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& Raptor Conservation  
Magazine

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bob dalton

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I have to start this editorial with some sad news. Hilary Smith, who co-founded the Hawk Conservancy with husband, Reg, died in September after a long illness. She died on what would have been their golden wedding anniversary. This year sees the 40th anniversary of the Conservancy and the story was covered in issue 66. Our sympathies go to Reg and Hilary's sons, Ashley and Martin and to all family members and friends.

Now on to more pleasant matters. In this issue you will see a short report on a day that I spent at the invitation of The British Falconers Club at their international field meet, which is held every four years in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire. My thanks go to everyone who looked after me and made me feel welcome on the opening day of the meet, especially Graham Irving.

Also in this edition, you will see on the Hawk Board News page an item concerning falconers trying to re-generate a grouse moor in Yorkshire with the help of a donation from the Board. It is good to see falconers putting something back into the countryside to further develop their sport and also restoring the moor for all to enjoy. Good luck to all those involved in the project.

My thanks go to all who have contributed to this issue, which I hope has something for everyone to enjoy. If you wish to contribute an article, or you feel you want to get something 'off your chest', please don't hesitate to contact me.



editorial

# Falconers

## news and products

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

### Birthday Celebrations!

#### The South East Falconry Group comes of age! 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Field Meeting

This year is the 25th Anniversary of The South East Falconry Group. The Club was formed in 1981 with the intention of keeping the membership low in number. It was soon apparent that there were lots of interested falconers and hawk breeders, who wanted to join, what was at the time one of a few 'new' clubs to be formed, so the doors were opened to new members eight months later.

25 years on and the club flourishes both in terms of membership numbers and hawking activities. Key to this success is the provision of field meeting opportunities for its members and much of the flying land which the group hunts over has been kindly offered by landowners at one of the many country shows where the group's flying demonstrations educate the public on falconry in the true sense of the word...hunting.

To Celebrate 25 years. the group is holding a field meeting in November in Exning, near Newmarket. Approximately 80 members and guests from several UK and European falconry clubs will be hawking over three days. The field meeting is full and a reserve list is already filling up. The Hawking ground will cater for longwings, Goshawks, Harris hawks, Redtails and eagles.

Each evening there will be a buffet and artist Ron Digby will be showing some of his fine work. Nick Havemann-Mart from Honeybrook Farm will be hawking and enjoying the social activities and it is hoped that he will give a brief talk on raptor nutrition one evening. On Friday evening, the landowners will join the group for drinks and a buffet to thank them all for their kind support.

On Saturday Evening there will be a falconers feast and raffle. Following the feast the South East Falconry Group social activity will get into full swing. If previous field meetings are anything to go by it won't be worth going to bed if falconers want to be up in time for the Kite Trial which is planned for the Sunday morning!

### Changes at the British Falconers Club

At this years' BFC international meeting at Woodhall Spa in October there were a few changes to the personal within the Club. Roger Upton has been appointed as president and Graham Irving, director. Also, the new membership secretary is now David Aldred. Andrew Heath has been appointed Conservation Officer.

### Geoffrey Pollard

At the time of going to press, we have heard that one of our sports "old masters", Geoffrey Pollard, died suddenly at his home in Hertfordshire. It seems ironic, or perhaps not, that at a time when excitement is building for the coming season and anticipation is high for the upcoming NAFA meet with it's international flavor; that we've lost yet another stalwart of our sport. When you think of Geoffrey Pollard and his passion for falconry, particularly flying Red Grouse with peregrines, other icons of the sport like Ronald Stevens, Steven Frank and Roger Upton come to mind.

## Letters

Got something to say? Write to Peter Eldrett, Knowle View, Kings Lane, Woodlands, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 8LZ or e-mail: [peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk)

#### Dear Peter

My husband has been flying Harris' Hawks for about 10 years and really enjoys it. He has always taken our six sons out with him when he goes hunting with his hawk and they have also enjoyed it.

But I was wondering if there is a younger falconer than our granddaughter, Sharkira Rogers. She is three years old and she has named Mike's latest Harris' Hawk, Jessie. She's been out with Mike many times and between them they have caught quarry, both fur and feather. She doesn't live too far from us so she often comes to visit. She has all her own camouflage clothing, including cumy hat and waistcoat and her own walking stick. She always looks through her grandad's copies of *The Falconers Magazine* and she has taken her photos and magazine to playschool with her. Her playschool teachers are really fascinated with her and she is so natural and not afraid of Jessie or the other Harris' Hawks that Mike has got for breeding.

Sharkira is looking forward to flying Jessie in the new season. I hope you can publish this letter, it would make all the family proud as we think that Sharkira is special.

*Thanking you, Janet Rogers*

#### Dear Peter

So the LANTRA scheme is underway at long last. I only hope we (the falconry community) get behind this scheme and make it stick as the sorry tail I am about to tell will only go to demonstrate. I strongly feel this is the only way forward for falconry under the current political climate.

Anyway, to the sorry tail. I received a phone call from a gentleman I didn't know, but his daughter new my wife. He asked if I have a bird and was it alright. I replied yes, the last time I looked two hours ago he was fine, why? He then told me he had a hawk stuck up a tree outside his garden and the RSPCA were in attendance with the fire brigade. I asked him if he wouldn't mind collecting the ring numbers for me when the bird was retrieved. He replied he didn't want to get involved as the RSPCA are the professionals.

As this was all happening only three miles down the road I decided to poke my nose in and see what Bodie and Doyle were up to. When I arrived the bird was just being caught up in a net by the fire brigade technical rescue team. Very strange why didn't the bird fly away? I introduced myself to the RSPCA inspectors as a local falconer and asked if they wouldn't mind me taking the ring numbers so I could report

## reviews

### The Countryman. A film by Ian Preece

Reviewed by Marian Eldrett



This DVD was shot by Ian Preece, who also gives an informative and educational narration throughout. It is about Dave Scott, a wildlife artist, naturalist, deer stalker and falconer. Filmed over a period of 12 months, we accompany him on his journey through the year and witness the reality of life in the countryside. He is shown as a true countryman, with an intimate knowledge of the environment and a realistic appreciation of his place within it. He is not lacking in compassion, as is shown by his taking on the raising of young orphaned birds, but is unencumbered by mawkish sentiment, being equally skilled at shooting, gutting and skinning a deer, or killing a fox. His over-riding passion, however, is for falcons and he somehow manages to include falconry in his busy life. The film includes superb footage of game hawking, joining members of the British Falconry Club on a field meet and sharing in their wonder at the impressive stoops, as well as their disappointment at the less successful flights. He has a respect for the countryside, putting back as much as he takes - for example by raising and releasing game birds, and rehabilitating injured wild birds of prey. He is someone who never loses his sense of wonder at the natural world and this can be seen in his wonderful paintings of wildlife.

The film centres on Dave's falconry activities and there are some brilliant action shots which the discerning falconer will no doubt appreciate. However, the portrayal of a man who has such an enthusiasm for his surroundings makes this an enjoyable watch for anyone who has an interest in the countryside.

Also available are two other DVD's by Ian Preece which show stoops and kills with no commentary but just a music soundtrack – *Sky Gods* and *Once Upon A Time In The West Country*. DVD available from IMP Video Productions [www.impvideo.co.uk](http://www.impvideo.co.uk)

the hawk found to the IBR. No problem there, all very polite and cheery.

The inspectors then told me how the bird had been hanging up side down; I think you can see were this story is heading. When the Hawk was back to ground level it still had its mews jess on and these were connected by a cheap aluminium carabineer, the type with the screw closure, which had come undone and both it and the leash had parted company, leaving the poor hawk to fly free and hang in the nearest tree. But, worse than this, the hawk's keel bone was felt to try and gauge the hawk's condition which was found to be fat. The poor Redtail was doing a very good impression of a Crossbill. So it had only been free for at the most a week and this hawk was in a disgusting state.

So, to sum up – wrong equipment, poorly checked and a hawk being kept by someone without the faintest clue of how to look after it. I fully understand birds do go free by mistake, but this hawk's condition was unforgivable. The Redtail was taken to the Ark, at Stubington, as the RSPCA wouldn't let me take it home. Change can some times be good and I hope the LANTRA course can start to stamp out this kind of bird keeper; I can't bring my self to call the owner of this bird a falconer.

*Yours sincerely, Laine Parker, Hants*

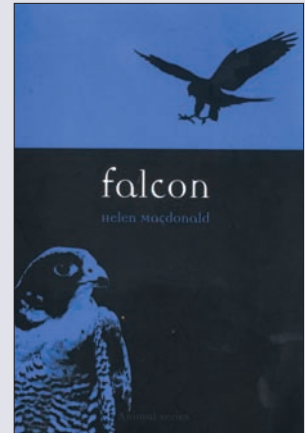
### Falcon

By Helen Macdonald

Published by: Reaktion Books Ltd.

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

ISBN 1 86189 238 1



"...cutting the sky in two at a velocity of over 200 miles an hour. Falcons are the fastest animals that have ever lived.

They excite us, seem superior to other birds and exude a dangerous, edgy, natural sublimity"

Helen Macdonald's introduction evocatively sets the scene for a book, which exhaustively examines mans universal, fascination with these creatures, that have a life in mans consciousness far beyond that of a simple living animal.

This book should have been called "everything that has ever been written about Falcons and more". It is crammed with facts, historical references, press clips advertising, etc. A truly exhaustive study of our recorded interaction with the falcon since time began.

The author begins by examining the Natural History of the falcon. The sub-species, the models design, how it perceives its world and its comparative abilities as a hunter. Filled with well illustrated facts, this section is totally absorbing (and a presenters dream). How fast? How quick? How far? It is all here with each fact qualified by a reference to the source.

For example. "...human pilots may experience total loss of consciousness G-LOC – pulling around 6G's. Eyewitness reports of Tucker's experiments enthuse about how his accelerometer went 'off scale' as the falcon pulled over 25 G's".

The rest of the book is devoted to the Falcon that lives within the consciousness of man beyond that of its life as a simple predator. It explores through a series of headings how this relationship has been expressed in different cultures and at different periods in mans history.

Under the headings of Mythical Falcons, Trained Falcons, Threatened Falcons, Military Falcons and Urban Falcons the author looks to highlight and examine, how throughout history, we have projected concepts of virtues, values and attitudes, onto this creature – creating icon status for the falcon. Which in turn can be manipulated to reflect those virtues back onto us as individuals/communities/companies/the military.

Given the wealth of information and its references contained in these sections it is not always easy to see a distinction between the individual chapters with the Mythical and Trained Falcon chapters covering a mass of historical references which would sit comfortably in the other chapters. It is as if the author had almost too much information that needed to find a home somewhere.

That said, the whole book is a very good read and has the authority of a well-researched and well-written study of its subject.

I would highly recommend buying this book as you will undoubtedly enjoy reading it, however probably only once. Thereafter it will become a reference book in your collection to refer to at need.

*Reviewed by Paul Manning*



# askchitty

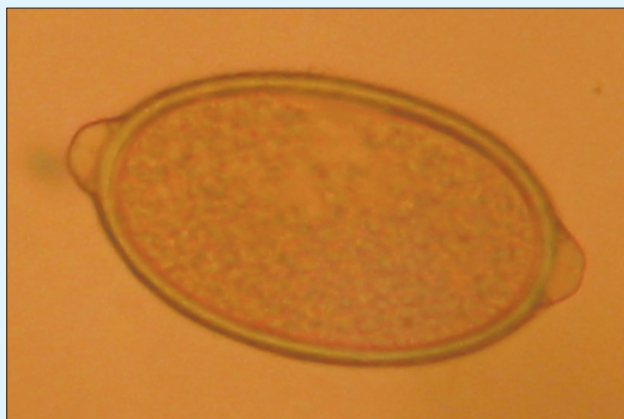
Do you have any veterinary questions relating to your bird? If so, send them to the editor (see address on page four) and they will be passed on to John Chitty - BVetMed CertZooMed CBiol MIBiol MRCVS

## Bird Worming

*How important is it to have my birds wormed during the year? Raptors in the wild do not have the chance to be wormed but seem to live their lives on a day-to-day basis. Is this to do with the diet we give our birds (day-old chicks, etc.) or the way we keep our birds in general?*

This single topic always raises several questions:

1. Wild birds don't get wormed – why should the captive bird need it? Well, the truth is that wild birds do get worms! They are also prone to die of parasitism – in particular, young birds brought in starving to rehabilitation units may have very large worm burdens that are dragging down the bird even further. Studies on road traffic accident birds often show high levels of parasitism: this may, in fact, be why they are so weak, the raptor is down on the road feeding on roadkill. However, in general life exists as a balance between raptor and its parasites – disease occurs when the balance tilts in favour of the parasite, ie. if there is a very heavy parasite load or if the bird's immunity is weakened, either by starvation or injury. Often, as long as the bird is healthy and fit they will be able to keep their parasite levels under control. There is also a major difference between captivity and the wild – in the wild the bird ranges over an area. They may have a number of different perching sites and they may take quarry over a large region. This results in a dilution of parasites in that bird's environment. Compare this to the captive bird that is tethered in the same place for many years. This can lead to a large build up of parasite eggs in that immediate area.
2. Where do they get parasites from? This depends on the parasite. Some have direct lifecycles – parasite eggs are released in the faeces and wait in the soil until ingested by another bird. These are prevalent in captivity where food may be dropped off the perch onto contaminated ground. Other parasites have an indirect lifecycle where eggs are taken in by an



**Falccapillaria parasite**

intermediate host (sometimes quarry: often invertebrates) and the raptor is infected by eating the contaminated carrier. This is an especial problem for birds in aviaries with "natural" soil/ turf flooring – they will have access to invertebrates and will readily pick up parasites. Again, we must not simply think of raptors in isolation – many of their parasites are shared with other bird species, especially wild birds. Commercially obtained food should not be a source of parasites – in particular day old cockerel cannot be an indirect parasite host as they rarely feed in the first day and simply don't have time to be contaminated! Conversely, feeding wild prey is a good source of parasites especially if roadkill is used.

