

The **Falcons**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

ISSUE 47

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**HARPY
EAGLES**
A STUDY IN
PANAMA

**PROFILE OF
ERNST
LUTTGER**

**HARRIS HAWK
OR GOLDEN
EAGLE?**

**GAME KEEPERS -
THE FALCONERS'
FRIEND**



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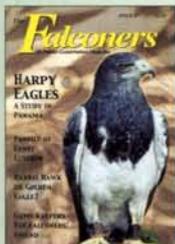
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News...News...News

GEOFFREY DASHWOOD BRONZES at St Barbe Museum, Lymington

Internationally acclaimed sculptor Geoffrey Dashwood exhibits his work in the New Forest for the first time with a retrospective show at St. Barbe Museum & Art Gallery. On display will be a selection of bronzes ranging from a tiny Wren to a stunning Monumental Owl.

Dashwood was born in Hampshire in 1947. At the age of fifteen he won a place on merit to study fine art at Southampton College of Art but preferring an outdoor life and studying direct from nature he left soon afterwards.



Geoffrey Dashwood - Red Kite, bronze 1999

He received his first commissions as an illustrator and initially concentrated on drawings and watercolours. By the 1980's Geoffrey had discovered a preference and a gift for sculpture and began making highly detailed, realistic studies in the mainstream tradition of English wildlife and sporting art.

Dissatisfied he soon began to explore a more personally expressive style and realism gave way to more minimal interpretation. His passion for birds is revealed in the elegant, abstracted form which display the characteristic essence of each individual species.

Dashwood's sculpture

has won many awards and his international reputation has been established by exhibitions in the USA, Europe, Asia, Australia and South Africa. He is a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy and has bi-annual one-man shows in both London and New York. In 1999 his work was included in the major national retrospective exhibition *The Shape of the Century - 100 Years of Sculpture in Britain* shown at Salisbury and London.

He now lives near Ringwood and despite being one of Britain's most important living sculptors his work is not generally known around his forest home. St Barbe Museum is therefore delighted to be able to introduce this phenomenal body of work to a New Forest audience and for his part Geoffrey is pleased to see his work exhibited in the area which has been such an inspiration.

The Times art critic, William Packer comments on Dashwood's place in the contemporary art world, "All art is abstract, only some more, some less. For the artist, the trick is only to establish the balance and proportion appropriate to himself. With his birds Dashwood does just that. He is simply an artist in and of his time."

Geoffrey Dashwood Bronzes
 Saturday 16th Feb - Saturday 20th April 2002.
 Monday - Saturday 10am - 4pm.
 Adults admission £3.



Geoffrey Dashwood - Goshawk, bronze 1999

One Man Exhibition of Wildlife Paintings by Mark Chester

Wildlife artist Mark Chester will be holding his 11th one man exhibition of paintings on Sunday 25th November 2001, at the Watermill Hotel, London Road, Bourne End, Nr. Hemel Hempstead, Herts. 2-5pm.

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

Much of the work shown will be drawn from Mark's trips to India, Africa, America and most recently Finland where he gathered reference of wolves and owls.

This years exhibition is supporting the Herts. & Wildlife Trust.

Mark has had a lifelong interest in natural history and from an early age has painted and sketched the wildlife that he saw around him.

He worked for a number of years in the photographic industry qualifying as a professional photographer. In 1990 Mark decided to leave the photographic industry to pursue a career as a wildlife artist.

Initially Mark painted birds and animals he saw in the local area. Wanting to broaden his subject matter he started travelling the

country, visiting wildlife sanctuaries and reserves gathering reference material for his paintings. An obvious development was for him to start travelling the world to see the wildlife in its natural environment, in particular his favourite subject, the big cats.

Mark has travelled widely in Europe, America, Africa and India where he led a group of artists on a painting safari to the national Tiger Reserve of Ranthambhore. This year he will be in Finland gathering reference on owls in the boreal forests for a series of new paintings.

In 1996 Mark was invited to become a Fellow of the Wildlife Art Society, and took the top photographic honour at the Society's annual exhibition, his paintings have been sold at the Royal Society of Watercolour Painters as well as in major wildlife auctions held by Christies, Sothebys and Bonhams.

Over 200 of his works have been reproduced as prints, greetings cards, calendars and collectors plates. In July this year the Jersey Post Office are publishing a set of stamps featuring 27 of Mark's bird of prey paintings, including



Falconers Roadshow

The Falconers and Raptor Conservation Magazine attended the Falconers Fair at Stonham Barns, Suffolk, on 30th September. We had a stand (2 x 6' tables) under a gazebo which decided to move in the wind until a nice young man with

'tent' pegs and a ruddy great hammer secured it to the ground.

As my wife (Marian) and myself were laying out the stock of magazines, they also tried to go walkabout! But then we were lucky to have two sides attached to the

gazebo to act as a wind break which was gratefully received.

The Falconry centre put on some wonderful flying displays of different birds, most notably a snowy owl and jack merlin. Also at the flying ground was a gun dog demonstration which kept the crowd enthralled and

LOST, FOUND, STOLEN FROM THE IBR & RAPTOR LIFELINE

Another three months have passed and the IBR is being advised of greater numbers of birds lost. This does not mean more people are losing birds, just that they are being more sensible and reporting them to the IBR. It costs nothing to report a lost bird.

There are another 55 found birds with no obvious owner. These could be back home if only the owner had reported the loss.

Please do let the IBR know if you have lost a bird, there is roughly a 50/50 chance of getting it back if you do report it. Whilst this is not brilliant it is very much better than no chance.

During these three months the IBR has managed to reunite a further 56 birds bringing the total reunited to almost 1000 since they started.

Don't be too proud. If you lose your bird phone the IBR on 0870 608 8500.

If you have lost a bird do contact the IBR on 0870 608 8500 who will help you find your bird. They have been running for 7 years and are the only effective nationwide service to help reunite you with your bird. We are certain some of the lost birds have been found but have not been reported. If someone found your bird you would like to know, wouldn't you? Who said you can't lose a Harris?

The fourth volume of the IBR Falconry Directory is now available and this year has listings of almost 600 entries in the breeders section together with a selection of excellent new articles from many well known personalities from the world of falconry. It is still excellent value at only £6.00 post paid and is available from the IBR (as if you could not have guessed)

FOUND

AFRICAN GREY PARROT
21xv
BARN OWL
5Bxx9U
42xxBC97U
6Wxx96U & IBR18849U
30xx94U
40xxBC97U & IBR18870U
4Bxx9U & IBR18957U
11xx01U
70xxOA97U
27xxBC98U
BENGAL EAGLE OWL
no ring x 2
11xx596Y
BUDGERIGAR
86xx6647
36xxRL
35xx462 01
COMMON BUZZARD
18xxW & IBxx8030W
58xxW
GFxx413BRITMUS
DUCK
66xx7
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL
no ring x 2
22xxAZ
22xxA00Z
FERRUGINOUS HAWK
3Rxx96X
GREAT HORNED OWL
7Fxx96X
GYR HYBRID FALCON
11xxOV & 22xx9W
HARRIS HAWK
IBxx410W
83xxW
39xx
6Bxx99W
9Dxx7W
EGxx233
KESTRELIBxx1176S
WBxx

59xxS & IBxx8429S
08xxRDAN
11xx2
ETxx808
IBxx8427S
LANNER FALCON
IBxx2932W
99xx & 2Jxx1268542068
LANNER/SAKER FALCON
1Rxx00V
PARAKEET
Mlx00S
PEREGRINE FALCON
GFxx072
PERE/PRAIRIE HYBRID
10xx1V
SAKER FALCON
6Jxx99W
SAKER HYBRID
SPARROWHAWK
7Dxx01S
92xxDOER
DBxx559 & DAxx55P
2Sxx1P
TAWNY OWL
43xxBCU

LOST

AFRICAN GREY PARROT
AMAZON-BLUE FRONTED
BARN OWL x12
BONNELLIS EAGLE
COMMON BUZZARD x3
COOPERS HAWK
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL
FERRUGINOUS HAWK
GOSHAWK x2
GYR BARBARY HYBRID x2
GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID
GYR/PEREGRINE/SAKER
GYR/SAKER FALCON x5
HARRIS HAWK x18
JACKDAW
KESTREL x15
LANNER FALCON x5

LANNER/SAKER FALCON
LITTLE OWL
LUGGER FALCON
PEREGRINE FALCON x6
PEREGRINE/GYR HYBRID
PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID
PEREGRINE/MERLIN
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID x4
RED -TAILED HAWK x2
SAKER FALCON x8
SPARROWHAWK
TAWNY EAGLE
TURKEY VULTURE

REUNITED

AMERICAN BLACK VULTURE
BARN OWL x4
COMMON BUZZARD
COOPERS HAWK
GALAH COCKATOO
GOSHAWK
GYR BARBARY HYBRID x2
GYR/PEREGRINE FALCON
GYR/PRAIRIE FALCON
GYR/SAKER FALCON x2
HAHNS MACAW
HARRIS HAWK x17
KESTREL x3
LANNER FALCON x3
LUGGER FALCON
MERLIN
PEREGRINE FALCON
PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID x2
RED -TAILED HAWK
SAKER FALCON x7
SPARROWHAWK x3

STOLEN

AMAZON-BLUE FRONTED 12JBK01V
HARRIS HAWK IBR13337W
PEREGRINE FALCON UK70644
PERE/LANNER HYBRID 8436V

a first day cover and a presentation booklet.

Many wildlife charities have benefited through the sale of Mark's paintings, including the RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, The Worldwide Fund for Nature and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the Hawk and Owl Trust with whom he advises on many conservation projects, in particular working with farmers and landowners in creating suitable habitats to encourage Barn Owls and other threatened birds of prey back into the countryside. He also has many of his photographs, drawings and paintings used in the Trust's publications.

To enable him to permanently display his work Mark has recently restored his 16th Century bar for use as a studio and to hold his paintings workshops. Customers are most welcome to visit,

informed.

Other traders who attended the event included Ian Vance, Karen Rose, Curfew Incubators, The Welsh Hawking Club and South East Falconry Group, so there was a variety of traders and groups with which to part with your hard (or

maybe not so hard) earned money.

A big thank you must go to the staff at Stonham for looking after us, and if you did not attend this year's event, I strongly recommend you make the effort next year.

P J Eldrett

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GAMEKEEPERS AND I

BY TIZI HODSON

Gamekeepers are often a much maligned and misunderstood type of people. I have heard some falconers complain give them enough land to fly over, or that they are restricted too much with days, times or boundaries. Sometimes I have heard falconers accusing Keepers of shooting or poisoning wild hawks.

Do these 'Falconers' understand the difficult and extremely hard, long days in a Keepers Life? Do they even introduce them to their feathered charges, and perhaps invite them to come along for a days hawking? No, the usual response I have heard from so many people is "Oh we see to it they have a bottle of scotch at Christmas." Hardly a fitting "Thank

She flew like an old pro, straight to the hare, with a fabulous hold anchoring the 6 1/2 lb hare until I arrived a couple of seconds later.

you" for land on which to pursue quarry, without which would render a hawk something of a burden or liability. Try using a local park or recreation ground to exercise a young hawk, with the attendant excitable barking dogs and questioning people in abundance.

I have been so fortunate with the kindness, helpfulness and friendliness of every Keeper I have begged or been offered land to hunt on with my hawks, they remain good friends, even now some few years after I have had to abandon the idea of hawking again to a degenerating back condition.

Looking back there are many occasions still fresh in my mind, whereby my Ferruginous Hawk, Buzz, only became the magnificent hunter she is due not only to the help I received from fellow falconers, but in large part due to the kindness, generosity and help from my Keepers.

