

The

Summer '95

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# Falconers

& Raptor Conservation Magazine



EAGLE &  
SHORTWING  
HAWKING  
IN AFRICA

THE  
NATIONAL  
BIRDS OF  
PREY  
CENTRE

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The Journals of The  
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Two-day Introductory Falconry courses, limited to 4 students, are available throughout the Summer on Tues/Weds; Thurs/Fri., & Sat/Sun.

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We are taking bookings now for Hawking Days commencing 1st Oct '94. Further details Write to Mrs G Keegan, or ring 10am-1pm any day on: 0264 773850, Fax 0264 773772.



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## LINDA WAIN [WILDLIFE ARTIST]

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Linda is a professional artist specialising in Birds of Prey and usually selling her work through galleries. This year, for the FIRST time, she is showing her paintings and DEMONSTRATING at the British Falconry Fair at Althorp, Northants, 28/29 May.  
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Britains first Falconry Centre

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**COVER: Juvenile Black Sparrow Hawk by Antony Raw.**

## COMMENT

Dear Readers,

One of the biggest problems we have come across in the last three months is how to return lost birds to their owner when you cannot find out who it is. The two registration schemes, do a brilliant job but obviously if your bird is not registered with them they can't get it returned. Micro-chipping, again if not used cannot be used as an aid for the return of lost birds, we have been told that readers are available in most areas of the U.K., either with vets or RSPCA centres. We are hoping to get a list of people with scanners. As theft is on the increase we are planning to do a feature on security in a future issue.

This year at the Falconers Fair Guy Wallace will be on our stand for you come to ask questions about your dogs. He will be there at certain times and these are listed on the news page. Please come and introduce yourselves, we speak to so many of you on the phone it would be great to put faces to names. If we are busy, interrupt, we really don't mind.

In the last issue we had an article entitled A Touch of Frost, about a Golden Eagle, we called it a him but after a recent visit to Neil Forbes we have it on good authority that it is in fact a her.

David & Lyn

## THE IRISH BIRDWATCHING AND WILDLIFE FAIR

Friday 29 September - Sunday 1 October  
Oxford Island National Nature Reserve  
Craigavon, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland  
To be opened by

**MAGNUS MAGNUSSON**

*Further details are available from:*

*Positive Action: 64 Spa Road  
Ballynahinch BT24 8PT*

*Telephone: (01238) 562332 Fax: (01238) 565080*

## A REGISTER OF BRITAIN'S CRAFTS

Britain's traditional skills and crafts are to be registered in a databank being established by the Conservation Foundation over the next five years in the hope that as many as possible can be retained for the Millennium.

One of the main aims of the databank is to discover elderly people who may have a skill which is in danger of dying out and who would be prepared to pass it on to younger people, thus ensuring its conservation.

"We are often so busy campaigning for endangered wildlife and habitats that we forget about mankind's own endangered species" explained David Bellamy, a founder director of the Conservation Foundation.

"All too often we hear about crafts or skills being lost through changes of fashion or demand, but these have been developed over years and years, and once lost may never be found.

"Whilst these may never again become major trades, it is vital that existing artefacts can be repaired. By teaching young people now we have the opportunity to ensure that ours and the next generation can hand on something really worthwhile to future generations."

As well as practising craftsmen, The

Conservation Foundation hopes that those who have retired will want to register. "We also hope that those whose skills may have just been a hobby will see the opportunity in passing on their knowledge" explained David Shreeve the Director of the Foundation.

"We will be hearing a lot about the Millennium and we believe it is most important that it is seen as an opportunity to look forward. What better way to do that than by carrying on as many skills and traditions we still have.

"There is no doubt that many elderly people who are bemoaning the modern world could gain enormous satisfaction from knowing that they had passed something on to another generation."

As well as the skills register, the Conservation Foundation is also inviting nominations for a list of items people regard as symbols of our traditional crafts and skills, which are worthy of protection now and for the next Millennium.

One area the Foundation is anxious to support are the traditional shops of Britain and it hopes to make a register of the best 2000 examples, in both towns and villages.

## FALCONRY BULLETIN BOARD

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

For those unfamiliar with the Bulletin Board system, it is basically an electronic mailing system that allows you to post messages and hold discussions with other falconers, by means of your computer using a modern ordinary telephone line. How does BBS work? Well, imagine walking into a room full of people who are all engaged in various conversations. You can only listen to and join in with only one conversation at any one time. A BBS allows you to view them all and allows you to join in with any of them. With the right software, you can download all the mail from the BBS and then view it OFF LINE, (without your phone line being connected to the BBS). You can then reply to any messages you wish, in your own time and upload back to the BBS. It only takes a few minutes to complete the process so the cost is minimal. The system has built-in security features to exclude any unwanted or dubious callers and is only available to practising falconers. Each user has his own security password and will not be allowed to log on BEFORE first contacting one of the System Operators (SysOps). He will then be given the number of the BBS. All software (IBM Compatible) required for using the BBS is available to you, including an off-line mail reader. For further details please telephone 0227 860649.

## GALLERY ONE ELEVEN

'Wildlife Art 95' is an exhibition bringing together works of art in a variety of media and styles, all representing the theme of wildlife. Works depicting many subjects will be on display, including British mammals, birds and fish, big cats and birds of prey, together with sculptures and wood carvings.

This is an annual exhibition, showing the work of 15 of the country's prominent wildlife artists. The 'Wildart' exhibitions have been greatly successful in promoting up and coming, as well as established artists.

The exhibition is to be held at Gallery One-Eleven, 111 High Street, Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 2JF from Monday 15 May to Saturday 3 June 1995. Opening times will be 9.30 am - 4.30 pm, Monday to Saturday, with the opening on Sunday 14 May, 2.00-5.00 pm.

The 'Wildlife Art' exhibitions support numerous wildlife charities including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Hawk and Owl Trust and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Mrs Barbara Frost - Exhibition Organiser



## EASTON COLLEGE DIARY DATES

**14 May 1995 Burlingham Open Day.**  
1.30 pm - 5.00 pm, £1.00

A chance to see the Burlingham Gardens in their summer glory. There are staff on hand for advice on gardens and horticultural careers.

**4 June 1995 Easton College Open Day.**  
10.00am - 5.00pm, £1.00

A family fun day with farm tours, pony rides, sheep shearing demonstrations, flower arranging, exhibits and much, much more. For further details contact Jane Pitkin, Marketing Managing, at the College on Norwich 01603 742105.

## GUY WALLACE

Will be on The Falconers Magazine stand at the Falconers Fair.

He will be available on both days to help and advise people who have or may be getting a dog.

He will be there from:

11am-12.30pm & 2pm -3.30pm

## RAPTOR RESCUE TO THE RESCUE

**On Tuesday 24 May 1994 the DoE ceased to operate the registration scheme for most species of raptors commonly kept by falconers and other raptor keepers.**

One of the practical effects of the 'deregistration' is that it has made it difficult to reunite owners with lost or stolen birds which are later found. Inevitably, some of those birds are going to pass through our members' hands. To assist as much as we can, the Raptor Rescue committee would ask all members to take the following action when dealing with found, identifiable birds.

1. Return the birds to its owner if he or she is already known to you. (Obvious!)
2. If the owner is not known to you, and you cannot trace him/her by your own local enquiries, please send details of the bird to Paul Beecroft, giving as much information about it as you can. Ring numbers, and any other distinctive features of the bird or furniture fitted to it are vital.
3. Consider asking your vet or local RSPCA inspector to check the bird for the presence of a micro-chip.
4. Retain found birds for a minimum of 3 months, and preferably 6 months, to allow time for enquiries to be made to trace the owner. If you have to pass on any such bird, obtain from the

recipient an indemnity from them absolving you from any future claims by the owner, or any person purporting to be so. Keep a full record of when you disposed of the bird and to whom it was passed.

On receipt of details from you of a found bird, Paul will use all the considerable resources at his disposal to find the rightful owner, including liaison with **The Falconer's Magazine**, where limited details of such birds will be published (no personal details of members will be published). Of course, should any member lose a bird, he or she is able to use this system "in reverse".

PLEASE REMEMBER...

Proper title to an identifiable bird never leaves the owner, and you could be accused of theft if you refuse to hand back, or pass on, the bird without taking reasonable steps to trace the owner.

You are entitled, however, to require settlement of any reasonable expenses incurred in the rescue and/or care of the bird before restoring it to the owner.

If you have any queries on this subject, or if any arise in the future, please contact either:

Tele: PAUL BEECROFT

Daytime (01734) 536257 or

MICK ROBINS Eves (01992) 505327

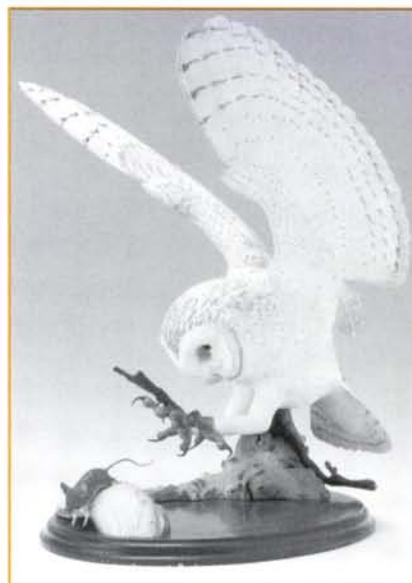
## WOODCARVING MAGAZINE'S 1995 NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CARVED BIRDS

PENSTHORPE WATERFOWL PARK  
FAKENHAM, NORFOLK  
16TH - 24TH SEPTEMBER

### WE'RE FLYING AGAIN

With generous sponsorship from Woodcarving Magazine, it will be possible for this very popular exhibition of wood carvings to be held at Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park for the third year. In their Courtyard Gallery, a large converted barn, more than 350 birds will be on display, and most of them for sale. Amateur and professional carvers from all over the UK will be invited to submit their birds. There will be very many superb prizes from generous sponsors for winners of the Awards of Excellence. Carvings will be selected across styles of carving and species of birds by an expert panel of judges. Interpretative or impressionistic pieces are encouraged with an

award of £500 for the Best Wildfowl Sculpture from Dremel USA. All visitors to the show will be able to vote for their favourite and the carving with the highest number of votes will win the Visitors' Choice Award. The third main prize will be the Judges' Choice Award, a wonderful £500 from the Guild of Master Craftsman Ltd. The Organiser, Judith Nicoll, emphasises that this event is not a competition. It is an art exhibition where any UK carver may display and sell their work. This year there will also be a special Woodcarvers' Weekend on the 16th and 17th



September. A marquee will have display stands of books, tools and general supplies for carvers. There will be a special demonstration area this year where different well-known carvers with varied styles and techniques will work and talk to visitors. A video camera will be set up so their work

may also be seen on screen in the main Gallery.

A visit to this exhibition is a great day out for the whole family as Pensthorpe has a 200 acre nature reserve, one of the biggest collections of waterfowl in the world, a Gift Shop, Children's' Adventure Play Area, and a Restaurant specially extended for the show.

Entry to the Park, inc the Woodcarving Magazine's Exhibition: Adult - £4.45  
Child - £1.60 OAP - £3.95  
Family Ticket (2+2) - £10.50  
Party of 15 or more £3.75 each  
Exhibition only £2.50

Full details and Entry Form may be obtained from the Organiser: Judith Nicoll, 18 Ditton Court Road, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 7HG or from Sponsors: The Guild of Master Craftsman Publications Ltd, Castle Place, 166 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XU

from the beginning of May. "Woodcarving Magazine" will also publish full details as they are made available.

## MINISTER RELEASES PEREGRINE

The Irish Minister for the Marine, Mr Hugh Coveney released a rehabilitated peregrine Falcon back into the wild. The bird was a young Tiercel that had some head and wing injuries, probably from being hit by a car. The bird was found on the outskirts of Cork city in a very malnourished state. He was tended to and nursed back to health at the Falconry Centre in Kilworth, Co Cork by members who recently attended a rehabilitation course at the Hawk Conservancy in Andover. The centre here in Kilworth is now well

established and caters for all native species of raptors. However, last summer we looked after a red footed falcon that landed on a trawler some 20 miles south of the Irish coast. The bird was built back up to peak condition on a diet of maggots and beetles and was released back into the wild at Youghal Marshes at the request of the Irish Wildlife Service.

It is good news for Ireland that a Minister can take such an interest in the well being of our native raptors. Mark A P Cashley, Cashley Chiropractic Clinic, Co Cork



## CONVICTIONS

1. Phillip James WALKER of Houghton Regis, Beds.  
The circumstances of this case commenced in January 1994 when they convicted WALKER at Luton Magistrate Court for offences in relation to Goshawks and Peregrines. Following his conviction, Section 7 (3) (b) then came into force. This section states, "If any person keeps or has in his possession or has under his control any bird included in Schedule 4 within five years of his having been convicted of an offence under this Part for which a special penalty is provided he shall be guilty of an offence.  
On 3rd February 1994 WALKER again appeared at Luton Magistrates Court charged with an offence of being in possession and control of a Schedule 4 Bird.  
For this offence he was fined £550.00 and costs of £36.00.
2. Gordon RAND of Hastings Terrace, New Huntley, Tyne and Wear.  
Appeared at South East Northumberland Magistrates Court on 6th February.  
He pleaded guilty to possession of three wild kestrels. For this offence he received a Conditional Discharge and the birds were subject of a Forfeiture order.
3. Terence GRIMES of School Lane, Brunscall, Chorley, Lancs.  
Appeared at Chorley Magistrates Court on 1 February 1995 following a search warrant being executed at his address. He was convicted of illegal possession of 6 dead wild birds which were: Threes Tawny Owls (All shot), Sparrowhawk (Poisoned), Goosander (Shot), Jackdaw (Poisoned). He was fined £200.00 on each plus £200.00 costs.
4. Leslie Mark MASSEY of Monmouth Gardens, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear and Dennis DOWSON of Henley Gardens, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear.  
Both appeared at Dumbarton Sherrif Court on 13 February 1995 having been charged with:

- (a) Disturbing wild birds, namely Peregrine Falcons. (b) Having equipment capable of being used to commit offences, namely equipment for the construction of a Bal Chatri snare trap. For the first offence in relation to disturbance this was not proven. For the second offence in relation to the Bal Chatri trap they were both fined £1000,00 each.
5. Mark James WHITTLE of Shaftesbury Ave, Keresley, Worcs.  
Appeared at Nuneaton Magistrates Court on 19 December 1994 charged with Possession of 43 Schedule 1 eggs. This included two Golden Eagle Eggs. Three Osprey, Four Merlin and Four Peregrine Falcon. For this offence he was fined £1000,00 plus £50.00 costs.

### STOLEN BIRDS

1. Stolen from W Yorks - December 1994  
1 Female Redtail: Ring No 1257X  
2 Sparrowhawk: Ring No 111VM94R
2. Stolen from Scotland - February 1995  
1. Female Redtail: Ring No UK84908
3. Stolen from Northumbria - February 1995  
1. Male Redtail: Ring No 0273Y
4. Stolen from Buckinghamshire

We have been asked to print a statement, for those of you who are unaware, saying that:-  
"Falconry is illegal in Australia and all raptors are indeed afforded full protection by the Federal Authorities.

