

The **Falcons**  
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

ISSUE 51

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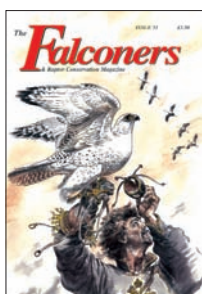
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Hello All,

Another season is already upon us. Time goes far too quickly. I think that falconers years maybe seem to go even quicker than most, marked as they are by the hunting season and the moult. Falling leaves and temperatures are noted, complained about and forgotten by most people but for falconers' they are long awaited and looked forward to.

By now your birds should all be in full swing, and on days like today, when the sun is shining falconry is an absolute joy. Let's hope no-one tries to deprive us of it. Let us also hope that the presence of over 400,000 people in London on 22nd September will convince the powers that be that we are serious about our cause.

So in the meantime, have a fabulous season, and a wonderful Christmas.

Keep Falconry Safe.

Lyn and David



The front cover picture and the two illustrated here are by a Russian artist called **Vadim Gorbatov**. I think they are very impressive and like nothing we see in this country. If any readers are interested in obtaining prints of these and other pictures by this artist please contact **Martin Hollinshead on: 01902 561075**

Next issue on sale  
February 1st 2003

# News & Products

## Sparrows and starlings disappearing from town gardens in the south east

Urban gardens in the South East are becoming increasingly poor environments for two of Britain's most common birds, the house sparrow and starling, a DEFRA-funded research report has been published, which makes interesting revelations.

The survey by a British Trust for Ornithology-led consortium found that during the last 30 years, house sparrow populations have declined most in South East England, and suburban and urban gardens have seen the most marked fall. In a remarkable contrast, the species is thriving in parts of Scotland and Wales both in urban and rural areas.

Starling numbers have declined in both suburban areas and the countryside. The decline has been greatest in the South and West. Starling breeding patterns have shown a recent improvement, but this is least in urban gardens in the South East.

DEFRA is already taking action to reverse the declines in farmland bird species, which include the starling. Agri-environment schemes, which are currently being reviewed, provide significant funding for promoting environmentally sustainable farming practices; more than £1 billion has been made available for the seven-year period 2000 to 2007. The Department will be looking closely at all recommendations in the report.

DEFRA commissioned the project in response to evidence of the rapid decline of starlings and house sparrows. The aim is to investigate trends in populations, breeding patterns and survival in relation to environmental factors and pest control measures taken by landowners and local authorities.

The main findings for house sparrows were:

- The British breeding population has fallen from 12 million pairs to fewer than seven million.
- 60 per cent are found in rural and urban gardens.
- They have declined most in South East England, but numbers are generally increasing in Scotland and Wales.

- Their favoured habitat is the country garden.
- The least favoured, with lowest population densities, is arable farmland.
- Breeding has been increasingly successful in all regions during the past 40 years and is most successful on farmland.
- Breeding has been least successful in the South East and most successful in the North West.
- Despite improved breeding patterns, the population continues to fall, probably due to a decline in survival rates and the poorer breeding performance in suburban habitats.
- The effect of culling on the population is believed to be negligible, accounting for 0.1 per cent each year.

The main findings for starlings were:

- The British breeding population for starlings is approximately 8.5 million birds.
- 30 per cent are found on farmland and 57 per cent in urban and rural gardens.
- The sharpest decline in the starling population has been observed in woodland areas (92 per cent), but it is recognised that this is a poor habitat for the species.
- Declines on farmland average at 66 per cent and are particularly associated with livestock farming.
- Breeding performance has increased, but not as much in urban gardens in the South East as in other areas.
- Changes to farming, especially in livestock areas, are likely to have contributed to the decline.
- A major cause of decline is the reduction of young birds surviving their first year, which may be related to diminishing food supplies during the autumn.
- Agri-environment schemes, which include managed pockets of grassland habitat in arable areas, may help to arrest the decline.
- Starlings are beginning to breed

more profusely, but progress has not been as great in urban gardens in the South East as elsewhere.

- Starlings have declined by two thirds on farmland during the past 30 years as modern farming practices have made it increasingly difficult for them to find food, such as leatherjackets (larvae of crane-flies).
- The effect of culling on the population, accounting for about 0.8 per cent each year, is considered negligible.

The report has identified actions that should be undertaken to reverse the declines and to help further identify habitat trends, suggestions for further research includes:

- Investigating the relative importance of factors causing sparrow deaths in rural, urban and suburban habitats, including predators, food availability, air quality, pollution and disease transmission.
- Ringing of starlings to determine movement between habitats, particularly of first year birds and winter movements in this country by British birds and winter immigrants from continental Europe.

Environment Minister Michael Meacher said: "This important piece of research has highlighted the factors that most affect starling and house sparrows. But it has revealed a remarkable regional divide; in some areas, particularly parts of Scotland and Wales, sparrows are actually doing very well.

"We have long suspected, and the research confirms, that the decline of starlings is closely related to changes in agricultural practice, such as the increased use of pesticides and the loss of pasture and unimproved grassland that has reduced food sources available to birds. The Department will continue to encourage the return of the starling through agri-environment schemes, such as the Countryside Stewardship scheme, which aims to maintain and restore habitats.

The report's lead editor, Dr Humphrey Crick of the British Trust for Ornithology said: "It is clear that house sparrows and starlings are finding it harder to make a living and we may have lost 15 million birds in the last 25 years. We know that there is less food in the countryside for birds, with more efficient farming systems, but the scale of the declines of these two species in towns, which are particularly important habitats for them, is very unexpected."

## Excellent film opportunity: Spectacular sky diving red kite feeding frenzies

Research at Forest Enterprise Wales' Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre near Aberystwyth indicates that locally-bred red kite chicks have wised up to the centre as a 'drop in' café for takeways!

However, the discovery has been heralded as a great success by conservationists at the Welsh Kite Trust, who are delighted that the birds are spreading elsewhere and nesting in other parts of Wales.

The long-term research project indicates that the birds see the feeding centres as safe havens but that they are not allowing themselves to become dependent on an individual site.

In recent years, red kite feeding centres have played a key role in helping rebuild the birds' population in Wales. The feeding helps inexperienced juvenile kites survive their first crucial year of life and also supplements food available to adults during the breeding season.

Observations by the Welsh Kite Trust at FE Wales' Nant yr Arian Centre and others in Mid Wales show that red kites born near a feeding centre do not seem



to feel obliged to nest near the site where they were born. Migration to other centres and 'centre swapping' of feeding sites also helps improve the genetic mix and is an early indicator that Wales's new crop of kites - often considered 'home birds' - are now travelling further distances than expected.

## PORTABLE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE AGAINST CRIME IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

A potential boon for anyone being affected by livestock theft or vandalism, the Predator Alarm, is a tough new portable system that is as easy to use as an electric fence.

The Predator Alarm will stand alone, without the need for mains electricity, giving you the advantage of being able to site it anywhere. A perimeter loop, which looks like galvanised wire, blends in well with stock fencing or barbed wire. It can surround paddocks, yards or prewired buildings and be used to anchor valuable equipment. When tripped, you can be alerted to the problem in a variety of ways, such as 115 Decibel Sounder, Flashing Beacon, Horn or silently straight to your mobile phone.

This particular alarm system is useful in situations where animals are present, which may otherwise set off movement-based alarms. However, the Predator is flexible enough to be triggered by other sensors where required, such as an external infra-red point to point beam, a passive infra-red, trip wires, or indeed anything that will break a circuit.

The Predator Alarm is very versatile and the Company is happy to advise on other applications that may solve your particular problem, such as being alerted to changes in water levels in trout ponds or rivers. For more information see:

**[www.predator-alarms.com](http://www.predator-alarms.com) or telephone: 01626 853535.**



## Defra launches consultation on bird registration review

DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly Government have launched a joint consultation on the review of the Bird Registration system.

This review will seek to reduce the burden of regulations on those who keep birds, particularly birds of prey, whilst ensuring that populations of the UK's wild birds are sustained and endangered species are protected.

At present, any bird of a species listed in Schedule 4 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 must be registered with DEFRA and fitted with a ring supplied by the department. This consultation looks for views on whether this system is the most effective way to protect our birds now and in the future.

Provision was made in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to support the conservation of native wild birds by requiring those holding certain species in captivity to declare them and register them with the department.

The legislation was based on data collected in the late 1970s, when many populations of birds of prey had declined due to the impact of certain pesticides. It was considered that taking birds into captivity for falconry or other purposes could have had a serious effect on the continued survival of the species in the wild.

However, during the last two decades, some of these species have recovered and the legislation needs to be reviewed to take into account current environmental circumstances.

About 6,500 birds are registered with DEFRA. This consultation will ask for views on a range of options available for reviewing bird registration. The kind of issues that people are being asked to consider are whether a registration scheme should include non-indigenous species, whether hybrid specimens should still be included and possible alternatives to the current system.

Neither DEFRA nor the Welsh Assembly Government is recommending a preferred outcome to the consultation, and a wide range of views is anticipated.

## Birds of prey are the subject of a set of ten stamps

Birds of Prey are the subject of a set of ten stamps to be issued by Royal Mail on 14 January 2003. Two birds are featured; nocturnal hunter the barn owl and the kestrel, a common sight searching for prey along side Britain's motorways.

Using a high speed multi-flash camera technique, renowned nature photographer Stephen Dalton has captured each of these magnificent birds across a sequence of five stamps as they take to the air.



The stamps will be available from Post Office branches, Royal Mail orderline 08457 641 641

or on-line at [www.royalmail.com](http://www.royalmail.com), as books of ten stamps for £2.70 or presentation packs

for £3.05. First day cover envelopes and postcards will also be available.

## Kite and balloon competition makes a debut in the UK

Have you ever flown a falcon to a kite or balloon? Have you ever watched one of these exciting competitions? You can now, thanks to the English School of Falconry who are based in Bedfordshire. Phil Gooden and his team have recognised the need for a competition to take place in the UK. Phil says, "flying your falcon to a kite or balloon is an excellent way of training your bird and increasing its fitness. Taking part in a competition against your fellow falconers to see who can take the equipment to the highest level has been in place across Europe for a number of years.

Unfortunately not all falconers from the UK are able to take part in these competitions as travel and time can be costly. The team here at the ESF felt it was time that all falconers in the UK no matter how experienced, should have the opportunity of taking part in their own competition.

