

The **Falcons**  
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

ISSUE 49

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- B.A.S.C. Shooting School
- Sporting Clay Shoot
- Dog Agility - Have A Go!
- Black Powder Shooting - Have A Go!
- Airgunning
- Demonstrations, Tuition & Seminars
- Flycasting Demonstrations & Tuition - Have A Go!
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- Invitation Beagle Show (Sunday)
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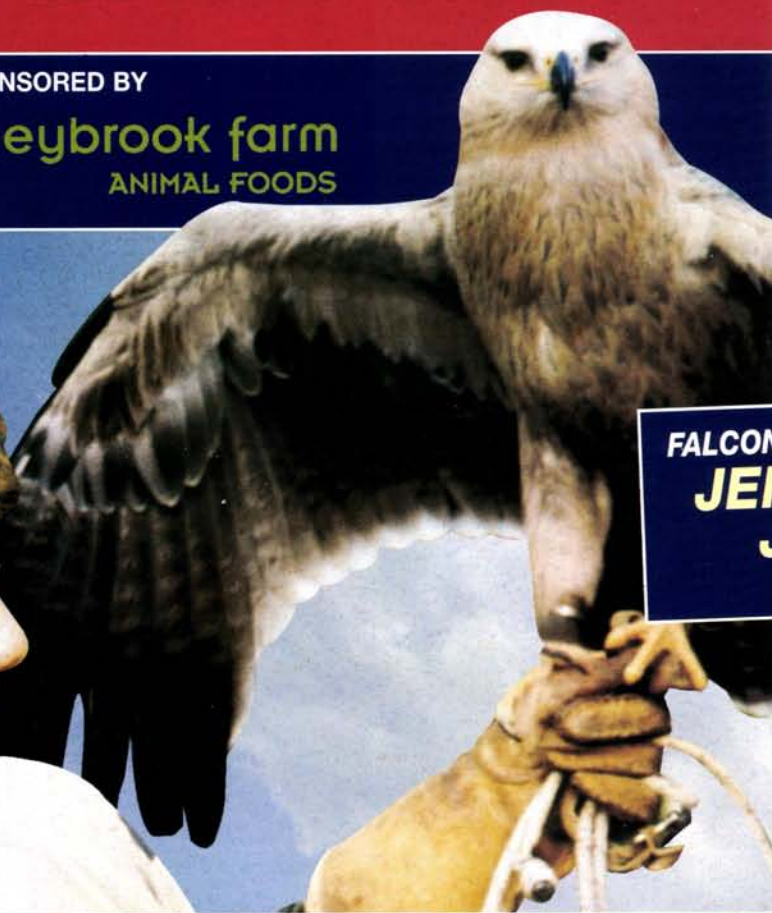
**Enquiries to the Show Office**  
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All information correct at time of going to press.  
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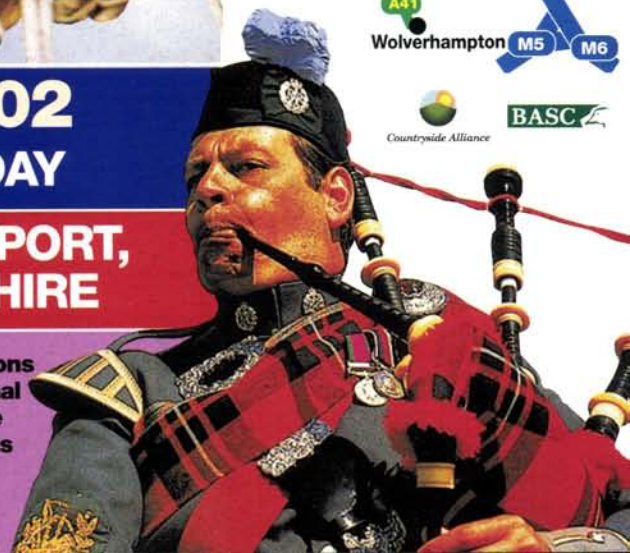
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## Spring 2002 No. 49

On sale 1st May 2002

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Hello All,

Hope you had a good season and the birds are all safely up for the moult. Now is the time for families and all those jobs that didn't get done in the winter courtesy of your falconry.

The Falconers Fair has a new venue and a new date this year and we are launching a bigger and better Falconers Magazine. The magazine still contains the same news, information and articles as before but has been given a serious face lift, with more pages and you will also see that it's perfect bound too.

At the Fair this year David and I will be on the stand from 11-12.30 and 2-3.30 on the Sunday. I may be there on the Monday and will be on the stand at similar times if anyone wishes to speak to me.

We forgot to say in the last issue, but the Golden Eagle on the front cover belongs to Alan Gates, the last time Maria graced our front cover was in 1990 and she made a welcome return. Alan has also written another brilliant article for this issue. Thanks go as well to the rest of our contributors including Martin Hollinshead, who will be on the Falconers Magazine stand at the Fair, and Guy Wallace who has been missing from the mag for too long.

Well, that's about it, all that remains is to say we hope see you at the Fair and have a fabulous summer.

*Keep Falconry Safe.  
 Lyn and David*

**Next issue on sale August 1st 2002**



# News & Products

## NEW PRODUCT

We've had many people ask us to produce a "Vehicle transmitter" that a person could leave in the car to then track back to when they get too far afield and disoriented, or lost. Many times a falconer will race away from his vehicle not paying close attention to how far (or in which direction) they've walked. Then, it either gets dark, fog or a blizzard rolls in, something.

Suddenly, it's a survival situation. Yet they've got a receiver right there in their hands. There's been several lucky stories of them finding their way back to the vehicle, and some have even put a collar or transmitter



on the dash, after one of these experiences, but the signal is compromised by the transmitter laying against metal and broadcasting from inside the vehicle.

So, we've come up with a simple solution: The "Homing Beacon." (see attached pictures)

This little box quick-connects to the BNC connector on an Omni antenna up on the roof which is the best of all arrangements: the Omni becomes a powerful 360 degree broadcast antenna while the transmitter remains locked inside the truck.



It hooks up out of the way with a visor-clip, and turns on and off with the tap of a magnet, runs for 30 days on AA batteries. A tiny LED blinks green to tell you it's running, red when there's three days left. It can be ordered in standard frequencies and the signal is a short, rapid pulse very different than the dog collars or other falconry transmitters.

**Marshall Radio Telemetry**  
896 West 100 North  
North Salt Lake, UT 84054  
(800) 729-7123



## A REMINDER TO ANY MERLIN KEEPERS

We are still conducting research into coccidiosis in all falcons (with particular reference to merlins).

Any breeders should be aware, that just prior to the breeding season is the commonest time for adult birds to shed oocysts.

We are still prepared to rest all merlin mute samples free of charge.

Likewise we will test the mute samples of any young (age 20-50 days) merlins free of charge for any successful breeders.

The value of finding the problem is that birds can be treated, rather than just dying suddenly

Thank you

**Neil A Forbes**

**CBiol MIBiol Dip ECAMS FRCVS**



## "TRAINING GUNDOGS FOR FALCONRY"

**Sunday 19th May 2002**

Our Day course covering all aspects of training gundogs for falconry, including pointing live game. Participants are encouraged to bring their own dogs.

Details from:

**Guy or Marian Wallace 01874 754311**

## NEWS FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE

**Richard Burge recently held a press conference about the proposed changes to hunting laws.**

**Below is a statement he released to members of the Grass Route. For those of you not on it, here is what he said.**

A major march in London in the near future is a certainty, but that a date is being reserved for a little while longer.

It is important to point out that we are not relying solely on a march to influence the political process but that it would be part of a sustained and escalating campaign. We will no doubt have to make our feelings known in small and large numbers, regionally and nationally, probably over a sustained period of time.

In addition, we are able to release a fresh opinion poll which has shown for the second time in four weeks that public enthusiasm for a ban on hunting is noticeably below 50%. Claims by anti hunting MPs that there is overwhelming public support for a ban has again been seen as nothing more than an exaggeration.

Certain journalists pressed very hard on the issue of where the

Alliance would stand with regard to a hunting Bill that contained sacrifices or that made distinctions between upland and lowland hunting. In my reply I made it perfectly clear that the Alliance remains totally committed to supporting and promoting all legitimate forms of hunting. I also made it clear when questioned about the situation in Scotland that not only was the Alliance confident of legal victory with regard to the Watson Bill but that it would be seeking punitive damages from the Scottish Parliament as a result.

We also made it clear that the Alliance is not the only player on this stage. We advised the media that they could expect significant contributions to the campaign from the Council of Hunting Associations and also the Union of Country Sports Workers.

Members and supporters might also like to know that today Sam Butler and others produced the first draft of a range of events which will require and involve the enthusiastic participation of members throughout the summer and autumn. This will be published on a rolling basis.

**Richard Burge.**



## What's on in 2002 at the Hawk and Owl Trust's National Conservation Centre

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

**3 - 7 June** Half Term Activities for young people and their families to mark Wildlife Week.

Enjoy the lively interactive audio and visual displays, take part in competitions and activities - explore the raptor ramble trail, visit the new hide.

**7 June** Teacher's Open Day: an opportunity for teachers to find out about the environmental activities for school groups, covering aspects of many curriculum subjects. Free for teachers. To book a place telephone Leanne Thomas, Hawk and Owl Education Officer (01494 876262).

**22 July - 30 August** - Summer Holiday Activities (see 3 - 7 June)

**18 August** Special Wildlife club activity day (all visitors welcome to join in).

**23 August** Teacher's Open Day (see 7 June)

**18 October** Owl Prowl: Special evening walk to listen to Tawny Owls in the woods. Advanced booking (tel: 01494 876262) is essential for this very popular event. Weather dependent. Ticket money will go to the Hawk and Owl Trust funds.

**19 and 20 October** Owl Weekend, including an Owl Prowl on 19 Oct - see 18 Oct, (booking essential).

**21 - 25 October** Half Term Activities (see 3 - 7 June)

**25 October** Teachers Open Day (see 7 June)

**PLUS** After school wildlife club for 8-12 year olds, meets 4-6pm on 15 May, 19 June, 17 July, 18 September, 16 October, 20 November - activities include bird watching and pond-dipping.

Entry to the Hawk and Owl Trust's National Conservation and Education Centre and most of the events and activities taking place there is included in the cost of admission to the Chiltern Open Air Museum, open daily from 30 March - 31 October, 10am to 5pm. There are no captive birds at the Centre. However, the museum site offers good habitat for many wild owls and other birds of prey, some of which roost and breed in the nest boxes the Trust has positioned in ideal habitat for different species along the raptor ramble trail.

## FOUND ON THE INTERNET!!

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## Diary Dates

### Southern Counties Game & Country Fair

09.00 - 17.00. Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday June 2 & 3.

Highclere Castle, Hants.

Off A34 south of Newbury.

**Tickets:** Adults £8.00,

Children under 14 yrs £2.00

OAP's £5.00

### Sussex Game & Country Fair

09.00 - 17.00, Saturday and Sunday August 10 & 11.

New Venue Brinsbury College, West Sussex, off A29 two miles north of Pulborough.

**Tickets:** Adults £8.00

Children under 14 yrs £2.00

OAP's £5.00

### Midland Game & Country Sports Fair

09.00 - 17.00, Saturday and Sunday, September 14 & 15, Weston Park,

Weston-under-Lizard, Shrops.

Off the M54, junction 3.

**Tickets:** Adults £10.00

Children under 14 yrs £2.00.

## CLA GAME FAIR

This year's CLA Game Fair will be held at

**Broadlands,  
Romsey Hants**

from

**Friday 26th July -  
Sunday 28th July.**

The CLA Game Fair is the world's largest countryside event and this year (2002) is the 45th Game Fair to be held.



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raptor section in the English articles).



