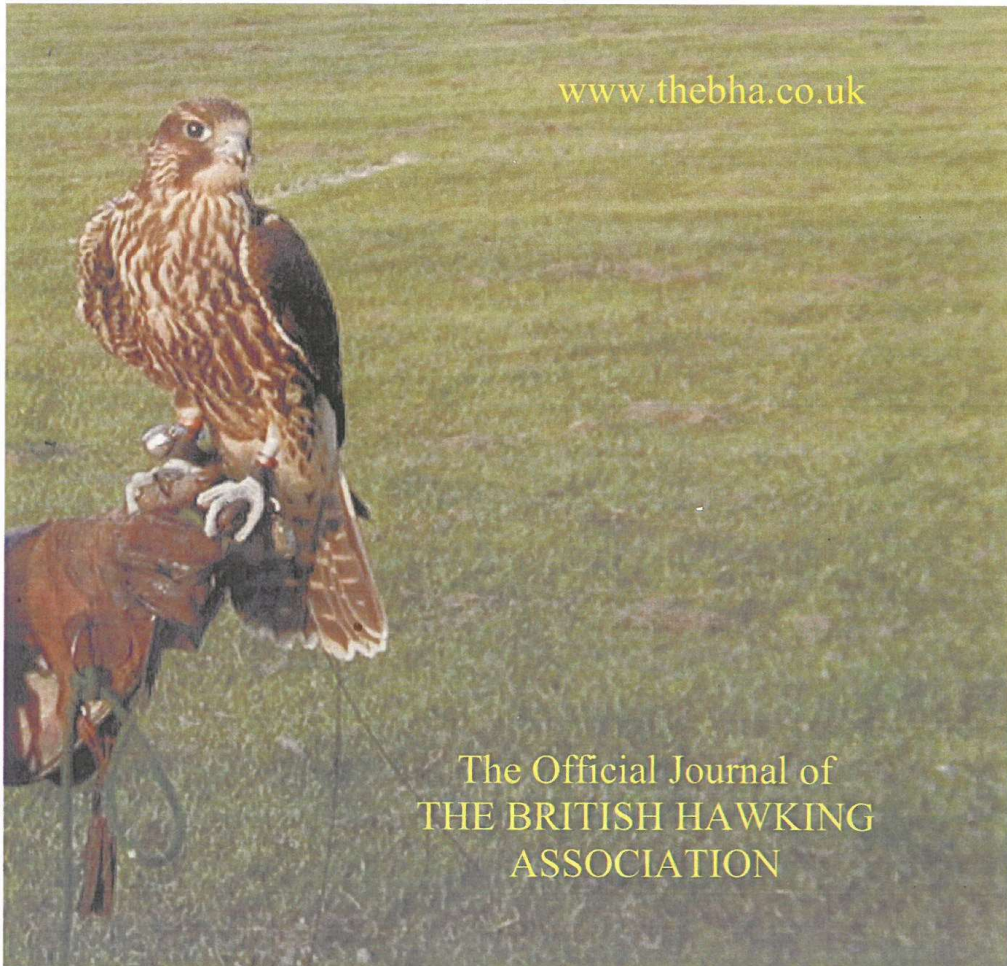


2004/2005 Edition

Yarak



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The Official Journal of
THE BRITISH HAWKING
ASSOCIATION

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Official Journal of
THE BRITISH HAWKING
ASSOCIATION

President: Baroness Mallalieu, QC
Vice President: George Roach

The BHA is an Equal Opportunities organization, and a democratic one. It is dedicated to helping beginners to succeed in the ancient sport of falconry, and at the same time improving the standards of practicing falconers through the implementation of a sound Code of Practice.

Reflecting this, The YARAK is devoted to serving all members whatever their falconry background. It is set up not only as a means of two-way communication between the Committee and Club Members, but also between members within the Club. For example, if you would like to share an interesting hawking story, or help novice members by passing on whatever you have learned. As a novice, you may even wish to tap the knowledge and experience of "old hands", or just write a letter with questions or contributions.

Please address correspondence to:

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LONDON
NW9 0AB

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Westminster Kingsway College

The BHA cannot accept any responsibility for any views and/or opinions expressed in any articles or letters submitted to or published by the Editor.

Message from the Compiler

I would hardly call myself an Editor, so Compiler will have to do! One reason for this delayed publication is the illness of our Editor John Read – so on behalf of the Club I wish him well for a full recovery. I make no apology for asking for material for the NEXT YARAK right now – ideas if not actual material is required. What do you want to sit down and read in here? What experiences can you pass on (good or bad) - we all need to learn. The scope can be widened to include dogs, breeds, their training, their use with birds, ferrets, equipment, books, make-do bits and pieces, how to mount telemetry etc. Many people have put in a lot of their own time to bring this together, so – more stories please! Breeders – do you want to place advertisements? Your 'For sale or wanted ads' can also be placed here, or in the more regular mini Yarak Newsletter. Letters – we have none this time, but are hoping for some reaction to this publication, so please write even if you do not want your name published (but say so!). I'm off to fly my crow hawk over Sussex, so "I may be gone some time.....".
Yvonne Taylor

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Additional copies of YARAK are available by contacting your regional officer or any Committee member.

BHA BUSINESS

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Notts/Derbs.	vacant	

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Kingsbury
LONDON
NW9 0AB

Membership Categories and Subscription Rates (2004)

Full Member	£30	Family Members	£40	Supporter Member	£15
Novice Member	£30	Overseas Member	£15	Trade Member	£52
UK affiliated Club	£50	Overseas Affiliated Club	£50		

You will only get ONE reminder to renew, as this keeps the administration costs down. The BHA does not impose late payment fines, and has not increased its membership rates for a number of years.

All this is done to help our members, so please help in return by paying your dues ON TIME. You will find a detachable Direct Debit form in this edition of Yarak – for use now or later.

Chairmans Report

Well it seems like only yesterday that I was writing the Chairman's Report for the last YARAK. This past year has seen the BHA begin to make a contribution to the work of the Hawk Board (HB). Firstly ex-Chairman Paul Beecroft was co-opted onto the HB for his legal expertise and then our club representative, Brian Morris, proposed an amendment to the HB constitution that would allow representation for all established UK falconry clubs at the HB. There is an increasing need for the HB to encompass within its ranks, all falconer's, and this move to "include all" will go a long way towards dispelling the HB's reputation as a "self interest clique" that it has had, perhaps quite unjustly, over the years. Falconry needs a strong, truly representative, body protecting its interests, and the BHA supports any move that takes us closer to this goal.

Falconry is under threat from those who would like to see it banned so be under no illusion that we are safe and don't need to worry, we do. Falconry has always been seen as the acceptable face of field sports and hunting. In fact most people do not look on falconry as a field sport or a form of hunting. In our defence, we are not in the same predicament as other field sport and yes we do have a very good press thanks to people like Ray and Wendy doing educational and entertaining falconry displays but it only takes one idiot with a video camera and an editing machine to make things look as horrific as possible to the general public.

We all need to be ever vigilant and make sure that we practice the art of Falconry in a proper and humane manner being respectful of the birds we fly and the game we hunt. Back when the Burns report was published in 2000 a lot of emphasis was put on the suffering of an animal once it has been caught. The government commissioned this report but then pretty much ignored it as it did not conform to their way of thinking. I read this report in great detail even

though I was told not to bother. I believe that at some point the government or other interested parties will come back to this report and make use of its findings.

I looked for areas that could effect us as falconers and found that not a lot did, but what it did do was look at the time an animal took to die once it had been caught, they called it "its period of suffering" and then they tried to define what constituted as suffering and what was an acceptable period from capture to death.

This rang alarm bells with me. When our hawks catch game it can take time for us to reach and sometimes in dense cover even find the hawk to dispatch the quarry. The same goes for falcons on large quarry that they do not necessarily kill in the air. Some of you will tell that your birds kill on impact but all of us know that sometimes not all kills are text book ones.

For this reason I urge all our members to be quick in the dispatching of all quarries to use the most humane methods possible and to be mindful of slips where access to the bird and its kill could be delayed. Like I said before it only takes one person to present something in a particular fashion and all falconry in this country could be a target for the anti-field sports lobby. You may well be asking yourselves why we are worrying about a report published 4 years ago well as you will see from the article by the Middle Way Group on shooting foxes the whole suffering issue had come to light again. So be warned, be careful and vigilant so that we can safe guard what we hold sacred our right to fly and hunt Bird Of Prey.

On a lighter note the last season has been a good one for most of us with good amounts of game in all regions by all accounts. My hawk Mac especially did well catching many rabbits and a duck or two. I did a lot of flying in Kent courtesy of a very gracious land owner Richard

Pemble and his side kick Lee Young (FB) who will pick up his new bird this year after spending two season hawking with me and Mac. I must thank Richard for allowing us exclusive hunting of the Rabbits on his land, everyone that went to Kent this year on mini meets thoroughly enjoyed it many thanks again Richard.

Martin Allen joined the club at the beginning of last season after buying a female Harris from the stables of Ray Mateer. Martin is an experienced falconer and formally a member of the disbanded Norfolk Falconers club approached us about starting up a Norfolk region to fill the void left by the folding of the NFC. So the Norfolk region of the BHA was born and we hope to see great things from this game rich region.

I came back from Derbyshire a few weeks ago and can now report that the game birds have arrived 30 Red Legged Partridge and 40 Pheasants to supplement the wild stock. It also looks like the Rabbits and especially the Hares have done well this breeding season so game numbers should be up all round but that does not mean that they will be easy to catch as we can

all see from the amount of game caught last year. Mary Lomas at Lydgate Farm is still doing the B and B for us at £20 per night and the hawking is still £15 a day. I also have the pleasure to report that while up at the farm Peter (Gamekeeper), Brian and I went to see another adjoining farmer to the end that we have now increased the land available to us to approximately 1000 acres. Please make use of this land it is exclusively for our use. Many thanks must go to Peter for all his hard work in Derbyshire this man does not stop he makes me tired just watching him run around, many thanks Peter but can you fatten them birds up a bit more so they don't fly as fast this year Cheers. Also, a big thank you to Mary Lomas for putting up with us all walking all over her land and for her hospitality whenever we visit. The Derbyshire hawking ground will be open from the 1st October so get booking.

Here is to a good safe season.

Jose L Souto
Chairman
British Hawking Association

Financial Report

Income

Subscriptions	£2,128.50
Merchandise	£4.50
Raffles	£203.00
Club meals	£73.00

Total Income £2,409.00

Expenditure

Stationery, copying	£392.59
Postage	£116.67
Raffle prizes	£185.00
Club meals (AGM)	£35.00
Hawk Board	£490.00
Insurance	£345.50
CA, NGO subs	£82.80
Falconers Fair Tent	£305.00
Build Hawk Boxes (Lydgate)	£375.56
Game birds and feed	£222.00
Others	£214.97

Total Expenditure £2,765.09

Regional Reports - Herts

Hello to all members of the B.H.A. I am Mike Warren and I am the latest person to be asked if I would help Ray with the running of the Hertford region. I was flattered to be asked, as I see herts as the biggest region of the club. But to my horror I find that the membership of this region has plummeted, but the people that we have at the moment are all active falconers and not exotic bird keepers

The process to become regional officer is long and the committee has to say yes which I do not understand as the person asking was Ray. Other than that at the moment I am flying a female Harris Hawk of seven years and I work a German shorthaired pointer.

This last season has not seen as many flying accidents and losses through illness as previous seasons, however I have just heard that Paul Harris's female Harris Hawk Heidi has died during breeding. Details are scant at this time, but our sympathies go to Paul for his loss.

Ray has ventured into the world of the Gos, a nice female German, a beautiful bird to watch fly just a little bit painful on the face, Paul Wetton ventured back into the world of the Gos with a very steady male.

John Topham received a very skinny Hungarian Vizsla back from the trainers, the weight was soon going on the dog and the points where being held as it was being taken out with experienced dogs and learning quickly.

I had two trips to Derbyshire this season went up and down in the same day, which was not that much of a problem. The keeper up there is Peter who is a friendly person and knows the land very well. The pheasants are jet powered and the rabbits are large and very quick. The dogs worked well and showed Peter the potential of the land.

The problem with Derbyshire is the booking of the days as I see it the person wanting to book the day and is being asked to sign the pieces of paper is not allowed to book the day or phone Peter and find out if the day is available, so what is the point of making it so difficult as Peter is quite happy to check his diary for the day and then the paper work is then sorted with the club secretary. If the person who is signing the paper work is not going to be trusted to book the day does this mean that the committee does not trust the people who go up and fly on the land? This is all I will say on the matter as it is now becoming boring.

There was a late field meet that Richard Bates was good enough to organise on a shoot near Weston Park great piece of land, shame it was such a windy day.

The two Harris were flown in the morning and the long wings got a go in the afternoon.

The meeting place for Herts region has been moved from the Dolphin. Well we did not have much choice as they knocked it down and built flats on it, so we have moved to the Shamrock Club in Welwyn Garden City and the night of the meeting has changed as well to **the last Thursday of the month.**

The full address is below: -

THE SHAMROCK CLUB
THE RIDGEWAY
WELWYN GARDEN CITY
AL7 2AD

Hope your birds are fat and the moult is no longer than you really want.

**Mike Warren /Ray Mateer
Regional Officers
Hertfordshire BHA**

P.S. would like to congratulate Paul Harris on the mother of all vet bills!!

Regional Reports - Norfolk

A big hello to you all from the recently formed Norfolk region. As we are still very much in our infancy there is very little to report other than we currently have four members with two more filling in applications as I type and a few still hesitant (but what do I gain from a club?) fence sitters just requiring a little nudge. Hopefully by the time this goes to press we may be up to double figures.

Our first social meeting is scheduled for Friday 10th Sept. and the **second Friday of the month** thereafter to be held at the Norfolk Dumpling Public House, Norwich 7.30 pm., and is open to all club members.

Although we have no plans as yet to hold field meets in the region I am sure once the new season gets underway we will be meeting up in the field. It would also be nice to arrange a trip to Derbyshire if only to stop the local pheasant population getting too complacent. (Just remind me, what was last seasons' record bag?).

We will also be having a stand at next years Norfolk game fair. Well I think that's about it from Norfolk.

Martin Allen
Regional Officer
Norfolk BHA.

