

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

Autumn '94

£2.50

RED   
FOOTED  
FALCON

*Red Letter Day  
With A Hawk  
Eagle*

**HAWKING  
SAFARI-IN  
ZIMBABWE**

ISSN 0967-2206





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- 1) Our objective is to eliminate unethical attitudes and practices that exist in the hawking fraternity today.
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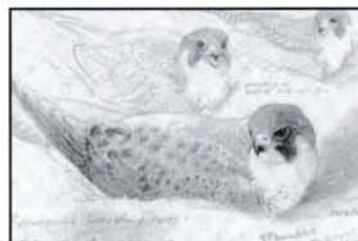
## PHILIP SNOW BA Hons.

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.

2 Beach Cottages, Malltraeth, Gwynedd, LL62 5AT.  
TEL: 0407 840368.



*Brooding Peregrine Sketch. Signed, Limited edition of 200 colour reproductions. Size 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" £14. inc p&p*

# AUTUMN 1994 No. 20

## features

- 8** **RED LETTER DAY**  
ROB HOLGATE
- 13** **FACING CHANGES**  
Falconry in Australia  
RICHARD NAISBITT
- 14** **TRIBUTE TO LORANT DE BASTYAI**  
ADRIAN WILLIAMS
- 18** **INAUGURAL FLIGHT**  
GARY WILLIAMSON
- 22** **GYMNOGENE**  
TAKING A LIGHT HEARTED LOOK AT AN UNUSUAL BIRD BRIGID SMITH
- 24** **AVIARY BUILDING FOR THE 1990'S**  
JEMIMA PARRY-JONES
- 26** **HAWKING IN ZIMBABWE**  
Geoff Adrian Andrew Dalton Williams Knowles-Brown
- 35** **CHATS FROM THE WEATHERING GROUNDS**  
E.K & THE TAWNY EAGLE  
REG SMITH
- 36** **POEMS**  
COLIN DELFOSSE

## regulars

- 10** **CLUB DIRECTORY**
- 12** **RED FOOTED-FALCON**  
MIKE EVERETT
- 16** **GUNDOGS FOR FALCONRY**  
THE LAST IN THIS SERIES  
BY GUY WALLACE
- 19** **RAPTORS OF SRI-LANKA**  
LAST PART OF THIS STUDY BY PHILIP SNOW
- 34** **RAPTORK**  
SMOKING CAN DAMAGE YOUR BIRDS HEALTH

## up-to-date

- 4-6** **NEWS**  
THE 1994 FALCONERS FAIR & DEFINITE RESULTS FOR POLICE PROSECUTIONS
- 7** **& CLUBS**  
A LOOK BACK AT THE LAST YEAR FOR THE B.F.C.
- 11** **BOOK REVIEW.**  
'THE REDTAIL' D BUTLER
- 34** **RAPTOR RESCUE.**  
ACCIDENT PRONE SPARROWHAWKS
- 30-32** **LETTERS.**  
WHO IS SAYING WHAT?
- 38** **CLASSIFIEDS.**



THE GYMNOGENE P.22



AUSTRALIA FACING CHANGES P. 13

## EDITORIAL TEAM

**EDITORS:** LYN & DAVID WILSON  
**DESIGN:** D PERKINS  
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**COVER: Luggar Falcon Belonging to John Bennet. Photo D W**

## COMMENT

Dear Readers,

As editors of a magazine that tries to be fully independent, we feel we are restricted when it comes to expressing our views on paper, although we have no trouble when it comes to talking. In this issue we have taken the liberty of airing some of these views, mostly because of things which come to our attention purely because we are the editors of the magazine. Falconry is something we have inherited from our ancestors, something to be cherished and looked after for future generations, not to be abused just because it is becoming more popular, and can be seen as a way to make a few quid.

Anyway, on a lighter note, we have the article you have all been waiting for; from Adrian, Andrew and Geoff, who have just come back from a two week Falconry Safari in Zimbabwe. Loads of News and Letters again and lots of convictions, proving that crime really doesn't pay. We must thank Paul Beecroft for his vigilance and dedication, and by the way Lynn, there was no holiday!

Well here comes the next season, and when we speak next it will be nearly Christmas so have lots of fun and "Keep Falconry Safe".

David & Lyn

## CHANGE OF VENUE FOR RAPTOR DIPLOMA COURSES

The Raptor Diploma course held for the last five four years at Kent University now has a new home. As from April '95 the course, with additions, will be held at the National Birds of Prey Centre, Thus giving a background of many captive birds, local wild native raptors and beautiful scenery for those attending.

There are four courses available.

The two year part-time Diploma Course leading to a Diploma awarded by University of Kent. (first year 3 x 5 day blocks of tuition, second year supervised home study)

A one year part-time course bearing a National Birds of Prey Centre Pass Certificate. (first year as above).

A one year part-time course (without exam) bearing an Attendance Certificate.

One or more three, five day blocks to include

specialist areas of study: Basic Raptor Biology; Captive management; Management and Impacts in the Wild, bearing Attendance Certificate.

All the courses are taught by internationally known experts from university departments, private veterinary practices, government departments and specialist raptor collections.

These courses will be invaluable to university graduates, students, reserve managers, enthusiastic amateurs, curators or keepers in specialist raptor collections, conservation workers or anyone with the desire to further their knowledge in birds of prey or owls.

For further information write or fax Jemima Parry-Jones or Monica Garner at The National Birds of Prey Centre, Newent Gloucester GL18 1JJ. Tel 0531 821581/820 286 FAX 0531 821389

## PAIR OF BIRDS STOLEN

I have had two Harris Hawks stolen from an aviary. The female was three years old and imported from Canada. The male was bred by Jane Simcox. Both birds were flown for the last two years and put into an aviary this year for breeding.

The female has broken its front talon and its second primary feather is twisted.

They stole the birds, Sunday night/Monday morning 15th-16th May, by entering double doors and closing them again behind them. All my other hawks and falcons were not touched and I cannot see where they tried to look for anything else.

It seems they knew what they wanted and where to find them.

I am offering a reward of £500 for the safe return of the birds.

FEMALE RING NO: UK81815/CX010502  
(Canadian Gov't Ring)

MALE RING NO: 9942W

## REHABILITATION RESEARCH IN CANTERBURY

If you have ever found an injured by the side of the road, taken it home, nursed it back to health then released it, you know the feeling. Watching it soar (or flutter, as the case may be) off to carry on its natural existence is an unmatched thrill, the pride of knowing you have done something good is reward in itself, and even more so if the bird in question is a bird of prey. But, have you ever wondered what happened to that animal, what will be the effects on the natural population, or what could you have done differently?

A project is now underway through the Ecology Research Group in canterbury that will attempt to answer these type of questions. This study will examine the rehabilitation of birds of prey in the UK using ecological methods as well as questionnaires, interviews with key experts and surveys of published material. the aim is to gather knowledge from a variety of sources which will give a fuller picture of the conservation value of rehabilitation.

This research will look at rehabilitation on several levels, to include national, local and individual, national statistics on numbers of birds treated and released each year will be collected, through the help of rehabilitators and (hopefully) the DoE.

Information on the wild populations will be gathered from scientific articles and, with the co-operation of such organisations as the RSPB and BTO and Raptor Rescue. Rehabilitators who agree to collaborate will provide valuable data on local activities. finally, individual rehabilitated birds, fit for release, will be monitored by radio-tracking after being hacked back into the wild.

Enormous amounts of resources and personal commitment are invested in wildlife rehabilitation and a wealth of knowledge and experience in this field is available in the UK. Unfortunately this is still a grey

area where many people are unsure of correct procedures and, even whether what they are doing is the right thing or not. And, as yet, there is no central organisation that co-ordinates this work on a national scale. This project will draw upon this knowledge and experience to highlight common problems and provide possible solutions, in the form of guidelines for rehabilitators. These solutions may be crucial for conservation programmes involving endangered species, particularly where captive breeding and re-introduction methods are being used.

If you would like to assist with this project, have any suggestions, or want further information, please write to the address below. A questionnaire about the work you do will then be sent to you. Although this project is still in the ground-work stage, it is, as yet unfunded and the work is now being done without any financial resources. Any suggestions for sources of funding to allowing this work to continue would be most welcome.

Please Write to: Renata Platenberg (a.k.a. Betty), The Ecology Research Group, Christchurch College, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1QU Tel. (0227) 767700.

## COMPETITION RESULTS

- 1st Scott Baldwin**, Chingford - Chose: A Manual for Hawking, Liam ÓBroin  
**2nd J Ferguson**, Banffshire - Chose: Raptor Traveller, Highlander  
**3rd Neville Butler**, Mansfield - Chose: Voucher, Peter Mulholland  
**4th C Butler**, Mansfield - Chose: The Modern Falconer, D Durman Walters  
**5th Richard Jones**, Gwynedd - Chose: Rabbit Lure, Cornish Hawking Centre  
**6th Mr R J Newton**, Peterboro' - Chose: Training Birds of Prey, J. Parry-Jones  
**7th Robert Cullen**, Bristol - Chose: Bow Perch, K.J. Falconry  
**8th Mr J Catt**, Hailsham - Chose: Lanner Print, Anthony Raw  
**9th Mike Smith**, March - Chose: Bronze Keyring, Pentapoint  
**10th A J Cooke**, Formby - Chose: Signed Andy Rouse Print, Geoff Dalton (Batsford)

Our thanks must go to Mr B A Stone who compiled and sent the competition, which you all, obviously enjoyed.

## FURNITURE COMPANY CHANGES HANDS

Earlier this year, Falconry Originals, formerly owned by Ben Long, was taken over by Ian Pearson of Nottingham.

He wishes to assure everybody that although ownership of the company has changed the quality of the furniture will not.

For more in formation Ian can be contacted on :0623 836071.

Or write to: I Pearson,  
3 Horton Mill Cottages, Horton,  
Nr Retford, Notts. DN22 8DY

# CONVICTIONS.

1. John Raymond EDWARDS of Petworth W. Sussex. Convicted at Chichester Magistrates court on 22.4.94

Following a visit by Police and RSPB at his home address in July 1993, blood samples were obtained for DNA testing from a number of peregrine chicks and an alleged parent bird. DNA analysis revealed that the birds were not related and Edwards appeared in Court for the following offences:

1. Possession of a Wild Bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon
2. Possession of a Wild Bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon
3. Selling a live bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon
4. Selling a live bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon
5. Possession of Peregrine Falcons.

For these offences he received the following:-

1. Fined £100
  2. Fined £100
  3. Fined £200
  4. Fined £200
  5. Fined £150
- Costs £100  
Forfeiture of all birds.

(Charges 3 & 4 relate to charges brought under CITES)

It is worth mentioning Charge no. 5 in this. this related to the alleged parent birds and Section 18(2) WLCA 1981. was used in this case. The prosecution alleged that as these alleged parent birds had been used to pass of other birds as being captive bred then an offence under this section had been committed. These birds were also subject of a forfeiture

2. Joanne WILLIES-WILLIAMS of Rodborough, Stroud Glos. Convicted at South Gloucestershire Magistrates court on 26.4.94

1. Possession of unregistered Redtailed Hawk
2. Possession of unregistered Peregrine X Saker

For these offences she received:-

1. Fined £25
  2. Fined £25
- Forfeiture of both birds

3. Harry NICKERSON of Newlands Estate, Bacton, Norfolk. Convicted at Cromer Magistrates Court on 6.6.94.

1. Possession of unregistered Kestrel
- Fined £250  
Costs £50

4. Martin PEEL who runs Hopton Wildlife Hospital in Norfolk. Convicted at Great Yarmouth Magistrates Court in Jan '94

1. Possession of two unregistered Kestrels and One Sparrowhawk.
- Fined £250

4. Thomas HANS CARNIHAN of Great Houghton, Northampton appeared before Daventry Magistrates Court on Friday 10th June 1994 charged with the following offences:

1. On Sunday 30th May 1993 did keep or have in his possession or under his control a Lanner Falcon within 3 years of having been convicted of an offence under part 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.
2. An identical offence relating to Monday 31st May 1993
3. An identical offence relating to Sunday 20th June 1993
4. A further identical offence relating to Sunday 20th June 1993.

The circumstances of this case are as follows:

On 28th June 1991 at Northampton Magistrates Court CARNIHAN was convicted of an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Under the terms of the Act, Sect. 7 (3) (b) then came into force. This Section states "If any person keeps or has in his possession or under his control any bird included in Schedule 4 within 3 years of his having been convicted of any other offence under this part so far as it relates to the protection of birds or other animals (or any offence involving their ill treatment)", (not relevant in this case), "he shall be guilty of an offence."

Following this conviction, Ms Lynn Garvey of the Department of the Environment wrote to CARNIHAN informing him of Section 7 (3)(b) now being in force.

Some months later CARNIHAN replied to this letter stating that he had sought legal advice and did not accept that this Section applied to him.

Ms Garvey replied again, stating that the provisions of this Section did apply. CARNIHAN stated he never received this reply.

On Sunday May 30th 1993 at The Falconers Fair, held at Althorp House, Northampton, CARNIHAN was seen to fly a Lanner falcon in the arena after the show had closed.

On Monday May 31st again at The Falconers Fair he again flew a Lanner Falcon in the arena. On this occasion the Fair was still open and the incident was witnessed by many Falconers who were annoyed over this. As a result the Police and DoE received many complaints.

An enquiry was commenced by the Police into this matter and a percentage of statements were taken from witnesses.

On Tuesday 1 June 1993 Carnihan went to the DoE at Bristol where he spoke with Mr Williams from the Wildlife Inspectorate. It was at this time that Carnihan stated he had not received a reply from Ms Garvey. Mr Williams did then write to him and enclosed a copy of Mr Garveys letter confirming that the Section did apply to him.

On Sunday 20th June 1993 at a show in Burton Latimer, Northants, CARNIHAN was seen to fly two Lanner Falcons in the arena this incident led to charges 3 and 4 which were witnessed by a DoE inspector.

After a one day trial at Daventry Magistrates Court he was found guilty of all 4 charges. He received a Conditional Discharge for 2 years and ordered to pay £150 costs.

Although two of these offences occurred at The Falconers Fair it is right to say that no blame can be attached to the organisers of this Fair as they were not aware, until after the

event, that any offences had been committed. Once they became aware they did support police proceedings in this matter.

6. On Monday 16th May 1994 following a two day trial, at Bicester Magistrates Court, Peter CLINTON, 28 of Smiths Quarry, Ardley, Bicester Oxon, was found guilty of the following offences:

1. Possession of a wild bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon.
2. Making a false declaration to obtain registration for a Peregrine Falcon.

These charges related to a female Peregrine which was to become known as the "M40 Bird".

3. Possession of a wild bird, namely a Peregrine Falcon.
4. Possession of a Peregrine Falcon that was not ringed and registered.

These charges relate to a Male Peregrine.

The circumstances leading up to the matter are as follows:

In August 1993 following information received from Central Televisions' The Cook Report, Officers from the Thames Valley Police visited CLINTON's address to search for two Peregrines suspected of being kept illegally. They found, and seized a ringed Peregrine Falcon (female). CLINTON was interviewed by Police and said that a lorry driver had handed the bird to him after it had been treated by a vet for a broken right leg and the leg had been in a plaster cast at the time. He was not able to supply details of the lorry driver or the vet who treated it.

During the course of the interview a second Peregrine Falcon came to light, CLINTON stated that he had responded to a call and collected a wet, exhausted, starving male Peregrine from a woman's garden. this garden was located some 400 yards from his house, giving evidence, he stated that it was a wild bird and after feeding it up he released it two days later. he stated that he had not notified the DoE as he only had it for a short time. The civilian witnesses who found the bird however were able to say that the bird had 'leather straps' hanging from each leg and that the bird had stood on CLINTON's gloved hand showing no signs of distress. This was denied by CLINTON.

A Veterinary surgeon also gave evidence to the fact that he had examined the female peregrine and X-rays revealed that the right leg had never been broken although the left revealed an old fracture. CLINTON was not able to account for this and admitted that he had not taken the bird to a vet while it was in his care and had in fact removed the plaster cast himself.

The Magistrates found him guilty of all four charges. After taking into account that CLINTON's livelihood was Bird Clearance using Birds of Prey and that Schedule four was about to be amended, the court gave him the following:

1. Conditional Discharge
2. Pay costs of £300
3. Forfeiture of the Female Peregrine.

**Thefts of Birds of Prey**, both from the wild and captivity, still continues. So far this year we know that the following species have been stolen from the wild; Peregrines, Goshawks, Merlins, with reported thefts of Buzzards, Kestrels and Sparrowhawks. Theft of birds from captivity has reached an all time high. In the first five months of 1994 more Birds of Prey were stolen than in the whole years since my records started in 1989. The list is varied but the majority of the birds stolen are no longer on Schedule 4 and there is now only a remote chance they will ever be found. Since deregistration two separate incidents of Kestrels being stolen have been reported. It is virtually impossible to trace the respective owners. Birds have been given away in the past because we do not know who they belong to. Blood samples are the not easy answer. If, suppose, three birds of identical species are stolen from different locations throughout the country and all three keepers had blood samples of their birds, we would not know where to start. The respective police forces would not foot the cost of DNA analysis on a hit and miss operation. The onus is without doubt on the keeper to make his or her bird identifiable at all times. Please do not think that because the bird has a talon missing or a leg injury from Squirrel bites etc. that it is identifiable - it is not as easy as that. There are many birds with this type of injury that are either missing, lost or stolen and it is very easy to change the appearance of a bird and add a few more injuries.

I am currently in contact with a microchip company in an effort to bring prices down and I will keep you informed of what is happening.

