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— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

Winter 1997 £2.95

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Bruce Haak**



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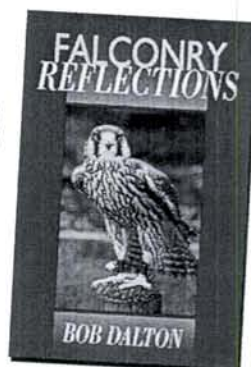
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## Falconry Reflections

Bob Dalton



Expert falconer Bob Dalton recalls a full and satisfying life working with birds of prey in *Falconry Reflections*.

Over twenty years' experience working with hawks and falcons are remembered as Bob explains how he has steadily built up his falconry skills, and increased his understanding of these magnificent birds.

*Falconry Reflections* includes accounts of the ups and downs of a career in falconry which has included keeping a United States Air Force base free of birds, clearing starlings from an Austrian vineyard, hawking in America, presenting and running flying displays at Windsor Safari Park, and the pleasures and perils of working with television crews.

Falconry enthusiasts will be thrilled by Bob's detailed descriptions of his work with birds such as prairie falcons, merlins, kestrels, peregrine falcons, shaheens, harris hawks and saker falcons. *Falconry Reflections* incorporates practical information on falconry training and management together with Bob's personal and emotional involvement with a number of individual birds.

*Falconry Reflections* also includes a glossary of technical terms and is illustrated with line drawings and 16 pages of colour photographs.

*Falconry Reflections* is published by Farming Press, priced £16.95 (hard-back). Copies available from bookshops, or can be ordered from Farming Press or direct from Bob Dalton by completing the order form below.

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If ordering from Bob Dalton please make cheques payable to Falcon Leisure and send to **Bob Dalton, Woodside, 8 Lorraine Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 4EF.** Please allow 21 days for delivery.

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## COMMENT

Hello All,

Christmas issue again!! It has been an extremely busy year for us all. Many things have come along to threaten our sport, but I am glad we have the Hawk Board in our corner fighting for us. I often wonder what would happen if they all decided to pack it in. Who would take over and more importantly what would happen to Falconry. These people give freely of their time and experience but unfortunately, if the attendance at the Hawk Board Symposium was anything to go they get very little support in return from the masses!

I have asked the organiser of the Falconers Fair if it will be held at Althorp again next year but they say that they are not sure at the moment and will keep me informed.

All the articles promised in my last COMMENT are in this issue, we were hoping to do field trials on all the telemetry systems and get the results in this issue but unfortunately most have been unable to supply them in time. Hopefully we will have something in the next issue.

Right, I'm out of space so we'll wish you all a happy Christmas and speak to you all again in the New Year.

David & Lyn

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**COVER: Painting, Prairie Falcon. Andrew Ellis.**

## LOST

### LOST

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Peregrine x Lanner | 15136W             |
| 2. Peregrine x Saker  | 14214W &<br>3133V  |
| 3. Peregrine x Saker  | 14509W &<br>8000V  |
| 4. Peregrine x Lanner | 14058W             |
| 5. Peregrine          | 9344V              |
| 6. Lanner             | IBR602W            |
| 7. Lanner             | 5412V              |
| 8. Lanner             | 7542W              |
| 9. Lugger             | IKFCC97V           |
| 10. Saker             | ADJ1               |
| 11. Saker             | DRW5               |
| 12. Saker             | 3MCW97             |
| 13. Saker             | 896W               |
| 15. Saker Hybrid      | 3192RRW            |
| 16. Saker Hybrid      | IBR570W            |
| 17. Prairie Falcon    | 3BYB95V            |
| 18. Redtail           | 1946Y &<br>IBR840Y |
| 19. Redtail           | 30198695673Y       |
| 20. Harris Hawk       | 008TJW             |
| 21. Harris Hawk       | 2668 &<br>IBR999W  |
| 22. Harris Hawk       | IBR532W            |
| 23. Harris Hawk       | P23W96TA           |
| 24. Harris Hawk       | TJW29W             |
| 25. Harris Hawk       | 5992W              |
| 26. Coopers Hawk      | Blue Ring          |
| 27. Buzzard           | 7775W              |
| 28. Ferruginous       | 0817Y & 1349X      |
| 29. Ferruginous       | PSD10 X or Y       |
| 30. Turk. Eagle Owl   | FAK3               |

## FOUND

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Lanner       | 56??          |
| 2. Lanner       | UK70???       |
| 3. Saker        | 80???         |
| 4. Saker        | 11???         |
| 5. Ferruginous  | Blue Ring     |
| 6. Redtail      | 04??Y & 19??X |
| 7. Sparrowhawk  | ?96R          |
| 8. Sparrowhawk  | 8CA????       |
| 9. Kestrel      | 859??         |
| 10. Kestrel     | 8MC???        |
| 11. Kestrel     | 15JHB???      |
| 12. Kestrel     | 4672???       |
| 13. Barn Owl    | 4234BC96U     |
| 14. Barn Owl    | 318697U       |
| 15. Harris Hawk | 14??96W       |

## STOLEN

- South Wales**  
Harris Hawk UK84939  
Harris Hawk 12225W
- South Wales**  
Harris Hawk 12847W  
Harris Hawk 15846W
- South Wales**  
Goshawk 15913W
- West Mids**  
Harris Hawk UK80157  
Harris Hawk 4675W
- Co Durham**  
Harris Hawk 6164W  
Goshawk UK79024

6. **Northumberland**  
Black Sparrowhawk WHC696

7. **Avon.**  
Harris Hawk 4CBMGW

8. **W. Mids**  
Harris Hawk IHD196

9. **Avon**  
Harris Hawk 13215W

10. **Lincs**  
Goshawk NW00100797 &  
UK80780

11. **Lincs**  
Goshawk 9406V &  
11092W

12. **Lincs**  
Peregrine 569V &  
76EHL96V

Also would anyone recognising the following number please come forward 694RR95Y - Redtail 40SFC95Y - unknown.

Owner also sought on unknown bird, Ring no 3325RR97W.

All the above information come courtesy of Raptor Lifeline and the IBR. They can be contacted on 0118 9016990 (RL) or 01926 850000 (IBR). Alternatively you can ring the magazine on 01536 722794.

Owner also sought on unknown bird, Ring no 3325RR97W.

And a plea once again for breeders to come forward and let us know what their initials are.

## CONVICTIONS

Leonard Durman-Walters appeared at Jedburgh Sheriff Court and was found guilty of causing unnecessary suffering to a pigeon. The pigeon was tethered and used as a live lure.

His actions were seen by Leslie Gallagher who was a witness for the prosecution, he claimed that Durman-Walters used the pigeon on two occasions to recover the falcon. He said each time the pigeon reached the end of the tether it fell to the ground and the falcon swooped towards it.

A veterinary consultant specialising in birds of prey said that the tethered pigeon would have suffered mental terror as the falcon came down.

Durman-Walters was admonished by Sheriff Paterson, who said the case had got completely out of hand. He was also admonished for releasing a live pheasant to be killed out of season.

In a statement Jemima Parry-Jones, Director of The National Birds of Prey Centre, said, "Field Sports in this country are very much under threat, particularly with a Labour Government and people involved in field sports must be very careful in what they do".

## EAST ANGLIAN FALCONRY DAY A SUCCESS



This year saw the first "East Anglian Falconry Day" at The British Birds of Prey Centre, Stonham Barns.

There was plenty to see and stands included the BFC, IBR, Double R Products, The Falconry Company, Paul Ashley,

bell maker, Stickmaker, Archery, an artist and the magazine.

Arena events included three flying displays and working dogs.

Stonham Barns is well situated for such an event with easy access (5 miles) from the A14. It has a well stocked gift shop and also within the complex



there is a restaurant, bonsai shop, woodturners etc.

People came from both north and south and for a first event the attendance was good.

It will be interesting to see what happens next year.

For more information ring: 01449 711425

# The Ancient Laws of Wales

The following article was sent in by Keith Jones who discovered it when he was researching the history of his house. It is a fascinating insight into the lives of these people and illustrates just how highly regarded Falconry and the Falconer were.

These laws are, in substance, the jurisprudence of the Britons, from the earliest period; simple and few in their origin; accumulating, and becoming more diffuse, according to the necessity of the progressive state of the society for which they were formed, under the influence of the examples of neighbouring nations.

Many abuses, errors, and contradictions must have crept into them in a length of time which were borne without any great inconveniency at first; but the value of property rising, as society advanced, and became more consolidated the evils also grew more intolerable.

Howel, the Good king of Wales\*, feeling the great urgency of the matter ordered a thorough revision of the laws; which he accomplished by recurring to the established means; of a solemn convocation of the elders of the people.

A great many copies of the laws, as reforming by that assembly, are still extant; but they are transcripts, more properly of the spirit of each particular institute, than of the words of them. The original acts were deposited in places appointed for that purpose, and to these the lawyers resorted, and drew up such forms as suited their purpose, often by giving illustrations of their own.

It is only by such a supposition that we can rationally account for the differences between the copies, in the phraseology. Very little can be attributed to the transcribers; for every copy which the editor has seen has the appearance of being as old as the time when those laws were in force, and the original documents were resorted to in forming codes which are now extant.

\*Howel, Prince of all the Welsh, succeeded to the principality of South Wales in the year 907AD; of all Wales in 940AD; and died in 948AD.

A translation of the Ancient Laws of Wales.

Officers of the King and Queen in order of their importance:-

Patron of the family  
Domestic chaplain  
Steward of the household  
Judge of the court  
Falconer  
Chief groom

Chief huntsman  
Steward of the house to the Queen  
Queens chaplain  
Domestic bard  
Silentiary  
Door-keeper of the hall  
Door-keeper of the chamber  
Page of the chamber  
Chambermaid  
Groom of the region  
Chandler  
Butler  
Mead Brewer  
Officers of the court  
Cook  
Footholder  
Physician  
Groom of the region to the Queen

A privileged right of granting protection appertains to every officer

"The protection of the falconer is to the farthest range which his hawk takes to kill birds".

"The protection of the chief huntsman is to the farthest place that the cry of his dogs can be heard".

"The steward of the household, judge of the court, head groom, chief of song, master of the hawks, page of the chamber, and domestic chaplain; the satisfaction for their insult and murder are the same, and their heriots are alike in rank".

In satisfaction for their insult shall be paid nine cows and nine score of money.

In satisfaction for their murder shall be paid nine hundred and nine cows and three advancements.

A pound is the heriot of each of them

A pound is the maiden fee of their daughters, their covert fee is three pounds and their jointure is seven pounds.

The lodging of the chief huntsman, and all the huntsmen with him, is in the kilnhouse.

The lodging of the falconer is in the Kings barn; for the hawks have an aversion to the smoke.

The falconer has a privilege, the day that the hawk shall kill a bittern, or a heron, or a curlew. Three services shall the king perform for the falconer on such a day; hold his stirrup while he dismounts; and hold his horse while he goes after the birds; and hold his stirrup while he mounts again. Three times shall the king compliment him that night at table. On one side of the chancellor he shall sit in the banquet.

The falconer shall have the skin of a stag in autumn, from the chief huntsman, to make gloves for himself, and the leathers of the hawks.

Two rations shall his horse have of the provender.

He shall drink only three cupfuls in

the hall, lest his hawks should be neglected through drunkenness; vessels therefore shall hold his liquor in the palace.

If the falconer should kill his horse in hunting; or should he die by chance, he shall have another from the king.

He claims every unfledged young bird; a sparrowhawk's nest found on the land of the palace belongs to him.

He shall receive a dish of meat as an allowance, and three hornfulls of liquor in his lodging.

From the time when the falconer shall put the hawks in their mews, to the time he shall take them out, he shall not give an answer to anyone that shall prefer a claim against him.

He shall receive quarters once a year on the villains.

From every villain in town he shall receive 4d. or a dry sheep, as food for his hawks.

Freely he shall have his land.

Three presents shall the king send to the falconer by the hand of his messenger, except on the day he kills any noble bird, or on the three principle festivals; the falconer shall receive the presents from the kings hands at those times. The day on which the falconer kills a noble bird, if the king shall not be with him, when the falconer returns to the palace with the bird, the king is obliged to rise up and receive him; and if he does not rise, then he shall give the garment which shall be on him to the falconer.

He owns the heart of every animal, which shall be slaughtered in the palace.

Though the falconer should be liable to distraint by the law, neither a bailiff, nor chancellor, shall distraint upon him; but the sergeant of the king and the household.

A pound is the value of the nest of a hawk. Six score pence is the value of a hawk before mewing. Should she be white after mewing, she is worth a pound. Twenty four pence is the value of an unfledged young one. 120d. is the value of a falcons nest. Three score pence is her value before mewing, and whilst in the mew. The nest of a sparrowhawk is of the value of twenty four pence. The value of a sparrowhawk before mewing, and whilst in the mew, is 12d., after mewing, should she be white she is worth 24d.

Additions from the W.S.M. "The falconer is entitled to a palms length of candlewax from the steward of the household, to feed his birds by and to make his bed."

(The falconer also had to provide a "tame sparrowhawk every michaelmas" for the chief huntsman).

"Three things which a king should not deuide; his treasure, his hawk and his breeches".

# CLUB DIRECTORY CLUB DIRECTORY

## AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

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

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

For further information contact Guy Whitmarsh on: 01179 660770

## The British Hawking Association

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

*Regular field meetings, novices welcome (apprenticeship available) and many other Regional Social Meetings are held.*

*Changing attitudes to improve standards.*

George Roach 01623 751339  
Garry Balchin 01159 300135

## BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

*Founded in 1927*

**The oldest and largest Hawking Club in the country.**

**Nine Regional Groups -**  
Scotland, Wales & Borders, Midlands, Cotswolds, Eastern, North Western, North Eastern, Southern and South Western.

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

## THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB

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

We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

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

## HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

*Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society*

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

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

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

Ring: John & Laila on 01276503891 or Alan on 01784 250577

## THE LONDON HAWKING AND OWL CLUB

*One of the only Falconry Clubs in London with flying and breeding experience with birds of prey.*

**For more information call:  
Paul Barham on 0171 515 7754  
or  
Roger Spary 0468 751270**

## CLUB MEETINGS ARE HELD AT



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

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

## NEW FOREST FALCONRY CLUB

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

We have access to 98,000 acres of land and organise regular meeting 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 & 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: Keith Channing  
Stable Cottage, Pamber Road,  
Silchester, Berks. RG7 2NU  
Tel 0118 9700937

e-mail: rba@redtail.demon.co.uk

## THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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

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

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

## 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

## STH GLOS & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

We are a fast growing club with members ranging from complete novices to seasoned falconers.

Our informal, friendly meetings provide an opportunity to exchange experiences, arrange field trips and establish contacts with local falconers. Guest speakers and suppliers of falconry furniture regularly attend. We also run beginners' workshops and organise outings to places of interest.

Meetings are held on the first Monday of every month at The Compass Inn, Tormarton - 800yds off M4 J18 (Cirencester direction, then first right).

Telephone  
Martin 0117 9710019  
Gary 01454 201702

## 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.

## MEETINGS of The Welsh Hawking Club

are held monthly, 8pm at:  
**USK** The Newbridge Inn, Tredunnoch. 2nd Monday  
**CHESTER** The Goshawk, Mouldsworth. 1st Wednesday  
**NORTHAMPTON** The Redlion, Kislingbury. 4th 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

## IF YOU WANT TO ADVERTISE YOUR CLUB IN THE FALCONERS MAGAZINE PLEASE

TEL/FAX: 01536 722794

E-Mail:

kbu77@dial.pipex.com

## Yorkshire Falconry Club News

## S.H.C. Report OCT '97

Another year ends for Yorkshire Falconry and we have reached the grand old age of two. We have finished our second year with just short of ninety members, for which we are justly proud to have achieved.

The last few months have been very busy for us all, starting with our annual barbecue in July. This was open to members families and friends and proved to be an enjoyable evening for all with the weather playing its part.

As a service to our members we arranged a practical evening in August where the more experienced amongst us demonstrated various aspects of general husbandry, imping, coping, tail belling etc. Birds were brought along and advantage was taken of the skills available, this also enabled those members who are new to the sport to observe what most had only read about. Demonstrations of hood making by Vince Smith proved to be one of the evenings most popular sessions.

The turn out for the AGM in September was approximately 75%. We are all looking forward to the coming year, speakers have already been booked and hopefully an American speaker will be visiting us again next year. At Christmas we are having a social and quiz night and our proposed trip to the Hawk Conservancy will have the added bonus of the opportunity to meet members from the British Falconers Club (Southern) who contacted the club after reading about our trip. The more clubs around the country interact, the stronger our sport will become, isolation helps nobody and with the

Foster Bill due for its second reading we need to do more, not less. Within the YFC we are busy collecting signatures for the BFSS' petition.

Field meets have begun again and due to the huge demand we now have two field meet coordinators, with a back up if needed to allow us to offer two field meets at separate locations on each Sunday that meets are organised.

Neil Forbes visited us at the end of September for our final event of the club year. The day started at 9.30 and continued until 4.30pm, it wouldn't be possible to even begin to tell you a small part of what we learnt or had explained to us. Neil is a consummate speaker and performer and for those who had the pleasure of nothing else we learnt how to duck out of the way of low flying Kookaburra's whilst inserting a crop tube. We had among our group four local vets who not only benefited from Neils knowledge and know-how, but we now have access to local vets who are willing to look at our birds who know that there are people like Neil out there willing to offer a second opinion. Not only did we get the day's lectures, practical sessions and comprehensive set of lecture notes, but we were offered the opportunity to buy a first aid kit compiled by Lansdown Veterinary Hospital.

So ends our second year, membership is now due for renewal and we welcome all new members. If you would like further information about the club please write to Kim Myers, 8 Belford Drive, Bramley, S Yorks. S66 3YW. or Tel/Fax 01709 549896.

The season seems to be progressing quite well up here so far this year, reports from the grouse moors appear to show that good numbers of birds are being found ( that's if you have a good dog ), It does sometimes surprise us that people pay high sums of money for that perfect bird, as well as a good rent for a moor with grouse only to fall down with a poor mutt, oh well as they say there's nowt quite as queer as folk. The weather has been very kind to us so far, what with it producing favourable conditions for our quarry to breed during the summer, the early season hawking has been good to, our first field meeting of the Autumn went well. Having to strip down to shirt sleeves is not a common sight up here, but Carlops just south of Edinburgh showed plenty of rabbits and an odd hare with some very good flights down the steep gullies that this venue is renowned for. The sound of the migrating geese in the late September evening sun had a very evocative feeling about it, also a reminder

that winter was not to far away. Our main meeting and A.G.M is on the Isle of Skye this year which should have just taken place by the time you read this, again we have been reliably informed that good numbers of rabbits, hares and grouse are available this year, also perhaps we will spot the elusive White tailed sea eagles that have set up home on the edge of Portree bay, which we missed last time we were there a few years ago.

The S.H.C. has just been accepted onto the I.A.F. (International Association of Falconers ) whilst we do not expect to make an astounding impact of the international falconry scene at least we can now add our 2 penneth worth to the debate and at least can be seen to be standing up for, and supporting our sport. We think in the coming months more of us are going to have to do this for the protection of falconry and other fieldsports. So in the meantime enjoy your hawking.



# VERACRUZ: A RIVER OF RAPTORS

By Ruth Tingay

Mexico is well known for many things: tacos, sombreros, banditos, but not for raptor migration. Until now!

Incredibly the world's largest flyway for migrating, diurnal birds of prey has only just been discovered.

Migration is the widespread movement of entire populations or sub-populations of birds (including raptors) to take advantage of seasonal food availability.

While migration takes place across a broad front, the spectacle is best viewed at the relatively few places where migrating raptors concentrate.

Many species of raptors make the long journey of migration by utilising rising air columns called thermals.

