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10th Anniversary Issue



1989 - 1999


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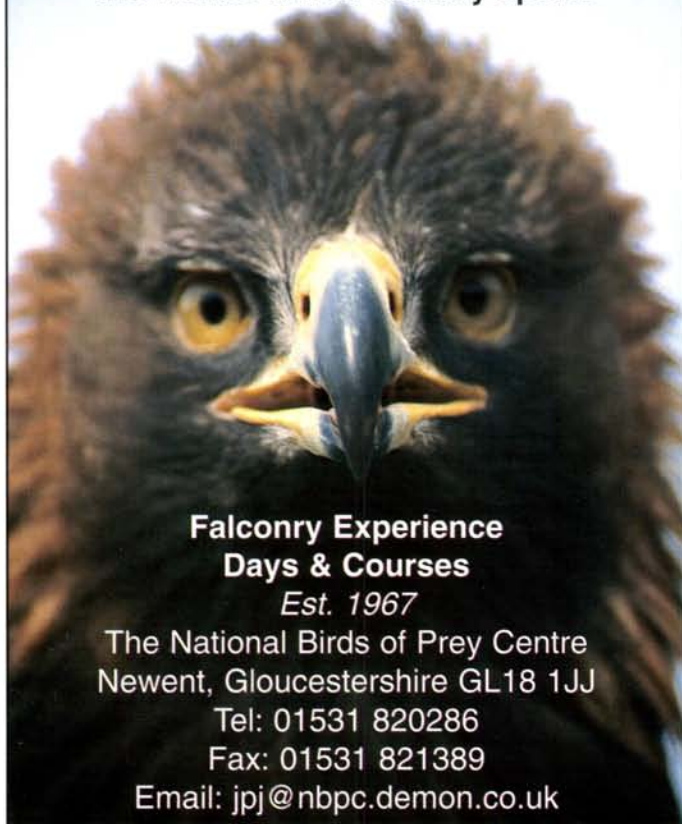
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THE SAKER - Pge 27



G'KAR - p:19

COMMENT

In Spring of 1989 David and I visited a falconer in Wales. He lent us a couple of copies of the NAFA Hawk Chalks. David made a passing comment that Falconry in the UK could do with a magazine and the seed was sown.

Initially the idea was to produce something very similar to the Hawk Chalk. We approached the Business Venture Trust for ideas and maybe a little capital but they couldn't help. On the way out we picked up a business card for a company which published mainly forces magazines. We arranged a meeting with the owner and discussed the idea of a falconry magazine. An advert was placed in Cage and Aviary asking if people would be interested in a Falconry magazine and if so could they please ring, we had over 350 phone calls in the first day. On the strength of this we decided to go ahead. Our job was to arrange all the articles and the publisher would sell advertising and handle the typesetting and printing. This arrangement seemed to work well at first but by early 1991 things started to go wrong. We had an amicable parting of the ways and they agreed to carry on typesetting for us. Now we had to sell the advertising, collate and distribute the magazine. As we became more experienced we decided that we could do more and more in house. We now do everything except print the magazine.

When we first decided to do the magazine we had support from a lot of people. Little did we realise though that we were stepping into a political minefield. Our hardest lessons have, we hope, been learnt. For the help and support (both practical and moral) we had received over the years from everybody we would like to say thank you.

David & Lyn

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COVER: Peregrine on R. David Digby. Reproduced kind permission Hal Webster.

FOUND

Buzzard 83??W
 Buzzard ?G?
 Buzzard 96??W
 Ferruginous ?95?
 Harris Hawk 98??W
 Harris Hawk ?CB??
 Harris Hawk 64??W
 Harris Hawk 55??W
 Harris Hawk ?H?B9?W
 Lanner 94??W &
 21?AN?93V
 Lanner 69??
 Lanner 74??W
 Redtail 11??X & 08??Y

Barn Owl 162?BC96U
 Barn Owl 072?BC99
 Barn Owl 149?BC98U
 Barn Owl 28?IOA94U
 Barn Owl 371?BC98U
 Barn Owl 18??CB93U
 Barn Owl 500?BC95U
 Barn Owl 18??38U
 Barn Owl 393?U95
 Barn Owl 15?95BCU
 Barn Owl 49?IOA92U
 Barn Owl 022?95U
 Barn Owl ?IOA95
 Bengal ?BENPANK97Z
 European 845??
 European 9?

LOST

Coopers Hawk ICGK96W
 Ferugenous Hawk 3673RR97X
 Goshawk 16873W
 Goshawk 14156W
 Harris Hawk 15892W
 Harris Hawk WAPRIL98
 Harris Hawk PCB97W
 Harris Hawk 10PJB1996W
 Harris Hawk 451RR98W
 Harris Hawk 6MROBB96W
 Harris Hawk 355IBR96W
 Harris Hawk 512RR98W
 Harris Hawk 4ALT98W
 Hybrid UK88041 &
 N98752520
 Hybrid UK87095 &
 CXD10752
 Kestrel CHIP11765
 Kestrel CHIP11735
 Kestrel 3HE98S
 Kestrel 3107RR97S
 Kestrel IBR1761S
 Kestrel 971WADES
 Kestrel 11526S
 Lanner 11RAH97V
 Lanner 1764W
 Lanner 1598W
 Lanner 24NBPC95V
 Lanner 2333RR96W
 Lanner 2403RR96W
 Lagger
 Peregrine 18289W
 Pere x Lanner 9548V
 Pere x Saker 5902V
 Pere x Saker 9183W
 Redtail 2730
 Redtail 0783Y
 Redtail 2419RR
 Redtail 0204Y

Saker RS398
 Saker CBK598W
 Saker 523RR98W
 Saker 521RR98W
 Saker IBR945W
 Saker GBOS7W
 Sparrowhawk IBR3756R

Barn Owl 3317BC98U
 Barn Owl 3796U
 Barn Owl 2722BC98
 Barn Owl 3597BC97U
 Barn Owl 3970U

STOLEN

Buzzard 8584W
 Buzzard 6668W
 Buzzard 410TSHRW
 Harris Hawk 1SCW97
 Harris Hawk 8902W
 Harris Hawk 7904W
 Harris Hawk 8875W
 Harris Hawk IBR1302W
 Harris Hawk 3517RR97
 Harris Hawk Not Known

If you recognise any of the above found birds as being yours please ring either Raptor Lifeline on 0118 9016990 or the IBR on 0870 6088500

FALCONERS FAIR A SUCCESS - DESPITE THE WEATHER

Despite the fact that this years event was the wettest yet, word is that it was a success. More European and overseas visitors came than ever before. Numbers on the Sunday were no different than usual, although Mondays numbers were down. The traders in the main had a good Fair and I am sure the clothing stands actually benefited from the wet weather. I know of quite a few people who came equipped for sunshine and had to dig deep, myself included.

The Campaign for Falconry stand looked good, with quite a substantial sum of money raised for the cause. Walker the Harris Hawk carving donated by Steven Duryea fetched £450.

Once again the art marquee held a large amount of quality paintings by both prominent and up and coming artists.

I have been assured that although the parachutist who had the accident on Monday was quite seriously injured he is making a good recovery. We wish him well.

Well done Ron for a sterling job and we look forward to next years Fair.

CONVICTIONS

In February 1998, Willy Enzlin of Eindhoven, Holland wrote a letter to a Falconer in Scotland. The contents of the letter clearly asked for up to 20 Peregrine chicks from the wild. There was also a request to burn the letter.

By doing this Enzlin had already committed an offence under COTES Regulations.

The Falconer however did not do that but instead passed the letter to the authorities. Advice was taken from the local Procurator Fiscal. A letter was then sent to Enzlin from a fictional Peregrine supplier. Enzlin then arranged to travel to Scotland to collect 16 young Peregrines at the end of May.

On 24th may Enzlin, met 3 persons in a car park in Scotland not realising that two of them were Police Officers. Enzlin was in possession of a bag which contained £4000.00. He was arrested and the money plus his vehicle was seized.

Enzlin pleaded guilty to a charge under Section 8 of COTES.

For this offence Enzlin was fined £2000.00. The Court also forfeited his car and the £4000.00 cash.

In June 1999, Noel Pannell of Birdham, Chichester appeared at Chichester Magistrates Court charged in connection with the sale of two Marsh Harriers under COTES Regulations.

Enquiries commenced in February 1998 when the authorities went to see the birds at Pannells address. Pannell claimed that he had sold one of the Harriers and had given the other away as it was Wild Disabled in April or May 1997.

The two Harriers were quickly traced. The Purchaser stated that he had bought the birds only 10 days prior for £1400.00 on the understanding that he was buying Captive Bred birds. Receipts were produced on Pannell's business paper and the buyer stated that he was expecting to receive the Article 10's.

In court Pannell pleaded guilty to the sale of the captive bred bird as he had not complied with COTES Regulations. He maintained that the wild disabled bird had been a gift and that he had passed them on for a price similar to what he had originally paid.

He was however found guilty by the Court and fined a total of £1350.00, ordered to pay £455.00 costs and compensation of £700.00 to the purchaser.

New this year at Huxley's

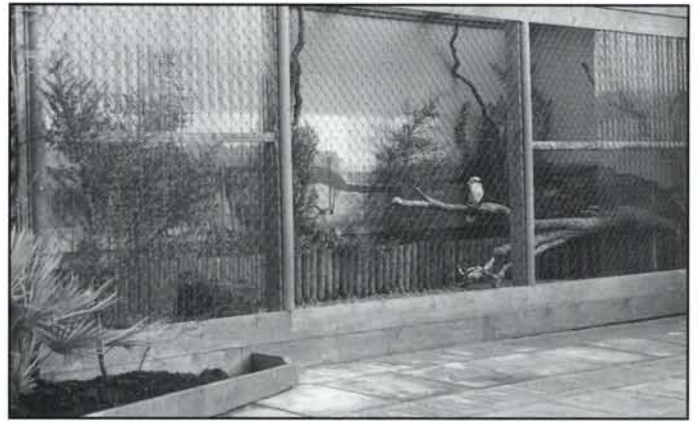
New this year at Huxley's Bird of Prey centre and garden are three specifically designed aviaries for Matilda the Kookaburra, Ebony the Caracara and the black kites; each has a painted backdrop to reflect the area that the birds come from - all painted by Julian.

The caracara's aviary (below) has a full sized rowing boat settled on a pebble beach and a stone tunnel which she can play

in (caracaras in the wild raid penguin tunnels for food) this is all completed by a stormy seascape.

The Black Kite's have a spacious aviary with a 50ft mural of forests and mountains; they have certainly shown that they are happy as at the time of writing they have just laid their first ever clutch of eggs.

Matilda's aviary is designed to give her a her collection of

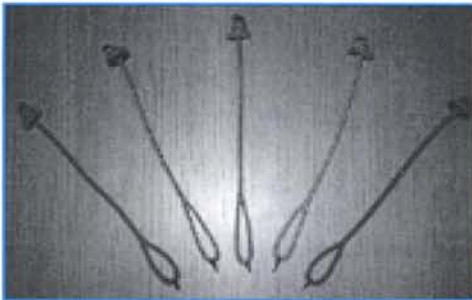


unusual collection of Australian plants full protection from the weather, again with a painted backdrop of the Australian outback.

This is a new concept of aviary design at Huxley's to compliment the beautiful gardens which are now being featured in national garden magazines.

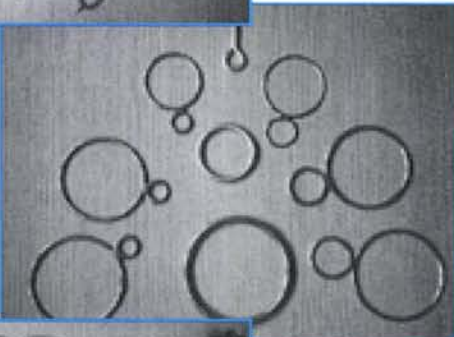


New Style Leashes and Block Rings From Oundle Country Sports



Julian Stevens of Oundle Country Sports has produced a new range of

Loop Leashes and figure eight rings. Pictured above are the leashes. To the right the rings and below



is a picture demonstrating how the leash is attached to the ring and swivel.

One Man Exhibition of Wildlife Paintings by Mark Chester

Wildlife Artist Mark Chester will be holding his 8th one man exhibition of paintings on Sunday, 28th November 1999, at the Watermill Hotel, London Road, Bourne End, Nr Hemel Hempstead, Herts. 2-5pm/

The exhibition will feature original paintings with subjects ranging from big cats to gamebirds, owls to garden birds. There will also be pen and ink drawings, limited and open edition prints and cards.

Some of the work shown will be drawn from Mark's latest trip to the National Tiger Reserve of Ranthambhore in central India, where he was able to see at first hand tigers, leopards, sloth bears, fishing owls and many other species.

This years exhibition is supporting the local Wildlife Trusts, helping to improve wildlife habitats in the local area.



Scottish Hawking Club Autumn '99 report

The long summer rains are upon us once again this year, I hope Scotland doesn't get a repeat of last years continuous rain. The cycle continues with birds breeding and others moulting. That new bird, so long anticipated should by now have arrived, and its mawning process under way, while those with old faithful wait for that last tail feather to drop. The new Scottish parliament came and went again, all the MSPs went on summer recess the day after opening, talk about easy work!! But seriously when they return we could be in for problems, with all the talk of banning hunting I'm sure something will be tried up here to test the waters. It is up to all falconers to stand up for our sport and to support others, we are fortunate that our sport is not in the front line, but a ban on hunting dogs could affect us. I will appeal again for all falconers to join a club, so all our resources can be used to fight the protectionists.

The summer fair at Scone Palace was our best ever, we were fortunate to obtain some sponsorship from Calor, this enabled us to offer some liquid refreshments to members and guests, as well as some new display signs and boards. Many thanks to Calor. We shall also have attended the CLA fair at Harewood House in Leeds by the time you read this, as the largest club in Scotland and the third largest in the UK, we are proud to represent our members at the largest game fair in the UK. If it's as successful as Scone the club will be extremely pleased.

We have provisionally booked our 4-day field meeting and AGM on Skye during the first weekend of November; we have had a warm welcome on the Island on previous years, if the weather is good to us a good time should be had by all.

Good Hawking.

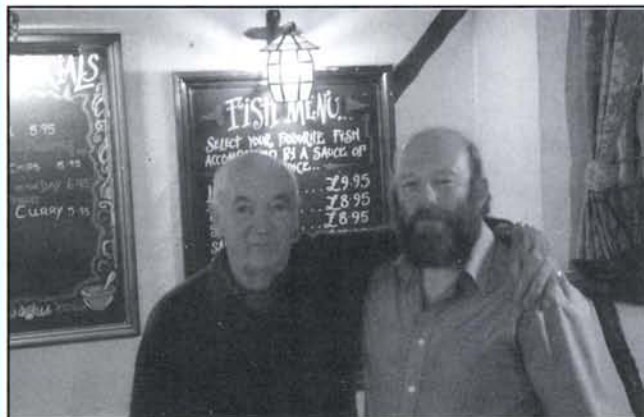
British Hawking Association News

The Association has been very busy over the past months. We have attended the British Falconry & Raptor Fair and supported Raptor Rescue at their open day at Herts Castle. Membership continues to grow and we were surprised at the interest shown in the Association at the Falconry Fair and the number of people that actually joined over the two day period.

Our new Website has proved to be a success with quite a few people showing

THE HAWKING CLUB NEWS

Presidents Nancy de Bastyai, John Buckner and Lawrence Workman.



The hawks are almost moulted out, let's hope the decks are all straight - soon we will be starting another season. The Falconers' Fair has passed, where we met a lot of old friends - and gained a lot of new members, whilst the rain poured we drank some ale and talked of hawking days past. At our Northampton meeting in June we were honoured by the attendance of one of our most celebrated members, Hal Webster from the USA. Hal also spent some time with members at the club stand at the Falconers Fair before meet-

a lot of interest and new members gained from this country and abroad including the US, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Spain.

The Association also has an online Internet Mailing List. A Mailing List comprises of a number of Members who have subscribed and allows them to send an e-mail that is received by all subscribers. The List allows members to disseminate information, and provoke discussion. Details of Meetings can be announced, Committee Reports and advice can be given. We understand that we are the only UK Falconry organisation that offers this service.

The hawking season fast approaches now and Field meets are currently being arranged. Over two hundred Pheasants will shortly be released by the Association on a selected Estate in readiness for the season.

If you would like to join us or find out more about us then contact one of our members listed on the Club Directory page. Our Website can be found at: <http://website.lineone.net/~bhas-soc/index.htm>

ing up for lunch with our Presidents.

Now we look forward to next season and already have some field meets planned for Devon, Anglesey and the Midlands. In mid summer we are invited by the excellent cook Fred J Taylor to a Feast at the Cefn Mably Trout Fishery, Caerphilly in South Wales.

Our breeding project now has a pair of Merlins set up in an aviary and we hope to have a pair of young Goshawks installed before too long.

Club evening meetings continue at South Wales, Exeter and Northampton, where we have occasional speakers, hawk food (by prior arrangement) such as quail, rats and chicks or turkey poults.

For an application form - (our subscription is only £20) or more details call our Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333 or email: adewilliams@saqnet.co.uk

Please send us your Club News. It will be printed free of charge on our clubs news page. 350 words Max and one photo if desired. Send to: Clubs Page, The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering Northants.
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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

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Contact:

Paul Beecroft: 0118 9016990

Wendy Alikar: 01945 450648

Rita Lippard: 01582 615741

THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB

Meetings:- Held 2nd Tuesday of every month at 8pm. Venue:- Railway Hotel, Mill Lane, Heatley, Nr Lymm. Ches. We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

Contact: Jeff on 01942 201995 or:

Rob on - 01706 845731 or 0378
609467 (mobile).

LONDON HAWKING & OWL CLUB

Affiliated to the Hawk
Board and Countryside
Alliance.

