

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

Winter 1996 £2.95

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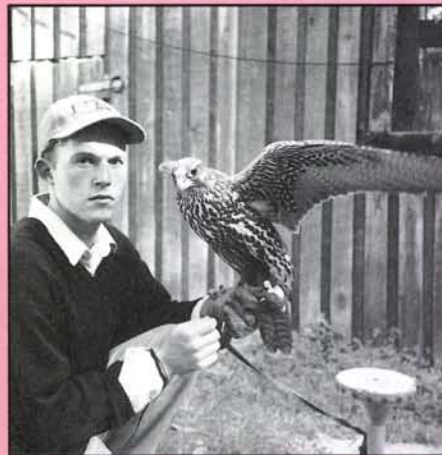
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COMMENT

Hello Everybody,

Well, it is nearly Christmas again, although our years are marked out in quarters so we are looking to February now.

Our front cover this time is of a Limited Edition print by Colin Woolf and which are available to you (see page 27).

The birds on page 29 of the last issue were an adult Gymnogene, Taita Falcon and an albino Sparrowhawk, (road casualty).

In this issue we have articles from Japan, Australia & America, Paul Beecroft explains how and why Search Warrants are necessary, Nick Fox kindly allowed himself to be interviewed and we have the winners of our competition. And for those of you who, like me, are sentimental Bob Haddon has written a poem to make you weep.

Anyway, don't miss our great Christmas Card offer on page 17, and more ideas for Christmas presents on the Back Cover.

Have a really good hunting season and a great Christmas and we look forward to seeing you all again in the New Year. As usual 'Keep Falconry Safe'.

David & Lyn

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COVER: 'Lady in Waiting' - Colin Woolf (see page 27)

RECORD CROWDS AT MIDLAND GAME AND COUNTRY SPORTS FAIR

A record crowd of 48,000 people attended the Midland Game Fair at Weston Park on the Shropshire/Staffordshire borders over the weekend of 14th/15th September.

The event has grown over the last 14 years to become one of the top shows in Britain, attracting visitors from all over the country. There were over 300 stands and displays on offer as well as a host of attractions including a ferret show, dog agility competitions and falconry displays.

Organiser Philip Poole said "We are delighted with the success of the Game Fair this year. The event is now very well established in the countryman's calendar and gets bigger and better every year".

Weston Park's Sales and Marketing Manager, Andy Sinclair, said "Weston is proud to host the Midland Game & Country Sports Fair and delighted with its continued success."

DNA INSPECTION HELPS PROTECT WILD BIRD POPULATIONS

The use of DNA testing continues to play a vital role on helping to protect threatened wild bird populations in the UK. Environment Minister James Clappison confirmed in a recent statement.

During 1995 and early 1996, blood was taken from almost 70 birds (parents and offspring), at the premises of registered keepers of Goshawks and Peregrine Falcons. The DNA in these samples was analysed by scientists at Nottingham University.

Mr Clappison said "The Department has now received a final report from the laboratory which confirms that all of the offspring were bred from the claimed parent birds. These

inspections provide two major benefits: first they enable genuine bird keepers to substantiate their captive breeding claims unequivocally; and secondly, I believe they act as a major deterrent against the small number of unscrupulous keepers who may otherwise attempt to launder illegally taken wild birds into captivity/

The success of this programme if inspections highlights the value of DNA testing techniques. It demonstrates the Department's commitment to conserving our wild bird populations, in line with the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW), which I launched last November."

MORE BIRDS POISONED

Illegal persecution of wild birds was on the agenda of the annual Police Wildlife Liaison Officers' Conference on Saturday 12th October, following news that two more rare birds of prey had been poisoned.

A post mortem examination of a Red Kite found in Oxfordshire revealed that it died of alphachloralose poisoning, while analysis of a White-Tailed Sea Eagle, found dead in Caithness, Scotland has shown it was illegally poisoned with carbofuran, a highly toxic pesticide.

A report examining the extent of the offences against wild birds in the UK during 1995 was discussed at the conference. It revealed that last year 988 incidents of wild bird crime were reported to the RSPB. Of these at least 147 involved birds of prey, resulting in the death of at least 97 birds and the removal of 50 eggs and chicks from nests.

Illegal poisoning incidents claimed the lives of 33 birds of prey, while at least 50 were shot.

The report, Birdcrime '95 produced by the RSPB revealed that while the total number of reported incidents of wild bird crimes was down slightly from 1,064 to 988 last year, the number of confirmed incidents involving birds of prey rose from 115 to 137. The RSPB received 141 reports of illegal shooting and destruction of wild birds other than birds of prey - the highest number since 1989 - and 19 reports of wild birds being poisoned.

RSPB conservation director Graham Wynne said "The illegal poisoning and shooting of wild birds is totally unacceptable, especially when it involves species such as birds of prey whose populations are highly vulnerable."

1997 set to be a PEARLER of a year at NEWENT

1997 will be a very special year for The National Birds of Prey Centre for a number of reasons. We will be running the second Raptor Biology Course to be held here in conjunction with Kent University. The first one moved here last year from Kent, where it started, six years ago. But as the course actually runs for two years, although only three weeks in the first year are spent in teaching at the Centre, we decided to let the second year run, and help students if they needed it rather than start with a new batch.

So in April next year we are hoping for a good turn out of students to come here and learn about how the birds of prey and owls they hold so dear, work. For anyone who is interested in a greater understanding of raptors, or who is trying to breed them, this course is a must as it is taught by such people as Neil Forbes, Nick Fox, Robert Kenward and many others who are world leaders in their field.

I should stress here that it is not a falconry course, although held here at the Centre it covers all the other aspects of birds of prey that anyone should need to work with raptors in whatever field. With the added bonus of gaining a University Diploma at the end if you get through all the work. Having the first group here last year was a learning experience and I hope that we can make this new course even better for both students, lecturers and the staff at the National Birds of Prey Centre. I need to make things relatively easy for my staff next year as we

are going to be somewhat busy as the other special happening is our 30th anniversary. We will have been open to the general public for 30 years in May 1997. We have all sorts of plans in mind, with new buildings, a membership, special weekends and possible even a field meet.

For those interested in finding out exactly what we are doing you can join as a friend of the centre and some of the benefits will be free entrance, a twice yearly newsletter, special evenings, priority booking for special events and more besides. Plus at the same time your membership fee will assist the Centre itself.

My long term aim and hopefully in the not too distant future, is to turn the Centre charitable. Although this means I will lose ultimate control and ownership, it will give us enormous tax benefits, mean we can fund raise and give the place a longer term future than just my working life. And as so many falconers, birds of prey lovers, and generally interested people have helped over the nearly 30 years to get the place where it is today, it is nice to think that The National Birds of Prey Centre will have a very long term future. So, if you are interested in coming on the Raptor Biology course - let me know soon as we are taking booking snow. If you would like to become a member of the Centre, drop me a line and we will send you the form. And, if you have never visited the Centre or have not been for a long time - the thirtieth year is the one to come in as we should be buzzing.

A total of 69 prosecutions relating to wild bird offences went to court in 1995, an increase of eight on the previous year. Sixty were successful. Of the 69 prosecutions 56 were police cases, eight were taken by the RSPCA and five by HM Customs and Excise.. None were taken by the RSPB.

Every police force in the UK now has at least one Wildlife Liaison Officer. Referring to recent newspaper coverage which suggested the police did not have the consent of rural people when investigating crime against wildlife, the Chief Constable of Tayside Police, Mr William Spence said "It is abundantly clear that many wildlife offences are brought to our notice by country folk, born and bred, who may have known about, and been appalled by illegal practices for years, but who only now have the confidence to come forward and report matters. I am therefore confident that in the best traditions of policing we are operating with the consent of the rural community, and that is why Wildlife Liaison Officers are being increasingly successful in terms of prosecutions." Mr Spence also stressed the importance of education and prevention.

The 8th Annual Police Wildlife Liaison Officers' Conference was held at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan Castle, nr Kincardine on Forth, Falkirk on October 12th & 13th. It was attended by more than 200 police officers from 44 forces around the country.

RAPTOR RESCUE & IBR LOST & FOUND BIRDS.

FOUND

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Harris Hawk. | DoE Ring 128??? |
| 2. Lanner | DoE Ring 44??? |
| 3. Buzzard | DoE Ring 74??? |
| 4. Buzzard | Cable Tie UK600?? |
| 5. Buzzard | DoE Ring 50??? |
| 6. Buzzard | Blue Ring ? 95W |
| 7. Buzzard | DoE Ring 97??? |
| 8. Sparrowhawk | Breeders ring with letters DH |
| 9. Sparrowhawk | Breeders Ring ??98R |
| 10. Sparrowhawk | DoE Ring 128??? |
| 11. Sparrowhawk | DoE Ring 128??? |
| 12. Sparrowhawk | DoE Ring 128??? |
| 13. Kestrel | Breeders Ring with letters LM |
| 14. Kestrel | DoE Ring 157??? |
| 15. Kestrel | Breeders Ring ?95S |
| 16. European Eagle Owl | |

No ring Found Cheshire Sept '96.

N.B. Sparrowhawks 11 & 12 are different birds.

There are many other birds that have been found and are being cared for all over the country. The list includes Lanners, Luggers, Sakers, Harris Hawks, Redtails etc. These birds have never been claimed. If anyone has lost a bird in the last 2 years please report it. The following birds have been found but are dead:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Buzzard | Breeders ring 3W96 |
| 2. Sparrowhawk | 2179 RR 96S |
| 3. Kestrel | 293 WM 96S |

LOST BIRDS

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Redtail | UK77194 |
| 2. Redtail | 2597X |
| 3. Harris Hawk | 9415W |
| 4. Harris Hawk | 206 |
| 5. Harris Hawk | IBR 356 W |
| 6. Harris Hawk | 3747 W |
| 7. Buzzard | 282 W |
| 8. Buzzard | 13227 (Red Ring) |
| 9. Lanner | 1 RJT96W |
| 10. Lanner | 123 RR W |
| 11. Lanner | 42 RAH |
| 12. Lanner | UK86819 |
| 13. Lanner | 23 GTA 96W |
| 14. Lanner | 4 RAH 96V |
| 15. Saker | 15IOA 96W & 4 KFCC 96W |
| 16. Saker | 2 SM 95 |
| 17. Saker | 9731W |
| 18. Saker | UK85690 |
| 19. Saker | 9203W |
| 20. Peregrine | 6790W |
| 21. Peregrine | UK84577 |
| 22. Peregrine | UK88131 |
| 23. Peregrine | 5438V |
| 24. Peregrine/Saker | 8280W |
| 25. Gyr/Lanner | 12641W |
| 26. Sparrowhawk | 5 96R |
| 27. Kestrel | 1 96S |
| 28. Kestrel | 3285 S |
| 29. Harris Hawk | ART 96W |

If you have lost or found any of the above birds please get in touch with either ourselves or Paul Beecroft or the IBR.

STOLEN BIRDS

- | | |
|----------------|----------|
| 1. Harris Hawk | 0168W |
| 2. Harris Hawk | 3DWG 95W |
| 3. Lanner | 8314W |
| 4. Lanner | 13713W |
| 5. Peregrine | UK86526 |

STOP PRESS

Stolen from Gwent 2/3 October 1996. FEMALE GOSHAWK. RING NO 7555W 1994 BIRD.

BREEDERS RINGS

Once again can I ask that breeders who are using their initials on rings to please come forward and identify themselves. We have a number of found birds which could possibly be returned if I could contact the breeder i.e. will DH & LM come forward.

Also, will breeders please stop using rings with just a number and year on them. i.e. 196S. Not only is this irresponsible on the part of the breeder it also does not prove that the bird is yours. I know of at least three Kestrels that have this ring number. Also Harris Hawks and Lanners, these are fitted with W rings. The situation has now arisen that we now have different species with the same ring number and being repeated all over the country. Please refrain from doing this.

Please also remember that when you sell a non-schedule 4 bird you are required by law to provide a certificate of captive breeding. The bird must also be close rung.

RAPTOR RESCUE OPEN DAY



On Sunday 22nd September the Charity held its second open day at its Hertford bird of prey hospital, run by Michael and Rosemary Robins. The potential interest from the public was apparent in 1995 when 500 people visited on a somewhat overcast, and later very wet, day in July. This year September was chosen in the

hope that optimum weather could be found, in the knowledge that ever attraction could be accommodated under cover. By luck or judgement, we managed to get exactly what was required, a dry, mild, calm day. A great deal of hard work and careful preparation meant that the day went almost exactly to plan, and

Right: Golden Eagle.

Left: Inside the hospital - Mick Cunningham the Chariman in the foreground (left) on hand to answer questions.



we were rewarded with an absolutely staggering response from the public. The hospital was open from 10am to 5pm, and was busy throughout the whole period. Sixteen different species of raptors were displayed, including a magnificent pair of Golden Eagles courtesy of Garry and Jude Balchin of the BHA.

It goes without saying (but I will mention it in case anyone gets the wrong idea) that no wild casualties were on

display, all being accommodated elsewhere in the organisation of the day of the event.

In all we had over 900 visitors on the day and as a result over £2,850 was raised for the central fund of Raptor Rescue. Our sincere thanks go to all who supported our Open Day and made it such a success.

OUT FOR A LARK

Andrew Knowles-Brown.



Here in Scotland there are very few people who specialise in flying Merlins on a regular basis, in fact hardly anyone at all. One falconer who I am in regular contact with is Peter Kirk, he has always been kind enough to invite me over during September to watch him fly his birds. This year lark hawkers numbers have doubled with Neil Mumby moving up to the borders. He had also invited two other falconers up from 'down south' over a weekend in mid-September, so Peter kindly asked me over to see some sport. Actually it was suggested I might like to come over and see if the soft southern Merlins could handle our tough larks, (the falconers banter had already started and we weren't even out in the field yet).

On a fine, warm, sunny afternoon we met (who said it always rains in Scotland) near Ashkirk, in the borders of Scotland. Grant Haggard and Phil Hawkes had just driven up from Essex that morning with their female Merlins and a three-year old Perlin. Neil also had a female Merlin and Peter a Jack. We wound our way a couple of miles inland to some superb ground, nice undulating hills which had only recently been planted. The lush heather and grasses perfect for larks and, certainly there were plenty of them, larks and pipits flushed as we parked the cars, a good omen. We moved off, the Brittany spaniels queuing keenly ahead of us, pipits were flushing at once but the Merlins were steady and never bated, it wasn't long before a lark was flushed by the spectators, a Merlin was off like lightning. The lark burst into song and powered sky-wards, the Merlin followed but not for long, it soon broke off the chase and came obediently back to its owner. This happened a few more times with none of the Merlins wanting to take on their chosen quarry. The larks were all flying strongly and their

singing was a joy to hear, no wonder none of the Merlins would call their bluff. We also had the music of a visiting beagle pack on the opposite hill side, the hounds speaking melodiously as they picked the line of their hare through the thick bracken. The sound of the huntsmans' horn also wafted across on the gentle breeze and made this a day to remember.

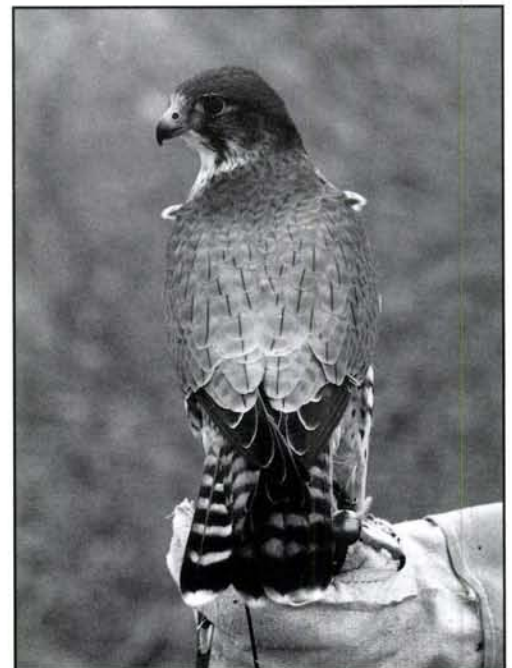
Soon Neil's bird took off in hot pursuit of a lark and decided to take it on, they both started to ring upwards, the lark was singing but presumably the Merlin could detect that this bird was catchable. The lark soon chickened out and dived towards the spectators, it zig-zagged between our feet before being taken about 12 feet from us. After the usual lag pulling (as one would expect) and after Neil had fed his bird up, we continued. A couple more aborted flights and then what we had been waiting for; Grants bird took off in serious pursuit of a lark. They both headed upwards the lark singing its heart out. I thought the Merlin had given up but it was just using the wind to get above the lark, it soon made a stoop and put the lark under pressure. They started to drift downwind and had reached 3 or 4 hundred feet or so (who knows?), when a wild Merlin joined in. The spectacle was superb, to see the lark with all its manoeuvres you had to watch with binoculars. The two Merlins put in about 25-30 passes and came so close we were certain it had been caught, we were sure the two Merlins were competing against one another, and I for one couldn't tell the difference, but those that could felt the wild bird was turning slightly quicker after each stoop. The lark roller-coastered down, with the Merlins in

very hot pursuit, stooping all the time, until they broke below the skyline and then behind a small rise where we had parked our cars. We all hoped the lark would evade capture after its' fine performance and when Grant returned a short time later his bird hadn't caught it, but had been well rewarded, also the wild bird was nowhere to be seen, so who knows what the outcome had been. Everyone agreed though, that this had been the best flight seen for a long time.

Later on we flew the Perlin, a truly beautiful bird in its mature plumage of a wondrous slate blue. This bird had only been out of the aviary for three weeks, but mastered the sky very well, rising to a good pitch almost immediately and putting in some terrific stoops. The wild Merlin returned with a friend and gave the Perlin some severe grief and forced him down, but after they had made their point they left and the Perlin quickly got back to where he was before he had been disturbed. He continued to put in some more good stoops, but was unable to connect with any quarry.

The last mention must go to Peters Jack, but as he invited me and my pocket is overflowing from his gratitude that I wouldn't print the truth, I can but say that this bird certainly won't go down in the annals of falconry folk lore, but he was 'trying' in every sense of the word, and it did produce the hilarity one likes at a field meeting.

Many thanks to Peter Kirk for arranging the meeting and also to Neil, Grant and Phil for showing us some fine sport.



