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# SPRING 1997 No. 30

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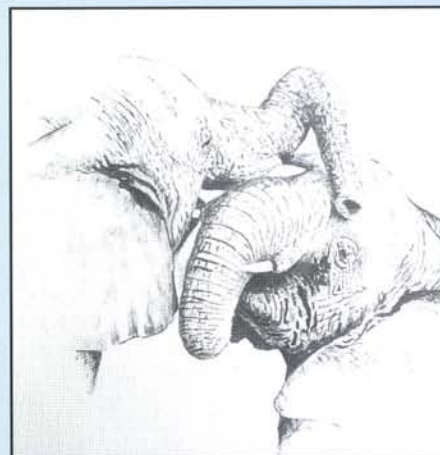
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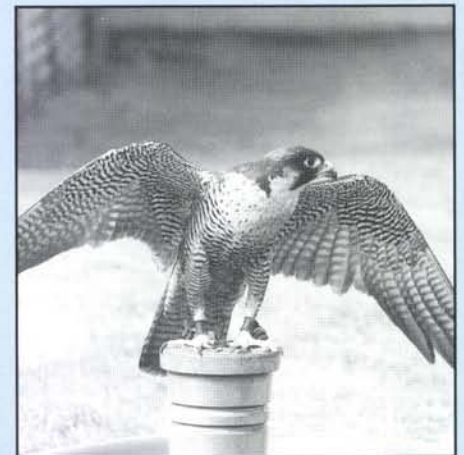
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## COMMENT

Hello Everybody,

Happy 1997! It doesn't seem long since we were wishing you all a happy 1996.

The big news for '97 is, as you all should know is the election. Please write to your MP's and let them know you feel strongly about field sports. It is **very important!**

We have lots for you as usual, but are still on the look out for more articles. In the next issue we will have an article by Martin Hollinshead about hunting eagles and a follow up to last issues article by Neil MacKinnon. I hope to have more by Neil Forbes and there will be news about the Fair etc.

Many thanks to our overseas contributors. Keep them coming. All copy for the next issue in by the end of March please.

We would love to get a problem page going and have lots of reputable people to answer your questions, whatever the subject. We have a few on page 34 to get you started.

Well that's it so everybody take care and as usual 'Keep Falconry Safe'.

David & Lyn

## EDITORIAL TEAM

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**DESIGN:** D PERKINS

**ADVERTISING:** LYN WILSON

**PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY:**

**THE FALCONERS & RAPTOR CONSERVATION MAGAZINE**

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

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

**Subscriptions:** UK & Eire £14.00, Europe £18.00, Airmail £26.00

*Cheque/Postal Order payable to: The Falconers Magazine.*

*For more details phone 01536 722794*

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**COVER: CROWNED EAGLE Robert Fuller (see page 16)**



## RAPTOR RESCUE AND IBR LOST AND FOUND BIRDS.

### LOST

- |                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| 1. Peregrine        | UK89817  |
| 2. Peregrine        | UK 88848 |
| 3. Peregrine        | 12375W   |
| 4. Saker            | 5 95W    |
| 5. Saker            | IBR210W  |
| 6. Saker            | 8CR96    |
| 7. Lugger           | 10GW95V  |
| 8. Goshawk          | 10630W   |
| 9. Goshawk          | 9424W    |
| 10 Hybrid Peregrine | UK88426  |
| 11. Barn Owl        | C2596    |

### FOUND

- |                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Redtail          | 12???( DOE Ring)            |
| 2. Harris           | 1???96W (Breeders Ring)     |
| 3. Lanner           | 4???96W (Breeders Ring)     |
| 4. Ferruginous      | 7WB???( Breeders Ring)      |
| 5. Barn Owl         | 68??BC??U                   |
| 6. Bengal Eagle Owl | No ring - Jesses and Swivel |

### STOLEN

1. Harris Hawk - Ring No M19956 - South Wales
2. Harris Hawk - Ring No 1747W - Tyne & Wear
3. Two Bengal Eagle Owl Chicks - Cornwall

Anybody who may have lost or found any of the above birds or has any information regarding the stolen birds can contact Paul Beecroft on 0118 9536421 Fax 0118 9536412. For emergencies or important calls he may be contacted on 0118 9536405 You can write to him at Woodley Police Station, 717 London Road, Woodley, Reading, Berks. RG6 1BE. Alternatively you can ring the IBR on 01962 850000 or the magazine on 01536 722794.

### MEN ACCUSED OF STEALING EGGS

Two men are said to have taken eggs from rare wild birds including a Golden Eagle and Roseate Tern, have appeared before a magistrates court.

Alan Barrow, 34, of Sumner Ave Ainsworth Bury Gtr Manchester and 35 years old Brian Mortimer, from Ribble Drive, Bury were summoned following an investigation by RSPB officials.

Appearing before magistrates in Bury the pair face joint matters that at Ynys Feurig, Rhosneigr, Anglesey, they intentionally disturbed a wild, namely a Roseate Tern, whilst the birds was on or near a nest containing eggs. In addition, there were also two matters alleging that they had in their possession over 120 wild birds eggs.

Mortimer also faces further matters that at Rhosneigr and Holyhead in Anglesey on separate occasions he took eggs from a Roseate Tern and a Chough. In april of last year he

is said to have intentionally taken a Golden Eagle egg from the Isle of Skye and an egg from a Hen Harrier at the Trough of Bowland in Lancashire in May.

Mortimer also faces a further summons that he had in his possession items capable of being used for the purpose of committing an offence contrary to section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. They include egg blowing equipment, photographs of birds nests and eggs, nature reserve leaflets together with 39 maps including some which were marked with birds nests, a file containing a log of nest sites\ visits, handwritten notes about nest sites and a RSPB membership card obtained under an alias.

In addition, Barrow is said to have used an Austin Montego car and a Zodiac type inflatable boat for the purpose of committing an offence.

Both men had their case adjourned until January 20th.

## CONVICTIONS

On 3rd December 1996 Derek Scott Armstrong of Front Street, Langley Park, Co Durham was found guilty at Durham Magistrates Court of possession of 145 wild birds' eggs (including 28 from Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and possession of egg blowing equipment and other items. He was fined £600 plus £1000 costs and the eggs and items forfeited. Armstrong was the final defendant in 'Operation Caretaker', organised by Durham and Northumbria Police in conjunction with RSPB investigations.

Two people, Joseph Vose and Robert Crich, had already pleaded guilty to possession of over 2000 eggs and been fined £750 and £1200. A polythene bag containing bro-

ken egg shells and a fresh peregrine falcon egg were found in Armstrongs dustbin. A lock-up garage, which he denied having, was eventually located and over two hundred eggs and other items were found. These included eggs of Australian and other foreign species plus price lists and foam filled boxes which suggested eggs were being traded between collectors.

Armstrong had changed his story several times and produced witnesses to claim the eggs were either old or from captive-bred birds. I summing up the Stipendiary Magistrate said of Armstrong "I find you devious, dishonest and a proven liar. You are the type of man who would deny his own Mother if it so suited you to do so."

### £1,750 fine x two

Gary and Peter Cunningham from Winsor Road and Balmoral Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham were prosecuted in Wick after pleading guilty to intentionally disturbing golden eagles. The brothers were fined £1,750 each. They were stopped by the police near Thurso in Scotland and found to be in possession of marked maps, a video camera, a climbing rope and an incubator. The video footage showed a golden eagle chick inside an eyrie and the nest site was ultimately located over 200 miles from where the men were stopped. With only around 430 pairs in Scotland, golden eagles are still vulnerable to persecution and disturbance.

### Possession while banned

On 29.7.96 Adrian Gowan (a.k.a. Adrian Thomas Roberts) pleaded guilty, at Hertfordshire Magistrates Court, to two offences contrary to section 7 (3) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

(Possession of a Schedule four bird whilst banned), and was fined £100 plus £80 costs.

This mean he now has three separate convictions for offences related to birds of prey the others at Harlow Magistrates Court in 1990, & Scunthorpe Magistrates Court in 1992, for neglect and cruelty.

### CHANGE IN THE LAW

From 1st January 1997 it is an offence to purchase a non-schedule 4 bird that is not ringed in accordance with the regulations. This includes species such as Harris, Redtail, Lanner, Saker etc.

The law remains the same for the seller of any non-schedule 4 bird. It must be ringed and a certificate of captive breeding must accompany any bird sold.



## BIRD OF PREY PAINTING DAY

Come eye to eye with owls, hawks and falcons on this painting day for artists of all abilities. Do not miss this opportunity to get close up studies of : Buzzard, Harris Hawk, Peregrine, Merlin, Kestrel, Little Owl, Eagle Owl, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Bengal Eagle Owl.

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

The Chiltern Open Air Museum is set in 45 acres of beautiful parkland and has over 25 traditional buildings, such as barns, stables and cottages dating back to Iron Age times. There is also a wood-

land nature trail, hosting wild Tawny Owls, Little Owls and Kestrels, as well as the opportunity to visit the new Hawk & Owl Trusts National Conservation Centre.

Places are strictly limited.

**Date:** Saturday 21st June 1997 10am - 5pm

**Venue:** Chiltern Open Air Museum, Gorelands Lane, Chalfont St Giles Bucks.

**Cost:** £15 per person (Society members)

£20 per person (non-members)

Cheques should be made payable to the

Wildlife Art Society and sent to The Wildlife Art Society, Greenways Bridge, Lower Hardres, Canterbury, Kent. CT4 7AG

Tel 01227 464739.

## CLA GAME FAIR APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR

Following the retirement of Colin Rees-Webbe this years CLA Game Fair sees a new Director, David Hough.

The Game Fair is to be held at Castle Ashby, Northampton, on Fri. 25th - Sun. 27th July.

The Falconry will, as usual, be provided by Jemima Parry-Jones and we look forward to bringing you more details of this regular and much looked forward to event in the next issue.

## FALCONERS FAIR STILL GROWING

The 1997 Falconer Fair is on Sun 25th & Mon 26th May, at its usual venue of Althorp House, Northampton.

Speaking to Ron Morris he informs me that more and more interest is being shown by falconers on the continent and in the US. With enquiries from both visitors and traders. This is really becoming an International event.

In this issue we have a competition to win tickets to the Fair, donated by the organisers.

The magazine will be there and we will let you know more details in the next issue about who will be on the stand with us this year.

For further details about the Fair you can ring Ron Morris on 01588 672708.

## HAWK BOARD SYMPOSIUM

October 1996 saw the very first Hawk Board Symposium, held at Birmingham University.

The idea behind it was to show people what the Hawk Board does and although numbers were limited it was open to all. The list of speakers was impressive and a wide range of subjects were covered. Tony Warburton gave us quite a bit to think about regarding Owls. Raising questions about in breeding and cross breeding, stressing the importance of keeping blood lines pure to safeguard wild populations.

Gut Wallaces talk on dog training was very well received, causing much laughter but at the same time answering many questions for the audience.

Clarissa Daly (BFSS) spoke about the importance of good media representation, explaining how to handle various situations and offering the services of the BFSS media group to anyone who felt unsure as to how to handle media interest.

Nick Williams was very helpful, giving various pieces of information about Government policies regarding registration and CITES etc.

Neil Forbes spoke about several important and interesting aspects of Bird of Prey keeping and breeding, emphasising good husbandry and management. He supplied us with facts which I am sure would surprise many. I am hoping to have details of another symposium for this year and would encourage people to attend if at all possible. Details should be available from your Hawk Board representative if you are a member of an affiliated Club alternatively contact the magazine and we will put you in touch with one of the organisers.

Personally I thoroughly enjoyed the symposium. I found the information given very useful and it is also an ideal opportunity for people to ask questions and to pool ideas. Also it helps to emphasise much better than any article seems to, the importance of many of the issues covered.

## South West Success

Westpoint, Exeter will see its second Country Pursuits Show this year, after a well received first year. Over 100 companies are taking part with hundreds of products, equipment and services on show, including. There will be free practical advice on game rearing, gun fitting, wild-fowling, deer management, falconry and ferretting.

The South West Shooting and Game Exhibition will take place on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th March.

Open 9.30 am - 5pm.

## South East Debut

Ardingly South of England Centre in West Sussex will have a brand new show for all game and shooting enthusiasts. Featuring an extensive range of indoor and outdoor events including gun safety and fitting, air gun school and target range, lurcher show, and game cookery demonstrations.

The dates for this exhibition are Friday 28th and Saturday 29th March.

IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING FOR THE NEWS PAGE IN THE NEXT ISSUE PLEASE TRY AND GET IT TO US FOR THE END OF APRIL. SEND IT TO :  
20 BRIDLE ROAD,  
BURTON LATIMER, KETTERING  
NORTHANTS NN15 5QP  
TEL/FAX 01536 722794

## STOP PRESS

**There is an outbreak of Newcastle disease/Fowl Pest in the Gloucester area, particularly Ross-on-Wye.**



## Yorkshire Falconry Club

The Yorkshire Falconry Club, since I last wrote, has had a busy few months. September saw our AGM which turned into a very lively evening with a turn out of 90% of members.

October saw the return of what is now becoming known as "Torture Night", to those of you not in the know it is better known as Quiz Night. Kim surpassed herself with some of the questions and there was much moaning, groaning and chewing of pencils in the search for that elusive answer. But members have decided to fight back by pooling their knowledge this time and competing in teams in the hope of winning the prize.

November should have Terry Large speaking but he was unable to come, hopefully we will be able to book him later in the year. At very short notice James McKay spoke to members on various aspects of ferreting. It was a very informative evening which also dispelled many myths about ferrets. November also saw, after a change in their constitution, our affiliation to the Hawk Board. Two members went to the Hawk Board Seminar, held in Birmingham. The day was very informative, their only criticism was that a longer period should have been set aside at the end of the day for questions.

December will see our

annual auction and buffet, if the bidding follows the pattern of last year everyone should come away from the evening happy. In January we are hoping to have Graham Butterworth talk to club members about nutrition and birds of prey. February will see another quiz night and in March, thanks once again to Rowland Evans, Bruce Haak will be speaking to the club. If he lives up to the quality of his fellow American Mike McDermott, who spoke to us last year, it will be a good evening. April will see Jim Chick speaking to us on the work of the Hawk Board.

The club as a whole, has held two large field meets a month at Malham, along with a number of smaller one in between. Thanks to an award from the National Westminster Bank we have been able to purchase for the club, to be used at field meets, a Ferret Locator and two collars and a Telemetry Transmitter. The field meets have been very successful and in part due to our new field meet co-ordinator, Malcolm Burgwin, who has worked very hard in his new post.

Anyone wanting further details of our meetings please send an SAE to Kim Myers, 8, Belford Drive, Bramley, South Yorks. S66 0YW or Telephone 01709 549896. We look forward to hearing from you.

## CENTRAL FALCONRY & RAPTOR CLUB

The last 12 months has been an exciting time for the club with the committee being active at various game fairs in the Midlands, making people aware of our existence with two regional groups. One based at Coventry, the other at Tewkesbury. The membership has never been higher, one of the reasons being the quality of the guest speakers which we have most months at both venues, plus free Field Meets during the Winter.

We, as a club, supported the Hawk Board Symposium in October by sending along 26 members and all agreed what good value the day was, with the information that was available from the quality of Guest Speakers and the catering that was supplied. Here's to the next time.

A junior Field Meet was held in December. The idea

was to give the younger members of the club a chance to flying a suitable hawk under supervised conditions in the hunting field. It was attended by seven youngsters and was over subscribed, so because of the success of the day we will be running a similar event in the future.

In March at the Coventry Venue we will be having as Guest Speaker, Bruce Haak, the renowned American Falconer and Author. The club has been offered the chance for him to visit us, to talk on a variety of Falconry related subjects concerning Falconry in the USA.

The date for this event will be March 9th, and a few places will be available to non-members at the cost of £5 per head. Please phone John Hill (0121) 457 5508 daytime for further information.

The second award has been made to an altogether different person. There is nothing public about Stephen Frank. Indeed he shuns attention and yet...

