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Summer 2001 No. 46

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COVER:
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Next issue on sale November 1st

EDITORIAL

Hi Folks,

Well, what can I say? The magazine is still here, looking slightly different but basically the same. PW Publishing now own the title, and all of the day to day running is now their responsibility, however, they have retained me as the editor so I will still be here to offer my opinion, moan and generally get on your nerves, as always. Joking aside, I am very pleased to still be able to be involved with the magazine without the responsibility of all the jobs. Hopefully I can make the editorial better, more varied and, you will be pleased to hear, with less typo's!!

My house can now start to look like other peoples, tidy! My kids will remember what I look like from one week to the next, David will have his dinner on the table sometime before bedtime, and in between times Polly, the latest addition to the family, will be flown and hunted every day, weather permitting. Can't wait.

I still need your articles, news items, letters etc., so keep on sending them in please. We are hoping for a fresh start for the magazine and I personally wish to see it regain what it had and go from strength to strength. The magazine still retains the same goals; to entertain, educate and disseminate information throughout the falconry world.

In this issue we have a mixed bag as usual, the layout is all new, I think it looks great, all credit due to Steve. The trouble with being a 'Jack of all Trades' is that you are, as they say, a master of none, Steve's mastery of design has certainly made itself evident and I hope you all approve of the changes he has made.

Here's looking forward to the next season, for those of us lucky enough not to still be in the grip of foot and mouth. For those that are, maybe some of us luckier falconers can extend our hospitality to you until everything returns to normal.

So good hawking and Keep Falconry Safe.

Lyn

Letters to the editor

falconers (not) fair

I have just returned from this years falconry fair, an annual event with an international reputation and I am not a happy man. Why? I hear you ask. Firstly I was concerned that the fair was going ahead at all in view of the current foot and mouth epidemic when so many other countryside events had quite rightly been cancelled. In fact I had decided not to attend the event and instead make a small donation to the NFU Farmers in Crisis Fund. However, shortly after making this decision I learnt that our club York And Region Austringers Klub (no it's not a club for dyslexic falconers, or dyslexic Austrians for that matter) had booked a stand in order to promote our clubs' activities and as I am the Press Officer/ Field Officer I felt duty bound to attend. The necessary equipment, tent, display boards, leaflets, free beer, and.... fudge!!! were packed into the car along with a large piece of humble pie and off we went. I was not happy with the event going ahead but thought I could at least have some good come out of it by organising a raffle in aid of the Farmers in Crisis Fund. The plan was to donate one of my own paintings and to visit the various trade stands and ask for donations of items for prizes and to raffle these over the course of the two days. In this way we could at least show the farming community that the falconry fraternity were, in some small way, thinking of them in these dire times and not just simply turning our backs on them with a "Stuff you jack I'm all right" attitude. Let us not forget that farming is the very backbone of our sport and without the support of thousands of farmers the length and breadth of our country we would not be able to practice this most noble and fascinating sport.

I mentioned my intended plan to our chairman (Jeff Mcknight) who had organised our attendance at the event. He said "yes that's a bloody good idea (that's the polite version) but don't do anything until you have checked with Ron Morris first". A mere formality I thought. Oh boy

was I wrong. On arriving at the event on Saturday evening I stopped at the gate and duly wiped my feet on the disinfected matting provided. Wow. I thought the organisers do care about the farmers. I introduced myself to Ron and told him of my cunning plan.

His response both surprised and appalled me. "Oh no you can't do that, the BHA will be having a raffle and raptor rescue and we don't want to step on their toes and overdo it" he said. I explained the vital role farmers play in our sport and the current situation in the countryside and the fact that were it not for the support of farmers he wouldn't even be having an event. I felt that all my words were wasted and the mere fact that I was putting my case whilst standing on a carpet soaked in disinfectant should have swayed the argument in my favour. What is it they say about actions speaking louder than words? I felt I might have been winning the argument when he said "don't do anything until I get back to you and don't approach any stall-holders". I felt there was perhaps a light at the end of the tunnel. It must have been a very long tunnel as it took Ron more than two days to walk along it and for all I know he is still walking along it. I waited until 5.30pm on the last day of the fair and still he did not emerge from it. Being a law abiding, responsible, upstanding member of the hawking community and representative of our newly formed club I never did hold the raffle and a valuable piece of PR on the behalf of falconers was lost. For once in my life I was ashamed to be connected with the sport of falconry, a sport which I have in the past defended vehemently. I hang my head in shame.

Which brings me to my next point. The organisers rightly or wrongly decided to go ahead with the event after consulting with various bodies MAFF, landowners, etc. who decided that it was safe to go ahead on the condition that DOGS WERE NOT ALLOWED on site and disinfected mats were placed at all entrances. Again on arriving on site I saw and indeed used the said

matting, phase one completed and passed with flying colours. Phase two however was a completely different story. One of the traders who shall remain nameless, not because I think he deserves anonymity, far from it, but because I can't remember his name, had brought with him not one but two dogs which were quite happily sitting behind the stall wagging their tails pleased to be spending the bank holiday weekend in the company of their kind, thoughtless, sorry I mean thoughtful loving owners when so many of the other traders and indeed members of the public had gone to the trouble of arranging dog sitters for the weekend.

When our chairman pointed out this flagrant flouting of the rules he was told it was all right to bring dogs as long as they didn't go off the stand. Now I am not one for paying great attention to advertising leaflets but on the flyers and adverts for the event I distinctly remember the words NO DOGS. Surely no dogs, means, no dogs. It's not rocket science.

What is the point of consulting with these bodies if you are not going to heed

their advice, it makes a mockery of the whole consultation process. That trader should have been asked, no, ordered to remove his dogs from the site immediately. If the consultation was merely a PR exercise on behalf of the organisers to show a certain amount of caring and responsibility on their part, it failed miserably.

My next point may to some seem petty and of no concern but I will voice my views anyway. When the club discussed having a stand at the fair we thought it might be a good idea to offer for sale some club merchandise, badges, baseball caps, t-shirts etc. to help boost club funds. Our chairman contacted the organisers to enquire if this would be possible and he was told politely that if we wanted to sell anything then we would have to purchase a trade stand. Which when you think about it makes sense, if I were a trader forking out however many hundreds of pounds for a pitch at such a prestigious event I would be more than a little peeved off if other stands who had paid a fraction of that were allowed to trade. We accepted that ruling and attended with a view to

promoting our newly formed club and hopefully recruiting a few new members, which we did. Imagine my surprise when I visited other club stands who were selling badges, prints and one was even selling a bloody Saker falcon. Again this is not rocket science. No selling in my book means no selling.

Malcolm Allison

Dear Lyn,

Thanks for taking the time to speak with me earlier. As discussed I represent a specialist tour operator to Andalucia, Spain at Heart, which has accommodation throughout the region, with many properties in rural locations and on the migratory route between the northern hemisphere and the wintering areas of Africa.

As you know, one of the main migration periods takes place from late August, through September and October and in to the first couple of weeks of November. Since the Straits of Gibraltar provide the shortest sea crossing to and from Africa, this area is, arguably, one of the best places in Europe from which to observe thousands of species of birds.

Among the birdlife which can be seen in Andalucia are the Spanish Imperial Eagle (said to be Europe's most endangered raptor) and the largest European enclave of Black Vultures. Others include the Golden Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Booted Eagle, Short Toed Eagle, Osprey, Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon.

A wide range of accommodation is available with Spain at Heart during the Autumn migration period. One such property, ideal for bird watchers, is the 'Cortijo La Hoya' near Tarifa.

Comprising two semi-detached apartments, each of which sleeps two people in a twin room, the Cortijo is reached by a country track surrounded by cattle farms and cork oak trees of the Los Alcornocales Natural Park, and offers breathtaking views over the Straits of Gibraltar.

This property is available on selected dates from 29th September, throughout October.

Further information is available by telephoning 01378 814222.



STAR LETTER

thank heavens for martin hollinshead

Dear Lyn

Thank heavens for Martin Hollinshead and his honest appraisal of the kill, which is such an integral part of falconry. The tragedy is that many people cannot equate our sport with the eventual kill, and are inclined to shy away from its inevitability. To be able to despatch quarry quickly and humanely is critical to the respectability of the sport and Martin's article makes this point with admirable frankness. Anyone who does not go hunting at every available and appropriate moment with his or her hawk cannot claim the ancient title of falconer. You are bird of prey keepers, and none the worse for that, you are just not falconers.

On another point, where did the absurd notion that you should clip the points off the talons of a newly caught up hawk come from? (Ken Loates: How not to do it.) If the desire is, and always should be, to get the said hawk onto kills as soon as possible you will end up sharpening them again within a week or so to enable them to hold onto quarry. If you spend sufficient time manning the new arrival she will rarely do harm to herself with her own talons, and if she gets you in the process you will be none the worse for it. Indeed you will perhaps better appreciate the need to despatch quarry quickly and humanely as a result of the experience.

