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Spring 1996

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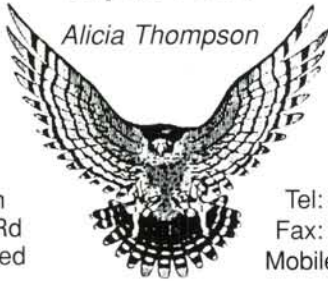


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features

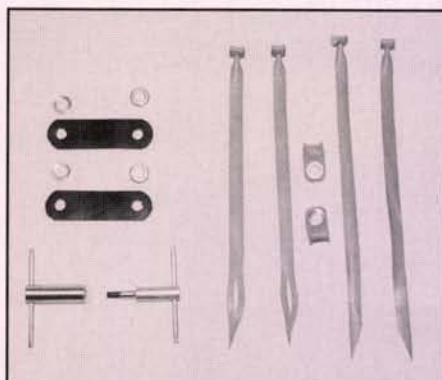
- 10** ICEBERGS & FALCONRY
LIAM O'BROIN
- 12** CLUANIE - A CENTRE IN SCOTLAND
PETER BROUGHTON
- 13** WILLIAM BRODRICK
CHRISTINE JACKSON
- 16** OFF THE FIST
MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD
- 20** DEHYDRATION
TRYING TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT
- 22** ALBERTA REHABILITATION CENTRE
BRYNLY ROBERTS
- 24** HARPIGORNIS
AN EXTINCT EAGLE
DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS
- 27** THE THREAT POSED BY THE LACS
ROB PAYNE
- 29** THANK YOU GUY
AYLMER ALAN GATES
- 30** NONE THE WISER
TONY WARBURTON
- 31** POEMS
D RAMPLING & D PLATT
- 34** TEAMWORK
AMANDA LEEMING
SHARES HER SUCCESS
- 35** MUSHROOM HAWK
TIZI HODSON
- 37** HUNTING WITH A SPAR & HAWK TALK

regulars

- 7** CLUB DIRECTORY
- 15** RAPTOR RESCUE.
HAS THE STRING BROKEN.
MICK ROBINS.
- 32-33** LETTERS.
WHO IS SAYING
WHAT?
- 38** CLASSIFIEDS.
- 38** COMPETITION
& RESULTS

up-to-date

- 4-6** NEWS MEFRG,
INTERNATIONAL
RAPTOR CONFERENCE,
CLA GAMEFAIR,
ELEONORA CASE UPDATE
& CONVICTIONS
- 8-9** & CLUBS UPDATE
FOR THE '95
SEASON
- 26** HAWK BOARD NEWS
ELECTION RESULTS AND
NEWS FROM THE LAST
MEETING
- 36** BOOK REVIEWS.
UNDERSTANDING BIRDS
OF PREY, PIRATE OF THE
PLAINS & HUNTING WITH
GOLDEN EAGLES
- 18** GINGER LU-LU Pt 2
NICKY STAPLETON



AYLMERIS, THE SAFER JESS. P29



SPARROWHAWK KEEPING COOL P20

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COMMENT

Well Folks

There's loads of stuff in this issue, had trouble fitting it all in. Its a good job my typesetting is getting better(?)

We tried to get some information about the Fair but it seems that nothing is confirmed yet so we will have to wait until the next issue. The only thing we can say is that we will be there, and hopefully the winners of our competition. We have a big piece for you from the Hawk Board, Jemima is joint press officer and is, as ever, extremely efficient.

As it is coming up to the display season we have tried to address the problem of birds and water and have given you as much information as we can about their requirements for water.

David & Lyn

*Front Cover Photos: Bald Eagle Taken by D Wilson.
Redtailed Hawk. Owner Amanda Leeming.
Prairie Falcon. D Wilson.*

CONVICTIONS

1. Leslie Mark MASSEY of Wallsend, Tyne & Wear appeared at Court recently for unlawful possession of a Peregrine/Merlin Hybrid whilst banned. He was given a £200 fine.

2. Geoffrey Kenneth GRIFFITHS from Staffs, appeared before Ludlow Magistrates court recently to answer charges in relation to Goshawk eggs. In a nest watch, organised by Forest Enterprise, the thief was caught red-handed stealing four Goshawk Eggs. At Court, Griffiths pleaded guilty. The Court imposed a Probation Order for this offence.

3. Peter John GURR of Rainham Essex, appeared at Havering Magistrates Court on 7th November 1995 to answer charges under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which could not be heard at the Crown Court the previous month when Gurr was sentenced to four months imprisonment as these charges were summary only. At Magistrates Court Gurr pleaded guilty for four charges of possession of wild birds, namely Peregrine Falcons. He was fined £1000.00 but this was then commuted to a custodial sentence. As a result what is generally known as a Ban of keeping Schedule 4 Birds then came into being for a period of five years.

the Crown Prosecution Service that the two birds could only have been stolen from the wild in Scotland by an expert with some skill.

DNA evidence proved that the birds were both females and that they were not related. Therefore two separate nests were robbed. Sweetman told the court that the birds had been found in a box on his doorstep with an anonymous note on 13th June 1994. He said that he had them for a week before writing to the Department of the Environment to inform them. After receiving no reply from the DoE he had written again some 35 days later.

A representative of the DoE gave evidence that the first letter was never received and that the first they knew of the existence of the Eagles was in a letter dated 25th July. The Court heard from experts that the Eagles, which were reported to be approx. 7 weeks old when found by Sweetman, could have been returned to the wild in a very short space of time if Sweetman had notified any of the authorities when they first came into his possession.

It was put to him that he could have reported this matter by telephone or fax immediately. It was alleged that instead he kept them in captivity causing them to become too imprinted for return to the wild.

After more than two days of hearing evidence the Magistrates found Sweetman guilty on both counts.

Following further deliberation by the Magistrates they then gave Sweetman a

BIRD OF PREY PERSECUTION

Reports outlining the extent of illegal persecution of wild birds of prey in 1994 have been published by the RSPB. The analysis has shown that 170 reported incidents of illegal persecution took place in Scotland in 1994. A further total of 59 incidents of illegal shooting, destruction or poisoning of birds of prey took place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

TAXIDERMISTRY

In August 1995 a search warrant was executed at the premises of a taxidermy supplies dealer in Wales. Over 500 birds a mammals were seized, many of them rare. Part of this investigation involves the discovery of the skull of a Philippine Eagle. This species is threatened with extinction and there are estimated to be less than 200 in the wild.

LOST/STOLEN/ FOUND BIRDS

1995 was the first full year of being without the Registration Scheme that was run by the DoE, in the days when all hawks and falcons were on Schedule 4. Following de-registration the lost and found service that the DoE had run was no longer available for many species. Private Registration Schemes came into being in an effort to provide a service to keepers in respect of lost and found birds, and to register birds if it was required. Under the DoE scheme they had the advantage of knowing who a found bird belonged to, whether it was reported missing or not. The private schemes do not have this advantage and therefore returning found birds can be very difficult. Keepers in the main make no attempt to mark their birds with an I.D. Tag, or similar when they are flying them. A wide variety of rings are being fitted by breeders with either initials of codes but as we don't know who they are the ring details are meaningless. Following my appeal for breeders to notify us of what they are putting on their rings it is obvious that anyone who subscribes to the Falconers Magazine or Cage & Aviary birds doesn't breed birds - as nobody has come forward. After a year plus now I have managed to contact some of the breeders of found birds by a process of elimination with the help of other keepers. Problem solved you may think - definitely not! 90% of breeders do not keep records and cannot tell me who they sold the bird to. Some breeders only use a number plus the year i.e. 2/92. I know of at least three birds wearing this ring number and there are probably more. Some keepers don't know what the ring number is when they report it. They have not kept a record of it, no documentation came with the bird and the previous owner can't help either. This letter is beginning to sound like a gripe and in a way I suppose it is. Keepers could make life a lot easier, not only for themselves, but for Registration Schemes as well. One great help would be - Report it missing in the first place.



Photo : G. Shorrocks

4. On Monday 27th November 1995, Keith SWEETMAN of Milton Keynes, Bucks appeared at Aylesbury Magistrates Court to answer two charges in relation to being in possession and control of two wild birds namely Golden Eagles in September 1994 at an address in Mentmoor Nr Aylesbury.

The Golden Eagle is a rare bird in Great Britain with only 430 pairs in Scotland. It is a bird that is included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and receives special protection.

The trial which lasted 2 1/2 days was opened with the appearance of a Golden Eagle being taken into Court to show the Magistrates the size and majesty of this type of bird.

The Court was told by Mr Peter TOOKE of

Conditional Discharge for 18 months and ordered him to pay costs of £500. The Eagles were made subject of a forfeiture order.

After the case a police spokesman said that the doorstep scenario of 'I woke up one morning to find a Golden Eagle in a box on my doorstep' will no longer be accepted at face value, especially when they are found some hundreds of miles away from their birthplace. The Police will investigate these matters and the actions of the Finder will be taken into account and should evidence arise of unlawful actions then a prosecution may arise.

It must be stressed however that if keepers comply with the law than they have nothing to fear from the authorities.

To give you some idea of what a years work involves I will list the current state. The following is a list of birds reported missing to the Raptor Rescue and the IBR Scheme.

1. Lanners - 36
2. Sakers - 13
3. Harris Hawks - 9
4. Peregrines - 7
5. Prairies - 2
6. Goshawks - 2
7. Lugger - 1
8. Hobby - 1
9. Buzzards - 3
10. Redtails - 2
11. Ferruginous - 1
12. Kestrels - 9
13. Hybrids - 4

TOTAL 88 - All of which are still missing. The above figures do not include the birds that were reported missing and are now back with their owners. Also it does not include the stolen ones.

There are currently approx. 30 found birds that have not been claimed ranging from Kestrels to Barn Owls to Harris Hawks. Many of these birds have been advertised several times but no-one has come forward. The following is a list of some of the birds recovered. No Kestrels are included in this list.

LONGWINGS

1. DOE Ring 150??W
2. DOE Ring 115??W
3. DOE Ring 140??W & DOE 2nd ring
4. Breeders ring - Raptor Registration RR
5. Yellow breeders ring with WBP & 2nd ring.

SHORTWINGS

1. DOE Ring 129??W
2. DOE Ring 66??W
3. DOE Ring 17??X & 2nd ring
4. DOE Ring 53??W
5. DOE Ring 80??W
6. DOE Ring 48??W
7. DOE Ring 18??Y

If you think any of the above birds are yours then please contact me. You will need to tell me the missing ring numbers, the species of bird, plus a few other details.

N.B. I would also like to speak with the owner/breeder of a common buzzard Ring no: 4VP95W

STOLEN BIRDS

Over 50 birds were stolen last year. There is a reduction on the 1994 figures but it is still a serious problem. The Harris Hawk is still the most popular bird to steal. Recovery of de-registered species such as the Harris is now extremely difficult. Birds can, at the moment, be kept quite openly that are not ringed and it appears that only a small number of responsible keepers are bothering to microchip their birds. Keepers must realise that the theft of these birds is a nationwide problem, it can happen to them and it is not just something they read about happening to other people. All of the people that lost birds during 1995 will tell you that. It can occur ANYTIME to ANYONE!

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around the world.

With quality restaurants, cafes, shops and cinemas also on site, this is the most exciting leisure facility to have been built in post-war Britain.

The museum opens in Spring 1996 and will remain open all year round.

For further information contact Julian Rawel, Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds LS10 1LT

Tel. 0113 2456456

Fax. 0113 244 4882

The Royal Armouries also maintains museums at HM Tower of London and Fort Nelson, nr Portsmouth.

1996 CLA GAMEFAIR



The historic Grimsthorpe Estate, Bourne, Lincolnshire is to be the venue for the 1996 CLA Game Fair. Now in its thirty-eighth year, the CLA Game Fair is the largest event of its kind in the world, attracting in the region of 100,000 visitors.

"The original aim of the Game Fair was to encourage landowners to develop country sports opportunities on their land", explained the events director, Colonel Colin Rees-Webbe. "Today the Fair has become a major celebration of the countryside, aimed not only at country sports enthusiasts, but also at members of the general public seeking an enjoyable family day out in a superb country setting."

As in previous years, national and international experts will be giving demonstrations of coarse and game fishing, shooting, falconry and gundog training. game cooking displays will be on the menu, and

visitors will be able to participate in clay pigeon shooting, casting clinics, air rifle shooting and gundog competitions. A massive tented shopping mall will be showing goods and services of every kind - from walking sticks to the latest 4 x 4 vehicle.

A non-stop programme of entertainment will take place each day in the main arena, and this will include the majestic Radford Shire Horses, Parade of Hawks, Falcon Flying, Exhibition of Sporting Dogs, a Military Band, Terrier Racing, Agility Competitions and Display of Gundogs.

The CLA Game Fair will take place on Friday 26th, Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th July.

NEW MOVE TO FIGHT WILDLIFE CRIME

A new initiative to help stamp out wildlife crime has been welcomed as a "big step forward" by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Commenting on today's (November 16th) launch of new partnership for action against wildlife crime, RSPB conservation director Graham Wynne said: "Any action which helps reduce the high level of persecution suffered by wildlife must be commended."

The partnership, announced by Environment Minister James Clappson, is one of several recommendations from the Enforcement Working Group set up last year to seek ways of improving the endorsement of wildlife legislation.

Other recommendations include advice for police on the use of DNA genetic fingerprinting, including research into the use of hair and feathers for DNA testing, and a guide on wildlife law for enforcement authorities like the police and HM Customs and excise.

"The new partnership has a valuable role to play in strengthening the network of police wildlife liaison officers", added Graham Wynne. "The RSPB looks forward to working closely with this partnership to reduce the unacceptable level of wildlife crime."

A recent RSPB report, Offences Against Wild Bird Legislation 1994, revealed that 1,065 incidents of illegal actions against wild birds were recorded by the RSPB last year (1994), the second worst year on record.

The most frequent offenses are trapping, shooting and nest destruction, with poisoning and egg collecting not far behind.

RAPTOR THIEVES KICK BARN OWL TO DEATH

Police are appealing for information in order to track down some Raptor thieves who kicked a Barn Owl and left it to die, before stealing three other birds.

The thieves climbed over a fence at the owners home, in Kent, in the middle of the night, just before Christmas. They stole a Bengal Eagle Owl, a Snowy Owl and a Common Buzzard.

The thefts were discovered the following morning, when they woke up and found the fatally injured Barn Owl laying in the garden.

Despite attempts to save it, it died that afternoon.

The owl was owned by the 6 year old daughter who is devastated by what has happened. She has buried the owl in the garden and gathered flowers for the grave.

The family believe the owl was kicked to death because it was an imprint and would have called to anybody that came near it. It was killed because it made too much noise.

The family ask "How can people be so cruel?"

If anyone has any information about this incident or they have been offered any birds of the species stolen then please contact P.C. Paul Beecroft of the Thames Valley Police on 10734 536257 or Ans Phone 01734 321243. Or P.C. Usher of Kent Police on 01622 690055.

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RAPTORS

The Raptor Research Foundations Second National Conference on Raports will be held in Urbino, Italy at the University of Urbino from the 2nd - 5th October 1996.

Features of the meeting include Scientific paper sessions, poster sessions, Plenary addresses, Special symposia, Workshops and round tables, Exhibits and art show, Field trips and tours, Film and video presentations, Social receptions and Banquet.

The official languages of the congress will be English and Italian. The organisers of the Conference are keen for falconers from Great Britain to attend if not participate.

Further information will be available later on in the year and we will be publishing more details nearer the time.

The Lowther Horse Driving Trials, which is being held on the 9th, 10th, and 11th August 1996, are planning to hold, as part of their three day event, a Northern Falconers Fair. Any enquiries for trade stands or for further information please contact Karen Gray on 01931 712746.

The Middle Eastern Falcon Research Group

The Middle Eastern Falcon Research Group is a unique organisation representing a common forum for the exchange of information and the co-ordination of collaborative programmes between experts involved and concerned with falcons and falconry in the Middle East.

Recently, the MEFRG held a historic three day "Specialist Workshop" in Abu Dhabi city, UAE, from 14th to 16th November. The workshop was sponsored by the National Avian Research Centre (NARC), whose Head of Veterinary Science, Dr Jamie Samour, is Chairman of the Group. Around fifty experts, including falconers, avian veterinarians, raptor biologists and conservationists, attended the workshop from ten different countries. Four main subject areas were covered in the workshop; falcon medicine, saker falcon taxonomy, saker falcon research and conservation and public awareness of falcons and falconry.

The main focus of the MEFRG's Specialist Workshop was the saker falcon, Falco cherrug, which is the most popular falcon used by Arab Falconers in the Middle East

As a result of the presentations and discussions at the workshop, the following recommendations for action were made by the Group:

Health and diseases of falcons

The Veterinary Scientists will collaborate in surveys to identify the main causes of sickness and death of falcons and continue the collection of baseline biomedical data. In addition, the vets will promote the use of preventive medicine and better husbandry and management of captive falcons. There are plans to conduct studies on the effects and types of stress in captive falcons.

The classification of the saker falcon

As it is still not clear as to exactly how the saker falcon should be classified in relation to other falcons, the field biologists and veterinarians agree to continue to collect blood samples from different forms of live falcons for further genetic studies. In addition, researchers will collect skeletons, skins and photographs of saker falcons so that their genetic makeup can be related to physical appearance. An understanding of the classification of the saker falcon is essential when conservation measures are discussed in the future.

Monitoring by field biologists

As it is important that the status of the saker falcon is known in the wild, it was agreed to try and establish contact with other field biologists, who are monitoring saker populations, so that information can be exchanged.

Public awareness

It was agreed that literature and videos for falconers should be produced over the following year. These projects will be supported by the National Avian Research Centre's Public Relations Department.

Public Falcon Hospital

As surveys of falconers have shown, there is a need for the creation of more falcon hospitals in the Middle East. The MEFRG agree to conduct feasibility studies for a falcon hospital in the Abu Dhabi Emirate. It was suggested that a public awareness centre could be attached to this hospital.

Arab Falconers Association

It was agreed that the MEFRG would encourage the establishment of an Arab Falconers Association which will be run by Arab falconers for Arab falconers. The MEFRG would provide support and assistance to this Association.

BIRDS OF PREY PAINTING DAY

Come eye to eye with owls, hawks & falcons on this painting day for artists of all abilities.

An opportunity to get close up studies of Buzzard, Kestrel, Harris hawk, Peregrine, Merlin, Little Owl, Eagle Owl, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl and Snowy Owl.

Many of the birds will be flown so bring a camera for close up, flight action. The day is designed as an informal workshop, but there will be professional artists on hand to give demonstrations as well as guidance to new artists, also a falconer who will give an insight into the biology and ecology of raptors. Bring your own materials and lunch, although there is a cafe at the museum.

The Chiltern Open Air Museum is set in forty-five acres of beautiful parkland and has over twenty-five traditional buildings dating back to Iron Age times. There is also a woodland nature trail, hosting wild Tawny & Little Owls and Kestrels, and the opportunity to visit the Hawk and Owl Trusts' new National Conservation Centre. Places strictly limited.

Date: Sunday 21st July '96, 10 - 5.

Venue: Chiltern Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks

Cost £15. per person.

To book a place please send your cheque to Wildlife Art Society, Herts, Beds & Bucks Group, Mark chester, 67 London Road, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP22 5LD

ELEONORAS' MAN CHARGED

On Wednesday 10th January, Paul Noble of Sandy Beds appeared at Biggleswade Magistrates Court, charged with offenses in relation to the unlawful trading of Eleonoras Falcons. The case adjourned to the 6th March for committal proceedings at the Crown Court.

CLUB DIRECTORY CLUB DIRECTORY

AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

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

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

For further information contact Guy Whitmarsh on: 01272 660770

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

We meet on the first Thursday of every month at the Hogs Head Hotel, Awsworth, Notts.

J26 off M1 - 1st slip Rd off A610

For more information please ring:

George Roach, 01623 751339

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THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB

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

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Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

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

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: John & Laila on 01276 23429 or Sue on 01344 423988 after 6pm

THE LONDON HAWKING AND OWL CLUB

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

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

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**

NORTH AVON & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

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

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

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

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

Give us a ring for a chat.
Phil 01225-891964
Keith 01454 315810

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: 01584 874874

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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

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

MEETINGS of The Welsh Hawking Club

are held monthly 8pm at:

USK The Newbridge Inn, Tredunnock. 2nd Monday
CHESTER The Goshawk, Mouldsworth. 1st Wednesday
BANBURY The George & Dragon, A438, Banbury-Southam. Last Monday
PLYMOUTH The Woodpecker, A38 3rd Monday

The Welsh Hawking Club is internationally recognised and has members throughout the UK.
For further information ring Secretary:
Adrian Williams on 10443 206333

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB NEWS

The Scottish Hawking Clubs' season is progressing well after our four day meet in October. Since then we have had three more one day meets. November saw us at Carlops, south of Edinburgh, courtesy of Stan Robertson, we haven't visited this venue for two seasons since a bad breakout of myxie, but the rabbits seemed to be back in their normal numbers. One eagle went up to Windy Gaul, well named for the lift it gave, and the Harrisites, Redtails and a

Goshawk went down to Kittlyknowe, where some great flights were had when the ferrets bolted rabbits down this almost sheer sided, steep gully. A total of sixteen rabbits were in the bag by sundown.

