

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

Spring 1998

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**OBSERVATIONS
ON HARRIS
HAWKS**

**FERRETS -
HEALTH &
WELFARE**

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American Falconry is a quarterly magazine that is devoted entirely to the sport of falconry and is produced by practicing falconers. Each issue has 70-100 glossy pages, outstanding full color photos, and is perfect bound. Contents include the latest techniques in training, captive breeding, and dog handling. Additional articles contain humor, adventure, conservation news, personal viewpoints, and information for both the expert and beginner. Well known authors and a fine departmental writing staff have set a new standard for falconry publications in the 90's. Our new creative approach will be a welcome addition to your library. **Subscribe today!**

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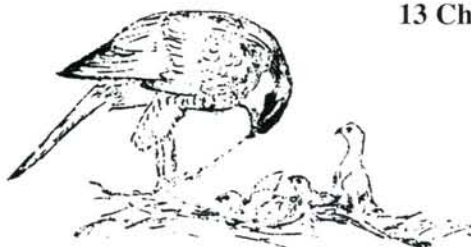
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COMMENT

Hello All,

Well, one season nearly over, and another about to start. It seems, well here at least, that time flies past, marked only by the falconry calendar. In our case it is flying & breeding, and of course the magazine, ever present to mark the quarters off.

We have a pretty full magazine for you again. This last few issues I have worried that I haven't got enough copy to fill it, but at the last minute we always end up taking something out as we have too much. Mind you, don't let that stop you writing, otherwise we really won't have enough.

This issue is full, again, of the crisis facing hunting with dogs, many people have taken the time and trouble to put pen to paper, asking for your support. Don't let their pleas be in vain. However you feel about fox and stag hunting, a quick read thru' the bill (Pge 11) should convince you that this is only the tip of the iceberg. All dogs which are used in any way to flush mammals will be affected. So no more using a dog to push up rabbits or hares for your Goshawk, Redtail, Harris Hawk, Buzzard etc.

We have another request on page 6 for more support for the HB Symposium. David and I have attended both and they really are good. So get off your bums and show the HB you appreciate and support them.

AND BE THERE IN LONDON ON MARCH 1ST. WE WILL.

David & Lyn

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COVER: Hobby, belonging Jemima Parry-Jones. Photo D. Wilson.

LOST FOUND & STOLEN

FOUND

Barn Owl	2573BC92U	Harris Hawk	3RJT97W
Barn Owl	6900U95	Harris Hawk	10173W
Barn Owl	2841BC97	Harris Hawk	3WHC96V
Barn Owl	5192BC96U	Harris Hawk	8660W
Barn Owl	1271BC97U	Harris Hawk	3232W
Barn Owl	2421OA93	Harris Hawk	Not Known
Barn Owl	7504BC95U	Harris Hawk	UK77164
Barn Owl	2716BC96U	Kestrel	20SFC
Barn Owl	5903892U	Kestrel	1RM97
Bengal Eagle Owl	NIL	Kestrel	AB976
Bengal Eagle Owl	NIL	Lanner	IBR611W
Buzzard	UK??521	Peregrine	13844W
Buzzard	?97? (Breeders Ring)	Peregrine	5252V
Harris Hawk	??EG96W	Peregrine	12444W
Hawk	??26W DOE Ring)	Pere x Lanner	15107W
Harris Hawk	??769W (DOE Ring)	Pere x Saker	7682V
Harris Hawk	NIL	Pere x Saker	13159W
Kestrel	?SCOT97S	Pere x Saker	9339V
Kestrel	??473S (DOE Ring)	Pere x Saker	15604W
Kestrel	??97SBS	Prairie Falcon	Not Known
Lanner	??201W (DOE Ring)	Redtail	0882X
Redtail	No Rings	Redtail	UK84922
Redtail	??45Y (DOE Ring)	Redtail	2KN96Y
Saker	?DRW97	Redtail	1623Y
Sparrowhawk	EA??143	Redtail	Not Known
Sparrowhawk	??RPR96R	Redtail	Not Known
Unknown	??MBC97V	Saker	10309W
Barn Owl	5451OA96U	Saker	GBJ97

LOST

Barn Owl	3341BC97U
Barn Owl	5081 (No other details)
Coopers Hawk	RC2
Goshawk	4971V & 14852W
Goshawk	5789V
Goshawk	UK89392
Gyr X Peregrine	2525V
Gyr x Peregrine	16006W
Harris Hawk	IBR1015W
Harris Hawk	ND195
Harris Hawk	80570 (No other details)

Harris Hawk	3RJT97W
Harris Hawk	10173W
Harris Hawk	3WHC96V
Harris Hawk	8660W
Harris Hawk	3232W
Harris Hawk	Not Known
Harris Hawk	UK77164
Kestrel	20SFC
Kestrel	1RM97
Kestrel	AB976
Lanner	IBR611W
Peregrine	13844W
Peregrine	5252V
Peregrine	12444W
Pere x Lanner	15107W
Pere x Saker	7682V
Pere x Saker	13159W
Pere x Saker	9339V
Pere x Saker	15604W
Prairie Falcon	Not Known
Redtail	0882X
Redtail	UK84922
Redtail	2KN96Y
Redtail	1623Y
Redtail	Not Known
Redtail	Not Known
Saker	10309W
Saker	GBJ97
Saker	3702RR97W
Saker	SAKER397
Saker	XMROBB
Saker	?GJB97X/W
Saker	80DW
Tawny Owl	Not Known

STOLEN

Barn Owl	8051OA93U
European Eagle Owls	366 & 367 (Orange Rings)
Goshawk	16324W
Kestrel	3443S
Tawny Eagle	PFD97Z

POLICE REQUEST HELP IN FIGHT AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

Northamptonshire Police are asking for help in their fight against poaching and wildlife offences.

County Wildlife liaison officers are compiling lists of representatives of wildlife groups, fisheries and shoots, who they can contact for local information and intelligence when offences have been committed.

"With the assistance of these groups we would hope for a reduction in these types of offences."

Groups, which can help by supplying a contact name & number, should write to: PC Rod Sanderson, The Police House, 64 Thrapston Road, Finedon, Wellingborough, Northants. NN9 5DG

ARTISTIC BY NATURE?

RSPB & SWLA JOIN FORCES FOR JUNIOR PAINTING COMPETITION

Budding Picassos and Constables have a chance to enter a prestigious wildlife art competition run by the YOC, junior membership of the RSPB, in association with the Society of Wildlife Artists (SWLA).

WildArt '98 is supported by Vauxhall Motors UK and is open to all young people aged 18 and under, and there are three age categories: 8 and under; 9 to 12; and 13 to 18.

Winners of each group will get their pictures published on the cover of a YOC magazine, or inside the RSPB's magazine, Birds. They will also get their work displayed at the SWLA summer exhibition in London, plus an expenses paid trip to see their work hanging next to some of the best wildlife art around. The winners will also receive a box of Derwent studio art pencils valued at £75, courtesy of ACCO UK Ltd. There is also a host of prizes for runners-up.

Entrants are asked to draw, paint or make a collage of a bird, which will look great on the front of the magazine. The closing date for completed entries is March 15th 1998.

All entries must follow the WildArt rules, so please write to: YOC WildArt '98, Dept BFB 3507, the Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL. All who write in will also get a copy of the Beak Fun Book, which is full of games and useful facts.

Peter Holden, YOC national organiser, said: "WildArt '98 gives young people a chance to harness their creative abilities with their interest in wildlife. It is also a lot of fun and there are some great prizes too?"

THE 1998 BRITISH FALCONRY & RAPTOR FAIR

The decision by The Earl Spencer to bury his sister, Diana, Princess of Wales in the park at Althorp has created an enormous, unprecedented pressure from the general public to visit the park. To stage the 1998 Falconry Fair at Althorp would prove impossible for many reasons and therefore, a new site has had to be found.

The new venue at Offchurch, Leamington Spa should prove popular for everyone. It is situated right in the heart of Warwickshire, just 2 miles from the Royal Show Ground at Stoneleigh, which itself is in the centre of England and well served by the motorway network from all parts.

The stature of the event is such that it attracts visitors and exhibitors from literally all around the globe. No other raptor related gathering comes close to attracting the sort of crowds enjoyed by this annual

event which caters for everyone interested in birds of prey and falconry.

Those giving thought to taking up the sport, beginners and old experienced hands can all find something at this unique gathering of interests whether it be furniture and equipment, original wildlife art or just meeting old friends.

See you there on 24th/25th May, Offchurch Park, Leamington Spa.



Training Gundogs For Falconry on Sunday, 26 April '98.

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

Details Guy or Marian Wallace
Tel: 01874 754311

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT 3rd INTERNATIONAL RAPTOR BIOMEDICAL CONFERENCE AUGUST 9-11, MIDRAND, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

The Scientific Committee of the 3rd International Raptor Biomedical Conference is happy to announce the preliminary programme of this conference which is scheduled as part of the Vth World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls (August 4-11) and close to the International Ornithological Conference (August 16-22). The conference will start with practical labs on raptor orthopaedics, raptor ophthalmology and raptor rehabilitation techniques on Sunday August 9. The main conference is scheduled for August 10 and 11. On Monday evening August 10 there will be a poster and free communications session. Proposals for free communications and posters can be sent to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee: J.T. Lumeij, Division of Avian and Exotic Animal Medicine, University Utrecht, Yalelaan 8, 3584 CM Utrecht, The Netherlands, e-mail:

J.T.Lumeij@ukg.dgk.ruu.nl

For further information on registration, hotel accommodation, the social program and field trips please contact Local Arrangements Manager Dr. Gerhard H. Verdoorn, P.O. Box 72155, Parkview 2122, South Africa. Tel +27-11-646-4629/8617, Fax + 27-11-646-4631, E-mail: neshier@global.co.za. He can also be contacted for information on the Vth World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls (August 4-11). Please consult the websites of the respective conferences

<http://www.uniud.it/DSPA/wildvet/rapmed/rapmed.htm> and

<http://ewt.org.za/raptor/conference/> for updates on programme and registration procedures.

For information on the International Ornithological Conference (August 16-22) please contact BirdLife South Africa in Durban, Dr. Aldo Berutti E-mail: aldo@birdlife.org.za. or the website http://www.ioc.org.za/othr_org.html

Preliminary Scientific Programme Sunday August 9

Practical Sessions (Wet labs)

Ophthalmology of birds of prey and owls (R. Korbel)
Orthopaedics in raptors (P.T. Redig)
Rehabilitation techniques in raptors? (No further information available at this moment)

Monday August 10

Opening by chairman of Scientific Committee (J.T.Lumeij)

Pathology and Microbiology I (chair: J.E. Cooper)

Neoplasms of birds of prey (N.Forbes, J.E.Cooper, and R.J.Higgins)
The pathology and diseases of the Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco punctatus*) (C.J.Dutton, J.E. Cooper, and A.F.Allchurch)
Detection of *Mycoplasma* spp. in raptorial

birds in Germany (M.Lierz, R. Schmidt, T.Göbel, and M. Runge)

Chlamydia psittaci in Strigiformes and Falconiformes in Austria (U. Pohl)

Pathology and Microbiology II (chair: O. Krone)

Newcastle disease virus in raptors (R.J. Manvell, U. Wernery, D.J. Alexander)

Clostridial enterotoxaemia: an emerging disease in Falconiformes in the United Arab Emirates (U.Wernery, J.Kinne, A. Sharma, H. Boehmel, J. Samour).

Endoparasites of raptors: A review and update.(D.Lacina, and D.M.Bird)

Parasitological findings in captive falcons (*Falco* spp) in the United Arab Emirates.(J.Samour)

Environmental Disease and Mortality Factors (chair: R.E. Kenward)

The probable reasons for the decline of the Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) in Russia. (V.Belik)

Diseases and causes of death in captured and free-living Bearded Vultures (*Gypaetus barbatus aureus*) (A.Scope and H.Frey)

Mortality of nestlings in Bonelli's Eagles (*Hieraetus fasciatus fasciatus*) in Algarve, Portugal - A multi disciplinary approach to the problem (J.M.Blanco, U. Höfle, L. Palma, and P.Melo)

Trichomoniasis in American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) and two Eastern Screech Owls (*Otus asio*).(S.N.Ueblacker)

Management of Captive Raptors and Falconry Birds (chair: J.D. Remple)

Veterinary implications during the hunting trip.(J.H.Samour)

Medicine and Therapeutics (chair: J.T. Lumeij)

(Patho)physiology, diagnosis and treatment of renal function disorders in birds of prey.(J.T. Lumeij)

Reconsideration of abnormal leucocyte and differential white blood cell counts as aids to diagnosis of different disease conditions in free-living birds of prey. (U.Höfle, and J.M.Blanco)

Considerations on the production of a 'safe and efficacious' falcon herpes virus vaccine (J.D.Remple)

Serological changes in Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) with Aspergillosis (B. Gollob)

Monday evening

Free Communications and Poster Presentations (chair: J.D. Remple)

Trichomonas sp. and falcon health in the United Arab Emirates (T.C.Bailey, J.H. Samour, and T.A.Bailey)

Reconciling conservation interests with health and medical issues of the Laggart Falcon (*Falco jugger*) in Pakistan (T.A.Bailey, N.C.Fox, A. Mukhtar, and J.H.Samour)

Herpes virus infections in raptors (R.E.Cough, and U. Wernery)

Raptor diseases in zoological institutions

(C.Bertram)

Assessing rehabilitation success of raptors through band returns (M.Martell, J. Goggin, P.T. Redig)

Ecology of helminths of raptors (O. Krone)

Tuesday August 11

Surgery and Anaesthesia (chair: P.T. Redig)

Advances in the treatment of avian pododermatitis (bumblefoot) using antibiotic-impregnated polymethylmethacrylate beads.(J.D.Remple and N.A.Forbes)

Osteology of the falcon wing (P. Zucca and J.E.Cooper)

Ophthalmology of birds of prey (R. Korbel)

Orthopaedic techniques in raptors (P.T. Redig)

Tendon repair and replacement in the pelvic limb in birds of prey I. Anatomical considerations.(N.H. Harcourt-Brown)

Tendon repair and replacement in the pelvic limb in birds of prey II. Surgical aspects. (N.H. Harcourt-Brown)

Rehabilitation and post-release monitoring and survival (chair: D. Csermely)

Aspects of management within the European Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus aureus*) reintroduction project (H. Frey)

Outdoor housing and release conditioning of raptors (S.N.Ueblacker)

Fitness levels as a determining factor in the survival of rehabilitated raptors released back into the wild (P.Holz, and R.Naisbitt)

Intra abdominal implantation of a multi sensor telemetry system in a free-flying Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus fulvus*).(C.Walzer, R. Bögel, R. E. Karl, G. Fluch, and R. Prinzing)

Rehabilitation of birds of prey and their survival after release (D. Csermely)

Breeding and Genetics (chair: N. Fox)

DNA-sex determination and sex-related variation in morphometric, hematologic and biochemical parameters in Iberian Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca adalberti*) and Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus fasciatus*) (U. Höfle, J.M. Blanco, and M.Wink)

Legal and Ethical Aspects (chair: M.E. Cooper)

Legal considerations in the collection and transportation of diagnostic and research specimens from raptors (M.E. Cooper)

Health monitoring of birds of prey - the ethical and legal arguments for non-invasive or minimally invasive techniques (J.E. Cooper)

Closing remarks by Chairman of Organizing Committee. (P.T. Redig)

1998 HAWK BOARD SYMPOSIUM

Jemima Parry-Jones

Last year the Hawk Board held its second symposium, for those who went I think if you asked them they would all say it was a resounding success. However, the reason I am writing this article is that as the Hawk Board Vice Chair and one of the coordinators of the Hawk Board Symposium, I wanted you to think about putting the date for this year's symposium in your diaries right now.

I have to say that I have been really disappointed by the lack of support from some of the clubs, especially as the threat to our sport is no longer just a threat but a reality happening as I write.

Not only did the symposium give those that came last year a really good amount of information on a wide variety of subjects from Police Wildlife Liaison Officers through to ferrets, some history of British Falconry, Incubation Techniques and most importantly the effects of the new legislation from Europe - the dreaded Article 10 certificates - on anyone who breeds any European birds, or has any commercial uses for these birds. We had over two hours of question time over the day and used every minute. Most of the audience went away with a great deal more understanding on a number of subjects, than they had arrived with. Admittedly some of it - like the new legislation, none of us liked, but we are lumbered with it now, so at least understanding about

it helps.

This year the Symposium is slated for October 17 at Birmingham University - the same place as the previous years. As yet we have no program - which is another reason I am writing - if you have topics that you want to hear about - let me know and soon please. It will be the whole day. Useful topics will be covered, if enough of you book soon we might even be able to get someone really special to talk to you - perhaps even from abroad, (ideas welcomed) but only if you support us. The venue is easy to find, the food is excellent, the company good fun and friendly, the chairperson brilliant, the opportunity to air your views is there - but only if you are. We also held a raffle and this year I will donate a Falconry Experience day with us here at the Centre as one of the prizes.

I know some think this event a waste of time, although I should say that those people who have voiced that opinion to me have not been to one - so I think its a pretty unfair judgment. Some people think it is a days hawking lost - dead right, but what you gain is much more.

Whether you like the Hawk Board or not, whether you believe it to be useful or not, - you are stuck with the unalterable fact that The Hawk Board has saved your sport at least twice in the last twelve months and you probably didn't even know you nearly lost it.

We may make mistakes or seem uncommunicative, but we work bloody hard at keeping falconry going and we are the only thing you have. We need to know you are out there - the symposium is the only time that anyone in the clubs and the committee can be face to face in the real sense, and now we want to make it so that anyone - club members or not, have the same chance.

Because we feel strongly that this symposium should continue and because apart from some notable clubs, we have not been well supported, we are changing the rules this time. The last two years have given clubs preferential booking. Not any more. This symposium is open to anyone who wants to come and the numbers are limited to 160. I, as the Hawk Board Vice Chair would appreciate it and I know the people that do attend, and the speakers who put in a good deal of effort, plus most of the members of the Hawk Board, if the symposium was really well attended this time.

Not all the details have been thrashed out yet so I can't give them to you. But if you write, phone, e-mail or whatever me in the next couple of months, I will either let you know or pass on the details to someone who can

I shall wait with bated breath to hear from you all!!!

Vice Chair The Hawk Board.
The National Birds of Prey Centre
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Glos. GL18 1JJ
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WELSH HAWK & OWL ASSOCIATION

We are a small and friendly club now in our fifth year of existence and pride ourselves on making all visitors welcome wherever their interest in birds of prey may lie. Advice and encouragement are freely given to any person wishing to take up this absorbing pastime.

The Association meets on the first Monday of every month and we endeavour to have some activity planned for the evening. Several guest speakers attended during the past year, including Dick Best the Veterinarian from Portishead in Bristol, who also provided emergency medical kits to those who required them, and agreed to act as Club

vet. Invitations have been sent to prospective Guest speakers for the forthcoming year.

The club runs both a book and video library for Members and arranges supply of Hawk food which is delivered during the week following the meeting. This year we hope to run trips to the Owl Sanctuary at Ringwood, the Hawk Conservancy at Andover and are also considering Eagle Heights in South East England. Annually we attend the Falconers Fair, to meet up with old friends and enjoy the company of other like-minded people. The club keeps a stock of Falconry Furniture, provided by Martin Jones, for sale, but at the fair

there is always that special something that catches your eye.

The hunting season is now nearly over and those of us who participate have mostly had a successful year. Several trips to North Yorkshire were organised which saw some excellent sport. One Junior Member caught his first rabbit with an eyass Redtail, and two others had their first pheasants with Harris Hawk, and all who went thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

We are now preparing for the breeding season and wish all every success this coming year.

S McHale

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

Jan '98

The weather has been very good to us up till now (mid January), we have only had to cancel one field meeting due to bad weather, with another 3 to go we will keep our fingers crossed. Of the 5 successful ones everyone seems to have had a good time, the Isle of Skye was particularly good for our main 4 day meeting and AGM, there were plenty of rabbits that were easy to bolt, the hare population was very good and some were taken by a couple of Harris hawks and a Golden Eagle. The highlight (apart from the great time we all had in the hotel bar until the early hours), was experienced by one group only, this was having a pair of WhiteTailed Sea Eagles flying overhead with the female stooping down and killing a rabbit about 500 yds away, just to prove that they reigned

supreme. There were also a good stock of grouse on the moors, although the island is not kept for shooting, the grouse seem to survive very well, some terrific flights were had, and although no birds were put in the bag a lot of grouse had feathers removed.

Our Christmas meet at Crookedstane was another well attended meet, again perfect weather, and this year about 15degrees warmer, which helped stop anyone getting frostbite! The good supply of rabbits along with the odd uncatchable pheasant kept the hawks on their toes, the dog group had particularly good sport in



About to go White Tailed Eagle spotting



Isle of Skye Hawkers

the low ground rushes as most of the rabbits were above ground resulting in loads of points. Multiple catches were had by the majority.