The style of game hawking on his small Scottish Estate has produced some memorable moments and, despite his outward reticence, there are many who have been privileged to watch his peregrines. If you know where to go and **how** to ask, there is always a welcome for the dedicated band of falconers (many from overseas) who go north each autumn.

Tea, cake and scotch plus a sparkling day out to watch his peregrine, the incomparable Mad Harry, floor another grouse, has been the making of many a falconers dream. His dedication to the sport, his quiet appreciation of the best in hawks and dogs, and his generosity to his fellow falconers has made the sport what it is today.

"It is the overwhelming example of excellence and dedication that qualifies Stephen Frank for this recognition", says Robbie Wilson.

## British Falconers Club

### BFC Appoints Honorary Vice Presidents.

In an unusual move the British Falconers Club, has appointed two new Honorary Vice Presidents, they are Phillip Glasier and Stephen Frank.

"It is not something that happens every year", says Robbie Wilson, BFC President. "Appointees must have made a very serious and substantial contribution to the sport. It is not enough to have been a member and kept your nose clean".

Phillip Glasier had been recognised as one of the founding fathers of modern falconry. Not surprisingly some of his ideas and opinions

sent him on a collision course with the establishment. But time has erased these conflicts and left a bed-rock of excellence for all to appreciate.

Paul Jacklin, former editor of the BFC journal, was apprenticed to Glasier in the early days and remembers with affection the guidance he received. "If at times his advice was somewhat abrupt it was because he only had one point of interest - the welfare of the hawk. Your feelings came a poor second. No wonder he made such a superb falconer to the actor, James Robertson-Justice."



BFC President Robbie Wilson, presents memento to new Vice President Phillip Glasier

To have your news on the Club news page please write to:  
The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer,  
Kettering, Northants NN15 5QP. Tel/Fax: 01536 722794.



## SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB REPORT



Another year and we continue with our favourite sport, the harsh weather has just broken up here in Scotland. I think for once "we had it better" than south of the border. We certainly had our portion of the white fluffy stuff but at least we had daytime temperatures above freezing, unlike last Christmas when temperatures at night were -16 and during the day -8. Let's hope things warm up and we get a proper Spring for once.

Hawking has proceeded well with the only major problem being digging out ferrets from concrete ground. Field meetings have been great fun as usual, with only a couple of meetings having to be cancelled. We have only two or three more to go till the end of the season, let us hope the shooters leave us plenty of pheasants for our end of January meet.

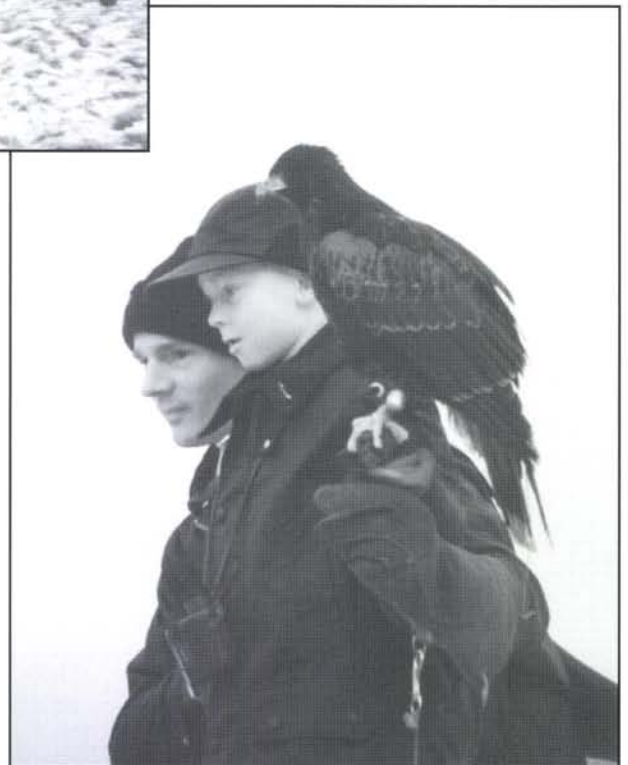
We have a new secretary. Stuart

### *Christmas Hawking at Crookedstane*

Stephen, who has been on the committee for many years has kindly agreed to take over from our acting secretary, Graham Whiting, who in turn took over from Ian Campbell. Both Graham and Ian have done sterling on behalf of the club and members should be grateful to them for the time they spent on club business. We wish Stuart well in his new post. We are trying to arrange for the visiting

falconer, Bruce Haak, to come up and give our members a talk about falconry over the big pond in America, also interest has been shown for another visit from Neil Forbes for one of his first aid courses, if anyone would be interested in attending either of these two events then please contact the club. We will only proceed with these if we have enough people showing interest.

Let's hope the outcome of the election doesn't see a banning of any field sports, make certain you contact your MP and let him know your feelings on the matter, only you can make a difference. Good Hawking.



*We start them young up in Scotland*

## More BFC News

Acknowledging the pronouncement by Jack Mavrogordato in 1968 the falconers are "passionately devoted to the long-term interests of all birds of prey everywhere in the world", the British Falconers Club (BFC) has created a conservation committee with the express aim of furthering the sentiments expressed by "Mavro", one of falconry's modern legends.

Chairman Gordon Mellor, does not see his roles as "just another sop to the green movement". Rather he expects the committee, the BFC and the falconry world in general to make a genuine contribution to the future of our native raptors.

"Birds of Prey have a habit of being piggy in the middle," says Mellor. "At any one time they can be icons of conservation, threats to game bird and pigeon racing interests, or wholesale destroyers of the garden bird population. It is our job to

help promote a balance between all those opposing views and at the same time put the role of the responsible falconer in perspective."

No small task. Yet the first steps have already been taken. In October Mellor spoke at the Police Wildlife Liaison Officers conference in Scotland. Here he had the chance to explain the many ways falconers were able to help in crimes against raptors from taking in and caring for birds under investigation to acting as expert witnesses in relevant cases. Gordons session was fully attended and the response from the floor was of solid support.

Earlier in September, another member of the team, Tony Crosswell, was a delegate at the CITES meeting held in the Czech Republic. CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) is a major influence on government conservation legislation and the British falconers' contribution, supported by the

International Association for Falconry and the North American Falconers Association, was recognised for its balanced contribution to the working group on the breeding, marking and identification, and movement of endangered species - notable raptors. The British Field Sports Society has asked that Gordon Mellor or one of the team sit on the BFSS conservation committee; brain child of innovative BFSS Chief Executive, Robin Hanbury-Tenison.

Thus in a few short months, this new BFC initiative has started positive talks with the police, international conservationists and field sportsmen. As each group has very specific needs it looks like the BFC may well replace the raptors as the piggy in the middle. Something Gordon Mellor and his colleagues see as a real achievement. The future work of the committee can now be mapped out in a spirit of consultation not confrontation, and always with the needs of the native raptor at the top of the agenda.





juvenile  
HOBBIES\*  
adult, left & top.

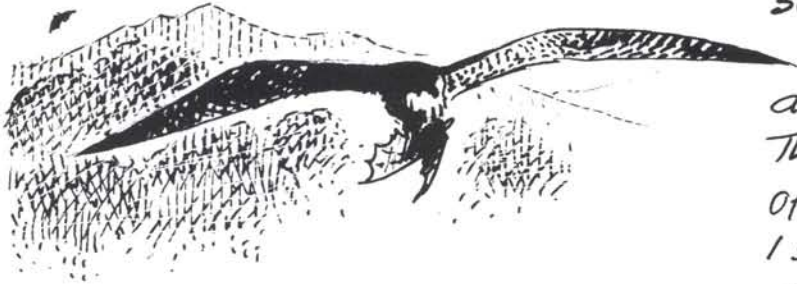
adult eating dragonfly, Shropshire.

© P. SNOW '96



# RAPTORS of Britain and Europe

## No 3. The HOBBY

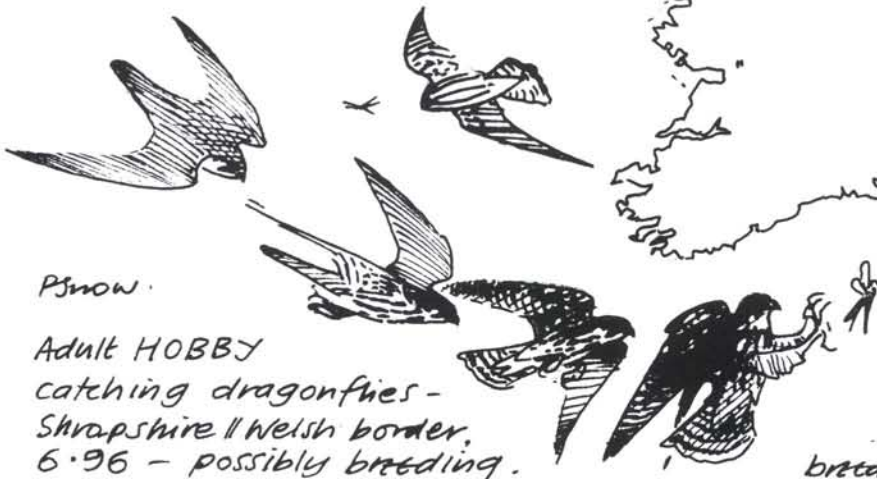


HOBBY catching bats, Sivirek, Turkey, at dusk. 9.89.

The HOBBY, (*Falco subbuteo*), is a long winged & slender falcon, between 28 & 35cm long, with a wing span of roughly 70 to 84 cm. It breeds from Britain & Western Europe to the old USSR, with towards 60,000 pairs, of which Britain now has up to 900 pairs. (1991 estimate)

Although it has lost much of its' traditional heathland habitat to our ravages, it has still managed an ninefold increase since the 1950's. It has also spread northwards & westwards, with increased sightings in Scotland, probably due to climatic changes.

This migratory falcon spends our winter in Africa, & is largely insectivorous,



Psnow.

Adult HOBBY catching dragonflies - Shropshire // Welsh border, 6.96 - possibly breeding.

switching to fledgling birds when it is itself feeding young, in June & July.

Hobbies leave our shores, usually, in September, migrating over a broad front. Aggregations of up to 300 have been seen at Gibraltar,

& they can be found virtually anywhere in Europe on passage. They are often attracted by roosts of hirundines, at this time, and I sketched the bird on the left at a bat roost in eastern Turkey. Their fast & agile flight is one of the bird world's most glorious sights, as they furiously chase swallows or larks, etc, twisting, jinking & turning at near impossible angles.



Although slowly spreading northward & westward, the main increase still seems to be in the south east, roughly from Poole to the Wash, in a broad band.

POPULATION  
NES & MAP  
ADAPTED FROM  
BTO, SOC & INC  
1993  
NEW ATLAS  
BREEDING BIRD



Hatched areas are strongholds + possible breeding - DISTRIBUTION MAP 89-91.



# Your Incubations Problems Controlled!

Because the National Birds of Prey Centre is a fairly small specialist zoo and therefore does not have a huge staff, each staff member has to cover a wide variety of jobs, myself as director included. So as well as incubating eggs, which is my job, I am flying birds on a daily basis, writing books, trying to get office work done, talking to the general public, and on occasion unblocking loos, laying concrete, building pens and washing up in the cafe!

We have bred 49 species of raptor here in the thirty years we have been going. Nevertheless, I would not call myself an incubation expert by any means, and when things get hectic here, which is fairly often, I cope with the incubation of our eggs by the skin of my teeth. Our breeding season is long - first eggs in December and the last one to hatch last year was October.

However we are often dealing with single eggs that, if they hatch, could have a market value of upwards of £6000. This adds to the misery of incubating eggs, especially if things go wrong. So I was delighted when David Le Mesurier contacted me recently about a computer programme he has designed to assist with the incubation of birds of all taxa.

David has been working with incubation of eggs for many years, mainly with falcons, but also species such as houbara. He is a serious chap and one of those

people who only does a job if he can do it well. I think he probably had a fit when he saw my 'expertise with a computer' but the programme he has designed has been built with people like me in mind. I told him that many people who use computers regularly still don't have a clue how they work, and I know many of my friends will stumble on a new thing their machine does and then include that function into what they can manage with delight. So for those of you who view computers with horror - don't, if you want to increase your hatch and at the same time learn a tremendous amount from the eggs you are dealing with - go for this programme.

David brought it over to the Centre and installed it into one of our computers and then showed myself and Dr Nicholls how it worked. For those of you interested in just getting your eggs right, basically you enter the breed of parent, the length of incubation required, unless it is a species that the programme already knows, the weight of the egg and the days of incubation it has already had, if any. The temperature you are going to use, the amount of weight you require the eggs to lose, if possible the length and breadth of the egg, and the programme works out what you should be doing in terms of humidity in the incubator to get the right weight loss for hatching.

You can have your whole stock on a stock list he has designed and the egg programme will just need the species and aviary number and it will enter the parent birds ID numbers into the egg and incubation programme and if you number the egg it will follow it through. Once the bird has hatched and been reared it will write out a captive breeding document, giving the ring number you have entered, the parents and even fill in a CITES form for you if needed.

By weighing the eggs regularly and entering the data into the programme, it will tell you if you should move an egg to an incubator with a higher of lower humidity. If you enter all your incubators onto the programme and keep each one at a certain humidity, then it will tell you which incubator to move it to. I have to say that I am highly impressed and I can't wait to get things going here. For any collection, breeding any kind of bird, this sort of information, particularly as it even takes into account the time during the day that you weighed your bird, is absolutely invaluable.

David gives excellent back up and will come and look at your incubation set up and advise on changes and protocol. He charges for this, but if you offset those costs with what you gain in an improved hatch of birds, there is really nothing to even consider.

The programme costs around £250 which is less than the value of one egg from most of the species that we are working with here, and in terms of conservation of species is not even worth considering. For anyone who is thinking they might "borrow" the programme from friends - forget it, he has quite rightly protected it and it will only work for the registered name.

For those who not only want to learn and improve their hatch, but who are also, like me, keen to make that information available, you can send your results in (in confidence) to David at the end of the year and all the information will be put into the programme and added to the information already known about bird species, incubation periods, Kw values and so on, then the programme will be updated and sent out to those who can benefit from extra data on the species they are working with. I would like at this point to strongly encourage everyone

System ID number	00003	Date acquired	25/05/96
Mothers system ID	00002	Mothers ID ring	UK9977
Fathers system ID	00001	Fathers ID ring	UK9988
Species latin name	<i>Falco columbarus aestivus</i>		
Species common name	European Merlin		
Name	Wee One	Rings ID	UK876483
Micro chip #	TR-YUT5677	Reader type	Trovan
Captive bred	Yes	Sex	Male
Date hatch	25/05/96	Rearing	Imprinted
Acquisition type	Hatch here	Generation captive bred	F 3
Price paid	0.00		
Acquired from	Avian Management Services		
Permit number			
Current location	RA4	Raptor Aviary 4	
Comments	Imprinted On Dlm		

ACCEPT ENTRY      REJECT ENTRY

Another entry      Exit

Accepting entry will save it to file. Rejecting entry will not save details to file

Ins Num 10:41:54

This picture illustrates the add a bird to stock facility



## Jemima Parry-Jones Director National Birds of Prey Centre.

to share information as I consider keeping facts hidden to stop others from breeding is similar to hiding a cure for a disease until you can make a fortune out of it.

For those of you who are computer buffs, the following is the information you need to know for getting the right machine to run the programme (for those of you, like me, who have the computer, but not the expertise - swallow your pride and phone or fax David and ask him) It comes directly from David and so is bound to be right unless I miss-type it!

The programme is called AIMS - Avian Incubation Management System.

It requires the following minimum system to run:

4MB RAM if virtual memory is set to temporary or permanent, or 6MB RAM if virtual memory is set to none.  
Hard drive - designated drive C:

3.5 Floppy drive designated drive A:  
Mouse (he didn't like my roller ball mouse I warn you - in fact he was very rude about it!)

Microsoft Windows version 3.0 or higher running in 386 enhanced mode, will also run under Win95.

VGA or higher recommended.