The first was after many months of trying to enter Buzz on hare. A demanding quarry compared to the easier rabbit, but less likely to slip away down a burrow at the second before impact.

I had walked so many fields with so many friends beating ahead and around me, with numerous chases at so many hares, but so far every one had eluded Buzz's desperate, albeit small talons.

One day my friend and Keeper, Jim Irons, who was as keen for Buzz to succeed as she and I were, suggested he should accompany me with a gun. On putting up a hare, with Buzz in pursuit he would shoot the hare and she would close in to the almost still fleeing hare, which she would feel was all her own work.

A terrific plan, Jim, his wife Karen and their two children, Lisa and Kate had beaten for me so many times over his land, with many determined chases. She had footed many a hare with small clouds of fur rising in the air only to see the "Dead cert this time" again galloping away.

I was excited for this day to begin. Jim met me at the suggested field in his

landrover with Lisa and Kate. He told me he was just returning to pick up his gun and a friend, also Jim and would be back in half an hour. In the meantime, would I like the help of his daughters to beat for me before they got back. A grand plan. I walked with Kate and Lisa ahead and to either side of me beating as they went. A hare shot up away from Kate, who called "Hare!" at the top of her voice, which was lucky or Buzz would have been in her usual position of hanging inverted

"Tizi, the amount she would take would make no difference to my pheasant numbers anyway. Besides she can have all the cock pheasants she want at any time

from my glove as on many previous occasions when I had not spotted the hare in time and Buzz had left the fist to be caught short by the jesses held firmly by the dimwit, 'me'.

I heeded advice I had been given earlier of not releasing her every time she bated as she saw so many imaginary hares that we ended up worn out and well exercised on regular occasions

without so much as a chase. Also, as was so often the case, as soon as she went off in one direction a real hare would jump up and travel rapidly in the opposite direction.

This time, however, I released Buzz on Kates call. She flew like an old pro, straight to the hare, with a fabulous hold anchoring the 6 1/2 lb hare until I arrived a couple of seconds later.

Her first hare. What an occasion. I was so happy and anxiously glanced at Kate and Lisa who were, for all I knew, witnessing their first hare kill, by a trained hawk. I was their first and they were both delighted, for Buzz, for me and themselves.

Buzz ate as much as she could, when I carried her back to where we were to await the two Jims. As we reached the arranged spot a land rover pulled up and both Jims ran out in alarm at all the blood staining Buzz's white chest feathers. Jim asked what had happened to Buzz.

Kate told him in detail looking happy as she related the fast hunt, and beamed delightedly when I added that but for her shouting 'hare' so rapidly it would have been another inverted Buzz and no successful ending.

"So you wont be needing this after all then!" said Jim. putting his rifle away and suggesting a celebration drink was now the order of the day.

From her first hare Buzz improved and honed her hunting

skills, until she was catching and holding her own hares on a regular basis.

On another occasion, hunting land near Newmarket, keptered by Richard Clarke, Richard joined me for the last part of the hunting day and Buzz

FALCONERS

caught a large 8lb hare. Richard impressed with the hawks' determination suggested I should try catching pheasants with her.

I told him it was a great idea, but I would need some fresh, dead pheasants to train her on and land to hunt the pheasants. I knew Richard had pheasants on his land but he spent weeks and months rearing and releasing them for the organised shoots on his land, so I had deliberately not trained Buzz for pheasants, neither had I asked if I could hunt them. She had often seen the pheasant, never chased them, as I had never given her any part of a pheasant or anything feathered. I did not want her chasing them as I did not want to be unwelcome in pheasant shooting country when all I wanted to do was chase hares and rabbits.

"Tizi, the amount she would take would make no difference to my pheasant numbers anyway. Besides she can have all the cock pheasants she want at any time - I would prefer she didn't get the hens though!" he said. Then added,

"If you need any pheasants to get her started on I have some in the freezer, come and take some." He led me to the freezer and insisted I take

a bunch, carefully selecting the Cock birds only.

The plan worked. I took Buzz out with a friend pulling a dead concealed pheasant from a bush. When she eventually gained some height I called her to the pheasant. The first time she alighted on it she jumped off when it 'moved' (aided by the string), having never been fed pheasant or any bird before. She soon developed a taste for it and over succeeding years caught several pheasants and the odd pigeon, although not in great numbers.

During Buzz's earlier training another keeper, Dennis McKenzie, offered me some land to hunt over, having heard I was looking for any land containing hares. He suggested I came round with the hawk and he would take me to his land. The field he offered my was fairly small and we only saw a couple of hare by the time we had walked round the field. However, Buzz put in a

determined, strong chase at the second hare that got up and clouds of fur went flying. Dennis said "She's got that one!" excitedly, unfortunately it was too large for her to hold whilst I covered the large distance she had between us, and she lost her grip.

"Ah, don't worry, I've much more land, with many more hares", consoled Dennis. After putting Buzz back into the landrover he drove me around the borders of all his ground, which was terrific as his land was in Duxford where I lived at the time.

Looking back over my hunting days the kindness, generosity and help I was given from all the keepers, helped make the change from 'flying my birds' to 'successfully hunting them'. I had a wonderful time gaining friends and meeting more people through such a fabulous sport and without help from all the keepers I would have stayed 'flying from post to post in recreation grounds' meaning in the worst case scenarios, should a hawk have decided not to return or drifted down wind, it would be signing their death warrant for they would have no ability to fend for themselves.

A heartfelt "Thank You" to all the Keepers and Landowners who helped me in my Hawking. □



Tizi with Xarra, her Golden Eagle



EAGLE AND THE HARRIS

BY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD

Golden eagle falconry is special falconry. The eagle is the gyr of the longwings, the Finnish gos of accipiters, it's the ultimate broadwing - perhaps the ultimate falconry bird - it's certainly the provider of some of the most dramatic experiences. The Asians always knew this and now modern western falconers know it too. The sheer size of the eagle makes the flying of it unique. It sits on your arm as big as a man cut-off at the waist. Also there's all that weight. No matter how many years you fly them, the weight is never fully absorbed and forgotten like that of a smaller bird. This is part of the experience, part of the sharing. The weight and size gives the bird an extra quality. It sits there eye to eye with you, a full-sized hawking partner, intelligent, trainer-bonded, and ready to do hair-raising deeds. Then it leaves the glove, launching out on a pursuit, its great wings taking all of that weight with them - and part of you too. You don't watch an eagle flight, you live it.

Is it any wonder the golden eagle can be such a lure? And is it any wonder that so many falconers are drawn in, desperate for the fabled 'eagle experience', without fully understanding, or perhaps being ready to acknowledge, just what the eagle experience relies on? We are talking about very basic falconry law, about having sufficient suitable quarry. The eagle experience is the relationship that forms when falconer and bird are out there desperately pursuing quarry and enjoying success. What the eagle experience is not, is acquiring a bird for which you have no proper quarry. Ownership alone isn't going to give you membership to some kind of club where the eagle experience comes with the badge. The eagle experience is about hunting!

Next issue, quarry. The obvious starting point is the rabbit. In the UK, rabbit hawking is something we know well. But we have sometimes come unstuck by thinking that rabbits work across the board: if it's a ground game hawk, we'll show it some rabbits. A good example of how this can go very wrong was seen with the big jackrabbit-catching ferruginous hawk. We showed it a few rabbits and it showed us a useless lump! Right bird, wrong quarry. And we've shown the golden eagle a lot of rabbits too. Judging by the phone calls I get, we are going to be showing it a lot more! But is the eagle really a rabbit hawk? The

At the Falconer's Fair earlier this year I fell into conversation with co-editor of this publication, David Wilson, about why I am currently concentrating on Harris' hawks as opposed to that other great love of mine, golden eagles. I suppose the conversation was sparked by the increase of interest in eagles in the UK and the fact that in the last couple of years a number of birds have been taken on by first-time eagle owners. So at a time when eagle falconry seems to be developing, why am I leaning towards the Harris'?



Happy with a Harris' in Shropshire

golden eagle will take rabbits, and in hill country will do so in fine style, but then so will some of the smaller birds, birds who will also hunt in spots the eagle could never function in. Now I can begin to address David's Harris' query. I am a passionate hunter, obsessive even, but I am also very practical. Some of the rabbit-rich hill ground I fly over would lend itself well to eagle flying. But the Harris' hunts it just as well, and in some spots, better. Totally lost would be the little, but very productive, rabbit patches on some of the arable ground I hawk.

Lost too would be the pheasants that go with them! Let those who want to chase rabbits with their eagles have their sport, but for me, the golden eagle's true quarry has a rather more leggy form.

My thinking on the matter is clear. Eagle hawking is brown hare hawking. I've had too much involvement with the hare- and eagle-mad continental scene to see it any other way. I'm afraid those hares really do have to be brown - blue just won't do! Blue hare hawking is great, the landscapes alone guarantee a



The mini eagle!

Hare hawking in Hungary



fantastic experience, but I don't need an eagle to take them, that rabbit-catching Harris' will do it very nicely. With the brown hare it's different. With this mighty creature we take an enormous step upwards. This is one of the fastest, strongest, biggest hares on earth, a super challenge, a mountain. The golden eagle just parted company with all other birds.

The golden eagle is the world's greatest hare-catcher. There is absolutely no room for debate. This is a falconry topic where the law can be laid down hard. The eagle has no rivals. This is a bird that will take the heaviest, toughest hares on the most brutal terrain you can throw at it and just soak it up. Where a smaller bird would be smashed into a thousand pieces, the eagle is in its element. It's ready to do it over and over again. When competition has been allowed to creep in, this bird's tallies have run into double figures. Believe me, nothing comes even close.

But to truly appreciate hare hawking with an eagle, you need a lot of hares. You need a lot just to get the bird going. Young eagles find anything but the easiest hares difficult. A young eagle is the 'Clumsy Clarence' of the falconry world and to enable you to hawk selectively, picking that 'right' hare for Clarence, requires more hares than you might imagine. It's not much use going

hawking and spotting half a dozen hares that are 'wrong'.

When numbers are low, they are so often wrong! This is why the big hare meets in central Europe (particularly those in some of the countries of the former Eastern Block) have always been popular with eagle enthusiasts - plenty of hares and so plenty of choice. I've walked fields at such meets and watched thirty plus hares rise at once! Too many in one go - but you get the picture.

Lots of hares are also going to be necessary when the eagle starts to become successful. I've said it before but it's so very to the point, once a hare's dead, it's dead! Think about seeing a sensible amount of sport with a worthwhile number of kills, and you are looking at 'harvesting' a lot of hares. All in all, we're talking about regular access to top hare ground. For me, this is where the Harris' eases back into the conversation. I haven't got all those hares. I have access to quite a few hares but rely on rabbits to provide the bulk of my sport and kills. As a serious falconer, I have to be seeing plenty of action. Let

me be blunt. I am currently flying a six-year-old Harris' that takes more quarry each season than many UK-based eagles even see. Indeed, she probably takes more brown hares than many eagles see!

But in favouring the Harris', have I lost the eagle experience? Well! Generally I don't like comparisons, and the more specialised the raptor, the more inappropriate comparisons become. However, there is certainly a distinct 'eagle feel' to the Harris'. It struck me the first time I flew one and over the years it's been firmly underlined. The intelligence is there, as is the way it closely bonds with its handler - the 'buddies' in the field together kind of understanding. Also, of

course, because the Harris' is an electrifying field performer, there's all that hawking drama. This is really where my love of the parabuteo comes from. Other small birds would catch my rabbits and hares, but other birds wouldn't give me a mini eagle.

