

*The* **Falconers**  
— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

DOUBLE ISSUE  
Winter 1998/Spring 1999

£5.50

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WONDERS  
FROM  
AMERICA**

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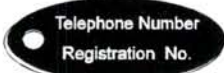


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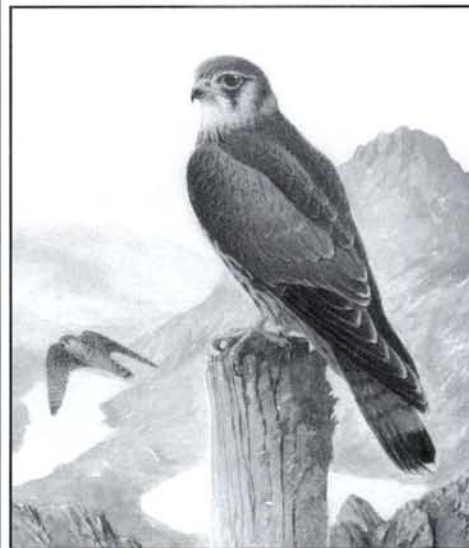
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## PHILIP SNOW

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

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



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## features

- 6** Hawking with Ravens & Crows  
CARL JONES
- 8** A Spar' Called Alice  
DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS
- 10** Air Fresheners - A threat to Birds?
- 11** Ladys' Luck
- 12** 'A Flying Visit'  
Grouse Hawking in Scotland
- 14** Reversed Dimorphism  
LINDA APPLEBY
- 16** Scottish Hawking Club  
Four Day Meet
- 22** BFC Spar & Merlin Meet  
JENNY WRAY
- 24** A Tribute to Shoni  
BRIAN SMITH
- 26** A Perfect Day
- 27** Calendar & Poster
- 31** Bird of Prey First Aid  
JEMIMA PARRY-JONES
- 34** Given With Respect  
PETER DEVERS
- 36** French Game Fair  
ANDREW KNOWLES-BROWN
- 42** Steven Duryea  
A Man With Magic Hands
- 50** Ace  
COLIN CALLABY
- 51** Crow Spotting For Beginners  
NICK FOX
- 52** A Life With Raptors  
RICHARD NAISBITT

## regulars

- 18** HAWK TALK  
John Matcham
- 32** Decline in BOP Numbers  
RSPB
- 37** Raptor Rescue  
AN INTRODUCTION
- 39** Facts on Falconers  
GEOFFREY POLLARD
- 41** COMPETITION  
WinTickets to the  
Falconers Fair
- 46** CLUB DIRECTORY  
Make your voice count,  
join an affiliated Club
- 40** PHILIP SNOW  
Common Buzzard

## up-to-date

- 4/5** NEWS Lost & Found,  
New addition to Hawk  
Conservancy Team
- 7** CLUBS NEWS.  
Scottish & British Hawking  
Association
- 7** Hawk & Owl Trust in Joint  
Barn Owl Survey.
- 38** 1998 HAWK BOARD  
SYMPOSIUM REPORT
- 47** The Raptor Trust
- 48** **REVIEWS**  
Video from Nick Fox, Books by Lee  
William Harris, & A study of the Verreaux  
Eagle by Valerie Gargett. Also a new  
Computer breeding programme
- 54** CLASSIFIEDS.



Alice, an Irish Sparrowhawk page 8



Scottish four day meet page 16

## COMMENT

Hello All,

Well you probably think we have disappeared off the face of the earth but, we are back. I must explain. The Winter issue was running late and I had planned to get it out immediately after Christmas, unfortunately I was taken ill on Dec 29th and spent a week in hospital and two weeks on the sofa. This was followed by a gradual build up to my usual 12 hour days.

This mag is a double issue and the next one will be out in early May. We have a full mag again with some good stuff, we must thank all our writers for a sterling job.

The Fair is at Offchurch again and we are looking forward to it very much.

We have an article in this issue about an American carver called Steven Duryea. He subscribed from our website and left me a message in my visitors book. I sent a quick note back and it grew from there. Then one day he sent me a pic of 'Bela' a recently finished carving and I was hooked. It was wonderful. It adorns my desktop and I have enormous trouble convincing people that it is a carving and not a real bird. You will, all being well, be able to see a sample of Stevens work at the Fair as he is donating one to the Campaign for Falconry. This is wonderful gesture.

Right, that's enough for now. See you all soon. Take Care and Keep Falconry Safe.

David & Lyn

## EDITORIAL TEAM

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**COVER: Golden Eagle, belonging Jemima Parry-Jones. Photo D. Wilson.**

## RAPTOR LIFELINE & IBR REPORT

### LOST

Barn Owl	823IOA97U
Barn Owl	5211
Barn Owl	5371BCU
Barn Owl	2195BC96U
Barn Owl	0701BC98U
Barn Owl	2323BC98U
Barn Owl	IBR2613U
Buzzard	3KA97W
Buzzard	12550W
Buzzard	298W
Buzzard	UK84970
Goshawk	8805V
Goshawk	3499V
Goshawk	UK89124
Goshawk	13497W
Harris Hawk	198MBW
Harris Hawk	531RR98W
Harris Hawk	3CJT97
Harris Hawk	4SCW
Harris Hawk	3638RR97W
Harris Hawk	21JD95W
Harris Hawk	4KP97W
Harris hawk	8DR96W
Harris Hawk	RED96
Harris Hawk	2WBO96V
Harris Hawk	B98
Harris Hawk	3750RR97W
Harris Hawk	1,2,3, or 4RT98W
Lanner	MH398
Lanner	6MB98
Lanner	2RWNC98W
Lanner	2498W
Lugger	437RR98W
Lugger	1W
Lugger	3298W
Merlin	8368P & 4577R
Peregrine	3968V
Peregrine	UK79287
Pere x Gyr	18794W
Pere x Prairie	6515V
Pere x Prairie	17457W
Pere x Saker	18084W
Redtail	7CJB95Y
Redtail	UK84810
Redtail	7PJ96X
Saker	4AMJ98W
Saker	4598W&
Saker	6522RR98W
Saker	IBR2451W
Saker	6BTB97W
Saker	3CBK98W
Saker	2B2C
Saker	4DRW98W
Saker	2RWNC98W
Saker	2 or 6 GJB98W
Sparrow hawk	4053RR98R
Barbary x Lanner	6054V & 17182W

### FOUND BIRDS

Barn Owl	3512U
Barn Owl	01311U
Barn Owl	3287BC98U
Barn Owl	2KAH98U
Barn Owl	5763BC95U
Buzzard	??5BC97W
Buzzard	?DLG9?V
Buzzard	96??W & AKJS???
Buzzard	?DAM9?W
Coopers Hawk	DOE Cable Tie + RV Ring

Eur. Eagle Owl	3?Z
Harris Hawk	145??W
Harris Hawk	??RJM98W
Harris Hawk	3??2RR97W
Kestrel	3??5BR97S
Kestrel	??DJ98S
Kestrel	??TSHR98S
Kestrel	??BC97S
Kestrel	57??S
Kestrel	?98S
Kestrel	?JNW9?S
Kestrel	?HE9?S
Lanner	92??W
Redtail	15??X
Redtail	09??Y + X Ring
Redtail	??SFC95Y
Saker	94??W
Snowy Owl	0?? 97Z
Spar. Hawk	99??BCU
Hybrid	02??V
Unknown	30??W

### STOLEN

1. Barn owl	IBR2612U
2. Harris Hawk	2424RRW

### FOUND & DEAD

Goshawk	OR80727 & NW00101818
Harris Hawk	15890W
Saker	PY47100867 & 7FALCONHUR
Saker	INCRw97W
Lugger	3225RR97W
Sparrow Hawk	296P
Sparrow Hawk	PARS1
Unknown	6842V

### BREEDERS BREEDERS

As can be seen from the Lost/Found birds many have breeders rings on them. If you are one of these breeders or if you recognise the initials/codes being used please tell us. It can go a long way to returning a bird to the rightful owner.

Tel: IBR 0870 6088500/01926 850000  
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## CONTINUING CONVICTION

In the Autumn Edition 1997 of this magazine we reported that Gary Job of Lampeter had appeared at Court in respect of Peregrines and had been fined £450.00 and ordered to pay £700.00 costs.

After this conviction Job immediately announced his intention to appeal. The Appeal was listed to be heard at Swansea Crown Court on 20th July 1988. During the period between court dates further evidence was obtained and consequently, on the opening day of the appeal Job withdrew. The Judge severely criticised Job for leaving it so late before making this decision. he said that the court had been gravely inconvenienced but he was well advised to withdraw since he was facing scientific evidence of a powerful kind.

Job was then ordered to pay a further £1000.00 towards prosecution costs. Judge Edwards concluded by saying that the courts will not tolerate interference with wild birds and their eggs.

## MAGPIES AND SPARROWHAWKS INNOCENT OF CAUSING SONGBIRD DECLINES.

Britain's declining songbird populations are not the result of increasing magpie and sparrowhawk numbers, confirms new research by the British Trust for Ornithology and the RSPB.

These findings, to be published in the Proceeding of the RSPB, support conclusions drawn from earlier studies. Extensive data collected since 1962 in the BTO's annual Common Bird Census were subjected to rigorous statistical analysis to see whether national population changes in the 23 songbird species reflected changing magpie and sparrowhawk numbers.

The analysis established there is no link. Comparing population changes between areas with these predators and areas without, showed no difference. In some areas songbirds thrived in spite of increased predator numbers.

The authors of this new study suggest that as there is increasing evidence that songbird declines are a feature of farmland habitats then further research should focus on the effects of intensified farming, rather than looking to predators to explain the declines.

Jeremy Greenwood, BTO director said "The study provides strong evidence that the declines of these songbirds have not been caused by the spread of magpies and sparrowhawks. It highlights the value of large-scale, long-term studies and of the contribution that the coordinated observations of volunteers can make to the scientific base of wildlife conservation. Sound research is the key to understanding and addressing the dramatic declines we have seen in many of our most familiar farmland birds."

Dr Mark Avery, RSPB director of conservation, said "For too long magpies and sparrowhawks have been blamed for a situation they have not created. In vindicating them, this new research shows more clearly than ever the need to address the problems of loss of habitat caused by modern agriculture."



## JOSHUA REVIVES MEDIAEVAL LINK BETWEEN HORSES AND EAGLES.

Joshua, a shire horse, has become the newest member of the team at the Hawk Conservancy, Andover, Hants.

The 18 hands former dray horse will be helping to re-enact in flying demonstrations how the knights of old once flew their birds.

Hawks and man have a long association and in the middle ages knights going to war would have used their horses to fly hawks and eagles as relaxation. In some parts of the world eagles are still flown from horseback.

Joshua's past life, coping

with heavy urban traffic means he is unbothered by the presence of Frodo, a Tawny Eagle, who is flown by a falconer mounted on the horse.

And Frodo's previous experience working with horses for several weeks making an historic film in Denmark means he is quite happy with Joshua.

"We are lucky to have hit upon such a good combination," said Conservancy director, Ashley Smith. "The new team will add an interesting and historic dimension to our flying demonstrations."



### A PLEA FOR HELP

If anybody is/has been offered any of the following items for sale please (if they feel they are of uncertain origin) would they either ring D Wright on 01553 617670, or get in touch with the magazine.

Breeding Pair Gt Horned Owls., Breeding Pair Snowy Owls.  
Breeding Pair Bengal Eagle Owls., Pair African Spotted Owls

Full set of The Falconers Magazine up beginning '97 (approx)  
Various bird of prey books by authors such as Eric Hoskins and Philip Glasier.

Oil Paintings; 1 Barn Owl, 1 Sparrowhawk, 1 Redtail, 1 Peregrine, 1 German Shepherd. Two pictures by Eric Hoskins. (Short Eared Owl & Buzzard)

Wood carving of a Bald Eagle.

(Any paperwork with these birds may be in the name of D Wright.)

Also, although not strictly falconry related are: Breeding Pairs of Orange Breasted Senegals, Yellow Breasted Senegals. A Patigons Conure, 1 White Peacock, and four Indian Blues, 2 hens, 2 cocks.

Wildlife Fact File and 12 Vols of One Four Wheels.  
Any help would be much appreciated.

## JAPAN REVISITED

Following the huge success of their initial six week visit last autumn, the National Birds of Prey Centre has been awarded a further contract to run falconry demonstrations at NASU Animal Kingdom in Japan.

Based north of Tokyo, NASU Animal Kingdom is a conservation centre which aims to educate people to understand and care for domestic animals in a kind and responsible way. Falconry has been a sport in Japan for many hundreds of years and the directors of NASU want to offer visitors the chance to get close to and appreciate the special relationship between birds of prey and people. They also feel it would provide an opportunity to show the importance of birds of prey to the environment.

Nine birds of prey and two falconers from the centre will leave for Japan at the end of April, in order to join the team of staff and animal keepers at NASU. The length of the contract, approximately nine months, with a possible extension to three years, will allow the two British falconers to fully train a Japanese falconer and supporting 'raptor keepers'.

The nine bird team will consist of three falcons, three Harris Hawks and three Bengal Eagle Owls, all of which are being specially trained for the contract.

"Both NASU and we decided to choose young, partially trained birds. It is important that the birds finish their training in the environment where they are to live and amongst the staff who will be responsible for their upkeep once we have completed the contract", says Jemima Parry-Jones, owner and director of the National Birds of Prey Centre. "The comfort and well-being of the birds is paramount. NASU also, understandably, want young birds, which will be with them for many years."

"Naturally, we are thrilled to be involved", adds Jemima. Our own mission here at the National Birds of Prey Centre, has always been one of conservation through education and so it is important to us that this continues on an international scale."

### MOURNE FALCONRY BACK ON TRACK

I would like to apologise to anyone who has written to me or phoned me over the last few months for a price list and did not receive one.

Unfortunately I had a lot of personal problems which distracted me slightly and many price lists were not sent. Thankfully most of these problems are sorted out and I can once again concentrate on my Falconry business. Once again my apologies to everyone concerned.

Kieran Tumilty  
Mourne Falconry

### 'WAITING-ON' YOUR CALL?

Many Falconers have told me that 'Gamehawk', printed in 1991 has become regarded as 'The Manual' for those interested in the waiting-on flights. Naturally this pleases me and as it seems likely that the remaining copies of the second printing will be sold over the next year or so I may then consider a further edition. Therefore, I am very interested to hear from any falconer who has consistently created stylish-waiting-on flights at quarry not already mentioned in the book and who is willing to share the experience and specialised field craft with his fellows through the pages of a future "Gamehawk".

Ray Turner. Tel: 01440 820656

# HAWKING WITH RAVENS AND CROWS

## Carl Jones

Many species of birds have been used to hunt with, or for, man, and in addition to raptors there are several other groups that have been successfully trained. I have read of cormorants and herons being trained to catch fish, and tame shrikes hunting various small prey. Crows and ravens have often been trained and I have found several accounts of them being used for hawking ( or should that be Crowing and Raving? ). Many of my fellow raptor admirers keep ravens and several have trained them to fly free and return to the fist or lure. Gerald Summers, the writer, naturalist, falconer and friend who has long admired these birds has described himself as Raven Mad, a term which aptly captures the state of mind of those who come under their spell. In his book "Wings over Wales" (1979) he summarises their persona, "The Raven bears much the same relationship to an ordinary crow as an eagle does to a

"Taken as a domestic bird, the Raven has many qualities that render him extremely amusing. Active, curious and impudent, he goes everywhere, pries into everything, runs after the dogs, plays tricks with the poultry, and with great skill and address even gets into the good

**"I spent hours training him like a hawk. He would come gliding in from wherever he happened to be...."**

graces of the cook-maid; truly sensible of her abilities to reward him for his attachment to her. By nature a glutton, and by habit a thief."

Although mainly opportunist scavengers they can be true killers and will readily take advantage of weak or injured prey. Konrad Lorenz (1969) hand reared many ravens and saw that naive young birds usually paid no attention to healthy living prey but would "make a determined dash at the one sick jackdaw among dozens of healthy ones and kill it skilfully with a well aimed blow at the back of the skull..." In this respect ravens behave like other raptors in taking the easiest quarry. Sometimes ravens and crows show advanced hunting behaviour. The eccentric British soldier, scientist and spy, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen summarised some remarkable observations in his book "Pirate and Predators" (1959) on the hunting behaviour of birds, recording many of his own sightings. "In Sini I have seen the desert raven single out a dotterel from a flock, tire it out by superior speed, drive it to earth and kill it with a blow on the head with its heavy bill." There are records of a raven preying on ptarmigan, even striking them on the wing and of a carrion crow striking a lapwing in the air. A pair of ravens harried a

rock dove by driving it back and forth between them. One struck it and they both settled down to pluck it and to feed. Meinertzhagen had observations of magpies chasing finches and catching them in the air and saw one "swoop on a flock of redpolls and seizing one in its feet, make off with it."

The Rev. Edward Stanley gives us more on the raven's personality and hunting abilities in "A Familiar History of Birds" (1835). "But pilferers as they are, and inclined to mischief, they have redeeming good qualities, which often make them deservedly great favourites, and they may be sometimes trained for useful purposes."

"Thus the landlord of an inn, in Cambridgeshire, was in possession of a Raven which frequently went hunting with a dog that had been bred up with him. On their arrival at a cover, the dog entered, and drove the hares and rabbits from the thicket, whilst the Raven, posted on the outside of the cover, seized every one that came in his way, when the dog immediately hastened to his assistance, and, by way of their joint efforts, nothing escaped. On various occasions, the Raven has proved of more use than a ferret and has been known to enter a barn with several dogs, and enjoy the sport of rat-hunting."

**"The Raven is capable of being taught to perform almost anything within the compass of any bird's abilities."**

buzzard; in other words it is bigger, twice as powerful, and three times as intelligent, with a personality that has to be experienced to be understood."

All connoisseurs extol the great intelligence of trained ravens, and wax lyrical about their great virtues and devious cunning. In Miller's Natural History (1785) it is written. "The Raven is capable of being taught to perform almost anything within the compass of any bird's abilities. He may be instructed in the art of fowling like an hawk; and like a spaniel, he may be taught to fetch and carry. He may indeed be taught to speak like a parrot, and...sing like a man."

**The raven is a superb flier with the ability to soar, stoop, roll and apparently even somersault in the air.**

More recently some falconers have written of their trained ravens including Gerald Summers, "I spent hours training him like a hawk. He would come gliding in from wherever he happened to be on hearing my rather poor rendering of a ravens croak, he would circle over-head, snatch a piece of meat from my hand without pausing and gaining height, stoop like a falcon to grab a further reward from my upward-raised fist, after which he would put in a couple of circuits of the garden, alternating with his own version of the 'raven corkscrew'. He was indeed a most accomplished performer, although probably little more than two months old."

Other interesting experiences with a trained raven are given by H.G.Hurrell, the West Country falconer and naturalist who kept several ravens and describes his adventures with them in his book "Wildlife: Tame but Free" (1968) Black Rod, a large powerful hand-reared bird was let out at feeding time and soon showed himself to be a bird of real character. Hurrell writes "He would come to



my gloved fist when called and learned to follow me for walks up the valley and across the moor. He was a marvellous companion, ranging far and wide, but coming back to me from time to time.... Black Rod was eager to chase everything he saw. Crows were an obvious target and he would chivvy them with great vigour, sometimes making them take refuge in trees bordering the moor...A buzzard once soared high above the valley. Undeterred by the buzzards height, which seemed to me to be quite out of reach, Black Rod began to circle up with quick, effective wing beats. Eventually he was almost level with the buzzard... At that moment they both disappeared into a cloud and vanished from view...ten minutes later Black Rod came flying leisurely down the valley and returned to my fist."

Black Rod also chased kestrels, he put in lively stoops as a kestrel until it made off. Flocks of passage rooks at a good height were irresistible. "He caused them to scatter in all directions and threatened some of them until they were forced to look for the cover of trees. His mastery of flight increased with daily practice and I found it fascinating to watch him develop."

"He would often fly quite a distance, at times almost out of sight. I was in the happy position of not fearing he would be lost, because I knew he could easily find

his way home if he should lose contact with me." Hurrell even trained Black Rod to wait on "A stiff breeze blowing up the steep slopes of the moor provided the most exciting conditions. Black Rod could then rise easily on the up-current and often achieve a commanding pitch. At this stage my previous experience of the use of the lure was vital so that he could be brought back by my swinging if he appeared to be making out of range. At the same time the lure had to be shown as little as possible so as to avoid lowering the raven's pitch. One particular day, with everything in his favour, Black Rod reached a magnificent pitch at an altitude of several hundred feet. Supported by a strong up-current he was able to glide to and fro...Sometimes he would circle, still without any wing flapping. He held this commanding pitch for a considerable time. I stopped, held out my gloved fist with a piece of meat and shouted "Come on Rod". Instantly with a slide-slip he dived headlong downwards. Controlled by a certain fluttering, twisting action he descended vertically to me. Black Rod only needed a few feet to flatten out and land unconcernedly on my fist."

The raven is a superb flier with the ability to soar, stoop, roll and apparently even somersault in the air. It is very encouraging that falconers have been able to get trained birds to express some of this behaviour.

My free flying crows, magpies and jackdaws would all return to the fist for food but I never progressed as far as hunting with them. H.G. Hurrell had the honour of being a pioneer in this field and describes moth hawking, using his crow Crocus. "Once an immigration of silver-Y moths had caused almost every bush on the moor to hold a resting moth. Each time, with a crow on hand I kicked a small furze bush and a moth would fly 20 or 30 yards before diving into another bush. The moth would be closely chased by the crow and if he succeeded in catching it he would readily eat it." Clearly moth hawking with crows on Dartmoor is going to develop as a must for falconers.

Among the intelligentsia of the bird world crows and ravens are far more intelligent than most raptors and are, as these stories demonstrate, capable of being trained to perform a wide range of behaviours. I have been amazed that in casual perusal of bird and country books to find them festooned with graphic accounts of the brightness and versatility of these birds. These are remarkable birds, I wonder if others have tried hawking with crows and their relations or if they have been used in bird shows or as trained birds in falconry displays. I would be most interested to hear of the experiences of fellow falconers who have become Raven Mad and wish to crow or rave about their experiences.

★ CLUB NEWS ★ CLUB NEWS ★ CLUB NEWS ★ CLUB NEWS ★ CLUB NEWS ★

## British Hawking Association Report.

The past few months have been a very busy period for the BHA. Following the AGM earlier this year the Chairman of the Association, George Roach stepped down from this position owing to ill health. In honour of all the good work that George has done to better and further Falconry, over many years, he was elected Honorary Vice President of the Association. I hope everyone will join me in wishing George the very best for the future and many years good Hawking now that he has taken semi retirement.

Following this a new Committee was formed and Paul Beecroft was elected to the position of Chairman for the forthcoming year and Wendy Alier was elected as Vice Chairman.

The values of the Association remain the same. We are continuing our Apprenticeship Scheme which has proved highly popular with both youngsters and adults alike who want to learn

more about the art of Falconry. The Association also remains dedicated to showing the way forward with our own Licensing Scheme to improve standards and to show the general public and other agencies that we are a professional organisation and that the right people are flying the right birds.

Field Meetings and Social Meetings are now taking place in various parts of the country on a weekly and monthly basis respectively. In the past two months new Regions have been started which include Thames Valley (Berks, Bucks & Oxon), Somerset and also Wiltshire. The Association continues to grow from strength to strength with new members and Clubs Affiliating. If you would like to know more about us, or you would like to join a Caring and Professional Association then please contact one of the people listed in our advert on the Club Directory page.

## Scottish Hawking Club Report November '98

The season's well under way, and so far the pretty poor weather hasn't affected our field meetings very much. Our 4 day meeting in Dumfriesshire only had one day curtailed due to rain, some headed for the dryness of shopping with the family, while those that did manage to get out between the "Cats and Dogs" had some good flights. Although the rain did affect where the quarry was, we did manage to bag a good number of rabbits, a few pheasants and one grouse. We have had a further 2 longwing meetings at grouse and 2 shortwing meetings for ground game, all have been well attended and a good time was had by all. With a further 4 meetings to go before the end of season lets hope things continue in the same vein. Lark licences were issued again this year in Scotland, we have been very fortunate not to have encountered the problems that England received.