Regional Reports - Notts/Derby

Dear members, just a short report about the happenings last season, Notts Derby area. Unfortunately due to my astronomical workload I only attended three meets.

The first meet we were accompanied by the Shooting Times Editor. The weather was not so good, misty with low cloud and snow. One of those days - although, we did manage a few slips on a rabbit and a pheasant I may add that my own red tail took the longest slip.

The second meet only two people attended! Yet again a windy miserable day bolted a lot of rabbits though, too quick for damp birds (well that's my excuse) but still an enjoyable day.

The third meet was a perfect day. I was ferret man that day we had some good bolts, two Harris's taking some good slips, and filling the hawking bag.

As the members probably know we have our own gamekeeper who puts a hell of a lot of effort in for us. With how he runs it we should never run out of quarry. In the past I have flown land that has been over hawked it gets very frustrating trying to find a rabbit, anyway with how Peter runs in the snow I am sure we will not have that problem.

To finish I hope you have good hunting in the forthcoming season. Keep up the high standards, and a big thank you to Peter (gamekeeper)

Douglas Smith
Regional Officer
Notts/Derby BHA

Regional Reports - Sussex

Membership

The membership has continued to climb slowly, the latest being Ian Broderick, who will be flying a Spar this coming season. Ian has done most of his hawking in Africa having flown Ovambo Spars, Gabar Goshawks and a Wahlbergs Eagle. We have an active group of falconer's now who are flying both short/broad and longwings.

Hawking

The Ladies, Melinda and Yvonne, organised a trip to Lydgate Farm, and in doing so wiped the eyes of all the male members by taking the largest bag for the Derbyshire venue so far.

The season for some of us extended well into May hawking corvids and gulls and the odd pigeon. The hot weather finally put paid to the often very exciting flying with the falcons all too ready to go up on the soar.

The forth coming season is promising to be hectic with trips being planned to Derbyshire and several other venues and a full complement of Field Meets.

Track Down Champions

One aspect of flying longwings at corvids is the the increased likelihood that you will need your telemetry, and you had better be able to use it! As the weather has been so warm weight control has been difficult, resulting in hawks taking in large swathes of the beautiful Sussex Downs.

My tiercel on one occasion was out there somewhere for an hour and a half one afternoon, he came back of his own free will this time, just as well as we had lost the signal for long periods. It turned out that he had been flying

with the Para ascenders who frequent this venue and it seems they were enjoying his company as much as he was enjoying theirs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the region members who have turned out to recover misplaced hawks, it seems we have an unwritten motto here in Sussex "one out all out", and I can say that having friends out searching with you is a great confidence booster and so far has resulted in no (permanently) lost hawks.

Meetings

The Sussex Region Meetings are held on the **third Thursday of the month** at Three Bridges Cricket Club, where we have good facilities including a bar. All BHA members are welcome and please bring along any prospective members. The 2004 dates are;

July 15 th	Aug 19 th	Sept 16 th
Oct 21 st	Nov 18 th	Dec 16 th

The club is situated not far off the M23, between Crawley and Three Bridges on the south side of Three Bridges Road, look for the signpost. Meetings will start at 8:00 pm the club will be open from 7:30 pm.

For further information ring Brian Morris on 01273 728969 or 07771 993645.

Three Bridges Cricket Club,
Three Bridges Road,
Crawley,
West Sussex.
RH10 1JR.

Brian Morris
Regional Officer
Sussex BHA

Regional Report - Thames Valley

We started afresh on the 8th September 2003 with a social evening where we discussed numerous proposals for future evenings and events. So on the 10th November we all tried out our skill in "Imping" and particularly with "Feathers, Glue, Scalpels" etc.

We missed December "Party Time" too late to book something so on 12th January we held a "Furniture Making Session", and the general opinion was that it would have to be repeated as I feel the TV group should run it's own.

We got Hamas to give us a talk on his trips to the USA, Texas in particular, trapping Harris's and Redtails U.S. style. The evening was very informative and the talk was supported with videos.

In the same theme on March the 8th we had Paul Beecroft on stage to share with us some of his case investigations and outcomes again another aspect that can affect our sport.

And so to our first Field meet this year, which was on Saturday the 4th April, at Bear Park under the guidance of Clive Hill. Unfortunately my hawk sustained an injury 10 days before so was still "under the vet". We all enjoyed Lunch etc. and the flying except Paul B. who Harris decided to visit he nether regions of Oxfordshire!!!

On the 1st of May, several members of the BHA attended rededication services for former falconers GW Lascelles at Lyndhurst, and EB Michell at Wyke Champflower.

We are planning a visit to the Hawk Conservancy in September (2004), and hopefully three more Field Meets in the run up to Christmas. So although we are few in number, I anticipate that we will derive a deal of benefit from the coming months.

Clive Palmer Happy Hunting
Regional Officer
Thames Valley BHA



Mary Lomas with grandson Oliver on a Field Meet 2004

Photo (Yvonne Taylor)

FIELD MEETS PLANNED for 2005/2006

2 x Inter-region meets at Lydgate
1 x BHA + Central Falconry Club at Lydgate
Ladies FM at Lydgate in mid October
One day at Ruckley, early season
3 days at Ruckley, Feb 2006
1 day at Paddock Wood & Hammerwood
1 day in Herts Region
Rook hawking (longwings) with spectators
Potentially 2 days at Mallam

Falconry Electronics Ltd

The birth of a company.

When Mike Warren asked me to write an article for the BHA about telemetry I agreed wholeheartedly. It was only after I put the phone down I thought what have I let myself in for and what aspect can I write about that hasn't been covered before? Well I suppose the best place to start is at the beginning with how Falconry Electronics came to be. (Somebody has glazed over already, keep reading it gets better I promise)!

I, along with several other falconers were stood talking after we had finished exercising the falcons to the kite, (theirs not mine) when the subject of telemetry raised its head like it often does. One guy said, "if only we could still get hold of the original Marshall receiver" It was at this point that the light bulb came on inside my head. I spent the next few hours looking for clues as to where these receivers came from. I soon discovered that Marshall did not manufacture this unit at all but bought them in from another company, a company who has over thirty years experience in manufacturing tracking equipment. Three months later after countless hours of negotiations, I managed to secure sole agent status for the UK. (Anyone nodding off yet)!

That was a little over four years ago. Falconry Electronics has continued to grow steadily and now I have my good friend Roy who is a brilliant electronics engineer working along side me; Roy takes care of all electronic research and development. We are very pleased with his latest project, the Sterling range of transmitters. These transmitters have taken a little over four years to design and develop into the high power unit we have today. Roy also looks after the ever-growing repair side of the business too. This means we are probably the only company who can offer a most makes telemetry repair and re calibration service.

We have new on going developments both in our transmitter range and also in the shape of a

new short telescopic Yagi antenna. We hope to launch both at the Falconry Fair in May. Fingers crossed.

Well that is how Falconry Electronics came to be. I suppose we need to talk a little about the subject now in the shape of a few do's and don'ts and things to consider when buying telemetry.

First of all I must stress that I am not in the habit of rubbishing other makes, after all we get to repair most of them! And at the end of the day they all recover birds to some degree or another. What I will say is, with telemetry you definitely get what you pay for.

When people are looking to buy telemetry they don't always ask the right questions. For example, very few people ask about company returns policy. If there is a problem what is the procedure? Does the faulty item have to be returned to the manufacturer in the USA? We have all heard stories about goods being returned to the US & taking months to come back, sometimes with the result of losing a whole flying season as a result. Will the goods be exchanged or do they have to be repaired? We operate an exchange scheme within the first twelve months on our receivers, for the remaining four years of the warranty we will, only in extreme cases return them to the US. Luckily 99% of the units returned so far have had flat batteries! So buy a battery tester, one that will put the batteries under load so you get an accurate reading. Applies to transmitter batteries too, or better still change them regularly.

Avoid – Any yagi antenna that when unfolded looks way too small for the frequency it is claimed to be. These antenna sizes are specifically calculated to collect the design frequency and anything under size will severely restrict performance.

Avoid – Leaving batteries in receivers for extended periods when not in use. Batteries have been known to leak, and they do the result is corrosion to internal parts and in severe circumstances render the unit beyond economical repair.

Always - test transmitters at least once a week from a distance of 100 metres. If the coax linking the receiver to the Yagi is faulty, it will sound fine when you are sat next to it but over a distance the signal will be vastly reduced and may even disappear. This is because the radio signal from the transmitter will bypass the faulty coax and go directly into the receiver. Same applies to transmitter antennas too, especially if it has a wound coil incorporated.

Avoid – running transmitter batteries right to the end of their useful life. If your transmitter has a working life of say ten days, run it for three or four and then change them. Throw them away to avoid mixing them up with good stock. If you lost your bird with only two days worth of life left in the batteries you will obviously only have those two days in which to find it. Remember also that a transmitter is like a torch, when the batteries start to fail the light goes dim, the same applies to the transmitted signal so these last two days will also be on reduced power.

Always – Use quality brand name batteries and remember to test them (yes new batteries have been known to be faulty) we have just recently sent a customer of ours three new Sterling transmitters. He rang us & said he was not very happy at all, the transmitter we sent him to replace his faulty one did not work either, even with the brand new batteries he had just bought from his local shop (you know where we are going with this don't you?) need less to say it caught me out too & also cost me a fair bit in postage costs.

Avoid – Importing your own telemetry. “You would say that wouldn't you” I hear you all say. Yes I would, don't get caught with the sucker punch. Yes you have done a great deal & it is only a matter of time before your telemetry is delivered. A knock on the door is answered to

the deliveryman, who is now demanding about a hundred pounds to cover the VAT & import duties, and he won't hand it over until you pay up. Yes you may still save a little after all this but is it worth it? Reflect on what I said earlier about sending goods back to the USA. The savings soon pale into insignificance when you have to send the thing back for repair. Not to mention down time. Its not too bad sending to them, the sting comes when they send it back to you. You may even have to prove to customs that you have genuinely returned it for repair because they delight in trying to sting you for the tax again. It has happened to me & the stress is not worth it, believe me.

Most important of all – Practise! Practise! Practise! I will never forget the day when a guy rang me and said, “I have lost my bird, how do I use it”? Practise, as obvious as it seems can make the difference between finding your bird quickly and loosing it for good. Practise in woodland, in built up areas, in-between building and a mix of all three. Practise in bad weather and even after dark. All these scenarios can affect the transmitted signal. Get someone to hide the transmitter somewhere so you can go and find it. Organise a club event, it is quite good fun actually. Some people are quite inventive when it comes to hiding transmitters.

Consider - Investing in a mag-mount antenna for your car - especially if your passion is for longwings. Falcons can soon be out of sight and range. So the ability to jump in the car, connect the omni directional antenna and give chase is a must and a real time saver because you don't have to keep stopping and getting out of the car to scan for the signal. You can drive around in ever increasing circles until you get one, then it is just a case of jumping out of the car, re connecting the yagi antenna and getting a fix on the direction.

Always – use a back up transmitter, especially on falcons. These things fail; to say otherwise would be an outright lie. After all you would never buy any other micro electronic goods and never expect them to fail would you?

Always – Have your equipment checked over, at least every two to three years. Get it checked during the summer, not with everyone else, three weeks before the season starts!

Well I hope I have written a small but informative guide. If only one person recovers a bird as a result then it has been worthwhile. Don't forget we can advise on most aspects regarding telemetry; even if you are thinking of buying second hand equipment give us a call without obligation. We hopefully can steer you in the right direction.

I will leave you with these words of wisdom from our web site:

www.falconryelectronics.co.uk.

NOTE:

Signal range depends on the environment, equipment capabilities and user expertise. The transmitters power output and the receiver's sensitivity to incoming signals are major factors in determining range. Yagi antennas amplify and direct the incoming signal to the receiver. Blanking circuitry within helps reduce unwanted noise and improves signal reception under poor conditions. Any make of transmitter under adverse conditions will have a dramatically reduced range and under perfect conditions i.e. line of sight, perform as per manufacturers claims.

Eddie Allum

Falconry Electronics Ltd

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We harness the best manufacturers of radio electronics in the world today to bring you what we believe to be the best telemetry systems available, both in quality and price.

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Greetland
Halifax

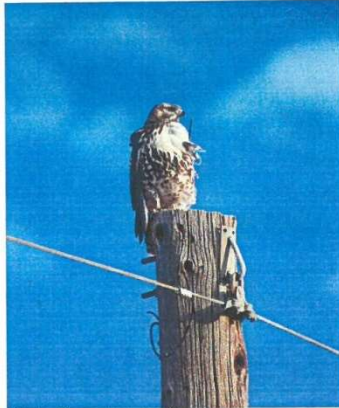
W. Yorkshire, HX4 8HX
Telephone / Fax 01422 376127
email falcoelectro@aol.com

Quality at a fair price



WALKING THE RED ROAD: DISCOVERING THE RED-TAILED HAWK

By Bertriz Candil Garcia



(Photo: George Robertson).

Red Tails have always been seen as special birds of prey. They hold a special meaning for native-american people, not only as a totem in many tribes but also being considered a bringer of *luck*. There are numerous accounts in native-american folklore of Red-tailed Hawks flying in circles related to mystical experiences. The Red-tailed Hawk is important among the Apache nation and Zuni Pueblo Indians as well as others, using red-tail feathers for healing ceremonies and for bringing rain and water necessary for life. *Redtails symbolise leadership, deliberation, foresight, truth, courage and success or triumph particularly at overcoming difficulties*. It is believed that red-tails can teach us to fly at great heights while still keeping our feet on the ground and help to discover our purpose in life.

A typical American image of a Red-tailed Hawk.

Biology

Red-tailed Hawks are birds of prey of great beauty and strength. The Red-tailed Hawk or *Buteo jamaicensis* (Gmelin 1788) is a *buteo*, classified as a broadwing and does make honour to its title of "windmaster". There are really very few things that one can find more beautiful or relaxing than the flight of a Red-tailed Hawk. A native of North America, where it is one of the most common birds of prey, it can be seen quite often perched near highways or soaring in the sky with its distinct shape and colors. These *buteos* are usually medium to large sized birds of prey (depending on geographical distribution), Western red-tails tending to be smaller in size (females averaging 1500g in fat weight) darker coloured (presenting rufous colouring and barring on flanks and belly as well as near shoulders) and with longer wings than the Eastern variety; these differences are also seen in falconry regarding the different nature and hunting style/flight of the various subspecies as some do differ greatly.