For more information
phone:

Paul Barham on 0171 515
7754 or Bill Fiveash on
0171 6399087

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/>

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CROOKEDSTONE ELVANFOOT,
BY BIGGAR LANARKS
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THE SOUTH EAST FALCONRY GROUP

Established 1981

‘Supporting & promoting falconry in the
south and East of England.’

Based at Tilbury in Essex, the South East
Falconry Group continues to provide a
forum for falconers to meet, discuss and
practice falconry. The club caters for both
the experienced and novice falconer.
Meetings are held on the last Tuesday
of every month.

For further information please contact:

Gary Biddiss: 0245 226057

Dean White: 0375 671302

or write The Tilbury Community Ass.
The Civic Square, Tilbury Essex

STH GLOS & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

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

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

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

Telephone

Martin 0117 9710019

Gary 01454 201702

The Hawking Club

Welcomes experienced Falconers
and Austringers but offers assistance
to the newcomer to the sport.

Membership £20.

We meet each month at the following
locations:

South Wales: Llantrisant. 8pm 2nd Friday

Devon: South Brent 8pm 4th Monday.

Midlands: Northampton. 8pm 4th Monday.

and have members throughout the UK and
overseas.

For further information call our Secretary

Adrian Williams on 01443 206333 or our

Chairman Craig Thomas on 01327 261485

MEETINGS of The Welsh Hawking Club

are held monthly, 8pm at:

H.Q. The Foresters Oaks, Llandevaud. A few
miles off J24 of the M4 held 2nd Mon

N.Wales. The Goshawk, Mouldsworth,
nr. Chester. 1st Mon

Exeter Group. The Ley Arms, Kenn,
nr. Exeter. 3rd Mon.

Essex Group. The Whalebone Inn,
Fingeringhoe, nr. Colchester. 1st Tues.

Bath Group. The Bull Inn, Hilton, nr. Bath.
1st Weds.

**The Welsh Hawking Club is
Internationally recognised and has
members throughout the UK.**

**For further information ring Secretary:
Mike Clowes on 01529 240443**

JILLS & OESTRUS

James McKay

Many ferret owners have heard the old countrymen's tales that state that a jill (female) ferret must have a litter every time she is in season, or she will die. While there is certainly some truth in this, today we have methods at our disposal which our forefathers did not, and which can eliminate the risks of prolonged oestrus in jills, without producing unwanted litters.

In common with many other animals - including chickens and horses - the ferret's oestrus is regulated by photoperiodism. In other words, she will 'come on heat' when the days get longer, and the nights shorter, ie in the spring. Unless taken out of season - either by injection of hormones or by mating - she will remain in season throughout the summer months.

If a jill is not mated immediately she is on heat, the levels of oestrogen (the female sex hormone) will build up, causing progressive depression of the bone marrow. This can result in a condition known as pancytopenia - the abnormal depression of all three cell types of the blood - a condition that is potentially fatal. In other words, if a jill is left in oestrus ('on heat') for any length of time, she will almost inevitably die before reaching her full life expectancy.

Where the owner of the jills does not wish to have a litter from their ferrets, the animals are best neutered (both jills and hobs). Neutering will also reduce the smell of the animals (particularly during the summer months), reduce the risk of fighting between hobs, and allow any combination of ferrets to be kept together in safety.

However, if it is desirable to keep all options open, the best methods of removing the risk of serious health problems linked to prolonged oestrogenic exposure are to either have the jill mated with a vasectomised male ferret (a hoblet), or given a "jill-jab" (a hormone injection) by a vet. To my mind, where large numbers of jills are kept, then the ferret owner really cannot afford not to have at least one hoblet.

To have a hob vasectomised costs between £40-80 (with such a large variation, it is well worthwhile ringing a few vets and asking their prices). The hoblet will be able to take jills out of oestrus for about 7 - 8 years, thereby repaying this investment several times over. Savings will be made on food, time and trouble that kits would cause the owner and,

of course, the fact that there will be fewer unwanted ferrets to be abandoned by unscrupulous people.

A jill mated with a hoblet will usually have a pseudo-pregnancy (phantom pregnancy) following the mating. This may result in the jill's stomach swelling, she may produce milk, and she may nest build. In other words, she will exhibit all of the symptoms of being pregnant, with one major difference - at the end of the 42 day "pregnancy", she will not produce a litter. The jill will, however, come back into oestrus about 3 - 4 weeks after the end of the pseudo-pregnancy, when she will require mating again. By the end of the second "pregnancy", the summer will be almost over, and the jill will not come on heat again until the following spring.

The reason that a hoblet can take the jill out of season, without getting her pregnant is that ferrets are known as induced ovulators, ie the physical act of mating induces the jill to ovulate. As there are no sperm to fertilise the eggs, the jill comes out of season without becoming pregnant.

Some ferret clubs recommend and even encourage owners of hoblets to lend them to owners of jills in heat, but this practice is fraught with dangers. The risk of the spread of diseases such as Aleutian disease, distemper, enteritis and influenza is far too great. Encouraging the loan of hoblets simply dissuades people from making the investment for themselves, and is not a sign of responsible animal ownership.

If owners do not wish to invest in a hoblet of their own, or have only a small number of jills, "jill jabs" - injections with drugs such as proligestone (Delvosteron) - are often a viable alternative which allows owners to keep their options open, without endangering their ferrets or producing unwanted litters. One of the few side effects of hormone injections is tem-

porary hair loss at the injection site. Sometimes jills will need more than one such injection during a year, ie if she come back into season. These injections vary from about £5 - £10 per ferret per injection.

Some ferret keepers have other ideas for taking their jills out of season - some of which are extremely outlandish. One theory is that, if a suitably shaped stone or similar object is placed in the cage with a jill who is on heat, she will copulate with it, bringing herself out of season, and thus reducing any health risks. Others state that if two or more jills are kept together, and never allowed the company of a male ferret, they will turn "lesbian" and remove each other from heat by using their paws on each other. Some ferret owners even try to simulate the coitus of a hob by gripping the jill firmly by the neck and using either a glass rod or even a cotton bud to stimulate the vagina; there is obviously a great risk of injury to the jill - and very little hope of success - in such actions, which should not be attempted by anyone.

Of course, no credence should be given to any of these weird theories, but it is easy to understand why the users of such methods believe they work.

Although a jill comes into season early in the spring, and will remain so until she is removed from season by a mating or hormone injection, the obvious signs of her condition will not always be present. When she first comes into season, her vulva will swell noticeably, often protruding from her body by over a centimetre. Within 7 - 10 days of mating, this swelling will reduce, but it will also reduce (albeit temporarily) after a couple of weeks even if she is not mated. This does not, however, mean that she is not in season as, in the next few weeks, her vulva will again swell to very large proportions.

KEY POINTS

Jills come are in season from March to September every year.

If not mated, jills will remain in season throughout the summer, resulting in serious health problems, and even death.

Hoblets or "jill-jabs" can be used to bring jills out of season safely.

CONSULT YOUR VET FOR FURTHER ADVICE

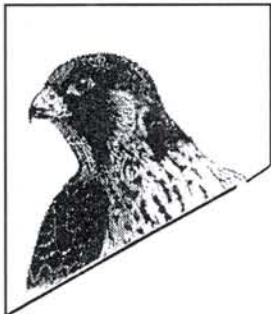


DE TO SPEED

There are no right words to start
this tale of joy and woe,
And few around could understand
the terrible hurt I know.
The bond which grows with every passing day,
In the blink of an eye
has just been stolen away.
My love for Speed is legendary
as is the bird himself.
His skill, his speed, his temperament,
his cunning and his stealth.
For in this mist that shrouds the beauty
of our highland moor,
The dogs they'd go a quartering
for what grouse are in store.
The hood came off, the falcon roused
and waved a long goodbye.
As beating up he left the fist
to wait on upon high.
The dog goes in, the grouse get up
a covey of three or so.
Speed folds up and flies earthbound
upon the screams of ho!
He stoops to bind in classic style

the grouse was his for sure
His tally for the season
had just docked up one more.
That certain sound of destiny
that thud and 'ding' of bell,
That only we can recognise has
consigned the grouse to hell!
But after seven years of grazing
Mother Nature's sky,
Unfortunately now it was
my Speed's turn to die.
In no fine style nor hunting field
not even in his mees,
But at the vets so far away
from where I heard the news,
For those who aren't a falconer
I am afraid to say,
The pride and joy Speed gave to me
will never come your way,
For all the greatest birds I've known
Ruth, Speed, Brock and Ling,
Their falconers in common
shared the greatest thing.
Although their feet are firmly planted down here on the floor
their souls fly higher than any falcon you've ever seen before.

Rick Gould 1999



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RECIPES JOSE SOUTO

ROAST SADDLE OF HARE WITH A REDCURRANT AND GREEN PEPPERCORN SAUCE

Here we continue with our recipes from Jose Souto with a wonderful recipe for hare.

Cooking game is not difficult and the flavours beat anything you can buy in the supermarket. Children are no excuse all my kids will eat rabbit, pheasant, hare and venison. So if you have never eaten what you have caught before make this the season to start.

The hare is the largest member of the rabbit family. In the U.K. there are two types of hare. The first the Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), lives mainly in lowland areas on open pasture and large expanses of arable land. Brown hares are the larger of the two species that can be found in this country, they can grow in excess of 8lb in weight and have a coarse red/brown coat. Brown hares have a very strong and distinctive flavour unlike their cousins the blue hare. Blue hares (*Lepus timidus*) are mainly found in Scotland and take their name from their blue/white coats that help to camouflage them against the snow covered hills of the highlands. They have a more delicate flavour are smaller and are said to be inferior to the brown hare. A female hare is called a doe and the male is called a buck, a young hare is known as a leveret until it is 3 months old and are by far the best to eat. Hares, unlike rabbits, live above ground and scrape out small hollows, which are known as lays or boots. Here the hare will lie perfectly still if danger approaches. Their camouflage is so good, that you can sometimes walk right passed them in short grass or stubble and not see them. Hares are at their best when young. The males are very tender in their first year and then become tougher as they grow older unlike the females, which are relatively tender well in to their second year. Young hares are recognised by their slender paws and smooth coats which becomes slightly wavy and shows signs of greying as they get older. Also in young hares their claws are not visible but hidden by the fur on their paws as they get older the claws project slightly beyond the fur.

Here is a recipe for Roast saddle of hare, which can also be done with rabbit. The other parts of the hare not used in this recipe can be frozen and used to make a casserole at a later date. Hare as with venison must not be over cooked when roasted as they both contain very little fat and will go very dry and tough as well as lose all their flavour if cooked for too long. All game contains very little fat and is one of the leanest and healthiest meats to eat. Because of the low fat content when game is being roasted it must be protected so that it will cook evenly but not too quickly this is why, in this recipe, the saddles will be covered with bacon.

ROAST SADDLE OF HARE WITH A REDCURRANT AND GREEN PEPPERCORN SAUCE

2 portions

Saddles of Hare
1lb Game bones
10 Rashers smoked bacon
4oz Onion

5oz Celery
5oz Carrot
Sprig of Thyme
1 Glass of red wine
1pt Beef stock
1 tsp. Redcurrant jelly
1tbsp Green pepper corns
Freshly milled black pepper
Oil

Cut away the belly flaps on the saddles and remove the kidneys. Then using a very sharp knife, cut away the very thin membrane around the meaty loins. You can do this by putting your knife in just under the membrane, all the way up to the top of the loin then carefully cut from the backbone around the loin without cutting away any of the meat.

Take the game bones and chop them up into pieces. Brown these bones in the oven so that they are well coloured do the same with the onion, celery and carrot in a frying pan then add the Thyme.

Once the bones and vegetables are well coloured, place them in a large pan with a generous helping of black pepper. Add the red wine and reduce by half then add the beef stock and allow to simmer for the same time it takes to cook the hare. This stock will be the base for the sauce.

Season the saddles and seal them in some hot oil.

Using the bacon wrap the saddles so that they are totally covered, if necessary use some string to keep, the bacon in place but do not tie it tight.

Place the saddles in a hot oven and roast for about an hour or until the saddles are cooked. Do not over cook them they must be left pink or else they will be very tough and dry.

When the saddles are cooked take them out of the oven and remove the bacon. Add the bacon to the sauce. Keep the saddles in a warm place allowing them to rest.

By now the sauce should be cooked using a fine strainer pass the sauce, return it to the saucepan and bring to boil, add the redcurrant jelly, green peppercorn and season with salt and pepper. Reduce the sauce to the consistency of double cream.

Take the saddles and cutting along either side of the backbone cut away the loins. Turn the backbone upside-down and remove the fillets.

Place the fillets on the a plate and then cut the loin into slices placing them onto of the fillets then pour sauce round meat and serve.

A quick and easy way of cooking pheasant. Using just the breasts, remove just the flesh from the breast of the pheasant, wash. Heat some oil in a small frying pan. dip the pheasant breasts in egg and seasoned flour. (make the seasoned flour with plain flour, Schwartz seasonal and black, freshly ground pepper) Then fry on both sides until golden brown. Serve with fries or new potatoes and vegetables of your choice.



The Call For *Silence*

By Martin Hollinshead

The Harris' - no other bird of modern falconry is so well known and yet so misunderstood. This unfortunate raptor has to become something different every time pen touches paper; what it should do, what it shouldn't, what it can do, what it can't. If it's confused, then the would-be Harris' flyer is left feeling punch-drunk!

The first blow is nearly always struck by the noise issue. The recipes for making a quiet Harris' would fill a cook book. But the solution is simplicity itself - acquire a different species. This bird is noisy, this bird likes to 'talk'. In the field it will communicate with its handler indicating pleasure and displeasure with grunts and mumbles; the experienced bird will even tell its handler of cover-hiding game. And yes, at home it may well scream. If wild-taken passage birds can scream in their first year, the vocal captive-bred bird is almost to be expected. And on the captive-bred bird some interesting observations from the other side of the Atlantic. In the September issue of *American Falconry*, Tom and Jennifer Coulson address noise and state: '...we find the tendency to scream stronger in certain bloodlines.' And also note: '...the birds with the gentler dispositions tend to scream more than the nervous, skittish types.'

It has become the norm to select birds for size and hunting pedigree, in future might especially quiet Harris' hawks find themselves being sought out? Not, of course, that these will necessarily be the better hunting companions or, indeed, the nicer-to-work-with birds. And here I can't resist commenting on hand-reared golden eagles. When I first became involved with eagles, my nestling-devoted mentor, Josef Hiebeler, remarked: 'If it doesn't call, chances are it won't be any good', words that I'm sure would horrify many of my British colleagues! Let me caution the first-time Harris' trainer in a similar fashion. There are some very good totally silent first-year Harris' hawks, but there are many more totally quiet mixed-up monsters!

In Britain there is a strong tendency for falconers to demand parent-reared/foster-reared birds which have been left aviary-confined for some time to prevent screaming. With the Harris' this approach is often taken to extremes and can lead to disaster. As the aviary weeks tick by the real parabeuteo slowly vanishes and in its place we find an inflexible, practically untrainable horror-creature - that still might scream! This is certainly not the Harris' the novice falconer has been educated to expect. The super-tame, joy-to-work-with bird is

not the parent-reared Harris', it's the hand-reared (group-reared) version. The difference between the two is shocking. Accepting that individual birds vary a great deal, the average seclusion-housed, parent-reared Harris' is far from ideal material for an inexperienced hand. If a malleable, heavy-flying, trainer-bonded companion is required, the hand-reared or early-taken parent-reared Harris' is the bird.

The hand-reared bird is particularly suitable for the less experienced falconer, and if proof of this is required look to the many commercial operators that favour it. This bird will fly for anybody, anywhere and will remain safe to handle even when all the rules are broken. Such a bird may have been reared and housed in a number of ways and require treatment ranging from fairly typical brief manning and training to almost straight into free-flight. Whether a little wilder or tamer, the best course of action is get it early and get it going. Some Harris' flyers prefer hand-reared birds that have been left weeks to months (like the p/r bird) to prevent screaming. This is not my way. It isn't natural for the bird to sit around doing nothing, (and possibly staring at four blank walls) and by keeping it confined we interfere with the most important stage of its mental development; we shouldn't use confinement to help us get over problems that need to be tackled in more productive ways.

Noise Reduction and the Early Bird

With the 'talking' accepted, there are a number of ways to reduce the irritation (and irritating it can certainly be) during training and with general management. But let me emphasise the aim here is reducing, dealing with, living with screaming, not curing or avoiding it full stop. Screaming is a complicated issue. And it's an old one. Boredom, too much glove-feeding/flying, too little hunting, erratic weight control - even introducing a non-screamer to a screamer - the list of culprits goes on and on. One thing's sure, if trouble can be had with normally quiet species, the Harris' requires some real thought. And always there's the need to work with the individual bird in a way that suits it. Just because something works with one bird, doesn't mean it will work with another.

A well recognised way of avoiding screaming is swift training and early hunting. And I mean swift training. The tame Harris' 'flies' through the basics and into hunting with ease. By moving quickly there is less time for trainer dependency to develop; few things will trigger or exaggerate screaming more quickly than unearned hand-

outs. It's natural for the less experienced falconer to over train. This is where he/she feels safety lies. Lots of creance work then lots of free-flying to develop flying ability. And it's fun. For the falconer yet to be bitten by the hunting bug, having the bird follow and come sailing into the glove is almost enough in itself - and the bird's in full agreement! But what about fitness? The novice is told that fitness is vital, but is it? In many branches of falconry fitness prior to hunting is essential (hare hawking would be a good example), but for the Harris' catching sensibly set-up rabbits it's far less important than getting into the field early. The rabbit hawk flying from trees can allow fitness (and flying ability) to gradually develop; with no full-power pursuits being required rabbits will still get caught. If fitness/flying ability is treated as a separate issue, something that has to be dealt with before moving on, it will really slow things down.

