

The *Falconers*
— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

Autumn 1995

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EAGLE



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Pointer**

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HAWK IN
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COMMENT

Hello Everybody,

We have 44 pages this issue, with a real International flavour, with articles from The Philippines, The Falklands, Zimbabwe, America and New Zealand.

The House of Commons has given the green light to the Wild Mammals Protection Bill. The Bill will make it an offence to "cruelly kick, beat, impale, burn, crush or drown any wild mammal". But there is an amendment to the wording of the original bill, under phrase 'torture'. Huntsmen were worried that they could be prosecuted under this part of the bill so they campaigned for it to be altered. The RSPCA, though, say they will still continue to campaign for all hunting with hounds to be outlawed.

We have made a precis of Nick Fox's Aspects of Killing Wild Animals in Britain, anyone who wants a copy should send an A5 s.a.e to the usual address.

Well, we wish you a happy hunting season, and look forward to hearing your tales from the hawking field.

David & Lyn

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EDITORS: LYN & DAVID WILSON

DESIGN: D PERKINS

ADVERTISING: LYN WILSON

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY:

THE FALCONERS & RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP

Telephone: (01536) 722794 **Fax:** (01536) 722794

Subscriptions: UK & Eire £14.00, Europe £18.00, Airmail £28.00

Cheque/Postal Order payable to: The Falconers Magazine.

For more details phone 01536 722794

The views expressed in this magazine are the views of the author. No responsibility for the quality of goods or services offered in this magazine can be accepted by the publishers or the printers, and the advertisements are accepted in good faith.

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COVER: Sakrette. Belonging to Rutland Falconry C'tre Photo D W

THE WILD ARTS SOCIETY'S ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF WILDLIFE ART.

10th - 16th August 1995
Westminster Galleries, London

Since its inception in 1992, The Wild Arts Society has held its annual exhibitions in deepest rural Kent, but demands for this high quality exhibit to be placed before a wider public has persuaded the organisers to bring this superb show to London. The exhibition celebrates the work of the Society's one hundred and sixty members who

come from all over the UK as well as countries as far flung as Australia, Sweden, Spain and South Africa.

Work is presented in a wide and diverse range of subjects, styles and mediums.

For too long Wildlife Art has been the Cinderella of the Arts world, now organisations such as The Wild Arts Society are helping to raise public aware-



EAGLE ROCK BY KEN STROUD

ness to the high standards and presentation of the work created by artists specialising in this exciting genre.

For further information please contact:
Ken Stroud
01227 464739

DANNY TRIUMPHS AGAIN

Danny Keeber, from Northampton has won another Livewire award. He was the winner of the Eastern Region Finals and won £500 and a bottle of champagne. Since he started in 1993 he has established a reputation and has bookings for flying displays up to 1997. He is, at the moment, negotiating with a local hospital to provide avian control, to get rid of their pigeon problem. He is hoping to set up a falconry centre next year, providing displays, falconry equipment, etc. He said "Livewire provided help and encouragement in the early stages of my business, when no other small business support agency wanted to know.

A NEW VENTURE FOR THE LAKELAND BIRD OF PREY CENTRE

Karen Gray & James Buttle, of the Lakeland Falconry Centre, are proud to announce that they have been awarded a £30,000 contract to supply falconry services to the £42.5 million Royal Armouries Museum, to be opened in Leeds in April 1996. This opportunity will include the creation of two new, full-time, posts of 'Falconers to the Royal Armouries'. This exciting Museum development will become the north of England's newest museum and visitor attraction, and a venue of National and International importance. It will house much of the world famous collection of arms and armour, currently housed in the Tower of London.

Only about 10% of the collection can be displayed there so the new museum is designed to show an extensive range in five spacious galleries, complete with the latest techniques of interactive computer information and video display.

The New museum will tell the stories of the use and development of arms and armour from around the world. Outside, on the Waterfront, the visitor experience continues, with dramatic enactments to recreate the activities of the warrior and the hunter from past civilisations and history.

Lakeland Birds of Prey Centre will be supplying a collection of Birds of Prey, which will reflect the Historical

RED KITE Viewing Trail Opens.

A new project has been launched which will enable visitors to their centres to watch Red Kites in the wild. With focal points at Llandoverly, Llandrindod Wells, Llanwrtyd Wells, Ponterwyd, Rhayader and the RSPB Dinas nature reserve.

Live camera link-ups offer outstanding views of breeding and feeding activities. During the winter visitors can watch Kites and other carrion-eating birds, such as Ravens and Hen Harriers, from hides at winter feeding stations at Llanwrtyd Wells and Gigrin Farm, Rhayader, without

disturbing the birds.

It is the result of an initiative by the RSPB, the project is led by the Society and run by a consortium of local and statutory authorities.

The Red Kite success story owes a great deal to the efforts and continued support of local communities in protecting and monitoring the birds in their area.

Tony Walker, Kite Country project officer, said: "Until now only licensed researchers have enjoyed such a privileged view of the kites' family life - from now on everybody can share it.

use of Hawks in Medieval times, with two full-time falconers to care for and manage them. The birds will be housed in the purpose-built Mews, part of the Menagerie Court, where horses and dogs will also live. The birds and animals will take part in the Tournaments and displays in the Tilt Yard, the first to be built in the UK for 400 years.

The centres' falconers will inform and interact with the public in the Mews, and we will train the Museum's Interpreters; professional actors, who will perform the re-enactments, to handle and work with the birds. A number will be used in

falconry demonstrations, while others will be for viewing only. The Lakeland Bird of Prey Centre staff and birds will also be involved with the range of facilities on offer to Companies for Sponsorship Events and corporate hospitality opportunities in the Conference and Entertainment Areas.

We are delighted to have secured the contract and are confident the museum will provide an exciting new location for birds, falconers and their activities, which will complement the continuing improvement and expansion of facilities at the centres' home in Lowther.

CONVICTIONS

Derek William CANNING of Hexham, Northumberland appeared at Newcastle Crown Court in May 1995 in answer to the following charges:

1. Possession of 14 Peregrine Falcons in 1993 for the purposes of sale.

This charge was brought under section 3(1) Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985.

2. Four charges of selling Peregrines in 1992

3. Two charges of selling Peregrines in 1993

These charges were also under the same Act.

CANNING pleaded Not guilty to all of these charges.

This case was reported as being extremely complex as no alleged parent birds were available. From a total of 14 Peregrines seized and another six traced, DNA testing showed that they came from six families and at least five different females. This was inconsistent with the number of alleged parents. Some of the birds that were claimed to be siblings actually contained birds from more than one family.

The jury involved in the case returned a unanimous Verdict of Guilty to all charges.

The Judge then sentenced CANNING to 18 months imprisonment. This is the severest penalty to be imposed on a British Wildlife dealer and legal history was made when he was sentenced to imprisonment.

In passing sentence Judge CARLIDGE said, "Yours suggested breeding program was a sham and through this case you have taken enormous trouble to disguise your offences. In a sense you were stealing from the public what was their own heritage".

All Peregrines were subject of forfeiture.

Bird of Prey Persecution Continues

The illegal persecution of birds of prey is still rife in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, says the RSPB, in a newly published report. The report shows that during 1994 some of our rarest birds of prey, including red-kite, goshawk and peregrine, suffered from nest-robbing, nest destruction, shooting and poisoning.

Coming hard on the heels of the publication of the 1994 figures for Scotland (170 cases of illegal persecution), the report reveals a nationwide problem. There is little sign of any improvement in the situation over previous years.

STOLEN BIRDS

Stolen from Doncaster June 1995

1. Merlin - Male - Ring No. 8455P

Stolen from Essex June 1995

1. Peregrine Falcon - Ring No. 4349V

Stolen from Staffordshire April 1995

1. Peregrine - Male - Ring No. 4968V

2. Goshawk - Female - Ring No. 12901W

Stolen from Liverpool May 1995

1. Harris Hawk - Female - Ring No. 9201W

Stolen from Essex 1994

1. Harris Hawk - Female - Ring No. 11586W

2. Harris Hawk - Male - Ring No. 9423W

Stolen and Recovered.

1. In May 1995 a Harris Hawk was stolen from Wiltshire. This was later recovered by Avon & Somerset Police in a field behind a Gipsy Camp.

2. In May 1995 a Falcon was lost during a flying display in Berkshire. The bird was recovered approx. 12 days later, minus the ring. A person has been charged with a number of offences in relation to this bird.

Lost and Found

The lost and found service run by Raptor Rescue is now running very well and a number of birds have, to date, been reunited with their rightful owners, including two Longwings that had been missing and also recovered nor, for some considerable time. I would like to say a special thank you to Barbara Wells and Alan Wallace for their kind donations to Raptor Rescue following the recovery of their birds. To all of the people who promised a donation to the Charity and didn't bother - NO COMMENT.

HORNSEA FALCONERS CLEARED

Ken and Shaun Smith of the World of Wings Bird of prey Centre, Hornsea, have been cleared of illegally dealing in birds of prey.

They faced a total of 30 charges concerning the sale of wild birds, trading endangered species and running a zoo without a licence. The accusations came after an investigation by the Cook Report in 1993.

The Cook Report accused Ken and Shaun Smith of selling two wild peregrines to a Belgian dealer, who subsequently sold them to the Cook Report Team.

Shaun said they used to take in a lot of wild-injured birds but now they are too worried about repercussions to continue doing so.

Shaun said "One of the main problems was that we had to prove our innocence, rather than the prosecution prove our guilt."

"SONGBIRD DECLINE DUE TO FARMING METHODS" say RSPB

An RSPB Press Release states the "Widespread farming changes are implicated in the declines of garden birds. Many of the countryside birds which also occur in gardens have suffered".

It goes on to say; "The Song Thrush, once one of the UK's commonest garden visitors, has declined by 54% in the last 25 years. The use of pesticides, fewer weed-rich fields in winter and the loss of nesting sites are implicated in the declines in numbers, although how they affect individual species is not yet clearly understood. Further research is needed to explain the drop in Song Thrush numbers and the RSPB is launching an appeal to fund this work.

Barbara Young, RSPB chief executive, said, "These figures reveal a disgraceful and depressing state of affairs and represent only part of what is really happening. Birds of prey have been protected by law for more than 40 years, yet nests are still robbed and birds slaughtered. Landowners and the main field-sport bodies routinely condemn this illegal persecution, but despite overwhelming evidence that birds of prey do no harm to human interests, the senseless killing, by a minority of people still goes on and on.

Short-Eared Owl

Mike
Everett

Earlier this year, I spent the latter part of several cold afternoons on an area of Fen farmland watching up to half-a-dozen Hen Harriers coming in to a winter roost. To be sure of getting a good count of the incoming birds, I usually tried to arrive at least an hour before the light began to go. Sometimes, it would be well over half an hour before the first harrier appeared, but the waiting time was never wasted - they say that East Anglian farmland is birdless in winter, but for this bit at least they were wrong! I watched Grey Partridges and Corn Buntings, and some of the biggest flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plovers I have ever seen in our district. Then there were the birds of prey....

On my first visit, there were two Rough-Legged Buzzards in the area, one of which apparently stayed around for some weeks. There were four or five Kestrels in residence and on most occasions I saw at least one of the two locally wintering Merlins. Other observers saw a Barn Owl - I missed that, but found two pairs of Little Owls and heard of a third. Finally, there was one bird I always looked forward to seeing - a Short-Eared Owl that often hunted or sat around close to my watching place. One afternoon, there was a second bird not far away, but I never saw that one again.

Although there are a few places in East Anglia where Short-Eared Owls breed, we know them best as winter visitors, both inland and around coastal marshes. Their numbers fluctuate from year to year. This is a reflection of two things - how well they did in the previous breeding season (perhaps somewhere in Northern Europe - many winter visitors reach us from overseas) and whether conditions are right for them in winter quarters. In both cases, numbers, breeding success and distribution are linked to prey availability. Basically, Short-Eared Owls are specialists, feeding mainly on small rodents, especially voles: they provide a classic illustration of how the cyclic populations of its prey can closely govern a predator's fortunes. Some Short-Eared Owls maintain a fairly stable pattern of numbers and distribution by feeding on mammals whose numbers do not vary all that much, but these are the minority. Most British birds rely on field voles, so the opposite is true in their case: breeding productivity is high in the so-called "vole years" and in the same way high winter populations of voles mean good numbers of owls.

Most of British Short-Eared Owls are moorland birds, with a particular liking for heather. Many also nest in young conifer plantations where, for a few years while the trees are very small, voles abound and the owls enjoy a short-lived prey bonanza. It is not unusual to see the birds on walls and fence posts, or even occasionally on small trees and bush-tops, but nests are invariably

on the ground, in deep cover, as are favourite roosting and loafing places.

Essentially, then, the Short-Eared Owl is a bird of wide, open landscapes. In winter particularly, it is often abroad in daylight and when breeding is active well before dark, so it can be an easy bird to see. Like its close cousin, the Long-Eared Owl, it is a long-winged hunter, with wonderfully buoyant flight, great agility and deceptive speed. One of the most abiding impressions I have of hunting Short-Eared Owls is the amount of ground they cover in just a few minutes, jinking this way and that, lifting over banks and sea walls and, perhaps, dropping into a gully or along a ditch and suddenly reappearing a hundred yards away. They have an engaging and very distinctive habit of turning to look at you as they float past.

Occasionally I have seen Short-Eared owls having a go at larks or winter finch-flocks, turning on the power and moving very quickly - but somehow they never look very good at this sort of hunting! Having said that, their manoeuvrability when chased by crows, or during dust-ups with Hen Harriers (often their moorland neighbours) can be truly impressive. Thankfully, Short-Eared Owls do not appear to be common victims of the sort of mindless (and illegal) persecution which still affects some of our birds of prey and small owls. Our population is probably fairly stable, fluctuating between perhaps as few as 1,000 pairs in poor vole years and 3,500 pairs in good years. Numbers in winter may be very large if there have been major influx-

es from Europe - in fact winter numbers are thought to vary between 5,000 and as many as 50,000 birds.

Because of its relationship with a fluctuating food supply, the Short-Eared Owl may be resident (at least in the short-term), an opportunistic nomad or a true migrant. At any rate, it has something of a reputation as a wanderer. British-ringed owls have been recovered as far away as Spain, Malta and Russia, while foreign-ringed birds have reached us from most of the countries of northwest Europe and even Iceland. Given its wandering nature, it is probably not surprising that the short-Eared Owl competes with the Barn Owl and the Peregrine as one of the worlds most widely distributed birds of prey. It breeds right around the Old and the New Worlds in the northern hemisphere, in parts of the Caribbean, in some northern areas and most of the southern third of south America and in such isolated places as Hawaii, the Galapagos Islands and the Falklands. Winter birds occur south of the Sahara in Africa, in the Indian Sub-continent and down into south-east Asia.

Despite hundreds of hours of autumn bird-watching at the coast, I have yet to see what friends tell me is a really impressive sight - a migrant Short-Eared Owl coming in over the sea. It will happen one day..... maybe I'll be lucky this year.



Short-Eared owl brooding young. Photo by Dennis Green

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

CLUB DIRECTORY CLUB DIRECTORY

AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

Our aims, much like other clubs, are to promote all aspects of Falconry, including keeping, breeding and hunting Birds of Prey.

We meet on the first Tuesday of every month between Bristol & Bath.

For further information contact Guy Whitmarsh on: 01272 660770

THE SOUTH EAST FALCONRY GROUP

Established 1981

'Supporting & promoting falconry in the south and East of England.'
Based at Tilbury in Essex, the South East Falconry Group continues to provide a forum for falconers to meet, discuss and practice falconry. The club caters for both the experienced and novice falconer. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month.

For further information please contact:
Gary Biddiss: 01245 226057
Dean White: 01375 671302
or write The Tilbury Community Ass.
The Civic Square, Tilbury Essex

RAPTOR BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1976, the Association aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences relating to the breeding of raptorial species.

Interested persons are invited to seek further details from our membership secretary: Robin Pote
2 Old Bell Cottages,
Ludford, Ludlow,
Shrops. SY8 1PP
Tel: 0584 874874

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB
CROOKEDSTONE ELVANFOOT,
BY BIGGAR LANARKS
ML12 6RL

THE CUMBRIAN FALCONRY CLUB

is open to new members.
Anyone either in or out of the county is welcome.

For more information please contact

Colin on: 01900 68063

HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Sandhurst on the Surrey/Berks borders is where the Club meets on the third Wednesday of the month.

Good husbandry and practices in raptor keeping and flying are promoted by way of education and assistance.

Our programme includes guest speakers, demonstrations, outings and members' issues, and the membership encompasses all levels of experience and knowledge, from novices to seasoned falconers

Ring: 01344 423988 after 6pm
or 01276 23429

MEETINGS of The Welsh Hawking Club

are held monthly, 8pm at:

USK The Newbridge Inn,
Tredunnoch. 2nd Monday

CHESTER The Goshawk,
Mouldsworth. 1st Wednesday

BANBURY The George & Dragon,
A438, Banbury-Southam. Last Monday

PLYMOUTH The Woodpecker, A38.
3rd Monday

The Welsh Hawking Club is
Internationally recognised and has
members throughout the UK.

For further information ring Secretary:
Adrian Williams on 01443 206333

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

We meet on the first Thursday of
every month at the Hogs Head

Hotel, Awsworth. Notts.

J26 off M1 - 1st slip Rd off A610

For more information please ring:

George Roach, 01623 751339

NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

We are a small but very active Club based in the New Forest area. We have some 80 members. We encourage all our members, experienced or inexperienced, to participate in all activities of the Club.

We are very keen on conservation and attend local shows with our Conservation Display Unit.

We have access to 98,000 acres and organise meetings every week throughout the hunting season.

We meet the first Wednesday of every month and for more information please telephone FRANK or CHRIS on

01202 478862.

THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB

Meetings:- Held 2nd Tuesday of every month at 8pm. Venue:- Railway Hotel, Mill Lane, Heatley, Nr Lymm. Ches.

We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

Contact: Phil on - 01204 523622 or
0374 691498 (mobile) or:
Rob on - 01706 845731 or 0378
609467 (mobile).

NORTH AVON & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

Our club is one year old with a variety of members with hunting & breeding birds of prey.

We all try to help each other and encourage youngsters into falconry.

Every month we have a guest speaker and in the hunting season we will be holding field meetings over 11,000 acres of woodland and open land.

We meet on the first Monday of every month. 400 yds. J 18 M4. Compass Inn.

Give us a ring for a chat.

Phil 01225-891964
Keith 01454 315810

THE LONDON HAWKING AND OWL CLUB

The only Falconry Club in London with flying and breeding experience with birds of prey.

For more information call:
Paul Barham on 0171 515 7754
or
Bill Fiveash on 0171 639 9087

Welsh Hawking Club News

The last few months has seen the Welsh Hawking Club very active on a number of different fronts. Two new format newsletters have been issued this year under the name of Mewsletter. Not original, I agree, but much better than Muteletter.

Monthly meetings have seen talks given by Ruth Cromie from the Durel Institute of Conservation and Ecology on her work for the RSPCA, Jim Blake on lark hawking with merlins and rook hawking with peregrines and Gareth Jones speaking on his work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The WHC committee, with the guidance of secretary, Adrian Williams, has seen three regional groups forming under the umbrella of the WHC. Although years ago the club was originally, largely South Wales based, through growing membership it now contains many more members outside of Wales. This is seen as a major step forward for the club and with each region having representa-

tion on the Club committee, this will allow greater membership representation and involvement. The North Wales group, meeting at the Goshawk Pub, Mouldsworth, Nr Chester, are the first to be formed. Although this North Wales group have met for many years they are now an officially recognised regional group, under the chairmanship of Bob Antonio with support from Terry Finnegan as secretary. Phil Hudson is their treasurer. Further groups are planned for the Oxfordshire and South West areas, where very successful pilot meetings have already been held in Banbury and South Brent. Falconers in those areas who might be interested in regular monthly meetings should contact club secretary Adrian Williams for future meeting dates and details. The club had a very successful two days at the Falconry and Raptor Fair. It was indeed an excellent event and is clearly gaining in popularity. This was confirmed by many of the furniture makers and other professionals

attending. The club felt that the use of a larger tent was well worth the extra cost and allowed us to meet the general public and club members in much better surroundings. With the breeding season coming to an end, the club breeding scheme has had success again this year with goshawks, harris hawks and possibly merlins. This years progeny will be used to bolster future breeding arrangements and the surplus being available to club members at realis-

tic prices which has always been the clubs aim. With a field meeting arranged for October in the Lleyn Penninsular, North Wales, the clubs annual magazine, The Austringer, due out at the end of July, elections due for a club representative on the new Hawk Board and representation on the BFSS falconry committee, there will be plenty of activity for the club in the coming months.

AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP NEWS.

The Avon & Somerset Raptor Group has been running now for a number of years. We have approximately 70 members, with a committee consisting of Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and four other committee members, two adult, two junior. We have a speaker each month, barring cancellations and other untoward happenings. In the past these have included Dick Best (vet) Paul Beecroft, Bryan Paterson, the list is endless.

When a speaker isn't available, a workshop is set up, teaching beginners the basics of making falconry furniture, the more experienced have often picked a few ideas. There are group trips, organised a couple of times a year, to places of interest to members. There are vari-

ous other activities and get togethers and of course the obligatory Christmas "do". A newsletter is sent out to members each month containing information, articles written by the members themselves and advertisements (lost, found, sales, wanted etc.). We encourage participation from all members in putting forward ideas for activities, fund-raising and articles etc., to help the group become more worthwhile and interesting for everyone. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday month of each month, at a venue between Bristol & Bath. For further information contact: Guy Whitmarsh. tel: 0117 9660770 Secretary or Derek Smith Tel: 01373 812035 Chairman.

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB NEWS

Life with the Scottish Hawking Club quietens down during the summer, with birds heavily moulting we can but wait for Autumn to arrive. A club Bar. B. Q was held at Clyde Valley Hawks newly opened branch at Glasgow Zoo Park and with raffle, a tidy sum was raised for club funds. Thanks to all who helped. Our main event of the Summer was to attend the Game Conservancy, two day fair, at Scone Palace, Perth. This is a major event in the fieldsportsmans calendar and is a good platform to raise the clubs' profile in Scotland. Again many thanks to all who helped make this a resounding success. Special thanks must go to Neil Hunter, Paul Fleming, Tizzi Hodson and Graham Whiting for bringing along their birds. Julie Ross of the Edinburgh Bird of Prey Centre and Adrian Hallgarth of Lands of Finnerlie also for bringing birds and helping under some difficult circumstances, next year should be even better.

The Anti Fieldsports brigade has surfaced in Scotland to target falconers, suspect people have been enquiring about falconry venues and at least one hatchet job had been done by a seemingly pro-sport journalist, everyone should be on their guard, contact the club or BFSS if you are suspicious.

Have a good moult !!!



Stuart Stephen's Redtailed hawk at Crookedstane fieldmeet.

HAWK BOARD NEWS UPDATE

The election process for the New Hawk Board is now well and truly under way. Sixteen clubs registered an interest, and the ten clubs with the largest hawk-keeping membership will now have representation on the Board. These clubs are:

The British Falconers Club.	The Central Falconry & Raptor Club
The Welsh Hawking Club	The Avon & Somerset Raptor Group
The South East Falconry Group	The Hawk & Owl Trust
The Raptor Breeders Association	The Northern England Falconry Club
The Scottish Hawking Club	The London Hawking & Owl Club

Also affiliated to the board will be The Southern Counties Raptor Group. The New Forest Falconry Club The East London Falconers

Members of these clubs will all be entitled to vote for the six specialist elected members, and the Hawk Board is confident that with the clubs' support, it will be able to start its' new term in September 1995 even better able to fight the constant threats to falconry and hawk keeping.

Full results of the election will be published in the next issue of the Falconers Magazine. If your club has not yet affiliated, please consider doing so. Although it is too late for your members to qualify for a vote in the election. The Hawk Board welcomes the support of all the clubs who qualify for affiliation.

Those clubs which were not able to affiliate at this time were turned down because they had been operating for less than three years and the Hawk board has written to them assuring them that they would be very welcome to apply again when they can supply three years' annual accounts. Any club which affiliates will be invited to send a representative to the Board's annual symposium.

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION NEWS

Our aim is to bring about a new attitude, from new and experienced Falconers alike.

Too long it has now been within the old guidelines and we, as a united body, would like to bring about a well awaited, new, approach, towards fellow falconers.

The key word is unity, for united we can beat all opposing attitudes towards our beloved sport.

Long gone are the days when falconry was a past time for the gentry alone, today, thank goodness, there is an increasing amount of newcomers, from all walks of life, flying a very varied species of raptor.

We at the BHA would like to welcome each and every one, without exception, to join together, so we can share our experiences with one another.

To gain is our aim, for everyone to benefit, not only with more hawking land rights, but to gain friendship, kinship, which we all sadly lack within today's society.

thanks to falconry there are more youngsters and maybe the not so young being kept along the straight and narrow, due to the love of our precious wildlife and of course raptors.

Without this passionate sport there would no doubt be more people falling to ulterior pastimes, ie., drug/solvent abuse, and various time wasting, even life threatening pastimes.

It is with this in mind that we would like to welcome youngsters and adults to learn about the true wealth of life, teaching these people to respect our wildlife, their surroundings and nature itself. It is just one step in the right direction, for making the world a better place, by filling it with people, better educated toward the nat-

ural world. Of course, to teach the newcomers, we also need experienced falconers, from all backgrounds, who are willing to share their past experiences and expertise, and have some fun at the same time.

There is only one condition on membership, plain and simple, as long as you have not committed any offence under the wildlife and countryside act, your application will be considered.

Acceptance of your membership entitles you to a quarterly newsletter, which keeps you up-to-date with the association.

Also, a monthly informal social evening where you can share your views, make new friends, purchase falconry equipment etc., and have your say. Of course your BHA badge, sticker and various other items but most important, help with any problems you may be having.

We have officers in several regions up and down the country, we are also increasing our hawking rights, along the length and breadth of Great Britain.

In the hawking season we have regular field meetings, within our own, growing regions.

you, as a member, are welcome to as many as you wish. Our aim is for plenty of safe, controlled, enjoyable hawking.

What better way to share your elation, with a fellow falconer who totally understands.

If you would like to join us just send a sae and we will forward all the relevant details.

We have specialist falconers who are only too pleased to help with any range of information you require.

Remember, we are here to help you and, together, we can make a mark within the falconry fraternity and command the recognition that each and every one of us deserve. The right to carry on enjoying our passionate pastime.

Wishing you all good hawking.

Change of headquarters

From The Shipley Boat Inn at Eastwood to: The Hogs Head Hotel, Nr Awwsworth Nottingham tel: 0115 9384095
Social meetings as usual, first Thursday in every month.

New regional social venues.

Staffs:

Barton Bowls Social Club, Dunstall Rd Barton Under Needwood, Burton on Trent Meetings held third Monday in every month. Joint regional officers: Nigel Dike & Paul Toone Tel: 01283 716630.

North Yorks:

Bolton Arms, Downholme, Richmond It is situated in the village of Downholme, some 4-5 miles west of Richmond. Meetings held 3rd Thursday in every month Regional Officer Roy Bebbington Tel: 01748 823527.

Sth Yorks:

Rockingham Arms, Wentworth Nr Rotherham, (10 mins from J35, M1) Meetings held second Wednesday in the month Regional officer Richard Hill Tel: 01226 741989.

Update on county regional officers

Cambs: Wendy Alikier - 01945 450648

Derbys: Roger Oxley - 01773 749413

Herts: Jose Souto - 01814 508669

Warks: Rick Garard (probationary) - 01926 512196

Wales: Mik Standing - 01766 590657

Caitness: Mike Cleaver - 01847 84213.

Nottinghamshire Regional Officers post is vacant. Applicants are invited, provided they have 12 years field hawking experience, plus two valid references.

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Other attractions in the area are Fishing, Bird-watching, Pony-trekking, Walking, Cycling and there are numerous Golf courses.

The only condition of the holiday is that it must be taken between 1st October '95 & 31st March '96. (excl. Bank Holidays).



TO ENTER

Simply answer the questions below and send it, along with your name, address and telephone number to: The Falconer Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering Northants NN15 5QP

QUESTIONS: 1. HOW MANY ISLANDS MAKE UP THE FALKLAND ISLANDS?

2. WHAT IS MAJOR GEORGE WILKINSON FAMOUS FOR?

3. WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PAIRS OF PHILIPPINE EAGLES LEFT IN THE WILD ?

THE SAVING PHILIPPINE EAGLE

By Amin Kanchenjunga

"Walk behind the cage and keep on calling him", said Ron to me. I am curious but I obey the order. Then in a split second he got hold of its feet and before I could notice it, Ransom is already folded in his arms. "Do you want to hold Ransom?" I was momentarily stunned by that offer because Ransom happens to be the Great Philippine Eagle. I readily accepted the offer and up 'till now I can still feel the thrill of holding it. That was way back in 1986, when I was a trainee with the Philippine Eagle Conservation Programme and Ron was the Executive Director. From that first meeting onwards, we have shared the thrill, joy and sorrow in saving the "Air Noblest Flyer". From humble beginnings, Ron and a few dedicated Philippino's managed to set up the foundation in 1987 and what is now known as the Philippine Eagle Foundation. We went to Baracatan at Mt. Apo, where the former breeding, research and nature centre was once located. Baracatan will be a new home for Ransom, so called because its captor demanded a sum of money for turning him over to us. Timely interception by

our team, with assistance from the law enforcement officers and the captor was arrested and charged.

Wildlife conservation in the Philippines is the most difficult task in the Oriental Region. As we drove along the highway, we saw the mountains and its plateau had been almost stripped of its natural surroundings. Worst still the water-catchment area was on the verge of losing against these unscrupulous people. That area was the home of these critically endangered Eagles where the present population of the species is now estimated to be less than 121 pairs left in the wild.

THE PHILIPPINE EAGLE.

The Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) is a giant forest raptor and the primary predator of the Philippines, to which it is endemic. The Eagle sports a narrow, highly arched beak, behind which sit the piercing grey-blue eyes, deep set beneath distinct eye ridges. A face, pockmarked by black pin feathers and finely streaked with brown. The legs and feet are scaled in yellow, the powerful



Mario Entrilizo and 'Luyang' In threat display.

talons, curved scimitars of ebony. The wing span is nearly two metres and the total wing area is the broadest among birds of prey. The Eagles body can tip the scales at 7.5Kg. (16.5 lbs), while its height registers one metre. It preys on many forest species (mostly monkeys are the favourite diet).

There is no factual documentation of it preying on domestic livestock.

The Eagle produces one egg per nesting cycle, rearing one offspring every two years.

Incubation lasts sixty days. The Eaglet fledges in about 150 days and becomes independent in about eighteen months, the parent "pushing" the juvenile out of their 60-100 square kilometre territory.

Ron implemented three strategies to safeguard its existence. They are field research, breeding research and an education and awareness campaign.

At present we are monitoring known nest sites, verifying new nest sites and surveying habitat zones in Mindanao.

In Mindanao active nest sites are under surveillance and additional Eagle-occupied areas are being observed to determine nest site location. We investigate new

reports when time permits.

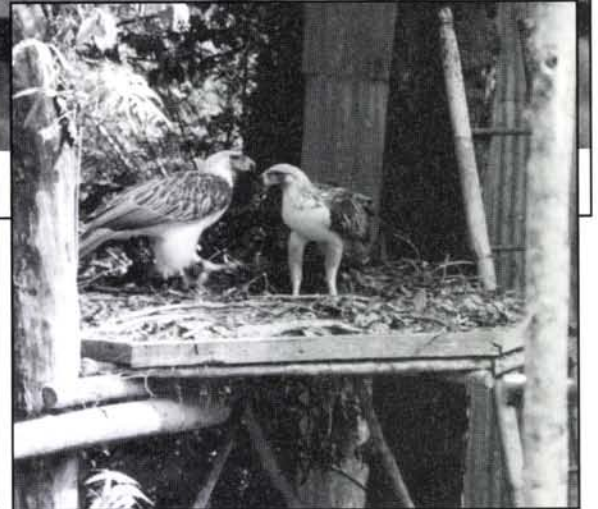
Presumed abandoned sites are spot-checked, only if support habitat remains nearby. Certain areas are deemed unsafe, due to poor peace and order conditions, which hamper our movement and opportunities for studies. Only when it is considered relatively safe do we mobilise our staff. Habitat surveys are conducted during breeding seasons, at the time Eagles are more visible than at any other time.

We have a scheme called an "Adopt a nest" programme, where, for a small amount of cash, a well-wisher, donor or individual, can adopt a wild Philippine Eagle nest by rewarding the nest guardian if the nest: 1, Contains an egg. Another incentive if, 2, The egg hatches and last but not least 3, If the Eaglet fledges and leaves the nest. The scheme was highly successful and in 1988 alone we discovered eight active nest sites. The people responded because, indirectly, for the first time, helping to save the Eagle benefited them.

One main concern is the indiscriminate logging. Centuries of misuse due to lack of knowledge of the proper conservation meth-



Technician, Eddie Juntilla at the breeding chamber, observing 'Tsai' and 'Girlie' During the breeding season.



MAIN PIC: 'Pitha' inside the holding cage. ABOVE LEFT: Domingo Tadena & 'Cupra' About to be released.

ABOVE RIGHT: 'Tsai' (right) and Girlie (left) Our potential, natural pairing inside the breeding chamber.

ods for their forest resources has led to the denudation of over five-million hectares of their forest land. If they do not manage their forest properly, disasters happen, flood and drought, barren land, poor harvest, too many people, too little resources, uncontrolled logging, and slash and burn techniques increase at an alarming rate. We appeal to international organisations and our friends out there to put pressure on the countries that destroy the Philippine Rainforest. Some European countries and Japan are the main importers of the Philippine hardwood timbers and they know that some of the timbers are trees that the Philippine Eagle once used for its nesting cycle!!!! The Philippine Eagle is at the top of the food chain in the Philippine Ecosystem. It acts as a barometer, indicating the healthiness of the forest and the environment. To kill these magnificent Eagles could directly ruin the future generations of the country

that depend on the forest for enough water for drinking and irrigating their farms. Despite the Anti-poaching law, the Eagle is hunters' game, pursued even in the legally protected sanctuaries. They hunt the Eagle for local private collections and hunting trophies. Due to circumstances, after fifteen years of hard work, Ron left the foundation in 1991. He left behind his highly capable deputy and biologist, Mr Domingo Tadena. Using the knowledge he gained from Ron, in 1993, Domingo produced the first Philippine Eagle ever bred in captivity. We called our precious Eaglet 'Pag-Asa', meaning hope, and hope it was because Domingo and his team succeeded in producing another Eaglet, this time we called it 'Pag-Kakaisa', meaning unity. We used artificial insemination techniques, based on the surrogate relationship that involved our male Eagle, Junior with his surro-

gate partner - Ben Salarza and our female Eagle, Diola, with surrogate partner - Goneforte Culiao. From semen we got from junior and after sixteen years of trial and tribulation, we succeeded beyond our expectations. Surrogate relationships that involved other Eagles are under development stages. Our natural pairing of 'Tsai' (male) and 'Girlie' (female), show signs of success and, hopefully, through Gods will, we will have an Eaglet through the natural process. We are continuing to attempt pairing with the wild caught and semi-rehabilitated (those that had sustained crippling injuries or had been held captive for a long time). This has been a very difficult process, but we believe it can become productive once the proper pairing combination is found. We have developed a new captive-breeding centre (Education and Nature Complex) in Malagos, Mindanao and plan to expand if funding is

available. Our Education Programme has a broad base. We give lectures, seminars to the younger generation and people from all walks of life. Our film, "To live and be free", was used in a promotional campaign throughout the Philippines. We also educate farmers and natives in the proper method of systematic agriculture and try to get rid of the slash and burn technique. We did a proper tree planting programme whereby students and volunteers planted trees in an area that was once a logging concession. Unless top government administrators' implement an effective system that works well for the people and the environment, there is little hope for the survival of the Philippine Eagle. The survival of the Eagle will not only depend on the work of the foundation, but also on the Philippines as a whole. The Eagle is still in decline, the Rainforest habitat the Eagles need is still in decline.



Above : The nest guardian and I.
Below: 'Junior'. Our most adorable Philippine Eagle.



The only element directly related to these decreases that is not in decline is Man. On Man, primarily and ultimately, depends the reversal of the destruction process. To save the Philippine Eagle, we must first create the awareness that it needs saving. We must show the people of the Philippines that the system behind the Eagles is endangered, not just the Philippine Eagle itself. Our appeal to Mankind is to help us with our struggle to save these magnificent Eagles. Once it is gone, it is gone forever. By sav-

ing it we may be saving the Nations and Mans very existence as well.

If you wish to help the Philippine Fund please write to either The Falconers Magazine, at the usual address or The Philippine Eagle Foundation, 2nd Floor, UCPB Building, Magsaysay Street, Davao City, Mindanao, PHILIPPINES



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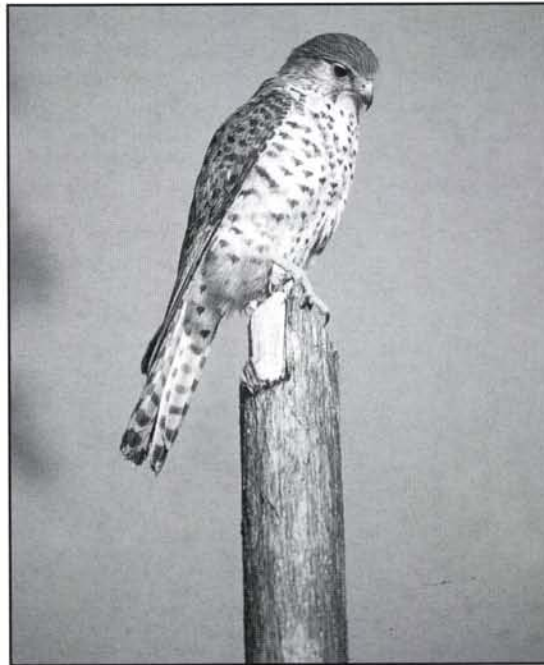
'Wildcobs' Long Barn Rd. Weald, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 6NJ Tel: 01732 463218 and ask for Brian.

Back From the Brink of Extinction

Jersey, one of the Channel Islands, and known mainly as a holiday Isle and tax haven, has another string to its bow and that's the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust. Although labelled as a Zoo, the Trust only keeps creatures that are threatened in the wild and has an impressive Captive Breeding Programme committed to saving them from extinction. The most notable success story known to Falconers is their saving of the Mauritius Kestrel from the very brink of extermination. The Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco Punctatus*) is as its name suggests, is a resident of Mauritius, which is isolated in the Indian Ocean. The Kestrels suffered, as did our own Birds of Prey, from massive pesticide contamination and habitat loss. By 1974, one year after the Trusts project started, they knew of only four individuals in the wild. The Project was an almost impossible task, one would think. In fact, a lot of Conservationists felt at the time that this daunting project should not even be started as its near certain failure would harm the new Conservation Movement and the Public's perception of how to save endangered species. But the Trust continued and used several management techniques which included:

- 1) Captive breeding
- 2) Supplemental feeding
- 3) Provision of nest boxes and the modification of natural cavities
- 4) Harvesting eggs by egg-pulling and double-clutching to increase the productivity of the wild birds.
- 5) Release of Captive-bred and Captive reared birds.
- 6) Control of predators at release and nest-sites.