With the formation of the new Scottish parliament in the near future we could be up against new laws being devised for

Scotland to attack fieldsports. The Scottish Hawking Club will be at the forefront in monitoring this situation and along with help from the Countryside Alliance, and the Scottish sub committee formed by the Hawk Board, we hope no nasty shocks are due. It is in all falconers' interests to watch out for any anti fieldsport or falconry rhetoric and report it at once to the club. It is also imperative that all falconers join a club, so it can be proved that we have the support of all falconers in Scotland and the UK. In years to come it will be seen that we could be at a vital crossroads for falconry in the UK and worldwide, with the Hawk Board becoming proactive rather than reactive, the reorganisation of IAF, to include NAFA, with representatives going to CITES and EU meetings to mould new proposed laws, and change damaging old ones, we could well be seeing the continuation of the oldest fieldsport being preserved for many generations to come. Lets hope so, good hawking.

# A SPAR CALLED ALICE

**Diana Durman-Walters**

Sparrowhawks seem to me to be the ultimate dynamo in the hawk world. Their energy input and sheer manic determination deliver a small deadly package like that of Prince Naseem Hamed. Boxers and spars seem to share the same emotion; losing is not in the equation.

Being able to see sparrowhawks in action is not as easy as it was 5-10 years ago. They simply are not fashionable any more. Superseded by amenable and flexible Harris Hawks the neurotic, on edge temperament of the spar does not endear itself to an increased audience, which is just as well.

Spars are consummately challenging and require skilled handling. They need to be the only hawk in the mews. Their small fragile structure with its high energy demands is quite the most riveting as they hurl themselves into pursuit as if possessed.

It is these images which come to life in the hands of excellent sparviter, one of which I was recently out in the company of.

Tommy Byrne lives in a particularly tranquil part of Ireland and has the good fortune to be able to fly hawks every day of the week. I had been impressed with Tommy's young spar at the Irish Hawking Club meet in 1997. In fact so had the rest of Ireland as he won the trophy for outstanding performance in the field with her. Knowing that good hawks such as she sometimes have the misfortune to have short lives I had arranged to travel over to see her on her home ground. Good job she's of a sturdy constitution as I didn't make the trip until November '98.

Alice caught my attention because she had started to take rooks not just as random quarry but on a regular basis. When I first met her in juvenile plumage she had already taken an impressive number of early season pheasant and partridge but was already starting to look at more accessible quarry.

Corvids by any standard need a hawk or falcon that really packs a punch. They have to get the strike and hold just right otherwise the tables are very quickly turned in favour of the rook. It is far more the domain of large falcons as they can use their speed to great effect.

Alice had started her journey into the minefield of rook hawking with successful attempts at magpie, then jackdaw but these are not often around when she was out and about. In Ireland there are formidable numbers of rooks and crows, it was a case of success breeds success as these were the most frequently seen items of quarry.



*"Alice." 1997 female Sparrowhawk in adult plumage.*

In order to get near them she is flown out of the car. (Please note this is illegal in the UK). This is a developed technique that relies on the spar's manic response to the similar technique of 'throwing'. As the fields are surveyed from the moving car rooks are located in fields where they are busy feeding, most often in groups. The rooks show no visible response to the car that is passing at normal speed, but the minute the car slows down the sentient cunning of rooks usually has them winging away before a chase can even be thought about.

The spar learns that her best gamble is to leave the open car window and give chase. With a 40mph slipstream she has momentary advantage. This kind of pursuit can only work if the fields are surrounded by hedges.

She uses these with instinctive cunning. As the field of crows have been decided upon the sparviter sitting in the passenger seat holds the spar out of the window at the point where the car has just passed the groups of crows. As she hurls herself out of the window she is immediately caught in the slipstream which takes her at speed over the hedge top. Some of the hedges are very high, well over 5 ft and this works to her advantage as she has

approached her quarry with exactly the same 'surfing' technique, slipping like a jet over the rim of the hedge and attacking the flock.

Almost without fail each flight is successful. Probably the only drawback to this form of hawking is that the driver usually ends up freezing cold. The window constantly open with cold winter winds whipping round you are the least inspiring part of it.

No matter; once the vehicle has stopped and you are on the run to get to the hawk as quickly as possible the adrenaline rush makes up for the hypothermia.

It's probable that this form of hawking is in fact best suited to Ireland. Stopping the car in the middle of the road, jumping out of it like something possessed and leaping into a field over and sometimes through the hedge could only be contemplated in an environment where people are tolerant and easy going. I don't think it has many plus points flying near the M25.

Alice is really quite something to watch. Her tiny form leaving the moving vehicle is nothing more than a brief glimpse as she is airborne and lost to sight. In fact her conquests take no more than 30 seconds to achieve. It seems





*Tommy Byrne and his impressive female Sparrowhawk "Alice"*

almost as if time stands still and your very actions to stop the car and get out and run after her are all in slow motion. It is in moments like these that you are very aware of your own cumbersome mobility.

This sparrow has taken over 100 rooks and whilst I was with her she took quite amazingly a hooded crow. Carrion crows really are a dangerous quarry for her as they are stronger and often bigger than rooks. They're not ones for giving easily and of she were to make a choice it would always be rook. However, in the excite-

ment of a dramatic chase she took a 'hoodie'. Seeing an excellent slip from the car we drove past the small feeding group of rook in a field, making a mental note of the quality of flight they would provide. Turning the car round we endeavoured to drive back this time with a slip from the window in mind. The hedge was quite tall and thick. Seeing the exact spot which provided a gap in the hedge, we drove past and slipped her. The car screamed to a halt and Tommy leapt out shouting "she's got a 'hoodie' ". As I

pulled the car into the side of the road and jumped out it was to see Tom hurling himself through a thick Beech hedge with briars running through it, desperate to get to the little sparrow in mortal combat with the hooded crow.

There she was with her prize neatly held and expertly done. Tommy was ecstatic. A real triumph for the little one and he was fairly sure a first for and Iris Sparrowhawk.

As he walked along the hedge side looking for an easier way out the joy of her flight, coupled with her evident ability was evident by the smile on his face. A wee dram was called for; in fact several!

Alice is like all spars, just stunning to look at. It is her look and intent that captivate a falconer. Alice does what all spars are capable of, the reason she is memorable is the devotion spent in her flying and management. She is fortunate in that she has an exceptionally talented falconer as her guardian.

For the record Alice has taken: 100 rooks, 20 feral pigeons, 2 wood pigeons, 14 pheasants - one of which was a mature cock, 6 magpie (her favourite quarry when a choice is optional) and has only ever bothered with blackbirds on two occasions.

If you would like to experience the "Alice Factor" and see her and other hawks flown in beautiful surroundings contact Tommy Byrne who will provide excellent holiday accommodation. If you ever needed a reason to visit Ireland, you've now got one of the very best.

For Holiday Information  
Tommy and Mary Byrne.  
Woodlands  
Ardeatin  
Co Carlow  
Ireland  
00353 55815.



*Alice plucking a hooded crow. The first one she has ever caught and probably a first for an Irish Sparrowhawk.*

# Scented Candles Kill Pet Birds!

by Monica Sudds Certified Avian Specialist

President Beakers Parrot Society

Iowa State Coordinator for the American Federation of Aviculture

Lost: One Peach-faced Lovebird; One Rare Lutino Lovebird; One Quaker Parrot. Birds valued at over \$400.00.

Kenny & Judy Ford, of Missouri Valley, Iowa, went out and purchased several fragrances of GLADE=AB CANDLE SCENTS and one Walmart brand scented candle.

Kenny thought they would freshen their home during the long winter months without fresh air. The candles were burned frequently for 2 days before their first lovebird died. The second lovebird died later that evening. The Quaker was acting strangely the third day and by that afternoon, was also dead.

Kenny and Judy were devastated at the loss of their pets. The symptoms were shakiness/trembling, inability to perch, then death. The time between the first sign of shakiness and death was a matter of a couple to a few hours.

The candles had not been burned since the night before when the Quaker "Bob" succumbed in the morning.

Kenny and Judy loved their pets like children. Bob, the Quaker, was their pride and joy. Every time Kenny would come out to my store, he would tell me of all the new things Bob had learned to do and say. He was one really proud 'parrot dad'.

So, I began to make some phone calls. I called several different divisions of the company whose candles the couple had purchased. I spoke with Lee Langsley, in the medical issues department, of SC Johnson Wax. He gave me some other numbers to contact. No one seemed to have any answers.

Finally, I was contacted by Carey Manderfield, senior toxicologist, at SC Johnson Wax. From this conversation, I found that there was no one named Lee Langsley associated with the company. The person in the Medical Issues department who gave me this name had given me a phony name. There is, however, a person in the department named Lee Swanson, I was told.

I explained the situation to Mr. Manderfield. We spoke at length about bird's delicate respiratory systems and the validity of the claim. Mr. and Mrs. Ford had already checked into the possibility of Carbon Monoxide poisoning, which seemed to be the only other possibility of why the birds had died so quickly. Mr. Manderfield did confess that they have not tested the products in question with birds. Mr. Manderfield promised to get back to me, with a response from the company, within a week. It's been almost 2 weeks and I've yet to hear from the company in any form. I also contacted a friend in Vancouver, B.C., Canada,

Gillian Willis, who is a toxicologist, about the products being used in the Ford's home.

Although it doesn't pertain to the candles specifically, the information I received is quite pertinent. The candles have a higher concentration of the volatile (essential) oils than the plug-ins contain and it is released into the atmosphere much more quickly. Ms. Willis was quite helpful and provided the

following information :

Glade Plug-ins contain:

Fragrances > 90%

Thickeners 3 - 6%

The fragrances are a mixture of volatile (essential) oils. The majority of these oils can cause either stimulation or depression of the central nervous system, as well as possible irritation to the eyes, nose and upper respiratory tract, depending on the oil and concentration used. Birds are very susceptible to the effects of inhaled volatile toxins, including essential oils.

I have a report on file of a woman who experienced marked respiratory tract irritation caused by excessive use of Glade Plug-ins in her home "to keep it smelling fresh."

More recently, I was consulted on a case involving two cockatiels that presented to my avian vets. One bird had been lethargic for a few days and was brought into the clinic for assessment. The owners brought in it's mate to keep it company during hospitalization. Over a period of hours, both birds became progressively lethargic, could not stand, developed hyperventilation and respiratory distress.

Despite aggressive intensive care treatment, both birds died within a minute of one another, within 24 hours of presentation to the clinic. Necropsy revealed congestion in the lungs. There were no other significant findings.

Heavy metal poisoning was considered and ruled out radiographically. After an extensive investigation into the possible cause of death in the two birds, (one being apparently healthy prior to being brought into the clinic) the cause of death was likely due to exposure, during transport in the motor vehicle, to TWO pine-scented impregnated paper air fresheners. The length of exposure was approximately one hour, in a closed vehicle. Clinical manifestations in both birds were consistent with pine oil inhalation exposure.

The take-home message is that any volatile oil (fragrance) has the potential for causing illness and possible death in birds.

Obviously, the concentration in a product and length of exposure are factors to be considered. Products containing a high

concentration of volatile oils, as in Glade Plug-Ins, should be avoided completely.

Gillian Willis

Vancouver, B.C.

The Glade candles that were involved in the 3 day period, at the Ford's home, were Vanilla, Peach, Potpourri, Cinnamon and one Walmart brand scented candle, Spiced Apple.

As I mentioned earlier, Judy and Kenny have ruled out every other possibility. They performed Carbon Monoxide checks all over their house and it showed nothing, until they lit one of the candles and sat it next to the tester for a few minutes. The indicator went into the lethal range.

Now, if it was the Carbon Monoxide level that killed the birds, or the volatile essential oil fumes, we can't be 100% sure. I can attest to the fact that the birds were in apparent good health before this situation occurred.

The birds were all in separate rooms when they succumbed. There was a candle burning at different times in all of the rooms, so there is not one specific fragrance that could have been at fault.

What I expected from my phone calls, was the possibility of getting warning labels displayed on the various products that could be causing harm to, or the death of, our pet birds. I have had no response, as promised, from the company. So, I must assume that they have no plans to attach warning labels to their products at this time and that they are not sharing our serious concerns.

Many manufacturers have started making their cleaning products 'more pleasing' to the senses by including these (fragrances) essential oils.

The bottom line is to protect yourself and be aware of the possible hazard these products could cause to the health of your pet birds. Volatile (essential) oils are in many products that we frequently use in our homes.

**Editors note:** When I received this article I hesitated about printing it and it has sat on the computer for some time. However on re-reading it I decided it was suitable for inclusion not least because I bought an air-freshener for our car the other day. I have since thrown it out! Also young birds are brought into the home when being hand-reared or when ill or just when wet or being fed or for marring, so please take note!

Don't dismiss this because the birds involved were parrots etc.

# Lady's Luck

Coccidiosis - a growing threat to birds of prey.

Lyn Wilson

Back in August I became the proud owner of a female peregrine/saker. Due to the fact that I wasn't too well when I picked her up it was about three days before I started any serious handling. She had been fed on her block and had eaten a little. As she was just out of an aviary, this years bird I wasn't too worried about her. After a couple of days manning she began to eat off the fist and everything seemed to be progressing normally. In hindsight there were things about her that were not quite right, but at the time, her being a new bird of unknown temperament and breeding etc., I didn't think too much of it. She didn't bate very much and never attempted to bite. The most she did was to lean back on her block and open her beak as a threat. As the days progressed I was aware that her food intake was lower than it should be. Although she seemed quite keen to eat when I first picked her up, after about a dozen mouthfuls she would refuse to eat any more. We tried all sorts of food, quail, grown on chicken, rat, rabbit, pheasant and chicks. Nothing made any difference. I noticed that she showed a marked preference for flesh and refused to take any casting 'flicking' this onto the floor. Despite feeding her three times a day she continued to lose weight. The more I thought about it the more I was convinced she was unwell.

I arranged to take her to the vets and on a Saturday morning we drove down to Gloucester to Neil Forbes and she was diagnosed with Coccidiosis. By this time I had had her for just over two weeks. Baytrill was prescribed and after administering the required amount on three alternative days via a crop tube, she showed a marked improvement. All the same it took a good week to ten days for her to regain anything like a substantial amount of weight. As she started to look better I began her training with short hops to the fist. When I felt she was fit enough her training started in earnest. She flew readily to the lure at four ounces above what her weight bottomed out at and would still fly, although a little half heartedly, at another three quarters of an ounce above that. In retrospect she had dropped to a terrifyingly low weight, and in such a short space of time.

Now, I had a bird which was healthy and well on the way to becoming fit. As I want her as a rook hawk she was flown from day one to a black lure, dead rooks were used sometimes in place of the lure and they were also thrown high up in the air for her to catch. All of this she did without hesitation, but never with the kind of enthusiasm I could have wished for. Straight lining, no problem, she will

come as far as you like, but show her a live rook in a field and that is a different matter. She is not bothered by them and on a couple of occasions headed off across the tops of some trees where they were sitting and made them take to the air. But she will not chase one. Dropping her weight, by even a quarter of an ounce, would cause her to run out of energy very quickly, and on some days she flew really well and on others it seemed she couldn't be bothered.

Her diet was still very varied and she was always fed whole food. If she has rabbit for any length of time she has a vitamin supplement otherwise she is fed a high quality food. So it was decided it was time for another mute sample. Hey presto! She is still carrying around coccidiosis in her system. So more baytrill, but this time a different sort and on consecutive days.

Now crop tubing an ill bird is one thing and it was relatively easy last time. But crop tubing a fit bird is (or at least in this case is) entirely different. The casting and tubing was not really a problem but baytrill, they tell me, tastes absolutely foul! Lady thought so also and promptly sicked the whole lot back up and I ended up wearing most of it. Now what? I rang Jemima and she advised mixing it with some baby food and tubing her with that. David duly went shopping but could only find Spaghetti Bolognese, or Vegetable Casserole. So there we are. Stumped. Then he has this bright idea. "How about chicken liver? We can mash it." "Even better than that," I say "I can put it in the liquidiser" and so we did. We filled the syringe about a quarter of the way, via the tube, with liquid chicken liver and then mixed the baytrill in with about a teaspoon of the liver. This we then pulled up the tube and down it went, but best of all, it stayed there! We tubed her again the following day and hoped she would then have a clear mute sample the next time I send one to Neil.

After a few days rest her training resumed and all

seemed to go well but after a couple of weeks the same problems presented themselves. Also she started sitting and no amount of coaxing could induce her to put in more than two or three stoops at a time. Also she was eating less, regardless of what or how much food she was offered.

So, another mute sample! No surprise to find that she still has it. Once again the same treatment is called for. By now she is becoming very aggressive when cast, it is obvious that she experiences substantial trauma. If we have to we will look for different ways of getting the Baycox into her. But luckily the fourth mute sample came back clear.

Training will resume shortly at spring rooks and we will keep you posted as to her progress.

Lady is part of a research project into coccidiosis and will have a mute sample checked once a month. There seems to be quite a high incidence of it this year and it is also becoming resistant to the usual forms of treatment. Hence the different dosage and timing of the doses for Lady's second lot of baytrill. If you have a bird with coccidiosis or one that has had it, it may be worth getting in touch with Neil to see if you can help with the research. It is usually seen in young birds which have been stressed, usually by the move to a new home. In very young birds they can die within six hours of presenting symptoms. It is especially prevalent in Merlins.



# A FLYING VISIT



TEXT & PHOTO'S BY DAVID & LYN WILSON

The thing I love most about Falconry is watching longwings fly. Their aerial ability and agility gives me such a buzz. I have seen birds stoop to the lure and have been lowland game hawking both of which are really good, but an invitation to Scotland from Martin Jones, to see grouse hawking held promise of greater things.

On our first evening we were introduced to Count Umberto Caproni, Ferante "Fricci" Pratesi, and Fulco Tosti, and their partners. It was arranged that we would go out with them the following afternoon.

We met them at their Lodge at 2pm to find they were just putting the last birds in the wagons. Umberto

was flying Laura and Olgina, both eyass peregrines Ferante, or 'Fricci' as everyone calls him, was flying Nicotina an intermewed 3/4 peregrine x 1/4 barbury and Raydua, an intermewed Brookei, and Fulco was flying Martina and Johnny, intermewed eyass peregrines.

After a 20 minute drive we reached the moor we were to fly over. I am unsure whether to call it a hill or mountain. It certainly felt like a mountain as we climbed its steep sides. As we arrived though high above its peak five buzzards were circling. "This," said Umberto "will probably have driven the grouse down towards the bottom."

The birds were put on the cage and the dog, Juniper, was loosed. It is impossible

*Above: Scottish scenery. Everything you imagine and then some.*

*Below: Umberto and Raydua.*



*Above: Three of the falcons on the cage.*

to do anything in this terrain without a dog. The heather is thick and springy and makes for heavy walking (and in my case much falling over), and huge distances have to be covered to find the grouse.

Juniper, it turned out, was an exceptional dog and worked hard and well for the whole afternoon. Each of the birds was flown in turn. Juniper

came on point and the bird was put up, working hard, climbing and gaining height. Problems arose as the grouse were running in front of the dog. She would follow but sometimes lose them or bump them up. Nevertheless, we had some good flights.

Towards the end of the afternoon Juniper came on point and Raydua was put up. She disappeared over the brow of the hill and vanished out of sight. She was gone for about 20 minutes and then someone said "there she is". We all automatically looked in the direction which

she had disappeared, "no, no, up there!" It took 3-4 minutes to find her in the sky. A tiny black dot. I knew that I must not take my eyes off her, otherwise in trying to find her again I would probably miss the stoop. It actually took a good 8-10 minutes for her to come into position for the flush.

The thing that is seemingly forgotten in all this is the dog. She has now been holding point for over half an hour. Given that the grouse have been creeping, we are still not assured of anything.

Eyes still welded to the dot in the sky, Umberto shouts her down. By now I am barely breathing, anticipating what must surely be one of the most magnificent sights in the bird of prey world.

Suddenly she pointed herself earthward and down she came, cutting through the air, this dot getting bigger and bigger. Wings held back in classic peregrine shape, the dog was sent in and up got the grouse! Juniper had done her



*Above: Juniper on point.*



*Above: Just off the fist and already shifting!*

stuff and held it for nearly 40 mins. The falcon struck the grouse on the rise and it was killed instantly. Only then did I exhale and realise that I had been moved to tears. It seemed as if for a few minutes the world had ceased to exist except for this falcon in the sky and myself.

Afterwards I asked Umberto how high Raydua was "About 800 metres" was the reply. (About 2,500 feet).

Much is written about Grouse Hawking, about everything coming together. It was evident from earlier flights that it is a difficult process. As we found out subsequently, to get the dog, falcon and grouse synchronised is hugely difficult. Grouse running can cause lost or false points. That's if you can find them in the first place. Take too long to serve the falcon and it may lose pitch or get fed up and disappear. The grouse may flush too early.

Even then, when it all seems to be

right the falcon may not acknowledge the grouse.

Not all falcons make good grouse hawks, not many make exceptional ones. The same can be said of the dogs. As the season goes on the grouse become wily and nature is weeding out the fittest ones to survive the winter ahead. By mid-Sept, this process is well under way.

So, for us to pick one day out of many, to head out onto the moor and see what must surely have been a 'perfect flight', I believe lady luck must have been with us.

Our thanks must go to Martin for the invitation and for introducing us to Umberto, 'Fricci' and Fulco and arranging the day with them

Also to Umberto, 'Fricci' and Fulco themselves for allowing us to go along and witness what for me, was one of the most memorable flights I have ever seen.

*Below: Sweet success, bringing a much deserved reward.*



# REVERSED SEXUAL DIMORPHISM IN BIRDS OF PREY OR 'WHY ARE THE GUYS SO SMALL?' - RELATIVELY SPEAKING Linda Appleby

The very first time I came across a bird of prey - a European Eagle Owl weighing in at over six and a half pounds - I was told that it was female and, therefore, in common with most birds of prey, appreciably larger than a male of the same species. In a world in which the male is so often larger than the female, I wondered why this should be so. Why do birds of prey buck the trend?

With the exception of birds of prey and other predatory groups of birds, reversed sexual size dimorphism (RSD) occurs infrequently and then, by and large, only in birds with reversal of sex roles or special mating systems. Whilst there is general agreement that in the latter case the occurrence of RSD is attributable to sexual selection through competition among females for mates, there is no consensus as to why RSD occurs in raptors. A number of explanations have been put forward, but none has received acceptance across the board.

It is thought that there is something specifically in the nature of being a raptor that is linked to the development of RSD, since RSD has evolved independently in different lineages of raptors on a pronounced scale and in other predatory birds to some degree. But which aspects of being a raptor have led to such size differences coming about by way of natural selection? And why should it be that the male is the smaller?

## Well-defined Parental Roles

Differences in size will help reduce or avoid competition for food between the sexes - or so the explanation goes. For instance, the male Sparrowhawk takes mostly birds of tit-size, though it is capable of taking small thrushes, while the female's range of prey starts at thrush-size and goes up to the size of pigeon. So no intra-species competition for food. But that can only be part of the answer, since there is a significant period of time when the male and female do not hunt at the same time, and are not, therefore, competing for food, during the breeding season. The reduction in competition for food at times outside the breeding season is probably more a happy spin-off benefit rather than the cause of or driver for sexual size dimorphism.

Raptors are strictly monogamous and the mates have well-defined and markedly different parental roles.

The male is the provider of food to the female during mating, incubation and when the offspring are young. Whilst he will relieve the female of the nest for short periods of time, in which she is able to exercise and eat, the female does most of the incubation; she broods; takes guard of the nest; and, feeds the young with the food brought to the nest by the male. At this time the male hunts for all



Two female Lanner Falcons.

At the extremes of weight ranges, the female Lanner Falcon can be as much as 80 per cent heavier than her male counterpart. On average, however, the male weighs about 69 per cent of the weight of the female.

Weight ranges: Males 17.5oz - 20oz. Females 24.5oz - 31.5oz.

(source: Cade 1982)

Photo: Courtesy of Daniel Ashman

This period happens to coincide with a time when the young of prey are first venturing out into the world, giving the male access, therefore, not only to the young of his usual prey, but also to the young of the regular prey of his mate. As he needs prey which can easily be carried back to the nest, this situation is ideal. Then as his young start to grow, his capability to feed his partner and offspring becomes stretched. At this time, the offspring are large enough to be left alone and the female takes up the major hunting role, her power enabling her more easily to satisfy the demands of the young and to take prey which by then have grown larger.

