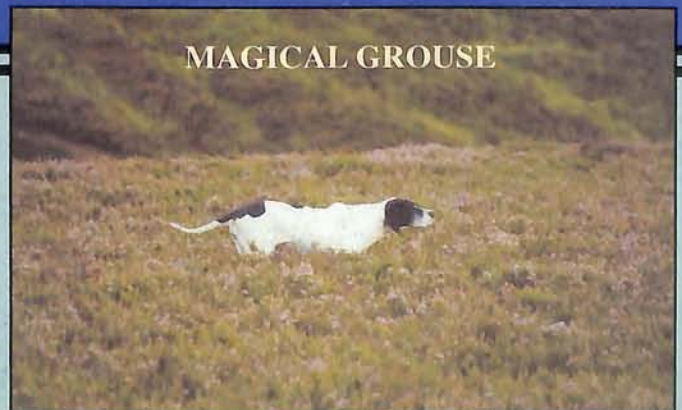


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— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

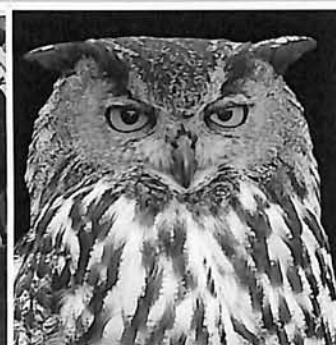


MEXICAN MARVEL



MAGICAL GROUSE

The
BRITISH
Falconry
 RAPTOR &
 COUNTRY FAIR



May Bank Holiday Weekend

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**OFFCHURCH BURY, OFFCHURCH,
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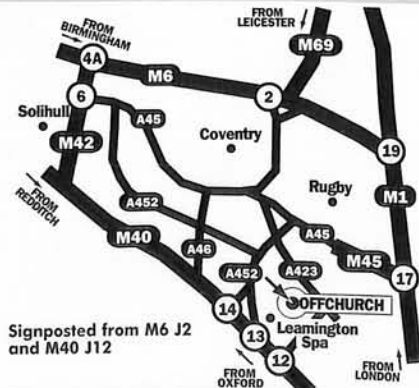


**CAMPAIGN FOR
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WILL BE PRESENTING SEMINARS
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 THE TWO DAYS

EVENTS &
 DISPLAYS INCLUDE
 ALL ASPECTS
 OF FALCONRY
 & THEIR
 MANAGEMENT,
 CONSERVATION,
 ART, EQUIPMENT,
 ETC

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features

- 7** **BLOCK BUSTER**
David Wilson
- 12** **LURE OF THE FALCON**
Francis Allen
- 14** **FIVE MINUTE WONDER**
Lee William Harris
- 16** **MAGICAL GROUSE**
Andrew Knowles Brown
- 18** **JURONG BIRD PARK - SINGAPORE**
Mike Gibb
- 19** **MEXICAN JUMPING BEAN?**
Doug McCarlie
- 20** **BOXES FOR NIGHT QUARTERS**
Jemima Parry-Jones
- 26** **FALCONRY CROATIAN STYLE**
Chantal Willaims
- 29** **JAMES DODD - SCULPTOR**
A BRIEF PROFILE

regulars

- 10** **RAPTOR RESCUE**
- 11** **CLUB DIRECTORY**
Make your voice count,
join an affiliated Club

up-to-date

4/5/6 **NEWS** Lost & Found,
Falconers Fair, British
Vulture Conservation
Society, Conviction.

11 **CLUBS NEWS.**
British Hawking
Association

27/8/9 **LETTERS.**
WHO IS SAYING
WHAT?

30 **CLASSIFIEDS.**



Block Buster p:7



Children & birds - A Five Minute Wonder? p14

COMMENT

Hello Everybody,

I know it doesn't seem long since the last issue but we are trying to get caught up, mind you I shouldn't think anyone is complaining, at least I hope not!

In this issue Jemima has addressed the problem of night boxes for us, following a recent court case in which a falconer was found guilty of keeping bird in nightboxes which were too small. It has caused much consternation among falconers but it really shouldn't be too much of an issue, provided Jemima's comments are taken on board by the majority.

Our front cover picture was provided by Ian Garland who many of you will know and isn't it spectacular? I must admit it was emailed to me and I didn't open it straight away, when I did I was absolutely gobsmacked. It is wonderful. Thanks Ian for sharing it with us.

This year sees the Tenth Anniversary of the Falconers Fair and let's hope it runs for another ten. More and more people are patronising the fair and from more and more countries. It is great to see that 'our' Fair has such an International appeal.

On that note I will end, saying I look forward to seeing lots of you there, and wish you a speedy moult, and successful breeding season.

David & Lyn

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COVER: Gyr Falcon & Sage Grouse Pic:

LOST BIRDS	2PB95W 5RJTW 0575W IBR5640U MH797 IBR7333W IBR7087W	Peregrine 11753W	FOUND BIRDS	?RJT9?W ?DK9?X	?LB9?Y
Buzzards 1. IBR2887W 2. IBR3219W 3. 761		Peregrine x Merlin 9602S	Buzzards 103??W UK825?? ?AJ97? ??MH98W ?MH98W IBR73??W ??MH97W 36??W 39??W	Kestrels ?BJD9?S 18??BC97U 10??S 111??S 55??S ?S&?99S IBR89??S IBR51??S ?NSM/98S 0??DRSS UK814?? ?FWS9?S	Saker ??6WINGS ??BPW ??SP
Goshawks 1. UK89138 2. UK87540 & 015/99/HUD 3. UK87189	Kestrels 899s 3PSD96S 9235S 93S99	Saker 3739RR97W 6WINGS IBR3478W 5908W	Coopers ??GY97U		Barn Owls Total of 20 plus Barn Owls recovered since the last report. Please telephone if you have lost one.
Gyr x Saker 18031W UK87544 & BRY780006451B 3816X	Lanner 196 8TS98W 15017W 4MB98 3MH98W 109RCW 2306RR96W	Saker x Lanner 3573V & 14176W	European Eagle Owl 1?Y ??WNB99Z	Lanner ?SO98W 87??W	STOLEN Goshawk 4749V Goshawk UK89700 Buzzard IBR3397W Tropical Screech Owl 435097R & 418Z
Gyr X Pere x Saker 17294W		Saker x Prairie 1. 1ALB97W	Harris Hawks 85??W ??GUY96W ?RJRW	Lugger ?98W	
Harris Hawks 13202W 11681W	Lugger 4KFCC99W	Sparrowhawk 498R		Redtail	
		Barn Owls 1. 1785BC94 300BC99 2786U			

BIRDS SPEND 66% OF THEIR TIME IN TRAVELLING BOXES - MAN CONVICTED

On Friday 6th November 1998 Northamptonshire Police, served a warrant at Shire Lodge Falconry Centre, the police officer in overall charge was PC Andy Glover, a PWLO.

He was assisted by Avian Vet, Greg Simpson and Head Falconer from the National Birds of Prey Centre, Mark Parker.

The warrant was served following an investigation, launched after several complaints from falconers concerned for the welfare of the birds at the centre. Subsequent to the execution of the warrant Daniel Keeber, the owner of the Centre, appeared at Kettering Magistrates Court charged with 30 offences contravening Section 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 30 cruelty offences under of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 & two Cotes offences. At the first hearing he pleaded not guilty to these offences.

A seven day trial was scheduled to commence from Monday 10th April 2000 at Northampton Magistrates court. Initially Keeber was expected to enter a not guilty plea. The hearing was delayed for over an hour whilst the prosecution and defence counsels discussed the case. The hearing finally commenced at 11am. Keeber pleaded guilty to 30 offences of keeping birds in boxes which were inappropriate in size for the birds which they housed, he also pleaded guilty to the two COTES offences, namely having birds on display, one kestrel and one kestrel hybrid with no Article 10 Certificates. He also admitted cruelty under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, to a female Barn Owl, Dusk. The other 29 cruelty charges were

dropped This was for keeping the bird in a cat box for the same period of time as the other birds. All the birds were covered in excrement to some extent, but this bird was filthy.

Neil Forbes who spoke for the defence said that many falconers and falconry centres used night boxes but he failed to explain that most of these boxes are big enough for the birds to move around in without becoming covered in their own mutes. Mr Keeber gave the impression to Mr Forbes that "he gave the utmost care and attention to his birds". Although Mr Forbes also admitted that he had never actually visited the centre.

There have been many rumours flying around following this court case, most of which are unfounded. I have seen it written that this case was a 'witch hunt' because Keeber had upset some people. Well if this is the case then I am amazed that these people were able to influence thirteen witnesses enough to get them all to appear in court to testify against Mr Keeber. The initial complaints came from independent witnesses, some of whom had never even met each other. All of them however, had been to the centre and seen the birds in their home surroundings. All at some stage or another had tried to advise him about his falconry practices. Several of these falconers have many years experience with birds of prey and could see quite clearly where Keeber was going wrong. Despite this he continued to treat his birds in a manner which they found unac-

ceptable and they felt their only recourse was to make an official complaint. The decision to prosecute Keeber was not taken lightly. The police have to commit many resources to the execution of such a warrant, then it is entirely up to the CPS to decide if there is sufficient evidence to proceed. On the grounds of the evidence gathered and the statements taken a decision was made to go ahead. Bearing in mind that this was the first time the police had prosecuted on the evidence of individual falconers and for this offence in particular, it could not have been an easy decision to make, especially when you consider the specialist subject.

The case, when presented to her by the prosecution, had the full backing of Jemima Parry-Jones who reviewed all the evidence, including photographs of the night boxes, the place in which they were kept, and the condition of the birds housed within.



THE BRITISH FALCONRY & RAPTOR FAIR



The tenth British Falconry & Raptor Fair will again take place in the magnificent setting of Offchurch Park. The Spring Bank Holiday weekend- 28th & 29th May, will once again see falconers and raptor enthusiasts from all over the globe converging on this world famous annual falconry event held near Leamington Spa.

The reason the fair has managed to continually grow year by year is due to the unflagging efforts of those who support it so wholeheartedly. Each year there is something new, something else to hold the interest of falconers and raptor enthusiasts alike. This year is no exception with a guest falconer from Austria providing two demonstrations each day in the main arena. Michael Holzfeind, from Klagenfurt, will be demonstrating his training technique for large falcons, using a helium filled balloon. Not that ballooning is new to British falconers, but Michael has added one or two twists that make the display worth watching.

On the artistic side of things we have two very exciting exhibitors from Spain. One a sculptor, the other an artist. The sculptor, Albert Relano, works in bronze and specialises in falconry subjects. These range from life sized models of hawks and falcons through to hawking scenes. Each piece is of a limited edition and beautifully finished. It is small wonder that anything with the Relano signature on it is becoming highly collectable throughout Europe and the Middle East. Other than falconry Mr Relano's number one source of working inspiration are pointing dogs. So expect to see some superb examples of these displayed at the Fair.

The artist, David Martin, is himself a falconer and manages to get movement and detail into his pictures that, perhaps, a non-falconer might miss. David has not only been a full time professional for the last two years or so, but already his work is becoming highly sought after. Not just in his native Spain but in North America and the Middle East as well. He is currently working on illustrations for a new book on falconry being worked on here in the UK. His particular passions are the peregrine falcon and the goshawk.

Consequently a great deal of his work features one or the other of these subjects. David's work is well worth a serious look, as now is the time to obtain an original before the prices start to climb too steeply.

A good friend of the fair, Chris Christoforou, will once again be organising a superb display of artistic talent in the art marquee. The art

marquee alone makes the Falconers Fair worth a visit. Quite how Chris manages to pull together such a wide and interesting array of talent each year is beyond comprehension, but the important thing is that he does and the benefit of all his hard work is there for all of us to enjoy.

The Campaign for Falconry have an increased presence this year and have laid on some seminars and workshops on falconry related topics. Breeding, nutrition, veterinary aspects and desert hawking will be amongst the subjects dealt with by leading experts in the relative fields. Desert Hawking is being covered by Roger Upton, the well-known and thoroughly respected falconer from Marlborough. Roger is also the author of three very successful books on the subject of falconry and is known around the world.

The flying demonstrations in the main arena will be of the usual high quality and will be as varied as possible. Apart from the Austrian guest Michael Holzfeind, we will have a good selection of British falconers displaying their skills. When not flying, their charges can be viewed along with plenty of other hawks and falcons on the weathering ground.

The trade stands will again be vast in their number and staggering in their diversity. Every conceivable topic relating to falconry and raptor keeping will be well covered. The same is true of clubs for both the established and would-be falconer to join and get benefit from. International, national and regional levels will be well represented.

Raptor Rescue will also have their purpose built stand and weathering which will no doubt be manned by the usual group of enthusiastic helpers. The work done by Raptor Rescue benefits all those that derive pleasure from wild birds of prey so it is to be hoped that donations are generous in both their quantity and amount.

All in all there should be something for just about every one interested in falconry and raptors. Should you require further information then call the show office on 01588 672708



Raptor Return

Honeybrook Farm Animal Foods are based in Evesham Worcs. We have been established 10 years and are the UK's largest supplier of frozen food to hawk, falcon, eagle and owl collections in zoos, falconry centres and private collections. We are a major sponsor of the Campaign for Falconry.

As part of our support for falconry and falconers in the UK, we are proud to announce the launch of a FREE bird of prey registration service. Raptor Return, in order to help re-unite lost birds of prey with their owners.

The first ever registration scheme was established by the charity Raptor Rescue, however, the scheme was discontinued because of the cost of administration. Although commercial alternatives are available, Honeybrook Farm felt that a free service is, once again, achievable given modern internet and database technology. The internet allows people instant access to register their birds and notify us of a loss. Clearly postal registration is also available for those raptor keepers without internet access.

How do the mechanics of the system work?

On-Line or postal registration with details entered on a central database. Split rings/closed rings would be issued as appropriate with unique numbers and free a call 0800 'Lost Line' number. Once a bird is found security checks are made and the bird re-united with its owner. The website contains additional information.

How many users do you expect?

We expect in excess of 5000 registrations.

How can it be free?