YORKSHIRE FALCONRY CLUB

The Yorkshire Falconry Club is coming to the end of an exciting and busy 12 months. Our inaugural year has lived up to, and in some cases surpassed our expectations. We will finish the year with 63 members, these include the very experienced falconer to those who are in the early stages of learning the art of falconry.

The club had attracted members from Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, word has slowly filtered through the falconry grape-vine that we exist and the welcome new members receive is warm. In April we held a quiz night. The questions were set by Kim with the help of a large number of reference books for those really obscure tie breakers. There was great hilarity and covering of answer papers as the quiz was hotly contested. The winners were justly rewarded and the biggest surprise of the evening was that our younger members may not have a vast amount of practical experience but their knowledge of falconry far outstrips many of their elders.

The highlight of this years speakers was Mike McDermott, the man behind

the 'Recipe', who was brought over from America to give a series of talks by Rowland Evans and Peter Smith. We were very privileged to be one of the few groups he spoke to during his short trip. The quantity and quality of the slides and information he imparted to our members kept them in their seats to 11.30pm. His innovative ideas on accipiter imprinting have sparked a number of our members to try this method, we are receiving updated news on the progress of this years Coopers Hawk by fax. Mike left us a 12 page article on the 'Recipe', this was originally for the American market but if you would like a copy please send a large A4 SAE with £1.25 to cover printing and postage.

For future meetings we have booked a barbecue to celebrate the end of our first year, our AGM, another quiz night by popular demand and Terry Large will be speaking to us just before Christmas. Anyone wanting further details of our meetings or the recipe please send an SAE to K.F.Myers, 8 Belford Drive, Bramley, S Yorks. S66 0YW, or telephone 01709 549896. We look forward to hearing from you.

WELSH HAWKING CLUB

Unfortunately our President, Kenneth Macleure and Vice President Lawrence Workman, have been suffering ill health recently and we wish them well.

The Clubs' members have made a start to the hawking season with many having travelled either to the Yorkshire moors or more often Scotland in search of the sable quarry and regularly make the trip to fly at grouse but often take in other sporting ventures whilst enjoying our countryside. Rabbit numbers seem to be high in many areas and members flying goshawks from the club breeding project inform us that they are already entered and performing well. A club-bred Merlin is providing some lark hawking for one of our members in the Carmarthen area. The final tally of Goshawks this year was 17, with the Harris's rearing 6, with one pair still laying eggs at present and the merlins successfully producing despite being the equivalent of pensioners! Will they continue next year?

If You have a report for the clubs page simply send it, along with a photograph if you wish, to The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer. Kettering.

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01536 722794.

The copy deadline for the next issue is
December 31st

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

Hawking has got off to a good start in Scotland. The weather has been very kind, which means plenty of days out with the birds. The rabbit population seems to be growing at a great rate and, in some places, is of plague proportions. Let's hope myxy' doesn't raise its ugly head and wipe out the short-wingers main quarry. Grouse and other game seems to have fared well also, so if the weather doesn't change for the worse a good hawking season should be had.

Field meetings are progressing well with our 2/4 day meeting in the borders putting rabbits and pheasant into the bag. One highlight on the Saturday was one new member, David Burns from Co Durham, who attended with his first bird, unentered, catching its, and his, first rabbit. Apparently the proverbial "dog with two tails" had nothing on him! He went on to catch more on the Sunday, well done David! The hotel treated us extremely well and the "crack" in the bar during the evenings was great, sides were aching after the laughter from the falconers banter. It was great that everyone got on so well. We have at least another meeting booked in each month for the rest of the season.

Our membership continues to grow well, it reinforces our belief that the Club continues to offer its' members the type of club falconers want, but we still wish to represent all falconers in Scotland, so come on, join our club and help us show solidarity to those who are trying to stop our sport. In the meantime good hawking.

Several invitations have been received for members to attend foreign fieldmeets, with our participation expected at the German - Deutscher Falkenord, the Hungarian - Magyar Madartani ESS, the Slovak - SKDV and the Belgian - SBV. The club annual winter field meet will be held in the midlands near Tamworth, in January. Local field meets will be arranged by the regional groups and these include several early rabbit days for shortwings and broadwings, with attendance at kept-er shoots later in the season, which should cater for long-wings too. The club is expected to be represented by members at the forthcoming Hawk Board Symposium at Birmingham University. Members have been urged to assist the BFSS in the run up to the General Election, which may have serious implications for fieldsports. This can be best achieved by contacting the local director whose telephone number can be obtained from the handbook or from the club Secretary.

If you would like details of the club activities, meeting places and times (Usk, Plymouth, Banbury and Chester) or an application form (first annual fee £27.50, thereafter £22.50), please telephone our club secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333.

AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

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

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

For further information contact
Guy Whitmarsh on: 0272 660770

THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

Social Meetings held regularly at the Hogs Head Hotel, Awwsworth, Notts.

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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.

We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

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

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 503891 or Sue on 01344 423988 after 6pm

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"The Falconers Rest" Public House, Thorpe Lane, Middleton, Leeds. Or Contact: Mr Steven Syree 01274 411688.

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NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

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

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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**

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

Parsley Patch, Scotts Lane,
Knowbury, Ludlow,
Shrops. SY8 1PP
Tel: 0584 890496

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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

SOUTH GLOS & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

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

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

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

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

Give us a ring for a chat.
Andy 01179 400373
Keith 01454 315810

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,
Fenny Compton. Last Monday

PLYMOUTH The Woodpecker, A38.
3rd Monday

The Welsh Hawking Club is internationally recognised and has members throughout the UK.
For further information ring Secretary:
Adrian Williams on 01443 206333

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD Part II

Richard Naisbitt

Healesville Sanctuary Raptor Programme.

I sat and watched the Peregrine for almost an hour - she had killed a wood duck and was casually plucking its breast. A methodical motion, bend and pluck, bend and pluck... She was a neat butcher, removing the meat from the breast in a quick and easy manner. Despite her attention to neatness, she soon became bloody and with the recent deluge the sodden ground around was stained a watery red. I could pick up her transmitter signal... a soft and steady beep - in my headphones. this had become ritualised, I would drive out to the release area and switch the receiver on and scan - I would pick up a signal and then follow and eventually find her. Sometimes she was perching in one of the many skeletal gum trees or, on occasion she was soaring and barely visible and on these occasions her signal would suddenly peak before entering another trough. Watching her hunt was interesting, Australian Peregrines, or rather some

Right : Electra.

*Bottom:
Peregrine flying
over Yarra
Valley
Healesville*

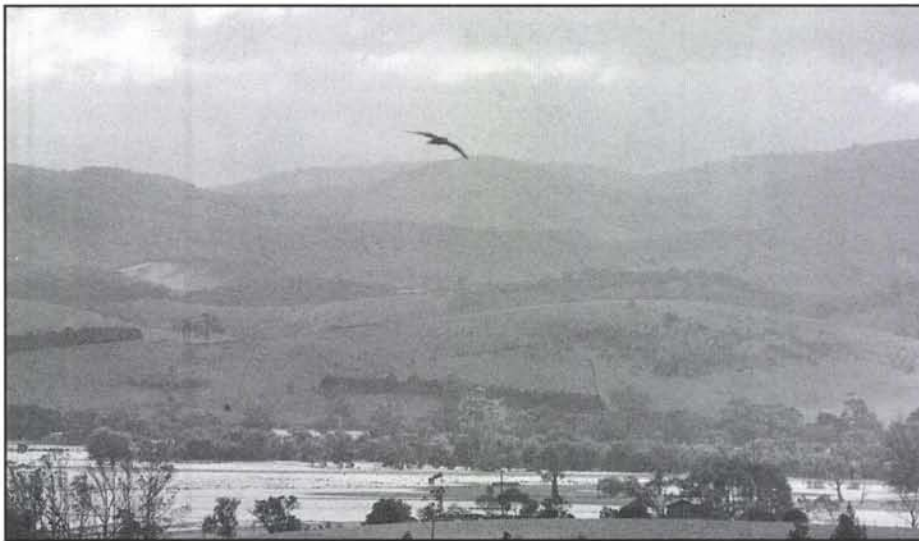
Australian Peregrines, do hunt in quite dense bush, searing through it like some supercharges Goshawk. Killing has become quite an art, but then again there were lean periods, perfection was being attained but through trial and error and when she caught and killed a large parrot, a desperate bite from it nearly severed the hind toe on her right foot. The foot swelled up and the toe looked withered, but a judicious amount of interference stopped any further infection. Survival was to be achieved at any cost - long term survival was obviously in the



hands of whatever God created her and which ever God happened to like Peregrine falcons - but there again survival is a game of Russian Roulette, there are only so many empty chambers before the bullet goes off, God probably has no control or maybe he pulls the trigger!

Thus Electra was learning the hard way. Her transmitter was the link but like the heart monitor it could tell certain things and when the signal finally flatlined and the sky suddenly appeared empty I knew it was the end, for me anyway and the future was indeed in the hands of whatever or whomever controlled such things as the lives of falcons. I do have to ask "What did I achieve" and if releasing one female Peregrine was a great conservation achievement then I have to argue against it - I achieved very little except to allow one bird a crack at living and perhaps to allow myself a few moments of illegal pleasure by watching a falcon kill with me in attendance - I admit I even helped her on occasion, I flushed ducks off a dam and watched her pursue them over the horizon - not to return and later discovering her feeding off a fresh carcass.

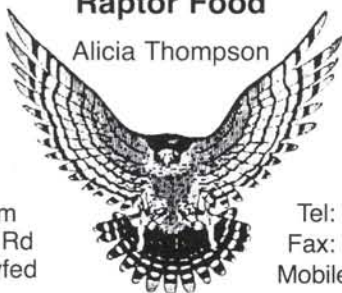
So there we have a conclusion - the quick and the dead, bloody piles of feathers and flying falcons - survival at all costs, negligible achievements and illicit pleasure. Survival is a game played by all but only won by those who are quick and all the rest are dead.....



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OLD ABBEY BOOKS. SLANE. COUNTY MEATH IRELAND

日本のたが狩り
Falconry In Japan

The following is an interview with a gentleman who is most important and who has the most precious experience in the Japanese falconry society. The interviewer is a gentleman called Tomohisa Kondo, who is a subscriber to the magazine.

Mr Kaoru Hanami is the only surviving falconer from the imperial household, and in that sense, he is the last authentic falconer, which means professional. He was born in 1910 and, being a bird-loving boy, he was recruited by the then ministry of imperial household as an assistant falconer in 1924. The imperial household had one head falconer, seven falconers and three

assistant falconers. The newly recruited assistant falconer must learn to fix the fist in the first place, by walking with a water-filled *sake* cup placed on it. This training was continued until he could walk without spilling the water, and then he was allowed to handle hawks. It was thought important to calm and relax a hawk so that she could concentrate and the fixed fist might

have been one of the factors in making her feel in the same way as perching on a treetop, that is to say, feel natural. Such a natural posture could have been seen as the most beautiful. Three years later he was appointed falconer.

The first recorded practice of falconry in Japan was pheasant-hunting by the emperor in the fourth century and in spite of such a long tradition of the imperial falconry, the exigencies of the Second World War virtually terminated its practice in the early 1940's. It should be pointed out here that the falconry in

Japan had been mainly developed by the official patronage of the privileged class, such as feudal lords and the imperial household, rather than as more widespread personal sport. After the war, the ministry of imperial household was reduced to the imperial household agency, and the falconry has never revived since then. There are still several 'falconers' in the agency today, but the 'falconer' is just the name of a job and they have no calibre to practice falconry any more. Mr Hanami himself had been placed mainly in charge of the administration of

TOMOHISA KONDO



The Japanese Hawking Association demonstrates falconry every November at the Hamarikyū park in Tokyo, which was one of the three imperial hunting-grounds for duck-hunting.

the former hunting ground, and retired from the imperial household in 1976.

In the Imperial Household, Mr Hanami was trained under the 14th headmaster of the Suwa hawking school, Utaro Kobayashi. During the Tokugawa (feudal) period (1600-1867) falconry was only permitted to the ruling class and in that sense it was the symbol of the blue blood. The vast hunting-grounds were preserved and hawks and their nests strictly protected from the commons' intrusion. Falconry had such status that many feudal lords employed their own falconers, by whom various hawking schools were developed. The Suwa hawking school originated from the falconers who hunted to dedicate the game to the Suwa shrine. The 1st headmaster, Ietaka Kobayashi was employed by the 1st *shogun* (the uppermost lord and the ultimate ruler of the country of that period), Ieyasu Tokugawa, and, since then, the Suwa hawking school had been the *shogun's* falconers until the end of the period. The 13th headmaster, Kyuzo Kobayashi first served the Tokugawa *shogun*, but he was once discharged by the downfall of the Tokugawas. After that, the newly revitalised imperial household decided to revive falconry as the imperial occasion in order to preserve the traditional culture and to receive honoured guests. Mr Kobayashi was mustered back by the emperor this time and thus the imperial falconry of the modern era began. Again, it held such status that there were no lookers-on except

the invited guests, no photographs by the outsiders, and no intrusion of the reporters from the media.

Mr Hanami became the 16th headmaster of the Suwa hawking school in 1929. The Suwa hawking school was not the only hawking school that had been adopted by the imperial household, but his master was the best skilled falconer, and, in due course, other schools gradually died out. One of the most distinctive features of the Suwa hawking school, which might have been the cause of its successful survival, is its 'roundness'. A person who is soft and flexible, who prefers harmonies to quarrels, is called 'round', and 'without edges' in Japanese. The falconers of the Suwa hawking school were originally the servants to the goddess, and not derived from the warrior class who were stiff and abrasive and tended to compete. Each hawk has her own character, some are impetuous, some are slow to burn, and so forth. Therefore there is no secret rule or skill of falconry, which can be applied to any hawk. The falconer cannot force his way regardless of the hawk's conditions, but he must learn everything from her, in order to make the man and the hawk one in body. It is thought to be necessary for the man and the hawk to be one in body, that is to say, in perfect harmony, in order to complete good hunting. Mr Hanami recommends handling various hawks with different characters and learning from them each time by experience, rather than seeking for verbalised secrets. In this way, the

falconers train the hawk as if he served her. Mr Hanami was the master to the other falconers, but the hawk was master to him. These 'learn from the hawk', 'the hawk is the master', and 'the man and the hawk in one body' are the essence of the Suwa hawking school. Mr Hanami's master, Utaro Kobayashi was famous for his excellent skill, and he was referred to as 'the master born from the hawk'. Mr Hanami himself has chosen this patient, broad-minded way of life, and he has never had any quarrels, even with his wife.

The principal hawk used by the Suwa hawking school is the goshawk, because she has more various uses than other hawks. Passage goshawks were presented to the imperial household every year. They trained these and other older hawks after moulting. The new hawk has jesses and leash on and is kept in the mews. Fasting begins and the falconer judges her condition by her droppings. When the time is ripe, the falconer offers food on the fist and mimics a rat's call in the darkness, in order that the hawk may think there is a rat and grasp the food. Thus she is invited to feed on the fist. Incidentally, doves are the main food. Manning is called *sue-mawashi*, and it follows the same process, from the dark quiet night to the crowded daylight. There is, for instance, a car driving down, the falconer turns his back to the road, and feed a little in order for the hawk to be distracted from it. The falconer must get up at two o'clock every morning to train the hawk.

Perhaps the manning is the capital part of training, occupying most of the time. The rest are as follows. *Furikae* is to fly the hawk from one falconer to the other. According to the professional tradition she must be ready to sit on anyone's fist in the end, so she can be flown by the emperor, the lords and so forth. *Watari* is to fly the hawk to perch on a tree, and call her back. In calling her back a dove's wing with a small amount of pectoral muscle attached to it is used instead of a day-old cockerel. *Marubashi* is an attack on a dove tied down to the ground. *Furibato* is an attack on a stringed, flying dove. Lures were not known traditionally, and stringed, live doves were used instead. The final stage is *tobinagashi*, which is an attack on a flying dove without a string. This is the direct preparation for the vital hunting skill, called *awase* or *haawase*, so the next stage after this is entering, *shyotorikai*. The training period is 45-60 days.

When a pheasant, for instance, is flushed in the actual hunting, the falconer must calculate the distance, the wind, the topography, the hawks condition, the timing and so forth almost instantly, and then cast the hawk. This instinctive, well-concerted casting is called *awase*. If the falconer is successful in it, things are decided, say within the twenty yard range. This is the typical way of hunting in the Suwa hawking school and *awase* is the most important technique to materialise it. Even if the falconer fails in *awase*, the fit hawk will chase the pheasant, knowing that it does not fly so long. The pheasant flies like a parabola, but the hawk skims over the ground smoothly and quietly. The pheasant will lose sight of the hawk shortly and begin to descend, feeling relieved. No sooner has it landed than the hawk binds to it with deadly silence and suddenness, quickly finishing the job. This is certainly a clear kill, but the falconer must cover the long distance in order to retrieve the hawk, even if he uses his whistle and *furibato* to call her back. In the meantime, the fellow falconers are gaining the second of the third kill.

Duck-hunting was the typical imperial falconry. The season was from 15th October until 15th April. During this period, there was one hawking day every week in each of three hunting-grounds, so the falconry practice as an imperial occasion



Mr Hanami and a home-bred female goshawk of four years, Husehime. 'The man and the hawk in one body', materialised in the perfect balance of this picture.

was held three times a week. The falconers also made an official trip to the foot of Mount Fuji in May or June and hunted hares using beaters. they even experienced hare-hunting with the Hodgson's hawk eagle in the northern region of Japan, where the local peasants were hawking in this manner. Moorhen-hunting, which was held three times between May and July, marked the end of the entire season before moulting. Other game which was hunted as practice included herons and egrets. The reward of a successful kill for the hawk is the heart of the game.

The overall objective of all these techniques in the Suwa hawking school is 'to make a round hawk', which means to make a hawk ready to perform good hunting under whatever circumstances. As a matter of course in any schools of falconry, food control itself is not so simple. According to Mr Hanami, the younger falconer tends to make a macho hawk, which is beautiful in appearance and dashing in hunting, but tends to neglect the falconers call, even carrying away the game, which has just been killed. Only the proficien-

cy of the falconer can tell how to make a hawk strengthen her spirit, perform good hunting and obey instructions at the same

time through food control.