The beginning of December had us over to the east coast of Fife at Leuchars, courtesy of Iain Campbell, our Secretary. Last year this venue had to be cancelled due to heavy snow, preventing Iain from getting to the meet (well that was his excuse), although

the rabbits were not being totally co-operative. some good flights were had and a few bunnies were added to the bag. The Christmas meet was held again this year at Crookedstane, courtesy of Andrew & Jacky Knowles-Brown.

this meet has been held here for the last three years and looks like turning into an annual event. After mince pies, coffee and a dram the group braved the elements. We had overnight temperatures of minus 17oC and, although the day was flat calm and sunny, the temperature never got over minus 10oC. We had four eagles attending (three Golden and One Verreaux) as well as numerous Harris Hawks, Redtails and a Goshawk. The Pheasants proved to be canny to catch, a number of flights were had but even the Goshawks couldn't keep up with these longtails. The rabbits were deep down in their burries due to the cold and were very reluctant to bolt, but those that did gave the birds a good run for their money and a few were added to the bag. We retired back to the house for a buffet and lashings of hot coffee and the odd winter warmer. We only had one case of a frost bitten toe, and one car frozen solid, but other than that all seemed to have a festive time.

We should still hope to have a couple of meetings before the end of the season (weather permitting) and these will be reported on in the next issue. Have a Happy New Year and Good Hawking.



LONDON HAWKING & OWL CLUB

The club was first started in 1986 and was formed by Paul Barham (Now the Club chairman), Peter Kent, Stan Kent and Harry Dukes. Since then the club has moved from its original meeting place in Hackney to Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, a thirty-acre 'wild' park, in the middle of London's East End.

The club has strong ties with the Cemetery, and it has become an ideal place for training new birds and new falconers. The members, over the years, have been involved with the conservation of the wildlife of the cemetery, this has included working days, the provision of nesting boxes and bat boxes, talks and walks concerning the wildlife of the park are given at regular intervals throughout the year, the last being open to the general public and organised between the park committee and our club chairman. Some of our successes have been the release of Tawny Owls into the park and the involvement of the club in the opening of the study centre within the cemetery for

schools and groups to learn the natural history of the area.

The aims of the club are to promote Falconry and the keeping of birds of prey, this is done in many ways, the main one being education. Not just children but anyone who shows an interest, given the time people have been informed what the sport of falconry is about, the reasons behind keeping, feeding and flying a raptor. Over the years the club has been involved with many events and shows in the London area. These have ranged from private schools to play schemes. Talks and displays can be arranged to cover most species of raptor, the one thing we do not provide is summer flying displays, the majority of the birds owned by club members are used through the hunting season. To this end we mostly provide a static display.

The Club has provided birds for both radio and tv. At present one of our membership is a freelance producer/director, and is aiming to

make a documentary about 'grass roots' falconry. If this goes ahead it can only do the sport of falconry, and the club, good.

With the club securing a seat on the new Hawk Board and the fact that we now have up and running a computer BBS, with connections in the USA because of it, the future is looking good. All this from a club with around twenty-five members. Overall, the feeling is that the future in our sport can only improve if the general public understand what we do and why. The London Hawking & Owl Club tries to do this throughout the London area. We welcome all new members, regardless of their interest or experience in dealing with raptors, be it just watching or hunting. Field meets for the coming season are still in the planning, but we hope to have more information soon. We meet at Soanes Centre, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Southern Grove, Bow, London E3, on the third Thursday of each month. If you are in the area pop along, or contact us through our advertisement on the club page. You will be assured of a warm welcome.

BEDFORDSHIRE FALCONRY & RAPTOR CLUB.

We've just held our AGM (Nov) and elected a new committee to guide us through the coming year, many thanks to those who served us so well during our first year.

the club was originally formed in October 1994 by a group of falconers and raptor keepers in the Chiltern area. By advertising in the local press and by word of mouth the club has gradually expanded, but, being

a fairly new club, we would still like to attract new members whether they are followers, beginners or falconers of long standing, and you can be assured of a warm welcome at our club meetings.

the main objectives of the club are to foster good husbandry and practices associated with the keeping of birds of prey, and to provide a meeting place where members can meet in a

social environment to exchange ideas and information.

Our slogan is "Aiming to help the falconer and the sport".

We hold regular meetings, usually on the last Wednesday of the month, in a function room at a local public house where club business is discussed. This may be followed by a guest speaker, demonstration or a short talk by one of the members. Members are actively encouraged to bring to the meetings items they have produced which may be of interest to other members of the club.

Beginners are encouraged to progress in the sport by being introduced to experienced falconers or members with the same birds/interests, who are willing to offer help and advice. In addition we produce a regular monthly newsletter entitled "The Falconers Shout" which contains articles of interest contributed by members, together with adverts for items for sale, wanted, lost, found etc.

For further information or membership details please contact our Chairman Alan Perkins on 0831 882882 (mobile)

Welsh Hawking Club News

A somewhat odd season for some members so far with changeable weather, sometimes very mild although not over Christmas(!) and with a lack of quarry in some areas for those flying rabbits raising the question of whether VHD is the culprit again. Hopefully it will not affect the wild rabbits too severely. It still appears to be largely confined to domestic stock. During November we held our usual field meet on the beautiful Lleyn Peninsular in North Wales. Whilst rabbits here were less evident than previously there were still many good flights at pheasant and partridge. Our grateful thanks go to the keepers and landowners who were so generous, with very special thanks going to Gwylm Jones the Head Keeper at Glasfryn. Several field meets have been arranged in the North Devon area thanks to the enthusiasm of some of our mem-

bers attending the regional meetings at Plymouth. Shortwings, Broadwings and Longwings have enjoyed a day each on a well stocked pheasant shoot there but with quite a few coveys of grey partridges present too. As reported in the last issue, invitations for our members to attend the international field meets of KSDF (Czech), SSS(Slovak), OFV (Austrian), MMES(Hungary), ANFA (French) and SBV (Belgian) had been received and as usual several members have this autumn and winter taken up the opportunities provided to enjoy the sport in foreign parts. At the Belgian Stichting Behoud Valkerij meeting alone over a dozen WHC members were present. This was only the second international meeting of this young club. A member of the WHC attended with is Goshawk, flew it at the two day meeting, and on his return to Wales



flew it the following day without the need for quarantine being imposed by MAFF. The main quarry at this meet was pheasant and rabbit. The hospitality was excellent with a three course lunch served each day in the field and a superb diner in the evening at the Falconhof which served as a base for the meeting. The annual meeting of The International Association of Falconry took place recently in France with delegates from many countries taking part, including a delegate from the WHC. The number of member countries represent-

ed at IAF continues to increase. The WHC AGM will be held during February at which members will elect or re-elect the officers to serve for the coming year. An end of season field meet will be held the following day.

Best wishes for the rest of the season and new year to members and non-members alike.

If you would like an application form or need more information about the Welsh Hawking Club please contact our secretary, Adrian Williams on 01443 206333.

Hebogydd dda.

BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

Licensing, Who needs it?

The simple answer is, we all do. The British Hawking Association believes that the only responsible way forward is for all falconers to be licensed, both for flying raptors and breeding aviary birds. The ultimate requirement may however turn out to be different for these different disciplines.

The BHA has developed a licensing scheme which goes hand in hand with its apprenticeship scheme and membership gradings, the first draft was copyrighted November 1995. It was seen as logical that a Senior member should be licensed for more birds and more difficult to master birds, whilst a Novice should be restricted to the steadier, medium sized birds.

Presently, the scheme is non-mandatory and still under active discussion on how to implement fairly. Members can then take up the idea gradually as, hopefully, the culture changes. New members will be encouraged to subscribe to the licensing scheme as well as the apprenticeship scheme, where appropriate.

The raptors commonly kept have been divided into three basic groups, these being easy, moderate and difficult e.g. Common Buzzards and Harris Hawks are easy to keep, Goshawks and Peregrines are in the moderate group, Eagles and Sparrowhawks are in the difficult group. These three groups correspond to the existing membership grades of Novice, Member and Senior Member.

Obviously whenever discussing the matter of grouping there is always someone who has successfully trained a male Sparrowhawk as their first bird, which indeed they may have.

However we believe the 'test' that should be applied is - if a hundred novices trained one hundred Sparrowhawks how many would still have been alive and in the care of that novice, if it is less than 99% then surely the bird is too difficult for a novice. Equally, it could be in terms of novices surviving with Eagles! This is the principle that has been used for determining the groupage.

An additional benefit of the licensing scheme is that it also provides A method of recording which birds are owned by whom. Indeed, this must be the case if voluntary licensing schemes such as ours are eventually taken onto the statute books. What easier way is there than comparing a birds' ring number with that on the license with the members' photograph. I doubt that many police officers would know a Peregrine from a Goshawk, obvious exceptions not included. My own Harris Hawk has acquired Eagle status on more than one occasion.

The way I see licensing schemes in the future is they will remain voluntary, but clubs and associations developing their own must try and think what legislation would require should licensing become mandatory, any changes then should be minimal. Eventually, with various groups objecting to keeping birds in captivity, this would show the falconry fraternity taking a responsible approach. Keepers of other birds and animals will surely have to follow suit, this is the way our culture is going. If you are not qualified in many disciplines you will find it difficult, if not impossible, to practice. It is no longer socially acceptable to learn by the experience of making mistakes, especially where the safety or welfare of others is concerned.

I know the above may be taken as controversial in some quarters, but only by developing such schemes will we improve standards and preserve our pastime.

CUMBRIAN FALCONRY CLUB NEWS

The CFC has had a busy year with mixed fortunes for some of our members, one of whom has his four year old hybrid tiercel stolen. A large contingent attended the Falconers Fair at Althorp, which always provides a great opportunity to meet falconers from other areas. As the last hawking season ended, so our plans to attend the Lowther Horse Driving Trials and Country Fair got into full swing. This is a major field sports event and our stand in the BFSS tent attracted some welcome interest from local falconers and landowners. With three longwing and a number of short/broadwing field meetings already successfully held, we are probably one of the busiest of hawking clubs, if one of the smallest. Although our membership now includes not only in Cumbria but also the North East and Lancashire. Our quarterly newsletter continues to improve and now includes a full colour front cover. We have strong links with the BFSS and through this we were able to arrange a special meeting, with Geoff Olstead, the BFSS public relations officer, our guest speaker. A prize draw was held with the proceedings going to a local charity. Business and social meetings are held at 8pm on the first Wednesday of every month in the heart of the Lake District. If you are interested in falconry and would like the opportunity of attending regular meetings, flying at a variety of quarry in some very spectacular countryside telephone the Secretary Michael Calvin on 01946 592339.

FALCONRY

AND

What on earth has an iceberg got to do with falconry? Clue, nine-tenths is hidden below the surface. I think about that a lot now. More and more in fact, especially since immersing my self in rook hawking. Flying short-wings – spars, and long-wings a little later were the variables. However, the quarry, which have been the focus of my attentions over the last decade, have developed into an obsession. Before talking more specifically about rooks and crows as quarry, there are other facets, considerations, which have moulded my obsession – even addiction. Every square mile of countryside here in Ireland, particularly in the midlands and east, is totally tied up by private shoots and local gun clubs for game. So pheasant, duck, grouse, partridge, woodcock and snipe are difficult to get at. In fact the truth is gamehawking in Ireland is almost impossible and that's nothing new. Shooters (well most of them) it seems, are happy to blast dozens, even hundreds of pheasants, daily, out of the skies and yet the mere mention of flying over their hallowed ground with a hawk is tantamount to violating their women! On the other hand anything which kills crows and rooks is considered to have been sent by divine providence. Farmers and landowners welcome my winged angels with open arms. Some offer their women and others are ready to sign over the deeds to the farm even disenfranchising kin in favour of the divine. The shooters (well, most of them) for their part consider

crow hawkers' as a sub-species of Homo-sapien, who have slipped off the edge of sanity. So we are left undisturbed as the mentally deficient. So quarry has ceased to be a problem, as has ground. But there is something else in the equation, because given the opportunity I suspect, I am in fact sure, that I would not want game. Instead yours truly, is happy to be left undisturbed tottering on the edge of the known world. Crows and rooks stretch from here in the east of Ireland all the way to the western seaboard, probably outnumbering the total population of humans on this island. (Which incidentally is four million). As I think about all of this I am leaning against a stone wall. My intermewed (second season) saker/peregrine tiercel "Finn McCool" on the glove. It's New Years Eve, around 3pm., and we're by the roadside waiting for the car to arrive. My head is crowded with the incessant chatter from a hawking guest whom I have met for the first time that day. He is telling me how forthright he is. "Always speak my mind you know". "No, I didn't know, but I know now, bugger off!", my mind screams at him unkindly. Now it wanders off at a tangent, escaping into thoughts that anaesthetise my tired nervous system. – It's as though I'm outside myself, watching me! I'm smiling at Nadia an eyass spar. It is three weeks since we flew her free and she still hasn't killed. The landrover, piled to the roof with camping gear, bumps and groans through County

Longford and on through the tortuous bends and small roads towards Ballyjamesduff, in Co Cavan. Stephen sits in the front passenger seat chewing a caramel bar with Nadia, hooded, on his fist. "It's a pity we didn't get her killing in Sligo all the same," Stephen pipes up "Yeah", I reply, and continue over the whine of top gear (no over-drive) "I can't understand it, I mean we'd got everything right – or at least we thought we had." "Maybe", replied Stephen, "maybe we just need a break." "Yeah, a break – you mean good luck," I replied and turned my attentions to the approaches to the town. Now I'm watching myself laughing behind the steering wheel of the landrover. I can hear Stephen saying, "What's gone wrong with you O'Broin, are you off your trolley or something?" I lean forward, both hands high on the steering wheel and ease the vehicle to a stop. I look at Stephens' puzzled expression and indicating with a nod of my head I'm saying "Do you see that litter bin?" Stephen, still puzzled replies in measured intonation "You mean the litter bin alongside which you have brought our vehicle to a stationary position?" "Yes", I reply. "There's a jackdaw inside that bin." I watch Stephens eyes appear to come out of their sockets "Take me back about ten feet," Stephen immediately orders and crumpling the caramel bar wrapper lobs it straight as a die into the bin. Simultaneously he has slipped Nadia's hood and is holding her out of the win-

dow. Out comes the jackdaw, off goes Nadia and nails it on the pavement about thirty yards ahead, at the feet of two elderly ladies laden with shopping bags. We both sit there gobsmacked for a couple of seconds and then explode into uncontrolled hysterics. I'm laughing, I'm bloody well laughing! Here I am standing beside a wall by the roadside with an almost total stranger and he's doing his best to keep me from suicide. It's dusk on New Years Eve 1995, my falcon is balanced in the cup of my gloved hand. His left wing hangs like a limp piece of plastic – the humerus smashed in two. and I'm bloody well laughing my head off! "That's it," my guest pipes up "It's good to have a laugh, you know, see the funny side of it." "Funny side of what?" I ask. There ensues a loaded silence and I wonder when will the damn car arrive. "Sorry", I say, "I was actually thinking of something else, something that happened." "Oh! Ah-well. Still when you think about it, sure he would have been better if he had been killed outright, you know, quick – in style." the car, luckily, arrived just then. Nothing that poor Martin could say that afternoon, despite his best efforts, could sound right, I was on the edge. I'm laughing again. It's forty-eight hours later. I'm back from the vet, a round trip of ninety miles, the break is pinned. No, I'm not laughing about that, I'm telling Sean what Martin had said, just before the car arrived – Luckily! "Well, I mean Sean it's got the same logic as

telling you, your Granny has been run over by a juggernaut – but you'll be pleased to know she's dead – killed outright, she was crossing the road in style." He is in hysterics on the the end of the phone, forty miles away. It's nice to be able to make someone laugh from that distance I think to myself.

"Look O'Broin, you went for him, you got him, you did it and got two super seasons out of him and he is a little rasper." This last word is Sean's ultimate accolade. If your hawk is called a rasper by Sean Gibney, then it has made it to the hall of fame.

"Yeah, you're right, he went down in style," I reply, thinking maybe my hawking guest was right after all and feeling the abrupt end of our hawking season like a ton weight on my chest. Sean continues over the phone, he is telling me about something else, my consciousness drifts off again at a tangent. Northumbria and it's Friday evening August 13th, about six o'clock.

Myself, Nick and Barbro Fox and Maria Sjoberg have just finished a few days hawking at Troughend near Otterburn. Three days earlier Aurora, Nicks' best falcon that season, flew straight into a windmill hot on crows and was killed outright! I had man-

aged, despite middling to downright poor horsemanship, to actually survive. We decided to give the horses a gallop before returning home. Next day Saturday, I'd drive to Edinburgh, full to overflowing of memorable – no, spectacular, crow hawking. There you see – I was at it again.

Nadia, that spar who took her first jackdaw in Ballyjamesduff, went on to take thirteen rooks out of the hood in fourteen days! She was the first of many a spar (similarly entered I might add) to take dozens of rooks. But it was only when I got a peregrine tiercel taking rooks that the real fun came. It was mayhem, one never, ever knew when or where the flight would end up. On one occasion the flight went full circle for a mile ending with a kill in my neighbours front verge, by the roadside. He promptly ran out and popped a plastic baby bath over the tiercel and his crow. Can you imagine my tiercels' reaction to this kind of *positive reinforcement reward*. "I'm not going to chase those black things anymore – every time I catch one I get blackouts!" So mayhem it was, and we loved it! Ironically during that weeks

in Northumbria, the day in fact when Aurora was killed, we all agreed that crow hawking was, as Nick put it "Organised chaos". I was thinking about that phrase – organised and chaos, I liked the logical ring to it, as we galloped the horses down a bog track. Before I felt anything, it's funny to say, I heard it! The sound was loud in my ears, like a cricket bat being walloped against a fast ball. Then I was gasping, struggling for breath. All I could see was sky and the tips of rushes over the top of my head. The Fox's were very well equipped to deal with a riding accident and they treated me for shock quickly and efficiently. I felt a crunching sensation in my left shoulder blade as I was helped into the jeep. Hexham hospital, for their part confirmed six broken ribs, the shoulder blade that crunched, a collar bone and a punctured lung. So you see the score for that week was actually six crows, one Gyr/saker falcon and a falconer. Here I am two seasons later totting up the score for the last six days hawking, one wood pigeon, three rooks and a saker/peregrine tiercel. He was good, tenacious and quite small by

average. He had been hacked for three weeks in Northumbria and it showed. At 1lb 6oz and the right appetite he always killed. One rook was was 2ozs heavier than him! Finn had been sluggish at the start that day. In fact, he refused the first rooks he was shown out of the hood. His second slip was marginally better. Missing he immediately put on the power and climbed out into the breeze, and up. I was uneasy, he was getting close to the village! Then he folded and stooped vertically and hard. We watched for the tell-tale spiralling of alarmed rooks, marking a kill. There they were, about a quarter of a mile ahead, wheeling and dipping. Still I was uneasy. "He could be on someone's roof," I thought to myself. He wasn't, and the rest is history. Now I think about the one-tenth bit – all the effort we falconers go to – for one short moments glory. Still, if you think gentle reader that any of the above vicissitudes, or anything else the God's may throw at yours truly, will deter my mission in life – the pursuit of organised chaos, fear not. Watch this space!

Liam O'Broin



CLUANIE

A FALCONRY CENTRE IN SCOTLAND

Cluanie Park is situated on the A831, three miles from Beauly and ten miles from Inverness in the Scottish Highlands. The site was originally a Deer Farm Park, but since taking over in October 1994 the Andy Williams, along with his Head Falconer, Adam Streeter-Smith, have started turning it into a Bird of Prey Centre with a difference.

Here, not only can you watch excellent Flying Demonstrations in a wonderful setting of Highland scenery, but if lucky you can see wild buzzards, Peregrines, Red Kites and even a rare sighting of a White Tailed Sea Eagle. The centre has brand new weatherings and aviaries all built to Andy's own design, which house

the centres present flying and breeding birds, which consist of Falcons, Buzzards, Kites and Owls.

Flying displays at the present time take place at approximately 12.30, 2.30 & 4.30 but may change for the '96 season. Displays are very well presented with the accent on informing the public of their reasons for everything that is being done, for instance, explaining clearly why mews jesses are replaced by flying jesses before the birds are flown.

Two of the highlights for me were to see a lanneret, which was allowed to go off and do its 'own thing' for up to 20 minutes, until barely visible and then executing a fine and fast vertical stoop, plus the

Bald Eagle soaring effortlessly above the centre being joined at one stage, by the local wild buzzard, (well above I hasten to add).