Yours
Nick Kester

LIST OF LOST, FOUND, REUNITED & STOLEN BIRDS FROM THE IBR 1 APR 01 - 1 JUL 01

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Found (59) | GOSHAWK x 2 |
| AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL | GYR/LANNER x 2 |
| BARN OWL x 24 | GYR/PEREGRINE FALCON |
| COMMON BUZZARD | GYR/SAKER FALCON |
| 12XX7W | HARRIS HAWK x 17 |
| 97XXW | KESTREL x 4 |
| 18XXR95W | LANNER FALCON x 3 |
| 85XXW | MERLIN |
| UKxx137 | PEREGRINE FALCON |
| 11xxDOEW | PEREGRINE/BARBARY |
| 01xxDOEW | PEREGRINE/LANNER |
| 7Gxx2W | HYBRID x 3 |
| IBxx7974W | PEREGRINE/SAKER |
| EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL | HYBRID x 3 |
| Sxx | PRAIRIE FALCON |
| GOSHAWK | RED-TAILED HAWK x 2 |
| 89xxV | SAKER FALCON x 10 |
| 15xx4W | SAKER/PEREGRINE FALCON |
| HARRIS HAWK | SNOWY OWL |
| IBxx359W | SPARROWHAWK x 2 |
| 13xx0W | Reunited (60) |
| 3Lxx00W, | BARN OWL x 6 |
| IBxx7904W | COMMON BUZZARD |
| 13xx4W | EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL |
| KESTREL x 7 | GOSHAWK |
| LANNER | GREAT HORNED OWL |
| 57xxV | GYR/LANNER FALCON |
| MERLIN | HARRIS HAWK x 17 |
| 03xxT | KESTREL x 4 |
| RED-TAILED HAWK | LANNER FALCON x 7 |
| 31xxR95X | MERLIN |
| SAKER FALCON | PEREGRINE FALCON |
| 17xxW | PEREGRINE/PRAIRIE |
| 21xxS97W | HYBRID |
| PCxx1527 | PEREGRINE/SAKER |
| SPARROWHAWK | RED-TAILED HAWK |
| 40xxRR98R | SAKER FALCON x 14 |
| | SPARROWHAWK |
| | TAWNY OWL |
| Lost (92) | Stolen (1) |
| BARN OWL x 21 | HARRIS HAWK |
| CARACARA | GJW46 & IBR12946W |
| COMMON BUZZARD x 3 | |
| EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 11 | |

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News...News...News

FLIGHT EXHIBITION SET TO SOAR

From Pterosaurs to rocket science - that's the theme of a brand new blockbuster exhibition opening at the National Museum & Gallery of Wales, in Cardiff, on July 8, which will follow the miracle of flight from pre-historic times to space age discoveries.

One of the miracles of the natural world - the art of flying will be explored in a new blockbuster exhibition opening at the National Museum & Gallery Cardiff, on Sunday 8 July.

Titled 'Flight' which will follow the miracle of flight from pre-historic times to space age discovery.

The exhibition is expected to attract more than 100,000 visitors and will be one of the largest projects in the museum's history. It is sponsored by GE Engine Services, Inc. Showcased in the exhibition will be an original engine from the powerful Airbus; a life-size model of a German glider; a WWII Hawker Hurricane, which was Britain's first plane to exceed 300mph; and a giant Pterosaur, which is one of the largest vertebrates to have ever flown.

Humans have learnt to fly in the last century; animals have been perfecting the art of flight for almost 350 million years. Tracking the evolution of natural flight from insects, the first masters of the air, to modern day birds, the exhibition includes a wealth of specimens such as large-scale insect models; casts of feathered dinosaurs, the first bird, Archaeopteryx, and examples of modern day insects, birds and bats.

The exhibition also explores the myths and legends associated with flying which give an insight into man's ambition and fascination with flight. Portrayed are the legendary tales of Icarus and

Phaethon to the medieval tower jumpers, who developed a crude version of gliding to recent flying heroes such as Superman.

During the 20th Century, man has successfully engineered many forms of flying machines from the glider to the Jumbo Jet and the space shuttle. Footage of the launch of the first artificial satellites and manned rockets as well as other historical moments in the race to the moon are featured.

To coincide with the exhibition there will be a host of hands-on activities for children and adults.

MIDLAND GAME AND COUN

Held on the third weekend in September at Weston Park, Weston under Lizard, the Midland Game and Country Sports Fair is not to be missed. This years event has been expanded to include a new Gourmet tent. Seen regularly at many other game Fairs, Ray and Wendy Alier of Ye Olde Redtail Falconry, will make their debut appearance at the Midland Game Fair. They having been entertaining people with their displays for 16 years now, and nine years ago moved from Harlow in Essex to a near derelict farm in the Fenlands, to house their extensive collection of birds, including their newest recruit 'Kedwyn' the Red Kite. Ray says, "People are fascinated by Red Kites and love to see them up close, which is part of the reason

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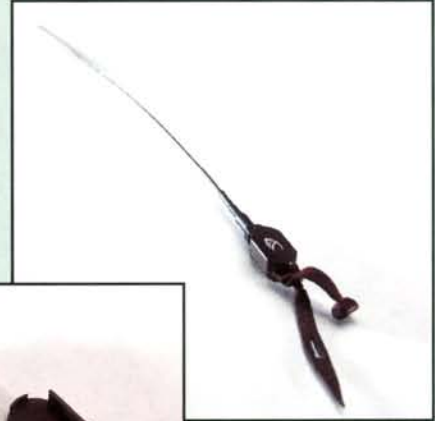
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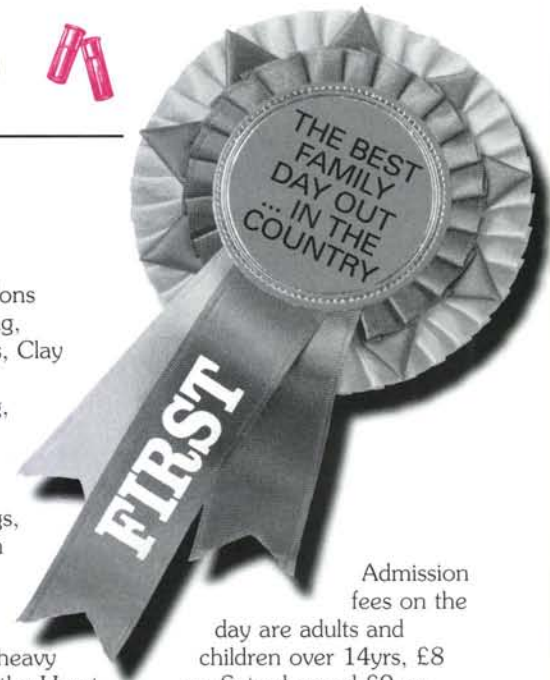
we are so pleased to be bringing 'Kedwyn' to the Midland. We got him at the end of 1999 and like all Red Kites he is a bit highly strung and can be a bit temperamental. Back in the Middle Ages, they were almost as common as pigeons in London and even classed as pests. But with the advent of firearms they were gradually driven out and at one time they were restricted to one small area in North Wales although, thankfully they have made something of a comeback today. "Man has hunted with birds of prey for thousands of years and I don't think there is a child - or adult for that matter



- in the country who doesn't find them a bit mysterious and magical; the beadiness of the eye, the curve of the talon and the hook of the beak. We all love to watch a kestrel or a hawk flying, even if it is so far away it is little more than a speck in the sky. All a falconer is really doing is enjoying that spectacle at really close quarters, and every day if he or she so wishes. Also there will be the usual

attractions including, Airguns, Clay Target Shooting, Dogs (to include;

terriers, gun dogs, lurchers, sheepdogs, hounds), European Field Target Championships, Fishing, ferrets, Gunmakers Row, heavy horses, Jazz with the Heart of England Band, Traditional Fun Fair, Gamekeepers, rural arts and crafts and rare breeds. So make a date in your diaries, 15th & 16th September, Weston Park.



Admission fees on the day are adults and children over 14yrs, £8 on Saturday and £9 on Sunday. Children under 14yrs, £2.00. **Adults can qualify for a £1.00 discount if they book in advance via the Ticket Hotline: 01902 552121.**

Some familiar faces...



2001 FALCONERS FAIR

Despite the foot and mouth this years Falconers Fair went ahead and very successful it was too. Numbers I felt were a little down on previous years but this was largely due to either people not being able to travel because of the foot and mouth or not realising the Fair was still on.

Probably the highlight of this years' Fair was the presence of Frank Beebe, world famous American Falconer, and author who gave a demonstration of the methods used to trap hawks and falcons in America, using a special lure. The rest of the arena events were up to their usual high standard, with Gary Biddis, from the South East Falconry Group, Jemima Parry-Jones and Brian Paterson just some of the

people providing the entertainment. The only thing missing this year were the dogs and this was the premise on which the Fair went ahead, that there were no dogs there. Once again our European friends were very much in evidence both as traders and visitors. It is wonderful that falconry can bring together so many cultures and nationalities in one place, all

with a common interest. Language barriers seem to disappear almost completely. Barbecues were held on the Sunday evening by Honeybrook and the BHA both were highly successful and much food was eaten and alcohol consumed. Jose excelled himself once again with his gourmet creations on the barbecue, that is reason enough to go to the Fair regardless of what else may

be on offer. The Art Marquee was once again a feast for the eyes, with artists both old and new displaying their many and varied talents, all ably organised by Chris Christoforou. It is marvellous to wander around and just lose yourself in the paintings, taking in every minute detail, all so skilfully executed. Hopefully next year all will be back to normal and we will

see dogs in the main arena as well as round the show, and all those that were unable to come along this year will be able to make up for lost time.



Tiercel to falcon: "Hey Doris, nice kit you got there"

Falcon to tiercel: "That's enough of your cheek George, it's not the breeding season yet you know"

Tiercel to falcon: "S'pose you've got a headache too?"

"I meant your equipment, stupid"

Falcon to tiercel: "Yes, that's typical of you George, trying to wriggle out of a situation"

Tiercel to falcon: "Oh shut up Doris and eat your gerbil"

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CLUB OF THE MONTH

The Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

The Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club held its first meeting earlier this year. It was a huge success, with a fabulous turnout, which was fantastic considering it was not advertised. People came from all over Lancashire and a few from further afield.