Tame-Hack

Elbowing its way into all of this comes tame-hack. For the breeder-flyer producing hand-reared stock that has direct contact with him/her right up to the flight stage, periods of carefully monitored free-flying, perhaps flowing into hunting, can be very beneficial. And with any tame, human-bonded Harris' hawk a modified or late-stage tame-hack might be considered. For this bird, periods a liberty prior to serious hunting can't be seen in the same negative light as handler-centred training sessions. The free-flying bird is not looking constantly to its trainer, it's exploring its flying ability and its surroundings. The Harris'-hacking of Austrian falconer Dr. Harald Barsch is particularly interesting. Barsch lives on an elevated site in mountainous country and, following some basic training, his youngsters are allowed total liberty over entire day periods. A great deal of soaring is seen with the birds rising to astonishing heights on thermals.

Slow to Start

The novice falconer is often hindered by reports that Harris' hawks are slow to hunt, need to see others catch first, and don't achieve much in their first year. Accordingly he/she feels the bird has to be pampered and allowed to develop slowly. Yet the bird needs just the opposite! Harris' hawks can be very quick to hunt but they need to be understood. They (the young birds) don't hunt in such an automatic fashion as the goshawk or red-tail and like to go about things in their own way. When allowances are made for this, first-year results, even when operating an initial



Above: The different faces of 'The Harris' Hawk'

single-kill policy, can be surprising. The very best approach is to do as much tree-flying and free-following as possible. When treated in this way, the Harris will do far better than when flown from the glove to suddenly appearing quarries. And let all of this be happening earlier rather later in the year. Easy flights and innocent rabbits will not be available to the late-acquired or aviary-abandoned bird. How many ill advised first-time Harris' owners celebrate Christmas with an empty game book? Believe me, the New Year won't bring new luck.

Back at Base

One of the biggest problems for the intelligent, activity-craving parabeuteo is boredom. To relieve the hours of drudgery of just sitting there, the falconer can try a number of things: tough-to-eat food, such as rabbit heads, can be fed at the lawn perch; the perch itself can be regularly moved to give the bird fresh scenes; if free-lofted, the bird can be brought outside for periods on the weathering lawn, and, the bird that screams in its pen is often totally silent when outside and feeling less 'abandoned'. The moult can be a difficult period and don't imagine for a moment that a heavy Harris' must be a quiet Harris'; inactivity might have fatty singing its head off! The perfect solution is to train-fly through the moult; I would certainly recommend it for the first- and second-year Harris'. And make the bird work for its food by hav-

ing it pursue pulled lures rather than fly to the glove. Boredom-screaming is something you have to tackle head-on - shutting the annoyance away just makes things worse when you do have to show your face!

While the hunting falconer might cringe, the best rearing and housing locations are commercial falconry centres. No risk of boredom at these establishments. Crowds, pushchairs, and noisy kids - the bird hasn't got time to scream it's too busy trying to keep up with all that's going on! It's worth noting that some of the nicest mannered and most effective hunting golden eagles in Central Europe are falconry centre birds. And some privately owned eagles spend their summers at centres to benefit in just the same way.

Whatever the setting, feeding is an important issue and the way in which food is presented needs to be carefully considered. With naturally tame birds, too much glove-feeding/flying should be avoided because it brings us back to the dependency issue. The emphasis should always be on the bird catching its own meals. Early training flights and between-hunt flying should centre around the lure. It doesn't have to be an imitation quarry affair, a simple recall device will do, the bird will still view it as something that has to be worked for; the fact that the falconer is pulling it makes no difference at all. The lure is very often neglected when it comes to the Harris' but I consider it essential. I use

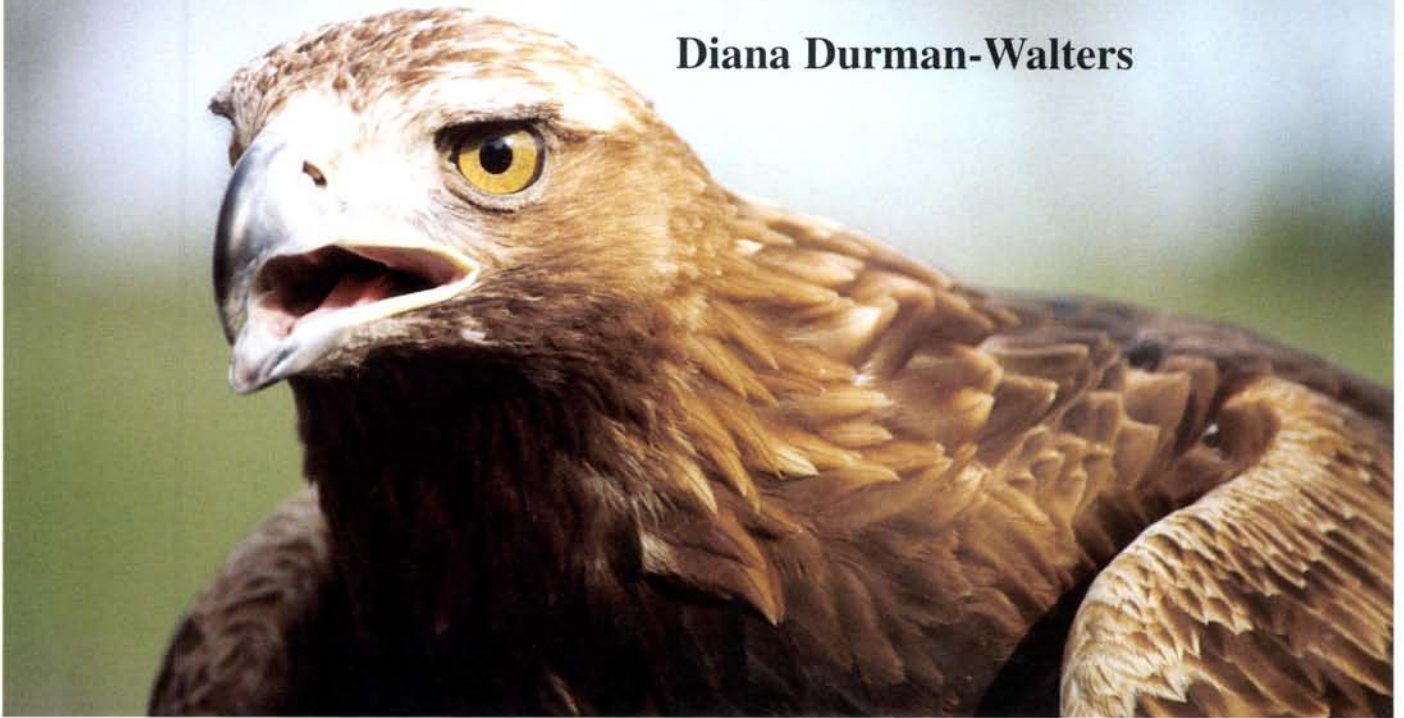
it for fitness training, boredom breaking and constantly in the field.

Although perhaps designed to combat restless behaviour more than noise, four important rules are: never to feed the bird in its accommodation; never go directly to it and feed it; feed (the tame bird) at its lawn perch rather than on the glove; and avoid any kind of set routines. The Harris' gets into habits very quickly, and the anticipation of food can make the sensible bird a flapping, squawking idiot! If a bird is being free-lofted remove it from its pen and leave it on the lawn while you do some other chores, or remove it, clean out its quarters and put it back; bring it out again later and feed it. Keep the bird on its toes, if it gets wise to one routine change it. All sorts of things can trigger silly behaviour and screaming: the sight of the feeding perch being moved into position, the act of being weighed, the sight of a familiar food container. With a nervous bird, routines help keep things running smoothly, with a bold, tame bird they can have the feathered half of the partnership calling the tune.

In closing this piece let me reiterate what I said at the beginning; if you have to have a silent bird go for a different species. If you do plump for the parabeuteo and find yourself in hot water with neighbours, you can always resort to the tactics used by one Harris' owning friend when moving to a new house - visit them next door with bottles of scotch!

“JAMES” A Millennium Eagle.

Diana Durman-Walters



Technology pushes the boundaries of knowledge and perception at such a rate that it is sometimes difficult to know whether it is an advantage or not. That is purely from a human perspective. It's hard to know how animals view such advances. It may well be that they take it in their stride rather like the Golden Eagle "James" who has just finished some very inventive filming for a new series called "Predators" which will be shown on TV next year in the new millennium.

As an accomplished hunter he has spent much of his young life hunting Blue hare (*Lepidus timidus*). Several years ago he was featured in a BBC Radio live programme which called for the hunter to catch and prepare a meal for the table "One for the Pot". This series attracted 1 million listeners worldwide and a lot of mail as a result. In particular James had captured the imagination of the listening population as the atmospheric programme took them out hunting onto the snow driven landscape of the Scottish Borders as if they too, were out with me, hunting for hare.

From this series the BBC Natural History unit wanted to film him catching

quarry wearing a camera. Clearly this aspect had been attempted before but it had been with heavier equipment and had not been able to show the eagle in action as intended as the camera gear had to be worn on the eagles back. This time it was needed to show the hunting attempts from the eagles eye view, that meant the camera had to be carried on the chest. Not an easy task.

Since the previous film sequences cameras had become smaller and smaller. Matching this development was the receiving equipment but as with everything that is designed for our own use it becomes challenging when used in

wildlife filming.

It was decided to begin some of the filming in December as previous seasons hunting had shown this month the best of fairly stable winter weather. Snow is very much a feature each year here in the Borders and there would be a problem in flying on these days as it would interfere with the lens on the camera.

A harness had to be made that James would wear in which he would be relaxed enough to fly with it attached to him. I constructed several prototypes until I found a design that he would wear which allowed the miniaturised camera and housing to be attached.

We flew him daily throughout November and early December so that it became second nature for him to wear it. In this period of time he was not hunted but given plenty of scope in recreational flying. It was important to develop a feel good factor so that the harness became associated with the pleasure of being out on the hill.

Not every day was a good day from James' point of view. If for instance the harness straps weren't tied in such a way so they couldn't work themselves



Above: James on a Blue Hare.



Left: James on Blue Hare, showing harness in situ.

Below: James rouses briskly in winters early morning sun.. Showing camera and harness being worn

loose then James would simply go to the nearest point, land and refuse to fly until the situation was rectified.

If the winds weren't particularly strong then he would be disinclined to make adventurous flights onto the hill preferring instead (once again) to sit down, as the harness obviously annoyed him.

Nevertheless, it was a learning curve for him and he began to look for different ways in flying into the wind which didn't allow so many aerodynamic problems with the unstreamlined harness attached.

As with everything fickle, so was the weather. By our agreed first film sequence, snow had fallen making it too difficult to begin. However, by early January the snow had all but cleared and we had decided to go ahead.

"James" in the meantime was taken onto the hill wearing the harness and camera so that I could see what his reactions were going to be when he was faced with quarry for the first time in his high tech flying suit!

A hare was spotted approximately 100 yards away, which promptly sat back on its haunches to check out the advancing intrusion. The eagles hood was removed and as he gazed around he too saw the hare and stared fixedly. He bobbed his head using minimum effort and continued the fixed stare without moving any other part of him. He then launched himself from the glove (to my relief) and went in direct pursuit of the hare, which by now was in fast exit mode. The eagle seemed to gain ground effortlessly and in order to be successful he would need to keep the hare running in front without allowing it to turn up hill.

He quickly accelerated over the heather and side-slipped over a slight brow in the hill. As he did so he lowered his height and seemed to put in an extra spurt and then disappeared from view. As we ran over towards him we could see his extra large shape in the heather with his back towards us mantling over the first hare of the day.

It seemed that the harness was going to work.



Filming proved a tad more difficult than just flying him at quarry. In the pursuit of excellence many sequences have to be shot and re-shot to get the desired results. "James" hadn't had time to think this one out. As far as he was concerned one or two excellent shots at his natural quarry would be quite sufficient, but technology has an annoying way of developing faults which in one case sent the film crew back to Bristol to go back into the design labs to do further work on the receiver.

"James", in the meantime, had by the second days filming decided he's had enough of this harness which seemed to be in the way and on one of his many forays after hare, which this time was unsuccessful, was seen to throw himself into the heather grappling with his harness, having an almighty tantrum which sent BBC

crew and falconers into a frenzied gallop across the heather to rescue the camera before it became history.

However, "James" by and large was very gracious in his flying and wore the harness during filming providing some quite stunning shots which of course are unique...

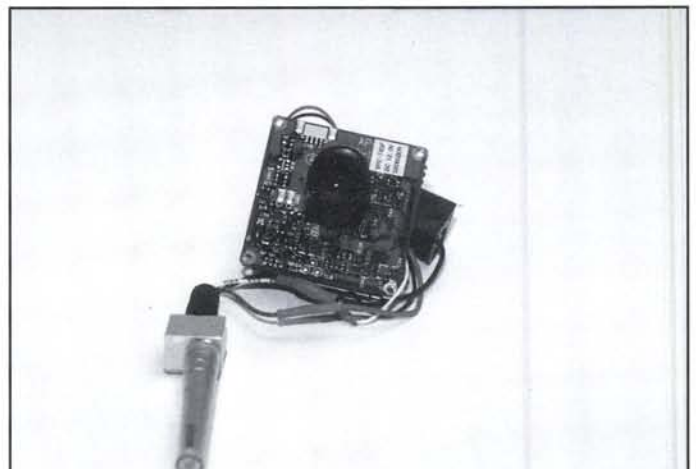
The work with the miniature camera was completed by March leaving only some long lens work which will be more traditional in so much as an eagle will be seen pursuing quarry as you normally expect to see in wildlife films. This to be finished by late October.

"James" for his part had an excellent season with some superb flights at hare many of which were not only inventive but devastating to watch. The weather in February provided some of the most stunning scenic action. Crystal clear blue skies with a touch of frost in the early morning giving way to such warmth in

the afternoon sun you could walk the moor dressed for a summers day.

Despite the exactness of this type of filming, the location plus the abundance of Blue Hare gave an added dimension to flying "James" this year. He for his part was suitably impressed when we finished the season with a further two days up on the hill in glo-

rious weather and he was able to go hunting without the harness. He soared along a ridge of hills into the wind just checking his body movements with a simple wing adjustment and keeping steady in the wind indicating he'd seen a hare. He trimmed his wings, folded into a compact shape and stooped with unnerving accuracy into the heather. I'm certain he looked over his shoulder to see if we'd got that one on film....



Above: the camera shown actual size - 32mm x 32mm

FLYING DISPLAYS, CONSERVATION, AND THE VIEWS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

AUTHORS: MARTIN FOULDS AND RONA RUBIN

Main findings:

Overall, it seems that seeing the birds at close quarters and hearing the commentary had put some minds at rest. However at least 29%, and possibly as many as 63%, felt negatively about tethering and caging

Introduction

As more and more Birds of Prey centres are opened in the United Kingdom, with the twin aims of conservation and education, it is timely to ask what influence do they have on the general public's attitudes towards aspects of flying birds at such centres, and to conservation in general.

Cromie and Nicholls (1995) explained the value of flying displays as opportunities where conservation and educational messages could be passed on readily during the commentary.

With this in mind, a survey was carried out to establish what attitudes the visitors to a Bird of Prey Centre in England expressed before and after visiting the centre, and after watching a flying display of raptors.

Method

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was in two parts, the first to be filled out on arrival at the centre, and the second part on leaving. Questions were on their expectations of the day, attitudes to birds in captivity, and attitudes towards conservation.

The sample

One hundred members of the public were selected at random as they arrived in their cars at the Centre. There was a wide age range and both males and females were included.

Procedure

On arrival, participants were approached by a member of staff, who explained to the car drivers why the study was being carried out and asked for their co-operation in filling out section one before leaving the car and section two before departing, handing both sections back to the kiosk on leaving. The questionnaires were subsequently analysed by the authors.

Results and Discussion

Education

95% of respondents were hoping that their visit to the centre and its flying displays would be a learning experience for them. This openness to education is crucial given the concern of Parry-Jones (

1994) that, with the ever increasing rate of Birds of Prey centres opening all over the United Kingdom, it has become particularly important that information given about the nature of the birds is correct.

Tethering and caging

On entering the centre, before seeing the birds, the overwhelming majority of the respondents said that they were in favour of keeping birds in captivity in such educational centres. This contradicts some received wisdom that the public disapprove of birds in captivity. Tethering and keeping raptors in cages is an even more emotive issue. This is one area where the public were clearly influenced by the visit. At the end of the visit, answers to an open ended question on how they felt about the tethered and caged birds were as follows:

27% thought it was fine, many stating that the birds looked well cared for and contented

10% stated that they had had initial reservations and doubts, but after hearing the commentary at the flying display had accepted that it was indeed a good idea.

However

17% didn't like it, but considered it a 'necessary evil', in order to breed from them, educate the public or protect the species

12% thought it was a bad thing in any circumstances

34% did not answer this question, and it is quite possible that they disapproved of tethering but did not like to say so at the centre.

Overall, it seems that seeing the birds at close quarters and hearing the commentary had put some minds at rest. However at least 29%, and possibly as many as 63%, felt negatively about tethering and caging.

Conservation

Cromie and Nicholls suggested that the role of captivity in the conservation of species was justifiable, for three important reasons; captive breeding, research and education. They also argued that the majority of the general public that visit such places are not active conservationists. Others have pointed out that breeding birds of prey in captivity has formed a focus for controversy, while some feel that this is the only way to restore certain endangered species back to the wild. From the responses to the question on perceptions of conserva-

tion, it seemed that even after visiting the centre, most people believed that conservation meant the protection of the natural habitat and nothing else. Research has shown consistently that positive attitudes do not always lead to positive behaviour. When asked would they help with a conservation issue by joining a pressure group, fund raising or just signing a petition the answers were as follows:

45% selected just signing a petition, whereas only

15% selected fund raising or joining a pressure group. More suprisingly,

40% were not prepared to say that they would do anything at all. So they believed in the importance of such centres, but were not prepared to support any conservation issue.

