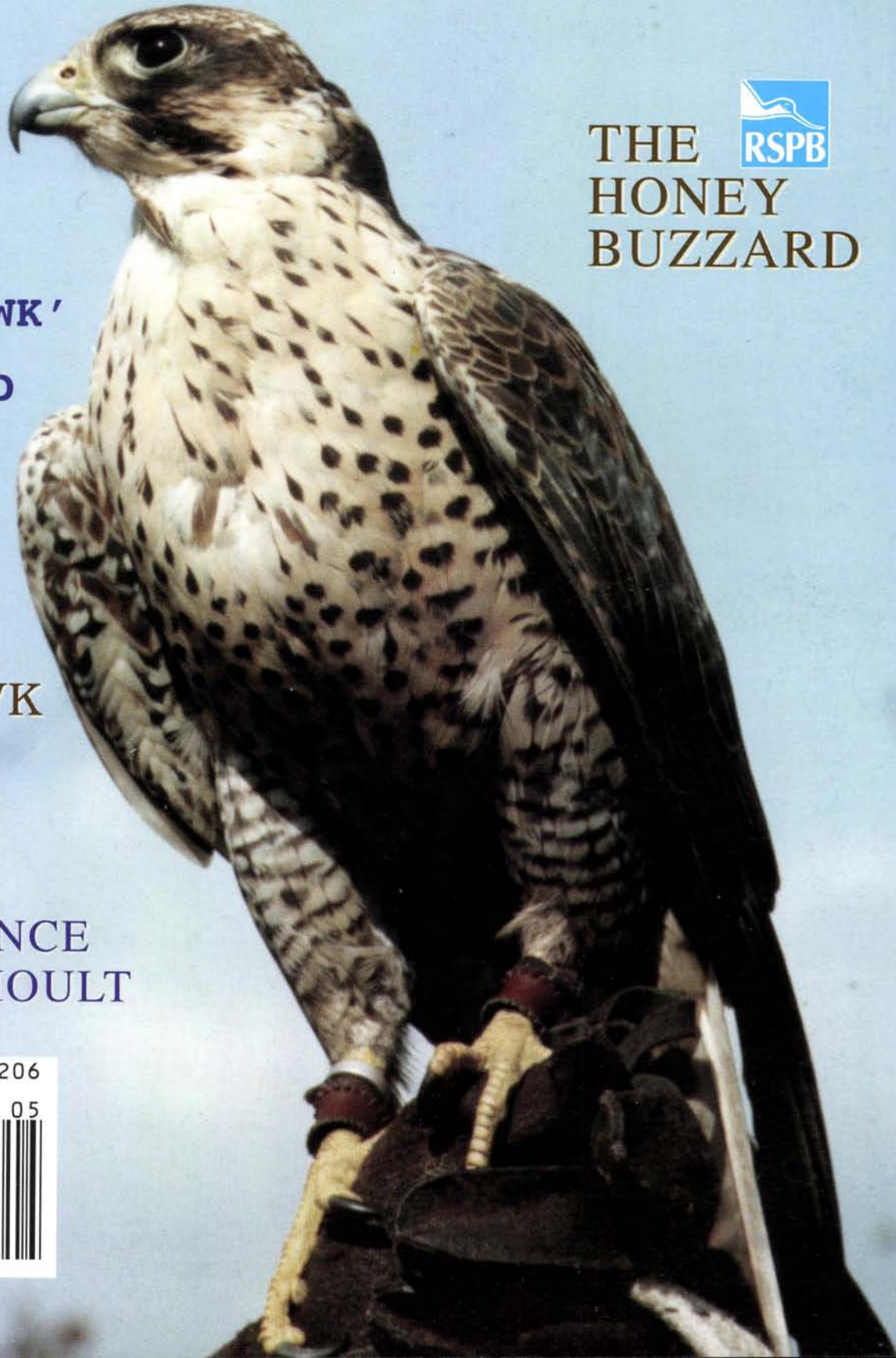


Summer '94

£2.50

*The* **Falcons**  
*& Raptor Conservation Magazine*



THE  
HONEY  
BUZZARD

THE  
'BLUE HAWK'  
OF THE  
FALKLAND  
ISLANDS

TIMES  
PAST  
WITH A  
GOSHAWK

THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF THE MOULT

ISSN 0967-2206



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## BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

**ASSOCIATION MOTTO:  
EQUALITY OUR STRENGTH  
UNITY OUR ENDEAVOUR**

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

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If these few principles apply to you, please send a stamped addressed envelope to: B.H.A. Membership Secretary, Kennel Farm Cottage, Old Kennel Lane, Annesley Park, Annesley Nottingham. NG15 OAU

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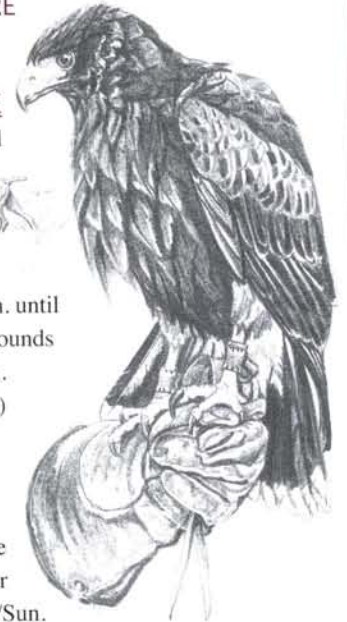
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## PHILIP SNOW BA Hons.

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, INTERCONTINENTAL of N. York, Texas's OCEAN WORLD and Turkey's TURQUOISE magazine etc.

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

The painting of raptors in this issue 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.

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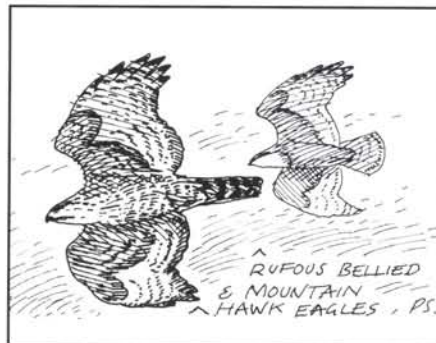
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**COVER: Gyr X Peregrine owner W Hawkins-Pincers**

## COMMENT

Hello everybody, here we are once again, another hawking season over and another Falconers Fair almost upon us.

As you will see from our letters page controversy about the Cook Report still rages on but we also have lots of letters about other topics which all make interesting reading. Sadly there has not been much input from the clubs this issue, too busy hawking to write, while we're too busy writing to hawk!

We have a bonanza competition on page 11 so get your thinking caps on, solve the crossword and you're in with a chance of winning some great prizes and thanks must go to all the donors. So good luck everybody.

We would also like to wish good luck to three gentlemen who are jetting off to Zimbabwe in July, Adrian, Geoff and Andrew. Hope you have loads of fun. Watch this space to find out how they got on.

See you all at Althorp, bye for now

David & Lyn



## HAWK & OWL TRUST CELEBRATE 25 YEARS

1994 sees the Hawk and Owl trusts 25th anniversary. To celebrate they are staging The Hawk and Owl trusts silver Jubilee Photographic Competition. It will be judged in four categories: amateur, professional, young photographers and Trust members. All the winning and commended photographs of hawks, falcons, buzzards, eagles or owls, will be exhibited in the Bird Gallery at London's natural History Museum, during September and then afterwards at Shell Centre.

The first prizes in three of the categories are holidays for two: for amateurs there is one of Abercrombie & Kent's birdwatching and wildlife tours, Wild Spain in Spring, for professionals there is a trip to Istanbul and the Camlica Mountains at the time of the annual migration of birds of prey, for Trust members it is a chance to explore wildest Scotland. Then there is a whole range of photographic equipment to be won. First prize for young photographers is a choice between a zoom, compact camera and a pair of binoculars.

The Trust is extremely grateful for the generous support of Amateur Photographer, Boots, Nikon and Shell which has made the competition possible.

To ensure the future of its conservation, research and education work for owls and other birds of prey, the Trust has also launched a Silver Jubilee Appeal. "Our continuation as an effective agent of conservation must depend on our ability to attract funding," says Chairman Georgina Harding. Entry Forms for the Hawk & Owl Trust photographic competition are available from all good photographic retailers. The closing date for entries is 17th June 1994.

## STOLEN BIRDS

- 1) Stolen from Beds - March 1994  
Male Lanner, Ring No. 0032V.  
This bird has a deformed Tail Feather, inso-  
much that it is 1/2 inch shorter than the rest  
and the last inch of webbing is coloured  
white.
- 2) Stolen from Yorkshire - Feb 1994
  - a) Pair of Redtails
  - b) Pair of Harris Hawks
  - c) Pair of Sakers
- 3) Stolen from Beds - February 1994
  - a) Pair Merlins
  - b) Goshawk
  - c) Sparrowhawk
  - d) Kestrel
  - e) Sooty Falcon

A reward is offered for information in  
respect of the above birds.

## YORKSHIRE DALES FALCONRY CENTRE FLYING HIGH

The Yorkshire Dales Falconry and Conservation Centre are winners of the Yorkshire Television Enterprise '94 for the most enterprising young business in the region. The finals were recorded at the Asda Headquarters in Leeds for the coveted title plus a trophy and 10,000.00 in prize money. The distinguished judges were senior bank manager, Mike Walker, business consultant, Roland Long and Julian Richer, who runs

Britain's biggest hi-fi retailing chain.

Proprietors, Suzanne and Chris O'Donnell opened the centre at Giggleswick, Nr Settle, N.Yorks. in May 1991. Rebuilt from a derelict barn to a very high standard to blend into the surrounding countryside, the aviaries and unique Vulture caves also recreate the natural habitat settings for the birds. Four



free-flying displays daily, starring Andy, the Andean Condor, the largest bird of prey in the world with a 10'6" wing span.

The Centre is offering our readers one free adult admission with every paying adult on production of this press release.

## CONVICTIONS

1 Trevor David ANDREWS of Warstock, Birmingham. Convicted at Birmingham Magistrates court 31.1.94

1 Handling stolen goods (pair of European Eagle Owls)  
Fined £200  
Costs £100

These birds were stolen in 1993 in the Birmingham area. Information was received that after they were stolen they had bred and their offspring were advertised for sale. WPC Jayne White, posing as a prospective buyer saw the chicks but before purchase asked to see the parents. She was then taken to another address where the parents were seen, identified as being the stolen birds and ANDREWS was arrested. The birds were re-united with their rightful owner.

2 Frederick Charles COOK of St Peters Basin, Newcastle upon Tyne. Convicted at Newcastle upon Tyne Magistrates Court 7.1.94

1 Causing unnecessary suffering to a common Buzzard

A) Conditional discharge  
B) Disqualification from owning a bird for 2 years under the protection of Animals Act 1954.

C) Forfeiture of the Buzzard

This offense came to light when Police were called to the address of Cook and found the Buzzard hanging upside down, distressed and exhausted and apparently close to death. The owner had allowed the bird to have a leash of over 10 metres, which was in fact a plastic washing line that was in turn tied to a drainpipe.

3) Steven MORRISON of Ayr.

This is the first conviction following the programme, The Cook Report. In April 1993 Central Television filmed a person climbing down to a Peregrines nest in Galloway. Four peregrine eggs were taken from the nest.

On 22.2.94 MORRISON appeared at Dumfries Sherrif Court and pleaded guilty to the offense of taking peregrine eggs. He was fined £700

4) Phillip James Walker of Houghton Regis, Beds.

In April 1993 Police received information regarding the possible theft of birds of prey and their eggs from the wild. It was subsequently suspected that an attempt was being made to 'launder' these birds into the legitimate falconry world by registering them as captive bred.

Sgt Phil Cannings, a wildlife liaison officer, from Beds. spearheaded the Operation and joint enquiries involving the R.S.P.B., R.S.P.C.A., the D.O.E. and myself, suspected Walker as being the person responsible.

A large number of birds of prey were found at his address, including thirteen young Goshawks and two peregrines. WALKER claimed to have bred these birds during 1993 from his adult birds.

During the investigation blood samples were taken from all the birds. During the course of searching his premises we found several licensing and registration offences, a number of unhatched Goshawk eggs and maps of Scotland marked with birds of prey nest locations.

All the young Goshawks and Peregrines were seized by Police, along with two adult peregrines.

The blood samples taken from the birds



were sent to the Department of Genetics at Nottingham University for DNA analysis. The results showed that the adult and young were not related.

WALKER was subsequently summonsed on six charges encompassing thirty offences.

On Monday 31.1.94 WALKER appeared at Luton Magistrates Court in a trial that lasted two days. Although he had previously stated that the Goshawks and Peregrines had been bred by him he stated in Court that his own eggs had been smashed in the Incubator and the eggs under the parent birds had been deserted following an incident with children in his neighbours garden. He then told the Court that following a meeting in Holland with a Mr Martello and a Mr Gunther, replacement eggs, of Goshawks and Peregrines had been brought to his home shortly afterwards.

FINALLY: Does anyone recognise the following ring. It is a blue, anodised, close ring number X808 (thought to be a breeders ring) and it is attached to a female Buzzard. If so please contact us here at the Falconers Magazine or Paul Beecroft on 0734 536257

The court found him guilty in respect of 5 charges which were as follows:-

- 1) Unlawful possession of 12 Goshawk Eggs
- 2) Unlawful possession of 13 Goshawk Chicks
- 3) Unlawful possession of Peregrine Chicks
- 4) Possession of unregistered Peregrine
- 5) Possession of unregistered Peregrine.

For these offences he was fined as follows:-

- 1) Fined £1,000
  - 2) Fined £7,500
  - 3) Fined £1,200
  - 4) Fined £400
  - 5) Fined £400
- Costs £1,000  
Total £11,500  
Forfeiture of Birds and Eggs.

## ALTHORP HOSTS FALCONRY FAIR

Can it really be a whole year since the last Falconers Fair, time just seems to rush by at an ever increasing rate.

In four years the event has established itself firmly on the falconry worlds calendar, not only here in the U.K., but with an ever growing number of overseas falconers.

This year will see a particularly strong presence of foreign falconers and of course each one of these will help spread the word for next year. Last year even saw visitors from the middle east. Traders be warned, have your phrase books handy.

The setting this year will, again, be that of Althorp House, Northamptonshire. The beautiful home of Lord Spencer and his charming wife, Countess Victoria. For the visitor, Althorp is most convenient, being very close to the M1 and having good and clearly signposted approach roads.

So many falconers now use the fair as their own, private, annual get-together. The best opportunity to see the best array of goods related to falconry gathered anywhere in the world at one time, as well as flying displays, dog training sessions etc., all in a convivial atmosphere proves to be irresistible.

Again, there will be seminars for those who wish to learn more about a particular topic relating to raptors. The list of speakers is, as ever, very impressive.

Equipment makers will, of course, be there in strength, an opportunity for the potential customer to see the different products side by side before spending their hard earned cash. Even if browsing is what you prefer to do, it will be all there. Do not miss it.

Remember, May 29th & 30th, Bank Holiday weekend, the British Falconry & Raptor Fair. Is there really any other place to be?

**A Special note from the organisers!** Due to the particular security circumstances at Althorp, regretfully, there are no overnight stay facilities on site for weekend visitors. Please ring Northampton Tourist Information Office on 0604 22677 for advice regarding staying in the area over the weekend.

## NEW COURSE IN ECOLOGY & CONSERVATION

Easton College is offering a new course in an Introduction to Ecology & Conservation. It can be taken as a summer school course and it will be for five days, commencing on Monday 4th July. It will give people the opportunity to look at basic natural history and conservation skills. It is suitable for beginners in ecology and the amateur naturalist. Lecturer in Countryside Management, Jerry Kinsley says, "We will look at different habitats, including woodlands, wetland, grasslands, heathlands and coastal zones by going on site visits. The emphasis will be on identification and practical skills". The course will be a mixture of lectures, practicals and site visits. The tuition fees are £100. For details contact Jerry Kinsley Norwich (0603) 742105.

## NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CARVED BIRDS

PENSTHORPE WATERFOWL PARK, FAKENHAM, NORFOLK

All species of birds, all styles of carving and all types of carver are welcome to enter or just visit. Last year it was held just for carvers in the East of England but this year any carver in the U.K. can enter, and there are some covetable awards from generous sponsors to encourage them. All visitors can join in by voting for their favourite carving which will win a £250 cash prize from Wessex Timber. Other awards will be for different species of birds and types of carving, including sculptural/interpretive, natural finish, decoy and detailed painted. Whether the bird is toucan, penguin or sparrow there is a possible prize.

A superb new professional gallery has been developed at Pensthorpe this year and entry is included in the ticket price to the park. There are 200 acres of reserve to explore with lakes, water meadows and woodlands.

There are gardens with one of the biggest collections of water birds in the world. Plus a children's playground and restaurant. The carvings will be of all styles and sizes but all of birds, most of them for sale, made by both professional and hobby carvers. At the weekends there will be demonstrations, including the winner of two awards at the British Decoy & Wildfowl Carving Associations Competition.

The exhibition will be open from 11am to 5pm, On 3rd to 11th of September. For details of visiting Tel: 0328 851465. For information on exhibiting send S.A.E. to: Mrs J Nicoll, 18 Ditton Court Road, Westcliff on Sea Essex. SSO 7HG. Cost of entry to Park: Adult £3.95; Child £1.80; Senior Citizen £3.40; Family Ticket £9.80 (2+2).



## DANNY'S A LIVEWIRE

As many of you will know Daniel Keeber, who was in our August '93 issue, was one of the runners up in the Business Start-up programme, *LIVEWIRE*, winning £150. This year he was joint winner and received £250, and a chance to compete in the regional contest the winner of which will receive £1,000.

"Because of my age I can't get any grants, it's been a struggle but thanks to my Grandfather, parents and friends things are looking good for the future".

Daniel Keeber aged 17

## 'BLACK JESS'

In this issue we have an advert for the print 'Black Jess', so for those of you who don't know it we have below some background to it by Andrew Millermundy



'Black Jess' was not a particularly good Falcon. Some names from the past have come down to us in literature as being exceptional performers such as 'Lundy III' and 'Lady Jane' but she was not up to those standards. Her immortality came from being the subject of an oil painting by George Lodge. Lodge died in 1954, aged 93, and is recognised as one of the greatest wildlife artists known. His painting of 'Black Jess' showed his mastery of technique and his knowledge of avian anatomy. He himself considered the portrait to be one of the best he had ever painted and he chose it as a frontispiece to his own book 'Memoirs of an Artist Naturalist'. It was used again in Volume V of 'Birds of the British Isles' by Bannerman and Lodge. Contrary to many beliefs, Lodge himself did not train hawks but he was perfectly at home with a bird on the fist as he spent many hours with the falconers of his time. It

## LOOK ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Jim Chick

On the 21st February 1994 the Department of the Environment published the outcome of the first stage of the Review of Sales and Related Wildlife Controls, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These proposals, mainly related to amendments to Schedule 4: Bird registration and Ringing, initially caused a reaction of alarm and concern amongst many falconers and bird of prey keepers.

This was quite understandable in view of the fact that most registered keepers had no involvement with the sport prior to the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and felt threatened by any change from what they considered to be the norm. When discussing the problem it quickly became apparent that the major concern was for the safety of their captive stock and not for the wild populations which are currently at very high levels.

Most of those concerned said they thought current ringing and registration scheme was some deterrent to the would be bird thief and felt that the de-registration of some species might make them vulnerable to this sort of activity. If this is indeed the case then as keepers we must be very concerned, however, within the parameters of this review it is only incidental; the Act was introduced to protect the wild populations at a time when they were at very low levels. Thankfully, with the help of falconers and all those genuinely interested in birds of prey, including hundreds of LRK's, those days are long gone and with them the need for such stringent legislation.

I am still amazed that birds which are not native British or European species were subject to this legislation and as yet no-one has ever offered any suggestion as to how this will help our wild populations. The "look-alike" explanation will just not do. As a conservation move it has about much relevance as including hornbills or pekin robins and de-registration for these species is long overdue.

was through his friendship with one of them that the portrait of 'Black Jess' came to be.

The falconer was Kim Muir. Again he is not a name in the annals of British falconry. He was a fairly wild young man who apparently flew his birds with the same abandon with which he tended to live his life. He died fighting for his country in France during the Second World War.

'Black Jess' was taken from an eyrie (legal in those days) on the coast of Pembrokeshire by Kim Muir and my father, as one of several to be trained, around the mid 1930's. It was a way of identifying individuals at hack to give them different

Modern techniques, such as Micro-chipping and DNA profiling have been developed, enabling the source of our birds to be established beyond all possible doubt and we should take advantage of these methods. They provide much greater security than any ringing can ever offer and remain constant throughout the birds lifetime.

The current registration system, in fact, provides very little in the way of deterrent or security against theft. The ring is easily removed and as note 5 on the Registration Document states, registration does not prove the bird was legally obtained or held. As far as I can see the only thing it provides is proof that you have complied with the requirement to register the bird and paid the appropriate registration fee.

If we were to invest some of the money that we will save on registration and transfer fees in micro-chipping all of our birds, a far more reliable lost/found bureau could be set up and the Hawk Board is currently looking into this matter. In order to comply with Sale requirements, most breeders will continue to ring their young stock with their own rings, which could bear a telephone number, which might aid the recovery of lost birds.

The existing legal requirements and onus of proof on the keeper will remain as now and a regular review of schedule 4 would be undertaken in the future. The requirement for the U.K. government to harmonise with the rest of Europe may have been one of the inspirations of this review, we should welcome it and accept that the DOE proposals have only been made possible by the hard work of many dedicated falconers and breeders, whose efforts are largely unmentioned by the conservationists. The huge majority of falconers and bird of prey keepers are responsible, law abiding people, don't let others bring your sport into disrepute. Above all, be proud of the achievement we have made over the last 15 years, in both conservation and domestic breeding fields.

coloured jesses and that is how the bird in question came to be named. She was certainly flown at partridges and quite likely at grouse too as Muir had access to moors in Scotland. It is sadly not recorded what became of her but my father and Muir continued to fly their birds on Salisbury Plain while they were being trained for military duty. My father told me that some were hacked back to the wild before they were posted overseas. Despite her unrecorded exploits, however ignominious or not as the case may be, 'Black Jess' is recorded on canvas and falconers, and others the world over can still enjoy the presence of the bird so beautifully depicted by Lodge.



**THE  
WELSH HAWKING  
CLUB**

1993 drew to a close on a sad note for the Welsh Hawking Club with the death of our president Lorant de Bastyai. Lorant was a founder member of the Welsh Hawking Club, indeed its inspiration, and from its beginning, along with a few friends, he saw it grow into the club it is today, with the worldwide membership and status whilst still maintaining the principles of a close knit, active hawking club.

He was our first president and held that position for over 30 years. Lorant will be deeply missed by falconers all over the world, especially by those of us who knew him as a personal friend

John Buckner, another founder member of the club retired as Hon. Treasurer at the A.G.M. in February after many years keeping a firm hold of the purse strings, ensuring that the club remained in a healthy financial position. Many thanks to John.

The club's annual field meeting, at Pwllheli in November, was a success, with a good head of game taken. Several small Field meetings were also arranged, some through the efforts of individual members to whom we are grateful. The 1993 N.A.F.A. field meet, held in Nebraska, was attended by five W.H.C. members and some spectacular flying was enjoyed despite temperatures reaching -30 degrees. Finally, with the ever present threat to our sport from anti field sport bodies and legislation, it is most important that all falconers join a recognised club. Don't forget that if the proposed deregulation of certain Birds of Prey is implemented a lot of falconers will "disappear" as far as registration is concerned.

Phil Hill. Publicity Officer.

With Summer almost upon us Hawking seems a long way in the past, but the club had a good season, putting 8 field meetings, two of which were 2 day meetings, the weather was quite reasonable, with some good hawking shown. Although the latter part of the season deteriorated weather wise this didn't stop the English contingent driving for 16 hours through blizzard conditions to get to the February meet, it's so nice to meet other falconers and discuss the finer points of hawking over a dram or two?!!!

We already have the first four meets of next season pencilled in, one of which, in October, is a four day meet on the Isle of Skye. We have the whole of the North end of the Island to hawk Grouse, Rabbits and Hares over but before that, this summer, we have Neil Forbes coming up to do one of his First Aid seminars on June 11th, from all accounts this is very informative and not to be missed by any hawk-keeper. Non-members are welcome to attend.

**THE SCOTTISH  
HAWKING CLUB**



Also the club will be attending the Scottish Game Fair and Scone Palace, if it is successful it will be an annual event for falconers to come along, see some birds, and generally socialise. Discounted entry tickets can be obtained for £3.00 each from the club before the end of June so enjoy your summer out at grass and roll on August 12th.

**ATTENTION ALL CLUBS**

Please write and tell us all your news, whether it is a forthcoming field meet or a report on one just gone, a special occasion or you just want to express your members views on something then please write to us at:

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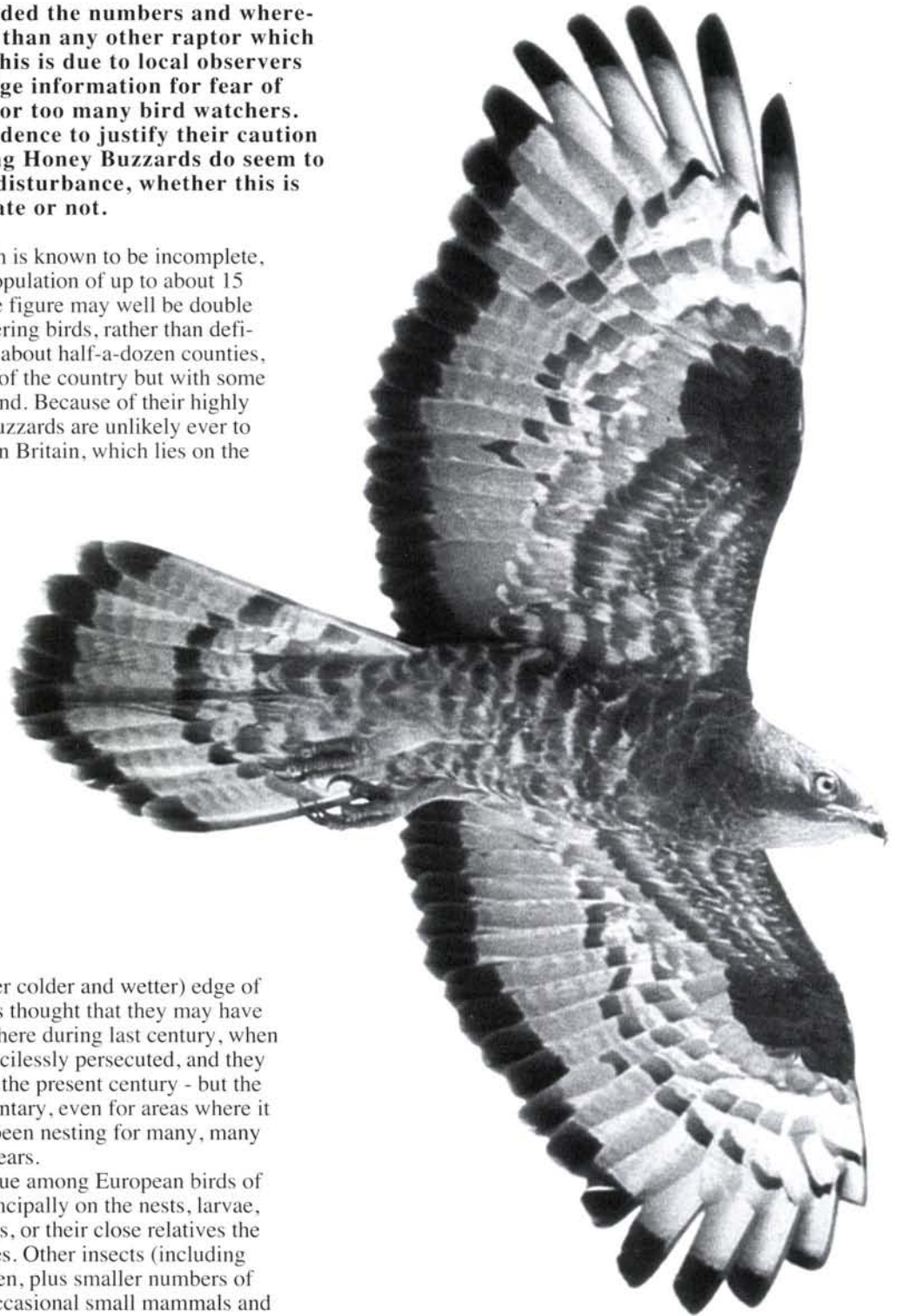




# THE HONEY BUZZARD

More secrecy has surrounded the numbers and whereabouts of Honey Buzzards than any other raptor which nests in Britain; a lot of this is due to local observers being reluctant to divulge information for fear of attracting egg-collectors or too many bird watchers. There is certainly some evidence to justify their caution in the latter case as breeding Honey Buzzards do seem to be susceptible to human disturbance, whether this is deliberate or not.

The "official record", which is known to be incomplete, suggests a fairly stable population of up to about 15 pairs annually, but the true figure may well be double that. These refer to summering birds, rather than definite breeders. They refer to about half-a-dozen counties, mainly in the southern half of the country but with some well to the north in Scotland. Because of their highly specialised diet, Honey Buzzards are unlikely ever to have been very common in Britain, which lies on the



outer (and generally rather colder and wetter) edge of their European range. It is thought that they may have been brought to extinction here during last century, when all birds of prey were mercilessly persecuted, and they made a comeback during the present century - but the historical record is fragmentary, even for areas where it is known the birds have been nesting for many, many years.

Honey Buzzards are unique among European birds of prey in that they feed principally on the nests, larvae, pupae and adults of wasps, or their close relatives the hornets and bumble-bees. Other insects (including honey-bees) are also eaten, plus smaller numbers of small birds and reptiles, occasional small mammals and

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**Honey Buzzards are unique among European birds of prey in that they feed principally on the nests, larvae, pupae and adults of wasps.**

even fruits. The bird is remarkably unobtrusive while hunting and feeding. Its thick scaled, powerful feet are armed with only slightly curved talons - designed for walking and digging, rather than grabbing - and its face is covered in short, dense, rather scale like feathers, as a protection against stings. Compared with many raptors of its size (roughly that of a Common Buzzard), the Honey Buzzard has a smallish head and a delicate beak - good identification pointers, which are normally obvious on a flying bird.

The bird's distribution clearly reflects its prey preferences: it is basically a bird of mature wooded country and is commonest in the warmer parts of Europe. My most recent encounters with Honey Buzzards, in

January this year, were in their winter quarters in West Africa, where they seem to be quite widespread and where the climate obviously suits them very well. I have watched small parties of them migrating northwards in May in the Pyrenees and in Central France: they arrive relatively late on their breeding grounds and do not normally reach the UK until mid or late May. Once there, they can be quite conspicuous as they soar over their territories. There is no mistaking a displaying Honey Buzzard, with its wings held high above its back and its wing tips seeming to vibrate together. Otherwise, they can sometimes be tricky to identify. Look for the small, almost cuckoo-like head, the rather long, narrow-looking tail and the way the wings are held flat while soaring - not in the shallow, but obvious V, of a soaring Buzzard. Honey Buzzards show a great deal of individual variation of plumage, but on many the diagnostic three dark bands across the underwing and on the undertail (two near the base and one at the tip) can be seen clearly.

There are one or two well-known Honey Buzzard watch points in England, and last year, in Devon, the Forestry Commission opened an "official" one.

Observation from a distance is the order of the day. But for most of us, seeing an "HB" is never easy in this country and we are likely to do better on a continental holiday. If you really want to see Honey Buzzards, though, autumn is the time, at one end of the major Mediterranean crossing points which European birds use on their way into Africa. Gibraltar and the Bosphorus (near Istanbul) are highly recommended: a few days in either locality can send your Honey Buzzard tally into tens of thousands.

There is spring migration too, of course. This has a special connotation for bird conservationists because, in recent years, our colleagues in Mediterranean lands have been involved - with much success - in campaigns against the illegal shooting of Honey Buzzards (and, indeed, other protected migrants). In southern

Italy in particular, where the Straits of Messina between Sicily and the mainland have been a particular nasty blackspot, the Honey Buzzard has achieved the status of the conservation symbol.