The competition is being held at the bird of prey centre owned and run by Phil in Old Warden, Beds on Sunday 17th November. All falconers are invited to take part, the only criteria is that you have been exercising you falcon to a kite or balloon so that the bird will realistically be able to fly to the equipment. No live aids will be allowed. There are two classes, eyass, red and falcon blue. An overall winner will be selected, judged by an independent team of falconers and a prize of £100 of falconry equipment will be awarded. Entry for both those taking part and anyone wishing to come along and watch will be just £6.00 for an adult and £4.00 for a child, this is the normal entry fee for the centre, no additional charge is being made for the competition.

Dave Bishop, senior falconer and one of those who came up with the idea says, "As a team we take our sport very seriously. We take any opportunity we can to enhance falconry and to let others know about the sport. It is important to us that our peers and colleagues have the chance of getting together to share ideas, to display their birds and to enjoy meeting up with old friends. It is our aim to make this an annual event that eventually will be recognised on the international circuit. We can only do this if we have the support of other falconers, we need as many taking part who can possibly make it.

The bird of prey centre has been open to the public for eighteen months. Phil has built up a large variety of birds over the years and the collection houses over 200 species. Phil supports and promotes falconry and the countryside whenever he gets the chance and this is borne out by the new initiatives that have been run at the centre this year. Key amongst these are the Town meets Country event and the Young Falconers Club, both of which have gained national recognition.

To take part in the Kite and Balloon competition, please contact the English School of Falconry, Old Warden Park, Nr Biggleswade. Beds. SG18 9EA.

Tel: 01767 627527. Fax: 01767 627752.

Email: [falconry.centre@virgin.net](mailto:falconry.centre@virgin.net)

Observers need not register, just turn up on the day.



## Red Kite chicks 'dropping in' and spreading their wings

This year's young are to be seen visiting Mid Wales feeding sites after leaving their nests in July. During June the Welsh Kite Trust wing-tagged over 100 young kites in nests throughout Wales to improve individual identification from a distance, and assess where the birds settle down.

FE Wales Conservation Manager for the Coed y Mynydd Forest District,

Wendy Joss, said: "We are really pleased about the diversity of red kites appearing at Nant Yr Arian. Biodiversity and conservation are key issues for FE Wales and our role is to provide a secure feeding site, with daily feeding all year round.

"We are delighted to support the Red Kite population and educate local visitors about conservation issues. Wildlife observation

also plays an important role in rural tourism and every year we are seeing an ever increasing number of visitors."

Forest Enterprise's Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre is open all year round for woodland walks, picnics by lakes and ponds as well as displays in its information centre. This year a new mountain bike route was launched although the centre

is best known for the bird of prey that has become the symbol of Mid Wales, the Red Kite. Spectacular sky diving Red Kite feeding frenzies are featured every day at 3pm.

Forest Enterprise's Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre is located on the A44 between Goginan and Ponterwyd, just 9 miles east of Aberystwyth. Admission is completely free but there is small car-parking charge of £1.

## ONE MAN EXHIBITION OF WILDLIFE PAINTINGS by Mark Chester

Wildlife Artist, Mark Chester, will be holding his annual one-man exhibition of paintings on Sunday 24th November 2002, at the Watermill Hotel, London Road, Bourne End, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. from 2-5pm.

The exhibition will feature original paintings with subjects ranging from big cats to gamebirds, owls to garden birds. There will also be pencil drawings, a new range of limited edition prints and open edition prints and cards. Examples of Mark's paintings can be seen on his website [www.markchester.co.uk](http://www.markchester.co.uk)

Much of the work shown will be drawn from Mark's many trips to India, Africa, America and Europe.

This year's exhibition is supporting the local Wildlife Trust.



## HAWK & OWL TRUST

### UK Charity Joins International Fight to end Raptor Slaughter.

UK conservation charity the Hawk & Owl Trust has joined forces with other European groups to stop the annual slaughter of migrating raptors in the central Mediterranean.

Over 25,000 birds of prey migrate between Africa and Europe each year by taking a route across Sicily and Calabria in spring and returning south via Calabria and Malta in the Autumn.

These are narrow winged raptors such as honey-buzzards, ospreys, harriers, and hobbies that can fly over large tracts of sea by 'island-hopping'. They are especially vulnerable when they arrive at

land exhausted and this is when they are brutally gunned down in their hundreds, perhaps thousands. This level of persecution overwhelms the intense efforts to conserve individual pairs of the birds further north.

Now the Hawk & Owl Trust, which works to conserve wild birds of prey, has become the UK partner in Migration Unlimited, a project to protect these migratory routes for birds of prey and storks.

"By committing ourselves to this project, the Hawk & Owl Trust is providing a UK base for fundraising and

helping to organise the fight back" said Hawk & Owl Trust Development Director, Dr Rob Davies. "We will use the money raised to support the international protection camps where volunteers from Britain, Germany and Scandinavia join Italians and Maltese birders to count, identify and monitor the migratory birds and report illegal hunters to the police.

"Funds are also needed for rehabilitating injured birds and for education - in schools and among local people generally - to continue the campaign to change attitudes. Ultimately we would like to establish field observatories where raptors concentrate in great numbers. This would enable tourists to enjoy a magnificent natural spectacle and learn more about birds of prey."

Migration Unlimited UK Project Manager, Stefania Davani explained, "Although a number of British individuals have joined Migration Unlimited, until now we have lacked an organisation to act as an official UK contact for our international partnership. The Hawk & Owl Trust has changed that." Now based in Watford, Stefania has been fighting for these migratory birds for the last 11 years.

Donations payable to the Hawk & Owl Trust, should be sent to:

**The Hawk & Owl Trust  
(Migration Unlimited),  
11 St Mary's Close,  
Abbotskerswell,  
Newton Abbot,  
TQ12 5QF.**

# March Montage

*Perhaps over 400,000 will convince them we're serious*

# Vigil



A 24-hour vigil was held by six falconers who are members of The Welsh Hawking Club on July 29th to protest against the hunting with dogs bill as this will affect us falconers.



It was a hard days night for Bryan Paterson, David Horobin, Mark Hinge, Terry Large, Paul Dillion and Dave Jones.

The support we had from Londerns and international visitors was great but the traffic fumes nearly killed us country folk.

A big thank you was given

to Anne Beckett-Bradshaw, secretary for The Campaign for Falconry and her husband, Mick, for the food and refreshments brought through the day and helped us through the night.

Ten petition sheets were filled and handed in to Tony Blair at No. 10.

## MAKE A DATE WITH A FERRET

Ferret's UK has created the first ever British calendar to feature ferrets.

Combining the 'Best of British' - in terms of print quality, sense of humour and love of all things furry makes this calendar a very special gift for all country and animal lovers.

The calendars are in full colour, A3, and each page features a ferret in an amusing situation. Every ferret image is, as you might expect, biting sharp.

Although not available in shops The Great British

Ferret Calendar already looks set to be a best seller - orders have already been received from throughout the UK and overseas.

Calendars are £10.99 inc p&p and are available direct from Ferrets UK. 01908 566366 or from our online store [www.ferretsUK.com](http://www.ferretsUK.com)



# Independent Bird Register.

## LIST OF LOST, FOUND, REUNITED AND STOLEN BIRDS FROM THE IBR. BETWEEN 10 JULY AND 17 OCTOBER 2002.

### STOLEN x 13

AMERICAN BARN OWL  
0392BC02U/IBR20463U  
BARN OWL BC1102U  
BARN OWL 2266BC99U  
BARN OWL 2265BC99U  
BARN OWL 4949BC95W  
BARN OWL UNRUNG  
BARN OWL UNRUNG  
BARN OWL IBR18929U  
BARN OWL 0186BC00U  
BARN OWL 0185BC00U  
KESTREL UNRUNG  
KESTREL UNRUNG  
RED-TAILED HAWK UNRUNG

### REUNITED x 111

BARN OWL x 7  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
COMMON BUZZARD  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 2  
FERRUGINOUS HAWK x 2  
GOSHAWK x 2  
GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID x 3  
GYR/PRAIRIE FALCON x 2  
GYR/SAKER FALCON x 10  
HARRIS HAWK x 18  
HOODED VULTURE  
KESTREL x 6  
LANNER FALCON x 9  
LANNER/SAKER FALCON  
MERLIN x 2  
PEREGRINE FALCON x 8  
PEREGRINE HYBRID x 10  
RED-TAILED HAWK x 5  
SAKER FALCON x 16  
SPARROWHAWK x 4  
OTHER

### LOST x 131

AFRICAN PEREGRINE FALCON  
AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL  
BALD EAGLE  
BARBARY FALCON x 2  
BARN OWL x 13  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
COMMON BUZZARD x 2  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 2

FERRUGINOUS HAWK  
GOSHAWK x 2  
GYR BARBARY HYBRID x 2  
GYR/PEREGRINE FALCON x 6  
GYR/SAKER FALCON x 5  
HARRIS HAWK x 33  
KESTREL x 4  
LANNER FALCON x 6  
LUGGER FALCON  
MERLIN  
PEREGRINE FALCON x 7  
PEREGRINE HYBRID x 6  
PERLIN  
RED-TAILED HAWK x 2  
SAKER FALCON x 10  
SPARROWHAWK x 3  
TAWNY OWL x 2  
OTHERS x 16

### FOUND x 81

AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL  
UNRUNG  
AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL  
66xxR95Y  
BARN OWL x 17  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL 15xxK99Y  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL 01xxC00X  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL ISxx0Y  
COMMON BUZZARD 49xx  
COMMON BUZZARD UNRUNG  
COMMON BUZZARD 14xxW  
COMMON BUZZARD UNRUNG  
COMMON BUZZARD IBxx9097W  
COMMON BUZZARD UKxx207  
COMMON BUZZARD 4Jxx96W  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL 05xxC01Z  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL UNRUNG  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL 56xx7Z  
FERRUGINOUS HAWK UNRUNG  
GOSHAWK IBxx5211V  
GOSHAWK 06xx2V  
HARRIS HAWK YES  
HARRIS HAWK PURPLE  
HARRIS HAWK 13xxC  
HARRIS HAWK 50xxBN  
HARRIS HAWK 20xxW  
HARRIS HAWK IBxx2959W  
HARRIS HAWK HBxx44