After the success of the rally in London last summer, the club will be supporting the March on the 1st of March, it is most important that falconers come along to show their solidarity, if anyone wishes to attend then contact the club for details of transport etc. With Michael Fosters Bill still going through parliament it is possible that hawking using dogs to flush our intended quarry could be banned, it will not be an all out attack that stops our sport, but through the back door legislation in badly defined bills like this one.

**ACT NOW
BEFORE IT IS TO LATE.**

SOME THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON RAPTOR INTELLIGENCE

Carl Jones

Intelligence is a fickle subject, psychologists still argue about whether it can be meaningfully measured in people let alone in birds. However some of the great students of animal behaviour have attempted a comparative look at intelligence and have provided some interesting ideas.

Raptors are not the brightest of birds, and what intelligence they do possess they do not express very openly. Most would agree that they are eclipsed by the greater intellect of many other birds such as crows and parrots. But I hasten to add that raptors are not devoid of a brain and do not occur at the bottom of the intellect heap. I would like to think that my favourite birds would leave gamebirds, ducks, rails, gulls, waders, bustards and megapodes standing in the intelligence stakes.

It must be every falconer's aim to try and truly understand their birds, to be able to empathise with them, not to treat them as hunting machines, but as sensitive and responsive creatures. As every falconer will agree, raptors readily recognise their handler, learn by experience, including how to outwit elusive prey, and do not forget major indiscretions wrought against them. There is however a great deal of difference between individuals and species in their learning ability, personality and brightness.

Due to the independent nature of most raptors they tend to have introverted and reserved personalities. Most raptors spend a lot of their time alone, often perched quietly. They can and do suffer from boredom but not to the same degree that the more extrovert parrots or crows do. In captivity they can tolerate long periods of inactivity and are not afflicted by the range and intensity of behavioural problems that affect more intelligent species. For example raptors rarely show stereotypical behaviour patterns or pluck out their feathers that bored captive parrots often express. (A notable exception is the Harris Hawk, some birds will pluck out their feathers)

Desmond Morris maintained that the intelligence of animals is directly related to their feeding ecology. Opportunist omnivorous species are likely to be brighter since they spend much time exploring and investigating. The knowledge gained in searching for food leads to a range of new experiences they can draw upon when they encounter new problems. Hence in raptors we would expect those species that feed opportunistically on a wide range of foods such as *Buteos*, *Harrier Hawks*, *Caracaras* and *Vultures* to be the smartest. Also social species are, on the whole, more intelligent and extrovert than the more solitary species since they have to develop the skills of cooperation and social interaction. Hence a *Harris Hawk* is a lot smarter than either a *Goshawk* or a *Buzzard*.

In birds as a rough and general rule, those species that produce highly dependent, naked, (altricial) young (eg *passerines*, *hornbills* and *parrots*) and spend a long time growing up are likely to grow into adults more intelligent than those that produce well-developed (precocial) young that are advanced at hatching (eg *ducks* and *gamebirds*), since these young seem to have many of their behaviours fixed from hatching. Raptors fall in between these two extremes. Of course in mammals the classic case of a species producing altricial young with a long growing, and hence early learning phase is provided by humans.

Individuals of the same species vary a great deal in intelligence, just like people. A lot of this variation is attributable to variations in early learning. Raptors go through this early learning period, (which seems most sensitive from the large nestling stage until they become independent) when the birds are acquiring the information and the practice needed to be efficient hunters and to develop their survival skills. This early period may influence their learning ability later in life. Birds that experience a wide range of sights and sounds and social interaction while growing up are likely to be better balanced and more competent learners in adult life than those that grow up without these rich, early experiences. To take an extreme example, a bird reared on its own and not socialised to either people or other birds will be retarded (do not try it!)

I suggest in my earlier articles that *kites* and *buzzards* (and other raptors also) reared with exposure to a wide range of sights and sounds while growing up were quicker and more content learners, more capable of coping with strange situations and altogether more emotionally balanced than those birds that were reared in unstimulating environments. In this respect skylight and seclusion aviaries can be a great disadvantage since many young birds that are reared in them may be highly strung and neurotic. (I am not suggesting that we should not use these enclosures which are suitable for highly strung breeding stock, but young birds do require a wide range of stimulation if they are to grow into healthy, well balanced birds.)

In birds it seems that larger species are more readily intelligent, or at least express their intelligence more readily, than their smaller relatives, hence *Gyr Falcons*, *Hyacinthine Macaws*, *Ravens* and *Condors* are usually regarded as the most intelligent members of their respective genera or families. These larger birds also have the longest periods of dependence on their parents, hence a longer learning period.

By this reckoning the larger eagles should be very bright. Konrad Lorenz the

father of modern studies on animal behaviour was not convinced of this. He wrote in *King Solomons Ring* (one of the most wonderful story books on animal behaviour), "all true birds of prey are, compared with *passerines* or *parrots*, extremely stupid creatures. This applies to the golden eagle 'the eagle' of our mountains and our poets, which is one of the most stupid among them, much more indeed than any barnyard fowl.

I am sure that no eagle keepers will be impressed to have their birds compared unfavourably with a chicken! Here Lorenz clearly did overstate the stupidity of eagles. He by his own admission only kept one eagle, an *Imperial Eagle* at that, and he did not do much with it by all accounts. I have to forgive Lorenz, who has long been an idol of mine, for this indiscretion. I can only assume that the eagle he observed was perhaps bored and retarded after years in deprived confinement. Not all eagles will necessarily show their intelligence. After all human beings are capable of great insight, sensitivity, passion and creativity, yet have met many who showed none of these characteristics, and very few who showed all!

Every eagle keeper I have spoken to has told me that their bird was far brighter than any lesser raptor. (But then every mother I have spoken to tells me that their child is smarter than average!) However despite this unobjective pride, large eagles are undoubtedly bright and this seems to particularly apply to the *Golden* and *Imperial Eagles* which also have very long memories. There are many accounts extolling the intelligence of *Golden Eagles* in the wild and in captivity. Tame *Golden* and *Imperial Eagles* will for example knock over a bucket to retrieve food hidden underneath, something few other raptors would be able to fathom out.

Perhaps one of the most dramatic illustrations we have of an eagle's intelligence is the record of two *Bald Eagles* that used "tools" to kill or attempt to kill small animals that approached their perches. They used rocks, held in their talons, to smash crickets and a scorpion. Furthermore they were seen picking up rocks in their beaks and hurling them 40-60cm at crickets, and even at a tame terrapin. At other times, each eagle was seen to beat the poor terrapin, hitting it with a stick held in the beak.

Lorenz however does have a point since eagles do not come close to the intelligence of some other groups such as *parrots* or some *passerines*. *Crows* and their relatives are widely regarded as the most intelligent of British birds and the *Raven* has been regarded by many as the smartest of all birds. (I am sure that parrot breeders would challenge this and put forward one of the larger parrots, perhaps a *Kea*, *Hyacinthine*

Macaw or a Palm Cockatoo as the brightest). I have kept several corvines at the same time as raptors which has given me opportunities to compare and witness their superior intellect. My tame crow would taunt my Buzzard and steal food from her feet. But when it came to food stealing this behaviour was almost perfected by a Magpie.

In 1972 I hand-reared a Magpie, which grew into a beautiful bird that used to live at liberty around my home. She (I assumed it was female but I never could sex her) was a great character and after much thought was given the original name of Maggie. At the time I had a large rapacious female Sparrowhawk that in fine weather used to spend the day on a bow perch in the shade of some apple trees. Whenever I fed the Sparrowhawk, Maggie used to sneak up behind the hawk and steal some of the food from between her feet, much to the hawks' chagrin. Daily Maggie used to outwit the hawk and always take some of her food, often catching the Sparrowhawk unawares. This was most humbling for the Sparrowhawk that would under unrestrained circumstances have been capable of killing the magpie. Stealing the hawks' food was not enough for the magpie for she would taunt the Sparrowhawk at any opportunity. Maggie would nonchalantly hop past the perched hawk which could not resist the temptation to get her own back and would launch off her perch and bate furiously at the Magpie trying to catch her, only to be pulled up inches short by her leash. Maggie would casually hop away and chortle defiantly at the furious hawk. There was an ongoing war between the two birds but Maggie had accurately worked out the full extent of the hawks reach and always strolled past inches out of her grasp. The hawk could not match the Magpies cunning.

One day the Sparrowhawk evened the score. I had given the hawk a new leash which was, I later realised, a few inches longer. The next time the Magpie taunted the hawk she flew at Maggie and succeeded in grabbing her. Maggie broke free but not without losing her tail and her dignity. After that Maggie treated the Sparrowhawk with considerably more respect, and when the hawk was weathering on the lawn

Maggie would give her a wide berth.

Later that Summer Maggie's insatiable curiosity led to her inauspicious end. I had gone on a raptor watching holiday to Scotland. Maggie went on holiday to the St Catherine's Island Zoo, Tenby, W Wales, which was based in a rambling old fort on a small island, where my friend Chris Batt, the owner of the zoo looked after her. After a few days to settle in Maggie was given her freedom. She flew around the island visiting the animal cages, tormenting some of the inmates and examining her new surroundings. There was lots to investigate. Maggie always examined strange new objects and she flew into the otter's enclosure to take a closer look at some toys that the otters played with in their pool. She jumped into the water, became water logged and drowned. Poor Maggie, RIP.

While on the subject of drowning birds. My female Goshawk Bodie, used to catch Mallard Ducks. Twice when she caught one over water she was dragged into the water by the weight of the struggling duck where she held it under water until it drowned. She then oared her way back to the land with her wings, dragging her prize, held firmly in her feet. I could not work out if the Goshawk drowned the duck on purpose or if it was just a consequence of the circumstances. This behaviour is quite a frequent scenario when hunting water birds with a variety of hawks and I feel sure that in some cases the hawk does intend to drown the prey. This is supported by an observation of a wild Gabar Goshawk that caught a bat almost as big as itself. It landed on the ground with the bat, but had difficulty in subduing it. The Gabar Goshawk carried the struggling bat to a nearby stream and held it under the water until it drowned. It seems that some accipiters are smarter than I give them credit for.

There are many stories which suggest that some raptors have a depth to their intelligence that is not always obvious. In the article on kites I quoted the case of wild Black Kites in Australia spreading bush fires by carrying burning embers to fresh areas so they could feed on the scorched and fleeing lizards and insects. Another wild kite, this time in India, would steal hats off passers by and exchange them with the local butcher for some meat. Similarly

some trained Common Caracaras will retrieve objects in return for a food reward.

Perhaps the most intelligent of all raptors are the New and Old World Vultures. Jemima Parry-Jones, Gerald Summers and other friends who have trained vultures, and have been able to compare them with other raptors, are unanimous about their superior intelligence. The Egyptian vulture has learned how to use rocks so smash open Ostrich eggs. It picks up rocks, selectively choosing those of about 140g. The bird throws the stone at the egg with a forceful downward head and neck movement. Smaller eggs it picks up in its beak and throws them onto the ground to smash them. Not all vultures know how to smash open the larger Ostrich eggs with rocks and it is thought that they learn by copying one another. There is also an old observation of Egyptian Vultures dropping stones from the air onto Ostrich Eggs.

In Australia the Black-Breasted Buzzard is also reputed to smash the thick-shelled eggs of Emus by flying over them and dropping stones on them so they can feed on the contents.

Therefore, as an end of term report, to make some rather shaky comparisons; accipiters are not as bright (or perhaps more accurately, not as extrovert and a lot more precocious) than buteos, and the Harris Hawk is a lot more responsive and learns quicker than the less social buteos. The more opportunist feeders such as caracaras are much brighter than their more specialist cousins the true falcons. The large eagles are also exceedingly intelligent (for raptors) but these are left in the cold by the vultures, the masterminds of the raptor world. Where owls fit into this scheme I am not at all sure. I have always found them harder to fathom, since being nocturnal they live in a very different perceptual world and do not readily show the depth of their intellect. Barn Owls with their semi-altricial young (more altricial than most other raptors) and long period of infancy should be among the more intelligent of raptors, but I have yet to be convinced.

Perhaps readers would like to comment on some of these ideas and help clarify just how bright or stupid raptors are, and provide some revealing observations and insights.

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MYOPIA IN FALCONRY (or HOW TO LOSE IT ALL)

ANTHONY WOMACK

There appears to be a feeling in falconry circles, that the Foster Bill and the government's attempts to ban hunting with hounds (or, as they would have it, dogs), is a problem for the hunting fraternity. Two quotes recently heard, and read:

"Foster is all about hunting, hunting with hounds that is. Nothing to do with falconry, no need to get excited"

"In my view to seek to ally falconry with blood sports...is thoroughly unproductive and indeed positively harmful"

Unfortunately The Foster Bill is not just about hunting with hounds, falconry is a blood sport, the Bill has a lot to do with falconry, and there is every need to get excited.

I doubt that many falconers have even bothered to get hold of a copy of the draft bill that went before parliament on 28th November 1997, but if you had, and you had read it, perhaps the people who made the above comments would think again. Most people think that the Bill is to outlaw Fox, Hare, and Stag hunting, but unfortunately the bill is to outlaw the hunting of any wild or feral mammal i.e. mouse, rat, rabbit, hare, fox, badger, deer, mink, coypu, otter, etc. But you say, that is hunting with a pack of hounds (dogs) - not so. Section 5 subsection (1) states:

"In this Act 'hunt' means intentionally to search for, chase, pursue, harry, bait, attack, injure, or kill any wild mammal (whether or not injury or death is caused by a dog) including coursing and 'hunting' shall be construed accordingly"

Further, in the list of offences in Section 1 subsection (2) it is stated:

"Any person who in the course of hunting uses, causes or permits any dog to enter any structure or place, whether subterranean or not, used or likely to be used by any wild mammal for shelter or protection shall be guilty of an offence"

So, any one hawking for rabbit who causes his dog to flush a rabbit from a bramble patch is committing an offence, the consequences of which are pretty dire. The act details sweeping Powers of arrest, search and seizure, coupled with draconian Penalties and Forfeiture and disqualification orders. Basically these mean that a constable can stop and search you and your vehicle at any time, arrest you if he thinks that you are about to commit an offence, and seize your vehicle, hawks, dogs, and telemetry equipment. If you are subsequently convicted, you face a fine of up to £5000 (or 6 months in prison, or both) for each mammal you have hunted i.e. if you get caught with 4 rabbits that is £20000 or 2 years in prison or both, and you will have to bear the cost of keeping your hawks and dog whilst the court decides what to do with them, and also the costs

of their disposal (which I take to mean destruction), and they also keep your vehicle.

I hope that by now you are all getting worried. Here what you do about it:

1. Get Organised - Join the BFSS as a member, not just through the affiliation of your Local falconry club. Tel. 0171 582 5432, Fax 0171 793 8484, or e-mail info@bfss.org Their Web site is at <http://www.bfss.org>

2. Get your pen out. Write to Mr. Foster, your MP and Tony Blair now. Tell them they cannot do this to you, a legitimate minority. Tell them you support hunting with hounds. Tell them you see no difference between any of the field sports. Say you are angry and that politicians have not listened to the countryside. And it is about time they did. The address is: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

3. Join the Countryside March in London on March 1st 1998 when the Countryside Alliance and the BFSS are organising a march through London and Rally to protest at the Foster Bill. Tel. 0171 582 2265 or e-mail march1@bfss.org

4. Make a donation to the Countryside Alliance to help the costs of running the campaign. Tel.0171 582 5432, or Fax 0171 793 8484

If any of you still have doubts about the threat to your sport, I close this exhortation with a quotation from the BFC web site Action page:

"Field Sports have never been under such close scrutiny as they are at the present time. Falconry is no exception. Those who seek changes in the Law to ban Field Sports have never been more active. The time for apathy and relying on others to do the work for us is gone. Make no mistake if we do not act now we will live to regret it."

For those of you with Internet access, if you still think that Animal Rights Activists are no threat just check out the following sites:

RSPCA <http://www.rspca.org.uk/>
IFAW <http://www.ifaw.org/home.htm>
PETA <http://www.peta-online.org/>
HSA <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/HSA/hsa.html>
LACS <http://www.thwarted.demon.co.uk/lacs/>

Animal Rights Resource Site <http://envirolink.org/arrs/index.html>
Also look at the following ARRS link site that lists literally hundreds of AR organisations (and these are just the ones on the Internet!) <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/organisations/arsites.html>

If the amount of disinformation, half truths and down right lies you see on the above does not convince you, then nothing

will. These people are committed, organised, and have heavy financial backing. They are running PR and education programs that should give you nightmares.

DO NOT FORGET MARCH 1 I'LL BE THERE - WILL YOU?

Below is the Bill in all it's glory

A BILL TO Make provision for the protection of wild mammals from being pursued, killed or injured by the use of dogs; and for connected purposes. BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

1: Offences.

(1) Any person who uses, causes or permits any dog to hunt any wild mammal shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) Any person who in the course of hunting uses, causes or permits any dog to enter any structure or place, whether subterranean or not, used or likely to be used by any wild mammal for shelter or protection shall be guilty of an offence.

(3) Any person who being an owner or occupier of land, causes or permits any person to enter upon or use that land to hunt with a dog any wild mammal shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) Any person who being the owner or keeper of a dog permits any other person to use, cause or permit that dog to hunt any wild mammal shall be guilty of an offence.

(5) Any person who owns, uses or controls a pack of dogs for the purposes of hunting shall be guilty of an offence.

2: Powers of arrest, search and seizure.

(1) A constable may arrest without warrant any person whom he has reasonable grounds for suspecting is about to commit, is committing, or has committed an offence under this Act.

(2) If a constable suspects with reasonable cause that any person is committing or has committed an offence under this Act the constable may without warrant-

(a) stop and search that person if the constable suspects with reasonable cause that evidence of the commission of the offence is to be found on that person;

(b) search or examine any vehicle, animal or article which that person may have with him if the constable suspects with reasonable cause that evidence of the commission of the offence is to be found on that vehicle, animal or article;

(c) seize and detain for the purpose of proceedings under this Act any vehicle, animal or article which may be evidence of the commission of the offence or may be liable to be forfeited under section 4.

(3) For the purposes of exercising the powers conferred by subsections (1) and (2) a constable may enter any land including any building not being a dwelling house.

3: Penalties.

(1) A person guilty of an offence under this Act shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or both.

(2) Where an offence under section 1 of this Act is committed in respect of more than one wild mammal the maximum fine which may be imposed under subsection (1) shall be determined as if the person convicted was convicted of a separate offence in respect of each wild mammal.

(3) Where an offence under this Act committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of any director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or any person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate is guilty of an offence and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(4) Where the affairs of a body corporate are managed by its members, subsection (3) shall apply in relation to the acts and defaults of a member in connection with his functions of management as if he were a director of the body corporate.

4: Forfeiture and disqualification orders.

(1) The court by which a person is convicted of an offence under this Act may, in addition to any other penalty-

(a) order the forfeiture of any vehicle, animal or article which was used in connection with the commission of the offence or which was capable of being so used and which was found in his possession; and

(b) disqualify the offender, for such period as it thinks fit, from having custody of a dog and make such other orders with respect to the disposal of the dog as the court thinks fit under the circumstances.

(2) Where the court makes an order under subsection (1)(b) above, it may-

(a) appoint a person to undertake the disposal of the dog and require any person having custody of the dog to deliver it up for that purpose; and

(b) order the offender to pay such sum as the court may determine to be reasonable expenses of disposing of the dog and of keeping it pending its disposal.

(3) A person who-

(a) has custody of a dog in contravention of an order under subsection (1)(b); or

(b) fails to comply with a requirement imposed on him under subsection (2);

shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) Where an order is made under subsection (1)(b) in relation to a dog owned by a person other than the offender the owner may appeal to the Crown Court or, in Scotland, the High Court of Justiciary, against the order.

(5) A person who is disqualified from having custody of a dog by virtue of an order made under subsection (1)(b) may, at any time after the end of the period of one year beginning with the date of the order, apply to the court which made the order (or, in England and Wales, any magistrates' court in the same petty sessional area) for a direction terminating the disqualification from such date as the court considers appropriate.

(6) On an application under subsection (5) the court may-

(a) having regard to the applicant's character, his conduct since the disqualification was imposed and any other circumstances.

5: Definitions and Exceptions

(1) In this Act 'hunt' means intentionally to search for, chase, pursue, harry, bait, attack, injure, or kill any wild mammal (whether or not injury or death is caused by a dog) including coursing and 'hunting' shall be construed accordingly.