3. So, how often should captive birds be dewormed? Well, this depends on many factors regarding the relative risk of parasitism. A hunting bird that eats some of its quarry and has access to soil/ turf flooring is at much higher risk than a bird in an aviary with a stone floor. These risks should be evaluated and, in conjunction with your vet, a worming regime drawn up. The big question is should you routinely deworm or do routine mute samples? Clinically the latter is the best option – the scale of worm burden is determined as is the species of worms found and both these may be useful in choosing drug and regime. However, parasites may be "missed" – some only produce eggs intermittently and worm

larvae not at all so a single mute sample may not pick up a mild worm burden. Certainly if you opt for the first, routine worming option then it is important that the drug used is varied occasionally to reduce the chances of drug resistance forming in the parasites.

Whatever happens, the best form of defence against parasites is good husbandry to reduce the chances of building up a parasite load and to maintain the bird in optimal health – a well bird can tolerate and control a small parasite burden. One of the main advantages of taking your bird to your vet for a "routine worming" or "mute screen" is that you get the bird checked over!





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**Nick Kester**  
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image and for the general public, who enjoy unprecedented access through the Park authorities.

Grouse have been hawked but they are currently augmented on the fringes by partridge and pheasant. Ponds have been cleared for duck and merlins have returned to the hill to the authority's and English Nature's considerable pleasure. The syndicate numbers fluctuate and membership does not come without cost in terms of time and money, which is why the moor is on the up, and why the Campaign considers the Award money well spent.

Terry Large, Chairman of the Campaign, makes the point that when a group put in such effort for falconry, particularly under the eyes of public bodies like English Nature, they should be rewarded.

So, if you know of a project that merits the Campaign's consideration why not put it up for consideration next year. Although, as one member of the panel makes the point, applicants should remember that it has to have a public, falconry and a conservation angle to warrant serious consideration.

### Yet more legislation...

Schedule 4 covers the registerable species used in falconry, including hybrids. Whether hybrids need such onerous legislation is a point open for debate and we are soon to have that opportunity because Defra is to issue a consultation paper on what should and should not be included. So if you fly a Schedule 4 species watch the Defra website, contact the Hawk Board or your club to make your point. Further updates will give you more information.

In the spring of this year we thought we had cracked the costs of registration and Article 10 fees with Defra and we were well on track for a reasonable, if they ever are, charge for what has been described as a tax on falconers. Wrong. At the last Hawk Board meeting we discovered that the concept of partial cost recovery had been thrown out by the Treasury. Good old Gordon Brown – now we are to start all over again. Could the Schedule 4 review be linked to this?

If some species like hybrids are removed will the costs reduce or will those with pure species bear the burden of the total cost of Defra's bird registration division?

What the hell is a BIP? Basically the port at which livestock is permitted to



**Hawk Board Chairman Jim Chick (right) presenting a cheque to John Callaghan for £1000 which will go towards the Levisham Moor project.**

enter the UK and exit for that matter. And what has that to do with falconry? Each raptor exported has to pass through a BIP, currently two in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow Prestwick airports. Imports are restricted to four of these (not Birmingham) and Defra is seeking a review of these to comply with, wait for it, Brussels. So all those breeders who supply your hawks and falcons, and require imported fresh bloodlines, could find their entry points severely restricted. Those new bloodlines keep our production healthy and benefit you, the falconer. They will be making a fuss, because one suggestion is to make Heathrow the exclusive processor of our raptors. Another job for the Hawk Board!

Finally, whilst on the subject of Brussels, and not really to do with falconry, here is a joyous piece of bureaucracy. Local authorities appoint inspectors to ensure that animal feeds are of a suitable standard. The EU has decreed that the inspectors shall be externally audited and the UK must comply. Guess who has to pay? The animal feed producers, which means the farmers, which means the consumer.

**If you have areas of concern about falconry, remember this is your Hawk Board and you can raise issues with us by contacting me or any other member of the board.  
My E-mail is:  
nk.quattro@zetnet.co.uk.**

### Campaign for Falconry Special Award

In its second award to a person or persons who have contributed to the future of falconry or linked conservation work, the Campaign for Falconry (CfF) has presented the Levisham Moor project with a cheque for £1,000 at this year's CLA Game Fair.

Levisham Moor can be found in the North York Moors National Park; to the public 3,500 acres of beauty and to falconers, as a grouse moor, one of total desolation. In 1998 a group of falconers decided to apply for the lease from the Park authorities with a view to restoring it as a suitable location for grouse hawking. At the time John Callaghan commented that if the moor caught fire and burnt out that would be an improvement. "The only way was up," he said. And up they went.

Initially, they were happy just to secure the lease. Then an English Heritage grant became available and further money was secured for essentials such as traps and a quad bike. Finally, they applied and obtained the CfF award, all of which leads the moor to continued restoration for the benefit of falconry, its

# Making the Dutch Hood



## Part 2

This is a continuation of the article which started in issue 66.

### Blocking

Fill a large jar or glass with luke-warm water and submerge the hood, leaving it for at least 10 minutes. Remove it and shake off excess water, then pressing firmly on the seams, turn it inside out. This is not easy and is especially hard with small hoods unless made with very thin leather. A large amount of stress is placed upon the stitching that must be minimised as far as possible. Slide the hood over the block and manipulate it into the correct orientation. Press down the seams by running over them with a burnishing rod of some sort (see figure 9). Ron Rollins uses a cylinder of Perspex; I use a section of red deer antler smoothed by electric sander, but the casing of a large felt-tip pen will do a perfectly decent job. Pull the hood downwards from the back to stretch the panels around the curve of the block, and smear the palm of your hand over the hood to make sure that the hood is in contact with the block at all points. There should be no space anywhere between hood and block (except at the very back, especially if you have cut it deliberately long); if there is, either try to smooth out the air space with the burnishing rod, running it firmly from front to back over the area, or else trim the pattern and start again! Examine the hood on the block from all angles to make sure that it looks symmetrical and has not been skewed to one side by the above procedures. Leave to dry at room temperature (or slightly higher if you are

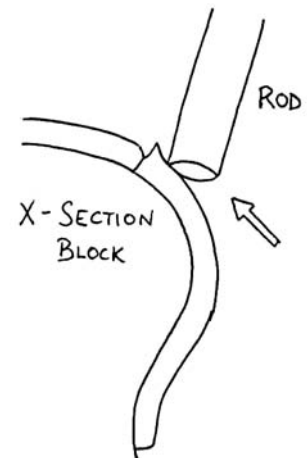




**Figure 9: Smoothing the wet hood with the burnishing rod.**

impatient!). It will take between 6 and 9 hours to dry.

Once dry the seams may be flattened off (if they are not already so) and the hood surface polished. Some hoodmakers prefer to polish the hood while it is still a little damp, say after 4 or 5 hours on the block, but I find the hood can move around on the block and may dry in the wrong position. With a finger dipped in a jar of warmish water, dampen the bottom 3-4cm of seam at the back of the hood, working the water into the surrounding patch of leather. Holding the hood firmly on the block with one hand so that it cannot slide around, polish the wet area with the burnishing rod. You will need to rub fairly hard and fairly rapidly, but the effect will be to bring up a smooth, smart shine. Check that the rod is not becoming so hot that it burns the leather (this can certainly happen with the antler rod), by frequently pressing the rod to your top lip where you will readily feel the heat. Over the seams it is best to rub in a perpendicular direction. You may find that the seam has opened up slightly during drying. The usual causes are slack stitches, stitches too shallow (i.e. not close enough to the skin side), or the pattern not being cut at a sufficiently acute angle. Minor gaps can



**Figure 10. Correcting gaping seams.**



**Figure 11: Trimming the lower edge with scalpel.**

be doctored using the burnishing rod as follows: Wet the area of seam with water, rubbing in 2 or 3 successive droplets with the tip of your finger. Assuming that the rod has right-angled edges (as opposed to rounded ends like a finger), use the edge to gently but firmly scrape towards the seam from the leather on either side, pushing up a ridge in the middle over the join (see figure 10). This done, press the ridge down into the gap from each side using the edge of the rod. Polish over the top gently.

Work your way up the seam, polishing the main surfaces of the hood as you go. Once finished, if the hood is not already

loosened, gently twist it from the block. The back and lower edge can now be trimmed with a sharp knife. Either judge by eye or compare the hood with an old one that fits your hawk to obtain the correct depth at the back, then trim the lower edge to ensure symmetry (figure 11).

#### **Finishing the hood**

For the rolled edge, cut a strip of suitably thin leather about 20mm wide, and 10mm or so longer than the circumference of the bottom of the hood. Thread a needle with waxed thread and tie a couple of overhand knots in the end. Place the leather strip

skin-side-down against the outside of the hood such that the bottom edges are flush, and the beginning of the strip overlaps the back of the hood by a couple of millimetres. Sew all the way along the bottom edge of the hood with an overlapping gloving stitch (or use a normal gloving stitch and go back over again when you get to the end) about 1.5mm from the edge (see figure 12). When this is finished, flatten out the joined edge (it tends to look 'corrugated' after sewing) with smooth-jawed pliers, then roll back the strip and fold it tightly under the inside edge of the hood, securing with a suitable adhesive. Craftsman Contact Cement is probably the best, and is available from The Identity Store though they will not send it by post as it is technically a hazardous chemical. Alternatively, Bostik Leather Adhesive seems to work fine. Trim the ends with a small pair of scissors.

The next step is to make the braces. Most people will use leather, so I shall describe this method. Cut two strips of suitable thin leather 5-8mm wide, depending on the size of the hood, and

about 28cm long. Make a button in one end like that of a jess, then cut a slit 10mm long starting 35-40mm from the button. Taper the other end with a knife. Make brace slots in the hood using a narrow chisel, marking them out first with the pin vice. The outermost slots are placed in the panels, allowing clearance for the stitches; the inner slots are arranged evenly in the available space, again avoiding the stitching on the inside. In the interests of space economy I do not include full instructions for brace attachment. *Falconry and Hawking* by Glasier and *Falconry, Art and Practice* by Ford both show the usual method, though this can be improved with a slight

modification (see figure 13): Punch a hole in brace A, some 5mm from where it emerges from slot 6. Brace B slides under brace A through slots 4 and 5 and then through this hole. The hole is not required in brace B. I usually trim the braces so that the unbuttoned end measures 100mm when in the open position. To aid the rigidity of the buttoned ends, fold them length-wise (skin-side outermost) and glue together, pressing firmly with smooth-jawed pliers.