HARRIS HAWK IBxx3521W  
HARRIS HAWK IBxx8360V  
HARRIS HAWK 22xx5W  
HARRIS HAWK 21xxB01V  
KESTREL 4Exx82S  
KESTREL UNRUNG  
KESTREL UNRUNG  
KESTREL IBxx1175S  
KESTREL 50xx  
KESTREL 10xx02S  
KESTREL 9RRxxS  
KESTREL NO RINGS  
KESTREL 50x  
LANNER FALCON 3Jxx02W  
LANNER FALCON IBxx171V  
LANNER FALCON 2Rxx96W  
LITTLE OWL UNRUNG  
LONG-EARED OWL UNRUNG  
PEREGRINE/PRAIRIE HYBRID IBxx583V  
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID 12xx5  
RED-TAILED HAWK 2ATWY  
RED-TAILED HAWK 00xx6X  
SPARROWHAWK IBxx897P  
SPARROWHAWK IBxx5020R  
TAWNY OWL 64xxBC96U  
PARROTS ETC x 14

### DEAD x 55

BARN OWL x 16  
BOOBOOK OWL  
COMMON BUZZARD  
FERRUGINOUS HAWK  
GYR HYBRID x 5  
HARRIS HAWK x 6  
HOBBY  
KESTREL x 8  
KOOKABURRA  
PEREGRINE FALCON x 2  
PEREGRINE HYBRID x 2  
RED-TAILED HAWK  
SAKER FALCON x 6  
SPARROWHAWK  
UNKNOWN BOP x 3

If you recognise any of these found  
birds or you have one of the lost ones  
please ring the IBR on 0870 6088500

Independent Bird Register

<http://www.ibr.org.uk>

44 (0)870 60 88 500



# Two in One

John Snelling

**W**ell there I was eagerly awaiting one of my 7 Sparrowhawk eggs to hatch and I waited and waited. But it wasn't meant to be, for whatever reason, they all remained beautifully intact and frustratingly infertile. So then, what do you do? I looked around and thought, well, what have I got locally? Quite a few pheasants, as we have our own shoot on our land, a few rabbits here and there, but most of all, loads of squirrels. So then I start to think, ok, let's find the biggest, meanest brute of a female Redtail and go dedicated squirrel hawking!

Easy...not! Where have all the Redtail breeders gone? I mean quality Redtails. Had the shift to Harris' gone so far that nobody bred Reds anymore? 'cos that's certainly how it looked to me. After many days ringing every number in the IBR directory, putting ads on websites and generally turning up dead ends, the best I came up with was one female in mid Wales. Now I've no aversion to travelling, but I didn't know the breeder from Adam and it would have been a bloody long trip to find it was unsuitable. Now why is it that just about every breeder talks about their young birds as 'Huge?' 'Bloody massive these are mate!', 'Crossed with Pterodactyls these are!', 'Monster feet!' etc., etc. In reality you get there to find this very average looking bird and state "Ok I can see the male, where's the female?" to be met with an embarrassed "well actually, that is her". There has to be some, 'man, hunter gatherer, small penis link' here I'm sure! Please guys, let's just be honest, after all, not everyone wants a monster and I've actually seen requests on the web recently from a guy specifically

looking for small Peruvian race Harris'.

I digress, dilemma had set in, did I go to Wales, did I keep looking, did I take up golf? Then the phone rang. "Steve Berry from the New Forest Owl Sanctuary here, fancy something a bit different?"

"We have two parent reared Harris Hawk/Redtail Hybrids and we'd like you to fly one for a year or so, put it through its paces, try it at everything and report back?"

"Ehm....well....Yes! I'd love to!!" So off I went to see Steve and find out the full story, which goes something like this: Back in the spring of 2002, there was a pair of Harris' in an aviary. In the next aviary were a pair of Redtails, separated by industrial strength screen mesh and all in full view of the public. One Sunday evening a member of staff, whilst checking prior to closing up, was horrified to find that the male Harris had made a nice little hole in the screen mesh and had let himself into the Redtails aviary. Huge amounts of panic ensued as nets were located and the Harris caught up before he became a sacrificial snack to the Reds.

Tools were gathered, screen mesh was measured and a work party set

about making good the repairs to ensure this didn't happen again. However, spring is a funny old time, what with the sap rising and testosterone arriving by the bucketload, (I'm sure it's the same in nature as well!). About a week later, our little industrial male Harris had decided that the old brown bird he was currently with had let herself go a bit and that big chested light phase tart next door was going to get the best Easter egg that she'd ever known. You guessed it...screen mesh dispensed with, he was back, but not only back, he was sat with her on the same branch, both of them loved up and intent on carnal desires. The staff at the Sanctuary at this point were somewhat bemused, so decided to keep them under very close observation and wait for the worst. The worst, however, never happened. This pair went from strength to strength, courting, displaying and nestbuilding. Now the male Red by this time, was getting not a little concerned, after all he had patiently waited a whole year for his conjugal rights, only to find some persistent Central American hero smoothing his way in on his bird. Mrs Red however, viewed the situation rather differently. On occasions when she was at the nest



site and Mr. Red sidled up close, she would gently nudge him away with her rear end or shoulder barge him until he got the message. His world was rapidly falling apart, he was not one of those who got his kicks seeing another guy servicing his girl, so he had to go for the only available option...let's get next door

chest but with the Redtails white stripe from under the beak and down the front; Harris' upper wings, but very light almost white underwings that are Harris' shape; Redtails colour tail but Harris' length but, best of all, Harris' length legs and toes, but Redtail thickness! These really are quite a formidable

## ***Please guys, lets just be honest, after all, not everyone wants a monster...***

before its too late and see if that tanned female Harris, fancies a bit of North American love god.

And so it went on. The initial pair of Male Harris/Female Red ended up laying three eggs, which were taken to Paultons Park, where they have years of experience of candling and incubation. They however couldn't see through the thick Redtail eggs so decided to incubate anyway.

A few weeks later, they had one hatched egg, the other two were only half and three-quarter developed. The live bird was returned to the Owl Sanctuary, who set about imprinting it, rather than risk putting it back with the parents. The parents however, by this time, had laid another two eggs and it was decided to leave those alone and let them hatch and rear on their own. This they duly did and did a fine job of raising them until 10 weeks of age when they were put into a crèche on their own. At the time of writing, the other pair, have not come up with the goods, so one can only imagine that a platonic relationship is all they desire. So at 12 weeks, off I went with travelling box, a selection of hoods, jesses, etc., etc. One bird appeared very slightly larger than the other, but there was hardly any difference, but I took her/him/it anyway. Not knowing if it were male or female, I decided to call it 'Tranny', but believe now it is probably female. She came out of the aviary at 2lb 6oz and a week later the other one came out at 1lb 12oz.

Now for the good bit. As you can see from the photos she has a definite Redtail head, juvenile Harris

set of feet, that are just screaming to get acquainted with pheasants.

Since getting her home, I have started things slowly. If I can avoid it at all, I don't want a screamer, she is after all only 12 weeks and I don't want her dependent on me just yet, so she has been weathered out every day for the last fortnight, with regular carriage and me taking her to the food or throwing it out after a bate. She is very settled and lets me walk round and round her bow about a foot away without a problem and is more than happy for me to turn the hose on her. On the fist she displays the typical Redtail crest, but now settles down and tucks in her wings after about 10 seconds. I have now started to display a chick on the glove but she is obviously reluctant as yet to take that big step, but I am confident that this will happen in the next day or so.

I know there will be the critics out there, posing the obvious question of 'But why bother?', and I'm really not going to enter into the ethics of such a debate. Perhaps if it had been a concerted effort to breed or via A.I. that may have been a different story, but for the time being I am just going to enjoy the bird for what it is and enjoy my sport. Having flown both breeds in the past it will be interesting to compare which attributes this bird subsequently displays. Will it follow on, will it slope soar, will it tolerate black dogs, will it crash cover, will it just tree sit and scream? Who knows? What I do know is that I have a stunning looking bird that has all the credentials to make a superb hunting hawk.





# What's in a Name?

Steve Eales

**I** consider myself very lucky to have had a father who loved birds of prey so much, and introduced me to them at such an early stage. That is how falconry used to be passed on from father to son. I continue the tradition with my elder brother Peter, with a slight change, from father to daughter. So am I a son, brother, father or husband?

Hawk on the Wildside was started as a way of giving people with no experience the chance to handle, fly and hunt with a bird of prey, and to try to show folk how these fiery vicious wild birds have been maligned. Hawk on the Wildside should have been Hawk on the Mildside, but what's in a W or an M? With so many places up and down the country with grand sounding names such as

"National", "Academy", "School", "Conservancy", "British", "English", (some with more than one of these in their title) I did toil with the name "Universal University of Falconry and related Topics", but as with all of them it's just a made up name!

Our main activity is a "Hawk Walk" with the emphasis on the "Hawk". We have just four guests with a Harris Hawk

each so they get plenty of hands on and after the necessary tuition, out in the countryside, we get all four birds in the air. If the guests follow the simple instruction (after all it's not rocket science!), they get their bird back, the joy that brings to them is written all over their smiling faces!

Obviously though this experience does not make them falconers, but nor

***Many people consider the best family dog to be a Labrador or Golden Retriever, but how many have you seen in the local park, out of control, pulling on leads, jumping up, not coming back or not let go of on extendible leads?***





does owning a bird of prey. Many of our guests would love to own a bird. I'd be rich if I sold birds to those who expressed an interest, but I console them with the thought that they are better falconers than many with birds because they put the bird first and realise they haven't the time, land, knowledge or often ability to look after one. Gerald Lassels wrote in the 1800s, "if you could afford a stradervairous violin, would you expect to play a concerto?" I believe that applies just as much today as it did then. The idea of them being beginners birds, easy to train, ideal for juveniles or even 'weekend' birds beggars belief.

Many people consider the best family dog to be a Labrador or Golden Retriever, but how many have you seen in the local park, out of control, pulling on leads, jumping up, not coming back or not let go of on extendible leads? If you've never trained a dog before then a Labrador is not easy, for beginners, juveniles or the weekend!

Personally, I don't consider myself a falconer although I have flown falcons, even the term austringer doesn't sit comfortably on my shoulders for although I do hunt with Hawks (not true hawks), and I also use them for demonstrations and fly a vulture too. In fact since I started flying at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, where we flew not only birds of prey but also parrots, kookaburra and even a red legged serema, I would consider myself more of a bird trainer. If you haven't visited Whipsnade Wild Animal Park then you ought to. When I was there two macaws flying free in the show impressed me.

## ***Quarry killed on a hawk walk is growing every season, with several personal firsts.***

Now they fly six, four blue and gold with two scarlet.