Raptors such as buzzards, eagles and kites, with a wide wing surface area, are lifted effortlessly upwards as the warm air of the thermal rises. Eventually, the thermal will meet cooler air from above and as the temperatures equalise and the thermal runs out, the birds will glide forward, again with little or no flapping, until they meet the next thermal, where the process is repeated. The birds thus accomplish their overland migration with the minimal expenditure of energy.

Migrating raptors are concentrated at certain points by the funnelling effect of water bodies acting as a barrier or because of the attraction of other geographical features such as mountain ridges, rivers and shorelines.

Thermals form readily over land but are not so readily formed nor are the as strong over bodies of water. Because they lack usable thermals, water bodies act as barriers to many migrating raptors. Many concentration points are at the tip

of a peninsular where the raptors are literally funnelled and are most noticeable.

Until recently, the most famous raptor watch sites were Eilat in Israel and the Isthmus of Panama in Central America. Huge numbers of raptors have been recorded; 1.7 million in Eilat but the 2.5 million in Panama was considered the highest known density on earth.

However, recent studies in Mexico during the autumn of 1996 have revealed an astonishing total of 4.6 million raptors, squeezing through a bottleneck over a period of three months.

It is incredible that such a phenomenon has only just been discovered but one reason may be that Mexico does not offer classic geographical features described above.

So why should millions of raptors concentrate above the Mexican State of Veracruz, which is a 500 mile long coastal plain at the edge of the Gulf of Mexico? The secret is revealed when Mexico is viewed on a topographic map.

Veracruz is a geographical corridor creating a bottleneck for migrating raptors on their journey from North to South America. The bottleneck is formed where the Mexican central volcanic belt



*A topographic map of Mexico. Veracruz can be seen quite clearly where the mountains cut across the right hand side of the country. (L Goodrich)*

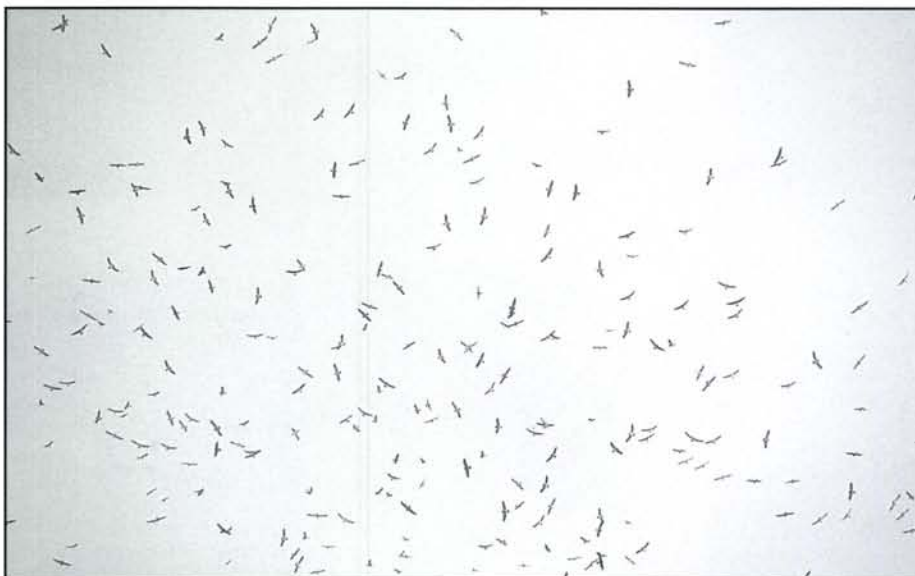
reaches the Gulf of Mexico, and almost cuts the lowlands of the coastal plain in two.

The topography and atmospheric conditions of the lowlands provide raptors and many other migrants such as pelicans and woodstorks with the conditions needed for migrating with the least effort; tail winds and warm thermal updrafts.

In 1991, two young Mexican biologists, Ernesto Ruelas and Jorge Mentejo noticed a large movement of raptors literally darkening the skies above Veracruz - a spectacle the locals call Rio de Rapaces, the River of Raptors, and brought it to the attention of biologists in North America, already monitoring the migration at watch sites across the country.

There was much scepticism amongst the scientific community and many did not believe the huge numbers involved. However, two well respected raptor organisations, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania and Hawkwatch International in Utah took great interest and funded the boys to receive training in North America, which was needed for them to conduct standardised migration counts.

Nineteen raptor species are identified and counted each autumn. The most



*Swainsons rising in a thermal.*

*(Photo: W Clark)*



**AUTUMN 1996  
VERACRUZ RAPTOR  
MIGRATION COUNT  
(AUGUST 20-NOVEMBER 20)**



*The international count team: Back row, L-R: Jeff Ogburn, Jorge Montejo, Brian Mongi, Jim Teetz, Steve Hoffman, Ernesto Ruelas. Front Row L-R: Bill Clark, Peter Gustas, Carlos Santiago, Zak Smith, Ruth Tingay. (Photo: R Tingay)*

abundant migrants are thermal soaring birds - Broadwinged Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Swainsons Hawks and Mississippi Kites.

The total number of Broadwinged Hawks each season is in excess of 2 million birds and is thought to be the entire world population of this species.

Swainsons Hawks have numbered approx. half a million, which is probably 98% of the world population and far more than people thought existed.

Around 50,000 Mississippi Kites have been recorded and over 1 million Turkey Vultures, which is a major proportion of the migratory population.

Other species recorded are: Osprey, Northern Harrier, Hook-billed Kite, Swallow-tailed Kite, Plumbeous Kite, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Harris' Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon.

The counts are conducted from the roof of a hotel in a small town called Cardel, as this six-storey building is the highest point for miles around. This locality is providing much needed income for both the project and the local community, as bird watchers are booking into the air-conditioned rooms below. Such is the interest from tourists, the hotel manager is now donating 25% of his profits from each booking to the project.

Three large raptor conservation organisations are funding the Veracruz Project - Pronatura, a Mexican charity, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and Hawkwatch International.

There are many challenges facing breeding and migrant raptors in Veracruz. Shooting for food or sport, pesticides and the loss and degradation of natural habitats continues throughout the flyway. With the tremendous concentration of raptors during migration, the potential impact of each of these threats

is magnified.

One important goal of the Veracruz Project is to involve and educate the local community about raptors and inspire pride in this spectacular migration.

Project personnel have conducted education programmes for school children, workshops for teachers and programmes for hunters and community groups. Educational brochures and posters have been distributed widely and radio programmes conducted.

As word gets around the world that daily numbers during the peak of the autumn have surpassed 600,000 birds, raptor enthusiasts will be making their own migration to witness this event. So far, there is only a handful of visiting groups, all from North America. However, in 1998 we will take the first British Group, timed to hit the peak of the migration during the last week of September to the first week of October. We will also be searching for some local neotropical raptors such as Aplomado Falcon, Laughing Falcon, Crested Caracara, White-tailed Kite, Grey Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk and Black Vulture.

A full itinerary can be obtained from the address below.

As you read this we will be coming to the end of our 1997 count on the hotel roof and who knows, we may reach 5 million this time!

Itinerary from: Ruth Tingay, Little Barton, Hungerford Lane, Shurlow Row, Berks. RG10 0NY. E-mail: Naturecorp@aol.com

SPECIES	TOTAL COUNT
Turkey Vulture	1,624,625
Osprey	1,662
Swallow-tailed Kite	95
Mississippi Kite	32,578
Plumbeous Kite	6
Hook-billed Kite	84
Northern Harrier	430
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4,301
Cooper's Hawk	1,667
Zone-tailed Hawk	52
Red-shouldered Kite	27
Broadwinged Hawk	2,227,589
Swainson's Hawk	541,663
Ferruginous Hawk	1
Harris' Hawk	11
Red-tailed Hawk	352
American Kestrel	3,093
Merlin	94
Peregrine Falcon	542
Unidentified Accipiter	58
Unidentified Buteo	186,945
Unidentified Falcon	11
Unidentified Raptor	20,126
Total	4,646,012
Non-raptor migrants	264,375



*The hotel which acts as the count site. (Pic R Tingay)*

# How it's Done

## Jenny Wray

As a reader of this magazine you will have heard of the Independent Bird Register but if we haven't spoken you may not know how we operate. Let me take a couple of minutes to explain how we work in the IBR. It is very easy for me to talk on the phone or at a club and not realise if the points I have made have been sufficiently well explained and understood unless we have feedback.

I started the Independent Bird Register in March 1994 because I wondered who was going to help me find my non-schedule 4 birds if I lost them. The DOE were about to cease registration for many birds of prey. I initially wrote to DOE to offer to do it for them, also to the Hawk Board. I received enormous help and encouragement from the DOE and still do. Several falconers then suggested that I myself start a registration scheme to help recover lost and found birds.

My background of 15 years falconry experience started with a 2 year apprenticeship. I now work full time with my husband in our business selling computers, printers and network systems. It is with this knowledge that we can set up and run a complex database for thousands of birds and keepers. I run databases for several pension fund groups and for the last 10 years ran the British Flute Society membership. The experience gained over the last 12 years enables me to provide a solid, reliable, safe and secure system to register birds and their keepers. We are registered with the Data Protection Agency and do not supply information to third parties without permission. As a falconer I realise this is both vital and necessary.

The aim of the IBR is to get the bird back to the right legal owner. The bird comes first. I offer a registration scheme, which registers the bird on the database with as much information as possible. The parents ring numbers, date of birth, when acquired, ring number, captive, disabled or imported and the details if identichipped. All this information is stored against the birds ring number and the keeper's name and address, telephone and mobile number. We then issue a yellow registration document, in a similar way to the DOE, with these details. When the bird is transferred to a new keeper the registration document is returned to us with the transfer details filled in at the base of the form and a new document is issued to the new keeper. We also offer a free split ring for the bird that has a unique number and our 24-hour telephone number. We recommend these rings and with them get almost 100% of found bird back to their keepers within 24 hours as the finder has an instantly available phone number to contact. It is a very cheap and practical insurance.

Our registration scheme gives every bird continuity for its history and future. It maintains a captive breeding record; it supports Sale and Displays Certificates. It has a central 24-hour phone number and provides closed and split rings. Registration

lasts for 5 years and we send a reminder when it is due to be renewed. During this time if the bird gets lost, the owner phones us and we help to find it. We check he has informed his police and suggest he repeats this 24 hours later to confirm it was noted with a log number. I also suggest people to tell and I contact key falconers and potential finders such as LRKs in their area or further afield in the case of wandering falcons. We notify the losts' and finds in Cage and Aviary via Paul Beecroft and also in the Falconers Magazine. Additionally I fax a list each week of every lost, found and seen reports to P.C. Paul Beecroft of Raptor Lifeline, Peter Mulholland and Graham Wellstead of NCA who runs the police theft register for birds and various animals.

I spend a lot of time on the phone because I want to find the owners of the found birds and track the lost ones. If the bird is registered, i.e. £10 for 5 years, there is no further charge. I just ask that the owner give something to the finder when they pick their bird up. This all sounds easy but there is a lot to arrange. When I find the owner of the lost bird I check that I may give his telephone number to the finder so he may contact him and sort out a handing/picking up procedure to suit both parties. Some finders do not wish to be known and will hand over at a neutral place such as a pub or police station, thus protecting their security. This all takes time and phone calls. When a bird is found by a member of the public I ring around until I find a falconer to pick it up, house it, and look after it until I can find or contact the owner. These falconers are IBR registered keepers and other falconers I have gathered over the last 15 years in the falconry world. These people will go out and get down a bird, if necessary take it to their vet and feed it, as I am sure you would do.

They are entitled to compensation but seldom get it. The current charge is approximately £4-5 per week and any expenses incurred such as petrol to pick up the bird and possibly vet fees. They are totally without their rights to hold onto the bird until the costs have been paid. They are not holding the bird to ransom; the owner owes the person what it has cost to look after the welfare of the bird.

If the bird is not registered I also ask for a fee to be paid. Some unregistered keepers are less than enthusiastic about this. If the found bird is not registered I could stand back and say I had no information on this bird and suggest the normal found property procedures be followed as we only have keeper details for the registered birds. I would be doing nothing wrong. I would have confirmed it had been reported to the police. I can't do this. I can't stand back. The priority is for the bird. I started this to get birds back to their owner, not just to keep keepers happy, although I hope I do both. I phone around and if the bird has a

breeders ring, I try to track it back through the breeder and sometimes 4 or 5 owners. I have become good at this and am able to reunite many unregistered birds with owners who would never otherwise have seen them again.

The £40 charge for unregistered birds is made up as follows: £10 goes to the finder who is the most important person. £20 goes towards administration, my phone bill and paperwork. (If Paul Beecroft or Peter Mulholland has originally passed the unregistered bird information to us then £10 goes to them from us. This £10 is paid from the £20 admin charge.) The final £10 is for 5 years registration for the bird so I may contact the keeper more quickly next time, the bird will also have a split telephone ring and there would be no further charge next time it is found. Many birds are found more than once.

During the first couple of years information was provided by us that enabled keepers to pick up their birds with minimal delay. Out of approximately 35 unregistered birds for which I found the owners, only 2 paid! I now ask the charge be paid first, before information of the bird's whereabouts is given.

We are not a charity and need this money to carry on offering this service. We initially invested a large sum into setting up the network. I now have of hundreds of falconers throughout England Scotland and Wales. I wrote to every police force, RSPCA, PDSA, LRK and wildlife hospitals and sanctuaries. It is because of these finders and contacts that we are able to run the IBR and be successful in reuniting birds with their keepers.

Proof of efficiency - we get a lot of birds back. I also am going around the country offering a talk to all the clubs. This costs. In only one club have I been offered expenses towards my diesel. I do not begrudge any of this. I feel it is important for falconers to hear what we do and understand that the system works. I would be sceptical on the other side of the fence.

We currently have well in excess of 800 misplaced birds of prey, 200 of which are found but we don't know the owner. These have not been reported lost. They are all with persons such as you in the area they were found. Help your birds, and me do my job by reporting lost and found birds to us. It costs you nothing to put a lost, found or stolen bird on the system. One day it might turn up or the thief might fly and lose it. It has happened, 2 years after losing a harris, the owner in Yorkshire got her back this June. It was reported to us found in Edinburgh! Without the IBR there is no way he would have got his hawk back.

As time goes by we are getting more and more general falconry enquiries by keepers who ask for advice or help on management, breeding, aviaries, vets, dogs, equipment and dozens of other things. To make life easier for everyone we are producing The Falconry Directory, this will be the yellow pages equivalent for falconry. If you breed birds or have any falconry related goods or services you should be in it. Contact me now on 01926 850000 to make your entry in the 1998 edition.

# I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

## Kim Myers

Agatha, as she has now become, is a European Eagle Owl, and very confused about what she is supposed to do - this, I must point out bears absolutely no reflection on her owner! She is now settled into her new aviary with its' variety of perches and tree stumps for her amusement. Depending on how sociable she is feeling she chooses a perch or corner where she can either keep a watchful gaze on her surroundings or fluff up in the corner and turn her back on all of us.

My ball of fluff rapidly disappeared and soon gained her flying feathers and over the last few days her ear tufts have started to appear and, apart from the very top of her head, she is fully feathered.

Her move to her aviary wasn't without incident, but then her past history it was only to be expected, but more of that later. Her days started generally with a visit from whichever member of the family got ready first and, time permitting before work, a promenade around the garden a few times. The garden or specifically the grass, initially caused her great problems. She was inclined to take a death on the lawn and then try and walk. This I'm afraid to say caused her to pitch forward onto her beak causing much hilarity on my part and ruffled dignity on hers. She has since adopted a high stepping gait which wouldn't put dressage horse to shame. The only thing that still catches her out is a red tartan wool rug which I occasionally put on the lawn before sitting, her death grip returns with a vengeance. I believe the problem is the fringe, maybe she thinks tray are a new delicacy - tartan worms?

Back to her move to the aviary. She obviously had her eye on an arachnid as her first kill because she chose to chase one up the front of her aviary and, not until she was a couple of feet from the floor did the realisation dawn as to where she was and she panicked. Luckily I was in the garden and saw her predicament. The only problem was that she wasn't going to let go of the netting for anyone. The resulting farce ended up with Agatha hanging upside down resting against my legs, whilst I tried to release her death grip. Mission was accomplished eventually with very little damage to her other than ruffled feathers but I wasn't so lucky, and the spider? It hung from the roof and laughed itself silly.

I am pleased to say food or should I say the digestion and disposal of, now no longer cause Agatha problems as they have done in the past. Although I think there may be some confusion as to what to eat on her part as tartan worms have already shown. She is, I think, flirting with the idea of becoming a vegetarian!! Shocking isn't it? But I will put the evidence before you and allow you to decide. Agatha has taken to grazing, every time she comes upon a clump of grass she pulls it out with her beak and then carries it about. I have in the garden, nestling very prettily by the aviaries a shrub, it has small green leaves which turn red in the autumn. Agatha has taken to killing it and ripping a small clump from it, then carrying it around the garden, transferring it between beak and foot for five minutes before discarding it.

There is my evidence, my only consolation is that she had her first kill recently. Crawling across The Times I was reading was a spider, a well placed peck and the spider was no more. Now as excited as I was by this major landmark did the fact that attacking the Times had become a daily occurrence mean this was just a coincidence? Agatha would regularly attack the newspaper and I began to wonder whether it brought back memories of the exercise and massage routine (see One Lump or Two Autumn '97), so it could just be a fluke, but I like to think she is an early developer!

Evening exercise has become a learning time for Agatha and myself. As recommended by Jemima, Agatha has her own tennis ball, fluorescent yellow, Slazenger, high grade (sorry Michael) to play with. Too big to swallow but allowing hours of fun on both our parts and a dummy bunny. The bunny I'm glad to say was soon in a very sorry state and emergency repairs had to be made double quick. The tennis ball fared better and Agatha took to clapping it in her foot and trying to walk. I leave the resulting picture to your imagination. Not content with one ball, she tried one evening to join the circus. Unbeknown to myself a neighbour had thrown into the garden a stray tennis ball (obviously a wild lob by my son - Wimbledon has a lot to answer for). Out came Agatha to play with her own, chasing it across the lawn she found the second, at this point she tried her hand or should I say wing at impersonating a Chinese acrobat. She clasped a tennis ball in each foot and, flapping her wings wildly, she tried to remain upright. As any sensible owl knows, you get off while you're ahead, or is that upright, but Agatha, being Agatha, didn't and the resulting heap of legs, feathers and tennis balls were not a pretty sight.

Daily she is improving and growing up and she'll soon be a very grown up and sensible owl, but I wouldn't have missed these early weeks for the enjoyment she has given us all. There is of course her training and this might yet throw up a few anomalies, but only time will tell.

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Buzzard-dark phase



Buzzard-light



Juv Honey Buzzard



Buzzards

Young bird kept briefly in my aviary, probably concussed.

The BUZZARD is one of Britain's commoner raptors, especially in the West, & seemingly spreading back towards eastern parts, (though still persecuted by gamekeepers), after its decline in the 50's & 60's due to myxomatosis & agricultural chemicals. Up to 17,000 territorial pairs were estimated in Britain, during 1983, with an increase in Ireland.

It is a versatile, compact raptor, highly adept at soaring, & enjoys a varied diet, including young rabbit, mole, voles, hedgehog, carrion, fledglings, beetles & worms. It is at home in both hill & lowlands, largely sedentary - a familiar & much loved bird, as it soars & skirts over hill & vale.

adult



Imm.



Rough legged Buzzard - winter only & usually eastern & central Britain. Uncommon.



Honey Buzzard - Summer only, rare breeding bird, in south & east. Typical plum.