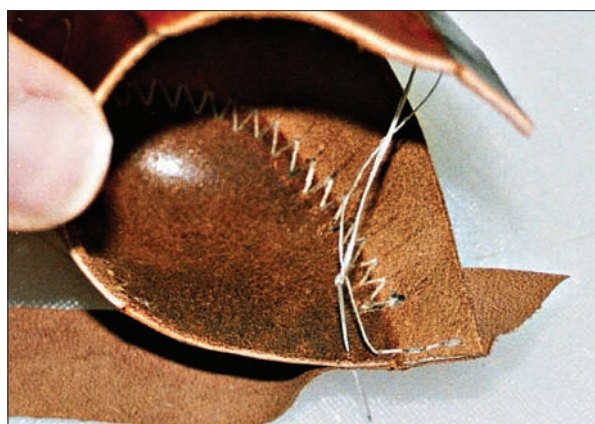
Cut the beak opening out with a sharp knife, then go around again with the knife, cutting at a steep inward angle to increase the comfort of the opening for the hawk (see figure 14). If the

opening requires enlargement upon fitting on the hawk, be careful not to slice through the stitching around the area of the gape. Bear in mind that if a hood fits well at the neck when the beak opening is a little small, the fit will become too loose once the beak is adjusted. For purely aesthetic reasons I also cut the back of the hood

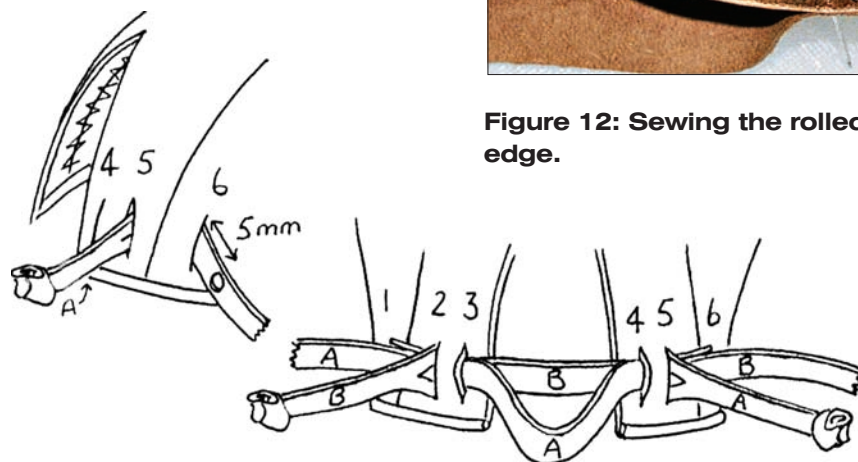
at an inward angle (see figure 14); this is optional.

The hood is now ready for the top-knot or plume. The ubiquitous Turk's head knot is very practical and I will gladly provide details of its construction should any reader wish, but space precludes its description here and instead I shall only describe the more traditional feather plume.

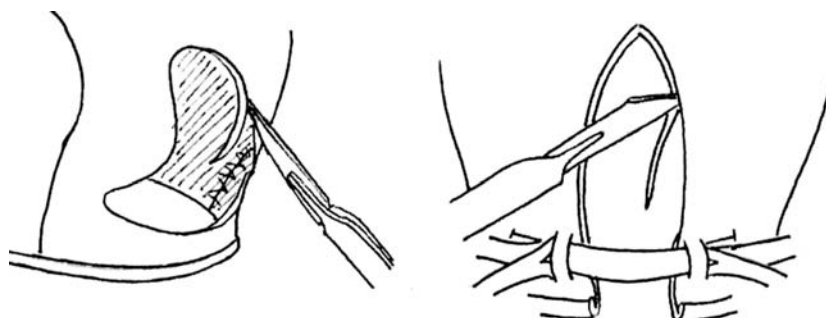
Using the pin vice, make a hole in the top of the hood where the plume will be attached. This should be 20-30mm from where the hood opens at the back, and centred between the two panels. Cut two parallel slots 10mm wide, one in front and one behind the hole, 10mm apart. Carefully enlarge the slots so that they become rectangles, 2-3mm wide (and hence now 4-6mm apart). Select some coloured wool (the type used for knitting) and cut 20 pieces of length 120mm. Cut a length of very thin leather 50mm long and 6mm wide. First thread the leather, then the pieces of wool, through the slots as shown in figure 15.



**Figure 12: Sewing the rolled edge.**



**Figure 13: Attaching the braces.**



**Figure 14: Cutting the beak opening and back at an angle.**

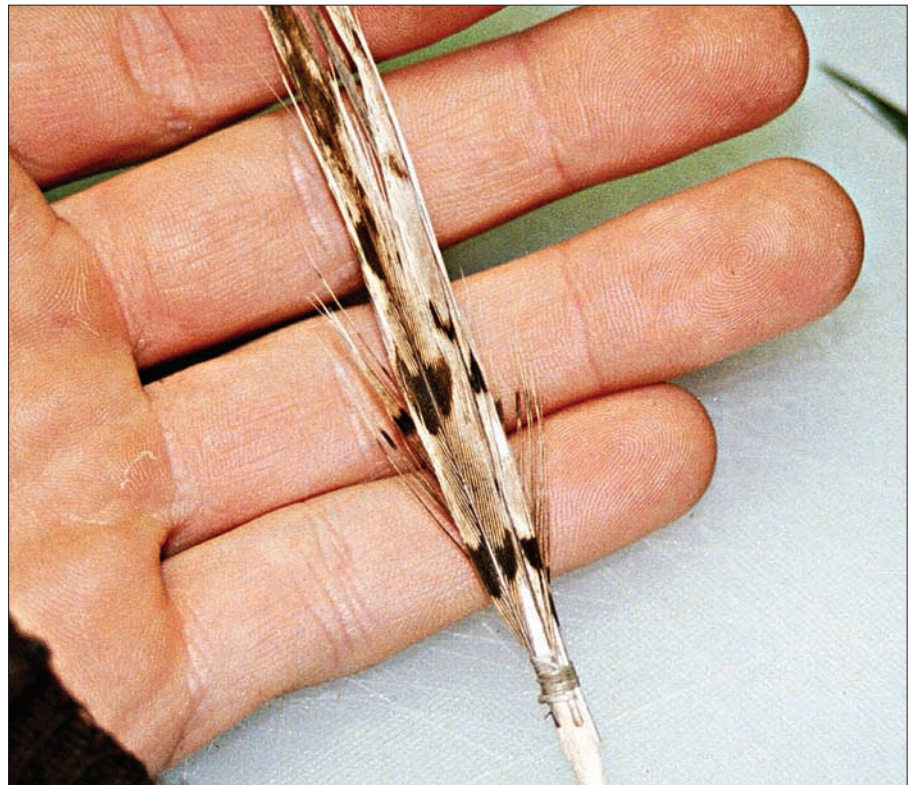


**Figure 15: Wool (partly unravelled) and leather threaded through the top of the hood.**



**Figure 17: Stitching the plume to the leather**

The wool is most easily pulled through 6 or 7 strands at a time using tweezers with 'teeth' (the surgical type – ask your vet for a pair). Each length of wool comprises 4 smaller strands spiralled around one another - they should be separated at this stage. By twisting the tip of each length in the direction opposite to this spiral, and sliding the pin vice between each strand, this task is easily achieved - unravelling 40 twisted strands is laborious but improves the look of the plume. Take a matchstick and sharpen one end into a point so that the overall length is about 25mm. Find some suitable feathers and bind each one to the shaft (sharpened end topmost) with a few turns of waxed thread, ensuring that the feathers are evenly distributed around all 4 faces of the match. 10 feathers, arranged in 2 separate rosettes should suffice (see figure 16). Continue binding the finished plume with thread until the base is about 6mm wide. Trim any feather shafts such that the base is flat and level. Hold the plume between the two slots in the top of the hood, ready for attachment to the leather. Take a needle with waxed thread and push it through the leather on one side, then through the plume (avoiding the match in the centre) and out through the leather on the other side (see figure 17). Go back on the other side, then repeat the stitch before tying off with a knot. Make sure that the leather is pulled tightly upwards as the stitches are made, such that the plume is held firmly against the



**Figure 16: The first rosette of feathers bound to the match.**

top of the hood. Now pull the wool upwards and around the plume so that it covers the leather completely. With thin thread of the same colour as the wool, bind the wool firmly about 15mm from the top of the hood (go round at least 10

times, securing with a reef knot), just below where the feathers begin to spread out of the plume. Trim the wool ruff to the desired length with sharp scissors; the hood is now complete (title picture).

**This article has been reproduced with the kind permission of The British Falconers' Club and appeared in *The Falconer*. My thanks go to Matthew Gage and Andrew Dobson for their kind support. (Ed).**

# CLA Game Fair 2006



**Rob Newark  
and merlin, Taz.**

Broadlands, Hampshire, was the setting for this year's CLA Game Fair and those who attended the show enjoyed a very hot three days walking around and admiring the various attractions that were on offer.



**Nick and Lynn Havemann-Mart with Terry Large (centre).**

**T**he CLA is the premier fair of its type anywhere and even if you attend for the full three days, you will still not see all that is going on. The many traders who sell their wares are varied to say the least. You can purchase anything from a pair of shoes to a full-blown spa bath, guns, fishing equipment, food and drink and, of course, falconry equipment.

The falconry area was once again under the umbrella of the Hawk Board and was organised by Mike Clowes in his usual unflappable and efficient manner. The traders who attended this event included Falconry Electronics, Ben Long, Falconry Originals, Garlands, Martin Jones, Falconiformes, Honeybrook Farm and three artists Colin Woolf, Peter Bainbridge and Martyn Brook. Others in attendance included five falconry clubs – The British Falconers Club, South East Falconry Group, British Hawking Association, Welsh Hawking Club and from overseas, Danish Hawking Club. Also, representatives from DEFRA under the leadership of John Hounslow

were also there to answer any queries that people may have had, including the current position of CITES which may have an impact on falconers and other interested parties. CITES does not just cover birds but animals, reptiles and fauna.

The mini arena was organised this year by Andy Stokes who got together various speakers from the falconry section demonstrating and imparting their considerable knowledge to the members of the public. The main arena flying displays were once again given by Jim



**Jean Dimond on the Welsh Hawking Club stand.**



John Hounslow (left) and Rob Davis of DEFRA.

Chick, Hawk Board chairman and Terry Large, Campaign for Falconry Chairman and were well received by all those who watched.

Although many of you may know José Suto connected to the British Hawking Association, he was demonstrating game preparation prior to cooking



José Suto of the British Hawking Association giving a demonstration preparing game for the pot on the Countryside Alliance stand.

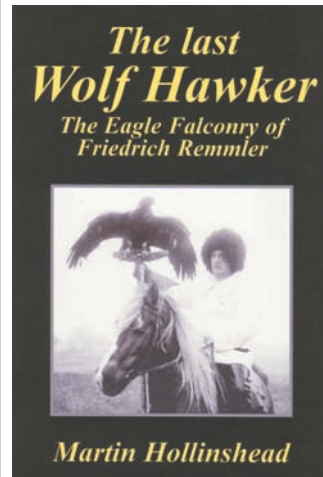
in his role as lecturer from Westminster Kingsway College. José held a captivated audience throughout the three demonstrations that he gave each day on the Countryside Alliance stand.

Saturday night saw a barbecue organised by the generosity of Lynn and Nick Havemann-Mart of Honeybrook Farm and a sum of over £300.00 was raised for the campaign which put a smile on Terry's face. Many thanks must go to Lynn and Nick (and their helpers) for all their hard work, it is much appreciated.

As mentioned on the Hawk Board News page in this issue, a cheque for £1000.00 was presented to John Callaghan whom, along with other falconers, has taken on renovating part of a grouse moor in Yorkshire. It is heartening when falconers get together and get a project off the ground, putting back something into conservation. I would like to wish good luck to the people involved in the project and I hope that I will be able to keep readers informed concerning the progress of the on-going work in the future.

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# It's all a matter of scale



**Electronic scales.**

**M**any modern falconry books advise that a set of accurate scales is the most important item of equipment (a sentiment with which I am in full agreement). This has not always been so, however, and authors such as Gilbert Blaine (*Falconry*, 1936) mention scales almost as an aside. In his book, Blaine states, "A useful guide is to weigh a hawk on a scales". Thankfully, by the time we get to MH Woodford (*A Manual of Falconry*, 1960), ideas seem to have changed somewhat, and he states "Weighing Machine – This is one of the most important pieces of equipment".

It must, however, be mentioned that weighing alone will not be sufficient to ensure that any hawk is in flying

condition. To do this, one must also judge the hawk's condition by feeling its muscles and watching its behaviour. I am always amazed, frightened and appalled when I read books which purport to give specific flying weights for hawks. Every hawk is an individual and the correct flying weight for one is not necessarily the correct weight for another, even if it is the same species and gender. For instance, I fly a cast of Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*), which coincidentally are siblings from the same clutch; one flies at 125g higher than its brother. While it is true that some may say that one hawk is smaller than 'normal' and the other is larger than 'normal', this merely begs the question – what is the 'normal' weight? The answer, of course, is that there is no such figure.

Ask any falconer – even a complete novice – and he will be aware that one of the most important aspects of flying a raptor is the weight of the bird.

Today, there is a plethora of scales designed for falconry use, although some are obviously better suited than others. Some favour the 'traditional' balance scales, while others, wanting a higher degree of accuracy, believe that one of the modern digital scales will give a more accurate weight. Some falconers will claim that they need to weigh their hawks to the utmost degree of accuracy and insist that the weight of a hawk should be so precise that it should be weighed to 0.1g. While this is laudable, it is also completely impractical and naïve to believe that this can be done. What happens if a hawk mutes just as the bird is being placed on the scales? This will reduce its weight by several grammes; what if the hawk had muted immediately after weighing? I'm sure you see my point.