Initially the scheme will be funded by ourselves, however, high levels of interest from potential sponsor means that the scheme should be self financing very quickly.

When will the service be launched?

Launch date of the service was Monday 3rd April 2000

How do falconers get in touch?

The point of contact for enquiries and postal registration is:
Raptor Return
C/O Honeybrook Farm Animal Foods.

Tel: 01386 830089

Fax: 01386 834393

Email: raptor@honeybrookfarm.com

Details and online registration at:
<http://www.honeybrookfarm.com/raptor-return/index.html>

REQUEST FOR HELP...

Richard Mabey and Mark Cocker are preparing an important, new book on birds entitled *Birds Britannica*, following the format of Richard Mabey's award-winning *Flora Britannica*. They want to enlist your help by asking you to send in your stories of birds.

Here are some of the themes in which they are interested: Traditional folklore, vernacular and local names, literary references, birds in art, regional lore, anecdotes of extraordinary observations and incidents, such as unusual nesting sites, bizarre feeding behaviour, three favourite bird sounds, and the reasons for the choice.

They would like you to write about your thoughts and memories with any pictures or clippings or letters and post them to:

Birds Britannica, c/o Random house,
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1V 2SA
or email: birdsbritannica@randomhouse.co.uk
Or visit our website at:
www.randomhouse.co.uk/birdsbritannica

Please include your name, address and telephone number. The common names of the birds you are telling us about. Any local names for it, and, if at all possible, its scientific (Latin) name. The area of the United Kingdom or Ireland - preferably the county and parish name - to which you are referring. Any other information you think may be important.

Although it will not be possible to acknowledge individually or return material sent, any material used will be credited in the finished book.

What's on in 2000 at the Hawk & Owl Trust's National Conservation and Education Centre.

at Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newlands Park, Gorelands Lane, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks.

30 May - 4 June

Activities for young people and their families during half-term *

Places must be booked in advance by phoning 01494 876262.

Tickets Adults £3.50 Children £2.00

1 June

Open Day for teachers: a chance to find out what's on offer for school groups. To book a place telephone Leanne Thomas, Hawk and Owl Trust Education Officer, on 01494 876262.

21 to 29 October

Half term activities for young people and their families *.

25 October

Autumn guided walk, departing at 2.30pm. No need to book*

1 August to 4 September

Summer Holiday activities for young people and their families.*

26 October

Open Day for teachers: a chance to find out what's on offer for school groups. To book a place telephone Leanne Thomas, Hawk and Owl Trust Education Officer, on 01494 876262.

3 August

Summer Guided Walk, departing at 2.30 pm. No need to book.*

7 October

Evening Owl Prowl. Special evening guided walk to listen for tawny owls in the woods.

[*Entry is included on the cost of admission to Chiltern Open Air Museum, oen 10-5 daily until 29 October.]

The British Vulture Conservation Society

The British Vulture Conservation Society, which was officially launched in 1998 at the World Conference on Birds of Prey, has grown quickly into a well known society supporting countries with research and field work, helping to conserve one of the worlds most majestic raptors.

As Director of the BVCS I am pleased to announce that the society has joined forces with the Saudi Arabian Wildlife Dpt for a period of three years to carry out vital research into the Eurasian Griffon Vulture. In fact no research has ever been carried out before so the BVCS are honoured to take the lead.

I have just returned from carrying out an initial study into the area, where the vulture colonies are, and most are at an incredible height of 8,000 ft. The region is known as Tanumah.

The aims over the next three years are

- 1 Estimate population Status
- 2 Causes of Mortality
- 3 Identify competition and feeding behaviour with other scavengers.

The BVCS is also assisting Israel with a recruitment campaign into getting field workers to assist with their research into the Eurasian Griffon, and we have been advertising in over 72 countries with a fantastic response. If you would like to be involved in this research then let me know.

The BVCS is certainly now very active in the Middle East, but now I have been asked if the BVCS would assist in research in Morocco, Bulgaria and recently been approached by colleagues in India in collaborating together to sort out the major problem there. Because there are no vultures here in the UK, we have the great opportunity, to assist other countries where needed.

We are now a world organisation, which is working to support all of our 22 species of vulture, and I find myself travelling all over the world preparing future projects, giving lectures and attending conferences.

As we now enter the year 2000 I would like to thank all of our members for all of their hard work.

Martin Foulds
Director
British Vulture Conservation Society
Linton Zoo

NOTICE

Martin Hollinshead will be on the Falconers Magazine stand at this years Falconers Fair with copies of his book *The Complete Rabbit & Hare Hawk*. Come along and see him, he will be available on both days for book signing and general questions.

NEW VIDEO RELEASE



The RSPB has released three new videos, one of which is entitled *British Birds of Prey*. The video covers the Golden Eagle, the Hen Harrier, showing its 'skydancing', and the Short-eared Owl. The only British Owl to hunt by day.

The other two videos are

British Woodland Birds and *British Sea Birds*, which should be equally interesting for anyone with an interest in birds.

The videos are available from all good retailers at a price of £12.99 each.



BLOCK BUSTER

David Wilson

How blocks have changed over the last 25 years, gone are the days when you cut the top off a rustic post and hammered a 2ft steel spike into it, then putting a ring on the floor pushed the spike through it into the ground.

The flaws in this are many, the bird could pull the block out of the ground or wear and tear could make the spike work loose from the block both scenarios ending up with a lost and probably death bird.

Today, block making is an art. Falconry furniture makers must make sure that birds put on blocks are safe and can't damage themselves.

Height:

The block must be high enough for the bird to be up away from ground frost and plenty of tail clearance but not so high that the leash is too long when the bird is tethered. As this could cause problems when the bird bates. As a rule of thumb the largest falcon should be no higher than 15" from the ground, and this should lessen as the birds get smaller.

Diameter of tops:

For anyone who has seen a falcon straddle it's block will know that it is very distressing for the bird and can cause broken feathers and even legs. There is a very simple remedy to this problem.

The two main reasons for straddling are:

- 1) Block top too small.
- 2) Jesses too long.

If a birds jesses are too long, the jesses have a tendency to fall either side of the block when they are sitting, then when they bate they can go no further than the length of the jess. Left unattended they will bate round and round eventually tying themselves into a knot and ending up right up against the block.

If you are unsure about the size of a block top play safe and buy bigger rather than smaller.

Block tops:

Coverings available: Astro turf / Cork / Leather / Rubber/ Concrete.

Astro turf:

Astro turf has been used for some time now, quite successfully as it allows air to the underside of the foot. It stops any one part of the foot from being under

constant pressure, but because of the way it is made the base has a tendency to hold food particles and mutes making a safe haven for bacteria to breed. Astro turf should be removable for easy cleaning on a regular basis (daily).

Astro turf proud of the block top can cause the leash to snag, leaving the bird hanging. Most block makers cut a recess into the top of the block, allowing the



This block clearly shows the recess, and the under cut in the top, to hold the astro turf securely. A good idea to stop abuild up of water in the recess is to have a few drainage holes drilled through the bottom.

turf to sit securely inside the rim.

Cork:

There are two types of cork, firstly reconstituted which is easily obtainable but tends to break up very quickly as it is held together with glue, which could be toxic to your bird if eaten, this is not recommended for block tops. Secondly proper cork in its true form, which is the bark of a tree that has been cut pressed and dried. This can be obtained on block form, approx four inches thick. This can then be cut to the correct size of the block top and contoured to your liking to give an even but irregular surface. The problem with this type of cork is that it is expensive and quite difficult to obtain.

Leather:

Leather tends to be fixed directly to the top of the block with padding underneath, usually with fancy upholstery pins. The rough side of the leather should be facing out so the bird can get some grip. The problem with leather is that it absorbs moisture and therefore if it was to get wet your bird would be standing constantly on a wet perch. When it dries out the leather will shrink, crack and become hard, this could cause problems with bumblefoot. Leather preserving oils can be applied to help prevent this but they are not ideal and

should never be left outside all the time.

Rubber:

Rubber has not been used a lot for block tops, some have been home made using car mats and other rubber items with good results as the surface is uneven, non-absorbent and washes easily. I know of only one falconry furniture maker who is in the process of developing and testing a purpose made, rubber top for blocks. Hopefully we will see a few of these at the fair.

Concrete:

The main reason for using a block made from concrete which is painted to seal it, is they cope with the extreme weather conditions, mid-day sun, snow, frost etc., where wood may crack after time. The tops can be covered with any of the aforementioned materials, the best way to hold them in place is with a section of rubber tubing. No falconry furniture

manufacturer makes them commercially, in this country at least, but they can be made using a little bit of initiative. See Understanding the Bird of Prey, Dr Nick Fox.



Above: This is an Arab style block, which has been adapted with a plate to stop the spike going all the way into the ground, the ring should be no bigger than the base of the block or the plate, to stop it being pulled up when the bird bates, also if the block should come out of the ground the ring will still be attached to the block.

The block however, should not be able to be pulled out of the ground if you have a sufficiently long spike.

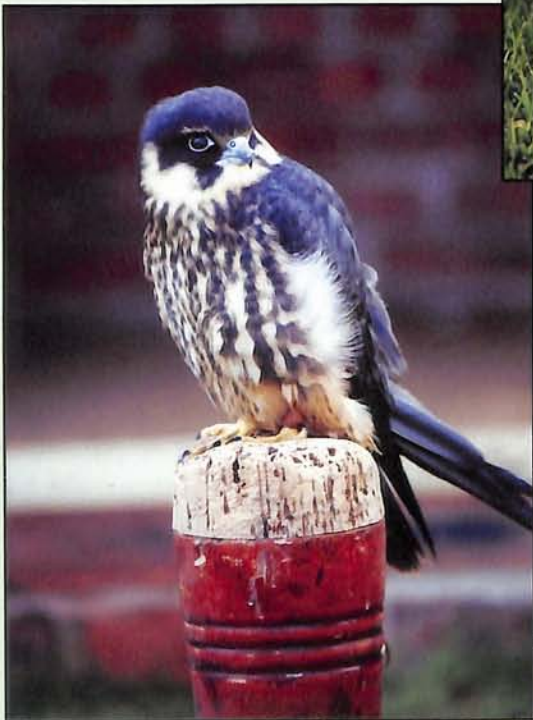
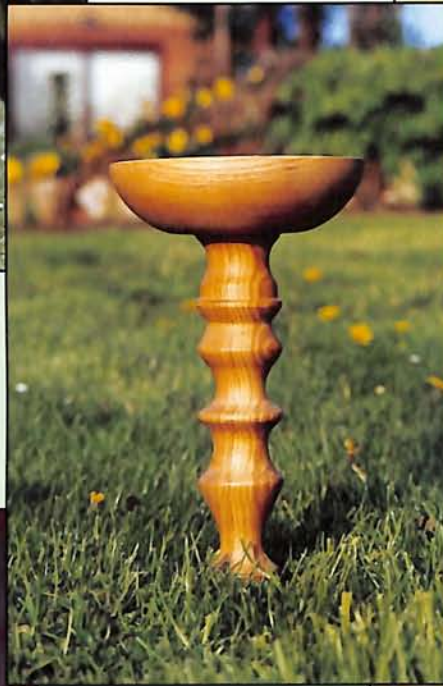


Left: This Prairie Falcon spent six flying seasons on this block which was re-corked, stripped and re-varnished every year, she had no accidents, and no foot problems. The main spike runs through the centre of the block with a fixing bolt in a recess in the top.

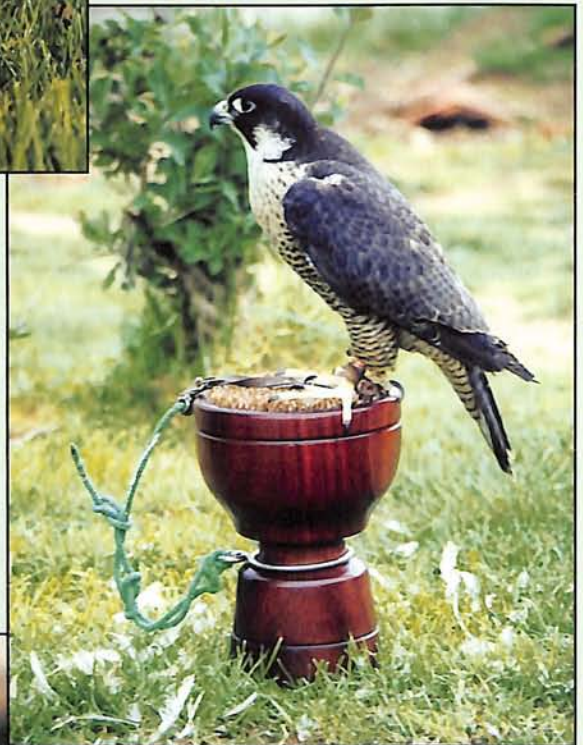


Above: This is an example of an accident waiting to happen, this peregrine is on a block which is too small, and her jesses are far too long.

Right: This is an Arab style block, which has no fixing ring just a spike into the ground, the falcon would be tied directly to the stem. This is not ideal if birds are to be left unattended for any period of time.



Right This Hobby is on a four inch diameter top, cork covered block, as this is one of the smallest falcons that is flown you should not be using a block any smaller, as you move up to larger falcons you should increase the size of the block accordingly.



Right: As you can see with this Kestrel, he has bated and the leash has become caught on the astroturf because it is not in a recess, the next time he bates he will not be able to reach the ground, thereby causing him distress.



Above: This is an excellent example of a block, the attachment ring is small and can be used for button leashes or as in this case a traditional leash. It has a recessed top to accommodate the astroturf.

Print size
16"x12" approx



Print shown is not actual size.

Juvenile female Peregrine Falcon

A true collectors piece

The Magnificent detail of this juvenile female Peregrine Falcon on a block has been beautifully reproduced using top quality printing methods.

The full colour limited edition print of 850 copies has been taken from a beautiful water colour original 'Juvenile Peregrine Falcon'.

Price per print:
£39.99 + £4 P+P unframed.

Framed prints are available for
£59.99 + £4 P+P.

Europe E90, USA \$90
Please allow 28 days for delivery.

