

The **Falcons**  
*& Raptor Conservation Magazine*



Have ferret-  
will travel

Deutsche Falconry

Poe - a Raven  
beauty

LESLEY J. WEBBER  
ARTIST



Raptor  
Conservation  
& Monitoring  
ANDY PAGE



SOUTH  
AMERICAN  
MAGIC  
BOB DALTON



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is just not natural

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# editorial

**A**s I write this editorial, I'm looking out of the window at a grey, wet, cold and miserable day with no chance of flying my birds. It's just like the day on which I was invited for a longwing meet with members of the British Falconers Club, in Sussex, last November. I have written an article on the event in this issue (see page 25) and I think I have just about dried out by now!

On page 17 of this issue you will see an idea from Kevin Ryan concerning an award for 'Falcon of the Year' to be introduced at the 2005 Falconers Fair. What are your thoughts on the matter? If you have anything to say on the subject, please let me know and I'll try to publish your letters in the next issue.

In the last edition of the magazine, an article was published on Parahawking in Nepal, which has been very well received by various falconers from across the country. I had a telephone call from Sky Television to say that a programme will be broadcast on the National Geographic Channel, on Monday 22 March, at 10:00pm, showing the Paragliders training the birds of prey in Nepal. If the DVD of the project is anything to go by, it will be well worth watching if you can receive satellite broadcasts.

Talking of Nepal, I am hoping to go on a three week holiday there in February, including going to base camp at Mount Everest. To me, this is a trip of a life time and I am hoping to see many species of birds of prey including the Lammergeier, Brahminy Kite and Himalayan Griffon Vulture. Fingers crossed that all goes to plan.

The next edition of the magazine should be published in time for the Falconers Fair and will be on sale a week before the event; so if you have any stories you wish to submit for publication, please send them in by 1 April, 2004.

In the meantime, have a good read.

*Peter Eldrett*



# Falconers

## news and products

Send all your news and product information to [peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk)

### Free visit to the Falconers Fair plus £50 of Brinsea vouchers

The Falconers Fair, the country's leading event for falconry, is on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Chetwynd Park, Newport, Shropshire. This year *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine* has teamed up with Brinsea Products to offer two free entry tickets to the Falconers Fair. The winner will also receive vouchers worth £50 off any purchase from Brinsea's leading range of incubation products.

Brinsea launched its ground breaking new Contaq X8 incubator at last year's Falconers Fair. Using Contact Incubation Technology to create the conditions of the natural nest, the Contaq X8 is now being taken up by leading breeders around the world. (Jemima-Parry Jones can be seen here with her Contaq X8.)

This year at the Fair, Brinsea will again be featuring the Contaq X8 and also selling a wide range of products for the keen breeder. If you don't win the free tickets, then visit the Brinsea booth for a chance to win more Brinsea vouchers: a further £50 worth will be given away each day of the Fair.



You can enter by post, fax or on-line at the Brinsea web site. Complete the form below, and send it, or a photocopy, by post to: Brinsea Products Limited, Station Road, Sandford, North Somerset, BS25 5RA, or fax to Brinsea at: 01934 820250

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Alternatively you can enter on-line by visiting [www.brinsea.co.uk](http://www.brinsea.co.uk) and following the link to the Falconers Fair competition.

The editors decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

(above) Jemima Parry-Jones receives her Brinsea Contaq X8 incubator. Contact Incubation Technology uses the warm air-filled membrane, which Jemima is pointing at, to recreate the natural brood-patch on the female bird. Prototype Contaq X8s have been successfully used in the breeding programme at the National Birds of Prey Centre.

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piece of clothing (a T-shirt for example) close to where you want the heat to work.

Zöe Shortland, who tried one of the patches, said "a brilliant invention - great for keeping you warm when out in the cold, as it heats not only the part of your body where you place it, but your whole body ends up feeling warm and 'toasty'. I would imagine it's great for relieving aches and pains also". The cost of the pads is £8.99 for eight plus £1.78 P&P or 30 for £29.49 plus £4.75 P&P.

To obtain more information, contact Personal Comfort Ltd, 9 Woodside, Wimbledon, London SW19 7AR, or visit their website at [www.personalcomfort.co.uk](http://www.personalcomfort.co.uk)



## From the Hawk Board

### Shooters who target trained falcons may face substantial claims...

The Hawk Board (HB) and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) today warned shooters to be especially vigilant when faced by birds that they do not instantly recognize. In two separate incidents members of the British Falconers' Club have had their falcons shot by guns on organized shoots: one case has resulted in substantial damages being awarded against the shooter in question, whilst the second is still under legal review.

"Falcons have enormous range and the sky contains no boundary fences," said Hawk Board spokesman, Nick Kester. "They may well have been blown off course and be returning to their handler. If a shooter sees the unmistakable silhouette of a raptor, even in the excitement of a driven shoot, he must not even contemplate raising his gun to it."

"Trained falcons are especially easy to spot as they carry bells, audible in flight, and wear visible leather anklets known as jesses. They are used to people and may well be drawn to pheasant shoots where large numbers of birds are being constantly flushed. Falconry birds carry unique locators which enable them to be quickly tracked over many miles."

BASC's head of media, Jeffrey Olstead said: "The time and effort falconers put into training their hawks is phenomenal and to shoot one is just like deliberately shooting a picker-up's dog. As with working Gundogs, a hawk's training can enormously increase its value, so shooting a hawk could be very expensive - and in more than just financial terms.

"Killing a protected species would almost certainly result in



prosecution and the loss of your shotgun certificate. You would also lose the respect and goodwill of all responsible shooters, and any BASC member found guilty of such an offence could be expelled."

Falconry and shooting enjoys an excellent relationship. Both regularly unite to defend any attack on field sports, and all over the UK falconers are welcomed on shoots, providing a very different and diverting spectacle for the members. However, both shooters and falconers were united in condemning irresponsible actions that could have so easily been avoided.

## Roger Upton to visit the Central Falconry Club

On the 14th March the Central Falconry & Raptor Club will be paid a visit by the world famous falconer & author, Roger Upton. The meeting will be held at the Sports Connexion, Ryton on Dunsmore, nr. Coventry and will start at 8pm. The cost to non members will be £5.

Roger has been a practising falconer for the past 50 years. He has flown most of the species of hawks and falcons used in falconry from Sparrowhawks to the Gyr falcons of the Arctic region.

Over the years he has owned some fine birds including Naseem, an outstanding Peregrine, Monsoar, a passage falcon who hunted on the Wiltshire Downs for three seasons, Dawn and Jallard, two falcons that proved their worth on the grouse moors of Caithness.

Some 40 years ago Roger made his first trip to Arabia hunting Houbara, the McQueens bustard, with Arab falconers in Abu Dhabi and since then has hunted with them in Oman, Iran and Pakistan.

If any more information is needed regarding the talk please call John Hill on 07973 224609

## Interhatch move

Interhatch, the well known suppliers of incubators, brooders, hatchers, etc., have moved to bigger and better premises in Derbyshire.

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**Whittington Way**  
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**Telephone: 0871 2 505 505**

## Icarus Falconry spreads its wings

Icarus Falconry, the Northamptonshire based company, have spread their wings and taken on another large-scale project.

The recently opened Twin Lakes Park, just outside of Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, decided a falconry centre was one of the attractions it needed and that bird of prey flying displays would be ideal for its intended clientele. The owners of Twin Parks turned to Mike Hewlett and Richard James to see if they would be willing to take on such a project.

Now staff members from Icarus Falconry and a team of more than twenty eagles, hawks, falcons, owls and vultures are firmly established at the park. There are two flying displays each day and there are various opportunities for members of the public to have a one to one with some of the hawks and also have their photographs taken with their favourite bird.

For further details of the activities at Twin Lakes Park, you can contact Richard James on 07899 953997.



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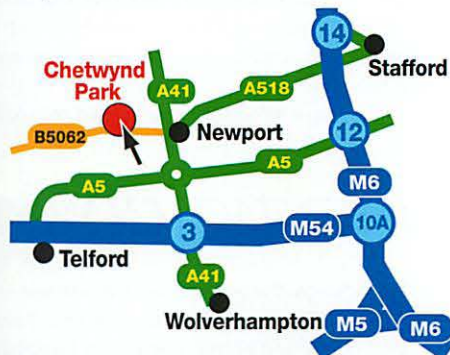
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the above due to unforeseen circumstances.



# MIGRATION

## DELAYED

**T**he planned migration of birds from The National Birds of Prey Centre at Newent in Gloucestershire to South Carolina in the US has been delayed.

Following advice from four internationally known veterinarians it has been decided to delay moving the birds from Newent to Charleston SC, because of a mosquito-borne disease called West Nile Virus that is infecting birds in the US. A vaccine is being developed specifically for birds of prey, but is not yet available.

The current risk to captive birds in the absence of a specific vaccine is significant. Both Jim Elliott and Jemima Parry-Jones feel that the risk is unacceptable to what is probably one of the most significant collections of birds of prey in the world. The delay will allow for the final stages of vaccine development to be completed and administered to the collection prior to any possible exposure in the US.

Mrs Parry-Jones said that the welfare of the birds was paramount, although this delay will inevitably mean the loss of the sale of the Centre. However the birds are more important than financial concerns.

The move is now planned for November 2004, it has to be either early or late in the year due to weather constraints. Mrs Parry-Jones has decided to carry on at Newent and open to the public as normal on February 1<sup>st</sup> this year. Her staff have all backed her and together they are going to work to get the Centre running and available to all, with flying demonstrations and guided tours of the birds.

The courses and experience days will continue to run and Mrs Parry-Jones says that because financially she had not expected to have to get through another winter, and much had been spent on equipment and travel arrangements, that she will be out in the Centre more than usual to help, and save on wages.

She said that it was a difficult and stressful decision for both to make, but the right one. So take the chance to go and see this important collection before migration resumes in November 2004, it is well worth taking the time for a visit.

## WEST NILE VIRUS - what is it all about and why is its existence important

**W**est Nile Virus is a mosquito borne flavivirus, which has been spreading across the US over the last 3 years. It has caused massive die offs (thousands) in corvids and raptors as well as other species, whilst certain song birds can be infected but not killed by it and as such act as a reservoir for the spread of further infection. Affected birds are presented with tremors, seizures, disorientation, reduced appetite, weight loss, difficulty swallowing, shutting eyes, feather loss and green faeces. The disease not only affects birds but is also potentially fatal in horses and man.

In USA a commercial vaccine (developed for horses), is available although its efficacy and safety is not certain in all raptor species. The best assessment given by Professor Pat Redig from the Raptor Centre (University of Minnesota), is that this vaccine reduced the level of mortality by 40%, i.e. 60% of infected raptors would still die. However in the interim Dr Patti Bright of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, using genetic engineering has developed a research 'virus sub unit' vaccine. This form of vaccine is very much safer and more effective than the previous one - however it is sadly not only unavailable commercially, but is also not even available on a trial basis (at present).

As NBPC veterinary advisor, I sought opinion from Professors Ritchie, Redig and Dr Bright, whose opinion was universally that we should delay the emigration of NBPC for 12 months if at all possible. The rationale being, that the disease might have burnt itself out by

then, and if not the safer and more effective trial vaccine should be available by then. As a last ditch attempt we considered importing the existing horse vaccine from the USA, to at least get some protection, but this was impossible for legal reasons. To get maximum protection using this vaccine it must be administered three times at 3-4 week intervals. The last option open to us was to export the birds and then vaccinate them on arrival in the US, during their quarantine period, i.e. prior to the mosquito season.

This plan would have been risky but possibly feasible, until the time line drifted, such that even vaccination on arrival would mean the birds would not be fully protected before the main mosquito risk season was well under way.

Whilst we appreciate it is a great blow to Mima, Jim and all those involved in the plans for emigration, the conclusion was that the world's most important and prestigious raptor collection, is just too important in conservation terms to take the degree of risk which we were faced with.

As a result, the joint decision of all those involved has tragically been to delay the move until the autumn of 2004. Sad and very difficult though this is, I have no doubt we are acting in the best interests of the collection as a whole.

*West Nile has been found in birds over here, in the last year. Crows have been found dead, and a number of live birds have been found to have been affected by the virus, but they do not seem to have built up an immunity that is measurable. As global warming continues West Nile will probably become more significant in the UK and Europe. jpb*

**Neil Forbes FRCVS**



**S**asha, a biology professor from Oxford University, rang me to ask how she could register her two rescued baby jackdaws.

They had been found down a chimney and had been given to her to hand-rear. She wanted to split ring them, register them and maybe fit some sort of jesses. I told her that I had a Jackdaw as a child and had graduated onto a Raven this year. Sasha was fascinated. She produced a monthly nature programme for television and would love to come up and film Poe. I said not a problem. We would welcome her and arranged for a couple of weeks time, for her to come up and visit and bring a cameraman.

By the time they arrived, I had envisaged everything that could go wrong. From Poe possibly doing a bunk, never to return until they had gone home, or doing them an injury! My brain was in overdrive to think of all possible equations, so I thought it would be sensible to underfeed her the day before they were due, to ensure she stayed around for food. Food was her prime object in life so it made sense.

### Birds together

The two jackdaws were beautiful but compared to Poe they were tiny. The cameraman Chris thought it would be a lovely idea to get them all standing side by side in the kitchen to compare the huge size difference . . . we thought if they wanted to take the Jackdaws home with them alive, it was better not to! The Jackdaws stood on



## Jenny Wray

the kitchen windowsill with Poe bombing around on the outside trying to kill them. She was busy trying to open the window catches, prise open the window frame and make up for a couple of missed meals! We put the Jackdaws away after we had rung them and kept them hidden from Poe.

Sasha and I went outside and I had put together a collection of her favourite foods in a dish. We sat at the patio table and I could see a look of trepidation and fear on Sasha's face. Poe is a very large bird and could be very intimidating. If you are used to large hawks, it is not a problem, but compared to small Jackdaws, Poe was vast and scary.

Poe was doing her marching up and down the table demanding to be entertained or fed. If she wanted to be petted she pushed her head under your hand and demanded her head to be tickled or scratched, but if you wanted to stroke her or call her, it was always if she wanted to come or if she wanted a scratch. She was a total individual and as each day went past, we likened it to the troublesome twos, or tantrum three year olds. By the time the summer was passing she had turned into a teenager. A total delinquent head banger.

### Magic tricks

Poe had games she loved and we rewarded her with food, or rather she would only do anything in life for food!

