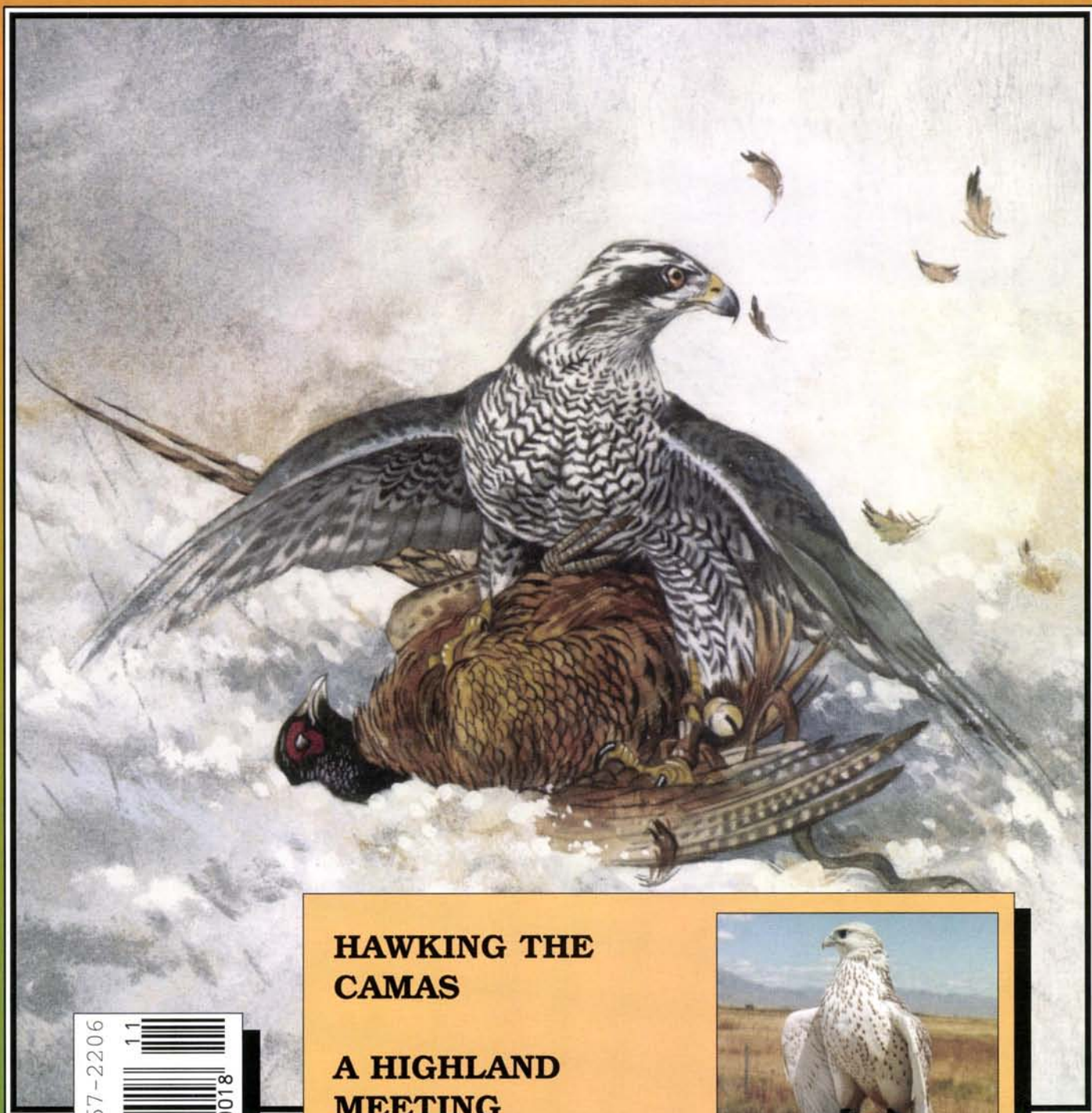


The **Falcons**
— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

Winter 1995

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Part II**



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COMMENT

Dear Readers,

First of all we would like to thank everybody for their continued support, this is an anniversary of sorts, issue 25 and six years.

In the last issue we had an article about the Mauritius Kestrel, I must mention that the photo was taken by Carl Jones.

We now accept Credit Cards, hopefully this will make the renewal of your subscriptions a little easier!
David & Lyn

STOP PRESS: Six Eleonora's Falcons were today (17 10 95) recovered in a raid in Bedfordshire. More information in the next issue.

STOLEN From Angus, Scotland, on 14th Oct. Female Ferruginous Hawk. Full Adult Plumage. Ring nos: 1627X & 1407Y. **REWARD OFFERED FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO HER RECOVERY**

FRONT COVER Painting of female goshawk on cock pheasant, by Asaad Raouf, who also designed the layout of this issue's Front cover. Available as a Limited Edition Print. See page 35.

Hundreds of pairs of eyes gazed upwards, intently watching a speck in a cloudless azure sky. As it suddenly started to grow larger, it soon became apparent it was a stooping bird of prey. Not a Falcon though, but a White Bellied Fish Eagle - folded like a Falcon and plummeting earthwards at spectacular speed, and this was only the start of the Valley of Eagles Demonstration, new this year at the Hawk Conservancy, Andover in Hampshire. Fraggie, the White Bellied Eagle, had started his long but swift descent in response to a call from Ashley Smith, Hawk Conservancy Director. Coming in low over the heads of its audience, the eagle dropped his legs to catch his reward, thrown into the air by Ashley. The demonstration has been made possible by the acquisition of almost seven acres of new land which gives Conservancy staff access to the easterly face of a shallow valley where the prevailing winds are south-westerly. It allows the birds to gain good lift through both thermal and slope soaring techniques. Making the decision to buy the land was one of the last carried out by the original Hawk Conservancy team, founder directors Reg and Hilary Smith, together with Ashley, before

Reg's death in January this year. Since then, the land has been planted as a downland meadow as a living and lasting memorial to Reg. Over the 1995 season, it has been possible to watch birds growing in fitness and confidence and to the casual observer at the start of the season it must have seemed as if it would never work out. "You have to have confidence in your ideas and be convinced they will work", explained Ashley. "I knew what we wanted and had a plan worked out but there were times when I began to wonder. It all came good in the end. The biggest problem was getting the birds to peak fitness, and that's what took the time. Eagles that had previously managed 10 minutes in the air were now being asked to stay up for maybe half an hour as part of a team that has five or more birds flying together. But when you watch Mowgli, our female Bateleur Eagle, you have a good example of how a bird can develop. From short post-to-post flights, she now soars around giving a brilliant view of the Bateleurs canting flight pattern. And Fraggles' stoops are unbe-

WHERE EAGLES DARE....



lievable. Sometimes he's so high you have a job to make him out at all and when he races in to catch his food there's always a gasp of approval. It was all inspired by Danebury, our Bald Eagle, who started using the land last year, before we owned it! We developed a theme and buying the land meant we could take visitors to watch what they had previously been missing. Even George, our legendary Andean Condor, has got motivated and now regularly clears the hedges, showing off

that amazing wingspan. I'd like to think it was all the work we put in, but secretly I have to admit it's partly down to our Cinereous Vulture, Gandalf. He was new on the team this year but did so well George was shamed into action. We are already expanding the lineup, adding Cheyenne, the Bald Eagle we bred this year in the latter part of the season. We are preparing for 1996, our 30th anniversary, and we want to have everything doing really well."

RED KITES ON THE UP

Red Kites have had their best ever breeding season in the UK this year. Both the native population in Wales and reintroduced pairs in England and Scotland have raised a record number of young. In England at least 23 pairs have bred and successfully raised 53 young as part of a reintroduction scheme organised by RSPB and English Nature. In Scotland, 15 pairs attempted to breed and 11 were successful, raising 26 young. Three of the pairs were the first Scottish born Kites to breed.

In Wales the only true native kites did well with 122 pairs attempting to breed, raising 116 young. The Welsh population has slowly built up after nearly dying out earlier this century. Only special protection has enabled it to become more firmly established. Barbara Young, RSPB chief executive said "The continuing success of the reintroduction project, and growing numbers in Wales, indicate a better future for this marvellous bird across the whole country.

The Wonder of Wirehaireds

We have been asked by Janet Taylor and Sue Dunn to request information about German Wirehaired Pointers, as they are putting together a book containing past & present pedigrees of the breed, with a short resume for any awards etc. They would be pleased if you could write to them enclosing copies of pedigree and a photograph, and information on the following: Showing, Agility, Obedience,

Field/Working Trials, Search and Rescue and General Temperament. Inclusion in the book is free of charge and all details should be sent to either: Mrs J Taylor, Studlands Rise, Royston, Herts SG8 9EZ. Tel. 01763 244071 (eves), or Mrs S Dunn, 48 High Street, Crishall, Royston, Herts SG8 8RL. Tel. 01763 838782.

All Birds Catered For

I don't know about everybody else but finding someone to look after the birds while we are away is usually a real pain. If you are lucky enough to have a willing falconer friend, all well and good, but what happens if you don't. Terry and Carol Moyse have the answer. Terry says "We aim to help people who need somewhere safe to leave their bird.birds while they away from home, for whatever reason. Both Carol and I have our own birds, a Harris and a Redtail and very rarely could we have a break, so when we came to Norfolk for family reasons we decided, as we have a nice piece of land to try and help others with a similar problem. If we did go away, a member of the family would feed the bird but we realised that if there was a real problem they wouldn't have a clue what to do. Leaving your birds with falconers means you know they are

safe and well and being looked after properly. At the moment we have a number of pens to cater for small or large birds. The birds can be fed a variety of foods, depending upon the owners wishes. Weather permitting the birds are put out on their blocks/bows and have clean water for bathing. As we live on the premises, security is not a problem. We are situated in Cromer and will look after birds on a daily/weekly basis, and the rates depend upon the length of the birds' stay. People have expressed surprise at how reasonable our rates are and we can work out something to suit you if you have a lot of birds or are going away for a length of time." Terry and Carol are happy to provide further information to anyone who wishes know more and can be contacted on Cromer (01263) 515849.

BREEDERS RINGS

Non schedule 4 birds are now being fitted with a wide variety of rings that breeders are obtaining from various sources. The majority appear to be using their initials on the ring. This is obviously the most practical way. However, for the purposes of the Lost/Found registers, we need to know who the breeders are and what initials etc. they are using. We do have some birds recovered with this type of ring on and we don't know who the owner is or the breeder. I have managed to return one bird so far to the owner via the breeder, who has kept excellent records (thank you Gary).

I would therefore like to ask all the readers who breed non schedule 4 birds, including owls, to inform the magazine of their name, telephone number and initials/code they use.

Also, in an effort to return birds to their owners I would like to know who is using:

- 1) PJW, 2) MCAB, 3) BYB, 4) EH or EHS.

SELLING OF UNRINGED BIRDS

So far this year I have been asked more than once 'Can I buy/sell an unringed bird'. The bird in question has either been a Harris Hawk, Redtail or Common Buzzard. The simple answer is DON'T DO IT.

THE PURCHASER.

If you buy a bird that is not ringed you could end up causing yourself a lot of problems. If the authorities find it in your possession, for one reason or another, they will want to know why it is not ringed. If it is purchased then they will want to know who from. This will straight away put the seller in trouble. If you cannot or will not say where you acquired it from, or your story is not plausible, then you could lose the bird during any subsequent investigation. With the number of raptors currently stolen from captivity, especially Harris Hawks, there may well be reasonable suspicion to assume that it is a stolen bird if you are not honest about it.

THE SELLER

If a person wishes to sell a non-schedule 4 bird then it is permitted under General Exemption (EC CITES EX/36) but only if certain conditions are complied with. These are:

- (a) The bird must have been bred in captivity. A bird shall not be regarded as bred in captivity unless its parents were lawfully in captivity when the egg from which it hatched was laid. Documentary evidence of captive breeding must accompany any sale.
- (b) The bird must be ringed with a legible, individually numbered close ring. Which is a band in a continuous circle (without any break or join) which has not been tampered with in any way and which cannot be removed from the bird when its leg is fully grown. (NB In other words, fit the recommended, correct size ring).
- (c) The owner of any bird to be sold under this license will, if requested by an Official of the DoE or a Police Officer, make the bird available for a sample of blood to be taken from the bird to be sold. The blood sample will be taken by a qualified Veterinary surgeon. Such a sample may be used to establish the ancestry of the bird.
- (d) Nothing in this exemption shall operate to authorise the sale or movement of a specimen, the sale or movement of which is restricted under the terms and conditions of an import permit issued under Article 5 of EC Regulation 3626/82, or prohibited under the terms of a license or direction under sections 1 or 6 of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1971. (NB In other words a bird that has been imported cannot be sold etc. under the terms of the General Exemption. You must apply to the DoE for an individual Exemption).

If a breeder finds himself in the position of having an unringed bird then do not sell it. You can apply to the DoE for an individual Exemption. Do not be tempted to say the bird was a 'gift'. You may find yourself in the position of having to tell the authorities, or even a Court, that the bird(s) you bred, worth several hundred pounds each, you gave away to people you hardly know, or don't know at all. Would you be believed - I don't think so?

BREACH OF CONDITIONS

If a person fails to comply with the conditions of the General Exemption then you are liable on summary conviction (Magistrates Court) to a fine of up to £2,000 or on conviction on indictment (Crown Court) to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine, or both. The court may order the forfeiture of the bird(s) involved.

LOST AND FOUND

The number of lost birds, especially longwings, continually rises each week. Only a small percentage of them seem to be recovered. The ones in the main that are being returned to their owners are the ones that have an ID. tag or barrel attached giving details of whom to contact if the bird is found. There is

by no means a 100% recovery but the percentage is greater than those who do not carry a tag.

There are still a number of birds that have been found and to date nobody has reported them as missing or attempted to claim them. They are:

1. Longwing	DoE Ring	150???
2. Longwing	DoE Ring	101???
3. Longwing	DoE Ring	140???
	Plus second DoE Ring	41???
4. Shortwing	DoE Ring	80???
5. Shortwing	DoE Ring	66???
6. Kestrel	DoE Ring	99???
7. Kestrel	DoE Ring	105???
8. Kestrel	DoE Ring	UK711??
	Plus breeders ring.	
9. Large Owl	Ring	4??93Y

STOLEN BIRDS

1. Stolen from Gloucestershire July 1995

- 1. Harris Hawk - Female 11 yrs' old Ring No UK84649
- 2. Harris Hawk - Male 9 yrs' old Ring No UK04340
- 3. Harris Hawk - Female 13 yrs' old Ring No UK63648 & 73RBA 76X
- 4. Harris Hawk - Male 9 Yrs old Ring No 3481W

2. Stolen from Essex August 1995.

- 1. Harris Hawk (Superior) Ring No 1 or 2 SC95W

3 Stolen from Gwent July 1995

- 1 Goshawk - Female Ring No 5674V & 15587W

DNA TRIUMPH

In February 1994 the Metropolitan Police received information that Mr Peter John Gurr, of Rainham in Essex, was offering Peregrine Falcons for sale. Mr Gurr has a number of captive-bred birds, including Peregrine Falcons. After little breeding success in previous seasons Mr Gurr claimed to have bred some 40 Peregrines during 1993. Many of these birds were sold through advertisements. The birds were sold on the basis that they were the progeny of Mr Gurr's captive-bred Peregrines but our information was that they had in fact been taken from the wild, either as eggs or chicks, and reared in captivity.

It was decided to use DNA testing to establish whether any blood relationship existed between Mr Gurr's captive bred chicks and those which he had sold. This is the largest investigation to use DNA testing on birds in this country and the first time the Metropolitan Police had used it for this purpose.

In order to proceed with the DNA analysis it was necessary to obtain blood samples from all the birds involved and, on Sunday 27th February 1994, officers from 10 different police forces, assisted by the RSPB, accompanied veterinary surgeons to addresses throughout England and Wales for this purpose.

Blood samples were taken from 36 Peregrines and were subsequently analysed by Drs David Parkin and John Whetton of the Department of Genetics at the University of Nottingham, who have pioneered the use of DNA analysis of Birds of Prey. Peter Gurr was arrested.

He pleaded guilty to six charges of selling Peregrine Falcons contrary to Regulation 3(1) of the Control of Trade in Endangered species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985. He appeared at Snaresbrook Crown court on Friday 29th September for sentencing.

In his summing up the Judge said "I take the view that this is a very serious matter for three main reasons:

One, You have abused your position as a registered keeper by lying to the D.o.E.

Two, You have, in effect, swindled six people of approximately £400 each.

Three, This offense is very difficult to investigate and prove, and that is shown by the enormous cost of scientific work."

For these three reasons, and the fact that he believed a deterrent sentence was necessary, the Judge gave an immediate custodial sentence of four months on each offense, to run concurrently.

Operation Dutch Lady was named after "Dutch Lady" the name of a peregrine falcon used in falconry in the 19th Century.

OPEN DAY GREAT SUCCESS FOR RAPTOR RESCUE

On Sunday 2nd July 1995, Raptor Rescue held its first ever Open Day at its birds of prey hospital in Hertford, Herts.

Without commercial premises, it is quite difficult to give the public access to the work of a rehabilitator, and a lot of pre-planning was necessary in case large numbers turned up.

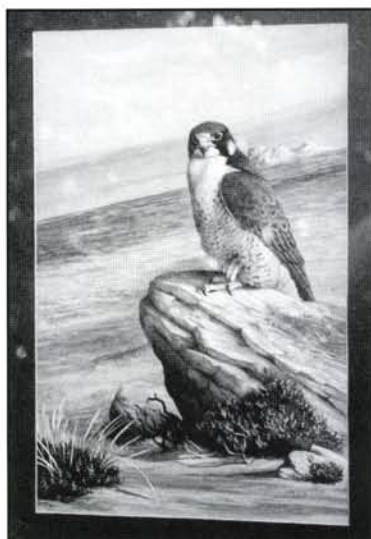
No wild birds could be displayed, of course, and those in care at the time were accommodated elsewhere for the duration of the event. Members were on hand to show visitors round the hospital and aviaries, and video and photographic presentations were available throughout the day. Happily, the response from

the public was tremendous, and over 500 people went through the "gate" on the day. Almost £1,000 was made for our central funds as a result of their generosity.

One family did manage to arrive on the Saturday before, making excuses that they had been given the wrong date, but I suspect it was really to avoid paying! A nice family, (the WILSONS from Northants, some of you may know them) so we gave them a private viewing amongst the chaos of last minute preparations.

Thanks to all who helped at the event, and to those who attended for donating so freely.
MICHAEL ROBINS

A RARE OPPORTUNITY



This painting, is an original Watercolour by John Haywood, and is being offered for sale by the owner. It is in a gilt frame, which measures 23" x 30". O.I.R.O £850. Should be sent to: P.O. Box 100, c/o 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants, NN15 5QP

YORKSHIRE MAKES YOUR HEARTBEAT

It's not very often we get invited out hawking, let alone for lunch as well, but today was going to be different. We drove to Rob's house and piled in his Landrover, David, myself and our four year old son Thomas. This was also unusual as we find some people are unwilling to accommodate the kids as well. One hundred and forty miles, and some three hours later, we arrived in Yorkshire. The scenery was breathtaking, you can understand why they choose to film the series Heartbeat, with Nick Berry, here. The day was the result of an evening spent with Rob and Alan who explained that they had taken a lease on 4,000 acres of Yorkshire Moorland. When we got there it was everything we expected it to be. We spent the morning driving around the heather clad hills where we saw several grouse, and our Wirehaired Pointer, Bess pointed her first grouse. These two gentlemen will be offering hawking days to falconers & non-falconers. You can go up to Yorkshire and spend a morning rabbit hawking, either with your own hawk or one of theirs, break for lunch and then spend the afternoon longwinging for either pheasant, grouse, partridge

or duck. They hadn't got all their birds going when we went up but we spent the afternoon watching Alan fly his Saker hybrid. Alan runs a Brittany and we also took Bess. The Brittany pointed a pheasant and Alan put the Saker up, she gained a reasonable pitch and the dog flushed the pheasant, the Saker stooped but missed. David had seen where the pheasant went down and pointed Bess in its direction. She came on point and held it for about fifteen minutes while

Alan called the Saker back and recast it. The Saker gained height again but we had to try and get her in position, David called her over him and the Brittany by this time was backing Bess' point. It was great to see both dogs working together. The Saker was in position and we told the dogs to 'get in' the pheasant rose and the Saker stooped, she missed again and the pheasant turned and headed in the opposite direction, the Saker wasn't going to be thwarted a third time and she put the brakes on hard, turned and powered up, overhauling the pheasant in style.



David was first on the scene and was pleased when Alan said it was OK for him to dispatch the pheasant and pick up the bird. She is such an amiable bird and showed no signs of upset at being handled by a stranger, especially at a time such as this.

We walked some more and they showed us a pond which is inhabited by quite a lot of ducks, the Saker was not flown again as she was a little overweight and she had already performed well. We all drove back to civilisation and went to a small restaurant for 'afternoon coffee', and a good old chinwag.

And Speaking of Paintings, Here's Another Rare Opportunity

The art of Falconry is something to inspire and awe us humble mortals, whose tragic efforts look no better, and often far worse, than that of their children.

Each year the Falconers' Fair knocks one out with its hawking art. The likes of Digby, Rhodes, Ellis and others tempt us to dig deep into the fat summer wallets.