They have very slowly reversed the Kestrels terminal decline. From late 1973 to early 1988 five adults, four fledglings, three nestlings and fourteen birds, reared from harvested eggs, were retained in the Black River based breeding project. Their first, actual, successful Captive Breeding was in 1978, with one youngster reared. It wasn't until the 84/85 breeding season that regular breeding successes were encountered with five young reared - 10 years after the project started. Since that breakthrough, 94 Mauritius young have been reared up to 1991. In 1986 three pairs were sent to the World Centre for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho and, up to 1991 36 young were raised there, 21 of which have been returned to Mauritius. Britain received its first birds in



1990, from Jersey and they raised two youngsters in their first year. Following the breeding successes of the 80's, young kestrels started to be returned to the wild by fostering under wild or later, free-living birds as well as hacking. The first releases were in the 84/85 season and by the end of 1991, 178 birds had been released, of which 133 had become independent. These were made up of 75 Captive-bred on Mauritius, 14 from the World Centre for Birds of Prey and 88 reared from harvested eggs, plus one chick from a failing nest. So at last major developments were happening to justify the money and effort being put into the project. At the same time supplemental feeding to the wild and free living birds was tried, and although birds were taking chicks and mice, it was difficult to quantify how successful this was. Nevertheless, productivity did improve in those pairs taking food. Also, nest boxes were provided in areas where natural nest holes were scarce, and any rock cavities were improved or modified, all 20 of which have since been used. Also, any cavities' unsuitable due to access from predators have been blocked up. The habitat of the Kestrel was originally thought to be the natural forest, which covers a lot of the Islands, and is where the last birds were found in 1974. This is where the first birds were released, and also at two additional sites previously known to have been inhabited by the Kestrels. It was felt

that there was no reason why other low-land areas could not be re-colonated. A good supply of alternative food was available in the disrupted and edge type habitats, and in exotic Acacia Savanna. Certainly, the few birds that were released adapted well to their new way of life. Some have been seen hunting in gardens in the suburbs of Mahebourg Town and a pair even nested in the Projects Compound at the Village of Black River. So there seems to be no reason why the birds can't, with a little help, become as versatile and common as our own Kestrel.

One other problem encountered by the Kestrel was predation. The main predator being mongoose and feral cats, although black rats and the long-tailed macaque will take eggs and nestlings. Trapping and poisoning was carried out at every hacksite and some foster sites it was impractical at the wild nest sites. It was felt that any form of predator control would be to the benefit of the Kestrels and this has continued throughout the project period.

So what is the position at present? John Hartley, head of the project at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, very kindly gave up his time to give me the up-to-date population status, and the previous background information. It appears the Kestrel is doing comparatively well. From an all-time low of four known individuals, there are now estimated to be well over 300. This consists of 80 located breeding pairs which have just reared 80 young. Non-breeding birds take the number to over 300 with 22 in captivity outside Mauritius, though Jersey was the only one to breed them successfully during 1974. The one other question I asked was about the small gene pool that these birds all stem from. So far there seems to be no abnormality due to interbreeding. Only time will tell. Hopefully, the Mauritius Kestrel will continue its successful breeding and one day discontinue to be an endangered species. It's in good hands.

Just as I finished writing this article, news came through that Gerald Durrell had died. Most of you will know that he started the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and was a Pioneer of the Captive breeding of endangered species. This was against the belief of many on the Conservation Band Wagon. He has shown how right he was. His death is a sad loss.

Reproduced by kind permission of The Scottish Hawking Club.

ANDREW KNOWLES-BROWN

I caught this morning morning's minion,
 Kingdom of daylight's dauphin dapple-dawn
 drawn Falcon, in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady
 air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a
 wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! Then off, off forth
 On swing.
 As a skates heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
 the hurl and gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
 stirred for a bird - the achieve of,
 the mastery of the thing!

Gerard Manley Hopkins
 (1844-1899)
 From "The Windhover"
 A friend

*THOUGHTS FROM A
 GOLDEN EAGLE*

*To live is to fly
 To fly is to live
 Some live to fly
 Others fly to live*

*Flying ...
 Above an overcast, beneath layered cloud
 A narrow tunnel of light. Of life. Of hope
 Eerie, quiet, but for the flexing of my wings
 Is this seventh Heaven, or beyond?*

*Only an Eagle
 Can have this magic feeling
 Of life within life
 Or life above life
 Or, is this a glimpse of the after life?*

*A man with a gun appears
 The spell is lost
 But the feeling of peace remains
 Tranquillity, smooth skies, stillness
 Here, above, in the skies
 Looking up, always higher
 Never down, never lower*

*Can happiness really be found
 There below on Mother Earth?
 There's no reality below
 Lies, mistrust, cheating
 Dishonesty, hatred, deceiving
 Unhappiness, sorrow abounds*

*While up up in the skies
 The calling clear blue skies
 They're beckoning, reaching
 To draw you higher*

*Peace and Love are found
 Friendliness and Trust
 Bad thoughts scatter like dust
 Honesty and calmness remains*

*To live is to fly
 To fly is to live*

Tizi Hodson

ANTI WHAT?

*Oh ignorant people, in so much need, of wealth
 of life on which to feed.
 Accents of truth, you say you speak, which turns
 a hunter into a freak.
 Of course you understand the things you say,
 or, is it just a game you play?
 A play off game of timeless greed, the chance to
 fill a growing need.
 'Tis love which fuels the flame of life,
 But this of course, is out of sight,
 To you all that money gains,
 Disrupting lives, your only aim.*

*Instead to learn and have a go, about a sport
 you so little know.
 If only you took the time to look, to read and
 learn the sacred book.
 Oh then my friends, you'd surely see, just how it
 was, and meant to be.*

*When life's created for all to share, to take what's
 needed, and nothing to spare.
 No, not more, than you do need, not fired by
 your timeless greed.
 To take only that which life sustain, leave not to
 rot into the rain.*

*We only kill to feed today, we leave to feed
 another day.*

*Our raptors that we do so love,
 Fly on high, and up above,
 They take their prey on which to feed,
 Their hunger is their only need.*

*It's nature's way to keep things right, but, of
 course, they're wrong, not right!*

*How little do you all but know, just how to plant,
 and reap, and sow,
 The seeds of life for all to share, and show us
 that you really care.*

*Say NO to those who pay the price, to try and
 keep things really nice.*

*But, can't you see,
 It's nature's way?*

A game you'll NEVER know how to play...!

J. Meads

birds' *EYE* view

1. Introduction to the species

With such a wide range of Species Humanus falconaspire now available to the young raptor making a suitable choice of keeper can be difficult for an inexperienced hawk. Learning as much as possible about this complex genus before making a decision is, therefore, wise. Remember these are long-lived creatures and you may be in partnership for many years.

Physical Characteristics:

Two-legged, flightless, predatory creatures with diurnal vision (though their production of artificial daylight enables nocturnal movement as well). Extensive use of sundry manufactured body coverings unique to the species.

Sexual Differences:

Dimorphism unreliable for identification: Males' Hum.masc., usually larger than females, Hum.fem., but very small males and very large females can occur. Diverse colours and lengths of plumage common to both sexes, however dense facial and body plumage are virtually exclusive to males, as is chronic moulting syndrome which causes permanent patches of bare skin on top of the head. Some, but not all, females have prominent areas of flesh either side of the keel bone.

Range & Distribution:

Global, found in most avian habitats apart from extreme Polar and some tropical and desert regions. Range is spreading all the time.

Habitat:

Individuals sometimes found in isolated units, but mainly colonise large areas, known as towns and cities, linked by well defined ground-based migratory routes.

Nest sites:

Commonly utilises nests abandoned by others. New nests built by males working in large, noisy, semi cooperative groups, but maintained afterwards by females. Often cohabit with other species, such as canis, felis, etc. Dwellings usually constructed from hard materials in range of shapes and sizes, frequently surrounded by enclosed, earth filled territorial space (sci. garden), an arrangement which the novice raptor is advised to seek.

A HARRIS

Food:

Omnivorous. Hum.fem. usually hunts without her mate inside big enclosures. Nestlings may accompany the female to learn hunting skills, though they will not use them for many years. Hum.fem. is an impressive hunter, often returning to the nest with many bags full of quarry. Most Humani take a wide range of prey with a few exceptions who exist solely on large quantities of herbivorous material. This seems to do them no harm, but close proximity to them in confined spaces is to be avoided.

Social Behaviour:

Co-exist in family units. Unpaired adults may occupy modular dwellings within communal, hive-like structures. Communication among colonies includes a variety of behaviours such as vocalisation, physical contact and facial expressions.

Migration:

Frequently observed short-term migration during summer months (of no known benefit). Some individuals also known to make short winter migrations, often returning with injuries. Raptors are advised to avoid Sp.Hum.Falc. which make a habit of the latter.

Reproduction:

Adults reproduce all year round, commonly hatching a single chick which develops very slowly. It may be years before established pairs lay again. Mating occurs in seclusion following complex courtship rituals performed by both sexes, often in communal watering places. Some food passing occurs (sci. romantic dinners), though acceptance by female does not always lead to copulation. Both males and females will display threatening behaviour to others attempting to intrude. This can develop into open aggression (sci. punch-up) if a competitor invades their space. Uncorroborated reports from nocturnal raptors claiming to have witnessed actual mating may be exaggerated. Gestation and incubation periods not known. Females brood young under outer coverings for several months. Nestlings typically reared by Hum.fem. while males make daily visits to other territories. Fledglings can remain dependant on parents long after reaching maturity.

2. Choosing your first Humanus

One should assess the temperament, attitude and intelligence of each individual Sp.Hum.Falc.; taking into account its lifestyle, commitments and its range of land and quarry. These attributes can vary enormously and a lack of one may be offset against an abundance of another, so decide what is most important to you. Research to date suggests little difference in performance between males and females, although the latter are relatively rare.

The young raptor should seek a healthy looking, parasite-free specimen, rejecting any which appears too careworn to cope with its need for daily training. Lack of muscle tone suggests a Humanus which has spent too much time roosting, but appropriate regular exercise will overcome this and it will quickly become fit running after you. Time and persistence are needed, but the results will justify your efforts: an unfit and under trained Humanus will never reach its full potential and will become bored and disheartened, neglect your welfare and possibly develop such vices such as screaming and aggression.

An enthusiastic, highly motivated individual, keen to enter its first season, is usually a safe choice for the novice raptor. Look for a bright, intelligent expression on the face, particularly in the eyes. It should appear interested and curious, eager to meet you. An apathetic seen-it-all-before look is a bad sign. A novice hawk should leave the latter to an older bird who will be better equipped to deal with it. Any unkempt, unpreened individual should also be avoided. If it disregards its own hygiene requirements, it will certainly neglect yours.

A sp.hum.falc. with experience may seem attractive, but it could have learned bad habits and vices from a previous bird. Some experienced individuals go from one bird to another repeating the same mistakes for years. These should be considered untrainable and are totally unsuitable for the novice hawk. A great deal can be accomplished with an intelligent, open-minded Humanus, but a stupid one will try your patience to the limits. Many promising young raptors have actually given up captivity and all its benefits and lived wild rather than stay with a slow or obdurate Humanus.

Finally, remember that every Species Humanus falconaspire needs time and patient training to enable it to reach its full potential. Always be flexible, observe your Humanus, have a range of possible behaviours and actions in your mind and be ready to try them out at random. Reward your Humanus when it has done well. The first season is always the hardest but if you persevere you should find that its subsequent seasons will show immeasurable improvement.

A PATERNAL EAGLE

Taking the baby Eagle Xarra for a day's hawking, the day was fine with blue skies, a low temperature and a gentle breeze. Perfect. My usual way of hawking with Xarra, is to carry him until he wants to fly, which is usually within a couple of minutes. This day was no exception. He left the fist, flew a large circle, scanning for hares and saw none. So he returned to the fist. He then appeared to see something, and set off in hot pursuit. It was a hare, which held tight until the last second and, just as Xarra landed on it, sidestepped, missing the talons, and galloped off in the opposite direction from which Xarra had approached. Xarra landed and yapped a few times in annoyance, then pursued the hare again, which changed gear and headed up hill and into the wind. At which point Xarra decided it made more sense to return to the fist and look around for another dinner, not fully concealed among the sprouting corn.

next to a hares form, and thinking a third hare in the same form was highly unlikely. I walked towards Xarra and called him. He came instantly, which surprised me somewhat, as he usually needs prising off his new found toys. Setting him on the ground, I went over to investigate. Totally dumfounded, I found two little leverets, too young to run, lying in the form, but clearly untouched and unhurt, twitching and breathing contentedly. All the while, Xarra stayed silently where he was, until I walked up and offered him my fist, which he took politely. After that, I went a few fields farther away to make sure the young leverets would be safe from any mind change about a free and easy meal lying on a plate; or in a bowl, as it were. I wondered about the possibility that young Xarra, at eight months old was feeling paternal already, and did not want to hurt something so young and obviously



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Sure enough, a few minutes later he spotted something well out of range of my eyesight, and set off at a determined pace. As he stooped onto a form, he walloped a hare who got up at a flat out gallop, together with another hare, which was in the same form. As the hare he had hit sped away, I could see tufts of fur flying, and was naturally disappointed he had let it slip away. Xarra however, proceeded to mantle vigorously, and kept putting his beak down as though checking something on the ground. He seemed concerned about whatever he had found, as he kept looking down, then all around him, trying to shield whatever it was from view. I was puzzled as to what it was - knocking out the idea of carrion

helpless. Or perhaps he had joined the Animal Rights Activists, and would no longer hunt or kill hares or anything else? This last thought concerned me somewhat. So I was especially pleased when two days later, at the same weight as when he was protecting his 'kids'. He took on a dumb hare that chose to run downwind on an especially windy day. He easily overhauled and caught it, enclosing the head in a vice-like grip as he landed. The hare was very dead when I arrived a few seconds later. I told Xarra I was very pleased he had not joined the LACS.

Since this article was written Xarra has been surgically sexed by Neil Forbes and 'he' is a 'she'.

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Tales of

THE BIG FINN

AND

LITTLE JERRY

To start with I had intended to title this article "Full Circle" on account that I had returned after twenty odd years to flying a goshawk.

The goshawk was my first real hunting hawk and although I had flown a few, mainly passagers, it was a small male eyas German that had impressed me the most. Finally, somehow the time seemed right and I succumbed to the urge that I had in the past been able to suppress. Once again to hunt with a gos.

I looked for a bird of the year, was totally unsuccessful and gave up. Then quite by chance, 'Ken' a falconry friend rang one day, and mentioned he had seen an advert for a pair of adult goshawks for sale. He was looking for an adult male to go into a breeding enclosure with his egg laying female German gos, would I be interested in the adult female of this pair?

Somehow I had set my mind on an eyas, a clean book so to speak. I was not so sure of an adult of unknown history, "oh what the heck if she looks good"

Sure enough she did, and so did the male, so Ken was pleased. It was the middle of June when we plucked her from the enclosure and as she had no flights in the blood I jessed her and gently manned her. Soon she was relaxing on the bowperch, in the shade of fruit trees on the weathering lawn.

Once out in the field it was evident that during her idle years in the enclosure she had not lost any of that gos magic, her head darting from side to side as we worked cover, she would almost launch an attack at the flick of a jenny wren's wing.

Ken's German female gos was now along side a new male in the breeding enclosure, and he was now about to fulfil his desire to fly a Finnish goshawk. He had been lucky to obtain a big female at the end of the previous season, and had flown her for a few

weeks before putting her down to moult in which time she had taken a handful of rabbits. He was impressed with her determined style and had been eager for the coming season all summer.

Ken had failed to find a suitable name for his Scandinavian beauty and so I nicknamed her 'The Big Finn'. She topped three pounds on the scales and flew around two twelve, no need to be exact she was so damned determined she would pursue with vigour with a couple more ounces on her breast.



Alan Gates in 1968, with "Spike" Intermewed, eyas, German, male Goshawk.

Flying the two gosses it was evident that their tactics and attitude towards quarry was very different. 'Little Jerry' as my female German gos became known was not an outstanding performer, little wonder really as she had languished the last four years in idyllic surroundings of a breeding enclosure with food dropping in at predetermine times. She had a definite liking for feathered quarry, nothing unusual there, most European goshawks seem to be pro pheasants. Her

tactics were more dirty tricks than style, fly low and as undetected as possible, slip over a hedge and smack!, as well as dropping from trees and crashing into cover. Although she had no staying power for the long pursuit, if she had not made contact within the first twenty yards of a flush she would pull off. I have had goshawks that would ease off the speed after twenty or so yards and just follow a pheasant at a safe distance, then when the quarry dropped into cover the gos would take stand above. As soon as the pheasant moved it would drop from above. Another dirty tactic but often very effective. 'The Big Finn's' pursuit of pheasants was a different story altogether, the first pheasant I witnessed, the flushed bird left the ground almost vertical, a large powerful cock, straight up it went and headed for a row of tall conifers about thirty feet high and not much further away from where we stood. 'The Finn' was off the fist almost as soon as the pheasant broke cover and kept very close to the pheasant, just as the pair clipped the top of the conifers I saw the 'Finn' swipe out with a foot at the pheasant. That one got away, it was one of the few lucky ones. 'The Big Finn' would fly pheasants at their break neck speed, in fact often she would out fly them and whip them out of the sky. She would sustain the speed as long as the pheasant would say airborne, she just harassed the bird until it could continue no longer and had to drop into cover. The Finn would just crash straight in after it and more often than not was successful. We were always amazed that she was never out of breath, she must have a pair of lungs like barrage balloons, in fact we thanked our luck that pheasants never flew more than five or six hundred yards before ditching in. Rabbits are always fun and 'Little Jerry' had some very bad luck, twice she has been pulled down holes. Turned inside out like a blown out umbrella, the last time she was jammed tight as a drum deeper than I could quite reach. I had to remove some earth at the entrance to get myself deeper in and pull her out. I thought her luck had changed when on what turned out to be her last flight of the season, I saw her bowl over a grey fur ball in the woods. When I reached her she had a very furious dog squirrel, luckily he had set his teeth into the leather around the





By Alan Gates

←
The "Big Finn"
Interviewed,
Finnish, female
Goshawk

→
1994 "Little
Jerry" eyes,
German female
Goshawk
with Alan &
Munsterlander.



eyelet of her anklet and I quickly dispatched him before he could do any serious damage. Unlike 'Jerry' where the rabbits often wriggled free leaving her with a foot full of fur, 'The Big Finn' would hit them with such force that on occasions clouds of fur would float on the wind as though dozen dandelion clocks had been blown together.

She took rabbits with ease and none ever wriggled free of her grip, although this season she had one or two flights at brown hare she did not make contact, given enough opportunities she has the tenacity and determination to succeed. The Finn caught a pile more quarry than Little Jerry, allowing for the fact that the dif-

ference in size of the two hawks and that Little Jerry never really got in top notch condition, nothing could equal The Big Finn's bloody determined pursuit of game. Her performance is exhilarating and leaves many a seasoned falconer speechless, she typifies the true spirit of The Goshawk.

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AFRICAN SKY HUNTERS

Zimbabwe is a landlocked southern African country with a mild climate and such diversity of fauna and flora that it has become a leading African destination for wildlife enthusiasts, photographers, big game hunters, and bird watchers. Over sixty species of diurnal raptors, a dozen species of owl and nine of gamebirds, along with pigeons, doves, plovers, snipe, duck and teal make this land a falconer and raptorophile's paradise.

An enlightened Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNP) policy towards sustainable utilisation of indigenous wildlife resources accepts falconry as a legitimate field sport. It considers the sport to be an integral part of, and an extension to, the conservation of raptors in Zimbabwe. The stage was set two decades ago by falconers and their counterparts in the DNP that ensured the art in Zimbabwe became the full hands-on falconry, conservation, and nature experience that it is today, and has excited favourable comment from all foreign falconers that have visited the country.

The primary components make this experience unique in the world: the availability of diverse species of indigenous wild raptors for falconry; the huge and varied natural quarry base from which to select a hunt; the ease of access to these. Without effective management and maintenance this situation could not have evolved, and this is provided by a dynamic and farsighted group in the form of the Zimbabwe Falconers Club (ZFC). Whilst the club is small, its members are, almost without

exception, of single purpose in the pursuit of sport, the principles and ethics of falconry and the long term conservation of raptors in Zimbabwe.

The ZFC uses a grading system to maintain standards and ensure ethical practices are adhered to. The C Grade is an apprentice category during which phase the falconer is at liberty to take from the wild any one of a number of species of unprotected raptor for purposes of falconry. More popular raptors used during this phase include African Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, and Little Banded Goshawk.

Numerous other species are legally available to the apprentice but those listed are all proven hunters, particularly the demonic Ovambo. It is not unusual for young C Graders to achieve in excess of one hundred and fifty kills a season with this delightful little accipiter which flies at around 140 g, males, and females at 230g.

Then, on passing a comprehensive written examination and field test, the aspirant moves into the B Grade and is permitted to take the awesome Black Sparrowhawk, Lanner Falcon and African Hawk Eagle. Eyas' of all three species can be taken from the nest and passage birds of all three can be trapped at any time. The only adult phase allowed for falconry is the Lanner and then



Pierre Heymans Lucky, late taken passage Lanner falcon.



