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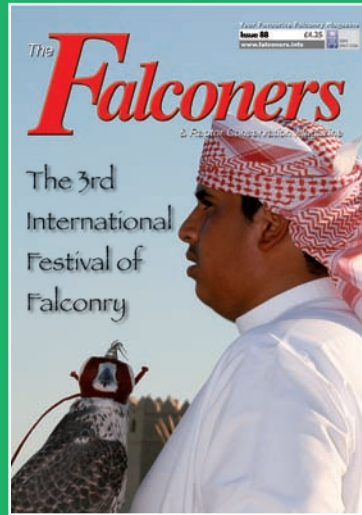
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The **Falcons**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine

*Breeding
Sparrowhawks*

The *Falconers*

& Raptor Conservation Magazine



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

ALL EDITORIAL
INFO TO THIS
ADDRESS

Art Editor: Steve Hunt
Telephone: 0845 803 1979
Fax: 01202 659950
E-mail: steve@pwpublishing.ltd.uk

Advertising and Marketing:

Sales: Roger Hall
0845 803 1979

Production: Peter Eldrett
PW Publishing Ltd., Arrowsmith Court,
Station Approach, Broadstone,
Dorset BH18 8PW
Telephone: 0845 803 1979
Fax: 01202 659950
E-mail: sales@pwpublishing.ltd.uk

ALL
ADVERTISING
INFO TO THIS
ADDRESS

Finance: Alan Burgess
Telephone: 0845 803 1979
Fax: 01202 659950
E-mail: alan@pwpublishing.ltd.uk

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Falconers Magazine,
Subscriptions Dept.,
Unit 8 The Old Silk Mill
Brook Street, Tring
Hertfordshire HP23 5EF
Telephone: (01442) 820580
Fax: (01442) 827912
E-mail: falconers@webscribe.co.uk
Web: www.webscribe.co.uk

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What on earth has happened to the summer? I think it must have gone abroad on holiday. The cancellation of so many events including the Falconers' Fair (twice) and the CLA Game Fair has not improved peoples mood and the season is not over yet. What other event will fall by the wayside? Roll on the flying season and hopefully that will put a smile on our faces once again.

If you have a look at pages 4 and 5 of this issue, you will see that it is all change at the IBR. Neil and Juliana have decided that they are now at a stage in their lives to have a change and are looking to go to sunnier climes. The IBR is now in the hands of Keith and Barbara Royle and I hope you will join me in wishing them luck in their new venture.

I also hope you will join me in thanking Neil and Juliana for all of their hard work in running the IBR over the last eight or so years and wish them all the very best for the future. You will be missed by so many falconers who have been reunited with their hawks over the years.

In the meantime, have a good read.

editorial



news & products

a review of what's new in our sport Send all your news and product information to peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

All change at the IBR



The time has come for us to move on and pass the IBR to the next pair of safe hands. The seed (The IBR) was sewn in 1994 when the then Department of Environment (DOE) deregistered Harris Hawks, little did anyone know how large it would grow or become the success that it is. We have been running the IBR since 2004 when it had just over 7000 members with 35,000 birds / rings. We now have over 16,000 members and over 90,000 birds / rings out there. It has been a long and hard journey but incredibly satisfying and rewarding, meeting many interesting and charismatic characters on the way.

The IBR is NOT a job it is a way of life - we start, oops, started at 8 a.m. and finish at 9 p.m. seven days a week, even Christmas Day, receiving an average of over 1000 calls per month and over 40 e-mails daily. Over the years we have had many difficult, awkward and sometimes downright hilarious calls dealing with anything you can think of and more. We have been mistaken for registrars (births and marriages) on more occasions than we can remember, reminds us of a certain well known TV advert. We have had falconers pick up falcons that turn out to be pheasants, we have had swimming hamsters and far too many eagles in our garden. If you are a falconer who has birds registered with us you would/will get a call from us asking for your help. It is how the IBR works so well.

During our reign we set up the website which includes a webshop for everything falconry, we developed and made a large range of quality equipment ourselves (became an expert

on dishwashers as we trialled different leather balm recipes), Birdmart (the most successful buying and selling platform on the web), registrations, rings, legal information and the online Falconry Directory - the website receives over two million hits per year. We still produce the only Falconry Directory (commonly known as the Falconers Bible or yellow pages for falconers).

We have always been well supported by our members and clubs at the many fairs we attended yearly (weather permitting) and they were a great place to be able to put faces to names / voices. The regular crowd on the fair circuit have always been great and we have had a lot of laughs together over the years.

We have tried to support and promote clubs over the years and have had many an entertaining evening whilst giving talks to them and it's always nice to see them at the fairs.

The years have passed quickly and we have seen many changes to legislation regarding birds of prey and also of course the introduction of the Lantra awards programme which is still moving in the right direction.

Unfortunately over the years we have had a few members/ friends die and it's always sad when you are asked to help re-home their birds for their relatives.

We built up a good working relationship with Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) now Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) over the years and hope that those relationships will be maintained for many more years to come.

Our final year has been a bit of a damp squib as we were hoping to introduce the new custodians to members at the many fairs we would normally attend, but as we all know due the exceptional weather we have been unable to do so.

We have tried very hard to make the transition to Keith and Barbara smooth for both them and our members, hopefully this will have been successful. We hope that all our members and suppliers will have as good a relationship with Keith and Barbara as we have had with our members and suppliers for many years to come.

We have so many people to thank for their support during our time with the IBR: our members, our suppliers, all those who have picked up and looked after birds for us at short notice and all the friends we have made along the way. A big thank you to everyone and we hope you will continue to support the IBR - it is there to help you which in turn helps falconry, a pastime that is worth preserving.

Promote responsibility - register your birds.

Neil and Juliana Fowler

IBR – new beginnings

On the 16th July 2012, Juliana and Neil hung up their jesses and handed over the running of the IBR to me and my husband, Keith.

This well established and unique business has been trading since 1994. Juliana and Neil took over in 2004 and have built it up to what it is today.

Many of you will already know me either personally or by sight. Although my passion for falconry started when I was a teenager it has taken just over 30 years for me to become a practising falconer. In 2004 I joined the British Falconers' Club and now 8 years on I continue to enjoy hunting with my male and female Harris Hawks. I also fly a Saker falcon to the lure and I own a jack Merlin which is flown as a display bird.

I am the secretary of the BFC's North West Group and I am a LANTRA assessor.

Some of you will also know Keith. He was a Communications Officer for 15 years but has since been made

redundant. He is an accomplished rock climber and mountaineer and is currently working as a part time instructor at a local climbing wall. Although Keith is not a practising falconer, he has supported and helped me with falconry and has become an extremely good ferreter!!

We will continue to run the IBR as it is and promote responsibility by encouraging those who have birds of prey to register them with us and we will continue to record all lost, stolen and found birds and endeavour to reunite them with their owners.

Since 1994, the IBR has reunited over 5500 birds with their owners. We use a comprehensive database that is capable of searching any details it is given, however in order to be successful all our records need to be kept up to date. It is important that breeders who are supplied with rings inform the IBR when they sell a bird on and to whom. The same applies to keepers that also



sell their birds or acquire new ones.

We will still be publishing the annual directory and so any of you wishing to advertise your business or write an article, you can either contact us via the website, by email or phone us.

This service is for you. If you have any ideas on how we can improve the IBR then please contact us or if we can offer any help or advice, we will do our best to guide you.

Keith and I look forward to working with all of you for the foreseeable future.

Keith and Barbara Royle

New sculpture from Bill Prickett

This Peregrine on Glove is the latest bird of prey sculpture from Bill Prickett. Bill was awarded the Best Sculpture prize at the Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi in December for his Preening Peregrine in Bronze, and has just picked up the prize for best 2012 "Wildlife in 3D" at the Wildlife Artist of the Year Exhibition", (run by the David Shepherd Foundation) 2012 held at the Mall Galleries in May for his plywood "Octopus".

This peregrine was originally hand carved from lime wood, and took him three months to complete. It is shown here in the Bronze Resin cast (limited edition of 35) which retail at £750 plus postage. Bill

makes the casts (which are taken from the original carving) himself, so the whole process for the bronze resins is completed by Bill, in the UK. The sculpture is also available as a bronze to order and in the original lime wood. Contact Bill on: 0845 257 0887. More info on www.billprickett.co.uk



Breeding Sparrowhawks

Over the last eight years I have had a pair or two of Sparrowhawks and over this time I have tried in vain to breed them. These are by far one of the most finicky delinquent species to breed, and yes I know that there are those of you out there that will say that you have had no problems, but believe you me you are the lucky ones. Producing eggs was no problem. One season I had 16 Spar eggs but not one fertile one. Getting her to sit on the nest was no problem – I had one female who went full term and after I took the eggs away she even sat another month with nothing under her. The males displaying and building the nests was again no problem – do you see a pattern here? Everything was happening except getting fertile eggs.

Spars on camera

Five years ago I bought some cameras that I set up in the aviaries. I bought two colour and two black and white cameras with sound and infra-red capability (so I could see the female sitting on the nest at night). These cameras changed everything; for the first time I could see the pairs going through their courtship and I could see what was fundamentally wrong. Like many people I was always told that the inside of aviaries should be as natural looking as possible so the inside of my aviaries which were made of wood were a wood colour, and I had a pine tree in there as well. Once I had the cameras in the aviaries I saw that, yes, it looked natural but the dark wood and tree made the whole thing look dark. That's not to say that you needed a light to see your way around, it just cut down the amount of natural light in the



Egg starts pipping

aviary. That season I watched the Spars go through their routine of courtship, but I noticed one thing straight away that I could not have seen before without the cameras. The male started at the beginning of the season making all the right noises and carrying food to the nest but he seemed to be terrified any time the female came near him. The same thing was happening with my other pair as well. I also saw that the males did not seem to calm down and pay any attention to the nest until after the female had laid the eggs. This led me to one conclusion and that was that, although the males were calling and offering food, they were not coming into condition until after the females had laid. Light has a big influence as to when birds come into breeding condition and my aviaries needed more light, so I did away with the tree and painted the aviaries white to increase the amount of light.

That next breeding season, unfortunately, I did not get to test my theory, as during the winter both my females killed both the males – an unfortunate trait in accipiters. Male Spars, as many of you will know, are like gold dust and I could not find a male anywhere until I spoke to Terry at the Kentish Falconry centre and he had two males and no females, so I swapped a female



Chick starts cutting

for a male. So I now had one pair - great! Roll on the season. BUT no, it was not to be. At the beginning of April just as the breeding season was getting under way a fox got on top of my aviary and spooked the female. She flew into the wall and broke her neck. I was gutted - I now had a male and no female. I was just about to give up and sell the male when I had a phone call from Yvonne Taylor who had a wild disabled female with all the relevant paper work for breeding. She offered me this bird to put with my male and so was formed my current pair of Spars.

In their first season everything went well. They both seemed to come into season at the right time and the male built a cracking nest, but the female being young would not allow him to copulate, so although in this first season I had no chicks she did lay eight eggs and both birds behaved well.

In 2005 (the following season) everything went to plan and both birds seemed really happy. At the beginning the male would try to copulate with the female on the nest but she would not stand for him and I never saw a successful attempt on the nest. This was a bit worrying because she laid three eggs and I had not seen anything that would have led me to believe that the eggs would be fertile.