## STOLEN BIRDS

1. Stolen from Leicestershire May 1994.
  - i. Female Harris Hawk, 3 years old, Ring no's UK81815 & CX010502
  - ii. Male Harris Hawk, 2 years old, Ring No. 9942W
2. Stolen from Hampshire March 1994
  - i. Male Goshawk, 2 years old, Ring No. 5521V. Social Imprint.
3. Stolen from Wiltshire May 1994
  - i. Male Peregrine, Ring No. 7055V
4. Tawny Eagle Ring No. 0007Z.
5. Kestrel, Ring No. UK79056

## STOLEN AND RECOVERED

1. Stolen from West Midlands in May 1994 was a Goshawk. This has since been recovered.
2. The birds stolen in February 1994 mentioned in the last issue are now safely back with their owner.

## FOUND BIRDS

1. An Owl has been recovered in the London area with jesses attached and is obviously an imprint. the Ring No is 143 10A 93U. If you think you are the owner give me a ring and tell me the species and hopefully it will be returned.
2. A Kestrel has also been found with the Ring No. UK 84156.

## NOTICE.

In order to eliminate him from their enquiries, the police want to trace Anthony Cuneo, of Talbot Crescent, Sheffield. He is a white male, aged 24-28, 6 feet tall, with long, permed hair. He drives a gold, 'A' reg. Mini which is reported to be in good condition.

## AMAZING GRACE

Jim Dean set up the Owl Centre in the grounds of Baytree Nursery nr Holbeach Spalding. When we went to visit him we were impressed with the cleanliness of his aviaries. Every thing was spotless. He is very knowledgeable about the ways of owls and this is obvious in the way his owls are kept. Jim recently bred a female Milky Eagle Owl by the name of Grace who has got to be one of the most beautiful things we have ever seen and is certainly the star of the centre. Jim has also provided a barn, complete

with burrows for Burrowing Owls, who breed successfully every year and live quite happily alongside Little Owls. The centre was initially set up as an owls centre but Jim has now moved on to incorporate a few species of falcons and hawks.

The centre is situated within a large, well established garden centre complete with restaurant and would make a good place to visit for a day out.



## OUT OF THE RAIN

When setting up a new centre size is not important as long as the birds are given the best possible facilities, and when John Bennett was given the job as falconer at Fritton Lake Country Park on A143, 6 miles outside Gt Yarmouth, he made sure they had exactly that.

The birds are housed in what can only be described as a very large agricultural barn, fitted out with weatherings and aviaries.



So even if it's raining you can look at the birds without getting wet and when it is time for the displays the fronts are put on the weatherings and the display takes place indoors. When it is fine the displays are outside where there is ample seating for spectators and a variety of birds are flown including hybrids and a mature Bald Eagle.

Also at the park are heavy horses, a large children's play area, acres of meadow surrounding the lake and a restaurant.

## THE SUN SHINES FOR THE FALCONERS FAIR

After three weeks of many inches of rain the sun finally shone on the 29th & 30th of May, for the 1994 Falconers Fair.

The amount of trade stands this year was larger than ever, with an even greater opportunity for visiting falconers to purchase all they need for the coming season.

The seminar marquee was always busy, with talks on various subjects from de-registration to breeding and the overall feeling for falconry was very positive. Clubs are becoming one of the most important parts of the falconry world, from people just starting out, and for those who have been falconers for many years and have not joined a club, please do as this lends strength to the voice of falconry. The flying displays were to their usual high standard from Bryan Paterson, Terry Large and Roger James and a few guests, seeing a larger variety of birds flown than any other year.

The parade of dogs showed the largest selection of different breeds used in falconry than at any other game fair in the country.

The birds on display were kept in the weathering ground under some trees which gave excellent shade from the hot sun and the birds always looked relaxed and contented. The organisers, Ron Morris and Peter Wainwright along with Bryan Paterson, have maintained, over the five years the fair has been going, a very high standard, not just in the arena but the fair as a whole, you are not allowed to take a bird along to the show without permission from Bryan or advertise birds for sale.

The fair is gaining a worldwide reputation and we had many visitors from abroad, some from as far away as Canada.

## A DREAM COME TRUE

DAVE  
CRESSWELL

In August 1991 I bought for myself a female Common Buzzard, my first bird. I had every intention of flying her at rabbits. Two and a half years later she had not even seen a rabbit, apart from one on the end of a lure line. Two and a half years of walking local fields without even a sight of a rabbit.

One day, while talking to Mark, a friend of mine, the conversation centred on his meeting with Garry Balchin and consequently the British Hawking Association. A few further enquiries were made and soon my application to

join was in the post.

I attended my first club meeting in December of 1993, still no rabbits. January 1994, could this be the year that my bird would see her first rabbit? January's meeting was duly attended and the banter of Goshawks taking hares, pheasants and loads of rabbits could be heard. I must admit this left me feeling a little low, but this feeling was brief. After an introduction to Garry, and a chat about my experience and what birds I owned, it was decided that the following weekend he would arrange for us to

hunt on land where rabbits were in abundance. This was it, my chance to try my bird at rabbits. Would this be the day? Would she look at the quarry? Would she give chase?

The day duly arrived. Garry and Malc picked us up in Garry's van and off we went. They had given up their days hawking to take us out and for this we were very grateful. After arriving at the landowners home, we announced our arrival and asked for permission to hunt and this was given. Off we went into the mist, myself, Garry, Malc and Mark

armed with a video camera. We worked the land quickly, beating cover as we went, but no sign of rabbits. Could this be another blank day to add to all the others?

A warren was located and the ferret sent in. Adrenaline started to flow, was this going to be the day after all, was this the moment I had been waiting for? We waited patiently, up bolted a rabbit. my buzzard left the glove instantly, two wing beats, a nice

glide down the slope and she had it. A moment to remember and all on video, thanks to Mark. And so back home to crack a few cans.

Who needs a Goshawk to take rabbits when you can fly a Common Buzzard?

A dream come true with the BHA, and after only two months as a member. Again many thanks to Garry and Malc for giving their days hawking for a Common Buzzards first rabbit.



## LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEAR

NICHOLAS KESTER

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

Every year is momentous as far as falconers are concerned. The sport has its highs and lows but it can never be described as boring. At the end of another season there is no satisfaction equal to the final feed-up on a kill, and the safe release of your hawk into a free flight for a clean moult in readiness for the new autumn.

Looking back over the British Falconers Club Business, I sometimes wonder how some of us ever get the time to go hawking at all. Indeed that someone can juggle BFC business, hunting holding down a job and keeping peace at home is a constant source of amazement. Yet the club newsletters for the year seem to prove that this does indeed happen.

On the domestic breeding front, the year placed us one step closer to achieving our goal of a hawk for every suitable, contributing member at prices independent of external influence. I hope readers will note the adjectives that describe member. There is no right that guarantees a hawk; everybody is vetted before becoming eligible.

Following years of investment, during the club spent £20,000 building aviaries and acquiring hawks, our breeding our breeding project bore fruit for the third year running. We bred 17 Goshawks, 4 Peregrines, 1 Buzzard and 8 Redtails this year. In addition we imported 4 Harris Hawks and 2 Coopers Hawks.

As the breeding success goes from strength to strength, we must pay tribute to those members who, for the love of the sport, continue to house BFC breeding pairs and who dedicate so much time, voluntarily, to their charges.

The project is now virtually self financing; costing less than £2 per member a year to run.

On the hunting front, 1993 was our big year at Woodhall Spa and I believe that everybody enjoyed both the sport and the company. But that event was nothing more than the visible confirmation of the routine activities of the nine regional groups. From the newsletters I receive, I count no less than 18 smaller field meets, organised for local members.

On the political front we have had considerable

input into the proposed Department of the Environment deregistration. Co-operating with the Hawk Board and liaising with other clubs to protect the future of our sport. We continue to provide input to the BFSS and represent falconry at as many levels as is possible in the political arena.

The media has provided less activity than in previous years. Thank heavens. Of course we had the Cook Report and what a waste of good television airtime that proved to be. Not that we condone those who break the law. We have had positive points as well as negative. I particularly liked the RSPCA employee who rejected them in favour of the BFSS because he could not equate their policy on hunting with animal welfare. As a falconer he made the right decision. Well done him.

The fact that falconers have nothing to hide was demonstrated when the researcher from the RSPCA commissioned study was invited to spend a week grouse hawking in the company of our Director. I recognise that there have been reports of over zealous actions by the rank and file RSPCA inspectorate. Perhaps they will concentrate on real animal cruelty once we have got yet another attempt to prove falconry is something to be ashamed of, well and truly laid disproved.

Education remains at the top of our agenda now and in the future. We have spent much time creating a workable apprenticeship scheme to help the falconers of tomorrow. Currently this is a voluntary (although participation might well become the criteria for a club hawk) but we have it in place should legislation force it upon us, most likely out of the dread European Community.

Falconry schools and courses spring up everywhere. Not all are good but the BFC spends time with a selected few and recommends them to our members and in club literature.

Talking of literature, this has been rewritten to take account of changes in books, courses and organisations. But as always it spends a fair amount of time putting people off rather than selling falconry. The real falconer knows what he wants to hunt with hawks long before he ever takes one onto his fist.

We are also looking at a schools pack to help explain falconry as a field sport and a major contributor to conservation. This apparent paradox is the hardest to explain to a bunch of urban schoolchildren despite being blindingly obvious to most hunters.

Finally, BFC stands will be at the major country fairs throughout the summer and a willing team of falconers will be on hand to explain why we seek to "Maintain the falconer and the falcons flight." (Club motto, in case you were not aware.)

## THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

The Scottish Hawking Clubs First Aid Seminar was a great success, a tremendous amount was crammed into one day and the 70 page course notes covering all, discussed jogged the memory of any part not quite registered by the grey matter, also the practical, which showed crop tubing, diagnosis of broken bones and bandaging to immobilise whilst transporting to the vets was very well received, in fact one group even tried heart massage and mouth to beak resuscitation but were unable to resurrect their pigeon ( a good try, but it had been in my freezer for 6 months).

Our visit to the Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace, Perth, was a tremendous success. We put on a static display of 15 Hawks, Owls and falcons, with 2 Golden Eagles, a Verreaux Eagle and a Tawny Eagle and, I think I can say, we were the busiest stand by far. I hope we were able to promote Falconry at a high standard to the thousands who visited us, our next event is a charity day in Edinburgh for Cancer Research and then the season starts with field meetings looking good for 1994-5.

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# A RED LETTER DAY FOR MUSTARD AND RAY

I am not a falconer myself, but I am lucky enough to live near to expert falconer and equipment maker, Ray Prior and I would like to share with you a recent experience I had with Ray and his latest partner 'Mustard'.

Mustard is a Hodgsons Hawk Eagle, about 22 years old at the time of the story he had been in Rays possession for five weeks. He had only been flying free for the last two weeks.

I understand that Mustard has had kills with his previous owner, but not on a regular basis. For some time Ray has wanted a bird for hare-hawking and anyone who has ever seen the feet on a Hodgsons Hawk Eagle will understand why Ray was so keen to get Mustard!!

You can well imagine my excitement as we set off one cool November afternoon to fly this unusual, even rare bird. There were about hours of light left and a light breeze was coming over the rolling downland, ridding the trees of a few more leaves. As we walked towards a line of trees and cover that hopefully had a rabbit or two hidden away, Mustard suddenly took an interest in a half-ploughed, half-planted with Lucerne, field, that had been cropped quite short, but still long enough to conceal quarry from human eyes.

Ray lifted his arm to give Mustard the choice of investigating or not. Mustard accepted the offer and took off quite quickly. He rapidly gained height and, as he did so, a cock-pheasant shot out of the Lucerne to seek other cover. Mustard realised he was too far away to give chase and merely circled twice and landed back on Rays fist. Ray was

delighted with this as Mustard had never circled like that before. We carried on towards the line of trees and, as we reached them Mustard saw a couple of squirrels in the field. Off the fist and into a long, low, determined flight (straight this time), Mustard flew after the first squirrel which just managed to execute a tight right turn under a fence as the huge feet extended above him. This bird's a tryer, I thought, as Mustard returned to Rays

say, "When you're out hawk-ing, and there's no interference from twentieth century machinery, you can imagine you are doing the same thing as centuries ago. Today's date is irrelevant. Time has stood still." Yes, I could relate to that!

Mustard's bells brought me out of my trance as he left his high perch and glided down over the field behind us. Ray ran over to him in case he had caught anything, but before he

of the tree, putting in a couple of wing-beats to speed him on his way. He looked tired and less committed this time and, as the rabbit changed pace, the manoeuvre outwitted the big bird.

I wondered if Ray would decide this was enough for one outing, but he said a rest would suffice as, with only two weeks flying time, Mustard was not yet super-fit. Standing by the trees, taking in the view, we were suddenly



*Mustard on that first hare*

fist. Ray decided to put Mustard up into the trees to follow on as we worked the cover for him. Now that we were down in a hollow Mustard needed the height advantage the trees would offer. Unfortunately we failed to produce anything so we carried on into the Lucerne field. As we walked up a gentle slope into a setting, golden sun I recalled something I'd heard Reg Smith from the Hawk Conservancy

could get there Mustard took off again back toward the trees. The opinion was that something had moved before he got there, and hidden itself. Beating around the area Mustard had landed in, I discovered a squatter. As I called to Ray, the rabbit took off in the direction of the trees (and Mustard). Could this be the one, I wondered, watching anxiously, hardly daring to breathe. Mustard swooped swiftly out

aware of a rabbit, standing not twenty feet from us, right next to a hole. Mustard was looking straight at the rabbit, but as he moved to a better position to swoop, his bells alerted the rabbit, who moved a bit close to the hole. You could almost read Mustard's thoughts; can I get to him before he gets to the hole? In the end he just had to try but as he left the branch the inevitable happened; one more disappearing bunny! Seemingly unper-





turbed Mustard carried on his glide into the next tree to, hopefully, have another go. As the big bird laddered his way up through the branches Ray suggested that we walk back into the Lucerne field to make our way back to the van. We were about fifty yards apart when I suddenly heard Ray shout and as I spun round I caught sight of a white scut tearing through the crop. At the same time I saw Mustard on a steep flight towards the rapidly disappearing shape. I stood motionless as at last Mustard connected those large feet with quarry. Fur was flying as she stopped the moving target dead in its tracks. I somehow resisted the temptation to cheer as I ran across the field to join Ray, Mustard and his prize. As I got closer I saw the big grin on Rays face. "Red letter day, isn't it?" he said, as I looked down to see, not as I'd thought, a rabbit, but a large hare on the end of those awesome talons. Mustard's first, and stopped at full tilt!

"It was worth missing those others for this", said Ray as we sat beside the magnificent bird, reliving those few magical seconds of flight. After sitting there for some fifteen or twenty minutes, allowing Mustard to feed up and his adrenaline subside, we went back to Ray's home where the afternoons event was recorded in red ink! The hare proved to weigh 7lb 4oz. What a catch! What a flight! What a bird! That afternoon I felt I had been privileged to see something special that I'm sure many a long-time falconer would doubtless appreciate. Many perhaps will never see this rare bird fly at four species of quarry and end up catching the largest. Needless to say, I can't thank Ray enough for enabling me to share with him the events I've described. How many other people will be fortunate enough I wonder to see a Hodgsons Hawk Eagle in action? I know I will never forget it!

**By**  
**ROB**  
**HOLGATE**

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2 Old Bell Cottages,  
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Terry Pearce 0273 542971 eves/w/ends.

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Gary Biddiss: 0245 226057  
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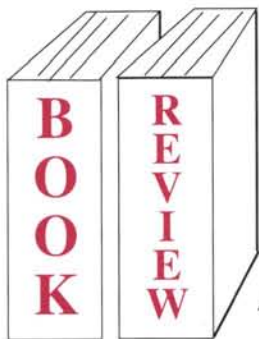
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THE REDTAIL  
DANIEL  
BUTLER  
Published by  
Johnathan Cape  
Price £14.99

A BOOK REVIEW  
BY HAGGARD.

Falconry attracts all sorts of people. Now, as probably never before, access to this demanding pastime is now more readily attained. Whether this is good or bad remains to be seen but whatever your age, gender or social position there is one thing that is common to us all- we have all been a beginner. No matter the dizzy heights of excellence you reached with peregrine and Goshawk, once upon a time you groped in the darkness with the same lack of knowledge, innocent naivete, overwhelming enthusiasm and mind-numbing stupidity as any lesser mortal.

**'The Redtail, sharing the season with a hawk' by Daniel Butler.** is the account of one such beginner. Mr Butler offers us an insight into those first few months spent with a first hawk. With a well written text in an easy going, enjoyable style, he imparts a catalogue of mistakes that if it did not involve a hawk's welfare could be titled 'A comedy of errors'. From relying on outdated 'classic'

falconry manuals to food imprinting his hawk, he runs the full gamut of erroneous techniques that the majority of beginners fall foul of. But this is the crux of the matter, Mr Butler is not an expert falconer and he writes from the viewpoint of a raw novice and how many of us can honestly say we also did not, at least to some degree, feel and do the same with our first hawk? Perhaps, if we were all more inclined to admit our mistakes and learn from other falconers Mr Butler would not have mentally ruined his hawk and suffered the trauma of losing it. I cannot say that I enjoyed his book, for me the unfolding story was too distressing to be pleasurable and a sad reminder of what must be happening all the time we have no organised apprenticeship scheme in operation.

I would like to make one request to anyone out there who intends to emulate Mr Butler. Accounts of one man's experienced certainly have their place on any falconry bookshelf but please, put a nice big sticker on the cover saying 'THIS IS NOT A FALCONRY MANUAL'. This may seem petty but I have actually met novice falconers who thought T.H. White's 'The Goshawk' to be just that! You cannot hope to learn falconry from any book but at least stick to those that are written with instruction in mind.

