World of Falconry

Issue No 4 Oct 2010 £5

The Magazine for Austringers and Falconers

AVIAN EGG INCUBATION WORKSHOP



NOVEMBER 24-26 2010 HELD AT The International Centre for Birds of Prev Newent, Gloucestershire, GL18 1JJ www.icbp.ora



What will be covered on the workshop?

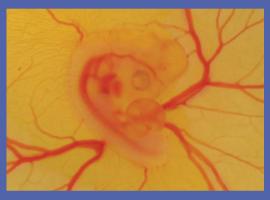
This is an intensive, practical workshop which will cover the following topics:

- Embryo and membrane development
- Factors affecting hatchability before and during incubation
- Hatchery management techniques (including equipment selection and operation, egg weight loss management and hatchability analysis)
- Artificial incubation and its role in field conservation programmes

Participants will break out embryos at all stages of development (older embryos are euthanized first) and gain first-hand experience of candling techniques, egg repair, hatching assistance and egg necropsy

Who is running the workshop?

Susie Kasielke (Los Angeles Zoo) and Pat Witman (San Diego Zoo) will be leading the workshop with additional support from ICBP's team of staff



Susie has been working with birds at the Los Angeles Zoo for over 30 years and has been Curator of Birds there since 2001. Through her involvement with the California Condor Recovery Program, she worked with the staff at Los Angeles and other facilities to develop and refine propagation, incubation and rearing methods for condors and other species. She has been teaching workshops on avian egg incubation for zoo groups in North America for 18 years.

Pat has been working for San Diego Zoo for almost 30 years with 20 of those years being involved with artificial incubation and hand rearing at the Zoo's Avian Propagation Center (APC). The APC has hatched almost 300 avian species, including the first California Condor. Pat joined forces with Susie Kasielke two years ago to combine their knowledge into the actual workshop format.

How much will it cost?

Course (including lunches and

coffee): £450

Spaces limited to 20 people so book fast to get a place

For further information please

Jemima Parry-Jones MBE at the above address Tel +44 (0)1531 820286

Email jpj@icbp.org



The World of Falconry

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Published by

The World of Falconry
Hamptworth Estate Office
Home Farm
Hamptworth
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP5 2DS

Telephone:

07774 267790

Email:

worldoffalconry@yahoo.co.uk

Website:

www.worldoffalconry.com

Contributors:

World of Falconry welcomes submissions from would be contributors. Please either post or email any articles and relevant photographs to the Editor at the above address, or phone 07774 267790.

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Editorial

Welcome to issue four and hope that your hawking season is going well. Due to the tremendous response we have had from our readership around the world we have included a photo section devoted to them and their hawks. Something we will repeat at a later date should the demand, from you the readership, prove to be there.

Lots of news and a good cross section of articles in this issue and you can help us to keep up the variety by letting us know what you would like to read about and perhaps contributing yourself. In the next couple of issues we will be taking a detailed look at Harris Hawks and Hybrid Falcons and the effect they have had on modern falconry. Love them or loathe them they are now an established part of modern falconry and we would like to hear your views.

Neil Forbes suffered a computer crash, as we all seem to have done at some time or other, and so he will resume his column in the next issue. In the meantime Neil is on his honeymoon and I am sure we would all like to wish the couple well.

So here is wishing you a good read and excellent hawking.



The Editor

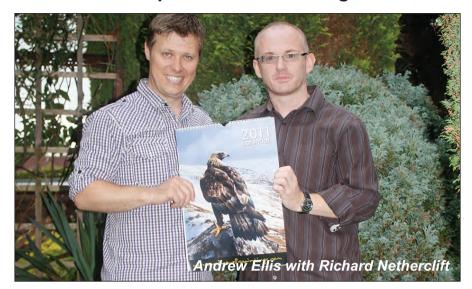
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Front Cover Photograph: Steve Magennis

News

Wildlife artist expands thanks to Insignia Creative



A niche market selling wildlife prints has seen a large rise in turnover, in part due to a Torbay based website design and marketing studio, Insignia Creative.

Wildlife painter Andrew Ellis turned to Insignia to help his business expand in the print market, with the result that new lines have been added including a limited edition calendar.

Andrew's business partner, Donna Ellis, explained: "Andrew is a very successful painter with his originals selling in a top London gallery and to prominent clients worldwide, especially in the Middle East. The website now enables enthusiasts who can't afford the originals to have the chance to buy high quality, limited edition prints. Insignia helped us by setting up a website, something we had been thinking about doing for some time. We've just had the site redesigned and have had some extremely positive feedback. We have been very careful to keep some resemblance to the old site as we didn't want existing customers to be alienated, but have made navigation mush easier, added more prints for sale and extra products such as gift vouchers".

Donna added that the website had made a big difference to sales, especially to the international market which wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the website. Donna also praised Richard Netherclift at Insignia in particular for his work helping to market their site, projects which have included designing and producing promotional postcards, leaflets, business cards and the calendars.

"He designed several batches of print work for us and is always very quick at turning it around. He follows our brief well and we have always been extremely chuffed. Richard has helped us to build a distinctive brand and always comes up with good ideas such as the postcards. It's ideal for us as we only need to go to one person who sorts everything out for us".

Further information on Andrew Ellis and his work can be obtained at www. andrewellispaintings.com or you can contact Andrew or Donna direct on 01752-481292.

Further information on Insignia Creative can be found at www.insignia-creative.co.uk or you can contact Richard Netherclift direct on 01803-321280.

First International Field Meet Belgium

The Equipage St. Bavo is holding the 1st International Falconry Field Meeting in Belgium on the 3rd till the 7th of November. The meeting will take place at Sint-Jansburg, Westmalle, just slightly North East of Antwerp.

The cost for a participant to attend the meet is 250 Euro but this includes barrack style accommodation, breakfast, food for hawks, a safe and secure weathering for the hawks guarded day and night, accommodation for dogs and finally an evening meal. For those that require a little more comfort when it comes to sleeping accommodation then an agreement has been struck with a local hotel who will offer participants of the meet a preferential rate. The alternative hotel is De Heidelbloem at St. Antonius at the rate for meet participants is 65 Euro for a single and 95 Euro for a twin room. Hotel phone number is 384-0474 and their e-mail address is info@deheidebloem.net

For further information on the meet contact equipagesintbavo@hotmail. com



Hunting Celebration Kasteel Van Ooidonck

On Sunday the 7th of November there will be a celebration of hunting, focusing on falconry, at the Castle of Ooidonck near Gent in Belgium. The event starts at 10am and is open to all.