(2) The definition in subsection (1) does not extend to-

(a) an owner or occupier of land using, causing or permitting any dog to hunt any wild rabbit or wild rodent on that land;

(b) the defence of any person or captive or domestic animal under immediate attack by a wild mammal;

(c) the flushing out of a wild mammal from cover on or above ground to be immediately and lawfully shot for the purpose of the necessary management and control of the wild mammal or wild mammals of that species;

(d) the use by a person of a single dog under his close control to track, locate or retrieve any wild mammal which is seriously disabled as a result of either-

(i) any lawful activity, or

(ii) any unlawful activity to which he was not a party the burden of proof of which shall lie upon him, provided there is no reasonable alternative and he intends to relieve the suffering of the wild mammal; or

(e) a draghunt in the course of which a dog inadvertently chases, attacks, injures or kills a wild mammal provided that the draghunt is registered with a body whose objects and rules expressly forbid its members from using dogs for any purpose other than a draghunt.

6: Interpretation.

In this Act-

"captive animals" and "domestic animals" have the meaning given in the Protection of Animals Act 1911;

"draghunt" means a pursuit in which a person or persons together with a pack of dogs follows a man made or man laid scent and which does not involve the hunting of a wild mammal;

"occupier" includes any person who has control of land or is the agent of any such person;

"owner" means any person who has an interest in land including a licensee or the agent of any such person but does not include-

(a) a mortgagee not in possession; or

(b) in relation to land in Scotland, a creditor in a heritable security not in possession of the security subjects;

"pack of dogs" means two or more dogs hired owned or controlled for the purposes of a draghunt or for hunting wild mammals other than wild rabbits and wild rodents; and

"wild mammal" means any mammal which is living free or is feral or which has been released or escaped from captivity.

7: Citation, consequential amendments, repeals, commencement and extent.

(1) This Act may be cited as the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Act 1998.

(2) The enactments specified in Schedule 1 to this Act shall have effect subject to the amendments specified in that Schedule being amendments consequential on the provisions of this Act and the enactments specified in Schedule 2 are repealed to the extent specified in the third column of that Schedule.

(3) This Act shall come into force with the expiration of the period of two months beginning with its passing.

(4) This Act extends to Northern Ireland.

Editors note:

As far as I can make out this Bill will effectively put a stop to us ever letting our Wirehaired Pointer off the lead in a field again. At the age of seven she knows nothing else but to work. It is what she does best, in fact it is the very reason she exists, you only have to see her, waiting at the door to know that. I am sure many of you have dogs, just like ours, who need to work.

DO YOU HAVE A DOG? DOES IT WORK? HOW WILL IT COPE IF IT CAN NEVER WORK AGAIN? IS THIS FAIR TO YOUR DOG? FORGET YOUR OWN SELFISH REASONS AS TO WHY YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEND THE MARCH, CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF DOGS WHO WILL BE RESTRICTED - STOPPED FROM DOING WHAT THEY ARE BRED TO DO, WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO DO - BY THIS BILL.

I have managed to get a coach full of people to go to the march. Only two of these are people we know through the magazine, all the rest are friends who we know in our area who will be affected by this Bill. If you really want to make a difference then talk to your friends, convince them it is worthwhile going down to London on March 1st to make their voices heard. Falconry will be next!!!

THE ART OF LIVING

R Naisbitt

There is an irony in rehabilitation, in trying to find some link between it and conservation.

What we can learn from rehabilitating raptors is perhaps the one primary reason for doing it.. we can learn something by watching and monitoring and by being ruthless and this is where the crunch comes.

I liberated a falcon recently, she had been flying strongly for 8 weeks, a limited amount of daily freedom had improved her fitness and then I told her "Watch those ravens, they will kill you with subversiveness, be wary of the Magpies they will lead you into a fence, don't touch the pigeons..you might get shot and don't hunt near roads, highways, buildings, power lines or barbed wire fences and watch those cockatoo's, they can bite.."

Then she flew off and began chasing Magpies..

What can we do except

hold our breath and keep and eye on the receiver and listen for the signal.

Matthew released a falcon once and he told he to "Be wary of people, avoid them like the plague" and the falcon looked around and said "Yea sure.." her eyes focused on the long snaking ribbon of bitumen that would follow her wherever she went.

We can learn something, raptors have to learn something.. we can give them the opportunity to learn and we can grow wiser through our conversations with the inexperienced.

Invariably the word freedom brings on a flush of mystery..the hawk, eagle or falcon has a freedom which we can only dream about, but freedom does come with a heavy price tag, freedom can mean the choice to select the manner in which one dies... we found a falcon once, squashed on the road, the transmitter still intact, still



Arusha (female Peregrine) to be released



White phase grey Goshawk

sending out its signal...it's all about learning and the frightening thought is that despite the basic risks that raptors have face to make it through to their second year, these risks are compounded by the simple human factors. The conservation factor seeps into the equation somewhere, natural mortality is one thing but unnatural mortality is another..is it possible to conserve raptors, regardless of their population status, by altering the way in which we live? It is possible to educate everybody as to the value of a meat eating, possum mauling powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*) or the rabbit bashing Wedge Tailed Eagle, it is possible to convince free-range poultry farmers that the Goshawk that just wreaked havoc on their stock was just hungry...The fluffy and the cuddly certainly have the upper hand. I told someone once that Wedge Tailed Eagles eat the odd Koala!!!

So then after all of that, after all of our hard work and blood sweat and tears, after walking through muddy paddocks, the birds we so carefully rehabilitate still have to contend with life in general.

There is an art to living and an art in learning how to survive...despite the fences and roads and power-lines and the buildings...

I was about to release a Goshawk recently and I told her to be wary of all those unnatural things that would invariably complicate her life, I said "Be careful of the chicken farmers and the pigeon lofts and the fences around the vineyards and the telephone wires and the roads and tall buildings."

She turned to me and asked if she could possibly opt out of this release..I told her she didn't have a choice.

She was dead within three weeks - there is an art to living.

THE HARRIS HAWK - SOME OBSERVATIONS

DAVID GLYNNE FOX

The fact that the Harris Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) is now the most popular raptor in British falconry circles is beyond doubt. It is a great favourite with beginners and experts alike and with good reason. The bird is relatively easily trained and in capable hands will readily take a variety of quarry, often in excellent style. Indeed, I myself have long been a confirmed Harrisophile, having trained my first specimen in 1967. Yet in spite of their easy going nature, I have noticed a growing number of problems associated with the training and flying of this species together with some previously unexpected observations which may be of use to a budding Harris enthusiast. It is with this in mind that I pen this article.

During the past few years I have often wondered if we are sometimes taking this extraordinary bird for granted in a variety of ways. Primarily, in experienced hands the training of a Harris usually runs like clockwork with subsequent impeccable performance in the field. From the viewpoint of a beginner this in itself may lead to a state of complacency to set in. Added to this, how often when visiting falconry centres and fairs does one hear experts (frequently, for them quite rightly) extolling the virtues of this hawk to wide-eyed, potential beginners, ending with statements such as "If you fail with a Harris Hawk you will never fly anything." I am not knocking this latter statement one bit because, largely, it is perfectly true. Harris hawks undoubtedly are probably the easiest of all hawks to train, but let us not forget that to train any hawk at all, including the Harris a basic knowledge of falconry skills is paramount. Such sweeping statements may instil false impressions into a beginner's head by, implying that they can cut corners and invariably get away with it. The Harris is certainly the



The Harris Hawk from Southern USA. Now the most popular raptor in British Falconry.

most forgiving raptor I know of and will put up with insults that would instantly drive a Goshawk over the farthest horizon in the shortest possible time. I know of more than one erstwhile falconer who has begun his falconry career with a Harris and then blundered onto a far more difficult species using the same techniques that seemed to work so well with the Harris, only to end up with alarming and costly results. The Harris's easy going nature and greedy habits (a Harris will almost asphyxiate itself trying to bolt food far too large to swallow) in no way have prepared the tyro for the feathered nightmare that refuses point blank even to sit on the fist, let alone deign to feed. More than one of these beginners has subsequently opted for the maxim, if at first

you don't succeed, give up! A quick return to the Harris is often the preferred route, but I sometimes wonder if such people should really be flying hawks at all. For anyone, the golden rule should be, if you haven't really got the time required, or are not prepared to make the time, then leave falconry to those who have. Don't simply abuse the Harris because you feel you can get away with it. Far too many Harris Hawks are ending the hawking season, if they ever started, with few or even no kills. If you do fly a Harris, fly it by choice and because that is the bird you really want, but for heavens sake, treat it with the respect it deserves. Although most Harris's generally look very much alike and may even behave in similar fashion, it is important to remember that each has its own characteristics and is an individual in its own right. How they are reared can also induce varying behaviour and performance, at least during the early stages of training and often throughout the life of the bird in question.

Considering the length of my falconry experience (spanning more than thirty years) it took a surprisingly long time for the Harris's endearing qualities to sink into my addled brain. The bird I flew in 1967, an adult female, was on loan to me through a friend. At this time, the Harris was literally unknown in British falconry circles. Check any falconry book published before 1970 and you will not find the species even mentioned. Therefore, I took on this gawky looking raptor with some trepidation. I must also admit that my interest in the bird was somewhat halfhearted, for not only was I flying a female Golden Eagle at the time but I was also dabbling with a female Sparrowhawk. Yes, I was totally over



Adult male Harris watching for quarry from a high elevation.

hawked, the Golden Eagle being enough for anyone. However, I was young and inexperienced, hence the zoo. Nevertheless, I made some progress with the Harris and was surprised how rapidly her training programme advanced. However, having never seen a Harris fly before, I was astounded how stiff-winged she was. I didn't realise it at the time but this particular Harris had a major problem with her wings. It was as though she could not bend them at the carpal joint while in flight, yet she folded them perfectly when at rest. I took her to a hawking meet where she received short shrift from many falconers present. How could such a gawky looking, road runner of a bird hope to catch anything they wanted to know? Such remarks do not usually put me off, but on this occasion it did strike a chord. The stiff-winged problem was a real handicap when trying to catch rabbits and so I regretfully gave up on her. I never did discover the cause of her wing problem.



Illustrating the wide variety of quarry capable of being taken by the Harris, this male took this magpie in a mid-air strike

I didn't see another Harris until the early 1970's, when I attended a meet of the recently formed Hawk Trust, held at Cheltenham Race-course in Gloucestershire. By this time I was flying my much loved and sadly missed female Imperial Eagle, Ajax, who was present at this venue. A well-known falconer, Pat Matthews had a pair of Harris Hawks flying in a cast. Both birds, uniquely at the time, would return not only to his car, but actually fly inside to land upon their respective perches. I had never seen any hawk do this before, but as we all now know, it is commonplace with Harris's. It was stunning stuff. Also I noticed that neither hawk flew with the stiff-winged gait that had plagued my bird. Perhaps I had been wrong about this species. Perhaps we all were.

Over the intervening years, Harris Hawks began to proliferate in British falconry circles, largely because the species lends itself well to captive breeding projects. I myself reared some from eggs belonging to a friend (see Falconers magazine summer 1990). The male I trained from this group was flying free in a matter of days, yet here I met

my first problem. All the hawks of course have an optimum hunting weight, and this weight has to be adhered to at flying times, indeed, it is the key to successful falconry. In the past, when I have been training hawks, whether Goshawks, Golden Eagles or whatever, the weight at which these birds readily and obediently returned to the fist was essentially the weight at which these same birds hunted. This is not necessarily true for the Harris, yet it took me a long time to realise this, the best part of half the first season in fact. Seldom before had I possessed such an obedient hawk. He was with me before I could put the whistle in my mouth. He would follow me through the trees as faithfully as any. Yet when quarry was flushed, he would be off the fist rapidly enough and sometimes catch up with it to a point where he merely had to stick out a foot and nail his quarry. Instead he would veer off and either return to me or take stand on some tree and wait for me to call him. This behaviour was alien to me. He was obviously super keen or he would not return to me with such rapidity. Perhaps my 1967 colleagues were right after all. Had I another species at the time I might well have

given up on him. Perhaps he had somehow lost his instinct to hunt, I thought. As he already appeared over keen, I dared not reduce his weight any further. Instead I tried taking it up, always in my view the safest option, a thin hawk being a dead hawk and all that. For a male he was a large bird, flying then at 11lb 10 1/2 oz. I took him up to 11lb 12oz, with little overall difference. For some weeks I hovered around this higher weight ratio until one day, despairingly, I decided to gradually cut him down until the desired result was achieved. Otherwise, I would give him to someone to use as a display bird. Still well muscled on the breast, he reached a low of 11lb 7 1/2 oz and BINGO!! He was off the fist in a flash, attempting to bind to whatever he was flown at and from that moment on we never looked back. After all these years I was still learning and continue to learn. To conclude this point a Harris Hawk's flying weight on the training field is not necessarily its hunting weight. Beginners take note! How many hawks of similar size I wonder will fly responsively at weight differentials ranging from 11lb 7 1/2 oz to 11lb 12 oz and still be completely trustworthy? Additionally during consecutive seasons, all I had to do from taking him up from the moult was to cut him down to his hunting weight. He would behave as in previous years and although I initially tested him with it, we made the creance virtually redundant. Most species have to be retrained after the moult to a greater or lesser degree, this was behaviour entirely new to me and I was loving it. Small wonder the Harris has become highly recommended.

However, there are darker sides to the coin. Why is it for example that the list of lost Harris Hawks is steadily growing? It used to be widely believed that to lose a Harris was virtually impossible and that to do so would court ridicule from one's contemporaries. Personally I haven't lost one yet, touch wood, but there are now enough of those who have to form a club. What are the reasons for this? Are we becoming too complacent and cutting too many corners? Relying on the good nature of this wonderful bird to forgive us? I don't know the



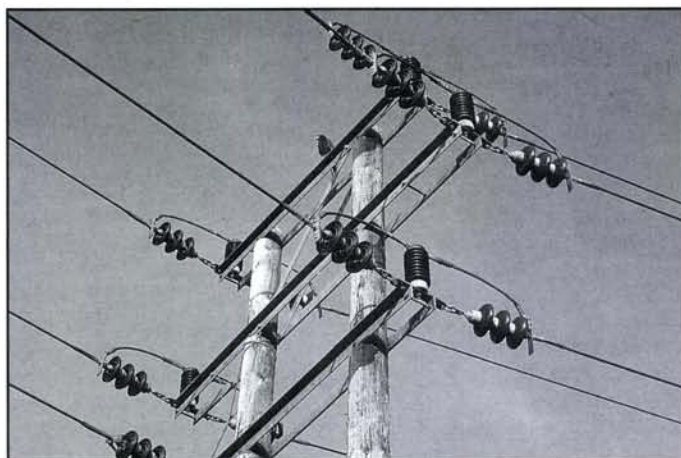
Although true crabbing on kills by bonded Harris's is rare, it is more common place where Harris's are flown together on an irregular basis.

answer. I suppose we should judge each case on its own merit. All I do know is, I have recently observed some odd behaviour from the hawks themselves. Perhaps these will be of interest.

My son David has a four year old female Harris called Sable. Acquired in 1996, she was originally part on the Woburn Abbey display team until she began attacking other Harris Hawks with whom she was flown. She apparently became so unsafe to fly in the company of the team hawks that we bought her and used her solely for hunting on her own. For most of her fist season she was flown alone and she turned out to be a superb hunting bird with thirty-seven kills to her credit, mostly rabbits, at the end of the season. During this period she was once flown in company with a male Harris whom she pinned to the floor and almost killed. The following season, 1997, she was flown in company with my new Harris, a female of the year bred by Alan Griffin. Apart from one slight altercation where she footed my female or settling too close, they have so far got on famously. They are not only flown together but also housed and weathered together. However, during this 1997 season, Sable has taken an irritating step backwards. She is as keen as mustard in the garden and on the training field, but once out hunting she has begun to self-hunt, virtually refusing the fist. Some days are better than others but on bad days, unless quarry is sighted, she will sit on some lofty perch until we actually toss food onto the ground for her. Ignoring the fist and similar bribes, she will usually come straight down for this and then allow herself to be taken up. The overall impression seems to be that she is not keen enough, but this is not so. On numerous occasions after refusing all such bribes, she has launched herself into space and taken on a long slip of several hundred yards to take the rabbit or whatever in tremendous style. I planned to use her as a make-hawk for my young and inexperienced Harris, a female named Diana. (I acquired her the very same day that Diana, Princess of Wales was tragically killed and named in her honour, what else could I call her after an awful day like that?). I was also afraid that she may learn some of these traits from Sable. Both hawks are flown mostly together as a cast ad are usually still-hunted from vantage points. Over the years we have found that Harris Hawks when flown together develop a sort of pecking order, whereupon one bird, more dominant than the others, will attack the others to assert its authority. This I suspect is what was happening at Woburn. Usually, little or no damage occurs and shortly they all settle down into an effective hunting unit. Still-hunting Harris Hawks together allows this binding to take place readily and more effectively than if continuously fist hunted. Under such conditions crabbing on kills, although not entirely unheard of, is quite rare, instead the hawks

pile in on the quarry instead of each other. Harris's not regularly flown together are more prone to hurting each other over quarry disputes or through plain and simple bullying. Although Harris Hawks are known to be naturally gregarious, I still wonder if the presence of my bird Diana is causing the abnormal behaviour of my sons bird Sable. This trait also seems confined to females as far as my observations have shown, with males usually behaving impeccably. We have put Sable's weight both up and down with little obvious difference and am now at a loss. It certainly is annoying not to have the bird follow on as she used to and constantly having to walk back and lure her down, who is training who?

Apart from the above-mentioned problem, these two are getting along fine with none of the expected aggression from Sable. In fact, if one takes off and flies to another tree, the other follows on almost immediately. What is it about Harris's? When there are literally thousands of available branches to perch on, why do Harris's flown in groups all have to choose the same branch? Once, four Harris Hawks flown together, actually pitched onto each others backs, piggyback style, stacked four high!!



Most vantage points can prove advantageous to any hawks, but would most strongly avoid at all costs, this type of pylon.

If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would never have believed it. Two yes, but four!! And we were flying them through a large forest with multitudes of available perches.

I firmly believe that greed plays a valuable part in the training and subsequent flying of Harris Hawks, but this is not so obvious in a new bird. The aforementioned Diana, whom I am currently flying was parent reared. In fact I entered the aviary and caught her up myself. I wanted to leave her in the aviary for as long as possible to prevent her from screaming. It didn't work. If she can see me from the weathering ground, or even hear people moving about, she will scream all day long, starting off Sable too. I am surprised the neighbours haven't complained. However, she is silent when out hunting, where it matters, for which I am eternally grateful. In their first year, Harris Hawks possess a far carrying, shrill and high-pitched scream, hard on the ears. However, this tends to break on or around

the first moult into a raucous rasp, which is somewhat kinder to the old ear drums. I once met a falconer from Texas who told me that all Harris Hawks scream, even trapped haggards. Whether this is true or not I am unsure. All I know for certain is that every Harris I have come across, once reduced in weight for training, begins to scream upon sight or sound of its owner. I personally know of no exceptions, although no doubt someone out there owns such a gem.

The training of Diana differed totally from that of my first male. He was reared from the egg and being imprinted was thus tame from the word go. In contrast, Diana was a hissing, thrashing, slashing bundle of feathers with eyes popping from their sockets in mortal terror. If I could get her to sit on the gauntlet for a few moments, she sank backwards onto her tail, only to drop off the glove and begin a furious dose of bating. I remember thinking as I placed her back on the fist for the umpteenth time, had I been a rank beginner, I would seriously have questioned the wisdom of this "easy" bird they all keep prattling on about. She was as testy and demented as the average Gos or Spar. I even wondered, as I am sure we all do with a new bird, if I was ever going to be able to trust this bird loose. Indeed, she took longer than I had anticipated, although I have reason to believe females are not initially so responsive as males. She was not imprinted like my male, so she was bound to be much wilder.

After a couple of weeks she began to fly on the creance, but even here I experienced a problem. At 2lb 3oz she would fly immediately to the fist. Yet the next day, at the same weight and same time, she didn't want to know. I called it her "switched off mode." She would keep this up, until I gave her a morsel on the glove, then suddenly she would switch on and all would be well. This happened on and off for about a month, so that if she were in her "switched off mode", no way could she be trusted. Therefore, I had to be very careful of how and where I flew her. So much for the easy, beginners' hawk. I had to use all my years of accumulated guile to get her where she is today, a superb flier and extremely obedient. For those Harris owners who may scoff at this, all I can say is, one day you may experience one of these more aloof birds yourself. If so, I would be delighted to hear of your trials and tribulations.