This has been my first attempt at a book review - as is painfully obvious and writing it has not been as easy as you would think. After all, you are only required to form an

opinion after reading a book and transfer this into legible English. Sounds fine, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate what you have read from the conclusions that are to be drawn from the text. Simply put, am I to comment on Mr Butler, the author, or Mr Butler the falconer? Read the book and draw your own conclusions.

## THANKS

PAUL BEECROFT WOULD LIKE TO PUBLICLY THANK THE FOLLOWING PERSONS FOR THEIR HELP;

Susan Fleetwood of Sky Television for re-scheduling the Film "Kes". It was scheduled to go out at 6pm but she agreed to move it to 8pm and to follow the film with a warning in respect to the law regarding Birds of Prey.

Also, Jemima Parry-Jones, who, in the past 12 months has given him a lot of advice and help in respect of Raptors during the course of theft enquiries. Also during a recent enquiry a reasonably serious problem occurred and as a result she invited myself and 2 other officers down and devoted the best part of the day explaining about Raptors to these Officers who knew nothing about them. As a result of this the problem was solved.

# THE RED-FOOTED



# FALCON

Mike  
Everett

The warmest May this century in many parts of the country....the hottest June since 1976.....you could be forgiven for thinking that I've let my imagination run riot, but these records actually applied to spring 1992. Around mid-May, an area of high pressure formed over Scandinavia and drew warm air from southern Europe up over the North Sea, conditions which lasted well into June. On effect of all this was to bring Red-footed Falcons to the UK in unprecedented numbers.

Small number of Red-foots reach us every spring, the average number of birds per year being around 11 for the period 1958-1991.

The spring of 1973 saw the largest influx recorded up to then, involving 40 birds; the 1992 figure trebled that - 120 birds, mostly south of the line drawn from The Wash to the Severn, but with a scatter of records north as far as Shetland. The weather pattern, the timing of the arrivals here and the distribution of the birds were similar in 1973 and 1992. Other countries bordering the North Sea also experienced large influxes in 1992 - 60 in Northern France, 55 in Belgium, 450 in the Netherlands, and incredible 760 in Denmark and over 100 in Sweden and Norway; 5 birds reached Ireland.

The long spell of warm weather produced high numbers of insects, including dragonflies and other aerial species, and this fact often led to the falcons staying for days in some locations, giving birdwatchers unprecedented opportunities for watching them. There were several birds on view at once in some places and often (in the evenings, when both species tend to be very active) there were Hobbies too, also taking advantage of the glut of insect food. Like Hobbies, Red-footed Falcons are agile aerial feeders, swooping and gliding, grabbing prey in their talons and devouring it in flight; like Kestrels, though, they also commonly hunt from a perch, with a definite liking for telegraph wires. Small birds of prey seen on wires in May and June are well worth a second look. Adults appear to be almost exclusively insectivorous, with grasshoppers and crickets being the main prey, but, interestingly, chicks are mainly fed on small vertebrates - voles, lizards, frogs and small birds. Unusual weather conditions can clearly cause a marked westerly shift in the spring migration of Red-foots and in exceptional years, like 1992, can result in unusually large numbers appearing in the wrong places. In normal years, the falcons (which winter in southern Africa) move northwards



ADULT FEMALE Red Footed-Falcon. Pic By Dusan Bouncy

through West Africa and then cross the Mediterranean, an a broad front, from Algeria eastwards. In well-watched areas along the north coast of the Mediterranean (the Camargue comes to mind immediately), good numbers are seen on passage every spring. In the spring of 1992, a friend made me green with envy with stories of up to 200 hundred birds seen at once in Italy; perhaps passage there was heavier than usual? Red-footed Falcons have a markedly eastern distribution in Europe, but nest as far north as Lithuania and, further south, in Slovakia, Austria, Hungary and Romania. They breed from European Russia eastwards to central Asia.

Like Lesser Kestrels and Eleonora's Falcons, Red-foots are gregarious birds, commonly found in small flocks on migration and tending to breed colonially. As long as it is rich in the right sort of insect prey, any sort of open-country habitat within the breeding range might hold Red-footed Falcons, but there must also be some degree of tree cover suitable for nesting. They rely on the availability of the old or disused stick nests of larger birds, especially corvids. Colonies will form where Rook nests are used. Years ago, rumours persisted among egg-collectors of pairs nesting in rookeries in southern England, but these were never substantiated and the general view at the time was they owed rather more to wishful thinking than to reality.

With their smoky-grey plumage, reddish vent and bright red cere and legs, male Red-footed Falcons are easy to identify. They are

very different in size, shape, movement and habits to dark-phase Eleonora's Falcons and in Europe at least you are highly unlikely to encounter the somewhat similar Sooty Falcon. Once or twice, watching rather distant Red-foots feeding in flight with Hobbies, I have been surprised at how similar they can look, especially in poor light when the characteristic silvery primaries of a male Red-footed Falcon may nor show up very well. Field identification becomes more interesting with immatures of either sex, and with females, but should not be too difficult for anyone with a reasonable working knowledge of small falcons. It is well covered in the standard field-guides anyway and will be the subject of a detailed paper to be published in the journal *British Birds* shortly. The first Red-footed Falcon I ever saw was an immature female, but it was not so much her distinguishing plumage features that struck me as the amazing tameness. Binoculars were hardly necessary! She was sitting on the tops of small bushes and dropping after insects, sometimes landing just a few yards from where I was sitting. My track record with this species is pretty poor and over the years I have missed more than I have seen when I have gone looking for them in this country. I have never managed to coincide with a good Red-foot passage on my travels abroad, but I did encounter several on the breeding grounds on a visit to Romania. All the birds I have seen have shown this almost total disregard for human observers, which, unfortunately, is not the norm where European raptors are concerned.

**"FALCONRY?..."** What is Falconry?".

A common question in Australia when members of the public are presented with a trained raptor on the fist. When hard pressed some people may vaguely recollect seeing a documentary about Saudi Arabia depicting some haughty sheik with a falcon on his wrist, but that's as far as it goes. Falconry in Australia is a foreign concept, a sport that's practiced only in England and Arabia. Falconry is seen to be a blood sport, a sadistic pastime that decimates wild bird populations as trained falcons frequently go on "uncontrolled killing sprees", "maiming and slaughtering thousands of birds", particularly racing pigeons. The Federation of Pigeon Racing Clubs accuse the peregrine of flying in flocks of up to thirty birds, actively seeking out racing pigeons, like some heat seeking missile and killing thousands in the process.

Falconry, therefore, is a big NO NO, but times are changing, people are becoming conservation conscious and falconry now has a place in society, mainly as a means of rehabilitating birds of prey. Australia does not have access to experienced people in the form of falconers, nor does it have aces to large hawking clubs that can offer advice. So, on the whole, rehabilitation is a comparatively uncomplicated affair, as every year thousands of raptors are sent to wildlife shelters and then turned loose after having their broken bones mended, with very little preparation for release.

In the state of Victoria there are five people who know how to use falconry as a method of rehabilitation, five people out of a possible 4 million. These figures are not confined to Victoria, other states have even less. There are illegal falconers, who go about their business in a quiet manner, flying the odd bird here and there, catching the occasional duck or rabbit. These falconers will not come forward for fear of prosecution and, as a result, a valuable resource is lost.

Healesville Sanctuary does practice falconry, in a manner of speaking and uses it as a tool for conservation. There are only three comprehensive centres in Australia, one of which is Healesville and the other two are literally at each end of the continent.

I firmly believe that falconry is multi

faceted, it can double as a conservation tool and does not have to have hunting as its primary objective.

Healesville Sanctuary offers two flight demonstrations daily, where we aim to educate the public as to the value of Birds of Prey. We also rehabilitate birds of prey, which is our main objective and reason for being. We are now starting to encourage wildlife shelters to be objective about their rehabilitating motives, to be selective and to make sure that the birds they release are indeed

releasable. This has greater ramifications and asks new questions; what is the best method of release? What is most effective? Is falconry actually necessary? While I acknowledge that it is impossible to generalise, it becomes clear that wildlife shelters release many raptors that are not releasable, birds with eyes missing or severely imprinted individuals have been and are being released. Little attention has been paid to the value of a full set of tail feathers and that a Peregrine Falcon needs to have both legs if it is to survive.

Some species may be able to get by with minor flight imperfections but the more dynamic species cannot. Assessment of flying ability can only be made if falconry is used. (Perhaps comment could be made by readers of this article). The debate rages, but as manager of Healesville Sanctuary's Rehabilitation Programme, no bird leaves our care unless it is as close to perfection as possible. As I said, times are changing and so are attitudes, and the future is not as bleak as it seemed so perhaps falconry has a place here after all.

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*Female Black Shouldered Kite*



*Seven year old Female Wedged Tailed Eagle*



*Passage Peregrine Tiercel*

# FACING CHANGES

**RICHARD  
NAISBITT**

---

# A Tribute To LORANT DE BASTYAI

By ADRIAN WILLIAMS

Born in the southern Hungarian town of Szeged in 1910, Lorant de Bastyai was one of twin boys. Sadly his twin brother died in infancy. From an early age Lorant took a great interest in natural history and was encouraged by his father who was a keen shot. He presented Lorant with a shotgun when he was nine years of age. As a lad Lorant often kept Hobbies and Kestrels around the farm but admitted that, although they were tame, he had little idea of how to train them. The family was engaged in the textile industry and they had a factory based at Szeged. However when Lorant was in his teens another branch of the family involved with banking persuaded Lorant's father to move the family to Budapest. They lived in a fine house on the banks of the Danube on the Pest side opposite the parliament buildings. Lorant was about 15 years of age when he saw his first Peregrine. The move meant access to the Budapest Zoo which opened up a new avenue of interest and Lorant made great use of the facility.

In 1931 the Falconer, Col Biddulph visited Hungary to hawk partridges, Lorant happened to be travelling from his uncles farm back to Budapest when he met one of the Pakistani Falconers on the train, imagine his delight at being able to converse by sign language with the man. He was invited to join the group of Falconers at their HQ at Godollo whenever he could. Every holiday was to be spent there learning how the Sakers, Peregrines and Goshawks were used. Shortly he was introduced to Colonel Biddulph who Lorant described as, "a very fit and jolly gent in his seventies", and so, his life as a falconer began!

Lorant's father however had laid plans for an agricultural course at a college in Denmark which meant Lorant attending for two years.

By 1939 Lorant had learned a great deal about practical Falconry and was instrumental in forming the Hungarian Falconry Association with Geza Kiss de Nemesker as President. Lorant was soon corresponding with Falconers world-wide such as; Guy Blaine, Fritz Loges, Jack Mavrogordato, Count Mensdorff-Pouilly, Ranz Waller and Hal Webster.

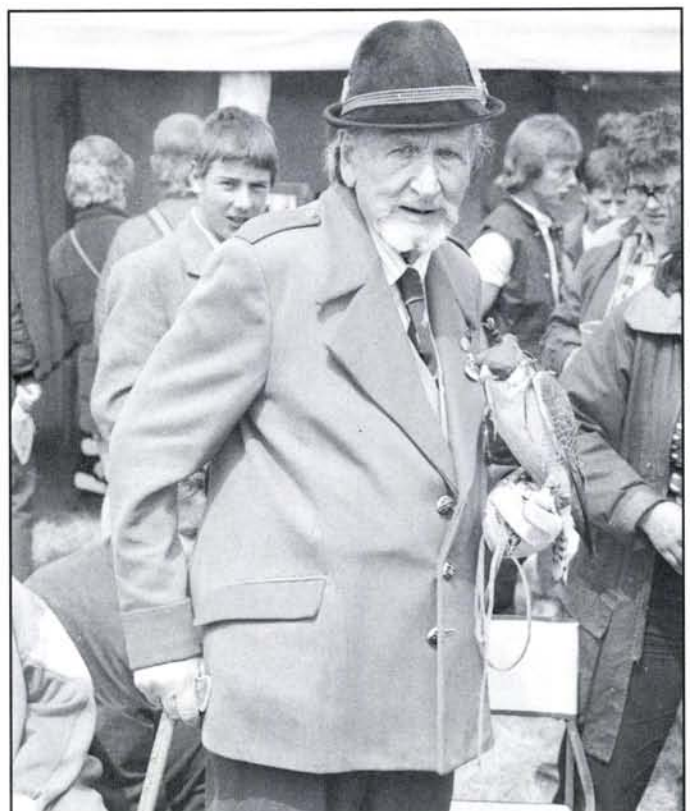
When the war started he was to join the Hungarian army and had a difficult time.

He took a Peregrine with him and flew her at Rooks until the day she crossed the river Tisza and was lost. Lorant left his Saker and two Goshawks with his friend George Lelovich for safe keeping. During the war he was pleased to meet with Mongolian Falconers who flew Golden Eagles at Wolves. After the war Lorant returned to Budapest and his old life. He started a Falconry school in 1950 but soon after was put in charge of the Bird of Prey section at Budapest Zoo, he became Curator of Birds and remained there until 1956 when the uprising took place. Lorant escaped with many of his compatriots and made his way across Europe. Whilst his younger brother settled in Germany, Lorant made his way to England. His previous experience as a taxidermist came to use when he found a position with the world famous firm of Roland Ward. Later Lorant was to work for Peter Scott at the Slimbridge Trust where he met Nancy, who he was later to marry. He always referred to her as his best Assistant Falconer. When working at Slimbridge during the winter of 1958 he saw something

which set his heart beating, a large Peregrine plucking a Mallard Drake, but on inspection with binoculars he could see the thin moustachial stripe and realised it was a Tundra Peregrine. It took his mind back to 1951 when George Lelovich had caught a Tundra Peregrine at the White Lake in Hungary.

By 1961 Lorant had itchy feet and was looking for another position, which he found, as the district taxidermist for Newport and West Museum. Here his reputation as a sportsman travelled quickly and before a few days

had passed Ken MacLeur was looking him up. Ken introduced Lorant to the Newport Wildfowlers at Caerleon but his tales of Hawking meant that it was inevitable that some of the sportsmen asked for instruction in the sport. Lorant of course was never happier than when he was talking of Hawking and so, within a short time a section of the 'fowlers had been set up to deal with hawks and shortly it was to branch out independently as The Welsh Hawking Club. Often in the old days it was thought of as a splinter group but it never was that - it was formed in its own right in 1962 and so is second only to the BFC in age in this country, and today is well respected as one of the largest, fully international clubs. Lorant was President of the Welsh Hawking Club from its formation until his passing in 1993. He had been an honorary member of the BFC, NAFA, Austrian, German and French associations. As a formative member of the Hungarian club Lorant was very pleased, whilst visiting the club AGM in 1991 to be the first to receive a bronze plaque from Istvan Bechtold, the



Photograph with kind permission from Kim Oakshott & Danny Keeber

President, who said the club were founding an order honouring those who had done most for Hungarian Falconry. The original plaque was then placed on the town hall at Solyman Village.

In his forward to Lorants book "Hunting Bird From a Wild Bird" Bryan Versey Fitzgerald wrote, "No man, not even the great Pakistani Falconers, whose reputation is and has been for centuries almost legendary, knows more, and certainly no man has done more to educate the public on the merits, beauty and value of Birds of Prey, than Lorant de Bastyai.

His knowledge of Birds of Prey was widely respected and he went to great trouble to find the answers to questions which arose, the like of which most people would let pass by. If he found that a falcon had been seen or picked up he had to identify precisely which species or sub-species it was, if necessary by writing to several other experts, world-wide, in an effort to verify facts. As a falconer he was a friend to everyone and was always ready to help in any way he could.

I remember asking him for some Hungarian girls names when I received a passage, female Goshawk, which had been trapped in Hungary. Within a day or so (Lorant was always very prompt, but unfortunately expected a return letter within a day!) I had not a name or two suggested, but about thirty all with English translations and explanations of their meanings. At first I chose Sza Sza but my friend Mark made some sarcastic remarks about this as he knew of a poodle called Sza Sza so I settled on the informal version Szara which also served as a reminder of our visit to the International meet at Szarvas (pronounced Zara-Vosh). Not only did Lorant delve into the sub-species but made in-depth studies of Birds of Prey as State Symbols and into their historical significance. For instance speculation existed for a long time on what hawk was depicted on the shield of Attila the Hun. In one of Lorant's articles in The Austringer (WHC journal no11-1978) he explained how different authors had sug-

gested Eagles to Lammagiers but eventually discussion between Dr Schenk and Prof Dementiev had resulted in evidence that it must have been what was known then as the Turul Falcon and later as the Altai Gyrfalcon. Again he was intrigued, after receiving a card from Dominick Kollinger, who had, in 1982, received a white Goshawk from Kamchatka (Siberia), Lorant and Dominick assumed it was *A.G. Buteoides menzibir* - the same species that George Lelovich had trapped back in the late forties. However research revealed that in fact both were *A.G. Albidus menzibir* - The Kamchatka Great Hawk. (source 1982 Austringer).

In fact Lorant had over 40 works published, including several books. He was working on his latest at the time of his passing. In 1978, on returning to Hungary for a holiday, Lorant was honoured to be met at the airport with an official car to take him to an appointment with the President of the Hungarian Nature Conservancy.

