

The **Falcons**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine



**PARAHAWKING
IN NEPAL**

PEREGRINATIONS
PART 2
BOB DALTON



Interviews with
JEMIMA PARRY-JONES
and **TONY ALLAN**



POE -
A RAVEN
BEAUTY
JENNY WRAY





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Editor: Peter Eldrett
Knowle View, Kings Lane, Woodlands,
Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 8LZ
Telephone: (01202) 826181
E-mail: peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

Art Editor: Bob Kemp

Art Director: Steve Hunt

Advertising and Marketing:

Sales: Eileen Saunders
0870 224 7820
Production: Peter Eldrett
PW Publishing Ltd., Arrowsmith Court,
Station Approach, Broadstone,
Dorset BH18 8PW
Telephone: 0870 224 7820
Fax: 0870 224 7850
E-mail: sales@pwpublishing.ltd.uk

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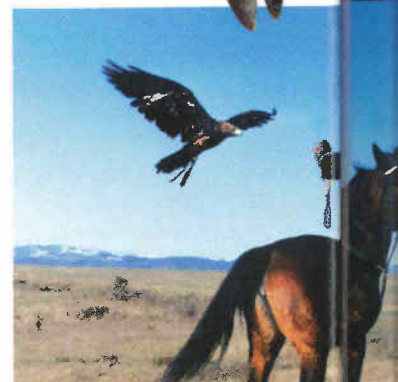
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editorial



The season is now underway and hopefully your birds have had a good moult and are flying well. I hope that all you falconers who are new to the sport are enjoying your new 'charges' and that the birds have now been entered on quarry. The weather has been dry for quite awhile but I am sure that mother nature will redress the balance later in the year when there will be days when flying birds will be out of the question.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue, which contains stories from around the globe. Africa, Mexico, Nepal, and India, as well as the UK, are all represented.

Also, there are two interviews. Jemima Parry-Jones and Tony Allan, both gave their time to talk to me and I must say a big thank you to them. When I went to see Tony in his office in Kent, I had a horrendous journey because of a long traffic jam, which was caused by an overturned lorry. Thank you M25!

The show season is now over and I hope that many of you had the opportunity to support one or more of the falconry events this year. We are already looking forward to the game fairs taking place in 2004.

Finally, I must apologise to John Hill for not crediting him for the photographs he supplied for the Falconers Fair pages in the last issue. Some of you may know John as a hard worker for the Campaign For Falconry and also as chairman of the Central Falconry Club.

Remember to keep sending in your letters, suggestions and stories. In the meantime, have a good read.

Peter Eldrett

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Bob Dalton's travels
Page 24



Falconers

news and products

Send all your news and product information to peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

Falconry Club on the move

The Central Falconry & Raptor Club, based in the Midlands, has come back to Coventry after having various venues in Warwickshire over the last five years.

As from September 14th we will be meeting at the Sports Connexion, Leamington Road, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry.

The club meets on the Second Sunday of every month at 8pm.

On September 14th, Jenny Wray from the Independent Bird Register came along to microchip birds that members & guests will bring along. Also, Craig Fellows, the local Wild Life Officer for Warwickshire, gave a talk on his experiences.

In October Graham Watkins, the famous Gundog trainer, will be giving a talk. Also he will be bringing his famous ferret racing team.

Then in November, Terry Large, the Falconry Display Giver, will be giving a film show on his Falconry experiences in North America.

We are the local club for the West Midlands, Warwickshire, Leicestershire & Northamptonshire.

Members old & new are more than welcome to visit us.

Any queries? please call John Hill on 07973 224609

Nests, Birds and Incubators New Insights into Natural and Artificial Incubation

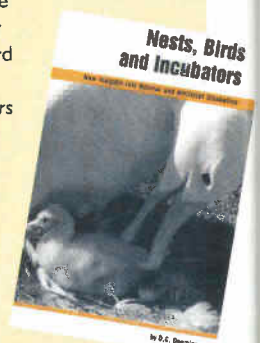
Review by Donna Vincent

Written by Dr Charles Deeming this comprehensive book is a result of several papers researched by him and brought together in an accessible way in over 200 pages for the non-scientific among us. Illustrated throughout with clear, concise diagrams, photos and graphs this book provides a useful reference source for those who are interested in incubation, the procedures and theory behind it. Taking the reader through basic bird reproduction, nest structure and functionality, egg formation, fertilisation, onto behaviour during incubation, how artificial incubators work and through to troubleshooting it answers a lot of questions. Also included, is a glossary of terms, further reading and species reference, all of which are particularly useful for the newcomer.

The differences between natural and artificial incubation are explored and even though the technical data is quite involved at times, the graphs used to illustrate points help to explain the theory in an at-a-glance format. Each chapter closes with a bullet-pointed summary, so you can re-cap on all that has been explained and if you've missed a point go back and refresh your memory.

All-in-all, even though it's not easy 'bedtime' reading, *Nests, Birds and Incubators* goes a long way to provide an insight into the practices behind natural and artificial incubation. It should be read by anyone who has an interest in or already breeds exotic bird species.

Nests, Birds and Incubators is available from Brinsea Products Ltd, Sation Road, Sandford, North Somerset BS25 5RA.
Website
www.brinsea.co.uk
Tel: 01934 823039.
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Caryospora Research Project Update

Neil Forbes DipECAMS FRCVS, European Specialist in Avian Medicine and Surgery and well-known raptor vet, has for the last nine years been researching the clinical disease caused by a protozoal parasite named 'Caryospora'. Caryospora is a type of coccidia. He and others have previously demonstrated that it is the single largest cause of death in merlins and is responsible for the disease and, on occasion, the death of a significant number of young falcons. Indeed Caryospora is the commonest parasitic disease of falcons. The parasite can affect owls, but is more common in falcons. It has not been recorded to affect hawks in the UK.

Eggs (oocysts) of the parasite are very resistant in the environment, surviving for up to two years on the ground. Once contamination is present within a falconry centre or aviary, one is unlikely to ever eliminate it. Neil Forbes has demonstrated that some 60% of all breeder establishments are affected by the parasite, with 26-28% of all faecal (mote) samples showing evidence of infestation.

Neil Forbes' research commenced with an evaluation of the prevalence of the disease, the seasonal, diurnal and age related incidence of oocyst shedding, and the comparison of prevalence between Germany, Saudi Arabia and the UK.

The research then progressed to assess therapeutic efficacy of various previously recommended treatments, together with a number of new and unusual treatments. The

result of this work was a newly recommended proven therapy for infested birds, whilst previously published treatments were proven to be ineffective.

It is well recognised that the greatest risk period for falcons is when they first enter training. At this time they are often newly exposed to the parasite, their condition is reduced, and they may be immune suppressed by the effects of training.

Neil Forbes appreciates that prevention of infestation would be preferable to control once it had occurred. To this end over the last two years he has been researching the potential for vaccine production to generate immunity in young birds so as to prevent clinical disease. Results are looking promising, however, further research is required.

This project has been undertaken in Neils' own time and funded by Lansdown Veterinary Surgeons. The conservative costing of the vaccine research alone is in excess of £10,000. A substantial contribution has been made by the Campaign for Falconry and the South East Falconry Group.

The main beneficiaries of this research will be falconers and their birds and it is gratifying to see the concern and commitment of falconers to the long-term welfare of their birds. Any other organisations or individuals who would be willing to assist in the financial support of this project should send contributions to Lansdown Veterinary Surgeons, Clock House Veterinary Hospital, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3JD. Tel: 01453 752555.

Parahawking

A new film by Sunrise Paragliders



The film starts with different images of Nepal, the mountains and people. It is not too long into the film before we start to see paragliding in the Pokhara valley.

Adam Hill was on honeymoon in Nepal but decided to stay and set up a paragliding school. Scott

Mason, a falconer from England, was trekking in Nepal and stayed there. The two got together and started the Himalayan Hawk Conservancy, combining paragliding and falconry. The film tells how the project was born and how they trained birds of prey to fly with the paragliders. This is an unusual award winning film for falconers and the quality is first class. It is available by logging onto their website www.hhc-nepal.org and there are also some extra features on the DVD of still photos and description of the HHC. It is also available in VHS format.

Update on New Forest Owl Sanctuary

Following the undercover investigation by the *Inside Out* programme on 30 June and the subsequent police investigations, the New Forest Owl Sanctuary has now closed to the public. Mr. Bruce Berry was arrested on suspicion of stealing a saker falcon and other matters. He has been released without charge pending further enquiries.

The lease of the premises has been taken over by Mr. Giles Talbot, who owns a bird of prey collection at Knock Hatch Park in Sussex. He has confirmed that Mr. Bruce Berry is no longer connected with the site. Mr. Talbot has held talks with planning officers at the New Forest District Council and says that he plans to re-open the centre, but it will be run as a business not as a charity. The new venture will include birds of prey, plus a collection of snakes and other reptiles. He has offered to buy the 242 birds at the sanctuary, which are owned by the New Forest Owl Sanctuary charity and has commenced work to improve the current aviaries and conditions for the birds.

However, Pam Broughton, head of the North Wales Bird Trust and Trustee of the Sanctuary, has launched the "Two Hoots Appeal" which aims to raise the money needed to move the birds to, as she says, "safe" locations and pay off the charity's debts. She is worried about the safety of the birds and is concerned that some of the rarest in the collection could go out of the country. The Charity Commission has placed a restrictive order on the birds.

Pam Broughton said, "There is a possibility that this collection will be looking for a new home". If interested please contact Pam Broughton through her website www.2-hoots.com

The Restoration Fund

Paul Beecroft

During the travels of members of the Archives Of American Falconry in Britain on their "Dead Falconers Tour" in 2002, it was discovered that the memorials to several important British falconers were either in terrible shape or completely non-existent.

The monument of the Hon. Gerald Lascelles, who was instrumental in keeping the sport of falconry alive in Britain as Secretary of the Old Hawking Club through the 19th century, has fallen into serious disrepair. Lascelles, one of the most renowned Deputy Surveyors of the New Forest, was laid to rest in the cemetery at Lyndhurst in 1928. His once handsome six foot marble cumbon has broken off at the base and has lain covered by high grass for decades. The inscriptions have seriously deteriorated, some to the point of being barely legible. The marble perimeter paling has cracked and sunk into the ground. For a man so important in the history of falconry this is a travesty.

Edward Blair Michell, famous for his expertise in flying Merlins and his book on falconry, had no monument at all. According to burial records for the County of Somerset he was buried in Wyke Champflower at the church where his father had been a vicar. Though we scouted every stone in the small cemetery no memorial was found. A month after the Americans visited the cemetery Brian Bird, a member of the BFC, happened along on the same mission. His search too was fruitless and it was decided that the cost of a memorial stone would be split by Falconers in the US and the UK. This monument has since been put in place.

The costs for the restoration of the Michell and

Lascelles monuments, and the placing of a simple plaque on the grave of noted American falconer Luff Meredith, are estimated to be in the region of £1900 to £4300 depending on the amount of work required. We are hoping costs will be closer to the former! The restoration work is expensive as the Lascelles monument is intricately carved and badly damaged. Plans are to have all work completed by the spring of 2004. On the Saturday before the Falconers Fair (early May) there will be a rededication ceremony for both men, possibly followed by an evening dinner for all those who attend. Contributors names will also be included in a program booklet to be published for the rededication ceremonies.

Peter Barry Devers, the Archives associate who directed the restoration of William Brodrick's monument in 1998 (tiefalca@aol.com), and Paul Beecroft (raptorlife@aol.com 0118 9016990) for UK Falconers will coordinate the restoration project. You can contact any of them for further information.

Contributions from North American falconers should be made out to "Archives of America Falconry, Monument Fund" and can be sent to the Archives at 5668 West Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, Idaho 83709. Those from US citizens are tax deductible. Contributions from British falconers can be sent to Paul Beecroft at 7, Arnside Close, Twyford, Berkshire, RG10 9BS. Please make out all cheques in sterling to Hoare Banks Masonry.

We hope you will be able to contribute any amount, large or small, to this project. Please join us in helping to honour our fellow falconers from times long past.

Falconry festival - Holdenby House

Bob Dalton

Mike Hewlett and Richard James, who together make up Icarus Falconry, recently hosted the initial Falconry Festival at Holdenby House. Situated a few miles outside of Northampton, Holdenby House proved to be an ideal backdrop to the event. The house is steeped in history and has an excellent falconry centre set up within the grounds.

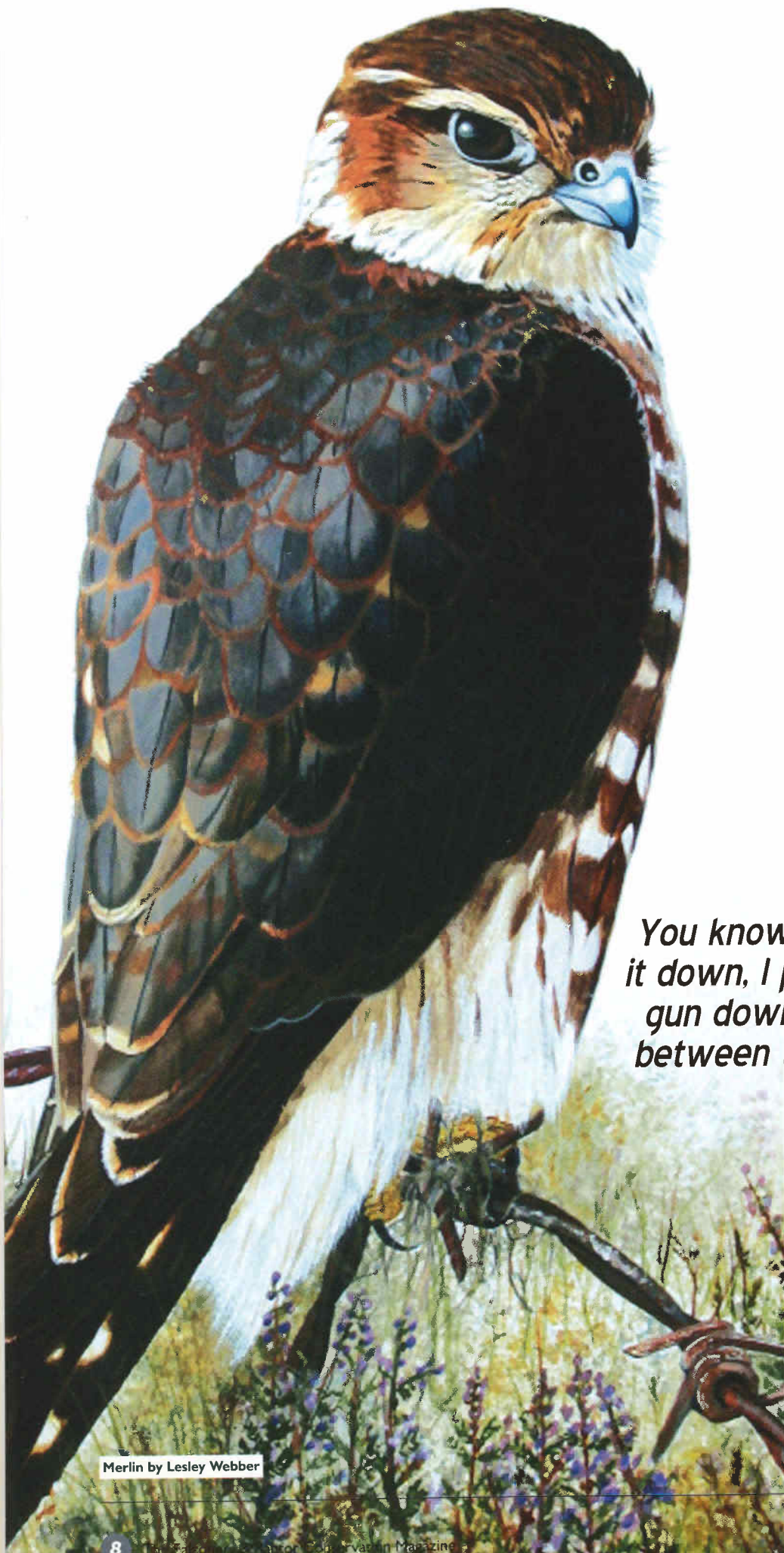
Held over the bank holiday weekend at the end of August, falconers and the public were drawn to the event in sufficient numbers to ensure that the event will run again next year. In fact attendance figures exceeded the organisers' expectations by a considerable margin. In addition to several first class flying displays each day, the visitor was able to browse various stalls relating to falconry as well as a superb art display, which had been organised by Chris Christoforou.