Many guests do not wish to see the birds hunting, so the hawk walk takes place where, sadly, there is little wildlife to interest the Harris's. Obviously, though they are predators and if a warm lunch is on hand, they do their best. Normally we are successful in keeping the birds attention and it is always the exception most folks are interested in. Quarry killed on a hawk walk is growing every season, with several personal firsts. So far the list includes:

- |     |             |             |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| (a) | Crow        | 4           |
| (b) | Earthworm   | loads       |
| (c) | Hare        | 3           |
| (d) | Mole        | 1           |
| (e) | Moorhen     | 1           |
| (f) | Mouse       | 2           |
| (g) | Pheasant    | (in season) |
| (h) | Wood Pigeon | 3           |
| (i) | Stone       | 1           |
| (j) | Toad        | 1           |

All of these without trying, although I must confess we do use the same team of birds for hawking. Then we take the dog (not a retriever) and the ferrets and are more successful. The old Hawking Club was a subscription club that allowed its members so many trips out with the paid falconer, very similar to a shooting syndicate today. We consider

ourselves to be similar in that you buy as many places for as many days as you like. We also uphold the unwritten code of not hunting on a Sunday and limiting the season from October to February.

If you are a little confused about item (i) it was caught in fine style across an open field, just after I'd explained that; "the birds wore bells because they are not retrievers!" Goldie flew at great speed and grabbed the unknown object, mantled, then flew back to the outstretched arm of her friend for that day, still clutching a large square shaped stone!

With Christmas almost upon us do not get caught out by gift voucher packs for sale in your shopping centres. Make sure you read the small print. Most centres around the country offer G.Vs for Hawk Walks or Falconry Days or Experiences, those in the high street often say you may get the chance to handle a bird or no more than twelve/twenty on an activity.

We are based on the borders of Bucks, Beds and Northants with loads of history or to be more precise Milton Keynes, but what's in a name?

If you want to know more about Hawk on the Wildside then check out the web site: [www.hawkonthewildside.co.uk](http://www.hawkonthewildside.co.uk) or call 01908 579544.

# Club Directory

*Join and support your local club today!*

## 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.

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



## The Welsh Hawking Club



SOUTH WALES, Usk

Contact: *Helen Scourse* Tel: 01600 860458

NORTH WALES, Chester

Contact: *Neil McCann* Tel: 01512 930364

SOUTH WEST, Exeter

Contact: *Dave Scott* Tel: 01752 830382

BATH, Hinton

Contact: *Dave Jones* Tel: 01934 811300

THE MIDLANDS, Loughborough

Contact: *Mike Cane* Tel: 01773 811491

COTSWOLDS, Eversham

Contact: *Shaun Healey* Tel: 01386 832812

YORKSHIRE, York

Contact: *Malcolm Allison* Tel: 01944 738369

ESSEX, Colchester

Contact: *Mike Young* Tel: 01206 513179

★ FOR ALL GENERAL ENQUIRIES CONTACT ★

Mike Clowes, secretary, 01529 240443

## 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



## Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

Meetings held at:-

**Haslingdon cricket Club**

**Haslingdon, J5 off M65.**

**2ND TUESDAY EACH MONTH.**

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

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For information please contact: **01942 205151**

or **07074 320425**



## WEST OF ENGLAND HAWKING CLUB

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

We meet the first Monday of every month at the **Bull Inn, Hinton nr Bath**. Our meetings are informal and friendly and provide an opportunity to exchange experiences, arrange field trips and establish contact with local falconers. Guest speakers and falconry furniture suppliers regularly attend. We also run beginners' workshops.

*ALL NEWCOMERS WELCOMED.*

**For more information please telephone:**

- **Rob Kelly 01275 891813**
- **Keith Wicks 01454 315810**
- **Tony Ellis 01666 510067**

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## The South East Falconry Group

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Meetings take place on the last Tuesday of the month at Tilbury in Essex.

For members in our Southern region informal meetings take place nr Winchester, Hants.

*For further information or an application form please contact -*

**Dean White (secretary) on 01489 896504**

**Email us at [enquiry@sefg.org](mailto:enquiry@sefg.org)**

*or visit our web site [www.sefg.org](http://www.sefg.org)*

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**Mr John Callaghan**

**Membership secretary**

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help/enquiry line:-  
0870 7590210**



# Falcon Sales Weekend 2002

Jenny Wray



'Falcon Mews' held its second annual sales weekend on the 3rd & 4th of August. Over eighty falcons were on sale with Gyr, Peregrine and Barbary falcons representing the pure species and a large number of hybrids of all shapes and colours, from large Gyr-Saker's through to Peregrine-Merlin's.

The sales weekend gives prospective purchasers the chance to inspect the falcons up close, handle and weigh them. All falcons bred by Falcon

Mews are now close banded with IBR rings and registered with the IBR for three years free of charge.

A larger Marquee than last year held all the falcons and the artists whom included Andrew Ellis, Mike Donnelly, Dave Woods and Carl Bass all had their work on display, plus brass sculptures by Alan Glasby OBE.

The Yorkshire Falconry club, Cheshire Hawking Club, British Falconer's Club and the Welsh

Hawking Club all had stands present. Falconry Originals, Raptor Box, Honeybrook Farm, Steve Hassal Hoods, Jeremy Law (leather supplies) and Bryan Paterson (telemetry) were all present in a separate row of tents from the main marquee.

Attendance was up on the first year; with numerous Arab families present and by Sunday afternoon very few falcons were left unsold. The date for next years sale is the 2nd & 3rd of August.





# Ospreys of Montana

Richard J. Tillin



**I**n August this year my wife and I were fortunate to be included as volunteers in a research team involved in a project studying the nest distribution, reproductive success and feeding habits of Osprey's. The area of study was the Flathead Lake catchment basin that is located near Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana USA. The lake is 27 miles long and 14 miles in width. Earthwatch sponsored this project and the Principle investigators were Charles Blem, a Professor of Biology at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond USA, together with his wife Leann who is an Assistant Teaching Professor of biology at the same University. They were ably assisted by Brandon Jackson, a graduate from Colgate University.

from the late 80's up to 1997. Within 2 years from 1997, the salmon had disappeared completely, with a subsequent severe decline of Bald eagles, which had relied on the Osprey for a significant part of its food intake, by acting as pirates and harassing them for their prey.

The disappearance of the salmon was caused by the Lake trout, which, with the introduction of the shrimp, had found an easily obtainable bountiful source of food. With this new source of food, the trout grew to a size that

*Mysis* caused a significant alteration in the food chain by being the instigator of the disappearance of the salmon in the lake. It was also found during research in nearby Canadian Lakes that the mercury levels in lakes which contained the *Mysis* shrimp were significantly higher, these higher levels of contamination appear to be a threat to the Osprey as it is the primary predator of lake fish.

During the nine days we were involved with this project, we stayed in a log cabin on the Montana University Flathead Lake Biological Station. It was

***This meant that the Osprey's main source of food had gone, as Osprey are only able to catch surface feeders to a depth of three feet...***

The project is in its second summer and was initiated to monitor the effect on the Osprey due to increased human activity around the lake; this has resulted in the lake ecosystem becoming noticeably altered. The change was initiated by the accidental introduction in 1981 of the shrimp (*Mysis relicta*). Prior to the introduction of the shrimp, the staple diet of the Osprey was the Kokanee salmon. This species actually formed 75% to 94% of all fish caught in the lake

exceeded 30lbs, they then became significant predators of the salmon and went about their cannibalistic mission with enthusiasm, and annihilated the salmon in a short period. This meant that the Osprey's main source of food had gone, as Osprey are only able to catch surface feeders to a depth of three feet, the alternatives were limited. The

a beautiful position, and we were lucky enough to have a pair Bald Eagle roosting in a nearby tree most nights.

We spent our days monitoring the Ospreys at their nest sites to observe the number of chicks reared and trying to identify the species of fish that the parents were bringing to the nest, not always easy to identify when the head is missing! The male Osprey eats the heads to reduce the weight of the fish, which otherwise are too heavy for it to carry. This action also ensures the bird will keep up its strength on its relentless search for food for its mate and chicks back at the nest. We observed an Osprey drag a fish from the water; as it was unable to take off with the weight. When it was safely on land, it eagerly ate the head. It was interesting to observe that the fish were carried lengthways like the old naval aircraft carried a single torpedo. We spent many hours below nests which were perched on a variety structures including tall trees and telephone poles. In addition,



platforms that are erected by the electricity company as an alternative to Osprey building their nests across the power lines and causing power cuts. One of our tasks was to recover fish bones from below nest sites for Professor Leann Blem to identify which species were forming the staple diet.

Nests were also found in large Ponderosa trees on the banks of rivers entering Flathead Lake. We spent time

## *While kayaking or standing on the edge of the deep canyons, the real beauty of Montana became apparent.*

in a kayak paddling down the river to monitor the progress of these nest sites. On one occasion, we observed a nest that appeared to be empty. However, there was a male Osprey perched in a tree nearby, it seemed very agitated at our presence, and dived on us with its talons extended, it was an incredible display of a bird defending its nest site, we later discovered that there were two chicks in the nest which were very small for so late in the season.

While kayaking or standing on the edge of the deep canyons, the real beauty of Montana became apparent. From the kayak, the forested banks of the rivers are beautiful, with little sign of human presence, but abundant with bird life and the occasional beaver. From the top of a canyon, the river's clear waters flowed many yards below, the rolling prairie extended in the distance with the last remaining bison in Montana roaming the hillsides. Numerous raptors including Bald and Golden Eagle soared above; in addition to these impressive birds, we saw Turkey Vultures and Red Tailed Hawks that are similar to our Buzzard. We observed a Night Hawk sleeping on a fence post in the hot midday sun; we were able to approach very closely without alarming it. Many of the raptors were not easily identifiable, but it was eerie to hear their plaintive calls as they crisscrossed the big sky.

On our day off from sitting under nest sites and scrabbling about trying to find fish bones, we visited the Glacier National Park. The journey there in the Montana University mini bus was fun with Charlie Blem our project principle telling interesting stories regarding the inhabitants of north west Montana. A particular story amused us; it involved a recently divorced man who noticed his

best friend's Harley Davidson motorcycle parked outside his ex wife's trailer (Caravan) on several nights. This got to him so badly, that one night he rode into town on his horse lassoed the Harley off his friend dragged in into the middle of the street and shot it several times.