This leaves us with a worrying discrepancy. It is clearly not safe to assume, even when members of the public express positive attitudes to the bird of prey centres themselves, and recognise their importance in conservation, that this will translate into action of any kind. One may ask then whether the resources invested in such places as centres of conservation education are justified.

Were entertainment the main aim of the centres, this would not be an issue, as our respondents clearly wanted to be entertained, and were satisfied with this aspect of their experience. However, as Cromie and Nicholls argue, education is one of the justifications of the centres.

Conclusion

Our conclusion has to be that more evidence is needed that the behaviour of the general public changes in a way which enhances conservation of our wildlife as a result of visiting bird of prey centres. Otherwise, there is little point in having the displays other than a means of earning money. Of those who took part in our survey, 94% said they would visit another bird of prey centre.

Let us hope that the opportunity may be taken to find out which kinds of information and interactions may actually lead to change visitors' intentions to support conservation activity in a way which will make a positive difference, which is what, after all, we are committed to.

References:

Cromie R and Nicholls MK (1995) *The Welfare and Conservation Aspects of Keeping Birds of Prey in Captivity in the UK* Reports of the RSPCA University of Kent at Canterbury Parry-Jones J (1994) *Training Birds of Prey* David and Charles Devon

What a GUY

Training Dogs the WALLACE Way

Some weeks ago we travelled to Wales to see a dog which had come up for sale. On the way down we called in to see Guy and Marion Wallace. Guy told us he was having a Dogs for Falconry

deer.

If you have never met Guy I can tell you he is quite a character, if you have met him you will know exactly what I mean.



Above: Guy explaining the uses of the various dogs. Dogs L-R: Pod, Poppy, Opal, Biena, Shale & Shaz.

training day the following weekend. A message was on our answer phone when we got back inviting David along for the day. We arranged to go and cover the day for an article and also took along our friend Andy, who has an eight month old Wirehaired bitch called Poppy.

When we arrived everybody was having coffee and tea and generally getting to know each other. It was all very relaxed. After we had all finished we made our way up to a field near Guys house. He has some quail here and also some pheasants, chickens and ducks. Roaming around quite freely (we saw four) were



Rusty, the Irish Water Spaniel.

From my point of view it was great to meet several subscribers to the magazine who had gone for the day.

Present on the day were:

John Agg and his Brittany Spaniel - Opal. John flies a Harris Hawk.

Chris Scott and his liver & white German Shorthaired Pointer - Shale. Chris flies a Harris.

Martin Whitely and his Black and white German Shorthaired Pointer -

Biena. Martin flies a Harris.

Melvyn Batt with an almost solid liver German Shorthaired Pointer - Shaz. Melvyn also flies a Harris.

Lyn Leeman with her Irish Water Spaniel called Rusty.

Sam Brooks with an English springer Spaniel - Meg. Sam flies a Goshawk.

David Wilson with a German Wirehaired pointer. David flies a Goshawk, and Andy Glover and his German Wirehaired pointer Poppy.

Jacky and Gary Scottford also came along to watch and pick up some hints and tips and were just about to buy a black Labrador.

Guy began by talking to everybody about the various different breeds of dog, giving extra time to the ones which were present, explaining what each was good at. He told us that the HPR had been bred to replace three dogs, which were originally used when out hunting. One dog to find and point the quarry, one to flush it and a third to retrieve it. Obviously there was a lot of training, not to mention feeding, involved.

Can you imagine the chaos unless the dogs were all exceptionally well behaved?

Guy recommends that as you buy a bird for your terrain then you should also buy a dog the same. English pointers for moorland, HPR's for close country. Some dogs work well with particular birds as well ie, the Springer spaniel and the Goshawk.

All the working dogs have both show and working varieties, they are quite different dogs although supposedly the same breed and it is recommended that you do not buy show stock for working.

He then goes on to discuss training, introduction to your bird, kennelling etc. His golden rules are:

Everything must be black & White.

If the dog does well praise it, if it does something wrong tell it off.

Training is a 24 hour a day job. The dog



Above: Shaz and Meg.

must do something always or never, and lastly,

Never give a dog a command you can't enforce

Next Guy did some basic sit & stay work with the dogs and their owners. Taking a dog in from its owner to illustrate

a point when he felt they weren't doing something quite right. Guy seems to have a natural ability with the dogs. They seem to change when he has their lead, obey commands better and a couple in particular actually seemed to be listening, waiting even for him to let them know what to do.

Next we walked down to a small stand of trees and each dog in turn was sent on to quarter the ground. Guy made sure that the owners understood not to get the dog to work downwind. Some of the dogs quartered quite naturally, others needed some encouragement. It was interesting to see the different dogs working. The

springer and Brittany like two little bullets, the pointers steadier and the Irish Water Spaniel compared to the other was quite sedate.

Then it was time for lunch.

After lunch Guy took everybody to another field where he had two homing pigeons which he dizzied and then lay down on the ground for the dogs to point. Quite a few of us had never seen this before. The pigeon is not harmed in any way it is, just as it says, dizzy.

Then we went up to the pens where each dog was taken in in turn to see if it would point. The black and white

German shorthaired pointer sight pointed superbly, and Poppy one of the German wirehaired pointers pointed on scent alone. She was quite confident. A couple of the other dogs also pointed. The best part about this was that it showed their owners that they had the potential to do the job.

Guys training philosophy is a very down to earth one. Dog psychology, but on a basic doggy level, which is where it belongs.

Training a dog is like raising a child, difficult and time consuming but done right it is extremely rewarding.

Top Left: Shaz German Shorthaired Pointer; Top Right: Guy with Opal the Brittany. Middle: Guy with Rusty, Irish Water Spaniel. Bottom Left: Bien, German Shorthaired Pointer. Bottom Right: Poppy, German Wirehaired Pointer.



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N V K O K E I Y F I E S A
D Y M Q U G Q N D G N A N
W C A M S G N A I N A R I
A J N B Q E H J F Y I O R
R W I U T L O L K S T N H
H N A A U G E R E I P O J
D U N W D N M C O G Y E B
S R Y A U O T M F S G L K
O A C Y B L Y T H S E E N
E L A T I C U E A T H O D

Hidden in the grid are three Hawk-Eagles, three Eagle-Owls, two Falcons, two Buzzards, one owl and one vulture. Their first letters give the latin name of another Buzzard.

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& Hare Hawk -
Martin Hollinshead*

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G'Kar

The Next Generation.

Alan Gates

The large speckled egg lay in the palm of my hand. I had just viewed the contents with the aid of a candling light, and watched the eagle embryo break through the inner membrane and take its first breath of air.

I could feel a slight tightening of my coronary arteries and I became aware that I was taking shallow breaths. This momentary condition came upon me as I dithered with the decision I had made before hand to pierce the shell, allowing a flow of fresh air into the air sac area. There were pro's and con's to this action and as I hesitated for a second I could feel a bead of sweat form on my brow.

This Golden Eagle egg was important to me, it was the first of six fertile eggs my female eagle 'Maria' had produced through voluntary artificial insemination, which had developed to this advanced stage of incubation.

Our previously successful inseminations had unfortunately resulted in the embryo's terminating at a very early stage of development. The reasons were speculative, and alterations to the eagles management and methods of incubation had been implemented, in the hope that we could proceed from what was becoming a log jam in the development of a full term embryo.

As I placed the eagle egg back into the

hatcher I contemplated the enormous time span and effort it had taken me to arrive at this moment. The next stage would be the pipping of the shell, but for now the embryo should rest. I was delighted that this time we had progressed this far but fearful of 'counting ones chickens'. At long last it looked as though what had become a lifetimes daydream could actually be achieved.

'Maria' my female Golden Eagle was now twenty five years old, together we had traversed the years, we had hunted the varied terrain of this country and in these latter few years she had concentrated her time in the breeding chamber.

'Maria's' very existence in captivity was through my early belief that I could breed golden eagles with the aid of voluntary artificial insemination.

Although a quarter of a

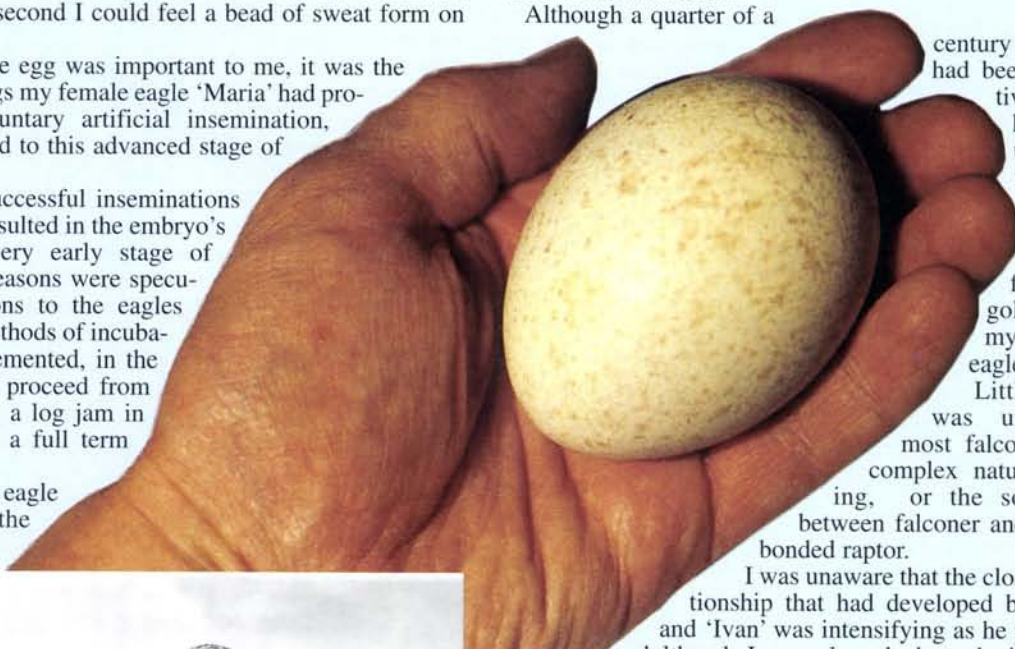
century ago few raptors had been bred in captivity and virtually all that were used in falconry were wild taken stock, I had embarked on a course to find a female golden eagle for my hunting male eagle 'Ivan'.

Little or nothing was understood by most falconers as to the complex nature of imprinting, or the social etiquette between falconer and a sexual pair bonded raptor.

I was unaware that the close hunting relationship that had developed between myself and 'Ivan' was intensifying as he progressed into adulthood. I was abruptly brought into the picture one morning as I routinely tethered him to his weathering block. Crouched to tie the leash to the block ring, 'Ivan' found the area of my back irresistible.

Startled by the eagle landing on my back I instinctively rolled him off, but once having realised he intended no harm I allowed his second attempt to proceed. He balled his feet and attempted to copulate, his early attempts produced no semen but it set me on a course of possibilities.

Sixties Britain held few captive Golden Eagles, and the majority of those were held by zoological collections usually as indi-



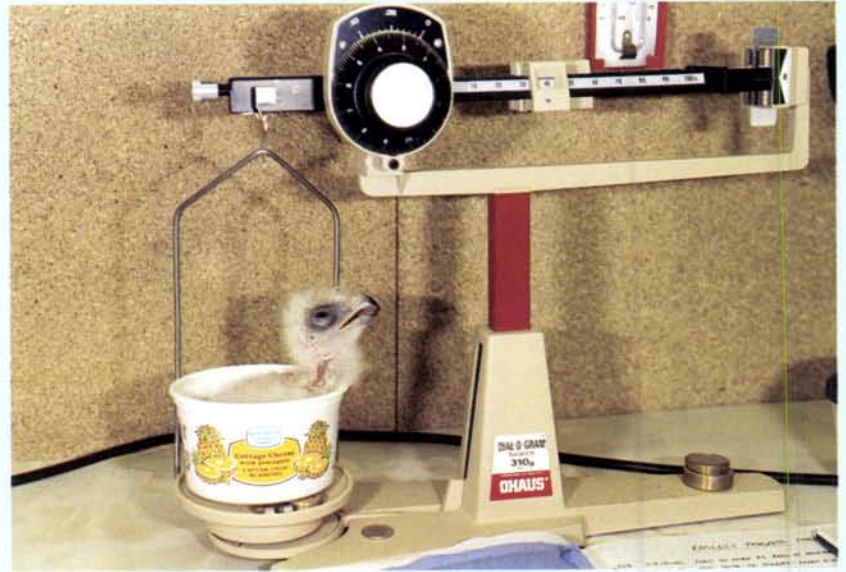
Above: Ivan, male Golden Eagle. La Moye, Jersey. 1970.

Right: G'Kar winks at me for the first time.

Far Right: sixty-three and a quarter hours later, finally free of the egg.



Edward, G'Kars' father.



vidual specimens. Falconers with golden eagles were a rare breed, possibly four or five of which two or three were regularly flown at quarry. My attempts to acquire a second eagle were directed towards those zoological collections which showed some interest in the idea of breeding golden eagles.

The first real faith in my belief came from Miss Molly Badham, Director of Twycross Zoo and eminent breeder of endangered primates. Within her collection she had three individual eagles housed in a large flight cage. A Spanish Imperial Eagle, a male Crowned Eagle and a female Golden Eagle.

The female Golden Eagle was named 'Helga' and had in the past been handled by Lorant de Bastyai when he had worked at the Zoo. She was a fine eagle and Molly was keen to hand her on to me, but in true zoological tradition was also keen to receive a specimen in return to enhance her collection.

My best hope to procure 'Helga' was to find a mate for either the Imperial or the Crowned eagle. As I was in touch with nearly every eagle owner in the country my only hope seemed to be in the pairing of the Crowned Eagle. I was corresponding with David Ried-Henry the artist who owned a female Crowned Eagle called 'Tiara'. David had had this eagle since she was four months old and had flown her successfully at quarry. , now twelve years old and laying eggs she was becoming belligerent and doing her best at putting David in hospital at every opportunity. I knew he was contemplating returning to Africa and releasing 'Tiara' back to the wild, but

would he consider her for an attempted breeding project ?. Although I presented a passionate request he was so against raptors being housed in aviaries and felt it total waste of raptor life to cage two birds in the vain attempt of breeding them. He was



convinced 'Tiara' would smash her face in the wire and pursue the male until she killed him. To be fair, with the knowledge of breeding raptors at that time this was probably an accurate scenario, and so went the possibility of my obtaining 'Helga'.

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland housed two female Golden Eagles at their Edinburgh Zoo. 'Benim' a young adult female, was housed in the tall telegraph pole rock faced enclosure. In a smaller enclosure there was a pale coloured adult female from "off the hill". She had been picked up in the highlands, suspected of suffering from the effects of poison and sent to the zoo for care. Her six month stay in captivity had seen her condition improve, she was very calm and had a tranquil effect on me as I gazed into her pale eyes trying to imaginewhat she made of this busy zoo life.

I spent many hours over numerous visits to the Zoo discussing my ideas of breeding eagles with the new Director Roger Wheater.

My proposal would have to be put forward to the Animal Management Committee for approval. The waiting for a decision seemed to take an age, but to my surprise they approved the trans-



Above: Maria's first foster eyas.



Above: Buteo - buteo



Early days, Maria delicately feeds her eleven day old eaglet.

fer of the wild adult female to me.

I had not even considered her, firstly thinking because she was an adult wild eagle temporarily incapacitated, and would naturally be released once fit. It was 'Benim' an eagle who had been in captivity since leaving the eyrie that I thought most suitable, but the committee felt as 'Benim' was well adapted to captivity she should continue as their main display eagle.

By now I was desperate to obtain a female eagle, and logic seemed to evade me, I would settle for this eagle, who knows maybe she would cooperate with me. Things move slowly within large organisations, and I was not famed for my patience indulgence to a lack of progress. My nail biting wait abruptly ended with the receipt of a letter from the Society informing me of the death of the female eagle just days before she was to be boxed and shipped to me. To make matters worse Zoo officials had apprehended two young boys within the grounds brandishing an air rifle on the day of the eagles death.

It was a hard enough blow to bear to lose the eagle I had worked so hard to acquire, but to have it shot was such a senseless waste. As it transpired, the post mortem result exonerated the young boys of such a deed, the eagles death was due to long term liver damage due to the effects of poison. A sad end to such a fine proud bird and a dead end to my attempts to obtain an eagle for breeding. I felt I had come to the end of the road, I had tried all of the options I could think of. I had been given a great deal of encouragement, in fact I think I had inspired one or two individuals to think

that my idea of breeding eagles was maybe possible. Still, the end result of all this effort was zero, I was no closer than when I set out.

As the hunting season of 1972/73 came to a close I put 'Ivan' ready for the moult, his amorous intentions with me highlighted my inadequacy. I had all but given up on my notion of breeding eagles when in early May I received a letter from a Mr. Welsh, Assistant Secretary at the Scottish Home and Health Department. The letter instructed me that the Department had been informed of the zoo eagles death and a license was enclosed to permit me to take a wild born eaglet from an eyrie in Scotland.

A license granted in early May gave me little time to organise. It stipulated that I could take an eaglet from the counties of Inverness-shire and Argyll. These counties cover a vast area of the Scottish Highlands containing many eagle eyries. I had some contacts that knew the mountains and the locations of many eyries, with some judicial arrangements of worktime I was able to travel North on a couple of scouting trips to locate viable eyries in the highlands.

This license was only the second ever granted and the first for a breeding purpose. At the time we were treading a new course, no one knew how many eagle licenses would be granted in the future, or for how long license allocation would continue. I made an unofficial agreement with the advisory committee that I would only take an eaglet from a twin eaglet eyrie. Thus reducing the risk of the parent eagles deserting that eyrie due to a failed breeding season, as they surely would if a single eaglet was taken.