Then for some of us, there are the infrequent trips to London galleries like the Tryon and Swann for some of the greats of yesteryear. Or even more green making are the visits to the homes of falconers of rather mature years. Clutching a stiff scotch and ready for an evening of falconry lore and legend you turn to the fireplace to exclaim "Where did you get that?" To which comes the modest reply "From the artist, I gave him a peregrine you know."

Soaked with history (and scotch) you return home to a disinterested spouse who couldn't give a damn that old so-and-so has got a thingy above his mantleshef. I once stared long and hard at a painting of Black Jess in just such circumstances. Pondering on its appropriateness as the British Falconers' Club logo it dawned on me that this was no print, but the original Lodge painting. Interestingly history tells that the hawk was not especially good - but the painting is something else.

Now, through the extraordinary generosity of the owners, the BFC has produced four limited edition prints by two great falconry artists of the past. Now, falconers can take a piece of falconry history home with them and it will be a most appropriate and timely Christmas present.



PADDINGTON SAVES

THE

DAY

When Sammy's piping cries of alarm awoke me at five o'clock on the third morning in succession, I decided something had to be done about it - and soon. For the moment though, as on previous mornings, I fell out of bed, stumbled into the back bedroom, flung open the window and threw the first thing that came to hand, at the taunting Magpie on the aviary roof. This time, luckily, it was only a coat hanger, and I would retrieve it later from the willow tree, where it now dangled. The magpie flew off chak-chakking, but I knew he'd be back. He always was.

The Kestrels peered up at me beadily from the rim of the nest ledge in the aviary below, then Sammy hopped out onto the perch, satisfied that his mate and her eggs were safe again, and she settled back onto the nest. I made my bleary back to bed and dozed off, only to be summoned to the rescue again forty minutes later. Same routine, same magpie, distinguished by a twisted deck feather. I crawled back to bed, but now on the alert, I couldn't relax. I got up and made a cup of tea.

With the patio doors open, I sat inside with my cup of tea, enjoying the peace and freshness of an early May morning - and was right on the spot for the magpies third visit, just missing it with an unusually well aimed can of Pledge. It seemed to take the hint after that and it was after eleven when Sammy's urgent weep-weep-weep alarm sounded again.

The unwelcome visits had begun about two weeks earlier, rapidly

increasing in frequency and persistence, and were the only source of fear and distress to the two little birds, causing whoever was sitting to leave the eggs and joining the other on the rim of the nest ledge at the back of the aviary.

Nothing else bothers them: both birds will splash happily in their bath on the aviary floor while my two cats sunbathe less than twelve inches away on the patio. A smart male blackbird, having discovered the grains and cereal spilled by the rabbits, visits three or four times a day, cleaning up around the hutches right outside the aviary. No problem. And while my female Harris shouts raucously at the Hawk & Owl Trust air balloons which often pass over my house, the Kestrels merely regard them with interested stares. It was also the Harris who woke me at some ungodly hour last week with a salvo of banshee screams at a small vixen, which was standing on the patio sniffing interestedly in the direction of the rabbits. My yell was added to the hawks and the fox made a speedy exit. Sammy had not even budged from his favourite perch over the door.

But the magpie is a different matter, and as pipping time approaches its visits are less wanted than ever. A full-time deterrent was needed. The cats would sunbathe on the aviary roof occasionally, and that worked while it lasted, but I can't persuade them to stay up there from dawn to dusk, not even taking it in shifts, and I draw the line at SuperGlue, even in such a good cause.

Magpies are so predatory themselves that I would have to find something bigger and potentially nastier than they are to scare them off. I could think of one or two people who would fit the bill nicely, but would they take

the job? And how reliable would they be? A machine gun came to mind, or maybe a rocket launcher, but where could one get one at such short notice? And who would man it?

One day I might start finding sensible solutions to serious problems, but as the silly ones keep working it was quite appropriate that in the midst of my deliberations my eye should fall on Paddington, twenty inches tall and splendid in his red sou'wester and matching Wellingtons. He might not be able to handle a rocket launcher, but perhaps he wouldn't need one.

Poor old Paddington, I reflected as I marched him outside, had had a pretty tough time since he moved in. A peace offering from an ex-boyfriend during a brief and tempestuous relationship, Paddington had arrived with a note saying "For you to hug when I'm not there". Not only did that ring warning bells, it also put Paddington in the front line for some of the less affectionate reactions which had occurred when the young man should have been there, but wasn't. Friends who knew the situation would avoid asking directly about my love life. They would simply ask where Paddington was. If the reply was "Upside down in the wardrobe" they know to ask no more.

When all was finally and emphatically over he spent days on my doorstep awaiting collection along with various other mementoes. They were never picked up and eventually everything was hurled in the bin. At the last moment remorse got the better of me and I fished Paddington out again, right under the noses of the astonished bin men (who took some consolation from the discovery of a very good leather jacket in the bundle).

He needed a few whirls in the washing machine before he was tolerable again and as soon as I could look at him without wanting to punch his lights out, I made him a new hat and restored him to the corner of the bedroom, where he has remained these last four years.

Sheltered under a large plastic bag, a couple of bricks keeping him upright, Paddington now took up his post as Guard Bear, on the roof of the aviary. Enoch and Doreen, stuffed toy crows were wired to the top of fence panels and Ollie the elephant and Trubshawe the rabbit were on standby in case reinforcements were needed. So far I haven't had to call on them, which is probably just as well. Magpies are intelligent birds after all, and they would never be fooled by an eight inch, plush velvet elephant.....

Having installed the defence team I rang a friend to tell her about it, in case my worried neighbours had me committed to a place where the warden wouldn't let me use the telephone. It was several minutes before I could get any sense out of her - she seemed to be laughing!

It is now a week since the magpies last visit. I spotted him sitting on a T.V. aerial the day after the patrol went on duty, but he flew off without any disturbance to the Kestrels. They have had nothing to trouble them and the eggs are being cherished without interruption.

Paddington, I noticed this morning, is currently adorned by an intrepid snail which has conquered his upper slopes and is now descending via the north face, but neither he nor the crows have made any protest about being of service. I have had some quiet enjoyment watching peoples casual glances into the garden turn into a major double-take and stop them in their tracks. All I have to do now is break the habit of waking up at five o'clock every morning. And the nice men in white coats haven't come - yet.

Pauline Hooley.

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: 0272 660770

HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society

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

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER
Benefits include:- Individual insurance to £25,000

Affiliation to British Field Sports Society & North American Falconers Assn.
£2,000,000 Public Liability at field meetings.

For Further details send S.A.E. to:
THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB
CROOKEDSTONE ELVANFOOT,
BY BIGGAR LANARKS
ML12 6RL

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

Founded in 1927

The oldest and largest Hawking Club in the country.

Nine Regional Groups -

Scotland, Wales & Borders, Midlands, Cotswolds, Eastern, North Western, North Eastern, Southern and South Western.

For more details send SAE with 52p P & P to:-
**THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB,
HOME FARM F.M., HINTS, Nr.
TAMWORTH, STAFFS. B78 3DW.**

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 071 515 7754
or
Bill Fiveash on 071 639 9087.**

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: 0245 226057
Dean White: 0375 671302
or write The Tilbury Community Ass.
The Civic Square, Tilbury Essex

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

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

Hotel, Awwsworth. Notts.

J26 off M1 - 1st slip Rd off A610

For more information please ring:

George Roach, 0623 751339

NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

We are an active, friendly club based in the New Forest. Membership is open to experienced falconers and beginners alike.

We have access to 98,000 acres of land and organise regular meetings throughout the hunting season.

We meet on the first Wednesday of every month and for more information please telephone:

**Christine or Frank on:
01202 478862 or
Rick on 01202 471388**

SOUTH GLOS & 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 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).

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 WELSH HAWKING CLUB

Est 1962

• • •

An International Club with countrywide membership.

We meet once a month.

Northern Meetings nr. Chester.

Southern Meetings at Usk.

For further information, please contact

Adrian Williams on:

0443 206333

WELSH HAWKING CLUB NEWS

This article is being compiled before picking up the Hawk for an afternoons sport - if the rain keep off - (remember the summer drought?). Here's hoping you are all having a successful season.

The club chairman for two and a half years, Mike Clowes, has recently resigned his position due to difficulties associated with attending meetings. Doug Morgans has been co-opted to fill the position until the Annual General Meeting. Terry Finnegan, Region 1 Secretary, also resigned due to other commitments and Roly Evans was elected to fill the vacancy.

As reported in the last issue of The Falconers Magazine, the decision to hold regional meetings of the Welsh Hawking Club, has generally been successful. However, we had expected a greater response to the meetings at Banbury, but it is anticipated that numbers will increase at this venue during the autumn and winter. The club has attended several game fairs during the summer and received interest from members and non-members alike. The club's annual field meeting will be held in mid October at its' usual North Wales venue, but this year additional ground is available thanks to the efforts of our field officer,

Roger James. The main quarry expected being; pheasant, rabbit and partridge..

October also sees the inaugural meeting of the newly constituted Hawk Board with its influx of club representatives, some of course quite new to the Board. Meetings of the British Field Sports Society Falconry Committee and of The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey will be held in October and a report of each meeting will be made to the club. We send congratulations to our friends in the French Club L'Association Nationale des Fauconniers et Autoursiers Francais (ANFA), who are celebrating their 50th Anniversary this year. Invitations for members to attend International field meets have also been received from clubs in Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic for which we are grateful. Several members are preparing to attend some of these in the knowledge that they will receive a hearty welcome.

If you would like an application form or more information about the Welsh Hawking Club contact our Secretary, Adrian Williams. Tel/Fax: 01443 206333. Hebogydd dda

Central Falconry & Raptor Club Update

It has been an interesting year for the club, seeing it going from strength to strength. In March the Tewkesbury branch of the C.F.R.C was set up and this has brought many new members to the club from far and near, some experienced, some just starting out and others just wanting to find out and learn about the subject. This is the whole purpose of a club, to bring like minded folk together to share in a subject close to their hearts.

August was also a memorable month, in that we gained a place on the HAWK BOARD. We have elected JOHN HILL to be the club representative on the board and wish him luck.

The Falconers Fair was well attended, with many people visiting our stand, which was conveniently positioned in front of the main arena so we could all watch the many events taking place during the day. The club now has a very professional newsletter, published four times a year. We have called it 'The Gauntlet'. Very apt don't you think? We also have access to the Internet and have been communicating with Falconers in America, who in turn have sent pages of information on Redtails and Harris's.

The CFRC has been affiliated with the BFSS for some time now and we now have two of our members sitting on regional area committees, this strengthens our voice as falconers and raptor keepers.

We continue to engage high quality speakers, and to this end we have a full calender of speakers arranged for future meetings at both clubs. The club BBQ was held in July at the Cotswold Falconry Centre, where our president Geoff Dalton was the host. A good night was had by all.

The hunting season will be well under way by the time this goes to press and the club will be holding many field meets throughout the season, so watch this space for news on how they went. Most field meets are supported by club funds.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the CFRC, please contact Kim Oakeshott on 01604 414155 or Shaun Healey on 10684 274591. Remember we have TWO regional groups, these are at Coventry, which meets every 2nd Sunday of the month and Tewkesbury, Glos which meets every 1st Sunday of the month.

Have a good season.

If you wish to put your club news on the Clubs page of the next issue simply send it to: The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine 20, Bridle Rd, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP. Making sure it reaches us by 31st December 1995.

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB REPORT. OCTOBER 1995

The Scottish Hawking Club's season has started off quite well, firstly we have been accepted onto the Hawk Board, something this club has been striving to do for some years. Also our membership is steadily rising, which is good, not just because there's safety in numbers, but because a lot of new members are either new to falconry or have never belonged to a club before. For those reasons alone it is very encouraging. The field meets are going well with us just having had our main 2/4 day meet, combined with AGM at Grantown-on-Spey. With quite a few regulars not being able to attend for one reason and another we still had between 25-30 coming out hawking on the Saturday

and Sunday and with the accommodation in the old hunting lodge being quite sumptuous, a good time was had by all. A further five meets are planned for the rest of the season so let's hope the weather is kind to us.

We would like to research the history of falconry in Scotland from recent times this century to as far back as possible (it will help with articles for the club magazine), I know there is mention of the subject in some falconry books already but we would like to try and expand on the known information. If anyone can help with any information on the subject please send details to the SHC. In the meantime, Good Hawking.



A group invited to the award winning Blackhouses Moor

THRINGS III

MIK STANDING

It's raining. Nothing unusual about that, up here in the Highlands of Cymru it rains quite often, usually with a quiet intensity that makes the evolution of a native Snowdonian with aqualung and flippers a Darwinian possibility. Not far from where I sit, applying finger to key with glacial rapidity, lies Blaenau Ffestiniog. Nestled in the confluence of the spurs of tunnel wormed granite ranges, Blaenau seems to accrue more than its fair share of pluvial activity, often gaining the dubious honour of having Great Britain's highest rainfall - usually all on a Wednesday afternoon! Contrariwise, I remember returning from the Falconers Fair in 1992 to find that Blaenau had been the hottest place in the country that weekend. Here in Snowdonia the winters are longer, although milder in recent years, and the summer comes later and is of briefer duration than for those in southern climes. Apparently, some of you reading this will have experienced something of a drought this year. We too had a hot, dry spell this summer, but nothing like the rest the UK, praise be to whichever anthropomorphic personification you rely upon for salvation. It was hot of course but as long as you stayed indoors around midday the chances are you are melanoma-free and you don't think you're Napoleon. The leaves remained green. The grass gained only a tinge of sepia and Dwr Cymru where able to fulfil their service contract without banning a single hose. I had a rtide awakening to these contrasting meteorological conditions the first time I ever visited Blaenau Ffestiniog. I arrived on a bright, sunny afternoon in mid-March and was, as all incomers from the soft underbelly of the country are, utterly awestruck by the impervious majesty of the mountains cradling the town. Here was true beauty. Overwhelmed by this display of nature I decided to celebrate by tending to more mundane needs like hunger and sought out a fish 'n' chip shop. Just to show how sophisticated I was, I elected to eat my chips in the cafe instead of out of the paper like any normal person. Three-quarters of an hour later I stepped outside to find a foot of snow cloaking just about everything. Now the mountains held not beauty but malice as they loomed over the town in sullen silence, dark and brooding, against the steel blue sky. All roads out of Blaenau were closed and I had to stay the night in the Local Queens Hotel, which is a tale all of its own.

Let me tell you a story. Are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin... One of the basic tenets of falconry has to be 'never do anything without first planning it in absolutely every detail'. Those of you with a few seasons tucked under your belt know this to be a worthy rule to live by, the inexperienced among us will, unfortunately, ultimately discover this to be true. It's happened to us all, no use denying it, we've all made this one humongous mistake sometime in our

falconry career - no matter how good we think we are. When we first embark upon the journey to austringerial enlightenment, we are meticulous in our preparation, fastidious in the care and training of our charge, and scrupulous in observing every detail governing the handling and free-flying of our hawk. With practice this premeditated circumspection becomes automatic, carried out with an immaculate nonchalance that belies the painstaking erudition gained with hard won dedication. Trouble is, inevitably something will go terribly wrong.

In some way or other we all do something on autopilot. How many can honestly say they haven't imbibed a cup of preferred warm beverage without any awareness of actually making it? How many of us fall out of bed when the alarm clock beeps/rings/floods the room with an intensively annoying, but cheerful disc jockey and when the grey fog of Morpheus lifts, find ourselves washed, dressed and almost out the door? Or, how many of us, whilst driving our cars, find ourselves twenty miles further down the road without any recollection of any participation in controlling the vehicle? Happens to all of us I can assure you. When a particular sequence of movements are repeated time and time again the brain simply allocates an area of grey, spongy cellular matter to taking care of these mundane actions and goes out to lunch.

With the possible exception of the latter, none of these will cause actual harm - although turning up at work wearing your spouses favourite dress will raise an eyebrow, if not more - and so can be said to be beneficial to some degree. It is when your brain goes out to lunch, Earl Grey and scones in a small Devonshire tea shop, or a fifteen course Chinese New Year celebratory banquet, that modicum of peril joins the fun. I'd like to say that I have been immune to this particular malediction, but I haven't.

A few years ago my wife Jude and I decided to open our own falconry school which, with a commendable lack of imagination, we named the Snowdonia School of Falconry. The opening of the School was an extremely large gamble for us, not just because of the prevailing economic climate and the slightly worrying number of other falconry related Establishments closing, but also due to my less than stable health. At that time I had been suffering from a degenerative illness for some ten years but as I seemed to be in a period of remission we felt we should give the School a try. After all, who wants financial security in their old age when you can squander all your savings on a gnat's winkle

of a whim now? We did reasonably well, offering courses at prices affordable to everyone. As I fervently believe that through tuition is a strong foundation on which to build falconry experience and I do not think the misfortune of poverty or youth should be a bar to learning. Whether we would have survived for very long is open to question, and is purely academic, as we closed early in '94. Finally, and unquestionably, my medical condition caught up with me and we had no choice but to make the sad decision to pass on nearly all our birds. Sounds simple but it took me a while to realise it was time to hang up my glove, this is how it happened. In the autumn of '93 we had a client who, unknown to us at the time of booking, was a newly appointed Wildlife and Liaison Officer for a county Constabulary. Before taking up the post Bob wanted to use up some owed leave and felt that learning the basics of falconry would be both enjoyable and a good way to get some understanding of the problems of hawk-keepers. Nice to know Authority ain't always out ta git ya! The week's tuition progressed as normal, loads of time spent talking, flying hawks and then more talking. I am a stickler for covering as much detail as possible in five days of teaching. I figure that if there too much information thrown at the student they'll either give up on the idea and leave birds well alone or have their interest piqued and make the effort to find out more. Personally I'd rather turn off one aspirant from falconry than encourage ten to take up the sport. If a client became bored during one of our courses and it led to them giving up the idea then so much the better, they were probably there for the wrong reasons in the first place. Yeah, I sound pompous but when you've seen as many dickheads who couldn't be trusted with blunt objects let alone living creatures as I have then you'll appreciate the sentiment. And anyway, only one client ever professed to becoming bored out of the many students who passed through our gates and he was a prime example of the problem. Although clients spent time flying 'their' bird during the course, and witnessed a wide variety of hawks and owls flying too, we used to reserve the final afternoon for a hunting expedition with the Harris Hawk team. Having a routine meant that the Harris' weights would be spot on for the afternoons hawking and everything would be prepared just so. On the Thursday afternoon Bob announced that he would have to leave early on Friday and so miss the Harris' hunting which he was keen to see. The week had not been a good one for me, I had been in an awful amount of pain but was unable to use as much analgesia as would have been comfortable because I tend to drift off when I do. If it's true that alcohol and hawks do not mix then it's doubly true for pethidine! Still, Bob was a nice guy and I was loth to disappoint him, so when the day's tuition ended I

offered to take him out with the Harris' that evening. He snatched the chance to go out hawking and we put the gear together, picked up the hawks and set off. Instead of going across the valley to our usual hunting ground we drove to an oak wood in the vicinity as a made up road went right through it and I could walk along that with less pain.

The chances of finding quarry I knew to be very slim as all we had ever seen there was the occasional squirrel and many, many vole holes. Bob knew we were not there to purposely catch anything but the Harris' would still demonstrate how well they fly and hunt together, and it gave our Munsterlander, Emma, a chance to show off. It went well at first, the Harris' following on from tree to tree, the dog working the rough ground either side of the track, and it seemed I had made the right decision. Then they all stopped. Running through the wood is a river that carved a pretty deep ravine. Now the dog stood staring down towards the river, the hawks likewise intently scanning in the same direction. Suddenly Rune, the male Harris', was gone. Literally disappeared. We had all been following the stares of the dog and hawks and were no longer watching the Harris', one second he was in a tree above the track and then he was gone. It took a while for us to notice his disappearance. His sister, Tarot, didn't seem to want to move from her stance when we tried to walk on, yet she didn't appear to be too concerned about Rune either. I began to call and whistle him back but a few minutes of this had no result. Still Tarot kept her stance, staring down towards the river but not wishing to go and investigate further. Obviously something was wrong, so Jude called Tarot down to her fist and boxed her in the van. No sight or sound of Rune. We decided to split up, Jude walking through to the far end of the woods and back along the far side of the river whilst Bob went back along the way we'd come in case Rune had decided to go home. I went straight down the steep slope towards the river. This was quite difficult, the ground was littered with a tangle of brambles, roots, loose stones and fallen trees and would have been awkward at the best of times, but with a hip that felt as if a hot steel blade were being twisted into the joint at every step it was bloody treacherous.

I finally reached the edge of the ravine and looked over to see if Rune was anywhere about. No sign at all. I whistled and listened for his bell. Nothing. The light was beginning to fade by now and panic was starting to set in. I whistled, I called and dreamt all manner of terrible injuries and deaths for the hawk. Obviously, Rune had seen something down here and come to have a look. If he'd gone into the water he'd have drowned, for the river was cascading through the ravine at a tremendous pace. If he'd injured himself on the ground and we couldn't find him before darkness fell his chances of survival would be slim, as any passing fox would find him easy prey. Writing this now, in the warm sanity of my study it seems long ago and far away but the danger of Runes predicament was very real indeed.