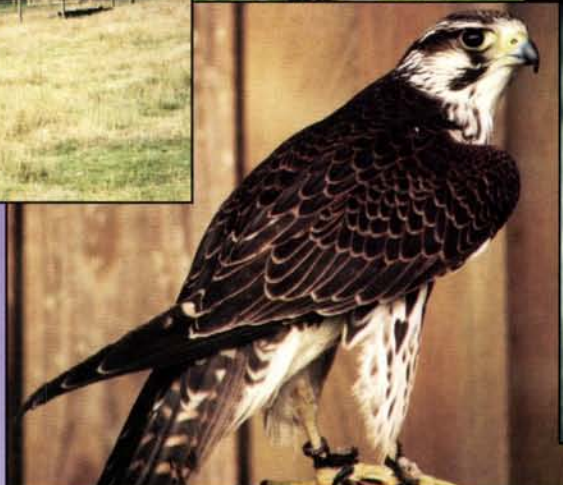
Plans are in hand to use the existing large video presentation and wildlife exhibition room to carry out flying displays when the weather is inclement, and also for group visits during the winter when the centre is closed. Andy and Adam are also planning to run exclusive eagle hunting packages.

A cup of tea and a piece of home-made cake can be obtained in the well-stocked shop and there is the added advantage of having a system whereby you can go in and out as many times as you please.

Right: Saker Falcon during the display.

Below: Adam Streeter-Smith, with the Saker.

Below: Showing the wonderful situation of the centre.



*Above: Part of the centre.
Middle: Golden Eagle*

**Report by
Peter Broughton**

*Above: Ferruginous Buzzard.
Left: Hybrid Falcon*

WILLIAM BRODRICK (1814-1888)

A 19th Century Falconer

By Christine E Jackson

"Hawking may be enjoyed in a quiet way at a very trifling expense, where only a cast or a cast and a half of Hawks are kept", William Brodrick and his co-author of *Falconry in the British Isles* wrote, but immediately added "a regular Hawking establishment would incur considerable expenditure. For this purpose, about eight hawks would be necessary, as also a Falconer and his assistant, with one or two good horses and three or four dogs". He calculated that the cost would be "not less than two hundred pounds a year". That was in 1855, twenty-five years after William had inherited good fortune from his father.

William's father had been a barrister with a large practice at the Old Bailey and other London courts, as well as in Essex, Hertford and Middlesex. He was visiting his brother-in-law, the famous Northumbrian ornithologist, Prideaux John Selby of Twizell House near Belford, in October 1830 when he was taken ill. Determined to get home and see his children before he died, he got on a London coach and managed to reach Newark, where he died at the Saracen's Head. P.J. Selby went post haste up to Brodrick's Gower Street house to be with his sister, Brodrick's widow, and discharge his duties as executor of the will. He also ordered a post mortem. The *Gentleman's Magazine* 1830 gave the curious cause of death as "resulting from suppressed gout by taking too much Colchicum".

William Brodrick, aged sixteen, now became the concern of his uncle Selby, who found him to be an incorrigible nephew, given to surprising him at every twist and turn. William first went to Harrow where "all he learned was how to catch birds", and with this useful talent pro-

gressed to University College Oxford, where (and Selby acknowledged him to be a "real, intelligent clever fellow"), he took his degree before going on to study medicine at Edinburgh.

He never practiced medicine, but spent years in the consideration of one profession after another. A disapproving uncle Selby wrote to a friend, in 1841, "You will be surprised to hear that Wm Brodrick has determined to go out to Australia, where, should he see any prospect of succeeding he plans to turn sheep-farmer &c. Whether this, like many of his resolutions, will end in mere nothing, I do not know what to think, as he says he is really in earnest this time." William never got to Australia, indeed, he never set off, but he made one firm decision, in July 1843, "Have you heard of Wm Brodricks intended marriage which I believe is likely to take place very soon?" his astounded uncle asked his friend Sir William Jardine, "We were not a little surprised at it, as we had never heard of the Lady before the engagement was announced."

Upon his marriage to Marianne Brown, William settled (if one could use that word) at Belford Hall, very near his uncle, in this beautiful house then owned by a cousin, the Reverend John Dixon Clarke. In late July the following year, Selby reported "Mrs W. Brodrick presented her husband with a daughter Sunday last. He has got several hawks and falcons up, which he manages very well, and expects to have perfectly trained by the commencement of the Season. I never met with such a fellow, for the training and keeping of Birds as he is."

Having access to his uncle Selby's moors and the open, rolling Northumbrian countryside, William was able to indulge his ruling passion, the training of wild birds, particularly hawks and falcons. After several years of experience, William got down to some serious work on a book on falconry, and prepared some watercolours which he subsequently lithographed himself. Selby, famed as an author, artist and etcher of the *Illustrations of British Ornithology*, must have been delighted. William painted 21 plates of hawks and falcons, and two which illustrated the equipment. The text was written jointly with a great friend and companion, Captain Francis Henry Salvin (1817-1904). *Falconry in the British Isles*, published in 1855 was long regarded as being "the best modern book in English on



Photo By Christopher Swann

Plate 3, *Falconry in the British Isles* Male peregrine (Adult), By William Brodrick

the art and practice of falconry". Both the authors had great experience, and William's illustrations, drawn from live birds, did not disgrace the standard set by his illustrious uncle, by being both accurate and most attractive. When a second edition was planned in 1873, Brodrick was obliged to re-draw the plates owing to the original stones having been destroyed. It was still so highly regarded in 1970 that a facsimile edition was printed by Tabard Press, although Philip Glasier, in his introduction, reminded readers that improvements and changes had rendered some of the methods out of date. However, every chapter is full of advice based on experience in the keeping and training of the birds, with examples of instances to back up any claims of assertions. The text is clearly written, with none of the usual mid-nineteenth century verbosity.

Early in the year in which his falconry book appeared, William lost two of his daughters, Flora and Mary Anne, within one week of one another, from Scarlet Fever. Apart from such events which were borne with fortitude, as inevitable, by Victorian parents, Brodrick's life may be called uneventful. Besides his hawking, he also bred canaries, was interested in microscopy and was an expert taxidermist who set up groups of stuffed birds in cases.

Brodrick was also a keen sportsman and, like Selby, painted natural history subjects in oils for the purpose of exhibiting in northern art shows. In 1839, while staying at Twizell House, he worked on a painting of a roebuck, another on kestrels, which were sent to Edinburgh for the academy's annual exhibition. Selby thought the kestrels to be very good and he predicted "He will, I have no doubt, be a



Photo By Christopher Swann

Plate 2 *Falconry in the British Isles*, Male Peregrine, by William Brodrick.

very precise artist.' Brodrick's painting of his birds of prey proved this, especially when he prepared another book, this time as sole author, with the title *Falconer's Favourites*, containing life-size lithographs printed in colour then touched up and finished by hand, of all the British species of falcons then used in falconry. Brodrick was both artist and lithographer of the six plates when published in 1865.

William Brodrick was frequently referred to as being 'kind' by fellow falconers with whom he was willing to share his knowledge and experience. "To my old and kind friend, Mr Brodrick, to whom I was indebted many years ago, for a knowledge of the rudiments of the art of Falconry, this book owes something..." wrote Gage Earle Freeman in his preface to *Falconry: its Claims, History and Practice*, in 1859. The Reverend G.E. Freeman wrote under the nom de plume of 'Peregrine' in *The Field*, and as joint author with Brodrick's old friend and collaborator Captain Salvin, referred in his *Falconry* to his indebtedness to Brodrick whom he first met in 1851 when he stayed at Belford Hall for a fortnight learning all that he could in the time about falcons and falconry. Brodrick gave him a female Merlin called 'Pearl' to take home to Northampton, and Freeman flew 'Pearl' at larks and pigeons until he lost her in April 1852.

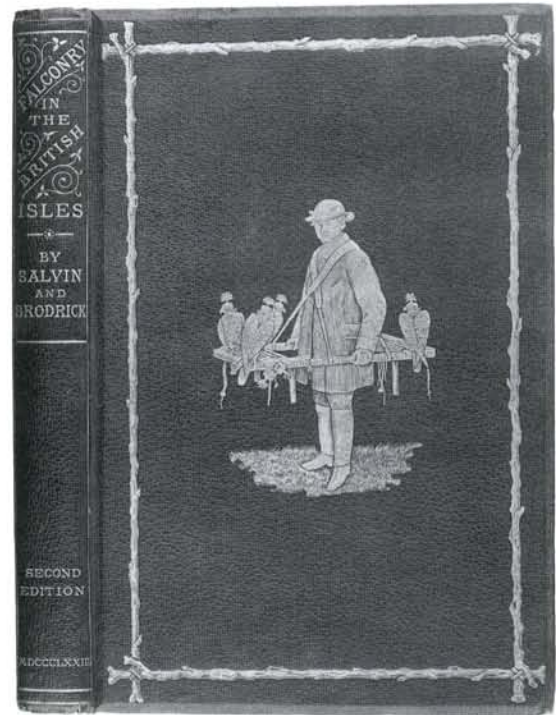
Brodrick left Northumberland to live first at Bath, then Ilfracombe (from which place he obtained eyass peregrines from Lundy Island for himself and his friends), then he moved to Budleigh Salterton. In 1868 he made his final move to Little Hill, Chudleigh, Devon, where the neighbourhood proved unsuitable for flying falcons so he reluctantly gave up the prac-

tice, though he retained his birds as pets. He may have reached the age when he could no longer qualify as a falconer by his own standards, for he had written that he should (possess strength, health and courage" to enable him to run, leap, ascend hills, dash through rivers and fields, press through thickets with agility "that he may be able to attend his Hawks in their flights and serve them with game whilst they are making their aerial circlings above his head". Since he had also listed all the best grasslands to be found for hawking in the British Isles, he would have known what the territory around Chudleigh was like before moving there.

He was still lecturing on the subject in 1881, and for this purpose wrote to Salvin to enquire "what hawks had killed" in his district. Brodrick died at Little Hill, on 21 December 1888, leaving an estate valued at £22,984. He had been able to indulge an expensive hobby, and still leave a fortune, but he left more than wealth behind. He had shared his knowledge and experience, in the true spirit of falconers of all time, and his two books are a legacy which we can still enjoy today.

The Author of this article, Christine E Jackson has written a biography entitled *Prideaux John Selby - The Gentleman Naturalist*.

It is published by Spredden Press 1992. ISBN 1-871-739-26-8.



This second edition copy of Salvin & Brodricks' "Falconry in the British Isles" sold at Bonhams for £1300

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"...HAS THE STRING BROKEN?"

Michael Robins - L.R.K.

In my part of the country, a rehabilitators' work is centred firmly around a very limited number of species. Predictably, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl and Little Owl comprises my staple diet of casualties. Whilst I am very pleased to deal with every one of those "common" birds it is always of slightly more interest when something a little unusual comes along. The occasional Long-eared Owl, Buzzard or recovered Lanner, gives one a break from the normal routine.

In a different part of the country, of course, what is unusual for me to see could be a regular. So, what constitutes a special bird for me may be old hat to another rehabilitator. I doubt, however, that there are many who could claim that they would be able to treat a Red Kite as just another casualty. When one was referred to me earlier this year I found it quite difficult to regard it as such, and had to keep reminding myself that the basics of first-aid applied to a Kite just as they would to a Kestrel. It was a very special bird, but it wasn't, if you can understand that! This particular Kite was perhaps both unfortunate and fortunate. It was hit by a vehicle whilst feeding on carrion in the road, but the accident was seen by someone who immediately scooped the bird up,

thus starting the rehabilitation process almost as the injury occurred. Within a few minutes the Kite was in the temporary care of a falconer who is not a rehabilitator, but did the right thing and put the bird in a quiet, warm box, before ringing me.

As I was at work, and some forty miles away, it took me a while to get to the bird, but as "leaving it alone" is a normal part of initial treatment that was no great problem. A brief examination whilst administering some liquid lactate seemed to indicate no obvious bone injury, but the Kite was subdued and concussion seemed very likely. I was later to learn that this subdued behaviour is absolutely typical of the species, when handled, and that in itself presents advantages and disadvantages, as will become clear later.

My vet had been alerted whilst I was en route to collect the Kite, and he very kindly stayed at his surgery to examine the bird when really he should have been elsewhere.

A thorough examination, and several x-rays, revealed nothing drastic in the way of injuries, other than a possible minor neck problem and spinal concussion.

The Kite bore wing tags and a B.T.O. ring, and enquiries revealed that it was part of the release pro-

gramme run by English Nature and had originated from the Oxfordshire area.

The investment by the charity in one or two large hospital units at my premises now came to fruition, as one needs somewhat larger accommodation for a Kite than my normal occupants. For the first two days the Kite lay flat out apparently unable to move legs or wings, and it did not change position in between feeding times, which had to be done by crop tube. On the third day it was noticeable that the bird did move about in the unit, albeit that this movement was not seen. It was about this time that it dawned on me that the Kite was deliberately playing possum.

If, on entering the hospital, I sneaked up to the hospital cage, I could just about catch a glimpse of the bird dropping flat from a semi-upright position. If I made a noise on entering, it would be prone before I could see it! It was making progress, therefore, and at this point I decided to provide some diced rabbit and see if it would feed itself. It did, and things moved on very well from there. However, the possum playing was a help in one way in that the Kite

never used its feet or beak aggressively, making it easy to handle, but a problem in another way. How did one decide when it was well enough to go to the next stage of its recovery?

It was a bit of a quandary, and "try it and see" became the solution. The Kite was transferred to an aviary on the sixth day and was then closely observed to assess when it was back to sufficiently good health to release.

Part of the assessment took into consideration the manner in which a Red Kite finds much of its food (i.e. carrion) and hence it does not need the advanced level flying ability of many other raptors.

All seemed well, and on the ninth day after injury the Kite was released back whence it came.

It was very satisfying, and I thank all those who gave me their help and advice in the short, but rather tense, time the Kite was with us. If you wonder why this article is titled as it is, the explanation is thus. When I asked permission of my boss to leave work so that I could assist with a Kite he said, "Why, has the?". I have asked to be spared from working with such people!



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OFF THE FIST

MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD TAKES A LOOK AT FLYING GOLDEN EAGLES FROM THE GLOVE.

The British falconry community is currently showing a good deal of interest in Golden Eagles. With this has come a renewed debate on flying styles: for some, soaring is the only way; for others, it's fist flights. Really it much depends upon how you have been educated and the type of ground at your disposal. For example, Scotland, with its high, heather moorland and mountain hares,

Immediately a number of problems face the eagle owner. Firstly, an adult hare possesses phenomenal speed. Secondly, it can match this with agility. But most importantly, the golden eagle is not designed for this type of hunting. In the wild state, its attacks are launched from above: it is not the eagle's way to accelerate after quarry from a stand still. To combat this the falconer must look to

manoeuvrability still has to be dealt with. An eagle that is trained for straight line performance alone, will be terribly outmatched by an adult hare. The best solution is to fly the bird in woodland. If conditioned from an early age, a golden eagle will fly with amazing ease in this seemingly alien environment. What's more, it will hunt here too. The procedure is very much like that used for a Goshawk

dramatic chases, it has to do with catching, pure and simple. The onus is on you to make the correct decisions and, if the wrong choice is made too frequently, the penalty can be a disillusioned bird. This is where many would-be hare hawkers go wrong - repeated flights, repeated failure and very quickly commitment is lost.

I have only scratched the surface of eagle training, but no doubt many readers will be wondering of it's all worth it. After all, there is still a big lump of a bird to carry around. Well, in an effort to balance things a little, let's look at a flight or two.

A small group of eagle owners are out for a day's sport on gently undulating farmland. The terrain rises and falls in long, shallow sweeps and, while easing down one of these, a hare is flushed. A shout goes up, "Eagle Free" and a male is on the wing. It's a long slip but the angle of the ground favours the bird and the distance between it and its quarry shrinks rapidly. But the eagle is travelling rather

of buteo, the bird follows on through the trees; and the skill it develops will stand it in good stead when it comes to flying hares over open ground.

This type of preparation will go a long way towards getting an inexperienced eagle ready for the hawking field. But now there is one more requirement - lots of hares. If the right



A hare changes gear to meet the challenge. Photo. L. Uhlir

would be a good argument for soaring, as would rabbit flights on the fells of Northern England. On the other hand, flat arable ground and brown hares dictate a different approach. With a few exceptions, high soaring flights are not possible in flat country and so the eagle must be flown from the fist.

In Central Europe (where I first worked with eagles) its nearly all fist flying. For the continental eagle owner, rabbits and mountain hares are not really a consideration. The former are disregarded by choice, the latter because of limited distribution and the high altitude settings they inhabit. In Central Europe the brown hare is king and it must be dealt with on its own terms.

equally unnatural training techniques and commit himself to almost daily flying. Indeed, in this respect the eagle has to be handled as if it were a giant falcon. The type of exercise required can be provided in several ways, from employing an Olympic sprinter as lure-puller, to using a motorcycle or horse. At one time or another, I have tried most ideas but a friend living in a very area of Germany has come up with something quite new. He gets his eagle to follow his car as he drives along agricultural roads and tracks. No lure is used, the bird just follows, knowing that it will be rewarded at the end of the session.

Speed and fitness can be tackled in this way but the Hare's

number of suitable slips can't be guaranteed, then the training will have been in vain. Yes, luck plays a part, but, as they say, its better to make your own. A first year eagle is way out of its depth when tackling anything but the easiest of hares; and so these are the ones you must seek out. This early hunting has nothing to do with 'sporting flights and



This Austrian golden eagle is flown very successfully from the fist.

Photo M. Hollinshead

too quickly. Wind from behind is driving him at a terrific pace and there's going to be no chance for him to readjust his line. If the quarry jinks it will be lost. But it doesn't, it holds its course and the eagle hits it like a sledgehammer. Fur flies from the target as the impact lifts it off the ground, momentum carrying the eagle several paces further. A glancing blow, but the hare is badly injured and, although it makes an effort to run, its pursuer is on it in a flash.

Staying with fast flights, let's look at another. This time the action is truly downhill and at break-neck speed. The hare is taken quickly but the eagle's determination has both parties crashing over and over in the dust. The force tears them apart, the shock of the encounter leaving them visually stunned, but the spell is soon broken as the hare once again takes to its heels. The eagle is quickly in pursuit and, catching a bit of wind, manages to put in another attack. The hare seems disorientated and the contest over, but, as its pursuer comes in for the kill it flattens out and the eagle shoots over the top. Now it heads off again, this time unchallenged.

To finish, something a little less dramatic is perhaps in order. We are on a vast plain when suddenly, ahead of us, a hare is up and running. Launching from the glove, a female eagle bursts into action, each downstroke of her huge wings carrying her across the terrain with decep-



A sharp right hand turn puts the hare out of danger.

Photo L. Uhlir

tive speed. bold and obvious, she looks out of place against the featureless backdrop. Her intended prey looks conspicuous too and now, for the first time, feels vulnerable. Swinging left, its line is followed by the eagle and, in the split second that it realises its peril, it's too late. Tipping over on one wing, the eagle sails seem to melt into the earth as the two combatants come together.

Well, is it worth the training? I think it just might be.

Editors note: A vivid insight into Golden Eagle falconry is given in the authors latest book, *Hawking with Golden Eagles*, available from:

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OLD ABBEY BOOKS, SLANE, COUNTY MEATH IRELAND

Ginger Lu-Lu - A Revelation

In the Autumn '95 issue of Falconers Magazine, I told of Ginger's accident, how she had flown across the road and collided with a van! She survived, but was badly concussed and had damaged her wing tendons. There followed several weeks of intensive nursing:

Ginger Lu-Lu is now recovering. We are still nursing her in safe, draught proof corner in the kitchen, on a makeshift perch, as close to the ground as possible to avoid any risk of her falling off. Newspapers are spread around her perch to save the area from lethal mutes. As the effects of her injuries wore off and she gained in self confidence, Ginger began to play. she would stretch her head down from the perch and grab at the newspaper. She often missed. Determined not to be out done she would pounce, grab the paper tightly in her talons, pulling and twisting, until a piece came away. Then back onto the perch with her prize. Her 'quarry' held tightly with one foot, or two if it was particularly slippery, she would puncture the paper with her talons, ripping at it with her beak, sending flurries of tiny newsprint flying around the kitchen. she threw small pieces upwards, catching them smartly on their way down, only to send them flying again. What a game! When the paper game palled she would look at me quizzically - head tilted to one side, or even upside down! I would sit close to her, stroking her legs and feet. Not once did she attempt to 'foot' me. Her response was to 'nibble' at my fingers! Was she trying to preen my fingers or just being friendly? I could hardly believe that such a business-like beak could be manipulated so gently and tenderly. A very special bond grew between us.

Towards the end of her convalescence she spent nearly all her waking hours preening. It was exhausting to watch! The meticulous effort and concentration were never ending. It just went on and on and on...a few little downy feathers floated around. Was it worth all that effort? Ginger obviously thought so.

We scrutinised her daily, which was easy when we were in such close proximity. Her wounds had healed and she was using her wing when she played with the newspaper. But could she fly? Did she have enough confidence? We had to be sure. We went back to basics. first just a hop from the perch to a tempting chick leg held in a gloved fist. She hesitated, tried to stretch out and grab it but couldn't reach. Oh well - here goes - she jumped and made it - just! Ginger recovered her balance and devoured the leg. The second time it was easy. Next day I took her for a gentle stroll around the garden with a tiring. She soon relaxed and even enjoyed it. i tethered her to a bow perch under the shade of the apple trees for the rest of the day. But the big question still remained. Could she or would she fly? Remember, it was nearly three weeks since her accident. (It seemed so much longer.)