I suppose it much depends on how you handle your hawks and what you want from your relationship with them, but for me, the Harris' comes closer to providing the eagle experience than any of the birds that we are told should. How many would-be golden eagle flyers acquire steppe or tawny eagles solely because they have an 'eagle' tag? Such falconers make a big mistake. These eagles aren't hunting birds! I had a lady phone me who had ordered a captive-bred steppe eagle to fly at rabbits. She really believed that this bird would deliver a close alternative to a golden eagle. She was flying a female Harris', soaring with it, hunting the woods, the whole thing. I told her to keep it and save pointless expense. She wouldn't listen. She wanted the 'eagle experience'!

I'm not suggesting that Harris' falconry is the same as eagle falconry - it isn't. Nor am I suggesting that achieving success with a Harris' automatically means you will do well with a golden eagle - you probably won't! However, these two areas, normally separated by an enormous gulf, share much in common and falconers in both fields would benefit from a flow of discussion. There are certainly things in Harris' falconry - the way of working and hunting with this wonderful raptor - that would benefit the eagle falconer who is looking less for a 'lion tamer' relationship and more for some sharing. Let's not forget that although in the UK the Harris' is seen as a relatively undemanding bird for novice falconers, it is also being worked with and explored by some of the most accomplished falconers in the sport. It works the other way too. I brought continental eagle falconry to my Harris' hawks and benefited enormously. In truth, I haven't stopped flying golden eagles, I'm just flying a small one!

□



Clubs...Clubs...Clubs

Scottish Hawking Club News Autumn 2001

As far as falconry in the field is concerned the season 2001/2 has been put on hold, the committee of the SHC has decided that due to the Foot & Mouth problem we would not hold any field meetings this season. This may seem a little drastic to those who are away from restrictive areas, but the SHC took some soundings from landowners who would have allowed meetings to take place had we asked, but we were told they would have been happier if we didn't ask in the first place. As the meetings we hold take place with the good will of the landowners and farmers it was felt that it would be better to cancel all meetings rather than bring falconry into disrepute with regard to F&M. We have advised all members to make certain that they disinfect their vehicles and themselves before going onto any farmland in Scotland, bio security is paramount.

At the time of writing Scotland has been declared disease free, but it would not take much for the virus to be brought up to Scotland, so I ask all of you who may come to Scotland for your hawking to be extra vigilant and please don't take any risks.

Sadly Lord Watson's Bill to ban the hunting of mammals with dogs in Scotland has been passed to stage 2 by the Scottish Parliament. This was not totally unexpected, but can only be seen as a political decision, when you consider that after the Rural Development Committee had spent the last 18 months studying the Bill and taking all the evidence from interested parties, they came to the conclusion that the bill was unworkable and recommended to parliament that the

bill should not proceed. The Bill has now been passed back to the RDC for amendments to be studied, this is the stage where we have been informed that falconry can be exempted, it will be interesting to see whether the MSPs will keep their word in helping us to keep parts of falconry from being banned in Scotland.

Our presence at the 2 major game fairs this year has been very successful, at the beginning of the year it looked like we would not have any fairs to attend. The CLA went ahead at a different venue as Woburn couldn't be used due to the park deer, although the falconry area was not in as good a position as normal, in the difficult circumstances it all went extremely well, with lots of visitors attending.

Scone Palace Game Conservancy fair near Perth was postponed to the end of September due to F&M, it went ahead as good as ever with superb weather, the new Falconry Mews area was very well represented with the 15 trade stands all being taken up

with furniture manufacturers, clubs, artists etc. Falconers in the north have at last a venue to come to so they can view before they buy, trade was brisk with all the stand holders intimating that they wish to come back next year. We will be looking to expand this Falconry Mews area further so anyone who thinks that they may wish to take a stand for next year should contact the SHC as soon as possible.

In the mean time those of you that can go hawking, I hope its good and stays that way.



CLUB OF THE MONTH

Norfolk Falconers Association

It's been all change at the Norfolk Falconers Association this year. As well as having a change of committee we have had a change of venue. We are now lucky enough to meet at Fritton Lake Falconry Centre, which means that we are surrounded by many different kinds of birds of prey. It also means that the members have access to all the tools of the trade. Our aim is to promote falconry through education and assistance. We cater for all sorts. The seasoned Falconer, who we hope will pass their knowledge on to the others. The beginner who we hope will learn from the seasoned Falconer and those who have a passion for birds of prey. The club now has a section dedicated to the younger, next generation, Falconer.

We are increasing our number of guest speakers at our meetings, which are held on the last Friday of the month. On November 30th, Mike Raphael will be talking on Medieval Falconry and will be wearing the clothing of the time.

The January meeting will look at taxidermy, although this is to be confirmed. February brings a popular person to Fritton, Jenny Wray will be here talking on the IBR Directory and how the system has helped many Falconers and bird keepers be reunited with their lost birds. The new committee has many other ideas that it shall be putting into action.

Our web site www.norfolkfalconers.freeserve.co.uk has been up and running for some time and has resulted in a great many e-mails.

We are a hands-on club and encourage members to make their own furniture. Some members make their own gloves and some turn blocks on lathes.

You are always welcome to come along to any meeting. If you're not sure about joining we charge £2.50, but this is refunded if you join on the night.

For more information either visit our web site or ring .

Kevin: 01502 583317

Paul: 01502 731315

Falconry Centre: 01493 488677

Norfolk Falconers Association

www.norfolkfalconers.freeserve.co.uk

Tel: 01502 731315

01502 583317

01493 488677

Club Directory

To advertise in the Club Directory, call **CHRIS STEADMAN**
AdXtra, Unit 25 Jubilee Business Park, Jubilee Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 7BS

Tel: (01305) 759888 Fax: (01305) 769088

E-mail: adxtra@hotmail.com

BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

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The oldest and largest Hawking Club in the country.

Nine Regional Groups -

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THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB,
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THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

Regional field meetings held regularly. A family association that welcomes both the experienced falconer and the novice.

The British Hawking Association . . .
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Contact the national
help/enquiry line:-
0870 7590210

THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB

Meetings:- Held 2nd Tuesday of every month at 8pm. Venue:- Railway Hotel, Mill Lane, Heatley, Nr Lymm. Ches.

We have speakers and Falconry Furniture Manufacturers in regular attendance.

Experienced and novice falconers welcome.

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

THE HAWKING CLUB

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**

HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

Affiliated to the Hawk Board.

Group member of the Countryside Alliance.

We meet at Blackwater on the Surrey/Hants border on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

The aim of the club is to promote good husbandry and practices in raptor keeping and flying and our membership ranges from complete beginners to seasoned falconers.

Our programme includes guest speakers and demonstrations, and field meets are held through the season.

Ring: Dave on **01784 460593** or
Alan on **01784 250577** 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 SOUTHERN COUNTIES RAPTOR CLUB

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month in BRIGHTON, East Sussex. Novice and experienced falconers welcome. Our meeting programme includes guest speakers, equipment workshops and flying displays. Training sessions are held during the year and advice and support given to members.

Contact Terry on
01273 542971
for further details

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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For Further details send S.A.E. to:

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB
CROOKEDSTONE ELVANFOOT,
BY BIGGAR LANARKS
ML12 6RL

The South East Falconry Group

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

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

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

Region 6 Cotswold Group:- 2nd Tuesday

Nr EVESHAM The Beckford Hotel, on A46 Nr Evesham

THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB IS INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED

AND HAS MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE UK.

For further information ring Secretary:

Mike Clowes on **01529 240443**

Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

Meetings held at:-

The King Edward VII, School Lane,
Guide, Blackburn, Lancs.

2ND TUESDAY EACH MONTH.

From beginners to experienced falconers, tuition where needed, advice where needed and a friendly welcome extended to all.

Promoting falconry
throughout the Northwest.

For information please
contact:

01254 726140





JESSES, ANKLETS AND ALL THAT

DAVE WILSON

With all the modern materials we have at our disposal nothing does the job better when it comes to jesses than leather. The jesses are the weakest link in your birds' equipment, especially the slits for the swivel, your prized bird is being held by a few millimetres of leather.

The original jesses were made from one strip of leather which went round the leg and was the ankle and jess all in one. The problem with this is that when you fly your bird loose there is the danger that the slits could get caught up on something.

Most of the jesses fitted nowadays were invented by Guy Aylmer. The Aylmeri jess is two pieces of leather, the Aylmeri ankle goes round the leg, being held on using an eyelet. The jess with a button is then passed through the eyelet and can be changed when out flying for either slitless flying jesses or no jesses at all with the minimum of fuss.

In some countries jesses are made of braid. This is to combat the effects of heat and to stop sand from becoming trapped between the jess and the legs.

TYPES OF LEATHER

All leather is the skin of an animal, (the hide). The most commonly used ones are cow, deer and kangaroo. The best part of

the hide to use is the back and sides as this is where the fibres are strongest.

The jess should be cut in line with the backbone and side by side, this is so they will stretch evenly. A good way to test the strength of a piece of leather is to cut a nick in it and then see how much force is needed for it to tear. All leather has a certain amount of stretch and you should cut the jess in the direction of the least amount of stretch.

ANKLETS

The anklets should fit tight with enough movement to swivel around the leg. It is a good idea to make two pairs, with one either smaller or larger than the other, as there will be a variation in the diameter



Some falconers still fly their birds with conventional jesses, this is due to their birds being destructive with the Aylmeri jess.

of the leg even in birds of the same sex from the same clutch. The small nicks or cuts in the top and bottom of the front of the ankle help to prevent rubbing on the leg. When the eyelet is fitted there should be about 4mm of leather around the outside edge. This will act as a buffer and prevent the eyelet from rubbing on the back toe.

Birds which have fragile legs and are inclined to bate vigorously, ie. Harris Hawks, accipiters, should have the widest ankle possible, allowing for rings or bewits, as this will give maximum support.

JESSES

The jesses should be cut slightly wider than the hole in your ankle, this will keep the button up against the eyelet, especially with your flying jesses, this will prevent them falling out when you are flying your bird. When the jesses have been cut and the button made make sure you pull the button up tight taking some of the stretch out by pulling the leather through your fingers. Then laying the jesses side by side you can mark out for the slits. You must punch a small hole at either end of the slit to prevent the leather tearing further. There are no hard and fast rules regarding the length of jesses but falcons

should be kept as short as possible to prevent straddling. Another preventative is to have a bigger block, if you keep your bird on a block whose top is too small then the jesses should be cut accordingly.



This imprint sparrowhawk has been fitted with the anklets only in preparation for being tethered. This should not be done until the bird is completely hard pennaed.



This male goshawk is fitted with customised anklets to relieve pressure on an injury. They were very effective and the swelling went down in just a few days. The picture also shows the feathering of the leather on the top and bottom of the anklet.



Double R Products have designed a very comprehensive jess making tool kit. Full instructions for design and cutting out are included.



Another invention from Double R Products, this closing tool is reversible and does two different size eyelets.

MAINTENANCE

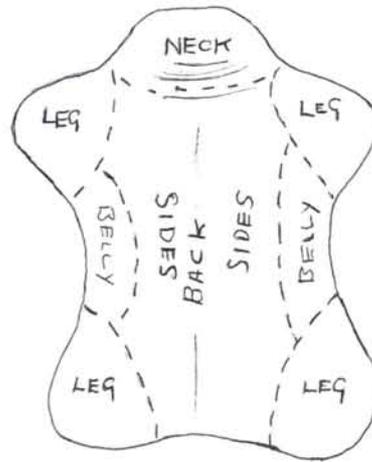
Whether you make up your own leather grease or buy one from one of the many falconry furniture manufacturers, the most important thing is to use it regularly. A good way to do this is to have a spare set ready greased, which you can swap over when necessary. This will help to keep the fibres supple and help stop the leather becoming brittle and eventually breaking. The areas to concentrate on are up against the knot, and the slits as continually taking the swivel off and on and removing the jesses causes a lot of wear and tear. Also the anklets should be greased at the same time to keep the leather soft against the legs. It is better to do this in the morning as the bird is less likely to have a foot up and soil its feathers.

