

# INTERNATIONAL FALCONER

NOVEMBER 2002

ISSUE 15



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# INTERNATIONAL FALCONER

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Cover photo by Seth Anthony.  
Goshawk on brown hare.

# EDITORIAL

Well it needed to be big and it was; the Liberty & Livelihood March made history on 22 September as 407,791 rural protesters converged on the streets of Central London - the largest demonstration ever seen in the United Kingdom.

The television coverage was very poor and didn't begin to put across the sheer scale of the event. Personally I've never experienced anything like it. The spontaneous eruptions of whistles, wailing horns and cheering were at times almost deafening - the atmosphere was absolutely electric. I think the memory that will stick in my mind the most is the huge wave of Scottish Countryside Alliance supporters passing us as we queued for the start, with Scottish flags flying and bagpipes playing - this undoubtedly raised the biggest cheers of all. It really was a day that I for one will remember.

Almost straight off the back of the March was the British Falconers' Club International Field Meet. It was nothing short of superb and the organising team must be congratulated on putting together such an incredible event. It was wonderful to meet so many overseas falconers there - this sport of ours truly is a worldwide passion.

We have another packed issue for you and I'm also delighted to welcome Nick Kester to the *IF* editorial team. You already know Nick through his excellent articles that he regularly contributes, and he's now taking the position of News Editor to keep us informed of all things happening in the global falconry community.

Enjoy the issue,

Seth

#### IMPORTANT - NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Editor wishes to point out that *International Falconer* features articles from across the world which inevitably include a variety of management, training and hunting methods. Some practices in one country/state may not be legal in another. It is the responsibility of the falconer to know and strictly adhere to the laws and regulations relevant to the area(s) he/she lives and hawks in. For the good of the sport NEVER do anything that you are not entirely sure is legal.

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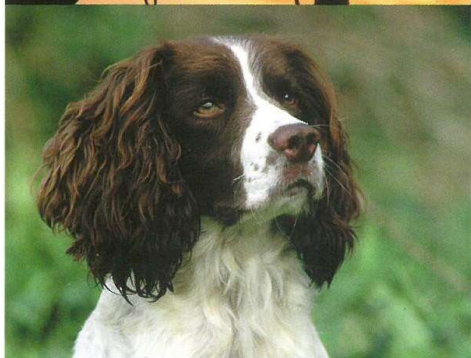
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## INTERNATIONAL FALCONER



# WEST NILE VIRUS - a North American nightmare

A deadly virus is sweeping through the North American raptor population: it also affects horses and humans (some 183 Americans have died this year). Scientists are now asking whether it is local to the USA and Canada, or whether there are global implications. What are the causes, the carriers and the cure?

It appears that West Nile Virus (WNV) has been around in Europe and Africa for some time – possibly un-noticed because locally infected species have developed an immunity that enables the virus to come and go without denting populations to such an extent that it shows up in monitoring. However, in the USA and Canada the impacts on first the corvid and now the raptor populations has been alarming. Sufficiently so as to set alarm bells ringing throughout the global falconry community.

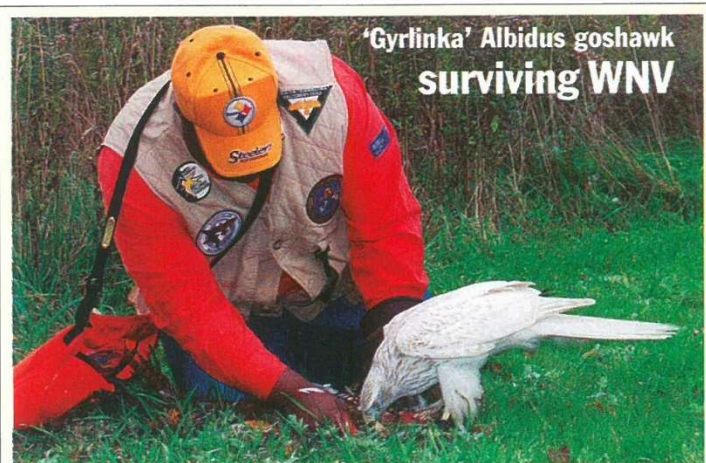
Carried by mosquitoes (and possibly by hippoboscids or flat flies) this virulent strain of the disease was first spotted in the East Coast states in 1999 but has now moved across the continent with a case (in a raven) being reported by David Johnson, Columbia River Policy Co-ordinator in Washington DC. The initial casualties were corvids (crows and jays) but in the last year raptors have been infected. At a Vineland, Ontario centre where owls are bred for wild release, Kay McKeever lost 74 owls; whilst in a Missouri location three out of five captive golden eagles have died. And the reports continue: "We received 67 birds. Seven are still alive," said Mona Rutger, director of Back to the Wild in Castalia. "The ones that are recovering are permanently impaired."

North American falconers are traditionally fast to respond to such

threats. Dr Patrick Redig, director of the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota and his team are working flat out to understand the virus and to develop a vaccine. There is a horse vaccine but no evidence that it is effective on raptors. However, Dr Redig needs \$175,000 to carry out his work and North American Falconers' Association President, Darryl Perkins, is coordinating this fundraising on

behalf of American falconers.

Reports in the British press that the virus has been found in UK specimens are still unclear. Current theory is that WNV has been in Europe for years, but, says avian vet, John Chitty from Andover in Hampshire, England, there is little research and the discovery that the virus once existed in an avian corpse is of little use.



Darryl Perkins got Gyrlinka, an Albidus goshawk at 24 days in June of this year. On September 8, he got up to go to the bathroom at 4:00 am. As Gyrlinka was raised in his living room, he checked on her as usual. She was sitting on her elbows with her head in a tucked in position, her beak resting on her breast and with one eye closed. She tried to get up and wobbled as if drunk. Darryl managed to get her up on the glove but her head remained in the tucked position and she was unable to open one eye. He placed her on the floor where she proceeded to act in a neurological manner. By 5:00 am she was still wobbly with the eye drooping as he headed to Tufts University Wildlife Clinic. Blood was drawn and x-rays taken. Her blood work came back negative except that her Aspergillosis titer was weak positive at 1.6. She was treated with 1.3 ml of Sporonox (itraconazole) by mouth every 12 hours for the Asper. The eye continued to droop for a few days and occasionally she seemed unsteady. Her appetite improved and Darryl flew her for the first time on October 20th. She is now gaining strength with every flight.

"There is no 'cure' says Darryl. "That's why it's terribly important that research is done and a vaccine created. The only thing that can be done is supportive care. Plenty of good food and fluids and minimize stress."

"What is needed is to find out where the virus was ten years ago and to work forwards so as to prove activity and/or immunity in the native population," says Chitty.

The way the disease has worked in North America demonstrates some risk for global raptors, although the fact that birds migrate many thousands of miles and mosquito populations vary (there are mosquitoes in Britain but not malaria) might mitigate some of the dangers. In the North American case, introduction was probably by importation. The population is technically described as 'naive' – without resistance – however there is a population of European house sparrows in the USA which, says Chitty, despite being largely resistant will be capable of amplifying the virus so that it grows in the host before being passed on to other more susceptible birds; and in North America this currently numbers 118 species including many raptors such as great-horned owls, red-tailed hawks, goshawks, merlins, gyrfalcons, Cooper's hawks and bald eagles. What the American conservationists really fear is that it will infect the small and highly endangered population of Californian condor.

How the strain varies from its origins in Africa is something that Patrick Redig's research must discover, for there is a positive trade in raptors from North America into Europe and the Middle East and thus a danger of re-importation of a variant back to the source area.

As Dr Redig's position paper states: "The most pressing need is the development of vaccination and diagnostic methods. The former to protect valuable and vulnerable populations of captive birds, and the latter to have accurate laboratory methodologies that would permit diagnosis on an ante-mortem basis."

He ends: "The emergence of this introduced virus has forever

eclipsed the landscape of infectious diseases in raptors and other avian species. It is imperative that we develop the resources required to deal with this disease...to protect our raptors and our country against similar agents..."



#### **A letter from the presidents of the IAF and NAFA:**

Dear Falconry Friends,

Falconry, as a legitimate field sport faces daily challenges from all sides. Be it from those who oppose all types of hunting and field sport, or government officials who have no concept of our way of life to the constant need in this ever-shrinking world to find suitable places to hunt and quarry to fly. We are now faced with a foe that threatens the very core of our existence for it attacks the most important element of our sport. The raptors we fly.

This foe, West Nile Virus, has wreaked havoc this spring and summer in North America and has the potential for worldwide distribution and destruction. The implications are far reaching when we consider the international movement of raptors.

Among others, there is an effort underway to research and combat WNV spearheaded by University of Minnesota Raptor Center Director Dr. Pat Redig. Dr. Redig is raising funds to determine if transmission could occur through digested meals from infected prey or parasitic flies and to develop a raptor specific vaccination against WNV.

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey and the North American Falconers' Association jointly endorse this effort. Getting WNV under control is vital to our sport and to the health and welfare of all raptors.

Monies for this research can be donated to an account in the University of Minnesota Foundation. They will be receipted by the Foundation as tax-deductible contributions. Cheques or international money orders should be made payable to The University of Minnesota and sent to Dr. Redig at 1920 Fitch Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108 USA.

Yours in the Sport,

Patrick Morel  
President IAF  
(International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey)

Darryl A. Perkins  
President, NAFA  
(North American Falconers' Association)

## 5th Canadian National Meet. Milk River - Alberta, 2002

October 8th 2002 saw the beginning of the 5th Canadian national meet since its inception in 1994. For the first time ever it was held outside of Saskatchewan and the Alberta Falconry Association had the privilege of hosting it in Milk River, Alberta.

The initial venue of choice was Hanna since it is where the Alberta Falconry Association has recently started holding their provincial meets. However central Alberta has suffered some of the worst drought conditions in over 100 years that have led to significant reductions in the abundance and size of ponds in the region. The town of Hanna is located within the southern part of this region. Although paradoxical, the Milk River region and much of southern Alberta experienced early season floods, which spared the southern region from drought conditions. Pre-season scouting in July confirmed Milk River to have ample water and ducks, (the bread and butter of any North American field meet), together with the usual high hun and good grouse population. There were also more suitable areas to find rabbits. Hence the decision to move the venue in the 11th hour.

During the event we had some challenging weather conditions. Strong winds, for which the area is renowned for, proved a challenge for most birds, however once they learned to handle the winds it sure did offer a new dynamic to the hawking. Driving sleet, snow and even hail came on the Friday providing some pretty extreme conditions that tested both falconer and bird. The snow proved to be a godsend the following days when the abundance of game became even more evident.

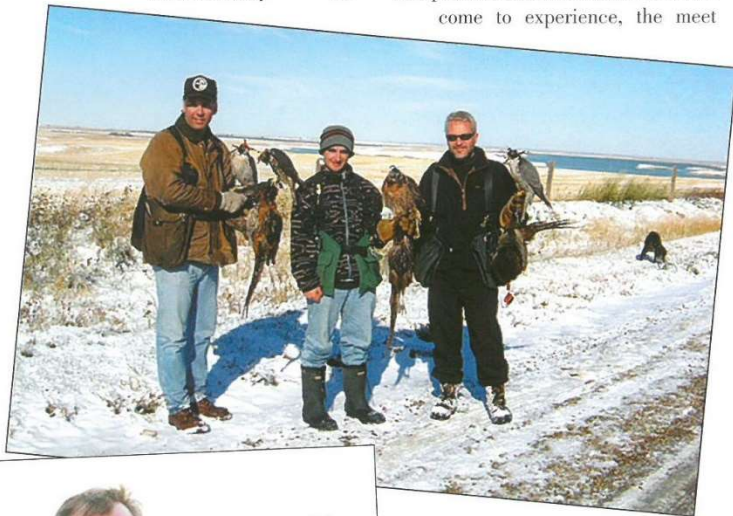
Visitors attended from Utah,

Oregon, North Dakota, Washington and Montana not to mention Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and of course the hosting province of Alberta. A special mention goes to Carl Cheshire who made it all the way from the UK just for the meet.