Cheques and money orders should be made payable to Andrew Sams Promotions and sent with your orders to:-

Andrew Sams Promotions
P.O. Box 96, WIRRAL, CH63 5WB, England, U.K



The centre is a sanctuary for birds of prey set in the walled garden and parkland of Lowther Castle. Visitors can see a large collection of eagles, hawks, falcons and owls from around the world.

Our aim is to conserve birds of prey through education, breeding and caring for injured or orphaned birds before releasing them back to the wild.

Our tea room is available for traditional cooking, fresh ground coffee and cream teas.

Open throughout the year for bird of prey experience days, courses, lectures and school talks. Hawking days available from November to February, ask an admissions or telephone for details.



Lakeland Bird of Prey Centre

Open daily from 10.30 am
1st March to 31st October
Flying displays at: 11.30 am, 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm



The Centre also breeds: Bald Eagles, Gyr/Sakers (inc black), Sakers, Lanners, Merlins, Black Sparrowhawks, Harris' Hawks, Redtailed Buzzards, Common Buzzards, Snowy Owls

Raptor Rescue

Code of Practice and Approved Status Scheme

Code of Practice and Approved Status Scheme encourages new members

Published in the spring of last year, the Raptor Rescue Code of Practice for Raptor Rehabilitators sets out guidelines for minimum standards of transportation, handling, treatment and care for injured birds of prey.

Throughout 1999 it gained interest and praise from many individuals involved in wildlife rehabilitation and has also been instrumental in persuading a number of people to become members of the Charity.

This 36-page document was produced over a period of many months involving consultation with active rehabilitators and advisors, both from within and from outside the

Charity.

The book covers subjects such as facilities, husbandry, types of casualties and rehabilitation techniques, as well as a chapter on the relevant law as it applies to the care of wild raptors.

One of the main reasons for producing this guide was to set out the list of minimum standards which emerged in response to a questionnaire sent out to all practising rehabilitators within the Charity. Those members who attain these requirements will be eligible to apply for "Raptor Rescue Approved Status" - which can then be confirmed by a simple inspection involving a 'tick-box' style checklist.

At the time of writing, several members have already been granted Approved Rehabilitator Status - Certificates and Identity Cards for these rehabbers will be available soon.

Raptor Rescue have long made it a priority to promote high standards of care and responsibility, but no organisation concerned solely with the rescue of birds of prey has ever set down such standards. It is hoped that this publication will unite all those involved in raptor rehabilitation work.

The Guide is on sale for £1 to members and £2 to non-members.



RAPTOR RESCUE

Registered Charity No. 283733

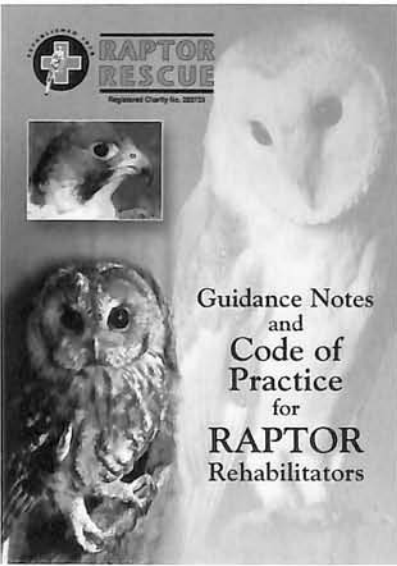
Raptor Rescue has been able to help an average of 250 casualties each year. Ian Taylor commented, "We would like to thank BT for their help in providing this unique service and it will enable us to help many more injured British raptors. By ringing 0870 241 0609, callers can get the most appropriate advice on how to deal with the bird concerned and, where possible, details of who to contact locally to ensure that the bird is cared for."

Pollyanna Pickering added, "Having run a small bird hospital myself for 15 years, I am delighted to support Raptor Rescue and fully appreciate the hard work they do in caring for and rehabilitating owls, hawks and falcons. I am sure this new life-line will be an invaluable service, providing information and advice for anybody who is unsure of the best way to help an

injured bird of prey."

Robin Haynes said, "I'm very pleased to have been able to help Raptor Rescue in this way. Birds of prey are beautiful creatures and are an important part of our wildlife. BT has supported a wide range of environmental initiatives over the years and this is another way of harnessing telecommunications to help a very worthwhile cause."

It should be stressed that this is NOT a 24 hour emergency service or a lost and found scheme - although an answerphone will be available outside normal hours. The intention is to provide help and advice on wild birds of prey, so that in the event of a rehabilitator or experienced helper being unable to collect an injured bird, the caller can be given basic instructions on how to care for the casualty temporarily and where to take it to obtain informed diagnosis and treatment.



National Help and Advice Line

National Help and Advice Line

0870 241 0609

Registered Charity Raptor Rescue now has a National Telephone Advice Line. Anyone who finds an injured or sick wild bird of prey at any time can contact the Charity by ringing one central number from anywhere in the country. This line has been set up with financial help from British Telecom.

The official launch took place on October 1st 1999 and was attended by one of the Charity's patrons, well-known wildlife artist, Pollyanna Pickering, as well as BT's Corporate Affairs Manager, Robin Haynes, who presented the cheque to Raptor Rescue's Vice-Chairman, Ian Taylor. Further publicity for the new venture will hopefully follow in the National Press.

Over the last nine years



Pictured at the launch of the Raptor Rescue National Help and Advice Line are, from the left: Charity Vice-Chairman Ian Taylor, Robin Haynes - BT's Corporate Affairs Manager and Raptor Rescue Patron Pollyanna Pickering with Jed the Barn Owl.

BHA CLUB NEWS

During the past 12 months the British Hawking Association has grown from strength to strength. A lot has happened within the Association which has included more members representing Falconry on Regional Countryside Alliance Committees in various parts of the Country. New Regions of the Association have been formed and these include Kent & Surrey, Lancashire, Tyne & Wear, Sussex and Derbys/Notts have a new

Regional Officer and new venue. Regular meetings will also soon be taking place in Cambridgeshire.

The Association has now moved into the 21st Century with a brand new Website following the incredible number of visits on the old one. We also have an online mailing list that enables an individual to send messages automatically to all those subscribing. In addition, she/he receives all the messages sent by other subscribers. This facilitates discussion, the dissemination of information, or just straightforward chat. There are currently around 50 members on the list. This list is free but for members of the Association only.

For further information please visit us at

<http://www.bhassoc.org>

The Falconer's Fair is fast approaching and once again the BHA will be holding a Bar-b-que on the Sunday night. (Hopefully the weather will be much kinder to us than it was last year). This Bar-b-que is open to any person that wishes to attend. People from all clubs/stands etc are welcome to come along and hopefully have an enjoyable evening. This is a good opportunity for a great social evening and last year people from all over the world showed up in the tent. The price of the Bar-b-que is about £5.00 per head. If you are interested in attending please let us know in advance if possible by ringing 0118 901 6990.

CLUB DIRECTORY CLUB DIRECTORY

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

Founded in 1927

The oldest and largest Hawking Club in the country.

Nine Regional Groups -

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

For more details send SAE with 82p P & P to:
**THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB,
HOME FARM F.M., HINTS, Nr.
TAMWORTH, STAFFS. B78 3DW.**

THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION A New Committee

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

Changing attitudes to improve standards.

Contact

Paul Beecroft: 0118 9016990
Wendy Alier: 01945 450648
Susan Smith: 01494 817305

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).

THE HAWKING CLUB

meets each month at the following locations
South Wales Hensol Golf Academy.
Llantrisant. 8pm 2nd Monday
Plymouth. The Woodpecker, South Brent, 8pm 3rd Monday
Northampton. The Red Lion, Kislingbury, 8pm 4th Monday.

For further information on this recently formed and fast growing hawking club with members throughout the UK and overseas call our
Chairman Craig Thomas on 01327 261485
or our
Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333

HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society

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

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

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

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

Northern England Falconry Club

**CLUB MEETINGS
ARE HELD AT**

**"The Stickler"
Public House.**

**Stickler Lane, Bradford.
Or Contact: Jeff Thelwell on:
01274 612334**

RAPTOR BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1976, the Association aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences relating to the breeding of raptorial species. Interested persons are invited to seek further details from our membership secretary: Keith Channing
2 Amesbury Road, Cholderton,
Salisbury Wilts SP4 OEP
Tel: 01980 629221
e-mail: rba@redtail.demon.co.uk
Web Site: <http://www.redtail.demon.co.uk/rba/>

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER
Benefits include:- Individual insurance to £25,000
Affiliation to British Field Sports Society & North American Falconers Assn.
£2,000,000 Public Liability at field meetings.

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

The South East Falconry Group

aims to support falconry and falconers, drawing its membership from around southern and eastern England. The SEFG provides a forum for falconers to meet, discuss and practice falconry. Members benefit from access to a wealth of experience, good facilities and a range of field-meeting opportunities.

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

The Lure of the Falcon

FRANCIS ALLEN

It sounded like a dozen distant drums as the rain bounced off the corrugated iron roof of Greg's isolated stone croft. As he lay, warm and snug in bed he knew without opening his eyes that it was morning, and by the intensity of the sound on the roof that it was coming down in stair rods.

"Damn the weather" he muttered, as he pulled the blankets over his head to dull the noise of the rain.

Yesterday had been a beautiful blue sky day, just typical of highland weather, when you plan to do anything the heavens open. It was just a week into the start of the roe-deer season, and for Greg, who was a part-time, self employed stalker, this was a chance to earn some badly needed cash.

He owned a couple of hundred acres of hill land, mainly deciduous woodland, and was slowly creating a nature reserve of his own. He had spent the last five years cutting back the bracken and replanting trees, 25,000 so far. Government grants helped pay for the initial expense, but no-one pays for the labour. He had not planted conifers which would yield a quick profit. Instead he favoured the hard woods, silver birch, oak, beech and sycamore. Slow growing but much more beneficial to the wildlife.

The roe deer on his land had to be controlled as they could munch his little trees quicker than he could plant them. In the long run it would benefit the deer, as the woodland grew it would support more deer.

Greg tried to make the most of his task of controlling the deer. He regularly placed an advert in a monthly shooting magazine for competent shots, to spend a few days in the highlands and enjoy the skill of stalking roe deer, under the careful guidance of Greg.

He restricted the party of stalkers to two at a time, and if the weather permitted they would attempt a dawn and dusk stalk each day.

Each stalker would pay £25 for each stalk on the hill. If they shot the deer the carcass remained Greg's which he would butcher and sell for around £15.

Greg would cull, in this manner, about twenty five deer a year. This was his only winter income, in the summer he spent his time as a guide for a highland holiday company, taking groups of amateur naturalists on wildlife holidays to the Western Isles. As he lay in bed listening to that incessant rain, he cursed at the loss of his fee for the mornings stalk. Two shots had travelled up the day before, and had planned to have a dawn start.

Greg had managed to make ends meet with this type of employment for the last

five or six years, but this year things were starting to bite. Garage bills for repairs to his old van, which really needed replacing, the old iron roof of the croft needed repainting and the dreaded poll tax were all playing on his mind.

As he rose from the depths of his warm bed and looked out of the window, his hopes of the evening stalk looked bleak. His little croft nestled on the side of Loch Erisort, but as he looked through the bedroom window he could not see the far shore, for a thick blanket of mist had descended. The rain beating down made the surface of the loch look like a giant cauldron coming to the boil, the mist just added to the effect.

Greg stoked up the stove and filled the kettle for a brew, he just finished dressing and was about to start breakfast when the phone rang. Thinking it would be the lads who had come up for a couple of days deer stalking, he was taken by surprise to hear the loud and hurried voice of Dick Slater.

"Hi Greg, how ya doing, hope I didn't get you out of bed, look mate I'm coming up your way next week, I'll call and see you on Wednesday, OK?" he blurted.

"Um, I think that will be fine, I'm always in around lunchtime", replied Greg.

"Good, see you Wednesday, got a little job on, a bit in it for you, can't stop now, see you soon, ta ta", click, brrr, and he was gone.

"Crazy beggar", muttered Greg, as he went back to start his breakfast.

The weather had cleared by the time Wednesday came round, but it had totally spoiled the chances for the lads who had come up for the stalking, and consequently Greg had not earned a fee. His money problems were now starting to depress him, which was so unlike his normal laid back attitude. Dick's telephone call had slipped his mind, and he was enjoying the warmth of the early winter sun on his back as he chopped some badly needed kindling, when the peaceful silence was broken by the continual beep beep beeping of a car horn. As he looked up and laid down the axe, a Range Rover sped along the dirt track that led to his croft. Travelling too fast for comfort and lights flashing, he could see Dick's round, rosy face behind the wheel.

"Crazy beggar" Greg muttered and carried on cutting kindling. Dick pulled to a halt just before he ran out of track and ended up in the loch.

"Hi Greg", he shouted as he flung open the door and jumped out. "It's good to see you, how long's it been?" he said, grabbing Greg's hand.

"God, it must be going on three years",

replied Greg.

"Come in, I've got a brew going, did you have a good journey up?", said Greg as he carried the basket of fire wood into the croft.

"It was a good run, I set out early, taken me just three and a half hours, not bad eh?", grinned Dick.

"Crikey, three and a half hours, what have you got in that thing, rocket fuel? They'll catch you one day doing speeds like that, you barmy beggar", warned Greg.

The both sat down at the bare wooden table in front of the stove. Greg poured a well stewed brew into two mugs and they chatted about the old times.

"So how are you making an honest crust these days?" inquired Greg.

"Breeding hawks and parrots and buying in a few to sell on", replied Dick. "We've set up a large incubator and brooder room and we even take other breeders' eggs to hatch and rear, for a good price, mind you" he went on.

"It's going great, this year we reared over fifty different species of raptor and twenty-odd of parrots. Average price for falcons is a grand a piece, the parrots a little lower because we are hatching some African Greys and they are cheap compared to some of our rare macaws, which are two to three thousand a piece."

"What crazy beggars pay that sort of money?" spluttered Greg, nearly choking on his mug of tea.

"You'd be surprised old son, we've sent them all over the world now. With the hawks, I'm aiming at good quality which are strong hunters, once the word gets around that you are breeding good, sound stock, the enquiries come from all over".