The three cup magic trick, hide a grape under a cup and move all three cups around and she could always guess where the grape was. This she did for the camera with great style but at the speed of a racing car. She was hungry and realised I had

passed the food box under the table to Sasha who was going to try talking to Poe and rewarding her. It only took a few seconds for Poe to jump down onto the ground, fly up Sasha's legs and try and grab the whole box of food. Etiquette and manners was a waste of time. She demanded the whole box of food with menaces. She was a very forceful bird. We gave up and she tucked into baby tomatoes and grapes with huge enjoyment, growling if we tried to interfere. She made regular forays flying up the garden to bury her mouthfuls of food, carefully ramming her huge sharp beak into the grass to make a hole big enough to hide all her food, then snip off beakfuls of grass clippings to cover and hide the hole, then a speedy return to stock up again and repeat the exercise. Exhausted she then flew to her favourite piece of rose trellis to kip for half an hour. It could rain, hail, thunder or we could walk underneath her calling and whistling to her, but when she had these day time sleeps you couldn't wake her. This changed as she got older, but four hourly naps were the rule for most of the summer.

### Not photogenic

We talked about Poe whilst the cameraman took various bits of film of her, but she was not impressed with him or the camera. The fluffy, woolly cover on the microphone really scared her and it took a long time to get her to fly down the lawn towards the camera for the usual "get it to fly to me, towards the lens" type of shot. I had to run toward the camera holding Poe's short jesses, but crouching down so that when I hurtled her towards the camera, I wasn't seen. It took

# Poe - a Raven Beauty

Part 2



about 20 goes, me puffing and panting, and her peeling off just before the camera got the required action shots. We cracked it soon after, by placing half a plain chocolate digestive on top of the camera. Pure greed won the day.

The raven did not impress my other birds. I had eventually covered the tops of my Harris and Saker aviaries because she could see food in them and would pick a fight, landing on the roof and would try and fight with the occupier, the birds inside and her on top were going to hurt themselves and none of them backed off, so we put a false top on all the aviaries to prevent disaster. My Black Rock hens caused the other problem. They would be pecking away, minding their own business when Poe decided that maybe they had found something to eat that she wanted, she dive-bombed them, and all we would hear would be a hell of a din of flying feathers and five black bodies all in a heap together. She was laying into them and vice versa, all of them jet black and feathered. By the time we had shot up the garden, Poe had regained the top of the henhouse and all would be peace again. They never hurt themselves; she appeared to do it out of boredom.

### **Poe's friends make a visit**

Until we had Poe we had never seen the local ravens but one day five appeared over the house and Poe watched from where she had been sleeping on her stomach on the top of the roof. They circled a few times with myself below thinking what I could do if she joined them? Would they kill her? She took off and joined them and they started chasing her. I went inside yelling for Philip and we watched as she then turned over the woods and started chasing them. After a few minutes it was very apparent that they meant no harm and they would call for her each day. After a couple of weeks, she would fly north and appeared ten minutes later, back with one of the ravens. They would fly around together for an hour, then Poe would return for supplies of food and the other raven would go home. They were totally fascinating to watch and we wondered if she would pair-up with this raven next spring?

Poe always flew back at sunset, putting herself away into her aviary or would fly back and join us on the patio, salvaging the remains of a BBQ or demanding her share of the peanuts and crisps, so when she didn't appear one evening and still hadn't returned the next morning we were worried. We covered the local area, calling and whistling

for her, but no sign. Later that day the local farmer called us, she had been seen sitting on the horse trough in a field and not moving. We tore over to the farm and went to pick her up, she was looking half dead, no reactions and no fight when I bundled her up in my arms. We took her home and I laid her on the kitchen table and examined her, thank goodness for Neil Forbes' First Aid Vet course, I was able to find various bloody wounds that suggested she had been shot. I wrapped her up and took her to my vet Stephen Bamber. He was brilliant, immediate help, straight into the surgery and she was x-rayed and within half an hour she was back with me having had several 12 bore pellets pulled out of her.

Unfortunately she still had a few in her that could not be removed but hopefully not enough to kill her. To show how bad she was, Stephen wouldn't charge me, Poe looked awful and I was sent home with her, a handful of syringes and a bottle of antibiotic.

## *Hide a grape under a cup and move all three cups around and she could always guess where the grape was*

She developed pneumonia a few days later. I nursed her for two weeks in the house, injecting her everyday and tubing her for two long weeks. She lost all interest in food and didn't regain it until she was out flying again four weeks later. We kept her alive by tubing her with feline AD liquid meat extract and she continued to refuse all food for weeks and resembled a bag of bones.

### **Poe's strength returns**

After a couple of weeks she went up to the aviary for fresh air and sun but back in at night. She was so weak, she couldn't fly, just sit on her log on the ground. It took a further two weeks before she regained any strength and eventually after a month we let her out and she started her 'jump ups' again. The first time she flew, she aimed for the house roof top but failed and ended up crawling up the tiles to the summit. After that huge step she set her sights on getting strong. 'Jump ups' are how she trained herself to get strong as a chick. We didn't teach her, it was inbuilt raven muscle building school. Under her favourite tree, the first horizontal branch was three foot above the ground; the second branch was 4 foot up. She would launch herself from the ground vertically, repeatedly until she had perfected touching the branch with her beak four or five times in succession. She then went on to the 4 foot



height, improving fast and quickly became stronger and started eating and enjoying her food again. Occasionally she would get cocky and the tone of the practise session would change to a game and every high jump she would grab a leaf and pluck it, landing on the ground and starting a pile of my tree leaves beside her.

I was not amused when this extended to a daily fly past of my favourite Acer sapling tree in the middle of the garden. On the take off from the patio, she would gain height and skim my tree and pull off one of the dark red leaves in her feet, fly on into the field and chuck it away as she circled around. Over a couple of weeks she reduced the tree by a foot!

Poe was now fighting fit, healthy and had regained her muscles. However, she was now wary of me. I had tubed and injected her daily so her affection and bonding shifted solely onto Philip. I could feed her, clean her, but it was Philip who was presented with mashed up food, she tucked it behind his ears or lovingly poked it between his fingers as a present.

### **Déjà vu**

Four weeks and four days after we got her flying again having been shot, we had a phone call again from the farmer, saying Poe had been sitting in her usual tree at the bottom of the farm by the canal and he had heard shots again. He suspected poachers as before. It was the wrong time, shooting at 5pm when the local craft centre was still full of people nearby. No one was allowed on the estate without permission. We rushed down there and searched for many days, but we never found her. To a poacher she must have been a large black easy target. She still would have had her blue IBR ring and she still wore her 'Peel' bell but no jesses. Ravens don't do equipment.

We feel Poe enriched our summer with her intelligence, humour and her ability even to tease. We miss her, but know she had a fantastic season of fun as we did.



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# moulting your falcon *with lights*

**Yes, you can get your Hawk clean moulted and hard penned by late July.**

In 2001 I was flying two Gyr/Peregrine Tiercels (Axil and Zulu) and was dreading the thought of reducing my Tiercels weight whilst the feathers were in blood and prone to damage. The previous year I had tried to moult my

new white toxic free emulsion aviary but did not switch on the white light.

I continued to fly "Zulu" who was kept on a shelf perch in another building. On the 28<sup>th</sup> December I moved Zulu into his new revamped aviary adjoining Axel's then switched on the 24 hour white light in both aviaries. I carried on flying Zulu out of the 24 hour white light aviary and fed Axil his normal balanced

*The end of the 2001 Hawking season was approaching fast. I decided to try something new to encourage the Hawks to moult early*

Tiercels with normal 60-watt electric bulbs in my two small aviaries measuring 6ft 6in x 10ft 6in and 6ft 6in high but with little success.

The end of the 2001 Hawking season was approaching fast. I decided to try something new to encourage the Hawks to moult early. My choices were: timing, i.e. when to put them away, diet or type and duration of light. I decided to concentrate on the light factor. First I painted the aviary walls and ceiling with non-toxic white emulsion and then by chance a good friend of mine who was installing a florescent light in our house happened to mention that this new florescent tube was white light and twice as bright as the previous tube.

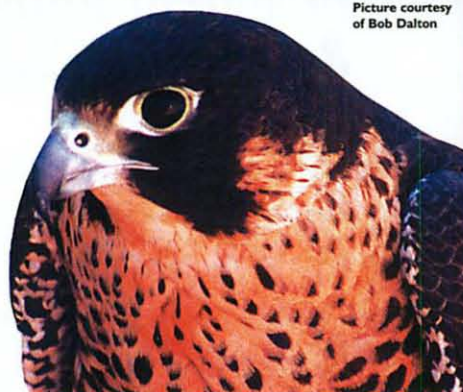
White light! My mind started to race and within a week my good friend Nick Chambers, an electrician and also a Falconer installed florescent fittings with white light tubes in my two aviaries. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October I decided to feed up my Tiercel "Axil" and free loft him in his

moulted diet.

I did wonder whether the 24 hour lights seven days a week would interfere with the health of my Hawks but on reflection the Gyr Falcon spends a proportion of its life in the far north with 24 hours of daylight. On the 11<sup>th</sup> February Axil lost his top deck feathers and on the 24<sup>th</sup> February two primaries were shed and so on. Zulu was fed up on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March and threw his top deck feathers out the next day, just good timing. These two Tiercels were hard penned by the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003 ready to pick up and get fit for Grouse hawking.

Some interesting facts came out of this experiment, Zulu caught up with Axil through the moult and the health and temperament of the Hawks was normal. I turned the 24 hour lights off on June 1<sup>st</sup> as the days were long.

*David Jones*



Picture courtesy of Bob Dalton

## Information:

- Aviary size was 6ft 6in x 10ft 6in Height 6ft 6in
- Brilliant White Emulsion painted on all walls and ceiling
- Half open aviary
- Florescent light, Phillips Fluotone 4 foot new generation white light
- 36w/840 colour with vapour proof fittings
- Duration of light 24 hours for 6 months
- Light placed over roosting perch under cover
- Approximate cost of electric per Hawk £10.40p for 6 months
- Cost of light fitting, approximately £20 each
- Diet for moult Pigeon, Chick, Quail, Rabbit and Pheasant variable per day
- Time of Zulu's moult 4.5 months
- Time of Axel's moult 6 months (when lights turned on)
- Lights turned on 28<sup>th</sup> December
- Lights turned off 1<sup>st</sup> June



# club directory

Join and support your local club today!

## The Central Falconry & Raptor Club

*Founded in 1988*

Is the local falconry club serving the following counties: -  
Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, & the West Midlands.

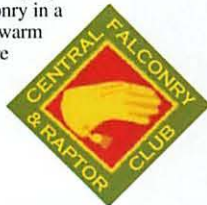
### NEW VENUE

We meet on the second Sunday of each month at 8pm, throughout the year, at the Sports Connexion, Leamington Road, Ryton on Dunsmore, Coventry.

### CLUB MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement of the C.F.R.C. is to offer people the opportunity to embrace all aspects of Falconry in a spirit of good companionship. There will be a warm welcome to people of all ages, whether they are experienced falconers, novices, or families.

For more information e-mail:  
[cen.falc@ic24.net](mailto:cen.falc@ic24.net) or phone  
John Hill 07973 224609  
[www.central-falconry.co.uk](http://www.central-falconry.co.uk)



## The Welsh Hawking Club



**SOUTH WALES, Usk**

Contact: *Helen Scourse* Tel: 01600 860458

**NORTH WALES, Chester**

Contact: *Neil McCann* Tel: 01512 930364

**SOUTH WEST, Exeter**

Contact: *Dave Scott* Tel: 01752 830382

**BATH, Hinton**

Contact: *Dave Jones* Tel: 01934 811300

**THE MIDLANDS, Loughborough**

Contact: *Mike Kane* Tel: 01773 811491

**COTSWOLDS, Evesham**

Contact: *Shaun Healey* Tel: 01386 832812

**ESSEX, Colchester**

Contact: *Andy Hulme* Tel: 01206 729363

★ FOR ALL GENERAL ENQUIRIES CONTACT ★

**Jan France, secretary, 01279 842440**

## HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB

*Affiliated to the Hawk Board.*

*Group member of the Countryside Alliance.*

We meet at Bagshot, Surrey, on the third Tuesday of the month.

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

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

Ring Laila on **01945 410150** or  
Alan on **01784 250577** after 6.00pm

## WEST OF ENGLAND HAWKING CLUB

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

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

ALL NEWCOMERS WELCOMED.

**For more information please telephone:**

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



## Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club

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[www.lancsfalconry.co.uk](http://www.lancsfalconry.co.uk)



## The Cleveland Hawking Club

*"Sharing the knowledge"*

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Club meets 19:30hrs first Sunday of each month at:  
**The Falcon Inn, Hilton, near Thornaby-on-Tees**

For further information contact:-

**Lee Copeland on 01642 766166 - 07802 251502**

or

**Jonathan Copeland on 07760 225555**

Alternatively visit our web site

[www.clevelandhawkingclub.20m.com](http://www.clevelandhawkingclub.20m.com)

[clevelandhawkingclub@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:clevelandhawkingclub@yahoo.co.uk)

## THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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Further details from:

**Tommy Bryce  
01620 850209**

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## The South East Falconry Group

AIMS TO SUPPORT FALCONERS IN THE CONTINUATION AND PRACTICE OF FALCONRY.

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

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

For further information or an application form please contact -

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

E-mail us at [enquiry@sefg.org](mailto:enquiry@sefg.org)

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

## BRITISH FALCONERS' CLUB

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**Membership secretary**

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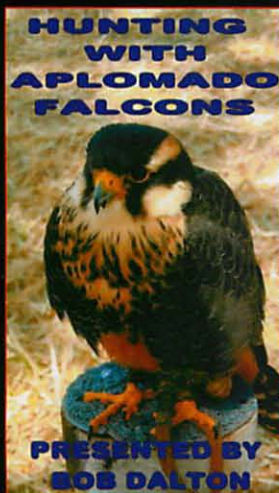
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or visit the club website [www.brittanyclub.co.uk](http://www.brittanyclub.co.uk)



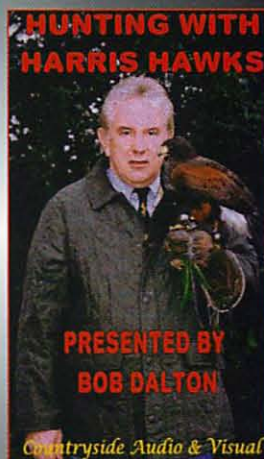
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# Falcon Of The Year

## Taboo or long overdue?

**M**ost of you will already be aware of this idea being introduced to the Falconers Fair in May 2005 by the letter that was sent out to all the clubs. We asked for feedback so here are some of your questions answered.