Unfortunately no

Hooke from Manitoba with his bald eagle and Bob Smirfitt with his red-tail from B.C. together with Alberta's Jo Turley and her red-tail put some pressure on the local lagamorph population.

As with the highs and lows that all who practice this noble art have or will come to experience, the meet



**Above: L to R.**  
**Dave Knutson of Washington with gyrfalcon and peregrine and hun and eyas tiercel peales with pheasant.**  
**Bob Smirfitt from B.C. with red-tail and pheasant**  
**Mark Williams from Alberta with gyrfalcon and pheasant.**



**Left: Burt Loesberg of Oregon with Rosey his peregrine and the only sharptail caught at the meet.**

falconers from eastern Canada were able to attend.

Hungarian partridge and ducks proved particularly abundant but some pheasants and sharptails started to show once we found where they were hiding. Due to the unseasonable weather many of the crops were still standing or laying as swath so much of the intended hawking grounds were inaccessible. Rabbits were there but again took some searching. Ken

was no exception. Alistair Franke's female *anatum* went AWOL for a few days prior to the meet and was found 4 days later safe and sound, much to everybody's delight on the official first day of the meet. Sadly our celebration was dampened later that same day by Terry Spring's tragic and unnecessary loss to electrocution of his beloved white 3/4 gyr 1/4 Saker hybrid Lucky. Terry put on a brave face and soldiered through the rest of the meet with the younger brother to Lucky.

The rest of the meet went very well and somewhat uneventful by comparison except for some pretty amazing hawking. Of particular note was Dave Knutson's eyas of the year peale's tiercel he bred named 'Lil Nicky'. What a consistently high flying and effective game hawk it is turning out to be.

The raffle was the best ever seen at a Canadian National Meet and it was not over until after midnight. Such a variety of raffle prizes ranging from a pointer and a setter, a peregrine, radio telemetry from the big 3 manufacturers, Marshall, Luksander and Merlin Systems, limited edition Beebe prints, two original paintings done by Lori Larsen and Colin Trefry both of B.C. Then there were the numerous hoods, bells, books and other great products generously donated by so many suppliers and private donators. The Alberta Falconry Association Field Meet organisers want to publicly thank all those contributors to the raffle. Unfortunately there are too many to mention but you know who you are and we offer our sincere appreciation. All profits generated from the meet and raffles are being donated to Dr. Pat Redig's West Nile Virus research project and The North American Grouse Foundation.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow field meet organizers, Jonny Groves, Alistair Franke and Rick Skibstead and the many others who helped during the meet. The camaraderie demonstrated by all participants throughout the meet made me proud to be amongst these fine people and great falconers. Canadian field meets are renowned for their friendly, hospitable atmosphere and this one was no exception. It has been decided that Alberta shall host the next Canadian meet in 2004, a privilege we shall endeavour to once again fulfill to the best of our ability. We hope to see you there!

**Mark Williams**

Coming soon to a country near you!

## A POTENTIAL THREAT TO FALCONRY IN BELGIUM

**“Falconry will be abolished. This way of hunting has no positive contribution for nature or game conservation. This way of hunting is practised by individuals for their own interest/pleasure/joy. Additionally, the current hunting law does not forbid the use of hybrids and non-indigenous raptors, so there is a possibility that these birds will escape during hunting and cause the problem of ‘fauna falsification’. Also these escaped birds cause animal welfare problems as they haven't learnt how to survive in the wild.”**

What you have read above is a proposal that has been put to the Flemish government of Belgium by the Association for the Protection of Birds. It is one of seventy that this protectionist body has put forward to Vera Dua, the Minister of the Environment, who is a member of the Association and who promotes their ideals.

Unsurprisingly, Patrick Morel, President of the International Association for Falconry, and a Belgian, is preparing a defence

through the two main falconry clubs (the Club Maria van Bourgondië and the Belgische Vereniging van Vlaamse Valkeniers en Havikeniers).

“This is the first time that such a ban has been proposed by an association for the protection of nature. Not only do they threaten falconry, they have also proposed a ban on hunting on Sundays and a ban on hunting partridge. If successful it will form part of the new laws covering the hunting seasons for the next five years.”

The IAF is drafting a letter with arguments covering the legitimacy of falconry and animal welfare, and will provide credentials from Europe and elsewhere as well as answering the charges levelled against hybrids and non-indigenous species.

Tony Crosswell, British Falconers' Club President and Secretary of the IAF remarks that sometimes falconers make their own problems in a desire to prove themselves electronically.

“What happens is that Internet chat rooms explore areas that are specific to one region and not another,” says Crosswell. “They do so in open forum and these comments are then cut and pasted by people less sympathetic who fire them back to us as our own wishes.”

“What the global falconry community must realise is that everyone's falconry is unique to them as individuals and within that region. We should not benchmark ourselves against the fears or aspirations of others, especially when the data is often so suspect or confused.”



**THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FALCONRY**

**The International Association for Falconry (IAF) held its annual general meeting in October at the British Falconers' Club International Field Meeting at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire.**

IAF secretary, Tony Crosswell, pronounced the meeting a success: "We now represent 38 countries and have 50 members."

On the agenda was a long-standing application by the Hawk Board, the representative body for falconry and bird of prey keepers in the UK, to join IAF. However, this has produced some constitutional confusion. The Hawk Board is already represented on the advisory committee (acknowledged as the power house in which most of the work

is done) but an application for full membership is at odds with the IAF constitution which restricts votes to one falconry club per country.

Tony Crosswell acknowledges this causes some problems but reports that the constitution is a fluid affair and constantly under review. "The IAF is an evolving body and aims to embrace wider bodies without damaging its base credentials (field falconry)," he said. As a result the Hawk Board has withdrawn its application and is awaiting a new response from the IAF.

Crosswell went on to say: "Global issues such as Bern Convention and CITES are getting more and more demanding. We need more specialists and more money. However, we cannot become a fully funded organisation that merely presents a career opportunity. We need our volunteers."

**CORRESPONDENTS NEEDED**

International Falconer now has a wider circulation than ever before. As a result we are looking for country correspondents. If you are a falconer, have good connections within the falconry community of your country (perhaps you are the press officer of your club) then we would be interested in hearing from you. Contact our news editor, Nick Kester, at [news@intfalconer.com](mailto:news@intfalconer.com) with brief details about yourself and how you think you might be able to contribute. Remember, your news must be of interest to a truly global falconry community, one that is keen to understand the hopes, ambitions and issues that you face back home.

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# LETTERS

letters@intfalconer.com

## More Please Sir

Dear Sir,

I'm a subscriber - I like your magazine but at times, after 45 minutes, it's read! A little too many pictures and not enough text or meat on the bone.

In the Vadim Gorbатов article (the pics are truly worth the space here) mention is made of a calendar of his pics. Can I get hold of one? The Kubilai Khan pic is amazing.

Having lark-hawked for 15 years the article '*Merlins, perlins and dogfights in the sky*' was interesting, but again too many pictures, too little text. An article by John Loft would be the thing.

Yours

**R. Bastard**  
Devon

**Thank you for your comments. We try and keep a good balance between copy and illustrations. Some readers will buy IF mainly for the copy, some a bit of both and we even have many overseas subscribers with little or no English who buy just for the excellent photos! In our opinion good quality photographs are highly important. Any magazine would be an extremely boring affair without them. Falconry in particular is a beautifully visual sport and there's no better way to put this across than with a good photo. If we've got quality shots we always make the most of them.**

**As for length of copy, well I think you'll find compared to other very well-known fieldsports**

**publications our articles are consistently above average in length.**

**With regard to Nick Kester's piece '*Merlins, perlins and dogfights in the sky*', this was never intended to be the definitive article on lark-hawking (this would take a book as indeed John Loft has!) rather a profile of two outstanding falconers who are achieving great things in the field with small falcons.**

**Your best bet for getting hold of Vadim Gorbатов's work is to contact Martin Hollinshead  
Tel: 01902 561075.**

Ed.

## Absurd Law for Dispatching Hares

Dear Editor

Thank you for the September issue of *IF*, very nice reading.

A few thoughts: The Hawk Board leaflet advertising the March stated that for us austringers in Scotland, there were laws now on dispatching hares - what are they?

Also due to the increased interest in hunting with golden eagles, perhaps we could have more on their training, i.e. it is stated that females are more difficult than males - in what way? Maybe Joseph Heibeler could be persuaded to write a column.

**Anthony Niall**  
Scotland

If you have a comment to make about anything we would love to hear from you. This is your page and it's up to you to supply us with the necessary material. Unfortunately we can't promise to publish every letter, but we will read them all with great interest.

You can put pen to paper, send a fax or E-mail us your thoughts.

Please send to:

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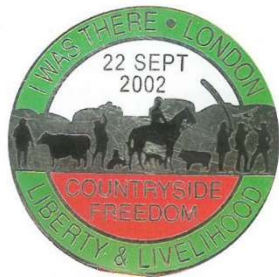
The Editor reserves the right to edit letters as he sees necessary.

**Under the current Hunting with Dogs ban, as drafted and enacted in Scotland, an abnormally exists whereby there is a possibility of prosecution should you dispatch a hare that has been flushed by a dog and caught by your hawk.**

**It is the relationship between man, dog and hare that causes the problems, not dog, hawk and hare. Therefore if your hawk kills a hare that your dog has flushed you have no fear of prosecution. But, if you involve yourself in the act, the law might render you liable. The real absurdity is that none of this applies to rabbits!**

**On the eagle front - lots more in the pipeline.**

Ed.



# WE WERE THERE

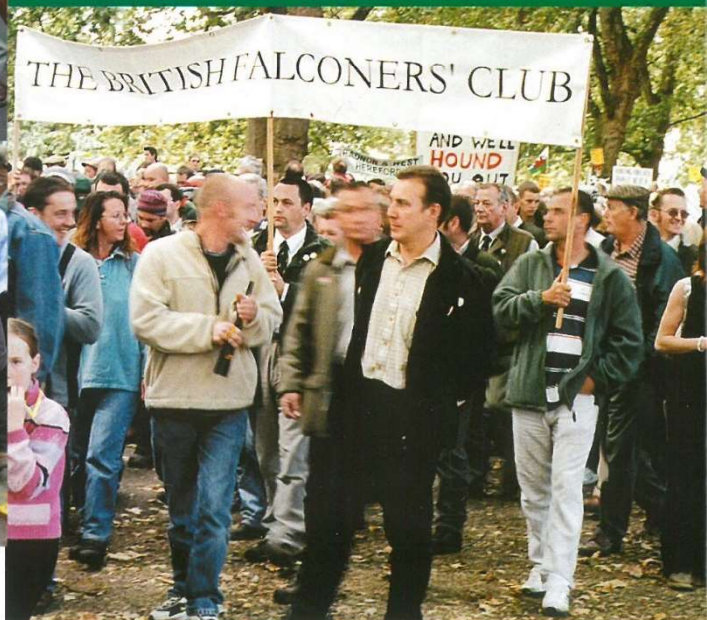
## LONDON

### 22 SEPTEMBER 2002

Falconers were there in force on that historic day from the length and breadth of the country. Well done to every one of you that made it.



Over 400,000 marchers completed the course to be counted.





It took over 3 hours for some to join the start of the march, but that didn't deter them.