Another hawk used in the Suwa falconry school is the peregrine falcon. She is less popular than the goshawk in Japan, and known for the tendency to lose enthusiasm for hunting quickly. the hood is used to prevent this, but even using the hood, it is believed that the falcon can be active in falconry for only a year. Incidentally, the Japanese hood is like a loose bag covering the entire head. In comparison to aware, stoop hunting by the falcon is called *agetaka*. Mr Hanami remembers pheasant-hunting in this way. He describes the falcon's waiting on as 'a whirligig beetle of the sky', and they moved her by the whistle call above the rice field. Instantly a pheasant was flushed, the falcon dropped into the whizzing stoop, and a stiff binding next moment. The peregrines were killed during the Second World War in Britain, because the captured carrier pigeons from the continent, but things went the other way around in Japan during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. the siege of Port Arthur was inflicting vast amounts of casualties on the attacking Japanese army at that time, they found out, however that the Russians were communicating by means of carrier pigeons. then, good pigeons were imported from Germany, and the imperial falconers used them in training falcons. It was proved to be a very

effective measure to cut pigeon communications lines, but the war ended before they were 'entered'. After Mr Hanami's retirement in 1976, there has been no real falconer in the imperial household agency, but several civilian enthusiasts began to gather in order to preserve this traditional skill and culture, if the government paid no attention to it. Those people gathered around Mr Hanami, the last imperial falconer. He was first perplexed with this idea, because of his loyalty to the imperial household, and hesitated to disclose falconry to the outsiders and general public, but their enthusiasm and the necessity to preserve the tradition finally persuaded him. Thus the Japanese falconers Association was formed, and Mr Hanami became its head in 1985. The association administers the qualifying examination for the falconer, in which applicants practice the basic skills of falconry, such as those mentioned above in explaining how to train a hawk, before the examiners. There are only about thirty members of the association now, but because of this selection system, only several of them are falconers and others are just the members of the association. they are hunting pheasants and bamboo partridges in the suburbs of Tokyo during the season, and, apart from it, positively performing falconry demonstrations to the general public.



Mr Kaoru Hanami, the 16th headmaster of the Suwa hawking school, aged 85 years at his residence. The painting on fusuma sliding doors at his back is a hawk on a pine tree, the favourite motif of the Japanese art.

One More Hero

By
Alan Gates.



*Snake River Canyon, site of the
'Snake River Birds of Prey
Natural Area.'*

Growing up on my native Island of Jersey, my early memories between the age of eight to twelve years were probably heavily influenced by my first real hero, Roderick Dobson's writing in the 'Birds of the Channel Islands' stirred my young blood as I scoured the island for a sighting or nest site of the numerous resident avian species.

I know I caused my parents many anxious hours on the many occasions I was missing from home, only to be found scrambling on the notoriously dangerous island sea cliffs looking for nests.

As my interests progressed to falconry and my life was enveloped by its fascination, I found and met a handful of individuals along the way, whose knowledge, understanding and compassion for the art of falconry, strongly influenced and greatly added to my enjoyment of the art.

Some years ago I made a pact with myself to seek out and correspond with as many dedicated falconers as I could, the sort of falconer to whom it was not a mere sport, but a way of life, a passion, a philosophy. To this end, for the past few years I have been enjoying an extended correspondence with Morlan Nelson, one of America's great ambassadors for the right of birds of prey to fly in the skies, without every rancher and landowner reaching for a gun.

It was Morlan's work with eagles that first inspired my initial correspondence, but it soon became evident to me that Morley Nelson and I would have to sit down and just talk eagles and falconry face to face. What started as casual planning soon gathered momentum, and before I knew it I was standing in the foyer of Boise airport U.S.A. It was early evening but I was feeling the effect of losing seven hours, and my body demanded a bed after twenty

three hours travelling.

When I had first arrived in Boise. I telephoned Morlan Nelson to arrange my schedule, he suggested that I look in at the World Center for Birds of Prey first, to see the showcase that is dedicated to some of his life. This I duly did as part of the official tour of its 'Interpretive Center'. On display was Morlan's first conservation tool, his holstered hand gun. Returning from the War Morlan continued to fly falcons and make 8mm films of them, but so many people stopped to shoot at his falcon if it landed on a power pole that he started to carry a Colt frontier model six gun to fire in their direction if they attempted to shoot at his falcon.

This wild west action saved many of his falcons lives but it nearly started a war in the state of Utah where he lived. So many individuals believed that all chicken hawks, bullet hawks and duck hawks should be shot on sight, and this caused many a heated argument which nearly ended in a shoot out. It became clear to Morlan that the way forward was through education not the bullet.

Walt Disney, having seen Morlan's early 8mm movies of his falcons brought him to Hollywood as a consultant on early wildlife adventures as *The Living Desert* and *The Vanishing Prairie*. Morlan flew Red tail hawks and Prairie Falcons, which gave many Americans their first intimate sight of wild birds of prey. The effects of the Disney films and the six series of TV's "Wild Kingdom" which Morlan worked on had such a dramatic effect on the American public perception of wild birds of prey, now you hardly ever hear the words, "chicken hawk" used.

Also on show were Morlan's war medals, he had given them to the Center as he felt that their possession by him was morally

wrong and they should have been awarded to his fallen comrades. As an officer in the legendary Tenth Mountain Division, the all-volunteer ski troops, Morlan saw action from the Aleutians to the Battle of Brenner Pass.

Decorated with the Silver Star and Purple Heart and wounded in the final week of hostility, but languishing in a hospital bed with his leg in a cast was not to stop Morlan from a successful attempt to obtain a young kestrel he had been watching on a nearby cliff. It involved rappelling down a cliff, but he returned to the hospital with the kestrel, a broken cast and some unexplained rope burns on his pyjamas.

I was beginning to understand the enormity of the task ahead of me in trying to document much of Morlan Nelson's life. His long life right from a boy growing up on a North Dakota ranch has been dedicated to the education of the American people towards the conservation of its birds of prey.

My real interest in Morlan Nelson was his work with eagles, and predominately the Golden Eagle. Although Morlan has worked with Bald, Bateleur and Harpy eagles, it is his work with Golden eagles which is so extensive and of such great interest to me.

We talked for days, and Morlan demonstrated many of his techniques often using his female Golden eagle to model a particular hood or to show me how he applied the snap fit jesses he developed for his film work.

Not all of our discussions were of the arm-chair variety, Morlan enthusiastically guided me on trips to the Boise River

Canyon and the famous Snake River Canyon.

The night before our planned trip to the Snake River Canyon, Morlan announced that he would take a rope along, so we could go over the edge and I could have a better view point for photographing the canyon.

We could go over the edge of the canyon, never one to make much of a point as to how much of a wimp this Englishman might be, I kept my mouth shut. This coupled with the loose talk of sun basking diamond backed rattlesnakes, had the effect of concentrating the mind. In fact I was conscious of where I was placing my feet in this hot arid dessert landscape, I had no intention of disturbing the slumbers of any ten foot diamond back, No siree.

As we walked, Morlan pointed out many new and disused eyries of Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons, in this remote and desolate canyon which at first glance is like many desert, river and cliff complexes in the North Western United States. It was not until Morlan Nelson moved to live in Boise, Idaho that he discovered the Swan Falls area of the Snake River to be a very unique habitat, probably in the United States if not in the world.

It was through Morlan's work as a soil scientist and hydrologist employed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, that he discovered the condition of the top soil surrounding the top of the canyon. This deep, medium textured soil was perfect for the burrows of the Townsend ground squirrel who multiplied in the area in large numbers.

Morlan also discovered that up to ten per cent of the nesting prairie falcons in the United States live in this unique 33 mile stretch of the Snake River Canyon, and that the Townsend ground squirrel made up to 70 per cent of the falcons diet. Forty nine pairs of prairie falcons nested in the Swan Falls area, which means there was a falcons nest every 300-400 yards in the canyon. Morlan also found that this

area of South Western Idaho contained about 100 Golden Eagle eyrie's, probably the largest concentration in North America and possibly the world.

He brought this unique location into the living rooms of millions of Americans through two nationally televised films that he worked on, Disney's "Ida the Off-Beat Eagle" and the Wild Kingdom series, "The Valley of the Eagles".

Through an enormous amount of lobbying, Morlan brought the uniqueness of this priceless heritage to the attention of the Department of the Interior, and upon the recommendation of the Bureau of Land Management, a protective withdrawal of 26,255 acres of land along the Swan Falls reach of the river was designated a "Nature Area" a unique and exceptional sanctuary for rare birds of prey, now known as the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area.

In April of 1972, a new effort to increase consideration for eagles was spearheaded by the Idaho Power Company. It had found a problem with eagle electrocutions, the eagles often use power poles as landing sites from which to scan the surrounding terrain for game. A wingspan of from

six to eight feet makes it easy for a landing eagle to simultaneously touch the two phase conductors (or one phase conductor and a ground wire) on either end of the crossarm.

More and more eagles were being found under the company's power lines, victims not only of the electricity but of gunshots, poison and starvation. Although the power company was unable to do anything about the last three things, it felt it might be able to prevent the electrocutions, but it wasn't sure how.

Morlan Nelson, now recognised as one of the world's foremost authorities on eagles, hawks and other birds of prey, was enlisted to help with Idaho Power engineers and biologists to study the problem of eagles and power lines.

Idaho Power line crews built mock-ups of various types of poles in Nelson's backyard in the foothills near Boise so he could study the eagles behaviour around the poles. Using his skills as a cinematographer, Morlan Nelson spent hundreds of hours filming his trained eagles in 16mm slow motion on the mock-ups. The big birds were tested in a variety of wind conditions and the films provided dramatic proof of an eagle's ability to touch both conductors with its wing tips.

A study of Idaho power pole landing sites determined that 95% of the electrocutions could be prevented by correcting 2% to 15% of the poles. This is due to the eagle's extreme



Mock up power pole and nest platform erected by Idaho Power Company for Nelson's work to save eagles from electrocution



Morlan Nelson with one of his Golden Eagles.

selectivity in choosing a landing site. Prevailing winds, prey density and surrounding topography have to be exactly right.

The corrections made by the Idaho Power Company varied from covering conductors and raising one wire, to building perches on top of the poles.

The sometimes fatal attraction of some species of birds of prey to nesting on power structures carrying 69,000 volts resulted in the Idaho Power Company's cooperation in designing nesting platforms for the larger birds, especially eagles.

The idea for this platform came when Nelson observed a pair of golden eagles nesting on the observation tower from which the Idaho Air National Guard marks bomb hits from fighter planes in training pilots.

The tower was an ideal nest, providing shade, elevation and protection from the wind. The nesting platform is mounted on a power structure, the open or unshaded end must be away from the tower. This

gives the adults maximum freedom to land under all wind conditions.

The Company stipulated that these nesting platforms should be constructed of materials impervious to weathering and have a projected lifespan equal to that of the power pole- approximately 100 years. Sturdy, permanent structures would not only minimise maintenance and replacement costs but would be of greater advantage to the birds.

The success of these corrective modifications was documented in slow-motion photography. After correction, the poles became positive ecological factors rather than inviting, but lethal killers.

It has been estimated that the work done to the Idaho Power Company's poles following Morlan Nelson's advice, which has been copied by other power companies within the western US, has saved the lives of around 300 eagles each year.

The work on the power line problem lasted over a decade and Morlan's own film company 'Tundra Films', filmed and pro-

duced the award winning film "Silver Wires, Golden Wings" which won top honours in four national film festivals. Nelson's work on the thousands of modified power poles and nest platforms have actually benefited the eagles and other raptors. While there's a solid prey base for raptors in the treeless high deserts of the western United States, high places which can be used for nest building and hunting perches are scarce. The building of power lines across the nation has undoubtedly helped raptors to increase their geographic distribution.

With a life time dedicated to the promotion of the protection and better understanding of birds of prey, Morlan Nelson is The Man who saved the Eagles.

When the time came for our goodbyes, it was a tough parting, I just wanted to stay a few more days. As Morlan put it, 'We are looking at things from the same track, Al.', all I can say is, 'it is a pleasure and an honour to know you Morlan Nelson, you are one of my personal heroes'.

COMPETITION & RESULTS

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TO WIN A FREE FAMILY TICKET TO THE NATIONAL BIRDS OF PREY CENTRE SIMPLY FIND OUT HOW MANY FALCONS ARE HIDDEN IN THIS WORDSEARCH, WRITE YOUR ANSWER ON A POSTCARD ALONG WITH YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND SEND THEM TO:

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The answer to our last Competition was *Falco biarmicus*.

The ten winners and their chosen prizes were:

- Mr J Barnes.** Surrey, A Martin Jones Glove.
- Mrs D Williams.** Pontypridd, Binoculars donated by Simon Rumble.
- Mr N Farrant.** Devon. £20 Ray Prior Voucher.
- Mr J Catt.** Hailsham, Falconry Originals Bag.
- Mr J. M. Cunningham.** Staffs, Knife from Westweald Falconry.
- Mr Colin Henderson,** Aberdeenshire. A Book - Some Time with Eagles & Falcons, donated by the Owls Nest Bookshop.
- Mr S Moroney.** Knottingley. Falcon Block donated by Crown Falconry.
- Paul Beecroft.** Berks. Peregrine on Rook Print by Glenn Baldock.
- Mr N.J. Clifton,** Hastings, A Book - City Peregrines also donated by the Owls Nest Bookshop.
- Mrs F Stone,** Telford, Steve Halsall Hood.

All these winners will also receive a FREE BIRD REGISTRATION from the Independent Bird Register.

Congratulations to all our winners, and keep trying those of you who entered by didn't win. Many thanks to all those who donated prizes.

OUT OF THE HOOD

Martin Hollinshead

Martin Hollinshead looks at the hooding of short and broadwings and questions why more of these birds are not made to the hood in the UK

There has been much written on the subject of hooding, but most of it in relation to falcons. For shortwings and broadwings hooding is normally considered unnecessary and I am reminded of the comment "the more they see, the tamer they become." Yet acceptance of the hood should be viewed as desirable in hawks, buteos and eagles as with the falcons and, although the former can be handled and flown without a hood being employed, hooding definitely increases their value. Putting aside practical field procedures; hooding smoothes training, helps with basic management, and generally gives the falconer more freedom. The changing of jesses, the renewing of Aylmeri anklets, tail feather imping, talon sharpening and foot washing, such things can all be achieved with the bird sitting calmly hooded on the fist. Hooding also helps with the current trend of keeping birds loose rather than tethered. 'Free lofting' has many advantages over a leash and perch arrangement but it also brings a number of problems with it. For example, turning a bird loose in an aviary



Hooding should not be reserved for falcons. Photo: E Luttger.



A Kazakh falconers Golden Eagle. In Central Asia Eagles are always flown out of the hood. Photo A. Zechmeister.

(or chamber) is only too easy - getting it out again may not be so simple; it may have removed its jesses or may simply refuse to sit on the glove. Unless such a bird can be hooded there may be many a bate before it is through the door. And, if a safety door system is being used (and it should be), there is a double hazard to negotiate. Let me use two of our own birds as examples. One, a five year old Harris, allows me to pick her up and carry her out of her chamber without any trouble at all. Her neighbour on the other hand, a first year redtail, can only be removed (without incident) by hooding her fairly swiftly. Of course, with any difficult bird, food could be used to keep it on the glove. However, I make it a rule to avoid feeding any of our birds in their chambers as this (especially with the more forward species) can lead to other problems.

Just how the hood is initially introduced will depend on the bird's age and background. With hand-reared individuals the hood is worked in with rearing. Fully feathered aviary or wild-taken birds come to know the hood from day one of their training; living in the hood until reconciled to their new life. In short, they are handled in very much the same way as longwings.

Moving on to field falconry and the hood. Perhaps the hood's greatest value is when flying in flat, treeless country. The bird is carried hooded until a suitable flight opportunity presents itself. Flying 'out of the hood' in this way puts the falconer in full control. He decides when a slip is viable or not and the bird is saved the annoyance of being held back from hares that are simply too far or, in group hawking, belong to someone else. Naturally, for this type of hunting to work, the falconer must be able to recognise when a flight is viable. If operated by a skilled hare hawker, it can develop a super-confident, very determined bird; a bird that has come to

realise that every time the hood is removed there is quarry ahead of it that can be caught.

Training for out of the hood flights is extremely straight forward. Once the bird is coming well to a dummy hare or lure-carcass it is simply hooded prior to each flight. The hood comes off and the bird is away. With lure training the hood serves a double function, making re-garnishing and re-positioning the dummy much easier.

In practical hawking, the hood's value goes way beyond out of the hood hare hunting. In hill country the hood has its place whatever the quarry. The aim might be to do some soaring but a blustery day and a long walk to higher ground can have a restless bird just about exhausted before it flies! The bird (especially if a youngster) can't possibly be expected to understand that it will eventually be allowed to fly.

Several German friends experienced similar problems when they came over for a spot of mountain hare hawking last November. None of their birds (five golden eagles) had been flown in hill country before and only one was accustomed to the hood. It soon became clear that the hoodable bird was going to make life easier for itself and its owner than the four others. In addition, it was proving more successful. All the flying was off the fist and for this to be effective over an 'up and down' landscape required military like planning. There was much walking, much positioning and re-positioning, and plenty of time for an unhooded bird to get a bit fed-up! While one or two of the birds got themselves into a bit of a flap the hooded eagle sat calm and ready to perform, regardless of the weather conditions and the mountain goat-like antics of its owner. And, when it did use its wings, it was to good effect - it was lethal. When it comes to recommending hood types, it's difficult to know where to begin. There are so many patterns to choose from, some based on traditional designs, other the result of experimentation. As a good all rounder I like the Anglo-Indian hood. However, for flying eagles out of the hoods, the type originally known as the Falconry Centre Style is hard to beat. I first tried these hoods about 10 or 12 years ago when Martin Jones sent some to me in Germany. None of my colleagues could fault them. Their main plus point is that their shape keeps them in place even when in an almost fully open position; and when flying out of the hood, it is essential that the hood can be removed at speed without taking the birds head off!



This female Redtail will only travel when hooded.

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ANSWERING A SEARCHING QUESTION PAUL BEECROFT

During 1995/96 much controversy has arisen over Search Warrants executed at the addresses of private individuals under the W.L.C.A. 1981. I have, over the past months been contacted by a number of people asking various questions such as; 'can the Police do this?' 'Is such and such allowed?' etc., etc., I will therefore try and attempt to set the record straight.

In the main Warrants are executed on keepers that are suspected of taking birds from the wild, passing them, off as captive bred and then selling them to unsuspecting Falconers by means of adverts etc. I am sure that every honest falconer and Keeper will agree that this is a practice that must be stopped.