Clay pigeon shooting, quad bikes, gun dog demonstration and various food and drink stalls also added to the attractions on offer.

Next year the event will be run in July and should prove to be even bigger and better. For details of the 2004 event, contact Icarus Falconry on 07899 953997.



Mike Hewlett, from Icarus Falconry, with a Black Eagle



Merlin by Lesley Webber

Tony Allan is an award winning businessman and falconer. You may have seen him on the BBC2 television programme *Tony and Giorgio*. I caught up with him at his Chislehurst office and here is what he had to say:

When did you first develop an interest in falconry?

I was 14 and I went down to Chilham Castle in Kent – the falconer down there then was Steven Ford. I'd always been bird watching because my father was into that sort of stuff. I was sitting with him when I saw my first demonstration. I went back a year later to Chilham Castle and did a week's falconry course. Then I got my first bird, which was a kestrel - I think everybody starts with one of them. Then I went and did an advanced falconry course when I was about 15 or 16. Then I moved into the realms of a buzzard, then a redtail and later moved on to longwings – mainly peregrines. By this time I was about 18 years old and I went to college to learn how to cook. I stopped flying birds in 1982 and I didn't pick another bird up until 1992. I left college, worked in some restaurants and hotels then I started a fish supply business which I got off the ground and got it trading very well.

In 1992 I thought to myself - I go out in the early mornings, I've got the afternoons free – it's about time I picked up another bird again. I got a female peregrine and trained her up. Then I met a chap who was flying merlins and I went out flying with him. A friend of mine took the peregrine, and I haven't flown any other bird other than a merlin in the last 10 years. In fact, this is the first year I haven't flown a merlin. My pair in the garden haven't bred this year – I've looked around to see if

You know, I fly the merlin, I put it down, I pick a gun up, I put the gun down, I go fishing – and in between times I do some work!

I can get myself another young one but merlins seem to be few and far between at the moment and very difficult to get hold of. So I spent last season, up until about March/April, out with my friends flying their birds. I do a lot of shooting and fishing – but this is the first season I won't be flying my own bird for nine or 10 years. I know I'll miss it – when you've done something consistently for nine or 10 years, it's a chunk of your life taken out of the summer. You know, I fly the merlin, I put it down, I pick a gun up, I put the gun down, I go fishing – and it between times I do some work!

Why birds of prey in particular?

It's something that clicked from an early age. From the early film about a young boy and his kestrel, Kes, which was one of the first films I saw at the pictures. I've always been infatuated about birds of prey. I think the fascination is the interaction -

every bird is different, every year is different, and it's a challenge to get them to the point where they can hunt successfully. I'm not into flying birds just to the lure (although I'm sure this has its place). I'd rather just let the bird go and catch its own food. For example, when you fly something like a merlin there's no shortage of prey. Throughout the season I don't think I have to put my hand in the freezer to get out a day old chick or a piece of beef. I used to hunt skylarks when the licence was available – I haven't applied this year. If you haven't got the licence, you go for some other prey which is legal.

How difficult is it for you to get flying ground near where you live here in Kent?

It's not difficult at all – I shoot on a lot of ground and I get offered lots of ground to fly on. There's always been a bit of a them and us situation with people who shoot and people who fly birds, but over the last couple of years with the Countryside Alliance and all the different field sports pulling together, I'm seeing a lot more commercial shoots and gamekeepers welcoming a day for the falconer after the main bulk of the season is out of the way.

A friend of mine organised a day on Vinny Jones' dad's land – there were 30 or 40 spectators who paid to see it and it was a welcome bonus for the gamekeeper. Many of my friends in the BFC are finding that gamekeepers are now welcoming them with open arms – let's all pull together for the sake of all our field sports. I can see it from both sides though – a lot of shoots do about 12 shoots a year at about 200 birds per day, they put down a certain number of birds and a pair of goshawks can ruin their year

But over the last couple of years gamekeepers have realised that if there is a falcon or a shortwing in the area, it's not going to do that much damage – with the exception being the goshawk which has the potential to wipe out a shoot – it can be a real killing machine. Whereas some years ago the gamekeepers may have shot a goshawk, now they're more likely to trap it. It has taken the threat of all our sports being taken away from us, to get us all to pull together and understand each others' sports. But at the same time, I don't know many falconers who take kindly to people who shoot. It works both ways – I think they've got to understand that a goshawk flying around the woods is not going to damage Lord Snooty's pheasants, but they also have to realise the damage such a bird can do to a commercial shoot, particularly when there might be 20 or 30 employees relying on that for their wages. It's a case of give and take.

What are your views of the Government's attempts to ban hunting with dogs?

I know it's now pretty close and I think deferral is all we can hope for at the moment. I do a lot of fox shooting and lamping at night, because again the fox is another potentially dangerous animal to any commercial shoot.

Sooner or later someone is going to get bitten by a fox which has got rabies – and it's going to take that to wake them up. Urban foxes are so plentiful nowadays – whilst the kids love looking at the family of cubs, when they've grown and you've numerous adult foxes living in the area and your garden if full of fox shit which the kids then walk into the house it's another story. Sooner or later, someone will go down with a disease caught from these animals and people will then take notice. I'm not really into

hunting with dogs – I haven't got strong views on it, but I do think the fox is an absolute pest.

Have you had any disasters whilst flying birds?

I've had a few mishaps. I lost a peregrine once with telemetry which hit a pylon and got blown to smithereines. I had a merlin which I had just got trained up and it looked like it was going to be a really good bird. I put it on its perch in the garden, the

kids were in the pool about five feet from it and a fox came out of the bush and took it straight off its perch in front of the kids. They're my two biggest mishaps. I was present when a friend of mine had just started his merlin off and it got up and up and up with the creance attached as he mistakenly hadn't tied it down securely. I've a jack merlin in the aviary which I flew last year – a very good bird, in fact. I had a mishap when it flew after a bird into a horse chestnut tree. My friend climbed the tree but could not see it. We went back after 24 hours and discovered it at the top of the tree. We had to cut it out - it had a ruff of conkers around its neck and it had tied itself up – lucky enough there wasn't any damage at all.

What telemetry do you use and why?

Luksander – it's been really good and consistent. I've used that for all of the 10 merlins I've flown. In actual fact, the first couple of years we didn't use telemetry but just a leg bell. The first bird I had was actually a hacked merlin from Yorkshire and it was probably the best bird I've ever had, in all respects. She flew right into October when I lost her. She'd had a massive ringing flight after a lark and went up into a storm and that was the last I saw of her.



ALLION TONY RESTAURANTEUR AND FALCONER

Peter Eldrett

Tony Allan

How do you manage to fit falconry into your busy schedule?

I'm a member of the British Falconry Club. I run a lot of businesses and do a fair bit of TV work, and when you're doing filming you've got to be fair to the bird and try to keep some sort of consistency.

If my profile goes up on TV and the like, then perhaps they'll ask me to blow the falconry trumpet for them a bit more. But at the moment, I don't want to go beyond my limitations. If I could end up sitting on the board of BFC or something like that, and really blowing the trumpet then, yes that would be good. But at the moment my priority is giving time and properly looking after the bird I'm flying, rather than going off guns ablazing and being a higher profile falconer and doing a bit more for the sport. The bird comes first and it's whether or not I can justify the time – I'm not going to keep a bird and let it work round my time schedule – I'm not going to let that happen.

A merlin season is probably six to eight weeks and Sarah (my secretary) will carve it out in my diary to give me afternoons off. If I've got filming and I can't be fair to the bird, then I won't pick one up. A merlin has to be flown every day – if you miss two days here and three days there, you take the edge of the bird and it's just not fair.

The balance of the weight is not an easy thing to get right. Especially flying a jack merlin - you've got about a half ounce tolerance between it being

under or overweight.

You have to be very careful but you do get into a consistent pattern. A couple of years ago, when they were eating what they caught, I found they were putting on a lot more weight and I was struggling to get the weight right. Normally a lark a day would keep them up to weight but at that time I found the next day the jack would be struggling. I think that was because there was such a resurgence of songbirds after foot and mouth with no-one being in the countryside and no crop spraying going on for a year and a half, that these larks were like small game birds – they were plumper, fatter – we put it down to that.

Would you go back to flying broadwings, for example a redtail?

No, I'm just too smitten with merlins. The only thing that would make me pick up something different is if I was having a great season with the merlins and going out with the lads and I wanted to continue that and I had some time. Then I'd think of getting a sparrowhawk or a goshawk, or something like that. But again, if I'm cutting eight weeks out of my busy schedule, I'd rather fly a merlin than cut eight weeks out in January and February to fly a goshawk. I've had seasons when I've put the bird down and thought that's been a good season – I'm going to miss it. It's like shooting – when I stop shooting on 1st February, the next six months is the build up to looking forward to another season of shooting – and it's

the same with flying a bird. If I picked up another bird and flew it through the winter, it would probably take the edge off it. I prefer to stick to my routine.

What about your future in falconry?

I want to carry on flying merlins, but friends of mine who said they would only ever fly merlins are starting to get interested in the hybrids now, like gyrlins and perlins. Whilst seeing some of these birds fly is fabulous, I'm not one of these people who are totally confident in mucking around with nature. The jury's out on that question for me at the moment – when you take the extreme of a six ounce female merlin and a 1.5 kilo male gyrl you're stretching the bounds. It's like breeding a Chihuahua with a Rottweiler. I'm not convinced so I'll sit on the fence for now. When someone breeds a 2-headed merlin with four wings, then I'll say I told you so. I've no real desire to fly a hybrid because I'm still smitten by the merlin. I found myself driving all over the south of England just to look for a covey of partridges for a peregrine, whereas I can go out into public places with the merlin. I've seen this bird fly, he can get four or five flights in an afternoon. It's great – you get everything in one: the chase, the ringing flights – it's fantastic. To cut a long story short, I think I'm sticking with the merlins for now, unless something else "floats my boat".

New light shed on Indian Vulture Crisis

Campbell Murn

The widespread mortality and decline of three vulture species (*Gyps bengalensis*, *Gyps indicus* and *Gyps tenuirostris*) in southern Asia has been a cause of concern since it was widely reported in 1999.

Following observed declines in western India, there were reports of further vulture mortalities in Pakistan, as well as other parts of India. The extent of these declines varies, but all are significant. At three sites in Pakistan, estimates of the decline in numbers of breeding vultures are between 33% and 97%. Survey transects conducted across India suggest population declines in the region of 92%.

Suggested causes have included pesticides, persecution, a novel infectious disease and habitat loss. Until recently, the identification of a single cause has been elusive. A common finding among field workers has been the presence of visceral gout in many dead vultures, with up to 80% of adult vultures examined *post mortem* having shown these symptoms. Efforts have concentrated on establishing the cause of this condition.

At the recent 6th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls in Budapest, Hungary (18-23 May 2003), there was a report of significant new findings. Dr Lindsay Oakes (Washington State University), an investigator with The Peregrine Fund (USA), highlighted the role of Diclofenac Sodium, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, in relation to vulture mortalities. Based on these results, it appears that the proximal cause of visceral gout in affected vultures is this widespread veterinary drug. Contamination of vultures occurs following the consumption of deceased domestic stock previously treated with Diclofenac.

To address the crisis, reactive strategies could include an attempted

withdrawal of veterinary Diclofenac from general distribution, the development of in-country captive facilities and the re-establishment of wild populations through food provision and field monitoring.

However, given the rate of population declines, it is possible that such remedial objectives will be too late to avoid local extinctions. Despite the identification of an obvious cause of vulture mortalities, the current situation and immediate prognosis for these species remains critically unfavourable.

The captive population covered by the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) is therefore highly significant. For a start, the vultures in the EEP population have lived in Europe for at least 15 years, and are therefore unaffected by the problems currently afflicting wild populations.

Although the likelihood of any future EEP population being used for re-introduction is very small, if not non-existent, the extremely poor status of wild populations means that the EEP population has a definite role to play as a 'safety net'. If, however, *in situ* conservation efforts continue developing captive care and captive breeding facilities, it is very possible that the EEP population can function as a satellite population in the future.

The Hawk Conservancy Trust has worked with both species of white-backed vulture for several years, and is committed to their conservation. Efforts directed at the African White-backed Vulture consist of ongoing field research on topics such as land use, breeding success and colony distribution. Work on the Indian White-backed Vulture occurs primarily in a zoological context, as the Hawk Conservancy currently houses the largest captive population outside India. Direct links are maintained with organisations working on wild populations.

Campbell Murn – Projects Director, The Hawk Conservancy Trust
EEP Coordinator *Gyp bengalensis*
Co-Chair Federation and EAZA Falconiformes TAGs



In 1999, I was living in the UK, but in a definite rut. I had been divorced for four years after a nine-year marriage and life was going nowhere fast. I had been a milkman for nineteen years but it felt like forty.

The milkround was however conducive to good falconry. I was out seven days a week flying my hawk due to my early finishing hours and I lived in a rural area in deepest Dorset where I knew most of the farmers and so for me the hunting land was abundant. So in a nutshell, life was a chore, but the falconry was great. To some of you out

there this statement must sound crazy. To most, falconry is life but I promise you, there was no personal life for me; just work, hawking and sleeping. I have been fortunate enough to be around birds of prey for the past thirty years. Like most, once I was in possession of a real hunting hawk (at the time this was a red tail) numbers were the name of the game. I thought nothing of trying to catch three or four head of quarry a day and built up huge tallies. Not something I am proud of now I have to admit. As time moved on, new birds arrived and

course that is just my opinion. The point I am trying to make is that flying birds is not everything, if you have nothing else in life. Again, don't get me wrong, I have family and I am fortunate to have a great many friends, but I always seemed to be too tired to see them with my 2am starts on the milkround - basically life was lonely!

Job offer
January 2000, my life changed drastically, for the better. I was offered a job in South Africa running a bird of prey centre. A South African falconer friend of mine, Tim Wagner, had just started this particular establishment and after being let down by young staff (leaving prematurely), he decided

business, three dogs, three hawks and many other issues to consider. No, come to think about it I didn't know what I had done. I decided to sit down and make a list of positives and negatives. The positives far outweighed the negatives, the move just had to take place, but I didn't kid myself, it was not going to be easy.

Persuasion by friends & family
Over the next few months, the business was sold, house rented out, hawks and dogs sold or lent out (that broke my heart I can tell you), debts paid off, but even then, a tragedy struck my family that almost changed my mind.

Two weeks before I was due to leave my dear mum suddenly died after a short illness, leaving my two sisters, myself and most of all, my father, devastated. It was the longest two weeks of my life and after many discussions with my father and my sisters and friends; we all decided I must go. The decision had been made, but boy it had not been easy.

The big day arrived - I was on my way.

From England To South Africa

a mature person might want to take over the reigns, and run it for him, and bring a bit of responsibility with the maturity. That is when he thought of me. (I must say I didn't like the mature bit).

Six months earlier he had visited me in the

I arrived in South Africa in March 2000 after a very uncomfortable eleven-hour flight where my legs seemed to have been stuck in my ears and my backside felt like the pins and needles would never go away. (It does not pay to be six foot five when you have to fly long distances).

Tim was there to meet me at the airport and so was the sunshine. When we left the airport, the heat took my breath away, it was ninety-two degrees and the humidity was up to 100%, not hawking weather, nowhere near! Please don't even mention hawking.

The night was spent at Tim's place and the next morning we were off to our destination, a little village named Dullstroom, in a province called Mpumalanga - this is where the centre is situated. Dullstroom is about two and a half hours away from Johannesburg one way and two hours from the Kruger National Park the other way. It is not what you expect Africa to look like; it actually looks a great deal like the borders of Scotland, with rolling hills and large bodies of

When the excitement subsided slightly over the next couple of days, I realised what I had done by accepting the offer so quickly, I had commitments to fulfil

style was the name of the game. I will always be a goshawk man and flights at pheasant will always be the way to go for me. Don't get me wrong, rabbit hawking also gives me a real buzz with a good working dog, over the right terrain, but the adrenalin flight of a goshawk chasing a pheasant and catching it over a canopy of trees is something that makes it all worthwhile. Of

UK and knew how I was feeling and decided to offer the post to me. I nearly bit his hand off when I got the offer, and rather foolishly just said "yes, yes, Tim, that's a definite yes"!

