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# The **Falconers** & Raptor Conservation Magazine



• A. SNOW •





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## COMMENT

Hello All,

Hope you enjoyed the Falconers Fair and are having a good Summer, despite the lousy weather. Birds should be well into the moult, roll on next season.

Sad to report that Jemima has had three Harris' Hawks stolen, any body with any info *please* ring her or even us.

Please keep your articles coming, and if there is anything specific you would like to see in the magazine please let us know and we will do our best to accomodate you.

This is the last bit of the mag to be done so I am away now to take it to the printers and then make the most of this brief spell of sunshine.

David & Lyn

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**COVER: Saker Falcon chasing desert hare. Philip Snow.**



**FALCONERS FAIR 2000**



The Campaign for Falconry marked the millennium with their most successful fair to date. Over £2,000 was raised, every penny of which will go straight back into falconry.

The highlight of the fair for the CFF was notably the presentation of engraved glass tankards to Roger Upton, Steven Frank and Geoffrey Pollard which were given in recognition of their dedication to the sport and their continued support to those joining falconry. All three have flown hawks for longer than they would care to mention, their knowledge is invaluable and happily they don't take much encouragement to share their experiences. Falconry is now a growing sport but our thanks must go to these fine falconers for keeping it alive during the "leaner" years.

The other important moment was the donation of two readers and a set of microchips by Bayer Electronics. Bayer very kindly agreed to assist the CFF in helping Croatia with their conservation work. This technology so generously given will enable the Croatians to monitor and preserve their Peregrine falcon population together with vultures and wolves. The presentation was made by Jemima Parry-Jones MBE of the National Birds of Prey Centre, herself one of the most important contributors to the conservation of raptors worldwide. Jemima made wonderful presentation and the acceptance speech by Alamka Mendusic on behalf of the Croatians was both interesting and moving - and you think

we have problems! Our thanks must go to Bobby Flight of Bayer Electronics for making all this possible and for taking the time to attend the fair..

This year the CFF had an extra marquee kindly sponsored by Honeybrook Farms where we held several informative and interesting workshops and in the evening Honeybrook provided a hog roast and together with KKK who provided refreshments, a good time was had by all - or so they told each other the next day.

The reception in the pavilion was attended by falconers from around the world. It was a great pleasure to meet so many like-minded people and it is good to note that the appreciation of good falconry is the same in any language.

All in all a good weekend and now onto the next of the seasons fairs. Never has it been more important to raise funds. For most of us the countryside and its ways are our first love - let us not lose it to urban ideas and management.



**"IBR Found, Lost, Reunited & Stolen Birds between 1 May 00 and 4 July 00"**

**FOUND**

- BARN OWL
  - IBxx832U
  - 34xxBC96U
  - 80xxC97U
  - 23xxBC99U
  - 21xxBC99U
  - 51xxBC94U
  - 17xxBC99U
  - 05xxBC91U
  - 38xxOA92U
  - 11xx630U
  - 33xxGB96U
  - 34xxGB96U
  - 47xxBC95U
  - 22xxBC97U
  - 17xxGB98
  - 15xxBC
  - 19xxBC
  - 24xxBC 2432BC
  - BHxx9U
  - 71xxA00U
- BUDGERIGAR
  - 94xx4H99
  - 99xxFC218
  - 99xxS6591
  - LSxx00914
  - 21xx36
- COMMON BUZZARD
  - 39xx IBR10475W
  - 63xxDOEW
  - 39xxDOEW
  - 00xx699545100
- CONURE
  - AJxx460
  - 9PxxKGKM99T
- HARRIS HAWK
  - IBxx324W
  - 85xxW
  - 7Nxx99W
  - UNRUNG
  - 81xxDOEW
  - 2Exx5W
- KESTREL
  - 89xx
  - 3 X NORINGS
  - 91xxDOES
- LANNER FALCON
  - 87xxDOEW
- RED-TAILED HAWK
  - 17xxY 1745X
  - 13xxDOEX
- SPARROWHAWK
  - 1MxxR 251R
- UNKNOWN PARROT
  - 07xx7728421

**LOST**

- AFRICAN GREY PARROT
  - 297V
- BARN OWL
  - IBR6924U
- WHITE RING
  - 1497BC97U
- BCJJ
  - BC94U
- BLACK VULTURE
  - 2 X No Rings
- EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL
  - No Rings
- GOLDEN EAGLE

80ROTH1998

- GOSHAWK
  - DOE?W
- GYR/LANNER FALCON
  - IBR7959W
- GYR/SAKER FALCON
  - 4540V
- HARRIS HAWK
  - 3272RR97W
  - 798W IBR7898W
  - SLOE5
  - 2SCOT
- KESTREL
  - IBR5154S
  - 93S99
  - 3KTG96S
- LANNER FALCON
  - 196W
  - IBR2347W
  - 11282W
- LUGGER FALCON
  - 498V
  - TEL
- MEXICAN STRIPED OWL
  - NORINGS
- PEREGRINE FALCON
  - 19343W
  - UK72999
- PEREGRINE/LANNER
  - HYBRID
  - 13323W
- PERE/SAKER
  - 7029V 18027W
- RED-TAILED HAWK
  - 48NFOSX.Y
- SAKER FALCON
  - GB9906W
  - 8999W
  - 25DAM99W
  - NBOPC
  - 2KLB95W
  - 40KA99W
  - 399W 398W
- SAKER HYBRID
  - 3573V 14176W

**REUNITED**

- AFRICAN GREY PARROT
- BALD EAGLE
- BARN OWL x 5
- COCKATIEL
- CROW
- EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL
  - x 2
- GOLDEN EAGLE
- GOSHAWK
- GYR/LANNER FALCON
- HARRIS HAWK x 6
- KESTREL x 3
- LANNER FALCON x 4
- LUGGER FALCON x 2
- PERE/LANNER x2
- PERE/SAKER
- RED-TAILED HAWK x 2
- SAKER FALCON x 4

**STOLEN**

- COMMON BUZZARD
  - 1WING97W
- BARN OWL
  - IBR6697U



## In Write Fine Style

If you have ever needed to purchase business cards, you probably would have experienced the hassle of finding a printer or designer and then may have found that the personal service is not one of their greatest assets, especially if you have no idea of the concept of your card. If you have got a version in your minds eye of what your card should look like, the finished article invariably leaves you a little disappointed.

Now with a new internet based company [cammy-cards.com](http://cammy-cards.com), you can buy business cards and other items of printed stationery off the shelf at very reasonable prices. The web site [www.cammycards.com](http://www.cammycards.com) is the internet trading name of Atelier Camouflage who enjoy a reputation as com-



mercial graphic designers of the highest calibre. The father and son, David and James Humphreys who run the company have always had a keen interest in country matters and especially in the

preservation of the rural environment by traditional methods. They are trying to emphasise this by introducing stationery

designs depicting wildlife images, beginning with their favourite subject, ornithology.

Atelier Camouflage are happy to accommodate subjects on their web site [cammy-cards.com](http://cammy-cards.com) previously not displayed. Just e-mail the designers at [ideas@cammy-cards.com](mailto:ideas@cammy-cards.com) with your design subject and they will endeavour to research, design and produce your desired image on the web site.

## ‘Falconry to be banned in Scotland!’

You may think that the above headline could never take place, but you would be wrong. Lord Watson's Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Bill as put before the Scottish Parliament includes within it powers to ban part of the sport of Falconry. Although publicly stating that he has no intention to affect any fieldsport other than foxhunting. This bill has been so badly drafted that it affects, not only Falconry but also includes banning some use by Gamekeepers of their gundogs and terriers, Hill fox control packs, Mink Hound Packs and those using long dogs to course. The financial implications are endless.

We urge all falconers or those who support our sport to write to the:-

Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs Department  
Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Bill  
Room 2.01, Committee Chambers  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

The Rural Affairs Committee are taking submissions at present before they consider the Bill, it is imperative that they are made aware that falconers who travel to Scotland may in the future go elsewhere if they have their sport restricted. Please also point out the financial implications that the Airlines, Hotels, Car Hire companies, Restaurants, Gamekeepers, Estate owners and many more, may have from being denied the income derived from your visit, which will place an unnecessary burden on the economy of Scotland.

Issued by the Scottish Hawk Board. [Scothawkbd@aol.com](mailto:Scothawkbd@aol.com)

## MIDLAND GAME AND COUNTRY SPORTS FAIR

The Midland Fair is the last of the season's great shows....and organisers are already predicting a record-breaking start to the 21st Century.

The 18 Midland Game Fair will take place in the beautiful, 1,000 acre grounds of Weston Park at Weston-under-Lizard, Staffs, on Saturday and Sunday, Sept 16th & 17th.

The biggest and the best of the traditional country fairs, the Midland regularly attracts tens of thousands of visitors. It promises to be a great day out for all the family....including the family dog!....and is a must for anyone with even a passing interest in our rural life and country pursuits.

Organiser, Tony Scutt explained "Although it is still quite early days, we already have a better and wider range of attractions than ever before so I'm looking forward to our best ever show. The Shirley Pipe Band proved such a huge success that they're back this

year 'by popular demand', but for the first time ever - we are having some traditional jazz at the Midland. The Heart of England Jazz Band will be playing their own marquee on the lawn in front of West Park House...I can't imagine a better setting and think it's going to be absolutely fantastic."

"On the trade stand side there's a record number of over 450 and because it's the end of the season there'll be some splendid bargains to be had."

Animals obviously play a major part at the Midland and Main Arena attractions this year range from a sheepdog demonstration from Katy Cropper, the only woman to win BBC's 'One Man and His Dog' Competition - to an equally entertaining Terrier Roadshow and another welcome first in the impressive shape of a heavy horse parade.

The Countryside Alliance has always been a staunch supporter of the Midland but

this year is really pulling out the stops, with its own pavilion and arena, forming the centre-piece of a new "Rural Life and Country Living" section. Other specialist arenas and displays include; The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, Carting Canines and Fun Dog Show, Hound Show arena, Falconry, Ferret Racing, a much enlarged Fisherman's Village and Terrier & Lurcher Arena. Elsewhere around the site other star attractions will be:

\* Europe's largest clay pigeon shooting line, with more than £14,000 worth of prizes to be won.

\* The European Field Target air-rifle shooting championship at the world's biggest airgun event.

\* 'Smoke and Thunder' with the Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain's display.

\* National Finals of The Game Conservancy Trust's

gundog competition.

\* A two day angling-clinic with coarse anglings world individual and team championship winner Ian Heaps; fly casting tuition and demonstration from former world casting champion Hywel Morgan, plus the event's own angling match.





# Kept Hanging Around

## Allen Whitehead

The story in the Winter edition of *Falconers*, about digging out a Harris Hawk which had 'gone to ground' has prompted me to write about an experience of my own.

It happened a couple of years ago, and the tale also relates to a practice which I took from the Spring 1996 edition of *Falconers*, when in response to a readers enquiry, you recommended the use of thin permanent jesses for handling a hawk which danced around on the glove when its owner was trying to exchange mews jesses for flying jesses. This was an idea quickly adopted by me because of the fidgeting of my hawk, and it worked



a treat.

What follows, however, is the story of what happened in the field one day, and has lessons to be learned! First, though, I must set the scene a bit.

My bird Kiak (American Indian for hawk) is a male Harris, my first and only hawk, which I bought as an eyass, trained and have flown for the last 6 seasons.

He's a smashing bird, a keen and enthusiastic hunter - probably not as fit as he could be, because my work does not allow me to get in many flights midweek - but nevertheless, we've learned a lot together. I keep him in an aviary all of the time, and during the moult I frequently feed him on the glove and take him for a wee walk, so when the new season arrives, he flies straight to the glove with no refresher training needed.

I'm a bit of a loner and have never hunted with dogs or ferrets, so hunting for us is very much down to Kiak's natural abilities, and whilst his annual tally is low by many people's standards, the variety of quarry taken by him is broad (15 species) including pheasant, squirrel, stoat, woodcock (caught by surprise when he had a strong tail wind) pigeon, and blackbird as well as the more usual rabbits, rats, mice, voles etc.

When he was young, he even fancied his chances at a hare, although I was secretly relieved when it escaped through a fence before him. He flies free, often 'following on' from the front, and he covers far more ground than me - ranging a quarter of a mile or more distant at times - but he keeps an eye on my hand moving to my bag for a morsel, and so often returns without me needing to whistle. If the wind is strong and I am moving through gorse bushes on an open hillside, he hangs on the breeze like a kite above my head, watching for any movements on the ground - magic!

But, back to the story.

We were returning from an outing early in the season, on a fine autumn day, although the grass had been wet from the dew. We were walking through woodland - a river valley with steep sides - and I was on a footpath near the top with Kiak flying nearer the middle of the valley. He landed in a tree, started to move on again, but suddenly tipped and hung upside down. He righted himself and tried again, several times, but one of the

permanent jesses wet from the grass, had whipped around the branch and tied itself in a hitch.

I was aghast. He was around 50 feet away from me, at my level, but about 30 feet up a slender ash tree half way down the side of the valley. I watched his struggles, whistled and tried to call and encourage him, hoping that he'd manage to free himself, but after about 10 minutes his efforts got weaker and it was obvious that he was stuck.

With my heart in my mouth, I ran the half mile or so home, at a trot, thinking out my few options as I ran. Climbing the tree would be almost impossible and very dangerous as it was so slender and had no branches near the ground.

The valley was inaccessible to the Fire Brigade etc.

A few weeks previously, though, I had bought a pruning saw with a very sharp serrated blade. I had an idea that if I could tie this on to a long enough pole, I might just be able to saw through the branch holding Kiak fast.

When I got home, my wife

Meeling and daughter Emmajo immediately stopped what they were doing and offered to help.

I didn't have a pole anywhere near long enough, but did have some lengths of tiling battens. So Emmajo and I collected these, the saw, wire, pliers etc. and set off back as fast as we could with Meeling following on behind. On the way back through the wood, we passed Graham Young, a neighbour walking his dog.

Kiak had stopped struggling, and had managed to perch upright.

The valley side was thick with brambles and broom bushes, so we had to clear and trample a path to the foot of the tree, where Emmajo and I began to fix battens together with wire bands. By the time we were ready to try out our 'pole saw' we had been joined by Meeling and Graham. When we attempted to lift the unwieldy pole, however, it flexed and snapped. We tried again but the same thing happened. Meeling said that it would never work, so she and Emmajo returned home to try and get the loan of a long enough ladder. They phoned another neighbour - a roofing contractor - Dick Irwin, who offered his help and his ladders if he could get some help to carry them through the wood. Emmajo then telephoned a couple of her teenage friends, Stephen and Bruce Docker, and they all got together. Dick said that he would drive around the village and along the farmers field and track, to get as close as he could to the path into the wood.

Meanwhile, back in the wood, Graham and I had eventually managed to remake the pole, and by sliding it up from further down the valley side - keeping it as vertical as possible - got it up the tree trunk to reach the branch holding Kiak.

The problem was that no pressure could be exerted on the blade. All we could do was lift the pole up and down. I worked away at this for what seemed hours, with no visible effect. I was tiring fast, so Graham took over. Then I sug-





gested that if we could move the pole to a fork a little nearer Kiak, the branch was much thinner there and the saw might work better. By gently wiggling the pole, we eventually got it into the fork and Graham began the awkward up and down sawing.

Suddenly I felt sawdust on my face, and yelled that I could see the blade cutting in.

The branch lurched, and Kiak flapped in panic. A minute or so later it fell. I leaped forward to try and break Kiak's fall, and caught the branch and bird together. I was ecstatic, and immediately began freeing him, forgetting that I didn't have a glove on. He rewarded me by footing me in the thigh! Three inches higher and I would have changed from a tenor to a soprano, but the pain was nothing compared with the relief that I felt at having him safe. Indeed, it was the highlight of Graham's 'adventure'. I believe that he has recounted the tale at several dinner parties since, with a detailed account of the difficulty of removing an angry hawk from a falconer's groin! To be fair, Graham, who wasn't at all dressed for rough action, was himself

badly grazed and lacerated by the thick brambles.