My own association with Lorant began after I became a member of the WHC and met him at meetings which were being held

**"no man has done more to educate the public on the merits, beauty and value of Birds of Prey, than Lorant de Bastyai"**

at Caerleon. He was, as ever, ready to advise and to converse on various aspects of hawking. He often gave a short talk on some interesting item that had cropped up recently. When his health meant that he attended meetings less often I began to correspond with him and this became almost a weekly letter. Of course his great enthusiasm never waned and this meant that he often had questions about the club, its field meets and the monthly meetings. It was very interesting to hear his tales of old times in Hungary and how he hunted on his

beloved Hortobagy Plains. His letters will remain of great comfort and interest. During his life Lorant had trained Goshawks, Sparrowhawks, Sakers, Peregrines, Lanners, Merlins, Eagles, Imperial, Golden, Tawny and so on. He went on to become head of the Bird of Prey school on the great plains after the war but the government decided the site was too isolated and the school was moved to Godollo. George Lelovich, who was assistant to Lorant, did not wish to move and so Lorant was to be in sole charge. he flew Falcons at the herons on state fish farms and also used Kestrels at the sparrows which were also a pest. He tried to breed at the station and when some had laid eggs he removed the top section of the aviary so that the adults would be able to hunt for themselves. Lorant worked alongside the Hungarian Forestry Commission, registering all nest of Birds of Prey using Hungarian Ornithology Institute rings, noting the contents of pellets and making reports. The ministry became concerned for the damage done to carp breeding in rice fields by Herons, Shooting the herons was considered impractical. george and Lorant suggested flying falcons from horseback at the herons and the idea was accepted. Later vineyards were cleared using Sparrowhawks and Kestrels. Dr Nagy of the Nature Conservancy made films of the activities and so Birds of Prey and Falconry were brought closer to the people and this helped a better understanding and it was hoped less shooting of Hawks.

Lorant was quite a humourous man, although many who met him did not realise this at first. Stories of the comical side of life with Lorant are rife among his close friends especially in the WHC. I hope to include some of these in a later article.

Nancy de Bastyai survives Lorant and is caring for their Lanneret, Leslie, who is over 20 years old, at Leamington Spa.

Lorant de Bastyai was loved by everyone who met him, he had no enemies and his passing was a sad loss to all who knew. He will be remembered and revered by them.



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# Training Gundogs For Falconry

## GAMEHAWKING

GUY WALLACE

It is essential to get both yourself and your dog fit before grouse hawking. If you are only on the hill for a week there is no point in spending half of that week getting yourselves fit when a lot of it can be done at home.

Therefore do not let your dog get overweight during the summer because all that fat has to come off before the muscle is built up. The old adage "He who walks furthest shoots the most grouse" applies equally to falconry. The only way to really become hill fit is to walk on hills, so try to get some grouse counting in early August which most grouse keepers will welcome and it is excellent preparation for the dog. (I always think that it is a shame that the grouse season precedes the partridge season because the mind blowing scent of a covey of grouse must spoil a dog for the more subtle scent of partridges.)

Larks and pipits are a mixed blessing. Most young dogs cannot resist chasing larks (hence the expression "larking about") but they soon realise that they cannot catch them and once they have had a few coveys under their nose will leave them alone. The Devil finds work for idle hands and most riot occurs when game is scarce. Beware the dreaded mountain (blue) hare! Larks, like snipe, give off a disproportionately strong smell for their size and many dogs will point them staunchly. This is fine if you are flying Merlins, but extremely boring, not to mention frustrating, if you are flying at grouse. Assuming that your dog is a staunch pointer - which it almost certainly is if it holds its point on a lark - LEAVE THE FALCON IN HER MEWS and go dog training. Work the dog and when it comes on point and subsequently flushes a lark chide it with the growl 'WARE LARKS STUPID DOG. Do not be so hard on it that it will stop pointing altogether, but at the

same time, make sure that it understands that you are not keen on larks. On the other hand when it points and then flushes a grouse make a big fuss of it. Back to the old BLACK/WHITE again. If you fly merlins at larks and falcons at grouse over the same dog I cannot help you. However an older, more experienced dog may well come to know, in time, which quarry you are flying.

If the austringer has a 'sticky' dog (one that remains on point and will not road in to flush) it is not the end of the world. You can always flush the game with your foot or thumbstick and it is certainly preferable to the alternative - the 'flash pointer'. However, when gamehawking, and you falcon has gained her pitch and is waiting on, ready to be served, your dog must go in and flush 'right on the button' when the falcon is in the optimum position in relation to the covey and the wind direction. (This is, in fact, an advantage of the HPR having a 'shorter' nose than a pointer or setter since it has much less ground to cover in order to flush the covey.) The purists use a spaniel to flush the covey downwind over the pointer to ensure the correct timing of the flush. Apart from meaning that you have to have an extra dog involved, it can make many pointers extremely jealous so that they will hold their point for ever until anybody or anything comes anywhere near them, when they will dive in. The same thing can occur when working a poorly trained brace of pointing dogs and, instead of honouring the other's point by backing the forward dog, the rear dog goes in

and steals the point. As already mentioned in the basic pointing and flushing lessons the time to praise a dog on a point is AFTER it has dropped to flush. This means that it will road in "on the button" in expectation of praise and has the added advantage of you not praising it for pointing the wrong quarry.

Running a dog on a hill is exhausting work, particularly in hot weather when its nose is stuffed with heather pollen and grouse are scarce. It is extremely easy to 'bottom' a dog and once a dog gets really exhausted it needs a few days rest to get over it and is likely to dehydrate internally. The old trick of giving a Mars bar at intervals helps keep up the blood sugars but you can still overtax even an HPR's undoubted stamina. "English pointers" burn out far sooner. It is a good idea to wean the dog onto a higher protein dog food before The Glorious Twelfth and then to gradually go back to your normal dog food after you get home. You cannot do a weeks grouse hawking with only one dog and, ideally, each falconer in the party should own a pointing dog and run them singly, turn and turn about. As soon as a dog starts to shorten its beat call it in and rest it. Do not worry if they all own Field

Trial Champions that can do no wrong. Insist on giving your novice its rightful turn (their dogs were all novices once!) since it is not going to learn anything sitting in kennels.

It is extremely important that the dog sees an 'end product' so, after a successful flight call your novice dog up to the kill, let it smell the grouse (most falcon will make it keep its distance!) and make a big fuss of it and let it realise that it is very much a part of the successful team as opposed to leaving it on the drop half a mile away!

Many hawks (particularly Harris Hawks, which probably regard dogs as coyotes) will tolerate their "own" dog, say a solid liver GSP, but bring a black and white GSP or an orange and white Brittany and they will 'flip their lid'. Arrange to take the hawk down to the local beagle kennels (foxhounds are large enough to rear up and "chomp" your hawk) and a "multicoloured" pack of hounds in the grass yard or on hound exercise will soon "crash man" her.

The best advice I can give any aspiring falconer is to train his or her dog thoroughly before taking it anywhere near the hawking field - and then keep training it. In terms of game in the bag you will never regret it.





# FERRETS and DOGS

GUY WALLACE

Just as the hawk has to be tactfully introduced to ferrets, so has the dog. Holding a ferret up to a puppy's nose while commanding NO and generally stroking the ferret is usually all that is required. An over inquisitive pup will usually get a nip (or stronger!) on the nose which will teach it respect for evermore. Once the dog has worked a few

times with the ferret they will soon recognise one another as allies. Needless to say the dog will have to be ultra-steady to rabbits bolting under its nose. ( I remember ferreting rabbits with Jim Chick in the long grass on Salisbury Plain while his rock steady GSP "Sancho" sat motionless beside him. Old "Cassy", his redtail took off and bound to a moving brown blur in the long grass. Suddenly Sancho growled and flung himself after the hawk and within minutes a large area of "The Blasted 'Eath"

was littered with very small pieces of a very dead fox! Unless the owner is also a ferreter the habit of pointing rabbits in a bury or burrow should be TACTFULLY discouraged from an early age. There is nothing more annoying for a non-ferreter than to have one's dog with his head permanently stuck down a rabbit hole.



All the articles that have appeared in The Falconers Magazine over the last few years are extracts from my book "TRAINING THE WORKING H.P.R." which is shortly (?) to be published. When it comes out in print details will be published in the sporting press.

## WHEELS FOR FALCONERS

Four wheel drive vehicles have seen an insurgence in popularity in recent years, the various makes and models have become both status symbols and household names. But somewhere in that rush to build to higher specifications and more refined levels of trim, the real 4x4 user has been forgotten. No longer can you put the Dogs and Hawk in the back without fear of getting it all dirty! Or climb into the drivers seat after finishing on the moor without worry of staining the upholstery.

Highlander 4x4 have the practical solution to this now common problem. Their range of four door pick-ups provide facilities not found in other 4x4 vehicles, for on road use you have all the refinements of any saloon car. Features such as power steering, five speed gear box and the economy of a diesel engine are all standard, but when you want a working tool the four door Pick-ups are clearly in a league of their own.

Canopies can be fitted over the pick-up bed, giving a large covered area, windows with fly screens are fitted if required for ventilation. The Dogs can be made secure inside a Port -a-Pet box under the canopy, still leaving plenty of room for Hawks and equipment.

The versatility of four wheel drive gives good general off road ability, but when needed all of these vehicles can be switched to four wheel drive, low ratio, for any precision manoeuvres, ensuring you reach your destination, hassle free.

What sets Highlander apart from other importers is that the vehicles are purchased in bulk and stored in bonded warehouses in the UK before they are



sold. There fore the customer is the first registered keeper and not the importer.

After a legal conversion any VAT can be reclaimed due to the vehicles commercial rating (providing the customer is registered)

The Four Door Pick-Up range starts at £12,495 + VAT (on the road) for the Nissan Diesel Pick-Up and extends to £14,995 + VAT (on the road) for the Toyota Diesel Pick-Up. Metallic paint, if required, is a no cost option and all prices include delivery to you door (except Scotland).

General delivery takes three to six weeks, most well known Japanese vehicles are available including Mitsubishi & Isuzu all in the four door configuration.

Each vehicle is "E" marked confirming they reach all European safety standards and are therefore legal on British roads. Highlander 4x4 import and retail the majority of four wheel drive vehicles all of which are between £2000 & £3000 cheaper than any franchise dealer and usually on a shorter delivery time.

Both partners involved with the business are Falconry and field sports orientated, which ensures customer empathy, being end users ourselves we realise what expectations our customers have of these vehicles.



# INAUGURAL FLIGHT



We purchased Max, a male Harris Hawk from Robin Haigh in Surrey, We found Robin and his wife to be very hospitable and a great source of information, due to hi long experience breeding and flying raptors.

Max spent the next 14 weeks in an enclosed aviary, we had conflicting advice on whether to start his training straight away or leave him for three months, making him in total around six months old, we decided on the latter.

Once out of the aviary Max was a little wild but nothing out of the ordinary. Training went well and, after five weeks, Max was flying free. He spent four days on the creance and I was confident he was ready to go loose. The day before we took him out and introduced him to the rabbit lure. In my past experience, when a bird first sees the lure, it's not quite sure what to do, but not Max, as soon as he set eyes on it he was off his perch and on it. I put this down to feeding rabbit and squirrel in the aviary before picking him up. He automatically knew this furry thing in front of him was food.

The next day was to be his first down on the farm, sunny skies and no wind to speak of, perfect for his first ungainly flights into trees. What happened next I can hardly believe.

As we walked from the car into the field

two rabbits bolted 50 yds away, Max bated towards them, I thought "no, this is too good to be true". The birds' I've had in the past have taken quite a lot of perseverance to get them entered. But once again, not Max. I took off his leash and exchanged his mews for field jesses. We arrived at the wood, where I intended to fly him, It is approximately 25 foot wide and a quarter of a mile long, so he could hardly get lost and I could keep my eye on him. In this wood I knew where there were plenty of rabbits so I had the ferret with me. Max showed no interest in the ferret from day one. We had a few flights on rabbits but he wasn't sure how to go in on them, especially as the undergrowth was quite dense, all he lacks is experience. Eventually we came to the end of the wood and walked out onto an open field, we walked close to the hedgerow back towards the farm. Max caught sight of his intended quarry; 80yds away a rabbit was making its way, quite casually, back to the hedge. He was off the fist and in pursuit, Max arrived just as the rabbit disappeared into the undergrowth, he swung up into a tree directly above the rabbit. I got within ten yards of him and thought the rabbit was long gone so I called him back. As he turned to face me he must have seen

some movement below him and he dropped like a stone. The squeal confirmed he had his first rabbit. I could hardly believe it, our first day out and Max had his first kill. What a dream start to our short, but thoroughly enjoyable season. Max is a superb bird, never moody and very responsive, he is a sheer pleasure to fly.

Max is tucked up in his aviary throwing feathers out, which is a shame, but, if the experience gained in the 19 weeks we had to fly is anything to go by, roll on next season!

Max's tally in 19 weeks, 4 Mice, 10 Rabbits, 2 Squirrels, 1 Rat, 3 Moorhen, 1 Mallard and a Cock Pheasant. Not bad EH!

---

*Gary*  
**WILLIAMSON**

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# RAPTORS *of*

## SRI LANKA

Three kite species are seen, with the PARIAN or BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*) a winter visitor and plentiful resident but only in the north. The splendid RUFUS BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*) is a fairly common resident around the coast and paddies, in both wet and dry zones. Although its silhouette is not very kite like, and it appears more like a fish eagle, its flight is, and contrasting colour scheme of foxy red, black and white is unmistakable. Elegant little BLACK SHOULDERS or WINGED KITES (*Elanus caeruleus*) are fairly widespread worldwide, and also here, although not a common resident. As usual it prefers scattered woods in open ground to perform its effortless canting flight over - always a delight. It is possible to see four harriers in the winter here with the graceful bird hunting PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) the most widespread, and the only one I personally saw the MONTAGUS HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*) is hopefully still a fairly common winter visitor largely in the north, where the larger western MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*) is also seen. One of the most striking and beautiful harriers in the world, the PIED HARRIER (*Circus melanoleucos*) of the oriental region is a scarce but regular winter visitor, again to the dry zone grasslands and paddies, unfortunately my only view of the magnificent male of this species has been confined to video - as yet! G.M.Henry mentions the 'DESERT' BUZZARD (*Buteo burmanicus*), which is the INDIAN or COMMON BUZZARD an irregular visitor to all zones. The CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) is virtually identical to our own Eurasian Honey Buzzard, with the same widely varying plumage, and is both an elusive resident and widespread winter visitor. These are sometimes known as two races the western and eastern occasionally known as

the Oriental Honey Buzzard, but there appears to be some confusion.

That slightly odd (because hard to classify!) group, the Bazas or Cuckoo Falcons has only two representatives here. Both the very scarce visiting BLACK BAZA (*Aviceda leuphotes*) and the (wait for it!) BLYTHS, JERDONS or LEGGES BAZA or BROWN LIZARD HAWK (*Aviceda jerdoni*) are small hawks of wooded hill country, the latter uncommon but widespread. They share the unique double notched beak of the Cuckoo Falcons but have broader much less falcon-like wings and a crow-like flight. It is superficially similar to the resident ASIAN CRESTED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter trivirgatus*) including the dark vertical throat stripe, and is a typically elusive but widely distributed bird of wooded hill country, preying both on small birds and mammals. By contrast SHIKRAS (*Accipiter badius*) are very common residents, and from my own observations especially in the south, where they dash like our Sparrowhawk through most habitats from suburban to wooded, avoiding only thick forest. One of the many I saw though, was by a forest clearing pool, and I tried unsuccessfully to transform it into the scarcer but very similar BESRA SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter virgatus*) which does prefer wet zone thick forest or jungle like the aforementioned Crested Goshawk. Both are supposed to feed mainly on lizards etc., but most I've seen have been bird hunting which their typical sprinting accipiter flights so suit. It would appear that none of the falcons have ever been common on the island, with the Eurasian KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) the most widespread and likely winter visitor to be seen, with the much scarcer resident INDIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus objurgatus*). The two races of Peregrine are both rather uncommon, the eastern PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus calidus*) although a regular winter visitor

chiefly to the north, and the resident and widespread SHAHIN or INDIAN PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*). This latter bird is smaller with very reddish underparts and more adapted to crags in wooded country than its many global cousins.

The orangey underparts and dark hoods are also shared with that rare straggler to the island, the smaller and slimmer ORIENTAL HOBBY (*Falco severus*). The AMUR or EASTERN RED-FOOTED FALCON (*Falco vespertinus amurensis*) are also rare visitors, with only a couple of recent records, one of which I was fortunate enough to see in the far south. They largely differ from their western cousins with their white underwing covers and non orangey females.

Although there are still possibly eleven owl species to be found here they are of course largely elusive, nocturnal and arboreal, like the Forest Eagle Owl and Brown Hawk Owl, and only the Brown Wood Owl, Indian Jungle Owlet and Brown Fish Owl probably still widespread and relatively common.

So, not a huge list of raptors, but with over four hundred bird species to be enjoyed in largely beautiful surrounds, and never usually far from a tropical beach, this is a great place to visit. The people generally, are very friendly and helpful and their fresh king coconut milk is the commonest and most refreshing drink available anywhere. The only real problems manifest themselves on the frequently poor roads - the bus drivers are famous and notoriously kamikaze, and it is actually cheaper and safer to hire a driver with your hire car, because of the insurance! I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and will always carry wonderful memories of Brahminy Kites effortlessly soaring over rice paddies full of white egrets following the plough, huge Flying Foxes slowly flapping in evening light over bustling towns, monkeys, Water Buffalos, Lily Trotters on pink lotus lilies, endless temples and huge Buddha's, splendid wetlands, rivers, creeks, lakes, tanks and beaches - and some of the best vegetable curry in Asia!

**Text  
&  
Studies  
By  
Philip Snow**

Painting overleaf

# RAPTORS of SRI LANKA

Part 2



c 135 wspan.  
MOUNTAIN or FEATHER  
TOED HAWK EAGLE ~  
Like a huge accipiter  
in flight - similar to  
Crowned & Harpy  
Eagles.



adults  
C.H. EAGLES  
wspan  
c 120 cm

CHANGEABLE or CRESTED  
HAWK EAGLE - c 61 cm.  
Forests, clearings, bush -  
- quite approachable.