**Q. Why must it be a hunter?**

**A.** Falconry is not the FBS (Fancy Bird Society), so we want to guard against people breeding birds of prey purely for show. Let us leave that to canaries, chaffinches, budgies, etc.

A hunting bird at the end of the season is unlikely to be feather perfect. Having said that, we wouldn't want a bird on display with no tail for example, because that tells us that the falconer neither knows how to imp feathers themselves, nor do they know anyone who could do it for them.

**Q. Why do I have to be in a club to enter?**

**A.** The reason for this is to try and prevent cowboys entering a bird. By being in a club your members put you forward to enter, they are saying YES we know this person! YES this person's bird has hunted for at least one season and YES his quarry record is true.

I bet all of you at some point have come across a falconer whose bird has the 'biggest talons in the world and it can catch cows and ostriches'.

It is highly unlikely that a respectable club would put forward such an individual.

**Q. Are we glorifying hunting?**

**A.** No. I don't believe we are. The hunters and hunted have been around before man put his mark on this planet and they will still be around when we are gone.

Let us look at angling for a minute. It is the most participated sport in this country with over a million anglers nationwide.

They have a weekly magazine full of stories and photos of some chaps holding his prize catch of game or coarse fish for all to see, yet no one goes into the newsagents and tears up the magazine do they? Why should falconry be any different, obviously you wouldn't put a falconer on the front cover with a rabbit

dangling from his redtail's talon but surely it could be worked upon.

**Q. Is it just for longwings?**

**A.** No. If the idea takes off (pardon the pun) it will include shortwings and possibly broadwings. Let me just remind you that what we are trying to do is for you, the falconers. If you want it then let us know.

**Q. Who are the judges?**

**A.** There are two ways we can do this. Either your club nominates one or two members as judges, this gives us a nationwide opinion of a hunter (note, a club cannot name their own bird) or we list well known and respected falconers who we elect as judges from the list.

**Q. What are the judges looking for?**

**A.** This is falconry not Crufts – heaven forbid it ever becomes that. Let me ask you. When you go on a field meet I would imagine you look at the other birds, there may be several of the same species; e.g. redtails or harris' or peregrines. One of those birds will catch your eye as looking more powerful or more alert than the others. It's your preference what looks like a real hunter, the bird that has something about it that makes it stand out from the rest. That is what we are looking for.

**Q. Do you have to provide a record of quarry taken?**

**A.** Yes you do. Again this is so that the judges can get some idea of what the bird caught and because you're in a club it will hopefully eliminate the 'fisherman's tale' scenario.

*These are some of the questions we've been asked so far.*

**NOTE: Any bird without proper documentation will not be allowed to enter.**



So is this a new avenue for falconry to go down? "Sacrilege", says one man. "Spell my name correctly on the trophy" says another.

So, you see, some people are for the chance to win a trophy and have the title and some are not. Speaking of title, one man brought up the point that how do you know someone hasn't got a better bird than the winner at home?

Well, let me just say that some years ago I attended a show (non falconry I might add) and the compere said, "for those of you down there in the audience thinking 'I'm better than him or him', the difference is you are down there and these lads have had the guts or nerve or desire to be up here and compete. So they are the best of those here today", (think about it).

We will be at the 2004 falconers fair to answer any queries for you so in the meantime if you think this is a good idea for the falconers fair then write or e-mail to the address below for an application form or with your opinion about it. We need to hear from you, the falconer, whether or not this really is Taboo or Long Overdue.

Write to:  
Mr Kevin Ryan  
41 Wharfedale Mount  
Shelf  
Halifax  
HX3 7NF

E-mail: [falconrylife@tesco.net](mailto:falconrylife@tesco.net)

**Kevin Ryan**

*What are your thoughts on this idea? I would be interested to know what you, the readers, think. Write to the editor with your comments and we will see if we can publish them in the next issue.*



*Why black Labradors?*

I think it's because I had a boyfriend, years ago, who decided he wanted to shoot so I bought him a black Labrador. We called her Bramble, we paid £20 for her and it was the best £20 I ever spent! When he left, Bramble stayed. And then I bred from her and slowly it seems to have continued. What you've got to remember here is that the dogs spend their whole lives with me and out with the public, so you cannot have one that isn't safe with the public. And although some of the dogs that are better dogs for

falconry are great dogs, there are few that are as 100% safe with small children and picnics and food laying around. I mean they are dreadful scroungers - they are without doubt the most professional Labradors you'll ever meet in your life. They go up to a group of people, assess the situation, if they realise they aren't liked, they move on to the next one until they find a party who welcomes them. I've got some cracking photographs of them scrounging ice creams and God knows what!

I'm not going to be able to allow them quite as much freedom on the new site as I do here because it won't be quite as safe. To start with, in the large lakes are large alligators - so any nasty child not behaving itself I can chuck in with the alligators! But I

don't want the dogs going in the lakes without my being there. And, of course, there are snakes and they don't understand about snakes. I've actually got a place to rent that's eight miles from the site and my major concern is how I manage until I build my house. Because I'm hopefully buying a piece of land on the site I've got to persuade the guy who owns the rest of the land that there are about eight acres he really, really doesn't want, and I promise faithfully to put a beautiful house on it - and I will too. And once I've done that, it's right next to the flying field and overlooks the lake, so I'll fence it so it's alligator proof and the dogs can stay in there. They can go in and out of the house as they want and when I've got time I'll have them with me for flying

*a talk with...*

# Jemima Parry-



**F**ollowing on from the last issue, here is some more from my chat with Mima - watched over by her ever-faithful Labradors. And the question had to be asked . . .

demonstrations. I doubt I'll get an office in the new place quite as sumptuous as this, or as large as this with armchairs enough and dog beds enough to take six labradors! So it may be a little bit crowded to start with but I think they'll enjoy it. They like being wherever I am anyway.

*You've been involved with birds of prey for a long time. (Mima: about 300 years, I think!) What do you consider have been the most significant changes over the years, and have they been good or bad?*

I think generally the changes in falconry have been good. I think people have a greater understanding of how to care for birds and look after their birds well. The equipment is so much better than it was - some of it is a little bit too innovative for me - but generally speaking it is good. And, of course, telemetry has helped



tremendously with retrieving lost birds.

I think the down side of all that is that there are an awful lot of people doing falconry who get into it without learning first, and that's a part of it which I think is a shame. When you've got as many people coming into the sport as we have had over the last 20 or 30 years, it is significant that a lot of them are coming in without having the right sort of teaching. There are a lot more books on falconry than there were and they're modern - I'm not very pro some of the old books because, although it's fun to read them, it doesn't necessarily do your bird any good if you take notice of an old falconry book. As far as I'm concerned, you need the most modern and up to date information on birds you can get.

If it wasn't for the commercial people (who I prefer to call professional because I think it means they're being paid for doing a good job) looking after falconry, falconry would have disappeared a very long time ago. It's the people who have something to lose, because they're making their livelihood out of it, who are the people who have actually put in all the work. People like Martin Jones, Jim Chick, Nick Fox and myself - all of us work in the field and so it's been important for us to make sure that we can still work in the field. I think the trouble with the individual "amateur" falconer, if you want to call him or her that, is that they don't have the time or the drive to make sure that falconry keeps going, or the understanding of what the threats are.

The hardest thing is trying to make people understand what the Hawk Board does and keep them up-to-date with it, because quite frankly most of it is deadly boring. Do you want to see a Customer Information Notice from the Ministry of Agriculture once a week? - well, probably not! I know all about how you can travel goats now!

However, it's important to be on that mailing list and to know

what's coming up. The other thing that I think is important is that the Hawk Board gives falconry credibility and unfortunately there are still people out there who do things to threaten the sport, probably not on purpose but certainly things that are very stupid. It's something that I've got a big bug bear about and have had for years. You have to be careful about what you say and do in this sport, because there are a lot of people out there who don't want it to happen.

*What do you think about the Campaign for Falconry?*

Basically the Campaign for Falconry is a very important part of the Hawk Board. It's a sub committee which is there to fund raise. The Hawk Board has not always been looked on with that much favour by some of the falconry fraternity and so the Campaign for Falconry was started so that people had another body that they could identify with. I think the Hawk Board does a fantastic job and I think that by saying we'll get the Campaign to do the fund raising because



some people don't like the Hawk Board, is not the way to go. People have to realise that they have in this country a group of people that are representing their sport to Government and making sure that it can go on, and instead of bitching about it they ought to be bloody proud of it, because no other country in the world actually has that. We have direct lines of communication with most of the government departments that are going to affect falconry and if we haven't we know how to get to them - as they say, "we know a man who does".

*Would you have made a career in drama if you hadn't found falconry?*

What I wanted to do was be an opera singer but I think in hindsight (which is a wonderful thing) I would have done much better if I'd have gone into comedy acting, because I have a natural flair for comedy. But I wanted to be an opera singer and it was the one thing I couldn't do because I used to get so nervous before I sang that I would either shake or make a mistake, and you can't shake if your body is your instrument. So I thought "Sod this for a lark. I can't do this". And I wasn't prepared to do chorus work, because I don't really have the right temperament for it.

So I came back to doing this. Plus, wherever I went I always ended up with livestock. Even when I lived in a tiny bedsitter in Guildford, which cost me £1.50 a week, I had Christ knows how much livestock in it. And then I went home and gave it all to my parents, and went to London and started all over again and got another whole steaming lot of livestock. So in the end I gave up and said "I might as well do this for a living".

*What is your favourite species of bird and why?*

I'm asked that question time and time again, and I honestly don't believe I've got one. One of the nicest things about birds of prey is how different they all are. And actually one of the things I admire most

# Jones

## MBE

*What part has the Hawk Board played and how do you see its role developing in the future?*

I think that it has played a very important role in that right from its outset it's had a very good relationship with the Government. It's mainly because of the Wildlife and Countryside Act that it came into existence. But I think now, as the threats to falconry are so much greater than they were, the Hawk Board is a much more politically aware body and it has "grown up". They are crucial to the future of falconry because there are so many things that go on because of European law which we would have not dreamt about before - like what happens with day old chicks. I get mail through from what was MAFF and is now DEFRA almost on a daily basis. For example, there's just been a poultry movement order rescinded so now you can theoretically take birds into Northern Ireland without a health certificate. Now we need to find out whether in this case birds of prey count as poultry or not - sometimes they do, sometimes they don't.

The other thing you've got to remember, and it's one of the things that I have a huge beef about, is that there are still out there in the falconry world people who say "Oh well, you know, these people are commercial and we shouldn't have the commercial element".

## PART 2



about my father was that, unlike a lot of falconers who only like goshawks, sparrowhawks, merlins, peregrines and gyrs, he loved them all. When a Black Shouldered Kite walked out of a box, or a Yellow Billed Kite, when we first started, with no wings and no tail, he wanted to see it when it was right and looking good. And he liked the owls – there was nothing that he didn't like about them. And I'm pretty much the same.

I suppose that probably my favourite birds, though I tried so hard not to have a favourite, were Leones and Kilbrecht - they were very special to me. They were hybrid Peregrine Sakers and they were both superb. Both died on the same day and to this day we don't know what killed them, but something did. Fern was a Lanner who I absolutely adored – he gave me 4 flights that literally took me to tears – they were so absolutely stunning. I probably train more falcons than anything else, but I've got some eagles that are cracking too.

Usually it's the birds that you work with that tend to be your favourites because you get such an intimate relationship with them. My Stellar Sea Eagles are to die for and I can't wait to get them into a bigger aviary and see if they'll breed in South Carolina.

*Have you every really upset anyone with your choice of language, during a demonstration, for example?*

I've never really had anybody complain. Once, when I was driving a Landrover back from the main ring at the Royal Welsh, and I'd said something about the fact that female birds of prey were bigger than males which meant if they didn't like their husband they could eat him (which is probably what I should have done when I got divorced – it would have been cheaper), two Welsh women came up and said "Disgusting! Disgusting!" But other than that, no.

I'm often accused of swearing far more than I actually have done in public. I've only ever once really sworn and used one word that I shouldn't have used, and that was actually last year at a show at Ragley Hall when somebody's terrier ran in and tried to grab the falcon on the lure – and ironically it was a falconer's terrier, which I thought was very poor. Other than that, I've said "Bloody hell, look at that!" and "The bird's sodded off!" and "Oh look, it's bugged off!" or whatever. But a lot of it depends on how you say stuff – and I was trained in drama for crying out loud! I'm very good at doing what

I do in dealing with the public. I mean, I always find it amazing that I still do the best demonstrations in this country. I have no idea why – I haven't made a secret of anything I do. You'd have thought by now somebody would have copied them.

The trick is you do your commentary - you're watching the birds, you're watching the public and you're listening with half an ear to what you're saying. Partly because you want to know that the microphone is working and that the wind noise over the microphone isn't too bad - and if it is it means that you're not listening because all you've got to do is turn to get the wind in the right direction and you can stop it. And

partly because you need to know what you're saying. It's very interesting when you do commentaries and you fly 5 birds for the general public. If you ask the general public at the end

(remembering that

we probably spend 10 minutes on each bird) they won't be able to tell you what the 5 birds were we've flown – they won't remember all five!

*I remember that you went to Dubai to do a demonstration some years ago. How did that go?*

That was interesting - I told them not to do it! British Aerospace wanted me to go and do a flying demonstration during the Dubai Air Show and I said, "Look, this is coals to Newcastle. This isn't a good idea – plus I'm female". I think it would have worked if the timing had been slightly better but they put it on at the end of the day. So of course men being notoriously difficult about getting them to move quickly, and Arabs being even more notoriously difficult about getting them to move quickly, nobody came! I had four staff – I had Philip Jones, Mark Ridge, myself and Jim Chick - and five birds. We got out there four days before. We'd rehearsed the birds – it was a bitch of a place to fly. They had a third of a mile of red carpet coming down from a golden clubhouse to where we were flying the birds. The Managing Director had flown in from Hong Kong on the way to New York to be the host. There were British Aerospace staff all over the place. There was food to absolutely die for, except I was so nervous I couldn't eat anything. And no bugger turned up – not one person came!