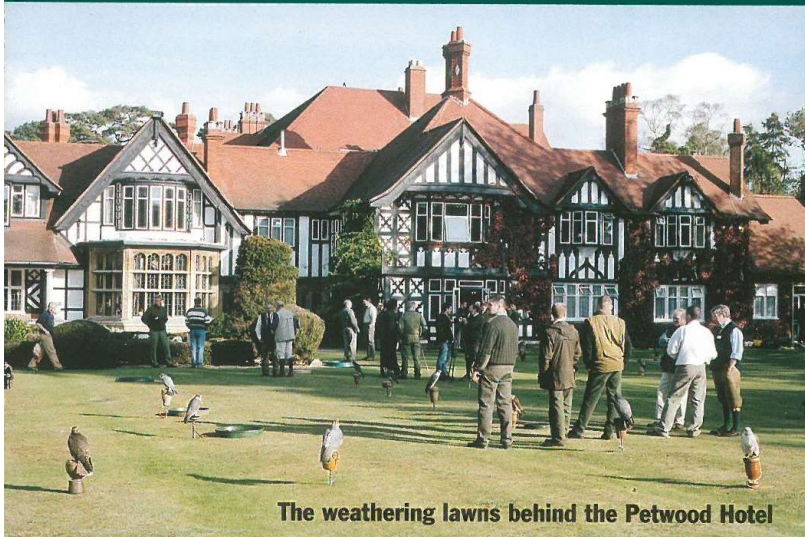


# THE BRITISH FALCONERS' CLUB

## 75th Anniversary International Field Meet

Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire  
8 - 12 October 2002

Report by Nick Kester  
Photos by Seth Anthony



The weathering lawns behind the Petwood Hotel

The fenland of east Lincolnshire appears to offer little to the tourist. Its flat lands broken by ditches and dykes are unappealing to those seeking a 'pretty' landscape. A man standing on the top of Lincoln cathedral can see fifty-plus miles in any direction. A farmer would note the



**Goshawk putting the pressure on a Lincolnshire brown hare.**

dark rich soil that is the most productive in the UK. The tourist would see the acreage of sky and wish himself somewhere more picturesque. And the falconer, what would he see?

Sport. For this is some of England's best hawking land. The big farms may be productive but they are certainly

not sterile. Conservation is big business in the fens where it goes hand in hand with shooting. So the ground is rich in game. There are pheasants in the cover crops specially planted along the hedgerows and field margins. The stubbles are alive with partridge of both types. The native

English partridge does especially well here when strips of rough land are left across fields to provide beetle banks and wild flower areas. The native brown hare is so plentiful that it is often considered a pest, and the humble rabbit breeds as only rabbits do.

# THE BRITISH FALCONERS' CLUB

So attractive is it that many falconers look for work in the area and those that cannot make such a move dream of retirement to a small village in the fens where they can fly longwings into a comfortable old age.

Woodhall Spa is a quiet leafy town in the heart of this falconers' paradise. At its centre is the Petwood Hotel, once the officers' mess of the famous Dambusters Squadron. It has a genteel, sleepy charm associated with small country hotels except once every four years when the falconers descend. For the British Falconers' Club has made the hotel its base since the four day International Field Meet began in October 1969 and 2002 – the 75th anniversary of the club – was no exception.

Logistics play a large part in making the four days a success. Take over in its entirety a small hotel, invite falconers from countries as far apart as Japan and Mexico and expect them all to turn up, add in the membership of the BFC and hope they don't all want

**Richard Burge,  
chief executive of the  
Countryside Alliance.**



to come. Plan 17 venues a day for them to hawk over, making certain that no land is hunted twice: a total of 200,000 acres. Promise the landowners that 200 plus falconers will behave themselves and arrange a massive dinner for the final night to thank them. On top of all this, satisfy the individual and highly personal needs of that most difficult to please hunter – the falconer. Then add in some journalists and VIPs and, just to add spice to the programme, the day before it starts hold a meeting of the International Association for Falconry to chew over global falconry politics. No, it will not take place every year; the organisers lack the stamina!

This year the weather was exceptional. The UK had basked in a perfect Indian summer with little or no rain from August until late October. The official opening was made by Richard Burge, the chief executive of the Countryside Alliance still high on the adrenalin of organising 400,000 marchers in London. In his speech on the first night he recalled his son's words: "How wonderful it was to march with real people. Dad says march and everyone turns up." "No", I told him, "they say march and I suggest a day."

Richard Burge acquired a old photo of a boy sitting on his haunches deep in the desert with a falcon on his fist. During his time in the Middle East he showed the picture to that falconer, now the ruler of Abu Dhabi, who was overcome with emotion for, he said, those days as a young man with his falcons had shaped his life. It is to be believed that all falconers share that emotion, said Burge, and this event is a celebration of that emotion.

So on Wednesday morning the day dawned bright and clear for just such a celebration. The goshawks, eagles and Harris' hawks occupied one side of the weathering lawn, whilst the peregrines, gyrs and hybrids were safely positioned the other side of the rose beds. A special place was



reserved for the new stars of the show – the 'perlins' (peregrine/merlin hybrids). In the club office the groups were already allocated and the field masters appointed enabling spectators to select a party of preference: longwing or shortwing, stranger or friend.

For the first two days I went out with the goshawks. Social imprinting has changed out of all recognition the management of these notoriously difficult hawks. Those on the weathering lawn stood like rocks, unmoved by the people threading their way from one side to the other. In the field they were quickly in yarak and obedient to the fist, making the decision as to whose would fly first a quick process rather than a reluctant



**The goshawks on the weathering lawn stood like rocks.**

debate. In the field, if there was a negative, it was that this wonderful autumn had kept the cover high with nettles and brambles making it hard work for dogs and falconers alike. Rabbits left cover reluctantly but flights were had and the hawks were in excellent condition.

A house move in the late summer denied me a trip to watch falcons flown at grouse, so Friday saw me out with the longwings spotting for partridge from 4x4s on the endless stubble fields. Once upon a time a dog was needed to find partridge but today short-stemmed cereal crops and close-cutting combine harvesters means this most sporting of birds can now be spied from a moving car. Once marked, a falcon is put up and the

**Tony Crosswell (President of the British Falconers' Club) introducing the Field Masters to the assembled members.**

quarry clamps down until flushed. As always engineering a good flight is the art of successful partridge hawking, and we had experts with us on both days. Steve Williams spotted a good covey of grey (English) partridge in a small bowl in a massive field and several falcons attempted to fly them without success. There was something wrong with the wind and no one hawk gained sufficient height to stoop with success. Eventually they were given the best. Even John Fairclough's 'Vulcan', ▶



## THE BRITISH FALCONERS' CLUB

Dave Sinclair slips his gos at the 'duck-pond' Manor Farm.



who was the talk of the bar the previous night, couldn't get to grips with them. So thick on the ground were partridge that on one occasion three substantial coveys merged into one causing some fifty birds get up under one rather confused falcon.

On Saturday the weather changed and the morning looked grim. But falconers are a persistent lot and we made our way to the venue knowing that three out of four is a good record

as far as the weather goes. Ken MacDougal, Andy Hollidge, Anthony Rhodes and I set off to see what might be out. The first four fields all drew a blank and there were long faces all round, especially from those who had to leave early. But eventually a covey was marked for Morten Moeller from Denmark to fly his tiercel peregrine at. The hawk clipped quickly into the sky over the audience standing in the lee of a hedge dividing stubble from a

field of beet – a crop that offered ample refuge for the fleeing partridge. However, a well-engineered flush produced a wonderful flight out away from the hedge across the stubble and then curving back through the spectators as the quarry made it safely into the sugar beet. Morten was thrilled even though no kill was made and the spontaneous applause of the spectators said it all. The day was clearing as the next flights were made

## WOODHALL SPA 2002

Everyone wanted to see the perlins.



This time was no exception. The talk of the bar was of a new spectacle and when the lists for the next day were posted in the club office, that group was filled to capacity in minutes. Everyone wanted to see the perlins flown. Falconers returned each evening bursting with enthusiasm for the flights of these little falcons. How a caste of them had waited-on endlessly over hedgerows as the beaters had worked under them. How they had stooped time and time again like fighter planes. This was participation falconry, they said, and long, voluble discussions were had on the future of this exciting new hybrid.

But we must sound a note of caution here. The successful flight of the perlin results from the absolute dedication and field craft of the falconer. Something that is not always achievable by all who might decide to take up this new branch of falconry. Woodhall Spa is a showcase of the field sport. It takes the best to show the best and this understandably fires the enthusiasm of others, let us temper this with reality and hope, for the sake

and as the weather lifted we were amazed to see the silhouette of Lincoln cathedral appear. We had not expected to be quite so close to such a monumental backdrop to our sport.

Big field meets always produce some special stars: an exceptionally high flying falcon, a goshawk that takes impossible slips at hare or pheasant and brings them to book, a Harris' hawk that waits-on stooping at quarry flushed by an obedient dog.



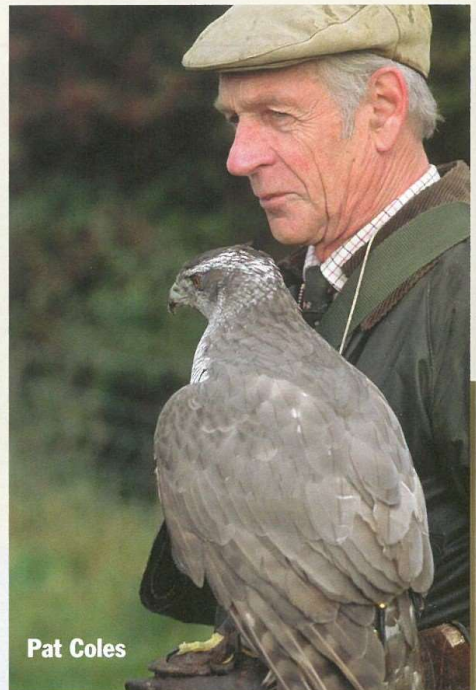
**Frank Bond IAF North American Representative and Andy Ellis. The painting by Andy was auctioned on the final night and successfully bid for by Frank.**

of the sport, that those who decide on the perlin path can maintain the standards set. For it is on a foundation of high standards that falconry survives and which permits Woodhall Spa to take place in 2006.

# WOODHALL SPA 2002



Ivan Martin with David Todd of Manor Farm who hosted one of the goshawk groups on day 2.



Pat Coles



*International Falconer* out with the goshawks



Alistair McEwan



John Byrne

A fine 50-yard flight brought this rabbit to book, right in front of host David Todd.



# WOODHALL SPA 2002

The perlin group was participation falconry at its best.



Grant Haggart with the perlin who started it all.

*International Falconer out with the perlin*



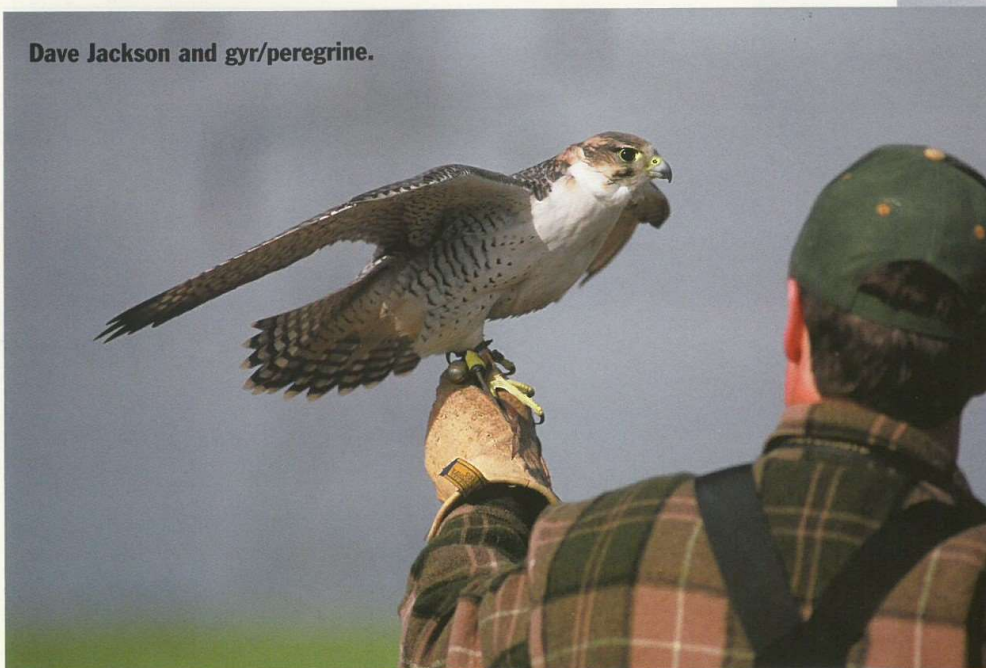
Pete Smith and helpers frantically trying to produce a flight for caste waiting above.