Two pairs of mews jesses should last a bird a flying season, but after the moult new anklets should be fitted along with new jesses. Do not be tempted to use last seasons jesses even if they look good. Bewits, whether they hold bells, identity tag, or telemetry holder should

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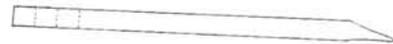
Leather leash, round braided cord leash and flat terylene leash. Leather leashes are very rarely used today as they wear and stretch very quickly whereas the two modern alternatives will last much longer and are stronger.



Full hide showing the various areas.



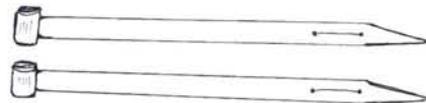
A pair of conventional, one piece jess.



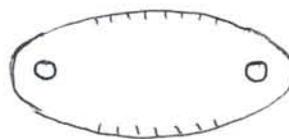
Jess showing where to fold for the button.



When folded use hole punch to make a hole through the middle of the folded leather. Then thread the pointed end through the hole and pull up tight. Pictures above show top and side view.

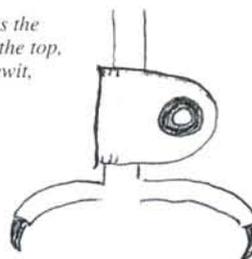


When both buttons are made lay parallel and mark out for swivel slits so they are exactly the same length and in exactly the same place.



Anklet jess showing slits top and bottom, and eyelet holes, these should be as small as possible allowing a tight fit for the eyelet.

When fitting jesses the ring should be at the top, then the button bewit, then the anklet.



There should always be a few millimetres of leather around the eyelet to prevent rubbing on the back toe.

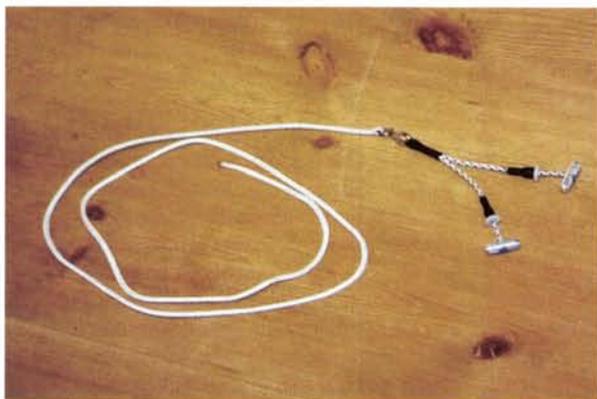
If the leather is not greased regularly it will go hard and that will rub and cause sores as well.

Continued from page 13

be made of leather and maintained the same way as the jesses. □



Picture showing anklets, and closing tool ready for fitting, mews and flying jesses with anklets that have been used for closing practice, this will help to ensure that the eyelets and the leather are compatible, minimising problems when you come to jess up your bird.



This is the Bullet Jess system, the two metal bullets are threaded through the eyelets on the anklets, and they are all one unit along with the swivel and leash. These can be removed quickly and easily and are very strong as they are made out of braided nylon and aluminium.

MIDLAND GAME FAIR

DOUG MCCARLIE

An enormous gathering of country lovers met at Weston Park for this year's Midland Game Fair, spread over an indifferent weekend weather wise. It can only be said that this country fair is absolutely top notch, by far the best game fair I have attended this season. Saturday, I was told

was pretty fair weather wise but on Sunday rain tried to dampen the country lovers' spirits. No way! Everyone seemed more than happy to don wellies and waxed jackets and get on with enjoying themselves.

Trade stands of which there was a magnificent array, seemed very busy, hopefully recouping revenue lost due to the awful foot and mouth crisis.



For falconers there was a mini arena surrounded by several clubs and furniture makers supplying those last minute bits of kit for hawk and falcon for the new season. There was a weathering

ground with most commonly flown hawks and falcons displayed, along with a topping female Golden Eagle who was very well behaved surrounded by its much smaller cousins. The mini arena had various talks and demo's going on to whet the taste buds of the unconverted into perhaps looking further into our sport.

Ye Olde Redtail Falconry Display is not to everybody's taste but I've got to say that from an entertainment point of view Ray and Wendy were great, they really are enthusiastic, involving next generation falconers whenever they can. I honestly don't know where they get their energy from.

I have only one complaint, the thunderbox toilets should stay on building sites. Ok, moan over. I'll say it again 'Top Notch'. I'll be back. □





A LONG ROAD TO A KILL

JULIAN WATKINS

It all started last year when I took my son Nathan to collect his birthday present, off we drove to Hemel Hempstead, a box of bits and a box to put it in (put what in I hear you say), well I'm coming to that. He had been asking for a Harris Hawk for a year or two so I made a deal with him, if he helped out at the Raptor Foundation as a volunteer then I would think about it. I thought the novelty would wear off. Wrong. It didn't. So I thought it might be a good idea for me to stay when I took him over every Saturday morning, because if he was going to have a bird I needed to know about them too.

Anyway, we arrived promptly at 11am this goodly Sunday morning. Nathan still didn't have a clue where we were going or why. I made up some cock and bull story about collecting an injured bird of prey to take up to the Raptor Foundation. We knocked at the door and were invited in. We went through to the kitchen where the all important kettle was put boiling ready for the first of many coffees. Paul, the breeder figured out that Nathan was in the dark about the whole thing. Eventually the penny dropped when Paul got the bird from the aviary and put on the anklets and jesses, gave the bird to Nathan and said "go and sit in the garden with him because he's yours" (A good job Nathan has ears to stop the smile or else the top of his head would have fallen off!).

After getting him home and settled, the manning process started. All was going well, sitting nicely on the glove feeding, jumping from the bow perch, then from a post. Next on went the creance, all going well except a bit of jealousy was creeping in so I phoned Paul and yes his birds had another clutch and yes there was a female and yes I could have it. He told me when it would be ready and I worked out how long before collection day. Plenty of time to get my son's bird free before mine was collected. I knew all of this because by now I was experienced - NOT!

The day came and I went down to get MY new bird. I got her home and everything was going to plan. My bird AMBER was feeding nicely off the fist and had settled in well. It was now time for

Nathan's bird JET to go free. So, that evening when it was time to fly, a couple of quick flights on the creance and then jesses off, and away. There you go son, this falconry thing ain't that hard after all. My friend, myself and my wife were praising me and then BANG! It happened. Nathan screamed, Jet screamed, we turned around and Nathan was wearing Jet as a face



mask. Oh my God! Now what do I do? Right, first things first, remove the bird return it to the bow perch, calm son down and tell him he didn't really want to shoot Jet with Dads 12 bore. He was just a little excited because he was free. Everything settled down for the night but I still didn't know what to do so I phoned Jenny from the IBR, she'll know. After a few calls to her and Phillip everything was



sorted. I'd dropped his weight so low he had become aggressive, the only thing to do was to get him into an aviary for a couple of months, feed him up and hope. As it happens I was very, very lucky, he came out a different bird. Amber by this time was flying like a dream, but I wouldn't take the creance off or drop her weight enough. Yes, I was out of my depth and sinking fast. Then a knight in shining armour came to save me, well, he wasn't a knight he was a cobbler and his shining armour was a red Audi.

Anyway, to cut a long story short,

DON'T think of getting a bird of prey unless you have a mentor who really knows what they are on about, is willing to help and you are going to listen and obey, otherwise you are wasting his time and yours and, there's a better than average chance of ruining, if not killing, the bird of your dreams.

Right, back to the title before I go off at another tangent. Because I thought I knew what I was doing, it took so long to get the birds free I'd lost the bottle to drop the weights enough to get them entered. I listened to David religiously but I couldn't get that last 1/2oz off them, a mental block I had to get over, so I totally cocked up two good birds for their first year.

Into the aviary they went for their first moult, they came out three weeks ago today, their weights are good, and it is a nice sunny day with a breeze. We are off over the road, jesses off and up into the nearest tree to stretch the wings. All was looking good then I heard a shot, somebody pigeon shooting 2 fields away so I said to Nathan, "we'll walk this hedgerow and then go somewhere I know that they don't shoot". We got to the end of the hedge, turned about, started walking back and Jet flew into an oak tree and came out clutching his first kill, a wood pigeon. He stuffed his face until he couldn't eat any more. Because it was his first kill, home we went, my son smiling from ear to ear, we put Jet on the lawn, Amber in the 4x4, had a coffee and off we went again. We were out for another 4 hours with Amber, not a damned thing, not even a mixie bunny. I said to Nathan about a small bit of setaside near where we lived, "We'll try there and then home", because it was getting late and I was knackered. So, we trudged up this field, I kept Amber on my fist because I knew there should be plenty of bunnies on the corner. When we got there and went through the trees, there, in front of us was...nothing, absolutely sod-all. I was gutted. I let Amber go for a fly round, called her back and as she turned she swerved off and down to a rabbit laying in a rut. The chase was on, my heart missed a beat and then raced as she was catching it up, now the question was, would she commit? When they reached the hedge she did and in they went, we heard the squeal and we were off, up the field after them. She'd hit the rabbit just as it got to the hole, but it was hers and she wasn't letting go. I lifted them out into the open and it was Ambers turn to feed up on her first kill!

I would now like to thank David and Lyn for all the help advice and time they have given me, if not for them I would have ruined two fine birds. □



HARPY EAGLES

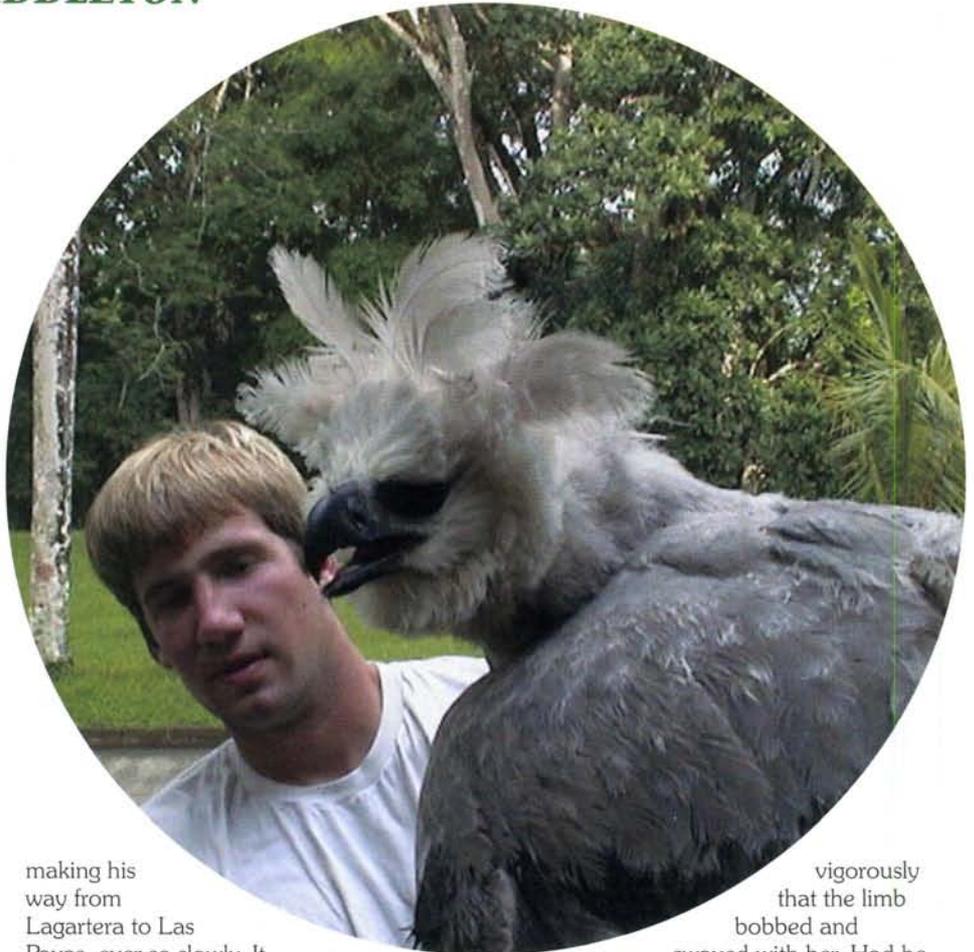
ARTHUR MIDDLETON

What people have found over some years in South America is that Harpy Eagles and some of the various hawk-eagles

(Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Black Hawk-Eagle, Black and White Hawk-Eagle) are shot frequently, so the work in a place like Panama involves an important stewardship, especially in the case of the Harpy. A pair of these eagles raises one eaglet every two to three years, and so public education bears a rare urgency.