So sexual dimorphism in size maximises the range of prey which may be taken by a pair in the breeding period and results in a coincidence between the time at which prey within that range are available and the ability of each partner to take it. And this is, to my mind, the key. At other times it gives rise to the reduction or avoidance of competition for food between sexes of the same species.

But why has natural selection favoured smaller males, or to put it the other way around, larger females?

## Female Dominance

Generally sexual dimorphism in size is related to mating behaviour and it has been suggested that female birds of prey need to be larger than males so as to assert social dominance over their partners as part of the process of maintaining their distinct roles in the breeding period. An obvious advantage of this dominance is that it ensures that in times of food scarcity the male parts with his prey for

the good of the brood rather than keeping it for himself alone. But this explanation has not found universal favour, for the dominance of the female during the breeding season is, regardless of sexual size differences, the general rule among almost all monogamous birds.

Recognising perhaps, the deficiency of the social dominance argument in that it is based on a feature common to monogamous birds generally and not just raptors, an additional spin to it, is the suggestion that female raptors must be larger than males so as to exert over them the required degree of social dominance, because both sexes are capable of inflicting serious injury on each other and without it they would be likely to do so. This would mean that those raptors which are the most powerful and most capable of killing large prey should show the most pronounced RSD because they are the most capable of seriously harming a mate, and raptors less well-armed, in terms of talons and beak, and which prey on small quarry, such as insects or rodents, should have little RSD. Whilst there is, broadly speaking, a relationship between the relative size of talons, feet and beaks and prey size and the degree of RSD, which supports this hypothesis (it is more pronounced in 'attackers' such as the Sparrowhawk, than in the 'searchers' such as the Buzzard and Kestrel\*\*) this may be as much related to the nature of the prey-base of the species and the size-range of the prey within it, as to the need for significant size variations in the more rapacious birds. Can it really be the case that without female dominance the male would routinely attack its mate or off-

spring? There are many examples of other predators where the male is larger than the female and this simply does not happen. Indeed, such behaviour would run counter to the primary instinct to reproduce and enhance species populations.

The degree of RSD varies from species to species perhaps because some aspects of RSD, such as differences in the size of wings, tail, beak, feet and talons may be more directly influenced by factors of natural selection associated with requirements for effective pursuit and capture of prey, and because adapted differences in mass may have become exaggerated in some species, as a consequence of the males and females being able to take different quarry.

So, if it is not necessarily about dominance, what are the advantages of large females?

#### Big is Beautiful

In mammals RSD has been explained on the basis that big mothers make better mothers. Big is beautiful when it comes to mothering (not something that I intend to share with my own mother who is barely five feet tall!). This is because a large female is more likely to produce a greater number of surviving offspring and there is no reason why this thinking should not also apply to birds of prey. A large raptor female (relative to a small female of the same species) will produce larger eggs, which will hatch larger chicks, which will be better able to survive. The larger female will have a greater thermal capacity and resilience to cold weather and will, therefore, be able to lay earlier in the season than her smaller counterpart and she will make a more efficient incubator of eggs. The larger

female will be able to store energy and, if need be, go without food for a longer time during incubation and care of young in the nest than a small female and, finally, the larger female will make a better defender of the nest.

But there are limitations, of course, as to just how large the female can become. One significant limiting factor will be the male's ability to provide the required amount of food during breeding up to the point where the female re-commences hunting. A large female requires more energy than a small one and since the male obtains nearly all the food for himself, his mate and young during the breeding season, her large size is a burden on him. This suggests not only that the adaptive advantages of RSD must be significant, but also that it is the size of the female that has increased, rather than the male's size having been reduced.

#### Conclusions

As I said at the outset, there is no broad-based consensus as to the causes of RSD in birds of prey and it is clearly difficult at times to distinguish between cause and effect, essential characteristic and mere consequence. However, it seems to me that the primary advantage of the occurrence of RSD is the increase in breadth and diversity of prey made available to a pair coincidental with the time at which each mate is best-able to exploit that prey-base when breeding - that most critical of times both in the life of a bird and in furtherance of the species. Female dominance and the avoidance or reduction of competition for food within species outside of the breeding period, though the importance of the latter should not be underestimated, are more in the nature of conse-

quences of RSD.

And as to how it comes about?

I think that when assessing the development of RSD the starting point should be the male, whose size is adapted to allow him to catch the most available sizes and kinds of prey with the least competition from other species. It would appear that the female's size is then adjusted upward to the degree that best adapts her to her mothering role and as a supplemental provider of food to the young late in the breeding season, when the male has depleted the range of prey for which he is best suited. And so there are two key elements in the natural selection process which has led to RSD. Firstly, the mortality of ineffective hunters. Hunting is the severest, most critical test and survival depends upon good hunting techniques and practice. Successful hunters are more likely to be of the optimum hunting size for their sex and species and good hunters will be better able to provide for themselves, their partners and brood. And secondly, the higher productivity of the larger female during the breeding period, who will produce strong offspring in greater numbers and be better equipped to ensure their survival, both in her role as nest-defender and then later as food-provider.

So it's not that the guys are so small, in common with at least one falconer I know, they are perfectly proportioned; it's that the girls are big mommas!

Sources of Information: The Falcons of the World - Tom Cade 1982, Birds of Prey of the World - Eric Hoskings 1987, Understanding the Bird of Prey - Nick Fox 1995.

\*\*Nick Fox utilises the 'attackers' and 'searchers' distinction.

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# Scottish Hawking Club 4 Day Field meet at Thornhill.



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*Spectacular views over the Lowther hills*

The Scottish Hawking Clubs' annual 4-day meeting and AGM took place on the Buccleuch estate, at Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, in southwest Scotland. This is the clubs first visit to this part of Scotland for a 4-day meeting and what fine hawking country it is. The ground we were allocated stretched from good stock rearing and arable ground down by the river Nith, right up to the high moorland of the Lowther Hills, this amounted to about 5 sq km. Our accommodation was the very nicely appointed Trygony House Hotel. They catered for nearly all our needs, the closing of the bar to early was the only complaint!

The weather was going to be our main contender, it had been raining incessantly in Scotland for months, (and has since for



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*Harris on her well deserved rabbit*



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*'Devil Dog' on point*

months more) so the ground and woods were soaking, where would all the game be hiding? And could we find it?

**Day 1 Friday**, and the English contingent were ready and waiting early. They were allocated to the north west corner of the ground with steeply sloping hills rising from the raging river Nith below, the ground had a mixture of open pastures, to bracken covered hills and a deep partly tree covered gully. The quarry was mainly rabbit although a few pheasants had been spotted on an earlier recce, (but they were nowhere to be seen on the day). A second group of longwingers headed for the high moorland in search of the wily grouse. Although mixed quarry field meetings is not always a good place to fly falcons at grouse, the Scottish Hawking Club tries to accommodate for these specialists.

We were not allowed to tread on the

hallowed ground of the driven grouse shooter, but there was a chance albeit a small one, of finding the odd bird on the edge of our little bit of moor. We also had a little contingency plan if the moor was totally bare! Our dogs worked very well for us, but not a bird was to be found, until that is we worked the very top and last bit. A point was made, the dog on our ground, the grouse over the fence on forbidden territory. We could see the grouse watching our every move, with necks erect, they obviously had never been hunted before. With the fence being on the highest ground no one wished to fly for fear of mincing there falcon on the wires, so the dog was sent to flush, with the only covey of the day disappearing over the horizon.



**Day 2 Saturday**, when the majority of members arrived, opened like the heavens, in a deluge. Things looked very bleak at breakfast, but being the optimists that us falconers always are we waited, expecting the best. It didn't come by lunchtime so a lot of hawkers headed for Dumfries for some recreational shopping with the family! The few that remained were rewarded with clearing weather in the early afternoon, 2 groups set off, one to a deep long gully with rabbits and pheasants, the other to some hill ground spotted the previous day, with loads of rabbits. The first group got to the gully quite quickly, decamped from the cars, walked a couple of hundred yards and were hit by an almighty storm which soaked both falconers and birds, they returned to the hotel suitably chastised for their foolhardiness. The second group took longer to reach their destination and missed the soaking, by still being in their cars while it raged. Dodging the showers this group had a good time, the wind gave the birds some good lift, with the Golden



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*Ready for the moor; L-R: A. Knowles-Brown, D Lilley, R. Watt, M. Calvin*

never got in a good enough stoop to catch anything. He played in the wind for about 20 minutes, but soon came over when the dog went on point. A rabbit was flushed and after a couple of stoops he had his bunny.

The longwing group went out in the afternoon, and were fortunate to disturb a pair of grouse gritting on the track to the moor, they were marked down and a careful plan was organised. For once things went according to plan the dog came on point, Michael Calvin put up his hybrid Hal, he as usual got to a very good height, the birds flushed the right way, the falcon stooped, and in almost text book style a grouse was in the bag. It looked so easy, but doesn't it

always when things go right.

**Day 4 Monday**, most had gone home on Sunday but a few die-hards remained to finish the weekend. Two groups went out, one to the low ground after the elusive pheasant, the other shortwing group and the Eagle went to the high ground where there were rabbits a plenty. The wind was quite slack which didn't impress the Eagle much, but when a squally shower appeared the wind improved greatly. The Eagle soon caught a couple of rabbits so the rest of the time was spent getting points in the deep heather for the Harris Hawks. The rabbits sat well and many points were had using the 2 Brittany's and a GSP. The hill made for some really fast and stylish stoops by the Harris Hawks, so many in fact that by lunch all the birds had had multiple flights and kills. It was decided to head back to the cars, which was just as well as the weather deteriorated rapidly from then on. This meeting may not go down in the annals of Scottish Hawking Club history, but tremendous fun and camaraderie was had over these 4 days, which is after all what falconry is all about.

Here's looking forward to the next time.



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*Peter Burns' female Goshawk with her prize.*

Eagle, and 3 Harris Hawks catching a few rabbits between them.

**Day 3 Sunday**, 2 shortwing groups went out in clear but showery weather, one to the deep gully of the previous day, the other to some woods where 300 ex layer pheasants had been released a month earlier. Although these were being fed to keep the pheasants locally the weather had once again thwarted things, birds were certainly being found but it was hard work. Some good flights were had and 3 pheasants and a number of rabbits were put in the bag by the end of the day.

The young Golden Eagle went to Black Hill on the East boundary of the ground for those with a bit more stamina who wished to walk a few hills. The wind was good and the bird went up well, quarry was thin on the ground so the eagle which is in its first hawking season did a bit of ranging and self-hunting, fortunately he



Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

*A successful hunt with the eagle.*

# Hawk Talk

## John Matcham

It is usually about the end of October and on through November that most of the telephone calls I receive are about problems with unhealthy Birds. Too fat, too thin, lazy and lunatic, wing tip oedema, bumble foot, and always the fault of the birds. In fact, never the fault of the keeper and all of the above can be avoided by only slightly improving the general conditions the birds are kept in.

When we as humans work too hard on a poor diet, snacking between breaks on junk food, then return home to what maybe just as stressful and uncomfortable surroundings, we too can become weak, tired, unfit and eventually we will also ail for something or other. Sometimes it's just a common cold or a skin allergy, but it could be as bad as cancer or worse. We are affected psychologically both in the long and short term. The psychological damage often takes far longer to repair than the physical. Therefore it should not be too difficult to see how a bird can be affected by similar elements in its life style.

A bird of prey has a metabolic rate far faster than a human, for example a Harris Hawk weighing 11lb10oz could eat 5oz of day old chicks at one sitting with ease, give a couple of hours and I'm sure it could manage more if hungry. That's about 1/5 of its body weight even without second helpings. I weigh around 12stone 1/5 of my weight would mean eating about five hundred and thirty day old chicks (Yuk) or 1kg (33lbs) of Steak. I tried a kilo of steak once, when I was a bit younger and I did manage to get it all in, but there was no room for chips and I had to lie on the floor for some time afterwards. Imagine doing it every day of the year, I would probably weigh closer to 30 stone. For a bird this would mean flight was out of the question. Often we hear complaints about the diets given to captive birds of prey, there are however other considerations to be made.

Lets just accept for now that food and housing are 5 star. What else could be going seriously wrong?

### Underfoot

#### Gloves and Jesses!

Perching birds has to be one of the most important points of care that is given the least amount of attention. The biggest problems I have seen is that many perch builders have only kept a limited number of species, have taken their designs from old designs that are tried and tested but not really understood them and then used modern materials that just don't have that craftsmanship feeling about them. They just don't bend; they don't have the same natural look or

feel about them. So when is a perch not a perch?

Although it may not be the first stop for a bird's foot in the relationship with the falconer I would like to look at the glove, Jesses and Aylmeri first.

The Aylmeri should be of the finest soft leather and fitted with a good quality eyelet. The eyelet should be fitted from the outside with the securing rings on the inside of the legs. This will reduce wear on the Jesse's and ease installing Jesses when new.

The Jesses can only be fitted to the correct length, if the correct weight glove is being worn to suit the particular species being handled. It is impossible to lock the swivel of Merlin through the fingers on a glove used for a large hawk or eagle unless the Jesses are too long. Jesses that are too long on a falcon will straddle the correct size block top. To reduce the quantity of leather in the glove so that the fingers are smaller, the glove for a Merlin would normally have the second, third and fourth fingers removed. You wouldn't wish to use this glove for a Gos. As the Merlin's foot is so small, thin leather can be used so that the bird has a comfortable spread of foot; this produces a gentle grip for balance and reduces stress on the bird. Equally the Eagle would be very unstable on a fleshy fist and arm with little broadness to the glove and would prefer a much heavier glove for stability. After all it goes without saying an Eagle landing on a twig would probably look rather embarrassed crashing to the floor. Equally an 8" long Jesse on a Merlin is easy to hold on a heavy glove, but it's too heavy for flight and uncomfortable on the perch being far too cumbersome. Birds that bait with Jesses, that just pass the tip of their tails as they bait (too long), will soon remove the tips and leave a tatty mess.

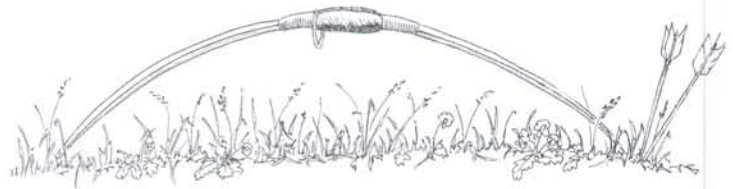
Correct Jesse length can be a bone of contention between many Falconers, if you're just starting out and buying pre - made Jesses, it's a good idea buying them from a Falconer who's been making them commercially for at least ten years. Experience really counts. Personally I would

like to see everyone who keeps a bird making his or her own Jesses.

The correct weight of glove will produce a Jesse length that locks the swivel perfectly behind the second and third fingers, for most birds. Eagle Jesses will obviously appear to be too long when on the fist if made to the correct length, as the human hand is too small to create the perfect sized perch for the large bird. Eagle sleeves are rarely used to protect the handler, but more often to beef up the perch for comfort. A grumpy Eagle will settle very quickly if it's comfortable.

#### Bow Perches!

The Bow perch is or was exactly that,



a 'bow perch'

Drawing: Richard Rossitter

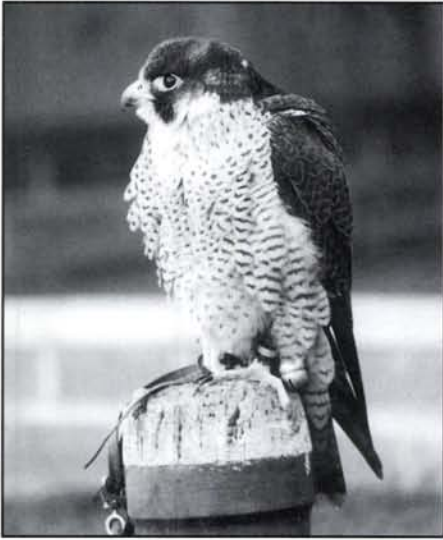
an archers bow with the ends stuck in the ground. The bird would sit upon the grip; the leash of leather would have been tied directly to the bow or to a ring made of a woven material, reed, willow or a husk of some description. Being long with a natural slow bend the ring would pass easily from one side to the other if the bird decided to move. As the length of time spent on the perch would have been relatively short, the surface of the grip would not adversely affect the birds' feet even if it were too hard. Sadly most of the perches I saw at the Falconers fair this year and on sale in many Falconry Centres, were not Bow perches, but Semicircular perches with steep sides. Even with the correct length leash (see Neil Forbes' article in the last issue), and the right weight of ring, the bird is incapable of pulling the ring over the perch in one smooth movement without hindrance. A simple test



Bow perch with moulded rubber perching

when buying a perch is to tie a leash to the ring at the correct length, as if the bird were sitting on it. Then use your fist in place of the bird and pull your fist down and away to the opposite side of the bow, if the ring does not pass over the perch smoothly do not buy the perch. The next wing beat from the bird would have crashed into the perch causing feather damage or worse.

Equally important is the space beneath the lower cross bar ideally it should not exist, a wing caught under here is a broken one. I rarely stand on one side of the fence or another when it comes to falcon-



*Block with a cork top.*

ry products; most have both their good and bad points. However when it comes to Bow perches I have found only one maker that makes a true bow to his perches, Ray Prior. At the Fair I saw many good ideas when it came to perch tops including a frost proof and stimulating stippled top, made of rubber. But it was built on to a semicircular perch. A travelling bow should not slide around, so glue



*Arab style block with AstroTurf inset*

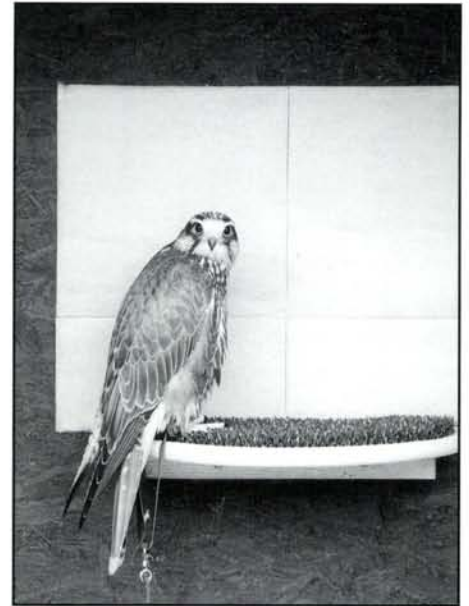
rubber to the underside of the feet and it should be heavy enough to stay firmly planted to the floor of your car in an acci-

dent, if it isn't bolt it down or better still use a safe box for transportation.

### **Block Perches!**

The block is supposed to imitate a rock or ledge and again although the bird may use the same spot to roost on a regular basis, in daylight hours to avoid predation or just harassment and when not feeding, it will usually rest on the wing at high altitude. Weather permitting the higher you go, the safer it gets. So our flat-footed feathered friends rarely get sore feet from sitting around too long. Rocks get colder at night and this does help reduce the possibility of infection to feet, bacteria like it warm. So plonking a Falcon on a block for twenty hours out of twenty-four requires the most luxurious rock we can fake. For years we have used many forms of wooden blocks and of various shapes and sizes, with some sort of covering on the top. I feel the best overall shape is the Arab block, with little or no side depth to collect mute that eventually runs down the Jesses and ends up on the swivel, this is unhealthy and unpleasant to handle. They are particularly good for messy Lanners. However the traditional Arab block uses staples or nails to fix a soft leather top. The staple heads can catch a Jesse and leave a bird dangling from a block top. Today most tops are made of cork and although I would like to find a better top for those Falcons, which choose to tear up cork, even so it remains the most versatile material that is fairly easy to keep clean. Plain wooden tops are too hard and cause hard skin areas on the feet of birds that can eventually split and lead to further problems, so if the top has fallen off or is worn out, replace it. A traditional block stem is turned on a lathe with a notch in the base that will catch the tethering ring when tying the leash. This helps to obtain the correct length leash, which should be hanging straight down to the ring without bends or excess leash, yet should not actually take up the weight of the ring. This is important so that should the bird go round in circles, the leash will not wrap around the stem but follow the bird. At the same time should the bird bate the weight of the ring will be felt instantly, so that the bird will realise once again that it is tethered and stop its attempt to fly. The size of the top is important in two ways, firstly so that the birds feet have plenty or room to spread evenly, I have seen some birds' on blocks were their digits overlap, the tops are simply too small. Likewise if a top is too large a small bird will have a hard time moving a correctly matched ring around the base and end up dangling over the top or stressed by the weight of the ring. This can also cause damage to tail feathers as the bird is standing too far forward on the perch. Ground spikes should be as long as you can get them in to the ground for security. The base should have a plate for the ring retention.

Cross or T-bars should never be used, the leash will always get caught unless the ground is soft enough to push them right underground.



*Shelf perch*

### **Other Perches!**

Blocks and Bows are the two most common perches used, but they are by no means the only answer to perching birds, so I would like to try and describe just a few more.

### **Ledges**

For falcons ledge perches are great, but they do need constructing well. A simple ledge fitted to a wall is not enough if the bird is to spend any length of time sitting on it. Unlike Hawks that will spray mute in all directions Falcons tend to drop in the same place. This has its advantages and should be capitalised on. Building a tray to place below the perch, it is easy to collect the mute and clean any medium such as sand or paper that is in the tray. At the same time a bird descending from a ledge perch is safely landing only a few inches below and never at risk of hanging. Hawks on ledge perches tend to turn around and spray mute up the wall and

eventually it ends up in their feathers usually tail first and unlike Falcons they don't like turning their backs on the world.

Another type of ledge perch is a long ledge. This is in effect the top few inches of a screen perch placed along a bench to prevent birds hanging as they would on a screen. Again a tray for mute is advisable.

### **Running**

I have perched Eagles between two tree trunks and large limestone rocks (about half a ton), with a tight strung steel wire or bar between them for a running ring, with some success. It is important to remember that the bird may fall over the extreme ends and care should be taken to ensure that the leash length is short enough to prevent this. It is also important to stop the bird travelling around the trunks at ground level; this system also requires a shock absorber in the leash if the bird is to travel any distance, so as to prevent any damage to legs. I remember seeing this method used on a project to release White Tailed Sea Eagles. Instead



*Ring perch*

of tree trunks a wooden apex construction was used reducing the risk of a bird hanging over the end and if they did go too far they could just climb back up again.

### Ring

Ring perches are little used these days, probably through lack of convenience. If well constructed and the perch is built to suit the individual bird's size (so it can not pass through the centre), I believe this to be a fairly good perch for a bird that is constantly trying to gain a higher perch place. It may feel uncomfortable at low level, so a very tall ring perch can be made with a disc above the tethering ring to prevent it going up the stem too far and so preventing long flights. Just like a falcon block, but taller. A friend of mine swears by this type of perch for his Gos. The disadvantage is picking up the bird. If it doesn't sit there quietly and wait for your approach, you could end up creating real problems, so not really for the inexperienced bird and handler. This should only be used for Hawks. Falcons with their long wings may find the almost vertical flight to the perch too stressful, especially if unfit. Therefore mounting a block three or four feet up is not a good idea. For high ring perches you will need two leashes one for tethering and the other for on the fist. I'm sure some problems do exist with this type of perch and again I would like to hear about them.