TEXT MIKE EVERETT

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## ACROSS CLUES

- 1 The female (6)
- 4 Stones for falcons (6)
- 5 Acarina, Cestoda & Siphonaptera (9)
- 12 Popular bird from Eurasia, Africa (6)
- 13,19 An organisation dedicated to ensuring that all sick and injured are cared for by suitably qualified persons (6-6)
- 15 Front of boat for perch (3)
- 17 *Falco tinnunculus* (8)
- 20 To analyse a GOLDEN eagles worth (5)
- 21 Negative (2)
- 22 A type of owl (4)
- 24 Pieces of equipment (3)
- 25 Assist (3)
- 27 A good one is most important (4)

## DOWN CLUES

- 1 *Buteo regalis* (11-7)
- 2 For carrying birds (5)
- 3 For bell (5)
- 6 Trachea (3-3)
- 7 Rise to a great height (6)
- 8 Vital liquid (3)
- 9 Enticement
- 10 *Falco columbarius* (6)
- 11 Male: robin (5)
- 14 Containing items of interest to club members (10)
- 16 OK for a fish eagle? (4)
- 18 Shaft of light (3)
- 23 Registered with 26 (3)
- 26 Tollgate House, Bristol (3)



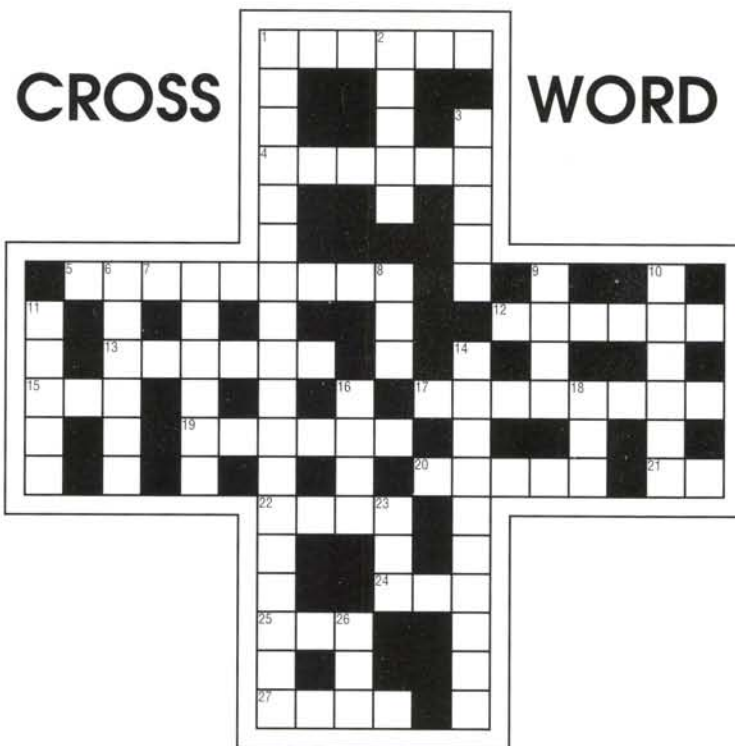
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# THE "RED-BACKED" OR "BLUEHAWK"

## OF THE



## FALKLAND ISLANDS

Adult, female Red-Backed Hawk  
Distributed over most parts of the Falkland Islands. Also found in South America, particularly in Andean regions, it occurs in lowland areas of Argentina and extends into South eastern Brazil and Uruguay

Suitably attired in a thick parka, heavy boots and a woolly hat, I trudged across the vast open terrain of bog and rocks, characteristic of the Falkland Islands, in search of the monstrous, sheep-eating, eagle-like bird that roamed the islands of East and West Falkland.

At least that was what I was expecting after some of the descriptions I had received of the Red-Backed Hawk! I was not, however, to be totally disappointed. On the contrary, what was to ensue was to be nothing short of spectacular and left me most impressed.

I was not very far into the wilds of the landscape before I met with my first encounter. Ahead of me was a small group (or 'Gaggle' I believe is the correct term!) of Upland Geese grazing in a small clearing. I was walking towards them when they suddenly got up and headed off to my left. It was then that I saw their cause for alarm, smoothly and powerfully following the contours of the land until it plunged quickly and accurately into the back and neck of its' marked victim, with a loud thud and a large cloud of white feathers.

I moved in closer and there she was, quite unperturbed by my presence, plucking away at her prize, which was a good deal bigger than herself. I immediately recognised her as a female Red-Backed Hawk,

owing to the richly coloured back and mantle of Chestnut-Brown, which is not a feature of the male of the species.

The Red-Backed Hawk, or 'Blue Hawk' as it is locally known (I never did find out why), is a close relative of the North American Red-Tailed Hawk, largely favoured by Falconers in the U.K. as well as America. It is comparable in size and possess the same characteristics typical of the Buzzard family.

Although the Upland Goose constitutes the main bulk of the Red-Back's diet, on account of its abundance across the islands, this very capable hunter will also take various other species of wild-fowl, hares, rabbits, rats and mice, snipe and of course the token amount of carrion that all Buzzards are occasionally partial to - although the Turkey Vulture tends to dominate this particular source of cuisine in the Falklands.

The Red-Backed Hawk is normally seen singly in its habitat, but pairs up with its monogamous mate, each year, around September, to build on and renovate the previous year's nest of twigs, situated on a ledge high up on a rocky crag. Visiting the nest site of this bird must be exercised with extreme caution during the breeding season, as I was to discover on my second encounter with the species.

Having learned of a possible nest site at a disused quarry not far from the Military Camp and Airport at Mount Pleasant on

East Falkland ( where I was Currently employed as an Engineer in the Main Power Station), I once again donned the appropriate all-weather clothing and, armed this time with a small, but effective pair of binoculars and my trusty camera equipment, I set out for the quarry.

During the months toward the Falkland summer-time the climate is not particularly cold and the snow has all but disappeared, excepting the mountain tops, which remain fairly hostile for a while longer. There is, however, a wind factor which can be quite fierce, owing to the open lay of the land and lack of trees. I was almost blown off my feet several times as I circumnavigated the top of the quarry in search of a nest. Quite a risky venture when you consider the hundred feet or so drop to the stony depths of this particular site.

Any way the nest was quite obtrusive and subsequently, easily spotted. There was actually more than one nest around the quarry, but one in particular stood out because the cliff face around and below the nest was heavily with the white mutes of the birds clearly indicating that the residence had been taken up.

My suspicions were confirmed when I saw a large female of the dark phase variety glide into the nest, which was situated about eight feet below the top of the quarry. She left the nest again and, hanging effortlessly in the wind, watched me care-



## TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY LES PEACH

fully. She stayed close to the edge not far from the nest and did not seem particularly bothered about my presence so I took advantage of the situation and moved in to shoot a few rolls of film at this remarkably photogenic specimen.

It was then that I discovered the meaning of the word caution regarding this particular breed of bird. I heard the unmistakable high-pitched cry of the male who was several hundred feet above me. My immediate thoughts were along the lines of a nice family portrait of this established couple in the vicinity of their home, which was directly below where I was standing at the time.

I pointed my camera at the much smaller and lighter coloured male and as he quickly fill the viewfinder I suddenly realised that he was in a headlong stoop on collision course with the top of my head. Needless to say I sought immediate sanctuary which involved a hasty but calculated leap and a large rock. I thought it prudent that I should retreat to avoid upsetting the nesting pair, not to mention work on the preservation of my scalp.

I later heard a story about an RAF officer who was out walking one day, taking in some of the Falklands countryside. He

inadvertently strolled dangerously close to the nest site of a Red-Backed Hawk, oblivious to the displeased parents overhead. The story was told by the medic who had the pleasure of putting twelve stitches in the top of his head.

I saw many Red-Backed Hawks in my two and a half years in the Falklands and located a number of nest sites. One such nest was situated on the side of a tower, near the main runway, at the airport. But despite the mess created by the Hawks, the RAF were disinclined to remove the nest because the Hawks did such an admirable job of keeping the runway clear and free of birds, which would normally constitute a hazard to the aircraft.

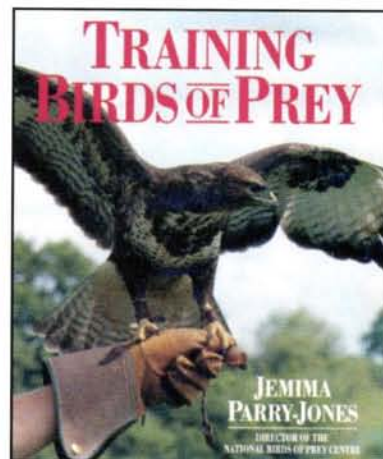
The Red-Backed Hawk is a very fine-looking bird, in both dark and light phase plumage, and judging by its' temperament and hunting ability in the wild I am positive that it would make a magnificent partner for any discerning Falconer. It would certainly be interesting to see how it would compare in performance with the popular Red-Tailed Hawk. I haven't heard of the Red-Backed Hawk being trained for falconry but if there are any readers who have had such an experience then I would be very interested to hear about it.



*First year, juvenile, Red-Backed Hawk*

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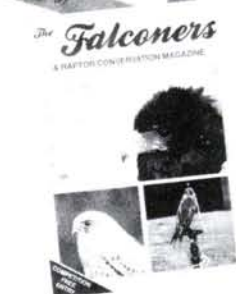
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# FERRETS FOR WORKING OR PETS

## NET MAKING

BRYAN COCKINGS

The art of net making by individuals is slowly dying out, with the machine made ones being sold in the sports shops. Years ago many a night was spent by the fireside knitting purse nets, stop nets, gate nets and the long nets.

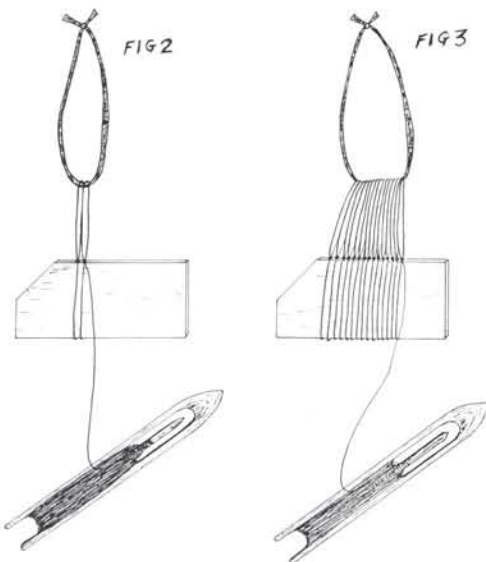
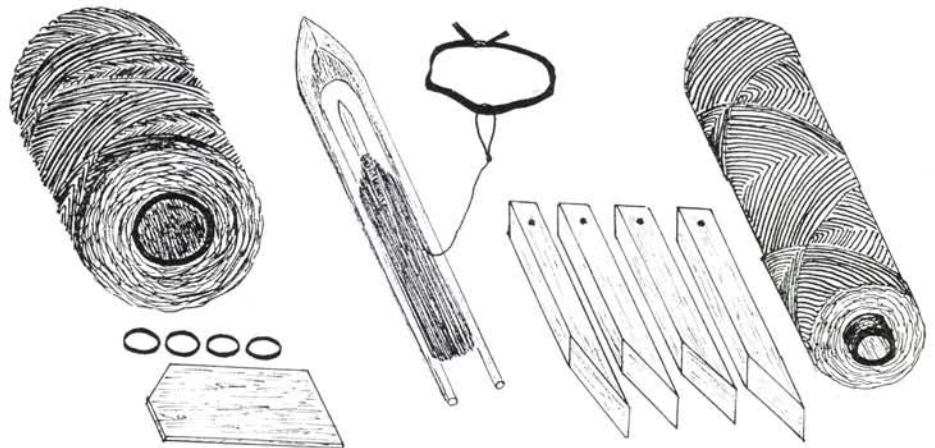
Stop nets were two yards long, lined with cord with a peg on each end and placed through a hedge to catch the rabbits running down it.

Gate nets, twenty-five yards long, were placed across a gateway to catch rabbits or hares chased over the fields by dogs.

Long nets were anything up to a hundred yards long, with half the amount again knitted into it to entangle a running rabbit, this was usually placed alongside a wood at night, held up by pegs placed at intervals along its length.

Net making can, after the initial outlay, be cheaper than buying them. What is needed is a board, a piece of plywood, four inches long by two inches wide (home-made) the width of this indicates the size of the mesh,

FIG 1



Fill the needle with hemp and tie a loop, approx. two inches long, take the short piece of cord and thread it through the hemp loop and tie, there should now be two loops on the end of the needle. Place the cord loop onto a hook or bent nail, take the board and place it under the hemp with the hemp knot on the top edge of the board, take the needle round the board and through the cord loop and down over the board, there should now be two lines, one under the board and one over it. Hold the line under the board with the first finger of the left hand and the one over the board with the thumb, take the needle and make a loop over the left hand, put the needle up between the two lines and the hemp knot through the loop over the left hand and pull tight. There should now be two knots, side by side at the top edge of the board SEE FIG 2.

Continue with the same procedure until there are fifteen knots on the top edge of the board, SEE FIG 3. Slide out the board and place it under the hemp, take the needle round the board, as before and through the first mesh and pull until the centre of the mesh is on top of the board and tie the knot, continuing along the loops

to the last one and start again.

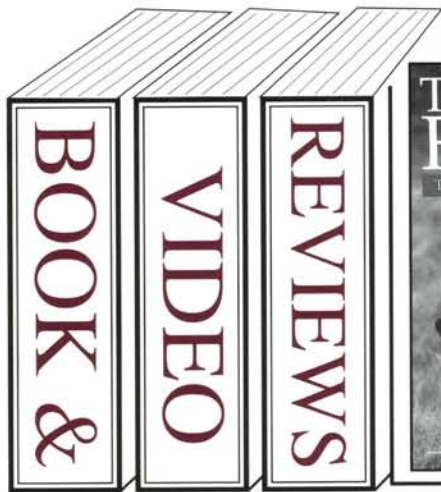
The average net is fifteen knots wide and sixteen long, when the last row is completed leave eighteen to twenty inches of hemp on the end for tying the ring on. Place the ring under the hemp, go through the ring and pick up the first mesh, pull until it comes up to the ring, make a loop over the left hand, the same as knitting the net, come through the loop and tie, carry on until all the meshes are on the ring.

To line the net, take the cord and measure the length of the net, plus two feet, double the cord. Go to the beginning of the net, open the first row with the short length of the cord and thread through until the cord is of equal length, and tie. Remove the short cord, place the net on a table and find the edge of the net. Thread one length of cord up one side and through the ring, turn the net over and do the same on the other side. Make sure the line goes through the ring the opposite way to the first line. Pull the lines together and tie a knot, four to six inches above the ring, tie another knot, six inches above the first one. Take the peg and thread the line through the peg, tie both lines together and now the purse net is complete.

Nets can be made larger or smaller by adding or decreasing the number of knots.

a piece of cord, twelve inches long, a net needle, (these come in different sizes, up to nine or ten inches), hemp or thread, metal rings, cord for lining them and wooded pegs (also home-made) SEE FIG 1. The needle, ring hemp and cord can be bought at most sporting equipment shops.





## THE MODERN FALCONER: TRAINING, HAWKING & BREEDING.

By Diana Durman - Walters.  
Published by Swan Hill Press £19.95  
Review Colin McKelvie

A quick glance at the Contents page of this book is enough to reveal the breadth and scope of Diana Durman-Walters' treatment of modern falconry in the widest sense of the term. Here, written by a proven practitioner, is a crisp and lucid introduction to the birds (indigenous, exotics and hybrids), their roles and potential as trained hunting birds, the business of training and daily maintenance, and their various ways in the hawking field, the display arena and the captive breeding unit. Illustrations in colour, black & white and diagrams complement a text that is directly informative, workmanlike and uncluttered.

The authors experience spans 25 eventful years in the development of modern falconry and hawk management - and what changes those years have seen! In 1969 who would have dreamed of the huge strides that have since been taken in the adoption of non-native species for British falconry; of the near miracles of telemetry and captive breeding, involving hybrids and artificial insemination; and, not least, of the remarkable success of the 1981 Act in securing an assured future for falconry at a time when many preservationists were calling shrilly for the final outlawing of the sport.