Spar just 10 minuets old

Female not sitting

After the first three eggs the female did not sit and did not lay another egg for four days. Then the male took to food passing to her on the floor where I could not see them. Because I could not see what they were doing I did not know if the male was trying to copulate again after food passing and I also did not know if he was being successful. In the end she laid six eggs and I consoled myself in the fact that after the full period of incubation I would know one way or the other if these eggs were any good. The only bad thing was that by the time she started to sit on the eggs (they usually start to sit on the second to last egg) the first egg was already 14 days old, so not a good age for a fertile egg. If anything I thought that the first three eggs would be infertile or would not develop and the second batch of three had a strong possibility of being fertile if they had got their act together and copulated. But I was expecting nothing as I was following pretty much the same pattern as the year before.

On day 32 of incubation I checked the cameras first thing in the morning and all seemed fine with six eggs in the nest and the female sitting tight. I left the house about 8.00am to attend a committee meeting in East Grinstead. When I got back at 6.00pm I checked the cameras again and to my horror found that one of the eggs was missing. I could not see anything on the nest so I got the aviary keys and went in to see if I could find the egg that might have fallen from the nest or even worse a half eaten chick. I looked all over the place and found nothing not even the egg shell. What I did find was that an egg was pipping, and if I put the egg to my ear I could hear the chick

inside. This was great!

I had a fertile egg and it was one of the second batch laid but it still did not answer what had happened to the other egg. A friend of mine, Paul Harris, had a pair of Sparrowhawks that produced but had a tendency to kill and eat their own young - this was going through my mind. Could this have happened here?

I decided that rather than remove the egg I would leave it in the nest as I had no proof of what had happened to the other egg and I wanted her to bring up her own chicks.

The next morning I got up early at 5.00am and checked the cameras. The egg had pipped a little more but had got no further, so I checked it again at 6.00am and at 7.30am just before I had to go to work. Nothing. I could clearly hear the chick's calls but it was taking its time. Later that day I got home and saw that the egg shell was to one side on the nest so the chick must have hatched. I made a cup of tea and sat down to wait for the female to move so I could see if the chick was under her. This took two hours then finally she moved and I could see the dry fluffy white chick sitting under her. The chick was making a lot of noise so it was obviously hungry and it was moving quite a bit for something that had only just hatched. This started to ring alarm bells as the female seemed to be ignoring the chick's calls for food. She was just walking around the nest tending the other eggs and once even trod on the poor chick. She finally settled on the chick and the eggs again but did not feed it. I decided

that if she did not feed it soon I would have to remove it and hand rear it, something I did not want to do as I had been told how hard it could be.

I got out my still air incubator and set it up giving it a good disinfecting first. Just as I switched the incubator on the female got up again off the chick, as the male brought in some food for her. Great I thought let's see if she feeds it now. But it was not to be, she went over to the food, took a few mouthfuls with the chick screaming in her ear but completely ignored it. She then came around the nest and pecked at the chick twice then to my horror picked it up in her beak, pulled it to the side of the nest, grabbed it with her foot, bent down as if she was holding a piece of food and was about to take a bite from it. I had seen enough to know that she was about to kill the chick and ran down the garden to the aviary making as much noise as I could. Once I got there I went in and removed the chick.

Once I had the chick my first priority was to get it warmed up as it was going very lethargic in my hand from the cold. Once it was warm then I had to get at least two or three mouthfuls into it. I placed it in the incubator but the temperature was still too low as I had only just put it on (one of the many valuable lessons I learnt - have the incubator always ready - you never know when you will need it). I rang my friend Derek Stotton and told him what had happened and the problem with the incubator not being at temperature. He gave me a simple solution. He said, "use



Sparrowhawk chicks



Both Chicks at 12 days. (Male – left, female - right)

a hair drier to warm up the incubator”. I did this and within minutes the chick was warm and begging for food. It took three mouthfuls and then went to sleep. This first feed was at 9.00pm, I then set up a chart noting down the time I fed the chick, if it had muted and if its crop was empty. These were two of the most important things to check, the chick had to have an empty crop and have muted before I fed it again. Better to check this than religiously feed it every so many hours and over feeding it. I fed it again at 11.15pm, 1.30am, and 3.30pm and at 7.15am.

At 7.15am I weighed the chick to find that it weighed 16g. This was also noted on my chart and I also gave it quite a bit of food. This is where I fell into quite a dilemma because I had to go to work and leave it till at least 3.00pm. I tried something which did work for me although it was a bit unorthodox. During the night I kept the incubator in a room with the lights on as this would stimulate the chick into calling when hungry and I would feed it on a regular basis throughout the night. From the time I went to work I placed the incubator in a dark room and made the last feed a large one so the chick would sleep and not move around. In fact, what I had done was to swap its night for day and its day for night. I worked out that on a normal night at that time of year allowing for hunting time a chick could go eight to nine hours sleeping without food. I was here during the night and this is when I could give it regular feeds.

This all seemed to work and as the chick got older I could extend the intervals between feeds because it was eating more at one sitting, but again I always checked the two most important things – mutes and an empty crop.

By day five the chick weighed 24g. Up to now I had been feeding finely chopped Quail breast but on day six I would start to incorporate some of the finely ground up bones and by day nine I did not cut the bits of meat and bone up as much.

On day five the other egg started to pip and so as not to take any chances I removed it and placed it in the incubator to hatch. As luck would have it I was there when it hatched and got it on film as you can see in the sequence of photos.

Both chicks did well and once the female was 10 days old and had her ring on she weighed 65g. I decided to put her back into the nest. I needed to do this because I wanted the parents to bond well in the rearing of their own young. If all went well they would be less inclined to kill the young next year and acknowledge the chicks for what they are.

The 10th day

I put the chick in the nest at 5.30pm the evening of day 10. At first the female was a bit unsure as to what to make of the chick, and the chick was not moving a lot since I had given it half a crop full before putting it in. The female and male made many trips back and forth to the nest looking at the chick but not feeding it. After about half an hour the chick

started begging for food and pecking at bits on the nest. By 6.05pm the female was feeding the chick. Once it had fed she tried to brood it but this is something that the chick had not done before. As the female went to sit on the chick it kept moving away!

Eventually as it got darker and the chick got colder it did get the idea and snuggled up under the female. I did speak to Derek about this problem and he told me that five days before going back I should place a piece of kitchen towel on the chick and lightly place my hand on it until it stopped moving and had gone to sleep. Doing this every time after feeding would get the chick used to being brooded. I did this with the male and put him in some five days after the female and I must say it worked really well, with the chick looking to be brooded when it was cold.

The female stayed with the parents until she was 18 days old, and then she went to a friend (Paul Wetton) for imprinting and flying. The other chick which was a male was kept back with the parents until fully feathered and hard panned, then it was to go for a breeding project.



Sparrowhawk on perch



askchitty

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

What can a bird of prey breeder do to avoid Microphthalmia, especially in artificially incubated chicks?

It always seems slightly surprising that artificial incubation is so difficult – after all, birds seem to do remarkably well with no scientific knowledge or equipment and in remarkably variable conditions. However, it is tricky and a number of problems can occur if incubator conditions are not maintained properly.

In the main, when it goes wrong it goes very wrong and incubator problems are normally marked by increases in embryo death or failure to hatch due to malpositionings.

However, on occasions there may be induced deformities. The most common of these (in poultry) is microphthalmos (or a small eye).

The causes of this in poultry have been listed as:

- Increased carbon dioxide
- Toxoplasma infection
- Toxins entering the egg (including insulin, salt, corticosteroid)
- Loss of part of the shell combined with lack of turning during incubation

Some of these (eg. lack of turning) will induce many other defects as well, including embryo death.

In a paper at the European Association of Avian Vets in 2003, Nigel Harcourt-Brown described a microphthalmia problem in a raptor incubation unit due to a rise in incubator temperature. The fact that this was from 37.2C to 37.4C shows just how sensitive egg incubation can be.

It is also important to remember that not all deformities are due to incubator conditions – some are genetically linked and some are pure chance as development goes wrong. Therefore,

if only the very occasional problem is noted and they are different problems each time then there may not be a problem that can be sorted.

However, if there are several affected (and they are not all from the same parent (s)), particularly with the same problem (or if there are problems with failing to hatch, malpositioning, or weak chicks post-hatch) then you can be very suspicious of an incubation problem.

Investigation should include the following:

- Post-mortem examination of all affected chicks and eggs that have not hatched (remember that an unhatched egg may not have even been fertilised – always worth checking!)
- Checking of incubation records
 - Incubator and hatcher temperatures
 - Incubator and hatcher humidities
 - Environmental temperature/humidity
 - Egg turning
 - Any problems noted – eg. power shortages/surges
 - Chemicals used round/near eggs
 - Incubator and hatcher cleaning/disinfection
- Bacteriological investigation of incubator/ hatcher, especially of water traps
- Review of all egg handling and procedures in the incubator room

i.e. Accurate monitoring and recording is essential when performing artificial incubation! Above all, it is worth preventing these problems.

Parent birds should be maintained



in good health (with monitoring) and their diet should be well-maintained and monitored.

Incubators should always be set up well in advance of need, having been initially cleaned and thoroughly disinfected.

They should be monitored constantly for temperature and humidity with appropriate alarms in place (the same also applies to the incubator room).

Staff working with the eggs must be thoroughly trained in procedure and eggs should be checked through incubation for weight (a measure of fluid loss and viability) and embryo viability (candling or Egg Buddy device).

As they near hatching, eggs should be moved to a hatcher unit where temperature and humidity are usually maintained a little lower than in the incubator.

We don't have the same innate biological knowledge as the parent bird – so we have to try to replicate this . . . and it's hard work! It is truly a wonder how well wild birds do!

Reference

Harcourt-Brown NH (2003) *Microphthalmia, cataracts, and microphakia in artificially incubated and reared hybrid falcons (Falco spp)*. Proceedings 7th European AAV Conference pp 197-203.

Crown of Jewels

Raptors are the United Kingdom's crown of jewels. We don't have the majestic Tiger prowling through our woodlands and long gone are the days Elk and Wolves roamed the highlands of Scotland. Unlike many other countries, we are devoid of large carnivores. Even our herbivores are petite in comparison to elsewhere. Our nature lacks the brutal force of big cats and dogs. We will never have a pride of Lions, nor do I expect will we ever see a wild pack of Wolves range free in our lands again.

We do however, have some beautiful, feathered predators. Our Birds of Prey surely more than compensate for our lack of teeth and claws? They boast impressive

talons, hooked beaks and baffle us with their adaptations. Although Owls are scientifically classified in a different order to the remainder of Birds of Prey, I am including them amongst the Raptors for the purpose of this article. Raptor is taken from Latin, meaning to seize and plunder with force – Owls fit this bill! So, from the Little Owl, our smallest native Bird of Prey, to the Peregrine Falcon, the fastest creature on the planet and the White Tailed Eagle, with its 9ft wingspan our raptors should meet our desire for the cunning and lethal killers we seek out around the world. Even the name 'Raptor' advertises the predatory nature.

Not convinced? The United Kingdom has a variety of Birds of Prey, the list is quite extensive. More than likely you

will have witnessed the Kestrel as it hovers on a roadside verge, seeking out a Short-tailed Vole. The Marsh Harrier sails over her hunting ground; wings held in the characteristic V shape, languid and relaxed with her head down similarly searching for her prey. Now tell me, have you been witness to this? Still looking for something with more force? How about the Sparrowhawk; these long-legged, agile aerial hunters often take you by surprise, zipping over a hedge. They catapult around trees and extend their talons at the precise moment to snatch a retreating Blue Tit. Or even a pigeon if you're watching a larger female!