A well-trained Harris Hawk in capable hands is poetry in motion. I do not believe in comparison of species and become quite irritated when falconers who should know better state that Goshawks are better than Harris's etc. I have flown several of both, and to me they are an entirely different species. Each with their own finely honed skills, produced by nature over the millennia to adapt themselves to their chosen habitat. Perhaps I am getting too old to sit beneath trees all night waiting for the cold

light of dawn, to lure down some recalcitrant Goshawk or Spar. It is the endearing, almost pet-like qualities possessed by the Harris that endears it to me and many others. For example, what other hawk would bate from the fist "catch" a carelessly kicked Sweet Chestnut mast and return with it to the fist. True, most hard bitten falconers would scarcely rate this trait, but it is one of the many endearing characteristics possessed by this remarkable raptor. Often they will return to the fit holding onto a dangling jess, or perhaps a bunch of leaves in one foot as though they were holding prey. I still have no idea why they do it but I know most other hawks in a similar state would mantle over it on the ground until they realise the mistake. How many other hawks will fly up to a squirrel's dray and systematically take it apart, scattering sticks and leaves to the four winds until the occupants break cover and the chase is on. That shows great intelligence.

A well-manned Harris Hawk will become practically bombproof. Only a few weeks ago I was feeding Diana up beside a rail track after a days flying when a diesel locomotive flashed past only feet away. It was getting dark and the train was well lit up, yet the Harris never even looked up from feeding. It was hard to think that only a few weeks before this event she would not even sit on the fist and was fearful of all around her. I don't use a dog, yet our Harris's are not overly disturbed by them. If one passes too close they merely scream abuse at it, particularly if it is a black dog. I have

noticed this habit with several Harris' of my acquaintance. What is it about black dogs? Is it because they are a similar colour to the Harris? The will even attack and foot a dog that approaches them while on a kill. They willingly jump into their travelling boxes when being taken out hunting with none of the scuffles sometimes seen with other species. Although far fitter if flown daily, as all hawks should be, Harris's perform reasonably well when only flown at weekends and as such have been termed disparagingly "the weekend falconer's bird", but surely this is a mark in their favour.

As aforementioned, this article is really aimed at beginners and I apologise to all the experts for going over some old ground perhaps. So to sum up, I would firmly recommend to all tyros thinking of taking on a Harris, and indeed any raptor, to first of all acquire a good basic knowledge of falconry techniques. Better still, team up with an experienced falconer, if you can find one willing. Obtain permission on suitable land with suitable quarry in hawkable numbers and put the time in needed to get the bird to a high standard of health and performance. Don't treat the Harris purely as an easy option, as I hope this article has shown, you could be unpleasantly surprised. Treat your bird with the respect and care she deserves and she will reward you with perhaps twenty years or so of top class sport. Cut corners and reap the problems this may raise. Most of all, use common sense and don't be afraid to ask questions. Harris Hawks are not cheap and neither is the time you must

be prepared to invest. Take your time. Just because Joe Bloggs down the road had his Harris flying free in four days should not mean a thing to you, after all, what will he do if his bird decides to "switch off" for a day or two, simply because he rushed things. Learn to read your bird. All the signals are there and will in time become apparent to you. Finally, don't let anyone tell you that Harris Hawks are second rate, because they aren't. I would not be flying one and the falconry circles in this country would not be "black" with them if that were the case. The one's who knock Harris's are generally those who have no experience of them. Just count the Harris Hawks in group photos' taken at club meets. I often wonder what my contemporaries of the 1960's think when they see this Harris revolution.

In conclusion, perhaps beginners contemplating a Harris would probably learn more of the difficulties involved in training hawks by selecting a different species first, rather than the other way round. If one plans to stay with a Harris from day one, and why not, then go straight for the Harris. However, if one plans subsequently to venture into the realms of Goshawks, Coopers Hawks, Black Sparrowhawks and even Redtails, then I feel the comparatively easy going attitude of the Harris is unlikely to pave the rocky road ahead for any of the above. Whatever route you decide to take, think about your choice long and hard beforehand, then make the right choice for you.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Jon Neviaser

First, let me mention that I was in the veterinary industry for twelve years, but I'm not a vet. My education is a bachelor's degree in Animal Science (husbandry) from Va.Tech, though I started out in pre-vet. med. I was flying hawks for about nine years or so before college and I really felt fortunate because my chosen area of study was so beneficial to my truest passion in life - my falconry! BTW, I flew a tiercel harris and a tundra peregrine throughout my college years. I graduated in 1981. I haven't been without a hawk since I was 14, and I'm 40 now. I am a serious game-hawker (why have them if not to watch them do what they're best at?) I'm very motivated to try to help others in the sport as so many good people helped me.

First, not enough emphasis is given to the importance of water and the bird's level of hydration. Nothing is more important to your bird's health. There is actually little importance placed on this in the classical literature. Of course, they couldn't know as much about physiology back then as we do now. Still, some authors have even gone so far as to downplay its importance, saying things like "hawks get all the moisture they need from their meat". Not! This area of your management is probably more important than even food to your bird's health and prevention of disease/maintenance of health. Sound outrageous? Let me try to state my case, but it will take some explanation to do so. (Lord, I hope I'm not just "preaching to the choir" on this! My experience has been that between everyone out there in the various stages of their falconry careers, I won't be, someone will benefit.) Please forgive the lengthy dissertation, but I feel that making my point on this very important issue may be necessary.

Your bird can go longer without food than it can without water. In fact, what is happening first to a hawk in starvation is dehydration. The physiological and metabolic processes slow down. If they come to a standstill, the bird dies. If the bird is well hydrated, the process of nutrition assimilation and elimination proceed normally and everything will flow smoothly. Many "stressors" will be "shrugged off". FACT: The first thing an emaciated hawk needs in treatment is fluids, not food. This should tell you something. If a bird is allowed to become dehydrated, all the physiological processes slow down, or come to a standstill. It doesn't matter if food is available or not, the bird whose system isn't working cannot utilize it anyway, and may be too depressed to have much of an appetite. To say your passage accipiter will not drink for an extended time on its own is a safe statement. This is

even true of passage redtails. The water in the bath pan beside their perch will go untouched. It will be up to you to see that the hawk gets ample moisture. "Well, there's water there if she wants it". Doesn't matter. The passage hawk will not feel comfortable enough to partake of it for quite a while. This is especially true of some poor excuses for water pans. Then consider the extra stress the new passerger is under. I can only imagine its moisture demands have to be higher. The result of dehydration and the slowing down of the hawk's system is that you will soon see some classic signs of "stress". The bird's eyes will not be as bright and full or round as they should be. This has been described as "squinty" or "almond-eyed". She won't have the look of vitality, but instead, lethargy. Sound like a hawk in low condition? It is, but dehydrated is what a hawk in low condition is before it's also energy depleted. Other stress risk factors include excessive weight reduction and the water issue is closely bound to that.

My old friend and benefactor, Alva G. Nye, Jr. used to tell me that he was sure more accipiters died of dehydration than anything else, but that it wasn't recognized as that. I think this is what got me into studying and analysing the problem. He taught me to "NEVER feed any hawk dry, sticky meat, and to ALWAYS make sure it is GOOD and WET". This is the main way you will keep a passage hawk well hydrated, and thereby avoid many of the problems that can occur. It's because hydration is so critical to the bird's immune system, as it is for people as well. Even normally, there are substances that are toxic if they move too slowly through the bird's system. Don't let the plumping stand still or back up! A hydrated hawk will slice its mutes out behind it, not dribble them down through the vent feathers (a sign of sickness and stress). A well-hydrated bird will fly at a higher weight. Many do not realize that the day to day weight fluctuations that they see on the scales with their bird is water addition or reduction, not fat fluctuation. Fat does not fluctuate up and down like that. You're dealing with a matrix of moisture, energy and nutrition. To say "my bird is too fat" when slightly overweight is not accurate. Many hawks, especially passage accipiters being flown, have no usable fat stores. They are lean and mean. I think this is true of the game-hawking kestrel as well. That's why these birds have no margin for error, esp. in cold weather. Needing a snack in the morning to keep them until they can be flown later in the day, and hopefully fed on the high-quality ration of a kill. Meat contains a lot of water. Dieting results in a caloric decrease and a

moisture decrease. The moisture decrease really isn't necessary nor is it desirable when conditioning the hawk for using hunger as a motivator in manning, training, or hunting. A well-hydrated bird will respond / fly at a higher weight. For weight control I far prefer to feed washed meat than to fast a passage hawk, especially the smaller species with higher metabolisms. Don't get me wrong though, fasting is a good method at times in some systems of management. One example would be such as when you're flying a hawk in high condition and you allow her to take a full crop on a kill. Fasting the next day should have her keen and ready at a good weight to hunt the following day, given other factors are o.k. Washed meat keeps the hawk hydrated and should be given as wet as possible. It keeps the hawk's system running, working, functioning smoothly, but she can still lose weight on it. She probably won't need to lose as much weight though, because of the better appetite she will have, hence my remark "a well-hydrated hawk will fly at a higher weight". If you ever need to treat your hawk with antibiotics, or even some wormers, it is of utmost importance that your bird be well hydrated. This is because they must be broken down, diluted, absorbed and dispersed rapidly through the bird's system and eliminated. Various degrees of permanent liver and kidney damage can occur if the bird is in a state of dehydration. This is true of the common treatment for frounce with Flagyl or metronidazole. Many falconers don't realize these drugs can be very toxic if the bird is not well hydrated. Another illustration of the importance of hydration! This is the single-most important management recommendation I can think of to ward off the negative effects of "stress" as far as the bird's natural physiology is concerned. Obviously one must consider diet, nutrition, cleanliness and the absence of pathogens. Handling issues such as when or when not to expose the bird to certain "stressors" and when to slip the hood on and when to leave her bare-headed, etc. Since aspergillosis is a serious concern I would avoid all dusty environments which are where the organism exists. The bird's immune system can keep asper at bay if stress is prevented, as stress is required to compromise the natural immune system and allow the asper. complex to begin. I hope some of this info. will help with the reduction of the effects of "stress" and the maintenance of health. I apologize for the lengthiness. Please feel free to comment whether pos. or neg. Your comments would be appreciated. There are some other ways to give your hawk moisture, if interested please let me know. Good Hawking!

Hawk Talk

John Matcham

The following article is the main part of an official complaint sent by myself and others concerned, to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The first 14 (not shown) questions, are only my personal details and the name and addresses of those involved. For legal reasons we have changed the names and addresses of the accused and of those who were witness to this despicable act. The name of Mr Bartholomew and others recommended to the accused, as a good source of veterinary care for raptors, remains the same. Please read this carefully and consider our combined horror when we received the following reply.

15. Please give the case history in brief with relevant dates of symptoms and treatment administered.

On the afternoon of the 14/05/97 Mr Windy Miller of Worlds End, Sparrow Road, Freehand Oxfordshire, while working in the gardens of Water Cottage Cookie Oxon. saw a bird now known to be a Buzzard fly away from the coppice and into a neighbouring field, at first he took little notice, but later saw a group of Crows mobbing the area where the bird had landed, on investigation he discovered the bird to be unwell. It reacted to his movement by rousing its feathers. He went to fetch gloves etc. to enable its capture. Having caught the bird he called The RSPCA who recommended he take it to his local Veterinary Surgery for immediate treatment. He did so at approximately 4.30- 4.45pm almost immediately after its capture. The surgery was that of Smith and Jones Farm Gate Road Walton. Where a secretary received the bird, who informed him that, the bird would be placed in a cage and treated shortly. Mr Miller left the surgery and returned home having no further contact with the bird.

At approximately 5.30pm on the 15/05/97 I retrieved a telephone message left on my answering machine (date and time registered) that had been received from the aforementioned secretary at approximately 2.30pm on the same day, asking us for our assistance in the after-care of a Wild Common Buzzard. I returned the call and spoke to the secretary who informed me that the buzzard had been perhaps poisoned and needed to be cared for up to its normal release in to the Wild, should that be eventually possible. Ms B Potter was not available at the time and she returned my call shortly afterwards. I gave her directions to our establishment, and she informed me of her expected arrival at approximately 8.30pm that evening. I was teaching that evening and the arrival of a sick bird intended for release is always an exciting aspect to my students.

Ms Linda Potter BVSc MRCVS arrived at 8.40pm she watched me prepare a secure housing in our night quarters, I handed her an Animal Accident and Injury Report form to fill in (standard procedure signed copy enclosed), and prepared to examine the bird myself Ms Potter informed me that I would not need gloves, which surprised me a little and prompted me to ask what illness the bird was suffering from and what treatment the bird had received. She replied "I don't know", and "None", respectively She did also say, "We tried to give it a drink, but it didn't take much". I asked if the bird had been X-rayed or had it received at least a broad spectrum antibiotic and re-hydration, she replied "No we are not equipped to treat such animals". I informed her that if she were not others were and suggested for future situations, she should contact us immediately for a list of specialists. I then informed her that the basic immediate treatment for any wild animal injury or illness should normally include, re - hydration if required and a broad spectrum antibiotic, she replied "I know its the same for domestic animals", at this point communication with her seemed pointless and a waste of valuable time, therefore while she filled out the form I contacted Andrew Bartholomew BVSc MRCVS, who is not a Raptor Specialist but with whom we have worked on similar cases in the past, he instructed his associate, Pablo Nart L.VET MRCVS, to prepare for our imminent arrival. Ms Potter left our premises looking very embarrassed and we proceeded to Iffley road surgery Oxford some seven miles away.

On examination and x-ray the bird showed signs of a swollen brain and had an injury on its head that we agreed had been present for at least five days due to the presence of a large granulation, removal of which showed the skull to be complete and recent growth of scar tissue, the bird weighed 1lb exactly, in my experience normal weight would be around 2lbs for an average male and up to 3lb for a large female. We decided that immediate treatment with the administration of fluids and a broad spectrum antibiotic and a liquid feed of minced meat, vitamins and minerals, followed by another treatment of the same the following morning would be the first line of treatment, some improvement had been noticed by the following morning and at this juncture (22/05/97), slow improvement continues

with a weight increase of 5oz and the bird is becoming more aware of its surroundings.

16. What specifically dissatisfied you?

There are three fundamental points that I feel need further investigation and clarification. But first the following information should also be considered,

1.The Secretary from Smith and Jones discovered the whereabouts of The Oxfordshire School of Falconry and Raptor Conservation by telephoning, The Cotswold Falconry Centre, Batsford, Moreton in Marsh, Glos. and speaking to Mr. Steven Powell who informed them of the existence of Aylmer and Cannon Veterinary surgeons of Chipping Norton Oxfordshire experienced in the care of Raptors, he also mentioned the name of Neil Forbes in Stroud probably the UKs most experienced specialist in Raptor care. The secretary or Ms. Potter informed him that both were too far to travel.

2. On no occasion did Ms. Potter ask for, or to see, evidence that we were capable of looking after and rehabilitating Raptors, or even if we were equipped for such work.

3.The possibility that Ms Potter was not alone in the decision to treat a Wild animal in this manner.

My complaints are;

A. That Ms Potter BVSc MRCVS did fail in her duties as a Veterinary surgeon, by failing to provide prompt first aid and food to a wild animal, for a period of up to 27.5 hours and that the animal in question had been left in a container of some description for that period while a secretary took responsibility for finding a place or person on to whom this should be off loaded.



B. That Ms Potter BVSc MRCVS did fail in her duties as a Veterinary surgeon, by failing to appreciate that if she was incapable of treating a wild animal of this description and unable to find immediate assistance from a more suitably qualified and experienced Veterinary Surgeon, that euthanasia for the sake of the animal would be a more humane solution.

C. That Ms Potter BVSc MRCVS did fail in her duties as a Veterinary Surgeon, by handing over an untreated wild animal with no hope of survival without immediate qualified Veterinary care, to an unknown and medically unqualified member of the general public.

D. That Ms Potter BVSc MRCVS did fail in her duties as a Veterinary surgeon, by causing unnecessary suffering to a wild animal.

Final Notes;

I am fully aware of the stresses and strains placed up on all personnel working with animals, having myself previously been Head Keeper of a small under budgeted private zoo, even so I have never been confronted with this level of unethical behaviour in failing to respond to what can only be described as an emergency situation on the part of a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Having briefly met Ms Potter and realising that her experience as a qualified Veterinary Surgeon is probably limited, due to her presumed age, and having dis-

cussed the matter with my associates, we feel that should a letter of her admission and regret be received by us at the earliest possible time, including her personal reassurance that she will suitably adjust her attitude for future cases and that she understands that respected members of her profession in conjunction with like-minded members of the public are ready to provide assistance at any time, and that she should make herself aware of these people. We would be totally satisfied, after all, "we all make mistakes".

17. I consent to a copy of this form being sent to the veterinary surgeon

Signed

Mr John Matcham Proprietor
O.S.F.R.C.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Legal Department replied

Dear Mr Matcham

The Royal College has now considered your complaint against Ms Potter of Smith and Jones Veterinary Surgeons.

With Mr Smiths permission we are copying his report to you since, all your points are addressed therein.

We have also received a report from Mr Bartholomew, who has explained that the message left at his surgery by Ms Potter on the 23rd of May was not dealt with as expeditiously as it should have been

because of an ankle injury which he himself had suffered.

I am asked to say that in all the circumstances no misconduct issue has been identified.

Yours sincerely
(Name given)
Assistant Registrar (Legal)

Mr. Smith simply denied all the allegations on Ms Potters behalf in his report and as for mentioning Mr. Bartholomew's injured ankle this was entirely irrelevant, the bird by then had been treated by real a vet and was now in our care.

For Mr. Bartholomew and the other real Vets mentioned we ask only that when choosing a Veterinary Surgeon for your hawk or a wild one, ask one question. 'If you do not know will you ask another better experienced veterinary surgeon'. If the answer is yes and he or she seems keen to help and learn, then help them by giving them a list of those famous Veterinary Surgeons we all trust in times of need.

As for the Buzzard, Melanie hand fed and washed this very sick bird for six weeks and then he stood up for the first time and opened his eyes. He now weighs in at around 2lbs and although still has a degree of feather damage, he will return to the wild in 1998.

Till next time John O.S.F.R.C.

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Waiting for Winter

Diana Durman-Walters

The cold grip of frost that snaps your breath and brings creeping paralysis to your fingers and toes seemed a distant thought in November. In the North, snow usually falls this month. All the preliminary schooling undertaken in Autumn is usually done as quickly as is possible, to make it easier for the falcon to be successful when the freeze of winter arrives.

The mild weather front that lasted an unprecedented length of time provided a lot of scope this season.

Normally once the ponds have started to encrust with ice ducks, which have, until that point, been quite content with their water world, seek situations that can offer better feeding prospects.

Duck hawking can be a limited affair if winter weather takes a grip in the early part of the autumn.

However, this season has been a bonus in that the mild conditions have kept the ducks at home and plenty of them.

Duck hawking doesn't have as much time spent on it in this country as for instance California falconers do. Of course they have the one thing we had this year, the mild weather, which provides them with a long and interesting season.

During mid October, Ikuya Hatano, from Japan, came and paid a visit to see Goshawks and Falcons flown. Pheasants, which might otherwise have been pretty sedentary, were very widespread at the beginning of the season.



She had stained her immaculate plumage (Phot : Ikuya Hatano)

The mild weather meant they were moving away more than normal from the coverts, and could be found unusually long distances away from feeding zones.

Hawking with the Goshawk would not be so much fun at present as the woods weren't holding birds and more importantly the mild weather meant that the falcons were receiving undivided attention as ducks were plentiful

Mallards, because of their size really need a hard hitting falcon. A capable female peregrine is up to the job, but perhaps nothing is better equipped to tackle this quarry, weight for weight, than the gyr family, which includes their hybrids.

Gyr x Sakers, are any match for duck, providing the quarry can fly to alternative ponds. Here flights of endurance are just the style and type that suit these powerful falcons.

Small dabbling duck such as Teal and Widgeon are highly manoeuvrable and are best tackled with nimble and adroit flights from male gyr x peregrines or gyr x sakers. Females that are not so quick on the turn tend to wait until they can put pressure onto the flight of duck, getting one to leave the formation or one that leaves by itself from the water.

This latter technique is one that Ikuya witnessed from the female hybrid.

She is more



Waiting for Pheasant days (Photo: D Durman-Walters)

familiar with harsh winds that are often accompanied by sleet driven squalls that would take the skin off your face. In these conditions her enormous frame become parent like and her flights are controlled and effortless as she follows the biological response to the gyr in her.

Making maximum use of extreme conditions, gaining height and position in such conditions brings her into a class of her own. However, the mild winter conditions, which personally suited me better than her, meant that her weight had to be somewhat tighter as the warm weather was making her rather indifferent.

Getting duck to rise from the pond was equally a problem. They were quite happy drifting in and out of the dense reed beds and were seemingly undeterred by the flight of the falcon. Nothing creates activity more surely than a good wirehaired pointer rattling around in the water and cover of the pond.

Their aggressive hunting style and energy are simply the deciding factor when you need duck into the air.