P. Snow ©

Typical plumage typical scenery

# RAPTORS

of Britain and Europe

Buzzard [Buteo buteo]

# A Jewel in the Crown of American Falconry

by  
Alan Gates



1987 - Pre James N. Rice Wing. This was the collection!

fronted a similar conundrum has been an inspiration. Many falconers have amassed throughout their lives a collection of manuals, artifacts and memorabilia. This collective instinct is stronger in some individuals than others, for some it is attributed to a desire for greater knowledge, for others it is a passion to own and build a collection. Often these collections are broken up and dispersed at the time of their present owner's demise. With their value in historical and monetary terms poorly understood, many items of immense value to the falconry community have been consigned to the ubiquitous car boot sale.

Here in the United Kingdom we are spoilt by the richness of our culture and the depth of our history. Our towns and cities bear witness to our turbulent past and are

As we approach the millennium and prepare to dip our toes into the twenty first century, there is a feeling that we will 'boldly go where no man has gone before'.

Yet as a species, one of mans greatest achievements, has been the ability to communicate with each another and record those events in a durable format.

Historians tell us that the practice of falconry was first recorded in the East probably over three thousand years ago. As it spread westward across countries and cultures throughout the centuries, its passion has driven and shaped the lives of many enthusiasts. Some of these felt the need to commit their experiences to the written word or capture the moment in art form. For the ensuing generations, the ability to look back and compare how Frederick II, Bert or Salvin may have con-



Still expanding - 1993.



A few M.D. Stevens hoods, Circa 1947-48.

influenced by the occupations of conquering Romans, Saxons and Normans. At the height of the British Empire we had colonised and controlled over 25 % of the worlds population and land area. The motherland of this Empire literally bulged at the seams with the plundered booty of treasure and artifacts from around the world. Little wonder that some present day residents of the Kingdom can be a little blasé towards our history.

Although falconry was practised here for some centuries, it received a major stimulus from the returning crusaders bringing new knowledge from the East, and it was eagerly pursued by the nobility and Royalty in the following centuries. In contrast, its progression into the New World is little beyond the embryonic stage.

Falconry in the US has been traced to the arrival of the first Europeans, with its greatest activities and advances having come in the last half of this century.

It was once stated by an eminent modern American falconer that "the Brits have little to teach us other than history", blunt and debatable as this truth may be, yet it is evident that thus far we have failed in our ability to collate our own rich falconry history. With most of the existence of American falconry spanning just a few decades, early alarm bells started ringing as astute falconers noticed individual collections of memorabilia from some of their 'old guard' were being dispersed into oblivion after their demise.

In 1986 The Peregrine Fund created the Archives of American Falconry to redress the loss of so much of the sports embryonic history within the New World. The Archives found a home in the headquarters of The Peregrine Fund at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. Already a respected research facility created by falconers and dedicated to the study, propagation and preservation of falcons and other birds of prey, it was the ideal home for the preservation of continent's falconry history. World famous for the amazing success in having returned the peregrine from the edge of extinction in the US, its founders, directors and the majority of its operating personnel were devoted, life-long falconers whose preservation concerns extended to the sport as well as to the peregrine itself. Advantageously, it had an already established, educational, not-for-profit tax-deductible status so that its supporters are eligible for tax relief for material and financial donations. Such a tax status is not available to the North American Falconers Association or to any of the local falconry organisations because of their involvement in political activities on behalf of falconry.

By 1988 the North American Falconers Association voted to transfer its own corporate records from McGill University in Canada, to the new Archives of American Falconry thus putting pressure on the space and man hours allocated at the World Center.

The rate of private donations of material also gathered considerable momentum



in those first few years, dramatically demonstrating the need for adequate housing/storage facilities dedicated explicitly to those growing efforts of historical preservation. The American falconry community--with some arm twisting--displayed its generosity, enabling The Peregrine Fund to add a new "James N. Rice Memorial Wing" to its administrative headquarters. Named in honour of a highly respected pioneer American falconer, the wing includes a room of some 700 square feet specifically to house The Archives' expanding collections of material and falconry memorabilia. A look at some of those collections and their major gifts will give the reader a better understanding of what The Archives is all about. The Robert and Sarah Stabler Memorial Library is built around a core of books formerly owned by Prof. Stabler. The library now contains over 800 volumes of falconry and associated works, to include the extensive Schwerdt catalogues, two copies of Schegel & Wulverhorst's magnificent *Traite de Fauconnerie* and works in a dozen foreign languages.

Over 750 photographs amassed by Alva G. Nye, Jr over his life-long association with the sport, supported by some 200 pages of captions vastly increasing their historic value ( and transcribed from seven and a half hours of personal interview with Nye before his death in 1992) are included in the extensive photo collection. That collection also contains almost a hundred photographic images dating back to the

early 1930's depicting the nest life of the eastern race of peregrine whose extinction provided impetus for the studies and efforts, led by

Peregrine Fund falconers, which have now resulted in the recovery and restoration of the peregrine in North America.

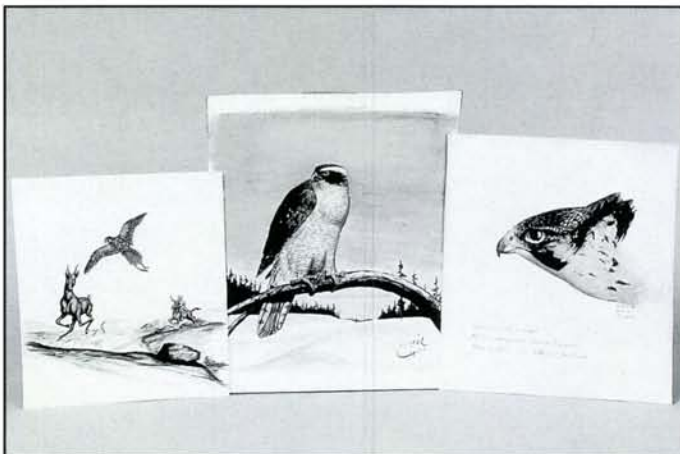
An extensive collection of hoods--and other equipment-- from around the world, both historical and contemporary, has been gathered, centred on a collection of the American falconer/hoodmaker Minard Stevens.

A wide array of typescripts and manuscripts, to include those eventually coming into fruition in the published works of contemporaries like Frank Beebe, Steve Bodio and Dan O'Brien, as well as a number of earlier authors.

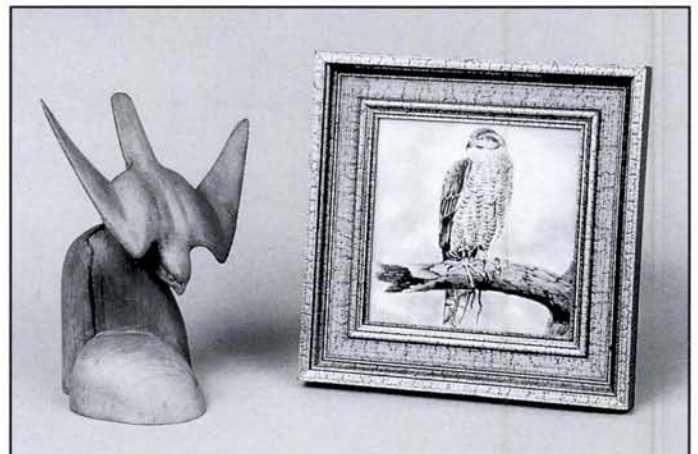
An expanding art collection of both originals and noteworthy reproductions includes about a hundred original pieces in a variety of media by then-budding artist R.A. Widmeier depicting his observations of falconry in India from 1942 to '44, the entire series of NAFA meet prints and a selection of more contemporary falconry prints by a variety of artists. Audio--and now video--tapes of oral-history interviews with a variety of older North American falconers.

A multitude of obscure but highly valuable scientific observations made or collected by falconers, highlights The Archives efforts to record the role of falconers in the advancement of raptor biology. Best exemplifying these materials are several archival boxes of field notes, photographs and draft publications recording historical peregrine nesting data from the studies of Dr. Walter Spofford.

The Archives collections are now valued at almost a half million pounds. All these materials represent generous gifts. These gifts eloquently reaffirm the truth of the old adage that it is a rare gift that is free. Correspondence, notes, photos and the like must be segregated in archivally-acceptable (i.e. expensive) acid-neutral folders. Those folders, like the equipment and other memorabilia, are then contained in acid-neutral boxes. Books require steel bookcases ( currently some 90 linear feet of shelving ) protected with anti-UV glass. All materials, filed and boxed are con-



L & C, R.A. Widmeier, (originals). R, H.W. Trimm



L - Carving by B.W. Stillwell.  
R - Delft Tile.



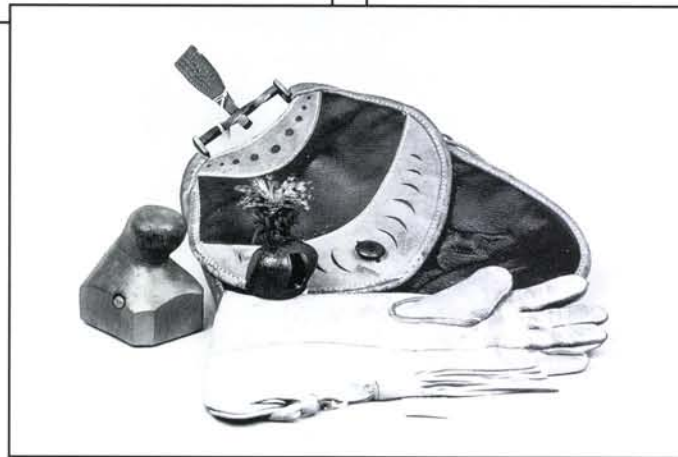
tained in steel cabinets, emphasising the archival preservation ( as opposed to museum-display ) orientation of The Archives. There are, however, a few of the more interesting items in display cabinets for the benefit of casual visitors.

To provide such storage material and facilities is expensive. Recognising that it would be inappropriate to redirect funding received for restoration and preservation of endangered raptors for this historical preservation, The Peregrine Fund has stipulated that the Archives, although an integral part of its organisation, must be financially self-sufficient. Rather than continually seeking annual operating funds, The Archives elected a single, major five-year fund raising effort, now approaching completion. Its objective is to raise a permanent endowment whose annual interest will provide sufficient funding to support preservation efforts in perpetuity. NAFA and the various state and provincial falconry organisations have generously joined with individual falconers toward development of this endowment, now well on its way toward its goal of \$350,000 (approx a quarter million pounds).

The resounding success of the American Archives is undoubtedly due to the individual generosity of the American falconers. It also reflects how serious and proud they are about their history.

Behind all successfully run organisations is a team of people whose names never hit the limelight but without whose dedication, time, efforts and generosity, success would be all that harder to achieve.

Above all, the Archives of American Falconry owes much of its fruition and its



*Above: M. D. Stevens hoods. L - Form, C - Finished, R- Shell. Top Left: Selection of Japanese equipment.*

*Left: Furniture made by O. Kals.*

continued success over the past ten years to one man, Kent Carnie, a retired army Lt. Colonel. Given all his archival activities, his "retirement" is a bit of a joke. From the very first, Kent has been at the helm as archivist and curator, he has uprooted his family and home to move across country to live next door to the Archives. He has cajoled and sometimes bullied the American falconers into realisation that without their continued support and efforts, much of their valued history would continue to be lost. It is without a doubt that Kent's dogged determination has brought the Archives significantly close to achieving its goal of self sustainability through its endowment fund.

The Archives of American Falconry is now a very serious collection, encompassing far more than the short time frame in which the sport evolved within the New World. Many of America's pioneer falconers learnt their art from manuals, and in some cases, additional personal correspondence with past European falconers. True to its name, which conveys concern with falconry in both The Americas and not just the United States, the primary focus of the AAF's archival attentions is on the history of the sport in the New

World. Nonetheless, recognising that virtually all falconry there is built on a common European, Middle Eastern and even Oriental heritage, The Archives collection extend to falconry-associated materials from throughout the world. It is a veritable Aladdins cave for any devotee who's passion also appreciates the heritage of our sport.

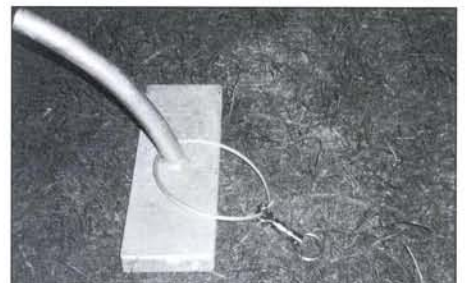
The Archives is open and readily accessible at virtually any time to anyone with a serious interest in our sport, open, that is, except between mid-September and Christmas when Kent is busy pursuing sharptailed grouse in Montana. He remains a falconer first and then an archivist. A visit to the Archives is all the more memorable due to the infectious delight Kent has in the collection and its contents, his knowledge and willingness to guide you through the Archives is invaluable. He asks only for as much advanced notice as possible from anyone seeking to use The Archives facilities, essentially to ensure his personal presence and assistance.

The Archives of American Falconry has passed its tenth birthday. It has emerged expertly honed and polished revealing a veritable Jewel in the Crown of American Falconry achievements.

## AMENDMENT

On page 19 Autumn '97 issue there was an article entitled Jess cutting tool and Bungee Spring Swivel, it should have been entitled Aylmeri Punch Kit and Spring Swivel Tether, as the the punch kit is not designed to make jesses but just the aylmeri. The way in which the Spring

Swivel Tether was attached to the ring was also wrong, see new photograph which shows the correct way. We hope this has not caused too much confusion. Rob & Rita Lippard from Double R Products have put together some statistics to show the advantages of their Spring Swivel Tethers. If you would like a copy or any other information you can contact them on : 01582 615741



# HAWK TALK

John Matcham

It's October and the nights are drawing in. Falconers everywhere battle to keep birds fit and ready for the weekend as winter approaches.

For just a few of us, who have more time for our birds than perhaps we might wish, the summer displays are over, the funds are in the bank and the winter courses booked, we pray for good weather and look forward to spring. Our Hunting Hawks are usually later than most, but they are experienced birds and don't take much getting going.

Sitting by the fire I have telephoned a few of my friends and we have arranged our own Hunting expeditions, which of course will never take place as we always seem to be too busy. It's the same story every year. One day we will all plan a great gathering of Falconers on the side of Paradise Valley. Stories of the days Hunting will be told long after we are gone.

Ring! Ring! - Ring! Ring!

Hark is that the phone I hear?

Me - "Hello OSFRC how can I help you",

Him - "Is that John Matcham"

Me - "Speaking".

Him - "Well it's like this you see, I was flying my bird when it decided not to come back and it's parked its self in a tree you see, you don't know what I should do, do you?"

Me - "Where are you now?"

Him - "Well I've just set up the tent, I've lit the tilley lamp and wheeled out a barrow full of rump steak, but he's not interested, I'm sure I don't know what to do".

You see the problem here, is not the bird, but the loose nut on the other end of the phone.

The bird is doing quite nicely. Happy sitting in its tree with a full crop of food for the day and content to wait until morning. When it will once again begin training the fool sitting at the bottom of the tree with a mobile phone tucked under his ear, watching the batteries on the telemetry go flat, while rubbing two sticks together and singing, 'Ging Gang Gooly Gooly Watcha'. Not too loudly I might add, he doesn't wish to frighten the bird away in the dark.

As if!

This is what I call "The ten week syndrome".

It starts off something like this:

Ten weeks ago he saw a display at a country show or something similar. "That looks easy, I'm going to be a falconer".

A mate of his down the road has kept birds for years and is very good at lighting fires with two sticks. He's had dozens of birds over the years so he must know what he's talking about. Anyway the two merry friends go off to

buy this chap a bird and once they've got it home and jessed it up, manning begins without wasting a moment of precious time. The bird, having been swept off its feet just hours ago, and carted halfway across the country, is just a little miffed. Amazingly however, it sits and remains firmly planted on the gloved fist. Suddenly thoughts of Monty Python, a certain Stuffed Parrot and Nails enter my head.

"Hey mate it likes me", he proclaims. "I think I'll put it on its perch for a while my arms tired, Ooh no it doesn't like that I better pick it back up again". And so on.

I always thought manning was a quiet and peaceful affair between man (or woman, sorry girls) and bird.

A week later the bird is used to the daily wrestling match and is becoming quite apt at footing the invader and has even had him pinned in a full nelson for a whole fifteen minutes, blood and all. Mummy would be proud. Even so the bird is now beginning to weaken as the daily rations are reduced and when the excess body fat has gone, muscles start to fade. DDO's are not much of a daily diet for a growing bird.

The bird, knowing which side has got the butter on, starts to behave. Bird domination is being achieved.

The next stage happens rather quickly and is relatively uneventful, although on occasions unfriendly. The creance was basically boring and the bird has been ready to fly for ages, but eight weeks have gone by and he hasn't plucked up the courage to let it go free. And then suddenly, in one deep breath he says, "Well its now or never", and releases the bird, mews jesses and all. Which in turn, does not want to leave the fist, as it receives so much love and attention and regular though meagre food supplies and is by now probably incapable of flying or fending for its self. Would you want to let go of your only chance of survival? I know I wouldn't.

Over the next two weeks the flying rate increases and as the two jolly fellows get more and more fun from our feathered friend, they realise the bird is getting better at flying and does not crash so often.

The bird has realised that the more it flies the more food it gets, if it waits too long to fly they reduce its weight again. (Believing that it is over weight and therefore reluctant to fly for something it does not want or need). But by judging it just so, the fools provide a larger piece than they would perhaps wish to and the bird fills its crop for less work in half the time.

At this point our experienced pal, having trained yet another expert, returns to his own birds to catch up and start

anew. After all he has just proven that he is remarkably brilliant, that Gos he purchased last year should now be a doddle.

Anyway this story is at risk of becoming decidedly boring, as unfortunately I've heard it many times before and it doesn't solve the problem of the bird up a tree.

I advise a good nights sleep and to rise before sun up. Removing all evidence of food, save one small peace offering, on a neutral post. Stand well back and wait with lots of real falconer patience, while the bird decides if you lie or not. For ten weeks falconer has spoken with forked tongue.

In future when you feed the bird on the fist, never steal from it and wait until it has finished all you have given. In time it will allow you to help in tearing up the food, without tearing up your fingers. Then you must learn to remove excess food without being seen, use that large brain of yours it's not that difficult to think faster than a 'bird brain'.

The bird will eventually be happy to leave the fist of its own accord, knowing that you serve only to provide on its return. You should after all be the easy option, lets face you can't fly, you can't run as fast as a rabbit and you're not supposed to punch its beak in when he catches you. You shouldn't be armed with spurs or even a beak for pecking out eyes with, if you are keep taking the pills.

If a bird really trust you and you don't ask too much of it in inclement weather, it will seek you out as the easy option, expecting you to work on its behalf in finding quarry. It will 'follow on' to the ends of the earth in expectation, you will then become a part of its world and not it a part of yours.

Learn that the ten weeks could have been better spent, understanding the requirements of the bird, than those of the man.

Then walk away offering her only a small piece of food. For a brief instance the insecurity of watching the only fool daft enough to walk out in any weather, dig holes in search of disobedient ferrets, train dogs to watch her eating without interfering, will put the fear of god up her. Don't worry she'll follow. After all she didn't waste ten weeks training you, your ferret and your dog for nothing.

Sadly I know you will not read this article because you don't get the magazine, you're not a member of a club and you don't really care what anyone else thinks. And we will try to explain it all to you over and over again for the sake of the bird. But you don't listen. Because to you, its about scales and hunger.

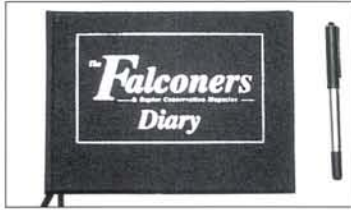
It's not!