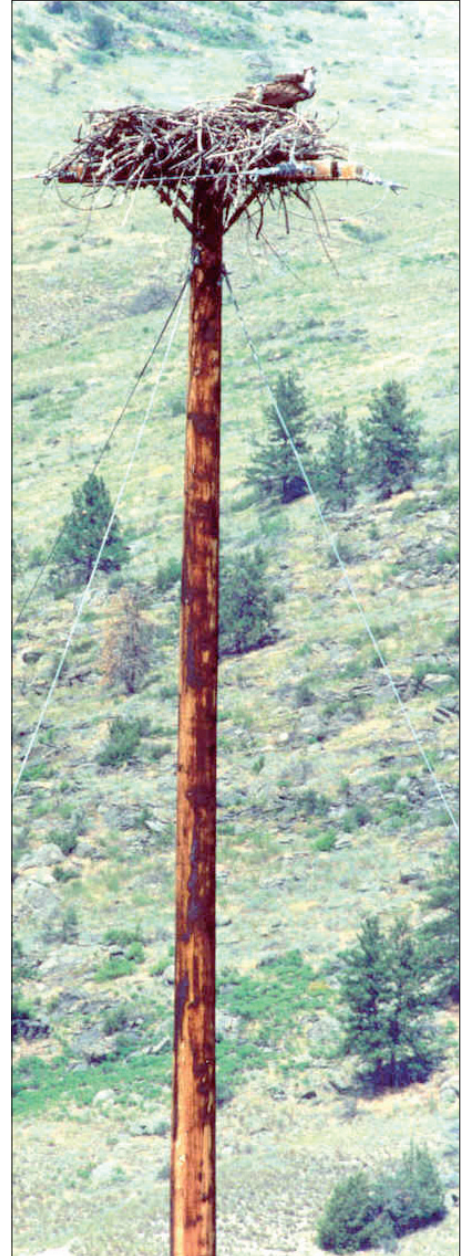
We were not lucky enough to see any bears while in the park, but did hear tales of encounters by other visitors, and

were advised of the essential things to carry for protection against a bear attack. One of these items was "bear bells" which is like a tin can with stones inside, the idea is to rattle these as you creep through the bush, also mace is important, you are advised to spray it in the face of the bear if he happens to surprise you!

The research on the Ospreys progress is ongoing and data from this study will provide information regarding the stability of the lake system and influence the future policy regarding the management.

We had a wonderful time in Montana and feel confident that the Osprey will prosper in the Flathead Lake catchment basis due to the concern people have for its survival.

Taking part in an Earthwatch experience was very rewarding and informative; we will definitely be volunteering for future projects.





# CLA Game Fair 2002

*The 2002 CLA Game Fair, which was held on the Broadlands estate in Romsey, Hampshire, has come and gone and once again the crowds poured in. The weather was brilliant - hot with just a slight breeze to keep everyone cool.*

The falconry section was well represented with various clubs and trade members selling their wares. Falconry manufacturers Ben Long, Martin Jones, Falconry Originals, IBR, Falcon Leisure, Emews.com and food suppliers KKK and Honeybrook Farm had a fairly successful three days, although Friday and Sunday were a bit on the slow side.

Colin Woolf had a stand showing his art prints, which is always guaranteed to pull the crowds. Colin is a very talented artist which the front cover of the last edition of The Falconers Magazine will testify.

The British Hawking Association, The British Falconry Club, The Welsh Hawking Club and the Scottish Hawking Club were also present to sign-up new members and to answer any questions the public had.

Jemima Parry Jones was once again the falconer putting on flying displays in the main arena in her own inimitable style. This was once again sponsored by Mitsubishi motors.

On the Saturday night Honeybrook Farm hosted a BBQ for the traders and a big thank you must go to them for putting it on.

A very enjoyable time was had by all who attended and we hope to see you all next year in Yorkshire.





# Fears for Bird After Epic Journey

*Honey buzzards migrate to Africa every winter.*

*Fears are growing for the safety of a rare bird of prey that got lost at sea while making a 5,000 kilometre migration from Scotland to Africa.*

**T**he young honey buzzard, which only learned to fly a month ago, went off course after it was caught in difficult weather conditions over the Atlantic.

A satellite tracking system estimates that it has made the longest flight ever recorded by a bird of prey. However, concern about the fate of the bird is growing among conservationists and enthusiasts who have been following its progress over the Internet. Two honey buzzards were being tracked as part of an attempt to learn the mysteries of their migration south.

The Forestry Commission teamed up with the Highland Foundation for Wildlife to follow their journey. Devices were fitted to an adult bird and single chick from a nest at a secret location in the Scottish Highlands earlier this year. The adult

male left its nest 26 days ago and is now somewhere over the Ivory Coast after travelling more than 5,000km.

However, the younger bird ended up off course after it was caught in difficult weather systems.

## Unbelievable distances

David Jardine, Forest District Manager for the Inverness area, said contact was lost while the bird was about 300km from the Portuguese island of Madeira. "We are all hanging on to hope that the next signal from the young honey buzzard will indicate it has survived," he said. "It has been on the wing for days and covered unbelievable distances in all kinds of weather conditions. Through tracking the birds, we have gathered a wealth of information that will help us secure the future of these spectacular

birds in Scotland. The young bird has made a journey of more than 6,000km - the longest ever recorded by a bird of prey".

The progress of the two birds has been followed by enthusiasts through a special website run by those behind the project. The most recent posting admitted that it was difficult to predict whether or not there would be any further news from the younger bird.

"This incredible journey has already revealed both the hazards of migrating from Scotland to Africa and also the stamina of a bird, which a month ago had only just learnt to fly," said the website.


## Migration

"For many people, this young honey buzzard is now a 'well-known' individual whose plight, as it has flown day and night over the wide Atlantic, has caused us to wonder and also to hope it has a safe landing."

Honey buzzards were given their name because they eat wasp grubs and larvae. Thought to have initially come to Scotland from Scandinavia, they migrate to equatorial Africa every winter.

# Lee William Harris




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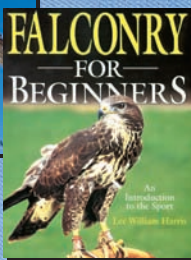
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# Breeding Falcons F

**I**f ever you had forgotten or lost your calendar it would not be a matter of importance in a breeding facility. The accurate timing of the falcons in response to the changing light says it all. Spring comes early here and falcon-breeding behaviour begins in mid February. The imprint males and females begin their courtship displays with activity already focused on the freshly gravelled nest ledges. By the first week in March some of the natural pairs will already have laid their first egg of the season.

From a specialist point of view nothing can quite equate to the one to one relationship, which will ensue now over the next 12-13 weeks working with imprints. This aspect of a falcons behaviour has an enormous attraction. It is creative, in that you dictate the outcome or the type of falcon produced. The relationship is strictly between a falcon that bonds and identifies only with you. Later on they will progress to rearing offspring so that you are able to watch at close quarters the whole process of young falcon development.

There is a strong similarity to this behaviour from us as avid spectator in the breeding chambers and

avid spectator in the field. Almost magnetic, it compellingly requires repeating, despite the fact that from the breeding chambers it is one of the most demanding, exacting and challenging times in a falconer's year.

In one of the world's largest facilities everything is on a big scale. An increase in seasonal staff is important, as the demands from over 200 falcons have to be met. Feeding now becomes an important part of the developing courtship between pairs or imprints. The visits with food now step up from the one feed per day to three or more. Each visit is greeted excitedly.

*Males wouldn't normally become so involved with young as the female adopts that role perfectly, but imprint males adapt to role reversal as part of their routine.*

Psychologically it represents a potentially good breeding site, as there appears to be an abundance of food and this could be a good place to rear young. Male imprints are given the same status as the three tenors. Their vocals almost being the same sweet music. If there are 'stars' on the breeding

circuit then it is these maestros on whom every breeding programme hinges a lot of attention. When size matters, then the gyrs have it. Whether white, black or silver they father numerous young, many of whom are just stunning to look at.

In any busy facility, the rearing of



# or The Field

*Diana Durman-Walters*

young by parents and foster parents is an absolute necessity. Here the males take on another role; that of mother. Males wouldn't normally become so involved with young as the female adopts that role perfectly, but imprint males adapt to role reversal as part of their routine. Many males will incubate artificial or pot eggs for quite long periods, then take very small young, brood them and feed them with a diligence that would make most females feel redundant. Not all males will do this but even if they're a little shy about incubation they will take larger, downy chicks at a later stage and continue the feeding process until

they're fledged. The end product is naturally fledged young. To achieve this depends almost exclusively on the art of incubation, both natural and artificial. The use of incubators is paramount. They are no longer a machine that sits on the sideboard with a few eggs in as an experiment to 'see whether these infernal things work or not'.



Today they are used with military precision in virtually all facilities. Monitoring the progress of the developing embryo is an interesting part of the breeding

management that is if there are not too many eggs. Yet here, the supervision of more than 300 eggs has to be done on an individual basis. Martyn Paterson is the facility's incubation specialist and skilfully guides each egg through to pip. In most cases this will be very straightforward but the true technician's skill lies in

***The use of incubators is paramount. They are no longer a machine that sits on the sideboard with a few eggs in as an experiment to 'see whether these infernal things work or not'.***



aiding and assisting chicks to hatch that are experiencing difficulties.

Knowing when these chicks are experiencing problems is crucial and any new advance in technology is a bonus, like the new heart monitor machine we used this season to help determine a better overall picture. The real ability however, is hands-on working knowledge of normal embryo development.

The newly hatched young are, despite their fragile appearance, fairly robust, demanding individuals. It is incongruous that these tiny objects



moments ago were living inside an egg on their own yolk sac, yet, hours later are demanding feeds of raw meat. I still find that totally fascinating.

As the hatching programme reaches its peak there is a continuous flow of young to feed. Their timetable is such that they

are fed four times per day. With often over 40 babies to feed every four hours, it's a bit like painting the Forth Road Bridge, no sooner have you finished than it's time to start at the beginning again.

As they approach their 8th day then foster parents are selected to take groups of babies. Initially they are given to imprints to begin the rearing on process as this is one of the most crucial changes in their early lives.

Removed from the warm and comforting brooder room where every slight change and demand from the chick is monitored and catered for, the

chilly outside imprinting pens are a testing ground for their next stage of development. With imprints we can keep a very close eye on how well the young are adapting to the change, particularly in temperature. At this age if it becomes cold, then this acts a major stress factor which challenges its ability to cope.