When the excitement subsided slightly over the next couple of days, I realised what I had done by accepting the offer so quickly. I had commitments to fulfil. I had a house, my own

water splashed around the landscape. It is also situated 2000 metres above sea level. Dullstroom is also one of South Africa's trout fishing mecca's, and it is classed as a weekend resort for many people living in the Johannesburg area. Ideal situation for a bird of prey centre I am sure that you would agree - after a morning's fishing, what can visitors do, go for a walk, have some breakfast, go to the bird of prey centre - well that it is how it is supposed to work. Unfortunately when I first arrived I thought, now this isn't the way that it goes. A bird of prey centre is such a new concept in South Africa that people do not know what to expect. To most it is just a few birds in cages and so numbers through the doors are slow. So slow in the early days that in October 2000 Tim broke the news to me that he had decided to close the centre down because he could not afford to keep it going. I was gobsmacked, where did this leave me? I had given up almost everything in the UK and I was enjoying life in South Africa, I had a new life, a new woman in my life and a whole village of new friends, and most importantly of all, two local pubs in walking distance from my house!

I had to do something to avoid coming back to the UK and so in my wisdom after a meeting with Tim I decided to buy the assets and the debts and take over the centre/business from him. This was another huge decision that was just not as easy as taking over a business. Being an English citizen it turned out harder to buy a South African business than I had expected and the centre was only legally mine after a further six months.

Here we are almost three years down the line and still going. Without doubt the centre is going from strength-to-strength and more and more visitors are coming through the door. The battle has still not been won, however, and we endeavour to educate as many people as we possibly can about birds of prey and begging

It is not what you expect Africa to look like; it actually looks a great deal like the borders of Scotland, with rolling hills and large bodies of water splashed around the landscape

them to tell their friends and relatives about us. The centre was actually created to try and educate South African people about birds of prey, as most South Africans, like most countries residence, are quite ignorant about their natural heritage. Here we get all types, from South African celebrities to the office worker down the road. Schools are a target for us, especially the poverty stricken schools in the townships. We

visit these on a regular basis, and the look on those little kids' faces when they see the birds is amazing. The visits that we do to the townships are for free; but occasionally we do get our fuel sponsored to visit the children.

What is nice, is the fact that we are now on a great deal of schools' visit list. Sometimes we get little monsters through the doors, but all-in-all the kids are great fun. I have always maintained that education leads to conservation, corny you may say but true nevertheless.

Entrance to the centre itself is actually very cheap; it is around 80p for children and two pound for adults.

As time has gone on here, we have moved into a natural progression, as more and more people have found out about us, more and more injured birds are brought in, and we are now an official rehabilitation centre for birds of prey.

Rehabilitation is difficult here to say the least as a good avian vet is very difficult to find. I have lost count how many times I have e-mailed Neil Forbes for advice. A very big thank you Neil!

We do have a local vet who does help us immensely and we are very grateful to her also.

Various Species

Most of the birds that we get brought in injured are owls, the Spotted Eagle Owl being the most common, followed by Barn Owls and Marsh Owls. The most common diurnal bird of prey we see come in are African Goshawks, then it must be the Black

Sparrowhawk, followed by a little bird named a Black Shouldered Kite. This little bird flies more like a falcon than a kite, but actually hunts by hovering like a Kestrel, rodents being their staple diet. They are a falconer's nightmare as they pester the falcons mercilessly so that the flight is ruined. They also come in and buzz our demonstration birds on a regular basis.

The most common cause of injury that we



Black Eagle

see is caused by the motorcar, also collision with overhead cables, electrocution, poisoning (mostly Vultures) and gunshot wounds.

The centre itself houses well over one hundred birds at any one time and at present has 42 different indigenous species to South Africa on show to the public, ranging from birds like the Black Eagle down to little White-Faced Owls. The centre now actually houses the biggest collection of birds of prey on display to the public in Southern Africa.

Breeding Birds

Most of the birds on display are illegally wild taken birds that have been confiscated from the public by the South African version of DEFRA, "The Parks Board", ex falconers' birds, and captive bred birds are also on show. We do house a couple of disabled birds, but we try and steer clear from this if we can. In my opinion it is not pleasing to the eye and most of the disabled birds that we do keep for possible captive breeding are kept at my home premises away from the public eye. We never keep any severely disabled birds, birds with one wing or foot/leg are unfortunately sent for euthanasia.

Most of the breeding at present does take

place at the centre, but in the future most of the breeding birds will be housed on my new farm. At the moment we breed a number of species, mostly owls, but we also breed African Goshawks, Peregrine Falcons, and Lanner Falcons - all nice falconry birds. Black Sparrowhawks are high on the agenda for next year.

Ninety percent of the birds that we breed we release into the wild via a hacking process, or actually allowing some of the local falconers to hunt with them to make sure they are deemed releasable. Some of the birds that we breed we do keep however for the demonstrations.

No time for falconry

The only down side for me being in South Africa has to be my lack of falconry, don't get me wrong it is available, I just no longer seem to have time. I can hear some of you saying "you must make time" but I promise this is much easier said than done. I always remember helping Ashley out at the Hawk Conservancy in my youth and listening to him telling me that he never had time for hawking, how true those words are to me now! Sorry to

have doubted you Ashley.

As I mentioned earlier in this article, the landscape is very similar to parts of Scotland and the quarry is available. We have a good wild population of Redwing Francolin here, they are an ideal match for Lanners and Peregrines and the flights with Black Sparrowhawks are spectacularly long. I do get out, but just not enough, this will have to change soon, somehow,

bird, more so than a Goshawk, in my opinion, and they have weak leg scales that sometimes make tethering difficult. They need a patient falconer, but once going, they have got to be one of the deadliest hawks in the world.

In the wild I have seen them out fly pigeons and on a more serious note they have flown down falconers' peregrines here in South Africa with their amazing stamina.

If any of you are out in South Africa, try and pay us a visit. It is always nice to welcome some English people to this part of the world and if you need any other form of encouragement other than the beautiful weather and the

diverse amount of wildlife that you can find here, the beer is incredibly cheap.

The Black Sparrowhawk is a nervous bird, more so than a Goshawk, in my opinion, and they have weak leg scales that sometimes make tethering difficult

One small footnote

If anybody out there is looking for a working holiday on a three-month basis helping out with the centre and demonstrations, drop me a line at falconer@dullstroom.net Why not visit our web page as well www.birdsofprey.co.za

<p>STOLEN (6) AHARONIS EAGLE OWL 3FAK01Y GOSHAWK 24513W HARRIS HAWK IBR20882W HARRIS HAWK IBR24919W HARRIS HAWK 5MGR97W HARRIS HAWK</p> <p>REUNITED (82) AFRICAN GREY PARROT BARN OWL x7 BENGAL EAGLE OWL COMMON BUZZARD x5 FERRUGINOUS HAWK GOSHAWK x2 GYR BARBARY x2 GYR/PRAIRIE FALCON GYR/SAKER FALCON x3 HARRIS HAWK x19 JACKDAW KESTREL x5 LANNER FALCON x7 PEREGRINE FALCON x4 PEREGRINE/BARBARY x2 PEREGRINE/LANNER x2 PEREGRINE/LUGGER PEREGRINE/SAKER x8 RED-TAILED HAWK SAKER FALCON x9</p> <p>LOST (135) AFRICAN GREY PARROT x10 AMAZON-BLUE FRONTED AMERICAN BARN OWL BARBARY/SAKER BARN OWL x22 BUDGERIGAR COCKATIEL x4 COMMON BUZZARD x2 CONIURE GOSHAWK x3 GYR BARBARY GYR/PEREGRINE x3 GYR/PRAIRIE GYR/SAKER x6</p>	<p>HARRIS HAWK x26 JACKDAW KESTREL x3 LANNER FALCON x3 LANNER/SAKER FALCON LOVE BIRD MACAW ORANGE-WINGED AMAZON x2 PEALES/SAKER PEREGRINE FALCON x6 PEREGRINE/GYR PEREGRINE/LANNER x2 PEREGRINE/LANNER PEREGRINE/PRAIRIE PEREGRINE/SAKER x8 RED-TAILED HAWK x6 SAKER FALCON x9 SUN CONURE TAWNY OWL x4</p> <p>FOUND (63) AFRICAN GREY PARROT x3 BARN OWL x12 BENGAL EAGLE OWL 19FAK00Y BUDGERIGAR x4 COCKATIEL x2 COMMON BUZZARD 10xx4W COMMON BUZZARD 58xxE95W COMMON BUZZARD COMMON BUZZARD 48xxDOEW COMMON BUZZARD GFxx154 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL IBxx1702Z EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL 05xx1Z EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL FERRUGINOUS HAWK 20xxX HARRIS HAWK IBxx75W HARRIS HAWK IBxx9261W HARRIS HAWK IBxx1386W HARRIS HAWK 74xxDOEW HARRIS HAWK 6LxxCS96W HARRIS HAWK 56xxR00 KESTREL IBxx8465S KESTREL 43xxDOES KESTREL</p>	<p>LANNER FALCON LANNER FALCON 3Rxx97V LANNER/SAKER FALCON 08xxB03W PARAKEET 37xx006 PEREGRINE FALCON 13xx2V PEREGRINE FALCON UNRUNG PEREGRINE FALCON 6Nxx518BTO PEREGRINE/BARBARY HYBRID 15xx1DOEV PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID 12xx3W RED-TAILED HAWK 01xxY SAKER FALCON IBxx0131W SAKER FALCON 2xx SAKER FALCON 10xxWSAKER03W SAKER FALCON 6Nxx2W SPARROWHAWK 27xxC98R TAWNY OWL IBxx5337V TAWNY OWL 14xxC02W UNKNOWN BOP 1TxxK97W UNKNOWN BOP 4GxxD0W UNKNOWN PARROT 149 UNKNOWN PARROT 31xxYMO5</p> <p>DEAD (60) BARN OWL x16 COMMON BUZZARD DOVE EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL GOSHAWK GYR/PEREGRINE GYR/SAKER FALCON HARRIS HAWK x10 KESTREL x4 LANNER FALCON x2 PEREGRINE FALCON PEREGRINE HYBRID x3 RED-TAILED HAWK x2 SAKER FALCON x7 SPARROWHAWK x4 TAWNY OWL TURKMANIAN EAGLE OWL UNKNOWN BOP x3</p>
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Independent Bird Register

List of lost, found, reunited and stolen birds from the IBR between 11 July and 23 September, 2003

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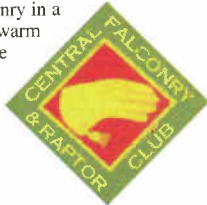
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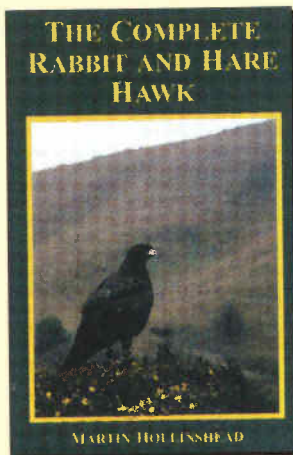
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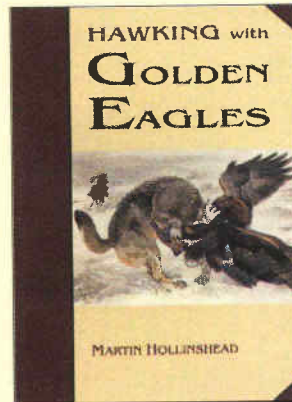
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GED'S DAY

"That ruddy dog" or "never forget your telemetry"



Terry and Simone Pearce in the field with Harris Hawk

Location: On top of the Pennines above 2000ft near Nenthead, Cumbria, during February this year 2003. This is land that has been worked by miners since the 17th through to the early 20th century digging for lead, copper, silver, gold, precious and semi-precious stones. It is still recovering and is now covered in gorse, grass and in small plots. There are Larch and Oak with some large areas of Conifers leaning from the strong winds. There is 'plenty of flat land' as Terry Pratchett would say, 'if you don't mind it being nearly vertical'.

Weather: Bleak, snow 6ins to 3ft with snow clouds below us in the valleys and a wind gusting from ten to about 20mph, freezing cold, with a chill factor of minus 10°C.

Bird: Male Harris Hawk named Ged, in his first year, young and inexperienced (they learn fast). We normally fly a cast of Harris or Goshawks, but all our other birds are in breeding programmes mostly for the first time.

Dog: Isla, a seven year old German wire haired pointer, extremely experienced, great in water and dense undergrowth, mostly very good to a command by mouth or whistle, but on the rare occasion very bloody minded, like all GWPs (she knows best).

Hunting: The most experienced falconer is my daughter, Simone, with over ten years experience

whereas I, Terry only have seven years. We started late that morning with it being about 10am before we got onto the land we were working, mostly for running rabbit. Ged was very keen and we put him up where he followed on between 50 and 200ft above us. We decided to hunt below the high peaks, in the gulleys, out of the strong winds. Isla was behaving impeccably, scenting and pointing rabbits in the clumps of taller grasses in the gulleys. These we then pushed into running, but poor Ged was having trouble in the still strong winds and only managed to hit, but not hold two of the rabbits. We then decided to fly Ged from the fist, as we were going to the higher ground with a chance of more rabbits but stronger winds. Isla immediately pointed a rabbit in some tall grass. I pushed it out and the bird gave chase, so did Isla, they both missed, I had some strong words with the dog. After that Isla behaved beautifully.

It was about 1.15pm and the weather was deteriorating further, the snow clouds coming higher up the sides of the valleys. We were close to calling it a day, nothing in the bag, wind blown and with freezing feet. We then decided to climb higher and give it one more try. Isla immediately pointed a rabbit, I flushed it and Simone released Ged from the fist. At that moment Isla decided to join the chase, where-upon my daughter and I did the

unforgivable. We both watched the dog, shouted and whistled and did not watch the bird. The dog chased the rabbit down the side of the valley, over and through the dry stone walls, until the rabbit went over the lip of a near vertical drop. It was 60ft or more down to the river below, where there were warrens and we lost sight of it, the dog stopped.

It was then that we realised we had both been watching that ruddy dog, not the bird, where had he gone? With the weather getting worse we spent half an hour swinging the lure and whistling, travelling downwind where we hoped he had gone, but to no avail. Neither of us had been carrying the telemetry, although the bird always wears the transmitter when he's out. The range in these hills is at the best half a mile and at the worse only a matter of yards. The land has enormous deposits of lead and iron and is full of deep man made valleys. We were getting desperate as there was no way that Ged could survive a night out, with deep snow, strong winds and a chill factor forecast of minus 17°C. In desperation we decided to try the telemetry.

It took me about three quarters of an hour of hard hill climbing to reach the car and activate the telemetry, leaving my daughter behind to fair as best she could with the lure, whistle and dog. I spent a further hour on the very top of the Pennines stopping the car every quarter mile to try the receiver, hoping to get some signal, but no luck. In despair I took the car back and parked, taking the telemetry with me, switched on, I went to find my daughter in the decreasing light. I decided to take the easier route back, down the bottom of the valley in the snow, close to the river.

Eventually, after about half an hour, I saw this shadowy figure coming down the gully out of the stronger winds, it was my daughter. Then to my relief, at that precise moment, I heard a faint ping in the earphone I was wearing, because of the high wind noise. Shouting and gesticulating to my daughter, I walked about 50 yards further up the valley and although still very weak, received a stronger signal. Simone reached me, I handed her the telemetry and we slowly walked up the valley in the falling snow, following the signal, until even with the attenuator on, the signal was all around us bouncing off the sides of the gully.

There below the lip where the dog had stopped, by the warrens, was Ged tucking into a big meal of buck rabbit, covered in snow and happy as Larry. It appears that when Isla chased the rabbit, Ged flew down hill away from the dog, then turned and flew below the lip and took the rabbit as it came over the top. We know from the fresh marks in the snow, he fell from near the top holding the rabbit, we also know now why Isla stopped.

