they are for short term.

most falconry furniture makers have their swivels specially designed for falconry. As far as I'm concerned dog lead clips are for dogs, falconry swivels are for falconry, well you wouldn't cut your fingernails with a hacksaw would you?

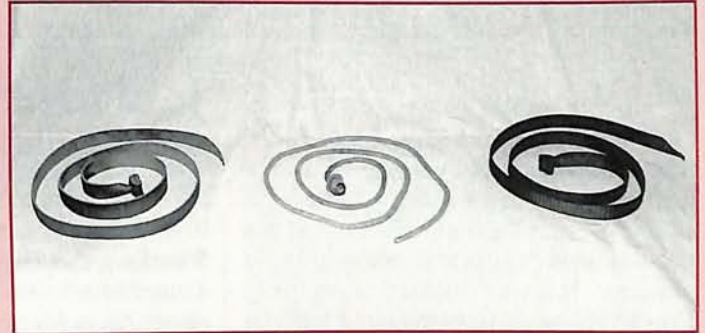
Leashes are my love, there is nothing like the feel of a new leash on a bird, clean to handle and makes the bird look altogether tidier, admittedly, it doesn't last long, but leashes are so cheap you could almost afford a new one every week. There are three types of leash around: flat, round and rawhide. The flat leash I only put on seasoned old birds as young birds like to test their



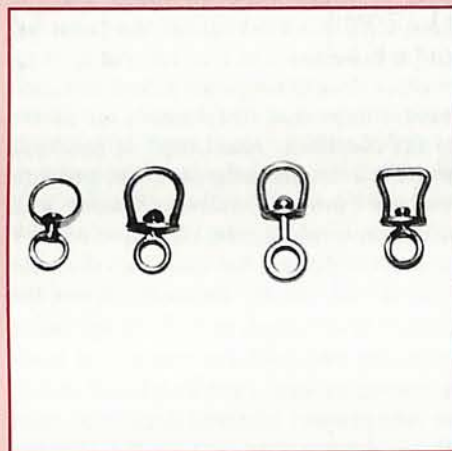
All ways fit Aylmeri and use slitless jesses when flying.

beaks and a flat leash can be easily picked. Round leashes are wonderful having a thick nylon core, the bird can turn the outer casing into a heap of spaghetti, but the nylon core remains intact however clever the bird may be. The rawhide leash is a rare beast

these days, they are around, but require the maximum maintainance to ensure safety, to some falconers the idea of opening a tin of jess grease seems to make them feel quite ill, so rawhide leashes I leave to those people who have time, money and a lot of trust in



Rawhide, round & flat leashes



Different types of falconry swivels

themselves.

Someone gave me a leash the other day with a sort of elastic attachment on it, the theory behind this was it took some of the strain out of bating, happy to try, I popped it on one of the birds, went back twenty minutes later to find two broken tail feathers to repair. This leash is now holding together my hose pipe in the garage and a very good job it does as well.

Falconry bags are a must, I say this with feeling because of a lesson learnt. I confess I did not carry a bag until one day I emptied the contents of my jacket pocket onto the counter of the grocers, there amongst the loose change were two mummified mice and a chick head.

The shop was full and in a trice I had become the local leper. Later that day I recalled a man my father introduced me to my many years ago, known as "Downwind Derek", now he never carried a bag either, superb man with birds, never bought a piece of equipment, let alone a hawk, in his life. You could get a good days hawking with old Derek, as long as you kept him down wind, alas, he's been dead many years. I also hadn't been wearing a bag because of the need to be constantly galloping after the hawk, so a bag got in the way. Realisation dawned that the damned hawk had been flying me, not the other way round. These days I always carry a bag.

Falconry is the oldest field sport still in existence, unless you count bashing women over the head with cudgels and dragging them into caves, so the basic design for equipment has been tried and tested for over 2,000 years. We may use different materials, like nylon or lighter metals, but with the exception of the Aylmeri jess the designs have remained the same. So to do falconry as it should be done you need the proper equipment, you wouldn't expect a cricketer to bet for England with a piece of 2x4, so, likewise, you shouldn't enter the falconry field with inadequate and dangerous equipment.

On a slightly lighter note, because of involvement with the sport on a twenty-four hour basis, I get more than my fair share of falconry tall stories; we've all heard the one about the merlin that retrieves rabbits, this was the end result of an enquiry about a pair of bells...

"Wow, £5.00 for a pair of bells? (long silence) "I don't think I'll bother, I'm only flying it in the garden". What more can I say?

FEEDING RAPTORS

Part two

**BY NEIL FORBES
MRCVS**

Too Rich a Living can Kill:-

Atherosclerosis is a common cause of death in many caged birds. The condition is similar to the hardening of the arteries which occurs commonly in humans. It arises predominantly from excessive eating, in particular a high fat diet, combined with a lack of exercise. There is never any indication that the bird is ill, it is simply found dead in the aviary. The condition is commoner in older birds, in particular female birds after the breeding season, due to the high level of circulating fats which were mobilised in order to fill the yolk of the eggs. It is known that the tendency towards the disease is hereditary. Most importantly however is the fact that if the condition could be predicted or diagnosed prior to death the pathology is totally reversible, simply by reducing the fat content of the diet and by exercising the bird. Initial exercise should be gentle, and only gradually increased.