I had not been that uncomfortable in a long time. I didn't feel so badly about it

because I had said that I wasn't sure it was a good idea. I think in hindsight if we'd had it as a breakfast event, in the desert at 6 o'clock in the morning, probably they would all have come. But it was because it was at the end of the day – the air show didn't finish until 4 o'clock, everybody came out of the air show so it was hell traffic and our event was at 5 o'clock. And it was dark by quarter to six, so we didn't have much of a window. But it was excruciatingly embarrassing. But it was just one of those things – I don't think it was the right thing to do for the Arabs. I did one here for the Arabs at the Duke of Wellington's estate and it was an absolute howling success - they'd never done an event that was so successful. But you can't do that in the Middle East. I went to the Middle East twice: once to do a rekkie and once to do the job and I ain't never going back there again! No thank you – not the place for me. I'll leave that to males, I think!

*Why do you always wear a skirt?*

Pants give me claustrophobia – literally. I don't think I look very nice in trousers – I think I've got a bottom probably the size of Africa! (It may not be quite that big, but I think it is.) So because I'm not very comfortable in them mentally, I haven't worn them for years. And now when I wear them, particularly if they're at all tight round your thighs and you try pushing a wheelbarrow, all I want to do is rip them off!

I mean, skirts are a bloody nuisance; especially climbing over barbed wire fences. On most of my skirts the hem is down. All of them have tears in them because of barbed wire fences. And it doesn't do your legs any good, because of course your legs get much more scratched than they do if you wear trousers. On the other hand, knees are much easier to clean than the knees of jeans, and as I have to kneel down on the ground every day to pick up falcons – at least five times a day – my knees get cleaner quicker than my trousers would do. Mind you, I have forgotten this a couple of times, when I've shot off to do lectures because I haven't had much time. Once I did a lecture sitting on a stage, so my knees were roughly at people's eye level, and about half way through the lecture I could see people looking at my knees. So I glanced down and on each knee was a big round circle of Gloucestershire dirt, where I'd been kneeling down to pick up falcons and forgotten to wash my knees!

I don't really care about that sort of thing, though. I mean at the Game Fair this year, someone came up to me afterwards and said, "Did you realise you've got odd socks on?" I said, "Good Lord, so I have" – I'm not



really bothered. I've got better things to worry about than socks.

*What's been your proudest moment?*

It was really special going to get an MBE – very nerve racking, but interesting. On the day, Arthur Middleton came with me. You're allowed to take three people, and so I thought I'd better take one male and Arthur had to be it because there wasn't another available one, and my sister and a good friend of mine came too. We drove up to London early because I didn't want to get stuck in traffic and it was a morning ceremony. We parked at London Zoo to start with, and stopped in to say hello, had a cup of coffee and got changed. And then I drove on and about half way down to Buckingham Palace I got into a panic mode as I hadn't got any stockings.

So we stopped in Oxford Street - I left the car parked on the pavement and told Arthur not to get it towed away - ran into one of the stores there and bought myself a

pair of hold-up stockings. Then, as we were still early, I thought we'd drive round Buckingham Palace and do a reccie. Because my father taught me time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted – which I think is an army thing - and he was dead right. But, the policeman there obviously saw the big red sticker we'd been sent to go in the front of our car and so waved us in and I think we were about the second person in the queue to go in! Unfortunately I still hadn't put my stockings on, so I had to put them on in the car - which was quite interesting, with poor Arthur saying, "Oh my God" and trying hard not to look!

But it was beautiful - the whole thing was beautifully orchestrated and very well done. I was as nervous as hell. The guests are taken away and then the MBE, OBE, CBE and any other BE's are taken and put in different rooms. The people who are going to be knighted go down first. And then it

goes down, and the MBE's, which is the second lowest of the awards, all go in last. It's done alphabetically but in fact I couldn't go the time that my name was called so I went later and was fiddled in. I obviously looked as nervous as I felt, because the Palace staff kept coming over to me and saying "Are you alright, Jemima?" I don't know how they knew me, but every one of them did. It was great, it was really nice – and I have absolutely no idea what I said to the Queen! But I've got a video of it which is also nice to watch. It was a really fun day.

I think the days when we've had events here and people have come round have been special. I'll never forget we did an event for British Aerospace after they'd given us a fair whack of money. At one point they couldn't send anybody - I was putting this whole event on for them, Princess Anne was coming and they were not going to roll up! So I wrote to them saying that I understood that they couldn't come any more – would they please write to the Palace and explain! They found someone to

*It's going out in the country, it's being on your own, it's seeing the first primroses, it's watching the sun go down, it's seeing the mist come up through the trees, it's watching a sparrowhawk come through a tree, twisting and turning as it comes, coming back to land on your fist*

come. He arrived early and I showed him around before the guests and the Princess arrived. He said "Jemima, I never realised you had a place of such calibre." That was great – that was exactly what I needed him to say.

Otherwise, some of the nicest moments have been when I've done a flying demonstration that really went well. I mean I've done flying demonstrations where the falcons and the eagles have just been brilliant - and people still talk about it. And that's a very special moment. And it isn't that you're proud of yourself - you're proud of what the bird's done. Because, you know, it isn't you that does it – all you do is give the bird the opportunity to be able to learn how to do it. You can't make them do it and it's a fantastic feeling of teamwork when it goes well. Of course, it's less of a feeling of teamwork when the bloody thing sits in the tree all night – which also happens!



*Lastly, do you consider yourself to be a falconer or a bird of prey keeper and conservationist?*

Well, as I haven't flown a bird in anger for about two seasons, it would be hypocritical to call myself a falconer. First and foremost, I would say I am a conservationist, but I would qualify that by saying I am a conservationist with a falconry background. Unlike some people, I would never deny a falconry background. I would always be proud of the fact that I have a father who was a falconer, a great uncle who was a falconer and that once I have more time than I have right now, I will go back to flying a bird.

I'm not one of these people who say, "I've got a goshawk and I've caught 73 rabbits and 97 pheasants in the last two days". I had tremendous fun flying sparrowhawks and we'd miss stuff as much as we'd catch. But it's the whole experience for me. It's going out in the country, it's being on your own, it's seeing the first primroses, it's watching the sun go down, it's seeing the mist come up through the trees, it's watching a sparrowhawk come through a tree, twisting and turning as it comes, coming back to land on your fist. All of that is part of the experience – not just catching blackbirds and starlings. It's the whole experience.

I'd like to fly a male Coopers Hawk over in Carolina – because there's plenty of opportunity. The lady next door to our site, Sue DREWAN, is perfectly wonderful and has a beautiful herd of Belted Galloways – that would be a cracking place to fly a Coopers Hawk above. I think I'm going to have to beat Richard Jones to it though, because I think he's taking his Sparrowhawk with him and he's going to be nicking my hunting ground.

**Mima is not going to Carolina just yet. See page 9 to find out more.**



# LEGAL EAGLE

## *From the RSPB's investigations newsletter.*

### **Custodial sentence for egg collector**

On 10 April 2003, Anthony Higham was sentenced at Northwich Magistrates' Court to four months' imprisonment. He was the sixth egg collector to receive a custodial sentence since this option became available in January 2001.

Higham, of Malmesbury Park, Runcorn, Cheshire, pleaded guilty to 13 charges under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 1997. These related to the possession of 818 eggs, egg collecting equipment and 16 taxidermy specimens, the taking of 113 birds eggs during 2001 and the purchase of eggs of Annex A species.

In March 2002 an enquiry began in Merseyside that led to the conviction of prolific egg collector Carlton D'Cruze. Information at the home of D'Cruze alerted Cheshire Police and the RSPB to execute a warrant at Higham's address, where they seized outdoor equipment, documentation and containers that indicated an active involvement in egg collecting. Higham was arrested but refused to co-operate. Continuing from handwriting analysis and detailed enquiries by the police and the RSPB, he was charged with possession of egg collecting equipment.

Merseyside Police also received further information that led to a second warrant in Widnes, Cheshire, this time locating Higham's collection of over 800 eggs. Here, there were over 160 eggs of Schedule 1 species, including those of ospreys, peregrine falcons, and golden eagles as well as choughs and divers. The police also discovered detailed journals and photographs outlining Higham's exploits over the preceding 10 years and video footage of Higham and D'Cruze taking eggs from the field.

Higham was once again arrested and, this time, accepted his involvement. He later handed over eight further clutches of eggs which were taken into consideration. In sentencing, the magistrates stated that the offences were deliberate, planned and

persistent and that Higham was aware of the consequences. His actions, they felt, were so serious that they had no choice but to impose a custodial sentence.

### **Schedule 4 DEFRA inspection proves its value**

DEFRA made an unannounced inspection on Craig Anthony Nuttall of Haughton Road, Darlington, in December 2001.

Nuttall was in possession of two goshawks, a species listed on Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, that had not been correctly ringed or registered, contrary to section 7(1) of the Act.

Further enquiries revealed that a third goshawk, housed at another address, had been unlawfully purchased, contrary to Regulation 8(1) of the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997.

Nuttall appeared before Darlington Magistrates on 30 January 2003 and pleaded guilty to all three charges. He received a 12-month conditional discharge and a mandatory three-year ban from keeping Schedule 4 birds including goshawks.

### **Destruction and shooting of birds of prey**

In total, 141 incidents of illegal shooting, nest destruction or trapping of birds of prey have been reported. Forty-two of these were confirmed by the recovery of a body or illegally set trap. Twenty-nine instances of these involved shot birds, including three red kites, two marsh harriers, eight peregrines and 16 buzzards. Illegally set traps included seven spring or pole traps, one illegally set Larsen trap and six illegally used crow cage traps. There were eight reports of nest destruction involving birds of prey.

Three reports of hen harrier nest destruction in Strathclyde and Cumbria were received as well as several of birds disappearing from suitable habitat after

settling to breed. There is a strong suspicion that it is common practice on upland estates to re-locate harriers in such circumstances. This may constitute an offence under either Section 1(5)(a) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (disturbance of Schedule 1 birds while building a nest) or Sections 28P(6)(a) of Schedule 9 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (intentionally or recklessly disturbing the fauna by reason of which land is of special interest).

Despite the large number of shooting and destruction incidents reported only one prosecution resulted. This involved a man in Cumbria convicted of using a Larsen trap, baited with a pigeon, which subsequently caught a sparrowhawk.

### **Trouble for Red Kite**

A young red kite found hanging dead in an ash tree in Glen Artney, Tayside, Scotland, on 16 April 2002 had been shot with a high-velocity rifle. Up till now the police investigation has been inconclusive and no individual has been charged with the offence. The bird was one of those imported in 2001 as part of a consignment of birds signed over to the Scottish red kite reintroduction project by German authorities in Brandenburg after they had been taken illegally from wild nests. Tragically this bird was subjected to two separate wildlife crimes in two different countries in its short life.

### **Arrest for possession of shot Hobby**

Andy McWilliam, Merseyside WLO, has reported another success in wild bird prosecution.

"While attending an incident at the home address of David Green, in Rawson Road, Seaforth, Merseyside, PC Hamish Rawcliffe noticed a stuffed bird of prey. I accompanied him to the address two days later and identified the bird as a hobby that appeared to have been shot.

Green was arrested on 18 March 2003 for possessing a Schedule 1 bird. He admitted ownership of the Hobby and said that he knew it had been shot. He denied having shot the bird and claimed that it had been given to him. Green did not meet the criteria for a caution, so he was charged with the offence. He pleaded guilty at South Sefton Magistrates' Court on 24 March 2003 and was fined £100.00 plus £60.00 costs. The bird was confiscated."



**STOLEN (8)**

COMMON BUZZARD IBR21631W  
 COMMON BUZZARD IBR21633W  
 GOSHAWK FINNISH 15770V IBR25488V  
 GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID 22564DOEW  
 HARRIS HAWK 10790DOEW 5MJIB92W  
 HARRIS HAWK 10 01706 8468  
 HARRIS HAWK 08 0170684  
 SAKER FALCON 4399W

**REUNITED (123)**

AFRICAN GREY PARROT x2  
 BARBARY/SAKER HYBRID  
 BARN OWL x8  
 BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
 COMMON BUZZARD  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x7  
 FERRUGINOUS HAWK x4  
 GOLDEN EAGLE  
 GOSHAWK  
 GYR/PEREGRINE FALCON x3  
 GYR/PRAIRIE FALCON x2  
 GYR/SAKER FALCON x9  
 GYR/SAKER/PEREGRINE  
 HARRIS HAWK x42  
 HOODED VULTURE  
 KESTREL x5  
 LANNER FALCON x3  
 LANNER/LUGGER FALCON  
 LANNER/SAKER FALCON  
 PARAKEET  
 PEREGRINE FALCON x5  
 PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID x4  
 PEREGRINE/PRAIRIE HYBRID x2  
 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID x7  
 SAKER FALCON x6  
 STEPPE EAGLE  
 UNKNOWN BOP

**LOST (143)**

AFRICAN GREY PARROT x6  
 BARBARY/SAKER HYBRID  
 BARN OWL x9  
 BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
 BLACK KITE  
 COMMON BUZZARD x3  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x10  
 FERRUGINOUS HAWK  
 GOSHAWK x7  
 GREAT HORNED OWL x2  
 GYR FALCON  
 GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID x2  
 GYR/SAKER FALCON x4  
 HARRIS HAWK x41  
 HOBBY  
 KESTREL x5  
 LANNER FALCON x3  
 LUGGER FALCON  
 MERLIN x2  
 PEREGRINE FALCON x10  
 PEREGRINE HYBRID  
 PEREGRINE/BARBARY HYBRID x3  
 PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID x3  
 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID x6  
 PERLIN x2  
 RED-TAILED HAWK x4  
 SAKER FALCON x7  
 SPARROWHAWK x5  
 TURKEY VULTURE

**FOUND (62)**

AFRICAN BARN OWL  
 AFRICAN BARN OWL IBR27382U  
 AFRICAN GREY PARROT 6PAH03V  
 AFRICAN GREY PARROT GA052  
 BARN OWL 0152BC00U IBR27418U  
 BARN OWL IBR20654U  
 BARN OWL IBR26358U  
 BARN OWL IBR26831U