Simon Higham and imprint perlin take a breather.

## WOODHALL SPA 2002

**Dave Jackson and gyr/peregrine.**



**Conditions were difficult for the longwing group on day 1, but things improved by the end of the meet.**



*International Falconer* out with the longwings



**Phil Myers.**



**Steve Gouldthorpe.**



**Neil Mumby.**



# Notes from South Africa

Words and photos by Bob Dalton



The opportunity to attend The South African Falconers' Association field meet arose recently and as Southern Africa was a place I had not visited before, I jumped at the chance. I have previously hawked across the top of Northern Africa in places such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya but never in the south.

The field meet was to last for one week but it seemed a shame to fly some six thousand miles and only stay for a week. So a few phone calls to people I had corresponded with over the years, resulted in a three-week trip being arranged. I would fly to Johannesburg and then gradually hawk my way south to Cape Town and then fly back to England from there.

My host for much of the trip was to be Tim Wagner, a very respected falconer as well as being the number one breeder of falcons in South Africa. Tim is a very generous man and had ensured that my trip was to be action-filled and one I would never forget. Despite having made the long-haul overnight flight, my first day was a busy one. Having dropped my luggage at Tim's house and met his six pointers and Brittany, it was time to go to the fields and shoot doves for the falcons.

We drove out of the city to an area of open farmland that was dotted with small clumps of trees. Each stand of trees would hold a small flock of pigeons and doves. They were feeding on the gleanings to be found on the surrounding fields. We spent a couple of hours driving round and obtaining food for

the breeding pairs of falcons. Tim only feeds quail that he raises himself or pigeons and doves, which he obtains with a rifle. There is not a day-old chick or rodent to be seen on his premises. He ascribes his high success rate of producing young peregrines to this diet.

Having obtained a couple of day's food it was time to go back and

fly a couple of falcons. We were joined by fellow falconer Ray Thomson and his immature *minor* peregrine tiercel. Tim was flying his three times intermewed *minor* falcon. The falcons were only going to be exercised to pigeons as it was felt I could well be tired from the long-haul flight and probably wouldn't want to face the exertion of

Immature *minor* tiercel.



## Notes from South Africa

a proper afternoon's hunting.

The late afternoon saw the heat from the sun rapidly disappear. It is amazing just how quickly the temperature can drop. Consequently there were no thermals to lift the falcons and they had to work to get up. But work they certainly did. Both the falcon and tiercel worked non-stop to get to their pitch and only set their wings when they got there. Their flight is very reminiscent of barbaries or red shaheens.

Just as a European tiercel always seems to fly so much harder and faster than a falcon because of its diminutive size then obviously the *minor* appears even quicker. *Minor* falcons are around European tiercel size and tiercels are like lannerets. But don't let the lack of stature on the part of the *minor* fool you into thinking these are not truly serious falconry birds. I was fortunate enough to see many flights at many different quarry species during my stay and was truly impressed with these pocket-sized peregrines.

The following day saw me fully rested and restored to hunting condition. Tim, Ray and myself were joined by another falconer that wanted to concentrate on running a couple of young pointers. He did not bring his falcon, as he wanted to give his undivided attention to his dogs. The quarry we were after were partridge. The area held two species. The grey-wing and the orange-breasted. The latter is supposed to fly like a grouse and is considered one of the fastest game birds on the African continent.

Ray was to have first flight and two pointers were run in the hopes of finding a flight. They had only been gone a minute or so when both came staunchly on point. One of the young

pointers slipped its collar and dashed over to join the pointing pair. Fortunately it stopped and backed the two dogs instead of running in and stealing the point. Not particularly good behaviour but it could have been a lot worse.

Ray cast his tiercel off and we started to head the point. The partridge obviously thought that three dogs, three humans and a falcon were a bit too much and jumped before the tiercel had reached his pitch. As the grey-wings rose the tiercel did turn over and put in a long, shallow stoop but he was too far back initially to make it tell. The partridge made it over a ridge and the tiercel threw up and then came straight back in. As he headed back the young pointer bumped another partridge and the tiercel stooped almost vertically to try and get on terms with it. But the partridge bailed out in a very unsporting manner just at the last moment.

The tiercel was taken down to the lure and our party moved on in search of another point. This came very quickly and now it was the turn of Tim's falcon to fly. The point was an ideal one, slightly down a wind-facing slope. The falcon was allowed to take to the air in her own time and we stood well back whilst she mounted. Once she was at a decent height we started to head the point in preparation for the flush. Again the partridge jumped and this time they were of the orange-breasted variety. The falcon pumped her wings a couple of times and then folded and stooped at the fleeing partridges. The orange-breasted were, in my opinion, faster than the grey-wing but the falcon still rapidly closed the gap.

But unfortunately these too had

no sense of sport and bailed out into the long grass as the falcon got within striking distance. We sprinted over and put the pointers on to the task of getting another point. But it was obvious from their demeanour that the partridge had run the moment they had touched down. The falcon went back up in expectation of being served and we did our best not to disappoint her. Soon enough the dogs had picked up another good scent and we had a point. It was close to a wood but worth a try.

The falcon was called back overhead by the time-honoured method of a waived glove. As she was directly over us a single partridge was flushed. It made straight for the trees and just managed to beat the falcon into them. The falcon was called down to the lure and we moved on again. Ray remarked that the partridge seemed exceptionally jumpy and that they didn't normally show so little inclination to lie to a point.

Another point was found and it was the turn of Ray's little tiercel again. The diminutive hawk was allowed to take to the air and then we started to get into position. This time the covey held and we managed to get a decent flush at the right moment. Three grey-wings threw themselves into the air and over the dogs. The tiercel reacted immediately. Two more partridge got up, but they merely fluttered far enough to get out of the way of the dogs and then put in again. The tiercel was closing rapidly on the three and hit one just as they looked like they would make the safety of the woods.

But as we walked forwards we saw the tiercel come back out the other side of the woods and head back towards us. We can only

assume he lost the partridge in a tussle on the ground. Which was a great shame as he had flown hard and deserved a good result. Ray decided to feed him up and we took a five-minute break as he did so.

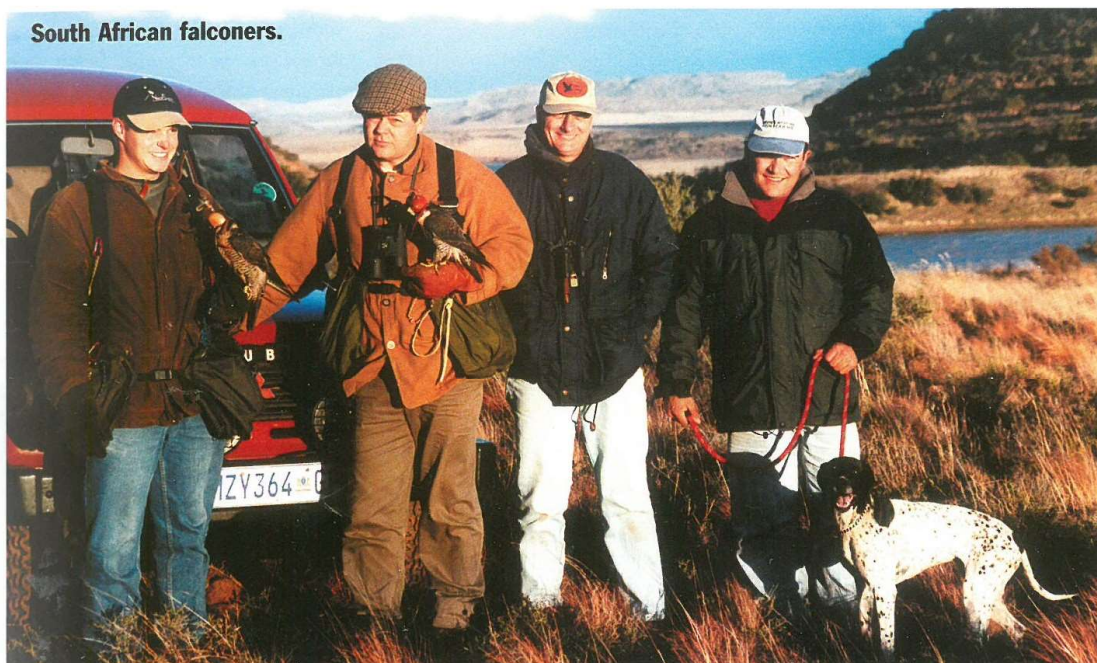
Then it was on to find a point for Tim's falcon again. This took around a quarter of an hour and then we had three pointers all on the same point. It was not a case of any dog backing

black sparrowhawks are the same size as European goshawks and are extremely aerial, probably more so than the majority of accipiters. They are a very serious threat to falcons, both trained and wild. I witnessed several flights by wild black spars on my trip but two in particular stand out and serve to illustrate the flying power of this accipiter.

On the first occasion I was with

group of trees. The black spar was determined and was definitely closing the gap. It carried on chasing the dove matching its every twist and turn until eventually it tried to grab it. The dove managed to sidestep the spar's attempts to clutch it and made off in the other direction. "That's it, the dove is away now" I remarked. Ray said that he wasn't so sure and to keep watching the spar.

**South African falconers.**



another; all three were on point in their own rite.

The falcon was unhooded and held up so that she could rouse, mute and depart in her own time. But she showed no inclination to do so. She kept cocking her head to one side and looking skyward. She was hooded back up and we looked where she had been looking with binoculars. Sure enough there was a black sparrowhawk wheeling round at a tremendous height.

Now it should be understood that

Tim and Ray and they were feeding their falcons on the fist. Both hawks stopped feeding and looked up. There was an adult male black spar circling round high above us. All of a sudden it quickened its pace and then put in a long shallow stoop, crossing the sky at a tremendous rate. Following its progress we could see it was after a group of collared doves. One broke with its companions and tried to make an escape by heading off into the blue yonder. The others had put into a

Sure enough it closed the gap again and made another grab. Again it was evaded but the spar kept going and on its third attempt was successful. An incredible flight that had lasted more than twelve minutes from start to finish.

The second incident involved a black spar and a wild peregrine falcon. Tim and myself spotted a wild peregrine putting in a series of stoops at some doves in an acacia tree. She was obviously trying to get them to make a break so that she

## Notes from South Africa

could then try and snatch one. All of a sudden, seemingly from nowhere, a black spar appeared. On sighting its approach the peregrine instantly took off. We assumed the spar would attack the doves. But very soon it was all too obvious that it had decided it would like the peregrine.

The peregrine pumped for all it was worth in order to get up and make good its escape. But the spar was more than matching it for sheer speed and climb rate. There then followed a seven-minute flight in which the peregrine was quite literally flying for its life. Several times it looked as if the spar would get its wish, but each time the peregrine just managed to avoid its clutches.

The peregrine could not lose the spar in open sky and only escaped

by diving through a wood. The peregrine came out one side and the spar came out further down. The short breathing space gave the peregrine sufficient impetus to get up and away. Had I not seen it with my own eyes I would never have believed an accipiter could fly down a peregrine in open flight.

The following day it was time to head south to Bloemfontein. Here we were going to do some hawking in the afternoon, then stop overnight before heading down to Aliwal North where the field meet was based. Our host in Bloemfontein was Francois Breedt. He was flying an intermewed *minor* falcon and a male gyr/prairie hybrid.