The condition is best avoided by ensuring that food given is not excessively fatty. Old spent laying quail, mature fat laboratory rats/mice and egg yolks are the main culprits. Furthermore it is important that birds are not overfed, becoming too fat. When feeding in a breeding aviary, food is best supplied in a drawer system, rather than a shute. In this way if excess food is given, (as long as it is not taken and cached), it can be removed rather than sitting around on the floor of the aviary gradually going off. The positioning of the food drawer in the aviary is also important, it should not be in direct sun light in the heat of the day, as this would encourage food to go off more quickly. When you feed your birds daily, watch their reaction; they should come straight down to feed. If they do not, they are probably not very hungry, hence given them a little less food that day.

Exercise, as stated above is important. In particular, if it is practicable, it would be advantageous to take birds out of breeding aviaries at the end of the season and fly them for a short period, if only a few weeks, in order to blow out and clear their arteries.

Feeding the Bird Which is in Low Condition :-

Many falconers have an obsession about giving casting each and every day. As all keepers should be aware it is important not to feed a bird again until it has brought up the casting from the previous day. If you have a bird which is in low condition, you do not want to have to wait a full day before you give a further meal. In this situation it is quite permissible if not essential that you do not give any casting. Instead you give a small meal of finely chopped meat, perhaps with a little added saline. **As soon as, and not before,** the bird has put its crop over, it should be given a further small meal. I hope that all falconers are aware of the condition "sour crop". If food has passed from the crop into the proventriculus (stomach), stomach acids will act upon it, aiding the digestion as well as preventing any bacterial action on the food. If conversely the food stays in the crop, it is no longer in your fridge being kept nice and cold. Instead it is at body temperature, and yet has no acid acting on it to prevent bacterial decay. In short the food goes off very rapidly, causing the production of toxins (poisons) which very rapidly kill the bird. If your bird is very slow to put its crop over, then a small volume (0.5% of the bird's body weight, ie. 5ml for a 1kg bird), of saline should be given by mouth. This will usually quickly result in the crop being put over. If it does not, and the bird does not throw the crop back of its own accord, then the food must be removed by milking it back up from the crop. This can be a risky procedure as any fluid present in the crop, will return as the meat is brought back up and the fluid may go down the windpipe causing a fatal pneumonia. Whatever the outcome the bird will need veterinary care and antibiotics.

Feeding the Vomiting Bird :-

Raptor vomit for a variety of reasons. The whole situation will almost inevitably require veterinary care,

although a few general points are mentioned here. A bird which is vomiting should not be immediately offered more food, even if it is losing weight fast. If more food is given the vomiting will continue. Instead the bird should be allowed to settle for an hour then a small volume (0.5% of its body weight ie. 5ml per 1 Kg bird), of slightly warm (hand temperature) saline (eg. Lectade) should be given by crop tube. The bird should be placed in a warm dark quiet area and allowed to settle. If the fluid is kept down, it should be repeated once more two hours later. If that is retained then a further two hours later, a feed with the same volume of a liquidised convalescent diet, examples are Hills and/ or Lquivite. The liquid food is repeated every 2 hours on 3-4 occasions, before the first meal of finely chopped beef (or similar). If the bird is not keen to take the meat, it is not yet ready for it. As stated previously a bird may vomit for many reasons, from simple matters such as travel sickness, to more serious situations such as Aspergillosis. So unless the situation is truly straight forward, and the bird immediately responds, veterinary care should always be sought.

Feeding the Inappetant Bird :-

Frequently one is faced with a bird which is low in condition, which you know should be eating, which is however not wanting to feed. Many conditions can cause this. Any mouth (eg. frounce, Capillaria, Candida), oesophagus/crop (eg. local irritant, bacterial infection, sour crop, pox virus), stomach (eg. impaction, infection) or air sac (eg. aspergillus, air sacculitis, egg peritonitis) or septicaemia (ie. blood poisoning) condition will lead to a depressed appetite. Sometimes the bird will simply not eat, on other occasions the bird attempts to eat, but then flicks its head all the time and brings the food back. Any such bird will need to be seen by a vet, an accurate and specific diagnosis made and the condition treated.

Bird which is low in weight, or not putting weight on in relation to its food intake:-

This situation is common. Either a bird may be taken out of an aviary after a

moult and not be as heavy as it should be bearing in mind its *ad libitum* feeding, or the weight loss may be noticed as a consequence of daily weighing. Again a range of condition may be responsible. The immediate reaction on the part of many keepers is to assume the bird is suffering a parasitic condition. Even if this is so, the keeper will probably then worm the bird with a standard wormer, such as fenbendazole (Panacur). The problem is that such a wormer only treats one form of parasite (ie roundworms), so even if the problem is parasitic, the situation may go on unchecked. It is far more sensible to have a mite (faeces) sample checked, to see if it is a parasitic one. If not one can then take other action to find the real cause.