For more information on the Castle and how to get there go to www.ooidonk.be

2011 British Falconry and Raptor Fair

The British Falconry Fair will have a new venue for next year's event. Whilst the superb setting of Chetwynd Park in Shropshire has played host to the Fair for quite a number of years now it was felt by all those involved with staging the Fair that it was time for a change. May Bank Holiday weekend of 2011 will see Ragley Hall in Warwickshire becoming the focal point for falconers and raptor enthusiasts from around the world.

The beautiful parkland that surrounds the truly magnificent Ragley Hall is an ideal setting for the Falconry Fair and the estate itself is no stranger to large events being held within its extremely extensive grounds. The Warwickshire and West Midland Game Fair is held there each August, as indeed it has been for the last twenty five years or so. The year the CLA Game Fair was held at Ragley and was deemed a major success by public and trade alike.



The Falconry Fair itself will once again be far more orientated directly to falconry and raptors and will build on the success achieved at this year's episode. Arena events will feature a mixture of displays both old and new and should prove to be entertaining to one and all. As well as the demonstrations in the main arena the ever popular mini arena will also be hosting a series of talks and displays directly relating to falconry

throughout the two days.

There will be the normal superb weathering ground with its excellent display of Hawks, Falcons and Eagles. An array of trade stands relating to falconry that is second to none plus all the stands one would normally associate with a country fair.

For more advance information on next year's event please contact the show office on 01580-672708.

The Third International Festival of Falconry

The third Falconry Festival will take place in Abu Dhabi in December of 2011 with the main public days being Friday the 16th and Saturday the 17th but the event as a whole will run from Saturday the 10th of December right the way through till Sunday the 18th.

The main site of the event will be at Qasr Al Sarab which is in the western region of Abu Dhabi some 250 km from Abu Dhabi airport. There is a newly built hotel that consists of 52 villas and 154 rooms.

Plans are well under way for the event and for those who want further information they should check out the website at www.falconryfestival.com or e-mail info@falconryfestival.com





A cultural breakthrough

The sport of falconry in Hungary has been officially added to The Intangible Cultural heritage National List by the cultural government in Hungary. According to the terms of the agreement with the National Heritage Council, the Culture Minister, Dr. Miklos Rethelyi presented the document to Toth Janos who is president of The Hungarian Falconers Club.

The National Heritage Council of Hungary suggested that steps be taken by the Hungarian Government to submit Falconry to the Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage list for inclusion. If adopted it would go a long way to safeguarding the future of falconry in Hungary.

Hungarian Falconers Club Field Meet

The Hungarian Falconers Club (Magyar Solymasz Egyesulet) will be holding its twentieth international field meet from the 2nd to the 7th of November at Fuzesgyarmat, Hungary. The falconers meeting place will be the Hotel Gara where there will be a weathering area for hawks throughout the day. Although it should be stressed no dogs or hawks are allowed in the hotel.

The cost of attending the meet is 495 Euro for those wishing to fly a hawk and 300 Euro for spectators. This includes accommodation as well as breakfast and dinners and also the banquet on the final evening of the meet.

Video footage of the hunting by each of the separate groups will be taken each day and the best of which will be shown in the evening as well as informal discussions and slide shows relating to falconry.

Tuesday the 2nd November is registration day with a dinner in the evening. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday are all hunting days in the field with the closing ceremony being given in the grounds of the hotel at 5pm on Saturday. In the evening is the farewell banquet at 8pm. Sunday the 7th sees guests take breakfast and then leisurely depart.

For those wishing to find out more you can visit the Hungarian Falconers Club website at www.solymaszat.hu



Texas Hawking Association Field Meet, January 2011



Abilene will again play host to the Texas Hawking Association when they stage their annual field meet in celebration of 41 years as an organisation. The meet takes place from the 14th to 17th of January and the base for the event will be the again be the Whitten Inn. This motel can be

found at 840Eoff highway 80, Abilene. The phone number is 325-677-8100. Those attending the gathering will get a preferential room rate if they mention at the time of booking that they are attending the hawking meet.

As on previous occasions there will be a safe and secure weathering ground that is attended and watched over throughout the day. There are plenty of good hunting grounds for both long and short wings within easy driving distance of Abilene and quarry in previous years has proved to be plentiful.

After the days hawking on the 14th Bob Dalton and Diana Durman-Walters will be the guest speakers and on the 15th Jeremy Bradshaw, falconer, artist, photographer and hood maker will be the key note speaker. Following Jeremy's talk the meet banquet will take place.

The Texas Hawking Association prides itself on its hospitality and all visitors from near or far are made to feel more than welcome. For more information on the meet you can email James Coody on treasurer@ texashawking.org or check out the club web site at www.texashawking.org

Xena the Lanner Falcon (continued)

Dale Fairbrass



In Issue Two of the World of Falconry Magazine I told you all about my Lanner falcon, Xena. To be perfectly honest when Bob the editor asked me to write a piece about Xena although I was smiling and nodding, inside I was actually thinking "can I really do this". It was approaching the anniversary of her death, a date I shall never forget as it is also my wife's birthday. Even though we were nearly a year down the line, I still miss, and often think of her (Xena not "the wife"). Adding to my initial uncertainty was the new pair of falcons which I had bought to replace Xena and her partner. They were now showing all the signs of coming into breeding condition. This just brought all those memories of that time flooding back. So, everything was still a little raw. In actual fact, after having reached for my trusty Xena

folder, complete with eight seasons worth of flying documented; I swear hand on heart this was the first time I had picked it up since she passed away. It was nice to recount some of our trips out together and I enjoyed writing the article. It is so nice to be able to pay tribute to her.

In Issue Two I gave you a season by season narrative of our flying days together. So, now in issue three I would like to focus more on some of our display days.

THE CURDRIDGE SHOW 16th July 2005 Season 6

Xena was such an easy going little falcon; I knew she would make a good display bird because of this. But you never know for sure until you try. The first display I tried her in was

at a small local country fair, where Bob Dalton was doing the falconry display. Xena and I tagged along as part of his display team. The show was held on a large recreation ground, surrounded by a row of large oak trees. The display ring itself was the size of a cricket pitch, roped off and surrounded by a ring of chairs. Xena was pegged out on her block in the weathering, along with Bob's team of hawks and falcons: I was very pleased with her reaction to the crowds. She was not fazed at all by all the passing people, peering over the waist high netting placed there to offer the hawks some privacy. Be it pushchairs, buggies, curious dogs, strange men on bikes even kids with ice creams. Xena took all of this in her stride. Sitting quietly contented on her block, just as if she was in the garden at home, she did not look out



of place. The noise of the other events plus the tannoy gave her no problems at all. Even with the wind rustling through all the marquees, flags waving on flag poles, balloons and all the hustle and bustle and colour of a busy country show, just like this one, held on a perfect July afternoon in the middle of the Hampshire countryside. All these things could send an undermanned falcon into a bating frenzy. I remained assured as Bob explained to me, display falcons can only learn on the job.