As a general guide to falconry in the 1990s and beyond, this manual falls into three main sections - on hawking and raptor management; on the role of dogs in practical falconry; and on the nuts and bolts of raptor breeding in captivity. Additional to her personal expertise, and that of Leonard, her husband and partner in the Scottish Academy of Falconry, the international line-up of names in the preliminary acknowledgments reveals the extent of Diana Durman-Walters' worldwide connections with, what is now, a global sport.

The book ends with an indispensable up-to-date reference section, dealing with the legal requirements for keepers and breeders of raptors, plus an extensive bibliography, a glossary, a list of useful organisations and publications and their addresses, and an index.

Too many post-war falconry books have been mere reiterations of traditional lore, some largely ornamental and pictorial, some historical, some downright self indulgent. But here is a rare item, a book that makes a really bright, new contribution to the practical literature of Modern British falconry.

Jemima Parry-Jone's first book, *Falconry: Care, Captive Breeding & Conservation*, first published in 1986, was written primarily to give people an insight into falconry and raptors. Her new book takes you a step further and is aimed at the dedicated, the person who is serious about learning falconry.

There are two main reasons for her having written another book; firstly to explain fully, about falconry, filling in all the details that other books leave you wanting. Jemima's style of writing leaves you in no doubt as to how to go about each stage properly. From choosing the right bird for you, right through to entering your bird. There is a lot of emphasis put on safety and the right way to go about training your bird, all

geared purely towards the birds well-being. The second reason is because no book covers in any detail the rearing, handling and training of owls. Jemima covers all avenues, explaining how important correct feeding is due to the fact that owl's have no crop. Going through the different breeds of owls and advising which owl is best for which purpose, keeping in an aviary, handling or hunting with. She explains the training methods, which are quite different to the way in which you train hawks and falcons. For the potential owl keeper this book is a must.

This is the most comprehensive, up to-date book, for the novice and experienced falconer alike, written in a way that makes it easy to read and understand.

## HAWK AND POINTER VIDEO CLAYBROOK VIDEO.

This video gives you the end result, that is when all the manning and training has been done, showing a female Harris Hawk, a German Short Haired Pointer and trainer, down the field spending the day working the hedges, with the Harris Hawk following on and a few rabbits being caught, (on the other side of the hedge) This video is not about big bags and fantastic flights but shows how the dog and hawk work together and how relaxing flying a Harris hawk can be. It is filmed on a camcorder and at only 35 mins long is a little overpriced at £14.99. + £2 p&p.

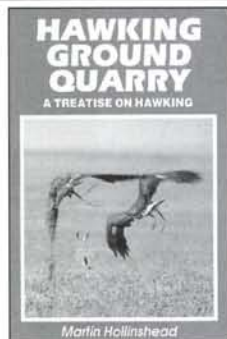


## HAWKING GROUND QUARRY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD £19.95

Published by Hancock House

When I first heard of this book I thought 'great, a book that will apply to 80 per cent of falconers in Britain, a specialised book about hawking rabbit and hares'. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The editorial is very weak, there is very little information about how to catch the 'brown furry things', and it just skips through the birds capable of catching them, Buteos, Goshawks and Golden Eagles. The first part of the book covers the birds and some anecdotes from different countries. The second part covers, in brief, field work, dispatching quarry and travelling your bird. Next is a section for all up and coming ferreters on working ferrets, this is a fairly comprehensive chapter, with some good information. Also, as you should eat what you catch there are ten recipes, provided by Carol North, for you to try.

What really makes this book worth buying, are the spectacular photographs, taken by D Kuhn and others with some of the best in-flight shots I have ever seen. If you like photo's then this is the book for you



## TRAINING BIRDS OF PREY

JEMIMA  
PARRY-JONES.

PUBLISHED BY  
DAVID & CHARLES  
£16.99



# RAPTOR RESCUE

## WHERE IN THE WAREHOUSE?

MICHEAL ROBINS

Some rescues are easy, some not so, and occasionally one looks impossible at first, second even third glance! This was just such a problem. I was asked by the R.S.P.C.A. to assist with the removal of a Tawny Owl that had managed to get itself into a large warehouse building, and could not find a route back out. On telephoning the manager of the warehouse I was told it was "a very large bird with long ears". That does not sound like a Tawny, I thought, and visions of an escaped Eagle Owl started to take shape. I agreed to visit the premises to take a look and geared myself up to try and lure the bird down to the fist if it was keen enough. As the saying goes "the best laid plans of mice and men"!

On arrival I found a bonded warehouse, the dimensions of which were some 200 feet square and 50 feet high, complete with miles and miles of pallet racking and a pipework sprinkler system at roof height. In other words, thousands of convenient perches for a fit and healthy bird. The final twist in the scenario was that the owl turned out to be a wild, Long Eared Owl, giving me no prospect whatsoever of an easy capture, in fact, after spending considerable time thinking about it, I could not see any way of getting to the bird, which was, of course, using the highest points of the building

to sit. Coupled with this was the rather obvious desire of the management of the building to remove the owl in any way possible, not necessarily with the welfare of the bird as first priority.

I thought that after an evening spent on the phone to anybody and everybody I might have an easy solution, but it became crystal clear that there was not one.

The next day, I returned to the

**Nets were put across the warehouse, this was to take nearly two hours**

building with my local R.S.P.C.A. Inspector and a senior Fire Service Officer (a member of Raptor Rescue who was very fortunately on duty at the time) to see what might be done. After much deliberation we felt our only chance was to position nets at roof height and somehow drive the bird into them. It looked helpful that every time the bird flew it seemed to fly the same route each time. A licence was required to carry out such a netting operation and I was a little taken aback when after faxing all the details to the Department of the Environment they came



*Long Eared Owl pictured at the hospital just prior to being released after rescue*

back to me and refused the licence. However, they gave me details of a B.T.O. ringer, who, if he could assist, would not need a separate licence. He and two of his bird ringing colleagues came very quickly and agreed at least to "give it a go". Eventually, everybody having gone off to gather the necessary equipment, we reassembled with fingers and everything else firmly crossed.

Rigging up nets was a very difficult and potentially dangerous operation and so I made a magnanimous gesture and let the others carry it out! The nets used had to span an area some 40 feet wide and 20 feet deep and be tied to the fabric of the building about 25 feet from the ground, and upwards to the roof. The Herts Fire and Rescue crew were, of course, well used to such heights and proved invaluable in helping the B.T.O. ringer to get the nets in place. Even so, this took the best part of two hours to complete and was a very difficult task.

Now came the acid test, would it work? The owl was duly dis-

turbed from its roosting point and within a minute flew into the nets but managed to free itself before we could get up to it. Several minutes passed and the same happened again. We began to despair. Having found itself caught up twice, the owl made sure it avoided the area where the nets were, and for the next hour thwarted all our efforts to drive it into them.

We felt our only hope was to keep the bird on the move and trust it would make a mistake. No doubt the bird was caused some distress by this and we felt a little uneasy doing it. However, we felt we had little choice if we were to have any chance of catching it. "Third time lucky", as they say, and eventually the owl flew into the net again and did not manage to escape. After removal from the net it was fitted with a B.T.O. ring, photographed and taken to my hospital unit for an overnight stay for rest and recuperation. It was released the next day onto a nearby nature reserve, where these quite rare, secretive and beautiful owls regularly overwinter.

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# RAPTORS of SRI LANKA

This tiny pendant island, hanging from the southern point of the Indian subcontinent, is a popular holiday and bird watching destination for Europeans despite its ethnic strife. These protracted and tragic troubles (basically native Buddhists against Indian Hindu settlers in the north and east of the island) somewhat restricts access to some of the best raptor watching in the dry zone, but hardly affects tourism in the popular south west.

The island though, contains a wide range of landscapes within a comparatively small compass (100 miles wide by 200 miles long) from central 7,000 foot misty mountains to coastal and inland forest, woodland, rice paddies and dry savannah. Also the south west contains the best tropical palm fringed beaches and coral reefs, although very wet in the south west monsoon season that lasts roughly from May to October. Conversely the north east monsoon blows from about November to March, affecting

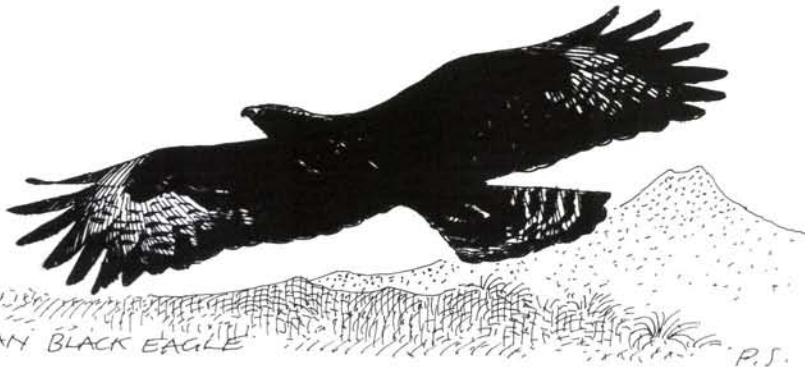
Ceylon in 1955. Nonetheless those which remain are frequently gorgeous with certain storks, egrets, bitterns, ducks, kites, parrots, kingfishers, beeaters, woodpeckers, oriels, barbetts, sunbirds, pittas, flycatchers, mynahs, minivets, leafbirds, and blue-maggies all delighting the eye! And there are still twenty-one endemic species exclusive to Sri Lanka alone.

The current status of many raptors and owls is not very clear; but they will undoubtedly have been affected by the large clearance of hill forest/jungle mainly for tea (there is very little true jungle left) and the large amounts of chemicals used in the plantations and rice paddies. So, what follows is based on several sources, including Phillips 1978 Checklist of the Birds of Ceylon and G.M. Henry's Birds of Ceylon; plus mine and a couple of others' observations over the last few years.

Only one vulture species, the SCAVENGER or

chance hill stop, when exotic Paradise Flycatchers, Golden Fronted Leafbirds and Scarlet Minivets were in every bush and tree, and four species of raptor drifted in and out of view. One of these was the equally large, but much stockier MOUNTAIN or HODGSONS HAWK EAGLE (*Spizaetus nipalensis*), an uncommon but prominent resident of the forested hills of which I saw probably three soaring individuals, one gliding above a beautiful mountain waterfall near Badulla. They are presumably still in decline and somewhat resemble huge accipiters (and Crowned and Harpy Eagles) with long tails often held closed in flight, and very broad, rounded and barred wings. Both these raptors favour a wide varying diet of reptiles, mammals and birds, and fortunately like clearings in their forests. The CRESTED or CHANGEABLE HAWK EAGLE (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*) is both a smaller and more plentiful and widespread resident, and can also have a wide variation of plumages in other Asian countries, but the two I saw clearly were probably typical, and quite long crested. (see illustrations). Both were in the open savannah 'forest' at Bundalla, allowing close study and only reluctantly flying in that intense morning heat, away from the racket made by our so called guides!. Another resident that much rarer hawk eagle is the RUFUS BELLIED HAWK EAGLE (*Hiraaetus kienerii*), though apparently widespread in hill forest during G.M.Henry's day it still apparently suffers persecution here. I had four views of a possible pale immature, soaring with Osprey, Painted Storks and Aningas over Handapangala Wewa tank just below the southern foothills at Wellawaya. This one of the few places wild elephants etc. are still seen. This little group of similar crested and round winged birds is completed by what is probably the commonest, the CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE (*Spilornis cheela*). This is also one of the most distinctive, with its rich colours, boldly barred wings and tail and loud scream, although often difficult to find in its preferred forest habitat. Fortunately one sailed right over my head during one of the brief periods in Udawattakele jungle sanctuary at Kandy when I wasn't plucking loathsome leeches from my legs! There are two resident 'true' fish eagles to be found on the island, the fairly common black and white WHITE BELLIED SEA EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) and the scarcer and slightly smaller GREY HEADED FISH EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaeus*). Both are moderately plentiful around the northern dry zone and its tanks especially at Mihintle, but unfortunately this is just in the military no go zone. I had two good sightings of adult White Bellied Sea Eagles on the south coast paddies and wetlands, and enjoyed watching an immature fishing in the ornamental lake in the middle of Kandy, besieged by hundreds of mobbing House and Jungle Crows directly over this bustling hill town.

**Text and studies by  
Philip Snow  
Painting overleaf**



the dry zone only, and this is the best time to visit the south and west coast. Sadly, as elsewhere, much hill jungle and forest has been cleared to satisfy western tea addicts, with the usual degradation of the land, whereas the widespread lowland rice paddies are often excellent bird habitats, as are the numerous 'tanks' or reservoirs and other cultivated areas.

My own visit was in November of '93 in what should have been the south's dry period, but latterly the monsoons have been far less predictable and quite a lot of rain, wind and heavy seas ensued, although this only really restricted snorkelling over the coral reefs and not bird-watching. Diverse birds of wondrous tropical hues, and some striking raptors, are locally common in this area of many estuaries, rice paddies, 'tanks' (reservoirs), palms, forest and Acacia scrub savannah and there are still Indian elephants, crocodile, deer and leopard to be seen although largely in the parks and sanctuaries. But this is a heavily populated island and pressure on landscape and wildlife is inevitable, with many birds obviously in decline since G.M.Henry published his classic Birds of

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron pernopterus gingianus*) has ever been recorded on only one occasion, even though it is common enough on the nearby Indian subcontinent. I saw only one OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) fishing at an inland tank but they have apparently never been a common winter visitor to the south, although an annual visitor to the northern dry zone. Likewise only one BOOTED EAGLE (*Hiraaetus pennatus*) passed my way, hunting over the wetlands and savannah of the Bundala sanctuary in the extreme south; and this small eagle is also only an occasional winter visitor to all zones. Its larger relative the BONNELLIS HAWK EAGLE (*Hiraaetus fasciatus*) is extremely rare, being represented by only one specimen in Sri Lanka. The large and distinctive ASIAN BLACK EAGLE (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) is a fairly widespread resident of the partially forested hills, and presents a unique flight silhouette with long tail and wings that taper slightly inwards from the inner primaries. My best view of this was near Kandy, hill capital of Sri Lanka, during a frantic 15 minutes





# RAPTORS of SRI LANKA

One of the island's most noticeable raptors, the WHITE BELLY SEA EAGLE c 70 cm, fishes mainly over coastal waters. Adult, far left & immature, which shows the more typical & squarer wings of other sea eagles. Juvenile is much browner. The B.Kite is shown to the same scale.

adult



adult JERDON'S BAZA  
c 47cm ✓



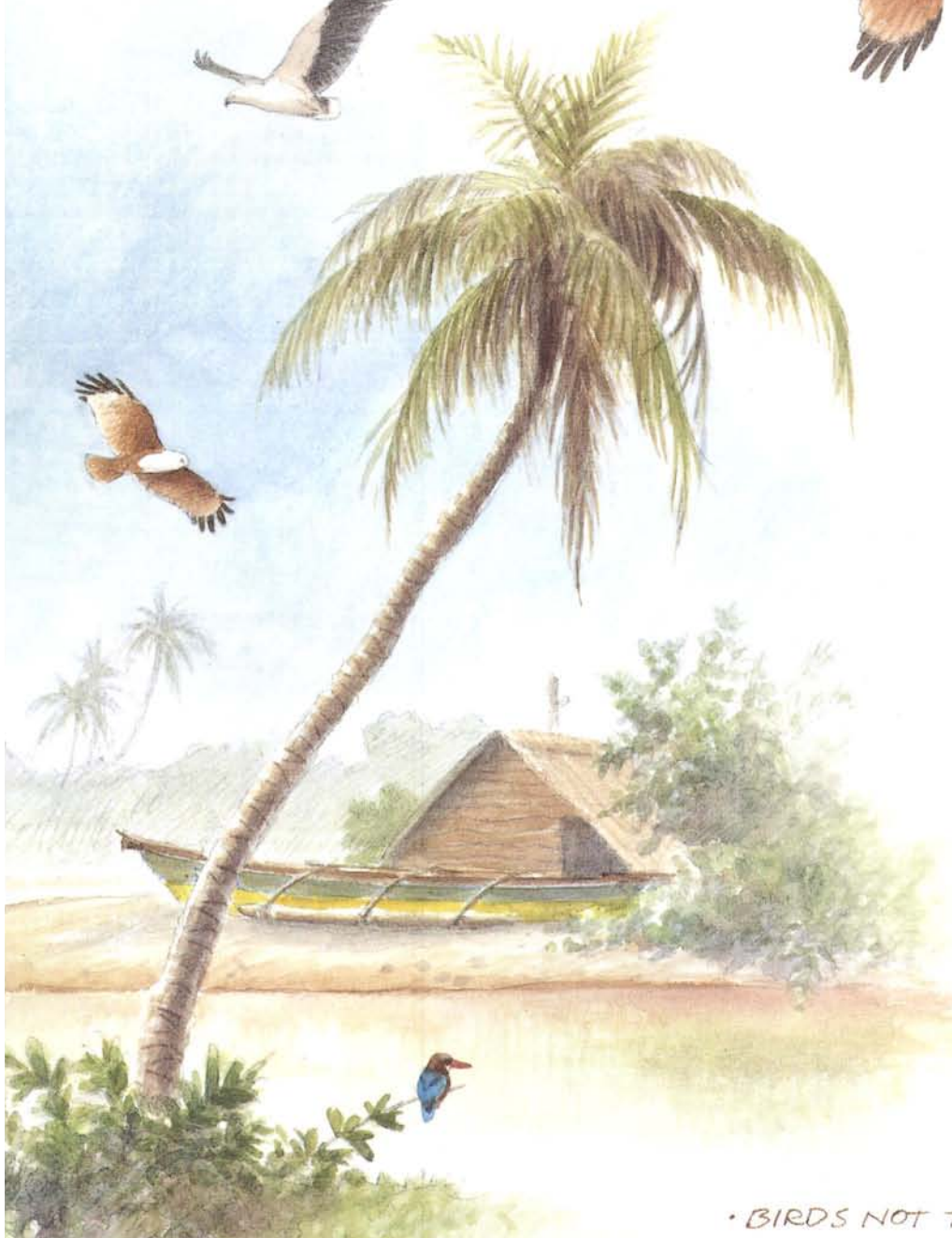
WHITE  
BELLIED  
SEA EAGLE  
head  
of adult



BRAHMINY KITE  
c 49cm.