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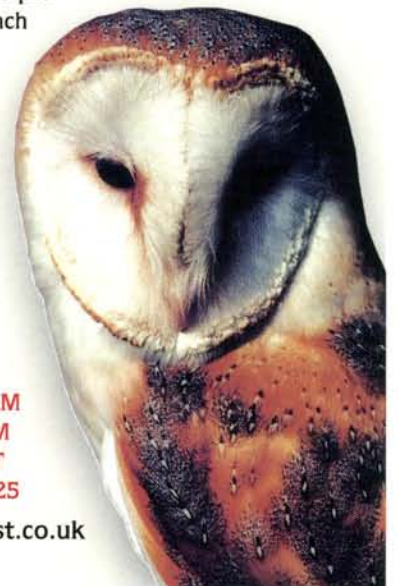
## ALL ABOUT OWLS

A WORD TO THE WISE... New for 2002, this special activity course at the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary will provide the chance to find out everything you always wanted to know about the care & conservation of Owls. Places are limited, so we recommend you book early. The price per person including lunch is £35.

For details of this and other Falconry Courses, plus our renowned Hunting Days, please contact Andy Hulme at

**EAST ANGLIA  
ACADEMY OF  
FALCONRY, STONHAM  
BARN, STONHAM  
ASPAL, IP14 6AT  
Tel: 01449 711425**

[www.falconry-east.co.uk](http://www.falconry-east.co.uk)





## ENGLISH HERITAGE

English Heritage is scoring over three centuries when its stages a Georgian Cricket Match this season. The 14th July fixture at Portchester Castle, Hants is set in the 18th century and will feature period costumed players, playing an authentic match supported by stalls, sideshows and other traditional English activities. It is a highlight of an action packed historic sports events programme running at English Heritage properties countrywide and coinciding with the Commonwealth Games being staged in Manchester this year.

Designed to show off sporting expertise from past eras which so often went hand in hand with the skill of survival and war, the programme also looks at some of the gentler pastimes enjoyed by ordinary people through the ages. Visitors can experience the sights and sounds of fearsome Roman gladiators battling it out in the arena, squires and men-at-arms in mediaeval tournament and mounted knights in combat. There are also magnificent displays of royal mediaeval falconry and the chance to take part in 14th century archery and the games of Hoca, Quoits and Tabula.



### Sporting highlights include:

**RICHMOND CASTLE**, North Yorks, Saturday 15th - Sunday 16th June. The Sport of Kings - from noon, an awe-inspiring display of falconry with magnificent birds of prey flying free. £4/£3/£2. English Heritage members free

**OLD SARUM CASTLE** Wiltshire, Saturday 27th - Sunday 28th July. A grand Mediaeval Tournament - from 11am, exciting 15th century joust, with musicians, fire-eaters and a royal falconry hunting party. £6/£4.50/£3. English Heritage members free.

Full details of sites and facilities can be found in The English Heritage Handbook 2002-2003. [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

#### THE SPORT OF KINGS:

From noon each day, skilled demonstrators Raphael Falconry present awe-inspiring displays of the mediaeval art of falconry with magnificent birds of prey flying free. Plus tours of a period tented mews with stories and folklore surrounding owls, hawks and falcons on display. Look out for these events across the country and throughout the year.

## More Choice With Dickies in 2002

The new Dickies catalogue for 2002 is now available featuring their extensive range of workwear. Manufacturers of hardwearing garments since 1922, Dickies have grown to be the largest producers of workwear in the world. This year Dickies introduce many exciting new products that enhance their world-famous collection, offering unparalleled choice to their customers.

Dickies have a long-standing association with the farming industry, developing a range of clothing that is comfortable to wear, but still offering protection against the foulest weather. Jackets and waterproof garments come in a variety of styles; from the traditional wax jacket to garments in a more contemporary style and fabric. Added to this range is the new 3-in-1 Glendale Jacket. This versatile,

waterproof garment can be worn as a jacket only; as quilted jacket; or both together: in effect giving you three options for the price of one.

The bodywarmer has become a firm favourite for those who work in the countryside. This practical garment gives warmth yet still allows free movement enabling the wearer to work efficiently. This popular selection has been extended to include the Grafters Bodywarmer. Made from the exceptionally hardwearing Beaver Nylon Fluorocarbon it has a nylon fleece lining for warmth, and is fitted with the large pockets that have become a Grafters trademark.

Ideal for the countryside, Dickies launch the Moorland Boot. This Wellington-style boot comes in blue or green and is made from

quality natural rubber, reinforced in areas of high abrasion and strain. With a cotton lining and cushioned insole it is comfortable to wear and has a slip resistant tread. As for safety boots, the agricultural worker is spoilt for choice. The Dickies safety footwear range has steel toe-caps conforming to EN345 (200 Joules) and comes in a variety of styles. New to the Deluxe range is the Texan Super Safety Rigger which has an oiled full grain leather upper with a Nitrile rubber outsole, and features a breathable Cambrelle lining that keeps the foot warmer in winter and cooler in summer. This distinctive safety boot has a steel midsole for underfoot protection and sturdy leather, pull-on loops.

So whatever your clothing requirements for the workplace, you can find the answer in the latest Dickies catalogue. For further information, details of your local supplier, or a copy of the catalogue, contact Dickies on **01761 410041** or visit the website at [www.dickies-uk.co.uk](http://www.dickies-uk.co.uk)



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IBR18234V	15891DOEW	IBR7377W
BALD EAGLE	KESTREL	1RAH98W
COMMON BUZZARD 4749DOEW	IBR15372S 8RSA98S	UK87666
QSRH95W	RED-TAILED HAWK	BARN OWL x4
UK79531	11FCHX	COMMON BUZZARD x2
7144DOEW	IBR2155Y	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x3
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	00386X	GYR/SAKER FALCON x3
IBR1141Z	SAKER FALCON	HARRIS HAWK x29
QPKB94Z 400001Z 10S&S01Z	IBR11230V QWP	KESTREL x3
48IOA98Z	8KFCC97	LANNER FALCON x4
RBA97Z377	SPARROWHAWK	PEREGRINE FALCON x9
IBR21930Z	IBR9504R	PEREGRINE HYBRID x16
FERRUGINOUS HAWK	UNKNOWN BOP	RED-TAILED HAWK x8
198Y	9300658A229442 GF73985	SAKER FALCON x2
GYR/LANNER FALCON	GOSHAWK	BARN OWL x41
17571DOEW	GYR BARBARY HYBRID GYR/PEREGRINE	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x2
HARRIS HAWK	HYBRID	FERRUGINOUS HAWK x3
IBR7482W	LUGGER FALCON	GOSHAWK x4
IBR10004W	MERLIN	GYR HYBRID x5
IBR10051W	ORANGE-WINGED AMAZON PEREGRINE	HARRIS HAWK x2
IBR12965W	FALCON	LANNER FALCON x3
IBR12959W	BENGAL EAGLE OWL	MERLIN x2
IBR13521W 33GB	SNOWY OWL	RED-TAILED HAWK x3
7583DOEW	690W	SAKER FALCON x13
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**<http://www.ibr.org.uk>**

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*Club Advertisement*

## 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



# Club Directory

## BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB

*Founded in 1927*

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

*For more details send SAE with 82p P & P to:-*  
**THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB,**  
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## 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

*Just call 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 White Swan"**

**Public House.**

**High Street, Yeadon.**

(2 mins from Leeds & Bradford Airport).

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

E-mail: NEFC@lineone.net





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or visit the club website [www.brittanyclub.co.uk](http://www.brittanyclub.co.uk)

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For more information please telephone:

- Rob Kelly 01275 891813
- Keith Wicks 01454 315810
- Tony Ellis 01793 521334

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## The South East Falconry Group

aims to support falconry and falconers,  
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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](mailto:WhiteGos@compuserve.com)

## 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**

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# NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

BY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD

**A**s I write this it's late February and for most of the month I've been walking on clouds. The cause of this buoyancy? Hawking with the best ferrets I've ever owned. This season I started two homebred youngsters. I wrote about their arrival a few issues ago (Heat, Hippos and Tiger Pits), and I can only say that they have fulfilled all my expectations and more. We've all had good ferrets, but these jills are truly in the Superferret category. They're puppy dog tame, bold, responsive, and hunt like demons.

As young ferrets develop you soon start to see their individual characters emerging and I quickly got an inkling of how the New Kids were going to shape up. It

born a rather sober individual who always needed much encouragement to get her to play. She seemed to instinctively know that there was more to life than all that

**“She’s like a little terrier, nose down and away. She’s fast too, covering ground like a whippet!”**

became clear that one jill, Silver, was heads and shoulders above her sister when it came to boldness. Nothing worried this ferret. In truth, she was a little strange. She was never a young ferret. She was

larking about. Now she knows she was right, and the rabbits know it too. Silver would put the run on a lion. How many rabbits has she bolted this season? How many has she tracked like some crazed





creature above ground once they've bolted! I've never had a ferret so obsessed with hunting above ground. She's like a little terrier, nose down and away. She's fast too, covering ground like a whipplet! Nor has the boldness faded. Yesterday she emerged from a hole in a steep, slippery bank to have bull in a china shop me heavily hitting the deck and then sliding right by her in an effort to help the bird with a difficult ditch-bottom rabbit. Another ferret would have at least ducked back in. She was ready to head butt me on my way!

Both youngsters were started off not with hawking, but netting (something on my interest in this shortly). I've always found netting quite a good way to enter young ferrets due to the fact that there's no pressure to provide the hawk with flights. Some ferrets get into working quickly, some slowly, but all do better if they are given plenty of time to explore and emerge fully - no snatching up - at their own pace.

### Netted Ferret

Netting has just one disadvantage. As the youngsters start to discover their new world of holes with all the inevitable in and outs, there is a tendency for the locator collar to get snagged on the nets. The more sensitive the ferret the more concerned it's likely to be. On one occasion, poor Silver ended up like a netted rabbit! But she didn't bat an eye and was ready to hunt on, net and all!

Invaluable during this early hunting was Rob, my border collie. If young ferrets can be a bit slow to get into the hang of things, then they're a lot slower if they're being asked to work unoccupied warrens! Older ferrets often know at a sniff or at least with very little

exploration, when a warren is barren, but a youngster just finds the whole thing puzzling. Their owner's are puzzled too. Are they working, or aren't they? A mark from a dog that knows the secret of every occupied warren is priceless.



### The Hawking

It's hard to put a value on these ferrets. My ferreting season starts quite late due to cover, but once the conditions are right, it's ferreting and more ferreting. Many falconers in the north tell of ferretless

**“Nothing moves like an open ground bolted rabbit. Just watch those little legs go as they propel their owner along at drag-racer speed!”**

rabbiting all season long, but this has never been my hawking. I've always relied on ferrets. In fact, the vast majority of all my mid- to late-winter rabbits are bolted type. I love it. I love all the

sneaking about. I love the dog work and the crafty hole marking. But most of all I love the flying. This February has really been special. All the wind that was lacking during the early part of the season to get the Harris' up and soaring over the cover decided to finally show itself. I don't recall ever doing so much soaring over warrens. It's something I never get used to: ferrets in, bird up, and nothing but a spade stuck in the ground to hint at

what's going on. I never get used to the next bit either - the bird becoming a dropping bomb as a ferret-encouraged rabbit explodes from the earth. Not long ago I overheard a chap telling his Harris'-owning mate to get himself a 'proper' bird. I've thought about him a lot lately!

### Formula 1 Animals

When the wind's failed I've been treated to that other parabuteo talent - catching the fastest direct-pursuit rabbits in the World! Nothing moves like an open ground bolted rabbit. Just watch those little legs go as they propel their owner along at drag-racer speed. Give them some nice short turf to run on and smoke will come from those furry feet. This type of action, together with all the normal woodland ferreting, the New Kids have been serving up with a giant ladle. Truly, you wouldn't prise me from my winter rabbiting with a crowbar!

### The Pot Hunter

And their workload hasn't stopped with hawking. I've always been keen on ferreting with purse nets and

will often combine this sport with hawking. I never take more than three rabbits per session with a Harris' and, always wanting a full day, will often use nets to secure a few more - actually as



many more as I can. I want the meat! All my hawking and hunting is for the pot.