As with any of today's software AIMS will run better on a faster machine especially if a large number of taxon databases are loaded (I can verify that one!)

The programme is written in MS Foxpro 2.6a and is a stand alone application. i.e. it is fully contained and does not require any external programmes to be able to run.

The programme will be priced at £250 which includes UK postage, overseas at cost. This price includes one 'Order' taxon database. Further taxa databases, when available will be £30 with a discount on orders of more than one taxon.

Egg ID	Mother	Father	System ID	Name	Ring	Species
1970001			00002	Demo 2	LIK9977	European Merlin
			00001	Demo 1	LIK9988	European Merlin

% loss required at pip	15.0	Day of Inc.	Weight	Error weight	% loss at pip
Last weighing	03/01/97	11:52	1	23.09	22.98
Current weighing	04/01/97	11:23	2	22.95	00.00

% rh required	44.59	ID	Temp °C	% rh	If egg is moved to this incubator now weight loss at pip should be.....
Current incubator	31.3		37.40	31.30	
Recommended incubator	44.6		37.40	44.60	14.99 %

Fertile:  Comments:

Buttons: Accept entry, Reject entry, Another egg, Exit

Status bar: Accept this entry and save data to file | Ins Num | 10:50:08

*This picture shows how the programme recommends different incubators.*

The Taxon database includes a full list down to subspecies level. Kw values and pip times for many species and subspecies. Each year all the returns will be pooled and the Kw and pip data will be updated and sent out to all users who submit their data to David. (Avian Management Services)

This information will give any breeder an unparalleled source of vital information to enhance their breeding programme.

The weight loss calculations for eggs include the time difference, to the nearest minute, between weighings and AIMS provides, for the first time, a really accurate system of incubation weight loss control. AIMS not only tells you what the required %RH your egg requires to obtain an optimum weight loss, but also which of your incubators to move it to. No more guess work in moving to dry or wet machines and then back again to

compensate for high or low %RH. You will KNOW what the egg needs.

Avian Management systems can provide in house or on site training. The cost of which will depend on the number of persons, the location, training requirements and time. With the value of the birds being bred in the world today, both in terms of genetics and monetary value, AIMS will more than pay for itself in the first season.

Back to the things I know about, I can't recommend this programme or David's company too highly. Anyone who sits down and gets this sort of information in a form all of us can use, from zoos to private breeders and pheasant breeders to Ostrich Farms, to the standard he has achieved gets my vote. The programme should be ready by February, so you have just got time to get it in and improve your coming breeding season - get to it and the best of luck!

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# TAKING A LOOK INSIDE HMP COLDINGLY

Well, what **do** you say when a six foot something policeman asks you to accompany him to prison? In my case I said yes.

H.M.P. Coldingley, was the place and Chris Winsor the man we were to visit. He has built up a falconry "centre" in the prison and asked if Paul Beecroft and I would like to go along and see what he has done. After being checked in and a short walk through the grounds we came upon aviaries and then weatherings. Chris and his friend Ben made us welcome with a cup of tea and after a chat they took us to look round.

Everywhere was clean and the birds all looked well kept. There are twelve aviaries, some still under construction, all with nest ledges and six weatherings all are very well built, with the birds

welfare uppermost in Chris' mind. As we walked round two female Sparrowhawks sat quite calmly, foot up, taking us all in. These we were told are the hunters, the quarry - pigeons.

Other birds include, Kestrels, Buzzards, a Peregrine, a Lanner and Bengal Eagle Owls.

Also there is an indoor mews built to hold twelve birds, which is very smart.

A prison is not the type of



Above: The indoor mews.  
Below Chris with Princess Anne.



place you would expect to find birds of prey, but I must say this place is a credit to Chris and Ben.

Above: Lanner on the weathering ground.  
Left: Ben with a female Swainsons Hawk.



## GROUSE HAWKING BY DERRY ARGUE.

FEATURING AN 18 MONTH OLD GYRXPEREGRINE TIERCEL, AN 8 YEARS OLD GYR X PERGRINE TIERCEL AND A FEMALE PEREGRINE.

Henri Desmonts visits Scotland every year with his English Setters and is flying two Gyr x Peregrine Tiercels at Red Grouse. His guest is Jock Hunter, with a female Peregrine and GSP.

The 8 years old Hybrid is entrancing, missing rarely and providing some unforgettable hawking on a backdrop of breath taking scenery.

Alastair McKissock shows a young Peregrine being fed and the first stages of hooding a young lanner. He also illustrates how to get a male Peregrine fit by stooping it to

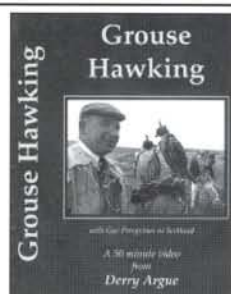
the lure.

Derry shows us how to make a bell, a process which I found quite fascinating. Starting with sheet brass through to soldering on the loop at the top.

This is an interesting video, mostly due to the variety of subjects covered.

Running time 50 mins.

**It is available from Firth Productions, Millers Place, Fendom, Tain, Easter Ross, IV19 1PE. £22.50 plus £1.50 p&p (UK) Tel 01862 893856.**



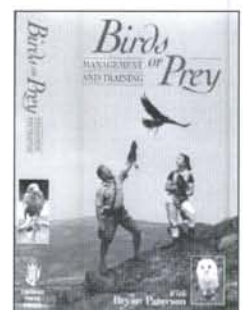
## Birds of Prey Management & Training

Many of you who have seen Bryan around the country at Game Fairs may have wondered how he gets the results he does.

Bryan guides novice Caroline Whittome through the basic training of a Bird of Prey.

He covers many items throughout the video including good and bad perching, water, fitting jesses and bewits, imping, crop tubing, transport, feeding etc. He also shows manning, jumping to the fist, flying on a creance and then flying free.

It is an interesting video and everything is explained in Bryans usual, easy to understand, manner.



The video is good for the beginner in so far as it is always there for them to refer to, having said that it should not be used as a substitute for a good falconry course.

Running time 57 minutes.

**The video is available from: Farming Press, Miller Freeman Ltd, Wharfedale road, Ipswich, IP1 4LG. Price: £15.99 plus £2.50 p&p.**



# A Plea for Improvement in the Diet of Domestic Birds of Prey.

During 1993-1995 and funded by the RSPCA, we carried out research into the Welfare and Conservation Aspects of Captive Birds of Prey. As part of this project we sent questionnaires to 67 veterinary surgeons in the UK who had experience of treating raptors. Of these 67 only 10 (i.e. 15%) replied. This low return rate may reflect the workload of vets and insufficient time to reply, but also may be due to the small number who felt that they treated enough raptors to be of use. It may also indicate however, that even though the actual number of responses is low, the sample probably represents a large proportion of vets who specialise in raptor medicine.

## Results of the survey

The total number of cases treated by the vets in the sample was around 300 owls and 1400 Falconiformes (falcons, hawks, buzzards etc. called here for brevity "diurnal" birds of prey) per year, i.e. an average of 30 owls and 140 diurnal birds of prey per practice per year. However it is worth mentioning that by far the majority of these cases were treated by one practice, namely Neil Forbes and Greg Simpson at the Lansdowne Veterinary Practice.

Amongst other questions asked was to list five most common diagnoses in their experience, and to list these separately for owls and diurnal birds of prey and for adults and juvenile birds. Even though the most common diseases are not the same for diurnal raptors and for owls, nor for adults and juveniles, there is an underlying commonality. Eight problems predominated for all groups of birds; in rank order these were:

- Diet
- Hygiene
- Aviary and housing design
- Tethering and handling
- Exercise, or rather lack of it
- Traumatic injuries, particularly in free-flying birds
- Stress
- Education and training, in the sense of the need for it in falconers and other keepers.

## The problems associated with diet

The most frequently recurring issue therefore was diagnoses related to diet. We have highlighted this in Table 1 which serves to remind that up to 44 % of diseases mentioned in the survey were attributed to diet, and thus could presumably be avoided. Some problems are associated with feeding wild prey to hawks, but the majority of raptor diets and also diet-related ailments, are related to day old cockerel (DO) chicks.

DO's were cited by the vets in the survey as a source of bacterial infection. Such infection may be minimal in the chicks at slaughter but bad practice in freezing, storage and thawing may result in subsequent high bacterial counts. The problem may occur either in the hatcheries, with suppliers or the keepers. DO's may also be the source of infection other than bacteria. As an example the source of two outbreaks of an adenovirus infection in captive Mauritius kestrels was traced to the DO food source. Non-avian food sources (e.g. rats and mice) do not carry bird-specific infections and are often recommended as safer foods for raptors.

As well as a source of infection DO chicks were suggested by the vets as being responsible for cardiovascular problems (atherosclerosis or "hardening of the arteries"), and alimentary impaction in adult hawks. DO's are also a nutritionally inadequate diet. Nutritional deficiencies cause metabolic bone dis-

orders and consequent fractures, especially in juveniles of both diurnal and nocturnal raptors and also vitamin deficiency problems.

## Type of Bird of Prey

### Number of Most Common Diseases Cited Number of Diet Related Causes of Disease

Adult Owls  
13  
5 / 13 (38%)

Juvenile Owls  
9  
4 / 9 (44%)

Adult Diurnals  
12  
2 / 12 (17%)

Juvenile Diurnals  
10  
3 / 10 (39%)

Table 1. The number for each bird of prey group of most numerous diagnoses in the survey and the proportion of these attributed to diet.

## The "day old chick culture"

As a preventive measure against such deficiencies, imbalances and sources of infection the vets surveyed suggested that keepers use a more varied, preferably non-avian diet and also add nutritional supplements. Further, a number of vets suggested that a better understanding of raptor nutrition is needed by keepers. Yet most modern books on falconry and raptor keeping discuss dietary needs and echo these sentiments. Judging by the prevalence of diet related diseases, this advice must be going unheeded and the raptor keeping community seems to be living in a "DO chick culture". What is needed is for keepers to explore alternative foods and for frozen food suppliers actively to seek to provide these.

DO chicks seem to be a cheap convenient food source, but raptor keepers are paying in the long run; in the welfare of their birds and in vets' bills !

Dr Mike Nicholls (Ecology Research Group, Canterbury Christ Church College) and  
Dr Ruth Cromie (DICE, University of Kent)

## Editors Note:

This is not the first article we have had in the magazine about the dangers of feeding day old chicks, sadly I am sure it will not be the last. Many people we speak to do not know what a 'Whole' diet is, they do not understand the importance of feeding casting, etc. They sound disgusted when you advise they feed their birds rats. Either that or they complain about the price. I cannot see why, when they have spent hundreds of pounds on a bird, they then feed it an inferior food and so endangering their investment. They profess to love and value their bird so why will they not do right by it?

If you have a problem with feeding other food please write to us and explain the problem and we will do our best to find the answers.



# First Experiences

Nicholas Rosser

I had little knowledge of Falconry or what it entailed when I went to my senior school in North Wales only, like most people, what I had seen at country fairs. When I visited the school I was shown some birds in their mews and did not have the best view of these creatures until I started in the Autumn. When I first got a look at them I was astounded by their beauty and calmness. I could not wait for the first hands on session which was to take place on a glorious Wednesday afternoon that week. I introduced myself to Chris Jowett who was to teach me the art over the next five years and, with whom I was to enjoy many an afternoon on "the back of the hill", as it was known.

After much practice of the Falconers knot, which I had to be able to tie before handling the birds, I finally got to see and handle a bird for the first time. On this particular day we were handling Common Buzzards, a female called Skadu and a male called Gwiheir who I was to fly for my duration here. We were not actually flying the birds, only manning them that day. The bird I was handling bated whilst in the woods,

needless to say she flew into the nearest tree. This would not normally be a problem but on this occasion she was fully tackled. So sitting in the pine tree was this buzzard looking down at us with leash, jesses and swivel still attached. We had one added problem here in that the bird had only just come out of the moult and needless to say her weight was somewhat high. No amount

**No amount of chicks or rabbit would entice her down**

of chicks or rabbit would entice her down from her comfy perch in the tree. After about an hour the big decision was made, to climb the tree after her. The climb commenced and in a short time the bird was reached by Chris. One thing which none of us had thought of until now was how to get down with the bird attached! It was a difficult enough climb up as it was. Well the descent began, a comical sight if I ever saw one, this bearded man climbing down a thick pine tree with a buzzard in tow. What someone would have thought if they did not know what was happening here I dare not imagine. Needless to say after a few difficult negotiations the bird and Chris made it down. The end of my first taste of falconry. What a start.

My first experience of hunting was to come a few months later when I had more confidence and handling ability. We were flying one of the Harris's, a female called Melandra, a splendid and courageous female who, despite her relatively small size was a very impressive hunter and at a later date took on successfully one almighty hare. On this particular day we were also working a ferret, Gypsy. If you've ever been out with a large group of people, watching as one bird and one ferret are working you know how difficult it is to keep them quiet and where to place them. Well try multiplying that by twenty! Not only were a group of about that number present, but

they were all teenage boys. A disaster? Well this was a typical Wednesday afternoons hunting at St Davids! We would all take it in turns to fly the Harris or work the ferret. When my turn came the old adrenaline began to flow as was told not to let the bird go if the ferret came up but to let go immediately if a rabbit came out. I had about a second to make this decision and remember all else I had been taught about holding the bird etc. The moment of truth came as the ferret was placed down the hole in the sloping wood. The Harris had a great flight path down the hill towards the bracken at the bottom, a run of about twenty metres. I waited as the ferret worked away under our feet. The I spotted something coming out of the hole. The question was, was it the ferret or a rabbit? Melandra had no doubt and bated as the rabbit bolted below us. I held on a fraction of a second too long and lost her a few feet. This though did not bother her and I watched with awe as she paced towards the running rabbit. Then I thought it was all over. The rab-

**she was in and bound tight to her well deserved prize.**

bit had made it to the bracken. She landed in a small tree just above where the rabbit had last been seen. She landed in a small tree just above where the rabbit had last been seen. She glared at the ground and then the head bobbing started and crash... she was in and bound tight to her well deserved prize. A great flight for her and my first hunting experience and a bunny in the bag to top it off despite all odds against her!

When I had started about my second year of falconry I was offered the chance to train and fly one of the buzzards, Gwiheir or Gwy as he became known. This was to be the bird I would stay with and fly for the rest of my time at the College despite training and flying many other birds I would always stick with him. Gwy was, at the time, about eight years of age. My training started and it took weeks and weeks to get his weight right and get him flying the 25 metre creance line immediately. The time finally came to set him free. The wind was right, a little overcast. The day before he had flown the full length of the creance immediately a couple of times. To be on the safe side I flew him once more that day the full



Chris, Hamish and me at our '96 open day





*GWY the male buzzard.*

extent of the creance. The time was right to let him go! I took off his mews jesses, put in the flying jesses and cast him off. He flew off my fist and landed in a big Oak tree about 100m away. There he sat and looked at me, I proceeded as usual with food and whistle. Any response? No! He sat some more. I moved in closer and still no response. How can this be? I've done everything right haven't I? Well the answer was soon to come. I waited for what seemed like an eternity but was probably only a couple of minutes, until he was back on the fist and safe. Shall I try it again I thought...well why not. Off he flew and this time came back almost immediately.

**I headed off and set about finding some rabbits**

After flying him for several weeks and building up his fitness, introducing him to the dummy bunny for the first time this season etc.. I felt it was about time to see how this bird performed at real quarry. So I headed off to the hill and set about finding some rabbits. It was not until much later, after introducing him to many different rabbits in many different areas and differing levels of difficulty that I was to find that this

bird was like so many other buzzards; lazy! He has never to this date, been successful at rabbit despite being extremely fit, as he is frequently flown in excess of three hours a day. Over the last season he has started to show much more hunting potential and success, even if not at rabbit. He takes mice and voles frequently and if he is flown at first light will take so many worms you would have thought there were none left in North Wales. Also, to my embarrassment one Wednesday afternoon while out hunting with Chris and his ferret the bird was on form and chased a couple of rabbits in the local wood. However this day he was not only interested in the rabbits. We were working Chris's ferret with the bird sitting in a nearby tree, when the ferret emerged from the hole he decided this would make a good meal. Luckily Chris's reaction time was quicker than that of Gwy and he managed to pick the ferret up just as Gwy was coming down with talons outstretched. Needless to say all he got was a talon full of dirt and an evil glare from Chris. He had worked many times with the ferret and had never shown any interest at all, in fact he has never since. He was and always has been a real pleasure to fly both for me and the members of the club who have seen him fly and flown him. On open day displays he has

become a regular feature and much welcome character.