An Hawk Eagles eyrie, she was sitting when the photo was taken



Geoff Bodington with Isis, a twice inter-mewed passage falcon.



Big game spotting at Lake Kariba.

ADRIAN LANGLEY

only out of the breeding season. To move on to the A Grade and license to take African Peregrines (*Falco peregrines minor*) the B Grader must satisfy appointed examiners in the field on several occasions that his Lanner is an effective hunter under conditions of falconry, not easily achievable when only eyas' are available. Zimbabwe falconers, almost without exception, use passage and haggard Lanners only. An example of how effective these birds can be is adequately portrayed by my friend and partner in falconry, Pierre Heymans. He trapped a passage Lanner falcon in mid-season and a fortnight later it had a Spotted Dikkop (*Burhinus capensis*) and three Red-billed Teal to its credit. I warrant most kills are more spectacular than many made by Peregrines. A Lanner's devastating strike-and-pass, combined with its penchant for taking quarry head-on, make for some truly exhilarating falconry.

Peregrines are mostly sourced from the club's captive breeding project, though passage birds are allowed. It is legal to take from the nest, or trap as sorehawks, young from a healthy wild population. In recent years half and more of the young Peregrines hatched in captivity are hacked to the wild. The captive breeding project has achieved its primary goal of breeding enough birds to sustain falconry's required harvest with excess to bolster the wild population. This is a sound practice that highlights the ZFC's commitment to conservation, while neutralising any anti-falconry sentiments.

The African race of Peregrine is a diminutive species with tiercels at 450 g and falcons at 650 g. They are ideally suited to the task at hand as Zimbabwe's gamebirds, nine species in all, range from the small partridge-like Coqui Francolin at 250 g to the Crowned Guineafowl at 1,500 g. Guineafowl are loath to leave the ground even under pressure and are not particularly fleet of wing and are subsequently not often hunted. But the five more common species of francolin, or pheasant, provide a challenging flight to all tiercels and falcons. Most Zimbabwean falconers consider their Peregrines to be utility hawks taking anything from Cape Turtle Doves (160 g) through Red-bill Teal (450 g) and up to Swainson's Francolin (f = 450 g, m = 700 g) in the normal course of a season. Flying at various species of plover, pigeon, lourie (touraco), hornbill and snipe is more often incidental and would not be a planned hunt.

And what of the Black Sparrowhawk? They are beauty and the beast in one, executioner, special friend and a treasure in the experienced falconer's hands. Most Zimbabwe falconers will fly at least one Black Sparrowhawk in their career, and none regret the experience, lessons, success and satisfaction that come from doing so. Dashing, fast, huge hearted and bold as a lion. These large accipiters (m = 450 g, f

= 750 g) are the Zimbabwean austringers' ultimate choice of hawk. Typically accipitrine in manner, management and temperament, Black Sparrowhawks combined with good dogs can feed themselves and a breeding pen of Peregrines through a season. Unlike the Gos and Harris of UK and European falconry whose main quarry is hare and rabbit, our Blacks are avian oriented as Zimbabwean hares are nocturnal. All Spar flying is at francolin, guinea fowl, duck and teal and occasionally touraco, buttonquail and lark.

Traditionally and historically, falconry is a blood sport and this is not negotiable - active hunting has to be any bona fide falconer's priority with his trained raptors. This fact is emphasised strongly in Zimbabwean falconry and any "Robin Hood" (Glazier) falconers practising hawk keeping don't fit in well! The loss of one's falconry permit and confiscation of hawks, if persistent, is the likely outcome of anyone that ignores this fundamental principle of falconry.

Due to Zimbabwe's rich and varied raptors, the ZFC has supported in full all legislation relating to restrictions on the use of exotic, or non-indigenous, species of birds of prey for falconry. There are no hybrids used and all falconry is with indigenous raptors at indigenous quarry. Marketing or dealing in raptors, whether internally or internationally, is prohibited. We do, however, fully appreciate the necessity of buying, selling and hybridisation of raptors in the West as being integral to maintaining falconry as a field sport in view of the distant lack of availability of wild raptors (imagined in the case of some species?), but all those foreign Harris Hawks? Still, it is difficult to imagine being a falconer in a country where that singular pleasure, thrill, and sense of achievement that comes from trapping one's own bird is not allowed.

African Sky Hunters is a safari operation founded by five avid Zimbabwean falconers. We believe our falconry scene, as a full raptor experience, is difficult to equal anywhere in the world. In one day of falconry we can fly our hawks and falcons in the early morning, view numerous species of game and other wildlife whilst doing so. We can then drive a few

kilometres and see Black Eagles at the eyrie, Lanners on the ledge, African Hawk Eagles at the nest. Then, on the way home for lunch, stop and watch a Martial Eagle hovering up high, to me, one of Nature's most wondrous achievements. This would be an average morning's activity on the vast ranch where our falconry and raptor safari is based. What we have is special. The unique and innovative concept of a safari designed by falconers to cater for kindred spirits starved of "raptor contact" and falconry, in an environment conducive to a natural and full experience, is what we offer. This original idea was inspired by overseas falconry visitors that we have entertained, and their bubbling praise, envy and enthusiasm at what the Zimbabwe falconry experience is.

The concept is a world first and we sincerely believe that anyone that joins us for a safari will go home with a refreshing view of not only falconry but all that goes with it. We hope to teach, and learn, from our guests about falconry, raptors, conservation and the myriad plant, insect and animal species that share the same ecosystems as our raptors. After all, without these other facets of Nature there would be no hawks. Learning more about them will enhance any keen falconer's, or raptor enthusiasts' outdoor experiences, be they with a hawk on the glove or a stroll with a pair of bino's. We are not scientists - we are normal people that relate in a normal way to the deep devotion we have to our raptors and the environment we share with them. And we want to share that understanding with other like-minded people - for the ultimate benefit, we hope, of the very hawks whose future all true falconers' profess such commitment to assuring.



Andre Groenwald's Lundi, a four year old African Crowned Eagle

AN ABC OF FALCONRY

Being a Short introduction to the Art of Hawking

II - Eyesses, feeding and hack

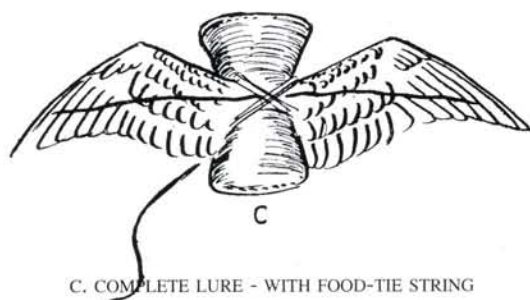
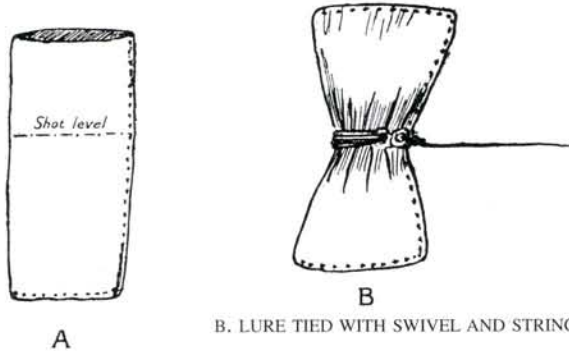
Your gear, now being in readiness, the question of which kind of hawk to begin with must next be considered.

Despite all that has been, or may be, written to the contrary, the bird par excellence for the beginner is the Kestrel. Merlins, peregrines, goshawks and sparrowhawks all require expert handling, and it is therefore essential that the beginner should learn the rudiments of his art on a hawk that is tractable, easily fed and easily obtained.

Kestrels are usually obtainable in most pet stores at prices ranging from 5/- to 20/-. The wilder birds are cheaper, and as it is these which are the best for falconry, this is all to the good.

Should you happen to have a friendly gamekeeper in your district, he will readily show you where you may obtain young kestrels from the nest. But delay taking the young until the last possible moment, as the nearer they are to flying age the better.

A SOFT LEATHER BAG SHOWING SHOT LEVEL



INTRODUCING THE LURE.

Of the family select the two largest and, placing them in a straw-lined basket, with a well fitting lid, carry them swiftly and gently home, placing them in your hawk room, which has been specially darkened for the occasion. Now put the jesses on, and if it was late in the day when the birds were caught, let them rest until the following dawn.

Hawks taken young from the nest are known as 'eyesses' whilst full-grown birds caught on migration are 'passagers' if under a year old, and 'haggards' if over that age.

At peep of dawn you must provide yourself with some absolutely fresh meat cut in small strips. Sheep's heart is excellent, or else mice or sparrows from which all fur and feathers have been removed. Now feed the young birds from the end of a small stick.

A good deal of patience is required, but feed they must, whilst at times they may have to be gorged! Should you have caught your birds early in the day, they must have a feed before night, or else hunger streaks will appear on their feathers, and these are a disgrace to any falconer.

As their fear of you abates, the birds will stretch out their necks to



GOSHAWK ON FIST

be fed, whilst eventually they will walk towards you.

Now is the time to begin to teach them to feed on the fist. Hold a piece of meat firmly in your fingers and allow the hawk to pull at it, without, however, permitting her to secure the morsel. In her endeavours she will put her foot on your hand to get a better purchase, and it will be but a moment before you can lift her on to your fist and let her feed there. Once started she must never feed anywhere else. "Tirings" may be given of the block, but never her regular meals. "Tirings" by the way, consist of wings or legs of birds etc., given for the same purpose as one gives meatless bones to puppies. They keep the hawk amused, give her exercise, and keep the beak from growing too long.

The lure may be introduced now, and the hawk encouraged to come to it.

Garnish the lure with tempting bits and allow the eyesses to help themselves so that they lose all fear of it. Above all, never allow them to see the lure without meat on it.

Your lure is like a hook to a fisherman, and to it the hawk should always come the moment she sees it, with the certain knowledge of finding meat thereon. Never, never deceive her in this.

As will be seen later, you may exercise your hawk by means of the lure.

The final stages of an eyess's training are similar to that of passagers, so that the two will be dealt with in my next article.

FISH-HAWK.

GLOSSARY

Hack = State of liberty in which young long-winged hawks are kept before pairing.

Eyess = Hawk taken from nest before it can fly.

Passager = Full-grown bird, under a year old, caught on migration.

Haggard = Adult bird taken wild.

Tiring = Piece of tough food, such as the leg of a fowl, with the flesh taken off.

Lure = Padded leather bag with feather and meat attached to it by which the hawk is attracted to the falconer.

(Re-printed with kind permission of The Field)

We must point out that it is illegal to take any bird from the wild, today and it is now not considered that a kestrel is an ideal beginners bird.

HUXLEYS

EXPERIENCE

BOOM

When we arrived, Julian and Ali greeted us warmly and showed us through the shop into the centre. My first impression was one of surprise. As on the left was the obligatory weathering area, with a difference, all the birds were sat under patio umbrellas. What a novel idea. But the best was definitely yet to come. At the end of the weathering ground you turn right and are greeted by the most beautiful flying ground I have ever seen. Flowers are everywhere. Every conceivable colour and shape. I was absolutely stunned, and down the bottom on the right-hand side was a pond. Behind the flying ground, in a U shape are aviaries.

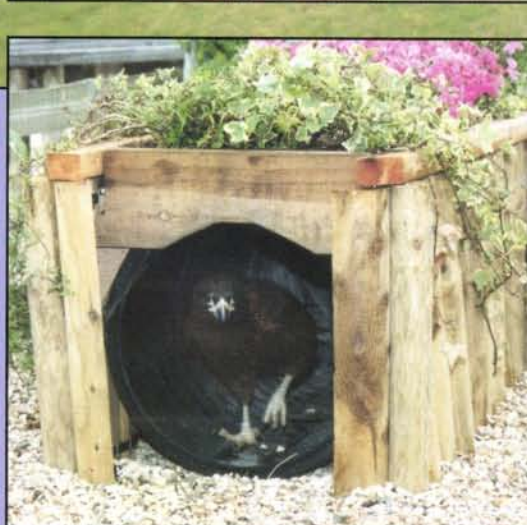
The gentleman who built this centre had what can only be described as vision. The piece of land he started with was a typical piece of waste-ground, covered in weeds and rubbish. To think that he has transformed it into this in the space of two and a half years is amazing.

Julian has been a falconer for 25 years and before he opened Huxleys Experience was a landscape gardener, so he has combined the two to maximum effect.

The flying displays at Huxleys are from 2.30pm until they have run out of spectators, or time as the centre closes at five. He and Ali will fly birds until you have seen enough, they have 30 birds available for display at any one time, so running out of birds to fly is not a problem. First he flew Norman, a fifteen-year old peregrine tiercel, named after Norman Bates (Psycho). It was raining when he flew but he performed beautifully. One of the things we liked was the fact that they flew two birds direct from the aviary. One was a Bengal Eagle Owl who obliged us all by catching pieces of meat in his feet, in mid air. The other was a Striated Caracara, who was quite obviously Ali's bird. He entertained us all by running down a tunnel, which is what they do on their native Falkland Islands, where they often eat baby penguins, to retrieve his dinner, and also turning over plant pots. This bird is very intelligent, as I believe are all Striated Caracaras. When he had finished flying he just hopped straight back into his aviary.

Huxleys' is situated on approximately 2 acres and was started in 1992 by Julian and Sue Ford. It is now run by Julian and Ali Collins. There are 90 birds at the centre, 45 of which are owls covering 20 species. There are six species of falcon and four species of hawk, and a Kookaburra. Also, they have a Black Vulture and a Honey Buzzard coming soon.

In the 29 aviaries there are a variety of birds and the Barn Owl aviaries are set out to look like the inside of barns. The Short and Long Eared Owl aviary has a scene painted in the back and a stream running through the middle. They all look very authentic, right down to the stone rattle snake in the bottom of one of the aviaries, which one gentleman watched for a good five minutes, waiting for it to move. Not the first they informed us, and probably not the last. The centre is on the main A281 Horsham to Brighton road behind Hilliers garden centre and is open from 11 - 5, every day (except Tuesdays), and at weekends throughout the winter.

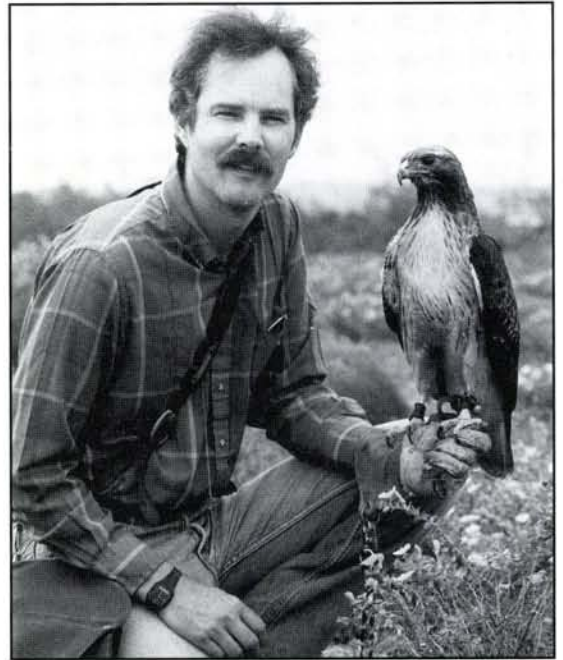




THE FORGOTTEN HAWK

When the Editor asked me to write an article on Redtails, I was at first flattered. I thought there must be others more qualified than I to write such an article. An investigation showed that there are only a handful of people in the State that have consistently flown the Redtail Hawk for more than a scant few years. I then checked my meagre library to see what had already been written. Most books allocated barely a photograph to this bird. There are whole books dedicated to Falcons, covering every conceivable contingency one might encounter. Whole chapters deal with specifics of lure swinging, manners, flight characteristics etc. etc. There are also the books on Shortwings. Several notable ones come to mind quickly: "A Hawk for the Bush", "Desert Hawking I", "Desert Hawking II", and several more that are soon to be released, including a book on training small accipiters by California Falconer, Jim Bryant. But what about Redtails? Little is recorded on the very bird that we all started Falconry with. The Falconry book "American Hawking" says of the Redtail: "The Redtail is ... often fast and aggressive, and many trained Redtails have proved to be gratifying performers in the field". The book "North American Falconry and Hunting Hawks" mentions it as: "Trained and flown with understanding in fair to good style on rabbits and hares, and in open country are somewhat superior to most Goshawks on such ground quarries". I'll give credit to Jemima Parry-Jones, who does give several pages to Redtails and says "... they are excellent for many Falconers ... They are more than capable of taking rabbits, pheasants, moorhens, coots and squirrels". Why are Redtails relegated to being for apprentices only? The low esteem given is peculiar to the Western Hemisphere only. In Europe and England this bird is highly regarded, often commanding a price in excess of that for a Falcon or Gos. Apprentices in Europe often start with a large Falcon or Gos, since these are the birds available. On a recent trip to England for Grouse Hawking, I met the "Apprentice" of a fellow Falconer. This "Apprentice" was flying a Saker, Tawny Eagle, and a Tiercel Goshawk, and looking forward to the day of flying a Redtail. Alaskan apprentices can fly a Goshawk. Are Alaskan apprentices smarter or more capable than ours in California? I don't think so. Alaska is millions of square miles of forested mountains. It makes sense that they have more Goshawks than Redtails. I guess that makes a Gos a beginners bird. There's a mind set that Redtails are a beginners bird. Falconers go through phases. They are thrilled to get that first Redtail ... Three years later they're too good to fly a dumb Redtail ... But 20 or 25

years later they again realise the value of this bird. At the '88 Field Meet in Victorville, the Guest Speaker was World renowned Falconer Frank Beebe. I was happy to find out that, back at home in Canada, he was flying a Gyr Falcon and a Redtail. I've been flying my present Redtail for about 6 years. She has become a regular member of the family. Over the years she has proven an excellent game hawk. Her take of rabbits and jacks has, for many years been over 100 head. She's also taken several mallards, cats, herons, pheasants, quail and 9 other Redtails (all released unhurt). Yet I often hear from other Falconers "Why not get rid of that Redtail, and get a". I think they have forgotten just how much fun they had with their apprentice bird. Most Falconers are planning what their next bird will be, long before the general license comes in the mail. There is an unwritten law that you have to get a different bird when you turn general. Consequently few people ever get the full potential out of a very capable hawk. I've flown many other hawks and falcons including: Coopers, Goshawks (they're a whole story in themselves), large falcons, a Kestrel that took morning doves, and even several owls that took game quite well, but none is as much plain fun as my old reliable Redtail. Redtails have many advantages. They can be flown in relatively small fields. A falcon need lots and lots of room. They can tolerate people, dogs and many other distractions in the field. I've flown my hawk in a small field, with a Santa Fe train going by on one side, a freeway on the other, and low flying F 16's over-head, and never missed a rabbit. Try that with a Goshawk and you better have telemetry. They are extremely powerful. Though a Harris may have feet twice the size, I think the Redtail has more brute strength. It's been my experience that Redtails tend to be all business, they don't have the playful nature of some of the falcons, the clownish antics that characterise nearly all of the owls. At a Mini-Meet once, I watched Craig Culver's young Saker play with a stick for hours. While it is unquestionably true that a 40 oz Redtail, flown from the fist, will not take as much game as a Goshawk or Harris, she will prove her worth when given an adequately high perch. Nature spent a lot of time perfecting each bird for a particular set of circumstances and Redtails just



Mike Faircloth with his high flying Redtailed Hawk

do better from the top of a light pole or in a soar. A Redtail in a soar is a creature of unsurpassed grace as she navigates the delicate air currents without even a wingbeat! Any lucky person that can get their Redtail to hunt and follow from 600 to 800 feet straight up will be assured of spectacular stoops and have a hawk that is indeed a rare gem. I recall an outing at the '90 Field Meet when I took several non-falconers out with me to see my Redtail hunt from a soar. We entered the field and I let Isabelle climb to about an honest 800 feet. After 10 minutes three other Redtails came in to fly with her. Now we had four birds over head and I couldn't tell which one was mine. To solve the problem I ran to the far end of the field hoping that Isabelle would follow. Sure enough, one black dot broke away from the rest and came to the other end of the field, and we continued to hunt there. About 5 minutes later we were witness to a stoop from this height, straight down on to a running jack that didn't stand a chance. That's Redtail Hawking. I've heard people say "God made Harris Hawks for Falconers". They are wonderful Hawks. They make even bad Falconers look like they know what they're doing. To get the most from a Redtail takes a lot of work, more than most people want to put in. It's much easier to get a Harris. Richard Hanna had a melanistic Female Redtail for about 15 years before he returned her to the wild. That kind of dedication is hard to find. What I'm saying is that the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence. We all seem to want what we don't have, and no-one wants what seems to be "common". In Southern California there are a lot of chevy Z28 or VET. I plan to be flying my "apprentice bird" for many more years to come, and hope that others will endeavour to get the most from the forgotten hawk.