I'm not sure how long I stood there whistling and calling for him, but suddenly I heard a single chime from his bell. A slight movement gave his position away and I could see

him for the first time. Almost directly across from me on the wall of the ravine stood Rune, very still and not looking at me at all. The ledge he stood upon was very narrow and partially in darkness, and I could see nothing there but the hawk. Getting to him from the other side would be arduous in daylight and extremely inadvisable in failing light. Again I called and whistled to him and, as before he showed no interest in me. Something was very wrong, Rune is a very obedient bird who always comes when called and that he should ignore me in this way could only mean trouble. I decided that I had to get across to him, quite how I intended to achieve this I am unsure to this day, but I knew I had to try. At the edge of the drop was a wire mesh fence, supposedly there to stop sheep emulating lemmings and I tried to climb over it. I was absolutely pathetic. Every attempt to raise my leg wracked my body with a pain that threatened to black me out, there was simply no way that I could climb a simple three foot high fence to get to my hawk. I can clearly recall whimpering with frustration when I realised that there was nothing I could do.

The problem resolved itself. As I watched, Rune roused and looked about him. Seeing me, he flew across the ravine and alighted in the branches of a convenient oak. He walked back and forth on the branch but eventually came down to my fist. The relief and jubilation I felt were cut short when I realised that his legs were covered in blood. I guessed that most of it must be his as I could see several open wounds on both legs yet, as there was nothing I could immediately do about it, my prime concern was to get him back to the School. I honestly do not remember much about the climb back up the hill, I can only assume that the already difficult climb was made harder with bird on fist, but I made it eventually. I met up with Jude and Bob soon after reaching the top and we drove back to the School as quickly as possible.

We dosed Rune with electrolyte to help prevent shock and cleaned up his wounds. His legs seemed to be covered in cuts but my major concern at the time was his mental condition for he was unresponsive and definitely subdued. By now it was too late to drive to our vets so I elected to keep Rune quiet and warm until morning. Next day he was still unresponsive but otherwise unharmed and upon inspection by our vet, Mike Dalimore, was deemed to have been in a fight with something a tad more vicious than himself. Mike counted no less than twelve separate bites on Runes tarsus, not the square-edged incision made by a water rat but the jagged slash made by mink or pole-cat.

Rune recovered from his wounds quickly, although his confidence was more than dented for some time. He is now back to his voracious self, hunting alongside his sister with all the grace and intelligence you'd expect from a Harris' Hawk. The problem lies not with the hawk but with the hawk keeper.

If we'd stuck to our routine this escapade would never have occurred. Instead of following the advice I have given to all my students, I took Rune out without preparing the expedition. It was too late to be out, we were in an area with poor access, we simply had

not prepared ourselves to be there, in that place, at that time. Due to my careless disregard of procedure I had placed my hawk in a position of danger, by running on autopilot I had almost killed my bird.

As bad as the incident undoubtedly was, I was finally able to face a problem that I had been trying to ignore. I could no longer deny that my illness was adversely affecting my ability to be a falconer. I should have been able to help Rune that evening and I should have been capable of climbing a fence. Odin's Eyepatch, I should never have been flying a hawk there just because it was convenient for me! The realisation that I was now unable to safely fly a bird was unbelievably unwelcome, but how could I hope to fly anything if I couldn't get out into the countryside with it or follow wherever it led? I had to be honest with myself and do the right thing by the birds in my care.

We closed the School, my health deteriorated and I now spend a lot of time in a wheelchair. I hope to fly a merlin to the lure when it finishes the moult and Jude will fly the Harris' when they complete theirs. I have discovered an undeniable fact of life - being disabled is as useful as a chocolate fireguard when it comes to flying hawks and I sorely miss what I once had.

Why have I told you this sorry tale of woe? Simply this, although I knew I was ill and likely to get worse, I couldn't imagine a time when I'd have to give it all up. Falconry is the only thing I've ever been half good at, the only time I've felt I've achieved anything and to be forced to give it up is the most bitter medication I have had to take. All I'm saying is don't rely on anything, don't assume nothing will change. I did, and look where it got me. Nothing stays the same forever, change is a natural phenomenon that cannot be avoided. Don't be complacent about current legislation. The 'as-long-as-it-doesn't-affect-me' attitude does nothing for falconry today or the falconers of tomorrow. If the anti-field sports faction becomes stronger, if the government decides a 'green' vote to be valuable, or if the Labour Party gets in at the next election (or the Liberal Democrats, although 'tis unlikely I know) you'll be faced with a change as unpleasant as my own. Nothing lasts forever. Life and legislation can be as unpredictable as the weather in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Don't believe it can't happen to you, it can, believe me. Think On.....

Falconry Centres, Wildlife Parks and Zoological Gardens

There are at least 8.5 million individuals with a disability in Britain today. That's a lot of people with Rights to exercise and money to spend. Do them, and yourself, justice by providing access and facilities for the disabled at your venue.



Phone for details of how you can have your venue assessed by an experienced falconer/wheelchair user, who understands your needs and those of the disabled public, just for the price of 'out-of-pocket' expenses!

Disability Awareness Training for your staff also available.

01766 590657

Hawking the Camas

Alan
Gates

I opened my eyes as I became conscious, it was still dark, at the back of my head I became aware of something scratching and fumbling. My brain and my audio receptacles tuned into one another, and my pupils dilated enough to allow the dim light to show me the image of my fellow tenter. I realised that he was desperately trying to vacate the shared tent, to do what one does, when the need arises in the early hours of the morning.

His attempts with the zipped exit were intended to be as quiet as possible, he had failed, I was now awake, although I did not let on. Instead I pulled up the Ultimate sleeping bag and tried again to find a comfortable position on the hard ground. The night had come in quite chilly, and even though we had all gathered around a roaring camp fire that evening to enjoy good food, cowboy coffee and joviality, I had still felt the need to seek my polarpelt.

Just after midnight a few wise souls were making excuses and retiring, I too was bushed, it had been a long day in the wide open



Karen Thee, wife of Dan Thee, falconer and breeder of fine Gyr Falcons

air and I was feeling a tiredness creeping into my bones. I took my opportunity and left those with a stronger constitution than I to progress from the beer and onto the spirits, it was time for me to hit the bag.

Some three hours later I am again awake, it was not Jon's exit to blame, for had my sleep-

ing pattern been normal, he could have ripped the tent from around me without stirring my slumber. The hard ground and my over-active mind reliving the past few days had all but prevented the lightest of sleep, now I would cat-nap until dawn, wondering what the new day would bring, how could it match

yesterday.

As days go it had been a full one, thirty odd hours before I had just flown into Boise Airport, it was early evening but I was feeling the effect of losing seven hours, and my body demanded the Motel bed after twenty three hours travelling.

The following morning my room resembled an untidy office as I rang round fixing dates on what had been a loosely planned schedule before I landed. My main priority was to contact Charles and Patty Browning who I had last spoken to on the phone on Thanksgiving Day. Then the exact dates had been a bit hazy, but the invitation was offered to join them and a few friends at camp on the Camas to hawk ducks and grouse.

Now Patty's voice on the answer phone indicated they would be camped near Soldier creek just north of Fairfield, and gave a mobile number if the caller required more details. Well I bloody did, but I could not get an answer from the mobile for the best part of the morning. Finally Patty's voice interrupted the phones ringing,



Darryl Barnes with his tri-bred Prairie x Lanner x Gyr

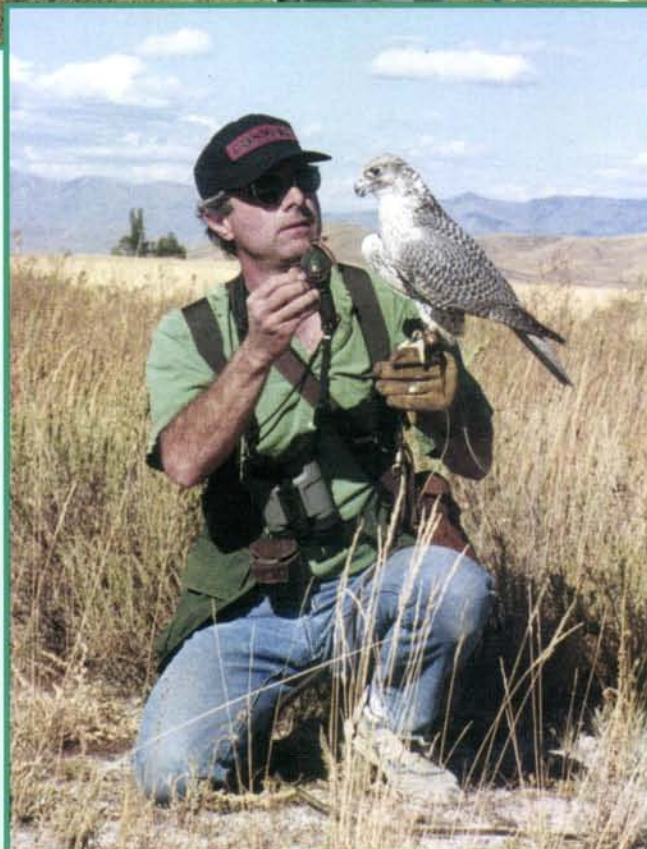
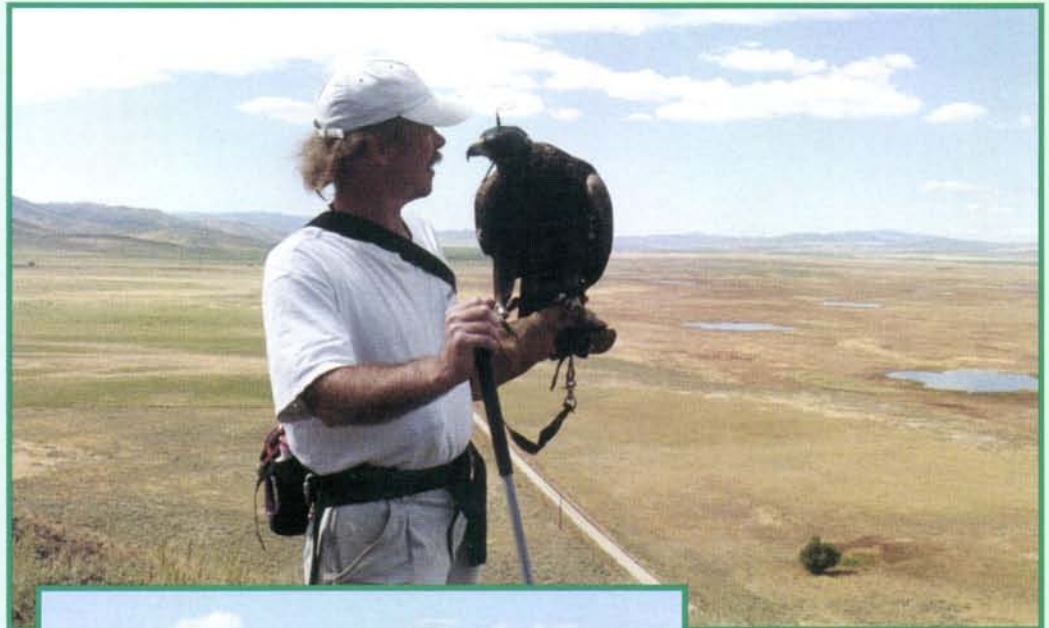
she had moved out of the foothills that had been blocking the signal and was now out on the prairie hawking. I took her advice and cadged a lift from Boisian falconer Jon Neviasser who was driving down the following morning.

We grabbed a drive in breakfast and proceeded along Interstate 84 slightly later than planned. Driving with large cups of scalding hot coffee in one hand and egg baps in the other, whilst talking falconry and swerving to identify the hawks sat on the cross bars of the power poles as Redtail, Swainsons, Ferruginous or Golden Eagles made the trip memorable.

We had enormous difficulty translating Patty's simple instructions on how to find the camp into reality, even the local Sheriff could not help. We had just returned to start at the Fairfield General Stores, when we both noticed that a Landcruiser that was been filled up at the gas pump and was carrying two fine hooded white gyrtiercel's. We were getting warmer. It turned out to be Dan Thee, who gave us the welcome news that all the falconers were meeting at the Stores prior to heading out on the prairie hawking.

Within minutes we were surrounded by four wheel drives, dogs, falcons and too many introductions for my brain to take in, and we were back on the road in convoy

It was ten a.m. on a normal September day in Idaho, the temperature was heading for its daily peak of the low nineties and the sky, with not a cloud to be found which stretched for miles, was a deep blue. The convoy stopped along a dusty road,



we were just south of the Soldier mountains on the Camas Prairie.

Rob Holen was kitted up ready to fly his falcon, and proceeded out into the sage bush and cheat grass, the organisation was loose, not everyone was ready, some stayed with the vehicles. I headed out to catch up with the two or three falconers with Rob, who by now had removed the hood and held aloft his fine Gyr x Peregrine 'Vapour'.

It leant into the slight breeze and pushed off the fist, a quick rouse and she was soon pumping into the sky. In no time I was having difficulty in keeping her in my 8 x 30's, having reached her pitch she turned and headed over Rob who was now moving towards a pond. With no undulation in the ground I had not seen this pond, these guys had been here before. A labrador and pointer set off for the water, and a group of small ducks flushed from the edge of the reed grass, I looked skywards, the falcon had teardropped and was stooping, I looked back to find the ducks, and just located them when the air was torn apart as the falcon levelled out and tapped the lead duck in the head. It dropped stone dead. She rolled over and

Top: Charles & 'Messiah' high above the Camas.

Middle: Jeff King with Tiercel Gyr Apollo.

Bottom: 'Zorro' Tiercel Gyr x Peregrine plumes his Shoveler Duck.

landed with her prize.

Next to put a falcon to the sky was Darryl Barnes with a lovely tri-bred Prairie x Lanner x Gyr which was climbing almost from the fist and was soon just a speck in the heavens. The pattern followed as before from the same pond, it had a good area of cover with the surrounding reed bed, which held pockets of ducks who quite obligingly stayed put until flushed and enabled repeated flights all morning.

The dogs flushed a small group of ducks and the tri-bred was soon ripping through them, a very experienced falcon she knew that a head hit meant certain death in the air, her victim was a Shoveler duck and was soon in the bag.

Charles Browning soon had 'Zorro' his strikingly marked tiercel Gyr x Peregrine high over the pond, 'Zorro' like all the falcons flown was super fit by any standards let alone this early into the season. At one point I watched as Charles joined the dogs wading in the water to successfully flush ducks for his waiting tiercel.

'Zorro' too took a Shoveler duck, these falcons made it look easy, and in doing so concealed the skill and experience of each of these falconer / falcon teams. We left the pond to settle down and returned to the vehicles to quench our thirst and partake of a little food.

The heat of the day was reaching its peak, or at least I'd hoped it was. The discussion between the falconers reached a consensus that Charles would take his Golden Eagle 'Messiah' up into the foothills where he would hopefully find some lift, thus leaving the remaining falcons in the shade awaiting the cooler evening air in which to continue flying on the flat prairie.

Watching these superb falcons being flown was an unexpected treat for me, but to experience the techniques of one of the few American eagle falconers, was the number one reason I had travelled to the mid-west.

Charles, carrying a hooded 'Messiah,' climbed the hill, as I followed my footsteps disturbed the dry dusty soil. The gravelled lava rock, in places like marbles under your feet, together with the long woody stems of sage bush lurking close to the ground just waiting to trip the unexpected footstep, made me aware that I lacked the aid of my trusty thumb stick.

I was feeling the effects of a lazy summer, Charles on the

other hand was finely tuned. I watched as he strode up the hill a little ahead of me, the muscles of his bare legs pushing like pistons as they brushed aside the sage. This was not the start of the season for Charles and 'Messiah', as they had kept flying throughout the moult and successfully taken many black-tails. We stopped about three hundred feet up the hill, the view out across the prairie was dramatic and I was surprised to see about fifteen ponds scattered about in front of us. The one we had been working the falcons over that morning was by far the largest. As our breathing pattern returned to normal, Charles removed the eagles hood. The slight breeze that was blowing gave the eagle little advantage, as it came across and down the hill from behind us.

As Charles extended his arm the eagle spread his wings, dropping altitude down the hill, he then circled a little way out only to return and land. I know the feeling well, on your own and with the elements, the eagle and luck on your side it can be the recipe for a red letter day. With the expecting assembled crowd down below and the wind as flat as a f**t. Things did not look as though the eagle was about to burn any primaries.

Once or twice the eagle did a circuit as though looking for lift, then as we were slowly moving down the hill 'Messiah' found a very gentle thermal of warm air. In seconds the efficiency of those large broad wings soon had the eagle above us, and within a couple of minutes he was high above the hills.

Charles and I hurried down the hill to the flat prairie below, all the time stopping to locate 'Messiahs' position in the sky, who was now over the second hill ridge.

By the time we were both on the flat the eagle was just a speck, I stayed put whilst Charles moved out into the prairie, he would locate 'Messiah' and I could then join him. The eagle was now so high he was lost to the naked eye, we had to hand over his position to one another before you could take down your binoculars and walk out into the prairie. We continued our progress in this relay fashion moving towards the larger pond, Charles was hoping for a stoop at ducks.

The eagle was a good mile away and hundreds of feet above a second ridge of hills, he was riding the air drafts back and forth for about three quarters of a

mile along the ridge of hills. At one point a wild eagle joined him, and I became confused as which was our bird, Charles knew and was proved right when the eagle I was watching disappeared into the blue and 'Messiah' finally started to fly towards the prairie still keeping the height gained.

With aching arms and a sunburnt face, an hour later, 'Messiah' was high above us and we were ready to flush the pond. By now everyone had joined us and a mass flush was on hand. Dogs, children and falconers pushed forward, a shout, someone called out "Messiah is stooping". From what must have been well over a thousand feet came a stooping eagle in a style that any falcon would have been proud to match. A small flock of ducks had left the water and looked to be making for the next pond, one of them must have spotted the eagle and they all hit the water like a shower of stones. At about three hundred feet he terminated his stoop and levelled out, cutting across the sky with the accelerated velocity he had gained. Over flying

the pond he turned then rolled over and stooped to the ground. As we made our way round the pond edge towards where 'Messiah' had landed, a wild eagle came low in from behind us and shot straight into where 'Messiah' was. Panic broke out as everyone rushed forward, mud splashed every where as most of us took the direct route. As we approached to where the two eagles were it was 'Messiah' who took off first, we were almost on top of the wild eagle (a first year bird) before it left. 'Messiah' had taken a coot running across the mud flat, and possibly 'Messiah' reminded the young eagle it of its parent, and it came in for a feed.

With no harm done, Charles called 'Messiah' down to a well earned reward.

The late afternoon was spent with Rob Holen and Jeff King's gyr's hawking sage grouse. As dusk crept in and Rob picked up his young gyr on a grouse kill, the sound of coyotes howling to one another across the hills brought a superb finale to a magnificent day's Hawking the Camas in America's Mid West.



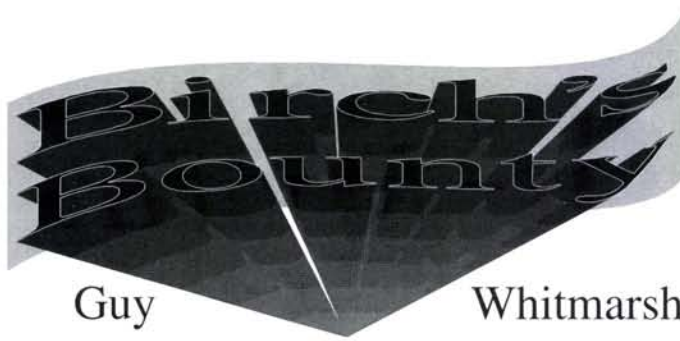
Charles Browning with 'Zorro' Tiercel Gyr x Peregrine.

To start off with I do not profess to be an expert on training dogs of any sort and this article is just a few observations and opinions of an 'amateur'.

I have had my Brittany (who goes by the name of Birch) for three years now and I am still amazed at his stamina, keenness and how quickly he learns things.

When I started him on field training, I gave little thought to my knowledge on the subject which happened to be very little. This turned out to be no problem, as Birch learned, so did I, and I found a few mistakes could be allowed without much trouble, although none would have been better.

Birch was quick to the whistle and other commands, such as hand signals. His eagerness to learn tended to rush the progress of training and so led me into a false sense of achievement. Initially he was reluctant to enter brush etc., but later I found that any scent detected would be investigated, no matter how thick the undergrowth. However nettles are considered a no go area as far as Birch is concerned. Having said this



Brittanys are (amongst other things) pointers, at which they are very good and steady. Once told to flush Birch very rarely chases the quarry, he seems to enjoy more, searching out the quarry.

Brittanys have a tendency to scent the wind rather than having nose to the ground, like a typical spaniel, which could cause some owners to worry that the dog is not hunting properly. These dogs also seem to have inexhaustible energy and will hunt all day with no problem. Quoting from one of the few books on Brittanys, "He has plenty of fire and go, yet neither nervous of high strung. He is cocky, giving no quarter to dogs twice his size for grit and determination, but still retains the calm of an understanding companion."

Sometimes Birch is so keen and the urge to work is so strong, he can be a nuisance, this does not mean he's disobedient, just that he turns a deaf ear now and again, but a growl from me usually reminds him to pay more attention.