### Food on the Table

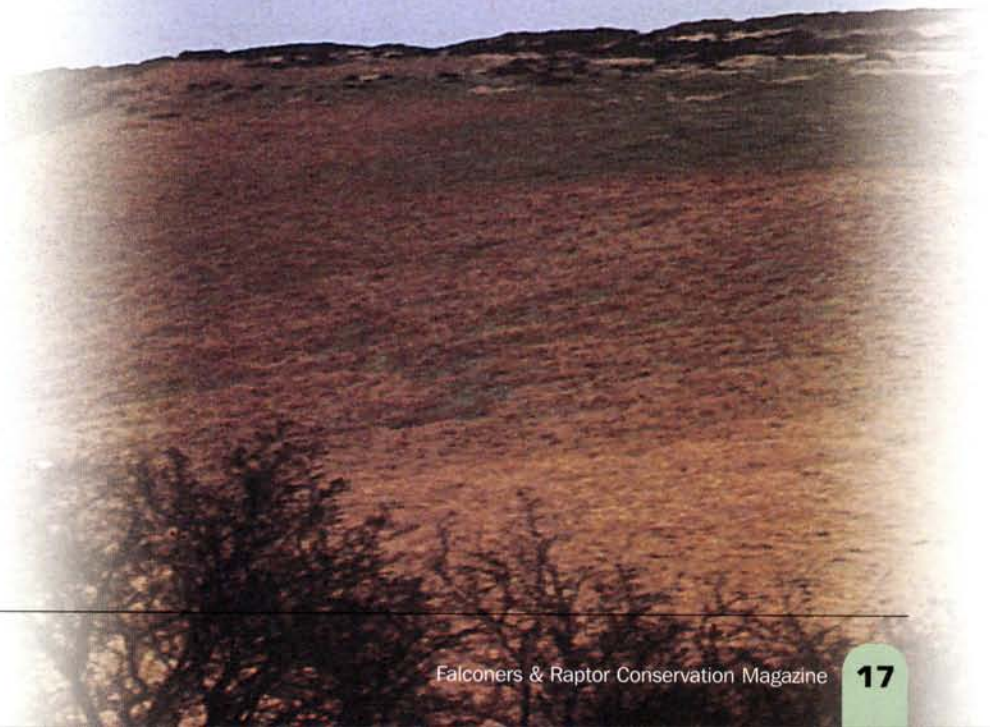
Certainly in recent years we have made an effort to acquire all the household's meat from the field. It's an attitude that makes you either a very determined hunter or a vegetarian! My goodness, don't you value those kills. Every rabbit is a jar of caviar! But I sense I'm developing a bit of a problem with this 'harvesting'. I find myself grading dinner guests as to what they merit! Things start with pizza and moves up through various rabbit dishes and pheasant. If you get served here

**“All the wind that was lacking during the early part of the season to get the Harris' up and soaring over the cover decided to finally show itself”**

you're a VIP! This passion for eating game has slowly grown over the years. I don't know exactly when it started. It certainly had nothing to do with my Mother's culinary efforts. She never cooked an item of game in her life, and what she repeatedly put the Sunday chicken through had to be witnessed first hand! I'm sure time spent on the Continent has been a big influence and my falconry is really an odd mix of a bit of 'ours' and a bit of 'theirs'. The Continentals are passionate consumers of game and I have flown with some truly obsessive pot hawkers. When you unload the car with a wheelbarrow things are pretty serious!

As I finish this article, the weather's looking very promising and I've just noticed a space in the freezer. Now where's that ferret box!

□







# LESSONS LEARNED

BY PETER ELDRETT

**I**t was a wonderful day, weather wise. A bright, clear blue sky with not a cloud to be seen on a February Saturday morning. My friends and I met at the pre-arranged spot with our Harris' Hawks together with a forest keeper who pointed us in the direction of where we would find the rabbit warrens. There were three of us (myself, Paul and Mick) together with Paul's wife, Vanessa, their four year old daughter, Amy and Laine, who looked after Mick's ferrets.

## Panoramic Splendour

The area of the forest we were hawking is very open. Plenty of gorse bushes which look great when in bloom with their yellow flowers, particularly with a rich blue sky backdrop.

We soon found the first bury and Laine put down a ferret. Paul spotted an adder sunning itself in the sun. He called to Amy and Vanessa to have a look but it slithered away under a holly bush before they could see it. A rabbit bolted and two of the Harris's gave chase but to no avail. Laine got the ferret back and we found another bury. This time Mick's bird gave chase. That was one in the bag. Then, another rabbit bolted but no one saw it except me. I shouted, and Paul's bird gave chase. It was a wonderful slip and we saw her go down behind a very large gorse bush. He ran after it and then returned a little while later with

his bird's first kill of the day.

We moved on again and one of the fetters was put down a hole once again. We all surrounded the bury when all of a sudden a chap appeared with three Jack Russells and a Lurcher. Oh dear! Two of the dogs started moving over the bury and the owner

the jill by the head and started to run off with it, shaking its head all the time. The dog owner ran after it still shouting and the dog was getting further and further away with the jill still in its mouth.

Mick, Laine, Paul and myself also went after the dog but we could not run too fast

**“Mick, Laine, Paul and myself also went after the dog but we could not run too fast with birds on our fists”**

shouted at them to come away but the dogs did not take any notice. He walked on still calling his dogs when all of a sudden the ferret popped up her head at completely the wrong moment. One of the dogs grabbed

with birds on our fists. Vanessa and Amy stayed by the bury because the dog owner left the Lurcher and two Jack Russells on their leads with her.

It was a full 15 minutes before we saw





the dog. It had blood all over its muzzle and so we drew the obvious conclusion that the fetter was dead. The dog owner could only apologise and offered to replace the ferret finder collar.

**On reflection**

What had happened left a nasty taste in our mouths. The dogs were not under control and we, the hawkers, were not quick enough to react when the dogs originally appeared. What should have happened was for us to cover the holes so that the jill had some sort of protection. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Falconers, please take note!!

We had a look for the dead ferret because Mick wanted to see if he could get the collar back. After a while we stopped looking agreeing to return later in the day.

On we went and saw the birds having good long slips and a couple of kills. Then we left the open part of the hunting ground and went into an area where there were a few more trees, holly bushes, etc. We found a very large bury and if there was one hole there must have been 50. This was a very large warren and we had only one fetter to work it.

Again, we had the area covered and after a few minutes standing and waiting I took a step to my right. The wrong thing to do. I should have looked where I was putting my great loafs. My right foot suddenly

dissappeared down a hole and over I went with a thud. My bird, Purbeck, flew on top of a large holly bush and the wind was knocked out of me. My friends gathered around to see to my welfare but started laughing when they realised that I was OK.

Just after this had happend my wife Marian appeared with our dog, Poppy. She is a sprocker (Springer x Cocker). I told her of the days events but it was not over yet.

I had Purbeck back on my fist by this time and we were back waiting for a bolting rabbit. One appeared and two Harris's went

after it. The rabbit took refuge under a holly bush probably thinking it was safe. Paul's bird, Megan, was high on the holly bush when Mick's bird flew down and walked into the base of the bush and flushed out the rabbit. Both birds went for it and it was another kill. We had not seen this kind of thing before. Two birds working together in such a way, only seeing each other about every-other-week. It was something we had only read about or seen on the television.



something back that belonged to Mick.

The time was getting on to 1 o'clock and we wanted a cuppa. So it was back to the cars, but because the area is popular with everybody walking on such a nice day, we were constantly being stopped and having our photos taken and being asked about the birds, about which we were only too glad to talk.

We put the birds away and after some refreshment went back to the bury where the dog had the ferret. We searched for a long time again to try and find the collar but without any luck.

**All to Pot**

With both birds retrieved and another bunny in the bag, Vanessa asked Mick where his bird's tail bell was. Not only had the tail bell come off but the telemetry aerial was missing as well, being fixed to the same plectrum.

**“Two birds working together in such a way, only seeing each other about every-other-week. It was something we had only read about or seen on the television”**

It was not Mick's day, what with one thing and another. So it was search time once again. The trouble was the ground was both muddy and covered with dead leaves so it would be very hard to find. Noses to the ground and eyes wide open. Poppy was let off the lead and she did her usual running around with nose on the ground. All of a sudden there was a tinkling of a bell as Poppy ran over it. At least we got

So it was a day of ups and downs. The ups outweighed the downs with a good bag and at one point we just stood watching four buzzards on two therns just ringing up. A brilliant sight.

A few lessons were learnt on that day which I hope will be put to use next season if the need arises.

□





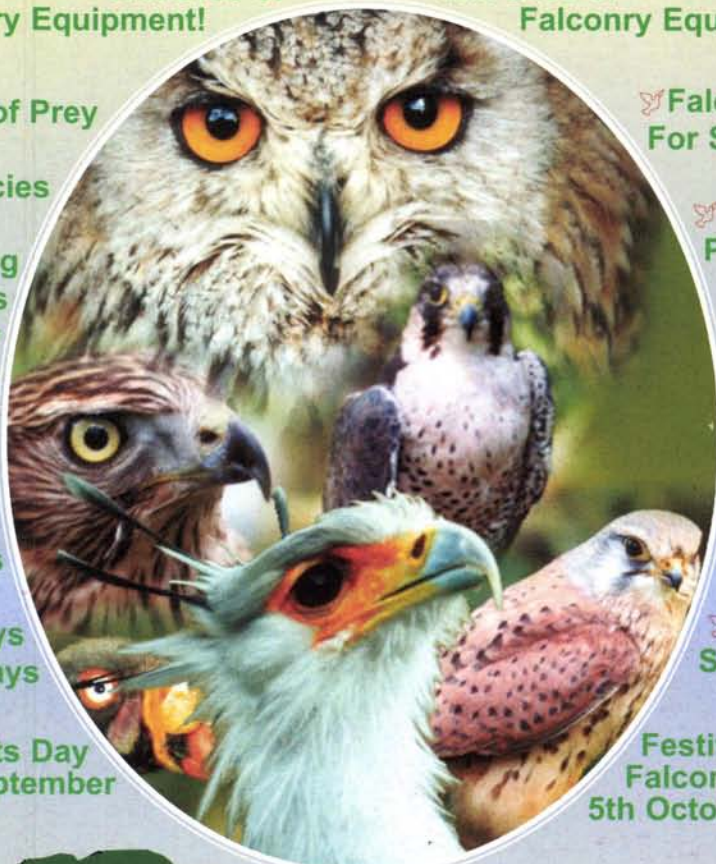
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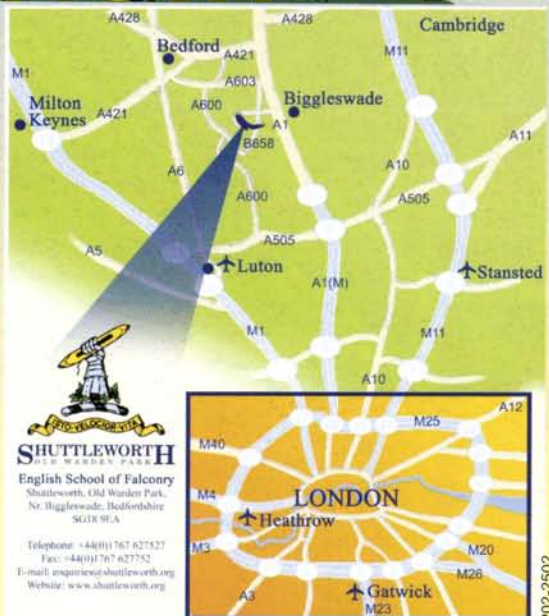
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# WHERE DO OUR BIRDS COME FROM?