• BIRDS NOT TO SCALE •

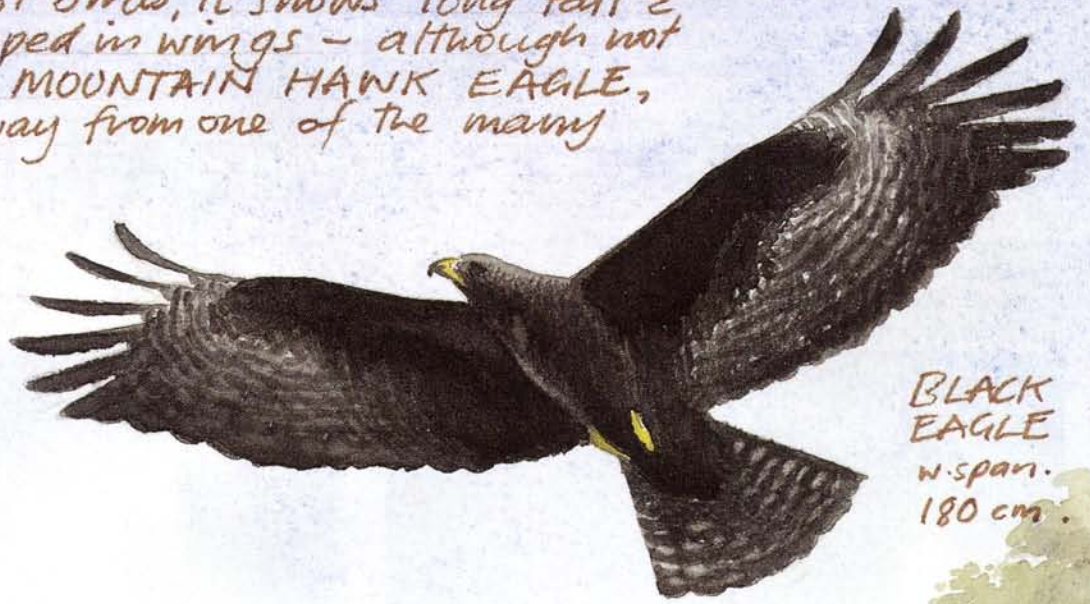


♂ wspan 115 cm

PIED HARRIER - scarce winter visitor, mainly north. P. SNOW ©

BLACK EAGLE - adult over highlands near Kandy.  
Like many forest birds, it shows long tail &  
fairly broad clipped in wings - although not  
as broad as the MOUNTAIN HAWK EAGLE,  
gliding fast away from one of the many  
waterfalls.

↙



BLACK  
EAGLE  
w. span.  
180 cm.

♀ SHIKRA  
c70 cm w. span.



CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE.

c48 cm. Noisy, but forest cover may render it difficult to see.

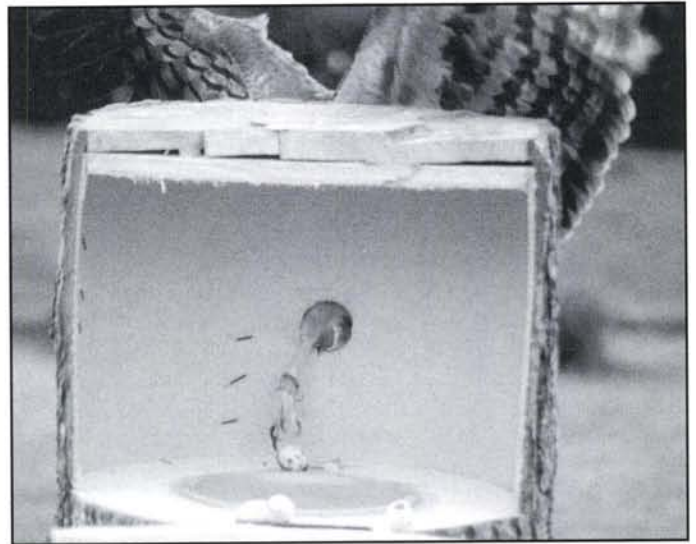
c30 cm.

♂ SHIKRA - locally a  
fairly common raptor,  
much like our Sparrowhawk.

# AFRICAN HARRIER HAWK



*I KNOW IT'S IN THERE*



*NEARLY GOT IT*

Having been married into 'The Business' at the grand old age of 26 and immediately introduced to such hefty gods' as Emma Ford and Jemima Parry-Jones before I could so much as swallow, I may have thought that the magic of birds of prey was something that one was inspired with as a child and otherwise lost forever. I couldn't have been more wrong.

In my case then (and I believe this to be true of most 'observers' who make up our audiences today), I was inspired the most, not by impressively speedy and sadly limitless demonstrations based solely on falcons and falcons alone, but by the exciting and challenging flights displayed by a variety of birds, none of which were necessarily the fastest, largest or cutest.

At The Hawk Conservancy we spice our demonstrations with the occasional different, even obscure, species of bird of prey in order to show something that little bit different. These species, far from being simply 'novelty' birds, treat visitors with a unique opportunity to admire just how varied bird behaviour and flight is, amongst a comparatively small selection of birds from the hundreds of species of birds of prey and owls in the world. Increased awareness can only come through education and experience and is crucial in the long-term conservation of raptors. (What child is going to grow up

caring about an obscure species of bird it has never even heard of, let alone seen?) This educational aim is quite apart from the vital role these demonstrations play in enticing newcomers back again with their friends, which I hardly need stress is how we all stay in business in the first place.

One of the most recent birds of prey to arrive at the Hawk Conservancy was an African Harrier Hawk or *Gymnogene* (*Polyboroides typus*). This bird has proved to be one of the most successful and exciting display birds in a good few years and its story began when Ashley jumped wildly (as he tends to do) at an opportunity to obtain a pair from London Zoo.

In case you are wondering if a *Gymnogene* is some high-fangled invention of the United States Air Force, it is actually one of two species of rather large, light-bodied hawks called *Polyboroides*, the other being the Madagascar Harrier Hawk (*Polyboroides/Gymnogynys radiatus*), both of which are rather similar in looks. The *Gymnogene* is found mainly in forest areas of Africa, south of the Sahara, although it is also found in the wetter, West Africa savannahs. It eats a diet of birds' eggs and young, insects, small mammals and reptiles, taken from both ground level and trees, and is also known to oil palm nuts, which it reaches by tight-rope walking

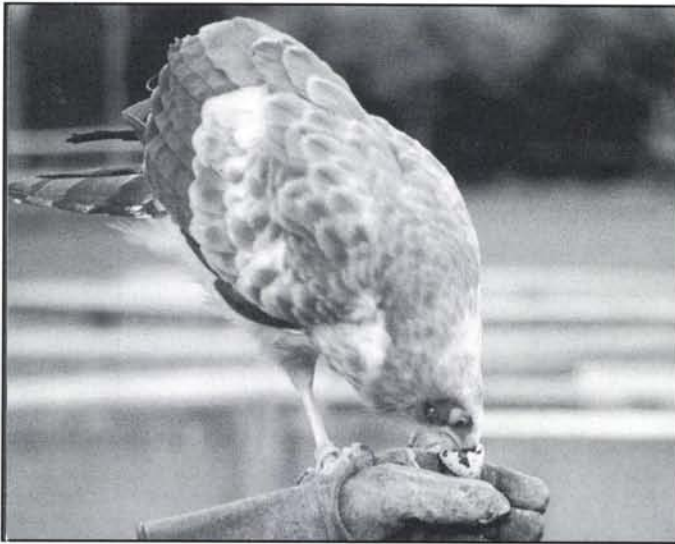
'hand over hand' with its feet along the palm 'fronds' or leaves.

Having found ourselves caretakers of two of these somewhat obscure creatures, we passed one bird onto the National Birds of Prey Centre to pair with one of their birds, in the hope of establishing a further TAG group (Taxonomy Advisory Group formed by the National Federation of Zoos), which is after all the principle of obtaining a captive bred, self-sustaining population. This left us here at the Conservancy with an immature male, which we decided to fly for the public rather than leave alone in an aviary for the season.

So, Ashley (and 'Co' I hasten to add, since we've now got two rather smartly turned out, dashing young falconers aiding and abetting such ongoing work as this) set to work with his training. This 'training' began with manning, which, as often happens in these cases, took place over a cup of coffee at ten o'clock one morning in the staff room. Everybody admired approvingly how quietly 'Jimmy' the *Gymnogene* (we surely can't deny ourselves marks for originality) sat on the fist. However after a minute or two, everyone's attention was diverted towards his head, which was beginning to rotate wildly around in the general direction of the ceiling. While Ashley began to leap towards the door to

**By BRIGID SMITH - THE HAWK CONSERVANCY**

# O R GYMNOGENE



DINNER!

fetch some glucose, the others looked heavenward in the vague direction Jimmy was staring. Lo and Behold, there, stalking across the ceiling, was a tiny black spider. Jimmy was not having a fit, but was looking for lunch.

Being uncontainably curious, Ashley took off Jimmy's jesses and turned out the staff room lights. Seven people sat silently watching to see what would happen. Jimmy, needing no further cue, immediately leapt up to the ceiling and began to claw wildly at the crevices in the woodwork, into one of which the spider had now, quite sensibly, disappeared. Within seconds Jimmy had pushed one leg through the same hole, flapping wildly with his wings to keep himself in this painfully awkward-looking, upside-down position, and retrieved - not the little spider, but the largest, blackest, choicest house spider seven people had ever seen. He then flew down to the back of a chair to eat with a menacing look of satisfaction. Incidentally, Gymnogenes are, in fact, unique in their ability to hang upside-down for long periods, so perhaps we were lucky that, in the absence of any African lizards in the rafters, Jimmy found himself a suitably tasty spider so quickly. Otherwise we could have been sitting there all day, twiddling our anxious thumbs, while Jimmy stuck, limpet-like, to the ceiling.

around a silly man waving around a dead, day-old chick. Instead of obligingly returning to the plump, juicy piece of meat jostling for attention in Ashley's gloved hand, he flew off in the opposite direction and was later found two miles away literally throwing himself headlong into several rather large trees. I seem to vaguely recall Ashley once stressing that manning and early training were vital!

The Gymnogene is a somewhat erratic flier, as we discovered. Although they are apparently capable of soaring steadily, they tend to float buoyantly on any passing breeze, seemingly without any great power of their own when compared with something like the kestrel which, although being a much smaller bird, can stay relatively unmoved in the face of even moderate winds. In the wild Gymnogenes are relentlessly mobbed by other birds almost as soon as they take to the air, indeed more so than most birds of prey. Their magpie-style nest robbing techniques presumably make them an unpopular visitor to other nest sites.

As Jimmy continued with his rather unorthodox, suicidal behaviour against one of his newly found tree-trunks, we discovered that he seemed to have the same objective as he had had up on the staff room ceiling. While glued to the trunk with his wings flapping behind him like a butterfly caught

Astonished by this event, Ashley was now desperate to see what a Gymnogene looked like flying free and consequently, Jimmy's training in flying to the fist on the leash was somewhat swift. Not being the most patient of falconers the Almighty ever gave breath to, Ashley let Jimmy go free as soon as he had done a couple of practice runs in the flying grounds. Jimmy, naturally, had things in mind other than hanging

in a jam jar, Jimmy was searching rigorously for small insects in the crevices of the bark. To a casual observer this may at first seem unastonishing, since everyone has heard of treecreepers and woodpeckers, until one realises that the Gymnogene was using his feet to obtain the food, and that in order to do so, he was bending his 'heel' (tarsal) joint in both forward and backward directions, enabling him to push his legs into any hole without having to turn himself upside-down and back-to-front! try bending your knee forwards as well as backwards and you will have some idea of just how astonishing this bird's double-jointedness really is. (The American Crane Hawk (*Geranospiza caerulescens*) is the only other species to have this peculiar characteristic and, indeed, may even be related to the Gymnogene).

Ashley, bless him, being something of an opportunist himself, constructed a mock tree to demonstrate Jimmy's unique behaviour in front of an audience. The 'tree' consisted of a tree trunk drilled with holes, half-hollowed out and hinged in the middle so that 'door' could be opened at the front. The whole trunk was pivoted so that it could be turned to different sections of the audience. This has proved to be the greatest invention ever introduced, since out Gymnogene demonstration inspires even more gasps and coos than that of Duffy, our European Eagle Owl, which must say something for Jimmy. (Duffy is regularly given single malt whisky from a small number of generous visitors at Christmas, which he kindly shares with Ashley and Myself. I wonder if Jimmy could be tempted to accept a few bottles?)

If London Zoo enjoy continued breeding successes, we hope the opportunity arises for Jimmy to try out parenthood in the next year or two, during which time he will mature into a striking, predominantly grey colour with black and white barred tail feathers, striped black and white lower breast feathers and a bright yellow cere and skin around his eyes. This yellow skin flushes pink with excitement in a similar way to Bataleur Eagles, especially around nesting time in the wild.

The Gymnogene is certainly not the fastest, largest or cutest bird of prey in the world, but it must surely rank among the most unusual. We believe Jimmy's success and popularity with our audiences shows how important it is to fly such birds in display. If, by seeing him, they are inspired to learn more about, or at least be more aware of, birds of prey, then we will have achieved something, whatever positive effects he has on his audiences, the Gymnogene's unique behaviour must surely be one of the strangest sights anyone can see.

PHOTO'S By MICK ROBINSON

# AVIARY / WEATHERING

## BUILDING FOR THE 1990'S

JEMIMA PARRY-JONES

As a breeder of birds of prey and owls, I feel very strongly that it is my responsibility to make sure that the birds I produce go to the best and most suitable homes possible, consequently we tend to put people through the third degree, on them asking what we sell. Apart from asking what experience the enquirer has and why they want a bird and what for and so on. I ask each prospective new owner for a photograph of their proposed quarters for the bird they hope to have from us. Very often the aviaries are excellent, sometimes they are in need of some alteration, usually size wise and often the roof needs to be improved. I then write back and suggest changes, in the interest of the birds, generally these are well taken and I am always pleased to let our birds go to people who are keen enough to take advice. (I am still, to this day, advising against the use of screen perches, which is a bit sad as there are plenty of excellent alternatives) This year I did the same thing as usual, writing to about four people suggesting changes, one photograph showed a pen with a transparent roofing material which is asking for trouble in the sort of hot weather we are having right now and which is always a possibility in the summer, because it is a very good way to cook your bird, the reply I had was interesting and prompted me to think about writing this short article. The chap replying seemed to think that I did not consider him suitable for one of my

birds, which was not true, I was merely making a sensible suggestion which would benefit him and any bird he had. He also said, and this was the interesting part to me, that I had considered his quarters good enough in 1984, so why were they not good enough now.

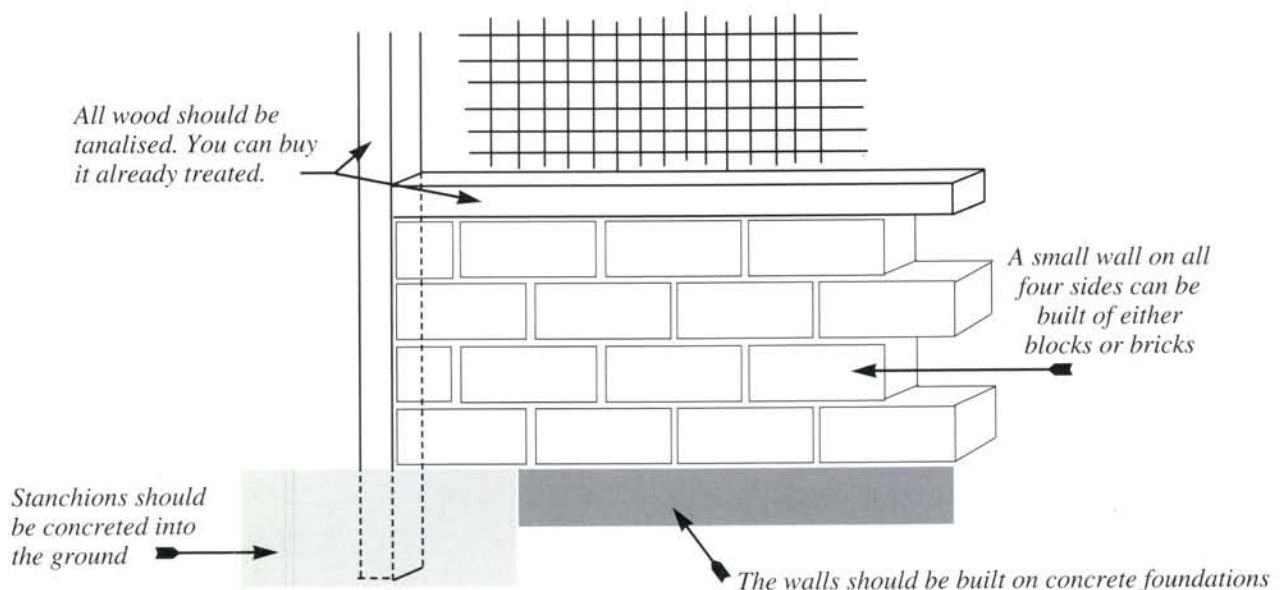
Well I am pleased to say that, here at the National Birds of Prey Centre, we do not stand still in terms of learning. The sort of aviaries we build now are very different from those I would have put up in 1984. In fact every time we build a new block we learn and make slight alterations - one of these days I will get it totally right! The other thing to remember is that over the years we find out about different materials on the market and learn more about building in general. So add those two facts into the equation and if you don't regularly update your ideas about the very best aviaries to build for your birds, then you fall into that large and sad category of people who think they know it all and are not prepared to keep improving the way they do anything and that is a great shame.