Any youngster seen to be looking less vigorous, looking tired and plaintively whingeing will be brought

back immediately to an isolation brooder and monitored closely. Most often fluid replacement therapy and warmth is all that is required. Occasionally antibiotic treatment is also used to aid recovery. Once they show that they are back to good health they will go back out with their mother. Their chances of coping with a changing environment are now much more favourable.

All foster mothers are good mothers. They keep the brood warm and feed them when the demand is insistent. They are not able to make allowances for any chick that suddenly begins to appear unwell, consequently visual care of the young

is still a major part of the staff routines. As they grow, then they are removed once more to pens that have pairs of falcons. Here they

will remain until fledged.

All fledged young go into the large hack pens. In these they develop their powers of flight, learning manoeuvring skills, speed, precision landing and take off. Such care and attention to detail will assist them to sharpen their natural instincts and develop into highly desirable, falcons for the field. There is barely a moment to recover. Throughout the year the video technicians are busy compiling new

***All foster mothers are good mothers.  
They keep the brood warm and feed them  
when the demand is insistent.***

issues of the *Bird of Prey Management* series and staff are actively involved in production. As we have access to a great wealth of material each one makes a visually eye-catching and informative product.

The season for crow hawking is from August to the end of September and a team of eight falcons, which includes some new falcons in the team, will be given the freedom of the wild open Northumbrian countryside, to put their renowned skills to the test.

As the seasons steadily (and far too quickly) roll on, a new breeding season is just around the corner. Before we know it that familiar sound of falcons' greeting the first signs of Spring will be heard once again in these Welsh valleys.

*Diana is senior Aviculturist for Hunting Falcons International and National Avian Research.*



***All fledged young go into the large lack pens. In these they develop their powers of flight, learning manoeuvring skills, speed, precision landing and take off.***

## review



# A Passion For Harris' Hawks

*A new publication reviewed by Lyn Wilson*

**W**ell passion is certainly the right word to use. Martin Hollinshead is extremely passionate about all aspects of Harris' hawking. This book is not written, as his previous book, to be an instruction manual, more an insight into 'how Martin does it'. Day to day accounts of his hawking escapades, how he incorporates his dog and his ferrets into his hawking routines and for all falconry is somewhat random Martin does have a routine. Horses for courses as they say.

I found myself smiling at certain passages, knowing exactly what he was trying to say as those situations and feelings are common (at least to me) when in the throes of a good (or even bad) hawking session.

This book illustrates what many of us seem to miss and that is hawking (successful hawking that is) has to be worked at. Nothing comes for free, but the rewards are enormous. Situations, weather conditions, etc. all have to be used to the advantage of

the bird, using different land and hawking techniques for hares and rabbits and the occasional pheasant.

Another thing evident in the book, and guaranteed to inspire us all with a little more confidence as we go hawking, is that even for the 'Martin Hollinsheads' of this world not everything always runs smoothly. Not all variables can be catered for, though by golly does he try!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, not wanting to put it down. I hid from David and the kids and read it cover to cover.

The recipes in the back are "interesting" and Martin and Tonya obviously don't like curry. It is really good though to see that people eat what they catch.

Martin's only problem now though is he will have to catch decidedly more hares, as

### *A passion for* **HARRIS' HAWKS** MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD



he will have to give it to everyone he feeds

who has read his book.

Martin's love, respect, skill and of course passion are evident on every page of this fun, interesting and informative book, and for anyone wanting to get to know the real Martin Hollinshead, an absolute must.

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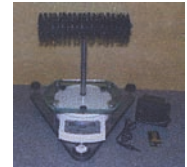


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# Birds of Prey Crimes

*This month's Legal Eagle, a publication by the RSPB has a lot of information about bird of prey crimes. There are usually one or two incidents but unfortunately they seem to be predominant this time.*

## Man found guilty of stealing Osprey eggs

Tayside WLO PC Graham Jack made a recent trip south of the border with DS Neil MacDonald to help West Midlands Police and the RSPB with an egg collecting enquiry which resulted in a custodial sentence.

At a major egg collecting seizure documentation came to light suggesting Paul Sly of Willenhall, Coventry, had taken a clutch of Osprey eggs from near Dunkeld in Scotland, with the help of a local gamekeeper, in 2000.

With four nests raided in the area it was a bad spring for the Ospreys. On March 28th PC Graham was present when a warrant was executed at Sly's home. Three Osprey eggs were recovered along with pictures of the eggs in the nest.

There were also photographs of the now ex- gamekeeper of the estate where the eggs had been stolen from.

About 30 frozen and taxidermy specimens (all avian) including some rare species such as choughs, peregrines, corncrakes and stone-curlews. Sly was arrested and interviewed and admitted taking the Osprey eggs on a shooting trip to Scotland.

He claimed a person, whose name he would not reveal, had given him most of the taxidermy specimens. WLO Andy Hale, from the West Mids Police, helped the by RSPB prepared the prosecution file.

Sly pleaded guilty at Coventry Magistrates Court, to nine charges relating to the possession and taking of Osprey eggs and possession of the taxidermy specimens on 28th May 2002.

He had two previous convictions for egg collecting and on 20th June 2002 he was sentenced to 16 weeks in prison on all charge other than the taking of the Osprey eggs which predated the change in sentencing guidelines under the Countryside & Right of Way Act. 1981.

## Guilty of Possession

Mark Smith of Wednesbury W Mids, pleaded guilty to the possession of two wild bullfinches and one peregrine egg at West Bromwich Magistrates court on 31 May 2002. He was fined £200 for the birds and £50 for the egg and ordered to pay £50 costs.

## Red Kite poisoning confirmed

It has been confirmed that two Red Kites, picked up in 2002 in North Yorks had been illegally poisoned. The birds were poisoned with the pesticides strychnine and alphachloralose. One of the birds was found near a public footpath in Castley and the other was next to a poisoned rabbit bait on a grouse moor in Nidderdale. Both birds, fledged from the same nest in 2001, were females and part of the Yorkshire Red Kite Project.

This year nine pairs successfully fledged 20 young. A recent study though of 248 kites fitted with wing tags between 1989 and 1998, discovered from post mortems that of 24 recovered dead birds 13 were confirmed as being poisoned.

From the total number of missing wing-tagged birds it is estimated that as many as 93 birds, a huge 37% of the total, may have been illegally poisoned. A similar study of Kites in the South of England suggested the figure there to be somewhere around 10%.

## Gamekeepers caught out

In the spring and summer of this year, five gamekeepers on three different sporting estates were arrested on suspicion of committing offences against Schedule 1 birds of prey.

Two gamekeepers were arrested in Durham on suspicion of attempting to take a Hen Harrier, using a pole trap. Following an interview and further

enquiries, they have now been reported for offences relating to the use of a pole-trap and storage of pesticides.

Two gamekeepers were also arrested in Derbyshire on suspicion of disturbance and destroying the contents of an active Goshawk nest. Also one gamekeeper was arrested in Northumberland on suspicion of using a cage trap baited with live pigeon to trap peregrines. Enquiries on both these cases are ongoing.

## Bogus wildlife photographers steal falcon eggs

Wildlife officials and officers from Quebec's provincial police - the Surete de Quebec - caught two men with seven eggs taken from falcon nest around Kuujuaq on 12 May 2002. The men, Paul Charles Mullin (UK national) and Jeffry Paul Lundrun (South African national) posed as wildlife photographers to charter a helicopter on the pretext of scouting sites for photography. However, they aroused suspicion when they showed special interest in the nests of peregrines and gyrs falcons.

The men were arrested and charges with six counts of illegal possession of eggs and hunting without a licence and were fined a total of \$7,250, the maximum permitted by Quebec's wildlife legislation. The eggs were taken to a bird of prey recovery centre in Quebec. Five were still viable and it is hoped to release any young back into the wild.

## Imperial Eagles Stolen

Three young Imperial Eagles were take from a nest in Hungary on 6th July 2002. The tree could not be climbed so the thieves cut it down. Feathers have been collected from the nest in the hope of identifying the birds in the future using DNA fingerprinting.



# Ancient Art - Modern World

Paul Manning

**W**e all expend a vast amount of time and energy in manning, training, flying and hunting our birds.

**Why? What is the magic of Falconry that can make us structure our lives, family relationships, houses, gardens, holidays and everything else, preparing, planning and practising Falconry? And, what are the unique attributes or combination of reasons which make us choose Falconry over other similar sports or pastimes?**

If you were asked to get to the core of why you love this sport, what would you give as your reasons? Firstly, birds of prey are aesthetically very pleasing, their feathers, colour and grace of movement are breathtakingly beautiful. They are truly awe-inspiring to be near, and are almost universally admired and revered.

In handling and hunting with them, their primeval rawness seems to touch the very essence of our nature. As hunter-gatherers, we seem instinctively drawn to them, as to all of the top predators.

As a sport, falconry is both natural and non-consumptive. We merely train our birds to tolerate us, whilst doing what they do naturally. What they catch they eat. If they didn't hunt they would still have to eat and a creature would still die to feed them.

***One of our primary arguments for why we must continue to teach our birds to hunt is an acceptance that, at some stage, this non-domesticated creature may one day leave us.***

In the same way, we do not manipulate the quarry to give it a disadvantage. When practised properly falconry is hunting at its fairest. Prey and predator have evolved so as to perpetuate the survival of the fittest on both sides, therefore the difference between success and failure is finely balanced. Most flights are unsuccessful for both wild and trained birds of prey.

For this reason, and the nature of our birds, falconry, as a sport, is uniquely close to the wild. A bird of prey is never tamed in the same way as a dog or horse, she is always wild and is only ever a couple of weeks away from her wild



state. She does not need us to survive in the same way as other animals which share our lives. She merely tolerates us for her own reasons. The most important reason is that through our patience, time, care and understanding

we make a life for them, where it is better to stay with us than to go. As with life, the only relationships worth a candle are based on mutual trust and respect. "She is with me because of my merits" is far more satisfying than "because I have made her dependent or beholden to me".

One of our primary arguments for why we must continue to teach our birds to hunt is an acceptance that, at some stage, this non-domesticated creature may one day leave us. It is our duty to make sure that they are not dependent on us for their survival. In its purest form, this would be taking a wild

passage bird, training and hunting with her and then returning her to the wild when she is ready to breed. A totally independent, wild bird which allows us, through our dedication and care, to share a season or two and take a share of the catch. A true partnership, with no subjugation and no domination. A noble creature that has a place in the world, independent of man's wants and needs, we are honoured to share that – nothing more.