Falconry, or rather some of the techniques, can be used solely for the purpose of rehabilitation but these techniques must not involve the active pursuit of quarry with a raptor undergoing rehabilitation."

1. Little Owl: Ring No 551 94R
5. Stolen from Berkshire - March 1995  
1. Male Peregrine: Ring No 84239
6. Stolen from Northamptonshire March 1995  
1. Female Goshawk: Ring No UK 76737
7. Stolen from Doncaster - March '95  
1 Male Merlin: Ring No 5622P  
1 Male Merlin: Ring No UK81633

### FOUND BIRDS

- The following birds have been found and are being cared for by Falconers. Only part of the ring number is being released. If you think it is your bird, then contact me and discuss it.
1. Longwing. This bird was probably lost whilst flying. It has two rings on it, one of which is a DOE cable-tie.
  2. Longwing. This bird has been in care since August 1994 and no-one has claimed it. Again, lost whilst flying. Part Ring No 145.
  3. In this instance I will release the Species which is a Kestrel. Part Ring No 99.

A Red Kite was found, shot, on Mon. 3rd April. It is a male, 1st yr. bird. It had a total of 15 pieces of lead shot in it. Two of these caused major breaks in a wing and a leg. It is thought to have been shot at least a week before discovery. The bird will survive its' injuries but it is too soon to say whether it will be fit enough to be released.

Ian Pearson at Falconry Originals is determined to let Falconers know that the quality is as good as, if not better than, before, to the point where he has produced a video catalogue, so now the customers can see for themselves, on a T.V. screen.  
The cost of the video (£1.95) is fully refundable with your first order.

**MARTIN JONES FALCONRY FURNITURE AND HAWKSPORT HAVE NOW JOINED FORCES AND HAVE BOTH MOVED TO: THE PARSONAGE, LLANROTHAL, NR MONMOUTH, MONMOUTHSHIRE NP5 3QJ  
TEL: 01600 84300 FAX: 01600 84450.**

# THE HAWK BOARD FIGHTING FOR FALCONRY

The McFall Bill against hunting went through the vote in the Commons on 3rd March unopposed, simply because the pro-hunting lobby knew that if it went to a vote, they would be massively outvoted. This is not a healthy position to be in. Soon we will have a change of government, and if Labour get in they are likely to make parliamentary time for a new anti-hunting Bill which would almost certainly be carried. If this goes through, then attention will be turned to driven shooting and other fieldsports and falconry is liable to get caught in the machinery at some point.

The anti-hunting debate is fuelled by emotion. It is much easier to stand up on a TV programme and say 'I think all killing of animals is cruel and should be banned in a 'civilised' society!' Nor so easy to explain in two or three sentences why you should support fieldsports; the issues are too complicated. We have to move the debate onto a more factual plane and realistically, our best bet is to go for a Governmental Enquiry. An independent scientific panel would be appointed to look at fieldsports and report back on their findings. We have had these reports in the past, such as the Scott-Henderson Report, or the Medway Report on fishing. But, although they supported fieldsports, they are now significantly outdated and thus lack public confidence. The Hawk Board has supported the concept of a governmental enquiry for two years now and we circulated the main organisations on this issue. But the other fieldsports are themselves very much divided (witness the recent rejection by BASC of an amalgamation with the BFSS), a situation which delights the antis. The cold fact is that, although we can look to the BFSS for some assistance and co-operation, as far as falconry is concerned it is up to us, through the Hawk Board to fight our own end.

As you know, we have a Falconry Fighting Fund which almost reached four figures but is currently depleted to cover the printing costs for a 14 page report entitled 'Aspects of Killing Wild Animals in Britain: An investigation on behalf of the Hawk Board into the nature and extent of animal suffering caused by current methods of pest control and fieldsports.' This has been provided to club representatives and is available from the Hawk Board at £2.00. The intention is to bring into the open various aspects of this subject which are usually muddled, ill-informed or not mentioned. Did you know that for all the methods of killing wild animals, including shooting, hunting, hawking, trapping, poisoning and so on, domestic cats kill about 79%? Hunting and hawking are so small that they don't actually appear on the graph, being less than 0.01%. I spoke to John Bryant, Wildlife Officer for the League Against Cruel Sports, after the *Kilroy* programme debate on hunting on 3rd of March. He told me that he kept cats and that he winced every time they brought a little bird! But statistically, if you keep two cats, you are killing the same number of animals with them each year as an average pack of fox-hounds, 50-60. So by bringing out a report, which is at present being used by the press and TV in various ways, we hope to introduce into the debate aspects of cruelty to wild animals which have previously been considered taboo. Cats, for example, are the only animal for which the owner has no legal responsibility. You are held more responsible for your hawk, flying free in the sky, than for anything a cat does. Why should cat-owners receive preferential treatment over dog-owners or falconers? We are also using this report in the Hawk Board representation to the National Trust to reinstate Falconry on its lands. We will

see how this progresses. All the arguments are on our side.

The restructuring of the Hawk Board is on target and what will emerge will be an improvement on the the Hawk Board. We hope to have club representatives from the ten largest clubs. We will enlarge our scope to include Owls. There will, as now, be representatives from the Department of the Environment (usually the Chief Inspector, Nick Williams), the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (which advises the Government on licensing), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods (which controls health certification and quarantine), the Federation of Zoos, and a new representative, the Acting Director of the BFSS, Peter Voute, CBE. There will be six elected specialist members who at present carry the brunt of the work. We are hoping that some of these will stay on but at the same time have room to encourage some new faces to help take the load. There will also be invitations for temporary representation, for example from the veterinary profession, if the need arises. As well as this, the BFSS falconry committee will now hold its meetings on the same day immediately prior to the Hawk Board Meeting. This will reduce costs and time wastage, as well as getting quicker and better communication between these two panels. The elections will be held in August and all the clubs wishing to affiliate should contact the secretary as soon as possible. Even the small or new clubs which affiliate will be allowed to send a delegate to the new annual Hawk Board Discussion meeting to see what the Hawk Board is doing and raise any points. I think this new Hawk Board is the right mix of democratic club representation, representation to and from other organisations, and specialist input. We are certainly more democratic and organised for our

size than any other of the field-sports!

Chris Tuffrey raised some good points on CITES in the last issue of the Falconers' Magazine. The Hawk Board has actually for the last two years been pushing the same points with the DoE, namely that we should have a CITES certificate passport system which goes with the bird anywhere in the EU. Ideally this would be like a car registration document and list previous owners. At present, one still has to register monitored species with the DoE, which is expensive and of very dubious conservation benefit.

Internationally we are pushing to have some species, such as the peregrine and Gyrfalcon, down-listed to CITES Appendix II. Their listing on Appendix I is for political reasons, not for biological criteria, and we felt that this is a mis-use of CITES, and an unjustifiable restriction on falconers.

If you wish to move birds into Britain from Europe, as well as the CITES certificate, MAFF is still imposing quarantine restrictions on all imports except from Germany and Belgium, which have agreed to impose a 'quarantine' before departure. The whole situation is riddled with loop-holes, is changing all the time and again, unlikely to contribute to the welfare of the animals.. Again it is bureaucracy and politics. We would like to do more about it but we lack the resources.

Finally, it looks as if we will be facing a serious attempt to ban hunting (which could also limit rabbit or hare hawking) in the next 12-24 months. To do anything at all we need money in the Fighting Fund. Please 'think fund raising' as a serious priority. I will be charging a voluntary £10 cap on all visitors who hawk with me this season, to be donated to the Fighting Fund. So my friends, such as they are, had better start saving.

## CROSSWORD CLUES

Here are the clues for the crossword which has appeared in the last two issues.

We are sorry for the mix-up. Entries to the usual address. No later than the 18th May.

### ACROSS

- 1 Masculine (7)
- 4 Vital Fluid (3)
- 7 Classical Place to Give Birth (5)
- 8 Without Fragrant Irises (2,5)
- 9 Subordinate Subject (9)
- 11 Lacking in Richness or Strength (6)
- 12 Utter (6)
- 15 Feminine (3)
- 16 Thrice (3)

- 17 To turn or Set or Become Turned (5)
- 19 Disgorged Following a Meal (7)
- 20 Narrow Entrance (5)
- 22 Items of Enticement (5)
- 23 Offspring in 7 (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Fashion (5)
- 2 Safety Line (7)
- 3 Falco Biarmicus (6)

- 4 To Hunt Game with a Gun (5)
- 5 Held in High Esteem, Worldwide (9)
- 6 Large Accipiter (7)
- 10 Strutting Females (7)
- 11 As Opposed to Surgery (7)
- 13 Accommodation (7)
- 14 Petty (6)
- 16 Attempts (5)
- 18 Numbers to Remember (5)
- 21 Away From the Wind (3)





# ROBERT E FULLER

## FALCONER

## ARTIST

With so much artistic talent captivated with the raptor form today, it is still no surprise that the small handful of artists with the real talent, are in fact falconers.

Likewise, those artists who are able to capture the real life of the flora and fauna of the countryside, grew up in the lanes, fields and woods possibly hunting, tracking and definitely observing all that was around them. Robert Fuller is a countryman, falconer and artist of outstanding talent, still young and not long out of Art College. Robert runs his own business as a wildlife illustrator, trading under the name of 'Natural Images'.

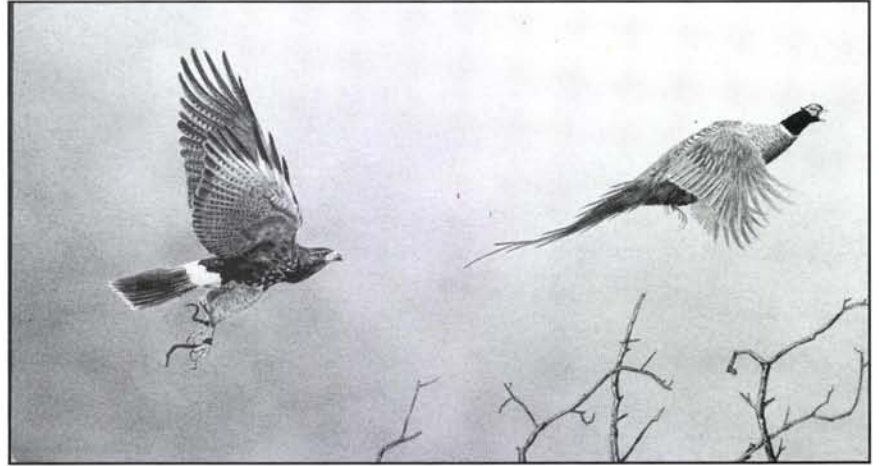
He first came to my attention in an article by Tony Jackson of 'The Shooting Times and Country Magazine', June 3-9, 1993.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to get a clear look at Robert's work from this article, but the main picture was of Robert at his easel.

What caught my attention in the picture, was the wall behind Robert. There hung previous illustrations of a Bataleur Eagle, Spectacled and Scops Owls and a magnificent picture of two brown hares boxing.

I was soon face to face with some of Robert's work at his first exhibition at 'Talents Fine Art Gallery' in Malton, North Yorkshire. During the following year, I was to come across his work at nearly every major game or country fair I visited, and was duly impressed by the range and diversity of this talented artist.

Born in 1972, Robert Fuller was brought up in a farming environment in East Yorkshire, where he has grown to acquire a keen interest and sensitive appreciation of wildlife. His talent was first recognised at Woldgate Comprehensive School, Pocklington, and he was subsequently allocated extra-curriculum



art lessons in order to develop his skill. He attained an 'A' grade at Art. Whilst still at school, Robert illustrated "Bird Watching in East Yorkshire", published by Hutton Press in 1989. At sixteen years of age, he progressed to York College of Art & Technology, where he gained the National Diploma in Art & Design with distinction. As a consequence, Robert went on to study at Carmarthen College of Art & Technology, in which he produced some inspired work, with the result that he not only received the National Diploma in Wildlife Illustration with Distinction, but also attained the prestigious "Student of the Year" Award. Whilst studying at College he was responsible for the set up of an exhibition of naturalist paintings at the



Wildlife & Wetlands Centre at Llanelli, Dyfed and also in Denmark. Robert similarly benefited from a fascinating four weeks at Chester Zoo - painting, drawing, photographing and forming essential bonds with the animals, with the object of producing promotional work for the zoo.

Robert has not only has received local acclaim, but also been recognised nationally, through his exhibitions which have been hosted in such reputable galleries as the Tryon Gallery in London and more recently La Musee de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris.

1995 will see Robert's work exhibited at the "Falconer's Fair" at Althorp and is certain to cause quite a stir amongst falconers and raptor keepers.

## By Alan Gates



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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.

Philips originals and prints can now be seen at Wildlife Originals Gallery, WOLLATON HALL, Nottingham.

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. Pencyhnant Nature Centre, Sychnant Pass, Conway, Gwynedd. LL32 8BJ  
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Peregrine Falcon in Flight, Anglesey '93, Water colour & gouache

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# THE NATIONAL BIRDS OF PREY CENTRE

In this issue it was decided to do a feature on the National Birds of Prey Centre, Newent, Glos. So we went to visit Jemima Parry-Jones armed with pad, pen, and of course, camera.

Upon returning home we sat down to write about the Centre only to find we were actually writing about Jemima. The two are totally inseparable, for Jemima is the Centre and vice-versa.

Jemimas' father, Philip Glasier and family founded 'The Falconry Centre', as it was originally called, in 1967. It was the first of its kind in Great Britain.

Jemima spent her holidays from school and college helping out doing flying demonstrations. This also continued after her marriage in 1981

In 1983 Jemima bought the centre from her father and has built up an impressive collection of birds. There are 72 species, totalling 240 birds in all. Eleven of these species are Eagles, which are housed in huge aviaries, these are 30' long x 15' wide and 26' high. The nest ledges are 15' x 8' and are 16 feet



*Jemima Glasier aged 7 with Arthur*



Photo by Eric Hoskins ▲

*ABOVE: Jemima with Lugger Falcon in 1974.*

*LEFT: With her Father and Prince Philip on a visit to the centre in 1979.*

*BELOW: Jemima with Tawny Eagle in 1995*



above the ground. It is really good to see these birds in aviaries which are large enough for them to fly around in.

The centre now stands on 12 acres, with 2 acres of car-parking space. The Centre has a café which serves home made food, including soup, main meals, sweets and snacks, a gift shop and wonderful new toilets, which are a must for families.

The flying displays at the Centre are both informative and fun. Hood, a 4-year-old Black Vulture has got to be one of the best advertisements for vultures there is. He runs along the ground and flies only when made

to ( this is done by making his food source disappear rapidly across the flying area, ie. running like hell!) The information given is easy to understand and questions are welcome both during and after the demonstration. Another high spot of the displays is Jemima stooping longwings to the lure, the atmosphere is almost impossible to describe, when the bird stoops at the lure and it is removed just in time, you can hear the audience begin breathing again. While we were there Jemima flew a Peregrine/Saker tiercel. David and I both agreed we had never seen anything like it. It was absolutely Spectacular.

There is also a gentleman at the Centre called John, I am sure you must all have seen him on Blue Peter, he has a style all his own, both birds and audiences respond readily to him, he is very relaxed and has a great sense of humour.