Since we started the Centre in 1967 the climate seems to have changed a great deal. The winters seem longer and the extremes far greater. Last winter it rained here in Gloucester from Mid September until February almost non-stop - I thought about building an Ark. The ground was sodden most of the time and I breathed a sigh of

relief that we had most of the birds in new housing. Then we had a period of very strong and unpleasant gales, which not only made flying the birds pretty difficult, but also made me quietly pleased that we had built very robust buildings for the birds. They are very sheltered in the aviaries regardless of the weather conditions. Falconry has an increasing number of enemies in the form of those people who either do not approve of any kind of hunting, or those who consider that birds should not be kept in captivity. Consequently for the majority of people with only a few birds it is far more acceptable to keep fully trained birds loose in aviaries rather than tethered. It is also much easier, better for the bird and makes going away for shot periods far less worrying for any falconer or the owner of a trained bird. I should add here that if you have as many trained birds as we fly daily here it is almost impossible to have each one loose in a pen.

With all the above in mind perhaps I can point a few people in the right direction for good aviaries, that will keep their bird safe from extreme cold, rain, wind and heat. Safe from harm from foxes, cats, badgers, children and all but the most persistent of vandals.

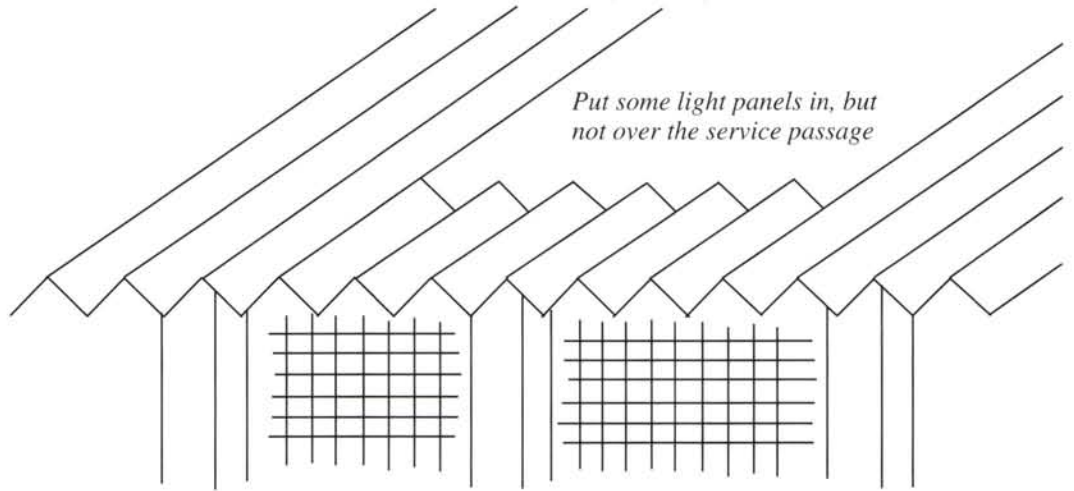
Any aviary built should have a double door system for security, and I strongly suggest a security passage all down one side of the pen. This allows for ease in cleaning out





*The service passage should be on one of the three solid sides, not on the front.*

*This is for safety, observation and to stop your trained bird, when loose in the aviary, flying into the wire on your approach.*



*Welded wire mesh should only be on the front of the aviary, and a small gauge, approx 1 inch square, to keep out rats and other birds, as the diseases from sparrows, pigeons, starlings etc. can kill birds of prey.*

*This is another reason for having a completely enclosed roof.*

*It stops bird droppings falling into the aviary*

pens - all rubbish can be put into the passage and then removed after the inner door is closed. It allows for birds to be taken in and out of the aviary with out risk of loss while jessing up. A bird that is perhaps not quite right can be watched without realising it and behaviour spotted that might not be shown while the bird is knowingly observed. There are many other good reasons for such a passage, some of which are mentioned in the book I just had published, which gives a great deal on aviary design. We build all pens with three sides solid and only the front opening, but I would suggest that anyone keeping a bird in a pen for flying always has the door in one of the solid sides opening into the security passage. In that way the bird is not going to fly into the wire trying to get to you at flying time. This goes for all species, including owls. We also build our aviaries totally roofed in. This immediately makes the aviary a much stronger structure and, if well done with the right material, much more attractive to have in your garden. For anyone building large barns, such as most of mine, the best material I have found is a concrete fibre sheeting which is the modern and safe form of asbestos. But it is very heavy and needs very strong support.

For most of us who are building smaller units of maybe only one or two aviaries you can't beat a sheeting made by a company called Onduline. the material is now made in Belgium and is a mixture of paper and tar, with colouring. that sounds pretty useless, but it is very tough stuff and, as long as it is well supported, on shallow pitched roofs it is excellent stuff.

It is lightweight to handle, has no problems with condensation dripping on cold birds in the winter, as do all the metal and plastic roofing sheets. It is relatively warm for in the winter and keeps the pen surprisingly cool in all but the hottest weather. I have had coloured Onduline on my stables for at least seven years with no problems. When we built the small falcon block here, we

roofed it in the red coloured onduline and it works brilliantly. You can also get it in a brown and a blue and probably other colours as well, so you can make your aviary fit into your surroundings very easily. As well as being easy to handle and lift because it is light weight, it is also easy to cut and to nail up. In fact as an all round roofing material for aviaries for all types of birds of prey it is hard to beat and I can very honestly recommend it to anyone. The company supplies full instructions for support, pitch and fixing.

It is a good idea to put in a couple of translucent sheets to make sure your pen is not too dark, and these do have to be drilled before nailing, but then that goes for any plastic material.

I have tried many different materials on the floor of aviaries and with great experience I can happily say that you can't beat sand, it does not heat up like gravel and with tethered birds, although it may wear feathers, at least it does not chip them as pea gravel does. It is easier to clean, more absorbent, less wasteful, kinder on the birds feet and, apart from tethered birds who may swallow some occasionally on their food, it has less drawbacks than any other material. I have never had any problems with sand. In our smaller aviaries, for the Merlins, Sparrowhawks and such, we are in the throws of concreting the floors and putting sand on top, but this is not a good idea for a flying aviary as you will always need the availability of tethering a bird at some stage, either for training or re-training.

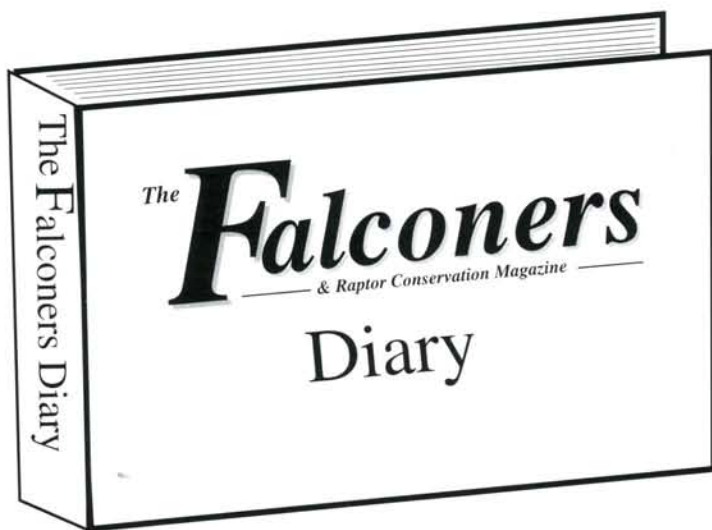
As I said earlier, I have covered a great deal about building aviaries in Training Birds of Prey, but for those who are not liable to want to buy it, I do recommend that if you

can, you keep trained birds loose, for a happier, healthier, fitter bird and also a better impression for those who do not understand falconry. And I also thoroughly recommend a totally covered in roof. For those who think it may make their bird less hardy and waterproof for flying in the British weather - just look at some of my birds and see what you think keeping them well sheltered does for them.

The only birds I would think twice about keeping loose like this are eagles. They may well need to be tethered during the time they are being flown unless you are very sure of your bird indeed. You should have a decent aviary for them while they are tethered which can double as a moulting aviary where they can be kept loose for part of the year. In my opinion, NO BIRD should be kept tethered year in, year out, without the chance of a rest, loose in a pen. I do know of people keeping eagles with no shelter at all, saying that as Golden Eagles, for example, live in cold, rough countryside they do not need proper quarters. This attitude I strongly disagree with. All birds, regardless of where they come from in the wild, should be given the best shelter possible as, particularly with tethered birds, they have not got the ability to move around and keep warm, not to fly to the lea of a hill to get out of the wind and rain. That attitude is just an excuse for poor management.

A well built aviary may be more costly in the short term, but it will last you a very long time, not put your bird at risk through storm or snow damage, will look attractive and therefore be more acceptable to neighbours and most importantly, keep your bird safe, secure, snug and happy for a long life to come.

# BROUGHT TO YOU EXCLUSIVELY BY THE FALCONERS MAGAZINE



There is information on the most commonly flown falconry birds, accompanied by photographs. With references to quarry species and preferred flying methods

Record your birds name, food intake, weight, and quarry caught, with space below for comments such as training progress, the weather, number and style of flights, or perhaps you went out with some friends and want to record their success as well.

DATE	SPECIES	NAME	WEIGHT	FOOD GIVEN	QUARRY TAKEN
08.11.95	Harris hawk	Ashley	1165g	2 chicks	1 rabbit & 1 pheasant

*Left the house at 7pm. Cold, frosty morning, a little misty at first but the sun came through later. Had four good slips and two were successful. Feeds like tomorrow's lunch is sorted out. Meeting John tomorrow to fly his Kestrel, plenty of quarry this morning, fingers crossed for tomorrow.*

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DATE	SPECIES	NAME	WEIGHT	FOOD GIVEN	QUARRY TAKEN
20.11.95	Harris Hawk	Ashley	1165g	2 chicks	

*Left the house at 7pm. Cold, frosty morning, a little misty at first but the sun came through later. Had four good slips and two were successful. Feeds like tomorrow's lunch is sorted out. Meeting John tomorrow to fly his Kestrel, plenty of quarry this morning, fingers crossed for tomorrow.*

## HARRIS HAWK (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)

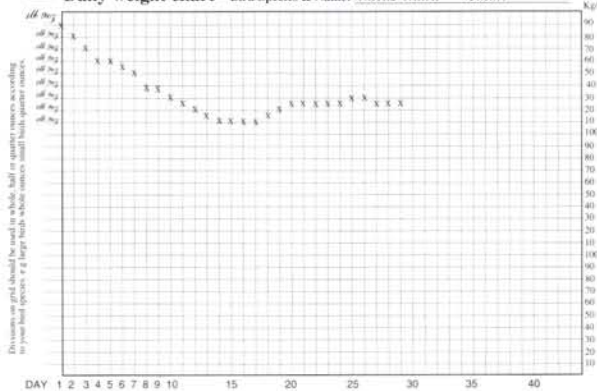
This is the most popular of all falconry birds. First introduced into the country about twenty years ago, it has been recognised as the most versatile, easily trained and sociable of birds.

Found commonly in South America and Mexico, they are extremely tolerant of each other, and will hunt regularly in pairs.

Their main quarry species in this country are rabbit, pheasant, magpie and partridge, although females will also take hare. They have become commonly known as the "weekend hawk", as once trained they seem to require very little training from one weekend to the next, although if left for long periods of time they can easily become bored and feather plucking is becoming a common problem in Harris hawks when put up for the month.

As they are from warm countries we tend to find that they do not tolerate our cold winters readily and some provision needs to be made for them when there is a lot of frost about. It would be a mistake to think that because Harris hawks are so sociable that they do not have that same hunting instinct that is so obvious in, for example on the accipiters. Far from it, if left unattended with quarry they will take it upon themselves to try and catch the nearest available, suitably sized creature, be it a rabbit or someone's Jack Russell. If flown properly and kept fit these birds are the very capable and proficient hunters, and, should you decide to buy one there is no reason why you should not have many years of fun and companionship.

Daily weight chart - Bird Species & Name: Harris Hawk - Ashley



We have included a grid for you to chart your birds weight loss/gain, over a period of up to 45 days, this is a quick and easy way to monitor it in respect to response and easily referred to next season.

As every Falconer knows, it is important to keep a record of your birds progress, charting the relevant details to help you recognise any mistakes or realise when you are getting the best from your bird. As there is nothing specifically available for falconers to do this we have designed and produce a diary/journal for just this purpose. Case bound in a deep red, with pages laid out for recording things such as weight, food intake and quarry caught, and with brief outlines of the most commonly flown falconry birds. There are no dates so you can start keeping the book whenever you are ready, using it for more than one bird if you wish. In this way you can compare your birds performance from one year to the next, always having the information to hand. The diaries will be available from mid-September.(Allow 14 days for delivery)

To Order your diary send a cheque or postal order for £8.50 (p&p free) to:  
**THE FALCONERS MAGAZINE,**  
**20 BRIDLE ROAD, BURTON LATIMER,**  
**KETTERING. NORTHANTS NN15 5QP.**  
 FOR MORE INFORMATION PHONE: 0536 722794

# FALCONRY

# SAFARI

IN

# ZIMBABWE

We met for the first time, 15 minutes before take-off, all 3 of us a little apprehensive as to what would unfold during the next two weeks.

It all started with a telephone call from Lyn, editor of this magazine, to ask if I would like to go to Africa on a Falconry Safari. After a long thought, (approx 10 seconds) I said yes and the wheels were set in motion. Geoff Dalton and Adrian Williams had similar phone calls and joined me on safari in Zimbabwe.

We were met at Hurare airport by Adrian Langley and Jeff Boddington, two of the five who were hosting us on this new venture, a three hour journey south took us to DEVULI CAMP at Eastdale, on a 100,000 acre ranch owned by Lonrho. We spent the first 6 days here and met another two of the team. Pierre Heymans and John Grobler, Pierre's wife Babs was head cook, although eight months pregnant.

The days started at 6am. and we left the camp by 7am., driving through the highveld we saw a most unlikely looking Africa, the countryside was of rolling hills with large patches of woodland and clumps of Acacia, the dead grasses were up to 6ft high in places and concealed Impala, Bushbuck, Ateenbuck, Kudu and Warthog, amongst others. The game for hawking here was Coqui Francolin, about Grey Partridge size, Shelleys Francolin, a little larger, and

## ANDREW KNOWLES-BROWN

Swainsons Francolin, the largest at Red-Grouse size. These were abundant in numbers and when flushed or bumped, very rarely flew more than 100 yds before putting in and could very easily be re-flushed for a second phase flight. Hawking generally finished before 10am. because of the heat and the possibility of thermalling by the birds. Back at camp we had 'brunch' and then went raptor spotting until mid-afternoon, then we returned to camp, showered and took the birds for evening flight at 5pm until dark at approx 7pm. After dinner we usually retired before 11pm to be up by six the next morning.

We flew five Peregrines, three falcons and two tiercels, all *Peregrinus peregrinus minor* the African minor. They took it in turns to fly morning and evening flights, all did extremely well and each day good flights and kills were had. The raptor spotting was quite spectacular with Bataleur, Martial, Tawny and Snake Eagles being seen almost daily, along with African Hawk and Black Eagles, Lanner Falcons, Goshawks, Sparrowhawks and Peregrines, a lot of these were seen at extremely close range or at nest sites. On day 7 we moved north to LIONS DEN, a tented camp in the lowveld, a much more fertile area with fields of harvested maize and

half grown wheat fields. Here, in addition to the falcons, we saw a Black Sparrowhawk being flown by Andy Barnes and an African Crowned Eagle being flown by Andre Groenwald, quarry for the falcons was Swainsons Francolin or Doves, although there were probably another dozen species which could be flown at, including Grey Touraco, Crowned Plover and Hornbills. The Black Sparrowhawk would be flown at Francolin or Guinea Fowl, while the Crowned Eagle flew at Vervet Monkeys, Orabie (a small deer), Guinea Fowl or Scrub Hare. The days were much the same, starting at 6am, with breakfast at 9am, a little earlier, as it was hotter here. Evening flying was from 5.30 to 7pm. The food, I might add, was extremely good considering our isolation from habitation, with us eating Impala, Kudu, Crocodile and Orabie, as well as many native dishes and local vegetables.

The final two days were spent at Sanyati Lodge on the south edge of Lake Kariba, this is one of the top lodges in Zimbabwe and was quite luxurious, here we saw at least 40 African Fish Eagles, some sitting on eyries, Augur Buzzards, Black Eagles, Ospreys, African Hawk Eagles and many waterfowl, but the main reason for going there was to see big game. Here we

saw Hippo, Waterbuck and Elephant, the Elephant we visited by boat and were able to get within 25ft of a small group of males, quite awe inspiring. We, unfortunately, didn't get to see Lion, Leopard or Water Buffalo, but they were in the area and there was always a chance they would appear.