We climbed back up to the path and returned through the wood in triumph, only to meet Meeling and the others coming to help, bringing ladders. I was glad that we didn't need to use them, though, because it would have been a dangerous place to set a ladder, and very risky for the person doing the climbing.

And that's about the end of the story. Kiak was none the worse for his ordeal and back to hunting within a week.

There were some lessons to be learned by me, though.

Any form of jesses are potentially hazardous in the field.

The tree could easily have been many times higher and overhanging a gorge or other equally inaccessible place, in which case either my bird would have died a slow and unpleasant death, or I would have had to get someone to shoot him. As you can imagine, I would not have relished either course of action.

Now he is flown wearing only Aylmeri

and no jesses at all. It makes life a bit more difficult for me because he still won't stand still on the glove, but we have developed techniques to deal with it, and fortunately it fits in with my 'freestyle' type of hunting.

Certainly, I would never forgive myself if he ever got hung up again wearing jesses.

Even if you like to hunt alone, you should remember that family, friends and neighbours are prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to help if you get into difficulties. I am still impressed by their willingness to drop whatever they were doing to come to the immediate assistance of me and my hawk in trouble.

**Editors note:** I am very sorry to hear about your problem, if anyone is worried about this I would suggest that flying jesses be made as thin and as short as possible (ie leather boot laces) if the flying jesses are rounded there is less chance of them locking around themselves or on a branch. At the National Birds of Prey Centre in Newent their permanent flying jesses are about 4 - 5 inches long.

# BIAK

## A New Falconry Centre in New Guinea

A new Centre is on the way to become a great partner for adventurous falconers interested in variety of hunting birds and preys. Or simply eager to discover unusual areas. The "Biak Falconry and Raptors Conservation Centre" is located in Irian Jaya (Papua), the Indonesian part of New-Guinea and world's second largest island. A tropical paradise of rich, largely untouched nature.

The BFC is developing quality and innovative falconry with so far poorly known species. Powerful but kind-mannered Hawk Eagles make up a first target group in this outstandingly rich biogeographic area: Gurney's Eagle, Harpy Eagle, Booted Eagle, Little Eagle, Black, Changeable and Wallace Hawk Eagles, many of them intensively trained for the very first time in the history of falconry.

A second development phase will concentrate on Meyer and Doria goshawks, female reaching a flying-weight of over 1 Kg. Probably the last, interesting large Accipiter so far untested in falconry.

Excellent adapted housing conditions are already provided to seven breeding pairs, and the BFC management recently purchased a new 2Ha location for more breeding facilities.

The Centre's spacious premises have been installed at midway between the seashore and beautiful cliffs inhabited by various birds of prey. Hunting trips will lead you to remote and game-rich parts of the 300 km<sup>2</sup> Biak island. Local quarry includes Phalangiers and other Marsupials, Varanus, a great variety of

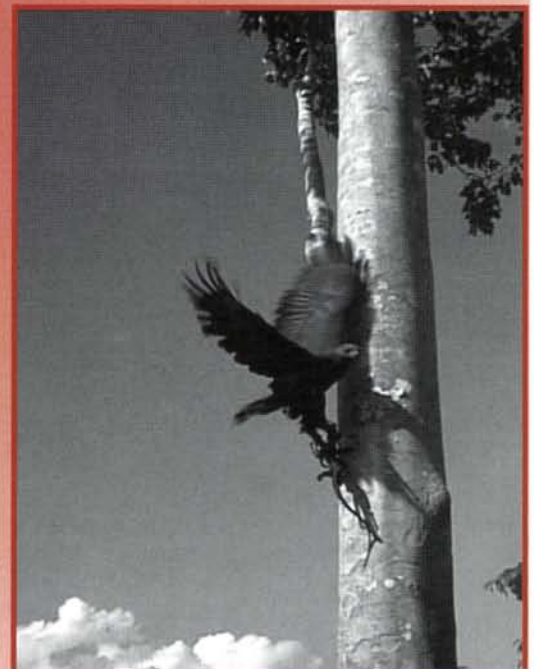
Doves, and some Crows, Butcherbirds and Plovers for the Gos'. Wild piglet hunting and more adventurous trips to the main island after four Ground Wallaby species are planned for a near future.

The Centre exclusively educates and employs local manpower under the guidance of an experienced, talented Belgian falconer and a dedicated vet who is now a living legend in Irian Jaya. Seven bird lovers make up the team you are likely to meet and hunt with in Biak. They do not see you as a mere bystander but, according to your own affinities, they are willing to give you the best chances to actively fly the birds you will opt for.

Dramatically disabled birds victim of human ignorance have already been saved and rehabilitated. Raptors in developing countries are traded for their feathers and claws which are tucked in traditional outfits or mixed in medications, or simply because their uplift their owners self-pride. Falconry has never existed in New Guinea. The BFC's action was therefore much needed locally to contribute to a better awareness about Raptors, a national resource worth much proper management and preservation. And much more important, the Centre's facilities will help to develop the first breeding strains of the most

endangered species of the world's largest archipelago. For this reason it is now strongly recommended by the government of the Irian Jaya Province. At the time this paper is printed, a Spilornis pair should be laying its first eggs!

The "Biak Falconry and Raptors Conservation Club" could well need your support. Think about visiting: this will contribute to promote the hobby and will help preserving some of the most beautiful Birds of Prey.





# LIVING WITH AN IMPRINT

Malcolm Allison



During 1996 I had cause to contact Jemima Parry Jones at the National Bird of Prey Centre, with a view to photographing some of the birds held at the centre. I was at the time a serving RSPCA Inspector based in Suffolk and it was my intention to produce an identification guide to be used by inspectors to try to alleviate the problem of raptor recognition when dealing with routine complaints. Having recently lost my first female Goshawk to Aspergillosis brought about by lead poisoning the conversation naturally led to my asking Jemima if she knew of any young Goshawks for sale. I already knew that she did not breed them at the centre as they were, and I quote "a bloody nuisance, they just kill each other." Her reply came as something of a surprise, "I have one here which is taking up valuable aviary space, it has been confiscated by the police and will eventually need to be released, if I clear it with them you could take it, fly for a season and asses it's suitability for release". I was requested to write to her with details of my falconry experience and photographs of my mews etc. If only all breeders were this concerned about the destiny of their birds. Some time later I received a letter from Jemima, which read simply; Goshawk cleared for take off. Come and get her. A short telephone call later and the date for collection was arranged.

The trip to Newent was uneventful and we arrived about lunchtime, we looked around the centre and watched the various flying displays while we waited for a lull in Jemima's busy schedule. After the public had left we got down to the purpose of our visit. We were accompanied to the aviary where the bird was being

kept. As I looked through the spy-hole my eyes were immediately drawn to the beautiful yellow eyes of an immature female goshawk in perfect feather, her large yellow feet gripping the perch. Jemima entered the flight and with one expertly timed swipe of the net the bird was caught. She was carried to the weighing room where her ring number was checked and she was placed in the travelling box.

On arrival back in Suffolk she was placed loose in her aviary and left with a supply of food, I observed her through the spy-hole and was pleased to see her eating within 30 minutes. A brief look through the spy-hole the following morning revealed she had just bathed and was happily preening. I was satisfied that she had settled in. I knew that for the following weeks she would be confined to her new surroundings whilst she completed her first moult.

When the time came to take her up for training it was apparent that Jem as she was now called was not your normal fiery tempered accipiter. Having jessed her up and fitted her tail mount and bell she sat quietly on the fist and was feeding within the hour. Her training went smoothly, or as smoothly as the training of an accipiter can go.

The first indication of the extent of her level of imprinting was her screaming, she would scream if she saw me, she would scream if she heard me talk, she would scream if she heard me whistle and I'm sure she would have screamed if she heard me fart, but I did not (intentionally) put this to the test. In fact, she would just SCREAM. However, whenever we were in the field she was silent, much to the relief of my companions. It was becom-

ing apparent that her eventual release into the wild was becoming unlikely.

In early 1997, I noticed a change in her behaviour. She would greet me, not with her usual scream, but with an alarming rapid keck keck kecking. This was soon followed by chupping and bowing. She would also, slowly and methodically, pluck each day old chick before delicately eating it. She was placed in her aviary to moult, where this behaviour continued throughout the summer. She was taken up for flying again in late August until February 1998, during which time there were no major incidents, but several less rabbits, pheasants, duck and moorhen than there were when she started. Towards the end of February, she again began calling and was beginning to carry sticks, feathers etc., and placing them in a corner of the aviary, as at this time there was no nest ledge.

During July '98, we had cause to move to North Yorkshire, where her old aviary was re-erected. The following flying season was relatively uneventful, apart from one incident when I thought she may have decided to return to the wild.

Whilst flying on a piece of land, adjacent to the A64 in North Yorks, I slipped her at a cock pheasant. She

Was at this stage, quite fit and taking on long slips, however, she wasn't as fit as the pheasant, which proceeded to take her over a LARGE wood. I have often wondered how big a wood has to be before it becomes a forest, or how small a forest has to be before it is a wood, however, I digress. I lost sight of her as she went over the top of the wood, so I set off in hot pursuit. She was nowhere to be seen, but I could hear the faint tinkling of her bell in the distance, and headed towards



the sound, which was of course, downhill.

I caught a brief glimpse of her through the trees chasing a hen pheasant, and again set off after her. By this time though, she was heading uphill. Running uphill in any terrain is not easy (well, not for me anyway) but running uphill through woodland through brambles, fallen branches etc is almost impossible. It was of course, not long before I lost all contact, there was no sign of her, no tinkling of her bell, no chattering of black-birds or cawing of rooks, or any of the usual signs of a predator being in the area. Although I always flew her with a transmitter, I did not have access to a receiver, as when I lived in Suffolk I used to rely on the good services of Paul Bracey and Keith Mutton's skills with their receivers whenever the need arose. I should point out however that the only time I required their services was to find the transmitter after it had fallen off during an outing in Suffolk. Jem was normally so reliable, but no amount of calling, whistling or lure throwing could summon a response this time. My falconry friends are constantly amused that whenever I go hawking I carry such a large assortment of dead wildlife - pheasants, pigeons, rabbits, partridge etc - to use as lures, but my thinking is that I would rather have them and not need them, than need them and not have them. I spent a further two hours searching but to no avail. I had resigned myself to the fact that even though she was an imprint, SHE had decided she wanted to be in the wild.

It was with a heavy heart (and a heavy bag) that I headed back towards the car, which was approximately three-quarters of a mile away. Whilst walking along the path at the top of the wood, wondering what her fate would be, I was stopped in my tracks by the distant tinkle of bells. I stood silently trying to get a fix on the direction of the welcome sound, which seemed to be getting louder (or was that just wishful thinking?). Within seconds I saw the familiar shape of Jem, flying towards me, in typical Goshawk fashion approximately three feet from the ground. (Sorry - we should be talking metric now according to the EEC regulations. For those who don't know, three feet is approximately one yard, or one litre - or should that be kilo-??). She rose almost vertically and landed on a branch approximately ten feet above me. She shook her tail and looked at me. I threw out one of my many lures as she's always flown to the lure and not to the fist, and she immediately dropped onto it. Within a minute or so she was back on the fist, she roused and looked at me as if to say 'You're not going home without me'. Perhaps she did not want to be in the wild

after all.

In February of 1999 she again began calling and slowly plucking her food. She was put in her aviary, which now contained a nest ledge approx. 3 feet square (sorry 3 kilos.) and piled with conifer branches. I would visit her in the aviary 5 or 6 times a day occasionally taking in fresh branches which she would carefully examine and pick out the ones she wanted. These she would carry up to the nest and carefully position, sometimes spending many minutes picking it up and replacing it in a slightly different position before nestling down and trying it for comfort. All this activity would take place whilst I was still in the aviary, and often with me leaning on the nest ledge. This I would do by standing on a wooden chair which was placed in the aviary, the chair was left in the aviary permanently and Jem would often spend hours perching on the back sitting in the sun or eating her food on the seat. The intensity of her behaviour increased and soon she would start chupping and bowing whenever I entered the aviary and allowed me to touch her back, this would in turn lead to her leaning further forward raising her tail and placing it to one side. Initially this would only last for a few seconds but



eventually she would stand for copulation in this position for over a minute (if only married life was like that!!).

On the 15th April she showed little interest in me or any food which I provided. The following day I entered the aviary on one of my now routine visits and found Jem sitting on the nest. I greeted her with the usual "are you a good girl" she chupped her usual response, rose from the organised chaos of branches and gently took the quail that I held up to her. She immediately flew down to the floor and began feeding. I stood on the chair and looked into the nest where I saw a perfectly formed, perfectly clean egg. I had, up until that time, only seen pictures of Goshawk eggs in books and I was amazed at just how beautiful it was. It was a wonderful shade of pale blue, my friend, wildlife artist John Naylor, subsequently said upon seeing an egg, "that's the colour I want my bathroom", and with Dulux's You find the colour, we'll match it service, it could well happen. Of course it will have to be eggshell finish (or should that be eggshell Finnish).

The next few days found me making frantic phone calls all over the country to try to find a supply of semen and glean any information I could on artificial insemination of accipiters. I would have had more luck finding a sack-full of rocking-horse s\*\*t. I now know why Goshawks are so expensive; breeders have to cover the cost of their phone bills!! Three days later (19th April) another egg was produced and Jem was sitting tight, although she still came off the nest whenever I entered the aviary and stood for copulation. My marathon phone-a-thon eventually led me to Angelo Canape; he told me that he probably wouldn't have any spare semen this year. I said "I'm not interested in your private life, what about your Goshawks?"

I had resigned myself to the fact that my ambition to fly a home bred Gos would have to wait until another year, when I





received a phone call from Brian Abbey who informed me that Tommy Graham had a male Gos which was producing semen, and what's more he only lived a short drive away. Arrangements were made to collect a sample of semen from Tommy (which was not an offer he got every day!) on the evening of the 21st April. Egg No 1 was laid at approx. 1.30pm and egg No 2 was laid between 11.30am and 2.00pm, so I was expecting egg No 3 to be laid at about the same time on the 22nd. However, upon entering the aviary at 9.00am, Jem as usual came of the nest and took the food I offered her. Whilst she was feeding I peered into the nest and found that she now had 3 beautiful blue eggs. I had no way of knowing what time this last egg was produced, or if she would produce a fourth egg but I decided to go ahead with the insemination anyway. On my next visit to the aviary about one hour later I was armed with a syringe containing the precious liquid I cast Jem and inseminated her by introducing the pre-warmed semen into her oviduct. She continued to stand whenever I entered the flight and I was confident that the fact that I had to cast her had not damaged our special relationship. I was not very hopeful however that the insemination would work. On the 25th April Jem produced what was to be the final egg of her clutch. Following the laying of the fourth egg Jem stopped standing for copulation and was only interested in incubating her precious clutch. She continued to sit tight, only leaving the eggs to feed, which she only did whenever I went into the aviary. Whilst she was feeding I would stand on the chair and look into the nest staring at eggs, when she had finished she would fly up to the perch, feak (no it's not a misprint) stretch her legs, rouse and then fly onto the front of the nest ledge landing inches (sorry litres) away from my shoulder. She would chup her usual acknowledgement and occasionally pull at my shirt with her beak, this was done in an inquisitive way and not as a sign of aggression. At no time did I feel threatened by her actions. She would then hop onto the rear of the nest and arrange a few twigs before curling in her talons, turning her feet inwards and gently shuffle onto her eggs, carefully turning each one before puffing out her breast feathers and settling down. To spend any time in the company of hawks is a privilege, but to take part in and witness this most intimate part of her life-cycle is something very special that is shared by only a few individuals.

After 12 days I removed the fourth egg and candled it, I was not surprised to find that it was clear. Having already decided to see if Jem would sit full term I returned the egg to the nest, her actions surprised me! She did not leave the nest as usual. Why should she? After all, she had only been off a few minutes earlier, I stood on the chair and she greeted me as usual. I held the egg between my thumb and forefinger and slowly moved it towards her, she raised up onto her hocks and I placed

it next to the three remaining eggs. She looked at it, turned it slowly and settled down to continue her maternal duties.