But try as he might, the visitor to that part of the world will find it nearly impossible to find a Harpy Eagle. So the question is, how do they get shot?

I had the privilege of tracking a young female eagle for some time with Peregrine Fund biologist JosÉ Vargas. She carried two transmitters and was placed on Smithsonian's Barro Colorado Island for daily observation, as part of the Harpy Eagle research program. About a month after I first saw her, she left Barro Colorado by crossing to the mainland at its nearest approach, a peninsula called PeÓa Blanca. Over four or five days she wandered up through the peninsular forest, ate a young sloth on the way, and came out the other side between two small villages called Lagartera and Las Pavas. We always tracked her with special care, but when she approached those villages, we began following her more closely. One day - her seventh or eighth off the island - JosÉ and I were watching her through field glasses from a hilltop. There she was across the broad valley before us, sitting on the only remaining section of an old wooden fence. Never mind she had only ever



making his way from Lagartera to Las Pavas, ever so slowly. It seemed a lucky thing, at the time, that routines such as the daily commute cause inattention to the landscape - he remained oblivious to the eagle, staring down at the road in front of him. He passed on, and she passed out of his field of view.

As this traveller grew more distant and mounted the next small hilltop, the eagle struck off in flight. She crossed her valley

vigorously that the limb bobbed and

swayed with her. Had he carried a gun that day, and been inclined to shoot her, he could have done so before we were audible. As it happened, he remained there watching for a moment, then trotted on. We were too distant to speak with him.

Visitors to South American forests will find it nearly impossible to spot a Harpy Eagle; they rarely move during hot days, and never soar. But what we saw that afternoon was the eagle being the visitor. She was utterly curious. It may be that young Harpy Eagles, as they disperse in their early years, come across and take interest in people. Young eagles can be curious and inexperienced, and forget fear for short spells. You like to think that wild animals coming across people will regress to a more comfortable place, but it appears that is not always the case. The young Harpy's quirkiness affected her in other ways too; she ate an armadillo the next day, and that's not in the rules either.

In the US and UK we talk of shooting as a serious problem for predators. It is, simply because it happens sometimes and there is not much logic involved. But a Harpy Eagle wandering into range of a gun in Panama, and making itself known,

perched in the cool, sheltering tropical forests for two years - she was just perched on the fence, visible to the world, staring at nothing. The obvious worry was that someone unpleasant would spot her.

A traveller appeared, riding a horse on the lone dirt road at the foot of the hill, blurred by the terrible heat. He was

gliding, to land in a dead tree on a limb that stretched out directly above the fading road. We would agree afterwards that this was the longest flight we had ever seen her make. The man on the horse stopped fully; dust rose as his horse stomped nervously. She just stood there on the limb, not 10 meters from the man, bobbing and swaying her head so

probably has as much chance of being shot as it does of leaving unscathed. The main reasons are not complicated. Consider the female Harpy Eagle herself: standing on the floor she may look straight ahead at your waist. She is the most powerful eagle in the world. Her feet are immense and worrying; the toes are short and fat; the talons are long, curved and sharp in a wild adult. Her legs might be two inches thick. She can kill sloths, howler monkeys, and white-faced capuchins with ease. Her eyes are white-green and set back below warlike brows and the overall size of her head is exaggerated by a tall dark crest, often raised with disturbance from below. Now imagine that eagle staring at you with great interest, at close range.



So for people who kill animals because they are threatening, the Harpy Eagle is a particularly reasonable target. Sometimes people want to overpower or to possess the thing, so they shoot it. Sometimes they are afraid of it because it might hurt their family. And sometimes they are worried that it might damage or kill their livestock. A few hunters told us they saw eagles as competitors for their quarry.

Soon after our eagle's audience with the traveller, José and several others organised a meeting with the people of Las Pavas and Lagartera. One afternoon they gathered at the school building in Las Pavas; a hundred people must have showed up - that's the advantage of being foreign, and funny looking. We announced the presence of this eagle and spoke about eagles and the Peregrine Fund for a bit. But otherwise, we just stood around and talked with people in an informal way. They expressed to us their concerns and some of the older men were particularly bothered about the eagle's proximity to the villages. The best method of allaying those fears and the most engaging for people, was to tell true stories. We told the story about the traveller looking agitated and how she bobbed her head and was so curious. That amazed them (though many had already heard the story from the traveller himself). We told the concerned hunters about the armadillo. Of course, they were amazed

she had worked out how to eat it despite its tough shell. We told them we had been watching this female for a long time and she had only ever eaten something of medium size - a sloth or capuchin monkey - every three to five days. So these were all simple, understandable ways of saying that Harpy Eagles do not hurt people, but might look overly curious at times; that they are not competitors for food, since they have such a slow metabolism. The toughest concern of the



local people was over livestock. We said we had never heard of or seen an eagle kill livestock; they said, surprisingly, they had. One old man's grandfather had seen a big eagle kill a chicken and all these people referred to that same story. It became clear how an entire region could come to think eagles evil - that way in which the human imagination hears something bad and assumes it will happen thereafter, and in a place where people have nothing much to do but talk, the imagination is utterly communal. It would be pointless to tell these people they were wrong, that eagles do not kill livestock. It happens - probably once every 50 years in their case, but that is enough. We told them it would have to be a desperate eagle, driven to seek easy food because of disease or injury. That brought, inevitably, looks of astonishment, as if they should have known it before. The extraordinary result of honesty and this informal approach was that as we were leaving, people were asking if we would let the eagle stay in the area and if they could name her. They were shouting out names like La Pavita and La Garterita, and all manner of variations on their town names. That small amount of true knowledge and the promotion or interesting thoughts about nature and eagles and the people wanted to claim this eagle as their own mascot.

□

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POLLY'S PROGRESS

BY LYN WILSON

To be honest I was a little apprehensive about training and flying Polly. Was Tilly just a fluke or could I do it again? I must admit I don't think I have done as well in some respects, or it may just be that, as with all animals, Polly has a different temperament. I try not to compare her but she is far more aggressive towards me than Tilly ever was, but then I think she is bolder in all respects.

She took more encouraging to the lure initially, and her weight was almost hunting weight before she would respond to any real degree whereas Tilly was responding to the lure at half an ounce above hunting weight.

Also, Polly was quite a bit older than Tilly, both when I got her and when she went loose.

I am aware that there is a window for all stages of a birds' training and I was worried that I had missed Polly's hunting window. Unlike Tilly she never really bated at anything to speak of.

She went loose on a Friday, all went well, she responded to the lure beautifully and after four flights, the first one on the creance, we went home.

On Saturday I decided not to hang about and off we went, stick in hand to beat the hedges for her. It was marvellous to watch her, it was as if she was awakening to all the wonders of her surroundings. She was alert and watching all that moved. On the Sunday she flew to the top of a tall tree and just looked around seemingly in awe, periodically looking down to make sure I was still there with her tea!! We had a few chases but nothing serious.

As the week went on her confidence grew and she started chasing seriously and definitely showed a preference for pigeons. We spent the whole week walking the land behind the house, beating the hedges and spooking pigeons in the spinney.

The following Sunday I decided to try her on some different land, new to her but not to me. She was a little heavy and I wasn't sure how she would respond but I decided to risk it. She wasn't as interested in the lure as I could have hoped, but very keen to hunt. Not far into the first field we put up a pigeon and she chased it, realising it was going to outfly her she made for a tree. From then on she flew from tree to tree spooking pigeons as she went, this was down a 30ft wide piece of rough between two very large fields.

Every time she put up a pigeon it excited her further and off she went again, until we were almost to the end of the 3/4 mile strip. I followed the beeps on the receiver and a pigeon came out of the trees and flew very slowly, about a foot above the ground across the field. Thoroughly fed up by now I told her what a pain in the backside she was, (even though I couldn't see her) and told her that if she'd been on my fist at the time she could have caught it. All this and various obscenities died on my lips as I pinpointed her to a tree.....sitting on a pigeon! Now we had a different problem. Luckily I had my daughter Emma and her friend Jo with me (Jo is a prospective falconer). I made an attempt to climb the tree but Emma, who although only 14, is taller than me, moved me to one side and proceeded to scale the tree like an expert. She climbed up the first bit and then onto the next branch until she could reach Polly. She dispatched the pigeon and extricated Polly, who was caught up in lots of twigs, still sitting on the pigeon and passed them down to Jo who had climbed up the first bit, and he then passed them both down to me!!! They really were great.

The following day saw thunder, lightning, hail, torrential rain and no hawking.

Tuesday though was fine and Hannah, daughter number three, asked if she could come with me. We walked our weekday land and had a couple of slips as we walked the perimeter of the spinney. Polly has missed a pigeon and was sitting up a tree. I was in the field trying to entice her down with the lure but she seemed to have her eye on something else. Hannah was to the right of the tree just inside the spinney, "She's going Mum", said Hannah. Here we go I thought and made to put away the lure and take up the chase, Polly moved, bells ringing as she did so. Suddenly they jangled again and I heard a squawk, bells again and then that tell-tale noise that meant she was sitting on a magpie!!! Then I moved, running, tripping and scrambling into the spinney. There she was, just inside, so I grabbed hold of the magpie all the time not quite believing what I was seeing. At no time during our



outings had she even acknowledged the existence of magpies, let alone shown any inclination to chase them. I had shown her them on several occasions, especially as Tilly was so good on them but I was fast coming to the conclusion she would never catch one. I know they are quite a daunting quarry for spars and many sparrowers say their birds won't chase them. So...Fluke? Maybe.

On Wednesday I decided to see. We walked down the field and turned left into the field that runs along the bottom edge of the spinney. Magpies are pretty predictable and we stood a good chance of spotting a couple. Sure enough, just as we turned into the field, a magpie flew across the field and into the far corner of the spinney about 200 yards away. Polly was away, making a bee-line for it, with me in hot pursuit. It moved and she went after it but it disappeared and no amount of beating would put it up. She sat in the top of a tree about 20 feet away and was looking around then she took off, flying purposefully. Emma and Jo were with me again and I instructed them to 'RUN!!' We did and as soon as we got into the spinney we had no problem pinpointing her, magpies were shouting at the tops of their voices and one in particular was making that distinctive "I've got a spar on my chest" noise. Yes!!!