The first step in the proceedings is that information of suspect illegal actions in respect of an individual(s) will come to the attention of the Police. The information may come from any number of sources in the first instance such as (1) During an investigation of a similar matter (2) Information received from a member of the public (3) Information received from an outside agency (4) Information received from a Government Agency.

Once the information has been received the Police will carry out enquiries to look, and obtain evidence to support any information that has been received by them. Each case that is dealt with is different from the previous one so it is fair to say that enquiries to obtain evidence will be different. What these enquiries are I'm afraid is not open for discussion for obvious reasons. Suffice to say that in most cases a considerable amount of work is often done by the Police lasting several months. When the evidence is obtained a Search Warrant will be applied for at a Magistrates Court.

Section 19(3) of the W.L.C.A. 1981 states: If a justice of the peace (i.e. Magistrate(s)) is satisfied by information on oath that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that an offence under section 1 (taking of wild birds) has been committed and that evidence of the offence may be found on any premises, he may grant a Warrant to any Constable (with or without other persons) to enter upon and search those premises for the purpose of obtaining that evidence.

I, myself, have obtained a number of Search Warrants in this manner. I am able to state that Magistrates do not authorise these Warrants just because the Police want them. Search Warrants are, and quite rightly, considered very seriously by the Magistrates. They will not, under any circumstances, sign a Warrant if, in their opinion, the Police have not or are unable to provide sufficient evidence to support the criteria laid down under Section 19(3). Once a Search Warrant has been signed

then the Police must execute it within one month from the date of signing and it can only be used on one occasion.

A Warrant will show the following details

(1) The Police Force concerned
(2) The Court concerned
(3) The name of the person applying for the Warrant

(4) The Act and Section under which the Warrant is being applied for.

(5) The address of the premises.

(6) What articles are being looked for.

(7) The Warrant will also give authority for the Police to be accompanied by other persons such as a Veterinary Surgeon, DoE Inspector and representatives of other agencies. The Warrant does not permit persons to enter who are not deemed necessary. The wording on this is obviously quite important and is fairly standard throughout the country. The normal practice would be something along the following lines.

"To search for any wild bird whether alive or dead of any part or derivative of such a bird. (Sometimes a particular species may be mentioned but this is not essential, especially when more than one species is involved) To search for any item capable of being used to commit an offence (this could include traps, climbing equipment etc)

Finally, documentary evidence connected with the offence(s). This could include a wide range of items such as sale receipts, breeding records etc.

The stage has now been reached where the Warrant has been authorised. The Police Force that is running the operation will normally be the one where the person suspected of committing the offence resides. It may well be that the suspect has sold a number of the offspring and they are now in various parts of the country, at addresses in different Police Forces. An Operation Order is then sent out to each Force concerned, giving full details of the suspected offences and the relevant ring numbers of the birds subject of the enquiry. Each Force will then apply to their own Magistrates for a Search Warrant.

Included in the Operation Order there are a number of guidelines that must be considered prior to the execution of any Warrant. Normally the Warrant will be dealt with by a Police Wildlife Liaison Officer who will be familiar with the guidelines prior to receiving them. The main concerns are:

(1) The welfare of the birds is of paramount importance.

(2) The birds must be handled by persons who have experience in dealing with these species.

(3) The Veterinary Surgeon called upon to obtain a blood sample is capable of doing so and has confirmed this prior to being formally requested to assist in this matter.

I am fully aware that those three items mentioned are likely to cause my phone to be ringing hour after hour and have sack loads of letters arriving on my doorstep stating that none of them were considered when the Police etc. came to check their birds. I am familiar with most of the Operations that have taken place over the past years. Some of the stories that have been bandied about sound horrendous.

Some of them are true, some of them are definitely not. Mistakes have been made, accidents have occurred. I will not deny this. We all make mistakes and we learn from them. Sometimes a bird will die, but this is, fortunately, very rare. When this occurs it is disastrous. The keeper/owner is quite rightly very upset and this goes without saying. It is a fact though that this does also affect other persons. It may be that the bird died whilst being handled by the Vet, the handler called in by the Police or the keeper himself. This can be very traumatic for all persons involved.

Everything possible is being done to ensure the welfare of all animals and birds, that are subject of an investigation, is considered first and foremost, in the hope that accidents will not occur. It must be remembered though, that when birds are being dealt with there is always an element of risk, but everything that can be done will be done to ensure the welfare of the birds involved.

The day will arrive when the Operation is executed. All addresses will, in most cases, be visited at the same time, on the same date, for obvious reasons. In the past frantic phone calls have been made asking people to 'lose' birds before the Police arrive. Warrants are normally executed early morning and if possible on a weekend for two reasons:

(1) The keeper is normally at home.

(2) The birds have not yet been fed.

In most cases two Police Officers will be at your front door. There may also be one or even two in your rear garden. Attempts have been made in the past to release birds from aviaries because the Police have been seen from bedroom windows and it is clearly obvious what is about to happen.

The Police will then introduce themselves and explain what is occurring. You may see a copy of the Warrant, but in any case you will be given a copy before they leave.

Following the explanation a number of people will then enter your house and garden. The number of people involved will depend on the number of birds you have subject of the enquiry. There are also a number of other factors that the Police have to consider such as, how many people are in the house, is there any likelihood of entry being refused, and the likelihood of violence. It has occurred in the past and may well again. The number of persons involved in an Operation has always been a bone of contention. I will therefore attempt to put this into perspective from a Police point of view:

(1) If you are in a position of having one or two birds subject of an enquiry then the minimum number of people you could expect is three, but in fairness this would be exceptional.

(2) If you have a fair number of birds then the number of persons will go up. So why are so many people involved? Let me try and explain. Each person has been given a specific job. Some Officers will secure the house, some will secure the aviary areas. We cannot be left in the situation that whilst the birds are being checked in the garden someone in the house is disposing of items that we would want and vice versa.

Once the premises are secure and all persons are accounted for the proceedings will commence. In the first instance it is normal procedure for the Officer in charge to make an external check of all the aviaries with the owner, ask him or her to identify the birds. There may well be a specialist as well who is able to confirm the species. The keeper will then be asked if he is willing to catch up his own birds for examination. Approx only 50% agree to this. There will however be times when this cannot be allowed, such as when a bird has to be removed from the aviary, into an area that is not secure and the keeper 'accidentally' loses his grip on the bird....

So, let us assume that the keeper is not willing or is not permitted. How many people will enter the aviary? This will depend on the type of aviary concerned i.e. open or skylight & seclusion, and the number of birds therein.

This, in my opinion, is how it should be done and hopefully it will be.

Commencing with a skylight & seclusion aviary containing one bird only. The handler will enter the aviary and catch the bird and cast it up. Once it is safe there is no point in removing it from a secure aviary and taking the risk of it escaping. Therefore three people will then enter; the vet, the video/camera operator and one other officer who records the details of the bird and the comments made about it. This is the minimum number of people that will have to enter this type of aviary, the ring number of the bird will be checked. If it is a cable-tie ring which has become unreadable through the plastic sleeving owing to dirt etc., then it will have to be removed. This will then require an Inspector from the DoE to enter, remove the ring and then fit another. The bird will then be examined by a vet. This has proved very useful in the past especially to the keeper when problems have been noticed and brought to their attention. A blood sample will then be taken. The usual procedure is to take approx. 0.5ml of blood from the brachial vein. The blood is then immediately divided into two phials and each is labelled and identified. The handler is then left alone as all other persons leave. Once alone the bird is released and the handler leaves also. In the case of an open fronted aviary I would expect only the handler and the vet to enter. The remainder would stay outside and operate from there, through the wire. In the case of an aviary with two or more birds there are two options open; all of the birds can be caught, placed in boxes and then dealt with one by one or they can be removed from the aviary individually and then dealt with. Whichever causes the minimum distress is the option to be taken.

The handling of the birds and the taking of the blood sample is normally done with the minimum of fuss possible and as quickly as possible. From personal experience I know that it takes far longer to fit falconry equipment to the bird than it does to carry out the procedure mentioned.

One of the main questions I am asked is what can I do if the Police arrive and what are the Police allowed to do. This is not a simple question to answer as each Search Warrant is different from the other, if you understand my meaning. There are however, some simple rules in the case of Do's and Don'ts.

(1) Don't refuse entry to the premises. The Police are entitled to force an entry and this will be done very quickly if entry is refused.

(2) Don't obstruct or assault any member of the search team. You are liable to arrest and you will end up sitting in a cell at the local Police Station for the duration with the possibility of being charged, depending on the seriousness. It is not advantageous to you or the Police to be removed from your own premises. You need to be there and we want you there.

(3) Don't claim that you have lost the key(s) to the aviary. If required a forced entry will be made and you will be left with the repair.

(4) Do be polite, even if you don't want to be. Remember you may be on video and this may well be shown in a Court.

(5) Do also try and be co-operative. Remember, the quicker it is over the quicker we are gone. Being unco-operative only extends the agony.

POWERS OF THE POLICE

This is another favourite question. What can the Police do and what are they permitted to take following a Search Warrant? Again, no simple, straightforward answer, but at the end of the day the list is quite long. Under the Police & Criminal Evidence Act the Police may seize any article that they believe or suspect could be evidence in the investigation. The Police do have the right to seize any bird that is subject of the investigation, however, in most cases this is not done and only a part of it is seized i.e. blood. Your house can be searched from top to bottom in order to find articles/documentary evidence. Also any person that is named on the Warrant may take part in this search i.e. a representative of an outside organisation. The Police may also seize articles that are not the subject of the actual investigation a typical example would be drugs, Firearms, etc. Also they may seize other birds that are not subject of the investigation. If birds were found that were not ringed such as a Harris Hawk, and you were not able to give a reasonable account for this/or could not produce documentary evidence of purchase/captive breeding certificate, then this could be seized pending further Any wild bird, such as Buzzards or Sparrowhawks must also be accounted for and the reason for being in captivity.

The owner/ keeper of any bird that has blood obtained from it is not entitled to a

sample of blood himself. There are strict guidelines on the amount of blood that can be taken and what is taken by the vet is required for Police use. In the case of some of the larger birds it may be possible to ask the vet if he/she is willing to take an extra sample for you. I think this would be up to the discretion of the vet, but, for obvious reasons it is doubtful that this would be permitted especially if (a) the bird was remaining with you and (b) your own vet could obtain a sample at a later date.

Another question that is asked is "Can I call my own vet to take the blood samples?" You certainly can ask, but (a) he is not likely to be available (b) he may not want to become involved in something like this (c) it would be at your own expense. It would probably not be practical to arrange this and you cannot expect the Police to wait several hours until your own vet has finished his own surgery or whatever. I also know that in the past we have contacted local vets who have declined to attend because the person concerned is a client. At the end of the day the decision will be at the discretion of the Police Officer in charge.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE

After an Operation has been concluded you may, if you wish, make a complaint if you feel anyone has not acted correctly, a bird has died or been injured etc. This complaint can be reported via your local Police Station. You will be seen by a senior Police Officer and you will be required to make a written statement outlining your complaint. The matter will be investigated by Officers from the Complaints and Discipline Branch. The matter is then passed to an Independent body who review the case and decide what action is to be taken. Contrary to belief, complaints against Police are viewed and dealt with very seriously. Finally, following the conclusion of a Search Warrant, you will be given a number of forms, some of which will require your signature that confirms in the main that you have received a copy. You will be given a copy of the Warrant, a copy of a form under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act which will supply you with information relating to your rights, compensation for damage, powers of seizure etc. You will also receive a copy of a form listing any articles that have been seized. You may also be required to sign a form agreeing to retain property (i.e. a bird) and not dispose of it. If you are not willing to sign it the Police will have no option but to seize it. If you dispose of it at a later date you may be liable to civil or criminal proceedings. I hope this article will answer many of your questions and give a clearer picture on what can and cannot be done. I have tried to cover as many aspects as possible but you may feel that there are still some questions that have not been answered. If this is the case then write to the Falconers Magazine, who will pass your questions on to me and I will try to answer them as open and as honestly as I can. Please remember that the Police are here to help as well and I am prepared to offer advice when it is needed.

The OSPREY [*Pandion haliaetus*] is found virtually world wide, & hardly threatened. Successfully reinstated in Scotland, helped by dedicated conservationists, & now



being reintroduced to England by hacking youngsters back at Rutland Water. Frequently seen by English & Welsh waterways & coast, espec. in Aug/Sept. Not shy, especially in the USA's coastal waters. Spectacular plunge dive -



Adult, FLORIDA



usually from a hover. The feet are especially adapted for grasping fish. Sketched in Florida, Spain, Israel & Wales. Immature, right: PHILIP SNOW

RAPTORS

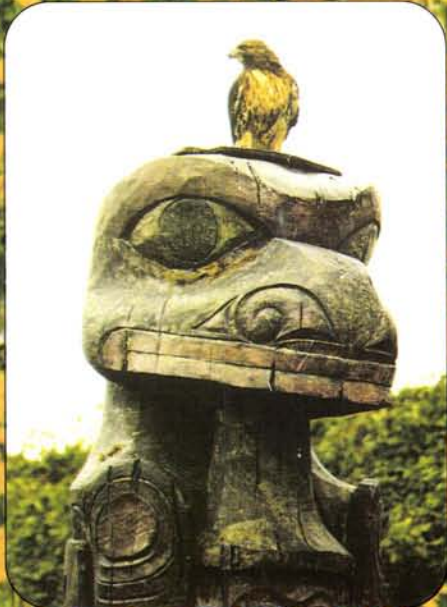
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No 2 The OSPREY.



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TRAINER.....



Above: Hudson on Movie "Magic on the Water."
Main Pic: Lee & Jake, a two year old Cougar.



Left: In her ledge on the window-sill, aged four and a half weeks A great HornedOwl
Above: Lee & Hudson, a 3 year old male Redtail.

TO THE STARS

LEE SOLLENBERGER

"We need the owl to land on the hood of the car. Behind the logo. We need it to stay until the dialogue is finished. Can you do that?"

That's a good question.

Where is the owl coming from? How big is the frame? Can we cheat it? These are the questions I ask myself. Others ask of me, when they see animal-work in a movie, television or commercials, "How do you do that?" As a wild animal trainer, and employed in the film business, I must be able to pull off small miracles.

It would take volumes of paper to try and explain these small miracles. And anyone involved with training birds of prey knows, not all hawks (or owls) are easy to train. When a bird is found that "goes by the book" it is a proud moment for the trainer and the bird.

I often tell film directors, when they ask about the animal or the bird action, "A bird can be out of sight in 30 seconds. I couldn't be out of sight in 5 minutes" because I know that a bird could just take off in flight. Yes, directors do ask for blood at times, and in the last 30 years I've given my share - metaphorically.

When one starts to train hawks, the first manoeuvre is to have the hawk jump to the fist (for food) in basic training. Once this is accomplished, the time is lengthened from the jump to flying to the fist. We call this part of training "flying from A to B" - perch to fist, fist to perch etc. Most hawks used in hawking are trained to do this. (Following is one example with Harris and other Buteos.)

In film, they want it on cue and to hit its mark perfectly. This is the difficult part. Will I get any pre-training on site, or on set? And remember, there are at least 75 to 125 people on set. Birds are shy creatures; too many people (and equipment) can add to the confusion, not to mention the pressures of production time (and the money involved.)

But! This is a business where

one has to be confident.

While working on a feature film some years ago, I had to fly a redtail to a prop (a Styrofoam head of a creature similar in looks to the Loch Ness Monster, Nessie.) this was a 2nd unit shot; no actors were present. I rehearsed the bird several times to see if we could do it. Hudson worked perfectly. The camera was set, and the director said, "Let's try one, Lee." After 4-5 takes, about 6 hours later, they had the shot they wanted. It was late in the day. The height of a large cottonwood looked more inviting than the fist, Hudson put up in the tree and refused to budge. The film company was concerned. I told them it was getting dark, Hudson would stay put, and I'd retrieve him early the next morning.

As Falconers know, the danger to Hudson that night would have been coyotes and horned owls, but luckily no threat came to him. At 5a.m., the following day, I returned, and at first light began to whistle and wave the bait (chick). The breakfast whistle blown, a now hungry Hudson flew right to me. I have flown this hawk for years, and he is a good worker. His training and imprinting, along with my confidence in him, gave me a much desired small miracle that day!

Working a television series involves extended periods of time spent on location. Also, work permits, interstate regulation along with other legal documentation must be dealt with before travel is allowed. While working on the *Grizzly Adams* television series in the 1970's, the animals ranged from bears to raccoon, deer, eagles, owls and hawks plus other assorted "critters." Again, I was involved with the 2nd unit shots. This consisted

of squirrels chattering in a tree, deer grazing in a meadow, raccoons fishing at the edge of a rocky creek, or mice scampering across log cabin windowsills.

Rather than series work, I prefer 3-4 day shoots with birds and smaller critters. We don't, however, use the game hawks for film. These hawks are strictly for hawking. Film birds are much easier to take up and down without worry because they are never used for hunting. They are fed daily, and prior to the shoot, we take them off food for 1-2 days.

Much of the time the hawk may have to sit on a tree limb, or some similar prop. The same applies to the owls. They are often called in to sit on a limb - example: campfire scenes, night scenes (horror film, owl flies across scene. Owl hoots at night (usually dubbed in, or I'll hoot for them.) I've seen birds hoot that are not in the *Bubo* family, but to audience does not know this. Often too, owls are worked in day shots.

Flying owls is also very different. All my owls come to me at a young age (two weeks) and this allows them to be very

tame, and to imprint to people. Students love to work with owls. I've often let them do an owl shoot. Most of the animal-rentals are small mammals and birds of prey. Teaching students the basics of animal training is the first step to more difficult behaviours such as training a cougar to go to a mark, and snarl, compared to calling a raccoon to the mark by buzzer.

I always stress the importance of maintaining diet, flying conditions re: birds and the health of animals. It is a difficult business, but one that has its rewards. It's always nice to see the final outcome of your training or teachings on the screen. It's there for everyone to wonder, "How'd they do that?" See you in the movies!

BELOW IS A LIST OF SOME PROGRAMMES, YOU MAY RECOGNISE, THAT LEE HAS TRAINED BIRDS FOR:

FILMS:

MAX, KILLER, CITY BOY, CALL OF THE WILD, GUNSMOKE, BIG FOOT, WILDERNESS FAMILY, GRIZZLY ADAMS, MOUNTAIN MAN, THE YEARLING, THE POND.