When it came to our turn to fly in the main display ring. Bob flew his team first; Xena would get her go at the end. This was purely because if Xena was to go AWOL, then the flying display would be over. As you cannot fly another hawk or falcon whilst another is free and Bob has to provide a good routine. I fully understood this and was just excited to be given the opportunity to give Xena a go. I knew how well she could fly; it was going to be interesting to see how she performed in this environment. Bob also said that when we did fly, to try and "keep it tight". It was a smallish arena but the crowd wanted

to see the hawks up close. So, I had to bear all this in mind.

I watched from the sidelines as Bob put his team through their paces, he flew his Harris Hawks, Hugo and Maud, then it was the kids favourite Whisky the Barn Owl. Also making an appearance was an African Spotted Owl. Then it was the turn of my favourites, Sid and Sage the Saker Falcons, it is interesting to watch

their different flying styles. Sage is a big 2lb plus female who just powers around the arena while being stooped to the lure, no mean feat for Bob when giving a commentary over the tannoy simultaneously. Sid, the smaller male, is flown differently in respect he is an old game hawk. He is allowed to float around at will, called in to a recall whistle and takes the lure on the ground. These falcons are old hands and performed admirably.

Now it was the turn of the newbie? Bob introduced Xena and me to the crowd (apparently Xena was the good looking one?). I got a mini round of applause as I entered the ring. At this point the colour drained out of my cheeks, I felt every ounce of energy leave my body. Is this what they mean by stage fright!?! As I got to the centre of the ring I could feel myself shaking with nerves. I unhooded Xena and held her aloft on my gloved hand in preparation to cast her off. My gloved hand shaking so much I had to steady it with my right hand. Crikey, I was fine up until this point! Xena seemed to take an age to leave the fist, as she had a good look around at all these unfamiliar sur-





roundings. She finally left the fist and did a quick couple of circuits around the cricket sized display ring. Then she started ranging out towards the tree line of the recreation ground itself. This is the point I should have reached for my lure, and started to lure her. But unfortunately, in the blink of an eye she was up and over the trees and on the soar. Our view was blocked for a few more minutes by the trees, but she was soon spotted again, by now she was well up and getting higher. Bobs words of "keep it tight" were now ringing around my mind. But even I knew it was too late for that? By now she was a good half mile away, but I was not worried at this point at all, as she was flying in the same style as she would in the pig farm. In fact I was actually thinking this is going to be spectacular when she stoops in. I could even hear the title tattle of the crowd with whispers of "oh she's not coming back" or "she is lost". Is it not strange how the public seem to revel in the excitement of things not going to plan? Still it was out with the lure





and I was now swinging for all I was worth.

I could not believe it when she blanked the lure. I swear this was the first time ever, so frustrating. Even with me luring like a mad man, she just continued to soar around at her pleasure. Our allotted ring time had now elapsed, and I now have one eye on the local schools brass band itching to make their entrance stage left into the ring. Next door to the recreation ground was a much larger field, partly being used for parking; I nipped through the hedge and started re-luring here. Even though we had now lost sight of Xena altogether. I was luring blind; nevertheless, within minutes she swooped in and took the lure. I was so close to spectacular, only no one saw (apart from the parking attendant).

Although I found this a tad stressful, it was also exhilarating at the same time. This sometimes happens when were flying alone, exciting flying can get out of hand, you can seem to lose control and then the worries set in. Everytime you cast your falcon free you never know what is going to happen next, the next ten to twenty minutes is in the lap of the gods. Once she returns to your lure you can enjoy the flights for what they are. Unfortunately I think I have a bit of a reputation with my hawking buddies for being over cautions at times. Though I never lost Xena once (well, not for more than an hour or so). That is why we had eight glorious seasons flying together.

Bob and I attended the same show the following year, this time I heeded Bob's advice and kept the flying tight. Xena always stooped the lure well. So, this time I gave her thirty good passes and called her in. This was one of our best performances. Xena once again took everything in her stride.

As we got involved with more display work I soon learnt to read the situations of flying much better. At some shows with larger display rings you could afford to allow your falcon time, possibly to find height. Other shows or corporate events might be tighter for space so you had to fly accordingly.

HAMPTWORTH SHOW 10TH August 2007 Season Eight

Another display that springs to mind was an experience day at Hamptworth in the New Forest, again helping Bob for the afternoon session. This was another chance to give Xena a whizz round and gain some more display experience. There was only a small group on the day itself 2 - 3 as I recall, but I remember this one as Xena flew superbly. Using Bobs exercise field on Hamptworh estate I cast Xena off and she immediately made her way up over a large wood to our right, the weather conditions were perfect today and as she started to soar over the wood she was joined by one of the local resident hobbies (resident for the summer). They swung around together for a good 5 minutes, just checking each other out, this was very exciting. When the hobby disappeared, as mysteriously as it appeared Xena carried on going up and up and up into the bright blue sky. She was clearly visible but it quickly got to the point where as she curved around in her soar, when at her narrowest point you could not see her anymore. Then as she came round again and broadened out, you could. She was up for a full 20 minutes. I began luring and the stoop in was

fantastic. Xena was so far away, and so high up she came down in stages. As she got to me for that first pass of the lure I literally had to swing it out, snatching it back with my eyes closed, just hoping for the best. Of course with that speed the throw up afterwards was again magnificent.

Xena never let me down; she was a falcon that wanted to fly. Sorry to say, if there were problems then it was I that was the weakest link not Xena. This leads me nicely on to the events at Stonham Barns.