I also know of several falconers who use spring balances. This, to me, is nonsensical, as springs can, and do, stretch, and the accuracy of these scales will undoubtedly be compromised by wear. If spring scales are used, they will need to be calibrated at least every three

months and even then will require the springs replacing every couple of years and still not give truly accurate readings consistently.

Before looking at the various types of scales available and at the pros and cons, it is prudent to mention that every falconer worthy of the name will weigh his hawks every 24 hours. It is important that the weighing is carried out at a consistent time and in a consistent manner, as this ensures that the hawk's guts are empty of food, and that any casting has been regurgitated.

## **Traditional balance scales**

I am always cautious about using the term 'traditional', as it is used far too often in a completely misleading sense. Although many falconers will describe the counter-balance type scales, with a platform for weights on one side and a perch on the other, as traditional, I can find no date at which falconers began using any scales, or weighing the hawks at all. In *Falconry in the British Isles* (1855), Salvin and Brodrick do not mention scales, weighing or weight of



hawks, referring only to the condition of yarak and describing how this can be identified in various species. I always smile when a falconer accuses me and my staff of thumbing our noses at tradition, by using the metric system of weighing our hawks, i.e. we weigh in grammes. If, as I suspect, weighing of hawks only originated about 100 years or less ago, no weighing can be accurately described as 'traditional'. For reference, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines tradition as "an opinion or belief or custom handed down . . . from ancestors to posterity, especially orally or by practise"; not very enlightening.

### My early days

Counter-balance scales are, I believe, the most common and popular type of scales among falconers, particularly those of middle age or older. My first pair was made from an old set that my mother no longer used; she had inherited them from her mother and kept them simply for sentimental reasons. They were big and bulky and the weights were made from solid brass. I'm sure the accuracy of the scales and the weights was somewhat questionable, but as a boy of 11 years, I probably overlooked the shortcomings of the scales, happy that my mother had allowed me to make use of them. Mother was not, however, too happy when she realised that I needed to alter them to accommodate the weighing of my kestrel.

With the help of my father, I removed the pan from one side of the scales and replaced it with a wooden perch, padded with leather. After making this modification, I needed to alter the balancing part (the scales had a large

screw underneath which accomplished this), and I was ready to go.

I loved the scales – they looked extremely impressive and I got many looks of envy from friends who didn't have hawks, but still admired my scales; the simple life of a young boy in the mid-1960s bears little resemblance to that



### Balance scales.

of a 21<sup>st</sup> century child. At some time in the 1970s, while I was serving in the armed forces, the scales were lost and I had to buy a new set.

The beauty of counter-balance scales is that, provided one has accurate weights, the scales are almost completely foolproof and will last indefinitely. When buying a set, choose one that has been properly made and not one cobbled together from kitchen scales. Also, get one with a large footprint, and that is heavy and strong enough to weigh any hawk; while a large set of scales will work for a small hawk, a small set will be useless when, for example, weighing an eagle, or even a large longwing.

### Spring balance scales

As stated earlier, these scales have no place with a falconer. Springs stretch over time and the accuracy of spring scales will even vary with temperatures. And don't just take my word for it. In his book *Understanding the Bird of Prey* (a must-have for any serious falconer), Dr Nick Fox states, "spring balances are untrustworthy".

### Digital scales

If you're the kind of person who believes that everything modern is better than anything else, particularly if the item is more than two years old, you will probably use (or at least try to use) a set of digital scales.

Here at the National Hawking School, we use digital scales for only one falconry purpose; we weigh all our eggs and the newly hatched eyasses, on digital scales. The accuracy of these scales is essential for such purposes. However, once the youngsters get to a stage where they move a lot, we have great difficulty in getting an accurate reading, as every movement of the hawk causes the scales to vary tremendously. We have tried a very expensive set, which had a 'damper' to reduce this problem, but even these we found impossible to use.

There are some very good digital scales on the market for falconers to use in weighing their birds, but I have yet to find any good enough – and easy enough – to use to get

consistently accurate readings from our range of hawks.

### Selecting the scales for you

Whichever type of scales you decide upon, when selecting scales for falconry use try to judge your needs for the foreseeable future and not simply your present requirements and hawks. Most falconers will fly several different species of hawk during their falconry career and the scales should be able to accommodate any hawk, of just about any size and weight.

It is also worth chatting to other falconers and trying the scales that they favour, to see if they meet with your approval. Remember, though, that what suits one, may not suit another and also bear in mind the practical aspects of weighing hawks using the different types of scales available.

### Invest in the future

Don't penny-pinch; good scales will last a lifetime and so they should be considered as an investment. Keep them clean, sparingly oiled and stored correctly and they will repay your investment many times over. The weights for counter-balance scales must be looked after; dropping such weights can result in pieces being broken off and even small amounts of damage can render weights inaccurate. It is also worthwhile, about every 12 months or so, having all of the weights checked for accuracy. A friend of mine works in a laboratory and has access to extremely accurate scales. He checks our weights every year and also works on them to ensure that they are accurate. If you can obtain such a contact, make sure you buy him a bottle of his favourite Scotch at Christmas.



an interview with

# Bob Dalton

**Bob Dalton is known by many people across the globe through his writing about falconry. I caught up with him earlier this year and asked him some questions about his experiences and thoughts on various subjects with which he is involved.**

**Q** *When did you get interested in falconry and birds of prey?*



My initial interest in birds of prey was first stimulated by seeing a wild Musket catch a Blackbird a few feet away from me when I was a youngster. A serious interest in the sport of falconry began in 1967 and I had my first falcon, which was a passage Red Headed Merlin, in 1969. I flew this diminutive little falcon for two seasons and was then completely hooked on the sport. Falconry has since taken over my life and is my all consuming passion.

**Q** *You've written books and articles for various publications. Do you enjoy the process of writing?*



Decidedly not. Whilst the process can be cathartic it is also laborious. What goes through your brain very quickly, in my case anyway, takes a long time to actually put down on paper. Probably the ideal way for me to write would be just to talk into a Dictaphone and then have someone else type it up. I also can't write to order. When the mood is on me I will write up to six or seven thousand words a day. Other times I would struggle to write 500. So now if I feel it is a struggle I just leave it until I feel more like getting on with it. That seems to work okay for me. Trouble is after all these years of writing I am still a two fingered typist and when I'm in the mood to write I very often just can't seem to get the words down fast enough.

**Q** *What made you take up writing about falconry initially?*



I well remember reading an article on falconry many years ago that I thought was

absolute rubbish. I moaned to those around me that I had just read a whole page of a magazine that said absolutely nothing, made no point whatsoever and had precious little to do with falconry. I must have moaned on a bit because in the end someone said "if you think you can do better why don't you get on with it". So I did and that was some 20 years ago.

**Q** *Most falconers enjoy being on their own and to write properly you've obviously got to be on your own. Do you find the writing process lonely?*



I enjoy the life style I have and fortunately that allows me the freedom to write when and if I feel like it and lap top computers, which rate as one of my all time favourite inventions, mean I can write more or less anywhere at anytime. I don't particularly enjoy the actual process of writing as it is too much like hard work. As to being lonely there is a saying by Oscar Wilde that runs "Other people are quite dreadful, the only possible society is oneself". Very apt, on occasion, for both writers and falconers.

**Q** *What made you become involved with film making and are your films mainly for entertainment or education?*



I like to think that my films can be both entertaining as well as educational. The first film I was involved with came about after I was approached by a company wanting to make a falconry video. The script was rubbish and I wasn't interested in doing it. I was asked what I wanted to do and although the outline I produced wasn't strictly adhered to it was still far more realistic and practical than the film that had originally been intended. It turned out to be one of the best selling

falconry videos ever made. The production company made a great deal of money and I made next to nothing. So I decided that in future I would have a far more hands on approach and that it would be my bank balance that would benefit if any future films were successful.

I do try and make the films educational and also I put things in that others may well choose to leave out. I believe that it is wrong to give the impression that taking up falconry is as easy as falling off of a log and I think that the drawbacks as well as the positive things should be shown. Falconry is a time consuming and relatively difficult sport to do well, and if you aren't going to do it well then you are better off not doing it at all.

**Q** *You seem to enjoy travelling around the world in pursuit of falconry. Which countries stand out for you and why?*



Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and Canada are my personal favourites. If I had to narrow it down to just one country it would be Mexico. That is why I usually go over at least twice a year to spend a few weeks hunting with friends I have made. We fly mainly passage Peregrines at ducks in the region of Aguascalientes. The group of falconers there are amongst some of the best I have ever had the pleasure of hawking with. People like Martin Guzman and Juan Berumen take falconry in their country to an extremely high level. We also hunt with Aplomado Falcons, Coopers Hawks, Harris Hawks, Merlins and Bat Falcons. I also do a great deal of trapping in Mexico and I find this both fascinating and extremely exciting. Brazil is also a paradise for falconers wishing to fly Aplomado Falcons, although realistically very little else. There are vast tracts of suitable land which most farmers will let you

fly on. Quarry is abundant and there are very few falconers in the country so there is no drain on the wild stock of falcons.

South Africa and Canada are both countries that if I had discovered them and their falconry potential earlier in life I may well have made serious efforts to emigrate to.

**Q** *What is it about trapping you enjoy so much?*



I don't think you could point to any serious falconer in the world who wouldn't be excited by watching, for example, a wild Peregrine or a wild Harris Hawk, and then five or six minutes later having that falcon or hawk in their hands, however briefly. The trapping I do in various countries is mainly for research and ringing purposes or it is to assist a falconer who has obtained a relevant licence from their government to take a passage hawk for falconry purposes. I must stress that any trapping I do when abroad is done under completely legal and fully controlled conditions.

**Q** *On a conservation note, how do you see conservation projects in this country compared to ones overseas?*



I have to say that projects here seem to be well organised and funded sufficiently. Projects like the Red Kite, White Tailed Sea Eagle and Osprey have all been superb successes of which we should be proud. I have had the opportunity to visit various projects overseas such as those for Harpy Eagles, Taita Falcons and Aplomado Falcons, all of which have been very impressive. But I don't actually know what long term success they are enjoying other than making people aware that there is a need to do something.

**Q** *What is your stance on hybrids?*



I am not very fond of hybrids and my own personal preference is for a pure breed of hawk or falcon. I can understand why there are hybrids and I can also understand why so many people are passionately against them. I have no desire to own one and would personally never buy one. That must sound very hypocritical as I do actually have one. A friend of mine tried very hard for seven years to breed a particular type of hybrid and when he finally succeeded he produced three. One he kept for himself, one he gave to his sponsor and the other he wanted me to have. I took the falcon as I didn't want to offend him and it turned out to be a good hunting falcon and I have flown it for 12 seasons now. But I prefer to fly pure falcons of which Peregrines

are my favourite, closely followed by Gyrs and Barbaries.

**Q** *What part of hawking do you enjoy most?*



I like all forms of hawking with the exception of slipping several hawks at the same quarry at the same time. I enjoy flying my falcons as well as my Harris Hawk and like to get out into the field as much as possible. I enjoy being in the field with friends but am just as happy on my own. I prefer to hawk over dogs, with the exception of rook hawking, and always feel there is something missing if I have to go out hawking without them. I like to see the dog and hawk or falcon working as a team. That is probably why I enjoy game hawking as much as I do. There is no truer saying than "good dogs make good hawks" and I am just as happy running my dogs for someone else's hawks as I am running them for my own.

**Q** *Your falconry career began almost 40 years ago, what do you miss most from the supposedly good old days.*



Probably the thing I miss most is the opportunity to fly imported passage falcons and hawks. I fully understand why it was necessary to change the relevant legislation and put an end to this and I'm also in complete agreement with it. But that doesn't mean I don't miss being able to go to Morocco and legally get myself a passage Barbary Falcon and then bring it back here to hunt with it. The same is true with regard to importing and then flying a passage Goshawk from Finland. I concur wholeheartedly that these days had to come to an end here with the decline of birds of prey in the wild and the mushrooming of those wanting to possess hawks. But for some falconers that are really dedicated there are ample opportunities in other countries to still indulge in falconry as it once was. This is why I spend so much time abroad.

**Q** *What would you like to do in falconry that you haven't yet done?*



There are so many different branches of falconry that no one can ever do or see it all. But I would like to keep on seeing as much as possible. My current goal is to catch a partridge here in the UK with my Aplomado Falcon. I have also recently purchased from abroad a domestically produced eyass Hobby. I have flown one Haggard and several passage Hobbies, all wild injured falcons, at quarry as part of their

rehabilitation process and caught odd items of quarry with them. I am keen to see if an eyass can be persuaded to take falconry seriously or if all the old writers on the subject were right to dismiss the Hobby out of hand as suitable material for a falconer.