It is this wild independent spirit which makes our sport so difficult. But, which also makes it so rewarding when things go well. Unlike most of the modern world we live in, there are no shortcuts; you can't buy success and your background or personal wealth counts for nothing. In falconry you truly only get out what you put in.

Even the relative cost of birds does not discriminate against this. The best, most spectacular display bird in the country is a male Kestrel with a street value (before the training) of about £50. Yet the pleasure and pride with which he is flown is equal to the amount of talent, time and dedication, which his trainer has put in to him.

I assume, as most of the above is just a re-hash of the things I've heard said at

many presentations, in conversations, etc., over the years that some of you, at least, will agree with much of the above. For my part, inarticulate as it is, it does represent much of the appeal of falconry for me. I would probably add that the values that draw me to falconry are a true antidote to the worst excesses of modern man, where personal satisfaction at all costs and we'll sort out the consequences later, drives much of our thinking.

OK, sorry for the long, over

***OK, sorry for the long, over romantic, preamble. But this does, I'm sure, go a long way to explain why I still have such a problem with the increasing numbers of Hybrids in our sport.***

romantic, preamble. But this does, I'm sure, go a long way to explain why I still have such a problem with the increasing numbers of Hybrids in our sport.

I know I'm returning to a well-worn subject but how do Hybrids fit into the above? They have no place in nature other than in the sport of falconry. Therefore, their only reason for being is for our pleasure. Is this right?

If someone decided to artificially breed a two-headed creature to exhibit in a circus for our amusement we would, I hope, recoil in horror. What's the difference? We're not creating the animal to look at, but it still only exists for our entertainment, with no other purpose. One argument runs that we have been selectively breeding, dogs, cows, sheep, horses etc. for centuries. So why not birds of prey, but surely, this is totally different.

Firstly if left alone, all of these animals would naturally interbreed, and in time would revert back to type. Secondly, they are bred to be dependent and domesticated, the exact opposite of all that we value in birds of prey.

The last time I wrote on the subject, Nick Fox wrote a very well reasoned response, arguing that "very little today is so called natural. Our birds are judged on their ability to be good hunting birds at the quarry we have available under the conditions that we have available. We may even accept, as in the case of the Harris hawk, a reduced hunting performance, if this is offset by other

characteristics. Hybrids are bred to hunt specific quarry on the type of land available, where another species would be unsuitable". The example he gave was hunting Carrion Crows within limited boundaries, the Peregrine lacks sufficient tenacity and is unwilling to tackle such strong quarry on the ground and the Saker being too slow and therefore the chase covers too wide a distance. The combination Peregrine/Saker combining the best of each and proves to be better suited to

hunting crows under British conditions.

This is a very good reason to produce a Hybrid. However, I do not believe it is an adequate justification. The key word I believe is "better". It is possible to hunt crows with both the Peregrine and the Saker as well as the Gyr and with Goshawks. It may not be as successful, it may be less convenient and a little more stressful, but it's still fantastic and we don't have to play God and produce a designer bird to enjoy it.

If our angling friends wanted to fish for carp but only had access to fast running waters, they would search out different water or switch their attention to another species. If their response was to artificially breed a hybrid Carp cross Barble, we'd be a tad surprised.

Whilst I don't agree with hybrids for hunting birds, I do at least understand some of the reasons for wanting to use them. However, I can see no reasons or justification for using these birds in public flying displays. I have already mentioned the famous male Kestrel. He could be joined in a hall of fame by Jemima Parry-Jones's Merlin and Saker falcon, Weyhill's carousel of Kites (Black,

Red and Brahminy), their African Fish Eagle and Bald Eagles and many, many more superb display birds, up and down the country. Why then do we need to show the public Hybrid birds? They will never recognise these birds in the wild, never empathise with them and never want to conserve them. Part of the joy of discovery as one grows up, is learning to recognise the animals we share the planet with. What is more exiting than seeing a Saker falcon stoop in a display and learning where they come from in the world. Then learning that we have a similar British bird, which is even faster and they can look for when they leave the show. Hybrids clearly aren't better display birds and even if on average they were, pure breeds are still pretty fantastic so there is no real need.

Worse still are showing these birds in static displays where I thought the purpose was educating the public to value birds of prey and to understand the ancient art of falconry. Presumably the argument here is that we are showing the public all aspects of falconry today. Another part of the slippery slope of post-justifying our actions to suit our fickle whims. Sounds like modern man to me.

These are my views and, whilst at times a little rabid in their presentation, they are not meant as an attack on your views. I accept that all opinions are

partial and based on the knowledge, experience and understanding which one currently has at ones disposal. This must therefore, by definition, be limited; (I have never bred, owned, or worked with a hybrid). However, without a reasoned debate you will never be influenced by my opinions and I will never learn the real



justifications for breeding, displaying and flying these birds, and thus change mine. It would be wrong to take up an entrenched view without hearing from those that fly hybrids and listen to those views with an open mind. God knows, 430,000 of us were forced to march through London as a consequence of people with a very limited understanding and closed minds presiding over the actions of others.





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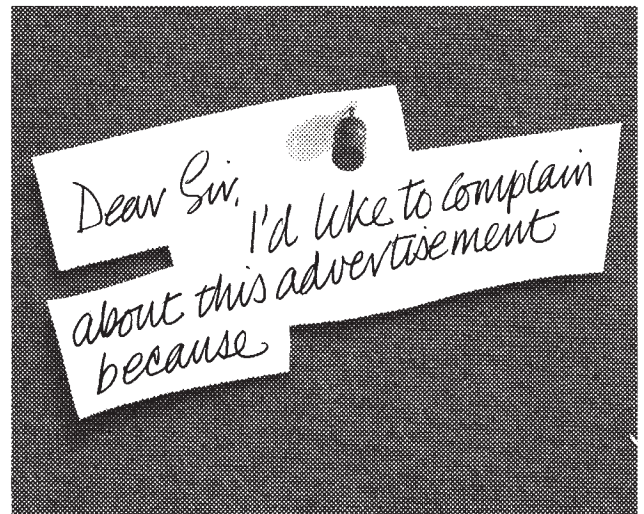
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# Mountain Challenge

Part II

Martin Hollinshead

**S**o you've got the most dramatic castle in the world, in the most dramatic setting in the world, serving up some of the most dramatic demonstration flying in the world. It's enough, right? Wrong. You take the next obvious step and throw in some horses.



How the idea of staging a two-day special of mounted falconry was introduced, I don't recall. It must surely have come at the end of a long day - perhaps late one night at some local eating-house when, senses dulled by good food and wine, nobody fully registered the discussion. Yes, it must have been slipped in this way. No clear thinking falconer would have agreed to such madness.

### The Obstacles

Just thinking about it now has my palms sweaty. Everything was against it. The castle, with its odd tiered layout and lack of level ground was the last place anyone would try to do anything on a horse. And if you were barmy enough, there was nowhere to put any horses; as far as space went, the castle had

more restrictions

than a high-rise flat! And even if we could get them up there and do something with them, we had a castle full of birds that had never seen a horse. How easily

I visualised terror-induced down-valley one-way flight demonstrations!

I was, of course, worrying for nothing. My employer, with his normal 'I'll rebuild the world if I have to' approach, steam-rolled my

concerns pancake flat. For every hurdle he had a move, and slowly, as if in some group trance, everyone was nodding in unison at each proposal. We were going to have horses, and we were going to make it work.

### The Waves Part

In that revved-up mood of 'can-do' it's hard to recall what got tackled first. But gradually the jigsaw eased together - and

***Several birds would come up with the horses: some for lure flying; some for glove flights. One in particular stood out - Rosa, a mantling, screaming, burst-your-eardrums imprinted peregrine.***

any reluctant bits were given the scissors treatment. A 'paddock' was squeezed from a bit of a clearing on the castle's forested hill. And at the bottom of the display lawn was a huge tower, the base of which was converted so that it would hold three horse stalls.

Now all we needed were some horses, birds to work with them, and some skilled help. And our sister centre in Lower Austria could provide the lot. The other centre did a lot of horse work and had staged some spectacular events; from mounted European

medieval falconry to Central Asian hunting camps - complete with yurts - few periods of history had been neglected.

Two horses were selected: Matti, who had originally come from Hungary where he had been used for stunt work, and Gwynivier, who belonged to castle falconer and expert horseman Andreas Zechmeister. And doing the riding? Well, Andreas would come up to help and he would be joined in the arena by Tonya, who knew both horses from time spent at the other centre.

Next the birds.

Several birds would come up with the horses: some for lure flying; some for glove flights. One in particular stood out - Rosa, a mantling, screaming, burst-your-eardrums imprinted peregrine. She was unbearable. But she was priceless. This bird

would do anything, become anything: she flew to the lure, she flew to the fist. For flights to the glove she ruled supreme. It's a type of flying most falcons do grudgingly - the urge always being to pass over the fist - but this peregrine flew from glove to glove with the type of precision and reliability that would put a Harris' to shame. And she was, of course, bomb proof. Nothing shook this bird, not galloping horses, not stampeding elephants! Whenever I found her gentle tones testing my nerves, I reminded myself of her value!





## Dry Runs

We may have had all the ingredients, but the biggest problem was still facing us - now we had to put a performance together. The main concern was the tiny, very steep display lawn. Always swimming with spectators, it was barely big enough to swing a lure, let alone manoeuvre a horse around. Every move would have to be meticulously planned. And so began intensive dry-run training - horseless and birdless to begin with. It was all a bit Monty Pythonish, as make-believe horses were put through their paces weaving around make-believe spectators!

From this we progressed to training with horses, and for Tonya, another hurdle - to do it all sidesaddle! Tonya had done a lot of riding, but sidesaddle was completely new, and given the setting and the conditions, she wasn't just being thrown in at the deep end, she was being given lead weights too. I'd never really studied a sidesaddle until I watched Tonya struggling with hers. It looked so very odd, as she grappled and hung onto the special support with one leg. And it was uncomfortable - a real back breaker. Nevertheless, she stuck with it, and as she became more competent, the birds were worked in.