### Aviary

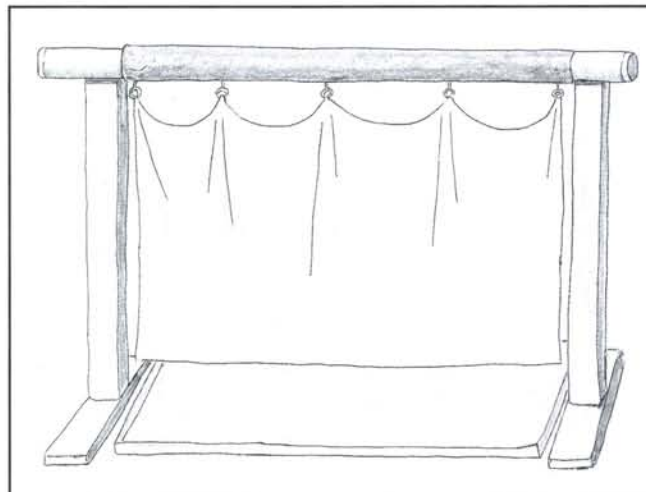
Aviary perches can be the cause of real long term problems, as more and more birds are bred in captivity the fewer of them are birds that have had any real handling, so curing foot problems in what are essentially wild captive bred birds can be a nightmare. It is too easy to think that any old log or branch is the perfect wild perch. Birds in the wild state do prefer certain trees for roosting for several

reasons, firstly safety from other predators, then perhaps comfort. I believe that they will also include a suitable wood for the cleaning on the beak which will in turn maintain the shape of the beak by wearing it down evenly as it grows, a wood that's too soft or too hard will have an adverse affect. Probably the most easily obtainable timber is pine, its great if it's alive and standing, but once it's felled and dead it's like sleeping on a sticky bed of nails in no time at all. Not exactly a comfy perch for the night and landing on those short hard spikes makes a good hole punch for feet. If you must use pine carefully remove all of the smaller twigs and branches until the main branch is smooth. Fruit wood such as apple is good for perching, as is willow. A large Willow branch stuck into damp ground may even take root. Should you decide to use timber normally used for building, be careful to cover it with a soft material, even seasoned pine is very hard once weathered. In any case perches should be changed

regularly to provide variation of grip, cleanliness, and comfort. It is important to point out that although Oak is obviously too hard it is also poisonous, as is Yew. Perches that are placed at each end of a large aviary serve not only as resting places but also to stop a bird hitting wire mesh or a wall and I would recommend using swing perches in these positions, not only does this act as a gentle braking system but also helps to exercise muscles used for balancing that are so often neglected in aviaries.

### Screen

I have a screen perch that I use for teaching purposes only. I would not rec-



*a screen perch.*

Drawing: Richard Rossitter

ommend the use of screen perches to anyone. This I am sure will have rattled some old school cages. Please remember that most Falconers spend far less time with their birds on a daily basis than ever before, purely because methods and equipment and the lower cost of birds, have allowed many more people to take

up falconry.

### Materials

Astroturf is one of those modern materials that is comfortable and kind to feet and is often used on shelf or ledge perches. However I feel its use on falcon blocks and bow perches to be hazardous, not being smooth the Astroturf has a tendency to catch a lightweight leash and cause to bird to hang from the block and prevents the ring passing over the bow. Another serious problem is cleaning, even blasted with a high-pressure washer and Vircon S, I still found serious infestation from bacteria and fly eggs underneath the Astroturf. Being porous it provides these pests with protection from thorough cleaning without dismantling the block or perch, replacement is often better if expensive.

Rubber is now being used, for both block tops and perches. It seems to have overcome the cleaning problems with Astro turf but beware of toxic materials often from recycled supplies. I look forward to more results from this product; if you have tried it please let me know how you're getting on with it.

Wood is traditional and when used correctly can rarely be faulted, avoid blocks made from soft woods they tend not to last once the varnish wears off, water and frost soon split them and they are then dangerous, a perfect way to trap a leash. Although hard wood is better for the construction of the block itself, it is important to remember that the birds feet should not come into contact with it, being hard like concrete it will lead to sore feet and worse, a good top should be used to prevent this. Never use any form of wooden fixing to retain a bird, the bird should always be finally tethered to steel or brass. Brass rings should be cast complete and not brazed, the joint is the weak spot and I have had them split in the past, the same can be said for thin steel rings so regular checks should be made as to the condition of rings.

Steel is used in almost every modern perch and as long as it is maintained it is reliable and obviously long lasting. There lies a problem, how to stop it rusting. Some are galvanised and will of course last much longer than the usual Hammerite coating. I have found a product that will rescue even the rustiest perch. Zinga is a zinc-based paint that loves to be painted on to rust. I painted an old barbecue in the garden two years ago with just a single coat, it's been outside in all weathers ever since and not a sign of rust and it's non toxic. Polish it with a wire brush and it even looks good to. It can only be pur-

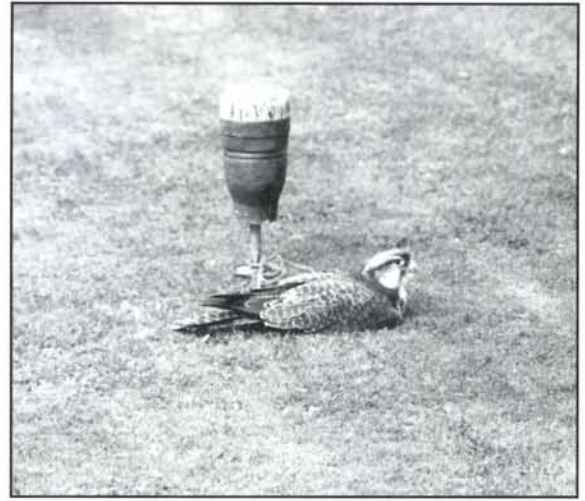
chased from Galvatec 01869 232800 and speak to Rick. The only real downer to steel is noise; a plastic tube around the main bow will reduce most noise. There are of course two sides to every coin and sometimes that noise of a perch can be an alert to danger, so don't rush out to silence your perch just yet.

After having chosen a good perch for your bird, just as important is where it's placed. The answer to this is far simpler. If a bird is placed on a perch just above ground level and it can see somewhere higher and therefore better to perch, it will bait! Think long and hard before picking the definitive spot after all the bird will.

There other types of perch and I'm sure someone somewhere is inventing another

as I write, if so please take note of some of the points I have made in this article. I know that having read it you are saying to yourself "ah but he should have mentioned X, Y & Z", I'm sure I should have and I wish I could have. But this article is 3,670 words long and four times longer than any other article on perches in any book on falconry I have read - and it's going in to a magazine. Amazing considering we give perches the least amount of attention when buying a bird.

Till next time happy hunting.  
John



*"Who needs a perch anyway?!"*

## NEW SURVEY SHOWS BARN OWLS STILL NEED HELP

The Barn Owl is still a rare bird that needs all the help it can get, a joint survey by the British Trust for Ornithology and The Hawk & Owl Trust has revealed. The three-year survey of Barn Owl numbers, which was sponsored by Bayer AG, Sorex Ltd and Zeneca Agrochemicals, has found an estimated 4,000 breeding pairs in the UK.

The survey approach used for Project Barn Owl incorporated a novel system for cross checking the results, and the whole survey was devised so that in 10 years time it can be repeated and the results compared. The hope is that the figures compiled from this three year survey will provide a new baseline for annual monitoring and a future 10-yearly survey.

"Our results confirm that the Barn Owl is still a very scarce species," said Mike Toms who co-ordinated the joint BTO/Hawk & Owl Trust Project Barn Owl survey. "Not only this, but it is clearly a species which is still under threat in many areas as nest sites and suitable hunting habitat continue to be lost. The conservation work already taking place needs to continue with increased efforts to enhance the UK landscape for this flagship species.

Monitoring work of the kind put forward as part of project Barn Owl will enable us to follow changes in the Barn Owl population and continue to assess how effective our conservation efforts are."

For the Project Barn Owl survey over 1,200 specially-trained volunteer fieldworkers carefully searched for signs of breeding owls on 900 randomly-selected survey areas in all parts of the UK. They did this in winter and summer for three years (to allow for natural variations in Barn Owl numbers because of annual fluctuations on their food supplies). The work took each volunteer an average of about 30 hours and their total efforts amounted to 11,000 hours - equivalent to six and a half working years, making this census quite possibly the most detailed and labour intensive for any single British bird.

An earlier census carried out by the Hawk and Owl Trust in the mid 1980s found

a similar number of Barn Owl pairs. It also revealed a dramatic drop of 70 per cent in the Barn Owl population since the 1930s when there were about 12,000 pairs in England and Wales alone. It suggested that Barn Owl had been affected by loss of feeding habitat and nesting sites, changes in farming practice, harsh winters and increasing road deaths.

The finding of the 1980s survey galvanised conservationists into action. During the last 13 years the Hawk and Owl Trust has been spearheading efforts nationwide to create and restore rough grassland feeding places and provide artificial nest sites where natural sites in barns and trees had become scarce.

Investigations carried out alongside the latest survey showed at least 30 per cent of Barn Owl nest sites in buildings had been lost since the mid 1980s census, mainly as a result of barn conversions or demolition. About 30 per cent of tree sites had also been lost, either because the trees had been felled or they had been damaged by wind. Site loss seemed to be associated with the loss of Barn Owls from the local area.

"Although the latest survey gives grounds for optimism that Barn Owl numbers may have at last stabilised after years of decline, we cannot be complacent," said Colin Shawyer, The Hawk and Owl Trust's Director of Conservation and Research, who co-supervised the survey, with Dr Humphrey Crick of the BTO.

"The current survey found that Barn Owl densities in East Anglia were higher than those reported during the 1982-85 survey. East Anglia in one area where conservation bodies like the Hawk and Owl Trust have been working over the last 15 years with farmers and landowners to create rough grassland margins and provide artificial nest sites. It indicates that our efforts are making a big difference.

"It will require the efforts of many more people with the will and the means to create good feeding habitat on their land to ensure a full recovery of the species in the UK. Once the feeding habitat has been enhanced,

it is then important to ensure that there are enough places for the owls to nest and roost, and this

inevitably means providing nest boxes."

The survey also provides an estimate of 25,000 nest boxes throughout the country, a substantial increase over the 6,000 estimated in the mid 1980s. Thirty eight per cent of the breeding Barn Owls the fieldworkers found were in nest boxes, 30 per cent in buildings and 27 per cent in trees. Occupied survey areas were more likely to contain a nest box than unoccupied ones. It is possible that lack of nest sites in some of the areas where rough grassland has already been restored may now be preventing Barn Owl numbers from increasing there.

A spin off from the survey is that fieldworkers were asked to record other species they found and this has produced a reliable population estimate of 5,000 to 9,000 breeding Little Owls.

"Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the volunteers, we have been able to produce a reliable estimate of the UK Barn Owl population," said Dr Jeremy Greenwood, Director of the BTO. "The application of rigorous scientific methods means that we now have a baseline estimate against which future changes in the Barn Owl population can be compared and an understanding of the nature of these changes should enable conservation efforts to be targeted effectively towards securing the future of this magnificent bird."



# BFC Merlin and Spar Meet

## October 1998

### Jenny Wray

Owen said "Don't worry if you're late, we'll wait for you". I thought isn't that kind! I made sure I turned up on time, in fact 15 minutes early. Guess what? No-one there! Knowing me, I checked with the office that it was Thursday, the previous week I had turned up for an evening class 24 hours early! I was in the right place at the right time and gradually they drifted in. I had heard that maybe Grant was coming with his Perlin and a Merlin and was looking forward to seeing them fly, well to be truthful I couldn't wait, I had counted the days.

When we started the day Adrian was the only person flying a bird. The famous "Cilla" had caught a partridge in a kale field the previous evening and it had taken Owen 30 minutes to find her, so her weight was a touch over! Adrian flew his Spar and we all beat and worked the hedgerow. She didn't actually look that keen but the second a Blackie was flushed she was off. Incredibly fast, beady eyed, purpose and intent to be seen. She missed the first one and then had a brilliant chase, under, over, between and succeeded in catching a 'LBJ' in fantastic style. We watched as Adrian fought his way through bramble, nettle, bush, stream and bog to get his bird back.

We then all trooped back to pick up the Perlin. A beautiful little bird with certainly the most beautiful features from both sides. The back looked pure Pere and the front Merlin. In flight it looked and flew like a small Peregrine until we saw it ring up, it saw the Blackie flushed



*BFC Spar and Merlin meet. October 1998*

out of the copse, it jinked and chased, getting tighter in a circle around the copse till the quarry broke away. Out into the open the Perlin shot after the blackbird, it appeared to be a long way behind but the perlin changed gear, put in a spurt and caught the Blackbird in the air above us all.

We all ran to catch up, take photos, gloat. It was superb to watch. If you had sat down and planned tactics, manoeuvres it couldn't have been better. We saw the

whole flight from beginning to end. I fell in love with that Perlin and it made me reconsider my ideas about hybrids.

Still on a high, we all trooped off over the fields to find the last untouched field of stubble for the Merlins to fly Lark. 61/2" of mud later on the height of our boots we got to the only piece of stubble still unploughed. Grant and Con had just come back from Wales where they had been lark hunting with licences thanks to the unsung heroes from the Hawk Board who had talked, explained, rationalised till blue in the face why we must have them. So, the licences are temporarily back for the time being thanks to them.

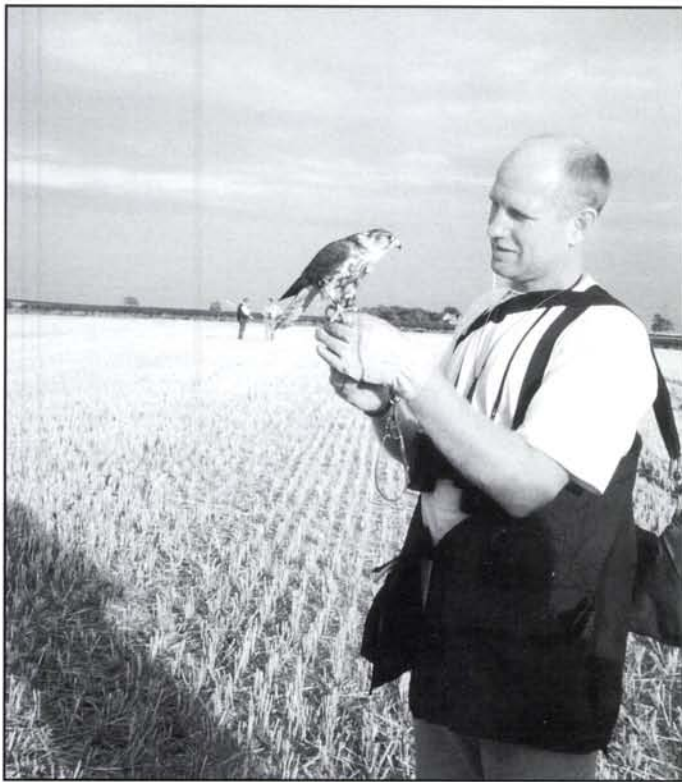
We only had an hour of daylight left so time was precious. We stretched across the field and slowly beat for the Merlins, taking turns for Con or Grant to fly. Within seconds Grant had had a chase and caught a Lark. Unfortunately not ringing up and diving for hedgerow but still with style and speed. In the distance we could see a combine working the field and could hear the larks. A beautiful sound and a lot of larks to be seen. We continued and Con had a couple of breathtaking chases, we were all holding back the football cheers, screams of encouragement, all behaving properly. Con's bird caught the Lark and we ended the day working back across the field. Grant's Merlin had another superb long flight and shot out of sight. The telemetry ariel was dug out of bag and put on, tracked over field and bird retrieved within minutes.

Smashing day. Ended with a really good evening with a talk from the IBR.



*Grant with his Merlin on a "Blackie".*

Very informative and something we must all support and use. They get a tremendous lot of birds back to their owners. By coincidence (couldn't have planned it better if I had tried!) I had been informed the previous day of a found bird and had asked one of the BFC members who had lost one to go and pick it up. It turned out to belong to another BFC member who picked it up and came out flying with us on the Merlin and Spar day. The system works.



Above: Grant with his Merlin and a lark.

Left: Con with his merlin.

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# A TRIBUTE TO SHONI

Brian Smith

My letter concerns the loss of a Harris Hawk!! Yes, a Harris Hawk. While flying my female, Shoni, one Saturday afternoon recently she went on the soar in spectacular fashion - a sight that was wonderful to behold. Never had I seen her at such height or showing signs of enjoying herself so much. While I stood and watched she became preoccupied by a pair of rooks and drifted off over the horizon. This in itself was of no great concern as distance between us has never been something I have worried about. However, on this occasion she drifted over a main road, to the far side, at which point traffic noise and failing light did not allow her to hear my whistles and I to hear her bells. I searched for her in the failing light of a beautiful sunset.

O.K., so she's out overnight I thought, I can always pick her up in the morning and headed for home, a meal and a nice cup of tea. Despite the nonchalance of the last remark it is still impossible for any falconer not to be a little concerned.

The following morning I was up and out early and a little surprised that she was nowhere to be seen and was not responding to my continued whistling. When finally it became a logical decision to call it a day, I returned home feeling a mixture of sadness, despite feeling sure that this would be only a short term loss, and inadequacy that I should be so stupid as to lose a Harris that I have flown for two fun packed seasons. My one overwhelming feeling was that whatever this probable short-term loss resulted in, she would certainly not go hungry as she has always proved to be an outstandingly adequate hunter with intelligence and resourcefulness on her side. These things allowed me to carry on through the following days without undue concern although I went searching for her on each and every day.

Sunday came and went, followed closely by Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, (as they do) and still no sightings or reports. I had called several other falconers, the police, RSPCA, Paul Beecroft, Jenny Wray and anybody else who might be helpful to the cause. The local newspaper was also contacted so that I might have the help of 100,000 other people!

The newspaper came up trumps. Shoni had gone in search of people - hungry or not she has always been a sociable bird. The RSPCA had been contacted and they in turn had called John, a local falconer who went out and picked her up. I have known of John for some years, understood him to be a very competent falconer and felt happy that

she was in good hands. Nevertheless, I couldn't wait to get over to John and pick her up. I had been warned that she had a damaged wing and possibly had been attacked by a cat whilst grounded. At this stage I was just delighted to be reunited. A few broken primaries were the least of my problems....then I reached John's house.

Shoni looked bright and well. Her wing was drooping but she was apparently not in pain. I thanked John for his kindness and left. Once home Shoni was cast to enable me to assess the damage and to administer treatment. The break was a compound fracture and the broken bones had punctured the skin. Out came the salt water, cotton wool and antibiotic wound powder. She was then crop tubed to combat any dehydration and immediately put on a course of antibiotics prior to getting her to the vet.

The vet was duly contacted and I was told that he would be unable to see her until later in the day.....he would call me. I waited, then I waited some more. No call. By the evening I was getting concerned, although Shoni seemed singularly untroubled by the whole affair, sitting on her perch in the house for added warmth she appeared to be the epitome of calm and contentment. Her dinner as usual for a weekend day was best beef, (yes I do mean best beef - I think she eats better than I do at the weekends!) which on sight she pounced on and tucked into. It was at this point that trouble stirred, although I was not to know this until some twelve hours later. Having eaten half of her beef, which she loves, she suddenly stopped and stood over it. One hour later she was still standing over it. I assumed that she had a casting on its way up and, as they do, she was waiting for its arrival before completing her meal!

Two hours later and still she was standing over it. Three hours.....same story. I felt mild concern and yet no other signs of illness were visible. I went to bed happy in my own mind that it would all be sorted out in the morning.

Sunday arrived and knocked me for six, Shoni was on her perch the following morning, the remains of the beef where it had been left the previous evening, her posture was hunched, her eyes squinty, her manner lethargic. Now I knew I had trouble, my bird was looking sick. An immediate call to the local vet resulted in a brief checkover and in my being told there was nothing further they could do. With my beloved Shoni wilting before my eyes it was decision time. Knowing that Neil Forbes' practise in Gloucestershire was a two and a half hour drive I dithered for

an hour and considered my options. What options? I had effectively wasted one hour, Shoni was getting worse and the drive to my destination in Gloucestershire was still another two and a half hours away. By this time I was becoming frantic with worry - not something I am generally noted for! Into the travelling box she went and immediately fell on her face.

The M25 seemed interminable, the M4 endless and the A419 was surely 100 miles long just on its' own. Speed limits had to be observed whenever cameras were present, in between anything went - surprisingly, even a diesel Land rover with a foot to the floor. Throughout this journey, every slight ring of her tail bell meant that we were not wasting our time and I constantly called to her in the back of the car on the probably ridiculous belief that this would keep her conscious.

We arrived at Neil Forbes' practice in Glos at around 5pm and were immediately seen by vet Ron Rees-Davis who very rapidly examined Shoni, concluded what was needed and set about applying his knowledge. Shoni was taken downstairs, anaesthetised, her crop was emptied and flushed through and she was put on an intravenous antibiotic drip and another drip supplying her with sustenance. Whilst this took place I sat, feeling helpless, in the waiting room where I was offered coffee and biscuits. The first stage of her treatment had taken no more than twenty minutes and she was now in the best hands imaginable. If she died here I could at least console myself in knowing that I had given her the best, as she had always done for me.

Mr Rees-Davis was honest with me. He told me how sick Shoni was and I believe he felt that she had little chance of survival, although he did not, of course, say as much. To say I was worried sick would be one of the greater understatements of the twentieth century. I was bloody frantic. The life of the finest hunting hawk that it had ever been my pleasure to fly was hanging by a thread.

I am not a man given to sentimentality or sopiness and I tried to remember this as the tears ran down my cheeks in the privacy of my home later that evening. I felt utterly helpless, lost and cared nothing for what was happening in the world around me. My every waking moment and many of my restless sleeping moments were filled with thoughts of Shoni and the good times we had spent together.

The following few days passed slowly....

Monday - 8am. I telephoned the



surgery to be told that there was no change but that she was hanging on to life. The relief was overwhelming but the reality was that I still had a desperately sick bird.

12 noon. No change. Mr Rees-Davis had hoped for a noticeable improvement by now.

6pm - No change. Nobody appears optimistic although not saying as much. Shoni is still alive and the veterinary staff are trying to be encouraging although not wishing me to think that a miraculous recovery is around the corner.

Tuesday, 8am. - Still no change, still hanging on to life by a thread. Unable to stand up or feed herself, she is propped up with pillows, now in an incubator and still being fed intravenously.

12noon and 8pm. - Still no change and Mr Rees-Davis is still very concerned.

Wednesday, 8am. - A glimmer of improvement but too early to get excited. She is still unable to stand and on the odd occasion that she tries she falls over. I thank God that I am unable to see this indignity, I feel it for her instead.

12 noon. - There is a definite improvement - they think.

8pm. - I feel that I must be starting to be a pain in the neck and yet I am treated with courtesy and patience. Shoni shows no further significant sign of improvement.

Thursday, 8am. - God only knows how she has held on this long. Her level of fitness must be helping and a very significant improvement is now evident. I have to temper elation with caution.

2.30pm - Shoni has been given her first solid food and has eaten well. Two more feeds are due later today so that her strength can be built up for the now, (nearly) certain wing operation to follow on Friday.

8pm - She has eaten well today. 6 chicks and standing, albeit a little wobbly. Her wing operation is planned for tomorrow, everything permitting.

Friday, 8am. Three more chicks given this morning and now cautious optimism is the name of the game.

3pm. - An emergency has come into the surgery and must take precedence. I can understand this and x-ray and op are now rescheduled for Saturday a.m.

Saturday, 12.30pm. Neil Forbes has called to tell me that Shoni has taken a turn for the worse. She has lost 80 grammes in the last 24 hours. This is serious and puts the wing operation on hold. On close inspection a wound has been found on her unbroken wing that had gone unnoticed. This is possibly the result of the suspected cat bite and has become infected despite the antibiotics she has been receiving all week. She is now placed back on liquidised food and her antibiotic changed for another to fight this latest infection. Once again I

am worried - I have been told that a cat bite can lead to a very serious infection. I am told to call on Sunday morning.

Sunday, 12 noon - I look forward to better news. Unfortunately this is not to be as Shoni has now lost further weight although she is still managing to stand up. Today she weighs 720grammes, her hunting weight was 1kg (1000 grammes). I feel desperate but know that I am helpless to do anything.

4pm - I am out in the field flying one of my other birds when my telephone rings. Mr Forbes tells me that Shoni has collapsed. The last and kindest thing that can be done for my bird under these circumstances is to put her to rest, I have to agree, for her sake.....Shoni was put to sleep at 4.15pm.

There was a beautiful sunset this evening, like so many that I had shared with Shoni. I will never forget her.

N.B. Throughout all of this I have been overwhelmed by the concern that has been shown by the handful of other falconers who know the circumstances, and the friendship shown to me by close friends, some of whom seem to have been as worried as I was. I will always be grateful to these people for the encouragement and comfort they gave me.

My sincerest thanks also go to Mr Neil Forbes, Mr Ron Rees-David and all the staff at Lansdown Vets who gave her their very best.