At one time or another (if we are game enough to admit it) we have all lost birds. My first experience of this traumatic experience, apart from Gwy doing his usual trick of going home by himself when he'd had enough, was while flying my first falcon, a bird called Boots, a lanner. She was the most beautiful bird and I was building up her fitness with a long-term aim to fly her at magpie. However one extremely cold winter day I was on top of the hill when, while stooping her she disappeared down a small crevice just out of my view, a common thing for her to do as she tried to catch me out as she came in low and fast. However this time the trick was not played and she disappeared completely. I looked that night until and beyond darkness with neither sight nor sound of her. I was up, along with Chris, at first light, swinging the lure and looking for her. This car-

**suddenly I heard her bell ringing**

ried on all morning, searching the whole of our hunting ground and beyond, an area of around five miles. At lunch time I feared the worst. It had been a bitterly cold night with temperatures dropping well below zero, with a light scattering of snow. I thought that it had taken its toll on her, with her originating from such a warm climate. I began to walk back after lunch just behind the college, a spot I had walked past numerous times that day, when suddenly out of a flock of crows I heard her bell ringing. She was flying right towards me and landed on the lure to be fed up. A very worrying time for all.

I have now left the college and will never forget what Chris has taught me and the experience I have gained will stay with me through the rest of my falconry years. If only more places were to offer only a grounding in our sport people would have so much more respect and understanding of it, not just for the enjoyment but on the environment too.

  
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## HAWKING IN ZIMBABWE

Wildlife artist, Robert E Fuller goes hawking in Zimbabwe with the African Sky Hunters.

"A Falconry Safari in Zimbabwe? Does such a thing exist?" I asked Adrian Williams, British agent for the African Sky Hunters incredulously. The first seeds of the idea were implanted one overcast day during the Falconry Fair, last May. A few letters and telephone conversations later it was booked and before we knew it we were boarding the 10 hour flight to Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe.

The next day, refreshed after a relaxing day in the capital we were picked up by Sally Langley, one of our hosts for the next 12 days. Our adventure had begun.

Our first stop was at Devure Camp, situated deep in the heart of a 100,000 acre cattle ranch at Eastdale. Adrian

Williams had described the camp as basic before arrival, so we had come prepared for an African-style mud hut with dirt floors. We were therefore pleasantly surprised to find ourselves unpacking in a spacious log cabin fully equipped with all imaginable creature comforts, a washing block and a large living room-cum-dining room with safari-print armchairs and a roaring log fire.

We spent our first five days here with Geoff Boddington, Ade Langley and his wife Sally, who tickled our taste buds with hearty Zimbabwean fare.

At 5.30am each morning, we were abruptly woken by the clamorous African Dawn Chorus and more particularly the dulcet tones of a certain fiery-throated Nightjar that

squawked with all its might on the top of our roof. At 6.30am, wrapped up for arctic conditions (who would have thought Africa could be so cold?) we stumbled into the living room to be greeted by scalding cups of tea and cheery faces. By 7am we were bombing through the highveld with its rolling hills and Msasa woodlands, eagerly awaiting the morning's flight.

Springtime in Zimbabwe is a sight to behold. This is the ideal time to visit because of the short grasses which allow for good game viewing and the vivid reds of the new Msasa tree leaves.

As we were driving along we would scan the horizon for game such as Coqui Francolin (French partridge size), Shelly's Francolin (the size of a leggy Red Grouse) and the Helmeted Guinea Fowl.

Geoff was flying his Peregrine, Isis a twice intermewed passage falcon, whilst



*Slick, the tiercel peregrine on his block awaiting the evening flight.*

*Painting: Rob Fuller*

Ade was hunting with his black sparrow hawk and lanner. Geoff was also flying, John Grobler's Peregrine 'Avalon', a five times intermewed falcon.

The abundance of quarry and the open terrain unaffected by commercial shooting made the flying particularly spectacular. The Francolin, which was expertly flushed by the trusty dogs Georgie and Tika, rarely flew more than 200 yards before putting in and could easily be flushed for a second phase flight.

Ade's Spar was always up for a challenge taking slips of up to 70 yards and surprisingly successful. Geoff's Peregrine provided

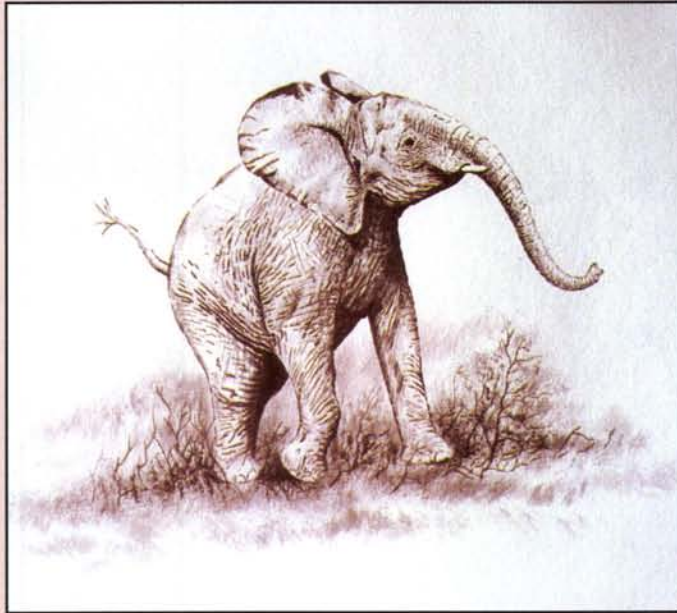


*Three year old male lion laid up after eating a Water Buck.*





Left: Two year old male Great Kudu.



Below Left: Playful Young Elephant. Painting Rob Fuller

us with some spectacular spectator viewing, taking vertical swoops of up to 800 ft, conveniently in front of us.

By 9.30 am we had to stop for fear of eagles interfering with the flights, the birds thermalling and of course for the need of a drink of Liquifruit, a most extraordinary Zimbabwean fruit juice.

Back at camp with the sun beginning to beat down, we tucked into a breakfast of Mealy maize (a stiff porridge), cereal, toast, fruit salad and of course a Zim fry-up of Impala mince and Kudu sausages!

Baking like lizards in the heat of the midday sun we would clamber up on to the roof-top seats of the jeep and set off in the search of Birds of Prey and other wildlife. During the first couple of days, although keen wildlife spotters we found it hard to spot animals on the Zimbabwean terrain. Geoff and Ade, both experienced bushmen, assured us that this was completely normal as our eyes were still tuned in to the luscious greens of the

English scenery and not the scorched yellows of Africa. However our eyes soon got accustomed to our new environment and we were soon up spotting with the best of them.

It was during these afternoons that we realised just how big the ranch was. We had a vague notion of its proportions when Sally told us that it was 70 km to the nearest food store. But when, by the 3rd day the only human life we had seen was a solitary shepherd living in a box of a hut, we began to realise its mammoth proportions. We were even more shocked when we found out that he had to walk 36 km to collect his salary every month! The number of different species of Birds of Prey that we saw at Eastdale astounded us. We saw Yellow-Billed Kites, Black Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Wahlberg Eagle, Long Crested Eagles, Brown Snake Eagles, Black Snake Eagles, Bateleurs, Lizard Buzzards, Gymnogene, Dark Chanting Goshawks, Ovambo Sparrowhawks and Secretary Birds.

After a quick sit down, tea and cake, we set off for our early evening hawking. By this time the sun was starting to wane, making the hawking pleasant. However by 5pm it was getting too dark to fly and we returned to the car to feed the birds and to partake in the seemingly national tradition of "Sundowners". This could consist of anything from beer to whisky, as long as it was alcoholic!

It was pitch black at about 6pm and a myriad of twinkling stars popped up in the sky and the humming of an infinite number of insects filled the air.

We then set off for our night drive spotting small mammals with a powerful lamp. During these drives we saw an abundance of wildlife including Bushbabies, Ard Wolves, Spring and Scrub Hares, Kori Bustards and Genets.

On the first night we were lucky enough to come across a pair of courting Leopards lounging nonchalantly on the dirt track before us. We were excited by the find, but not overly surprised (we were in Africa after all). Jeff and Ade on the other hand were speechless and were a tad disappointed by our reaction. Leopard's are extremely elusive in this part of Zimbabwe, as we later realised when the manager of the cattle ranch informed us that he hadn't seen one for 27 years!

Our second camp was at Norton to the west of Harare. Although only 3 hours drive from Eastdale the land was much more fertile, the quarry much more plentiful and the temperature warmer. Our log cabins were swapped for luxury tents kitted out with shelves electric lights, an adjoining toilet (nicknamed "The Long Drop" for obvious reasons) and a shower which was filled with

## Robert E. Fuller.

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*Ade feeding his Black Sparrowhawk after killing a Swainsons Francolin.*

piping hot water on demand.

At the tented camp we said goodbye to Sally and hello to John and his hawk Avalon and Hobbit, Andre and wife Laura and their Crowned Eagle.

The Crowned Eagle, Lundi, who had the presence of a 8lb Goshawk, was a rescue bird hand-reared from the wild. Crowned Eagles are not usually allowed to be used for falconry in Zimbabwe, but this was an exceptional case and Andre was granted a special licence. As well as these, he had a male and female peregrine, both in immaculate condition and a male African Goshawk.

The male African Goshawk is tiny - smaller than a Sparrowhawk - whilst the female is twice its weight. You could only describe it as similar to a large butterfly as it floats effortlessly towards its prey. We were both astonished when it actually caught Babbler and Long-tailed Shrikes.

Most of the time was spent hawking here. The wealth of quarry meant that we could literally "pick'n'choose" our flights, as we were always guaranteed to find large coveys. Then it was back to our camp for a sumptuous Zimbabwean feast prepared by Laura

After lunch it was often too hot to go hawking. So, one day we decided to go for a stroll to a nearby stream, sit in the cool shade and see what we could spot. Just as we sat down a black and white dart flashed by. It was a Pied Kingfisher completely unperturbed by our presence just 10 feet away. Moments later we heard frantic

squawks coming from the distance, it was two Giant Kingfishers (true giants the size of a Wood Pigeon) with our friend the Pied Kingfisher, a third of their size, in hot pursuit, shooing them out of his territory

At night, we went night hunting with Lundi, a real experience. Andre, perched on the roof of the jeep, would flash his lamp over the land with Lundi on his arm, following every movement of the light. Then, Scrub Hare sighted, she would open her 5ft 6in wing span and thunder down onto her helpless victim. In one night she could catch up to 6 hares.

Our last port of call was Ruckomechi Camp situated on the banks of the river Zambezi, which separates Zimbabwe from Zambia. We stayed here for three nights. The camp was just on the edge of the famous wilderness, Mana Pools National Park. This was the place to spot the Big Five (Lion, Buffalo, Elephant, Rhino and Leopard). We were now in lowveld country, with the high temperatures to match.

The 12-cabined camp was the epitome of luxury with a capital L. There was even a 'loo with a view' and 'bath with a view', open-air facilities with breath-taking views across the river!

We were lucky enough to be upgraded to the Honeymoon suite, with immense four poster bed. Unfortunately this had its disadvantages. Due to its positioning for maximum privacy away from the other cabins we were subjected to repeated vis-

its from passing elephants. One evening a trunk even appeared through the roof whilst I was taking a shower! As a result we were either chauffeured to our evening meal or escorted by an armed guide! We even had lions and hippos passing through the camp!

The dining room itself was an immense thatched structure with a medieval-style dining table for 30 people, lit by elaborate candelabra.

In the morning we were woken by the rhythmic beats of an African drum. This signalled the start of the day and that our morning game drive was about to set off.

The area was literally packed with antelope, elephants, zebras, hornbills, lions and birds of prey. It was almost surreal to see so many animals living in harmony with each other in such a small area - you could almost get the impression that it had been set up, it was so amazing! One morning we chanced upon a male lion, bloated to the extreme from a recent feast of Water Buck. He was so full he didn't even mind the jeep driving up so close. In the near vicinity, hoping for a couple of left-over scraps were vultures and even a jackal slunking around.

After our game drive we would return for a relaxed buffet-style breakfast, before being offered the choice of another game drive or going up stream on a platoon. The platoon was a brilliant bird-life opportunity. The banks of the Zambezi were literally buzzing with herons, storks, cormorants, spoonbills, bitterns, egrets and kingfishers. Now and again we caught glimpses of hunting Fish Eagles, so common in this area.

Arriving back to camp, we were greeted by a herd of elephants having their midday drink from the river and snacking on the reeds. The infants caused great merriment with their futile attempts at pulling these up. They had yet to master the 3000 muscles in their trunks.

After lunch, we had the choice of a long game drive or a quick game drive, followed by a down-stream canoe back to camp. The light was magical at this time of the day as the sun started to set. Along the banks of the river a colony of several thousand brightly coloured bee-eaters were coming in to roost. The sky was literally swarming with red. Skill was needed to avoid the heaps

of hippos which were getting restless at this time of day, as they awaited their evening's graze. A clap of the paddle against the surface of the water was usually sufficient to scare them off. But we did not take any risks and gave them a wide berth.

Apparently, if the hippos feel threatened or that their territory is at stake in any way they are likely to attack. We found this out when one took a particular dislike to our kayak and decided to charge us, getting within 20 yards away after a former distance of 200! Luckily it was scared off in time.

At around 5.30 pm we would pull our kayaks up onto an island and serve ourselves with Sundowners whilst watching the sun set. One evening we timed the speed of the sun setting and were astonished to find that it went down in under 3 minutes!

One evening as we returned to camp we had the spectacular sight of a herd of elephants wading through the river crossing from Zimbabwe to Zambia - clearly the Zambian authorities are not nearly as stringent with their customs policies when it comes to nature!

The African Sky Hunters was set up a couple of years back by Ade Langley, Geoff Boddington, Pierre Heymans, John Grobler and Andre Groenewald to, as Ade puts it, "Justify doing what we like doing best - hawking". All the team are expert falconers and knowledgeable bushmen. The hawking that we witnessed on the trip was absolutely superb. Added to this, it was the team themselves that made the trip even more special. They really welcomed us and made us feel at ease. Unlike the majority of safaris where you are a part of an anonymous (and often ill-matched) group, the African Sky Hunters tailored the trip to our exact requirements. By the end of the holiday we felt that they were our friends rather than our guides, sharing the mutual interest of falconry in spectacular surroundings. No doubt we will return again.

For further details on a Falconry Safari in Zimbabwe with African Sky Hunters, contact:

Adrian Williams  
Maendy Farmhouse,  
Church Village,  
UK CF38 1SY  
Tel/ Fax : 01443 206333





**GOLDEN EAGLE** *Aquila chrysaetos*



**LANNER FALCON** *Falco biarmicus*



**SAKER FALCON** *Falco cherrug*



**REDDTAILED HAWK** *Buteo jamaicensis*



**BLACK EAGLE** *Aquila verreauxi*



**GREY EAGLE BUZZARD** *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*

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**HARRIS HAWK** *Parabuteo unicinctus*



**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** *Buteo regalis*



**BONELLI'S EAGLE** *Hieraetus fasciatus*



**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco Peregrinus peregrinus*



**GYR FALCON** *Falco rusticolus*



**GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*



# Day Old Chicks - False Economy?

It is my belief that apart from the cost, one of the main reasons people feed mostly day old chicks, is because they are so neatly packaged. They make feeding easy. No need to worry about putting your bird out of condition as you know that X amount of chicks will produce the desired response.