This put an extra pressure on me to find a suitable twin eaglet eyrie, in an accessible location which made removal of the eaglet reasonable possible. On the 2nd June 1973 I came face to face with Maria and her brother, she was a big downey just ready to stand and weighed 8lbs.

At last I had a pair of Golden Eagles, but the reality of breeding eagles was a



Right & Below: Part time social imprinting at the workplace



Left: At three weeks, resting after a feed.





Above: Gloria, the best incubator in the business.

long way ahead. 'Maria' had at least four years before she was sexually mature enough to lay eggs. In that time I had to establish a pair bond with her every bit as strong as the bond between 'Ivan' and I.

The only way I understood to form such a bond was to fly this female eagle, she had grown into a large powerful hunting raptor and it took fourteen years before she turned her amorous attentions towards me. Sadly in that time 'Ivan'

had died and I had shelved the notion of breeding eagles.

Once again I needed another eagle, although this time the breeding of raptors in captivity was no longer a vision of the few it was a massive reality. Strident, innovative advances had been developed by falconers in the highly successful propagation of many species of raptors. This time initially I sought the help of fellow eagle falconers who had imprinted adult male eagles, with the intention of obtaining viable semen. In the following few years 'Maria' built and rebuilt her large eyrie and laid, incubated and foster reared a number of buteo eyases. What I was unsuccessful in obtaining was the elusive viable semen, those who had seen their males give semen could never produce such a product when required.

Finally, yet again to my rescue came the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, this time they had five eagles in their collection. They had a male called 'Edward' who was seventeen years old and had been in captivity since leaving the eyrie. He had been housed with a number of females during his time in captivity, but had not formed a bond with any of them. It was felt that he may be imprinted enough to become a viable semen donor and so he was offered to me.

'Edward' bonded within weeks, but it was five years before he gave viable semen and in that year we produced our first fertile Golden Eagle egg. The embryo died within the first week of incubation, and at first I believed 'Maria' had possibly let it chill. The following two years I managed two fertile eggs each year, but regardless of my strident improvements in incubation methods my end results were the same.

In desperation I prepared for an extreme method of management, I had naturally fed a varied diet, mostly home grown quail, rabbit and wild rifle shot rabbit. In addition I had added Vitamin and mineral supplement plus pro-biotic and Vitamin E, the main diet was stored deep frozen and freshly thawed with a small proportion freshly killed and fed warm.

Throughout the winter of 97/98 and up to the end of egg laying I fed both eagles solely on freshly killed warm food, no additives. All eggs were naturally incubated under 'Gloria' my totally reliable buff Cochinchina hen. Only one egg was found to be fertile, and 'Gloria' dutifully

sat for twenty three hours per day. During her two half hour breaks the fertile egg was removed to a incubator running at one degree less than incubation temperature, it was never allowed to cool. The embryo thrived throughout those forty long days, and burst into the air sac bang on schedule. It took sixty two and a quarter tortuously marvellous hours for the embryo to break free

of the shell, as I iodined its umbilicus it was hard to imagine the miraculous transformation that would develop over the coming weeks.

Three and a half hours later I moved the eaglet to the brooder, its down was still not dry and fluffy. Three and a half hours after that it took two small pieces of quail heart, and so started a regime of four daily feeds which rapidly transformed this helpless little scrap. Within a week it had doubled its hatched weight and by day eleven I handed a 220 gram determined bundle of an eaglet into 'Maria's' care.

This was the big one for 'Maria', she had been practicing for many years with experimental foster eyases waiting for this moment. I had enormous confidence in her, but all the same I stayed with them both to observe all went well.

Her dedication, patience and delicate maneuvering around such a helpless ball of fluff is an amazing experience to watch at such close quarters. Over the next couple of weeks my role was reduced to food provider and family album photographer. On day twenty four the eaglet was standing in the eyrie and the following day I fitted the DOE closed ring, reporting in my daily log that growth was so rapid that the following day may well have been to late to get the ring to fit.

My intentions had been to remove the eaglet from 'Maria' for social imprinting, once it was able to feed itself. But events have a way of presenting themselves which don't always follow to plan. 'Maria' was very relaxed with me handling the eaglet and clambering about in the eyrie,

so I decided to remove the eaglet on a part time daily basis.

Each morning I would climb into the eyrie with a large plastic box in which to transport the eaglet with me to my workplace. I am lucky enough to work within a small factory environment that is relaxed enough to allow the social imprinting of as large a raptor as a golden eaglet. At lunch time I would return the eaglet to the eyrie, upon which 'Maria' would immediately fly in and feed the eaglet. This routine worked exceptionally well and by day thirty six the eaglets weight of five pounds eleven ounces confirmed to me, it was a male.

'G'Kar', is a warrior, an honorable character from a fictional SiFi TV series. I chose this name for my young eaglet as it phonetically appealed to me. I had come full circle and once again I would fly a male Golden Eagle, but this time he was **Home Made.**

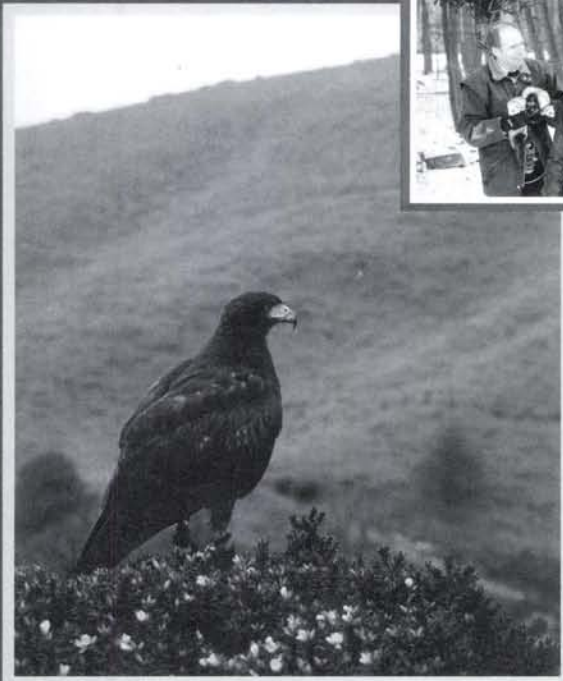


Above: Alan Gates with G'Kar on the hill.

THE COMPLETE RABBIT & HARE HAWK

Martin Hollinshead

THE COMPLETE RABBIT AND HARE HAWK



MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD



desire to fly a Harris Hawk I must say I am tempted.

The first chapter of the book covers the quarry species rabbit and hare. Martin gives a detailed breakdown of the subspecies, their geographical distribution, habitat requirements, size and what to expect from them when out hunting. I found this whole chapter of great interest, so often too little attention is paid to the quarry and the naive falconer arrives in the field expecting it to run out under his feet and present itself to the bird. This is not the case and it is important to know as much as possible before entering the field.

Next up are the birds themselves. Each one is described individually for its advantages and disadvantages, its quarry preferences and capabilities, hunting strengths and weaknesses. Also discussed are the various methods of rearing and the results achieved.

The chapter on weight control is short but contains good sound advice and the tale therein should be noted, and moral clear!

Once we move on to rabbit hawking, Martin describes all sorts of hunting techniques and situations ie; scanning flights, soaring flights woodland hawking, hawking from the glove and more, going into detail about cover, quarry behaviour, the hawks requirements and what is required from the falconer to produce successful hawking.

Next we have a detailed chapter on ferreting, the first part deals with ferret care and welfare and the second part covers ferreting to hawks. This second part as before takes you through, step by step how to ferret successfully, highlighting the problems and the best way to achieve the results you are looking for and all in numerous situations and locations.

Throughout the book Martin draws on his own experiences and the experiences of others to explain or simply entertain.

The Chapter on hare hawking is singularly good. Martin gives his all. Sensibly he begins by explaining just how difficult a sport hare-hawking is, but then goes on to give the potential hare-hawker all the information and advice needed to produce a successful hare hawk. Covering slipping, entering, weather conditions, fitness, scanning, woodland and hill country hares and more. Followed by the hunting of different types of hare eg, Sagebrush, Prairie, Snowshoe etc.

Cast flying and a look at some more unusual birds used for rabbit and hare hawking, with a particularly good story from Ernst Luttger about a saker called Anaga, are the two final chapters.

The centre section of the book contains the sort of pictures that Martin has become quite famous for including in his books, impressive, colourful and action packed.

I would say that for the novice falconer this book is essential as something like 95% of them fly buteos. For the expert it is a source of new ideas, giving them the encouragement to do something a little different. Whichever you are though the only thing you will want to do after reading this book is get your bird a go hawking.

For the novice the most frequent question they have is why? In his book Martin anticipates this at every turn. He never makes a statement without qualifying it. The other question is how and once again Martin leaves nothing to the imagination. He covers everything from the simplest of issues such as the type and size of a bag to the most sensitive ie, dispatching quarry, removing the bird from a kill etc. He explains the best way to achieve the desired result but also why other methods would not work, making it easy for the reader to see the sense in his thinking.

The other thing which is abundantly clear from the book is the enormous amount of patience this man obviously has. Every stage of the birds' training is carefully thought out, but flexible enough that it caters for each individual birds' strengths and weaknesses.

Housing and equipment are covered in detail. Giving the reader plenty of ideas and options. Boxing is something he pays particular attention to, taking the reader carefully through, step by step, introduction to and eventually successful boxing. The same detailed instruction is given for hooding, both for young birds and older birds which haven't previously been hooded.

Martins' expectations of and confidence in the birds he flies makes for a different approach to falconry with buteos in particular. Although many people fly these birds well and with much success, so many are not flown to their full potential, as being regarded as 'beginners birds' they are maybe thought of as 'too easy' or 'boring' but for someone who has never had a

Inset: Martin & Tonya

Martins' book is available in this issue on special offer, for details see page 26. The book is published by The Fernhill Press and retails at £28.95 plus p&p. A must for everyones' book case.

A CZECHOSLOVAKIAN FIELD MEET

Barry Schofield

Over more years than I care to remember a pleasant young lady has gently bent my ear about putting pen to paper as she has with many of you. There are just two comments to make, one to all of you readers out there, do it's easier than you think, and two, it will be as long before I do it again maybe.

So there we were Sunday night, rain, wind and the M62, an almost perfect end to a rather unusual "lads" long weekend. In the spirit of the best tales the story started almost a year before with a phone call from; "we'll call him T.L.". "What are you doing next weekend? Because you know how much I enjoy hawking on the North Yorks hills. Also I have two lady falconers from foreign parts to entertain. Now as you should all know, not many red blooded falconers (male) especially Yorkshire men, could possibly turn down such an opportunity. Calls were made, help was enlisted and on the appointed day two Czech ladies, one Welshman and two Yorkshire falconers met on the windy hills. Over the weekend the hawking was good but not great, the conversation was difficult but not impossible and the weekend was enough of a success for return invitations



to be proffered. During the following weeks the idea was knocked around and eventually myself and three friends determined that "Czech Republic here we come."

The flight to Prague was as all modern flights, uneventful. T.L., Rena and the four of us wandered into the main hall expecting to find two people which ought to mean two vehicles to transport us and our luggage to Opcno. Now have you ever noticed how when everything is going well fate frequently takes a hand, often to no-ones advantage, so it proved. Two people but one car so the luggage and three people would travel



into Prague by car and the other three along with Sonja (Czech guide) would travel into Prague by public transport and all meet up for a drink in the town square. The journey involved bus, tram, underground and shoe leather, but it was worth it. If like me you feel that we falconers have a particularly strong link with the past then Prague has to be seen. Charles bridge and the buildings leading up to and away from it, everywhere you look there is one chocolate box cover after another. For those of you who can remember the TV programme returning para's to Prague then to walk into the square brings on a bad case of *deja vous*, it was like bumping into

an old friend after years of absence and as if to top it off echoing round the square came that attention grabbing 'kek kek' of wild peregrines. Not one but three juvenile falcons wheeling around teasing a magpie, enough already, time for a bite of food and a couple of long cold ones and just as a warning the small, under-ripe tomatoes are chilies and are Bl***y hot, beware!

Onward for the rest of the journey to Opcno, this involved a long boring train ride another bus and then a far from boring ride in a Lada which defied belief

suffice to say the drivers seat belt looked like a black pipe cleaner and the passengers was held together with two granny knots. Eventually we got there and registered with the hotel and the meet organisers, quick change and into town for somewhere to eat, we ate a large and well prepared meal and consumed an ample sufficiency of milk of amnesia, the bill when it arrived left us thinking we had just robbed someone.

Our first full day started with a shock hotel breakfast. Big mistake! Scrambled eggs on toast, how can anyone spoil that? You start by putting more garlic in the eggs than Tesco sell in a week and the toast has to resemble

a 15mm thick roofing tile. I have eaten some strange things in even stranger places, but that breakfast was beyond me. The coffee however, was a big hit, thick, black and strong enough to stand a spoon in.

Up to the Castle for the formalities, hunting horns, long speeches, brightened by a smattering of pere's and sakers, around forty gos' and more goldies than most of us can dream of. Having flown falcons and gos' in the past it was definitely an eagle day for the four of us, so lifts were arranged and off we went.

Now would be a good time to pass on a few hunting notes about Czech hunting, all hunting land is controlled by the government and administered by local state gamekeepers whose word is LAW. The playing of hunting tunes on horns may seem quaint to us, but certainly with the eagles happened not only at the beginning of each hunting session as well as at the end, local game laws and traditions are strictly observed and administered along with the daily paperwork. Back to the Goldies, after horn blowing and photos and what I presumed was a pep-talk by the keeper, off we went. Two pointers, nine eagles and some twenty spectators lining out the field. Twenty yards or so into the field the cry "Harsa" went up from the left, an eagle was brought up and the flight was on. Large eagles flown off the fist over

short distances have all the excitement of the Goodyear blimp, it's only after a hundred yards or so that the bird comes into its own, but after an hour the novelty had worn off and only highlights remain, heart stopping minutes when Gerhards bird landed on a power pole and the relief when it came down, one very hacked off bird doing a bad gos impression for much of the afternoon and more than one "Harsa" doing the springboard and rear somersault trick. One in particular which cleared the eagle by a good metre (tough luck Marie-Anne) Then however, word filtered through that the whole field had been given a red card by the keeper (remember he who must be obeyed), it transpired that the earlier pep talk had included that the bag limit was one hare per eagle, one falconer had caught three and was suspected of releasing two injured hares. I was led to believe that the person concerned was fined, a pointer for the UK I might venture. Back to the hunting lodge for sauerkraut and wurst along with the inevitable lager and something which can only be called clear liquid lightening in a glass, a bit like schnapps without the taste. Unless you have an overwhelming desire to destroy large numbers of brain cells the best advice is "don't".



The evening passed in a thickening haze!

Friday dawned and breakfast was partaken away from the hotel, yesterdays garlic and roof tiles being a salutary lesson, up to the castle for horn blowing and we decide that today is Gos's. Lifts are arranged and off we go. An hours journey dropping off two groups on the

way. Much the same procedure as yesterday without the horn blowing an hours hawking wasted trying to find the local keeper, but much drinking and talking always passes the time. At last we lined out, field photo's, pep-talk and off we went, hares once again being the quarry. Fifteen or so Gos' and a Harris flown by our friend T. L. Hares were caught and some in style. However, amongst the scrub there were many pheasants shown, which with the exception of the Harris and one male Gos, went unchased. This we were told was because they "take the hawks too far away", the Harris was flown at both pheasant and hare and she connected with one hare. This provided one of those memorable moments, those of you who know Terry, sorry T.L. will know that like me gravity has taken a firm hold on him, the sand has mostly settled and, as such, rapid changes of direction do not suit him. Picture if you will a hare with hawk firmly attached to the back leg hotly pursued by T.L., equal volumes of encouragement and amusement, sorry T. but it was funny. The sight of so many



pheasants going un-saluted left four of us longing for our team of Harris' and dogs even if comparisons are dangerous. More memorable moments; the wild gos flying down the tree line, one hell of a flight four or five hundred metres, missed the original hare but peeled over to nail a second one. A pheasant flown by a male gos when either through a moment of exuberance or brainstorm a young man flew his female at the same bird, a not too unusual mistake, we have all seen it I am sure, here however, the young man was taken to one side and "spoken to". No more hawking for him that day. Another pointer? Back to the village hall, thick slices of ham, slices of very "filling" dumpling and the inevitable sauerkraut, more dubious liquids a crazy dash back to the castle for more horn blowing and a salute to the quarry.

The evening passed.....!

Saturday dawned bright and breezy and for me that meant eagles, the wind may help the birds but first up to the castle for, yes, horn blowing and a parade then out to a

nearby hillside for a flying display for the local populace. To us educated Brits, unremarkable except for what we would class as dangerous flying by a redtail and the harris, flown by T.L going A.W.O.L. but in all fairness he didn't train this bird. Once again lifts were arranged, village hall, drinks, horn blowing etc., etc., but eventually we lined out the field...and what a field, root veg as far as we could see. The breeze had turned fresh and when birds went with it, it helped but when flying into it the braking effect was dramatic with one notable exception, a bird being carried by someone to give its owner a rest, a hare broke back through the line and the bird was off, rowing hard. To my surprise the bird stayed on the case for seven or eight hundred metres rolled over the only piece of cover and nailed it. Other memories that stand out are Gerhardt and Marieanne's birds crashing in mid air due to gusting winds as they gave chase to a roe deer, no problem as they fly together at home. Max's bird bursting upwind and



catching a hundred metres away, Milans bird refusing one hare but kiting up on the wind to perform a perfect wing over to kill close to hand.

Memories are plentiful with just a few worth mention; Kipper slumped over a table two nights running and a manic drive to try and get him to his flight only to miss it, Mick trying to "converse" with Russians and Ukrainians but who could forget Alan trying to change TV channels

at 2.00 in the morning with a pocket calculator (milk of amnesia Alan) there are many others too trying to tell.