The meeting started with our Chairman, Shaun Callon, doing some introductions and talking about what we wanted to achieve with the club. He then went on to read just a few of the e-mails he had received from all over the country congratulating us and wishing us

Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

well with the new club.

There were a lot of new faces, all of whom fitted as though they had been there for a long time which was great to see. Some of the comments I heard throughout the evening were very encouraging and pleasing to hear.

Overall the meeting was an outstanding success and if this is an indication of things to come then the L.F.H.C is going to be a great club to be part of and I am sure that all who attended the first meeting are proud to be part of it. The room we held the meeting in proved to be too small for the amount of people who turned up, next time we will do our best to make sure everyone can be comfortably accommodated.

Clubs...Clubs...Clubs

What the future holds for the Central?

What a busy start to the year we have had at the Central Falconry & Raptor Club, starting with an old friend of the club Roger James giving us a talk on his vast experience training dogs. Also, we had an insight to his experience hunting with Goshawks. It was nice to see Roger not winning the star raffle prize for a change.

The following month saw the return of Terry Large in his new position of Chairman of the Campaign for Falconry. The first half of the evening was spent hearing about the ins and outs about where he sees the Campaign going and the tie up with the Hawk Board. The club is a strong supporter of the Campaign over the last four years with my involvement and I know it is much appreciated. The second half saw a film of the annual October Czech Republic field meet where a lot of well known English Falconers can be seen captured on film. The manning and flying of the Golden Eagles is something else.

In May was Ferret Night with the stopwatch doing overtime to keep up with the antics of some of the characters competing. There was a surprise package that was put in to through a wobbly and it worked. No guessing what it was with a name like Roland. Afterwards it put the finalists off the scent.

July is the month for the annual club BBQ, held at the Cotswold Falconry Centre where we always have a great time, thanks to Geoff and Naomi Dalton who over the years have been our hosts for which we are always grateful.

In September Jenny Wray will be giving us a talk on her unusual experiences over the last 8 years running the 'Independent Bird Register' for which there are a lot of

grateful people around who have been reunited with their loved ones.

October sees the long awaited return of Neil Forbes, 'The' Avian Vet of the U.K. What Neil doesn't know about Raptors, you could fit in a matchbox. Neil will be talking on First Aid in the Field and taking care of your new arrival. There will be an opportunity for microchipping your new bird or dog, charge to be confirmed. An admission charge of £5.00 will be made that evening for non-members.

The speaker for November will be Martin Hollinshead, who from our previous encounter has a vast knowledge on flying broad wings and Golden Eagles. His main talk will be on his experiences hunting with Goldie's, but his vast experience with Harris' Hawks will also be discussed. There will also be an admission charge of £5.00 to non-members for this excellent speaker.

The club is hoping in May 2002 to receive a visit from Jemima Parry-Jones MBE, from the National Birds of Prey Centre, who will be giving a talk to the general public on behalf of the C.F.R.C., the topic being, 'An evening with Owls'.

I would like to give a big thank you to all the member who gave there free time to look after the weathering, help out on the CFF stand and also man the Club Stand at the F.F. I sometimes wonder how the falconry fraternity would manage without us.

Anyone interested in visiting the club, we meet on the second Sunday of every month at the Stoneythorpe Hotel, Warwick Road, Southam. The meetings start at 8pm and anyone who is interested in raptors are welcome.

For more details, please phone John Hill on 07973 224609

It is my belief that clubs are vitally important for the future of falconry. Many people want to practice this sport but they are hindered by a lack of knowledge, Clubs have a valuable role to play in educating future falconers in the art. If you had a mentor please return the favour and help someone else, if you didn't then spare some else the pains you went to, to get a foothold on the falconry ladder and through the learning process. We get many phone calls from potential falconers wanting, no needing, help and guidance. What many of us lose sight of is the fact that when falconry is done badly the only thing to really suffer is the bird. Our private face of falconry must be as acceptable as our public one. By not showing beginners the right way to do it we may lose falconry if they, one day become the public face. Teach them that falconry is not learnt in a week, a month or even several years. It is an ongoing process and the birds should always be the first priority.

We are here for you to promote your club, and encourage new members along. All reasonable submissions will be printed, also a photograph if desired.

Tell us about who you are, where you are, your aims and achievements, and encourage falconry down the right road.

CLUB DIRECTORY CLUB DIRECTORY

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Contact

**Paul Beecroft: 0118 9016990
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We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

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**Contact: Jeff on 01942 201995 or:
 Rob on - 01706 845731 or 0378 609467 (mobile).**

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Meetings at various locations around the country.

For further information on this 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**

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Affiliated to the British Field Sports Society

Hawley on the Surrey/Hants 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.

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

Northern England Falconry Club

Club meetings are held at:-

"The Stickler"

Public House.

Stickler Lane, Bradford.

Or contact: **Chris Southern on
 01422 366425**

E-mail: 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 Sec:
**Tel: 01247-472413
 or 07713-887551**

E-mail: nihawkingclub@hotmail.com
 or: mike@bustop18.freemove.co.uk

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The South East Falconry Group

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

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

SOUTH 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

MEETINGS ARE HELD AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

South Wales:- 2nd Monday

USK The Casey's Court Pub, Usk

Region 1 North Wales:- 1st Monday

CHESTER The Goshawk, Mouldsworth

Region 2 Exeter:- 3rd Monday

EXETER The Ley Arms at Kenn, Nr Exeter

Region 3 Essex group:- 1st Tuesday

COLCHESTER The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, Nr Colchester

Region 4 The Bath Group:- 1st Wednesday

HINTON The Bull Inn, Hinton, Nr Bath

Region 5 Midlands:- last Monday

KEGWORTH Ye Olde Flying Horse, Kegworth, Notts

THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB IS INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED AND HAS MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE UK.

For further information ring Secretary:

Mike Clowes on 01529 240443

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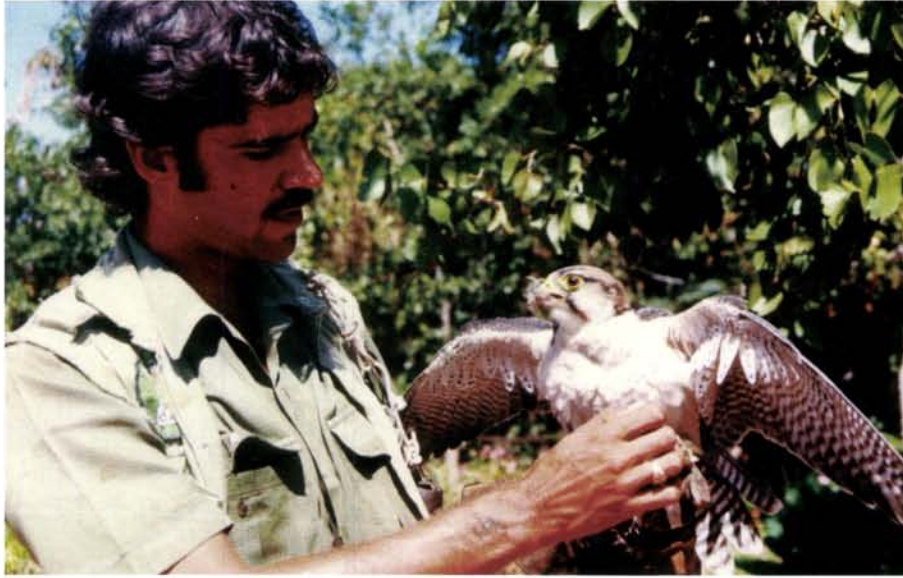
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ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

RICHARD NAISBITT



I could not believe that blue sky and the shimmering heat that melted the edges of the tarred road, but it did. The sun simply burst its banks and melted the candles in my room.

It was one of those hot sticky Kariba days in mid-summer before the rains.

The period when great big thunderclouds lumbered in from the North, clouds that had the anvil shape and a colour of badly bruised skin. It also shrank the water holes and forced many animals to use the shimmering waters of Lake Kariba.

Birds flocked there, Turtledoves, Namaqua doves, Guinea fowl, francolin and the huge flocks of double-banded sand grouse. I had tried hunting the sandgrouse with various lanners. They all failed. I saw a calidus peregrine outflown by a pair of grouse, the mighty bird from Siberia was left breathing hot air and I

The sky was a vast aching blue mirror that seemed to reflect the heat that oozed from the hot flood plain

watched it recover on top of a tall dead tree, its chest heaving with every breath.

If a peregrine could not do it, what hope did a lanner have of achieving this impossible task?

Thermals were the answer. Not the small early morning thermals that withered quickly but the great big vulture sucking thermals of midday and late afternoon that just rose, column after column,

carrying the soaring vultures up like specks of dirt.

I put Justine into one of them. I could see the heat haze over the grassland and a herd of buffalo that grazed the short grass. Justine vanished into a blue haze,

If a peregrine could not do it, what hope did a lanner have of achieving this impossible task?

not even a speck. She left me sweating, fending off flies with a leafy branch and gazing into nothingness.

I waited for 30 minutes, then I started to swing the lure in great arcs that showed a degree of desperation. An old buffalo bull looked up from his sanctuary of mud twitched an ear and fell asleep again. I did have an audience other than the buffalo. A tree festooned with gorged

white-backed vultures stared at me with a hunch shouldered curiosity before they too left me in the heat. I could not help but marvel as each of the 20 or so birds hitched a ride on the invisible thermals, a few flaps and then set the wings and gone!