Regardless of whether you hold our Raptors with such esteem as the planet mammalian predators, almost everyone experiences a thrill of excitement if they see a Bird of Prey. They are awe inspiring and often breath-taking.

Why then, is the United Kingdom's crown of jewels still under threat at the hands of humans? During 2010 alone, the RSPB received 128 reports of Raptor poisoning incidents, affecting at least 129 individual birds. Another 227 reports of destruction or shooting of Birds of Prey were filed. Egg collecting incidents totalled 40. Even with numbers this high, it is expected that actual figures will be much higher – many incidents will go un-noticed and will not be reported.

Pressure of habitat loss

Many of our Raptors are already facing environmental pressures including habitat loss, climate change and reduction of prey availability. Following the harsh winter of 2010, breeding pairs of Barn Owls in some areas of Northern England, Scotland and Wales were down a whole 90%. Despite being fully aware of the struggles our iconic countryside Raptors are dealing with, we (including the government, the media, the wildlife crime officers and the general public) sit by as onlookers while un-responsible people commit crimes against them.



Female Sparrowhawk

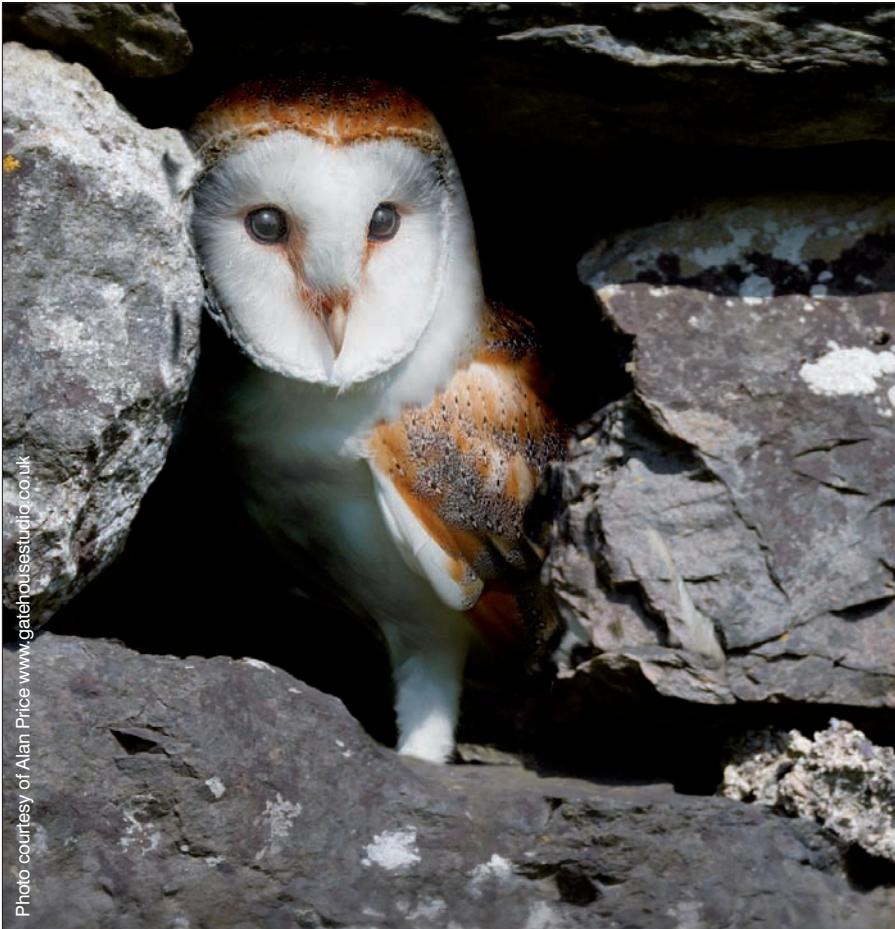


Photo courtesy of Alan Price www.gatehousestudio.co.uk

Barn Owl

It is fair to say that some control is executed by bodies such as the RSPB and the wildlife crime officers – but it is not enough. In 2010, there were only 49 individual prosecutions involving wild birds. In comparison with the number of reports and what the actual number of illegal killings would be if all uncovered, this number pales into insignificance. Many of those found guilty leave with only a fine – 14 of the 49 received were given prison sentences (11 of these being suspended sentences). The punishments or chance of getting a punishment obviously do not deter nor dissuade these people committing from illegal Raptor killings – despite it having been illegal since 1954!

Now you might ask, who on earth would want to go around deliberately laying poison and traps or shooting our winged beauties? This is the part where our story becomes even more awkward. It has long been known that gamekeepers have controlled 'vermin' across their shooting estates to protect the valuable grouse that they rely upon. We can look back at shooting records, handed in by

individual keepers to see exactly what they dispatched – which before 1954 always contained Hawks and Owls (often huge numbers of them). Gamekeepers claim that they have reformed and that they are not to blame for the continued demise of Raptors but much evidence is to claim otherwise.

Not to tar all gamekeepers with the same brush but I cannot omit that a great deal of evidence points the finger of blame towards the shooting fraternity. To clarify, I am not biased – I myself have worked on a shooting estate and understand how they function. I sympathise with gamekeepers, everyone has a job to do, and why would you want it to be more difficult? Unfortunately though, it may be said that many gamekeepers feel that the law may not apply to them and nothing should make this acceptable.

A key example is that of the Hen Harrier – this is our most intensely persecuted Raptor. Its link to predating Grouse throughout the summer months has led to much conflict with gamekeepers and estate owners. Nests of

the species have often been destroyed, as well as individuals being shot, trapped or poisoned. A 2008 survey found that only five pairs nested successfully on 'driven' Grouse moorland in northern England and Scotland. Sufficient habitat exists for 500 pairs.

Persecution of Raptors

Despite the evidence and the obvious low numbers of our Raptors, this illegal persecution still continues. Now tell me, if the United Kingdom were to have its very own pride of Lions, would we stand by and watch as they were hunted, trapped or poisoned?

Of course we wouldn't. Similarly, the public will not stand by and allow the government to cull the Badger, despite this species being in high numbers and arguably the cause of Bovine Tuberculosis. With this in mind, I cannot comprehend how the public, the government and the wildlife crime police are still allowing persecution of our Birds of Prey.

For some of our Birds of Prey times are extremely difficult and if things continue we may find that we can appreciate them much less often. Even our humble Kestrel is in decline! Surely a car journey will be much less enjoyable without the site of a little Falcon hovering by the roadside?

The Barn Owl is struggling more every year, both the Long-Eared Owl and Short-Eared Owl are seen less and most likely are suffering due to habitat loss combined with the reduction of prey items.

Our Merlin and Hobby are a sight for sore eyes. It was long since that I witnessed the aerial acrobatics of a Hobby in pursuit of a Swallow.

I hope that our country will wake up and realise the error of their ways. Scotland is already one step ahead of England with the introduction of new legislation. This recognises that those who persecute Birds of Prey may do so at their employer's discretion and enables punishment to be given to those who instigate the crimes.

To end on a positive note; our Sparrowhawk and Buzzard have increased in numbers and continue to do so. Although the large rise in the number of these predators is causing some controversial discussion. That will be an article for another time!

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ICBP at 45 years young

The International Centre for Birds of Prey reached its 45th anniversary this year, and although possibly an odd one to celebrate, with the more recent ups and downs and history of the Centre it seemed like a good plan!

At 45 years old that makes it the oldest dedicated bird of prey centre in the world. Although there is one in Germany that is older, it is no longer just a bird of prey centre but has diversified into Meerkats and the like.

Being completely and unashamedly biased, I think it is the best bird of prey centre in the world of course. It has a very special atmosphere that is commented on by many of the visitors and volunteers. It has one of the most unique collections of birds of prey and some of the best flying demonstrations. Its conservation work is internationally recognised and its work in rehabilitation and education is all a part of its remit.

The actual day was a great success, the weather was dry and sunny although chilly, HRH The Princess Royal joined us for the morning, the birds flew brilliantly, the guests all enjoyed themselves, the food was great, the mulled wine perfect for the weather, and the dogs had a good time too. The Princess was given a limited edition bronze of a trained Peregrine in flight which is stunning –

by Jemima Parry-Jones there are six left in the edition – and had we are told a very good time here.

So 45 years was pretty special and we continue to celebrate for the rest of the year with various events including the Falconry Weekend on Sept 1st and 2nd here, which may give traders a chance to recover from this awful summer and falconers the chance to have a great weekend out.



Princess Anne with Jemima Parry-Jones at the celebrations

Nick Kester
Communications Officer



Fed up with the weather? I am. Every event that brings us together during the summer seems to have been cancelled: the Falconry Fair (twice)

and now the CLA Game Fair. It is all too depressing. Nothing for it but to count the goshawk's dropped tail feathers, and pray for an improvement.

But life goes on. Now is a good time to advise the readers of this column that I am retiring from the Hawk Board at the end of March 2013. So this will be one of the countdown reports before I draw my old age pension. Members of the diplomatic corps were allowed a valedictory period as they headed for retirement, so in the same vein I am permitting myself the occasional comment that may be slightly off the wall and an extra to the usual 'we did this, the government did the opposite' reportage.

Falling club membership

Club membership is falling and this is depressing news. Some of this can be attributed to the recession, but not all. I have just renewed my British Falconers' Club and Welsh Hawking Club membership at a total of £75 and what good value they both are. Not only do

I get entertaining journals and newsletters, I can join in field meets on the best hawking land outside my own. Travelling with a hawk is great fun because although I know my own back yard intimately, 'foreign' trips provide a challenge and I get to see other people fly their hawks – which adds to the never-ending learning that is falconry.

But there is more. For my subscription supports the Hawk Board which insures my sport is there season after season and it also provides me with all the friends of a lifetime. Some have gone to great hawking grounds in the sky, others teeter on, and many much younger than I confirm the continuing joy that we all feel when we take a hawk on our fist and go out into the British countryside to join in this most natural of field sports.

So if you have let your membership lapse, or declare clubs are not for you, I urge you to think again. Join a club for falconry's sake.

Real value of a Peregrine

Here's a popular myth. Peregrine falcons are worth lots of money. It must be so because I read it in the paper. Thankfully this did not come from the RSPB, who know the real value and no longer quote the king's ransom amounts that used to be considered gospel. No, this time it apparently came from a police wildlife officer.

Perhaps he was keen to make an impression on the journalist from the local paper. Unfortunately this echoed on until it reached a national who quoted it verbatim. I wish they would check their facts with those who know the real price. It is an uphill struggle. I sometimes feel like the Greek legend Sisyphus who was condemned to push a boulder up a mountain only to have it fall back just as he reached the top.



Wild disabled bird document

The Hawk Board has produced a document on wild disabled birds of prey that I urge you to read. http://www.hawkboard-cff.org.uk/nm/publish/news_79.html We have sent this to the Minister at DEFRA, Richard Benyon. Our understanding is that we shall have a reply shortly and that our issues are being taken very seriously. Our inability to use wild disabled birds for commercial breeding and a refusal to grant an Article 10 for second generation young flies in the face of reason. Let's hope the Minister agrees. After all these hawks are the only way a captive stock can be enhanced by new genetic input.