At home he isn't any trouble, he

normally lives outside during the day, except of course in extreme weather conditions and indoors at night. He loves his family, especially the children and can be very protective. For all those that have just acquired or are about to acquire a Brittany, with time and patience they will never let you down.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the Brittany is a natural born comedian. It is impossible to describe on paper the innumerable tricks and pranks, but those of you that have one will confirm this and if you acquire one you will very soon find out.



CAPTION COMPETITION

WIN A Day Hawking on the Yorkshire Moors.
Donated by
The Old Hawking Club Ltd.

CAPTION COMPETITION, The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering. Northants NN15 5QP. Entries in no later than January 1st



We decided to have a caption competition in this issue for a change. To enter decide either what the puppy is saying to it's mum or vice-versa, and send your answers on a post card or sealed envelope, along with your name, address and telephone number to:

Right: Richard Naisbitt, his wife Vanessa and their daughter Camille



Competition Winner.

The winner of last issues' competition was Mr R W Leach from Bath. He wins a weeks free accommodation in Scotland. The Competition was drawn by Richard Naisbitt who came to see us whilst over here visiting family. The answers were:

1. There are 780 Falkland Islands
2. Major George Wilkinson was famous for re-introducing the Wirehaired Pointer to this country.
3. There are 121 pairs of Philipine Eagles left.

Doug - My first bird

Graham Jack

After much arm twisting, and by way of an opportunity to thank everyone who has helped and advised me, I have finally put pen to paper. So, while it is still fresh in my mind, I will relate some early notes from my log. Novices like myself might find it of help, and more experienced falconers can smile and remember their own early days.

I picked up Doug on September 3rd, 1993. He was a parent-reared male Redtail, just short of four months old, and weighed 2lbs 6oz. The manning went very well. I tried not to rush anything. He stayed in a darkened mews for seven days, and I would sit with him for one to one-and-a-half hours every morning and evening, slowly allowing more light in each day. Towards the end of the week we had a dog lying by the partially open door. This was Jemma, my soon-to-be hawking dog, a nine-year-old mongrel with a keenness to help if she can. What follows are entries from my hawking log of the time.

September 11th. At 2lbs 4 1/8oz, still too high, progress slow but no setbacks.

September 21st. Eighteen days on, manning going well but my rewards have been too big and he is still 2lbs 4oz. This is now working against me.

I visited an experienced falconer to seek more advice. He listened intently enough, nodding and showing polite signs of encouragement and then he said "Yes, yes, now get on with it!" "Oh. Okay then." I replied. By taking Doug's weight down so slowly I had reduced the whole effect and as yet Doug would not jump to the fist. If I kept a good selection of titbits and a tasty tiring in my pocket, then I had a nice bird on my fist and could walk around dogs, strangers, traffic etc., without incident, but he was not keen. His weight had to come down even if it meant less manning.

October 5th. 33 days on and Doug is five months old and for the first time he has started to scream. Panic sets in, "Oh no, not a screamer!" Have been advised to feed him up quickly but if I feed him too much will I be going backwards? No more titbits then, only rabbit, and weathering on the front lawn in full view



of everything going on.

As the day went on, if he screamed when he saw me then I would vanish for one or two hours and blow his food whistle before reappearing with glove and waistcoat, plus dog. This way he screamed only at the sound of the whistle and when I had my flying clobber on. At the same time, it all started to come together, his whole character was changing. The nickname my friend Graham had given him of 'Binky the Budgerigar' was now 'The Omen'.

October 8th. 36 days have passed and he has come down from 2lbs 6oz to 1lb 12 3/4 oz. (By the end of the season this turned out to be his optimum flying weight, with obedience and power to play with. At 1lb 13oz he soared.)

He took his first hop to the fist on that day, and his progress from there on was rapid. At last his metabolism was working in my favour. Up to now, everything I had done in the way of manning was achieved by giving him as little food as possible, or as a distraction from anything that might upset him whilst manning. I could now give him more protein, ie. pigeon, pheasant, something rich and tasty. In five days he was coming ten yards. I didn't call him off too many times in a session, but always to something good.





rabbit - it jinked twice, then ran through a bush. Doug treed for a moment then stooped, but missed. I picked him up with no reward, but this only made him excited and ready for more.

Paul beat up through the hedgerow at the bottom end and a rabbit ran out along the outside edge of the trees. Doug was off, up through the woods, tracking him. He treed for a moment and back he came, in Hawk & Owl Trust pursuit, only ten or fifteen feet behind the rabbit, and passing right next to Paul, winding through the trees like a Star Wars movie. Treed again for a second, then down he came - wham.

By the time we uncovered him from the brambles he had been dragged into, Doug was on the rabbit's head, looking very pleased with himself. Paul and I sat with Doug and his prize for twenty minutes, sipping brandy from my hip flask to calm our nerves. I then picked him up on a warm leg, from the carcass, and fed him a very full crop.

With the happy thought that Doug could now probably survive should I have the misfortune to lose him, we headed home.

Doug has progressed steadily through the season and much of it is due to the help I received. I'd particularly like to thank Jim and Peter for all the invaluable advice and encouragement they have given me.

On the sixth day the lure was introduced, laced with big bits of pigeon breast (his favourite). The lure was then thrown out to five or six feet. Down he went and broke a tail feather - oh great! I used the lure sparingly, with fresh meat on it every time, so that when I pulled it out he knew it meant something good - it usually brought immediate results. All other call-offs were to the fist with a long blast on the whistle every time. If he came without being called, he did not get a reward. However he was never restrained and was allowed to leave the fist again if he felt so inclined. This kept him happy and with no resentment for the glove.

October 18th. Eleven days after his first hop to the fist, I flew Doug loose and with Peter's words ringing in my ear, "Oh, I just fling them up a tree, and when they feel like it they come down." Well, that sounds good enough for me. In my case it was a post in the middle of a field, but it worked the same.

I had only flown Doug eighteen yards on a creance before flying him loose for a reward of warm coot. However, in my excitement at the progress being made, his weight had climbed up to 11lb 15oz. So it was back to rabbit as a main course, and higher protein foods for titbits.

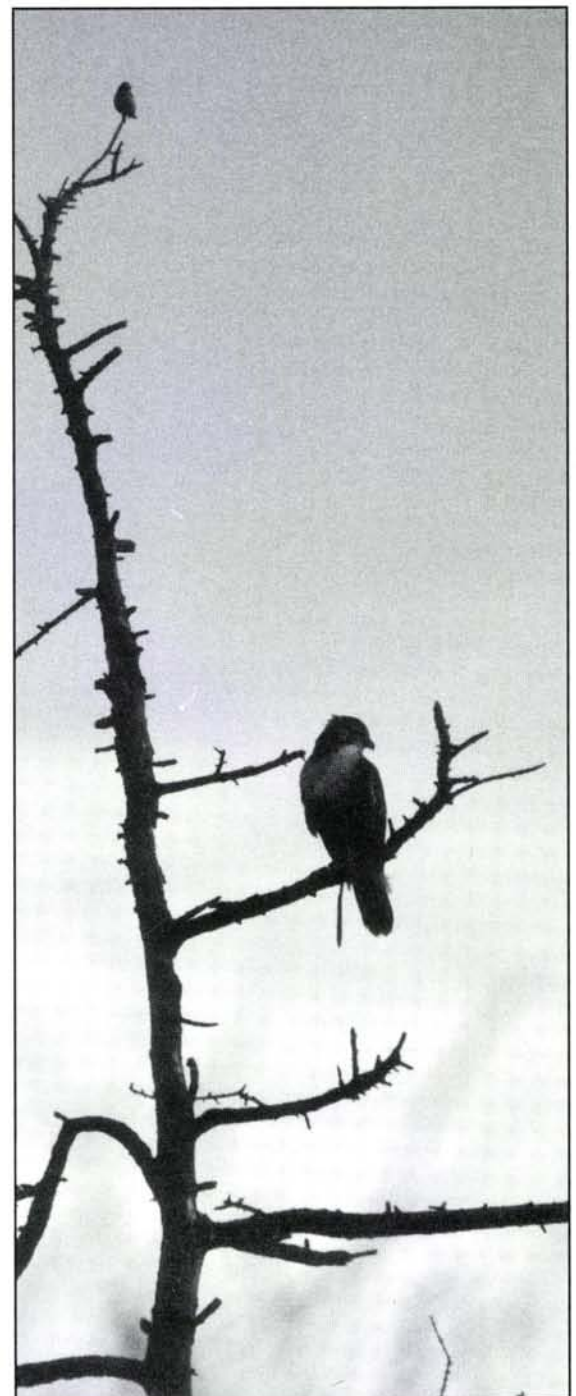
Training went well and every day his flying improved, but it was not until twelve days later, at 11lb 9oz, too weak for strong flight, his attitude changed again to Doug 'Omen 2'. With his weight so low even though he had been eating quite a bit, his excitement grew and he stayed alert most of the time. We ended an uneventful trip out, with a lured dead rabbit, pulled out of the bushes by a friend, on a creance.

As his weight climbed, so did his strength, skill, courage and determination. He was getting very close and footed one or two rabbits. The strong winds at the time meant he had to work hard just to stay with us as we bushed, and had it not been for a very kind person who lent me a transmitter, I would not have had the courage to have flown half as much (a transmitter does give you some peace of mind).

All this meant that Doug was chasing everything quite hard, dropping out of trees like a stone, and throwing himself into brambles four feet deep.

November 14th Two months and eleven days after being picked up, and weighing 11lb 11oz, he was entered. The log reads "One pm., very keen when picked up, snatchy, pheasant wing as tiring. Very windy, cold and from the North, but sunny."

I was out with Paul, a friend, who had accompanied me on many training trips. We decided to go bushing in the woods, as the wind was too strong in the open. The first slip was at the top end of K the woods at a



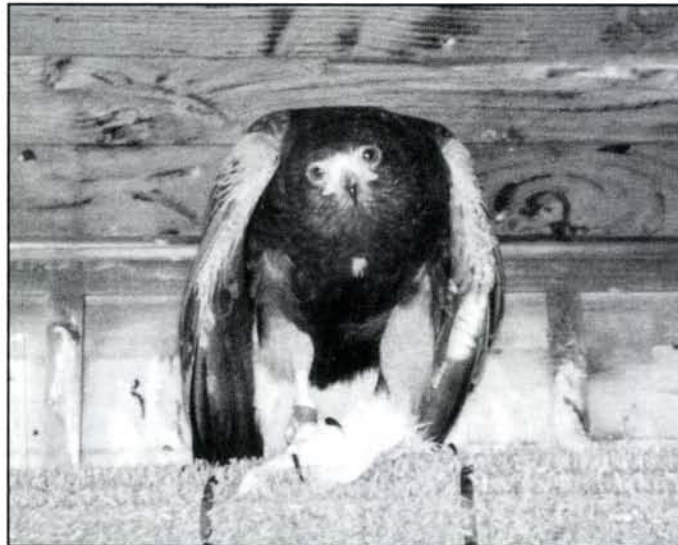
HARRY HARRIS

I find myself looking at a PC screen, with a lump in my throat and a numb brain, trying to find a way to tell the readers of how I came to lose my hawk, only to find him 24 hours later, dead in a rabbit hole.

Harry, my 18 month old Harris' was, I suppose, an average bird. He was parent reared in a seclusion aviary and, as a result, was initially quiet and quite jumpy. If memory serves me correctly, it took 20 days of manning before he would step from his perch to the fist for a titbit. Before this he would bate away each time I approached him. During this time he fed on the fist and his manners were fine, no mantling and no bating. On the 21st day however, he allowed me to pick him up without bating. Later that day he jumped the leash length and on the next came 4 or 5 times some 50 yards on the creance. I would like to mention here that his weight was constant during this time. Two things happened at this point, I gained his trust and he gained a partner. He started chatting, only to stop when he was hunting or if I was at work. Whenever I opened the bedroom curtains in the morning there would be a reassuring hello from the aviary and then a regular reminder until I got my act together and took him out.

Living on a hillside in wet and windy Snowdonia is not normally conducive to a high rabbit population. Hence some time ago I sat down with my mentor and mate Ian, over a cup of coffee, and he reckoned that a plentiful supply of rooks and crows, 'pies and gulls were just waiting to be flown. Corvids are easily spooked when you try to approach them in a field, so a different approach was required. I remember hearing of a Hungarian falconer using a push bike to approach

unsuspecting prey with his goshawk on his fist, ready to pounce. I ordered a male Harris, thinking that his small size, long reach and natural tolerance would be advantageous for what I had in mind. Next we substituted the bike with a car to aid our long distance searching. Last season, his



one of his left toes was broken short of the knuckle. After a visit to the vets I was assured he would heal OK but his hunting was over for the season, so I put him up for the moult and to give him time to heal properly.

A long summer passed before I picked him up, eager to carry on where we left off. Over the summer we had secured permission to fly corvids on farmland that is literally woven with private disused roads, left over from the 2nd World War. This meant that we could stalk our quarry in the car. It also made hawk-ing possible in much poorer weather. I would like to say that we had a happy ending, but that is not the case. Yes, the plan worked and in his first week, and five outings, he caught six rooks and

first, Harry caught six bunnies in standard tradition and four crows, three rooks, a magpie and a moorhen. All these were caught in two weeks in January and then he ended his season rather abruptly. He had an excellent flight at a Herring Gull, which was caught and dispatched. Unfortunately in the process

crow. Although it is true to say we were able to get closer, four of these were caught in the air as his confidence and skill were, by now, growing.

Last Sunday he gave chase to a rabbit I had not seen and as he stooped behind a collapsed stone wall, I remember hearing a thud and then silence. When I went over to the point where I last saw him, there was nothing except a bunny hole. I could not see or hear anything in or around the hole and assumed, quite wrongly, that he must have flown on along the wall, out of sight. After some ten minutes of calling, and no signal from the

telemetry, I came to the conclusion that he was not about, or that the telemetry had developed a fault, as he normally came instantly when called. In the same field as I lost Harry, I found a wounded rabbit, which I dispatched, an examination confirmed that Harry had indeed caught it, but where was he now?

The painful truth was that Harry had caught the rabbit and it had dragged him into an underground drainage channel. What I thought was a small rabbit hole was actually a 50-yard drain, colonised by rabbits, with no visible clues as to its existence or size. Where the channel came to an end, all one could see was an overgrown bolt hole, and it was here, after a sleepless night, that I was to dig him out the following lunchtime. Harry must have been under my feet all the time, yet I didn't know, nor did I know I was to lose him to a drain that I never knew existed. This, incidentally, was in a field behind our house, where I have flown birds for the last three years. On talking to members of the Welsh Hawking Club I discovered that hawks entering rabbit buries is by no means an uncommon occurrence. Hawks, unfortunately favour going forward rather than back, so as not to ruffle their feathers. The result is that the hawk carries on further down the warren, usually to get stuck and die. Harry made his way 50 yards along the channel only reach a bolt hole that was too small for him to escape through. He died over night from hypothermia.

The moral of my story is:

- 1 Holes aren't always as small as they appear.
- 2 VHF transmitters don't work very well underground, particularly when wet.
3. Telemetry is a bonus but should not be a substitute for common sense.

It may be a good idea to manufacture something along the lines of a miniature ferret finder, thus making underground location at close range, at least a possibility. I hope my misfortune will be of assistance to others and that fewer hawks will be lost.

Brian Jones

Raptors in Israel

Text & Pictures by Philip Snow

The LEVANT SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter brevipes*) is one of the six commonest raptorial migrants, with nearly 50,000 recorded in mid-April 1987. This slightly mysterious, dark-eyed hawk, roosts in huge numbers by, and north of, Eilat, often hunting the kibbutz fields until the air warms up; before heading north for s.e. Europe, often at very high altitudes. The SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) only migrates in small, but regular numbers (max 456, spring 1983), but is a fairly widespread winter visitor and breeder, around agricultural and forested areas. The second rarest accipiter is the mighty GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) with a seasonal maximum of only six in autumn 1980, and just one record of the more tropical SHIKRA (*Accipiter badius*) exists. 'STEPPE' BUZZARDS (*Buteo b. vulpinus*) are the second commonest spring migrant, with 465,000 recorded. In March/April 1986, of this slightly, smaller, rusty-tailed, eastern buzzard. Claimed by some to be a full species, it nevertheless integrates with the nominate western race, *Buteo buteo*, which, by contrast, winters here (396 counted in winter 1988). They could also be confused with the larger LONG LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo rufinus*), a desert resident, and uncommon passage migrant which sometimes joins the flocks of Steppe Buzzards (All three species have a bewilderingly wide variety of colour forms). Finally, just two ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARDS (*Buteo lagopus*) have been seen in the winter. Israel sees an impressive number and variety of eagles, but the LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE (*Aquila pomarina*) is the most common passage eagle in the near east, 141,000 clocked in the late 80's. Nevertheless, this broad-winged eagle of lush and forested eastern Europe, is outnumbered near Eilat by the not dissimilar STEPPE EAGLE (*Aquila nipensis*) (75,000 counted here alone in spring 1985) en-route to the steppe and semi deserts of

old Russia. Steppe Eagles also overwinter in small numbers, and are one of the earliest migrants, as are IMPERIAL EAGLES (*Aquila heliaca*) (95 counted on passage in spring 1977). The eastern Imperial is an impressive bird of open country, perching prominently on pylon or tree, and I saw them at Eilat's kibbutz fields, Yotvata and Beersheva, where they regularly winter. GOLDEN EAGLES (*Aquila chrysaetos*), are locally not uncommon, with up to three pairs in the Negev. BONELLIS EAGLE (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*) and SPOTTED EAGLE (*Aquila clanga*) are both rare migrants, although a pair of Bonelli's nest near Eilat, and a maximum count of 117 wintering Spotted has been recorded, mainly in the centre and north of Israel; by wetlands like Hula. The BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*), almost equally represented by light and dark morphs, is another fairly uncommon passage migrant and winterer, with a peak of 95 passing in Spring 1977, and eight wintering in 1988. Two other African eagles are possible near Eilat, as a couple of pairs of the beautiful VERREAUXS EAGLE (*Aquila verreauxi*) breed in the Sinai mountains, around the Egyptian border. Their favourite prey, the Rock Hyrax, are also found here, and another eagle of the African Savannah, the BATALEUR (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) has half a dozen winter records from the 80's. Finally the SHORT-TOED EAGLE (*Circaetus gallicus*) breeds and winters in small numbers, whilst a peak of 345 individuals were counted passing in Spring 1985. Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) are scarce migrants and winter visitors, but a pair breed in the Sinai desert, near Eilat, and are regularly seen at the salt pans. No fewer than eleven falcon species are recorded in Israel, with six breeding. These spectacular birds are nowhere common, apart possibly from the KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*), of which 298 were observed, making a clear migratory pattern with other raptors, in

autumn 1980. They are also resident, sometimes making migratory status unclear, and the daintier, LESSER KESTREL (*Falco naumanni*) also summers and breeds. Likewise the HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) is a scarce migrant and breeder, but the pretty RED FOOTED FALCON (*Falco vespertinus*) is rarer, with a maximum of eight seen in one day at Eilat, in May 1982. Dashing little MERLINS (*Falco columbarius*) are notoriously difficult to census, but a top count of 83 wintering birds was arrived at in 1986, mainly in the Negev and the Hula, at which last site they roost communally. Of the remaining six falcons, three are resident breeders: all are glorious! The subtly beautiful SOOTY FALCON (*Falco concolor*) is almost wholly near eastern, confined to coral islands and desert cliffs, and about six pairs breed near Eilat. Little is really known about these extremely graceful bird eating falcons, which, like the similar ELEANORAS FALCON (*Falco eleonorae*) breeds in late summer, feeding young on abundant migrants like bee-eaters and warblers, and a max of 21 Eleonoras have been counted in spring '86, some migrating with Sooties. Both LANNER (*Falco biarmicus*) and SAKER (*Falco cherrug*) winter, mainly in the prey rich farmlands of the western Negev, where huge numbers of sandgrouse and passerines also overwinter. An excellent place to watch them, and many other raptors, is around the pylons which cross the road just below Kibbutz Urin, west of Beersheva. Identification of both can be somewhat difficult, and confused further by different ages and races of Lanner. The local resident race 'tanypterus' of Lanner Falcon, is midway between the pale N. African race 'erlangeri', and the somewhat larger and darker European and Turkish 'feldegii' race. Of course, in practice, precise views and plumages are not always forthcoming! Estimates of overwintering and population size are vague. In 1988, six each of both Lanner and Saker were adjudged win-

tering, with two Lanners resident, and one to four migratory Saker usually pass through each spring. This leaves the PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus*) and the BARBARY FALCON (*Falco pelegrinoides*), thought by some to be only a race of the former; nesting from Asia across N Africa to Morocco. Barbarys are smaller, and appear even more agile and faster than Peregrines, but share their habits and prey preferences, with the only real difference being plumage. Juvenile male Barbarys can be very reddish brown, female's paler buff, and adults have very pale rufous under-parts, conspicuous rusty napes and paler bluish backs. They are regular breeders near Eilat, (as are Lanners), but Peregrines are only rare migrants in Israel, mainly in the north, and of the nominate race 'peregrinus'. The northern race 'calidus' was represented by only two specimens, and one of the Mediterranean race 'brookei', in the 43 counted in winter 1988. Unfortunately, I have hardly any space to deal with the owls, but of the eight palearctic species represented, two are of special note. The HUMES' TAWNY OWL is a smaller, paler desert tawny with reddish eyes and only local distribution around wadis and palm groves, whilst the greyish STRIPATED SCOPS OWL is a more eastern species, rare here and a partial migrant. Well, a very impressive roster of birds of prey, and it seems they are indeed fortunate to pass through, or live, in a country that largely cares for them. Because such huge numbers of raptors (and storks and pelicans etc.) migrate through their highly strategical airspace, the Israeli's are careful not to fly near the flocks, (for both their sakes) and little direct persecution faces them in this vital channel between north and south. Secondary poisoning from insecticides and rodenticides formally killed large numbers of wintering raptors, but education, and the Israel Nature Reserves Authority and Society for the Protection of Nature, are doing their best, and improvements have been seen. As conditions in both their African wintering grounds and palearctic breeding grounds largely worsen, it is doubly fortunate and apt that these seminal biblical lands should protect them, where ancient Hebrew scriptures first spoke of the wonders of migration, thousands of years ago.