The falcon flew somewhat lazily towards a high bank to one side of the pond and seeking an easy ascent let the thermal pull her into a steady climb. Duck by now were starting to leave the pond. Not because of the falcons profile above them, but due in the main to the wirehair bitch getting just a touch too close for comfort.

The falcon chose to continue rising steadily appearing to ignore the scene below. Shouting at her didn't seem to stimulate her to commit herself to action.

She is a highly experienced falcon and although her demeanour suggested that she might be a touch "high" and her cruising style was hardly workmanlike, she was using all her guile and skill to create a sense of "I'm not really interested".

Formations of duck do not interest her unless one of them indicates that it will break away and attempt to outfly her. These individuals are selected every time.

One of the mallards took the initiative to divert to a small pond nearby. Duck are astonishingly fast. They will outfly the falcon if she is in the wrong position.

However, the gyr factor in these falcons provides them with another gear that they simply switch into. The falcon, seeing the opportunity arise, tilted and threw herself into the downward flight, rowing and propelling herself through the sky breaching the gap between her and a fine meal.

As the duck accelerated, she responded. In those moments where motion seems suspended and the action is on "slow frame" she seized her quarry, mid air. The weight of the duck meant she had to watch how she put the brakes on



A female Peregrine Falcon or a Gyr Falcon and their hybrids make excellent duck hawks

her descent. Suddenly we could hear the voices of those around, excitedly indicating where they thought she had landed.

She always has the quarry neatly dispatched before you arrive. On this occasion she had severed the neck with unusual vigour and had stained her immaculate white plumage.

For Ikuya this was to be the highlight

of the stopover. The Goshawk, which was just beginning her re-schooling, wasn't able to show her ability on pheasant for him.

The unseasonal weather has now given over to snow and ice. This has presented some really excellent hawking days on pheasant with the Goshawk and flights of style and calibre, proving that winter is worth waiting for.

FALCONRY BY JACEK STREK

A superb new film produced by one of the leading, award winning wildlife film makers of this century, Jacek Streck who has also done work for the National Geographic. This video is produced to a high professional standard and contains some excellent close up sequences.



This film is an epic journey through time and place in search of an answer; why has this complex and enigmatic association between man and bird existed throughout history. Our story is also about Erik, a falconer who has arrived in the Canadian arctic with one desire, to find and fly a Gyr falcon.

Included in the video are footage of Heron hawking, Japanese falconry, Grouse hawking and hunting Houbara.

**The video is priced at £29.95 (inc p&p) To order please send your name, address and a cheque/P.O. for this amount to: Paul Deeley, Brown Edge Cottage, Salperton Estate, Salperton, Cheltenham, Glos. GL54 4EF
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THERMAL TROUSERS FOR THE FALCONER

A unique thermal trouser for the falconer, is amongst the latest items to be found in Shropshire based, Caradoc Clothing's new '98 brochure of mail order country and outdoor clothing.

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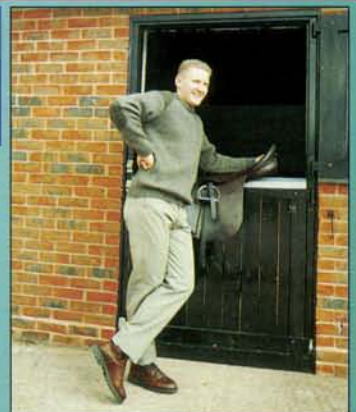
resistant. It is then fully lined from the waistband down the entire length of the legs with 100% cotton moleskin. This makes the trouser warm and comfortable on the coldest of days, yet smart enough to casual wear. The ideal trouser for falconry and hawking.

Originally designed for forest rangers, the trouser is well cut with a high rise for comfort. It features one hip and two side pockets, a sturdy metal zip fly and belt loops. It is available in Field Grey with unfinished legs, and waist sizes from 30" - 46".

For really extreme conditions, the trouser is available in dark green with dry wax stitched in seat and front of leg patches. These offer greater protection when kneeling or sitting on damp or dirty ground. Available in the same sizes as the standard thermal trouser.

Caradoc's brochure also offers many other items of quality outdoor clothing from corduroy and moleskin trousers through to bodywarmers, knitwear, thermal wear and waterproof coats. All of the items are made in Britain by well known manufacturers and are reasonably priced.

Trousers and brochure are available from: Caradoc Clothing, Mor Brook Barn, Morville, Nr Bridgnorth, Shrops. WV16 5NR Tel: 01746 714275



THE BRITTANY - THE EURO GUNDOG PART 2

“The Brittany - Fit for business?”

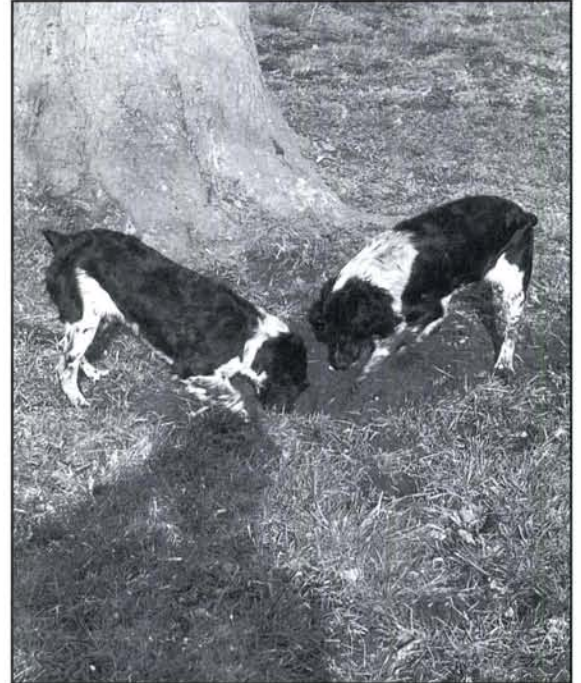
Health and Welfare

Anne Massie

In my first article I indicated that the Brittany Club of Great Britain has amassed a considerable volume of information on the breed - from fellow breeders in France, and in other countries, from books on the breed printed in French, and also from our own experiences. When the breed came into this country from France in the early 1980's, there was little information received from the country of origin regarding hereditary defects and diseases. We have since accumulated data from both France and America, and also from the BVA in this country, all of which shows that there are a number of health problems that we must try to eliminate from the breed as far as possible. Many of these diseases were already in the breed in these countries, but whether it was a case of importers being blind in love or whether breeders selling to the UK actually withheld the information is difficult to determine. Either way, the Brittany Club hopes to distribute a questionnaire on health to every known Brittany owner in the near future, with a view to assessing the problems. Owners of Brittany's who are not presently members of the Brittany Club of Great Britain may wish to assist us by completing a questionnaire. These may be obtained from myself or from any Club Committee member, a list of these

is being appended at the end of this article.

The main problem facing owners of bitches who would like them to have a litter is that in common with a number of other breeds, there is Hip Dysplasia in some lines, this being a condition that could seriously affect a dog's performance when working, possibly becoming progressively worse with time. No-one wants to spend time and money raising and training a dog then to find that it is unable to work after it is about three or four years old because it is in pain with hip problems. The remedy is to ensure that all dogs bred from have been hip scored under the BVA/Kennel Club Scheme, and that they are preferably under the breed average. At present that average is around 20 in total, variations can be 10 each side, or perhaps 7/13, 8/12, 9/11 etc. (The lower the hip score the better the hips.) A dog with a high hip score should not be bred from, unless the reason for the dysplasia has been verified by a Veterinary Surgeon to be largely environmental, or caused by damage in puppyhood. A dog must be 12 months of age for the x-ray plates to be scored by the BVA panel, since a puppy's bones are not sufficiently developed till that age. After the age of about four or five, some natural deterioration may also occur. There can also be environmental causes of deterioration. One of my older bitches had a bad habit from when she was a puppy of leaping vertically in her run whenever she saw anything of interest, either human or animal! She had a hip score at 2 years of 30/28 and has thus never been bred from, although she is a very good worker, as well as being good looking! For these reasons, it is recommended that dogs are HD tested between the ages of one and four years. The cost varies across the country, but the BVA fee is at present £21.50, with most vets charging around £50 to £70



*The Brittany, Hunts.....Points.....Retrieves.....
and jumps*

in addition to X-ray the animal. Further diseases, which may affect working abilities are common to many breeds, such as those affecting the eyes (PRA, Cataract etc.), Epilepsy, and some heart disease. Eye disease can be tested for, but since a dog may not show signs of these diseases in puppyhood they require annual checks to ensure they are clear. There is some doubt as to the effectiveness of testing for these and not all breeders will do so. It is quite possible for a dog to be tested clear one month, be used at stud or whelped, and be tested positive at a later date. The result of this is that puppies may be born as either sufferers or carriers. Breeders who do test for eye problems will most likely test their breeding stock every year. The cost of this can again vary, but will probably be around £12 to £15. Thankfully, there has not been a high incidence of eye disease in the Brittany as yet.

Epilepsy is usually detected as a result of fitting and can be at any age. Tests are also available but this is not normally done routinely. However, not all fits are attributable to hereditary causes - they can be due to chronic illness, accidental skull damage, viruses etc. But obviously it would be safer not to breed from known fitters - fits usually commence prior to the age of two years if epilepsy is the root cause. Epilepsy can be controlled by drugs in most cases, but working abilities may be affected to some extent, and if the dog disappears from view while hunting one might never be sure whether



it is on point or ill. Therefore, the best advice is to be aware of the disease when purchasing a puppy and ask the right questions. Dogs are not usually tested for Epilepsy unless they are presenting symptoms, so only breeders having access to full information will know which lines are prone.

It is easy to pick up any heart murmur and also other congenital defects at a puppy's first visit to your Vet, so it is good practice to introduce your new pup to your Vet within a few days of taking it home.

Anyone who was contemplating buying a Brit pup will by now probably have been put off for life! However, what I am saying is not - Don't buy a Brittany', but rather - "When you buy a Brittany, ask questions first, not after"!! Brittanys have some health problems it is true, but these can be avoided and they are certainly less than a number of breeds. They can also be reduced and possibly even eradicated from the breed by careful and informed breeding programmes.

Reputable breeders should already know of any disease prevalent in a breed and adjust their breeding programme accordingly, so it makes good financial and emotional sense to find one from whom to buy your next hunting companion.

CHARACTER AND ABILITIES

Having given you all the bad news now we have the good news. The Brittany has a character like no other dog. Brittanys are fast and fabulous! All other gundogs are zombies by comparison. However, they do need firm but considerate handling. A Brittany can be highly offended by you one minute, then totally besotted by you the next. The iron rod in the padded velvet glove is what is required. The Brittany has been termed a 'high-spirited hooligan' in some circles, but is certainly biddable, elegant, stylish and confident in its work. The French Club has the motto "un maximum de qualites pour un volume minimum" - the best life comes in the smallest parcels, one might say, but the French phrase literally means that this breed carries a maximum of quality in a minimum volume. In my final article I will detail many of the activities in which Brittanys both at home and abroad are presently taking part.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF OWNING A BRITTANY

Advantages

- ★ Small, easy to train if started young, good with people, and children.
- ★ Attractive personalities, spectacular in work.
- ★ Sensitive nose, excellent hunter,

staunch pointer.

- ★ Unrivalled loyalty to owner and family.
- ★ Reasonably short coat for easy maintenance.
- ★ Extremely enthusiastic in all activities, a bundle of energy.
- ★ An excellent house dog if exercised sufficiently.

Disadvantages.

- ★ Can be a little boisterous for families with babies and small children, but it is all play.
- ★ May miss game while inexperienced due to exuberance.
- ★ May rush in due to excitement but will learn with experience.
- ★ Not a first dog breed, can occasionally be 'spiky' with other dogs, although this is easily controlled.
- ★ May need some trimming for show work.
- ★ Very intense, with basic instincts.
- ★ Requires considerable exercise, must have access daily to beach, fields or woodland, where they can run free.

Brittany Club of Great Britain. Officers and Committee 1997

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FROM A FORD ESCORT TO A PORSCHE

Martin Cook

"Have you flown a Gos before?" I was asked.

"No, I've been flying a male Harris for the last couple of years," came my reply.

"Well, it's like going from a Ford Escort to a Porsche!"

Let me start at the beginning, before all you Harris fans get upset, because I am a great admirer of the ability, tenacity, bravery and above all the favourable social qualities of a fit Harris Hawk. (Fitness being the key to any good hunting bird). I'd still be flying my male today if I hadn't lost him while out hunting one day. Although I never found him, I am sure he got pulled down a drainage hole by a rabbit. This was an occasion when I saw him go down into a valley and never saw him again.

I have been flying birds for the last eight years. I'm a self taught falconer after being shown the basic husbandry skill by a friend. I've followed this up by reading everything I can get my hands on and talking with anyone involved in Falconry. At this point I must say I love these magazines. They are a constant source of valuable information to me and I look forward to their arriving every quarter.

I started flying my friends' female buzzard, then went on to his male. Never managed to enter either. I had a lot of fun though and of course I was learning. I then bought my wife a male kestrel for a wedding present (well we didn't have much money and she did hint to me that she was interested in falconry). I had great fun with this little fellow until he flew into a straining wire and had to be put down.

On the subject of wives. Although my wife isn't as passionate about falconry as myself, she is great at running down the field dragging a dead rabbit or hiding in the bushes ready to throw out a dead quail. She's very supportive of my hobby and if

you have a wife like mine guys, then you should look after her!

I then bought a male Harris (I named him Tico) What a lovely bird. I flew him at 11b 7oz in the first and second season very successfully, with a wide rage of quarry being taken. Once trained I flew him out of an aviary and always from the trees. I always tried to fly him every day. Therefore, he got fit. I've learned that an unfit bird will ignore quarry and an inexperienced falconer may start dropping a bird's weight. We read quite often of males ignoring rabbit and by dropping their weight they will respond. This is true but it is wise to remember there are other factors why birds don't always respond the way we expect. The third season I was flying him between 11b 6oz and 11b 7oz. The reason for this was his lack of keenness in coming to me out of the aviary. What a different bird this third season. I believe it to be maturity. He was landing in trees as high as possible, (after learning this was the best place to be) resulting in one of the best slips I've had. On a Starling! I was working a bramble patch with my two springers when I saw Tico leap out of a tree so fast I thought it must have been a rabbit. I came running round from the bush to see him on the ground with nothing, so I thought, and my wife Debs saying "Did you see that? He just took it out of the air." He went on to take a liking to Magpies. He would crash into trees after them resulting in a couple of kills. I was having a great start to the third season and Tico was everything you read about Harris's. He caught just about everything from mice to Cock Pheasant. He would fly to anyone and to me from fields away. I could call him by name or whistle.

It was in November of the third season that I lost him.

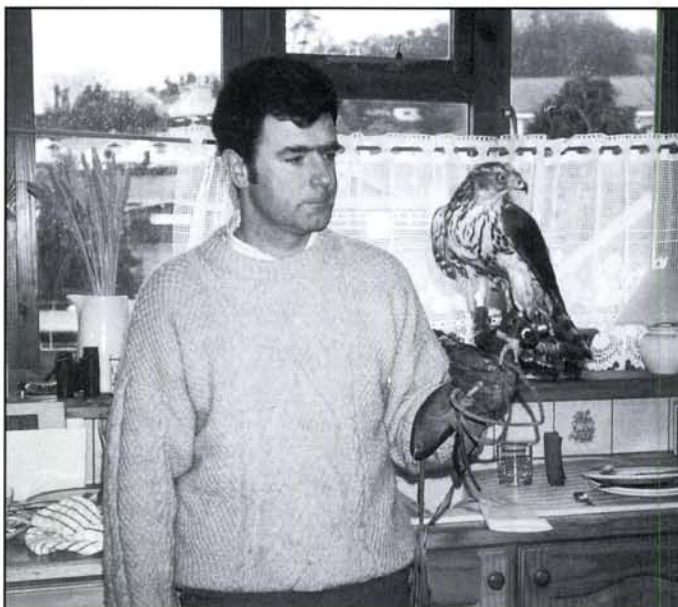
As you can imagine I was gutted and even today, as I am writing I've re-lived many exciting days out hunting with him.

After speaking with Adrian Williams (Secretary of the Welsh Hawking Club) he told me that a club Goshawk was still available. I thought I would like to try a Gos so I contacted the breeder and arranged to take delivery on Boxing Day 1995.

I named my male Gos Gustav. A captive bred Hungarian Goshawk. Weight 11b 11oz. Now I had my 'Porsche'. Unfortunately (due to my inexperience) this Porsche took a bit of starting! Throughout the training I compared Gus with my Harris. Mistake! Goshawks don't respond like Harris's. (How did I know? I'd never flown a Gos before. It took a bit of time to get used to the metabolism of a Gos. I could fly my Harris all day on two chicks. The Gos will stay steady on two chicks. Do a bit of flying and WOW he needed four chicks. It's just a bit colder and wow, more food! Needless to say his weight was up and down like a yo-yo. I learned that if I dropped the weight of my Harris I would get a response. I try that with the

Gos and the reverse would happen. He would be more jumpy and less pleased to see me. So I would drop his weight more. Still not pleased to see me. I thought he was but it turned out he was too weak to bate away. How I didn't kill him I don't know. I can only say that I was constantly on the phone to Adrian Williams for help and guidance which he always gave with patience and understanding as did his wife Diane, who I spoke to often when Ade wasn't available. I started feeling his breastbone (not Adrians) which was something I never did before. I was starting all over again. I eventually let Gus go at around 11b 4oz+. He was great to the lure but wouldn't enter. I wasn't putting anything up for him. He hated my dogs and bated constantly at them. I thought he would just chase after magpies in the next field. (As I flew him to a Magpie lure.) I wasn't taking into account his lack of experience. On the odd occasion I put something up for him he would ignore it, resulting in more frustration and eventually he got more disobedient in returning. "He's bored". Somebody told me. Time was getting on so I put him down to moult.

Second season was very much the same but I was flying him at 11b 5oz. This seemed to be his most obedient weight. He chased the odd thing only if it broke cover very close. No luck again this year. Obedience not very good and all the time I felt he didn't look like a slick racing machine.



Nevertheless, I was learning all the time. I was getting some good advice like: -"You had it too late. You should have started training it earlier." Or "Bloody thing's useless. Get rid of it."

Hang on a minute! Surely it's not the birds fault? All the things that have happened up to this point have been down to me! People have told me he would be difficult because he was left until the end of the year before he was touched. I don't know. Somebody else said "Rubbish! He can't be any wilder than a passage or hag-

gard and I've flown many of them."

We're into the start of the third season, 1997. Training has gone very well. Coming 50-70 yards on the line to both fist and lure at 1lb 6oz! The bird's bated at everything! I let him go every time so I had to get him back. As soon as he got in the trees he was not keen on coming back. I pulled his weight down and I noticed straight away his condition changed. He was a bit better to the lure but he didn't look so good flying. I got him back to 1lb 6oz and he looks much bet-

ter. He is now chasing pheasants at top speed, resulting in a dozen or so great slips over the last couple of weeks and even hitting one in the air. I have found that I have to garnish the lure with wings to tempt him back. Sometimes it takes a few minutes, but, I get him back.

What has changed? The poor bird was too weak to fly at anything, and to quote Emma Ford "The reason that some Goshawks (two out of 3) do not perform well is due to the falconers lack of experience and his high expectations of the bird in the early

days."

To summarise: - I have learned that anything can upset a Goshawk and it can be annoying, especially of the bird has seen whatever is bothering it before. A Gos is not a machine and can respond differently in different days even at a steady weight. You have to show it game all the time. To see a Gos chase quarry at top speed is truly exciting and I'm looking forward to the rest of the season and Gus's first kill, which won't be too long. My Porsche is now firing on all cylinders!

THE DEDICATED FEW

This is a story about my wife Liz, and her first broadwing, "Bow" a female Buzzard. After flying a Kestrel for a season and a half, she decided it was time for a bigger bird and a new challenge.

After reading various books and talking to friends Liz decided on a Buzzard. Knowing it would take a lot of work on her behalf, especially to get it hunting, the challenge was set. We acquired "Bow" late in November 1996. After a six hour round trip in some of the worst weather to drive in we arrived home tired, yet excited at what lay ahead. Manning began next day and after six days she was feeding from the fist and becoming very steady, taking her surroundings and the dogs in her stride. On the bow perch, sitting in the garden it was another story, constant bating, for what reason we don't know, resulted in many broken primaries, but by this time she was flying free, looking somewhat like a plucked chicken. Flight wasn't easy for her, only managing to get to a six foot high branch, but she was building muscle with all the extra work.

It was now time to visit our good friend Paul Harris for a major imping session with help also from Jose Souto. Some time later, resplendent in Harris Hawk feathers, she was ready for the next days training. Liz took her out the next morning at a weight of one pound twelve and a half ounces and let her go, she flew straight to the top of the tree with ease. What a difference, even Bow seemed more positive and eager. Two more weeks of flying at a dummy bunny and then a dead rabbit and she was ready to be entered.