**Q** *How do you see falconry going in Britain in the future?*



Falconry is supposedly going through something of a boom in the UK at the moment although I am not totally convinced it is. I do think there's a tremendous amount of people going out and buying hawks but whether the actual sport of falconry is booming I wouldn't like to say. Some of the things I have seen in recent years give me grave cause for concern; I think that is the politest way of putting it. For example, in the past year alone I have had seven Harris Hawks and a Saker Falcon given to me by people that were either going to release them or get rid of them in some other way. One guy brought a male Harris Hawk round to my house and told me that either I take it there and then or he would put it down. These people have dabbled in falconry, realised it wasn't for them and are then stuck with the problem of what do they do with the poor hawk. Most of this stems from the fact that hawks are so cheap now and so readily available. In what was considered the bad old days, when hawks were very expensive and not freely available, the problem of dabbling hardly ever arose. Only those with serious intent would go through the expensive process of obtaining a hawk.

I suppose I am relatively pessimistic about the future of falconry in this country, particularly with the government we have now and the supposed mind set of the majority of city dwellers. I also believe we don't do enough as falconers to regulate our own sport. This I feel is short sighted and sooner or later we are going to get legislation we don't want. Things like the LANTRA awards are positive steps along the right lines but we as falconers could do more. For a sport that seems to throw up so many instant experts we don't seem to be keeping our collective house in very good order. Fortunately the life style I have sorted out for myself will mean that I will practise falconry no matter what. If for any reason it ceases here I shall merely move to another country where it can still be practised.



Thanks to Bob for his time. If you have any views on anything mentioned, drop me a line for publication in our letters page. Editor

# So Long and Thanks for the Game



**Tweed bowed out on the lawn.**

I n common with a lot of falconers or austringers my introduction to birds of prey came courtesy of Kes. As a teenager I both read the book and saw the film and I found the process that Billy Casper led us through absolutely fascinating. Time moves on however; it would be another three decades before I was in a position to rekindle that earlier fascination. Even then, the timescale between nurturing the nascent interest in falconry and actually becoming involved took a further four or so, years.

We moved house in 1996 to a charming part of rural Suffolk where the new residence could be classed as a small farm or as a large smallholding. The village's sole pub was run by a somewhat eccentric gentleman. During one of my earlier forays to the hostelry in question it transpired that 'mien host' kept some raptors; to wit, a European Eagle Owl and a couple of Harris' Hawks and I was asked whether I would have any objections to his continuing to hunt over my few acres. Permission was granted and over the ensuing months I could sometimes be found listening intently to a variety of accounts of many facets of falconry. Conversation apart I never progressed to a more hands on experience.

## **Another landlord**

Eighteen months or so down the line, the village found itself temporarily without a pub, so one of the pubs in the next village became my local. Another pub, another eccentric landlord! Then came the fateful day when the landlord's wife took me aside. As a birthday present she had given her husband 'a day out with the hawks' at a local bird of prey centre. Would I be interested in going along too? She thought her husband would appreciate the companionship of a friend on the day so I jumped at the chance, knowing only too well that such an experience would leave me totally smitten with falconry *per se*.

The day was a resounding success, I knew that I had to have a bird of prey. How had I managed for so long without one? But, why did "she who expects to be obeyed" not appear to share my enthusiasm?

Over the next few months I read a fair amount and continued to pester my wife about the need for – what was starting to look like – a Harris' Hawk. Several of the country fairs or horsy events which we attended had bird of prey displays. I would chunter on about the relative merits of the display and the types of birds, using my new found wisdom and knowledge. I must have been a right pain but at least I persisted.

A four day falconry course followed and the library increased in size, dramatically, as I devoured any book that I could lay hands on which pertained to falconry. A couple of months before my fiftieth birthday, following a visit to the CLA Game Fair, I chanced upon a hawk bath and a bow perch hidden in one of our outbuildings. Something was obviously afoot. I didn't let on, in much the same way as I failed to admit to having had a glove made to measure.

### Birthday

The birthday arrived and I found myself at Gleneagles. On the day itself my wife and I hunted with Harris' hawks, courtesy of the Emma Ford Falconry School. Over the course of a picnic lunch I was informed that a female Harris' hawk had been sourced and would be ready for me to collect, aged 15 weeks, at the end of the month (August). Returning home I was further astonished to find an aviary had been erected in the garden. To refer to it as an aviary is doing the edifice an injustice. What had been erected was a bespoke, thatched Gazebo which incorporated a 12' by 7' wire mesh aviary. This bird was going to live in more luxury than some people.

The next couple of weeks prior to collecting my bird were frantic. A complete bird care kit had to be purchased. Everything from telemetry, furniture, scales, food and first aid kit to a new freezer in which to keep the aforementioned food and hopefully, in the future, quarry. I also persuaded my mentor, Trish, to let me be her willing slave and dogsbody at the falconry centre for a few days.

*Tweed* - what else can you call a Harris' hawk? - came into my life on the 25 August 2001, and I started on the vertical learning curve which is beginner's falconry. I had decided that I would do everything as I had been taught by Trish and that if ever I needed advice, it would be her that I would seek out. In this way I would avoid contradictory advice and any confusion which might ensue. Every well meaning person seems to have a slightly different approach to the same problem, in much the same way that every book varies slightly from the next. There are many ways to skin a cat but a consistent approach seems best.

It was eight anxious days before she took her first feed on the glove. Those eight days were a study in relaxation as the manning process progressed. The bird who, initially, was difficult to pick up, who flapped and bated, who flopped backwards off the glove, to hang upside down, slowly started to accept me and her surroundings. The ferocious grip of her talons lessened as she became calmer. Long hours spent in the subdued light and coolness of a stable, long walks with her and the dogs eventually bore fruit and she ate.

After that, progress was rapid and it seemed hardly any time at all before she was flying free and then out hunting. More by luck than anything else I found her hunting weight very quickly, *Tweed* was a ferocious and determined hunter. A local farmer who let me hunt his land was very happy with her effect on the rabbit population. He didn't even mind the loss of the odd pheasant or partridge. The freezer started to fill and it wasn't long before a dinner party featured game pie "a la *Tweed*".



**Allan and the team.**

### Learning curve

The learning curve maintained a degree of verticality and then there are the things for which you are not prepared – the novice austringer is perplexed by a baffling array of little mysteries. Why did no one warn me that your average Harris' hawk will not differentiate between domestic poultry and any other potential quarry? Why is it always the favourite chicken, or the best layer which is singled out for hawkish attention? Why did no one warn me that a little owl is viewed as fair game and just another snack?

I was mystified, for a considerable time, as to why a large percentage of quarry was being caught in the field adjacent to the one I was in. Was Tweed deliberately trying to evade me? Then, like a bolt from the blue, it dawned on me that as she followed on down the hedge line she could see into both fields. Rocket science!

Then there was the mystery as to why her flight range suddenly increased and she was killing at greater distances from me. The answer to that one was that the leaves had fallen off the trees, as they do in autumn, so, presumably, she could see further.

### First sight of snow

The first time Tweed encountered snow had an element of hilarity. A long low flight over a white landscape was interspersed with the odd somersault as her wingtips touched ground. That legendary eyesight obviously could not cope with the monochrome nature of the snowy vista and height perception was lost.

Each season saw Tweed mature and develop. Her hunting capabilities seemed to increase and she became far more

efficient in the field. The only downside was that towards the end of her second season she stopped going for hare. A good kicking on one occasion and being dragged through dense undergrowth – firmly latched on to the rump of a hare – on another fostered a healthy respect for the large lagomorph and undergrowth was also the direct cause of a momentary concern. Plummeting through a briar patch, in pursuit of a rabbit she tore her thigh, which entailed a visit to the vet and a few stitches. Tweed was the first raptor this particular vet had ever dealt with and to say she was slightly nervous would be an understatement. The only other injury was caused by a weasel which managed to turn in her grip and bite off half a talon. There was, of course copious amounts of blood, but it grew back again.

We are back on the learning curve again and Tweed was put down to moult in March this year (2006). She was free lofted and, when possible, perched out in the garden during the day. I would try and ensure that she was fed on the fist at least a couple of times a week. Basically I would leave her to her own devices as much as

possible – unlike during the hunting season I was not so diligent about weighing her.

### Bad day

On the 29 April I went out to the aviary to pick her up and feed her but she was lying dead below her sleeping shelf. A post mortem ascertained that she had an intestinal tumour and was slightly underweight. I beat myself up because I hadn't noticed the weight loss, which would have told me something was wrong. Even if I had known there would have been little I could have done except getting her euthanized. A harsh lesson, but one I will not forget. It demonstrates how important a piece of equipment the scales are. They should be used regularly throughout the year, not just to maintain a hunting weight during the season.

### Privilege

As for the Harris' hawk, it was a privilege to own and fly one. Tweed taught me a lot and explained some of the mysteries to me. I hope my next bird of prey will benefit from the schooling which Tweed provided me with.

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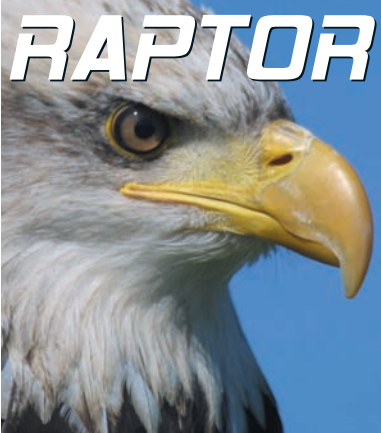


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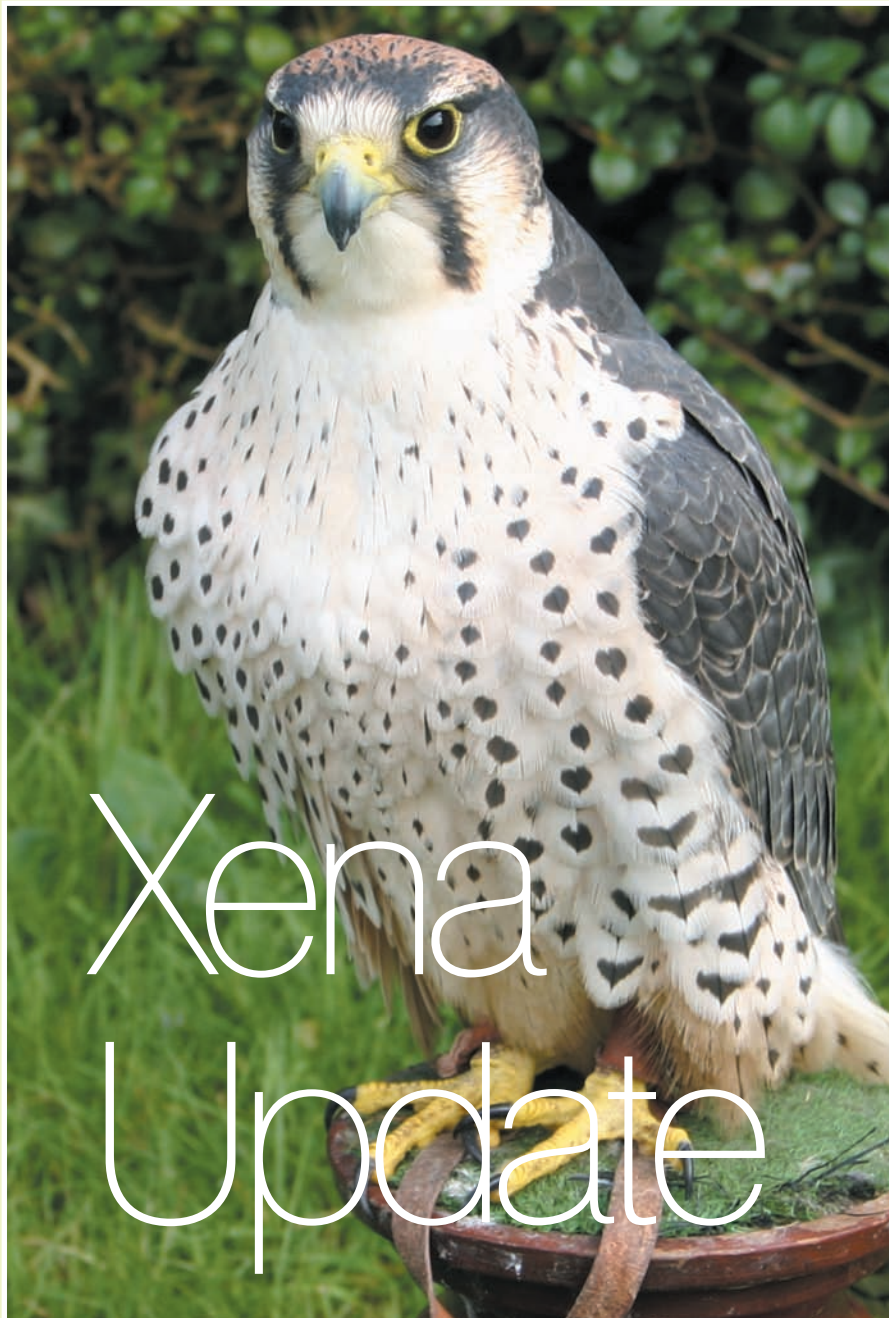
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# Xena Update

We flew from September 2003 to March 2004 and I was quite glad to see the season end. I actually vowed to myself to become a dedicated Harris' hawk, as this had become hardly any fun. I enjoy flying Xena and I know what she is capable of, but I knew I was still doing something wrong.