Western Red footed Falcon. ad ♀ Rare migrant.



They all Regularly catch insects on the wing.

The glorious Barbary Falcon is thought by some to be merely a race of peregrine, but whatever its classification it is a striking pale falcon, found in mountainous desert regions & around towns & cultivations, like Eilat. Only its stronger moustache & shorter tail tell it from the Lanner, found in similar terrain here, when seen briefly.

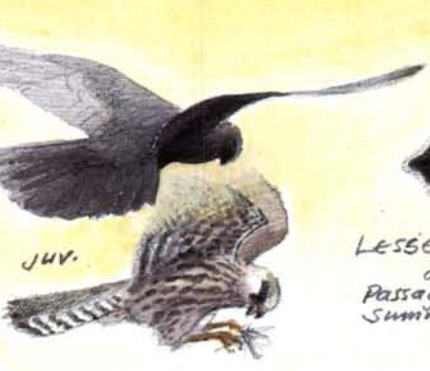


juvenile / 1st yr Barbary Falcon - soft parts turn yellow faster than juvenile Peregrines.

RAPTORS IN ISRAEL

PART 3 PHILIP SNOW

Falcons are represented by 11 species here, if we 'split' the Barbary from the Peregrine. Peregrines are found in Israel in three species, mainly the nominate race 'peregrinus'. About 20 records of northern race 'calidus', & occasional mediterranean 'brookei' are seen.



Lesser Kestrel. ad. ♂ Passage & Summers



Kestrel. ad. ♂ Resident & passage.



Hobby. ad ♂ Passage & summer.



Barbary juv/imm. finer streaking than Peregrine. Overall more rufous, with diagnostic 'clean' cheek.

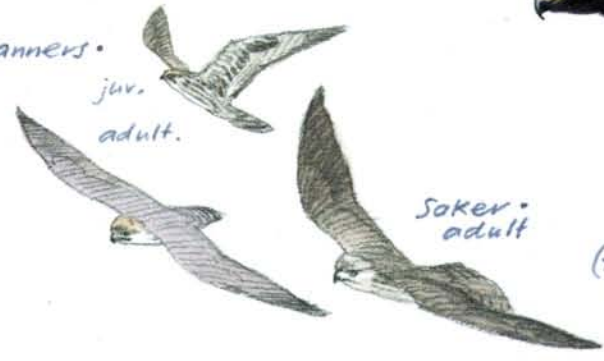
Strong desert light can render Barbary & Lanner very pale, but Barbary usually have strong rufous wash to underparts.

Sooty Falcon. ad.
 A handsome breed on the
 desert cliffs north of Eilat.
 Elsewhere in the Red Sea
 it nests on coral islets,
 feeding on small
 migrant birds.
 Breeds sept; like Eleonoras.



Lanners.

juv.
 adult.



Saker.
 adult

Eleonoras Falcon. Dark
 (top) & light phase adults
 both show contrasting &
 'two toned' wing plumage.
 A few migrate with the
 Sooty Falcons past the
 town of Eilat in spring.
 Sootys tend to appear
 grey // dark whereas
 Eleonoras look
 brown // dark.

Sooty Falcon. juv.
 Between Hobby &
 Eleonoras in size,
 but overall juvs. are
 darker, more buff
 than Hobby, less
 two toned than
 Eleonoras.



Saker. juv. hunting
 Skylarks, w. Negev.



adult
 Sooty Falcon.



adult
 Saker.

Lanner's
 primary
 coverts are
 usually

strongly
 marked
 - like Barbaries, but generally paler

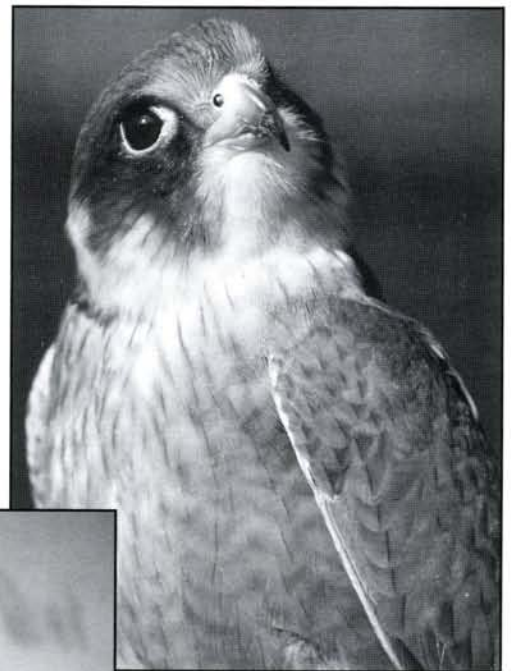
adult Lanner on
 Sand Partridge.



The handsome Lanner is another desert falcon found in Israel, smaller paler resident
 race 'tanypterus' mainly; with migratory sub species 'feldeggi' recorded. The western
 Negev is a good place to see them in winter, alongside sakers & many other raptors.
 Sakers are rarer, migrants & wintering, but confusion between the two species
 is common. Both hunt the massive flocks of sand grouse & larks, & will take such
 prey as rodents & reptiles. Lanners frequently hunt in pairs around Eilat.

10/85 - P. Snow ©

Falconry & Rehabilitation



↑ Female Little Falcon
(Australian Hobby)
← Juvenile, Female,
Brown Goshawk



THE CONNECTION

Putting rehabilitation into perspective before bringing falconry techniques into the argument is perhaps prudent.

Rehabilitating is, for all intents and purposes, the task of returning an animal into a wild situation with a good, if not excellent chance, of survival

The process used to achieve that objective should be the most appropriate in that circumstance. In addition when dealing with birds of prey, the fact that they are predators should be taken into account. Predators do not lead simple lives, the complexity is astounding - they have to learn how to find food, then catch it, using methods that are both efficient and effective.

The treatment of injuries, or the hand rearing of orphaned raptors is simply a part of rehabilitation. It is by no means the primary component of rehabilitation (although very important nonetheless). The preparation for release is the most important component of rehabilitation. In some cases this can take place with very little effort (in situations where Rest and recovery are the only requirements). In other cases, the process of preparation requires more effort.

Several factors influence the release process:

- a. Age of the bird.
- b. Injury type.
- c. Feather condition.
- d. Species involved.
- e. Time of year.
- f. Time spent in captivity.

Or in the case of orphaned individuals or sibling groups:

- a. Age of the bird(s)
- b. Species.
- c. Feather condition.
- d. Hand rearing method used.
- e. Presence of injuries.

Another point to take into consideration is the objective of the rehabilitator. Is it enough simply to release a bird, hope for the best and rely on the 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' attitude, or, as in most cases, here in Australia, the rehabilitator works towards the release and forgets the post release aspect of rehabilitation?

To be pedantic for a moment. The rehabilitation of birds of prey should aim to release a raptor of a quality and standard that would allow it to survive and eventually contribute to the breeding population. Releasing a raptor of a quality and standard that is well below that of a wild raptor is not acceptable.

The understanding of how a raptor finds and catches its food has a direct bearing on the release method employed thus rehabilitators must know what they are dealing with. Falconry has little value if the person using it has little or no knowledge as to how a raptor functions, the same can be said of using aviaries. When assessing a raptor, either by flying it

free or by using an aviary, knowing what to look for becomes vital. A rehabilitator cannot assess a raptor if he or she has nothing to compare it with or lacks the experience on which to base these comparisons. The raptors status as a predator should no be overlooked, regardless of the species involved. The fact remains that, all birds of prey are put under enormous selection pressures and no raptor is born with the experience that makes hunting and finding food easy. Rehabilitation must take into account the raptors' need to be able to forage efficiently, then catch its food. Recreational falconry will help put this into perspective, if for no other reason than to illustrate just how difficult hunting actually is.

It has been pointed out (F & RCM Summer Edition, article entitled Raptor Rehabilitation - Does it need Falconry?) that raptors used in a controlled situation (hunting) often have an unfair advantage over their prey. If this is the case (in some situations this may be so), why are the success rates so low when the bird is

- a. Unfit
- b. Inexperienced

When prey is not caught in these situations, the falconer feeds the raptor anyway.

If the situation is reversed and the raptor is in a wild environment, it is inexperienced, unfit and suffering from a flight deficit (has no advantage over its prey), what chance does it have of catching food? Unsuccessful hunting sorties are energy expensive and, in time, through repeated squandering of those energy resources, the bird becomes incapacitated

through an energy deficit. Experience teaches birds of prey when to attempt to hunt and when not to. Experience teaches a raptor the best way to approach its prey and where to look for it. Using an aviary does not, unfortunately, provide the raptor with the opportunity to learn these basic survival skills.

It is worth pointing out that young birds are being used as an example here. Adult birds brought in with injuries have proved their survival skills simply by being adult. We certainly cannot teach them how to hunt, but we can assess their ability to hunt after having recovered from an injury.

It was mentioned (in the article mentioned previously) that it is pointless having a bird that can catch food but can't find it. The reverse is also true, it is pointless having a bird that can find food but can't catch it. Rehabilitation does not only deal with the treatment of injuries - it deals with a whole conglomeration of situations, ranging from injured adults, injured fledglings, orphans and starving juveniles. Due to the whole range of scenarios restricting rehabilitation to traditional hacking or aviary convalescence is impossible.

Falconry in rehabilitation is not solely about the use of lure or glove, and indeed, falconry techniques are just that, techniques. The training of a bird using falconry as a basis, which in turn allows the rehabilitator to increase or decrease the workload placed upon the bird prior to release.

A goshawk that follows the rehabilitator for three or maybe four kilometres certainly receives significantly more aerobic exercise than flying up and down an aviary.

The simple understanding of what a raptor is and how it functions is undoubtedly a vital component of rehabilitation. Falconry techniques in rehabilitation and falconry in a recreational sense must be kept separated if we are to keep a firm objective in mind when rehabilitating birds of prey.

Richard Naisbitt - Melbourne Australia

Raptalk

RAPTOR REHABILITATION CARE OF THE CERE BEAK AND PLUMAGE NEIL FORBES MRCVS

Wild injured birds may be taken into captivity in order to tend their injuries so long as they are released as soon as they are fit for survival back in the wild. It is of crucial importance that wild casualty birds, arriving in captivity are prevented from causing themselves further trauma whilst in care, which would delay or prevent their eventual release.

Wild birds are by their nature wild, and should remain so during rehabilitation, unless training and flying using traditional falconry techniques is necessary for their successful release. Wild birds are easily startled and frightened (in particular Accipiters), handling techniques and aviary design must prevent further damage.

Common problems that arise are considered individually below:-

Cere: Startled birds often fly into wire or mesh netting. Aviary sides should be designed to avoid this. Either solid sided aviaries may be used, alternatively hessian or fine nylon netting should be attached to or hung inside link fencing, this presents a visually solid barrier, such that the bird turns away from the side before hitting it.

Cere and Head: If aviary roofs are constructed of nylon or wire netting, frightened birds will often fly across the aviary, scalping themselves in the process. This is avoided by having a solid roof, or placing numerous battens (1-2" sq.) across the roof of the aviary (1.5 - 2" apart) parallel with each other, this will put the bird off flying against the roof.

Beak: As all falconers will be aware, raptors in the wild pull on their food, which is often tough and fibrous. This

process leads to natural wear and break-ages of the beak, in order that over growth is prevented. Wild birds in captivity, eating a soft diet of day old chicks, do not benefit from such wear, their beaks therefore often become over long. Cracks may then develop in unnatural positions or directions, which may then delay or prevent release.

Aviary and mews design must allow complete and solid barriers between birds which might otherwise come into contact with each other. Small holes between such partitions, will be investigated by curious birds, often with their beak, similarly inquisitive birds on the other side of the partition may grab and remove any visible part of the other bird. The occasional conclusion is a bird with no top beak, furthermore if the germinal epithelium, from which the beak grows has become damaged, then that beak may not be replaced. That bird is then left to eat soft, cut up food for the rest of its days, or be euthanased.

Catching Birds: Any aviary birds, but especially rehabilitation birds, should be caught from the aviary, either after dark using a torch (not effective for diurnal species) or by day using a long reach fishermans landing net, with a padded rim and additional material in the net itself. In this way as the bird makes its first pass, it may be caught. When caught, it clenches its talons, grasping the padded net, rather than piercing its own feet. Considerable damage is caused to birds by chasing them around an aviary prior to catching them. Such birds may die of shock. Eventually, as the keeper grabs the bird as it flies past the frequent result is a handful of tail or primary feathers and a bird which keeps going.

Feathers: In particular, if a bird requires a degree of nursing or close confinement, tail and primary feather damage

may occur. This should be avoided by providing a suitable perch, such that the birds primaries and deck feathers are kept as well away from the ground as possible. A plastic, paper or cardboard sheath should be fitted around the deck feathers to prevent damage to them. At its simplest address labels with water soluble glue, may be applied to the tail, or plastic of varying thickness applied around it, being attached to a tail mount, with a cable tie around the central deck feathers, or with tape around all the feathers. The bird should not be subjected to an unnatural length of daylight, (e.g. by keeping electric lights on), as this can delay or prevent a natural moult. Feathers damaged by oil (petroleum), or fulmar vomit, should be washed repeatedly with warm water and green detergent (eg Fairy Liquid). In the case of birds affected by fulmar oil, a clean moult will generally be required prior to a successful release. In cases where a birds release is prevented on account of its poor plumage then thyroid hormone or sex hormone injections may, on occasions be effective in stimulating a moult. Advice should be sought from your veterinary surgeon.

Parasites: Great care should be taken to maintain hygienic rehabilitation accommodation. Extreme feather damage can arise in birds which are affected by ecto-parasites. The latter are varied, some living only on the host, others such as the Red Poultry Mite (*Dermanyssus gallinae*), which live off the bird, and are generally only found on the bird at night, when they come to feed. In the latter case, not only should the bird be treated. But the environment ie. the aviary/mews will require treatment as well. Rehabilitation accommodation should be treated for ecto-parasites between birds, and incoming casualties should be checked and if necessary treated for ecto-parasites.

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RAPTOR RESCUE

The Tale of

By Paul Beecroft

DIPPY

On a cold October night in 1986 I was on patrol in a Panda car in one of the villages that are part of my police area. I recall that I was just returning to the station from an alarm activation at a factory, with thoughts of going home to bed. It was about 1.30 in the morning and I had just driven into a sweeping left-hand bend on a country road. I was travelling about 45 miles per hour and as I came out of the bend I saw her laying in the road directly in my path of travel. I knew it was a bird and my first impression from the quick glimpse I had was that it was a female Mallard. There was no time to stop or move over so I did the only thing I could. That was to drive the car gently over her and hope for the best. I did exactly that. There was no 'clunk' from the underneath of the car. I then stopped, rather quickly, in the middle of the road I put the flashing blue light on for safety (the bird's of course), and ran back to the

'duck'. It was not a duck however, but a Tawny Owl, (I have since purchased a book on bird identification and I'm getting quite good at it now) and it was alive. It was spread eagled. With the right wing going up and down in the wind It's head was slightly off the ground and it was looking up at me. There were no warning clicks and no threat directed at me. No resistance was offered when I picked it up and carried it back to the car. I did notice though, how light in weight the bird appeared. At the station I gave her a quick examination and found grazing to the left leg and a broken talon. Although light in weight she appeared to be in good health and was quite plump. She was, however, the smallest Tawny Owl I had ever seen, a good 1/3 less in size than a normal Tawny Owl. Having no suitable place to put her I ended up placing her on the back of a chair where she sat quite happily watching everything I did. After about ten minutes I heard her rouse. I then watched her lean

silently forward and release some perfectly healthy mutes all over the station carpet.

I took her home, cut up a mouse, and she readily took small pieces from tweezers. She was obviously not in shock. I then boxed her overnight. The following day the vet checked her. There were no other injuries but upon examination her bone structure appeared to be very soft and a course of calcium was prescribed.

I returned home and kept her under observation. To begin with I kept her in the house where it was warm, she disliked being boxed and was continually crashing about trying to get out, so I rigged up a perch in the kitchen and she sat on this day after day quite happily. She watched everything with interest and never became alarmed at any noise or movement. There was no fear of dogs or other animals. She behaved like an imprint but she never uttered a sound at any time.

The only problem I had was feeding her. She would not feed herself. Mice would be left for her but she would ignore them and starve. She would only feed when it was offered to her and mice would then go down whole. This went on for some time before she finally got the idea and started feeding on her own. She was a complete "dipstick" and ended up with the name of Dippy.

I knew that she couldn't stay in the kitchen forever and once she started feeding I moved her to the hospital quarters where she stayed for a few days. There was no change in

her attitude and I decided it was time for a try out in an aviary. The only one I had available at the time was already occupied by another Tawny Owl that was an imprint. I had my doubts, but I thought it was worth a try. I put Dippy in and sat back and watched. They watched each other for about five minutes then the imprint very slowly edged closer and closer towards Dippy. Finally they were side by side, touching. It was like little and large. For the first time she made some vocal noises and was twittering away. I checked them regularly during the next few days and they were either side by side or not far from each other. Dippy settled in very well and it was soon obvious that she loved a good bath. She would drench herself from head to toe, to the extent that she could not get off the ground, climbing obviously didn't occur to her. It was always necessary to pick her up and return her to a perch to dry off. Usually when I found her this way the imprint would be on the ground with her, chattering away as if she were being scolded for getting into this situation. Back on the perch she would dry off and also receive a lot of preening from the other owl. It was spectacular to watch. Although these owls are no longer with me, I know they are both alive and well, living together, to all intents and purposes, a perfectly matched pair. There is no sign of breeding and I don't think there ever will be and, in any event, I am not a hundred per cent sure of the gender. They appear happy enough though, and that is sufficient.



THE INFAMOUS INSULATOR HAWK

Mike Faircloth

We've all seen one, at one time or another ... the Insulator Hawk. This is written to dispel some of the myths, and lay out what few facts are known about this much misunderstood bird.

So little is written because there have been no known captures of this most elusive of the large hawks. Though frequently spotted by young trappers, none have ever been captured and trained.

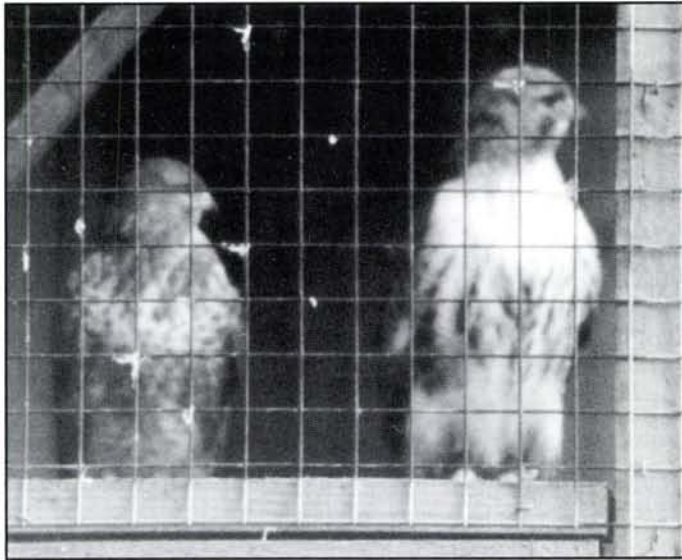
I remember in my early days, when trapping with friends, we would be looking for Redtails or Coopers and the cry would go up "There's one!!! ... oh, never mind, it's only an insulator".

The Insulator Hawk comes in shades varying from near black to almost white. All variations are widely distributed throughout its entire range. It is generally thought to be symmetrical in coloration, so that a dark insulator will appear dark from any approach angle. The Hawk is always seen from a great distance and close approach is virtually impossible. Not only is this bird shy, but it has an unusual fear of man-made sight enhancement devices. They have better eye sight than all other hawks and falcons, in that the slightest move to get binoculars or spotting scope will surely send them

fleeing with incredible quickness. Before the binoculars can be focused the bird will be gone. Left behind will be only the telephone pole and its various projections and paraphernalia. They have been found throughout all of North America and can be seen from the large metropolitan area, out into the worst stretches of desert. They are seldom to be seen in areas that have underground electric lines. In fact, they have a distinct preference for telephone poles. Sometimes an Insulator Hawk will be spotted in a tree or on a sign, but these always turn out to be Ravens, Redtails, or other more common birds. There is well-documented proof that apprentice falconers are better at locating the Insulator Hawk than Generals, Masters or even most bird watchers. The apprentice can spot them at the greatest distances needed for a careful approach. This ability seems to wane quickly, and second year apprentices are not as good at spotting as they were in their first year. By the time General is reached, the ability is almost completely gone.