Now the pressure really started to be felt. Although the horses knew the birds, and the birds knew the horses - and both knew about demonstration flying - they didn't know about our wild mountaintop setting and lunatic weather. The fear of loss was terrifying. Everything had to be geared by safety and simplicity; the horseback flying would have to be cautious, the horses themselves doing much of the entertaining. The dramatic stuff could be dealt with by our own birds. It proved a hard plan to follow. Those damn new birds just wouldn't stick to the rules, were determined to hit the clouds and strut. One of the sakers had obviously been watching a rerun of *Top Gun*. His tailfeather-burning antics made you clench your teeth and pray. Didn't we get through some nerve pills!

Eventually we had a routine that gave us a display of the correct length and content: we had some fist to fist flying between Tonya and Andreas as they moved between our still imaginary crowds; some nice single-handed lure flying from Andreas, all conducted from the saddle; little exhibitions of horsemanship (including some jumping!); and we were able to blend in just the right amount of standard flying. Things were looking good.

## Little Surprises

It was about this time we were told of the Czech musicians. The boss had decided the whole thing would need to be iced with live music. The musicians were a familiar troop. They frequently took part in demonstrations in Lower Austria and had a relationship with Josef that went back years. They were about as mixed a bunch as you could imagine. From long and bean pole thin to

short and portly, and every shape in between, they made a fascinating line-up. The clock ticked on their arrival. We also gained a new horse! Strange how little additions kept creeping in! The third horse was on loan from a local farming friend and was included to try and pad things out. Padding is certainly something Sophie brought with her. She was a Norika, a traditional Austrian heavy horse and built like a tank. And we had the perfect role for her; she would carry an equally heavyweight musician. Wouldn't they make a pair!

## Practice Makes Perfect

So with our routine worked out it was time to add the finishing touches. A difficult aspect to operate was the horse-stall tower. It had been a clever idea. Hidden in the tower, the horses and riders would emerge with surprise impact. The drawing board made it look easy - another con! The drawing board had obviously been given the wrong measurements. It had certainly got Sophie's wrong! The real tower wasn't Doctor Who's tardis, didn't become massive as you entered, it stayed its normal sardine can. You had to be in there - doors shut - to appreciate just how far out the calculations were. With falconers, birds, assistants, and three horses - 'cramped' took on a whole new meaning. It was clear - well clear to me - if your feet weren't

***Although the horses knew the birds, and the birds knew the horses - and both knew about demonstration flying - they didn't know about our wild mountaintop setting and lunatic weather.***

trampled flat, you were going to be crushed. To do anything - just to turn around - was like being a lorry driver in a multistorey car park! This truly, really was the last place in the world you would have wanted a problem. And the exit was dodgy too. Because we

were actually in the base of the tower, and below ground level (now you feel the horror, right?), there was a steepish slope to deal with. I had visions of the mighty Sophie rolling back down like some huge bowling ball.

But, with some of those nerve pills left, we did get it to work, and it made a grand opening scene. The big doors opened to

have Tonya and Andreas ride up the ramp and burst right out into the arena. And they were dressed for the part. What costumes! All Hohenwerfen displays were conducted in costume. They were fairly simple outfits finished with heavy sleeveless overjackets. They were unbearable. During high summer the heat on the display lawn burnt with laser intensity and the leather jackets almost cooked you alive. They may have looked the part, but they had obviously been designed in February!

For the horse event, there was to be a costume change. Something a little more refined was called for: flowing silk and flamboyant wide-brimmed hats. Andreas was transformed into one of the three Musketeers. And Tonya's looked like she'd escaped from a Disney film set!

### Full House

You can imagine how exhausting all of this was. It was the height of summer, we were packed every day with visitors, were still refining routines with our own birds, and doing displays three times a day. And, as an additional burden, there was the need to keep shuffling demo birds about so as not to horse-spook any. And we were advertising and pushing the event. The surrounding villages were plastered with posters showing how fantastic it all was going to be, and the air was humming with it. And the authorities - the owners of the castle - were humming too; they were

place was always popular with friends, relatives - well anyone who could wriggle their way in for a holiday - but the horse special turned the place into a honey pot.

As the event drew closer our numbers started to grow and grow. You couldn't move for all the 'extras'. You fought for the bathroom, you fought for the washing machine - you fought for the loo!

It was now that the Czech musicians arrived - would our family never cease growing! In truth, our colourful music men helped ease tensions greatly. They were such a happy easy-going bunch that having them about the place was a tonic. No matter how hectic things got, no matter how stressed you felt, time spent in their company smoothed the most

### The Big Day

And then it was there - the first day of the two-day event. I didn't see the gallows, but they were there somewhere, my stomach insisted. It was a strange morning and it passed, for all the preparation that had to be done, agonisingly slowly. And then the crowds started to build, with a stream of spectators slowly making their way up to the castle. And as they gathered they had to be carefully ordered so as not to block any of the routes planned for the horses. And there was no room for compromise.

The horses had to perform exactly as planned. It was difficult keeping the imaginary walls in place, but each time there was the slightest overflow, it had to be eased back.



really revved up and ready for it. And now all we had to do was get it right. The sleepless nights rolled in one after the other.

And if all of this wasn't stressful enough, we were invaded! The falconers' accommodation at the castle was a building called Lime Tree House. The

determined frown. With no room at Lime Tree House, they set up camp in the Music Tower - a little driveway-bridging tower that, before they arrived, was never actually referred to as the Music Tower! And, aided by gallons of beer, each evening, from the tower did indeed spill much music.

Nobody expected such a turnout. The place was absolutely packed. Could this possibly work? The last clear memory I have is of my hand around the microphone and squeezing it so hard I almost crushed it. Terror doesn't nearly describe it. And then it was too late for final checks, or excuse illnesses, the performers were on. And guess what, it all worked. And it was fantastic. The horse routines went as if on rollers: not a single hiccup, not one out of place hoof.

And our own birds, be outdone by a bunch of newcomers? I don't think so. They whistled up some of that wind and decided to turn the demonstration into an air show. Wow! The musicians followed suit. They were surely heard in Germany! And so it was on day two - perfection. Josef had been right. That final evening we went out to celebrate at a restaurant on the other side of the valley, and looking back to the castle, raised our glasses. YES!





# Your Letters

Send your letters to: **LYN WILSON**  
 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants NN15 5QP  
**Fax:** (01536) 726815 **E-mail:** falconersmag@dial.pipex.com

## Dear Lyn

My wife and I enjoy going to various country and game fairs around the country and look forward to seeing the falconry displays put on by the organisers.

Eminent falconers, both professional and amateur, can put on wonderful flying displays and also commentate at the same time. We see birds such as Lanner Falcons, Sakers, Harris Hawks, Steppes Eagles, Eagle Owls and all

kinds of hybrids being flown to entertain and educate the onlooking crowd.

But why don't these falconers fly and educate people on our own British birds? There are not many falconers who fly Golden Eagles, Kestrels, Buzzards, Peregrines, Merlins or Barn Owls in display. Surely it would be better to fly more of these types of birds so that the paying public could see close at hand what a native bird looks like and how they fly. Then, when they see one

in the wild, they have more of an idea of what they are looking at. How many people know what a Tawny Owl looks like close up? They probably have only heard one in the dead of night.

So, if you and your friends find yourselves at a game or country fair, ask the falconer why he or she is not flying native birds of prey in demonstration?

**Yours**  
**Mr A. N Gary**

## YOU ONLY GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

### Dear Lyn and David

In response to Ed Hopkins letter in issue 50, I believe it is important that several points are addressed.

Of course, all keepers have every right to choose where they take their birds for treatment and hence how much they pay for it. After all, vets fees are services and are no different to choice over which bed and breakfast, or which 1 to 5 star hotel you stay in. Equally in the human medical field, services may be provided by a local GP, a country hospital, a city hospital or a University Teaching Hospital.

Within the avian veterinary field, there are practices who earn their income treating conventional pets / farm stock, where one vet is happy to do their best in treating birds as well. In others a vet may have developed particular experience or expertise with birds. In time they may move on to gaining additional post graduation qualifications in treating birds, gaining a certificate in zoological medicine, in time moving onto a diploma in zoological medicine and finally to becoming a Specialist (either a RCVS Specialist or a European Veterinary Specialist in Avian Medicine and Surgery). The clinician however Specialist, may be on their own and hence not always available, whilst in other practices there may be an avian vet on duty at all times of all days. No vet involved with bird work, would deny that it is easier, less stressful and more lucrative doing standard cat and dog work, than concentrating on birds. If a vet is only doing bird work, then that is how they have to earn their living.

There are many good clinicians who have no post graduate qualifications. However, those vets who have put themselves forward to examination and review by their peers can be certain that they have achieved a measured

level of knowledge and expertise. The difficulty for any professional who has not undergone post graduate examination, is that you only know how much you don't know, when you know more. Details of post graduation qualifications are listed on the RCVS website. Lists of RCVS Specialists and European College of Avian Medicine and Surgery are listed on the respective web sites.

You do not expect to pay a Solicitor the same daily rate as a Barrister, nor should one compare the fees charged by a GP vet and those of an avian specialist. Many legal cases are admirably dealt with by Solicitors, whilst others require the expertise and appropriate cost of a Barrister.

Apart from the clinicians own ability, one also has the question of what nursing back-up they have. In the case of Veterinary Hospitals, trained and qualified nurses are on premises, 24 hours a day 365 days a year, most other practices do not have resident staff. Apart from staffing one also has the question of equipment and facilities. How many practices have an avian ward, let alone a separate isolation avian ward? In many cases the outcome is not dependant on the expertise of the clinician who treats the bird however, in other cases, the expertise, support care and facilities available will make a difference.

We would advise any falconer, who values their bird (as well as the time and effort you have put into training it), to insure their bird for veterinary fees, then that nasty question of money need not enter the discussion and the owner can just concentrate on seeking the appropriate level of care and treatment which they feel their bird deserves.

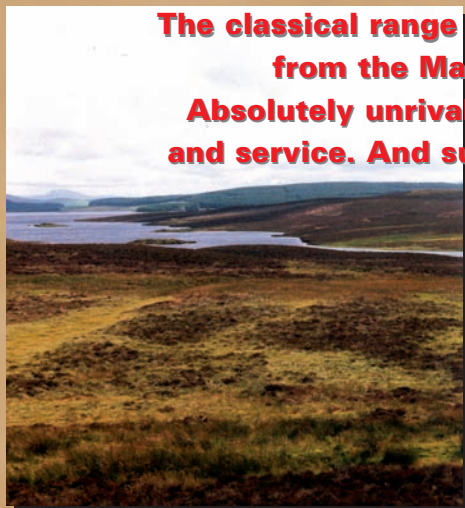
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