Jem continued to sit tight right through what would have been her natural incubation period and beyond. In fact she sat for a total of 52 days from the laying of her last egg. She did however break 2 of the eggs during this period but I believe this was due to the fact that I did not remove her anklets prior to releasing her into the aviary. On the 16th June I obtained a newly hatched Redtail from Dave Robinson a local breeder. The chick was just 24 hours old when I collected it from Dave at approximately 7.00pm. At about 8.30pm having fed the chick I carefully carried it into the aviary along with a dead quail. Jem left the eggs as usual and proceeded to eat the quail in her usual place. I reached into the nest and carefully placed the chick in the nest and removed one of the eggs. I stood and waited until Jem had eaten her fill, when she had finished she flew up to the perch, wiped her beak and flew onto the nest-ledge landing just inches from my shoulder. She took one look at the new arrival, chipped and hopped onto the nest. She carefully folded in her talons shuffled and began brooding the tiny downy. I stood and stared in awe as she re-positioned herself and gently picked at and moved around small branches of conifer. I was happy that she had accepted the sudden arrival of her latest charge and left her to settle down for the night. I felt confident that she was not going to cause any harm to the chick.

The following morning I was up at first light. I didn't realise it got light so bloody early! I thought it did not get light until about 10.30am but that's probably because I'm a late sleeper. I entered the aviary as usual with a succulent piece of pheasant breast. Jem rose from the nest and took the meat gently in her beak before transferring it to her powerful feet, which made the now hungry youngster look so tiny and delicate. She pulled off and swallowed two or three mouthfuls before the chick realised he was missing out and began begging for food. Jem continued to feed and ignored his cries of hunger, I reached over to where she was feeding and pulled off a tiny piece off meat, which I offered, to the chick. He shakily raised his head and grabbed at it with his small but perfectly formed beak. I did this a number of times and each time Jem would interrupt her feeding and look at me as if I was mad. The same routine followed about 4 hours later; I had a CCTV camera in the aviary and had not witnessed Jem feeding the chick, although she continued to brood. It appeared she was happy to keep him warm if I was happy to keep him fed. She would sit and watch me feed the chick but did not attempt to intervene.

The following day I tried a different approach. Whilst she was feeding, again, on the nest I picked up the chick and placed it near her feet. I pulled off a small piece of meat and held it out on my fingertip, as the chick reached out to take it,

Jem slowly bent down and gently picked it off. I waited with bated breath as she carefully and purposefully.....SWALLOWED IT! After 5 or 6 attempts at this the chick was becoming more and more desperate. Then all of a sudden she picked a piece from my fingertip, held it in the tip of her beak and delicately offered it to the ravenous youngster. I subsequently noticed that whenever she offered the chick tiny morsels of food she would hold them in the tip of her beak and allow them to become covered with saliva, sometimes to the extent that it could be seen dripping from the tip of her beak. I can only presume that this is a way of passing on vital anti-bodies (answers on a post-card please). I am amazed at just how gentle she can be, She would use her powerful bill to tear off a tiny sliver of meat held in her large powerful feet tipped with needle sharp jet black talons and delicately offer it to this tiny bundle of down. Isn't nature wonderful?

On subsequent visits to the aviary I would leave most of the feeding to Jem, occasionally offering her tid-bits on the end of my finger, which she would take and feed to the chick. Following each feed she would carefully remove any uneaten food from the nest and place it her special corner of the aviary. I also noticed during my periods of close observation that whenever the chick misjudged his lunge for food, which he did quite often, and it fell onto the nest Jem would immediately pick it up and eat it herself. Not once did I see her offer it back to the youngster. I would be interested to know if this is normal behaviour, perhaps to reduce the risk of infection, or whether this was one of Jem's little quirks (answers on another post-card please). My visits to the aviary continued throughout the fledging period though I acted merely as an observer during the latter stages. The Redtail, which I had decided to call "Arfur" (because he would grow up thinking he was arfur gos and arfur redtail) grew rapidly and was soon flying around the aviary. I knew now that Jem would not only sit full term but also that she would rear. Next year I would be better prepared!

The 1999-2000 flying season was a short one for Jem, as I had to curtail her hunting due to a foot injury (hers not mine). A number of falconers I have spoken to since she reared the Redtail have expressed their surprise that I am still flying her, she's too valuable they would say, she's worth her weight in gold, you might lose her. Perhaps they are right. Technically being registered as "wild disabled" she is worthless. But to me she is PRICELESS, I am at heart a falconer and not a breeder. By the time she started to come into breeding condition she was already established in her aviary (I did not keep her in there during the flying season).

The nest from the previous year had been refurbished with fresh conifer branches. Her routine was much the same as before and when she started to stand



regularly for copulation I contacted Angelo and informed him that she was in condition and that I would need a supply of semen fairly soon. I phoned him again on the 12th April and told him she was now standing for a minute or so at a time and that I needed it urgently. He told me that I should have a couple of days to play with and he would sort me out a supply.

On Thursday 13th April Jem produced her first egg, she showed none of the usual signs of lethargy prior to laying and its arrival came as something of a surprise. Panic stations!!!. I immediately phoned Angelo who said he'd get me some semen on Friday (14th). I knew I would not get it in time to catch the second egg, but if Angelo came good, as it were, I had a very good chance of catching the third. Friday came (pardon the pun) and went and still no call from Angelo. Sunday saw the arrival of egg number 2 and once again I was on the phone to Angelo, by this time I was getting more than a little pissed off, as I had to kiss goodbye to egg number 3. He once again promised me a supply on Monday



morning. By Monday afternoon I decided Angelo had messed me about enough and decided to try once again to find another supplier. I had a strange feeling of Deja vu. In an act of sheer desperation I even looked up "Semen" on the Internet but all I got was the Royal Navy website, and something about a goalkeeper! I tried to narrow down my search and typed in "Discharged Semen" all I got that time was the Royal Navy Pensioners Assoc!! Back to square one

Numerous telephone calls later and I was speaking to Pete Bowyer in Bristol. Pete was very helpful and told me that he had a male, which was donating semen, and I was welcome to have some if we could work out the logistics of getting it to me. I told him that wasn't a problem as I would come (as it were) to collect it. I find the attitude of most people in the falconry fraternity very refreshing as they are usually keen to help and if they can't help they will almost certainly know someone who can.

The morning of Tuesday 18th April saw me dashing southward to Bristol, or if there are any policemen reading this,

driving carefully to Bristol. I arrived at Pete's at about 1.00pm, I watched as his bird donated a sample of the precious fluid onto the back of his hand. It gave a whole new meaning to the phrase "comes to the fist". Pete and his wife ensured that I didn't travel back on an empty stomach (nice sandwiches Pete.) and I headed northwards.

The third egg was laid right on cue on the morning of the 19th at about 11.00am. I removed the straw of semen from the fridge in order to allow it to warm up. I inseminated Jem at approx. 1.30pm and again at about 4.30. The rest was down to nature. I was not optimistic. One thing I had learned during my many telephone conversations was that the phrase "artificial insemination" and goshawks were seldom used in the same sentence, it was by all accounts a very hit and miss affair.

To cut a long story short and despite early expectations, the egg did not hatch and another year had been missed. Thanks Angelo! The next job was to again find something for Jem to rear. Dave had nothing of a suitable age so it

was back to the telephone. I had decided to give the Internet a miss, god knows what would have come up if I'd typed in "young chicks wanted". Look what happened to Garry Glitter!!! On Saturday 3rd

June I collected a young Harris hawk from Andy Margeson at Chesterfield the chick was just 12 hours or so old. I was surprised when Andy refused to take any money or even accept a deposit, he simply "said if you decide to keep it we can sort it out later, if not I'll have it back". See what I mean about falconers?

I arrived home in the middle of the afternoon and placed the young hawk in with Jem and removed one of the eggs (this year I removed her anklets and all the eggs survived) Jem began brooding it straight away as I expected. It occurred to me that as Jem thought it had just hatched she probably would not attempt to feed it until the following day. I watched carefully throughout day, not because I thought she would cause it any harm but because I was still fascinated by her

behaviour, even though I had seen it all before. The next morning I entered the aviary and Jem came off the nest and took the plucked quail breast I offered her. She began feeding next to the chick, which by now was calling for food. Just as she had done the previous year she ignored it, I picked up the tiny youngster and held it up to her in the palm of my hand about 5 inches above the nest, to my astonishment she immediately began feeding it. When she was satisfied the chick had had enough she cleared the nest and removed the uneaten quail. Whilst she was stashing the food in her usual place I replaced the eyes onto the nest, she returned and settled down to brood. Although she continued to feed the chick normally I would still occasionally go in the aviary and stand with the chick in my hand whilst she fed it. To be party to such intimate details of a raptor's life is a truly wonderful feeling and just writing about it sends a tingle down my spine. At the time of writing this article the Harris is two weeks old and is now too big to fit in the palm of my hand.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped and advised me, and put up with my constant pestering. You know who you are, and to those that messed me about I know who you are (Angelo)! I also have to thank my long suffering wife, Jill, who, every winter has to fight for my attention, and loses, and every summer has to fight for my affection, and loses

I do not profess to be an expert on raptor behaviour and some of the things I have written may contradict the views of



some if not most acknowledged experts in this field, I have simply written about what I have witnessed. Nor am I a breeder interested in breeding large numbers of hawks, though I have great admiration for those that do. I am first and foremost a falconer, interested primarily in taking wild quarry with a trained hawk.

Anyone with any comments can e-mail me at [Sycamorebirds@tesco.net](mailto:Sycamorebirds@tesco.net)

Photos of Jem feeding Harris ——— Jeff Mcknight.. All other photos M. Allison





# GUESTS

by  
Ghillie



It has often been said, and not without good reason, that falconers are often their own worst enemies. Falconry is a far older sport than shooting but, having been both a falconer and a gamekeeper/shoot manager for over 40 years, it has become increasingly obvious that gameshooters have learned the rules and the etiquette of the business of sporting lets, far more thoroughly than the hawking fraternity, which is why many estates will no longer have so-called falconers on their ground at any price. There has always been a tradition among shooting people for the senior guns to pass on "the form" to the next generation. With a sport that is growing as fast as falconry,

**The sportsman was always the landlords guest and he always respected his host's hospitality**

the generation gap becomes somewhat blurred and, in many cases individuals err simply because no-one has ever pointed out to them the correct way of going about things.

There are obviously a large number of exceptions to this and many falconers behave extremely well on all counts, are a credit to the sport and are always welcome back. It is of those others, whose numbers are ever increasing that I write....

In the days of yore, when landed gentry was more affluent than today, anyone who shot, stalked or fished over somebody else's land did so by invitation and as a guest of the landlord, and that sport was reciprocated in like form, i.e. a days shooting for a day's shooting or a days deer stalking for a day's deer stalking etc. The sportsman was always the landlords guest and he always respected his host's hospitality, his property and his game. He was brought up to accept this arrangement as the status quo and that was ever the code of ethics upon which the agreement was based. Financially, things have now changed dramatically and owning a Scottish estate these days has been likened to standing under a cold shower while tearing up £20 notes! Therefore, in order to try and make ends meet, landowners both of "high" and "low" ground have had to let their sport in exchange for hard cash. However, the twin pillars upon which the whole agreement is based still remain those of Guest and Respect. If both parties are satisfied the landlord wants to see you back again

next year - even if only because he wants to see the colour of your money again!

Presumably a group of falconers take a sporting let because (a) the landlord has more game or more suitable game than they have at home or (b) because they wish to fly their hawks in the company of like minded souls - or probably both. Falconers may sometimes wonder why they appear the 'poor relations' to shooting parties. The answer to that one is pure economics since Guns are happy to pay £50-£80 (+VAT) per brace for walked up grouse and £100 - £120 (+VAT) per brace of driven grouse and £25 (+VAT) for each driven pheasant, while spaniel field triallers will pay up to £100 per day for rabbit shooting so presumably falconers can see why shooting takes (financial) priority over hawking.

However, there is another, more deep seated, reason why Guns are always more welcome than many falconers. If five guns agree to take a days rough shooting at, say, £100 per Gun per day plus so much for a cottage containing five beds they pay 50% (or whatever) deposit by return of post, turn up at the appointed time, comply with the landlord's or his agent, the keeper's wishes, tip the keeper £10 - £20 each at the end of every shooting day and, at the end of their stay leave the cottage clean and tidy and usually write to thank their host afterwards. Should a sixth Gun accompany them the cheque is for £600 rather than £500 and he will stay in the local hotel. They would expect the keeper to accompany them,

**...not only will the original five be flying but Fred Bloggs who carries the cadge will fly his hawk as a perk.**

even if only to point out where the 'march fence' or estate boundary is.

In my experience if five falconers agree to take so many days hawking on an estate, they will put off paying the deposit for as long as possible, invariably more than the original five will turn up with sleeping bags, they will hawk wherever they can get away with on the estate, irrespective of any long-term plans for game, complain about a keeper "breathing down their neck" and not only will the original five be flying but Fred Bloggs who carries the cadge will fly his hawk as a perk. Joe Soap who provides a dog will expect to fly his hawk as a perk. Uncle Tom Cobley who drove them up in his transit will want to fly his falcon as his perk and half the falconers from the

neighbouring estate will be invited to fly their hawks as well since there is no game on that estate anyway! When they leave there are muddy dog footprints on the duvet, dog pee on the furniture, mutes on the sitting room carpet, in the bath and probably everywhere else, and the keeper, who has carried the game, held the 'rest' dogs and been general dogsbody all week is lucky to come away with £50 altogether while the falconers try to renegotiate the letting fee since their dogs

**Rabbit hawking means just that. Slipping your hawk on a blue hare is not rabbit hawking**

have not found any game or their hawk caught anything!

The general attitude invariably seems to be "falconers versus the landowner" and "what can we get away with?" as opposed to "what does the landowner require from us as guests?" The fact that group of falconers have paid a sum of money (frequently relatively small) for their sport in no way entitles them to make free with the estate as if it were their own.

The respect also applies to the landlord's game. All game whether dead or alive is the property of the landlord and, when killed, should be offered to him. He may accept all of it to sell to the game dealer, may accept some of it, having returned some as 'grace' birds or none of it, but it is up to him to do with it as he wishes. It is never the 'falconers' by right. Look at the terms of your agreement whether written or understood. Rabbit hawking means just that. Slipping your hawk on a blue hare is not rabbit hawking and Italian guns will pay large sums for hare shooting and still recoup the cost of their trip by selling the game in Milan or Turin market! Grouse hawking means grouse hawking and does not include 'nicking' pheasant poults out of the release pen (at £25 + VAT when put over the Guns). Lamping rabbits "for hawk food" does not include lamping roe deer and I have "confiscated" many a buck with antlers for which a German or Belgian stalker would pay £700-£800 aside from the venison value.

One of the attractions of Field Sports is the traditions associated with them and one of those traditions is being correctly dressed as a mark of respect for one's host and one's quarry. Jeans and trainers give "The King of Gamebirds" scant respect indeed, whereas breeks and boots mark one as a sportsman worthy of the name. It all comes down, once again, to being a guest and having respect for one's host, his property and his game....



# Talking Harris's

I have started this article a number of times, but always it becomes too complicated as there are so many, ifs, buts or unlessees. Nevertheless, I am going to give it one more shot, keeping it as simple as I can.

Throughout the year we get umpteen phone calls from people wanting to take up falconry. They want to ask lots of questions and if you are not careful you end up giving half a falconry course down the telephone. Inevitably these people want to begin their falconry careers with a Harris' Hawk. Towards the end of the year the phone calls do not lessen but the subject matter does change slightly and the one question asked above all others is "How can I get my Harris' to stop screaming?" The short answer is "You can't".