"You see", he went on "a lot of so-called raptor breeders just chuck the first two birds they get as a pair into an aviary, with the results, poor to average and not worth the going price."

"God, it sure beats selling dodgy jewellery, I can tell you", said Dick leaning back in his chair.

"Ah, you've stopped all that cloak and dagger stuff", grinned Greg.

"Yeah, it got a bit hot at times, I can tell you, mind I still dabble a little now and then", confessed Dick.

"I might have known you'd take some weaning off that caper", smirked Greg. "Anyway what's this bit of a job you want me to do, it better be straight", said Greg, knowing full well that anything to do with Dick was usually far from straight.

"Well, I've got this old pal, German he is, Otto Rosenburg, really nice, you'd like him, anyway he lives just outside Vienna now. Used to buy a lot of jew-

ellery from me in the old days, you know."

"Got pots of money, lives in a dirty great mansion-castle sort of place. He's a falconer and raptor breeder, and his father was great German falconer. He's a bit like me, in that he believes in breeding from good stock, only he's a bit more fanatical about it."

"anyway, I was over in Austria the other month, I called in and stayed with him for a couple of days", explained Dick.

"Fine, but what's any of this got to do with me?", said Greg impatiently.

"Steady on, give us another fill of that stuff you call tea and I'll tell you the story he told me", Dick clasped the hot mug of tea in both hands, leaned back in his chair and lifted his feet onto the log basket near the stove.

"Go on", said Greg, somewhat hoping he would get to the point before bedtime.

"Well, Otto used to come over here with his father when he was a lad, his father used to get an invite from the late Duke of Byland to fly his falcons at the grouse. It's the Duke's land on the other side of the loch, isn't it?" inquired Dick.

"Aye", said Greg uncommitted like.

"Thought it was" continued Dick. "Anyway they used to stay up here for four to six weeks in the grouse season, Otto's father would bring about six peregrines all strong game falcons, and they used to have some terrific sport. Otto said they were some of the best flights he can remember."

"He had many fond memories of the Dukes Setters on point, with Rani, their best falcon, climbing high in the sky to get her pitch above the dog, ready, waiting for the grouse to be flushed. When just at that moment the grouse left the heather, a blue streak flashed past from nowhere and cracked sown one from the covey, only to carry on at full speed. Otto's father would curse and swear at the check of this wild falcon for spoiling his sport and for showing up his favourite falcon. Although he never admitted it, Otto knew his father greatly admired this wild pirate.

The Duke's keepers told them this wild falcon came from an eyrie on the sheer south face of Beinn Mhor.

Now that Otto is breeding falcons from

great hunting birds, he asked me of I could get him two young falcons from the strain on Beinn Mhor", said Dick looking at Greg intensely.

"You won't get a license to take peregrines from the wild, they stopped all that, now so many are bred in captivity", said Greg, surprised by the enquiry.

"I know, but there are still ways round that", said Dick quietly.

"Come on, even if you take them, you'll not get export licenses. There is too much bureaucracy these days. You've got no chance", dismissed Greg.

"I could if they were ringed to say they were captive bred and had official paperwork to prove it", smiled Dick.

"How the heck are you going to pull that one?" asked Greg, knowing full well by the large grin on Dick's face, that it was already worked out.

"Well me old son," said Dick, trying to keep up the suspense. "You know I was involved in the jewellery trade, well you get to make a few contacts. I just happen to know a chap who can make first class



forges of bird rings."

"Now this scam will only work for this particular job, because you don't find fanatics like Otto every day, not with the brass anyway," explained Dick.

"You see the idea is that I will take two of my legally genuine captive bred peregrines, which have just been rung in the presence of DoE bird inspectors, then my little friend makes two identical rings with the same numbers on.

Now this is where you come in. You old son, pop up Beinn Mhor to the peregrine eyrie and slip the two forged rings onto two eyas falcons. To make matters right we will cut off the rings on my birds and you again will swap by birds for the Beinn Mhor eyasses.

Everybody's happy, Otto gets his super blood-lines, the peregrines don't lose any

eyasses and you and I make a nice little bundle", concluded Dick.

Greg pondered for a while on what he had just heard. "How much and exactly what do you expect me to do in all this?" he said finally.

Dick shuffled about in the hard kitchen chair in which he was sitting. "God, these are a bit hard on your bum", he muttered. "What I want you to do is to keep an eye on Beinn Mhor, and then let me know when those eyasses are ready to take. I will then bring up my eyasses and we will do the swap". see, nothing to it grinned Dick. "Oh I nearly forgot, you then pop over to Vienna escorting our little feathered friends to Otto's mansion".

"Why do you want me to travel with them, why not send them on their own, or better still, you go with them", inquired Greg rather suspiciously.

"Well, I could send them as normal, on their own, but I don't want to risk them being held up for any reason. If you are travelling with them, you can help sort out any problems or queries as you speak

the lingo", explained Dick.

"Got it all worked out. Eh? You crafty beggar", smiled Greg. "Except in all this you haven't mentioned how much I get from the exorbitant price you are no doubt charging Otto".

"What do you mean, exorbitant? Don't for get I'm donating two first class captive bred eyas falcons to the wild", cried Dick in defence.

"Alright, but

how much?" demanded Greg.

"One thousand lovely pounds, plus your air ticket to Vienna and modest expenses," "How does that sound to you old son?" smile Dick.

"It would certainly come in very handy", pondered Greg. "O.K., you're on" he said offering Dick his hand to shake on the deal.

"Great", smiled Dick "Bloody great, I'll come back in spring, mind you keep an eye on that mountain and those lovely falcons in the meantime."

The next day Dick left at this usual breakneck speed. Greg doubted he would see Dick again in the spring. It was not unusual for these mad cap schemes of Dick's to fizzle out just as quickly as they were concocted.

A FIVE MINUTE WONDER?

Lee William Harris

This article has been carefully composed due to the volume of enquiries which are received here at the Eagle-Owl School of Falconry from anxious parents who have children that all of a sudden wish to become falconers and who are demanding that they are bought a bird of prey. Apart from the monetary side of things, that parents' main concern tends to be the time and commitment issues which are nowadays expressed with severe clarity in many modern day falconry books and articles. These are however, just concerns, and I beg all parents to attempt to speak to raptor owners before any premature purchase is carried through.

I write this article with a grin on my face as the telephone conversations between ourselves and parents are so alike. I've even thought of producing a tape so my staff can hit the play button whenever a call of this nature is received as it would save so many man hours and give us all endless fun. On a serious note however, we parents are all too aware of the sudden trend changes which our children experience throughout adolescence. Adidas one minute, Reebok the next, as long as it is expensive I don't think they're overly worried. Although trainers and clothing are materialistic commodities, the parents' concern is justified when it comes to something as expensive and reliant as a raptor, as this is far more than just a living animal, it is an animal which requires specialist skills from the owner and it is this single facet which presses the parents internal panic button more so than any other once they have been explained the pros and cons of hawk ownership.

The majority of us parents have, at some time or other, been fooled into ham-



Bradley Joyce with Harry

ster, rabbit or guinea pig ownership, normally after being begged and promised that it will not be left to us to clean out and tend to; although somehow it never quite works out that way does it? As a result, we have, over the years, grown wise to these false promises and some of us remain forever more on the defensive, possibly far longer than we should. When our child reaches early teens and wants a bird of prey, we have a serious decision to make. Do we say no, giving the endless reasons why, or do we take heed of what they say, treat them like a young adult, put them on a course, purchase a hawk, construct a weathering and buy the endless equipment in the hope that this is something which lasts a little longer than the interest did in the rabbit?

Children with a parent who is a practising falconer are, perhaps, more likely to follow in mum or dad's shoes, as helping clean out the weatherings and tending to the birds will be a natural part of inquisitive growing up. My own son for instance takes great pleasure in cleaning out my weatherings and makes a jolly good job of things. In this instance the falconer will easily recognise if the child is capable and determined enough to look after a hawk of their own. The child who has no contact with the falconry world, and who has only seen a display or a hawk on the telly is in a much harder position. He or she will not know how to get into the sport and the parent will be unqualified to assess their child's suitability as a potential owner of such an animal.

Falconry needs enthusiastic, dedicated children

From a personal point of view, I think it is great that our sport appeals to the younger person as they will be the ones to take over from us in years to come. Falconry needs dedicated children and we need to recognise their role, encourage this interest and enthusiasm and nurture the talent or our sport will have no future. Over the years I can count myself privileged to have met, trained and guided many juveniles who have advanced through our falconry school. Not all have made the grade, in fact very few have gone on to pursue their fleeting interest further or for any prolonged duration. Some children however, have knocked on our door, determined to get a weekend or school holiday job. They want to learn about falconry and are prepared to start with the mucky side of the business, cleaning weatherings, greasing gloves and jesses all with the utmost

enthusiasm and for what? Not a great deal in return, a bit of flying time perhaps and subsidised equipment. In actual fact they get much more than this, they gain knowledge and the opportunity to handle various species.

In the age of the computer and the many interesting and challenging games available, I believe outdoor pursuits have taken a back seat amongst many children who may otherwise have been keen field enthusiasts. Not many have ever had the drive and determination to attend to soiled aviaries but now, in this fashionable computer climate, this is even more scarce. Why stand in a cold field when one has the responsibility of getting to the next level of Tomb Raider? Believe me, I have known promising talent to have given it all up due to an obsession with computers. My very own nephew has gone that way. Regularly he would come hawking or coursing with me, and he'd never say no to some rough shooting, but now, he is computer mad, and little else in life matters. He is twelve years old and wants to go into Information Technology when he leaves school. Information Technology? I found myself asking a twelve year old kid exactly what Information Technology was. Although computers may give him a far better living than tending to birds of prey, I doubt if they will give him nearly as much satisfaction. I'm glad that I never gave in to his relentless pleading and allowed him the responsibility of his own bird.

If falconry is in a child's blood then they'll tend to the bird day in day out, and do it without ever being reminded, if it's not then the parent will indeed make a costly mistake. An additional worry is when a child reaches the age of 16. Children turn quickly onto adults, enjoying night-clubs and parties. Typical Kevin's and Perry's, they know best and are not prepared to listen to us old timers. Many budding falconers have given up their sport in favour of the late nights and really who could blame them?

On a more favourable note however, I have also known those who have not got involved with the night life and remained dedicated to falconry as it's in the blood and nothing could be more appealing than to work with a hunting raptor.

Whenever someone under sixteen enters onto our course the first thing I do is ask them what the appeal is. This is a vital question to ask and the reply is even more crucial.

Those answers below are the most common and normally prove that the child is attending for all the wrong reasons -

I like the birds.....

Liking raptors and owls obviously helps and you'll never be a falconer if you don't. However, will you like cleaning them out before going to school and flying them most nights afterwards, even when the weather is at its coldest and your friends are doing other things like playing Dreamcast? Some say yes to this but I know falconry will be a fleeting interest and the parent is advised to delay before getting further involved.

The Birds are cute.....

Perhaps a Barn Owl is cute but a barn owl is not a falconry bird. A Harris hawk or a goshawk couldn't be classed as cute. Well, not in my opinion anyway. The child that is of this opinion will quite frankly, never make the grade and the parent is well advised to purchase a cuddly toy.

No-one else has a pet like that.....

Again not the answer I would be looking for and the one I detest more than any other. Too many people already keep birds of prey as pets, not flying them and of the misunderstanding that they are happy. What folly this is. Birds have been blessed with this complicated feather and wing pattern. And why? Yes! So they can fly. How therefore, could a perfectly healthy bird of prey or owl be happy confined to the average sized aviary, denied the very thing which is natural to it?

Rightly, or wrongly, I have very little time for those people who just want to own a bird of prey. I have never quite understood this as one will get little in return unlike the ownership of a cat or dog which loves the keeper. I can appreciate those folks who maintain a disabled owl for instance, but further from this I have severe reservations.

On a brighter note however, other children give positive answers for course attendance such as -

To understand falconry and look after birds of prey.

To train them to fly to us.

When I was a lad the above answer, to train them to fly to us would, I think have

been my answer. I was mesmerised when I first caught a glimpse of a bird of prey flying gracefully and with controlled enthusiasm onto the falconers glove, and I knew right from that very moment, that I had to be part of this wonderful sport. Although falconry stayed with me during my adolescence and up to the present day. I clearly remember as a child having many other fleeting passions all of which turned out to be five minute wonders. I remember wanting to be a jockey, then a footballer for Tottenham Hotspur, then a golfer, then a fisherman then a cricketer, the list went on and on. With each interest I begged my father to buy me all the kit which I thought I needed. Like gullible parents do, he did. One Christmas I was given fishing equipment, rods, reels, floats, keep nets the whole shebang. I think the interest lasted just three months. Once I realised that there was much more to the sport than just placing the float into the water and hooking my fish, my enthusiasm quickly declined, as it did with everything else.

On a cautious note, falconry, as we know, is taking wild quarry with a trained bird of prey which for some children can be quite alarming and upsetting and I for one will tread very carefully when a juvenile asks to join us for the day. Over the years I have experienced such mixed feelings about hunting. Some children see no wrong in the birds taking rabbits whilst other think they can handle it but personally I would not push my own son into witnessing this and would be very skeptical if he asked to see it. The parent must understand the child's sensitivity and not necessarily take his or her word. On the other hand I have known very young children not flinch at all when seeing hawks taking quarry. All I have to say is that any child ought to be introduced to the hunting side of things slowly and sensibly or they may be put off

altogether which will be a crying shame.

Another season, further courses, more children.

Looking through my 2000 year diary, our courses are once again heavily booked with juveniles. Children as young as ten have apparently begged their parents and will be attending.

It is our policy at the Eagle-Owl School of falconry to help and guide the genuine child and encourage them as much as we possibly can, although I have now learnt those tell-tale signs which tell me if a child is truly passionate about falconry or not. Over the years I personally have wasted so much time being fooled by children into believing that they truly want to be a part of the sport that now, I'm very cautious and would rather spend my time on those who are truly



Hannah, Thomas & Emma with Harry & Kennedy the Harris Hawks

genuine.