Mike Faircloth

Raptors in Israel

Text & Pictures by Philip Snow

The Spring migration of approximately 2.5 billion birds, of which about 3 million are bird of prey, makes Israel & neighbours one of the two most important passage areas in the world; along with Central America.

Forty-five species of diurnal raptor, & eight of owls, have been recorded in these hot, biblical lands that bridge Africa & Asia: Obviously essential crossroads. Thanks to the diligent and expertise of ornithologists, like local author Hadoram Shirihai, the International Birdwatching Centre in Eilat & many eager volunteers, an understanding of this vital passage 'funnel' for birds has emerged. Israel, fortunately, does not have the appalling 'macho' tradition of blasting them from the skies, like for instance, Italy, Malta or parts of Turkey etc., possibly because of the numerous references to wildlife, birds & migration in the Hebrew Scriptures. Indeed, attempts are being made to reintroduce endangered raptors like Lappet Faced Vultures & many other 'Biblical' birds & animals, such as Ostrich & Oryx, from Haibar near Eilat, in Southern Israel.

Eilat, hemmed in by mountains at the head of the Gulf of Aqabah, in the Red Sea, is ideally situated to channel birds northwards, in the early spring. (The more leisurely southwards autumn migration is less concentrated) It lies, also in the more northerly reaches of the great Syroll African Rift Valley, a natural 'highway' stretching thousands of miles down into equatorial Africa from Asia Minor. The raptor passage can be enjoyed from just about anywhere in the small modern town & port of Eilat, or across the head of the Gulf into Jordan, depending on wind direction. The best views, though, are usually from the many hills just west of the town, by the Egyptian border, often around 10.00am and with the usual north wind raptors start to trickle through from late January, but peak between March & May, depending on species: Steppe Eagle usually first, Honey Buzzard, amongst the last. Six species dominate the thirty regulars passing

through Israel, with counts in the late 1980's of 850,000 Honey Buzzards; 465,000 Steppe Buzzards; 141,000 Lesser Spotted Eagles; 76,000 STEPPE EAGLES; 49,000 LEVANT SPARROWHAWKS; & 36,000 BLACK KITES; all bound for Eastern Europe or Asia. Gibraltar Italy & various Mediterranean islands are the other significant passage places for European raptors, as most birds of prey prefer not to cross large bodies of thermal-less water. Incidentally, tens-of-thousands of AMUR FALCONS (eastern Red-footed Falcons) apparently cross, largely unrecorded, from Asia to Africa each year - along the Southern Saudi coast?

Eighteen species of raptor breed in Israel, and about twenty-six winter, making a visit at any time of the year worthwhile, although early Spring is undoubtedly the finest time. My own first visit was in late January, too early for the main passage but I saw enough birds, in often awesome desert and mountain scenery, to keep me busily sketching, and usually quite close to Eilat. I sorely envied the crane operators (erecting yet another soulless skyscraper beach hotel) their eyeball-to-eyeball encounters with the first passing STEPPE EAGLES, languidly flapping north over the town in the afternoon, or the BARBARY FALCONS that regularly perch on pylons and aerials. Needless to say there are plentiful birds of other species to be seen here including 'exotics' like LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER, GRACKLES, BOOBIES, BUSHCHATS & NAMAQUA DOVES etc., in and around the town of Eilat. I must also mention the spectacular aquarium, which includes an underwater observation tower on the coastal reef, with easy snorkelling access to this wondrous Technicolor world. Nevertheless, it is the memory of masses of swirling raptors above the mountains and deserts of this area that most retain, so here we go. HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis apivorus*) - one of the main passage migrants, peaking in early May, usually maintains a slight westerly route from

Eilat, with 850,000 counted in the late 80's. ORIENTAL or CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) has only recently (1994) been observed with the Honey Buzzards, with just two or three being seen in the middle eastern passage. As they are very similar, this is hardly surprising, and anyone interested should consult 'Birding World' Vol.7 No.10, for plumage differences. The elegant RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) is only an accidental migrant as are BLACK SHOULDERED KITES, Whilst BLACK KITES (*Milvus migrans*) breed and are one of the six commonest migrants, with 36,000 counted in the 80's. 2,639 Wintering birds, both western and eastern races, were recorded, mainly in the north of Israel (1988) and I personally counted about one hundred in a single binocular sweep of the western Neger near Beersheva last January. The WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) formally bred in Israel and reintroduction attempts have been made, but only about five recent records of mainly sub-adults, exist. The magnificent BEARDED VULTURE OR LAMMERGEIER (*Gypaetus barbatus*) is likewise rare and a recent breeder, but facing extinction here. EGYPTIAN VULTURES (*Neophron percnopterus*), whose sub-adults are not dissimilar to Lammergeier, are both resident and passage migrants, with a peak of 802 counted in Spring 1977. They too show the not uncommon downward trend in numbers. Characteristic of the worlds raptors at present.

GRIFFON VULTURES (*Gyps fulvus*) are uncommon but regular migrants and fairly rare breeders, with highest counts of 30 in the autumn, usually migrating with Steppe Eagles. The striking LAPPET FACED VULTURE (*Torgos tracheliotus*) is the subject of an ambitious captive breeding project in Israel, as this severely endangered bird is down to possibly just one or two individuals, in the southern Arava desert. As they appear to still be resident next door, in Jordan, and have now successfully started breeding in captiv-

ity, hopes are still entertained for this more African species. They can be seen in the Haibar Yotvata 'Biblical Wildlife Reserve'; a wonderful acacia desert oasis, not far north of Eilat. The BLACK VULTURE (*Aegyptius monachus*) appears also to be a rather rare breeder, but mainly winter migrant with peaks of seven birds around the Golan heights in 1988. Coming to the four harriers, the NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) is the commonest in the winter (235 counted in 1988), but rarest at all other times, with only two or three counted on passage. None of the Harriers appear to breed in Israel, but the MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*) is the most widespread visitor, especially in the north. The Hula valley, on Israel's northern borders with Lebanon and Syria, is one of the best winter raptor spots, with its huge fishpond and agricultural areas, (& usually the only area to see the uncommon Spotted Eagle). The beautiful and wraith-like PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) is at the northernmost limits of its wintering area in Israel (as the Hen H. is at the southernmost limits, hence mainly females and juveniles seen), and this is thought to account for the preponderance of adult males seen.

Of 26 Pallids counted in winter 1988, 19 were adult males, and seen mainly in the western Neger desert, by Beersheva. I was enthralled to see a male energetically chasing a female SPARROWHAWK there, through and around an olive grove, and right by the road. Although I immediately sketched the scene, I could not photograph it, as I had (somewhat uncharacteristically) obeyed the military orders, and put my camera away! A peak of 113, in Spring 1985 is the highest count of this scarce migrant, usually seen on passage between March & April. The females and immatures, are, of course, very similar to the MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pyargus*), an even scarcer passage migrant that passes through a little later, and doesn't appear to winter. The agricultural lands of the western Neger, in south/central Israel, are also excellent for harriers and other raptors in winter - and a damn sight warmer than the cold north, at that time of the year.

wingspan:
135-150cm.

Honey
Buzzards



adult ♂
typical

typical
adult ♀



light
adult ♂



typical
adult ♂



dark
♀



HONEY BUZZARDS have a very wide spectrum of plumage variability, ranging from very dark to rather pale. Distinctive tail shape & projecting narrow head show with good view, as does greyer brown back of male. They usually fly on flat or slightly drooping wings, unlike the common or Steppe Buzzard which soars on wings raised in a V. Both STEPPE BUZZARD & LONG LEGGED BUZZARD also have wide variation in colour forms, with the Long legged usually showing strong contrast between upper flights & coverts, & always showing dark carpal patches on underwings.

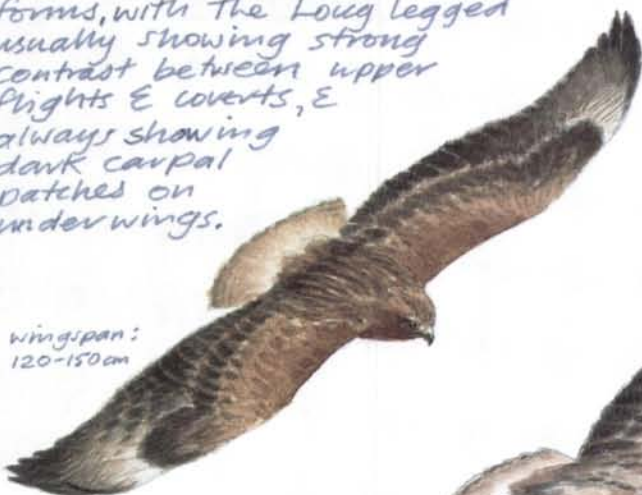
wingspan:
c115cm

adult
STEPPE
BUZZARD-
rufous
form



wingspan:
120-150cm

adult
LONG LEGGED
BUZZARD
adult - pale phase



imm.



Immature
Steppe
Buzzard



dark
adult



Imm L. Legged
Buzzard.



RAPTORS IN ISRAEL

PART 2 · PHILIP SNOW

Eagles featured in Part 2, Falcons & owls will be in part 3.



Wingspan: 295-
LAPPET FACED VULTURE
Huge, nearly as large as the
BLACK VULTURE, both v. rare.

Above: OSPREY, by Eilat.
left: GRIFFON VULTURE
Golan Heights & Negev.
Wingspan: 220-285 cm



'BLACK' KITES - common wintering & passage
migrant. Young birds more reddish, &
they dominate
in winter.

Wingspan: 153
-155cm



- immature



A premier winter migrant site, the
Western Negev, by Beersheva.
Black kites, Marsh harrier
over reclaimed desert.
Large kite roost in winter, as
at Hula in the north.

Wingspan: 95-110 cm.
PALLID HARRIER ad. ♂
chasing SPARROWHAWK ♀
Western Negev, MARSH &
HEN HARRIERS of all ages
also hunting croplands &
Kibbutz Umm.



♀ Pallid.



Wilderness
of Sinai.

♀ Wingspan 64-80cm



Levants, especially ♂s,
usually show a
distinctive pale &
almost falcon like shape

LEVANT SPARROWHAWK.
The last week in April is
the best time to see 1000's
of them on passage near
Eilat. P. Snow

adult ♂
1st yr LEVANT SPARROWHAWK

THAT OLD WORLD COMMERCIALISM

Written by Jemima Parry-Jones

Research by Philip Glasier

For probably all the years that The National Birds of Prey Centre has been in existence, we have been dogged, labelled and even spoken of detrimentally because we make our living out of birds of prey. One meaning of commercial is to have profit as the first aim - well, all I can say to that is you must be joking. If this centre had profit as its main aim, I would not be open to the public and that would get rid of all the staff and the £90,000 yearly bill it takes to keep them, I would not build aviaries to the cost and standard that we do. I would not worry about whom my birds go to, or what quality of birds I breed. With the set up we have now, in terms of commercialism I could make a fortune by employing one member of staff, breeding hundreds of birds that are suitable for the market and selling them willy-nilly.

Those who frown and point fingers at anyone breeding birds and selling the offspring should look back in history before shouting about spoiling the sport, by selling birds. Birds of prey commanding prices, some of them very high for the time, has been going on for at least 500 years and probably longer.

In Fisher's Reminiscences - a freshly trapped passage Peregrine in Holland cost £4.

Michell - a Frenchman paid a Russian falconer £40 and a gun for a trained Golden Eagle.

Michell - falcons valued at £4-£5 and Tiercels £3-£4.

Michell - A famous trained Goshawk "Gauety Gal" changed hands at £40 and the vendor afterwards considered he was the loser.

Freeman and Salvin - £1 per bird should be a fair reward to a boy who risked his neck over the cliff to take young Peregrines.

Harting 2nd Edition - Eyass Peregrines from £1.10d to 30/- (£1.50 to those not old enough to remember 30 shillings) Merlins 10/- to 15/- (50p - 75p)

Edmund Bert - a Goshawk and Tarsell at 100 marks (haven't a clue of that value today) and in 1619 another Goshawk at £40 - can you imagine what they would be at today's prices! We are now coming to the time when it is often said that falconry was only done by gentlemen and commercialism would have been an anathema to them - if that is the case - why did they pay for birds I ask myself. In 1928 - De Von and Co. in the Kings Rd, London charged 10/- carriage paid for a Kestrel.

In an article in The Field, November 7, 1931 Kestrels are quoted, obtainable from most Pet Stores at prices ranging from 5/- to 20/- (25p - £1) the wilder birds being the cheaper ones. Captain Knight used to pay keepers £5 per Peregrine (usually the birds were shot if not taken or sold).

In the mid 1930's a BFC member used to ask 30/- per Merlin, but this was conditional on your getting a licence and on returning the Merlin at the end of the season.

In 1928 Philip Glasier bought a female Goshawk from Jack Mavrogordato for £5. She had a twisted beak - she took 72 head by her first Christmas, mainly rabbits (my Father stated that as rabbits fetched 1/6 each, the Gos gave him more pocket money than his father did!)

In 1967 a female Goshawk from Germany was £23 and a male £17. A Kestrel complete with swivel was £1 and 6/-. For those who think that was cheap just remember that the house I

live in which is now probably worth between £250,000 - £300,000, in 1967 was £11,400. Until fairly recently there was a thriving commercial industry in Holland in Falkonsvarg, where the leading family of the small town, the Mollens' made their living trapping passage birds, training them, making the falconry furniture and then selling the birds to falconers throughout Europe.

Falconers have been paid employees of the rich for centuries, only these days has it become less viable to employ someone on a commercial basis to train birds.

So commercial falconry has been around for hundreds of years, for those hypocritical enough to shout about it. I have to say that I consider myself a professional as my aims are certainly not commercial in the true sense of the word, and I am also proud to say that I consider my birds are better housed, fed and cared for than most. My care in trying to make sure that birds I have bred go to good, knowledgeable homes puts me above those who will give a bird away to almost anyone rather than be seen as 'commercial'. It has also been my sad experience that when people pay for a bird they are more likely to look after it well, than if it were a gift.

For those of you who point fingers and make rude comments about people who make their living working with birds of prey, do try to grow up a little and realise that not only have birds of prey been bought and sold, traded and exchanged for centuries, people have been paid to fly them for centuries. It is not a stigma as long as it is done well. As the future of falconry comes closer to the front line of the Anti-movement, remember this - the commercial people will probably be attacked first as they are easier to target and it is the good commercial - or better, use the word, professional people by which falconry will stand or fall as they are the only people liable to get off their rear ends and fight - both for their rights to keep and fly birds and the quality of their raptor keeping.

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RAPTOR RESCUE

Annual Survey 1993/94

This is the latest in Raptor Rescue's continuing series of surveys and is based on the information supplied by rehabilitators in answer to our specially created census form.

The pie chart and figures below illustrate the general picture in terms of total numbers of birds and the species involved. Our investigation also provides the opportunity to collect further data, where possible, regarding the sex and ages of the casualties, as well as a more detailed analysis of the types of injuries sustained. It is hoped that these additional statistics will prove useful and may be published in due course.

Accompanying the results are the observations of Raptor Rescue's vice-chairman, Mick Cunningham (L.R.K.), who has once again devoted time and effort to oversee the organisation of this year's survey.

Our rehabilitator's reports for the period 01.09.93 to 31.08.94 show that July and August were their busiest months with many youngsters requiring attention. Mature casualties were also at their highest density during these two months and far exceeded the number of juvenile birds taken into care. This is almost certainly due to their increased activity at this time of year.

In line with the results of previous surveys, the number of mature casualties was more than double that of immature and juvenile birds. However, the total of juveniles taken into care has fallen by 25% compared to last years' results. A significant number of these - mainly Kestrels - showed extreme maladaptive behaviour, making them unsuitable for release. Socially disabled birds accounted for over 37% of those birds permanently retained in captivity.

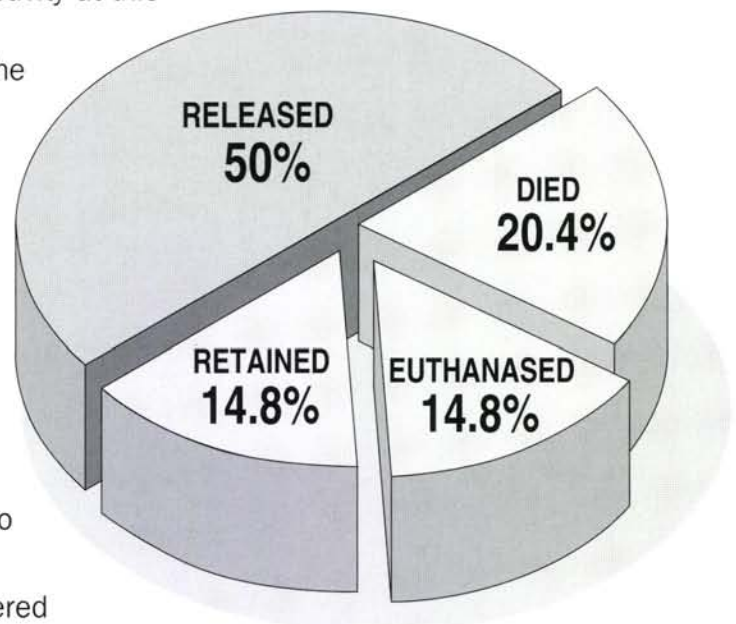
Of the total number of birds received, only 32% were able to be sexed. This revealed 60% to be male and 40% female.

A total of 11 different species were encountered during the year, and as expected, Kestrels and Tawny Owls dominated the statistics, comprising 50% of all casualties handled.

Our rehabilitators continued to take in escaped or lost domestic birds. Most were reunited with their rightful owners, but a few, including a Lugger and a Lanner had to be re-homed. Deregistration has made it difficult to get these birds back to their owners.

No Goshawks were taken in during the survey period and unfortunately there is bad news regarding the female Goshawk which was reported in our last census. She is now dead, having been shot. A sad end indeed, especially for our rehabilitator who had spent many weeks using full falconry techniques, to prepare this bird for release.

Mick Cunningham. June 1995



THESE STATISTICS HAVE BEEN COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY 21 REHABILITATORS.

Wild Casualties	290
Domestic Bred Casualties	21*

SPECIES BREAKDOWN

Kestrel	86	Peregrine	7
Tawny Owl	61	Hobby	3
Sparrowhawk	54	Long Eared Owl	2
Little Owl	38	Short Eared Owl	1
Barn Owl	19	Merlin	1
Buzzard	18		

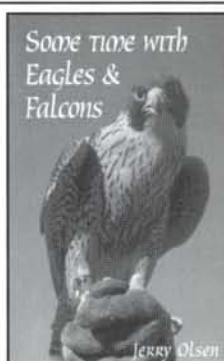
* **Note:** Domestic bred birds are recorded as a separate category and not included in the graph.

SOME TIME WITH EAGLES & FALCONS.

JERRY OLSON.

For the Falconer and non-falconer alike, this book will prove both interesting and entertaining. Jerry Olson writes in such a way that the facts and figures are so much a part of the story they are absorbed easily along with the rest. It is a blend of humour, drama and personal experience that keeps you interested all the way through. I found it really nice because I came across names I recognised, such as Nick Fox and Tom Cade. Making the story all the more interesting.

Covering a span of over twenty-five years he begins the story in 1969 when he finds a dead body in Lake Lebarge and from there



he takes us trapping Prairies in Washington State, then onto Australia where we meet Peregrines, Black Falcons, Brown Falcons, and Eagles. Jerry helped with the making of quite a few nature programmes and also the making of Mad Max III. The variety in this mans life is amazing. I was extremely jealous to think he has lived all this and at the same time excited by it.