## Season six (2004 – 2005)

I stuck to my guns and concentrated on my Harris' Hawk through the season. But in May 2005 I decided to re-train Xena and, if she was flying well enough, I was hoping to join in with the club's display team.

It never ceases to amaze me just how tame she is. With the best part of 12 months off she was flying free within a week (obviously once I had got her down to near her flying weight). The end of May and whole of June was spent working on her fitness and not to make the mistake of the previous season, I did not over-lure her. I wanted to see her range out more and gain good height (what is needed for a display bird). This was the first time I had flown a hawk in the summer, but Xena performed so well on the hot summer days I had seen her fly as well as ever. On the really hot days, she would "speck out" and be on the soar for half an hour or more – and that first stoop to the lure was breathtaking.

There had been a few changes at the pig farm, which was my main hawking land, but they were all for the better. It had been extended and split into two. This opened up so many opportunities. With flocks of at least 200 rooks always in attendance, this gave me so many options of flying them. I can approach from any vantage point and, because it's set in a valley, I can get above them. And now being smaller areas, this keeps the rooks in these areas, plus I can get to Xena quicker when she is on a kill. I admit to totally over-hawking this land, but the draw of the pig pellets seems too tempting for the rooks, so I get far more slips than I probably should.

I am under no illusions that what I do is classical falconry, but I am proud of what I have achieved with Xena, the time I put into her and making the most of what land I have. Once I was up and running and had

**B**ack in Issue 54 of *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine*, I told you about my female Lanner Falcon, Xena. Throughout that article I took you through our first four seasons together. During this period she took many rooks and jackdaws but was very inconsistent, bearing in mind that we had 500 trips out. So you can see that the 'kills to trips' ratio was not very good. Now I would like to tell you about seasons five and six (2003 – 2005). In the early seasons I could not understand what triggered her to be in the mood to hunt. Well, I now have some answers to my own questions and I would like to share them with you.

## Season five (2003 – 2004)

This season I changed things a little. Taking advice from some of the older falconry books, I tried to get her super fit, so I really worked on luring her. Every day I worked her hard, making her do 50-60 passes. When I felt she was ready, we moved on to the hunting ground. I wanted her as strong as possible to give her the strength to handle rooks when she caught them. But this had a very detrimental effect – she suddenly became totally focussed on me. She would not range out or look out for quarry and just hung around me waiting for the lure to be produced – so frustrating. With only seven kills to show for 87 trips out, I was very disappointed.



taken some quarry, I was joined by a friend from our local falconry club. He is an experienced rook hawk and the advice he gave me turned Xena around as a hunting falcon – I could never put my finger on what switched her on to hunt. In earlier seasons she had had her moments but was never consistent and I also worried about her getting hurt. She is game enough to chase and catch rooks but, as any rook hawk knows, if you take one on you take them all on. So, once she has caught one I need to get to her assistance as quickly as possible. The four pieces of invaluable advice I was given were as follows (in hindsight, so obvious but you're never too old to learn) :

1. Weight control
2. Programming (the rhythm method)
3. Multi-slipping
4. Urgency

### Weight control

Xena is not a large falcon and rook is a tough quarry for her. I wanted to fly her as high as possible to give her the strength to take rook. Remember, in my original article, she took it upon herself to put rook on the menu. So if she took one at, say, 11b5oz - 11b 6oz I thought it best to keep her at this higher weight. I see my mistake here – any hawk needs to be on the keen side to tackle rook, so

I discovered that I was flying her too high. I dropped her weight to around 11b4oz and she certainly chased more consistently.

### Programming – the rhythm method

It was pointed out to me that, for the last five seasons, I had programmed her to be a display bird, albeit just for me. I wanted to fly her every day, so I tried to keep her weight level. Even if she was successful, I let her have a good feed but not too much so as I could not fly her the following day. This, again, I can see is a mistake, especially as I was flying her overweight. Using the rhythm method, you feed a full crop on a kill (positive reinforcement), letting the falcon gorge herself, then take the next day off (because she will be over flying weight). This also made all the difference to her performance. Also, on the days she didn't manage to be successful, I did not over-reward her, as I had done before. Even if her weight dropped down to 11b3oz, I never worried because she was still strong on the wing. This regime programmed her that to get the quarry was good.

### Multi-slipping

"Why are you not multi-slipping?" I was asked. I think this was due to reading too many books that advised not

interfering with your bird's pattern of retrieval. In six seasons, I have never lost Xena (for more than an hour!) and was proud of my initial training in the fact that even if she is a dot in the sky, the moment I start luring she is on her way back. So I did not want to muck this up but, once again, this advice was right and as soon as I introduced multi-slipping, this gave her so many more opportunities for a kill. In fact, I would give her three or four slips in a session (with breaks in between) if she flew rooks half-heartedly the first slip. So, where as before, I would fly her once and if she missed or didn't fly them at all then I'd call her in and feed her her daily ration on the lure and call it a day, I now put the equivalent of a pick-up piece on the lure, so if I need to get her back I can and then we're ready for another go. I also got to a point where I could call her back to the fist, which also made life easier.

### Urgency

In the earlier seasons, my hunting tactic was to find a nice lofty position and cast her off, knowing there were going to be a couple of hundred rooks out feeding below me and hoping she would pick one out for herself. I was told I needed to put some urgency into her work and I started to take a little pride in my craft and tried to get closer, sneaking up on smaller groups of rooks, letting them get up in front of her to give her the desire to chase – which it did. This also helped me to get to her quicker to assist her if she managed to get onto her quarry. This is the classic 'out of hood' style. But the better flights have been when she has made height first. She can pick a rook out from a mile away and it is interesting to see how she picks which Rook to go after. But, once a flight was over, if she missed or gave up, I called her straight back to try and stop her self-hunting, thus keeping control of a flight, although I would let her gain height and wait on if there were rooks on the ground in front of us. Sometimes with the falcon in the air the rooks would sit tight and then she would shoot across the sky and plough into them. This was very exciting and produced some of her best flights. This is where I get my hunting styles mixed up, but Xena is capable of both waiting on or "out of hood", off the fist flights.



Xena after a flight.



## Zena Update

### Rooks' reaction

It's also interesting to note the rooks' reaction to Xena. I have land I solely use for exercise and once I think she is fit enough I move on to the hunting ground. When I first tried to enter her she was still overweight and not over-interested in chasing quarry. The rooks took no notice of her at all and they would continue to feed and she may attract some mobbing, but the general feel was that the rooks were not threatened (June 2005). Move on to August 2005 and it was a totally different matter. With quarry taken up to double figures through July she was hot. The moment I slipped off the hood she was straight off the fist and in pursuit of the nearest rook. She means business and don't the rooks know it! Every rook in front of us would rise in a black cloud to make their escape, they are under no illusions that they are in danger. All you can hear is their distress calls as they ring up high and this means every rook in the vicinity is on edge. Rooks instinctively know when a hawk is serious. So, unfortunately, with all this action I have had to put the display work on hold.

### Final thoughts

So, the summertime hawking really has been a revelation and Xena is suited to flying in the nicer weather.

End of May	Re-training
June	20 trips out Fitness training
July	Rooks; Jackdaw taken 23 trips out
August	12 quarry taken 15 trips out
September	13 quarry taken 14 trips out

Putting everything I have learned from my friend together, Xena has become a very consistent performer. As you can see in August/September it was almost a quarry taken every trip. This is a much better ratio. I will not deny there were a

few "muggings" involved and obviously there were young rooks around at this time of year and also adult birds heavy in the moult, so I know all this helped. She had a tendency to go easy, looking for weaker birds in the flock, which were mainly taken as they took off from the ground, but there were some decent flights sprinkled in.

Let me try to help you visualise one of my finest flights :

### Wednesday, 21 September 2005

Weight	11b3oz
Food	Full crop (rook, chick)
Time	1.00pm
Location	Pig farm
Weather	Nice day – breezy

### Comments :

The top end of the pig farm is around 200 square acres. A single track lane runs along the top, with another following the slope down to a large wood. Beyond all this are agricultural fields, I sneakily made my approach from the top lane. There were plenty of rooks out feeding in the open, so from behind a hedge I slipped off the falcon's hood and cast her off. She half-heartedly flew the closer rooks but soon gave up. She came back behind me and soon had a good height, then I

started to wander down the rough tracks between the pig pens. Looking down the valley there was a small group of rooks still feeding whilst the rest had started to ring up high. It was a beautiful day, I had got about half way down the valley and turned back to see where Xena was and at this point she slipped into top gear. From a good height she made a shallow stoop, more or less following the downward lane, then she was heading for the group of rooks and they all got up to make their escape. By now they were a good 100 feet up. Xena had one in her sights and I was amazed to see her swing down under it. She hit him a hefty blow from underneath. The rook faltered badly and headed for the nearest pig pen and Xena threw up and was straight on his tail as they disappeared into the pig pen. As all this took place, the farmer had just entered the bottom gate and witnessed the whole flight above him. He had a far better view than me and he ran straight to the pig pen to see the action. By the time I had run down (a couple of minutes) I thought he was going to help me usher the pigs to one side while I retrieved the falcon. "My God, it's you" he said. "I thought it was a wild one." Top praise indeed.



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# Hunting with Golden Eagles in the Czech Republic



**Golden Eagle on the fist.**



**Young boy with Tiercel.**

**F**alconry is an art form with variations of shade and tone depending on the raptor flown and the quarry pursued. The old adage goes; that a serious falconer should never stop learning, and it is these qualities that attracted me to this particular field sport in the first place. Ultimately my aim would be to own and fly a Golden Eagle. However, I am aware of the shortcomings I will always have regarding such ownership. I do not and will never possess the appropriate type of land, enough of the correct quarry and most importantly, I lack the time and dedication needed to bring such a complex bird to the peak of its hunting prowess.

However, thanks to the passion and professionalism of one UK falconer, I recently gained first hand experience of hunting eagles in the correct environment and at the correct quarry. Mick Young has been visiting the Czech Republic for many years and has now set up a successful falconry and hunting service. Mick offers a 24 hour guiding service and bestows the utmost attention to detail making hunting with such magnificent birds of prey as memorable as possible.

He has built two log cabins on the outskirts of Plesna, a small and beautiful village nestling in the vast landscape of the Czech/German border. To facilitate better communication Mick has taught himself German, forging strong links with many of the well respected falconers and hunting people in the area. This means he and any guests visiting are granted access to the less formal and more

intimate gatherings that take place throughout the season.

### Arrival

I booked my flight on the 17 December to Altenberg from Stanstead. On arrival I was met by one of Mick's Czech friends and was taken by car through Germany, over the border and on to the log cabin. On arrival I was met by Mick and quickly whisked off to a local bar and fed and watered in preparation for the next day.

Sunday's meet was to be a formal gathering of falconers from all over the Republic. We arrived at around 10.30am and were introduced to the group, ushered through into the hall and proffered beer, food and hot toddies. There were several Eagles on display, a haggard Gos, a couple of Peregrines, assorted hybrids and a juvenile Harris Hawk. Most impressively a small boy of around eight years old was in possession of his own Peregrine falcon.

Once all group members had arrived we made our way to the edge of the permission for the official opening, this took the form of a small speech and tune on a hunting horn, a blessing for the quarry we were after and the hawks we were to fly.

The field split into two groups and the falcons were to be flown first. The second, smaller group of Eagles moved further into the distance on the far side of the land to be worked in readiness for any deer that may be flushed. The landscape consisted of massive wind open agricultural fields with strips and bands of sand brown brush and marsh. The concentration of quarry was second to none, I personally bumped up a Hare and the dogs flushed many singles and several coveys of pheasant.

Two of the falcons gave a passable account of themselves on the wild pheasant, but failed to make good their promise. One of them checked at pigeon and although the flight was entertaining the result was not. By the time the first group had pushed through the brush it was clear there were no deer and so the field master agreed that the Eagles would separate and take a short journey to a much more productive spot.

Ten minutes from vacating the car our line had flushed about four deer, but

missed each one. The wood was reasonably tight and the huge wing span of these big females coupled with the deer's agility meant the sustained open ground flight needed was not possible. The eagles battled valiantly but the race was un-matched in terms of manoeuvrability.