STONHAM BARNS SHOW 10TH September 2006 Season Seven

On this occasion I had joined the South East Falconry Group accompanying their display team for the day at Stonham Barns Falconry Fair. This I also found very nerve wracking, flying in front of 500 plus falconers. However, by now Xena and I had become a well oiled flying combo so I thought we could pull it off. Let's face it falconers come a close second to anglers when it comes to tall stories and who can do what the best, but I was prepared to give it a go. All the falcons before me had flown well, so it was a tough act to follow. The weather was perfect so there could be no excuses. I cast Xena off and she flew off around a quarter of a mile, made a bit of height and was soaring around; this time it was Gary our chairman doing the commentary. With every circuit Xena was slowly going down wind. In the end I gave Gary the nod to say I was going to call her in, he starts to "big her up", explaining to the crowd how well she stoops to the lure as Xena makes her way back to us. I was actually relieved and thinking, "nothing can go wrong now", she has not spotted a rook and pushed off or anything silly. Xena powered her way back and I

got in a cracking first pass. Xena threw up but then I felt a sort of tug on my lure line, to my horror my padded lure had just become dethatched from my lure line. This in turn threw up 30ft in the air to land neatly in the display ring, some 15ft away from me. Xena spots her chance and just butterflies in to alight on her lure, without even breaking a sweat! Yes, I was embarrassed. Though some say I sort of got away with it as it looked like I had tossed the lure out to one side? My only excuse was that I had not finished work until 2am that morning that combined with a 6am start driving from Hampshire to Stonham you can see I would not be at my best? At least this is a lesson in always making sure you check your equipment prior to flying. As I'm sure Gary, Tony and Dean of the club will never let me forget.

Since I spent the first few seasons hawking on my own, I suppose I have always felt like, "yeah I'm doing okay, but all other falconers are doing so much better". It's hard to explain, but perhaps not an uncommon thought amongst those who enjoy the sport. In actual fact (and with Bob's editorial note at the end of article 1) I should stop and think. I am very proud with what I have achieved with Xena. This proves that if you stick by a falcon through thick and thin the rewards are there to be had. Whatever happened through the good and the not so good days I always enjoyed flying her. Always looking forward to taking her out; I was always looking for new experiences to have with her. Across eight seasons of flying with Xena I got them. I've always had a bit of a chip on my shoulder, as early on I sorted everything out myself, sourcing falcons to buy, working so hard to





find suitable land to fly on; very challenging when you have no country contacts. Over the years I have taken all these aspects by the scruff of the neck to make my flying time pleasurable. I am going to get slightly soap boxy now, but falconry has to be one of the hardest sports/hobbies to follow. It has dictated how I work, how I sleep, what car I drive, when I have a holiday. Everything has a real big impact on my family and family life. But we do it, we do it all because we love our hawks and falcons, and we love the sport. If you do not put the time in, there are no rewards to be had. Now I have become good friends with Bob, and a couple of local falconer's life is so much easier. Along with joining the South East Falconry club it certainly helps to have someone to share the passion with. During my time with Xena I have built up these new experiences and have had the opportunity to become friends with fellow enthusiasts. All this continues to be central to my falconry life today.



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Things Can't Always Go to Plan

Tiercel



Each branch of falconry has its devotees and although faithful to our own chosen disciplines that doesn't mean that we as falconers can't appreciate other types of hawking. I myself have always had my eagerness fired up by falcons and the flights obtainable with them. To me falcons have an air of dignity and I believe to bring a hunting falcon to the field in the peak of physical and mental conditioning is a skill that is an exceedingly rewarding one. Whilst I have always admired the accipiter family and also the broad wings they don't fire the same passion in me that falcons do. Eagles I have admired from a distance and that is how I have tended to be happy for things to stay.

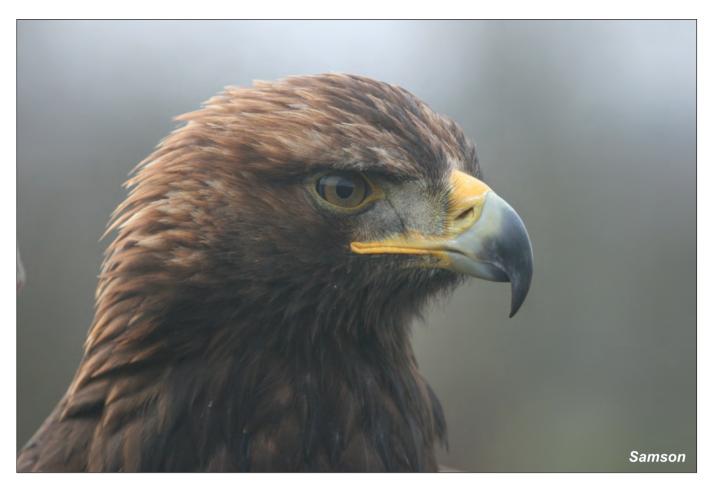
However recently I have had two days out hunting with three different Golden Eagles and have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed both occasions. My first day was with a good friend Richard James hawking hares in Leicestershire. Richard had brought along his eyass female Golden Eagle

and a friend of Richard's was also there with another female Goldie. The weather was simply appalling; with torrential rain eventually bringing an unscheduled halt to the day's proceedings. Before finally admitting defeat to the elements however, I had enjoyed seeing these magnificent predators chasing Hares from the fist and come oh so close to success on a number of occasions.

The next eagle experience for me came when I went out hawking with friend and fellow falconer Keith Davies from Forest Falconry which is on the edge of the beautiful New Forest National Park. Keith has an adult male Golden Eagle called Samson and hawks Hares with him in the company of his German Short Haired Pointer dog known as Kaiser. Poor old Samson has had a serious infection in his feet for some considerable time, as vet bills totalling over six thousand pounds will attest to. But with things well and truly on the mend it was time to get Samson flying again, not only to help his blood circulation in the rapidly mending feet but also to alleviate some of the boredom that must have built up as a result of several months inactivity.

The day I was to spend with Keith and Samson was not the kindest in terms of weather with mist and drizzle seeming to be the order of the day. Perhaps bad weather and hawking with eagles go hand in hand. Undeterred we set off and drove for some twenty minutes or so till we came to the farmland that would be our venue for the morning. It is strange how different falconers view different tracts of land. As we got out of the Land Rover my immediate thoughts was that what superb land to fly partridge with falcons over pointers. Another falconer might have thought that as far as lark hawking with Merlins was concerned this was almost heaven. But Keith remarked that as far as hawking hares with eagles went things couldn't get much better. The ground was large expanse of gently rolling stubble fields and each field was a really decent size, certainly in excess of eighty acres.

The one advantage to be drawn from the fact that it was drizzling was that it would help the pointer a great deal in finding scent. We set off with expectations set on high and optimism exuding freely. We found plenty of signs of hare, freshly occupied seats and fresh droppings but other than seeing one rear end of a hare disappearing under a hedge and onto land that we did not have permission on we drew a blank in the first field. The pointer was working well and got several points on pheasants in surrounding hedges and even on a brace of Red Legs out in the middle of the field. (Oh how nice it would have been to have a tiercel in the air over the point).