BY PHILIPPE HOIYIS

**C**ertainly not from the nest! Nestlings produce awful birds. Mal-imprinted on humans, most become "screamers" (a true nuisance) and must learn all the skills of air from nothing!

Our Gurney's Eagles were rescued not unlike the ones on the "medic" patchwork attached:

#1 is a young female found crippled on the ground. X-rays unveiled a bullet embedded in thick fibrous tissue growing right under the shoulder joint. Air ruffles to protect poultry are cheaper than mesh and bring more fun....

Immediate surgery allowed proper healing and the benign stiffness in the elbow receded accordingly with rich food, medication and a lot of rest.

#2 is a fully grown, dark male found on the ground with signs of a terrible pain in the right eye. Refused to eat. The second day the

Nematod showing on the picture could be detected, moving rapidly on the eye surface and hiding under the eyelids. Eye is an atypical site for this respiratory Cyasthostoma, erratic larvae being coughed up from the trachea to start growing inside the orbit. Blindness follows by destruction of the optical nerve. Fenbendazol allowed total recovery, but the beautiful golden right eye is permanently blind. Such a disabled bird cannot be released, but can usually become a successful breeder. A lovely specimen, flown free every day despite his problem.

Back to our Gurney's Eagles, with some pictures and comments for you... see if they can stand the challenge with any existing Golden Eagle population... Four adult birds (two pairs) regularly soar and hunt over our facilities.

**05/25/2001**

On the picture: this immature specimen is a passing-by "newbie" obviously drifting from the west after several days of sustained wind. But... surprise! From her soaring height, she gracefully goes down as for landing, and she settles high on top of a Sukun







tree. The pictures show her very curious and peering at Kitty, another G.E. weathering on the balcony roof.

The new bird will spend the next hours observing the surroundings. The least one can say is that wild Gurney's Eagles are not scared of humans (unless hunted)!

We stopped paying attention to her. She spent the day moving between various posts and proceeding to a longish inspection of our place. She didn't threaten the other birds. She eventually roosts for the night in a tall Intsia tree, just in the middle of our weathering grounds.

**05/26/2001**

The next morning the bird is still there. Obviously hungry, she is a 2nd year immature and she makes no attempt to beg for food from the adult Eagles. We refrain from feeding her. With this killing machine nearby, we proceed to the routine work with the other birds with caution, and nothing bad happens. She stays quiet however close we come to her perch, and she is even sighted eagerly checking for forgotten meat tidbits or

maybe small preys on the lawn by late afternoon! Second night roosting on the same tree.

**05/27/2001**

Next morning, still there!... For three days now she has carefully avoided the neighbouring village where poultry waits for an easy stoop, sticking closely to the hawks' place instead. A rumour runs among our staff, "Sir, she's not Donna leave at all, and we can't let her starve like that...we must give her some food!!!" I surrendered, and yes, we sinned. Chicken meat was offered on the ground, taken in a matter of seconds. I now expect her to depart with a good crop over the

forested ridge where the wild Eagles nest, but instead, she stays.

A meeting is held, and again female point will prevail. This bird must be trapped and manned!



**The reasons, you ask?**

1) Biak Gurney's Eagle population is more than steady. Breeding pairs nest in every single forested spot available. My estimate is >150 pairs on this small island, living on extremely abundant game.

Space and food resource being limited by the number of adult birds, the offspring (one chick every 12 or 18 months) cannot possibly expect to reach maturity and win their own breeding and hunting territory.



2) Whatever you call it (selection, resource limit), 90% of these young wandering birds ("Branchers", then "Haggards") are doomed to die before they reach adulthood. This is abundantly documented for who has spent a couple of months in Biak countryside.

3) This particular, unexperienced bird has drifted to our place, close to the main town, and if we force her to leave, she will rapidly get an air rifle bullet as soon as she starts threatening locals' poultry a mile away.

4) and I cannot possibly deny a fact: she now seems to feel totally at home around our centre, what our staff translates by "she was sent to us, it's a sign!"

5) she has to be named "TINA", after young Agustina who is becoming a very skilled bird keeper and hawker, to show the world that here too, we can care properly for our wildlife.

A Balchatri trap is installed under her tree with a decoy. Instant capture. The bird doesn't even notice the humans who immediately blindfold her, install proper Aylmeri grommets, jesses, swivel and a leash (she may of course NOT be caged, but tethered).

TINA was a "virgin" specimen, never handled by humans before. She was thin but

had no stress marks or leg marks from being chained (sic) by natives (big Raptors' yellow fat, mostly White-bellied Sea-eagles', is still a



well-known delicacy here - no joke intended!).

It is of the UTMOST importance that you NEVER frighten an Eagle you want to study, train and breed from. Eagles are clever and judge people extremely well! Training keys are patience, skill and understanding. A relation entirely based on "positive reinforcement", and LOVE. No fear and no punishment allowed.

Tina proved to be very bold and willing.

1) Introducing period ("manning"): zero-stress

in calm indoors quarter while creating confidence: less than 1 week! She stepped, jumped, then flew to the fist in days! No species within the *A. chrysaetos* / *audax* / *gurneyi* superspecies is known to learn THAT fast!

2) Flying on the creance + classic retrieve rubber lure: a couple of weeks.

3) Flying loose, everyday since then. Her training period was the shortest ever recorded for a big *Aquila*. Flown loose after four weeks, she took her first quail after six and delighted visitors afield after five months. I let her totally free for long periods, neighbours' poultry allowing. She comes to the glove from >500's meters and from soaring (not recommended in afternoon thermics!) for food but now mostly to interact.

I am not strong on the hunting sport but I let her make a kill whenever she wants to. Keeps her fit for further breeding and preserves her skills for possible hacking. Mostly Bandicoots (a pest in local peanuts fields) and Phalangiers she spots while following along the forest edge. She dislikes wild feathered game. Also the fast varanus in rubbish dumps and ...mock attacks on the odd piglet! □



BEFORE

AFTER





# STARTING AT THE VERY BEGINNING

JOHN SNELLIN



**J**ohn Snellin rang me regarding the piece I put in the last issue about following the progress of first year birds through their first seasons. John was going to imprint and fly a female sparrowhawk. I know you have all heard a lot about spars from me but I thought it might be interesting to hear from another sparrowhawk. Anyway things changed slightly for John as you will read and rather than follow his story from the beginning of the imprinting we can follow the story from the very beginning so here is your first instalment. Also, John has asked me for quite a lot of advice and I am very interested to see whether my training methods are as effective when implemented by someone else.

I am 40 (yes 40!) years old 6'2" and slim and have been flying Hawks for about the last 10 yrs, mainly Gos & Harris. I am the full time Force Wildlife Officer for Dorset Police, based in Poole and have been in the Police for 16 years, prior to which I was in the Royal Marines. I have never bred Hawks before so this is all quite new territory for me!

I had decided that this season I would imprint a sparrowhawk. I ordered it and ended up being offered this breeding pair of Spars. Well I've spent the last fortnight or so converting my aviaries, and have to say, I'm rather pleased with the result. They are about 12ft square each and about 10ft high, painted white on the inside, with shade netting stretched taught in front of the wire mesh, and pea shingle on the floor. I have a 7ft high Christmas tree courtesy of the Forestry Commission in each aviary, in huge pots, with a hose rigged to the outside. I have also cable tied an 18" bread basket in each of the trees to give them a start and left loads of twigs and foliage on the ground. The same hose system applies to the baths.





The two aviaries are divided by shade cloth so they can see and display but can't get to each other. In the centre of this partition is an upright 4"x 2" post, with a small hatch in it that I can open from the outside, which is only big enough for the male to get through. I have put in plenty of perches, covered with pipe insulation or hessian backed carpet with the hessian outermost.

So at 6.15am on Sunday morning I set off for the 370 mile round trip to Lichfield!

### Stunning

On arrival I was shown the most stunning pair of birds, the male being particularly gorgeous (as so many of us are!) after a quick beak cope of the female they were both placed in separate boxes for the journey back. I didn't hear a sound out of them for the entire journey. Arriving back at 12.45pm I had spent about 45mins at the previous keepers house and about a 20min stop for breakfast. It doesn't take a mathematician to work out what sort of speeds I was doing! But didn't see one Police car on the whole trip (luckily!)

Once back home, some food was put out.

A final check of the aviaries was made, and then they were let out. Within ten minutes both had found a favourite perch and were sat on one leg all puffed up! Both of them had a bite to eat, but I did notice the next day the male had wasted no time in trying to woo her, as he had completely stripped a quail leg and left it draped over a perch for her to see (the things we have to do to

**“Now...rather than upset the birds by going in and rigging up the camera, I mounted it on a bracket on the outside, and quickly drilled a whole through the wall”**

impress you women!). When watching them through the spy holes he will occasionally go for a quick and very agile flit around his territory, backwards and forwards to greet her, while she just sits there looking at him with that lovely upside down head movement (I'm sure that if they had mobile phones

they'd probably be sending each other text messages!).

I'll probably give them about another week or so and then pull the hatch back, as the previous keeper usually puts them together around now, without any problem, only splitting them up again as the eggs are about to hatch.

### Keeping Watch

Over the following few days, I was again, keeping a watch over them whenever I could, but soon realised that squinting through one of about four spy holes was not only uncomfortable, but also, bloody impractical. So it was off to the cash & carry store 'Macro', returning a short while later, with a complete CCTV system. What a bargain! £50 + vat, bought me a camera that is about half the size of my fist, a six inch monitor (with sound!) and all the leads. Now, rather than upset the birds by going in and rigging up the camera, I mounted it on a bracket on the outside, and quickly drilled a hole through the wall. The other reason for doing this, was that it was quite obvious, that especially the male, would perch on just about anything, so rather than have him sat, or mute on the camera and risk damaging it or altering its position, that is now not a problem, as it's on the outside tight up against the hole (I do hope this makes sense!)

A flick of a switch, and there they were, stars of their own TV show. While I'm on the CCTV subject, if you have a redundant portable TV, Macro actually did a colour, sound camera with all the leads for £24.99 that plugs straight into the back of a portable. Not bad eh?

A word of advice on camera position - really put some thought into it.

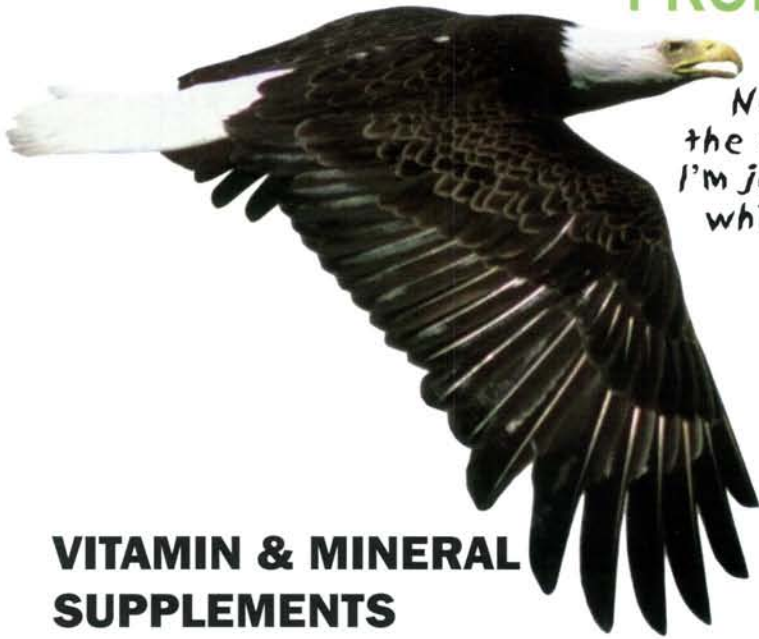
Watch them for a while and find their

favourite perches and plucking posts.

Obviously, with one camera, you can't cover every angle, but mine is in the top corner of the aviary, which gives a lovely view, down both aviaries, including both their favourite perches, the food hatches and the nesting

continued on page 28





*No! look down there, thats the stuff the vet said to get. I'm just off to sit in that tree while you run round in demented circles.*

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trees, in fact about the only thing it doesn't show, is the baths, and be careful that a light source or sunlight doesn't 'white out' the picture.