On her first hunting trip with Liz, Jose and friends, Bow showed no interest in the

rabbits put up underneath her. Perhaps she was too heavy. But in the afternoon after being shown a Moorhen she took it with great aggression and we let her crop out on it. We left feeling she was coming into her own. Unfortunately Bow had run out of time and the season had ended. We fed her up and decided to keep her on the bow-perch. After about two weeks at a weight of two pounds and seven ounces she sprained her leg with her constant bating. After a trip to the vet's and a months rest we then free-lofted her. All went well through the moult, lovely new primaries and a new look until disaster struck, Bow managed to escape during routine cleaning.

She was out for six days in the hottest weather of the Summer. After many attempts at capture we finally managed it with a net and grown ons secured to the creance and guess what? She had damaged her new primaries flying through the woods near our home. Liz took her through her training at a new weight of one pound ten and a half ounces and another trip to Pauls' for some new feathers. This season Bow has



Liz and her Buzzard, Bow.

changed into a real hunting bird, with a real purpose about her. Liz's first hunting trip ended with a bunny in the bag, and a few days later another rabbit. As I write this Bow is going from strength to strength and proof that what you put in you get out. I must at this point take my hat off to my wife Liz, she stuck with this difficult bird when others might have given up and sold her. A big thanks must go to Paul Harris and Jose Souto for their time, encouragement and enthusiasm and their true falconers spirit.

Hence the title of my story, The Dedicated Few' of which my wife is definitely one

ADRIAN PARRISH

RISK ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE LIFE TIME OF A RAPTOR

Nutrition

Source of food: Irrespective of the food type, it is obviously essential that one is 100% certain as to the quality, source, method of killing, freezing and storage of the food. Hatchery waste chicks, should be humanely killed, then immediately laid out on shelves and blast frozen, prior to packing. If chicks are boxed and then frozen, the chicks in the middle of the box may take an excessive amount of time to become frozen, leading to a proliferation of the small number of bacteria which are likely to be present in all chicks. Likewise, when chicks are purchased, it is important that they are transported direct to your freezer, still frozen. Thawing and subsequent refreezing of chicks creates a great risk for your birds. Food should not be kept stored (frozen) for more than three months.

Any ex-wild source of food eg. pigeon, game etc. must be considered to be potentially infected. Such birds can carry bacterial infections such as Tuberculosis, Salmonella or virus infections such as Paramyxovirus, Adenovirus or Rotavirus. Alternatively they may have been poisoned eg alphachloralose, mercury, lead, mevinphos. Any wild sourced food should be in good body condition, have been caught and killed by physical means, and on examination of the carcass, should look in all respects to be thoroughly wholesome and free of disease. It is crucial that the abdomen of such birds is always opened and the surface of the liver checked. If any small white spots are present on or in the liver, (often indicative of avian tuberculosis) the whole carcass must be rejected.

One should be wary of feeding road traffic casualties as one does not know why the animal or bird was so slow that it got hit, perhaps he wasn't feeling too good that day!! Any foods such as rats, mice, squirrels or foxes are less likely to cause any infectious diseases to your birds. The reason for this is that most pathogens will only affect one family of animals, ie. rodents virus is highly unlikely to affect birds. Conversely feeding avian derived foodstuffs is a potential risk.

In recent years we have encountered several outbreaks, in particular of virus disease, (eg. Adenovirus and Rotavirus), where perfectly healthy commercially sourced quail, day olds, turkey poults etc., have been fed to healthy raptors which have then succumbed to disease and in several cases died. The problem here is that one species can harbour many viruses (eg. day old chicks), without causing it any harm, ie the chick looks and is healthy, but when the chick is eaten, the raptor is infected. Sadly although the virus did not harm the chick it may conversely be dead-

Neil Forbes

ly for the raptor. There is no way of predicting or avoiding this, albeit rare, problem except by avoiding feeding any avian derived food.

Pigeons form a special risk to raptors on account of their high incidence of Trichomoniasis (frounce). Many falconers believe that if they only feed the breast there is no risk. Sadly this is not true. Stressed, old, young or sick birds will be most susceptible. Birds in perfect health may avoid infection. Otherwise, most wild peregrines would suffer badly. However, no risks should be taken, all pigeon which is fed should be frozen completely and thawed before feeding. The duration of freezing is unimportant. Other dangerous diseases which pigeons in some areas commonly carry are Falcon Herpes Virus (not currently in the UK), Owl Herpes Virus (an occasional problem in the UK), Newcastle Disease Virus, Paramyxovirus, Salmonellosis and Avian Tuberculosis.

Rabbit & Pigeon: Many falconers feed ferretted, rifle shot or shotgun shot rabbits or pigeon. The author would strongly implore that shotgun killed quarry should never be fed. One is aware that some falconers have for many years fed such food, and by feeding an increased level of casting have avoided lead poisoning. Some keepers swear they can find and remove every pellet. However, in view of the number of lead poisoning cases we still encounter, I can assure you it is not worth the risk. A further risk, which cannot be avoided, but that one should be aware of is encountered when feeding rifled or ferretted rabbit or pigeon. One is aware that on occasions some poor shot will have peppered such an animal at a prior date without killing it. So, although you know that you put no shotgun pellets in the quarry, they may already be present. The food source is good and healthy and avoiding it in view of the low risk is unreasonable. However, one should be aware of it so that if any signs consistent with lead poisoning are seen, immediate action can be taken. The signs of lead poisoning are weakness of legs and wings, inability to stand, often grasping the feet in each other, inco-ordination, poor appetite, green mutes, and weight loss. If these signs are present, the bird should immediately be seen by a vet, and it is important that you do not insist to the vet that there is no possible chance of lead poisoning.

Rabbit: Just occasionally when feeding larger species on rabbit or hare, a problem

can arise. If the bird is sufficiently greedy, it may take the whole thigh (femur) bone of the rabbit. On many occasions the bird will cope with this, however, sometimes it will wedge sideways in the crop or proventriculus. This may cause a perforation of the gut lining or an obstruction. The recommendation for such sized birds is to break the femur before feeding the carcass, if they take the bone in two sections no problem will arise.

Source of food: Food should always be purchased from reputable sources, where the wholesomeness of the food can be assured. The method of killing should be ascertained. One should be certain that no toxic or noxious substances can be in the food. One should be certain that the animals or birds fed to the raptors were not on medication, or being fed on medicated food before their death, as such medication can adversely affect your birds. Even the feeding of day old chicks where they treated the eggs with antibiotics to prevent bacterial infections, is likely to be deleterious.

Excessive feeding: Aviary birds in particular breeding birds, are often fed excessively. Excess food, in particular in the absence of exercise is as dangerous to birds as it is to mammals. Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), may occur in over fed, poorly exercised birds. The condition is especially common in older breeding female birds, in view of the increased mobilisation of fats, to form egg yolk material during laying. Firstly feeding should be controlled so that excess is not given. If birds do not come down to feed immediately the food is put in, they do not need as much. Excess food not only causes the bird health problems but also increases the risk of vermin (rats etc.), infestation.

The one good aspect about hardening of the arteries is that the condition is totally reversible, if the bird is exercised. So if possible at the end of the breeding season, take your breeding birds out, man them, and fly them even if it is only for a few weeks.

Water: Although raptors typically acquire their daily water intake via their food, if the weather is hot, they are unwell or laying at the time, or if they are not eating sufficient food, their dietary water intake may be insufficient. All birds should have access to water on a daily basis. However, water containers should be cleansable. Water should be changed regularly, especially in hot weather, as the very dangerous bacteria *Pseudomonas* sp. often grows in warm water, and can then readily infect the bird, leading to severe and often fatal infections. In hot weather sanitising the drinking water with a diluted disinfectant to prevent this problem may be neces-

sary. Furthermore if the water bowls are filled from a hose or standpipe, the water should be left to run for several minutes before it is used, as the first water from the pipe will have a significantly higher bacterial loading. Water baths should be carefully designed to minimise the possibility of birds drowning in the water. During the months of October to April (in the UK), birds should be prevented from bathing in the afternoon, as birds still wet at night are more prone to wing tip oedema, even when free lofted in an aviary.

Perches:

When birds are first tethered (especially Harris Hawks) there is a significant risk of injury, and action should be taken to minimise this. Firstly the correct size perch (especially bow) should be chosen. A bow should be of such a height that the bird's tail just clears the ground and no more. The taller the perch, the longer the length of leash that will be required. When a bird bates away from its perch, the farther it flies (which is determined by the length of the leash), the greater the speed it will be travelling at when the jesses pull on the birds legs. The faster the speed, the greater the force applied to the legs and the more likely the bird is to suffer a broken leg. The leash length should be kept to an absolute minimum when a bird is first tethered. Moreover the perch should always be placed in a position where the bird is unlikely to be become startled, (ie. it should not be in a frequented area, or where there may be significant pedestrian through traffic). Tethered birds should be protected from the elements, (ie. shade and cover provided as required), and from predators, both of the two legged and four legged varieties.

Birds should not be kept tethered on perches during the night or on particularly cold days, from October to April, in view of the risk of wing tip oedema and dry gangrene syndrome.

Falcons in particular are prone to bumblefoot. No one perch material is suitable for all birds. Careful daily observation by the keeper is important, in order that they detect the very early signs of this potentially crippling disease. Then effective changes and treatment can be made, in order to prevent continuation of the condition.

Training: Every care should be taken to minimise the stress caused to all birds, one of the most potentially stressful times

is training. Species such as Goshawks are most likely to be affected. Training should be taken as slowly and as gently as possible. Rapid weight losses, starvation (beware possible dehydration), and rapid training for an unreceptive hawk should not be used. In any situation stress causes a release of additional levels of cortisol within the bird's system. This cortisol prepares the bird for the characteristic 'fright and flight response', ie. enables it to fight or flee from the situation. However, this increased level of cortisol also reduces the bird's immune system, rendering it even more susceptible to infection.

Less experienced falconers should seek advice and assistance in the initial training and assessment of the correct flying weight, from more experienced colleagues.

Free Flight: furniture, apart from hunting jesses, bells and telemetry, should never be left attached to a bird when flown. Birds must be flown with at least bells and wherever possible telemetry, in order to reduce the chance of losing the bird. Flying ground should be very carefully selected. The inherent hazards of any flying ground should be assessed prior to free flight. Electricity transformers, neighbouring gamekeepers who are anti raptors, razor wire on the tops of perimeter security fencing, sheep fencing, methane burners on refuse tips, large rivers, railways or major roads that might prevent the falconer making in to the bird after a kill, are all factors that should be considered. When rook hawking care should be taken to ensure that the hawk is only slipped when there is a solitary rook present, for fear of attack by other birds after the hawk has bound to its quarry. Harris Hawks should be deterred from flying squirrels wherever possible, in view of the high incidence of serious squirrel bites sustained. A bird should not be flown if other birds are visible (eg. on a cage or block). Occasionally the bird in flight will attack another. Birds other than Harris Hawks (which naturally hunt in groups) should not be flown in a cast. Although it can lead to exhilarating flights, the chance of loss or injury to either bird is greatly increased.

Birds should, whenever possible, be restricted in the size of quarry that they fly. Flying a bird at 'outsize' quarry is not only unfair to the quarry, but also runs a

considerable risk of damage to your bird.

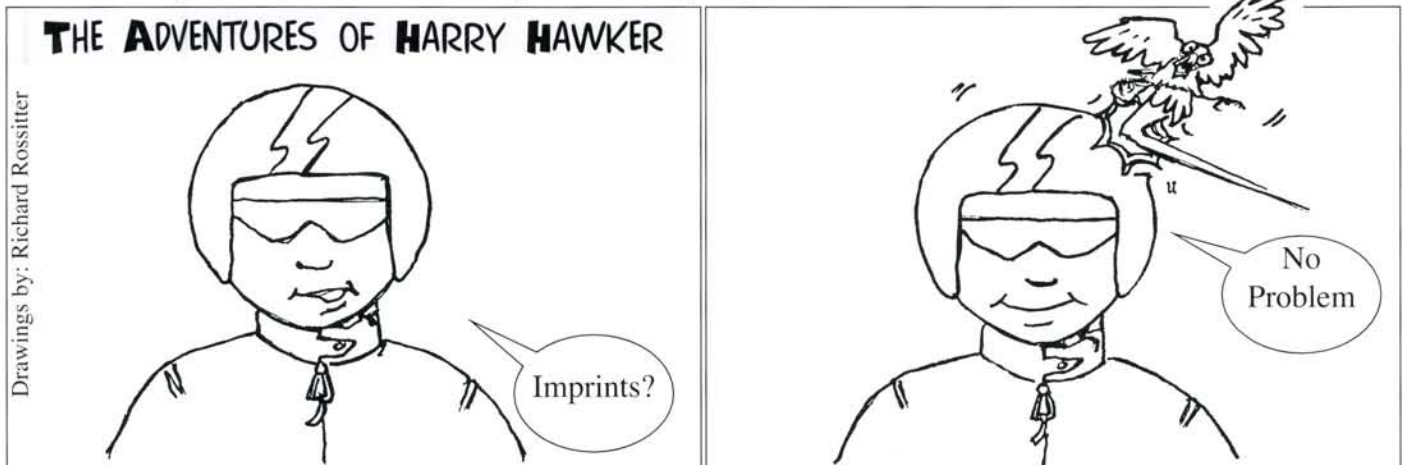
Whenever your hawks kill avian prey, it should, if possible, be checked (in particular the surface of the liver), prior to the hawk being allowed to feed up.

Aviary design and siting: Aviaries should be designed to prevent escape (ie secure build, support against snow or storms, and double doors to prevent escape) and to reduce the risk of theft. The bird should not be able to damage itself in the aviary. If it does, the aviary must be altered in some way to prevent this. If damage is occurring on fencing or netting roof, then vertical bars or battens (eg. bamboo, conduit piping etc.) should be placed on all surfaces, at sufficient space apart to allow the bird to get its head between, but not it's body.

The aviary must be able to be thoroughly cleaned. Although the beginner may want to keep the design simple, there is no substitute for a sloped concrete floor covered with soil or pea gravel. In this way if it is ever found that there is significant infection in the aviary, (eg. Capillaria sp. worms, coccidiosis, avian tuberculosis, salmonellosis etc.) the substrate can be cleaned back to the concrete, pressure cleaned, disinfected and refilled. If the aviary is earthen floored, it should be taken down and reconstructed elsewhere. The bottom of the aviary walls should also be solid. In this way both rodents and slugs, snails, worms etc., ie the intermediate hosts for most of the avian parasites are kept out, which will minimise the chance of your bird suffering infection with such parasites.

When choosing the site for the aviary, the potential consequences of flood, fire or tempest should be considered, as well as toxic pollution (carbon monoxide from car exhaust or pesticides or other noxious substances) from adjoining land.

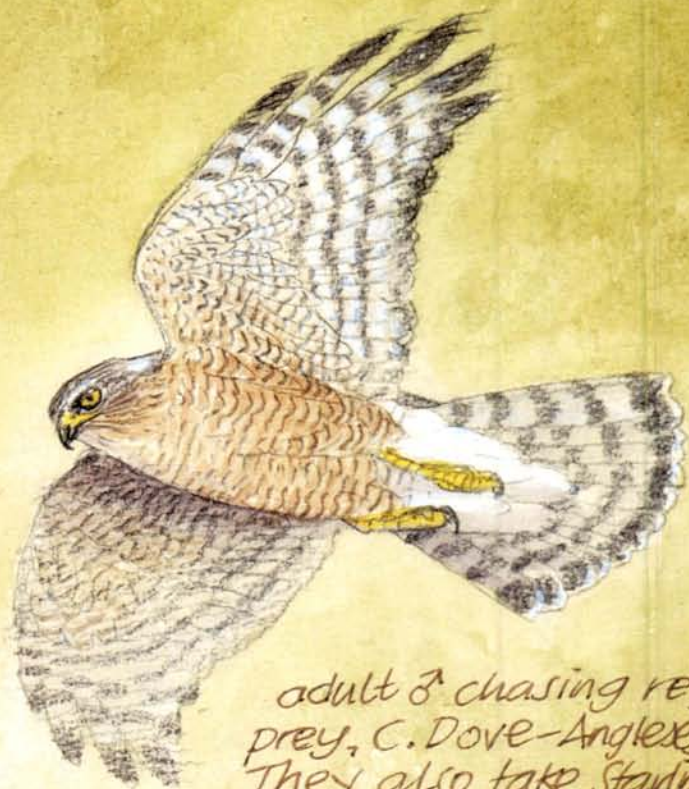
Routine checks: However careful you are, your bird will be at risk of infection or injury from time to time. You should be diligent in your daily careful observation of your bird, and receptive to slight changes from normality. It is also sensible to have at least mute parasite tests carried out twice yearly (at the end of the flying season, and again when taking the bird up again), and preferably a full examination and a blood test from your vet at least once a year.



RAPTORS

of Britain and Europe

The SPARROWHAWK · ©J.98.



adult ♂ chasing reg. prey, C. Dove - Anglesey. They also take Starling, Blackbird, tits, or even Dunlin & Redshank here. The adult ♀ was rescued from drowning, when bound to a Moorhen!



ad. ♀



The dashing SPARROWHAWK is one of Britain's commonest raptors, with c. 32,000 breeding pairs estimated in '91. Its spectacular comeback from the agricultural disaster of the '50/'60's is well documented, & probably helped by our provision of peanut/tit feeding stations for them. They can take a wide range of prey, from tits to pigeon. Edelight many with their spectacular low level attacks. P. SNOW.

FALCONRY FITNESS

WEIGHT TRAINING HAWKS

Colin Taylor



mately 30 feet away or whatever you can manage, place your hawk on the bow, tying her first to an anchor or fastened creance. Now climb onto your platform holding your garnished above your head, your fist now being 15 feet plus off the ground. Your hawk now has to fly at an angle of 30 degrees or above up to your fist. Walk the bird back to the perch initially but soon you'll be able to cast her back down to the bow without her looking for some higher platform.

Once your hawk can manage 30 to 40 of these flight no problem, you can add a little weight to the bird, by clipping carabiners or other clips or small shackles to your hawks' swivel, remember, casting the bird back down to the bow is just as important as calling it up to the fist. After all its just as hard walking down a steep hill as it is

To practice and achieve successful falconry, fitness and conditioning of the bird is paramount. Many courses and indeed books don't really cover this subject in any great detail if at all and the legacy of this very high percentage of hawks and broadwings are flown far below their potential and lack of success leads to an eventual lack of interest by falconer.

As a busy working father, I am only too aware of the problem of trying to exercise your hawk on dark wet winter nights, but the fact is that unless the bird is made to work at least three times through the week, hunting at the weekend will be limited.

A half fit Goshawk will always be quick enough to catch rabbit, but unless she is really fit pheasants especially mature winter birds are probably out of question and if we're all quite honest, quite a high proportion of Goshawks struggle to catch pheasants and partridge in flight.

If you are lucky enough to be able to hunt your bird three or four times per week your hawk will soon be fit and successful. However, most modern falconers can only hunt at weekends, so working the bird through the week is essential. Casting a hawk up a tree and calling it back 50 to 100 yards to the fist a dozen times is not enough. Even letting her follow on for a couple of miles is no real hardship, it is really just a couple of flaps and a glide up into or down out of a tree.

A method I've found to be very successful is to fly the hawk steeply up to the fist with added weight. This can be done quite easily in a back garden, fit an outside light and this can be done at any time, day or night.

Using any object you can to give you added height, outside bench, steps, wall etc. Place the birds bow perch approxi-

Above: Colin's female German Goshawk on a cock pheasant.

Right: Colin with his Goshawk, showing the weights attached to its swivel.

Below: Colin's Goshawk on a 7lb brown hare



climbing up it, and braking hard to land on the perch especially when the swivel is weighted is quite demanding. Slowly you can add more and more weight to your hawk still looking for the 30 to 40 reps (my years spent in gyms paying off!)

As an example to the reader my parent reared German female Goshawk - Viper carries approx. 10oz of added weight (excluding the heavy creance) quite easily 40 times to the fist five nights per week and although she could easily carry more weight, at her present level of fitness she catches 60%+ of all pheasants flown. This is a hawk that weighed 2lb 9oz fat when I brought her out of the aviary as a youngster two seasons ago. She was entered four weeks later on rabbit at a weight of 2lb and by the end of the season she was flying at her present weight of 2lb 6.5oz, at which weight she will readily take brown hares. This training method will add extra weight in the form of pure muscle to any hawk if applied consistently. It takes approx. 30 minutes per night and leads to a circle of the bird using more energy therefore needing more food and getting more exercise. I wouldn't personally advocate not rewarding the bird occasionally, especially in the case of a Goshawk, just manage the food into smaller pieces,

leaving a more substantial lump to attach to the lure for the last morsel. (Wedding a hawk to the lure is never a bad idea). The difference between fit and unfit birds in the field is immense and you'll find that this method is much more successful than the high jumping method whereby the bird is jumped of the bow/block directly onto the fist, above it.