We progresses to the next field and as we walked Samson suddenly became extremely focused and peered into the distance. We couldn't see what it was that had attracted his attention but Kaiser was called to heel and we moved steadily forward. Eventually we spotted a hare that was around a hundred yards or so from us and it was gently trying to sneak away and make the safety of a hedge. Once it became aware we were approaching the hare took to its legs and made off. Samson launched himself off and gave determined chase. The eagle stood no chance what so ever of getting on terms with the hare before it made it to the hedge but if it carried on through the and into the next field it would run into one that we did have permission on. The hare was crafty though; it didn't go straight through the hedge but ran along within the safety of the bottom of it and after sixty yards or so doubled back into the original field. Meanwhile the eagle had skimmed over the hedge and was looking for his quarry in the next field.

He seemed somewhat bemused that it had to all intents and purposes disappeared and landed on the ground.

The hare, once back in the original field, took advantage of the fact that the eagle was otherwise engaged and ran the full length of the hedge until it reached another field and made good its escape. What did im-

press me about Samson was that the minute Keith held up his fist and called him he was on his way back. No sulks no tantrums just perfect obedience. I well remember a few years ago going hawking with an eagle falconer in Scotland and his eagle chased a hare across an extremely deep valley and ended up on





the ground around about three quarters of a mile away and on the other side. I was immediately informed that I may as well wait there whilst he went and fe3tched it. When I remarked that surely it would return to the fist I was immediately told that I obviously knew nothing about flying eagles and you have to go to them to pick them up.

Well this falconer was absolutely right; I obviously did not know anything in assuming that the eagle would return to the fist. Nor, blatantly, did any of the other eagle falconers I had been out with previously whose eagles all unfailing returned to the proffered fist after an unsuccessful flight. Some might not come straight away and it appeared to someone who does not train or fly eagles that they can be prone to moodiness and sometimes take longer to return to the fist than is strictly desirable, but they did all do it. However in the case of Samson the response and return was immediate. When three quarters of the way back the eagle suddenly spotted another hare loping along in an adjacent field and was off after it. This slip must off been a good four hundred yards and Samson closed

the gap between himself and the hare at quite an astonishing rate. Anyone who says eagles are great lumbering clumsy things has never seen one flown in earnest. This particular hare escaped the direct attentions of the eagle by using probably the oldest and most common trick in their arsenal for evading capture. Just as the eagle felt it was close enough to stick out a foot the hare quite literally stopped dead in its tracks. The eagle accordingly overshot and the hare made off at full

speed in the direction it had originally come.

We walked on over three more fields and never managed to get another decent slip at a hare. Kaiser, the pointer, was working well and got quite a number of points on pheasant but hares eluded us. It was time to put Samson back in the Discovery. give Kaiser a well deserved drink and Keith and I adjourned to the local pub for a well deserved, at least we thought so, lunch. It really is a small world as the landlord of the pub turned out to be a falconer who had flown a Ferruginous Hawk and currently had a male Harris Hawk. So lunch was enjoyable both in terms of food and conversation.

After an excellent meal stop it was time to press on and we changed venues to another farm which offered very similar conditions to those we had enjoyed in the morning. The weather had decided to brighten considerably and we all set forth with renewed optimism but at least this we had the pleasure of the sun on our backs. Unfortunately though hares were exceedingly scarce and despite the best efforts of Kaiser we only encountered one. This literally got up at our feet as we crossed a fence and Samson launched himself





off of the fist in an effort to get on terms with his quarry. Because we were literally half way over the fence when the hare jumped Samson had to launch himself forward then almost instantly turn and go over our shoulders. Somehow or another he managed this manoeuvre without making it look at all awkward. As Samson closed the hare jinked at the last minute but a tell tale clump of fur drifting on the wind showed us that

he had timed his escape quite as well as he could have done. However although raked by the eagle it was still good enough to ensure his survival.

That was the last hare we were to encounter that day and after another couple of hours walking it was decided to fed Samson up and head home. In terms of quarry in the bag the day was a far from rewarding one. In terms of seeing some good flying, excellent if unsuccessful sport,

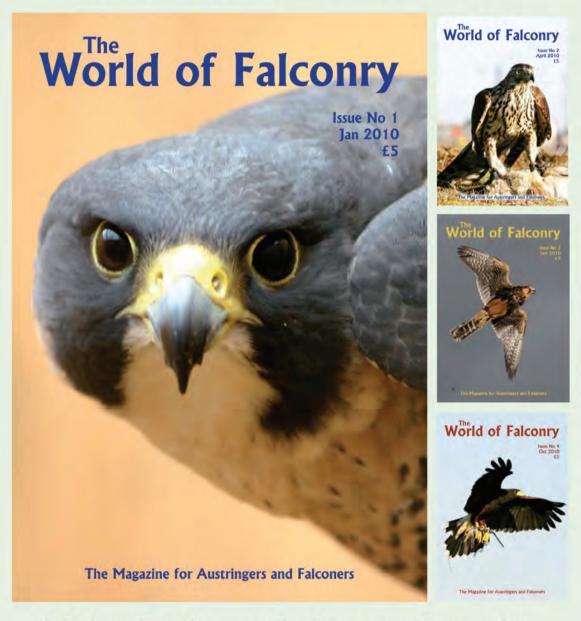
coupled with good dog work and first rate companionship the without doubt the day was an unmitigated success.

Just as a postscript I still have absolutely no desire what so ever to train and hunt an eagle myself. But I can and do very much appreciate the skill of those that can do so well and wait with eagerness my next opportunity of seeing one of these magnificent predators hunting.





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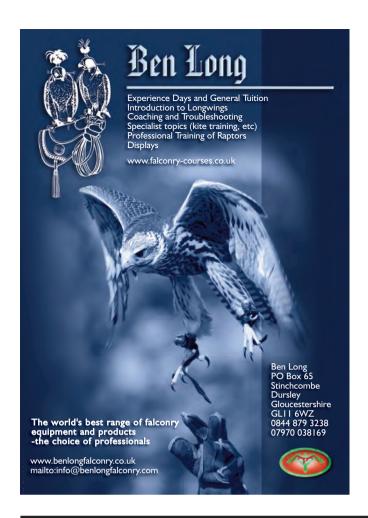
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Return of the Passage Peregrine to American Falconry



Recent events saw a dramatic event in the life of North American Falconry with the taking of limited numbers of passage Peregrine Falcons under licence for the first time in forty years. This was the culmination of years and years of work by many different bodies that finally meant that the Peregrine Falcon was delisted as an endangered species in North America. As the Peregrine Falcon numbers continued to grow then falconers put forward their case to be allowed to take a very limited number of passage falcons each year for their sport. After a great deal of diplomatic wrangling and enquiries and further population and ecological studies it was finally agreed that a very small number of licences would be granted to take passage Peregrines once again.