A tawny eagle, a little way ahead of me, picked out a dung beetle from a pile of steaming elephant dung, crushed it and

swallowed it. The Tawny eagle was also sucked up by those thermals and finally I had no audience, aside from the buffalo that snored in the mud.

My hands were blistered after 30 minutes and still I swung the lure in some vague hope that my falcon would return. The sky was a vast aching blue mirror that seemed to reflect the heat that oozed from the hot flood plain and then in an area high above me, a small speck, like a fly on a wind screen. I swung that tattered old lure faster until I could here it whirl and the blisters on my fingers popped.

The old buffalo woke from his ancient slumber and meandered along the shore, placing his mud laden heavily body in the short grass. Two sand grouse flushed from beneath this old buffalo's feet.

They beat their sharp wings in a scything rhythm that hurtled them forward at a pace that was hard to follow. Before long they were inside the heat mirage, burning their way up the shoreline, over the herd of buffalo and almost into oblivion.

The speck that I had seen grew larger and time stood still. I dropped the lure

and clenched my fists when I realised that my falcon had been there all along and the sandgrouse had seen her and understood.

I lost sight of the birds and followed the dusty road in the landrover. The constant stooping and screaming from a pair of blacksmith plovers brought over a ridge and into an eroded gully. Justine was there, with her head cocked to one side as the plovers skimmed her head. I sat with her as she plucked the sand grouse. There were more to come over the months. As the rains fell the sand grouse dispersed but then there were francolin and doves and wet hunts over small rivulets.

All good things end. I let Justine go the following season. Ten days before I left the safari camp for good and before I came to Australia. I cut her Jesses, held her up and let her loose to find one of those thermals. I last her as a speck that joined the vultures in a sky that reflected the heat like a mirror.



TROUBLE AT THE BEACH

MIKE FAIRCLOTH

They say that to get your first Goshawk, you've got to pay your dues. My first Gos came after several years of going to the Sierra's on vacation and climbing every canyon and ravine that had the required orientation, trees and creek, that seemed likely to hold a nest. I finally got a large, beautiful female from high up in a huge Ponderosa Pine. Gos nests are hard to find in Aspens but nearly impossible in large pines. I named her 'Trouble' for all the hard work she had been to obtain. Little did I know how well she would live up to that ill chosen name. This is the story of one of the days when 'Trouble' proved worthy of her name.

Trouble had trained quickly and learned her lessons well. It seemed like no time at all 'til she was ready to be given her first bagged game. We started with bagged bunnies, then progressed quickly to pheasants, chuckers and ducks. She once took a hen pheasant after a flight of a full measured 1000 yards. I was surprised that the pheasant would fly that far, I do a lot of my hunting near the beach, adjacent to Sea World Park in San Diego. It's flat, open and has a good breeze off the Pacific Ocean.

The day in question was in mid-November. My apprentice, Paul Corry and I were going to bag the Gos a chucker that morning. It was early when we arrived at the beach. A cold, windy, overcast day, not beach weather, but not too bad for hawking. The idea was to have Paul hide behind a large bush with a chucker, and at the appropriate moment toss the bag and let the Gos give chase and hopefully catch the chucker in a short, but classic, Goshawk style. Paul and I had done this many times before with a variety of game, it always worked great. So after sending Paul into the field, bag in hand, to hide behind the appointed bush, I gathered up Trouble and we went in search of the elusive "Beach Bush Chucker".

Trouble was plenty sharp that morning and I was sure we'd get a good flight and a quick kill. She was actually ready for some honest to goodness wild slips.

We approached the chosen bush



Goshawks - more 'Trouble' than they are worth? I think not!

cautiously and I gave my apprentice the "anytime now" signal. Paul tossed the bag perfectly.....now any self respecting chucker with half a brain, that's given a choice between the wide open Pacific Ocean and flat field with lots of brush for cover, would not have

...suddenly I had a dead chucker and a gos that was unwilling to let go of her prize 200 yards out in the Pacific.

had a difficult decision. This chucker didn't have the required "half a brain"!! He immediately banked hard to the right and headed out to sea, with a hungry and determined goshawk closing the gap. The chucker bailed into the water about 200 yards out. Trouble did a perfect impression of an Osprey and suddenly I had a dead chucker and a gos that was unwilling to let go of her prize 200 yards out in the Pacific. Trouble started rowing for shore with wet wings but it was obvious that the dead chucker under water was acting like an anchor and she'd never make it.

Apprentices have certain rights of passage and I think that rescuing a sponsors' prized goshawk on such an occasion falls into that category, but Paul wasn't buying it so it befell me to go for the swim. It was still early in the morning and still overcast....the beach was deserted except for Paul and I. I stripped down to my "briefs" and waded in. What's that Mom used to say about always having clean underwear?? The water temperature must have been in the high 40's. As the water reached the lower waist level, my more sensitive parts were retreating from the cold! I had to swim with one hand held over my head, the one with the glove. I closed the distance to my hapless hawk quickly and Trouble seemed happy to see me, though a bit perplexed at the turn of events that had placed her in the water. She clambered onto the upheld fist, still holding the prized chucker in one foot.

At this point a strange thing happened.....as if on cue from a higher power, the clouds slowly parted to reveal a brilliant sunny morning, and the beach that had been deserted just moments ago now suddenly was crowded with men jogging, old ladies walking dogs, kids on bicycles, girls in skimpy swimsuits and generally people

staring at the guy swimming while holding a goshawk over his head.

It's hard to be inconspicuous while sitting on the rocks at the beach, dripping wet, freezing cold in your underwear and holding a large goshawk that's eating a chucker. The crowd dispersed slowly as Paul tried to answer questions between fits of laughter. This was the start of Troubles' career to earn her name. □

Editors note: It must be said that this article is by an American gentleman and bagged quarry is strictly illegal in the UK.

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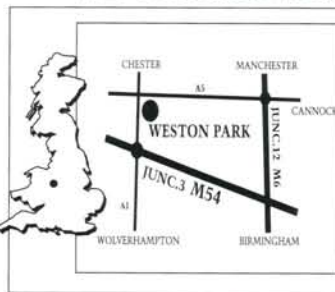
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THERE ARE NAMES FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME PART 2

In the last issue it was left that I had 5 fertile hybrid Golden eagle x Steppe eagle eggs, with one weeks incubation to go. Well to cut straight to the outcome, 4 of the 5 hatched, so the first ever hatching of an eagle using frozen semen has been accomplished. All 5 eggs developed through to hatch date, the one that failed developed the wrong way round so when it came to pip it didn't have the air space and so suffocated, a great shame but then I was over the moon to get the other 4 out all in one piece. All the eggs were artificially incubated and all stormed out textbook style; maybe hybrid vigour had something to do with that. They were all strong and healthy and at the point of writing this article the

youngest is 5 weeks old and starting to feather up well.

So what now? Well now that it has been proved that the system works we can try it out with different species, I would like to see how Accipiter semen stands up to the freezing process as well as Falcon semen. Also I would like to refine our current system to make it



I would like to refine our current system to make it easier to use, and therefore more effective.

easier to use, and therefore more effective. There are still a lot of sperm that die during the process, so we need to adjust how we do things, compare quick freezing to slow freezing, try different additives to help protect the

sperm and generally improve the protocol. Graham Wishart my co-conspirator is doing some lab research at the university on the frozen semen that I didn't use; I also froze some more semen using slightly different techniques that may show better sperm survival rate. All of this is dependent on time and funds, there is only so much that can be done for me free gratis. Perhaps out there somewhere there is some large company that would like to sponsor the work we are doing in exchange for the PR that it brings.

Certainly the publicity generated for the University of Abertay by their PR team indicates the level of interest that the general public has for anything that involves a soft fluffy baby bird. And it goes to show that



falconers are largely responsible for the technological breakthroughs that benefit much of raptor propagation development. It may well be that the scientific know-how is there it just needs falconers to take that know-how and adapt it to help the birds we love. After all it was falconers who pioneered the first bird reintroductions (the goshawk in the 60s) before it was fashionable to do so. Falconers were the first to develop captive breeding techniques, then AI techniques, all of which have gone on to be used by non falconry organisations.

And it is ultimately falconers who will continue to try and improve things for raptors long after the fashion moves on to other animal species.

HEAT, HIPPOS AND TIGER

MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD

As I write this it's late June and we are suffering what I consider to be a tropical heat wave. You wake up hot, you go to bed hot - you pray for air conditioning. It's just too hot! Around me, most disagree. Limp bodies loll about like sun-starved lizards. How do they do it? Why do they? I watch them in disbelief and grumble some more. I'm beginning to feel like some spoilsport summertime Scrooge!

It's been a period of some excitement. Through the wide-open windows the occasional 'squeak' comes up from the ferrets' shed at the bottom of the garden - the shady oasis bit of the garden, where, like the dog, I could willingly take up temporary residence. The baby ferrets are exactly two and a half weeks old and are slowly arriving at the point where a bit of blind exploring will be undertaken. It's all a bit of a novelty because I don't usually



mated to prevent them becoming ill has rumbled on for years. But the fact is, regardless of evidence to the contrary, jills who stay in season can become ill and some do perish. Freak? Chance? Nothing to do with her season? Maybe, but for me, mating is the only option. And can those who keep their jills in season really argue that a constantly swollen vulva is a good thing? Ask some poor jill!

However, with this needing major attention, I dumped the ferrets in the shed. They loved it - and were staying!

At the moment the litter is in a corner nesting area specifically designed as an escape den for females who are being over-pestered by the hob. It has an adjustable door opening so that it can be positioned so as not to allow a hob passage; though, even fully open, it struggled to accommodate one of the pregnant jills who approached labour looking like a hippo! Incidentally, the top of their nest corner is open so I can take the odd careful peek, hence me knowing the number of young.