This may be OK for a while but sooner or later you are going to have to face the fact that your bird is not being fed properly if it lives its' whole life on day old chicks.

In our diet we get different nutrients from different foods and it is the same for different types of meat.

After discussing this with Dr Nick Fox I have decided to poach some of the facts and figures from his book.

To help judge what alternative food to feed he details the calorific values of various foods to show the amounts of different food needed to supply the bird with a similar amount of calories.

	Kcal/g	Grams equivalent to 100g mouse
Mouse	1.57	100
Small birds	1.31	120
Hare meat	1.19	132
Day old chicks	1.08	145
Whole rabbit	1.01	155
Beef heart	1.01	155

So a hawk which maintains its weight on 100g of mouse would need 145g of chick.

Rats have a similar calorific value to mice, providing they are lean. Ex-layer Quail or fat rats have significantly more calories.

He also explains how to measure the bird's crop for when you are in the field.

Different foods provide different levels of energy as we have seen and some birds, usually the smaller ones and especially the accipiters, need a greater ratio of food compared to body weight.

Also a bird which is food hard will burn up food more readily than a bird which is not worked. The rate at which a bird burns up food can depend on a number of factors ie. Time of day; if fed in the morning they will burn more food than a bird fed at night, as they are awake, alert and their metabolism is

working at a higher rate than if they are asleep. The cold weather also affects the amount of food a bird needs to maintain good condition. Accipiters burn up larger amounts of energy through stress than do many other birds so their food requirements are of a higher energy level. Both protein and fat provide energy but protein only about one quarter that of fat. So if a bird has no fat and is low on food reserves it uses its own muscle (protein) and loses both weight and condition. What you must do is study your birds and see which foods in various quantities give what effect.

Below is the system suggested by Nick to measure the crop:

Empty crop - nothing can be felt in the crop and the mutes show no pressure or are green with bile.

1/10 crop - nothing can be felt in the crop but you have fed her a certain amount which has gone straight down into the stomach for digestion.

2/10 crop - food can be felt in the crop but nothing is visible.

3/10 crop - a slight displacement of the feathers makes the food visible.

4/10 crop - there is a definite small rounded crop visible

5/10 crop - the crop is larger and more pointed at the base

6/10 crop - the crop is wider but is still pointed at the base

7/10 crop - the crop is now flattened at the base

8/10 crop - the crop is now becoming asymmetrical, building up more on the bird's right side.

9/10 crop - the crop is even larger but is not quite tight and the feathers are able to cover it

Full crop - the hawk refuses more and seems uncomfortable. Bare skin may show on the front and either side of the crop. The tip of the birds beak may touch the crop when at rest. Bird may not tuck its head into its scapulars until some of the crop has been put over.

The other thing you must understand is the different levels of food needed for moulting, hunting, breeding etc., but it will be easier to

understand if you 'study' your bird.

David will feed a bird seemingly ad-lib, with no real pattern on a variety of food including rabbit, pheasant, quail, pigeon, rat, chicken and day old chicks (they do have their place) but he generally achieves the desired weight and attitude, this is because he understands the bird. His approach is not a scientific one but one of experience. Cost never enters into the equation and never has, even when he was broke. The bird and its welfare has always been the priority.

An interesting question was raised whilst discussing the pros and cons of feeding different foods and the question was asked "Why is it so expensive to feed alternative food. Why don't people feed what the bird has caught?"

Well hopefully the majority of you do but I am sure you will find that birds which have trouble catching quarry would perform much more efficiently if they were fed a better diet!

We recently had a peregrine brought to us who was a classic example of what a bad diet can do to a bird. We do not know exactly what she had been fed but it was obvious that she had not been fed 'proper food' for a long period of time. Her feathers were like straw and snapped with just the slightest pressure, she bated just once and was literally lying on the fist gasping for breath. Her talons snapped and bled profusely, and her beak peeled off in layers. David smashed up quail heads for her to try and raise her calcium levels but she cast all the bone. We consulted a vet and were told that her stomach was treating it like a 'foreign body' and was casting it as it did not recognise it. It took weeks of feeding a high quality diet, (introduced slowly) to get the bird to a point where she could cope with any sort of flying. Seeing such a beautiful bird in this condition is heartbreaking, knowing that she will never reach her full potential. Knowing that now there is nothing we can do to restore her to her former glory.

So take the time and trouble to study your bird and give it what it deserves. Would you expect a marathon runner to exist solely on bread and water?

Note: To try and explain fully about food, energy and metabolism in an article is almost impossible. All this and more is explained in Nicks book. The hows & whys. It doesn't seem to matter what the problem the answer will be in there somewhere.

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# FLYING AT THE SPANISH RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

Fernando Izquierdo Martin-Aragon

Some British authors in their treatise on falconry (Emma Ford, Roger Upton, etc.), do not give much importance to the flight at the Spanish Red-legged Partridge, considering the flight at the grouse as the most beautiful game hawking that can be practiced, for they think that the flight at the grouse is much faster than the one at the partridge. This is a fact I do not discuss since I do not personally know this appreciated quarry, but I believe that they do not really know the difficulty it means to hunt the fierce Spanish Red-legged partridge in game hawking.

One of the first difficulties the falconer finds is that the red-legged partridge can never stand the dog point, unless it has been surrendered by the falcon in a previous attack. Besides, we must take into account the difficulties that the land may present, the wind, and the most important fact is that we can never presume where and when this prey may appear, because of its acute knowledge of the land where it lives, due to the fact that it knows exactly where to find its natural defenses, streams, bushes etc. When they are attacked by the falcon, they fly straight and very fast along the ground towards their defenses, which makes its capture more difficult and dangerous.

To fly this prey successfully the falcons used should weigh over 600gms, since we will lose many partridges if they do not

reach this minimum weight, as a result of the low power in the stoop. It is necessary that the falcon be waiting on and very attentive to the falconer, as he will serve the quarry.

To begin with the covey must be located. Once this has been done, we should establish a theoretical approach on how to fulfil the flight. We shall study all the defenses where the partridges will be able to fly, the wind will be especially considered, as well as the way in which they are going to be approached so as to be flushed downwind, towards a place as defenceless as possible. After taking an approximate optical reference of where the covey is found, we shall remove the hood, allow the falcon time to rouse and mute, and tip it gently off into the wind, being always at a reasonable distance so as not to promote a stampede before the falcon is at its pitch. 70-100 metres will be enough. Once the falcon has reached its pitch we shall move upwind towards the partridges, at a good rate, always trying to have the falcon well situated. When we consider that we have reached the place where the partridges are we shall rise them by shouting at them or with the help of our dog. The partridges will come out fast



*A successful day in Toledo (Spain)*

and in different directions, but the falcon will focus on one of them and will chase it, stooping or capturing it while flying. This would be the ideal thing, but it does always happen this way. When the falcon is about to reach a partridge it may fall to the ground, avoiding the stoop. This way the chaser is left disconcerted, and they prey will take advantage of this fact by performing a second flight towards one of its many defenses. This is a very important point in the hunting of the prey. We shall take good notice of where the prey is hiding and, as usual, we shall wait until the falcon rings up. Then we will go towards the refuge so as to flush the prey by ourselves or with the help of the dog. If it happens this way, the partridge cannot be missed, it will come out completely surrendered and the falcon should be able to carry out the capture without any difficulty. Only in this second flight the partridge

will stand the point of the dog, making the chase even easier for us, allowing the flushing out in the right moment (which also occurs in the flight at the grouse).

It is an exciting flight and full of surprises. From these lines, I want to encourage all falconers to practice it is they have not done it yet, so that they can appreciate the difficulty it involves and how satisfied you feel when you carry out this flight successfully. The experience will be difficult to forget. Then you will be able to confirm whether it is comparable or not to the flight at the grouse.



*Peregrine Falcon on Red-legged partridge*



*My sweetheart with Falcon & Partridge*



# HUXLEYS FLOWERS

Huxleys Experience has been described as the prettiest in the country. Perhaps not a description I would use myself, but I know what people mean. At the time of writing this article the whole place is a blaze of colour, from the herbaceous borders; with roses, delphiniums, lupins and such to the baskets and tubs that are currently a wealth of flower.

When I designed Huxleys



*Above: The tubs in full bloom and full of colour.*

*Left: The flying area complete with pond.*



and set about the building and planting I always said I wanted a garden with aviaries and birds not just pens with a pair of birds sitting on branches (normally cut a few years ago from an ancient tree). therefore I wanted to give the resident birds a little more in a way they might choose to live in the wild. Careful planning initially meant that every aviary, where possible was

planted with the type of tree, bush or plant you may expect to see in the wild.

Tawny Owls, being woodland birds, have large Lawson conifers, in which they camouflage quite nicely and it gives them a natural perch, the ground being bark chips.

All our aviaries initially were laid out with a good depth of washed sand, making the main cleaning easy,



*Both birds and aviaries are provided with suitable camouflage*

the back one third full length is under cover so the floor is covered with a good depth of the new coconut shell granules; a nice, easy to clean material. The rest of this aviary has a stream and pond circulated with a small pump, alongside of which is planted ericas; the natural plant of short-eared in the wild; in which they sit and camouflage quite beautifully. The Long-eared are quite at home in the selection of various conifers, a couple of nest boxes are provided under the covered area. It is all finished off with a painted backdrop of hills and trees. I am sure that the nesting success of these owls is attributed to their surroundings.

Birds such as african Barn Owls, African Spotted Eagle Owls and other more tropical species, have large planted aviaries with grasses and bamboos. We have found, with experience that large,

and regardless of what may be laid on top, it remains a good drainage material. Little Owls again have large Lawson conifers, and although these do get a little messy at times, we have found that they wash down well with a small pressure hose, without being detrimental to the foliage.



*Birds such as African Spotted Eagle Owls have large planted aviaries with grasses and bamboos.*

Snowy Owls have quite a stark aviary in contrast, being above the tree line, we stuck to a clean sand floor, with large tree slabs stacked to resemble stones. (as stones are rather expensive) and these birds are extremely happy and breed regularly.

Perhaps our best aviary is where we house the Short-eared and Long-eared owls. Approximately 45 foot long,

quick growing grasses, such as Pampas (dwarf types) a whole host of ornamental grasses and the bamboos quickly replace pieces broken off by enthusiastic birds, and again, being the shape and structure they are they lend themselves to being cleaned easily with a hosepipe. Quick growing shrubs like evergreen Escallonias are excellent for



planting against walls, bearing in mind all our aviaries are 3/4 secluded so each one is an environment on its own. Climbers and upright shrub species help to cover fence panels effectively as well as providing some summer colour.

Tough plants are essential; any with coniferous structure or leathery leaves and grasses can be ideal. Most ground cover plants, except perhaps heathers and grasses are rather a waste of time and they quickly get fouled by the birds. Branches for perching are generally placed so that birds sitting on them don't automatically make a mess on the plants below and, where we get this wrong, we either move the plant altogether or cut out the affected pieces and wash



*All in all we have clean, pleasant aviaries for the visitors to look at. Ali & Julian with peregrines.*

the rest down.

All in all we have clean pleasant aviaries for visitors to look at and hopefully an environment that the birds are happy with and our current breeding season results point to this being true.

Below is a list of some of the plants we have used in our aviaries:

#### SHRUBS

*SENECIO GREYII*  
*MAHONIA VARIETIES*  
*PRUBUS ROTUNDIFOLIA*

(LAUREL)  
*GENISTA (SPANISH BROOM)*  
*COTONEASTER VARIETIES*  
*CEANOTHUS VARIETIES*  
*CYTISUS VARIETIES (BROOM)*  
*KERRIA JAPONICA*  
*LIGUSTUM OVALIFOLIUM*  
(PRIVET)

#### CONIFERS

*JUNIPERUS MEDIA (PROSTRATE CONIFER)*  
*CUPRESSES LEYLANDII (FAST GROWING CONIFER)*

#### GRASSES

*CORTADERIA (PAMPASS)*  
*FESTUCA VARIETIES*  
*MISCANTHUS (LARGE GRASSES)*

#### OTHERS

*ARUNDINARIA VARIETIES (BAMBOO)*  
*TAXUS BACATA (YEW)*  
*ERICAS IN VARIETY (HEATHER)*

## THE FOUR WINGED BUZZARD

A Saturday afternoon, cold and dull, but not raining, flying time has arrived! I prepare the food and collect Hogan, my 2 and a half year old male buzzard from his weathering at the bottom of garden. He tips the scales at 1lb 13 1/4 oz, could be a session today.

After a short walk through the housing estates we come out at a grassed area bordering the woods.

Maybe we'll see a rabbit today, if hell freezes over maybe he'll even consent to chase it! You see Hogan only catches three things - worms, Flora margarine tubs (because I keep his food in them) and my fingers, everything else is viewed totally without interest until today.

We continue up through the woods with him following on, returning to the fist either when called or offered meat. As we approached a bramble patch, I called him to the fist for food and then cast him off again, he flew up into a tree several yards in front of me. There, sticking out of the bottom of the brambles was a pair of hen pheasant wings, joined by a lump of flesh, skin and feathers, nothing else, just those bits. Perhaps the overnight work of a fox?

Now, not wanting to waste a gift from nature, the idea of making a lure crossed my mind, so I picked the wings up, then had immediate change of heart (what's the point, Hogan's not going to be inter-

ested anyway) and put them back down again. Then I had the feeling that I was being watched. Hogan had flown back to a tree a few yards from me and was watching intently, waiting, no doubt for his next piece of food from the fist.

Time to gauge his interest. I picked up the wings again and threw the up into the air - what goes up must come down - wrong! I'd managed to throw the wings into the whippy branches of the tree behind me, to make things worse Hogan had seen them too, he leapt off the branch he was on and flew straight down and "caught" the wings, but became entangled in the branches as well. What a mess, he wouldn't let go, I couldn't reach up to the branches, now what? Desperate measures were called for, I got out my creance line and unwound some of the cord, then threw it over one of the thicker branches of the tree and then gave it a good shaking. Out flew (fell) Hogan, then he was off, flying, his wings on top and the pheasants held in his talons, on the bottom. He looked like a bi-plane. Obviously having four wings hampered his flying ability as he couldn't make it up into the next tree, but glided down into the undergrowth (phew!). I made in and swapped the wings for a nice big piece of meat.

Needless to say he didn't chase any bunnies during the rest of the time we were out that afternoon, but I've kept the wings and intend making a lure during the moult, in time for a spot of retraining next season.

**Bob Winkell.**

## STOP! THINK! 1997 BREEDERS RINGS

Before ordering your breeders rings for the coming season please stop and think! What does the ring do for the bird? It enables the bird to be legally sold but seldom helps the bird to be returned to its keeper when it has been lost. Unless the finder of the police know the breeders initials there is a strong possibility the bird becomes another statistic as a found bird which no one has reported lost. A number of breeders use the same initials and we also have a number of birds with identical ring numbers. What is the answer?

As a breeder you can keep accurate and comprehensive records of every bird you transfer to another keeper which is fine until the bird is passed on again. The next person may, or may not, remember who the bird was passed on to.

A better solution is to use our IBR breeders closed rings. These are bright blue, have a unique number together with our 24hr telephone number. Every bird which has been found with one of our rings has been returned to its keeper, even though some have had as many as six different keepers.

Give your birds a future. Contact the Independent Bird Register, 184 Warwick Road, Kenilworth, Warks. CV8 1HU  
Tel: 01926 850000,  
Fax: 01926 859151.

## Buying a bird?

Before buying a bird why not phone the Independent Bird Register on 01926 850000 to confirm the bird has not been reported lost or stolen.



# THE DOWN SIDE OF RAPTOR REHABILITATION



**RAPTOR  
RESCUE**

Registered Charity No. 283733

by  
*Mick  
Cunningham*

The recovery made by peregrine falcons in Great Britain has been remarkable – in contrast to the situation in Sweden where, although numbers are slowly improving, it is still considered to be a threatened species.

In 1994 there was an estimated population of only 50 pairs, mainly in northern Sweden (I would be interested if anyone can provide a more up-to-date figure).