For those that have never flown a passage falcon it is very difficult to try and put down on paper just what makes them so special in the eyes of the experienced falconer. I have often heard it said and indeed read that a passage falcon is no better than an aviary bred falcon just that the aviary bred falcon takes slightly longer to achieve the same degree of knowledge and field craft as the passage falcon. All I can say is that the people who state these views both out loud and in print have never ever trained and flown a passage falcon. They are absolutely poles apart and no matter how good the eyass is or becomes, it will rarely if ever, develop the style and panache that are the trademark of the passage falcon.

It has been stated in falconry literature of old that no matter how many times it has moulted a passage falcon will always be distinguishable in a group of falcons to those that know what to look for. I remember some twenty years ago I was in Spain with a couple of other experienced falconers and on the weathering lawn first thing in the morning were some forty or so falcons. Approximately half of these were peregrines, varying greatly in sub species, age and

of course there was a good mixture of falcons and tiercels. To all three of us one falcon stood out from all the others, not in any blatant way but merely in the way in which she held herself and the apparent squaring of her shoulders. It is hard to express but it was almost as if she had a dignity that the others didn't.

Later on in the meet, when we were fortunate enough to see this falcon flown, the tactics she employed made her stand out head and shoulders above her peers at the meeting.

With the passage falcon being relegated to the history books in a great many areas, and quite rightly so if the status of the population dictates, then those that are fortunate enough to still fly them should enjoy such a privilege whilst they can. For many the thrill of training and hunting with a passage falcon is something that was experienced when younger but now is unlikely to be enjoyed again. Before the world DDT crisis and when the numbers of falconers, particularly in Europe was miniscule when compared to now, then a small number of passage falcons taken annually had hardly any serious detrimental effect on the relevant species populations. But once the lasting effects of DDT poisoning had truly taken hold, which just happened to coincide with a boom in the popularity of falconry or at least in the demand for people to own hawks, then the annual take could, quite rightly, no longer be justified.

What I find truly sad is that there will be generations of genuine falconers that will never know the thrill of training what is probably the ultimate falcon for the chase. Nearly all the older European works on falconry sing the praises of the passage falcon and hold her in the highest esteem. For the falconer with the knowledge and experience to do so, here was a falcon that before coming into his hands had left the eyrie and spent several months fending for itself. The very fact that she was still around proved that she had been successful and she had learnt how to use the wind and the sun to her advantage as well as various other traits all leading to the falcon being a successful hunter.





Trained with due care and attention, the passage falcon is second to none in terms of style and footing ability.

Don't let these few notes on passage falcons make anyone think that eyass falcons, whether wild or domestically produced, are anything other than first class falconry material. Every falcon, no matter how produced, comes to the falconer with a clean sheet, it is up to the individual falconer to get the best he can out of his charge. I make no apologies for quoting The Honourable Gerald Lascelles who in 1892 had this to say about the passage falcon.

"What the professional is to the amateur, or rather, perhaps, what the thoroughbred horse is to all other varieties of the equine race, the passage hawk is, according to species, to every other hawk which is trained, in so much as she is swifter, more active, more hardy, and more powerful than the nestling. That this should be so is no matter for surprise when it is recollected that the passage, or wild caught, hawk has spent days and weeks on the wing in every kind of weather, and has killed dozens, or perhaps hundreds, of wild birds in fair flight, while the nestling has only gained the power of wing she possesses from some three or four

weeks of flying at hack, and since that time has been flown at from two or three birds a day, and that only when the weather was fine. Moreover, though we cannot definitely account for this, the temper of the wild caught hawk is, as a rule, far gentler and far more amiable, when once she is tamed, than is that of a hawk taken from the nest; and, while the latter are rarely free from the horrible trick of screaming, that vice is almost unknown among passage hawks".

When this truly excellent extract was written some one hundred and twen-

ty years ago wild hack, not merely flying round within a hack pen, was the norm and an unhacked eyass was considered almost worthless when compared to a hacked one. In the times we currently find ourselves living and all the implications with population increase and uses placed on any land that is considered worthwhile to either build a house on or use for recreational purposes, even wild hack is almost a thing of the past, certainly in mainland Europe anyway.

In the next issue of "The World of Falconry" we intend to look a little deeper into what makes the passage falcon quite so special and some of the flights at which they are known to excel. We also intend to feature cameos on one or two well known and successful passage falcons. In many countries throughout the world the taking of passage falcons is no longer legal and accordingly we do not intend to give any detailed description on the taking of such falcons. We would never ever condone or in any way encourage the taking of such falcons except where to do so with the appropriate licence is fully legal and ecologically justified.



Readers from Around the World



Maud – A Celebration

Bob Dalton

There is always something especially exciting about embarking on a new hawking season with a freshly trained hawk, which has yet to be entered, with the anticipation of what could possibly come being a very tangible feeling. Until the hawk has repeatedly been shown quarry the falconer has no way of knowing if he has a mere workhorse on his glove or a future pearl beyond price. Not that a pearl will normally manifest itself im-

mediately but in general the signs that you have an exceptional hawk on your hands are there to be read by those with the knowledge and experience to do so.

However it is also true that taking up an experienced intermewed hawk can be equally as rewarding in its own way. Because falconer and hawk that have been in the field together for several seasons have a tendency to be comfortable with each other and enjoy an understanding of what is required from each party to bring about success. Let me stress that I do mean the hawk and falconer should feel comfortable with each other and not that the falconer should feel free to take liberties or short cuts when re-training the hawk and certainly never ever take the hawk for granted. The end of the moult and start of a new season should not mean a minimum of manning and drastic food reduction until last year's flying weight is reached.

Quite the contrary, the end of the moult is when a great many hawks can all too easily be ruined by incorrect feeding and skipping various stages of training and manning and substituting these with food reduction. When a hawk is approaching the end of the moult the high quality diet that it has been on to ensure good strong feather growth should be gradually changed to one designed to very gradually reduce weight and also steps should be taken to properly enseam the hawk. I still strongly believe in the use of rangle and casting material such as quail feathers of crushed front rabbit's foot. It does not take a great deal of effort to instigate a sensible and controlled diet regime that should gradually cleanse the hawk internally as well as slowly but surely assist in bringing it into flying condition. Make haste slowly at this time of year, the whole season is in front of you so don't be tempted to rush things simply to get one or two more flying days under your belt. Better to miss a week or so at the start of the season but begin hawking in earnest with a fit and healthy hawk that truly is ready for the job.