But the litter didn't enter the world in this corner. They were born in a free-standing nest box elsewhere in the shed. And in this they spent at least two days. I'm not sure what prompted the move but I suspect it was the arrival of jill number two's litter. I think number two, 'Pepper', had her young in the corner nest and jill number one, 'Pip', took hers to join them. I'd love to have seen the move.

Currently the shed is a danger zone - or is perhaps better described as a

tiger pit. Nursing jills vary a lot in their response to their handlers. Some are easygoing, wanting to even gently drag hands into nests. Not Pip, 'the hippo', she has become lethal, nailing unguarded hands like a cobra. Cleaning the latrine corner out has never been so exciting! Pepper is

The fact is, regardless of evidence to the contrary, jills who stay in season can become ill and some do perish.

breed ferrets, indeed my last litter was several years ago. I have always much preferred to buy in new stock when required due to the worry of finding homes for youngsters. And being careful about where they go is essential. Although ferrets are probably having a better time of it than at any other point in their history, misunderstandings still occur regarding diet and housing. They can be found in terribly cramped and filthy conditions - and even being fed bread and milk! But perhaps I take my home vetting a bit too far. One woman responded, 'I'm trying to buy a ferret, not adopt a child!'

However, this year, the death of my old vasectomized hob, plus the need for at least one more jill, forced my hand about breeding. A male was acquired on loan - a rather bigger animal than I would have ideally chosen - and the deed was done. Of course, I could have purchased a young jill and simply left 'the girls' without a hob. But this would have resulted in them staying in season all summer long. A problem? The debate on whether jills need to be

The present litter - eight I'm pretty sure - is being nursed by two jills, both mothers. All are housed in an 8' x 5' shed, a shed, that over some 30 years, has been guinea pig pen, pet mouse den (until pet mouse made a hole and encouraged his wild mates home!), and, more recently, a free-loft aviary. As ferret accommodation, the shed works a treat. Until some months ago I was using an outside compound affair.



R PITS

fine, but then she's always been wonderful in every respect.

The plan is to keep a hob who will be vasectomized, and run two jills on with the idea of retaining one. I never like to keep more ferrets than I truly need. I've never been much of an animal keeper and to be honest, feeding valuable hawk- and ferret-

gloves are dragged madly about, other items are tossed, rolled and brought to life, and then there's the game that provokes the most frenzied action of all - kill the enemy in the feed sack! For those who don't know the real ferret or perhaps those who have had

Young ferrets need an adventure playground - and often, a human to go with it!

caught food to a shed full of pets leaves me cold. In practice, it works out that for the ferreting I do, two or three jills, with a hob as a possible stand in, is perfectly adequate. The rest of the litter are going to the chap I borrowed the hob from; he has a better way with potential customers!

Something I'm looking forward to is early handling. Obviously, young ferrets are best handled from an early age. In practice, this can begin as soon as they are making a few early nest escapes. The bumbling-about, still-blind critters can be gently touched and picked up before mum carts them off again. But I'm going to have to be careful. When mum's a tiger, hands need to be considered! The time is approaching - will I be finishing the article with bandaged fingers?

I've always been fascinated by how precocious baby ferrets are; the urge to travel while still examining the world through sealed eyes, and the interest in solid food while not knowing what they are eating or how to eat it, is intriguing. An interest in solids starts at about three weeks but I'm sure I caught one sucking on a lump of tripe this morning!

The real fun is still some weeks off yet. You have to see ferrets play to appreciate just how wild the games get. Now everyone's a tiger! All the pouncing, grabbing and play biting - things get pretty wild. The shed will give them ample room, and the normal assortment of play items - the tubes, flower pots, old boots - will be all be called for. Young ferrets need an adventure playground - and often, a human to go with it! They beg you to get involved, and how can you resist? And where do you stop! Old leather

The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine



a bad first-time experience, this is a wonderful attitude-shaper.

What a shame so many people - falconers included - misunderstand ferrets. What a pity so many are put off by acquiring stock that has never been handled. I remember a falconer friend who had been taunted with ferrets as a boy by his bullying father. When we started hawking together he

angle than nets, wide eyes signalled a convert.

Nets, ferrets, hawking - but in this heat doesn't the season seem a long way off. And with the foot and mouth disaster, the countryside has become quite a stranger. But as paths slowly open, all the indicators point to a very good rabbit year - there are young scampering everywhere. A farming

When we started hawking together he had a phobia about ferrets but watching me work them, he gradually came around.

had a phobia about ferrets but watching me work them, he gradually came around. And then what happened? Against my advice he acquired a hand-me-down creature that was half crocodile!

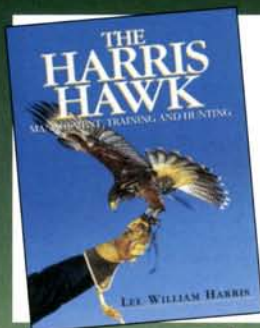
A rather happier father and son ferreting team came to the house recently. The son, perhaps 13, had tagged along to assist his dad with a small electrical job. I had no idea they were ferreters until we went into the garage and the kid's eyes lit up at the purse nets hanging from the wall. I used to do a lot of netting and believe me, without the hassle and 'hurry' factor of a hawk along, netting is a great way to learn the ferreting game. Anyway, the kid and I fell into conversation and it became clear he loved his ferreting, and when I revealed that the mews held a more interesting

friend on the hill ground I fly over - ground still closed at the time of writing - gives me weekly reports. And of course, in addition to the numbers of rabbits he teases me with, a veritable 'plague', this year his patch is home to the biggest rabbits he's ever seen! Grow you baby ferrets, grow. And bird, drop those feathers!



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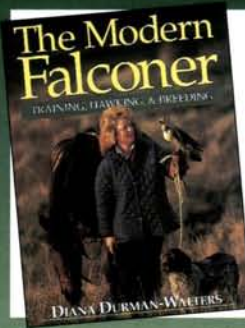
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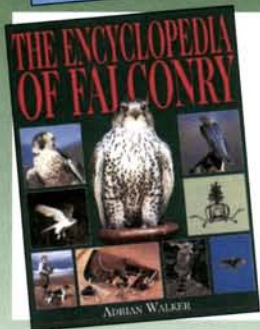
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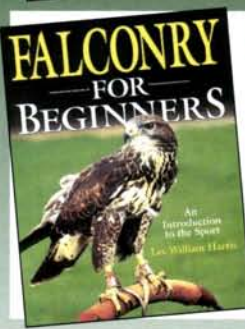
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the embryo, as the egg becomes saturated with water and also becomes susceptible to harmful bacteria, which are sucked in through the pores of the shell. How many times have we all thought 'is it still alive?' Indeed there have been many bird keepers who have mistakenly thought that 'it must be dead, because it should have hatched yesterday', so the top of the egg is removed, only to find the chick was still alive and is now well and truly dead. Disaster!

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UK'S LARGEST FALCON MOVES CLOSER TO HUMANS

Peregrines are moving into UK towns and cities - and the Hawk and Owl Trust wants to find out more about this trend. The wildlife conservation charity is asking people to help with its new research into urban living by these previously country-loving birds of prey.

"I am very keen to hear about any Peregrines that people see flying in built up areas and perhaps perching or even nesting on man-made structures such as buildings, bridges, pylons or radio masts", said the Hawk and Owl Trust Project Officer, who is carrying out the research, raptor biologist Nick Dixon. "The idea is to find out just how many of the UK's largest falcons are adapting to the modern world in this way and to understand their behaviour in this new urban setting."

The Trust's research, which is being funded by Howard Victor Skan Charitable Trust, is taking place over three years. Nick is studying how the number of urban Peregrines has increased in the last decade, the type of man-made nest sites they are selecting (such as ledges or nest boxes) and their distribution. He will also look at what habitat features the sites have in common.

"I am an enthusiastic bird watcher and my family and I are delighted to support such a valuable investigation into urban Peregrines", said Roger Skan, principal trustee of the Howard Victor Skan Charitable Trust.

The Hawk and Owl Trust, which works to conserve wild birds of prey and their habitats, was founded in 1969 because of



concern about the crash in Peregrine numbers. With the banning of DDT, increased protection and intensive conservation efforts, the population slowly recovered.

Peregrines, which are traditionally associated with coastal cliffs and wild upland crags, also began to breed in quarries during the 1980's. Sporadic nesting attempts have since been recorded in man-made structures which seem to offer secure nesting sites and vantage points from which to search for prey.

In 1991 the British Trust for Ornithology's national Peregrine survey found seven successful nest sites in urban areas and on man-made structures. In 1993, 2 pairs were nesting on buildings, bridges, railway viaducts, pylons, industrial towers and chimney stacks. Since then the number of pairs that take advantage of the plentiful prey in urban areas has continued to rise.

The Hawk and Owl Trust's research will complement the BTO's Peregrine survey, scheduled for this year but postponed until 2001 because of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. The BTO aims to establish the population trends in the species every 10 years.

Please send details of urban Peregrine sightings - where and when - by email to Nickdixondevon@aol.com or to **Nick Dixon, The Hawk and Owl Trust, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regents Park, London. NW1 4RY**, including your telephone number so that he can get in touch for further information.





CLASS 4'S FIRST DAY

MALCOLM ALLISON

Good morning children, as you know, today we are going on a bus ride to the countryside to visit a

Falconry centre.

Yes you do John. You took a letter home to your parents last week.

Why didn't you give it to them?