In view of these statistics, I was somewhat surprised to receive into my care a passage peregrine, marked with a Swedish ring - *Riks Museum, Stockholm*.

On admission, she had permanently clenched talons and appeared to be lame. Her tail was all there, but many feathers were broken. She was distressed from her recent rescue and probably in more immediate danger from the subsequent effects of shock rather than from her injuries.

Shock therapy treatment was administered straightaway in the form of fluids given orally via a crop tube and syringe. The bird was placed in a warm (not hot) environment; in this case a purpose-built hospital cage.

Following a few hours rest to allow her condition to stabilise, she was examined in more detail.

Several punctures were noted in her talons; it was suspected that these were self-inflicted. Both legs were checked for fractures, revealing no obvious injuries and it was thought that her lameness may have been due to a neurological problem. Whilst checking the wings, a definite grating was felt in one of the ulnas, indicating a fracture. A tail sleeve was fitted to minimise any further tail feather damage and she was then taken to a veterinary surgeon.

X-rays confirmed a 'green stick' fracture of the left ulna, but, even more serious was the revelation of several shotgun pellets in her talons, legs and head! This was the third peregrine to have been shot in the same location and the police were already investigating a number of incidents, which also involved other raptor species.

As the radius had remained intact, it was decided to use external fixation to

repair the fracture. A leather brail was employed which encapsulated the carpus joint and was then secured at the humerus, thus immobilising the joints on either side of the fracture, but still allowing the closed wing to be used for balancing.

After 14 days of rest and the completion of a course of antibiotics, the brail was removed, and a well-formed callous could be felt. She was still 'not right' on her feet, but could stand and use her talons to hold down food whilst feeding. The bird was now transferred from the hospital cage to a small, darkened mews.

Following a further two weeks in this environment, she could fly up to the highest perch and looked good on her feet. The tail sleeve was removed and she went into a secluded aviary.

It was very encouraging to see her fly vertically 3 metres from the floor to the highest perch, but it was still apparent that she was having problems with her feet. She was caught up and returned to the vet for further investigation.

This time the X-rays showed up a piece of shot embedded in the femur joint, which looked likely to be the cause of the problem. She underwent surgery to locate and remove it.

Soon she was back in the aviary and looking good. The time was right to start the long task of rehabilitation. It was vital that she was proved to be able to use her wing and talons properly before release could even be considered. Now the "ultimate raptor rehabilitation technique" – falconry – could be put into use. This would decide whether or not her wing and feet were fully recovered, as well as getting her muscled up and in condition for hunting prior to release.

As with most falcons, training was not a major hurdle. I had thought because she was a passage bird, that I may possibly encounter problems, but this was not the case.

During the latter stages of training it became apparent that her flight was far from perfect. Thinking that this was due to lack of muscle, I persevered. However, her flight actually deteriorated, with a slight

drop on her previously fractured wing. Examination revealed a very warm and swollen joint.

Following veterinary advice, she was put on courses of anti-inflammatories and anti-biotics, plus several weeks rest. During this period she was blocked up, allowing her wing to be examined daily and making medication easier. It also kept her manned down, which would save time later on. After one month's rest, she was picked up again. Re-training was quick.



*This picture indicates just how badly the bird's left wing had deteriorated, prior to her final visit to the vet.*

She had just started flying loose when her wing started to hang again. After a further week's rest, I noticed a damp patch on her plumage around the wing joint. Another visit to the vet and yet another X-ray. The vets' diagnosis was 'osteomyelitis', an infection of the bone and probably caused by its original shotgun wounds. Attempts to treat the defect were unsuccessful, the only course of action appeared to be amputation, due to necrotic bone around the joint. This was not an option that I could contemplate, and the vet agreed euthanasia was a sensible decision. In any case, Raptor Rescue operates a euthanasia policy for birds which have any missing limbs.

Euthanasia is a part of any serious rehabilitator's life, but it never gets any easier. In cases such as this where many months have been spent nursing the bird back to health, manning and training, a bond is inevitably formed. Euthanasia as a final outcome for such a bird is a particularly unpleasant experience and must take its place firmly on the 'down side' of raptor rehabilitation.

I did eventually receive some details from the Riks Museum. She was rung, along with two tiercels, whilst still in a cliff-site nest in the province of Dalsland in south west Sweden – almost certainly the offspring from domestic bred birds which had been released by the Peregrine Project, run by the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature.



# THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF RAPTOR REHABILITATION

Neil A Forbes BVet Med FRCVS

**Wild bird casualties:-** it is legal for any member of the public to take into care, for the purposes of tending its injuries, any wild bird, so long as the creature is given that care. Further injuries which would delay releases should be avoided, and the bird must be released as soon as it is fit, so long as the environmental conditions are suitable at the time. If due to season or weather, they are not suitable, the bird should be released as soon as they are suitable.

Individual injured ex wild Barn Owls may be released once an individual license, obtainable from the DOE, has been issued. These licenses for individual wild barn owls, so not require exhaustive environmental study and prey species availability analysis to be carried out prior to issue of a license.

**Records:-** it is imperative that the carer maintains records relating to all birds admitted into their care. It is recommended that standard record card is filled in for each bird on arrival, an example record card is shown below.

Following that a record card should be set up for the bird whilst in the carers care. (See Fig 1.) This should cover all treatment given by the carer. The date or dates on which the vet examined the bird, (if that was necessary), plus any treatments and medications administered by the vet. A

FIGURE 1

Information to be obtained at the time of admission of a wild casualty bird		
1. Name of rescuer		
2. Address		Telephone
3. Exact location of recovery?		Map Ref.
4. Circumstances of recovery?		
5. Date and time of recovery?		
6. Was any traumatic incidence witnessed?		
7. What was the condition of the bird at the time of recovery?		weight.
8. What fluid, food or treatments have already been administered?		
9. Is there any knowledge of history of avian toxin exposure in the area?		
10. Date.	Time of Admission	Signature

progress report of the birds' recovery and rehabilitation should be kept. The method, place and success of release should be recorded. If the case was unsuccessful, the date the bird died or was put down and any post mortem results that are available.

**Responsibilities:-** if the injured bird is a schedule 4 bird eg Merlin, Goshawk, Peregrine, Hobby, Golden Eagle - if in doubt always inform the DOE), the member of the public has a responsibility to inform the DOE on arrival of the bird, and keep them informed of the birds progress. If they do not keep the DOE informed of the birds progress, the department will request information typically after each 3 month period.

The carer has a responsibility to seek veterinary care. If it is later shown that veterinary care was not sought, and that failure to do so may have resulted in a delay or failure to release, an offence will have been committed.

**Treatment:-** although any member of the public may give first aid care in order to void or minimise suffering, such a right stops after initial first aid care is given. Legislation exists for the sake of the protection of animals and birds, who are not able to care for themselves, which prevents any invasive surgical procedures or the making of diagnosis by anyone other than a veterinary surgeon, illegal.

Furthermore, the performance other legislation exists which requires that suitable medication, including anaesthesia and pain relief is administered wherever necessary.

Lack of funds, or lack of specialist veterinary services are no defence for failure to seek professional veterinary assistance.

**Imprinting:-** the DOE will make the carer aware of the importance of avoiding 'imprinting'. Failure to avoid imprinting may be regarded as a serious matter by the authorities (depending on the circumstances eg species, experience of carer etc.)

**Rearing:-** the importance for correct psychological development is essential. The value of creche rearing with the same of similar species cannot be over stated, (although it is accepted that there is an increased risk of disease spread by mixing young birds from different sources). Continual, full observation of the patient is essential, and an important responsibility of the carer.

If the carer has other responsibilities, such as a full time job, which prevents them from giving regular care at a time it is required, then the patient should be passed onto someone else, who is better able to properly care for the bird.

**Feeding:-** the correct dietary provision is essential. A whole carcass diet must be

fed, the bones of which must be small enough for a bird of that age to ingest. Although the calcium content of the diet is always important it is most critical between 10 - 25 days of age in raptors.

**Water:-** birds require 50ml/kg of water daily, all birds should have access to water daily. Ill or convalescing birds generally require more water. In particular birds which are not eating (as food is normally 90% water) must take water by mouth.

**Escape:-** the carer has a responsibility to prevent escape or theft of the bird.

**Prevention of further injuries:-** aviary design should be such that damage to the cere or head does not occur. Wild birds should be kept wild, and not be visually exposed to humans more than absolutely essential. Wire fronted aviaries should generally be avoided. Sky light and seclusion aviaries, require battens/bamboo/plumbers plastic piping placed across the roof (mesh wire fronts of other aviaries also), so as to avoid trauma of the bird against the mesh. If a bird has or does become traumatised an any particular aviary, it must be unsuitable for that bird, either the aviary must be altered or the bird transferred to a more suitable aviary.

**Cere damage:-** this is generally caused by trauma arising through poor aviary design. An aviary may be suitable for 5 individual kestrels, but unsuitable for one other who has a different temperament or nature. The proof of the aviary is in the condition of the bird, any bird which becomes injured in any way in an aviary must be removed from it, it is obviously not suited to it. If cere damage does not improve when trauma is prevented then veterinary care should be sought. Similar damage may occur due to parasitic infesta-



tion with eg *Cnemidocoptes* sp mites.

**Feather damage:-** must be avoided, delay in release due to damage to the plumage is a serious failure to care. Tail guards should be fitted, (unless loose in an aviary), suitable perches should be used, to keep the tail and primary feathers off the ground to minimise soiling or damage. Perching should be of a suitable nature to avoid 'bumblefoot'. Chain link (uncovered) especially rusty fencing must not be used. If a carer does not have suitable facilities for that or any bird they should not be caring for it. Although bumblefoot will inevitably occur occasionally in a wild injured bird, proper husbandry and regular complete examination of any bird in care, so that problems are detected early, should minimise such risks.

For birds first coming into care, cardboard boxes are still perhaps the most useful containers, they are easily acquired, readily available, cheap and disposable. Any other accommodation should be constructed with impervious surfaces, and be readily cleanable and disinfectable.

**Parasites:-** it should be appreciated that at least 30% of all wild birds carry a parasitic burden. Whilst still in the wild, fit and healthy, they live in happy harmony with their parasites, however once injured and taken into care the parasite often takes the upper hand. Not only is this of significance for the birds own health, but also from the point of view of the hygiene of the accommodation. It is advised that aviaries should have a slopping (so that it drains) concrete base, which may then be covered with soil or pea gravel. In this way, either whenever the keeper is aware of contamination, or better still on a routine basis, the substrate may be removed, back to a clean concrete base which may be power hosed and if necessary disinfected, prior to refilling.

All wild injured birds coming into care should be treated for roundworms (with Panacur or Ivomec), but the keeper must be aware that there is no one treatment which is effective against all parasites. If in doubt, or if the birds condition is not improv-

ing a faecal sample should be examined by a vet who can then advise on effective therapy for the parasite in question.

**Post mortems:-** should be carried out on all casualty failure cases. A post mortem may explain why that case failed, with such knowledge the carer may be better equipped to deal with other cases in the future. Moreover if the bird died with some infectious condition, this can be appreciated, and preventive action taken to prevent any other birds being infected with the same organism.

**Prognosis:-** the birds releasability should be continually reassessed. It is the authors very strong opinion (although one which is not shared by all rehabilitators) that permanently disabled wild birds should not (except in occasional exceptions), be kept in long-term captivity. The aim of a rescue centre must be to give 100% care (space, time, food, vet care), to those who have a chance of release. If failures are kept, they fill space, take up time, reduce hygiene levels, absorb valuable funds and generally have a pretty poor quality of life. As soon as it becomes apparent that a bird cannot be released to the wild, such a bird should be euthanased.

**Cause of presentation:-** when a bird comes into care, the reason for its failure to survive in the wild should be assessed. In many cases it will be due to trauma, in others the bird may appear thin or starving. Starvation may occur at times of extreme weather, (which has affected them or their prey species), at dispersal time, on or following migration or if for some reason the bird is unable to hunt effectively and hence sustain itself. Many of the latter cases may have defective eyesight. Once in care they put on weight and everything seems satisfactory, however once released they starve again. Eye function must be assessed by careful observation or checked using an ophthalmoscope by an experienced vet.

**Eye sight:-** it is known that 30% of all trauma raptor cases have damage to the eye. Of these 70% only have damage to the 'posterior segment' ie the part of the eye behind

the lens, which is not visible with the naked eye. It is important that all trauma cases have eye function carefully assessed. No one should consider releasing any bird following cataract surgery, or with any active eye condition which might deteriorate in time.

**Skeletal defects:-** No bird may be released unless 100% fit. More latitude may be permitted for birds who feed primarily on dead materials (eg Buzzards), whilst at the other extreme, absolute perfection must be present in falcons, who rely on high performance precision flight in order to kill and survive. It is still preferable to train any bird, post injury, using traditional falconry techniques, in order to establish that it can fly well and kill in order that it may be self sufficient. There are very many causes of wing and leg injuries and defects, their diagnosis and assessment of prognosis should be carried out by an experienced avian vet. Not only is the full function of the skeletal imperative, but normal functioning of the soft tissues (eg. muscles, nerves, blood vessels, tendons), is also essential.

The author believes in the ten commandments of rehabilitation, which should be adhered to at all times:-

1. Maintain good records
2. Maintain good hygiene
3. Feed only good quality food.
4. Remain within the law.
5. Give maximum care to patients who have a chance of release.
6. Prevent overcrowding with long-term invalids.
7. Only release 100% fit and healthy birds.
8. Use correct hacking procedures.
9. Seek veterinary care and advice where necessary.
10. Minimise human contact with wild injured birds.

**Assessment and certification of invalidity:-** if the carer believes that a bird is unfit for release, they should either as their vet to examine the bird and if they agree euthanase the bird, or they may ask their vet to certify that the bird is a permanent invalid, and cannot be released.

It is very important that car-

ers of wild injured birds remember that it is their responsibility to be able to prove to any investigative authority (eg. police, RSPB, RSPCA), that any wild bird in their care, is legally so. In the case of wild permanently injured birds, the best way to prevent any possible future accusations is to ask your vet to certify that the bird in his opinion is unfit to ever be released into the wild, and moreover that he or she believes that the bird is fit to be kept in long term captivity.

In order that such a certificate is given, the vet will require that the bird is permanently identified in some way (usually by application of an electronic identichip), so that all parties can be certain that the certificate does apply to the same bird which he or she examined. Inevitably some costs will be incurred in the identification and certification of such birds.

A standard 'Permanent Invalidity' Certificate is available, free of charge to your vet, from Neil Forbes, Clockhouse Veterinary Hospital, Wallbridge, Stroud, Glos. Tel 01453 752555, Fax 01453 756065. Which will hopefully assist in minimising the cost and assisting your vet to perform this certification for your bird.

**Requirements for release:-** the bird must have the physical ability to fly, to see, to grasp and kill prey of sufficient quantity to provide for its own nutrition. It must be of normal mental and psychological status to peacefully co-exist with others of its own species.

Prevent release if:-

1. Loss of any limb.
2. Loss of eye or sight.
3. Loss of hind talon.
4. Permanent loss of any part of the beak.
5. Inability to waterproof plumage.
6. Inability to fly well enough to catch prey.
7. Physical or psychological cripples.

During release be aware of:-

1. Time of year
2. Weather
3. Habitat.
4. Fitness.



# EXPERIENCES WITH THE COMMON BUZZARD

It is nearly thirty years ago since I owned my first hawk. She was a large common buzzard, tame, hand reared and imprinted upon humans. She was chocolate brown with a boldly marked front. To me she was priceless. I was fifteen years old and crazy about animals. I had built up a mini zoo in my parents back garden, which included Jackdaws, crows, two foxes and a tawny owl. I used to longingly watch the wild buzzards soaring and hoped of one day owning one to add to my collection and maybe even training it to fly free and return to me. When I was eventually given a buzzard I was overjoyed, but my enthusiasm greatly outstripped my ability. My knowledge of falconry was negligible and there was no one locally to help me train her, so I had to teach myself from a book. The only one I had was *Falcons and Falconry* by Illingworth, a fascinating book, but not ideal for a schoolboy trying to keep and train his first buzzard.