Needless to say, over the next few days I became something of an 'aviary potato', sitting watching the monitor whenever I could. Believe me its fascinating, and was an absolute godsend when it was time to pull back the hatch, and let them in together.

So, after they had settled in for about a week, it was time for the big day!

I had up until then been watching avidly as he would spin round and round his aviary with the most incredible agility, and thought

minutes, buzzing very close to her, and on occasion, she too would do a 'wall of death' with him. At times, when they got close, they would both chatter at each other, at other times she would just sit there and let herself get 'buzzed' rolling her head upside down and was she thinking; he's a fit looking bloke or; look at that mad bastard!?

### Very Interesting

I still continued to put food through both hatches, to avoid the territorial thing as much as possible, and one thing that was interesting was that on two occasions whilst watching, I saw him go to get food and then

but will leave quail or mice, whereas he, will eat anything. I've now got to the stage of skinning day olds and 're-skinning' Quail meat with the day old 'coat'. It seems to work and I am a past master at giving a woman what she wants, and sometimes even dressing it up!

### Rations

I feed them both at least twice a day, usually about 7.30am and then about 4pm. By the time I get there at 7.30am they have already just eaten what was left from the night before. If I am around during the day, i.e. weekends or days off, I will feed them about six times a day, giving the same ration but split up x6 periodically through the day. In this way I believe it keeps them both, and especially the male, more active. There is more chance of the male displaying, preparing food and caching if the food is dropping in more often, rather than him pigging out to himself only twice a day. I also give all food a dusting with A1 Raptor 'Breeding Mix' just to give them a bit of extra help. And finally - my god have they got incredible hearing! - there is no way that they see me approaching their aviaries, but they hear the tiniest sound, even cutting through the legs or wings of a Quail and the male will hear it. If I cough or drop something I can guarantee that the male will usually go for a few high speed circuits before settling on his perch and rousing.

She is obviously a woman that takes a bit of wooing, because first thing each morning he is back in his own aviary. I haven't yet seen him stay overnight. During the day he spends most of his time with her, and I've only once seen her in his aviary. Unlike myself, he is probably unable to use the line, 'look luv I think I've had too much to drink, I'd better sleep at yours!' □

## The male then started to pay a lot of interest in this new opening and obviously realised that something was different but still, wouldn't take the plunge!

it was time that he should go and do the same in hers. So, over a couple of days prior to this, I fed them both right up, in the hope that this would lessen the chances of him becoming her next meal! The big day arrived and the hatch was pulled back. Nothing! What an anti-climax! I must have sat there for a couple of hours, but neither bird even seemed to notice. The male then started to pay a lot of interest in this new opening and obviously realised that something was different but still wouldn't take the plunge!

It was now nearly dusk, so I had to leave them. What a night! When you've just put two Spars together for the first time, don't even think about trying to sleep! All I kept getting was this horrible vision of a nice plump female sat atop a freshly plucked male!

### There They Both Were

I should never have worried or doubted them. The following morning I could not get down there quick enough (my aviaries are not in my garden, they are about 1/4 mile away in our farm buildings). On went the TV monitor, and there they both were, sat on the same perch, all puffed up and very much in love! (don't get complacent here, I was probably just bloody lucky, it can't always be this easy!)

So, most of another day was spent watching 'BBC Spar' - fascinating. He would do his little flit around about every two

only about twenty seconds later, she would go to get hers...did she really wait for him? Was it a hierarchy thing? I don't know, probably nothing. Another thing was that if I turned the light off (one small 60 watt bulkhead light) just before dusk, they would both obviously think "oh, its getting dark, better have my last meal of the day" and drop down for their last meal.

They are both eating like wolves, especially him, probably because he spends so much time burning it off with his flying it's nothing for him to eat 3/4 of a large Quail a day. She however can be very choosy over her food, and loves day olds,







# GUNDOGS FOR FALCONRY

BY GUY WALLACE

**T**aken from 'The Specialist Gundog' by Guy Wallace, to be published by 'The Sportsman's Press' in July. Guy will be launching at the CLA Game Fair.

The Good Lord may not have got everything right, but the one thing He did get right was that he gave hawks the summer in which to moult in order that falconers should have the time to train their dogs! Successful falconry has sometimes been described as a "three-legged stool" requiring a sound falconer, a sound hawk and a sound dog in order to remain upright! Because the dog is invariably a second class citizen compared with one's hawk it is essential to train it thoroughly while one has the chance because, in my experience, once the hawk is taken up all further dog training usually ceases forthwith!

For anyone wishing to train a dog for falconry all of the foregoing general chapters, with the obvious exception of retrieving, apply equally to falconry dogs. (Incidentally, never turn down a dog for falconry because it retrieves. Dogs are not so stupid that they do not know whether they are hawking or shooting. Prior to the use of freezers in

private homes, everything our hawks ate was caught, run over on the road or shot and we used our dogs to retrieve whatever was shot for hawk food. By the same token, there is no reason why one should not use the same dog for both shooting and falconry.

Prior to about 1960 things were simple. Game and lark hawkers flew their falcons over pointers or (mainly) English setters and austringers flew their goshawks over spaniels

1990's and, thirdly, the continental Hunter Pointer Retrievers started arriving in Britain from BAOR via returning ex-servicemen which generally increased the choice of breed for all branches of falconry.

If a person takes up falconry or a falconer moves to a new area they would be wise to discover what the terrain and cover are like and what quarry species the area holds before deciding upon what type of hawk to acquire.

## Prior to about 1960 things were simple...

- and that was it (with the exception of sparviter and rook hawkers who never used a dog anyway). After that time three factors changed the whole scenario for ever. First, redtails and later Harris' Hawks began to be imported in large numbers, coupled with the captive breeding of British birds and imported birds of prey, followed by hybrids of all origins. Secondly, practical falconry - due largely to the arrival of the Harris' Hawk - increased phenomenally from some 40 of us then to some 4,000 actual falconers out of some 13,000 licensed raptor keepers in the

Similarly with the dog. If one is going game hawking on large tracts of heather moorland an English pointer or one of the setters (preferably an English setter on account of its mainly white coat) would still be the first choice. If one was partridge hawking over the vast root and cereal fields and the setaside of the Fens or East Anglia a 'bird dog' would still be the favourite but one might opt for one of the larger HPR's such as a GSP or vizsla instead. If one was flying a Harris' Hawk or redtail in small fields, bits of rough and woodland any of the HPR's would suit well (although I expect my own 'English' pointers to cope with brambles in woodland when on the 'pheasant job' which they do extremely effectively) but an austringer flying a gos might favour an English springer or a cocker spaniel although an HPR would do equally well. Were he lucky enough to fly both longwings and shortwings it would almost have to be an HPR since they will invariably work in close cover but 'get out' in the open. So one way and the other there is a large choice of dog for every type of hawking within those parameters.

When I started hawking in the 1950's I flew a male gos over an English springer (the pup and the eyass both cost £8!) and, probably because there was never the end product of the retrieve, she was a remarkably steady little bitch. In my naivete I assumed that all gundogs were steady - until I went







shooting! I know that many falconers regard a dog as a necessary evil to get slips for their hawk but, fortunately, they also realise that nothing succeeds like success and the more slips they get, the better the hawk will get in terms of fitness, 'the killer instinct' and footing ability. Most falconers acquire a dog because they have hawked with a chum who has one and are then suitably impressed with the amount of quarry the dog finds. Every generation of falconers throws up the dogless 'experts' who search with binoculars for the 9" grouse in 18" heather but most of them eventually either get a dog or give up falconry!

When introducing your dog to hawks (or should it be vice versa?) always assume that the worst will happen and you will usually be pleasantly surprised. If you have, say, sparrowhawks or merlins take the pup towards them on a lead with a rolled up newspaper. When the pup is just beyond leash length tap it on the nose with the newspaper and a gruff 'NO' and that should be it. The same process goes for introducing



may take days or even weeks. A game hawker once wanted to buy a pointer dog of mine which I was reluctant to sell because he (the pointer!) would kill any game fowl, training pigeon or even swallow on the wing that he could get his teeth into. Anyway we

to as many different dogs as you can while they are still eyasses. Feeding in the Grass Yard of the local beagle kennels is good manning and when a client asked me to train and keep his Harris' Hawk she was only ever fed on the yard among 20 assorted gundogs - but she still barely tolerates black Labradors! To say that your hawk will not fly with a strange dog present is, in my opinion, merely bad manning. One can frequently incorporate the kennel into part of the mews security and the more that each permanently sees the other, the better. However, never be tempted to leave your hawk and dog loose in the same place.

Having taught your dog the DROP, when calling off your hawk in training blow the SIT or DOWN whistle every time she takes off. The hawk taking off eventually becomes a command in itself to DROP (as in Dropping to Shot for a shooting dog). This helps prevent the annoying, not to say dangerous,

habit of the dog trying to beat the hawk to the quarry! For all other early training leave your hawk in the mews or flight because you cannot train a dog with a hawk on



## When introducing your dog to hawks always assume the worst will happen!

a pup to ferrets. If you took a 7-week-old pup up to my female redtail she would merely regard it as lunch! Therefore use some common sense with the larger hawks and wait until the pup is big enough to get away with being footed if need be. Beware the older, possible 'rescue' dog. This introduction

killed grouse over him with an old falcon and on taking him up to her on a tight lead while she was pluming the grouse I let him sniff it. Quick as a flash she footed his nose and two weeks later I saw him in a vehicle curled up asleep amidst a cadge of falcons! Get your hawk, particularly Harrises and gosses, used

your fist. When teaching HEEL remember to walk the dog on the right hand side.

Flying shortwings is relatively easy on both the human and canine system. The austringer merely plods along with hawk on fist (or up tree) while working his dog within that imaginary semi-circle already described,



having taught Fido to sit sharply on his bum whenever a rabbit or pheasant erupts. End of story. Flying longwings, however, is a different ball game for both man and dog. To get the best out of it you both have to be fit before you start. If you both go up for your annual stint on 'the bonny purple' overweight



come across. If, as is often the case, a party of you go out you should each have at least one dog and preferably more. Do not leave inexperienced youngsters behind but give them their turn. After a certain stage they will learn nothing in kennels but have to be out there learning their trade. They will have to pack a lot of experience into two weeks of the year even if you use the mornings to train while the falcons are weathering. However, fly the 'old-stagers' over the young dogs and the eyasses over the experienced ones so as not to

control the flush and drop if you have the slightest doubts. There is a school of thought that says that game should not be served a second time or it makes the hawk idle on the first stoop if it knows that the game will be easier to catch a second time round. There may well be some truth in this, but many a 'bird dog' would put a spaniel to shame when winking a grouse out of thick cover once it has put in! Finally, whatever your hawking, when the hawk has actually killed the quarry found and flushed by the dog, call the dog up and, once you have made into the hawk, let it see and sniff the dead quarry and on the first few kills for which the dog is responsible 'mouth' as well so that the dog can actually see the end product to all its work. Make a big fuss of the dog (which has done most of the work) and make it feel part of the team, that 'three-legged-stool'. □



and pear shaped, by the time the blisters, aches and sore pads are over it will be time to pack up and go home. Get yourself and the dog fit first and the best way is to go grouse counting or, if this is your 'thing', field trialling on grouse before the season starts. Grouse counting is brilliant training for a young dog but, as I said earlier, with the older dogs I carry a .410 and salute the departing coveys or the old devils do not take it very seriously! If game hawking make sure that there are enough dogs to keep swapping them over and to allow for lame dogs, bitches in season etc. It is extremely demanding for dogs, even in cool weather let alone a 'scorcher', and many dogs have died on the hill through being 'run into the ground' by thoughtless owners. Never pass up the opportunity to let them take a drink or even dip in any water you

disappoint young falcons with false points, points on larks etc. Do not be tempted to use a spaniel to flush the covey at 'the moment of truth' since it will make the pointers 'jealous' and consequently unsteady to the point. If properly trained to rode in on command before dropping to flush and being praised for it there should be no problem. Therefore let the pointers do their own flushing but do not be ashamed of letting youngsters trail a line so that you can





# HARRY

BY BILL TOFTS

I thought some readers might be interested in these photos. The bird is an eleven year old Harris Hawk male, flying at 11lb 7oz. On his first day free he took a moorhen, from then on he has taken a variety of quarry. He has been flown over lots of areas. One day out on a farm I use, which has hedgerows, he shot through the hedge into a marshy area. When I got there he had taken a heron by the back. Just for a moment I had visions of a Walt Disney film with the heron flying off with 'harry' on his back. I got him off with no damage to the heron.