Filled with trepidation, the following morning, I put on the creance and took her outside. She stepped up onto the fence post and I asked her to fly a few yards into a gentle breeze. the juicy, familiar chick leg tempted her. I whistled. She looked, twitched her tail, looked and hesitated. finally she gave a terrific push with her legs and took off. It was back to the flight of a baby. Her wings spread but she lost height. Her forward momentum carried her to my fist, but below it. A quick backward somersault and she caught hold of my gauntlet. I gave her a helping hand to climb up - she'd made it!. Enough for one day. The next day, the same distance. No hesitation today. ginger flew to my fist in style. Relief! She could do it. Can a bird look pleased with itself? I know Ginger did. (and so did I!) We tried a greater distance, her response was fast and confident. Des recorded the event on video and we pored over it, playing the film frame by frame. Was her left wing still drooping? Was she using it properly? Were there any signs of her injury? No, None. We decided that this would be her last night in the kitchen. tomorrow she goes free

to complete her moult.

Next day in the aviary we removed her anklets and bells. It was like cutting the umbilical cord. She stood still and quiet, then stepped onto her perch and watched as we slowly retreated. She was alone. I put her food down the feed tube. We stood outside listening. there soon followed a reassuring 'plop' as she landed on the quail.

During the following days we watched quietly through our little spy hole in the side of the aviary. she was preening endlessly. Did her wing look different? Ah. Her fourth primary was lying on the ground. Five day slater she shed another. Her moult had begun in earnest. I began to understand the importance not only of a high protein diet, but also the need for a seclusion aviary and why this had been drilled into us. ginger was too busy with the serious business of removing itchy old feathers and growing pristine new ones to be bothered with non-essential, interfering humans.

Later, after more feathers had dropped, we saw the first new feather appear. It was an amazing sight. Only an inch or so long. The blood filled shaft looked like a streak of quicksilver, topped by a point of dark brown, almost black, feather. Over the next few days the silver shaft grew longer and the dark feather began to fan out, in contrast to her beautiful ginger immature primaries. The second new feather appeared on her left

wing - the same gleaming quicksilver tipped with intense brown. Would the others be the same? She would look spectacular if they were.

Her appetite increased.

Every old feather was scratched, pulled, twisted and tweaked till it submitted and gracefully floated to the ground. She was covered with ever changing streaks of quicksilver against a growing background of burnt umber. She was looking thin and moth-eaten beside her appetite.

After two weeks Ginger started on her tail feathers. It did look strange when she spread her tail. There were gaps - like a child losing its front milk teeth! The new tail feathers began to grow. They too had a silver shaft but were tipped with a pure white tuft, later followed by the now expected, dark brown. The old tail feathers were grubby and stained by comparison. they would have made a good advertisement - the "before and after" for a brand of washing powder. Over the next fourteen weeks, the new feathers were oiled and preened and, even the ones with a mind of their own, were painstakingly put in their proper places! We watched with bated breath. Would she lose her ginger eyebrows which had given her such a delightful, smiling and mischievous countenance? Dark feathers had grown over the bald patch on the side of her head, which was a legacy from her accident, but a few light ones remained. Or were they new ones? We had to wait and see.



Her panel and legs moulted next. I kept many of the feathers. They were cream, with vibrant ginger and brown horizontal stripes, while her breast feathers had a dark brown vertical streak. Her tiny shoulder feathers, turning from brilliant ginger through grey to white at their base, with their contrasting deep brown feather shaft, looked as if they had been painted with swift brush strokes onto a piece of blotting paper. Oh, how delicate and colourful her old feathers were.

The new feathers gradually took over from the old. As Ginger preened them into place they gained a glorious powdered sheen.

The larger feathers dealt with, she started on her down feathers, they were tiny and so light that they defied the laws of gravity, wafting about in the breeze, clinging to the first thing they touched - the wire enclosing the top of the aviary, the wooden sides. They were everywhere! It brought to mind the little glass ball I had as a child which was transformed into a gentle snow flurry when I shook it. To pick up a feather was like chasing the end of the rainbow. I would grasp one in my finger tips ready to go in a bucket, but as I let go it stuck to my fingers or floated off again! Cleaning the aviary took longer and longer! One very hot day, I found a way to defeat those tiny down feathers. I sprayed them with water from a hosepipe and they fell to the ground, sodden and collectable. Ginger was fascinated by the spray. I was careful to keep it away from her lest it cause her any stress. But curiosity got the better of her. She flew over and landed on the front perch near the fine spray. I held it steady, casting a cascade of water over the end of the perch. She sidled closer to it. Droplets began to fall on her wing. Intrigued, she tentatively spread her wing further into the water. She moved along the perch until she was fully under the shower and spread both wings wide so that the water cascaded down them in silver rivulets. Her beak open to catch a drink. She was enjoying this! She beat her wings gently for a few moments then hopped out of the water, turned around and sidled across - to have her back done. I could see and study every feather as

she spread her wings once more. When she had had enough she hopped into the sunshine. I told Des about it. "You're exaggerating" he said. He was present and amazed at the next shower session. By then her feathers were nearly all hard panned. The silver shafts had gone.

Ginger seemed to enjoy the spring cleaning of her aviary, chuntering and almost purring happily. As I entered, she would fly to the back perch to greet me. I would work my way to the front and she would follow. She would stand on one leg and perch above me as, on hands and knees, I picked up castings and feathers from the floor. She'd wait till she thought I wasn't looking - then a quick cock of the tail, take aim, and a mute would be jet propelled in my direction. It was a game of duck and dive.

Her moult seems complete now. She looks magnificent.

Although her eyebrows have darkened a little she still has her light-hearted, mischievous expression. Her shoulders glint red and gold. Her deep brown feathers all have the slightest of cream tips to them, contrasting with the startling white tips of her tail feathers and the cream and ginger striped feathers on her legs. She still likes to "nibble" at my fingers and hands, and chunters delightedly when I enter the aviary. She's keen to be out and about again and every so often will gently climb onto the left fist if I rest it on her perch. If I couldn't see her on my fist, even without a glove on, I would hardly know she was there!

"ROLL ON SEPTEMBER"

Those were the concluding words in my last article. I could say my lack of understanding of the moult wasn't my fault! Few books describe the moult, they tell you in principle what happens (which is invaluable). But watching her first hand, has been a joy and revelation. Not once was she ever stressed. It has only been possible thanks to Gingers laid back attitude. Is this a consequence of the days we spent in close proximity after her accident? Or just the natural easygoing disposition of a Harris Hawk?

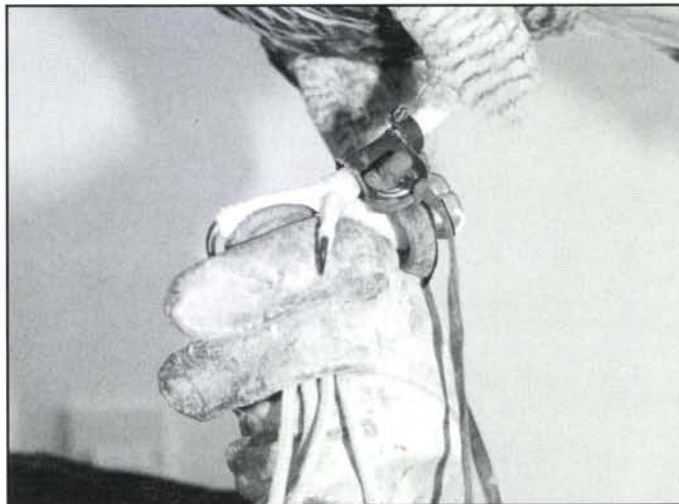
In case your wondering, she was definitely parent reared!
August '95

**NICKY
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FANCY FOOTWORK

I hope you can help me with my female Harris Hawk, she flies and hunts very well and I always change her jesses from mews to flying, but this where I am having a problem. As I remove the mews jesses she keeps moving her feet about, making it difficult to put in the flying jesses. Is there any way of stopping this?

Yours sincerely
Mrs M Freeman.



This is a common problem, especially with Harris Hawks. There is no way of actually stopping her moving her feet, but I have found that by fitting permanent flying jesses, attached directly to the eyelet in the aylmeri jesse, (see Photo), they can be held while removing and replacing the mews jesses. This enables you to keep the birds feet still and removes the need to put in flying jesses.

Yours Ed.

STUDY ON INTERNAL PARASITES IN MERLINS

SUE DEWAR

As reported at the Hawk & Owl Trust/Raptor Research Foundation Conference held in Canterbury, September 1993, the coccidial infection *Caryospora neofalconis* has become an increasing and more significant cause of sudden death in young, captive merlins, than ever before.

Together with Neil Forbes, one of the top raptor veterinary surgeons in the UK, I am undertaking a study into this infection which involves collecting faecal samples from as many captive merlins as possible. Our concern is whether the infection is present in wild merlins. If it is, is this a factor in merlin population dynamics? If it is not, then there is a particular risk in releasing captive-bred merlins.

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the best methods of control of the disease which is found mainly in merlins. The disease characteristically affects young birds, causing sudden severe signs of collapse and death within 24-36 hours. Not only is it important to improve our knowledge of the disease, but also our techniques of treatment. If, in the future, it was considered appropriate for captive-bred merlins to be released into the wild it is imperative that no disease risk be introduced into the wild population.

All keepers of captive merlins and merlin hybrids have already been contacted through the DOE and asked to participate in the study. Samples will also be collected from wild roost sites, and could be provided from wild disabled birds during the rehabilitation period. Although in the former case it would not be possible to identify individual birds from these samples, the data is needed to confirm our current belief that the infection is not present in wild merlins. If you are studying wild sites, are involved in rehabilitating merlins, or keep captive merlins and would like to help please would you contact me urgently on 10734 696501. Obviously, if any samples from captive birds show signs of the infection the owner will be the first to know.



Above: This female prairie falcon regularly drinks, regardless of whether she has a bath. Some times when filling the bath she will actually take water from the end of the hosepipe.
(Photo. D Wilson)

Below:

1. A HOP
2. A SKI
3. AND A DUNK

This Redtail regularly lays in its' bath water. Its' enjoyment is obvious.
(Photos: Alan Gates)



BATING

TRAVELLING

BREEDING

STR

HE

DEHYDR

ED. BIRDS OF PREY DO DRINK WATER!

Initially I was going to write an article purely about birds of prey and drinking. This was due to the fact that people have been going to, mainly outside displays, ie game fairs, fetes etc. and seeing birds with no baths. Some people have been told that the birds do not need water as they do not drink. I wanted to illustrate, for those that were unsure, or unaware, that birds of prey do in fact drink. Upon researching the subject I discovered that the whole issue of birds of prey and water is much more involved than I realised. With this in mind I retitled the article DEHYDRATION.

There are several reasons for a bird losing water. The most obvious of these is heat, but there are other causes of which people may be unaware. Long journeys, stress and the act of flying even, can all contribute to loss of moisture.

It must be said that the outside display contains most, or all, of these criteria and so this is one of the times when provision of water is most important.

Some birds, under these circumstances, will not drink or bathe, even if they are dehydrating, so steps must be taken to ensure that they are alright. This can include spraying the bird with a hosepipe, using the end of your finger and pointing the hose upwards to simulate rain, some birds will bathe in the sprinkled water, or spray the area surrounding the birds, ie. the grass, especially when it is very hot and dry. Display givers will say that it is impractical to give a bird a bath if it is going to be flown as they can't fly when they are wet but, and I quote "Falcons, if they are not offered a bath before flying, especially in hot weather, may refuse to fly at quarry" (lure?) "and go off looking for water. So you should allow up to an hour and a half for bathing, drying and preening before you take them out. At times falcons have been lost because their owners either did not know this fact, or ignored it." (Philip Glasier) The bath can be removed the appropriate length of time before the bird is to be flown and replaced afterwards. We should not accept excuses for failure to provide baths. Speak up!

Upon speaking to several people I have discovered that their birds drink regularly after being flown, and they are all perfectly healthy. It must be said that not all birds drink, and obviously they do obtain all the moisture they need from their food but you must bear in mind that a bird in training has its food intake reduced and so its' moisture intake will be reduced also. Nick Fox, in his new book, Understanding the Bird of Prey says, "Another point to bear in mind, especially as it is often the hottest time of the year when hawks are taken up from the moult, is dehydration. Birds adapted to a temperate climate need, very roughly, sixteen times as much water for evaporation to keep cool at 44 degrees centigrade than at 1 degree centigrade. When a hawk is burning energy in flying or bating, it is heating itself up and has to pant to cool down and this loses a lot of water through the surfaces of the air

FLYING

FREEZING
FOOD

FOOD
REDUCTION

sacs. Some lose a lot of water during car journeys or other possible stress situations and even if water is available some may be too wild or stressed to drink. Deep freezing has a tendency to dry out the food and therefore warm tapwater is often better for thawing food than a slow drying heat. In hot weather, a bath should always be available and the hawk should be kept out of direct sunlight." It must also be pointed out that if you are feeding your bird wild caught, or even specially bred, food, this may itself be dehydrated before it is killed. This coupled with the loss of moisture during freezing will lead to a drastic reduction in the hawks' fluid intake. Small raptors have been known to die because of the lack of moisture in pigeon meat.

Each bird's daily fluid intake should be 50ml, per kg. A recent article in the NAFA journal goes into this subject quite seriously saying the dehydration is 'a significant component of midwinter anaemia' it also states that 'Water is commonly overlooked as an essential part of a raptor's diet, especially in winter', and "some falconers, wrongly assume, that hawks get enough water from their food." It advises soaking the food, or injecting the food with water. Also some birds in Japan and eagles in Kazakhstan have been taught to drink from a bowl.

A bath is the most usual way of providing a bird with water and they will use it for bathing and drinking, but just standing in the water can provide the bird with valuable moisture and cool it down. In the Middle East they use specially made blocks that have a hollow middle. This is filled with water so the bird can stand in or over it when in danger from dehydration.

Although it is the hot weather which seems to encourage conditions in which a bird can dehydrate we must not forget that they need water in the winter too. Again Philip Glasier says - "Do not think that the cold weather will stop a falcon bathing. I have seen them bathe in icy cold weather with snow lying all around them."

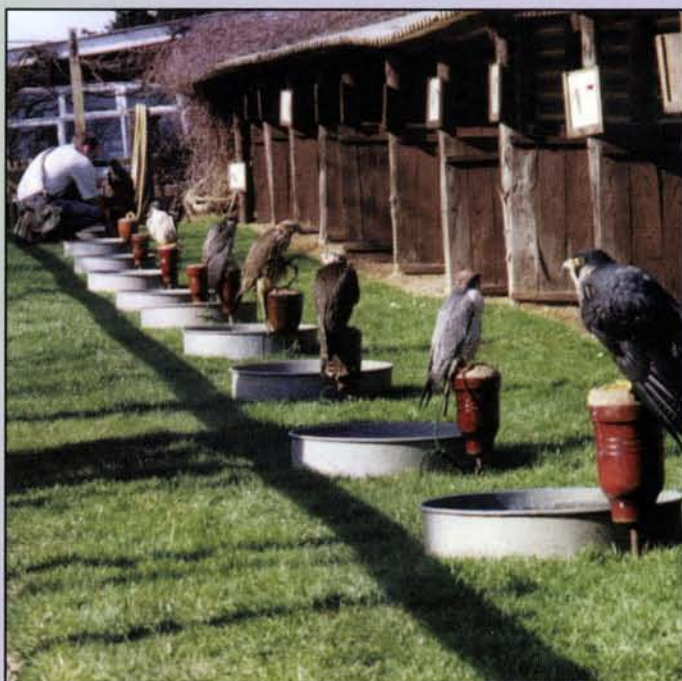
The other time in a bird's life when water is very important is during breeding. I read in Diana Durman-Walters book that "Females have an increased need of water when they are laying eggs. It is quite noticeable that females at this time will stand in their bath scooping large beakfuls of fresh water. This is probably a direct response to the egg's requirement for water just prior to calcification." The other thing to note is that the humidity levels of an incubating bird must be kept just right, (as those of you who have used incubators will know) Standing in the water will not only cool the bird's feet, as they have been very near the hottest part of the bird, but also take moisture into the birds plumage thus aiding the incubation process. Baths must always be kept clean and filled regularly with fresh water, and they must be positioned in such a way that the bird cannot foul them with their mutes.



Above: Gorby, a male Golden Eagle, belonging to Andrew Knowles-Brown, pictured drinking from his bath water in sub-zero temperatures, whilst surrounded by snow. Birds should be offered water during the winter as this is a time when food is being reduced for training purposes. This is one of the causes of dehydration. (Photo: A. Knowles-Brown)

Below: What a marvellous sight. This is a row of falcons at the National Birds of Prey Centre, where birds have access to water at all times during the day. Whether they are flying, static or in aviaries.

(Photo: D Wilson)



REHAB FOR RAPTORS

At the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre

Brynly Roberts

Wendy Slaytor spends every day of the week ministering to a wide variety of wild birds at the non-profit Alberta Birds of Prey Centre. Explaining her rigorous schedule, 62 year-old Wendy just smiled, and said "Gods' creatures need care seven days a week."

Formerly of Hertfordshire and London, England, Wendy Slaytor came to Canada in 1979, later settling in the small town of Coaldale in southern Alberta. This is where Wendy and co-founder Colin Weir, began the provinces first privately-run, birds of prey, rehabilitation and release programme in 1984. With a combined experience of over 60 years,

Wendy and Colin are considered to be among the most knowledgeable individuals working in the field.

Wendy and Colin initiated many of the first provincial programmes, including a nesting inventory, artificial nesting programme, and a captive breeding and release programme, directed towards the protection and recovery of the Burrowing Owl population. This harmless little bird, which feeds primarily on grasshoppers and mice, and lives underground in abandoned gopher holes, is classified as a threatened species on the Canadian prairies. The Centre has reintroduced captive-bred Burrowing Owls into areas of Canada where the birds have become virtually extinct. Wendy and Colin have also conducted nest surveys for the Ferruginous Hawks in the environmentally sensitive Milk River region of southern Alberta.

Injured birds are routinely turned over to



Wendy Slaytor, holding Albert, prior to one of the flying displays.

Wendy in a cooperative effort with Alberta Fish and Wildlife, a division of the provincial government. Her patients are first assessed by an area animal and pet clinic, and returned to the Centre for rehabilitation. An assortment of Red-Tailed Hawks, Golden Eagles, colourful American Kestrels, and owls of all sizes come under Wendy's care.

"What we do here is give the birds physical therapy," said Wendy, her tanned face wreathed in a possessive smile. "They may have a broken leg or wing, and are the same as people in a hospital. They like privacy, and don't want to be on display." Occasionally birds are kept at the Centre to act as foster parents for orphaned nestlings that have been brought in, but the majority are released into the wild as soon as they are rehabilitated.

"Birds of prey are essentially wild creatures," Wendy continued. "It doesn't matter how long they stay in captivity, if they came from the wild, they go back to the wild with no problem whatsoever.

What we do is fatten them up for two or three weeks before releasing them. For a bird, the first priority is food, but if they are well fed they have time to adapt to the area they are released into."

Wendy speaks with obvious sadness concerning a permanent resident of the Centre. The small Merlin Falcon was imprinted on humans by the time it was turned over to the Centre, and cannot be released. Wendy explained the problem by saying "It was taken from the nest as a very small chick and

just dumped. Someone tried to make a pet out of it, and you can't make pets out of them."

As Wendy reminds us, birds of prey are unemotional creatures and will not become attached to humans as dogs, cats or even budgies might. It's part of the message she delivers to schools, colleges, universities and community groups each winter. The ongoing public education to promote environmental awareness and conservation of wildlife are strong components of the Centre.

Wendy believes the Centre is responding to the plight of many species of birds in trouble due to mankind

upsetting the balance of nature. Recalling how a visitor said he shot any owl or hawk he saw, "Because everybody does it", Wendy took the time to remind the visitor how owls and hawks rarely bother domestic birds and animals where humans are present. "For example, Great Horned Owls have babies toward the end of March before migrating birds return or the gophers are out. A nesting pair of owls must work very hard while catching thousands of mice to feed their babies during the three months they remain in the nest."

Considerable, personal financial commitments, including start-up costs and operating expenses, were undertaken by Colin Weir in getting the Centre operating. Assistance has also been provided by the town of Coaldale, local municipalities, a one-time provincial grant, as well as individuals, schools and corporations, reflecting the publics' interest



This North American Kestrel awaits release back into the wild.



A Red-tailed Hawk enjoying the sunshine.

and commitment to the success of the Centre.

Meanwhile, Colin continues working full-time as an accountant as the Centre is a non-profit operation with all proceeds from their work going into the facility and making necessary expansions. Volunteers trained by Wendy work with the birds, as well as offering information to visitors, and have become an integral part of the programme.

Over 200 silhouettes of hawks and owls with the names of sponsors cover the walls of the Centre, attesting to the success of an Adopt-a-Bird programme. Visitors from all over Canada, the United States, and even England have made sizeable contributions.