Red-tails can see up to 8-15 times better than humans, having some of the best eyesight amongst raptors, and the actual colour of the eyes (from grey to light yellow during the first year, then gradually turning from yellow to chestnut or dark brown (usually at 4 years of age), as well as the colour of the cere (greenish-yellow in juveniles) and the tail itself can all help us determine the age of a Red-tail as well as its overall health. Juvenile and adult plumage is quite similar amongst subspecies, although generally, juveniles tend to have shorter and broader wings and longer tails (for tail in juvenile plumage, see photo). Juveniles also tend to be more heavily marked in the abdominal region and show the 2 toned upperwings. Males and females of a same subspecies are also quite similar (although females tend to be larger in size and more heavily marked than males, also giving the appearance of a more robust bird) and cannot be sexed just according to size, weight and plumage; there is a lot of overlapping between the sexes.

A beautiful albino Red-tailed Hawk.
Albinism in its various forms is very common
in red-tailed hawks.



(Photo: Charlie Kaiser).

The Buteo jamaicensis has been classified into 14 subspecies which are of general recognition and which I have included in my book (there is a whole chapter on Red-tail subspecies and similar buteos). Amongst these, the most commonly known are: the Eastern Red-tail or B.j. borealis (eastern USA except Florida where it is replaced by the B.j. umbrinus); B.j. harlani (this was for some time considered as a separate species and not subspecies, the "Buteo harlani" or "Harlan's Hawk") in its darkest form, the darkest of all red-tails; B.j. kriderii or Krider's Hawk, one of the palest red-tails without being albino (can be mainly found in the great plains of USA); B.j. calurus or "Western Redtail", now this is the typical red-tail we are mostly accustomed to seeing and is being mostly bred and flown in Europe (Western USA) and the B.j. fuertesi or "Fuertes" Redtailed Hawk, appearing like a light colored version similar to the eastern subspecies but with less markings in the abdominal area and darker head. This last subspecies is also the red-tail with the largest wingspan amongst Red-tailed Hawks. Finally, one must not forget in Jamaica, the B.j. jamaicensis which initially gave its name to the species.



Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis, quite a dark Red-tailed Hawk and in appearance more similar to a Harris Hawk

(Photo: Bertriz Candil Garcia).

A friend of mine living and working in Puerto Rico, master falconer Juan Manuel Iglesias, who is also currently undertaking the publishing of his studies carried out on red-tails in Puerto Rico for the last 15 years, told me about a possible "new" subspecies of Red-tails, the smallest of all, the *Buteo jamaicensis portoricensis*, males weighing about 550g and females weighing about 750g, feeding almost exclusively on reptiles, rats and small birds.

The future of falconry with the Red-Tail Hawk

The Red-tailed Hawk has not been a traditional falconry bird throughout the history of falconry but nevertheless it has been flown since the earliest days of falconry in North America, and not only has become quite popular, but really is a part of the history of falconry itself in the United States. I think that it is impossible to think about American falconry and not think of the great Red-tailed Hawk. Initially a beginners bird for many, being the first choice amongst birds of prey for entering into the world of falconry, providing in most cases, experiences which have been unforgettable; *The Red-tailed Hawk has proven to be an extraordinary bird for the practice of falconry, both for novices and expert master falconers.*

In Europe, just as it happened with the Harris Hawk, it has been undervalued by those few who decide to fly it for their first time. The majority of these first-timers do not understand what its training requires and therefore do not fly it at its highest potential (Red-tails like other birds, for example Harris Hawks, are directly proportional to the falconer's experience and expertise and so a novice may have great adventures with his first red-tail but in the hands of a master falconer, a red-tail can really be extraordinary).

The Red-tail has undeservedly earned a "bad" reputation by these inexperienced people and both in the US and UK, where it is mostly flown, it is seen in many occasions just as a beginners bird (*although many well known falconers with years of experience, like Gary Brewer, Manny Carrasco or Jim Gwiazdzinsky, choose to fly a Red-tail*): those who fly red-tails as their first falconry bird are sometimes too eager to "move on" to a different bird so they are not identified as "beginners" and this *means not really making the most of their red-tail* I myself began with a common buzzard, and although it isn't the best bird in falconry, it certainly can hunt (yes, to the disbelief of some) and is great for gaining experience, having a noble and easy-going manner, making it ideal for many beginners. Red-tails are *buteos* but really do not have too much in common with these, especially some of the Eastern subspecies, which really can remind us more of a goshawk than anything else, and really they should be given a fair chance and not be overlooked.

Advantages and disadvantages

Red-tails, if properly bred (*never hand-reared*) and trained can really be our best hunting companion and a bird like no other. They do have great speed and strength (again, we are talking about red-tails in optimum conditions not weekenders), noble manners with the falconer (once fully trained), are extremely aggressive with quarry and greedy with their food (this ultimately can be used as a great advantage to us when training them).

Health-wise, we must as with all birds, make sure that we are buying the bird from a reputable breeder and that it is healthy (*not only apparently but also regarding its diet as if it has been fed exclusively on day old chicks which is not the best idea for any raptor, this will influence its overall state and feathers which will be quite likely to break off*). The best diet for a red-tail is mainly composed of mammals (their main food source in the wild) such as mice, rabbit, rat, pigeon, quail, and day old chicks plus vitamin supplements as needed. Red-tails seem to be very tough birds and their feathers can amazingly withstand many "accidents", this being really important as with red-tails, as most happen to think that nothing can get in between them and their prey, so they will go through every obstacle possible seeming as if these simply do not exist. One of the surprises with the Red-tailed Hawks is that if throughout the year, they have been flown everyday and are in excellent shape, they will not have lost at all muscle mass after the moult and will soon be ready for action. Also, red-tails like many other falconry birds, do

fly better with time and with a higher weight (regarding weight, we should always try to fly them at the highest weight possible, no point in having a weak bird for hunting!)

A last thing to consider is that they are also easily available and do breed with great success in captivity, and as mentioned earlier, they can fly almost on any land (can practice “normal” hawking with them or introduce them to soar hawking) and therefore the possibilities for hunting and quarry are enormous: rabbits, hare, squirrels (where permitted), ducks, geese, pigeon, pheasant, quail....etc.



A stunning dive that could only be performed by a Red-tailed Hawk on the chase, “Bird” Jim Gwiazdzinsky’s red-tail from Rhode Island, going after a squirrel. Squirrelhawking has in recent years become a very popular practice amongst falconers in the USA.

(Photo: Geoff Dennis).

The only disadvantage I can think of when flying a Red-tail is that they may take longer to train and may require more patience than other birds, such as Harris Hawks (plus during the first few days, I have to say, they are one of the most aggressive birds I have ever seen), but as I always say, where’s the rush? I really think that will all birds it is always better to take one’s time and do things right than to rush through things just because we want to get out on the field with our friends and our bird. Also, some red-tails may work better with just one or two people (I have myself tested this here at our falconry courses) but can be flown without problems by others, although we should get them used to these people from the beginning (specially when hunting), and always be present (the owner of the bird) when the red-tail is being flown by someone else, as sometimes, they will look to the person they most know when in doubt or will refuse to cooperate with someone they don’t know and trust.

All of these reasons really add up to *the Red-tailed Hawk really being a bird of the future for hawking*, not essentially the best bird, as I really do not want to compare it to others being so different, but it is a very good option for the future and definitely a bird that will make heads turn. Hopefully, we shall see more Red-tails soon in the world of falconry.

Hawking on Wheels

Robert P.C. van Dipten

In every disadvantage lurks an advantage. These words came from the famous Dutch football player Johan Cruyff. Often ridiculed because of his incomprehensible philosophies after match tactical examinations. Still, this one is spot on as I came to realise in the last two years.

Life was good to us. Nina was working as professional falconer with a fixed contract, pest-control on landfill sites keeping them free of gulls and crows. Ten years ago she made this career move from self-employed graphical designer stuck in an office to an outdoor loner working with animals. No boss, bank or nasty clients rule her actions. Just the simple presence of the birds she has to fight dictate what her working day looks like. When it's cold or a storm is approaching the pressure is on, once the young birds have left their parents and the weather is fine she can relax. Helping her are our 3 Harris Hawks, 1 RedTail, 2 Sakers and 2 dogs. The birds take shifts; during the quieter periods 1 falcon and 1 hawk accompany her but when the pressure is on an extra hawk or falcon is needed. One needs to understand the enemy, predict the weather and still make a wrong decision as supply of waste can cause a feeding frenzy. Today Dutch landfill sites are very modern. Rolling green hills (older landfill sites) with grazing sheep and Galloway cows, hardly any smell, modern equipment and a wide diversity of wildlife.

We just moved home from Holland to Belgium into a very large country house that needed some interior finishing with ample land for our birds and gardening. The restrictions Dutch falconers have to endure made us move over the border. In Belgium hunting laws for falconers are so much more relaxed. Dutch laws restrict us to hunting only with Goshawk and Peregrine and a numerous clauses of no more than 121 hunting permits. Now we are a small country but we do have more active falconers than that. Without such a permit it is forbidden to even keep a Goshawk. Belgians are a special species. They appreciate life and savour the gifts that make it even better. We became members of the Flanders Valkerij Academie. Nina being a fulltime professional falconer and myself performing weekend falconry displays we also became member of the professional falconers guild lead by Hugo Clerens. The government has acknowledged falconry as a profession and now there is also a falconry course with exams.

Again, life was good to us. I was running my company stuck in an office. We, my employees and I, followed Nina's daily adventures outdoors. More so as the worldwide recession closed in and business became less and troublesome. If there was one thing I wanted most, it was doing what Nina was doing. Work outdoors with the birds and the elements. Move about outside instead of the stressful office live. I registered my pest-control and display company, *Birds@Work*. Then that Sunday night I got out of bed, naked, put on a glove, went over to my Boobook owl that had flown off it's perch, put it back and stepped on a wooden floorboard cover on the first floor. I woke up in hospital with no recollection of what had happened soon to learn I had broken my spine. I was now paralysed from the waist down.

During my rehabilitation process my main concern was how to continue doing what I loved most - falconry. Could I ever fly my birds again? How do I handle, feed and train them, and go cross-country through mud, grass and sand in a wheelchair. Now that's where Johan Cruyff's philosophy comes into focus, "in every disadvantage lurks an advantage". I needed a kick in the butt to change my life and what a kick it was.

How to go about it? Shop around for a wheelchair with all-terrain tyres and a contraption to support a bird, as I need both hands moving the wheelchair. A customised van, redesign the mews to waist level. Adjust my lure technique. Train the birds do respond to a sitting falconer.

Field sports can be enjoyed despite a wheelchair. In December we went rabbit hunting; me, my new male HH and 2 ferrets. The weather was fine, cold and sunny. Instead of the expected rabbits, hare jumped everywhere. Now my male HH is a nice fellow, he watched the many hare pass with great interest. I must tell you, never seen so many hare running about in one day but not one single rabbit.



Rob with his RedTail (Photo: Robert P.C. van Dipten)

Since the others didn't have the right birds with them either we gave up the hunt early that afternoon and went for beers in the local pub. Simple problem, simple solution, we would return in January with bigger birds! And so we did. No ferrets, no dogs, just big birds. I took my 1450 gr. RedTail, Bert Deckx his RedTail, Hugo Clerens was there and 2 more falconers with female Harris Hawks. The pictures you see are made during the meet on the Castle in Retie where we hunt. Good thing

we brought 3 bottles of Jagermeister, some malt whisky and cigars. Again it was a crispy sunny day. We worked up a sweat but will you believe it, we spotted neither hare nor rabbit. I wonder what has happened during the Christmas holidays.

Now, 2 months later, my website www.valkenieren.nl (active since December 2003) has already generated a lot of display contracts. The hawks respond as if nothing has changed, helping me to overcome my doubts about the career move. One major problem remains - how to fly my falcons. I started training a new female Saker and we have some serious chemistry going on. She is ready to be flown on the lure but how do I go about this in my wheelchair. I know about the flexible fishing rod type with the lure attached but I have not yet figured out how to solve the problem of being fixed on the spot in a wheelchair. Still, I'm convinced that it is possible to fly falcons from a wheelchair. By analysing how it has been done for centuries and for what reason I might have to redevelop a technique that works for the both of us. Thus, just like an American movie, I shall produce Hawking on Wheels part two later!

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What have you got to lose except your bird

Welfare Aspects of Shooting Foxes

WHY DID THIS STUDY HAVE TO BE DONE?

By Andy Poole

Consultant to the Middle Way Group

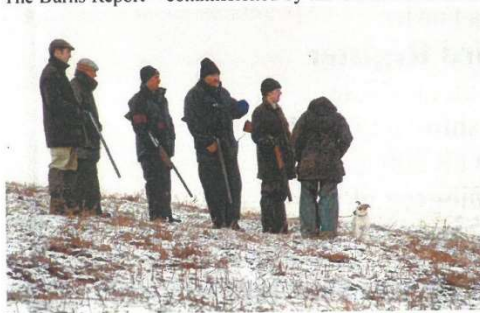


(Photo:)

The Middle Way group was formed in 1998 by a cross-party group of MPs interested in resolving the hunting issue. In light of strong, scientific evidence, the group argues that regulation and licensing of hunting will lead to an improvement in animal welfare while an outright ban would actually lead to increased suffering. As an alternative to a banning bill concentrating on just four species, therefore, the group has proposed an amendment to the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act that would give *all* wild mammals protection from *all* undue suffering in *all* circumstances. The workable Middle Way Group proposals are supported by the major countryside and land-use organisations, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the House of Lords.

To properly make judgements on the suffering of wild mammals involved in hunting with dogs, other methods of control must also be taken into account. Levels of suffering must be assessed and compared to the alternatives – shooting, snaring and trapping – for which the Government has no plans for legislation. Very little is known about suffering levels involved in these activities and much of the information being used at present is opinion, rather than scientific evidence.

The Burns Report – commissioned by the Government to investigate the consequences of a possible ban on hunting with dogs – acknowledged this shortfall of information and called for further scientific studies to be undertaken. It appears, however, that many MPs and some Government Ministers do not share this view and are willing to pass a law prohibiting or severely restricting hunting on the basis of the severely limited information available, most of which is not scientific. In line with the Burns Report suggestions, and in the absence of any such evidence being sought by DEFRA or any other body, the Middle Way Group commissioned a scientific study into the main alternative to hunting with dogs – i.e. shooting with shotguns and rifles – so that the debate surrounding these activities could progress on a properly informed basis.