He has taken rabbit, pheasant (hen and cock), mallard and teal all round a pond. He will chase partridge until they can make cover, then he will sit over them until they move. He will take magpies, crows, and hares, as you can see by the photographs. It has been a pleasure to own him.



*Harry taking a rest.*



*Harry on various quarry.*





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# To CHIP OR NOT To CHIP

BY COLIN FORSHAW

**S**unday the 10th of February was a bright and sunny day in my neck of the woods. There was not much wind about, so I thought it would be a good idea to take Sassy, my female Harris' Hawk, to some land I'm allowed to fly over, on the top of the North Downs. The land is a bit risky when it's windy because of its steep valley sides, but I do like to see Sassy soar off them and find her own prey.

## The Start

When we arrived, I went through the normal routine; got her out of her box, changed her jesses, etc. and walked the hundred yards or so to the field we always start in. I put her up into some trees at the top of a narrow valley where there are normally some rabbits out. Sassy soon took off down the centre of the valley and she was barely 50 feet away when some crows took off from some evergreen trees nearby. They flew towards her and began to hassle her. They were all disappearing over the tree line on the left side of the valley within 30 seconds or so. This is not normally too much of a problem as it's happened a few times before and she usually finds a tree to settle in over in the next field, but by the time I had jumped over the fence, there was no sign of Sassy or the crows. Many of you will know how I felt at this point - my heart sank. I stood out in the middle of the field and stated to call with a chick on my glove, but nothing. I walked up and down the fields calling and whistling for the rest of the afternoon, but to no avail.

As night fell, I walked back up to the landowners' house where I leave my car, feeling sad and slightly embarrassed I have to say. I told Mike, the land owner, that I had lost Sassy and asked him to look out for her.



## Phones & Posters

The next morning I was straight on the phone to Jenny and the IBR. I gave her

the relevant details, i.e where I had lost her, and the IBR ring number and identity chip number. As soon as I got off the phone I made up some posters with

**“Sassy soon took off down the centre of the valley and she was barely 50 feet away when some crows took off from some evergreen trees nearby”**



Sassy's photo and my mobile phone number on. I went and put them up on the footpaths around the land where I had lost her. The next day I made many trips out looking all over but there was no sign.

### Friends Indeed

On Monday 25th February my mobile phone rang at work. On the other end of the phone was a lady called Martina. She explained how she had helped a friend catch a large hawk on the same day I had lost Sassy, less than a mile away. She gave me the number of her friend, Melanie, who would know where the bird had gone. I phoned Melanie and she explained that she had been in the bath and heard a crash

downstairs. Thinking it was suspicious, she put on her dressing gown and went downstairs, only to see Sassy sitting outside her French windows trying to get



in. Not knowing quite what to do, she first of all called Martina and family and asked if they could come and help. In the meantime she went outside, put on a glove and tried to call Sassy to the glove, but Sassy was having none of it. Soon after Martina and her son, Elliot, arrived.

some chicken into his hand and called her. Down she came. This time when Sassy had settled Simon grabbed the jesses. They then decided to put her in the garage with some more chicken and some water. Melanie then phoned the RSPCA who turned up later that evening and took Sassy away.

### Location

Luckily for me Melanie made a few phone calls to the RSPCA in the following days and had a rough idea from them where Sassy had got to, so I decided to take the next day off work and track her down. First thing in the morning I phoned the RSPCA hotline. I explained where I had

lost her and gave them all the details that Melanie had given me. They told me that the local officer would call me back soon, but after 3 hours of waiting by the phone I called them back. They explained that some of their officers didn't come on duty



said, "Give me five minutes and I'll check to see if it is your bird." A few minutes later the call came back to tell me that it was Sassy and that I could come and pick her up. If only they had checked 2 weeks before!

### The Return

I drove down to pick her up. She was sitting in a large aviary. I spoke to her and she called back, but when I tried to get her into her box she was not interested. It took a chick and a bit of coaxing to get her in. I asked one of the staff how much they had been feeding her and she said four or five chicks a day. I knew then I had problems ahead. As soon as I got Sassy home I put her on the scales and to my horror she weighed a monstrous 2lb 11oz - 11oz over her flying weight. I could not believe she had put on so much weight in

**“As soon as I got off the phone I made up some posters with Sassy's photo and my mobile phone number on”**

Having seen flying displays, they decided to get a glove and some chicken out of the fringe. Elliot put some chicken on the glove and Sassy came straight down to him, sat and ate the chicken. However, Elliot didn't manage to grab the jesses and Sassy climbed up his arm, onto his shoulder, then took off into a nearby tree. For a while Sassy refused to come down, so Martina went back to get her husband, Simon. When they arrived back he thought he would have a go at getting Sassy down. He put on the glove, put

until 12 noon. I was not prepared to wait any longer and I called Jenny at the IBR, gave her the details and the pair of us set about finding out where Sassy had been taken. After a process of elimination we worked out where Sassy was.

### Found

I phoned up the centre and the man at the other end asked me some details. I explained she was wearing an IBR ring and that she was microchipped. "Oh!" He

two weeks, so it was straight on a diet and lots of jumping to the glove. At the time of writing, two weeks later, she still weighs 2lb 5oz and is not being very responsive! But, at the end of the day, I should be thankful that I got her back at all, and at this point I would like to thank Melanie, Martina, Simon and their son Elliot, Jenny at the IBR and everybody else who aided in her return.

□





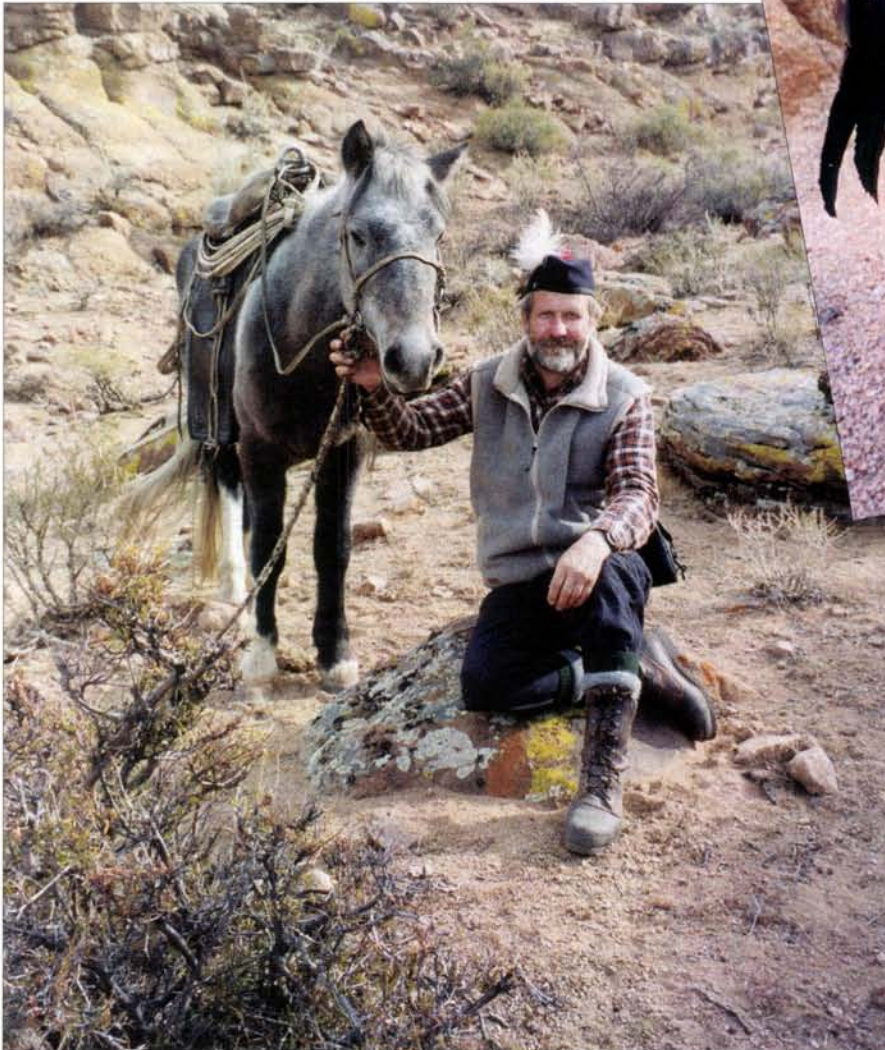
# THE HUNT

ALAN GATES

**S**uddenly, I felt totally and utterly alone. Perched on the surface of an enormous pink granite boulder the soles of my Lundhags gave confidence as I hunkered down on my heels.

From my lofty view point high up the mountain a large vista of barren rock and dust lay out before me. As I scanned the rocks and cracks for any movement I felt as though my head was wrapped in cotton wool. Not a sound, not a whisper of wind, not a leaf or blade of grass to rustle, nothing, absolutely not a living organism could I see.

*My faithful steed!*

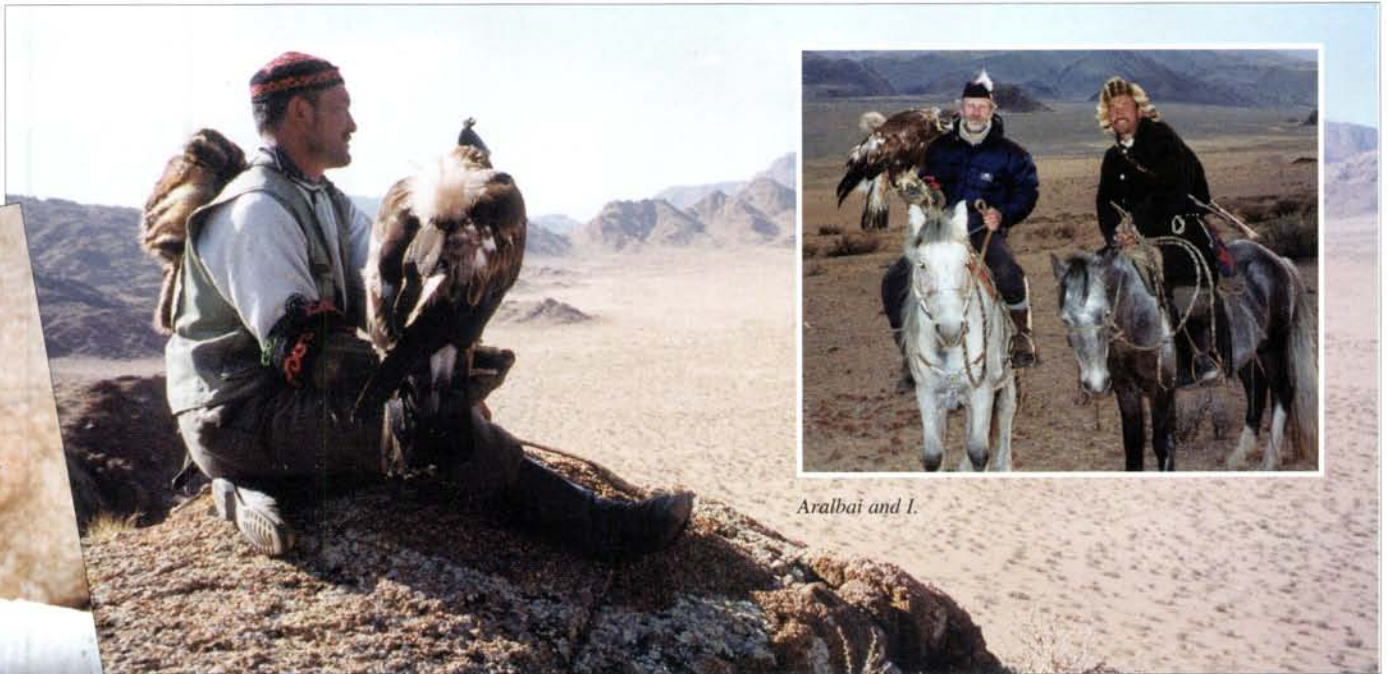


*Aralbai.*



**One large leg stretched out, she clenched her foot and slowly withdrew it into her body feathers, at the same time shifting her body weight over the knuckles of my right hand.**





Aralbai and I.

