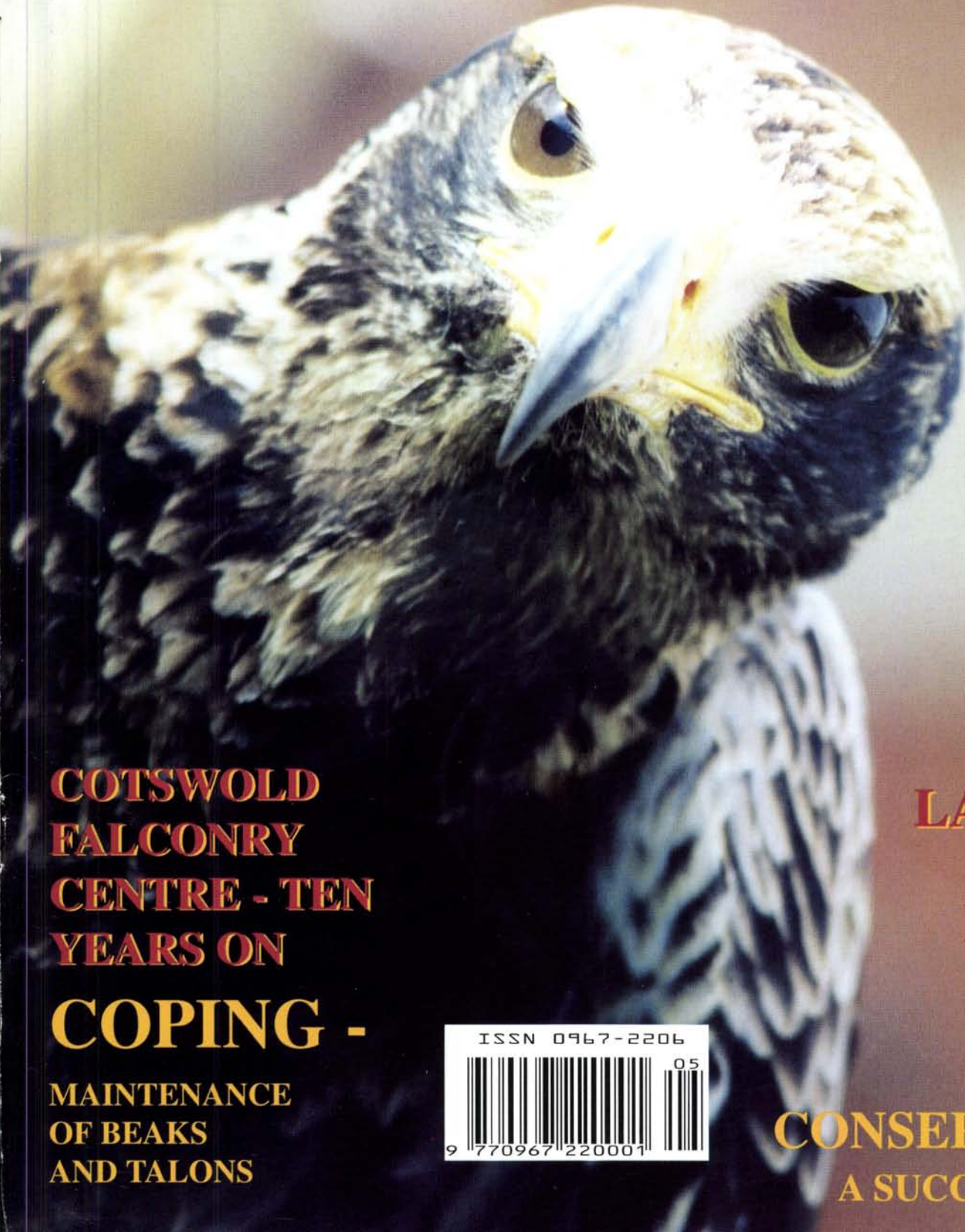


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— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

Summer 1998

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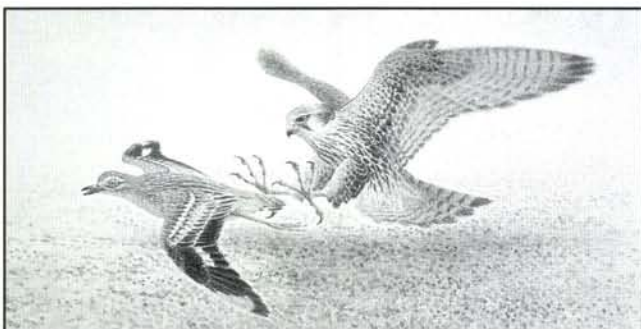
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PHILIP SNOW BA HONS.

He has been published and has exhibited
 in many lands and has contributed
 illustrations to about 50 books.

Paintings are in many private, public and
 some Royal collections and he has exhibited
 with the **ROYAL ACADEMY 'BRITISH ART'**
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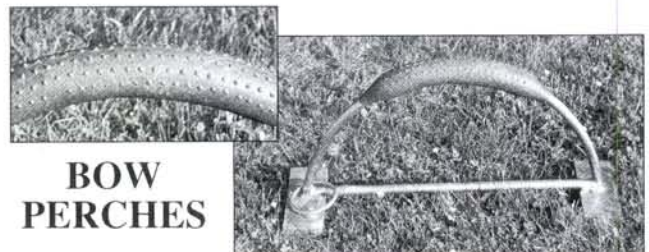


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SUMMER 1998 No. 35

features

- 9** CAST OF HARRIS HAWKS
Anthony Womack
- 11** CATAPULTED TO FITNESS
Paul Beecroft
- 12** KITE CONSERVATION
Dr Nick Fox
- 13** TAXI DRIVER
Colin Taylor
- 14** NOT A HOLIDAY CAMP
Mark Parker
- 16** LAMPING
Tez Wright
- 18** OUCH,
Nigel Wayne
- 19** TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY JACK
Nick Kester
- 20** COTSWOLD FALCON, EAGLE &
HAWK PARK (BATSFORD)
10TH ANNIVERSARY
- 21** COPING
David Wilson
- 24** BRITTANYS Pt111
Anne Massie
- 27** THE SWINGING 60'S
David Glynne-Fox
- 31** WITHOUT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT
Richard Casemore
- 31** WHY DO WE DO IT
Gary Worley
- 34** TELEMETRY-THE MODERN MIRACLE
David Marshall

regulars

- 7** CLUB DIRECTORY
Make your voice count,
join an affiliated Club
- 25** COMPETITION
RESULTS
- 26** HAWK TALK
John Matcham
- 17** CARTOON
Richard Rossitter

up-to-date

- 4/5/6** NEWS Lost & Found,
CLA Game Fair HB
Symposium,
- 7** CLUBS NEWS.
Central,
Home Counties,
The Hawking Club
- 32/33** LETTERS.
WHO IS SAYING
WHAT?
- 38** CLASSIFIEDS.



The Swinging Sixties p:27



Kite Conservation p12

COMMENT

Hello All,

Nearly time for another Falconry Fair, doesn't time fly? Excuse the pun.

This issue is full again. Lamping, Kite Conservation, Batsfords 10th Anniversary - Congratulations to them.

The Campaign for Falconry will be launched at the Falconers Fair on Sunday the 24th, I hope you will all give it your full support. Jemima Parry-Jones will be there to launch it. This will be the first time she has attended the Fair.

Congratulations to our competition winners, they are announced on page 25 and the tickets will be in the post shortly.

David & Lyn

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COVER: Immature Verreaux Eagle. Photo D. Wilson.

CONVICTIONS

1. On March 11th 1998, Malcolm Burgwin of Worsbrough, South Yorks, appeared at Barnsley Magistrates Court.

During 1996 Burgwin claimed to have bred two Goshawks. In July of the same year Police and RSPB executed a Search Warrant at his address. Using a new DNA testing kit developed by the DETR blood samples were taken from the two offspring and the declared female parent.

DNA analysis at Nottingham University showed there was less than a 1 in 7 million chance of the two juveniles being genuine offspring.

At Barnsley Court Burgwin pleaded guilty to the following offences:-

1. Possession of two Wild Goshawks
2. Making a false declaration to obtain Registration
3. Using a female Goshawk and an incubator in order to commit offences

For the offences he was dealt with as follows:-

1. Fined £1000.00
2. Fined £250.00
3. Fined £1000.00

Costs £50.00
Total:- £2300.00. All birds (including the parent bird) and Incubator were made subject of a forfeiture order.

The magistrate commented on how serious he considered the offence and that the maximum fine available was £22,500.00.

2. On 11th March 1998, Bryan Dudley of the Marlow Wildlife Centre, Bucks, appeared at High Wycombe Magistrates Court to answer charges in relation to the display of wild birds for commercial purposes under The Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations (COTES).

In April 1997 a member of the public visited the Centre and saw two Common Buzzards in an Aviary. He was concerned about the birds which he thought were distressed. He therefore reported the matter to the Police.

The Police visited the premises and saw the Buzzards in question. The court heard that both birds were extremely nervous and were seen to crash around the aviary when approached. Many of the birds wing and tail feathers were broken and pieces of broken feather were seen on the Aviary floor.. Other species of Birds were also seen including Tawny Owls.

The court heard that an admission charge was made to enter the Centre and therefore licences were required to display Wild Birds.

Dudley pleaded Guilty to the display of 4 Tawny Owls and Not Guilty to displaying the Buzzards, claiming that they had never been on display. The court after hearing the evidence returned a Guilty verdict.

Dudley was fined a total of £200.00 and ordered to pay £120.00 costs.

OPERATION FOLKESTONE

On Thursday 26th September 1996, the South Wales Police launched an Operation in respect of possible offences in relation to indigenous Birds of Prey. It was suspected that a number of Keepers were believed to be in possession of wild taken birds and to have sold wild taken birds.

This Operation involved a total of 9 Police forces throughout England, Wales and Scotland and approximately 40 birds.

Following this operation and the results of DNA Fingerprinting two persons appeared at Court in January 1998 and were convicted of the following offences:-

Robert GRIFFITHS of Pentre, Mid Glamorgan.

1. Possession of a Red Kite
1. Fined £750.00
2. Possession of two Red Kites
2. Fined £750.00
- (Alleged offspring of 1.)
3. Possession of two Merlins
3. Fined £750.00
4. Possession of Peregrine

4. Fined £750.00
5. Possession of Sparrowhawk
5. Fined £100.00
6. Failed to register Red Kite
6. Fined £100.00
7. Failed to register Peregrine x 2
7. No extra penalty
- Costs £300.00
- TOTAL £3,500.00

Bernard LYLE of Pentre, Mid Glamorgan

1. Possession of Goshawk
1. fined £500.00
2. Possession of Goshawk
2. Fined £500.00
3. Possession of Goshawk
3. Fined £500.00
4. Possession of Section 1 Firearm
4. fined £250.00
5. Using Gin Traps
5. Fined £150.00

Costs £250.00
TOTAL £2,150.00

LOST

Barn Owl	2318BC97U
Barn Owl	4435BC97U
Barn Owl	5422BC97U
Eur. Eagle Owl	058TJWZ
Eur. Eagle Owl	059TJWZ
Eur. Eagle Owl	IBR894Z
Little Owl	EH73191
Tawny Owl	193U
Tawny Owl	19KDN90
Harris Hawk	11RJT95W
Harris Hawk	1JOE97W
Harris Hawk	2JOE97W
Harris Hawk	5607W
Harris Hawk	5PKS95W
Harris Hawk	CNX97W
Harris Hawk	IBR121
Harris Hawk	JOEC3797W
Harris Hawk	MAG6896W853
Harris Hawk	UK77095
Kestrel	197S
Kestrel	Nil
Lanner	IBR606W
Lanner	11453W
Lanner	2304RR96
Lanner	4213W
Lanner	IBR574W
Lanner	IBR575W
Merlin	12231R & 8915P
Perex Lanner	5843V
Perex Saker	9231V & 13259W
Perex Saker	15247W
Peregrine	9357V
Peregrine	9194V
Redtail	0370Y & 1269X
Redtail	12430X or Y
Saker	JGB497 & JGB597
Saker	10964W
Saker	8346W
Saker	7508W
Saker	13JN
Sparrowhawk	196R
Sparrowhawk	497P
Sparrowhawk	497SOT

FOUND

Buzzard 29??BW

Buzzard	129??W
Buzzard	125??W
Buzzard	35??RR97W
Harris Hawk	101??W
Harris Hawk	4CB??96
Harris Hawk	130??W
Kestrel	1J??97S
Kestrel	112??S
Kestrel	3J??96S
Kestrel	R??97
Peregrine	?HMSW?GF02?
Redtail	11??Y
Redtail	11??X
Redtail	12??X
Redtail	7NF??95Y/V?
Redtail	04??X
Saker	29??W
Saker	10??W
Saker	??CNXX97W
Sparrowhawk	196R (not the found one)

Barn Owl	9328BCU
Barn Owl	7042BC94U
Barn Owl	4610BC93U
Barn Owl	175897
Barn Owl	3911BC94U
Barn Owl	0296BC96U
Beng Eagle Owl	No Ring
Eur. Eagle Owl	4P??96Z
Eur. Eagle Owl	No Ring
Little Owl	2054BCR

STOLEN

Barn Owl	84IOA97U
Goshawk	9298V Cheshire
Goshawk	16259W Cheshire
Goshawk	15669W Wales
Harris Hawk	50NCF96W W Yorks
Harris Hawk	UK80577 Newcastle
Harris Hawk	UK 78158
Newcastle	
Harris Hawk	UK11345W
Newcastle	
Peregrine	7659V & 10114W Kent
Peregrine	UK81354 Kent
Peregrine	UK 89330 Kent
Peregrine	UK89329 Kent
Peregrine	UK88807 Kent
Praire Falcon	16BW95 W Mids.

**THE WILDLIFE ART SOCIETY
7th ANNUAL EXHIBITION
WESTMINSTER GALLERY
22nd AUG - 5th SEPT 1998**

Now in its seventh year, The Wildlife Art Society's Annual Exhibition has established itself as one of the major exhibitions of Wildlife Art in the UK.

Each year the Society receives wide praise from both the visiting general public and those closely associated with the wildlife art genre, for the very high standard of entries and the presentation of this event. The venue is the Westminster Gallery, at the Westminster Central Halls, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London. From the 22nd August - 5th September. The exhibition is open 10am - 5pm daily, closed Sundays.

Such is the enthusiasm and commitment of those involved in the organisation of this annual event, as well as the activities of the Society in general, that we have attracted the interest and generous support of a very impressive list of Patrons and Honorary Fellows. These include singer Lynsey de Paul, Glyn Washington and Paul Green of Washington Green publishers and internationally famous wildlife artists Donald Grant, David Shepherd, Alan Hunt, Simon Combes and John Seerey-Lester. The Society appreciates the sponsorship of Soloman and Whitehead, Schwan Stabilo, William Dorset Designs and Cash Converters Ltd.

As well as the aims in promoting the wildlife art genre, the Society also has a growing commitment to wildlife conservation. Alan Hunt, who is the Society's Conservation Officer organises and coordinates events in association with the conservation organisation Tusk Force, to help raise funds for various wildlife projects, including a recent donation of £2,000 to the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund. The Society is now working to raise public awareness and funds for this year's international efforts for the protection of the Siberian and other tiger species, which are now under growing threat of extinction.

If you would like further information about this year's Annual Exhibition or membership of The Wildlife Art Society, please contact Jean Evennett - Society Co-ordinator, at the following address:

360 Sandhurst Lane, Ashford, Kent.
TN25 4PF. England Tel: 01233 631783.



Sentinel

THE 1998 HAWK BOARD SYMPOSIUM

As we did not have a full audience last year or the year before, we are now opening the symposium to all comers, you do not have to be a member of an affiliated club. The tickets are now allocated on a first come first served basis. So if you want to hear what are first class speakers and have the chance to ask questions - book now - send £15 to the Hawk Board via Jemima Parry-Jones at the National Birds of Prey centre, see address below.

Last year saw the Second Hawk Board Symposium, held at Birmingham University in October 1997. This was our second attempt at producing something useful for the clubs that are members and or affiliated to the Hawk Board, and it was a first class event, thoroughly appreciated by those who attended. To have the chance to ask any and all questions that were thrown at DOE, was well worth attending, let alone any of the other excellent speakers.

There are about 140 places available at the Symposium, which is going to be held at Birmingham University on Saturday October 17th starting at 10am. The program will include talks from the DOE on the new legislation and how it has worked in this first year. As you can see by the programme there are other useful topics that are going to be covered. I have to say that to have got Ian Newton to come is a great feeling. He is one of the highest ranking raptor scientists, and yet extremely approachable and he has always had a very open mind about falconers and falconry. Probably most important, two hours during the day are set for questions and an open forum, with a panel including the speakers for the day, plus others.

There will be various stands at the Symposium. Should anyone be interested in bringing a stand please contact Jemima Parry-Jones well before the event. There will be an excellent buffet lunch and good company, the day finishes at 6pm. The cost is very moderate £15 per head, to include lunch. Last year we ran a very good raffle and I am looking for prizes - I shall be donating one or two myself.

Don't forget - Book your tickets now - I have them here. Some will be for sale at the Falconers Fair and at the Game Fair if there

are any tickets left. Otherwise contact me at The National Birds Of Prey Centre and I will send tickets out as soon as we receive your payment. All payment to be made to The Hawk Board.

10.00am Registration and coffee

10.30am Welcome

10.35am Hawk Board work over the last year, introduction of the Hawk Board Liaison Officer and his Duties (Chair)

11am Countryside Alliance - Where we are now! (Speaker to be announced)

11.30am CITES Enforcement Team at Heathrow - Charles Mackay (head of the team and a co-worker on the 'green parrot program' a software program for identifying raptors and parrots!!)

12pm Veterinary Surgeon. (Speaker to be announced, his/her topic to be chosen)

12.30pm Question Time for All Participants. (We are giving large chunks of time for questions as it seemed to be much appreciated last time.)

1pm Lunch. (An excellent meal - well worth it and included in your ticket price, wine and beer are available to buy too).

2.15pm Dr Ian Newton (probably the best known raptor scientist world-wide).

2.45pm A Presentation from Bill Heinrich from the Peregrine Fund in Boise, Idaho, USA. (This will depend on the number of tickets sold as we need to be able to cover his travel here to the UK - so it's up to you guys!)

3.15pm DETR A discussion on how the Article 10 certificates are going, what, if any, new legislation might be in the pipeline and any other topic that legally affects bird of prey and owl keepers under the auspices of DETR.

3.45pm Raffle Prize Draw and Tea.

4.15 Open Forum with All Speakers Available.

5.55pm Closing Remarks

(The programme may be subject to unavoidable change)

Tickets are available now from Jemima Parry-Jones at The National Birds of Prey Centre, Newent, Glos. GL18 1JJ. Tel: 01531 821581. email: jjp@nbpc.demon.co.uk

Please make any cheques payable to The Hawk Board.

FIRST AID COURSE

European specialist in avian medicine, Neil Forbes, recently presented a raptor first aid and emergencies course organised by the national charity Raptor Rescue. The one day event was fully subscribed, with fifty individuals attending from all over the country.

The course, which took place at a hotel venue in Cannock, West Midlands, covered not only the many medical aspects of the care of wild raptors, but also the responsibilities of the rehabilitator towards the casualties and the legal implications of having these birds in your possession whilst treating them. Those attending were given the chance to participate in a practical session simulating the examination of an injured bird and how to administer liquid by crop

tube - a vital technique for the treatment of shock.

The course was the third such successful event to be run by Raptor Rescue in conjunction with Mr Forbes and the Trustees of the Charity would like to thank Neil for his interesting, informative and entertaining lecture. As usual, the course notes alone are a priceless source of reference for anyone involved with raptor rehabilitation and husbandry.

Raptor Rescue chairman, Mick Cunningham received a cheque from Neil Forbes. The money was raised and donated by Neil and the other members of staff from the Clockhouse Veterinary Hospital in Stroud, Gloucestershire. The membership of Raptor Rescue extend their gratitude to all those who contributed.

IDENTITAGS FOR YOUR BIRD.

We have been using some of these tags for about 3 months and are very pleased with them. The one in the photo is on our female Peregrine Falcon, it is simply attached with a leather bewit, and has stood up to her pow-

erful beak. For the first few weeks she spent a lot of time biting, pulling and twisting the tag and as you can see it is still readable.

The tags come in all shapes, sizes and colours. They can be made small enough to fit a Merlin/Sparrowhawk right up to Eagle sizes.

You can have what you want engraved on both sides. They are made from very hard plastic, and also brass.

They will be available for you to examine on the Falconers Magazine stand at the Falconers Fair.

For more information phone Alan on: 01740 621175.



1998 BELMONT HORSE TRIALS & COUNTRY FAIR, MILL HILL, LONDON 30TH & 31ST MAY

Set in 160 acres of green rolling hills, within a scenic setting reminiscent of the Cotswolds, the Belmont Horse Trials and Country Fair are coming to town.

A unique event in an unrivalled location that you have to see to believe, Belmont provides the opportunity to entertain clients and friends just a few miles from the City.

Based in Mill Hill, this is London's first ever affiliated horse trials at London's first comprehensive equestrian centre.

Featuring a Country Fair and a cross country course, designed by Captain Mark Phillips, combined with dressage and show jumping against a backdrop of extensive stabling, polo arena and field and horse tracks, the two one-day events, held on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st May promise to highlight the countryside in London. With competitors from all over the country bringing their horses to compete in the three disciplines, these trials guarantee to be a true test of both horses and riders.

In addition to the main eventing, the Country Fair, with the support of the Countryside Alliance, offers a wide range of entertainments in the Countryside

Arena between 10.30am and 5pm daily. Activities include Falconry, terrier racing, dog agility tests, working dog demonstrations, arena polo, fly casting demonstrations with the World Champion Fly Caster, hound and beagle displays together with a host of other activities associated with country life.

In surrounding areas there will be fly casting lessons with Hywel Morgan on the Belmont Lake, laser clay pigeon shooting, archery, laser pistol games, a childrens funfair, ferret racing, pig racing and more.

The trade-stand village, located near the Countryside Arena and close to the cross country course, will offer an interesting variety of shopping and refreshments and with pubs and a selection of caterers, everyone's tastes are sure to be satisfied.