It was getting on for 4pm and nearly dark as we walked and climbed back to the car, happy, frozen, covered in snow, with a very happy, full, contented bird, and with many new lessons learned, one of them being, Never forget your telemetry.

What made you first think about moving from Newent and what finally decided you?

Well I have actually considered moving the National Birds of Prey Centre five times. When Jo, my then husband, and I first took over the Centre in 1983 we looked at moving it. We looked at a place in Buckinghamshire called Tyrells Manor which would have been ideal, but it was all pretty much "pie in the sky daydreams" because we didn't have any money anyway. We then looked at moving to the US in the early eighties.

a talk with...

The trouble with this place is that it's off the beaten track. Newent isn't in the Cotswolds, and isn't in Wales, and isn't in Shakespeare country – we fall between the bloody cracks! And although it's absolutely fantastic when you get here, it's not easy to get people here. I am not a particularly good businesswoman – I'm OK at conservation, education, and all the rest of the stuff I do – but I'm dire at business because I don't know what I'm doing. I hate thinking about money and I have other things which interest me more.

So we always wanted to move it to somewhere where we thought it would be more financially viable and have more room. It's very hard because I've spent a lot of time and effort, and money, trying to make sure this place looks really nice and because of that everyone

thinks I'm well off, which in some ways has been our downfall. I always remember someone saying "Why do dog kennels at the Dog home always look so untidy and ramshackle?" – and they say because that's the way they get money from old ladies. If they do them up and make them look good, nobody will give them anything.

So, the reason for moving is partly financial – that I've always wanted to be somewhere where I didn't constantly have to worry about getting through the winter and pray it didn't rain at Easter, which is an important time for us – every winter has been and still is a damn struggle. I actually offered the Centre, lock stock and barrel to the Peregrine Fund in the early 90's, because I wanted to join somewhere else.

Jemima Parry-Jones



Jemima Parry-Jones is someone who has to keep busy. Even while I was conducting this interview she was making a new lure line.

We sat in her office which was full of books and pictures, as well as memorabilia of all kinds, and four of her black Labradors who were sprawled over the floor like thrown cushions or rugs. Even on her computer there were many images of her beloved dogs.

Firstly, the subject we all want to know about – her impending departure to the USA. Here is what she had to say.

My husband left in the mid 80's, so for nearly 20 years I've been doing it on my own. After a while that gets very lonely. I live in a huge house on my own generally (not that I mind, I quite enjoy living alone) but come the end of the day I don't have anyone to share the real problems with – I can talk to my staff, but I can't burden them. So, it would have been nice

had an unexpected slot of time. So I phoned him up from New York and said, "If you want to pay my air fare down, I'll come." So they did and I went down for about a week.

I was very, very impressed with the clinic and veterinary side of what they were doing. I was also impressed that they realised they needed help with the educational side and the

profile. We both wanted to teach people more about bio-diversity and make them understand that we're not just trying to save birds of prey, but also environments. However there are little things everyone can do to help. (Such as, if you throw litter out on the road, insects and rodents come to the litter, birds come to the insects and mice, then something gets run over – and all

I am not a particularly good businesswoman – I'm OK at conservation, education, and all the rest of the stuff I do – but I'm dire at business because I don't know what I'm doing. I hate thinking about money and I have other things which interest me more

Jones

MBE

to have had other people to share the responsibility with.

Another reason is that I've now been doing what I've been doing for a very long time – far too long – and although there's lots of things in the conservation field that I want to do, I can't do them here. Because we've only got 12 acres, which means that we can't have, for example, breeding aviaries out of sight of the public – if I built any more aviaries near the flying field it would spoil it for flying. None of the local people will sell me a piece of land that adjoins mine, or if they did sell it to me, it would be for a high price, which I would never see back.

This Centre, as it is right now, is totally reliant on my continuing existence – so if I got run over by a bus tomorrow, it would fade away. Over the 37 years now that we've been doing this, an awful lot of people have put in an awful lot of their time and effort – it's not by any means just me, it's a combination of lots of people – and so I've always wanted to make sure that it had a long term future. So now I have the chance to do that in two ways, both here and in the US.

Why Jim Elliott and Carolina?

I met Jim Elliott at a conference in Duluth at an RRF conference in the mid 90's and then again at a conference in Africa in 1998, and by sheer chance he asked me to go and have a look at his Center. I have been asked this sort of thing and don't normally have the time, but I was doing a lot of travelling around at the time anyway and I

handling of the non-releasable birds. They did need help too, but they knew it and they asked. They had volunteers come in and, at that time, Jim only had one paid member of staff. You should see the hours they worked down there; they'd come in at 8 o'clock in the morning and leave at 10 o'clock at night and they'd do 6 days a week. The bulk of the work is done by volunteers, who give 12,000 hours a year. It's

like they go to work but they don't get paid. They are unbelievable. I was staggered – I've never seen a system like it and it really impressed me, along with the quality of the work they did.

So I went back again the following January to help. Then Jim sent one of his volunteers – Arthur Middleton to stay with me for 10 days – he actually stayed for a year and a bit! And then Jim came over and we talked about extending what they were doing. He was thinking at that time of opening a small public facility – because the South Carolina Center for Birds of Prey is not open to the public. However, like my Centre here, it's all on Jim's land, but without the visitors, so for educational programmes they take the birds off site.

Over the time when I went there and he came over here, we talked about what the other was interested in doing. I've always wanted to have a full time vet but couldn't justify it because there wasn't enough work. He's always wanted a full time vet but again couldn't justify it because there just wasn't enough work. I've wanted to get more involved in research projects and have some off view captive breeding programmes. He wanted a public facility and to be able to give their work a higher

because you've thrown out an apple core.)

Birds of prey are such a beautiful example to use for education and they happen to be my field, which I can't live without. And we looked at one another and said "This is silly. We both want to do what the other is doing and both of us want to go in the same direction. So why don't we see if we can merge?"

We looked at doing it both ways – the South Carolina Center coming over here, or the National Birds of Prey Centre going over there. But, although I have some superb volunteers here, and they are wonderful, it's not 12,000 hours a year. In America it's something that they do, everybody tries to volunteer and do something. Whether it's at schools, helping the disabled, cleaning up roads – it's something that children are encouraged to do and then as



adults they go on doing it. Fund raising is also more acceptable over there because its more usual for everyone to share funds and have Trusts in a very different way than we are here.

Also, with all due respect to my American friends, (and I have some very good American friends whom I am very fond of) their general public could do with more education in wildlife issues. Not because they're stupid, but purely and simply that they haven't had the sort of exposure, especially in their television programmes that we have had over here. We



are so lucky with the stuff that is produced for us here in the UK. You know, when we only had four channels, everybody watched nature programmes because you were stuck with them. If you go into schools in this country, usually they'll know what a bird of prey is and often what species and they have a greater awareness of wildlife, that is probably because we are a much smaller country too. They don't necessarily understand how the countryside works, because unfortunately in this country teachers don't, but they can recognise a bird of prey.

I've been over to South Carolina in every month of the year over the last five years, so I know what the climate's like. I have now got more friends over in South Carolina than I have in Gloucestershire. Because of all the volunteers out there, you get to know a lot more people. Whereas I don't here – I mean I meet the visitors and then they go and I sit at my computer all night – I'm a very boring person – a little bit of a workaholic. I don't paint the town

red - in fact, I don't paint it at all!

I can't believe how much stuff I've got to pack – I've got 230 bloody paintings! Actually it's mainly books and paintings, there's not that much else. I don't think I'm a hoarder of junk. My furniture will all go into store for a year and then it's going over. I'm going to build a house which I've already thought about and which I'm really looking forward to – well I'm not personally going to build it because I might be a bit busy!

Tell us a bit about your central role in South Carolina and the work you hope to be doing.

My role, to start with, will be getting the birds over and helping to get the public facility up and running. It's being built at the moment. Jim and I have spent two years working on the designs with the architects – we have a cracking piece of land that's been given to us, worth \$2.8million –

Jim and I have spent two years working on the designs with the architects – we have a cracking piece of land that's been given to us, worth \$2.8million – I mean that was an amazing gift

Mima's house that overlooks the flying ground



I mean that was an amazing gift. It's got everything we need – it's got deciduous woodland, coniferous woodland, a 15-acre clear flying field for the big birds with a lake in front of it, and a smaller flying field with trees in it so that we can fly the owls and the Harris' Hawks in slightly less exposed conditions, and even a swamp! We're going to move the UK part of the new Centre on to it first, and then hopefully within a year, the clinic, which is 10 miles away, will move onto the same site, only off public view. So we will have veterinary expertise right next to the birds.

At the moment SCCBP takes in 400 injured wild birds of prey a year – that will probably increase, we think, to 700 once people know we're there. We're taking Richard Jones, who is one of the young vets that Neil Forbes trained for about three years and then he did three

When we went up to see the US Fish and Wildlife Service, they were very helpful and pleased with the idea because they'd all heard of the work that the Centre has done and could see the potential and perhaps even use the new Center for training. Which is basically what we try to do here – DEFRA bring their people here. We also do Police Wildlife Liaison Officer courses here – so we're slowly training the people who are keeping the laws and we hope to be able to help in the same way over there.

So it's a huge project – absolutely huge – with huge

to deal with the heat), and then you'll see all the diurnal birds dotted in their enclosures among pine trees. So they've got shade, and also because being close to the sea, they get a really nice breeze, which is good for the birds in the summer. Then you can come round to the big

We're opening in a limited way probably to start with because we're going to be building and changing, and adding and doing things over the next five years. So it's actually going to be a very exciting place to visit



years with Pat Reddig in Minnesota at the Raptor Centre – so he's absolutely first class, and a falconer, and very keen and dedicated and keeps up with the modern stuff. So he will have the NBPC birds to look after, the SCCBP's resident birds plus 700 wild ones.

Hopefully, once we get in there, we're going to be able to be involved with the training of vets, training foreign students from all over the world, and teaching people to teach. The only thing we are not going to do to start with, and may or may not do at a later date, is the teaching of falconry that we do here. The American laws are very different – I don't want to leap in and tread on toes. And also I'm going to have enough to do. I've learned so much by having this place – at the new place the aviaries are going to be different in design.

ramifications. My title is International Director and I'm still going to keep on the work with the vultures in India, and still going to be advising and travelling over the world in the future.

We're due to open next June and I don't arrive till January. The birds come out of quarantine in February if all goes well. So we've got till May to get the birds in, settled, retrained and doing demonstrations in a different country – a bit of a challenge. We're opening in a limited way probably to start with because we're going to be building and changing, and adding and doing things over the next five years. So it's actually going to be a very exciting place to visit.

The setting is gorgeous. You walk out of the education, conservation and science building and you go through the Hawk Walk (which will be similar to the one here but a little bit more open

flying field called Rice Meadow, after the man who gave us the land. At the end of this, you will see some of the birds that are in what we call the flying aviaries – the trained birds, like the vultures where you just open the door and they fly out, do the demonstration, and then fly back in again. Then you can cross the smaller owl flying field into a deciduous wood and there you will come across all the owl enclosures.

What we'll be able to do is that when we've got school parties we can say "Come with us and we're going to take you for a walk." We've got swamp areas, conifer forest, deciduous forest, open country, and lakes. Which means we can walk through the swamp area and show them what's important about swamps, but we can take a Red Shouldered Buzzard (or a Barred Owl) with us and it will fly along over our heads from tree to tree as it does in the wild (because both are species that live in the swamp area). Or choose a different bird and walk through a different habitat, so we can teach not just about birds of prey, but about biodiversity.

There are 150 bird of prey centres in the UK, so many people have seen them and they're not anything particularly new. There won't be anything like this in the States. There are a few bird of prey centres, but nothing of this size. So it will be very, very exciting. So I won't be bored for a while – I won't have time.

What about the future of the National Birds of Prey Centre in Newent?

I have passed over the Japanese contract to Gary Dyer, one of my staff here. Gary has been working out there now for several years. Gary and I talked about it. He wants to stay out there, he's got a Japanese girlfriend, and he's gone back to take it over, which I'm very pleased about, both for him and the birds, and also the Japanese.



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All my staff are either staying here or I've tried to organise other things for them – and one of them, Annie Millar, is coming with me.

Negotiations are going through now. It has been tricky, it's been very up and down. Selling a place like this is not easy. As soon as you get solicitors involved they don't always understand the ins and outs of it. The new people want to keep the falconry side of it going, as well as keeping the Centre open. But whatever happens the staff should be safe.

Has anyone said they're glad you're going?

Nobody has said it to my face, I am sure some people are. I was told that somebody said it on one of the UK chatlines, and I was informed that almost everybody else jumped on whoever it was with a huge ton of bricks and he got thrown off the chatline and wasn't allowed to come back on again, which touched me greatly, I have to say. I think I've become a bit more acceptable to the falconry fraternity than I was. I hope they've all realised that I am interested in making sure that falconry continues and that I try to be a good emissary for it. And I think most people now have begun to realise that what you need is people at the top who are good emissaries and who will talk to the government and do get listened to.

Will you come back to this country – to do demonstrations, for example?

The one I would love to keep on if I can is Chatsworth because I've done it since the early 1980's. The nice thing about Chatsworth is that it's always in the same place, so I know the audience, they're like old friends, and I can and do always have a lot of fun there. Next year I doubt I will come back for anything other than Chatsworth, apart from a couple of Trust meetings here.

Will you still attend Hawk Board meetings?

I would be very happy to stay on as a co-opted member of the Hawk Board, so that they can use anything that I can help with. An awful lot of the stuff that is done with the Hawk Board is either writing or done by e-mails anyway. And, as far as that's concerned it doesn't matter where you are in the world. So I shall be more than happy to still be involved with the Hawk Board, because I'd like to help with making sure that falconry is safe in this country.

I'm English - I'm British and I won't ever be anything other than British. I would like to have an American passport as well in the future, but I think you can have a dual passport and I wouldn't like to give up my British citizenship – not for all the tea in China. And I'm not that likely to get an American accent either. I spend my whole life listening to myself – if you're any good, you have to – you listen to what your voice sounds like, you listen to your intonation, your chords – everything that you do. I try very hard not to say Um and Ah. I'd rather stop and think what I'm going to say and then come out with it. And because I do that, I hope that I'll be able to stave off any accent, plus, I think that having a British accent in any country can help!

Have you any regrets?

There are many things I will miss. It's not a regret, because if I regretted it then I would be doing the wrong thing. But I shall miss this house which I love dearly and the land. I think this country is the most beautiful country in the world – I've been lucky enough to fly at stately homes and seen some beautiful places. It's just stunning here. But, having said that, I spend the bulk of my life on 12 acres of land, or I'm at a meeting, or I'm abroad. The only time I ever see the country is when I go and do the flying demonstrations.

Regrets? Sometimes, if I've been rude to people unnecessarily I wish I hadn't. And I wish



I'd worked harder – and been more focused, because I'm not very good at working in a focused fashion.

I wish every book I've written, I'd written five months before the deadline so I could sit down and look at it before I gave it to them and change the bits that are in there that I don't like. But as usual you don't – you finish it on the deadline. I don't think anybody is that organised – I'm not sure I'd like anybody who was that organised, actually!

I wish I'd had my education at a later part of my life. Because the trouble is you have your education when you least want it. It isn't until you're older that you realise actually what an education is and what you need it for. And then you go "Damn it, why didn't I do Latin – it would have been really useful!" I spend my whole life dealing with Latin and I don't know what it all means!

I see your first book, Care Captive Breeding and Conservation, is now out in paperback.

Yes and hasn't it got the worst cover you've ever seen – that Lanner on the front! What annoys me about publishers, is that you think you have the right to choose the cover for your book. But unless you're Jeffrey Archer, or unless you're pretty aware, you don't. The publishers wrote to

me and they said they were re-publishing. I had no say as to whether they re-published or not. In the end I pulled the legal chapter because it was so out of date, because the laws are changing so rapidly. I up-dated everything else I could.