Thanks are due to a number of people a few of whom are Merka and Lenka for the original invite, T.L. for arrangements in Czech, Jeff and Mick Milan for saving a desperate situation and last but not least my companions for their good humour and great company.

One last comment "Where to this year chaps?"

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THE SAKER

Dr Nick Fox



Transmogolian railway with saker nest

SAKER - the legendary *Shonkhor* of Chinggis Khaan or *Sunkhar* to the Kazakhs, *Baloban* to the Russians, *Itilgi* to the Kirgiz, *Li-e Sun* to the Chinese and *Turul* to the Huns, this tough falcon ranges across eastern Europe and Asia. Known to the Arabs as *Hurr*, to the Persians as *Charkh* and to science as *cherrug*, the history of this falcon is deeply intertwined with the histories of many cultures. It is probably the original falcon of falconry. It is the one which started it all.

It is one of the hardest, most versatile falcons. The Asian steppes and mountains are its home, from the southern limits of the Siberian taiga forest, to the desolate Tibetan plateau, the slopes of the Himalayas. The high passes of the Pamirs and the Tien Shan, the grilling plains of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the broken mountains of Afghanistan, places where the temperature plummets from +40 degrees in the summer to -40 in the winter, from the static baking heat of the rocks to the dervishing storms and ceaseless keening winds of the steppes; in these places the saker is queen.

The saker has been prized as a hunting bird for thousands of years. Its feathers are adapted for the dry air and the rough and tumble of ground prey. Its metabolism copes well with the changeable steppes, the gluts of food followed by days of storms and starvation. Even its breeding is adapted to make the most of opportunity - five chicks when prey is abundant, no breeding at all when it is scarce.

In Britain the saker tends to be a rather maligned bird. It doesn't fly well in

Britain's damp, dense air and most of the bloodlines are poor. Most are low grade *cherrug* types, fluffy and slow, and some are the small European sakers known to the Arabs as *Wachiri al Harrar* or lanner type. The Mongolian sakers are big,



Mongolian students radio-tracking

barred, *milvipes* type; few females are under 1250g (44.5oz) and some sakers are a fair bit more. At this altitude of 1500 metres they are powerful fliers and catch both birds and small mammals up to marmot size. Most are pale, some clean white on the front, but a few are dark



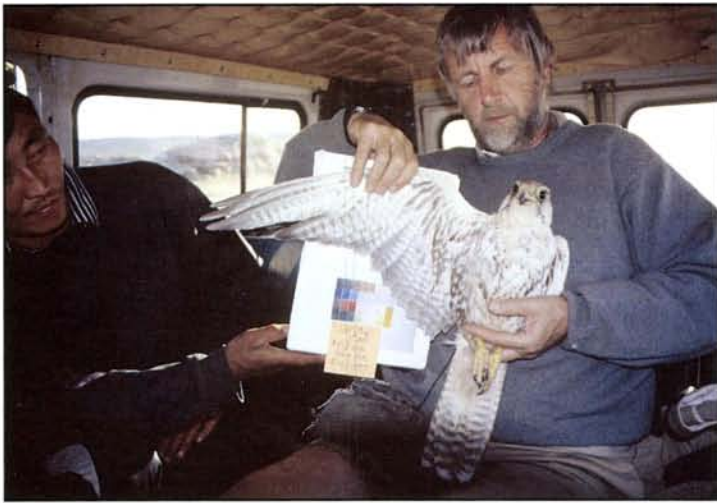
Batsahaan & Eugene Potapov at our first ground nest of sakers

morphs.

In late autumn, most of the birds of prey leave the northern steppes and the mammals seek shelter underground, tunnelling under the snow. The sakers move south, leapfrogging their relatives on the central steppes for warmer climes in the south, some as far as Arabia and north Africa.

As they drift south, trappers are on the lookout for them and, once trapped, they are traded for falconry. They are transported down to market on sure-footed ponies through the mountain passes of the silk roads. Previously they were bought by Persian falconers or traded down to Peshawar and Lahore for use in the Indian sub-continent. But with the demise of falconry in Iran and post-partition India the trade was reduced to Arab falconry markets. This trade continues but with the increasing use of domestic falcons in the Gulf, most of the wild-caught sakers are destined for Saudi Arabia.

The National Avian Research Centre (part of the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency in Abu Dhabi) has worked on sakers as part of its falcon research programme since 1992. Our first priority is to define the current world distribution and status of the saker falcon. This has been an enormous task in itself. We have teams of biologists this year in the Russian Altai, Tuva and eastern Baikal, in Crimea, Kazakhstan, Kazakh Altai, Mongolia and Kirgistan. Results wets of the Altai have been patchy. Although the saker is doing well in some regions, in others such as Kazakhstan and Kirgistan it has been trapped heavily and many traditional pairs have gone. In Russia there have been habitat changes



A fresh trapped breeding male saker

which are probably irreversible, but some of the sakers have adapted by turning more to avian prey rather than small mammals. East of the Altai the saker is doing well, with huge number breeding in Mongolia. In China they are still eaten occasionally.

So the day after the Falconers Fair saw me heading out for Mongolia, checking in with Professor Galushin, our Russian team leader en route. The nests here in Mongolia range from big cliffs which require ropes, to small crags, pylons to old well huts. We even found our first ground nest. Usually they use stick nests built by Upland Buzzards or Ravens. One wooden hut we visited last week had four saker chicks on the roof (including a lovely black one), inside were a pair of pigeons, sparrows with fledged young and a nest full of well-grown choughs. All in the area half the size of a garage!

Mongolia is my favourite Central Asian country. As I write, our horses are hobbled and shading each others heads. They are tough beasts, going all day and taking us up clattering rocky gullies amongst the Argal sheep and the haughty Ibex. The vultures potter about their nests, doing everything in slow motion. The Beerkut eagles have a valley to themselves. The other day one chased a Kazakh fox across the steppe in front of us and another caught a marmot. As soon as the eagle had a crop on board, a Black



Adult male saker fitted with backpack transmitter.

Vulture came in to claim the carcass while a Steppe Eagle watched disconsolately.

The Mongolian saddle is a precarious contraceptive device so I brought my own this year, which has made life much more pleasant. It has room on one side for field-glasses and on the other for the GPS. We navigate

by GPS - the only maps are American airforce maps and the steppes is like a featureless frozen sea. Today is a bit of a rest day after four days surveying another study area. We have two Russian YAZ 4WD wagons, one with a roof yaggi, and we use gyroscopic field glasses from Russian tanks so that we can check rocks for whitewash without stopping. We cover about 250km per day. Anything which can rattle to bits, does so. Including the little grey cells!

Our main study this year is based on a granite outcrop in south central Mongolia, north of the Gobi, The massif



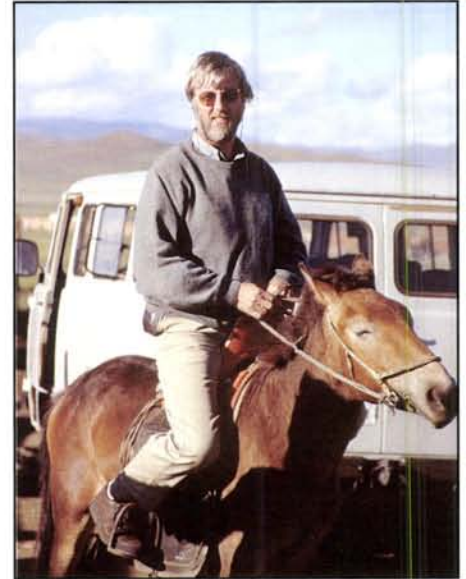
A gerboa or Kangaroo rat - Saker prey.

is about 30km diameter in an ocean of steppe. The raptors nest here and hunt over the surrounding steppe. We are intensively studying 7 saker pairs and

have put backpacks on three of the mothers and one of the fathers. They are activity transmitters with a double antennae - we can tell by the signal if the birds are standing or flying. We also have leg mounts on 17 of the youngsters. The member of my staff who is organising it is Dr Eugene Potapov, a Russian raptor specialist, and for the Mongolians

Professor Sumiya, Head of Vertebrate Biology at Mongolian State University. We also have 8 students, 2 drivers, a cook and Gombobaatar who is doing his PhD on saker diet. The horses cost a dollar a day and the pony boy \$10 per month.

We have three triangulation points 10-20km apart, with someone tracking from each from dawn till noon, and another team noon till dark. They are an



Nick trying a Mogolian saddle.

unhealthy lot; with the weather going from very cold to very hot we have had double pneumonia, two cases of heat stroke, two food poisonings (too much goat guts), two teeth pulled out, another tooth ache and a severe chill. I practically have to run a morning surgery. They also suffer from wife/girlfriend deprivation (Treatment: retrieved fashion page from old Mongolian newspaper ad many ribald remarks!) In the evening Eugene runs a data processing

surgery, entering all the timed bearings into a laptop. The software then produces a map of the movements of each bird. Gradually we are working out the home ranges, habitat use and time budgets. Now the youngsters are beginning to fly it is getting quite complicated distinguishing between all of the signals. The language is Mongolian with some Russian. I am the only English so some conversations require four people - me - English/Russian - Russian/Mongolian - end person. You can imagine what it's like when we use walkie talkies....

These are sacred hills with spectacular rock formations which remind me of the Painted Desert. There are old grave sites all over the place and the Mongolians are frightened of ghosts, but I don't feel it badly. We have had to move camp once out of respect for the graves. At the last camp was a grave under a rock with a man's horse-hide covered coffin, skeleton, saddle and bow and arrows. Other

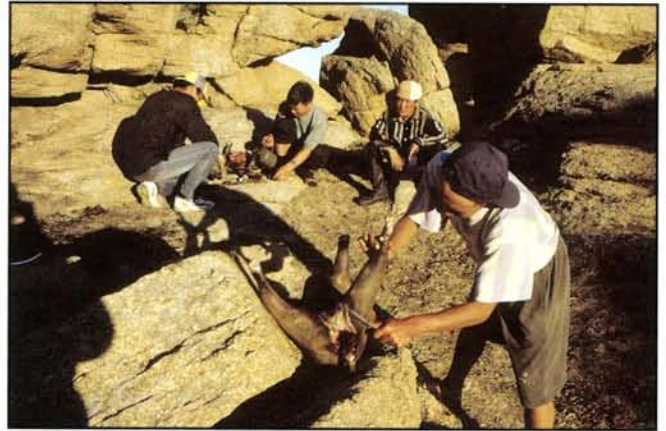
graves are iron and bronze age. There are also quite a lot of snakes; one got into one of the tents last night, it was a species of viper (variety: Mongolian Alarm Clock).

The locals are very friendly. At the nearest ger near the well, about 2km away, lives Mindu, a divorced lady known amongst the team as 'Thirty minutes' - we timed our driver! (About the same time as it takes him to strip and service a carburettor). Mindu is very sociable and did a good job last night thundering through the camp on a grey pony to drive the camels out. Her father, a 65 year old herdsman with a gappy smile, gave a barbecue in my honour last week. Mongolian barbecues are not quite the same as British ones. First you catch a suitable goat from the flock and bring it down to camp. Then you kill it by going through the diaphragm and tearing the aorta. Then you fill a blowlamp with petrol and clear the jet by back pumping with an old stirrup pump. Next you burn off all the hair from the goat, then scrub and rinse the now bloated carcass. Then you dismember it into big chunks, washing through the intestines with a funnel before refilling them with blood and tying the into various knots. Meanwhile a fire of heaped cowpats has been encour-

the dark with goat bones to emphasise each point. When all that can be seen is the occasional glint of a gold or silver tooth, we totter off to bed.

A dog from a passing goat flock found our camp this morning and got stuck into our pile of sheep and goat skulls, (already picked clean by us) and decided to become a mammalian Lammergier. Any other small scraps are quickly seized by a Black Kite which checks us out daily.

The wolves have not been a problem. Locals killed a mother and cub here two weeks ago. Last year, further north, the wolves were quite bad, killing a foal and mauling two others. The mares had to be picketed very tightly to camp and they put up scare crows around the flocks for the wolves.

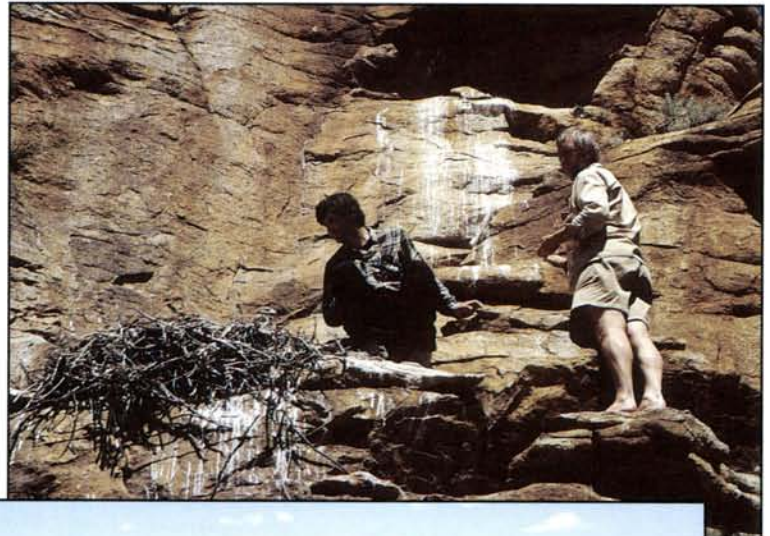


Preparing a goat.

Soon it will be time to head off for China. We have a project there on Houbara and hope to begin work on sakers soon with the Academy of Sciences. I am looking forward to getting home for the crow-hawking. If our horses in Britain are half as fit as these dry bone bags here I will be well pleased. I used to feel guilty riding them, they are so small. But then I caught one yawning!



aged to burn and embedded in it are numerous fist-sized rocks. These are raked out red-hot and placed in a big churn alternately with the goat meat and some water. Various levers and rags are used to get a good seal on the lid and we then wait for an hour while locals from two years old to eighty appear either on foot, horse or ancient motorbike. A huge rock slab forms a table and as the meat is fished out of the churn the rocks are given to guests as hand-warmers. Once I have done my bit with the vodka we have various speeches which fall to bits in the translation and by gesticulating in



Above left: Saker chicks.

Top: Nick Fox and Eugene Potapov at a saker nest.

Bottom: Saker nest on a rock pillar

HAWK TALK

John Matcham

“Food glorious food” something, something and something, “I’m half-starving”. The words of a song from a sickly old English film or the call of a Harris hawk at the bottom of the garden?

More recently our illustrious editor, the almighty Lyn Wilson, has asked me to write about some of the more controversial points of keeping Raptors. Perches as you may have gathered certainly made a few people, shall we say, “uncomfortable”. And although I never set out to point the finger at anyone in particular, I think this article will at least stir up the mud at the bottom of the pond. Just as it should, because it’s what I intend it to do. So be warned, “If the cap fits”? May I now suggest that you don’t scream it out loud from the top of your local steeple, you’ll only attract attention if it does. Best go away quietly and rethink your freezer contents.

In the past most of the articles I have written have really been intended to help the relatively inexperienced Falconer, however this one is aimed at nearly all of us. Only a very few in the modern world of Falconry fully understand the food requirements of a Raptor. Equally they are the very few that achieve real greatness in the eyes of their birds. That may seem a little sentimental to you, the people who think they know enough to hunt regularly each year with what looks to be the fittest bird in the field, even if the bird is singing that silly song on a daily basis.

You see it’s really quite simple, you cannot run a Ferrari on three pistons and expect it to win races. Further still, if you’re daft enough to put Two Star petrol in the tank, it will rattle like a bag of rusty nails. Some birds I’ve seen have lungs that rattle like a bag of rusty nails, as a result of being run on Two Star food and too little of it. The latter being the worst of the two crimes, and take note it is a crime to starve any animal in this or any other European country and probably the rest of the world.

At this point it would perhaps be reassuring to know. That before we get down to the nitty gritty of this article, (which by now I’m sure you have gathered is having a hard time rolling off the key board). I have consulted my library of well know Raptor and Falconry Authors, and discovered that they are all of the same opinion as I, so why do I

still feel like the Lamb to the slaughter?

I shall begin

Lets just say that the following list is a Star rating (octane level - quality) as in petrol for your car but in this case it is the food quality per 100g just like on a packet of biscuits or a prime fillet steak.

Mouse	1.6
Quail	1.4
Day old chicks	1.1
Rabbit	1.0

It is clearly obvious that a mouse is higher in value than a rabbit the value is the calorific value or as seen on your biscuits Kcal/g. This means that in each mouse weighing 100 grams you would find 1.6 Kcal/g of energy. Therefore feeding my Buzzard on mice would solve all my feeding problems - if only that was the case. You see it’s not at all that straightforward.

A Common Buzzard could not survive on mice alone for very long. The Buzzard is designed primarily as a scavenger and opportunist, so catching mice wouldn’t be that easy. He’s the Stan Ogden of the bird of prey world a sort of dustman that likes to find the odd bit of new in the rubbish and knows were to look for the goodies when no one else is around. The chances of him finding enough mice sitting around waiting for a sluggish old Buzzard to come along and eat them would be very slim indeed. The Buzzards would also experience other changes in his dietary needs, as less food would be required on a meal by meal basis eating mice rather than rabbits, eventually causing the crop to shrink. The smaller quantities would not aid the constant changes in the lining of the gut that is needed to prevent the bird digesting its own stomach. To achieve this, the bird requires a food source that general comes in larger quantities and has some form of abrasive like the fur and small fragments bone. High-grade food can be found lying around early in the morning dew e.g. worms! And they have a calorific value far higher than a mouse. Many

other insects and reptiles have a better calorific value than most mammals. Maintaining a carefully balanced diet the buzzard will keep its body weight fairly stable throughout the year with the exception of hard winters and breeding times. With a weight of around 1kg it will eat about 10 % of its body weight as an average daily basis.