The Gun pack (Photo:)

Until this point, the debate had failed to properly assess, in animal welfare terms, the alternative methods of fox control which would inevitably fill the vacuum in the event of a ban.

Some individuals and groups opposed to hunting have actually claimed that shooting produces low wounding rates. It is important to understand, however, that these claims are based entirely on an extremely dubious survey stating that '*incidents of foxes taken to wildlife hospitals with wounds from shooting were very low*'.

This survey is misleading for several reasons:

- Members of the public do not generally walk in areas where fox shooting takes place.
- A wounded fox is likely to seek a quiet place away from humans.
- It is very difficult to catch a wounded fox unless the injuries are extreme.
- Many people would be unwilling to take a fox to a wildlife hospital that may be many miles away.
- **Usually, only part of the fox was X-rayed in relation to its primary injuries – in other words, the hospitals did not examine the foxes by way of a full body X-ray for old shooting injuries!**

Figures of low wounding rates have therefore been based on a survey of *partial examinations* of foxes using a *tiny and non-random sample* selection – i.e. only those taken to wildlife hospitals. **This is NOT good, scientific evidence!**

In reality, shooting is legally undertaken with a variety of different weapons, ammunition, distances and skills. Regardless of the obvious limitations of the wildlife hospital survey, the argument that shooting is significantly more humane than the use of dogs is still frequently used, but mainly on the basis of opinion rather than actual evidence. This is the position taken in the main by anti-hunting organisations. In doing so, these organisations fail to take into account the wide variety of weapons used, the competence of the shooters, the varied types of terrain and the costs involved. The impression of a quick and efficient 'clean kill', with no element of enjoyment, is one that is very strong in the minds of the public and some politicians and it is frequently used as an argument against hunting with dogs. Shooting currently encompasses a wide variety of guns, ammunition types, marksmanship skills and field conditions, some of which may lead to an instant kill and others of which may lead to a high degree of wounding and suffering. Add to this scenario an increase in inexperienced amateur shooters and opportunistic shooting following any restriction on hunting with dogs, and the need for information on wounding rates is even more relevant. Such amateurs are likely to use shotguns because a shotgun certificate is easier to obtain than the firearm certificate required for a rifle.

Checking shot patterns on skins (Photo:)



Despite the observations above, the Middle Way Group study is *not* an attack on shooting. It is a properly conducted scientific study which looks, for the first time, at the possible wounding rates of a range of different shooting regimes. It *is* an attack, however, on the presumption that '*all hunting is bad and all shooting is good*'. If new evidence shows that certain types of ammunition should not be used on foxes then the shooting world should welcome this information. For instance, the Middle Way Group study has shown that under common field conditions, for every fox shot dead with a shotgun, at least the same number of foxes are wounded and many are never found. On the other side of the coin, however, it has been shown that rifles above .22 calibre and in best practice scenario are capable of better animal welfare performance than most shotgun scenarios beyond about 25 yards, but are limited in their usefulness owing to practical and safety issues. The shooting study also examined miss-rates, relative welfare and shooter attitudes – including the use of dogs – for a number of different shooting regimes.

The wounding results described in the Middle Way Group study were not a measure of suffering directly, but they did allow suffering to be assessed more accurately. The study, therefore, has an educational aspect. If undue suffering is shown in certain types of shooting, the shooting world would hopefully embrace these concerns in a code of conduct. This willingness to improve animal welfare and to adapt to new scientific evidence would be good for shooting and would be in line with the Middle Way Group's proposed changes in the law protecting wild mammals. These proposals have now taken the form of a Bill to amend the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act – presented simultaneously this parliamentary session by Lord Donoghue in the House of Lords and Lembit Öpik MP in the House of Commons.



The reality is that both shooting and hunting with dogs can be undertaken to an acceptable level and equally, through ignorance or simple bad practice, they can both be undertaken badly. At present, the fox-control activities of both practices are, to a reasonable degree, balanced. By removing or restricting either, this balance will be upset and the consequences cannot be shown to improve animal welfare. Instead, it is the unacceptable aspects of *all* activities that must be addressed, rather than a simple attack on one activity in its entirety.

(Photo:)

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DEFRA bows to rural lobbying

The Countryside Alliance has brought about a major policy climb-down from DEFRA on Open General Licences. DEFRA had, without properly consulting key shooting organisations, changed the Open General Licence procedure. This made the Open General Licence confusing and unclear and required shooters to demonstrate that non-lethal methods of pest control, such as scaring, were unsuccessful. Only then could they undertake lethal methods of control.

The Countryside Alliance, working closely with the National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO) and the Country Land and Business Group (CLA), lobbied DEFRA and asked them not only to clarify the law but also explain why they had not followed their own consultation code of conduct. DEFRA has now climbed down from its original position and tacitly admitted its error. Shooters must now have to satisfy themselves rather than demonstrate that non-lethal methods of control were ineffective.

Alliance Chief Executive Simon Hart commented: "DEFRA back-tracking on its position is an important victory for the Alliance, the NGO and the CLA. We have jointly lobbied hard on this issue seeking to clarify a requirement that would have had a serious negative impact on shooting. We knew we were right and stuck to our guns - this is the right result".

Small Ads

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TELEMETRY BATTERIES : Contact Member Representative Miguel Gomez at ml.gomez@btinternet.com for popular battery sizes (e.g. 1/3N, 399, 393) at competitive prices.

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Both parents can be seen. All colours, dogs and bitches, ready early May and will work next season. £400



## A good day for a field meet!

It was the last weekend of November 2004. A nice still morning and I am taking Carol, Adrian and John onto two small pieces of land. The 1st meet was 09.00am opposite the first piece of land and the phone rang. It was Carol - I've just got up and it's 07.30 and I have to pick up Adrian so we will be late. (just a note at this point - I know that Carol drives like a nutter!).

We pulled up just before 09.00am and within fifteen minutes we were all there and ready to go armed with dogs, ferrets, three Harris Hawks and a Redtail. It was a short walk to the first line of holes and the ferrets went to work. Soon the bunnies were running for their lives and the Redtail was hot on their little white tails.

Then it was the turn of a Harris, so we combed an area of long grass putting up bunnies and pheasants with the aid of the dogs. As we made our way down to the river that borders the lands end, the hunt is on for moorhens and duck. As we work the river, a moorhen got up and we swiftly followed to the far side of the river to retrieve a hawk and its victim - this means getting rather wet again!

After several more flights on moorhen and duck, we went back to the cars to move onto the next piece of land. The first flight there was for the Redtail, where the dog is pointing the holes into which we sent the ferrets. True to form, the bunnies come bolting out closely followed by the Redtail in hot pursuit. Close but not close enough.

We worked the fields and came to a pair of oak trees heading to Bunny Central with the dogs. Bunnies are flushed by the dogs producing good flights but no kills for the moment.

Bunny Central is one side of a disused railway track and there are many sets of holes where the game is fast and furious. The first set of holes and the ferrets are set to work. The holes erupt with bunnies and off goes the redtail which just missed one.

John's Harris was the first to strike a bunny through the barbed wire fence and it was in

the bag. We picked up the ferrets and moved to the next set of holes and more rabbits. The other two Harris' then had a turn but no successes. The Redtail was given a slip and this time the rabbit travelled about 10 yards before it acquired a Redtail shaped accessory that it didn't want! It was fun watching Adrian retrieve the bunny from the Redtail - as we wondered if Adrian would be the next RT victim. Whilst this was happening, another bunny ran straight past Adrian and the Redtail, on to run another day.

The flights continued and John thought he had another bunny as his bird closed in and the bunny just froze and watched the bird sail straight over its head. We moved on from Bunny Central and down to the river where there are holes on the river bank. From here we know that bolted bunnies run back up to Bunny Central! The flights here are long and straight.

Carol's bird had been getting closer and closer as the day had gone on. Finally a good sized bunny was hit after a straight tail chase, a spin and the ultimate head shot. The last part of the day saw me and John going after a group of ten moorhens running around on the far bank of the river. The birds spotted them and went in pursuit, with the dogs bounding across the river. John and I are getting wet again! The moorhens scattered and took cover while the hawks took vantage points in the trees. After attempts by both birds, Johns took a moorhen to add to his bag.

The day ended around 3.00pm, and we decided a warm pub would be a good idea for refreshments and drying out whilst reliving the days better moments. The bag for the day was two moorhens and three bunnies.

I hope that the people who came on the meet enjoyed themselves as I felt the day was a success, it being the first field meet that I had been on where everyone had gone home with something in the bag.

You never know, we may do it again next year!

Mike Warren



## Kites

1. The Falconer must respect the landowner or farmers' property, livestock and directions. It is essential that as Members of the BHA we conduct ourselves in an orderly manner, and not bring the Club or Falconry into disrepute or give either a bad name.
2. Foul (or obscene) language must not be used.
3. Appropriate game and quarry licenses must be in the Falconers POSSESSION, and must be shown if requested by the Field Master, gamekeeper or landowner. Failure to do so may result in removal from the field.
4. The Falconer is responsible for their Hawks welfare, and any other animals brought to the field. The falconer does so at their own risk.
5. All birds flown must be entered and hunting. Slot-less jesses must be used when flying a Hawk (or Falcon).
6. All birds flown MUST carry working telemetry which is checked prior to flying.
7. It is the Falconers responsibility to retrieve any "lost" hawk as soon as possible, and to notify all other parties of its absence and likely location.
8. Any Ferrets used MUST carry an electronic ferret locator. It is the owners' responsibility to retrieve the animal before leaving the field.
9. The Field Master will have the responsibility to determine:
  - a. slipping order of birds (drawn by lots if necessary)
  - b. whether any Falconer needs cautioning
  - c. whether any Falconer/person needs removing from the field
  - d. when flying commences and when it ends
10. Any bird slipped out of turn must be announced to the field as "BIRD AWAY". The remaining Falconers must hold their hawk until the loose hawk is recovered.
11. If a group of Falconers decides to fly Harris Hawks in a cast, it must be with the express agreement of ALL Falconers in that group, the Field Master and the host/gamekeeper.



12. All quarry must be dispatched as quickly and humanely as possible.
13. Dogs will only be permitted with the consent of the Field Master, the landowner/host and gamekeeper (if applicable). All dogs MUST be 100% safe with livestock.
14. Only BHA Members, Affiliated Club Members, Landowners and their guests may attend BHA organised Field Meets. Other guests by PRIOR CONSENT of the BHA Committee only.
15. Any person attending a Field Meet found not observing the above rules, or any specific directions for that event, will be asked to leave the field.
16. The Field Masters decision is final in all matters. An appeal may be made in writing to the BHA Committee in the event of any perceived dispute or unfairness.
17. In addition to BHA FM Rules, the host (landowner or his agent) may add further conditions to an event. The Field Master has the responsibility to implement those directions.
18. Written feedback from a Field Meet is welcomed in order that we may improve procedures and provide the facilities the BHA members would like to see. A pro-forma for this will be available at the end of every event, please ensure that you have one on the day you leave (if it is not the last day of the event).

The above guidelines have been formulated to facilitate the smooth and above all SAFE running of BHA Field Meets. They should enable all attendees to have an enjoyable day and a rewarding Falconry experience.

Jose Souto  
Chairman  
British Hawking Association

Ray Mateer  
Vice Chairman  
British Hawking Association



## Understanding The Huntill Bills' Terms – or 'what to tell your Vizla next seson'

### What is a MAMMAL under the Act?

In this Schedule "wild mammal" includes, in particular-

- (a) a wild mammal which has been bred or tamed for the purpose of being hunted or for any other purpose,
- (b) a wild mammal which is in captivity or confinement,
- (c) a wild mammal which has escaped or been released from captivity or confinement, and
- (d) any mammal which is living wild.

A reference to a person hunting a wild mammal with a dog includes, in particular, any case where-

- (a) a person engages or participates in the pursuit of a wild mammal, and
- (b) one or more dogs are employed in that pursuit (whether or not by him and whether or not under his control or direction).

For the purposes of this Schedule land belongs to a person if he-

- (a) owns an interest in it,
- (b) manages or controls it, or
- (c) occupies it.

(b) unrestricted hunting (within the meaning of paragraphs 55 to 60).

(3) Participation in a hare coursing event is not prohibited hunting.

### *Unlicensed regulated hunting*

(1) A person commits an offence if he engages or participates in regulated hunting which is not licensed.

(2) Regulated hunting is licensed if in the case of each dog employed in the hunting there is a person who-

- (a) holds a hunting licence, and

### Is it YOUR dog?

For the purposes of this Schedule a dog belongs to a person if he-

- (a) owns it,
- (b) is in charge of it, or
- (c) has control of it.

Note that if you have control of a dog – i.e. are holding it on someone's behalf while they deal with a hawk, their quarry or even a phone call, you will be responsible for the dogs actions. 21b) could be interpreted as there being more than two dogs, where one has come in from another source and is not under your control.

### What are the OFFENCES under the Act?

#### *Prohibited hunting*

. - (1) A person commits an offence if he engages or participates in prohibited hunting.

(2) Hunting a wild mammal with a dog is prohibited hunting if it is not-

- (a) regulated hunting (within the meaning of paragraph 21), or

(b) is in charge of the dog.

(3) But regulated hunting is not licensed if a person who is in charge of a dog employed in the hunting holds a hunting licence and-

- (a) the hunting falls outside the terms of the licence, or
- (b) the hunting involves a breach of a condition of the licence.

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3)(b) it is immaterial whether a breach of condition is caused by the action or inaction of-

- (a) the licence-holder,
- (b) the person charged with the offence, or
- (c) some other person.

(5) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this paragraph to prove that he reasonably believed that he was engaging or participating in licensed regulated hunting.

#### *Hare coursing 44.*

- (1) A person commits an offence if he-
- (a) acts as an official at a hare coursing event which is not licensed, or
  - (b) knowingly permits land which belongs to him (within the meaning of paragraph 63(e)) to be used for the purposes of a hare coursing event which is not licensed.

(2) The following persons commit an offence if a dog participates in a hare coursing event which is not licensed-

- (a) any person who enters the dog for the event,
- (b) any person who knowingly permits the dog to be entered, and
- (c) any person who controls or handles the dog in the course of or for the purposes of the event.