A good first year apprentice is essential for anyone wishing to try and trap the Insulator Hawk. All trapping methods are equally effective since the Hawk disappears before getting close enough to set a trap. The Insulator Hawk has a cyclical population and their numbers have a sharp rise from November through to the end of January. This is curious since this is the time when other Raptor population are dropping. The number of Insulators spotted also mirrors closely the number of apprentice falconers that are trapping in any given year. So, armed with this information, anyone should be able to find that elusive and infamous raptor... the Insulator Hawk!

A 'TAIL' OF BUTEOS



The parent birds

The first hawk I had ever really taken an interest in was Holly, a Redtailed Hawk, then owned by my Father-in-law. I was told to get a common buzzard if I wanted to start falconry as they are a little more forgiving if you make a mistake. So around August 1991 I went to get Jake, a common buzzard, he was 14 months old when I got him. I trained and flew him and after about 12 months my father-in-law offered me Holly as he knew how much I liked her. I built an aviary for her, next to Jakes'. After a few months Jake started acting like a love sick chicken, clucking and poking food through a hole in the thick netting which separated the two pens. After a few weeks they had pulled more netting away

from the wire and started preening each other through the wire. I told a few friends about their antics as it was quite funny to see Jake running round the floor trying to find things to please Holly. After a few months of this I decided to open the door between the two pens. Jake flew in to Holly and sat beside her. For a few days I watched, ready to run and get Jake out if Holly turned on him. A couple of times I ran up to the pen thinking Holly had hurt Jake only to find she had thumped him with closed talons to let him know she is the boss, and he has to wait for her to finish feeding before he can have his fill. That first year they built about three nests but there were no eggs laid. When

Jake and Holly had finished moulting that year I took them out and flew them through the season.

I put them together again in the Spring and they copulated several times and started nest building. I could only watch and wait. I noticed Holly was sitting on the nest all the time so I decided to take a look. I went in and Holly sat tight, Jake got a bit agitated and squawked at me. Holly still sat on the nest, I put my hand under her breast, talking to her, and managed to get her to stand. To my delight there was one egg. After nine days she had laid three eggs. Now all I could do was wait and see if they hatched. One day I saw egg shell hanging from the nest and I went to check Holly, she moved over and there it was, a small, creamy coloured chick. Two days later the second chick hatched but it died. The third egg never hatched. The chick, we called him Lucky, grew well. He had his mothers' markings and strength. Slightly bigger than a buzzard and aggressive like a Redtail. I did

not keep Lucky.

Last year (1994) Holly laid four eggs, three hatched, two on the same day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The third egg hatched three days later. The two older chicks would not let the third chick feed so we had to remove it from the nest. It was three days old and weighed just two ounces. We fed her for a couple of days and when I put her back she weighed six ounces. Now I could only hope Holly would not reject her. She didn't. When the two older chicks reached ten days I decided I must go in and ring them, I weighed them all at the same time. The largest chick at 10 days weighed 11b 2oz. The second chick at 10 days weighed 12oz, and the third chick at 7 days weighed 11oz. When the third chick was ten days old, she was ringed and by this time she weighed 11b. All the chicks grew well. They are like Redtails, once you have manded and trained them they are more than capable of taking rabbits and squirrels, depending on the trainers.



The chick at three days old

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A Highland Meeting

Andrew Knowles-Brown

The Scottish Hawking Club's latest 2/4 day meet was held at Granttown-on-Spey this year. Situated at a traditional highland estate, the majority of us stayed in the private home of the estate laird. This beautifully appointed lodge, with its sporting trophies and prints adorning the walls was the very epitome of a bygone era, and was well appreciated by all.

This area of Scotland is blessed with a particularly good abundance of quarry and this was certainly the case here. We were able to pursue blue hare, rabbits, pheasant and grouse. The only one not caught was the wily grouse, although some came a feather's width from being in the bag. The groups were split in the normal way, with a choice of low ground hawking, mainly rabbits and pheasant, mid ground hawking for rabbit, pheasant and a few blue hare, the high ground for Eagles and the moor for Longwings. People changed groups depending on what they wanted. On Friday I went to the mid-ground with Paul Burns, his female Redtail and my Golden Eagle to have a go at the hares. Paul flew first and we walked up a small basin of heather at the base of the hill. While he was getting height, a few hares flushed above him, heading straight up the hill and not giving his bird a chance. A hare was spotted below entering a deep patch of heather. This was walked through, but no sign of the hare. Paul came down and the moment he got below where the hare had crept in, it flushed behind. A quick shout and the Redtail had spotted it, with a rapid chase, she nailed it. Her first blue hare. After congratulations we continued with a few more slips but these hares knew what it was all about and evaded her, until one slip, when she seemed to overshoot her target, came back to the hill in a wide arc and landed on a patch of freshly burnt heather. She sat, waiting, the hare lolloped upwards, through the deep heather and emerged a foot in front of the Redtail so all she had to do was jump on it. No 2, a very foolish hare indeed, was in the bag. Paul fed her up and we moved on to higher ground to fly the Eagle. There was a good breeze so things looked promising. He was cast off and soon made height and hares started to move. He was slightly choosy about which ones to go for, but he soon had four in the bag. He had, by this



Paul Burns' female Redtail on her first Blue Hare

The Lodge



time, seen quite a few head over the ridge and this is where he concentrated his efforts. He stooped down at a hare and didn't reappear, so I assumed he had made another kill, but when I got there he was nowhere to be seen. The telemetry revealed him down in the valley bottom, so I headed down to get him. The law of Murphy was at work here and as soon as I got down he found lift on the opposite ridge, got height, ignored my juicy dead hare, flew high over my head back up to where we had been, and caught another hare. It took 30 minutes to struggle up to him, but he was already gorged. That was my flying over for today, and also for tomorrow. We headed back to the lodge to meet new arrivals and have some refreshments. Saturday saw another bright and breezy day, after overnight rain. I went out with the low-ground group, made up of all Harris Hawks. After the initial coyness of who goes first, things soon got into a good

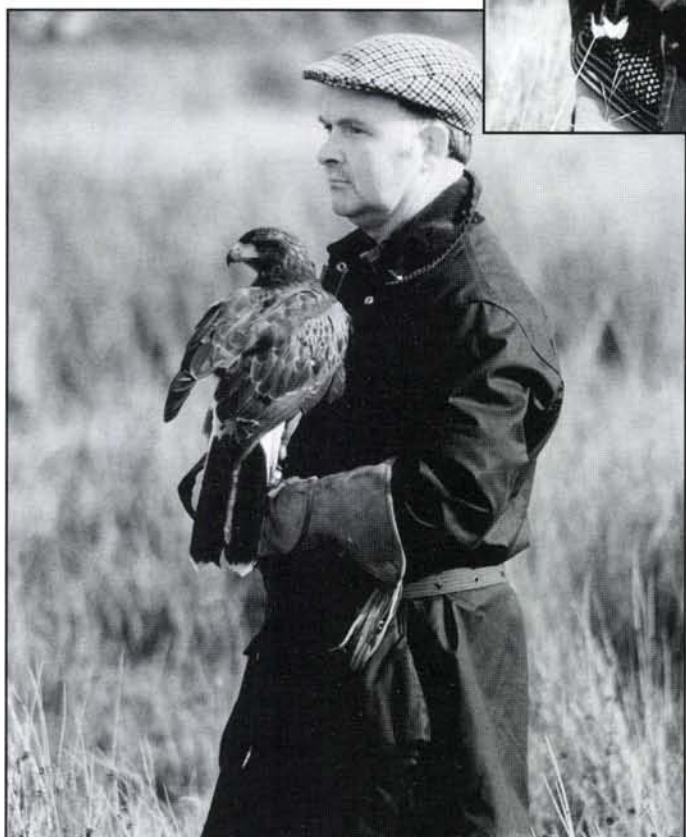
The Longwinger's, (L) Douglas Collins & Frank McCulloch (R)



Above: One of the keepers with Graham Whiting

*Right: Andy Stewart (L)
Stewart Stevens (R)*

Below: John Graham with his young Female Harris Hawk



rhythm as there was an abundance of rabbits, above ground in the thick rushes. There were pheasants too, but with this being a 'no dog' group it was hard to know when they were going to flush. All the birds handled themselves well and a good number of bunnies were put in the bag, with some notable flights. John Graham's first bird, a young, female, he had only had for six weeks, showed particular good form, taking good, long fast slips, and was very unlucky not to connect with a rabbit. I understand on the Sunday she showed the same good style and was rewarded with a well-taken rabbit, Congratulations John. The next flight was a rare account and the falconer concerned wishes to remain anonymous as he didn't have the correct quarry licence, but he still showed pride in his bird's feat. We were moving through some rushes when two rabbits were spotted up ahead. His Harris took off, straight as an arrow and made a classic, wings-closed stoop into cover binding admirably to - a cow pat. The pat didn't stand a chance, it had tried to slip out sideways but the bird had its measure and gave no quarter. Being of an extremely fresh nature there was no need to penetrate the crust first and its' demise was instantaneous. This first will go down in the annals of time and I'm sure will be recounted whenever we have a gathering. In the afternoon I went out with the Longwings, we were taken to a nice moor which showed that quite a lot of birds had been present very recently, but we were only able to get a few points, and even these birds were very jumpy. We later saw a hen Harrier quartering, which was probably the cause of the missing grouse. As to the grouse we flew, conditions always favoured them and no kills were made.

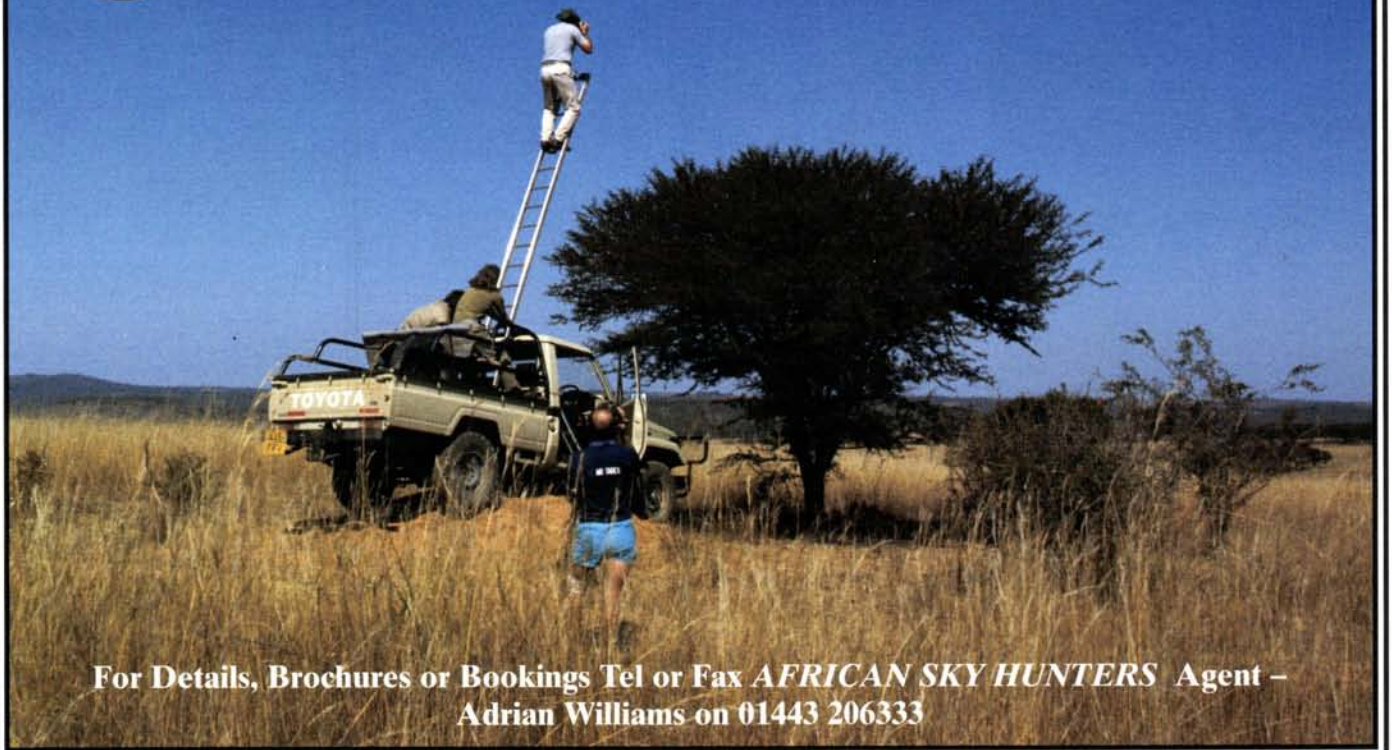
Sunday saw weather conditions much the same and I took my Eagle out, along with Jim MacDonell's Black Eagle. One of the Longwings

came along, just in case. We intended to fly the Eagles first but when we stopped at our appointed hill we could see and hear grouse, so Dougie Collins, with little persuasion, flew his Gyr hybrid. We sneaked up close to where three grouse had put in and his bird was put up. As soon as it left Dougie's fist a covey of eight birds got up below, close to the cars and the falcon set off, in pursuit mode. He was quickly retrieved and another try at the three grouse was made, he was put up and quickly made a good pitch. The birds were flushed and he plummeted, picking out the back bird. He came in from behind to bind underneath, but the grouse jinxed at the last minute and he overshot taking on the next bird. This grouse knew the score and immediately dumped into a thick juniper-filled gully, the falcon remade his pitch and we reflushed, but this was a grouse that was not going to put itself at risk and it immediately put down again. He was flown once more, later on, but a hare was flushed by mistake. He was brought down, with a grouse rising just as he broke into the lure, Murphy's law again. The Eagles were flown in between falcon flights, with both birds putting in some good flights and one hare for the bag. This was all the hawking I saw over the four days, but the other groups had an equally enjoyable time, with plenty of good hawking had by all. The total bag for the weekend was 10 blue hares, 25 rabbits, 2 pheasants and 1 cow-pat. Many thanks to Lady Pauline and her keepers for ensuring we had plenty to fly at, and the lodge staff for their kindness and courtesy. Also to Bruno, who worked his heart out, being the only dog there. He got extra Bonios when he got home!



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Flying a Hybrid II

EDMUND. A GYR/PEREGRINE.



"Edmund" Gyr x Peregrine, with Red Grouse.
Sept 1995. Photograph: Eva-Maria Schultze

Like a continuing saga, the life of Edmund is intertwined with the seasons. You may recall when I first wrote about him (Spring '94 issue) that he proved to be a somewhat enigmatic character. Difficult to be sure whether his behaviour was characteristic of his hybrid status or whether this was idiosyncratic of him. In truth one can never be sure as many of these types of falcons would need to be flown to make a true assessment.

As with all our longwings, the brilliance of performance can really be seen when flying them at taxing quarry. In Edmund's case his year begins with Red grouse. The grouse populations on our moor have been in serious decline for the past 3 - 4 years. This has been typical of the pattern of events for many of the more northerly moors, especially those above the Dornoch Firth. In the first season of any young falcon it is vital to have quarry in numbers that can provide the ability to develop hunting skills. Footing, striking accuracy and pitch are all learnt when the falcon can focus on the lessons repeatedly. If the quarry is thin on the ground and difficult to locate then

clearly the young falcon may well develop a lack of concentration when out flying, and appear not to want to excel itself. In other words success breeds success.

Edmund was trained in these sparse years of grouse. For the falconers with young peregrines that were on the moor at the same time they found their lessons difficult to learn and consequently became indifferent flyers. To Edmund's credit, he has always found the thrill of flying an act of importance. When he is in a good degree of fitness, he can literally leave the fist in the horizontal plane, finding wind currents that will take him upwards. Reaching banks or small hills that have thermalling air and good updraft he can literally stand on his tail and sky upwards.

This dramatic to watch as it is usual to see this behaviour when stooping from a high pitch that has involved a strike. These 'throw ups' are spectacular. To see it in reverse when leaving the fist is breathtaking. Gyrs do this with comparative ease and this is when this part of his make up takes over.

Once in this mode he simply continues to climb to great heights and will come back over the falconer in this position for the flush. In this aspect he is at his brilliant best. However, as I had previously written, Edmund is made up of complex behaviour patterns and doesn't always function in the manner you're anticipating. He can be very much of an exhibitionist, and this aspect has never altered. Moorland fascinates him. The openness of it all, the chance to explore with ease, thermals, wind currents and simply how high he can get. On one of these excursions this season he had gone on 'walk about' somewhere into the vastness of the sky. The dog was firmly on point and had been for approx. five minutes. He was nowhere in sight. At this point in time it is not advisable to move as the grouse would immediately flush, knowing that the falcon was not in a position to be of any danger to them. Scanning the sky to its far horizons, I saw what appeared to be a speck, way up in the lighter part of the cloud. I was fairly sure it was him, yet no amount of glove swinging, then lure swinging, attracted the speck's attention. Convincing myself by now that it was it was a wild peregrine, a sense of irritation arose as I made a mental note that I would have to bring out the telemetry.

My concentration shifted from watching the dog, making sure she remained steady on point, to fidgeting with the telemetry quiver on my back. The focus of my attention now was simply to get a location on where Edmund could be. Bending down to unfold



Norma-Jean, with Mallard. 1995

Photograph: Diana Durman-Walters

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS.

THE SCOTTISH ACADEMY OF FALCONRY & RELATED STUDIES

the Yaggi, the grouse seized the moment to depart. The instant reaction from me was to curse the dog for prompting this action (which it hadn't) and watch the accelerating images of grouse getting smaller as they disappeared across the landscape.

Across my vision hurtled a single image which was taking the exact path of the grouse. Edmund (the speck) entered the picture. Although seemingly out of possible contact with the grouse he had already been cutting back across the sky when I had been taking out the telemetry. Somewhat out of position on the flush he had used height and speed to put himself back into contention with the covey. Gyr hybrids have a remarkable turn of speed and this can really only be gauged in situations such as this, when enormous ground needs to be gained.

Locked onto the covey, he simply overhauled them, singled out his bird and struck it hard into the heather. He reduced the usual roller-coaster throw-up to a bare minimum, and threw himself into the heather, where all remained quiet.

I waited for several minutes, just in case he hadn't caught his bird and was merely marking the place where he had last seen it, I waited for him to make a move. Upon walking towards him I was pleased to see he had his grouse.

Edmund can, of course, be very decisive about

his quarry. On difficult birds, such as mallard on a river, he realises that he must have a good height position to be in any form of contest with these when they are flushed. For a falcon that weighs 11b 91/2 oz, these require really a hard strike if they are to be taken. His half sister 'Norma-Jean' (Gyr x Saker Falcon) is far better equipped to tackle them. At 21b 10oz she is a powerhouse of speed and weight. However she too has moments when she demonstrates behavioural changes.

Whilst recently flying mallard she had moved off down river as falconer and beater were getting into position for the flush. Not paying too much attention, because she often cruised in this manner, then came back at her pitch, everyone was on standby. Looking for the falcon, it was pretty evident she was nowhere in sight. With her whiteness it is easy to spot her anywhere and she was simply nowhere to be seen.

The telemetry revealed that she had gone on down the river valley. Jumping into the car the signal suggested she was flying home. She was!

She flew on until she came to Bonchester hill, a local high landmark. Realising she had turned left instead of right (as you do) she turned into the twilight along our home valley. By now the weather was on the turn. Low mist with torrential rain and darkness meant that we pinpointed her location and would have to

leave it till first light to get her. she was, by now, only half a mile from the house, having flown six miles.

Early morning for Leonard was a climb onto Wolflee. A hill that never looks steep (approx. 2,000ft.) until you begin to climb. Every metre seems to pull at your lungs and calf muscles, but the signal was positive and she was somewhere near the top. As he homed into the signal, lying in front of him were the two deck feathers, with the transmitter, thumping away, lying perfectly in its mounting between them. The falcon had pulled them out. Those moments of inexplicable despair and exhaustion are overwhelming as everything you have shared with the falcon floods before you. There was nothing else for it but to swing the lure all the way to the bottom of the hill.

From somewhere she appeared. That imaginary sound of bells. It was her. A bit jumpy when she arrived, a little indifferent to the garnished lure, but breakfast was easy come-by. We speculated that the previous evening she had anticipated being fed and as the duck flush had taken longer than she was prepared to wait, she went back home where she knew food would be.

To date, flying these hybrids can be heart wrenching, heart stopping or mind blowing, but one thing it certainly never can be is boring!

REQUIEM

It was two years in October since Lorant de Bastyai left us. He was Hungarian by birth, the president of the Welsh Hawking Club, the honorary member of the Hungarian Hawking Section. Despite his long illness his falconer-friends were much moved by his death, it arrived unexpectedly. He achieved fame for himself in reorganising the working of Hungarian Falconry in the thirties, and he wrote several famous books and articles of lasting value for falconry.

He was an admirer of the Hungarian flat, open countryside, rich in small winged game, he had several hunting experiences in the Hungarian steppe; the Hortobagy.