TELEVISION:

GRIZZLY ADAMS (SERIES), KUNG FU, LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE.



Hudson on the movie "Magic on the Water."

FACTS ON FALCONERS



Dr Nick Fox & Spitfire.

Dr Nick Fox is the subject of our Facts on Falconers. He lives in West Wales with his wife Barbro and their 9 year old son, Benjamin. Although in the UK he is best known as a falconer and breeder he is, he informed me, much more involved in conservation projects than the part of his life we see.

His love of all things 'bird of prey' is evident in everything he says, and his excitement and enthusiasm when talking about Spitfire or his conservation projects are catching.

Between his wealth of knowledge and his wonderful, droll sense of humour, this interview was a pleasure to conduct.

How long have you been practising Falconry?

For 30 years. I made my first hood though, when I was seven. I won't show you it, it's awful.

What was the first bird you ever flew?

A rehab Kestrel at school.

What are you flying at the moment?

An imprint, male New Zealand/Peregrine weighing 450g, called Spitfire

He is catching 9 out of 10 Jackdaws, often high up, as well as partridges. Today's kill was a magpie.

What is your favourite species?

The New Zealand Falcon is the one which has given me the most challenges, enjoyment and frustration. But you can have fun with the most unlikely species. For example I once had a bird which was great at catching mice if you tipped over hay bales in the shed. She was a 9 year old, haggard, chicken.

In that case have you ever had anything you couldn't train?

Yes! I once had a Changeable Hawk Eagle. She would sit on the fist as if in a trance and completely ignore everything.

Tell me about your book and how you came to write it.

I started documenting things when I was an undergraduate. I wrote about things I had experienced and learned. Some were for my Phd thesis, some were articles or scientific papers and other stuff was just for myself. We gave courses in '73 and '82 and I realised that we must have a syllabus so I wrote about anatomy and physiology for those. The courses also taught me what questions were asked by stu-

dents. As I started breeding more so I wrote about that. The behaviour and condition articles were written some years ago and I have updated them. I wrote mainly to clarify thoughts and ideas I had.

It is written from a biological angle rather than the traditional didactic falconry approach. So I don't use words like 'correct' or longwings and shortwings. How could I talk about shortwings when a New Zealand Falcon has shortwings?

What changes have you noticed since you started falconry?

Well for a start we now have sustainable captive populations of birds, and also telemetry.

And, of course, hybrids. We are breeding birds for a purpose, i.e. Spitfire. It is wonderful when you fly them and understand their potential. Each bird is different with its own special qualities.

What is your preferred quarry.

Crows and Jackdaws. I much prefer pursuit flights.

If you could fly any bird anywhere what and where would it be?

It would be crow hawking on horseback in Northumbria, on our hawking grounds. When I go across them I can remember a flight for each and every place.

A female Spitfire would be the bird. He is brilliant, he chases birds literally over our heads. The Jackdaw heads for distant cover and if it realises it isn't going to make it, it often doubles back, this brings the flights really close.

We are itching to fly a female at crows.

What law would you introduce if you could.

A law to make it impossible to ever ban field sports. Then we could stop fighting and go hawking instead.

If you could go hawking with anybody, past or present, who would it be?

If I had an interpreter it would be Frederick II. In his book he writes knowledgeably about furniture, hunting, raptor biology, only when you hawk an awful lot can you understand each bird's different approach. In the book he explains a lot of little things like how to travel a bird properly or what to do if it is raining. He knew about the hawks and the quarry and the way they react under certain circumstances. I would have loved to ask him questions about falconry on horseback. When I started there was no-one to ask as all the old falconers had finished.

What do you enjoy doing the most?

Raptor research abroad. We currently have projects on Sakers in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan and Arabia, Luggers in Pakistan, Red Kites in UK, new Zealand Falcons, and Peregrines in Siberia. I put satellite tags on two peregrines in the extreme north of Siberia in August and they have just this week crossed Russia and are now near the Caspian Sea.

With so many cultures and languages in these regions, one has to consider human needs as well as just the conservation of raptors.

Is there anything you would like to see change?

I would like to see more townspeople understanding country life and - if I was a total autocrat - I would ban barbed wire and power poles.

Last, but not least; what was the first bird you ever bred?

A New Zealand Falcon.

EAGLE WORLD



Paul with one of the Centres Golden Eagles.

Having had a wonderful year in Southern Spain flying falcons two years ago, I thought it was time for me to pack my bags once again and set off for a new adventure. This time my opportunity took me to Scandinavia, to the Northern tip of Denmark.

Situated here was a large Raptor Centre called Eagle World, which was run by Mr & Mrs Frank and Irene Wenzel. I was offered the opportunity to spend the summer working here, training and flying birds of prey, basically for public display and education.

The first thing I found out, to my great dismay, when arriving in Denmark, was that the sport of falconry was not a legal field sport, which I found difficult to comprehend. Basically because I knew falconry in Europe was one of the oldest field sports and had such a strong historical value, especially in Denmark. It is also an ancient Nordic tradition to hunt with birds of prey.

Remains of falcons, hawks and eagles which have been buried, together with their masters have been found in excavated graves of Viking chiefs.

I sincerely hope that in the near future people will understand falconry's value to conservation and the preservation of wild and captive birds of prey. It made me think how lucky we really are here in Britain.

Here at Eagle World, they chose to concentrate on the native Scandinavian Raptors, namely Peregrine Falcons, Golden Eagles and Goshawks, with the exception of a number of Saker Falcons. I was extremely excited at the chance to handle some of the larger species of rap-

tors.

Mr Frank Wenzel, my employer, could speak reasonable English, which of course made my life a little easier. It wasn't long before I became equated with all the birds and the daily working routine of the centre.

Time was drawing close to the beginning of May, when this part of Denmark was transformed into a tourists paradise. Tourists from all over the world, most of them being German, flocked here by the thousands. The main attraction up here were the beautiful long stretches of white beaches, which ran up the west coast near my new home Tour o Tversted. Another thing which drew the tourists was the unspoilt nature and complete tranquillity this area held. I was fortunate enough to live near the famous fishing town of Skagen, which was renowned for its bird migrations. During the spring months I witnessed many wild birds of prey which I had never seen before, such as the Great White Tailed Sea Eagles, Honey Buzzards, Kites, Ospreys and a large number of Common Buzzards and not forgetting the spectacular Hen Harriers, which were quite a common sight up here, around the flat meadow lands which surround this area.

I was given a number of birds

to fly and to look after during the Summer months. The main aim, this summer, was for me to keep birds fit and ready to fly for demonstrations which took place at ten o'clock and at five o'clock during the peak season. There was a particular bird "Sugar", a young three years old female Golden Eagle, whom I became very fond of. It was my first real experience handling such an impressive and wonderful bird. I was completely taken aback by her sheer power and strength. She weighed



PAUL DEELEY

three and a half kilos (7.5 lbs). I also had three Falcons to look after and to display, one three-year-old female Peregrine named Gaia and two female Sakers, one of which was a five year old and the other an Altai Saker called Drima was a three year old social imprint. All of these Falcons were extremely good display birds through the summer, they were consistently reliable and calm in front of the public.

Also here at the Eagle Sanctuary, there was a unique photo exhibition with large colour photos showing situations from the life of birds of prey not normally seen. I was extremely impressed with the quality of the pictures which were all taken by

Mr Frank Wenzel, who is a professional photographer. In the corner of the exhibition room was a television with live footage of young White Tailed Eagle chicks, which were hatched there earlier this year.

The breeding season this year was very successful, managing to breed two White Tailed Eagles and a small number of Peregrines and Mr Wenzel's famous Icelandic Grey Falcons which were absolutely stunning in appearance and size.

The White Tailed Sea Eagle "Nokke" was the monarch of the sanctuary, Nokke is a large male who was born in 1968 and is probably one of the most dramatic birds I have ever seen fly. On a good day, weather permitting, he would climb to an impressive height and soar above the crowd, giving a wonderful display of his flying ability and his massive wing span of almost two and a half metres.

Unfortunately, Eagles have been hunted in the north. We know that in Norway alone, at the end of the 20's and up to the 70's at least five thousand White Tailed Eagles were shot, and the Norwegian Government had paid reward for this unnecessary slaughter. Today, more or less, all birds of prey are protected by law in Scandinavia.

The thing I will remember most about Eagle World, will be Frank and Irene's sheer determination and the passion they showed towards their birds and their constant struggle to educate the public about the plight of falconry and the conservation of birds of prey. Also the need to preserve the remaining raptors which still inhabit this world of ours.

I would like to offer my thanks to my fellow falconers in Denmark and Mr & Mrs Wenzel for giving me this opportunity and all the people in Britain who have helped me to get this far.

MANUAL OF RAPTORS, PIGEONS & WATERFOWL

This book is aimed mainly at the veterinary profession and is the latest addition to the Internationally acclaimed BSAVA Manual Services.

The book will give those involved in the keeping of the three groups of birds a very in depth understanding of the problems they are likely to come across.

The book is laid out in three parts.

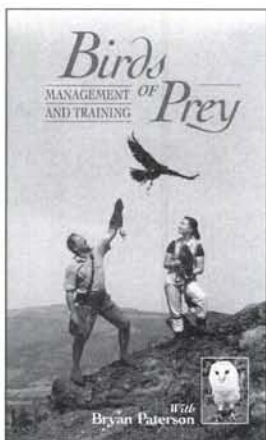
The first part is Clinical examination, follow up procedures and investigations. The other three parts are dedicated to describing diseases and clinical and surgical problems, and their treatment. This is the most up to date book on the three birds mentioned. There are no less than 26 authors, with experts from around the world with scientific editors; Neil Forbes and Nigel Harcourt-Brown and general editor Peter Beynon. This is a must for your vet so

make them aware of it.

Available from BSAVA, Kingsley House, Church Lane, Shurdington, Cheltenham Glos. Price to non-members £65; Members £39. P&P (UK & Eire) £4.50 (Overseas) £12.00.

Just a quick note to say a great big thankyou to Mark who found Melanie Pearson's Redtail, she is hugely grateful

Farming Press Books and Videos



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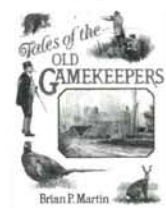
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READER OFFER



The postman came the other morning and brought me a parcel from David & Charles Publishers. I knew before I opened it as there was a return address, what I couldn't understand was why it rattled! When I opened it all was revealed, for inside were review copies of Poachers Tales by John Humphreys and Tales Of The Old Gamekeepers by Brian Martin - on cassette tape.

Each one is a double cassette, equalling two hours listening, Tales of the Old Gamekeepers is narrated by James Greene and Poachers Tales is narrated by the author. Both cassettes contain the sounds and atmosphere of the countryside; birds singing, foxes barking etc. Ideal for people who dislike reading but want to know what everybody is talking about, or for when you are driving or even working either around the house at a computer or out walking. With the walkman comes complete freedom to listen whenever and wherever you want without feeling, like I do, that you are perhaps reading when you should be doing something else.

Priced at £9.99 they are excellent value. The only criticism I had was "there are no pictures" but for avid readers this will cause no problem as they are all drawn in your head anyway.

The Falconers Magazine can offer you these cassettes at £8.99 (£1 OFF RRP) p&p FREE.

If you buy both sets they will cost
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STARTING AT THE BEGINNING.

Neil MacKinnon

I first became interested in falconry about four or five years ago and at that time my interest centred around owls. This was prompted by a stay at a farm where the owner kept a couple of Barn Owls. My view was short lived, as on a visit to Newent a chat with one of the display team, who was flying an owl, let me in on all the pro's and con's of flying owls.

The interest lay dormant for a while until about twelve months ago, when several visits to several Bird of Prey Centres started the juices flowing again. I spoke to anyone I could find, about owning and flying a bird of prey.

I discussed types of birds, housing, feeding, hunting and the thousand other details I felt I needed to know prior to committing myself and the poor bird, to the sport.

I then tried to find someone locally who could help, and ran into a brick wall.

One, year on, summer is here, more visits to more falconry centres etc.etc. This time I was successful in finding locals in the form of the South Glos and West Wilts Raptor Club. Some of the members even lived in or around my town.

I made contact with several of the guys who lived close, and ended up getting some very friendly and sensible advice,

including how to go about looking for a first bird.

As housing was, in my mind, one of the paramount considerations (for the bird!), I decided not to do anything else until a suitable construction had been built. I would perhaps just look in C & A birds to get an idea of prices and availability.

BIG mistake. There was an advert, with a local phone number, male Harris Hawks for sale (for this was the chap I had decided upon). No harm in looking I thought, if they are any good I will be straight about the 'nowhere to keep the bird' problem.

One of the guys I had met, Dave, said he would come along for moral support, and because he already owned a male Harris I thought at least he would be able to tell, from a distance, if the bird was O.K.

We arrived, we looked, all seemed well and the price was right, time to confess. Problem! Four weeks and the breeding aviaries should be empty, time to take a holiday. We agreed to speak on the phone a couple of days later.

On the way home in the car Dave lifted the atmosphere of doom by offering to foster for a month, until all was finished at home.

The arrangements were made with the breeder, and as good luck would have it the Club

was holding a training session for us beginners on the weekend chosen to pick the bird up. I mentioned my impending 'First Bird' at the session and our chairmans son offered to come along and give a second opinion on the Harris.

As expected, all was more than well and wit his nice new furniture fitted, "The Bird With No Name", was loaded into his nice new travel box.

With most of his feathers sticking out of the air slots, it was clear something had to be done before I could get going. We covered the box with a coat, after getting all the offending feathers where they should, and we set off for Gareths home, and a larger cardboard box!

During the transfer Gareth tried "TB w NN" on his glove, just to see how wild he was. After a little persuasion he did get up onto his fist, for a short while. We then boxed him up and I took him over to Daves Avian Hotel.

He stayed with Dave for a month. He was left loose and 'blind fed'; the front of the enclosure was panelled so that he could not see anyone. He has just come home to a nice new aviary, he has been tethered for the first time and his bells attached. His, and my, mutual training will commence shortly, and he now has a name 'Jax'.

In an effort to get off to the best and most informative start I could, I have talked and listened to many different ideas from many people with a wide range of experience on all matters, from bird selection to training methods. Each have had their successes and each have had made their own mistakes, and I have tried learning as much as I

could take in BEFORE I did anything. I have bought and borrowed books, I even cornered one of the chaps from Newent, when they recently gave a talk at the club.

I am sure that I too will make mistakes along the way, and I am sure that with the continued help of others I will get there in the end. The one thing that will not happen is that three of four months into his training, Jax will not be in the reluctant hands of a new owner, as I believe so often happens with people who 'fancy having a bird of prey' a instance being a member of the club who acquired a Kestrel from a man who was keeping it in a cat box because he 'didn't have the time' to train it.

I would like to thank all those who have helped me so far, as they didn't know what they were letting themselves in for, especially Dave and Jill.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A small piece in a newspaper has news that could have us all reaching for the phone to ring our nearest quail breeder. It says that a scientist discovered that the sex of chickens is determined by temperature not by chromosomes. He pulsed chicken eggs at different temperatures and managed to produce clutches which were two thirds male or two thirds female. According to the article it may help solve the problem of unwanted male chicks, of which there are around 30 million a year.

Westweald Falconry

At last! The new 1996/97 price list is out - 12 pages crammed with quality equipment with ranges from many manufacturers outside the UK, as well as kit from our own workshop and our own sole suppliers. Over 90% of stock is considerably below RRP. With over 320 lines stocked at all times we can supply virtually any piece of kit from stock. New lines being added regularly. Try us - you won't be disappointed.

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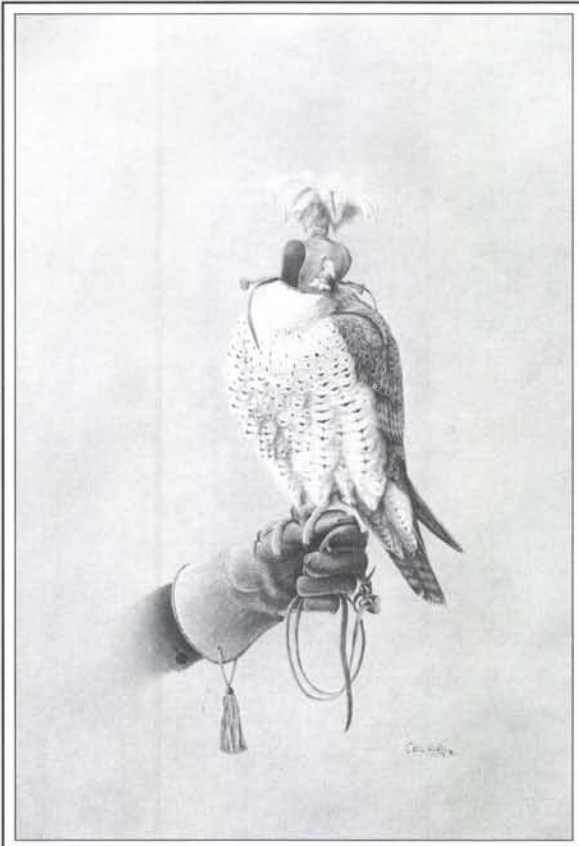
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'Lady in Waiting'

Colin's latest painting as depicted on this issues front cover



Orders are now being taken for this latest Limited Edition Print. Prints will be available in time for Christmas, but be sure to order early - as this single edition is limited to 150 copies only. Fifty of these will have pencil remarques (small pencil sketches) added by Colin to the border of the print. The image area is approx 230 x 350mm.

Orders can be reserved by phone or e-mail.

Cheques must be sent to the address below to confirm your order, please make them payable to Colin Woolf.

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Framed prints are available at £150.00 to order, carriage extra.

Unframed print £70.00 inc P&P and insurance

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This year's Exclusive individually signed Christmas cards depicting a Red Kite in snow, are still available at the time this advert was prepared - although stocks are limited.

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IN SEARCH OF OSPREYS.

Though once common in the Highlands of Scotland, like all birds of prey, the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was persecuted by gamekeepers in the last century. By the time it became accepted that they did no real harm ospreys were so rare that demand for their eggs and skins by collectors made their further destruction inevitable. At the end of the nineteenth century the last few remaining nests were robbed year after year by the same people. These people not being averse to taking a pot shot at the adult birds as well, it is hardly surprising that early this century the osprey became extinct as a breeding bird in Britain.