They sent me this picture of the cover and I said I thought it was an awful picture and that I didn't think they should use it. I presumed the picture they e-mailed me was not the quality of the picture that they were using on the book. And then, blow me, the book came through and it was the quality – it's appalling. Which is very disappointing because, in fact, that being the first book, the very first cover it had was dreadful as well, you couldn't barely read the title! That was when we used to get covers through the post – I picked up this cover on my desk and thought "Good Lord, look at that cover, it's awful." Then I looked at it again and said "Oh no – it's my book" – and that was the first time I'd seen it – it was very disappointing, but I have got used to it now.

Will you write another book?

I have a dream, as they say. I would like to get this new place going, along with Jim. He's a very good working partner – we've had a few arguments but that's because we both care deeply about what we do. And when we work well together we have a magic which I have not often had with

other people. We would like to get the whole thing going and running well, and I would like to have built my house and get it so that my dogs and myself are comfortable and happy. And then one day in the future, when I have the time, I'd like to do an up to date version of *Eagles, Hawks, Falcons and Owls of the World*. Because there's lots of books that give you short amounts of information, but nothing has ever come up to the quality and the amount of information that you have in Brown and Amadon. The problem is, it was written 40 years ago so it's now a little out of date.

It's only when you start to write something and you look up to try and find a bit of information in a book that you think "Why hasn't anybody put this piece of information in here?" I know so many good scientists, and falconers and bird of prey people in general around the world, it would be great to be able to say, "Well OK, I'm going to go and see this person or that person and find out everything I want to know about whatever and just up-date it." But that's a way off yet – I'll start that when I'm 70!

In the next issue of Falconers magazine, I'll report some more of my chat with Mima – with answers to those important questions like "Why do you always wear a skirt?" and "Why black Labradors?"



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In the wild, one of the hawks that is fun to watch is the favourite of modern day falconers - the Harris hawk. Everyone knows that this particular species is sociable and therefore hunts in family groups. These can range in size from three or four hawks through to groups of a dozen or more. The largest group I have ever seen hunting together was sixteen. This was in northern Mexico.

The hunting method for the group follows the same procedure whether the group is large or small. The males act as the beaters and drive either the bird to take wing or the ground prey to make a run for it. When the quarry does break cover the females of the group pounce. It has invariably been the females that make the kill with the flights that I have witnessed. Although I am sure there must be occasions when the smaller more agile males are the first to reach the prey.

The thing that still always comes as a surprise no matter how many times I witness it is the way the family group contentedly share the kill without any squabbling or fighting over who gets what.

Underestimated Caracara

A raptor that is very underestimated and almost dismissed by falconers as being no threat to a trained hawk is the Great Caracara. But falconers in

Mexico treat them with respect and are careful of them when out hawking. I saw a group of Caracaras kill an adult female Harris hawk when she herself had made a kill. Caracaras act in a similar way to vultures. That is you tend to only ever see one on its own in the field. But when the Caracara spots something that may be of interest it calls and then homes in on it. Other Caracaras pick up on the call and movement and they also then home in. Very shortly a group of half a dozen or so have gathered.

The wild female Harris I saw had killed a small rabbit in amongst some Joshua trees. A female Caracara spotted her and landed on one of the trees above her. Four others rapidly joined it and the group then attacked the Harris hawk. They unfortunately made very short work of her. The Harris hawk was only attacked because she was on her own. Had she been with a family group she would have been safe.

Impressive Chanting Goshawk

Another species of hawk that I have been fortunate enough to see hunting more than once is the beautiful pale Chanting goshawk. These are very colourful and very impressive looking hawks. From a falconers point of view though, looks are the only impressive attribute of this particular species. It lives mainly on small rodents and lizards. The hawk tends to either quarter the ground like a Barn Owl or sit in a tree or in a bush watching the ground for movement.

I did once see a pair hunting together, in a manner similar to Harris Hawks. One hawk would land beside a bush and run in whilst the other hawk stayed above ready to pounce. Eventually an injured weaver bird was driven out and caught by the pair. Just like the Harris Hawk there was no squabbling over the kill and it was shared without rancour.

Goshawk and Pheasant Over Breakfast

I have seen many, many Goshawks in the wild but have only ever witnessed one kill. This was a cock Pheasant that was killed by a mature female as he strutted out from the relative safety of a pine wood to feed.

I was sitting on a hotel balcony in southern Germany enjoying a leisurely breakfast when the incident occurred. The pheasant was strolling around and I just caught a flicker of movement out of the corner of my eye. The Goshawk had obviously been sitting in a tree on the edge of the wood and had launched herself on seeing the pheasant. She accelerated rapidly and then hugged the ground on her final approach. The feeding

She accelerated rapidly and then hugged the ground on her final approach. The feeding pheasant didn't have any idea that a Gos was approaching rapidly and of his impending doom

tons

Part 2

pheasant didn't have any idea that a Gos was approaching rapidly and of his impending doom.

The struggle was very soon over and I was rewarded with the sight of the Gos pluming the pheasant and then taking her pleasure on it for some 20 minutes or so. I have been lucky enough to witness many other hunting flights by Goshawks but none of them ever ended in success.

Falconers' Memories

Falcons being the primary love of my falconry life, it goes without saying that I have many more fond memories of wild encounters with them. I have spent many years making an effort to watch them in the wild and have travelled thousands of miles to do so. The highlights have been many and it is



Aplomado Falcon

The farm was plagued with not only small birds, as you would expect, but also bats. Each dusk as the bird life subsided the bats would come in droves to feed on the fruit. Just as the light was fading two Bat Falcons appeared from nowhere and attacked the bats. In a few seconds each falcon had managed to catch a bat and were gone from

wings once from the time that she left the initial rock until she alighted on another with the swift in her foot. An incredible piece of flying.

Over the next few days I watched as both the falcon and tiercel caught several swifts to feed the three youngsters that their nest contained. I never saw them fail when they were hunting seriously.

She had not beaten her wings once from the time that she left the initial rock until she alighted on another with the swift in her foot. An incredible piece of flying

difficult to pick out just a few to mention here.

Without doubt the most beautiful falcon, in terms of plumage, that I have ever had the pleasure of watching in the wild is the Bat Falcon. These are very small, around the size of the European Hobby, and are incredibly fast. Whilst in Mexico some years back a falconer friend asked me if I would like to go and see wild Bat Falcons hunting. My reply was naturally yes and we duly set off to a fruit farm a few hours from my friends home.

sight again. It was an incredible piece of flying but it was literally over in seconds. I had until that point never seen any raptor fly so quickly.

It had all been so quick that I had hardly had time to realise what was happening before it was all over. Fortunately my friend suggested we stay in the area for a few days as Aplomado Falcons were also to be found locally. We spent the days watching Aplomados and came back each evening and watched the little Bat Falcons hunt.

Each morning the tiercel would leave the rock face and fly out of the gorge and high into the sky. He would then put on a display of stooping and remounting for several minutes. I can only assume this was a declaration as to his territory, etc. Having enjoyed watching the powers of flight that the Taita is blessed with I would love to have the opportunity to train one for falconry purposes. But such is their rarity in the wild, I seriously doubt if the occasion will ever arise.

Peregrine Falcon

South African Nest Site

Several years later I was to watch another small species of falcon hunt, which is, in my opinion, even faster than the Bat Falcon. I was very fortunate that whilst on one of my trips to South Africa I was fortunate to see Taita Falcons at the nest. Like Bat Falcons these diminutive raptors have a beautiful plumage and very long wings compared to the rest of their proportions.

The nest site I went to was on a cliff face in quite a deep gorge. The falcons were living on swifts, which they caught with consummate ease. I watched in awe as a female sat on a rock close to the nest ledge watching the swifts beneath her. Without warning she suddenly left the rock and glided the length of the cliff face. She then turned and let the wind lift her up. All of a sudden she turned over and stooped and snatched a swift in mid-flight. She then glided to another rock where she despatched her prize. She had not beaten her

The Ultimate Machine

My own favourite, when it comes to falconry and watching wild raptors, is without doubt the Peregrine falcon. Here, surely, is the ultimate flying machine. I have had the pleasure of watching various sub species in many different parts of the world but my most outstanding memories regarding Peregrines took place recently in Northeast Scotland.

I was doing some work close to an eyrie and was going to be in the region for around two weeks. This was at the time when wild Peregrines would be feeding any youngsters that they may have. I have been extremely fortunate in that I have seen very many wild Peregrines making hunting flights and have witnessed quite literally dozens of kills. But I have never seen a pair hunting in unison other than in nature films on the television. Knowing how many of these so called wild films contain cut together footage and trained falcons





Goshawk

The falcon cruised around a small wood making play passes at the tops of the trees. The pigeons that were sitting in them were restless but held their ground. They knew they were safe all the time they stayed in the trees. When the falcon eventually broke off the pigeons took flight and headed off in the opposite direction.

I knew he must be around but I could not see the tiercel anywhere. All of a sudden the pigeon flock bunched and changed direction. But it was too late. A blue streak passed through the flock and a lifeless pigeon and a cloud of feathers tumbled earthwards. The blue streak threw up and then slowly alighted on his prize.

Secretary Oddity

Amongst the oddities that I have been lucky enough to see in the wild was a gathering of Secretary birds. I was driving north out of Johannesburg when I came across a small ditch fire by the side of the road. I pulled over because a number of Marabou Storks were gathering. Presumably in the hope of catching some small frogs, snakes and rodents as they fled the fire.

I was taken aback when a Secretary bird suddenly appeared and joined in the hunt. They really are huge on the wing and it seems so strange to see them in the wild. Before too long there were nine of these peculiar raptors in attendance.

Eagle Owl and Bats

Again in Africa I was taken to a particular bridge that spanned a wide river in the middle of the night. The idea of the exercise was to see an African Eagle Owl that specialised in hunting bats that lived under this bridge. The Eagle Owl had worked out that the bats roost by hanging upside down. Therefore to take off and fly they have to initially drop from their perch on the bridge. In the few seconds it takes for the bats to get right way up and flying, they present a feeding opportunity for the Eagle Owl. Accordingly the owl cruised up and down the bridge each night waiting for the chance to take advantage of this opportunity.

Falcon Oddity?

Another strange raptor to watch hunt is the Collared Forest Falcon of South America. These are not really falcons at all and are as happy running after prey as they are flying. I saw several chasing rodents and lizards and the hawks spent more time on the ground than they did in the air.

Watching hawks and falcons in the wild gives me endless pleasure. After all most falconers are just frustrated raptor watchers. If I had the opportunity to see a wild Peregrine hunt on a daily basis, then I seriously doubt if I would fly a trained one myself.

with their jesses removed I am still not sure if I have seen a pair hunt truly even then.

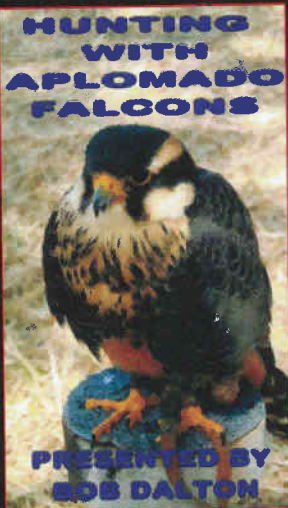
But recently I twice saw this wildlife spectacle on the same day. On the first occasion the tiercel came low over some arable fields and headed for a flock of pigeons. These lifted up in panic and the tiercel passed them by. As he did so, the pigeons took off in the other direction. The falcon came out of the clouds and plucked a tail-ender from the flock. It was a classic flight and a joy to watch.

The second flight was similar in its execution.



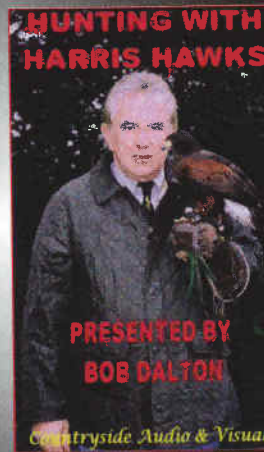
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Tame Hacking an Imprint Goshawk

Dave Jones

I have always thought that I could Tame Hack an imprint Goshawk so last year I put my idea to the test. I was fortunate to breed two Finnish male Goshawks from my female imprint using artificial insemination. I imprinted one male and called him "BUZZ".

Buzz spent a lot of his time on our patio in his movable nest, 'watching the wildlife go by'. He would walk out of his nest onto our patio table where he spent most of the day sleeping until he was semi-fledged and became a brancher.

Buzz was now working out every day flapping his stumpy wings until he lifted his scruffy body off the ground and flapped from one end of the patio wall to the other.

I decided to perch Buzz in a pine tree 15 feet from his outside nest where he felt secure looking down on the world. At feeding time I would place his garnished lure in his nest and lift it up to his branch. He would then climb back into his nest to eat. This technique lasted for two days then I threw the lure onto the ground near the tree where he could easily fly down and catch it.

I did this twice a day for two days with fresh food and he could eat as much as he liked.

I then placed the lure on our patio table where he could see it. I gave the lure a few twitches and then whistled, after a moment or so he plucked up the courage to fly 15 feet to the lure.

The time had come to fit two small bells and one telemetry mount on his legs.

I would walk him from the aviary and feed him on the patio table each morning before either placing him in a tree or casting him off to go wild for the day. At evening I would call him home with one long whistle blown three times and he would reply with a call. I always knew where he was as he would call to me when prompted. I would take him into the safety of his aviary at night to roost.

At hack Buzz would eat as much as he

wanted then burn off his energy before the evening flight home. From time to time I would bow him out for a couple of hours alongside my longwings to socialize him before letting him go. He would fly over the longwings and only once showed an interest in them - I cured that by pushing him away from them.

Buzz would spend his time whizzing around the garden and visiting neighbours. I would get a call to say "He's been keeping me company all

On one occasion we were having a barbeque and Buzz came out of nowhere, flew through the guests then landed in a bowl of lettuce

day in the garden". He was very interested in the human race.

On one occasion we were having a barbeque and Buzz came out of nowhere and flew through the guests then landed in a bowl of lettuce, much to the amazement of our friends, as he joined the party.

I decided to experiment and leave him out for a night. The next day his frenzied excitement was overwhelming as I whistled and he flew in at

great speed calling and hitting the lure with a killing blow.

During the long summer months Buzz would watch the two pointers mouseing in the garden. This stimulated his hunting instincts and accustomed him to working with the dogs.

(Sheigra my female Imprint Goshawk will display to my dogs when in condition.)

From observations and notes I found that the territory of a tame hacked Goshawk is small - five hundred yards or so from where he is fed by the parent (me).

Buzz was very fit at hack and would come home at great speed when called. This fitness and determination would bring down many Partridge and cock Pheasant in the future.

When August came I was off to Scotland for five weeks of Grouse hawking so I decided to take Buzz with me and hack him out from the lodge. This would be a new adventure for Buzz and me.

The first two days in Scotland I bowed him out with the longwings and took him for a walk on the glove. I showed him a small forest conveniently placed within the home range. I flew him to the lure in the forest then let him follow me home. I had established his new

territory in Scotland where he was tame hacked for almost five weeks.

One day a racing pigeon arrived at the lodge and was caught by Buzz in front of an audience from the main house. They were amazed by his agility.

Two rabbits were also killed at tame hack but he still came back to the lure in the evening. However, at 101 days he left his territory and was tracked down three and a half miles away on a rabbit. He was then grounded (i.e. tethered to a bow perch)

There is more to be told about the adventures of Buzz. This year I am tame hacking "Bow" another Finnish male bred by Nick Havermann-Mart to be flown in a cast with Buzz at crows.