### Eagles back in line

With the Eagles back under control, the line once again moved forward. Five minutes further on Mick and a Czech falconer flushed a small roe that broke right. They were on the edge of a clearing thick with thigh high bramble and the deer was struggling with the cover, making only slow progress in front of me. The Eagle took flight, moved out over the ground in a slow low powerful flight. By now the deer had reached the edge of the forest, no more than 20ft from where I stood. The eagle pulled up heavily and sharply, the giant wings folded and she went in to a short stoop hitting the ground hard.

The struggle between the roe and the Eagle began in earnest. The sheer scale of the combatants and the unfolding battle was stunning. I had not come for the grace and finesse of a falcon, but for the force of power and majesty an Eagle of this size commands. Watching this massive Eagle attempt to get on terms and over power the flailing deer was a sight I shall not easily forget.

However, no sooner had it started than it was over, the roe deer was up on its feet and making its way towards me. I hollered out and as the deer veered right once again, a second falconer deep in the forest let slip his Eagle. Under threat and with adrenaline pumping, the roe dropped a gear, shifted off and quickly melted away between the closely planted pine trees. All in all it was the most enthralling pursuit I have ever witnessed.

After this meet the Eagles were a little overweight and quite possibly not in sharp enough condition, so the next two days were spent sight seeing, taking in the abundant wildlife and visiting the local bars and restaurants.

### Fishing venue

On one visit we called into a hotel Mick

was planning to use as a fishing venue during the summer months. After looking at the sizable carp lakes, we made our way back to the car through the thick snow, when suddenly a pigeon thudded into the floor no more than a dozen meters in front of us. We looked up and saw the telephone cable shaking violently and to the right of us about 30 foot up, a wild Tiercel was tail chasing another pigeon.

We watched open mouthed and with awe as the falcon got closer and closer to the twisting and turning pigeon. In a slow motion movement the Peregrine stretched his legs out and grasped at the panicked pigeon. It dropped sharply and threw the Tiercel imperceptibly off course. Turning once more the pigeon headed left and landed un-gracefully in the courtyard of the hotel.

Remembering the pigeon at our feet, the Czech falconer moved towards it, startling it into a thin line of willow trees snaking along a small stream. From out of the snow laden sky another Peregrine came streaking down on a long low stoop. It was another miss, and as we watched the falcon disappear, we were un-sure whether it was in fact a separate Peregrine, or possibly the same one which had forced the first bird into the snow no more than 30 seconds previously.

After a quieter, earlier night, I was sharp for the following day and cooked a late breakfast of eggs, fresh bread and thick smoked bacon on the little wood burner in the log cabin. By about 11am we were ready and set forth to meet up with two of Mick's friends, both of whom would be flying their Eagles.

Once in the field both Eagles were released and allowed to follow on in a cast as we made across the snow swept tundra. These two particular falconers are very close friends and fly their Eagles in this way frequently. To be allowed access to this style of flying and to watch these large and potentially dangerous females work alongside us was something that I never thought possible. I was accustomed to watching Harris Hawks flown in this way, but with raptors of this size and on this scale, the experience was almost surreal.

### New quarry

Soon enough we began to flush a wide range of suitably sized quarry. A large Hare got up and shot across the rock hard arable field and then a fox moved away up a steep slope and disappeared through the trees. However both Eagles swayed on the thick branches, then set off towards the horizon line in a totally different direction. The focus and the power of the flight became markedly different than the relaxed following on flights through the trees. In recognition of this fact we were off and running at full pace as a small group of deer traversed the edge of the old lake bed. It was at around the 732m mark, with my heart bursting through my mouth and the morning's breakfast making its way up my throat, did I realise that it is not just the eagles that needed to be fit.

One eagle was sweeping left across the open ground and was looking to cut off the small herd as they exited right out of the trees and into the open. The bigger of the two females was making slow progress, but gaining from behind. The deer kept on going and the Eagles kept on following. As a single deer broke from the group and out of the tree line, one Eagle was less than three feet away. But the open ground found favour with the agility of the deer and it dropped a gear and took off.

Picking up the Eagles we caught our breath for 10 minutes and made our way over to what looked like an old river bed with waist high brush and reeds. Mick and I followed one of the falconers as he moved to higher ground and immediately the Eagle took after a Hare. It quickly became clear that the previous flight had taken its toll as the Hare swallowed up the zinc white earth and the Eagle turned and coasted down onto a nearby tree.

As I turned to watch the flight, the Eagle that remained on the fist suddenly bated forward. As the falconer struggled to right his charge, a large female deer lifted its head in the centre of the cover. I let out a holler and the roe took off past the falconer with the furiously bating Eagle. Once it had been righted she was let free and took off in pursuit of the fleeing quarry. Unfortunately, it was not to be, as the three second delay had given the roe a life saving head start. A spirited flight but the difference was

too huge to cover and at about 900 yards the female landed gently on the ground.

### Common quarry in Czech Republic

Hunting wild boar, fallow and red deer is very common in the Czech Republic and all over the landscape, dotted amongst the brush and on the edge of woodland are high seats for shooting. On the way back to the car we passed one set tucked neatly in a slight dip, with light cover surrounding it. With the nose of a good falconer Mick's investigation flushed a roe that double backed and veered left running towards the furthest falconer.

As it came into view the deer stalled at the sight of a huge Eagle moving in a slow and deliberate manner and on course for collision. Realising the situation the deer went into reverse running back towards Mick but at a slight angle. The Eagle carried on towards it but took station on top of the hide as the eighth deer of the day specked out at the furthest point of the horizon.

From its lofty position the Eagle spotted movement in the far distance and took off in pursuit of quarry out of sight. Running to the crest of the hill we could see a drainage ditch and frozen pond. Maintaining a full running speed we made it to the first set of trees and clattered through them. Harder and harder we ran only slowing to a gentle pace and bending double as we hit the edge of the lake. The stench emanating from the Eagle's feet was a sweet sickly smell of a fox in fear.

The big Female was sat atop a tree stump, its orange/gold crest and pointed feather fanned out in excitable rage. The scuffed snow and delicate footprints indicated that the fox had fought bravely, broken free and had slipped down the steep bank and out along a drainage ditch. The Eagle being so big had been un-able to skip between the roots, but she had made a valiant attempt as the



### Golden Eagle in flight.

soaked chest and tail feathers attested.

For the final part of the day we agreed to box up the now wet and smelly Eagle and take the other one over to fresh ground around 15 minutes away. This ground resides in between deep and cavernous mountain sides, with an ancient and stunning white washed Palace at its centre.

### Eagle fitness

The rest of the day was a series of misses as the true fitness of the remaining Eagle was tested to the full by around eight or 10 fully grown deer. With the light fading fast we returned to the car and then skidded through deep snow drifts to the local hunting lodge for a beer and shared conversation of hunting days past.

All-in-all, the four days of adventure that Mick Young offered was second to none. To be allowed access to other styles of flying, different methods, a different culture and a new landscape is something every falconer should aim for. To witness the full majesty and glory of a hunting Golden Eagle in this context makes it especially so. So, the added bonus of witnessing wild European Eagle Owls, Shrike, wild Peregrines, Goshawks, Buzzards, Storks and Stone Martins made it a singularly life affirming experience. It is certainly one place I aim to re-visit, not least to taste the meat of an Eagle caught deer.

For further information about falconry and hunting in the Czech Republic contact Mick Young at Pivoni@hotmail.com

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# British Falconers' Club International Field Meeting 2006



**Earl of Yarborough giving the opening speech.**

longwings and broadwings were an impressive sight weathering on the large lawn in front of the hotel. After the opening speeches, the falconers dispersed in small groups to various pre-allocated locations throughout the county.

I was with a group of longwings including Jeff Cockel, Anthony Rhodes, Paul Jowett, Antony Crosswell, Nick Dearing, Chris Southern, Elias Phaygain and Graham Irving, who was chauffeur to myself and a young female apprentice falconer from the USA, named Summer Hargraves.

It took us a while to find the correct land on which we were to fly but we eventually parked up just as quarry had been seen. First up was Chris Southern with his bird but unfortunately, because of the weather conditions, it did not gain a great deal of height and as the quarry was flushed the bird was not successful. When Chris was not flying his bird, he was filming with the intention of making a DVD of the event.

Just after midday we came across a pond which contained quite a few mallard and Elias Phaygain was the falconer to try his luck – unfortunately again he was not successful. At this point, we were joined by James Measures who is the landowner over which we were flying. He took us to another part of his estate and, after we parked our vehicles, he produced a bottle of sloe gin and offered everyone a drink – a most hospitable host!



**The Petwood Hotel – base for the meet.**



**The birds weathering on the lawn.**

**T**he BFC International Field Meeting was once again held at the Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire and many falconers from both Britain and abroad attended the event, which ran from 3 to 7 October. The field meeting is held every four years and was started in 1969 by Doctor Ridley

MacPhall after he visited field meetings in Germany and Austria and realised that a field meeting on a similar scale could be organised in Britain for members of the BFC.

This year the event was opened by the Earl of Yarborough who owns the Brocklesby Estate in Lincolnshire. On the day that I attended (Wednesday) eagles,



At this point it was Anthony Rhodes' turn to put up his Peregrine as we had seen a cock pheasant in a small copse at the end of a dyke. The pheasant was put up with the help of Paul Jowett's black working Cocker Spaniel, Jack, who was an exceptional young dog. It was not one of the greatest stoops ever seen due to the Peregrine's lack of height but the bird chased the pheasant and made contact not 30 feet away from where we were standing. At last, we had our first success of the day!

On another part of the estate we had spotted partridge and Elias Phaygain took another turn to fly his bird, but unfortunately it flew off into the distance and was eventually picked up having despatched a pigeon. Obviously, this was not what was intended.

Later on in the afternoon Patrick Morel arrived after having had a very long journey from his home in Belgium. We had already spotted some more partridge and Patrick got out his Peregrine and his Pointer dog which quartered the ground and flushed the quarry. The Peregrine did gain a good height and we saw the best stoop of the day – not bad despite just arriving after a long day's travelling - would you believe it! On this occasion, the Peregrine was not successful and after he



Getting a falcon ready for the first flight of the day.

put the bird back into the car Patrick brought out a Tiercel. Once again his Pointer quartered the ground and put up a partridge and with a good stoop the bird got its quarry.

By this time it was getting late in the day and we had time for one more flight, again at the duck pond, this time by Antony Crosswell. He put his bird up and, together with three other falconers in the group, made his way to the pond ready to flush the mallard. However, Antony's bird

stooped down behind the tree line at the side of the pond and about 15 seconds later around 200 mallard took to the air. Frustratingly the falcon did not chase even one of them!

These were some of the flights from my first day at the BFC meet and I would like to thank Nick Kester for giving me the opportunity to attend. My thanks also go to all who were in our group, both falconers and spectators alike, for making the day most enjoyable.

**IBR Lost, Found, Reunited & Stolen birds of prey from 16 March to 27 September 2006.**

Part of the ring number has been replaced with an ? for security reasons. The IBR would like to thank all of those people that helped to reunite and look after found birds. If you think one of these birds is yours or you think you may know the owner, - please contact us. If you have reported losing a bird it is **LOGGED** on the database and **REMAINS** on the **LOST LIST** until **WE** are told differently.