But then you'll never experience the true joy of Falconry.



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# NOMAD

## Bruce A. Haak

I called him "Nomad" because I didn't know where he had come from and I wasn't sure where he was going. Such is the nature of passage prairie falcons, winged hunters that might traverse half of the temperate latitudes of western North America during their lifetimes.

The prairie falcon is North America's only indigenous falcon species, and most of its habitat lies within the borders of the United States. The heart of its range and the largest concentration of eyries are in southwest Idaho, where I moved in 1984. At the Snake River Canyon, which is a short drive south of my home, huge basalt cliffs line the canyon walls. Some 15 thousand years ago, a breach in the dam of prehistoric Lake Bonneville created a canyon carved in chaos. From Utah came a rolling wall of water, estimated to be 400 ft. high, careening down the river on its way to the Columbia River and, ultimately, to the Pacific Ocean.

Over 80 miles of river canyon and half

a million acres of public land have been set aside as the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. For thousands of years, windblown soil from the volcanically active Cascade Range to the west has been deposited on the north side of the river. A sandy loam of uniform texture some 4-6 ft. deep, the soil is the ideal environment for digging mammals. Here, the greatest concentration of badgers and of nesting raptors in North America share a dependence on an unusual prey species. Resembling small prairie dogs, Townsend ground squirrels spend most of their lives below ground, in the domain of the badger. They estivate most of the year, living on stored fat. But between February and July, adults and their new young venture above ground to forage on the desert's spring green-up. This is the time when the bounty of ground squirrels fuels the raptors' frenzied nesting in and around the canyon.

The combination of abundant nest sites and Townsend ground squirrels encour-

ages prairie falcons to proliferate. In the canyon area, between 150 and 200 pairs of prairie falcons may nest each spring. By the end of the breeding season, the squirrels are gone, the heat is stifling, and the prairie falcons leave for higher elevations.

Before relocating to the Boise area, I had visited southern Idaho several times, beginning in the early 1970s. The high desert plain was sparse and open, alternately burning hot in summer and frigid in winter. But I liked it; dry air, huge vistas and clear, blue sky. For most of those years I lived in the mild, rainy climate of western Oregon. Warm ocean currents, similar to those influencing the British Isles, create a Mediterranean-style climate in the valleys west of the Cascade Mountains, with rainy winters and balmy summers. I enjoyed my life there, but it was time to move on. For falconry, the high desert offered more variety and access to populations of upland game.

In 1994, I was between falcons.

Actually, I was in a falconry slump. In the span of a few months during 1992, my finely honed hawking team of many years disintegrated. My game hawk killed herself in a freak accident. Not long after, my pointer developed inoperable cancer. For me it was the end of an era, and I was having a hard time getting back on track. The kind of falconry I find most challenging centers on the workings of a good dog. Reluctantly, I took an English pointer puppy bred by a falconer in Colorado. It was a generous gift, and the pup was wonderful; training him was part of the therapy I needed.

My friend Darryl Barnes is "bi." Bicultural that is. For a number of years, he moved back and forth between England and the States with the U.S. Air Force. In time, he became acculturated. Now, nobody on either side of the Atlantic can understand him. But Darryl is a sportsman and that translates well. He makes a mean Vindaloo, throws back pints with the best of them, and is an outstanding falconer. We corresponded for some years before he too moved to Idaho. He arrived with a pregnant wife, two pregnant setters, and a passion for falconry that has blossomed. It's been an adventure to share it with him. Darryl met and married Helen in the U.K. From what I hear, it was a tumultuous romance involving car wrecks and close calls when Helen's parents arrived home early, just the sort of thing to give prospective in-laws confidence. Early on, a rude falconer confronted Helen and said, "what's a nice Suffolk girl like you doing with a Yank?" She replied tersely, "I guess I'm not a nice Suffolk girl!" Yes, Helen is a peach. Woodbridge should be proud.

When the Barnes family came to Idaho in 1989, they bought a house on the edge of the desert plain, not far from the Snake River Canyon. About the first thing Darryl built was a loft for homing pigeons. Racing around the sky sunup to sundown made these birds as tough as boot leather. After the first season, they knew how to dodge raptors of all sizes and shapes.

In autumn, when temperatures cool, prairie falcons return to the Snake River Plain. But they are devilishly hard to find and can be tricky to trap early in the season. Trapping one early allows the falconer to take advantage of our long hawking season in Idaho. Unfortunately, the falcons generally don't cooperate until it is cold and they are hungry. However, Darryl stumbled upon a novel solution to this problem. In early October, the whole Barnes family pays particular attention to their pigeons. For some years now, the pigeons have attracted the cream of the annual crop of passage prairie falcons and provided Darryl a means of selection for proven bird-hunting falcons.

Even the Barnes' young daughters are alerted to the telltale "thwap" of a pigeon being hammered to the deck by a passing falcon. Most get hit in his driveway, where Darryl can observe from his living room window. When it happens, he runs madly around the house, gathering up the dho gazza set, drag line, and bait weight. Then, he either grabs the injured pigeon or flush-

es the falcon off its kill. Generally, the falcon lands on a nearby pole and Darryl simply sets up the trap and disappears within the camouflage of the house to watch. A falcon that is motivated to strike once, strikes twice. It isn't long until the falcon is hopelessly tangled in the net and Darryl is running out to collect it. It was just such an operation that brought Nomad to me.

Early on in my falconry career I had flown two passage tiercel prairies. Both were easy to train, took a fine pitch, and hunted hard. Compared to the average passage falcon, these tiercels were like another species. They had sweet personalities and, true to form, their footing was astounding. But that was before I was seasoned, before telemetry, and before I moved to Idaho. Curiously, the last passage tiercel prairie I flew, back in college 20 years before, had been trapped within a few miles of Darryl's house.

At times, it is difficult to piece together the right hawk and the right quarry within the confines of a particular landscape. Parts of western Oregon resemble valleys along the River Spey in northern Scotland, especially now that Scottish foresters plant Douglas fir and spruce trees, pulp-production species native to the coastal Pacific Northwest. The climate in this region of the U.S., as one might imagine, is damp. This, however, did not deter the tiercel prairies I flew there. In my college days,

**Nothing explodes a dove like the impact of a direct hit from a tiercel prairie.**

we hawked ducks, quail, pheasant, assorted small birds from field and bush, and mourning doves, my favorite quarry. I relish the idea of hawking doves regularly, but they don't like our Idaho winters and leave with the first frost in September. Nothing explodes a dove like the impact of a direct hit from a tiercel prairie. To campaign against doves requires a rock-steady falcon that will not carry. Perhaps I'll be skilled or lucky enough to have another tiercel prairie suited to the job some day.

For some time after I came to Idaho, I had pondered flying a passage tiercel prairie at partridge over pointers. In Oregon, I had often flown them at small game, but a flying weight of 16 oz (465 g) made the tiercel prairie the ideal match for gray partridge. I imagined it would be relatively easy and fun, kind of a "get back to basics" move for me. No eyas to raise, no breeder to pay, and Mother Nature had already taught these falcons everything they needed to know about hunting. There had not been a passage prairie falcon of any kind in my weathering yard for years, and now the place seemed empty.

Truth is, I wasn't planning on flying a falcon that 1994 season. The year before, Darryl had trapped a huge passage tiercel, the largest one I had ever seen. Although I had passed on taking it, the decision had gnawed at me ever since. When he trapped one again, I found myself wel-

coming the opportunity. Passage tiercel prairies are smart and train quickly. So getting one in October made perfect sense. The best partridge hawking locally is in winter, when there is enough moisture to make good dog work feasible. The opposite is true of our local duck hawking, which requires getting into the field early to take advantage of the desert potholes.

I had just returned from a mind-numbing drive to the first Canadian Falconry Meet in Saskatchewan when Darryl called. He said, "I'd really like to see you flying a bigger bird, but I just caught another passage tiercel prairie and I thought you might be interested." While at the meet, I had watched young Ryan Guthormsen's imprinted tiercel prairie pound down a widgeon easily twice his size. The stoop was directly in front of a crowd of spectators, an impressive display by a brave little falcon. Ryan's father, my old friend Dale, had been guiding the development of this pair and he was obviously proud of their efforts. During the 1,200 mile drive back to Idaho, the event had stuck firmly in my mind. This was an untapped resource I needed to explore. On the drive to Darryl's place, I thought of what I wanted to accomplish with my new prairie falcon.

As I had anticipated, the manning process progressed quickly. The tiercel fed bareheaded on the fist the next evening, jumped to the fist in a few days, hooded easily, and willingly took tidbits when offered. The fastest way I know for working people to man wild falcons is with a round perch placed in the midst of human traffic. Wild prairie falcons are nervous and their weights must be cut to get their attention. Once they are coming to the fist for food, training proceeds to the next level inside the house via a round perch and outside on the block. With a round perch, the falcon sits high and people do not loom menacingly above it. From this position, it is easy to reach out a small morsel of food on a fingertip and feed the bird as you walk by. Before long, the falcon is anxiously awaiting your entry into the room.

Soon after acquiring Nomad, I was scheduled to attend a conference near Seattle. Fortunately, Darryl volunteered to look after the tiercel while I was gone. His strategy for manning the falcon was simple: he put the round perch in his kitchen. The Barnes' girls, the same as children everywhere, delight in scurrying under foot like perpetual motion machines. In the midst of all this commotion, a falcon either dies of fright or learns to ignore it. In daylight hours the action is relentless and, sooner or later, the falcon gives in. After a few days of continuous dawn-to-dusk stimulus, Nomad found a calmer plane. When I collected him, he was fatter and more relaxed than when I had left.

Continuing the manning process at home each evening, I set the round perch in the living room with scattered newspapers and a plastic picnic tablecloth to protect the carpet. Perched on one foot, Nomad casually took in our movements and the workings of the television. After the first few weeks of captivity, Nomad

was seldom upset by our activities and relished the tidbits he received sporadically. Maybe he appreciated being warm too. At bedtime, I put him into the mews. The nighttime temperatures, well below freezing, aided the management of his weight.

By the time I was able to fly Nomad free, it was November. The comfortable fall temperatures were gone, replaced by wind and snow. As anticipated, however, the tiercel was a quick study and took promptly to waiting on. During one training session, it became clear how he had made a living in his former life: he shot off the fist and tried to sneak-attack a flock of horned larks. But he soon realized that I was providing him better hunting opportunities, with meals more reliable and substantial than larks.

Always in the back of my mind was the concern that this tiercel would become a "carrier." Both of the passage tiercels I had flown before had been lost because they had carried off small birds. One tiercel seemed inclined this way from the start, and the other I taught to carry in my ignorance. The footing of these passage hawks is deadly and, sooner or later, they catch something small. While telemetry would allow me to recover a skittish tiercel determined to dine "take away," I did not want the frustration and inconvenience of such a vice.

I'd had a long conversation about the problem with Tom Smylie at the NAFA field meet in Dodge City, Kansas. In the "old days," Tom had flown passage tundra peregrine tiercels at quail, an easily packed meal should the tiercel be inclined to carry. Tom related a conversation with Jack Mavrogordato on this subject. He said that when Mavrogordato flew Barbary tiercels in North Africa, he learned that larger raptors often pirated their kills. The end result was a "dine and dash" mentality that prompted these pint-sized tiercels to carry their quarry to some out-of-the-way place to eat. Mavrogordato's solution to this problem was to teach the tiercel to leave its kill for food on the lure. To teach the lesson, he garnished the lure with an attractive, pre-skinned food item and fed the tiercel generously from it. With this system, the tiercel is fed up when the lure is shown; it is also tid-bitted carefully while it is feeding from the lure on the ground. Tom claimed that the technique had worked well for him for many years.

After my previous failures, I was willing to test the technique for myself. I began by attaching a skinned quail breast or half pigeon breast to the lure. Nomad would get a fair meal from this garnish but still fly to the glove to finish his meal for the day. Eventually, the routine became habit and Nomad, too, would leave a fresh kill to eat from the lure.

Over the course of the season, Nomad learned to go higher and wait longer to be served. There were no thermals or atmospheric lifts to help him, so he merely powered up into the sky. Small but strong, he left the fist and flew away like he was leaving the country. Out in the distance, he would turn and then mount on his way

back above me. Many prairie falcons take a pitch in this manner, a characteristic disconcerting to falconers in the habit of seeing longwings gain height in close, tight circles above them. But up is up, no matter how a falcon gets there. What matters is the pitch, stoop, and footing. Small tiercels are very flashy in the stoop and their lack of size gives one the impression they are going at great speed. Even at 500 ft, a tiercel prairie looks quite high. With his white belly, Nomad was sometimes difficult to spot in a pale blue sky with a snowy backdrop of rolling hills and mountain peaks. His footing, as I expected, was dead on. Because a tiercel prairie weighs a mere 16 oz, one does not expect it to generate a heavy-weight impact. But its striking power is nothing short of remarkable. It does not have exceptionally large toes for binding to quarry, so it compensates with a serious knock-out punch.

**....my reward was seeing a little brown blur materialize from nowhere,**

As the training progressed, I monitored my goals for the season. The tiercel was now well mannered, took a respectable pitch, and did not seem inclined to carry. Plus, he was a joy to have around the house, an "easy keeper." The endearing nature of tiercel prairies, eyes or passage, has not been fully appreciated, in my opinion. One simply needs to experience the development of a close relationship with a wild falcon, less than three months removed from the trap, to value this characteristic. However, behaviour among prairie falcons is highly variable and each one must be treated as an individual.

It was at this stage, in the grips of winter, that we found ourselves ready to begin the search for game. Not far from my home are rolling hills frequented by gray partridge and the occasional pheasant. Back in the late 1980s, before years of drought, there were good numbers of partridge. This is where I took my puppy, Jake, to run on wild birds. These days, the ground holds precious few coveys and the cover is thick enough to cause problems.

None of this mattered when I had my old hawking team geared up. My intermewed passage red-naped shaheen, Jasmine, took a truly spectacular pitch on a daily basis. She regularly waited-on for an hour or more while I ran the dogs. And, if the partridge ditched themselves in some island of thick cover far away, I simply waited until the falcon had regained her pitch, worked the dogs into the birds, and put them out again. Without a doubt, Jasmine's greatest attribute in this situation was her propensity for binding to partridge. An outstanding duck hawk, she routinely struck waterfowl to the ground. Somehow, she knew that knocking partridge into dense sagebrush was a losing proposition, one that would significantly delay her feeding. Shaheens have huge feet for their size and Jasmine's binds on partridge were permanent.

Getting Nomad entered was more difficult than I expected. He was game enough to chase partridge, but they just kept disappearing into cover after being struck. Oddly, Nomad would not readily go back up for a reflush. In fact, he kept flying back toward me to land on a nearby bush or my glove. I soon learned to hood him, wait 15 minutes, and send him up again. After a break, he went right back up. Curiously, he would stoop repeatedly at other birds. Perhaps his ability to connect with partridge, then have them escape, dampened his spirits to some degree. Some game hawks do have fragile psyches and Nomad was more sensitive than most.

In hindsight, I should have abandoned the nearby hills and looked for partridge in lighter cover, a situation that would have resulted in cleaner kills and reinforced his pitch. I don't think I ever flew a falcon more stubborn about not going back up after knocking quarry down. I'm sure this was frustration on his part, coupled with his determination to catch game he had hit, even if it had become buried in cover. But the team persisted and we eventually got Nomad entered to partridge. With exposure to game, his pitch got better, the dog work improved, and I was satisfied that my assumptions about this sporting match of falcon and quarry were justified.

I was not breaking new ground with this form of falconry. Plenty of falconers have pursued gray partridge with eyes tiercel prairies, with Les Boyd among the notables. Under ideal conditions, in the highly productive wheat-growing region of eastern Washington known as the Palouse Hills, Les has been highly successful hawking this quarry for many years. But it was something different for me to try, and reaffirmed my belief that this versatile raptor is well suited to classic quarry. I delighted in knowing that any bird between the sizes of sparrow and pheasant was fair game for this particular longwing.

I could envision tiercel prairies being flown successfully at red-legged partridge as well. We don't have them in Idaho, but I saw red-legged partridge in Suffolk and in Spain, inhabiting open country of primarily plowed dirt. Any partridge there that chose to run in the open, instead of flying, would be safer with a goshawk than a waiting-on prairie falcon.

Toward the end of the season, I managed to lose Nomad several times. It took me far too long to deduce that the coaxial cable from my telemetry receiver to the yagi antenna was broken, which explained why I got no transmitter signal and, consequently, couldn't recover him before dark. Occasionally, he would go off self hunting, although usually these excursions were unsuccessful and short-lived. It was during this period, when I could not locate him electronically, that he started coming back to the lure with a full crop. At first I thought it just a fluke, some odd bit of ingrained conditioning that caused him to respond to the lure despite having eaten his fill. But he did this several times, leading me to conclude that he liked me. The feeling was mutual. I never knew if he



*Nomad, Bruce's tiercel prairie falcon.*

would return in an hour or be gone overnight. Any falconer who has spent a sleepless night, worrying about an errant game hawk, can relate to my mental anguish. Arranging time off work to stumble mile after mile over rolling hills in the freezing cold is not my idea of recreation. But my reward was seeing a little brown blur materialize from nowhere, and pop briskly from lure to fist to be hooded.

Finally, I figured out the telemetry problem and we got back on track. Near the end of February, Nomad was flying great. Over a weekend, I took him to the Nevada border so my wife could indulge her fondness for nickel slot machines. Gambling is not legal in Idaho. At Jackpot, several casinos have been built within walking distance of the Nevada/Idaho state line. We reserved a motel room next to a patch of lawn so I could take Nomad and Jake along. I hadn't hawked in this part of Idaho in years, so I phoned Charles Browning, a local falconer, for some leads. Coveys of gray partridge spend most of the year within a home range with a radius of about three quarters of a mile. In that regard, they are dependable quarry. I generally begin my search for a covey in the last place I saw then. Charles flies big falcons and a golden eagle, so he pays little attention to partridge. As we talked on the phone, Charles

wracked his brain for a covey that might suffice. Eventually, he recalled running into partridge just north of the border. His directions read like a map to buried treasure, complete with an "X"

to mark the spot.

The next afternoon, I met up with Steve Van Zandt, who drove down from Twin Falls to see the prairie in action. It was a beautiful day, clear and cold with a cloudless sky the color of my blue '67 Volkswagen "Bug." Charles' directions led us to a field that looked like every other field for miles around. I was skeptical. All of the sagebrush to the east had been removed, replaced by an expansive plowed pasture awaiting spring planting. We rigged up the tiercel, grabbed assorted hawking paraphernalia, and turned Jake loose. A fence line ran north to south. Starting to the west, we tramped a stand of low sage that bordered on an adjacent farm. Jake quartered the ground at quick time, swerving back to meet us before racing off to search in the direction we were now facing. So far, no good. The other side of the fence seemed a long shot. The ground had been plowed in the fall and the furrows were little more than traps for wind-driven tumble weeds.

Up to that point, the outing was a pleasant stroll on a lovely late-winter afternoon, nothing more. Steve's stories were amusing and Jake was thoroughly engrossed in exploring new terrain. Suddenly, the tone changed. Out in the distance, Jake was on point.

Nomad was more than ready to fly, even though it was rather early in the day. He sat sedately as I slipped the hood, and then left the fist on a low outrun for a quarter of a mile before he turned and started to mount. The country was relatively flat and open - one could see for miles in any direction - and Nomad had no problem keeping us in sight. He was climbing to his pitch at a distance. It was then I realized we should savor the scene. The hawk was within sight and climbing, Jake was locked on point, and the season was drawing to a close. Standing 100 yards from the dog, the falcon circling in and out of the sun, I knew this was the most glorious day for hawking all year. Nomad must have agreed because he kept going higher, even though there was no wind, which is unusual here. Eventually, the tiercel's orbit



*Bruce with Nomad on a kill.*



*Bruce with Nomad and Jake.*

brought him overhead. Before we moved in for the flush, I reminded Steve to fix his eyes on Nomad. It was getting difficult to observe the tiercel and at least one of us should see the stoop from start to finish. We marched in front of the dog and up popped a pair of partridge.