Entrance prices are £5 per car, £5 per adult and £2 per child (under 14). To obtain a 50% discount on entry tickets, please telephone 0181 959 1588 before 19th May. Doors open at 9am daily.

For visitor, entertainment and sponsorship information please contact the Belmont Horse Trial & Country Fair Office on 0171 318 4419



CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

The first CLA Game Fair was held at Stetchworth, Newmarket on 25th & 26th July 1958. There were 57 exhibitors with 9 firms in Gunmakers Row. Forty years on The Game Fair has over 500 exhibitors with almost 100 in Gunmakers Row and an angling section which is now the largest outdoor angling show. This year the CLA Game Fair returns to Stratfield Saye, Hants, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Wellington. The CLA Game Fair acts as an umbrella for a number of 'shows within a show', each one of which is a major event in its own right. The site covers 1,000 acres with fishing event running along a 3.4 mile stretch of the attractive River Loddon.

This year the face of Falconry will be changing at the Game Fair. The static and flying displays will be put on by five clubs; The British Falconers Club, The Central Hawking Club, The Welsh Hawking Club, The Hawking Club and The South East Falconry Group.

They will also have their own mini-ring where they will be giving talks on dogs, breeding, Falconry, and answering your questions throughout the day. Kim Oakeshott of the CRFC will be attending in a full native American Ceremonial headdress. In the main arena they will be putting on two 30 minute displays a day throughout the weekend, with a parade of hawks in the morning.

One of the main attractions will be Geoff Dalton (Cotswold Falconry Centre) who will be flying his juvenile Bataleur Eagle.

In the Falconry tent there will be Martin Jones, Peter Mulholland, the Hawk & Owl Trust and two well known Falconry artists. Each Club will have its own stand.

The static display will consist of approximately 25 birds, including Merlin, hybrids, Ferruginous, Redtails & Bataleur. There may also be another eagle and an accipiter. These details have yet to be finalised.

All in all this years CLA Game Fair looks set to be one of the best ever. Everybody go along and enjoy!!



Stratfield Saye House - Venue for this years CLA Game Fair

CAMPAIGN FOR FALCONRY TO BE LAUNCHED AT THE FALCONERS FAIR.

The defence of raptor keeping and falconry enters a new age when the Campaign for Falconry (CFF) is launched at 12 noon on Sunday 24th May at the Falconers Fair, to be held at Offchurch Park, Nr Leamington Spa, Warks.

Jemima Parry-Jones, whose work on the conservation and protection of all raptors needs no introduction, will explain the work of the Campaign and invite visitors to meet those involved at the CFF stand.

Campaign chairman, Marie-Louise Leschallas said today "We are not another club or association. Our aim is simply to raise enough money from those who enjoy all raptors so that we may continue to keep and understand them."

Donations will support the valuable and often underfunded efforts of those who give time protecting our interests in the UK and at critical overseas events such as the convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

We are working in association with the Countryside Alliance and the Hawk Board, who are providing valuable support for the initiative which has won unreserved approval from all responsible raptor keeping organisations.

CLUB DIRECTORY

AVON & SOMERSET RAPTOR GROUP

A well established club with a pool of experience in our membership whether hunting, breeding or an interest in raptors all are welcome, families, juniors and seniors alike. Regular speakers, work groups and excursions are just a part of our programme. Informal friendly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at The Old Down Inn, Emborough.

For further information please contact myself, Rob Cooke on 01749 870004

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

Founded in 1927

The oldest and largest Hawking Club in the country.

Nine Regional Groups -

Scotland, Yorkshire, Midlands, Cotswolds, Eastern, North Western, North Eastern, Southern and South Western.

For more details send SAE with 82p P & P to:-

**THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB,
HOME FARM F.M., HINTS, Nr.
TAMWORTH, STAFFS. B78 3DW.**

THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

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

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

Changing attitudes to improve standards

George Roach 01623 751339
Garry Balchin 01159 300135

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).

THE HAWKING CLUB

meets each month at the following locations
South Wales Hensol Golf Academy.

Llantrisant. 8pm 2nd Monday

Plymouth. The Woodpecker, South Brent,
8pm 3rd Monday

Northampton. The Red Lion, Kissingbury,
8pm 4th Monday.

For further information on this recently formed and fast growing hawking club with members throughout the UK

and overseas call our

Chairman Craig Thomas on 01327 261485
or our
Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333

HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society

Hawley on the SurreyHants borders is where the Club meets on the third Wednesday of the month.

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

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

Ring: John & Laila on 01276 503891
or Alan on 01784 250557 after 6pm

THE LONDON HAWKING AND OWL CLUB

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

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

THE NORTHERN ENGLAND FALCONRY CLUB

**CLUB MEETINGS ARE
HELD AT**

"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/>

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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

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

For Further details send S.A.E. to:
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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, Tredunnoch. 2nd Monday

CHESTER The Goshawk, Mouldsworth. 1st Wednesday

PLYMOUTH The Woodpecker, A38. 3rd Monday

The Welsh Hawking Club is Internationally recognised and has members throughout the UK. For further information ring Secretary: Mike Clowes on 01529 240443

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HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

The Club was formed in 1993 to bring together falconers and supporters within the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire.

Now in it's Sixth year, the Club was formed by and for people with a keen interest in birds of prey. Our aims, as set out in our constitution, are to promote excellence in the practice of the sport of Falconry and hawking; to encourage high standards of raptor keeping; to foster the well-being and conservation of raptors both in the wild and in captivity; to give assistance, education and advice as required, and to support legitimate field sports.

Our membership encompasses a range of knowledge and experience from novices to seasoned falconers with many years practice behind them, we also welcome all genuine enthusiasts.

We will meet at a new venue in Hawley, which is on the Surrey/Hants borders on the third Wednesday of each month.

Where we endeavour to provide our membership and guests with a varied calendar of events, including talks, demo's and outings. So far we are planning for talks on raptor breeding, a Wildlife Liaison Officer and a wood carver demo. Club outings will include a mini-bus trip to Jemimas' National Birds of Prey Centre and during the Summer a Bar-B-Que is being planned.

The Club has again had invitations to several Country Shows during the Summer months and will also again have a stand at the Falconers Fair.

Throughout the year we hold a number of Club field meets for falconers and spectators within the Club. This gives novices and spectators an insight into the flying of shortwings and longwings in the field and to the commitment falconers do give to their birds.

We are all looking forward to the next season when we pick our birds or start afresh with a new species.

Thank you for reading our resume and hope to see you at one of our meets in the future.

Alan Greenhalgh. Chairman

Central Falconry & Raptor Club News.

The Summertime is a good social time for our members at the CFRC. We visit various Country Fairs in the Midlands, either helping the Countryside Alliance with bringing to the attention of the public the sport of Falconry or having our own club stand, looking for new members and talking about the birds that we take along. The club has been invited again this year to look after the Weathering at this years "Falconry Fair" at Offchurch and the new site looks ideal for the Fair to grow from strength to strength. This year we will also be helping out with the falconry section at the CLA Game Fair. This will be a first time for our club and we are looking forward to helping with the flying displays as well as enlightening the public regarding how to get started the right way keeping a bird of prey. The birds must come first.

In July we will be holding our Summer bar b cue where

we ship in special burgers and spicy kebabs which go down a bomb. We have a flying display, Ferret racing and a quiz. All that is needed is the weather, and it will be another success.

There has been a change of venue for both branches of the club, so for old or new members who wish to come along, here are the new addresses: First Sunday of the month, The Teddington Hands Inn, Teddington. Nr Tewkesbury. On A435, just off A46.

Second Sunday of the Month, Eathorpe Park Hotel, Eathorpe, Fosse Way, Nr Leamington Spa. (B4455)

Any further information please call Kim Oakeshott on 01604 414155.

If you wish to send a piece for the next issue please send it to the usual address by 30th June. (max 350wds)

The Hawking Club

The Hawking Club was formed in February of this year and already at the time of writing is approaching its first 100 members. The objects of the club include the promotion of the sport and its continuation and we support those organisations which have a genuine interest in the sport, conservation and aviculture as a means of achieving that. This will consist of practical offers of voluntary aid, along with financial support subject to the funding available. This will include support to groups such as the IAF.

We are UK based and are enrolling members from throughout Europe, the United States and South Africa. Whilst we are a new club we have some well known members who are experienced, practising falconers. Some of these have been established as Breeders, and Lobbyists for the rights of Falconers for many years both in this country and abroad. We felt that a breeding project was a priority. Since our decision to establish a small project offers of donation hawks have been made. As our membership is widespread it is anticipated that field meets will be arranged at suitable locations next season. We will be attending the British Falconry & Raptor Fair at

Leamington Spa on the 24th & 25th May and look forward to meeting with members and answering questions from potential members.

We have established three meeting places each month, at Llantrisant, South Wales; Kislingbury, Northampton and South Brent, Plymouth. Other meeting places can be arranged in any area. Our annual subscriptions is £20. Membership forms and more details are available from our Chairman: Craig Thomas on 01327 261485 or from our Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333.

You can e-mail us on:
TheHawkingClub@geocities.com

FLYING A CAST OF HARRIS' HAWKS

ANTHONY WOMACK

These are a few of my experiences in training and hunting a cast of Harris' Hawks, both hawks living and hunting together with one handler. This is not the same as two or more hawks and their individual handlers come together on an ad hoc basis to hunt. I know others are flying two or more Harris', but no one seems to have written about the pitfalls, or the advantages, so I thought that perhaps this article might help anyone considering this type of project.

How I came to consider a cast of hawks came about thus. In the Autumn of '95, after three seasons flying RTH, a falconer friend rang up and said would I like to train and hunt a Harris hawk for his business partner? Would I!! So, on 16 December '95 Harriet, a '95 eyass arrived chez Womack. In 2 weeks I had her flying free, and she caught her first rabbit on her second day out (January 10 '96). She went on to catch quarry most days out, but I never went for multiples, feeding her up on each kill. At the end of the season, I put her in an aviary to moult. Her owner had not been in touch, and I was loth to stir things up, but obviously she was not mine, and what would I do for next season? So, to cover myself, I put my name down for a club bird from the Welsh Hawking club.

In due course in late July Rupert a 12 week old male Harris' arrived. With much trepidation he was introduced into Harriet's aviary. She totally ignored this frenetic bundle of feathers as it whizzed round and round the aviary, sitting on one foot and contemplating the sky (she was very fat). In September '96 I was just about to start retraining Harriet when the dreaded call arrived — could her owner have Harriet back please? So, away went Harriet, and out of the aviary came Rupert. Some three weeks later I had Rupert flying free, and with a dint of persuasion managed to get him taking quarry (those of you who have flown a male Harris will know what I mean). By the beginning of November he was showing promise, flying at 20 oz he was taking rabbit and pheasant quite regularly. Unfortunately he was in very poor feather, and soon lost his tail feathers, and his steering! In desperation, a call to Harriet's owner quickly resolved the problem — Harriet was available for loan again!!

So the 96/97 season was completed hunting Harriet, whilst Rupert contemplated his sins in the aviary.

In the summer of '97 Harriet and Rupert whiled away their time in the aviary, happily eating quail and throwing feathers in all directions. Meanwhile I persuaded Harriet's owner to sell her, and she became mine at last. Now with two Harris' Hawks, and fired by the Coulson's (a husband and wife team who hunt five hawks in a group)

article on group hunting Harris' Hawks in Harry McElroy's book "Desert Hawking with a little help from my friends," I decided to hunt the two together for the season 97/98.

First problem was getting all the kit together — Four bow perches, two for the mews, and two for the weathering lawn; Four swivels and leashes, two to use and two as spares; Two sets of bells, aylmeri, and field jesses; Four sets of mews jesses, two to use and two as spares; another telemetry transmitter, etc. It all adds up I can tell you!

October '97 saw the start of retraining. The aviary was converted into a mews with two bow perches side by side and six feet apart, each with its own bath, and separated by a mesh partition. The floor was astroturf. This may seem expensive, but your hawks will not keep sharp talons if they can stand on gravel, even pea gravel, and I personally do not like sand. Astroturf will not damage feet or talons, and it is very easy to clean and disinfect.

The only problem I had at this stage was that it took 8 days to get Rupert flying free at 21 oz from his fat weight of 24 oz, but 32 days to get Harriet down to her flying weight of 37 oz from her fat weight of 50 oz. However, it meant that I was able to hunt Rupert by himself for nearly four weeks, and work on accustoming them both to a T perch.

To get my hawks fit I have always used the High Jump technique on non Hunting days — this technique is fully described in Nick Fox's book "Understanding the Bird of Prey" and basically involves getting the bird to jump to the fist, even though it cannot see a tid bit on the glove, the glove

being held high above one's head, and the bird being on the floor. By means of variable rewards, this can be built up to some 150 to 200 high jumps in a session. I further refined this technique by substituting a T perch for the glove. This does two things, it orientates the bird to the T perch, and it gets the bird even fitter. They now have to do vertical take off's to a point some twelve feet above, which really gets them pumping those pecs.

After nearly 5 weeks, Rupert now having some 18 head under his belt, and having flown Harriet free on her own, the time came to try them both together. During the week prior, they had been tied on their bow perches on the weathering lawn ever closer (always under observation when close enough to reach one another), without any sign of aggression, or even in fact of acknowledging each other's presence. The first couple of days I did not take them hunting, but just flew them at exercise in fields close to home. All went well, they both came back to the T perch when called, and both followed on well, often landing together on the same branch. The only point I would make here is that if you have to call them to a tid bit, you should always have two or three tid bits in hand so that you can divert one or other if they are both coming together to the same tid bit by throwing one on the floor just before the first one hits the T perch or your glove. If they are exactly together, then just drop the perch or glove so that they both have to pull off into a tree. My hawks come when I whistle, a reward is not necessary.

Hunting the two hawks together was great. My hunting grounds consist mainly of woodland with brambles, brambles, and more brambles. Of course it is the amount of cover that enables the rabbits and pheasants to survive. I could now see the advantages of two entered hawks, especially the more experienced female. Both hawks regard my dog as the provider of all good things, and both follow her closely waiting for things to happen. When they kill, they feed up with the dog on drop within 3 feet or less. It is amazing to see the two hawks and the dog working a patch of cover. Apart from commanding the dog I am virtually redundant, both hawks following us and taking stand either side of the dog when she comes on point. On the command she goes in to flush, drops to the whistle, and the chase is on, the hawks taking turns to stoop, throw up and re-stoop as they harry the rabbit through the bushes and brambles. Other times if the rabbit or pheasant flush onto clear ground, there is a terrific all out dash after the quarry, if the first to try contact fails, the other pushes in, if he or she fails then, more often than not the first hawk is back in contention again! I can certainly guarantee that you do get twice the excite-



ment with two hawks!! When they do kill, there is no aggression whatsoever on the kill. Both sit on the quarry and await me to dispatch it. I then let the adrenaline surge subside, whilst they break in. If feeding up on the first kill (as I did for the first two weeks of hunting them together) then I open up the carcass and allow them their fill. This they do completely amicably, taking alternate bites of the cherry, without any squabbling. If going for multiples, I cover the kill and throw out a pick up piece to one side (usually a quail leg) One or other dashes for this, and I throw a second piece to the other side for the other hawk. Whilst both are occupied with that, I transfer the quarry to my bag. Then it's up to the T perch together, and off we go again. A point here, when picking up off a kill, make sure that each hawk has both feet on the quarry - if one is gripping the quarry and the other hawk, you cannot disengage with a pick up piece as both come together and this can lead to a fight over the pick up piece.

After 4 weeks of hunting together, I put them both together free in their aviary, as I dislike keeping trained hawks tethered, and they live happily together in harmony. I still feed them individually though by taking them out and putting them in their traveling boxes whilst I either feed or do jump ups with them individually, then they go back in the aviary. On hunting days I just let them both feed up on the last kill of the day.

Although I rarely tid bit them whilst on the glove or T perch, it can be done by hiding the tid bit in your cupped hand, this is accomplished at the manning and training stage by feeding the Hawk from within your cupped bare hand laid on the glove. With the two, each Hawk buries it's head in my bare hand to find the food, whilst the other waits it's turn, there being no food visible. If food is visible, they will squabble. This method of feeding has built up a trust and bond between each of us. Perhaps I have just been lucky, but neither of them has ever footed me, and I often carry one or other on my bare hand

The above are only my experiences with my Hawks, and others will no doubt have different ways of doing things, and different experiences. There are a few tips that might be useful to others considering flying more than one Harris:

Make both birds to the hood. This is in hind sight, mine are not, but I will try to do so next season, as this would make it so much easier to take them up off a kill, and also for going back to the van after hunting, or moving to another draw.

Plan your days so that your birds can always follow you on — as above it is quite difficult to carry two birds any distance unless they are fed up. If your country includes areas where you have to carry the birds any distance, you will need an assistant or two hoods.

Make sure your birds are fit, they have to

do a lot more flying as you cannot carry them.

I would not think that this would work with two inexperienced hawks, at least one should be intermewed, acting as a 'make' hawk.

Make sure both hawks are well manned — the last thing you want is for one of them to decide to sit in a tree, or disappear into the next parish, if something unusual turns up in the field.

Use telemetry on both Hawks — it does take a lot of stress out of flying even one hawk, and doubly so with two.

Be very particular about your flying weights — too low and they will get jealous, too high and you will have real obedience problems. Think what it is like with one high hawk, it is more than twice as bad with two!

Before undertaking a project like this make sure you have the space, the hunting ground, and the time. You need to hunt at least every other day, and on non hunting days you need at least two hours of daylight time to exercise and feed your hawks

Finally I would say that hunting a cast of Harris' Hawks is truly a rewarding experience and enables the Austringer to observe aspects of these sociable and adaptable raptors that are not possible when flying single birds. The bonds that are built up between hawks, handler and dog are a very rare and precious experience.



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Paul Beecroft

This is my first article that covers an aspect of Falconry. I am normally known for other types of articles that are generally connected to Wildlife Crime and Lost, found and stolen birds. I am sure that there are a number of people that are not even aware that I am a Falconer and have in fact been flying birds a lot longer than I have been involved in detecting Wildlife Crime.

From the outset I originally decided that I would leave the subject of Falconry to those people that are far more experienced than I am and it goes without saying that there are a lot of those people out there.

I decided to commit myself to this article for two reasons. The first was after reading another article, namely 'The Harris Hawk - some observations', by David Glynne-Fox in the Spring issue of The Falconers Magazine. I read this article with avid interest and to my mind it was brilliant. I found that the comments and observations made by David were very accurate from the Black Dog problem right through to the flying/hunting weight of this species (although my problem was more or less opposite). The second reason was following a telephone conversation with a certain blond-haired lady about David's article who claimed to be the editor and after telling her about my Harris Hawk she said "Write about it". So - here it is.

My Harris Hawk is a female, a small one compared to many others and is now 5 years old. I acquired her aged one year and she was in the process of finishing her first moult. I know little or nothing about her first year so it is impossible to tell if all of her good points are down to me. She was reasonably well manned, but to start with disliked the Bow Perch intensely and spent a considerable time bating. She was extremely amiable on the fist and would allow herself to be stroked, tickled on the head, but she hated her legs being touched. Toes were alright, but not the legs. She was not nasty about it but the moment you touched one of them she would (and still does), draw it up to her body.

On the subject of screaming, I'm sorry David but I have one of those gems. She is totally silent except on two occasions. One is the Black Dog problem. I work a Black Labrador. When she first met it she hurled the normal Harris Hawk abuse at it. In a short space of time though she gave it up and now works well with the Lab with only an occasional Raucous Rasp as you so well put it. She will not however accept any other Black Dog. She knows the difference between two identical black Labs and will vent her anger at any intrusion. Often when I am flying on a particular piece of land I will meet up with the owner walking her black Lab and a small white Terrier. The

terrier she ignores, the Lab...

The only other time is after pursuit of quarry, which has escaped her and gone for cover. She will then take stand above it and give a deep rasping noise. I cannot make out if she is trying to frighten the quarry into moving again (which it isn't prone to do) or she is asking the dog or myself to flush it which is the normal course of events. However, this season she has not done this and has remained silent.

When training commenced I started from scratch and treated her as a bird that had never been flown before. She was easy compared to other birds that I had trained and it was not long before she was coming 50 yards, 100 yards to the fist. I brought her down in weight quite slowly, keeping her on the creance longer than I normally would. On flying her free at 2lb 1/2 oz, she was very responsive. Returned when called and would follow on quite readily once she cottoned on. The only problem that I encountered at this stage was the first return to the fist at the start of the days flying. Once she had returned once the remaining flights were instant.

I then moved on to the dummy rabbit which took little or no encouragement and was very quickly ruined beyond repair. Entering her on live quarry was, though another matter. She, as you described would on occasions veer off at the last moment. This occurred often but not always. The problem I knew was the weight and I knew in my case that she was too high. I again cut her her back and as one would expect she improved dramatically. Once she was into serious hunting the only

problem I encountered then was getting her to return to the fist when called. I do most of my hunting from trees through personal choice, although she is quite willing to hunt from the fist as well. Flying her from trees though has to some extent caused her to 'self-hunt'. I therefore cut her back another 1/2 ounce and now have at 1lb 13 1/2 oz a pretty much perfect bird.

My next step was to get her fit. Flying out of trees and gliding into a kill was not my idea of hunting and did not seem much of a challenge. I called her in from longer and longer distances but for most of the time it was more gliding than flying. When she was in a chase situation the majority of the prey would out distance her very quickly and she would give it up as a lost cause. I therefore decided to make her fly and fly hard. Following the days hunting I would move out into an open field, stand about 100 yards away from her and then call her down as though to the fist. As she levelled out and closed in on me I would then catapult a chick head up into the air forcing her to go back up again. In no time at all she cottoned on to this and it became an enjoyable game. She soon became very adept at this and to watch her go vertically, wings pumping like mad, turn sideways or onto her back, catch the meat, complete the backward somersault and then return to the ground to eat it is an incredible sight. Her fitness improved no end as did her agility. Pursuits became fast and spectacular and she has the 'Never give up' syndrome. One memorable flight was against a Cock Pheasant. The dog flushed it and it powered out of the copse and across a ploughed field in full flight. The Harris was off and the chase was on. Not only did she catch up with it she also went above it, hit it, bound to it and Pheasant and Harris crashed in to the field. By the time I had legged it across to them the Pheasant was stone dead (presumably from the impact) and the Harris was in the process of plucking it.