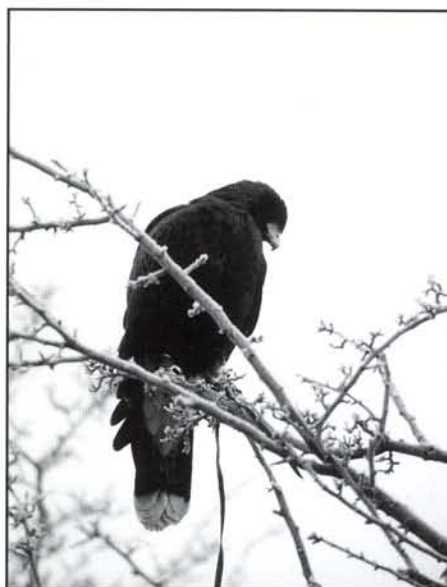
I have spoken to many falconers about this problem and unfortunately they all say the same thing. What you can do however, is to try and reduce the likelihood of it screaming in the first place. Before I go any further I must make it plain that many falconers take on relatively young Harris' Hawks and train them and they do not scream but these are usually experienced falconers or they have a mentor, someone who is with them every step of the way. Unfortunately there are so many people now wanting birds that it is hard to find someone for everybody or indeed guarantee that the chap around the corner with a bird' really knows what he is doing sufficiently well to teach someone else.

Consequently these people have little more than books, videos and the occasional telephone conversation to guide them, and it is because of this that I have decided to write this article. It may not concur with a lot of people's opinions, but in the main I believe the advice is sensible.

In his book Martin Hollinshead says he prefers creche reared Harris' and that is fine but there are different methods of creche rearing and he also says that these birds will inevitably become vocal. Hand rearing gives us the same result so the best advice we can give is to buy one which has been totally parent reared.

The next problem is that a lot of the books that beginners read are older, written way back when the way to train a bird was through intensive manning and a fist garnished at all times with food to help overcome the fear. Here is where we hit our first problem, when the novice gets his new bird home and sits it on a fist full of food and waits.

Due to the fact that Harris' Hawks mature later than other birds, they are very often taken from the aviary before they are really ready. Not physically but psychologically. Some breeders do not



let their birds go until they are at least 5 months old some even later, this however, usually puts the price up, so, our beginner (not realising it makes a difference) buys a younger bird because it is cheaper. So this bird, taken away from its family earlier than is natural suddenly realises that this person on whose fist he is sitting, or who is throwing him food each day, is his new food provider and (although he/she looks somewhat different) Mum!! Then it starts doing what comes quite naturally to a young bird, it screams for food. The new owner, knowing no different, feeds it, not necessarily in response to its demands but the bird doesn't know that. The bird requires somewhere quiet for the first little while, so its new owner puts it at the bottom of the garden, only going down when he is going to the bird. It has started. Before you know where you are, the bird knows where you are going when you go to get the food out, it recognises the sound of your voice, it knows even when you are coming out of the back door and it screams incessantly.

Sooner or later the neighbours start complaining, your spouse is complaining also and the bird has to go.

So, what is to be done? Prevention - there is no cure!

It is important to note that most Harris' Hawks are vocal to some extent, the bird will probably (I said probably) never be totally silent. They chuck, and twitter and will threaten dogs very noisily. But what you want to avoid if at all possible is the continual screaming for food.

Try to obtain a bird that is at least 5 months old. If the breeder sells them a lot younger ask him to hang on to it for you, offer him another £50. (You will still need to follow the feeding method set out

below but hopefully it will be a little easier if the bird is older to begin with.) Alternatively build yourself an aviary, with a chute for the food. Not however, a seclusion aviary, Nick Fox says this is like depriving a teenager of its' adolescence. The bird needs contact, it needs stimulation, it just doesn't and shouldn't realise you are the provider of food until you actually want it to do something (by that I mean other than sit on the fist). It needs to gain its independence, recognise itself as an individual (not part of your family group). Then you can introduce yourself as its hunting partner.

If neither of the above are possible the you will need to devise a way of supplying the bird with food without him/her realising it is coming from you. How you do this will depend on where you keep it. If the bird is in a secure weathering then you could put the food down when it was dark so it would be there when it got light in the morning.

Otherwise you could go and pick the bird up, turning round and discreetly depositing the food next to the bow and then moving away and taking the bird for a short walk. You could also ask your other half or one of the kids to put the food there for you. If the bird is put away at night then you could use one of the above or put the food out before the bird, alternating between the different methods.

For the first few days give the bird time to settle and then gradually increase the manning both in frequency and length of time. There is no need to reduce the bird's weight, it will have done this naturally by refusal of food in the beginning and nervousness on the bird's' part can also cause it to consume less than usual. Gain the bird's confidence and trust by handling and manning. When the bird is steady and does not bate away like a mad thing every time you approach it then you can begin its training proper. Try pegging the bird out in different places around the garden, somewhere where you have to walk past it, even if it is just for walking pasts sake. Go into the place where the food is kept and come out again, without going immediately to the bird, or go into the shed frequently so the bird does not immediately associate it with feeding time. As the bird matures you will do things like this less and less but the bird will have matured and there is also less chance of it screaming.

Finally, after speaking to Martin Hollinshead on the phone this afternoon and asking him what he thought he said "If you really do want to make sure your Harris' Hawk doesn't scream - get a Redtail".



## York and Region Austringers Klub

**YARAK** Was initially formed in the latter part of 1999, and was at that time merely a get together of 6 or 7 falconers from the York area who met once a month for a drink and a chat. Towards the end of the year numbers steadily increased as people travelled from further afield.

It was decided early in the millennium that these meetings should have some sort of direction and format, it was also strongly felt that it was important to maintain the friendly and informal atmosphere and not be overwhelmed by rules and regulations. A committee was formed of four members, Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Press Officer, all of whom are practising falconers. **THE REST AS THEY SAY IS HISTORY.**

The format of the meetings is, we believe, unique in that anyone is allowed to attend. A fee of £2.00 (£1.00 for juniors) is payable per meeting for members and visitors and free coffee and sandwiches are provided. Persons who attend 12 meetings per year automatically become full members for the following year, and are eligible to vote, or put forward any proposals they wish, and take part in any club activities. Any person wishing to become a full member who has not attended 12 meetings may do so, by making up any monies paid to £24.00\*, ie. A person attending 9 meetings @ £2.00 per meeting will have paid £18.00, by paying a further £6.00 that person becomes a full member.

Although **YARAK** is only a young club we aim to provide members of the falconry fraternity and their families with an enjoyable and friendly night out by organising such things as raffles, quiz nights, equipment sales, auctions, guest speakers, barbecues etc.

\*Subject to a minimum attendance of 7 meetings.

Meetings take place on the Last Wednesday of Every Month at approx 8pm at:

**THE PARSONAGE COUNTRY  
HOUSE HOTEL, ESCRICK,  
Nr YORK**

### Aims of YARAK

- \* To maintain birds in good health at all times.
- \* To help and encourage newcomers to our sport.
- \* To portray a positive image of falconry to members of the public.
- \* To abide by the code of practice of the Hawk Board.
- \* To arrange regular field meetings.
- \* To encourage national and regional liaison with other clubs and organisations.

- \* To initiate a club breeding programme.
- \* To help in the campaign to keep falconry a legitimate country sport.
- \* To encourage family involvement.
- \* **But most of all to have fun and maintain the traditions of this noble sport.**

**For further information Contact:**  
**Karl Leadley (Secretary) on:**  
**01937 849616**  
**Malcolm Allison (Press Officer) on:**  
**01944 738369.**

### MAINTAINING TRADITION IMPROVING STANDARDS.

## Scottish Hawking Club Report Summer 2000

The New Year's field meetings were dogged by poor weather, we had to postpone a couple of meetings, but those that did venture out were of the boldest nature only. That said sport was to be had, and with the rabbit population at probably it's highest for a number of years, good flights were had by all. This summer has been the busiest for a long time, firstly Lord Watson's anti hunting bill was published, and against all the assurances that falconry would not be affected, surprise surprise falconry is affected. The Scottish Countryside Alliance scored top marks by hitting Lord Watson with our plight, and got him to admit one week after publishing

his bill that he would have to make major amendments to take falconry out of the bill's remit. There is a plea later on in the magazine asking you to write to the Rural Affairs Committee please help us.

Secondly we had a great success at this years Scone palace Game fair, the SHC has been urging the fairs committee to enlarge the falconry area for a number of years, this year they allowed us a mini falconry village. We had 6 falconry furniture manufactures, a leather supplier, a hawk food supplier, an artist, the SHC the BFC (Scottish group) the Scottish Hawk Board, and Adrian Hallgarth the resident falconer, all in attendance in a prime position. It all went down hugely successfully, and the fair's attendance was up by 10% to over 30,000 for the 2 days. We look forward to doing even better next year, so all you falconers in the north of England and Highlands of Scotland mark the next Scone Palace in your diaries for 2001.

Our next foray will have been the CLA game fair at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, although we don't normally attend fairs outside Scotland we feel the support of the Hawk Board is necessary at this difficult time for fieldsports. We look forward to meeting all you falconers who take the time to visit us. One last plea please will all falconers who fly Merlins or Sparrowhawks in Scotland please apply for the correct licenses from the Scottish Executive, this is the first year that they have handled this and if no one applies we could lose licenses all together.

Good Hawking

## STOLEN

Dear All,

Very sadly we had three female Harris Hawks Stolen from the Hawk Walk some time last night. It was a full moon and they all had their leashes cut.

Female Harris Hawk - Lambe - 1992 hatched by John Shaw in Derbyshire. Part moulted, some of last years feathers in breast giving slightly mottled appearance. Ring No. 12860W (ring is brown) She is Microchipped and we have the number here.

Female Harris Hawk - Common Blue - 1998. Found in Yorkshire and donated to the Centre by West Yorkshire Police. No ring. Microchipped here.

Female Harris Hawk - Bell - 1999 Hatched here at NBPC, juvenile plumage still. Ring No. 17NATBIRDPREYW (Green)

We are pretty convinced that we will be able to recognise Lambe at anytime, after eight years. We can certainly blood test Bell as the parents are still here.

Would anyone with any information please ring 01531 820286  
Regards Jemima Parry-Jones. National Birds of Prey Centre.



# FALCONRY TERMS - AN ALTERNATIVE (Pt I)

By Malcolm Allison

AI	MAJOR ROAD.
ANKLET	A BABY ANK!
ASPERGILLOSIS	I DO NOT KNOW WHAT A GILLOSIS IS BUT I AM SURE IT MUST BE HANDY TO HAVE A SPARE ONE.
ASTROTURF	MARIJUANA.
AUSTRINGER	STRANGE PERSON WHO RUNS AROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE SHOUTING AND WHISTLING AND CARRYING LADDERS, CLIMBING ROPES ETC.
BAG	SPOUSE.
BAGGY	DESCRIPTIVE TERM FOR EYES AFTER SPENDING THE NIGHT UNDER A TREE WAITING FOR YOUR GOS TO COME DOWN TO THE LURE.
BATE	SANDWICHES ETC., REQUIRED WHILST WAITING FOR GOSHAWK TO RETURN.
BEAM	SHAFT OF LIGHT USED FOR LOCATING LOST HAWKS AT NIGHT.
BELLS	AMBER LIQUID. ALSO USEFUL WHEN WAITING FOR GOS TO RETURN.
BLOCK	WHAT YOUR HEAD WILL BE ON IF YOU ARE LATE BACK FROM A HAWKING TRIP AGAIN!
BRAIL	THE ONLY STYLE OF WRITING YOU WILL BE ABLE TO READ AFTER YOU HAVE TRIED TO GET YOUR IMPRINT REDTAIL OFF HER FIRST KILL!
BUSTARD	PROBABLY A MISPRINT.
CADGE	ANCIENT METHOD, THOUGHT TO BE OF SCOTTISH ORIGIN, OF GAINING LURES, CHICKS AND OTHER PIECES OF EQUIPMENT.
CERE	TERMS OFTEN USED BY PEOPLE WHO FLY GOSHAWKS, IE, "WHERE IS SHE, CAN YOU CERE?"
CHECK	SMALL PIECE OF PAPER USED FOR REPLACING LOST HAWKS.
CLOSED RING	PHYSICAL CONDITION WHICH YOU WON'T HAVE WHEN YOU FIRST FLY YOUR HAWK LOOSE.
COPE	WHAT YOU LEARN TO DO WHEN THINGS GOWRONG, BECAUSE THEY WILL!
COWERING	WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING WHEN YOU GET BACK FROM A HUNTING TRIP LATE, AGAIN, AND YOUR WIFE IS WAITING FOR YOU WITH A ROLLING PIN.
CRAB	PARASITIC LOUSE OFTEN CAUGHT BY FALCONERS ON OVERSEAS FIELD MEETS.
CREANCE (PRON CRAYONS)	SMALL STICKS OF BRIGHTLY COLOURED WAX USED FOR WRITING LOST HAWK NOTICES.
CROP	VEGETATION IN FIELDS FOR WALKING UPON TO PREVENT WELLIES GETTING CAKED IN MUD.
DIURNAL	WELSH FALCONER.
DNA	DYSLEXIC FALCONERS FAVOURITE CLOTHES SHOP.
DUTCH-HOOD	CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICE FOR FALCONERS WIVES.
ELECTRO-EJACULATION	£50.00 PER SESSION FROM MADAME FIFI.
ENTER	YOU NEED TO GET PERMISSION TO DO THIS IN ORDER TO REMOVE YOUR BIRD FROM YOUR NEIGHBOURS CAT, DOG, DUCK, PIGEON ETC.
EGG	FILLING FOR SANDWICHES (SEE BATE).
EGG, GAS EXCHANGE	FOUL SMELLING FLATULENCE CAUSED BY ABOVE.
EYAS	TERMS USED BY WEST COUNTRY FALCONERS, SUCH AS, EYAS GOT ME A NEW 'ORK T'FLY.
EYRIE	USED T O LOCATE TIERCEL, IE; EYRIE, IS OVER 'ERE.
FEAK	ANOTHER MISPRINT.
FURNITURE	ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH FALCONRY; STRAIGHT JACKET, VALIUM ETC.
FRET-MARKS	BRUISES CAUSED BY ROLLING PIN, (SEE COWERING).
GORGE	STEEP SIDED, INACCESSIBLE VALLEY AT THE BOTTOM OF WHICH YOUR BIRD WILL MAKE HER FIRST KILL.
HACK	GENERAL TERM FOR FALCONERS ATTEMPT AT CUTTING LEATHER.
HAGGARD	DESCRIPTIVE TERM FOR FALCONER AFTER SEASON ENDS.
HARE	DOWNY COVERING ON FALCONER HEAD (USUALLY) WHICH IS FREQUENTLY PULLED OUT.
HAWKING DIARY	COLLECTION OF FAIRY TALES.
HOBBY	RELAXING PASTIME NOT FALCONRY!
HOOD	HEADGEAR FOR KEEPING HAIR DRY WHILST WAITING FOR YOUR BIRD TO COME DOWN FROM A TREE.
IMP	MISCHIEVOUS ELF WHO SITS ON YOUR SHOULDER AND PERSUADES YOU TO SLIP YOUR HAWK EVEN THOUGH SHE IS 6OZ OVER WEIGHT.
IMPRINT	NOISY B*****D
INCUBATOR	HEATED DISPLAY CASE FOR STORING FALCONERS EGG COLLECTION.
JACK	TOOL USED TO REMOVE VEHICLE FROM FIELDS, OFTEN USED JUST AFTER THE WORDS "YES WE CAN GET OVER THAT, EASY".
JERKIN	ARTICLE OF WARM CLOTHING, USEFUL FOR WAITING UNDER TREES.
JESSE	PERSON WHO DOES NOT FLY A HAWK.
JOKIN	COMMON EXCLAMATION USUALLY FOLLOWING THE PHRASE "EYE LAD, SHE CAME STRAIGHT BACK".
KECKS	SLANG TERM FOR TROUSERS.





# A TASTE FOR THE *Exotic* Martin Hollinshead

UK Golden Eagle falconry is flourishing. Never before has there been so much serious interest in this species: captive breeding, a healthy number of imports, lots of flying, and a growing awareness of this bird's potential and versatility. We are even seeing Continental eagle owners coming over to hawk brown and mountain hares. But in this climate of 'eagle mania' the Golden Eagle isn't getting all the attention.