As soon as the partridge sprang into the air, the tiercel began his stoop. The quarry were far out into the open plow, at least two hundred yards from any kind of cover. I had walked in to the dog from the nearest cover and both partridge flew around me in an arc, headed in that direction. Instinctively I yelled, but Nomad was already on the way down. A few seconds later, I spotted him at about the 600 ft mark, tucked into a tight teardrop. He was closing the gap from a spectacular pitch and coming nearly straight down over our heads. By this time, the partridge were at full speed. But there was no help for them. With surgical precision, Nomad simply sliced one out of the air, hitting it hard enough that the partridge didn't even twitch.

We gathered around to honor the kill and pay our respects to the dearly departed. Down in a deep furrow, Nomad nonchalantly plumed his quarry. The sun radiated on the horizon as we took in the sudden silence of the scene. This was to be the final flight before the molt, and I couldn't imagine a finer ending to the season. Yet I knew there was more to learn about the passage tiercel prairie falcon and I resolved to explore further its exciting potential as a game hawk.

# WOODHALL SPA INTERNATIONAL FIELD MEET 1997

Andrew Knowles-Brown

This year's International Field meeting at Woodhall Spa I think most people who attended will agree was a very successful affair, I certainly found the camaraderie to be particularly good this year, and I'm sure that had nothing to do with being in the bar until the early hours. I will write about only 2 of the 70 odd groups that went out on the Lincolnshire countryside, but it has to be said that without the cooperation of all the landowners as well as the extremely hard work put in by Brian, Ronnie, Val and Sheila to name only a few, this whole meeting would never have taken place, a great many thanks must be extended to them all.

Both of these groups were mixed shortwings and both were at venues in the Lincolnshire Wolds, the first group met on the Friday, day 3 of the meeting, and was led by Pat Coles, it was very windy and the Goshawks and Redtail were having a difficult time contending with the wind, the dogs worked well in the deep hedgerows and were able to flush a few rabbits but the wind made it very difficult for the birds to make anything of it. The most memorable flight if not for the right reasons was when an big eyass male Goshawk took on a rabbit and chased it across the corner of a seed field to another hedge, she then threw up and decided to try and land on an electricity pole, having scrambled between the wires she decided to hold onto one wire with a loosely clenched foot and proceeded to be kited backwards with wings open in the strong wind, I know my heart was in my mouth for what seemed like ages before she let go.

After lunch at a local hostelry a intermewed female Goshawk took a good hare we had spotted during lunch in a seed field and my eagle took a hare in a not very spectacular flight out of sight of the field being followed by a huge pack of rooks and seagulls, the best of the afternoons sport was spent ferreting in a very sheltered steep banking behind some farm buildings this produced some very spectacular fast downhill flights with the Redtail taking a superb text book rabbit flying from the top right down to the bottom of the hill. Another notable flight was the young Goshawk binding onto a fleeing rabbit being taken by the momentum over a small sheer drop letting go hitting the rabbit again at the bottom of the hill being kicked off, chasing uphill making 2 more grabs and missing it as it went down a hole, all to a round of cheers and clapping by the field.

The next group on Saturday day 4, was led by Matthew Kimpson and the venue was at the highest point of the wolds, a superb bit of ground with plenty of pheasants as well as hares. The weather was perfect for shortwings not a breath of wind unlike the previous day,



the morning saw us walking along some steep sided small valleys with plenty of cover for the peasants we were after, the 3 Goshawks were all having plenty of flights, and these longtails were not first year poults but good strong birds not looking to be caught.

It was a credit to the falconers and their birds that game was put into the bag, as well as a rabbit. After lunch we headed for a stubble field that was up and over a ridge, this proved to be where the hares were and we must have put up over 20 of them, the Redtail spotted one from a tree and nailed it good and proper, my eagle scabbled one and a pheasant, but the best flights were from the Goshawks they took these on with no hesitation and 2 of them were able to catch their intended quarry, we finished the day with tea laid on by the landowner, what else could one ask for.



# CENTRE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS



1997 saw the 30th anniversary of The National Birds of Prey Centre and to mark the occasion we were invited down to Gloucester for an open day. The guest of honour was HRH Princess Anne.

Such a day needed a flying display 'par excellence' and that is just what it had. Among the birds flown were a cast of Lanners, a trio of Harris Hawks, a Tawny Eagle, A burrowing Owl, a Black Vulture, and a Caracara. All performed perfectly.

Jemima took Princess Anne on a tour of the centre. Of particular interest was the Hawk Walk, the newest addition to Jemima's building programme.

To follow was a buffet and a chance

for all the guests to get together and chat.

Many well known people in the Falconry world attended including, Lyn Garvey and Nick Williams (DOE) Jim Chick, Ashley Smith (Hawk Conservancy), Jemima's father Philip Glasier, who set up the centre originally, Geoff and Naomi Dalton (Batsford) Tony Warburton (Muncaster) Derek Starkie (BFSS & Hawk Board) Adrian Williams (WHC)

It must be said that the changes to the centre, which have taken place over the last few years, now make it one of, if not the, country's finest Falconry Centre.



*Top Left: HRH Princess Anne & Jemima.  
Top: The new Hawk Walk.  
Middle: The display kept the audience rapt.  
Bottom: Front of the Hawk Walk.*

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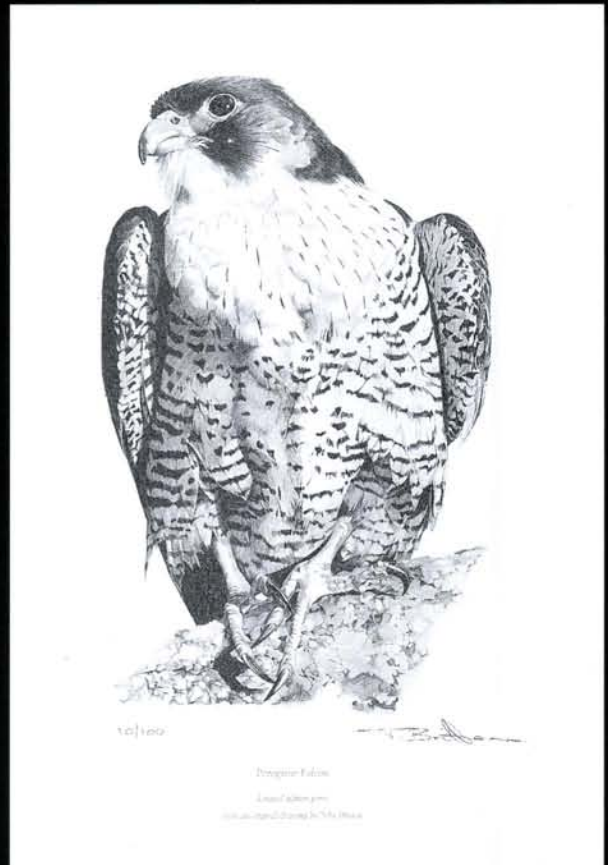
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## RAPTOR RESCUE

Registered Charity No. 283733

Earlier this year Raptor Rescue junior member Angie Harrison, from Rugeley in Staffordshire, was named as an award winner in the BBC Wildlife Magazine's contest to find the *Young Wildlife Champion of the Year*. The Trustees of Raptor Rescue and all the members of the Charity would like to congratulate Angie on her success and to wish her all the best for the future. Angie is pictured being presented with a carved wooden trophy and a cheque for £100 by the Chairman of the judging panel, Chris Packham. Here Angie tells in her own words what it was like to be a T.V. star for a few weeks!



*"Angela, this is the BBC Wildlife Magazine. You have been chosen by our judges as third prize winner in our competition."*

I was so shocked and amazed that I just cried on my mom's shoulder.

I was told that a film director called Jeremy Angel would be phoning me. He had been recording the judging and now wanted to film me and the other two winners for a wildlife documentary which will go out on Japanese television.

Jeremy and two of his colleagues, cameraman Adrian, and soundman John, came along to the British Deer and Oxfordshire Country Fair. They stayed with us for the two day event obtaining material for the TV documentary.

Bob Dalton was doing the falconry display at the Fair that weekend. Thanks Bob for your help and support during the filming and also for allowing me to assist you in your flying displays.

During my school holidays I acquired a Barn Owl, which I have since named "*Hannah*". So when the T.V. crew returned to do some more filming at home, they were able to film me working with Hannah.

We then went to Mick Cunningham's home and filmed at the hospital unit. Mick kindly showed me how to examine a Barn Owl, in case I ever have to take in an injured bird myself.

I would like to thank Mick for all his help and co-operation during this time and also for sharing his valuable knowledge.

The highlight of it all was the presentation of the awards at BBC Bristol in July. Chris Packham presented me with a beautiful carved wooden Barn Owl. Chris has a great love and knowledge of birds of prey and I enjoyed meeting him very much. If I work very hard, can I really have your job when you retire Chris?

As part of the award I received £100 for myself and £100 for my chosen charity, which is... guess what? Raptor Rescue!

Many thanks to our friends Steve and Denny who helped us during the filming at the British Deer and Oxfordshire Country Fair and last, but not least, thanks to BBC Wildlife Magazine for their hospitality and to all the others who have helped make my award possible.

ANGIE HARRISON



*The T.V. crew filming Angie at work on the Raptor Rescue display stand.*

Through my work with Raptor Rescue - fund raising and working with birds of prey - I decided to enter a competition in the BBC Wildlife Magazine, to find the Young Wildlife Champion of the Year.

There were a number of categories available to enter and I chose "Exceptional Fund Raising".

I explained how I helped to set up our 40 ft display stand, put out all the equipment, blocks, water bowls and so on. Also helping to set up and sell sales stock and doing the arena collections. All this after getting up very early in the morning to get to certain venues!

I sent off my entry and didn't initially hear anything until one day I had a call:




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 Tel/Fax: 01732 463218 and ask for Brian.

# 1997 HAWK BOARD SYMPOSIUM

## Jemima Parry-Jones

As last year, the symposium was held at Birmingham University, in one of their many meeting rooms, the organisation, food and venue were excellent and thanks should go to John Hill and his team from the Central Falconry Club for all the work that went into getting things running smoothly.

The day started with a short welcome given by the Vice Chair of the Hawk Board - me!

Then Jim Chick the Chairman of the Hawk Board gave a run down of some of the problems that the Hawk Board has faced for falconry and all raptor keepers, over the last year.

1. The Berne Convention - an ongoing problem with the possibilities of the flying of all non-native birds of prey being banned in the EC. Yes, that would include all non-native owls and many of our hunting birds of prey such as Redtails and Harris Hawks. It could even mean that you could only fly species that are locally native, so - Golden Eagles only in Scotland, Goshawks only where they are found in the wild etc.

2. New Quarantine requirements for all birds of prey and owls coming into the EU from outside the EU. This one has still to be dealt with and we are probably onto a loser as it's MAFF and they tend not to take any notice of the consultation papers anyway.

3. The problems with the ceasing of Lark Licences - well on its way to being resolved.

4. The flying of non indigenous birds and hybrids then reared its head in the UK and they nearly got banned. This has been solved temporarily, but an eye has to be kept on the review that is being done next year. At least we now have a voice on that review.

5. IAF - for those of you that don't know the International Association for Falconry. The Hawk Board was not a member of this body, for reasons to be found in the constitution of the IAF. This led to communication problems and some things nearly slipped through the net. However, IAF have generously agreed to put the Hawk Board on the Advisory Committee and I am pleased to say that NAFA has been invited a well. This can only be good for falconry in the UK and hopefully worldwide.

6. Jim discussed the need for the Hawk Board to now have an employee, probably to be called the co-ordinator, to field all the potential problems that the Hawk Board is dealing with, to link other groups, to make the Hawk Board more available in terms of information and forums and to assist with minutes, co-ordination, e-mail and so on.

7. International meetings, now the HB is on the Advisory Committee of the IAF we have the ability to attend some of the important decision making meetings, such as CITES and the Berne Convention .

8. The topic of fund raising was mentioned. The Hawk Board needs more funding to be able to continue protecting falconry and

the keeping and flying of birds of prey in general. We are desperate for help, if for example all bird of prey keepers gave a donation of 5.00 - less than a round in the pub, that would give the HB a tremendous kick start. There are supposed to be 30,000 Barn Owls in captivity for just starters!

9. Communication or lack of it from the Hawk Board to the outside was raised. Apologies were given but it was pointed out that the clubs that are affiliated to the Hawk Board do have the information to hand out to members and those people who are doing the bulk of the work are pretty bust and don't have a great deal of time to write this sort of stuff too often. ( I could be outside flying my Sparrowhawk right now as the weather is glorious). You can always contact us as well you know - communication is a two way street.

10. The last topic was the new European CITES regulations which are a perishing nightmare and could only have been written by civil servants. As there was to be a talk on this later the subject was only raised - not aired.

There followed a talk by BFSS political Officer Peter Starling.

He firstly discussed the threats that may come now we have a Labour Government, probably for the next ten years.

The main threats come from the alliance of the RSPCA, IFAW and the LACS. This.....trinity have funds - IFAW, the will to ban all forms of hunting - LACS and from the position of the RSPCA - a very sticky political wicket to be on right now.

Having dealt with the McNamara and McFall Bills and various others the BFSS is now trying to involve all field sports and get them working together - a difficult and ambitious plan.

Mr Starling went on to discuss that other job the BFSS tackles - lobbying at party conferences, the Countryside Rally in Hyde Park, and tactics for the future.

The upshot of the information was that we will constantly have to be on our guard for bills

such as the Foster Bill as the anti movements have a much easier passage with a Labour Government than that of the Conservatives.

The BFSS is also working on the Banning of all flying of birds of prey on National Trust land.

At the end of his talk Mr Starling opened the floor up to questions, of which there were many.

This was followed by a talk by Police Wildlife Liaison Officer, Inspector Phil Cannings.

He firstly discussed who the PWLO's are. They can be full time or part time officers, they can be of several ranks and although many have a definite interest in wildlife to some degree, there are the occasional officers who are just landed with the job, regardless of interest or experience. He then looked at the sort of problems that they have to deal with from badgers and all the issues relating to them, through poaching, dealing with bats (!) illegal use of traps, birds of prey through direct persecution, poisoning - this has the joint approach with PWLO's and MAFF, pole traps, fen traps, larson traps, nest robberies - both eggs for collectors and live eggs and young. They even have to deal with ivory cases (although there is a bit of a shortage of wild elephant poaching in the UK).

He then came on to the use of DNA in court cases to prove parentage of birds bred in captivity. He like the rest of us will be pleased when DNA testing has reached the stage where feathers can be used, rather than the more stressful blood testing.

The PWLO's now have anew blood testing kit designed for them and the DOE, it has been tested (NBPC helped, with Neil Forbes), and this mean that all blood tests will be regularised, whichever vet is used.

He ended up with an attempt to allay fears that the RSPB take prosecutions - although they may be involved as advisors, only the police are able to take prosecutions.

During his talk he told a good few stories and there were a number of questions at the end.

The last talk of the morning was David Le Mesurier, who gave an excellent talk on Incubation of Raptor eggs. He pointed out that although many people succeed in hatching eggs with little regard to egg quality and hygiene, that without any shadow of a doubt eventually problems would arise and they would be liable to lose many eggs due to lack of suitable care.

He explained that the three most important rules to follow for good consistent and successful artificial incubation of eggs were:

1. Eggs Quality.
2. Good Hygiene.
3. Weight Loss.



L-R: Greg Simpson, James McKay, David Le Mesurier, Phil Cannings, Peter Starling & Lynn Garvey.



To get good egg quality all that is needed is good founder stock - which in the case of some species, such as Merlins is very difficult as it is not easy to know the exact relationship of birds. The second requirement is a good diet for the birds, without this the growing embryo does not have a good start in life.

Hygiene in artificial incubators is very important, incubators and the rooms they are in must be physically cleaned first and then fumigated. This should happen on a regular basis. He said that the ideal situation even for people with only one pair of birds would be 3 incubators and two hatchers, this would give enough incubators to have different humidity set ups and to be able to clean units when needed.

Personal hygiene with the constant cleaning of hands and also items such as pens should be kept at the highest level.

Eggs should be collected using disposable plastic gloves and should then be dipped in a good egg disinfectant before going into the incubator room.

He discussed weight loss which is always a difficult to explain, especially with a time limit on the talk, however David is very good at bringing difficult subjects down to an understandable and he rarely leaves them until the audience understands.

He pointed out that hatching eggs is really not magic, it is a science, much of which is pure physics and much a case of common sense and first class hygiene. David also brought his computer software programme for assisting in getting the right weight loss in all eggs.

He ended with a plea to all breeders of all species of birds (not just birds of prey) - masses of information could be gained from breeders if only they would measure and weigh their eggs. If you really hate interfering with your eggs - what you can do is take the infertile or failed eggs and by injecting them carefully with water you can get the fresh egg weight. If you weigh and measure them send the information to David. He is trying to get all sorts of information together to help all breeders of birds. The other really poorly represented information is incubation periods. There is a surprisingly small amount of data on pip times and hatch times - even for the commonest of species like Kestrels, so if you know the exact date the egg started incubation and the date it piped and then hatched - let him know.

After the last morning talk we had a half hour of questions - mainly for the morning

speakers, particularly as the BFSS/ Countryside Alliance speaker had to leave after lunch. This was, as expected, an active session with many useful questions being answered.

Then followed an excellent lunch - we allowed 1 and a quarter hours for lunch to give time for people to chat and relax. During this time the Central Hawking Club organised selling raffle tickets for the raffle - which raised over £150 for the Hawk Board.

The first talk of the afternoon was a very interesting and amusing one by James McKay of the National School for Ferrets. He had the audience in gales of laughter with his excellent style. But the information was very relevant. He felt, as many of us do that Ferrets have a raw deal. He covered the origins of ferrets and their history. Then the different types of ferrets including names such as Hoblets, for vasectomised males. He went on to discuss housing and most importantly the feeding of ferrets, where like David in the previous talk he pointed out that your ferret is only as good as the food you are giving it. Many of the very commonly used foods, such as day old chicks and bread and milk are very bad for ferrets and can cause many infections. The best was either whole carcasses, which could lead to problems with flies, or a proprietary dried ferret food.

He covered some of the problems and diseases that ferrets get and generally all of us should have had a much better idea of how to care for ferrets and use them well, than we did before he started.

The main talk of the day and the one that was liable to raise the most questions for the poor speaker was Lynn Garvey from what is now called the DETR not DOE. She was covering the new European Cites regulations and Article 10 certificates. I am not going into detail on this one as it was a very complicated subject. For those of you who wish I would - you could have come to the symposium - this was the whole point of it, to raise awareness for falconers and bird of prey keepers to some of the issues that the speakers were covering. Suffice to say that Lynn covered a lot of ground. Many of the listening audience had no idea of the implications of Article 10 certificates and the questions were fast and furious. At this point I would personally like to thank Lynn for taking on this task, as explaining new and greatly unwanted legislation to people is a thankless task which she did very well.

Although most of us could really do without these new rules - including DETR, the audi-

ence at least finished the day with slightly more understanding than they started with.

We all then stopped for a much needed cup of tea and the raffle was drawn. There were a number of prizes donated by people including a generous number of memberships for the Independent Bird Register. To all those who donated prizes - thank you.