(3) A hare coursing event is licensed if a person who organises it holds a coursing licence.

(4) But a hare coursing event is not licensed if a Hunting rats, rabbits, the retrieval of hares that have been shot and flushing a wild mammal for falconry are all exempt if they take place on land with the permission of the landowner or occupier in possession (e.g. a farm tenant).

#### **What are the PENALTIES under the Act?**

If a person commits, or knowingly permits someone else to commit, one of the above offences, there is a maximum penalty fine of £5,000. Dogs and vehicles may also be forfeited. There is no penalty of imprisonment under this Act.

person who organises it holds a coursing licence and-

- (a) the event falls outside the terms of the licence, or
- (b) the event involves a breach of a condition of the licence.

(5) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (4)(b) it is immaterial whether a breach of condition is caused by the action or inaction of-

- (a) the licence-holder,
- (b) the person charged with the offence, or
- (c) some other person.

(6) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this paragraph in respect of a hare coursing event to prove that he reasonably believed that the event was licensed.

#### **What are the OFFENCES under the Act?**

Stalking and flushing out is not "hunting" if it is done on land with permission, if it does not involve "terrier work", if the quarry is shot dead as possible, if only two dogs under close control are used solely for the pursuit, and if the purpose is to protect livestock or its food, birds, crops, timber, fisheries, obtain meat for human or animal consumption or participation in game shooting. If police ask for evidence that these conditions obtain such evidence must be provided.

Further Information can be found at:

The full text of the Hunt Bill (2004) from which these definitions were obtained:

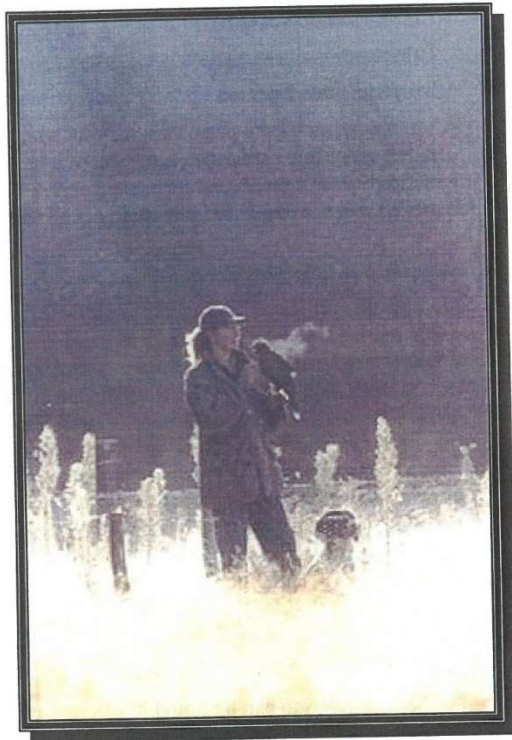
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200001/cmbills/002/2001002.htm>

DEFRA's web site is at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/>

Compiled by Y Taylor March 2005

# 2004 Photographic Competition Results

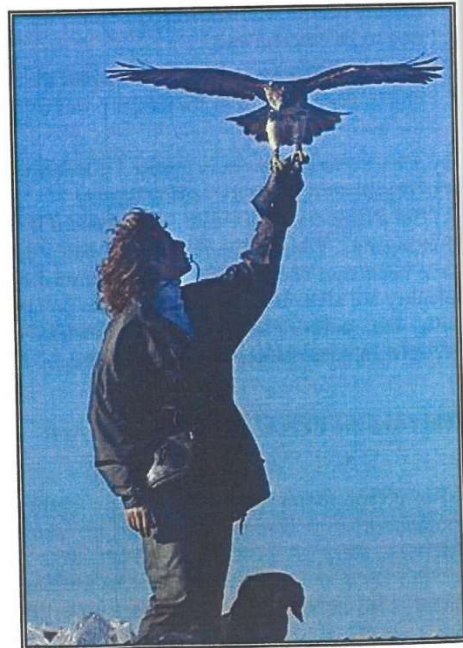


## **The WINNER!**

Rob van Dipten's winter shot of Nina ready for the hunt.

**Top Right** – Jamie McArthurs arial shot of Brian Morris's tri-bred Tiercel waiting on.

**Right** – Rob van Diptens' Valkenier about to Leave the fist.





# 2004 Photographic Competition Results



Runner Up - Martin Allen's Harris Hawk in Norfolk



Dinks (Harris Hawk) Looking for quarry



Third - Portrait of a Kestrel (is this yours?)

# Red Kite Chicks on the Web

By  
Cathy Rose, Chilterns Conservation Board

Many people visit the Chiltern Hills in south east England to marvel at the re-introduced population of red kites. The Chilterns Conservation Board's 'Red Kites in the Chilterns' project offers opportunities for the public to take part in guided walks and illustrated talks to find out more about these magnificent birds of prey. As part of this project, last spring, visitors to the Blooms Garden Centre near Stokenchurch were given the chance of getting 'up close and personal' with a local pair of breeding red kites using the technology of CCTV. The initiative will be repeated this season, but this time you won't even need to leave home for the experience!

If the birds co-operate, Nest Watch 2004 will be bigger and better than last year, as we're planning to put live images of the nest onto the internet. As last year, you will also be able to see live images on a monitor at the garden centre, which is now under new management and called Charwood Garden Centre.

The CCTV camera has been re-erected, and there is evidence that the birds have been re-building the nest that they have used for the last two years. If everything continues to go to plan, we expect eggs to be laid in early April and chicks to hatch about a month later. The chicks will stay in the nest until mid-July and will be completely independent by August.

To enjoy the Nest Watch experience, either visit the Charwood Garden Centre coffee shop (on the A40 near Stokenchurch) or log on to: [www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/red\\_kites.html](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/red_kites.html)  
Live images of the nest should be available from late April to late July. Call Red Kite Officer, Cathy Rose on 01844 271 306 for an update on progress or for more information on red kite events in the Chilterns. We are grateful to Advanced Diagnostics for generously donating the batteries to power the CCTV.

## Nest Watch 2003 Update

The three chicks from last year's Nest Watch touched the hearts of many local people, and we're happy to report that all are alive and well and living near Stokenchurch. Monitoring two of the juveniles has been fairly straightforward as along with their colour coded wing tags (yellow and red, indicating Chilterns and 2003) they were both also fitted with radio tracking devices.



**Tagged Red Kite** (Photo: Gerry Whitlow)

The biggest of the three chicks (number 67) has been the most adventurous. Within weeks of fledging, she was radio-tracked to Fawley, near Henley on Thames, then in early September to East Ilsley, near Newbury, some 30 miles from the nest, where she stayed for about two weeks, before returning to the area that she hatched in.

The middle chick (number 65) headed off towards Aylesbury for a few days, but soon returned to the Stokenchurch area where she has remained ever since.

Checking on the third, smaller chick (nicknamed 'Little Weed' by garden centre visitors) hasn't been so easy as he was too small to be fitted with a radio tracker.

He can only be identified by his wing tags which are yellow and red and bear the number 66, but he has been spotted no far from the nest as recently as January 2004.

If you spot any of them on a visit to the Chilterns, please let us know!



## HARRIS HAWKING IN CENTRAL MEXICO

Miguel Alejandro Bejarano Díaz

In Mexico, the Harris Hawk is the most popular Raptor used in falconry because of its versatility and abundance in the wild. Other Raptors used, but to a lesser extent, are Peregrine Falcons, Prairie Falcons, Aplomado Falcons, Bat falcons, Merlin's, Cooper hawks and Goshawks.

For over fifteen years, I have flown and hunted Harris Hawks in many different types of habitats and they have shown again and again to be successful and adaptable where ever you fly and hunt them. My experiences have been mainly with one passage bird, one intermewed bird and two haggards. The haggards were released into the wild at the end of 1 or 2 hawking season.

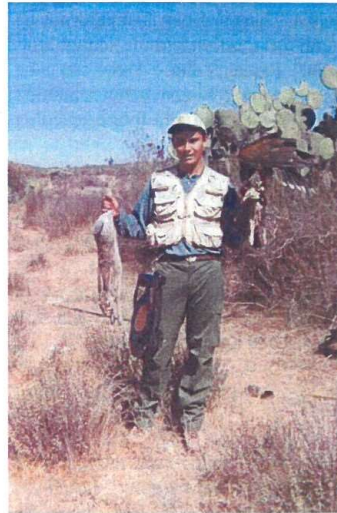
### Trapping Harris Hawks

When trapping Harris Hawks we use the classical Balchatri. This is a cylindrical shaped trap made from small gage wire, covered in small fishing line nooses. On the under side of the trap there is a small door to allow us to place the bait inside. For Harris Hawks we use Chickens or Rats. The trap is then placed in an area where we know there are wild HARRISES or we drop it near where we can see some. Once the trap is set we move to a safe distance and keep watch. The movement of the bait in the Balchatri will attract the Hawks and they will try to take it catching there toes and feet in the nooses. The Bait is never hurt because the wire is too small for the Hawks feet to get through. This form of trapping is I consider the best way to trap wild Harris Hawks. Once caught, we then make in and untangle the freshly caught Hawk from the trap.

### When to trap Harris Hawks

Over the years we have seen a lot of differences in the hawks we have trapped at different times of year and have built up a theory about this. Hawks that were trapped during September, October and early November behave very different to other Hawks trapped during February. HARRISES that were trapped in the early part of the year (September, October and early November) are still very dependent on their parents because of this their flights can be very irregular and cumbersome. The reason being the birds are still very immature in their hunting style. At this early stage in their life they would still be learning and taking only small prey. When we tried to fly these Hawks at large quarry (White and Black Jack rabbits *Lepus californicus*) they tend to shy away. However, their training and manning is easier than older birds. The Hawks trapped in February are very different because their hunting style is better and usually they have had a good amount of hunting experience in the wild. These later taken Hawks I believe are ideal for falconry.

### Training two haggards



Miguel with Tayra, haggard Female Harris

(Photo: Miguel Alejandro Bejarano Díaz)

Over the years I have had the opportunity of handling and hunting two haggard Harris Hawks with good success at game. The first was a male, about 4 years old more less, this Hawk was very shy with me but with lots of manning and good handling, he soon settled down and shows a peculiar style of hunting. Being a later taken Hawk and an adult he was a little more head strong than a younger Hawk. He captured many Bush Rabbits (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) and small birds; this male was release at the end of the hunting season in semi desert zone (good Harris Hawk habitat) around in the Durango state.

The second haggard was a female. This females training and manning was very different from the male because she show a real stubbornness and craftiness towards me. It took me a while to break this barrier of incorporation, the results were incredible because she bonded well with me, her style of hunting was very spectacular. She caught many Bush Rabbits, Forest Rabbits (*Sylvilagus cunicularius*), Black Tailed Jack Rabbits (*Lepus californicus*) and some Quail. This female hunted with me for two years, she flew at 950 gm (around 2lb). I entered her in the First hawking sky trail in Mexico in 2000. This was held in San Luis Potosi state many austringers arrived from all over Mexico with mainly Harris Hawk. She won in two events during these trails. The first was for her persistence and focus on game and the second was for her hunting instinct. This haggard was release that year. Both



these haggards came to me from the wild in very bad conditions. The male had a damaged tarsus and the female had broken feathers and both were very low in weight. These Harris were trained and hunted from trees without problem. In Mexico, we have to fly them like this because in arid ecosystems it is very common that plants such as magueys, cactus, nopales, and huizaches are very tall and the scrub below is sometimes very dense so this makes it easier for the Hawks to spot game.

Certainly, I believe that the haggard Harris should not be considered under any condition inferior to the sought after and more easily trainable Passage, these Hawks can be harder to train but in the end make I believe better hunting Hawks and they represent the present and future breeding stock.

At the moment, I am flying a female Passage Harris Hawk trapped in February. She is about 10 months. This Harris has had one season with me; she has caught a variety of game (Bush Rabbits, Quails and Black Tailed Jack Rabbits). I hunt her at weekends and keep her fit with vertical jumps in my house and I am now hunting her with the use of a T-perch. She flies anywhere between 930 gm (1 lb 15oz approx) and 1020 kg (2lb 3oz approx).

### **The quarry**

In Mexico the black and white tailed jack rabbits are a very powerful quarry more so than the Rabbits. Usually, I look for semi-desert areas where I can discover opportunities for good slips where quarry is abundant because large areas of Mexico are like this untouched and undeveloped.

The Black and White Tailed Jack Rabbits (*Lepus townsendii*) and the Bush Rabbits are species typical of arid zone of Mexico. The Bush Rabbits and Quails are very abundant, in the areas where bush, Nopaleras, Magueys, Cactus, etc grow. The Bush Rabbits live in holes and the flights at these Rabbits can be very short as they do not stray far from these holes. Bush and Forest Rabbits don't seem to have evasive maneuvers other than the occasional jinx or dodge. Jack Rabbits on the other hand find safety in their intelligence and speed and are much larger they are in fact not a Rabbit but a species of Hare.

### **Hunting with Harris Hawk in desert zones**

The Harris Hawks are gregarious species and will hunt cooperatively. We hunt our Hawks together as in our kind of terrain the Hawks have a better chance and it is amazing watching them work together. During the hunting season we hunt the abundance of quarry in these semi desert areas with my fellow austringers. In the morning very early we began to walk through the scrub looking for the quarry with our Harris Hawks. We usually use the T-perch, this is a long pole with a perch at the top, and it allows the hawks to sit high above you with a good view over the dense scrub. The hawks soon learn to return to

this perch if they miss. On other occasions the Hawks are flown from tree to tree, which is necessary for this type of terrain.

When a Jack Rabbit is seen the hawks began to chase and the typical jack flight ensues. The slip can go many different ways sometimes the Harris can fly straight in and grab the Jack Rabbit which will not move at this, but wait and then try to dodge the Hawk. Other times the Jack will try to get a safe distance from the hawk before it stops turns and tries to fight the incoming hawk. Sometimes the Jack is far enough away so that the hawk is not a threat it, it will probably try to intimidate the approaching hawk by sitting tall with ears erect. Facing the bird from this posture a Jack can spring up and kick the hawk in the air to fend it off. If the hawk can take all this then it will execute a wing-over and sometimes if successful it can overtake its quarry before the Jack shifts into high gear. Sometimes a tough hare will continue to face towards the hawk until the bird loses its momentum and lands while the Jack escape into the wind. The social hunting of Harris Hawks definitely adds another dimension to flying a cast or group make it much more interesting, safe and rewarding than flying the lone bird is my opinion.