Finally, returning to some of David's observations. From my own experiences what other species will "Kill" a Corn on the Cob and bring it to the fist. What other species will hurl themselves out of a tree to catch a leaf floating down to earth. The clutching of the jesses etc, all so very true. The intelligence of these birds, I mean, how do you get rid of a Squirrel that is locked onto your neck...simple...fly into the stream and try to drown it...let's go straight away. The down side of this is Squirrels can swim, and very well. Harris Hawks can't (or the fact it is sinking gives me that impression). Falconer can swim, but not very well with Wellie boots, Wax jacket, thick socks, scarf, jumper, Falconry bag and the fact is it's the middle of bloody winter and it's freezing.

Harris Hawks second rate? No, I don't think so either. I have had more fun with this bird and learnt more from it than any other.

On a final note, returning to the subject of her legs. Why oh why does she, twice a year pluck all the feathers out leaving herself with a pair of white trousers. Can anyone tell me?



Kite Conservation

Dr Nick Fox

Shakespeare wrote: 'when the kite builds, look to lesser linen.' Kites had the unfortunate habit of grabbing ones smaller off the washing line to use in lining their nests. They were common in the towns then, and some of them may have been Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) rather than the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) we are familiar with.

In the last few years many of you will have seen kites in England and in parts of Scotland. They are now breeding well in several areas as a result of a co-operative re-introduction programme involving many organisations. We are proud to say that falconers have played their part in this story.

Owing to persecution by shooters and farmers, the kite was almost eradicated in Britain to follow the same fate as the Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and the White-tailed Sea Eagle or Erne (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

But a few pairs of kites hung on in the hills of mid-Wales, and their fortunes were monitored during the first half of this century by a dedicated group of kite-watchers. By 1984 there were still less than 20 successful breeding pairs, and many were robbed by egg-thieves. In 1986 we proposed to the Kite Committee that they take some of the eggs which were likely to be stolen or eaten by crows and bring them to us for hatching and for return to foster nests as chicks. This caused some consternation among the Committee who, although they had been wing-tagging chicks, were nervous about taking the responsibility for removing eggs. They sent a small delegation to visit our breeding facility, and as a result decided to give it a try. Over the winter the various licences were arranged and in April 1987 Peter Davies delivered 13 eggs. Here in Wales the kites don't use knickers for nest lining but use sheep wool instead, as well as less savoury items such as docked lamb tails. As a result, the eggs stink, and I could always tell if Peter had been delivering eggs just by sniffing. So we were



Young Kite on the nest

reluctant to put these filthy eggs into our nice clean incubators full of nice clean falcon eggs.

After a modest success in 1987, we did various trials on temperature and turning of the eggs using dummy eggs rigged up with thermistors and with tilt switches. But in the end we abandoned technology altogether, and just popped the eggs under bantams. These had a virtual 100% success rate on viable eggs. Sadly, not all eggs actually were viable. Some were infertile from pairs which year after year failed to breed. These were kept going on dummies and given a foster kite chick to rear. Other eggs had been abandoned for some hours or even overnight, sometimes one of the pair had been poisoned. Some of these eggs were already dead but we ran them through just in case one was

still alive.

When it came to returning the chicks we found it was best to let the kites hatch out buzzard eggs and then swap chicks rather than substitute a dummy egg with a precious kite chick. Sometimes the parents would fly off and never return. They are very sensitive at the nest and easily desert. One year a farmer near Aberystwyth eagerly reported that kites were nesting for the first time on his property. The field team went up to investigate and gingerly raised a car wing-mirror on a telescopic pole. Viewing the mirror through field glasses they could see that the egg looked grey, with a pattern on it. It was a tennis ball! Maybe the kites had ferried it up there thinking it was a lamb's head and then just sat on it. So Tony Cross substituted a live buzzard's egg which, in the fullness

of time, they hatched out. When the chick was a few days old, we sent them a kite chick as a replacement and this eventually fledged successfully. Rather a round-about way of doing a spot of conservation, but it worked.

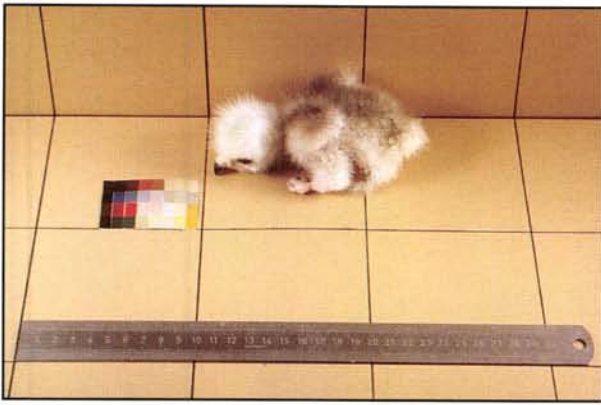
Often if there were three eggs in the nest, the team would remove one because only 2.6% of nests ever rear three chicks in central Wales. There is simply not enough food. The chicks fight each other and only one or two survive. The kites feed on fledgling corvids or scraps stolen from nearby peregrines. But when desperate they feed carrion such as rotting lambs' purses, complete with the rubber rings. These impact in the crop and kill many of the chicks. This food stress was graphically underlined for us when we tried to

return a chick to its original nest. Our chick had been fed ad lib by our old imprint buzzard, while its sister had been fed by its own kite parents. When Tony climbed to the nest to put our 18 day old chick in, we found that it was more than twice the size of the one which had been left behind, so we could not go ahead with the fostering because the big chick would have squashed the little one. Instead we had to do musical chairs until all the nests had suitable-sized chicks.

Encouraged by these successes by the Welsh Kite Committee, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the RSPB decided to set up an ambitious re-introduction programme. The Swedes kindly let us have kites for the Scottish releases, and the Spanish let us take birds for the English release. I supplied seven chicks hatched from Welsh eggs to the English release. These projects have been very successful. The food supply is better than in Wales and many of the new nests support three chicks. Also the new bloodlines will help counteract the inbreeding depression suffered by the Welsh population. Now, new release sites are being established and it will not



Red Kite siblings, showing different size



Red Kite chick - day 7



Red Kite chick - day 13



Red Kite chick - day 25



Red Kite chick - day 37

be long before the populations merge.

With 145 pairs in Wales last year, we now only manipulate eggs at high risk. Even so, we

have released 52 chicks reared here, many of which survived and bred. England and Scotland now have at least 85 pairs and these are expanding very fast. It

has been a major team effort and has produced very useful scientific data because it has been closely monitored at all stages. So if you see a kite near

you this year, wish her luck. And it might pay to check your washing line; a size 36 cup could be just what she's looking for!

FALCONER OR TAXI DRIVER?

Colin Taylor

Whilst out hawking late last season I found myself summing up the relationship between Viper, my Goshawk, Tan my GSP and myself. When out in the field the hawks total interest and focus of the dog, any time the dog is out of sight, Viper gives the good old Goshawk twitch (the only time she ever becomes vocal), or bates toward the dog's last position. Her eyes follow the dog's every move, once the dog comes on point the tension can be felt right through the glove.

For the dog's part, Tan worked with mercenaries in the past. A moor we regularly worked with my Peregrine held a good population of foxes, these would often be flushed from cover by the dog, who would subsequently ignore the fox to lock on pointing game. Meanwhile the Peregrine would happily follow on at a pitch above the fox. Tan has gelled perfectly with the Gos for she wags her tail incessantly once the Hawk is loose. She has the uncanny knack of being able to locate the hawk up in trees even in the thickest of woodland. If the hawk misses its quarry and puts in up a tree, the dog can always be found sitting at the foot of the tree in which the hawk is sitting. So I think it is a fair assumption that having trained both hawk and dog, I am now just short of being redundant. Reduced to a taxi driver come mobile perch. Once on our hunting ground I could feasibly let the dog and hawk loose

and wait in the car for their return.

However, I can't really complain, having had another good start to last season. My accomplice on our first pheasant day of the season was a friend who by profession is a Labour Party Agent for a very prominent MP. A gentleman who is not really into hunting, or falconry - I invited him out (remember we still need to get our message on field sports over!) He was treated to some fine pheasant hawking and dog work, catching three pheasants. The first, a nice hen bird, broke cover from a dyke, gaining height she flew in a large arc, trying to get into a wood to our left. Viper cut her off in mid-flight, taking her from the side at a height of about 40 feet. The second bird, a fine cock bird, broke cover from a clump of sieves and was caught two feet off the ground after a hundred metre tail-chase. The third pheasant, a first year hen, she took as it tried to get into cover in a thick horn hedge. Two other birds were missed, one after a spectacular flight where the Goshawk tail-chased the quarry up and over a thorn hedge, the pheasant kept flying back and forth over the hedge as they both flew parallel to

it, the pheasant desperately trying to get room from the hawk to break into cover and finally securing his escape in a small fir plantation. All in all a good afternoon's flying with the added bonus of securing yet another pro-falconer in the Labour Party ranks.

To sum up - being a taxi driver for a successful hunting team isn't that bad after all.



IT'S NOT A HOLIDAY CAMP!

Mark Parker

When people visit a falconry or raptor centre of some kind, I'm sure they see the handlers in a job that, on a surface level, is one that they themselves, would very much like, in place of their own. What many people don't see is the great deal of hard work and sacrifice that goes on behind the scenes. Many people no doubt, who pursue falconry as a sport, or fly/keep birds as a hobby, have a dream perhaps of changing it all and pursuing their interest as a career. I must say that I love my job, but it is not always as glossy and as easy as it may seem.

Firstly it is not a career to involve yourself in if it's riches you desire. Salaries are fairly low, working hours long and hard. Though in one area it does excel when compared to others and that is job satisfaction. To be paid for flying raptors, whether hunting or on demonstration is, in my book, a privilege, a challenge and great fun.

Here at the National Birds of Prey Centre, we have a very close knit bird handling team with a great deal of experience contained within. Outsiders assume that there are about twenty of us, when in fact there are only five. In addition we have a permanent handyman, Dave, who keeps a good eye on general maintenance, baths, food trays etc. and of course Mark Rich who helps

me out on all the courses and is in charge of building work and development. Of course at the helm of it all is Jemima Parry-Jones and contrary to popular belief, she is a great lady to work for.

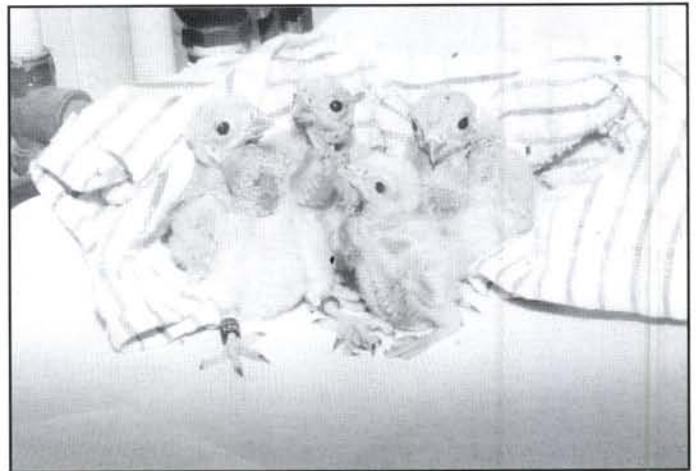
The National Birds of Prey Centre is not a holiday camp and therefore not an easy place to work, but it is extremely rewarding and abounds with interesting opportunities. For example TV and film work, meeting many, many different people, as well as interesting and challenging demonstrations. Flying birds in front of members of our own, and the Saudi Arabian Royal family certainly put the pressure on last year. Our standards and expectations of staff are very high. There is definitely a great deal of loyalty amongst us all. We work together for the Centre and not as individuals for ourselves, which is important. If we lose a bird then we're all out looking, together, if something goes wrong on a demo, then we all try to help out and find a solution to the problem. None of us are perfect and we all have our ups and downs, including the boss, but in general the birds come first and we all work together to achieve that.

Our day starts at 8.30am with food preparation and then the food round, which takes two people approximately one and a half hours. During this time other bird staff members

will attend to any birds in the hospital that may need any assortment of drugs to and associated treatment. Birds kept over night within the inside Hawk Walk have to be moved outside. This alone, to move the whole team, takes about an hour, including walking a distance of about two miles in the process.

We all gather for tea and coffee at around 10am. As well as discussing any relevant news of things that need our attention, this is an opportunity for staff that have completed the food round to report on the birds in all aviaries, and whether any new eggs have been discovered. We liaise directly with Jemima to ascertain any directions that she may have regarding our breeding programme, and any other

can become very hectic, for example when school parties arrive, there could be a number of guided tours required, utilising staff members and delaying other jobs. The breeding season is certainly one of our most important times of year. It's a time of highs and lows with everyone under pressure to be as observant as possible. One minute everyone can be elated at the news of eggs laid by a new species, then weeks later there may be a low when we find out the eggs are infertile or it fails to hatch. Throughout all this there may be any number of extra jobs to undertake, an aviary may need cleaning, a bird may have to go off to the vets, or require imping or a new tail bell fitted. Any number of new pairs of jesses may



Baby Mauritius Kestrels that we bred at the Centre. A major success for us!



Nest Building in the Eagle Aviaries

issues of importance to the Centre. This is also a time of much teasing and joking. Any visitors, I'm sure on first impressions would probably assume we're all lunatics. We're not of course, but NBPC humour does take some getting used to!

The Centre opens at 10.30am, our busiest time of the year is throughout the summer and school holidays, but in reality to bird staff it does not make a great deal of difference, whether we have twenty or two hundred, we still have the basic jobs to do. There are times when things

have to be made up, as well as new birds requiring times for early training etc. All this adds to the pressure of the day, which can still increase dramatically if youngsters are back with parents or have been given to foster parents. They have to be checked on a regular basis. And then there may be the scenario of perhaps staff members involved with filming, courses, or demonstrations away from home. I've never known a quiet day at the Centre, there is always something going on to keep you busy.

Flying demonstrations play



Feeding babies that have hatched (Gabor Goshawks)

a big part in the Centre's day. During the winter there are three demo's per day at 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3.30pm, with approximately four to six birds being flown at each demo. In the summer we move up to four demo's per day at 11, 12.30, 2.30, and 4.15.

Obviously the weather plays an important part in all this, we normally fly in most conditions, though obviously we have to be careful in high winds and driving rain, but if the public are there then we like to do something for them. You'd be amazed what the British public will put up with weather-wise, when it comes to watching birds fly. The secret is choosing the right flying team for a particular day to suit the weather. Flying ones that perhaps don't mind the rain, or other that fly well in strong winds.

Demonstration birds are a lot different to hunting birds. We have approximately ten minutes per bird to try and get the best from them and to demonstrate to the public what they can do, or in some cases

what they should be doing. Consistency is important and a bird that flies off chasing everything that moves is not one to be relied upon.

If you are out hunting with your bird and it disappears or sits in a tree for a couple of hours you can take your time to sort things out. On the other hand if this happens on demo it can cause a few problems. The "show must go on". You are only as good as your last demonstration as the boss says. I'm a firm believer that flying a bird on demonstration is harder than flying it in the field. Here at the Centre we fly the birds and give commentaries at the same time, believe me it isn't easy. You can have the best flying bird there is, but if you can't give a decent commentary you're stuffed. Another quality you require is being able to talk round a problem when disaster strikes, and it does happen to all of us from time to time.

Many of you will no doubt see demonstrations as anything but Falconry, and in some respects you would be right, but we still use tradition-

al Falconry methods to get the bird there in the first place. Each year the senior members of bird staff give an average of over a thousand demonstrations. We in turn make a yearly average of about eighty pairs of jesses, put on seventy five (plus) tail bells and imp approximately a hundred feathers. There are also the many hours of training and flying birds on demo to be counted and the three hundred or so people on different courses to contend with, just a few things to keep us busy.

Even in the winter months when we are closed December and January, birds still have to be flown and fed. All aviaries are systematically cleaned thoroughly, one at a time. Each bird is caught up and checked, nests built, perches scrubbed, floors disinfected. It takes a fair bit of time to complete the whole Centre as there are over a hundred aviaries.

Towards the end of the day all the birds that haven't been flown, have to be checked and fed. Many have to be put away for security reasons, as we have had birds stolen in the past. All the aviaries are

checked and unused food collected up. We all finish around 5.30 - 6pm, and usually much later in the summer, whereupon we raid Jemima's kitchen for a well earned cup of tea or in most cases; a bottle of wine...

The benefit of working at the National Birds of Prey Centre is being able to fly some species, that under normal circumstances you would never have an opportunity to handle. And when it all comes together in front of an appreciative audience, it can give you an amazing high and makes all the hard work worthwhile. For me personally, one of the things I get a buzz out of most is teaching on the various courses. It's a great feeling to give something back to a sport that has provided me with so much. Some days things can get you down, especially when you are the only member of bird staff on duty and all the usual jobs together with the demos have to be completed, but to be honest I wouldn't swap my job for anything. Though to be fair a lottery jackpot might persuade me otherwise.



A flying demonstration at the Centre

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Westweald Falconry

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Telephone or send SAE for our current price list to:
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avoid disappointment if I'm out.
Tel/Fax: 01732 463218 and ask for Brian.

LAMPING

Tez Wright

My experiences of flying a hawk to the lamp started quite by accident. In 1990 I lived on the Isle of Bute off the west coast of Scotland, I was employed by a hotel owner to care for his collection of raptors. My father, Steve Wright, sold me a young female Harris Hawk, bred by the late John Campbell. I decided to name her Kali, she distinguished herself quickly. After one weeks training she was flying free. To enter her I took her to a stretch of coastline known as Scalpsie Bay, an area thick with rabbits. Unfortunately at this early stage she was totally centred on me and failed to notice the multitude of game. In my bag I had a dead rabbit which I intended to use for lurework. I placed Kali on a fence post and stepped back to prepare the lure. At that moment a hare stepped out of the long grass not 10ft away. Kali took one look and piled in. I was two strides behind and as the hare started kicking threw myself onto it and quickly dispatched it. In the space of a few seconds I had gone from owning an unentered novice to possessing a hare hunting Harris, not a bad start for anyone.

With such a confidence boost, Kali notched up an impressive tally, more hares, rabbits, pheasant, herring gull and on two occasions Greylag Geese, filled the game bag.

However, I must get back to the subject I wish to write about, using a lamp to hunt at night with a hawk. This is how it all started. Living on an island made it difficult to buy in a supply of food for the raptors I cared for. Because of this I had to rely on wild game to feed the birds. Kali, while an excellent hunter, couldn't be expected to feed 4 Ferruginous, 3 Buzzards, 2 European Eagle Owls, 1 Redtail, 3 Kestrels, 2 Barn Owls and 3 Tawny Owls. Luckily I had the help of a friend, Roger, with whom I would go out every two weeks, shooting hares and rabbits for the freezers.

Personally I dislike shooting hares as there is little challenge. Hunting them with coursing dog or hawk brings out the best in the hare as a sporting animal. No hare can jink, outrun or outfight a bullet, and anyone who boasts of shooting a hare is no sportsman in my book. Sadly I had no choice, hungry hawks don't care where their food comes from. However, the Isle of Bute boasts a massive hare population, without predators and no intensive agriculture. The population is high and I was confident my shooting wouldn't affect numbers.

On these trips I always took my hawk to fly at rabbit, hare and pheasant until darkness fell. Then out would come lamp and rifle and Kali would go into her box in the back of the truck. On one

trip, as we moved from the hawking fields to the shooting ground, Kali was still on my glove. A rabbit caught in the headlight of the pickup. She bated hard at it and on impulse, I slipped her. Wings pumping hard she closed on the rabbit, but the advantage was to the prey not hunter. With 6ft to spare the rabbit reached a hedge and disappeared in the dark triangle. Kali landed on the ground and peered into the gloom optimistically hoping for a rematch. I was nervous as this was the first time she had been free in the dark. I needn't have worried, as soon as I whistled she flew straight to my outstretched arm. I was relieved but also intrigued. I had heard of American falconers lamping Harris Hawks, but knew of nobody in the UK who had attempted this technique. Lamping was not new to me as I had worked lurchers to the lamp and knew it could be very effective in hunting rabbits. Now I was determined to try it with a hawk.

We had all the equipment we needed - a 1/4 million candle power spotlight on a flexible lead mounted above the cab of the pickup, most importantly a Harris keen to fly rabbits at night. First of all we had to work out an effective technique. Early flights were marred by standing too close to the lamp. The problem was that, because she flew straight down the beam her shadow would cover her prey. This caused her to miss many opportunities by losing sight of her quarry. We rectified this by standing twenty or thirty feet away from whoever held the lamp. This ploy allowed her to approach from outside the beam. Having an assistant to hold the lamp is a big advantage in lamping a hawk.

Once we had worked this out results were not long in coming. Kali's first kill on the lamp was a rabbit. It was spotted about 300 feet away, its eyes glowing green in the light. We approached within a hundred feet before it started to run. Kali's sudden appearance must have startled the rabbit for it jumped about 3ft vertically and she bound to it in the air. Hares are well known for their aerobic evasive manoeuvres but this still remains the only rabbit I have seen attempt to jump out of dangers way.

Soon she was taking rabbits fairly regularly but not in great numbers. I limited her to one kill per hunt, this encouraged her to persevere in this unusual style of hunting for a hawk. Eventually we caught a hare in the lamp, Kali bound to several, only to be kicked off before I could reach her. A hare is a powerful animal with a dangerous kick. Any Harris Hawk which hits one, let alone holds, is to be respected. Imagine pulling down a pony and immobilising it with your hands - that's the equivalent! Speed is critical when making in. As soon as Kali closed on a hare I would jump in the truck and career at 30-40 mph across the field after her. Leaping from the truck as it slid to a halt like someone in an old safari movie, I would dive in to the fray. Most of the hares Kali caught were taken with truck assistance. The largest weighed nine and a half pounds, Kali weighed in at 11b 15 3/4 oz, proving size isn't everything. Physically back up a confident hawk and they will tackle anything.