During the 1950's ospreys were once again seen in the Scottish Highlands and a pair successfully reared two young in 1954. The following year the nest failed and in 1956 the eggs are recorded as being destroyed by crows. Attempts were made to protect ospreys a Loch Garten, but despite a round the clock watch, in 1958 hopes of the birds

rearing young were dashed by a human egg thief. The Loch Garten area was then made an official bird reserve and in 1959 three young ospreys were raised there. This eyrie has been protected ever since and many young ospreys have been reared successfully. It is run by the RSPB and members of the public can watch the ospreys from a hide during the breeding season. /throughout Scotland this year (1996) a total of 146 young ospreys were raised.

So when we headed for Scotland on holiday, top of our list of priorities was 'to see and osprey'. Cheating a little perhaps, our first port of call was Loch Garten. Three young had been raised and though they had long since taken their first flights, the whole family was still based at the eyrie and we saw them quite clearly from the hide.

A few days later we discovered ospreys fishing on the river Spey and what was to follow exceeded all our hopes. We were admiring

the view, having a cup of tea when one of the many 'seagulls' flying stopped in mid air and hovered - it was an osprey, surprisingly easily confused with the large juvenile (brown) gulls. Through binoculars we were able to watch this osprey dive into the water and emerge carrying quite a sizeable fish (probably salmon) with which it flew off towards the distant conifer forest.

This was pretty impressive, but quite a distance away, as most of the fishing was going on in a particular area we tried to get closer. The ospreys did not seem to be bothered by people, even the salmon fishermen who were actually in the river. In fact one angler told me he had had one splash into the water three feet behind him once - bet that made him jump! Later, lounging on the grassy riverbank, we were able to watch an osprey fly slowly over us, less than 100 feet up. Its' head moved from side to side, looking down at the water, then it turned a tight circle and hovered - a very bouyant, slow hover, not a

STEVE RADFORD

fast wingbeat like the kestrel. It folded its wings and dropped headlong into the river with a huge splash! As the spray settled there was the osprey taking off, flapping heavily to get out of the water. In its feet, also flapping heavily, was a respectable sized fish - quite a meal I should think. As soon as it was a couple of feet clear of the water's surface the bird shook itself hard,

Right: Osprey eyrie, perched, seemingly precariously, at the top of a dead tree amid a pine forest.



Left: We watched this Osprey fold its wings and drop headlong into the river, to then emerge with a reasonable sized fish

sending droplets of water in all directions - like a wet dog. As it gained height it shook itself again, not so hard this time, more like a normal rouse in the air. In spite of the slow wingbeat the osprey moved very quickly and was soon high up, heading for the forest.

Well I had hoped to see ospreys and I had thought if we were lucky we might catch a glimpse of one actually carrying a fish, or plunging in some remote loch - but I never dreamed we would see all this. Although it was best to watch through the binoculars to see the details, we were close enough to hear the splash as the bird hit the water. There was more to come too - those ospreys must have been stacked up like jumbos at Heathrow; as soon as one caught a fish and left, another appeared. There was rarely more than one bird there at a time, they seemed to 'wait their turn'. However on one occasion there were three together, calling to each other. This could have been an adult male and two young - it is the male who teaches the young to fish, the female leaves earlier to start her migration. I found it difficult to tell the juveniles from the adults, but when it came to the actual fishing the juveniles gave themselves away with their hesitant manner and apparent lack of confidence. They would hover, then begin a dive, but pull out after a few feet, then go again - it was quite exciting because they spiralled down, barely in control and then bellyflopped in a loud splash - these birds often left the water with nothing to show for their

efforts. Some birds were real professionals and knew exactly what they were doing. Every move was clear and decisive; a straight dive with total commitment which usually resulted in the capture of a fish; presumably these were adults.

One afternoon when we were about to leave and thought we could not possibly be impressed any more, an osprey came over close to us, hovered and then dived out of sight behind one of the stony shoals in the wide shallow river. It soon reappeared, shaking the water from its feathers, losing quite a lot of height in the process, but carrying no fish. It rose and circled above us and

returned to the same spot. Then within a minute or two it again dived out of sight behind the shoal. We watched for it but several seconds passed before it came into view; still in the water, wings outstretched on the surface, being washed downstream in the rapids. Had it injured itself? Was it holding a fish that was too big to lift but it could not let go? Finally it heaved itself out of the water with those great wings only to circle round and back to the same spot. It was not long before it once more plunged out of sight reappearing almost immediately 'empty footed' and yet again returned to its station above the same patch of water. It dived a fourth time. When it finally appeared it was half submerged, again being washed along by the fast water. It must be tired now, perhaps in trouble? Eventually its wings came up vertically over its back and with what looked like a huge effort, lifted the wet bird out of the water - along with a salmon which was as long as the ospreys body and tail. Once the fish was out of the water and adjusted in its feet, the osprey had





KITE FLYING

CARL G. JONES

I have kept and flown two Yellow-billed Kites. Both were bred by friends Christopher and Marion Batt in West Wales who were the first to breed Yellow-billed Kites in Britain, and perhaps the first ever to breed this race of the Black Kite. My first kite was a hand-reared female and the second a parent-raised male.

I obtained my first kite as a three day-old chick in May 1977. I was a student at the time, living in a flat in the east end of London. I was fascinated by the growth and development of birds of prey and was eager to find out more. I set up brooders in my room and was also hand-rearing a Barn Owl, Tawny Owl and a Buzzard. It was a lot of fun, but as the birds grew they took up a great deal of my time. It was approaching the end of the college term and I had final exams to sit. When I should have been revising I found myself caring for my birds. The owls kept me awake at night, the Barn Owl hissed endlessly, like gas escaping under high pressure and the Tawny Owl, seeking food and attention would land on the pillow when I was asleep and call 'keswick-keswick', in my ear. As the day of my exams approached I was getting less and less sleep. By the week of my finals I was a wreck.

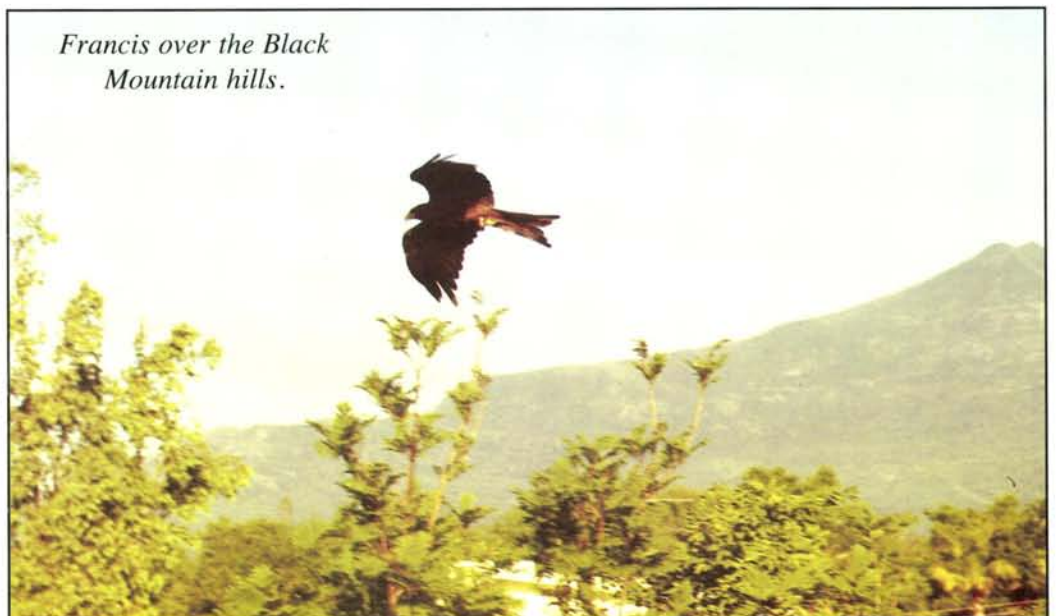
Not surprisingly I did badly in my exams but I consoled myself with the thought that I could appeal to my lecturer since I did have mitigating circumstances, how could I study properly when I had my growing brood of raptors to care for? Of course they were bound to understand, after all they were all biologists! However they

did not understand and I was given short shrift and failed my exams miserably. I was able to comfort myself about my failure, since I did have some stunningly beautiful tame raptors. At the end of term I travelled home to Wales with my birds. The kite by now was growing into a beautiful hawk and was well feathered. She was handled a great deal and frequently taken out of her brooder to be fed, weighed or photographed. She had been introduced to a wide variety of sights and sounds and had grown into a very tame and healthy bird. When at the age of 50 days all the kite's feathers were fully grown I started her training. I fed her daily on the fist and reduced her weight to make her keen. Within a few days I had her hopping to the fist for food, and I soon had her flying free. I

was able to leave the kite free, at tame hawk, for several hours a day. She was very reliable and did not stray. Initially she had to learn how to use the wind and lacked confidence on flight. She was usually very obedient and returned to the fist as soon as she was called, but if she felt too intimidated to fly she would just sit tight and pull at her jesses in frustration. Daily her flight improved and soon she was flying competently. Due to her low wing loading she was exceedingly buoyant and her long forked tail gave her great manoeuvrability and enabled her to fly at low speeds. She could raise on the slightest breeze and would often poise above the house on upcurrents of wind bouncing off the walls and roof. I now started to take her out into the country for exercise. Initially she would fly little and just sit in a tree sulking, but after several excursions, when she learned to cope with strange sights and sounds, she would

fly with few inhibitions. On still days she would perch quietly in trees but when there were breezes or updrafts her flight was very much more spectacular and she would often rise up hundreds of metres and range widely, sometimes flying a kilometre or more away before drifting effortlessly back to the fist when called. Once I had to rescue her when she was mobbed by hundreds of Rooks that forced her to the ground. I flew the kite daily during the summer of 1977 and handed her on to a friend, Richard Lewis in the autumn, since I had to return to University to resit some of my exams! This was Richard's first hawk, he had great fun flying her. He flew her extensively and trained her to catch food in the air which she would eat while on the wing. The kite provided Richard with valuable experience and insights into raptor behaviour and management as he has since become a raptor biologist and has worked on a

Francis over the Black Mountain hills.





My first Yellow-billed Kite aged 7 days

range of species including Philippine Eagles, Mauritius Kestrels and Madagascar Fish Eagles.

I did not have any more experiences with kites until 1980. I had left Britain and was working in Mauritius running a conservation project, including the captive breeding of rare birds and bats. When I was home in Wales in September of that year, Christopher and Marion Batt gave me another kite, a brother to my first one. Francis proved to be a very different character. When I removed him from the aviary he was very wild. He was already four months old and had never been handled. I placed him on a bow perch in a quiet, sheltered enclosure, but any slight disturbance would cause him to fly off his perch in panic. I had a few weeks before I returned to Mauritius so I started to tame Francis. He was quite hysterical and even when I entered his enclosure in pitch darkness he would try and fly. But gradually he learned to accept me and would perch quietly on my fist at night. After dark I took him for walks along country lanes. I trained him to the hood, and during our nightly walks he would feed off my fist. He was still very wild and I could not walk around with him unhooded on my fist during the day without him becoming alarmed at the most trivial things.

I returned to Mauritius with him in October. I placed him on a perch in my garden but he wildly tried to escape from even the slightest disturbance. He was just too nervous to leave out unhooded during the day. I built a perch in a corner of my bedroom, in my small wooden house, so the kite would at least be in my company for several hours a day. The perch was eight feet above the floor, and here he felt secure

and relaxed. Every evening I would feed him on the fist. After a few weeks I awoke one morning to a high pitched, trilling call, "wuhihihih", the kite was calling to me. He had undergone a quite remarkable transformation and was now trusting and relaxed.

While a student I had a similar experience with a very nervous and highly strung male kestrel. Before starting to train the kestrel I kept him on a perch high up in the corner of my room where he could see my comings and goings, but here he felt secure and did not become alarmed. I was in his presence for perhaps fourteen hours a day. Without and conscious effort to tame the bird he became very confiding before any formal period of training. As soon as the kite had lost his fear of me it was straight forward to train him and I soon had him flying loose. The first day he was flown free he crash-landed in a large *Raffia* palm and clung onto a frond, hanging upside down with his wings half-open, like some strange fruit bat. I tried calling him, but he would not budge, and the palm was quite impossible to climb. For over twenty minutes I waited, until eventually he let go and fluttered to the ground in an undignified heap. This first attempt to land in a tree was so upsetting to him that he refused to even attempt to land in a tree for a long while after. During the following weeks he improved, but at a painfully slow rate. He had no idea how to use the wind and often used to try and land with the wind behind him - crash landings were common. Twice he crashed into a field of sugarcane, fell down among the canes and could not get out. Only after a considerable effort hacking around among rows of canes was he found. Sugarcane

fields are large and the canes grow to over three metres high. They are very unpleasant to try and battle through, with tangled stems and cutting edged leaves. It would have been impossible to find Francis had it not been for the bells attached to his legs/

It was a long while before he was flying as a kite should. It took three months of almost daily exercise before he could fly competently and use the wind, and several more months before he would land in trees. Also early on he had his confidence shattered again when he was chased out of a tree by a troop of monkeys.

I used to fly him at the foot of a hill near my home and as he gained experience learned to find the updrafts and how to use them. On being cast off the fist he would fly to the side of the hill and fly back and forth until he had found an updraft. He would also go and look for thermals, and once he found a pocket of hot air rising above a burning sugar cane field. He would then circle, sometimes rising hundreds of metres and travelling two or three kilometres, sometime drifting completely out of sight. At any point I could whistle to call him back to my gloved fist. If directly overhead he would stoop for the first part of the descent, falcon-style, and descend in lazy circles. Usually I just let him fly and after he had gained height he would drift back overhead before descending gradually in large circles to land at my feet. This was Francis at his very best. The whole flight would take anywhere up to an hour.

Francis flies well at weights of between 560 and 600g (with jesses and bells which weigh about 15g or so) but a weights of over 600g he is sluggish. The weight at which he is mostly flown is about 575g. While he is moulting I usually fly him at about 600g. My first kite used to fly well at a wide range of weights also, but was usually flown at about 750-760g.

When he was now being flown I kept Francis on a bow perch at our captive breeding centre. We have a watchman who helps look after the animals. When I turned up at the centre one evening to check that all was well, the watchman told me that the kite had broken free, had flown into a large tree where he had stayed for several hours but had now flown away! The following afternoon I was going

abroad on an important trip so I had limited time to search for him. The morning of my departure I was up at dawn searching for Francis but he was nowhere to be found. I suspected that he would turn up at his usual flying grounds and I left instructions that they should be checked daily. About a week after he had flown away he was seen one evening flying in his favourite place. The well meaning discoverer's put out some food on a rock for him, he flew down, ate his fill and flew away again! The next morning however he was still in the same area and returned to a friend's fist as soon as he was called.

I still have Francis who is now sixteen years-old. During fair weather he now lives on a bow perch in the dappled shade of our garden, which he has learned to treat as his territory and he rarely wanders far. Usually he circles around, weaving elegantly through trees, against a backdrop of the Black River mountains. When tired he perches on the house or in trees. However, when the conditions are right he will put on a spectacular show of flying, rising high into the sky and ranging widely. He is often buzzed by a resident pair of Mauritius Kestrels. It is a spectacular sight to see these small falcons mobbing him! One of the world's rarest raptors chasing one of the commonest. There are a pair of kestrels that nest in the eaves of a house only 100m away, the only pair that does so and one of the only few pairs of suburban kestrels. We leave Francis for twenty minutes to an hour in the late afternoon as we have tea on the verandah of our house. It is usually a gentle way to end the day, however sometimes Francis takes it into his head that he would like to join us for tea and, not infrequently, I have had some food stolen from out of my hand, just as I was about to eat it! When Francis has had enough exercise he often sits on the ground nearby or returns to his perch without any prompting. Such day to day experiences with a contented bird leaves me feeling hawk-happy. There have only been a few brief occasions in my adult when I have not lived with a trained hawk, when my life seemed strangely incomplete. My kites, although sister and brother, had very different personalities. The most striking differences between the two birds were their temperament



The Author with Francis, a male Yellow-billed Kite


and the very great ease with which the first kite learned to fly well and use the wind. The first kite was tame and confident with everyone and don easily startled. Francis, by comparison is, to this day, highly strung and easily becomes frightened and will not, for example, travel quietly in my jeep without first being hooded. He is a more introverted bird and has been a slower learner. I believe these differences are not just the product of individual variation since other people have also commented on the vast differences between parent-raised and hand-raised kites from the same captive pair. Kites that were hand-raised were exposed to a wide range of different sights and sounds and were frequently handled. Those that were raised under the parents only experienced the sights and sounds that were available to them in their largely enclosed aviary. The more enclosed the aviary in which a young bird grows up the more akin it is to a deprivation chamber. I have learned a great deal from my kites and have enjoyed my adventures with them. Wild Black Kites show many inter-

esting behaviours and are often very bold. there are many stories of them taking food from the hands or plates of unsuspecting picnickers and both my kites would try and snatch food from me at any opportunity and they would try and snatch food from the fist a few times before landing. Kites are quite resourceful when obtaining food. I have watched Black Kites in Madagascar feeding on creatures fleeing from bush fires. There are apparently also accounts of Black Kites spreading fires, the Aboriginal Australians call them "fire hawks". One account notes, "I have seen a hawk pick up a smouldering stick in its claws and drop it in a fresh patch of grass half a mile away, then wait with its mates for the mad exodus of scorched, frightened rodents and reptiles. When the area was burnt out the process was repeated elsewhere. My favourite Black Kite story is that of K. Eates, from Fyzabad in India, quoted by Meinertzhagen in his famous book *Pirates and Predators*. "An Indian wearing a white cap approached the Post Office, when a kite swooped down and picked it off his head. A few

days later Mr Eates heard a kite calling near his kitchen and, looking up, saw the bird had a white cap in its talons; the bird circled Mr Eates' kitchen and out came the cook with some pieces of meat which he threw in the air. The kite dropped the cap and took the meat in the air, eating it as he circled around. The cook told Mr Eates that he had been collecting caps from these kites for several weeks and showed Mr Eates a dozen caps thus secured. Any caps too old or dirty were thrown away but those in good condition were sold. When this particular pair of kites bred and had youngsters to feed the stealing of caps became more and more frequent as more and more meat was required. So well known became this habit in Fyzabad that visitors to the Post Office invariably removed their caps when approaching the Post Office." Clearly there is a great potential to train Black Kites for hat hawking, there are a wide variety of potential flights. Hunting woollen hats on grannies, or babies bonnets are exciting possibilities and, more challenging variants are flat capped farmers or bobble hatted, early morning joggers. The Black Kite was apparently first bred in captivity at the London Zoo in 1964. Since then the kite has been bred on several occasions, but no-one has, to my knowledge, ever bred them in any numbers. The breeding pair belonging to Chris and Marion Batt came from Ibadan in Nigeria in 1967 as young birds, collected by Bob Golding. They were imported for the Tenby Zoo in West Wales which Chris and Marion used to own. They were fed day old chicks and occasionally fish, which they liked. A clutch of two infertile eggs

was laid in 1975 and they produced young in nearly every year between 1976 and 1986 when the male died in his 20th year. The female died in 1990 aged 23 years. The usual clutch was of three eggs laid in the first half of April. During incubation and rearing the female was very aggressive to any intruders and would try and grab people through the aviary wire. In the 1970's the kites often used to rear a full brood but in latter years usually reared one chick. Most of the Yellow-billed kites in Britain can probably be traced back to this pair. My kites have done very well on a mixed diet, mainly of day old chick, mice (which they prefer), doves and quail. The Black Kite is likely to be an easy species to establish in captivity, but, because of its commonness few people have ever considered trying to breed them regularly. Now that birds of prey are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain from the wild I hope more people will try and breed these interesting raptors. The kite has an attractive and interesting style of flight, they are naturally docile and good tempered. The two birds I have flown, and those flown by friends, have been very obedient and a great pleasure to own and fly.