Having so many birds obviously poses a problem when it comes to names, so since 1985 they have had a theme, e.g. Mountains ranges, hence Hood, Poets, we met a Saker called Milton, Greek Mythology and Real Ales - this last one has produced some interesting names. Apart from running the Centre, Jemima is actively involved in other areas of Falconry. She sits on several committees such as The Taxonomic Advisory Group for Diurnal Birds of Prey, for which she is Chairperson. This group tries to pair up rarer birds of prey for breeding and is setting out guidelines for Falconry Centres to obtain Zoo Licences.



*Magellans Owl*



*Saker X Peregrine Tiercel*

They also set the guidelines for outside demonstrations. As well, she is an International Director of the Raptor Research Foundation in America, a Committee member on the Raptor Panel for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and a member of our own Hawk Board.

People from the R.S.P.C.A Wildlife Units in Taunton and Norfolk are also trained at the centre, as a good knowledge of raptors is essential for the R.S.P.C.A Also the centre houses customs confiscation birds. Contrary to common belief these are not all kept by the centre, many are passed on to other centres and zoos, released back into the wild or for non-indigenous species, returned to their country of origin.

The other thing for which the centre is known is breeding birds of prey. To date they have bred 44 different species, including Bald Eagles, Verreaux's Eagles and Fish Eagles.



*Female Imprint Sparrowhawk*

Hopefuls for 1995 are Burrowing Owls, Straited Caracaras, Martial Eagles and Crowned Eagles.

Newly on display from 7th April are two Stellers Sea Eagles.

Before Jemima sells a bird to anybody she insists on seeing a photograph of the quarters in which the bird is to be kept, if it is not satisfactory she will refuse to sell it. She also likes to know how the bird will be flown etc., and again if she is not happy, no sale. Her motto seems to be 'Birds First'.



*Pygmy Falcon*



The National Birds of Prey Centre is an impressive place run by an equally impressive lady.



*Above Left: New Owl Complex.*

*Far Left: Saker Falcon.*

*Left: Young Secretary Bird and Egyptian Vulture bred at the Centre in 1990.*

*Above: Young Peregrine Falcons.*



# CROWNING GLORY

## Hawking in Zimbabwe with Eagles and Shortwings

In this, my 3rd article about Hawking in Zimbabwe, I am able to expand a little more about African Sky Hunters, the Safari Company arranging these excursions for falconers. This now up-and-running Company was formed by a group of Zimbabwean falconers deeply committed to falconry, who are also keen naturalists and very knowledgeable on most of Zimbabwe's flora and fauna. Only indigenous raptors are flown, including Peregrine (F p Minor), Lanner (F biarmicus), Black Sparrowhawk (Accipiter melanoleucus) and African Hawk Eagle (Hieraaetus spilogaster) at quarry of Francolin, Doves, Pigeons, Duck, Plover, Quail and Hare over midland Savanna as well as on more conventional arable areas. Visitors accompany these falconers on their twice daily flying excursions. These are not displays for entertainment, but dedicated falconers flying their birds at wild quarry, with all the trials, tribulations and ecstasies that this brings to all falconers. At other times, trips out to view Eyries, Raptors, Eagles or big game can be arranged. 1995 will



Right: RAKER, a female Black Sparrowhawk,  
Taken Feb. '94 Late soar Hawk Flies at 785 gms.

Below: Lundi



see the first falconry Safaris undertaken and I wish them every success with this pioneering falconry venture.

In the Winter '94 issue I wrote about longwinging. In this one I'm concentrating on hunting with Eagles and Shortwings. African Hawk Eagles are the only Eagles commonly flown in Zimbabwe under normal rules. These tend to be flown at night from the back of a pick-up truck, using lamps to find the nocturnal Scrub Hare. Obviously, conditions tend to dictate that flights are fast and furious over fairly short distances. It would have been nice to see an Eagle waiting on during daylight over one of the many koppies, but this has not been tried, although one falconer did say he would try this method with his next Eyas. We were fortunate to see an African Crowned Eagle being flown. This was, for me, the highlight of my trip. "Lundi", all 8 lb of her just oozed aggression. This forest hunter had all the right equipment to ambush and crush the monkeys they preyed upon in the wild. We tried to catch velvet monkeys, but they were too canny to be

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# ANDREW KNOWLES-BROWN

caught out. Night flying produced some good flights and put a few hares in the bag. Lundi was able to show us the power her large rounded wings could produce. With that long tail showing, she was built like a giant Goshawk. Her best daylight flight was when she caught a young Orabie (a type of deer), which failed to follow its family into some dense vegetation and paid the ultimate price. Again this flight was from the back of the truck.

There were going to be 2 Black Spars flying, but unfortunately, one was killed 2 weeks before our arrival. She hit a submerged fence while taking a teal. From the stories we heard, she was a demon of a bird and will be sorely missed by Pierre Heymans. This left Andy Barnes to show us "Raker", a late taken Sparrowhawk who flew at 785 gms. This bird, still in her immature plumage looked exactly the same as a small European Goshawk, except she had longer legs and toes, just right for catching feathered quarry. Her temperament was as our own Goshawks and listening to the manning techniques, Black Spars would seem to be very similar to our Goshawks. Raker was unable to connect with any Francolin, although she chased plenty. She did catch 2 Guinea fowl probably twice her size, one of which took her down to an ant bear hole. Not the nicest of creatures to meet while out hawking. Fortunately, he didn't appear to be at home.

This completed our stay in Africa, an experience I shall never forget, and I shall certainly be returning. Also, I'm sure I can speak for Adrian Williams and Geoff Dalton in thanking our hosts - African Sky Hunters for the wonderful time we had, and not forgetting Lyn and David of this magazine for the opportunity to go on this wonderful trip.



*Lundi is a female African Crowned Eagle weighing 8lb. Left: On Orabie. (small deer)*



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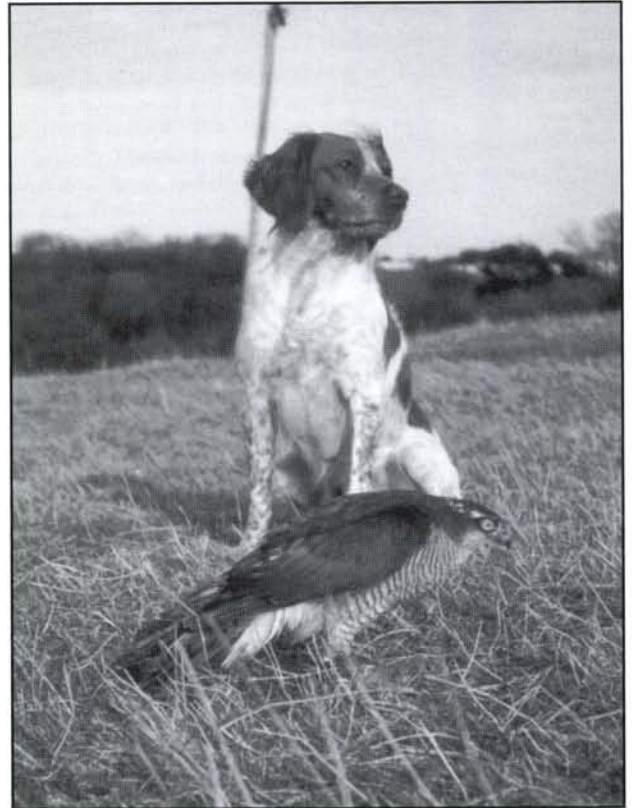
My first Sparrow-Hawk came to me as a downy, some ten days old. She was hand reared on a diet of Quail, Rats, Mice and chicks, supplemented with calcium lactate, and she grew into a large bird, who in her first season flew at 9 ounces. She was an imprint and most imprints become aggressive, sticky footed, and generally unpleasant. I trained her in the usual way, reducing her weight slightly and increasing the distance in calling her off daily. She was hand reared in the house and took everything in her stride. The normal hustle and bustle of every day life didn't bother her in any way. Even though she was a imprint, I knew I would have no trouble in entering her, as in the early stages of training, she would often bate at anything that flew by. Once off the creance, I wasted no time in entering her at quarry. She was entered at Magpies, and became very skilled at taking them. Being an imprint, I always allowed her to feed up on each and every kill. Her first season was very fruitful, averaging one kill a day. Being flown seven days a week throughout the season, she became very efficient at hunting, although her aggression towards me never waned.

Her second season was completely different, and I decided that this year she would be flown mainly at Partridge and Blackbirds. Having fortunately obtained permission on several bordering farms, it was decided that stocking up on the already dwindling Partridge population was the only way of procuring regular flights. Some fifty Partridge were reared and released and once fit and familiar with the ground, they were hunted as often as possi-

ble. We had some excellent flights. Hunting up the coveys with a pointer, we were able to get close slips, producing some breathtaking displays of courage and persistence from both Hawk and Quarry. Twisting and turning across the vast fields of stubble, often ending in a tremendous catch, with the Sparrowhawk turning upside down and binding to the Quarry from underneath. She took thirty-one Partridge and two Magpies in her second season. Her aggression was now subsiding after being allowed a good crop on every kill.

Her third season was her best, but unfortunately her last. She had, up until this point, taken 61 head, then disaster struck. After a long twisting flight at an old experienced Blackbird, both pursued and pursuer flew across a large stubble field, over a hedge and along a ditch. The Blackbird tried every trick in the book to throw the Hawk off. However, this Hawk was by now experienced and persistent. She knew that the Blackbird would eventually put in, and she rarely missed on the reflush. On this occa-

sion the Blackbird dived into the only available cover which was unfortunately a mass of barbed wire, which over the years had become overgrown with bramble and grass. My Sparrowhawk had no intention of pulling off and followed the Blackbird at full speed, smashing straight into the entangled mass. I arrived at the scene and could see she was in some distress. She has extensive lacerations to her head, neck and shoulders. I rushed her to the Vets, but unfortunately she died of shock that same evening.



She really was a joy to hunt with, and more than made up for her bad manners with excellent hunting prowess. I have, since her demise, flown other imprint Spars, but I shall always remember her courage, ability and great character. She was, without doubt, a real hawk for the bush.

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# Spar excellence

I am an experienced Falconer, and over the years I have flown most of the Birds of Prey that are readily available. I have experienced the painstaking effort of working a dog into just the right position for a, (hopefully), ideally pitched Falcon to take the flushed Prey. I have beaten cover to force a Rabbit to bolt, and witnessed my Redtail spring from a tree in powerful pursuit. I have followed the Goshawk from the fist at fur and feather, and my time with Harris Hawks has provided more relaxed Hawking trips.

I have travelled to many parts of the country and have flown various birds in the most suitable ground for their particular needs. Now I was fancying something a little different. I decided to try a Sparrow Hawk. Respectfully to other Falconers, I would like to point out that a great deal of experience is required before one flies a Sparrow Hawk. There is very little leeway with the weight on these tiny bundles of fury. A sudden change in the weather and the spark that was once a life is snuffed out.

I purchased my Sparrowhawk, later to be called Maggie, as a little bundle of down, and then, with the help of the family, proceeded to socially imprint her. Training started once she was hard penned, and she was responding well at 8.25 oz. She would fly about fifty yards on the creance at this weight. However, at greater distances she would show no interest at all. I dropped her weight to just above 8 oz, and she would come one hundred yards. From the onset of training I had used a dog whistle to call her. When she would come a hundred yards instantly on hearing the whistle, I flew her free.

I established a routine with Maggie, flying her every day and feeding her up on a lure at the end of each session. After having Maggie for six weeks, she was, in my opinion, fit and ready to be entered. I had made a point of getting Maggie used to various sights during the manning process, and she was quite comfortable with my friend's Pointers. So, about three in the afternoon, I set off with Maggie on the fist and my friend Phil working one of his dogs. The dog was soon pointing and Phil, with his knowledge of the dog, assured me that there was feathered quarry in the bottom of the hedge. I positioned myself and indicated that I was ready, and on Phil's command the dog flushed a Blackbird. It came out of the hedge like a rocket, shouting its alarm call. I stood ready, but Maggie did not give chase. I had however, felt her tighten and watched her body twitch. This was a promising sign.

The next flush was better and this time I cast Maggie at the Prey. She seemed to find another gear. She was after the Blackbird with full power. The prey seemed to decide not to head across the open field, having seen the Sparrowhawk. It turned and darted back into the hedge with Maggie in hot pursuit. I recovered a very irate Sparrowhawk from the hedge, one foot was clutching feathers, but the Blackbird had escaped. A near miss and a good flight.

The following day I was determined to score an easy kill. This would give Maggie the confidence she would need, and also start to build the bond between us. She would need to learn that I would make in and assist her. With this in mind, I picked up Phil. Maggie was riding in the back seat of the car. The Pointer was loaded in the rear, and off we went. A local pond was the venue. I knew that with a good dog I could force a Moorhen to leave the pond to try to reach cover in an overgrown ditch. Knowledge of your hunting ground and the prospective preys likely behaviour is a great help when hunting.

Phil held back the dog while I got into position. On my signal, the dog was sent on and entered the pond margins - all the signs were good. The ditch, which I expected any Moorhen to head for, was about one hundred yards to my right. I knew that in an attempt to escape, the birds would keep low in the long grass as they made their way to safety. The dog moved out of the pond and was on a firm point. I raised Maggie, and Phil urged the dog to flush. Moorhens always seem to fly as though they can only just remember how. Up went the prey rising to about twenty feet, and Maggie was in swift, purposeful flight. The Moorhen made a valiant effort to lose height but to no avail. Maggie bound to her prize and they hit the ground within twenty yards of the ditch. The Pointer had been stopped after flushing, and I was on my way to help Maggie. She was having great difficulty holding the Moorhen. They are quite a handful for such a small bird. I quickly made in, dispatched the prey and sat

back while Maggie broke in and gorged herself. We set off for home content, and talked about the kill from our different viewpoints, both agreeing that we had managed to work well together as a team.

The following day, we were off again. This time I hoped for a Partridge on some local permission. Phil was driving, my son was in the back with the dog, and I was in the front, with Maggie on the fist. We were nearing our normal parking spot, when I felt Maggie tighten. She had spotted a Magpie feeding in a stubble field. We stopped the car, I got out raised my fist and gave Maggie the air. She shot forward, dropped to ground level and set off across the field. The Magpie was perhaps fifty yards into the field and the nearest cover was a small wood some seventy yards away. Maggie flew straight and true and hit the startled Magpie as it started to rise. The impetus knocking it onto its back, and then they started to struggle. Again I assisted in dispatching the quarry and allowed Maggie to feed. I flew Maggie in this manner quite a lot after this. It is like having a mobile hide. The Magpies then become more approachable. It is a strange thing that everyone I speak to, all over the Country, express their concern for the growing numbers of marauding Magpies, and of their



desire to find a bird that can cull large numbers of this readily available crafty prey. Maggie proved to be that bird. She has personally accounted for sixty-three this season, and has managed to take four on one outing. All this at a fighting weight of eight ounces.

On one trip the Pointer flushed a Mallard from the water, and Maggie bound to its tail in mid air, but released as the drake dived back into the water, showing just what a Sparrowhawk will attempt in its first season. She even tried a fully grown Rabbit in her very early days.