Imagine now then the hawk out hunting, normally when she flies she is flying uphill carrying an extra 25% of her body weight in the form of a training rig, now however, when the dog moves in from point and the pheasant breaks cover, the hawk, with no extra weight added, mews jesses replaced by smaller field jesses, explodes off the fist with the muscle energy to carry something 25% heavier and travels like a feathered land to air missile, soon catching up to the quarry. Remember, feeding the bird its full daily portion on the lure or fist in one easy fast go is just a cop out. Rain, even snow, should not put you off flying the hawk this way, you'll find the bird will still fly in this manner when wet, although you may have to ease off some of the weights. Basically falconry is like anything else in life - you only get back out what you put in.

We asked Neil Forbes for his com-

ments on this method and they are as follows. (Also we would not recommend this for Harris Hawks.)

The only points I would care to add are :-

The goshawk is a sprinter by nature, so imitating sprinting in this manner, by repeated stepped increase in effort is a good form of training.

Great care must be taken that the weights are not banging against the ankles, as this can easily lead to bumblefoot and other inflammations about the ankles.

Tremendous care must be taken that the bird cannot escape with all this additional furniture, as it would inevitably lead to her becoming tangled in a tree.

When training all goshawks, it is imperative to remember to minimise the stress caused to the bird during the training process. Even moderate stress, will lead to an over stimulated adrenal gland, an increase in endogenous glucocorticosteroids, and hence a reduction in the birds immune system. This in particular tends to lead to an increase in the incidence of aspergillosis.

Best wishes

Neil Forbes BVet Med CBiol MIBiol

Dip ECAMS FVMA FRCVS

RCVS and European Specialist in Avian Medicine & Surgery.

Finders Keepers

Paul Beecroft, Raptor Lifeline

"I've found it so I'm keeping it". "Possession is nine tenths of the law" and of course "Finders Keepers". These and others are some of the statements made to me over the years by people who have FOUND a bird of prey. So what, you may, ask is the answer to this ever increasing problem of what to do with a Found Bird. Can I keep it, can I sell it? Can I use it for breeding, can I fly it? Can I give it to someone else to look after? What happens if I lose it, what if it dies? These are problems that many raptor Keepers face throughout the country who are currently caring for Found birds. More than 200 birds are now recorded as Found by the Raptor Lifeline and the Independent Bird Register. Species such as Lanners, Luggers, Sakers, Harris Hawks, Redtails, Buzzards and others are all waiting to be claimed by their rightful owners. Some of these birds have been in care for more than two years and there is no sign that they will ever be claimed. So what is the answer? In simple terms there isn't one, at least not where we can give a definitive answer.

What is a bird of prey in the eyes of the law under these circumstances? It is quite simply PROPERTY or CHATTEL. The definition of Property is: - 'something owned, a possession'. A chattel is: - 'An article of personal, movable property'. A captive bred bird falls into these categories. Somewhere there is a rightful or lawful owner who is entitled to have his property returned at anytime no matter how long it has been lost.

Many people are under the impression

that if they find a Watch in the street for example and hand it into the local Police Station, if after six weeks or so, it has not been claimed, they become the lawful owner - WRONG. If you wish to keep the watch you are entitled to do so and the Police will sign it over to you. However, if the rightful owner ever comes forward, he or she is entitled to ask for its return. The same will apply to a bird of prey but possibly with complications that I will mention later.

Therefore, what must be done to ensure that all is above board and legal if you find yourself in the position of having a Found bird and not knowing who the owner is?

First you must report it to:

(a) the Police Station closest to you and if appropriate

(b) the Police Station in the area the bird was found.

Obtain from the Police the Found Property Reference Number(s) and retain them for future reference.

(c) Report the bird to Raptor Lifeline or the Independent Bird Register.

These organisations work specifically for reuniting Lost and Found birds. They will circulate the bird as found via specialist magazines etc. You may also consider reporting it elsewhere such as Veterinary Centres. R.S.P.C.A. Petwatch/Birdline, Local media and the D.E.T.R. if it is a

Schedule 4 bird or a hybrid that you are unsure of. It is imperative that you do everything possible to ensure that it is returned to the rightful owner. Should you have a Found bird and do absolutely nothing about it you could find yourself being suspected of a Criminal offence, namely Theft (by finding). If the bird found was also for one reason or another a wild one then offences may be committed under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

So, the bird has now been reported to the various organisations. Everything that can be done is being done and all that remains is to wait and see what happens. Now the difference between finding a watch and a bird is that a watch does not need feeding, housing, great care and attention and does not incur Veterinary fees. Obviously, the finder or someone on his behalf is responsible for the welfare of the bird until the owner is found. Costs will obviously occur during this time. When the owner comes forward, you are entitled to ask for reasonable costs. You may have travelled many miles to collect the bird. It may have required Veterinary treatment and of course the food bill. It has been suggested that as a guideline the figure of sixty pence per day for a Harris Hawk would be reasonable. Sixty pence a day soon adds up and over a year amounts to £219.00. In most cases from past experience most owners have freely paid the finder/keeper any costs incurred. What do you do though when the owner refuses to pay but is demanding the return of the bird? If the situation cannot be

resolved amicably then you only have two options. Hand the bird back and count your losses, or refuse and put the matter in the hands of a Civil Court. It is hoped that this situation will never arise but sods' law says it will. Should you find yourself in this position then seeking legal advice may be advisable. The owner may try to report you to the Police claiming that you have stolen the bird. This however is not so and it is doubtful that the Police would become involved unless it was to prevent a Breach of the Peace. Should the matter continue it would normally be up to the owner to have you served with a County Court summons for the return of the bird. (Although the same option would be open to you in order to claim costs). County court is a simple affair consisting in the main of a Judge, yourself and the owner sitting at a table discussing the matter. You may if you wish bring any witnesses to support your claim. At the end of the hearing the Judge will announce his decision. If what you are claiming is fair and reasonable in terms of costs for looking after the bird then all should go well.

Finally what do you do with a bird that has not been claimed. In the first instance I would suggest that you do nothing for a minimum of six months but preferably wait a full year. By this time the bird has been well and truly advertised in several magazines etc. and throughout various clubs. Following this allotted time I can see no reason why the bird

cannot be flown, after all it cannot be left on a block/perch for the rest of its life. If you choose to do this, I would strongly recommend that the bird be microchipped and also fitted with an I.B.R. ring. Then if you were to lose it you would stand a better chance of getting it back than the other loser did. I can also see no reason why it could not be used for breeding. I would not recommend under any circumstances though that the bird be sold, not even to offset the costs for looking after it. Should an owner come forward after a sale has taken place then obvious problems would arise. Give it away - Yes, but I would recommend that paperwork goes with the bird. Give full details of the history of the bird as you know it, stating that it is possible that a claim may be made on the bird in the future and it may have to be returned. A signed copy of this agreement would of course be beneficial.

Should you use the bird for breeding and it is successful, would the rightful owner be entitled to half the progeny? Quite simply at this time we can give no answer. To my knowledge this has never happened before so there is nothing to refer to. My instincts however say NO. The owner has not contributed in anyway to the breeding with time or money to feed and care for the parent birds or the chicks. Should a claim be made then of course you would be entitled to expect half the food bill etc. to be paid, and any other costs. I also feel that you would at least be entitled to refuse any claim in respect of the

progeny. At the worst then it is back to Civil Court for a decision from a Judge.

If you lost the bird while it was being flown then ensure that you report it to the same organisations that you would for a Found bird. If you decide to fly the bird then it is possible that this could happen. There is also a chance that the bird could be killed or injured while it is being flown. This as we all know can happen. Should this occur and the owner was to come forward after the event then I can only hope that they will give some understanding to the fact that it was accidental and that they can attach no blame. The question of compensation may of course arise but again I will return to the costs incurred while you were caring for the bird.

If a bird should die whilst in your care and cause is unknown then have a Post Mortem carried out. If not, at least retain the bird in the freezer. Should the need arise you can then prove the bird is (a) dead and (b) the owner could if he so wished have his own P.M. carried out.

The above is not conclusive and is not to be regarded as absolute Law. It is not suggested that you can treat any found bird as your own property. I have written this article only as a guide. The situation is not black and white and should there be any doubts you should obtain your own legal advice. We must judge each case on its own merits. At the end of the day I feel we must judge it on the basis of What is best for the Bird.

COMPETITION

WIN TICKETS TO THE 1998 FALCONERS FAIR

FIRST WE WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS OF OUR LAST COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE, THE ANDREW ELLIS PAINTING, WAS WON BY AN ECSTATIC, (I KNOW I HAVE JUST RUNG AND TOLD HIM), MR J CALLAGHAN, BARNESLEY.

SECOND PRIZE, THE HOOD BLOCK, WENT TO S BEDDING, MIDDLETON CHENEY, OXON.

THREE RUNNERS UP PRIZES WENT TO P HORNE, CLEVELAND, LORRAINE HILL, DONCASTER & W.D. EDWARDS, PLYMOUTH. THE ANSWERS WERE:

1. *Falco mexicanus*
2. 150-200 pairs
3. 16oz (465grms)
4. Townsend Ground Squirrels
5. Mourning Doves.
6. Pirates of the Plains

We would like to thank both Andrew Ellis and Alan Cass for donating the prizes and everybody who entered the competition, almost 200 of you.

NOW TO THIS ISSUE'S COMPETITION

I thought we would tax your brains with a little latin. We will provide the latin names and you have to tell us what the English is. Easy isn't it?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | 6. <i>Falco cherrug</i> |
| 2. <i>Buteo regalis</i> | 7. <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> |
| 3. <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i> | 8. <i>Accipiter nisus</i> |
| 4. <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> | 9. <i>Falco subbuteo</i> |
| 5. <i>Aquila rapax</i> | 10. <i>Falco rusticolus</i> |

To enter please send answers on a post card, with your name, address and telephone number, please to:
The Falconers Magazine Competition, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP
Fax 01536 722794. e-mail kbu77@dial.pipex.com
Last date for entries 6th April. No more than one entry per household. First ten out the bag will receive a free ticket to the Falconers Fair. 24/25th May. Offchurch, Nr Leamington Spa.

THIS AND MORE

Dear Lyn & David

It would be imprudent of me to attempt to change the mind of Jenny Gray (Winter '97 edition) concerning her stance on country sports. However, I feel it important that we made other readers fully aware of the factual dangers that face falconry and perhaps how they could help. Regrettably, Field sports are a political issue. Readers must be aware that the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) has pledged to ban falconry using Parliamentary process.

The Countryside Alliance (BFSS) together with the Hawk Board work tirelessly in raising our profile in order that Falconry and its associated activities are correctly maintained in step with legislation, proposed legislation and good practice. These bodies (together with others) are the closest to Westminster and both must have our unprecedented support.

The Private Members Bill raised by Mike Foster is a rolling programme to criminalize all Fieldsports. I attended three venues of his "touring bus" and they were quite happy to portray Falconry in the same light as Fox hunting, Mink hunting, etc. The propaganda used is based on lies and deception which the public were gullible enough to believe. Every point one can genuinely raise in support they have more (lies) to the contrary that they are feeding daily to the media, public and parliament. No amount of education by Falconers alone can stop it.

The "nuts and bolts" of Fosters Bill is an attack on Falconry. I highlight one of the many examples.

"to allow a dog to search for, chase, flush or pursue a rabbit on your own land is acceptable. But to allow it to search for, chase, flush or pursue a rabbit or hare on someone else's land is a crime"

To my lay eye, this act contains a further eight such clauses that affect falconry (apart from the ethics)

The hard facts of this bill being, if you were arrested, you would have your car, dog, and hawks (ie articles) impounded under the Police and Property Act pending your prosecution. Then on conviction a fine of £5,000, prison for six months or BOTH per offence.

A heavyweight marketing team is pushing the Anti Voices who regularly use selective quotations from Scientific papers to further their cause. Doctors Collard, Naylor, Harris and Leadon have blasted the Bateson Report (Stag hunting) for its gross inaccuracies. Another report titled 'Fox, is it a pest?' by Bristol University Professor Harris (a well-known anti) has raised many eyebrows, not least the Game Conservancy's Doctors Reynolds and Heydon, but they

timed both reports to embarrass the country sports enthusiast and gain maximum publicity. It will be only a matter of time before they publish another 'report' on Falconry and this time I suspect the curious alliance of the LACS/IFAW and RSPCA will be looking to illustrate Falconry as cruel. I am left in no doubt they will use every method, both fair and foul, to turn the country against us, using Fosters Bill as a springboard to achieve their aim. I quote their parlance in Cardiff.

"We have the public and Parliamentary sympathy to ban all blood sports and the money to do and say what we like".

My message to readers is quite simple, we cannot achieve getting Fieldsports off the Political Agenda ourselves, therefore solidarity is of paramount importance. Unquestionably as soon as we lose the executive power of the hunting, shooting, fishing order, we are simply cannon fodder that amendments to Acts of Parliament will overnight (yes that quick) stop you and me hunting our hawks and falcons.

So, how can you help? Well, I have enclosed a precis of what some people have done which may give food for thought.

Not everyone went to the Hyde Park Rally (July 10th, 1997) or wrote to Mike Foster, Tony Blair or their MP to complain about this Bill. I doubt everyone has pledged to do it again particularly if the replies are not satisfactory. I don't know how many people rang No10 to thank the Prime Minister in not granting Parliamentary time (this time) or made a call to the twelve TV polls, twenty-six radio polls, forty-nine newspaper polls to register their distaste at Fosters' proposals. I doubt many wrote to the local newspaper or requested to visit their MP at the constituency surgery (for a head-to-head discussion with the MP). Volunteered their services to lobby Parliament on 19th November 1997 and then wrote to or rang those who did go, to thank them. I doubt everyone tried to get at least a mere twenty-five signatures on a petition to oppose the bill, sent a few shillings to the BFSS Fighting Fund (or joined!). Held a Field meeting with a cap for the Hawk Board, similarly, why not take your MP out hawking or see your breeding programme. Thank heaven for the falconers who have done the above and more.

Unfortunately, referring back to Jenny Grays letter, the two unbeatable cards to play - 'Conservation and Education' are to the Antis (and in this I include Parliament) not Aces but Jokers.

Wouldn't it be heartening to see the whole Falconry fraternity in London on Sunday 1st March 1998 for the COUNTRYSIDE MARCH? The time is ripe for you to voice your concerns.

Yours aye, in Hawking
Mark Hinge.

DISPELLING MYTHS

Dear Lyn

Jenny Gray should perhaps have researched and reflected before making the statements that fill her letter in your Winter issue.

I note that she calls herself a 'bird of prey keeper', rather than a Falconer, for had she used the latter she would lay herself wide open to no less a charge of hypocrisy than that levelled at Michael Foster MP, match fisherman. For Falconers are without question hunters, and are proud of their tradition, skill and paradoxically, their love and understanding of the quarry they hunt. Indeed, quite how anyone can keep birds of prey without being a hunter is something of a surprise. They are not pets, trophies or extensions of our egos.

I can agree that the urban/rural divide as an argument about hunting (all hunting and that includes falconry) has little to merit it. Many hunters live in town and antis live in villages. This we must accept. I sense it has built up, like many misconceptions, from the tradition of country people hunting because it was on their doorstep, whilst town dwellers did not, due to problems of access. What we should be doing, Ms Gray, is promoting tolerance and understanding through education and not perpetuating emotive and inaccurate stereotypes.

If Ms Gray believes Falconry (Bird of Prey) Centres should not support hunters, I suggest she ask Jemima Parry-Jones why she was on the stage at the Countryside Rally, took a petition to Downing Street, spent a night's vigil outside parliament before the second reading of the Foster Bill, and is vice-Chairman of the Hawk Board which represents the vast majority of the hunting clubs in the UK. I think she might get a fairly pithy response.

Fox hunting is not a sport of 'nobs' anymore than falconry. It used to be the case for both sports, and if Ms Gray accepts a change in falconry, a visit to any pack of foxhounds will equally quickly dispel that myth. Sure there are those who pay to hunt with smart packs; there are falconers who rent grouse moors each season. But they do so through hard work, not a 'silver spoon'. My local hunt in Kent is hardly 'patrician' as a visit will reveal. It is funded by hard work and love - nothing more.

The so-called 'pit' sports that Ms Gray so enthusiastically lumps in with 'field' sports is illogical. They cannot be called hunting as the hapless victim (bear, cock, badger, etc.) has no means of outwitting its pursuers. Falconry is defined as "the taking of wild quarry in its natural habitat by means of trained hawks." Substitute hounds for hawks and you have hunting. "Pit" sports require no field craft, little or no animal training and are justifiably outlawed.

Do not sing the National Trust's praises over its ban on stag hunting. They have also banned falconry and have reviewed other field sports. Most of the justification for this ban came from a belief that bird of prey centres and displays encourage theft from the wild and commercial trade in raptors, which is why neither displays or centres are permitted on NT land.

Ms Gray ends with two of the most precious

comments ever heard. That Falconry has the exclusive claim on conservation is absurd. Our role is sometimes good (sometimes less good) but we cannot claim to manage 14,000 acres of woodland as the hunters, or 260,000 acres as the wild-fowlers do (90% of which is SSSI). If by education we mean school visits with an owl or two, then fine. But be warned, too often such visits end up as exploitation with paid for photo opportunities being the main justification.

Yes, birds of prey are "phenomenally" beautiful to those who love them. So are hounds, ferrets, horses, foxes, rabbits, deer and hare. The hunter's relationship with prey is hard to understand and cannot be judged in isolation. It is a slow learning process built on many facets.

Oh, by the way. When did you last meet a real anti who was in favour of any field sport, and that includes falconry. They are not going to stop with hunting with hounds and it is naive to believe otherwise.

Yours sincerely
Nicholas Kester.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Dear Lyn & David,

I am writing to you in response to the letter by Jenny Gray. I agree, her views are extremely unpopular with all of the "falconers" I know, although I see she labels herself a "Bird of Prey keeper" - there can be a big difference. Some "bird of prey keepers" are perfectly happy to "doggy-walk" their Buzzard or Harris Hawk around the local park and can even be rather upset and embarrassed if by mistake it catches something. To me, and most other people I know, falconry is hunting, yes HUNTING wild quarry in its natural habitat with trained hawks/falcons, and if Jenny feels the grace and beauty of their flight will keep the anti's at bay, once they get their way with deer and foxes, I can promise her she is wrong.

To liken any field sport with badger or bear baiting is also wrong, the main difference is the wild animal has a SPORTING chance of escape and is not tethered or put in a pit. Although I would not fox hunt myself I believe "freedom of choice" is a way of life in this country and should remain so. On that point, it appears to me that instead of doing anything constructive, the labour party at the moment seems to be intent on banning anything and everything.

I also wonder, if my dog pointed a rabbit, would I be breaking a wild mammals (hunting with dogs) law, should this bill go through. Also, although we do not hound our quarry for hours on end we are prepared to "re-flush" a pheasant a couple of times.

We must remember the true anti will protest at anything i.e., road building, poll-tax, fur farming, etc., but this is because it is a fashionable stage they are going through and most are hypocrites ie, wearing leather and using motorways to drive to their next protest. The thing is, we do what we do quietly and they make plenty of noise.

Please, please do not undo the good work done by the BFSS and allies thus far, by complacency. The true anti will eventually want to

ban fishing and shooting but is aware of the huge numbers that participate in these sports, but may feel more confident once they have "mopped up" the smaller, fringe sports.

The Government in power (whatever Party) needs to realise that not everyone lives in Camden or Islington and not everyone likes football or cricket and they should be concentrating on laws that benefit all the community and not taking away freedom of choice at the whim of a few militants.

Name & Address supplied

KICKING BACK

Like many other field sports men and women I hadn't really given the thought of losing our sport much real consideration. Even when Labour won the last election I still believed they wouldn't seriously ban hunting with dogs.... Would they?!

But alas so incensed am I at the apparent seriousness of this government to take the Foster Bill seriously, I eventually kicked back.

I decided to write to my trade union the AEEU, explaining how I felt, bearing in mind the unions' support for the Labour Party, and said that after 20 years membership at £90 per annum I no longer wished to be a member.

Thinking that would be the last I would hear about the issue I was surprised when the AEEU wrote back to me two weeks later.

They explained their democratic position at having to go along with any majority decision made by the government etc., but also they expressed their sorrow at my withdrawal from the union.

However, they did send me a Labour Party levy exemption form, and explained that I could still be a member of the union, enjoying the obvious benefits, without actually supporting the Labour Party in the form of hard cash. This I agreed to do.