# Conkers

## Nicki Stapleton

Autumn is here again. It is early October and the conkers are falling from the Horse Chestnut which stands 'guardian' to our drive way. In the days when this was a working farm, just before the war, the youngsters who lived here used to sit in this very tree waiting for the occasional motorist to pass.

**We were intrigued. Whatever animal it was, it had worked incredibly hard.....**

Then, amidst great shouts of glee, they would shower their store of conkers onto the unsuspecting car. We were reminded of this yesterday as we cleared away, what seemed to be a very meagre harvest of conkers, before cutting the grass under our 'guardian' tree.

To our surprise, outside the garage door, we discovered a neat pile of 30 or so conkers, some had been nibbled others were still whole - we puzzled over this. The garage door was stiff to open and no wonder. There was an even bigger pile of shredded brown conker skins piled up inside! We were intrigued. Whatever animal it was, it had worked incredibly hard but it could not get the

conkers through the tiny gap under the garage door.

It was a cold day but Desmond decided to cut the rear lawn so he started the task using our small Westwood tractor mounted mower. It wasn't his day! the machine would not pick up the grass cuttings. Well, as there wasn't too much growth he continued cutting - he could rake up the grass later. After a while there was a smell of hot rubber! He stopped the tractor and looked at the pickup drive. The drive belt was burning hot and the pickup brush wouldn't move!

**There were big conkers and little conkers, fresh conkers and old conkers. In all there were a hundred or more!**

He investigated further, wriggling his fingers around in the one inch gap surrounding the drive pulley. He found some conkers jammed up against the drive belt! puzzled, he removed them and tried the pickup again. No luck, the brush still wouldn't move. At this point Desmond brought the tractor up to the

back door and called me out to see. Armed with a wooden kitchen spoon, he used the handle to delve into the small gap in the pickup frame. Out came conkers, one at a time, matched by a constant stream of expletives from my otherwise placid husband.

It took the rest of the day to clear out the unit, using sticks, screwdrivers and a lot of ingenuity. The little \*\*\*\*\*s had jam packed the whole of the unit. There were big conkers and little conkers, fresh conkers and old conkers, some fully intact, some slightly gnawed, some half eaten. In all there were a hundred or more!

The little blighters had succeeded in getting the conkers through the tiny gap by the garage door and had stored them in the pickup. Perhaps they had been put there by squirrels building up a winter hoard. Or perhaps they were mice - if so they have left no tell tale signs.

As for the lawn? Unlike Desmond - it is only half cut.

Have any of your readers had a similar experience? Or do they have an idea of what '\*\*\*\*\*' animal might have gone to so much trouble, and nearly decimated our tractor pickup in the process?

# A Perfect Day

The sun came streaming through the small slit between the curtains, the beam started in the bottom corner of the dark bedroom, and like a laser it moved slowly across and up the wall until it slashed onto the bed. The powerful light burned through the closed eyes of the sleeping falconer, startled he woke. Unable to see until he moved his head away from the source of his rude awakening, he rubbed his eyes and jumped out of bed to throw open the curtains. Brilliant, he thought, a perfect day to go hawking. After the poor weather that had been thrown at him for the past 2 weeks this looked just right, he quickly threw his clothes on and headed outside to "Just check" things were OK. About 4" of snow lay on the ground, covering everything and making it all look so perfect, and what was even better there was a gentle easterly blowing the cotton wool clouds across the rich blue sky. The falconer walked across to the mews to see his hawks, "I think a trip to my hill ground is in order" he mumbled to himself, as he focused on his last bird, the only one that hadn't been put down to moult.

The more he thought about it the more he felt he could put one of those wily hares in the bag, his excitement grew the more he imagined the flight, plotting its exact route through those whin bushes and then down past that dead tree. The same one his perfect hawk had spent all those hours in at the beginning of the season, but that was forgotten about, across the open flood plain until finally, in full view a perfect stoop, and that illusive hare. He jumped out of his almost trance like world as the tinkle of his hawk's bells shattered the silence, he busied himself to get all his chores done so he could spend as much time as possible out hawking.

By 11.30am he was on the road, the 3¼ hour drive would soon slip by, the bird was at a perfect weight, and the weather was holding, just perfect! The wind was still right when he arrived at the farm, he quickly put on the flying Jesse's and telemetry hoping, no praying that the weather wouldn't change, as it usually does just as he's ready to cast his bird off. All done and off she flew, a couple of flaps and the wind caught her, quickly whipping her downwind, but this was fine the bird knew what to do. She waited until just before the small rise and turned into the wind, up she went text book style. The aerodynamics bringing the bird forward as well as upwards, almost effortlessly, a buzzard screamed in anger somewhere far away, and the hairs on the back of our falconers neck bristled with pride as his bird reached a couple of hundred feet. Right he thought where are the hares, he moved forward quickly to where he felt sure there would be some, the bird held firm, side slipping to keep level. The first area drew blank, he moved to the next patch more hurriedly this time, nothing, frantically he started to run, panic setting in, surely the thought, there must be something here. Suddenly a movement out of the corner of his eye, hoooooyy he shouted, he looked up, the bird

started to stoop, he looked back to his quarry which turned out to be a rabbit, he was disappointed, but was soon urging his bird on. He knew where the warren was situated, and pleaded with every god known to him that his bird would snatch the bunny before it reached security. It all happened so quickly the rabbit disappeared down the hole a second before the bird arrived, #\*!#\* he cried, the expletives were not so pleasant to hear, but he shouted them out anyway, loudly. Still no one was about to hear him, he watched as his bird carried on for about fifty yards in a slow glide and disappeared over the riverbank.

The riverbank, it soon registered, this was a major Salmon River, deep and fast flowing, he started to run. Still no sign of his bird, every possible bad scenario went through his mind, he soon got to the edge and scanned ahead of him, nothing, no movement at all. Where could his bird be, it couldn't just disappear, he waited, then he heard it, a faint growling chattering sound down river. He ran towards the sound until it was louder, a movement below the far bank caught his eye, he focused, there was his bird mantling over something at the waters edge, he couldn't see what it was as the bird had its back to him. The noise suddenly became louder, what is it he thought, and then he saw it, a black head, about 6 feet from his bird. Shouting and spitting fire from the black hole in the riverbank, another head appeared, then two more from a nearby hole, all making an alarming racket. What were they? He thought, mink, no to big and flat, otter, yes that's it an otter, oh Christ the birds caught an otter, what do I do now. Quickly, he thought again, it would take at least 20 minutes to get back to the car and drive round, and its to deep to wade across. More scenarios crossed his mind and not one of them was pleasant, he decided, "I will swim" he said it out loud as he felt it more convincing that way. He couldn't believe what he was doing stripping off in the middle of nowhere, with 4" of snow on the ground, god only knows what the water will feel like, still, there was nothing else to do. He left his underpants on, he didn't know why, just that it seemed the right thing to do, no matter that he would probably catch pneumonia. He stepped into the cold water, yes damn cold, but not that cold, he kept telling himself. The otters had stopped their noise having caught sight of this vision on nakedness; they were probably curled up in hysterical laughter at this human's stupidity. Deeper he waded and deeper still, over his knees and up his

thigh, his brain was working overtime here pleading with his senses to continue. He threw caution to the wind and took a big step, the water reached the family jewels, the wedding tackle, the bits most favoured, however you wish to call them, the body however threw a wobbly, it took over, ignored the brain and went into panic mode. He took two sharp intakes of breath and then stopped breathing, his eyes popped out of their sockets, he went weak at the knees and froze to the spot, although froze is perhaps not a suitable word in these circumstances. His body had played itself to checkmate what now? The burning in his lungs became unbearable with the lack of oxygen, his brain came through and urged him to breathe, he dragged in a lungful of air, turned and made a dive back for the bank. Our hero now realised the near fatal mistake he had made, he started shaking uncontrollably and felt faint, but he focused on his bird still across the water, still mantling. The car, he thought, this was probably the most sensible decision he would make all day, the combination of hurriedly putting on his clothes, saggy wet underpants and all. Making a mad dash for the car, with all that adrenaline coursing through his veins, and whacking on the car heater, would save him from hypothermia, but he thought nothing of this just to get to his bird before it was to late.

It actually took 1/2 an hour to get round to his bird and the sweat was running down his forehead as he ran to the river, all was quiet except for the sound of water. Then he spotted his bird down in the rushes still mantling; he made in slowly, moving the bird's wing out of the way expecting to see the worst. "A rabbit a bloody scabby rabbit" he growled "I did all this for a scabby rabbit" he was not happy to say the least, but there was an air of relief in his voice. As it turned out the otters were making all that racket because it was their rabbit the bird had stolen, it hadn't even caught it itself. But as the tired falconer trudged his way back to the car, his body glowing from head to toe, his damp underwear still finding its way into unspeakable crevasses. He looked around at the slowly setting sun with its picture card surroundings, he glanced back to his bird sitting quietly on his fist, its gorged crop pushing out through its breast feathers, and he thought to himself "well I suppose it had been a perfect day after all".



Drawing: Richard Rossitter



# Falconers' 1999 Calendar

## January

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## February

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

## May

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## June

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## September

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
31			1	2	3	4
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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## October

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
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# alendar Magazine



## March

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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## April

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## July

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## August

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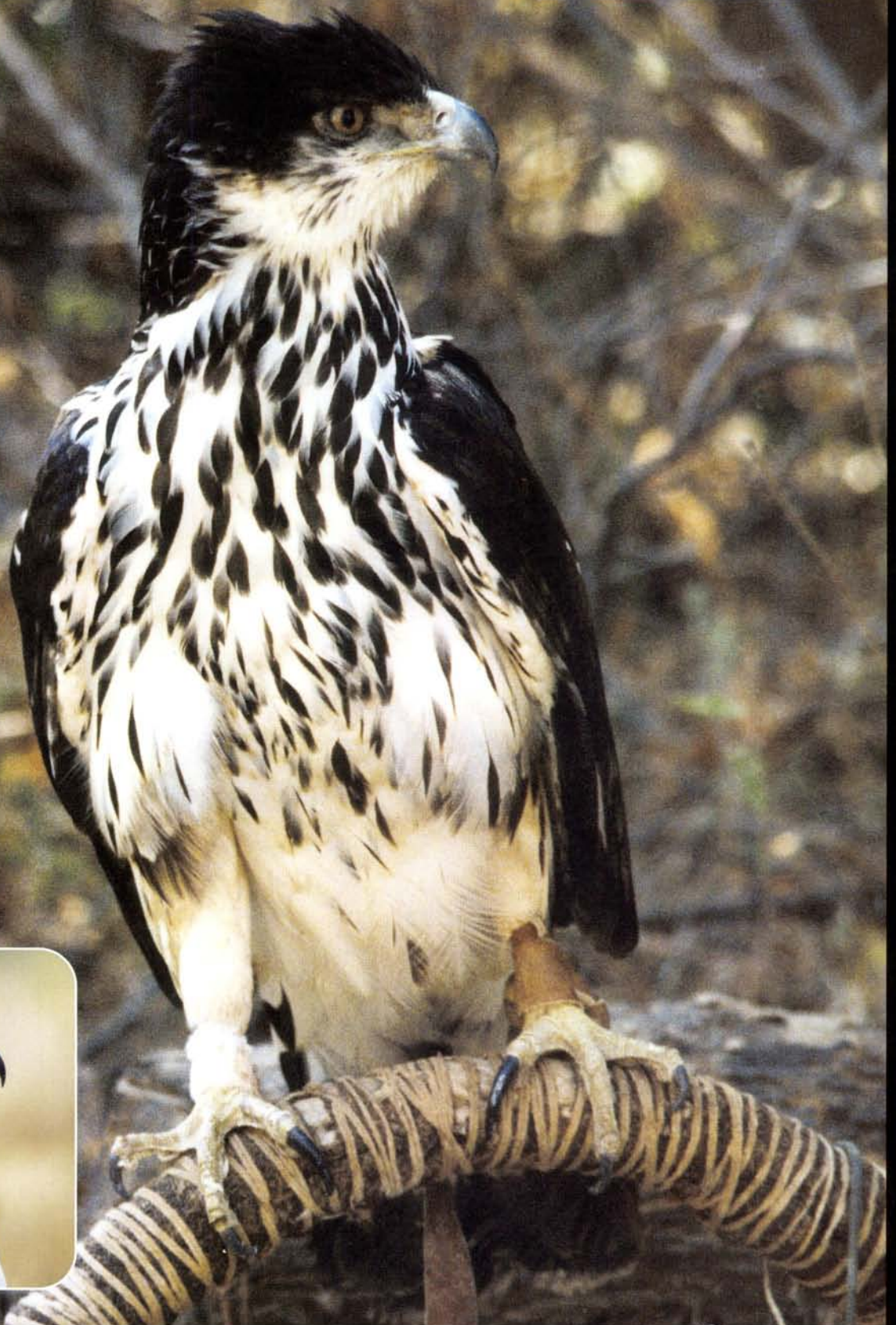
## July

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## December

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			





# Emergency First Aid.

Jemima Parry Jones

Over the years we have had probably hundreds phone calls and these days emails from people who have very sick birds of prey. Recently I was asked to do an article on what people can do themselves in an emergency and what they should be asking their vet to do for them.

At the risk of upsetting vets, I have to say that I am saddened by the lack of what would seem to us common sense practises to do for very sick birds. Always ask your vet what he or she intends to do for your bird, as often you will not be allowed into areas where they might be working on your bird. As I have said time and time again in books, when you first get your bird, or even before hand, check out the local vets, see if they have any experience with birds of prey, or are interested in taking your bird on as a client. Ask them if they are prepared to contact a known veterinary raptor expert for advice if there are problems, most are more than pleased to do so, but if they are not prepared to do this - don't use them! If you cannot find a raptor vet immediately contact members of a local raptor club, and ask them who they recommend. Do not be afraid to travel to a vet, or practice who have special skills and whom you can have confidence in.

If you have concerns about your bird, at the very first sign of looking sick or having lost a lot of weight in a short time, don't hang about and wait to see how the bird does - go to the vet straight away. Particularly don't wait until the evening as vets only have a skeleton 'emergency service' outside normal working hours. In most practices there is at most one vet who has experience with birds, this vet will only be on call out of hours on a rotation basis, so call during the day time, and be prepared to visit the vet during the day, rather than waiting until evening surgery, when you will just be left with who ever that

**Never give a large crop of food to any sick bird or one who is in very low condition,**

evening's duty vet is.

Most sick birds should be kept quiet and warm, and by warm I mean pretty warm, particularly if the bird is low in weight. If you can keep it at 85 - 90 degrees farenheight it will not have to

waste precious energy trying to keep its body temperature up. Put the bird on a towel or piece of clean carpet so it can lie down if it is feeling rotten. Don't immediately try to get it to eat - solid food may be the last thing that is needs, imagine how you feel when you are unwell - you don't want food forced down you - you do however need fluids and that's exactly what the bird will need.

Never give a large crop of food to any sick bird or one who is in very low con-

**All falconers and raptor keepers should be proficient at using a crop tube.**

dition, this is the surest way to cause a sour crop.

If it is really sick and dehydrated then your vet should anaesthetise the bird (as it is less stressful to the bird to have this done whilst asleep), place a catheter into it's vein, and give it fluids intravenously. Such a catheter can be sewn in place and remain useable for several days. This procedure must be done by a vet.

Otherwise fluids orally (by mouth) are important, and should be given every two hours depending on the state of the bird. The amount given will depend on the weight of the bird - in simple terms give 10ml/kg of bird, or if you are more old fashioned like me - A Sparrowhawk weighing 8ozs can have 2.5ml. A Lanner Falcon weighing 1lb 5ozs can have 7 mls. A Redtail weighing 2lb 4oz can have 10mls. A Golden Eagle weighing 10 lbs can have 40mls.

We have a bottle of Lectade available at all times. We also have in stock a tinned cat / dog convalescent food called Hills A/D diet, which is available from pretty well all vets. It is a paste for convalescing cats, I have kept a sick Golden Eagle alive on it for six weeks. You should have a 10 ml syringe and a soft tube so you can crop tube your bird. I usually make the paste runny by adding a teaspoon or two of diluted Lectade to a small tin of food. You can get Lectade from your vet - If you ask for a small bottle of undiluted lectade (just 20ml will do fine) and keep it in the fridge it will keep for 12 - 18 months. You can then dilute it with eleven parts of water to one part of lectade and either use it by itself to keep up the birds body fluids, or add it to the Hills AD diet and give that

to you bird. Remember - the hole in the middle of the tongue is the air passage - nothing but air must go down it. The throat is behind it.

You need two people to crop tube properly. One to hold the bird and the other to open the beak insert the tube into the crop and depress the syringe to eject the fluid into the crop. All falconers and raptor keepers should be proficient at using a crop tube. If necessary get a vet or experienced falconer to show you how to do it first, then practice on healthy birds, before you need to use it on a sick bird. Remember for a sick bird, excessive handling can kill, so restrain the bird for the minimum period, and use the crop tube in a practised and efficient manner.

If you take your bird to the vet you should try to take a fresh mute sample and unless there is a very obvious cause for the bird being sick, the vet should take and analyse a blood sample as soon as possible. Although a broad spectrum (wide range of cover) antibiotic can be given straight away, unless a blood sample is taken and the bacteria identified and checked to see which is the most suitable drug to cope with it, time may

**- time may be lost by using an inappropriate drug. Guess work does not cut it with many infections.**

be lost by using an inappropriate drug. Guess work does not cut it with many infections.

So the things to do in an emergency for both owner and vet are:

If you are worried - don't wait - go to an avian vet.

Keep the bird as warm as you can and on a soft surface so it can lie down. Peace and quiet will help.

Mutes samples and blood samples should tell you what is wrong

Fluids by mouth immediately or once at the vet intravenously are vital to keep a bird that is low in weight, or dehydrated, going until drugs can help the situation. You will save more birds with fluids and food than any other single action.

Some of the world's most magnificent birds are endangered and declining. Birds of prey world-wide, and many in the UK, are having severe problems, says the RSPB.

Persecution is still a great threat to the UK's bird of prey even though they are protected by law. Every year birds are illegally trapped, shot or poisoned. Nests are robbed with eggs or young stolen. In 1997 birds of prey were involved in 45 reported poisoning incidents, 67 incidents involving trapping, sale and illegal possession and 143 reported incidents of shooting and destruction. Additionally, at least 77 bird of prey nests were robbed.

at least 71 birds of prey were known to have been killed in the UK in 1997. Buzzards, red kites and peregrines were most frequently poisoned, while buzzards, kestrels, peregrines and sparrowhawks were most frequently shot or trapped. Peregrine, goshawk, golden eagle and osprey all major targets for nest robberies.

Many persecution incidents go undetected. Recent research on UK hen harrier populations shows that illegal killing on grouse moors is preventing any population increase. For the populations to be at the level they are an average of 55-74 female hen harriers would have to be killed by humans each year. The average annual number of confirmed incidents involving hen harriers is only 15.

Birds of prey are an indicator of a healthy environment. Their position at the top of the food chain makes them vulnerable to pollution and habitat loss, which affects food supply. The sudden decline in peregrines and sparrowhawk numbers in the UK in the 1960's led to the discovery of the harmful side effects of DDT and its subsequent banning.

Dr Mark Avery, RSPB Conservation Director said "It is scandalous that illegal killing of birds of prey continues to be such a problem in an environmentally aware country like the UK. That such magnificent birds should be the target of persecution is an outrage and recent calls to legalise such killing, if heeded, would inevitably lead to their widespread decline."

# BIRDS OF PREY IN DECLINE

The UK's birds have been categorised by conservation groups in three groups: **Red List** - Birds of high conservation concern. **Amber List** - Birds of medium conservation concern. **Green List** - birds of lower conservation concern. (all other species)

SPECIES	STATUS (list)	Breeding no's (pairs)	COMMENTS
Honey Buzzard	Amber	9-28	Small population, relatively stable
Red Kite	Red	260	Historical decline; small increasing native population in Wales; reintroduced to England and Scotland. Still suffers from poisoning
White-tailed Eagle	Red	12	Historical decline; persecuted to extinction, then reintroduced to Scotland. Unfavourable European conservation status. Suffers from poisoning and the attention of egg collectors
Marsh Harrier	Red	160	Historical decline; small population is increasing but persecution is still a threat.
Hen Harrier	Red	690	Historical decline - persecuted to extinction, in mainland Britain - recolonised this century. Unfavourable European conservation status. Illegal persecution still a problem.
Montagu's Harrier	Amber	7	Decline and small population.
Goshawk	Green	400-450	Persecuted to extinction in 19th Century. Now increasing but persecution still a problem.
Sparrowhawk	Green	34,500	Increasing but declined by 27% from 1994 - 1996 probably due to agricultural changes and a decline in prey
Buzzard	Green	12-17,000	Expanding range but illegal persecution is restricting expansion.
Golden Eagle	Amber	442	Unfavourable European conservation status. Stable but full recovery following persecution last century is restricted by continuing persecution.
Osprey	Red	104	Historical decline - persecuted to extinction ; small increasing population. Unfavourable European conservation status. At risk from egg collectors.
Kestrel	Amber	51,500	Decline in the UK (25% from 1972-1996) probably due to agricultural changes and a decline in prey. Unfavourable European conservation status.
Merlin	Red	1,330	Historical decline due to habitat loss and pesticides but numbers have been recovering.
Hobby	Green	5-900	Recent increase and range expansion.
Peregrine	Amber	1,283	Unfavourable European conservation status. Increases in many areas but persecution still threatens a full recovery.

## Wild Bird Crime Incidents Involving Birds of Prey in 1997

Species	Poisoning	Shooting/Trapping	Nest Destruction	Nest Robbery
Buzzard	10	18	2	1
Golden Eagle	1	0	0	3
Goshawk	0	1	2	8
Hen Harrier	0	0	2	4
Kestrel	0	9	0	4
Merlin	0	0	0	10
Peregrine	3	6	5	42
Red Kite	7	1	0	2
Sparrowhawk	1	3	0	0
Osprey	0	0	0	3



Europe has 40 breeding species of bird of prey of which the Spanish Imperial Eagle is probably the most threatened, being confined to Spain where the recent pollution incident by the Coto Donana area threatens at least 10 per cent of the world population

*Europe's breeding birds of prey (includes Turkey, European Russia and Madeira)*

Species	Status ** * globally threatened ~ near threatened	Breeding Population (pairs)	Comments
Honey Buzzard	Secure	110,000 - 160,000	
Black-winged Kite	Vulnerable	1,100 - 2,000	Small Population
Black Kite	Vulnerable	75,000 - 100,000	Large Decline
Red Kite	Secure	19,000 - 37,000	
White-tailed Eagle	Rare~	3,300 - 3,800	Small Population
Lammergeier	Endangered	200 - 640	Small Population
Egyptian Vulture	Endangered	2,800 - 7,100	Large Decline
Griffon Vulture	Rare	9,300 - 11,000	Small Population
Black Vulture	Vulnerable~	1,000 - 1,500	Small Population
Short-toed Eagle	Rare	5,900 - 14,000	Small Population
Marsh Harrier	Secure	48,000	
Hen Harrier	Vulnerable	22,000 - 32,000	Large Decline
Pallid Harrier	Endangered~	1,000 - 2,000	Large Decline
Montagu's Harrier	Secure	26,000 - 42,000	
Goshawk	Secure	130,000	
Sparrowhawk	Secure	270,000	
Levant Sparrowhawk	Rare	3,600 - 5,800	Small Population
Buzzard	Secure	740,000	
Long-legged Buzzard	Endangered	2,000 - 12,000	Large Decline
Rough-legged Buzzard	Secure	91,000	
Lesser Spotted Eagle	Rare	6,700 - 9,500	Small Population
Spotted Eagle	Endangered*	860 - 1,100	Large Decline
Steppe Eagle	Vulnerable	15,000 - 25,000	Large Decline
Imperial Eagle	Endangered*	320 - 570	Large Decline
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Endangered*	150 - 160	Small Population
Golden Eagle	Rare	5,000 - 7,200	Small Population
Booted Eagle	Rare	2,800 - 6,100	Small Population
Bonelli's Eagle	Endangered	820 - 1,000	Large Decline
Osprey	Rare	7,100 - 8,900	Small Population
Lesser Kestrel	Vulnerable*	10,000 - 17,000	Large Decline
Kestrel	Declining	290,000 - 490,000	Moderate Decline
Red-footed Falcon	Vulnerable	18,000 - 44,000	Large Decline
Merlin	Secure	34,000	
Hobby	Secure	58,000	
Eleonora's Falcon	Rare	3,800 - 4,500	Small Population
Lanner	Endangered	200 - 330	Large Decline
Saker	Endangered	370 - 610	Large Decline
Gyrfalcon	Vulnerable	1,300 - 2,300	Small Population
Peregrine	Rare	6,200 - 10,000	Small Population
Barbary Falcon	Secure	6	Small Population

\*\* Europe's threatened birds have been classified as follows:

- \* Endangered - fewer than 10,000 pairs in large decline; fewer than 2,500 pairs in moderate decline; fewer than 250 pairs not in decline.
- \* Vulnerable - more than 10,000 pairs in large decline; fewer than 10,000 pairs in moderate decline; fewer than 2,500 pairs not in decline.
- \* Rare - fewer than 10,000 pairs not in decline.
- \* Declining - more than 10,000 pairs in moderate decline.
- \* Secure - more than 10,000 pairs not in decline.