Adults [above & left] over southern paddies & estuaries. Mainly fisher & scavenger, often around human habitations

• BIRDS NOT TO SCALE •





# Part 1

MOUNTAIN HAWK EAGLE <sup>?</sup> c73 cm  
 (Also formerly known as Feather-toed H. E.), essentially a forest dweller above 2000 feet. Widespread but probably uncommon - still persecuted for taking the odd fowl? [Understandable as wild Jungle Fowl live here]!  
 Adults, flight below.



CHANGEABLE HAWK  
 (CRESTED) EAGLE c69 cm  
 S Loynds Parakeet



GREY HEADED  
 FISH EAGLE ✓  
 adult  
 c68 cm



Rarer than W.b.s. Eagle, found mainly in n. dry zone. Much shorter, broader all dark wings & less active than most fish eagles.

juvenile  
 WHITE BELLED  
 SEA EAGLE





*Gos lived at night in the woodshed*

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# *Times Past With*

# “GOS”

**By Ray Turner LRK**

As a young chap on a remote farm in Cornwall I had few local friends, although I did strike up an acquaintance with a Colonel Rawlings, who was a keen bird watcher. One day he turned up at the farm in his mud splattered jeep and said “Here you are, you might like to look after this one.” It seemed that the Colonel was on the move again. There on his fist was ‘Gos’, a magnificent female Goshawk.

It transpired that ‘Gos’ had been well trained, which is more than I can say for myself. It is with some chagrin that I remember that I did not know the first thing about falconry, although with Gos I learned fast! An old motor-cycle gauntlet (a bit on the large side) the ends of which nearly reached my elbows and jesses, made of old leather bootlaces, borrowed from a pair of farm boots! Since I had no aviary Gos lived at night in the woodshed, which was piled high with logs. During the time I had her she ‘decorated’ the summit of the log mountain with her mutes. Quite dramatic really, a sort of snow clad mountain.

As a rule, during the day, Gos would sit on the ‘horse’ in the garden, a wooden structure that

was used for sawing logs on, with a double handled saw. To pick her up I would extend the gauntlet and say “Gos!”, and she would jump onto my arm. This came in really handy as she soon escaped, I found her sitting on the farmhouse roof, but with an outstretched arm and a “Gos” down she came, as good as gold. It got so that I would let her fly up onto the roof; from there she would go to the shallow granite drinking trough, where she would have a good bathe, then back up onto the roof for a most fastidious preen.

Now, the good Colonel’s parting remark was “she loves rabbits” which I took at the time to mean just for food. In the days before myxamatoxis, rabbits were in abundance and it turned out that Gos was a champion hunter.

Carrying her on my fist (complete with leather bootlaces) we would go hunting, accompanied by Bonzo our spaniel. Bonzo’s method was a little crude to say the least, he’d charge through the brush and brambles like a tank, Gos was much more subtle.

Through a gap in a hedge I’d show her some rabbits feeding in a field at the edge of a bramble and gorse thicket some 60 to 70 yards away. She would get

quite excited and grip my arm very hard, so then she was cast off. A devious little devil, she never flew at the rabbits but would speed low over the ground towards where they were feeding. I am sure they never knew what hit them! By the time I had scrambled through the hedge she would already be plucking her kill, with little bits of fur floating on the wind.

The rabbit would be duly paunched and she would be rewarded with the liver and kidneys. I think it is fair to say that Gos was

a most exceptional bird and was the epitome of goodness itself, added to this was the fact that being on a farm we had lots of free-ranging hens and these were never the object of attack. Moreover, in the spring, our bantams would appear with a retinue of fluffy little chicks that dutifully followed their parents all over the place and at times walked right under neath where Gos was perched. She

never ever took a fancy to those little morsels, so I guess the Gos was ‘hooked’ on rabbits.

Now it is a long haul from Cornwall to the Orkney Islands, a journey which I undertook on two occasions. A train to Thurso, taxi to the little port of Scrabster, followed by a four hour trip on the St Ola to Stromness. The three of us,

Gos, a friend and myself, unscathed. Gos travelled in a large laundry basket in the guard’s van. In those days, before the railway was nationalised, (they were

steams trains then) the staff were very friendly and helpful, I was allowed to sit in the guard’s van with Gos on my arm. On the lovely scenic route from Inverness to Thurso, Gos and I watched the dramatic scenery go by through the smut-stained window.

We stayed at Skail Bay, on mainland Orkney, where we lived in a tent. At night Gos would stay in the boat house and

**Carrying her on my fist (complete with leather bootlaces) we would go hunting, accompanied by Bonzo our spaniel**





*When Gos hunted rabbit they never knew what hit them*

during the day would be perched on the low stone wall outside. We were also allowed to borrow a couple the local ponies. However, no saddle - just a halter and bit.

We'd set off with Gos on my arm, trotting over the treeless, undulating ground, where the quarry was hare. Big chaps these hares and they could run like the wind. One local fellow reckoned that some of these hares would be about eleven pounds in weight. Whether this is true or not I don't know, as I never weighed one, but take it from me - they *were* big.

Almost invariably, Gos would spot a hare long before we did, she would quiver and grip my arm tightly - then she would be cast off and away she'd go. I guess that she thought these hares were really just big rabbits! We would watch Gos gaining speed over the ground and perhaps half a mile away she'd turn, flying low and fast in the direction of the intended prey, following the contours of the ground like a radar attack fighter plane. The hare would be up and galloping like the wind but the poor old chap never stood a chance. By the time we got there Gos would look up at us whilst sitting on the hare and then continue plucking with great gusto. These big hares were not so easy to overcome however. Sometimes there would be a bit of a struggle before the hare could be subdued, but Gos always won through. I guess she

was lucky in that she was never kicked by a hare, which has been known to make a hawk shy of hunting such large quarry. We were also very fortunate in that during our two visits the weather was really good.

Perhaps for a day or so there was a little light rain, but none of those storms or gale type winds that are associated with that part of the world. To be able to ride over thousands of acres where we seldom saw another human being, with Gos sitting proudly on my arm was a really exhilarating experience. Some days we would see no hares at all, but somehow it did not really matter. Gos would go for a flight after which she'd find some outcrop of rock where she would survey the scenery. Riding up I'd outstretch an arm with a "Gos" and down she would come. She sure was a champion of hunters of which I feel sure that I will never see the like again.

Time came when Gos (rather Prematurely) went to meet 'The Great Falconer in the Sky' - which even to this day is a sad memory. Gos developed 'bumblefoot' in the days before antibiotics were widely in use and sadly had to be put down as there was no sure cure. The veterinary surgeon was kindness itself, and did not even charge me a fee.

This was a time of change for me too; I left the farm behind and learned to fly myself - as a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm!

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# Training Gundogs For Falconry

GUY WALLACE

## BAPTISM OF FIRE

**The two most important days for a dog are the day its' parents were mated and its' first day's hawking. You can only do so much about the first but make sure that you get the other one right!**

A dog does not finish its training one day and then start its' hawking career the next. Rather, work in the field is a gradual transition from basic training, during which time the dog is very much still being trained (and will continue to be so for the rest of its working lifetime) up until the point where it can be considered to be a trained dog - whatever a trained dog is! (One of the great advantages of running pointing dogs [as opposed to spaniels or retrievers] is that the handler is IN COMPLETE CHARGE of the whole local operation, whoever the falconers may be and this point should be confirmed before the party sets off.)

The first point(?) is that the trainer should be solely involved with actually handling the dog and should leave the actual flying of the hawk to a chum - preferably a chum who understands dogs. Secondly, these first forays should be regarded very much as a dog training exercise, rather than an endeavour to put vast amounts of game in the bag and, thirdly, the novice dog should be the only dog in sight so that there are no other canine delinquents to lead it astray.

If you have done your homework correctly and thoroughly your dogs first few performances in the field will probably be something of an anti-climax! All will probably go well and it is only

when they have put two and two together that they start to think that they know more than you do. It is important that you wait for favourable weather conditions before its' "Baptism of Fire". On the old scottish estates, if it was good stalking weather they stalked deer, if it was good weather for pointers they ran them, otherwise they left them in kennels and took out the spaniels and if it was pouring with rain they probably fished. This meant the pointers only went out under favourable conditions. Good conditions make good dogs.

Cast the dog off and hunt it into the wind. Do not worry too much about perfecting quartering patterns for the first few outings. This can be tightened up on later, once the pup has settled 'into the collar'. At this stage it is important that it enjoys what it is doing and as long as it is reasonably obedient do not lean on it too hard. After two or three outings you can tighten the screw. When its' tongue starts lolling out and it starts to shorten its beat when hunting it probably means that the dog is getting tired, so give it a breather for five minutes. Take your time. There is no hurry. Hopefully, sooner or later, the dog will come on point. The handler should leave the dog on point for a respectable length of time and slowly make his way over to one side of the dog, talking to it reas-

suringly. Take up the line, if the dog is still trailing it (my own youngsters trail a line for their first few weeks on a grouse moor) and eventually command the dog to road in. If the handler can see the quarry he should flush the game with his or her foot and quietly, but firmly, drop the dog. Either way it is essential that the dog actually sees the quarry that is pointed and produced. Remember that this should be the first time that the dog has put all its hitherto isolated lessons into the correct sequence that we have been leading up to, so it is important that the dog actually sees the end product. The dog should, at last, now be ready for the penny to finally drop. (For this reason I like to shoot quarry over a falconry dog before flying over it with a game hawk.) ON NO ACCOUNT SHOULD THE HAWK EVER BE FLOWN AT ANY GAME THAT THE DOG HAS NOT POINTED AND PRODUCED ON COMMAND. Failure to

observe this basic tenet will result in your HPR ending up as that original long range spaniel! Quitting while you are ahead is an invaluable principle of training and, after hunting the dog on for a further few minutes, so that it does not associate game killed with the end of the fun, you should call it a day.

A novices first outings should be ENJOYABLE so, while maintaining discipline, do not be too much of a martinet and remember that, like children, young dogs get easily tired with excitement and stop concentrating on what you are telling them. I have described the ideal scenario when everything goes smoothly. However those two characters that make the laws by which we all live (and train dogs) Messrs Murphy and Sod, will probably conspire to make sure that things do not go as smoothly as you had hoped. Your first point may be on a wily old grouse or pheasant that runs in front of the dog, causing the dog



*A young G.W.P. on one of her first days hawking*





*Your dog should be steady to everything before entering the hunting ground*

to either point the 'haunt' [where game has previously been lying] thus making you think that you have a 'false pointer' on your hands or she makes the dog creep forward to 'handle' [keep contact with] the game, making you think that you have got a dog that is not so staunch on point! Or the dog is 'messaging about' at the extremity of its beat and ignoring the turn whistle, so you run across to teach it the error of its ways when, up gets a cock pheasant (usually with that well known chortle) that the dog was trying to get on terms with! (Game will not ALWAYS lie to a point, particularly when a human ranges alongside the dog and is towering above the game or, simply because, the game is just 'jumpy'. You will frequently have to crouch down on approaching a novice on point.) In each case TRUST YOUR DOG and stay cool. If you had a better nose than your dog you would not need one in the first place! Never assume that you have a complete moron on your hands but always have confidence in your dog. As my old huntsman, the late Bob Jones, used to frequently tell me "If you think that your hounds are going to chase sheep, they probably will" and "If you think that your hounds are going to 'sugar off', they probably will." And he was right. Never fly at any game that the dog chases, If you are keyed up, that emotion is transmitted to the dog and it may chase game that it has been commanded to flush (despite being rock steady to flush in training) If it 'gets

under its bird' and that bird is killed under the dogs nose, it will forever chase in expectation of the game being presented on a plate. As long as the dog is obeying your commands you may count your first outing 'under Battle Conditions', as a success. It is not what the dog does on its first few outings that counts, but what it does not do. Just because you have committed your dog to the hawking field do not think that there is no need for any further training. You will doubtless discover weaknesses and even faults that need concentrating on back on the training field before they become ingrained. Thereafter you can give the dog increasing experience in decreasing scenting conditions, but always be mindful of the important fact that it is still very much under TRAINING and do not, therefore 'ask it questions' that it is not experienced enough to answer. In short, progress at the the dog's pace, rather than at your own (impatient) pace. If things are not going according to plan, never be afraid to swallow your pride or to disappoint yourself or other people but put the dog on a lead and retire gracefully. You have ten seasons hawking in front of that dog so why ruin it for half a days foolhardiness. The same thing applies to any time in the future. All dogs have their off days, as do their handlers and you will both commit many "boo-boos" on the way through. It is all part of both of your learning curves.



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# Hungarian Hunter

As a small boy, too young, I suppose, to really be responsible enough to have my own bird, I saved every bit of my pocket money and bought what few falconry books were available at the time. I tried to imagine the day, far in the future, when I would be old enough to have a Goshawk of my own to fly and hunt. As I got older I flew a variety of birds, Harris's, Redtails, Merlins, Lanners and others, my favourite was always the Sparrowhawk. I had many seasons with one, both in my native Suffolk and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. But I still had my dreams of a Goshawk.

While helping out at a Falconry centre, I came to know one well, an imprinted female, by the name of 'Phrenic'. She was bad tempered, unpredictable, tatty and vocal, she was bad mannered and she was too noisy to be pleasant to handle. But we persevered and only after I got hurt did I think she would be better in an aviary or passed on to a falconer less concerned about his personal safety than I was! But seeing her in pursuit, was the time when she finally did have something in common with the marvellous birds I had read about as a boy, and the time came when I was in a position to get one of my own. A breeder was found, a proven strain of Goshawks filled his pens. Well reared youngsters, fed on a mixed diet. They were Hungarian and therefore small. Even so I chose a male, as my main quarry would be feathered prey. He was stunning to look at in his mature plumage, physical perfection. Had he been a woman, I would have married him on the spot. Training went on slowly but thoroughly and without a hitch.

He was soon incredibly obedient and took everything in his stride. He refused to tolerate strangers on hunting trips though, and as the place where I lived was very

remote, he never saw enough strange people to accept them. But I didn't mind that, my days of showing off were passed and the only person I needed to impress now was me!