At the moment, I am writing a book about the Harris Hawks, this book talk about biology, management and hunting in Mexico, but I have included a chapter where I have invited foreigner austringer who fly and hunt Harris Hawks in other countries to talk about them and how this incredible hawk has revolutionized falconry though out the world. Finally may I say that I think that the Harris Hawks maybe the most versatile and intelligent raptor flown in the modern falconry.

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### **Editors Note**

Black Jack Rabbits *Lepus californicus* and White tailed Rabbits (*Lepus townsendii*) are in fact a species of Hare the Black Jacks can weight up to 6 kg (12 lb) and the White Jacks can go 3 kg (6 kg).

Bush Rabbits(*Sylvilagus audubonii*) and Forest Rabbits(*Sylvilagus cunicularius*) are types of Cotton tailed Rabbits can weight between 1 to 1 ½ kg (2 to 3 lb).

We would just like to point out that although in Mexico and the USA raptors are trapped in the wild for the purposes of falconry, it is illegal to trap wild raptors in the UK.

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## The First Flight!

By Mick Hayes

Chatsworth Show is an amazing event and I first attended with my wife and Nan in 2002. We wandered round and observed all the 'country folk' with their fancy socks and garters and then sat in awe of the brass bands, the parachutists and the falconry display.

Husband: "I'd love to have one of those"

Wife: "Don't be so stupid!" (Yet another of his wild and wacky schemes!!)

Husband: "I'd look after it"

Wife: "Don't be so stupid!" (She does say other stuff but not too often to my ideas.)

One year on and we return to the show and again wander in amazement of country life. A golden eagle catches my eye. 7lb and she's only a baby. Incredible creatures. Photo's taken and we move on just in time to see the falconry again in the ring!

Husband: "I'd love to have one of those"

Wife: "Don't be so stupid!"

Husband: "I'd look after it"

Wife: "Don't be so stupid!"

Not so easily shrugged off this time! I'm on a mission (it's a secret one though. Can't tell the wife she'll thwart my plans!)

Husband: "Shall we go for a walk round the stalls darling?"

Wife: "That'd be nice dear." (I told you she said other stuff!)

Husband: "Look there!! What a surprise!! There's someone with birds of prey on his stall. I'm just going to ask him what they are."

(Enter stage left George Roach)

After a brief conversation (well quite a long one actually) I left with George's details and an arrangement to go to see him and learn a little more about falconry.

Husband: "This way I'll get it out of my system and learn all the reasons why it's not for me."

Wife: "....." (Deliberately left blank)

And so things began. The apprenticeship began and as my Jedi master instructed me in the way of the wing I learned and learned and after many books and many many hours assisting with George's birds the day came to get my own. A male Harris was decided upon and Jake was to be his name.



Mick with Jake (Photo: Mick Hayes)

Home came Jake and the process began of manning the bird. Things went really well and Jake was coming along nicely. He refused to eat for a week so tense times,

but then things again moved on and after a further seven days we went for a walk. With Becki by my side and Jake on my arm (or was it the other way round... I forget) we went to some land to fly him on the creance. Things were going really well. So well in fact that I decided this would be the day to try him free.

Off comes the creance... off comes the jesses... Becki takes Jake and I walk on...

My heart pounds, my breathing races; will I ever see him again???

I whistle and out goes my arm and faster than a speeding bullet Jake appears. Fantastic!! Three more free flights up to 50m in length and I decide not to push my luck. Today is a good day.

The feeling of taking a completely unmanned bird, training him at home and then flying him free is one that I shall never forget because not only was it Jake's first free flight, but it was mine. Yes I'd flown George's birds free, but this was different. This was my bird and we'd done it together.



## **An Interview with Angel Garcia Rojo**

Camera man and Editor for Dr Nick Fox's  
"Birds of Prey Management Series" of videos

Angel has been a practicing falconer for many years in Spain before coming to this country. Since he was a young man he has been helping a good number of remarkable falconers and great breeders in his country combining this with hunting with his goshawks which he loves. He worked during one summer at the Falcon Center (Germany) supervising the hawking sites and working on the training of falcons. He then worked at Cuatro Vientos airport (Madrid) as a falconer, one of the busiest airports in Madrid. Before coming to this country he also worked at the Madrid Zoo on their Bird of Prey display team flying a multitude of not only Raptors but other species of bird as well, making it one of the most amazing displays I have ever seen. Madrid set the standard that many zoo displays have followed in Spain including "Walvo" in Valladolid and "Selwo" in the Costa del Sol. In Spain he has flown Goshawks, Lanner Falcons, Kestrels and Chilean Blue Eagles.

### **1) Which work related with birds of prey you had enjoy the most and why?**

Definitely the work I enjoy the most was when I worked at the airport doing clearance. The reason being that this is the closest job you can get to falconry and you need quite a high level of responsibility, its a risky job even when it doesn't look like it, you are encharge of the welfare of the pilots and aircrafts as well as the welfare of the birds, its a great job in which you never stop learning.

### **2) What was it like working in the display team at Madrid Zoo?**

I worked closely with Jesus Ayala one of the best display falconers in Spain. His understanding of not only Raptors but other birds opened my eyes to the possibilities of training any bird for a display team. In a short time slot we would fly quite a few raptors including Griffon and Egyptian vultures, Condors, Chilean Blue Eagles, Bald Eagles, African Fish Eagles and several more, after these birds had done there bit we would then release 19 Ibis's 5 light pink colored ones and 14 white ones, Marabou, Storks and Japanese Cranes. All these birds would fly around the arena in a large flock just over the top of the crowd heads it is amazing to watch and a fitting finally to the display. Working with Jesus gave me good experience in working with large Raptors. I came to further understand their behavior and the proper way to handle such large birds.

### **3) How long have you worked with Dr Nick Fox?**

I have been at the "Avian Research Centre" with Dr Nick fox for 4 years. When I first arrived I worked on the bird husbandry side assisting with the cleaning, feeding and looking after the Falcons and Hawks. After a year of working with the birds I moved to work assisting on the production side of the "Faraway Film Company" which produces the "Bird of Prey Management Series". I have now been working on the production, editing and filming side for the last 3 years and do most of the film work myself.





**4) How many videos are there in the series and are there any more to come?**

At the moment there are 9 videos in the in the series they are:

- 1) Nutrition
- 2) Basic Training
- 3) Anatomy
- 4) Healthcare
- 5) Captive Breeding 1, 2, 3 and 4
- 6) Fitness Training.
- 7)

There is another video to come out which we are working on now it will be called "Getting Started". As the title suggests it is aimed at people who are thinking about taking up falconry and giving them an insight into what they must take into account before acquiring a bird.

**5) Which ones did you enjoy working on most?**

Fitness training was the most enjoyable for me, from a film making point of view because action sequences. These scenes were very challenging but all of them where enjoyable to do as they all have their own particularly interesting moments.

**6) What was the most difficult scene to film?**

I remember in Fitness Training we did use a mini camera for the lure sequence, the camera was fit on a hat on Nicks head and we try to show to the veiw that the actual falconer would see from his position whiles swinging the lure.

**7) Have you done any other film work apart from the "Bird of Prey Management Series"?**

Yes I worked on a film that Dr Nick Fox did with the "Middle Way Group" on "The Welfare Aspects of Shooting Foxes" which was shown at the House of Commons as part of the fight against the total banning of Fox Hunting.

**8) What do you enjoy most about film work?**

To be honest everything. As a falconer I love, as we all do to see Raptors fly and hunt, twisting and turning as the prey tries to evade them, seeing the speed at which they fly and watching the complete unexpected play out in front of you

**9) Do you fly any birds now?**

Because most of my time is taken up by filming, editing, translating and distribution of the videos into Spanish speaking countries I get very little time to train and fly my own birds. When I was in Spain I would hunt and fly my own bird every season

**10) What do you think about Falconry in the UK?**

I think that the falconry I have seen in the UK is of a very high standard. I also think you have easier access to hunting land than in Spain where the majority of land is held by shooting syndicates. The seasons for your game are also different allowing you a much longer season. In Spain all the animals we consider game have a shorter season including Rabbits. We haven't got as many pheasants as here but we got more partridges, the beauty of Spain is that if you catch a hare with your goshawk or a partridge with your falcon you can have a quick siesta in the field without be threaded by the rain.

**11) What sort of work would you like to do in the future?**

I would love to work on wildlife films branching out into film work not only with birds of prey but with all sorts of animals specially predators.

**Finally.....**

I would like to thank Dr Nick Fox and Barbro Fox for not only giving me the opportunity to work on the Production team but to also for being so good to me and not allowing me to miss my country as much as I should, I extremely enjoy what we are doing and think we make a great team.

**Angel Garcia-Rojo Galguera.**

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## **Review of the Year at Lydgate Farm**

Peter Bartorelli

I thought I would try and put a few words together about the last year in the hope that you might understand some of the highs and lows that I encounter over a period of twelve months. Due to the nature of some of the land in Derbyshire and the way it has to be farmed it can cause some major headaches for a gamekeeper and the weather can also a critical factor. This summer (2003) saw some of the hottest temperatures we have encountered for many a year. Although it turned out to be a great advantage in two ways. Firstly we had a good breeding season with the wild stock as the grey partridge brought up a brood of thirteen and finished with twelve chicks reaching maturity. The pheasants also did well having two broods, most of which survived providing a good head of birds for the season before releasing our bought poults. Water played a big part in holding the birds in the pre season days, the poults were less prone to wandering, but the hot weather did bring some headaches. I have had more trouble with the badgers this year than in any other year as they were continually at the pens after the water, causing significant damage to one of the pens. However I did manage to overcome that particular problem! Not so with the buzzards, which proved to be quite a nuisance sitting in the trees watching the poults in the pens below, so netting the top of the pens saved the day there. I was worried when the time came to release the birds as they are not street-wise to begin with. There were times when the young poults were in cover and very reluctant to come out to feed when the buzzards were around, but as far as I am aware, they did not kill a single poults. Even the sparrowhawk which usually causes me a lot of problems seemed to be confining itself to the pigeons.

As some of you are aware, I have not been on the best of form, and at the time of writing am still awaiting a date for my operation. I have endured quite a bit of pain this year and at times it has made me very low in spirit and hampered my duties. There have been a few problems with the landowners that I have had to overcome, but that's life and I must admit there have been some lighter moments too. Some great people have been helping me out, and to some of you lads at the BHA and other

friends I will be eternally grateful. I did however attend a few shows, met quite a few of the club members at the Falconry Fair – which was a first for me – but I must admit I did really enjoy it and also learnt a lot from the experience. The CLA game fair at Leeds proved to be a memorable occasion in the fact that I only had a few hours there, but it will go down in my personal history book as the event where I queued for England. I suppose the only consolation I had was that I did get in for free on a press ticket, but even then I missed out on the free champers!

August 2<sup>nd</sup> saw the building of the hawk boxes and a barbecue in the evening – food and booze being supplied by the lads of the BHA. A good night was had by all after a hard days work, and I spent an uncomfortable night in the front seat of my car. I was out on the fields as dawn broke in the hope of a date with Reynard I passed Jose who was fast on and totally oblivious to the dawn chorus but was making a pretty good attempt of sounding like a pig. The only quarry I came across was a tortoiseshell cat who outsmarted my every manoeuvre much to my disgust. Saturday August 9<sup>th</sup> saw me speeding up the motorway with the pheasants on board, where I was more than a little worried for the birds as the temperature was well into the eighties. Naturally I wanted to get them into the pens and settled down as soon as possible, the stress factor was the worry as the birds had been reared without entryl, but had been pre-dosed with vitamins. When I eventually left the birds they were quite settled, but I was a nervous wreck! No sleep that night, and back to the pens very early next morning. All the birds were in good shape much to my relief.

The end of the month saw me on the Countryside Alliance stand with George (Roach) at Chatsworth where we had a very busy day. He omitted to tell that I would be expected to parade in the main arena! We had some well known visitors to the stand, Clarrisa – who pinched my chair - and the Countryman both stayed chatting for half an hour. Weston Park was the next occasion when I saw some of you and was pleased to be introduced to Ray and Wendy Alier. It was the first opportunity I had to see the whole of their display, which I found very impressive. I also managed to speak with quite a few of my Gamekeeping colleagues.

October – Jose came up to do a little more work on the hawk boxes and we also had a walk round Lydgate. November saw the first real foray with the Sussex Regions arrival. Weather put a bit of a damper on the weekend as we had a mixture of rain and fog. Ray and Mike also came up for a day this month, and my thanks go to these lads for recharging my batteries as I was particularly low during that period. They may never understand the importance of what they did for me that day, and again my heartfelt thanks to you both. The lads who I felt most sorry for were from the Northumberland region, the weather was absolutely atrocious. We only had about two hours out hawking – sorry lads but I can't control the weather, although I do hope to see you again this season for some good sport.

One of the highlights of the season was a visit by Ian Valentine of the Shooting Times, and unfortunately the weather was again determinedly anti-social. We had a taste of everything Mother Nature could throw at us, fog, wind, drizzle and a little snow thrown in for good measure. How the hell Jamie was going to get some good photos was in the lap of the gods, although I was told that he did manage it. Flying was very restricted and the falcons just ended up having a bath. We did however have some sport ferreting, and one incident springs to mind where a rabbit bolted and was taken by one of the harris hawks. While the bird was being removed from the rabbit, another bolted and collided with the now dead rabbit and the hawk, when realising its mistake turned and nearly ran into Ray before making its escape! We all stood there stunned at the spectacle. Doug's redtail had the best slip of the day at a rabbit, out a good hundred yards followed by Doug who deserves second prize or his slip as he released his bird. He got up shaken, but not stirred, to witness the rabbit take shelter in one of the walls much to the amusement of the spectators. I hope Ian does not print some of the comments that were shouted. Later the dogs came on point at a large holly bush. Doug was sent in to flush the quarry but he jumped back shouting "it's a bloody fox fast asleep". I moved in and evicted Reynard with my stick with a few choice words about not having a gun with me, and Ian replied "nice note for the article Pete!".