Did it taste nice?

So what do you think we will see there?

No George there won't be a mega-death ride.

No, nor an oblivion water splash.

That's correct Rosie, we will see lots of birds of prey.

No Rachel they won't all be in church.

No John, you will have to sit in the front next to me.

Because it is closer to the door.

In case you are sick.

But you were sick last time, weren't you?

Well have you eaten any worms today?

All right then but be sure to tell me if you feel sick.

Yes Sidney of course earwigs would make you sick as well.

Has he?..... JOHN!. come and sit near me.

No children we are not nearly there yet. This is a petrol station.

No Laura they do not sell shells.

Can you all see the cows in the field over there children, did you know that that is where milk comes from?

No, Colin it does not come from Tesco.

Yes I know that is where your mummy gets hers from.

Yes Sidney they will have toilets there.

Well you should have thought of that before we left.

Right children, here we are. I want you all to get off the bus and wait in neat line near the gate.

George! I said near the gate not on it.

I can see you are nearer to the gate than anyone else, but gates are not for climbing on are they?

No they are not, please get down.

Children when we go inside I want you all to stay together and keep to the paths.

No Sidney we do need to stay together in the toilets.

Well go now and don't forget to wash your hands.

Yes I know you have already washed them once today but wash them in the toilet.

No!!!. not IN the toilet, in the wash basin.

Now children these are very special birds called falcons.

No Peter they can't talk but they are still special.

I know your grandma's parrot can talk.

Yes that is special too.

Can it really say "hello Peter", How clever.

Peter, be quiet that is very rude, we do not use words like that.

We do not need to know what else it can say.

This bird is a Peregrine, isn't he beautiful. Can anyone tell me what he eats?

No George, not Pringles.

No Susan not fish.

I know penguins eat fish on the telly.

No Susan I did not say it was a penguin I said PEREGRINE.

Don't do that Sidney, it will not eat ham sandwiches.

No, not even if they have got marmite on.

Good girl Rosie. That's right they do eat meat.

Yes Sidney I know ham is made of meat but ham is cooked meat, they only eat raw meat

I know it is cold but it is still cooked.

Yes it is, now put it back in your sandwich.

Does anyone know how it catches its food?

George, why on earth do you think it catches it on a motorbike?

That is not a crash helmet George, that is a hood.

Yes Sidney I know it's not raining, they put that on the bird's head to keep it quiet.

Yes Rosie one would be useful for Sidney or George but I don't think they make them that big.

No Peter your satchel won't do the same job.

Not even if you take your lunch box out.

Peter take it off this instant.

Because Sidney can't see where he is going.

Miss Barnes, could you please take Sidney to the first aid station and tell them he bumped his head when he walked into the wall.

Well it catches its food by flying after it very fast and catching it in its talons.

It is another word for claws George.

When they are hunting they catch things like pheasants, pigeons and rabbits.

No Rosie I don't think he would eat your bunny, it is a long way away and locked in a cage in your garden.

Is it really, and does mummy know it is under your bed?

Here at the centre they are fed on day



Y OUT



old chickens. Look, that one over there is eating some food now.

No John it isn't eating a slug it is eating chicken.

What do you mean it tasted like a slug. Go and wash your hands immediately.

What has it got on its legs Peter?

No not feet.

Yes George I know it HAS got feet but what else has it got on its legs.

Yes Rosie well done it has got leather straps on. Does any one know what they are called?

No George not leather straps, they are called Jesses. The Jesses are attached to a Swivel, which is attached to a Leash. The leash is tied onto the bird's perch, which is called a Block. Why do you think it has to be tied to its perch?

No George, not to stop it flying off and eating Rosie's bunny.

It is to stop it flying away and eating the other falcons.

That would NOT be cool George.

Hello Sidney, are you all right now, can you see properly with that big bandage on?

Good then we shall continue. These birds are called hawks they are slightly different to the falcons but they still eat the same sort of food.

No Peter they can't talk either.

Really, well some people might think parrots are boring too.

Look children isn't that a big bird. That is called a Golden Eagle, can anyone tell me what a Golden Eagle eats?

No George they do not eat dogs.

I don't care what they eat in York; dogs are not part of their natural diet. They eat things like hare and small deer.

Now now Rosie stop crying, your pony-

tails are quite safe.

Right children gather round, now after lunch we will see some more of the birds and we may be lucky enough to see some of them fly. We will now go to the picnic area to have our lunch!!

JOHN!! give that chick back to that bird and tell it you're sorry.

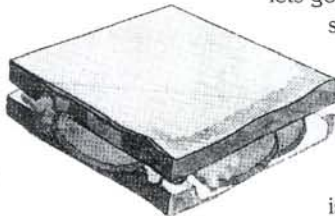
I don't care if you do like chicken, you will have to make do with sandwiches.

No you can't swap, I have already explained falcons don't eat sandwiches.

No nor crisps.

No not even chicken flavour, now come along.

Attention now children you have all eaten lunch and had a little play, now lets go back and see if we can see some of the wonderful birds flying. All sit down on the ground and stay behind the rope. Sidney the rope is not for swinging on, is it?



No it is not!! Miss Barnes could you please untangle Sidney's bandage from the rope.

Now children this nice man is called Frank and he is a Falconer.

Yes he is a nice man George.

Because he looks like a nice man.

Yes he does, now be quiet and listen. He has on his hand a Lanner Falcon, which he has trained. Frank is now going to give us a flying display.

No Sidney, Frank is not going to fly.

I know what I said, just watch while Frank gets the bird ready for flying. Before the falconer lets the bird go he must take off it's swivel and leash and attach a radio transmitter to it.

No Rosie I did not say it wrong. A transistor radio is something totally different

Does anyone know why it needs a radio transmitter?

HELLO PETER!



No George not so as it can listen to Steps.

No Peter, nor the Spice-Girls. It is so he can pick up a signal on a receiver if the bird gets lost.

Yes Rosie what is it?

Your grandma has one what called Ben?

No Rosie I think you will find that is a probably Retriever.

Finally before he releases it he must remove its hood.

So it can see where it is going and doesn't bump into things George.

Yes Peter just like Sidney.

Yes Rosie it would look silly with a bandage on. Now Frank is about to let the bird go!! There it goes, doesn't it fly very fast children, did you know some falcons can fly at over one hundred miles per hour?

Don't be silly John you can't run faster than that.

No you can not, now be quiet. The falcon will fly round in big circles and get higher and higher until it reaches about 1000 feet. Then the falconer will get a lure out and call him back. Falcons have very good eyesight and can spot their prey from a very long way away.

George!... stop teasing Rosie, it will not be able to see her bunny from up there.

Yes Rosie I am sure.

No Peter he has not lost it, the bird has been very carefully trained and Frank is an expert Falconer who has been flying birds for many years.

No Peter he has not.

Well children wasn't that a marvellous day?

Yes Rosie I am sure the bird will come back eventually!!!!!!!!!!!!

THE END.

polly

As you probably remember, I had a spar called Tilly. She was a wonderful creature and from conversations with other spar owners she was everything one could want from a spar. She never footed me, she came back, she hunted like it was going out of fashion and was very steady.

As she was an imprint I moulted her out on her bow perch for the first summer and she was fine, her weight stayed steady at 11.5 oz and her feathers came down as if by clockwork.

It was a terrible shock, therefore, to lose her! She was tethered on the lawn as she had been on a hundred other days, and had just eaten. I was in the house and all of a sudden the dogs went loopy, they barked and ran down the garden, I went out to see what was the matter and to my horror I realised Tilly was not on her bow perch. Everything was left behind except the bird and her buttons. I did what you would expect, I cried, and then got my bag and lure and went to look for her. I walked the fields behind the house, where we used to hunt for over a week, looking, calling, hoping against hope that I would find her, even if just to ascertain that she was still alive. I knew, without a doubt, that she could fend for herself. I was disappointed though and I never saw her.

It was too late to get another spar so a gaping hole was left in my hawking season. Other birds were contemplated but nothing seemed to have the appeal of a spar. The thing with Tilly was I could hunt her every day on land within walking distance of the house, all the quarry we would ever

I was in the house and all of a sudden the dogs went loopy, they barked and ran down the garden, I went out to see what was the matter and to my horror I realised Tilly was not on her bow perch.



need was there in abundance. If I decided I wanted a change she was always ready to tackle new quarry, where possible, on different land. So, with all this in mind, in November 2000, I ordered another sparrowhawk.

Tilly towards the end of the season, looking supremely confident.

Tilly was picked up from Doncaster on 1st July 1999, Polly was picked up from Doncaster on 1st July 2001. A little older than Tilly, she was alert, standing up, albeit very wobbly and I was immediately drawn to her. Lucy and I brought her home and she was quite nervous for the first couple of days, particularly in the mornings. Polly's progress though has been rapid and she is now part of the family, taking it all in her stride. I don't think she will be as big as Tilly, but time will tell, having said that she is

now pulling and has mastered the art much sooner than Tilly did. Her feathers are just as dark as her predecessor's and I know she is going to be beautiful!

I am not comparing her favourably or unfavourably with Tilly, just fascinated that they are the same and also so different. It will be interesting to see how she progresses, if the training methods I used with Tilly which were so successful, will be as successful with Polly. She will be flown exclusively to the lure, never, ever fed on the fist. She will have at least two if not three weeks after being hard penned to grow and fill out.

At the moment she is pumping her wings hard and getting 2-3 inches off the floor, running across the room and footing things with vigour and an obvious killing instinct. This is what makes them so easy turn on to quarry, at three and a half weeks old she is 'killing' everything that looks like a suitable candidate, Davids' jeans, a tube of hand cream, a feather she has to play with, the legs of my coffee table.