In the past I have used Springer Spaniel's or Black Labrador's as my working dog. I was mistaken in my belief that the German Shorthaired Pointer would not face thick cover, or work water well. After this season with Phil, I am a convert and have ordered a pup. Phil and his son are breeding 'Yaraks GSP' and advertise them as 'Bred by Falconers for Falconers'. I can personally vouch for their integrity in this endeavour.

On one trip we were out in the field heading for a very productive wood, when the Pointer lowered its body, moved forward and came on point. Phil knew that this meant feathered game and warned me that it could be Skylark or Partridge. Standing ready, the dog was sent in, and the ground seemed to explode as a three quarter grown Hen Pheasant burst forth. In the instant that it takes to decide to slip, Maggie was away and brought the bird down. This was the first of two such kills, but as the season progressed and the Pheasant achieved full size, Maggie would not tackle them.

My tally for the season, 1994/95 with Maggie, reads as follows: 63 Magpies, 19 Moorhens, 4 Starlings, 4 Collared Doves, 5 Blackbirds, 2 Thrushes, 2 Three-quarter grown Pheasants and one Partridge. ( All taken under licence) I rested Maggie after her one hundredth kill and so her season ended in the first week of January. I honestly think that this has been my most enjoyable season ever, and attribute its success to a very special lady - Thank you Maggie.

**JOHN DANDY**

## POSITION STATEMENT

by  
**THE HAWK BOARD**  
TERM ENDING AUGUST 1995

The Hawk Board's weakness in the past has always been an inability to contact the individual 'hawk' keeper, other than through infrequent mailings by the DoE, due to the confidentiality of the names and addresses of 'hawk' keepers. With the changes in regulations, many individual 'hawk' keepers are no longer on the DoE mailing list and thus contact by The Hawk Board has become impossible other than by direct contact from individuals themselves, who have responded to requests from The Hawk Board. After much deliberation, the new constitution of The Hawk Board has had to be aimed towards falconry and bird of prey/raptor clubs; now that all clubs are able to gain affiliation to The Hawk Board through the criteria set out below:

It has therefore been decided that as The Hawk Board can now only disseminate information through the clubs, we strongly recommend that all 'hawk' keepers join reputable clubs, so that The Hawk Board can:

- a) disseminate information quickly through the club system, and
- b) know that certain standards, through club Codes of Conduct, are expected from all those it represents.

The New Hawk Board continues to represent individuals on a case by case basis through direct contact with anyone feeling the need of Hawk Board assistance.

### THE HAWK BOARD

ALL falconry / bird of prey / raptor / owls clubs and associations wishing to be affiliated to the New Hawk Board and wishing to participate in the August Elections should contact the Hawk Board Secretary as soon as possible - Sue Dewar,  
6 Glendevon Road, Woodley,  
Reading Berks. RG5 4PJ  
Tel: 01734 696501

## YORKSHIRE DALES COUNTRY FAIR

ORCABER FARM, AUSTWICK,  
NR SETTLE N.YORKS  
8th & 9th July 1995

**FALCONRY:** Displays & Advice

**FISHING:** Displays & Advice.

**GUNDOGS:** Arena Displays,  
Advice, Parade of Breeds & Competitions...

**HOUNDS:** Arena Parades by local Foxhounds & Beagles. Sheepdog Display.

**FERRETS:** Showing, racing demo's & Advice.

**COURSING DISPLAY & EXHIBITION**  
**RARE BREEDS DISPLAY**  
**TRADE STANDS**  
**CRAFT TENT**

**BFSS 'NEW GUN' STAND**  
Information & instruction from  
experts for novices or those  
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**TERRIER & LURCHER  
SHOW & RACING**  
Exemption dog show. K.C. Rules,  
Judging 11am Both Days, Entry on Day

VINTAGE ENGINES & VEHICLES ♦ DRY STONE WALLING ♦  
CLAY PIGEON SHOOT ♦ TUG-OF-WAR ♦ STICK MAKING  
DEMO. BY THE RISLEY MOSS STICK GROUP ♦ HUSKIES ♦  
PLENTY FOR THE KIDS: MINI QUAD BIKES, CHILDREN'S  
ENTERTAINER, BOUNCY CASTLES, ETC., R.A.F. EXHIBIT.  
LICENSED BEER & CIDER BARS & MUCH, MUCH MORE!!  
♦ CONTINUOUS MAIN ARENA ON BOTH DAYS ♦  
For Trade Space, Enquiries, Sponsorship Details, Overnight Camping,  
Group Discounts & Any Other Enquiries Tel: (01386) 48974  
**ADULTS:£5/O.A.P's:£4/Family ticket:£10** (2 adults,2 children)  
CHILDREN 12-16 £4. CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE ACCOMP'D BY AN ADULT

**FREE CAR PARKING**

The organisers reserve the right to alter or omit advertised events.



## Cotswold Wildlife Park

Burford, Oxford OX18 4JW  
Tel: (01993) 823006

Why not come and spend a day in  
beautiful surroundings and enjoy  
Bird of Prey Demonstrations on:-

- ♦ May 28th & 30th
- ♦ June 4th
- ♦ July 23rd & 30th
- ♦ August 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th & 28th
- ♦ September 3rd

**OTHER ATTRACTIONS INCLUDE**  
a large and varied collection of animals from  
all over the world, childrens playground ●  
train rides ● bar ● restaurant & refreshments  
**OPEN DAILY FROM 10am**

*The park is situated on the A361, two miles  
south of its junction with the A40*

# RAPTOR REHABILITATION

## Does it Need Falconry ?

Nick Mooney Secretary of the ARA

I would like to comment on the two recent contributions by Richard Naisbitt (F&RCM, Autumn 1994 and Spring 1995) on raptors in Australia. It is good to see Australia being discussed and Richard makes some important points. There is no doubt he is making a positive impact on rehabilitation. Involving the public with raptors through exposure and education is something he is very good at, and I have great respect for his abilities both in this and the husbandry of raptors. Being of convict stock, I was not surprised by Richard's despair of our situation, but my 27 years experience with Australian raptors leads me to suspect that falconry is a little better understood than he suggests. The example of it being regarded as a threat to racing pigeons is extreme and the belief of a few fanatic pigeon fanciers only. In Australia, falconry is regarded variously as a curiosity, a bloodsport, a potential pressure on raptor populations and as a useful tool in raptor management. Wildlife authorities have a consistent policy that raptors can not be collected or kept purely for falconry. However, there are many examples of trained raptors being legally used in filming, research, bird scaring and of course rehabilitation. The use of **some falconry techniques** (and those are the key words) has always been accepted in rehabilitation in Australia. Again the bad examples Richard quoted are in the minority and in my experience of nearly 2,000 injured raptors, extreme. The norm is more sensible. Because so many raptors come in for rehabilitation (thousands per year) and there are few people who will or can rehabilitate them, probably 33% are euthanased immediately with the balance rehabilitated,

kept for education, display and/or research. Some falconry techniques are occasionally used by most experienced rehabilitators on a case by case basis. Variations of hacking procedures are the norm for the final stages of wildlife rehabilitation generally, be the subjects apes, pandas, dolphins or raptors. Therefore, I don't consider the process (as distinct from the name) of hacking as synonymous with falconry. The rehabilitation of every raptor does not need falconry techniques. Most injuries from which raptors fully recover are minor and involve experienced, wild-'caught' birds in need of little more than first aid and R&R. An enormous effort can go into more serious injuries in most cases to little or no practical effect and can distract from the more important issue of habitat conservation without which it is all to no avail.

**A goshawk flown to the fist or a lure gets very little aerobic exercise, not nearly as much as being forced to fly up and down a large aviary. Even if that is a little frightening for the birds at least any rehabilitator can do it**

Probably we should ask the rational question "Could that effort be better put in elsewhere?" as a matter of routine. A goshawk flown to the fist or a lure gets very little aerobic exercise, not nearly as much as being forced to fly up and down a large aviary. Even if that is a little frightening for the birds at least any rehabilitator can do it and a little negative conditioning against people is surely a good thing. Richard says that assessment of flying ability can only be made via falconry. I heartily disagree. Most falconry I have seen, either in person or on film, stacked the odds in

favour of the raptor to the point where the whole experience was rather artificial. In nature, a kill is often the climax of a long and completed procedure involving a mesh of behaviour and physical abilities that falconry does not address. There's no point in having a raptor that can catch something if it can't find it! Sophisticated hacking is altogether a more rounded procedure but I guess that too has its limits. There have been many attempts at pure falconry using rehabilitation as a cover. Holding a bird longer than necessary is essentially the same. For some reason, many people seem to think they deserve 'to have some fun' once they have gone to all the trouble of getting a bird to the point of release. This is perhaps understandable, but surely unethical (and risky considering the prominence of Murphy's Law in rehabilita-

are they really such a 'valuable resource'?

By the way, the photo *Passage Peregrine Tiercel* gives the impression that our birds migrate. There is no evidence that Australian peregrines migrate in the sense of 'passage'.

As regards the Spring 1994 issues on our endemic Black Falcon (*Falco Subniger*), I was concerned that nowhere did the article mention the species was wholly protected (everywhere in Australia) and that the birds Richard discussed were being flown for rehabilitation or as bird scarers, not, as the omission could imply, for recreational falconry. Without such comment such articles can only encourage the use of Black Falcons and others in falconry. This creates real problems for both source and sink countries. The appearance of a Black Falcon in the wild in New Zealand a few years ago, a place where even the ubiquitous peregrine has not even gotten to, raises the obvious question - was it smuggled for falconry, and escaped? Considering the lack of raptor diversity there, and the interest in falconry, I think it is a fair bet. The ramifications for spread of exotic disease are obvious, especially for New Zealand, with its long list of endangered and extinct endemic birds (thanks largely to introductions). We can also do without the loss of such birds from Australia. Yours sincerely, Nick Mooney, Editor, ARA News, Australia (ARA NEWS is the quarterly newsletter of the Australasian Raptor Association, an organisation committed to the study and conservation of raptors. For information, contact me or the ARA Secretary, Flora's Cottage, Fairy Glen Road, Collinsvale 7012, AUSTRALIA)

# SHADOW OVER THE HEBRIDES

UNTIL RECENTLY there were comparatively few shadows over these Scottish Islands, other than raptors, but now looms large, for the sake of a few jobs and foreign motorways. Roneval, south Harris (the highest hill, below right) has amongst other rare flora and fauna, Golden Eagles, and will be almost thoroughly destroyed by a quarry four times releasing radioactive manganese dust for sixty years, and probably destroying the vital coastal fishing and shellfish industries. Golden eagles, destruction helps neither.

Reproduced by permission of The Hebridean SAKER press from the forthcoming



by the threat of five so called super quarries  
on one of the earths most beautiful isles,  
measures the height of Dovers White Cliffs,  
industry. We obviously need both jobs and

Philip Snows' Hebridean Wildlife and Landscape Sketchbook.



P. Snow ©94

White tailed & Golden Eagles -  
sketched in the Hebrides  
1980-1994



now narrower  
wings than W.T. Eagles.

P. Snow 94

Goldie mobbed by Ravens  
- Roneval, Harris. 9/94

## CENTRAL FALCONRY & RAPTOR CLUB

At the March meeting it was agreed that for the first time in the history of the club, a President would be elected. By a unanimous decision, it was announced that Geoff Dalton would hold that position.

Because of the distances some of our members have to travel to Coventry every month to attend our meetings, we have found a need to start a Southern Group which will be based at Ashchurch, near Tewkesbury. It will be run on the same lines as the parent club, being a friendly club with families welcome, and guest speakers most months. The icing on the cake being free hunting days during the season. The Southern Group meet at the Queens Head, Ashton Cross, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Glos. on the first Sunday of the month. If anyone is interested, please contact Shaun on 01684 274591.

We have had a year of interesting speakers who have enlightened us on all aspects of Falconry. Our year started with Simon Tyas who is one of the few "Professional Falconers" left in this country, telling of his experiences. The following month, Chris Neal arrived with an enlightening talk on his experiences on making the Cook Report. PC Beecroft was our next speaker, who gave a talk on the security of the birds we keep, and microchips. This was followed by Neil Forbes paying us a visit to microchip any birds our members required chipping. Jim Chick, the chairman of the Hawk Board, our next speaker, came to discuss the current situation regarding the Hawk Board and answered any questions members had. The new year started with Ruth Cromie from the Durrell Institute paying us a visit explaining about her project linked in with the RSPB, regarding Raptor welfare, including assessing Bird of Prey Displays, and welfare of birds in public and private collections. We are looking forward to an exciting 1995/96 with our two clubs and new projects in the pipeline. Please visit us at our tent at the "Falconry Fair" where you will be most welcome.

John Hill

**STEVE BENNETT IS INTERESTED IN CONTACTING ANYONE IN CORNWALL WHO PRACTICES FALCONRY, WITH A VIEW TO SETTING UP A CLUB, OR JUST MEETING PEOPLE IN HIS AREA.**

He can be contacted on:  
01209 710468.

The Club pages in the Falconers magazine are there for any Club to write and tell everybody what their club is doing, how to join etc. It is entirely free. Articles should be limited to around 500 words and can be accompanied by a photograph if desired.

I believe most clubs have a press officer and as the magazine is only published four times a year it should be no problem to send something for publication. It is good to show people that your club is actually doing something.

Articles should be sent to the usual address and copy deadlines are on page 38.

## SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

The Scottish Hawking Club's Season ended with two meetings. The first was a 2-day Meet at Braco, Perthshire. This was the last weekend we could have at pheasant, and there was certainly plenty of them about, as well as duck, hare and rabbit. The 8 inches of snow that fell on Friday evening didn't encourage the rabbits to bolt. We had 2 groups out on Saturday, 3 on Sunday, and a couple of people stayed over till Monday to have a bit of extra sport.

This is a wonderful part of Scotland for hawking and with a bit of cultivation we will hopefully have a regular 'End of Season' Venue. We were able to end the weekend with a dozen longtails in the bag and the memory of many more brilliant flights. Colin Mitchel and Stuart Stephen very kindly showed their group how to retrieve a red-tail from the other side of a river - swim! Hypothermia had almost set in by the time they got back to the hotel, but the brisk rub-down with a scented lettuce leaf certainly got them glowing again and any bodily shrinkage cannot be attributed to the cold! Their respective wives will be privately canvassed at a later date. Thanks to Adrian Hallgarth for instigating this Meet.

The second was a one-day Meet in February, held by the Lothian and Borders Pigeon and Rabbit Clearance Society, to which we were invited. It certainly created a lot of interest. Hawks were outnumbered 5-1 by spectators. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Also a good number of bunnies were brought to book. Many thanks to Peter Kirk for setting this Meet up.

The March Meet had to be cancelled due to



the dumping of a large quantity of fluffy white stuff over Iain Campbell's house, so preventing him from being present (a requisite of the landowner). He really will have to move to a more civilised part of Scotland. Many thanks are due to all those who have hosted Meets this season and roll on August. The Hawk Board Meeting we attended in February was very interesting. You will all see big changes in the running proposals with a much more open, 'Club orientated' make-up. I think this new style Hawk Board will go forward, with the backing of all Falconers. It's now up to you to get every Falconer to join one of the many Clubs, so we can stand together and support our sport.