I remember his first kill was a partridge. He had only been off the creance for two days and I held on to him for a fraction of a second unsure if it was wise to let him go. But it had very little lead on him and he overhauled it as it slowed down to find sanctuary in a hedge bottom.

His manners were perfect, no mantling, screaming or footing and for my part I never teased or robbed him and fed him up well on every kill he made. He was always rewarded for improvement, however slight. He travelled well, unhooded, on the passenger seat head rest, undisturbed there even by strangers, tractors or traffic jams but showing a great deal of interest in roadside rooks! But he was small, even for a Hungarian Goshawk. He started the season at 1lb 14oz and was, perhaps, a little plump at that and at first I kept him entirely on Partridges and Pheasant. He learned early that to snatch at a Pheasant's rear would leave him with nothing more than a foot full of feathers. So, he started to orientate himself towards the underside of the

fleeing bird, grabbing the mid-torso with both feet and tipping the quarry over. It is true to say he held on to very few full grown cock Pheasants, but Hens, first year cocks and Partridges were taken easily enough if they flushed close to us.

He knew exactly what it meant when my collie stood on point and he got so good at the game I began to think of him as unbeatable, a superb bird.

Our first attempt at rabbits with him brought me to earth with a bump, by now he was experienced and confident, small yes, but wise in the ways of feathered quarry. The sun shone and the breeze was light as I drove to some of my rabbiting grounds.

Bird on my fist and my heart in my mouth, we walked over the hill and the ground before us moved with rabbits. Like a bullet he went and singled out a rabbit from the crowd. He hit it broadside and rode it like a bronco for a few yards before being kicked off. He stood there, on the short cropped grass, panting from the effort. I raised my fist and he returned instantly for the reward he always found.

Next rabbit, same story, except that he hit the backside of it and got a rougher ride than before. After that one he refused to look at them, no matter how small, or how close they were when they got up. I was disappointed of course, but I told myself, and



First attempt at a rabbit. He rode it like a bronco before being kicked off.



# DAVID RAMPLING

indeed others told me, that he was too small and without the weight he simply could not subdue a 3 and a half pound rabbit.

So, for the time being, we stuck to feathered quarry and his tally mounted. Mallard, Rooks, Woodpigeon, Stoat and even young Grouse were added to his list of species in the bag. But I wasn't entirely satisfied that he would never take a rabbit. And for my part fed him almost exclusively on them, splitting the head to give him the brains, which he enjoyed, and I hoped this would help to orientate him towards the head end.

Then came the news I had been waiting for, (and usually would have dreaded). Myxomatosis. Months had passed since he had last refused to chase a rabbit and now as an experienced hunting

by the head, slam, simple as that, as though he had done it a hundred times before. I ran down the hill and dispatched the rabbit and noticed that both his feet, being small, were wrapped around the rabbit's head, (unlike most hawks, who prefer one foot on the head and one on the loins).

I fed him up, next day, same thing and the next and the next. After a week or two of that we progressed to clean healthy ferreted rabbits and he continued to use the same method. He would never, no matter what, go for a hold on the rear end, he would always overtake, wingover and pin the head. Of course he missed some, the manoeuvre, if not done quickly enough, gave the rabbit time to jink. If it looked like he couldn't perform his trick before the rabbit made cover he would simply peel

**It is true to say he held on to very few full grown cock Pheasants, but Hens, first year cocks and Partridges were taken easily enough if they got up close to us**

Goshawk, he sported a Harris Hawks, almost indestructible, tail, his own being shredded some time before, trying to subdue some large, feathered quarry. I walked with him to the top of the same hill as before, and there in the valley was just what I hoped to see, a weakened rabbit, Goss saw it, hesitated, then started. He hardly flapped, just closed his wings and glided down the hill, gaining speed and momentum. The rabbit must have heard the wind whistling through his bells and ran towards its warren, too late, Goss slammed on the brakes for impact, looking from above he seemed almost round, with his outspread tail and wings but instead of hitting it on the side, as before, he very quickly gained a little height, did a sharp wingover and pinned the rabbit

off and return to my upheld fist, often without landing between times, and it seemed to me, on that day of his first rabbit, that I at last had the bird I had dreamed of as a boy.

I look back to that first season in Scotland with my Goshawk with fond memories. These days I am a shepherd on a beautiful little Island off the north coast of Devon. My collie has had to give up all thoughts of finding quarry for a hawk and get back to the job she was originally bred for, working sheep.

I don't have the time to fly a bird now just now, a shepherd at lambing time works long hours and, so, for the time being at least, I have to be content watching the wild Peregrines hunting around the fields, cliffs and skies of Lundy.

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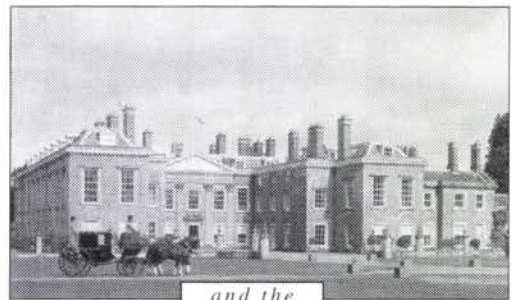
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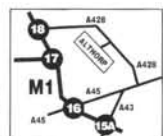


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# MOULTING

**MOULT: to shed feathers, hair, skin.  
Taken from the latin *mutare*: change.**

In the case of hair and skin this is done at regular intervals during the year and, in the case of hair, is cyclic, responding to temperature and photoperiod (light). Feathers on the other hand are annual occurrences, the moult coinciding in birds of prey with their breeding cycle.

Most falconers use this known time of the year to put their hawks and falcons into aviaries so that the moult can proceed, if they are not already in an aviary for breeding purposes.

However there are a large number of falconers who, like myself, will fly their hawks and possibly their falcons from March right through to the autumn, which would have been the

optimum time to moult them. What effect does this have on their feathers and their flying ability? Both hawks and falcons invariably start by casting their primary feathers first.

The loss of more than one of these either side will incapacitate the hawk's flying, decreasing their mobility, which could cause them to make critical mistakes and errors when flying at quarry.

Tail feathers, on the other hand, are somewhat different. Most birds usually cast the deck (centre) feathers first. This in itself is not a problem if the hawk (I use this in the generic sense to mean both hawk and falcon) is flying as air pressure on this area is not likely to cause as much stress to the feathers and thus cause them to snap or bend. Moulting when the hawk is in flying order is a very slow process which begins to respond to increased daylight hours, the warmth of the sun and of course to an increase in food consumption. Many hawks today are flown at high weights, particularly when the bonding process between falconer and hawk is at optimum level. The degree of trust and intimate knowledge of how the hawk will behave is really the governing factor. In this situation the hawk can be flown throughout the traditional moulting period, even though there are gaps in the feathers, without a great deal of harm.

But there are limits to the feeding regimes when flying hawks. Consequently the opportunity for maximum intake of food won't be available, which would encourage the hormonal changes needed for the

complete moult. Often one can see very easily hawks that have been flown through their moult period by looking at the feathers on the back and in the tail. Here they may well have a mixture of juvenile and mature feathers signifying the moult wasn't clean. In tail feathers between juvenile and mature this can be a marked difference when the mature feathers acquire their shorter length. In manoeuvrability this might be a hindrance. In the case of a falcon the fact that it was flown whilst moulting from juvenile to adult plumage, would probably indicate that it was an efficient hunter and was able to cope well with the different lengths of feathers in its tail.

Hawks that are restrained from the moult because their flying skills are required either for demonstration purposes or hunting will, we have found, respond to a late opportunity to moult. If they are kept back through the spring and summer then in the autumn (September to October) are put into an aviary they will almost immediately begin to moult. Once their food levels are increased it is almost as if they have been waiting for this moment. Down feathers appear first in profusion, followed by primaries and tail. In fact the loss can be such that it is similar to eclipse moulting, usually associated with waterfowl. To encourage moulting a good quality diet is given, providing



*In tail feathers between juvenile and mature there can be a marked difference when the mature feathers acquire their shorter length*





*One can very easily see hawks that have been flown through the moult period by looking at the feathers on the back and in the tail.*

variety. This can be quail, rats and rabbit which is equally good for large falcons and hawks. At one time I wouldn't have given any falcon of ours a rat in its diet, but recently I have seen that during the moulting period this form of protein produces good feather growth, maximising on feather replacement and giving that super 'plum' like bloom on their new plumage. Prior to putting into an aviary they benefit from spraying with Johnsons Anti-mite, this avoids new feathers being eaten by parasites you didn't even know the hawk had. Also the birds should be wormed. It is important that you pro-

vide the hawk with a bath, this must be cleaned regularly as most hawks love to bathe, especially when moulting. One thing that should not be attempted is continued flying from one year to the next without allowing a full, uninterrupted moult to take place. What happens here is the feathers which are 'bitty' in replacement never seem to have the lustre of properly moulted feathers and can be more brittle and less resistant to wear and tear, besides which the hawk begins to look dowdy, as if it's in need of a good moult and that is exactly what should be done without further ado.

**by Diana Durman-Walters  
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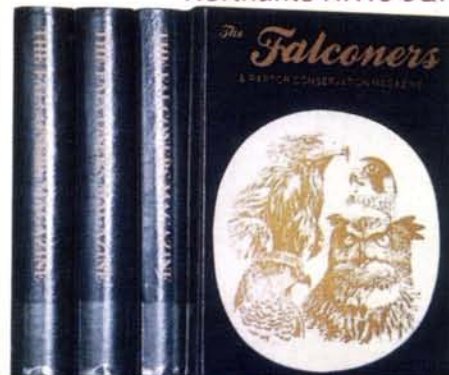


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## PRIZE WEEKEND

Dear David & Lyn,

Just a few lines to thank - you for the weekend we spent at the Scottish Academy of Falconry as a result of winning the autumn competition in your magazine. Both myself and my wife thoroughly enjoyed our stay with Diana and Leonard, who could not have made us more comfortable. Due to heavy snowfall on the Friday night we were unable to find much quarry on the Saturday but watching three Harris Hawks and a German Wire-haired pointer working together in beautiful border country-side was very enjoyable. We also very much enjoyed learning about the breeding programme that is being carried out at the Academy. We would fully recommend the Academy to anybody interested in learning about falconry and we certainly intend to make a return visit ourselves.

Yours sincerely  
Brian & Diane McBride.

## ONE LINER'S WANTED

Dear David & Lyn,

I wonder if your readers could help with some information. I have a book scheduled to be with the publishers by July on understanding Birds of Prey in captivity. It is intended for internal circulation, primarily for more experienced falconers, biologists, breeders rehabilitators and others managing wild or domestic raptors in captivity. Section 5.24 outlines some bad practices which have led to the deaths, injury or loss of a hawk while in captive management. Most of us have, at some time, done or seen something stupid which we now avoid doing. Like holding a hawk in such a way that it has escaped with a leash trailing. Or been attacked by another hawk. We have learnt by painful experience. Rather like an aeroplane accident report, I would like to pull some of these together and publish them, so that they are less likely to happen again. I don't want peoples names, just the salient facts briefly put. It could save a lot of hawks. We have had, so far, some bizarre reports from many different countries but already some common threads are appearing. In section 8.11 and in Appendix I there will be information on the contributions of falconers to raptor conservation. We already have a small database on this and would be delighted to receive more contributions. Just a one-liner on each is all that's needed; for example, name, initials, date, organisation (if relevant), title or subject of the contribution to raptor conservation. Maybe he/she has written a paper on some raptor research, or operates a major raptor rehabilitation centre or has played a significant part in a larger project of raptor conservation. The person must have been at some time in their lives a fal-

## ONE VOTE AGAINST

Dear David & Lyn,

I have read with The Falconers Magazine great interest, for few years. It is always interesting for falconers to read about what is going on in other parts of the world. But I must say that I was very sorry to see that English falconers also have troubles regarding sensationalist trial by media and dishonest organisations claiming to rescue wild raptors at the expense of the entire group of falconers. (I am referring to the 'Cook report investigation').

For the past few years Denmark has had a debate concerning the revision of the Game Act. Our former Minister of Environment was of the opinion that it should be legal to go hawking after a 25 years' prohibition. The new act should be enforced with strict regulation e.g. D.N.A. tests of hunting birds. This benevolence towards the few Danish falconers started an outcry from organisations such as the Danish Ornithological Society, supported by sister-organisations from Sweden, Norway and also from the U.K. against the proposal. To avoid the new Act being passed in the Folketing (The Danish Parliament) a storm in the media was raised against falconry. All well-known and underhand methods of propaganda have been used.

For a while the situation seemed hopeless for the 10 - 15 active Danish falconers, horrible arguments were adduced against the historical and natural sport, which was known by so few people in Denmark. Suddenly most respectable newspapers turned from being sceptical to being positive. They started to treat falconry and falconers with fairness and impartiality and became more critical of information given by environmentalists.

The reason for this change was to be found in unscrupulous



extremist organisations' use of information and "facts" in the newspapers. In several cases it was proved that journalists were told and given stories without foundation. Actually, one journalist was given notice because he passed false information about falconers.

The presidents or the Norwegian and Danish Ornithological Society even went so far as to provide members of the Danish Parliament with false information in order to influence the members before the passing of the proposal.

Unfortunately a change of the Government and thereby of the Minister of Environment one year ago made falconers losers. The new Minister of Environment made hawking a political question (the new government had a one vote majority). He was against it and today Denmark is the only country within the EEC where falconers are not permitted to go hunting with their birds of prey. This act was passed without giving scientific reports or other specialists' opinion any attention.

In the preparation and debate of the bill the Government received more than 200 letters from experts, falconers, universities, organisations from Africa, all EEC countries, America, The Middle East and Asia who all gave information of the legitimacy of falconry. In connection with this I would like to think the I.A.F for the great work the organisation has been doing to help Danish Falconers.

From the debate we have learned

that knowledge of falconry is the best way of convincing people of this fantastic relationship between man and hawk. One or two years more of fruitful debates and information programmes and the majority of opponents of falconry will realise that falconry is a beautiful sport, doing no harm to nature.

Finally, I think it is very sad that hatred of falconers often makes fanatical environmentalists lose the proportions of the case. In Denmark members of the Danish Ornithological Society have been convicted for collecting thousands of eggs of rare species of birds. Furthermore, a survey has been done which established that between 1300 and 1900 birds of prey are shot every year. This survey solely applies to country house game. Add to this all other hunting in Denmark and a realistic estimate would be twice as many birds shot. On an annual basis this means four thousand birds of prey are killed in modern Denmark. In addition even the Danish National Forest and Nature Agency is in open conflict with Common Market directives regarding bird protection in exterminating a large number of Goshawks. Here really is a job worth doing, preventing this happening - but this is probably too difficult - it is much easier to contest the legality of raptors (bred for several generations in captivity) of a few falconers.

Edith Wenzel  
Fredensborg Falkonergard.

coner, the contribution must be significant (e.g. not just rehabbing a few birds) and the project can be at any date in the history of raptor conservation. This compilation is in order to bring home to protectionists just how big a force falconers are and have been in raptor conservation.

We plan to keep this database open and available for use by anyone needing this information.

Information can be sent to Dr Nick Fox, c/o The Falconers Magazine. Contributions will be welcomed and acknowledged.



## FULL STORY

Dear Editors,

This letter is in reply to both of those written by Mr Neil and Mr Beecroft in your last issue. Their letters, I am afraid to say, just prove to me that they are both very politically unaware of the effect that programme like the Cook Report has.

I have been an elected member or a co-opted member of the Hawk Board for over a decade. I suppose I am also one of those people who are well known in falconry, although probably not universally liked, not that it causes me much grief, I have to say!

Both Mr Neil and Mr Beecroft have inflated ideas as to what the Hawk Board can do for a start. The Hawk Board is just an elected group of people-elected only by those 1100 people who bother to register to vote, not by the 5400 bird of prey keepers who don't bother. We are not a government body, we have no power and yet over the years we have actually achieved a great deal for the falconry world, by having no official link allowing us to talk directly to people like the DOE, MAFF and JNCC.