Flying a hawk at night was something I learnt as I went along, but to any falconer wishing to try lamping I would give this advice. Preparation is every-



It's been a hard days night

thing. Work it all out before you get in the field. Most importantly know your ground. At night barbed wire and electric fences and other obstacles are lethal to a hawk. There will always be a moment when a rabbit heads toward a fence. Just turn the lamp off and your hawk should drop to the ground instantly and is safe.

Get your hawk accustomed to the lamp. Go back to basics and drag a dead rabbit in the lamp beam. Your hawk should soon catch on. Calling the hawk back to the fist is also important. At night rabbits can be scattered all over a field and your hawk could be on the other side after a failed chase. Walking toward her may flush the quarry and ruin your sport, shining a 1.4 million candle power beam on a garnished glove will advertise your presence to every rabbit in sight. Use a small hand torch (a mini maglight is great) and even put a red filter over the beam. You will not disturb the rabbits and the hawk can still see you.

My own personal experience was that Kali soon learned after a failed chase to drop to the ground, turn about and fly directly to the fist. This was without the use of a torch or whistle. This behaviour may not be general but if your hawk repeats it you are a lucky falconer. Even on the blackest nights she would find me, usually hitting my chest, not the glove! Maybe Kali was afraid to be alone in the dark who knows?

My observations lead me to believe that the Harris Hawk has very good night vision. In areas with a lot of light pollution Kali would even follow on from tree to tree as she would in daylight. Anyone who has left their Harris out overnight in a tree and returned before dawn to find it half a mile away,

will readily confirm this.

At night sound carries a long way. The bells which are an asset in daylight, at night become a positive hindrance. The sound of bells at night alarm rabbits and send them scooting for burrows, particularly if they are familiar with your daylight activities.

It may sound crazy but at night I remove bells. As you are flying from the fist, the hawk will only move in response to the light or to return to you. Telemetry can be used as a fail safe. I have never had a hawk stray at night, in the dark it has nowhere to go. Weather conditions play their part in lamping. An experienced lurcher man will recommend dark, windy, wet, moonless nights as the best conditions to find many rabbits sitting far from cover. Harris Hawks needs are different. I have yet to find one keen to chase rabbits through rain in the teeth of a gale. My best results have been in little or no wind always working into whatever wind there is. Again little or no moon is good. Try avoid streetlights nearby and stay close to hedges. There will be plenty of rabbits out but they will tend to be flighty and nervous and hard to approach. Stay silent and try to get as close as possible before the rabbit flushes. You should try to position yourself to block escape to the closest cover so the rabbit has to run as far as possible.

Having said all this don't expect huge bags. You will take more quarry and of greater variety in daylight. For me flights at night are not as dramatic and aerial as those you can achieve in daylight, they all tend to be simple tail chases over open ground. I prefer a greater variety.

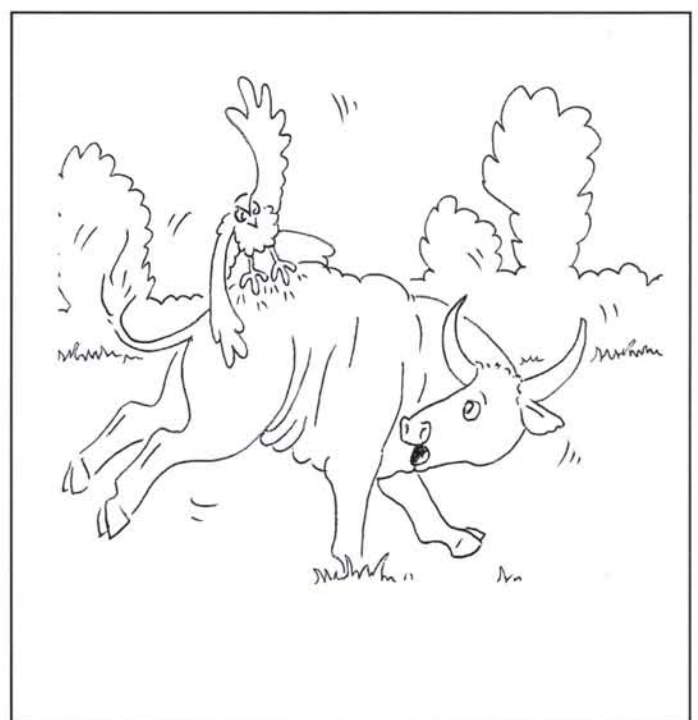
Why lamp a hawk then you may ask? There are several good reasons. One is

simply the challenge of using a very unusual system of hunting and making use of the amazingly adaptable capabilities of this species. As falconers we don't fly our hawks just to kill. We love to observe our hawks in action and see how far we can take a sophisticated symbiotic relationship that has existed for centuries.

A second and very practical consideration is the impact of nine to five employment in the winter months. This has a profound effect on many falconers, restricting their hunting to the weekends. To my mind the popularity of the Harris Hawk is mainly due to the fact that you can get away with only weekend flying. Compare a Harris hunted every day with a weekend flyer and the difference is pronounced. Confidence, fitness and ability come with constant flying. If you are trapped in the weekend hawking routine don't complain, buy yourself a lamp and improve the quality of your hawk's life. A good tip for urban falconers. Once your hawk is familiar with night flying, is to exercise in a local park or area of waste ground where light pollution gives sufficient illumination for flying. My Harris's have been worked like this many times, without any lamp, they happily fly from tree to tree, rooftops and lamp posts. They did have a tendency to catch hedgehogs and if your hawk is turned on by cats, care must be taken at night in suburban areas.

I hope other falconers find this a useful insight into a little known, but possibly very useful facet of hawking. If you decide to take up lamping, equipment and lamping advice can usually be obtained from a local gunshop. Good luck and good hawking

THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY HAWKER BY RICHARD ROSSITTER



OUCH!

Nigel Wayne's first 'raptor rescue' included a painful lesson...



RAPTOR RESCUE

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Well I suppose it had to happen sometime. Having birds of prey as a hobby ('scuse pun) and caring about their conservation enough to talk about them with some enthusiasm had to end up with us being in the firing line one day.

In 1994 we moved to Devon, not far from Dartmoor and in prolific buzzard country, so it should not have come as a surprise when one day the phone call came. It was a Saturday afternoon about 3pm and time was getting shorter to when we were going out in the evening. I had to leave at about 4.45pm to get into the local college by 5pm to play sax all evening, Christine was heading off with some of her chums for a night out, so I was taking elder son Daniel with me. Fred (the daughter) was out, so at least she was no problem - to us anyway. So as we were all packing up and getting ready to get ready to go out, the phone rang. "Hello - you know about birds of prey, don't you?" said a female voice. One thing we've learnt and learnt well is that we don't know very much at all. "Yes-ish" I replied hesitantly. "We've got an injured buzzard, what should we do with it?" Phone Mick Robins, I thought.

We got the story - car in front stopped to avoid running over big bird lying on its back with its feet in the air. "We can't take it missus," said driver to my friend. "we've got a dog in the car." So my friend agreed to take it with her, with some ridiculous comment about knowing someone who knew all about birds of prey. No visual damage apart from holding right wing a bit droopy. Horrified, I heard that her 12 year old daughter had cradled the bird on her lap from where they found it to the farm where they phoned me from, so I suggested they put it in a box rather smartly. Daniel and I jumped in the car and headed off. Anxiety must have affected us because we were leaning out the windows doing a duet imitation of a police siren to clear the way. Daniel, being younger, did the high note, I did the low note...

We met them 20 minutes later in a car park in town. The box was the size of two small football fields, or at least it seemed it when I tried to get the damn thing in my car ("Only box we got missus," said the farmer). Daniel steadied the box on the back seat on the way home, and with a real casualty beside us we were both a bit subdued. I was madly trying to recollect word for word the two Raptor Rescue first aid courses we had attended. In my head I was boldly inspecting a dead pigeon with a figure of eight bandage on one wing, a splint on the opposite leg and a huge patch of tissue damage on the right side of his rib cage. In the

way of these things the moment was lost when in my mind's eye the pigeon winked at me and then hobbled away mumbling "pieces of eight" with a miniature Long John Silver perched on his shoulder.

Never mind. I had recalled several salient facts and procedures. Towel/cloth over bird, orient the bird by feel, gently remove from box, examine, decide if immediate vet attention needed, if not, dark warm place, possibly electrolyte by crop tube for shock.

So home we get, Christine ready with a towel. "Mop my brow dear," was not met with a positive response. Most unladylike I thought. Closed all curtains and doors (nowhere and no light to bolt or bate at - how am I doing?) and carefully opened the first layer of the box ready to lower the towel over the bird. Then the second and third layers. Is this a trick Christmas present I thought: like Russian dolls, I would finally get to the innermost layer and find a blue tit. But no - after three layers or so, it was clear the next was the last and there was a momentary panic as we saw a completely still bunch of feathers. No it was OK - the bird moved fractionally. Enough to know we weren't too late. We lowered the cloth à la course demonstration, having first noted which way was up.

Carefully holding the shoulders, we placed the bird face and talons down on a cushion. What a magnificent specimen. Feather perfect as the adverts say. And big! I bet that one had taken fur and feather. Checking the back and gently feeling the wings absolutely no indication of injury. The bird however was motionless, a symptom we presumed of shock. Then we turned the bird over; me kneeling on the floor with the bird between my knees and Christine opposite me. It was awesome to see such a beautiful wild specimen close to. At last I could see why perhaps some people would want to take wild raptors to train. The thought went through me how wonderful it would be to tame such a majestic and powerful bird. Then I refined the thought - no not tame but develop a relationship of trust to live, work and hunt together. Not of course possible in this day and age, but maybe an insight into the thoughts of some (not the commercial thieves) who take birds from the wild illegally. Then I returned to the real world.

If birds are telepathic, it obviously heard my thoughts and

decided then was a good time to come out of shock. We nevertheless finished the examination and replaced the bird in a smaller box in a warm, dark, quiet place. Then I had to go out, having run right out of time and suggested Christine give Mick a ring to see what else. Mick quite rightly pointed out that without an aviary we would not be able to see if anything was amiss. So what damage did we record so far from the examination:-

One deep puncture to the left first metatarsal (you could see the bone actually); two shallower punctures on other metatarsals. A series of punctures in a ring pattern on the left inner thigh area with a single deep puncture lower down. Substantial soft tissue damage between the two sets of punctures.

Any guesses?

Yep - the bird was fine - that was the damage to me when he (she?) came out of shock and decided I was foe, not friend. Frankly, the pain went on and on and it was my turn to say some unladylike things. It was interesting to note that they seem to be able to summon up increasing pressure in spasms. I remember thinking "Ow, that can't get any - OWW! that really is - OOWWW!! that really must be as - OWWW, OOWWW, OOWWW!!!!" (stopped thinking then). The other curious thought was "Nothing wrong with his feet and legs then...!" The talons of his right foot were sunk up to the bone in my left hand, and his left foot was sinking repeatedly in and out of the soft fleshy part of my left inner thigh. Five inches higher and I would have had



to change my place in the choir.

Mercifully, he decided I wasn't worth the effort and let go after about a century, but we had to finish the examination there. We could no longer tell if he was bleeding, because of my blood all over him, and I could no longer hold him because my strength was gone in agony. However, we had, we believed, seen enough to reckon that he was in no immediate danger, so we boxed him up. Oddly in spite of the pain, I felt more sorry for him in an alien and frightening human world than I did for me conscious and aware of all my actions (and mistakes). It seemed most likely that he had been clipped and stunned by a passing car but suffered no real injury.

The following morning, we boxed up our barn owl and loosed Mr Aggressive B'zard into the aviary. He wobbled a bit on his pins but as we observed him through the spy hole over the next few hours he shook off his sloth and made a couple of flights up to the wire to see if

he could find a hole big enough to squeeze through. Satisfied that he was fit and well we chucked in a couple of mice and he suspiciously ate them up. Not, I might add, when we were watching - but each time we turned our backs for a few moments, they disappeared. Crafty or what.

Next step - release. Oh my goodness - we've got to box up a wild healthy buzzard. Strangely the easiest part of all. Fear gripped him as I eased my way in to the aviary, but not panic. He cowed in the corner and without letting him get his wits, I gently lowered a towel over his head again. Once covered it was easy to gather him up and pop him into a carrying box. Off we went to the exact place in the country lane where he was found. Adjacent was a pasture bordered by woods. It was warm and clear with just the hint of a breeze. Perfect release conditions.

We opened the carrier door facing away from us into the pasture, and after a

moment's hesitation he scrambled out. A couple of ungainly strides along the grassy floor then suddenly he was airborne and soaring in a long, curving, left hand glide. I kid you not when I say I had a lump in my throat. Admiration for a truly magnificent creature seen at close quarters. He seemed hardly to need to beat his massive wings as he rose over the trees and disappeared. Seconds later two more buzzards appeared from behind us calling plaintively. Family or friends, I wondered, as they all drifted on the air currents into specks of distant silhouettes.

We learnt a lot about techniques that you simply cannot learn from books or even (with the greatest respect and thanks to Neil and Greg from Clockhouse) from courses. Perhaps only by being gouged by a wild buzzard's talons can you learn that dead pigeons are not dangerous! I am not sure, really, whether we contributed anything to his recovery. I like to think we did and will always remember with pride our first "raptor rescue."

ANTHONY JACK

The most influential figure in British falconry of this century has gone. His lasting influence was not in the field, but in meeting-places, committee-rooms, and even corridors of power. In the early morning of February 3rd, at Louth County Hospital, Anthony Jack died after a short illness. He was in his eighty-third year.

As president he had overseen the running of the British Falconers' Club (BFC) for twenty-three years, but his service had begun in 1937, when he became Editor of the BFC journal, *The Falconer* and the club's Assistant Honorary Secretary. After the Second World War, he and Guy Aylmer spearheaded the revival of the BFC. In 1945 he was deeply involved in the provisions of the Wild Bird Protection Act for the continuation of falconry as a legal sport, and for the rest of his life worked to maintain the falconer and the falcon's flight, in Europe as well as Britain, through the channels of the Hawk Board, the British Field Sports Society (of which he and the BFC were founders), the International Association for Falconry, and the International Council for Birds of Prey.

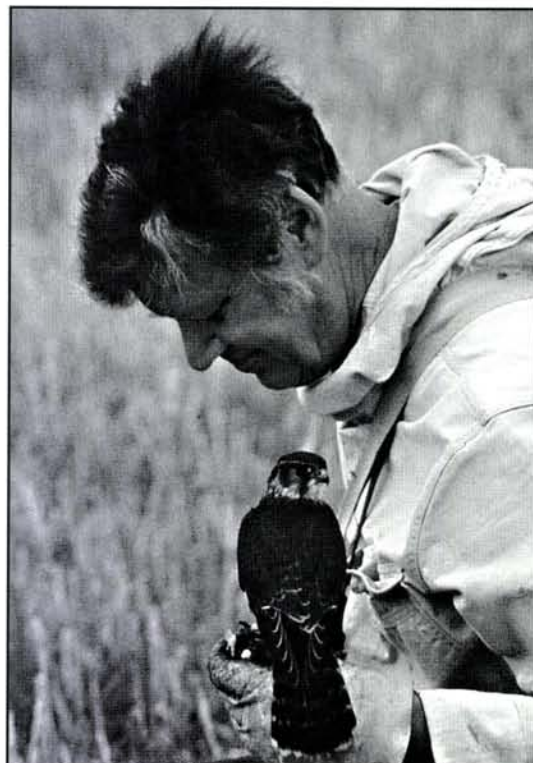
Big in frame and presence, Anthony Jack accepted responsibility and was not afraid to use it. He was firm in his opinions and firm in his dealings, keen on the letter of the law, an observer of etiquette. He was scholarly too, a linguist, a writer and speaker, of the clearest prose who looked to history and to literature for present illumination. Fair as well as firm, he was exactly suited to the task of Chairman. It is fair to say that on occasions his energy single-handedly saved falconry from the ravages of legislation, ignorance and, sometimes, from its practitioners.

He stood out, even more than his con-

temporaries, as One of the Old School, and that makes it even more to his credit that he made the effort to move with the times. It took him longer to shed the habit of using first names, instead of surnames only, than it did to accept, and to attempt to cater for, the extraordinary changes that took place in every aspect of "falconry" during his presidency. He looked with disfavour on anyone who sought to live in the past.

Yet there was something of the absent minded professor about him; he had to make careful shopping-lists and to write notes of everything else he needed to remember, including a list in the mews so he could check that he had everything necessary in his bag before he went hawking. Although the pace of life could confuse him, he could tell you without hesitation where in Sicily the hawking lodges of Emperor Frederick are to be found, and even such obscure details as the principle beliefs of the Unitarian Church. On most occasions he was reticent. When asked directly if he had ever flown a Spitfire, he said that he had, but failed to say where or when. Although he was not amused by what he called "attempts to be funny" in local falconry newsletters, his wit and quiet humour shone out in his learned articles, and when anything struck the right spot it was a joy to hear him laugh. A little-known gift was a powerful shout which he used in the field, without much provocation, to alert companions well out of normal earshot.

Falconry was always his main concern. His wife and friends feared that when he relinquished the Presidency he would suf-



fer for lack of occupation in his retirement but the Council found that they still needed to apply to his experience and sound judgement; he used and enjoyed his position as President Emeritus; and he exercised his scholarship to translate two falconry classics - Ferreira and D'Arcussia - and to add to the long series of articles that he had contributed to *The Falconer*, over sixty years, on all manner of topics but only one subject.

He was a falconer to the end, attending and participating in last years International Field Meet at Woodhall Spa. A fitting testament to the man might have been his comment that despite years of experience the standard of falconry today was, he believed, higher than at any time during his memory. And there has never been a better judge.

Cotswold Falconry Centre Celebrates 10 Years

Those of you that have seen the very first issue of the magazine will remember the main feature about the Cotswold Falconry, Eagle and Hawk Park. The layout of the centre has not changed much over the last ten years and this is just what Geoff Dalton (now the sole owner) wanted. He never wanted to become very big, the important work is done at outside displays and in the flying arena at the centre, where they have three displays a day. Geoff is a master at keeping the public entertained and informed, explaining about the bird he is flying, its habits both as a species and an individual. His enthusiasm and love for the birds is very evident and this seems to transmit itself to the audience, all of whom go away with a better appreciation and understanding of both the birds and the hard work Geoff puts in training and flying them.

Some of the birds that

were there when we first visited ten years ago are still there now. Alex the male Golden Eagle was just a baby then, and their Bengal Eagle Owl who is 20 now is still doing displays. A Lanner Falcon that Geoff has had for over 20 years is still flown daily. There are some birds new to the centre, like a Gyr-Lanner hybrid, a very quick and powerful bird. Two young Bataleur Eagles, a Buzzard and a Redtail are all being trained to go up and soar high above the centre, then stoop in for their reward. It is a spectacular thing to see a large soaring bird stoop like a falcon, straight down to the fist.

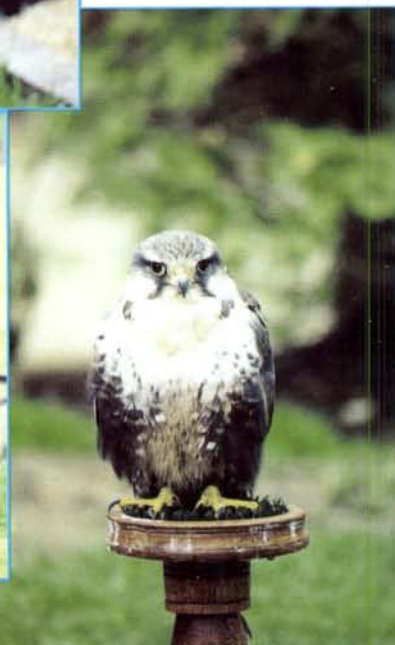
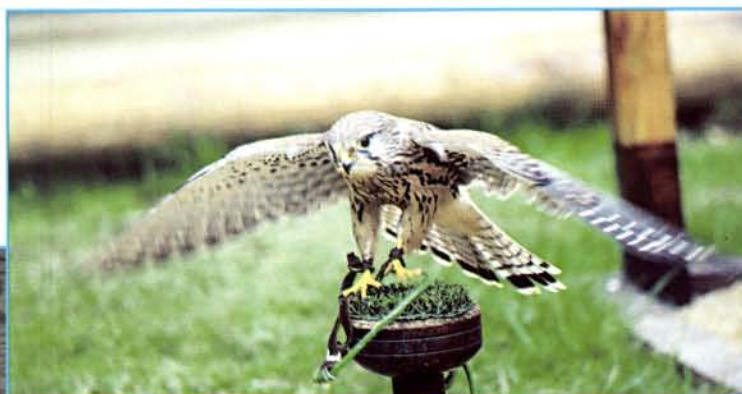
Geoff's other interest is fish, especially

Koi Carp, and he owns the Aquarium which is about 200 yards from the Falconry centre, next to the garden centre.

The Centre is in the grounds of a stately home and this is famous for its trees. Called Batsford Arboretum, it is an attraction on its own. While we were there Geoff took us round some of the grounds. We walked, fairly briskly, for about 30 minutes and covered about half. For anyone who is remotely interested in trees and plants it is wonderful.

Our congratulations go to Geoff and his wife Naomi, for achieving what they set out to do. Creating and maintaining a centre which has the interests of the birds as

its foremost priority, education of the public about those birds, and also continual support for falconry as a whole and many individual falconers who have benefited from Geoff's knowledge and kindness over the last ten years.



Top: Kestrel.

Above Left: Immature Bataleur Eagle.

Above: Geoff flying young Bataleur Eagle.

Above Right: Luger

Left: The weathering lawn.

Right: Sheer delight as this little boy gets to hold a Harris Hawk.



“COPING” With Beaks & Talons

Taking a look at Care and Maintenance



Ferruginous Hawk with overgrown beak in need of coping.



This Harris Hawks beak is curling back on itself and will click when the bird tries to eat, and is in need of coping.



This hybrid has a very severe split in its beak, going nearly all the way back to its cere. This is a job for a professional.



This Prairie falcon has a crack in front of her tomial tooth, this has made the beak very weak.



The same Prairie with its beak taken right back to relieve pressure when the bird is eating.



This Peregrine Falcons beak has flaked quite badly and also needs coping.



Front view of a Saker falcon showing proper length and shape and giving a good view of the tomial tooth.