The Scottish Hawking Club will be attending the Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace, Perth, again this year on a bigger and better stand. Come along and see us as well as your friends and make this a Summer Event to remember. Discounted entrance tickets can be acquired through the club.

We now have club close rings to supply members and Scottish breeders of de-registered species. Also a registration and declaration form to enable breeders to comply with the new DoE exemption No Ex/36.

Anyone interested who hasn't already been contacted speak to a Club Official. Have a good moult.

## BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION NEWS

North Yorkshire is England's largest county and without doubt one of its most beautiful, what else could it be?

With the rolling hillsides of the Yorkshire Dales to the purple clad splendour of the North York Moors. Quite sparsely populated with a predominantly rural community, field-sports are an accepted part of everyday life for the majority of the counties inhabitants. As the newly appointed B.H.A. Officer for the North Yorkshire region, I would like to extend a warm welcome to fellow practitioners of our sport, to unite and pursue our cherished art within this region.

As Martin Luther said, "I have a

dream", mine to create a region in which the experienced and complete beginner can gather, to form a supportive, informative and above all, active group of like minded individuals, concerned with the continuance of falconry.

Looking to the future, regular regional field meets, informal social gatherings and regular presentations are all things I envisage as part of, what I'm sure will become a flourishing region. Interested? Then please contact me for an informal chat, I look forward to hearing from you.

Roy Bebbington  
01748 823527.

# WELSH HAWKING CLUB NEWS

Despite its name, the Welsh Hawking Club, which has been established for well over 30 years, has members throughout the UK and indeed all over the world. It quickly gained international links through the contacts of its founders, including its first President, Lorant de Bastyai. The Club has always had a reputation for being one of the friendliest and this continues today. The Club has representation and is associated with The Hawk Board, The British Field Sports Society, The International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, The Game Conservancy and National Council for Aviculture. It has a successful breeding project and members can apply for allocation of a hawk for flying or breeding loans or sales. Now, in response to enquiries and in order to broaden its base, The Welsh Hawking Club has decided to offer its members the opportunity to hold regional meetings in certain areas. Members and potential members say that they would like to meet on a regular basis without travelling a great distance. The Club ran a pilot scheme last year with members meeting at "The Goshawk" near Chester, although members have been meeting there informally for several years. Following the formal launch of regionalisation at the Annual General Meeting, this group has become the 1st regional group with groups starting in the South West and Oxfordshire shortly. Others are expected later. At the AGM, the Club Secretary, Adrian Williams outlined how the

regional groups would operate for the benefit of the clubs existing members, whilst it could have obvious attractions for potential new members who sought a regular meeting place reasonably locally. In the past Falconers would, out of necessity, travel often quite long distances to meet other enthusiasts, but as a result of the increase in the number of people taking up the sport it should not be necessary to do so and this is illustrated by the proliferation in clubs over the last few years. However, many of these smaller clubs have disappeared within a year or so. Some of the newer clubs are, of course, very enthusiastic and have experienced Falconers as members, and deserve to succeed. Properly run clubs with a sound code of conduct and responsible officers are to be welcomed and are a healthy outcome for the increase in interest and growth in the sport. We have no complaints of them and do not feel threatened. Our regional groups are being set up by our members who seek to enhance this club and its facilities, and therefore their own enjoyment. Our intention is that they will meet monthly, at suitable venues with good facilities, easy access to motorway links etc, where they can meet socially, be kept up to date with relevant information, have speakers, (recent and future talks include Veterinary Aspects of Hawk Keeping, Training Dogs for Hawking, African Raptor Safari, Lark Hawking with Merlins, Rook Hawking and ADAS Wildlife Incidents), hold discussions, raffles, quizzes, have a few beers and relive those exciting flights!

Local field meetings will be arranged although the annual field meeting which many members regularly attend, will still see a large group of Falconers coming home to Wales where a warm welcome is always assured. Now, briefly, onto more club news. As mentioned, the Club held its AGM recently where several rule changes were agreed, Club officers were elected or re-elected, interesting discussions took place on club insurance and also, the future of the club breeding which will be expanded to provide further species as finances and aviary space allows. On the following day, a field meeting took place thanks to the kind permission of Mr Graham Rossiter. Several rabbits and waterhens were taken and much sport enjoyed before the parties returned to the "Newbridge Inn" for a lunch of game pie, (not all of which was hawk caught!). Plans for the Autumn Field Meet in North Wales are under way with dates arranged and agreement from some keepers already assured with expectation that we will negotiate permission to several more estates. The Club will be attending the Falconry Fair at Althorp on 28th and 29th May. So please call in to our tent and say Hello. If you are not a member you can find out what you are missing and we'll do our best to answer any questions you may have. Hebogydd dda  
If you are interested in obtaining details of the Welsh Hawking Club please contact:  
The Secretary, Adrian Williams. Tel. 01443 206333

## Cotswold Falconry Centre

### Falconry Courses:

Join us for a day on our very popular introductory course.

### Hunting Parties:

Early booking essential for 95./96 Hunting Parties

### Falcon Leisure:

Here with a full range of Falconry Equipment. Books & Videos.

We now sell Honeybrook Farm's best quality Hawk Food.

**Cotswold Falconry Centre, Batsford Park,  
Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. GL56 9QB  
Telephone: 01386 701043**



# TIRINGS

**Hello. Once again you find me staring out of the window. Unlike Playschool I am somewhat lacking in the arched or round variety, but my view is better than any experienced by Big Ted or Humpty. Contrary to established belief, I do not spend all my time studying the landscape, but if you had such a vista spread before you as I do, you would agree that it deserves more than a passing glance.**

Today I overlook the sort of scene popular with Christmas card manufacturers and plimsoll-wearing weekend ramblers from Creation, whose task in life is to give the Mountain Rescue volunteers something to do. Autumn has departed taking with it the amber-hued leaves and swaddling bracken leaving the valley looking tired, the colours no longer vibrant but seemingly diluted and washed. Higher up in the distance the precipitous scarp that dominates the horizon is cloaked with snow, dark shadows dappling the almost glowing terrain. Now, I could be out hawking snowshoe hares and disorientated reindeer, investigating the interior of a sudden snowdrift and savouring the delights of inadequately waterproofed boots but, with much self-sacrifice on my part, I have elected to sit at this warm keyboard in my cosy centrally-heated study and with lightening fast one-finger typing continue my quest for literary lucidity. It's a dirty job but ...

Continuing the theme of my previous discourse (what d'ya mean, you didn't read it?!) let me tell you a story. I am a member of the North American Falconers Association. No, I will not apologise. Since I joined a few years ago, NAFA has proved to be an excellent source of information, indeed I have often been informed of falconry related matters relevant to this country in the club newsletter, or 'Hawk Chalk' as it is incongruously known, prior to or instead of equivalent British publications. However, occasionally there appears the kind of article that falls well and truly within the 'What the f####!' category of human experience and one such article appeared

in the April '94 issue in which the design of a wooden lure was promoted. The tone of the piece was possible somewhat tongue-in-cheek as alternative lures consisted of a large engineering bolt and a horseshoe suitable for Godzilla! Nevertheless, whatever the intention, the article was written in a serious and plausible style and for individuals of a more gullible persuasion would seem genuine enough. And you can never be sure ...

Come the August '94 issue and we find within the 'Hawk Chalk Forum' a letter from Jemima Parry-Jones decrying this article in a forceful and forthright manner in which she quite rightly points out the stupidity and irresponsibility of using such dangerous equipment and outlines the correct type of lure to be used. She does admit that the original article may have been intended as a joke but points out that 'less experienced members might not know it and take advice from the information'. This is the whole point of my little story. Yes, there is a point. Some of you might think Mrs Parry-Jones was overreacting, but you'd be wrong. Consider her experience in dealing with the likes of you and me, the questions she is asked and the events she gets to see or hear about and now ask yourself if she's overreacting. Of course, none of us would be moronic enough to use a lump of wood or a horseshoe as a lure. Neither, I'm sure, would any of us leave a kestrel on its block overnight in the snow, nor transport a Harris' Hawk free in the back of a car, or hunt a Goshawk with creance attached, or fly a hawk under an electricity pylon, or repeatedly throw food to your

hawk, or fly a hawk with its swivel and leash on, or hit your hawk when it misbehaved. Need I go on? All these, and more, are things I've heard of recently, and I speak to a fraction of the people that Mrs Parry-Jones does. These are all realised disasters or accidents waiting to happen. Mrs Parry-Jones' letter was written with a greater understanding of human nature than the writer and publisher of the article and highlights just why we need a better system of tuition in this country, and we need it now.

Falconry schools are a very good idea. When wanting to begin any form of discipline being taught by someone already skilled and knowledgeable in the subject is preferable and where better to learn than in an institution dedicated to imparting this information? Unfortunately, like so many sensible and basically good ideas, I do not think the falconry school can

**Of course, none of us would be moronic enough to use a lump of wood or a horseshoe as a lure. Neither, I'm sure, would any of us leave a kestrel on its block overnight in the snow, nor transport a Harris' Hawk free in the back of a car, or hunt a Goshawk with creance attached,**

be entirely successful. The major flaw in the premise may be of standards, or lack thereof. I am not suggesting that the tuition on offer is not of good quality, but without a nationally accepted basic standard of tuition how can anyone be sure of getting the required information and be judged to have assimilated this knowledge? If school, colleges and universities failed to conform to a standard of education, qualifications would be absolutely worthless. Those of you with children would be unhappy to discover your rugrat's teacher had no formal qualification or experience. How do you know that your average falconry instructor is any better? As the situation stands anyone attending a course in falconry has only the word of the school as to the ability of the

instructor. Would you buy a used car because the salesman told you to? I have nothing against paying for tuition, anyone deluded enough to believe they can make a living from falconry should keep taking the tablets and good luck to 'em, but the diversity in the amounts sought is questionable. If we are to have fee-paying falconry students then the price should be within everyone's reach as it would be a sad thing indeed if only a wealthy elite could afford tuition. 'If they really want to do it they'll afford it' cuts no ice with me, in case you haven't noticed there's a recession and I hope the days when falconry was exclusive to the gentry are long dead and buried. Tugs forelock apologetically.

Having said that, I would like to muddy the waters by saying that I also feel the usual system of learning from an experienced falconer as an 'apprentice' to be vital for the newcomer. This is more or less the accepted way of entering the Old Sport and undoubtedly worked perfectly when you could count the number of practising falconers on a broken abacus, as then there was a very good chance they had learnt the arcane and esoteric skills from an experienced falconer who in turn had ... you get the idea.

Nowadays, anyone with a one-legged barn owl and a tassel on their glove is a falconer and as useless as a chocolate fireguard when it comes to imparting even the basic skills. You have probably guessed where this is leading and although the idea of an apprenticeship scheme is not all new it is definitely one that needs a much closer look. If all practitioners of falconry had to have some form of qualification then they would create a standard of knowledge so that any new, bedazzled and possibly insane aspirant could approach a falconer, and be sure of being taught at least the basics correctly, which would be a major step forward. And I don't mean just future falconers, I think all falconers should have to be licensed, forget bird registration (why not? the DoE



# Mik Standing TAKES A LOOK AT LIFE IN THE FALCONRY LANE

have) let's show the Establishment how responsible we can be. All over the country can be heard the steel shutters of tradition slamming into place.

If you want to drive a motor vehicle on British roads you are required to pass an approved examination and should you desire to emulate Tom Cruise in 'Top Gun' style you would first need much expert tuition before gaining a licence. If may be an Englishman's right to own a shotgun, but first a licence must be acquired, unless you intend to make a substantial unauthorised withdrawal from the local building society in which case you only require a hacksaw. All these activities demand a certain level of excellence but not so much for your own safety but to protect other members of society. Fair enough. Strangely, in a society that proclaims to be a nation of animal lovers, no such standard of excellence is required for the keeping and use of animals. Apparently we can inflict all manner of trauma and ignorance upon helpless creatures without any sort of knowledge of our mistakes. Of course the RSPCA, armed with the Wildlife and Cruelty to Animals Act, can prosecute an offender but this is a little late for the animal, don't you think? Please, do not say this does not apply to you, can you really be sure you have the necessary knowledge? Those who know me can attest to my lack of respect for Authority, especially those of the blue-uniformed, "Evenin' all' variety. An adolescence spent astride a Triumph Bonneville gave me a cer-

tain view of life from a gutter perspective that leaves little regard for the curtailment of civil liberties, yet even I can see the absolute sense in some form of an apprenticeship scheme. I railed against wearing a crash helmet when riding my Bonny, that is until a friend hit a Range Rover rather hard while not wearing his and failed to recover consciousness after six months of intensive care. Sometimes, just every now and then, new rules and regulations can

the Animal Rights groups have public support for this emotive protest? It is up to today's falconers to preserve the sport for the falconers of the future and if apprenticeships and licensing can help safeguard falconry then they get my full support.

Alright, let's be realistic, licensing falconers is not going to happen. If for no other reason than the financial expenditure required for such a system. The government ultimately brought about de-registration

downright cantankerous later. Other countries have adopted such ideas, even America, the 'Land of the Free'. The British Falconers' Club is about to introduce an apprenticeship scheme, the British Hawking Association has already done so although, as they are voluntary, their validity may be questioned. Nevertheless, it is a good beginning and everything must start somewhere. It is possible that if falconry was to be invented tomorrow all manner of restrictions and regulations would enshroud it but because it is such an ancient tradition it resists change and tampering with laudable tenacity. Tradition is undoubtedly a thing to be admired and respected. Democracy, monarchy, parliament and religion are all fine traditions but equally slavery, religion, nationalism and rickets are not. At the turn of the century the author G K Chesterton made the following comment: "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; Tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death." Being defined as 'traditional' can excuse a multitude of sins and should not be regarded as sacrosanct. Times and conditions change and our traditions must change with them. Might not now be a time for change? Think about it! Happy Hawking.

## Licensing the falconer would benefit both our hawks and us. Nobody can have failed to notice that there is more than a modicum of dislike for blood sports which, no-matter how we see falconry, is how the majority of the public regard our sport

be for our own good. Licensing the falconer would benefit both our hawks and us. Nobody can have failed to notice that there is more than a modicum of dislike for blood sports which, no-matter how we see falconry, is how the majority of the public regard our sport and if they can see that we are responsible and looking to the future, we provide less of a target. Do not make the error of dismissing the influence of Animal Rights groups and the anti-hunting fraternity especially as, even as I type, protesters are successfully blockading Swansea Airport to prevent the exporting of veal calves to the continent and have recently prevented the same exports from Shoreham harbour in Sussex. Both events seem to include a violation of the law and yet the police are apparently reluctant to use their newly granted powers. Is this because

because the revenue created from payable fees was smaller than the cost of operating the department. It seems they acknowledge their responsibilities as long as they can afford to. Registration wasn't much of an idea in the first place but as least it was something constructive. What have we got now? In a perfect world all the clubs and school would get together and agree on a standard of basic tuition and a workable apprenticeship scheme, then everybody would know exactly where they were. Nevertheless, you and I know this is not a perfect world (Jim Morrison is dead, allegedly, and Take That are on Top of the Pops). I don't want a Huxley vision of genetic uniformity with no room for individuality and innovation, yet I believe we should standardise basic tuition first and applaud development, eccentricity and the

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## AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

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For further information contact Guy Whitmarsh on: 01272 660770

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# THE HARPY EAGLE

## (*Harpia harpyja*)

Diana Durman-Walters. The Scottish Academy of Falconry and Related Studies.