BARN OWL GNI0335  
 BARN OWL 5EA02U  
 BARN OWL 3571U96  
 BARN OWL 4240BC97U  
 BARN OWL 28091BC90U  
 BARN OWL  
 BARN OWL 67968 03U IBR27387U  
 BARN OWL  
 BENGAL EAGLE OWL 2FGH02X  
 BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
 COMMON BUZZARD  
 COMMON BUZZARD 2419DOEX  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 FERRUGINOUS HAWK 1184  
 FERRUGINOUS HAWK  
 GALAH COCKATOO 0033BM01  
 GOSHAWK 12672DOEV  
 GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID  
 HARRIS HAWK IBR10111W  
 HARRIS HAWK 6JAC02W IBR17708W  
 HARRIS HAWK IBR19311W  
 HARRIS HAWK IBR21175W  
 HARRIS HAWK 8KP97W IBR29475W  
 HARRIS HAWK 4751RR  
 HARRIS HAWK R+PW  
 HARRIS HAWK 1430  
 HARRIS HAWK 96NIC5  
 HARRIS HAWK  
 HARRIS HAWK 11757DOEW  
 HARRIS HAWK 1187RBA  
 HARRIS HAWK MARTIN HOOK  
 HARRIS HAWK 1TE01W  
 HARRIS HAWK DD18569  
 HARRIS HAWK 24748 12488  
 HARRIS HAWK 12067DOEV  
 HARRIS HAWK 6JWB03W  
 HARRIS HAWK 0454V  
 HARRIS HAWK 1DW999  
 HARRIS HAWK 2DGL01W  
 HARRIS HAWK 2IAW+96S  
 HARRIS HAWK G00320  
 HARRIS HAWK  
 HARRIS HAWK 17441W 15486V  
 HARRIS HAWK  
 HARRIS HAWK 8457V  
 HARRIS HAWK IBR11552Y  
 HARRIS HAWK IBR19433X  
 HARRIS HAWK NO RINGS  
 HARRIS HAWK 203R  
 HARRIS HAWK  
 HARRIS HAWK 1DWC99W  
 HARRIS HAWK 10987

**DEAD (84)**

AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL x3  
 BARN OWL x24  
 BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
 GOSHAWK x5  
 GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID  
 GYR/PRAIRIE FALCON  
 GYR/SAKER FALCON x2  
 HARRIS HAWK x11  
 KESTREL x8  
 LANNER FALCON  
 LANNER/SAKER FALCON  
 LUGGER FALCON x4  
 PEREGRINE FALCON x2  
 PEREGRINE/GYR HYBRID  
 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID x4  
 RED-TAILED HAWK x4  
 SAKER FALCON x6  
 SPARROWHAWK x2  
 UNKNOWN BOP  
 UNKNOWN PARROT

# Independent Bird Register

List of lost, found, reunited and stolen birds from the IBR between 24 September, 2003 and 12 January 2004



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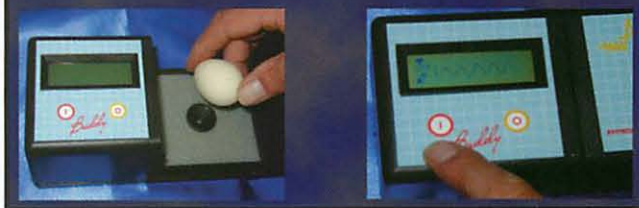
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# Awful flying day - ...but the curry was good



Gary Railton feeding-up his peregrine after the morning flight

I had a telephone call from Greg Liehenhals of the British Falconers Club (BFC), inviting me to a longwing meet at Devils Dyke, near Brighton, Sussex one Saturday in November last year. I arrived at the farm where the BFC members meet up before flying their birds and I was promptly introduced to the falconers for the day who included Alan Ames of Eagle Heights, in Kent. A welcoming bacon roll and a hot cup of coffee was given to me just after the introductions and given the state of the weather, I was very glad to have consumed them.

Greg was master for the day and he was hoping to get everyone together for an 11 o'clock start, but the weather was so terrible, it was put back until about 11.45. The rain just fell and fell and together with the very strong cold wind, nobody wanted to leave the shelter of the barn that we were in. Falconers just huddled around the heater to keep as warm as possible and didn't want to move.

Eventually, Greg thought that we should get out and see what it was like on the farmland that the BFC members use. There were about 20 people in total and we all piled into six 4x4 vehicles - some with birds in the back ready for the chance to hunt for the quarry that the members had put down some weeks before. The farmland, owned and farmed by Chris Williams, is kept by the members and areas of maize crop are set-aside for pheasant and partridge and include feeding stations and release pens.

## Wet peregrine and falconer

We drove to one of the large fields where a pheasant was spotted and so Gary Railton decided to have a go at flying his peregrine. Together with his dog and Dave Jackson, Gary let his bird go, which flew very low because of the atrocious weather conditions. The pheasant was finally flushed and the peregrine steamed in and hit the quarry, but not very hard as it made its escape. After a few more circuits and looking for more quarry, Gary decided to call in his bird.

All the other members of the group were watching the action from the warmth of their vehicles and the driver of the car I was in, John Franklin, decided to go to meet up with

Gary and Dave and offer them a lift back to the farm. The two falconers jumped into the back of the car with the peregrine and, because I was in the front passenger seat, had the sheer 'pleasure' of having the dog on my lap!

## Time for lunch

We returned to the barn to get warmed up. The heater was relighted, the coffee was put on and Andrew Thorn produced two camping cookers from the back of his vehicle and proceeded to heat up a curry and chilli-con-carne, which he'd prepared the night before.

These were most welcome (especially by Gary) and were accompanied by warmed naan bread and very, very hot chilli sauce. When I say hot, I mean hot!

## Back out in the afternoon

After the break it was good to see that the rain had finally stopped but the wind was still as strong as ever. So back to the vehicles we went and parked up on a different part of the farm. The flying ground was very undulating and, I would imagine, very beautiful in the right weather conditions. In fact you could see the coast when there was a brief break in the clouds.

Five of the vehicles parked up on an area of ground where we could see down into a small valley with absolutely no tree cover and the other vehicle moved to the other side to get into position because we saw some crows in the field where Mark Collins was hoping to fly his Gyr/Peregrine falcon.

But, as I have already said, the wind was pretty strong and as his bird was released, it pitched up and then flew in the other direction going way over to another part of the countryside.

Mobile 'phone calls were made and received to the other vehicles to appraise the others of the situation and Mark had to go to look for his bird.

## Next bird up

As previously mentioned, there were small areas of land, which were kept where pheasant and partridge have been reared and released. In one such patch of maize John Franklin spotted a covey of partridge. We parked up and Dave Ward got his bird ready, a gyr/peregreine. Under the direction of Greg earlier in the day, he instructed us that no one should leave their vehicles to spectate

until the bird was in the air. So, when Dave's bird was in flight, we got out of the cars to watch the action. Three of us started to move towards the maize patch to act as a stop and the bird was gaining a bit of height with Dave positioning himself ready for the flush. Unfortunately, just at the wrong moment, a low bank of cloud came in and within a couple of minutes Dave couldn't see his bird and the bird couldn't see him. No matter how much he whistled, there was no sign of the bird and so out came the telemetry.

After a short period, Dave and I got into John's car and we went looking for the bird. At the top of a ridge Dave did get a signal and got out the lure to call in his bird but without any success.

We then got back into the car to go to another part of the surrounding area with Dave hopping out every now and again to try to get a signal. Nothing.

Then we moved on another mile or so and picked up a signal. Once again the lure was produced and in came his bird, with a big sigh of relief from Dave. There were smiles all round.

## Bird meets magpie

As we returned to the hunting ground we had missed some more flying by other members of the club including Greg and his Perlin, but Steve Knight had his bird ready to fly at more partridge. Dave Jackson walked down yet another side of maize with his dog and flushed 12-15 partridge. Steve's bird gave chase and at this moment a wild sparrowhawk decided to join in the fun. This time, however, Steve's bird just kept on flying in one direction and he had to go to look for it. About 20 minutes later he returned with his bird and what was left of a magpie that his bird had caught which, apparently, was in the middle of a field minding its own business.

## End of the day

Time was marching on and the gloom of the November day was drawing in and eventually we returned to the barn for a final hot drink and farewells.

I would like to thank the falconers on that very wet and windy day for their hospitality and to Greg for the original invite. Perhaps one day I might be invited back when, hopefully, the weather is more agreeable.

*Peter Eldrett*



**“The sun always shines on the righteous”. This old saying strayed into my thoughts as I drove across the car park and drew up beside a dark green crew cab with the distinctive yellow stripe denoting it a Forestry Commission vehicle. Gusty wind pushed a steady downpour across the heath before it, enveloping the few parked vehicles of the hawking club in a curtain of wetness. There were no early dog walkers or twitchers about; they weren’t that stupid.**

We stood about for half an hour getting wetter by the minute. It was the last Saturday before Christmas and my third fortnightly outing with the club. I couldn’t help but think what a right wicked bunch we must be to deserve the sort of weather we get. The final decision was “it’s in for the day”, and after Paul’s port flask had been round a few times (yes, even at this time of the morning) we parted company, all heading off to drier places. The sado-masochists went off to complete their Christmas shopping and I returned home to pen this. Or maybe that should read the other way around. I’ll see them again in two weeks time as they’ve asked me out again.

### Invitation

About six weeks before this, Paul of the Wessex Falconry and Hampshire Hawking Club telephoned me to buy a ferret collar. We got into conversation and I ended up with an invitation to ferret for them at a New Forest site a week or so later.

Now, I’d ferretted for hawks at a meet down in Dorset some 15 years ago for two days running. The ferretted action was pretty poor, I seem to remember mainly due to a myxomatosis outbreak, but one happening remains engraved on my mind. There was an American guest and I watched his peregrine/gyr hybrid spiralling upwards, ever upwards, becoming just a speck in the sky, then stoop, to bind to a partridge in flight in a ‘puff’ of plumage. (I’m learning the language from Linguaphone, in association with the BFC website.) Unforgettable when it happens right in front of you. And I visited the Bird of Prey Centre in Wales a few years ago too. And what’s more I spoke to Jemima Parry-Jones at a show once. So, as you can understand there’s not much I don’t know about flying hawks, or is it falcons. All the same anyway - isn’t it? So I was quite looking forward to my day’s ferreting.

Except no one told me about the weather. It was warm and sunny when I went before, but Holmsley... Holmsley. It rained, how it rained, although we did get a few bolts and a few flights. Anyway we ‘played’ until lunchtime at which point it was decided the weather had won. However, I got an invite for the next outing. They were obviously impressed by my ability to stand around in the pouring rain and not look too bored, or it may have been that all the other ferretters were busy on that date, but an invite I got.

### Test and re-test

Two weeks later the weather was better, a relative term of course when a monsoon would have been an improvement on last time, but it was workable and looked likely to improve as the day went on.

I retrieved my ferret box from the Land Rover, collared up two ferrets ready for action, then tested the collars to make sure they were working. I always test them the day before, but a re-test doesn’t hurt. Two collars close together give a double-fast bleep, a single rate bleep would mean one wasn’t working. Electronic locators are not cheap but save so much time and really do speed up operations. With my ferret box

## *To a rabbit, jingling bells don’t mean riding around on a one horse open sleigh*

slung over one shoulder and the graft on the other - ferreting is not the same without a dig - I wandered off after the hawkers in search of conies.

Our keeper put us on a long low bank with a ditch of water along one side and good clear ground the other. A few bushes and isolated brambles offered a little variation. We got onto the first bury and I entered a ferret. For some technical reason we’re working one bird at a time as I look up

to see Colin, Harris on wrist, standing poised for action. “Are you standing there?”, I ask. “Well, I want to be upwind” came back the reply, plus some more technocratic jargon that was a bit over my head. “Only, I think they’ll probably go that way”, I say, indicating an area difficult for the bird to get to from its current position. Most rabbits emerge and make for the nearest cover. Would you run out onto exposed open heath when there’s a hole in a tangled patch of briar and bramble offering sanctuary only ten yards away?

After a shuffled re-siting I heard the faint distinctive sound of a rabbit rumbling around the underground passages, my ferret in hot pursuit. A rabbit burst from the ground, going for gold across the open heath. I point. Silence is golden in ferreting and I’ve forgotten I’m hawking today. A belated “Hey, Hey” from elsewhere, leads to an even more belated slip and sees the rabbit safe to ground again. “Don’t listen to me next time”, I mutter to Colin, thinking of the old saying about never working with animals. To his credit Colin never said a word. I’m not bad at reading facial expressions though. I blush.

“You have to shout ‘Hey-Hey’ when one bolts”, calls Paul. My dog would have got it anyway, I think to myself - and brought it back to me too.

There was only one rabbit in that bury so we move along the bank to the next set of holes to try our luck.

### Communication lesson

Now ferreting is best done in complete silence and most experienced ferretters, working in two or three man teams, use a system of hand signals to communicate

between themselves. This hawking performance is a whole different ball game. In between shouting ‘Hey-Hey’, and people clumping about, and bells jingle-jangling, and impatient Austringers whistling at Harris hawks perched in bushes there are odd patches of silence. Periods during which any self respecting rabbit is giving some thought as to just what’s waiting for him up there. To a rabbit, jingling bells don’t mean riding around on a one horse open sleigh, you don’t

# Have ferret





see many these days around here anyway, they mean something's up.

It's a bit of a poser for a rabbit. Face up to what's down here, what you know is down here, or take your chance with, well whatever it is, up top. The worst scenario is a rabbit which hole-hops. It goes back down after a quick shuftie around topside and then elects to brave it out with the ferret. And what's worse is that, by some form of osmosis, it seems able to communicate the above ground situation to all its mates. If you have a close look at a rabbit its eyes are mounted on the side of the head and coupled with a wide angle lens design this gives them about 360 degree vision. They don't miss much! I do have an answer for these bolshy types. It's called Albi and she is an albino ferret.

I put her down into the bury and things start to warm up. The subterranean rumbles start up again and I do the old 'one finger vertically in the air, rotating slowly' sign to Pete, whose turn it now is, who is standing on with a red-tail. He looks at me rather bemused, probably confusing me with a demented Italian car driver, and thinking I've cracked up. My ferreting mate would have known I meant rabbits circling below and expect a bolt. A rabbit bolts. I shout "Hey-Hey". Pete casts off the red-tail. The rabbit finds its intended destination filled with water and executes a double quick U-turn, shadowed by the red-tail, which closes rapidly, but unfortunately misses and the rabbit runs away to cover.

### Birds don't retrieve

They don't bring 'em back, do they, these birds.