FALCONRY ORIGINALS VIDEO CATALOGUE

This video is a novel idea, one which will no doubt be taken up by other manufacturers quite soon. I must admit it is nice to sit in the comfort of your own home and have all the furniture and equipment 'modelled' for you.

The video is quite well filmed and there is a commentary throughout explain-

ing the different types and styles of equipment. The £1.95 fee may be a little off-putting at first but this is fully refundable with your first order and to be quite honest it is better than pictures in a regular and cheaper than driving to a game fair, or similar just to look at the furniture.

RUTLAND FALCONRY CENTRE

This is a small but tidy centre which has not been open to the public for very long. Situated behind a garden centre it is in the middle of open countryside. Rutland, England's' smallest county, is just outside Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. It boasts Rutland Water, a famous and much frequented RSPB nature reserve.

Paul Johnson, who owns the centre, has very firm beliefs about the way falconry should be represented and this shows in his course pack. There are a variety of birds, including Saker, Harris Hawk, Buzzard, Peregrine/Lanner hybrid and a wild-disabled Marsh Harrier. The Garden centre serves tea in the afternoon, and there is a lovely play area

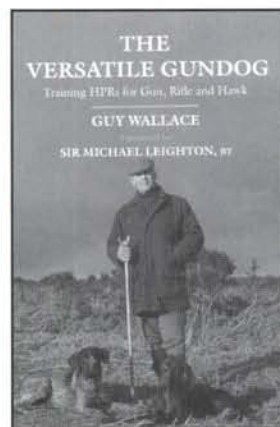
for the children. The centre has two weathering areas, with a third in progress and a nice block of aviaries. The flying area backs onto the fields so the birds can take full advantage of the extra space. The main falconer at the centre is a young man called Matthew who has a good rapport with the birds and a good relationship with the general public. He works very hard at his lure work when he flies their star bird, a tiercel saker, who keeps him well and truly on his toes.

The Versatile Gundog.

Training HPR's for Gun, Rifle and Hawk.

By Guy Wallace

Those of you that have been reading The Falconers Magazine over the last few years will be aware of Guy's no-nonsense attitude when training dogs, and just as he insists the commands for the dog should be black and white so is his approach to helping you train yours. Setting out a step by step training programme, going in to great detail about the different HPR's and their characteristics, history and origin. As Guy says, horses for courses, if you get the right dog for the right job then you are half way there. Once you have decided which breed of dog is best for you, with the help of the book, it is then possible to take it through all stages of training, using Guy's book as a guide



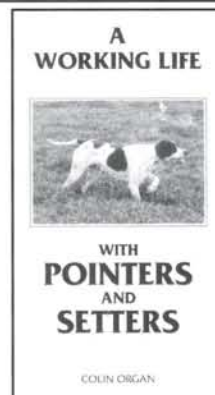
and mentor. There is emphasis throughout the book on important points, the author stresses very clearly the pitfalls, pointing out mistakes, hopefully before they are made.

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Matthew with the Sakerette, which he flew when we visited. It really is an exceptional little bird, extremely fast and nearly catching Matthew out on a number of occasions.

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STRIATED CARACARA

PHALCOBENUS AUSTRALIS

The summer is short. The winter is long. The wind is strong and unforgiving almost all year round.

Temperatures plummet to, a merciful, 70 degrees below freezing. The terrain is rough and unsheltered.

When the snow comes it barely settles before it is whipped up and carried away in chaotic flurries across the bleak landscape. Who would want to live in a place like this?

The mountainous regions of West Falkland aren't much, but the Striated Caracara calls it home! These territories also provide residence for a variety of other rare and endangered species of bird and animal alike. All possibly seeking the asylum afforded by the rancorous climate, in a bid to preserve against the actions of the Animal Kingdom's age-old, arch enemy, Man.

This is certainly the case for "Johnny Rook", as the Striated

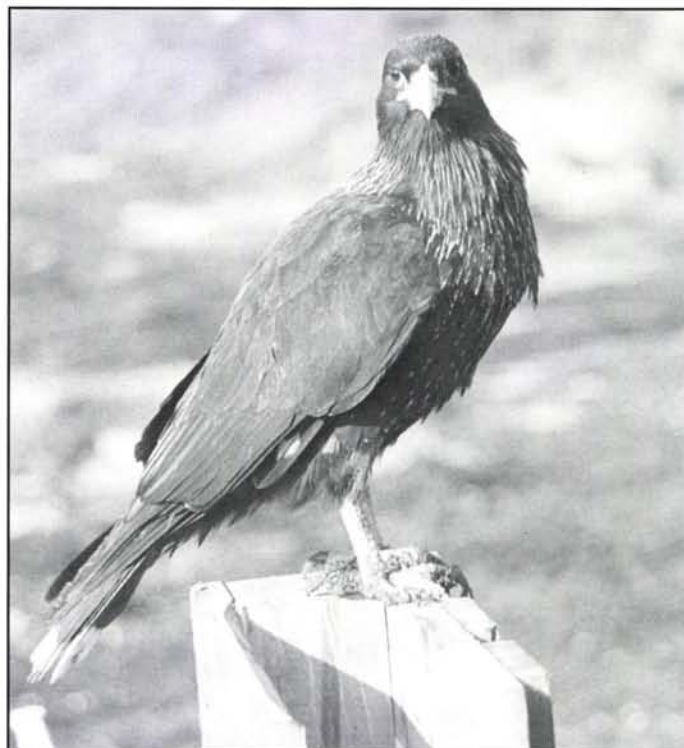
Caracara is known by the various human communities throughout the Falkland Islands.

Up until the latter years of the 19th Century, this unusual species of raptor was widespread throughout the 780 islands which collectively make up the Falkland Islands. They were not an unfamiliar sight in and around the town of Port Stanley, on the lookout for easy pickings.

However, at the turn of the century they were observed by the naturalist, Cobb, to have "decreased in numbers of late years". And so began their retreat to the sanctions of the wild and sparsely populated West Islands.

"Persecution by ignorance", is such a familiar aphorism, applicable to so many species of raptor and the Striated Caracara is no exception. Probably having been sighted, on occasion, feeding from the carcasses of dead sheep - which would not

LES PEACH



have been uncommon by any means, because they are largely carrion feeders and the adverse climate of the Falkland's takes its toll on even the hardiest of animals - they became reputed killers of sheep and lambs. Hence, around 1910, the species was added to "the list of birds for whose destruction a reward is offered, on account of damage done to sheep and lambs," as Cobb wrote, and became classified along with the Crested Caracara, Red-backed Hawk and Turkey Vulture as a "pest for which a bounty would be paid". "Johnny Rook" was finally exonerated of his crimes and removed from the "hit list" in the 1920's. However the persecution continued, illegally, for at least a further 40 years, leading, inevitably, to their extinction on East Falkland and serious depletion in numbers on West Falkland. When you consider that the Striated Caracara is almost exclusive to the Falkland Islands, only being found elsewhere in small colonies on the islands off the southern tip of Chile, in South America and on the southern coast of Argentina, where they also fell victim to man's disrespect for his fellow creatures, this rendered them one of the rarest species of bird in the world.

My first experience of this unique bird was not in the Falklands, but at Geoff Dalton's Falconry Centre in the Cotswolds. Geoff's young specimen won the hearts of the audience with its comical antics as it chased across the ground (reluctant to fly anywhere!), sometimes at remarkable speed, in hot pursuit of the small tidbits that were on offer, occasionally pausing to tug at the shoelaces of the unsuspecting, and somewhat bemused onlookers, at the same time giving out a raucous "kawing" noise in its frustration, or perhaps delight at the havoc and mischief it was causing! It was dis-

playing all the traits, I remember thinking at the time, of a demonstrative and spoilt imprint. I was to discover though, that this fearless and playful nature was in fact typical of the species, regardless of age or sex.

On my return to the Falklands I was offered a temporary post, away from my usual place of work, at Mount Pleasant Airport Power Station (about 30 miles from Port Stanley on East Falkland) to work on some generators at a small, military radar station, situated at the top of Mount Byron Heights on West Falkland. I had heard many accounts of the large black hawk that frequented the site and, naturally, welcomed the opportunity of seeing for myself.

I arrived at Byron Heights by helicopter and was immediately struck by the severity of the weather in comparison to the general coldness of the lowlands, to which I had become accustomed. But more striking was the number of Striated Caracaras that nonchalantly looked on at the proceedings, as I strode against the biting, gale-force wind towards the small container camp which was to be my home for the next month or so.

After unloading my kit and exchanging pleasantries and gossip with my friends and colleagues who were permanently stationed at Byron, I ventured outside for a closer look at the mountains' more established residents. The sensation of being amidst, and practically tripping over, one of the worlds rarest species of bird, in their own environment was, to say the least, overwhelming.

The attraction of the camp for the birds was obvious - easy food! There were plenty of scraps to be had and quite often the army cooks, obligingly put out the various remains of the early morning repast, such as bacon, sausages, eggs, bred



etc., and also a variety of spoils left over from other meals - not exactly the ideal diet for a bird of prey, but the birds didn't seem to mind in the least. On the contrary, the competition with each was quite fierce as they kawed and squabbled indignantly over even the smallest and most unappetising piece of mud-soaked scrambled egg!

More usually, though their diet consists almost entirely of carrion, in the form of Sheep, Upland Geese, various breeds of penguin and just about anything that doesn't require the effort and application involved in the hunting down and killing of prey.

However, in the absence of these ready-to-eat culinary finds, the Caracara's will, and do, pull together to make a kill. Although their preference of quarry lies with the small, young, inexperienced type, like the progeny of such species as the Upland Goose or Kelp Goose, they have been known to attack much larger, adult birds. But this requires teamwork between usually five or more birds. The first bird flies up behind the unsuspecting goose and knocks it over by issuing a timely clout with the outstretched feet, and the remainder of the conspirators promptly move in and finish the job by delivering lethal blows with their beaks. This is then followed by the obligatory bickering and squawking match, as they devour their trophy.

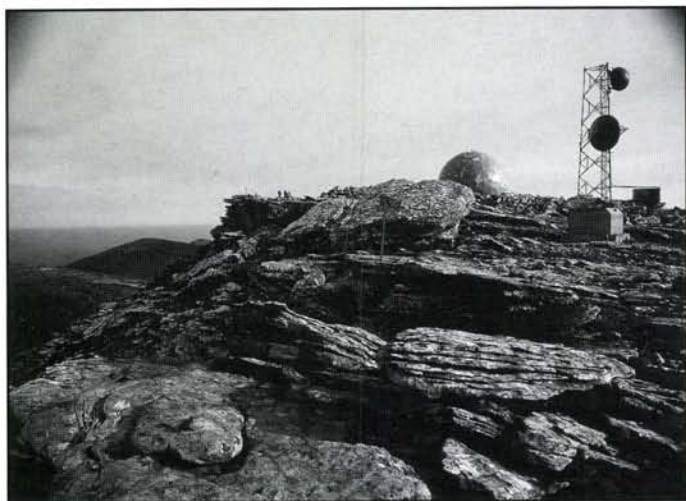
The Striated Caracara is by no means incapable in the hunting department on a lone basis either, and has been known to take Storm Petrels, Diving Petrels, Fairy Prions and small penguins such as the Rockhopper. All of these breeds can be found in their on Beauchene Island, which the Caracara's also choose for their breeding ground in early November - a calculated choice, in view of the abundance of these other breeds. It has, indeed, been shown that the young of the Caracara are raised predominantly on Rockhopper Penguin chicks.

I wasn't fortunate enough to visit the breeding grounds of the Striated Caracara during by two and a half year tour in the Falklands, but I did make a concerted effort to leave the semi-civilisation of the radar station in order to observe the species in a more natural surround.

Once again, heavily laden with essential foul-weather clothing and various items of survival kit, which I had to carry in case of sudden and dramatic changes in the weather conditions, (a notorious feature of this country), and clutching my faithful companion in the form of a medium sized camera bag, I left Byron Heights and headed out across the bleak, open heathland, where one hill rolled smoothly into the next, punctuated only by scattered areas of igneous rockforms, in lonely search of my subjects.

As I walked I saw nothing, save the occasional, solitary, Turkey Vulture circling high, silhouetted against the muggy, grey sky that adorned the inclement landscape.

I came across a relatively sheltered patch of rocky ground where I decided to stop for a rest and a bite to eat. At this time I was still alone with only the lichen smothered rockery and dense, hardy foliage for company. I unwrapped a small parcel of sandwiches, which I had prepared before my departure, and, no sooner had I taken the first mouthful, than a large adult Striated Caracara alighted, not six feet away from me, on top of a small clump of wiry heather. I assumed the bird to be a female on account of its size (there is no plumage discrepancy between the male and female of this breed) and judged it to be a good three or four inches bigger than the familiar Red-tailed Hawk. She appeared, it seemed, out of nowhere, and watched attentively, as if she that sooner or later I would impart to some of the contents of my ham sandwich. She was right, of course, and devoured the morsel of meat that I offered to her, with fervour.



*Mount Byron Heights.
The large golf-ball is a radar dome*

In the meantime a small crowd of Caracaras had gathered behind me, again unannounced, almost as if they were spontaneously emerging from the cracks and crevices of the stony mass! These birds are truly efficient scavengers and don't miss a trick when the opportunity for a quick feed presents itself. I handed out some more scraps of meat, ate the empty remains of my lunch, and then set about the task of shooting some pictures while I still had their undivided attention. All four variations in plumage and colouring, from juvenile to adult were present. Adulthood is achieved in the fourth year, after a series of changes through each moult, in a logical progression from the bland, dark browns and grey/white skin colours of the juvenile through to the predominant, rich black plumage with contrasting streaks of white or buff on the nape, mantle, sides of neck and throat, and a broad white band at the tip of the tail, and the bright orange/yellow skin colours of the adult in all its glory. I became overly engrossed with my work and hadn't noticed the pair of birds that had joined forces, in the vicinity of my camera bag, which had become the focal point of their interest. I paused long enough to

take a picture but once the lid was open and the systematic extraction of items that were obviously there to be investigated and generally played with had started, I thought it prudent to act. I recovered and repacked the "toys" and then decided to head back to base. The birds soon dispersed as quietly and unobtrusively as they had arrived, having exhausted the food source of the moment and having had their playthings duly confiscated, moving on to better things elsewhere. That is to say all but one. The large adult female that had made the initial appearance, for some reason, stayed with me for the entire duration of the journey back to Byron Heights. She rode the

breeze expertly as I walked - never further than about twenty feet from my flanks - and whenever I stopped, she landed and paid me close attention, until I moved again. I couldn't figure out why - perhaps in the vain hope of scoring some more tasty snacks, or even perhaps because she genuinely enjoyed my company in contrast to the childish and absurd behaviour of her associates. On the other hand, maybe she was sizing me up, waiting for an opening so that she could move in and have a good tug at my shoelaces. I spent a lot of time following the escapades of these, rather amusing, inquiring birds and their character and intelligence was the source of

much enjoyment for me. It is, therefore, heartwarming to know that over the last twenty years, population of this species has recovered, albeit marginally. They are by no means out of danger yet, and although capable of coping quite reverently with the atrocities of the harsh Falkland Island climate, that even the penguins leave behind after their breeding season, in the warmer months of November, December and January. They need time and, moreover freedom, from man's molestation in order to re-establish themselves to their former glory. We can only hope that one day they will become numerous once again and, this time, respected citizens of the Falkland Islands.



Striated Caracaras at home in typical West Falkland habitat.

2

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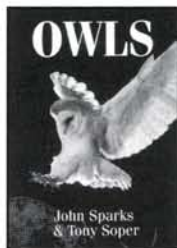
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THE VERSATILE GUNDOG

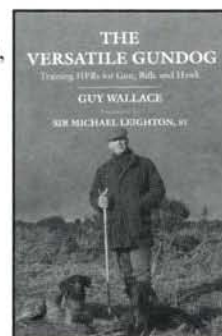
By Guy Wallace

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THE NEXT GENERATION

Dear David & Lyn

I have recently enquired to several establishments about the possibility of spending the summer as a "working pupil" and, for mostly understandable reasons, this did not come about. I am naturally very disappointed but I don't blame any of the people concerned. However I wish to gain experience with a range of birds of prey which is not really possible where I live, just outside London.

On one hand I can agree with established falconers who don't want amateurs fumbling around with their precious birds. However I would like to things put across from my point of view, please believe me when I say I don't mean to upset anybody.

I have been interested in falconry for as long as I can remember, and as I know no-one with any experience of keeping birds of prey, I don't know where my interest sprang from. It also meant I had no-one to learn from.

I now wish (and have done so for some years) to take it up as a career, either as a veterinary sur-

geon specialising in avian medicine, or as a display falconer. I cannot do this without a suitable amount of experience, which I am finding difficult, if not impossible, to gain, (although I have taken a falconry course).

I have no desire to parade in front of the public in the shadow of a huge eagle, but rather wish to learn more about feeding, flying, training, handling and the general day-to-day welfare of a variety of birds. I would be happy to prepare food, clean aviaries, walk dogs etc., for nothing more than my food, board and a basic wage to cover expenses.

However, when I am not given the opportunity to do this, I am unable to gain the experience necessary for my chosen career(s). I have no idea how many other young people have found this but I feel it is important for young people to be encouraged. Ultimately we are the next generation to carry on the tradition of falconry, in country that is becoming increasingly opposed to all forms of field-sports.

The other end of the wedge is, unable to gain experience from a suitable person, I could (but here I must stress that I personally never would) set out to gain

experience by buying a bird of my own. I suspect I would not find it very difficult to find a friend with an acquaintance who could get me a Harris Hawk, for example, for little more than £50.

As I have little money, I could use cable ties as Aylmeri and bewits, cat bells instead of the traditional falconry bells, and shoelaces as jesses. I could tether the poor bird to the top of my bookcase, carry it about on an old welding glove, and cope it with a nail file. As I have no car, I would have to carry the already decidedly dishevelled bird to our hunting ground, no doubt doing irreparable damage to the public image of falconry in my little town.

Again, I would like to stress that I would never personally do this but I wonder how many young people would. I hope I haven't offended anyone but I just wanted to let people know how things look from my point of view. I don't know how many falconers have considered things from this angle but I hope they may think of spending a little bit more time to help educate the next generation of falconers before it is too late.

Yours sincerely
V. B.

PAST & PRESENT

Dear David & Lyn

I have been asked if I will do a 'past and present' Falconry display for the County Council's Heritage Centre in Northamptonshire. This will include conservation. It will be a permanent display and will be seen by many people. I would like to ask if your readers are able to help me by donating or offering the permanent loan of any of the following: Stuffed birds, maybe a taxidermist has some specimens that are 'not quite up to scratch' that they wouldn't mind parting with; Old photographs, that we could take copies of and use. Drawings & Artwork, pictures and prints of birds of prey would enhance the display, maybe artists would like to use this as a chance for some publicity, all the names of the artists can be displayed underneath, you may possibly get some orders. All items donated/loaned, will be protected by the Museums Association code of practice and Insurance. I would also like to thank those who have already helped out with loans and donations.

Yours sincerely
Paul Blackburn-Elliot.
22 Kings Avenue, Higham Ferrers,
Rushden, Northants NN10 8LA

FIRING LINE

Dear David & Lyn

This is a reply to the letter re tethering small owls to assist in fund raising. I know raptor rehabilitator groups as a rule are doing a much needed job, which will get more difficult once LRK's no longer exist this coming November. Indeed we do rehabilitation here and have done for 28 years, but there are wider issues to be faced than just fund raising.

I have been in correspondence with Michael Robins and as far as I know there are several groups with the same name. I am delighted to hear that the displaying of birds by rehab groups are not going to be of the very poor standard they used to be. I hope this means that the birds will be tethered at least six feet apart, will have bath water at all times in hot weather and shade/shelter regardless of the weather. Not be stroked constantly by the

public, and not be close to an arena where trained birds of prey are flying free. I am still not sure of the value of taking non-indigenous birds to raise money to care for British species, but that is just an opinion.