In my own case this season I am taking up my old faithful intermewed female Harris Hawk, Maud, This tried and tested campaigner is in fact actually eighteen times intermewed, this will be her nineteenth hawking season. She is more like a close and trusted friend than a hawking companion and every season we have tremendous fun together and enjoy some consistently good quality sport. Long gone are the days when we set out to single handedly decimate the rabbit and pheasant population and I like to think (although I am sure misguidedly) that we have both matured in our joint approach to hawking. For many years now we have aimed at quality flights as opposed to numbers of kills achieved. If Maud has a really good kill in the first flight or two of the outing then she is fed up on it and we call it a day. If the first kill or two are relatively easy then we continue, but any serious effort gets a serious reward. I am sure Maud has come to appreciate this and its meaning is not wasted on her. I could well be my imagination in that I simply believe what I want to believe but I do genuinely think Maud tries harder since we have adopted this system.

Despite her age she doesn't appear to have slowed down at all while she certainly does have a tendency to fly cunning on occasion, although I am of the opinion this is merely her vast experience in the hunting field manifesting itself. By this I mean she does not blindly pursue rabbits and follow their every twist and turn slavishly but will however anticipate their flight path and fly accordingly. Very occasionally this will end in a complete and utter miss on her part but usually it results in a kill that may well have not have happened without her application of cunning.

I don't hunt Maud in a cast with another Harris Hawk and have only

ever flown her in a cast once with a large male Harris and this was purely for the purposes of filming. I know that in the wild that Harris Hawks do undeniably co-operate when they hunt and have indeed been fortunate enough to witness this many times myself in Mexico and Peru. In fact in Mexico I have seen family groups of Harris Hawks as large as sixteen strong hunting together to provide food for the entire family. This was the exception I grant you but family groups of five, six and seven are extremely commonplace with the norm being three or four. But this co-operative hunting is born out of the conditions the Harris Hawks have to survive in and the nature of the prey that is to be found there. Let me make it perfectly clear that I have absolutely nothing against those that enjoy flying either a cast of Harris Hawks or who enjoy social hawking where several Harris hawks are flown together.



To each their own and live and let live. For me however, I cannot see the fun in flying a cast of Harris Hawks or the sport in flying several Harris Hawk at quarry at the same time. I very much enjoy the sense of achievement when my hawk leaves my fist and I end up picking her up off of the guarry she has taken. The only assistance I freely use to help the hawk achieve the kill is either a pointing dog or a ferret depending on the circumstances. But this is purely my opinion and it would be a dull world if we all liked exactly the same thing.

When it comes to ferrets Maud never really had the classic introduction of the hutch being opposite her weathering so that she could see them all day long. But in all the years we have hunted with ferrets she has never once showed any inclination to try and snatch one. Her relationship with my pointers is both a joy and an education to watch. From the day Maud arrived she has been surrounded by a selection of various pointers and setters, never less than two in number and often as many as five. When she sits on her bow or in her aviary

she is almost oblivious to them but as soon as we venture out into the field and a pointer starts to run she is constantly focused on it. Hawks that are regularly out in the field with decent dogs really do learn that it is the dog that provides the hunting opportunities and their behaviour pattern alters accordingly. I tend to fly Maud from the glove and so we walk with the pointer sweeping the ground, as directed, in front of us. As soon as the pointer finds something and locks

onto it the whole demeanour of my hawk changes. You can feel her tighten up and slightly raise herself in anticipation of the flush. On some of the rare occasions I let the hawk follow on it is always fascinating to me to watch Maud quite literally follow the dog. Should the dog suddenly come on point then Maud will immediately take stand in the nearest tree and remain totally focused on the dog until the moment of flush.

For many years Maud worked superbly well with my old pointer Emma. This pointer was a superb grouse hawking dog and at the age of eleven had a stroke. Despite this Emma was desperate to go out every time she saw or heard the hawks loaded up ready to go hawking. To run the moors would have certainly killed her but not taking her hawking was verging on cruelty as far as she was concerned. So her latter life was spent finding rabbits and pheasants for Maud, which she did unerringly for another two and half years before she eventually left us. Emma was eventually replaced by Freda, a pointer that at six years of age had suddenly turned gun shy. Her colouration and markings were very close to Emma's and certainly their tem-





peraments were spookily similar. So she is now almost a constant hawking companion for Maud and the two complement each other in the field. They are so effective together that I often feel like I am almost an unnecessary hindrance to them.

Maud is not an exceptionally large Harris Hawk; her weight varies as to what part of the season we are in and what the type of quarry is that is currently the centre of our attention. It would be fair to say her weight is generally speaking nearer to two and a half pounds than it is to two. It would also be fair to say that Maud is far from the most attractive looking Harris Hawk ever, in fact she is downright ugly. I can admit freely to this as her other many qualities far outshine those of superficial looks. She appears to have a head that is somewhat too small for her body and this accentuated by an extremely weird looking beak. Due to quite a serious hunting accident her upper mandible was severed quite close to the base when she was around four or five years of age and accordingly Maud had to be hand fed for a very considerable period of time as she could not pull or tear food in any way at all. The incident which severed the top half of her beak could well have severed her head instead. Maud was chasing a cock pheasant through a wood and all of a sudden the pheasant cart wheeled as if it had been shot. Then Maud did exactly the same thing. Fortunately whereas the pheasant had indeed lost its head on a piece of wire that was strung between two trees Maud was still alive but had a torrent of blood pouring from her face.

I rushed her to a local vet who managed to stem the flow of blood but once he had tidied her would up it became blatantly apparent that without daily help feeding for the next few months Maud would not be able to survive. The vet actually asked me if I wanted to have Maud euthanased. The next two weeks or so proved to be a nightmare with the wound constantly opening despite my best at-

tempts to feed small pieces of food with tweezers without touching the actual wound itself. The beak did in fact grow back, albeit painfully slowly, and despite careful shaping and trying to get some form of normality back Maud still looks like a hawk that has flown beak first into a tree. But the incident never dented her enthusiasm for the hunt which is what really matters.