Ducks were to be the main item on the sporting agenda that afternoon. We drove for about an

hour to reach some lovely gently rolling grasslands that went on for quite literally miles. Dotted here and there are small duck ponds. These are known as 'slaughter ponds' to the locals. The reasoning being that if they are small enough to be able to flush the ducks readily then there is a very good chance of getting a kill.

First to fly was 'Penny' the intermewed *minor*. This particular falcon is a very fine looking falcon with exceedingly dark plumage. It turned out she flew even better than she looked. The first pond chosen for a flight was about an acre of shallow water with sixty or seventy ducks on it. The falcon was cast off and mounted very quickly more or less over the pond. This had the effect of pinning the ducks down.

When Francois gave the signal

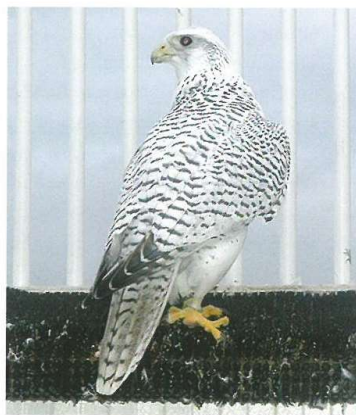
# Falco uk

*Breeders of World class  
Scottish Peregrines, Gyrfalcons  
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email: enquires@falco.uk Website: www.falco.uk



we all rushed in and the ducks lifted in a straggling raft. The falcon cut through the middle of them and bound to a large yellow-bill. By the time we had got to her she had dispatched it. A yellow-bill is a large duck very akin to a mallard. Not an easy quarry for such a relatively small falcon. But Penny had made the whole process look easy.

Next to fly was the hybrid. Hybrids are the exception in South Africa. I only saw three throughout my whole time there and most falconers were more than happy flying their indigenous species. Which when you think of the range they have at their disposal made perfect sense. For those that want to fly falcons there are peregrines and lanners. The austringer is spoilt for choice with black spars, red-breasted spars, gabor goshawks and African goshawks. Plus there are various eagles and hawk-eagles as well.

Having driven to another pond that held a small group of ducks, the hybrid was put on the wing. Francois briefed us on how the flush would be done this time. Apparently the hybrid has a rather peculiar habit when coming overhead. He flies off from the fist in a straight line. When he is a tiny speck in the distance then he pumps up quite quickly. Having reached a fair pitch he then pumps back to bring himself overhead. All the time he is on his way back he is still mounting.

Once overhead he must be served almost immediately. If not then he will just carry on going until he finds something to hunt for himself. He has done this on several occasions and each time he has had to be tracked down. Invariably he is on a kill when found.

On this occasion there was no

### South African lanner falcon.



## Notes from South Africa

problem and the flush went according to plan. The hybrid folded and cut a duck over with a crack that could be heard from a considerable distance. Another yellow-bill had been added to the bag.

Next day saw us all head down to Aliwal North. Here the Falconers' Association had rented a group of bungalows for those participating in the meet.

Alan Harvey joined Tim and myself. He had brought with him his red-naped shaheen and *minor* falcon. Francois was joined by Gary Warren and Angelo Grobler. Gary had spent ten years working in England and we had become friends then. To see him again here was excellent. He was flying a very small *minor* tiercel and Angelo a young *minor* falcon.

The rest of the falconers attending the meet would be gathering over the course of the afternoon and evening. Alan, Tim and myself went off to see if we could catch a duck with Alan's falcon.

We drove to a lovely spot with a slaughter pond nestling in the bottom of a group of hills. Through binoculars we could see that it held some ducks and accordingly the falcon was put on the wing. The falcon came overhead nicely and we rushed forward in an attempt to flush the ducks. They were obviously intimidated by the presence of the falcon and merely lifted briefly and then put down again. The falcon had reacted immediately and had started to stoop. As the ducks put in she pumped her wings in order to regain her pitch.

We moved around the pond to be in a better position for the re-flush and waited for the falcon to come round overhead again. Trouble is,



Black sparrowhawk.

when we looked up she was nowhere to be seen. Having waited a few minutes it was out with the telemetry to see where she was. We got a signal but it was quite faint. No one was unduly worried as we were in very hilly terrain with some fairly deep ravines. If the falcon had flown at check and killed in a ravine then that would account for the weak signal.

Having driven to the top of a nearby escarpment we then got a good signal. The falcon was down in a deep gully, we could not spot her

with binoculars but the signal was strong and stationary.

By the time we managed to get down the escarpment the falcon had taken a full crop and was flying again. She was eventually tracked down again and picked up mid-morning the next day.

The field meet proper began that afternoon and I was fortunate enough to spend the next six days going out with a variety of hawks and falcons. The falcons consisted of African peregrines, three hybrids and a lanner. On the hawk side I

saw black spars, an African goshawk, a red-breasted sparrowhawk and two European goshawks. There were almost as many dogs as falcons with a host of pointers and several Brittanys.

The main quarry species were ducks, partridge, francolin, guinea fowl and small birds for the red-breasted sparrowhawk. Permission on vast tracts of ideal hunting land had been obtained and it was obvious that everything was in place for a really good meet.

Two hawks I had never seen before, let alone in action, were the African gos and the red-breasted spar. Both of these provided excellent sport and the little spar was very much all action. Very similar in colouring to a European musket. This particular hawk was twelve years old and had a great many successful flights to its name. Tragically it was killed the day after I saw it fly.

It had chased a small bird along a barbed wire fence. As it tried to get through between the strands a barb had pierced its neck. The unfortunate hawk bled to death in a matter of moments. A nasty end, but at least it died in the field doing what it did best.

The African goshawk was taken out after partridge and was helped in its quest by a pointer. But no partridge were to be found when I was out with it and the hunting was confined to glossy starling and mouse birds. Both species provided us with good flights and the speed of the gos was impressive. Even by gos standards the toes of this hawk are very long and slender and it would appear that it only ever eats birds in the wild.

A hawk that did impress me very much as a hunting companion was

the black spar. I had previously been out with a couple in Britain and both had left me cold.

But here in Africa I was going to see an intermewed passage female flying in its own environment against natural prey items. We would be looking for both partridge and francolin and had the inevitable pointer to aid us in our search.

Within two or three minutes of setting off we had a nice point. The falconer walked forward with the hawk held aloft and all of a sudden a covey of orange-breasted partridge burst into the air. The hawk was airborne in a flash and grabbed a partridge before it got properly going. The reaction time of the hawk had been excellent.

Having been allowed to take a small reward from its kill the hawk was taken back up on the fist. The pointer was sent off again and we walked forward.

Twenty minutes later we had another point. We followed the same procedure as before and this time some grey-wing partridge broke around us. The black spar took off after a partridge that had risen behind us. The hawk chased hard and gradually closed the distance. As the partridge tried to put in to some bushes the spar put on an extra burst and grabbed it.

We did enjoy one more flight that afternoon, but this time it was a guinea fowl that was pursued. The hawk bound to it but unfortunately lost it in a rough-and-tumble on the ground.

The one falcon that was a revelation to me was a lanner falcon that was used for hunting ducks. She is an intermewed passage female that has three seasons under her belt. Her success rate is astonishing and it is just not the smaller species

of ducks, like teal, that she takes. Mallard and yellow-bills are all taken on a regular basis. Another quarry she quite commonly takes are cormorants.

She kills by hitting the quarry at the end of the stoop as opposed to binding to it. I think she realises that if she stoops and levels out behind the quarry and then binds to it she stands a chance of getting hurt. By hitting it hard enough to disable her quarry she greatly reduces the risk of any injury on the ground.

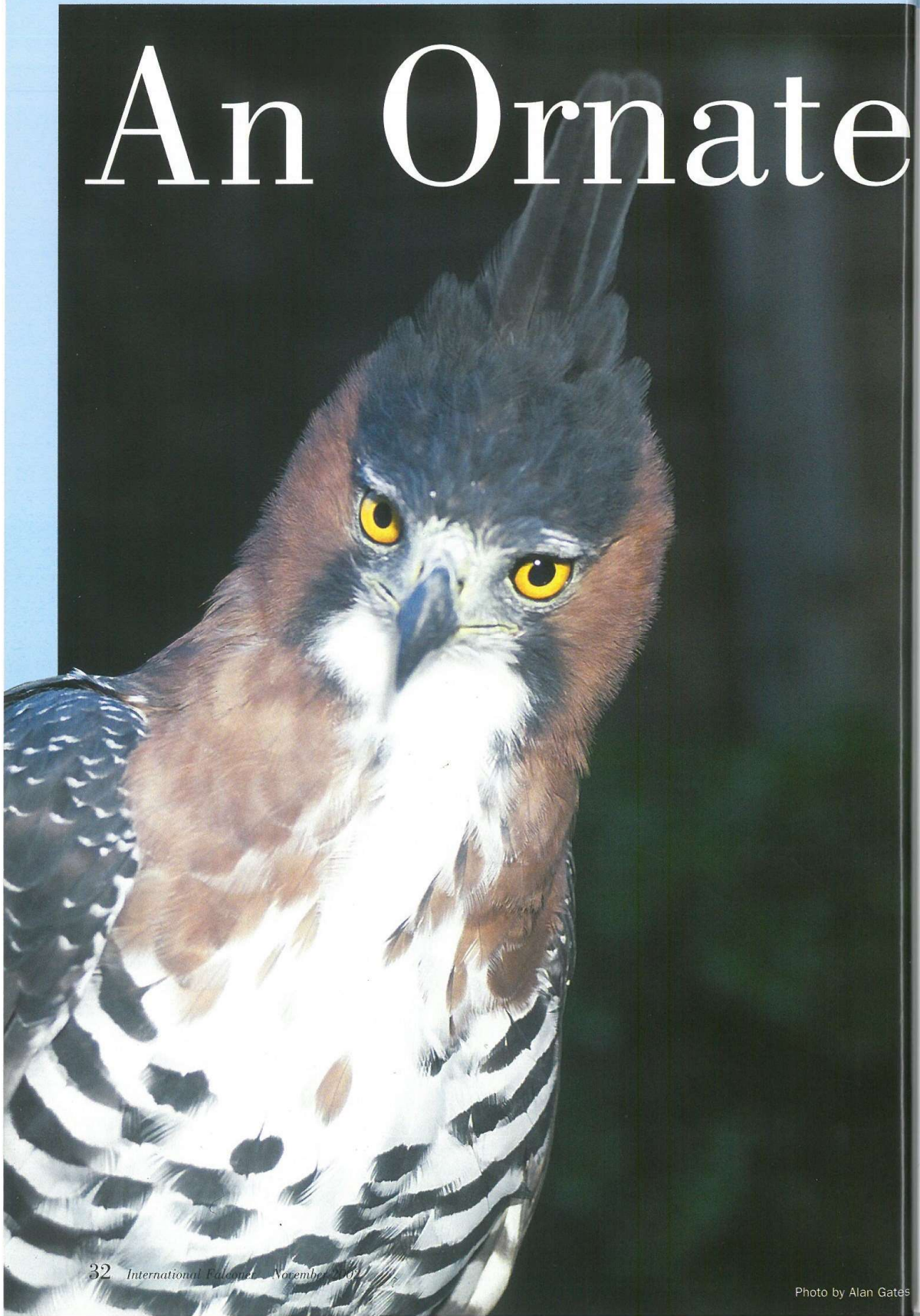
The other thing that really impressed me about this falcon is the way she would pump and work to get up and obtain her pitch. You could be forgiven for thinking that a lanner will only go up if it can do so by thermaling. But this was not the case. When flown at a time when thermals were abundant then it certainly did take advantage of them. But it still went up if flown in the cool of early evening.

I was indeed fortunate during the week to see some excellent and very varied falconry. Many people were very kind and I will always be grateful for the trouble they took to show me some good sport.