The other evening I was talking to a friend in the north who has spent the past season flying a Martial eagle - one of the two he owns. And with the numerous other exotics around the country, 'big bird' falconry is flashing a real show of colour. The work with captive bred Verreaux's eagles has been most interesting, and even the Bald Eagle has been taken afield. It may be that UK falconry has, at times, been a bit slow to push forward, but these eagle devotees have snatched the ball on the bounce and are running with it!

With all these intriguing goings on does the Golden Eagle need to fear for its crown? Perhaps a glance at some of the challengers might be interesting. The obvious starting point in the Golden Eagle's own family - the Aquila's. Here's a group bursting with big brown 'golden eagle-like' eagles. If there are any contenders surely they will be here. Yet from a troop that boasts at least 9 species, and as many as 11 if we separate the Tawny from the Steppe and recognise the Spanish race of the Imperial eagle as an individual species, there are just two birds that deserve consideration, the already mentioned African Verreaux's eagle and the Australian Wedge Tailed Eagle. Birds like the Tawny, Steppe and Imperial might overshadow their smaller relatives, but they can't even begin to compete with the Verreaux's and Wedgetail. The latter two join the Golden Eagle to form a 'super group', far different to other Aquila's. They possess size (though so can the Steppe and Imperial), have more impressive feet and talons than other Aquila's, and most important of all, they are ready to use this weaponry. These birds are keen hunters, geared to hunting large and sometimes formidable prey.

The Verreaux's eagle is particularly interesting. Similar in size and shape to the Golden Eagle, it boasts a proportionately larger foot span and has a flying ability that some would say puts the better known bird under serious pressure. And, with its adult black and white plumage, few eagles look

quite so stunning. I have seen this bird flown to hares on the continent, but in the UK it has yet to make its mark. Some success has been achieved against rabbits, but as a hare-catcher it has not yet been fully tested. This really is one area of exotic falconry that I do hope someone will fully explore. The Verreaux's is begging for



recognition.

The Wedge-tailed Eagle is the smallest of our 'big three', but it is still a substantial bird and one that comes with a hidden qualification - this is the most versatile of the Aquila's. With the exception of dense forest, this species is able to scratch a living almost anywhere. It is both active pursuit predator and high altitude scanner. In short, the Wedgetail can become whatever conditions require, and when hawking over the varied landscapes of the UK, this type of flexibility is extremely valuable. This eagle has received very little attention from falconers, but it has been flown. As with the Verreaux's Eagle, the main quarry has been the rabbit and it's a type of hawking the bird seems very compatible with.

Before leaving the Aquila's, something needs to be said about hybrids. The most frequently seen hybrid is the Steppe-Golden Eagle, but Imperial-Golden Eagles have also been produced. The Golden

Eagle influence gives both of these hybrid's sufficient 'go' to make them suitable field companions. The Steppe hybrid has been quite well tested in central Europe and has been found quite up to the task of direct-pursuit hare flights.

Let's move on to our African show stopper, the Martial Eagle. Africa's largest eagle and ranking as one of the biggest and most impressive eagles in the world, this must surely be the most outlandish alien to hunt over British turf. In one very distinctive way, it should fit perfectly with the type of eagle loved falconry so loved in Britain - soaring. The wild Martial Eagle is a bird of open country and is highly aerial, spending much time high aloft. And, indeed, the Martials that have been flown here - and there has been more than one - have shown no reluctance to 'go up'. More of a problem has been the commitment to the hunt. Flown to rabbit and hares, the huge Martial has returned less than favourable results. Last season attempts by my colleague in the north saw the jury still out, but everything points to a more positive second run at it. Of course, it should be remembered that when the wild Martial eagle goes up, it so very often comes down at large game birds. Perhaps the Martial might prove to be the ultimate feather-catching eagle.

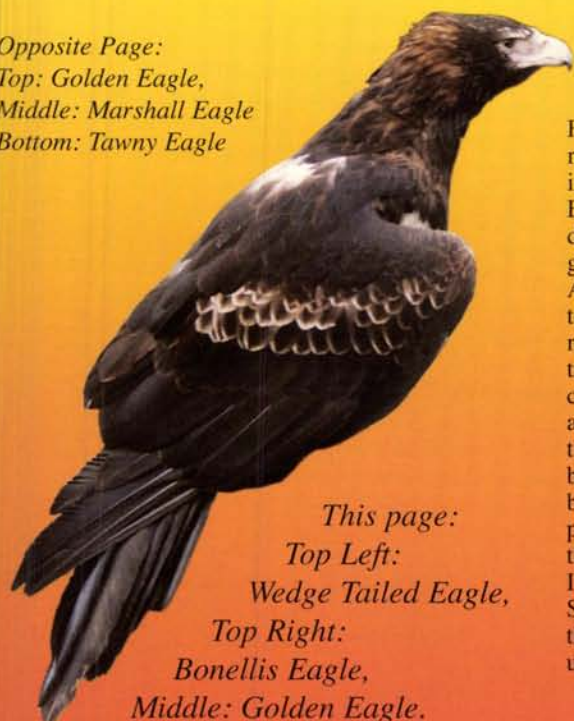
The American Bald Eagle might seem the most peculiar choice so far - a sea eagle for falconry? But are field trials with this bird really so eccentric? I think not. The bald eagle actually possesses many of the qualities desired in a hunting eagle. It's big and powerful, strong and swift in flight, and it's rapacious. It may not look the part, but the choice between this bird and any of the more conventional looking, lesser Aquila's is quickly made.

The bald eagle can be used for both direct-pursuit flights and soaring. It does both well but it's with the direct-pursuit approach that it shows a special quality - bottomless power reserves. Sea eagles are strong flyers, they have to be. Quarry that is





Opposite Page:  
Top: Golden Eagle,  
Middle: Marshall Eagle  
Bottom: Tawny Eagle



This page:

Top Left:

Wedge Tailed Eagle,

Top Right:

Bonellis Eagle,

Middle: Golden Eagle.

Bottom Left: Bald Eagle.

Bottom Right: Verreaux Eagle

Falconers Fair) demonstrating this long-range ability at a big East-European meeting in the 1980's. He was flying a Bald Eagle that was normally used for 'fishing' demonstrations and managed to fish a fully grown hare right off the field! In North America there has been experimentation too. Respected falconer Morlan Nelson rates the Bald Eagle highly and tells of trained birds stooping at mallards and even cast flights. Has this wonderful eagle got any drawbacks at all? Well, it must be said that the Bald Eagle's willingness to use its beak aggressively can make it a difficult bird to handle. Some falconers report few problems, others confess to living in fear of their birds' wire cutting apparatus! Incidentally, biting is also a trait of the Steppe/Imperial Eagle-type Aquila's, and the hybrids are certainly not averse to using their beaks.

To sum up, one of the biggest problems



caught over open water has to be carried, often still struggling, long distances with no gradient or hill-lift to help; it's powered flight out and powered flight back, with nowhere in between to rest. In direct-pursuit flights to ground game, this translates into a bird that can take on enormously long flatland slips. I remember Michael Holzfeind (who many readers will have seen trying to show balloon training under difficult conditions at the

bigger 'sensitives'. Again, the Golden Eagle comes out on top. This species is extremely cold tolerant and temperatures that would freeze some of the competition solid, do little more than put a nice edge on its hunting condition. No, all in all, I feel that stealing the Golden Eagles' crown is going to take a more serious assault.

when assessing any of the less familiar birds is the fact that so few have been flown and many have been hand-me-downs or have come with no background history at all. Obviously, in some cases there is a problem with landscape/hunting/quarry combinations; some birds are being asked to do a job they are not suited to. There are no such problems for the Golden Eagle, it's hunting quarries it knows well enough and is often flying over its native haunts. Of course, it wouldn't be wise to give this aspect of the discussion too much weight because many non-indigenous birds do very nicely indeed, look at the wildly exotic Harris'. One thing that can't be manoeuvred around is the problem that many imports have with our climate. This is something the Harris' knows all about and the free-lofting approach so strongly recommended with the parabuteo should be looked to with the





# LURE OF THE FALCON

Pt II

## Francis Allen

Greg had to prepare for the winter and make sure the wood shed was well stocked with split, dry logs

The days became very short in winter this far north, and the weather could block you in for weeks.

When the snow fell in the glen it was often too deep to walk, this kept Greg house bound and bored. After the first few days with all the neglected household chores completed, he was champing at the bit to be back on the hill.

Luckily, this year as it turned out, was not a bad year. Only blocked in twice, and not for more than a few days at a time. This had suited Greg fine, but he knew this gradual change in climate was not a good sign. Nature at least needed these harsh winters, it was her way of cleansing the system. Killing off the bugs and pests and sorting out the weak, making sure only the very fit and healthy made it through to spring and a new breeding season.

All this man-made pollution was changing the climate, Greg had moved to the highlands to get away from all the filth in the South. Sadly there was nowhere totally free. He had noticed speckles of muck in the virgin snow. Picked up in the atmosphere, frozen acid rain in fact.

With the coming of spring and the gradual and welcomed lengthening of the day, Greg had noticed the falcons in the vicinity of Beinn Mhor. First just a single bird at a time, but one morning whilst Greg rested his bones on a comfortable rock in the warming sun, his attention was focused towards Beinn Mhor by the anxious checking calls of the falcons. Through his binoculars he could see both peregrines stooping in turn, then came into view the reason. A juvenile Golden Eagle, now flying out over the loch and trying to dodge the stooping peregrines. This eagle had inadvertently come too close to the falcons' territory and was in no uncertain manner being shown the error of its ways. It would remember in future, and steer well clear of that rock face. Greg knew from this demonstration of territory defence that the peregrines were favouring this site for this year's eyrie. So long as nothing disturbed them,

this is where she would lay her eggs. Greg was pleased with what he had just witnessed, not only was it a fine display of falcon stooping, but it had saved him many hours foot slogging the hills searching for this year's site.

That evening as Greg was clearing up after finishing his dinner, he was pondering on Dick's proposal to swap the eyas falcons. He would welcome that extra cash, the bills were starting to pile up again, and Duncan from the garage was threatening no more credit for petrol and repairs until he saw the colour of some cash. Suddenly the phone burst into a

"Sounds fine to me", replied Greg.

"Great see ya then mate. Ta ra", and he was gone.

Greg kept a close watch on the famous falcons and her nest ledge. He first knew the eggs had hatched, whilst watching the tiercel land on the nest ledge with food, he could hear the eyasses chittering to be fed.

It was time Dick was here, he thought.

That evening Greg phoned Dick, and as always Dick was very excitable.

"Oh, bloody hell", he shouted on hearing the news that the peregrines had young.

"I've only just had mine ringed today. It'll take a couple of days to copy these rings, I will try and get up to you by this weekend. God, it's all happening a bit sooner than I expected."

That evening Greg sorted out his climbing gear, it was a lot of years since he had dropped into a falcon eyrie, he began to feel the old adrenalin flowing. At the bottom of his old rucksack were his faithful climbing irons. "Well, I won't be needing these", he said softly to himself. As he handled them he felt a sticky substance on the spikes. Amazing, fir sap still tacky after all those years, mind the damp cupboard helped to keep everything moist.

As he rubbed his fingers trying to remove the sticky

sap he recalled the last time he was belted to a tree, feet straining in those irons, ears deafened with the defiant kekking of an angry German female Goshawk not far away. As he tried to work his way around a large stick nest to remove a couple of eyasses, palms sweating, stomach churning, expecting any minute to receive a passing smack in the back of the head from the angry female. As he day-dreamed of those days collecting eyas gosses to send to British falconers he could swear he could smell the pungent pine of the nest trees.

Next morning Greg had an unexpected visit from Roger Dowkes, who was a staff member of the Scottish Society for the Protection of Birds. Roger said he was just passing, but it made Greg a little jumpy, he tried to keep calm but he felt Roger sensed maybe a little flutter in Greg's voice.



strangled warble, breaking the silence and giving Greg a jolt.

As he picked up the receiver, his ear was filled with that unforgettable breathless breakneck speech of Dick's "Hi old son, how are you? What's the weather like up there? Are you keeping an eye on those falcons?" he blurted without even stopping for breath or waiting for an answer.

"God, you must be telepathic or something, I was just thinking about you, you old rogue," replied Greg. "And yes, I think I know where those falcons are going to nest", he continued.

"Bloody great", shouted Dick. "I've spoken to Otto and he is really excited about getting these falcons. I'll ring you again in about six or seven weeks, by then the young ones will be ready to ring and we can swap them with my two. Is that OK with you?" Dick inquired.



Then after a little casual small talk he dropped a bombshell in Greg's lap. "Have you seen tricky Dicky lately?" he asked.

"Who?" inquired Greg, knowing full well who Tricky Dicky was.

"Come on, you old mate Dick Slater", said Roger abruptly. "His name came up on a routine report of suspicious parked cars in the area".

"Oh well, he was up here for a day or so a few months ago", spluttered Greg. "He probably stopped for a pee on the way home," suggested Greg.

"Maybe, but I don't like that hook this side of the border so close to the nesting season. Things always seem to go missing after a sighting of Tricky Dicky. I'm warning you Greg, watch that one." said Roger sternly.

"He's not interested in pinching birds, he breeds dozens of them", defended Greg. "Maybe so, but we'll be keeping a close eye on him from now on. I'll look forward to catching that one red-handed", smiled Roger.

As Roger drove away, Greg worried, trust Dicks vehicle to get spotted, things were looking too hot. I'll ring Dick and tell him it's off, he thought. "But what if they have tapped my phone. Hah, they can't do that, mind I'll use the phone box just in case", Greg said to himself.

That afternoon Greg phoned Dick from the village call box and told him about Roger Dowkes. Greg felt it would be safer to call the whole thing off, but Dick would hear none of it.

"Don't panic, he's all wind and water that Dowkes" said Dick. "We'll be in and out of that eyrie before he's had breakfast. I got the rings, so I'll be up late tonight and we'll do the swap at first light. So I'll see you later on, ta ra", click, gone.

As always ringing off before Greg could reply, this infuriated him as he shouted "sod" into the dead receiver.

Greg had settled down to watch the late film on television when the silence outside was broken by a car dragging the gravel outside his door, trying desperately to stop before going past and into the loch.

Greg was not familiar with the engine sound, but the style of driving was definitely Dick's. Greg went outside to see the back of a smart new Subaru estate car, from which emerged Dick with that stupid grin from ear to ear. Is he ever miserable? Thought Greg, feeling the inevitability of it all. There was no saying no to Dick, he just didn't hear a word of it.

"New car?" spluttered Greg.

"Well, you said Dowkes had my number, so I thought there was no point in making life easy for him," sneered Dick. "I've got the eyas falcons and they are still wearing DoE rings, won't cut them

off until the last minute, so let's go in and have some tea, I'm starving said Dick, pushing Greg back inside.

The next morning Greg rose at 3.30am, it was still dark outside, but only just. The kettle was simmering gently on the stove as Greg rattled the fire. Placing half a dozen or quarter splits of dry fir wood on the hot embers soon brought a squeal of steam from the heavy iron-bottomed kettle.

Greg placed a large mug of tea beside Dicks bed and gave him a sharp dig with his foot. Dick just rolled over and pulled the covers tighter around him. Greg leant over and flicked Dick's ear with his finger and caught him fair and square. Thwack, went his ear lobe. Greg wasn't prepared as Dick exploded up and forward. The bed was only a foot or so from the wall, as Dick fell to the floor his bulk pushing the bed back and into the knees of Greg who was still leaning over it. Greg's legs went from under him, he went face down onto the now empty bed, spilling the contents of his mug of tea over Dick on the floor.

Dick was howling blue murder,



although it was more from shock of the abrupt awakening, than from the temperature of Greg's tea, which was at best lukewarm.

It certainly helped to lighten the atmosphere, every time Greg spotted Dicks red ear lobe, he fell about. Dick took it all in good fun, and as always used it to his advantage to keep Greg jollied along.

The morning dawned still and slightly misty as they both stood above the falcon eyrie. Talking in a soft hushed voice, Greg explained to Dick as he secured his ropes to a very convenient Rowan tree. Within minutes of arriving Greg disappeared over the edge, abseiling down to the eyrie.

Suddenly the dawn silence was shattered as an angry tiercel circled above, screaming his protest. He was soon joined by the falcon making even more noise, as soon as she arrived the tiercel stooped at Greg, and Dick felt the rope jerk.