The 305 Species of bird of prey in the world belong to the order Falconiformes: New World Vultures (Cathartidae) - 7 species. Secretary Bird (Sagittariidae) - 1 species. Kites, Old World vultures, eagles, harriers, buzzards and Hawks (Accipitradae) - 233 species. Osprey (Pandionae) - 1 species. Falcon and Caracaras (Falconidae) - 63 species.

Habitat destruction, persecution and pollution have resulted in many of the world's 305 bird of prey species becoming globally threatened. 31 species (10 per cent) are globally threatened while a further 44 (14 per cent) are near-threatened and may soon be elevated to globally threatened species.

### Critically Endangered\*

California Condor	North America
Madagascar Fish Eagle	Madagascar
Madagascar Serpent Eagle	Madagascar
Philippine Eagle	Philippines

### Endangered\*

Imitator Sparrowhawk	Solomon Islands
Gundlach's Hawk	Cuba
Red Goshawk	Australia
Grey-backed Hawk	Ecuador/Peru
Hispaniolan Hawk	Haiti/Dominican Republic
Javan Hawk-eagle	Indonesia
Plumbeous Forest-falcon	Columbia
Mauritius Kestrel	Mauritius

### Vulnerable\*

Square-tailed Kite	Australia
Sandford's Fish Eagle	Solomon Islands
Pallas's Sea Eagle	Asia
Steller's Sea-eagle	Asia
Cape Griffon	Africa
New Britain Sparrowhawk	Papua New Guinea
White-necked Hawk	Brazil
Crowned Eagle	South America
Galapagos Hawk	Galapagos Islands
New Guinea Harpy Eagle	New Guinea
Spotted Eagle	Europe/Asia/Africa
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Spain
Imperial Eagle	Europe/Asia/Africa
Philippine Hawk-eagle	Philippines
Wallace's Hawk-eagle	S E Asia/Indonesia
Lesser Kestrel	Europe/Asia/Africa
Seychelles Kestrel	Seychelles
Grey Falcon	Australia
Taita Falcon	Africa

\* Globally threatened species fall into three categories, as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature:

**Critically Endangered** - facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.

**Endangered** - facing a very high risk of extinction in wild in the near future.

**Vulnerable** - facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.

# GIVEN WITH RESPECT

## Peter Devers

Enclosed find some some photo's I thought you might find interesting. After leaving a recent Falconers Fair I was driving down through Devon on the M38 when I saw a sign on the motorway for the village of Chudleigh. Having just finished transcribing about 300 letters written to Lord Lilford by falconers, I recognised Chudleigh as the last address of William Brodrick. His book Falconry in the British Isles, has been a favourite of mine for a longtime.

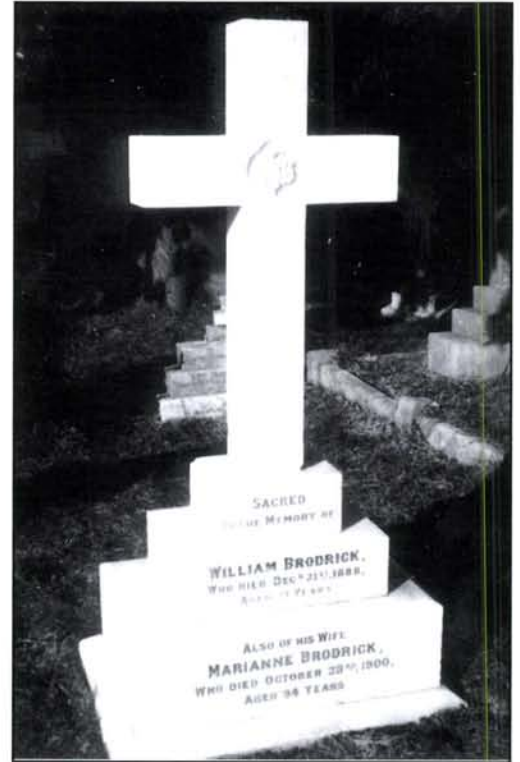
I turned off the motorway thinking to find his home and possibly grave and to pay my respects to the old master. I came up short on the first - I found "Big Hill" but not "Little Hill", his last home-place, but a kestrel hovering at the far end of Chudleigh Cemetery looked like an omen to me.

I was really shocked when I found the grave site. It had been vandalised by men or time. The cross had toppled from the plinth stones and was covered with grass and dirt. When I tipped it up it was evident by the significantly lighter colour beneath that it had been that way for years. The plinth stones were black with soot and askew. The

leading was coming out of the inscription. After having read his book, transcribed his letters, and devoured Roger Upton's histories of that era I felt I knew Brodrick as a friend. I couldn't just leave it in that state.

The clerk of the cemetery said she knew of no living Brodrick descendants, and no, there were no funds available to restore the marker. I asked if I could have the work done and was given the okay. Before leaving Britain I talked with a stonemason and set things going. Upon my return to the states I contacted several falconers who were also keen about the historical aspects of the sport and in no time enough money was contributed to restore the gravestone and cast a bronze plaque to add to the stones.

*Right: The cross and plinth at on William Brodricks' grave after restoration.*



*Above: The grave site of William And Marianne Brodrick as it was when Peter found it.*

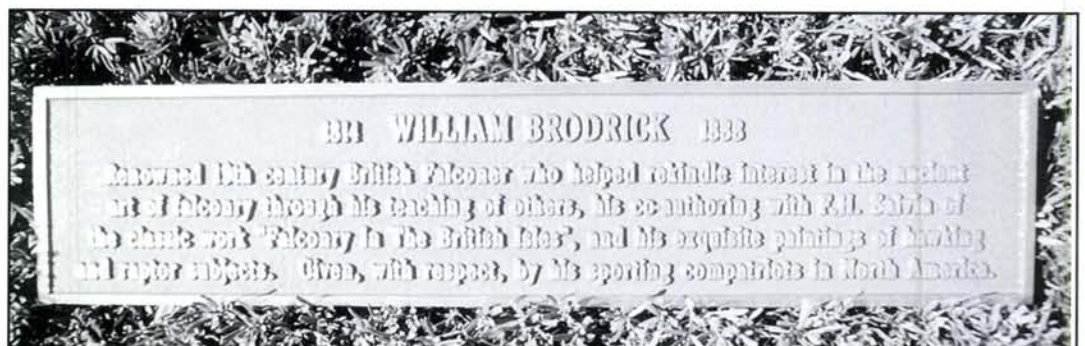
*Right: the bronze plaque with the inscription paying tribute to William Brodrick*

The results were dramatic! From a dirty, grubby stone emerged a gyr-falcon white monument! It now stands whole once again. The bronze plaque bears the following inscription:

1814 William Brodrick 1888

**Renowned 19th century British Falconer who helped rekindle interest in the ancient art of falconry through his teaching of others, his co-authoring with F.H. Salvin of the classic work "Falconry In The British Isles", and his exquisite paintings of hawking and raptor subjects. Given, with respect, by his sporting compatriots in North America.**

Those who contributed to the restoration include Hal Webster; Col. S. Kent Carnie; David Hancock; Bill Mattox; William Jameson; Natalie Nicholson; Frank Ely; Steve Herman; David Frank; Dick Musser; Don Heidt; Alan Jenkins; Jed Lavitt; John Swift; Jack Hagan; Peter Devers.



# A LOOK BACK AT THE 5TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON BIRDS OF PREY & OWLS

Martin Foulds

The 5th World Conference this year was held between the 4th and 11th August in Midrand, S Africa. It was hosted by the Raptor Conservation Group and the Vulture Study Group of the Endangered Wildlife trust, which supports wildlife throughout Africa, in particular South Africa.

The World Conferences are arranged at five yearly intervals by the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls and the aims and objectives of the WWGP is to promote the understanding of Raptors throughout the world, in which capacity it works in close collaboration with other raptor organisations and also with leading international and national bodies, concerned with wildlife and native conservation and brings together Raptor Biologists, Conservationists from all over the world to meet, exchange ideas and present the latest research and put many ideas into practice globally.

From the United Kingdom we were

well represented by experts in their chosen fields such as: Jemima Parry-Jones, Dr Nick Fox, Dr Ian Newton, Robert Kenwood. The programme for the conference was very well aid out with each day's session of papers beginning at 8.30am and finishing at around 6pm, then straight to the bar to recover from the days intake.

The sessions were held in two very large auditoriums and papers were read on subjects such as:

Current Studies of African Raptors.

Biology and Conservation of the Vultures of the World.

Satellite Telemetry to Study Raptors.

Falcons in Asia and the Middle East.

Predation and Feeding Ecology.

Legislation and Trade.

To name but a few.

The hosts of the Conference also provided excellent evening entertainment.

Saturday 8th August was a day off for everyone, so an excursion was arranged to the Magalisberg Cape Griffon colony,

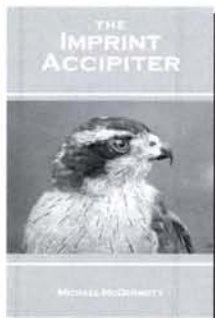
where we saw the Cape Griffon which is only found in Southern Africa, then we visited the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre where we saw five species of vulture, other raptors, cheetah, wild dog, brown hyena and antelope.

In the evening the Endangered Wildlife Trusts 25th Anniversary celebrations took place, with a gala dinner at the Helden Fontein Estates Conference Centre, which was a magical evening for everyone. Shortly after this the 5th World Conference drew to a close.

Raptors throughout the world are facing many difficult problems, mainly through the ignorance of man, and when a conference such as this one brings together the most highly respected Raptor Conservationists around, all who have the same goal in life, then perhaps there is hope for the Raptors of the World.

If you would like to find out more about the W.W.G.P. then for further details contact W.W.G.P. P.O. Box 52, Towcester, Northants. NN12 7ZW

## THE IMPRINT ACCIPITER



The Imprint Accipiter is a comprehensive work written in text-book format for those interested in hunting with accipiters. Extensive techniques are covered for goshawks, Coopers, and sharpshins. Cutting edge training methods are detailed in a sequential and logical format that is easy to understand. The reader will find a step by step approach for each stage of the developing eyes. This is followed by explanations about how and why each technique works, along with alternative approaches and their specific outcomes. This book features the most thorough explanation of training methods regarding aggression, carrying, and screaming avoidance.

This modern approach helps the falconer eliminate or minimize unnecessary problems. Of special interest is a chapter on nest hunting including 12 detailed guides for locating the three North American accipiters, written by experts from across the United States.

The training techniques are divided into six key elements with a comprehensive analysis of each principle. Metabolism and weight control are covered in depth, correlating weight, behavior, and performance. A special chapter on quail hawking showcases what classical hunting over pointing dogs can be like with each of our three accipiters. The final three chapters are composed of actual journal notes from six different falconers.

These detailed notes meticulously describe raising and hunting each sex of all three species and include everything from climbing the tree when pulling the chick to the last catch of the season....

In short *The Imprint Accipiter* is packed with state of the art information regarding raising, training, and hunting with these ultimate predators.



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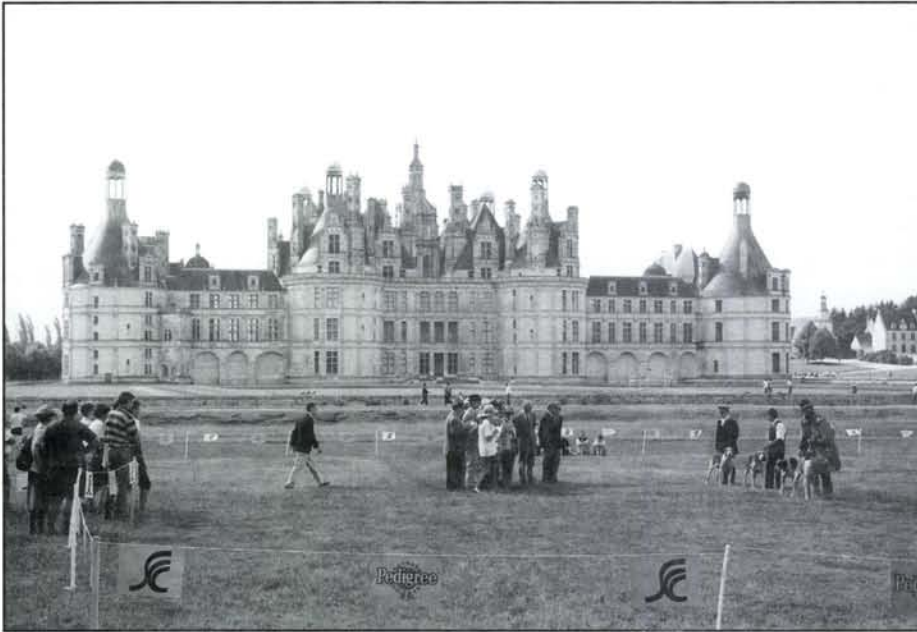
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e-mail = peter@falconmews.u-net.com

# The Game Fair at Chambord

Andrew Knowles-Brown



*The magnificent Chateau, as backdrop to the Game Fair*

Having contracted this terminal disease called falconry I am always looking for an angle regarding the keeping of domestic harmony. Holidays can be a contentious subject, so keeping in the vein of trying to steer a wobbly line down the middle I agreed to go away during this summer to France. As it happened I had heard of a nice little game fair taking place in the Loire valley at Chambord! So at the end of June I was to be seen driving down through France while all the commotion with the world cup was on. And not being of an athletic type, at least not in relation to kicking a ball about, my nearest visit to a game of football was to pass the Stade de France when it was empty!

The reason I knew of the game fair was that it was to have a Scottish theme, with a Scottish Village and therefore I knew that if the visit was a total disaster at least I could visit some fellow countrymen for a chat.

Chambord was a presidential hunting estate until very recently, and although presidents don't have a complete run of the place now it is still run as a sporting estate for wild boar and deer shooting.

The setting was magnificent, the huge chateau dominating the backdrop behind the "Ring D'Honneur", was quite spectacular, there was also a pair of Hobby's hunting of the spires at the swifts and swallows. This fair was of a size to rival our own CLA game fair, with approximately 100,000 visitors over the 3 days, and nearly 300 exhibitors. But unlike the CLA fair the commercial aspect was not so large, and to browse through the stalls was not a major exercise and could be done easily over 1 day, this left the other days to look over the more important sporting aspect of

European country sports. The French certainly had their priorities right here, this was a game fair dedicated to game, the taking of it, and the eating of it.

There was an area showing all the breeds of dogs used by hunters, with about 30 different breed clubs or societies representing dogs from tiny Tekels up to Deerhounds with hundreds of dogs being displayed, as well as classes for showing them. There was also a major hound show with a large number of packs of Boar, Deer (Red, Fallow and Roe), Fox and Otter hounds being shown, with all the huntsmen and servants dressed

in their fine livery. For the canine enthusiast this was one of the best displays of different breeds that I have seen.

I should also mention the fly casting demonstrations, dancing white stallions, clay pigeon shooting, archery, and the magnificent fireworks display on the last night which seemed to go on for ages.

The Scottish Village had 17 exhibitors ranging from Anna's Kitchen, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and Highland Games Athletes to Perthshire Falconry Services with a fine display of Hawks, Falcons and Eagles. The parade of the exhibitors of the Scottish Village marching each day to the evocative sound of the bagpipes in full Highland dress was a joy to watch, the French marvelled at it all.

On the falconry front there were three exhibitors Adrian Hallgarth from Perthshire Falconry Services in Scotland, the French falconers ANFA (Association Nationale Des Fauconniers Et Autoursiers Francais) and Faucon Solognot, a commercial company. Displays were given every day primarily by Perthshire falconry Services who entertained the public with a very polished routine which went down very well. And certainly their professionalism shone through from the French company.

But what impressed me the most was the entente cordiale shown to the British falconers and myself by the French falconers as well as other exhibitors. We were cordially invited down to the French Falconers associations stand, which we did, while being piped down by 2 Scots in full dress, bagpipes and drum, who live in Paris. This went down very well and helped cement our relationship along with the Scotch supplied by us, and some very good chilled



*Above: The French Falconers Association (ANFA) stand.*

Champagne supplied by them. While there we were invited to another stand (which promoted the continuous use of the trompe or the circular horns used by the hunters) the next day to celebrate the link between different sporting associations in different countries, more Scotch and good Champagne, hic! And then I had the privilege to be invited to see some wild boar by one of the park rangers. This had me bouncing about in the back of a little van along forest tracks to the feeding stations where the boar and their piglets or should that be boarlets came out of the undergrowth. All of this as well as the hospitality shown by Anna of Anna's Kitchen, an expat living and working in France, who offered food and beverages, as well as a good end of fair party (more Champagne) helped make the whole trip worthwhile.

So should you like to venture forth during the summer I recommend trying one of the European fairs and mix both family duties with pleasure.



Above: Faucon Solognot's stand.



# RAPTOR RESCUE

Registered Charity No. 283733

## .....AN INTRODUCTION

The Trustees and members of Raptor Rescue are eternally grateful to the publishers of the Falconers Magazine. From the very first issue, Lyn and David have given this Charity room in these pages to inform readers about our rehabilitation work. Over the years this has brought us many new members and friends across the country and further afield.

Raptor Rescue is constantly striving to improve and progress as a wildlife rehabilitation organisation and we felt that it was time to provide the readers of this publication with a little more detailed information regarding the benefits of membership, particularly to those who can support us with the rehabilitation work itself.

Originally founded by a group of falconers in the North West of England, Raptor Rescue is now a national charity with a growing membership and a valued reputation in the rehabilitation and falconry worlds.

The Trustees of the Charity have long made it a priority to promote a high standard of care and responsibility throughout the organisation:

All fund raisers are subject to a set of rules and to a specific code of practice when captive bred birds are used for static displays.

Raptor Rescue developed its own Euthanasia Policy, drawn up in consultation with the membership. This was considered vital to prevent the Charity's valuable aviary space from being overloaded with birds of prey which have no prospect of being released back into the wild.

At the time of writing, a Code of Practice for Rehabilitators was in production. With the demise of the L.R.K. system and inspections, it was felt necessary to provide some guidelines for rehabbers within the Charity - as well as for those interested in joining - for our minimum acceptable standards of practice and fac-

ilities. When the Code is published, this will be another milestone in the history of Raptor Rescue. Bringing together overviews of both the legal aspects and medical information, this one document is designed to set out attainable standards for all our practising rehabilitators.

The benefits of membership to rehabilitators include:

Reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred in the collection, treatment and rehabilitation of wild injured raptors.\*

Medical equipment and other supplies are often available at little or no charge. Previous items distributed include heat pads, astro-turf, wood preservative, liquid lectade and Virkon S.

The cost of construction materials for aviaries and hospital units used to house legitimate casualties can be claimed from the Charity's Central Funds.\*

All we ask in return is that rehabilitators provide accounts where appropriate\* and case histories for the birds treated during the year. The latter can be done simply by completing our specially produced Rehabilitator Report Sheets, which incorporate a duplicate copy for you to tear off and keep. For details of membership fees

and further information please contact any of the Trustees listed below:

Mr M. Cunningham, Chairman  
Tel: 01543 491712

Mr M. Robins, Secretary  
Tel: 01992 505327

Mr B. Stone, Treasurer  
Tel: 01992 621205

e-mail: bstone2@compuserve.com

Mr R. Barnard, Newsletter Editor  
Tel: 01438 728273

Mr I. Taylor, Committee Member  
Tel: 01298 70959

Official merchandise is available by post. Please contact Stock Control Officer Brian Routledge on 01992 631674 for details.

\*All financial claims for expenses are subject to submission of receipts and accounts for verification and approval by the Treasurer and/or the Trustees of Raptor Rescue.

An organisation dedicated to ensuring that all sick or injured birds of prey are cared for by qualified persons and that whenever possible they are released back into the wild.

# THE HAWK BOARD SYMPOSIUM 1998

## Jemima Parry-Jones

On a day that started out beautifully and ended up being just the sort of afternoon you would not want to be out in, the third Hawk Board symposium was held at Birmingham University. The turn out was very good, with the hall filled nearly to capacity. As people arrived they were welcomed by others in the falconry and bird of prey keeping world that they knew, a much needed cup of coffee and a number of stands around the hall. There were falconry equipment stands, hawk food, hunting bird breeders, Owl breeders, the Independent Bird Register and the Campaign for Falconry, so there was plenty to keep people busy until the symposium started.

The audience was first welcomed by Jim Chick who has just been newly re-elected as the Hawk Board Chair, running for his third term. He explained what the Hawk Board has achieved over the last year and what we are about. He covered the withdrawal of the quarry licenses and their subsequent re-instatement, and also the potential banning of the flying of hybrids and non indigenous birds which had been successfully quashed. A third issue covering day old chicks was mentioned and is currently being dealt with.

Iain Timmins the Hawk Board Coordinator was then introduced and gave the participants a brief run-down on himself and what he can achieve for us as bird of prey and owl keepers and falconry as a whole.

As there was a little time to spare, Marie Louise Lachelles then came up and gave a short overview of the Campaign for Falconry. This is a fund raising organisation to assist in fighting for falconry wherever it might be needed. The bulk of the funds will be to give the Hawk Board much needed back up. She called for help from any falconers who were interested in assisting in any way.

The first speaker was John Chitty, who is the vet in charge of all the raptors at The Hawk Conservancy. He was extremely interesting to listen to, plus very amusing and very obviously knew his stuff on birds of prey. He spoke about all the things that can go wrong from beak to bum! He covered the subject well, and clearly is very experienced in treating birds of prey. It was interesting to note that in the

question time at the end of the morning he had numerous queries thrown at him.

Following John was Charles McKay, who is in charge of the CITES Team at Heathrow. He told some interesting stories of what people had tried to bring through under the guise of something else. We were shown some pretty interesting slides of confiscated birds that had arrived at the airport, either with the



*The Speakers*

wrong paperwork or more recently his team has been able to hold birds on welfare grounds as well. Charles also showed us the computer software programme which has been developed to help customs identify species. It was interesting to see how this programme worked, slowly eliminating the possible birds by size, colour and so on until pictures could be brought up of species to assist in identifying the birds correctly. Charles mentioned that if people had photographs of birds they thought might be useful, the CITES team would be very interested in borrowing them.

The final talk of the morning came from Dan Dempsey, who is head of the

Labour Party group of the Countryside Alliance. He was great to listen to, it was nice to hear someone so down to earth, who felt that we should be fighting for our sport in very positive ways and including educating people about what we do. The falconry world is actually very good at that side of our sport. He is only very new to his job and as yet does not even have a secretary, however he was keen to be able to help us, he will be on email and have a Website soon. Many of us thought him a breath of fresh air and we were delighted that he could come what was a very long way to give us his time.

After a question time of about 30 minutes, the symposium broke for lunch.

During Lunch the staunch members of the Central Falconry Club did their normal excellent job of selling raffle tickets, raising over £200. There were prizes donated by most of the stands and we would like to thank those who donated and those who bought the tickets, plus

the Central club for all the work they put into, not only the raffle, but the organisational work of the symposium during the day.

The first paper after lunch was by Dr Ian Newton, I have to say that I was so proud to be able to introduce Ian to the symposium. He is probably the best known and most liked raptor scientist in the world today and his open mind to all forms of conservation and use of wildlife, including falconry has made him acceptable to all those interested in birds of prey.