Weight loss may be caused by any illness. If it is gradual loss over a period of time the most likely causes will be parasites, bacterial gut infection, aspergillosis (even in the absence of any respiratory signs) or tuberculosis. Expert veterinary care is required, to differentiate and treat accordingly.

Feeding Birds and Travelling :-

Birds should not be fed directly before travelling, in particular if they are not used to travelling. If one is talking about an experienced flying bird, who is used to travelling, known not to suffer from travel sickness, then fair enough he may be fed up after a kill and allowed to travel home.

For a bird such as a Peregrine, we would advise giving a cast free meal 8-12 hours before travelling. The danger is that any bird with a stomach or crop full of food or casting, may regurgitate during the journey. This is particularly dangerous if the bird is hooded. However even without a hood, the bird can choke and die in a matter of a few seconds. Conversely a bird should not be starved for a long period before travelling. The smaller the bird, the less time they can manage without food. Many of the essential nutrients are not stored to any extent, or are unable to be rapidly mobilised, by the bird. Examples are glucose and calcium. Nervous birds, who are particularly sensitive to stress are prone to calcium deficient fits if food has been withheld and the bird is then stressed. In particular if goshawks are to be transported long distances (or undergo any other major stress), it is advised that they should be given additional calcium supplementation beforehand. In my experience the most effective product for this situation is 'Nutrobal' (Vetark). Even a single dose of this powder by mouth prior to such a situation is likely to be effective.

Casting in Adult Birds :-

This has already been mentioned with chicks, however problems may even arise with adult birds. If birds are tethered in mews, whose substrate is peat, wood shavings, or sawdust, then as the bird eats food, if the food has fallen on the ground, peat, wood shavings etc may also be ingested, leading to an impaction.

Water :-

Although raptors under normal daily condition usually do not drink, when ill, stressed, in hot weather etc. they will often need to drink. With this in mind water should be available for birds on a daily basis. Care should be taken in choosing a suitable water vessel as birds are able to drown themselves in even the shallowest container.

Hawks, Hygiene and Eating :-

The hygiene of the food supply, during its preparation, and the way and manner in which it is given is very important. However many falconers are unconcerned about their own hygiene when in the presence of their bird. We must accept that infections such as Salmonella enteridis are rife in the poultry industry, and hence will also be in day-old chicks. Likewise avian tuberculosis is common in feral birds. Either infection can be a serious pathogen to humans, so care should be taken. We are all prone, when short of a hand, to pull a gauntlet off with our teeth, temporarily forgetting who just got eaten on the fist, or who mewed on it. Furthermore knives used in food preparation, as well as the occasional footing of your hand by your bird can introduce tetanus, which we all know is a dangerous and potentially fatal disease. Needless to say all falconers must have an up to date tetanus injection. Consult your own GP, most advise a booster every ten years.

Calcium Deficiency in Adult Birds:-

As previously mentioned a diet should be varied and mixed, consisting of whole carcasses. However in display birds who are flying daily in front of the public and being fed up afterwards, whilst the spectators questions are being answered, this can be a problem. Understandably the public find a lump of meat far more acceptable than a fluffy chick or a rat. In this situation it is best to give just half a crop then feed up on a rat etc, later. If meat is fed for any significant part of the daily food intake, they must also offset this deficiency by calcium supplement such as 'Nutrobal' (Vetark).

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According to the Managing Director of WWF Austria, Mr Winifred Walter, of the former 24 breeding species of birds of prey in Austria, 11 have already become extinct. The WWF station for birds of prey and owls, which has existed since 1975 and will from now on be named Swarovski Station for birds of prey, cares for approximately 300 endangered birds of prey and owls per year. The birds are cared for medically by specialists and will be released again if possible. Thanks to the support given by Swarovski, we can now keep and care for these birds, provide them with food and medical treatment for the next three years and, what's more, start building new cages which have been long overdue.

Besides the daily care of injured birds of prey and young animals, the breeding of the Bearded Vulture, which has been virtually extinct since the last century, takes up quite a lot of time. To date the WWF has succeeded in resettling more than 30 animals in the Alps and thus played an exemplary role in the whole of Europe.

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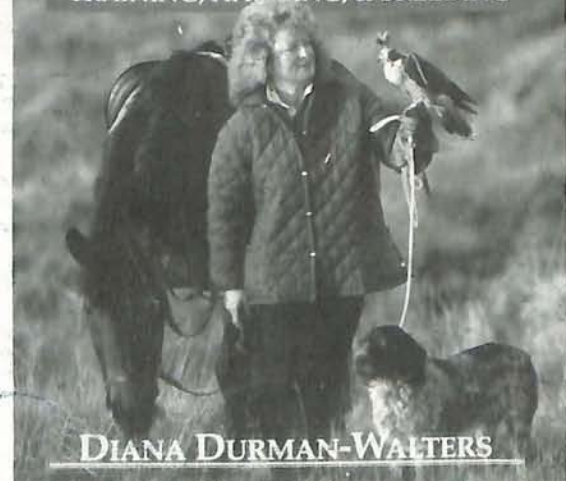
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