The Centre has been open five years, with over \$2.5 million invested in buildings and development of the 70 treed acres which includes a large body of water. The natural environment required two years to develop, and has become a nesting site for Canada Geese, Mallards, Hungarian Partridge and Killdeer. Many other species may also be seen stopping by to take advantage of what has become a natural wildlife refuge.

When the weather is favourable visitors to the Centre may witness exercise flights by hawks and falcons every 90 minutes. Following Wendy's trained falcon, Albert, is a thrilling experience as he drifts effortlessly among warm air currents high above the prairie town of Coaldale, before making a breath-taking, 60 mph stoop as he hunts a whirling lure Wendy has prepared for him. "It's good for the soul to watch him soar

free," Wendy said, adding rather wistfully, "He doesn't come back because he loves me. He comes back because he trusts me." According to Wendy, man and birds have always interacted, and falconry is the oldest sport known to man. Hunting with birds of prey to replenish the larder was very common in the early days, and nobleman to common man developed a special rapport with the swift, natural hunters. "Birds of prey are Nature's culling machine," Wendy went on to say, "They kill the weak and unwary."

"Back in England in the 60's, when I first started taking my falcons into the fields to hunt, I realised it was my hawk that was going into a strange area. It had to be pretty smart to hunt while wearing bells telegraphing its every move. I just loved to fly my falcon and see it soar up so high. It made me feel so free." Claiming to be too old to tramp through fields, Wendy still flies her falcon every day, but these days Albert hunts a lure made up of beef heart and feathers.

As visitors leave the Birds of Prey Centre, they are likely to experience a warm feeling within themselves, a reawakened sense of awe, not only of God's winged creatures, but of the determined energy Wendy Slaytor and Colin Weir have shown in preserving something that has long been

a part of our lives. Too often we ignore the order of life around us, but fortunately, there are people like Wendy and Colin who help us get on track again.



Adult, North American, Bald Eagle.
A resident of the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre

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HARPIGORNIS MOOREI

Extinct Haasts Eagle.

DIANNA DURMAN-WALTERS

The Sunday Times is a luxury to read here at the best of times, as the opportunity to just sit and relax is generally at a minimum. Scanning the holiday pages I noticed that there were remarkably cheap return fares to Australia. Thinking of different continents is pleasant enough, but the realisation that you can physically reach such shores without having to win the lottery had immediate appeal.

In the past four years we had student guests from both countries and they had generated an interest to visit "Down Under". In addition one of our dog pups was scheduled to go down to New Zealand so it was decided we could combine the two trips in one go. In November 1995 we landed in Australia. This time I promised myself it wasn't going to be a trip that seems to always revolve around birds of prey. It really was going to be a break. I guess I was just kidding myself. The inevitable attraction of seeing unknown raptors was bound to grip my attention. Australia has an enormous diversity of birds of prey, most of which cannot be seen in private or public collections in this country. In fact 25 breeding species exist in Australia (with two breeding species and one a non-breeding visitor in New Zealand). This vast continent simply cannot be explored within the confines of one month and seeing birds in their natural environment had to be condensed into

viewing the majority of these species at Featherdale Wildlife Park on the outskirts of Sydney.

From tropical rainforests to more temperate climates, Australia is a modern, exciting country, that you could easily spend a lot of time in. Just 2 hours away by air is New Zealand. A country that is as different in its' landscape and geography as it is in climate.

North and South Island area as dissimilar as the Mediterranean is to Norway. In the north where the climate is sub-tropical, it is an amazing complex of giant Kauri forest, vast beaches (one appropriately named the 90 mile beach) hot springs, geysers and volcanic action.

The south is cooler, with fjords to the west, coupled with vast temperate forest. Vineyards in the north and the feeding grounds for male sperm whales to the east. New Zealand could in fact be anywhere that you are familiar with. It is very akin to Scotland in geography as indeed many Scots and Irish settled in New Zealand and their surnames are as common as Maori names, but it is its' flora and fauna that makes it unique.

Its' medley of ground nesting species, coupled with only two known species of birds of prey, don't exactly excite the imagination of the European falconer, yet it is here that the largest known eagle in the world existed. The Museum of New Zealand, in Wellington, is the resting place of some of the remnants of these Titans. Harpigornis is thought to have been the world's largest known eagle with a wingspan of approximately 2-3 metres (7.5 - 10ft) At an estimated weight of 9-13kg (20-29lbs) the bird was probably heavier in relation to wing size than any of the eagles living today. From skeletal

remains it is thought to be related to both the forest eagles of south-east Asia and to the Golden Eagles which include the Australian Wedge-Tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*). Although related to the golden eagles, which live in open country, it would have looked quite different because it lived in the forest shrubland which covered New Zealand before the coming of man. The oldest Harpigornis bones are estimated to be 35,000 years old, but the youngest come from deposits dated only 500 years old.

The largest eagle today is easily the female Harpy, weighing up to 10kgs (22lbs). A female Harpigornis weighing as much as 13kgs (29lbs) would have struck its' prey with the certainty of a high powered rifle. It is unlikely that it could soar like a vulture and would therefore be unable to take advantage of favourable winds and thermals. It would have to still hunt, waiting patiently for hours in branches high in the forest canopy. When it did launch an attack it would have swept through the forest at 60-80km per hour, just like the Harpy. Maximum speed would be essential to support the birds great weight.

The size of its legs and talons and particularly the strength equated to these illustrate it was an effective and active predator, able to kill very large prey. Recently evidence of talon marks on Moa skeletons confirmed they had certainly preyed on large ratices.

The Moa is an extinct, flightless bird, which resembled the ostrich in height, weighing approximately 250kgs. (550lbs). From some remains found in swamp areas it is known that the heavy, ponderous Moa became the hapless victim of its own weight and unable to extricate itself from the mire, became easy pickings for this eagle. Eagle remains tell us that in attempting to take the Moa in these situations it too became a victim of the swamp. In the absence of mammals, one assumes Harpigornis also preyed on other flightless birds, particularly Aptornis, (extinct Rail about the size of a turkey) wekas, flightless geese, ducks etc.

It is difficult to say what its' plumage looked like, but more than likely it would have been brown or brownish grey. Flights of fancy have suggested that it had a crest and colourful plumage similar to tropical eagles. However, birds of New Zealand are not brightly coloured, which



*Harpigornis foot and leg bone.
The span is greater than a mans hand.*

DEAR EDITORS

With reference to Kevin Murphy's letter in the Winter '95 issue, I would like to take up a few points which he mentions on owls.

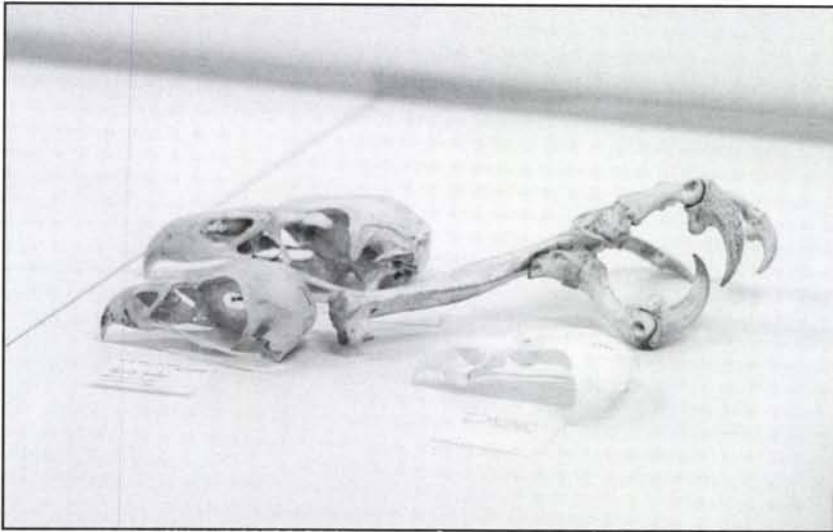
I don't intend to enlarge upon Mr Murphy's statement that little research has been undertaken to learn about the habits of captive owls. I am sure establishments such as the National Birds of Prey Centre, The Hawk Conservancy and the World Owl Centre will have plenty to say on the subject. Jemima Parry-Jones (of the former) and Tony Warburton (of the latter) are Chairpersons, respectively of the taxon advisory groups on diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey! I would certainly dispute the statement that "little breeding is achieved". Sad to say that whilst there are probably less than 5,000 breeding pairs of Barn Owls remaining in the UK there are estimated to be over 20,000 in captivity. Captive Barn Owls breed like rabbits and one of the most frequent calls I receive is to ask for help when yet another brood of unwanted baby Barn Owls is looking for a home. This, of course, is why Mr Murphy sees frequent advertisements for owls in newspapers and magazines at low (sometimes give-away prices). My response to these calls, having tried to deal with the immediate problem, is to attempt to discourage them from breeding any more young owls. Some callers ask me to find homes for their owlets, some ask me to put them in touch with release schemes (so that someone else can do the work, few ask for details of how to apply for a licence to release Barn Owls themselves and those that do are often put off when they realise it is not just a matter of opening the aviary door!

The subject of release schemes has long been a thorny one, and of course the release of Barn Owls is now controlled under the Wildlife & Countryside Act. It is all too easy to decide to release captive-bred birds to the wild, but what of the released birds' future? Whilst there have undoubtedly been some extremely valuable release schemes operating in the UK, the Hawk & Owls Trust considers that the emphasis should be placed firmly on the creation of foraging habitat and provision of nest sites in order to encourage birds of prey back into areas from which they have disappeared. The Hawk & Owl Trust has been greatly encouraged by the number of sites which have been repopulated as a direct result of schemes such as Farmland, Riverside & Forestry Link Scheme and the World Owl Trust's Operation Phoenix.

As far as breeding from permanently injured birds is concerned, again, this can be valuable with the rarer schedule 4 birds, such as Merlin, Hobby, Red Kite etc., but relatively few of these find their way into the hands of most rehabilitators, and release schemes are carefully controlled. Breeding and releasing the more common species such as kestrel and Sparrowhawk could very easily put undue pressures on the wild populations of these birds, since their numbers are already high.

Finally, I am puzzled by Mr Murphy's statement that his organisation is considering breed and release schemes for Snowy owls, Long-Eared and Short-Eared owls, "if wild numbers decline to the levels of the Barn Owl." There have been no breeding records for the Snowy Owl in the UK since 1975, although there is a remnant population in the Shetland Islands. Long-Eared Owls (which are particularly elusive) are thought to number between 2,200 and 7,200 pairs, with Short-Eared at 1,000-3,500 pairs; there is insufficient foraging habitat to support larger populations of either of these species at present in the UK.

Sue Dewar

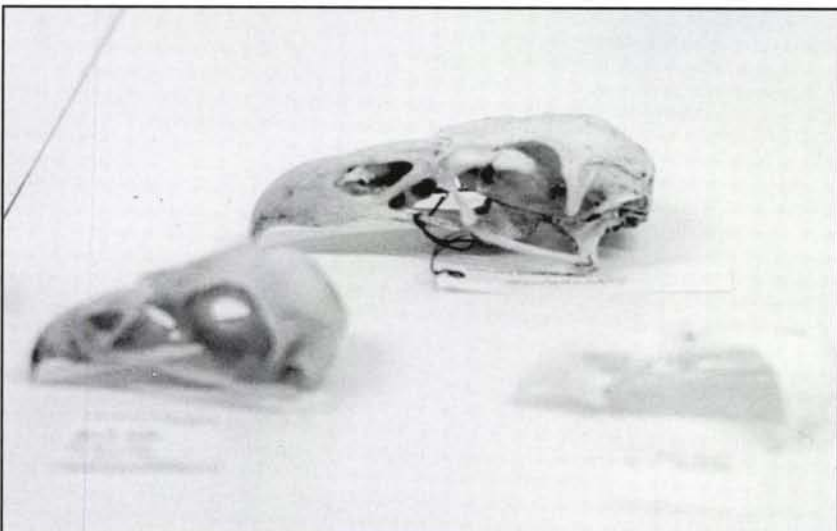


Harpigornis skull and foot lying next to a Wedgetail and Golden Eagle skull.

would suggest that it might possible have had a sombre colouration similar to many of today's forest eagles. Limestone caves at Honeycomb Hill, near Karamea, have provided the largest series of eagle bones ever collected. Over 200 bones from more than 10 individuals which lived and died in the valley between 10,000 - 20,000 years ago have been recovered. Such is the perfect condition of these, that even the fine tongue bones were intact. The large sample of bones, particularly wing and leg bones, have allowed detailed analysis of the eagles structure and habits. It is now known that the eagles which hunted Moa and geese in cool shrubland and forest of Ice Age Karamea had longer wings than those which lived around Pyramid Valley in 2500 BC, but they weighed the same. Such an enormous predator would have required an extraordinarily large hunting range and like extinct forest eagles today, its reproduction was most likely very low, representing a low population density. Climatic changes played their part in

population decline. As the climate grew warmer, wet, dense West Coast rain forest replaced drier, open forest and shrubland in the Karamea Valley. This paralleled the change in avifauna. Some Moa species moved away and new species moved in. The eagles left the valleys and never returned. They maintained a stronghold in the drier east, until the emergence of the Polynesians, whose fires and hunting exterminated the prey and destroyed the forest on which they depended.

South Island Maori tell the story of a gigantic bird which terrorised the local people capable of swooping down and carrying off men, women and children to its' eyrie. Folklore vividly recalled may be one of mankind's last faint recollections of the largest eagle that ever lived. Harpigornis may have survived just long enough to imprint its presence across the collective memory of the Maori. A forbidding shape gathering speed through the trees of the lost forests.



Harpigornis skull

Golden Eagle Skull

Wedge-tailed Eagle Skull

HAWK BOARD NEWS

HAWK BOARD MEETING, JANUARY 17th 1995

For all those who may not know who or what the Hawk Board is I will explain a little. The Hawk Board started heaven knows how many years ago, I seem to have been on it and trogging up to London for decades now, as a group of falconers, raptor keepers, rehabilitators and so on. It was formed to firstly discuss, comment and advise on the new legislation (then the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and then later to act as a voluntary body to liaise with the Government on behalf of all birds of prey and owl keepers. I stress that word 'voluntary' as the majority of people on the Hawk Board over the years have never claimed expenses and given of their time freely, the travelling up to London, a day off work, plus the follow up work achieved on making the Hawk Board work, is quite significant and not inexpensive. With the new legislation the Hawk Board has changed dramatically, and now comprises of the 10 largest falconry/breeders/ birds of prey clubs, (at least those who had the insight and interest and energy to bother to register to be a part of the HB) experts - myself included, plus representatives from the DOE, BFSS, JNCC, MAFF if we need them for something special. The Federation of Zoos, Veterinary experts and so on - if you don't know what all those initials stand for - find out - they can all affect falconry and bird of prey keeping and can help us occasionally if approached the right way.

Anyway, the Hawk Board meets approximately four times a year, usually in London as it is the easiest place for people to get to, particularly those coming down from the North. There are smaller meetings of sub-committees, often held at my Centre as it is close to several motorways and has useful facilities, these groups will be dealing with things such as the Code of Conduct produced by the BFSS, they may have an emergency meeting to deal with anti falconry matters that arise. There are many different topics that we deal with which affect people who keep birds of prey and owls, the next big one will probably be the Balai Directive being put through the EC by MAFF and the other European equivalents, then we had a nice little fright about a meeting next week of the Berne Convention who are looking into the banning of the keeping of non-indigenous species and, where they were kept, all sort of restrictions would be put on them. This we are looking into as I write.

The following notes, if you like, cover what went on at the meeting, the sort of topics that we have to deal with and should give you an idea of what the Hawk Board is doing, and how it works for those who bother to support it (are you getting the drift of my feelings yet?) and the sort of topics that your club members might want your representatives to bring up at the next meeting.

1. FUNDING

A follow-up on the minutes of the last meeting on the funds raised for the Hawk Board by the Falconers Fair in 1994 - There was a sum of £218 in the bank, which on receipt of a letter from the Hawk Board Secretary would be passed over to the Hawk Board fighting fund. The 1995 fund raising done at the Falconers Fair had already been collected. The other monies to be collected for the Hawk Board were the subscription by the Federation of Zoos.

2. THE COOK REPORT.

This was an on-going issue. A letter to the Hawk Board Chairman from the police stated that on the investigation into the corruption by the RSPB and the Roger Cook programme, no case was being brought as there was insufficient evidence to warrant a criminal investigation. On that topic a number of members of the Hawk Board were interviewed by the police to discover how the Cook Report had been put together.

3. MAFF

A small working committee was put together to work out what were the salient questions to put to a MAFF representative, as the Hawk Board intended to ask an expert from MAFF to come to the next meeting if possible to discuss the Balai Directive as it affected those who keep, and move birds of prey and owls.

4. THE BERNE STANDING COMMITTEE

A document has recently come into the hands of members of the Hawk Board which concerns us greatly. It referred to the keeping of non indigenous species - which would of course affect all of us who keep any non British birds of prey or owls. It is so specific that it suggested strong requirements for people keeping, for example Golden Eagles or Peregrines in areas where they do not occur locally in the wild. The BFSS representative phoned his Brussels counterpart during the meeting to check that they knew about the document which covers everything from animals, birds, fish, insects and plants, and necessary steps are being taken as quickly as possible to avert any forthcoming problems.

The real issue here is that the Hawk Board only found out about this committee at the eleventh hour as this is a group none of us knew about, should any bird of prey keepers get hold of any such thing in the future, let the Hawk Board know ASAP.

5. WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT STEERING GROUP.

The Hawk Board has received and accepted an invitation to participate in the contact group - this group will work with the Steering Group, although not be a part of it, to bring issues of concern to the attention of the Steering Group and hopefully, see what the Steering Group is working on.

6. POLICE WILDLIFE INSPECTORS SEMINAR.

The Hawk Board Chairman gave a presentation at this seminar, held late last year. His talk covered all aspects of hawk keeping and the problems that can be caused with inspections, the taking of blood for DNA and other related topics. Not only was his talk well received but the Hawk Board was then asked by letter to provide a list of experts round the country who would be prepared to give expert witness statements and perhaps to hold confiscated birds.

7. LEGAL ACTION

The Hawk Board heard from the BFSS what they were doing regarding a raid on a falconer in the north where TV cameras had been taken. The raid was filmed and shown on TV. The BFSS and members of the Hawk Board would be looking at the film and taking the matter further, possibly with legal action pending. The Hawk Board voiced its distaste at use the use of Video and TV companies at raids, particularly if they were shown publicly.

8. DNA TESTING

The Hawk Board has had a number of enquiries from hawk keepers on the requirements of DNA testing, particularly with respect to damage or death of a bird resulting from the taking of blood. The Hawk Board has been having dialogues with the DOE on this problem and there is to be a meeting this coming week to discuss who should accept responsibility for death or injury to birds being blood tested for DNA.

9. LRK's

The meeting ended with a discussion of the new recommendations to replace the LRK license. The recommendations for a general license for holding Schedule 4 birds were reasonable apart from the qualification for being a general license holder. These were thought to be too strict and made it almost impossible for new people to qualify. Recommendations were sent back to the DOE with their representative and it was agreed to discuss them further at the meeting next week on DNA collection.

The meeting was very long, we covered a great deal of ground and a lot of good work was done. For those of you who believe that the Hawk Board does nothing, and we all just go up to London for a jolly - you have hopefully changed your mind after reading this, for those of you who haven't changed your mind - I give up.

Signed **Jemima Parry-Jones.**
Vice Chair. Hawk Board.
Joint PR Officer.

THE HAWK BOARD ELECTION RESULTS, AUGUST 25th 1995

Elected	Votes
1. Dr Nick Fox	602
2. Jim Chick	596
3. Martin Jones	545
4. Jemima Parry-Jones	515
5. Emma Ford	417
6. Carol Scott	413

The BFSS carries out the Count for the Hawk Board. 661 voting papers were received by close of business on Friday 25th August, of which 3 papers were spoilt and were not taken into consideration in the count and a number were returned after the closing date.

A total of 1510 voting papers were sent out; this represents a new electorate of 1733 club members - however, some 223 people belong to more than one club.

The New Board held it's first meeting at the beginning of October when elections for office were held. The format of the New Hawk Board is as follows.

Chairman:

Jim Chick (elected member)

Vice Chairman

Jemima Parry-Jones (elected member)

Publicity Officers:

Jemima Parry-Jones & Emma Ford (elected

members)

Secretary & Treasurer

Derek Starkie (appointed member)

Information Officer

Sue Dewar (co-opted)

Elected members:

Dr Nick Fox

Martin Jones

Carol Scott

Club representatives

British Falconers Club

John Fairclough (840 members)

Welsh Hawking Club

Adrian Williams (239 members)

South East Falconry Group

Bill Pearson (129 members)

Raptor Breeders' Association

Geoff Dalton (113 members)

Scottish Hawking Club

Andrew Knowles-Brown (113 members)

Central Falconry & Raptor Club

John Hill (73 members)

Avon & Somerset Raptor Group

Derek Smith (53 members)

The Hawk & Owl Trust

Chris Percival (52 members)

The Northern England Falconry Club Terry

Fitzgerald (41 members)

London Hawking & Owl Club

Bill Sinclair (24 members)

Ex officio members:

Department of the Environment

Nick Williams/Bob Ford (non-voting)

JNCC

David Morgan (non-voting)

BFSS Falconry committee Chair

Nick Kester (voting)

BFSS Executive Director

Peter Voute (non-voting)

National Federation of Zoos

Ashley Smith (voting)

Due to pressure of work and personal commitments, Sue Dewar resigned after three and a half years as Secretary to the Board, and was co-opted as Information Officer. The post of Secretary will in future be combined with that of Hon. Treasurer and will be held by Derek Starkie, who can be contacted on 0181 977 0304.