I dedicate this article to the memory of my friends Christopher and Marion Batt. Chris was killed in a motorcycle accident last May and Marion died this May. Chris was a naturalist and a teacher who, with Marion, used to run St Catherines island zoo, Tenby and more recently with children ran an aquarium, reptile and amphibian collection "Silent World" also in Tenby, West Wales.



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HAWK TALK

John Matcham.

Hello once again I trust you have all had a tremendous Summer season and the necessary holidays before the Winters hard hunting season ahead? No! Oh well try again next year. How many times I have said that to myself over the past few years, and wished I had forced a holiday upon Melanie my better half and the only sane member of this Family.

Hopefully those who ask the question as to why many of us full time Falconers do not show our face at the Falconers Fair, now know the answer. We are just too busy on Bank holidays earning a crust elsewhere. The only solution would be to add a day to the Falconers Fair and then we could afford a days visit.

That answered on to this articles "issue", Schools! Obviously this article is going to be very difficult to write in an unbiased fashion, as of course I run one myself and have been teaching for some years. (by the way for our friends in France and other French speaking Countries, we also teach in French), OK I promise no more plugs for the O.S.F.R.C. The problem newcomers have is 'Which one and Why'?

Starting from the beginning. The first problem you need to sort out is YOU! the beginner. Why do you want a course? and be prepared to explain your answer in as much detail as possible, it will enable an instructor to cater better for your needs. The most physically apt with animals, or the most intelligent person in the world do not make instant Falconers or in fact good keepers of any creature. It is a combination of both attributes. A good instructor, 'can find the parts of your caricature that other instructors can't reach', and help you develop them. Remember always ask for his or her honest opinion, you can always take a second opinion from another instructor or your local club members if you do not agree. ('ask the really experienced ones, he or she may not be the most sociable however, this is normal do not be afraid'). Having chosen your school this will have of course taken in to consideration distance to travel, funds to spare, and hopefully a recommendation or perhaps you have seen them at work somewhere or even read about them. What course? First things first you need a proper "Introductory Course", this is not a fun day out hands on thing. This type of "entertainment" only serves to promote bad practices, and follow on instruction by Fred Bloggs and his pet Barn Owl in a chicken wire cage at the bottom of his garden. An introductory course should include a Lot of Learning using words and pictures and examples of both good and bad practices. Most of all it is a lesson in commitment and responsibility and therefore should include the following in a basic yet informative form, and so before I jump on to my soap box with both feet here is a list;

Time;

To train, to fly, to hunt, to make furniture, to care for, to understand why, in short the rest of your natural life.

Space;

To train, to fly, to hunt, to keep, and to escape the rest of humanity so only you are to blame when things go wrong, not the kids or the bird or the neighbours cat. 600 open acres is a postage stamp to a Peregrine and a wilderness to a Harris.

Vet;

To train, to understand, to trust, most of them spend their lives with an arm up a bum. Some have incredible biceps and others intellectual brains, neither are required to be brilliant. Your school or club can give you a list.

Food;

To eat of course, but what types are available and best for your bird, what parts make good food and are some parts just a bit risky.

Dispatching quarry;

To prevent your bird getting its feathers damaged or worse getting it's teeth kicked in. No you can't guarantee that it will not catch a rabbit while in the local park.

Security;

To keep the rest of humanity out, barbed wire, razor wire, glass in wall tops, mine field, all of which are a danger to you, the bird, and the kids, the latter not being so important these days.

The Law;

To keep you from doing something really stupid, like buying a registerable bird without the relevant ring or documentation, or worse receiving a stolen one. To be made a hanging offence when I become Home Secretary.

Furniture and equipment;

To take care of the bird, to weigh it, to hold it, to carry it and carry yet more equipment in, and to carry you and the bird in.

Buying a bird;

How old should it be? What sex? or is that not important. How does where I live make a difference to the type of bird suited to me and maybe I am not suited to that type of bird. From who? Why not Fred Bloggs? Why a recognised breeder or a fellow club member? Which sort shall I buy?

A red tail, or as the Game Warden on Wimbledon Common once said to me while protecting the Wombles, 'That's a Ring Tailed Buzzard, I know I'm an expert', That's why he was being followed by the vet with a long arm.

Are you getting the message?

One thing I have learnt over the years, is that an impatient student is a failure. Most students think that because the tutor can train a bird in just a few days or weeks, they will be able to do the same, this is far from the truth. Many students, even with good instruction, will naturally

have delusions as to the speed of their progress. An experienced Falconer may be able to train a bird in just a very short space of time to fly from post to fist or fist to lure, and it may look very spectacular. But the fact still remains, at this stage the bird is probably still very unfit and certainly not fit enough for regular successful hunting. Long spectacular hard flights, not ganging up on some bunny with a choice between being bitten, (where the vet puts his hand), by a Ferret, or being jumped on by a whopping great Red Tail the instant he shows his face.

Even with all the above included, and I can think of many more points just as important that I could cram in to an "Introductory Day", You will never learn even the bare minimum to be in a situation that should encourage you to buy a bird in just one day. But you should be able to go home and have a good rethink before spending any more money.

The Future;

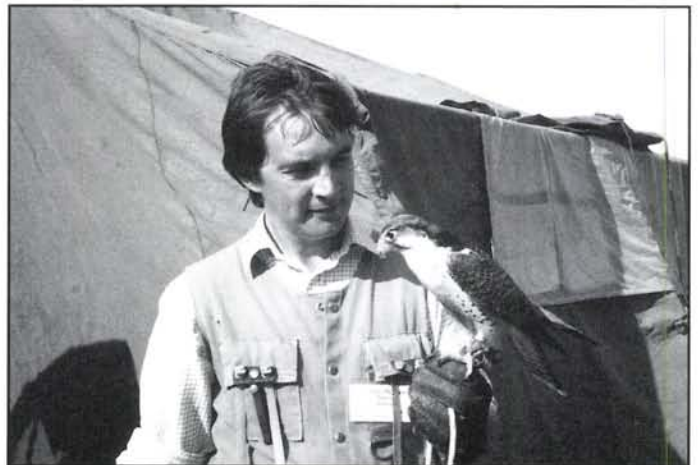
To help you learn your school should be flexible, some will allow you to spread any subsequent courses over a longer period of time, at the same time as offering advice on housing etc. So that when you finally obtain your first bird you should know what you're doing. I for one would not expect you to make your own glove and I would advise against making your own hoods, however I would expect any student of mine to be able to make Jesses, Aylmeri, Leash, and fit them, or they should not own a bird. To practice this you go to school or help a mate who is further down the learning curve and preferably under the supervision of a mentor.

Patients is probably the most important piece of equipment in falconry, next to the promise of help for life from your school tutor, (that should be his or her commitment to you).

The one thing I am certain of is this;

If you have spent half a day handling a Harris and the other half learning about the "History of Falconry", and you have had the pleasure of a buzzard landing on it's "Portable Human Feeding Perch", (yes that's you in the picture). I have wasted my time writing this article because you didn't read it.

Till next time Happy Hunting and, 'May the force be with you, be like a Rabbit and don't get caught.



The author with a lanner

OBSESSION!

Obsession: To fill the mind completely, domination of the mind by one idea. I headed out to the Borrego Desert the other day to look for Prairie Falcon eyries. Several people had pointed me in that direction as having a good concentration of falcons. I took "Isabelle", my old reliable Red-Tail along to get some flying out of her. The plan was to pick up a pilot friend and use his plane to locate nests from the air. A great idea, none of that hiking around the desert in the hot sun!

We flew around and located several nests from the air, then back to the hanger went the plane. Now it was time to let my hawk do some flying. She had been left behind in the hanger. I picked her up and all related paraphernalia for Falconry and off across the desert we went. I released her and let her soar. The way I get best advantage from a Red-Tail is from a high pitch in a soar. That's just what she did, soared straight up and waited over head like always. 45 minutes of beating bushes later, she was still straight over head, but we had seen no rabbits. Taking advantage of the desert thermals, her pitch had increased considerably. She soars high all the time, but she was sky-ing out now. She was just a speck in a very big sky, and still rising. I lost her in the sun and couldn't find her again after that. So I tried swinging the lure to get her down. No sign. One hour later still no sign of my Red-Tail. This was getting serious. She had skied out many times before, but had always come down to her lure. I walked around the desert swinging the lure for another 30 minutes and then started looking for her from the car. She was gone without a trace. My pilot friend had to be getting home by now, as he had left 4 full grown Great Danes in his house, and that can make for a problem of another kind. I left thinking I'd have to come back the next day to retrieve my lost hawk.

I left home at 4 am the next day to drive the 100+ miles to Borrego before dawn. That's what all the books say to do, right? After driving around the desert for a few hours on every road I could find with any trees or poles, still no Hawk. So off to the Ranger Station to leave my name and phone number with them, then on to the Sheriff for the same reason. There was one other place I should talk to, the little cafe I'd had lunch at the day before. Everyone seemed to come and go out of there. Maybe someone had seen her.

No luck. Well, as long as I was out this far I might as well look in on one of the Prairie cliff nests I had seen the day before. It didn't look like a bad climb from the airplane. It's amazing how deceptive things can be in the desert. Distances look close that are really miles away. After driving several miles out into the hill, I found the place I was looking for. From the desert floor it looked like a lot steeper climb, and a lot further away to where I had to get to see the Prairie nest. But I had to climb it and see if there were any birds. So what if it was a steep clime over sharp rocks in a volkwagon!

I have to have a bird if I can't get my Red-Tail back. Obsession!!

Now it didn't occur to my thick head that I wasn't dressed for mountain climbing or that I had no water, or that I was wearing slick bottom cowboy boots. (Great for mountain climbing, right?) The desert can be very hard on the unwary and foolish. I climbed up the rock valley and when I got to the top, totally exhausted and dripping with sweat, to my horror it was the wrong place!

It must have been the next one over. What should I do? Climb down and call it a day? I'm exhausted and it's 95 degrees on the mountain. But it looked like I could climb over the hill to the right and be in the parallel valley. That had to be where the nest was. I'd come this far, I had to see it now.

Obsession! As I made it to the top of the hill, I was nearing dehydration, and my heart was pounding like a freight train. I laid down and put my head in a small spot of shade under an over-hanging rock. What was that pain in my chest? Just from laboured breathing? Or was I going to have a heart attack? No, that only happens to old folks and I'm only 40. The pain passed and I resume climbing. I had to get to that falcon nest. I was climbing down into the next valley now and could see the nest on the cliff face to the left. After more climbing I made it to where I could see in. Damn!!! Not occupied. I was physically exhausted. I noticed that I wasn't sweating anymore. I was getting more dehydrated in this open sun and heat. Why did I start this, I must have been crazy to come out here and climb a mountain in the desert completely unprepared.

I had to climb down and get out of there fast before I got into serious trouble. Climbing down should be a lot easier, but I hadn't come up this ravine and didn't know what to expect. But it had to be easier than going back up and over the valley I can in through. I climbed down, and found that this ravine stopped at a 50 foot drop straight down. I climbed back up and tried a different approach. There had to be a way out. Down another ravine I came to a smaller drop, about 8 feet. Not bad, but in my condition, I didn't want to jump it. What if I sprained an ankle, or broke a leg? There's no-one around for 10 miles. No-one knows I'm here. I should be in Borrego, 20 miles away! Back up again. The only other way out was worse than the first. The 8 foot drop was looking better and better. I went back and made the jump down, with no ill effects. Then I realised there was no way I could get back up it I came to another problem further down.

Funny how one mistake leads to others when you're in a panic situation. You guessed it, further down was another bid drop. This was about 25 to 30 feet down. No way to climb down since the cliff was under cut. Beside me the walls went straight up on both sides and no retreat. At this point, me and that Great Falconer in the sky had a brief talk. I wondered what my wife would look like dressed in all black, and how long it would take before they found the body. No choice, Jump or die of heat stroke in the sun. And all this started to be just a quick trip up to check a Prairie eyrie! I jumped and somehow didn't break anything. A few cuts, bruises and scratches, but still alive!

I don't remember much about the rest of the climb down, except for stumbling a lot as I walked to the car. The car had a terrific A/C and once I got to the nearest water and drank half a gallon, I was feeling much better. I knew that the desert have given me a second chance, something that doesn't always happen. The story could have had a very different outcome. The next time out I'd be better prepared than a troop of cub scouts.

On my way back out of Borrego and home-ward bound, I saw a female prairie falcon sitting on a telephone pole with a large lizard in her talons. She flew from the pole out across the desert. Probably going to a nest somewhere maybe, if I followed her a little way... ??

PS Isabelle was recovered three days later at a resort hotel. She was sitting on the rail of a foot path going around a goldfish pond.

Mike Faircloth

Dear Editors,

Having recently become subscribers to your excellent magazine, my wife and I have to own up to the fact that we were the tourists in John Matchams article re:- Barn Owls. It could have turned into a sad story but, purely by chance we were lucky to come across Mr Matcham. Lizzy (my wife) and I realised we would have to acquire some help and information as to the welfare/rearing of "Pebbles", our new baby Barn Owl. Luckily for us we met John Matcham. Now Mr Matcham is a very outspoken and single-minded young man, but! as regards our Barn Owl, a blessing. After telling us in plain language how stupid etc., we were he then proceeded to offer us a position on one of his Falconry courses as mature students. Now, we had no ambition to become Falconers but we did want to learn to fly "Pebbles" and learn about the

welfare of our new charge. All this we did, plus, we gained some knowledge about other birds of prey. In addition to this John, in his own time, designed a weathering ground to suit Pebbles and our garden. (Being a carpenter/joiner, construction didn't present a problem). He then made numerous visits to our home to check on Pebbles and to make sure we were doing everything right. The Bird Comes First! His words, not mine. In short a nice dedicated young man a Fine Falconer who writes articles for a superb publication.

Yours truly
K A Steward.

Dear Editors,

I would like to tell you a short story concerning the Independent Bird Register. Back in August '96. I was flying my lanner Falcon (male) from a smallish garden. All I

do is put him on a fence post with his flying jesses on, a quick shake and off he goes. I have two ways of flying him. Simply I can bring his weight down and fly him to a lure which is quite impressive, or simply let him go so he can do his own thing. If I let him go in the morning from my garden I can usually pick him up early evening 2 miles away, where he flies to the lure. He can be flown also fully fed. When I do fly him from my garden I don't know where he is or what he's up to. No transmitter used. In August '96 he went missing for four days. He can fend for himself quite easily and has done so before. This has happened before but back in August I noticed a man in a field where my falcon sometimes flies, with a high powered air rifle with large sights on it. As the days went on I was getting somewhat concerned about his safety. Returning to the place where

he usually returns to, 5 or 6 times a day - no falcon! On the fourth day I was basically thinking the worst. Then, out of the blue, I received a phone call on my mobile from Independent Bird Register with whom my bird is registered, saying that he had been handed in to a wildlife rescue centre. By reading the ring number on his leg they had simply phoned the IBR who had contacted me, so I could be reunited with my falcon. They operate such a simple system to enable bird and owner to be brought back together. For the cost of £10 for five years it is worth it. from now on my falcon is going to be flying before lunch, not fed up. It is a great shame that a falcon cannot wander from its owner for fear of something happening to it. The name of my falcon is Caistor.

Many thanks Vince Jones & Caistor.

An Errand for a Redtail.

Paul Johnstone

Monday 1pm. Blood stained mutes were the first signs there was a problem. Our local vet was called, after some discussion it was decided that it was possibly a severe infection of worms. Consultation of various books on raptor welfare seemed to confirm this was a distinct possibility. But due to the awareness of Marie our Falconer it was decided that the birds rapid deterioration meant it was something more serious.

2.30pm. It's decided a visit to the local vet is in order, an appointment is made for 5pm.

4pm The bird is now showing signs of a serious problem, her eyes have narrowed and she is nowhere near as alert as normal. An inspection of her cloaca shows a protrusion of a rubbery type swelling!

5pm. The vet confirms the bird is suffering from a prolapse. I had furnished him with Neil Forbes phone number and he decided a call to him would be in order. However, Neil had left for the day and couldn't be contacted, our vet, not to be deterred, rang a colleague who advised a course of action that basically meant pushing the prolapse back and stitching it in place, a procedure our vet felt was within his scope.

5.30pm. A decision made made to carry out the operation that evening and the bird was left in their care. Myself and Marie returned home.

7pm. A telephone call from the vet to tell

me Neil Forbes had rung and advised the operation was not a good idea. She needed to go to his surgery on Stroud, some 150 miles away.

8pm. Depart for Stroud, bird safely boxed.

11.30pm. Arrive at surgery in Stroud. Mr Forbes was already there and lost no time in examining the bird, who by now is sleeping for most of the time and her eyes are very narrow for the brief periods she is awake. Mr Forbes explains the situation; Alex has a prolapse with the gut possibly twisted or restricted in some way. Removal of this section is the only solution. A swift discussion on the chances of survival and subsequent problems and needless to say, cost followed. The answers were - about 40%. None, providing she survives any infections and £300-£400.