Don't forget
to keep
checking the Hawk Board
website for information and
contact details at:-
www.hawkboard-cff.org.uk

THE HAWK BOARD

a defence

I would like to begin this article by asking two questions. Firstly, “How much do you value your falconry” and secondly, “When you go out hawking, do you ever wonder how many times we have been so close to losing it all?” The answer to the first question would no doubt be a resounding, “It means everything to me,” and the second? No, I thought not. For those like me, who have been flying raptors since the early 1960’s, and perhaps even before, many serious threats have almost robbed us of our sport, but likewise, the majority of falconers were probably unaware of such threats, simply because they were headed off at the pass by a number of hard-working unsung heroes.

Defence against the anti’s

In those days, falconry was defended from all manner of anti’s and so-called conservationists, often by a mere handful of far-sighted individuals such as Jack Mavrogordato, where they pleaded our cause during international conferences and suchlike in various parts of the world. Many powerful lobbies were against falconry for a number of reasons, and many still are, usually through ignorance, but that does not lessen the threats any, they are real and far reaching. Thanks to a few individuals who stood up for our beloved sport, many falconers were oblivious to the fact that there were threats in the first place and thus flew their hawks in blissful ignorance.

Staggeringly, the same situation exists today, only now we face even greater threats due to European Union (EU) directives. Laws passed in Brussels can and do affect us in the United Kingdom and this includes falconry. Consider this: falconry is now the sole remaining field sport legally pursued in this country. Who would have thought that the powerful fox hunting fraternity would lose their chosen sport, but it happened. The falconry fraternity is not only much smaller but is fragmented, some belonging to various clubs whilst the majority belong to no clubs at all. Therefore, how can we possibly speak with one voice under such constraints? The ban on hunting with hounds could so easily have finished falconry forever, had it not been for the intervention of the Hawk Board.

The Hawk Board has been in

existence since July 1979, yet I have been surprised at how many of the younger falconers especially who have never even heard of the Hawk Board, let alone its achievements. I have also been surprised and mortified by the flak and lack of appreciation that the Hawk Board receives. There may be reasons for this, one being that it was always considered a closed shop, as indeed was the British Falconers Club not so long ago, but at the end of the day, without the Hawk Board to defend us from the aforementioned threats, who is going to stand up in their place? The Hawk Board members are largely unpaid and do this work purely out of love for the sport of falconry and I would like to state right here and now that I have never had any affiliation with the Hawk Board whatsoever, so I have no bias or axe to grind one way or another



Wessex Falconry & Hampshire Hawking Club. One of the affiliated clubs to the Hawk Board

and like the majority of us, their work has always remained peripheral to my vision. Yes, I know two or three Hawk Board members personally, but that is my limit. Yet it is soothing to know that the Hawk Board is trying its utmost to protect our sport so that I can sleep easily in my bed at night. Therefore, it horrifies me that the Hawk Board suffers so much antagonism from falconers themselves, when in fact we should all be giving our full and moral support.

Respect requested

I have not been party to any of the arguments that falconers levy at the Hawk Board members and therefore may be a trifle naive here, but it seems to me that anyone with the knowledge and determination to head off threats to falconry ought to be treated with the utmost respect. Recently, it has come to my notice that there are two elements that may cause falconry serious problems in the not too distant future. The first, as Jim Chick, Chairman of the Hawk Board explained to British Falconers Club members at their 2012 Spring meeting, was that several of the long standing and stalwart members of the Hawk Board are eligible for retirement quite soon. Who is going to replace them?

Who wants to spend long, unpaid hours sifting through constant pending legislation, searching for elements that may impact upon our sport? Very few I would wager and this is going to prove disastrous if suitable replacements cannot be found. It is a thankless job at best, which is all the more reason why the work of the Hawk Board should be cherished. Secondly, and this may only be a rumour, but I hear that there are, or were, plans for the British Falconers Club to withdraw its support from the Hawk Board. If this is true, then I feel this would be the biggest mistake the BFC has ever made.

The Hawk Board needs the financial support that it receives from the BFC and elsewhere to enable it to finance its operations. Some in the BFC feel that we are paying too much because we only get the same voting average as do the smaller clubs who have Hawk Board affiliation. The BFC pays more for its Hawk Board involvement because not only is it the oldest falconry club in the UK but also the largest, and subs are levied according

to the size of the membership, hence the BFC paying more than others. In my view, virtually any price is worth paying if it means the active defence of falconry and thus is money well spent and as aforementioned, the members of the Board do this voluntarily. One could not buy a pizza with the money required from each member's club subscription percentage that goes to fund the Hawk Board. Therefore if the BFC were to withdraw from the Hawk Board, it would also send out entirely the wrong signals to other supportive clubs, which would be disastrous. Throughout its long history, the BFC has been at the forefront of the sport and given a lead to the rest of the hawking community, but if it withdrew from the Hawk Board, I feel it would lose that position indefinitely. Even though I have only been a member of the BFC since 2006, I have long followed its history and admired the high level of falconry that the club has sought to maintain and would be mortified if it lost that position.

Expensive legal costs

The cost of hiring legal teams to fight our corner can be horrendous, but vital if we are to succeed in protecting our sport and it is such expenditure that the Hawk Board necessarily incurs. We not only need the Hawk Board, we cannot really survive for long without it. Make no mistake, there are threats to the sport that we haven't even thought of yet, which renders all the stupid comments we constantly see on forums, Face-book and You-Tube all the more dangerous. Do these idiots not realise that all this rubbish that they post is viewed and collected as evidence against falconry by many of those who would like to see falconry banned? When this array of stupidity is finally used against us, which I am sure it will be, how are we possibly going to be able to provide credible answers to such accusations and prevent the sport from being discredited? We all know it is a small minority who post such harmful items, but the anti's are not going to worry about that, they will have the "hard evidence." What price falconry then? We need the Hawk Board to voice the opinions of genuine falconers to counter these and other such threats.

The Hawk Board members sit on various councils and committees to

place our sport in the best possible light, so if we lost this powerful tool, we would be hard pressed indeed to even begin a line of defence. I hope I am not scaremongering here, but during my long falconry career I have witnessed the vanquishing of many threats against falconry, most of which were barely noticed by the bulk of the falconry community, it was all out of sight, out of mind. Only when an outright ban comes into force will everyone wish they had taken more notice, but it will then of course be too late! Many of us now feel that it would have been better to licence the falconers rather than the birds and I am inclined to agree with this, but the choice was made to licence the birds instead, which is a great shame, for the system at the moment neither protects falconers nor the hawks.

Lucky in the UK

We in the UK are very lucky, at the moment. We can fly any raptor of our choice against almost any quarry, whereas this is not so in parts of Europe and America. In America for example, some states ban falconry altogether and one cannot fly my favourite bird, the Golden Eagle, other than as a rehabilitation eagle, which has to be released as soon as it is proclaimed fit enough, or a depredation eagle, that is to say an eagle that is causing problems to ranchers by taking livestock. It is illegal in America to fly eyas Golden Eagles as nobody is allowed to breed them for falconry purposes. This seems bonkers to us in the UK, but it could happen here. Also in America, one has to be an apprentice for several years and can only own a Goshawk or Red Tailed Hawk when that apprenticeship is completed. A similar scenario could also happen here.

The same is true of some European countries. In truth, few realise how lucky we really are and it is all down to those who have striven to protect our sport. So, to return to my first question, "How much do you value your falconry?" If like me, you value the sport almost above all else, then please give a thought for the work of the Hawk Board, for if we lose it through crass complacency, then we will soon no longer need to ask how much we value falconry, for it will not be there to worry about any more. So please support the Hawk Board, it may be our salvation.

Highs and Lows of Falconry



Coal, the author's tiercel peregrine falcon

Well, it's good to be home but I have to say I really had a great time in Saskatchewan and the company of many like minded folks this past 12 days.

As always in Saskatchewan the weather plays a part and this fall we did not have as nice weather as some past provincial meets there. Most days were windy and often overcast but at least we did not get snow this year. Typical that the last day is one of the best weather wise.

I was very pleased with my three falcons' performance until my bad luck struck on the third day out there and

yet another series of highs and lows of falconry.

The high was when in 27km winds Coal my tiercel Peregrine killed the first sharptail I ever flew him on. Good high pitch in strong winds and a nice adult cock grouse weighing in at 885 grams compared to his 566 gram frame.

The low came within two hours when Wallace the Gyr/Barbary hit a Gadwall very hard on the rise in the strong winds resulting in a very serious leg injury. Initially we thought it was broken as he could not stand on it. A four hour round trip to the vet showed no break and the leg still in the socket. Now six days later he is starting to put weight on it but I

suspect possibly needs a few weeks more rest.

The next "high" was seeing Coal bind to a grouse high in the air on a clear blue sky crisp morning the following day. Very good flight but unfortunately he lost it crashing to the ground with it in heavy tall cover. We were flying hunns when a single grouse bust and skied out.

Three days later Kent Carnie and Karl Gersmann got to see my young Gyr/Peales fly really high in a stiff breeze and kill a mallard in an incredible long stoop – only to later learn that we think the dog may have bitten him when I discover blood and a couple of gashes and punctures on his chest.

Dog bite

No one saw it happen but the bird was bitten across the chest and my young wirehair was later found at the scene next to the mallard and my bird was soaking wet, hidden deeper in the cattails. No one really knows but I suspect he saw both birds within the thick heavy cattails in the water and went for a retrieve or mistook the falcon for a duck in the water. We'll never know but he has never showed a tendency to do this before, or after, but it could be a case of too much energy and enthusiasm and not enough brains. Regardless I am now on my guard and will monitor in future.

Another visit to the vet and three stitches in one hole and the second small wound was left to drain. I am administering anti-biotics via injection every day for 10 days now. I flew the bird three days later and he is doing well but I will not push his flights and hold off hunting him for a week longer maybe.

While the hun numbers are very low EVERYWHERE, we had numerous sharptail grouse flights as well as ducks.



Three provinces converge (Toyota meet!)

Coal's second grouse came on the last day when everyone gathered for a hawkling marathon in Weyburn. Lots of water, too much in fact and plenty of ducks to fill it.

We saw good grouse numbers and we all got many flights on both ducks and grouse albeit in trying conditions. Coal took his second grouse in a great flight into strong wind and pulled off a cool manoeuvre as the grouse headed out into wind low off the ground by shooting out to its right side and slamming it from the side rolling it several times.

Typical for grouse, it did not miss a wing beat and got up and headed to a small bush where it was caught by Coal as they reached it. Our high fives, back slapping and hollering was cut short when a Harlans redtail that some mistook for an eagle, flew to the bush and was hovering momentarily over the bush before dropping in after my falcon. We all ran to assist, with dogs running ahead of us.

Fortunately the hawk lifted at the approach of my dogs and my bird was safe but he had let go of his grouse

momentarily (smart bird). I really thought that this was going to effectively be my third piece of bad luck. Hawking in these conditions is never easy but makes the successful moments sweeter to savour. Upon reflection falling on rocks in long grass and breaking my receiver antenna will count as my third piece of bad luck. The good news is a replacement was kindly dispatched immediately by the manufacturer.

On the way home

The trip home was good and, nearer to home, I flew a sweet hun set-up that was out in the middle of nowhere. I bumped the huns off the road and then bumped them again further out a few hundred yards more. Coal takes a super pitch and like most falcons knows when we are flying upland and goes up into the heavens.