Buzz at hack



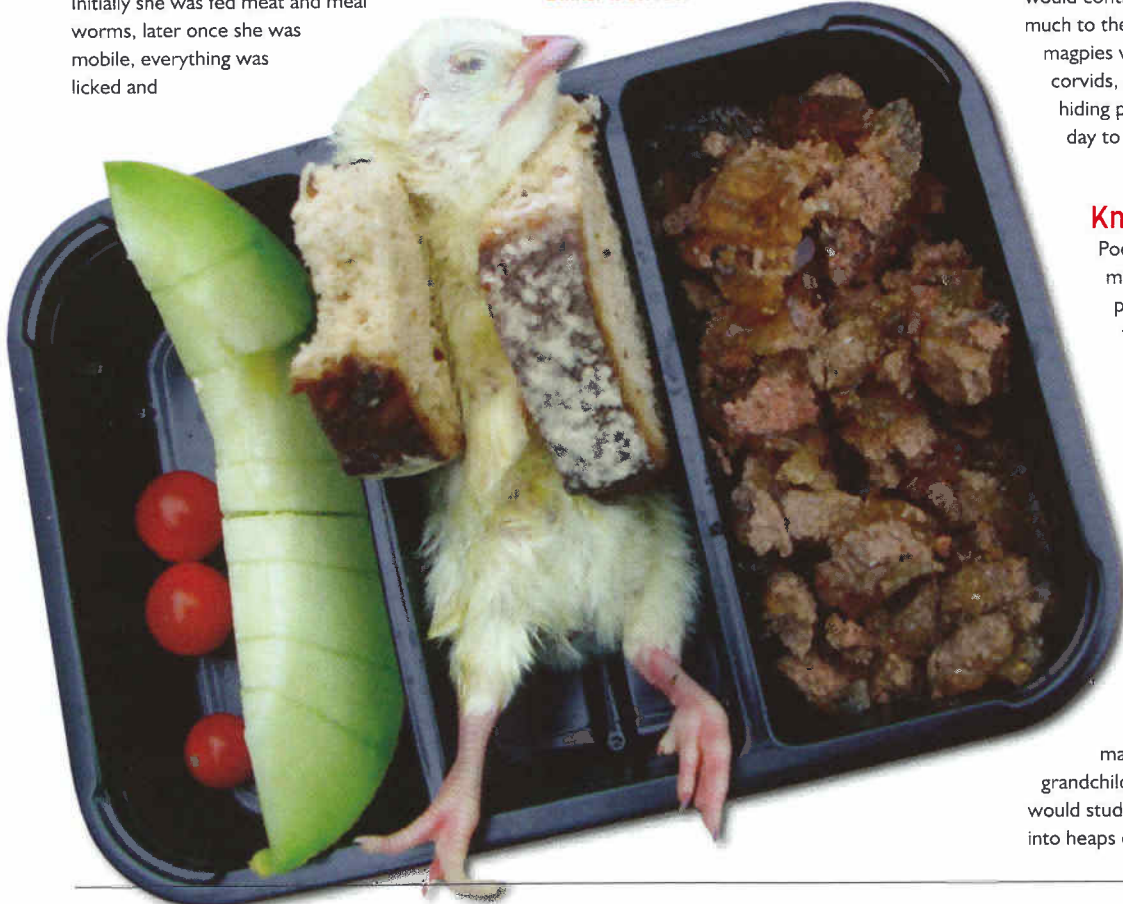
I had a jackdaw as a child and remembered the joy and inquisitive nature of corvids. Then a falconer phoned me for breeders rings for her sakers and ravens and I couldn't resist.

We picked up the 12 day old fledgling in March. It looked more like a frog with splayed out legs, it was deep red skin, dark points of feather beginning to show and a huge gaping mouth. Nobody was going to miss that mouth, it was there to be filled and filled and filled. At the height of her growth she ate in one day, this sounds very like the very hungry caterpillar, 14 chicks, a breast of quail and a rat. She later went on to eating a very wide variety of food. Being omnivorous she ate fruit, vegetables but favourites were unhealthy things like cheddar cheese and butter.

She would use the side of her beak like a knife and would slice the butter off the bread, throw the bread away and swallow, savouring every greasy drip. Roast potatoes and parsnips she would die for and grapes and mango were her favourite fruit. She could load seven grapes into her crop/pouch, a huge slack piece of skin inside her mouth, exactly like a pelican's. If you continued to offer grapes, she could then swallow them into her stomach, squashing them in her beak first. She loved the inside juice.

Various Foods

Initially she was fed meat and meal worms, later once she was mobile, everything was licked and



Dinner is served!

Poe - a Raven Beauty

Part 1

Jenny Wray

tasted. She obviously had a superior sense of taste. She was very picky about foreign cheese! Dried complete cat food was loved, but it was the little yellow squares that she picked first. She would root around a bowl for them or check your pockets in case you forgot to give them to her. We hid them under things and she thoroughly enjoyed hide and seek. Now you see it, now you don't. The slight of

hand couldn't fool her. She knew which hand the yellow cat food was in 100% of the time and would slowly peel back your fingers one at a time to reveal the prize.

When she had a mouth or crop full of supplies, she would walk or fly up the garden and use her hammer drill beak to make a hole in the grass. She would fill it with a few select pieces of food, and then cover it up with grass and bits of leaves, carefully laid on top and patted. This she would continue to do this throughout the day, much to the appreciation of the following magpies who retrieved her stores. In tests on corvids, they can remember well over a 1,000 hiding places and used them throughout the day to retrieve and eat the food.

Knife and Razor

Poe's beak was a black and Decker multi-tool. I have never seen such a piece of equipment with so many uses, far more versatile than a common Swiss army knife. The side of the beak was a razor and could draw blood, could even cut buttons off, and make an instant hole through anything she wanted. We gave her a six foot by 12 inch diameter log, a piece of our rotten pear tree. She spent hours whittling it down, emptying the dry and dead contents and leaving the shell of bark. Many treasures were tucked into the sides of the horizontal log, including her pink magnetic letters, stolen from the grandchildren. She definitely knew colours and would studiously sort a pot of 50 or 60 letters into heaps of matching individual letters. She

would pass them to you on request, but the pink ones were hers to treasure, never given up but hidden in her tree trunk.

The point of her beak when hammered into the ground, or a leg was extremely painful. She was a nice as pie to my husband, Philip, and myself but became very jealous of visitors and grandchildren. They could come into the garden, call her and she would graciously fly down and accept offerings. They would then be dismissed, and if they didn't take the hint she would take to the sky and come back at speed, stabbing your arm, or doing fly pasts that skimmed your head. Very amusing to watch, but potentially dangerous. She did become territorial and after being beat to a pulp as a youngster on several occasions, we had to rescue her from the local playground where rooks had grounded her and drawn blood. Once she had matured and grown, she weighed over 3lb and nothing could boss her around. She took on the local dogs and played tag. Even with the local young black cat. If any animal didn't fly, she would match them on the ground and would roll balls for them to chase and peck their tails, inviting them to chase her, only when frustrated did she take to the air.

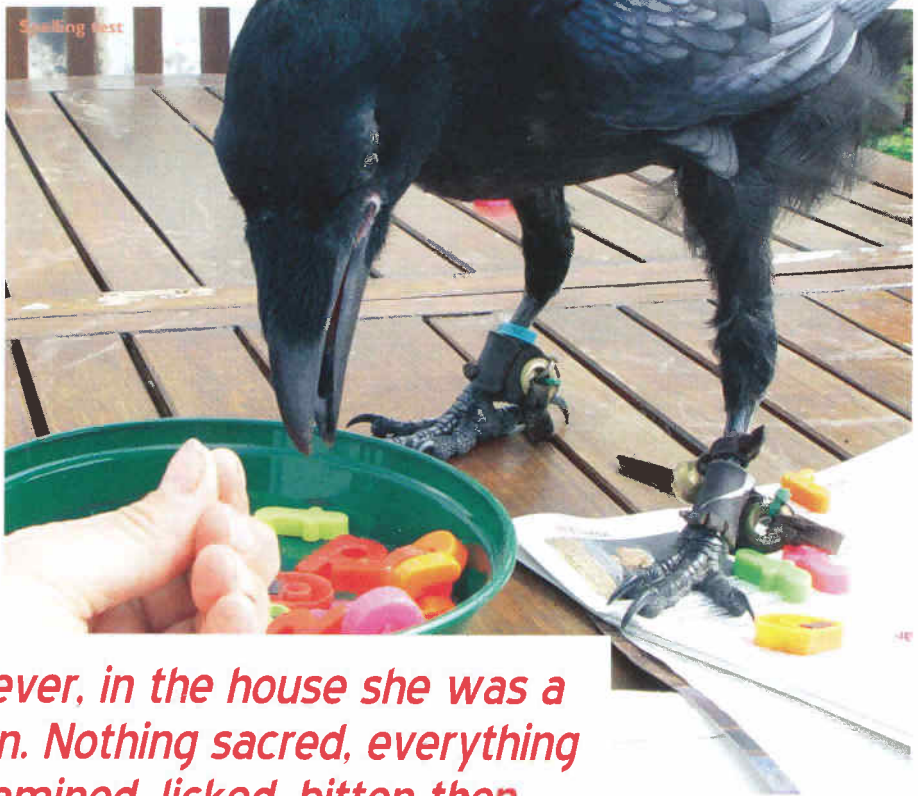
Hated equipment

The first time we lost her, she turned up two doors away, helping the family to clear out their shed. She had bitten off the aerial on the transmitter mount and bitten though the cable-tie holding it to her leg. I later found the transmitter but didn't bother to try again. She wore a closed IBR ring and initially we jessed her up and gave her small permanent field jesses a few inches long, but ravens don't do equipment! She refused to be held and was very distraught if restrained, very beneath raven dignity. In the end she snipped off the anklets and jesses but we kept a loud 'Peel' bell on her. She was content to fly to our arm, stand the same way as a falcon and never flew to our head or shoulders. We had totally discouraged that when younger. We didn't need to hold her, however when she wanted to go, she went. If she was being a pain, I would mug her, a hand either side of her wings and march her up to her aviary.

By this time she would have done something awful and would need to be removed from ripped clothes on the washing line, every garment pulled off, or on one particular day she stole a pair of the next door neighbour's pants and left them on top of his garage! Worse was trying to keep her away from friends around a barbeque with the smell of food. Chicken wings and spare ribs she adored.

Into adulthood

After a few weeks maturing, she took to the skies for most of the daytime, just returning for food or when called by whistling and clapping



However, in the house she was a demon. Nothing sacred, everything examined, licked, bitten then systematically destroyed. Any favourite object she found was stolen and hidden

hands. If she was extra hungry and you weren't there just waiting to feed her, she would fly around the house until she found which room you were in and would tap persistently till you gave in and fed her or opened the window and she came in. However, once in the house she was a demon. Nothing sacred, everything examined, licked, bitten then systematically destroyed. Any favourite object she found was stolen and hidden.

Quite often Philip or I were used to hide things under, we were obviously favoured. Philip had his top pocket rammed home with anything from a worm to a licked piece of roast potato. If I was sitting down, she would tuck things under my legs or under shoes, then she would pull my foot to cover it up properly.

We watched her one morning picking up a large snail. She then hid it between two stones in the patio wall. To see her amazement half an hour later on going to retrieve it to eat, and it had gone!! We were both examined for maybe stealing her snail cache.

Lost a Raven?

We had a few interesting phone calls over the next few months, asking if we were the owners of the 'bloody big black thing' that visited them. The local craft centre was one of her calling in places, but by far the favourite was the local farm

over the fields.

The farmer and his daughter were getting desperate; this very annoying bird visited them early, followed him when letting cows out, then went and joined

his daughter, Becky, who was trying to break in a few young horses. Fly-pasts with bells on, through the ears of these unbroken horses was not to be laughed at. The horses didn't understand and didn't ever get used to it. When they contacted us and explained the problem we went and apologised and introduced ourselves, they were great. We compromised. Poe would stay in till 5pm when horses would be put away and Poe was released. She was good with the farm dogs, the sheep and the cows, they all got used to her, but the young horses she spooked.

Poe stayed out until dusk and Phil and I could set our watches by the sun setting, then the two collared doves came back into the hazel trees, count on five more minutes and in she came, gliding over the fields, ending up skimming the house then putting herself away in her aviary. All we had to do was go up the garden in the dark, hear her say 'Hullo' in the dark and we shut her door. She then chunntered to us each night in imitation of human talk. The beginnings of copying sounds and intonation.

She was content in a very large aviary with boxes of coloured toys, Lego and three rubber squeaky ducks till 4.45pm. every day. She then started cawing, increasingly loudly till 5pm release time.

**Part 2 will be in the next issue...
How she got on with the film crew!**

Josef Hiebeler

Martin Hollinshead

A book came through the post some time back, a big heavy thing with an equally weighty title, *Der Steinadler in der Falknerei (The Golden Eagle in Falconry)*. It was an unexpected gift from the author, old friend and mentor, German falconer Josef Hiebeler. As I sat down to give it the usual quick pre-read flick through, photos and snippets of text began to unroll this man's life: his work, his achievements, his passions.

The Entertainer

Josef Hiebeler has always led a double life. For many he's the devoted hunting falconer. But away from the hawking field this man is one of the world's greatest demonstration falconers, and the developer of some of the most successful falconry castles in Europe. The first of these castles was Schloss Rosenberg in Bavaria, established 1977-78. Later (1988) came the coincidentally-named Schloss Rosenberg in Lower Austria (in *Hawking with Golden Eagles I* discuss it using its falconry centre name: Renaissance Falkenhof), and more recently (1994) the castle I have been writing about in my series of articles, Burg Hohenwerfen in Austria's Salzburger Land.

All of these castles are very different but share one common feature: height, lots of height. At the two Rosenbergs it's given by high-clinging locations over steep valleys, and Hohenwerfen is nailed to the tip of its own little mountain in some of the most extreme country in Europe. Hiebeler is obsessed with height. No altitude, no go. Height means big birds and soaring flights straight out into the blue. It's a theme that has always carried the weight of his demonstrations.

Keeping Pace

Falconry demonstrations are nothing new – are old, are everywhere. Tourists are choking on birds of prey. And the modern public – and especially their kids – are so plugged into a world where *everything* is possible *all the while*, where gadgetry can deliver the universe at a button push, that to thrill with nothing more than normal flesh and blood birds, you have to be way, way better than good.

And Hiebeler knows it. And so his birds haven't been normal – they've been something else. They've been things to hold the most fidgety button-ready kid nailed wide-mouthed in its seat. Demonstrations that have people overflowing onto the display lawn, hanging from trees and climbing walls, a horde of visitors that has spilled from a convoy of coaches and stormed through the gates like a wildebeest migration, desperate not to miss the show.

It's all about drama and action. It's about a sky just bursting with birds – a multi-shaped assortment as colourful as a wall poster. It's about crazy straight up, straight down flying, jet passes causing turbulence enough to suck spectators from their benches. About griffons launching from high secret doorways right into the mountains, and eagles 1 – 2 – 3, corkscrewing out of the sky one after the other at a hand signal. It's about shocking golden eagle

stoops that have hands grip seats as the suicide bird that's about to smash into the ground pulls out into a just-over-your-head screaming-through-castle-gates exit. It's about full on, full power, *wring every last drop out flying*.

The Hunting Falconer

Now let's look at the other side to Josef Hiebeler – the hunter. This man pours as much energy into hunting as he does into his summer life. And it's all eagle hawking: intensive, dedicated, sharp-as-a-razor serious. Hiebeler has devoted his entire hawking career to the golden eagle. Hunt with eagles – it's all he's ever done. And what a CV. The number of eagles he has flown, the different lands he has flown them in and the staggering amount of quarry taken, puts this man in a very special category. In a modern falconry where a couple of seasons and a few head of quarry is often enough to have an eager hand grabbing for the title 'expert', Hiebeler's achievements are so lofty they have you gasping for air.

Then the action: balance for tree cover, and back

Where do you start to look at it all? Training maybe. And immediately we put one foot back in that demonstration arena, for although I've used the term 'double life', Hiebeler's back and forth move between demonstration work and hunting isn't drawn with quite such a heavy line as implied. Certainly his eagle hawking has benefited enormously from his entertainment flying, with many of his best hunting eagles having lived the double life too: demo bird switching to hawking and back again. The gains are obvious: the flying time and difficult routines developing eagles that can fly like giant merlins. A pretty much anti-demonstration falconer once said to me 'you can't learn much about hunting from entertainment flying.' No but you certainly learn about getting to that last ounce of potential. And believe me, Hiebeler gets it all.





But if I had to single out one aspect of Hiebeler's eagle work for special mention it would be his ability to motivate birds, especially the young hand-reared eagles he has devoted so much time to. He enters and hunts with surgical precision, carefully shaping the bird – pushing it hard with a sensitive hand – until it glows white hot with its own power and confidence. He just possesses that feel and connection to the bird you either have or you don't.