However, I am absolutely, totally and utterly sure of my facts when I say that if the general public see small owls tethered they will consider it the acceptable way to keep them. Are you seriously telling me that you manage to talk to all those who see the birds tethered at shows, because if anyone manages that they are a better man than I am as it were? At least half, and probably far more than that, walk past, see the birds tied up to a post, as they put it, and go away either thinking that is how the birds are kept all the time, or with a bad taste in their mouth. We have fifty thousand visitors a year here and only a tiny percentage of those actually leave without seeing a bird fly, and yet I still hear them sound surprised when I tell them that IS the bird they have just seen fly. Is the

policy of people who display tethered owls to tell them that in fact tethering them is not good - that must go down a storm? Or that tethering them is acceptable, but only for two days a week - ie. over a weekend show. Does the discerning public say 'well if it is not a good, kind way to keep small owls - why are they here?' I think not, in fact I know not.

When you put something in front of the general public for whatever reason, you are saying that this is the way it should be done. Just to point out how much at face value people do take what they see or read, in my last book I made the mistake of saying we do not try to handle a new bird until it had fed on the perch, what I meant was, until it fed while being tethered to its perch, not actually sitting on it, but at least five people have phoned up saying they were worried because their bird hadn't actually fed on the perch for ten days, upon questioning them I discovered that the bird was feeding happily on the ground next to its perch and set-

ting nicely and was in fact ready to be starting on its training. BUT, it wasn't feeding ON its perch. Now that is a very small example of what people will take at face value. We are now in the front line in terms of being attacked by anti-groups. The Hunt Saboteurs have started to look at falconry and others will follow, it is a little earlier than some of us thought would happen but it is not a surprise. For anyone who thinks that just because they do rehabilitation or only keep owls, or run a centre, they will not be attacked because it is not falconry - think again. All of us are in the firing line and all of us have to have ideals, manners and behaviour towards our birds, their food sources and the general public that is without fault. If you can sit back and tell me that tethering small owls in front of thousands of people is the way to do it - just to raise funds - I despair.

Jemima Parry-Jones
National Birds of Prey Centre.

MISUNDERSTOOD

Dear Lyn & David

I feel obliged to clarify the purpose of my two previous articles, both of which seem to have been misinterpreted. A number of facts need to be made clear. First and foremost, the Black Falcon, on which one of the articles was based has been released and was held under licence from the appropriate Wildlife Authorities. The bird described was used in a deterrent project, hence the description of some of the flights. Secondly, I have released a total of four Black Falcons, two of which were tame hatched, thus I have a fairly good idea of how they fly, hunt, etc. All the rehabilitation work that I undertake is carried out under licence from the "Appropriate Wildlife Authorities".

Furthermore, I have no wish to see the legislation that makes falconry illegal, reversed.

Indeed the current legislation has enough trouble controlling the standard of rehabilitation, without having recreational falconry to complicate the issue. Falconry techniques are fully permissible in rehabilitation, but it is up to those who use these techniques to keep falconry in rehabilitation separate from recreational falconry.

I may be accused of being "Pro-Falconry" but I am fully committed to the effective and efficient rehabilitation of raptors, and if that means using falconry techniques as a tool to achieve my objective then, so-be-it. If I was bent on continuing my recreational falconry career I certainly would not be living in Australia.

Thanks again for a wonderful magazine

Regards

Richard Naisbitt, Australia.

FAN FAIR

Dear David & Lyn,

Just a line to say how much I enjoyed the Falconers Fair. It was my first and was well worth the three-hour journey it took my son and me from Blackpool on the Sunday. I fully appreciated the time and effort that must have gone into preparing for the Fair, with everything being made by hand, in my opinion everything on display was of the highest quality.

The displays were very informative, and anyone, not familiar with falconry could, in my view, find it very easy to understand. As with all displays with animals things can and do go wrong, as happened with two of the falcons, but the handlers coped very proficiently, keeping cool and

in charge of the situation, well-done lads.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mick Robins of Raptor Rescue, I can now put a face to a name and we had a good long chat. Also I met the breeder of my Redtail who had travelled down from Penrith, so that helped to make my day. We enjoyed the seminars, the various club speakers and other representatives gave some splendid talks imparting important information. May I thank the gentleman who gave us some light entertainment with the question on his Merlins, it all makes for a memorable day. So, thank you to all involved for putting on a splendid show and for all your efficiency and hard work from my son and myself.

Yours sincerely
J Welsby

RE-REPLY

Dear David & Lyn

Thank you for publishing my letter to Mike Everett and thanks to Mike for replying. I would like to ask him some more questions that I hope he can answer.

1. You said last time that eighty-two released White Tailed Eagles are not likely to be enough for a viable population. How many does the RSPB feel they will need to release to reach a viable population?
2. If the RSPB has been releasing White Tailed Eagles for the last two years how many have they released each year, do they intend to go on releasing them, and if so how many.

Yours sincerely
Paul Barham

Dear Paul,

White-tailed Sea Eagle releases are not the responsibility of the RSBP, but of the Sea Eagle Project Team, of which the RSPB is a member. The present proposal is to "top-up" the original reintroduction with the release of about 60 more birds. 10 were released in 1993, 10 in 1994; 6 are to be released this year.

All being well it should be possible to complete the programme over the next two to three seasons.

Yours
Mike Everett

BACK HOME

Dear Lyn & David,

Ten months ago I lost a bird whilst out flying her, every falconers nightmare. She had telemetry so we tracked her, but we never got a sighting so as to call her back to the line.

After a few weeks of tracking the batteries in the transmitter lost their power, so I resigned my self to the fact that I wouldn't see her again.

By chance I purchased the Summer edition of your magazine and in your Found Birds section was a description of a bird very much like the one I had lost. On meeting you the following day at the Falconers Fair I explained the situation and was impressed with the speed at which Paul Beecroft got in touch with me after speaking to yourselves.

Paul spent a lot of time and effort tracking her down and making sure everything was legitimate and that the bird was actually mine. He then put me in touch with Carol Scott, who was most helpful in getting the bird back to me.

In short I would just like to express my thank to everybody concerned who helped me regain my bird and to say that without Raptor Rescue and other bodies like them fewer falconers would be reunited with their lost birds, keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely
Graham Layzell
Lancs

FOR THE SAKER

Dear David & Lyn

I am very interested in the UK Saker population and I would like to do a Saker survey with a view to creating a Saker Information Exchange.

I would be grateful if people who fly and/or breed Sakers could contact me either in writing or by phone or fax.

W Hawkins-Pinchers
Falconoid International UK
6 Wilson Road, Coseley
WV14 9EN.
Tel: 01384 826415.

Sentimental Clap-Trap, Pt two.

Dear Lyn & Dave,

I cast my thoughts upon the wind, reaching Cumbria, Suffolk and Kent.

They got up peoples noses, which wasn't my intent. Jack Alston, the mighty hunter took exception right away. He didn't comprehend a word of what I tried to say.

That our future attitude to wildlife Really must be one of care. Or it may African Greys for everyone.

I'm sure you are all aware.
Ron Billingsley
Liverpool

AVIARY PLANS

Dear Editors,

Could I please purchase a copy of Nick Mooney's aviary plans (F&RCM Sum.'95)?

It seems I have dedicated hundreds of voluntary hours in the daily training of raptors to no avail. You see, (silly me) I thought that it provided an opportunity for the birds to experience normal, indeed natural flying and hunting skills in preparation for release. Yet all I needed to do was put them in an aviary and chase them up and down a few times!

I should imagine that the stressed, heavy landings against aviary walls, netting and onto perches might also strengthen flight feathers and ceres too.

I take offence also to his suggestion that the Black Falcon was an escapee from a falcon smuggler. Of course it is a well known fact (obviously worldwide) that New Zealand has supported a huge following of falconers. At the moment I could count a whole 4!!

Yours sincerely
Debbie Stewart-Badger
Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust,
Rotorua
New Zealand

RAPTOR REHABILITATION & FALCONRY TECHNIQUES

I would like to pick up on some of the points raised by Nick Mooney (F & RCM Summer '95). First a little background info, for readers on the other side of the world.

In New Zealand raptor diversity is very small. A country of almost identical size to the UK, in land area but with a very much smaller population (3.5 million). We have only six known species of raptor: The endemic New Zealand Falcon, the native Australasian Harrier Hawk, the Morepork Owl, the introduced Little Owl, and occasional vagrant Barn Owls and Nankeen Kestrels, that get blown over from Australia in bad weather.

The Australasian Raptor Association (ARA) may have one or two members in NZ, but is an Australian based and run organisation. The recognised body for people in NZ, with an interest in raptors is the Raptor Association of New Zealand (RANZ). The two outfits are independent of each other at present.

Nick States that with the lack of raptor diversity in NZ and the interest in falconry, the appearance of a Black Falcon here, in the wild a few years ago would point to it having been smuggled in for recreational purposes. First, the unconfirmed sighting (12 years ago) would more likely have been a juvenile NZ Falcon, a bird whose plumage is not dissimilar to a Black Falcon. Even if it were a Black Falcon, we have several sightings each year of both Barn Owls and Nankeen Kestrels which are blown over in bad weather (as well as non-raptor species and even butterflies). It is therefore not beyond the realms of possibility that this could be the case with a

single Black Falcon.

Secondly, to imply a high level of interest of falconry in NZ is a complete nonsense. In a country of 3.5 million people, I know of four people who are regularly flying birds, (including myself), and none of us are smugglers.

Agreed, the ramifications of the spread of exotic diseases would be enormous, but this, quite honestly, is more likely to happen when people visiting NZ by boat bring in household pets. This frequently happens and is not always detected by customs or MAF.

To address some of Nick's other points, racing pigeon enthusiasts should not be ignored as a threat to raptors, far from it. I know of two cases in the last twelve months where falcons have been shot down by pigeon keepers. One of these birds was, in fact, rahabbed, and later released by myself. She was shot at a time of the year when she may have had eggs or chicks depending on her. It follows then that her shooting may have affected or killed up to three or four birds. That is one case we were lucky enough to find out about, how many go undiscovered?

Nick states that wildlife authorities have a consistent policy that raptors cannot be collected or kept purely for falconry. Is not this policy in fact held virtually worldwide, in countries where falconry is legal? Birds used in falconry do not drain wild populations, they are either bred in captivity, for the purpose of falconry or, as is often the case, are surplus to breed and release programmes.

Nick asks if rehab' effort could not be better put in elsewhere. To answer, no, not always. It is the pure love of the birds and working with them that drives many rehabbers to do what they do, and, for the large part, do well. These people simply do not have the same passion for politics and paperwork. We should perhaps recruit members who have similar passion for those kinds of

battles.

I would perhaps agree that the taking of certain species for use in recreational falconry in Australia should remain illegal for the present, but let's keep our ears and eyes open for the future. After all, were it not for falconers like Ronald Stevens, Tom Cade and Nick Fox, etc., etc., where would many of our raptor species be today?

So to answer the initial question, "Does rehab' need falconry?" Without a doubt, Yes. I don't personally consider chasing birds up and down an aviary is good exercise, or even very ethical. Birds, even in solid-walled mews', do not stop when they come to the end, and feet, feathers and cerea can, and do, get damaged. A recent copy of ARA News ran an article on what happens, both chemically and physically, to a bird in the company of humans. Anyone considering chasing birds around an aviary would do well to read this article first. If flying a bird to the fist or lure does not provide sufficient aerobic exercise, then this is the strongest argument yet, to allow full flights against quarry. The odds are not too highly stacked in the raptors favour. How many readers have birds which have 100% success rate?

I firmly believe that rehab' has room for, and in fact needs, all opinions, but we should never lose sight of the one reason we all do it...the birds themselves.

By Lee Fern, Raptor association of New Zealand Newsletter Editor & Executive Member.

Anyone wishing to join RANZ, and receive our quarterly newsletter, can do so for NZ\$30.00 a year. (About £12.00) Please write to Dennis Fordham, 14 Bridge Road, Akatarawa, Upper Hutt, New Zealand.

PERSONAL CHOICE

Dear David & Lyn

If a Labour Government is elected with its current policies, the days of hunting and coursing will be numbered. Hawking, Shooting and Fishing will then come under increasing attack. This is the accepted view, as I understand it, not only of the Hawk board (Falconers Magazine Summer 1995) and the British Field Sports Society, but fieldsportsmen and women who also support the labour party. As a Labour supporter I can assure that the danger posed to fieldsports and implicitly Hawking by current Labour policies is very real.

Following the "success" of the anti hunting and coursing McFall Bill the Labour Party brought out a Rural Policy Paper in April called A Working Countryside. In its final paragraph this document states:

"One kind of countryside enjoyment Labour cannot endorse - hunting with hounds. A Labour government will make parliamentary time available for a free vote on the abolition of fox hunting, deer hunting and hare coursing with dogs."

However there exists within the Labour Party a group of fieldsportsmen and women who are opposed to a ban on any fieldsport. We are the

Leave Country Sports Alone Group. This campaign was initiated a year ago by Baroness Ann Mallalieu QC (chairman) and Penny Mortimer (secretary) and has among its founder members Melvyn Bragg and John Mortimer QC of Rumpole of the Bailey fame. It is our view that fieldsports are, and should remain a matter of personal choice, are an integral part of country life and play a vital role in conserving the countryside and its wildlife.

An attack on one sport implies an attack on another as, the influential and wealthy animal rights movement has explicitly stated, they will target hunting first then the other fieldsports successively. Falconry as a small, minority sport could easily be targeted next and in a very short space of time find itself in a very precarious position. For that reason alone Falconers have been and should support hunting and coursing in their hour of need.

Given that a future Labour government will be the likely vehicle of legislation against fieldsports, I would ask any Falconers who are Labour Party members or supporters to join our group and make their views known to their MPs and The Labour Party Policy Unit (address below). If you are not a fan of the Labour Party I would nevertheless urge you to write to The Labour Party Unit, either individually or through your club, and make it absolutely clear that all fieldsportsmen and women, of whatever political persuasion, are

fight for their right to follow whatever sport they choose. To do otherwise will court disaster.

I have heard some falconers say that if hunting and coursing are banned they will not be affected. Others argue that if we keep our heads down we will not get caught up in the struggle. We will and are. The Hunt Saboteurs Association is already targeting falconry, we or any other sport cannot afford to be complacent. The animal rights lobby has access to annual funds in excess of £40 million They spent an estimated £2 million in just four weeks in support of the anti hunting McFall Bill while The British Field Sports Society can only spend that much in a whole year.

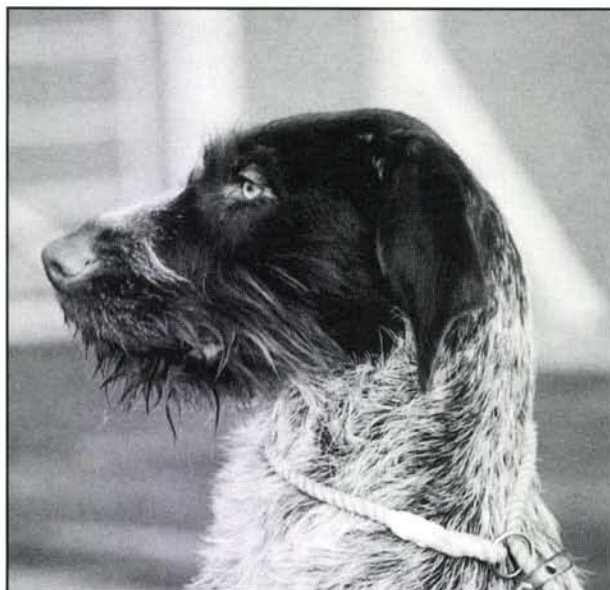
Nevertheless, all is not lost if falconers and fieldsports enthusiasts lobby their MPs, the Labour Party and anyone else that moves against us. The threat to falconry is real and nearer than many think. The simple message is PROTEST and SURVIVE before it is too late.

Peter Garner
Leave Country Sports Alone Campaign.

Leave Country Sports Alone PO Box 4402 Henley-on-Thames Oxon RG9 6YU	The Policy Unit The Labour Party John Smith House 150 Walworth Road London SE17 1JT
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GERMAN WIREHAISED POINTER HAWKS BEST FRIEND

MARK ROSE.



After an enjoyable day's hawking over a good dog, many falconers should raise their glass to Major George Wilkinson, but few know why. Major Wilkinson reintroduced the German Wirehaired pointer to this country in 1972. The breed was originally brought back by English servicemen after the Second World War, but due to no registration available the blood filtered back into the G.S.P.'s, with which they were crossed. The reintroduction by Major Wilkinson was with a bitch, Vrede von Romersee, who was to be followed by two black & white Wirehaireds from the Bocholter kennels. Within a few years the breed gained popularity at a fair rate and other imports were sought. Dogs were imported from many countries as well as Germany and pedigrees now show Dutch, Swedish and American bloodlines. Early breeding was obviously from a very close genepool, but over the last 20 years distinct lines have started to establish. A few well-documented dogs have been influential in the development of British breeding with regard to their working abilities and, with Leonard and Diana Durman-Walters establishing a very successful working kennel, it is not sur-

prising that the G.W.P has become so popular as a falconer's dog.

The breed is a peculiar mixture of Griffon, Pudelpointer and an ancient breed "Stichelhaar", although many breed experts have opinions on the exact mix. It is most definitely not just a hairy G.S.P. The Germans started their breed club in Berlin in 1902 and their own breeding is strictly controlled. In the UK the breed has a thriving breed club, which covers both showing and working the G.W.P. as well as its general welfare. Unfortunately, as with most breeds, it has to run a rescue centre as well.

As with all gundog breeds, the only yardstick by which improvement as a working breed can be measured, is in field trials. This does not mean that the best workers are running in trials but gundog pedigrees are so often judged on their field trial content. The breed to date has had only one FTCH in the British Isles, being FTCH Velia von Andesheim, a direct descendent of the two black & white dogs from the Bocholter kennels, owned and trained by Rory Major.

G.W.P.'s appear to be tailor made as a falconer's dog and very much an all rounder. Their

ideal is probably as a lowland dog working root-crops, stubbles and woodland. Their immense stamina makes them also suited to working on the hill but they lack the out and out pace and style of the native Pointer and Setter breeds. With many falconers also enjoying a days shooting, with the correct training they have the necessary tenacity to work both to the gun and for hawks and to know the different requirements of each. A well-trained G.W.P. is a delight to work and its faithfulness to its owner is to be admired. But a word of warning, whilst there are positive points "every swing has a roundabout" and they can be the most independent of characters, aloof and willful. they will try the patience of the best trainers and need firm handling. Prospective owners should consider whether they have the required attributed themselves for such a breed. They are not happy as loners and need company both human and canine. However if you have not the time to be with you Wirehaired do you have time to devote to a hawk?

With puppy registration increasing, purchasing a puppy is not difficult but, as with all breeds, the prospective buyer needs to do his homework. The breed is still classed as a dual purpose breed but as with established gundog breeds I am sure that in time a division between show and work will start to appear. Therefore, it is probably wise to look primarily at offspring from genuine working parents. Good temperament is essential and as such find out all you can about the temperament and manners of both of the parents. What are the breeders stock like in general? Try to go for parents with hip scores and eye tests. Your vet will advise you on what to ask about these. Don't forget, all puppies look adorable but if there is something about the dam, or sire if you get to see him, that you don't like, don't buy. Finally, as with all dogs, get your vet to look him over as soon as you can. If there is a problem reputable breeders would take him back.

More than anything, enjoy the dog. The bag at the end of the day will be fuller because of him which enables you to continue to toast Major Wilkinson.



Mrs Anne Johnson's Maplehaze Watersprite

Wonders of Wingspan

During 1994 my family and I were fortunate enough to holiday in New Zealand and spend the first Christmas with my Mother and Brother for about twenty-two years.

Obviously we were interested in the Raptor population and prior to leaving the UK I had been in touch with the Birds of Prey Trust, known as Wingspan. Wingspan is very similar to our organisation Raptor Rescue. It has been operating for more than eight years and was registered as a charity in June 1992. It is based in Rotorua and has been recognised as a national rehabilitation centre for New Zealand birds of prey. There are no other similar organi-

sations within New Zealand and therefore birds arrive at the centre from many miles away and from a variety of sources such as Zoos, Vets, SPCA and the Public.

The trust was established for the rehabilitation of Raptors, their captive management, biological studies and education of the public.