While he was holding patiently directly above when I last checked, I misplace the huns and even with two pointers it takes time to relocate them. A single gets up first followed by the covey. I lost Coal in the sky and waited for him to come into

view as I scan between the single and the rest of the covey. I get nervous as the delay seems longer than expected and I wonder if he drifted off somewhere.

Finally he comes into peripheral vision at the bottom of his stoop and had picked the first to flush and lined up on it some 250-300 yards out in his outrun. A high speed power bind pushing it up higher into the sky and long glide down results in his first hun of the season. To be fair we have hardly seen any.

He is cropped up and might fly tomorrow evening if he burns that off. As I take some hero shots the land owner drives up. Ooops! He comments how cool this is and after chatting about falconry offers me to fly his land. Although it is 60km from home, he has over 10,000 acres of prime stubble and hun hawkling and various areas of water with ducks. We chatted for a while longer and exchanged business cards and I suspect I shall return.

It has been an eventful 12 days of hawkling. Great company, great flights and some challenges along the way. I hope everyone else is having fun.

The Return of Pure Wild Blood from Finland

We first started to fly Goshawks from the beginning to mid 1980s. Previous to that we flew a range of different birds (Sparrowhawks, Merlins, Kestrels, Buzzards, etc.). This was until we met the late Eric Furniss from Derbyshire who invited us to go hunting with him and his Finnish Goshawk. We were utterly amazed at this male bird – the size, temperament and hunting ability made us decide we wanted one ourselves.

Eric advised us to buy one from John Shaw in Derbyshire who bred Finnish Goshawks, so we purchased a female

from him. We had many years of happy hunting with this bird and decided to purchase a male Finnish Goshawk from Cliff Bramall of Northampton to breed with. We successfully bred with this pair for several years until one unfortunate day when the female killed the male.

We had several attempts of trying to replace it with so called “Finnish” birds from reputable breeders but the offsprings were of no comparison in either size or temperament to the original pair which we knew was of pure Finnish origin. After a great deal of disappointment and a discussion with friends over a few beers, we decided to try and obtain pure Finnish birds



Andy with Finnish Goshawk



Finnish game keeper and Dave getting ready for transporting a Goshawk

directly from Finland. After contacting the Finnish embassy in London, who gave us the telephone number of the Finnish Environment Institute in Helsinki, this is where our journey began.

The first person we contacted was a gentleman called Virgo Mettinen, who at that time was a minister of Finnish Environment, who categorically said that under no circumstances would we be able to bring any Goshawks out of Finland which was our first major setback. He also said that to his knowledge no-one bred them because it is illegal, and they were not even kept in zoos. He also informed us that Falconry was not permitted in Finland.

Our next step was to enquire if we could get any injured birds, which was not possible as they were not kept if they were too injured to possibly return to



Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter Gentilis*)

the wild in the future. This went on from 1997 with constant letters and telephone calls trying to get through an extremely difficult language barrier until we met a Finnish gentleman, who later became a very good friend, and was working for an oil treatment company which we were testing oil for. After discussing the situation with him he offered to try and help with the communication barrier and took on the project for us with regards to the Finnish Environment Institute. He discovered that they were still trapping Goshawks on a movement license in

Finland on certain estates, but were not allowed to kill them. We persisted in trying to establish how wide the scope was on this movement order, and if it would be as far as the UK. Our friend was in constant contact with the Finnish authorities including The National History Museum who had to do a survey on the Goshawk population. Then in October 2001 we received a very important phone call from our friend to say that the Finnish authorities were going to grant him with the CITES permit when he was granted with the trapping license, but



Dave and Andy inspecting the Northern Goshawk

this never occurred because the British authorities did not agree with it.

In July 2002 after a big battle with our authorities in the UK we eventually obtained a CITES and trapping permit for ten wild Finnish Goshawks under certain conditions. The conditions being, we could only trap the birds between October and February, they could not be in adult plumage, none of the birds could be rung (same as the RSPB do in the UK), and all birds had to be micro chipped in Finland before entering the UK.

After researching through our friend and Finnish birdwatchers (twitchers), we discovered the best place to trap the Goshawks was on the North West coast of Finland. We first flew out to Helsinki via Sweden in October 2002 where we were met by our friend who took us three hours north to meet the keepers on an estate where they had permission to trap Goshawks. Over a period of time we managed to trap a considerable number of birds, which we weighed and measured, eventually picking five males and one female which we returned to the UK with. As we had a CITES for ten birds we flew out again in December 2002 and repeated the same procedure on a different estate in the North West region and then returned to the UK with two males and two females. All the birds had been micro chipped in Finland and went straight into quarantine for 30 days in the UK.

We first produced offsprings from this consignment of birds in 2005, and since then we and our friends have flown these birds and finally brought back the temperament, size, and hunting ability we had in the 1980s. Our breeding project has now reached second generation and all Article 10s are commercial, meaning we can now supply falconers with genuine Finnish Goshawks with the papers to prove it.

Overall this journey was a great achievement for us and has been worth all the hard work as we were informed by one of the environmental ministers that no Goshawks had left Finland since 1979, and in his opinion, he could not see it ever happening again.

Andy and Dave Margerison of Derbyshire would like to thank you for taking a moment of your time to read, and hopefully, enjoy their story.

Lessons from Other Fieldsports



In the field

It was an invitation to be a guest speaker at the 3rd International Festival of Falconry to be held at Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates . . . but it was clearly meant for someone else. So, after the initial delighted surprise, I was sorely disappointed in having to contact the office of International Wildlife Consultants to inform them of their error. However, my hopes were raised when I was told to expect another e-mail and when it arrived this was indeed an invitation to attend the festival and speak in the conference section.

My link with International Wildlife Consultants is through its director, Dr Nick Fox. It was shortly after I had left my position as executive director of the League Against Cruel Sports that Nick first contacted me. I had started to have misgivings about the simplistic policy of a ban on hunting with dogs advocated by the League and whether animal welfare would be improved. After leaving the League and receiving a degree of scorn, criticism and a few threats from certain quarters, I was, and still am, very grateful to Nick for his help, advice and support in those days.

Collaborating on different projects

Nick and I worked on various projects in an attempt to find a sensible resolution to the age-old arguments about hunting, which would address welfare and wildlife management issues. Despite the Hunting Act being passed in 2004, the matter is still not resolved. The coalition government has said that a motion on bringing forward a vote on repeal will return at some stage to the political agenda. So the title of the talk I was asked to give was very apt - "Lessons Learned

from Other Fieldsports” – and there are certainly plenty of those.

While there have been opponents of hunting for almost as long as hunting itself has existed, the nature of that opposition appeared to change during the 20th century – it became party political. This was due to a number of factors, including payments of large sums of money into the coffers of those who would ultimately deliver a ban on hunting with dogs, but it was also due to an increase in pressure groups exploiting the views of growing numbers of people who were now detached from the countryside. A rise in animal rights groups and direct action threw the spotlight onto a wide range of issues involving animals and the way in which they were treated and hunting was an obvious target. With new technology developing better ways of disseminating information, more and more people could now see images that persuaded them that ‘killing for sport’ was wrong. During these decades, the hunting world always appeared to be behind the learning curve, sometimes deploying the worst possible advocate to put the hunting case or, more usually, simply keeping their heads down in the hope that the ‘antis’ would just go away

Once the issue of a hunting ban became party political, an important tipping point had been reached. It no longer was an argument about the welfare of the quarry species being balanced against the need to control certain wild animals for various reasons. For many politicians at the time it became a grudge match, as one politician said, “This is a dispute we must win, having

long ago ceased to be about the fate of a few thousand deer and foxes. It’s about who governs us. Us or them?”

So what has all this to do with falconry? Well, it too is hunting and it is also a sport. If laws are to be passed on the same basis as the Hunting Act, is it not reasonable to conclude that the attention of certain groups and some politicians will at some stage turn to falconry?

Here is a policy statement tucked away on the League against Cruel Sports’ website: “Falconry involves the use of birds of prey to kill other birds and animals for sport.

The welfare of captive birds of prey kept for sport, where they are reared and held, and at shows and game fairs where the birds are often exhibited and used in displays, is a matter of concern. The League Against Cruel Sports also believes that in the interests of raptor welfare, no further licences should be issued. The League believes that the bloodsport of falconry should be banned.”

Falconry and hounds

There is one very important link between hunting with hounds and falconry. Professor Roger Scruton has written, “Hunting with hounds is entirely natural to the four quarry species since it does not use any alien human technology for which the hunted animal has no natural defence” and of course the same principle applies to falconry. Yet there are clear differences, too, between the ways in which those in the falconry world have promoted their activities and the ways in which the hunting (with hounds)

world has traditionally argued its case. For years, falconers have engaged with the public through country shows and similar events. People could see these magnificent birds first-hand and how they catch their prey. They could talk to the falconers, stroke or hold the birds, learn about their lifestyles and life in the wild. Moreover, through events such as the first two festivals of falconry in the UK and the third festival in the UAE, members of the public were not excluded from this world but drawn into it, leaving with a better understanding not only of the birds of prey and how they operate but also the vast amount of conservation work undertaken by those who support falconry.

Thankfully, those now in charge of promoting hunting with dogs have learned the lessons of past mistakes and have marshalled the arguments, including the important welfare and conservation points, into a convincing and strong case for repeal of the Hunting Act, but if legislators can be convinced or persuaded to produce laws on the basis of ignorance, prejudice and pseudo morality nothing is safe.

If that sounds like a pessimistic note on which to end, it is not meant to be. It means that there will just have to be more festivals of falconry and who would not want that?

Jim Barrington is an animal welfare consultant to the Countryside Alliance, Council of Hunting Associations and the All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group.

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British Falconers' Club National Goshawk Meet January 2012

Arranging field meets is an onerous task; ask anyone who does it. This is made harder by trying to accommodate each different falconry discipline: open land with partridge and pheasant for falcons; rabbits for broadwings; and gamehawking for the austringers. For these reasons the British Falconers' Club (BFC) only does this once a year at its AGM and every four years at Woodhall Spa (which takes that long to arrange that it cannot be held more frequently).

Members will know that the club is divided into regions – some more active than others. Currently, the two Midlands regions are pretty energetic, and for the last two seasons have managed to put on a January meet aimed at us austringers. The 2012 location was a very comfortable, and not overly expensive, hotel just below the Wrekin in Shropshire. Problem number one is finding a venue with lawns suitable for weathering hawks, one which doesn't mind the odd foul-booted visitor and which has a very long-suffering bar staff prepared to go the extra mile for the income generated by thirsty, celebrating falconers, each exaggerating his day's sport. The Buckatree Hall Hotel was a shining example of such tolerance.

Organisers Dave and Julie Whittingham, with too many support

volunteers to mention, pulled together enough land to take five parties on both Friday and Saturday. Venues that weren't shooting, that had understanding 'keepers, and were all within reasonable access of the hotel. Each estate would look after up to six goshawks and dogs, plus a phalanx of onlookers. That they achieved this with only a few minor alterations on the day was to their eternal credit.

Bad weather

Hawking is not a very weather tolerant sport and Friday was pretty doomed from dawn. John Fairclough's shoot is a small family affair so by luck only two of us were on parade. The rain had not stopped all night when I put my seventh season male goshawk, Baldrick, on John's lawn during a slight lull. So fingers crossed. As coffee was drunk, I was mortified to see a huge cock pheasant parade towards the French windows without a care in the world, only to be joined by a second. John threw them a handful of nuts and still the gos sat with a leg tucked up. Had I got his weight wrong? Not at all. When he is on the weathering he never bates towards prospective quarry. In fact that seems to be the norm. John tells me that he has had pigeons bathing in the hawk bath whilst the falcon sits and preens.