For the first time in my literary career, I am probably going to get blasted by people under half my age for writing an article which may appear so 'adultist'. I can imagine just what some are thinking as they read these carefully scripted words. All I have in my defence is that I was once a child so I am speaking from experience, I am also a parent, so I speak with authority.

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Hunting the Magical Grouse

By Andrew Knowles-Brown

The season this year was a very mixed one, the weather and the grouse population have both tried to put a halt to some of my visits to the north of Scotland. Although I have never aspired to fly a grouse hawk I certainly appreciate the hard work put in by falconers who are dedicated to this branch of our sport. I rel-



Chris with his first Grouse

ish watching the whole story unfold on a wild and unforgiving moor, never knowing what the outcome will be until the very last moment. By normal standards I only scratched at the surface of what went on this autumn, but maybe some of what I witnessed may inspire you to seek out this furtive band of falconers, and watch them in action. They who head north during August to December, do so to test themselves, their dogs, and their birds to the extreme, and they experience what has gone on for centuries unchanged.

My first trek north came at the end of



Michael & Chris after a successful day

September, I waited until the fitness of birds and dogs had been established, as well as picking what I hoped would be some good weather. The moor was near Melvich, which is on the very northern edge of Scotland, the cottage I stayed at was perched right at the edge of mainland Britain, a very unforgiving place when the weather was poor. But the sun shone and the wind was fair, so looking north, the Orkney Islands were clear to be seen behind the wheeling backdrop of seabirds and surf.

Grouse had been hard to find, and the shooting had been cancelled this year due to low numbers, but it was gladdening to see that falconers had been allowed to continue hunting the moor, in recognition of the small numbers of birds that would be taken. My hosts were Michael Calvin and Chris Gilchrist, with a third falconer having to leave before I arrived, with his tiercel injured.

With just 2 birds having to be served we were not under too much pressure to find grouse quickly, just as well, as at times it was certainly hard to find the birds. Michael's dog Trotter worked well, but he had to have a transmitter attached to his collar, as when he went on point he would crouch into the heather making himself invisible, and as such we could walk into the birds without knowing it, and bump them. On the 4 days I was there, birds were found easily on 3 of them, the fourth day found us on a patch of heather badly affected by heather beetle so the grouse were not there, though we were able to get one flight that day. I went go into all the flights in detail, but the 2 that stand out

were, firstly at the beginning of my visit, Chris's young tiercel bred by Stephen Frank caught his first grouse. This bird had been flown to the kite for some weeks during his training, and as such was quite consistent in climbing straight off the fist to a pitch of about 200-300ft, although usually out of position. It was quite frustrating for Chris, as he had missed some chances previously that the bird could have capitalised on had he been overhead. This flight was similar as before, he drift-

ed downwind while gaining height, he was called over, and although he lost a bit of height as he came over the grouse flushed at exactly the right time, which had the tiercel stooping straight down to bind to his prize. I don't know who was more pleased Chris or the bird. The second flight was on the day before I was to leave, weather conditions were just about perfect, blue sky with fluffy clouds billowing in the gentle breeze.

The moor sloped gently upwards in front of us giving plenty of lift for the falcons, it took about 3/4 of an hour to find our first point, so we took a nice vantage point to watch Michael's Hal show us how to do it. Hal is well known for putting in high flights so I waited with baited breath, a rouse and off he went. Hal climbed into the wind and came over at about 300ft, Michael muttered, "You must be joking if you think I'm going to flush anything for you at that height". It was almost as if Hal had heard Michael, because he turned back into the breeze and started climbing again. The Gyr in him allowing him to



Hal with his prize.

just pump up, no circling just straight up into the wind, he was very soon about 1/2 a mile away and had to be viewed with binoculars, when he finished climbing he turned and started to come over. A combination of being overhead and a slight drop in height while coming downwind meant he could be viewed, just, without bino's, but you had to keep your eyes on him. A glance sideways or to check the dog on point meant a long time spent trying to find him again, even though he was right above us. His progress was given in commentary by those who could see him, I was one who had learnt from previous times out not to take my eyes off him for a moment, or the stoop could be missed. After what



Whizzer and Snuff on a point

seemed an age and with an aching neck, I could hear Michael urging Trotter forward, and then the satisfying HOYYYY followed by the whirr of grouse wings. While all this was happening by sound, my eyes had also registered the telltale flick of wings as Hal started his decent, a tiny speck turning into the classic teardrop. A momentary flash of wings showed him pumping down to gain more speed, then the searing tear of air through sweptback wings. The noise grew louder until the thump of him making contact with his quarry, a quick throw up, and an even quicker turn, and down into the heather to claim his grouse. A round of applause followed from the spectators, a truly classic flight, which will remain with me for always, the consensus of opinion, was that Hal was somewhere over 2000ft when his stoop began.

On my way travelling south I visited Stephen Frank, and was privileged to be asked if I wished to be included in a walk out on Birichen, Stephen's moor. For those who don't know, a walk by Stephens description is another man's hike. The weather was blustery with intermittent showers, which soon cleared leaving a high cloud base with blue sky improving all the time. We parked by the loch and started our ascent, Snuff and Whizzer, Stephens 2 pointers were hoovering the moor to find scent. We travelled some way, and got to James's cairn high up on the ridge overlooking the moor before the dogs found a point. Stephen was flying Harry his tiercel, and this was the beginning of his 12th

season!! Although Harry had only been flying a couple of weeks, he made up for his unfitness by his amazing experience at grouse killing. Harry did things his way, he knew the ground and probably the grouse, and when they flushed they made the fatal mistake of turning under him. He just folded, shed one off, and killed it down a sheer rock face below us, giving the spectators who couldn't make the climb a superb view of how to kill a grouse, thanks Stephen.

My next visit north was to Camster, a name that rings in any longwingers mind as the place where falconry has always, it seems, been practised. Walking with the ghosts of long dead falconers, (and some not so dead falconers), we would pass the famous Camster burial cairns. The planting of conifers spoiling what must have been an amazing moor in its prime. But sport was still to be had, with flights and grouse being taken each day. The most memorable flight was by

visiting falconer Darrel Edwards, we had been frustrated for most of the day by running grouse, bad wind causing a downdraft, and numerous other problems that had given us grief. We found a point in some long heather on the edge of a small gully, but we only had about 20 minutes of daylight left. Darrel's hybrid left his fist with a sense of urgency due to the fading day, he quickly made a good height, the dogs urged on, and a pair of grouse flushed exactly where the point was. The bird powered down and gave the grouse a mighty thump which put it in the heather, a quick throw up and down, but the grouse nipped out the back door to everyone's surprise and headed off down the gully quick time, chuckling as he went. Fortunately the falcon had seen the grouse's exit and set off in hot pursuit, by this time it was dusk and both birds disappeared into the gloom. Our elation quickly turned to disappointment thinking the bird couldn't possibly catch up with his quarry in such conditions, so we set off in the direction both birds had left. We had only gone 100yds when we could hear the tinkling of bells, we soon found the hawk on his grouse, it had hit a wire fence in its hurry to depart, and this had probably killed it judging from the slice across its breast it had received on impact. A very satisfying end to my stay at Camster.

My last longwing foray of the season was at the Scottish Hawking Clubs' 4 day meet on the Isle of Skye at the beginning of November, I had been out flying my bird in the morning with an American visitor, and had returned late back to the hotel to find the longwingers had already left for the moor. We hurried off, though I was not confident in finding them amongst the rolling landscape I knew they were in. I drove up the only road that bisects the moor, and as luck would have it the party of hawkers were just coming up to cross over the road to the higher ground, after a disappointing 2 hours walk, with one unsuccessful flight. Within 5 minutes I saw Michael's bird cast off, but the pair of grouse flushed while he was out of position, the dogs were run on and another point quickly found for when Hal returned. This time he got

things right so that when the single grouse flushed downhill, straight towards me, he bore down on it knocking it into the heather. This bird also did an out of the back door trick, but he must have been injured as he cackled in panic as he left. Hal was down on him within 100yds, just in front of me, to administer the Coup-de-Gras. I saw a further 3 superb flights, all with the grouse screaming past me at head height. With the speed they had got to in such a short time I can see why the famous grouse is such testing quarry. Roll on next season.



The triumphant Team

JURONG BIRD PARK, SINGAPORE

Mike Gibb

Dropping you a line with some info about my visit to Jurong Bird Park in Singapore. December 1999.

Initial Outlay.

1.1 The park is situated off a busy freeway in Singapore excellent positioning for the tourist.

1.2 My main interests in the park were strictly birds of prey and owls, although I would strongly urge anyone who visits Singapore to visit this fantastically well set up Centre. All tourist needs are catered for and all the staff I met were very helpful and professional.

1.3 Car parking is well set out and the park has a monorail type vehicle second to none that I have ever witnessed. It had full air conditioning and multi-lingual narration at a touch of a button.

1.4 Disablement facilities are excellent and I believe the whole park to be wheelchair accessible.

1.5 They have the largest man made waterfall in the world and the walks around the entire park are breathtaking. You can walk through parts of the park which are open to free flying birds and I must admit it was a strange feeling having such colourful birds flying around me so close, it was a very pleasant experience which made me smile.

1.6 They have the worlds' largest canopy covered arena for displays of all different species of birds, which is separate from the hawk centre.

2. World of Darkness Attraction.

2.1 I visited this attraction first and I am sorry I did as this put a bit of a down side to my visit.

2.2 I found certain species of *Strix* and *Bubo* etc. stored in artificially darkened aviaries, although the scene set for the tourist was a very pleasant one, my main

concerns, as always, are for the owls. The diurnal, crepuscular and nocturnal of the species were housed together in fully enclosed darkened aviaries and my main concern was the welfare of the owls receiving natural light and exposure to the elements. I do not hold much hope for the owls of this attraction to hold longevity under those conditions, however clean and well maintained the aviaries are. I did make this known to Mr Cheema and I was reluctant to include this information but he assured me he would look into this.

3. The Hawk Walk.

3.1 This attraction definitely gets full marks.

3.2 Mr. Jeet Cheema 'Manager of the Hawk Centre', met me at the entrance. This was a highly motivated and capable individual to whom the Management of Jurong Bird Park should show deep gratitude. Mr. Cheema, has knowledge and understanding of the tasks involved with birds of prey are shown in an outstanding self planned area of the park. Using a limited space Mr. Cheema has created a wonderful display area taking in full consideration for the creatures in his command and the desires of the public. With a highly motivated team of extremely keen staff, a flying display to match no others, I have witnessed, is given to the public in twice daily shows.

The shows are a marvel of flying displays and they are timed to perfection. They fly a number of different species together, which included vultures, eagles and Brahminy Red Kites. It looked very spectacular.

The staff do a good job of getting the message across of the different birds hunting techniques and wildlife patterns. For example they bring out some Secretary birds and show the public how they run, fly and hunt.

They show the birds static jumping skills straight up, and then they use an artificial snake on a creance from out of a bag, (which they make the audience jump



The main flying arena during a display.

with, as they make believe it is a real snake), to show how the Secretary Bird uses its long legs for hunting and killing snakes.

They also have a full sized artificial Wildebeest lying in the arena with the stomach opened and all the bits and bobs poking out, this is to show the public how a lot of the carrion feeders behave in the wild. They brought out some Griffon Vultures and placed food inside the stomach of the plastic cow, which gave a pretty good indication of how they feed in the wild.

They have also strategically placed elevators on large poles around the arena in which they place a bird of some description. This is then raised about fifty feet in the air and at a certain point in the show a bird swoops from out of the sky from one of these elevators. They flew an African White Bellied Sea Eagle from one of these, which swooped down and lifted a fish from a small pond they have in the arena.

Again very spectacular.

Mr Cheema showed me around (back stage so to speak) to the parts of the hawk centre not open to the public. I was extremely impressed to see the condition, layout and expense that have been used for these birds. The breeding aviaries must have cost millions; no expense in my eyes has been spared in this section of the park.

I have been to many centres and always somewhere there is a downside. With this bird of prey centre situated within another theme park Mr. Cheema should be commended for his efforts. And I could not find any fault in my short two-day visit to the centre. It is just a shame that it is so far away, but with permission on my next visit around February 2000 I will take extensive video footage and try and make this available to anyone interested



Harris' Hawk in a weathering at the Park

MEXICAN JUMPING BEAN?



Doug McCarlie

I recently dropped in on a mate of mine who'd just returned from a Deer Stalking trip in Scotland, with him was a friend of his who, as it turned out, had flown birds of prey. We chatted about falconry and on hearing that I flew, among other things, a male Harris' Hawk said he wouldn't touch one if he was paid to. Well, why not? "They're too easy", he said. Well I was gobsmacked. Too easy compared to a Gos or a Saker or perhaps he meant a Tawny Eagle.

Nothing is easy in falconry some just more manageable than others. We, as falconers, should fly what we fly because of many things, ones' ability, the land available to us, the type of quarry it holds. Not because a 'harder' species makes us sound more macho. fly a species you are comfortable with, a harder won't make you a better falconer.

Back to Harris' Hawks. Presently I have two males; Taff, a 1995 parent reared bird, and Max, a 1995 parent reared bird, easy? Yes and no. Both birds parent reared, similar in size, but flying at different weights. I acquired Taff at 10 months old, straight from the aviary and started training in earnest. He did appear a little temperamental but we progressed together to free flight and hunting, on which he was very keen. Taken to the same place too often and he would self-hunt, remembering his previous kills. Off he would go to his favourite rabbit spots, not too bothered about me or my bag of best beef. He was totally silent, worked well, with a black lab, but he did show signs of a dislike for ferrets but once the bird ferret partnership was established he settled down to them. His general nature was more accipiter than buteo, and control was more weight orientated. To keep him responsive to me and meat on his keel I flew him at 11b 61/2oz - 11b 7oz.

On my approaching his bow for a chat he would bate away, not threaten but just wanting his own space. But hunting was his forte, capable and game for anything.