This process is equal to the number litres of fuel used per 100 kilometres in your car, in the animal kingdom this is the metabolic rate, the speed at which the energy is used. Any excess over the required basic number of kcal on a daily basis is stored in fat cells. (Ladies if your thinking of Lipo suction, do it when your skinny, the cells are nearly empty and the vacuum pump gets more of the little suckers at the same time). Of course the bird will eat as much as it can get in the wild almost to the point of bursting, therefore gaining some protection from the days when food is not so plentiful (filling up the fat cells or topping up the tank). However a Buzzard cannot soar and thermal if its weight to wing ratio is far too great. So there is a limit to how much the Buzzard can safely carry around in the wild and still perform well to survive, so no extra fuel cans. The balance is crucial, the wild bird controls this all by itself as long as the weather doesn’t play a foul hand. The bird in captivity cannot, it relies entirely on your knowledge and understanding of its metabolic weight and the quantity and quality of the food you give it at anyone time.

In warmer weather the daily intake will decrease by about 1% in the Common Buzzard. In a Peregrine that would be about 3.5% but then the Peregrine will eat about 15% of its body weight daily not 10% as in the Buzzard. The two birds weigh about the same 1kg, but their metabolic rates are different. The Peregrine hunts in a completely different manner to the Buzzard, using up energy 5% faster yet its crop is a little smaller and its wing to weight ratio slightly lighter. Therefore the basic daily intake of 3.5% of bodyweight must be of a higher quality food containing a higher kcal level.

You would think that an Eagle would require the most food being the largest of Raptors but this is not the case. The Steller’s Sea Eagle is by far the heaviest at about 7kg and will eat about 240g of food a day only 3.5% of its bodyweight. But the food it would eat in the wild would be high in proteins and carbohydrates, the elements required to burn in Oxygen that produces the energy we

call kcal. With hardly a wing beat per hour when on the soar, its metabolic rate is much slower than that of a Sparrow Hawk requiring 25% of its bodyweight a day.

So if the Eagle is the Solar powered giant glider of the skies using up very little energy, The Sparrow Hawk the Lotus Seven hill climber, blasting off in short burst with its fast burning engine. The Peregrine a Ferrari perhaps. Then the Merlin and the Kestrels of the world must be Fiat 500s at 110 mile an hour. Yet their daily intake of food substances can be as low as 20% of their body weight, eating a diet of small rodents and large insects, with a poor quality food (for a Kestrel such as day old chicks) as much as 30% or more when regularly flown.

I hope that you can see the need for a varied diet not only for the meats calorific content but also for its value as a tool to keep the birds' digestive system in good working order. Very few keepers give their birds tiring. The last time I saw this in a Falconry centre was in 1994. At the time I took the complaint from the uneducated member of the public. Who had realised it was the wing of a very Dead Duck and no matter how much I explained the importance of such an item of horror, she insisted I remove it, much to the disgust of the bird.

I have seen some "Falconry Centres" fly their birds almost entirely on day old chicks and it has had little harmful

effect as behind the scenes the birds are treated to a concoction of vitamins, minerals, pro-biotic and tiring helping to build up a healthier if not perfect diet.

There are however others that wouldn't know a quail if it landed on their heads and would run a mile at the site of a Rat. Their birds often deceive the public and fly like the devil, fast and aggressive, spectacular to watch for the brief period that the bird can sustain such an effort. When pushed too far I have seen a Lanner clip its legs on the top of a fence and crash helplessly to the ground, only to be thrown back into the air for another thrilling display (not). I could sprint up Everest if I was hungry enough and I thought I had half a chance of getting there before someone else.

A healthy fit, fast and furiously fantastic bird to watch is well fed one. The key to flying a bird like this is not found on the scales, but in the trusting relationship created through honest manning and a healthy diet. A sharp keel is a starving bird (inanition is starvation). Does Linford Christie look starved to you? Scales are a tool to help maintain the communication, not a means to an end.

Just to add a twist in the food cupboard of Falconry some Raptor food suppliers will provide better food than others will. A captive bred mouse can have twice the calorific value of a wild one, just as a well fed hen will lay bet-

ter value eggs and in turn chicks, than one that is not. Just because someone in the North, South, East, or West can feed junk food, it doesn't mean you can.

In my freezers I keep Rats, Mice, Pinkies, Quail, Rabbit, Venison (for mincing and mixing) and the occasional Pheasant, and a little ready minced for emergencies. That's about 10% of the stock and the rest is DOC. In the bird room cupboard I keep; a well-known avian multi-vitamin and mineral mix, and some probiotic. Anything else is purchased as and when I need it and would normally be for sick birds brought in. What's in yours at this very moment?

I hope that this article will help guide the newcomers and the inexperienced away from a modern tradition that I feel has been created by the sudden increase of people taking up the sport in the past ten years, and perhaps the lack of suitably experienced people to guide them. Twenty years does not a Falconer make but one brilliant bird and a whole lot of patience and understanding can!

Till next time
Regards and best wishes
John

PS. It's easy to spot a display bird flown only on DOCs. Look for the lack of shine in the eyes, the dull finish to the feathers, the gunk around the talons and cere, and the "oh so slightly manic behaviour".



LETTERS



Please send your letters to **The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP** or Fax us on **01536 726815** or Email: **kbu77@dial.pipex.com**

Seek References First

Dear Lyn & David,

I am writing in response to Lee William Harris' article on the importance for would be falconers to attend a training course prior to obtaining a hawk. A few years ago I attended a beginners training course. The falconry school I chose was well established and recommended to be by the British Falconers Club. It did not however meet my expectations.

I had been learning about falconry for several years and had been on one or two hunting days. I therefore knew the difference between a pair of jesses and creance. However I feel the absolute newcomer might have come away feeling slightly more disgruntled.

The course was aimed at people who wished to take up falconry seriously and was not a 'taster' course. The problem with the course was the lack of structure. At no point were we actually given 'lessons' in the various stages and techniques of falconry and raptor training. I attended the course with the aim of learning how to train and look after my own hawk and wanted to come away feeling I was confident to do this.

Although I had a thoroughly enjoyable five days and my hosts were very hospitable, I felt I had learnt more from books than I had from the course. Of course I asked questions but it's a bit difficult to ask "how do you train a bird of prey" when that is what the whole course is supposed to be teaching you, but doesn't.

I agree wholeheartedly with Mr Harris in that no number of books or videos can replace the invaluable tuition available from experienced falconers and would never

advise anyone otherwise. What however, I would advise someone considering a course, is to seek references from people who have previously been on the course and find out if it fulfilled their needs. I took the advice of the BFC but would look for further opinions should I decide to go on a course today.

Universities and colleges are assessed each year by several independent bodies and their standards are made public. I'll even admit that in one publication my university ranked bottom out of 98 universities and colleges in the UK.

Perhaps falconry organisations should have the schools independently assessed to ensure that they maintain the high standards of teaching before making recommendations to the novice falconer.

Congratulations on a quality magazine

Yours sincerely
Neil James
Edinburgh.

Accident Waiting to Happen

Dear Lyn & David

I Just thought I'd write to tell you about an incident which happened in July this Year. Julian & I were called by Jenny at the IBR with reference to a bird causing concern on the end of the runway at Gatwick airport, we immediately telephoned the person who reported it and were told that it stood about 2 feet tall and appeared unable to fly any great distance. Apparently he had tried to throw a coat over it but was unsuccessful and the bird took off briefly before crashing to the ground. As we

were already booked to do a display that evening we arranged to go over as soon as we had finished. So with a Land Rover full of birds we set off to find it. Stood at the edge of the runway we looked out over the field and stood just in front of us was what was later established as a White backed griffon vulture. This was obviously cause for concern for the airport and apparently they were contemplating shutting the runway, which would have cost thousands of pounds. Julian grabbed his glove and some food and approached with caution, not wanting it to take flight. On closer inspection it had anklets and jesses so obviously was a bird which had been trained and bearing in mind the type of bird was probably used for public demonstrations. The vulture approached for food and Julian managed to get hold of the jesses at which point it lunged at Julians face. I was stunned to see a huge gash which started to bleed profusely, the farmer who had taken us to the spot and had previously tried to throw a coat over it turned white and looked quite ill. We managed to get it into a carrier as it was lashing out and also drew blood on Julians hand and leg. Bird safely contained we made a dash for casualty. The Hospital staff were brilliant and he was admitted immediately without the usual 2 plus hour wait that you usually encounter. He had 10 stitches and a very bruised and painful face. At that stage we were relieved that a) the injury wasn't any higher which could have caused loss of an eye, and b) that we had managed to get to it before somebody who didn't know how to handle it did - the results could have been far worse. The following morning we contacted the

RSPCA and the vulture was traced back to Eagle Heights. For some reason they didn't report it to the IBR which was a pity because they would have been called instead of us and we wouldn't have had the problems it has caused us.

Mr Ames came down to collect it and was so flippant, I believe his words were "sorry about your face mate, still you'll have a good story to tell." He also admitted that the bird could be nasty, and whilst he proceeded to wave his hand around its head and generally wind it up, it turned around and bit him. What I can not understand is why someone would want to risk flying such a bird in public demonstration; we know for a fact that he has eagles and vultures walking through the legs of the audience and jumping on picnic tables. It is an accident waiting to happen and when it does with a Member of the public it will be plastered all over the papers giving all bird of prey keepers a bad reputation.

To add insult to injury he handed over £40 to cover petrol when recovering the bird - don't get me wrong we certainly were not after a big payment, money is not the issue here - but when you think that if the airport runway was closed he would have been liable for thousands of pounds for costs, we had recovered highly valuable bird, prevented an accident to a member of the public and been injured in the process. What would have been nice would have been some genuine concern from Mr Ames for what the bird had done.

We have been advised by friends and a solicitor that we have a case to sue for personal injury, yes it may give us some satisfaction but what good would it do to the image of bird of prey keeping? In this day and age everybody

needs to be safety conscious, I know we are, because it could only take one incident for us all to be tarred with the same brush and do irreparable damage to bird of prey keeping in this country.

We don't set out to make enemies with anybody; but when something like this happens you feel compelled to do something.

Ali Ford
Huxleys Experience

Too Low, Too Long

My letter is a plea for help.

I've been hawking now for three and a half years. My first bird was a male Harris Hawk which screamed after a few weeks of training and I also had problems entering him.

My second bird, which I still have, is a female Harris. The bird was advertised in Cage and Aviary birds. I rang the number because the advert said "totally silent", which was very important to me because of my previous birds' behaviour. The bird was two years old at the time (April '98), but hadn't flown at all that season but in her first season she caught 18 rabbits and a stoat.

The weekend following the phone call my father and I, who also has a female Harris, travelled to Ipswich, a couple of hours from my house in Northamptonshire. We arrived at our destination and were well pleased with the size and condition of her. The owner recommended I fly her at 1lb 13 - 14 oz. This surprised me as she looked a tad bigger than my dad's bird and he flies his at 2lb 3oz. He also said don't fly her over 2lb at all. We got her home safely and I was really pleased with my purchase. I started to bring her weight down slowly and she responded well apart from being nervous which was to be expected, but the main thing was that there was no screaming (well chuffed) I then put her up for the moult.

The Summer seemed endless but eventually the moult was complete and she looked great. I started training in earnest, I decided to fly her free at 1lb 15oz, even though she returned on the creance at

2lb 3oz.

Jess, her new given name, was chasing anything that moved but always seemed to miss her quarry.

The next time we went hunting I decided to bring her down to 1lb 13oz like the previous owner had said. Because of all the slip she had had but nothing to show for it.

We were well into January and the dreaded happened, she started squawking. It was just occasional at first but as the days went on it got worse. It's never been constant but enough to annoy. Jess would stay quiet after being fed, it could be one chick or six, she'd be quiet.

A couple of weeks later Jess was noisy for most of the day, even after food. This was starting to stress me out big time. My first reaction was food, but some days I'd go into the shed where I kept her food and she would be silent and another day she wouldn't. Jess would scream at anybody.

I decided to ring Martin Jones, a lady answered and I told her the story, the first thing she said was Jess was bored out of her mind and her weight may have been kept too low for too long, I thanked her for the help and advice she had given me.

The next day I started to bring her weight up, I was flying her at 2lb 1oz in no time with no change in her response to the whistle. A few weeks later, with her still screaming she had her first kill. This particular day she was following on really well. Jess was about 30 yards ahead of me as I was climbing a steep embankment, I saw her go into a dive from the top of a tree, I knew she was onto something but apprehensive because I'd seen it so many times before, the next thing I know she's on the deck. I could hear a screeching noise, I started to clamber up the embankment with my heart pounding like mad. I got to the top and to my disbelief she had a healthy rabbit. I was ecstatic, more for Jess than for myself. SHE'D DONE IT!!!

After a few more phone calls with Jess still being noisy I decided to put her up for the moult.

I sat in my conservatory one day in April and watched her catch a sparrow in the flight, the day before I had

weighed her and she was 3lb 4oz. Surely she couldn't be hungry? It's now mid-summer and she is totally silent.

My main concern is when I drop her weight for the forthcoming season she's probably going to scream. If there's anybody who can give me some ideas on this I would be very grateful.

Yours sincerely
Anthony Smith.
Northants

Any replies can be sent: c/o
The Falconers Magazine at
the usual address.

27 Degrees & No Baths?

Hi Both,

After many years away from falconry I recently discovered your magazine at the NBoPC. It is a thoroughly enjoyable read - thanks. Looking as an interested observer at the sport, I am amazed at how falconry has changed, the greatest being the availability of birds and the number of people trying to turn their hobby into an occupation, many displaying their birds at shows. The NBoPC in my opinion is the pinnacle, but what a contrast I saw on the weekend previously at the Medieval Market, part of the Lichfield International Festival. A company that advertises in another publication was present.

On display on the lawn at the side of the Cathedral was an European Eagle Owl, a Harris' Hawk, a Barn Owl and a Kestrel. The weather was a scorching twenty-seven degrees Celsius, no birds had baths available or any shelter. The eagle owl was on a bow perch more suited to a sparrow hawk, it's poor feet totally encircled the perch! Nothing looks worse than owls stuck on lawns believe me! To top this, the kestrel was on a high t-perch. It seemed that if it baited that it would hang upside down! This display looked shabby and I wonder what the objective of this static demonstration was? What worried me even more is that this company advertises that it runs falconry courses, amazing!

I always thought of falconry being a sport where the

bird was put first and where the people involved had integrity and honour. As an outsider it seems to me that the sport really needs to do something about the standard of those demonstrating birds. I hope that this letter starts or fuels debate.

Kind Regards,
David Owen

David,

Unfortunately this is very often the way with outside displays. Despite many people commenting, advising and getting generally upset about the situation. We have printed articles about the importance of water for birds of prey and have shown through photographs that birds do indeed drink.

I would advise anyone in a similar situation to complain to the organisers of the show about the lack of water for the birds. Don't be fobbed off by being told by the falconer/s(?) that birds of prey don't drink - they do!

Editor

The letters pages of the magazine must be the ones which have seen the biggest variety of opinions.

Responses to some peoples thought provoking letters, thanks to others for help. Advice and information freely given or asked for.

We would like to thank all those who have put pen to paper to voice their opinions and we hope they will continue.

IMPRINT GOSHAWKS

By Ade Williams

In an article this length - 'Adrian please submit an article on Imprint Goshawks!' - I can only touch the tip but I will write an article and hopefully not exceed my allocation by too many thousands of words. It's not an article about breeding Goshawks, it's not even 'about imprints', but a little about a few imprint Goshawks and perhaps some ideas on imprinting accipiters with a lot of 'this is my own experience'. Bear that in mind, for far too many people are fond of saying 'Gos's, Spars or whatever, do such and such,' when what they should say is 'mine does such and such'.

Imprints have been around a long time - possibly as long as falconry itself. In the beginning taking a downy from the nest must surely have been the easiest way to obtain a hawk but I imagine that it was fairly soon realised that there were problems resulting from this approach...

So, until fairly recent times passage hawks were de rigueur with relatively few haggards being flown, whilst imprints were nasty, noisy, horrible, footy things that almost nobody wanted. Some of course were pretty effective despite their bad manners. The imprint Gos 'Jabberwock' flown many years since by Lawrence Workman springs to mind. Since then there have been some fine imprints but in the main they have been aggressive, and noisy.

At the time I began hawking, passage Goshawks were what you would generally see flown, especially at club field meets, and I think that was the picture throughout the UK. Most Gos's were imported from the continent and were lost before they had a chance to moult into adult plumage. You would occasionally see or hear of someone who had a haggard but even these often turned out to be passagers whose owners thought age or mature plumage turned them into haggards.

So, to imprint accipiters. Now please don't go off the deep end if you don't agree with my opinions - you are entitled to your own. Please feel free to send your opinions and your suggestions to me or to the magazine

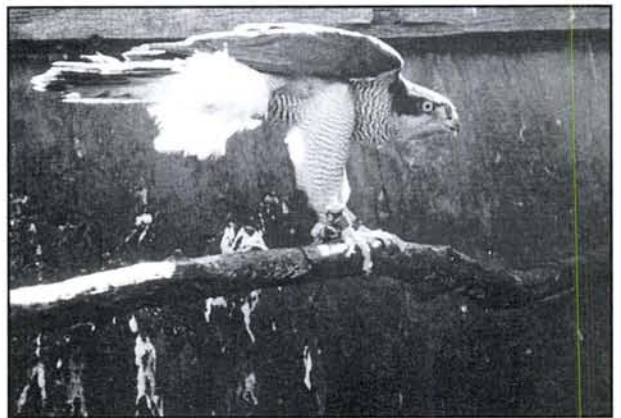
What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Some of the advantages are a calmer hawk, which is not afraid of a car door slamming or a strange dog running in but don't assume that every non-imprint Gos' is petrified of everything or that it stays in trees for hours on end. I have heard about this Gos for years and have yet to see it!