Bitting the bullet, and despite the rain

Neil Sayer and I set out with Paul, John's 'keeper, into the drizzle. Because last season I had caught a duck on the brook, I was to go first. Duck are very jumpy at all times and the approach had to be well coordinated. Paul flushed and away went Baldrick, closing fast but to no avail. I quickly called him back and we moved further down the channel. By now he was in yarak and ready for anything. Another flush and he was onto them. But again they put into water with a furious goshawk only a foot away. So rapid was the mallard's dive that the back-spray soaked him. His anger was unabated and he took stand, refusing both fist and lure. Self-hunting is to be avoided at all costs but is sometimes inevitable, and this was one of those occasions. A small island of firs held a pheasant and there he was found, tucking into a hen. Drenched to the skin, his day was over. And so, very nearly was mine. For to recover him, I was obliged to first wade the brook (thigh deep) and then shimmy across a log upon which was set a fen trap. This was first sprung to save my manhood and sitting astride I made a tortured progress to safety. Time for a change of clothes so I relinquished my role as field master, not really necessary with only two in the field, and headed for the dry leaving Neil to catch a hen in rather better style.

Whilst we had a late lunch and something warming to drink, I left



Baldrick in John's mews to dry before heading to the hotel. A swift check on the local weather revealed that Saturday would be the reverse of Friday: instead of low wind and torrential rain, it would be gales and sunny intervals. This is when the skill of the organisers comes into play. High ground venues were abandoned in favour of those with sheltered woods, and those that had proved successful were persuaded to have us again.

Good quarry

Compared with the Friday venue, Will's shoot is substantial but the pheasants were really alert. We put stops on all

cover but even this didn't stop the odd explosion of very fit January birds. Six goshawks is ok on such a large parcel of land, but the total field numbered 26, which is almost too many. Thankfully our field master had a firm grip, hushing any chatter and ensuring dogs not in use were kept in check.

A small plantation of young firs with a border of red dogwood looked promising and a first cock bird was taken in the air as it exited into the wind. A second slip by Chris Moxon's female secured another in the release wood some distance away (more of that later), and a flight by Mike Lister's slip ended up with a long telemetry track as the hawk had crossed the same wood and taken stand. In the meantime, Baldrick had been patiently waiting his turn. The gusts of wind seemed to increase and the cold cut into him. As he became more and more unsettled, I was forced into a limited feed to calm him down when Mike radioed in with the 'ok to fly' and Dave put his German pointer into the covert.

Nervously, I readied myself. Flying tiercel goshawks in high winds is not a favourite option. And as I turned towards the dog I kicked up a massive cock pheasant that had been crouched in the stack of coppiced branches at my feet. Now it's worth saying that Baldrick has been less than enthusiastic about cocks this year. I guess his age has made him canny. So when this one rose, my heart sank. Doubly so because with me was one of the best austringers in the country and I was anxious not to disappoint. (You can bang on about your hawk's skill in print, but you really have to cut the mustard in front of your peers.)

In the first seconds it looked like he would bind to the pheasant. The cold wind and the small snack had certainly increased his aggression. But the bird turned left down wind and the gos right, and into the gale. Ironically, this served him well for a gust hit him hard, forcing pursuit. Suddenly he was out of view and crossed a field making for the release pen wood. Those who could see him reported that a second gust pushed him on and he was fully committed and closing fast. The wood embraced them both and Harry and I set off in search. At the top of the wood we looked down into a deep valley with an open track going the full length. Telemetry time.

A good signal on the miraculous Marshall receiver, but it was on full distance mode. We turned left onto the track and eventually I could flick the switch to middle distance. Suddenly even this was bouncing off the gauge, and I went down to close range. Thwack, thwack, thwack went the audio. Had I trodden on him? Harry couldn't see him and his eyes are ten times more experienced than mine. Behind a tree was a plucked corpse, but it was cold, and anyway in his mood he would never have left a kill. Looking across the small stream I suddenly noticed a grey outline on the leaf litter. Both goshawk and (dead) cock pheasant were perfectly camouflaged, and Baldrick was not just mantling his kill, but lying flat over it. Only his unblinking stare gave him away.

Using technology

They say pride comes before a fall, but I will take a risk here. For it had nothing to do with me and goshawks cannot boast. Using Google Earth I tracked the flight and it was just over 700 yards (640 metres). Baldrick is 11b 10½oz (750 grams) and the cock pheasant weighed in at 3lb 14oz (1.75kilos). The wind that day gusted to over 40mph and on high ground in North Shropshire, where it was substantially more, it brought down a commercial wind turbine. To fly a hawk in such conditions was mildly foolish but great fun and when Lee Featherstone did the same and caught his own cock pheasant there was much schoolboy humour about their respective sizes. Grown men celebrating can be forgiven 'behind the bike shed' repartee.

An old falconer once told me that to get the best from a goshawk I should follow the Elizabethan adage from *A Perfect Booke for Keepinge of Sparhawkes or Goshawkes*

*Tiring after feeding
Water and weather at her needing
After every gorge fasting
With twice a week casting
Makes her sound and long lasting*

So I did just that and fed Baldrick right royally, and then retired to the bar for some liquid equivalent. By the end of the month my season was over and he was in the moulting chamber. But wait, it's only eight months 'til it all starts again.

Silver Streak



Light Sparrowhawk

I have been a falconer for all of my adult life and through that short passage of time much of the technological progress that has emerged has had some beneficial effect upon falconry.

In the early years for instance, veterinary practise for exotics such as raptors was a very hit and miss event. Often ailments were treated with diluted solutions of drugs designed for agricultural animals. A visit to the vets was a last resort as it usually culminated in the demise of your hawk. Happily, this is one area of expertise that has improved enormously and now the vet, especially a specialist avian vet, has a wealth of knowledge and skill.

In the past I, like many of my peers, were brought any and every casualty, raptor and non raptor – after all you were the locally known “bird man” and where else would the general public take them?

Road casualties and so-called abandoned nestlings plus window stunned sparrowhawks, were taken in, fed and rested until fit and well enough

to be released. In later years those that sustained more serious fractures were lucky that veterinary skills had improved and were treated to having bones pinned with some remarkable success.

Recently I was told of a Barn Owl that had been picked up dead with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) ring on which proved that it was one of the many owls that had been handed to me with a broken wing. My kind vet had pinned this owl's wing free of charge and we nursed her, hacked her back from a barn on the farm from where she was found and recovery of the ring told us that she had successfully hunted and presumably bred for the next 15 years.

These days there are many raptor establishments that are commercially more visible to the general public and that is often the first port of call for a raptor casualty. In fact, there are establishments that are set up as charities that deal with the ever increasing casualties from their accidental contact with our ever busy modern life and so the arrival of casualties is less frequent these days. Looking back on all those encounters, one stood

out more for its look and later for its resurrection.

Stunning female Sparrowhawk

Back in 1996, there was a knock on the door from a lady who lives in a nearby village asking me to identify a dead hawk she had found not far from her house. She handed me the still warm body of a female Sparrowhawk. Beautiful and sleek as these hawks are in life, this hawk was a stunner in a unique silver plumage. This feather colour mutation was rare, if not a complete one-off, as I have never seen, heard or read about such a colouring. At the time I was at work and laid the hawk's carcass on the table and took a couple of record photographs.

One of these photos was published in this magazine in the Autumn 96 issue, but as the hawk was dead and the lady had thoughts of a visit to a taxidermist, she left with the silver Sparrowhawk and I thought no more about it.

A couple of years ago I was sorting through my photo records and came

across the pictures I had taken. I scanned one and e-mailed a copy to my friend, Carl Church who is "The Bird Taxidermist" and happens to live in a nearby market town.

The subject of the e-mail was, "I bet you have never seen one of these" only to get a reply that around five years before a lady had told him of a story of a light coloured Sparrowhawk that she had in the freezer.

Welcome to take the hawk

With us all being local it had to be the same hawk so the next time I was in the village I asked and yes it was still in cold storage and we were welcome to it.

A week or so later I called and after some racking about at the bottom of the large deep freeze I was handed a plastic covered body. I could see through the discoloured bag and ice crystals that this contained a beautiful male Kestrel. "No sorry, that was all she had, so it must be the one" was the reply. A little more gentle querying and she was back head first into the depths of the chest freezer,

this time to emerge with the Silver Streak as she had become known by me.

Fifteen years at the base of the chest freezer had taken its toll, the bag had loosened and she had sustained some freezer burn. Carl was not committing himself as this was going to be a test of even his incredible skill. Once de-frosted the carcass was rehydrated as the skin was so brittle and delicate. In fact the preparation lasted some weeks before the skin was prepared. Then I had to wait until Carl had a window of time in his very busy schedule, but at long last after 16 years since I held that limp dead body I was able to witness what this Sparrowhawk would have looked liked in real life.

Quite what I would have made of her had she streaked past our bird feeders after a garden bird I don't know, but I'm sure she would have been a magnificent Streak of Silver.

Carl Church's work can be viewed at www.birdtaxidermy.co.uk



The finished work by Carl Church

Shot Peregrine Falcon



X-rays showing the metallic fragments in the wing

demonstrated a shot injury (metallic fragments are the bright splinters that you can see at the fracture site) with a highly comminuted/fragmented fracture of the left ulna with massive soft tissue damage/bruising.

The wounds were managed with regular dressing changes, flushing and draining of haematomas (blood blisters) between the feather follicles, anti-inflammatories/pain killers and antibiotics. A 'figure of 8' dressing was used to stabilize the fracture.

In February of this year a juvenile, tiercel peregrine was found wounded by a member of the public in a field near Moore nature reserve in Warrington.

The injured falcon was collected and taken to Avian Veterinary Services (AVS) in Knutsford as falconer and AVS vet Richard Jones, having completed extensive training at the Raptor centre, University of Minnesota has a great deal of experience in managing such cases.

X-rays under anaesthesia





Draining of haematomas

Having two bones in the bird's 'forearm', if only one is broken (in this case the ulna is broken but the radius is intact) the other acts as a very effective 'internal splint' maintaining wing length and joint alignment and offering support to the healing tissue.

Avoiding more trauma

All of the above were performed under anaesthesia to minimize stress/pain and avoid further trauma to the healing fracture site.

Once the wounds had healed and dressings were removed the bird was transferred to RSPCA Stapeley Grange wildlife hospital where confinement in an isolation unit allowed natural 'physiotherapy' and gradual return to function of the wing. The bone had healed within four weeks but it was now essential that the falcon regained its full fitness and flight capabilities.

As peregrines rely almost exclusively on fast flying prey such as pigeons, this bird would have to regain full fitness if it was to have a fighting chance of survival in the wild.