He gave a talk about the Sparrowhawk, a species of raptor that he has been studying for 25 years, so his insight into the Sparrowhawk is pretty good! Many of those working in the public field with raptors will know that there is a move towards dislike for the Sparrowhawk by the public, because of a misconceived idea that the decline of the small farmland birds is caused in part by this bird. Ian proved that despite public opinion, the Sparrowhawk has not affected small wild birds over the last 40 years. His talk was informative, fun and very useful to those of us who have to defend the reputation of the Sparrowhawk on an almost daily basis.

We had hoped to have someone from the Peregrine Fund at Boise



*The Audience*

Idaho USA coming to fill the next slot. However although they were more than willing to come, we felt that with the battles that we have had to fund in this year, we could not justify the expense of bringing them over - perhaps another time - or if anyone out there will cover the airfare - let me know.

Dr Gordon Mellor kindly stepped into the slot for us. He gave an overview of the history of the falconry clubs, starting in the 17th century up to present day. He then went on to point out the problems of there now being not just one club in the UK, but indeed many. Although this in itself was very healthy, the one big downfall was that there was no single voice. He then pointed out that the Hawk Board was in fact that one single voice, covering all those clubs who were interested in being a part of the Hawk Board, and indeed needed the backing of all the clubs so that it could represent falconry and bird of prey keepers adequately. He pointed out that the Hawk Board fulfilled a similar role to NAFA in that it was an umbrella organisation. He hopes that the clubs would continue to grow, prosper

and at the same time support the Hawk Board.

The last talk of the day was given by Bob Ford from DETR. He outlined the history of the Article 10 certificates and then explained that the British Government had fought very hard for birds of prey to be exempt and to stay on a general license, but they were outvoted 14 - 1. He pointed out that the work load for DETR had increased 30% and was expected to increase a further 45% by the year 2000. The applications for sales licenses had increased from 8% - 60% of the work load.

He also said that one of the reasons for delays in Article 10's being processed was that 50% of the applications were either filled in incorrectly or lacked sufficient documentation.

Then just to really cheer everyone up he mentioned so possible changes on the horizon that could affect raptor keepers.

Review of charges for registration of Schedule 4 species and CITES application charges

Simplifying charges with a possible two tier flat registration fee.

Review of procedures for registration.  
Customers Charter  
Help Desk!!

Devolution - probably Scotland will run own Registration System.

These are just a few potential items in the pipeline. All reviews will include input from the Hawk Board who will be consulted once potential methods have been set down.

We then broke for tea and the draw of the raffle.

After tea there was an hour and a half question time, giving the participants time to ask questions of most of the speakers. Sadly some had had to go home due to long journeys or other commitments, but there were still plenty of people left to answer most of the queries. Having DETR there was as usual very useful.

The day wound up with thanks to all those who had come to the symposium, or given papers, or helped to organise the event.

If anyone has any ideas for topics for next years symposium, please contact the Hawk Board as soon as possible.

## FACTS ON FALCONERS

### Geoffrey Pollard

**In this issue we have an interview with Geoffrey Pollard, a name no doubt many of you have heard but a very private a somewhat elusive gentleman.**

**It took quite a large amount of my feminine charm to persuade him to be the subject of our Facts on Falconers but eventually he succumbed.**

**I am trying to coax an article out of him also but I think this is still quite a little way off yet. Keep your fingers crossed.**

**How long have you been practising falconry?**

Since 1943

**Where did you learn Falconry?**

I hawked with Ronald Stevens from 1943 - 1955 and killed my first Grouse in 1948.

Ronald taught me, Blaine taught Ronald, Fisher taught Blaine, Ian Pells taught Fisher.

**What was the first bird you ever flew?**

A Kestrel.

**What other birds have you flown?**

Sparrowhawks, Goshawks and Peregrines.

**What are you flying at the moment?**

Peregrines.

**Have you ever had a bird you couldn't train?**

Yes. One peregrine falcon which seemed to have several screws loose or missing.

**What changes have you noticed since you started falconry?**

Telemetry, plus the vast numbers of people involved in falconry.

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

Passage peregrine falcon at red grouse.

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

Ronald Stevens

**Favourite bird?**

Peregrine.

**Favourite Quarry?**

Red Grouse/Wild Duck.

**Do you have any special training techniques?**

In Caithness where I hawk, I teach my birds to come home to my cottage in the middle of the moor.

They will do this even with a full crop and will come down to a dead grouse. This relieves me of carrying all the paraphernalia of telemetry. But of course I have to use it when hawking away from home.

# COMPETITION

**WIN** TICKETS TO THIS YEARS FALCONERS' FAIR, TO BE HELD AT OFFCHURCH PARK, N<sup>R</sup> LEAMINGTON SPA ON 30TH & 31ST MAY



COMPETITION

COMPETITION

## TO ENTER

Simply identify to four species of bird used to make up our "hybrid".

Write the answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope along with your name address and telephone number, and send to The Falconers' Magazine Competition, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP

Alternatively you can Fax on 01536 722794 or

Email on: [kbu77@dial.pipex.com](mailto:kbu77@dial.pipex.com)

Entries must reach us no later than 10th May.

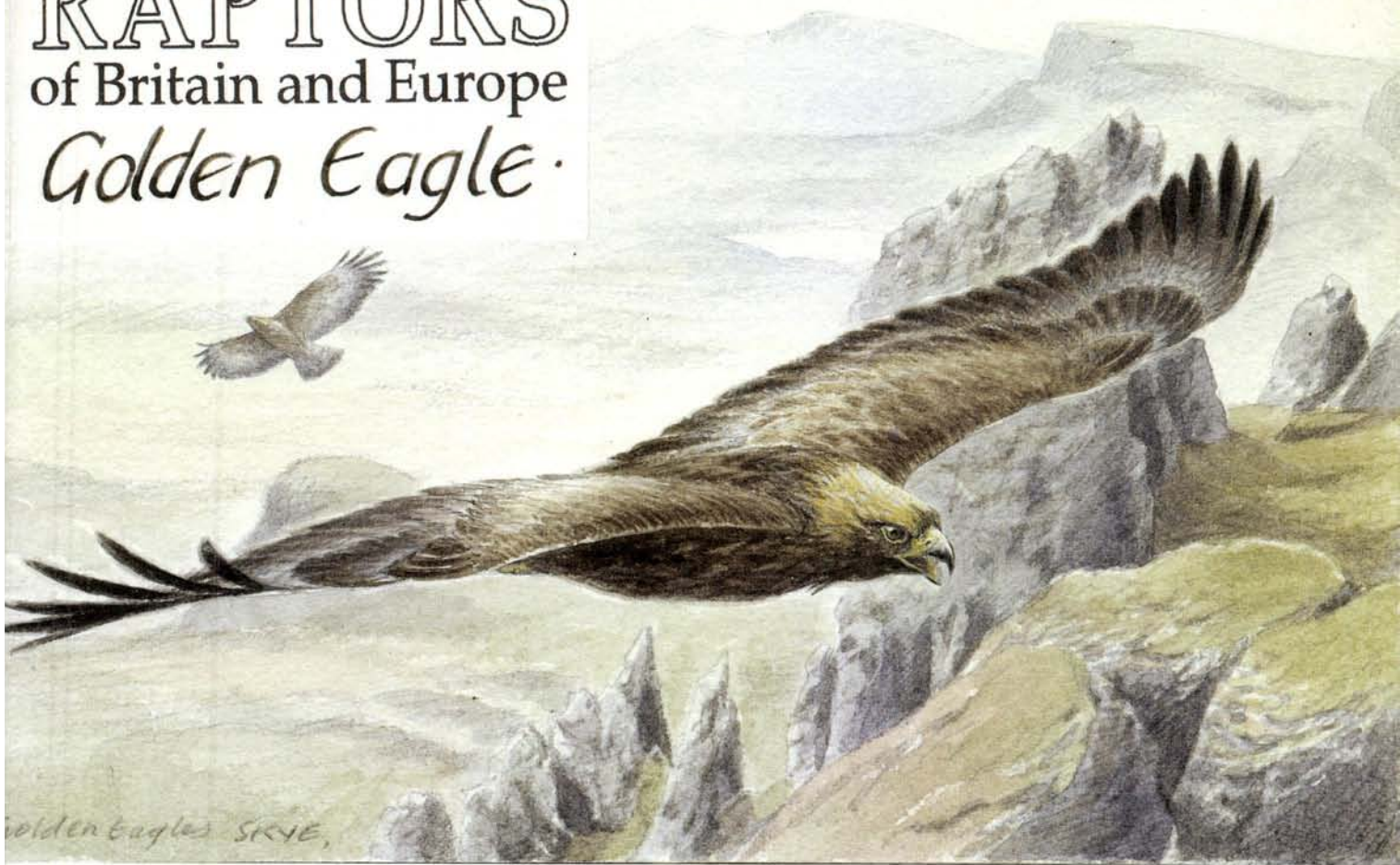
First Ten Winners drawn will each receive a ticket to the Falconers' Fair.



# RAPTORS

of Britain and Europe

## Golden Eagle.



Golden Eagles SKYE,

Studied from Hebrides,  
English Lakes & Europe.



Immature.

Golden Eagle

♂? by nest

often perches above nest.

— repelling Peregrine, & then brief display, returned to other perch. J. P. Snow.

# STEVEN DURYEA

## A MAN WITH MAGIC HANDS

I've been interested in birds of prey and falconry for almost forty years. By age 13 I was doing pencil renderings of hawks and falcons, mostly copied from photographs, and had begun making plans to become a falconer, with copies of Woodford, ApEvans and Michell in hand.

I came close but that dream came to an end when I entered art school in New York City. I didn't stay there long, but neither did I pick up where I had left

er, he was looking to learn more about playing blues guitar, which is my musical specialty. We quickly became friends.

I had been in a creative deadlock for some time. As a highly skilled a guitar maker as I was suffering from the inevitable boredom of the expert. I had taken up lapidary work as a hobby, but found it very expensive and was only able to pursue it through the good graces of my teacher, who allowed me access to his shop for a reasonable hourly fee.

why anyone would want to copy a bird.

To my surprise I enjoyed the seminar more than anything I had done in years.

I felt totally at sea at first, and needed some hands on help from Floyd to get through the early stages and keep up with the other students. These seminars are fun but very intense-- you go from bandsawed block of tupelo wood to finished piece in just one week!

By the time we had gotten to burning in the feather barbs, a job which is very difficult for most beginners but came quite naturally to me, I knew that my adolescent passion for raptors, which I had never quite lost, had sprang wide awake after a thirty year nap.

The piece was good enough for Floyd to encourage me to consider bird carving as more than just a hobby. After attending two more seminars, with increasingly good results, I closed my eyes, held my nose and jumped off the cliff. I quit my music store job to devote myself to bird carving full time, and in late fall 1996 started my first independent piece, made for competition and therefore untouchable by any hand but my own.

I chose one of my favorite species, the sharp-shinned hawk the New World equivalent of the Eurasian sparrowhawk, a bird not seen too often a carving shows by comparison to what many people in the US still incorrectly think of as a sparrowhawk, the American kestrel.

By spring 1997 I was well into the piece, but in April suffered from a health problem that set me back for three months or so. I resumed work in August and finished the shin just in time for entry in my first show, the New England Woodcarving and Wildfowl Art Exposition.

Bela, as I named her, took 1st Place in diurnal birds of prey, Intermediate Division. Encouraged by that result, I entered her next at the California Open in San Diego, where the only division for raptors was open (professional). Again, she took 1st Place, this time in birds of prey overall followed by a somewhat disappointing Honorable Mention intermediate at the prestigious Ward World Championship in Maryland, and a bounce back to 1st Place open at the Northeast Wildlife Art Show in Vermont.

All in all, a pretty satisfactory record for someone who's been carving for only a few years!

Since then I've continued to work on my carving skills. I have been unable to attend any more seminars (I no longer



*Amy, Steven and Floyd Scholz.  
(One of the worlds most eminent bird carvers).*

off. Though I retained some interest in raptors, instead of becoming a falconer, ornithologist or bird artist I became a guitar maker, and pursued that craft for 25 years or so.

I got quite good at it eventually, and reached master level by 1978.

Bird carving, although I was aware of its existence, was not something I ever had plans to do even as a hobby, much less take up as a profession. I got involved in it by what can only be described as a happy coincidence.

Late in 1994 Floyd Scholz, one of the worlds most eminent bird carvers and a specialist in raptors, happened to stop by the guitar shop where I was employed, looking for lessons and an amplifier. A veteran bluegrass banjo and guitar play-

For years I'd been toying with the idea of trying my hand at carving netsuke, a form of miniature sculpture indigenous to Japan, but was too intimidated by these incredible pieces to have a go at it. I'd never carved a representational sculpture in my life.

By May 1996 Floyd had opened his carving school, the Vermont Raptor Academy, about 60 miles from my home. Two months later, after much hemming and hawing, I decided to attend one of his seminars, where I carved my first bird, a miniature red-railed hawk.

I was still unsure about bird carving, and didn't really understand what it was all about. Like many another person with a fine arts background, I couldn't see



held, a non-North American species has won only once a great reed warbler by Larry Barth, in 1996. Floyd has been entering wonderful carvings of toucans, parrots and other exotics (he makes his second home in Venezuela) for years, and has gotten nowhere for doing so. I myself am interested in many raptors the average judge wouldn't even recognize, and intend to carve them nonetheless.

I am by no means a master carver, or even an advanced one, but I will be happy to answer any questions I can about carving and competing as best I can to those who are interested; just e-mail me, sduryea@bigfoot.com.

Good hawking to all who are fortunate enough to be able to work with the real thing instead of wood and paint!

*Below: Steven With Walker, the subject of his Harris Hawk carving.*

*He has offered to donate this carving, when completed, to the Campaign For Falconry. I would like to thank him on behalf of all falconers and the Campaign itself.*

make my own guitars but spend much of the seminar season teaching others) I've become Floyd's apprentice, in a very informal way.

We get together when we can, and in between guitar playing and bottles of micro-brewed local we even get some carving done once in awhile! I try to do as much of the rough-out work as I can at Floyd's, since he has adequate dust collection in his shop and I don't in my living room, but for the most part I work alone.

I still hope to take up falconry someday. I have been on course at the Vermont branch of the British School of Falconry, a wonderful experience. But having no field craft, I'm afraid I might well end up one of those well-meaning bunglers Mr. Matcham mentioned in the last issue of this magazine even though my feet aren't overly big and I don't wear Brut.

Decorative bird carving is as distinctly a North American art form as netsuke carving is Japanese. But it is still very young, and I think that in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fantastic level of skill developed by American and Canadian carvers in the past thirty years or so, it has become somewhat static. Attendance is down at many shows here; everyone is wringing their hands about it but no one seems to know what to do.

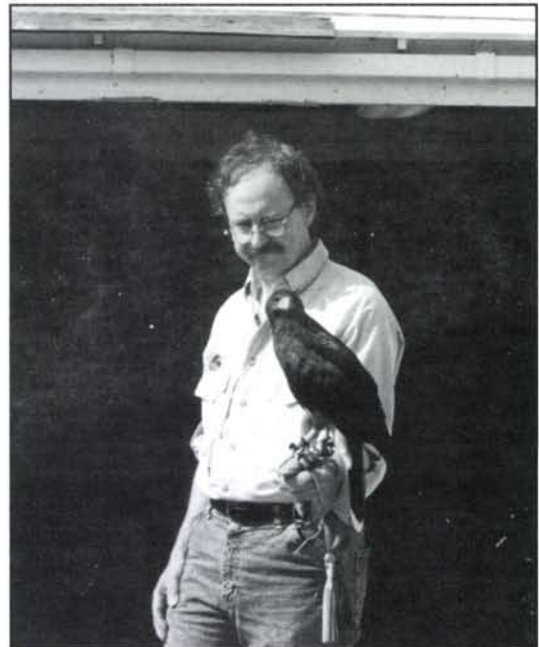
I would really like to see more European and Pacific Rim carvers get into the game. It won't happen without a lot of knocking at the door, but sooner or later the Ward Foundation, which runs the World Championship, will have to realize that a competitive event devoted to less than 10% of living bird species really has no claim to such a grandiose title.

In the 27 years this event has been

*Above: A clay head study of a Redtailed Hawk.*

*Below: Rufous and Sunstone.*

*Humming Birds are also a speciality of Stevens'.*



*Below: Walker a Harris hawk, gessoed but not yet painted.  
Right: A close up of the head of the same carving.*



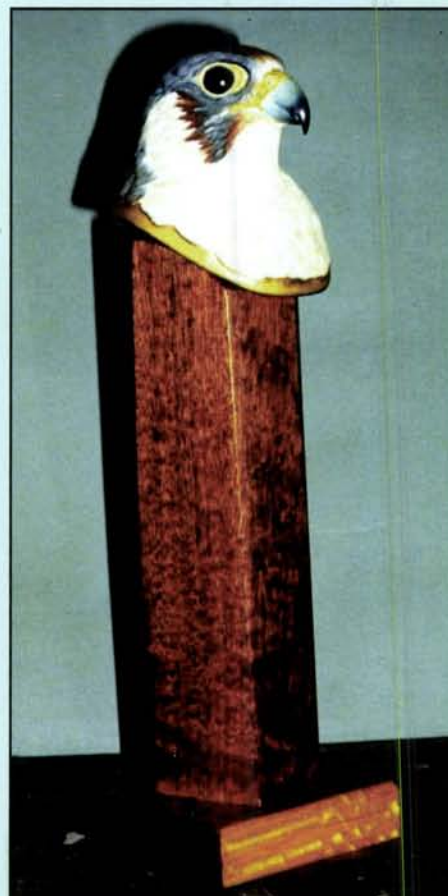
*Above: Red-Naped Shaheen in progress*

*Below: The same Red-Naped Shaheen bust complete with its' base.*

*Below: "Greta Garbo" .  
Doesn't she have the most wonderful eyes, and such a thoroughly disdainful expression.*



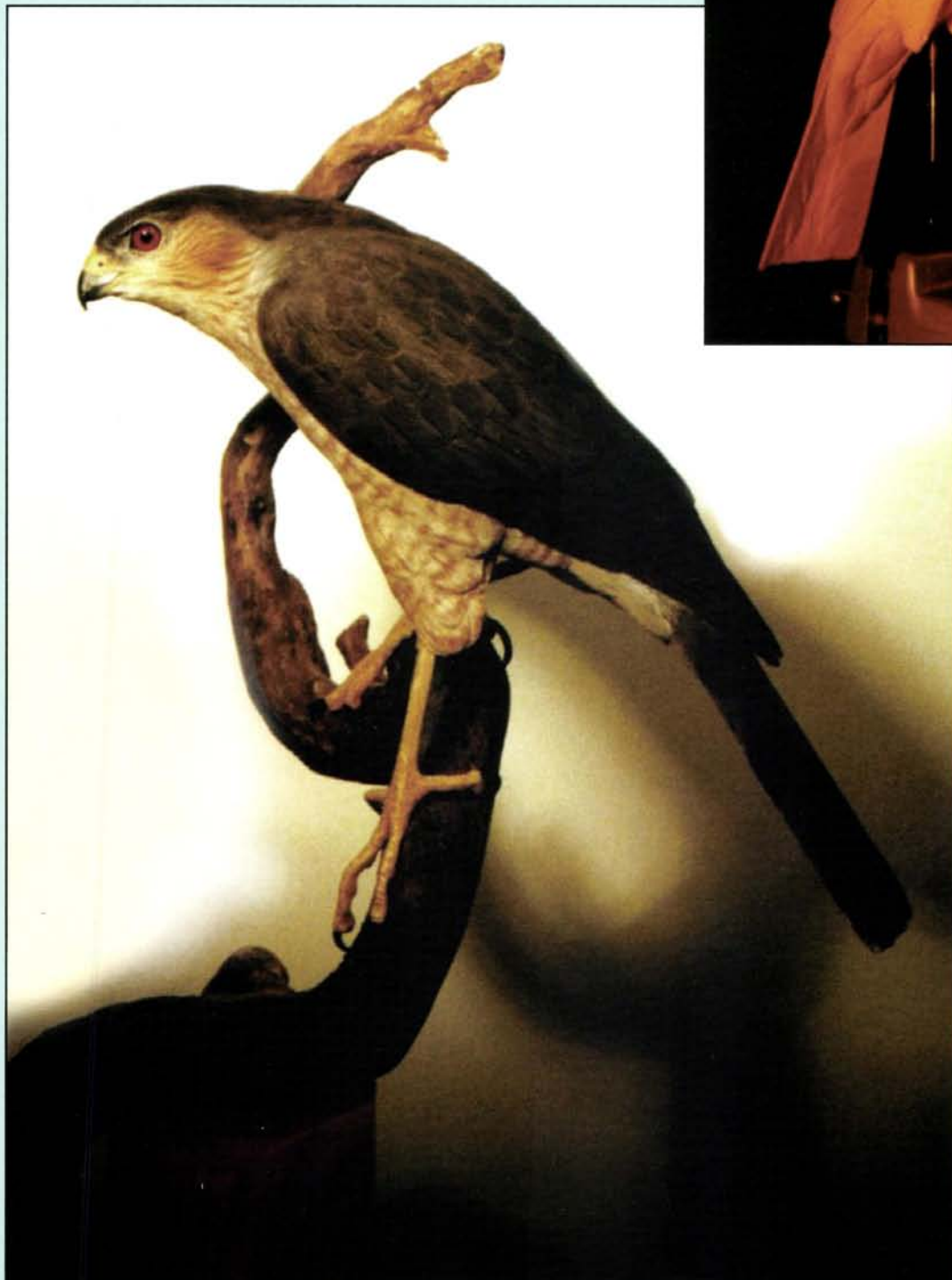
*Below: A head and shoulders study of a Redtail called Cyril.*



*Bela - A Sharp-shinned Hawk.*

*Left are pictures of Bela viewed from the rear, firstly in progress and then as she is when finished.*

*Below is a picture of Bela in progress and below left is a picture of Bela in all her glory.*



# 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, Wales & Borders, Midlands, Cotswolds, Eastern, North Western, North Eastern, Southern and South Western.

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

## THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

**A New Committee**

Regional Field Meetings held regularly. A family Association that welcomes both the experienced Falconer and the novice. A full apprenticeship scheme is available which has been pioneered by the BHA.  
The British Hawking Association -  
Showing the way forward.

*Changing attitudes to improve standards*  
Contact:  
Paul Beecroft: 0118 9016990  
Wendy Alikar: 01945 450648  
Rita Lippard: 01582 615741

## 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, Kislingbury,  
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**

## STH GLOS & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

An established 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 21720

## 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 SCOTT, HAWKING CLUB

FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER  
Benefits include:- Individual insurance to £25,000  
Affiliation to British Field Sports Society & North American Falconers Assn.  
£2,000,000 Public Liability at field meetings.  
For Further details send S.A.E. to:  
THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB  
CROOKEDSTONE ELVANFOOT,  
BY BIGGAR LANARKS  
ML12 6RL

## The South East Falconry Group

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**

## 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

# The Raptor Trust

FOR THE PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF ALL BIRDS OF PREY

## 'BEST PRACTICE GUIDE'

**JOHN FINNIS,  
CHAIRMAN,**



After fifteen years, much head scratching, arguments and two fist-fights, we've finally done what we should have done some time ago. I do not refer to an agreement not to swear at the spouse having got lost on the way to a remote bird of prey centre, but the publication of the Raptor Trust's Best Practice Guide for Bird of Prey Keepers and Rehabilitators.

To give a bit of background, the Raptor Trust is a predominantly Norfolk-based registered charity which has been dealing with raptor rehabilitation since its inception in 1983. Our activities cover the normal range of operations by a conservation group, from giving a few hours' breathing space to a concussed sparrowhawk to setting up our own full-blown Harrier Research project. However, it is not the purpose of this article to go fully into the many aspects of the Trust's work, but to highlight one area in particular which is the cause of much concern and which resulted both in our changing our Constitution a couple of years ago so that we deal not only with wild birds of prey but all birds of prey, and which also prompted the publication of the Best Practice Guide.