Well, what can I say about the ladies field meet chaps – they put you all to shame. For the first time they have visited the weather for most of the weekend was perfect and both the girls and the birds were very keen. I will not rub it in with a blow by blow account as I am sure the girls have already achieved that!

I had a call from Ian Valentine in March and he asked if I would give him a couple of quotes for an article he was writing on buzzards. The article was in the Friday April 2<sup>nd</sup> publication. I enquired about the original article he came up to Derbyshire to write, and he told me that it would not be published for a while as there is a lot to put in Shooting Times at the moment. Hopefully we will not have to wait too long to see it. [Due out December 18<sup>th</sup> edition – Ed.]

**Come and see for yourself!**



## ~~~LIVING AMONG BIRDS OF PREY IN PERU~~~

Jose Luis Dibos

The challenge of a group of falconers to keep alive one of the world's most fascinating relationships between humans and animals and their huge efforts with conservation of wildlife for their future generations.

It could be surprising for someone to discover reading and knowing about falconry in a country like Peru, which most of the people could relate it to political and social issues or to the Andes mountains, the Inca's Empire and its most famous archaeological site Macchu Picchu.



**Adult Male Cassini**  
(photo: )

Peru is the second world's most bird bio diverse country holding the most fascinating bird of prey species for falconry and hawking. Even though there are no statistics, I estimate as more than 30 the number of people that are currently practicing falconry and hawking in Peru, most of them in Lima.

Falconry in Peru is being practice with two peregrine falcon subspecies; the *F. p. cassini*, native from South America and the *F. p. tundrius*, that migrates and visit us from North America during the summer.

Peruvian geography restricts in some way the practice of falconry but it is not a limitation to see high quality falconry. In the coast, where most of the falconers live and fly their birds, it is hard to find fields with appropriate hunting conditions. The Andes offers nice prairies but the altitude is an important barrier to consider for the falconer and the bird as well. The rainforest is not the most adequate place for falconry.



**Tyrane hawk-eagle** (photo: )

Hawking has more followers basically because of the variety of quarry and the ease of reaching hunting spots. Hawking is totally orientated to feather quarry that in my opinion is more fascinating

The wide range of quarry species allows us to attempt and enjoy each flight that turns to be an acrobatic challenge for the bird.

The birds usually trained for hawking are the Harris hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*), Aplomac falcon (*Falco femoralis*) and the Bicoloured hawk (*Accipiter bicolor*). Eventually there are some falconers that fly some buzzards, kestrel and sporadically a Bat falcon (*Falco rufifigulari*) can be used in falconry. Other species that I believe have an interesting potential for hawking here in Peru are the Hawk eagles, like the Ornate hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus ornatus*) and the

Tyrane hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus tyranus*), and some hawk species like the Tiny hawk (*Accipiter supersiliuosus*). A very particular case is one Orange-breasted falcon (*Falco deiroleucus*) that is currently being flown by my friend Oscar Beingolea. It is still being trained and we all are very excited about its potential. It is still a total mystery but see flying this precious falcon is a delight for any falconer.

Here in Peru there are basically three ways of getting a bird for falconry:

- trapping from the wild (regulated activity and restricted to any common falconer),
- buying for the illegal market (unfortunately occurs)
- and since a few years ago the Breeding Centre “El Huayco” which is making huge efforts and having significant results.

“El Huayco”, privately owned by Jose Antonio Otero, has currently near two hundred birds of prey of 28 different species. It has successfully bred nine species: Cassini peregrine, Aplomado falcon, Bat falcon, American kestrel, Andean Condor, Bicoloured hawk, Tiny hawk, Ornate hawk-eagle and King vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*).

For this 2,004 breeding season “El Huayco” expects even better achievements. There are eight more Aplomado falcon pairs, in addition to the eight older pairs that laid last year, that will hopefully start laying in the second semester. The two Bicoloured hawk pairs will hopefully repeat the three clutches each of them had last season.

The raising of Tiny hawks is a hard task and some improvements are going to be done based on the last two-year experiences. There are two young Ornate hawk-eagle pairs that are showing signs of breeding, adding to the older pair that successfully raised a chick in 2002. A large number of Cassini peregrine chicks are expected as well, and two Bat falcon pairs which normally produce several chicks.

One of the most exciting challenges of “El Huayco” will be the breeding of Orange-breasted falcons, for me the most amazing and beautiful falcon I have ever seen. There are currently five females in “El Huayco” waiting for males that hopefully could arrive soon to start the program. “El Huayco” is constantly improving its management, nutrition and husbandry procedures, which, in addition to the knowledge and experiences of the last years will contribute to achieving even better results. One of the programs that El Huayco hopes to develop in the short-run is the implementation of Artificial Insemination that will allow the Centre



to maximize production of young birds and optimise the genetic stock to achieve a better selection. Maybe even develop a Hybridisation Program of species used for falconry and hawking.

In parallel to what “El Huayco” is developing, some colleagues and I have recently founded the Peruvian Birds of Prey Conservation Association (APCAP) to promote wildlife conservation in Peru, participate actively in wildlife legislation initiatives, develop environmental education programs, promote birds of prey investigation, rehabilitate injured and recovered birds from the ecological police, and promote the organized and responsible practice of falconry in Peru.

In the meantime I will continue enjoying my bi-coloured hawk (above) and probably a cassini peregrine soon.



## Wild Kites - To Feed or Not To Feed?

Cathy Rose,  
Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer,  
Chilterns Conservation Board

Should we feed red kites? Certainly, a red kite swooping down and snatching its food is breathtaking, and it's not surprising that people leave food out for the birds to encourage this behaviour. The question is whether feeding kites is necessary or helpful to the birds. There are two main arguments against feeding. Firstly, providing extra food may increase red kite densities and may slow down the rate at which they spread to new areas. Secondly, some non-natural food sources may be bad for the birds' health.



**Red Kite Feeding on carrion** (Photo: Gerry Whitlow)

The size and distribution of the red kite population is determined amongst other things, by food availability. There is no shortage of natural food for the kites in the Chilterns, particularly in the form of road kill. Left alone, the kite population will find a healthy balance based on the food available, spreading out to new areas as food becomes limiting. The range of the kite population in the Chilterns is spreading

slowly, but the birds are still confined to a relatively small area. By feeding the kites, we are providing more food in this core area than the birds would find naturally, and we may be contributing to the slower-than-expected rate of spread that is currently being observed.

In the wild, red kites scavenge on the bodies of dead animals. They feed on all parts of the carcass,

including flesh, fat, bone, skin and the internal organs. In particular, calcium from bones and vitamin D from skin are essential for healthy bone development in red kite chicks. If red kites don't get a balanced diet, and are fed on processed foods, such as sausages, cooked meat, or lean meat with little bone or skin, they can end up with serious dietary deficiencies, including metabolic bone disease that can be fatal. In the last two years, three red kites are known to have suffered from this problem, and a birds in the wild with bone deformities will often die, undetected, at an early age, this may be a problem that is far more widespread than previously realised.

The following guidelines, issued by the Chilterns Conservation Board and English Nature, are aimed at reducing the potential for further problems:

- a) Consider carefully whether to feed the red kites in the first place. Kites are able to range over wide areas in order to locate natural food sources.
- b) Do not use processed meats which have potentially harmful additives, e.g. salt and limit the feeding of butcher's offcuts which may be excessively fatty with little or no digestible skin or bone.
- c) Whole or chopped animal carcasses are suitable for feeding red kites. Road kills may be used, provided that sensible hygiene precautions are taken. If you do decide to feed, only put out small amounts and do not feed every day.
- d) Be aware that the food you provide can attract crows, gulls or rats which may be unpopular with neighbours.

For more information, please contact:

Cathy Rose, Red Kites Officer, Chilterns  
Conservation Board, 01844 271 306,  
[crose@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:crose@chilternsaonb.org)



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## Falconry in Spain

By Carlos Bernabéu González

Let me introduce myself first. I am Carlos Bernabéu González, 32 years old and the current president of AECCA (Asociación española de cetrería y conservación de rapaces – Spanish Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey). AECCA is the only falconry association at a national level in Spain. It was founded in 2002 after the merging of the two larger national associations, therefore carrying with it a historical background of more than 25 years.

During the current year, AECCA has doubled the number of members placing itself amongst some of the largest falconry associations in the world. AECCA currently works in diverse fields emphasising the various aspects of falconry through its publications, the legal aspects, regulations in the different autonomous communities, or the conservation of threatened birds of prey through projects with international collaboration.

I am professionally involved in environmental management, through the development of study and management projects of wildlife and environmental education for various public administrations. I have worked professionally with birds of prey since I was 17 years old, in some of the largest breeding centres in the world. I have also directed wildlife rehabilitation centres with an educational approach. My falconry preference is to hunt anywhere suitable with sparrowhawks, and to fly at corvids with falcons.

### MEDITERRANEAN BIRDS OF PREY.

Male bahari of typical color and medium size.  
(Photo: Carlos Bernabéu)



From the point of view of biodiversity, the Iberian peninsula holds great interest. It is a natural bridge between the European continental fauna and that of the African continent, possessing a great variety of species. In addition to vast and unpopulated areas, which provide rich and varied natural habitats in a good state of

conservation, its geographic location transforms it into an important stop-over point in migratory routes, resulting in gatherings of great densities of birds of prey such as the peregrine falcon. This abundance and variety of birds of prey used in falconry has influenced the long historical tradition regarding this aspect of hunting in Spain, which is greatly ingrained in the culture of this country. Regrettably, this tradition was interrupted with the renaissance only to regain an extraordinary force in present day.

### Falcons

In Spain, we have a great diversity of peregrine lines, which today, according to an official census, (possibly still of a conservational nature) there over 3000 nesting pairs, in addition to an extremely important wintering population of individuals, difficult to quantify. This important migration of falcons, together with a variety of climates and habitats of the peninsula, conditions a great genetic hybridisation where the theoretical barriers regarding subspecies are diluted, appearing as a result a diversity of sizes and colours. The genetic health of these peregrines is apparent even in the morphological varieties that can often be seen in juveniles of a same nest in the wild.

The appearance of Spanish peregrines does not always go hand in hand with the typical concept of the southern *Falco peregrinus brookei*. Up in the coasts of the North of Spain we can find larger individuals, with longer wings and lighter plumage. Intermediate forms are common in the area of the central plateaus. There are no clear barriers and the variation is gradual, appearing as exceptions to the rule. This little brookei is named bahari, a term of Arabic origins which accompanied the introduction of falconry in Spain and which has survived until the present day. This variety of peregrine appears as an intermediate form between the European varieties of the *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* europeas and the smaller and more rufous forms of the *Falco pelegrinoides* from the North of Africa, which appears in Spain also in the Canary Islands.

Regarding the typical brookei, domestic production is quite large in Spain and without doubt, it is the favourite falcon of the Spanish falconer. This falcon presents a small size, males weighing about 450g-500 g (flying weight) and females with an average of 750g to 850g. They are very agile birds in flight, more acrobatic than other larger sized peregrine races, specially the tiercells.

There are also differences relative to the psychological and physical development of these raptors if we compare them with those peregrines of the nominal peregrinus subspecies more typical of the British Isles. Brookei peregrines are early learners. When hacking techniques are employed (controlled hacking is a usual practice between Spanish falconers) to individuals of these



peregrine varieties, we shall be able to verify how, while the nature of these little Mediterranean falcons stabilises itself rapidly and shows a premature interest for hunting, the more northern chicks maintain a more infantile behaviour and are occupied with play during a longer period of time. Regarding those brookei individuals that have been bred through hacking, the high flights and serious attacks on quarry take place around two to four weeks before those of the larger peregrines (peregrinus or pealei). This maturity can also be appreciated when looking at sexual behaviour and reproduction. It is common for bahari peregrines to start producing acceptable semen of good quality after their first moult.

Concerning matters of handling, these little falcons have a fast metabolism, are very alert and tremendously aggressive, even being able to kill prey of large sizes. Those tiercels who kill "azulones" (mallards) on a regular basis are not hard to find in Spain, although with time they do tend to suffer injuries.

There are some practical inconveniences of using these smaller sized males, stooping at red-legged partridge for example. Those baharis, who do not reach 500g in flying weight, will be insufficient in size for striking and binding in an efficient manner to these hardy and strong gallinaceous birds, being the contrary to flying at mallards, as these usually fly very close to the ground making it difficult to carry out stunning strikes. This is not the case, however, with those peregrines of a more northern variety, which fly in ranges between 600 to 650 g, presenting a perfect size for this type of hunt. For this reason, even though these bahari tiercels show great beauty and agility in their flights, and their amazing stoops, most Spanish falconers finally choose small females of this variety or big tiercels of the northern European varieties for the typical flight to red-legged partridge; one of the most common falconry slips to feathered quarry in Spain today. Bahari peregrines are also extraordinary flying together in a cast at magpies, a flight of great tradition in the central area of Spain, which provides for exciting daily slips followed up with frantic racing for those of us who choose this particular quarry.

### Goshawks

Goshawks and Sparrowhawks are birds of prey that also present a great morphological variety in Spain. My experience with Iberian Goshawks can be narrowed down to the rehabilitation of a large number of these, having flown them for many years through a female which was transferred to me by the administration. The difference with those northern goshawks is notorious in aspects such as size or perhaps also their nature. If we compare them to German Goshawks, of great popularity in Spanish falconry, the latter have a flying weight of 200g to 300g more, adding an additional 100 to 200g in the case of

northern birds such as Norwegian or Finnish. This bird itself has a repercussion regarding its use for hunting hares, typical prey for Spanish hawking. Iberian goshawks fly too tight, flying on their limit, sometimes lacking weight in order to dominate the small but combatant Iberian hare. However, these are very agile birds in their flights to feathered quarry, where they show their efficiency. The nature of Mediterranean goshawks can be more unfriendly and difficult than that of the German specimens and without doubt that of the Norwegian or Finnish goshawks. They show a much more aggravated response of fear before situations or objects that are not usual to them, this aspect however being possible to overcome through good handling.

A male Iberian goshawk can be an excellent bird for partridge, as can be seen from its use for horseback hunting in Spain during the XVI century. The flight to corvids or at ducks and waterfowl is also a very good option today. These males can catch rabbits, but their size does not make it appropriate for them. Regrettably, even though it is a very abundant species and enjoys a good conservation status, the absurd administrative restrictions do not hardly award grants of these birds for domestic breeding. For this reason, their availability for falconry purposes is very scarce.