The same Saker Falcon from the side.



Female juvenile Goshawk showing correct length of beak.



Verreaux Eagle showing how long their beaks are in comparison to the hawks and falcons. This is an ideal length.



Harris Hawk showing correct length and shape of beak. Note the curve in the upper mandible found in hawks. (Festoon)

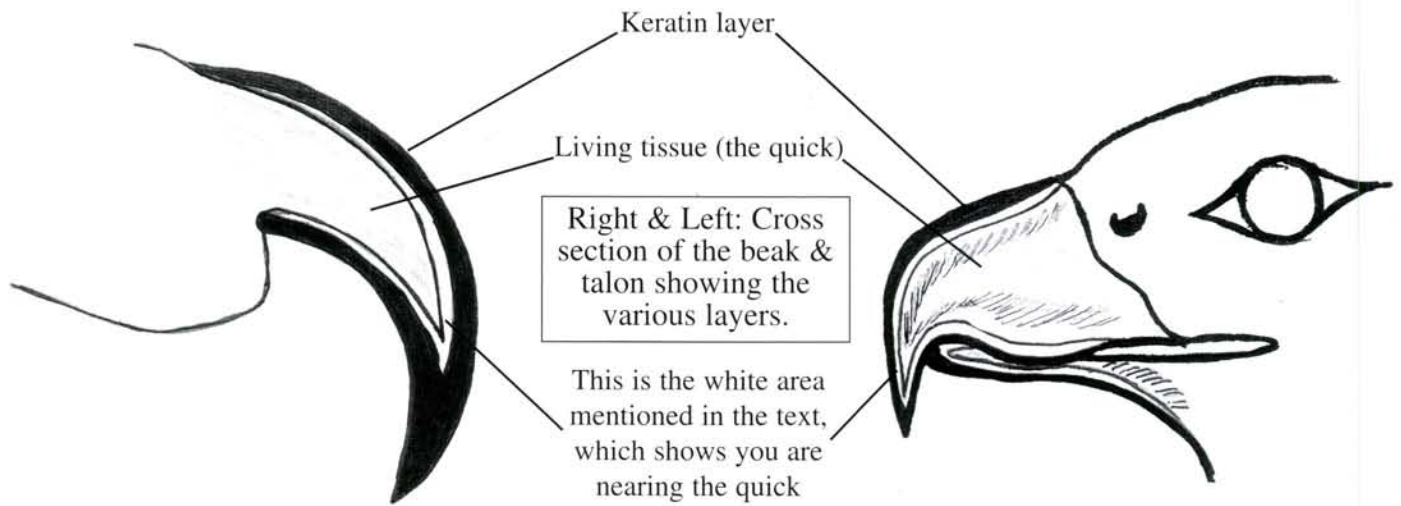


Female Buzzard showing beak which is just slightly too long. If coped now it will require minimal attention.

On my travels I am constantly coming across birds with beaks and talons that are overgrown. Some are so bad that the bird has to physically force its beak open and it clicks when closing. These birds talons have also been too long.

Beaks grow a lot quicker than talons and should be coped approximately twice a year. Sometimes more. Young birds should not need to be coped for the first year. A good time to do this is when the bird goes up for the moult, and when it is taken up from the moult when all its new equipment is being put on.

I hope the following information will help you to cope your own bird, or at least know what to look for before taking it to somebody for help.



COPING BEAKS

Hawks. (Shortwings & Broadwings)

First you will need an assistant to cast and hold the bird, using a silk scarf or a very soft towel. Placing her chest on a cushion on a table or work top.

Top mandible:

Holding the beak closed with your thumb and finger, use dog toe-nail clippers, that cut in a circular motion, to help stop splitting, remove no more than 1mm at a time, checking after every cut to see if you are nearing the quick. You will know this when a white dot appears in the middle of the beak. Do not go any further, even if you have not taken it back enough. You will have to wait for the quick to recede before any more can be removed. (At least six weeks.) File the tip you have just cut with a flat file,

You can also use the flat file to put the point back by filing downwards, toward the tip, either side of the beak.

If the top mandible has got an inward curve, then you can file the inside, but be careful not to remove too much.

Bottom mandible:

A gloved finger for the bird to bite on is a good way of working on this. There is not much you can do with the bottom mandible, because only the end few millimetres are solid. Never use clippers, but the tip can be filed. This can be done by running the file straight across the end, from the outside edges, toward the middle, this will stop splitting of the sides, (only in severe cases will the top or side of the bottom mandible have to be touched). Great care must be taken here because the beak is very soft. Check by closing the beak completely, that the bottom mandible can move freely and does not touch the top mandible.



Above: Very overgrown Hawk beak showing how the beak is starting to curl backwards. This will catch on the bottom mandible when the bird tries to open and close its mouth.



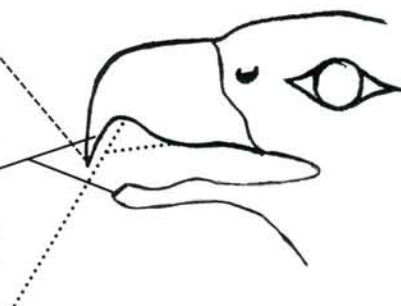
Above: This picture is of a hawk's beak correctly coped. To help maintain the hawk's beak after coping it is advisable to give them plenty of tiring (Rabbit heads, legs, etc). The bone helps to keep the length down and also helps to finely tune your coping.

Hawk with open beak showing where to cope.

Clippers; these can be used to remove the tip, but must be used very carefully, removing no more than 1mm at a time.

Flat file; This is used on the sides to bring a point back to the upper mandible and along the tip of the lower mandible

Round file; to be used on the inner curve and festoon of the upper mandible.



Falcons:

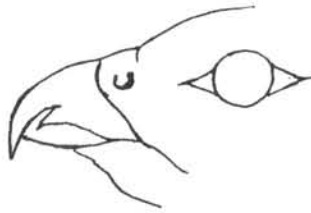
The Falcons beaks are much shorter, rounded and stronger in comparison to a hawk of the same weight and they have a tooth, this is for breaking the necks of their prey. When coping a falcons' beak the tomial tooth will have to taken back first using a round file, then the tip can be reduced and filed as with the hawks

The bottom mandible of Falcons is very short and there is not much room for a gloved finger to hold the beak open, so use something round and smooth. They should be filed as with the hawks, noting that there is a step on the top at the front of the bottom mandible.

Diet:

One of the main reasons for cracking, splitting and flaking is a lack of calcium in the birds diet. Day old chicks lack enough calcium for a bird to maintain its calcium levels. For this reason the diet should consist of 'whole' foods; animals which have fully developed skeletons.

This includes rat, grown on chickens, quail, rabbit, pigeon, pheasant, mice etc.

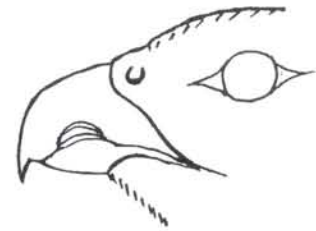


Above: Falcons beak showing split just in front of the tomial tooth. If left this will become packed with food which will force the split back further, eventually right back to the cere, and may cause infection.

You will have to file back to the beginning of the crack, without weakening or thinning the beak too much. The tip will have to be taken back quite severely to reduce pressure on the weak point. If the crack is bad, this will have to be done over a period of months, keeping the beak short all the time.



Above: This picture shows a falcons beak very badly over grown, the tooth has overshot the bottom mandible and the tip is starting to curl back and will meet with the lower mandible when the beak is opened.



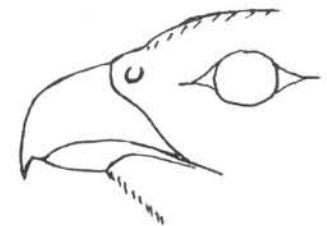
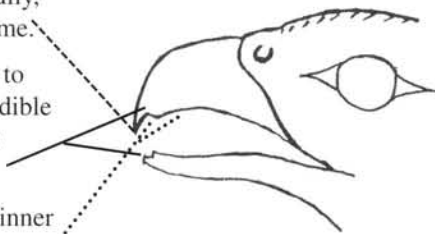
Above: The beak usually flakes on the lower edge of the upper mandible anywhere between the cere and the tip. If flaking is mild no maintenance is necessary, but it must be carefully observed for signs of worsening, at which point it can be smoothed with fine emery paper.

Falcon with open beak showing where to cope.

Clippers; these can be used to remove the tip, but must be used very carefully, removing no more than 1mm at a time.

Flat file; This is used on the sides to bring a point back to the upper mandible and along the tip and the step of the lower mandible.

Round file; to be used on the inner curves of the tooth of the upper mandible.

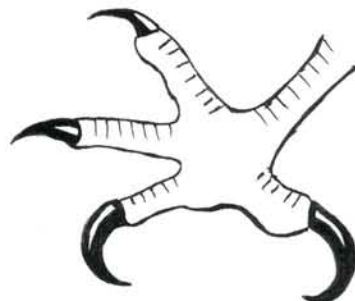
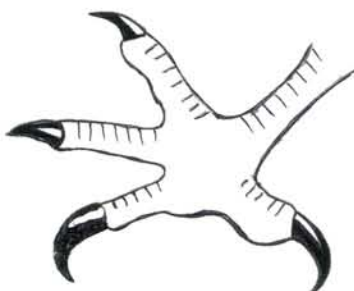


Above: Falcons beak showing correct length and tomial tooth position. To help minimise the necessity for coping tirings can be given, as for the hawks.

TRIMMING TALONS - Hawks & Falcons

Below: Foot showing correct talon length.

Right: Foot showing overgrown talons, in need of trimming.



Clippers can be used to remove the tip of the talon, no more than 1mm at a time, checking for the white core each time. A rule of thumb is never to take more than 3mm at any one time. Then file back to a point.

TALONS

Talons should very rarely have to be touched because they receive a lot of wear from bating and perching. If talons do have to be coped you can remove the tip, but remember they also have a quick, like the beak. Then you can file them to a point. Again care must be taken to always file towards the end of the talon, to reduce splitting which could cause infection. If the talons are considerably overgrown, then this procedure can be repeated two or three times over the next few months.

BRITTANY THE EURO GUNDOG

PART 3

Anne R D Massie

MIMgt JD

Basic Obedience

I have indicated in previous articles the speed and agility of this breed - it can be spectacular, and for anyone accustomed to spaniels or retrievers it can be a culture shock to own a Britbag! It may be an advantage to be a fitness freak! If your Brittany decides to go, it goes - and fast! However, they have redeeming features and are quite honestly a joy to own. They have a charisma all of their own.

Brittany's love people and love to please their owner. They are charmers, and will win over even the staunchest of Spaniel or Retriever man as converts. The Brit, however, needs to know who is boss in the partnership early on in life, but he also needs to think it was all his own idea! Basically, however, a young pup can be taken advantage of! When you take him away from the only home he has ever known, and from his Mummy and his brothers and sisters, he is totally dependent on you for everything in his life. Use this fact to your own advantage. When you feed him call him to you by name every time with a happy tone to your voice. Before you put the bowl down, bend down to him and tell him to sit once, then gently push his bottom to the floor. This can gradually be extended to include the word 'stay'. If basic obedience is instilled at this early age you should have few problems training your Britbag. The most important thing to remember is that Brittany's more than most breeds have a relatively short memory gap - all my own dogs' memory gaps have been estimated by my own family at two seconds! (I rather think they are being derogatory to my training abilities, though!) You may need to spend considerable effort in re-enforcing commands. Always be sure that you are being consistent - use one syllable words, and always use the same word for a command. The best advice I can offer is to keep calm in all situations - the

Brittany responds well to a cool situation, but a raised or panicking voice can exacerbate a Brit's excitement. There can be few finer sights than a Bevy of Brittany's hurtling across a 10 acre field at the speed of light having heard Mum calling 'Teatime'. This is another good point of the breed. With a few exceptions, they are generally what breeders term 'good doers' - they love their food. But beware, if they do not believe they have had enough from you, they are quite prepared to

**"The Brittany
an active breed for active
owners!"**

help themselves at full gallop from the nearest cow pizza or sheep pooh berries, not even stopping to sniff these, since the aroma would have been checked out and the item located from a hundred yards away!

This leads me on to one of the most useful attributes of the Brittany - its scenting ability. It has been known for a Brit to go on point hundreds of yards away from the quarry! This could be daunting if you had to trek that distance over rough heather moors and peat bogs to get close enough to shoot or send your bird skyward! No doubt there are some of you whose birds would not have a problem with this distance. However, in general, game is pointed closer to hand, perhaps up to about one hundred yards, and the dog can be encouraged to feather in and get you closer, instead of rushing in to flush the prey. They are also quite staunch pointers and have been known to hold a point for a number of minutes - one report I have heard is twenty minutes, but I cannot corroborate this, mine will normally hold long enough to walk right up to their side. They will hunt fearlessly in almost any cover, although it has to be said that due to the height of the Brittany (about 18/19 inches at the shoulder) some cover would disguise the dog if it were on point. As I said in previous article, a video I have seen shows the French working their dogs with cowbells attached to their collars - when the bell stops ringing the dog is on point. The only thing you then have to do is flight your bird of prey, wait for it to be at the height of its rise, send the dog in to

flush and - hey presto, up gets the prey, and down comes your hawk in a glorious stoop!

We have covered hunting and pointing in this last of my three articles, and the last of the trilogy, namely retrieving, is perhaps not of such importance to readers of this magazine. However, there are falconers among you, I am sure, who will wish to also use your dog for shooting. When the breed first came into the UK rumours abounded that it was not a good retriever. I rather think this may have been an attempt to discredit the breed for I personally have yet to meet a Brittany puppy who will not rush to pick up a soft ball or a skein of wool when it rolls away! This is again where an intelligent owner makes use of natural traits. You cannot force retrieve a Brittany - they just go off retrieving if you try it. Far better to wait, only allow retrieving occasionally to keep interest high, and treat it as a game. The Brittany loves fun, it loves games, it will play all day. That's what hunting is about most of the time. The tail wags constantly. When the tail stops the dog is seriously thinking of its stomach and points at its prey.

Although the Brittany is primarily a gundog in most countries (and there are Brittany's in all the third world countries), it is frequently progressing to other activities.

Some Brittany Activities - not a comprehensive list!

Someone, somewhere, is bound to come up with another one!

Competition Obedience

At least one committee member of the Brittany Club of Great Britain is involved in Competition Obedience up to Championship level. Although the Brit's 'heelwork' is perhaps not executed quite so close to the legs of its handler as a Collies might, it is still a force to be reckoned with! The 'recall' is instantaneous, but be sure you have a firm stance or you could be knocked sideways! The 'stay', as I explained earlier, can be instilled into the puppy from early times, and is just an extension of this at competition level. The 'send-away' is perhaps out of character for the Brit since it really wants to be with you all the time, but will still be successful, if tackled with empathy. this command is obviously akin to the 'go back' in gundog work. 'Scentwork' is naturally

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easy for the Brittany. All in all, this breed is up and coming in Obedience, so watch your screens for its appearance at Crufts in the near future.

Roughshooting

This is indeed the true roughshooter's dog. The Brittany stands just below knee height has little feathering for dirt and mud to accumulate, can be trained to range far or wide according to terrain being worked. A Club member regularly enjoys wildfowling in the Wash with 'Boy', his imported black and white dog, who has sired many show winners and excellent working dogs.

Field Trialling and Working Tests.

These are specialised forms of gundog work, where the dogs are assessed by a judge on various aspects of their required disciplines. A Trial is a good replica of a shooting day with the game being shot. A Test is organised by disciplines and canvas dummies are retrieved instead of game. The disciplines assessed are Hunting in differing types of undergrowth, full cover of the ground, scenting ability, intelligent use of wind, firm and confident pointing, flushing on command without 'stickiness' or 'running-in', steadiness to flush and to shot, and finally efficient and confident retrieve of shot game. There are about ten Brittanys being regularly Field Trialled at present, and two Champions have been made up in the field between 1982 and 1997. A few more are attempting Working Tests with success.

Competition Agility

The Committee also sports an Agility enthusiast, and she already has prizes with

her two Brittanys, Kizzie and Inca. Kizzie has another claim to fame in that she was the first Reserve Challenge Certificate winner in bitches - this was at Crufts Show this year. A truly dual purpose Brittany is Kizzie - my own kennel motto is 'good-looking AND intelligent'. I think this equally applies to

Kizzie.

There are numerous Agility Clubs throughout the country and anyone wishing to take up this hobby is well advised to join one of these. Details are available from Mrs Wilce. Once again the handler requires a degree of fitness to run the course to keep up with the Brit! These dogs are fast, agile and fearless. The fences are no problem to a breed with coiled springs in-built in its back legs! The poles are woven through with natural elegance. The tunnels are not a hazard to a gundog breed committed to hunting in dense cover. It has been stated that there is only one way to tire (tyre) a Brittany!

Yet another sport conquered by Brittanys!

Showing

I know that many of you out there look down on people who show their dogs - it seems to be imperative for those who are working to give voice to their derision, but it is a fact that this is a sport and a discipline in which the Brittany is having success. It is also a fact that the dogs have to be trained to show to best advantage and this is just as difficult to do as any other form of training. It is also a fact that if a dog is made right it will look right, and it will also work right. No-one can argue with that. If a dog does not have the correct construction for working it will tire easily, it will not have stamina. If it has too much coat,

it may become snagged in thorns or fences, too little and it may not be able to withstand the same thorns and fences, nor cold water. If its nostrils are not correctly shaped, for instance, its scenting ability may be impaired. If it does not have the correct shape of muzzle or its flews are too heavy it may be dry mouthed and feathers are likely to stick to its lips. This in turn might make the dog reluctant to retrieve. If its skull is too narrow, there may not be enough brain space for intelligent work. There are, of course, finer points of the breed which only specialists might take into consideration when judging at shows, and some of these might be aesthetic rather than practical points, perhaps not having effect on the working ability of the dog. However, showing was originally started as a shop window for breeder to prove that their stock was better than others, and in the early stages of the sport mainly involved terrier and working dog breeders. The two sports, working and showing, should always go paw-in-paw where the Brittany is concerned.

Finally, I would like to thank my readers for progressing this far to the end of my three articles. My aim was to inform and entertain those of you who might be interested in reading about my beloved breed, to encourage those of you who are already converts, and to instil enthusiasm for a wonderful breed in the remainder of readers. I hope I have succeeded and that readers have enjoyed the accompanying photographs. I will be happy to discuss the Brittany with anyone interested, at shows, working events or on the telephone.



FALCONERS FAIR COMPETITION WINNERS

We are pleased to announce that the winners of this years Falconers Fair Competition, each winning a **FREE TICKET**, donated by the organiser Ron Morris are:

Mr W Trower, Chippenham, Wilts.

C. Stancer, Hull, E Yorks.

Mr R Leach, Bath, Somerset.

P Hague, Sheffield.

Mrs J Croxford,

D Nelder, Mid Glam

Mr K Perkin, Leamington Spa

Mr P Clarkson, Chattenden, Kent.

Mr L Whitely, Port Talbot, W Glam.

C Henderson, Ballater, Aberdeen.

We would like to congratulate all the winners and we look forward to seeing them at the Fair.

Don't forget that this years Fair is at Offchurch Park, Nr Leamington Spa. 24th & 25th May.

First for National Birds of Prey Centre

I have just received an email from Jemima Parry-Jones, saying that they have bred their first ever Golden Eagle. The mother is Sable and she was AI'd at the Centre by Alan Griffin.

She is a most beautiful bird and is a first time mother at the grand old age of 31. Congratulations to all at the Centre.

HAWK TALK

JOHN MATCHAM

As I write this article, Adam my apprentice and friend, is winging his way here to watch patiently as the first of this years Red Tail chicks attempts to break free from its shell. Its brother or sister is already tapping away at the little house that has protected it for the last thirty days or so, while the miracle of life took place. Hidden away from the outside world inside a hard shell their parents have carefully turned them and arranged a warm and neat bed, merely hoping that their efforts would be rewarded. From the moment the sun spent enough hours in the sky for them to believe the time had come to reproduce, the gamble that is life had begun.

Of course mum is no longer sitting on them, she is taking care of a glass egg or two, while Madam Brinsea Octagon, does her job in my incubator room. After such a poetic entrance, a song and dance, a gift of food and a lot of coming and going with twigs and moss. Man interferes, in the hope that he can compensate for some of the problems they are likely to encounter along the way, i.e., bacteria, noise, impatient humans and anything else you can think of that disturbs breeding birds. Most of them caused by man in the first place.

Adam arrives to hold his first hatching egg and listen to the tiny creature inside, tip tapping away at the walls it so impatiently now wishes to escape. I watch the look on his face and see the child that exists in every grown man peek out from behind his smile. So many times this year as I have watched Adam grow in his knowledge of the birds and in him I have seen myself as a young boy in the Cotswold hills of Blockley, calling out to the wild birds and enjoying their company in preference to that of man. I look back and see how things have changed, it only seems like yesterday when I walked past the game keepers gibbet and saw several sparrow hawks just swinging in the breeze along with a host of other creatures considered to be pests.

A pest in those days was anything that moved on some farms, unless it was worth money. A better description was anything that caused harm to stock or crops. Then again I was lucky the gibbet was only seen on the lower farms in the valley owned by a rich townie and industrial farmer. He had land all over the world and wanted more and more. They held chemical tests on his farms, to see how fast they could grow the crops. Now and then the fish would start to die in the lakes and we would be chased off the estate. But as I say I was lucky, the gamekeeper on the Batsford estate allowed me to hunt on four hundred and fifty acres and the only other was the village vicar, he was allowed to hunt for a rabbit at Easter. It was my patch and still is to this day. John Jones was the keeper and he's still at it now. He always used to tell not to shoot the pheasants and not to shoot this and that, he

did go on with his sermon, and then I never saw him again in all these years while I was out hunting with my birds or with the dogs or the gun. I learned not to kill for fun but to kill for food and nothing should ever go to waste. I learned to stalk the animals I hunted, by failing nine times out of ten and respecting the quarry I sought. In this way although I didn't know at the time, I was also a gamekeeper, a keeper of the countryside animals. Learning how to decide who should live or die, in this world controlled by man. By killing the weak, the slow and the sick, I helped the fit, the fast and the healthy to feed their families and repeat the cycle of life.