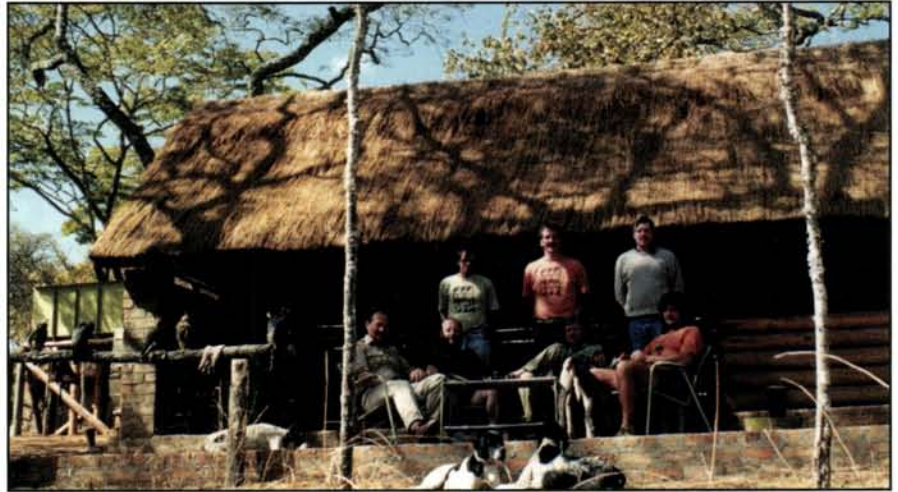
So, after 15 exhilarating days, with experiences so superb that my description of them will have done them an injustice, we left for home, tired, but vowing to return to visit our newly found friends, with final quotes from Adrian, 'Africa was as we expected, and to see what we saw, thanks to the expert knowledge of the dedicated falconers who were our hosts, was a great privilege' and Geoff, "You can't beat seeing native Hawks on their native quarry".

Thanks must go to the safari team, and Babs and Laura, Andre's wife, for their fabulous cooking, and to Lyn & David Wilson of The Falconers Magazine, for helping to arrange this whole experience for us.

Anyone wishing to know more about these safaris, which could be available in 1995 should contact Andrew, Geoff, Adrian or The Falconers Magazine.

Next issue: Longwinging in Africa with Peregrines.

(See overleaf for photo's)



The main lodge at Devuli Camp. L - R sitting: Geoff Dalton, Adrian Williams, Adrian Langley, Pierre Heymans, Standing: Geoff Boddington, John Grobler, Andrew Knowles-Brown.

Pretending not to be there! African Fish Eagle sitting tight on Lake Kariba.



ABOVE. The 'weighing room' at LIONS DEN.

RIGHT. A male KUDU under an Acacia tree, a common sight at Devuli



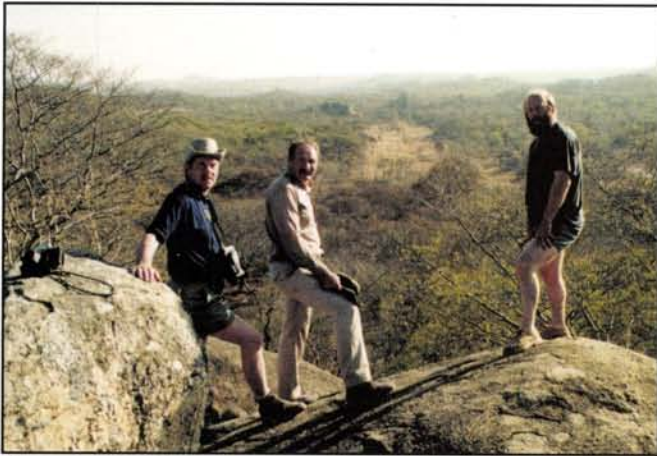
BELOW. DEVULI CAMP. 5000ft. above sea level in the African Highveld



↑ One of a group of five Elephant that we got within 25ft. of, by Sanyati Lodge at Lake Kariba

ADRIAN praying to his GOD for the safe return of NEVANA, and she caught something!!





Andrew, Geoff & Adrian on a Kopje with a Gymnogene at nest below Adrian, an African Hawk Eagle sitting on an eyrie behind Geoff and a martial Eagle Eyrie behind the camera with a chick in it SPECTACULAR!!



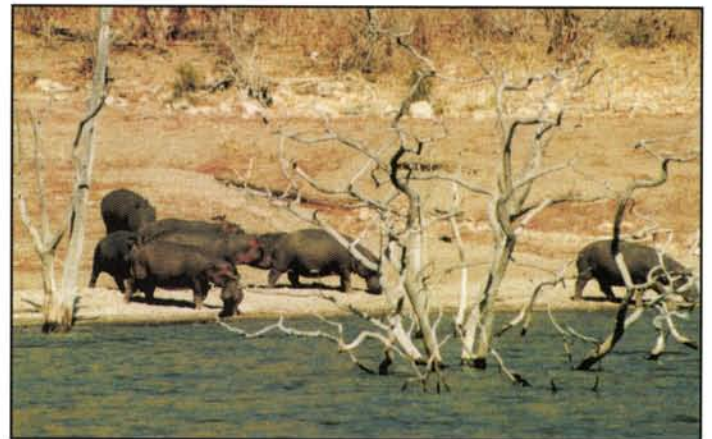
Sunrise on Lake Kariba, 6.30 a.m.



"I just want to cuddle Daddy" 'LUNDI' the 4 year old African Crowned Eagle flown at Scrub Hare, Vervet Monkeys and Orabie



THE REAL WORKERS. 2 of the pointers, Georgie & Becky.



A pod of Hippo', unusually on land during the day



Geoff checking a Secretary birds nest in an Acacia tree



The motley crew around the campfire at LIONS DEN after a hard days hawking. From L - R: Andre Groenwald, Adrian Williams, Geoff Dalton, Andrew Knowles-Brown, Andy Barnes, Geoff Boddington, & Adrian Langley

Dear David & Lyn,

I am shocked to read in the last Falconers Magazine about the Yorkshire Dales Falconry Centre receiving a £10,000 prize for Enterprising Young Businesses from Yorkshire Television. I would like to take this opportunity to let everybody know, and express my anger about, what I saw go on at the centre.

It was Sunday the 8th May when my wife and myself decided to have a run out to the Yorkshire Dales Bird of Prey Centre, we arrived just before the 3pm flying display.

The display started off with a young, so called professional, falconer flying a Male Kestrel, which seemed to have only half a tail. The bird was flown from the perch in the flying area and called to the fist, the Kestrel was then cast off into a tree, at which point the falconer joked about it not coming back down, he even jokingly bet a member of the public that he wouldn't get the bird back, however I know this was done to humour the public.

I couldn't believe what I was about to witness next, another, so called professional, falconer started flying a male Lanner falcon to the swung lure while the male Kestrel was still perched in the tree, fortunately the Lanner Falcon did not attack the Kestrel, the Kestrel stayed perched in the tree and the Lanner Falcon returned safely. However, what happened next was even worse, the first falconer returned with a Harris Hawk, he cast

the bird off into the same tree where the Kestrel was perched, the Harris Hawk flew back and forth from the tree to the fist several times until the falconer threw a chick leg onto the ground, when down came the Kestrel, followed by the Harris Hawk, the Harris Hawk then attacked the Kestrel, the falconer tried to separate the two birds while the Kestrel was screaming for its' life. The falconer tried telling the public that the Harris Hawk couldn't hurt the Kestrel because the tendons in its' legs were torn, I just wonder how the Harris Hawk managed to perch in a tree whilst not being able to use its feet. I couldn't watch any more, I offered assistance to the falconer because there was nobody else in the vicinity who could have helped. I understand he would not have known I was a falconer and would have been able to help him.

As I left, after spending only ten minutes at the centre, I asked the lady on the desk if there was anybody who I could speak to about what had just happened, our conversation went as follows:- I told her what had just happened and as a falconer and paying member of the public, how upset I was, she replied by saying, she had every confidence in the two falconers as professionals, I questioned their capability as falconers and she asked me if I was a professional falconer myself or just a weekend falconer. (I don't think this really matters, I fly hunting hawks every day of the week, from Peregrines to Bald Eagles) the lady asked if I flew a

Goshawk, I took this to mean that only professional falconers fly Goshawks.

The point I am trying to make is that Falconry in general gets enough bad press without, in my opinion, some idiots making it worse.

I only wish that centres and displays like this could be made answerable to some official organisation.

Yours deeply concerned,  
Philip & Tracey Gibbons.

Dear David & Lyn,

In response to the above letter, may I first of all express my sorrow that Philip Gibbons felt he needed to write an anonymous letter to the centre, not giving me the chance to sort this out.

The Centre has extremely high standards of animal management and is responsible for setting new standards in the U.K. Our achievements and customer care are outstanding. This is the first complaint the Centre has received in the three years since opening, with over 180,000 visitors. Regarding the complaint, the member of staff came to us with very good references from the Scottish Academy and when this matter was brought to my attention, the member of staff was instantly dismissed.

Your sincerely Chris O'Donnell  
Yorkshire Dales Falconry Centre

Dear David & Lyn

On March 14th this year I started my new job as falconer at Chris O'Donnells Yorkshire Dales Bird of Prey Centre. I was very excited as there were many different types of birds I had never handled before. As the weeks went past I started to worry about different practices that went on there and on more than one occasion my blood would boil at something I noticed that could cause harm to the birds that I was becoming very fond of.

The incident that is referred to in Philip Gibbons letter was that of out male Kestrel, Sinbad, being grabbed by the female Harris Hawk, Hannah.

On this particular day I was welcoming everyone to the centre. Sinbad began the flying display. He was not on my usual flying team but, as Chris O'Donnell was away in Romania it was my job to fly him. Just before he was due to finish he flew into a nearby tree. Despite attempts to get him down, there he remained. Our second falconer came into the arena with a Lanner falcon. I stopped showing the Kestrel the food and left to pick up the Harris Hawk. I feel I should mention at this point that the line up of the birds was decided before the display.

The Kestrel hadn't moved. The show had to go on. As I made my way into the arena I cast off the hawk which went into the same tree as the Kestrel. Whilst I was talking to the crowd the hawk began to fly away from the arena, not wishing to lose contact with another I

inadvertently threw a piece of meat onto the ground to entice her back. This is when my nightmare began. Down came the Kestrel, followed by the Harris Hawk, the hawk grabbed the falcon. The Harris had bad tendon damage but I was still unable to unlock her grip. I looked around for help but there were no staff to be seen. One caring man did offer to help me but I declined his offer, unaware that he too was a falconer. When assistance from centre staff did arrive the hawk let go and, very fortunately, no damage had been sustained by the Kestrel. I was able to show the public that he was fine although shaken.

I realise that I should not have thrown the food on the ground. One of my objections is that, had it been up to me two birds would not have been flying at the same time, as had been frequent practice in the past.

I chose to leave this centre, having been offered a job at a more professional establishment, where care of the birds is the first priority. Chris O'Donnells claims that I was sacked are fabricated nonsense.

In any apprenticeship the standards that are taught are the one that are with you for life. As an ex- student of Heriot-Watt University, I felt that I was more than capable of assessing the quality of working standards, or the sad lack of them, and that was my reason for moving.

Yours Sincerely  
Craig Mathewson  
Fife

## DEREGISTRATION OF CERTAIN CAPTIVE BIRDS OF PREY

Dear Editor

On 25 April 1994, following widespread consultation, Ministers announced certain changes in to the bird registration scheme. These changes included the deregistration of Britain's three most common birds of prey; the Kestrel; Sparrowhawk; and, Common Buzzard.

Following a report contained in recent publication, it has been brought to the Department's attention that the effect of these changes may have been mis-interpreted by certain individuals, groups or organisations. This letter is to try and clarify the position. From the end of 23 May 1994, the requirements for the registration and ringing of captive Kestrels, Sparrowhawks and Common Buzzards ceased. However, under section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it remains illegal to kill, injure or take individuals of these species from the wild. The penalty for conviction of such an offence is a fine of up to £1,000 and forfeiture of the bird in question. The Department has no plans to licence the taking from the wild of any of these species no longer subject to registration.

Keepers of these species, and all native birds, are reminded that the onus is on the individual keeper to show that any bird in their care is legally held. The Department recommends that keepers continue to fit close rings and keep detailed written records of captive breeding, or the origin of each bird in their possession. The sale and display of birds of the deregistered species will continue to be permitted under a specific exemption licence providing that all the conditions are met. If you purchase a bird, it is advised that you obtain a signed declaration from the breeder stating that it was captive-bred (and including details of the parent birds), or otherwise legally obtained. For further information, or copies of the specific exemption licenses, please contact:-

Dep't of the Environment,  
Bird Registration Section,  
Room 8/09, Tollgate House, Houlton Street  
Bristol BS2 9J  
(Tel: 0272 878829  
or Fax 0272 878393)

### PLAYING OUT THE BOREDOM

Dear Lyn & David,

Having read the item on feather plucking and boredom in the latest issue of the magazine, I thought I would write and mention my own Harris Hawk, 'Jack'.

I noticed during last years moult he took great interest in a tennis ball we were playing 'catch' with. I rolled it to him and he pounced on it and proceeded to play with it. He also has a well-weathered piece of driftwood, which he flies around with in the aviary.

We always ensure he has his ball and his wood during the moult as he really does enjoy playing with them. Perhaps this would help alleviate boredom in the other bird.

Yours sincerely  
Martin Perryman

### £200 SURPRISE RESULT

Dear Lyn,

In May this year you kindly gave to Mr John Welsby, of Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs, my telephone number when rang you asking if you knew of any Raptor related charities. He had been asked to help a local church celebrate its 900th Anniversary at a medieval weekend event, on the 18th and 19th of June, by attending in Falconers costume with his Redtailed Hawk. In return the church suggested he collect donations for his nominated charity. John subsequently contacted me and suggested Raptor Rescue be the beneficiary. This was quite an unusual occurrence for us, being offered money! Our fund raising is nearly all carried out by a small number of members, and is done under a strict code of practice when live birds are being displayed. This is to ensure that the welfare of the birds takes priority.

John will not mind me saying that he is a relatively inexperienced hawk keeper, but I was

Dear David & Lyn

I am involved in Falconry on a 365 days a year basis, and I am pleased to see how popular the sport is becoming. However, one cause for concern is the number of courses that have sprung up as a result.

Let's be realistic about it, five days tuition will teach just about enough to keep the bird in good health, two days enough to cost out and realise the commitment involved, one day is just a pleasant day out, there is no way you can learn enough in two days to qualify you for keeping a bird of prey. It matters not one jot that you have read every book under the

### TIME TO LEARN

sun, because when you have a bird on the fist, and things are going wrong, no book will tap you on the shoulder and "say this is where your mistake is." Likewise, buying a bird to teach you Falconry is just as silly, guns don't teach you shoot, birds don't teach you falconry. So a good five day course is the answer, if you can't fine the time for five a day course how are you going to find the time to look after your bird properly? 90% of Falconry is common sense, but it is surprising how much of that common sense goes out the window on the first day of a course, that leaves you with four days to get to

grips with it, the secret of good Falconry is a mixture of taming and weight control, if you can grasp this in a few hours, I take my hat off to you, it takes a few days to get the bird from fat to flying, if you are not in at the start of this procedure then you are not learning the most important part of Falconry. Far from wanting to stop people teaching, I think those of us who do teach should get together and standardise a teaching procedure that will not only benefit falconry but help the newcomer, who, at the moment, can only rely on so much conflicting advice.

Yours sincerely  
Biff Norman

impresses by his realistic self-appraisal and motives. I was pleased to give him the go-ahead and at that stage I think we both expected the charity to benefit to the tune of about £30. I was extremely pleased, and I know John was thrilled, when he rang me on the evening of the 19th of June to say he had raised over £200. This was a tremendous result, and we are very grateful to all who contributed

May I express our thanks to John and to The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine, which, quite apart from this specific event, has been a true friend and assistant to Raptor Rescue since our regular column first appeared over three years ago.

Yours sincerely  
Mick Robins L.R.K./Chairman.

### REDCROSS

Dear David & Lyn,

I would like to know if anyone has managed to breed Redtail Hawks with a Common Buzzard and had the chick reared by both parents. Last year my female Redtail and my male Common Buzzard reared one chick out of a clutch of three eggs. The chick has the build of a Common Buzzard and the speed and aggression of the Redtail. This year they are sitting four eggs but I have not heard of anyone else having luck breeding these before, I would be interested to hear from any one who has.

Yours sincerely  
Mr W H Butler

## RAISING STANDARDS

Dear David & Lyn

Firstly, thanks for a great magazine, full of information, variety and humour.

Sadly I wish to bring up the Cook Report debate (yet again). If readers were to cast their minds back to the mid eighties they may recall the massacre at Hungerford. A solution had to be found to control and regulate the sport of shooting in all its forms. The various shooting organisations had differing views on what should be done against each other to protect their own discipline of shooting. The result of this debate was that the government made the decision for them.

Legitimate shooters were persecuted and specific weapons were banned and the sport declined in numbers. Today we have armed police on the street, Mr Cook making programmes about the weapons available to criminals (he seems to get everywhere).

So what of me? Bird of Prey + man = Falconer. Wrong! Delete falconer, insert thief, persecutor of

wildlife, enemy of nature, scum, but not falconer.

But the system is wide open. It is a free for all. With no experience or knowledge you can buy a hawk, inform the DOE, or not as the case may be, and go bunny stalking. In the eyes of yourself and your friends you are a falconer.

Let's look at Germany in contrast. Firstly you register for the next hunting permit course which will last, on average, 6 months and cost approx. £700-£800. After you have passed the practical and theory exam you have your hunting permit. To own and hunt with a hawk you must complete a further course of 5 weekends, culminating in a practical and theory exam. Cost approx £150. The permits are internationally recognised. Should you only do the falconers course then you will be allowed to own, but not hunt with, a hawk. Should you only have the hunting permit then you cannot use a hawk.

Should you break the law and hold unregistered hawks that can be

proven to be stolen from the wild or another falconer then, you stand to lose everything. Your permits, hawks, equipment, guns, nets and ferrets can be removed. Then comes heavy fines and the possibility of jail. Even if you should be able to retake your courses after five years of probation, your reputation has gone, no invitations to field meets etc., no favours and constant observation by the authorities. You will also lose your pride and all the time and money you have invested. Is it all really worth it?