My buzzard was delight to win, she would "preen" my hair and pluck at my eyelashes with great gentleness. I named her Bertie. With some help from the book, but largely by trial and error I gradually learned how to train her. I wince with embarrassment when I think of the crude equipment and techniques I used, but my bird was very tolerant and forgiving. I did not even weigh her to estimate her condition. Out of necessity I learned to understand the buzzard's needs and to read her behaviour. Slowly I developed a remarkable rapport with her and soon had her flying free.

I was living my wildest desires, I had a beautiful hawk that I could fly free

and would usually return obediently to my fist or lure. Falconry was giving me the opportunity to not only watch and learn about raptor behaviour but also to participate. Daily I flew Bertie in the fields around my home and I was thrilled that she would follow me flying from tree to tree and chase a dragged rabbit lure. I remember our first kill vividly, Bertie was perched high in a tree and I accidentally flushed a moorhen that was lying undetected among some reeds, she dropped out of the tree and caught it after a brief chase. The flight was all over in seconds, but I was very proud and pinned the dried, flattened skin to my bedroom wall as a trophy, where it remained until the moths got to it and it fell to pieces.

The way we hunted was not very formal. In the late afternoon, after school and at weekends, I would walk across the fields and along streams with the buzzard following me (or me following or chasing after her) and she pursued anything she fancied. There was not a great deal of potential prey around but as the season progressed we both increased in confidence and competence, this was not very serious falconry but it was one of the best ways I could learn about the hunting behaviours and abilities of buzzards. In our first season Bertie caught a few moorhens (and missed many more), a cockerel(!), grabbed one of my tame guinea pigs (which I quickly rescued), vainly chased rabbits, a stoat, a snipe and a water rail, caught a frog, two eels, beetles the odd earthworm and she gorged herself on a putrid heron carcass. Our first season was a great success and I was delighted. I was now a practising falconer.

Beside being a prized hunting hawk my buzzard was also a great character and family pet. She was happy and relaxed in human company and tolerated my free-living tame crow that used to steal food from her. I became very confident with my hawk and felt she was unlosable. Late the following season I was unable to fly her for a few days so I fed her up and when I wanted to fly her again she was well over-weight. I tried to fly her but she was not interested and just sat in a tree, ignoring my fist and lure. Eventually she took off. It was a clear day and she started to soar, and she was mobbed by crows. I remember thinking how magnificent she looked as she rose higher and higher in a rare blue winter's sky being chased by and dog-fighting with the crows. I was filled with a mixture of awe and blind panic as she disappeared in the distance. The date, 17 January 1971 is etched permanently into my memory, the day I lost my hawk. I looked very hard but failed to find any sign of her.

I was in school one afternoon, twenty-nine days later and was watching a buzzard soar. As it drifted closer I noticed it had a missing primary feather from the left wing, similar to my buzzard, and, as it came closer I could see it trailing some jesses. It was Bertie. I was thrilled, she was still alive and well and I flushed with pride that the buzzard soaring high in the heavens was my buzzard, that had survived in the wild.

I made some inquiries and after two weeks discovered that she had been visiting the garden of a cottage on the edge of a nearby village where the occupants had been feeding her scraps of meat. I visited the site and located her perch in a dead tree. She was fat, and of course was not in the least bit interested in returning to my fist or to a lure. I decided that the best way to retrieve her would be to locate her roosting and to climb up the tree and grab her. At the dead of night my friend shinned up the tree in which she roosted as I gave my instructions below. But soon after he started climbing Bertie took off into the night. We followed, running madly across fields trying to keep up with the sound of the buzzards bell.

Bertie landed in a graveyard and we could clearly hear the bell ringing, we rushed around trying to locate the bird, that from the sound of the bell was jumping from gravestone to gravestone. We had not located the bird, but were getting close, when we were disrupted by the caretaker, who no doubt wanted to know what the flashing of torchlights,



*Bertie, adult female common Buzzard and crow,  
Summer 1992*



# CARL G JONES.

and the scrambling over graves was all about. He came rushing up waving his fist and spluttering 'Oi! What the 'ell do you think you are up to?' I stopped and as calmly as I could told him that we were looking for a lost hawk, which I was sure was sitting nearby on one of the gravestones. Since the caretaker was now spluttering incoherently I urged him to stop for a moment and he might just hear the jangling of a bell that was attached to one of the hawk's legs. He was quite incredulous, turned a shade of purple and started waving his arms around quite uncontrollably. I was hurt that he doubted me. He uttered a jumble of words which I deciphered as meaning that we should get out or else he was going to call the police. All this commotion was just too much for the buzzard who by now had taken off into the night and we lost her.

At dawn the next morning Bertie was perched in her favourite dead tree on the opposite side of the valley. Proof that buzzards can, when necessary, find their way around in the dark! Later in the day I succeeded in retrapping her. She had been free for 47 days. I was con-

cerned that she would need to be retrained but as soon as I placed Bertie in her mews she settled immediately and took to her old routine as if she had never left. During her sojourn I was amazed that she had lost none of her confiding nature and tameness, and as far as I could tell was happy to be home!

I flew Bertie for several seasons and never lost her again. One winter's night someone broke into my mews and stole her....

Since those early days I have kept and flown other buzzards. Between 1969-1978 I kept ten different birds for periods of four months to eight years. I experimented with breeding buzzards in captivity and bred four birds. I trained



*Russ, adult male Common Buzzard*

and flew five buzzards, including two that I kept at tame hawk. When I left Wales in early 1979 I gave my breeding pair of buzzards to my friend Robin Haigh. The male, Russ (who I took from the wild as a nestling under licence) lived until 1985 when he was 14 years old and the female, Jinks lived until she well over 20 years. During their lifetime they produced many young which must now be related to a large proportion of the captive buzzards in Britain.

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CALLERS WELCOME - PLEASE PHONE FIRST



**IS IT A JOKE?**

Dear David & Lyn

Is the letter from Vince Jones in the Winter 96 issue of the Falconers magazine a joke or trick letter?

I refer to the 'irresponsible' attitude of the so-called falconer. I would like to think that Raptor keepers have the welfare of their birds at heart, whereby we normally panic if our birds go AWOL for more than half an hour. If we are flying a Falcon the Telemetry would be in use after about 10 minutes if no sighting was apparent, just for the birds welfare, just to see what it is up to, just in case it's straight lining over the hills and far away, just to make sure I get it back. So why does Mr Jones show no apparent thought for the welfare of his Lanner. What does he expect if he sends his bird off in the morning and then picks it up in the evening. I

could expect it to be possibly shot, disappear, get attacked by some other predator or be picked up by some wise-gut who could lure it down, after all it seems to be lost! This time he got the bird back, I wonder of he still flies the bird in the same way, or has he invested in telemetry or had the bird micro-chipped?

Just recently the RSPCA published a report on the welfare of falconry birds etc, etc. which I believe came out in favour of the falconer, what we do not need is articles like this, it could do us a lot of harm and that's the last thing we need?

I do understand that some falconers like to fly young falcons at hack, but this can only be justified if the right conditions apply.

Please Mr Jones, think of your bird, think of the future of Falconry.

Yours sincerely  
Sean Healey.

**EXPERIENCE NEEDED**

Dear Editor.

Regarding the subject of 'social imprinting' of accipiters. A term used for a method of hand-rearing that most raptor keepers will be familiar with while few have practical experience.

An American Falconer, Mike McDermott, visited certain falconry clubs in the UK during 1996, talking about his own "recipe" (as it has become known). He kindly left behind a twelve page article on social imprinting, of which I have a copy. Interesting reading though it is, it still leaves a number of unanswered questions for myself, if not others.

I wish to try this method in 1997, on which accipiter I am undecided, but I am told that the European Goshawk has certain peculiarities that could be a drawback when socially imprinted even by the most meticulous of people.

I invite almost anyone with practical experience in this most demanding field who would wish to share that experience, to contact me by reversing the charges on the phone number below.

Who knows, even Mike McDermott might read this.

Colin Bevan  
01746 767066

**HYBRID DEBATE**

Rick Gerard lets himself down badly when he suggests his tri-bred falcon more adaptable to grouse hawking in Scotland and Partridge hawking in England than a straight. As for sheer lunacy to try it, Rick ought to hang up his glove in shame. Many good falconers have been doing it for years, with great style and success. It all comes down to field craft, commitment and dedication. No wonder your falcons speed is top of your score list if you do not fly the others.

I am in no doubt that good sport can be had from all the hybrids, but better than a peregrine, you must be joking!.. As for any hybrid for game-hawking, who needs it? A good tiercel for grouse, partridge, a good female for late season grouse, partridge, pheasant.

Nick Fox, I suspect specialises in birds of pursuit to fill the Arab demand for hawks to take their larger quarry. And by using hybrids can arrange a suitable falcon for the task.

As a salesman you need a large market, especially if a large number of hybrids are being produced, and like all salesmen if their is not one they will make one. The peregrine has coped with rook and crows in time honoured fashion and is being eased out of the way by flashy sales talk. If Nick spent as much time and effort in flying straight peregrines the results would be just the same but the financial rewards less.

Commercial breeders are getting like car salesmen this is the turbo hawk or the GTi falcon, what we need is less exotic hybrids and more dedicated, competent falconers, to fly our native peregrine.

Yours faithfully  
Steve Williams.

The sporting print is a peculiarly British invention, with its best and most productive period being the first half of the nineteenth Century. Many artists of the time turned away from the grandiose Regency conventions, striving instead for a new style of pictorial journalism. Some of the results have great charm and typify the English countryside with its crisp hunting weather, with all the details of fields, woods, hedges, streams, and rural dwellings. That was the backdrop and in the foreground what possibilities of variety and action: the rendezvous, the flying start, the fatal stoop and the tired ride home! With such a range it was possible to show hawk and man under every aspect and well the sporting artist rose to their opportunity.

F.C.Turner particularly shone in this field and was never more at home than in the company of falconers. Perhaps Turner's masterpiece is a series of four hand coloured plates, dedicated to his Grace William Aubrey de Vere Beauclerk. Duke of St Albans. Hereditary Grand Falconer of England. In which we see a remarkable peepshow of the "cream of the cream".



**OF LANDSCAPE AND FIGURE**

To the Regency buck and even to the Regent himself, sport was something more than a diversion or pastime, it was a religion with its own ritual and costume. It's not surprising then that the hunting print is considered by many to be the icon of the Regency period.

George Wolfenden.

**A Rare Opportunity**

This set of four Turner's original engravings, each mounted on acid free paper and handsomely framed (22x27) are being offered for sale by the owner for £1,000. For details call him on 01803 212979.



# IS THAT HER?

Lyn Wilson

"The lads at work have decided to organise an evening Ten Pin Bowling next Thursday, do you fancy going?" David asked, "O K" I replied, "I'll book the babysitter."

At four O'clock on the Thursday Danny came round with some cement, "Is he flying the bird tonight?" he asked. I doubt it, I answered, "he fed her a whole quail on Tuesday and she was really fat yesterday, we are supposed to be going out tonight and it's too much like tempting fate." "Tell him I'll ring him tomorrow teatime then" said Danny. "See you".

At 6.30 David decided to fly Jet anyway. 6.45 I hopped in the bath. 7.10 Lucy came home, very out of breath. "She's gone!" "Which way?" "Across 'Ugs 'Ole". (hogs hole)

I got out of the bath and left my best jeans on the bed and put on an old pair. I didn't want to go ten pin bowling anyway. David, Danny, his son Jake and I walked until 10pm and came home empty handed.

Jet is a female peregrine, quite old and rather unfit. She rarely ranges out far as she hasn't the energy to get back. She had no telemetry on as I hadn't got round to sending for some new batteries.

I got up at 7.30am and found David eating his breakfast. "Been up long?" I asked "Since 3.30am, I've just got back, I went out at four." He went to work and I got the kids off to school. On my return I rang the police and a couple of friends to tell them she was out. After dropping Thomas off at playschool I headed off, complete with lure, glove and binoculars, to search for the missing peregrine. Everything that moved, and plenty that didn't was given a second look. Every bird I saw was a pere-

grine masquerading as a rook, or pigeon, every silhouette, for an instant, became that familiar shape, outlined against a blue sky. I climbed barbed wire fences, balancing precariously on piles of stone to get high enough to get over. I saw some rooks congregated together, when I finally made it over the fence I discovered that they were the other side of the river, which was obscured by the long grass, and I hadn't a cat in hell's chance of seeing what they were looking at. At one point I found a pile of feathers, which I was relieved to find belonged to a pigeon. David's worst fears were that because she was unfit she may have come down in a corn field and not been able to get out so I found myself walking the tramlines left by the tractor after spraying. Not a peep. I covered the same area as David had that morning, the most likely one, he had also covered some more unlikely ones. I picked Thomas up from playschool and after lunch we set off again. Different area this time but still no sign. I was so tired, hauling Thomas over fences and helping him through long grass etc. I had to be home for 3.30 to pick the kids up from school, I passed Danny on my way home, he was just off to walk the dog, and look for Jet. I gave him my glove. An hour later he returned, nothing.

I had decided that when David got home we should extend our search going beyond the area we had covered. I suggested to him that we start our search at the outside limit of the area we had already covered, he said no but I refused to walk the same area again. We did the shopping, taking the scenic route to the shop, and then came home and had fish and chips. We set off en-mass, David, myself and the four children.

We parked the car and headed up towards the railway line. This sides onto a mini industrial estate, with units either side of a narrow country road. To the left of the road, behind the units are fields and the other side of the railway line is fields. We walked, shouting and swinging our lures, David going through some rough and us walking by the side of the railway line. Every bird we saw the children were calling "Mum, Mum, is that her?" I was answering, "No, it's a rook/pigeon/blackbird/sparrow?" We reached a gateway where there is a path down to the road. I suggested we walk this way, it would be easier for the kids. "No", said David "Let's walk a little further, it opens out to fields on either side now and she will be able to see us for sure if she is here".

I looked up and saw a bird flying towards us, another rook, but this time masquerading as a peregrine! The next thing I know David is shouting "Get down, get down." Followed by a string

of expletives, and swinging the lure like there is no tomorrow. Jet, for her part was pleased to see us, but not quite as pleased as we would have liked and for some reason thought this was an ideal opportunity to display her lure passes. She made about eight passes at the lure and then proceeded to head across a rape field and land in a tree on the other side. David hesitated and contemplated going back to the gate to run down the road and walk the headland of the rape field, then he ran down the side of the track and over the fence. The rape was up to his waist, then his chest, and finally his shoulders. He kept going, shouting at us all the time to keep an eye on her, lest she should fly away again. Then he disappeared completely as he fell over. Lucy (our eldest daughter) and I dissolved into gales of laughter, which thankfully he was too far away to hear.

Once on the other side of the field he threw down the lure and Jet came down for her tea.

The feeling of indescribable relief when the bird was safely home is completely forgotten though when the next day arrives and an overwhelming urge to see her fly is uppermost in David's mind. His love and respect for the bird and her need to do what comes naturally seems to know no bounds. Having said that I refuse to traipse round the fields again too soon.





# YOUR PROBLEMS & QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## SAND OR GRAVEL?

Dear Editor,

I have built my weathering and I am confused as to what to put on the floor. Some say sand and some say gravel. Which is best or is there something else I could use?

Sand and gravel are used the most. Do not use building sand it must be Silver sand, (the type used for childrens sand pits). Pea gravel

not shale should be used as the shale gravel has sharp edges which can cut feet and damage feathers.

The sand or gravel which the bird has mated on must be removed and either replaced with fresh or washed and re-used.

Note: do not use bark as this is still alive and harbours bacteria. Wood chip-pings should not be used either as they can cause blockages in the crop and/or stomach.

## MYXOMATOSIS

Dear Sir

Please can you tell me if it is possible for rabbits with myxomatosis to infect my birds and ferrets if it is fed to them?

No its is not. Myxomatosis is not an avian disease and so cannot be passed to your birds and it doesn't affect ferrets.