The last talk of the day was Dr Robert Kenward, who started with the history of falconry in the UK. He followed on with explaining about some of the work that he has been doing with wild raptors, with particular reference to the radio tracking that he has been doing with Game Species and also the mystery of survival - particularly in young birds. Both subjects were giving interesting answers.

He then moved on to cover some of the international scene on falconry including IAF. This body is now nearly 30 years old and has been working for falconry in the international scene for a long time.

Once Robert had finished all the speakers came up to the front and there was an hour and a half of questions. The whole time was used up, everyone had a chance to ask questions or voice opinions and generally the question time was felt to be very useful. The day closed at 6pm.

Much thanks should go to John Hill and the committee for what was an excellent symposium.

#### Footnote

*Thanks also goes to those falconers and raptor keepers who bothered to attend the symposium. Not one of you out there has any right any longer to complain about the Hawk Board - for two years now you have had your chance to go to the symposium and there has been a disappointingly low attendance. We can have up to 150 people and both years the attendance has been around 100. I don't want to any excuses about the thing not being publicised. All the clubs should have pushed the information and I did an article in the Falconers Magazine. It was up to you to get off your backsides and come and support what was a first class meeting, where any and all complaints could be aired and where the chance to ask questions of the panel of experts was second to none. I don't think there is one person who attended the symposium who would not have found it extremely valuable, interesting, informative, fun and downright useful and my opinion of those who did not go is low to say the least.*



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# R. David Digby. Falconer & Artist



The first time we really met Ron and Sheila Digby was at the Falconers Fair this year, and just like all the other "first encounters" I have had during the last few years with people, especially the names we all know, I was nervous. Ron and Sheila immediately put me at ease, and within about 10 minutes had invited David and myself down to visit them in Essex. We warned them we had four children but they laughed and said they were quite welcome too. Brave people. On our second visit we conducted an interview with Ron and Sheila, accompanied by a wonderful meal, and lots of Sheilas' home-baking. ( we thought we might do another interview with them next week). We were made very welcome and thank them very much for their hospitality

*Top Left: Ron with his 4 year old male Goshawk 1997.  
Top right: Ron with Reid Henry's female peregrine Princess, 1950.  
Above: Ron's wife, Sheila.  
Right: Ron with Julie, a female peregrine in 1961.*

When you hear the name Ronald Digby you probably just imagine him as an artist. An accomplished painter of birds and more especially birds of prey. But he is in fact a falconer of long-standing and has been a member of the BFC since 1957.

Born in Walthamstow Ron has been married to Sheila for over 28 years, and they have two children Ian and Elaine, Ron has been a professional artist for 25 years.

He always had an interest in wildlife, and particularly birds and art was his best subject at school. When he was 14 he moved to Woodford Green where he met

the man who was to introduce him to falconry and encourage his painting skills - David Reid Henry.

An artist and falconer himself he gave Ron informal painting tuition and Ron started painting seriously. He also looked after Davids' birds when he went away on holiday or hunting trips.

In 1955 Ron joined the army while here he met Ian Doe who introduced him to Philip Glasier and Mike Woodford. Whilst in the army he had his first peregrine falcon, Diana. He continued his association with David Reid Henry. In 1957 Ron left the army and in 1962 David went to Zimbabwe. Ron has made various trips abroad to study birds, in

1963 he and two friends drove from Calais, across the Pyrenees to Southern Spain in a brand new Ford Anglia, and in 1965 he toured the whole of Morocco. Here in Casablanca he met a falconer and encountered his first Brittany Spaniel. They went hawking, hoping to use the dog to point the quarry but all it could manage were large red and black lizards which were sunning themselves on rocks.

In 1975 Ron went out to Zimbabwe to visit David Reid Henry. He says he stayed longer than anticipated when he was befriended by an African who put him up for several weeks, he was a gamewarden and took Ron with him around the reserves.



*One of Rons Goshawks, Herod. He flew this bird in 1965.*



*Diana, female peregrine at army barracks in 1956.*

Ron's other interest include breeding butterflies, and Wildfowling his knowledge in both fields is excellent.

Apart from his individual paintings, Ron has done paintings and illustrations for several books; Tom Cades Falcons of The World, for which he did 44 paintings, parts of North American Hunting Hawks by Webster and Beebe, some for Game Hawking at its Very Best by Hal Webster, whom he visited in 1988, they

went to the Colorado Hunting meet at Lamar and then onto the NAFA meet in Amarillo.

Ron also did paintings for the non-passerine volume of Birds of Malaysia, a study of the aviformes of the Thai/Malay peninsula. For this he spent 3and a half months in Malaysia to study the diurnal birds and birds of prey.

For this book Ron had to paint the birds to scale, this involves measuring

legs/ toes/ beaks/ feathers etc and consequently several visits to the natural history museum. The birds painted by Ron included Herons, Egrets, Plovers, Fishing Eagles, Medium Eagles, and Kites. He also paints extensively for the World Pheasant Association.

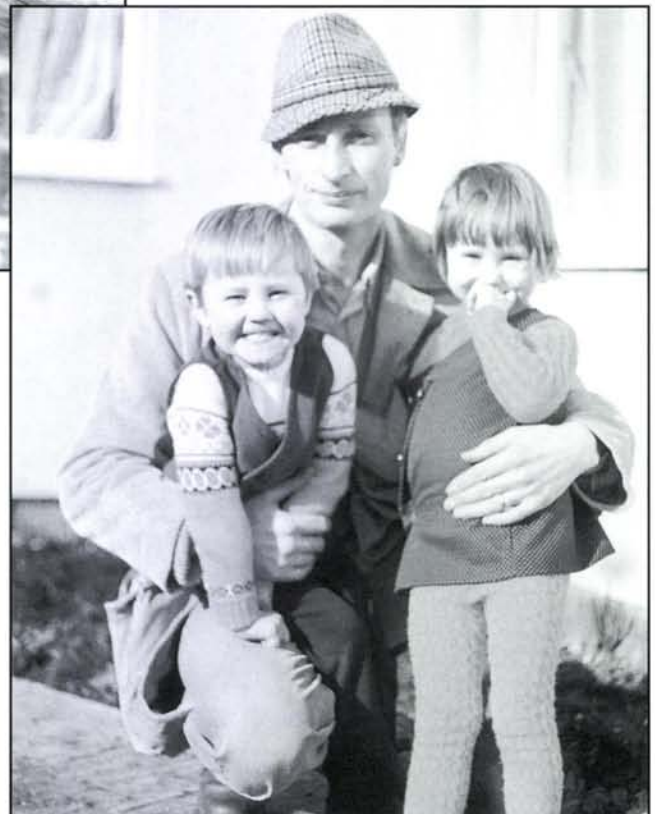
Ron's favourite falconry birds are peregrines and goshawks, and his favourite flight is peregrine at rook. I asked him who taught him to swing a lure and he said "Oh, that was Jack Mavrogordato, I used to visit him at weekends when I was in the army."



*Left: One of Ron's Sparrowhawks.*

*Bottom left: A Kestrel, this was Ron's first bird.*

*Below: Ron with his children, Ian & Elaine.*





*Left: Immature Gyr Falcon.*

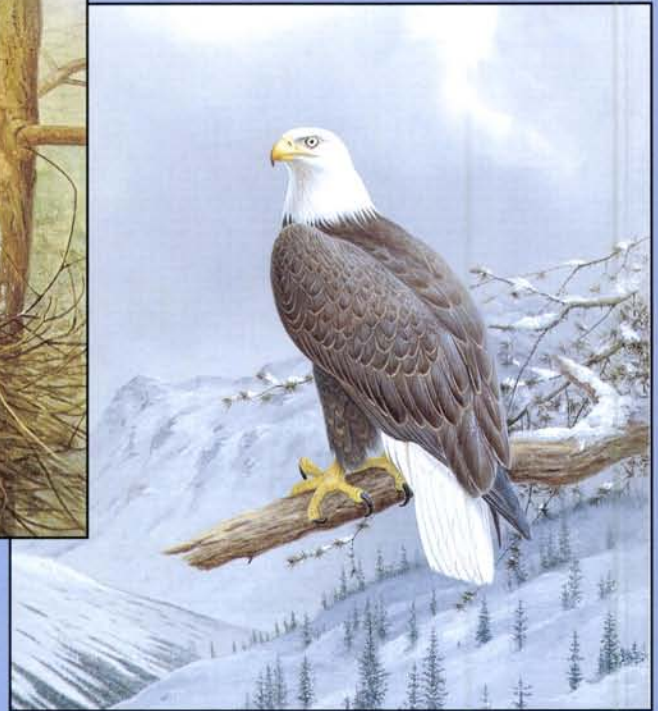
*Above: Peregrine Falcon on Partridge.*

*All paintings by  
R David Digby.*



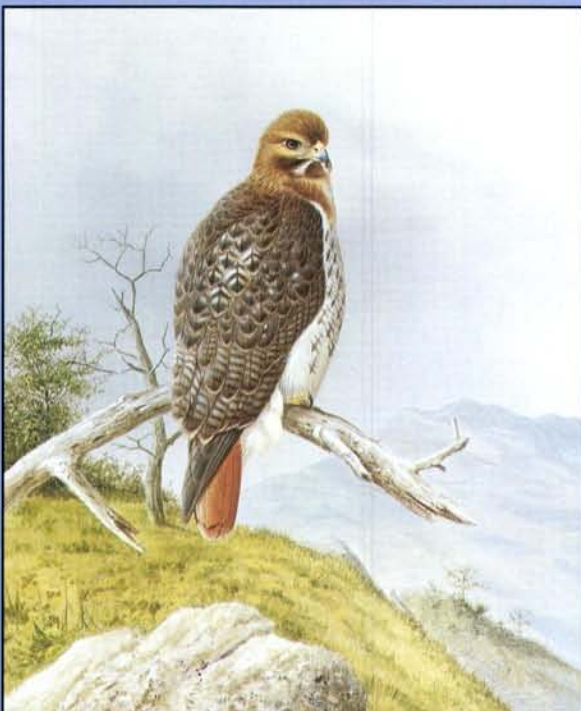
*Above: Sparrow hawk and young at nest.*

*Below: Red-tailed Buzzard.*



*Above Bald Eagle.*

*Below: Sparrowhawk on Chaffinch*



# THE BRITTANY - THE EURO GUNDOG

## PART 1

### ANN MASSIE

**“Brittanys do it first - Ask questions after!!”**

This is just the latest in a long line of car stickers, but the phrase does capture the spirit of the Brittany, a breed that might be termed the Ultimate Euro-Gundog, in the context of today's European Community. These articles are aimed at newer converts to the fraternity of BritBag enthusiasts, and also at increasing the general knowledge on the breed and the Breed Club. Clubs are not everyone's cup of tea, but the Brittany Club of Great Britain was established to promote the breed, and between the Committee Members and Club Members we have amassed a great deal of information on such matters as inherited diseases, breed lines, French breeding, methods of training the Brittany, characteristics etc. We also have some 15 years of experience of the breed, making it a substantial source of information for any new or prospective owners. Serving on the Club Committee there are Falconers, Roughshooters, Triallers, Agility Competitors, Obedience Competitors, Show enthusiasts - quite a varied selection of knowledge, and from all walks of life. All of the Committee use their Brittanys for at least two of the above disciplines and also have them as pets. Some have only one or two dogs, others have larger numbers.

The Brittany was brought into the UK in 1982 by Stan Smith, who is president of the Brittany Club of Great Britain. He first imported three unrelated animals, two bitches and a dog. These were all orange and white, and a second orange and white dog was imported soon after. Ray & Joyce Greenwood, Peter & Margaret Green, and Kathy Gorman all imported some coloured stock over the next few years, with a few other founder members also bringing further unrelated dogs to the UK. By 1990



*Kite P and Kozarker B. Backing the point.*

as being one of the 'objects' of the Club, referred to in the Club rules, can only come from using mainly French stock - from the country of origin. There are a few American bred Brittanys in Britain, but



there was a considerable gene pool in this country and further imports continue to come from France. Many Club members believe that 'breeding true type of Brittany'

these can look quite different. They can sometimes be larger, with paler pigmentation (as a result of coloured Brits not being used for breeding in the USA for long periods in the history of the breed.) The breed is also very popular in Eire, with again the majority of breeding stock having French origins.

Perhaps a short refresher on the attributes of the Hunter, Pointer, Retriever type of dog might be useful at this juncture, since many falconers may be accustomed to Spaniels or even Collies working alongside their falcons and hawks.

The Continental Gundog comes in various shapes and sizes. In the United Kingdom today there are about seven or eight main breeds being worked and shown. These include the Brittany, German Short-haired Pointer, German Wirehaired Pointer, Hungarian Vizsla, Italian Spinone, Large Munsterlander and Weimaraner. Other lesser known, but becoming increasingly popular, are the Hungarian Wire-haired Vizsla and Bracco Italiano. These breeds each have their own staunch supporters who believe that the dogs should be all-purpose, i.e. Gundog work, falconry, obedience, show or pet. No less the Brittany - with the addition that it is rapidly becoming serious stuff in Agility competitions. Here it's size is a distinct advantage, being able to corner considerably faster than even some collies! It's size also an advantage in the home where there is rather less mucky, hairy, wet dog to contend with during inclement weather on the hills and moors of Britain.

Pointing dogs have been in existence for at least 2000 years and probably much longer. The instinct to point is a basic one, and is extremely strong in the pointing and setting breeds. The body-scent of its prey would be sufficient for the dog/wolf hunting for food to locate the quarry. The hunter would then stop in its tracks to check on the distance, size and exact location of the prey, lower its body profile to 'point' at the game, and then, in theory, at any rate, to mesmerise and immobilise it, to go in and seize its reward. Other types of breed, such as sight-hounds, which also hunt for food, are not able to stalk and capture like this, and must rely on their considerable long-sightedness and speed.

In Greek Mythology, the origin of the distinctive point is attributed to the



*Kite P and Kozarker B*



*Kite P and Kozarker B. with Harris Hawk.*

Goddess Diana, whose sport was to hunt with dogs which took on immobility in the presence of game. It can be established that the pointing dog also existed in Ancient Egypt, with hieroglyphics having been discovered which show that the Ancient Egyptians had quite a sporting instinct and greatly enjoyed hunting with both their scenting dogs and their sight hounds. The Pharaohs were fiercely proud of their dogs and had collars made for them which indicated their differing uses. Of course, in those days, the bow and arrow, stone sling, or nets would have taken the place of the more modern shotgun.

Stan Smith indicates in his book *Bird dogs of the World*, that there could be considerable discussion on the origins of the name 'pointer', inasmuch as the Egyptian pointer-type dogs may have originated in a place called Punt in Nubia. Perhaps 'point' is a corruption of the name of this area, or perhaps it jointly alludes to indication of quarry. The Hound and the Pointer once established were recognised as having different jobs to do, and each one's structure influenced its ability to perform as at should. The Egyptians were therefore extremely careful to avoid breeding the distinct types together, in order to preserve the attributes of each.

The Chiens d'Oisel and d'Arret (bird-dog and pointing-dog respectively) have been well documented throughout French history, although there is some discussion as to the meaning and origin of the phrase "d'Arret" (The Egyptians began the use of nets to trap game, using such dogs to stalk and indicate the game, whether fur or feather.) The phrase 'Chien d'Arret' means in French 'stop-dog', whereas the phrase for 'of the net' is 'de la rete' - Setters and Pointers both stop on point, and both have been used with nets. (Thus the confusion).

The Brittany is a breed included in the Hunter, Pointer, Retriever group, and as its name suggests originated in the area of France known as Brittany. There is a small village in the area called Callac where there stands a statue of a French Cob horse. The old breeders modelled their stock on this horse as do still many of the current breeders.

Until recently, the conservative British shooting fraternity have been slow to take advantage of the all-rounder, the H.P.R.,

Weimaraner, and Hungarian Vizsla can all be seen in large numbers at shooting days, working tests and Field Trials. A German Wire-haired Pointer which is already Working Trial Champion and a Show Champion, is also now being Field Trialled. This indicates the range of different sports in which these HPR's can participate and excel. The Brittany, being a smaller HPR is only now receiving its deserved recognition, particularly in hawking and falconry circles, as a fast, stylish, intelligent and biddable worker and most appropriate animal to have in the home. Perhaps its only disadvantage is indeed its size, since in tall undergrowth it can be difficult to determine whether the dog is on point or merely stalking through the brush slowly and quietly. For this very reason the French Field Triallers attach cowbells to their dogs' necks so that they know that when the sound of the bell stops the dog is on point. It would appear that this action does not disturb the game. The same principle applies to handlers whistles, although voices will certainly put rabbits rapidly to their burrows and birds to instant flight! Perhaps we will see this method applied in British Field Trials in the future, where dense or high growing terrain is being worked.

The Brittany comes in a number of different coloured jackets and one of the top French breeders has written an article for the Club Handbook on colour genetics, this book is to be published in October. The colour most often seen is orange and white, in either clear colours or roaned. The first French Champion was a liver and white dog - Max de Callac, and there are approximately thirty livers in the UK to date. A few hundred unrelated black and white dogs and bitches were imported from France in the eighties and nineties in order to increase the gene pool, so this colour is also becoming more common. One of the

perhaps in the belief that such a versatile dog could only be a 'jack of all trades and master of none'. However, many have now seen the light, and the larger of these breeds have been in this country for some time now. G. S. P. .

most outstanding dogs in France over the past twenty to thirty years was Ska de Saint Tugen. He was a magnificent tricolour and stock has been imported into the UK carrying his bloodlines. We now also have a number of outstanding tricolours in Britain. One such dog, Fosscott Hautain, is worked to the gun along with several of his kennel mates, and has two Challenge Certificates in the show ring. One more could elevate him to being the first breed Champion in this country. Whilst on the subject of Champions, the first Brittany Field Trial Champion died last year, and is sorely missed by her owner, a much revered working trainer, Angie Lewis. A second Field Trial Champion, Bestobel Hiver, was made up last year by the Lamberts. A few liver tricolours have also appeared in breeding programmes and they are extremely attractive when evenly marked.

An orange and white Brittany mated to another orange and white can only produce orange and white puppies, regardless of the lines behind either of the parents. Whether they are clear or roan will depend on the parents' markings. Any other colour mated to either an orange and white or to another of the colours may produce any or all of the colour range, with the influence coming from both sides of the family tree. I am not a geneticist and it is a very complicated subject, but I have shown below a table giving puppy colour results from a selection of matings. Nineteen litters were analysed from breed records of registered dogs in the UK, with a total of 117 puppies.

PARENT COLOURS		PUPPY COLOURS					
SIRE	DAM	Number of Puppies	Orange & White	Liver & White	Black & White	Black Tricolour	Liver Tricolour
TRI	OW	7	0	2	4	1	0
BW	OW	6	4	0	0	2	0
OW	TRI	6	1	0	1	4	0
TRI	TRI	8	0	0	0	8	0
TRI	BW	3	1	0	0	2	0
TRI	TRI	5	1	0	0	4	0
OW	BW	5	2	0	2	1	0
OW	TRI	6	3	1	0	2	0
BW	OW	5	3	0	0	2	0
TRI	TRI	6	3	0	0	3	0
TRI	TRI	7	3	0	0	4	0
TRI	OW	10	7	0	0	2	1
TRI	TRI	6	0	0	0	6	0
TRI	OW	8	6	0	0	2	0
OW	TRI	7	0	0	0	7	0
TRI	OW	4	1	0	0	3	0
LW	OW	6	5	0	0	1	0
LW	OW	5	4	0	0	1	0
BW	OW	7	4	0	0	3	0
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>117</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1</b>

The average size of litter was 6, with the minimum being three and the maximum 10. (Incidentally not the record in the breed - this stands at 13, I believe!) Orange and white matings have been omitted as not being under any variable result.