Other Clubs affiliated to the Hawk Board are The Southern Counties Raptor Club (21 members), The New Forest Falconry Club (20 members) and East London Falconers (15 members). These Clubs will receive minutes of Hawk Board meetings, and the Board looks forward to welcoming any other clubs who would like to affiliate in the future.

THE INSIDIOUS THREAT TO OUR HERITAGE BY THE L.A.C.S. ROBERT PAYNE

Having grown up in the country and lived within its' confines all my life I have been fortunate enough to enjoy the many benefits it has to offer in terms of way of life and the abundance of natural flora and fauna.

Particularly of interest, from an early age, have been raptors of any sort, which led me, through a natural progression, to falconry and field sports in general. This country has very rich sporting traditions in the field, dating back many hundreds of years which have contributed to form the fabric and definition of who we are as a race.

Whilst I must agree that the prohibition of certain activities was long overdue and the need for continued vigilance must be preserved. We must now be on our guard because all forms of field sports are under threat.

Just because the high profile activities of the antis against predominantly southern hunts may make us believe that they alone are in danger and we falconers have nothing to fear, is recklessly complacent.

The fact that the hunts exist promotes a natural abundance of flora and fauna in the vast tracts of land required for the hunt. This would not be the case in the event of a ban and the intensive farming techniques that prevail already, over much of our countryside would further reduce the preferred character and topology of the land.

It is generally understood that the hunt is not an effective fox control method and that tired

argument should cease to be used in preference to the real positive arguments of the encouragement of the marginal areas, light coppice and coverts.

What is often missed is that the exponents of field sports have a very clear understanding, appreciation and respect for the countryside and are very effective custodians.

Paradoxically, for the antis it was the otter hunts that first realised the catastrophic reduction in otter numbers and applied immediate voluntary moratorium that later became legal protection.

The League Against Cruel Sports will, in my opinion, succeed in achieving the banning of fox hunting and probably very other activity that pits one animal against another. This on its own is a very significant issue.

Will LACS stop at the use of a hound against a fox, beagle against a hare, the mink hounds, or much more worrying for us a hawk against fur and feather.

There is also debate within the LACS regarding lobbying for a ban on the use of captive reared game for release. This, I believe, is what happened in a particular country in Europe and has resulted in the almost complete disappearance of game-shooting.

What approach should we, the falconry fraternity, take in response to this most ominous threat to our rightful heritage? We should look at who sponsors the LACs and assists the anti-movements Middle-class,

city dwelling, well-off conscientious objectors, together will some very well-known pop stars, who all, honestly believe they understand the countryside and its ways. The LACS are able to call upon funds and politically correct influence of such magnitude, it is not inconceivable that a future Labour Government may even be persuaded to hurry through legislation to the detriment of us all.

I believe we should be helping the BASC and BFSS in their campaign, and the recently formed Countryside Business Group, that are attempting to create an effective and coherent defence, rather than the "keep quiet and they might leave us alone" stand.

A voluntary levy system has been introduced at shoots for next season for each brace taken and we intend to do the same on our grouse moors. This we hope will, if nothing else, swell their coffers and assist their campaign.

We must also be more sensitive to public opinion, we are after all, not only in the minority but also very much in the public eye. At the 1995 Falconers Fair I was disappointed to repeatedly hear reference to the number of rabbits taken by peoples' Harris Hawks, instead of talk of the quality of flight and respect for the quarry.

I apologise now for painting a grim picture, but if we remain complacent as a body, we may find one day that we are unable to practice and enjoy out most traditional of field sports. This very special form of ornithology must be protected.

I hope everybody enjoys the forthcoming season and has a Happy New Year. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss this further. I can be contacted on rpayne@object.demon.co.uk or through the magazine.



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THANK YOU GUY AYLMEER

ALAN GATES

I have always been somewhat pedantic, a stickler for detail especially where safety is concerned. I am, a great believer in the notion that prevention is better than cure.

Within the sport of falconry, as with many other pastimes that include the care of animals, these sentiments are of value and should, I feel, be practiced wherever concerned.

For as sure as "God made little green apples" if it can go wrong it will go wrong, it is often a matter of time. Disaster strikes when you least expect it and are least prepared. It is with this concern that I am appalled at the number of fellow falconers who abuse the lives and safety of the hawks. In today's high-tech world even the ancient art has woken up to some of the advantages on offer. We are all armed with greater buying power than ever before, and our trained companions are festooned with state of the art transmitters and jangling at every move with the finest hand-made bells money can buy.

Even with the aid of all this high-tech paraphernalia, some of us still neglect the one item which is probably the cheapest, yet can afford the greatest safety to our flying hawks, and that is the humble jess.

It too has had a major re-design, in the last twenty years many of us have realised the advantage of using the aylmeri jess.

My personal appreciation for the aylmeri jess was due to a dreadful moment one day out hunting, when an eagle I was flying became entangled high in a tree by the swivel slit in his jess. The events leading up to the solution of this problem, I documented at the time and they were subsequently published in the B.F.C. Falconer Volume V no.5 1971.

Every day since, when I have flown my hawks and eagles, I have thanked Major Guy Aylmer for the peace of mind his invention has given falconers like myself, who religiously use the aylmeri jess.

He came up with the idea whilst he was a Conservator of Forests in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. In

his spare time he was not only Master of the Khartoum Foot Foxhounds, but flying his eyass and wild-caught Red-Headed Merlins. It was whilst flying, that these Merlins, with their jesses trailing, attracted the unwanted attention of piratical birds, thinking the merlins were carrying snakes etc. His idea was to fly his merlins with just the anklets, leaving the field jess behind in the grip of the falconers glove.

Little did he realise what a great contribution he would be making to future falconry, and that countless hundreds of hunting hawks and falcons lives' would be safer. For this alone his name should live on as long as falconry. Today of course they are used for the added safety to the hawks and the peace of mind of the falconer. Especially, should he be unfortunate enough to lose his hawk for any length of time. There is no point in owning the most expensive and sophisticated electronic tracking equipment, only to locate your hawk hanging dead by its' jesses.

Yet I am still amazed that, despite all the advantages these jesses offer, I still come across falconers who do not use them. When asked why not, they can only offer pathetic excuses like, "Well, I twist the slitted ends over before I release the bird", or "He does not land in trees."

Also dangerous to the hawk are the modified versions of the anklet that I have seen used. These being clamped together with rivets, or knotted, with the eyelet being fitted further away from the leg. This little bit of extra distance could allow the rear talon to slip through the eyelet, with the result of a bate leaving your hawk with a broken rear toe and the rest of the season recuperating.

Even worse still, last summer I visited a falconry centre, now primarily concerned with educating the public on falconry and Bird of Prey Conservation. In their nicely produced guide is a colour photo-

graph of an immature Lanner standing on a post, with an expectant look, ready to come in to the lure or fist. Around each leg is an aylmeri anklet, but it is flying wearing its mews jesses, with the swivel slits wide open. Further on in the booklet is an illustration of a flying hawk wearing old, traditional jesses. This is a case of careless laziness, to fly a falcon fitted with aylmeri and not to bother to change the jess straps is bad enough, but to photograph it and then include it in your educational and promotional guide is downright unprofessional.

There is no reason whatsoever for still using the old type jesses. There is every reason for using aylmeri, especially the romantic dream that if, unfortunately, you do lose one of your birds, and as long as it is an indigenous species, it might have paired up with a wild bird and help popu-

late the skies with another generation of its species. Instead of hanging dead by its' legs.

For those of you who might read this and still have birds wearing the death trap jesses. Don't ignore these words, please purchase the equipment and fit aylmeri. Don't make excuses, remember sods law.

For when it happens and you are stood at the base of that tree, it will be a sixty foot, dead elm on a hillside, and you hawk will be right on a limb. You will be on your own and miles from anywhere with only minutes to make the decision to climb to your bird. You hesitate and a cold sweat engulfs your body. All the time your hawk is frantically bating round and round the branch she is caught on, then she can't go any further and is fast tight to the branch. Now she can only hang upside down and wait. Deep in your mind you know, that if you climb out on that limb it will not hold your weight and you will fall to your death.

No, you will not wake up then and find it's all been a nasty dream. You are still stood there, and at that moment you will remember these words.

**"USE AYLMEER -
THE SAFER JESS"**



This Saker Falcon was found hanging from a tree, it is fitted with aylmeri jesses, but it has a 5 foot dog lead with a dog clip at each end and is knotted in the middle to make it shorter. The ring was still on when the bird was recovered from the tree.

This Golden Eagle is fitted with Guy Aylmers jesses



NONE THE WISER?



Tony
Warburton

Was Kevin Murphy serious when he wrote in the Winter 1995 issue? Or has he been emulating Rip Van Winkle and suddenly woken up to a whole new exciting world? Perhaps on the other hand it is me who has been doing a Rip Van Winkle, for after working with Owls, and the Barn Owl in particular, for 30 years, the name of Kevin Murphy is (or was) one with which I was not familiar. Nor have I ever heard of his 'Barn Owl Society' (how many members does it have?).

Now, however, suddenly it seems impossible to pick up any periodical concerned with birds of prey or owls without finding both jumping out at me, usually with Mr Murphy 'pontificating' about how to, or how not to, do things dealing with these particular groups of birds. Evidently we have a new 'oracle' in our midst who has apparently become an 'expert' overnight and is now hell bent on showing us lesser mortals where we have been going wrong all these years!

Now don't misunderstand me. If someone wishes to set up a Society, Club or Association, he or she is perfectly entitled to do so. Indeed, I did exactly that with my own organisation in 1972. However, what they **should** do before embarking on such a venture is to find out whether anyone else is already doing what the new organisation is proposing to do. If the answer is "yes", then the new organisation should be shelved and the existent organisation should be joined. In that way, energies will not be disseminated, data and research will not be duplicated, and the existing organisation will be strengthened - not weakened by people 'doing their own thing'.

The fact is there is no need whatsoever of another 'Barn Owl Society'. The World Owl Trust (formerly The British Owl Breeding & Release Scheme (BOBARS)), The Hawk & Owl Trust, and The Barn Owl Trust, have all been in existence for many years and I can assure Kevin Murphy that absolutely every aspect of Barn Owl biology, research, captive-breeding, release, and conservation is more than adequately covered by these bodies. I cannot speak for the other, but certainly Kevin Murphy is not a member of the WOT, which is a pity, for if he was he would hardly come out with the utter nonsense he does (and I am being polite when I call it 'nonsense').

Where on earth does Mr Murphy get the idea that little research has been attempted

to learn the habits, behaviour and conservation of owls? And as for his statement that "little breeding is being achieved", all I can say is that it is high time he stopped 'advising' the rest of us and started carrying out some research of his own!

For his benefit let me tell him that owl breeding has never been more successful and is improving all the time. Out of the 55 species/subspecies currently kept in collections owned by members of the Owl Taxon Advisory Group overseen by the Federation of Zoological Gardens, no less than 37 are currently breeding, or have bred in recent years. Three of the others are laying but have not reared young, six are either single birds of single sex 'pairs', and three are new imports which have not had a chance to breed, that leaves just six which are capable of breeding but which have not yet done so. However, I am sure that most of these will join the ranks of breeders sooner, rather than later. Sorry Mr Murphy, but before jumping into print to show us how clever you are, you should make sure of your facts. That way you might avoid making such a fool of yourself.

As for 'lack of research'. One can only assume Mr Murphy does no, or cannot, read books or the ornithological literature. On the Barn Owl alone there are three monographs and several other excellent shorter works - including Colin Shawyer's marvellous 'bible' **The Barn Owl in Britain**, plus literally hundreds of scientific papers. If he doesn't think we know anything about owls he should buy just one book which might, perhaps, show him what arrant nonsense he is spouting. This is Heimo Mikkola's wonderful opus **The Owls of Europe** (Poyser). Nor is our knowledge confined to just Britain and Europe. If Kevin Murphy would like a list of books which will educate him on owls, all he has to do is send me an sae and I will oblige him.

Mr Murphy also apparently has extensive knowledge of what happens to all the owls which are born in British collections (even though he did not know about them being bred!) Perhaps he would care to enlighten us as to where he gets this data, or is he clairvoyant? No, Mr Murphy, they don't all end up 'back in captivity'. Since 1972 the WOT alone has bred and released into the wild a total of 1,056 Barn Owls, and various reputable and knowledgeable groups have released many others. In the 1970's Philip Wayre bred European Eagle Owls at the

Norfolk Wildlife Park which were donated to the Swedish reintroduction schemes and were partially responsible for the survival of the species in that country. Other, similar programmes are under way for endangered owl species (and of course diurnal birds of prey), but this is not simply a case of breeding birds and tipping them out into 'the wild'. Reintroduction is an exacting science where much preliminary research has to be done, both on the subjects themselves and the chosen release sites. Space precludes me going into details here, but for goodness sake Mr Murphy, at least read **Last Animals at the Zoo** by Colin Tudge before professing your 'expertise' to others.

What I do have to deal with however, is Mr Murphy's statement that the Barn Owl Society is currently breeding and releasing Barn Owls - a statement also repeated twice in **Cage and Aviary Birds** in recent weeks. In none of these declarations did Mr Murphy see fit to mention that since 1993 it has been illegal to release Barn Owls (including rehabilitated wild injured birds) into the wild without a licence from the Department of the Environment. As a member of the DOE Barn Owl Working Group I am most concerned at this serious omission and rather than contacting Mr Murphy I would urge all would be releasers of Barn Owls to first send for the 'Guidelines' produced by the Working Group, plus the leaflet **Thinking of Releasing Barn a Owl?** which accompanies it. There is more to Barn Owl release than simply breeding the birds and putting them out into what you might consider is a suitable release site and the Guidelines will explain what is needed. They are obtainable free of charge from the Department of the Environment, Wildlife Licensing Section, Room 908, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol, BS2 9DJ.

I am also more than concerned at Mr Murphy's pronouncement that "Snowy Owls are on the agenda (for the Barn Owl Society), plus Long-eared and Short-eared Owls if wild numbers decline to the levels of the Barn Owl". Would he please explain why he considers the Snowy Owl to be in need of a reintroduction programme, and where? He might be interested to know that the Working Group of the Owl Taxon Advisory Group recently decided to recommend that owl breeders of three species of owl due to the fact that they were currently being over-produced and ending up in unsuitable hands. These are European Eagle

Owl (all reintroduction programmes are now completed), the Barn Owl (lack of suitable release sites) - and the Snowy Owl (not endangered and needing specialised housing, food and treatment).

As for helping Long-eared and Short-eared owls if they decline in the wild, where is Mr Murphy proposing to obtain his young birds? Can he tell us how many young have been produced in captive conditions by these two species in the last five years? If they do decline in the way he suggests, then rest assured it will be due to loss of habitat rather than anything else. I should be interested to know what the Barn Owl Society will do to rectify this loss, especially the moorland habitat used by the Short-eared owl. Believe me, after 30 years of 'battle' the WOT will welcome any advice on this score!

I am conscious of the fact that this letter is rapidly assuming the length of a novel, and believe me I could go on for ever such is my ire. But I am sure my good friends at the National Birds of Prey Centre and the Hawk and Owl Trust (plus no doubt many others) will have their own say in answer to Mr Murphy. So let me end by saying that of all the bilge spouted by Mr Murphy, probably the most ridiculous of all are his claims that "permanently injured can be kept in captivity if they have constant human companionship, though a mate might be a good idea", and that "a bird's spirit is destroyed if it does not have the chance to fly to the fist or lure, either on a creance or free flying".

I find these statements mind boggling, especially from someone who started off his letter by berating us for not breeding our birds or carrying out research and conservation. Please, please Mr 'Expert', do tell us how you propose to breed from your birds (imprints) while you are flying them to the fist or lure? And, exactly how much useful research will YOU get out of your tame flying birds? And do you fly all your breeding Barn Owls to the fist? I think not. Is this not a case of "don't do as I do, do as I tell you"? And, incidentally, if you think non-flying birds are 'dispirited' I invite you to come up to the Owl Centre to stroke our Eagle Owls when they have eggs or young! I would like to watch however!

If your Society is to gain the credence you obviously crave, you had better learn very fast that one of the most difficult aspects of captive-breeding and reintroduction programmes is to keep the 'wild gene' intact over a period of time - and you won't get this by handling your birds on a daily basis. You need to make your mind up about what you are doing - playing at 'falconers' or useful conservation work. (and don't rush for your pens falconers, I do know what useful work many of you do, but you DO know what I mean!).

One last plea Mr Murphy. PLEASE keep your humanised flying birds to yourself and leave the rest of us to get on with our work without the 'benefit' of your extremely suspect advice. For any tyro birds of prey or owl keeper thinking of taking Mr Murphy's advice I have only one thing to say - Don't. Get Jemima Parry-Jones' book instead.

Tony Warburton

Director, World Owl Trust

Chair, Owl Taxon Advisory Group.

CORNISH PEREGRINE

*Feathers hard and velvet eye
Perfect on the glove.
To open wings and sail away
Into the sky above.
With crossbow wings, the Reaper waits
The land around a hush.
And I below look up in awe
And find the perfect flush.
Exploding grass, a Partridge bolts
On safety hopes are pinned.
The Falcon turns and plummets down
Stooping down the wind...
Feathers fall on Cornish cliff
The Falcon does not miss.
I wonder at the Gods
That let me witness this.*

David Rampling

'UP ON THE MOOR'

**With Falcon on fist
I walk briskly in to the mist.
The air is still, not a sound
All across the open ground.
On we plod through
The heather, both together.
The mist lifts
What a sight.
With natural views
Up on the moor
As we climb, falcon knows
Its nearly time
On we go across the moor
Not too far, not too fast.
Quarry's near, I can hear.
Hood is off
Away she flew.
Like a star across the sky
All I do is stand and stare.
Mr D Platt.**

NOT ALL BAD

Dear David & Lyn

It is possible that anybody reading some of the articles and letters in the Falconers Magazine for the first time would think that modern falconry is beset with doom and gloom.

I am glad to confirm that it is not. I have been successfully running a Falconry School and Bird of Prey Activity Centre since 1992, catering for the inexperienced, after spending the two previous years trying to get a similar project off the ground but being hampered in my efforts by third parties. 1995 has been the best year yet, with a good percentage of clients attending the Experience Day and Afternoon Flying and Handling Session as a direct result of recommendations. These two activities are the most popular and are generally attended by people who have no intention of owning a bird of prey but would just like to experience the thrill of handling and flying one. What these activities allow me to do is inform and educate and therefore make clients aware of what is involved in owning a bird so that they can go away and pass on some of this information to other people but more importantly be aware if they do see birds being flown elsewhere, how they should be handled.

A sponsors club was also launched attracting funds to build new enclosures and a lecture at the Centre. This year has culminated in receiving major sponsorship from the owners of a prestigious local tourist attraction to open a second unit at their premises for 1996. The success of the venture is based on:

- Dedication to promoting a responsible, caring attitude towards the keeping of birds of prey.
- Professional and friendly approach to the public.
- Not being prepared to enrol students on the beginners course if they or their lifestyle is not suitable to owning a bird.
- Open opposition to breeders that will sell anybody a bird, irrespective of their knowledge, or lack of it, simply for financial gain.

It cannot be said however, that falconry does not have its internal problems and I would like to express my own opinions on some of them. It is to be commended that the professionals at the top of the sport are trying to clean up some of the problems but I firmly believe a lot more could be done from a grass roots level.

The first area is the "Gods gift to" brigade that are within all forms of life in this modern age, but appear to be fairly prolific in falconry. These people think that they know it all and do correctly and if anyone dare criticise them the people handing out the criticism are liable to receive a verbal ear bashing on the sport or what is even worse become

the subject of unfounded rumours behind their back, out of spite, and rumours, by nature, are exaggerated the more they are related. This results in a percentage of people who are frightened to speak up when they feel their sport is being harmed. You will also have those that will express their views to a third party or support a third parties view but if it came to the crunch, for example a legal case, would back down at the last minute and the case would not proceed.

The second area is that of hunting. At the moment the anti brigade seem to be concentrating on hunting, shooting and fishing, rather than, in our case, the actual keeping of birds of prey in captivity. All the time falconers are part of the "head count" they are adding ammunition to the anti's arsenal. What is the point of defending falconry by saying you are not asking the birds to do something they would not do in the wild and then going out with a hawk and trying to decimate the wildlife population in one afternoon, when we all know that in the wild birds only hunt when they are hungry and do not kill for the sake of it? A parallel example to this attitude is shooting. When I bought my house some ten years ago the parking lot of the local shoot would be full of 4WD's and high powered cars for corporate days and at the end of the shoot the same area would be piled high with dead game birds. As a result of public awareness that same parking lot is hardly ever full and the all day corporate shoots have ceased to exist.