We all know that illegal taking of birds goes on, and many of us have been quietly doing things about it since long before either Mr Neil or Mr Beecroft came on the scene. We have as individual members of the public and the falconry fraternity, passed information on to the requisite authorities where we thought it would do some good. We have sat and watched hours of videos and spent time and effort giving expert witness statements. We have taken in confiscated birds, many of which are often badly imprinted or birds in very poor condition and have cost us time

and effort to house and get right again before release. We have gone to court and given evidence and been on the receiving end of all sort of threats and pretty scary phone calls. We don't, I am proud to say, tape all our calls, as does Mr Neil. Nor do we shout about what we achieve.

We have also seen the scale of thefts of birds decreasing as captive breeding has improved and prices have dropped. We are certainly not sitting with our heads in the sand. We are doing all sorts of things that will in the long term benefit raptors in the wild and the falconers. We watch for new legislation from the EC coming and try to stop the authorities doing such things as stipulating that birds can only be imported and exported from recognised breeding establishments and many other little delights that probably very few of your readers know will affect them in the future. As to disassociating ourselves from the less pleasant element in the falconry world - indeed most of us do and it was the Hawk Board who refused to accept an elected member because of an ongoing legal problem in an overseas country. So gentlemen get your facts straight. You are new to the game. Anyone who has had anything to do with the press will know that investigative journalists, particularly of the calibre of Mr Cooke, are interested in one thing and one thing only and that is getting a good, exciting television on air, regardless of how they do it and here I speak with great experience, I don't trust any of the press any further than I do my male Andean Condor and he is a conniving devil to say the least. The programme has done nothing whatsoever to conserve the British peregrine, indeed the Peregrine in this country is doing quite brilliantly, so much so that there are now research programmes on going

instigated by the shooting fraternity and many are hoping the Peregrine will be taken off the protected lists - this will I hope never happen. The programme is, in my opinion, more likely to have, yet again, brought the peregrine into the public eye at inflated prices and that is nothing but bad for both the wild birds and birds in captivity.

If someone went round offering financial gain for wild taken Kestrels, or even hedgehogs or whatever you may choose, I guarantee that somewhere along the line a taker would be found. This would not mean that there is a huge trade in hedgehogs or Kestrels. In every field you care to mention including the police, bribery will bring people out of the woodwork.

Both gentlemen are wrong in their conclusions, Jim Chick and myself gave filmed interviews for the Cook programme and condemned illegal trade, but because we did not pat Mr Neil's efforts on the back or say exactly what the programme makers wanted us to say, the interviews were not used. Incidentally, some of the film of young peregrines used on the programme was nothing to do with it whatsoever, it was from a totally different case, because I had seen the piece before the screening and given an expert witness statement on it - just to give an idea of how truthful television can be.

I find it very odd that Mr Neil was acceptable to the known illegal element, who were prepared to take bribes - they wouldn't have done so if I had offered it I am sure.

Yours sincerely  
Jemima Parry-Jones  
Director  
The National Birds of Prey Centre.

## UNITED WE STAND DIVIDED WE FALL!!

Dear David & Lyn,

Following yet another statement from the Hawk Board on the topic of the peregrine falcon and more response from the public on your letters file, I am compelled to drag the debate yet even further. I, and many others feel that reputations (including the Hawk Boards) have been damaged following the fated television programme, and efforts seem concentrated on diverting any blame and not on the issues the programme highlighted.

Whether the programme makers' inflated prices insulted people, or whether their tactics were unethical is irrelevant. People were exposed. There obviously is a market, the prices may have been inflated but the activities of the

thieves are common knowledge. Thankfully more and more breeders are being exposed through DNA fingerprinting which I would hope will put an end to this stealing, the most selfish of activities.

Falconers all over the UK may well continue to question the facts of the programme but the public drew their own conclusions when the credits appeared and have had these confirmed with arrests of thieves and phony breeders.

We must drop this unproductive bitching and bickering which shows divide, but unite and take definite action and be seen to be taking action. What the programme did do is bring falconry to the attention of the public and with more and more people providing falconry display services it is set to remain in the spotlight throughout the summer.

Our sport is definitely under

attack, we may survive this latest assault with little more than egg on our faces, but I fear the real battle is on the horizon and this is one which could be difficult to defend.

We currently have a Hybrid mania, a real trend with more and more being bred and flown, the breeders benefiting from a less competitive market, and therefore able to receive a higher premium. This all seems innocent but the problem is that England is well behind the rest of the world on its falconry ethics and natural conscience. Hybrids are, without a doubt, fertile and, if lost, could take residence in an eyrie belonging to our own Peregrine, driving it from its territory and nesting site or worse, breed with a wild bird, damaging the pedigree of our wild stock. Most countries ban the use of parent reared Hybrids in falconry insisting that any such bird

must be imprinted so as to reduce the possibilities of breeding if lost. It is difficult and time consuming to produce good, non-screaming, high flying imprints and a practice which our British breeders have chosen to avoid.

Why are we so far behind? Some people may believe that the Hawk Board has not made a stand on this because it is made up of a number of commercial breeders who are benefiting from the production of these birds and it is profit which is at the bottom of their hearts. This is, I feel, too harsh and I am sure that these people who are the foundations of Falconry within the U.K. are aware of the potential damage to the sport that these Hybrids could bring and are deliberating on action now.

Yours sincerely  
Johnathan Rowan



## WRONG IMAGE

Dear David & Lyn

For the first time in quite a while I have decided to write to you. It seems to me that whenever people write in they have gloomy, depressing news, well I have decided to follow the same trend.

Over the last couple of months the falconry world has been subject to much bad publicity. Publicity is highly important, for this reason falconry displays should be at a much higher standard in many centres, mostly the new.

Inexperienced falconers, who take on falconry centres are, I think, highly selfish and can not care much for the sport as a whole. Upon visiting a centre a week ago I discovered that the display falconer had only a years experience, his lure swinging was terrible and his commentary was so disorganised much of the public left mid-way through it. This cannot be the impression that we wish to create for ourselves, so please can we see more deterrents for over-ambitious falconers who wish to turn a hobby into a profession.

Roger Harvey.  
Lincs.

## ARABIAN FALCONRY LIKES & DISLIKES

Dear David & Lyn

Once again the much hyped up myth of Arabs paying tens of thousands of pounds for peregrines taken from Scottish eyries. This myth has been used against falconers on a regular basis, mainly because the Conservation bodies are running out of excuses to get our sport banned and secondly the rumour is spread by people who haven't the faintest idea what qualities Arabs do look for in their falcons, even if one was to come up and bite them on the ass!

I have been fortunate to have had the chance to work in the Middle East and I'm regularly in touch with various Middle Eastern falconers, but let's focus on the traits the Arab falconer desires in his falcon.

First 70% of all falcons flown in the Gulf are Sakers, not peregrines, next come peregrines, barbarys, lanners and luggers. Falcons are obtained from various countries where trapping is still allowed. The traders word is his bond and from this comes the respect he gets from falconers who buy from him. Some families have these ties going back centuries. Very pale Sakers are highly prized, especially those which have white heads, breasts etc.,

## MAGAZINE HELPS CLUB

Dear Lyn & David,

On behalf of the London Hawking and Owl Club I would like to say how much our advertisement in your magazine has helped swell numbers of the club. Although we do not consider ourselves a large club we have added at least 15 new members to our books due to the advert. The club is now going from strength to strength and is getting involved more with activities inside the M25 area. Due to the fact that many of our new members

do not have birds of their own yet, the club now runs a number of 'hands on days' throughout the year to enable these people to experience the flying of different birds. Club outings are becoming popular and there may be a trip to the continent this year to visit bird of prey centres.

Our involvement with the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park conservation project has had press coverage and we have ongoing dealings with the park which gives us flying ground for demonstrations and such within the

London area.

We hope to be involved with more schools and shows within London which will enable us to put the message across regarding falconry, conservation and field sports to a much wider audience, in the coming year.

If anyone is interested in joining us just phone one of the numbers in our advert, we always welcome new members.

Yours sincerely  
Bill Sinclair  
Secretary London Hawking & Owl Club.



*A Saker, the falcon most favoured by Arabs*

they should also be large with broad shoulders and back and a strong powerful set of pectoral muscles. The physical appearance plays a very important part in choosing a Saker, they should also have large thick toes with long black talons. Sakers of unusual markings are also greatly admired as well as black Sakers (Sinjari). The buyer will also ask whether the Saker has hunted houbara, if so the price will be at the top of the scale, this, of course, does not apply to freshly trapped Sakers, which have not been formally trained. Next comes the peregrine, colour is of less importance when buying a peregrine but she too must be large, with a big head and eyes and large feet, also she must not scream when handled or fed. You may think these traits uncommon but if you go back 50-100 years or more the likes of Lachelles, Thornton, Radcliffe etc., looked for

the same qualities in their freshly trapped peregrines and even today, discerning falconers look for similar qualities in their prospective, domestic bred purchases.

Western falconers must change their perception of Arab likes and dislikes, in a recent chat with a fellow falconer I mentioned a recent visit I had from an Arab "oh good" he said "tell him I've a female peregrine for sale, £10,000 should be a fair price".

We can no longer let our Arab brothers in falconry be Europe's Conservation Scapegoat for robbed peregrine nests, be the nest robbed in Scotland or France. Those who break the law must be banned from our

sport and it is up to every law abiding falconer to keep his ear to the ground. With Europe's barriers coming down our biggest threat comes with the movement of raptors around Europe and we could be looking at falconry's biggest challenge to its survival. Should we allow a few people to mess it up for the rest of us?

Falconry's future is in our hands, what we say, how we behave, how we keep our raptors.

It is now time for all of us to stop the back stabbing, bickering etc. and, together, get on with the job of practicing good falconry and good hawking.

Yours sincerely  
W Hawkins-Pincers



**THANKS TO  
THE FALCONERS  
MAGAZINE**

Dear David & Lyn

As chairman of the East Midland Bird Breeders Association I organise the sale days where our members can display, sell and exchange their birds. It was decided last year that we would have a falconry display to encourage our Bird of Prey keeping members and entertain us all. We booked a display team, whose name I will not mention. The contract was signed and accepted, but soon after I received a phone call from the team and I was told that, for various reasons, they would be unable to attend. My time commitments meant that we would not be able to find a replacement, however, about two days later I received my Autumn '93 copy of The Falconers Magazine. In it was an article about Danny Keeber and an advert for his company, Shire Falconry Displays. I immediately phoned

and, luckily, he was free for the date required. The display he gave was extremely entertaining, especially his explanation of falconry terminology in use today and a Lanner manoeuvred around cars and audience like no other bird I have seen. It was so good I contracted Danny to do four Hawking days a year for myself and I have booked him for three displays in '94 on behalf of the E.M.B.B.A. My business commitments don't allow me to keep and fly Birds of Prey "at present" but thanks to Danny my frustrations are alleviated to some extent. Our events are held on the last Sunday in Feb and the first Sunday in November at the Newark & Notts showground. We would like to encourage and promote good keeping and breeding of Birds of Prey and the art of Falconry. If anyone has any ideas I would be interested to hear from them. Shire Falconry Displays will be the only contracted Display and all ideas must be approved by them

Yours sincerely  
Phil Carcass  
Chairman EMBBA

**RE - GAMEHAWK**

Dear David & Lyn,

You probably know that my book 'Gamehawk' was sold out sometime ago. I am still getting calls each week from home and abroad, from people trying to buy a copy. I would produce another run if I could find a distributor to handle the sales & marketing. I am too busy to contemplate handling the sales, as I did last time. I would be interested in hearing from any person interested in distributing and marketing another run.

yours sincerely  
Ray Turner

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# AJAX

## A Tribute to a magnificent Imperial Eagle

By David Glynne Fox

I doubt that I will ever forget the evening of 15th March 1993. I had returned home after having a couple of raptor paintings framed when I went out to the mews to settle my hawks down for the night. Anyone who has ever met Ajax, my female Imperial Eagle, (*Aquila helica*), will remember vividly her raucous, almost dog-like, yapping call, uttered whenever anyone that she really knew entered the garden. This particular evening, there was no yapping. The day had been rather inclement for weathering so all my birds had spent much of the day in the mews. Even so, Ajax's hearing was so acute that she usually heard my foot steps coming down the garden path, which was sufficient to cause her to burst into "song".

Her lack of yapping was most unusual and the closer I approached the mews, the more concerned I became. Nothing, however prepared me for the event that was now to about unfold. Although the night was pitch black, (my security lights had not been fitted at this point) her shadowy figure was not visible on her night perch as I entered the darkened mews. Even this did not completely register in my addled brain. Only when I turned on the interior mews light did the whole drama dawn on me with sickening force. There, on the wooden floor of the mews, in immaculate condition, was Ajax, as dead as a Dodo and stiff as a board, rigor-mortis already having done its work.

It is difficult to put into words how I felt at that moment. Twenty-four years is a long time to be associated with any animal. For ten whole minutes I could do nothing other than stare in disbelief at her lifeless body. I was looking at a friend I had known,



*David on the South Downs with his beloved AJAX*

trusted and respected for more than two decades, a friend which had now been taken from me so unexpectedly. Gradually I regained my composure, but still feeling sick to the pit of my stomach, I lifted her cold body, cradled her in my arms and with bottom lip quivering and tears welling in my eyes, I gently and slowly carried her indoors to inform my family of the tragedy. If anything, they were more upset than I and there was not a dry eye in the house for some time afterwards. Both of my children were born after I acquired her and so they grew up with her, never knowing what life was like without a magnificent Imperial Eagle in the garden. They really took her demise to heart this marked the end of an era and I slept little that night

waking constantly in fits and starts, hoping that I had merely dreamt it all, but the reality soon came flooding back.

Much of Ajax's story, particularly her earlier years, has been recorded for posterity in my first book "Garden of Eagles, The Life and Times of a Falconer", published in 1984. What is not generally known is that about nine years before her death, Ajax caught a rabbit (nothing unusual in that) but in doing so she caught her left wing an almighty clout against a fence post. For a while, she continued flying as normal, but in time she began to "drop" the wing and appeared to experience some difficulty in keeping it in the natural folded position. I took her to the Vet's for an x-ray and he diagnosed scar tis-

sue damage to the carpal joint, similar to that caused by arthritis. As the years went by flying her became almost impossible. I gave her long periods of rest, but each time I began a flying session with her, the wing buckled in mid-air and she came crashing to the ground. I could not bear to see her like this and as it became apparent that the wing damage was permanent, I grounded her completely and reluctantly retired her from the hawking scene.

As a small means of exercise, I always used to allow her to fly from my gauntlet to her outside perch which was situated only a few feet from the mews. I would not normally condone this sort of thing, because a fit hawk may well carry on past the perch and away into the clear blue yonder.





But with Ajax, the condition of her wing precluded any such manoeuvre. However, some two months or so prior to her death, she began to miss the perch on odd occasions and end up on the ground. Occasionally, she would even roll over onto her side. I put this down to her progressive wing problem, coupled with age, yet I remember saying to my wife that I thought Ajax would soon be no longer with us. It was a gut feeling really and as such, I put it to the back of my mind. I certainly did not expect my gloomy forecast to come true quite so soon.

As my hawking colleagues know perfectly well, I have been flying a male Harris hawk (see the *Falconers Magazine*, Summer 1990 issue) ever since grounding Ajax and while I love this bird to bits, there was always something special about Ajax that I have found in no other bird. In looks, she was nothing short of magnificent and in flight, especially on the hills of Scotland, she was something to see. As I gazed at her now lifeless form, the years of pleasant memories and happy times came flooding back. I had flown her in many parts of the British Isles over many years and I of course knew that one day death would come between us, but twenty-four is not exactly ancient for an Imperial Eagle. I have it on good authority that London Zoo's Imperial was fifty-eight when it died, although most of the Imperials known to me personally have been in their early twenties at

the time of their demise.