As one can see, when mixing the colours, it can be difficult to predict the result, certainly surprising, and sometimes record-breaking. Amongst other, Monsieur et Madame Willems have produced a litter in France with all the colours, a photograph of which is in the annual Brittany Club calendar. In my next article I will go into depth on the health and welfare, character and abilities, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the Brittany.

# WIN This Superb Front Cover Painting by Andrew Ellis.

The painting on the Front Cover of this issue was painted exclusively for the Falconers Magazine by Andrew Ellis to complement the article on Nomad by Bruce Haak.

**Second prize is a hood block donated by Alan Cass.**

**Three runners up prizes of a copy of Bruces' book about Prairie Falcons.**



To enter simply write the answers to these six questions on a post card and send with your name, address and telephone number to: The Falconers Magazine Competition. 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer. Kettering Northants. NN15 5QP.

1. What is the latin name for a Prairie Falcon?
2. Approximately how many pairs of Prairie Falcons nest in the Snake River Canyon area?
3. What does Bruce find is the optimum flying weight of a passage tiercel Prairie Falcon?
4. What is the name of the prey species that North American birds of prey depend on?
5. What is Bruce Haaks favourite quarry to hunt with a Prairie Falcon?
6. In the title of his book about Prairie Falcons what does Bruce refer to them as?



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## CLARIFICATION

Dear Lyn,

I think some of your readers may be interested in some recent correspondence I have had with the DOE.

Your readers who run falconry centres may be aware that as a zoo they qualify for a reduce rate for registration fees of schedule 4 species, however the DOE have previously said that to qualify as a zoo they must also be a member of the Zoo Federation. I recently took this up with the DOE and pointed out that if one is licensed by the local authority as a zoo then by definition one must be a zoo and therefore qualify for the reduce zoo rate. As a result of this the DOE have now

agreed to recognise a zoo which is registered as such by their local authority as qualifying for the reduced zoo registration fees.

I wrote to the DOE on 23rd July of this year to clarify why we pay more for the registration of raptors than do people who keep other registerable species.

I received a reply on the 9th September, my original letter having gone

astray. The reply to my question was: "Birds registration fees are for administration costs and supply of rings. I understand that the fees were originally set higher for birds of prey on the grounds that birds of prey live longer than, say, snow buntings. However, the fee schedule is old and in need of updating, and we hope to review it later this year, although the process has been set back by the work involved in introduction of new CITES Regulations and fees for CITES permits."

I then wrote back and made the point that if fees are payable every three years what relation was there on the life expectancy of the bird and that even snow buntings live longer than three years.

The reply I got was :

"As I understand it, the point was that small birds are short lived and generally cheaper than birds of prey. Charges therefore had to be lower to encourage keepers of these birds not to evade the registration system. I am advised that this point came out very clearly when we last consulted on this issue."

As we are paying for the administration I fail to see where the value of the bird comes into the issue and also why should raptor keepers pay more for registration than others. We abide by the laws for registration, why should we pay more to ensure that keepers of other species do as well. I hope that the DOE will take this into consideration when they review the registration fees, and that the Hawk Board on our behalf will work closely on this with them. I would also be interested to know who they last consulted with.

In reply to Nick Fox's mention of

another method of calculating the fresh weight of an egg in your last issue. I didn't include this method in my article as the rate of loss during the four days after the egg is removed from the bird to an incubator has no relationship what ever to that which occurred under the bird. It is purely as function of the relative humidity of the incubator you place the egg in. If one takes as an example an egg whose original fresh weight is S66 and has a shell conductivity of 0.012471 g/torr/day and was incubated by the bird at 37.4 OC and a relative humidity of 50%. When removed on day 10 it would weigh 42g. If this were placed in an incubator at 30% Rh, four days later it would weigh 40.32g. By using his method the calculated fresh weight would be 46.2g, an error of 2.7%. Whilst the egg in this example was heading for 20% loss under the bird, many eggs have very high or low shell conductivity and it is these eggs which need to be corrected as quickly as possible. His method works fine for a normal egg, especially if it placed in an incubator near the humidity that the egg was being incubated at by the bird, it is less accurate than using Kws when it comes to high or low weight loss eggs. The Kw does not depend on the weight loss to date and so one does not have to worry if the egg is normal or not.

Whilst I agree with him that the Kw value varies from egg to egg. Within a species the variation is very small and by using a species specific Kw one can quite accurately calculate the fresh weight. As an example using a Kw for Lanner Falcons of 0.0005564 (n = 58, SD = 0.0000082) for an egg measuring 48.45mm by 40.56mm the fresh weight would be 44.35g, and the maximum error would be 1.47%. This is well within the acceptable range to hatch the egg.

Whilst his is a very easy method to use I feel that the extra trouble taken to measure the egg would provide a more accurate result.

David Le Mesurier  
Avian Management Services

## NO HOPE FOR BRIDIE

Dear Editor

I had just settled down to read the Autumn edition of the Falconers Magazine, when I came to an article sent in by J Pitcher. It brought back some sad memories for me. It was during the 1994-5 season. I had decided to go out for an afternoons hawking with my male Redtail, Boris and my Springer Spaniel, Bridie, to a small wood where I knew there to be a few rabbits. En route I had to pass a farm where I also had permission to fly. I looked over the hedge and saw a couple of pheasants feeding at the edge of a wood. As I don't get much opportunity to fly at pheasant I thought I would give this

farm a try instead of going on to my original destination. As I entered the wood I let my hawk fly up into the nearest tree and proceeded to work my dog through the dense cover. The Redtail spotted a pheasant and launched an attack but the pheasant was too fast and quickly made its' escape. I followed the Redtail and found the bird sitting high up in a large Oak tree, the dog continued to work the cover below. I looked up at the hawk and could see that he had his attention on something in the brambles below him, down he came and I heard the squeak of a rabbit, so I thought "there is one for the pot".

I made my way through the cover but could not see my hawk anywhere, my dog Bridie was marking a large hole going into the bank. I had never had a hawk go down a hole before so I dismissed the idea. I kept looking for the hawk, but nothing, so out came the tracking gear. From four different directions a signal came from the place that the dog was marking. After scraping away with my hand I found some rabbit fur just inside the hole. I whistled and called but no sound came from the hole. By this time it was almost dark. I made the journey home realising I needed help. A few phone calls that night had Adrian Williams, Mike Campsie, Dai Griffiths and Roy Bailey, all members of the Welsh Hawking Club, at my door the following morning, all armed with picks, shovels and spades. Also at the wood, thanks to arrangements made by Adrian we had the help of the fire brigade with a heat seeking device. We dug most of the day but the burrow was very large and old, plus large tree roots made it very difficult to gain ground, so I decided to try and hire a JCB, no matter the cost. Well into the hours of darkness we did not seem any nearer to finding my hawk so sadly I thanked all my friends for helping me and we went home.

The following morning I was back at the wood, tracking gear out hoping the hawk had found his own way out. I had a faint signal towards the holes again. I decided to phone the JCB firm again, out they came. After another days digging and with the help of a spotlight, we found the hawk some fourteen or more feet below the roots of a dead oak tree. He was stone cold so had been dead for a while. I picked him out of the hole and carried him back to my van, I was too chocked to talk to anyone. I now fly a female Redtail and have had her go down a hole but managed to get her out with the rabbit she was after, so it seems this kind of thing happens often. I would like to thank Adrian, Mike, Dai and Roy for helping me. Also the fire brigade, the driver of the JCB and not forgetting Howard the farmer who gave up two days work to help me.

Yours sincerely  
Stuart.



## TOWN &amp; COUNTRY

Dear Lyn,

For the last two issues of the magazine I have increasingly been feeling I ought to get off my bottom and write a dissenting letter about the heated views being expressed in the magazine about Hunting. The latest issue has finally made me put pen to paper.

I realise my views will be extremely unpopular but as keeper of birds of prey myself I feel a great unease at what appears to be the increasing desire in the raptor keepers camp to affiliate themselves with field sports per se. I guess this is because falconry is such a minority sport that people think they they have to stick with the fox hunters and deer hunters against 'the antis vile propaganda' to quote Alan Gates in the last issue. The whole thrust of his article was that the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill was being thrust on 'us' country folk by the 'mass urban population'. He then trots out the same old hoary chestnut about the sweating urban masses not understanding the realities of country life as refined over the last couple of millennia. This is surely one of the very poorest arguments which can be advanced.

How do we define the mystical difference between a country person and a town person anyway? How am I supposed to be defined, who lives on the edge of suburbia, but next to several hundred acres of National Trust estate? Am I qualified to have my views on hunting with dogs taken seriously? If I am, I will state that I am totally and adamantly opposed to it.

Knowledge about animals is not the prerogative of country folk, very far from it. Town folk may not exactly be on top of the blood and guts aspect of nature, but they keep pets in their millions. They also visit falconry centres and wildlife centres in droves, and provide a great deal of their funding. It is absolutely NOT in those centres' interest to start proclaiming an affiliation with the hunters with dogs. Like it or not, a substantial majority of people in this country thoroughly disapprove of hunting with dogs. They do not, however, look at falconry in the same way. No sensible person could. Going out with a single falcon bears no relation whatsoever to hounding another animal to death for hour on end.

The only reason why fox and deer hunting has survived this long is because they are (or at least used to be - a lot of effort is now being expended to prove otherwise) the sport of the nobs. Without patrician support, they would have long ago gone the way of badger baiting, cock fighting and bear baiting, as totally unacceptable to civilised people. And a great many countryfolk think this too - and resent being automatically included with the hunting fraternity just because of where they live.

Country people are no more standard

cardboard cutouts than the so-called urban masses. They are not automatically possessed of The Ultimate Wisdom About Wildlife. One has only to read the disgusting item on page 4 of your Autumn 1997 magazine, when a farmer was found guilty not only of poisoning Red Kites on the grounds that they were vermin, but also of keeping gin traps, pole traps and totally illegal poisons, to realise that some country people are absolutely and utterly selfish and irredeemably irresponsible in their behaviour towards wildlife.

And what about the immediate response of some hunting folk, flushed with the success of the Countryside Rally in Hyde Park when they unbelievably called on the National Trust to rescind its ban on deer hunting? Several years and thousands of pounds had been spent to prove beyond any doubt to a rational and reasonable human being that deer-hunting is savagely cruel. Yet through self-interest the devotees of the sport just wrote the whole thing off as nonsense. The fact that the bulk of the National Trusts money, just as the bulk of funding for the National Parks comes from the despised urban and suburban masses has apparently nothing to do with the sacred right of the unreconstructed lover of blood sports.

Tradition can never be used blindly to sanctify evil practise. The world moves on, and what the majority of people think is acceptable behaviour changes and for the most part I guess we all think it changes for the better. We don't have public executions any more (lovely and traditional), or stick up the boiled heads of traitors on city walls (very Olde Engliche).

Slowly but surely the Law has changed to try and ensure a more humane and equitable society. This is hardly the nanny state that everyone loves bleating about. The laws against child abuse are of incredibly recent origin. For hundreds of years it has been considered perfectly okay in these islands to beat, starve, terrorise, keep in rags, criminally overwork and take sexual advantage of young kids. As it was traditional, should we have left things as they were?

There are a great many more things I would like to say, but this is already far too long a letter. I would just like to say that not all of your readers are convinced that joining with the Field Sports Brigade makes sense. In my view to seek to ally falconry with blood sports like fox hunting is thoroughly unproductive and indeed positively harmful. Falconry has two unbeatable cards to play - its role in conservation and education, and the phenomenal beauty and grace of its birds. Let's concentrate on these two immense blessings, and abandon the confrontational stuff.

Yours sincerely  
Jenny Gray

## PRIVATE PERSECUTION

Dear Lyn & David

There is nothing wrong with bird of prey centres open to the public, and no doubt they have their virtues but the old line hacked out by some prominent individuals that bird of prey centre serve to educate and enlighten the paying public is the reason that prompts me to write.

They probably enlighten people but only those people who wish to be enlightened anyway. Surely then those same people posed no threat in the first place? Then what of the rest of the populace? Well, they couldn't give a tinkers cuss about birds of prey, having never seen one, likely to, or wish to. Their indifference is our bliss.

For the above reasons I'm a little puzzled why a few informed, influential individuals, deliberately bark up the wrong tree.

To illustrate my case I must first relate to a tract of mossland in my own area. Prior to the aforesaid mosslands private ownership when it became closed off to public access, foxes proliferated there, short-eared owls bred too. I have, since its private ownership witnessed, upon one of my trespassing excursions, forty dead foxes at one given time, hanging head down from the game keepers gibbet. One can safely assume that the same fate awaits any sparrowhawk or short-eared owl etc. The public are not, and have never been, the threat.

In the UK the hardcore of bird of prey persecutors, both past and present, by accident or design, are landowners and government, land development and modern agriculture. Money and greed, not the public. However I suspect it much more convenient to take the frustrated but cosy option and moralise to those people who can't bite back.

Decimation of the Red Kite occurred pre-industrial revolution, pre-proletariat. We all know the original reasons for the diminishing numbers of our remaining indigenous raptors. We also know the few guilty of those deeds. So why do the well informed crusading individuals kick the poor old cat?

I think it also appropriate to refer, from heartbreaking personal knowledge, to the deliberate persecution of sickening numbers of peregrine and Hen Harriers on certain northern grouse moors. How many birds of prey must be lost each year on private kept estates to the clandestine slaughter by landowners and farmers, perpetrated with almost total impunity, and what are we going to do about it? Open a bird of prey centre?

The public have done their bit keeping the turnstiles clicking.

Name and Address supplied.

# VULTURES

## Martin Foulds

Two particular Birds of Prey groups that I have admired and studied for many years are the New and Old World Vultures. Charles Darwin who first saw some Vultures on a carcass described them as disgusting. He soon changed his opinion when he saw them soaring high above on thermal currents and thought they were the most beautiful birds on the wing. How right he was!

Last winter I had the wonderful opportunity of flying out to Zimbabwe to meet Dr Peter Mundy, head ornithologist at the Department of National Parks. He is also one of the worlds main experts on Vultures, having studied them throughout Africa for the past 20 years. Trying to track him down in Africa was like trying to track Dr Livingstone - incredibly difficult. Two visitors to the Birds of Prey Centre happened to be friends of Dr Mundy's and put me in touch with him.

My time with Dr Mundy was spent in the bush, first studying the only colony in Zimbabwe of the very rare Cape Griffons (*Gyps coprotheres*). This has not been a breeding colony for sometime now but we counted the birds as they came to roost for the night and tried to ascertain how many were mature birds and how many were juveniles. We also watched the behaviour of the other Birds of Prey in the area towards the Vultures. A juvenile African Hawk Eagle (*Hieraetus spilogaster*) kept buzzing the Vultures on their rock, occasionally knocking them off the rock completely. Dr Mundy had never witnessed this sort of behaviour before.

The ranch where the Vultures' rock is situated has a high density of Raptors and we saw 17 different species just around the rock in one day.

We also visited the Matopos National Park to track juvenile Black Eagles (*Aquila verreauxii*). A study is being carried out by volunteers who spend all their spare time tracking these birds. They are trying to find out what happens to the birds when they leave the nest site because a lot of youngsters never return to the area. A light aircraft

is needed eventually, due to the area covered by these birds.

Sadly, the Vultures of Africa are declining dramatically through direct pressure from tribes who poison Vultures for medicinal purposes and modern ranchers who poison carcasses to kill jackals.

There is no financial help available to the groups which are trying to conserve the species. Dr Mundy, who was one of the founder members of the Vulture Study Group based in Johannesburg, South Africa, explained that I could help here in the UK by becoming Zimbabwe's main sponsor and starting up the African Raptor Research Group to raise funds to help with a number of projects. These are:

1. Monitoring the Cape Griffon Colony.
2. Tracking Black Eagles.
3. Birds of Prey movement and problems met: poisoning, shooting and electrocution.
4. Raptor community in the Matopos Hills.

Our fund raising is already under way with nearly 5,000 Zimbabwe dollars raised. Dr Mundy has got together with people who care about and study the African Raptors and formed a working group. The main aim of the African Raptor Research Group in the UK is to make people aware of the plight of the African Vultures and all other Raptors, and raise funds for the volunteers in Zimbabwe to carry out their vital work.

In return for a yearly subscription of £15 interested parties would receive a quarterly newsletter keeping them fully updated with the progress and work carried out; also, depending on response, a tee-shirt with the groups logo and car sticker. Obviously our main aim is to get most of the money where it is needed rather than spend on incentives.

Although Vultures are not thought of as the most beautiful of birds, they have a vital role to play (at the top of the food chain) in the worlds eco system and along with other African Raptors, desperately need our help and support.

Readers requiring any further information are urged to get in touch with me at the following address: M.J. Foulds, Head Falconer, Butterfly and Falconry Park, Long Sutton, nr Spalding Lincs.

Tel: 01406 363833.



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# RISK ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE LIFE TIME OF A RAPTOR

Whilst most raptors live a healthy life from start to end, realisation of the potential risks by the keeper can hopefully increase awareness, and allow the keeper to avoid or minimise the potential risks. The following article starts at the start of the bird's life and follows through, commenting on the main risks at the different life stages.

**Egg Health & Viability:** The health and viability of the egg is dependent on the health of the parents, (in particular the hen), the hygiene and safety of the nest ledge, and the handling, storage and incubation of the egg. Careful records of dates when eggs were laid, fertility of different clutches, hatchability and stage of death if this occurred. In the case of 'dead in shells' these should be investigated, by your veterinary surgeon, so that the stage of death, the presence of infection etc., can be detected. By proper investigation it is hoped that future losses can be minimised.

In naturally incubated, dead in shells, the most common causes of loss (ignoring disturbed incubation due to disturbance), are usually infection. Infection may arise at any one of three different times. Firstly if the hen is infected with a bacterial infection eg. *Salmonella enteritis* then this infection may pass direct from the birds ovary into the yolk, prior to the egg even being laid. Secondly, when an egg is actually laid, it is warm, and in the cooling process air is drawn into the egg via the pores in the shell. If on laying the egg is deposited in an unhygienic environment, bacteria may be drawn in through the pores in the shell. It has been shown that within 3 minutes of laying, the inside of an egg may be contaminated with bacteria such as *E. coli*

Attempted removal of eggs immediately after laying will not prevent this, but instead simply upset the female. Thirdly the egg may become contaminated during incubation, in particular if it is in a nest or incubator with an infected egg. The risk of this can be minimised by candling eggs during incubation and removing any non-fertile or non-viable eggs as early as possible. Incubators should be fumigated or cleansed in some other effective manner prior to their use. One should employ an all in all out policy, ie once a batch of eggs have been incubated, the incubator is emptied and recleansed prior to a new batch.

If broody hens (eg bantams) are used for incubation, these should not be kept past their second season, in view of the risk of Avian Tuberculosis which they might then subsequently pass on to their foster eggs/chicks.

Other important causes of chick loss relate to handling and potential storage of eggs, lethal genes and temperature and humidity control during incubation. If eggs are to be pulled, (to encourage recy-

## Neil Forbes

cling), improved hatch rates can be achieved by pulling eggs as day 10 rather than earlier. Eggs should be vary carefully handled with no sudden movements or jarring. They should be collected by cleansed (of preferably sterile) gloved hand, and placed in a clean soft vessel, for safe immediate transport to the incubator.. Although many poultry text books discuss storage of eggs prior to incubation, this is generally not practised or indicated in raptors. It is only ever done, it can only be done with totally unincubated eggs, and generally leads to a 10% reduction in hatchability for each week stored, (even in ideal conditions).