I decided to go ahead and a swift response came from Mr Forbes, who prepared for immediate surgery.

12am. Alex was put back under and a one and a half hour operation, of the most delicate nature was performed. The birds' stomach was opened and the problem section of the gut was identified; she was found to have a twisted gut and also a slight perforation. The offending piece of gut was removed and the ends re-joined with an incredibly steady and obviously professional, hand. Using some pretty high tech equipment, some antibiotics and a check for leakage, Mr Forbes was satisfied that every thing was alright and he closed up and Alex was brought round from the anaesthetic.

1.30am. Alex is now still dopey, but awake and left in good hands.

Tuesday

5pm. The return journey.

Alex returns home with a complex set of instructions for her diet, and an array of fluids and tablets to fight infection. She's still not out of the woods and requires two hourly feeds of a special food for convalescing animals.

Wednesday

7.30am. Alex is looking better by the hour, it will take about four days before she is back on solids and about a week for her to be clear of infection. Her quarters have been scrubbed and disinfected ready for her return and the days care continues.

One week later and Alex is now fine. She has been putting on weight steadily and all seems well. Having talked to Mr Forbes at the time there appears to be no specific reason for this complaint, except maybe a certain parasite that seems to affect Redtails and not other species. I must stress the need to react quickly to any sign that your bird is not well. The tendency to "wait and see how it is in the morning" is just no good. Time is of the essence, these birds have the ability to hide their ailments and show no symptoms very often, until the eleventh hour.

As a result of this all of my birds are now on a Mute Sampling Programme, which is very inexpensive and will identify any parasites, then with the administering of the correct medicine we can ensure the welfare of our birds.

I, for one, hope this story will prompt anyone to act quickly if they suspect their bird is ill.

My thanks must go to all concerned from myself and Alex.



RAPTOR RESCUE

Registered Charity No. 283733

ANNUAL SURVEY 1994/95

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

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

Accompanying the results are the observations of Raptor Rescue's Chairman, Mick Cunningham, who has once again overseen the co-ordination of this year's survey.

Our rehabilitator's reports show that the percentage of released raptors remained almost unchanged for the fourth consecutive survey. Mature casualties numbered more than twice those of immature and juvenile birds. Juveniles made up 23% of all the birds handled, and 20% of these were already socially disabled when taken into care and therefore not suitable for release. From those remaining, 98% were released.

Long stay casualties suffering from fractures, made up 21% of the total intake and of these, just under a quarter were eventually released.

The number of mature casualties peaked in July and August, showing once again that adult birds are more at risk at this time of year due to their increased activity trying to locate food for their offspring.

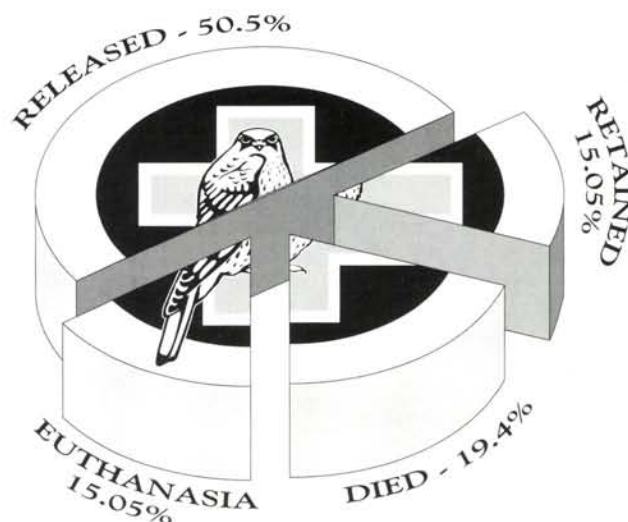
In the past, Kestrels have always been the most numerous species in our surveys, but this year Tawny Owl casualties were almost double those of Kestrels. Sparrowhawk numbers have been increasing annually and in this reporting period they equalled the number of Kestrels for the first time.

The only Red Kite to be taken into care proved to be one of English Nature's project birds. Luckily its injuries were not serious, enabling the bird to be released only 9 days after being rescued. There is sad news on the only Goshawk to be treated this year. It was an extremely emaciated adult male bird and died within a few hours.

One of the two Rough Legged Buzzards died from poisoning and the second was released once it had recovered from being disoriented and emaciated. Good news regarding the two Merlins. A mature female was released following a full recovery from head injuries. The other was an immature jack suffering from gunshot wounds and a broken wing. Several months of full falconry rehabilitation techniques proved that he could overpower and catch his natural prey on a regular basis, and was therefore released.

Despite the fact that the primary concern of the Charity is wild raptors, our members continue to take into care domestic bred birds. This year showed an increase in excess of 100% in the numbers we dealt with – a total of 51 lost or escaped birds. Deregistration continues to make it difficult to re-unite these birds with their legitimate owners. Anyone who has already lost or who loses a bird in the future would be wise to contact the co-ordinator of our lost and found birds list :

Paul Becroft – Telephone: 01734 536257 or 0118 9536257.



THESE STATISTICS HAVE BEEN COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY 20 REHABILITATORS.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Wild Casualties | 279 |
| Domestic Bred Casualties | 51* |
| Released (50.5%) | 141 |
| Died (19.4%) | 54 |
| Euthanasia (15.05%) | 42 |
| Retained (15.05%) | 42 |
| Total number of species encountered | 14 |
| Tawny Owl | 90 |
| Kestrel | 54 |
| Sparrowhawk | 54 |
| Little Owl | 30 |
| Barn Owl | 20 |
| Common Buzzard | 15 |
| Long Eared Owl | 3 |
| Hobby | 3 |
| Peregrine | 2 |
| Short Eared Owl | 2 |
| Merlin | 2 |
| Rough Legged Buzzard | 2 |
| Red Kite | 1 |
| Goshawk | 1 |

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

A HAWKS FAREWELL.

She was something special, at least to me,
Not unique but one of three.
Young and fiery, bright of eye.
I never liked her morning cry
as it pierced the stillness, far and wide
Through the walls, to those inside.

Those early times are written down.
The days I took her into town.
Not for ego or undue pride.
I'd read a book and there inside
was written quite a lengthy list;
"Should be carried on ones fist
among the throng of creeds and race
The local inn and market place."

Sometimes she'd vainly try to leave,
Or step off glove and onto sleeve.
I'd try to let her see my calm
As she buried needles in my arm.
But walking home in failing light,
A joy to see, a different sight.
Try to look but not to gaze,
Softly speaking words of praise.

The after years were full of sport,
Some were missed, a lot were caught,
Rabbit, Pheasant, Hare and Duck.
Most by skill, but some by luck.
The years flew by as in a dream,
That hawk and spaniel, what a team.
They made some kills, they made few trends,
But most of all they made some friends.

Last night I placed her in the mews
And went inside to air my views.
Hardly glanced at her at all,
As Winter snow began to fall.
My morning visit to check her stay
Was late today, abed I lay.
A sorry sight as, glove in hand
I saw her lying in the sand.

I stoop and gently lift her up,
Her greying head in hand I cup.
I knew one day that she would die,
But I never really said goodbye.
A warming feather, white and brown
Fell from her breast and floated down
When suddenly, as if by breeze
It chased a leaf among the trees.
Spaniel watching, alert, entrancing
The two of three watched feather dancing
Then land between us in the mud
Message received.....and understood.

Bob Haddon

Rhymes & Reasons

For centuries past we've practiced this sport,
Many a rabbit and pheasant we've caught,
Still today there are a dedicated few
Who will trek for miles through morning dew.

Please do remember many an old adage,
For 'tis from this sport they are cadged,
Many today want their pound of flesh,
From whence this came is a painful guess

A Kestrel for a Knave they did'st tell,
That he'd be lured by her bell,
Another feather in his cap they say,
'tis a saying still used to this day.

Goshawke t'was known as the cooks bird,
To people today this may seem absurd,
Yeoman and common men were hood-winked
not,
As this keen bird hunted food for the pot.

Whether ye fly long or shortwings,
Do remember you'll pay for your sins.
Ensure your bird is keen and willing,
Enjoy your hunt and make a killing.

L Feldon.

FEATHERED FRIENDS.

Anchor Books, an established poetry publisher is currently looking for poetry for possible inclusion in an anthology all about birds. Whether you are a dedicated breeder or just enjoy watching the sparrows in the garden, why not write a poem. Poems can be serious or humourous, so if you have got something to say about an endangered bird or just a funny tale, write about it in the form of a poem. Contributors are invited to send no more than two poems, each no longer than 30 lines. Copyright remains with the author, and royalties for all published work will be paid to charity, which poets are invited to nominate along with their entries. The charity which receives the most nominations will benefit. All entries should reach Anchor Books, Feathered Friends, 1-2 Wainman Road, Woodston, Peterborough. PE2 7BU no later than 31st December 1996.

REVIEWS



A COUNTRY- MANS YEAR BY JOHN HUMPHREYS Illustrated by John Paley

Many of you will know John Humphreys through his column in the Shooting Times, which he has been writing for twenty-five years. He has written over twenty books on field sports and country ways, including the bestsellers, Poachers Tales & Days and Nights on Hunters Fen. John was born in 1939 in a fenland village. The book covers four seasons, each season is split up into seven chapters each of which is accompanied by a colour illustration and several black and white line drawings.

Telling how life was some fifty years ago, revolving around the countryside, some working the land with horses, hedge-laying, harvest-time, reaping what had been sown and also what nature provided along the hedgerows, for preserving, pickling and storing.

Many of the young lads became game-keepers and were taught by the old hands how to work with the countryside and not against it. A time when people understood the countryside and how it worked, not trying to change or outwit mother nature but appreciating that there was a reason for most things and just accepting the others. A time when your country skills could mean the difference between empty or full bellies.

Published by David & Charles, this hardback book is priced at £18.99, would make an ideal Christmas present and looks good enough to grace anyone's bookshelf.

Gamehawk Field and Moor



Ray W. Turner & Andrew Heald

Gamehawk, Field & Moor. Ray Turner Review By Tony James

I have always been somewhat reluctant to put pen paper, but when I was asked to write a short review of "Gamehawk" I was particularly pleased.

Having read so many disappointing falconry books written in recent years I felt no great sense of anticipation when I sat down to read my first copy of "Gamehawk" in 1991, but I couldn't put it down and sat reading all night, totally captivated. Since flying my first hawk, some twenty years ago, I think it would be fair to say that putting into practice some of the principles laid down in "Gamehawk" brought about a more dramatic improvement in the quality of my falconry than any other thing. As you will now be aware I was already a fan before this new edition, Gamehawk - Field & Moor became available. If it had remained a study of one particular branch of the sport, the flight of the Peregrine at game-birds on farmland in lowland Britain. I would have been happy to recommend it, but at a time when so many people, like myself, have the opportunity to take our gamehawks north, this latest edition has the additional benefit of a chapter devoted to grouse hawking too.

This chapter, based on the observations of Steve Williams, (undoubtedly one of the countries most accomplished falconers), completes the work in that it now covers all British quarry species normally flown at in the waiting on style.

Flying a gamehawk has a number of inherent problems that can only be appreciated with experience. Gamehawk isn't another book that tells you what a gamehawk does rather it sets out in detail how to create one, and how to overcome or avoid those difficult problems. When one considers that this book deals almost exclusively with the management of gamehawk in the field and that most books deal with this in one short chapter (e.g. J. G. Mavrogordato's, A Falcon in The Field, just six pages), you may have some idea of how detailed it is.

I am a lowland gamehawker and as my own trips north to fly falcons at grouse are destined to be infrequent, the new section on grouse hawking was particularly interesting to me, bearing in mind that Steve Williams flies the same hawks both at grouse and at lowland game. I would suggest that anyone in a position to fly their lowland gamehawk at grouse might expect to meet with some success at the first attempt, having read this chapter carefully before leaving for the moors.

Although this treatise is aimed directly at those with a particular interest in gamehawking, much of the information therein could be used with great benefit by those flying other hawks. It is said that the best costs, four years ago I paid £20 for a copy of Gamehawk and just last year I tried to but another copy, only to find demand so high that I would have to spend several times that amount to secure one. Now that this limited edition is available I suggest it may be wise to buy a copy sooner rather than later.

Available from well-known Falconry book or equipment suppliers or by post from Gallery Press, 97 High Street, Lavenham. Suffolk. Signed copies by phone from 01440 820656.

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WINTER WARMERS FROM COOLFIX

I was asked by Coolfix International if I would be interested in trying out and reviewing their thermal bodywear. Originally designed for the Danish Army & police force this it is ideal for people pursuing outdoor sports. The cloth works by "wicking" damp out into the outer layer, so a 0.5mm space filled with dry air protects the skin from changing temperatures.

Trials found it successful at -20C in Scotland and +30C to +50C in Saudi Arabia.

After giving it some thought, I settled for the long sleeved 'vest'. If you look closely you can see the two layers. Although it is thin enough to be worn under anything, it looks good enough to be worn on its own. The back is longer than the front and it can be a pain to tuck in but it certainly keeps your bottom warm and in never comes untucked.

I found it extremely comfortable to wear, the ribbed cuffs keep the sleeves where they belong and the generous length mean they don't ride up.

When worn I found it as warm as any of my thicker jumpers which is something of an achievement as I am one of those terribly cold blooded people, who requires the heating to be on full at all times.

The other thing about it, which surprised me, was the fact that it will take up to a 60C wash, although it is not suitable for tumble-drying

The range includes Long sleeved vest, zip polo neck, t-shirt, long pants short pants and a hood/loose dry neck. Prices start at £14.50 for the hood up to £34.95 for the zip polo neck and come in sizes S to XXXL. Colours white or navy blue.

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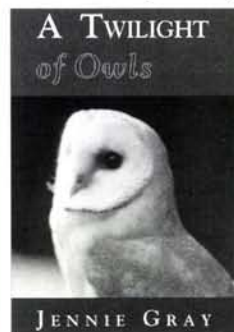
A Twilight of Owls. Jennie Gray.

Initially, for some strange reason I thought "A Twilight of Owls", was a scientific book, so I was pleasantly surprised when I discovered it wasn't.

My next pleasure was finding that Jennie Gray has a sense of humour. She accurately describes the emotions and feelings encountered when rearing & training "Hesper", the barn owl. The revulsion at having to "mince" mice, and the feeling of embarrassment if caught wandering around with one. The excitement at Hesper's progress & development and then the feeling of sheer panic when she finds Hesper has been attacked by a weasel or stoat and has lost a leg. The arrival of "Hubert" - the Tawny Owl and "Albina" - another Barn Owl, cause further emotional and physical chaos.

Although not strictly 'falconry' in the purist sense, life with these owls causes basically the same problems.

Written in a way which I particularly enjoy, descriptive, funny and very real, this book is another to be put alongside all the other good



JENNIE GRAY

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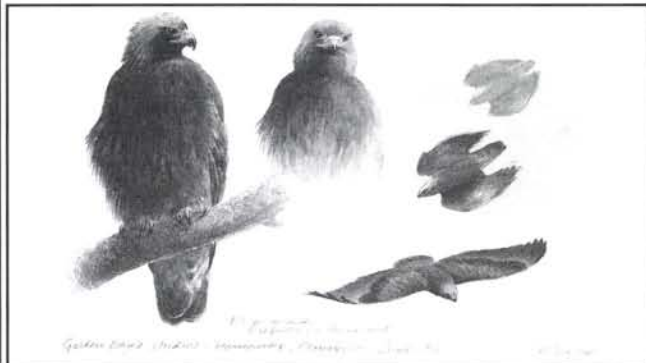
ACCESS & VISA WELCOME



PHILIP SNOW BA HONS.

He has been published and has exhibited in many lands and has contributed illustrations to about 50 books. Paintings are in many private, public and some Royal collections and he has exhibited with the **ROYAL ACADEMY 'BRITISH ART'** exhibition as well as in most of London's top venues, like the **MALL** and **TRYON GALLERIES, SOUTH BANK** and **BARBICAN**, and widely in Wales.

Philip is currently finishing a 16 year project; 'A Hebridean Sketchbook - Birds & Landscapes', done for publication in May 1997, amongst other books



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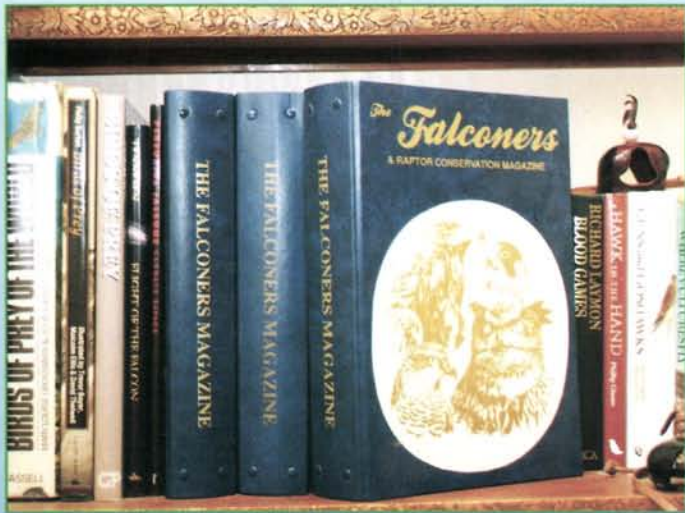
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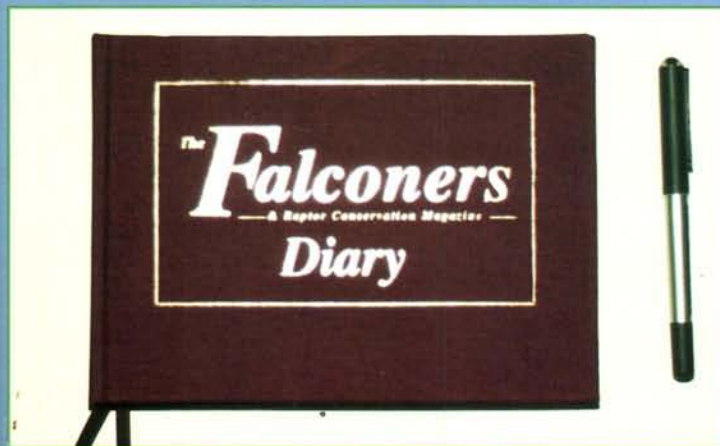


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