Today the two methods of farming have come together and found a strange sort of balance. Each realising that one method needs the other to survive in the modern man made world. Equally the fauna and flora of the countryside that has survived has to a degree begun to adapt to modern farming methods. As man also learns from his mistakes, some of them often too late, we also adapt to protect the countryside, politically and financially. Realising that we too can not survive without the help of Mother Nature.

And so on March the 1st 1998 The Lord, The Laird, The Village Fool, Horse Trainer, Ferreter, Fisherman, Falconer, Hunt Master and a Quarter of a Million others or more, marched shoulder to shoulder through the streets of London.

From behind the faces of hardened country men I saw frightened little boys, some had never left their villages in their entire lives until then. Others were as at home in the streets of Piccadilly as they are on their estates. Yet they marched together, not all of them for the same reasons, some even argued as they marched as to what should be done and why, all extremes were explored, and still they marched on to the end in Hyde Park, hoping to be heard by the powers that be. Never before had London been marched upon in this way, without violence just stern concerned faces looking forward to the end. The only complaint I heard was "This black stuff ain't half hard on yer feet".

Adam and I as usual carried mobile phones, some of our friends who couldn't make the trip were calling to offer support and keep up with any eventualities. Someone must have asked "What's it like", "I don't know" he replied. "I've never stood with a quarter of a

million people for the same reason before. I doubt I will ever get the opportunity again in my lifetime. That makes it very difficult to describe, there's not a lot to compare it to".

You see the thing is, a quarter of a million people can not entirely agree on anything much, but somewhere in the confusion, a balance is inadvertently found that keeps all mother natures creatures going on for another year or two. The keepers of the countryside had all come to town and in their diversity had demonstrated how good they are at doing their jobs.

Walking down Piccadilly towards Hyde Park, for a brief moment I could smell fresh clean country air, laced with the scent of spring. A moment later I bumped into Lyn and David our editors and begged a camera. Not only had the air been cleaned by the presence of this throng, but the streets of London were also cleaner. The Keepers were finding a balance even in the city. For the first time in history London bins were full and the streets around them were tidy.

As a scientist who has spent a lifetime believing he stood more or less alone save a few, I thank you for allowing me to stand with a quarter of a million or more for the same reasons. Time is running out for the experiments and we must begin to act. Our old ways may appear to some as ineffective, missing our quarry nine times out of ten as we do. If only for this reason our countryside can survive through the extra time granted us while we chase and fail to catch the Mad March Hare. Humane chemicals and mans other instant inventions allow no time at all, are entirely indiscriminate and often backfire.

In an incubator just a few feet away a tiny life begins, it took a lot of valuable pheasants and the need to make money to create the incubator that gives it life. Twenty years ago to hatch half of our eggs was an achievement, today we hatch them all. Even I can't argue with that.

Wild Britain thanks you all for marching on March the 1st Countryside Alliance.

Till next time a very humbled John



THE SWINGING 60's

David Glynn-Fox

Most of us old-timers remember the swinging sixties for things like the Beatles, Rolling Stones and mini-skirts, although no necessarily in that order. But for falconers this was also the time when the importation of foreign raptors into the UK reached its zenith and I was one of those fortunate to play a small part on this front. Although these days are long gone and the issue is purely academic, the purpose of this article is primarily for interests sake, for most of the following species can no longer be imported legally, or certainly in nothing like the volume of those glorious years. In these current times of great conservation awareness, the importing of wild species is now heavily frowned upon, and often with good cause. Many imported birds and animals were found to be dead on arrival, emaciated, sick or physically damaged in some way. Pointless overcrowding or smuggling of rare species accounted for many of these problems. Unscrupulous dealers and trappers, trying to save on freightage and packing costs were largely responsible for death by overcrowding, which to me at least, seemed to defeat the objective. These of course were the cases which hit the national headlines and in due course were ultimately responsible for the instigation of the 1970 Import Restriction Act. Although none of these cases can ever be condoned, by far the majority of imports were highly successful and apart from a few birds with natural maladies, which I shall go into later, most arrived in good feather and in a healthy condition.

Incidentally, only a very small proportion of hawks trapped in foreign climes were caught specifically for the falconry market, which was then comparatively small, indeed most were, and still are collected as foodstuffs for the local populace. I have a friend, Mr Utomo Lie of Jakarta, Indonesia, who informs me that now, as then in the 1960's, hawks, eagles and falcons are trapped alive and offered for sale in his local market place and bazaars for culinary purposes. The Chinese believe apparently that the consumption of an eagle for example, will pass on to the customer the eagles' own long life-span. These superstitions die hard and are prevalent in many third world countries. To a starving population, meat is meat and family needs come before conservation. As depressing as it sounds, we in the comparatively rich western world would do no less given the same circumstances. When I last spoke to Utomo on the telephone from Jakarta, he informed me that at that very moment in his local market were a number of owls, falcons and several Changeable Hawk Eagles *Spizaetus cirrhatus* and Chestnut Bellied Hawk Eagles *Hieraetus kienerii*. The rare Java Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus bertelsi* found only in Java, and in many ways similar to the fabulous South American Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus ornatus*, has apparently been exhibited in this market place. One of our pet

phrases of the 60's when lifting a newly arrived raptor from its crate was "Well, that's another one saved from the cooking pot," and for that reason alone, I believed that our importation efforts were well justified. One should also remember that even in the UK the conservation message, which we all now fully endorse, was then still very much in its infancy. We had barely woken up to the pesticide crash and raptors on shooting estates were shown little mercy. Prosecutions, when successful, scarcely reflected the severity of the issue and fines were accordingly puny. Licences for British taken raptors were few and far between and whether true or false, it was widely believed that such licences were granted on a who you knew basis rather than on what you knew. Captive breeding was practically unheard of and in fact many leading falconers of the day did not really believe that birds of prey could be bred in captivity and the mere thought of placing a hawk in an aviary would send paroxysms of wrath through their ranks. The only positive way to obtain a raptor for falconry purposes was to either import it oneself or get someone else to

Berkut Golden Eagles arrived at Heathrow in a box and together with freight charges, they worked out at about thirty pounds each.

do it for you.

So this was the basic back ground upon which birds of prey were imported. In the 60's licenses were not necessary, all that was required was a reliable source and off went the international money order and one merely sat back to await the telegram stating the impending arrival of one's consignment together with the details of the designated airport. Sources of supply were about as varied as the raptors themselves and some offered an amazing variety of livestock and other items. For example, in those days V/O Prodintorg was the sole import/export company in Russia and their trade list was nothing short of staggering. It seemed that everything coming in and going out of Russia was handled by this obviously government controlled body, everything that is from a can of baked beans to an Indian Elephant. Their livestock list was very impressive and the raptors included were little short of spectacular. One could purchase Gyr Falcons *Falco rusticolus*, Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, Berkut Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*, Stellers Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus pelagicus*, White Tailed Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*, right down to the more usual Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* and Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*. Apart from receiving their fabulous list I only once had indirect dealing with this company and

that was in connection with two female Berkut Golden Eagles. They arrived at Heathrow in a box as large as the average sideboard and together with freight charges, they worked out at about thirty pounds each. A far cry from todays prices! One of these birds was Sable, who can be seen at The National Birds of Prey Centre at Newent in Glos. At thirty one years old, she was artificially inseminated this year by Alan Griffin at Jemima Parry-Jones' request. I look forward to a positive result. It would be nice. Most importers dealt with dealers and trappers originating in India, Pakistan, Africa and Malaysia, particularly Thailand. Taking India and Pakistan first, there were several professional hawk trappers operating in these parts and some I believe still are today, although now primarily for the Arab market. Often, we falconers in the UK would receive birds that the Arabs had rejected, usually male Sakers and tiercel Peregrines and Shahins. Occasionally a female or two of the latter species would arrive and close inspection would sometimes reveal tiny perforations in the eyelids, indicating that the birds had been seeled. Sometimes this was done by the hawk trappers themselves, although there was evidence that at least some of these seeled birds had been in the hands of Arabs who perhaps found them below par for their requirements and thus passed them on to us. Most such birds however turned out to become reasonable game or rook hawks in the UK. The arrival of seeled falcons into the UK occasionally caused a furore at air port cargo terminals, which is perfectly understandable. Even British falconers, let alone the British public, consider this practice somewhat barbaric and never practice it, although it has to be said it is nothing like as cruel as it sounds. What we have to consider here is that life itself in Asia and the middle East appears to be somewhat differently perceived than in the west, as indeed it seems to be in many parts of the world as far as the human animal is concerned and the things which we believe to be cruel are matters of little or no concern to other peoples of the world. Whatever our views on the subject, I am sure that the Arabs will continue to seel the eyes of their falcons as long as they deem it necessary to do so, whatever we pompous Brits think.

The most common species imported from India was undoubtedly the Laggar Falcon Falco jagger. In the 1960's it was one of the most common raptors used in British falconry circles, costing around eight to ten pounds each. Almost everyone connected with falconry had at least tried one and they certainly appeared to be common and easily trapped in and around India and Pakistan. How different is the situation today where rather incongruously they are considered virtually a Red Data species and the few in the hands of British falconers today are almost certainly derived from the stocks imported during this hey-day. The

Arabs view the Laggar in rather a poor light and generally only use it as a barak hawk. That is to say that the bird is usually seeled, fitted with a ball of feathers or fur round its legs and to this ball is added a number of nylon nooses. A wild Saker is spotted and the Laggar, or barak is released. The Saker, thinking that the Laggar has prey in its feet, binds to the Laggar and becomes entangled in the noose ball and is thus captured as both birds try to fly off in opposite directions. I personally flew a number of Laggars during this period and in fact I actually preferred them to the Nigerian Lanners we also imported, about more of which later. Both of these lovely falcons were considered the poor mans Peregrine, which I always thought rather unfair. These so-called desert falcons are designed to occupy a different niche in nature and feed on a range of generally smaller prey items than their more noble cousin, but they will crash into cover and take prey on the ground, to which a Peregrine would seldom lower itself. The main problem with both these falcons is of course the familiar old story of them ending up in the wrong hands and therefore often not given a proper chance at quarry they stood a chance of catching. Provided they are not launched at Red Grouse, Mallard, Carrion Crows or other such large, difficult or fast quarry then some quite serviceable results from using these attractive birds are possible. Desert Hare, Stone Curlew and Houbara Bustard are well outside the scope of these falcons and as these are the main prey items of the Arabs, it is not difficult to see why they favour the much larger female Sakers and Peregrines. I have tried both Laggar and Lanner over windswept moorlands and found that their broad sails were a definite handicap, being inadequate to penetrate the harsh air stream and were constantly blown all over the sky, whereas the Peregrine, with much tighter plumage and a higher aspect wing ratio suffered no such detriment. Let's face it, if such falcons were designed for this type of environment they would probably occur there naturally. Also, a female Lanner or Laggar is considerably lighter in weight and thus hits large quarry less hard, necessitating a hard ground struggle, small wonder

they are soon put off.

The Red Headed Falcon *Falco chiquera*, or Red Headed Merlin as we referred to them, were also commonly imported. This beautiful species is seldom seen by British falconers today, let alone flown by them, but I vividly remember batches of twenty or thirty coming into this country. These are game little falcons in the right hands and the one I trained flew well at starlings. Because of her rapid flight techniques, I always thought of her as a long-winged Sparrowhawk. A female Red Headed Falcon in the 1960's fetched between six and ten pounds. I shudder to think what one would have to pay today.

Many of the Tawny Eagles *Aquila rapax* that came into Britain from India in the 1960's often arrived as make-weights. If a dealer could not fulfil and order of say, twenty Laggar and ten Red Headed Falcons he would often send other species as replacements and these often took the form of Tawny Eagles, Crested Serpent Eagles *Spilornis cheela*, Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, Black Shouldered Kites *Elanus caeruleus* or some other such weird and wonderful raptor. Most of these, although next to useless for falconry purposes, would no doubt prove a delight to raptor enthusiasts today, but in the 60's were a constant source of annoyance. It was no joke having to inform an experienced falconer that his erstwhile long-awaited Black Shahin or Saker Falco cherrug had turned into a Crested Serpent Eagle! Obviously, he didn't want the eagle, not at any price, and unfortunately, neither did anyone else at the time, so moving such birds was often a difficult and time consuming process.



Mountain Hawk Eagle Spizaetus nipalensis. One of the most useful of a number of Hawk Eagle species to be imported from Thailand. This particular bird is in need severe beak coping.

are prone to much variation, as are all forms of Peregrine, most of the ones known to me could scarcely be anything other than Peregrines and I have always been a little surprised at some authorities granting them full species status. Still, I stand to be corrected and perhaps DNA testing will sort out the relationships one way or another. Many falconers of the sixties will remember many of these birds being advertised in the weekly Cage and Aviary Birds with some being passed off as non-existent species. For example that commonly imported Indian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* the same as our bird except perhaps a little paler, was sometimes advertised as the Blue Crowned Malaya Kestrel, referring to the blue grey colour of the head of the male. The Black Kite was advertised as Great Mountain Hawk or Giant Pariah Hawk and so forth. I myself bought a Pallas's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* as a Golden Eagle, showing my ignorance of the time. Knowledge of foreign raptors was nothing if not scant.

One interesting order I was once involved with concerned an offer from a dealer in India. For one hundred pounds he would send us a mixed bag of some thirty four raptors. We had no idea of the species involved until the day they arrived and they turned out to be the following: ten Laggar Falcons, six Red Headed Falcons, three Tawny Eagles, three Crested Serpent Eagles, three Black Kites, four Black Shouldered Kites, three Shikra Hawks, *Accipiter badius*, and two Besra Sparrowhawks *Accipiter virgatus*. By today's standards this order would be worth hundreds if not thousands of pounds and they would all probably be snapped up in a flash. But it took months to find decent homes for them and several were actually given away.

However the suspense as we opened each crate was nothing if not intense. The ten Laggars came first, each housed in an individual hessian covered wicker work compartment. There were both passage and haggard birds but quite apart from haggards being older birds, I always felt saddened when these arrived, primarily because it represented the removal of wild breeding stock and which had thus been removed from the gene pool. Many



Red Headed Falcon Falco chiquera. Occurring in both India and Africa, this game little bird was also known as the Red Headed Merlin. Now rare in falconers hands, it was commonly imported during the sixties.

Sometimes it worked the other way round and the shortfall on a batch of Laggars might be made up of Sakers or Shahins or other forms of Indian Peregrine. Despite the current taxonomy, having seen numerous Black and Red Naped Shahins and also Barbary Falcons, I am of the firm opinion that they are all first and foremost Peregrines, merely forms of this wonderful falcon, although I know there are those who would totally disagree. Although they

times I wrote to trappers asking to select only passage birds or young birds, but all in vain. I suppose to a trapper with a family to feed a hawk is a hawk. Incidentally, I often also wonder what some of these trappers thought we wanted these birds for in the first place, if not to eat. I remember one consignment of Laggars and another of Lanners whose entire primary feathers had been snipped off halfway along their length. Like most falconers, I always keep primary and train feathers for imping purposes, but no way could I produce enough feathers for this lot. Even phoning around falconer friends produced only a few feathers, so most of these birds had to be turned loose in various aviaries until they clean moulted. Luckily, I had a few friends with some spare room in their pens.

Another batch of Shikras and Red Headed Falcons were so severely smothered in bird-lime that they too had to be free moulted. Bird-lime, a type of very sticky glue produced from plants such as holly bark, was often used in India to catch small birds, including the smaller hawks, but unfortunately it gums up every feather that comes into contact with it and then dries hard. It is almost impossible to remove and looks such a mess. Fortunately, these cases were in the minority and most hawk merchants such as the late Mohammad Din and son of Lahore and Dapo John Alabi of Nigeria always sent first class birds. Birds apart, we had to suffer rogue dealers too. I was luckier than some, but a few of my contemporaries lost their hard earned money to these unscrupulous traders and never received their orders. Importing had its risks believe me, and not least from talon marks. All these birds were wild and their natural reaction was to throw themselves onto their backs and present both sets of stabbing talons. Even with one hand gloved, many hawks would rapidly transfer their grip on the glove to the ungloved hand in an unguarded moment, which were all too common place in the confines of a travelling crate. By the time this consignment of thirty four birds aforementioned was jessed, leashed and swivelled, my hands were more than smarting.

Now to Thailand. Most of the species I was personally involved with from this country were Hawk Eagles, although a few Eurasian Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* and a few Crested Goshawks *Accipiter trivirgatus* were received by colleagues. Most of the Hawk Eagles arrived in juvenile or immature plumages and there were no, and I believe still are no monographs available which accurately depict the plumage stages of these fine birds. I had to use Grossman and Hamlets "Birds of Prey of the World", to try and figure out to which species a particular bird belonged. Although nicely drawn, the little monochrome ink sketches were seldom of any real use. The main species were Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nanus*. Blyths Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus alboniger* and the occasional Chestnut Bellied

Hawk Eagle. The Changeable is aptly named for, despite the hassle of correctly identifying immatures, no two adults really resemble one another. A number of melanic specimens of this species were also imported. These belonged to a dimorphic subspecies known to science as *Spizaetus cirrhatous limnaetus*. They were of uniform dark chocolate brown all over and the ones I had, all possessed piercing yel-



Laggar Falcon *Falco jugger*. A once commonly imported species but now rather rare in the hands of British falconers,

low irides, hence my interest when recently visiting the well known and highly acclaimed bird artist Ron David Digby. While at his home, examining his lovely paintings, Ron showed me a set of plates he was working on for a new publication and one of these included the dark morph of the Changeable Hawk Eagle. His melanic form had entirely dark eyes and he expressed amazement when I informed him about the marigold eyes of my birds. Perhaps they form yet another subspecies like the Spotted Eagle Owl *Bubo africanus* where the northern race has dark eyes and the southern race golden eyes. Can anyone throw any light on this? These dark morph hawk eagles were not common, in something like ten years I saw perhaps half a dozen. My own bird, a female, I nicknamed "The Crow" on account of her dark colouration.



Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*. One of a number of small accipiters which were commonly imported. Most made excellent hunting birds.

The larger and more powerful Mountain Hawk Eagle was a spectacular bird with a long floppy crest which it can elevate at will, according to mood. Some Changeable Hawk Eagles also have these crests, causing even more confusion. Of all the Hawk Eagles imported, the Mountain seems to have been the most successful for falconry purposes. If flown from the fist like Goshawks they rarely connect with their quarry. A study of their habitats in the wild was necessary to appreciate that most of these large forest eagles of the genus *Spizaetus*, use the sit and wait technique. Often they perch above a well used animal track in the forest or above a pool, whereupon they parachute down upon their intended and unwary victim. They are certainly capable of a fast turn of speed and are highly manoeuvrable in forest habitats, aided by their rounded wings and long tail, but even so, it is rather unfair to expect them to perform in the open like a Goshawk when their natural hunting methods differ so markedly from the latter.

The relatively small, pale coloured and rather scarce Wallaces Hawk Eagle came over in one's and two's as did the spectacular Blyth's. All the Blyth's that I saw were initially in juvenile or immature plumage and it took some time and accumulated experience before one could really identify a youngster of this, or for that matter, any other Hawk Eagle species. Several in fact came as juvenile Changeable or Mountain Hawk Eagles and it was only as they began to moult into adult plumage that one became aware of what a real treasure this bird is. Basically black with a heavily barred black and white breast with magnificent golden eyes and a long floppy crest. Most of the Blyth's I saw went into breeding units and I never knew personally of anyone attempting to train and fly one, which was rather a shame. It is also a pity that a few cannot be rescued from the aforementioned bazaars and used over here, for I am sure that in the right hands they would make good falconers birds.

The same applies to the markets and bazaars of Hong Kong, where all manner of raptors are still offered for sale, including a diminutive race of the Peregrine together with Imperial Eagles *Aquila heliaca* and Bonelli's Eagles *Hieraetus fasciatus*. My main regret is that in the 1960's I had not developed my current interest in wildlife photography and I constantly lament the missed, never to be repeated opportunities, not only of unusual birds but also of the parasites and suchlike that some of them harboured. Good colour transparencies of some of these would have been virtually unique, but more of this later.

Africa was another source of raptors, with most suppliers being in West African countries and with Nigeria being the primary source. However, one dealer in North Africa regularly sent over beautiful little desert Lanners known as Alphanets. They were so pale in overall coloura-

tion that the late Lorant de Bastyai named his little tiercel "Whitey", and no doubt many of you will remember this lovely little Alphanet for he used to bring it to many game fairs, in fact the pair seemed almost inseparable. The usual sandy coloured crown of the Nigerian Lanners was reduced to pale buff or even white in some of these North African birds. African Goshawks *Accipiter tachiro* and Black Sparrowhawks *Accipiter melanoleucus* were occasionally available and like all accipiters, made excellent hunting birds. Very occasionally, one would receive a few oddments such as Red Breasted Sparrowhawks *Accipiter rufiventris*, Lizard Buzzards *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*, Pale Chanting Goshawks *Melierax Canorus* or Dark Chanting Goshawks *Melierax metabates*, again often as make weights and again difficult to pass on to other falconers. It seemed that most falconers of the 60's preferred the tried and tested species and were loth to experiment and yet I personally found this aspect interesting and exciting. Being an eagle freak however, I never managed to find, until it was too late, a dealer who could supply Verreaux's Eagles *Aquila verreauxi*, Martial Eagles *Polemaetus bellicosus* or my all time favourite, the mighty Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*. I still live in hope of acquiring one of these magnificent birds some day.