I have decided not to hood her. At the beginning with Tilly there were times I wished I had. She would bate at everything that moved in the early days, leaves, birds too far away to have a hope in hell of catching, but she learnt exactly what



Tilly taking it all in her stride



Even as a downy Polly had no problem with being in the limelight

was what, all you have to do is be patient. By the end of the first month of hunting she had pretty much got it sussed. The things you protect them from with a hood are always there as a problem when they aren't hooded, whereas if you don't hood they come to accept them, given time.

Polly squeaks at me now, something she will do for the next 5 or 6 months. It is a tiny sound, not at all offensive. As she gets older it will become louder and sound more like a 'mew'. It is a positive bonus when you first take them out and the cover is still high. They are so small they are easily lost and even with telemetry on it is still hellishly difficult to spot them. I have stood literally beneath Tilly and not seen her until she moved and I heard her bell. As the season goes on the

them like 'babies' for too long they will overtake you and you will struggle to keep up with them. It is mid July now and Polly is flying about 10 feet and starting to steer.

When they first learn to fly it is very tentative, a couple of inches off the ground, pumping their wings, but once they get the hang of it 6 inches become 6 feet and then 60 feet very quickly. A bath must be offered fairly early, not when they are really downy but Polly has about 10% of her down left and is now bathing. They generally let you know when they are ready as they look 'interestedly' at water. It is not just curiosity but a message, take heed. Polly's first bath took her 10 minutes, she loved it, dipping, drinking, splashing about and regularly falling over, but loving every minute of it. It amazes me how naturally everything comes to them. They are



Polly's first bath, I thought she was never going to get out!

passing interest. The dogs on the other hand are a different matter. Tilly had a healthy respect for the dogs, preening Pod's tail and between his toes was as far as she ever went, not so with Polly though.

She is much bolder and sees them as 'fair game'. Both the dogs, are extremely good but both exit the room rapidly when Polly flies across and lands on them. Ah, friends, I hear you cry, no chance, quarry. As they leave the room it is with Polly running behind them footing at their feet. She shows no fear at all. On one of Tilly's first hunting expeditions she came tearing out of a tree at a Muntjac deer which was running through some long grass, when she realised what it was she raked off and sat up a tree chucking in fear, I dread to think what would happen if Polly came across one. I have a nasty feeling she would just pile in.

Anyway, time will tell, if I have half as much fun with Polly as I did with Tilly I will be happy, although I have a feeling things will be a little more hairy. I will keep you posted.

The rules with Tilly were simple, never feed on the fist, always reward when she returned, never fly without telemetry, and learn to run like the wind. I am hoping this will be enough with Polly.

One thing to note with a spar is the rapid rate of growth and development.

calling stops, but as I found with Tilly, if you spend the time with them the bond strengthens and a relationship develops that goes way beyond the bounds of food. The bird will trust you, look to you for help and security.

One thing to note with a spar is the rapid rate of growth and development. What they struggle to do on a Monday morning, for example, they have mastered by Tuesday afternoon. Pulling food may be impossible for them one day and a couple of days later they think nothing of it. It is important that you provide them with different challenges at a rate which is compatible with their development. It is ok to give food that they have to pull and then substitute it with smaller bits if you find they can't do it but you must be careful not to delay and feed the titbits for too long. If you treat

raised in an environment so completely removed from their natural habitat, yet everything happens as it should, hours of preening, mock 'killing', bathing, plucking and tearing food, standing on one leg, (Polly mastered this much easier than Tilly). Their interest is piqued by the things it should be, birds flying past the window cause much interest and the various angles of her head and neck cause much laughter among the family, but more mundane things like the vacuum cleaner, the kids, etc. elicit only a



"I wonder if things look different this way up?" said Polly



SEARCHING FOR IVY

RICHARD NAISBITT

I am a falconer at heart, whatever that means. Perhaps it is the solitude that comes with walking through bushland, watching the gos on your fist, straining your ears and watching so hard that your eyes start to hurt.

The good strong healthy gos with unfathomable eyes and a desire to survive. Maybe that is what I mean by saying I am a falconer at heart, maybe I share the latter attribute.

I first saw Ivy on the surgery table. Mangled was my first thought, no hope was my second and put it down was my third. But that was not to be. Ivy had her wing pinned and she lay in the recovery pen looking at me with those same unfathomable eyes that I had grown used to.

It was six weeks before I jessed her up, six weeks in the small recovery pen where she just sat and looked at the four shining walls of her captive world. Her nature began to show itself. She was like a snake, still one minute then thrashing wildly the next, lashing her taloned feet in a frenzy of anger, fear and a desire to escape. What future was there for this bird? I contemplated simply releasing her and letting her die on her own and she surely would die. Then I stared at her again and decided she was a challenge, if surviving on her own would be a task then I would

help her in some way or anyway I could.

I hooded her late in the evening after a struggle of wills and then she perched on my glove like a blinded gladiator, her head and wings drooping. The area where her wing had been pinned was stained with faded blood that seemed to have seeped into her feathers. There was a small portion of bare skin, pock

trying to gain control of this broken hawk. There were thousands like her out in the wild, hundreds that would die before winter gave way to spring. Dying from starvation, injury, gunshot wounds or predation by other raptors. I saw a peregrine plucking a juvenile male brown goshawk the week before, she flew off leaving his mutilated carcass to the ravens.

I sat with her for two long hours until my hand grew numb. She spent her first night on a low bow perch, I unhooded her in the dark and quietly left her to her dreams.

marked with spikes of new feather growth, I touched the scar and she flinched.

I sat with her for two long hours until my hand grew numb. She spent her first night on a low bow perch, I unhooded her in the dark and quietly left her to her dreams.

It seemed cruel to put this bird through so much, it seemed that I had decided to make her my challenge. I fought that idea, I fought the idea that I was

That was the difference, she wasn't one of those thousands that would die unnoticed, she was one that was rescued. So there I was, at midnight the next day, staring myopically into the dull lit room, watching this broken hawk hang her head.

She finally managed to perch on my glove on the 5th day, unhooded but terrified. The only sign that she was alive were the pupils of her yellow eyes, they contracted and dilated with flicker of a shadow and every drop of a pin.

The piece of bloody pigeon I offered her was ignored, she stared straight ahead, her beak slightly open. After an hour she slowly bent her head and examined the meat, cocked her head and looked at me and then with exaggerated movements she started eating, looking at me between each mouthful. She had something in her, something that had to be saved if only for my own benefit. I mentally slapped myself for being so emotional, just do the job I told myself with another mental slap.

Getting fit was a major hurdle for Ivy. 10 vertical flights made her wing droop and her chest heave. We started with two three metres flight and then worked up to 25 and then 60 in two sessions. Her wing stopped drooping and her breathing was easy even after 40 straight vertical flights.

Flying free was comparatively easy, she followed me for a few kilometres on her second free day. I could feel her eyes on my back and each flight she made from tree to tree was announced by a hundred



alarm calls. Every bird watched her. I could see some change in her demeanour. The frightened broken look was replaced by rediscovered competence and her flight improved day by day.

Her first kill was hidden from view but the blood that spattered her chest told it was not easy. The moorhen had dragged her a few yards into some dense reeds and if it were not for the fairy wrens that danced on the reed stems, I would not have found her. She plucked her kill with a steady rhythm before peeling the skin off the moorhen's breast. I watched as she

sipped the still warm blood. One success at least.

Our daily flights became quite methodical. Her kills were regular and it became all too easy. By the end of 4 weeks, she had taken 22 moorhens and 4 ducks. What more was there to do other than allowing her some freedom.

Ivy had been at liberty for 5 weeks when I started having difficulty locating her. Her transmitter signal dropped out in the wet dense understory of tree ferns and bracken. The recent rain made life a misery in the early mornings. I remember standing under a small dense bush, my jacket pulled over

my head and the receiver hidden from the constant heavy drizzle. I switched on the receiver and there was a faint bleep. Within minutes, the signal was screaming at me although the gain was turned down. In the foggy undergrowth, I saw Ivy watching me with those yellow eyes.

I tracked her a few more weeks before I found her deck feather in the leaf litter, the transmitter still beeped with life but the bird was gone. The feather was just a reminder that sometimes a bit of faith is all that is needed. □

WHAT MAKES A GOOD OWL OR RAPTOR SUPPLEMENT?

Moulting problems

One of the largest problems in falconry is the slowness of the moult. Having missing feathers is always going to have an adverse effect on flying performance. So wild birds will always moult as fast as their nutrition will allow. Captive birds moult slower because we restrict their food intake to prevent obesity. In other words captive birds need a different balance of nutrients than wild birds.

Feathers contain 70% of a bird's sulphur containing amino acids. And it is these nutrients (and sulphur itself) that affect the speed with which a bird can replace feathers. This does not mean that your supplement should contain an impressive long list of amino acids on the label. Why pay supplement prices for nutrients that in plentiful supply in your meat and prey foods at much lower cost? What you need is just the amino acids required for good feather production. This means lysine and methionine. To prevent the methionine being broken down in the body to release its valuable sulphur we also add a highly bio-available organic sulphur source to our Raptor Essentials supplements.

In small birds like finches these ingredients can enable a bird to moult, stress free, in just 3 weeks. In birds of prey our experience tells us that the moult can be shortened by six weeks or more. Not only will moulting be quicker but also feather quality and strength will be improved with obvious benefits for hunting birds. There is no way to improve the useful level of sulphur containing amino acids without supplements. Producing prey with longer fur or more feathers would increase the amount consumed but the ability of your

bird to break down these proteins is very low. No bird would waste a valuable resource like this so this behaviour highlights that the bio-availability of the amino acids in fur and feather protein is very low.