Most of the large trade unions are actually affiliated to the Labour party, so you automatically pay a levy out of your annual subs without being fully aware of it. Some smaller unions will only take a Labour Party sub from you at your own request, this amount may vary from 5% and up so come on let's all get in on the act. A very high proportion of field-sports people and their supporters are in one of the many unions. If 20% of these contacted their head office for a Labour Party fund exemption form and stopped paying the Labour Party levy, imagine the massive implications this could have.

Name and address supplied.

COMING FOR YOU

Dear Editors,

I could not believe, first time around, the letter in the winter issue of your magazine, from a Jenny Gray, but having read it a second time I feel I have to reply.

We have a big enough battle on our hands at the moment with the anti's, never mind people within our own sport. WE MUST ALL STAND TOGETHER.

The main point is, hunting, be it with hounds, hawks, guns or rod and line is either black or white. Ban the lot or stand up for all field sports. The definition of the word hunt is: "to pursue and catch". I should remind Mrs Gray and Michael Foster MP (competition angler), this is exactly what they do. These people who want to see an end to hunting with dogs also want to see an end to falconry, and ultimately shooting and fishing.

This bill (hunting wild mammals with dogs) is just the thin end of the wedge. If it succeeds it will affect falconry immediately. Pointers, springers, Jack Russels or Heinz 57, whatever dog you use to flush rabbit, hare etc will be illegal.

With reference to Hyde Park, was she one of the 146,000 there on July 10th? I know of lots of falconer's who went to defend our sport and show support for all field sports. And will she be there on 1st March?

PLEASE, PLEASE, anyone reading this letter, make an effort to attend the Countryside March in London, it will make a difference.

To end with, I would just like to mention something I read only the other day which we all should think about. From the diaries of Ann Frank, she wrote:

The Germans came for the Polish and I did nothing.

They came for the Czechs and I did nothing.

They came for the Jews and I did nothing.

Then they came for me and it was too late.

Yours sincerely
John Callaghan

COUNTRY-WIDE ALLIANCE

Dear David and Lyn,

With reference to the letter from Ms Gray entitled "Town and Country", I must admit that when I first read it, I could not believe what I was reading. How could such an anti field sport letter get an airing in a falconry magazine? On pondering this, I realised that Ms Gray is probably one of the "pet keeper" members of the falconry fraternity. Keeping B.O.P, but not indulging in falconry, so she feels that she should not stand alongside field sports men and women against the anti elements.

However, I feel that this blinkered attitude will not help her. Her right to keep B.O.P is just as much on the IFAW/LACS/RSPCA coalition agenda as is hound sports, shooting, fishing, and falconry. When I say falconry, I mean the sport of taking wild quarry with a trained hawk under natural conditions, not what Ms Gray defines as falconry, which definition obviously does not include hunting with B.O.P as she says quote:

"In my view to seek to ally falconry with blood sports...is thoroughly unproductive and indeed positively harmful"

I would love to know how to practise falconry without shedding any blood.

A.J.Womack@btinternet.com

FERRETS - HEALTH & WELFARE

JAMES MCKAY



FERRET TERMS

Hob	male ferret
Jill	female ferret
Hobble	castrated ferret
Hoblet	vasectomised ferret
Kit	ferret under 16 weeks of age
Business	a collective term for a group of ferrets.

STARTING WITH FERRETS.

Intelligent and clean, ferrets make excellent pets for those who take the time and effort to learn about and supply their essential requirements. Unfortunately, over the years they have had a bad press and have acquired a regrettable reputation for being spiteful and vicious. However, ferrets obtained from careful, thoughtful breeders who have practised selective breeding, are highly unlikely to have these deleterious traits and, for the right person, will make superb pets.

PRELIMINARIES NEVER BUY AN ANIMAL ON A WHIM

Before buying any ferret, you must have made preparations for the animals long-term welfare. You should have a suitable cage, food and other equipment and, above all, the will and determination to ensure that you will be able to look after the ferret for the whole of its life (often 13 years or more). Read as many books and watch as many videos on the subject as you can. Talk to breeders and keepers. Attend a specialist course on ferret keeping.

BUYING YOUR FERRET

When you have made the decision, and are 100% certain that you can cater for all the animals requirements, make enquiries about ferret breeders of good repute. While ferret kits are often offered for sale at county fairs, these are frequently sold by people who just want to get rid of them and, unless the person selling the ferrets is known to you, you should not buy ferrets at any such event.

The best age to acquire ferrets is between 8 and 16 weeks, when they are still classified as kits. Before deciding to purchase any of the ferrets on offer, check that the parents are easily handled; if they aren't, then the chances are that the kits won't be either. If you are happy with the parents' temperament, and the manner in which they are being kept, examine the kits. Ask which type of feeding the owner is using; this should either be complete carcass or a complete ferret food. If the kits are being fed on any other diet, they may be malnourished, and this could lead to future health problems for the animals.

Examine the kits' faeces; in healthy ferrets, these should be dark and have little odour. If there is any sign of diarrhoea,

do not buy any animals from the breeder. Examine the eyes and nose of each kit; do not buy animals if any of them show any signs of discharge. Examine the kits' jaws; these should meet almost exactly. If any of the kits show signs of under - or over-shot jaws, do not buy any of the animals, as this is a hereditary trait which all animals from the same line will carry, even though some may not show the problem. Look at the tail of each kit; there is an hereditary problem which results in short tails. Reject all animals with such a problem, and all kits related to them. Watch how the kits move; problems with walking are often associated with malnourishment of their mother during pregnancy, and such problems are usually incurable, leading to crippled adult ferrets.

COLOUR

Ferrets come in a wide range of colours, from almost pure white to almost black. Many people have strong feelings about which colour of ferret they like best; our experience indicates that colour has no discernible effect on the ferret's temperament or working ability. Choose the colour which is most appealing to you.

MALE OR FEMALE?

Ferrets, unlike their wild cousins the polecats (which are solitary animals) enjoy company of their own kind, and it is best to keep at least two ferrets in a cage. This could be either two jills (females), two hobs

(males) or a true pair, but each combination has its problems. If you decide to keep a true pair, remember that, every spring, each jill will come into season and, if the hob is kept with her, she will be mated, resulting in a litter of a dozen or more babies (called kits), and you will then have the problem of feeding them and eventually finding homes for them.

JILLS

Jills will commence oestrus in early spring (usually about March or April), although, as their biological clock is regulated by the length of light to dark (photoperiodism), this may vary from one keeper to another. At this time, her vulva will swell, often protruding from her body by over a centimetre. If not mated this swelling will reduce of its own volition, but the vulva will swell again within a few weeks. If a jill is not mated when she is in oestrus ("on heat"), the levels of oestrogen (the female sex hormone) will rise, causing progressive depression of the bone marrow, this usually results in a condition known as pancytopenia - the abnormal depression of all three types of blood cell. This condition is potentially fatal. In other words, if a jill is not mated EVERY time that she is in oestrus, she will almost invariably DIE before living out her natural life span.

If you are keeping your ferrets as pets, and do not wish to ever have kits from them, the best course of action is to have them neutered. This means that any combination of jills and/or





hobs can safely be kept together.

However, if you wish to have an occasional litter from your ferrets, then you must consider other ways to ensure the jills do not suffer from [prolonged oestrus in the years when they will not be bred from. In this case, the best method of removing this risk is to have the jill mated with a hoblet (a vasectomised ferret), and every responsible ferret owner should make the investment and keep a hoblet. To have a hob vasectomised costs about £30, and he will be able to take jills out of oestrus for about 7-8 years. The alternatives to the use of a hoblet are to have the jills injected with drugs such as proligestone (Delvosteron), or have them neutered; both methods will remove the risks associated with prolonged oestrus.

HOBBS

Occasionally, two hobs kept together from an early age - particularly if from the same litter and with no jill present - will live happily in the same cage, but others will fight; this problem is more acute in the breeding season (ie the summer months). Two hobs which start to fight need to be housed in separate cages throughout the summer. If left alone, they may inflict serious injuries on each other, and one may kill the other.

HOUSING

Many people keep their ferrets in a 'cub' (hutch), and this is perfectly weather and water proof. The size of the cub depends on the number of ferrets kept, 1.5 metres long, by 1 metre wide and 75cm high, being suitable for two ferrets. The floor of the cub should be covered with wood shavings - not sawdust, as this can cause breathing and eye problems. Larger cages for ferrets resembling aviaries, are called

'courts' and if you have the space, are far better for the ferrets.

Some people keep their ferrets in the home, either in cages or giving them the freedom of the house, with constant access to their own 'bedroom'; ferrets can even be trained to use a cat litter tray! Remember that ferrets will get into all the places that you would rather they didn't! A correctly designed and fitted ferret harness will enable the pet ferret to be taken for a walk, giving the ferret plenty of exercise. All ferrets given this type of exercise in a public place must be vaccinated; your veterinary surgeon will advise on this matter.

FEEDING

Ferrets are carnivores and, as such, must either be fed on a diet of complete carcasses or a complete ferret food, such as that manufactured by James Wellbeloved, under the name of "Ferret Complete". Milk sops (bread and milk) must never form the basis of a diet for a ferret, as it is nutritionally lacking, causing diarrhoea and many serious ailments. Some people feed tinned dog and cat foods, and this will suffice, although such a diet will increase the smell of the ferrets; cat food is the better of the two. Add bone-meal flour or some other calcium rich supplement to tinned meat, to ensure good nutrition. A hard boiled egg once or twice a week will also be beneficial - ferrets also like scrambled eggs. The feeding of day old chicks should be kept to a minimum (ie no more than once or twice a month), as they can cause many medical problems. Feeding raw eggs more than once a month may result in chronic hair loss. Clean water must, of course, always be available to the ferret, and is best supplied in a gravity feed water bottle, available at pet stores.

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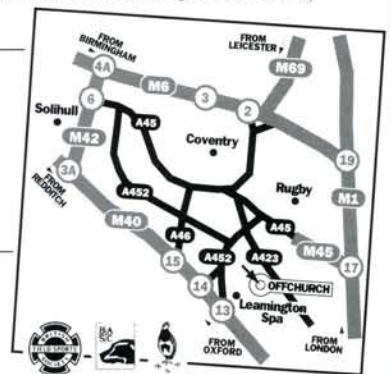
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It's a great day out for all the family!

AVIARY CONSTRUCTION

Jemima Parry-Jones - Director, National Birds of Prey Centre

After the awful gales of this winter, plus, at least with us here at The National Birds of Prey Centre rain, rain and more rain, I have a feeling that a number of people out there will have had damage to a greater or lesser degree to their pens. I should add at this time, that apart from a few drains that got irretrievably blocked and had to be redone, all our pens are looking pretty good, with no damage.

As I am sure you already know, falconry is under attack right now, we are now waiting for the writing on the wall - it is here in the form of the Foster Bill. More and more, particularly if (and I am afraid to say when in my opinion) hound hunting goes, falconry is going to come under keen scrutiny. So the way we keep our birds, both from the point of view of the changing weather that we are having and the need for us to be whiter than white is very important.

Most people now agree that, wherever possible, it is easier, safer, better and more acceptable to keep flying birds loose in pens rather than tethered. All birds, except for imprinted birds, have to be tethered during training and re training periods, but other than that, for the individual falconer, and many of those who have a few birds, keeping birds loose is the way to go. Therefore more and more people are building pens so they can do just this.

This winter has been the wettest I have ever seen - in the last six weeks or more we have only had three days with no rain at all. As I walk round the Centre I can look at almost all the birds and not have to see drenched birds, sodden aviary floors, dripping wire roofs and so on, because all but seven of the 110 pens are totally roofed over. This means the birds look comfortable, the pens can be cleaned during the winter months because we can work in them, the food doesn't get wet, and if breeding starts early - we have no problems. But if you go round and compare the condition of the birds in those pens without solid roofs against that of all the other birds - you would understand why I am changing them, particularly when it is not just wet but also cold.

I believe that the green house effect is

affecting us all now and I think it is time to think about the effect of the extreme weather conditions that we now face when building pens for birds.

We are now building everything on a brick (you could use block) wall - this gives strength, looks, safety, and lots of other advantages. Then we build up from there in timber. Three by two inch timber is fine for the structure, if you buy all the wood that is going to be exposed to the weather as tantalized timber it will give you a long lasting pen that at least for the first five years you will not have to treat with any wood preservative. After many years of experimenting with the covering materials I think now without doubt the safest, nicest looking is tongue and groove. Feather Edge is OK, but if the wood warps birds can get legs stuck, it has not happened here, but I know of instances where it has, particularly if the overlap is not sufficient.

Every bit of advice I offer here is led by the fact that having worked with and built pens for 31 years now - almost everything that could have gone wrong, has gone wrong, so it seems silly to watch people make the same mistakes when it is not necessary.

Don't use bloody fence panels, I am definitely not one of the fence panel brigade. I think they make lousy aviaries, they are made of the cheapest of timber, mass produced, often thrown together and even more often falling apart at what little seams they have. If you must, use them for fencing, but not pens or weatherings.

Almost all our pens are three sides solid and one wire. If you think that your bird will hit the wire front - put up builders plastic on the inside until it has got used to the idea. As I think many people know I hate the old fashioned Skylight and seclusion pens - I



I think they are cruel and unnecessary. I think all birds benefit from being able to see out of pens and have a view other than just sky. We also have a service passage. You don't have to concrete it like we do, although it makes life much better if you do. You could gravel it to keep it

dry and pleasant to walk on. It serves as a double door and if you train your bird to wait by the entrance door it should not fly into the wire trying to get to you at flying time.

Roof - without doubt the best material is Onduline for small numbers of pens. It is easy to work with, light, prevents condensation, is cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

The newest innovation we have put into practice here in the last year is to paint the back wall of the pen Magnolia. I have bought so much bloody magnolia paint it is not true, we are sick of the stuff, even the black labs are magnolia on occasion. We use emulsion as it dries quickly, it touches up well after the year scrub, makes pens lighter and the birds easier to see.

I am not going to go into more detail - get the new Owl book out in May it will describe the building process. Just think about your pen, put the extra cost of building a good pen with good materials against the cost of having a poorly built pen being damaged or destroyed, usually at a really difficult time of the year, with the added possibility of injury or loss to your bird and you will find that it is worth every penny.

Following is a costing for a pen - Remember if you ring round you can usually better the price of materials. If you go in with other people and buy in larger amounts you can reduce the price again.

Best of luck.

The Following is a pricing for a pen

10 x 12 x 7 feet:	
174 bricks for the base	£ 32.71
320 feet of 3" x 2" timber	£124.00
656 feet of Tongue & groove Onduline	£189.63
6 Solid sheets	£ 57.00
2 Clear sheets	£ 60.70
4 Ridge peices	£ 20.00
3x1 weldmesh to cover front	£ 87.19

Total cost without labour or foundations £571.23

Please remember these costings are approximate, taken from our own suppliers and liable to change. we usually reckon at the Centre most of the average pens we have here (not the huge ones), cost about £800 each.



REVIEWS

Breeding Goshawks

Anthony Wakefield has had this, his only pair of Goshawks for nine years. They have been breeding for the last five. Anthony doesn't claim to know all about breeding Goshawks, but has studied this pair and in 1996 installed a black and white, close circuit television camera. Unfortunately with no sound. The camera was situated looking onto the nest and shows over 100 minutes of the pair incubating, brooding and feeding the young, up to the fledging stage. I felt this was rather long, but to see these large, powerful birds being so patient and gentle was marvellous.



Anthony put together a booklet containing Aviary design and dimensions, aviary furniture, obtaining young stock, feeding. The dangers and how to avoid them.

Studying the behaviour and body language of your birds. Preparing the nest site. When to introduce and remove the male. Problems with stress to the parents and young. Especially when ringing.

All in all this is a good video and Anthony's narrative is easy to follow. The information is sound and would be advantageous to anyone hoping to breed Goshawks.

For purchase details see page 2

To accompany the video

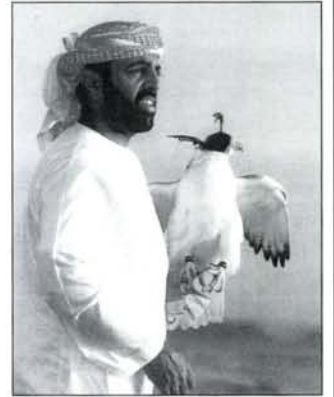
FALCONRY By Jacob Streck.

This video is a comprehensive work. Showing many different types of falconry, Japanese, Arab, Rook hawking, Grouse hawking, all in an endeavour to discover the reason for the unique relationship between man and birds of prey. Each subject is explained, telling how and why the birds are flown as they are in each particular country.

Heron hawking is also on this video. I don't know about anyone else, but have never seen it before. Also they explain the tradition behind it.

Falconers whose names are well known to all, both alive and dead are mentioned in it, covering some in detail.

Also throughout the video we follow the story of Erik, whose ambition is to catch and fly a Gyr falcon. We share his excitement at securing a bird, his worry when he releases the bird



for the first time and he thinks she is gone, and then his joy and triumph as he finally earns her trust.

This video has many facets, all of which we found fascinating. It is professionally shot and would do credit to anyone's collection. The narrative is good, the music tasteful, and the falconry sequences well shot.

For purchase details see page 21.

PHILIP SNOW BA Hons.

is a professional wildlife illustrator, whose work is regularly published worldwide in books, magazines, prints and cards etc., by such as, BBC WILDLIFE, COLLINS, RSPB, AMERICAN EXPRESS, BIRDWATCHING, BRITISH BIRDS, CHESHIRE LIFE, INTERCONTINENTAL of N. York, Texas's OCEAN WORLD and Turkey's TURQUOISE magazine etc.

He has exhibited in many of London's top venues, I.E. THE SOUTH BANK, THE BARBICAN, ASS. OF ILLUSTRATORS, SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS, THE TRYON GALLERY, THE DESIGN CENTRE, OLYMPIA, and in the R.A. exhibition of BRITISH ART. in Saudi Arabia. He specialises in raptors in landscape; particularly in flight and welcomes commissions.

Philip's originals and prints can now be seen at Wildlife Originals Gallery, WOLLATON HALL, Nottingham.

The painting of raptors in this issue is for sale and closely based on his own field sketches and photo's and he has studied birds in many countries. For details of limited prints or commissions please contact: P SNOW. 2 Beach Cottages, Mallaeth Gwynedd Tel: 01492 840368



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Jones on 01531 821581 ~
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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

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THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

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

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Garry Balchin 01159 300135

Bedfordshire Falconry & Raptor Club

Affiliated to the British Hawking Association "Aiming to help the Falconer and the sport". Our club meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month at The Green Man, Clophill (off A6). We often have demonstrations, guest speakers & furniture makers attending. The club has access to hunting land and welcomes members, old & new.

Contact Bob on 01525 713899 for further details

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).

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

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

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
2 Amesbury Road, Cholderton,
Salisbury Wilts SP4 OEP
Tel: 01980 629221

e-mail: rba@redtail.demon.co.uk
Web Site: <http://www.redtail.demon.co.uk/rba/>

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The South East Falconry Group

aims to support falconry and falconers, drawing its membership from around southern and eastern England. The SEFG provides a forum for falconers to meet, discuss and practice falconry.

Members benefit from access to a wealth of experience, good facilities and a range of field-meeting opportunities.

**Contact Dean White for further information: 01489 896504
e-mail: WhiteGos@compuserve.com**

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

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, Tredunnock. 2nd Monday
CHESTER The Railway Inn, Chester Rd. Helsby. 1st Monday
NORTHAMPTON The Red Lion, Kissingbury, 4th Monday
PLYMOUTH The Woodpecker, A38. 3rd Monday

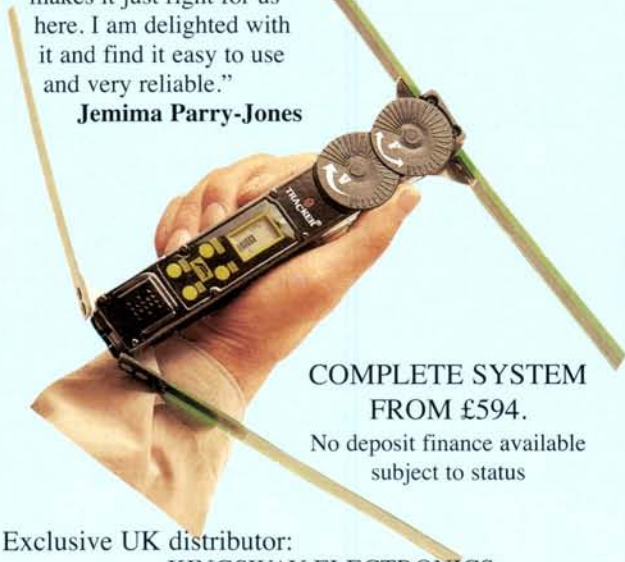
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