Max belonged to a friend of mine. He was taken from the aviary at 16 weeks old and got going pretty quickly. He had taken a good head of quarry, mainly rabbit, but due to a marital breakdown was offered to me to fly. When I took him on I changed all his equipment, coped his beak, much to his disgust, and popped him on the scales, 11b 12oz. He gave me the eye for a day or two but he soon settled. I noticed his talons were pretty blunt so he had been bating, but tethered next to Taff he was quite quiet. I have sand in my weathering so it is softer on the feet than gravel, but does stick to food and furniture. To combat this I place a large piece of matting on front of the bow and bath. This practically stops any sand particles from being ingested or sticking to the birds' furniture.

Max was also totally silent, except where my two terriers were concerned, he got on with my friends two dogs, a Labrador and a Rotweiler, but not with mine

My ferret cage is situated quite close to the weathering, giving both birds some form of visual stimulation. Max didn't seem bothered by them at all. As soon as he was offered a bath he dived in and started to spruce himself up. At first he gave Taff a bit of a sideways look, coming off his bow perch at him, but they seem to have settled down nicely. Not all Harris's can be flown together, and I certainly won't be attempting to fly this pair at the same time. Harris's don't

tend to do well stuck down the garden on their own for great lengths of time, they need to see things, anything; kids, dogs, just so it breaks up routine and boredom. These brainy birds soon latch hold of your routines, so change things about a bit. ie, when you weigh them, where you feed them and where they are tethered in the garden. All things to keep the brain ticking over.

I started jumping Max to the fist in the garage and after about a week I took him sown the field for a quick go on the creance. As he was a seasoned pro, he looked at me as if to say you can take that thing off. No need to worry he was back to the fist like a rocket, so I clipped on the telemetry and off he flew. He was loose at 11b 91/2 oz. At this weight he was responsive, returning to me for food or an empty glove, something Taff did only on my birthday. Off we trotted, not serious hunting, just a stroll. I popped him on a fence post as I scrambled over and he hopped back onto my fist once I landed on the other side. I know it sounds daft, but I was so used to Taff bating as I hopped over a fence or flying off if I put him on a fence post, this was a real treat for me. I got Max into position and pulled the dummy rabbit past him, he caught it in fine style. Now for the exchange. He came off nicely, I usually need half a bullock to coax Taff off. Parent reared Harris' Hawks, taken early enough, are a joy to fly, a really versatile all-rounder, but a bird kept too long in an aviary is not for the beginner. Don't be tempted because they may be fifty pounds or so cheaper, they are a mixture of buteo and accipiter, moody and less likely to accept the beginners early mistakes. Bide your time for a bird of the year, you won't be let down and don't let the macho boys knock your long legged, Mexican jumping bean, because they are 'easy'.

BOXES FOR NIGHT QUARTERS

Jemima Parry-Jones

Yesterday I returned from potentially being an expert witness in a court case, it is something that I do fairly regularly. Not because I particularly want to, far from it, they always come up at the most awkward time and take inordinate amounts of time. But I suppose after all this time I am fairly expert in my field, and one has to stand up for things that one believes in. Actually in the event we all came home as the case was finished very quickly with a plea of guilty to many of the charges.

The case in question was one that may well affect a number of people, and I know some are very concerned about the outcome. The birds involved in the case were housed over night in night boxes, which in itself is OK with provisos. However the sizes of the boxes were not only in my opinion far, far too small, placed in a room that I might have used for keeping coal, but not birds, and completely dark, but also the birds were spending too much time in the boxes. It worked out that if the birds were boxed once the visitors had gone and not got out until about 10am the next morning, they were spending possible 60% of their lives in a box, which I do not consider to be acceptable for a bird or anything else for that matter.

As a quick aside here, I also consider hooding birds for most of the day and night is a totally unacceptable practise as well - it's old fashioned, outdated and in the long run does not train a bird in the least. However I digress.

The law states that cages or other receptacles should be large enough for a bird to stretch its wings freely in all directions. Now this I believe was to stop people from keeping birds for all their lives in cages where they cannot stretch their wings and I think that is fine. The definition of stretching wings has not been made and for example a bird is not physically able to stretch its wings from the top to bottom of the box in the same way it would from side to side. All of us have seen birds doing an upwards stretch, leaning forward and stretching both wings above their head - this is the length of one wing not two.

I really do think that this potential box size problem must be looked at in a common sense way and not in a panic mode. If people are using small, dark, unpleasant boxes then there will be complaints leading to court cases. However if people are using good sized, light, airy, clean boxes, CPS is not going to waste valuable court time as the experts will all agree this is acceptable practise and so

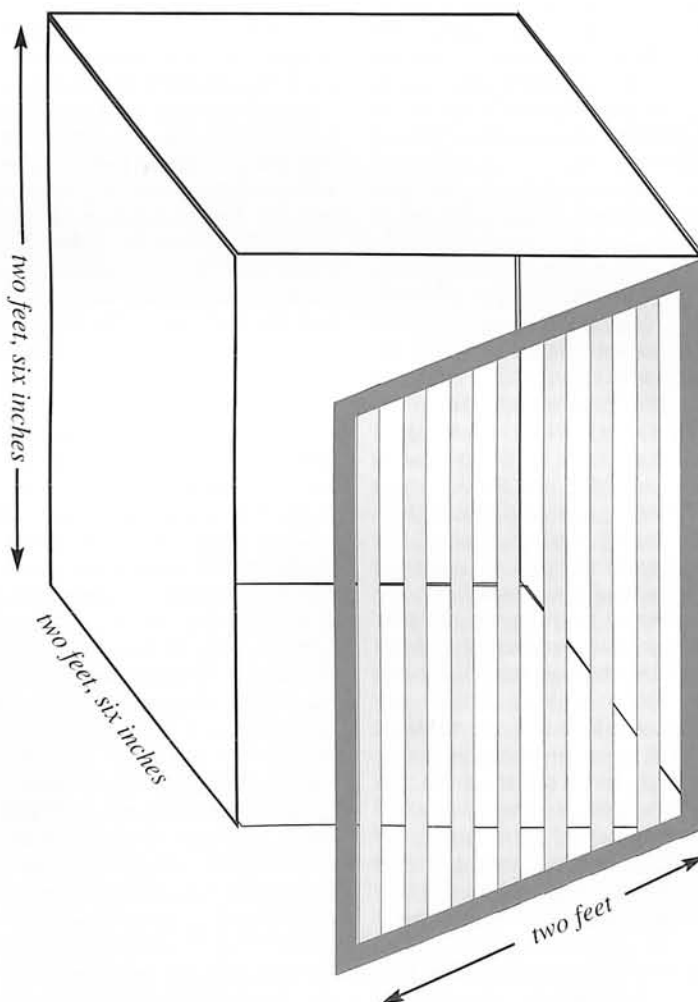
the case will not stand up in court, therefore it will not get to court.

I strongly believe that it is very, very unlikely that anyone is going to be taken to court for putting their birds into decent boxes for the night, IF and I stress that word IF the boxes are well built, clean, light, airy, roomy, well perched and situated in climate controlled rooms that give the birds a pleasant place to spend the night. And IF the birds are not left in there for unnecessarily extended periods.

So what should be built for birds. Well I think one of the mistakes people make is to double up. They want a box that the bird can travel in and be carried, as well as spend the night. I don't think this is possible, except for very temporary measures, such as being away on holiday with your bird. So don't do it, have separate boxes.

Your travelling box is unlikely to be able to be as large as your night quarters because, unless you have a large van as I do, you will not get the box into the car. So don't panic on this one either. It is acceptable to have a travelling box for your bird which will be smaller than a night quarter - just don't double up on both, because that will not work. I have to say that at least 50% of the travelling boxes I see are fine in the height and width, but most are too shallow, they are built for the bird sitting absolutely upright, without considering that to turn round the bird will lean forward.

The boxes we use for birds are generally only used for sick or injured birds, maybe for a bird if a jess has broken at a difficult point in the day. But these are similar to ones that you would need for



These are approximate sizes for a night box for a Harris' Hawk; two feet wide by two feet six inches high and deep.

night time as the bird may have to spend an extended period in the box depending on the nature of the illness.

Our Eagle boxes, for most of the eagles - not the huge ones like Stellers, are four feet high by three feet wide and three feet deep. A large falcon is comfortable in a box about two foot square. A Harris Hawk 2' wide by 2'6" high and deep. I think that it is wrong to keep owls in boxes over night. They are birds that are awake at night and should be loose in an aviary, able to move about and do owl type things. All boxes should have doors that are made of a frame and vertical bars, so that they have light and air. If you have a very nervous bird a towel can be draped over the front, but quite frankly if a bird is nervous and unhappy in a box how can you justify keeping it in one every night of its life. Now I know this is not the full size that is stated in law, however the difference is that the birds can move, which they could not in the boxes involved in the court case, they can easily and comfortably turn round, they can defecate without dragging tail and wing feathers through the droppings. They can see the day, get light and be comfortable and not cold or damp.

The boxes should be off the ground, in a room that as I said is warm enough, or cool enough for the birds to be comfortable. The room should be light so the birds are not in the dark, particularly during the summer months when daylight comes early and leaves late. The perching in the boxes should be suitable for the bird sitting on it. Daily cleaning should be done. All of this is good, sound and kind management giving the birds a decent life and making them stay in good condition feather and health wise.

So basically I think what I am saying, remembering that this article may well come back at me in a subsequent court case, is this. I don't personally keep my birds in boxes over night for the whole of their working lives. We use an indoor hawk walk which keeps them clean and warm and able to move freely within the tether. They are also only tethered during their flying season which is about eight months of the year. However, if boxes have to be used for security purposes, or keeping the birds safe and warm in the winter, as long as they are a decent size, giving the bird plenty of opportunity to move around at night (and believe me, they do - I have slept in the same room as birds in boxes and I know they move about - I have been kept awake by the bell!!) and placed in a decent building, then I do not think that people are going to be taken to court in droves on charges of cruelty or anything in that line.

If however you keep your birds in small, dark boxes, in small, dark, damp rooms, then pleading guilty is the best thing to do, as in my opinion, it wasn't, isn't and never will be right for birds to be kept like that.

On to other matters:

New Zoo Standards

Some words of warning to anyone who has birds on view to the general public. The new zoo standards, following the new Zoo Directive from the EU, are now in force as from May 2000. That means that any place with non domestic animals (which includes all birds of prey and owls) that opens to the public for seven days a year, is a zoo and comes under the full force of the Zoo License and other Acts. I strongly suggest that anyone who has birds on view to the public gets hold of the new standards and makes sure that their establishment reaches those standards. The Inspectorate is being studied at the moment, hopefully training for zoo inspectors will become the norm and inspections will be much more uniform and up to date.

The Federation of Zoos which is the body that helps and advises zoos who are members, and has very strong links with the government a strong voice in legislation, produces information leaflets on Management and Welfare. These have been used in the formation of the new Standards and are useful documents to have. Federation and non Federation members can buy them and I would advise bird of prey and owl centres to do so. There are Demonstration Guidelines on the keeping, training and housing of demonstration birds. And Welfare Guidelines on the keeping, housing, feeding and so on of aviary birds. There are also Owl Guidelines being edited at the moment. The address is The Federation of Zoos, c/o London Zoo Offices, Regents Park, London NW1 4RY if anyone is interested in getting copies of the Guidelines.

MAFF and the Importing of Birds from the EU.

As most people know, or at least should know, there is a requirement at this time, and has been for the last 21 years, for birds of prey to go into quarantine on their arrival into the UK. Now it was hoped that this requirement would be removed once the EU was formed, but generally it has not, there are exceptions which I will go into.

However now there is a difference in the bringing in of birds. Where in the last few years, anyone bringing them in via one of the ports was not only unlikely to be stopped and asked for paperwork, but in fact there was often no place or person to even hand it to anyway. This has now changed dramatically. If you want to blame anyone, blame those who have successfully lobbied for dogs and cats to be allowed to come in without quarantine. Because now MAFF has a presence at all the designated Ports of Entry into the UK, as they have to check the dogs and cats. As there are not huge amounts of these animals, they are left with time on their hands and so all animals and birds are being looked at

and now people are being caught out with the wrong or no paperwork for their birds. So be very careful. I have to say in MAFF's defence that if you phone the Bird Import Department and tell them what you want to do they are very helpful, however you do need to leave yourself enough time to get the right paperwork sorted out. And it is different depending on where the bird is coming from, what family group and what is the reason for importation.

Now I am only discussing birds of prey and owls here - not other species; with all European Countries except for Belgium, Austria and Germany, and hawks and falcons from France, you need to apply for an import permit, which is a Health Certificate. You will be sent a form to fill in, that is returned to MAFF, and the quarantine quarters get inspected by a local MAFF vet. Once they have been passed you will be sent an uncompleted Health Certificate which has to go to the country from which you are importing the bird, and be stamped by a government vet once the bird has been inspected. The form then travels back with the bird. This is exactly the same as the requirements for importing a bird from anywhere in the world.

The exception to this is if you are taking a bird out for a short period, such as filming. Then you can apply for a different license, which incorporates the Health Certificate, but because the bird is under your control and is only going out for a short period you can get an exemption from quarantine. Apply in the same way, explaining what you are trying to do, get the form, fill it in and the license/health certificate will be sent to you. The form/health certificate still has to be stamped and signed by an inspecting government vet. The import license is named 'Birds returning to Great Britain from exhibitions, shows and contests in other Member States'.

To go back to the named countries - Germany etc. These countries have an agreement with Great Britain, have answered various questions correctly and have got the Unicorn Computer System link up. This means we are allowed to import birds from there without quarantine - but NOT without the MAFF health certificate. So you apply in the same way, get a form fill it in, get sent a license which you can either take with you to collect the bird, or send out, and this again has to be stamped and signed by a government vet and return with the bird.

It really is not that difficult, it is a bloody nuisance, but we actually have had this legislation for a very long time and it just has to be dealt with. And as one who two years ago was within 1 kilometer of a New Castles disease outbreak I can only say I am happy to have health restrictions if they protect my collection.

JPJ

Director National Birds of Prey Centre
Zoo Forum Chair.