### First Ever Domestic Breedings at San Diego Zoo & The World Centre for Birds of Prey

The Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) is physically the most formidable eagle in the world. It is not the largest in terms of weight and its wing span is comparable to any other large eagle, what sets it apart from any other raptor is the size of its talons.

These are awesome. The tarsus is thick and equates to the diameter of a female human wrist and on the end of this are the largest feet of any raptor. Powerful, with a very large span, they house an armoury that is lethal. The talons of this eagle are similar to that of the Kodiak bear, with a curve on the hind talon reaching four inches on the females.

When it was first examined by zoologists they too were impressed by these enormously powerful feet, more-so than any other feature and so Linne called it 'Harpyja' after the strong taloned, Greek mythological, winged figure. Half woman, half bird. This creature was entrusted with kidnapping humans who incurred the wrath of the gods. Harpia is the name generally adopted now. Although there are many Indian names, the best known being 'Uiracu' (big bird) used in the Amazon.

At first sight this development seems excessive, as it hunts prey in similar fashion to other large forest eagles. The Harpy has a taste for large mammals such as monkeys, sloths, opossum, coati and porcupine. They are remarkably agile flyers and they are best known for their breath-taking pursuit of monkeys through the trees. It is soon apparent just why these feet are designed this way. If it is arboreal prey, it will be clinging tightly to the branches of trees prior to capture. The eagles' technique is to snatch these from this habitat without missing a wingbeat. To succeed requires stealth and high speed which, combined with its weight, will provide the momentum to enable it to wrench the prey item free and secure it in the first attack. The force involved with such high impact levels of attack require large feet and thick, strong tarsi, which will act as an additional safety factor.

The plumage by comparison to many other large eagles is fairly nondescript. It has a black back; a white underside with a broad black band which adorns the neck. Its main ornament is the fully erectile crest. When erect some of the longest feathers remain limp, hanging loosely in the

occiput like ribbons. The crest is like a soft flap, easily lifted by a billowing wind and when raised the face acquires a somewhat owlsh expression. The eye is the darkest hue of brown, almost black. When staring into the Harpy's face, the density of colour gives little as to the character within.

Indeed, where might you stare into the face of a Harpy Eagle? Not as it happens in the rain forests of South or Central America.

The World Centre for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho, houses the largest collection of Harpy Eagles in the world. In February of this year Sarah Bevan and I went to look at the current work being done with the Harpy Eagle. On view to the public are five pairs of eagles which are in a superb

new complex. Viewing of these birds is along a darkened, sound proof corridor with special glass panels allowing you to see them, but they can't view you. One of their perches is conveniently placed within 3 feet of the viewing panel. When the eagle sits on this there is the sudden sensation that it is right next to you. From this vantage point their enormous size and those awesome feet are clear to see. The pairs appear comfortable in each others presence but in the breeding complex (out of bounds to the public) a further pair of Harpys had successfully bred and their egg was within days of pipping. However, exciting as this news was to me, California had produced something very special.

The superb new eagle facility at the San Diego Zoo had already produced one of these rare offspring.

On 16th September, 1994 excitement was felt throughout the raptor complex when the resident

pair of Harpy Eagles laid an egg. Near fever pitch was reached about one week later when they laid a second egg. This exhilarating event presented the zoos' bird department with the challenge, and opportunity, of incubating and hand rearing one chick in the Avian Propagation Centre, while the parents raised the other in their aviary. In the wild, Harpy Eagles will typically raise only one chick during the breeding season.



*For a birds its size the Harpy Eagle has exceptionally large feet.*

Photo by Ron Garrison

Careful plans had to be made. The first being how to remove one of the eggs!! If anyone should doubt the danger of going into a Harpy breeding complex to collect on of their eggs, let me assure you there isn't a keeper who is willing to risk life and limb for that. Instead this dangerous job had been carefully thought out during the construction of their impressively vast aviary. The nesting platform was a solid structure resembling a rock mound with a large stick nest on top. Into the mound they had built a tunnel which they could enter from outside the aviary. They had built a trapdoor facility, enabling a keeper to walk into the structure completely concealed and, using the trapdoor, slide his arm down a piece of plastic pipe to gently retrieve the egg. When this was attempted, the sitting female tried many time to snatch at the pipe and probably to crush this intrusion into the bargain, but ingenuity held out.

**MORE ABOUT THIS WINGED, GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURE OVERLEAF**



Photo by Ron Garrison

unsure as to whether the chick hatched and died of unknown causes, or possibly died while hatching.

The first chick continued to thrive and we were privileged to meet this chick (at 14 weeks old) and its keeper. Looking for the first time, as no other outsider had done before, at this large white downy youngster, I was mesmerised by the return of stare and that halting, fixed gaze, indicating it was unsure of human attention. Those fleeting moments were as if I had spied a wild Harpy in the Guyana rain forests. Here was the brilliance of breeding, once more portrayed in an eagle that falconers or ornithologists have rarely seen. As I looked back once again the youngster stood up and balanced itself upon two enormous feet. No mistaking what this was going to mature into.

The parent birds in the new aviary were again displaying to each other. We witnessed the male being coerced by the female into food finding displays. She would alight on a branch next to him and, while dropping her wings and head

*Left: Note very deep, strong beak.*

*Below: Even at this early age you can see the enormous feet.*

*Bottom: The young eagle being fed by the puppet..*

Meanwhile, the second egg remained in the nest and was well cared for by both parents, who took turns at incubating. The egg at the Avian Propagation centre hatched on 9th November to the elation of the staff. Now the real problem was raising the youngster without imprinting it. The method of using a glove puppet was chosen as it had previously been employed very successfully with their Californian Condor Chicks.

We were shown the brooder where the eaglet spent the first vital weeks of its sleepy existence and how the puppet was used to get it to feed.

Getting familiar with this hand attachment was tricky for the keepers and young Harpy. Struggling to keep the meat in the 'beak' while the youngster, with unsteady head movements, tries to grasp it, can be fraught moments but together they began to get the hang of it. During these periods of feeding, they played taped calls of the parents, this vocalising was to aid the stimulation process with the puppet.

The puppet, it must be said, was cleverly constructed and extremely lifelike. As the chick grew there was the difficulty of making sure that the keepers, when feeding, didn't show themselves, which meant feeding routines were elaborate affairs behind curtains. Within two weeks the chick had more than tripled its weight.

On 18th November, the second egg, being incubated by the adults, hatched. The following day it was nowhere to be found. Fragments of eggshell were found in the nest, which left keepers



Photo by Ken Kelley



Photo by Ken Kelley

posturing, would walk slowly and deliberately towards him, calling. The male would vacate the perch and fly the full perimeter of their immense aviary. In flight the wings are broad but relatively short and the tail is long. Using minimal wing flaps, alternating with a few glides it strongly resembles a spectacular Goshawk. Landing back on the perch beside her, a continuation of this interaction would begin again. In such surroundings the flight of this eagle is dramatic. The black and white plumage accentuates the sheer size of these birds and I could only wonder at how the senses would be reeling coming upon such giants in their natural habitat.

Habitat destruction and loss play a major part in the Harpy's diminishing populations in many regions. It is this factor which prompts the San Diego Zoo and the World Centre for Birds of Prey to concentrate funding and facilities to breed these magnificent raptors.

The youngster at San Diego continues to thrive and it is hoped that it will join the younger Harpy, which hatched at Boise, for a future breeding programme. The World Centre for Birds of Prey now has two more fertile eggs in incubation, and the signs for Harpy regeneration, in specialist breeding programmes, look good. Re-introduction to the wild in Venezuela is one of the most current aspects concerning both complexes which, given their current success,


may be something that will be about to happen in the very near future. It may not be within everyone's reach to travel to the rainforests to view Harpy Eagles, but it most certainly is within reach to visit Boise and particularly San Diego, which has a reputation second to none, as a zoo that has a strong bias on wildlife conservation. If you are travelling to the states this year

and have thought about California I strongly recommend that you pay them a visit and view their work on breeding successes.

I would like to give my thanks to Daniel J Brimm and David Remlinger: Zoological Society Curator of Birds, San Diego Zoo, for their time and energy in helping to create this article.



Photo by Ron Garrison



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# JAKE

Jake is a 10 months old Kestrel and had flown at displays before I purchased him about 5 1/2 months ago. I fly him at our local park most days, weather permitting. He is usually very obedient, even following me home on the rare occasion when he plays me up. He flies at 6 1/2 oz, but I have flown him at 7 oz without any problems at all.

On Friday 3 March, I weighed Jake and he was 6 1/2 oz. He was bating as we were heading towards the park. I cast him off. He flew around the park and landed in his usual tree waiting for me to get the lure out.

He stooped at the lure a couple of times and started gaining height, hovering above the trees. I thought he was enjoying himself, but when I saw a female join him and start hovering and diving with him, I started to worry. Out of sight they both went, but as he flew well the previous day at 6 3/4 oz, I thought I had nothing to worry about. Four hours later there was still no sign of him.

On Saturday, I spent another 6 hours at the park and surrounding area, but there was still no sign of him, only our local Kestrel flying through like a rocket.

On Sunday I started to give up as the weather was very cold. I looked for about 7 hours and came home blue. Monday, there was no sign, so I presumed he'd either had a bump on Friday and somebody had picked him up, or the weather had got to him.

Tuesday I only spent 20 minutes in the park. On returning home I put all his gear away, fearing the worse. Then at about 5 o'clock my friend phoned. "There's a guy here who may have found your bird," he said. "How do I know that he's yours?" he asked. I described his jesses and some damaged tail feathers, having forgotten to take the ring number in all the excitement. "I've fed him," he said "I've given him Mother's steak!"

When asked where he'd been found, he replied "Oh, I was down by the river, near the boating lake looking for poachers (Water Bailiff), when I saw him digging for worms. I saw these things on his legs and thought he was tangled, so I went up to him, but he flew off into a tree. I felt about in my pocket and the only thing I had was a red opal fruit, so I bit it in half, held it up and he flew to me."

## Dave Bright



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## 200% INCREASE

Dear David & Lyn

I would like to reply to part of the Hawk Board statement that appeared in the Spring '95 issue. The Hawk Board state 'Thefts of domestic Raptors have increased slightly, but at about 0.3% per annum are probably less than for many similar items.

This statement, in my opinion, is not only very misleading, it is totally wrong. The theft of domestic Raptors in the past 12 months has escalated. The figures for the past 3 years are:

1992	Total 23 Raptors stolen
1993	Total 23 Raptors stolen
1994	Total 69 Raptors stolen

I make this a rise in one year along of 200%. I do not consider this to be a 'slight' increase.

When I queried the 0.3% per annum, I was informed this was the total percentage of birds stolen against the total in captivity. I feel that as we no longer know how many Raptors are in captivity since de-registration and coupled with the fact the final figures for 1994 thefts had not yet been released, I believe that it was wrong of the Hawk Board to make this statement especially after being told that the figures worked out from my previous publications. I do feel that the Hawk Board should either wait until the final total is published or contact me and ask.

I'm also still wondering what a similar item is and what similar item has seen a crime rise of 200%.

Paul Beecroft

## RELEASING RESULTS

Dear David and Lyn,

I would like to ask Mike Everett, through the Letter Page of Falconers Magazine, the following questions:

1. Now, after 5 years of releasing Red Kites, are you still releasing them? If so, for how long do you see the need to do so, to get to the number of pairs you are aiming at.
2. As it is now 10 years since the last release of White-Tailed Eagles, do you not think it is about time that the programme was reviewed, as only 82 birds were released and it should have been 200 birds released in the first place?
3. I know that the Republic of Ireland are talking about releasing 200 White-Tailed Eagles and have, so far as I know, released one captive-bred bird in 1993. Could you tell us how that bird got on, and if the Republic of Ireland is going on with this release programme.

Yours, Paul Barham, London E3

Paul,

Here are the answers to your questions

1. Red Kite releases have now ceased at the first two sites (one in England, one in Scotland); however, there will be releases at a new, second English site beginning this year and plans for releases from a second Scottish site are under consideration. It is hoped that, over five years, about 100 birds will be released at each of the two new sites.

2. The White-tailed Eagle programme has been under continuous review: a computer model showed that it was likely that the 82 releases would not be enough to guarantee an established population, so further birds have been released during the past two years. The situation will remain under close review. Incidentally, there never was an official target of 200 releases.

3. As far as I know, the Irish experiment has been shelved for the time being, but the Irish Wildbird Conservancy may be able to provide more information.

RSPB

## CREATIVE EXCELLENCE

Dear David and Lyn

I would like to say that I am one of the privileged people to have attended the National Exhibition of carved birds at Pensthorpe.

Words cannot express how stunningly accurate some of the carvings were - please keep us posted for this years' exhibition.

I am still scanning every magazine for a club or association in my area - doesn't anybody keep or fly birds in North West Norfolk?

Keep up the excellent work and contributions and very informative features on all relevant topics.

Yours sincerely

Robert Rix

Kings Lynn, Norfolk

## WHETHER TO TETHER

Dear David and Lyn

In the Spring issue (page 36) you published an article by Neil Forbes entitled "Tethered Birds".

Overall, I found this advice was excellent, of which all concerned should take heed. I must, however, take issue with just one sentence and, indeed, probably only one word within that sentence. Neil quotes from the BFSS code, and say "small owls (ie all except possibly Eagle Owls) should never be tethered". If left unchallenged, that one sentence has the potential to cause harm to our fund-raising efforts in the coming shows season. It is the word "never" to which I cannot subscribe. I, and several other members of this charity, use owls on static displays at shows throughout the country, weekends only, during the show's season. They are tethered for only this tiny proportion of their lives. At all other times they are in aviaries. Given the respect for, and influential nature of both Neil and your magazine, it would be only natural for readers, who see our displays in the future, to believe we were acting unethically. The question of whether it is right or wrong to use some owls as we do, is a matter of opinion, not an indisputable fact either way. Each is entitled to hold and voice an opinion. Since the article was published, I have spoken to Neil Forbes, who has considerable direct knowledge of how this charity operates. He very honestly said that he accepted that to say small owls should never be tethered was too simplistic, and perhaps needed expanding on, as to the thinking behind that part of the code. He also stated that, personally, he has no problem with the way we display owls. I have also corresponded with one, and spoken to the other, very prominent figures in the falconry world whom, I understand, were primarily the supporters of this part of the code when it was formulated. Both were kind enough to explain to me their stance on this subject. While we undoubtedly disagree, I hope we can all accept and respect the other entitlement to their own views.

I ask that Raptor Rescue, and other show displays, be judged on individual merit, not on what others may or may not do, and that each observer form his or her opinion. I can now have no illusions that some very popular forces are ranged against us. That is not a pleasant prospect, but so be it.

I reiterate previous offers to debate any concerns about Raptor Rescue as it is today, not as it may have been perceived in the now fairly distant past.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Robins, LRK, Chairman

## BOTH SIDES

Dear David & Lyn

I must comment on two letters that appeared in your Spring issue.