There was no way that I was prepared to simply bury a rare bird like Ajax and yet I personally did not want her mounted, at least, not for myself. I wished to remember her as the living article and I doubt very much if any taxidermist, no matter how brilliant he or she may be, could capture the essence and mannerism of a bird that only I knew well. In the end I decided to pass her on to a collector who planned to have her mounted in a glass case along with another Imperial Eagle he had obtained. At least she would not be rotting away in the ground and will still provide pleasure for all who see her. As for me, I prefer to remember her in her hey-day as a silhouette among the clouds in a Perthshire sky, where I hope her spirit still soars. As far as I am concerned there will never be another Ajax, she was a one-off. One of those birds some lucky falconers may see once in a lifetime. I count myself privileged to have known her and shared her life with her, I would like to think the feeling was mutual, for she was certainly a one man bird. If I live long enough to have another bird half the calibre of Ajax I will be exceedingly fortunate. Her death has literally knocked the wind out of my sails, hence the belated appearance of this short article which is meant as a small tribute to one gorgeous, outstanding raptor, Ajax the Imperial Eagle. May she rest in peace.

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# RAPTOR

## LEAD POISONING IN RAPTORS - THE SAFE ALTERNATIVE NEIL FORBES

### QUESTION

Mr Ramsey from Ireland wants to know how you feel about the new stainless steel shotgun pellets, and whether you would consider them to be a safe alternative?

### ANSWER

LEAD poisoning in raptors invariably occurs as a consequence of feeding shot rabbit or pigeon. This will occur when a falconer or supplier of food has shot the animal or bird, or occas-

sionally when although the rabbit or pigeon was killed by ferreting or by a bird, it had previously received a non-fatal shotgun wound, such poisoning cannot be predicted, but must always be borne in mind by any person feeding pigeon or rabbit, in particular if the bird develops weakness in the legs or other nervous signs.

As to whether such poisonings can be prevented by feeding quarry shot with different pellets, this can certainly be the case, but careful homework must be done first. There are a number of so called non-lead alternative cartridges now available. The traditional lead pellets will lead to poisoning within 24-48 hours. There are also copper or nickel coated pellets.

With copper coated pellets the copper is, in time, removed by stomach acids, whilst the nickel coating tends to crack on impact, hence both of these forms will lead to lead poisoning although at a later date, often 3-5 weeks after ingestion. If of course the pellet is cast or passed in the meantime clinical poisoning will not occur. However this form of delayed poisoning can well lead to a falconer or vet thinking that lead poisoning is impossible simply because shot quarry has not been fed within the previous 3 weeks. It is our opinion that in any case of leg weakness, paralysis or other nervous signs that the bird should be x-rayed. Furthermore the absence of lead does not rule out it's possible

involvement. A bird may have taken lead, sufficient of it may be dissolved and absorbed prior to the pellet being cast. Blood samples can be taken to confirm the diagnosis, however results usually take some 1-2 weeks to be available, hence treatment must be instigated in the interim.

Currently bismuth cartridges are also available, these are thought to be safe, however they are incredibly expensive. Although not an ammunition expert, I am unaware of genuine, pure, stainless steel pellets being available. If they were made, they would be likely to cause considerable barrel damage, although pure stainless steel pellets would cause no risk to wildlife.

## SELF PLUCKING - PARASITES OR BOREDOM? NEIL FORBES

### QUESTION

'I have a Harris Hawk that has a habit of plucking the feathers from its' legs and lower breast.

I have wormed it twice, with Panacur and Ivomel and regularly sprayed with Johnsons Anti Mite. I have also given it a view of Bantams, Ferrets and Doves. It also has an occasional rabbit head. It is loffed and is hunted at least four times a week.

I have spoken to several people who have also had the same problem, but as yet I have still not found the cause or remedy.'

### ANSWER

Feather plucking is, thankfully, a rare problem in raptors. Firstly one must exclude all the common causes. Traditionally ectoparasites are most often considered. A suitable ecto-parasitic preparation, that is both safe and effective, (this is no longer easy since the demise of Alugan), may be used. However the most troublesome of ectoparasites is the Red Poultry Mite (*Dermanysus Gallinae*), this mite sucks from it's host at night and then returns to the crevices in the woodwork adjacent to the birds. In view of this one can often treat the bird regularly with suitable compounds but, in fact, fail to kill the mites, as at the time of treatment they are off the bird. Firstly check your bird after dark, with the help of a torch, the mites

are small (pin head size) varying in colour from cream, brown, red to black. Alternatively bring the bird inside in the middle of the night and place it in a night quarter or transport box which has a white cloth lining. Check the cloth in the morning, if the mites are present they will easily be seen. If this is ones problem then the environment must be treated as well as the bird.

Other factors that can cause feather plucking are metabolic diseases (in particular liver disease), skin infection (typically with bacteria or yeast), abdominal irritation or pain, internal parasites or psychological problems such as boredom, sexual frustration or attention seeking. If one discounts parasitic problems, then by far the greatest number of feather pluckers are all Harris Hawks, it is my belief that this is as a consequence of their greater intelli-

gence (compared to most other raptors). Plucking Harris Hawks inevitably involves the inner thighs and chest between the thighs. It occurs in birds who are tethered without sufficient entertainment. Many birds, out on hawk walks all day, will pluck as soon as they are put away for the evening.

In all cases all other non-psychological causes be excluded first. Following this the bird should be better occupied, if the bird is put away in a night quarter or enclosed mews, before dusk the accommodation should be darkened. Some birds will benefit from hooding. If all else fails, all other causes have been ruled out, and husbandry changes have been unsuccessful, then a number of alternative human antidepressant type drugs have been successfully used in feather plucking birds. Some of the tests need to be carried out by your vet, as will the prescription of any drugs.

## WATCH THOSE FEET!

Our young lanneret, Sky, was enjoying himself, darting through the sky in very strong winds, earning his keep, helping us on an Avian Control Contract. As he came in on a dramatic stoop to the lure, the wind caught him from behind, forcing him to scrape his two middle toes along a tarmac roadway, until he was able to throw up again. We examined his toes carefully and found that he had grazed them. When we returned home we applied some Preparation 'H' oint-

ment to his feet (yes we do know what it is made for), it had been given to us by our veterinary surgeon Mr Neil Forbes on a previous visit. When we returned from the surgery and read the label on the packet we immediately phoned Mr Forbes, as soon as I said who I was he said "I know why you are phoning, yes it is also very good to use on the birds feet, please apply twice a day, to the feet that is!"

After applying this to the birds feet for several days the swelling went down and, on phoning Mr Forbes, he said to continue the treatment. The toes suddenly began to swell

a day later, so off we went to the surgery. Mr Forbes, who examined the bird, put him under anaesthetic and took a blood sample and swab of the infected toes, he also gave the bird an antibiotic injection and gave us some antibiotic tablets to treat the bird with and also told us to, yes, apply the Preparation 'H' twice a day.

We finished the course of antibiotics, using the ointment each day and the toes healed, the swelling went down and all was well, except for a small scar left on one of the toes. We continued with the ointment and noticed that the bird's condition was drop-



# Trials and Tribulations

I have just discovered the Falconers Magazine, loaned to me by a friend.

I am now retired and spend several happy hours each day with my female Harris hawk 'Ruby'.

I have flown falcons and hawks for the past 20 or so years. My interest grew from a general interest in wild animals and of birds in particular.

I have flown Ruby since September 1992 and wish to share some problems that I encountered during these 18 months with others who may have had similar experiences.

The basic training and manning was straight forward and she flew free within the first few weeks.

I was anxious about her health when I noticed from the outset that she habitually scratched her feathers out around her head and neck I also noted a dampness around her ear coverts.

I took her to my local veterinary who suggested that she might have gape worm causing irritation. After treatment of a drench, designed to kill off all worms, I found no significant improvement. Her general health was good and she flew well after prey.

A further visit to the vet and close examination of the ears and head by magnifying glass brought the suggestion that she may have feather mite infestation. An injection of some chemical was given (can't recall the name) which is designed to kill off external parasites feeding on her blood.

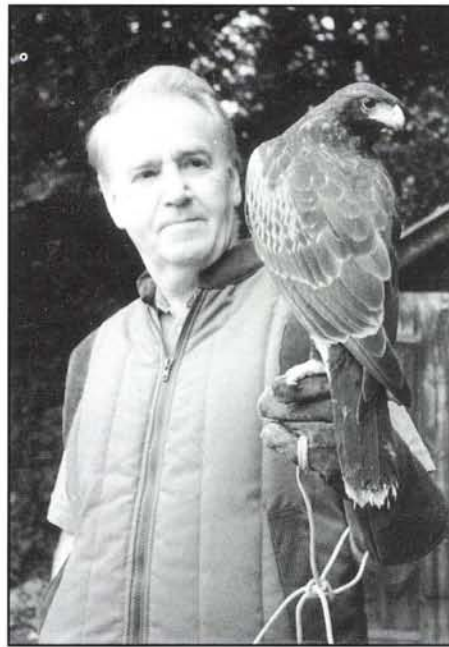
Again no change for good or ill followed.

I had suggested all along that she may have had an infection from her parents or siblings but the vet seemed reluctant to prescribe antibiotics.

My third visit resulted in the vet agreeing to prescribe a course of antibiotic administered over a seven day period. I am happy to report that this cleared the problem and that she has remained free of health problems over the past 10 months.

I find the Harris Hawk a delight to fly but cannot claim much success in encouraging her to press home attacks on prey. She has had many "good slips" and should have caught rabbits, magpies and squirrels, if only she had the courage. She always chases hard but when the time comes to bind seems to loose interest or decides that the risk is too great when I am on

ping, even though he was eating 3-4 chicks a day he was not gaining any height when flying and was always out of breath. Off we went to the surgery again, this time we saw Mr Simpson as Mr Forbes was in Saudi Arabia. He treated the bird in the same way as Mr Forbes, taking blood and mute samples and also a swab from the infected toe, which he had to lance. After his examination he said he had 'Good news' and 'Bad news'. The good news was that the tissue in the infected toes was healing well, the bad news was that the virus from the infection had affected the birds metabolism, hence he was



hand to supply her dietary needs;

I have made up a rabbit skin lure which she attacks with spirit and considerable aggression. She enjoys this sport but if a real rabbit strolls by she looks at it as if it were merely another sheep;

I am told that it is not good practice to cut down her weight as this will not improve her fitness and therefore her ability to hunt. (She weighs 2lb 2oz). I am also told that eventually she will make a kill and from then on "will be a different hawk". Having flown a musket for four years in stalking prey, I find her laid back attitude something of a contrast and not a little frustrating.

Her plus factors are her strength and apparent affection. She is the only hawk I have owned that will lick egg yolk off my finger;. She is entirely trusting and recognises me no matter what clothes I wear (unlike my Musket). Strangely she hates all other humans and will not tolerate any other person. If tethered she swears at them and if free will refuse to come anywhere near me until they have departed. I have tried holding her on my fist while chatting to friends and she will eventually settle, but is as bad the next time that I try to educate her.

As soon as I take her up I remove her jesses. She helps by pulling her leg away while I hold the knot end. We then move off and she decides when she wants to fly off or make an attack. After a flight she returns to my fist

eating a lot and not putting on any weight. He also gave us a course of antibiotics and suggested we continue with the ointment. He also said that as the antibiotics had a bitter taste, if the bird refused them in some meat, we could disguise it by putting the tablet in either vegetable oil or margarine or, if that did not work, try strawberry jam. The course of antibiotics now over, the bird is progressing well, flying high, and back to his old self.

Thank God and the Vets!

Daniel Keeber

SKY →

## John Elliott

without any need of a reward. She is happy to ride along untethered for long periods knowing that she is unrestricted. If I rattle a hedge she will move to a nearby tree and await until something emerges. The chase is exciting if somewhat leisured. The intended prey usually crashing into the foot of a thorn hedge, leaving her standing gazing at the point of entry. She returns to my fist and we walk on.

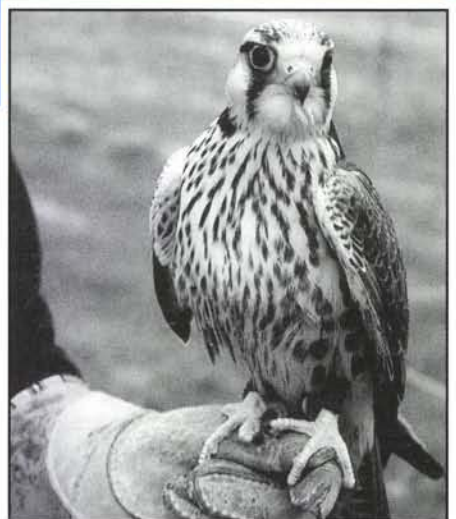
I have noticed that she enjoys flying in fairly strong winds and wheels and dives practising tight manoeuvres and then stooping to my fist to rest.

Early this week I was enjoying watching her exercising in high winds when a stranger entered the field. She habitually turns and angles her wings into the wind rocketing upward like an express lift. On seeing this stranger she repeated this manoeuvre and rose to a height of some 100 feet. Instead of waiting on she wheeled and shot off down wind at about 60 mph. She disappeared from sight some three fields distant behind some scrub woodland. I waited until the stranger departed and then walked in the direction she had taken expecting her to appear from the trees.

I did not see her again for days. The winds grew to gale force and continued day after day and I imagined she must have blown hundreds of miles away. I contacted the police leaving photographs and descriptions of her. I went on local radio and asked folk to report any strange bird that "tinkled". After a while and much pacing of her usual flying grounds, I have given up hope of seeing her again and cursed myself for flying her in such high winds.

Yesterday, I walked out of my front door to greet my in-laws when she flew overhead, bells jingling, right above my house. She spotted me and flew to a tree while I ran inside grabbed my glove jesses and leash. She found her own way home from I know not where and seemed genuinely pleased with herself.

I wish you well with your magazine and look forward to receiving my next issue.





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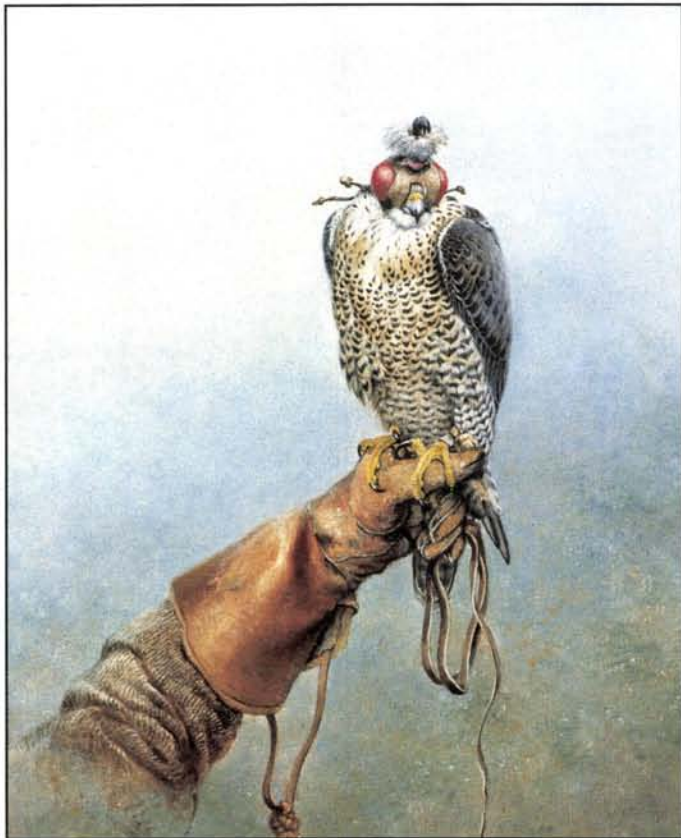
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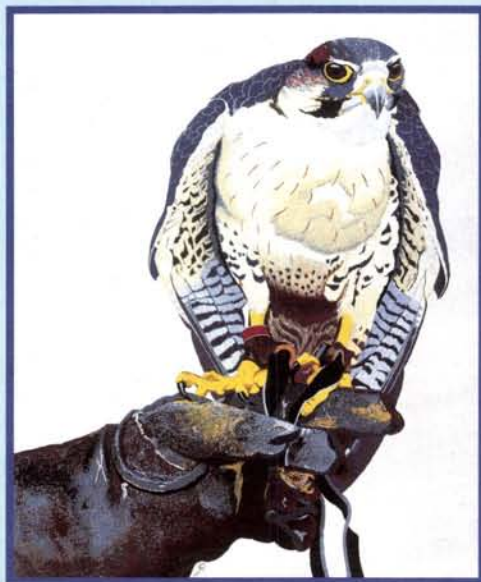
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