Put the time into properly manning a parent reared Goshawk and you can still have a good hawk - after all, it's been done for thousands of years by competent austringers. My first Gos' was a passage female and beautifully mannered and very efficient she was. After her and a few other passagers I thought I would never have anything else, but experience changes your perception. In future I doubt I will fly anything but imprints, given the choice. There is no doubt in my mind that it is better to have an imprint. Better for the Austringer and better for the hawk. If it is less easily upset it has a better life and so do you. I also think they are more likely to breed both naturally and possibly by AI too. After breeding Goshawks for over a decade I am convinced, because that has been my experience, that imprint females are less likely to attack and kill males than are the more nervous parent reared females whether they are passagers or domestically produced. I have been trying to breed Goshawks for a lot longer than a decade but my success first came when trying to imprint females with passage males. To date, I have never seen any Goshawks fighting, but of course, I may just be lucky.

Because imprints see so much at an early age when they are not capable of flight, or fright flight, they simply get used to everything around but you imprint must see lots of different things if you are to get the best from it. It is a waste of time to simply keep an imprint in the house. Take it with you every time you go out, into the garden, to the shop, in the car, to visit friends, to the pub, to a fair or to the local park. The more it sees whilst nest bound the better.

Make it to the car asap, ie, whilst in the nest. I have found the best, most easily transportable, cleanest nest is to use a hawk bath with a see-through side. Take some 6' of perspex or similar transparent material about 18" deep. Carefully (to avoid cracking) drill 3-4 holes parallel to each other about 5" from each end. Twist the perspex into a circle using the hawk bath lip as a base. Overlap the edges of the perspex and bolt together. Line the bath with fir tree fronds for a nest. To clean out, take the nest into the garden and simply lift the perspex off the bath. Tip the fir nest into the dustbin. (Oh yes, take the Gos' out first!). Hose the mutes off the perspex and bath. Perspex back in, fresh fir on top. A clean nest twice a day and it takes just two minutes. Much easier than cleaning square fish tanks etc. Try it. It's easy and light to carry about too. I make my imprints to a travelling box as well, which may sound like defeating the object of them seeing everything. Sadly, it's a practical consideration. A hawk left on 'display' in a car attracts attention and if you pop in a pub



for lunch you might want to leave the hawk outside. When you return someone or maybe a party of kids will be banging the car windows! This might not upset your imprint too much but it bloody well upsets me!

Be sure food is always available in the tray or dish, but don't let it see the food arriving. Feeding on a plate of some sort as soon as your imprint is old enough and then transferring later to a lure, later still feeding only off the lure for the first whole season is the best plan. A method I found useful was to use moulded magpie or rook decoys as plates. (I have yet to find rabbit or pheasant decoys!) You can crush the decoy breast so that you have a concave plate. Buy at least two so that you can ensure food is always present on

a clean plate.

Without doubt, the time a work involved in the early stages is a serious disadvantage to having an imprint - it is not an easy way out of manning a hawk as so many would-be imprinters seem to think. If you do it properly you must spend an awful lot of time every day with the hawk, whereas with a parent reared hawk you can spend much less time, ie hours only. The imprint should be with you most of the day. If you do not have the time and the will to fly an accipiter that that's it, you don't have the time. There's no way around that. Having an imprint accipiter does not give you any more time. In the first year of its life you need to put a lot of time into the Hawk. Just look at the well-known breeders, centres etc who employ staff to look after hawks. Even with the staff available they still train very a few imprints each year. It's my opinion that the minimum criteria for imprinting an accipiter should be that you have a job that enables you to take the hawk to work and keep it with you most of the time, (or work from home or are retired), during at least the whole of its first season.

Maybe your wife/mate/partner will help while you are out. That is a great help - but it is only as a help. About 5-6 years ago there were many enquiries about imprint accipiters especially Goshawks, which were inspired by ideas to produce candidates for AI in order that pairs would not need to be put together, there fore no more males killed by females. Sounded good, but with hindsight it seems that most of them went wrong, especially the males. So many people took up males then reported that they were lost or turned out to be the very nasty, aggressive screamers we all hated. Why? I believe that a lot of it was to do with the lack of time put into the young hawk. I repeat, if you don't have the time to man and fly a hawk then that's it you don't have time, so don't have one. I believe you have to spend much more time with an imprint than with a parent reared Hawk.

The intensive work goes on and on right through until the end of the season in the first year. Now, at that point, a lot of falconers - myself included - think, 'great, what a relief, the end of the season!' The parent reared Goshawk usually now goes into an aviary, almost certainly a seclusion aviary, where it spends the next four or more months probably not seeing a human nor much else. I think this must be boring for any hawk so all my hawks have a 'window' through which they can look out over the yard and fields to at least see something other than four walls.

The imprint Gos put into his situation

is being treated even more cruelly. Devoid of any contact with its handler/mate no wonder it soon reverts to a normal Goshawk, hypersensitive and frightened of every noise etc. When the time comes to take it out next season it will be a gibbering wreck, needing hours



of reclaiming. So, what's the answer? Even more time with the hawk! But luckily not quite so much. Don't ignore the hawk by putting it in a seclusion aviary. Sure feed it up, put it in an enclosure/aviary loose but one with an open front or 'window' in a position where you can approach and have a chat for a minimum of a few minutes a couple of times a day right through the

moult. At first it might fly against the window (dowelling, shade cloth, whatever) but it should soon calm down as the extra yamma (meat) takes effect. From there on in your imprint will probably be pleased to pass the time to day with you without trying to fly to you. After a few months you might be able to go away for a holiday without any major problems, with someone else feeding the hawk, but don't move it to that someone's house, at least not in the first year.

The 'window' not only lets you see the hawk but lets you keep an eye on feather growth, moult and general condition which is far better for your hawk. Next flying season you might well find that you are able to fly your hawk and still

house it in this enclosure when not being flown ie, not tie it at all. Some Goshawks will remain quite sane this way but some do seem to need to be put on a perch if they are not to damage their feathers. A couple of years ago I found that my Gos' Poppy would be OK with this regime until I travelled to a field meet which entailed her being weathered on a bow perch and of course spending a fair bit of time in the travelling box. On return home she would not tolerate being loose in the enclosure without damaging her feathers so I reluctantly had to keep her tied from there on except when actually hawking.

Another obvious disadvantage - which some seem to think is inevitable, is screaming. Whilst a shortage of food can clearly start this I believe that boredom is the culprit not the act of dropping the weight. Again it's a time factor. If you drop the weight to enter the hawks then leave it alone the boredom will start it screaming. If and when you drop the weight just make damn sure it does not get bored. As I have indicated already I am tempted to think that most of the imprint accipiters that have 'gone wrong' have simply not had the time spent on them, but of course I may be wrong.

Unfortunately with screaming comes aggression more often than not. The idea that an aggressive imprint is a better hunter is a fallacy. I don't want to fly a potentially dangerous hawk and anyway, I believe calm hawks are just as keen to hunt but that you are more likely to successfully hunt if you are more confident with the hawk than you can be if you think she is likely to foot you or attack something other than the intended quarry. In this respect imprints are no different to other hawks - the time spent in making in carefully, not upsetting the hawk, helping her is never wasted. Long term I believe you will have a better hawk, a more obe-



dient hawk and one that will catch more if it is an imprint. Most hawks don't show their best until the third season but I believe that imprints as a rule seem to take less quarry than parent reared birds do in their first 2-3 seasons. I know this flies in the face of some of the claims coming from the US but then we use different methods which are more acceptable here. Buckets of quarry are not everyone's bag and as a general rule US falconers also seem a lot less bothered about screaming than we are. It's possible that the reason our friends in the US have more success per se with imprints is at least partly because they seem to be prepared to devote more time and effort to the imprint and secondly don't worry about those that scream as we do and so don't lose patience. They more often allow the hawk to live in the house for long periods whereas we generally put up with it for a few weeks then say OK, that's enough now it can live outside. You don't need to ask why. My wife named one of my imprints Artex - 'cos that's what he did, he artexed the downstairs rooms.

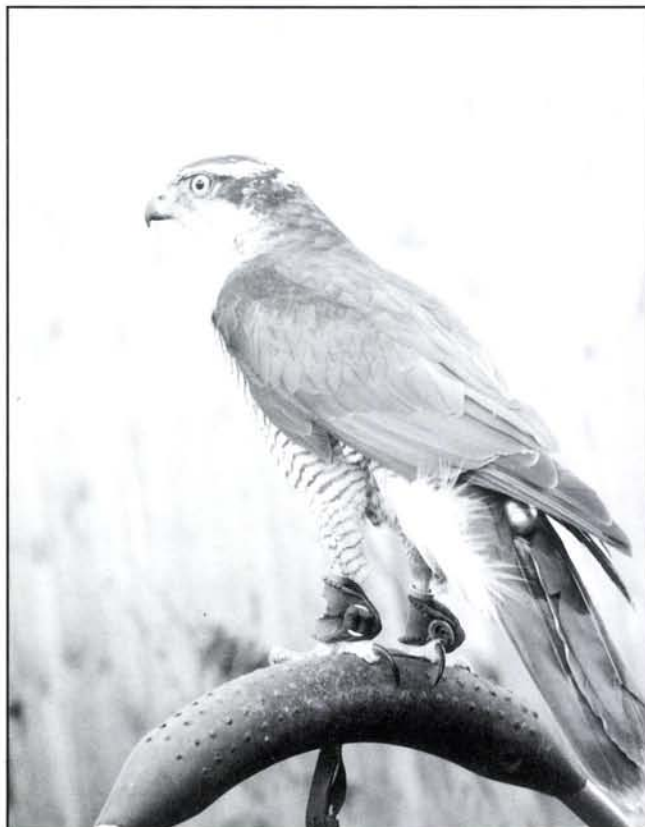
Most of the people I have spoken to who had them 'go wrong' admit that they thought they had the time and were prepared for the commitment but either found that the hawk made too much mess in the house so they put it outside on the lawn or in the shed/mews most of the time or their wife/partner/mate who was looking after it when they were not around failed to put the effort in that they should have. Worse, some even in the middle of training/imprinting decided to go off on the annual family holiday. Meanwhile, someone threw the imprint food! God's teeth! Imprints are a lot of work. Yet, it's possible that some will still go wrong even if you do all the work - if, that is, those who have them were telling the truth about how much they did and if they did it using the principles of not hand feeding, not allowing the imprint to see you constantly approaching with food and so on.

Try to get the hawk as soon (young) as possible, although in the UK unless you are the breeder it may be difficult to obtain it until it is registered anyway if you are buying one you probably won't want to part with the cash until it looks like it is old enough to survive, which is quite reasonable. To do the best job, bite the bullet, it is not difficult to raise Goshawks, breeding them is still the problem.

I prefer not to feed the hawk up in the field. Let's look at one of the basic training methods: we normally enter our young hawk - a hawk with a small brain mind you, and in doing so teach it that if you catch something you deserve a reward - a gorge. You continue with this

reward system for maybe the first 20 or even 30 kills. OK, so we teach the hawk - by experience, that as soon as she catches something she gets a huge reward and, as a consequence, a rest up for a day or two. When the hawk has this notion firmly instilled in it's small brain we then move the goal posts! No we teach her 'no, no you don't get your huge reward after you catch something. No, now you have to catch two things, but then you get a gorge as a reward'. So you teach her this for a couple of weeks. Lo and behold, when she understands this we now say 'oh, sorry, actually now I want multiple catches before you get a reward'. Is the hawk confused? Are we? Is this helpful? Why not let the hawk with the small brain (or is it us with the small brain) be taught once and for all, right from the start what it is we are trying to attain? The chance of taking a few head of quarry occasionally, is all most of us want, ie being able to go out for a few hours hawking and if we take a rabbit after 5 minutes, being able to continue to hawk for another one or two rabbits, pheasants or whatever. How do we go about it? Maybe, if you never feed the hawk on its catch in the field, it will never enter its head that it might be fed there.

So, when you catch something take the hawk off to a pick up piece. Then carry on. Next one the same etc. Only at the end of the days hawking do you feed the hawk up and do it when you get back to the car or when you get home. Associate something with the end of the day. Being put on the bow perch in the weathering for instance. That way the hawk never associates being taken off a kill with disappointment at not being fed. Hopefully preventing any of the tantrums often associated with imprints.



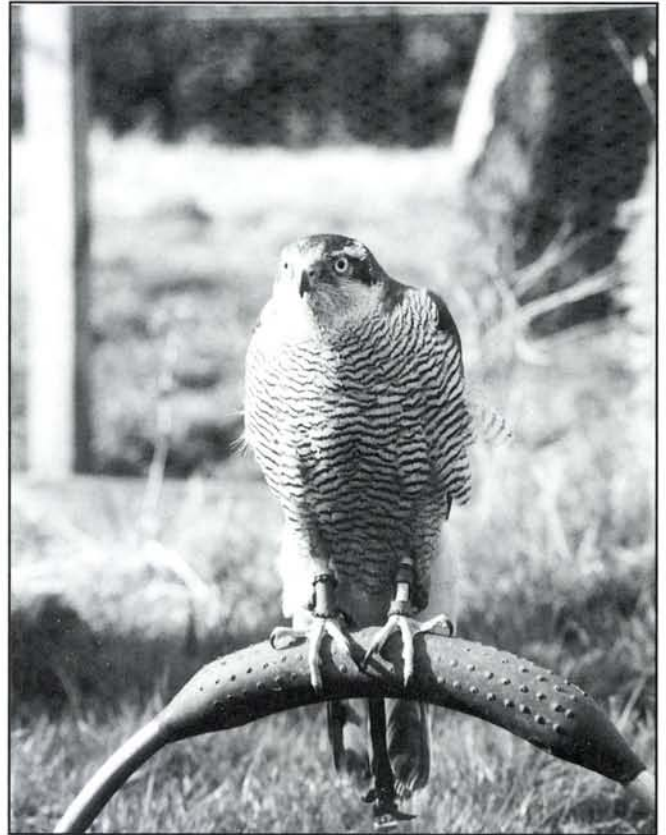
I currently have two imprint males, as well as a few imprint females, - both German type and now 3-4 years old. It was interesting to see how they developed. Artex - the younger one was loose at 1lb7oz but soon had to be lowered or he would have been lost. His flying weight was found to be 1lb 51/2oz and has remained fairly constant. He caught a few crows in his first year which was what I wanted him to do. He also took some pheasants, more cocks than hens and subsequently there is no doubt that his main interest is centred on them, which is a little annoying as I do not have access to a lot of pheasants. In his first season he completely ignored small mammals ie rabbit and squirrel. My intention was to concentrate on avian quarry so that was fine - besides I had previously flown female Goshawks for years and was quite happy to have a change, besides I thought that rabbits might be too big for him and I certainly did not want to fly him at squirrels. I ended his second season early and put him down to moult. In his first season he had been brilliantly obedient - always coming instantly over a quarter of a mile to the lure. He always flew at crows well but after taking them in his first season he took fewer in the second and none last season. He now only flies them if they are on the ground. He flies hard until the point at which they leave the ground, when he then lands, no matter if he is 30 yards or 300 yards away from them. Something has put him off but I do not know what. I have always been able to assist when he caught one and have seen nothing to scare him. Towards the end of last season I decided to try him at a ferreted rabbit which he flew hard but missed. He took the next one and went on to take half a dozen before it was time to

pack up for the season. In his first moult he called and displayed to me. In the second moult he was more demonstrative but did not nest build when given the opportunity. He never attempted copulation until the third year. He has been opposite a female in the next aviary this year, has nest built and copulated with me frequently on the hat. He was confident with the female when they were together, although he seemed unready to try copulation with her. She too is an imprint, four years old but in a different aviary and did not build so I was not too surprised that nothing came of it. She did however, lay, once on the floor and once on his nest. As time passed he called more, displayed more and tried to food pass with her.

To the other guy, Fagin, a full brother to Artex but a year older. After a good imprint spar I had some years ago which was not entered for a year, and without going all over that

experiment, which would just be a repeat of this, I decided to try an experiment with Fagin. I trained him to the lure and flew him loose every day at about 11b 8oz for about 10 weeks. During this time he was very fit and obedient but was not entered. He was too high to be seriously interested in hunting but keen to be with me. He never flew at anything and I did not try to enter him. Not too difficult in this area I assure you. (I was also flying (hunting) a female Goshawk at the time). In his second year he called and displayed to me in the same way as Artex. In his third season I again flew him from October on and he was as obedient as ever. His manners were good, no aggression, no screaming etc. A lovely hawk to handle. About a month later I decided I would now enter him. I took him to where I thought we would see rabbits. He bated at them. We saw squirrels, he bated. To corvids there was no reaction. He was entered on the first cock pheasant he saw. Not a brilliant flight but good enough. He went on that season to fly pheasants well enough but would fly squirrels too which was unnerving. I had never planned to fly a male at them. I decided to fly only him that season and I was reasonably pleased with his performance. He went on to catch mostly pheasants although not in huge numbers and also about half a dozen squirrels, one of which gave him a nasty bite which laid him up for a month. On the day I next flew him

loose, first slip, he bated at something in the distance so I slipped him. He had flown about ten yards when I saw the squirrel running for the trees, 'oh no,' I thought 'here we go'. I dashed after him, uselessly. He scooped it up from the grass and landed in a brook which I think helped him. I got him out of the water but by then he had the squirrel well clamped. Shortly afterwards he took his first rabbit. I had slipped him at a pheasant running into a copse. When I made it to the wood he was nowhere to be seen. I found him plucking a rabbit. Last season he built a nest, copulated with me. I tried him with a female, again there was no trouble between them at all, but to no avail. but next year hey?



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