REF	SPECIES	RING#
<b>STOLEN x 9</b>		
23980	HARRIS HAWK	5038RR
33656	HARRIS HAWK	UK77138
34821	HARRIS HAWK	IBR29846W
47160	HARRIS HAWK	5450
48386	HARRIS HAWK	IBR47526W
52328	PEREGRINE/GYR HYBRID	DBNA140010183
28817	RED-TAILED HAWK	IBR27753YA
53228	RED-TAILED HAWK	
43485	SNOWY OWL	IBR38113Z
<b>REUNITED x 126</b>		
32241	BALD EAGLE	
6083	BARN OWL	x12
4484	COMMON BUZZARD	x4
43078	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	x2
40678	FERRUGINOUS HAWK	x2
47193	GOLDEN STEPPES	
14417	GOSHAWK	x4
10589	GYR HYBRIDS	x7
2730	HARRIS HAWKS	x37
28374	HOODED VULTURE	x2
47842	INDIAN EAGLE OWL	x2
25789	KESTREL	x4
3874	LANNER FALCONS	x9
2793	LANNER/SAKER FALCON	
53198	MERLIN	
21319	PEREGRINE FALCONS	x8
52899	PEREGRINE HYBRIDS	x12

35559	RAVEN	x 2
6414	RED-TAILED HAWK	x 4
10207	SAKER FALCON	x 10
46412	SPARROWHAWK	
<b>LOST x 114</b>		
6115	BARN OWL	?073JU
17364	BARN OWL	?5606U
25036	BARN OWL	?0532U
30669	BARN OWL	?6775U
31924	BARN OWL	?6924U
32641	BARN OWL	?7386U
43169	BARN OWL	?0647U
43655	BARN OWL	?51BC04U
46552	BARN OWL	?6937U
52549	BARN OWL	?0461U
52832	BARN OWL	?58FC0203
52886	BARN OWL	?141BC99U
52887	BARN OWL	?142BC99U
52889	BARN OWL	?0330U
52900	BARN OWL	?0DM06U
53115	BARN OWL	?3DCM06U
53224	BARN OWL	?60BC00U
53249	BARN OWL	?PEG06U
53300	BARN OWL	?5L04U
14343	GOSHAWK	?3000W
53415	GOSHAWK	?1933V
53416	GREAT HORNED OWL	?AK02Y
27824	GYR BARBARY HYBRID	?8875W / ?88098W
53457	GYR BARBARY HYBRID	?916W
49080	GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID	?2285 / ?11608W
53450	GYR/PEREGRINE X BARBARY	?WHC06W / ?22679W
42536	GYR/PEREGRINE/SAKER	?911W
44666	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?55X / ?3138X
52916	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?887W / ?038X
52924	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?048X
52934	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?887W / ?038X
52978	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?953W
53013	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?001W / ?644X
53065	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?880DOEX
53128	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?664P
53497	GYR/SAKER FALCON	?681W
2531	HARRIS HAWK	?342W / ?6885W
11898	HARRIS HAWK	?3590W
18231	HARRIS HAWK	?8124W
23391	HARRIS HAWK	?1310W

29657	HARRIS HAWK	?8402W
31139	HARRIS HAWK	?8811W
32476	HARRIS HAWK	?93359W
34185	HARRIS HAWK	?9716W
35259	HARRIS HAWK	?9949W
35623	HARRIS HAWK	?9996W
39740	HARRIS HAWK	?6534W
40525	HARRIS HAWK	?0T04W / ?1821W
40551	HARRIS HAWK	?712 / ?7077W
40955	HARRIS HAWK	?7017W
41310	HARRIS HAWK	?6993W
43633	HARRIS HAWK	?3042W
43944	HARRIS HAWK	?22518W
44729	HARRIS HAWK	?878W
49134	HARRIS HAWK	?8269W
51220	HARRIS HAWK	?4000W
52429	HARRIS HAWK	?834
52541	HARRIS HAWK	?82002
52705	HARRIS HAWK	?W697
52800	HARRIS HAWK	?5P598W / ?1493W
52896	HARRIS HAWK	?CJT06W
53230	HARRIS HAWK	?PRF98W
53508	HARRIS HAWK	?4BC04W
4482	KESTREL	?SD975 / ?77805
15202	KESTREL	?11125
30377	KESTREL	?95225
40649	KESTREL	?96415
44831	KESTREL	?02325
44832	KESTREL	?02335
44837	KESTREL	?02385
48639	KESTREL	?776965
52940	KESTREL	?778PROSS
1550	LANNER FALCON	?C2
52941	LANNER FALCON	?353
53183	LANNER FALCON	?YOOONEKN06W
53302	LANNER FALCON	?065W
52817	MERLIN	?159R / ?1183P
53231	MERLIN	?439R
47654	PEREGRINE FALCON	?1119V / ?14274W
52999	PEREGRINE FALCON	?0335W
53473	PEREGRINE FALCON	?121W
53513	PEREGRINE FALCON	?181DOEW
14321	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID	?865V / ?3862W
52893	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID	?911V / ?875W
53080	PEREGRINE/MERLIN	?8375
19544	PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID	?959V / ?8317V

48078 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?6289W / ?7476W

49295 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?3166W

52885 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?836W / ?1500W

52918 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?782V / ?1495W

52926 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?394W

53138 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?703V

53163 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?43V / ?441W

53459 PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID ?513W

52630 PERLIN ?633S / ?650T

52631 RED KITE ?1A0712903318

10453 RED-TAILED HAWK ?254Y

22814 RED-TAILED HAWK ?3216Y

41192 RED-TAILED HAWK ?YONX / ?9505X

47602 RED-TAILED HAWK ?FC02X / ?3207X

48512 RED-TAILED HAWK ?3206X

36505 RUFUS THIGHED OWL ?5056U

22035 SAKER FALCON ?9206W

38410 SAKER FALCON ?1173X

43348 SAKER FALCON ?2375W

44328 SAKER FALCON ?2849W

53176 SAKER FALCON ?559W

53220 SAKER FALCON ?8801W

53378 SAKER FALCON ?1LB

53396 SAKER FALCON ?999W

45687 SPARROWHAWK ?4552R

52927 SPARROWHAWK ?93R

43062 TAWNY OWL ?1482U

48930 TAWNY OWL ?7992U

**FOUND x 12**

51216 AFRICAN BARN OWL ?N73

20083 BARN OWL ?140A97U

39873 BARN OWL ?3784U

53182 BARN OWL ?233

51219 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL ?28C99Z

52881 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL ?DC03Z

53161 EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL ?CB04UZ

53495 HARRIS HAWK ?A02W

53098 INDIAN EAGLE OWL ?999Y

53012 KESTREL ?77334

53041 LANNER FALCON ?34DOEW

32428 PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID ?345W / ?9322W

**Independent Bird Register**

**Tel: 0870 608 8500**

# Club Directory

Join and support your local club today!

## The Central Falconry & Raptor Club

*Founded in 1988*

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

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

### CLUB MISSION STATEMENT

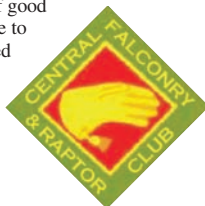
The mission statement of the C.F.R.C. is to offer people the opportunity to embrace all aspects of Falconry in a spirit of good companionship. There will be a warm welcome to people of all ages, whether they are experienced falconers, novices, or families.

For more information e-mail:

[cen.falc@ic24.net](mailto:cen.falc@ic24.net) or phone

John Hill 07973 224609

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



## The Welsh Hawking Club



### South Wales Region

2nd Monday of the month at The Rat Trap Hotel, Usk.  
Further details from Dave Dimond Tel: 01179 324845

### North Wales Region

1st Tuesday of every month at The Robin Hood Pub, Helsby.  
Regional Secretary: Neil McCann - 0151 929 3402.

### Essex Region

2nd Tuesday in each month at The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, near Colchester.  
Regional Secretary: Ray Hooper - 01206 251765

### South West Region

3rd Monday of the month at The Ley Arms, Kenn, nr. Exeter.  
Regional Secretary: Kevin Mosedale - 01392 833681

### Yorkshire Region

Meetings take place at The George & Dragon, 81 Main St, Wentworth, Barnsley  
Regional Chairman: Glyn Treloar - 01709 326865



## Brittany Club of Great Britain

For information and help on all aspects of this versatile breed phone Paul Yarrow on

**01621 817728**

or e-mail:- [bonapartistbrittanys@hotmail.com](mailto:bonapartistbrittanys@hotmail.com)

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Contact our Falconry rep, Tony Ellis, on:-

**01666 510067**

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

## Northern England Falconry Club

*Club meets the first Wednesday of each month at :-*

**Richardson Arms. Bradford Road  
A638 to Low Moor 1 mile from junction 26.  
M62 (M606)**

*Contact: Phil: on*

**01274 815797 or 07795030640**

## The Cleveland Hawking Club

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Monthly meets on the first Sunday of the month at 6.30pm.

Venue:-

**The Falcon Inn, Hilton near Thornaby-on-Tees**

*For further information contact:-*

**Lee Copeland on 07802 251502**

**or Ray Grange on 01642 291817**

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

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

## BRITISH FALCONERS' CLUB

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**Dave - Membership Secretary**

**THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB (F.M.)**

**01253 859062** (evenings)

## The South East Falconry Group

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

Drawing its membership from around the South and East of England, the SEFG provides a forum for falconers and would-be falconers to meet, discuss and practice the art.

Members benefit from having access to a wealth of experience and knowledge, good facilities and field meeting opportunities throughout the winter months.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*Further details from:*

**Tommy Bryce**  
**01620 850209**

★ We are a D.E.F.R.A. recognised club ★

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or e-mail to **[secretary@thebha.co.uk](mailto:secretary@thebha.co.uk)**



*Yorkshire Falconry Club*

Our meetings take place at 8.00pm on the third Wednesday of each month at the **Rockingham Arms Public House, Wentworth, Rotherham, South Yorkshire.**

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Membership includes;

- Public liability insurance
- Affiliation to the Hawk Board

For further information please telephone Steven on

**07736 319 347**

or

visit our website

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



# Club Directory



## **South Eastern Raptors Association (S.E.R.A.)**

Established for some 25 years, and now affiliated to the Hawk Board and holding group membership to the Countryside Alliance, the aims of S.E.R.A. are to further and maintain the standards of falconry in the South-East of England. With a broad band of knowledge and experience within our club, we extend a warm welcome to new members, whether practising falconers or complete novices. Where practicable, novices will be allocated a mentor. Helpful, honest and friendly advice is always available.

**Our meetings are held at 10.30am on the second Sunday of each month throughout the year at The Junction Inn - Groombridge, Kent. (Opposite Groombridge Station)**

Outings, guest speakers, field meets, (at home and away) videos, quizzes and other special events are ever-present features of our club calendar and may be viewed on our website.



Please visit our website at: [www.sera.freereserve.co.uk](http://www.sera.freereserve.co.uk) or telephone Brian for information on: **01732 463218**

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## **Lancashire Falconry & Hawking Club**

*Meetings held at:-*

**The Sand Knockers, Halifax Road,  
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For information contact:

**07711 514073**

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



## **HOME COUNTIES HAWKING CLUB**

***Affiliated to the Hawk Board.***

***Group member of the Countryside Alliance.***

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

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

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

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

## **THE CHESHIRE HAWKING CLUB**

*Meetings:- Held 2nd Tuesday of every month at 8pm.*

*Venue:- Railway Hotel, Mill Lane, Heatley,  
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A photo study of a Barn Owl on a post.



Resting after a morning flight.

“Every year we visit the same 70 breeding sites and we generally find young owlets in most nests. This year one third of the sites we have visited had no signs of Barn Owl occupation at all, let alone nesting. One third have had single adult birds, which implies their partners didn’t make it through the winter and most of the adult pairs that did survive show no signs of breeding. This lack of nesting success, on top of the high mortality means a further reduction in the British population.

“The phenomenon is not limited to the South West as conservationists in other parts of the UK are reporting similar findings. John Lightfoot from the Shropshire Barn Owl Group normally expects to find 40 nests at the sites he monitors, this year he found three. We have also had similar reports from Sussex, Wiltshire and other areas”, added David.

It’s natural for Barn Owl populations to go through peaks and troughs like any other species. However, the sheer amount of mortality and the high frequency of nest failure is a serious setback for the species recovery. Global warming is thought to be behind many of the extreme weather patterns in

recent years. Virtually every year has record-breaking weather and prolonged extreme conditions are bad news for Barn Owls. The thought that climate change may significantly hinder the recovery of this national treasure is a huge worry to those concerned with Barn Owl conservation in the UK.

Registered in 1988 the Barn Owl Trust is the only UK charity working solely to conserve the Barn Owl and its environment. The main areas of the Trust’s work are practical conservation, education, provision of information and research. Visit [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) for details. A new and more up-to-date website will be launched later this year.

# Disastrous year for Barn Owls

*Barn Owl Trust*

**T**he forecast for Britain’s Barn Owl population is extremely bleak following the worst breeding season for over 20 years. Barn Owls are a Schedule One Protected Species and under UK law they have as much protection as any species can have (included on Schedule One of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). Between 1932 and 1998 the Barn Owl population declined from over 12,000 pairs to less than 3,000.

A huge amount of conservation work has taken place and the future was looking brighter for this graceful and much loved native bird after a long history of decline. However, this year’s appalling breeding season has been a severe set-back for the UK Barn Owl population.

Records of dead or injured Barn Owls reported to the Barn Owl Trust between January and July 2006 tripled in comparison to 2005. Below average temperatures in March caused reduced levels of prey activity causing higher than normal owl mortality. The birds were then hit with well above average rainfall in May, which further reduced hunting success. Those birds that did attempt to breed nested much later and laid fewer eggs than in a normal year.

Conservationists in the South West have discovered that at least two out of three traditional breeding sites have failed to produce young this year. This is particularly disappointing following the gradual

## Did you know?

Barn Owls have unique adaptations allowing them to achieve silent flight, this means their feathers are easily waterlogged and they generally avoid hunting when it is raining.

Cold temperatures suppress activity in the Barn Owl prey species (small mammals such as Field Voles, Common Shrews and Long-tailed Field Mice). Less activity means that small mammals are harder to find and catch.

A female Barn Owl will not begin to breed and lay eggs unless a sufficient supply of food is provided by its mate. The number of eggs laid, hatching success and the survival of young is largely controlled by food supply.

increase of Barn Owls in the wild over the last 10 years. David Ramsden, Head of Conservation at the Barn Owl Trust based in Devon said,

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