We had a disgruntled Harris which was slightly overweight and stayed on top of a

beech tree. The falconer, plus three assistants, stood around the base of the tree chanting magic words and numbers at it.

"Two o'four", said one sage, with a slow sort of shake of the head.

"Two o'two", came back a reply.

"Two o'two and three-quarters is just about it", nodded the one on the right.

"You're just too high, so you're not gonna fly", said the handler, who'd now got up-tight.

I agreed, it was just a fraction too high. Just out of reach. And boy it knew it. They'd never grab the bugga (falconry term for an unresponsive Harris hawk) where it was perched, gently swaying, bells tinkling in the breeze, looking down its beak at them with that supercilious manner that's adopted when they know they've got you beat. We edged away gently murmuring the chorus "See you later", leaving handler and hawk eyeing each other in mutual disrespect.

### Interesting action

Things soon livened up and Paul's Harris struck a rabbit in a tight-woven patch of mixed cover, an interesting mixture of briar, bramble and blackthorn. There may even have been the odd nettle. His bird had pitched straight in, footed the rabbit as it entered and got dragged further inside before somewhat subduing its prey, closely surrounded by nasty thorns. Paul was on all fours, knees in the wet mud, head in the undergrowth, trying to avoid the spikey bits, kill the rabbit, fool the Harris onto something else and take away its trophy without it thinking he had, plus recover the whole lot in one go. In the position he was there wasn't room to think, let alone move. You guys do like a challenge!

I got down to have a closer look and offered to 'chin' the rabbit, which I thought might assist. Paul backed out, slowly releasing his grip on the rabbit as I took it from him. I got a grip on the rabbit with my left hand, tilted my head to the left and found myself eyeball to eyeball with the Harris. On a head to head at six inches this suddenly loomed rather larger than I remembered it at a distance. I looked at the feet, talons locked to the rabbit. Mmmm I thought. For its part the unwavering yellow eyes began to study my little pinky-brown hand that had replaced the welder's glove. Much to my relief Mister

Harris slowly backed off the rabbit.

That was easy, I thought and stood up with the rabbit to neck it, not now needing to chin it, turning to find an unwavering pair of pale blue eyes locked on my hands. "You took its rabbit away", said Paul. "Wheeeeeee" I thought. Now here was a new one. I've watched blokes chasing a dog round a field for two hours solid trying to get a rabbit off it that it regarded as personal property and then only get back an odd ear or leg. I've watched dogs that would eat one on the run, raw even, rather than give it up. Next to that this was easy. "You can't do that", he said, "that can ruin them. They get annoyed and won't work".

"Should I give it back then?" I ask, but Paul thought not, returned to all fours and went to cover to console his charge. It flew again later so wasn't quite ruined. But if it jibs at anything from lark to red deer in the next few years it'll all be down to me!

I observed this phenomenon later at close quarters on the last flight of the day. Colin's Harris was back in play on a large open bury and after another spectacular chase grabbed a rabbit on open heath and mantled over it. Its talons were locked onto the catch, really ratcheted up tight. Even if inclined to do so it couldn't give it up. Not that it gave any indication it was. So it was down on all fours for Colin, despatch the rabbit quickly and wait it out before fooling the bird onto an alternative piece of meat. I can see the hawk psyche is slightly different to the dogs, well some of them anyway.

### An unusual idea

It's a lot of trouble to go to just for a rabbit though. There is a definite market for a hawk that would retrieve to hand and voluntarily give the catch to its master. Maybe your top man could solicit assistance from the GM boys and whilst they're at it a dash of osprey and cormorant genes wouldn't go amiss for days out in this weather. Now there's a really good idea for a new sport. Flying an osprey at cormorant, catching them in the act so to speak. Is that hawk mantling, no it's just drying its wings.

It was a really good day, most enjoyable and I think all the birds caught. something I got a quick dig in too. My turn to get down on all fours in the mud and take one off the ferret, just like hawking really.

Robin Tarrant

# will travel



# Deutsche Falconry

Paul Beecroft

**B**eing a collector of Falconry memorabilia I am always on the lookout for interesting items and so it was when I came across some old photographs of Falconers from 70 years ago.



Clockwise from top left - the postcard sent to Herrn Melcher, Hans Robert Knoespel, Dr. Hans Crusius, hooded Falcon, lady with Goshawk



Having obtained them I then needed to find out more about them, which I knew, was not going to be easy, at least, not for all of them. The easy part was that they were quickly identified, as originating from Germany from the writing on the rear of some of them and that one in fact was a Postcard with the signature of a well-known

Falconer, Renz Waller. The dates were also easy as some were marked and it appears they were all taken in the early 1930's.

Some of the photographs had writing on the rear and translation should be quite easy or so I thought. This turned out not to be the case as it was all in old German. Copies were made and through a friend of my wife

they were sent to Germany where it transpired that some of the elder residents in a certain village did their best to translate what was written on them. Most of it was managed but there are certain words that were never actually translated into English but the gist of it was understood.

Copies of the photographs were also sent



to a Falconer in Germany and he was kind enough to name some of the people in the photographs and also some of the birds were identified by name. Some of the people in the photographs have not yet been identified. I have therefore decided that it would be nice to share some Falconry history by doing this article and also hope that someone out there may be able to put names to faces on the ones not yet known.

The first photo in the series is the postcard, which was sent to Herrn F. Melcher on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1931. The English translation reads, "Until today we have caught 44 pieces of game. Many thanks for your letter and photo. Perhaps I can get hold of a good young Falcon for you. Will write you details soon. Again many thanks". It is then signed by Renz Waller.

The second is of Hans Robert Knoespele with Gyr Falcon 'Bomber'. Hans died in 1944 and was a member of Reichfalkenhof at Braunschweig-Riddagshausen. Accompanying this is one of Dr. Hans Crusius another well-known Falconer with Goshawk 'Lies'. Both of these



**Clockwise from top left - a smartly dressed Falconer Loges; the mystery gentleman with Falcon and Binoculars; a teenager with different birds, and an unidentified Falcon**

photographs are believed to have been taken at the Falconers Meeting of the Gau North West and Gau South West 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 1937 at Gartingen near Stuttgart/Wurttemberg.

The Hooded Falcon has the words "With many regards" written on the rear. It is dated 26/9/32 and signed Prof. Kanzan. I have no idea who he is.

The lady with the Goshawk I have seen once before in another photograph but I do not have any idea who she is. The inscription on the rear reads "My lovely Hellse 1934" and then the words "In Memory".

The very smart looking gentleman holding the Falcon in front of the screen perch has the inscription on the rear "In memory of Falconer Loges"

The gentleman with the Falcon and binoculars. Again I

have no idea who he is.

Two photographs of the same teenager but with different birds. In both photos he appears to have the leash attached to his right wrist.

Another teenager with a Falcon, again, not identified.

The final photographs show a man with a Golden Eagle. If it is the same Eagle I think the photos were taken at different times, which is suggested in the fact that he is not wearing the same clothes and his hairstyle is slightly different. I am told that not very many Falconers were flying Eagles in Germany in the 1930's and one would think that he would be easy to identify but this has not been the case.

If any reader can put names to faces or supply any other information I would be very grateful.

**Contact details**

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**was born in 1968 in Doncaster, Yorkshire but grew up in an industrial area of Tyne and Wear.**

As a child, my parents would take me regularly to the countryside and it was through these trips that my love for nature and wildlife developed.

My interest in drawing and painting also started from an early age, this coming from my father's influence but I have had no formal training and so therefore I am self taught.

Just over eight years ago I moved to the Highlands of Scotland and this has given me a greater opportunity for studying subjects for wildlife paintings.

Up until then a lot of my paintings had been commissioned sporting portraits, people's pets and landscapes etc., but it is really only in the last five years or so that I have started painting birds on a regular basis.

I began getting interested in birds of prey in 1998 after I visited my first falconry display which was given by Bob Dalton at his centre in Grantown-on-Spey. I can remember being amazed by all of those beautiful birds that I had only ever before seen in books or on television.

Watching his falcons climb, then turn and stoop to the lure was quite

brehtaking. Bob also let me handle a couple of the birds. One was a Harris' Hawk and the other, a Barn Owl. To be that close to the birds was such a great privilege for me.

The pictures I took that day really inspired me so I decided to have a go at painting the Barn Owl as it is one of my favourites. When the painting was finished I was really pleased with the results and wanted to show Bob . . . just to ask his opinion. I guess he must have liked it as he bought it from me!

That had given me great encouragement and so more paintings followed, including, Peregrine, Lanner and Red Tail.

A lot of thanks must go to Julie Ross at the Edinburgh Bird of Prey Centre and also, more recently, to Andy Hughes at Dunrobin Castle who have both allowed me to spend many hours studying and photographing their falcons, hawks and owls. Both of these falconers have a fantastic way with their hawks, have great patience with me and have given me a lot of insight into these wonderful birds for which I am very grateful.

Although most of my works have been painted in watercolours, I have lately started using acrylics which I find gives me good overall control of detail and greater flexibility.

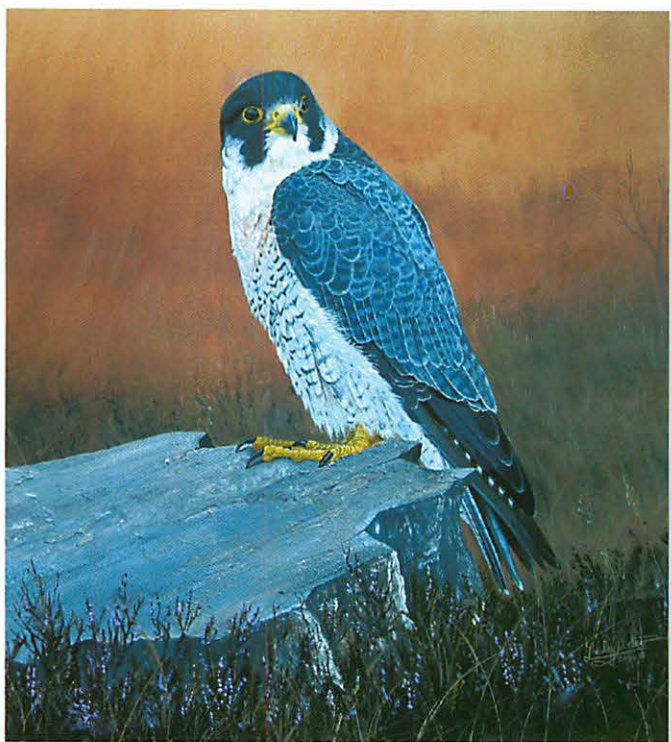
Being a member of the Art Society of Inverness has allowed me to display my work on a regular basis at their exhibitions where I have always received good sales and feedback on my artwork.

I would like to eventually be able to show my work at Falconry Fairs and also Country Shows.

# Lesley J. Webber







Clockwise from top left - Peregrine Falcon, Spar, Saker Falcon, Barn Owl



At present I have a small website where people can look at and order my paintings through. [www.lesleywebber.com](http://www.lesleywebber.com)







Female Kestrel

# Raptor Conservation and Monitoring

## in the New Forest

**C**overing forty five square miles of mixed conifer plantation, ancient broadleaved woodland, heaths, and wetlands, the New Forest has long been recognised as a special place for birds and not least of these would be its diurnal raptors. With the possibility of up to eight species breeding and another six being encountered at other times it is inevitable that the area attracts its share of bird watchers generally and raptor enthusiasts specifically.

### Management

The Forestry Commission as the land managers of the Forest have the difficult job of accommodating numerous tasks, from large scale timber felling and cut and burn heathland management, to giving permission to a host of recreational activities, and all in a way that is compatible with its unique nature conservation interest. Key to this is a knowledge and understanding of what we have, where it is, and how it can be safe guarded from these activities where possible. To this end a host of contributors both within and outside the organisation, both professional and amateur, assist and update the biological records which form a working document for the most heavily managed areas of the Forest. In my sixteen years with the Forestry Commission a small group of New Forest Keepers and enthusiastic and committed others have monitored a number of raptor species.

Because of the huge task involved, much of this effort was targeted at those species most vulnerable from commercial timber felling during the breeding season. You cannot protect a breeding attempt without knowing where the nest is, so most effort was directed to this task. This then progressed to ringing young, recording nest success and removing addled and unhatched eggs for analysis at the then ITE and now CEH at Monks Wood, Huntingdon.

It is important to stress that all the activities I am involved in regarding birds of prey require the appropriate licences from the relevant EN agency and BTO and work carried out also needs landowners' consent. These licences are becoming tougher to acquire with much worthwhile effort going to reduce disturbance through duplication of effort and a requirement to provide a full and detailed report of your season's activities and results.

### Climbing safely with up-to-date equipment

Over the years we have modified and fine tuned our methods and equipment so as climbing, nest data collection and ringing are conducted quickly, efficiently and professionally to minimise disturbance. Our climbing team are trained in arboricultural techniques and standards of safety. Most of our visits however occur when young are in the nest and very often parent birds are far away hunting and not even aware a nest inspection has taken place. Some birds are far more tolerant of disturbance than others and there is variability within individuals and at different stages of the nesting cycle. As a general rule most birds are more tolerant of nest disturbance with young than they are with eggs. There is no substitute for good fieldwork and interpretation of behaviour to guide your learning with different species.

Since 1988 we have found and recorded information on over four hundred nesting attempts by Sparrowhawk pairs in the Forest, with between twenty five and thirty five pairs located in any one year. Our fieldwork coverage has been consistent and reveals a relatively stable population albeit with local fluctuations. Often this is brought about by forestry work making some nesting compartments unsuitable and birds moving site. This makes relocation more difficult and can bring them into conflict with neighbouring pairs. Generally there is more availability of prey around the periphery of the Forest and around villages and subsequently density of pairs can be slightly higher here than in mainly coniferous blocks where food availability is lower. During 2003 over ninety young Sparrowhawks were ringed, and recoveries are into double figures for the project as a whole.

Any long term monitoring project has huge merit in its ability to identify normal fluctuations within a population against genuine increases in numbers or density or conversely, more worrying long term declines. Recording nest and fledging success can show if declines are linked to increased adult mortality or a sustained drop in fledging success due to change or loss in habitat quality.