Several things have become apparent this year with regards to the general public as a result of what I and my colleagues put over to people and the final area concerns flying displays and here the public fall into two categories.

The first category is the "You cannot fool everybody". A local tourist attraction has recently added flying displays to their activities. The first mistake was their publicity material which prompted a friend of mine, who owns a large collection, open to the public in the South East, to visit the display which resulted in letters of complaint about the publicity and the display being sent to the owner of the venue and other connected parties as a result for the public image and the birds themselves. What makes the story interesting is that I had several people who participated in my activities, who generally knew nothing about birds of prey before visiting my Centre, come out with complaints having visited the same venue and seen the flying display. Don't get me wrong, everybody has done a bad display at some time but the areas of complain involved basic handling and preparation, for instance:

Aggressive tone of voice towards the birds and the public.

Handling birds without the protection of a glove.

Although I saw the publicity I have not witnessed the display but have no reason to disbelieve the stories. What I did happen to see was on the local TV news. They ran a piece about the sale of the estate at which the person giving the display had previously worked and although birds of prey were not mentioned the archive clip showed him walking through the grounds with a very large bird on the left hand and a very small bird on the right hand. Try and convince me that this is control of a bird **YOU WON'T!**

The second category is "the people you can fool". I was talking to some friends recently who had seen a flying display, for the first time, at a large country show in West Sussex. They were both very enthusiastic about the experience and I assumed that it had been conducted in a proper manner. They started to tell in more detail what had gone on and this is where, in my opinion, the display fell down because from what was apparently received as a good display by the public, a false impression was given as to how you handle a bird of prey.

Handling birds without the protection of a glove.

Allowing the public to handle birds without a glove.

Encouraging the public to enter the arena to have a bird land on their head, on which a piece of food had been placed.

The problem with both of these examples is that the owner of the venues or the organisers may not be aware that anything is wrong with the displays or may not even care. Who is therefore responsible for making sure that displays are done correctly?

My view is that if the public are not happy then they should complain either at the time or in writing as soon as possible. Before I started giving public flying displays I took the trouble to enrol on a display course with Mik Standing at the Snowdonia School of Falconry. (I have not come across any other school that offers such a course) I found Mik and his wife Jude to be very friendly and professional and although some of the weekend covered aspects that I was already aware of and practised, it made a refreshing change to come across someone that considered presentation a high priority. Maybe others should try attending such a course, even at this late stage, because as far as I am concerned, with falconry, you never stop learning.

Maybe some people will think that I am over-reacting, I certainly don't. But for those falconers or display teams that do become involved with the public, the moral of the story is **BEWARE, YOU ARE BEING WATCHED!**

Yours sincerely
Micheal Poulter

FAIR COMMENT

Dear Lyn & David,

I thought I had better reply to the comment by Mr Hender and in fact other people who have asked me why I don't go to The Falconers Fair.

The sole reason I give external flying demonstrations is to earn money for the Centre. If the day ever comes when I can afford not to have to load my birds into an expensive van, struggle with weekend traffic and Sunday caravan drivers, subject my birds to often less than the best of flying grounds, deal with PA systems that don't work and all the other joys that go with having done demonstrations at shows for 28 years. I shall give it up with the greatest of pleasure. However, for the time being, the extra funds help run my Centre. I have never been asked to fly at the Falconers Fair, but I am afraid that I would only do so on the normal basis of going to any show - i.e., that I get paid, as indeed I am sure Bryan is!

Having said all that, I would not be prepared to give four demonstrations per day as I only like to fly my birds once per day. And the other thing to remember is that the more demonstrators you have, the more there would be to house safely and securely, without them having to sit out in the blazing sun with no baths, as I am afraid that I have seen at shows, still, even in the heat we had this year!

All those equipment makers that were happily together at the Fair were all selling the equipment - I can't afford to spend time and money on a Bank Holiday, when I am usually fairly booked up both here and away, to do demonstrations for free. I hope this clarifies any doubts in any minds.

Yours sincerely
Jemima Parry-Jones.

GOLDEN FLASH BBS

Dear David & Lyn

Having installed a modem into my computer last Christmas, I read with joy the editorial in your last issue about the falconry bbs, "The Mews". I was, however, saddened when I spoke on the phone to find it had been offline for a number of months due to lack of interest, the guy I spoke to (apologies as I can't remember his name) told me he would help me with my setup if I wanted to create a new BBS. As I was in the process of doing so, the conversation lasted about an hour! It is now my pleasure to inform you that GOLD FLASH BBS IS on line from 8pm to 11pm daily.

The board is based around playing online games but it also encompasses a lot of message areas. I have set up two areas at the moment dedicated to falconry, one is called The Mews, in memory of the other BBS and is designed for general chat about fal-

conry ie, news, opinions, events etc. the other is called Club News, and is designed to enable Falconry Clubs to contact each other, report on meetings, and generally discuss the social scene between clubs. I also have a few photographs available for download, and anyone is welcome to upload pictures of their own birds too. Access to these areas is restricted to serious falconers only and as such are not available the first time anybody contacts the BBS. I edit "Stoop!", the bi-annual journal of the London Hawking & Owl Club, who have agreed if the bbs takes off, to consider sponsorship of a 24 hour dedicated phone line. I have been making discreet enquiries on the internet amongst interested falconers from all over the world and believe that the time to put falconry back on the information superhighway is now! I still need some help from experienced sysops to set up a world-wide network to transfer information globally and would welcome suggestions about extra message areas that people would like to see.

The phone number to ring for access to the board is 0181 4024295. Please remember that the board is only open from 8pm to 11pm daily, any calls outside this time slot should be voice calls! I do believe in a certain amount of confidentiality and as such all information registered with me by callers to the bbs is treated in the strictest confidence, as it is illegal, under the data protection act to divulge information stored on a computer without a persons permission.

Sy Hughes

H.O.T. DEBATE

Dear Lyn & David,

In the Winter issue of the magazine a letter from P Knight expressed strong feelings about the Hawk & Owl Trust taking a voting seat on the Hawk Board's "club panel". Firstly, it's just a thought, but as both Colin Shawyer and Jemima Parry-Jones responded to the writer as Ms, and somewhere in the letter she mentions her marriage, maybe her Hawk & Owl Trust membership was in her maiden name.

P Knight seemed angry, but makes some valid points. Having read the replies, I must agree that there are worrying irregularities around the Hawk & Owl Trust's possession of a voting seat on the new Hawk Board. I am a member of the Hawk & Owl Trust and of one of the major voting Clubs. I also belong to a local Hawking Club which is affiliated to the BFSS and has around fifty members, the majority of whom are active falconers and austringers.

Both letters make the point that not all hawk keepers are falconers. True, Mr Shawyer also mentions that the BFC and Welsh Hawking Club pay a levy only on 'full members who are hawk keepers'. Full Membership of the BFC requires far more than simply 'keeping' a hawk. After three years as an associate member, a falconer may apply of full BFC membership. This

involves BFC officials accompanying said falconer and bird out hunting, where the bird must be seen to take quarry. They may also visit the falconer, inspect the birds' accommodation and food and ask questions about husbandry and management. If everything is satisfactory, full membership status is granted. A full member of the BFC therefore, is decidedly more than a 'keeper' of birds of prey. He or she is a witnessed, hunting falconer.

Mr Shawyers statement that the Hawk & Owl Trust is 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 conservation and research of wild birds of prey', is also open to debate. I can think of several excellent centres (including one at Newent) where conservation and education are high on the agenda, and where not just keeping, but flying and hunting with birds of prey are also featured. Many falconry and hawking clubs also include conservation information and activities in their programme.

I have no personal axe to grind with the Hawk & Owl Trust. On the contrary, I was privileged to be a steward at the official opening of the Chiltern Centre, distributed leaflets publicising their Really Wild Weekend with our club newsletter, and, with others, willingly displayed the Trust's material and discussed their work with members of the public on our own Club stand at a County Show which the Trust did not attend. The new Hawk Board, however, seems to have got off to a regretfully inauspicious start, and may seriously have damaged its credibility.

Before our Club applied for affiliation, a senior representative of the Board was invited to address the membership and answer questions. Having been constituted for only two and a half years, we wondered whether it was worth applying. We were told that the requirement of three years' audited accounts was to prevent 'anti' groups forming instant, fake falconry clubs in order to gain access to the Board, thus ensuring that only genuine pro-hawking organisations would be affiliated. Two of our Club members are closely connected with the Hawk Board, and while we did not expect concessions, their attendance helps endorse the Clubs' authenticity.

The Club was also told that realistically the 3-year rule might not exclude 'antis' as many of the Bigger, established clubs are believed to have been infiltrated. We were however, encouraged to apply, even if only to enable us to be represented at the annual symposium.

As expected, our application for affiliation was rejected under the 3-year rule. We were told that the criteria were being applied without exception, and were invited to re-apply when we come of age. Going back to the correspondence, therefore, while Mrs Parry-Jones writes "I don't know if Lyn intends to publish the Hawk & Owl Trust's code of conduct...". Colin Shawyer writes "With reference to the

Trust's affiliation to the Hawk Board... It would see no relevance in having a code of conduct on falconry" Please correct me if I have misunderstood, but Mr Shawyer seems to be saying that the Hawk & Owl Trust does not have the required code of conduct and thus fails to meet all the Hawk Board's criteria.

Re the falconry and conservation issue, like many falconers. I regard the two as inseparable, which is why I (and possibly P Knight) joined the Trust. Though I have never met open hostility towards my sport at local Trust meetings, I am well aware that it exists and confine any conversation about falconry to those whom I know to be falconers. Both replies admit to the existence of anti-falconry factions within the Hawk & Owl Trust.

Firstly, I suggest that these are the people who need to be educated about the inter-relationship of falconry and conservation, not the disillusioned falconer who wrote the letter.

Secondly, the Trust's appointed representative is in an unworkable position when a vote on falconry issues is called for. If they are pro-falconry, they can not represent those Trust members who are against. If they are anti-falconry, they cannot serve the Trust's raptor keepers or falconers, nor vote in all conscience with representatives of genuine hawking orientated organisations.

Thirdly, if the Hawk Board was resolved to forestall 'anti' infiltration, this determination should have precluded outright the Hawk & Owl Trust's occupation of a voting seat. In the enforcement of the 3-year rule, under the pretext of deterring anti-falconry elements, the Hawk Board has denied affiliation to bona fide clubs comprising genuine falconers and supporters. At the same time it has embraced an organisation openly acknowledged to contain 'antis'. This is irrational, contradictory and unjustifiable.

Regardless of its history, the Trust has opted for the advantages of charity status. It is no longer a Club. It apparently lacks the requisite Code of Conduct, thereby failing to meet the Hawk Board criteria. It contains a proportion of members acknowledged to be against falconry. I agree absolutely that the Trust's input in a consultative capacity is desirable, but feel that a genuine hawking club which met all the criteria should have been given priority. Furthermore, if criteria were applied at all, they should have been applied universally, without fear or favour.

The concept of the New Hawk Board was a bright ray of hope in all the current doom and gloom surrounding our ancient honourable sport. The combined experience and resources of its proposed members augured well. Many of us hoped that at last we could look to a central body with courage, foresight and credibility. I know I am not the only worried falconer who now needs reassurance and solid evidence that the future of falconry is in the safe hands we urgently need.

Yours sincerely
Pauline Hooley

MANY THANKS

Dear David & Lyn

I would, through your magazine, like to thank all the members of The Scottish Hawking Club for making my son Shane, and I, feel welcome at the Field Meet in Leuchars in December '95. We thoroughly enjoyed our day out, and, although our group only had one rabbit, taken by Julie Ross's Harris, we saw many excellent flights, which is what it is all about. Thanks again S H C and we hope to see you all again this year.

Yours sincerely
Kieran & Shane Tumbley,
Northern Ireland

LOST AND FOUND - THE GYR FALCON

"Flying a Hybrid II", by Diana Durman-Walters (The Falconers' Magazine, Winter 1995) about Edmund, their Gyr x Peregrine, immediately put me in mind of the final chapters of the delightful and instructive little masterpiece "The Taming of Genghis" by Ronald Stevens. (Faber & Faber 1956. Price 12/6d! and subsequently reprinted by the Falconiforme Press Ltd of Saskatchewan, Canada in the seventies) Ronald Stevens, who died in December 1994, was a real master of the falconers' art as well as being an entertaining author and this book, together with his Laggard and Observations on Modern Falconry should be mandatory reading for any tyro falconer. Because of his attention to detail and because he put himself inside the mind of the falcon, he would hope to train a wild-caught eyas from taking her up to killing her first grouse without a single bate - and frequently did so. We still have much to learn from his like.

Guy Wallace,
Llandefalle. Brecon.

PERFECT FOIL

Dear Lyn & Dave

After reading about the increasing number of bird of prey thefts and birds being recovered and owners not being able to be traced, I decided to take positive action and invite Peter Mulholland along to identify my bird.

For £20.00 she now has an internal registration number and I have peace of mind. The whole procedure took seconds! It left me wondering why I had not had it done before.

I now know that if she were to disappear and her identity was to be changed, removal of rings etc., the number implanted is European recognised, and cannot be tampered with so she could be returned to me if found. So lets foil would be thieves and get your birds chipped and save yourselves that "I wish I had done that" feeling. If you cannot afford £20.00 for your birds you obviously do not regard them too highly. I regard my bird as my best friend, do you?

Yours sincerely
Amanda Leeming

TEAM WORK

AMANDA LEEMING

If I had listened to the opinions of the majority I would not have my Redtail today. But, as it happens, I am very pleased to say that I was right and they were wrong. Although I have had experience with birds they were not mine. This Redtail was going to be my own. My first bird.

The day we went to get her is forever a fond memory. Ten weeks previously I had spied on her through a crack in the aviary wall and chosen her from the others in the nest. The time in between had seemed an eternity. As we left Norwich and began that drive down to Kent to collect her all the questions, which I had already answered time and time again, flashed through my mind. Imprinting, correct weight and all the other words of warning. God only knows how my heart pounded and my head span. Before leaving I taken the precaution of checking, two or three times, everything I might possibly require. the aviary was built and ready and waiting. The weighing room and scales were sorted, together with chicks in the freezer. A day in May had been spent at The Falconers Fair. Books, bits, bow perch and bath were in place. The local vet had been out and was aware and experienced with raptors. I was prepared. I pushed these thoughts away and settled down to enjoy the journey and day ahead. It was such a fitting start to such an occasion. A wonderful new dawn, crisp and fresh heralded a new chapter in my life. With positive training and a clear mind I had reached the "Big Day".

Times of frustration and determination, then joy and elation as my efforts in training began to pay off. together we had got to know each others' temperament, both of us having good days, bad days and very bad days. the teaching went both ways as Storm also educated me in her ways and needs, things that cannot be read in a book but have to be experienced. Trust and confidence. this is the bond that is built between a falconer and the bird and what makes falconry so special. Looking back I am proud of what we had achieved.

From initially getting her to sit on my gloved hand for more than ten seconds. then jumping for scraps of food over increasing distances on the creance, then flying free. Now the time had arrived to put this teaching to the test and let Storm do what came naturally. As the saying goes; "The proof of the pudding is in the eating", well in this case the cake had all the best ingredients and they had been added and mixed to the best recipe. For the umpteenth time I checked that I had all that I was likely to need. Knife, bag, rabbit lure, spare leash, flying-jesses - do I need to go on? I placed her in the travel box and we were ready to go. five minutes in the car and dawn was breaking as I parked at the edge of the field.

A lot of introductions and explanations of myself and Storm enabled me to do this.

Many times I had been refused permission, but through a number of local land-owners and their respective gamekeepers I had been granted access to a few estates. Granted, it had cost a few bottles of scotch and an occasional visit, but it paid off. Once given access I had spent time studying the best places for us to try. The field I had chosen was evidently very active with rabbits as numerous fresh diggings dotted the base of the hedgerows. The recently harvested field stretched out in front of us in the early light, it was going to be a lovely day. Hardly a sound, just the occasional call of a cock pheasant, above a twittering dawn chorus of unseen birds. To my right lay a dell and that was where we were going to head first. I zipped up my waxed jacket and started my walk. Storm sat on my gloved fist, taking in the view that only she could have. Each passing moment seeing more and more, her head darting around to focus on something I had missed. Slipping her flying jesses on and putting the leash away, we headed across to the edge of the field, where the dell lay. Ahead lay a wood with a small community of crows, their cawing seeming to be a discussion of our arrival. Keeping tight to the hedge I walked round, silent, eyes peeled for any movement, my breath hanging in the cold air. Relaxing my hold on her jesses,

she could go when she pleased. I could feel the tension in her as her talons clenched again and again, as she froze upon a movement. She jumped, taking me completely by surprise, following her gaze I could see nothing until a rabbit sat up in the stubble, about fifty yards away. Storm launched herself and was on her way towards it. For a few seconds the creature just sat and looked at the oncoming bird, as if thinking, "what the heck are you?" When the rabbit decided to do something and move, it was too late. The bunny never even got into its' stride when Storm hit and held it. A shrill squeal and it was all over. My heart was in my mouth as I watched all her instincts and adrenaline take over, I made in and looked at her. She somehow looked

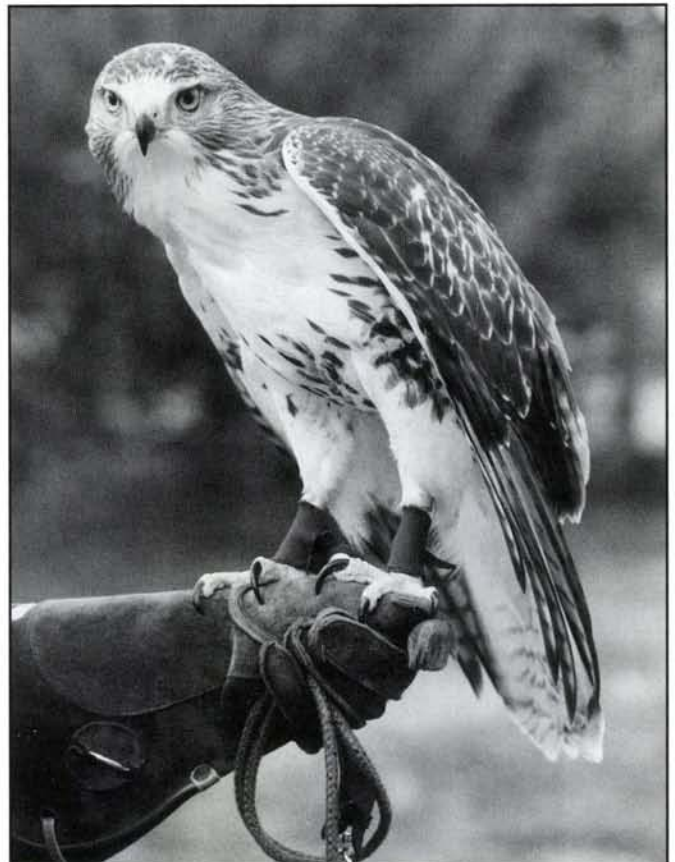
different. All of a sudden she seemed to have grown up.

Picking her up I removed her first kill. All that work paid off and I realised that I was grinning from ear to ear. I felt so elated that I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Her first kill.

That was a year ago! Since then she has never looked back, taking everything in her stride or is that wingbeat. Making the most of every situation even when Tiddler and Riddler (my ferrets) or other people or dogs are out with her it doesn't seem to matter. She has occasional off days, but then so does everybody sooner or later and usually there is a simple reason.

To my way of thinking, good days are not numbered by kills achieved. I don't need to take a dozen rabbits in a day. To me a good day is when everyone, birds, dog, ferrets and falconer return home safely after a few good flights and maybe a catch or two. I have tried to express my feelings within these few written lines, you may like what you have read or you may not. To me it does not matter because I don't think that written words can do justice to the experience.

These magic moments when bird and falconer act in harmony with each other are the essence of this proud and age old sport. I love it!



"Storm", Amandas' Beautiful Redtail.

MUSH ROOM HAWK

Tizi Hodson

Walking out to the mews, to pick up the hawks was more of a battle, with the wind mercilessly catching the doors and trying to pull them off their hinges. But eventually, with both hawks weighed and loaded into the landrover, the wheels rolled toward rabbit country.

On exiting the landrover, struggling to stand up against this gale force wind, now stronger than before, I decided to fly Buzz, the Ferruginous, first, with Xarra the 17 month old Golden Eagle taking her chance on a rabbit if the wind abated.

Toby Whillock, just recently introduced to Hawking asked if the wind was a problem when it was at this strength, "Not with Buzz" I assured him, "but there may well be a good deal of running to keep her in sight." I was hoping Toby was going to be able to witness a wonderful waiting on flight that Buzz find easier in high winds, but this gale force strength was keeping even the crows and wild buzzards on the ground.

So much for any soaring; the wind contained no thermals or upcurrents, just a plain head or tail batterer. Final adjustments to Buzz's transmitter and she was ready.