Chair Falconiformes TAG Federation of
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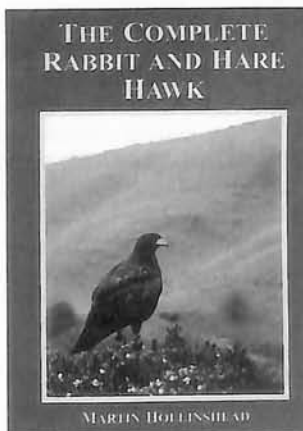
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INNOVATIVE FALCONRY FURNITURE BY DOUBLE R

The design of the OTT started long before I read John Matcham's Hawk Talk article Winter 98/Spring 99 Issue of the Falconers Mag.

The concept of a pivoting ring is obvious to an engineer, but not always practical to a falconer or even the hawk. But having read his article, the two main points that John made regarding bows spurred me into completing my design in time for the Falconers Fair in May.

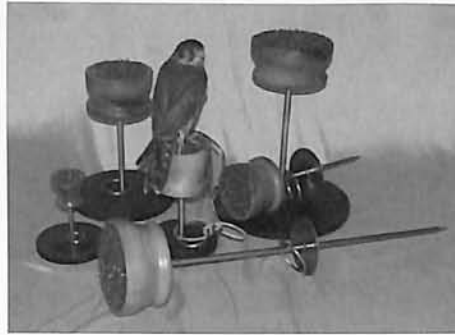
99, which included testing by various birds. The Goshawk, was our main concern because of their tendency to bate and their delicate plumage, although, this new design is suitable for all hawks.

No matter what the perching material the ring does not falter. The first point : Semi Circular design with steep sides supports ring hindrance. The OTT pivoting ring overcomes this problem as even a slight tug on the leash sends the ring racing over, usually landing before the bird, to rest on the opposite side.

The second point: The space beneath the cross rail. There needs to be a gap to enable a bow to sit without rocking. The cross rail on the Portable is welded to flat weights each end and two thick safety plastic sides screwed to and extend pass this rail to the ground, so that minimum clearance is left



Over the Top

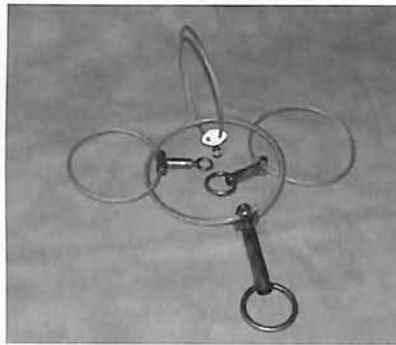


Blocks

to aid stability and avoid trapping a wing. The Static cross bar has mounting points, to afford the same benefits with extended footrests stopping at ground level.

These transparent sides house the pivot point and stop the hawk traversing through. They are also useful for displaying any information about the bird or advertising etc.,

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Spring Swivel Tether

and continued use of our Finishing Oil builds up a continuing resistance to water. This aids cleaning. Water drainage holes avoid flooding the recess. Unique, Stainless Steel central spindle allows the block to spin in order to prevent tangling and dangling, no matter what size of block is used and with optional locking quote facility to prevent spinning.

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Bobby's Bullet System : A whole new way of tethering your bird - overcomes many of the problems associated with jess and leashes in the past. It even simplifies the connection of the Creance without using clips. Many safety aspects include multiple security at Aylmeri, Swivel and Ring with optimum leash length. It is lightweight, extremely strong and is simplicity in itself. Is used as a complete unit, but each component can be purchased separately. Systems available for use in the Mews as well as in the field.



Bobby's Bullet System

WAISTCOAT BY STOOPS AND SWOOPS.

Review by Doug McCarlie.

At last years Falconers Fair I was sold a waistcoat at cost to try out and review after 12 months.

The waistcoat is not a traditional style as it has braces instead of sleeves. It is made from Cordura which is durable but unfortunately made me sweat.

I used it when flying both long and broadwings. It was good for both, especially for the falcons. With a large rear, zippered pocket which easily holds at least three rabbits. It goes all the way around the back making for even weight distribution. Although the straps are a little too narrow and tend to cut into the shoulders.

Two large patch type pockets on the front are big enough to hold a Martin Jones receiver, one with a meat pocket, detachable for washing, and the velcro fastening made for easy access especial-

ly when it was cold.

It has a hood clip, telemetry clip and a D ring on the shoulder straps, unfortunately the jess eyelets were for me in the wrong place. They needed to be on the flap of the pocket.

The waist clip is adjustable to accommodate those of a more portly build.

Over-all, the waistcoat was very good, much more convenient than a bag and easier to cope with over fences and through brambles etc.

Editors note

I have spoken to Andy of Stoops & Swoops and he tells me that the material is now slightly different to minimise sweating, the straps are padded and the jess eyelets have been moved round to the front. This means all the negative points listed above have been sorted out. In addition the waistcoat now has a zippered front pocket, in front of this is

another, side opening pocket for your hands and the very front pocket has a detachable, popped meat pocket. Both front pockets are designed like this for both right and left handed people. The game pocket in the back is also zippered at both ends again to cater for both right and left handers. As last year these will be available at the Falconers Fair.



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Falcon on partridge. Bronze sculpture. (life size)

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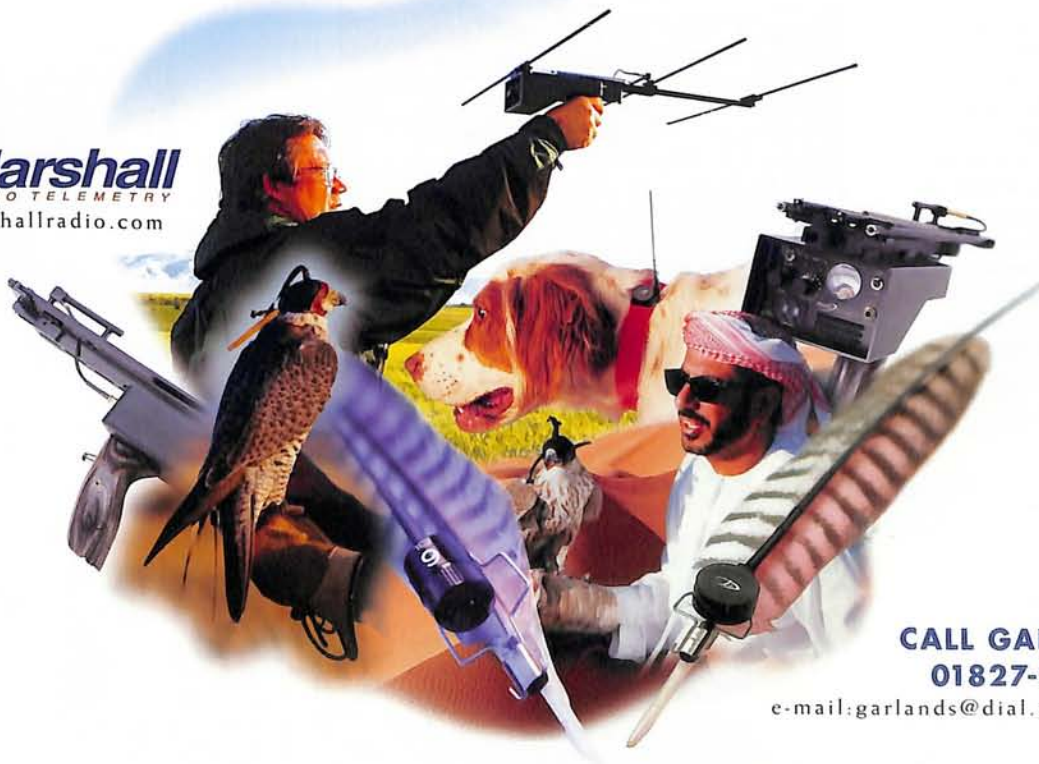


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FALCONRY CROATIAN STYLE

Chantal Wilkinson

In the Autumn of 1999 I was invited to attend the third International falconers meeting in Sibernik, Croatia, between the 4th and 6th of February 2000. I'm not really a fan of field meets, and coupled with jokes from my work colleagues about tin hats, life insurance, and land mines I wasn't sure what to expect!

However, as the plane touched down on a gloriously sunny but cold winter day, after flying low over some spectacular scenery, I knew I was in for a treat.

Our hosts, Emilio Mendusic and Alemka Skugor, met us at the airport and chauffeured us to our accommodation. They had invited falconers from surrounding countries and arranged for us all to stay in Sibernik's main hotel, Jadran. This provided us all with the opportunity to exchange information or just chat over coffee in the evenings. The language barrier was not really an issue as most people spoke English to some extent, and by the end of the trip my Croatian extended to please, thank you and most importantly, "Cheers". Emilio also arranged transport to and from the hunting ground.

Approximately twenty falconers attended the meet, from Croatia itself, Slovenia and Germany, with a variety of hawks falcons and dogs. A large tent had been provided

for shelter from the bura - the strong bluster wind which blew on the first day - refreshments were available in the form of good Croatian brandy, coffee and sweet bread. Lunch was served in the nearby pub and consisted of spit-roasted pork or lamb, vegetables and bread, all washed down with local beer - excellent.

The meet itself was held on a large plain in Bribar, approximately thirty minutes drive from Sibernik. The plain was trimmed by mountains and was accessible by roads which still bear very evident scars of the war. The bullet-ridden houses sent a shiver down my spine each time we drove through the deserted villages - a feeling shared by all in the car as conversation simply ceased.

Although some years ago now, the war in Croatia still impacts on people. Wages are low and the cost of living for

items such as meat and clothing is high. Subsequently any natural quarry such as rabbit and hare, or even game put down for hawking, is shot by the locals. The quarry used during our meet was pheasant and partridge, and to maximise successful flights the birds were placed on the plain shortly before the arrival of the falconers.

Because the plain was relatively flat with just a slight slope, observers were able to sit on the grass and watch the chase unfold without any of the usual running around. In fact, the whole meeting ran with a gentle, laid back attitude.

Although the quarry in Croatia is not protected, the hawks are. Unlike many countries, the government and the falconers worked together and developed legislation to safeguard both the wild stock and the captive hawks. Let's hope it catches

on!

All the hawks and falcons at the meet were in excellent condition, and included the usual selection of Harris Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, a Goshawk, a Sparrowhawk and a hybrid. The love and affection held for the Croatian hawks was evident, but never more so than with Tweety, a female Kestrel rescued with serious injuries but now feather perfect and in full health.

The furniture used by the Croatian falconers was, in the main, similar to that used here in the UK, as is the style in which they practice falconry. In fact, if you ignored the stunning scenery, generous people and their relaxed approach to life itself, you could have been on a field meet here at home. But then, it was the scenery, the people, and the suntan I came home with, that made my trip special.



Top Left: Examining British furniture whilst enjoying Croatian brandy and coffee.



Top right: Emilio & Alemka with Harris' Hawks & Tair the dog.



Bottom left: Yankee, the Harris' Hawk.



Bottom right: Emilio & Alemka with Harris' Hawks.



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**

INFORMATION WANTED ON ELECTROCUTION

Dear Lyn & David

I am a member of the Glantawe Hawking Club and I was flying my Harris Hawk with my 14 year old son on the 3rd May 1999 near my home and the bird landed on an electric pylon known as an H pole and was electrocuted. I contacted the electric company, Swalec, they refused to do anything about the H pole.

In July this year my wife and a close friend witnessed a carrion crow die the same was on the same H pole, resulting in a power failure in our village, again we contacted Swalec and also the RSPCA and Swan Rescue, both organisations are now involved in this.

An engineer from Hyder the owners of the H pole contacted me by telephone to say that he was coming to see me, he brought with him an insulating sleeve which he showed us fits over the cables, the H pole is now fitted with the insulating sleeve, however, we feel unconvinced because the proposed solution has only been tried in one other place and we were not given sufficient guarantee that the wildlife would be protected. I feel the estimates of casualties are hugely understated and in any case this problem is unlikely to be confined to the one H pole, almost certainly it is a national problem. The effects of these fatalities on small, localised Eco-systems are probably catastrophic, there is no doubt that these pylons have and will continue to kill large numbers of our declining wildlife. The question I feel is, can we as a nation allow this needless slaughter

to continue?

This is why we are working with Swan Rescue and the RSPCA to compile a dossier of birds and other wildlife that are killed on these pylons. Any information that we can gather from the readers of the magazine would be very much appreciated, because we want to see all these pylons made safe to our birds and other wildlife either by coating the wires with the insulating sleeves or other insulating covers.

To help us with our findings we need the following information:

Time and date of incident.

Location of incident.

Number/name of identification pole and description of it (photo graph if possible)

The electrical company it belongs to.

Type of bird injured or killed.

Brief description of what happened.

Thanking you
Lyn Rowlands.

WHO IS THE NOVICE THEN?

This is for the so-called and often belittled 'hobby falconer', the person who so desperately wants to do the sport well, but is held up at every turn by conflicting advice, 'traditional ways' of doing it and the general boring pot of 'in the old days' stories in which we live, combined with all the outside interferences. Who of us have not heard 'Well, I have been doing this for X amount of years, so I should know'?

The mystique surrounding falcons has, for many years left many falconers/austringers believing that they are almost on the point of being too sacred to handle,

totally unforgiving and that to fly them is flirting with disaster. Many birds are held in such awe and seem to be reserved specifically for the wealthy and/or elite, and to attempt to train and fly such a creature without being one or the other is deemed to be foolhardy.

Well, my personal observations have not been such, and although I do not wish to see everybody rushing out to purchase a Peregrine or Gyr falcon, there is no reason why anyone should not be successful with these raptors, and their hybrids. I am a big fan of the Redtail and Harris', but for exhilarating speed and performance you cannot beat the superlative skills and flights of longwings.

For what it's worth, this is my way of thinking.

It all comes down to three things:

Information,
Preparation and
Expectation.

INFORMATION

In this day and age, with the new technology we now have at our fingertips, there is no reason why falconers should be ignorant of any part of the sport. With all the books available, the internet and a number of falconry centres around the country, there is every reason to believe that the modern day falconer is leaps and bounds ahead of their traditional colleague when it comes to gaining information. It all depends on how much an individual can retain, and the how they apply it. Some learn and remember things at the drop of a hat, others have to persevere, but what would perhaps have taken years to filter through the sport, can now be picked up within seconds. Although there is much to be gained from the experiences of the

other falconers, raw knowledge is the key to most successes, and the lack thereof, responsible for the failures.