My time in South Africa had quite literally flown by and all too soon I was heading back home to England. The members of the South African Falconers' Association had made my trip one to remember for many a year to come and I am extremely grateful to them. The standard of falconry I witnessed was as high as I have seen anywhere in the world. I would recommend anyone who has the opportunity to go there and hawk for a while to jump at it. Would I go back? My ticket is already booked. ■



# An Ornate



# Encounter

by Alan Gates

My fascination with the exotic can be traced to the moment that the two mighty volumes of *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* dropped into my arms. Still hot from the press Brown and Amadon's impressive work inspired and exploded my knowledge of diurnal raptors, the whole order of Falconiformes were illustrated in the hundred-odd full-colour plates.

Many hours of idle dreaming were spent pouring over those wonderful illustrations, seeking out likely looking species that just might make suitable falconry candidates. In those pre-regulation days the importation market was still in full-flow, and one never knew when some exotic species would appear in the 'for sale' adverts of the bird press.

Reality is a whole different ball game to idle daydreams and the facts of the matter were that it was a rarity indeed if something exotic that was worth purchasing came on to the market. Still, I suppose it was the very elusiveness of the goal that made it compulsive.

Whilst most of my male friends found the birds of their fantasies in the magazines on the top shelf, all that I ever desired was contained within these two volumes.

Those piercing eyes staring into my soul from behind a black eye mask is etched deep into my memory banks. Don Eckelberry's evocative illustration of the rare *Spizastur Melanoleucus* or black and white hawk-eagle haunted my dreams for years. The sparse information available on this very rare species

indicated a size similar to a European goshawk that had a predilection for bird hunting. The illustration gave me the impression of a bolder, stockier and larger individual than the goshawks I was use to. Above all it was the powerful contrasting plumage of a black back against a pure white head and front, with a black crest and sinister black eye mask that sent it to the top of my 'most wanted' list.

As with most fantasies it never became a reality, in fact I have never seen one or even heard of one outside of the pages of these two volumes.

A few pages on and Eckelberry really puts the pressure on for those who weaken at the knees at anything in the Accipitridae family, for it is the

queen of the *Spizaetus*, the 'bobby dazzler' of the hawk-eagles, *Ornatus* this is where his artistry really shines through.

Classified as fairly common, it sent shivers through the desirability scale, for here was a more probable species than the very rare black and white hawk-eagle. Still, it was many years before I encountered even the briefest mention of an ornate in the hands of a falconer.

Although my falconry life has followed a fairly determined path, along the way I have encountered many interesting diversions. One such detour arose on my first trip to Idaho in the United States. The purpose of the visit was the culmination of many

**Ornate in first-year plumage.**

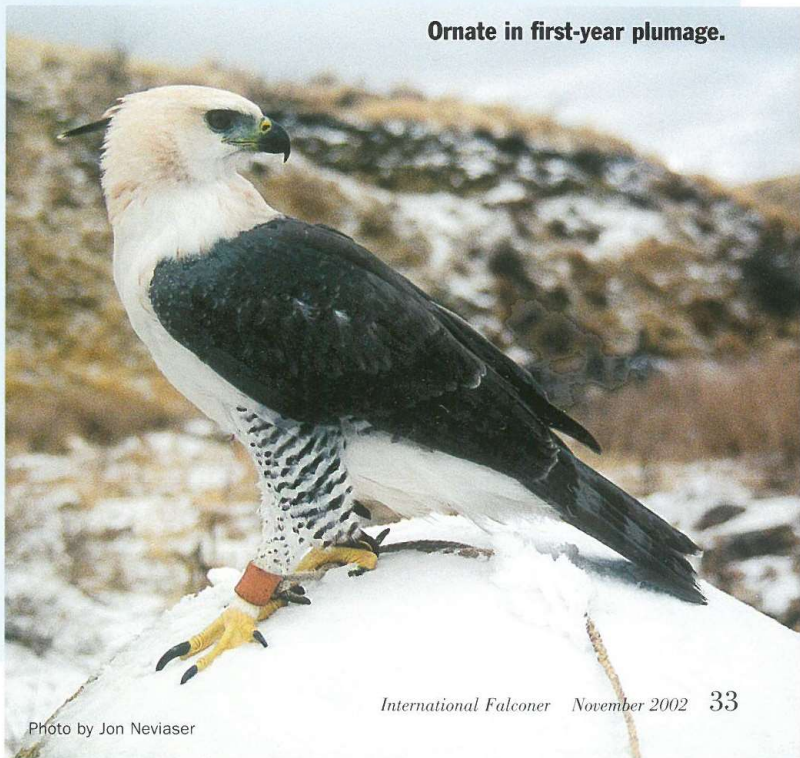


Photo by Jon Neviaser



Photo by Alan Gates



Photo by Jon Neviaser

months of correspondence with Morlan Nelson, a falconer, conservationist and wildlife film maker, and of particular interest to me, one of the most experienced eagle falconers in the Western world.

Morlan, though in his autumn years was still a very busy man, and I had difficulty even though he had invited me to spend time with him, actually pinning him down to a date. I narrowed a window of opportunity down to the first weeks of September and hopped onto a plane bound for Boise, Idaho. Knowing that once I was encamped on Morley's doorstep I could fit into the slots of free time he had, I also loosely arranged to meet a number of other falconers in the surrounding area.

Charles Browning was another eagle falconer with whom I had been corresponding with and he had invited me to attend a small field meeting of the Idaho Falconers' Association due to be held the weekend I arrived. Telephoning around different contacts I had been given in the hope of cadging a lift, I struck it lucky with falconer Jon Neviaser who was setting off early the following morning.

Jon duly arrived at my motel early the following morning and I clambered into his four-wheel drive truck. It had been a brief telephone call the previous day to secure this lift to the meet and make some scant arrangements. Apart from the fact that

**'Tikal' was sitting next to the open window as Jon cruised slowly towards some feeding carrion crows.**

we were both falconers and going in the same direction, we were total strangers, but the name Neviaser was ringing faint familiarity in my memory but for the life of me I could not recall why.

We struck an instant rapport, we were both aficionados of the shortwing and the moment Jon mentioned that he owned and flew ornate hawk-eagles my interest clicked up a notch. Confessing that I knew very little about the species, I recalled reading of a falconer in some Eastern state of the US who was flying an Ornate, and that to be the sum total of my knowledge of their use in falconry. With a knowing smile Jon explained that he was that falconer who had recently moved from Virginia to Boise, at last I knew why the name Neviaser had been nagging away at me. The journey to the meet was an enjoyable exchange of questions, hunting techniques and quarry, and humorous accounts of past escapades and exploits. The time flew as we travelled the highway, occasionally swerving to view a pole perched raptor or identify a flyby, and before we knew it were straining our eyes skywards to watch

for the moment the trained falcon folds into a teardrop and plummets earthwards to strike a flushed duck.

The mini-meet of the Idaho Falconers' Association was a friendly affair with some superb falconry skill on display. The hunting centred on a group of ponds on the Camas Prairie offering numerous successful flights for the handful of falcons at duck, though for me the highlight was the tremendous aerial display of

## An Ornate Encounter

Tikal with his carrion crow.



endurance and control by 'Messiah', Charles Browning's tiercel golden eagle.

Charles let Messiah get some steam off and play with the wind for a while, as he found a thermal over the second mountain range, I started to think we were just going to witness an eagle enjoying the wind through a pair of binoculars.

Somehow Charles managed to attract Messiah's attention from the

great distance and he turned out of the thermal towards us keeping the height he had gained. As we made our way out across the prairie towards the pond Messiah followed, once in position the whole assembled group made a rush on the pond and Messiah folded.

Now one of the great wonders of the art of falconry is the stoop of a falcon from a great pitch, but I defy any falconer not to be impressed when a golden eagle folds from a thousand

feet. Messiah adjusted at about three hundred feet and selected his duck, the noise of the air ripping through primaries is awesome and probably the last thing the duck heard.

We prepared to spend the night under canvas, ate around an open camp fire with a backdrop of a black starlit night serenaded by coyotes. It had been a day's hunting that would go down in my mental personal journal for the sheer delightful company ▶

## An Ornate Encounter

of like-minded souls and a demonstration of superb falconry skill.

Jon and I packed up camp and headed out after breakfast, on the way back to Boise Jon invited me to spend the next few days at his home, at last I was to meet his ornate's.

For some reason ornate's are designed to be noticed, they stand out in a crowd, in fact they would stand out in neon-lit Vegas. Both sexes are plumaged alike, and perched before me on Jon's weathering lawn were a pair of adults in their splendid finery. As I gazed at the boldness and pattern of colour in their plumage I felt somehow inadequately dressed, I knew if I ever flew such an exotic I would have to improve my field attire. Out would go the dapple greens in favour of more vivacious attire, at the very least I would have to sport a continental plume in my hat.

Nature had clearly honed these raptors as very efficient hunters of the forest, long muscular legs with wide-spanned powerful feet aggressively armed with thick, strong talons, demonstrated an ability to tackle large quarry. Short, broad wings with a long tail of strong, wide feathers indicated a speed and agility that would match the fleetest quarry in the forest be it avian or mammalian.

Having produced such a deadly hunter it is little wonder that nature then threw caution to the wind and chucked the whole pallet of colours at its plumage, this raptor did not skulk in cover for a surprise attack, it blasted its way through the canopy and outflew its quarry.

'Angel' the female had been flown back in Virginia and Jon told me of many flights at rabbits and squirrels, out west he knew she would hone her talent on jack rabbits. Sadly during my short stay so early in the season she was just not quite hard-penned and ready to do battle.

I returned a few years later to find Jon concentrating on the male ornate Tikal. Sadly Angel had sustained an

**Tikal with starling.**



Photo by Jon Neviase

injury having collided with a car whilst in hot pursuit of a squirrel and she was now aviary bound.

Tikal was much more tuned in to avian quarry and tackled anything from starlings to pheasants. His acceleration from the fist was blinding as I was to witness on a day's hawking the suburbs of Boise. We started brush beating an overgrown industrial lot looking for cottontails, with a few goshawk-style flights putting one in the bag we moved closer to residential areas in the 4x4 truck. Tikal perched on Jon's gloved fist, the truck being a left-hand drive meant that Tikal was sitting next to the open window as Jon cruised slowly towards some feeding carrion crows. Something spooked the crows before we were close enough, but the second they left the ground Tikal was out of the window in a flash, he hit the first crow before it had lifted

fifteen feet off the ground. There were many people going about their daily business, not one witnessed the spectacular demise of the crow. Jon sat cross-legged on the grass and allowed Tikal to plume his quarry, a few people stopped and asked questions but no one was perturbed by the event.

Later we moved on to some exciting chases at squirrels through the trees to end the day footing for cottontails as they disappeared into deep cover.