"I really would like some garlic mushrooms for dinner again tonight" Toby announced unexpectedly. We had had a lovely plate of them the previous evening.

"Well Buzz, off you go for a rabbit and some mushrooms" I told her, and faced her into the wind.

She nearly fell off my fist; tried to walk on the ground, but was almost bowled over. She tried to flap gently and covered 10 feet of ground, doing the same for three more flights; then as she took a gentle flap for the next short flight, a gust of wind emerged and took her up and away, over a mountain and out of sight.

Toby and I started running in the direction she had taken, up the mountain, expecting to see her from the top, but nothing, not a Buzz in sight. I was unworried as I had the receiver with me so I struggled to get it out and take a reading. Easier said than done. The wind closed the ariels at every attempt I made to open them.

Finally a clear reading 180 degrees

behind us and a slight blip ahead. I now realised I had left Xarra in the landrover wearing her transmitter which operated on the same frequency as Buzz's.

This was deliberate as I knew I could forget to reset the receiver each time I flew either hawk, but I would always remove a transmitter from the second hawk, should I ever need to track down the other.

This brilliant idea of mine, like most of them, suddenly appeared to have a flaw....a major flaw. Buzz was gone in a total gale. I was standing dumbly holding a receiver giving a strong return to a landrover nearly 2 miles away and a weak blip in the opposite direction, which was PROBABLY Buzz.

"Toby" I called above the wind "Let me show you quickly how to use the receiver to track down Buzz...I've absolutely no idea where she is except in that general area", (waves the transmitter in the vague direction we had last seen her), "While I get back somehow to the landrover and take off Xarra's transmitter, then you will only get one signal.

So in about half a minute I showed Toby how to track the transmitter, which was hopefully still attached to Buzz, and started the hopeless task of battling against the 80 odd knots of wind to get to the landrover.

After several weeks of running (well...o.k....minutes, but it felt like weeks) I reached the landrover and removed the eagles transmitter, deactivated it and started off in the direction whence I had just come.

The wind was joined by rain which was whipping into my face...I had to remove my hat as there was no chance of keeping the bodka on my bonce in this storm, and only now did I realise that all mountains look alike and I had no idea on which one I had left Toby on. Apart from which, he would have covered a fair distance, so, what hope did I have of finding him? The only hope was to keep running downwind, (up the mountain) assuming Buzz had 'gone with the wind' and Toby had tracked her somewhere in the same direction.

Whilst climbing the mountain, complete with climbing irons, I thought "What chance has Toby of finding

Buzz?" "None".

I had bought the receiver at a very silly price from a hawking club in London who told me they were getting rid of the club's telemetry very cheap as it didn't work very well, I said I'd buy it as I wanted to learn how to use Telemetry anyway and figured that if I started with a cheap set then I could get the hang of it before I purchased a new top of the range set when I knew one from another.

So I obtained my receiver and spent long trips and sorti's hiding the transmitter and tracking it down later. But I'd had hours of help and practice and Toby had had half a minutes guidance.

Still fighting the wind, now hitting me at all angles, I wondered how it could possibly be getting stronger than ever, when I realised I was reaching the top of the mountain. A fabulous view, but how I hated it. Not a Buzz or Toby in sight. I now wished I'd kept the receiver with me as from the top of this mountain I would have known for sure where Buzz had been blown. As it was I had to find Toby before I could find Buzz.

Trying to run on my pathetically weakened, tired legs, I realised the only hope was to get down the mountain and climb the next one ahead of me, and surely either Buzz or Toby-with-the-receiver would be in view from the summit.

Going down was harder than climbing up, I kept missing my footing and falling over.

Then I found myself day-dreaming, as I was climbing the next mountain, of sitting in front of a log fire eating mushrooms with garlic.

Now something seemed to be waving in the distance at a 45 degree angle and I thought I heard a shout. "Could it be Toby?" I won-

dered to myself and decided it was a mirage, you could fool yourself into seeing anything. Still, I headed for the mirage, somewhat off course and miles away. Still being thrashed by the downpour and dashed from the mountain by the treacherous wind.

Soon the 'mirage' took on a definite form. It was Toby. He was jumping up and down, shouting and pointing wildly, but I couldn't hear a word in the wind.

I kept calling Have you got her?" at the top of my voice, until I was hoarse, but still I couldn't hear an answer. So I decided to save my breath and continue to run.

On reaching the summit I couldn't believe my eyes.

Toby was standing with Buzz at his feet, devouring her well earned rabbit, which she had gutted neatly for us. Surrounded by Mushrooms.

As I fell at Buzz's feet, offering her a large fat white rat to trade for the remains of her rabbit, which she decided, as usual was well worth the trade, I gasped and panted to Toby, "Well, shall we collect some mushrooms?" "No" he replied, "I already have two carrier bags full, enough to last for days."

So I thanked Buzz profusely for the mushrooms and far more for the main course when I found she had left us the back legs, saddle and liver for our dinner. Kind, thoughtful hawk she is.

Toby thought the mushrooms were a coincidence on that early occasion, but after flying with Buzz many more times later on (in more sensible conditions) and finding every time I fly her she leads us to mushrooms, even though the other two hawks don't, he has now finally admitted it no longer seems a coincidence. Buzz usually comes back with a rabbit, but she ALWAYS finds us mushrooms.

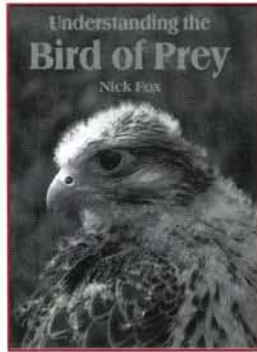
I think sitting round the log fire that evening eating garlic mushrooms and rabbit stroganoff, it had to be the best meal I could remember.

Thanks Buzz, my little 'Mushroom Hawk'.



BOOK REVIEWS

UNDERSTANDING THE BIRD OF PREY BY NICK FOX



I had been tempted by the preview advertising of 375 pages, 150 colour photos and over 290 technical drawings. The early whispers that Nick Fox's book had been published, prompted numerous phone calls both in the UK and to the US, a copy finally landed in my lap.

By today's standard of book pricing, first impressions are one of good value for money. The quality, glossy hard backed binding gives a robust feel to a book that, by the authors suggestion, is one to be "dipped into".

Sadly I have not had the time to sit down for a cover to cover read, but I have seriously "dipped into" and will continue dipping in, for this is not a book to languish on the bookshelf.

Nick Fox is a leading raptor biologist, experienced falconer and successful breeder, who is highly respected throughout the world.

He writes in an easy, friendly way, covering the biology of birds of prey, their captive management, breeding, training and rehabilitation. Each section is covered in great detail, with a profusion of diagrams and sketches which exemplify the text. I found it exciting and exhilarating to be learning so much from one book.

In the past three decades we have had an explosion of publications for such a minority subject, many are shallow "how to do" books produced for "wannabees".

Thankfully amongst us are a few exceptional individuals with an instinctive animal insight, couples with sound practical common sense, and a willing and able ability to share their wealth of knowledge with us all.

It may have taken Nick Fox nearly twenty-six years to compile "Understanding the Bird of Prey", for those whose minds are still open it will guide and inspire, and for those proteges to come it will give a sound understanding well into the next millennium.

Published by Hancock House Price £37.50

REVIEW BY ALAN GATES.

PIRATE OF THE PLAINS BY BRUCE HAAK.

The prairie falcon is a little flown bird in the UK, but if you have ever seen one it is an unforgettable experience, their shows of temperament are amazing. Such bold creatures. This is upheld in Bruce Haaks book *Pirate of the Plains*.

When I read this book I felt as though I have been given something special. Bruce, through his writing had allowed me, in some part, to share in his experiences and to understand his love for the prairie falcon.

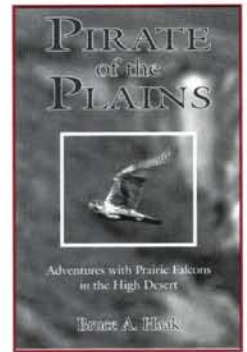
The book illustrates fully how falconry and conservation are inextricably entwined and Bruces own opinions echo those of many.

The book is very descriptive and you have little trouble in visualising what or where he is talking about and when you reach the photos it is all there for you to see. I found that it was lovely to go back to the pictures at the end of the book and see birds I have encountered in the text.

The whole feeling of the book and Bruces feeling for the prairie falcon is summed up in a few short sentences where Bruce says, "we would hop into Georges old beater of a pick-up and greet a new day out at the boat docks, watching the neighbourhood Prairie Falcons on the high cliffs above the lake. It was like going to church. Although neither of us was overtly spiritual, one cannot help but question the meaning behind such inspiring visions of beauty." With over 80 colour photographs, some of which are superb in-flight shots of prairie falcons, this book is well worth a space on the bookshelf. After you have read it, of course!

Published by Hancock House.

Price. £18.95



HAWKING WITH GOLDEN EAGLES BY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD

Some books cover a lot of subjects in small detail but this whole book is devoted to the Golden Eagle.

Martin Hollinshead goes into great detail to explain the do's and don'ts, covering equipment, housing transport, purchasing, rearing, hooding, handling, entering and flying. Exercising in woodlands, highlands and lowlands. Catching rabbit, hare, Roe deer and fox. He explains the best way to use a lure in order to encourage the bird to chase, utilising horses, motorbikes and landrovers to achieve speeds necessary to get the bird fit for these taxing quarry species.

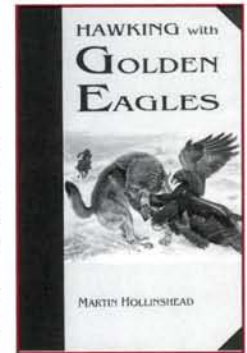
Martin gives accounts of personal hawking trips in this and other countries. He has spent a considerable amount of time on the continent, where more Golden Eagles are flown than in the UK.

He goes details the problems encountered when flying these large birds, dominance being the main one.

The book contains approximately 28 colour photographs.

Published by Hancock House

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OBITUARY

CAPTAIN BOBBY BOND M.B.E.



The death has been announced of Captain Robert Bond M.B.E. of Broome Hall, Chwillog, Pwllhelli, Gwynnedd, following a heart attack.

Bobby, to his friends, had lived for the early part of his life in the South East of England before embarking on a mixed career. He was a professional seaman with Trinity House until World War 2. During the war he was in the air sea rescue service operating from Wick in Scotland. Many lives were saved due to his heroism and this was recognised when he was awarded the M.B.E. and also in the film "The Sea Shall Not Have Them", which starred Anthony Steele as Bobby Bond. The Avian, the ship used in the making of the film sank in Barry harbour on about the 20th January, 1996.

After the war Bobby came to Pwllhelli, where

he managed, and later, owned Broome Hall which was the Home Farm for Butlins, Pwllhelli. Here he flew mostly Peregrines but also was one of the first to be successful with the Prairie Falcon at Rooks. Broome Hall became a well stocked shoot under his management. In the early sixties he invited several members of the Welsh Hawking Club to hawk at Broome Hall and as a result a friendship and camaraderie began, involving the local people which continues to this day, with the WHC holding annual meets in the area. Bobby hosted the club on many occasions and members were always welcome to hawk at Broome Hall. Donations in memory of Captain Bond M.B.E. are being received on behalf of The Royal National Lifeboat Institute by the Funeral Directors at Caernarvon.

A GOOD EVENINGS' HUNTING

Craig Dandy.

It was about four in the afternoon and the day was perfect for flying Mudca, my female Sparrowhawk. There was no wind and the air was heavy. My dad, Mudca and I set off in the car to a farm we had permission to fly our hawks on. The farmer had planted a lot of potatoes this year and now the corn had been cut the partridge should have moved in to the potatoes. As we walked a covey of partridges lifted, they were too far away but I let Mudca chase them to get her warmed up and hopefully once they have seen her they will not be so keen to lift next time. We may then be able to get closer for a good slip.

We marked them down in the corner of the potato field, about 250 metres away, we walked towards them with the Springer working in front. As we approached the place where we had marked them down I felt Mudcas feet tighten on the glove. This usually means she has seen something. Seconds later the covey lifted and Mudca was off my fist in a flash and after them. She singled one out and within 60 metres she was close up behind it, the partridge started to twist and turn, trying to lose her but it was not its' lucky day, Mudca flew underneath it and with a quick clip of her wings, twisted



onto her side and bound to the partridge. They both tumbled to the ground, I ran over and quickly dispatched the partridge. Mudca was

fed up on it and when I got home I put the rest in the freezer to feed her another day. A good evenings hunting was had by all.

Hawk Talk

Welcome to a brand new look at falconry written for all by everyone, it's meant to be informative, controversial, a helping voice in the dark, and on occasions offensive, but first a quick "How do you do?" from me.

My name is John Matcham, I am thirty four years old, a Falconer and up until recently Head Keeper of a small Bird and Animal Park in South West Wales. I am now running the Oxfordshire School of Falconry & Raptor Conservation. How long have I been a falconer? How much or how little do I know? These questions are irrelevant! We are all, no matter who we are, here to learn and we will probably never know it all. My only policy, The Birds come first! So be ready for some straight talk. Which brings me to the original reason for writing this column in the first place.

Geof Dalton of the Cotswold Falconry Centre, with whom I worked with for about four years, has been nagging me to get a higher profile, instead of hiding behind him all the time, 'So this is his fault', I hear you cry. Unfortunately, no it is not. The reason for me assassinating the English written word, is the Idiot from the Eastern half of England who sold a Barn Owl at the discounted price of just £50.00 to two passing tourists in the heat of this past summer and informed them that, 'It would be OK on the

back seat of their car in a crisp box for the duration of their Holiday, lasting another three days and covering over 500 miles'. So armed with six dead day old chicks in a plastic bag, you can imagine the condition they were in on day two, off they went on their merry way. On arrival in South West Wales three days later they came straight to me with a somewhat underweight four week old Barn Owl chick. YOU are the reason for writing this piece and any subsequent articles that I may write during the remainder of my entire life.

I am sure that by now he knows who he is. Next season I am sending someone to by another Barn Owl from him. Perhaps he will have enough sense not to sell any more. The saddest part of this story is that he did not break the law in any way, just a few moral and ethical unwritten rules like The Birds come first?

Rules to follow when considering buying any animal.

1 Ask yourself why you want to own this animal at least ten times over a period of one week and write the answers down on different pieces of paper. If you can not honestly justify all of your answers at the end of a week, forget it leave it to the experts, if you can, join your local club and then go on to stage two.

2 Now take a proper course in the skills of Falconry, even if you do not intend to handle your birds on a regular basis. Something that upsets me greatly is watching even an experi-

enced breeder handle aviary birds with the grace of a ballerina on wooden legs and the hands of Robocop.

3 Now find a local experienced Falconer who appears to reach the same or higher standards than those you have learnt on your course and gain some more experience with them. Local weather will affect how you intend to house your birds, their knowledge will help you decide what to build.

4 With all the previous knowledge gained you should be in a situation to ask question No. 1 again. If you still want to be a keeper of birds of prey, remember this; If you are not sure about something Ask! If you are still not sure Ask me and I'll find out for you.

5 In my opinion if you have reached this stage you should be at least six months down the line from the moment you decided to own a bird of prey and all your reasons for doing so will hopefully have changed to a great extent. It is no longer a novel idea to boost your ego. In fact even the most docile of untrained birds will do quite the opposite. You have got the inexplicable bug that will leave you asking yet more questions for the rest of your days.

I look forward to your letters and questions and replying to some of them in the next edition.

John Matcham

O.S.F.R.C.

IMPRINTING OF ACCIPITERS

Mike McDermot, an austringer from the United States, who has pioneered a specialised method of training imprinted Accipiters, has accepted an invitation from the Welsh Hawking Club to visit the UK during May of 1996 in order to speak on his methods, techniques. The benefits to both hawk and Austringer and to answer your questions. It is hoped to arrange venues in the North of England, the Midlands and the South of England. Mike will explain how using his recipe, accipiters can be utilised as dual purpose, non-aggressive hawks for hunting and breeding.

There is already much interest shown by those who are keen to learn more about the potential of imprinted accipiters. Mike has written articles in NAFA journals, which you may have read and in Desert Hawking 3, which is about to be published. Entry to venues will be limited and by ticket only.

Tickets: £10.00 Individuals.
Club Block Bookings £8.50 per member. WHC members £5.00.

Further Details available from Adrian Williams. Secretary Welsh Hawking Club. Tel/Fax 01443 206333.

Training Gundogs For Falconry

There will be a training day at The Warren Gundog Training Centre on Sunday 21st April 1996.

Covering all aspects of training a gundog for falconry, including pointing live game. participants are encouraged to bring their own dogs.

Details & bookings from Guy or Marian Wallace on: 01874 754311.

AMAZING RECOVERY?

Steve Clarke would like to express his thanks to Phil Hudson, Martin McLoughlin & Paul Dingle, for all their efforts over the last 17 weeks in helping him to recover his female Harris Hawk Bonny.

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRDS

ORDERS NOW BEING TAKEN FOR 1996 TOP GAME HAWKING Peregrines, Hybrids; Gyr x Saker, Saker x Peregrine, Gyr x Peregrine. For more details Tel: Martin Jones 01600 750300, or send s.a.e. to The Parsonage, Llanrothal Monmouth NP5 3QJ.

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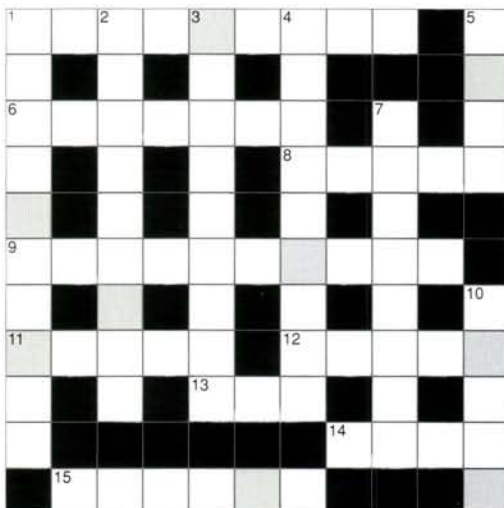
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- FLY WIDE
- INTRODUCE QUARRY

CROSSWORD COMPILED BY JESS BARNES

CAPTION COMPETITION RESULTS



The WINNER is Martyn Cook, from Paignton in Devon. He wins a days hawking in Yorkshire.

To enter, complete the Crossword and unscramble the letters in the shaded boxes to give you the name of a bird. Write this on a postcard and send along with your name and address to Competition, 20 Bridle Rd, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants NN15 5QP. We have 10 tickets for the Falconers Fair to give away to the first 10 correct entries drawn after the closing date of 31st March.

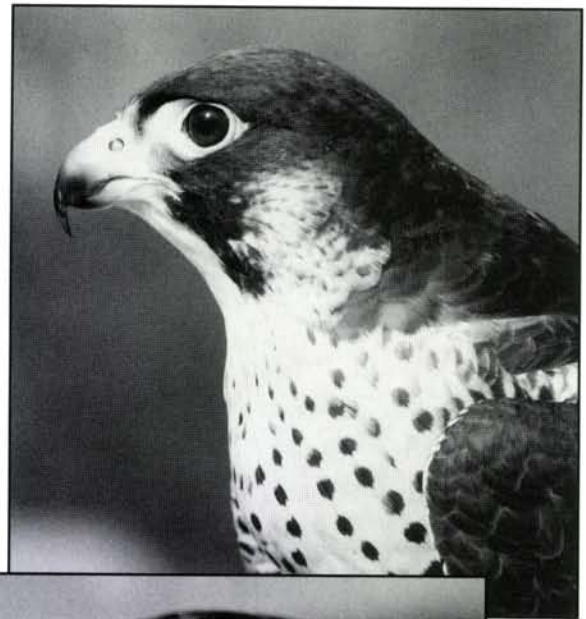
THIS YEARS FALCONERS FAIR IS ON THE 26TH & 27TH MAY AT ALTHORP HOUSE, NORTHANTS.

There will be the usual attractions plus lots more. We will let you know more about it in the next issue.

USE YOUR HEAD!

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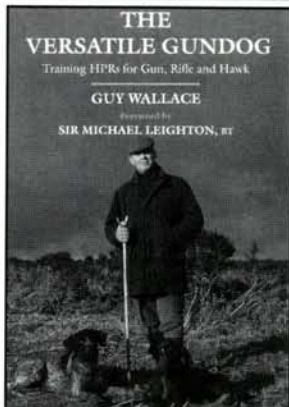


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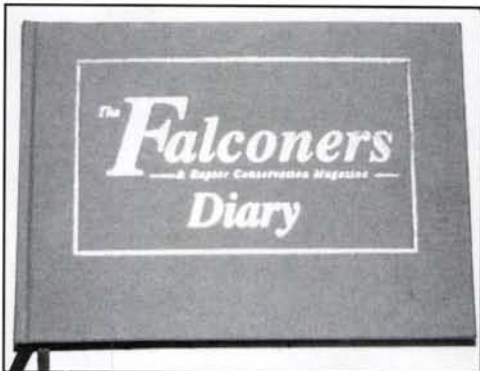


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