A well-known author and wildlife photographer, Geoff Moon, heads the trust as the patron. The Trustee/Secretary is Debbie Stewart who runs the Centre at Rotorua. Debbie has fifteen years experience with birds of prey including falconry, rehabilitation and captive management.

New Zealand has only one Hawk, which is the Harrier (*Circus approximans*). Its other names are Hawk and Marsh Harrier. During my stay I saw over one hundred of these birds in the wild. They are carrion eaters and one would see them quite often on the roadside feeding on a dead rabbit or possum.

New Zealand has only one recognised Falcon which is of course the New Zealand falcon (*Falco novaezealandiae*)

There are, however three races of this falcon: The Bush Falcon, The Eastern Falcon, and The Southern Falcon.

Attempts are being made to have these Falcons officially recognised as three species and not races. The New Zealand Falcon, is, in any event, believed to be a threatened species and this has prompted the Department of Conservation and the Raptor Association (a national group interested in birds of prey) to unite in helping to monitor the population and the breeding pairs. During my time there I did not see a single Falcon (confirmed) in its wild state. The Falcons are versatile hunters and take prey such as Sparrows, Starlings, Mynah Birds, Lizards, Insects and also Rabbits and Hares.

The current threats to its survival are deliberate shooting, habitat loss, disturbance and pesticides, (sound familiar?).

We arrived at Wingspan late one afternoon, when the main heat of the day had passed. The surrounding countryside was magnificent



Debbie Stewart with a Harrier

and ideal for a Rescue Centre. Debbie met us and within minutes it was apparent that she was dedicated to caring for sick and injured Raptors and was very knowledgeable about them. Debbie gave us a tour of the Centre where we saw adult Falcons and Harriers. Also, being in New Zealand in the height of the breeding season we were able to see four and a half week old Bush Falcons and slightly younger Harriers. I was able to hold and examine an Adult Harrier named Godzilla. Godzilla is a wild, disabled bird (minor leg problems) but she is flown by Debbie and used for education purposes.

While we were there, a hatched Harrier, that lived in the hills behind the centre returned, and we were able to witness a flying display of a wild Harrier at very close quarters. On this day she ignored the food on the hack board, she had obviously eaten elsewhere.

Debbie also explained that Falconry in New Zealand was not widely practised, as here in the UK. Potential falconers must also be a member of the Raptor Association for two years before they can even apply to the Department of conservation for a permit. The beginner will then

commence with a Harrier before being allowed a Falcon.

This visit was memorable in more ways than one, because while we were there we were bitten by sand mites. We should have guessed because when we arrived Debbie was dressed in trousers, long-sleeved shirt and Wellingtons and there was us in shorts, T-shirts and flip-flops. The itching lasted for about three weeks but it was well worth it just to see these wonderful birds.

The rest of the holiday was brilliant. I even allowed myself my family to talk me into going to see other attractions including visiting Zoo's where we saw Kiwis, Moreporks and birds of prey. The Zoos in New Zealand have a system where they will only keep birds of prey that are wild-disabled. We were very impressed by that. We also went on a bush walk, just to see if we could see any birds of prey at close quarters, but sadly we didn't.

We all had a great holiday, none of us wanted to come home, but the weirdest thing was Christmas Day, it seemed so funny sitting on the balcony having breakfast with the temperature at 90 degrees. It just didn't seem like Christmas. Roll on December 1995, when we can have a cold miserable Christmas like we are used to.

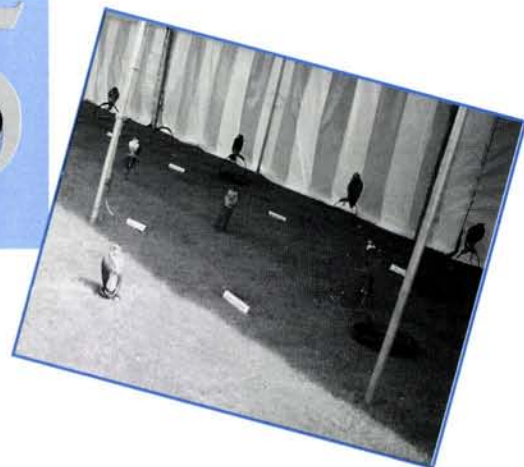


Hack board and flying post

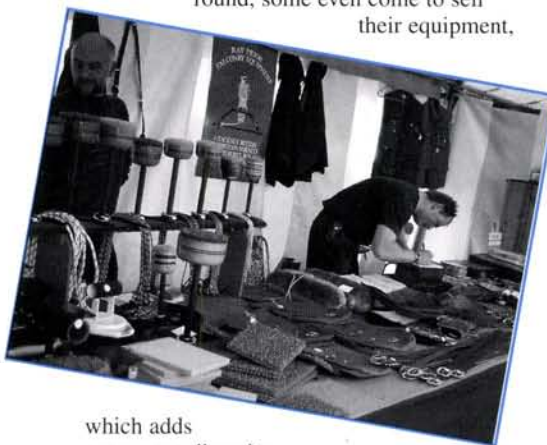
Paul Beecroft



1995 BRITISH FALCONRY AND RAPTOR FAIR



What a great event it is, speak to anyone to do with Falconry on the lead up to the Falconers Fair and most will say that they are either going, or would like to go. For an event that has only been going for six years, which is some testimonial, and it's not only people in this country who talk about it. The organisers say that there were 23 nationalities at the Fair this year, which shows how far the word has spread. They don't all just come to look round, some even come to sell their equipment,



which adds even more diversity.

Think of it, the biggest falconry shop window you are ever likely to see. I think that this is the main attraction for most falconers, being able to look at the styles, quality and price of all the different makes of equipment. Let's face it, when you start off in falconry you send for a couple of catalogues from recommended equipment makers and when you get them they are like an Aladdins' cave. Full of all the equipment you need, but you are not quite sure what to buy first. Even with pictures to help, deciding what type of glove to buy can still be difficult, or whether to

have a hawking jacket instead of a bag etc.,. In one day, at the Falconers Fair you can make all these decisions and even ask questions, (something you have trouble doing with a catalogue). You can even have something made to your own specifications (for a modest fee, of course).

The arena displays by Bryan Paterson and Terry Large are nice to watch when you need a break from feasting your eyes and emptying your wallets on equipment. Bryan's seemingly endless enthusiasm for his birds, and the way they fly, is a pleasure to behold. Even when one of them decides to go AWOL for a while he still carries on talking, and just before he has to reach for his telemetry someone in the crowd spots the bird, working its way back towards the arena and in it comes to the lure. I can never work out who is more relieved, the falconer or the bird (both equally if the truth be known).

A wealth of experience and information is at the Fair, and not just on the trade stands or in the arena. The Seminars, arranged by Adrian Williams, (a well known name in the Welsh Hawking Club) are well worth sitting in on. This year you could listen to advice on everything from breeding birds to choosing the right dog. How to train it for your own particular requirements, and, most important of all, the veterinary aspects of the health and care of your bird, and who better to learn from than the foremost vet on the subject in this country, Neil Forbes.

Neil is very approachable with any questions you may have about the care of your birds. More important, he speaks plain English, where possible, not trying to baffle you with science and words that send you running for the nearest veterinary dictionary.

The Falconers Fair is like a gathering of the clans. For me it is a place to meet people who I may not have seen since the year before. Then again you can strike up a conversation with a complete stranger who has the same passion for falconry that you have.

I have to say, I think the layout of the fair this year was better than ever. The only comment I could make is, as all the equip-

ment makers are there, could we not have some other big names in display-giving as well? It would save Bryan having to do four displays a day. Why not have Jemima Parry-Jones or Ashley Smith there, putting their hawks through their paces. If the Falconry Furniture Manufacturers can get together for two days without bloodshed, why not the flying demonstration teams as well? It could make the best fair even better.

Whatever your reason for visiting the fair this year, I am sure that, like me, you have already penciled the date in your diary for next year, so hopefully, we can all meet again and swap stories about the season just gone and expectations for the season to come.

ALAN HENDER



COMPETITION RESULTS

THE answers to our Summer competition were as follows:

- A. Bald Eagle
- B. Bataleur Eagle.
- C. Goshawk.
- D. Bonellis Eagle.
- E. Saker Falcon
- F. Sparrowhawk.

The Winner of the first prize, the Pewter Hip Flask is,
Mr J. P. Cullen, from Manchester.
10 Runners-up who won a Gold Plated Pin are:
Mr J Catt, Hailsham.
Hans Hamacher, Germany.
Simone Pearse, London.
Peter Miles, Bournemouth.
A Cotton, Devon.

Richard Mooney, Woking.
Mark Springthorpe, Derby.
Jake Underwood, Kettering.
Mr C Butler, Mansfield.
Mr R J Newton, Peterborough.

We would like to congratulate them all and thank them for entering the competition. We hope you will all have a go at the one in this issue.

THE LONGEST DAYS IN THE LIFE OF

10 March 1995

The day was bright, sunny, no wind, and warm, compared with the frosty layer to which we'd woken up. Ginger had caught and fed up on a rabbit on Sunday, so we'd rested her for a couple of days. We decided to take her out on Wednesday afternoon to give her some exercise. We weren't expecting her to catch any quarry as she was 2 lb 3/4 oz and her best flying weight is 2 lb.

My husband and I, and our 11-year-old labrador Sheeba, set out. We crossed the busy main road that runs past our house and went into the fields opposite, through thick mud with a layer of water on top, to the copse on the other side. I put Ginger up into an Oak, while Sheeba hunted through the undergrowth along the edge of the copse. Ginger watched 'like a hawk'! She followed on well, though rather leisurely, 30 feet up, as is her wont when her weight is high.

We climbed over a gate and started walking to the right, along the edge of the copse. I heard Gingers' bells - but they were going out to the left! We watched as she sailed out at full speed across the next field, heading back towards the road, in an unusually determined fashion. I whistled hard and grabbed for a chick. Ginger was getting ever closer to the road!

I willed her to land in the row of Chestnut trees that edge the field. She hesitated, but carried on - getting lower and lower. Cars were whizzing along the road. We watched in show motion. A white van approached the spot where Ginger was heading. The world seemed to stand still and fell silent. The van continued. We heard the sickening bang. Des said "That's it". (My stomach had gone.) I said "I can't move until my stomach comes back!" It did, and I moved. It felt like aeons as I ran the 300 yards through mud and water. I couldn't climb over the high barbed wire fence. I rolled under it, into the ditch and water, and up onto the road where I'd last seen her. I scoured both sides of the road. No feathers to be seen. I spotted white and ginger colouring 20 yards along, and I ran. It was Ginger. She'd been knocked back across to our side of the road. She was lying on her back, head lolling, feet curled up, talons tightly clenched. Was this her death spasm? I put my fist next to her talons and picked up her field jesses (just in case). No response. I put my right hand under her back. Gently and slowly, I picked her up and cradled her in my arms. No response.

I stood there, breathing deeply and shaking:

GINGER LU-LU

Des arrived, having put Sheeba on the lead and legged it over the sodden field. We exchanged glances, almost certain that Ginger had taken her last flight.

In silence we crossed the road and walked gently back home through the field. Ginger shook her head a few times, then tried to stand on my fist and fell over! She tried, but wobbled everywhere, her legs struggling to hold her. Was her left leg broken? I held her close, keeping my right hand behind her as a safety net. She kept shaking her head and was nearly falling over. We reached home, rang the vet, and took her straight there. Des drove. I held Ginger. We thought it was all over and gritted our teeth to do the right thing and have her put down.

The vet took us straight in. He examined her thoroughly - no major bones broken! Shone a light in her eyes - pupil response good! Her left wing looked odd, hanging slightly lower than her right one. The right side of her head was grazed, with a few feathers missing just behind and above her eye. His examination was gentle, but thorough. He felt she was concussed, but to save her further distress he only gave her an injection to counter the shock, and us antibiotic capsules for her.

While Des paid the vet's bill, Ginger and I sat in the car. The skies clouded over and hail the size of mothballs began fall. There was a two-inch deep layer all around. Suddenly, the hail stopped and the world became quiet. As we absorbed the peace and tranquillity, the turmoil within us began to retreat. I thought about Gingers triumphs - willing her to recall them.

"Her first rabbit. She'd flown straight as a die from high up in an Oak; her wings swept back in an arrow formation, the tips like aerofoils, then, with her wings fully open, she took a good look, adjusted her speed and angle to go uphill slightly. Suddenly, talons extended, she landed like an explosion, feet on the rabbits' head, talons like a vice. I could hardly get there fast enough. (Des told me I almost

'flew'!) I contained myself to sit still with her while she fed up. In my excitement, I forgot to put her mews' jesses, swivel and leash on, and tie her to my belt or glove. Finally, Ginger stepped back with a crop fit to bust, and I grabbed for a jess - in the nick of time - she bated for a moment, then settled on my fist.

Then there was her third rabbit. It was a big old buck, and it bucked and heaved, but Ginger held on till I'd negotiated the blackthorn hedge and dispatched it. (Who's worried about a few scratches and tears, they'll mend!)

And the next outing? With the ferrets. Desmond one side of the hedge, Ginger and I on the other. She knows what ferrets are for, and watched intently, alert to every movement. A rabbit bolted down the hedge. She flew it for 40 yards then, caught by a sudden gust of wind, flew high and wide, circled, and came back into the wind to my fist ready for the next one. A sudden 'plop' and another rabbit went into the ditch and bolted up the hedgerow. Ginger gave chase, she dived into the ditch, got wet, but the rabbit disappeared into a hole. Foiled again! We moved to a more sheltered spot. Des put the ferret into a small bury. Ginger watched from my fist. Suddenly a rabbit's head popped out of a hole. I couldn't let Ginger go - sheep wire was between her and the rabbit - I turned so she wouldn't see, and watched over my right shoulder. It was a bolt hole. The rabbit broke free and raced across the field. Ginger was away, flying low and fast, emulating its every twist and turn. Gaining, she bore down on him and with a final burst of energy, nailed him. I ran over, made in slow and low, dispatched the coney, and as she fed up I made sure she was safely tied to my belt.

What about her one and only cock pheasant? Des and Sheeba put it up. Ginger was in a hazel, above and just in front. As Sheeba moved in, the cock began to run. Ginger dived headlong. There was a frenzied turmoil of feathers, leaves and noise - then silence. Just the tinkle of Gingers' tail bell. I made in and dispatched the bird. Ginger was triumphant again!

I'm certain Ginger can read my mind, she's responding; I begin to dare to hope that she might pull through.

In a silent snow white vacuum we slowly glide and slide home in the car. We took Ginger into the warmest room, the kitchen, sat her on a bow perch, pulled the curtains and crept around. Oh horrors! She fell off the perch! I collected her up, and she stood on my fist, a sorry sight, shaking her head and wobbling.

Nicky Stapleton



Nicky with Ginger Lu-Lu, her unusually marked, nine month old Harris Hawk

Inspiration! Des raided the ferrets' cage and brought in their log. Ginger had a new safe perch on the floor. It wobbled a little as she tried to balance - so I went out to the shed to seek further inspiration; I found an empty sandbag, weighted it down with the ferrets sawdust granules (litter to the uninitiated) tied the bag in the centre and end, and laid it over the log - success, her makeshift perch was as solid as a rock! I hung a towel beside her to cut out any draughts, then sat quietly to watch.

When she had settled, we fed her. Following instructions, we chose quail, breast meat only, being high in protein and easy to digest. We sprinkled the contents of an antibiotic capsule onto 1 oz of the meat. Ginger devoured it! But later, when putting her crop over, she threw back 1/2 oz. Was this just lack of coordination? We tried another 1/2 oz, again laced with antibiotics - the result was the same. A third time and she refused the food altogether - unheard of! I began to worry, especially after talking to experienced falconers who mentioned the horrors of "crop damage", "sour crop" etc. etc. I rang our vet for the second time. He asked for precise details. Was there any change in the food she'd brought up? Any blood? Had her condition deteriorated? All my answers were negative. "Keep watching carefully" he replied "And phone again if you're at all worried. Bring her in before my surgery opens tomorrow morning."

In subsequent conversations, I was told she may have started to put her crop over, tasted the bitter antibiotics and spat it out - Oh, how I hoped that was the reason!

We had bread and cheese for dinner, so as not to disturb her! She put over the rest of her crop OK. By one am, we could stay awake no longer. We tossed a coin, and I took the first night's watch. I put a sleeping bag on the kitchen floor. I woke every hour or so, Ginger seemed settled and dozing. At three am I half woke up. I couldn't see her head! I fumbled for the torch, got closer. Still no head! About to panic, I looked closer. She was asleep, head tucked under her wing! Flood of relief - then a fit of the giggles and I fell asleep again.

Thursday morning and Ginger is still alive! At 8.30 am our vet checked her all over again, then x-rayed the wing. He cleaned up her head and applied antibiotic ointment to her grazes. Then followed a ten minute discussion over the phone for a second opinion. We were given stronger antibiotic capsules and cortisone

tablets. Her wing tendons were bruised and damaged, and she was still concussed, but no crop damage! How were we to feed the capsules to her? "No problem" he said "Coat them in margarine to make them slippery, or even dip them in red jam!" We tried the jam - no good! We made a pocket in the quail meat and slipped it in - no good! How to fool her? "I know" said Des "I've been saving a piece of fillet steak for a treat, let's try it in that." We did and it really worked a treat! By the time she'd taken the capsule she'd eaten 1oz more than I'd intended and it was 6.30pm! When we went to bed exhausted at 11pm, Ginger still hadn't put her crop over. Again thoughts of sour crop raised their ugly heads.

By seven am on Friday, Ginger had put her crop over and was looking brighter - still a little wobbly, but no more head shaking, and our two hourly applications of ointment on her grazes were working wonders. She still looked a sorry sight, but began to move around a bit and take notice. Even preening herself and holdong her left wing normally, and I really do believe she's on the road to recovery.

Dare I dream of Ginger in the Autumn, mature plumage glistening as she twists and turns, glides, or plummets, at one with the elements? To us, as mere novices, one of the most wonderful things has been the support, telephone calls, and advice we've received from other falconers and the veterinary profession. If this is the falconry world - give me a surfeit of it! Our heartfelt thanks to you all.

23 March 1995

Two weeks later, Ginger is back to normal. She is full of mischief - tearing up the newspaper we put down to save our kitchen floor from total destruction! She watches every move we make. Tomorrow we plan to give her a trial flight to check all is well. Then into the Aviary to moult in peace. (She's already dropped three wing feathers.) Roll on September!

Raptor^k

HEALTHIER. HAPPIER
BIRDS.

As falconers we should be constantly making every effort to improve the quality of the birds which we are breeding and flying. Moreover, we should be making increasing efforts to look after our birds better and reduce the risk of them becoming ill, and improving the care they receive if they become ill.

It is my belief that the greatest move in this direction, in particular with respect to Goshawks, is the flying of social imprint birds.

It is a well accepted scientific fact that any stressed individual releases increased levels of naturally occurring glucocorticosteroids, into the bloodstream. These steroids have a negative effect on the immune system, weakening it, thereby reducing the birds' resistance against infection.

If we consider Goshawks as an example, the times they are stressed is during initial training or remanning, during weight reduction, and generally when in close human company. If one is to fly an imprint bird the weight does not need to be reduced to the same extent, the bird enjoys the falconers company, is not frightened and hence not stressed. The same applies to other species, although perhaps to a less marked extent. Imprint birds are also very easily flown direct from a free flight aviary, and do not generally require jessing. Admittedly the production of a social imprint takes skill, dedication and a great deal of time, also the resultant bird may not be suitable as a future breeding bird, unless one is to contemplate artificial breeding. However, the increased joy, companionship, ease of training and reduction in health problems make the technique worthwhile.

NEIL FORBES

ONE OF OUR READERS ASKS

As we all know Raptors can sometimes be hostile towards strangers. If someone approaches you while out hunting, protesting in an aggressive manner, you tell them to keep their distance as the bird may get annoyed, and walk away, but they persist. They get within striking distance and the bird attacks them causing minor injury, can they prosecute for assault?

J Welsby.

As far as we can ascertain there would be no criminal charge in such a case but a civil action could be brought for damages.

Latest Estimates of breeding pairs of birds of prey in UK (excl. Scotland).

Red kite	125
Marsh harrier	100
Montagu's harrier	6-8
Hen harrier	120
Sparrowhawk	22,000
Goshawk	170
Buzzard	11,000
Golden eagle	1
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