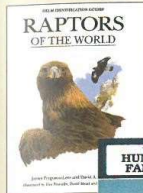
This brief experience proved there was a lot more to the Ornate than a dandy coat and it had been a memorable encounter. ■

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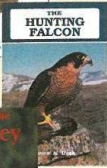


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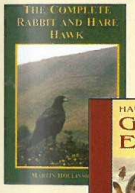


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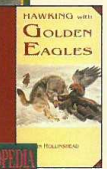
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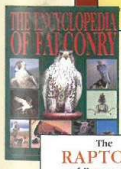


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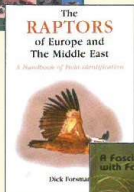
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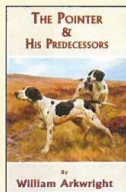
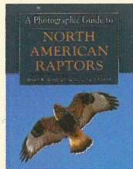
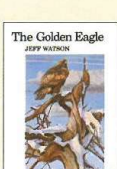
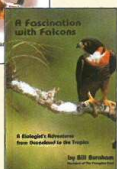
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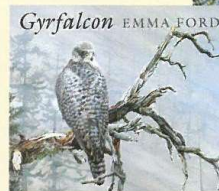
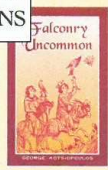
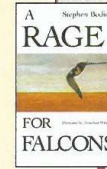
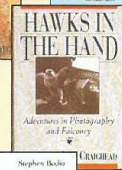
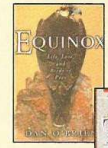
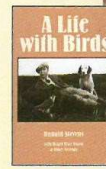
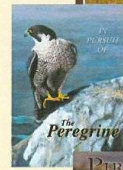
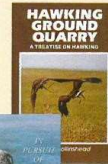
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# MY 'ALETHE' FALCON



BY KARL G. KERSTER  
PART TWO

In August, I took Pepper and Manfred to do bird control at a vineyard in Napa and I bought Manfred's brother Blue to add to our team. For the large flocks of blackbirds, Pepper was the best thing going as I worked her alternately with Manfred. I would fly Manfred and the blackbirds would ball up, but then dive into the vines when he stooped them. I wanted those birds gone, not just covering. I would put Manfred away and bring out the Pepper monster. She would fly straight at the flock where they had been safe from the peregrine, leaving them no choice other than to ring up and blow away.

Both Pepper and Manfred learned about flying through and around wires on this job, and I am sure that knowledge has saved Manfred's life repeatedly. I should mention that the Aplomado's eyesight and coordination are very fine. Not only, could Pepper see every wire, she would tend to perch on wire when not on the ground.

## THE BIG SURPRISE

I was out in Davis near sunset, looking for one more slip after a nice afternoon of hawking, when I saw a big cock pheasant strutting his stuff in an open spot. Pepper, who rides black unhooded on a block perch, saw this cock and was dancing and bating like

she thought she could get him if only given the chance. At 333 grams, I knew she could never take a full-grown cock pheasant. "Pepper, you silly bird." I said to her, "Fine, lets just see what you want to do with him," unclipped her, and let her out of my van. She flew right at him and grabbed him, was knocked off and tried again. Mr. Pheasant was surprised and ticked off and flew about thirty feet to some thin cover in order to get away from this stupid marsh hawk-looking bird, but Pepper was still after him. She chased him around, hovering and dropping down back and forth and in figure 8s that went around tufts of Sudan grass. Now Mr. Pheasant was getting scared and took off a couple hundred yards, and Pepper chased after him. He put in to a little unharvested patch in the middle of the harvested field of Sudan grass. The cover looked like a Mohawk hair cut 7-8 feet long, and he ran around the tufts with Pepper diving and hovering up and down, and then she went down and did not come back up.

I did not know what happened, but I was still sure there was no way that little Pepper would be able to catch a full grown cock, but I drove down the dirt road to near where I thought they last were. This chase had been going

on for several minutes and it was getting dark, because of that, I overshot to the next bit of cover and tracked back using telemetry. I found the most unbelievable sight. Pepper

**"I now had a 333-gram bird that looks like a big kestrel and kills a cock pheasant over 1400 grams."**

was standing on the big cock pheasant! He had his head down trying to hide and I figured he would bolt if he saw me, and I was thinking that Pepper might let go if I did not hurry, so I dropped to my knees and swiftly grabbed hold of the base of the left wing of the pheasant. Pepper stepped right off him and peeped at me, as if to say "Did you like that?" I shoved the pheasant into my pouch and fed Pepper a sparrow on the way back to the van.

She was very contented, and of all things to think of at the moment was the fact that she did not carry the kill. I now had a 333-gram bird that looks like a big kestrel and kills a cock pheasant over 1400 grams. Not one ▶



## MY 'ALETHE' FALCON

feather was out of place, and in fact Pepper never damaged any feathers the whole time I had her, including flying her right through the moult. I looked at the fact that Pepper could and would hunt large quarry, but could not carry it, and I followed her lead in looking for pheasants.

I started our intentional pheasant hunting by trying to duplicate the situation that had been successful the first time. I drove around looking for a pheasant and would wait for Pepper to key in on it. This quickly reversed to me driving around until Pepper saw something that got her excited and then I would let her out and run behind her. I tried to drive with her on my fist, but because I completely remove the traditional jesses from my birds legs, the way that I learned from Frederick II, I had her deciding for herself where the best place for her to stand was. Her favourite place was

right on the steering wheel. She tried on top of my head, which I did not like, and she could not see well, so back she went to the steering wheel.

Most of the time Manfred, my Y2K tiercel *anatum* peregrine, was riding hooded on his block in the van, and Pepper never bothered him even though she was loose. I even had one day that I was tired and inadvertently left both of them loose unhooded in the van while I went off hawking with another falconer for an hour and a half. When I got back, I was shocked to see Pepper standing on the steering wheel and Manfred on the seatback. It was interesting how they acted as companions, but I never repeated the experiment. If I had her for another season at the vineyard I might have had the guts to try them in a cast, but I feel that any bird flying under a waiting-on peregrine is just too tempting a target to be safe, so I will

not plan to try it.

I got many slips where we saw pheasants on a dirt road way ahead of the van. At first I would try to get close before letting Pepper out, but I quickly learned to let her out at the first sighting, watch the initial attack, and then drive as close as was practical to get out and help chase. I got to see wonderful, exciting action this way, but kills were limited.

### GRASSHOPPER HAWKING

Sometimes in the middle of the day when it was hot and I was walking through the field with Pepper, she would chase grasshoppers. These are not just slow hoppers like crickets. These grasshoppers can fly hundreds of feet. When a grasshopper was flying, Pepper would leave the fist to chase it often killing it. Pepper sometimes ate them, but not always. She was hunting them for sport,



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because they were there, and they were the one quarry she could carry that she was willing to trade-off for a tit-bit. I took the hunting of this quarry seriously. Pepper did not like to just pounce on grasshoppers on the ground, she needed the stimulation of the quarry in flight. I had to flush them by walking along, and we had reflashes resulting in kills, and the whole bit.

One Sunday in Davis, a college professor who teaches a raptor identification class watched Pepper and I going after grasshoppers. He happened to flush a cock pheasant while he was watching us. Pepper left me and the hoppers to chase the pheasant, and in doing so flew right past the professor. When we spoke about it, he said that research of aplomado falcons says they eat insects, lizards, and small birds. None of the published research documents aplomado falcons hunting anything like the size of a pheasant, and he would not have believed it if he had not seen it himself.

This flight was typical of how our grasshopper hunting would end. We would be happily catching grasshoppers until some bird would flush, and Pepper would chase it away from where the grasshoppers were, so that when I caught up with her we would move on to more bird hawking. This micro-hawking was fun and interesting, and had the same advantage as pheasant hawking, in that carrying was not a problem.

#### **SERIOUS ABOUT PHEASANTS**

I moved on to field hawking for pheasants. I went to any field that I knew had pheasants and stomped through it beating all cover to try to get a chase started. Once the chase was on, it was all I could do to try to keep track of where Pepper was, and I

would run in the direction she had flown. I used my receiver often to keep track of her and I needed it to find her most of the times that she made a kill. The chases went as far as the pheasant would fly, and when it put-in, most of the time it would reflush, repeatedly. If, for example, Pepper saw pheasants a quarter mile away she would fly right at them with me running behind. When one took flight it would become her target, and she would chase it to cover. I would run as fast as a fat guy can run to the spot to reflush, although it often would reflush before I got near. Either way, the chase would be back on, and often would lead back to the starting point. Each time the pheasant flies, it gets more tired, but the aplomado falcon has stamina that lasts all day, and she gets more determined to kill the more flushes she gets at a bird. Kills were often made when a pheasant put-in to thin cover where it could be seen. A hunt like this could take over an



## MY 'ALETHE' FALCON

hour with me running more than three miles back and forth across the field. I loved every minute of it!

One cock pheasant that will always stick in my mind was again in Davis. After flying Manfred over an alfalfa field, I was walking back to the van through the thick cover at the side of the alfalfa and I kicked up a rooster who flew thirty feet into the fallow across the road. I hurriedly switched birds and went into the field right where I saw the rooster drop down. We got to a six-foot-wide mowed strip that is used by people for walking through the field and Pepper and I looked around. I spotted him first a full hundred yards down the mowed strip. Pepper saw him when he moved, and she took off. This time I just stayed still and watched, as she attacked him.

The big rooster bucked her off, and flew in my direction. I got to see this beautiful, colourful, strong pheasant fly right past me with Pepper fifteen feet behind him. Both of them were flying full out, and they went a long way, so that I put my 12 power binoculars up to see where the put-in would be. This time I thought I saw Pepper dive right in after the pheasant, and I thought I could tell where they were, so I drove to the spot I thought they were which was six-tenths of a mile on my odometer. I tracked her down still farther away, so Pepper and the pheasant had both flown close to three-quarters of a mile. She had the pheasant, and it was dead.

As I walked with Pepper on my fist and the big cock pheasant hanging down from my gloved fist I wished

some falconers would drive by and see this sight. I took some time to examine this big bird that my little bird had managed to kill, because I wanted to know how she could do it without any fighting that would damage her. The whole neck and part of the head were full of blood hemorrhaging caused by lots of pin-prick holes through the skin and into the flesh caused by Pepper's sharp talons.

I took a few other falconers along on pheasant hunts with Pepper, and in most cases, the other falconers were worn out exhausted long before we were done. I especially enjoyed one time that this happened, and when Pepper caught the pheasant my friend was not surprised or impressed, but rather was relieved that we could stop running.



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## THE ROADRUNNER

I took Pepper to the California Hawking Club meet at Christmas time in hopes of finding lots of pheasants in Bakersfield with lots of eager flushers to help. The first day of the meet I was given directions to find pheasants over an hour away in Porterville. I loaded up an apprentice and a wanna-be apprentice in my van and we were followed by a car full of raptor rehabbers and biologists.

We drove right to the spot that we had been directed to, and flew Pepper, but we did not find any pheasants. Pepper chased a few small birds that we were able to flush, but we gave up after forty minutes, and looked for another spot or a slip for Manfred. We found a duck slip and Manfred killed his first drake widgeon, which was one of only four ducks recorded in the game counts for the week, but Pepper got skunked.

I started the next day with what I hoped would be an easy catch to break the ice and get the game count rolling for Pepper who was the only representative of aplomado falconry at any American falconry meet that I know of. We went to a dairy that has a pond full of coots and we got some of the coots to go into the field behind the pond.

Pepper got the first coot so fast. I slipped it into my vest pocked and she took a second one almost as fast. I slipped away the second coot as well and I heard my friend shouting at me to give his bird a chance, but Pepper was off my fist and away chasing after a coot that could really fly. I caught up to them where the coot had Pepper in a stand off. The coot was standing in an inch of water, and Pepper was standing four feet away on a mound of dirt. I tried to get around the far side of the coot and I waited for a photographer who was slipping along

in the gooey field trying to see and shoot the aplomado hunting. The coot flew a long way and Pepper caught it in a noble chase. I had promised the weathering yard chairperson that I would be at the meet site at one

**When she missed on the first pass, she was on the ground, and the roadrunner took flight toward me with Pepper right behind him.**

o'clock to take guests hawking in an organized way on a schedule, so I left while the rest of the party stayed behind. From highway 5, I turned onto the 84 for what I thought was the most direct route back the meet. As I drove along, I spotted what looked like a hen pheasant in an apple orchard. I hate to be late for any appointment, but I could not resist my chance at what might be the only pheasant of the week. I turned around and looked down the rows for the bird I had just passed. I found it and averted my eyes to avoid spooking it while I got Pepper from her block. I opened the van's sliding side door and Pepper went right after what turned out to be a roadrunner. When I lived in Southern California, I had seen Harris' hawks try to catch roadrunners lots of times, but the roadrunners never got caught. As Pepper closed the two-hundred-yard distance, the roadrunner watched her without moving until the last second, then he sidestepped and she missed him. When she missed on the first pass, she was on the ground, and the roadrunner took flight toward me with Pepper right behind him. I ran and yelled at the roadrunner, which turned to my left and went one row

over behind a tree. Pepper was close behind him and caught him as he tried to double back right in front of me. I slipped Pepper off and put the roadrunner into my vest for safety. I brought the live roadrunner back to the meet site to show it around and to have a vet check it over before I released it. It escaped from me in the parking lot before I got a vet to look at it, but it seemed healthy as it ran away.