*Aralbai.*

As the minutes ticked by, the desolation enveloped me, I hoped my companions remembered where I had been left. Of course they would. Already they had shown they knew every rock, every crevice, every canyon, and their sense of direction in this hard landscape was perfection, I was totally in awe. Still, I felt alone.

She roused her

feathers and nearly shook me off my perch, I lied, I was not entirely alone. One large leg stretched out, she clenched her foot and slowly withdrew it into her body feathers, at the same time shifting her body weight over the knuckles of my right hand.

My arm was engulfed in a large leather mitten called a Bijalai and I held her Ayakbau, jesses, between thumb and palm. Her weight was supported on my knee as I squatted on my heels. She was a magnificent Mongolian Burkut, waiting patiently, hooded on my right arm for the action to begin.

I had been left in charge of the vital

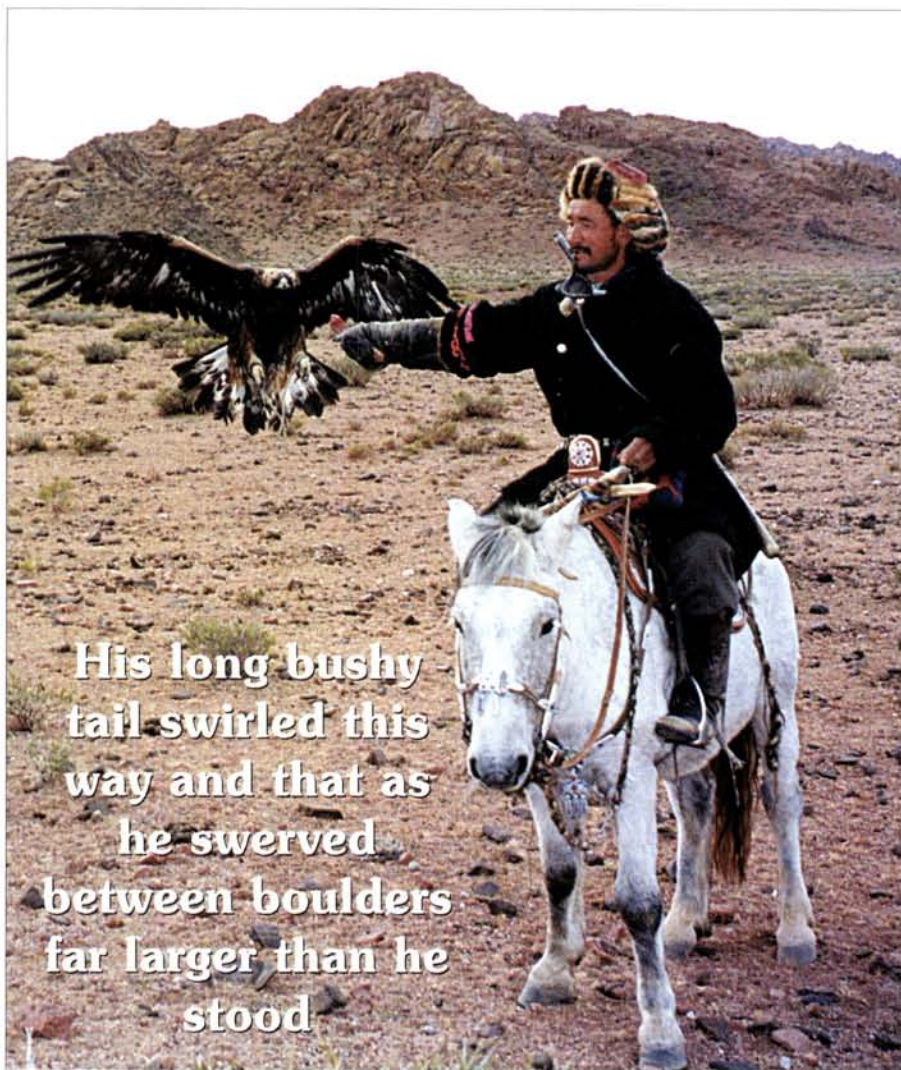
element of the unfolding operation, Aralbai had withdrawn his arm from the Bijalai and laid it on the rock with his eagle still perched on it like it was a large branch. Through sign language he indicated that I should slip my arm into this large hollow tube, wait here with her for the flush, but only to slip her if our quarry bolted clear of the rocks.

In this harsh rugged landscape an eagle binding to quarry at high speed in confined rocky cover can easily break a wing or graze a foot off. With my instructions understood, he and the scareboys melted into the rockscape, their intention was to circumnavigate the

*Aralbais Ger.*







**His long bushy tail swirled this way and that as he swerved between boulders far larger than he stood**

*To the fist.*

constantly scanning the vast area my eyes began playing tricks, was that movement, is that shape alive or just a shadow? My left hand became twitchy, itching to strike the hood at the slightest imagined movement.

Sound, at last my ears were working again. I heard the occasional crash of tumbling rocks as the approaching scareboys launched boulders over precipices. An echoing sound as the rocks exploded on impact, scattering debris for dozens of yards. Voices could now be heard as they growled and shouted to spook their quarry, its direction was to my right, they had managed to circle the mountain.

As if it had popped out of the solid rock, right in front and below me was a fox. His black coal eyes bore straight at me as I struck the hood from the Burkut. At an instant she saw him and launched forward, wings closed to her body she pushed off my arm and out into the air. With her wing butts slightly protruding she dropped towards the now feeling fox, hell she was going fast.

His long bushy tail swirled this way and that as he swerved between boulders far larger than he stood. As the Burkut burned right up his tail, I could see her large feet swing forward as she covered the last twenty yards before impact. The fox was kicking up dust as his back legs powered him down a tight channel in a flat rock shelf. The Burkut, to my relief pulled out of the dive, she lifted about twenty feet above the channel peering down looking for the fox to emerge, when he didn't she peeled back and landed.

Aralbai appeared and I excitedly relived the flight enthusiastically animating as much as I could without jumping off the cliff myself. He got the gist, and threw his arms around me and patted my back. I felt he was pleased that the strenuous effort he and his friends had put in to flush a fox in this enormously difficult country had made their guest so ecstatically happy. The fox evaded our efforts, maybe he would play our game another day either way the flight was etched deep into my memory.

My dappled grey horse was still patiently waiting where I had dropped her reins, I climbed into the saddle and wound my way down the mountainside. We regrouped and proceeded to the next mountain, once again to try and extract a fox from solid rock. □

mountain, lobbing rocks into likely crevices in the hope of disturbing our quarry, the fox.

In this part of western Mongolia the red fox was particularly attractive, I was completely captivated by them. In the dry cold climate they grew a long bushy coat of golden red which blended with the pink granite rock and gave them a magical illusion of sudden appearance.

Fleet footed they float

across the hard terrain and present a tough and agile adversary for a trained Burkut. In a good

season an experienced Burkut could catch fifteen or twenty foxes, I hoped today we might catch one of them, but above all I hoped she would not harm herself on those jagged rocks below me.

The concentration was draining,



*Waiting for the flush.*



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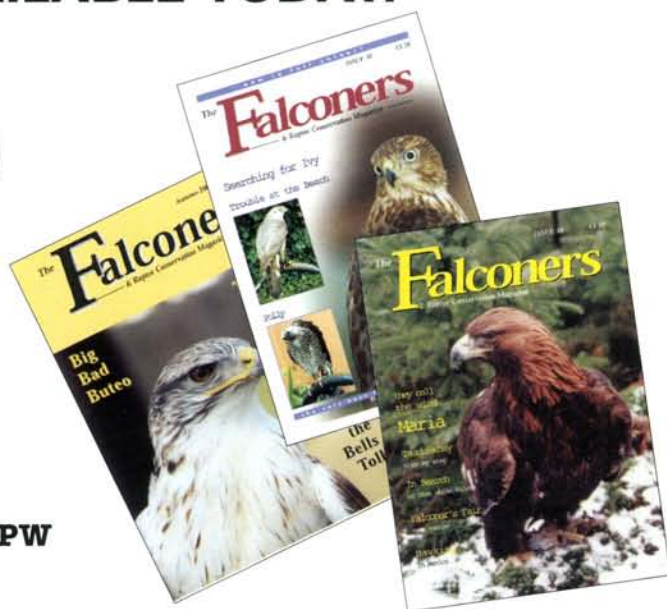
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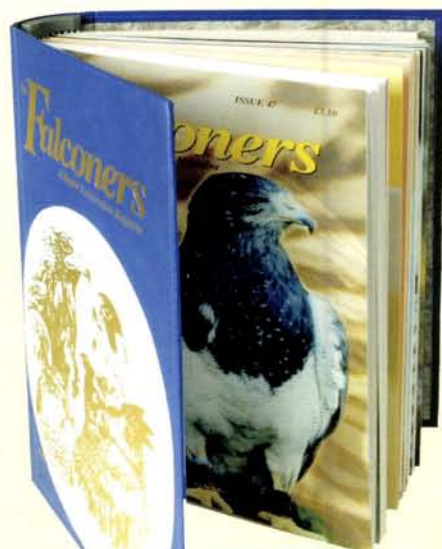
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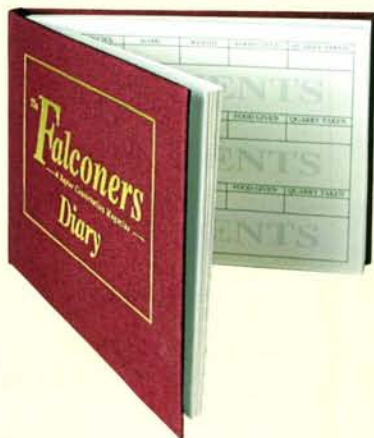
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# RABBIT HOT POT