Trace minerals

Most supplements contain trace minerals. Again the objective is mostly to compensate for the lower levels of food

consumed by captive birds. Traditionally supplements have contained "inorganic" minerals. The bio-availability of these substances is very low too. The most modern products contain very highly available 'organic' minerals. These are far more efficiently absorbed into the bloodstream. As a bonus they also help to remove the heavy metals that contaminate so much of our lives these days.

Herbal extracts

The varied diet of wild herbivores like rabbits contains a wide variety of plant species. Many of these have health

benefits, which can be passed to owls and raptors. These benefits include supporting the immune system, maintaining a healthy digestive system and attacking selected disease causing germs. For birds of prey we only incorporate these herbs into our breeder supplement, as it is chicks that benefit most from their inclusion in the diet.

Vitamins

Vitamin supplementation has mostly changed in purely technical ways that affect storage and palatability. At the nutritional level we have moved our emphasis from the fat-soluble vitamins to the water-soluble B group vitamins. This is particularly important for falconry, as your birds are 'athletes in the skies'. B group

Few falconers or breeders of birds of prey would argue with the benefits of using supplements. Basic vitamins and calcium products have been available for many years. But the human and animal nutrition industries have blossomed in recent years and now many new ingredients are available that have benefits for falconers.

vitamins are involved in energy management so they are particularly beneficial for flying birds. Because they are also water-soluble they are flushed out of the body in a matter of hours. This why they should be given every day. In the end the test for supplements (which are best or whether you need them at all) comes from the benefits you see in the breeding or flying performance of your birds. An investment of just £5 -10 a year is all that is required for most falcons or hawks. Not much to pay for the greater pleasure of seeing your perfectly feathered bird make that extra-ordinary kill. □

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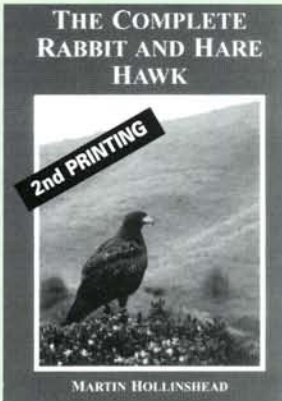
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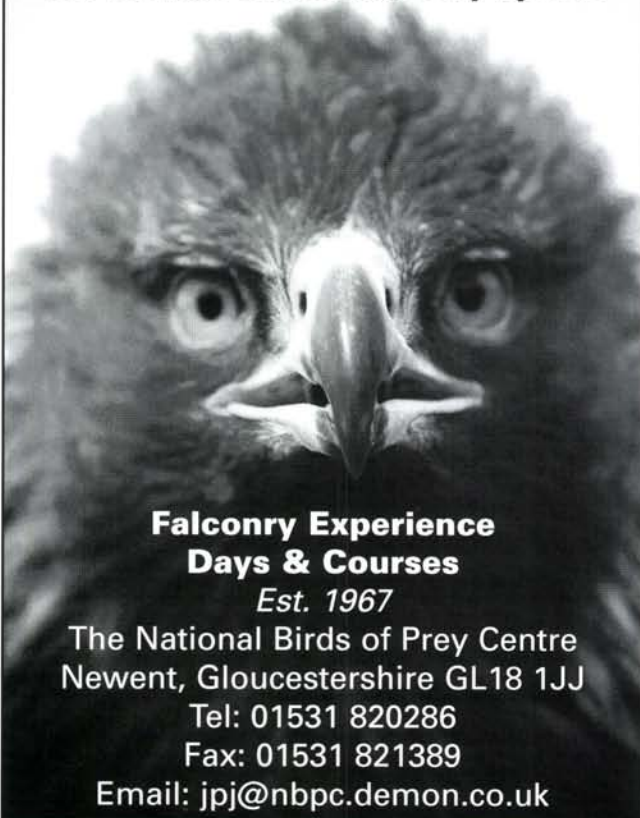
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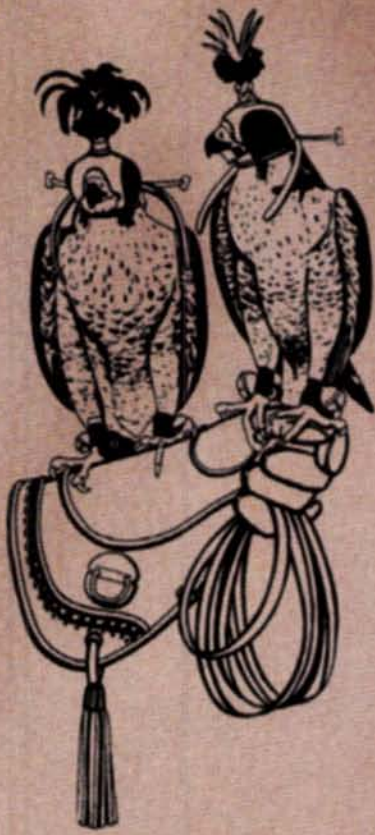
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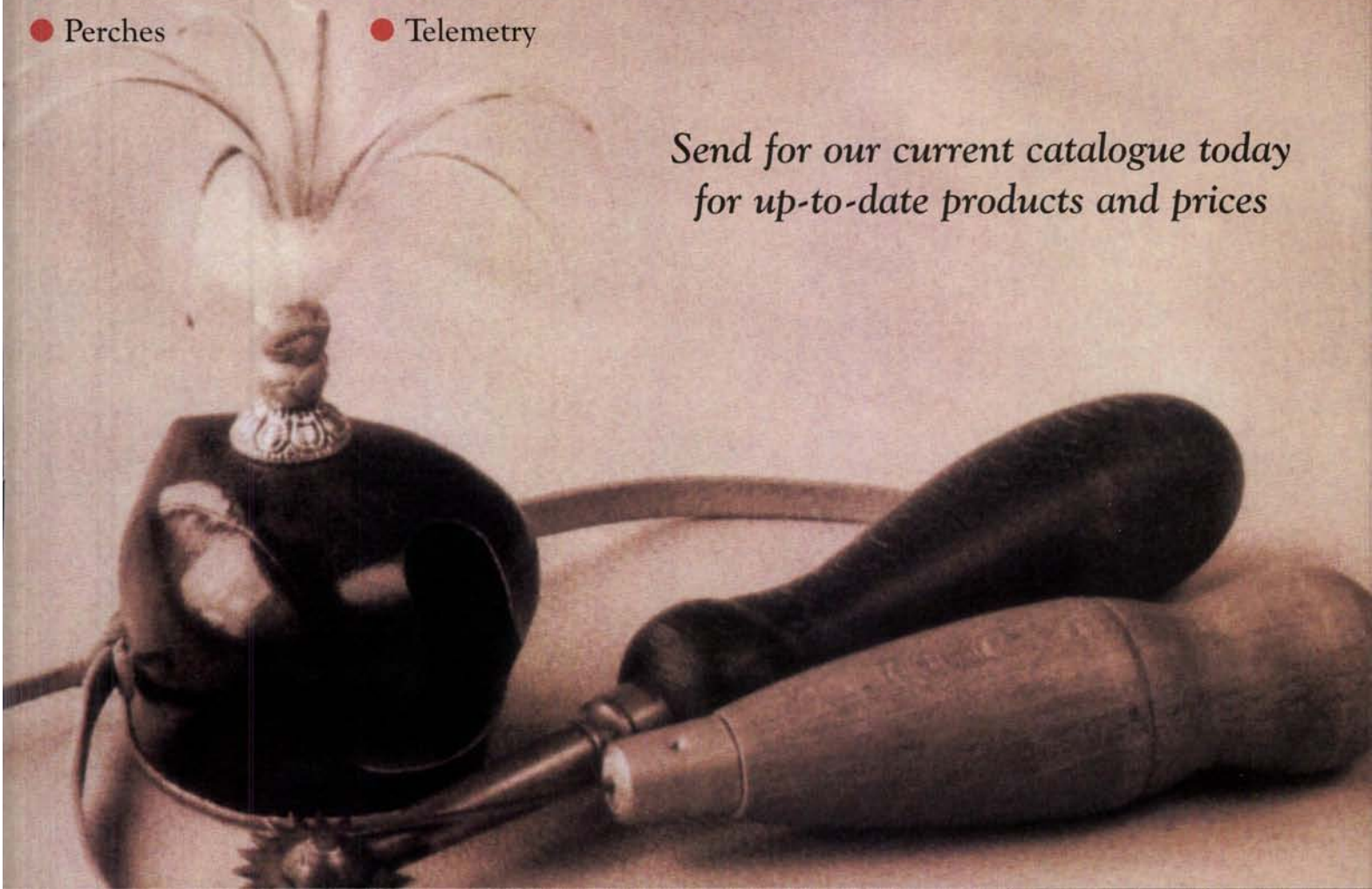


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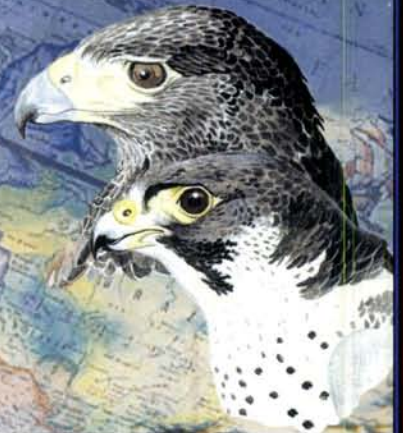




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