At 8oz Polly is a whole ounce lighter than Tilly was. This alone gave me pause for thought regarding bigger quarry, but she has shown that it makes very little difference, what she lacks in size she makes up for in attitude and determination. □



PROFILE

BY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD

Ernst Luttger's falconry career charts an impressive list of achievements. Born in Oberhausen, Germany, in 1947, he kept his first hawks at the age of ten. By the time he was fifteen, he had obtained his falconry and hunting licence and become a member of the Deutscher Falkenorden. By sixteen he was hawking rabbits with a passage saker! It was a fast-track start to career that would hold its momentum. Over the next thirty-five years he would become one of the Continent's first producers of gyrfalcons, open the fantastically successful falconry castle,

expedition to Greenland. He and Ernst first met at Oberhausen zoo, where they both stood observing some buzzards. They fell into conversation and young boy and old man laid the foundation for what would be a long friendship. Through Magerstaadt, Ernst came to know the legendary Renz Waller. Waller didn't live far from Ernst and was happy to offer any help he could. Having such highly esteemed mentors resulted in guidance and advice coming from others too. The young Ernst began corresponding with top names all over the world. He exchanged letters with Lorant de



Ernst Luttger at Schloss Rosenberg in 1985

always rival any later involvement with falcons. All the while that early quest for knowledge remained; as the years passed by there were many trips abroad with much delving into the falconry of other lands.

There was captive breeding too. Ernst had success with several species and in 1974 even bred the first (as far as can be determined) German-produced red shaheens. Success with gyrfalcons was first managed in 1979. Ernst is quite clear that this breakthrough was due largely to the AI instruction he received from US falconer, Steve Baptiste. Ernst came to know Baptiste through friend Prof. Tom Cade and when the former was invited to France to demonstrate AI to various French falconers, a stay at Ernst's home in Germany was arranged. It sparked a friendship that would result in Ernst travelling frequently to the US where he would come to know falconers like Dave Jamieson, Jim Weaver and others.

The production of gyrfalcons (mainly for the Middle East) really took off in the early to mid 1980's; from this point on regular success was achieved and the preparation of the young falcons was meticulous. Bred at Ernst's main home in Germany, they were then taken to a

Martin Hollinshead throws the spotlight on one of Europe's most accomplished falconers, Ernst Luttger

Landskron, become the first European breeder of white, east Siberian (albidus) goshawks, and establish the Hungarian kite sky trials.

Ernst's early falconry has the feel of belonging to another time, a different world. From being guided by his grandfather on how to keep kestrels, he soon found himself under the wing of one of the most prominent falconers of the day, Dr. Heinz Magerstaadt. Although perhaps not immediately familiar to falconers outside of Germany, Magerstaadt was one of the earliest members of the Deutscher Falkenorden and had also been part of Hermann Goering's gyrfalcon-collecting

Bastyai (still living in Hungary at that time), Mavrogordato, Hal Webster in the US, and SM Osman in India. His list of 'pen pals' read like a falconry Who's Who!

Ernst's early falconry involved all kinds of birds, and, in addition to his rabbit-catching saker, he helped Magerstaadt manage quite a few 'exotics', including hawk-eagles. However, more typical falconry eventually took hold and Ernst threw himself totally into hunting with goshawks. The rabbit-rich area he lived in was perfect, and the gos and ferret team, so popular with local falconers, served up plenty of success. This love of goshawks would develop into a passion that would

training base in Hungary. From the very outset of the breeding project it was decided to supply customers in the Middle East with only trained, field-ready falcons, and Hungary, having vast open flat country and very warm, almost rain-free summers, proved ideal for the required work.

It was during this period that I came to know Ernst. I was working at the falconry castle Schloss Rosenberg in Bavaria and Ernst frequently used the place as a stopover on his regular treks all over Europe. His arrival would often be late at night, with him bedding down while the staff slept like dead men following a grinding



Photograph by Dieter Kuhn

day's entertaining. The first clue he was in residence would be the discovery of an additional goshawk - he always had a gos with him! Many of the Middle East bound hybrids also made the Rosenberg stopover. They were huge - massive to my inexperienced eye - as broad as the chair I am sitting on. They ruled the place during their stay. Nothing was too much trouble and the slightest concern - a feather out of place - would send the castle to red alert! Today, it's hard to understand such fuss; big hybrids are commonplace, are flown by many and no longer steal the show anywhere. Big, small, light, dark, any mix you like, no hybrid is much further than the end of the phone away. Then it was different. These birds truly were something special, were unique, glamorous and worth the historical 'king's ransom'.

The move to breed albidus goshawks was also an 80's project. In 1982, four years planning came together when, with the help of the Russian authorities, seven birds arrived at Frankfurt airport. Luckily, their mixed sexes allowed three pairs to be put together, the spare bird, a white female, being retained for hawking. The years that immediately followed saw other albidus join the project and success was eventually achieved in 1987. Today, Ernst has regular success with these birds and, unlike the production of hybrid falcons, which, as noted, is seen all across the western world, he shares centre stage with very few others. The rarity of the captive-bred albidus does indeed make it something special. Beyond its colour (in the case of white individuals) and size, perhaps it is somehow special. Ernst certainly sees it as quite different to its cousin *buteoides*, describing it as far more 'feather' orientated; a highly aerial, long range, half-tundra hunter with the foot of a true bird-catcher. For those gos falconers concentrating so energetically on pheasants, maybe this could be the ultimate bird.

Away from breeding and hawking, in 1983, Ernst opened the Austrian falconry castle, Landskron. This took him into the very different area of entertainment. With this move he was following a tourist attraction trend that had long used the castle setting to play on the historical aspect of falconry while at the same time capitalising on the type of flying castles offer; castles often mean height and height means very dramatic performances. Landskron had all the right ingredients; it had height, a backdrop of mountains and was in highly popular, southern Carinthia. Also Ernst mixed in flying to match. The Continentals have always added big birds to lofty settings and at Landskron Ernst

went for some very big and very unusual birds; a female Steller's sea eagle leading a cast that included a young lammergeier, griffon vultures and big aquilas like golden eagles and a Verreaux's eagle. The project was a terrific success, with the castle packed all summer long. Today, Landskron is run by a former employee of Ernst's, Franz Schuttelkopf.

Ernst's private falconry has continued to revolve around goshawks and falcons. A big passion is crow and rook hawking and over the years Ernst has flown some very effective birds. From the goshawks, one male's achievements put him high above the rest. This bird, a relatively small, nothing-remarkable-to-look-at Austrian gos called Hugo, took well over 300 rooks and crows and three hares in his first season, taking 20 head of quarry in one afternoon alone! He delivered electrifying performances for several seasons and was surely the most successful goshawk of his time. He was also used for AI,



Above right: A half white Siberian Goshawk.

Above: Preparing a white goshawk for AI.

producing young with a Kamtchatka female.

But Hugo was not to see old age. His end came unexpectedly and rather less dramatically than might have been expected for a bird that lived a light-speed existence. It was a warm day and, having missed a rook, he began to climb, going into a semi-soar. This kind of flying was quite typical for him and he would frequently ring up to then come back to Ernst's hat where he was accustomed to copulating in spring. On this day, he began to lose altitude and start his approach, an approach that would take him over a quiet road. Then Ernst registered the car. He watched, powerless to do anything, as what seemed a remote possibility began to

look very dangerous. Of all the speeds the car would have to be travelling at, of all the places and heights the gos would have to cross the road, on this day fate had charted a lethal course. Hugo was killed outright, the car driver never even realising the drama he had been involved in.

Ernst's corvid hawking has involved Siberian birds too. The very first, the 1982 albidus surplus to the breeding project, immediately demonstrated her clans' love of feather and took rook after rook. Other top-performing Siberian birds followed. I remember a very good albidus from the season of 86'. I had first seen this bird, a female, at Rosenberg during the summer of that year. She arrived as a youngster from her homeland with a male and was tended at the castle until Ernst could arrange for her transportation. The next time I saw her was at a big hawking meet in Slovakia. I recall the meeting vividly, partly due to the fight that broke out in the bar (nothing like a bit of friendly competition!), and partly due to my eagle devouring a night-wandering hedgehog! But the rook hawking with the gos left its impression too. She was dazzling. A snow-white showstopper who was the killer of many a rook during the three day event.

Nowadays, Ernst is based fulltime in Hungary where he and his Hungarian wife maintain the original hybrid training centre (which now includes a breeding facility) and also run a small guesthouse and stable. His deep love for the country, its falconry and history is so very evident. Sit him down and ask him about hawking with the legendary George Lelovich and with an 'Ah well!' a magical journey unfolds. A coffee later and you're riding with Attila the Hun! He has particularly fond memories of Lorant de Bastyai. Their long friendship, starting with those boyhood letters, was very special to Ernst and each year he and a few friends hold a two or three day hawking meet to commemorate the great falconer's passing.

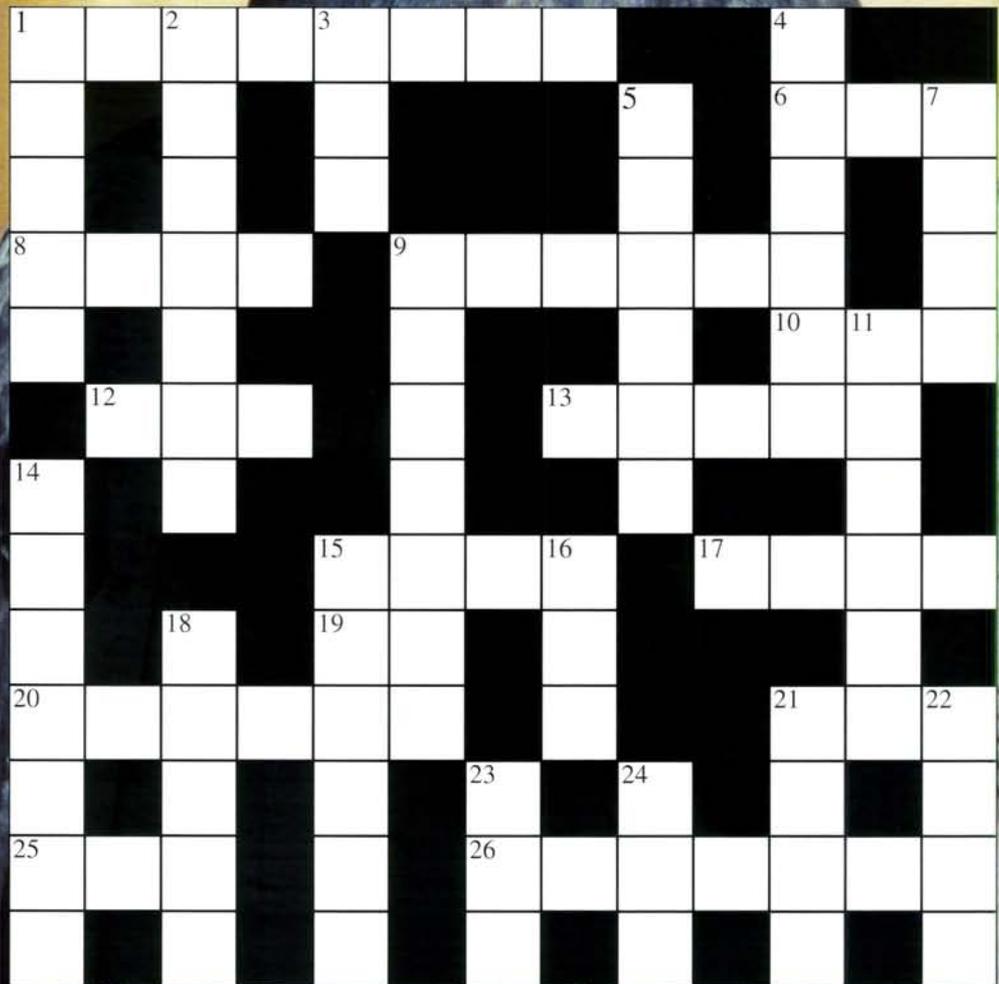
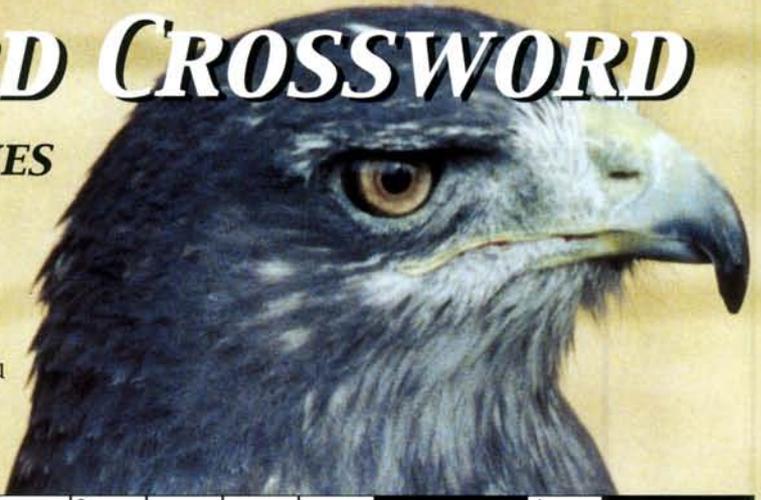
Much of Ernst's current hawking involves pheasants, flying falcons over English setters. Today the falcons are pure peregrines or gyrs, hawking with hybrids no longer holding any interest for him. It's funny but I can't help reflecting that even during the early period of hybrid production Ernst always maintained a deep interest in peregrines - a case of coming full circle? But his beloved goshawks certainly haven't been neglected. The gos flying this season will be dominated by a female *buteoides*-type. This bird is particularly interesting as she is the first-ever white *buteoides* Ernst has produced. She really is something. At the time of writing the season is not yet under way, but all eagerly await her performance. My guess is I'll be getting a lengthy Christmas card!