AVS approached one of their clients

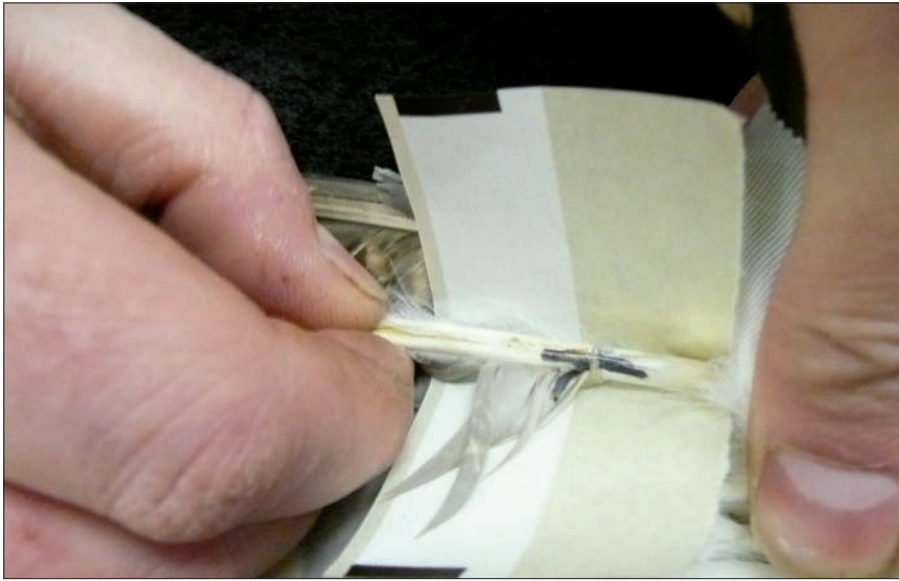
for help. At their falcon breeding facility in Yorkshire, Peter Gill and Richard Hill of Falcon Mews have a huge flight aviary into which their captive bred falcons are released for a few weeks to gain muscle and fitness prior to their falconry training.

This was exactly what was needed and they very kindly offered to house this bird until deemed fit for release.

After repairing, or in falconry parlance 'imping' some flight feathers that had been damaged following the injury



Dressed wing



Imping damaged flight feathers

(Falconer Tony Armstrong from Liverpool donated previously moulted feathers from his falconry bird for this purpose), Richard transported the peregrine to his new temporary home. Within six weeks the bird had regained full symmetrical and powerful flight and so in May he was deemed fit for release.

Monitoring by radio telemetry

In order to monitor the bird post release, Richard approached falconer Steve Lea from Marshall Telemetry who kindly donated a radio tracking device that was attached to a tail feather which would then be moulted out in a few weeks.

After a final pre flight check he was wished all the best and released early morning at the site he was found. Given his history of being shot in this vicinity very careful consideration was given to whether releasing him back here was actually indeed the right thing to do for this bird. However, he had obviously been thriving in the area and knew it well, we hoped that being able to monitor him closely would hopefully prevent a recurrence.

It was amazing and quite emotional to see him power into the brisk wind and land briefly on top of a pylon to once again survey his territory, then head off with purpose in the direction of Daresbury. He seemed to know exactly where he was headed.

Using the transmitter we were able to monitor his movements and over the first week he was found to be covering an area between Warrington and Daresbury,

centred on the Moore nature reserve, so if you are ever in the area keep your eyes to the sky!

Despite his injury thanks to the dedication of the staff at AVS and RSPCA Stapely Grange, numerous falconers who kindly donated their time and facilities and Marshall telemetry who supplied the tracking equipment, this lucky falcon has every chance of survival and hopefully producing young of its own.

We are really hoping that by making it public that such birds are very closely monitored by falconers, naturalists, birdwatchers and bodies such as the RSPB and BTO, it may at least help prevent such a cruel act from happening in the future.



Pre-release. The Peregrine Falcon with Richard Jones

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Eagle Road Trip

A DVD by CorJo Wildlife Productions



Anyone who enjoys watching golden eagles flying from the fist at rabbit, including the occasional kills, will enjoy this DVD. It features footage of Joe Atkinson's eagles, Jackhammer and Mini-Me, taking on black tail jack rabbits in Kansas, Oregon and Texas. The viewer is given a rare insight into hunting with golden eagles and the patience that this requires. Expert filming shows just how manoeuvrable a large eagle can be, even at speed.

But this is more than just a film about eagles; it is also a film about Joe and the way he interacts with his birds. Throughout the film he comes across as a man who is confident in his ability as an astringer. He is surprisingly gentle with his birds and is sympathetic to their needs. The action is filmed by Cordi Atkinson and she does a good job of capturing the true excitement of the flights. This is a film which celebrates the bond between one man and his eagles. Over a few field meets, the viewer gets to share in the excitement of flying these magnificent creatures and can only marvel at the dedication and skill required to enable them to do what they do best. If you like golden eagles, this is a DVD for you.

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Eagle-Man's Vision

Part 1



Author with Golden Eagle, Ak Jol Toy

Sary Satilganov strides into the small paddock where an elegant seven-month-old male golden eagle named Ak Jol Toy is stepping onto my right, gloved fist. I'm learning rudiments of Kyrgyz eagle falconry from this approaching honored-elder in northern Kyrgyz Republic, south of Kazakhstan and west of China. The young Burkut was taken from the nest to partner with me, and will be given to his grandson when I leave. Sary is one of a few remaining professional Burkutcholor. His authoritative "Eliza!" captures my attention. My translator, his smoking companion, arrives after I grip jesses tight and spin toward Sary.

Archetypal presence radiates from this eighty-two year old man dressed in his everyday three-piece suit and crowned by a traditional Kyrgyz felt hat. "One important event in training any eagle is chyrgar," he says. "Chyrgar is the name for a rope to which a dead hare or fox is attached and then pulled behind either galloping horse, or running person." Sary's eyes are sparkling beacons in a weathered, sunburned face. "The bird flies to attack and mock-kill this lure, similar to chasing wild prey," he explains, "but it's easier since the lure doesn't fight back. Flying the chyrgar provides hunt training, as well as needed release in an eagle's daily energy cycle."

Sary's lips purse and curve upwards, forming his distinctive smile. Taught by a traceable lineage of Burkutcholor, he's worked with eagles since age thirteen. Excitement threads his next words. "Chyrgar is also an event at our Kyrgyz Salburun Festival. I want you to fly the eagle in this event, even though he may not be ready." He taps my gloved hand. "It will be good experience for both of you!"

Blood pulses in my ears – I'm speechless. Tonight is my chyrgar debut here on the southern shores of Lake

Issyk-Kul in Sary's village of 38 Soviet-era homes, none of which has running water. I'm primed to ascend that 10-foot-high dirt hill near the central bathhouse, odd-times smoking locale of Sary and village friends, now to be used for Burkut training. Chyrgar is a mystery about to unfold. How can I embrace exhibition competition with seasoned Burkutcholor in about ten days?

"Yes," I splutter nonetheless, "I am willing!"

History passed from father to son

"History of the burkutcholor is a spoken tradition, passed mostly from father to son," Sary had explained a little over a week ago when I arrived to stay as a guest in his home among nine family members during my apprenticeship, "but not to daughters because they had more work."

Born in 1930, when his village's homes were round, wooden-frame, felt-covered dwellings called yurtas in Kyrgyz, Sary looks forward, acknowledging change. "Now Kyrgyz tradition is different. Being a Burkutchu was considered a profession, but most Burkutcholor don't often hunt with their eagles right now; they do it for making money with the tourists."

This male tradition grew millennium-deep roots throughout Central Asia from times before Genghis Khan. Was hunting with eagles an idea gifted by ancient God-Beings? Bronze age petroglyphs testify to this Eurasian steppe tradition's several thousand years of practice, one of the oldest ways of food hunting. The art of partnering with a golden eagle to hunt fox, hare, marmot, goats, deer and wolves, provided food and clothing for families or even entire villages in mountainous steppe regions of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, China, and the Kyrgyz Republic. This is the breeding range for the largest of our planet's six subspecies of golden eagle, *Aquila Chrysaetos Daphanea*, whose size is esteemed for hunting large animals.

Although women were not part of the traditional Burkutcholor, history offers more than a few anomalies wherein women did hunt with eagles. The Janyl Myrza story from the celebrated Kyrgyz epic poem "Manas," as translated by Virlana Tkacz, Roza Mukasheva and Wanda Phipps, describes the female archer Janyl Myrza: "She tamed wild eagles and other predatory birds, she trained them to hunt. Among the Noygut people she had power and respect." Burkutcholor still name a prized Burkut

after this sixteenth-century heroine.

Jack Weatherford, professor of Anthropology at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, writes a well researched manuscript, *The Secret History of the Mongol Queens: How the Daughters of Genghis Khan Rescued His Empire*. He points out many examples of Asian women with resources and time, who lived centuries past and did what they wanted in life. Often they wanted to participate in endeavors that were considered traditional male activities, including training and hunting eagles, hawks and falcons.

In my pre-teen years, during a middle-school event, I met a falconer whose hawk captivated my imagination. Enchanting spirit shone through this bird's eyes. While I sensed the hawk assessing me, flickering images of raptors on the wing reaching talons toward outstretched gloves flooded my inner vision. I felt a calling to the realms of falconry that I wasn't able to pursue until decades later.

Golden eagles emerged foremost in this calling, as though part of my DNA. I've hunted horseback with Mongolian eagle-hunters, trapped a Wyoming eagle with my falconry sponsor, and run alongside eagle falconers hunting in the Czech Republic as well as Austria, where golden-nape raptors take hare, fox and deer. I've witnessed American eagle falconers training, soaring, and hunting golden eagles. Through these years I've trained and hunted with my own wild-caught falcon and a variety of hawks.

First time in Kyrgyz

I first trekked to Kyrgyz Republic in 2010, where there are no regulations on trapping, possession, or hunting of eagles. Disputes over eagle trapping regulations in America have prevented the trapping of falconry eagles for all but one of the past five years and captive breeding of golden eagles is not legal. The Kyrgyz Republic's wild beauty, rich animal life and grandeur of geography draw hunters and tourists of all kind. I was curious how Kyrgyz Burkutcholor traditions remain unique while aware of globalization's impact on ancient customs. Could I find an authentic Burkutchu and opportunity to train an eagle under his guidance?

Assisted by Almaz Akunov, creator of the Kyrgyz National Salburun Festival, I met several Kyrgyz Burcutcholor in



Elizabeth hunts with Ak Jol Toy on a donkey

2010. Almaz still spearheads programs he initiated 10 years ago to rebuild Kyrgyz falconry traditions. The USSR's 55 year occupation rendered eagle-men near to extinct. Traditional festivals and eagle falconry were banned. The Salburun, a Festival Almaz created both as a national tourist attraction and goal for developing hunters' skills, is based on his ideas applied to group hunting references from the Kyrgyz epic "Manas." The Salburun is a composite group hunt, which includes dogs, archers, eagles, hawks, falcons, and horses. The Salburun Festival is an exhibition type of competition, with events that test as well as exhibit each type of hunters' skills along with their hunting partnerships. Prizes are awarded to winners, judged by performance, partnership and presentation of their Kyrgyz national outfit.

"Why not welcome women who hear a calling to the life of Burkutchulor? I'd asked Almaz as he drove me to meet Burkutchulor in 2010. "This can only benefit the Kyrgyz in an emerging global falconry community." Following hours of rapidly translated conversations, amid introductions to Burkutchulor, I seemed to win him over with views I'd shared about my goals and ideals in falconry and in life.

"Maybe a woman among the Burkutchulor would be okay," he conceded. However, after Almaz introduced me to honored-elder Sary



Kyrgyz falconry glove

and I conveyed my arrangement to return to Sary's village in 2011 as aspiring Burkutchu for five weeks, bushy black brows lifted to hairline when Almaz exclaimed, "Everybody asks Sary for things, and most of the time he says no! He said yes to you?" Later, Almaz gave me his best wishes to return.