Now and again a bird would arrive which was obviously under the weather. It was a waste of time contacting a vet because in the 60's there were none who knew anything about raptors, let alone any who specialised in this field. The celebrated John Cooper was still virtually a student, at Bristol, so over the years I, and others, had to learn to care for these birds ourselves, although we took advantage of every veterinary breakthrough. I once had a Black Shahn which contracted Frounce through catching pigeons. Browsing through the literature revealed that Emtryl could cure this protozoan infection, and it did. I also used it successfully on a female Goshawk with the same problem many years later. But there were some nasties which came in and which were, and still are I believe, difficult if not impossible to cure today. Lanner Falcons in particular suffered from a helminth known as Lungworm *Serratospiculum* sp. Certainly in the 60's this was always fatal, sooner or later, and on post-mortem the worms, often many centimetres in length would be found threaded through and through

the lung tissue and attached to a sucker-like pad, or disc. Chloramphenicol was the only recommended treatment, but the drug was toxic and probably as dangerous to the Lanner as the Lungworm. All one could do was hope for the best, but in my experience an infected bird invariably died. another equally distressing and fatal disease was the fungal agent *Aspergillus fumigatus* or Aspergillosis. An Indian Laggar that I post-mortemed was infected with this obnoxious disease. The entire left lung was a complete mass of black fungal growth of which I have never since seen the like. the right lung appeared normal, but then I did not possess a microscope to examine the smaller bronchial tubes and airsacs. I later learned that I had been risking my own health for apparently, the breathed in spores can infect humans as well as hawks, with dire consequences. The excised lung reminded me of a ripe puff ball except it was black in colour rather than olive brown, but likewise, any movement caused clouds of spores to rise into the atmosphere.

Tapeworms of various species were relatively commonplace and most particularly *Mecostoides* species could be discovered by regular examination of the mites. A small, pinkish mobile blob usually disclosed their presence and were soon eradicated permanently by dosing with a drug called Yomesan. Feather lice were also easily eradicated with Johnson's anti-mite. These are just a few of the ailments carried by wild raptors, although I have my suspicions that certainly some of these infections were passed on by the continual use of undisinfected holding pens used by the trappers and dealers. In such circumstances an otherwise healthy bird could easily become infected. I also know that a sick bird which died prior to shipment, meat is meat as they no doubt say.

So there we are,

the delights and the pitfalls of the 1960's bird importer. I am sure that other importers of the period have even more ghastly, grisly or even more exciting tales to tell, if so, let's hear them. In conclusion, there were always a few falconers who did not approve of importing birds from abroad, although I know for a fact that some of these dissenters actually purchased quite a number of foreign raptors, hypocrites or what? However, whether one was for or against, it has to be said that were it not for these early imported birds, falconry in the UK may well have been very much more difficult, if not impossible for most falconers today, for a large number of these imports were used for the initial captive breeding experiments in this country when the sport was threatened in the late 60's and early 70's, (yes, threats to falconry are not new) by ever more restrictive legislation. This in turn persuaded even more falconers to try their hand at captive breeding and the rest is history.

Although nowadays I am beginning to feel a bit long in the tooth to career over moors, bogs, swamps and fields after my trained hawks, I shall always be grateful I was around in the 60's for the whole era was a learning curve and I saw things that today's newcomers can perhaps only ever dream of. Yes, the 60's were swinging in more ways than one for me.



Wallaces Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nanus*. A smallish and rather scarce Hawk Eagle which came over in small numbers.

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WITHOUT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT

Richard Casemore

I have had my female Harris Hawk, Shadow, for three years now and I think she is just coming into her own.

Up till now she has been better on feather than on fur. She is rather partial to pheasant, which has caused its problems with our local gamekeeper.

My good friend Colin also flies a female Harris, Joy, she is two years older than Shadow. Both hunt well at the same weight 2lb 1oz, and they have been flying in a cast for 2 seasons. We had both decided to take sometime off work to get in some serious hawking. We had got into the middle of the week and hadn't taken any quarry, although we had some very good slips and were fairly content. Both birds were working well together.

We arranged to meet on Colin's land on the Mendips at 8am. There had been a hard frost and the morning was cold and clear. So off we set. Shadow her usual self, screaming her head off, until I cast her off the first into the first tree. Joy right alongside her.

We had walked a good 500 yards and Shadow was still in the same tree. I turned to Colin and said "It looks as if I'm in for a bad day with Shadow", I tried calling her on with chick but to no

avail. Colin said that perhaps we had better go back and with that she took off, flying very high.

So off we set, Joy following on behind, Shadow was flying parallel with a dry-stone wall, leaving us well behind.

Suddenly she closed her wings and dropped like a stone on the blind side of the wall. We heard a terrific noise and a flock of rooks came to investigate. We

didn't really know what had happened.

When we finally arrived on the scene, completely out of breath I must add, we could hardly believe our eyes. Shadow was sitting on the head of a six and a half pound hare, which she had dispatched herself. A good clean kill.

As Gary Cook said in the 1996 Summer issue, "who needs a Goshawk?"



This is a question I have often pondered. I wonder if it is because of the endless lack of money it creates, or perhaps it is the constant lack of interest in anything else except the Hawk or Falcon you are flying. Could it be the never-ending argument it can cause between you and your spouse, and anyone else who happens to encroach on your precious time, or even the thankless task of attempting to find and maintain valuable hunting ground?

Or maybe - just maybe - it is the thrill of having the good fortune to have created for yourself a lifestyle which enables you to share the life of one of nature's most magnificent creatures - the Hunting Bird of Prey. Add to that the spectacular countryside to which the sport can take

WHY WOULD ANYONE BECOME A FALCONER?

Gary Worley

you with friends, all of whom are as enthusiastic about their hawks as you; and only too willing to relate - yet again - that story of 'the best flight she ever had', and "the one that got away - but only just!" over a good whisky at the end of a hard days hunting. Then there is that inescapable mixture of excitement and trepidation when you take the awesome decision at the end of 6 to 8 weeks training, to fly her free for the very first time and the immense relief when she returns obediently to your fist. And how much more intense are those feelings if she is a hawk you have bred yourself. Diligently watching day by day, until the egg hatches safely and now that tiny ball of fluff and feathers is flying free and ready to take you hunting.

You may have spent the last 6 or 8 weeks believing that you have trained her, but at the end of the day it is she who has trained you. She has allowed you to get to know her and to show her your world and how it works, finally she has accepted you and is now ready to show you 'her' world. As a Falconer you will never really 'own' your hawk, you are privileged to be a very small part of a finely balanced team of Hawk, Dog and Falconer and she will tolerate you in her life as long as you play the game

according to 'her' rules, but 'she' is a free spirit and will not tolerate disobedience.

Even as I write I feel a rush of excitement through my body at the thought of witnessing one of nature's finest creatures in action and wonder of this is the true predatory feeling and if she feels the same as she hangs in the air above me or waits patiently on my fist. This is truly a remarkable sport that can grip your emotions and draw you so much to become a part of nature's rich drama and I feel extremely fortunate to be part of such an art. For an art it is, to convince such temperamental creatures that we mean them no harm and that we can become an ally in their quest.

I strongly believe that we are but custodians of this ancient Art of Falconry and we must maintain and preserve its time honoured traditions. It makes no difference if you are flying a Peregrine Falcon at Grouse or a Common Buzzard at rabbits you must practise our sport to the highest standards at all times, with due care and regard for all that is involved in order that we can ensure that Falconry, the quarry and the land we hunt on can be preserved for those who - I hope - will follow in our footsteps in years to come.

FINAL COMMENT

Dear Lyn & David,

I felt I must respond to the letter from Jenny Gray (Winter '97), concerning her disapproval at the response of many falconers/Austringers and just plain old keepers of Birds of Prey to support the fox and deer hunters against a ban on their sport. Ms Gray says in one breath that it is wrong to group all the country sports under one hat whilst later on referring to the group term "blood sports", whatever they are. And even though I personally do not agree with fox or deer hunting, and do not agree that this is the best method for controlling them, this is based on observation and not hard facts, and I feel unable to make a balanced judgment without further investigation, something I would certainly do before I refer to any sport as a "blood sport". Therefore I do, to some degree agree with her when she says we should not group all the sports together, they should be judged on their own merit. However, in this instance I feel that we should all stand firm in our support of all country sports, firstly because the whole ecology of the countryside could suffer if we get it wrong, and secondly because we are in danger of losing the fight for the survival of Falconry unless we do so.

I am an ex full-bore pistol shooter, with nearly 30 years shooting experience behind me, during which time I only shot at pieces of paper, yet I was persecuted and outcast by so-called public opinion into surrendering my guns, even though I had committed no crime.

The ease with which the firearm ban was implemented was because the government was closely supported by the press and TV media who through public ignorance about shooting, based mainly on American violent films and the continual portrayal of guns on TV as methods of killing, were easy to convince that a ban was necessary. However, the ban has not solved the problem and addressed the main issue which was one of an inadequate policing policy. Instead of owning 6 handguns I now own 6 rifles. So what difference has it made apart from costing the taxpayer millions in compensation; the method of control has not been addressed.

The problems with saving the handguns were also compounded by the inability of all the shooting organisations to talk to each other and come up with a common policy, this left the situation wide open for conflict which allowed the newspapers more fuel to destroy our cause. Incidentally, the vast majority of newspaper reports were wholly inaccurate and deliberately biased toward the abolition of guns, and all the TV documentaries which I witnessed featured people in combat jackets firing semi-automatic pistols, a totally inaccurate representation of handgun shooting as a sport. The reason I have laboured on the

handgun debate is to get rid of the complacency that seems to prevail with some sports people, that this will never happen to them. We need to get our heads out of the sand and start to look at ways we can survive.

The fishermen and women are possibly the safest at the moment because they are a large body of people. They are trying to portray their sport on TV as caring and are seen to release their fish back to the wild to grow larger, they also have a role in monitoring rivers for pollution etc, but even they will not be safe. We should all be doing something to promote our sport and as Falconers we are extremely vulnerable. We are a small body of people, the general public know very little about us apart from what they see at shows and falconry centres, which does not portray the hunting side to the full. At numerous events I have been asked if they can feed the owls with biscuits and do they eat the same food as budgerigars. How would many of them react if they knew that I put ferrets into a nice warm, safe rabbit burrow so that they can force out the rabbits for my Harris Hawk to chase. She very rarely catches them but let's face it, very few foxes are caught by hunts. And what support will we get from the RSPCA, the RSPB and other animal welfare organisations.

On a recent TV programme the anti-hunt lobby and RSPCA made it quite clear that they are against hunting where "animals are hunted for sport or pleasure", I have tried to tell my Harris that she is not to hunt, I have even shown her the newspaper articles but to no avail. So what do I do, keep her caged for the rest of her life?

At the end of the day it will depend on who the newspapers and the TV decide to support. The clever thing is that there will be a pattern to the destruction, starting with fox and deer hunting which has a class element (the nobs) attached to it, then game shooting, that shouldn't be too difficult because guns are involved, then falconry, which Joe public and many farmers actually know little about. The pattern will run through all the areas where it is easy for the press and TV to manipulate the public, through their lack of knowledge and their love of anything furry. We will finally end up with fishing, which is the hardest nut to crack, but by then the case against them will be so great that the job will be easy. I truly believe that we in this country are a nation of pet owners and not animal lovers, because to be an animal lover you have to consider all elements of the animal and bird kingdom and the welfare of them all to safeguard the ecology of the countryside.

I liken our responsibility over animals to that of the Wild West, we are the cowboys and the animals are the Indians, the only difference being that they do not shoot back. We are growing and spreading out continuously, taking over the animals kingdom. What do we do, force

large amounts of animals into smaller and smaller reservations, or do we manage them better and look at ways of controlling the numbers so that we can all live in close harmony.

So let's all try and work together for a common policy on saving "country sports". Yes, there will be some with which we disagree, whether based on a great deal of knowledge or just via anti-propaganda, but let's not force these sports underground as has happened with dog-fighting and cock-fighting and other quite cruel sports, (my opinion only). We must work together with each organisation to support the others, and not bicker among ourselves, it's no good saying that it will not happen to us, because it will. The .22 calibre competition pistol shooters said it would not happen to them because it is a Commonwealth sport, how wrong they were. Let's start looking at the countryside as animal lovers and see how we can manage the animal and bird population and the ecology of the countryside, because if we don't the farmers will do it themselves and I would rather re-cycle rabbits as food for my birds, ferrets and myself than think of them being gassed and left to rot in their burrows by the farmers.

Colin Taylor
Newport Pagnell
Bucks

STANDING FIRM

Dear Lyn,

Having read the frequently vituperative responses to my letter in the Winter 97 issue of the magazine, in which I said it should not be assumed that all raptor keepers support hunting with dogs, I can only thank the forbearance of the Editors that I was allowed to express my unacceptable views in the first place.

Of course, events have moved on a great deal since then, with the march to London in March and the failure of the Foster Bill to outlaw fox hunting et alia, despite an absolutely overwhelming Commons vote in its favour. The arguments for and against seem to be getting increasingly vitriolic, and for this reason I don't particularly want to get into a slanging match with those who have written to rebuke me for my stance. However, I would like to say that the one thing I found truly tasteless was John Callaghan quoting Ann Frank at me. As someone who has spent the last two years researching into wartime RAF, I am extremely aware of the true nature of the Nazis and what had to be done to combat them. To equate 'the antis' with Nazis is just grotesque. It is also a metaphor singularly inappropriate since it was the Nazis prerogative to enjoy murdering and torturing for fun, a charge far more easily levelled at the supporters of blood sports than those who seek to regulate the recreational

killing of intelligent and complex mammals.

I reiterate that I think falconers allying themselves closely with fox and deer hunters, and indulging in such vicious and irrational insults, will prove a very costly mistake in the long run.

Yours sincerely
Jenny Gray

WHAT NEXT

Dear David & Lyn,

My attention was recently drawn to an article in the Spring edition of *The Falconers Magazine* concerning weight training for hawks. When I was told about this article I originally believed that my friends and colleagues were just trying to play a joke on me. But when I read through the magazine I was, to say the least, horrified. I mean what's next, steroids perhaps, hypnotics, aromatherapy, even yoga for birds?

My horror just turned to sadness as I read through the contents, sadness in that I see "weight training" for hawks as just another attempt at a short cut to achieve the end result. But the most important factor about the whole thing is the impact that it could have on many young and inexperienced falconers who may read the article and conclude That's how you get your hawk to catch quarry", or "I wonder if my bird can lift more than his". I believe in this respect the article is irresponsible.

In addition to this I would like to add that a super fit bird does not necessarily produce a good hunting bird. There is no substitute for experience in the field. The more opportunity that a bird has to pursue quarry the more experience it will gain and therefore its fitness levels increase. If you are unable to give time to you hawk to train and fly it properly then you cannot expect outstanding results and you should not look for short cuts to achieve them.

We are led to believe that hunting success is paramount. I urge you all never to judge yourself or another on numbers killed. Look at the style, behaviour, responsiveness of the bird and then the attitude and enjoyment of the keeper. I once was very glad to know a falconer who did not manage to enter his redtail until his third season and I know he loved every minute trying. Lack of success does not always promote lack of interest. Falconry has been around for thousands of years, very little has changed to the methods we used to use to train our hawks. Traditional ways will in the long run look after our sport, but will we look after the traditional ways.

Lastly on a technical note, what happens to the weights when the bird lands. She slows down, but weights don't have their own braking system. Surely any

impact of the weights hitting the hawk could be extremely dangerous, especially at the sort of speeds Goshawks can sprint up to.

As falconers we should all have a solemn contract of mutual loyalty, care and consideration and good handling practise when it comes to our hawks. I urge people who have new ideas to consider carefully before they openly promote them, please consider its possible affect on our sport and the people involved within it.

Yours sincerely
Mark Parker.

Finding an English Bred Falcon

The following story happened to me recently and I would like this to be a warning to other buyers and a note of attention to other sellers.

Where do you find the bird you want to fly? You either ask around or look in different magazines until you find what you are looking for.

For quite some time now I've been looking for a male Gyr x Peregrine hybrid. (Note that in Belgium it's illegal to have pure Peregrine or pure Gyrfalcon!) I would love to fly a bird that has a little more power and being half Peregrine at the same time.

After inquiring with all the reputable breeders I know, there was no bird available. So I looked in the *Cage and Aviary Birds* and at last found one. I phoned the falconer and found out he lived in the Yorkshire area (which is quite some distance) and that the bird wasn't sold yet.

I told him what I was looking for and that I needed the paperwork with the bird. He would contact his DOE inspector and I could call again the next day.

So I did; there was no problem, he would get the paperwork soon and I could come over and get the bird. "Thank you Jim, and I'll see you in two weeks time."

I went to a travel agency to book my trip to Hull (not cheap! £110) and ordered English £'s to pay for the bird. I would phone Jim one day before departure but there wouldn't be any problem. I sent a deposit to secure this bird and then I had to wait to see "her".

I was going to leave on Friday and on Wednesday I got a letter from Jim. I thought it was a description of how to find him, but no way.

He wrote me that he didn't want to sell me his bird. He send my deposit-cheque back and that was it...

I then tried to cancel my ferry trip but it was too late! (till 2 days prior to departure) and had to rechange the ordered £'s at the bank. At the end of Thursday I had lost almost £140!!, and I needn't say I didn't take a trip to England the following day!!!

Needless to say that I didn't feel alright

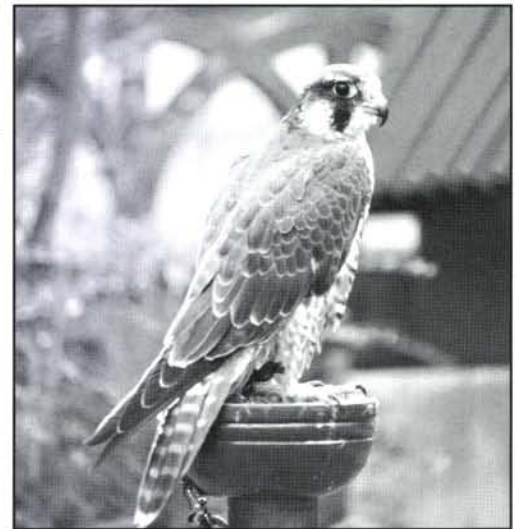
that weekend when I could and should have been in England picking up my long awaited falcon...

So let this be a warning to other falconers like me. Please make better arrangements. before, and keep hoping this doesn't happen to you.

And for people like Jim; please let people know in time if you won't sell your bird so he/she don't throw away their money.

Although I still have and fly some nice English falcons, I must admit that this story shocked my belief in others. I'd like to thank Martin Jones and Chris Eastham for playing the game fairly and for letting me have a superb bird. Thank you!

Peter Leen
Belgium



One of Peters Falcons

We would like to thank all our contributors to the letters page, your opinions are very welcome.

However, I feel I must call a halt to the anti-hunt debate with this issue, it could go on forever. It would be nice to have some good news!

Peter, please rest assured that not all Britains are as thoughtless as the man you dealt with obviously was. I am pleased everything worked out for you in the end.

If anyone feels the urge to write, please feel free. Send Letters to:

The Falconers Magazine
20 Bridle Road
Burton Latimer
Kettering
Northants Fax: 01536 722794
email: kbu77@dial.pipex.com

Radio Telemetry: The Modern Falconer's Magic Tool

Part I

By David L. Marshall

Is It Always Like This?

I'm new to the sport of falconry. I'd heard of the beauty of a bird stooping from a pinpoint in the sky, striking its prey and being picked up by its owner. In the rare cases when it was lost, telemetry would take over. No problem. I had no idea how different the reality could be.

The first real falconry flight I ever witnessed was on a frosty winter evening in rural Utah, near a small duck pond. Because it was getting dark the falconer quickly got his bird in the air and we trudged through snow covered rushes to the pond. By the time we realized there were no ducks to be had that night, the gyrfalcon hybrid was a mere speck in the sky, quickly swallowed in the blackening gloom. "Not good, but we should be okay," Sam said (not his real name). "Telemetry always works." He unsheathed his weapon, a five element yagi and explained his bird had not one, but two transmitters. The fact that he didn't know one of the frequencies didn't concern him, nor that the other transmitter had been running since last week. The signal was there, chirping solidly, and would last a few more minutes while we tracked it down.

We drove ten minutes toward where the falcon should be, stopped on a side road and took another reading. No signal. A minute later we heard some fleeting beeps, then nothing but the lifeless hiss of the receiver. We never heard the signal again, after eight hours of searching; not from hill-tops, not from the windy, icy, convex water tower top, and not from the airplane we hired to circle in the moonlight. Sam didn't sleep well during the few hours before dawn, muttering something about great-horned owls.

The next evening I watched my second flight as another falconer, Virgil, flew his merlin at a flock of starlings. After the starlings were scattered the merlin disappeared into a grove of cottonwoods two hundred yards from us, and Virgil set out across a cow pasture with his receiver but no antenna. "No time to hassle with that," he said. He would hold his receiver to his chest, turning while shielding with his body. "It always works great," he said.

An hour later Virgil emerged from the trees, sans merlin. The bird had been in there, he said, but it was like being in a room of mirrors and now he had no idea where the merlin was. We spent the next four hours with two receivers trying to track it down as it kept moving into more difficult terrain. In the end the merlin, too, spent the night among the owls.

A Necessary Evil

Looking back, neither of these birds probably had to be lost. The thing Sam and Virgil shared in common was that neither of them especially liked telemetry. They used

it, but not with their hearts. They gave it its due, but telemetry was something to get over with before enjoying a flight, a thing that was really in the way. Like changing your oil.

Yet, there is a group of people who actually think that finding hidden transmitters is a sport in and of itself. To amateur radio operators (hams) tracking down a transmitter is fun and brings out the competitive adrenaline. They come in teams to Saturday transmitter hunts in vans with eight element yagis mounted through the roofs. They plot bearings on maps while they drive, measure polarization, switch rapidly between antennas, and use triangulation algorithms. They're prepared for anything because there's not a second to lose: they're being timed with a stopwatch and their odometer will be checked when they find the transmitter.

My point is that there's probably a lot that can be done to improve your telemetry success. If these radio enthusiasts put so much painstaking effort into winning a six pack of beer, wouldn't you want to do the same to beat the owls to your bird, even if it's only needed every hundredth flight? The keys to being an expert in the art of telemetry are understanding and experience. Experience comes only with practice, but understanding lies in knowing the fundamentals.

Donut in the Sky

The one thing falconry transmitters all have in common is the antenna. The dangling wire commonly used in falconry is known as a short end-fed dipole. With this kind of antenna most of the energy radiates from the side. It's called broadside radiation and the pattern looks like a donut, as in Figure 1.