The cruel winds of war forced him and his family to leave their native land of Hungary.

His new home gave him satisfaction and a new point to his life, he spoke about life in Great Britain always proudly and highly.

I visited him in his home in 1992, before the International

Hawking Meeting, organised on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Welsh Hawking Club. He enthused over his wish to come and see the Hortobagy, the scene of his last hunting experiences in Hungary. I promised him that I would accompany him there. The following year, 1993, there was an International Hawking Meeting in Hungary, but his health had deteriorated and he could be with us only in his thoughts.

Our hopes and plans scattered forever, the cruelty of fate has intervened... He did not live to see the publication of his book "All my life with hunting birds", in Hungarian, which is a huge success.

I am able to realise the dream of the sometime falconer having a good sense of humour only by drawing in pencil, but I hope dear Lorant you are receiving it even this way with much pleasure, there far away on the immense, boundless, green hunting fields...



By Zoltan Sellei.
Budapest.

QUESTION.....

Dear Falconers

I am dumfounded at the list of voting members of the new Hawk Board. Falconers', Autumn '95, P8. "Sixteen clubs registered an interest, and the ten clubs with the largest hawk-keeping membership...etc." The list contains six Clubs, one Association and two Groups with a real vested interest in keeping the sport going, and one very large cuckoo.

I am a member of two of the ten Clubs with a vote and a former member of another voting...Club? No, the Hawk and Owl Trust is NOT a club. It is a Registered Charity. So I would like to ask what it is doing taking a place which should have gone to one of the three 'leftover' bona fide hawking clubs? And how come the Hawk Board even considered it for one of these seats?

It will make no difference to the Hawk & Owl Trust if falconry carries on or not. They have nothing to lose. The members of all the other affiliated clubs and associations do. Why was preference not given to them by right?

The Hawk & Owl Trust has been involved with the Hawk Board as far back as my old copies of this magazine go. If it has to be represented, it belongs among the non-voting and consultative members. It should not occupy a seat which should have gone to a genuine hawking club. I really thought the Hawk Board had turned over a new leaf and I believed there was hope for the future when they admitted that they had been weak and ineffective in the past and had to do something about it. Then they go and give a registered charity a voting seat on the new board. No wonder only sixteen clubs bothered to apply, the others must have known nothing had changed. I refused to renew my subscription to the Hawk & Owl Trust last year because of its attitude to falconry. The feeling I got from Trust people about my sport was "ignore it and it might go away". At every meeting I attended I was made to feel like some kind of leper if I said I was a practising falconer. Several of those awfully nice people might have found me more acceptable if I'd said I had Aids. I have a long journey to meetings of my hawking club since my marriage, but it's worth it to know I am among people who share my interest.

The Hawk & Owl Trust is full of people who are against fieldsports and not afraid to advertise it. A friend, a fellow falconer and future ex-member of the Trust, went to an event held in July at the Chiltern Open Air Museum. On the Sunday he watched one of the most embarrassing birds of prey demonstration he had ever seen and was even more disgusted to see a scruffy young man there wearing a T-shirt with "Kent Sabs" written across it. If the Trust is really in favour of falconry, how come they let him in?

According to the Hawk Board's own advertisement in Falconers' magazine, Summer '95 (p18) inviting Clubs to affiliate, the criteria for affiliation were: - missing. My Club's Secretary says they had to present three years audited accounts, a verifiable list of members and a Code of Conduct acceptable to the Hawk Board. Please publish the Hawk & Owl Trusts code of conduct. I can't wait to read it, seeing as it was never offered to me while I was a member, and I would love to know how it relates to falconry practices. (Better make sure the ink is dry).

The Trust did its own membership survey this Spring. Question 7 on the form was: "For our involvement in the Hawk Board, are you a keeper of owls (check box) other birds of prey (check box)" and said later that names and addresses were essential if the reply was yes.

How many of these "keepers" are falconers? Why did the form not ask if they were? It didn't ask whether its members wanted any involvement with the Hawk Board at all, or tell them up front that the purpose of the Hawk Board is to fight for falconry. Was this because the majority of members would disapprove?

The analysis of the survey was published in the Summer issue of "Peregrine", their newsletter, and the members' own priorities are: Conservation and watching of birds of prey, followed by rehabilitation, education, research, wardening and photography. No falconry. This is not surprising because the only place anyone could have put falconry was in Question 4, under "other (please specify)"

If the Hawk & Owl Trust can prove it has a majority of members who will support and fight for falconry and none who will oppose it I'll not only renew my subscription, I'll join for life. I will also support its inclusion in a voting seat on the new Hawk Board.

The proof I need is for them to publicise their Policy Statement, their Code of Conduct and the Hawk Board's own Policy Statement and objectives to every Hawk & Owl Trust member, along with a list of the real falconry clubs and associations that they are now affiliated to. I want them to ask their members up front "Do you support the sport of falconry in the UK?" and "Are you prepared to pay to save it?" And I want the replies sent to an independent body for analysis.

Until I am convinced that this Charitable Trust deserves to have any influence on the future of the sport of falconry I will continue to encourage my fellow falconry club members to vote for our club's withdrawal from the Hawk Board.

Yours Sincerely
P Knight.

AND.....

Dear P Knight,

Your letter has been sent to me to answer as the newly constituted Hawk Board's Vice Chair person. There was much debate as to whether or not the Hawk & Owl Trust should be allowed club status in the new Hawk Board. After several meetings, and much discussion it was decided that as the Hawk & Owl Trust treats its hawk keeping members differently from the rest of their membership, charging them an extra fee to cover inspection costs, this meant that the Hawk & Owl Trust had a definite, identifiable branch of its membership, all of which had birds and therefore had the right to be represented by and at The Hawk Board. In fact the numbers of that membership were considerably higher than several of the other clubs that got places.

The status of the club -, i.e. whether or not it has charitable status is not relevant, it was started as a club in the early days and has a membership. It also has a constitution and policies on various things, including draft copies of any involvement with falconry demonstrations. The ink of this may well still be wet, and is liable to stay so for some time to come. I am the one writing it and I am way behind in this and a number of different pro-

jects, due to parental illness and lack of time. I think you should also know that although there is without a doubt an anti-falconry element in the Hawk & Owl Trust, I am a working member of the project's group and you would be hard pushed to find a higher profile falconer than I.

I don't know if Lyn intends to publish the Hawk & Owl Trust code of conduct, but I would have thought if you dropped them a line they would be delighted to send you a copy.

I can't comment on the demonstration on Sunday at the Chiltern Open Air Museum, I did the one on the Saturday, but not the Sunday - however the one I did was well publicised by the Hawk & Owl Trust - does this sound like a group of people who wish to dissociate themselves with falconry? As to the Sabs person - I doubt if it would have been possible to stop him coming in, and we are going to have to face up to these groups, not hide them away by disallowing them entrance.

Can you tell us how many of the members of those clubs that now have a seat on the Board are actually falconers, or do they just fit into the category of having a bird? And please don't bring out that old apple that I personally am not a falconer, no one outside my staff knows what I do in what little spare time I have, and I intend to keep it that way.

I leave it to the Hawk & Owl Trust to prove to you that the majority of their members support falconry, I am sure if they feel your life membership subscription worth it they will try to comply with some of your 'wants'. As for asking people who don't actually own birds or partake in falconry to pay to save falconry, I think that would be a little unfair considering that most of the people who do own birds and partake in falconry won't even do that!

The Hawk Board is, and always has been, for all hawk keepers and that includes owls. At this time we are probably going to spend most of our resources on the saving of falconry, nevertheless, all the issues that face birds of prey in terms of conservation, rehabilitation, falconry, captive breeding and many others, are the concern of the Hawk Board.

Yours sincerely
Jemima Parry-Jones
Vice Chair
The Hawk Board.

ANSWERS.

Dear Editor,

The Hawk & Owl Trust is not a falconry body, and was never designed to be such. It was set up by eminent falconers who wanted to see a new organisation which would devote itself to the conservation and appreciation of wild birds of prey, at a time when raptors such as the Peregrine were in dramatic decline.

The Trust's constitution, whose objectives haven't changed for twenty-five years, makes no reference to the sport of falconry and as such the Trust's policy states: It is not a falconry organisation and has no vested interest in the sport of falconry. As a conservation body we have no standpoint as to the morality of the practice since it represents no threat to wild bird of prey populations. The Hawk & Owl Trust fully recognises, however, the work of raptor keepers, rehabilitators and breeders, and the valuable contribution they can make to education about birds of prey

and their well-being which complements the work on wild populations. However, the new Hawk Board is not in place purely to fight for falconry, although this represents the main thrust of its work given the current threats to the sport. It is, however, there to represent the interests of all hawk-keepers (and owl-keepers too). To quote the new Hawk Board constitution, its aims are as follows: "The Objects of The Hawk Board (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") are:

1. To liaise between keepers of all Falconiformes (diurnal birds of prey) and Strigiformes (all owls) hereinafter referred to as "hawks" the government and other bodies, in the best long term interests of the "hawks" and keepers.
2. To encourage those who keep "hawks" for any purpose to adhere to appropriate and approved Guidelines and Codes of Conduct, and to seek to promote increasingly high standards of husbandry and conservation.
3. To collate scientific evidence to safeguard and promote falconry and the keeping of "hawks".

The Hawk & Owl Trust was a recognised club under the old rules and had been since the Hawk Board was formed. Under those same rules keepers who quoted membership of The Hawk & Owl Trust to the DoE were afforded the same privileges as those members of the other recognised clubs and pay an additional sum on top of their membership. Under the old rules, those members were required to take part in the Trust's inspection scheme. The Trust currently has 52 hawk-keeping members who take part in this scheme. It may well have many other members who keep birds of prey, particularly since the new Hawk Board now encompasses owl-keeping. Whilst not all of these members are falconers, many are, and these people would of course have as much to lose as Ms. Knight were they to lose their sport. The list published in The Falconers' Magazine listed the "clubs" who had affiliated in the order of their "hawk-keeping" membership. The clubs listed below The Hawk & Owl Trust each have less than 52 hawk-keeping members. Why should those members of The Hawk & Owl Trust not be represented at the Hawk Board? It should perhaps, be pointed out that neither the BFC nor the Welsh Hawking Club paid a levy on all its members, but purely on those full members who are hawk keepers.

Ms Knight states that The Hawk & Owl Trust "has been involved with the Hawk Board as far back as my old copies of this magazine go." She may be interested to know that the founder members of the Voluntary Panel, from which the Hawk Board was formed, numbered amongst them members of The Hawk & Owl Trust, notably Philip Glasier (the Trust's founder Chairman) and Martin Jones (past Chairman of the Hawk Board and still with a seat on the Board - and a member of The Hawk & Owl Trust). Ms Knight's comments about the Trust's attitude to falconry are puzzling. The Trust is not anti-falconry and in fact issued a policy statement to this effect only last year. Its main committee was wholeheartedly behind the Trust's continued representation on The Hawk Board and welcomed the news that it had retained its place, although it would be equally happy to be represented as a consultative body if the Board so wished. Ms Knight seems to feel there is a direct conflict

between falconry and conservation; this is far from the case as most people will recognise. Ms Knight states that "at every meeting I attended I was made to feel like some kind of leper...." The Trust as a whole has only one main meeting open to all members each year - its AGM, whilst many of those who attend the AGM are not falconers, there are certainly some who are, and some of those are well-known and highly respected. The Trust has recently seen the formation of members' groups and it is possible that Ms Knight attended a local group meeting, where the main interest was in conservation.

With reference to the Trust's affiliation to the Hawk Board, it was obviously able to supply audited accounts and a verifiable list of members. It would see no relevance in having a code of conduct on falconry. However, in the policy statement mentioned above it does state that it expects its hawk-keeping membership to adhere to guidelines already laid down by the Hawk Board and BFSS in terms of welfare (guidelines which the Trust itself contributed to), and that members should observe "best practices" at all times.

However, the Trust remains the only organisation in Britain which brings together those who have an interest in keeping birds of prey with those who have an interest in the conservation and research of wild birds of prey. This is because it believes that the appreciation for our wild raptors can often be developed through the care and rehabilitation of birds of prey and the experiences of seeing and watching trained birds when such displays have conservation as their backbone.

The fact is that the 52 Hawk & Owl Trust members on whom levy is paid are bona fide hawk-keepers, and this number is enough to qualify the Trust for a place on the Hawk Board, over and above clubs who have considerably less hawk-keeping members. It should be remembered that all other clubs who qualify for affiliation to The Hawk Board will have an opportunity to voice their opinions/concerns, through their representative at the annual symposium which the Board has undertaken to organise.

Regarding the Trust's event at the Chiltern Open Air Museum, this was a weekend event with Saturday's display given by Jemima Parry-Jones. On Sunday (the day in question) the demonstration could hardly be described as being in the same league, since the birds there were supplied by Chris Packham, the TV personality who described the individual birds and their wild status. Although nobody mentioned the presence of the young man wearing the "Kent Sabs" T-shirt at the time, and he certainly did not approach the mews tent, it transpired that he was attending with one of the musicians booked by the Chiltern Open Air Museum who own the site, over which the Trust had no control.

Finally, regardless of The Hawk & Owl Trust's status on the Hawk Board (whether as a paying membership or a consultant body) it remains the fact that the Trust is the major organisation in the UK dealing solely with the conservation of birds of prey and owls. Other members of the Hawk Board are obviously involved with conservation in addition to their falconry connections; however the Trust is "at the sharp end" and is able to advise the Board if, and when there is likely to be any impact on hawk-keepers/falconers as a result of the fluctuation in wild populations, whilst at the same time keeping an open mind because of

its long association with falconers. Other conservation organisations are often less sympathetic! It is unfortunate that Ms Knight did not see fit to write to the Trust before terminating her membership, as some of her misgivings could well have been addressed at that time. Sadly, the Trust can find no record of her on its membership lists, but would invite her to make contact so that we can try to allay her concerns.

Colin Shawyer
Director.

RESCUED - RAPTOR

Dear David & Lyn,

I recently lost my Saker falcon, flying rabbits and was unable to locate her using telemetry. After two weeks without any sign of recovering her, I began to give up hope. Whilst looking through a recent issue of Falconers' Magazine, I read an article titled Raptor Rescue to the rescue, concerning lost falconry birds. It gave good advice for anyone having lost or found a hawk. Feeling I had nothing to lose I telephoned Mick Robins reporting my loss. Within 24 hours I had confirmation that my falcon had been picked up and I was able to collect her, fortunately in good condition, that evening.

I would recommend that anyone having lost or found a bird should not hesitate in contacting Paul Beecroft or Mick Robins as it can only increase their chances of reclaiming their bird. I would like to thank Paul and Mick for all their help.

Yours sincerely
Nick Emery.
Beds.

BAD EXPERIENCE

Dear Editor

I am writing with regard to the Falconry Experience adverts that you publish in your magazine. I feel that I must let you know about the situation that I found myself in after I booked the Falconry Experience to do a show at my attraction. I had been in contact with the company well in advance and had booked them to do a day of flying displays and to provide a wide selection of birds, a marquee and all the relevant information boards for the public to see. A price was agreed and I received a letter of confirmation. However, when I contacted them to give directions I was told that they had never heard of us and that they couldn't possibly do the show. This was two days before the event was due to take place. It would seem that the person who had dealt with it had been sacked and had failed to tell the owner. However, the owner, Ross McMann, ASSURED ME THAT A TEAM WOULD BE PRESENT AT THE EVENT AND THAT I WOULD NOT NEED TO FIND ANOTHER DISPLAY. On the day of the event the promised display team failed to arrive leaving me in a very difficult situation. The Falconry Experience have since failed to return any of my calls. I hope that my experience does not happen to anyone else and that you will think twice before accepting adverts from this firm

Yours sincerely
E J GWYN

Dear Mr Gwyn

I am sorry to hear of your experience, at the magazine we try to ensure that all our advertisers are of an acceptable standard but it is not an easy task sorting out the good from the bad. When somebody comes along and their ideas and ideals both seem good we are not to know that they are going to end up treating their customers this way. Incidentally, Falconry Experience and Highlander 4x4 are no longer trading and have been served with a county court summons by us for non-payment of their invoices. Hopefully nobody will encounter a similar problem with Ross McMann again. Although, as I say we do our best to 'vet' our advertisers we strongly advise that you satisfy yourselves as to their reliability and the validity of the claims made in their advertisements.

Lyn Wilson

BIRDS OR BOARDS?

Dear David & Lyn,

Regarding Jemima Parry-Jones' letter (previous issue). I totally agree with all she said, but could I add my own thoughts/questions, on raptor rehab. work? Not necessarily aimed at organised groups, but more at the individuals frequently seen at public events, collecting money for funds, or displaying birds for one of the many wildlife groups! Or indeed any excuse to publicly display these birds.

Do these tethered, fundraising birds ever get flown? You only have to look at the swivels and leashes, bonded together with muck to realise not. Why do some people display signs stating: 'Birds of Prey Don't need water'?

If you question this you are usually told they don't drink unless they are ill, and rarely bathe! If no water is offered, how do they know if it wants to bathe or indeed drink if it is unwell? Give the birds a bath and they will at least have a choice. I have heard things like: Give a Barn Owl bath water and it will drown/Barn Owls drown in Half an inch of water. my owls have lived in an aviary for years without bath water - What Rubbish!!

Yes, wild Barn Owls have been found drowned in half empty cattle troughs. This is because they have wanted to drink of bathe and couldn't get out afterwards. A lot of cattle troughs now have wire mesh draped over the side to help wild birds. Who would put a bath in an aviary 18 inches deep and only half fill it? No-one I hope. For a bird to drown in half an inch of water it would have to be very ill or very stupid. If even a small bird in an aviary got into difficulty in 4 inches of

water it would only have to stand up. Why do some people encourage others to stroke these birds? Apart from obviously removing the waterproofing from its feathers, would you let your child, or even another adult stroke a large Eagle Owl, knowing the power of these birds? I wouldn't. Personally I think too much of my birds to allow them to be 'poked' or 'stroked' by all and sundry.

Is it necessary to display more than one bird of each species? Five Bengals and six Barn Owls don't impress me, nor encourage me to put money in a bucket, quite the reverse in fact.

I personally don't find it necessary to fundraise to finance my rehab. work. Yes, there is petrol money to pick up casualties, but my vet treats all injured birds free of charge, food bills are low because birds are released A.S.A.P. Any with very bad injuries, that are not considered releasable are euthanased by the vet. Therefore I don't hold large stocks of one winged/one legged, birds which take up aviary space and food that less seriously injured birds could use to better effect. Quality of life is most important.

As a falconer I will always assist in any way I can to rehabilitate injured wild birds, as most do, but I feel we still need organised groups to take on birds from people with no facilities or

specialist knowledge.

Perhaps photo' Display boards, showing work done in Raptor Rehabilitation Work could be used to better effect. I have seen this used on a Raptor Rescue stand at a show and thought this portrayed the group far better than a lot of tethered birds.

Yours
Ray Prior
Berks

NOT FAIR

Dear Mr & Mrs Wilson,

As a visitor to Falconers Fair at Althorp this (1995) could I point out a few observations from a relative beginner to the art of falconry, in the hope that the organisers will read it, as I have no idea who they are. Firstly the weathering area: A very nice selection of birds, in good condition, but where were the baths for them? the weather was Hawk & Owl Trust but of approximately 20 birds only two had baths. this goes against all I was taught on my course. I can understand that the birds to be flown in the next display needed to be kept dry, but not all of them surely. How ironic that the top photo' on page 39 Autumn '95 (Falconers Magazine) shows 8 birds and only two baths and the lower photo" shows baths for sale!!

Secondly: The use of screen perches

hunting area, and probably do not have the time to train and hunt it to its best. This masterpiece of ariel flight soon becomes a tethered pet in some back garden to be looked at and talked about, as a symbol of greatness - for the owners ego.

Think on, if a peregrine is your goal in falconry can you suit your life to the needs and demands of this majestic bird?

Back to owls. Many are kept purely for their size, colour, shape, unusual features and for the interest of their owner. Little research is even attempted to learn about their habits, behaviour, courtship, with little breeding being achieved. The usual destination for any captive-bred owls or falcons, is eventually back to captivity, at zoos, falconry centres or new owners. This can continue without a wild owl being taken and is a good means of keeping a constant supply; But some thought should be given to conservation and trying to increase the wild populations of particular species.

Permanently injured birds can be kept in captivity, if they have constant human companionship, they will do alright, but a mate may be a good idea. If disabled owls, hawks, or falcons do breed while in captivity the possibility of releasing the young back to their natural environment

on one stand to keep two falcons on. I have been led to believe these are no longer used. An impressionable beginner, like myself, could believe this is the way to keep birds at home. Thirdly: A young girl was carrying a barn owl around on the fist, amongst thousands of visitors. Does this mean anyone can take a bird along? I hope not.

Fourthly. On the second day the toilets were devoid of water, all day! This, I find unacceptable, my children have always been taught to wash their hands after visiting the toilet, especially one used by thousands of other people, as of course everyone should. My thanks must go to one of the Falconry equipment suppliers for allowing me and my family the use of their washing facilities throughout the day, without whom we would have had to leave early. How did other families manage? After six years I would have thought these problems should not arise. Having said all that, it was a very enjoyable two days. I have even decided to join a falconry club. something I thought I would never do, until I met the friendly, smiling falconers on the BFC stand. Their code of conduct is second to none. (If they will have me).