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ACROSS

- 1) Acrobatic eagle (8)
- 6) Ancient mythological eagle (3)
- 8) Wax-like skin above beak (4)
- 9) A British falcon (6)
- 10) Origin of all birds (3)
- 12) --- footed falcon (3)
- 13) Falcons like to do this (5)
- 15) Pre-training liberty for an eyass (4)
- 17) To beat the air with wings (4)
- 19) See 26 across (7,2)
- 20) Latin name for rare raptor (6,7) (see also 9 down)
- 21) Arctic loving bird (3)
- 25) Find this bird when you go south (3)
- 26) Circling in the sky waiting for a flush (7, 2) (see also 19 across)

DOWN

- 1) A falcons perch (5)
- 2) One of the two peregrines (7)
- 3) A tarsus is part of this (3)
- 4) Hair-like feathers about the beak (6)
- 5) The other peregrine (6)
- 7) Mountainous perch for falcon or eagle (4)
- 9) See 20 across (6,7)
- 11) Falconry was once thought suitable for these only (6)
- 14) The birds coat! (7)
- 15) Ideal falconry dogs are all these (6)
- 16) 70's cult film about a boy and his bird (3)
- 18) To scare from cover (5)
- 21) A hawks' hold (4)
- 22) Violence can be found in anger (4)
- 23) Sounds like a saddlers tool (3)
- 24) An alcoholic trap (3)



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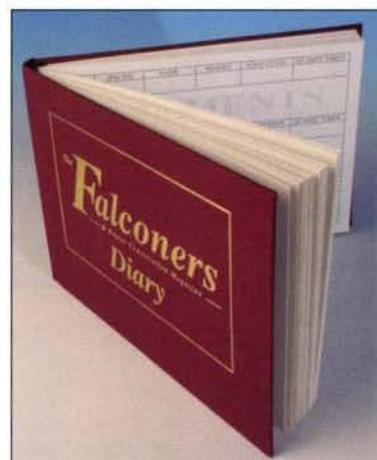
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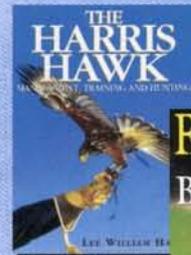
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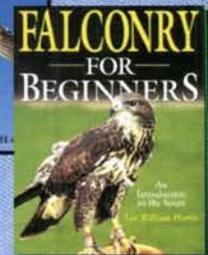
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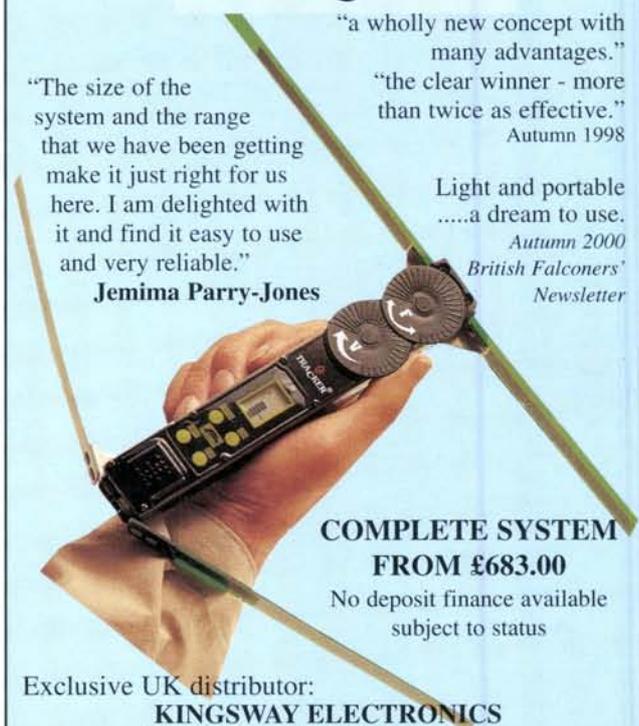
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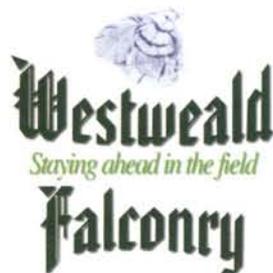
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SCONE PALACE GAME FAIR 2001

ANDREW KNOWLES-BROWN

Scone Palace, near Perth is normally a historic tourist centre for summer visitors to Scotland. It is probably best known as the home of famous Stone of Destiny the ancient stone that all Kings of Scotland were crowned upon which disappeared down to England and was returned to Scotland from Westminster Abbey by an act of Parliament in 1996.

During the first weekend of July, Perth and its palace become the focus for country folk. The Game Conservancy Scottish Fair should have taken place on the 6th -7th July this year, but due to the Foot and Mouth outbreaks in England and the south of Scotland it was postponed to the 22nd - 23rd September. A bold move as Scotland in September can be a wet place weather wise. As it happens the sun shone, most of the time, a few minor showers but nothing too drastic.

As far as falconry is concerned this fair was much like any other fair found in the UK, the traditional bird of prey display along with the local falconry club to draw in the general public in to see the birds.

The club that had regularly attended Scone was the Scottish Hawking Club,



and the Club worked hard to put together what was a very successful display, along with an agreement from the fair organisers for this to be a regular event.

The 2001 Game Fair saw us in a prime venue at the top of Fishermans Row with KKK Hawk Food being a major sponsor, we had a 90 foot frontage with enough space inside for 15 trade stands along with a very comprehensive static display of Falcons, Hawks, Eagles and Owls. The stand holders attending were

as follows, Scottish Hawking Club, British Falconers Club, Perthshire Falconry Services, Shaun Callon, Ben Long, Raptor Craft, Alan Hayman, Ian Vance, KKK Hawk Food, Scottish Hawk Board and the Campaign for Falconry.

The fair had 30,000 visitors over the 2 days, with Sunday being the most busiest. After last years first falconry orientated fair, word had obviously got

around that equipment would be available. Business was very brisk judging by the queues that were forming at the stands, the general public were also extremely interested in what was going on in the Mews area, with a great deal of attention being made of the fine static display put on by Adrian and his staff, as well as the flying displays which had the crowds enthralled with the entertainment.

So I recommend that you make a note in your diary for next year, to come along to Scone and see all the falconry furniture and accessories that will be on sale, also why not stay and make a day or two of it in bonny Scotland.

For more details about stands for Scone Palace game fair contact the Scottish Hawking Club on 01864 505245.



with the displays being put on by Adrian Hallgarth of Perthshire Falconry Services; regular appeals had been made to the fair organisers for a central falconry area to be established, so we could encourage falconers to attend. But it was not until last year that a large area became unexpectedly vacant, so the opportunity was seized to arrange the Falconry Mews area specifically for falconers. Adrian

The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine



□

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FIRST FALCON MEWS SALE

JENNY WRAY

If you missed the first Falcon Mews sales weekend last August you missed a new milestone in falconry. Anyone who was fortunate enough to attend on the weekend of 4th & 5th of August, must have been impressed at this new and exciting method of selecting and acquiring a new eyass falcon.

The whole event was held under one large Marquee, within the grounds of the breeding centre run by Peter Gill and Richard Hill in South Yorkshire. Over eighty falcons were on display and these included pure Gyr falcons, Peregrine falcons, Barbary falcons and a large variety of hybrids of both sexes. Several of the falcons were imprinted, with the vast majority being parent reared. The falcons were all trapped from the hack pens the day prior to the sale and placed on custom made perches, hooded, in rows of five. Each falcon was priced individually and the price included jesses, swivel and leash. The hood could be bought separately.

The whole idea of the sale is to awaken falconer's perceptions as to the large difference in size, shape and colour between individuals of the same species or hybrid. This gives you, the purchaser, the chance to pick and choose the falcon that you desire from a large choice. Gone are the days of ordering a falcon unseen over the phone, or trying to choose a bird through a pokey eye hole, flying around in a breeding chamber. Each falcon could be unhooded, weighed and thoroughly checked over with out any commitment to buy.

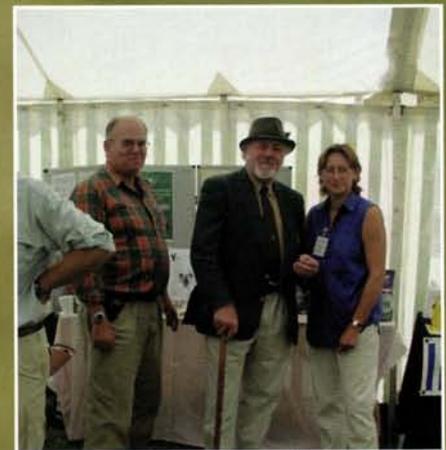
I had no idea of such variations in longwings. It was fascinating to watch some of the foreign buyers with tape measures and notebooks, recording the width of shoulder and spread of chest measurements.

Colour also played a big part in what was chosen and bought.

The sale was loosely based on the sales techniques used in Middle Eastern falconry. Here, a choice of falcons is expected and each falcon is bought on its own merits, after being inspected and reaching the desired requirements. The ability to choose a star performer at the time of purchase is given great credence and is thus another skill to be added to the falconer's repertoire.

Around 300 falconers attended over the two days, which included several families from the Middle East plus Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany and Holland. Over 50% of the falcons were sold over the weekend with a further 40% being sold throughout the following two weeks, mainly to people who attended the sale. Several artists exhibited their paintings, including Andrew Ellis. Trade stands included 'Falconry Originals', Raptor Craft, Raptor Box, the 'International Falconer' magazine and the IBR. The BFC and the Yorkshire falconry Club also had stands.

Next years dates have already been set for the 3rd & 4th of August so add it to your diary NOW and I'll see you there.