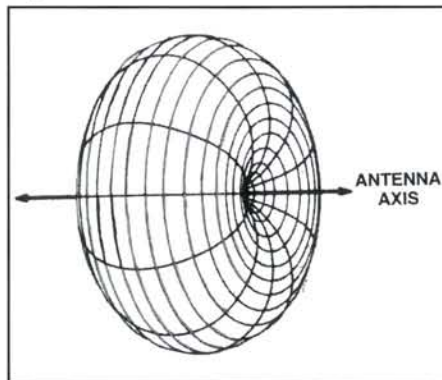


Figure 1: Transmitter radiation pattern

Little energy comes from the end of the antenna, so when the antenna is pointed right at you, you get the worst possible signal. Wouldn't you know, that's the situation when your bird is flying directly away from you chasing a pigeon; you're looking at the

hole of the donut.

If the antenna is bent or curled up its pattern will not look like a donut, but maybe more like a partly inflated beach ball. This may not be a bad thing when the bird is flying, giving more uniform radiation than a dipole can, but the pattern is unpredictable. There simply is no antenna that radiates equally in all directions. However, a leg mounted, straight dipole will give the ideal radiation pattern when the bird is perched with the antenna hanging down. The maximum radiation is horizontal in all directions, exactly what you want.

Hint: When your bird is out of sight, the donut pattern can tell you if it's climbing or waiting on. Listen for the signal fading in and out as the bird circles, alternately pointing the antenna toward and broadside to you. One wildlife telemetry expert claims you can also tell when a hawk is flying near the ground, hunting a perch, perching, or bathing by the pattern of the signal.

Transmitter Antenna Length

The antennas you buy are usually about a quarter wavelength (.43 meters at 173 megahertz). Is there something magic about that length? Yes, but you can make them shorter. You will see a gradual decrease in signal output as you do, with some spots making a bigger difference. If you're willing to sacrifice range for a shorter antenna, go ahead. Figure 2 shows the effect for a typical transmitter. I heard one falconer say

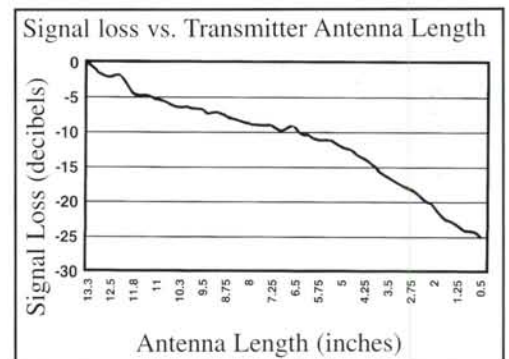


Figure 2: loss from shortening transmitter antenna.

his transmitter was too strong anyway! If yours is strong enough, cut away. A more powerful transmitter lets you have a shorter antenna hanging from the bird. The internal circuitry of the transmitter determines exactly how shortening the antenna will affect its performance.

While we're on the subject, a transmitter radiates more effectively when tail mounted. The tail mount spring acts as an extension on the "ground" side of the antenna, making it more symmetrical. If you can tolerate it, a wire extending from the ground of your transmitter case in the opposite direc-

tion from its antenna would improve it further. The bird's body helps too, becoming coupled to the transmitter and acting as part of the antenna (compare the signal before and after you attach the transmitter).

Polarization

Radio waves are electromagnetic, exactly the same as light. When your bird is lost you're literally seeing it, with different eyes. The miracle is that the transmitters used in falconry emit such small power, a few thousandths of a watt. Picking up that tiny signal is equivalent to seeing a dim, blinking flashlight miles away in daylight. Listening to your receiver is like looking through a telescope: you can look but one direction at a time, but your visibility is high.

You know from using sunglasses that sunlight is somewhat polarized. Radio

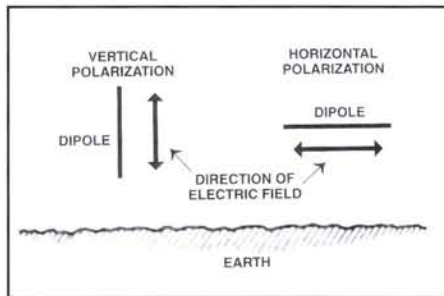


Figure 3: Common types of polarization

waves are strongly polarized. Polarization has to do with the alignment of the magnetic and electric fields that make up the wave. When the transmitter antenna is vertical we say the waves are vertically polarized, and when it's laying on its side they are horizontally polarized.

The thing to remember is that your receiving antenna should be oriented the same way as your bird's antenna. This is important with weak signals. Your antenna will work poorly if it's oriented the wrong way, as much as ten times worse. So if your goshawk is happily perched in a tree with its antenna hanging down, hold your yagi antenna vertically, with the elements up and down. If it's flying with the antenna trailing behind, hold your antenna horizontally, with the elements flat. As with polarized sunglasses you'll see sharper as you account for polarization in your telemetry.

Rule #1: When tracking a weak signal, always try both orientations first! Stay with the orientation that gives the strongest signal. This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. It is easy to develop a preference for which way to hold your antenna, but in doing so you will miss the boat half the time. Try them both and remember that your bird can change positions at any time.

Radiation from the end of the transmitter antenna (around the hole of the donut) has elements of both vertical and horizontal polarization. And after a signal has been reflected it loses its polarization altogether (it actually becomes elliptically polarized, with equal elements of vertical and horizontal polarization). The same loss of polarization can occur after the wave travels through obstacles.

Hint: Absence of polarization can be a

clue. Suppose you're in a canyon and get a strong reading from a canyon wall. Either your bird's up there, or it's a reflection off the canyon wall from somewhere else. Before climbing, check the polarity of the signal. If it's a reflection the strength won't change much as you rotate the yagi around its axis.

Receiving Antennas

Virgil was using an antenna of sorts when he went after his merlin, shielding his receiver with his body. That antenna, though not very sensitive, did have an important characteristic in that it was directional. When the signal was weakest he knew the bird was to his back.

A directional antenna is an indispensable part of your receiving system. Such an antenna receives signals better in one direction than in others, and that's the only way you'll find your bird when it's out of sight. Listening to the strength of the signal alone is almost useless, unless you have a lot of time to travel. You need a bearing.

The Yagi

The yagi is the most popular antenna for getting that bearing. It's highly directional and can be compact and light-weight, folding up conveniently. The yagi also has gain, picking up weak signals better as if it were amplifying them. It can pick up a far away transmitter when other antennas would get nothing.

A yagi can best be described by its radiation pattern. It always has a distinct forward lobe in the favored direction. The length of the forward lobe shows the gain in that direction.

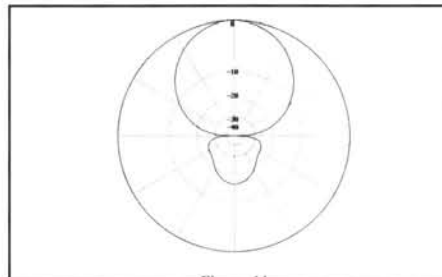


Figure 4A: 3-element Yagi

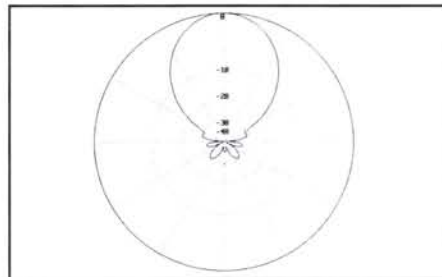


Figure 4B: 7-element Yagi

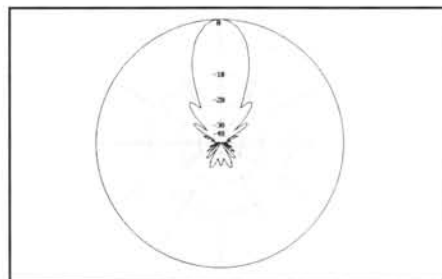


Figure 4C: 17-element Yagi

Radiation Patterns for typical yagis:

The width of the forward lobe is its beamwidth, the range over which the antenna picks up strong signals as you scan across the horizon. A sharper beamwidth allows you to pinpoint the direction to your bird more precisely, like a spotlight compared to a floodlight.

Yagis also pick up signals in other directions. The back and side lobes can confuse your ability to determine the direction to your bird. The strength of the forward lobe relative to the back is known as the front-to-back ratio, a higher ratio being better.

Rule #2: Whenever you take a new bearing with your yagi, scan the entire horizon first, all 360 degrees. Otherwise you could find yourself following the back lobe, going exactly the opposite direction from your bird, not a notably productive exercise.

Every yagi is different and an infinite number of patterns can be created by varying the spacings, thicknesses, lengths of the elements. And there is no best yagi. Optimizing one parameter hurts another, so the designer has to compromise. One general rule holds, though. As you add more elements, the beamwidth gets sharper, the front-to-back ratio improves, and the gain increases. The above diagrams do not do justice to the superior gain of the higher element antennas.

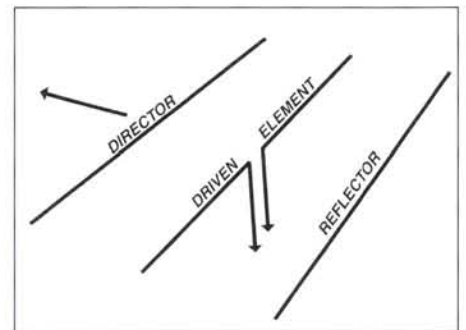


Figure 5: Elements of a yagi antenna

Long yagis. So is a many-element yagi worthwhile? If you want the ultimate in performance, yes. A long yagi will pick up weaker signals and pinpoint your bird's direction much more accurately. You have to be more careful in scanning with one: the narrow beam could miss the bird altogether between pulses. Weight and size are significant factors, especially when on foot. A long yagi mounted on the roof of your car, rotatable from within, with a smaller yagi for footwork would be a great combination. If you're only going to have one antenna, a single three element yagi makes a good compromise.

Whatever yagi you have, getting peak performance depends on how you use it. Don't bend the elements and don't touch them while using it. Keep it away from other objects, including cars and other people. The coax cable should come away perpendicular to the boom. The gain of your antenna can change if you raise it up or down, so keep it at a fixed height as you scan (higher is better.)

In spite of the above guidelines, a yagi is

very forgiving. It will almost always guide you directly to your lost bird, hopefully awaiting your appearance.

Omni-Directional Antennas

These antennas pick up equally well in all directions. You should use one in your car when driving to the next point where you'll take a bearing. Hearing the signal from your bird can tell you if you're going in the right direction and warn you if you're about to lose the signal. Sam would have been in better shape had he done this.

Hint: If the signal starts getting weak you know to stop the car immediately and take a bearing with your yagi. At least then you'll know what point of the horizon your bird just disappeared behind, a vital piece of information.

The omni-directional antenna is also useful when you lose the bird's signal altogether. Hook it up and drive around in widening circles around where you think the bird should be until you hear something.

The most common omni-directional antenna is probably a magnetically mounted whip. It should be in the center of the car roof, as the roof forms a key component of the antenna. Whip antennas are usually 1/4 wavelength long, but you can get a better signal in the horizontal direction from a 5/8 wavelength whip with base loading. Neither kind of whip picks up very well directly above, should your bird be flying overhead.

Be aware that a vertical whip is vertically polarized. That can be a big disadvantage if your bird's antenna is horizontal and the signal is weak. A collapsed yagi antenna may approximate an omni-directional horizontal antenna in such a case.

Other Receiving Antennas.

Quad Antenna. The yagi is by no means the only kind of directional antenna. The quad antenna is a three-dimensional version of the yagi. Though more bulky, they are half as wide and superior in gain, beamwidth, and in their ability to pick up horizontal and vertical signals equally well.

Loop Antennas and Vertical Arrays.

There are a variety of directional antennas useful for stronger signals. The loop antennas and vertical arrays can be lightweight, small and highly directional, though they have little gain. For close up work they can

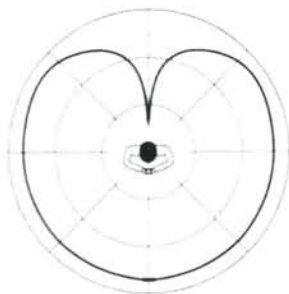


Figure 6: Radiation Pattern from a loop antenna

beat a yagi, though they are not good if your bird is in the air. Their advantage is that their null can be much sharper than the beam of a yagi, allowing them to pinpoint the bird more precisely.

If you ever use a loop or vertical array,

be aware that they work differently from what you expect with a yagi. As with the body-shielding that Virgil used, the bird is in the direction of the null rather than the strongest signal. With the antenna shown in the Figure 6 the bird is in the direction where the signal disappears, rather than where it is strongest. Using loops can be very confusing if you don't understand this concept.

Homing and Doppler Systems.

You may have heard of antenna systems which can give you a digital bearing to the transmitter. The antennas are relatively small and can be mounted on a car or airplane, giving precise and instantaneous bearings even when you're moving. Their weakness is that they require strong signals from your transmitter and involve additional electronics that must be attached to your existing receiver.

The Fun House

Radio waves normally travel in straight lines, but like light, they can also play tricks. If you do your hawking on an utterly flat, dry, treeless plain, you can skip this section. It's when you have terrain that things can get interesting, and doing telemetry in certain locations can be like being in a room full of curved mirrors. A good transmitter hunt takes advantage of all the deceptions below:

The Mirror Always Lies

Radio waves reflect under many conditions and the result is always an illusion. You think the bird is behind the point of reflection, but it isn't so. Compound that with multiple reflections, and you may wish you had stuck with raising pigeons.

Suppose, for example, you pick up your bird's signal coming from the side of a mountain. You spend hours climbing to the place only to find no bird there. It never was there. What you saw was the reflection of the bird's signal from another valley. You're comforted by the fact that without reflection you would have gotten no signal from your bird at all.

Virgil's troubles probably came from reflections from the trees surrounding him. Such reflections can reduce the effective directionality of your antenna and lead you in false directions. Radio waves reflect off any surfaces that conduct electricity, including the following:

- * Metal is the ideal reflector. Reflections from your nearby car can easily give you a false reading and the steel in a building can scatter your signal in every direction. Put a few buildings together and you have a major problem. It's no wonder people don't do much falconry in London.

- * Water is another good conductor. Radio waves will bounce off the surface of a lake like light off a reflecting pool. It is actually dissolved salts in water that make water conduct. Interestingly, pure water is transparent to radio.

- * Hills and mountains reflect, but their properties will depend on the nature of the material in them, particularly the moisture they hold; wetter structures reflect better. Most natural structures will give significant reflections.

- * Live trees reflect radio waves, but dry

wood does not. A forest can scatter the signal in many directions. Any green plant more than a meter in size can do it.

Radio reflections occur just like with a mirror, in that the angle the wave comes out is the same as the angle going in. A flat surface will reflect the signal in only one direction (the concept behind the flat, angular surfaces of Stealth aircraft), while a rounded surface will reflect in many directions, and most natural surfaces behave like that. Multiple reflections are possible and a signal may funnel a long distance down a canyon through successive reflections.

Using the Edge

Radio waves can bend around objects. So-called knife-edge diffraction works best around metal edges in buildings, but also happens with hills, trees and mountains. The sharper the edge, the more pronounced the bending. Diffraction is invaluable to falconers. It is the only way you get a signal when your bird is beyond line-of-sight, which is almost always the case in hilly country. Diffraction bends the signal over the crests of the hills to your receiver. A bird beyond a hill or in a deep ravine would be undetectable if it weren't for diffraction.

The transmitter frequency is very important in determining the amount of diffraction. Higher frequencies undergo less diffraction. Thus higher frequency transmitters do not do as well beyond the visual horizon or in hilly terrain. The signal simply can't go through solid earth and loses strength in bending around it. This is unfortunate, because higher frequencies allow smaller antennas.

Diffraction around trees combined with reflections can create complex patterns within the forest and well outside its boundary. You should hold your antenna horizontally in a forest because trees produce mostly vertical interference.

Down the Wire

A power line or fence wire can really mix things up. The fence picks up your transmitter's signal, like an antenna, and the signal races down the wire and re-radiates. Your receiver picks up false signals from all along the wire which will most likely be horizontally polarized. The effect is worst when you bird perches on the wire. Why do they do that?

On Again Off Again

Have you ever thought you were getting close to the bird, but when you stopped you found the signal weaker than before? So you go back only to find you were going in the right direction all along. If you are near the bird the culprit could be interference patterns. If you plotted the strength of the signal near your transmitter, it would look something like a round checkerboard. One spot is strong, while a few feet away you get little signal.

Interference patterns occur when the signal reaches your receiver over two different paths, one being line-of-sight and the other usually a reflection off the ground. When the two signals combine they compliment each other in certain spots, nullifying each other in others. The effect is most pronounced when your bird is perched in a tree, especially when the transmitter antenna is pointing at you.

Interference patterns can weaken the signal in the direction of the bird while it remains strong in some other false direction. It can make you think the bird is on the ground when its in a tree, or make you look in all the wrong trees. It threw one falconer off by exactly ninety degrees, giving the strongest signal where his yagi should have had a null. He happened to be trying to impress someone with his telemetry equipment at the time.

What do you do about interference patterns? Don't rely on signal strength alone to find the bird, especially up close, because you could have just moved into one of the low signal pockets. Instead, rely on the directionality provided by your antenna. Don't get too close and circle where you think the bird is. Use vertical polarization, since ground doesn't reflect vertical waves well. Also, rotate your antenna around a fixed spot and at a fixed height, avoiding moving the antenna across the interference pockets which can be just a couple of meters across.

Count your Losses

As radio waves pass through objects they diminish in strength, their energy being absorbed. The effect is most noticeable in wooded areas where vegetation saps the strength of your signal. The further it goes through a forest the greater the loss. Fog, clouds, snow and rain also absorb radio waves, lowering your transmitter's range. It could almost make one think that fog-shrouded rain forests are not ideal locations for falconry.

Frequency

What we're leading up to is that the frequency you choose for telemetry is significant. The magnitude of all the above deceptions depend on the frequency you use.

A radio wave's frequency is the number of vibrations it goes through each second. A 173 megahertz (MHz) transmitter consists of electric and magnetic fields that reverse themselves 173 million times per second. The only difference between light and radio is the frequency; light vibrates faster.

The wavelength of a radio wave is the distance it goes during one vibration, travelling as they do at the speed of light. The wavelength of a 173 MHz signal is 1.7 meters. A higher frequency gives a shorter wavelength.

In what ways does frequency effect telemetry, and what's the best frequency? Reflections, absorption, the effects of wires and interference patterns generally increase with increasing frequency, while diffraction decreases.

Advantages of higher frequency:

- * shorter antenna on the bird
- * more reflections that help in rugged terrain*
- * less diffraction around trees
- ** lighter, more directional receiving antennas

Disadvantages of higher frequency:

- * more confusing reflections in other wise clear terrain

- * more absorption in wooded or urban areas
- * lower range due to less diffraction over hills and the horizon
- * more distracting interference patterns
- * less efficient transmitters and receivers

You won't notice these differences by changing frequency a small amount within a band, say between 171 and 172 MHz. Unfortunately, the frequency bands available are dictated by governments. Even if you could choose, it's clear there is no best frequency. As with most of the aspects of telemetry we've gone over, there isn't a single answer: it all depends on the situation. So in the end, it's up to you to recognize the situation you're in, get creative and come up with an answer. The falconer who can do that will always excel in telemetry, and that's what makes it such an intriguing sidelight to the sport of falconry.

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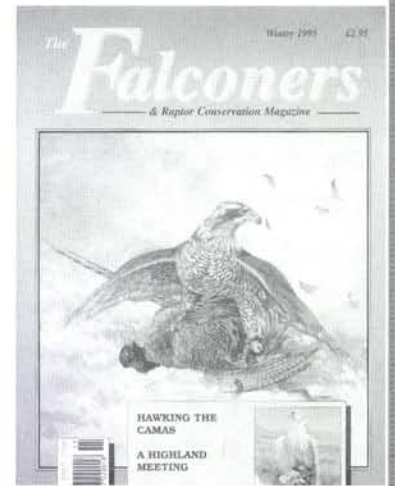
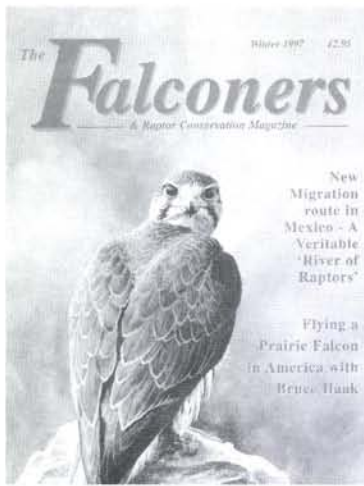
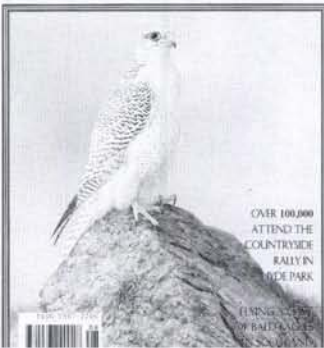
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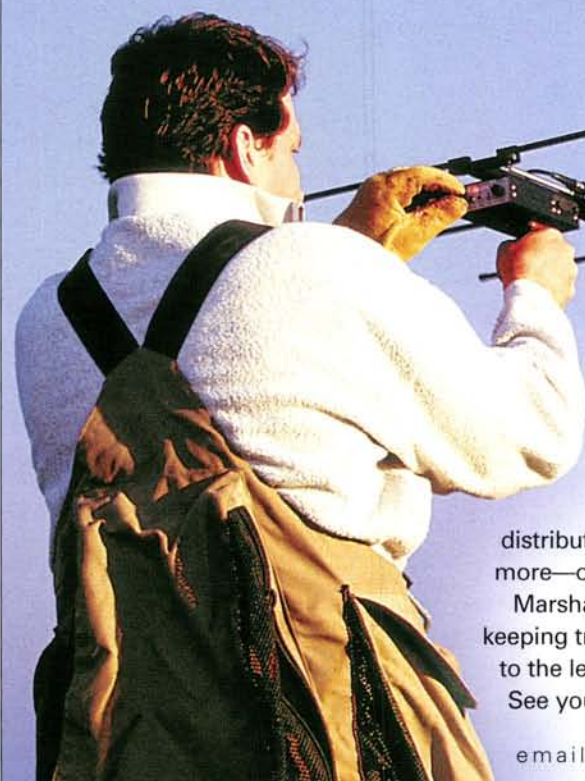
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