Possibly the bird of prey that captures most partridges in the wild in Spain, could be the Booted Eagle, expert performing beautiful breathtaking stoops towards the ground or near it.



**Booted Eagle**

(Photo: Javier Martín)

This migratory raptor of great beauty, very abundant in central Spain during the warmer months of the year, has not really been used in falconry, perhaps in part due to the almost non-existent stock of reproducing pairs in the hands of today's falconers and its style of flight more typical of long-wings with its stoops, which differs greatly from the traditional birds of prey such as short and broad wings used for hawking in Spain

# Recognition of Game Part I : Birds

Jose L Souto

There are over 13 different species of game bird in the UK. Here are a few of those the better-known ones and some of the not so well known: -

**Quail** (*Coturnix Coturnix*) *Open Season: Available all year Weight: 175g*



A small game bird the combination of its stocky body and long, pointed wings makes it quite distinctive. It has a brown back, streaked and barred with buff, while its breast is a warm orange.

Quail live on open grassland and cereal fields where they eat seeds and insects. They live solitary lives coming together only to breed and migrate though Southern Europe. It is illegal to hunt wild Quail in Britain due to its declining numbers but sub-specie, farm-bred birds close to the wild variety are available.

**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) *Open Season: 1 Sept- 20 Feb Weight: 1.25kg*



There are at least 13 different wild species of Duck and Goose that are shot in the UK, the most common of these is the Mallard. They live on a variety of water ways, lakes and ponds eating seeds, acorns and berries, plants, insects and shellfish.

The male has a dark green head, yellow bill, has a purple-brown breast and grey body. The female is brown with an orange bill. Other common species include the smaller Widgeon (*Anas Penelope*) and Teal (*Anas Crecca*)

**Red Grouse** (*Lagopus Lagopus*) *Open Season: 12 Aug- 10 Dec Weight: 750g*



The Red Grouse is considered as the only truly wild game bird found in the UK. The opening of grouse shooting season in the UK is 12th August, referred as the "Glorious Twelfth". The Red Grouse is a species unique to the British Isles found in the uplands of the country, particularly the north of England, Scotland and the northern part of Ireland.. The Red Grouse is largely dependent upon heather for its diet and their chicks eat large amounts of insects present on Moorland in the summer months. Males "Cocks" are a reddish, brown colour and have two scarlet combs which are particularly prominent during the springtime courtship. The female, is duller and does not have combs.



**Ptarmigan** (*Lagopus Mutus*) Open Season: 12 Aug- 10 Dec Weight: 550g



The ptarmigan is a Grouse that lives among the highest mountains of Scotland, in this Arctic like landscape, it has fantastic camouflage. During the summer, its feathers are a mixture of a grey, brown and black, with white breast and wings, which allows it to blend in with the rock faces. In winter it becomes totally white except for its tail and eye-patch, which remain black on the females and cocks have red eye brows.

**Snipe** (*Gallinago Gallinago*) Open Season: 12 Aug- 31 Jan Weight: 150g



Snipe are a relative of the Woodcock, who live in boggy marshes of wetland areas. They eat small invertebrates, including worms and insect larvae. They are, apart from Woodcock, the only game birds that can be cooked whole, removing the gizzard and trussing it with its own beak. Both sexes look the same apart from the male being slightly larger.

**Woodcock** (*Scolopax Rusticola*) Open Season: 1 Oct- 31 Jan Weight: 350g



The Woodcock is a large bulky wading bird with short legs and a very long straight tapering bill. It is largely nocturnal. Woodcock like to feed on earthworms and surface insects. As with the Snipe they can be cooked whole, removing the gizzard and trussing it with its own beak. The male and female are almost identical.

**Woodpigeon** (*Columba Palumbus*) Open Season: All Year Round Weight: 600g



The Woodpigeon is not considered a game bird but more of a pest, therefore they are in season all year round. The Woodpigeon is the UK's largest and most common Pigeon, it is grey with a patch of white on its neck and wings, making it clearly visible in flight, and a rosy colored breast. Farmers are constantly at war with the woodpigeon as crops, such as cabbages, sprouts, peas and grain, are a staple part of its diet



**Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*) *Open Season: 1 Oct- 1 Feb* *Weight: 1.500kg*



Pheasants are not, as many of us think, a native of the British Isles but were introduced into this country by the Romans who even left detailed accounts of rearing methods and cooking recipes. Many cross breeds have been released by shooting estates to produce larger, higher flying and faster birds, but the main subspecies are Ring Necks and Michigan Blues. Pheasants live around woodland and open farmland eating all kinds of vegetable matter and insect life.

Males, called "Cocks", have rich chestnut, golden-brown and black markings on body and tail, with a dark green head and red face wattling. Females are smaller and mottled pale brown and black.

**Grey Partridge** (*Perdix perdix*) *Open Season: 1 Sept- 1 Feb* *Weight: 400g*



The Grey Partridge is a native to the UK. Its numbers are in decline due to changes in farming methods and the wide use of pesticides as insects are very important in the diet of its chicks. In recent years they have made a slow come back in some areas because of the popularity in organic farming. They like large areas of open, agricultural land and live in large groups during winter months called "Coveys". It is hard to differentiate between males "Cocks" and females "Hens". Both have an orange/red head and a red/brown heart in the middle of a grey breast but the males are very slightly larger.

**Red-Legged Partridge** (*AlectorisRufa*) *Open Season: 1 Sept- 1Feb* *Weight: 500g*



The French or more commonly known as the Red-Legged Partridge is not a native to the British Isles, but originate from the semi arid regions of the Mediterranean. Red legs mainly feed on vegetable matter. They do well in agricultural areas and like the Grey Partridge are found in Coveys. About 7-8 years ago American Red Legs (Chukka Chukka) were crossed with our European Red Legs introduced to produce larger birds but these hybrids were found to be very aggressive towards native Grays and were banned. Males (Cocks) and Females (Hens) are hard to differentiate both are grey with white throat and black and brown flecks, red legs and beaks, but the males have small spurs and are slightly larger.

***Black Grouse*** (*Lyrurus Tetrix*) Open Season: 20 Aug- 10 Dec Weight: 1.500kg



The black grouse also known as Blackgame is one of Britain's most striking game birds, living in areas of moorland fringe - heather moorland, blanket bog, and pine trees. Like many other game bird species Blackgame are seriously declining in Britain with their range having reduced dramatically this century, there has been a 50% National decline since 1990. At one time Blackgame were found as far south as Hampshire, however, their range now is confined to Wales, Northern England and Scotland. Males "Blackcocks" have almost completely black plumage, save for a white wing bar, a white, lyre shaped tail and red wattle. Females "Greyhens" are smaller, a grey-brown colour and have a slightly notched tail.

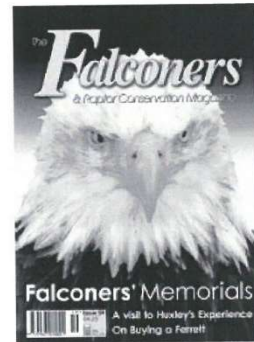
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# Training Your Summer Puppy

By Roy Bebbington

When contemplating obtaining a new puppy, many working people decide to time its arrival to coincide with the end of their sporting season. The majority, understandably, think that with their sporting commitments out of the way, the new pup will have their undivided attention. Very wise!

However, once simple basics such as sit, stop and recall have all been instilled into your willing pupil, what on earth do you do with it next? We firmly believe, contrary to what you may have previously read or heard that a puppies training starts from day one. We do not believe, as is so often stated, in allowing your pup 8 - 9 months before you commence its training. That also includes early exposure to game, preferably once all of the aforementioned basics have been completed, for there is no substitute.

A summer time puppy is at somewhat of a disadvantage, as the close season precludes exposure to wild game. It would be an incredibly understanding, if not foolhardy landowner that would allow you to train your dog on nesting birds! So, what are the alternatives and how and when can we use them in the development of our puppy? Let us begin by stating the obvious.

First and foremost, you need to have somewhere that you can actually take your puppy for training; preferably a field or two containing rough grasses in which to hide either caged or liberated birds. The more fields you have the better, because dogs soon become conditioned to knowing where they are going and exactly what for.

## The use of Quail, Japanese/Bob White for training

I will begin by laying my cards firmly on the table! Up until recently, we used Japanese quail in the early stages of all of our puppies training. Due, in no small part, to not having any summer time alternative. Never again!

Japanese quail are easily obtained and inexpensive to purchase. They have an extremely limited use in the training of your puppy. In fact, they are only worth

bothering with if, and only if you are unable to purchase anything else! What they can do, when hidden out of sight within rough grasses, is to bring out the pointing instinct in your young pup (but then, so can a wing on a string!). Our advice would be to only use Japanese quail at the very earliest stages of your puppies training, and then they must be secured in a small, wire, padded cage. The padding is to prevent damage to the quail's head, if it takes fright and flies up against the wire.

Why have the quail caged? The reason is simple. Domestically bred Japanese quail are pathetic flyers, often preferring to run rather than fly. If they begin to run in front of your young pup, then they are irresistible! Who could blame a young dog from wanting to run after and capture them? Similarly, if they do decide to fly, then it is generally for a distance of no more than 30 - 40 yards, before putting into cover. This is far from a safe distance, and will once again encourage a young pup to give chase.

Once the desire to chase becomes ingrained in a young puppy, then hey presto! you have your first negative behavior to deal with. We also feel that it is somewhat counter productive to simply lead away a young puppy



6 month old wirehaired Vizla on point (photo: Roy Bebbington)



from a caged bird. What it actually needs to experience, is to see a flush, from a strong flying species that it soon learns it has no chance of actually catching.

So, as far as Japanese quail are concerned, use them only if you must, caged, and only to obtain those first points from your puppy. Bob white quail are basically everything that Japanese quail aren't. If you have the time and facilities, these are the quail to have. They behave very similar to our native partridge, and boy can they fly! Not only this, but they also have a strongly developed homing instinct. Unfortunately they are a little more difficult to obtain, and they are also expensive to purchase. A number of professional trainers keep this species, and they are widely used and highly thought of, as a training aid, by many American gundog trainers. I am unsure as to the exact legality of releasing, what is basically a non-native species, such as the Bob White, regardless of its homing instinct. This would need to be looked into further.

As more notable people than I, regarding this species, have already written much, I shall not go into great detail about them. What I would recommend is obtaining a copy of Derry Argue's video on their use and upkeep, available from most field sports outlets.

### **Using Pigeons**

Once again, pigeons are easily obtained, inexpensive and straightforward to keep. Even to olfactory challenged humans, pigeons stink! Imagine therefore what they smell like to the finely tuned nose of your puppy. Pigeons, when dizzied and hidden within grasses cause your puppy to point as well as any game bird. When flushed they head skywards, giving the pup no chance of catching them, and if that was all not enough, they head straight home to your loft! Young dogs really do seem to like hunting for pigeons, and for initial training they prove very useful. We now use pigeons almost exclusively to bring on our young pups.

### **Rabbits, the pariah!**

We live in a part of the country where it is practically impossible to train your dog, without coming across rabbits, or in their absence, residual scent. Accordingly, we have shaped our puppies training to accommodate them. We firmly believe, that if you can stop a pup from chasing a flushed rabbit, then you can easily stop them from chasing birds! The desire to chase fur seems all that more strongly ingrained in the canine psyche. We introduce our puppies to rabbits, just as soon as they are reliably pointing feather. This does not lead, as is so often expressed, to the pup forever dropping its head to the floor and constantly bumping birds, due to incorrect head carriage.

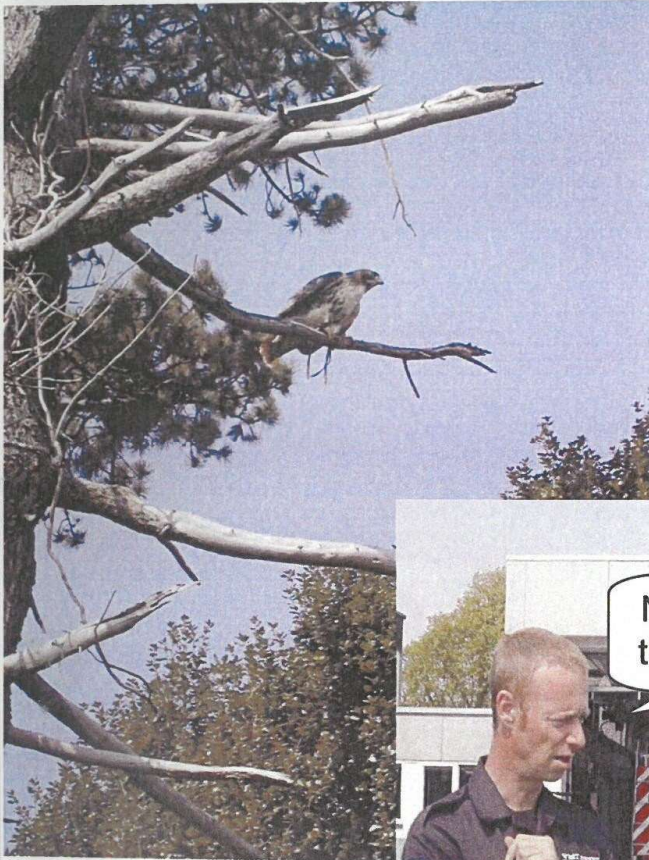
After 28 years of having hunted rabbits, with the aid of a dog, for both gun and hawk, experience has taught us that through constant repetition and experience, a dog will naturally alter its head carriage according to whatever game species lies before it, and the type of terrain it is being worked upon. That is, any dog worth its salt!

Many professional trainers have rabbit pens, and if rabbits are scarce in your locality, then a visit or two would prove very beneficial. Obviously nothing can truly replicate wild game and the myriad of complexities that goes with it. The above examples if used wisely and at the appropriate time can help to bring on your pup, to the stage where it will be ready for wild game

The young pup, which you may well now have in front of you, is basically a blank canvas. It will be down to you and the subsequent results of your training, as to how it matures and develops. Always remember to respect the responsibility that it entails.

May I wish you all the very best of fortunes.

# The Last Word



(Photo Paul Davis)

12.00 Noon.

(Photo Paul Davis)



2.00 PM.

*(No animals were harmed – Ed.)*