Incubation in itself is a specialised topic, which cannot be fully covered in this article. However one of the commonest errors made by inexperienced breeders is to try to incubate eggs of different sizes in the same incubator at the same time. Eggs of varying surface area will lose water (and hence weight) at different weights, so the correct control of weight loss is at best hit and miss, or at worse totally impossible. If a pair of birds keeps having dead in shell chicks in successive years, whilst those around them are breeding successfully, the main possibilities are a 'lethal gene', ie a genetic abnormality, which prevents the chick from surviving to hatch, or infection in one or both birds. Dead chicks must be investigated in order to pinpoint the cause.

**Hatching:** the assistance of chicks during hatching is again a subject in it's own right. The main point to emphasise is that it is quite normal of a chick to take 48-56 hours from pip to hatch, the temptation for many breeders is to try and interfere too quickly, often with disastrous results. The shut down of egg membrane blood vessels and the reabsorption of the yolk are critical and time consuming processes, and if rushed are likely to lead to significant haemorrhage, egg sac rupture or infection.

### Neonatal Care:

**Infection:** when chicks are born they benefit from few antibodies from their parents, their guts in particular are considered to be 'immune incompetent' ie they are not used to bacteria and have no defence against them. The gut must colonise with bacteria, and generally speaking its a question of 'First come, first housed'. As we are all aware there are good bacteria and bad bacteria, and all of our guts are likely to have a balance of good and bad at any time, and it is when this balance is upset that gut infections occur.

Many breeders are meticulous about food hygiene, but however careful one is,

any food will contain some bacteria. Whilst good hygiene is important, what is more beneficial is filling the chicks gut with 'good' bacteria before the nasty ones have time to get there. To achieve this one should use good quality 'bird' probiotic, with the chicks food for the first 10-14 days of its life. By doing this we have been able to show quite conclusively that average chick weight gains improve, but more importantly the incidence of enteritis (gut infection) and subsequent frequently fatal septicaemia's (bacterial infection in the blood stream), is greatly reduced.

**Imprinting:** is yet another whole subject in itself. Whilst the author is in favour of flying social imprint birds, such that the stress of training is reduced, and so that the bird can be flown at a higher weight, imprinting should only be undertaken after considerable study and discussion with fellow falconers experienced in the various techniques.

**Temperature:** artificial chick accommodation should have a temperature gradient, ie warmer and cooler areas, such that chicks can select their own preference.

**Fluid:** chicks will generally receives all their required fluid intake in their food, If however they are in very warm accommodation, or in sunlight, dehydration can occur. The chicks will appear sleepy, and have wrinkled skin, resembling 'little old men', if this is noticed, additional fluid should be added to their food.

**Food consumption:** some inexperienced breeders so not appear content unless the chick perpetually has a bulging crop. It is important that the crop does empty fully before the next feed. Although chicks of some species may sometimes need some encouragement to feed initially, if well stimulated they should be eager to feed. If they are not, they are either unwell or have already had sufficient. It is better to a give half to three quarter crop more often, than an over full crop infrequently.

**Nest substrate:** If artificially rearing chicks the nest conformation and substrate is particularly important. The nest should have a 'bowl' shape. This can be achieved by placing clean sand (it can be sterilised by preheating in an oven), in a plastic bowl, making a cup shape indentation on the sand, then placing a clean section of kitchen paper in the centre. The idea is that the chicks legs should be encouraged to go in under the chicks body, rather than splay out to each side. If chicks do suffer from splay leg, these are best corrected by placing them in a firm 'cupped' structure eg a section of PVC gutter. Strapping the legs together using micropore tape should only be used as a last resort.

Some breeders have, over the past used peat, wood shavings, sawdust, vermiculite etc. as nest substrate. Such substances should not be used as they will from time

to time, be ingested by the chicks, who being unable to cast them, will then suffer impactions of the proventriculus (stomach).

**Trauma in the nest:** It is crucial that full observation of developing chicks in the nest is possible. All too often it is not apparent to the breeder that a chick has suffered some injury such as a broken leg, until long after the event, simply because the chick continued to feed well, so all was thought to be in order.

**Canism:** Eagles in particular will practice canism, in other words if more than one chick hatches, the stronger, larger chick will push the other one out of the nest. Evidence of canism should be watched for.

**Inexperienced or disturbed parents:** It is not uncommon for young inexperienced parents, or those who are suffering disturbance, to fail to feed, or to eat their offspring. Careful observation will hopefully pick this up at an early stage, before the situation is critical. Often the best solution is to remove the chicks and allow a more experienced pair to foster rear them, replacing them if possible with a less valuable or important chick for practice rearing. If this can be achieved then usually by the subsequent year, they will successfully rear their own chicks.

**Nest ledge security:** the nest ledge should be rebuilt annually, to ensure that it is clean, it will withstand the weight of the nest material and clutch. The nest ledge should also be sheltered from any possible inclement weather and from vermin.

**Neonatal nutrition:** This is a large and very important subject.

**Hypocalcaemia, (calcium deficiency)** is still the commonest cause of developmental abnormality in young raptors. It can arise for one of two reasons. Firstly the initial bone development is determined by the calcium content of the egg, not the chicks diet. Hence it is possible for a chick to hatch with calcium deficiency, due to the deficient calcium content of the egg itself. This may arise due to the parents having been on a poor diet, the female having laid more eggs than she was designed to or is able to cope with. Calcium deficiency can also occur in a chick if the female suffering from a kidney complaint, such that she was losing excess calcium through her kidneys, ( this is not uncommon in very old breeding birds), or if the pair is being kept away from natural sunlight. Ultra violet light(which is present in normal sunlight) is required to convert Vitamin D3 to activated Vitamin D3 which is necessary for the proper absorption and metabolism of calcium.

It is recommended that if any pair of birds is likely to recycle after laying a clutch that they should have their diet supplemented at the recommended level, with a calcium and vitamin D3 supplement, as soon as they have finished laying their first clutch. A normal female bird builds up a reserve supply of calcium prior to egg laying within the medulla (centre) of her femur (thigh bone). Once a clutch is laid this reserve is depleted and should be rein-

stated prior to a subsequent clutch.

Secondly a calcium deficiency can occur in a chick, as a consequence of a suboptimal diet. All chicks should be fed on a complete carcass diet, ie the food actually consumed should equate to the full contents of the normal carcass of that species natural quarry in the wild. Although it is generally appreciated that 'day old chicks' are a marginal diet (ie barely good enough), feeding these does ensure that all parts of the carcass are fed. If conversely the breeder tries to do better and feeds whole pigeons or rabbit, the bones of such food are often too large for young chicks (whose most critical stage of development is 7 - 20 days) to consume. So if larger carcasses are to be fed, the bones must be broken up, in order to enable consumption.

Some of the larger, faster growing species eg Secretary bird, vultures, large owls, may also run into problems with apparent calcium deficiency even when they have been fed on a very good diet. This generally occurs when the chick has grown fast, so that although the calcium content of the diet was good, the skeleton simply did not have enough time to calcify (ie add calcium to), the cartilaginous ends of the bones as they were growing. (In birds the bones length increases by growth of cartilage, which subsequently calcifies, if it is able to). Such species should have their dietary intake restricted (and supplemented with calcium and activated vitamin D3) during their rapid growth phase. Such large birds should also not be in a nest in which they can put their large wings out of the nest and try to support their weight at an early age on their wings, as this will often lead to a distortion of the then soft wing bones. Excessive growth rates may also, very occasionally cause a distortion of the wing, distal to the carpus. This is a condition which is encountered in fast growing geese, it is termed 'slipped' or 'angel wing' where the bones are growing too fast. The result is that when the bird is about 3 - 5 weeks of age, the growing primary feathers start to rotate upwards and away from the body. If this condition can be diagnosed at an early stage simply reducing the growth rate, whilst strapping the primaries back against the body for three to four days, will lead to a full recovery. If the fault is not detected until later, careful surgery on the bone of the wing should result in a full recovery.

**Casting for chicks:** Casting should not be given to any chicks under 12 days of age, for some species (in particular merlins) casting should not be offered until they are over 20 days. This recommendation applies in particular to hard casting such as rodent fur. Young chicks are often unable to cast such material, it leads to a build up of casting in the stomach, causing a blockage and typically death of the chick.

**Choice of Breeder:** do not simply rush to the first or the cheapest breeder. Ask to see the breeding records of the parent birds. Check that the parents are not themselves inbred, ie that they are not broth-

er/sister or father/daughter etc.

Check which clutch bird you would be buying, first clutch birds are generally superior. Check how they have been reared, (with respect to imprinting).

Be certain that the breeder is genuine, and that the birds are legitimate. If in doubt ask for a signed declaration that the birds are legally bred by his/her birds and a state the parent bird's identity, preferably stating an identichip reading rather than a cable tie which might be altered. Confirm an understanding from the breeder, preferably in writing, that you may take the bird to an experienced avian vet within a given period (3-7 days), to have it checked, (perhaps including a blood sample), and that you may return it to the breeder if it is found to be defective in any respect within that period.

**Planning for the homecoming:** Prior to going to inspect any potential new bird, you must be certain that the accommodation, furniture, perches, travelling box, food supply and veterinary surgeon have all been arranged. Most importantly if you are a novice, you must appreciate that you cannot learn falconry out of a book or from a video. You must attend a recognised course run by a reputable falconry establishment. Preferably join a good falconry club (names are generally listed in this magazine) go and attend some meetings, and find an experienced member of the club who can guide you in choice of course, breeder, species as well as aviary design. Remember each and every falconer has his or her own opinions, do not rely just on one person, talk to as many others as you can, and supplement that with a good course, books and videos.

If you have an existing aviary, ensure that it is in a good state of repair and thoroughly clean. If timber treatment, or parasite control is required in the aviary, make sure this is done with a safe product at least 10 days before the bird will enter the aviary. Ensure you have a fresh supply of good quality food (see later). Before actually bringing home a new bird, check with the breeder what food the bird is used to and ensure that you have similar foods to offer, once you get the bird home.

**The travelling box:** Most falconers use a travelling box only infrequently. The remainder of the time the box is typically left to go mouldy in the garage or shed. A good travelling box, will be large enough for the bird to stand up in and turn around, but not much larger or the bird will tend to be thrown around in the box, whilst in transit. The box should be of sound construction and be capable of being thoroughly disinfected. There must be a slip proof floor (eg a section of carpet tile), which can be discarded after use, or taken out and washed. Ventilation holes should be provided at the bottom of the sides, so that there is not too much light at head height. If you want an inspection panel at head height, have a shutter over the outside of this (eg a flap of wood) so that the bird is in darkness except whilst being inspected, the shutter may be opened to inspect the bird and then closed again. The box should be designed so that the

ventilation holes cannot be covered up, if the box is placed against another, or the side of the vehicle.

When not in use the box must be stored in a clean dry place, so that it does not become mouldy. There is nothing worse for a bird than placing it in an enclosed mouldy box (full of fungal ie. aspergillus, spores), stressing it during transport and moving it to new accommodation. Such a bird is highly likely to suffer from aspergillosis, a condition which is most commonly fatal. Prior to getting a bird all keepers should have checked on the details of one or preferably two veterinary surgeons who would be willing and suitably experienced to check over their new bird or to treat their bird should the need arise. All veterinary surgeons operate a 24 hour service, however it is common to find one at most vets within a practice who are experienced in treating raptors. In the event of this vet being away when the dilemma arises, you may need to call upon the assistance of another vet. If in doubt as to where to find an experienced avian vet, contact members of a local falconry club and ask who their members use.

**Inspection of the bird:** where possible ask to see the bird in the aviary before it is caught up. Watch its' flight, its' movement and its' reaction to its' surroundings and what is going on around it. Aviaries should be designed and equipment available (eg. a long handled fishermans landing net with a padded rim). with the safe catching of birds in mind. Watch your bird being caught, so that you can be certain that no injury was caused during catching. If your bird has been caught up prior to your arriving, at least make sure you have the opportunity to check the bird over well before parting with your cash. Always ask for a receipt for your money. It is illegal to both sell and purchase a raptor without a closed ring (unless there is an exemption licence), so it is important to check for the presence of such a ring.

**Furniture:** Once the bird has been caught, for the sake of safety during transport, it is generally best to fit a new set of safe and suitable jesses, swivel and leash. Once the bird is boxed, the end of the leash should be tied firmly to the outside of the box. In this way, even in the unfor-

tunate event of another car driving into the back of your vehicle on the way home, such that the box is broken, the bird will not be able to escape.

**Preparation for travelling:** Birds should not have been fed for at least 12 hours before travelling, and should certainly not have any food in the crop. Equally the bird should not have been starved for more than 24 hours. The bird should not have had any casting at the last feed, so that there will be no yet to be regurgitated. If the bird did still have casting inside, there would be the chance that the bird might cast during transit and choke on the casting. When travelling goshawks in particular, it may be better to have reduced the bird's weight over the previous 2 weeks slightly, and perhaps manded it a little as this will help it cope better with the stress of boxing and travelling. There may also be some benefit in giving goshawks a calcium and vitamin D3 supplement the day before travelling.

Those birds which are particularly susceptible to aspergillosis (eg. Gyr Falcons), should receive prophylactic treatment for aspergillosis for 7 days before and 14 days after any particularly stressful procedure (eg. travelling, quarantine, training etc.)

**Position of the travelling box:** The new keeper must be certain that the travelling box is placed in a safe position. Be certain that the exhaust system is in good repair, and that there is no chance of carbon monoxide poisoning to the bird, where it is travelling. Be aware of other potential fumes or noxious substances. Beware of the effects of sunlight. For you, driving at the front of the vehicle, with the air conditioning on, the temperature may be very different to that experienced by the bird in the back of an estate car, with the sun pouring down on the box, and in the total absence of any air circulation around the bird's immediate environment.

**Arrival at home:** Most owners of new birds want to immediately tether the new bird on the front lawn so that they can admire it. This temptation should be resisted. In most situations the correct line of action is to place the bird, loose, in an aviary, and allow it to settle after it's journey and adjust to the new surroundings. All these events, and particularly training cause stress to the bird, the effect of each

stress is additive, such events should, if possible, be separated so that the stress is never excessive at any one time.

**New Bird - Quarantine:** Many keepers do not understand the essential principles of quarantine. Quarantine should not apply just to birds entering your premises from abroad, but also to all new birds which you acquire. All new birds should be isolated in separate, readily cleanable accommodation for 30 days. This allows time for veterinary checks to be carried out, and time for diseases which the bird was incubating to become apparent, prior to mixing with your collection and infecting them. Wild injured birds should always be kept separate from your won birds.

**New Bird veterinary check:** All new birds, even when acquired by experienced falconers, should be subjected to a health check. This should certainly include a full physical examination, a faecal (mote) test for parasites and preferably a blood test. In this way if there is any underlying illness which is not clinically evident, it can be detected and the bird returned or treated prior to the bird becoming ill. It is sensible to have the bird implanted with an identichip at this examination. If your bird were to be stolen, any thief is likely to cut off the ring( unless schedule 4) immediately. By having your bird fitted with an identichip, if you can find your bird, or if it turns up without a legitimate owner, you can prove ownership. As most bird thefts are sadly carried out by people who know us, it is good to publicise amongst ones friends that your birds are chipped. This is one good argument for having club chipping sessions, so everyone knows whose birds are chipped. Furthermore, signs should be erected on your birds aviary (door) stating the birds are chipped. This should act as a deterrent to theft in the first place.

**In the next issue Neil will be talking about Nutrition, Avairy siting, and construction and perching.**

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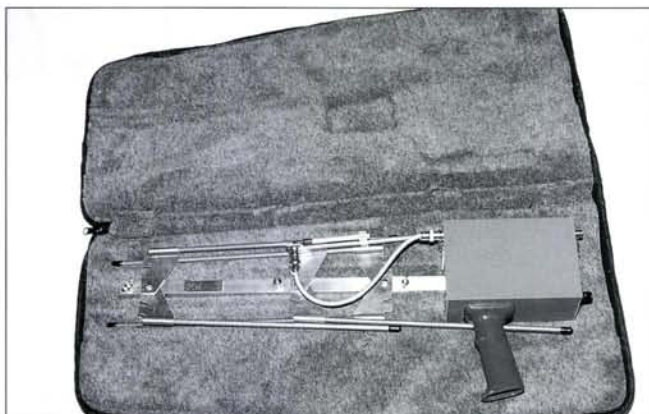
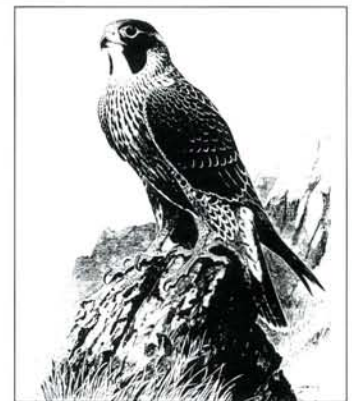
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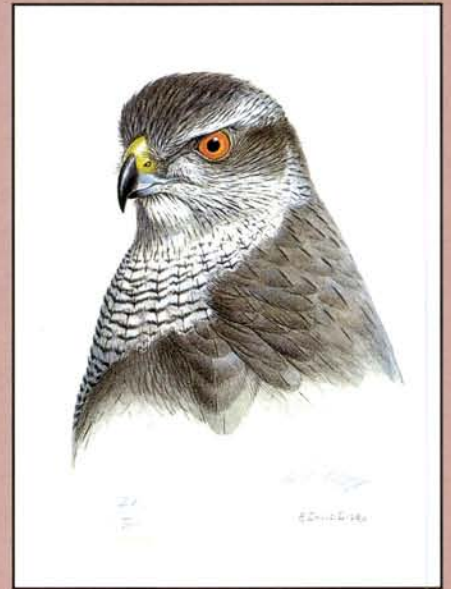
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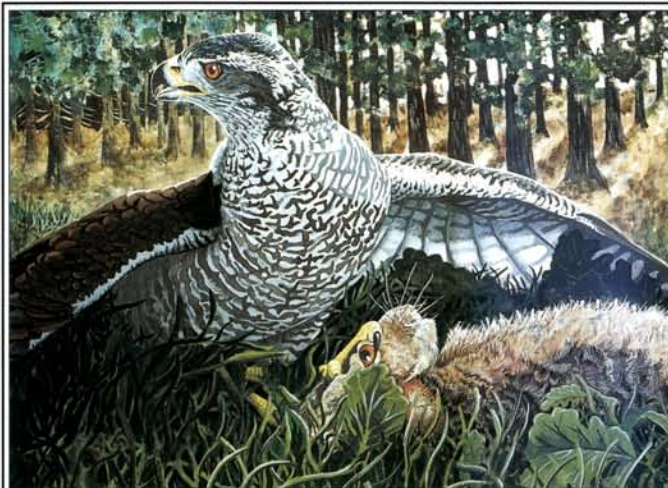
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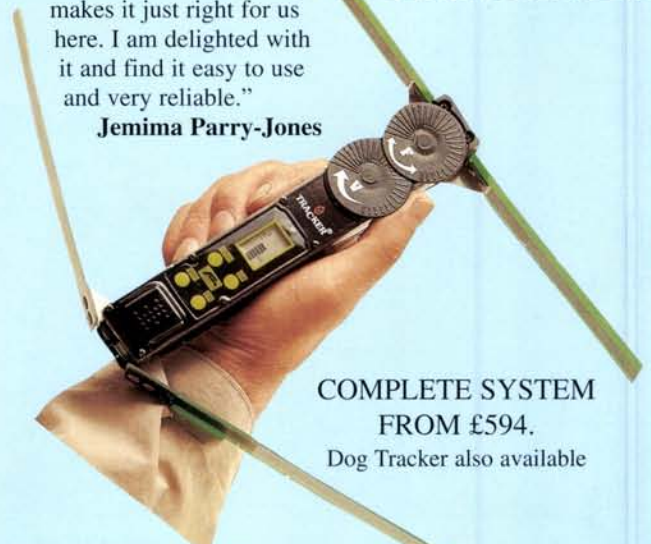
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