In The Field

Like most Central European eagle falconers, Hiebeler primarily hunts brown hares off the glove over arable landscapes. He's a master at it: the judging of distance, terrain and wind – and the reading of the quarry. And if you really want to test him, load on the adversity. Throw him the wrong weather, wrong ground and give him winter hares that have made deals with the Devil just to see out one more season. In fact throw

hawking meets drawing eagle falconers from all over, the experience was made even more exciting due to it all being locked away behind the Iron Curtain.

Fox Hawking

But it's not been all hares. There has been fox and roe deer hawking too. Fox hawking is always a topic that sees eye wide and sets pulses racing. Maybe it's the size of the quarry and the fact that it can retaliate. Maybe too it's the link to historical falconry, to central Asia and mounted falconry. But in Europe this is far from everyday hawking, in fact the fox plays a minor role in eagle falconry. Even so, Hiebeler has enjoyed more than his share of success, knowing Raynard better than most.

And for someone so very deeply interested in the eagle's role in historical falconry, to experience Asia, to hunt the fox where it belongs, was something that had to be. Hiebeler

become a more common kill but still the master is there, demonstrating consistency and style.

His book gives us a cracking flight. It's minus 20 degrees, a day so cold that if you weren't moving you'd have your fingers frostbitten in the glove. And above, while the party beat through a young tree plantation, an eagle wavy up in the icy sky. Then the action: far below and far off, two deer struggling through the deep snow and heading for tree cover, and the eagle going into a long slanting stoop, all disappearing into the timber. It's electrifying stuff. You're struggling through the snow with him, the dog ahead (for Hiebeler always a large Munsterlander), desperate to discover the outcome, the evidence of the kill soon rushing at you – this time a top weight animal killed outright.

And far off, two deer struggling through the deep snow and heading for tree cover, and the eagle going into a long slanting stoop, all disappearing into the timber

whatever challenges you like, and while others flounder, he somehow offers the Devil a better deal.

With the hare hawking has come much travelling. Most falconers cover a few miles each season, but eagle-owning European hare hawkers spend more time behind the wheel than most. It's certainly long been the way for German falconers trying to show young birds sufficient optimal chances, or bringing a proper season's bag together with older birds. The top destinations have always been the hare-rich lands of the former Eastern Block. Hiebeler has a tie to this hawking that goes back many years. From the Bavarian Rosenburg he would head off in a vehicle packed with eagles, falconers and a mountain of gear on true hare hawking expeditions. Far from home and with the various

undertook his first of many trips about 13 years ago. It was pretty raw stuff, the experience 100% proof: out-of-a-rucksack living in frozen conditions, waking up to steel-solid boots, fording wild ice-rivers and days living in the saddle searching for flights. I remember his return: two thousand photos, a Kasakh saddle over his shoulder, and a man ready to burst with the rush of it all!

Deer Hawking

Roe deer hawking is very close to Hiebeler's heart. Again it's historical falconry, golden quarries having been hunted with hooded eagles since the bird's earliest use in the sport. When Hiebeler first started to hawk deer not a lot of this type of flying was seen. Slowly the roe has

On a Personal Note

As we pass through falconry we are touched and influenced by those we come into contact with, sometimes the briefest encounter bringing about monumental changes. Our falconry alters: we sample, mix, discard, borrow, test and try and shape what works for us, the shaping never ceasing. Over the years I have flown with some of the sport's most skilful falconers, but none have influenced me like Josef Hiebeler. Today I can't help reflecting on the massive gulf that separates our two very different types of hawking: me with my Harris' hawks, him still with his eagles, and both of us having changed with age and with much of that sampling and blending over the years. But it's funny, when I take to the field with a bird that's truly motivated and up for anything; we're as close as you can be.

The culmination of a 25 year ambition to breed and release Red Kites, one of Britain's rarest and most beautiful birds of prey, into part of North Hampshire has been achieved.

The Hawk Conservancy, which was founded by Reg Smith, had always wanted to see wild red kites resident in the local area around the Conservancy, which is situated near Andover, but unfortunately was never successful in getting the birds to breed.

Reg's son, Ashley, who took over the running of the conservancy after Reg died eight years ago, has succeeded in breeding Red Kites and the birds have now been released.

"It is probably the first time that Red Kites have resided in this part of Hampshire, the Cholderton Valley, in 180 years", said Ashley.

"We have released youngsters into a nest site in Reg's Meadow, the wildflower meadow planted in memory of my father, so at last we are achieving his long-held ambition".

After being persecuted to the verge of extinction, efforts are being made to help the Red Kite become re-established in Britain. But the birds are still under threat – only last winter the



Red Kite chick

RED KITES RELEASED- 25 YEAR AMBITION REALISED

Conservancy Trust's hospital had to treat a Red Kite from the Chilterns that had been shot. The bird was treated successfully and was released back into the wild.

The birds released by the Hawk Conservancy Trust are being constantly monitored by it's members to ensure they are adequately protected from both predators or the weather.

"We have given the birds the names Manor, Haydown, Fox and Piper after local farms. Landowners are co-operating and they are really pleased to see these birds returning," said Ashley.

The co-ordinator of the team is Trust projects director, Campbell Murn, who is being aided by



Ashley Smith with one of the young Red Kites

research assistant Sarah Curtis, from Newbury, and Newcastle University undergraduates Mel Oswin and Kate Whitton as well as a team of Trust members. Using radio tracking techniques, the locations of the kites will be known at all times.

At the time of going to press, both Manor and Piper were unfortunately electrocuted on power lines

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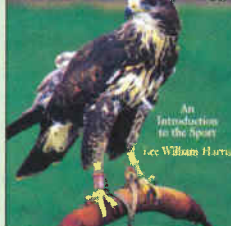
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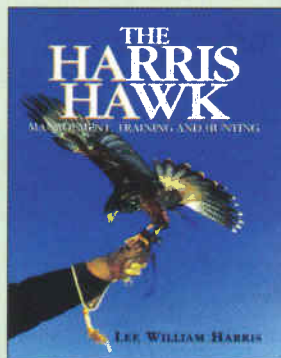
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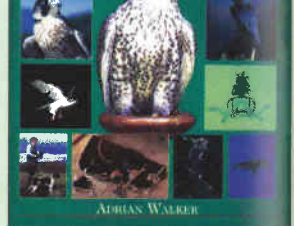


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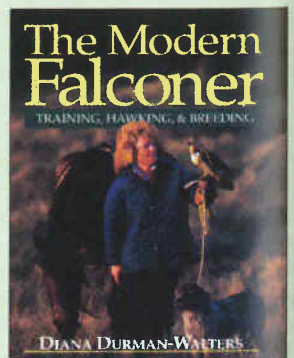


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Game Conservancy Scottish Fair 2003

Andrew Knowls-Brown

Set in the park of Scone Palace at Perth in the heart of Scotland this years G.C.S.F. fair was up to its usual high standard. With a record attendance of 32500 over the two days the Falconry Mews area had a continual stream of people to see what is probably the largest static display of birds of prey put on at an outside demonstration in the U.K. It is now an important date for any falconer from the north of England or Scotland wishing to see and purchase a wide range of falconry furniture.

This is the 3rd year that the mews area has invited falconry related traders to show their wares in Scotland and it has been growing each year. The whole site covered 100 foot square this year and had 20 trade stands a central tent for the Campaign for Falconry and two large bird weatherings.

Those exhibiting at the fair were the two clubs in Scotland, the Scottish Hawking Club who runs the mews area and the British Falconers Club (Scottish Group), Shaun Callon, Ben Long, Raptor Craft, Falconry Electronics, Campaign for Falconry, Falconry Originals, Ian Vance, KKK Hawk food who have kindly sponsored the mews area for three years, Honeybrook Animal Foods who very kindly sponsored and provided the BBQ on Saturday evening which fed 70 people and raised £500.00 for the CFF and Perthshire Falconry Services who are contracted by the Game Conservancy to put on the fabulous twice daily bird of

prey flying demonstrations as well as the static display, which this year had over 40 falcons, hawks, eagles and owls on display. The quality of the flying display was up to Adrian's usual high standards and he had the crowds packing the main arena to watch, also his static display was not the usual 39 Harris hawks and one Red tail but was made up of over 25 different species and is well worth seeing.

Next year the fair is on the 3rd & 4th July. Anyone wishing further details or to exhibit at the fair should call the Scottish Hawking club on 01864 505245.



Falcon Mews Sales Weekend

The Falcon Mews sales weekend this year coincided with the CLA Game Fair, both events being held in Yorkshire, and many falconers attended both events.

The sales days were held on 2-3 August and was attended by falconers from this country and the Middle East. Although the number of falconers attending the event were down on previous years, more birds were sold or pre-ordered than last year.

The birds themselves were mainly hybrids and it is quite a sight to see 80 or so birds on perches (five to a perch) and all hooded in rows.


The weather was very hot and two sides of the marquee had to be opened to create a light breeze for the birds (and standholders). A bar-b-que and refreshments were also available and many thanks must go to Peter Gill and Richard Hill for putting on such an important event.



Himalayan Parahawkers

Nepal is a country of immense contrast, diversity, warmth and wonderful, refreshing simplicity. From the epic proportions of the Himalayan peaks to the lush lowland valleys, the Kingdom of Nepal offers a range of opportunities and experiences for the adventurous soul.





Having been out in Nepal flying with these birds on a daily basis for the last eight years, Adam and another enthusiast, Graham, were keen to push this interaction further. So after a few beers and plenty of enthusiastic discussion, the idea of Parahawking was born.

The Himalaya is home to eight of the highest peaks in the world all over 8000m, and some of the deepest river gorges notably The Kali Gandaki, which carves a path four miles deep through the mountains providing a passage for a great number of migratory birds. Nepal is home to over 80 species of diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey, with some of the largest Eagles and Vultures including the spectacular Himalayan Griffon Vulture and the Lammergeyer to some of the rarest, the Rufus Bellied Hawk Eagle down to the tiny Falconets of the Terai. It truly is a mecca for Raptors

The Beginning

This story starts with a journey of discovery. While traveling through Nepal on an around the world tour I noticed some paragliders flying above Pokhara, a beautiful lakeside town nestled at the foot of the mighty Annapurna range. As a falconer I had always had a fascination with flying and decided to have a go at paragliding.

This led to my meeting Adam Hill, a brit whose passion for flying and birds of prey had kept him in Nepal for the past eight years, where he established and runs Sunrise Paragliding, the only Paragliding School in Nepal.

Paragliding is a relatively new sport. The early days of unstable, dangerous gliders have now been replaced with a vastly improved technology - one which allows pilots to fly hundreds of kilometers in a day at anything up to 18,000 feet, and above all carry their equipment in a rucksack weighing only 15 kilos. The potential is limitless.

Utilizing the same forces of nature which raptors have used for millions of years, paragliding pilots seek out thermals to take them to cloud base and into a new world. Once experienced in finding and utilizing this lift, pilots can hop from thermal to thermal and cover hundreds of kilometers without ever getting near to the ground. The holy grail of cross-country flight is the pinnacle of paragliding achievement,

and in a country of outstanding beauty like Nepal, it is without doubt one of the most awe-inspiring experiences life has to offer.

Unsurprisingly then, my maiden paragliding flight was an experience that changed my life. Here was an opportunity that I had only dreamed about during my falconry career. The chance to fly with the raptors that I so admired, but on their own terms, in their own element.

During this flight I experienced more wild birds of prey than I could imagine, including Egyptian Vultures, Griffon Vultures, Red Headed Vultures, Steppe Eagles, Crested Serpent Eagles, Mountain Hawk Eagles, Peregrines and Kites to name but a few.

I was awe struck. It was at this point that I realized that Adam and I shared a mutual fascination with these creatures and a bond was formed.

Having been out in Nepal flying with these birds on a daily basis for the last eight years, Adam and another enthusiast, Graham, were keen to push this interaction further. So after a few beers and plenty of enthusiastic discussion, the idea of Parahawking was born.

Different types of wings

Parahawking is simply a fusion between paragliding and falconry. The idea being that the birds are trained to "hunt" the thermals, which allow the pilots to stay aloft.

This was exciting stuff, to have one of the sky's most gifted flyers as your own remote Variometer (an instrument pilots use to indicate lift or sink rates) was surely every pilots dream.

It was here that my travel plans were turned on their head. I agreed to stay and teach Adam, Graham and his business partner Rajesh, falconry and in return they would teach me to paraglide. The end result being that we could all fly together with our trained birds, an ideal exchange of knowledge.

It was decided that the Pariah Kite was the

best option, being a truly gifted flyer with exceptional maneuverability and a gregarious bird with an inherent social and amiable temperament making it easy to train. The next challenge was how to obtain a bird. By an amazing twist of fate we received a phone call alerting us to a possible source. A local farmer had cut down a tree and in doing so disturbed a kites nest. Unfortunately for the kites the tree and nest were destroyed, fortunately for us they had two chicks.

The mother wasn't so lucky, the farmer had her chained up and wedged into an upturned basket, her chicks lay starving stuffed in a shoebox next to her, all being destined for the cooking pot. It was this mans' belief that their blood would prevent certain diseases. After many hours of bargaining he eventually agreed to sell us the birds for 2000 rupees, about £20 to us but approx one month's salary for the farmer.

Injured kites and chicks

The chicks, we named Sapana and Shadoko, were only a couple of days old, male and female as it turned out. We were now thrown in at the deep end, after all we had only decided it was a good idea the previous day. Whilst the two chicks were in relatively good shape albeit a little hungry, the mother was not so fortunate. The chain had cut heavily into her leg right through to the bone so she needed immediate care, she was placed on a course of antibiotics and fed a healthy diet of fish, chicken and buffalo meat. Her spirits raised as her weight began to increase, her dressing was changed daily and her wound cleaned and disinfected but it was clear she needed surgery.

An advert was placed around town requesting the assistance of any traveling Vets. Within hours an English vet had offered his help and coincidentally had some experience with birds of prey, a rarity even in the UK. So armed with enough Ketamine to knock out a horse, Keith,

Himalayan Parahawkers

the vet, performed his magic. Despite the unhygienic conditions, it seemed the surgery was a success. After an hour or so of tense waiting, she eventually came round from the anesthetic and seemed none the worse for her ordeal. Now all that was needed was a lot of TLC and a little bit of luck.

Raising Sapana & Shadoko was a pretty standard procedure, all the while I was passing on my knowledge to Adam and Rajesh, Adam was teaching me to fly. The similarities between training birds and teaching me to fly were clearly evident, as the birds took their first tentative steps so did I. I could now empathize with the birds I had trained over the years, that first nervous reluctant hop to the glove. It was now me who had to take that brave leap from the safety of my perch, *tera firma*.

No building superstores here

Nepal is a primitive country desperately trying to modernize, but without the resources it struggles at every turn. Things take time and the simplest tasks can seem so difficult at times. Like building aviaries! The construction itself seemed an endless ordeal.

DIY superstores are in short supply, the lack of simple things like Philips head screws, saws that cut the right way and electricity, things we all take for granted, hampered our progress. Added to this, the local builder was laying bricks at a snails pace and the regular afternoon thunderstorms would literally grind things to a halt. The monsoon was clearly coming early and there was still so much to do.

After a hectic few weeks of rearing chicks, teaching falconry and learning to Paraglide I felt I needed a holiday. The aviaries were finally complete, the birds were now branching, and old enough to be transferred to their new homes, after all, they had grown out of their nesting baskets and were creating havoc in the paragliding office, where we had been raising them. The mother's operation was a success and the round-the-clock care she was given seemed to have paid off. She was now on the mend and ready to be transferred to her half way house.

Then fate dealt a crushing blow as all the hard work and dedication came to nothing for shortly after my departure to Thailand the mother took a turn for the worse and despite the gallant efforts of the team, she died. Without a postmortem examination it's difficult to diagnose the cause of death. Her injury was terrible and it was always an uphill battle, maybe in the end after such a traumatic time, she just lost the will to live.

Holiday over

On my return from Thailand we commenced the training, which was smooth and predictable. The real challenge was how the Kites were going to be rewarded for their part in hunting the thermals. Various different methods were experimented with, the first being a 5ft aluminium boom which was attached to the harness of the pilot. We had reared the birds by feeding them from small green trays, so we decided to attach the tray to the boom. Food would be placed on the tray and the birds would come in to land and collect their reward. Simple! Unfortunately the boom proved too unstable for the pilot to manage solo so after Adam had modified his lovely new harness by gauging a huge great big hole in it, the idea was shelved.