Dick called out to Greg, but he got no reply, no doubt Greg could not hear with all the noise, the peregrines were making.

Dick assumed that Greg was on the eyrie ledge, as both birds were stooping in turn, they were putting on a fantastic display. Three tugs on the rope signalled to Dick the Greg had reached the bottom of the crag. He hurriedly pulled up the ropes and packed them away in Greg's old rucksack. By the time Dick arrived at the base of the mountain, Greg was sitting on the falcon box with his head in his hands.

"have you got them, how many were there?" asked Dick excitedly.

"Four altogether, I got two good sized falcons, mind I had a hell of a job ringing them, another day or so would have been too late, and that falcon hit me three times, fast, bang, bang, bang. She stooped, hit me, looped over, hit me, again and again. I've never been hit by a falcon before. Christ, she nearly knocked me off the ledge, good job I had this climbing helmet on.

"Now you see why Otto wants these falcons, they are bloody fearless," smiled Dick.

"Let's get back home and get some breakfast, the sooner these birds are off the hill the better I'll feel", suggested Greg.

After breakfast things started to move fast. Greg packed an overnight bag and tidied the croft. With everything in Dick's estate car they were away by nine o'clock.

They were to spend the night at Dick's, pack the falcon eyasses into a travelling box, and Greg would set off for Heathrow in the morning, Dick was to follow on and meet Greg at Otto's.

All went like clockwork, Greg sailed through customs, all the relevant documents

were in order as Dick was a stickler for detail.

Otto had Greg met at Vienna airport and driven to his mansion. Greg felt this was all too easy, and still could not really see why Dick had insisted he accompany the eyasses to Otto's.

Otto was beside himself with excitement when Greg handed him the box containing the two eyas falcons. After meticulously examining them both, he hurried them away to one of his breeding chambers, to be introduced to an old peregrine falcon who was an experienced foster mother.

That evening Otto entertained Greg to one of the best meals he had ever consumed, and afterwards engulfed in a large leather high-backed chair he sipped brandy and talked of his beloved highlands and islands.

The door opened and in walked Dick, Otto leapt up his feet and threw his arms around him in welcome. Greg noticed that Dick seemed agitated, and when he



emerged from Otto's embrace, he knew all was not well.

"What's wrong with you?" he inquired  
"I'm not sure, call it paranoia but I think I was followed from the airport", said Dick.

He had hardly spoken when they heard a vehicle pull up on the gravelled drive. Muffled voices in the entrance hall as they were greeted, and then the announcement that the visitors were from Interpol.

Greg nearly fainted, what on earth would Interpol want with a couple of falcon eyasses?

As the officers entered the room, one face was horribly familiar to Dick and Greg. Roger Dowkes, of the SSPB came in behind the two Interpol officers.

"Hello Greg, I told you to keep away from this one, he's nothing but trouble", whispered Dowkes, as the officers introduced themselves to Otto.

Dick butted in "What are you poking your nose into now, Dowkes, this is nothing to do with you, these are captive bred falcons and here are the documents to prove it.

"They look in order", said Dowkes as he leafed through the paperwork. "But I would like to see the young falcons".

"Well you can't, they are under a foster bird, and that would constitute undue disturbance", insisted Dick.

At this point Otto interrupted, "I have no objection, the old falcon will not mind as long as these gentlemen keep nice and

quiet whilst we are near her chamber."

He led them out of the room, and then picked up the phone to instruct that part of the security system be de-activated. As Otto led them to his falcon mews, Greg noticed that Otto still had to tap in code numbers to open the doors, and that the security cameras still followed them as they passed each one.

Otto went into another room, and passed through a hatch to Dick, each of the two eyas falcons. Dick showed the closed DoE rings on each bird to Dowkes, who checked in turn the paperwork.

"Well, you have done a good job here Dick, I can't tell", he said, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, these are quality bred falcons? I only produce the best, that is why the best falconers like Otto order from me" Protested Dick.

Greg was getting decidedly nervous, he could not believe how convincing Dick was, he just prayed Dowkes didn't turn his attention on him. Dowkes offered the eyasses back through the hatch to Otto, then he offered a well disguised apology for interrupting the evening. The three of them entered into a little light hearted banter, centred on Dick's reputation. Greg just kept smiling and praying. All the while the two Interpol officers stood, stern faced and never said a word.

After a few minutes Otto led everyone back through the security system and to the front door.

Just as they were about to leave one of the officers finally spoke. He asked Otto in German, if he could see the crate in which the falcons were transported in. Otto looked puzzled and went to fetch the box. It was a fine box, beautifully constructed in thin plywood and yet very rigid. The inside was lined with hessian, and the falcons had been in a sort of hammock which was sewn to the sides.

The officer cut and removed the hessian, as though he were looking for something hidden. He tipped the box over to see if there was a false bottom, bits of discarded food, castings and a shower of feather quill dust fell to the floor. Dowkes apologised to Otto for the mess the officer was making, and bent down to pick up the castings and old bits of meat. As he placed them back into the box, he rolled one casting between thumb and index finger as he would any casting found on the hill, to identify any prey species falling victim to predators. In the centre of the casting was a hard lump, as he looked at the contents in the palm of his hand, a small, sellotaped tube emerged from the centre of the casting. In the tube was a sizable diamond earring, the other casting revealed the pair.

"Oh Dicky, hot rocks, you just can't resist them can you?" grinned Dowkes, "And there I was thinking you were pinching scottish falcons, bloody smart that, feeding the rocks parcelled up in the falcon food. I think you had all better come along with us gentlemen."

## RAPTORCARE

### Your Boarding Problems Taken Care of

Tony Bryant Launched Raptorcare eighteen months ago when he decided that going away, for more than one day, when you have birds of prey, is very difficult. Who is going to look after your pride and joy? Some are fortunate enough to have reliable friends to care for a bird but most Falconers find themselves with more than one bird. This collecting of birds, Tony has found, is a disease that goes with the sport. To ask a friend to look after three or four birds is rather difficult.

Hence their launch of Raptorcare. Tony can care for up to eight birds at a time, at the moment and tailors his care to the owners individual requirements, eg. should the bird need to be kept at a specific weight.

Rat, Quail and chicks are always kept in stock but any special food requirements can be catered for by prior arrangement. The are close to the reputable food suppliers Honey Brook Farm.

Tony started flying birds seven years ago, after being interested in the sport for several years. He took a course with Biff Norman of Falconry Furniture. Biff is now near Monmouth but at the time was just down the road from the National Birds of Prey Centre at Newent and had spent much time working with Jemima Parry-Jones.

Tony's experience is more with broadwings and shortwings but he is quite happy to take other raptors.

The birds that they take are tethered in weatherings during the day. The weatherings are well fenced and secure and the birds are kept boxed at night in an alarmed shed. Our German Wirehaired Pointers are on patrol 24 hours a day and it would be a brave person who would come into the garden uninvited. It is hoped, shortly to have shelf perches for night or any reason that a bird may need to be kept in during the day.

A number of Raptorcare clients are now returning with their birds for a second visit. Marie Louise Lachallas, Chairman of the Campaign for Falconry, (or should that be Chair



Person) says that she has regained a social life which she had forsaken for 'Flo' her much love Sparrowhawk. She is now quite happy to let Raptorcare take care of her. We have actually taken care of Marie-Louise's two dogs as well as the bird on a rather domestic arrangement but this is something that is being looked into, as to offer care for your working dog as well as your birds may be a bonus.

The home of Raptorcare is in Gloucestershire and is situated midway between Bristol and Gloucester.

Should anyone like to know more about Raptorcare, Tony may be contacted on 01454 294258. Mobile 0370 580687 email: tonshei@aol.com





# BLOCK BUSTER REVISITED

DAVID WILSON

## Hawk Talk

### The Prior Method

In this issue we have an article about a gentleman who had a problem with permanent flying jesses. I mentioned this to Ray Prior who said he had a solution to the problem of changing mews jesses for field jesses. Make the end of the flying jess slightly narrower and after removing the swivel put the narrowed end through the slit in the mews jess and as you pull it out the flying jess should pull through. We must admit we haven't tried it and the proof of the pudding as they say, but Ray assures me it works. When changing back most people do not have a problem as the bird is usually occupied with food.

I hope the block article in the last issue helped some of you to take a look at the design and type of top covering for your blocks, or helped you to choose a suitable one for the coming season.

At this year's Falconers Fair, as there are every year, there were new ideas and designs from a lot of the Falconry Furniture makers, this year saw a completely new rubber topped block from Crown Falconry and a swivel block for eagles from Double R Products.

Subsequent to my last article Ray Prior approached me to say that he doesn't put a recess in the top of his blocks for the astroturf but attaches it directly to the top, as the hard wooden rim round the top can cause foot problems, but he does say that if you have the astroturf on the top then you have to have the leash longer to compensate.

### LARGE SWIVEL BLOCK FROM DOUBLE R PRODUCTS

Rob Lippard was asked to design a very large block for eagles which would swivel freely. As you can see from the photo the block is very strong, the base can be fixed directly to the wood or cement floor or it has three stainless steel spikes which screw up into the



base for use on grass. The top is made in two sections, the bottom, which is stationary and the large top that can move freely round with a race bearing between the two pieces of wood, which are made from oak and treated with many coats of finishing oil. For a price ring Rob or Rita on 01582 615741.

### RUBBER TOP FOR BLOCKS FROM CROWN FALCONRY

Jim Moss has been designing & making rubber topped blocks for the last twelve months. Experimenting with different ways of fixing the top to the block. He has devised a way so the rubber will stay firmly in place using a tongue and groove design, the top can



then be removed with ease for washing. I must say that the top I have been using for a little while, when washed looks like knew. As you can see from the photograph the surface of the rubber is uneven, with raised, smooth contours to reduce the pressure on the falcons' feet. One thing that must be taken into consideration is that rubber can get quite



hot if left in direct sunlight.

The rubber tops are £6 each if bought on their own. There is one size at the moment which is six and a half inches, and Jim can supply you with a block to put it on.

For more information please ring Jim on 01246 237213



### BLOCK HEIGHTS

Following on from Davids' article in the last issue about blocks, he mentioned block heights. I was approached by another falconer who said he had seen an article in NAFAs Hawk Chalk (Dec '97) where a gentleman by the name of Jack Stoddart explained that the height of a block should be no higher the beak of your falcon when it is standing on the ground. The reason is as follows: He observed a hooded falcon bate from her block and turn around and using her beak as a guide, find the block, ascertain how high it was and jump back up. If the block was too high she would not have been able to find the top and therefore would not know how high to jump.

### EARLY START

Bird that have been free lofted for either breeding or to moult will inevitably have had a high quality diet. To get a head start on the training process reduce your birds rations in quality for 7 - 10 days before taking it out of the aviary. This will help reduce the fat store that the bird has built up during the summer and lessen the time it takes to get the bird going. It is not wise to do this however, if the bird hasn't finished moulting, and is only good for seasoned birds, not youngsters.



# 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).

## HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

*Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society*

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

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

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

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

## THE HAWKING CLUB

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

Llantrisant. 8pm 2nd Monday  
Plymouth. The Woodpecker, South Brent, 8pm 3rd Monday  
Northampton. The Red Lion, Kissingbury, 8pm 4th Monday.

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

Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333

## Northern England Falconry Club

### CLUB MEETINGS

ARE HELD AT

**"The Stickler"**

**Public House.**

**Stickler Lane, Bradford.**

**Or Contact: Jeff Thelwell on:**

**01274 612334**

Email: NEFC@lineone.net

## THE NORTHERN IRELAND HAWKING CLUB

Members of the Countryside Alliance.

**To Protect, Conserve and Educate.**

**For all aspects of Falconry, the keeping and breeding of birds of prey.**

Contact: Mike Gibb, Hon, and Sec:

Tel: 01247-472413

Or: 07713-887551

E-mail: HYPERLINK

mailto:mike@bustop18.freemove.co.uk

nihawkingclub@hotmail.com

## 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 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 SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER

Benefits include:- Individual insurance to £25,000

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£2,000,000 Public Liability at field meetings.

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

## STH GLOS & WEST WILTS RAPTOR CLUB

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

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

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

Telephone

Martin 0117 9710019

Gary 01454 201702

## MEETINGS of The Welsh Hawking Club

are held monthly, 8pm at:

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

**N.Wales.** The Goshawk, Mouldsworth. Nr Chester. 1st Mon.

**Exeter Group.** The Ley Arms, Kenn, Nr Exeter. 3rd. Mon.

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

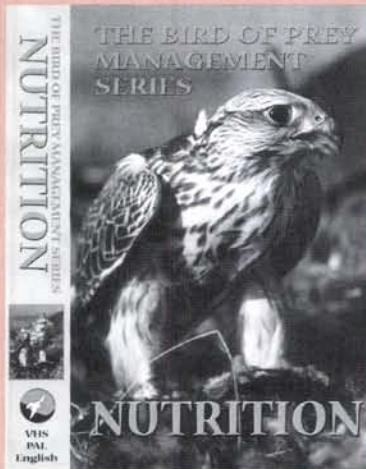
**Bath Group.** The Bull Inn, Hilton, Nr Bath, 1st Weds

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

For further information ring Secretary: Mike Clowes on 01529 240443



# Reviews



## Birds of Prey - Management Series. Nutrition

Price £24.99 + £2 p&p

Available from  
Faraway Films, P.O. Box 19  
Carmarthen SA33 5YL.

The film is also available in  
Spanish. Details Tel/Fax (0044)  
01267 233864  
email: office@falcons.co.uk

This video is the first in the series and covers Nutrition. The video was film at Hunting Falcons International in the UK and on location in Mongolia, Spain, Abu Dhabi and Zimbabwe.

Taking an in depth look at what to feed your bird, and why. Starting with a look at wild birds, illustrating different requirements for different birds. Some prefer feather, some fur, and some insects, and some aren't bothered which. Which takes in Hawks, Owls, Eagles and Falcons.

Next is the diet we provide. Nigel Barton BSc, PhD, raptor biologist and aviculturist shows that variety is the spice of life, and all foods have different nutritional values. He pays special attention to the importance of the liver. Each food item is discussed with its value explained, also the difference between fresh and frozen.

Disease and poisoning is looked at, and the preparation of pigeons and suitable storage to prevent trichomoniasis.

The next section is Digestion.

Nick explains this, beginning with the food entering the crop, travelling down through the digestive system, explaining each process as the food travels through.

Next comes range, where Nick explains how and why it is administered, how it works and what not to do.

Casting, when and what to give.

Washed meat and the reason for it.

Nick uses a system of feeding by tenths to monitor how much food his bird has had when it eats what it has caught. He actually shows this on the video using a male gyrfalcon.

Baby food and food for junior birds is covered next, preparation, feeding and storage is ably demonstrated by Diana Durman-Walters.

Disease is returned to again when the subject of feeding wild caught animals or road kills to your bird is covered, taking a look at the risk of parasites, worms, bacteria and lead poisoning.

Ministering food to birds in low condition or those that are sick or injured comes next and lastly water and the role it plays in preventing food problems.

As you can see this is a very comprehensive video and answers just about all you need to know about nutrition. The video is accompanied by a booklet which takes you through the video step by step. Section by section.

When you buy the first video you will find in the sleeve a £5 voucher off your next video in the series which is Anatomy.

A True Partnership  
By Tizi  
Hodson.