### Recording Goshawks

Despite many rumours to the contrary, until 2002, Hampshire Ornithological Society records Goshawk as a bird with few substantiated records and not proven to breed in the County. This was also the conclusion we reached for our fieldwork in the New Forest. Occasional confirmed sightings but no proof of attempted



breeding. All this changed suddenly in 2002 when intensive fieldwork through January to March led to the discovery of two separate pairs in display and subsequently nest building, laying and successfully fledging young. That three of the four birds exhibited streaked brown plumage of first year birds indicated that these were probably the first colonisers of the County from a known breeding source in a neighbouring County. 2003 saw three pairs successfully raise young in the Forest. It is hoped that cooperation with land owners will continue so that potential conflicts with game keeping interests can be better understood and minimised, so that the Goshawk can remain



European Buzzard chick



Sparrowhawk

as a regular breeding addition to Hampshire's avifauna.

### Rare visitor

In 1995 the Forest was the focus of local ornithological attention when a pair of rare Montagus Harrier took up residence in the north of the forest after an absence of thirty years and proceeded to nest. These summer visitors are scarce and highly mobile, needing large areas of productive hunting ground, just the right height and structure nesting habitat and, being a ground nester a large slice of luck where natural predation is concerned. Where the FC could assist was in ensuring casual human disturbance was minimised and that bird watchers generally could watch and enjoy the birds without adversely affecting them. Large clutches and the ability to repeat lay are both strategies of birds with increased chances of natural predation or nest loss, and both were illustrated by the Forest pair. In 1995 the first eggs laid were predated before the clutch was complete and the birds quickly switched nest sites and completed laying, subsequently successfully fledging young. In 1996 the pair lost large chicks to the predations of a fox and were unsuccessful that year. In 1997

young were again fledged successfully. In 1998 the first egg laid was predated by Crows and as in the first year the birds quickly moved site and continued to lay. Unfortunately these eggs were again predated by Crows and the birds vacated

published work by him, the basics of this study are still continued by his wife today. I am pleased that the New Forest Keepers can continue to help with sightings and information as they have always done and that recently we have recommenced active climbing and ringing with this species on part of the forest. As with a number of other raptor species they are in a period of range expansion but still subject to fluctuating breeding success due to the intricacies of weather and prey availability. A point not fully understood by many regarding birds of prey is that weather and prey availability are often far more crucial in the period leading to the female gaining good breeding condition than they are in determining the survival of any dependant young. This was evident in 2002 when a number of Buzzard pairs failed to progress past nest building though established and

***Unquestionably the most mysterious and elusive raptor of renowned association with the New Forest is the Honey Buzzard***

the area completely. Harsh as those losses seemed at the time, a fifty per cent success rate from nesting attempts was a very good result for Harriers generally. Montagus Harrier are still occasionally seen on passage in the Forest but to date no more nesting attempts have been recorded.

### Ringing Buzzards

The Common Buzzard in the Forest has been the subject of a lengthy and continuing study to monitor overall population and breeding success. Started many years ago by the late Colin Tubbs and others and the subject of much written and

holding territory all year. 2003 however, saw around fifty pairs nesting with forty one successful, rearing seventy young.

### Scarce Honey Buzzard in the New Forest

Unquestionably the most mysterious and elusive raptor of renowned association with the New Forest is the Honey Buzzard. Until recently almost nothing of any worth had been published on this species in this country and most records here and elsewhere were heavily suppressed from the birding world as a whole. Much of this was wholly justified for what was, and still



is, a very scarce and fluctuating population, now known to be scattered throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Here in the Forest, numbers vary from odd individuals to a handful of scattered pairs, and often non breeding. Slowly our many hundreds of hours of observation on this species are adding to the national picture through cooperation with field workers elsewhere.

### Kestrels and Hobbies

One of the least common raptors in the forest is the Kestrel. Primarily feeding on a range of small mammals, the Forest's grazing by cattle, ponies and deer preclude a wealth of long rough grass favoured by these animals. Many of the Kestrels seen hunting the Forest are ranging from more suitable marginal land around the edge.

The summer visiting and breeding Hobby is a bird with an historic association with these lowland heaths of southern Britain and that continues to this day. Being a most difficult and time consuming bird to find at the nest makes accurate assessment of the breeding population difficult. Most easily seen on warm afternoons in May when numbers of day flying Oak Eggar and Fox moths are emerging over the heaths and hunting Hobbies can be watched catching and eating them on the wing with the greatest of ease. This high energy food to low energy hunting output is key to the birds' rapidly gaining breeding condition after the rigours of migration. Hobbies are the last of all our raptors to begin breeding mostly selecting an old or vacant nest of a Crow and laying early to mid June. Patchy breeding records we do have coupled with

distinctive low quartering flight. Still a much persecuted bird on their breeding grounds it is sad to see a decline in the number frequenting the known roost areas in the Forest. With only one main roost regularly in use and only by a handful of birds it is very important that bird watchers keen to glimpse these beautiful birds do not disturb the vulnerable roost sites by thoughtless and selfish behaviour. Our heathland management programme is looking at accommodating some of these preferred roost sites past normal rotation to assist the birds.

Another winter visitor to watch out for is the small and easily overlooked Merlin. Never a common bird here but can be seen with perseverance in very small numbers hunting pipits and finches on the heaths and around the woodland edges.

### Raptor sightings

Until fairly recently any sightings of Peregrine Falcon would have been mainly confined to the winter months and only then very sporadically. This last year any reasonable period of raptor observation was likely to yield a sighting of Peregrine. With known breeding sights now scattered around the edge of the Forest their hunting forays regularly make them observable to serious raptor watchers. Most nest sites are high on pylons or other tall man made structures but we are ever aware that one day we may locate a tree nesting pair high up on wood or heathland edge in an old Crow nest, or if they become established, a Raven nest.

These are exciting times for raptor watchers in the New Forest with Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and Hobby populations stable, Peregrine now regularly

observed, Goshawk added to the list of breeding birds and the increasing possibility that Red Kite may be next. Although never a place that features highly for rare migrants or vagrants added to this is the possibility that Osprey, Marsh and Montagus Harrier and Honey Buzzard can be seen and most years there are odd records of Red Footed Falcon.

### More pressure in the New Forest area

Increasing demands for more recreational time, and tolerance to more varied pursuits within the forest environment put increasing pressure on all our wildlife and wild places. We all have an obligation to understand how our roles in the forest can impact both positively and negatively on a range of species both intentionally and unintentionally. Our interest in wildlife does not exclude us from the equation and needs to be borne in mind whenever we are out enjoying all those special places like the New Forest.



Honey Buzzard chicks



Leg differences between male and female sparrowhawks

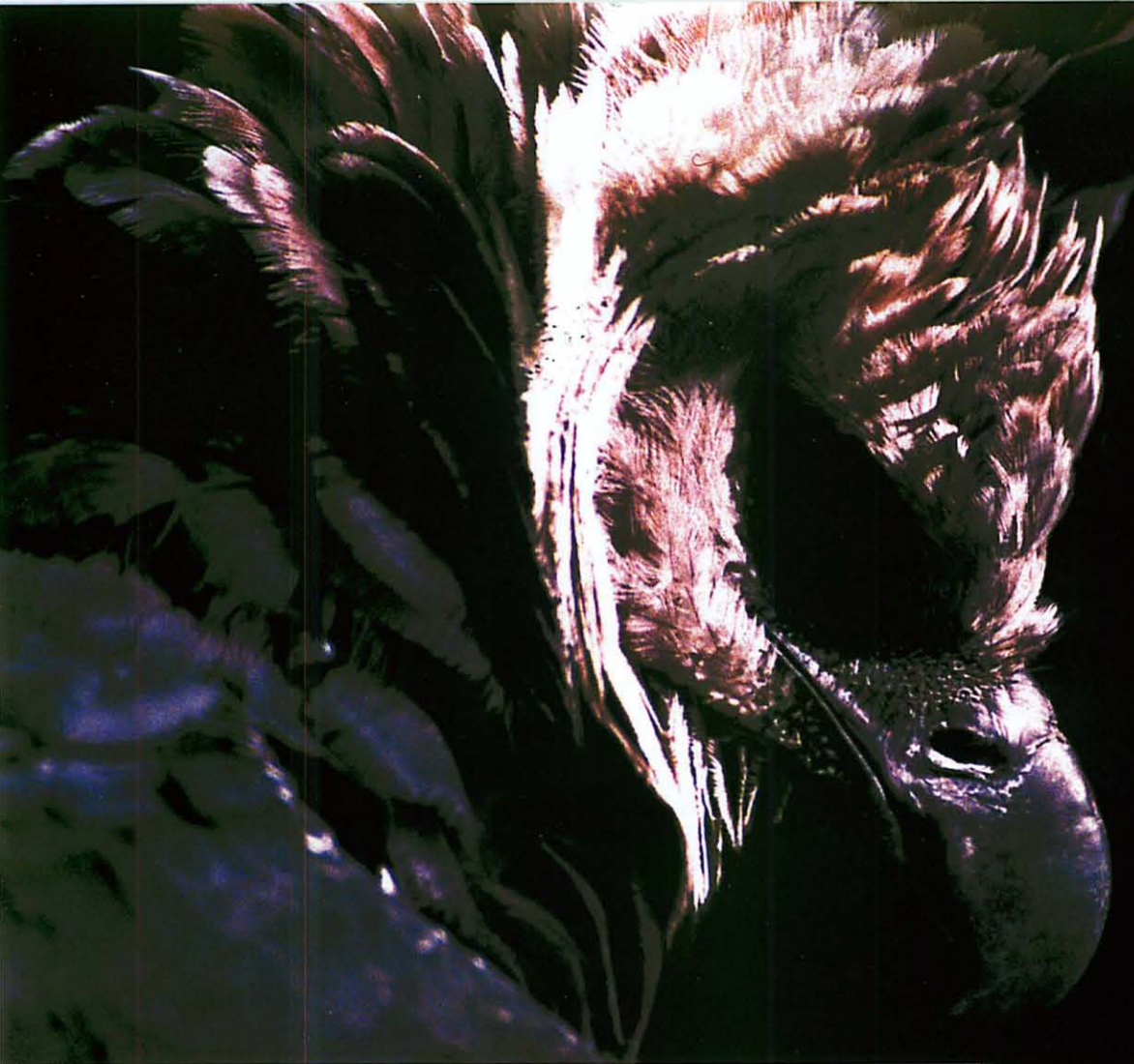
historic information suggests that the Forest population is relatively stable but nationally it is thought the range of this species has expanded.

### Harriers and Merlins

During the winter months a few Hen Harriers still grace the heaths with their

Photo credit:  
Derek Middleton photography





**R**ecently I accepted an invitation from several falconer friends to visit them in Brazil and see first hand some exciting falconry with Aplomado Falcons. Brazil is a long way from England and not overly cheap to get to, so I did think long and hard before committing myself to the trip.

I have seen Aplomado Falcons flown before when visiting friends in Mexico and I have to say I had not been over impressed with them.

To be fair, all but one of the Aplomados I had seen flown had been taken as eyass falcons. The exception to these was a passage falcon and this was the only one I had ever seen fly with any vigour or determination. The rest never seemed very committed in the chase and were just as happy catching insects as they were chasing small birds. In fact, on many occasions I had seen Aplomados check from chasing quail to drop onto a locust or large spider. Not my idea of exhilarating falconry.

But I have been assured by several South American falconers that Aplomados catch

quail and will often tackle quarry considerably larger than themselves. But having seen one good and seven bad examples my personal opinion of the Aplomado as a falconry companion was not a very high one. In the end, the chance to visit a different country and see a branch of falconry I had not witnessed before won the day. Arrangements were duly made and I found myself on a very long flight from London to Sao Paulo. Here we landed and then sat on the ground for an hour before taking off again and eventually landing at Rio de Janeiro.

The falconers I was going to visit had warned me that it was winter in Brazil and would therefore be cold. I was told to prepare myself for temperatures as low as seventeen degrees Celsius at night. In fact, when we landed at Sao Paulo at just after five in the morning, the temperature was some twenty eight degrees. It may well be cold for a Brazilian, but for me it was wonderful.

During my stay which lasted the best part of three weeks, I never once wore a jumper or a jacket. But it was not only the temperature that was warm. Everyone I met was friendly and nothing was too much trouble. As soon as people realised you were a visitor to their country they would go out of their way to be helpful. What made the whole trip an even greater pleasure was the

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cost of living in Brazil. It is unbelievably low compared to here in the UK. A really good five star hotel is around eleven pounds a night. A good meal at a top class restaurant will set you back two pounds. To fill a medium sized car to the brim with petrol will be almost eight pounds. Money went a very long way and service and value for money was nothing short of excellent.

One of my friends picked me up from the airport and drove me to his home city, which was two and half hours away. The plan was to rest here for the day and then move on the following day. Several things had been specially laid on for me, including visiting two breeding facilities that are not open to the public. Both specialise in Raptors and I was very keen to see them. We would also be visiting various falconers on route to our destination, which was Uberlandia, some six hundred kilometres to the North. Here we would spend some considerable time hunting with five Aplomado Falcons.

During the journey from the airport I was struck by two things. Firstly how green Brazil was. I had expected scorched ground and wilting plants. But everywhere looked green and pleasant. The other thing that could not fail to register was the sheer volume of Vultures and Caracaras that were quite literally everywhere. I remarked to my companion on the sheer number of scavengers and he asked me what species of

vultures were common in Britain. When I explained we didn't have any, he seemed really confused. He wanted to know what cleaned up the dead animals from the fields

species is one I am very familiar with, having visited Mexico many times. It is very similar in size to a Red Tail and inhabits the same sort of countryside. The big difference



**Clockwise from top left - Melanistic White Tailed Hawk, Juvenile Harpy Eagle, and two Adult White Tailed Hawks**

and roadsides. Trying to explain as tactfully as possible that we don't have corpses of animals littering the sides of our major roads was not an easy task.

One vulture that I had hoped there would be a chance of seeing during my stay was the magnificent King Vulture. But other than a couple of specimens in a breeding project, this was not to be. Although I travelled a vast distance within Brazil, I just didn't get to the areas where these particular vultures are to be found.

Once back at my companion's house, it was time to meet his family and then see his hawk and falcon. The falcon was a haggard Tundra Peregrine that had been rescued from a beach in Rio de Janeiro. It had been picked up exhausted and in a very weakened state and taken to the environmental police. They in turn had sought a falconer to look after it and eventually, all being well, rehabilitate it. At the time of my visit, the falcon was in excellent fettle again and was hunting well. It would not be too long before the process of hacking it back would begin.