First, Mr Clark should not be proud of his total bag of fifteen rabbits in one day with his Harris hawk. For a start it is not sporting practice. Falconry is about flight quality as much as it is about the quarry. A responsible falconer should realise that two or three kills are more than enough in any day and shows that the falconer understands the need to replicate the wild in his sport, if it is to gain the continued respect it deserves. So, please, while we all know how good Harris hawks are, no more of this boasting. It does us no favours.

Secondly, I would caution Mr Billingsley against taking the views of any publication as the only side to a story. He would not vote for one political party without hearing the policy of the others, and I would advise him to do the same for field sports, especially hound sports. I hope he is a British Field Sports Society member as well as a recipient of the Wildlife Guardian. He should remember that the pages of the LACS publication regularly contain articles intended to promote the end of falconry.

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Kester, Marden, Kent

## QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Dear David and Lyn,

In recent issues a lot has been written about the image of Falconry, and the part Falconers have to play. But what about the part breeders have to play? Nothing has been mentioned about the role of breeders in providing well balanced and well mannered birds.

Why is it, when so many birds are being bred now, supply having outstripped demand, that some breeders still insist on double clutching and hand/creche rearing birds, some on a large scale. These commercial breeders are only interested on the bottom line on their balance sheet, not in the birds welfare as they so often state.

I purchased a male Harris Hawk that was bred last summer, and during its training and then flying, its manners got progressively worse. This particular Hawk was sold with a signed statement confirming that it was parent reared. My relationship with this Hawk, has now come to an end, when it struck me in the face which resulted in a wound around the eye, which fortunately looked worse than it actually was.

What image for Falconry does this portray to my family, friends and neighbours who hear the hawk scream day or night, or indeed others, had this Hawk been in somebody else's possession? What life will this Hawk lead now, probably being passed around from each disillusioned owner? Is this respect for the birds that provide the breeder with a fairly decent income?

The typical attitude from some of these breeders is all too familiar, in that it is either a) The Hawk itself - bored or naturally aggressive or b) Down to the Falconers bad practice, or lack of knowledge. In some instances this can be true, but I have flown various shortwings now, including other Harris Hawks, and am coming up to my 9th season. I certainly don't profess to be the best Falconer around, but by

no means the worst. The Hawks that have been in my possession have been flown and hunted regularly, weather permitting.

But I am concerned that people coming into Falconry for the first time end up with some of these birds in their possession, and due to no fault of their own, will know no differently.

I know of a small breeder in Rayleigh, Essex who relies totally on nature, and I have seen his birds trained, flown and hunting, and they are a pleasure to possess. I understand that in some cases eggs, or young, have to be removed from the parents, but surely not every egg from every pair on a large scale.

I respect that there are a lot of genuine breeders in this country, and I don't wish to tarnish these with the same brush. But I feel let down by trusting somebody's word, paying a considerable amount of money and devoting my time and energy. The end result? A poor Hawk that is unbalanced, not a pleasure to possess, and one that fate may not be so kind to.

Yours faithfully  
T Basri,  
Romford, Essex

## NEED A REST?

Dear David and Lyn

I would like to add my name to the growing list of falconers who have left their birds in the safe hands of Terry and Carol at Raptors Rest.

I left my bird with them and I was happy to do so. Every care and consideration has been thought of. If you have the situation where business or pleasure takes you away and you're looking for peace of mind then give them a look. If anything, Jem and Zsar will be pleased of the extra company,

Yours sincerely,  
Amanda Leeming,  
Norwich

## FEATHER QUERY

Dear Lyn and Dave,

I have a query which I hope one of your reader's can answer.

In July 1993, I became the keeper of my first Hawk - a female eyass Red-Tail twelve weeks old. My first hunting season was not good as we had winds and rain most of the time. I live in Lancashire on the West coast. So, on February 6th, I put her up to moult and all went well till late in August. She cast her first deck feather on March 1st and had all but finished when, in the last week of August she cast the first feather again.

This can and does happen if a feather is badly damaged, but this was not the case. It was perfect in every way. No-one locally can explain why she cast this deck feather twice. I am beginning to think it may be something I did, or perhaps her diet.

This is a run-down of what I did and her her diet during her first moult. It may throw some light on it.

Took her out most days for two or three hours in fields where we hunt, but only until school broke up for the summer holidays, as children play and people walk their dogs on the land. I never allowed her to get upset at any time.

Her diet consists of: Doc's, Turkey neck and wings and Rabbit (bred for showing). These are fed to her in that order, 4 to 5 oz per day with one day per week without any food. She also has A1 Raptor vitamins 3 times a week. This is a high protein diet, but while out with her in fields, she is allowed to exercise to expend some energy and keep her weight steady at 3lb 5oz.

So, if anyone can help me with this query, I would be very grateful. Does this happen if at all, frequently, or just the odd time. This is the question. What is the answer?

I await the answer with interest.

John Welsby,  
Carleton, Lancs.

## THE GOOD, THE BAD OR THE IGNORANT

Dear David and Lyn

It is with some regret that I feel it necessary to write this letter. It concerns the sale of birds to people who are clearly unsuited to keep them by experienced people who really should know better.

With my partner David Morris, I run The Westweald Falconry School, offering equipment sales, food supplies, field activities and a very comprehensive introductory falcon course. Although I fully realise that there are many people better qualified to teach than I. (I was taught by Steve and Emma Ford and hold them in the highest regard for their abilities to teach and the way in which they represent falconry generally. They instilled in me the importance of commitment in my chosen sport but also the need for knowledge prior to purchasing my first bird).

It appears to me that the need for prior knowledge seems secondary to some raptor breeders who will happily sell birds to the unknowledgeable, while the cash is freely available in suitable quantities.

I do not consider myself an expert in the field of falconry and have an ongoing desire to better my understanding at every opportunity. I nevertheless feel extremely sad at the number of people who arrive at

my shop asking for the necessary equipment to kit themselves and their birds, yet have not even the most basic knowledge of the equipment required or indeed even the quantities and types of food that they should be feeding for a balanced diet. As for accommodation, I'm sure falconers everywhere have heard horror stories about birds being housed in totally unsuitable/undersized quarters at one time or another. A kestrel in a cardboard box is my most recent disappointment. It has always been our policy at Westweald, to offer as much free advice, as frequently as necessary to inexperienced beginners as an aid to learning and understanding and this I am happy to do. Why then, are there a number of people out there, better qualified than myself and indeed some who are well known in falconry circles, who seem happy to relieve total novices of their hard earned cash regardless of the eventual (and possibly fatal) consequences without questioning their ability or understanding. I know of two such people locally. From a falconer who is passionate about his sport and even more passionate about the well being of captive birds everywhere can I ask for a little more thought from those who are selling birds only for the financial rewards. There quite literally are lives at stake. Thank you for an increasingly good magazine and happy hawking to all your readers.

Yours sincerely  
Brian J Smith, Kent



## MOVING ON

Dear Dave and Lyn

I would like to express my dismay at the advert in the Winter '94 issue for "Effective Falconry Training", page 13. The photograph advertising this company shows no respect for the Quarry and this is the kind of photo that the anti's love. We all know that falconry is the art of taking quarry with trained birds of prey and the end result, if we're lucky, is a kill - but we don't have to glorify it.

May I also write in reply to John Ellis' letter "Buzard Problem". If Mr Ellis has a pair of breeding buzzards on his land, it would be advisable to hunt elsewhere - before his Harris Hawk or one of the buzzards are killed. They were there first and should be left alone to live their lives in peace. To carry on hunting there would be tempting fate and the life of a bird is not worth that.

Yours faithfully,  
Mark Mooney

## BEGINNERS EYE VIEW

Dear Editor

As a beginner wishing to pursue my interest in Falconry, I was alarmed by the number of short (two/three day) courses which give the impression that once taken they apparently leave you qualified to be a 'Falconer'. After some inquiries I embarked on a well recommended five day course which I felt would give me a thorough grounding in the sport. The course covered all the necessary basics together with much of the background of the sport. After completing the course I feel confident that I have gained enough knowledge to contemplate owning my own bird. However, the course made me realise that it will be a long time before I am a good falconer. As a result of this I am concerned that many of the courses on offer do not fall under some form of official recognition as it is essential for the future of falconry that newcomers are instructed to a consistent level whether it is through an official qualification or at least a form of regulated learning.

I am in a position to see first hand the irreparable damage that educating the public incorrectly can cause. All falconers must ensure that whenever they are on show, whether it is publicly or privately, that they present a 'public friendly' image. This can only be done if the person concerned has had the proper grounding and fully understands what falconry entails. If falconry is going to enter the twenty first century successfully then it has to start at the grass root level by ensuring that it is done by properly trained people.

Yours sincerely  
Edward Gwyn,  
Wolverhill,  
Banwell

## PROPER PROPAGANDA

Dear David and Lyn

I read the letter from Mr Billingsley "Something To Think about" on page 31, Spring '95 with interest. I firmly believe that Falconry ought to stand alongside other Fieldsports when they are under attack. The recent McFall Bill being a case in point, because as sure as day follows night, if and when they go, Falconry, as a small minority sport could be next!

I do not know of the publication or articles of which Mr Billingsley writes but it would be surprising for an anti-Fieldsports (the word Bloodsport is itself the jargon of the "Anti") publication to say something complimentary and highlight best practice. The adage "believe nothing you hear and only half you see" might apply.

Undoubtedly, as in all walks of life there are people who break the rules, moral and legal, but that should not condemn the decent majority who don't.

All Fieldsports exist in an increasingly hostile political and social environment. Of course we must treat our Hawks and the quarry they pursue with respect, but at the same time we should not fall for the rubbish and propaganda that may one day be aimed at us!

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Garner,  
Cumbria

## SOMETHING ELSE TO THINK ABOUT

The Editors

I read with dismay an article written by Ron Billingsley in the Spring '95 issue of your magazine. The biggest load of sentimental clap trap I have ever read. Another two issues of 'Wildlife Guardian' and he'll be a fully paid-up member of LACS. Does he really think that their publication is going to try and make blood sports look acceptable? Has he heard of propaganda? What on earth makes him different from the 'so-called sporting Gentlemen' he abhors? Falconry is the taking of wild quarry with trained birds of prey, and I'm sorry to tell you Ron old chap, but that means killing! Yes, 'a sad point' indeed, but it happens, and if it doesn't happen I'm afraid it's going to have to be the African Grey Parrot for you my friend! What is this 'sad point' you describe, when your hawk actually does the thing you've trained it to do, take quarry? Picture the scene. Ron flushes a cock pheasant for his Goshawk and after an equally matched chase that any wild goshawk would be proud of, Ron's charge manages to get a foot to her quarry and hauls him down. Ron, panting after his sticky run across a ploughed field, on seeing his hawk do exactly what he's hopefully trained it to do, bursts into tears. I don't think so.

Ron tells us that as human beings we must show compassion or we'll be no better than the 'dumb beasts'. So what do we call a man who takes advantage of a lesser life than he perceives himself to be? A big bully and hardly civilised! Ron respects and admires his quarry so much that he kills it! Ron, please!

We are told that the 'wild critters' have to face the menace of predators hour by hour, day by day in their natural habitat. Absolutely right, but now they haven't got their wild counterparts to deal with, they've also got a blood-thirsty human Ron Billingsley after them as well. Heaven preserve us!

What we have to ask ourselves as falconers, and yes I am a falconer, is the question, why do we train birds of prey? Is it to only call them back from a tree to our fist? Is it to fly them in Raptor display? Are they to stroke and pet as a replacement to the family pooch? I'm afraid

not, we train them to take quarry, and no, the number of prey in a season doesn't matter, but to own a hawk of any repute, it has to do what all hawks do in the wild and that is to take quarry in a style that is acceptable to the standards of falconry. Yes, yes, I hear you cry, of course we know all that, but we still have the inexplicable dilemma of why do we as these 'compassionate' even 'god-like' human beings who set ourselves above our 'fellow creatures' have to hunt when the society we live in provides most men/women with an unlimited supply of affordable food? Please don't tell me that your sole purpose as falconers is to provide meat for you and your family.

What we have difficulty in explaining rationally to any non falconer, fox hunter, hare courser, beagler, deer stalker, game bird shooter or anyone who participates in any shape or form of hunting, is what kind of enjoyment do we get out of a sport when ultimately it will end in the death of a 'fellow creature', Can we really call ourselves civilised, compassionate, respectful to all living things as Ron does, if this is what we do? No, to appease the opponents of any country sport, we'd better get our hawks entered on cabbage or other form of plant life. They eat vegetables in the wild, don't they?

Could it be, that we as falconers still hold on to that skill, inherited from our ancestors who didn't have Sainsburys, Tescos, Macdonalds, Burger King or the local fish and chip shop to pop down to when food got short, an understanding that could stand us in good stead when man has to rely on his natural, yet unconscious instinct to survive. You wouldn't get many of the starving in Rwanda, Cheshnya or Bosnia turning down a plate of meat and two veg. Come to think of it what a decadent society we live in when we can actually choose whether we eat meat or not!

Let's not beat around the bush, this is a real thing, we are hunters, maybe survivors, falconers in every sense of the word and most importantly we enjoy it! So Ron, please don't burden us with your new found guilt, the problem is yours!

Fight the good fight my friends.  
Amen

Jack Alston,  
Suffolk

# THE LITTLE OWL

MIKE EVERETT

There is a short period in late winter when I drive the 18 miles from The Lodge to my home just as the light is going - a welcome time this, after the darkness of the mid-winter months, but significant for looking for birds too. This is the time of day when the Little Owls are seen best, just as they emerge from their daytime hiding-places and sit out on their regular perches. A few weeks later and I am too early for them.

Dusk is not the only time I see these birds. Sometimes I find them sitting out in the early mornings in winter, while during Spring and Summer, they often seem to spend large parts of the day in full view. The well-known, semi-diurnal habits of Little Owls make them one of the easiest owls of all to see, but for all that they are so obvious, and so regular in their choice of perches, they can sometimes be very elusive and censusing them properly can be surprisingly time-consuming.

Over the years, I have found pairs in at least ten places along my 18-mile route, but not all of them appear every year, or at least not where they are easily seen from the road; if they move even 100 yards away from the road, I would probably never see them at all, so I have to be very cautious about interpreting my sightings. In any one year, I suppose I can only be sure of four or five pairs. Not having the time to make systematic observations. I cannot be too dogmatic about pairs which apparently "disappear". One pair I am seeing regularly this year are in a traditional site which has not been used for some years - but what I don't know is whether other nesting-places in this territory have been used in the intervening years. Another pair which have apparently disappeared nested close to a busy road and lost most, if not all of their young to traffic accidents: are there still Little Owls there, and if so, have they simply found a better, safer site away from the road? I wish I knew! The only currently empty territory I can be sure about is one quite close to home in which a local farmer deliberately burned down the nest-tree.

Despite all the gaps in my knowledge of these birds, I can say with a fair degree of confidence that the Little Owl population along my 18-mile route has not changed much during the last 25 years.

This is probably because my route takes in a nice mix of farmland, small-holdings and parkland edge, with lots of old timber and some good hedgerows - good Little Owl habitat, in fact, which looks much the same as it did when I first got to know it in the early 1970's.