Mr A Watson
Crowley
Oxon.

ONE FOR THE OWLS

Dear Editor,

It is with great interest that I read many fine publications on falconry, and also articles discussing, promoting and celebrating this wonderful sport. Nevertheless, I do feel that more emphasis should be placed on the conservation aspect and habitat management.

Also, there is rarely a mention of any owl species and their role in education and flying. Although owls, by their nature, are not great hunting birds, they can still give the beginner an insight into the world of training, keeping and flying, - whether on a creance or free-flying.

The huge Eagle Owls are very impressive at flying displays for the general public. They can be the spark that encourages people to take up keeping owls or raptors, and then learn all that is involved.

In truth, hawks should not be used in the sport of falconry, by many experienced bird handlers would have started on a buzzard or other large hawk - maybe even a Kestrel.

The Peregrine is the most sought after bird for falconry. However, many owners of this noble creature do it no justice as they do not have access to good grouse moor or other

would be of great service to the birds and the species. It is disappointing to see owls for sale for as little as £10 in newspapers or bird magazines.

If birds are kept then they must be flown regularly, otherwise they are nothing more than a budgie in a big outdoor cage. The system of obtaining, cleaning, feeding and showing a bird is fine, but without the chance of flying - either to the fist or the lure - a bird's spirit is destroyed. This goes against the ideals of a man calling himself a Falconer.

Here at the Barn Owl Society, we are breeding and releasing Barn Owls. We also find new homes for owls, advise people of their care and welfare, and treat any injured owls to be returned to the wild.

At present Snowy Owls are on the agenda and both the Long and Short-Eared owls if wild numbers decline to the levels of the Barn Owl.

I hope more features and articles will be written about owls in the general, both in the UK and worldwide.

Owls are universally popular and to encourage an interest in the environment, birds of prey and wildlife, we should promote them better.

Kevin J Murphy
Natterjacks, 36a Ormond Avenue
Epsom Surrey KT19 9EP
Tel. 01372 812647.

VALUES & TECHNIQUES

Dear David & Lyn

In the last issue of the Falconers Magazine a letter from VB described some of the frustrations experienced in trying to take up falconry through becoming a working pupil. Our working pupils here read the letter and came up with a number of points and one of them even wanted to write a short note of her own, which is below.

We employ up to ten working pupils each year in various locations and we receive one or two applications a week so we have to be selective. We are trying to achieve several objectives with our working pupil scheme. One is that working pupils are a convenient source of labour for lower-skilled jobs during the peak season which for us is April to October, from breeding to hacking to training to hawking. Another is that it is good for the staff to have fresh faces and attitudes around, questioning their values and techniques and often contributing new ideas. Thirdly it provides valuable training and experience for the working pupil, both in terms of on the job training, in terms of work experience in a rural situation and in terms of (for most of them) living in a foreign country. Some come to learn about breeding techniques and conservation, some help at hack sites, some come to help train falcons and some come to undertake scientific work as part of their degrees. Because we have research and conservation programmes in Britain, the Middle East, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Mongolia, and links with many other institutes and organisations, it is sometimes possible either to include foreign travel as part of the work placement, or to set up a further placement on one of our other projects.

We have had working pupils now for well over a decade. Some have been school leavers, some have been PhD's or vets. Some have been dyslexic, some have been highly literate. They have come from all corners of the globe, this year we had four Americans, a Mexican, an Arab and two Spaniards. No Brits. They usually come for periods of between six weeks and five months. To take on a working pupil properly requires a lot of work and commitment from both sides. From our point of view we have to provide housing (normally a private bedroom, shared kitchen, bathroom and living room), food, interviews, contacting referees, sponsorship letters and visas, insurance, protective clothing, staff supervision, staff training videos and some quality time. From the pupils point of view, he or she also has paperwork before coming, flight tickets and the stress of coming to a new country and workplace. We therefore try, if we can, to go for high

achievers, people who will deliver more than they say and who will benefit most from the experience, both during their stay and in their future careers.

Over the years a few general points have surfaced. With rare exceptions, the youngest age we find suitable for a working pupil is 19. The pupil would normally have practices field falconry for at least three years; this is no place for beginners. During the first week or two we gradually see what the new person is capable of. Everyone has their strong points and their weak ones. A person with aptitude might be handling gyrfalcons or a string of horses within a few days, whereas someone who puts the birds off is more likely to become acquainted with a pressure washer and a tub of Virkon. We are not open to the public and we would not expect our working pupils to be involved in this type of work, by the end of the visit, each pupil will have learnt and progressed. We offer sufficient skilled staff and facilities for everyone to find something that they are good at. Some come as pupils and later we offer them a job.

The main reason that we don't take very many Brits is that the quality and commitment of applicants tend to be on the low side. By and large, provided that they had a good supervisor, the American pupils usually have the best background knowledge of birds of prey, both in the wild and in captivity. In contrast, people who passed the German falconry test tended to have been taught didactically, often using out-dated 'traditional' techniques, this clashes with our own approach which is more analytical and questioning; we don't use words like 'correct' much. Some of the Brits are good but many only have superficial knowledge of raptors in comparison with the vehemence of their opinions. This does not endear them to the staff.

To get back to VB's particular problems; the keys to the solution lie in her letter. She says that, although she lives just outside London, she doesn't know anyone with experience of keeping raptors, this is easily remedied, there are many clubs around London advertising in your magazine, there are plenty of people in that area who could quite happily talk the hind leg off a donkey about falconry. Some of the clubs, such as the British Falconers' Club, have an apprenticeship scheme. She can spend time with some of these people and get a better idea of the practicalities of falconry and then perhaps in a year or so, get a Harris or similar. After she has flown a few birds for a few years, then is the time to start making career decisions or applying as a working pupil. The joys and disappointments of your first birds are precious experiences. For the private individual I would stick to amateur falconry,

Ahead of you lie all sorts of challenges and dreams; your first gos, a perfect little merlin, grouse hawking in Scotland....

Our working pupils on the other hand learn different things, like how to exercise thirty falcons in the desert before the sun gets too hot in the morning. Or how to train or exercise ten falcons before ten am in Northumberland in order to leave an hour to prepare and load six horses and six falcons on to vehicles, followed by the reverse procedure after dark on return. The world of professional falconry is different; we are handling large numbers of mainly high-value birds, often at very delicate and sensitive stages in their life cycle. The work is often round the clock, seven days a week, and mistakes can be expensive. At the end of the day, jobs are scarce and few involve actual field falconry. The life of a professional falconer is like a mayfly; months of preparation for just a few glorious days of flying.

Nick Fox

WORKING PUPIL

As a working pupil in falconry, I am thankful that, before taking on this responsibility, I had already enjoyed three seasons of raptor handling as a hobbyist. Through my own experiences, I knew my strengths and weaknesses and I had become familiar with bird behaviour in general. I had learned from my own mistakes what questions needed asking. At the same time, I had not become so set in my ways as to be hidebound, believing there was only one right way, say, to mount a transmitter. I would have been completely overwhelmed by the tasks put to me over the past four months if I hadn't had some practical grounding - not just book learning - in falconry. Still, bird handling is not the only work done by the working pupils at the facility where I was engaged. It benefits a person aspiring to become a working pupil to: a) have a familiarity with general animal care (beyond feeding and walking the family dog) and b) to be able to offer other skills to the running of the operation. In my case horse-handling and riding skills were useful. Certainly, flexibility and a willingness to try new things are essential. The primary reason I signed up for this experience was to learn. I have no aspirations for become a 'professional' falconer or bird-handler. Falconry is my hobby. I will take home with me a new self-assurance and many, many fresh ideas about the "do's" and "don'ts" of raptor-handling, not only from the staff at the facility where I worked, but also from the working pupils like myself who were in various stages of the learning process themselves.

Without the ability to share and compare personal experiences, much of what is possible to glean from working as a pupil would be lost.

Lee Chichester USA.

NO REPLIES

Dear Lyn and David,

It is almost impossible, and certainly frustrating, trying to conduct a debate by letter especially through a quarterly magazine. Having tried to have an exchange of views direct with Mrs. Parry-Jones, (which she ended almost before it had begun by declining to write more than one letter), I was a little disappointed to see her continue the discussion, in public, in the Autumn issue ("Firing Line"). Mrs Parry-Jones is obviously concerned about an impending attack on raptor keepers by "anti-groups". She may well be right, but if so why load the gun for them? Hence, I do not propose to further debate the issue through the pages of your magazine, especially as to do so with this particular detractor has all the potential of going for a walk with a grasshopper. I was, however, interested to see Mrs. Parry-Jones advocate "manners and behaviour towards the general public that is without fault". I agree with the sentiment, but, here again, we obviously have different ideas as to what constitutes manners and behaviour that are beyond fault!

Arising out of this debate comes another issue which could also come under the heading of good manners. Whilst in telephone discussion with a member of the "old" Hawk Board allegations were made that Raptor Rescue was the cause of a lot of complaints and bad publicity. I subsequently wrote twice to the secretary of the Hawk Board asking for details of the same to be forwarded to me, in order that I could enquire in to them. I have not had a reply to, or even an acknowledgement of, either letter. I have written previously on other subjects with the same lack of response. I was recently asked if Raptor Rescue had considered applying to affiliate to the new Hawk Board. Not everyone may have been pleased to have us on board, of course, but no doubt our financial contribution would have been useful. I had to say I felt unable to recommend such action to our members, as I could have no confidence in a body that did not have the courtesy to acknowledge correspondence.

It will be interesting to see the make up of the new Hawk Board, and I hope their policy will be to respond to letters with reasonable diligence.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Robins

Chairman, Raptor Rescue

QUARRY LICENCES

Nicholas Kester.

Falconry has seen a certain relaxation of the rules and regulations that have governed us over recent years. Firstly, the proposed dropping of the game licence for those who wish to take game birds (pheasant, partridge etc.) with their hawks and falcons. This cost more to collect than it actually earned and was an archaic piece of law dating back to the days when poachers were more likely to be exported to the colonies as receive the irritatingly small fines of today. The last time I applied for one it was in a London Post Office and the counter staff were mystified by the request: they had none in stock. The other relevant relaxation came when the Department of the Environment removed certain species from the Schedule 4 list of Raptors. This was a reflection of the startling improvement in the numbers of many of the wild species and the success of falconers' domestic breeding schemes. Indeed there were some who argued privately that even the peregrine should have been taken off the list, thanks to the dramatic increase in the native population. But there remains one corner of the law that must still be observed: the quarry licences required to fly hawks or falcons at bird species that are neither game nor vermin. This mainly affects those who fly sparrowhawks and merlins, although there are some who will need licences to fly gulls with the larger longwings. Licences are obtainable from the government office relating to the county in which the bird is to be flown, and not the residence of the applicant. An information pack can be obtained from: Department of the Environment Bird Licensing Branch Room 8/09

Tollgate house
Bristol BS2 9DJ
Tel: 0117 9878694

The DoE form requires certain declarations which, if incorrectly completed will invalidate the application. Amusingly, the first is an insistence on the use of black ink only. Without it Bristol's photocopiers malfunction. You will need to give details of your falconry club membership and, in three lines, describe your falconry experience in full!

Part B gets down to the basics. You are required to specify the quarry species and the expected number to be taken in a season. The licence is for one season only.

The species of raptor must also be detailed and ring numbers given. No licence will be granted for hawks or falcons that are not close rung, or otherwise identifiable, regardless of whether it is a Schedule 4 species or not. At this point you will be required to state the county (note this says COUNTY and not country) in which the hawk is flown. Finally, under part C you must declare that you have not been convicted under part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

At the end of the season (28 February) you will need to supply an accurate return of the species taken. You must do this by 31st March. If you are a falconer of any consequence, you will keep a game book so this should not pose any particular problem. And do remember that the season does not start until September 1st, so it is a waste of time asking for an earlier date on your application. These should be with the DoE by July/August; earlier and they may get overlooked, later and they may be

rejected.

The Department of the Environment staff are helpful and nonjudgmental when it comes to quarry licences. The process under which licences are granted is simple and, given the numbers, fairly easy to administer.

Each year the DoE consults with the conservation bodies (JNCC) as to appropriate limits for falconers on the following species (The brackets contain the British Trust for Ornithology estimates for the wild population): Blackbird (10 million), Song Thrush (3 million), Skylark (4 million), Meadow Pipit (3 million) and Black Headed Gull (400,000). Licences are issued accordingly.

Many falconers make their applications year in year out, but there are those who, having flown at vermin or game, only now have the falconry skills to take on a Spar or a Merlin. What great little hawks to fly! Talk to the regulars and you will soon realise that in falconry big is not always best. Indeed there are many who would not swap back to larger hawks for all the rabbits in the world. But they are not, repeat not, beginners birds.

Deciding to fly Sparrowhawks or Merlins at their natural quarry should not be taken lightly. Few people have the time, understanding, aptitude and dedication to enter this exacting branch of falconry. This is evidenced by the licences issued. In the 1993/4 season, only 79 were issued and 291 species taken; numbers that even the RSPB states "are trivial in conservation terms."

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ALASKA OR TRIAL BY BALD EAGLE

ALAN AMES

I had initially been on the lookout for a Golden Eagle, but having tried for two years to find one that didn't make the National Debt look like loose-change, I gave up. Having flown smaller eagles, I was definitely sold on the idea of a bigger bird. So, when the offer of a 6-month-old, female, parent-reared, Canadian Bald Eagle first came my way, back in the Summer of 1993, I deliberated for a second and said yes. It also presented me with a new challenge and a unique opportunity to fly, what I consider to be a beautiful bird. November arrived, time to collect her from quarantine. This proved to be serious fun and games, as the barn in which she was housed

was large and she also had three companions. It was quite intimidating walking in with all four of them standing on their perches staring down with that "and what do you pair of idiots want", look. After a bit of whooshing to and fro, we finally caught her up, put her jesses on and coaxed her into her transit box. Arriving home, we took the box indoors, turned the lights down and gently got her out to fit her swivel and leash. Here, a word of advice, remove anything that is not nailed down, the draught from her wings sent the wives' ornaments flying off their perches. Spare bed for me that night. After giving her a couple of days to take in her new home, it was

time to start manning. This is something that I would never again contemplate with the onset of winter. Having a 12-pound eagle clamped on your arm in cold weather soon brings on the frostbite as your circulation disappears.

I have trained some awkward birds in my time, but this one took the biscuit. She refused to sit on the glove for any longer than 10 seconds. When she was on it, she beat me endlessly about the head with her wings, pausing only to stretch out her goose-like neck to remove bits of my left ear with that great hatchet of a beak. As you can imagine, this would be enough to try the patience of even the most laid back of falcon-

ers, especially having to endure it for some 10 weeks. It had almost reached a point in January 1994 where I was considering moving her on (as she had convinced me that after 20 years at this game I didn't have a clue) when, suddenly she calmed down a little.

Things now started to improve, but I could not believe how slow she was to get used to new sights and sounds.

Looking back it must have been nigh on 16 months before I was truly confident that she would not disappear over the horizon just because some horse neighed in a field a mile away! Living where I do, I consider it of the utmost importance to have a large eagle perfectly manned, that will return on command, as the local countryside is covered with fences, power lines, livestock, bridle-paths and roads. All potential disasters waiting to happen. We have all heard the horror stories.

Eventually, after taking her down to 9lb 2oz, we got all the basic training out of the way, cured of her nasty little habit of snatching the food from the glove (which is only instinctive in my opinion) and then introduced her to the lure. She took to this with great relish, chasing it long distances, smacking it hard and then reducing it to shreds, before finally giving it up.

My next problem was to get her to go up in the air and stay there, as flying her off the fist would be about as much good as having an ashtray on a bike. Living on the top of the North Downs in Kent (not even hills by the standards of those up north), I decided to use the method I employ for getting falcons waiting quickly. That is to stand them on from the top of the hill and then walk down some two hundred feet to the valley, hopefully the bird follows out level and ends up 200 feet above you head, (it all sounds good in theory).

It was not to be with my tormentor, all she did was hurtle down the hill after me, at about 60 miles an hour and land either at my feet or on the glove. On one occasion she followed on down a fairly steep part of the hill, so, in my wisdom, I decided to crouch down, expecting her to pass over me and hopefully soar out over the valley. Wrong again Alan, the next thing I know there is a loud whoosh and I looked up to find her standing on my back with that long neck bent round and that hatchet an inch from my nose, as if to say "is this a new game?" As she became more confident I started to fly her on windy days, by, again, leaving her on the top of the hill and then walking down wind, she obviously had to take off into the wind, turn, come down wind and soar out over the valley so she could turn again to land.

This continued daily for about four weeks and she got better and better.

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from cover and she was off. She now cruises over the top of the hill, folds up and the chase is on.
 Has she caught anything yet, I hear you ask? Not yet (one obvious problem is that she is not the most manoeuvrable of birds, with her short tail and huge wings, and we are short of quarry) but she tries. Her best attempt to date was to be only three feet behind a rabbit as it hit the bushes. Nevertheless, I feel that her first success will be just like everything else with this bird. A long time coming and well worth the wait. Unless of course I get invited up north where you have lots of proper hills and lots of bunnies.
 Watch this space.

as biddable as an imprint Harris and with the warm breezy weather this spring she got the idea. She now steps off the glove, powers out across the valley and soars back over my head. On my part it is an absolute joy to watch and certainly worth all the grief and aggro. On a good day she will hang two or three hundred feet above my head, preening her mail, lifting her head to bark at a noisy Heron or rolling to stab at her usual entourage of 20 or so noisy crows, as I stroll along the Downs. To get her hunting was surprisingly easy, a few rabbits for dinner, the lure in the right place at the right time when she was up, to teach her where to rabbits would be away



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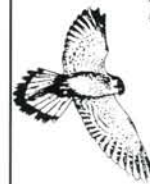
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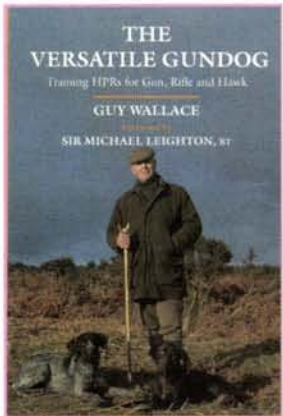
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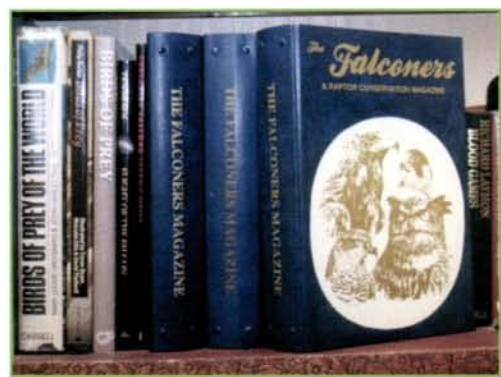
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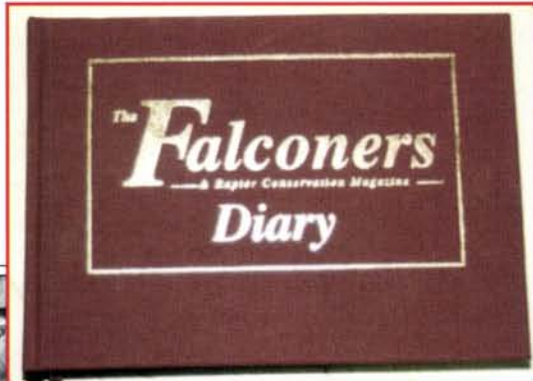
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HARRIS HAWK (Parabuteo unicinctus)

This is the most popular of all falconry birds. First introduced into the country about twenty years ago, it has been recognised as the most versatile, easily trained and sociable of birds.
 Found commonly in South America and Mexico, they are extremely tolerant of each other, and will hunt regularly in pairs.
 Their main quarry species in this country are rabbit, pheasant, magpie and partridge, although linnets will also take hunt. They have become commonly known as the 'weekend hawk', as once trainees seem to require very little training from one weekend to the next, although if left for long periods of time they can easily become bored and feather plucking is becoming a common problem in Harris hawks when put up for the result.
 As they are from warm countries we tend to find that they do not tolerate our cold winters readily and some provision needs to be made for them when there is a bit of frost about. It would be a mistake to think that because Harris hawks are so sociable that they do not have that same hunting instinct that is so obvious in, for example, the osprey. Far from it, if left untrained with quarry they will take it upon themselves to try and catch the nearest available, usually wild crop-lark, but it is a rabbit or an amorous Jack Russell. If those properly kept fit these birds are the very capable and proficient hunters, and, should you decide to buy one there is no reason why you should not have many years of fun and companionship.



ran to fly his Redtail, plenty of quarry this morning, fingers raised for tomorrow.

DATE	SPECIES	NAME	WEIGHT	FOOD GIVEN	QUARRY TAKEN
18.11.94	Harris Hawk	Arthur	1165g	2 chicks	1 rabbit ? 1 pheasant

Left the house at Ten. Cold, frosty morning, a little misty at first but the sun came through later. Had a few good slips and run were successful. Looks like tomorrow lunch is sorted out. Waiting John tomorrow to fly his Redtail, plenty of quarry this morning, fingers raised for tomorrow.

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