## WITH CHORIZO SAUSAGE AND THYME

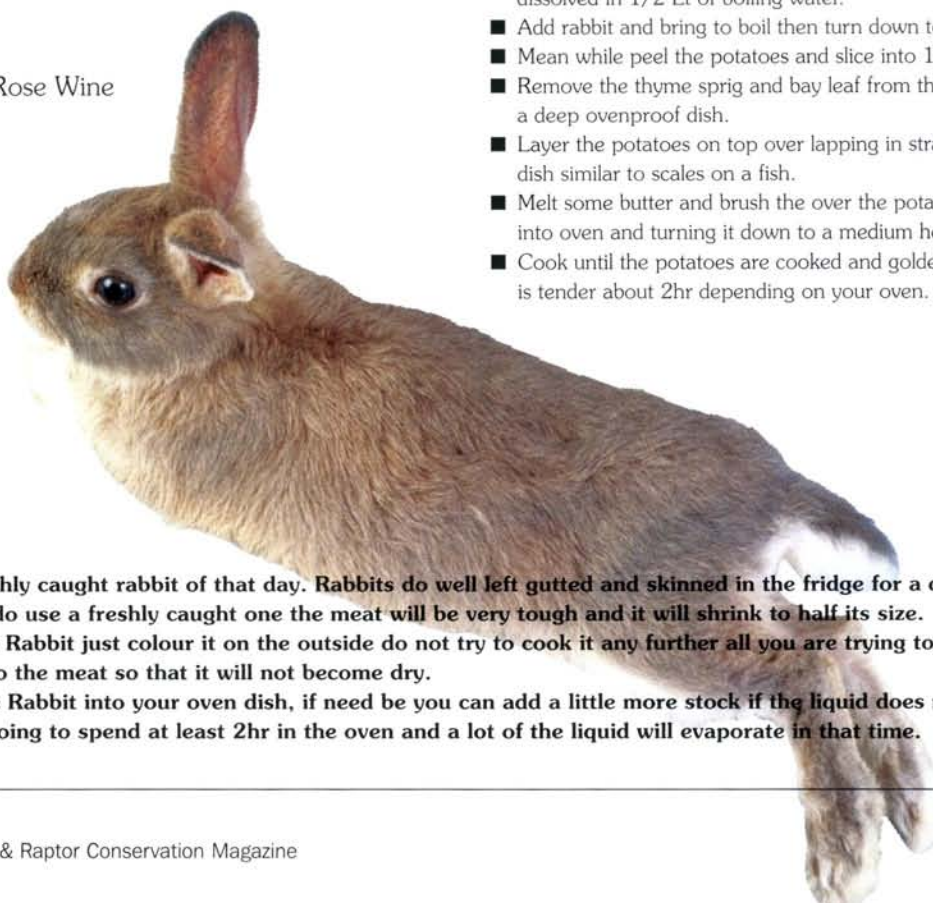
BY JOSE SOUTO

This is a dish I made up after a day out and was the perfect warm finish to cold day hunting. You can get Chorizo from any supermarket now a days, it is a Paprika flavoured pork sausage from Spain that can be eaten as it is like Salami or can be used as part of a dish. The nice thing about Chorizo is that when you cook with it releases Paprika flavoured oils in to the food you are cooking and gives it that very slightly spicy flavour. The union of Rabbit and Thyme was made in heaven and in most of the countries around the Mediterranean Rabbits feed on wild Thyme. They naturally have a distinct Thyme flavour our Rabbits feed largely on grass and do not have such a flavour. Add tomatoes, garlic, a few potatoes and you have a real winter warmer. The only other thing that would top it all off is a nice glass of Rose wine to go with it.

**This recipe is for 4 people and you will need the following: -**

### Ingredients:

- 2 Rabbits skinned and jointed
- 500g Chorizo Sausage
- 1 Spanish Onion
- 2 Cloves of Garlic
- 2 Tins of Chopped Tomatoes
- 1 Chicken Stock Cube
- 1 Good Sprig of Thyme
- 1 Bay Leaf
- 3 or 4 Potatoes
- 1 Glass White or Rose Wine
- Olive Oil
- Salt / Pepper
- Butter



### Step by step cooking instructions:

- Pre Heat oven on full.
- Finely chop the onion and the garlic
- The Chorizo will have a skin on the outside which needs to be removed. Once you have done this cut the sausage into slices about 1cm thick.
- Pull the Thyme leaves off the sprig of thyme.
- Add some olive oil to a large pan and allow to become smoking hot, then seal off all the Rabbit so that it looks cooked on the outside. Remove from pan and leave to one side.
- Add a little more oil to pan and turn the flame down.
- Sweat the onions and garlic off for about 1 min then add the Chorizo, Thyme leaves, Thyme stork and Bay leaf. Cook for another 3 min. This is when you will see the paprika oils come out of the sausage. Add the wine and allow to reduce by half.
- Once wine has reduced add the tomatoes and the stock cube dissolved in 1/2 Lt of boiling water.
- Add rabbit and bring to boil then turn down to simmer.
- Mean while peel the potatoes and slice into 1/2 cm thick slices.
- Remove the thyme sprig and bay leaf from the rabbit then place into a deep ovenproof dish.
- Layer the potatoes on top over lapping in straight lines across the dish similar to scales on a fish.
- Melt some butter and brush the over the potatoes before placing dish into oven and turning it down to a medium heat.
- Cook until the potatoes are cooked and golden brown and the rabbit is tender about 2hr depending on your oven.



### Tips:

- Do not use a freshly caught rabbit of that day. Rabbits do well left gutted and skinned in the fridge for a day or two to relax the meat. If you do use a freshly caught one the meat will be very tough and it will shrink to half its size.
- When sealing the Rabbit just colour it on the outside do not try to cook it any further all you are trying to do is to seal some of the flavour into the meat so that it will not become dry.
- When placing the Rabbit into your oven dish, if need be you can add a little more stock if the liquid does not cover the rabbit. Remember it is going to spend at least 2hr in the oven and a lot of the liquid will evaporate in that time.





# YOUR LETTERS

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**Dear Lyn and David,**

At the risk of boring both yourselves and your readers, I have a two-part letter!

I refer to your Product Reviews page in the last magazine. (Issue 48)

I was somewhat surprised to see that the 'bunny blanket' was not accompanied by a matching pillow. Although I have to admit that the rabbit in question did look quite cosy, would it not have been nice to go the whole hog? (did I notice the outline of a hot water bottle underneath the blanket – top left?).

In the case of the quarry spike, I find that by stretching and dispatching the quarry to a point of complete 'deadness' it rarely runs away and needs 'securing'! Nonetheless, this could be a useful tool.

The hood case looks very nice but I'll bet there are very few falconers who pay £10 for a beautifully crafted hood oh, I wish.

Seriously though, you tell us of the products but fail to inform us of where two of them are available – go on, be a devil,

even though it will inevitably give more business to my competitors.

The second part to this letter refers to the article titled Flymore (leather versus plastic) My first thought was that this article was written for falconers with a particular fetish, but then I read on.

Leather versus plastic - is this in fact the point in question at all? Does it truly make any difference what your flying jesses are made of? I am all in favour of moving forward in the production of falconry equipment, wherever the outcome will have a beneficial effect upon the safety, security or health of our birds, but it seems to me that the problem experienced by Graham may well have been a problem of length. (Oi you lot, keep it clean). A jess that is too long will, one day, inevitably whip around a small branch and leave your bird hanging upside down and looking more like a feather handbag. Surely a jess of the correct length, whatever material, will be unable to do so.

I have had customers over the years asking for all manner of daft things. A

twelve-foot leash, so that their beloved can break its legs in the comfort of their back garden, whilst getting a degree of exercise in trying ever to stand up again, is just one example. The most frequently asked question is 'can I have those jesses a bit longer'. The answer to both questions is 'No'. Why, oh why do some falconers think it necessary to have a twelve inch jess, this is an accident waiting to happen and it will! A flying jess needs to be long enough to hold and nothing more, six inches is more than sufficient (stop it lads!) and should, in all but the most exceptional, fluke cases, do the trick.

No slits, no holes punched and no excess length is, I believe, the answer. What they are made of seems to me to be unimportant.

This letter is in no way a criticism of Graham, his ability as a falconer or his innovative ideas, it is simply my observation and maybe food for thought?

**Kind regards,  
Brian Smith (Westweald Falconry)**

**Dear Lyn and David,**

I would like to congratulate Malcolm Allison on a first-class, thought-provoking article; Falconry - Modern Improvements! (Issue 45). whilst I agree with much of the content and I defer to Mr Allison's undoubted experience and knowledge I feel that someone, albeit somewhat naively, has to defend the oft-denigrated Harris' Hawk.

Mr Allison considers the HH to fall into the category of 'dubious improvements' and whilst I can see the point of this argument he is, I fear, hoist by his own petard! The Harris' will indeed return at a forgiving range of weights and this appears to simplify the weight control. Paradoxically however, this is where it can get more difficult due to this broad range of response, pinpointing the hunting weight is an extremely trying matter. With a Redtail or a Goshawk you seem to be able to drop the weight until it responds then drop a tad more and it will hunt - alright I know it's not that simple but finding hunting weight with my Harris' is like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack! I have a first class honours degree in engineering but nothing I was taught at University could prepare me for the frustrations and exacerbations of training a HH to catch furry animals! Yes I know nobody said it was going to be easy but therein lies the attraction - it would soon become a chore if everything always went swimmingly.

What a wonderful creature the HH really is, it is full of guile, cunning, skill and stamina, brave to the bitter end and virtually bomb-proof. Due to my work, and I'm sure I speak for many others, I cannot stand around for hours waiting for my bird to decide it wants to come back. The Harris' is generally totally reliable - it can eat a horse and will still return (alright it won't catch Horses!) Surely these traits cannot be seen as faults? I fear that in the sometimes snobby world of falconry there are those who see the HH as the poor persons bird, the bird for the masses. How many times have read that if you can only fly at the weekends, take up golf etcetera - I'm sorry but some of us have to work and my bird and I do very well thank you. (If he could speak he'd probably say he's as miserable as sin!).

One thing I'm pretty sure of and I think is really the gist of Mr Allison's comments is simply that the fault is nearly always with the Harris' Hawk not with the Harris' Hawks. Perhaps one day I'll join the denigrators and never again let a Harris' darken my glove. But if I do move on I then for one will remember the lessons the Harris' gave me. More power to Mr Allison's elbow!

Yours faithfully  
**Richard Stout.  
Lanes**



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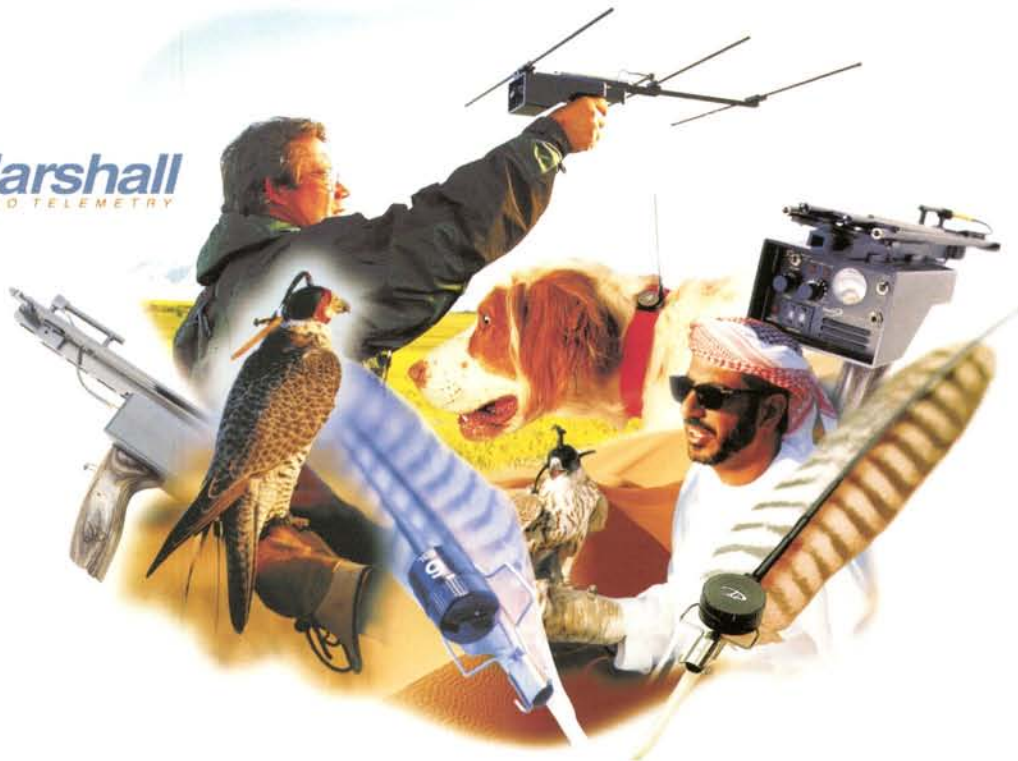
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