Trends have been rather different in many parts of the much more intensively farmed arable land of East Anglia and the East Midlands, where the Little Owl is scarcer than it was in the 1960's. The history of our Little Owl population is one of assorted ups-and-downs. It begins with a series of introductions - the Little Owl is not native to our islands. The first birds were released as long ago as 1842, but the more extensive and widespread releases of the 1870's established them more firmly and by 1900 there were Little Owls breeding regularly in Kent, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. There was something of a population explosion up to 1930, after which the spread continued more slowly; by 1960, Little Owls had bred in every English and Welsh country and had trickled over the border into a few places in southern Scotland. They had become a familiar bird in open lowland country.

But there were local decreases too, and others which were more general. Little Owls are probably very susceptible to cold winters and evidently suffered badly during the particularly severe weather of 1946-47 and 1962-63. From the mid 1950's to the mid 1960's, some declines were associated with pesticides - the same problems that affected Sparrowhawks, Peregrines and other raptors and owls.

The most up-to-date assessment of the Little Owl population comes from the *New Atlas of Breeding Birds (1988-91)*. This suggests that there are 6,000 - 12,000 pairs and clearly shows that the birds, while present in

many areas, are most thinly distributed in Eastern England (that part of the country with the most intensive arable farming), extreme South-West England and Wales. Because Little Owl distribution was mapped for the original *Atlas* for 1968-72, we have a good comparison with the situation 20 years ago. Little Owls have declined most markedly in the most intensively cultivated areas of Lincolnshire, East Anglia, the East Midlands and South-West England, but at the

ers, though, welcome them about the place.

Nearly sixty years ago, a remarkably wide-ranging investigation of the food of the Little Owl was carried out, mainly in response to accusations that large numbers of gamebird chicks were being killed. The results completely exonerated the owls, showing that they took hardly any gamebirds and in fact fed principally on small rodents, and, during the breeding season, small birds - especially Starlings, House



Male Little Owl at nest hole with chick, which has just been given a Ghost Moth to eat. Photo by: Dennis Green.

same time have increased along the Welsh borders and in Northern England.

Little Owls and intensive arable farming do not go very well together, but where hedgerow trees, pollarded willows, small pastures, orchards and old parkland survive, they will continue to thrive. Nowadays, they are not persecuted to any great extent, although I have met a surprising number of ignorant people over the years who still think of them as vermin. Most farm-

Sparrows and thrushes. Insects and their larvae, and earthworms, are commonly eaten too.

Raptor enthusiasts, and indeed most conservationists, are often surprised to learn that this study was one of the first of its kind ever undertaken in this country. The next time you see one of these jaunty, fierce-eyed little hunters, bear in mind that it has a special place in the long and often frustrating history of our efforts to tell the world the truth about our raptors and owls.

# FALCONERS & RAPTOR FAIR

RON MORRIS

## HAS IT REALLY COME ROUND ALREADY?

For myself and the organising team the next Falconers Fair starts the day after the preceding one has finished. There really is so much to plan and get sorted that it would be a hopeless task if it were all left to two or three months before the event. Yet it does seem to come round quicker and quicker each year. As the fair itself grows, so does the organisation that has to go into it. Fortunately I have a good team and between us all we seem to get everything to run pretty smoothly. This year the event will again be at Althorp House, nr Northampton, on the bank holiday weekend of May 28th & 29th. Due to the ever increasing size of the fair and the crowds that attend, they are shifting the position within the grounds slightly. However, access will still be from the A428, with the nearest Motorway junctions being either 16 or 18 of the M1. Each of the previous Falconers Fairs has grown in stature year by year and this year should be no exception. The amount of overseas visitors attracted has always pleased us and judging from enquiries and correspondence received, this year will see more than ever.

Nevertheless, we must remember that the event is a unique one, not just here in the UK, but throughout the world. Visitors from Canada, North Africa, Arabia and even Japan are now the norm as opposed to the exception.

The weatherings and flying displays will again be up to their very high standard and it is hoped that an even greater diversity of raptors will be on show. Bryan Paterson and Terry Large will be the main men in the arena and will no doubt be calling on various friends to fly a falcon or two in the main ring with them. Rumour has it that a Merlin will be flown again this year, something that proved to be so tremendously popular when flown at a previous fair.

Roger James will be giving his superb falconry dog displays again. These went down so well with the crowds last year and attracted nothing

but universal praise. Rogers approach is so refreshing from the normal working dog display and also very informative.

Other ring events will include the beautiful Stallions of El Caballo De Espana. As an exhibition of horsemanship at its finest, this display really does take some beating. Also, making a return are the wonderful musicians from France Le Rallye Bonnelles.

A major growth area of the Falconers Fair and, without doubt, one of the major success stories of the event is the Sporting and Wildlife Art Exhibition. In fact so popular is this side of the event, with both artists and public alike, that every year the size of the marquee is increased and every year it is fully booked by November. Congratulations must go to Chris Christoforou for all the tremendous work and effort he puts into pulling this side of the event together each year.

The lectures and seminars will be as last year and we hope that as many people as last year will take advantage of the wealth of talent that is at their disposal for two days.

The various clubs will again be on hand to help people that would like to join a local organisation or just need to be steered in the right direction. As well as the local clubs three major national clubs will also be well represented.

Raptor Rescue will be in attendance with their normal display. The public have always been very generous when it comes to Raptor Rescue, but as the Falconry Fair is visited by literally thousands of people whose main love in life

is raptors, it would be great if each person attending made a conscious effort and just gave fifty pence, think what that organisation could achieve in the coming year.

Everybody now knows that this fair sees the largest gathering of equipment makers and falconry related products each year, so it pays to have a browse around to see all that is on offer before making a purchase. It is the only opportunity you will get of viewing all the different suppliers' products side by side.

It should not be overlooked that this event is twinned with the Northamptonshire Game Fair. So as well as all the falconry activities there will be, Hounds, fishing, Stickdressing, Terriers, Lurchers, Ferrets etc. With a total of 150 trade stands this years fair will be bigger than ever. Car parking is still free and admission is only £5.50 for adults and £1.00 for children. The show starts each day at 10am and goes right through 'till 6pm. See you there.

**David & Lyn would like to take this opportunity thank everybody for their continued support and look forward to seeing friends, old and new at the Fair.**



*For places to stay while at the Fair please see overleaf*



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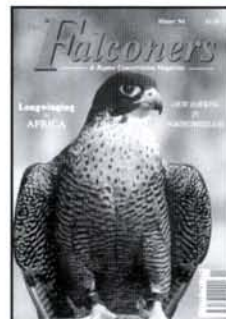
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# Raptor *k*

*Nicholas Kester*  
British  
Falconers' Club

## ELECTROCUTION, IS IT AN ISSUE?

Well, it most certainly is to those who have had the misfortune to have a hawk killed this way. The second question is equally critical. Is anyone liable?

Some eight years ago, I lost a female redtail to a power line in a way that I thought could only be a chance accident. We were hunting in an open field in the centre of which was a pond. I had put in the dog in the hope of flushing a moorhen. The hawk was sitting quietly on my fist watching the pond intently. Suddenly she bated hard and because I thought she had seen something move that had escaped my eye, I cast her off. It turned out to be nothing. She described a lazy circle around the pond, refused my offered glove and set off to an impossible stand. With only moderate concern I realised that she had changed course and was heading for the electricity power post that fed a pair of farm workers' cottages on the edge of the lane. As she had taken stand in power poles before, I expected her to head for the cross bar. However, it was not to be. Without deviating she landed on the transformer box located halfway up the pole and, as she closed her wings, bracketed the two supply lines: live and neutral. With her feet earthed to the box, there was a flash and a bang and she was dead. I was horrified. Nothing could have prepared me for such an awful and unexpected loss. But, as I have said, I believed it was a freak accident and accepted it as such.

When, some years later, I heard of a similar event in the East Anglian region of the British Falconers' Club, I wondered how "chance" these events actually were. A call from a falconer in Berkshire convinced me that they were far from unusual. A report in the club's newsletter produced some ten responses with most of the deaths due to transformer boxes. Only two had resulted from main power lines, and none from the super lines; the pylons depicted as marching in a caring way across our country in the advertisements.

So who was to blame? Certainly not the falconers, who have been around far longer than the power supply lines. In any case why should we face these hazards every time we fly our hawks? Just imagine the row if dogs or cattle were placed in danger, let alone racing pigeons. So what have the power companies to say to all this? Regrettably the answer has been fairly unhelpful, which hardly reflects their "green" image. A falconer in the west country even went so far as to claim through the courts only to fail. While closer to London, another got a settlement on a technicality after nearly twelve months of ceaseless badgering. Recently a member in the same region lost her redtail and called the electricity board for advice and compensation. Her husband reports that the person spoken to came as close to a snigger as was possible. You can imagine the office comment. "Got a real nut-

ter here, John."

I wrote to the RSPB asking for advice. But they have no record of any regular deaths of wild raptors because of power lines or transformer boxes. Hardly surprising when you consider that the poles are usually next to roads, so the casualties, when not removed by foxes, may well be misconstrued as road deaths. Nobody has bothered with research, unlike America where this is considered a serious issue.

We even got onto an edition of BBC Countryfile with Jim Chick being interviewed and BFC members sending in photos of their lost hawks. However, apart from a company making pigeon deterrents, a nothing response from the authorities. What would it take to persuade them to insulate the two lines from the cross poles to the transformer box?

In October, I was asked to address a group of falconers in Essex on the subject. Unusually, one of their number had two hawks electrocuted on power lines, not transformer boxes. One had survived thanks to the telemetry which took the main charge. Better fried transmitter than hawk we agreed.

I recently heard that there were some 7,000 hawk keepers registered in the UK. Speculation by my peers is that only about 4,000 of these practice field falconry. (You can argue about these numbers for hours, but one really does wonder about all the others.) But how many of them have lost hawks to power lines? I need to know for two reasons. First, I want ammunition for the assault on the electricity companies. Secondly, I think the RSPB should hear what happens to our hawks because it must then happen to their wild cousins.

Would all readers who have experienced this write to me via this publication? A postcard will do. All I need is a date, whether the hawk died or survived, the species, type of power line and what happened when/if you contacted the power company.

I will write up all my findings in future issues. So if you care about this let me know and tell your friends.

**Adrian Williams of The Welsh Hawking Club has also written to us on the same subject and has comments from the Electricity Boards as follows:** Carolyn Whittle, Press Officer for Midland Electric simply said "It does not happen. It is not a problem in our area." SWALEC PR Officer, Alan Hapgood said "We are not aware of a significant problem, but would like more information."

**He then goes on to make the same request as Nicholas Kester;**

Maybe, if we could collate enough information on the number of incidents, with precise details of species involved, type of equipment involved ie transformer or pole etc, in fact, as many written details as possible, then perhaps

we can approach the electricity companies and suggest preventative methods. Perhaps the Hawk Board could liaise.

If you have any information or comments, please send them in to The Falconers Magazine.

**We are quite prepared to accept and forward any correspondence on this subject and to report any findings in the future, also we will help in any way we can to push for better safety measures from the electricity companies.**

Please send any letters to:

The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road  
Burton Latimer, Kettering  
Northants, NN15 5QP

Below is a letter sent to us by Dr Nick Fox on the subject:

Dear David & Lyn

Britain is getting more and more crowded with technological pollution which is a hazard to wildlife. In the last two years we have had one falcon killed in the blades of a generator, one broken his wing on a strand of barbed wire and one electrocuted, (not to mention one kicked to death when he caught his crow under a cow).

On our farm in the north I had alterations made to eight electricity poles to try to make them safe for falcons at hack. The crossarms were increased to two metres and plastic shrouds fitted over them, the old transformer was removed and replaced with a modern one, shrouded and fitted with insulated jumpers and an insulated, single wire to the house. On one occasion five gyr hybrids roosted on the transformer, presumably for warmth.

Last season while I was out hawking, the boys gave a peregrine/saker a pipe-opener and she landed on a transformer in the rain. there was big flash, she got killed and several neighbour' power went off. I made a claim against Northern electric on the grounds that I had advised them that their installation was hazardous and had paid for modifications according to their specifications. Their engineers admitted that they had left a portion of wire exposed, thus leading to the electrocution. The electricity company owes a 'duty of care' over its appliances, notwithstanding any statement made to the contrary, written or implied.

Without of course admitting liability, they have now decided to settle my claim out of court, which means no legal precedent is set. However, a decision to settle a claim in full, unopposed, is an admission of sorts. If any readers have an area where they regularly fly their birds it may well be worth notifying their electric company and either make some simple modifications, or at least obtain some acknowledgement in writing that they are aware that hawks are being flown and of their duty of care over their installations, should an accident happen. it will not bring a treasured bird back to life, but it may make them more aware of just how dangerous their equipment is. Most of the engineers I talked to said that they had never even considered a problem like this  
NICK FOX

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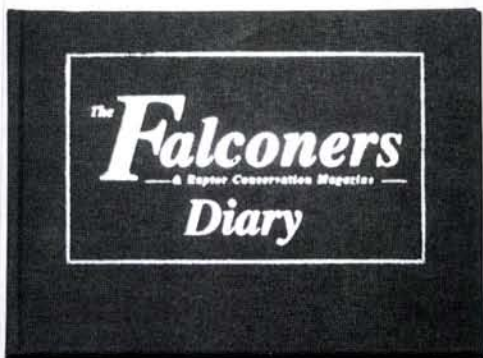
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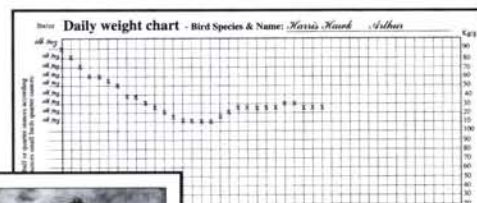
Found commonly in South America and Mexico, they are  
commonly hunted on the 'washed hawk', or near transitory  
wings.

Their main quarry species in this country are rabbit, pheasant,  
maggot and partridge, although females will also take hares. They have  
become commonly known as the 'washed hawk', or near transitory  
wings, although of late for long periods of time they can usually become  
bored and further plucking is becoming a common problem of Harris hawks  
where put up for the night.

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 where there is a lot of frost about. It would be a mistake  
to think that because Harris hawks are so available that they do not have  
the same hunting instincts that is so obvious in, for example, the  
accipiter. Far from it, if left untrained with quarry they will take it upon  
themselves to fly and catch the nearest available, usually small  
game, be it a rabbit or someone's Jack Russell. If flown properly and kept  
in 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  
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mation to hand.



DATE	SPECIES	NAME	WEIGHT	FOOD GIVEN	QUARRY TAKEN
18.11.94	Harris hawk	Arthur	168 Sg	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. Looks like tomorrow lunch is sorted out. Meeting John tomorrow to fly his Redtail. Plenty of quarry this morning, fingers crossed for tomorrow.					
19.11.94	Harris hawk	Arthur	168 Sg	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. Looks like tomorrow lunch is sorted out. Meeting John tomorrow to fly his Redtail. Plenty of quarry this morning, fingers crossed for tomorrow.					
20.11.94	Harris Hawk	Arthur	168 Sg	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. Looks like tomorrow lunch is sorted out. Meeting John tomorrow to fly his Redtail. Plenty of quarry this morning, fingers crossed for tomorrow.					

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