It was clear that Kites were happy to eat on the wing. This we encouraged during training by throwing food up for them to catch mid-air, although after some thought this seemed like a bad idea, for if she missed the tid-bit and it fell, she may follow the food down to the ground. So we settled for them to return to the fist. It was, however, impractical for the birds to land and sit

on the fist for a number of reasons. Firstly, they found it difficult to actually land on the pilots moving fist during flight; secondly, the longer they stayed in close proximity to the glider the more chance of them

getting caught in the lines of the canopy, as we subsequently discovered. Finally, the pilot needed both hands to fly. Through a process of trial and error we encouraged them to snatch the food from the glove of the pilot and eat their reward on the wing.

Many hours were spent encouraging them to take food from the fist under an inflated glider, all the time ensuring that they fly out the correct way as to not get tangled in the lines of the canopy. In fact this became a real concern as on one occasion Sapana decided to snatch the food, swing up and back and then straight into the lines. Luckily she managed to struggle free but her confidence took a severe knock and only after some gentle coaxing did she start to come back to us in flight.

Then tragedy struck. The Kingdom of Nepal woke one morning to discover that almost its entire Royal Family had been obliterated in a Palace massacre and the country sunk into a state of emergency and mourning. Grey clouds covered the sky and the heavens opened, the monsoon had arrived, so it was time to hang up the gloves until the next season.



Sapana and wild kites

It's now two years on and the dream is finally being realized. Unfortunately for little Shadoko, he was lost during one of his epic three hour flights with Rajesh. Sapana however is carrying the torch and is an outstanding acrobatic. To watch her fly and interact with the glider and other wild kites is a sight to behold. She will happily fly for hours upon hours, marking out the thermals and returning for her reward.

We call this experience Parahawking. The potential is limitless, and we are excited to see how far we can take the project. With over 80 species of raptor in Nepal, we have many years of discovery ahead of us. Unfortunately as is the case in many third world countries, the natural environment takes a second place to development. This development takes many shapes and forms; habitat destruction, human population growth and pesticides have led to a serious decline in many species of eagle and vulture in the Himalaya.

During the monsoon many raptors like Shadoko and Sapana are bought to us, either injured or orphaned or sometimes captured by locals and are just hungry. Many of these birds can be released or simply put back in their nests. However, some, particularly the very young orphans, need proper care and once imprinted cannot be returned to the wild.

Future Aims

The Himalayan Hawk Conservancy is in its early stages of development. The aim is to develop a raptor center to house a pool of parahawks for private and commercial purposes. Also, to rehabilitate wild raptors and to educate and inform locals and tourists of the conservation issues surrounding birds of prey in Nepal. Hopefully in time through our Parahawking trips, falconry courses, breeding programs and research, the HHC will be able to contribute to the conservation efforts that others are making in this area.

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CLA Game Fair 2003

The CLA Game Fair was held at Harewood House in Yorkshire this year and attracted 131,000 people through the gates.

The falconry section was once again sponsored by Mitsubishi cars and the whole area was set up by the Hawk Board and the Campaign for Falconry. The main organisers of the falconry area were Mike Clowes and John Hill, both of whom are very experienced in organising such an event.

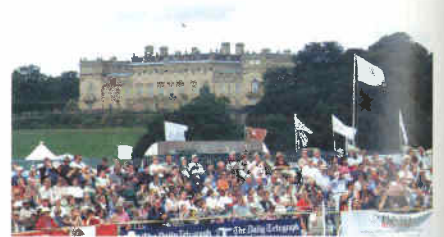
This year saw the final demonstrations given by Jemima Parry-Jones in the main area before she bids farewell to these shores. Jemima has given many people much delight and information over the years at this event and we are sorry to see her go.

The mini arena also attracted many members of the public with demonstrations and talks given by Bryan Paterson, among others.

Bryan invited children into the arena to fly Harris hawks and they all went away with a smile on their faces. He certainly knows what the kids want and how to communicate with them.

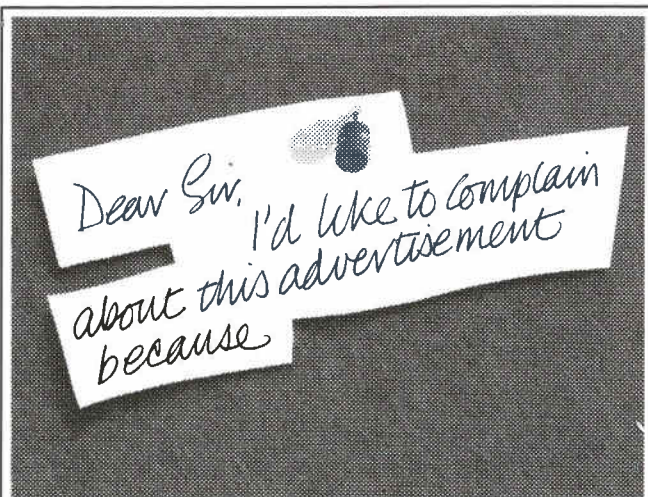
The falconry section was well represented by manufactures and clubs alike - 22 stands in all - which has built up over the years. At one time only Martin Jones was the only business in attendance, along with two or three clubs, and anyone who has attended the fair over the years have seen it grow from its small beginnings. Equipment making used to be demonstrated but now that does not happen. Perhaps we should see a return of the demonstrations by manufactures.

Next year the CLA Game Fair will be held at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, on 23 - 25 July 2004.



(above) Good crowds was seen every day around the falconry arena

(left) The Editor and Ian Garland take time to have a quick chat



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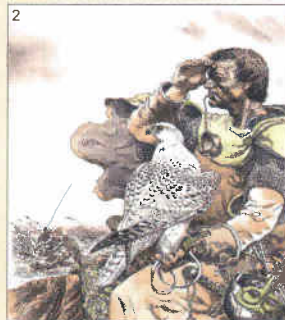
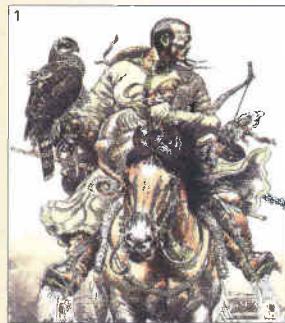
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When reading through the pages of your favourite periodical (I mean of course *The Falconers Magazine*), don't you sometimes wish that a beginner would write an article now and then? Well, here is one. I have kept raptors for about seven years now and am still far from knowing even half of what I should/could know. I remember very well most of the mistakes I have made and things which with hindsight I would do differently. Of course, we all read eagerly the articles written by the experts and gurus but what if there are a few people out there who would appreciate a few admissions of faults which could be avoided and the often laughable episodes which are sure to accompany inexperience? So here goes.

Clothing

I can remember walking in the country a few years ago when I saw in front of me a vision in leather trousers and jacket. It's not for me to say whether her hair, which had clearly not been dressed by the average suburban salon, was specially tinted so as to be of the same auburn shade as the wings of her Harris' Hawk. This was perched on her immaculate buckskin glove, attached to a pure white leash untainted by dirt or droppings. For all I know the bird might have been stuffed. It had obviously been trained to sit tight and that it did very well. You will

Some (not always serious) advice to a would-be falconer

not meet too many of these 'Rhinestone Cowboys' among the happy band of falconers who in general tend to dress down rather than up. All the falconry clubs appeal to their members to dress appropriately, by which is probably meant not to wear jeans or highly coloured shirts. The best-known, perhaps simply the best, display falconer in Britain today will typically appear dressed in a skirt and top which would not be out of place if she were shopping in a supermarket and no-one would dare to challenge her taste!

There are two points about clothing which I have learned by experience. The first is never to wear an open-weave woollen top. If you do, this will be the time for your bird to sink a talon into your sleeve instead of your glove. You will try to disentangle the talon. Your bird will grip all the harder and then will throw a wobbler, hanging upside down and screaming. It is then that a lady will come along with a little child who asks, "Mummy, why is the man being cruel to the bird?" The lady will hurry on with a grim expression on her face and you just know that, once round the

corner, she will contact the RSPCA on her mobile.

The second thing is never wear sandals the same colour as your lure when you are out with a young bird you are training. When my current Lanner was ready to fly free for the first time, I took her out, perched her on a post, and stood back. It was a warm August day and I was wearing open sandals without socks. I was at this stage just holding the lure in the air for her to catch. As soon as I showed it to her off she came in fine style, but what I did not know was that the lure had swivelled round, hiding the meat. Not to worry, thought the Lanner, there's a nice piece of meat on the floor and before I could react she had grabbed my big toe which was sticking conveniently through the front of my sandal. One thing about Megan is that, once she has bound on she has no intention of letting go! Since the revelations in the press of the sexual behaviour of certain celebrities, toe sucking may well have become a popular intimate pastime but I can assure everyone that there is nothing erotic about the attentions of a falcon's beak and talons. You would be surprised at how much blood there is in a toe and the sight of this seemed to encourage her to tighten her grip all the harder! I was hopping about for some time before she saw the lure on the ground and decided to give it another go!

Sod's Law

As you can judge from my last example, it will always be the case that, when something goes wrong a spectator will suddenly appear to see you in your worst light. Similarly your bird will always fly off when it has no telemetry on or when the batteries are going flat, your mews jesses will go missing just when your bird is having a tantrum and you need to get it on a leash as soon as possible. When working on a creance, a young falcon will always get it tangled in a wing or round a foot and doesn't it just love you trying to untangle the line whilst it is eating? (Yet another deep scratch on your arm to attract infection). Raptors hate children and dogs. When you have decided that today is the right time to let your obedient young Harris' Hawk fly free for the first time, pooches or kids will turn up from nowhere, spooking your bird and leaving you waiting under a large oak tree in the hope that, before it goes dark, she will come down to the tempting morsel in your glove (she never obliges). It is interesting to note that a Harris' Hawk, which has previously been ready to perform double

Lanneret, Bobby, my first falcon

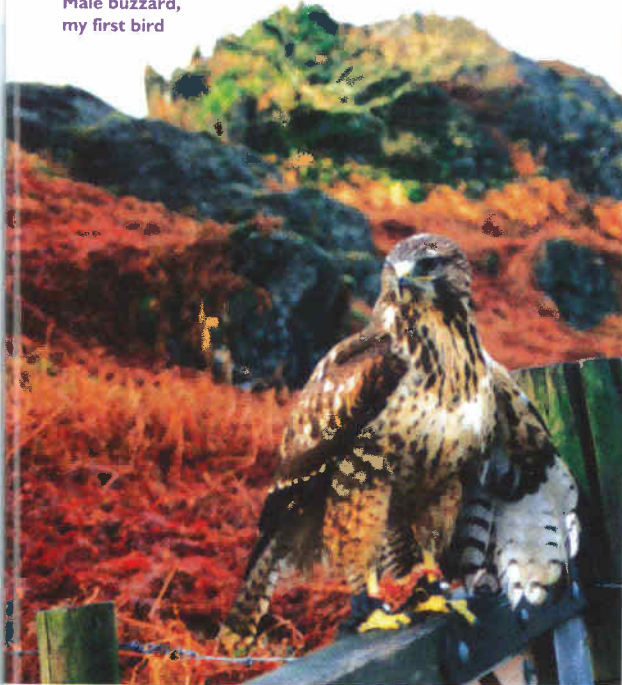


somersaults for you at every mealtime day after day, will happily stay in a tree for up to 76 hours before coming down even to its favourite food and when it finally does it will look at you reproachfully as if to ask, "Where have you been all this time then?"

FAQ's

Where I exercise my birds on a daily basis is fairly public and it is a rare day when I don't get someone

Male buzzard, my first bird



Today list. To his credit, he decided against this since it was not a native species.

The questions which people ask show a lot about their knowledge of raptors in particular and the natural world in general. Among the favourites are "Is it an eagle? (Mostly from adults), "Is it an owl?" (Mostly from children of the age to read the Harry Potter books), "Can I stroke it?" (Take a look at its talons and then you decide.) "Would it like some of my crisps/ice-cream/chocolate bar/whatever I am eating at the moment to stave

off my terrible hunger?", "Is your bird vicious?", "Does it only eat live prey?" (These last two mostly from men. Why do men frequently introduce a sadistic element?), "Does it come back to you?", "Is it on a line?" (This when the bird is perched about 100 metres away from you).

Courses/Course books

No beginner should ever even think of getting a raptor without first accumulating a great deal of information about them and their requirements. This is nowadays available from other raptor keepers, courses and books/videos. Only a few years back this was not the case. I have a book, published not so long ago, whose author says in the first chapter that he has deliberately withheld some points so as to discourage his readers from becoming falconers. In other

words, he shows us how exciting it is to own and train a bird but then denies us the basic guidance to do so. Since any Tom, Dick or Harry can buy a bird with no questions asked; this is a recipe for disaster both for owner and bird. Nowadays attitudes have changed and sound information is available from a variety of sources. You will still be very fortunate if you can find a good falconer who has the time and patience to give extended help. Courses are a good, even indispensable start but don't think you will be handling a typical bird. Course birds are chosen for their steadiness and reliability. You will be lucky if your first bird is just as bomb-proof.

So what about books/videos? There are quite a lot of them but is their advice consistent? Well, here are a few examples of differing pieces of advice. One book tells you to hood your new bird on its arrival and to keep it hooded for a day or two to reduce stress even feeding through the hood. Another calls this practice 'bloody silly' (Falconers don't just differ, they differ with attitude!). One book says that, if a bird is as yet too scared to take food from you, it should be replaced unfed in its aviary until the next day, when its hunger may overcome its fear. Another says that this is wrong and the bird should be given a third of a cropful everyday (My difficulty as a beginner would be to know just what is a third of a crop-full).

Never feed a new bird except on your fist. It's OK to throw it some food. Never put a bird in a travelling box on a leash. Design your box so that there is a notch in the door to thread the leash through. Never use a swivel when your bird is on a creance because, if the knot slips the bird will be on the loose with its legs tied together, is one piece of advice. Another says, use a swivel with a creance so that the jesses don't get twisted round the bird's legs, putting it off at a critical time of its training. How can you reconcile these pieces of guidance or know if one is right and the other wrong?

All these falconers, who accuse each other of being thoughtless, insane or even cruel, are successful trainers and have excellent birds to prove it. Probably the best thing is to follow the counsel of the late and great Phillip Glasier who advised that you should at first follow unflinchingly one falconer/book/video and subsequently, with the benefit of some experience behind you, use that very valuable commodity – common sense.

To finish

So there it is. I've got it off my chest. No-one will be particularly enlightened by what I have written. Someone may have laughed to read it or at least have raised a wry smile. One last thought and it's this. In spite of its difficulties and its inconsistencies, our sport is strangely satisfying. What a pity that there are people who don't understand this and because they don't understand they are sometimes 'anti'. Can we all, beginners and experts, unite to do everything possible to enlighten all kill-joys and spoilers? It's good to hawk. As one person said to me after seeing Megan flying free, "Thank you for keeping a centuries old country sport going." If, after the long apprenticeship, you become a falconer you too can be proud of that tradition.

passing on foot or on a bike, which young birds react to as if it is some kind of scary half-man, half-machine, which I suppose is what it seems like to them. All but the bird-phobic of these passers-by stop and ask questions and mostly it is a pleasure to be able to talk to them if only to dispel the myths about having to starve raptors into submission before they will co-operate or that it is cruel to keep them in captivity and they should be let free. They are often amazed to hear that non-entered birds will just die if left to their own devices and I hope that people pass on their way more enlightened and more kindly disposed to falconers and falconry than before. The really happy ones are those who happen to have a camera with them.

These latter have been known to ask me for my address and send me copies of their photos. The kind of question that people ask before they move on says a lot about their knowledge of birds of prey in particular and nature in general. Of all those I have met, only two people have ever identified a bird correctly first time – one a Kestrel, which is fairly easy but was perhaps just a guess because many will ask, "Is it a Kestrel?" whether I am with a Harris' Hawk or whatever. The other, to my amazement was a Lanner but the clued-up individual was a bird watcher who was then in an agony of conscience as to whether he could legitimately mark it down on his Birds Spotted

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