## ADDITIVES

Dear Neil,

I rear cockerels for human consumption and have been feeding the heads and necks, along with chicks and rabbit etc., to my birds. Recently someone said that the additives in the fattening pellets could harm my birds could you please advise.

A few years ago that would have been true but now the chicken feed is perfectly safe and contains nothing which will harm your birds.

We have specialists available to answer any problems and queries. Please feel free to write and ask them your questions.

## '96 - A GOOD YEAR FOR SOME OF OUR RARER BIRDS OF PREY

Some of Britain's rarest birds had a good season last year. Ospreys had their best year with the 104 pairs in Scotland raising 155 young. White-tailed Eagles in Scotland did well with nine young raised from seven successful nests. England's only breeding pair of Golden Eagles raised one youngster for the

first time since 1992.

Red Kites did extremely well with 152 pairs attempting to breed in Wales, raising 115 young. In England at least 34 pairs raised 82 young and in Scotland 15 pairs raised 38 young.

In England, Montagu's Harriers fared less well with half of the eight nests failing. Eleven young, however, were successfully raised. Marsh Harriers had a very good year with at least 160 nests raising more than 350 young - at the RSPB's Minsmere reserve eight Marsh Harrier nests produced 24 young.

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**JULIAN STEVENS**



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## HAWK BOARD NEWS

During the meeting of 15th January, the Hawk Board gave its approval for affiliation to the Board of the Hampshire Falconry Association, The South Gloucester and West Wiltshire Raptor Club and the Home Counties Hawking Club. In common with other affiliated clubs, these organisations will now receive minutes of the Hawk Board meetings.

In response to a request from Nick Williams of the DOE, the Hawk Board has drafted a protocol for catching-up hawks from aviaries. These guidelines will be included in a larger document currently being compiled by the DOE for distribution to the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime, which includes the RSPCA and the RSPB. When published the document will provide

guidance for the safer handling of hawks caught up during investigations and inspections supervised by the enforcement agencies.

The Hawk Board has submitted proposals relating to the implementation of the new EC Wildlife Trade Regulations under CITES. These regulations govern the movement, trade and sale of raptors throughout Europe. The new implementation document, which has not yet been finalised, will address issues such as the format of forms and certificates, rules relating to the validity of documents, time limits, definitions pertaining to captive breeding, and the manner of marking captive bred specimens.

**Emma Ford**  
**Joint Press Officer.**



# HAWK TALK

John Matcham

'And a Very Happy New Year to all!', 'That's it', I exclaimed as those immortal words were uttered at the stroke of midnight December 31st 1996.

For the previous two months I had been researching and contemplating this article and yet I could not be sure if it should be written at all. Finally I found good reasons to try. 'You have the right to judge for yourself and I have the right to share my experience with you'. The importance of its understanding goes beyond us all, into the future, the one place none of us can truly go. So try not to be in a hurry to condemn what a few believe with all their hearts and minds.

It is easy to look at the past and learn from our mistakes, even to believe that when we make them they are the first in our sport, our town, our country or even for mankind. Then we realise how wrong we can be and how silly we look, this is a story of how I was when I believed myself alone or simply mad.

It began in the Summer of '96 when I met artist and Author Rob Turner at the Hearing Dogs for the Deaf, Open Weekend, where we had been booked to fly two Bird of Prey demonstrations. As usual I did not have the time to speak to him at length and get to know him well. Even so his girlfriend Diana took photos of us and Rob later posted on a cartoon painting. Most of our visitors spot it in the hall and have a good giggle at my expense, but as you will see it is worth it. This cartoon opened a door I had been banging at all of my life.

In late October, having expanded our friendships through work and the usual dinners, games of Jenga etc., we were invited to Robs Birthday Party, a fancy dress affair to which Melanie went as Liz T in National Velvet and I as a 18th Century Falconer. It was quite a do. The Local Press had been informed and were there to take photos of the arrivals. The restaurant had been completely redecorated for the evening with a New York Skyline and all Robs paintings of Hollywood Stars. With Oscars up for grabs, in a place of the same name, it was just a tad grander than we were expecting. I tried to warn those around me about my feathered friend's habit of raising his tail and giving it all his worth in whatever direction his backside is pointing. He must have heard me and wanted an Oscar for himself. Raising his tail while I turned to explain the danger to those behind me, Aunt Sally got his very best, down her dress, much to the disappointment of Wurzel Gumidge. My feathered friend got his Oscar later for The Most Outrageous Performance. You tell me who was paying attention

the most - those around me or my feathered friend?

I sat opposite Explorer Rex Warner and next to Caroline Anns-Baldock, the worlds first professional woman jockey (no no fancy dress - the real people) and Melanie next to Rex and opposite Caroline, in all an interesting little foursome. During the evening we all told out favourite stories. Melanie was chatting with Caroline and Rex with me, when all of a sudden I hear Melanie suggest that Caroline takes me off her hands for a while, in fact about three months. Caroline seemed very pleased., a brief word with Rex, they compared me to some chap called Roberts, and I'm off on an expedition that has a lot to do with horses and, if I'm lucky, Eagles. As for the expedition you will have to wait for the book and the articles I hope to write in 1999. It's all very hush hush for the time being.

This chap Roberts is the most intriguing part of the story. I admit I had never heard of him, and Caroline's claims of his abilities with horses were fascinating.

In 93/84 I had trained a very fat Eagle free flying from scratch and a horse that had only previously been in contact with wild birds, together. Neither had been tethered during training and all done in front of the public (none of whom believed what they were seeing). It had all been a bit of an experiment based on the knowledge that we rarely see an Eagle running from a Zebra and vice versa etc. etc. Moving to Oxfordshire had meant the end of my experiments for now.

However my interest in the psychology of horses was still very active and I wanted to meet this Roberts and find out what he was up to. It turns out Melanie had just read a book called 'The Horse Whisperer'. I was, however, and in some short measure, informed that this is entirely fictional and bears no resemblance to 'The Man Who Listens to Horses', by this Roberts chappy. Having briefly believed that my experiments could possibly in some small way be breaking ground in the communication with animal stakes, it turns out that this chap Roberts has been doing it since the forties. With the wind removed from my sails, yet not entirely discouraged, I received an invitation from Caroline to meet the man himself at the National Stud, Newmarket, where he would be giving a short demonstration of his skills. This was too good to be true, this chap Roberts was mad enough to attempt to converse with a horse 'in public' and at 'The National Stud'! This I had to see with my own eyes. As it happens we

even took a vet who had heard of this chap Roberts and was even more intrigued than myself. So there we were, Caroline, Melanie, the Vet and myself, standing in the cold and wet about to see a new phenomenon in action. It seems I was a bit late on that one too. this chap Roberts has so impressed the horse world he's even done this communicating with horses for the Queen at Windsor (and had tea with the Queen, alone on the lawn). He, sadly did not give the demonstration but a student of his did while he described what was happening.

First we were told of a three year old horse, untrained except for a lead rope and halter, that was about to arrive and enter into a 50ft diameter mesh pen in front of us. Then Kelly, an instructor of his new art at the West Oxfordshire College teaching his skills as part of the Equestrian courses held there (yes by now I was really feeling a bit of an idiot, this talking to horses seemed to be quite popular), would perform a small miracle. She would train a horse without the aid of a rope or whips or even words and have someone ride it, in under thirty minutes. Just by making friends. I did try to tell you this might seem a bit far fetched.

During the following thirty minutes the horse did make friends with Kelly and she did put a saddle on its back, a bridle on its head, and yes a Jockey, who rode it happily round the ring in all directions with the softest of hands and no kicking. It didn't bat an eyelid, not a flick of its tail, bucking not even once, only moving faster than a walk when asked. To explain the language Mr Monty Roberts (it should be Sir but he's American), uses, called Equus, would probably take me the rest of my life. Nevertheless, I saw with my own eyes a man describe how a woman he had taught would and did "Talk to a Horse, and it answer back Politely".

Later that day I met Monty Roberts, no longer a mad man like myself, but a hero in the Animal Kingdom.

I have read his book now. Melanie gave it to me for Xmas, (I hate reading but she says it's good for me). I read it in just three days flat, every last printed word, even the credits and the printers name, just to make sure I wasn't missing anything. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for a look into the future, because the next time I find myself alone in the garden talking to a bird, I won't worry what the neighbours think and I will deny being mad. This man has proved to me that you can talk to animals and they can talk back and it's great fun to listen! All I need to do now is figure out how to speak "Sqwark", and get the Queen to believe me and a knighthood is in the bag.

For forty years Monty Roberts worked behind closed doors, it took all his love of horses and a Queen to open them

The next time your bird says something to you please try to remember carefully. You never know it may be you drinking tea with the Queen next time



# A STRANGE STORY

Nick Fox.



Some time ago, my wife had a bad accident which left her in neuro-intensive care with her skull fractured in two places. During the course of her convalescence she decided it might be a plan to farm ostriches. What started as a momentary mental aberration in the course of time flourished into a full blown ostrich farm with about twenty-five breeders and a lot of youngsters growing on.

One of the things one can't help but notice about ostriches is that the cock birds are extremely well endowed. They flaunt penises which would be the envy of any casanova. And, during copulation (which can be a haphazard affair in such ungainly birds), the semen is splashing around all over the place. In fact you can easily collect a useful sample with a spoon if you are reasonably nimble and the male doesn't catch you and nail you to the fence. We also breed Harris Hawks and this year we had a pair which failed to copulate. What was to be done with such intransigence? Ostrich semen to the rescue!

Two shots and we left them to finish their clutch and start incubation. So far so good. After they had been sitting for a couple of weeks, curiosity got the better of us. Could the ostrich semen fertilise a Harris egg? Luckily, Harris eggs are much easier to candle than goshawks eggs. Two of the eggs were clear and two were fertile. One looked very blotchy and must have died early, but the other seemed to be developing OK.

We took the egg into a hatcher once it pipped, and the chick came out looking like a miniature hedgehog with spikey blotched brown down. It had a long neck like an ostrich, a fairly long but definitely hooked beak with an egg-tooth, and three toes pointing forward and a back toe on each foot. Ostriches of course only have two toes, both pointing forward and indeed our little chick had two of its front toes partially fused. Of course it was too early to tell if it would grow usable wings.

We tried to foster it back onto its parents but they

wouldn't take it. For one thing it didn't make Harris chick noises and for another, it kept trying to run around and wouldn't stay under the parent. Then it started to pull the nest to bits. So we decided to hand-rear it. One of the features of both Harris and ostriches is the very rapid growth of their long legs which makes them very prone to leg problems. The trick is to provide a nutritious balanced ration and to keep the animal slightly underfed so that its body does not become too heavy for its legs and so that it is encouraged to run about and get exercise, which strengthens the legs. After a couple of weeks our chick was scurrying around all over the place. Despite being completely tame, the slightest new thing would alarm him and he would belt off like a

He developed wings with feathers on and quite a respectable tail, but it was not until some weeks after he was hand penned that he made his first flight. He would probably have been ace at lizards and snakes, but he often preferred things which weren't alive at all. The most effective lure for him was a shiny teaspoon tied to a piece of string. It was obvious that Connor would never be able to catch anything that could fly, so we decided to try him a rabbits. Here we struck a problem; taking after his ostrich father, he had a pathological dislike of cover and would not even linger near a hedge. Provided he could see over the top of the vegetation he was alright, but really he preferred open places. By now his head was about level with my waist and he learnt to be at ease in rushy fields. Using Bramble, the wire-haired pointer, we managed to get some good points at summer rabbits lying out in the rushes, and Connor, just for the fun of it to start with, would make short dashes at the rabbits as



frightened chicken. Although we weren't sure of his sex we called him Connor.

One day in a fit of optimism we put anklets on his legs. But there was not way you could use jesses; he was more like a Secretary Bird.

they bolted. His first attempts were rather comical because being so intent on the rabbit he would go flat on his face in the rushes and, by the time he scrambled back onto his feet, the rabbit would be gone. Then he learnt a new trick - flying!



Once he reached a peak of ground speed and excitement everything would be flapping so fast that he would take off, usually with very uncertain results. We would cover our eyes when he tried to land...

If you just keep trying long enough you are sure to get a stroke of luck in the end, and Connor had several. The first rabbit he caught was only a baby one and instead of trying to foot it he went for it full tilt with his beak. He went sprawling but he hung onto it triumphantly like a blackbird with a worm and when he ate it you could see the chunks going down his long neck like a snake. From there he graduated to myxie rabbits and finally caught several legitimate full grown ones. One problem was, with all the running about, his claws got very

blunt and there was not much we could do to sharpen them. Although there were quite a lot of chases at rabbits in the rushes, his success rate was very low because the rabbits could dart about in the tussocks much better than he could. But he was a big strong bird (we never managed to weigh him) and once he got hold of a rabbit it was Dead On Arrival.

So we thought why not try him at hare? We should find them on more open ground and he would have a much better chance. The problem was to get him and a hare together. There was no way you could carry him on the fist and hooding him was out of the question. Nor would he follow very well like a dog; he was rather like a spoilt child. We constantly had to keep an eye on him. So we lured him into his

night box which double as his travelling box. Then two people lifted it into the back of the Landrover. When we got to hare ground we would spy carefully for a hare and only once a hare was actually marked did we unleash our Secret Weapon. And I have to say he was magnificent at hares. On smooth open ground he had a tremendous turn of speed and on the turns he would field the hare back on line with a wingtip. Any suggestion of fight from the hare and Connor would fluff out all his feathers in an awe-inspiring threat display before jabbing at the hare with a lethal forward kick. He could walk along carrying the limp body in one foot like a suitcase. Sadly a hare eventually caused his death. I suppose it was inevitable. One scooted flat out under a barbed-wire fence and

Connor's long slender neck took the full force. He was killed outright.

Authors Note: If you have stuck with this story so far, then you deserve to be told the truth!

Connor, of course never existed. His only victims have been the people he has conned, some of them quite distinguished raptor biologists. Most of him was modelled by Noel Hyde, taxidermist at the National Museum of New Zealand who visited us as a working pupil last summer and constructed him from a dead, young ostrich and various biological bits. The photo is total fabrication and was taken by Martin Paterson.

You didn't really believe it did you?

# COMPETITION

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To enter the Competition simply see how many items of Falconry Furniture you can find in the grid. Write them on a post card and send to: Falconers Magazine Competition, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering. Northants NN15 5QP.

The winner of the last competition was Mr J O'Neill, Cumbria. He wins a family ticket to the National Birds of Prey Centre. Donated by Jemima Parry-Jones.

Five Runners-up each receive a diary or a years free subscription. They are: Paul Wetton. Herts., B Guest. Devon., B A Wood. Stoke-on-Trent., D Wheatley. Warks., R.C. Rix. Norfolk.



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TN14 6NJ or visit the shop, but do telephone first to  
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Tel/Fax: 01732 463218 and ask for Brian.



## 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: 0117 9660770

## BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

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**For more information call:  
Paul Barham on 0171 515 7754  
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## NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

Est 1990, affiliated to the BFSS and NAFA. Membership currently covers the southern counties.

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

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month in the relaxed atmosphere of a New Forest pub. The forum of the meetings is to get together with like minded people to discuss and practice methods of falconry and hawking. Please feel free to contact:

**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,  
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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:01245 226057  
Dean White: 01375 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,  
Tredunnoch. 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

## WELSH HAWK, OWL & FALCON ASSOCIATION

Now approaching our fifth year.

Meetings every 1st Monday of the month at Penllwyn Hotel, Pontllanfraith, Nr Blackwood Gwent.

Friendly informal meetings which include guest speakers, films, the sale of falconry furniture, organised trips etc. etc. Non members always welcome.

for more information contact Paul Spearman 01443 833002 or Ed Hopkins 01495 228397.

## CLUB MEETINGS ARE HELD AT



**"The Falconers Rest"  
Public House.**

**Thorpe Lane, Middleton, Leeds.  
or Contact: Mrs Alice Douglas,  
Secretary. 0113 2777347**



## 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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