In our country we have not really got much to lose, with the exception of a fine, hawks and reputation, but what does a criminal consider of his reputation, not a lot. With all the courses available, as advertised in the magazine, why can't we have a standard course which would be acceptable to the DoE and us? It would not have to be as intense or as time consuming as the German system but at the end of the day the benefits would be threefold: Firstly, and most important, the hawks and falcons would be rewarded by hav-

ing a keeper with the correct knowledge to keep their hawk. Secondly, the falconer would belong to an "order" of falconers and would know how to look after his or her charges to a minimum standard. Lastly, the DoE would know that the hawks and falcons were being maintained and cared for by people who know what they are doing, know the law and the penalties of breaking that law. For genuine falconers who pride themselves on their knowledge, experience and standing, along with compliance with the law, there can be nothing worse than being tarred with the same brush that painted the thief a falconer. We should not leave ourselves open to 'Joe Public', the media and the politicians to control our sport for us. Ask any 'shooter' how he felt in the mid eighties and if he is honest he will tell you he didn't do enough for what he believed in. Finally, did anyone see a Goshawk at the Falconers Fair this year? I didn't.

Yours sincerely  
Cliff Maffia

## TWELVE FOOT DEATH TRAP?

In June this year a letter was published in *Cage and Aviary Birds* written by Graham Wellstead advocating the use of a twelve foot leash for an Eagle Owl to use it as a deterrent for cats in your garden. This is a ridiculous thing to do. There are many reasons why you should not even consider doing this; Firstly, the strain put on any birds legs when it is brought to a dead halt after having up to 24 feet in which to gain speed is tremendous and could cause untold damage, secondly, he does not advise that there should be no obstructions on which the bird could get caught and so maybe hang, helplessly, upside down for an undetermined length of time, thirdly, if you do remove all obstacles the bird will have absolutely no shade and current temperatures have been very high and are a danger in themselves. There are other things to be considered also, what if an unsuspecting child wanders in to you garden and is attacked? We, and I am sure many others, have written to both *Cage & Aviary* and Graham Wellstead, but as yet there has been no retraction or apology. We would be pleased to hear something from either of them in the near future.

The Editors

## INSPIRED BY BLACK JESS

David & Lyn,

As a postscript to Andrew Miller-Mundys notes on Black Jess (Summer '94), her owner Kim Muir was one of the "Corinthians" of his time and there is still an amateur steeplechase at the Cheltenham National Hunt Festival. I believe that he was shot down over France flying a Spitfire.

The painting was also the basis for the British Falconers Club Badge, as a comparison between them will show (p.6 & p.23 Summer'94).

Yours Guy Wallace

## THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

We have two letters in this issue asking for tighter controls on falconry in the form of either regulated courses and/or tests. We speak to a lot of people and find that a great many are in favour of something like this. Our sport is being invaded by people who want only to make money from it and seem to have no love or respect for the birds. Beginners are being taught and advised by such people and are ending up with no money, and a badly trained bird. We try hard to advise people of the right way to go about getting into falconry and to make them under-

stand that just because a person has a bird this does not automatically make them an expert, nor is every course a good one. The most expensive course you can find does not necessarily give you a higher standard of tuition. People who give courses should be, I believe, mainly guided by their love of falconry and their consciences. Without these two things there is only one more guiding factor involved and that is money. I have heard of people who after a one day course think they are equipped with enough knowledge to fly a bird, people who after reading a book on the subject also think they are qualified. I have even heard of people who, after taking a course, then set up a couple of months later as professionals and give courses themselves. What happens to the birds who are kept by people who have been trained by these people? We would like to hear your views on this subject and maybe we can encourage clubs to do more for beginners and ask, as a united body, for course givers to comply with a minimum standard of tuition. We have to do something about the way our sport is going and to ensure our future generations of falconers are, just that, Falconers.

Lyn Wilson

WRITE TO: THE FALCONERS  
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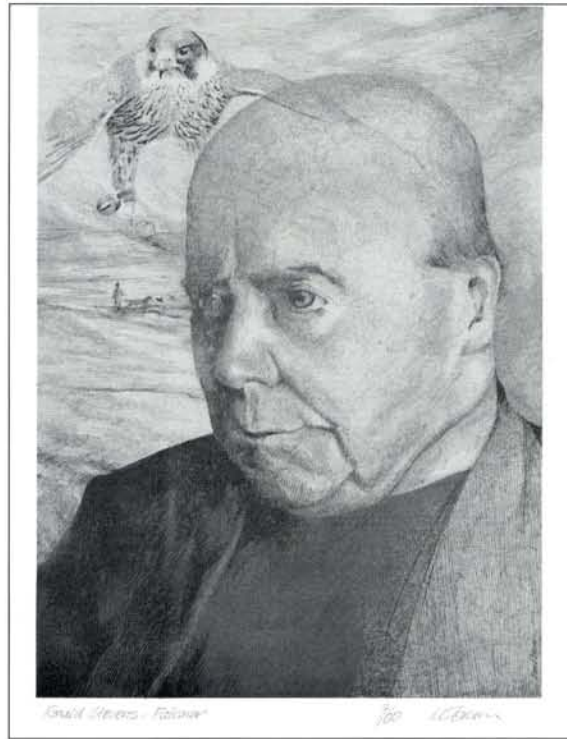
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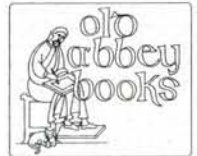
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# RAPTOR RESCUE

## THE ACCIDENT PRONE SPARROWHAWK

By

Ray Turner LRK

### SOMERSET

The sparrowhawk is by nature a bird that usually keeps a low profile, and the only time one is noticed is when the hawk is in pursuit of its prey.

Unlike the Kestrel, that maintains, (to us on the ground) a high profile, the Sparrowhawk sits and watches where its cryptic plumage, against the background of trees and branches, makes it most difficult to spot. Sparrowhawks are, I feel, much more common than that which is generally supposed, and probably outnumber the Kestrel. My supposition is based on two factors. Firstly, a gentle man on the radio was engaged in a Sparrowhawk survey in Staffordshire in the course of which he was monitoring no less than seventy nests over a linear distance of about 40 kilometres. In many cases each nest was no more than half a kilometre from the previous. The second reason is that whilst Kestrels may appear at any time of the year, it is from the beginning of July and for the next two months we receive quite a few injured Sparrowhawks. So much so that in the light of experience I tend to think of July and August and 'Sparrowhawk months'.

It does seem that young Sparrowhawks have a lot to learn and their enthusiasm in their quest for prey leads them into all sorts of problems. In their natural environment there are many pitfalls, such as crashing into the interior of a dense bush with the possibility of injuring a wing or breaking one of their delicate legs. The prospect of man made hazards lead to many young Sparrowhawk casualties; striking a

thin telephone cable when in rapid flight, careering full tilt into a mesh fence, or hitting a large expanse of glass such as a window or patio door. Injuries resulting from the latter may lead to a broken neck and death is instantaneous. More often the hawk is rendered unconscious, though recovery from this is quite rapid. The hawk being left in a darkened cardboard box, so that when the lid is later removed the hawk will immediately fly away. Much more frequent is that either the radius or ulna in a wing is fractured so that expert medical attention is required of a veterinary surgeon. Provided that the fracture is not too serious, then the hawk is taken into care until the time comes when the fracture has healed and release can be effected. It is the nature of Sparrowhawks that they will probably refuse any food that is offered and would in the course of time just starve themselves to death. In this case the hawk has to be handled for force feeding. The latter is a problem in that with a wing injury the less that the hawk is handled the better.

It is important to note that on occasion the injury can be so serious that whilst the fracture would mend, the outcome is that the bird will never again be able to fly free. In this event the most kind thing to do is to euthanase the bird. 'Raptor Rescue' advocates the policy of euthanasia of all species of hawk

where full recovery to a normal life is not possible. There may be mitigating circumstances where the species may be rare or severely endangered, and that a partial recovery from injury may enable the bird to be kept for breeding purposes.

The most difficult decision is that of a Sparrowhawk which had made a good recovery and yet is unable to fly strong enough to be released. One looks at this otherwise vibrant bird with the pale unflinching stare, and the rather sad sickening feeling that this is yet another candidate for euthanasia. From a personal point of view it is a heart rending experience that I loathe. However, all I know is that Sparrowhawks are quite long lived in captivity, and that retaining all the casualties would lead to a large aviary full of these injured birds. We of 'Raptor Rescue' experience the great satisfaction when a fit bird is safely released back to the wild. Equally, because we care, it is a saddening experience to carry out the practice of euthanasia.

I am aware that the attentions of a Sparrowhawk may be the bane of those that keep a well stocked bird table in the winter, where a bird is picked up and carried off by a 'marauding murderer'. Be that as it may, I still admire the Sparrowhawk and understand that Sparrowhawks in general carry of the sick, unwary or aged bird, and in so doing, ensure that the resident bird population is kept fit and healthy to rear a fit and healthy brood.

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## CHATS FROM THE WEATHERING GROUNDS

### E.K. AND THE TAWNY EAGLE - REG SMITH

The Vet is probably the most important outside member of the staff here at The Hawk Conservancy. Dennis, our Vet' has been coming here for about thirty years. He comes regularly about twice a week to check on the health of the stock and is a personal friend of all of us. Dennis dispenses wisdom and understanding as well as veterinary medicine and knowledge, not only to us, but to lots of farming families in the district.

I have lots of things in common with Dennis, - an appreciation of, old books, our beautiful Wessex countryside., the stunning beauty of the wife of our local Member of Parliament, and we both hold long conversations with dogs.

However, I digress. In the early days here at the Conservancy, I avoided Dennis's senior partner, E.K. as much as possible due to the fact I always owed him lots of money, and my eye-sight was sharper than his.

E.K. and I started in business at about the same time and he worked like two men and a dog for years, as well as putting up with idiots like me. However, when we gave up farming and started The Hawk Conservancy, E.K. was very apprehensive and not very encouraging.

Our first bad casualty, I remember, was a very large, bad tempered Tawny Eagle, called Josephine, who had broken her leg. "I have never had to deal with anything like this before", said E.K., when I took the casualty into the surgery. "You know I'm a farm Vet. and an expert on the diseases of pigs", - "Can't you pretend you are treating a turkey?" I asked. "I'll have a

go", said E.K., looking apprehensively at the enormous talons and glaring eyes of a very big, bad tempered Tawny eagle.

In the 1950's the method used to anaesthetise was chloroform, cotton wool and a large jam-jar. One poured the liquid chloroform onto a pad of cotton-wool, then placed the pad, plus chloroform into the jam-jar. One held the bird on it's back on the operating theatre table, with the head by your chest, inserting the head of your patient/victim in and out of the jar until one achieved unconsciousness. One could always tell by the expression in the bird's eye the state of play, so to speak.

The operation itself involved cutting open the leg and inserting a thin but strong metal rod, which joined the two broken parts together. "Are we ready to go?" said E.K. glancing at the bird's talons. "You won't let go of the feet Reg, will you?" "Of course not", I replied. The operation started well, E.K. made the incision, formed the rod into the correct size and started to insert it. All was going well my end. Suddenly I noticed that the Eagle was looking straight at me with some interest. "I think we need more chloroform this end", I said. The young lady assistant leant over my shoulder and poured some chloroform onto the cotton-wool. she was very nervous and a considerable amount splashed

onto the front of my jumper. All still went well - a few moments later the room started to rock, my head hit the operating table and I let go of the Eagles legs as I gently drifted into unconsciousness. I remember seeing the Eagle's one good talon grasped firmly into E.K.'s stomach muscles, as they both went over onto the floor.

This was the first time I met Dennis. He came into the surgery just at that crucial time, dragged me over to a window in the corridor to the fresh air, then went back to the surgery to rescue his boss, who was still rolling on the ground, firmly attached to the Tawny Eagle, and together they finished what proved to be a really excellent job.

I was walking round the grounds this morning and I glanced up at Josephine, sitting in her aviary with her teen-aged husband and thought, "How quickly the last thirty years have gone."

I did not see E.K. again for two years. He was a magistrate and I drove my car very, very carefully after this. As a penance I pay my veterinary bills before anyone else and Dennis became The Hawk Conservancy Vet.





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## THE HARE

Closer. louder is the falconers tread  
 And danger soaring o'er his head  
 With pounding heart in heaving breast  
 Abandon now this place of rest  
 Pastures safe must now be sought  
 To flee the wing and ne'er be caught  
 Running hard past startled sheep  
 toward the heathered hill so steep  
 Broad wings of death draw ever near  
 The peal of bells so loud, so clear  
 The race for life quickly ebbing away  
 Beneath the cold winter sky so grey  
 Kicking, struggling, the final fight  
 No more to see the morning light.

Both poems written by Colin Delafosse

# RAPTOR K

## WARNING! SMOKING CAN DAMAGE YOUR BIRDS HEALTH.

Recently, a seven week old bird I am socially imprinting picked up, and swallowed a filter tip from a cigarettes. I assumed it would come up with its casting the next morning and I wasn't unduly worried. However within 20 minutes it brought up the contents of its crop, complete with the filter tip. Ten minutes after this it closed its eyes and laid down. I immediately crop tubed the bird with 2 mls of water, within minutes the bird seemed to perk up. I inspected the contents of the crop and around the filter tip they smelled quite normal but around the bottom they smelled strongly of tobacco, proving how quickly

the digestive system can draw in toxins, especially in a small bird. I quickly telephoned for some expert advice, as my own vet was out for the day. In fact all the specialist vets I called were either on their day off or out on call. However, within 15 minutes Greg Simpson, then Neil Forbes, rang me back, from my description nicotine poisoning was diagnosed. First aid advice over the phone was; 5 mls of water, crop tubed, (for this size and age of bird) and to take it to a vets surgery as quickly as possible for further treatment. This was promptly done and saline injections, followed by more crop tubed water and liquid food were given over a period of 12 hours. By the next morning the bird appeared to be completely back to normal. Several things can be learned by my experience, the first of which has to be DON'T SMOKE! If this is not possible I would suggest you

keep cigarettes and ashtrays away from your birds. An empty drink can makes a good, inaccessible ashtray. Check your lawn before putting your birds out to weather and be especially careful if doing outside static and flying displays. If you suspect a bird has eaten a cigarette end take it to a good vet immediately. This case appears to be quite rare, but unless a thorough post mortem is carried out on any bird which dies for no obvious reason, who knows? Grateful thanks must go to Greg Simpson and Neil Forbes for their expert advice. Also to Mrs Tilley, my local vet, for administering the treatment and to Maurice, for his assistance and fast driving to the surgery, (just below the legal speed limit all the way, of course). Incidentally, the filter tip in question came from a short, low tar cigarette, maybe, if it was from a king size, full tar cigarette, the outcome could have been worse!

### A COSY RELATIONSHIP



"I bet you thought you'd got away with it!"

If you see this man out hawking ask him for a cup of tea

#### FOUND.

A leather item was left on the magazine stand at the Falconer Fair. If you ring and tell us what it was we will let you have it back

## ωηατ'σ ιν α ναμε?

### what's in a name?

In the 1700's a gentleman by the name of Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778) pioneered a system whereby an organism has two latin names; a generic name beginning with a capital letter and a specific beginning with a lower case letter. This system is called taxonomy.

We have put together a few of the meanings behind the latin, or in some case greek names that birds carry alongside their every day ones:

The Common Buzzard is *Buteo buteo* this word just means hawk.

The Rough-Legged Buzzard is *Buteo lagopus* the greek word is λαγοπους and its literal translation is hares foot.

The word *Rufinous* in *Buteo rufinous* (Long-legged Buzzard) means red.

The Tawny or Steppe Eagle, *Aquila rapax* is a greedy eagle. The word *Aquila* means Eagle. The Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos* is literally a golden eagle. The Imperial Eagle is *Aquila heliaca* and *heliaca* relates to the sun (*helios*).

The word falcon is a Greek word φαλκων spelt falcon.

The Merlin is a *falco columbarius* this word is connected with Doves. The Kestrel, f. *tinnunculus* is the shrill sounding falcon, and the word Peregrine means wanderer.

The word *Accipiter* means hawk and the word *gentilis* which is a Goshawk means pagan or heathen hawk (quite apt). For the Sparrowhawk the word *nisus* means extreme, and the word Raptor means to snatch or grab.

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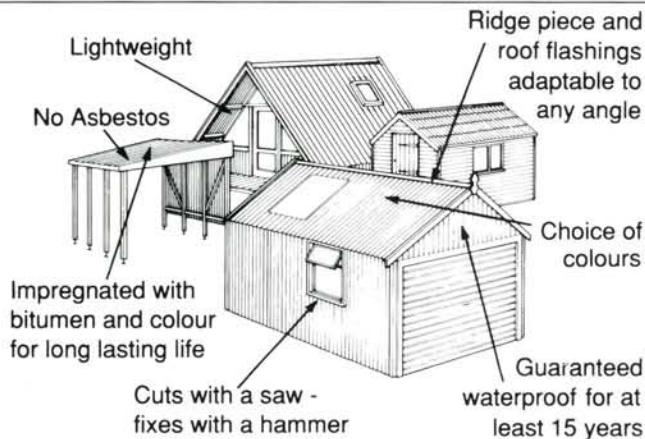
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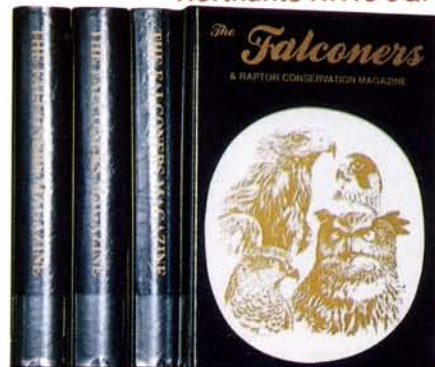


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