During my first week under Sary's instruction in 2011, I've been exploring the environs of Sary's village, observing where fishermen harvest Lake Issyk-Kul's alpine waters, ascending rocky buttes above bucolic pastureland and following behind donkey-mounted Sary

on trap-line maintenance tours through enchanted terrain. Everywhere I walk, Ak Jol Toy, meaning friendly, rides my fist. Initially achy muscles strengthen under his roughly nine-pound-plus weight. Intermittent use of the hood allows me to keep attention focused while stepping the willing raptor off and on the glove as we accustom to one another for growing time-periods most days. I'm thrilled to watch as he learns the sounds and meaning of bubbling water along a riverbed, gobbling turkey gangs, flocks of birds in flight, or grazing groups of sheep, cattle and horses. Other characteristics emerge when the Burkut eats from a bowl while standing on my fist, his vigilant eyes higher than mine.



Jesses tied to swivel and leash

Munyoshkor is the Kyrgyz word for the general falconer who flies any raptor except golden eagles. Eagles, or Burkut in Kyrgyz, are their own class of falconry. Size, strength, intelligence and hunting abilities of golden eagles require specialized falconry skills. Eagle falconers or eagle-men are named Burkutchulor in Kyrgyz. When a single eagle-man also hunts with falcons or hawks, he is still referred to as Burkutchu, acknowledging attainment in falconry not known by the munyoshkor. Burkutchu is also the correct word for a woman who hunts with eagles because the Kyrgyz language is gender-neutral.

Taigan hounds are deep-chested, longhaired greyhound type dogs bred in the Kyrgyz Republic for mountain herding, herd protection and hunting. One and maybe two Taigan hounds are often part of a hunting team, alongside Burkutchulor hunting on foot, or horse-mounted, whose eagles ride on their fists.

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SPECIES

AMERICAN KESTREL 2
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 FERRUGINOUS HAWK 3
 GOSHAWK 7
 GYR HYBRID 9
 HARRIS HAWK 31
 KESTREL..... 14
 LANNER FALCON..... 5
 PEREGRINE FALCON..... 5
 PEREGRINE HYBRID..... 9
 RAVEN..... 1
 RED-TAILED HAWK..... 8
 RUPPELLES GRIFFON VULTURE 1
 SAKER FALCON 6
 SAKER HYBRID..... 2
 SIBERIAN X TURKMANIAN EAGLE OWL..... 1
 SNOWY OWL 1
 TAWNY EAGLE X GOLDEN EAGLE 1
 TAWNY OWL 4

LOST x 27

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
7825		FERRUGINOUS HAWK.....	PO20
22600	?4166?	GYR BARBARY HYBRID.....	AB42
29236	?500B?	BARN OWL.....	CV2
29438	?8357?	HARRIS HAWK.....	NR26
39114	?9117?	BARN OWL.....	DL16
44551	?2570?	HARRIS HAWK.....	FK10
51328	?1006?	HARRIS HAWK.....	HR8
54489	?CC06?	SAKER-ALTAI.....	WA7
60793	?9417?	BARN OWL.....	BS32
61358	?9662?	HARRIS HAWK.....	PO15
63261	?1745?	PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID.....	TA6
68321	?5248?	PEREGRINE FALCON.....	TN23
69108	?6131?	EURASIAN EAGLE OWL.....	CF37

69535	?5193?	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID ..	NN18
76133	?4292?	HARRIS HAWK.....	PE12
76664	?4491?	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID ..	NR32
76785	?3223?	BARN OWL.....	ST16
79558	?1BC0?	RAVEN.....	CO3
79657	?WVBU?	PEREGRINE FALCON.....	PE7
82000	?6622?	SAKER FALCON.....	DH9
83944	?1DMB?	AMERICAN BARN OWL.....	OX16
85774	?3136?	HARRIS HAWK.....	SO40
87346	?MPHW?	LANNER FALCON.....	CB25
87430	?5YDF?	COMMON BUZZARD.....	LA2
87726	?5MPH?	LANNER FALCON.....	PE38
88014	?4934?	BARN OWL.....	WA2
89758	?586D?	COMMON BUZZARD.....	WA9

FOUND x 20

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA FOUND
9356	?053B?	BARN OWL.....	CO14
25166	?924D?	HARRIS HAWK.....	LS8
35658	?304D?	RED-TAILED HAWK.....	PE4
39116	?2044?	HARRIS HAWK.....	KT23
41581	?8157?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL.....	CF83
44479	?2543?	HARRIS HAWK.....	BS24
80669	?5051?	AMERICAN KESTREL.....	BS34
83175	?5NFO?	RED-TAILED HAWK.....	RG2
83176	?LHW?	HARRIS HAWK.....	CO7
86476	?M13?	INDIAN EAGLE OWL.....	RM13
90019	?8690?	BARBARY/SAKER HYBRID.....	BB1
90204	?3ZC?	EURASIAN EAGLE OWL.....	TA3
90843	?G130?	SAKER FALCON.....	NR9
91601	?7119?	GYR/SAKERxGYR/SAKER.....	BD13
91683	?9IOA?	BARN OWL.....	CM3
91857	?DN5?	INDIAN EAGLE OWL.....	DN5
91931	?DUKE?	HARRIS HAWK.....	RG42
91953	?2TWI?	BOOBOOK OWL.....	NE65
92516	?CC07?	SAKER FALCON.....	TA9
92869	?3154?	PEREGRINE FALCON.....	S36

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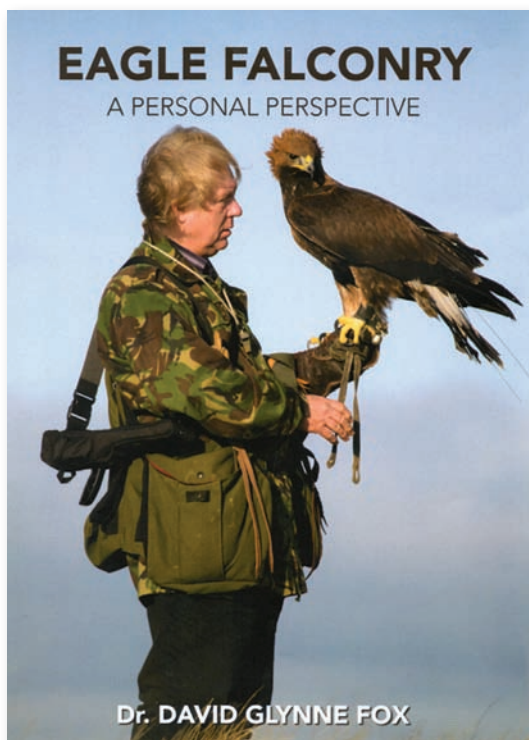
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Eagle Falconry A Personal Perspective



This new work covers a relatively new branch of falconry, at least, so far as the UK, Europe and America is concerned and fills a long-awaited niche regarding eagle falconry. The author has been flying eagles for half a century with varying degrees of success, but is mostly concerned with the Golden Eagle. This book covers the history of eagle falconry in these islands and more importantly perhaps, takes the reader on a journey into the not too distant past to discover those early falconers who saw merit in this stunning bird despite all the bad press the species received back then. The book also gives short biographies on those eagle falconers who are still with us today, giving insights into the achievements of Ronnie Moore, Alan Gates, Andrew Knowles-Brown, Geoff Clayton, George Mussared, Joe Atkinson and many more.

With the upsurge of interest in eagle falconry, the author, together with Alan Walker, formed the British Falconers Club Eagle Group, a small but passionate and successful group who regularly fly their eagles at organised meets throughout the country. The author has brought together his experiences, and those of others, in a highly readable format to help newcomers to eagle falconry. Although the book is not, and was never intended to be, a "How to," fly eagles monograph, there is a wealth of information within its pages to enable any tyro to get a feeling for the sport of eagle falconry. The author stresses the point that these birds are not toys and can be frightening to those unfamiliar with eagles. He warns that great dedication is required to take on these fascinating raptors and takes the reader through his own trials and tribulations whilst training his own eagles, highlighting the problems that can be associated with eagle falconry.

The book contains over 230 pages of text and 32 pages of stunning full colour photographs, many taken especially for this work and is reasonably priced at **£35.00**. The author will be signing copies of this work at the UK Hawking Event near Evesham on 11th and 12th August and again at the ICBP Falconry Weekend on 1st & 2nd September. Alternatively, copies can be purchased directly from the author by e-mailing **davidfox78@hotmail.com**

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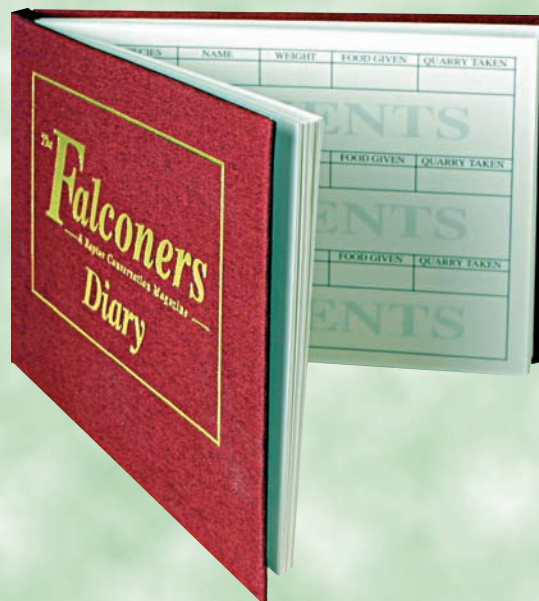
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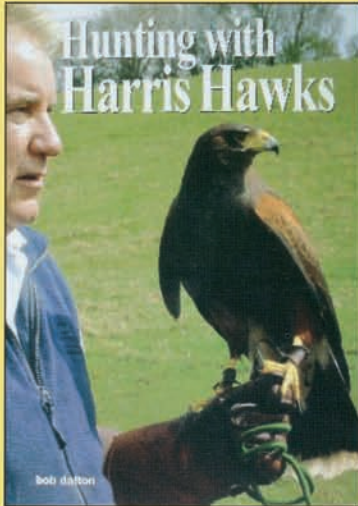
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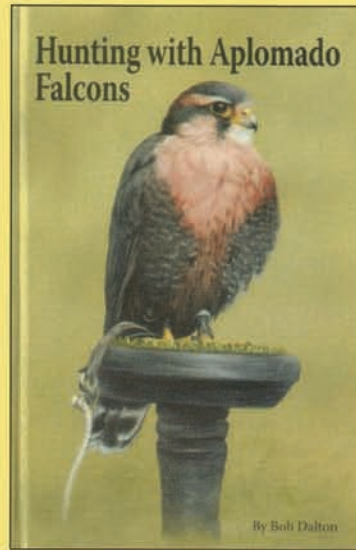
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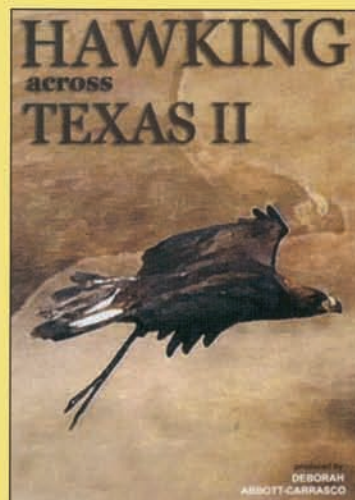
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