Illustrations by  
Jean Dinsdale-  
Young

ISBN  
09538569-0-9

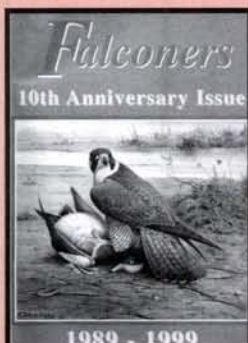
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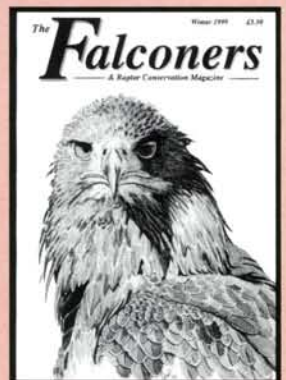
This book is written by a lady who has a great love and respect for birds of prey and whilst she had birds of her own she gave them everything they could ask for and more. A factual but light hearted account of her exploits with Xraysay the Kestrel, Buzz the Ferruginous Hawk and Xarra the Golden Eagle, where her love and compassion shine through. Tizi is a remarkable lady and has achieved things in her life that most of us could only dream of. Airline pilot, karate black belt, motorcycle dispatch rider, stunt bike rider, first woman to complete the trans Kalahari 1,000km motorcycle desert race, flying stunt planes, training dressage horses and more. The book is written, with feeling and humour, and Tizi is a very descriptive writer. Each chapter, whilst telling the story over a period of time usually deals with a specific days or event in the life of Tizi and the birds ie. a particular days hawking, usually where something happened to make the day memorable. Tizi is a great believer in eating what her birds catch and in the back there are 13 recipes, all I have no doubt, tried and tested by Tizi. For those who know Tizi and especially those that are in the book it will bring back memories, and for those who don't it will give you some idea of what a remarkable person she is.

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# TAKEN OVER -

## By a Ball of Fluff

Lyn Wilson

I have given much thought as to whether or not to write another article about Tilly, but after the Falconers Fair and several phone calls my mind was pretty much made up for me. I have been asked by lots of people about the method I used to train her, how she hunts, how steady she is, etc. So I have decided put as much as I can on paper.

Firstly I must explain that this bird spent almost 24 hours a day with me. I picked her up on the 1st July 1999. We brought her home and she was never out of my sight, she came to bed with me, into the bathroom when I had a bath, visiting relatives and friends, school sports days. If I was working she was in the office, if I was cooking she was in the kitchen, if I was sitting watching TV, so was she, if I was gardening or sunbathing she was watching me. She couldn't come grocery shopping or into town so I went on my own and David and the kids watched her or I sent him. During the summer we had two days out, on these days she spent the day with a falconer friend who spent as much time with her as I did on pain of death if he didn't.

### First Days: Feeding

Initially she was fed on quail, mixed with chick and minced up together, all the food was skinned and gutted, the head and lower legs were removed, all bones were smashed up very finely. She was fed with tweezers at four hourly intervals for 3 days after we got her home making her 11 days old. Once she was eating by herself her food was changed regularly, and when it was hot it was sprinkled with water to keep her moisture levels up and stop the food getting sticky. For the first 48 hours she was under a lamp to keep her warm. It wasn't a special lamp, just a desk lamp, but it provided enough heat to keep her body temp up. This was the most unnerving time for me as I fully expected to find she had expired for no apparent reason. Also in the beginning I cut a gravy granules tub in half and lined it with a flannel and kitchen roll to keep her legs in to stop them splaying. As the weather warmed up she was moved from place to place to accommodate temperature changes, if she looked cold we moved her to somewhere warmer, if she looked hot we moved her to somewhere cooler. She was constantly watched and monitored (I was worse with her than I was with my kids). Her progression from immobile fluffy cot-

ton wool ball was rapid; on the 5th July 13 days old, she succeeded in standing for the first time, albeit only for a couple of seconds, by the 10th she stood for the whole of a feed. Another thing which I was not prepared for was the fact that the birds will not mute in their "nest", at the earliest stage they manoeuvre their little bottoms over the edge of whatever serves as this and mute either in the box it is in or, all over the floor. Be warned. Also power slicing isn't something that comes with age, especially first thing in the morning.

Before I got her I considered various things which were recommended in books and decided on a plan of action with the option to change at any time if either the bird or myself were not happy. The first of these things was hooding. I had decided that I would hood my spar and a good friend of mine made me a beautiful little hood. The first time I put it on her she fell over. It was several days before I could bring myself to do it again. By this time she was much more advanced and proceeded to shake it off, I couldn't stop her as the idea is not to brace up the hood when they are tiny. I made a decision then that we were doing so well I would not do anything to upset our relationship and never hooded her again. She had things to play with, initially an old hood, a feather, and later a lure. As she grew she would 'kill' these things with vigour but strangely it took a long time for her to be

able to pull her food and she was still having to have it chopped up when a younger spar I knew had been pulling for over a week. Eventually though she cottoned on more through frustration than anything else, I think. She used to have a whole quail and I would cut the meat almost off the breast and into thin strips



*After lunch, Fed up*



*Above: They started off like this*

&

*Right: Ended up like this.*







*At play, with a feather and lure.*

The following day 20th July she flew onto the sofa, and hopped down the back steps to have a bath in some water in a big plastic dog bed we had put outside. Also that evening I brought an old bow perch into the house and she sat on it like she had been doing it for ever. This was the first day she was fed off the lure.

From here she came on in leaps and bounds, the next day she flew onto the dishwasher door and then up onto the work surface in the kitchen. Later as I wetted her

she hadn't managed any real height or distance) she flew onto the top of our greenhouse. I proceeded to tell him in no uncertain terms to 'get her down!!'

The next day I decided to tether her. She was a little confused at being restrained after all that freedom but soon settled down. The next few days were spent eating, growing, although not really visibly now, sleeping lots in between sessions of pumping her wings and plenty of bathing. All her food now was offered from her lure.

food because it was hot she looked very interestedly at the water so I offered her a bath in a wok, she dived straight in and once dry she flew around a lot. Later that evening David sat her on top of the pergola in the garden so she could look around (bearing in mind

By the 26th, 34 days old, she was onto the next stage, flying to the lure for her food from her bow-perch. Also her meals had gone from ad lib at the beginning to twice a day. Morning and late afternoon. At this stage she spent a lot of time in the garden and so did I, sitting with her, playing with her, also she would only bath in the early days if I was with her.

From the very beginning we touched her, stroking her feet, tummy etc, not too much but enough to get her used to it. The children all spent hours with her and the dogs as

well. Especially Pod who would lie with her in the garden under our Honeysuckle tree. I will be honest and say that I broke what is one of the main rules and I touched her on her back, again not too much but I will say that when it has been really windy it has come into play in so far as I can hold her close and put my hand on her back to stop her getting blown around without causing her any distress.

Each day she was flown to the lure for her food but now it was from my fist, with David swinging the lure. If

PTO →



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he was not available she flew from her bow perch and I swung the lure. Now important stuff, Tilly has never been fed on the fist. When I first got her I was told about umpteen imprinted sparrowhawks who when frustrated flew at their owners' faces. It was something that quite bothered me but I have never had it happen, having said that she chased me one day for the lure, flying at the bag and dive bombing me so I know the potential for aggression is there. This is the method advised in Mike McDermott's book. The books (McDermott's and Liam O'Broins) say not to call the bird back more than two or three times but Tilly will come over a dozen times to the lure in any one hunting session and as far as you like. However, this eagerness to return at the beginning of the season is replaced with independence and a desire to hunt at the end.

I found her initial responsiveness very deceiving as she would come 50-100 yards at 10oz, she was 10 & 1/4 oz when she first bated at a magpie. On the 20th August she went loose for the first time at 9 & 3/8oz. I was to learn that this weight was too high. (I lost her overnight). David advised me to bring her weight down and reluctantly I did, when she reached 9 1/8 she changed.

To get her interested in chasing quarry she had an all black lure which we would swing for her, pull along the ground and also David would hide in the hedge and wave it at her. It sounds extremely funny and at times it was but the idea is to get her to watch the hedgerow. It all worked very well.

The first thing she caught was an LBJ, I was chuffed to bits, I had put up with lots of ribbing from my fellow falconers (all male), about my ability to get this bird hunting successfully, especially when I said I wanted to catch magpies.

Anyway she caught this sparrow and as I made in she relaxed her grip and it broke free and flew off, she looked at me totally bewildered and from that day on she never let go of anything. Her first magpie was her third kill. She slipped on an LBJ and it put in to a hedge, as it did she followed and spooked a mag-

pie, she came back out and flew up behind the magpie and hit it in mid air. Success with a capital S. It took a couple more but finally they stopped telling me it was a fluke.

I found with her weight that 9 or 9 1/8 oz was spot on. If it was too high she wouldn't hunt very well, she wouldn't commit 100% to the flight but at the right weight she would. I know that with falcons for example they need to be slightly lower in weight for rooks than game, but with the spar I found that reducing her weight by say an 1/8th oz to 8 & 7/8 or even 8 3/4oz made no difference. I tried it a couple

**The other thing she was never without was her telemetry transmitter, I know for a fact that I would have lost her without it**

of times to try to curb her independence, but taking her lower showed no improvement, it just put her in the position where I was jeopardising her health. During the colder weather her weight went up but not for long, a day or so and then she became uninterested, and we did have a magpie with her weighing 9 1/2 oz but although it may sound strange she seemed to have her 9oz head on that day, and she soon became wayward and had to come down again. I will not expect her to hunt at the same weight next season. I will bring her down gradually and I know she will let me know when her weight is right.

She will follow on or go on ahead as I beat towards her but not when I have company. Also she has never really been fed up on a kill. The first few I broke into for her and she ate but then the lure was offered and she was gently and slowly coaxed off, never rushed. As she ate on the lure her equipment was put back on, always with one hand firmly round either one jess or the other and the lure tied to the bag, every precaution was taken to ensure she wouldn't disappear with a full crop or with any equipment on. She has never been fed up completely in the field.

Her first kills were hers, from the moment she made contact and she would try to hide and mantle, threatening me a lot, now she accepts me

totally whilst I dispatch it, and at this stage I could quite easily take my glove off completely. However, once it has been dispatched it is hers. I usually let her pluck for a few minutes then I put a piece of meat on the lure and the lure on the bag, this covers the quarry, she will bring up one foot immediately to the lure, as I continue to slide the bag gently forwards she lets go completely of the quarry, I then slide the bag and the quarry out leaving her with the lure, once she has eaten the food on the lure I cover this with the bag, complete with titbit and she eats this and steps up. Thus making it

no more in some senses, than an extension of the process of returning to the lure. I always cover the lure with my hawking bag and I put a titbit on this, she will relinquish the lure for this titbit. At first she would bate for the lure if she caught sight of it again but now once she is off the lure, has had the titbit off the bag and is back on the fist she completely ignores it. It has served its purpose. I have only ever called her back once and not given her a titbit on the bag, the next time she refused to come to me at all. I know she felt cheated and I had lost some of her trust, I never did it again. I believe that this consistency in the way I pick her up has helped enormously. The titbits offered are extremely small, if I use a chick leg as an example, I cut it off right at the top, in the hip joint and take off the bottom where the skin starts (elbow?). This remaining piece will make five bits. I usually take four legs or the equivalent, cut up into bits, a couple of larger bits for the lure if she catches something and a whole chick just in case. (I have only ever had to use it once). I must stress here that although I am using chicks as an example, they are just that an example. She was never fed on just chick for more than 2 days in a row. This was only when her weight was up. Other wise she was fed on pigeon, quail or magpie. We are not talking titbits but a

whole breast and more if it was magpie. I do not believe it would be possible to maintain a spar (maybe even keep it alive) on day olds alone. It would not be possible for the bird to consume enough to fulfill its requirements. I would imagine have to be fed twice a day. Flying a spar is not like flying a buteo, where you worry you have overfed it and may not be able to fly the following day, the main cause for concern is always that you haven't given it enough and it may not be alive to fly the following day.

The bird I flew at the end of the season was quite different from the one at the beginning. I believe this was because we had a routine and it never varied, she knew that when I presented myself to her with hawking bag and coat we were going out, she knew that when I got out the lure she would get a titbit when she returned. At the beginning of the season she would not fly anything unless it was moving, I have found this is common to most accipiters, now she will spot birds sitting and will fly them quite happily. I couldn't teach her this though, she had to learn it by herself. It took ages.

Now she is up to 11 & 1/2 oz and is moulting. She is bowed out and I spend time with her every day, sometimes just a few minutes, sometimes I will go and sit with her for a couple of hours, but generally going to see her and talk to her on and off during the day. She is still reasonably steady and will allow me to stroke her breast and touch her feet and legs. When I go out into the garden she calls to me with a little 'chuck chuck' noise.

Next season I would like at least one partridge, she has flown them but I think she was a little daunted by their size, although she won't refuse a slip. All last season she flew with a bell and telemetry, the bell is very important so long as the bird is within range for you to hear it, the drawback though is that everything else can hear it as well. She has it on a button bewit though and next year when she is eying up pigeons or partridge sitting out I will remove the bell, thus giving her a bit of a head start. (Scary thought). The other thing she was never without was her telemetry transmitter,



I know for a fact that I would have lost her without it (don't think that because these birds are imprinted you can't lose them, you can!). As I said in my previous article, when she is on familiar ground she becomes quite wayward. I think this must have something to do with the fact that she is very confident on what she must view as her 'home territory', consequently she flies from field to field in search of quarry. This can be construed as a drawback but after weighing it up I have decided that better this than a bird which won't hunt. I believe that my limited success with this bird has been due to the fact that I have flown her every day, weather permitting, and have spent as much time as possible with her, David was quite pleased when the hunting season was over as it meant I would have his dinner on the table when he got in, but I can work in the evenings, and hawk in the afternoons, and usually when my subscribers finally get hold of me they are very forgiving when they realise why I have been out of the office

all afternoon.

I love this little bird and have had some scornful remarks from David when I have said she returns the feeling, however, just before the end of the season I lost her overnight. We were out flying and she went after something, instead of coming back she spotted something else and kept going, leading me a merry dance. It got dark and I found her and marked her down on roof in the village on the other side of the river. The following morning I went back for her, unfortunately my telemetry transmitter wasn't working. I couldn't find her anywhere. I went home as David needed the car for work and I had to get the kids off to school. I was very upset and David said he would come with me to look again. We parked the car in a layby on the main road and started walk along the path, we hadn't gone ten yards when he pointed to her sitting on the top of a house with her back to us. Now this is not a quiet road, it was heaving with commuters and lorries and he frantically looked

round for somewhere quiet to call her down. I trotted off down the driveway of the house though and got out the lure. At no time had she looked round and was totally oblivious to us. I called her name and she opened her wings, did a 180 turn and came straight down. The lure was well garnished but she completely ignored the food, she plucked the lure and I covered it with my bag complete with titbit, she ignored the titbit and climbed onto my fist. As I stood up she started to rouse, and by the time I had reached top of the driveway she was so fluffed up her eyes were mere slits. I climbed into the car and she put her foot up and started to preen. David was amazed, he said he

had never seen the like. He said that he hadn't realised quite how close the relationship was between Tilly and myself and he also admitted that "Yes, maybe she does love me, just a little".



*Drying off after a bath*

## platinum lined cloud !!

**Keith Williamson**

I don't think for one minute that I am the only one doing what I am about to put on paper, but this is to get those that aren't, thinking about the potential of our smaller partners in crime.

I have been flying a male Harris called Jazz for the past five years and up to now have been unable to convince my better half Lynn, of the benefits to be had by working a dog with Jazz, e.g. less clothes ripped to shreds by gorse and brambles and no hypothermia due to falling in rivers and ponds, so for now I remain dogless. I do however work ferrets with Jazz, but due to the fact that despite all my patience and trickery Jazz still wants to eat the ferrets and 99.9% of my hawking is done alone, working ferrets and Jazz alone is a little tricky to say the least.

Whilst out hawking over the ferrets a few weeks into the season a disaster turned into an inspiration.

I had placed the ferret down a hole and was waiting for the rabbit to bolt. After being stood for about fifteen minutes with absolutely nothing happening a squirrel took my attention for a few seconds, at that point my ferret must have sneaked out of a hole and into the thick cover (like they do) down the side of the embankment we were working.

I turned back to watch the warren just as the cover exploded and a cock pheasant

with thrusters on full throttle disappeared through the trees with Jazz hot on its tail. o s\*~t!!, I had a very fit and determined Harris disappearing through the trees and a ferret still working the warren, or so I thought. Just as I had decided to leave the ferret box with food in it and chase Jazz (no telemetry) the ferret appeared from the cover with feathers on its fur, at that point I placed the ferret in its box and ran off after Jazz.