THE EASTER EGG THAT KILLED

BY JOHN WELSBY

We all have memories of some big event in our lives that happened years ago. Apart from getting married and the birth of my two boys, the day I picked up Jess and her sudden death at the age of eight are two that stand out the most. I hope this story will be a warning to anyone who has a female hawk coming up to laying maturity to keep a close eye on her and look for the signs that killed Jess.

On the 20th of July 1993 I was to go to Penrith to pick up Jess, my first hawk, a female Redtail.

Like a child waiting for Christmas Day, I did not sleep a wink all the previous night, and neither did Sandra my wife, who said "This is b****y ridiculous, we are adults" as she joined me at 2.00am.

The first of every thing is best in most cases and so it was with Jess. Jess never took to Sandra and would scream at her when ever she came in sight and likewise with any strangers. So you would have thought I would have taken a look at Jess the day she did not scream at Sandra, but I didn't.

I just said she must be getting used to you, as you've been in the garden working for several days.

All day she was quiet: sitting on her perch watching us work, except for having a bath and afterwards sitting with her wings down drying off, nothing odd in that, she did it every time she had a bath. That was Tuesday the 3rd of April and on the Wednesday when I went to feed her I had that feeling all was not well with her as she was sat with wings drooped and had not eaten her previous days' food.

I dashed in and took her up and weighed her, she had dropped 6oz from the previous Sunday. I did a check on her and on looking at her rear end found to my horror she had an egg just showing but stuck fast to the skin at the opening. It was her first egg. I put her back in her aviary and went to tell Sandra we had an emergency and to warm up some water. Both Sandra and I have worked with poultry and have released eggs from hens many times

so we thought we could handle this situation.

On returning to Jess she was in her bath dunking her rear end in the water in what I can only describe as an attempt to soften the skin holding her egg so she could pass it.

We started to clean her up as she was badly swollen and had fouled the feathers, but realised immediately we needed to get her to a vet - so off I went. The vet began work on her by applying jelly around the skin and by the use of a fine tube eased away the skin and squeezed jelly inside between the egg and skin. The egg refused to move so the only other option was to make a small cut to the skin where there were no blood vessels. This was done and the egg dropped out much to my relief. An internal inspection was done to make sure there was not another egg and none were found.

We returned home and I checked her every half hour to see she had not prolapsed and all was going well. I phoned George Duncalf to get some advice and he was very helpful contacting Mick Cunningham and then phoning me back with the information. Jess seemed to pick up but only ate four chick legs over two days; she did eat one chick on the Thursday, but brought it up undigested later. She did not eat at all and was not looking good after a couple of days so I phoned George again. I chewed over when she would have laid and came to the conclusion that she may lay her second egg on Saturday night but made an appointment to see a different vet on the Sunday if there was no change. There was not, so off I went, heart in mouth and got there twenty minutes early.

This new vet works with birds - mainly Parrots - and knows her stuff, so Jess was in good hands but things were not to turn out for the good. She had four clients to see before Jess as we needed plenty of time to examine Jess but she did just take a look after her first patient and said she needed to be cleaned up again and anaesthetised to X-ray her so, I put her back in her box till she had cleared the other people.

It was about an hour later when

we could start on Jess and we went into the X-ray room. My whole being sank when on opening the box I found Jess lying dead.

I am sixty one years old, a Master Farrier and have worked with animals most of my life and I am used to seeing dead animals and seeing them put down. But this was my Jess: my best mate, companion, call her what you may, and it hurt so much I thought my whole world had collapsed. The vet was very sympathetic and did her best to ease my pain but to no avail. She X-rayed Jess and could just see a faint outline of another egg and on doing an internal found what looked like hard cheese inside her. The egg had burst. This infected her inside and the Vet said she was so low that the anaesthetic would have killed her. How I drove the forty five minutes home I do not know, tears filled my eyes. I cursed myself for not looking at Jess when she did not scream at Sandra. The signs were there. I got home and I am not ashamed to say sobbed uncontrollably for twenty minutes holding the limp body of my Jess. I stroked her; did more swearing, but the pain would not go away. All sense and reason go out the window when one loses a loved one, I can remember telling Sandra that I wanted Jess buried with me and I would keep her in the freezer till then.

So this is my story and I hope no one else goes through the pain of losing a bird in the same way.

If you see any change in your birds habits, as small as it may be, CHECK IT OUT straight away as to wait could be too late. We have all at some time spoken those two words "IF ONLY". I will make sure I never use them again.

I would like to give George Duncalf and Mick Cunningham a big thank you for all the help and understanding they gave me at a time when I was at my wit's end.

I did not know it at the time, but a poem I wrote in 1994 came to reflect the way I felt, and many more falconers like me who have lost a very precious bird in such an unnatural way.

□

“SILENT BELL”

by John Welsby

My days are long and lonely
I don't even want to talk.
It's been like this for ages now
Since the passing of my hawk.

Her aviary stands empty
Like a prison on my lawn.
My heart is filled with empty pain
Like the muscles have been torn.

I had my hawk for twenty years
Twenty years filled full of love.
And now she's left me all alone
For that great place up above.

O how I miss her mewing call
To greet me at first light.
And sit beside the garden pond
On long warm summer nights.

How I regret the wrongs I did
To her when she was here.
But this cannot be righted
Now she's no longer here.

My walks across the long green fields
No longer take first place.
Her hunting ground that stretched for miles
No longer can I face.

The mould grows on my hunting bag
My glove is dry and hard.
Freezer full of quarry killed
These things I can't discard.

Her jesses and aylmeri
Hang on wooden pegs
They do not look as pretty now
As when they adorned her legs.

I have a box of feathers
From her first moult to her last.
I remember each and every one
And the day that they were cast.

Away from me these things must go
But when? I cannot tell.
One thing I'll keep for ever
Is her now so silent bell.

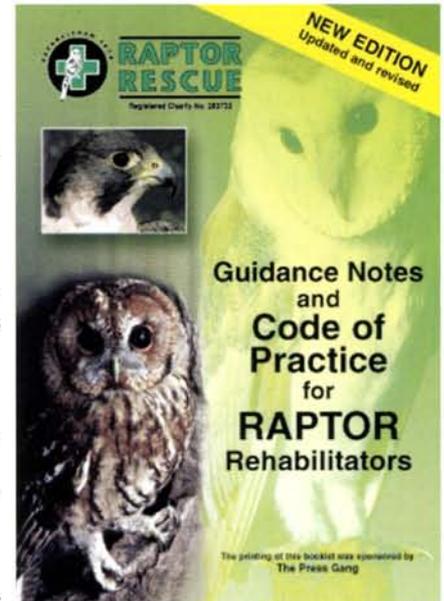
New Edition of Code of Practice

Specialist rehab charity Raptor Rescue have recently published a revised and updated edition of their booklet entitled "Guidance Notes and Code of Practice for Raptor Rehabilitators".

This comprehensive guide includes chapters on facilities, husbandry, treatment of casualties, rehab techniques and the law as it applies to raptor keepers and rehabbers.

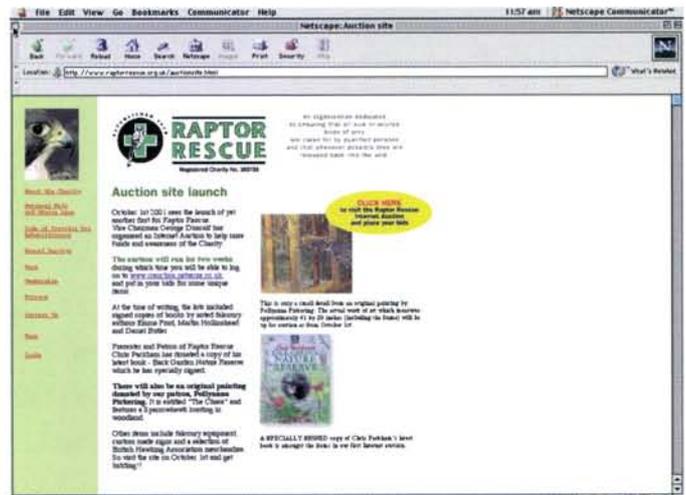
The book also contains full details of the Raptor Rescue Approved Rehabilitator Scheme. Members who attain the minimum acceptable standards will be eligible to apply for Approved Status.

The book is available for £2.00 to non-members and £1.00 to members (plus postage). For further information visit www.raptorrescue.org.uk or e-mail: info@raptorrescue.org.uk



INTERNET AUCTION

The specialist bird of prey charity Raptor Rescue has today launched an Internet auction. There are lots of items to bid for from an original Pollyanna Pickering painting of a musket hunting to signed books, falconry equipment plus lots more. It's easy to make a bid and you could pick up a great bargain. All bids must be in pounds sterling but we can arrange for any successful bid to be paid in American dollars, if anyone requires. To have a look go to www.raptorrescue.org.uk and click on Auction.



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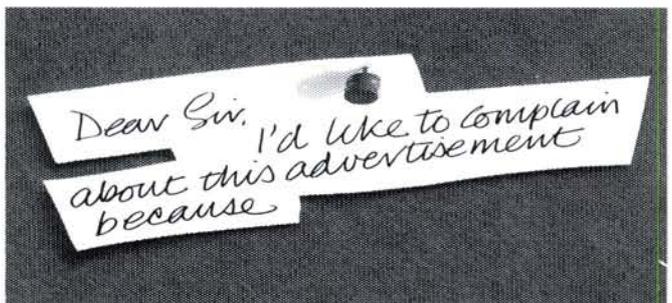
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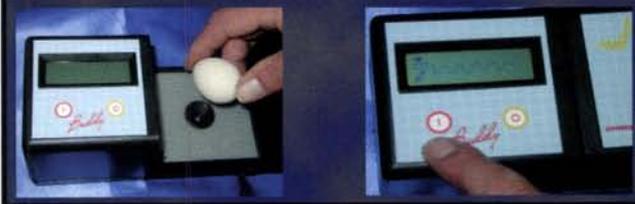
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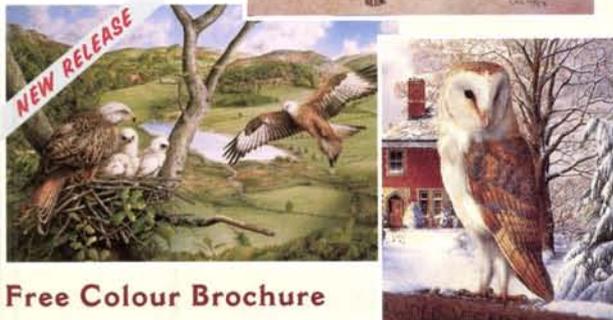
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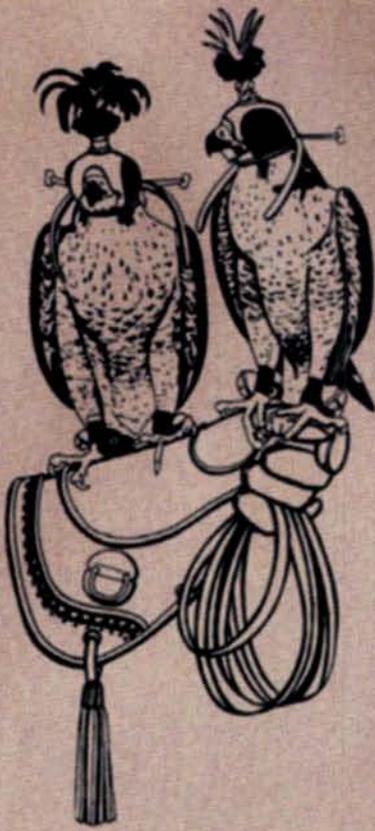
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