After the CHC meet, I only had Pepper for three more weeks before I returned her to Doug Alton's breeding project. This was the plan all along, and I am proud that I succeeded in keeping her alive and well long enough to get her into breeding as a well-proven falconry bird. The week after the meet, I was in one of my pheasant fields. In fact we were walking back to the van and getting close when a drake mallard flushed from a weedy wet spot less than twenty feet from us. Pepper exploded off my fist and tackled him on the rise within sixty feet. I got there quickly to help her and slipped her off so the duck could be released. I do not know whether she could have held this drake who weighed over 1200 grams by herself, but she sure pulled him down out of the air as though she was in total control.

Pepper's last hunt before going into the breeding chamber was planned for a Sunday with two close friends along in her favourite pheasant field. It was a success with Pepper killing a hen pheasant. We cheered and made a toast, and we each took a feather from the tail of the pheasant. ■

# FALCONERS



# DOGS

## THE SPRINGER SPANIEL

Much is debated about the best dog for falconry but suitability is often as much in the training as in the breed. Spaniels make excellent falconers dogs provided they are trained as such. Before the advent of the continental HPR breeds, walking guns used spaniels to flush for pointers and setters, especially on grouse moors. (A more energetic breed of falconer seems to have discontinued this practice.) They remain the preferred rough shooters or beaters dog. Having superb drive, springers are unafraid of cover and are energetic hunters in all conditions. The uninitiated will complain that they are too wilful and that flights over them are hard to engineer, which is where the training comes in.

A good working spaniel should quarter no more than ten yards on either side of the falconer and should drop to the flush or the flight so as not to bump further game or interrupt the chase. An experienced handler will be able to read his dog and spot when it is coming up on quarry. The action will get more intense but the pace will slow. As with all dogs, the tail is the signal of intent. Good falconers know all the signs. It has even been recorded that some spaniels will half point or pause when they come up to the moment of flush.

They are ideal dogs for flying goshawks over in open country where the cover is low and dense but they do equally well for Harris' hawks in a following-on flight through woodland, provided they can be controlled at will to match the hawk's movement. They are especially useful for flushing reluctant pheasants from deep in bramble patches that some of the thinner-skinned breeds will refuse.

To watch a spaniel working hard cover is a joy. Every little bit of ground is checked with a vigour that often causes disbelief in the watcher, but is almost always accurate. So good is their nose that little is missed, and their joy at work is positively human. A well-trained spaniel makes falconry fun; the opposite causes misery. But isn't that a universal truth with dogs? ■



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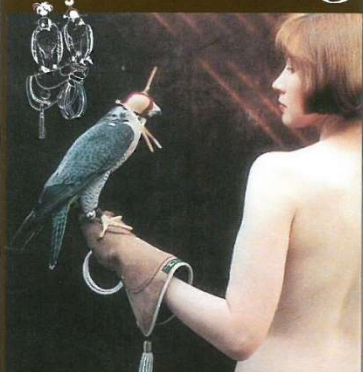
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Falconry



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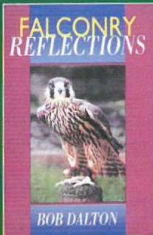


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# BOOK REVIEWS

## A Passion for Harris' Hawks

By Martin Hollinshead  
Published by The Fernhill Press  
Price: £22.95

Reviewed by David Owen

**T**he gourmet's hawk? Love them or loathe them, the Harris' hawk has to have been the greatest influence on modern falconry in the United Kingdom and in many other parts of Europe. Martin Hollinshead, regular contributor to this fine publication, is of course the doyen of the Harris' hawk in the United Kingdom.

Such is the power of the previous book, *The Complete Rabbit and Hare Hawk* that by the accounts of fervent broadwing men, has helped to increase the standard of rabbit and hare hunting in the UK. It helped me no end and the section on removing a Harris' from a kill is a must! The thirst for information on this rather unique hawk is so great that Martin has had to take time away from hunting to pen this latest book and fill in the gaps left by *The Complete Rabbit and Hare hawk*.

In essence this is the sister title to the former and the student really needs to extrapolate the information from *The Complete Rabbit and Hare hawk* before taking on this tome. This is essential, as the reader will then understand the reasoning behind why each topic is expanded and explained. The content of the book is as follows:

1. The lethal partnership
2. The clone
3. The young Harris'
4. Four-legged help
5. The ultimate quarry
6. Cloud nine
7. Down to earth
8. The mixed blessing
9. All trouble

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

MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD



10. David Meets Goliath
11. The amateur cook book

This is not a book on the taxonomy of the Harris' Hawk. It does not investigate the truth behind the so-called *Superior* or the performance merits of the small Peruvian Harris' Hawks. Specific medical conditions aren't covered. Nor does the book cover group hunting. Instead Martin focuses his attentions on the use of a single hawk in the field flying at rabbit and hare, with the use of dog (particularly the Welsh Collie) and ferrets.

The battle of the sexes is covered in not too much detail as our Martin prefers the female – his argument once again is firm. Game-bird hawking is not covered in any detail either. Our author does state that he comes across the occasional pheasant and his preference is for wild stock and this is an admirable stance.

Within the book several difficult subjects are hit head-on. An example of this is that of aggression. Included within this section are details of my own Harris' and her behaviour conversion. The analysis is specific and exact. Those of us who have been touched by the Harris' know that this is no beginners' hawk alone, the

intelligence of this hawk, if not moulded, will condition the austringer and not vice-versa. The author has delved into this subject to a greater extent within this book and much of this is covered by example. Details of hunting trips are beautifully written and do provide vivid accounts of the effective use of a Harris' hawk at ground game. This method of explaining by example is very helpful and does example the tactics and field craft required.

Breeding is another subject hit head-on. Harris' hawk breeding is said to be not that difficult and as a result the breeding of Harris' hawks in the UK may, by inference of the author, have been conducted without too much thought. Martin's evidence and preferences as to breeding methods will raise the hackles of breeders who could be said to be set in their ways. For those who rise to Martin's challenge, we may see a different type of Harris' Hawk in the future perhaps?

Few falconers take hares regularly here in the UK and the section covering the specifics of hare hawking is superb. Within this is the subject of hooding. Our author is a man who hoods his Harris' hawk and his reasoning is sound. Many of us have attended field meetings where we have seen the agitated hawk, used to hawking alone and having all the slips. The hood avoids this and also helps to focus a flight, as any corvid hawker will know.

Who should buy this book? Well, if you fly a Harris' hawk or intend to fly a Harris' hawk then you should reach in to those deep pockets. This is a very good book and all Harris' Hawking austringers, no matter what their experience is, will learn from its pages. ■

## Falconry

by Gilbert Blaine

£25.00

Reviewed by Bob Dalton

Every now and again a book is published that is not only hailed as a masterpiece in its day, but also stands close scrutiny several generations on. Such is the case with the classic work *Falconry* by Gilbert Blaine. Unfortunately originals are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain and ever more expensive. Thankfully, a high quality reprint has just been published.

The word classic seems to be banded about with consummate ease these days but, in this particular case, it would be difficult to find a more apt description. Written, as it is, by a falconer who practised his sport to a very high degree for many decades.

Gilbert Blaine was introduced to falconry by none other than Charles Hawkins Fisher and enjoyed his tutelage for the early part of his career as a falconer. Rooks on Salisbury Plain and partridges on the Dorset Downs were the chosen quarries and venues in the early days. The Old Hawking Club was at its height during this period and it enjoyed no stronger support than given to it by Blaine. In fact Blaine is often credited with being a major factor in keeping the sport of falconry alive in Britain in the period that followed the Great War.

When the eventual and almost inevitable demise of the old Hawking Club came about, Blaine was one of those instrumental in founding The British Falconers' Club. He was to go on and become the club's vice-president and then President for a total of nineteen years until his death in the mid 1950s.

Although Blaine practised many branches of the sport, it is probably for his unparalleled expertise in the field

## Falconry



Gilbert Blaine

of grouse hawking that he will best be remembered. This was undoubtedly his passion and flying peregrines over his own kennel of Westdown setters gave him more pleasure than anything else.

His book was first published in 1936 and was greeted by some as the best treatise since Latham. Written in an age that knew nothing of domestic breeding of falcons, hybrids, Harris' hawks or telemetry, many might wonder if such a book has any real relevance today. The answer is, without doubt, an emphatic yes.

Blaine was an acknowledged master of his chosen craft. In this work he carefully lays down his thoughts and methods in dealing with hawks not only in their training but also in their home life. He writes from personal experience and with an obvious passion and sensitivity for the subject. One or two aspects covered in the book have been superseded by today's conditions and our understanding of health issues pertaining to hawks has certainly advanced. But for all that, the book is crammed with useful knowledge that is as pertinent today as it ever was.

In structure the book follows the well-worn path of its predecessors. The various hawks and falcons

employed in the chase are discussed as is furniture and appliances. Then the reader is given thoughts on peregrines at the eyrie and eyasses at hack. This is followed by education of the eyass. This chapter has been a fund of knowledge for many tyro falconers over the years. It reads fresh and crisp and could have been written no more than a month ago.

Equally informative and relevant are the two following chapters which cover lure flying combined with waiting-on and then the subject of hooding. A whole chapter is devoted to hooding and has probably never been bettered.

The branches of falconry that it was practical to follow in the era the book was written, are covered in full. Rook, gull, game, and lark hawking are all comprehensively discussed. For the Austringer, work with goshawks and sparrowhawks is also detailed.

Feeding, moulting, ailments, advice, incidental matters and hawking establishments are all covered in their own rite. But one chapter above all others makes this book a must for every falconer's bookshelf. Regardless of whether the reader is a longwinger or shortwinger at heart. The chapter on passage hawks is probably one of the finest ever written on falconry.

Throughout the book it is more than obvious that peregrines are the hawk that is held in the highest regard by Blaine. His admiration for them is confessed in the book itself where, when discussing goshawks, he says "For myself, being wedded in my affections to peregrines, I can find goshawks only a secondary interest".

As well as containing a wealth of practical information on training and hunting, the book has some excellent anecdotes sprinkled throughout. They make for interesting reading and raise the book above the normal standard of a conventional treatise. ▶

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## BOOK REVIEW CONT.

Many oft-quoted sayings originate from the pages of this fine volume. For example, again when speaking of goshawks, "She will exasperate you to such a degree that you will long to wring her neck, being deterred only by the reflection that, were you to attempt it single-handed, you would get severely lacerated in the process". Another well-known one is "A goshawk that will only come to a lure is not properly manned, and is the second-rate pupil of an indifferent teacher".

But it is when discussing peregrines that his personal feelings show through. He says of them "The peregrine in this country can do all that these foreign hawks can do, and do it better. From time immemorial this has been the bird of falconry, the most universal and the most useful. It seems to have been created for the service of man. Its courage, docility, and the brilliance of its performance cannot be rivalled by any bird that flies". A sentiment that is still shared by many falconers throughout the world today, despite the ease with which gyrfalcons and large hybrids can now be obtained.

This reprint is limited to five hundred copies and has been produced to a very high quality. It is essential reading not only to those that fly falcons but also to any falconer who enjoys reading about falconry from the pen of a true master.

Blaine closes his volume with some very apt words. "To those that are young professors no less than to those that would learn to profess I offer this my book, trusting that they may gather something of profit from its pages. I shall regard the attainment of this object as a fair reward for my labour of writing it". ■



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