It did not take long to find him due to all the noise as they fought it out (harris = 11lb 9 oz - pheasant = 3lb+). after allowing Jazz to feed up on his hard earned prize I started to think about what had happened, and then I had a brain wave.

On returning home I fitted a ferret harness that my little girl used for taking the ferrets for walks with a bell. From then on I would look out for pheasants sneaking into cover, place the ferret in the cover down wind, and then wait. It is easy to keep track of the ferret due to the bell, I treat the ferret the same as the bird, e.g. it is offered food for every item flushed. This rou-

tine is excellent if the cover consists of large gorse bushes or brambles, but if your hawk is as fond of ferrets as mine is, make sure something is flushed before you slip your bird or disaster will strike. The drawbacks to this method are -- no control over when to flush or direction of flush, and you try and get the ferret to understand the game as a whole picture, e.g. spot quarry - find quarry- flush - (fine so far) straight back to me - chase Jazz chasing pheasant (no chance), oh well three out of five is not bad. Who needs a dog (I do). happy hawking, whatever form it comes in.

Well that's it, so if anyone else is doing the same or has better ideas go on share and share alike. Get it on paper and we can all maximise the potential of our hunting partners (and save our clothes).



*"OK Dog, move over, we've arrived!"*





# Letters

## THE THINKING MANS' CHALLENGE - THE GOSHAWK

Dear Mr Williamson,

I refer to your letter, which you wrote about my article "Keeping a bird at livery". You are obviously correct about all you say on the manning and training aspect of a bird of prey; to have to leave the major part of this vital stage of bonding to somebody else, in this case a professional falconer, cuts totally across the concept of falconry. To be fair though I did allude to this in my article. Of course Geoff Dalton trained our Goshawk, her was training me at the same time! However, I did share in as much of the training process as I was able to do, which must have helped a little. That having been said I couldn't do any more as I work in the middle of London during the week and couldn't keep the bird or fly it there. I used the words "at livery" perhaps incorrectly, I should have used the title "sharing a bird - a novices experience". I don't simply fly a hawk at quarry and turn up on the day expecting it to be "bridled and saddled", I do as much work with him as I am able and fly him as often as I can.

I certainly meant no offence by saying that "I had been relegated to a Harris' Hawk". I could not be happier with the one I now share and I had a wonderful end season with him and enjoy flying and working with him immensely; I like to feel that we have bonded well together, we are certainly a good team. However, I did find that our goshawk was very quick off the mark when we eventually got him going and it has always been my (short experienced) belief that the goshawk is very much the Ferrari of the hawk world. I wonder if you have felt the exuberance and seen the speed of a goshawk darting after quarry through trees and undergrowth, I found this totally exhilarating; particularly after having experienced the extreme difficulties of a very highly strung and complicated bird in the initial periods of manning and training. The feeling of satisfaction, even for me the novice, was second to none.

P.S. I have indeed read Martin Hollinshead's book, which I enjoyed greatly.

Yours in sport  
Johnny Rickett.

## 'SANCTUARY?'

Dear Lyn,

Yesterday something happened which brought to my attention a problem, which is probably countrywide. Over 4 years ago we lost Fred - one of our display kestrels, we never heard anything of him and were resigned to the fact that he had probably met a very sorry end. A few weeks ago we were contacted by the manageress of an 'animal sanctuary' owned by a very well known lady about 20 miles from our centre, she had just taken over a few months back and wanted advice on the birds of prey and owls at the sanctuary. We went over expecting perhaps a tame barn owl and a few birds being rehabilitated, on arrival at the 'sanctuary' we were confronted by aviaries stuffed full of Corvids, pigeons, etc, most of which were in a hell of a state and quite honestly should be euthanased. We were in due course taken to view the birds of prey; it was enough to make you weep. All aviaries are constructed with thin twiweld mesh meaning that nearly every diurnal bird of prey had appallingly cut ceres, some to the point that such a callous had built up that it looked like a bloody horn. 13 kestrels were in a 6 by 18-ft aviary, which was filthy; a dominant male was busy trying to slaughter other males in the aviary. 12 Tawny owls were in an identical aviaries next door, as were 4 Eagle owls, and 3 buzzards (one of which has such severe cere damage which I don't think will ever repair. A further 2 buzzards were tucked away in an even smaller aviary with severe health problems (we have been told that these are under veterinary treatment).

To be fair to the new manageress she realised that something was not quite right and insisted that she desperately wanted to improve conditions, but that the owner of the sanctuary must not find out as she wouldn't tolerate any interference as she believed that everything was being cared for well enough. Because of this we decided that rather than call in the RSPCA we would give our assistance as much as possible. We returned a couple of days later armed with boxes and nets to try and sort out releasable birds, and those which should be put out of their misery. All 12 tawny owls were suitable for release, we have taken 6 and are assured that the rest will be released by the manageress, one of the Eagle owls has a closed ring and anklets as have 4 of the buzzards which we have taken down

and informed the registers. On our previous visit we had noticed that a couple of the kestrels were banded and one had a closed ring and anklets at the time we made the offhand comment that it could be Fred. When we got home that evening I managed to find Fred's ring number out of interest. We caught up the captive bred male kestrel to write down the ring number, and were shocked to recognise the first couple of numbers in the ring IT WAS FRED! Now our bird has been sat in squalid conditions for 4 years and has ended up with a damaged cere that may heal in time, nobody had reported him as being found; he was just thrown in an aviary and forgotten. How many other so-called sanctuaries do the same? If you have ever had a bird disappear without trace it could be sat in just such a place. I have now issued this Sanctuary with laminated posters detailing what to do if they have a close rung bird handed in and intend to send these out to other Sanctuaries in the area. It may be an idea for other Falconers around the country to do the same, let's educate these people for the sake of our birds.

Also I would strongly suggest microchipping birds, none of the birds that we scanned were chipped, if they were then they could be reunited with their owners and got out of their present situation. Over the past 2 years we have had the majority of our birds chipped and I cannot recommend it strongly enough.

As for the sanctuary; we will continue to help and advise where we can, and hope they will improve conditions, if not then we will take it further. As for the rest of the wild kestrels, I was recommended for euthanasia, two we have taken to be treated by our vet (just in case they do not bother) the rest are viable for release, some immediate, some after they have cleaned themselves up. So progress is being made.

Ali Ford - Huxley's Experience  
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Dear Lyn,

Please inform your readers of the CFF millennium grand draw, we start selling the raffle tickets at the CLA Game Fair in July.

Thanks to the generosity of the people who have donated them we are able to offer some superb prizes. These people are mentioned on the tickets.

The main prizes so far are: Original Oil painting by Ronald David Digby. Life sized cold cast bronze merlin, Sculpted and donated by Alan Glasby OBE, GM. Pencil Drawing, falconry related. Mark Upton. 21" colour television CFF. Transmitter 173mhz, donated by Jim Chick. Quality hawking bag, donated by Martin Jones. Case of wine, 2 bottles of Whisky, 3 subscriptions to the Falconers Magazine Donated by Lyn Wilson, five other falconry related prizes.

Tickets can be purchased through

Falconry Clubs, and via your next copy of the Falconers Magazine. Price per ticket 50p. 10 tickets per book.

All prize winners to collect their prize at the Falconers fair may 2001. Raffle drawn in April 2001 and all winners will be contacted by phone.

Best regards,  
Peter de Wit.  
Fund Raiser CFF.

**SIZE DOES NOT MATTER**

Dear David & Lyn,

It had been my practice, until the following happened to use a scissors clip through the flying jessies of my Hawk when transporting him to and from my flying land, and also whilst hunting.

After a successful days hunting and a full crop, Kivs (male Redtail) flying jessies where secured with the scissors clip. Whilst he was being placed in the box he bated (this was the first and so far only time he has done this). I grabbed hold of clip as the jessies slid through my glove thus opening the clip and 'shock horror' and any other emotion you can

think of Kiv flew over my shoulder into the nearest tree.

Plan A) First food on the fist, then the dummy bunny then a dead one, no luck, he just sat there quite content.

Plan B) Place the Landrover under the tree to gain access to the lower branches, then climb. As you know birds like to test you by perching on the thinnest branch they can find (I weigh in at 15+stone). So with Craig's verbal assistance "go on it wont break") I shinned along the branch. 20/25ft up with a tempting rabbit leg in gloved hand 'sweating with fear' I crawled along, 5ft to go, no response 4, 3, 2, 1, I felt that I was at my safe limit Kiv looked at the leg then me (I'm sure he chuckled) but did not move. They say 'size does not matter', it does 25ft up a tree on a thin branch. I managed to stretch just a bit nearer to Kiv and thankfully he came. Secured properly this time Kiv was handed down to Craig, who was in a better position (thicker branch) than I and eventually the three of us made it down to terra firma.

I have learnt my lesson, to 'TAKE TIME' and 'not to save time'. As accidents do happen.

Derek Holroyd

**ISLE OF MULL -  
HOME TO BREEDING SEA EAGLES**

A pair of Britain's most spectacular and rarest birds caused foresters to down tools when they plumped for the branches of a condemned tree to raise their family.

Forest operations came to an immediate halt when the prospective parents, - one of only eighteen pairs of sea eagles in the country - decided to settle in the Sitka Spruce wood, on the island of Mull, destined for Argyll's timber markets. Working patterns were changed to allow the birds peace to breed - and Scotland's fragile fledgling sea eagle population was boosted by the successful arrival of two healthy chicks.

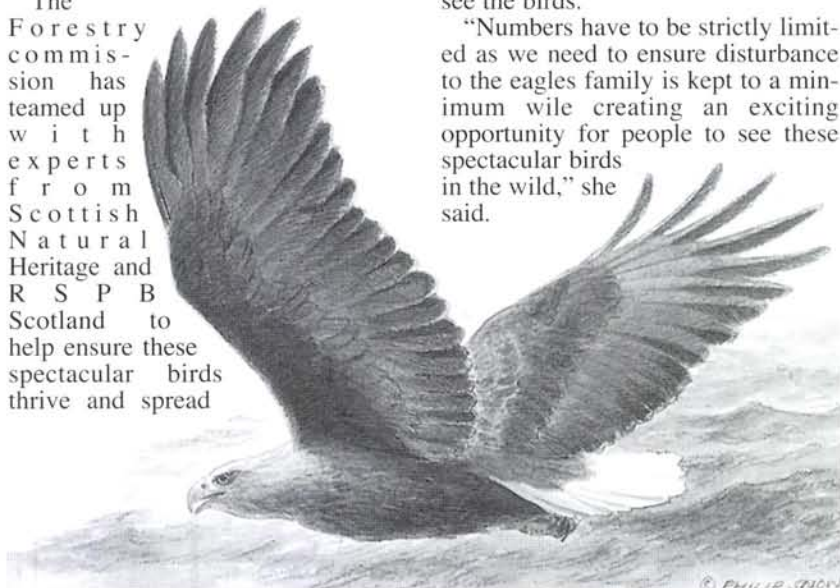
The Forestry commission has teamed up with experts from Scottish Natural Heritage and R S P B Scotland to help ensure these spectacular birds thrive and spread

from their island stronghold.

There was concern about the numbers of people visiting the site because of the risk of disturbance to the pair so the pilot scheme was set up to properly manage the access.

Local Joyce Henderson has been appointed to help monitor the birds and provide guidance and information for visitors to the site. Among the first to get the chance to see the birds in the wild were local school children and pre-booked groups of island visitors. But Joyce warned tight controls on numbers meant people faced disappointment if they turned up on Mull without booking to see the birds.

"Numbers have to be strictly limited as we need to ensure disturbance to the eagles family is kept to a minimum while creating an exciting opportunity for people to see these spectacular birds in the wild," she said.



**Change in Law for  
Telemetry Manufacturers**

The introduction of the R&TTE Directive on 8 April 2000 will bring a sea change in the way manufacturers of radio equipment and telecommunications terminal equipment (TTE) can gain access to the European marketplace for their products. This change will herald much greater flexibility and opportunity for them at the price of greater responsibility for the conformity of their products.

Manufacturers will no longer have the comfort of a type approval regime but must shoulder the full consequences of product liability.

The Directive aims to provide the European radio and TTE industry with a more deregulated environment than at present. The involvement of third parties in conformity assessment is not necessary in most cases. The person who places equipment on the market will, in general, be regarded as taking full responsibility for its conformity to essential requirements, and for properly informing users of its intended use. Only in the case of radio equipment for which harmonised standards are not available, or are not used, is it mandatory to consult a third party notified body.

The Directive replaces the national approval regimes for radio equipment and TTE and the requirements of the consolidated Telecommunications Terminal Equipment Directive (98/13/EC). The Directive also contains requirements on Health & Safety and Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) based on those in the Low Voltage Directive (LVD) (73/23/EEC) and the EMC Directive (89/336/EEC), disapplying those Directives for equipment within its scope. This means that manufacturers will only have to declare conformity to one directive to enable them to place their products on the market anywhere in the European Union.



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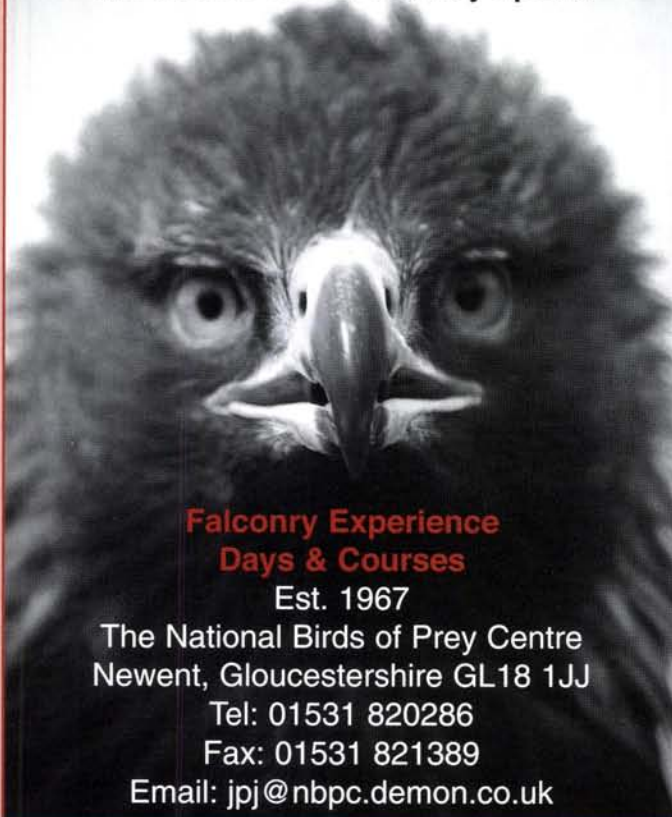
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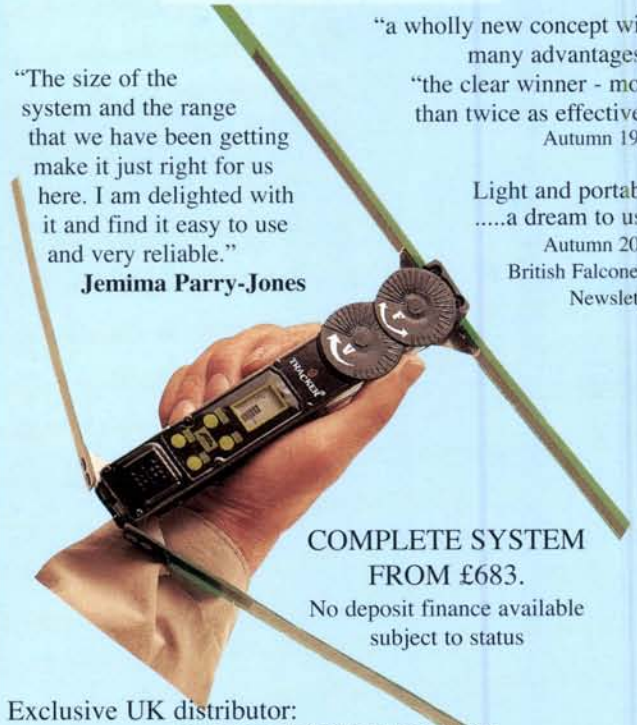
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