Tundra Peregrines are, in my opinion, one of the best looking species of Peregrine. Their very dark cap and exceptionally light breast look superb and they are very reminiscent of *Calidus* Peregrines.

As well as the Falcon, my companion also had a White Tailed Hawk. This

comes in their eating habits. White Tails live almost exclusively on large birds. That is not to say that they are not opportunist hunters and do occasionally take lizards, small mammals, etc. when the circumstances dictate. But the main diet consists of larger species of birds.

The hawk my friend had was a melanistic phase White Tail, something I had never seen before or even knew existed. It looked rather odd especially when put on a bow perch next to a normal colour phase. The environment police had also brought this hawk to my friend. Its progress was a little slower and although the aim was to release the hawk, eventually, it would not be for some time to come.

As we stood in the garden discussing the hawks on perches before us, an Aplomado Falcon came and landed in a tree less than twenty feet away from us. It wasn't overly bothered by our presence and set about eating a small lizard it had caught. This had the effect of re-affirming my fears that as good hunting hawks for falconry they were going to be found lacking. But a few days time would show if my fears were grounded. After visiting some falconers and a couple of breeding facilities, I would be spending more than a week hunting with several of these diminutive falcons.

Bright and early the next morning, we set off on the drive to the city of Belo Horizonte. Here we would meet up with the director of





a breeding facility dedicated to endangered Brazilian species of birds. Although all manner of birds were being bred at the facility, the emphasis was very much on raptor species. The director Mr Roberto Azeredo, had very kindly taken time out from his busy schedule to spend the day with us and personally give us a guided tour.

To say the facility was impressive would be an understatement. One of the endangered species the centre is putting a lot of its resources into is the magnificent Harpy Eagle. I have been particularly fortunate on a visit to Mexico, a couple of years ago, to see two pairs of Harpies at the La Siberia facility. To see four Harpy Eagles together was a sight I shall never forget and the experience crowned for me by being allowed to go in with one pair, collect feathers and take photographs. I never thought this Harpy experience would be surpassed.

But at Belo Horizonte there were ten pairs of Harpies as well as some odd eagles that were being allowed to mature before being paired up. Twenty four Harpies at one place at one time was just a truly awesome sight. They are not the biggest eagle in the world, the Stella's Sea Eagle has that distinction, but they are without doubt the most powerful. Such is their power that they regularly snatch Howler Monkeys and Three-toed Sloth's from the treetops and fly back to their nest sites with them.

Harpies normally only breed every two years and one youngster that they have stays with them until eighteen to twenty months old. Mr Azeredo has been trying different techniques so that the young he produces can be taken from the parents and raised without becoming imprinted. The pairs are then relieved of parental duties after ten months so that they can breed on an annual basis instead. So far the scheme has met with some outstanding success.

I was lucky during my visit in that one pair still had a youngster with them and I watched them tenderly feed it and clean up after it. I was watching this action through a feeding slot. Mr Azeredo asked me if I would like to go into the enclosure with the eagle family and take some photos. I then had the privilege of spending around ten minutes with the family and I was literally less than ten feet from the nest. A wonderful experience that I will never forget.

After the Harpies we went on to view the rest of the raptors at the facility. These were also truly splendid and included one of my personal favourites, Black Hawk Eagles. There were also a couple of pairs of Ornate Hawk Eagles, some Roadside Hawks, White Tailed Hawks and Black and White Hawk

*Twenty four Harpies at one place at one time was just a truly awesome sight. They are not the biggest eagle in the world, the Stella's Sea Eagle has that distinction, but they are without doubt the most powerful*



Eagles. Many people don't realise that immature Ornate Hawk Eagles are also black and white and confuse them as adults of the other species. Although all these raptors were magnificent in their own right, they seemed somehow just ordinary after the awesome Harpies.

Our day at Belo Horizonte was over all too quickly and it was time to move on. We drove for a couple of hours and spent the night with a falconer who was flying a female Bi-coloured Hawk. These are very similar to our European Sparrowhawk in both looks and size. The next morning we would get a couple of hours hawking in before moving onto the next leg of our journey.

We were out in the fields just as it was getting light as the falconer we were with had to go to his conventional job at nine am. Quail were our intended quarry but unfortunately we never got to find any. We did flush several groups of small birds, mainly American Blackbirds and Robins. The hawk flew in exactly the same style as our Spar and managed to catch one of each before our brief hawking spell was over. But it had been good fun and we had enjoyed some decent sport. We said goodbye to our host and moved on.

The next leg of our journey was a nightmare. We had to drive some five hundred kilometres to the town of Patrocinio. Under normal circumstances this wouldn't be too bad. Just a few hours slog on the motorway. But there was no motorway and the roads were some of the worst I have ever been on. Great stretches of road, which was supposedly a first class road I might add, carried danger extreme caution signs. These were due to the fact that the roads are collapsing due to lack of investment. There are huge potholes everywhere and in some places the road simply does not exist anymore. When I talk of potholes I am not talking of dinner plate size holes that don't do your tyres the world of good. I am talking about holes that are large enough to swallow small cars.

During the course of our hellish journey we passed a couple of lorries that had become stuck in potholes. We did not make Patrocinio that night despite more than nine hours driving. We stopped for the night in a lovely little town called Ibia. The best hotel accommodation that Ibia could offer was four star. But at seven pounds per night included a full breakfast - this didn't seem too much of a hardship.



# New ways of challenging youth



## Hawkeye working with Pioneer Centre

**S**ituated in 25 acres of open grassland and woodland on the Shropshire / Worcestershire border is Pioneer Activity and Conference Centre. Our aim is to assist people in reaching their full potential through sport and creative activity in a caring, accepting, safe environment.

Pioneer welcomes many different groups from schools and colleges, youth groups and special needs groups to management training, church weekends away and conferences. During their stay at Pioneer many of the groups take part in the various activities provided on site such as Climbing, Abseiling, Archery, Fencing, Raft Building, and the 10 metre High Ropes Course.

During the past season we have been working in partnership with the Hawkeye Falconry Display Team; Hawkeye work directly with many of the groups who stay at the Centre. A lot of the young people are from towns and cities with little or no experience of the countryside, especially the exciting world of birds of prey. The work with Hawkeye is a valuable resource as together we seek to introduce young people to new life-changing experiences.

The strengths of Hawkeye and Pioneer Centre in their approach to working with people is their desire to offer a hands-on learning experience designed for long term impact. Challenging attitudes, imparting personal responsibility, developing communication skills, increasing self-esteem and motivation are just a few of the outcomes experienced by group members.

During the two-hour presentation the young people are introduced to both the fascination of Falconry and the need for Conservation - not only abroad in the form of high profile cases, such as Tiger Poaching and

the illegal trade in eggs or wild birds, but also in our day-to-day lives. Even the toughest, roughest, coolest dudes listen intently as they learn about the global history of falconry, bird biology, feeding, care and the impact it has had on our modern language.

The young people are initially introduced to the Eagle Owl and its silent flight. This is demonstrated by the young people lying on the floor with their eyes shut while the owl is



*The group are asked the meaning of conservation and how it affects their daily lives*

allowed to fly just above, without them noticing. Also, within the session the young people are given the opportunity to meet and fly other birds of prey, an experience which they talk about for days to come, giving them a fresh insight into the natural world around them and an appreciation for creations' detail.

Throughout the presentation the underlying theme of Conservation is discussed. The group are asked the meaning of conservation and how it affects their daily lives. Conservation is often misunderstood by young people. It is perceived as something that involves countries far away and not as

simple as picking up litter or what to do if they find an injured bird. Hawkeye also talk about their first hand experience of their wildlife rehabilitation work and their travels around the world working on various wildlife projects. The groups are shown evidence of their conservation work in the form of excerpts from various TV documentaries they have been involved in.

Both the work of Pioneer and Hawkeye are a valuable resource in educating young people in the issues facing the wider world as well as giving them an opportunity to develop their teamwork, social skills and their own sense of worth. In today's society many young people spend so much of their time in front of computers they never have the opportunity to experience the sense of fulfilment that comes from completing a task. The exhilaration experienced through working together as a team, confronting their fears, overcoming them and realising their individual value and unique skills can make a difference.

All of these are demonstrated at Pioneer through, amongst others; designing and building a bridge across a pond as part of a team building exercise - getting to the top of the 10 metre high ropes course when they thought they were scared of heights - flying a bird of prey when their first reaction was "It will eat me" or learning how they can make a difference through picking up litter and knowing who can help when they find injured animals or birds.

*If you would like further information on the work of Pioneer Centre please contact:*  
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# HOT DOG TRAINING

*Diana Durman-Walters*



**I**t is a fact that people who keep dogs (and cats) live longer on average than those who don't. They have a calming influence on us humans reducing blood pressure and therefore the risk of heart attack. Stroking or cuddling a dog has a de-stressing influence that can be linked to complex modern urban living. It is most likely that this de-stressing trigger is very much the same in falconry. The hunting falcon or hawk provides a moment of harmony, tranquility and brings it's own inner peace.

Put the two together though on a hawking day and the falconers' sea of tranquillity is often put very much to the test. The more confusing a dogs' behaviour is to us, the more likely its actions will be in direct conflict with what you want them to do and suddenly you feel your blood pressure is rising. Dogs can simply be too hot to handle. Worse still if the hawk is in the same frame of mind (and won't co-operate) and they're out together then we know where this will all lead.

Dogs left pretty much to their own devices are the greatest offenders. These individuals are spending the greater part of their lives without contact with their handler and are expected to work in the field at any time without putting a foot wrong. Now saying without contact isn't strictly true. These dogs see their handler every day and can do basic stuff like sit when they're asked or come to heel if needs be, and not terrorise the neighbours. But once out into a hunting framework they become like somebody else's dog but not yours, as they proceed to ransack the countryside without any thought that they could be working with you and for you.

Most of this is due to leaving the dog alone out of the game season without any regard to continuous prompts and

reminders as to how they can compliment the hawking team. During the summer months most falconers' dogs are in a dormant state. They lounge around, go for jollies out in the park or down the street and generally have little or nothing to do with hunting. As the months wear on and the hawking season gets closer they are raring to go and have pent up energy that is needing to be burnt off. They then proceed to do just that as you are trying to get some decent hawking in, hindering rather than helping.

One of the techniques that doesn't take up so much time but keeps the dog very much on its toes is doing a small amount of work perhaps at the week-end or evenings that involves concentration and discipline which keeps the bond of master and servant prominent in the dog's mind.

In hunt, point and retrieve breeds, the retrieving skills endorse the element of control for the handler, as he knows what must be achieved and the dog finds these problem solving lessons fun to do. These are not of course just putting a dummy out in a grass field so that the dog can see it, but in such a way that the dog has to use it's nose to find it. Once the dog has found the dummy and retrieved it to you this form of positive reinforcement is beneficial as it tightens the hold you have over the dog and strengthens the bond that makes them want to work with you. It would be very easy to overdo the retrieving aspect in the HPR's. A little imagination is called for when setting about these tasks and not to bore the dog. For instance if your dog likes swimming, try throwing them across an easy part of a stream or river or into a pond. Or throw them over an obstacle such as a wall or a fence. I haven't met too many HPR's that don't like jumping. Try making the dog sit and watch whilst you go into the field and drop the dummy into cover then walking back send the dog for the retrieve, making him use memory and scenting skills to complete the task.

But I can hear you say, my dog doesn't like retrieving and I can't get it to bring dummies back. I have trained one or two dogs like that in the past which would run right up to a dummy then 'blank' it, run

right past and carry on in the field as if there wasn't anything there. I began to use items of dead game that I had in the freezer, which they would retrieve no problem (providing they were thawed out) or pigeon which I used to put into a pair of tights as the feathers, particularly if they are wood pigeon come loose in their mouths and they'll spit the pigeon out, otherwise. These are much more interesting for them to retrieve and they enjoy doing it. As you are going to have to get them to take a certain degree of instruction in the game of find the dummy, then the dog never gets into the habit of trying to work without you being in control.

Some breeds don't willingly retrieve. The desire to do this is not bred into them because some other aspect is required. For instance pointers and setters. Their task is to run as fast as possible with the keenest of noses to detect suitable game. As they had traditionally been used to simply locate game swiftly, the job of retrieving fell to spaniels or Labradors. For these breeds they would need to accompany you in the field once you begin to start flying the falcon again. Making them lie down as simple flight lessons begin so that they can watch proceedings and then eventually be brought in towards the hawk on the lure, or if that proves a bit daunting they will need to be out in small fields with positive boundaries such as hedges or walls where they can run on short quests under orders from the whistle which you can then practise stop, turn and down. To keep a dog that has previously been trained in tune with what you want from them, takes a little effort on our behalf in order to get the maximum pleasure from their company. There is a saying "dogs are a necessary evil" in other words you need the blighters in order to get some decent hawking done. With just a little time spent in sharpening up the skills that you taught them when they were just learning, then dogs can be a real pleasure to have and hot dogs will be a thing of the past.



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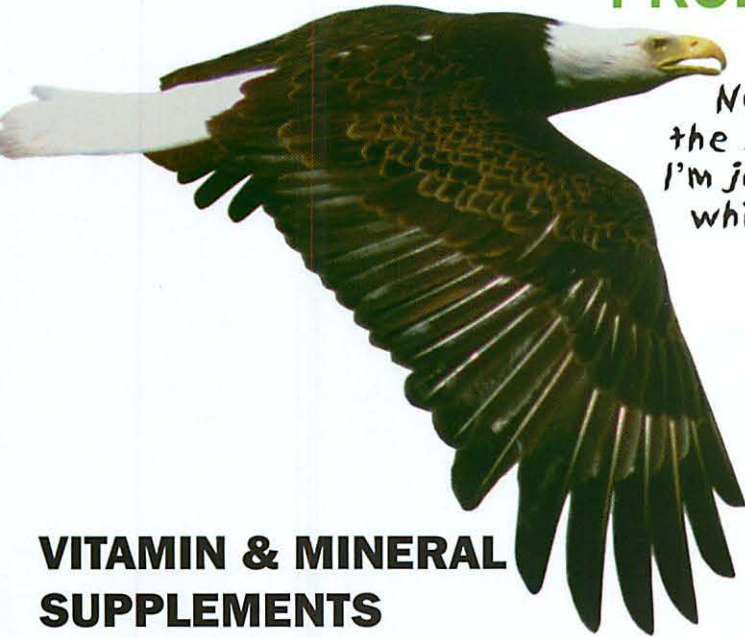
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