There is really no excuse for blunders in areas such as husbandry and feeding, even though we are only human (although I bet we have all at some point thought "Why did I do that?") Everything we need is out there somewhere, it's just a matter of looking in the right place.

Likewise, there is no reason why you cannot show the seasoned (been there seen it) falconer, a new methods or way and not be dismissed, because it is not 'traditional'! We are in a technological age where up and coming falconers after us will learn and find out about things even faster still, therefore it is wise for all, including the experienced, to take time out to listen to those who 'have only been doing it for 5 minutes', and to remember that the amount of information the newcomers are privy to is far in excess of what perhaps you were exposed to when you started. You may not agree with, or wish to practice something the new person does, or shows you, but it does not necessarily make the information bad or wrong.

The majority of us will always follow the same basic guidelines, but every one of us adds a personal touch to everything we do, so what is seen as the norm to one may be viewed with raised eyebrows by another. So what? That's what makes us the individuals we are. As long as the bird is happy and you enjoy what you are doing, does it really matter?

We in Britain may feel historically superior with connections to ancient falconers and their traditions, but let's not forget, the Americans who have only been practising the art for 200 years or so are

streets ahead of us in most fields.

PREPARATION

Information goes hand in hand with preparation, because if you don't have sufficient information at your disposal, then mistakes could and are more likely to creep in. This in itself is not wrong as everybody makes them, but they can be annoying as nobody wants to make mistakes, especially avoidable ones.

There is always time to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. There is no reason to get frustrated or rushed about anything, because it makes no difference to the subject you are frustrated with.

There is nothing wrong with being so thorough that you are on the point of being pedantic. I am, and it reflects in the birds I have, the way I treat them, and the way they are looked after. I try to think of everything that could go wrong with every decision I make, and I ensure there is a plan in place to correct any mishap. This is the application of common sense, which if you do not use, then no matter what, you will make proportionally higher and potentially more serious errors than others.

Lack of common sense can be seen in some people, who get so carried away and enthusiastic with everything that before they know it they have over-birded themselves and, before they have had any results with one species, they are being split to give time to yet another. An extreme case I know of is one such person who now approximately 25 or so birds and has yet to train one, from scratch, himself. This person only took the sport of 'bird-keeping' 9 months ago! An example of wedge over wisdom.

Preparation is vital for every aspect of falconry. There is a need to have everything ready for any given task you may be involved in, or contemplating, whether it be washing out, coping a beak or imping a broken feather. Making sure your bird is suitable for the land you have is another, not trying to make land suit your bird.

Preparation is something which will come more naturally to some than others, and

will reflect in any task or at field meetings. The perfectly flawless hunting trip from beginning to end is a rare event, but preparation and forethought before every action can smooth things out a long way.

EXPECTATION.

'Stoop it to the lure that will put muscle on it', how many have heard those words? Well, it depends on what you as an individual want. So you want a Linford Christie or a Steve Cram out of you bird? I know which I prefer, to watch a falcon wait on for an hour or so rather than a ten minute beasting to the lure. Can you 11b 50z male Harris' catch full grown rabbits? Does it really matter if it can't?

It all depends on what expectations you place on your bird once trained, and this again is linked with the information you gained prior to taking up the sport, which will give a good indication of how successful you are going to be.

I fly my falcons 'recreationally', which I am told means 'for fun' although the whole affair is extremely serious to me. I usually take them to open hillsides, preferably windy, slip them then just walk for an hour or so. They do their own thing. The Per/Gyr I fly, was said by its previous owner to 'fly like a lawn mower' and was 'useless at turning to the lure or gaining height'. Now it waits on in 40mph winds at a pitch up to 400+ feet. She chases game and because I don't expect her to do anything she performs beautifully and I know if the chance were to arise I could enter her with the best of them and she is still only in her first year.

I demand nothing from my birds and give them everything. I do this because I have a passion for the birds. If they hunt and catch I am pleased but I am no less pleased when I have been slogging round a wet field with nothing in the game bag. In fact some of the best flights I have witnessed have ended up being a missed opportunity. The thrill for me is the participation and spectacle of the event, whether game is caught or not. Certain individuals are going to get more out of their birds than others, but again this is going to be largely down to the bird itself and its respons-

es to hunting, combined with the delicacy, method and continuity with which training is/was approached, which in itself relies on the information gained and retained by each person.

Expectations will increase as time goes on, as it becomes a challenge to extend ones participative thrills. What was a near catch, you may wish to be a little closer next time, until the day arrives when you are in the right place at the right time and bongo, she gets her kill. We would all like to witness the Peregrine stoop at Grouse 200 mph, but believe me it's just as spectacular watching them chase smaller birds at 60mph+ in strong winds on the South Downs. It's natural to raise ones hopes and expectations, as once people have experienced one thing they are keen to experience the rest of what there is to offer. This is where true experience of a subject is accumulated, coupled with preparation and totally encompassed by the information you have at your disposal.

In summary, if it works for you and is not detrimental to your birds' welfare.....do it. Don't be beaten down by the 'old school', just because they have had a different approach for 50 years or more, and thing they know better, quite often just because they say so. At the end of the day, we all start at the bottom. The difference is that persons starting now are better informed and have access to more information than those who started even three years ago. If the common sense is there, there is no reason why a novice should not derive the same pleasures, apply the same skills and achieve the same results as the experienced person. We are all on a constantly growing, learning curve. So keep reading those books, and watching the videos and keep the information coming off the internet. Everybody is aware that we will never know everything there is to know, whether you are a novice or. Each day has a lesson to be learnt, and it all depends on whether we can see it. We will all be better falconers at the end of the day by as much as we know, by as much as we can do or have done.

S.P. Charlton
Hailsham

IN SUPPORT OF THE IBR

Hi Lyn and David,
After reading the article from Philip in the Falconers mag. I feel compelled to write in support of the IBR.

I work in a quarry and my duties include loading a lot of lorries. Now you are wondering what this has got to do with the IBR. Some drivers are very helpful when it comes to loading and some are completely ignorant and these drivers make you think why should you bother. But then I always remember the saying, "You can please some of the people some of the time but you can not please all of the people all of the time".

Now Jenny is in the position of being able to please most of the people most of the time. If some people feel that their bird is not worth £40 or £10 if they had put in some thought, then these people are beyond help and should not have taken on a bird in the first place. So do as I do, only help those who can help themselves and forget about the 1% who spoil it for the 99%.

Keep up the good work
Yours Faithfully
Paul Carrier

Thinking Man's Hawk

After reading one of the articles in the winter 99 issue I feel I just had to say a few words on it.

Dear Mr Rickett

I refer to your article about keeping hawks at livery, which in my opinion totally loses an important part of falconry, i.e. getting to know and understand your bird in order that you will both trust each other and so can build a partnership. If all you want to do is fly a GOS at quarry then I am sure Mr. Dalton could arrange this for you at the weekend. To keep a hawk in this way you will never get the best out of it, you may as well fly one of Mr. Dalton's hawks, as he would have been the one that trained yours/his goshawk anyway. The goshawk in question was only yours in that you owned it. Any way if Mr. Dalton is willing to train and look after

your bird for you who am I to judge you, it's easy for me to get on my high horse as my shift system for work allows me to spend six days out of every eight training and flying my hawk.

My main irritation was your comment about being relegated to a Harris. This comment belongs in the same waste paper bin as :- from an escort to a Porsche. (spring 98 issue)

For the past five years I have been hunting with a male Harris Hawk called Jazz and believe me this Harris never fails to give 100% at all times. His hunting weight is 11lb 9oz and he is more than capable of catching a cock pheasant in flight and rabbits

are taken with ease. When he leaves my fist or a tree etc I know he will pull his tripe out to catch his target. You will only get out of a hawk as much as you put in and if you are willing to put the effort in and fly your Harris with an open mind he will repay you ten fold. Harris's may not have the explosive speed of a gos but they more than make up for this with brain power, determination and team work. My Harris is very fit due to all the flying, and on none fly days e.g. due to work or weather I fist jump him 200 times minimum from bow perch to my fist held above my head while I stand on a pair of step ladders, he comes vertical approximately 15 feet

and then returns to the bow perch, by the way the only weather that stops us hunting is heavy fog and that is for his safety, and he is always free lofted. This fitness training gives him the confidence to pull out all the stops every time, and the constant free flying gives him the space to learn and develop his skills. I find it just as invigorating to see my hawk flying with his brains i.e. fly straight through a conifer plantation at the dizzy height of four feet as the cock peasant disappears on full thrusters over it, and then time it just right so he bursts out the other side just as the peasant comes down for cover. Than flying with pure power i.e. flying a cock

peasant down in a straight flight. As I tell my bird, it's not just your looks, I love your brain power as well!!

So Mr. Rickett My advice to you is do your self and your hawk a favour and give him a fair chance to prove himself, rather than thinking of him as a second class hawk. To help him on his way I suggest you read Martin Hollinshead's book (The Complete Rabbit and Hare Hawk) which I am sure will help you appreciate a thinking mans Hawk.

P.S. you never did say why you were not to be trusted by your mentor!!

Happy Hawking
K.Williamson

JAMES DODD SCULPTOR

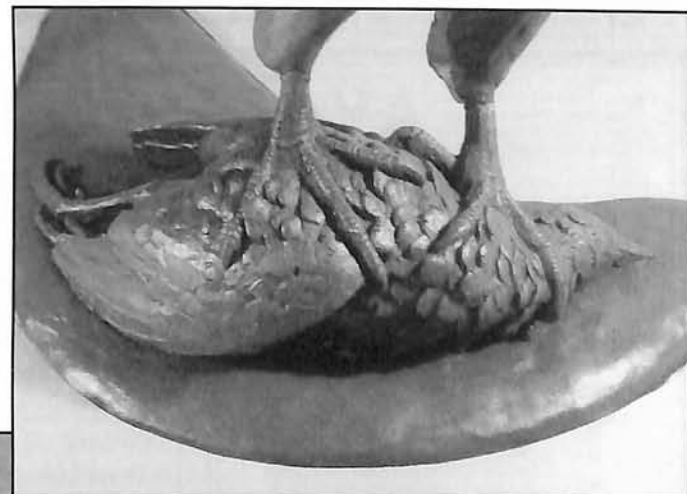
James Dodd was born in Malawi, Southern Africa. His father was a forester there for some years. Throughout his life, James has travelled extensively, and he has therefore been able to familiarise himself with a variety of wildlife.

As a young man, he had great interest in sculpture and Fine Art, and he studied in Italy and London. His skills in finely detailed sculptural work led him into doing commissions for the Silversmithing trade in London. Some of these commissions were for extremely distinguished customers, and the works vary both in size and content.

In the past few years, James has been able to combine his long lasting interest in wildlife with his considerable skills as an artist. James has spent the last few years studying, very closely, the Falcon, and other birds of prey. this time has been well spent, as he has produced eight outstanding sculptures of Falcons in various attitudes. James' excitement and fascination with these birds is very apparent. Standing in the stu-

dio, surrounded by these sculptures, you could be forgiven for thinking that you saw one of them move! In order to create these sculptures, James studied live Falcons not far from where he lives in Dorset. Not content with this, he also wet to some trouble to "get under their feathers", and really understand their structure and anatomy - just another aspect of the birds which fascinates him.

These sculptures are modelled over an armature, which is an inner structure that supports the whole sculpture. James usually works with



modelling wax specially designed for this purpose. When the sculpture is finished, it will be encased in a plaster mould and cast into bronze, using the "lost wax" process.

James is greatly interested in other forms of wildlife, and he has plans to begin sculptures of horses, greyhounds and other varieties of birds, and also animals native to Africa and Australia.

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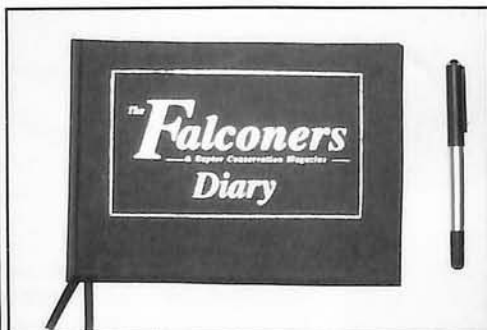
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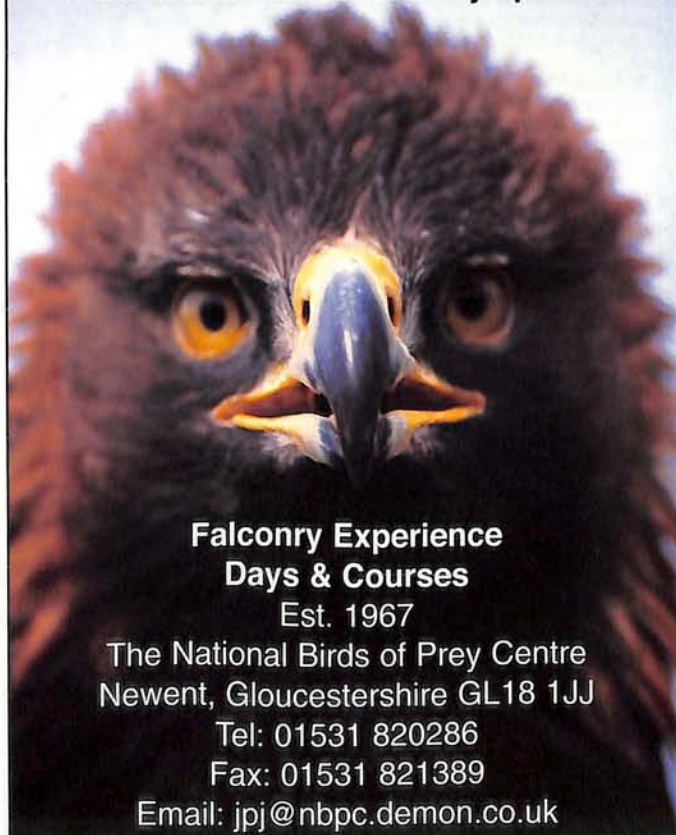
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