Compiled with the kind assistance of Neil Forbes and Jemima Parry-Jones, to whom we owe a debt of sincere gratitude and a fiver apiece (cheques are in the post, folks) the Guide is just that - a guide. It is not intended to be a full-blown treatise on bird management (there are many good books on the market already) but an introduction, if you like, on the basic requirements in housing raptors.

Through our experiences we identified two major areas where, either through ignorance or wilful neglect, raptor husbandry sometimes falls short and at which the Guide is aimed: wild injured birds and captive birds.

It seems there has been an explosion recently of wildlife rehabilitators, possibly as a result of the many programmes devoted to the subject on TV. Some of these, although perfectly well-intentioned, take in all sorts of injured wildlife but have no specialist knowledge of birds of prey and no real idea of what they are dealing with. Others, while professing to be specialists, either operate inappropriately or with out-of-date methods. For instance, maintaining the likes of wild injured one-winged tawny owls in captivity is a distinct no-

no, although one which, I freely admit, the Trust was guilty of in its early, more naive days. As for doing the same in public aviaries with the birds in full view of the customers, there are words to describe this practice, not one of them polite. However, that's another matter and one worthy of an article on its own. The Guide is intended to help rehabilitators appreciate some of the requirements of wild raptors, particularly with respect to hygiene and reducing stress levels, thereby hopefully increasing success rates.

When it comes to captive birds in private hands, despite the fact that we are all volunteers we have picked up a fair bit of experience along the way and are frequently called in to advise the police and RSPCA in suspected cruelty cases. As you can imagine we've seen some pretty hairy sights along the way, and whereas birds in the wild are protected under various legislature, it seems the conditions in which any birds are housed when in captivity are almost entirely at the discretion of the keeper, with only the most outrageous cases being investigated by understaffed and overworked authorities. Even then, there are many occasions where nothing is done. Believe me, there is nothing more galling than seeing birds kept in rotten conditions (again either through ignorance or wilful neglect) being left where they are because the keeper is not actually breaking any law. Confiscations and prosecutions are not common. Again, the Guide is intended to encourage prospective keepers to manage their birds correctly, and to encourage those existing keepers whose standards are below par to change their approach.

Additionally, it has become clear from our dealings with them that very often the authorities do not have the required specialist knowledge when dealing with captive birds of prey. (Obvious, really, otherwise why call us in?) We therefore hope that distribution of the Guide to the likes of the RSPCA Inspectors and Police Wildlife Liaison Officers will at least give them a grounding in what to look for.

In addition to the above, the Guide covers such subjects as bird of prey collections, showing birds of prey and legal requirements. As previously stated, it does not cover all subjects in great depth as it is intended as more of an initial pointer to what to expect if someone wishes to keep a raptor, and what is

expected for the welfare of the bird if you do.

Although only recently printed, the Guide is already proving popular, with copies ordered by five Police Wildlife Liaison areas as well as several rehabilitation groups, with talks for its adoption by the RSPCA. Now I'm not saying that it is the definitive work on how to keep a raptor; there are as many ideas on this subject as there are keepers. Nor am I claiming that we know it all - we don't and never will. What I am saying is that it is an account of our thoughts, gained over many years, on the practices which we have found work best for the welfare of birds of prey. Furthermore, we shall be revising it as we learn more, and I shall be delighted to hear from other people with their ideas on the subject.

Anyone who reads this magazine should have the welfare of the bird at heart. Lord knows I've read this sentiment enough on its pages, and rightly so. However, the sad reality is that there are many birds kept incorrectly, and we all of us should help educate those whose methods require improvement. Let's face it, aside from the primary concern for the harm it does the birds, such people can, and do, give anyone connected with raptors a bad name.

Copies of the Guide are available from John Finnis, The Raptor Trust, The Old Butchery, The Street, Redgrave, Suffolk, IP22 1RY. e-mail: [trust@theoldbutchery.demon.co.uk](mailto:trust@theoldbutchery.demon.co.uk). The cost is a measly fiver per copy, with all proceeds guaranteed to go directly into raptor welfare.

Further information on the work of the Raptor Trust is available either from the above address or by visiting our web site at:

<http://www.theoldbutchery.demon.co.uk/index.htm>.

(Yes, the Trust has joined the information superhighway. Admittedly, we're driving a horse and cart down the middle of it as we get familiarised, but we're getting there.)

### Editors Note

This guide is well laid out with headings and sub-headings and covers just about everything you need to know about basic husbandry. For beginners it should be compulsory. Reading every book you can lay your hands on is a good idea but with so many conflicting views this guide is refreshingly simple and easy to understand. It will probably be the best £5 a beginner could spend.

# REVIEWS

## EGGTECH

*A Computer Programme For Breeders*

EGGTECH was written from start to finish with one thing in mind - simplicity and accuracy.

The program uses a simple keyboard interface to communicate with the user and a familiar menu system is easy to pick up and stays constant throughout the programme. Automatic back-ups to floppies on every computing cycle ensures all but the last keyboard entry is secure and retrievable in the event of hard disc/computer failure, and Real time data means up to the second accuracy.

Designed for computer novices EGGTECH is programmed to NEVER allow the user to inadvertently erase information.

The programme works with eggs weighing from 1 - 2000 grams, with an incubation of up to 199 days. The calculation function computes from fresh egg weights, egg ages and volume etc. As well as co-efficients for calculating egg weights.

It has a simple graph feature that allows you to monitor eggs by weight only. Enter the eggs' current weight and current age and EGGTECH plots your graph from start to present day whilst working out final weights and other vital statistics.

A standard monitor system logs all details of eggs, ( these are optional ), including size, density, vein growth, weight, humidity, temperature, wetbulb, and also logs ring numbers, and parent information for every egg logged in. This data is stored in such a way that it allows interrogation by other EGGTECH family software products allowing you to research your breeding pairs and parent information as well as hatch rates and much more. It automatically generates density/weight/humidity/vein growth charts with overlaid graphs that allow cross-data referencing of, for example; weight loss/humidity.

Graphs are saved in colour as standard BMP paintbrush format to allow windows import and printing.

On line Automatic Simulated Incubation System (OASIS) can be called up at any time with one keypress. OASIS watches every incubation you are currently undertaking and will give you tips and advice as well as warn you if things are getting a bit dangerous. He continuously gives you tips on the instrument panel as to what you should do as well.

Automatic day skipper, EGGTECH will allow you to miss weighing any number of days or make alterations to past days data without problems. Unlike spreadsheets that give 0 errors if you simply miss them out EGGTECH fills in all the days in between for you. Great for experimentation and projection of figures.

EGGTECH can be interfaced with a wide range of RS232 scales and callipers if required.

## Falconry for Beginners.

An introduction to the sport by Lee William Harris.

Price £18.95. ISBN 1 85310 8936.

Available from: Swan Hill Press.

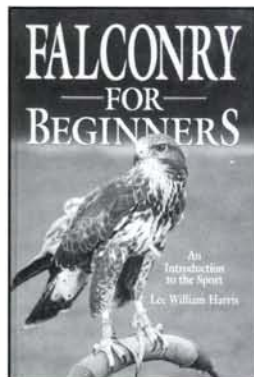
101 Longden Rd. Shrewsbury. SY3 9EB

With any review you have to read it as though you are the person the book is aimed at. This one aims to help and advise people wishing to taking up falconry and that is exactly what this book does. Covering all aspects of obtaining, keeping and flying a bird of prey or owl.

It is obvious when reading this book that a lot of time and thought has gone in to it and that the author has a great love and understanding of his birds and all that surrounds them.

The author goes into great detail about equipment - designs and materials used, and the pitfalls to look out for when not buying only equipment but the bird itself.

Food preparation and diet, beak and talon maintenance, imp-



## THE NORTHUMBERLAND CROW FALCONS

VHS PAL Video Running time

approx 60 minutes

Produced by Jonathan Francis and Dr Nick Fox

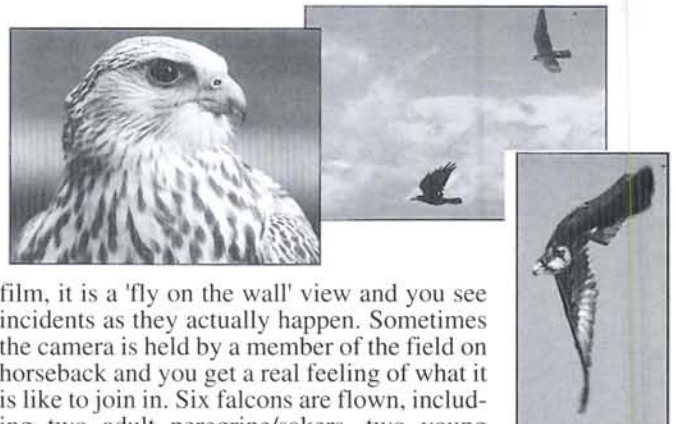
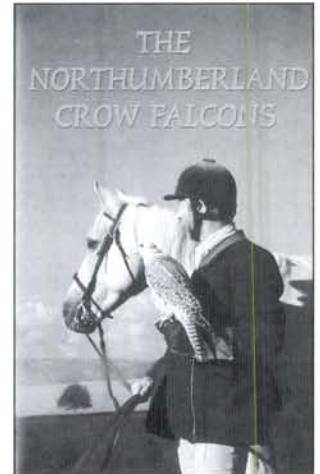
£20 incl. post and packing, from Hunting Falcons International, Blaencwm Farm, College Road, Carmarthen SA33

5EH, Wales. Tel: 01267 233864

This is a film made by falconers for falconers. Two years in the making, it starts with a brief history of falconry in the area, including a local stone carving showing a falconer from 760 AD, through Mary Queen of Scots and wild merlins hawking on the fells, to Hawkins-Fisher's moor for hawking red grouse. This is a magical area.

Coming on to modern times, we see a brief glimpse into Nick Fox's breeding farm in Wales and follow a white gyrfalcon called Quicksilver emerging from the egg, then growing up and being trained. We also see some of the other falcons used for crow hawking from black gyrfalcons down to littleSpitfire, a male peregrine/ New Zealand Falcon.

The Northumberland Crow Falcons are the only group to hawk crows from horses in the traditional manner since the days of the Old Hawking Club. You are shown a visitor's view of a day's hawking, from the morning preparing the falcons and horses and getting them to the meet. There is no acting in this



film, it is a 'fly on the wall' view and you see incidents as they actually happen. Sometimes the camera is held by a member of the field on horseback and you get a real feeling of what it is like to join in. Six falcons are flown, including two adult peregrine/sakers, two young ones, and Quicksilver and Spitfire. The flights are spectacular, some disappear into the clouds and in some the falcon is seen tumbling holding the crow. As well as many crow flights we also see remarkable footage hawking jackdaws with Spitfire, as well as flights at magpies and starlings. You will find the action footage compulsive viewing and want to watch it time and time again!

ing, hooding, equipment checks and weight control are just a few of the things he covers in depth and in a way that is easy to follow and understand.

The chapter by Philip Stapleburg BVSc (PRET) MRCVS, deals with common illnesses and ailments and will help you spot the first signs that something is wrong and what to do about it. One of the most important things is that it deals with prevention as well as cure.

Paul Beecroft has written and comprehensive, up to date chapter on the law regarding birds of prey. Including the Wildlife and Countryside Act, CITES, Ringing and the requirements for Article 10 Certificates, Game Laws, DOE rings etc.

Although the book is aimed at beginners it should not be overlooked by the more experienced as this book contains very useful and up-to-date information.

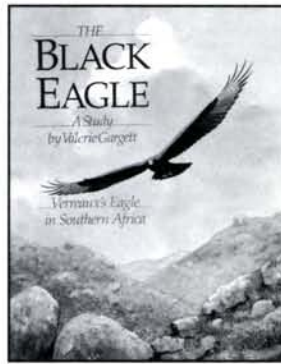


## The Black Eagle

A Study by Valerie Gargett  
Paintings by Graeme Arnott  
Sketches by Robert Davies  
Review by Steven Duryea

From the size of this volume (9x11" and 277 pages) you might think it's a coffee table book. It isn't, though it is nicely bound and beautifully illustrated. Written by an amateur but rigorously scientific, *The Black Eagle* is proof that in field ornithology there is still room for major contributions by bird watchers.

Based on a 21 year study of the Black (Verraux's) Eagle of southern Africa, undertaken by a team of volunteers, this is the most comprehensive work on a single species I have ever seen, and has something to interest every one, tables and statistics, a thorough anatomical and behavioural study, population dynam-



ics, an especially interesting section on the Cain and Abel syndrome, and many amusing (sometimes hair raising) anecdotes.

The entire raptor community of the Matobo Hills of southern Zimbabwe is also covered in considerable detail. In a more personal chapter Mrs. Gargett tells of her experiences observing two female eagles who proved to be as individual in their behaviour as humans. There is much more, too much to list even briefly here.

Though this is a work of science, and never talks down to the reader, it is written in an engaging and lucid style. The photographs, of the birds themselves and the extraordinary landscape of the Matobo Hills, are magnificent. Graeme Arnott's full color paintings are reminiscent of David Reid-Henry's, and even more so of Richard Sloans. Wonderfully unforced, expressive sketches by Robert Davies are sprinkled liberally throughout.

As a sculptor, and a great admirer of this most handsome of the Aquila eagles, I cannot praise this well-made book enough. For many people it may be overkill. It is not the type of book you read in a single sitting. I figure to spend a good year or two on it, and will know a lot more about birds of prey in general, not just the Black Eagle, when I'm done.



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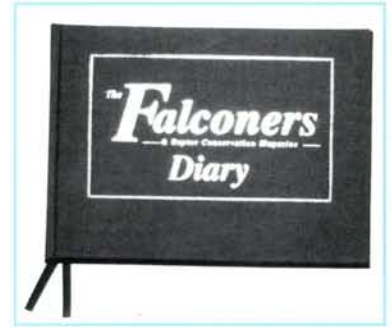
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# ACE

Colin Callaby



*Above: Ace on his bowperch  
Top right: Ace on a pheasant.*



With reference to your recent articles on drinking water for Raptors, I thought you might like to hear about my recent experience, as this might help someone else's bird one day. The other weekend I was flying Ace my male Harris, he landed on a thick Hawthorn tree and began to call. He will only do this out of frustration, when he knows there is something to be had, but cannot penetrate the thick thorns. I sent in my trusty little Jack Russell and she flushed a Pheasant. Ace took off and flew through the wood out of sight, I followed the dog and found her jumping up a tree. I found my bird ten foot up, hanging on to a branch with one foot and the dead Pheasant hanging from the other, he had it squarely by the head.

As I climbed the tree to get him down I noticed a lot of blood dripping all over me. I thought no more of it, fed him up a bit and we carried on. He had a Moorhen later and having had a good day he was put up for the night. Before flying him the next day I weighed him, I have flown this bird for two seasons now and can usually predict his weight fairly well, however I was shocked to see him up 1 1/2oz ? However, he flew well and again took a Moorhen in flight. Later when calling him to the fist I noticed his rear talon was stripped of the Black 'enamel' and only the ivory coloured stump was showing.

I finished flying him and tried to rack

my brains as to how he had done it ? The Moorhen catch was fairly straightforward, he had not been near wires? I couldn't work it out. I later sat and tried to piece it together. I might be wrong but perhaps the damage was done the day before. Perhaps he had hit the Pheasant in the tree, a heavy bird to hit at speed, maybe he had split the talon that day and it actually came away the next day, as I found no blood on the Pheasant despite copious amounts dripping on me. I know all birds carry much less blood than mammals, and such a loss to a bird can be very serious. Now I get to my point. If indeed it was blood from my hawk, then it stands

to reason that the lost blood needs to be replaced, quickly. Maybe due to this loss the bird became dehydrated and did something I have never known him to do - drink water! It's the only way I can explain him being so overweight, as he was flown hard and fed his usual ration. Had he not had drink available whilst his system was under shock would he have been alive today?

I have heard it said, and it's probably right, that most Raptors only drink when they are sick, but if the water's not available when they unexpectedly become sick the first signs you might get are when they are Dead !



*Ace on a rabbit.*

# CROW-SPOTTING FOR BEGINNERS

Dr Nick Fox

Going through the records of the Northumberland Crow Falcons recently, I noticed that during the past eight seasons we have flown 53 falcons at crows. Originally these were being trained for export but in recent years we have been unable to cope with so many and the young falcons have all been exported untrained. This has meant that we have been able to fly whatever types we want at crows and also we have been able to keep back birds through the moult, enabling us to have a good team right from the start of the season and thus to start mounted meets earlier.

Apart from a peregrine and a gyrfalcon, all of the successful crow falcons have been hybrids, mainly peregrine/saker types and gyr/saker types in varying proportions and bloodlines. Despite the rude remarks bandied around about hybrids, they are in our experience the only ones seriously worth training for crows. Pure sakers are too slow, gyrs take up too much room, and peregrines just don't like it. The prairie is about the nearest of the pure breeds for crows. No pure breeds that I have tried can catch jackdaws consistently in ringing flights; the only hybrid to do this has been a male peregrine/New Zealand falcon called Spitfire weighing 450g.

Entering the young crow falcons has to be done carefully. The falcons need to be able to manage 70 stoops to the lure, have done long-luring, and taken dragged and thrown dead crows. Then it is time to set their appetites right and look for a good slip. Ideally a nice low-ground crow or rook feeding quietly where the beginner can have a good look at it before setting off. So



I say to the boys "OK, we need a crow that's blind in one eye or with a wooden leg!"

Funnily enough, over the years, we've just about caught them both. Cross beaks or deformed beaks are not uncommon. Once we took one with a mouth full of what looked like trichomoniasis. Apparently crows can get frounce, but a number of other conditions can show similar symptoms and I didn't swab the corpse for a definite diagnosis. As for blind in one eye, again, not unusual. This season Spitfire stooped through a big lot of crows and came down with one who had turned a blind eye on him.

Broken wings are not so common although we have caught one with a healed broken wing which had set rather out of line. I remember doing a study in the 1970's of Australasian harriers in which I trapped and colour marked 70 individuals. One female was brought to me by a neighbour from the farm next door eighteen months after I had ringed her. One of her wings was missing, with a stump healed at mid-humerus. She was otherwise in good health and had been living at a water-hole presumably on frogs, and maybe her mate had fed her. I kept her for a while, fat and untrained, throwing her chunks of possum every day. After a few weeks she started to scream at me like a youngster, I suppose the disability made her more dependent and juvenile food-begging may well have been the successful strategy for obtaining food from her mate.

And the wooden leg? Well, we caught one crow whose legs were bound together by a tangle of tightly twisted wet sheep's

wool. It was flown on passage so I never saw it walking, but I doubt it could manage more than a wobbly hop.

This season we caught a crow with a totally deformed leg. The toes were all curled up and one claw had actually grown and embedded into the flesh of the upper leg. It walked on the knuckle of its tarsus and obviously put almost all its weight on the other foot, which had bumblefoot.

Sometimes these disabilities are so obvious that the falcon will single out that particular bird, or the bird is so weak that even an inexperienced falcon easily catches it. To that extent the predators do a good job weeding out the sick crows. If Spitfire is fat, he will sometime shunt a large flock of crows around the sky for a while, stooping into the top of them until dozens have baled out and landed on the ground or beside walls or sheep. Once he's got the whole lot completely under control and unable to go anywhere, he sets his eye on one of them and stoops at it as if to say "Oi you! I want a word with you!" Then he hits it and they tumble down together. Coming up on a horse you have to be careful because the other crows keep flushing out of little tussocks right under your feet.

Of course when you're searching for crow slips you can carry this wooden leg business too far. A black bullock behind a stone wall with its ears sticking up sends me reaching for the hood braces. But if anyone ever tells you that I have slipped a hawk at a piece of black polythene, I shall deny it categorically. All witnesses have been bought off with alcohol!



Above: This crow's toes were all curled up and one claw had actually embedded into the flesh

# A LIFE WITH RAPTORS 1984 - 1987

## Richard Naisbitt



*Typical Zimbabwean sunset and a Fish Eagle.*

I have been reminded on more than one occasion that I am not of convict stock, the true meaning of this comment still eludes me, it could be an insult but I take it as a compliment and having said that it is worth mentioning that I am not an Australian but rather a Zimbabwean.

I spent 12 years of my life working in the Zambezi Valley, in the north of Zimbabwe, there I met my partner (I won't embellish that fact) and I still wonder what it was that sparked the relation-

ship, it might have been my incredible charisma but I like to think it was my falcons that lived in my room, or the vulture that lived, for a short period, in an outside enclosure during her recovery, or better still it might have been the giant Eagle Owl that lurked in yet another enclosure. Whatever it was, we did get married despite the smell, "This room is rather pungent" was

one of her earlier comments, it is funny how one becomes accustomed to the scent of a raptor, she did too, or so I thought, but I subsequently discovered that Vanessa was being incredibly polite. The scent of raptor is not pungent I once said, more aromatic. The vulture did however cause a bit of a stink, literally and

one falcon stayed, ensconced in my room, but with the aromatic scent replaced with the strong scent of lemon.

This existence, flying a falcon in between safaris, was perhaps too idyllic, putting up my falcon at the end of a long day, and flushing double banded sandgrouse was a joy, except when the sandgrouse sought sanctuary amidst the large herds of buffalo. things got exciting then and I hauled out the falcon from the buffalo



*Above: White Backed Vulture 1985*

*Below Left: 6 yr old Lanner 1986*



Vanessa smiled when it finally took off after being hurled into the wind, we saw her (the vulture) a few weeks later, in the midst of a scrum, with her head buried in the remains of a dead buffalo, (we win-dowed her secondaries for identification).

The giant eagle owl went too, but

on more than one occasion, driving the old landrover as close as I could without stampeding the herd and the crawling on my belly to pick him up as quietly as I could.

If I think back there would be enough experiences to fill many pages, unfortunately many of these memories have somehow become mixed and welded together, time it seems mixes well over long periods. This is evident in the fact that



*Above: African Hawk Eagle*

things, this came to an end, that hawk eagle and falcon were released before I too left Lake Kariba. I am now living in Australia and have been for 8 years and work for a Government run Wildlife Sanctuary where I manage a raptor rehabilitation and research programme and fly

a number of Australian raptors in a demonstration capacity. Falconry here is illegal, so with a much modified association with raptors I do what I can, there are no herds of buffalo, and many a suspicious farmer has watched me crawl on my belly through flocks of equally suspicious sheep...“sorry, just picking up a falcon...she will be released soon and no it won't eat sheep”.

Vanessa pointed out that she doesn't remember a vulture...it must have been someone else, not that I am promiscuous, time just mixes well.

I started stealing chunks of meat from lion kills



*Above: Lion*

*Left: Adult Fish Eagle. It is quite usual to see them sitting like this on dead trees. The trees are usually left from when dams are made by flooding.*

*Below: Peregrine.*



after I picked up a steppe eagle, emaciated and covered with lice, I really should have left her there where she was, being circled by side striped jackals, “pick it up, you can't just leave it there” someone in the vehicle said, an American lady from memory so I did and wrapped this bird in the lady's jacket, and exquisitely tailored photographers jacket...she wouldn't take it back when she saw the millions of lice crawling over it.

This meat varied from buffalo to impala and the African Hawk Eagle that I had at the time did well on the meals. The steppe eagle was released one hot day, she simply climbed, wheeled and caught a thermal, the last I saw of her she was heading north toward Zambia.

Like all good



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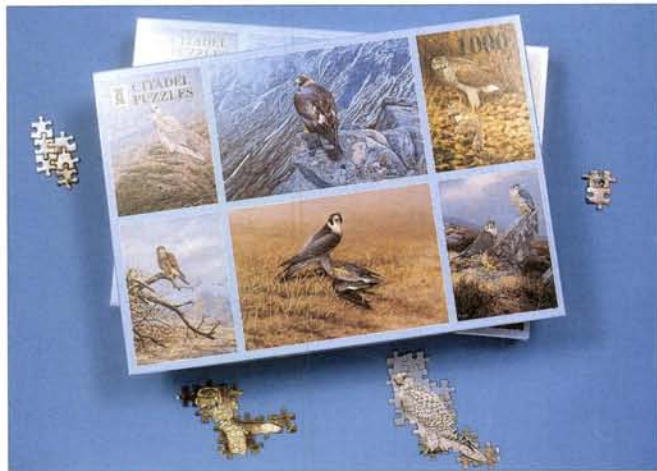
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