Over the course of the last eighteen seasons together we have had a few moments together that will live on in the memory forever. Some memories are good some not so good, some were funny although one or two quite sad. Probably the saddest of all was when Maud had chased a rabbit through a sparse wood and had taken stand in a tree when the rabbit made the temporary safety of a pile of brash. As I walked towards the brash in the hopes of reflushing the rabbit a juvenile Sparrowhawk landed on the branch right beside Maud. Despite the close proximity of the spar Maud still peered intently down into the brash. I pulled a dead rabbit Maud had killed earlier from my jacket and was throwing it on the ground as the young spar footed Maud in the chest. Up until that point I had every confidence that we could have saved its life. But as far as Maud was concerned that was just one indignity too far and she returned the footing gesture with unfortunately catastrophic results for the young spar.

Two of the strangest kills that Maud has against her name in the hawking diary are sea trout. Whilst hawking in

no amount of footing seemed to quell the trout's efforts to get away.

In terms of non successful flights one in particular stands out head and shoulders above the others for the sheer determination on the part of the hawk and also the absolutely hopelessness of the flight that was blatantly obvious to all and sundry except Maud. Let me also hasten to add it was an unintentional flight and one that I tried to repeatedly in vain to call her off of. Whatever it was that had triggered the desire in her to

sitting out. Slowly Maud tensed herself and looked beyond the pointer towards the stream. I assumed she had seen a rabbit that was trying to sneakily creep away and held her up so that she could go if she wanted. She bobbed her head once or twice and then she was off. But it was not a rabbit she was after but a small bird on the edge of the burn. It was in fact a Dipper and the small bird waited till the hawk was almost upon it and then dived under the surface and reemerged some fifteen feet or so away.



Scotland one of the farms we hawk over has a series of small burns running through it which sea trout use to get to their spawning grounds. In places these burns are only inches deep and the sea trout have wriggle hard to propel themselves onwards to the next stretch of deeper water. On two separate occasions Maud has left the fist and dragged a sea trout from the water out on to the grass and then proudly and defiantly stood astride it. She seemed almost bewildered on both occasions when

catch this particular item of quarry nothing was going to stop her trying her very best to have it her foot.

The flight took place on the same farm where we had seen the successful fishing expeditions, but this time higher up the reaches of the burn where the water was deeper and ran quite quickly. I was walking with Maud on the fist and one of my pointers was working a patch of Marram grass and reeds, which was normally a good place to find a rabbit

Maud would spot it and set off after it again and the whole process would get repeated. No amount of shouting or throwing a dead rabbit or handful of chicks on the ground would distract Maud from her mission of catching this small bird. This chase, dive, re-emerge, start all over again hunt went on for almost twenty minutes which is far longer than it sounds when it is all constant bursts of energy. In fact it only came to a conclusion because Maud was almost exhausted and I managed to grab her



field jesses as she rested on a rock after yet another failed attempt at the Dipper. Quite why a normally intelligent hawk such as Maud should carry on with a flight that obviously held little chance of success really does escape me. Also from the hawks point of view even success meant the ensuing meal would not replace the energy that had been used in obtaining it. Baffling.

A flight that ended in success but could very well have been curtains for Maud happened when she was around ten years old. I had been flying her off the fist at rabbits and pheasants in a large wood on an estate I had not hawked before. I was in the company of one of the estate workers who had a hawk of his own and was keen to see a Maud fly. Maud chased a pheasant which broke out of the wood and my hawk followed in close pursuit. By the time I and my companion got out of the wood there was no sign of hawk or

pheasant. So it was out with the telemetry set and the immediate reassurance of a strong bleep denoted that the hawk was not too far away. There were no trees in the direction of the signal and I somewhat naturally assumed she had killed the pheasant as it put into a ditch or some long grass. As we followed the signal it became apparent Maud had crossed a road and looked as if she was in a cottage garden not too far off. There were certainly no trees what so ever in the direction of the signal for her to take stand in. On getting to the cottage the signal was going off the scale and it was obvious she was within fifty feet or so of us. Despite the years we have hawked together Maud still has a habit of freezing on her quarry, if it is dead of course and no longer struggling, as anyone approaches her, even if it is me. Without doubt on this particular day and in these circumstances this trait saved her life. On knocking on the cottage door we were greeted by the occupant who turned extremely aggressive when confronted with the fact there may well be a hawk in his garden. At first he was set against us having a look and it was only when my companion reminded him it was an estate cottage and that it might be prudent to let a guest of the estate owner at least see if his hawk was there that we gained access. As we stepped around the side of the cottage we could see laid out before us a collection of ornamental pheasants and a few waterfowl. There were also a few Guinea Fowl wandering around. But I thought the hawk can't be as close as I thought otherwise these avian guardians would be sounding off.

The owner of the ornamental birds was busy telling us how he hated hawks and he knew that he would be within his rights to shoot a non native hawk if it came in his garden after his birds. As he angrily spoke I spotted over his shoulder a few feathers lift-



ing gently up out of the ditch directly behind him. I then focused properly and could see Maud's head lifting up and down as she plucked her kill blissfully unaware of the malice that could well be directed against her should she be discovered. I decided a hasty retreat was in order and explained to the cottage tenant that sometimes you can get a bounced signal with telemetry and this was obviously what had happened in this case and we needed to head back the way we had come and thoroughly retrace our steps. Once out of the garden I scooted round the side and jumped into the ditch and recovered Maud and the ornamental pheasant she had killed and made off as quickly as possible. On the one previous occasion such a thing has happened I face up to my responsibilities and tell the truth as to what has occurred and pay recompense for the victim. But in this case I could not see there being much chance of a reasonable outcome so I thought discretion the better part of valour.

Over a period of eighteen years I have had many fine kills with Maud, both fur and feather, but two in par-



ticular always come to mind when I think about our exploits together. The first was when we were doing some filming in Scotland and against my normal feelings, with regard to flying more than one hawk at a time; I agreed to fly Maud in a cast with a particularly large male Harris Hawk. The guarry was rabbits and we were working a large patch of mixed rough and Marram grass that was liberally interspersed with gorse bushes. My friend with the male Harris and myself with Maud on the first walked about twenty yards apart as we worked the ground. The male Harris had never ever worked with dogs and accordingly we couldn't use pointers for that particular piece of filming. A rabbit got up relatively close to me and Maud was off after it instantly. The rabbit just managed to make the safety of a gorse bush as Maud crashed unceremoniously into it. Undeterred the rabbit crept out the other side and carried on trying to make good its escape. The male Harris on my friends' fist then took off in pursuit and gradually closed the gap on the rabbit. In the meantime Maud had run round the bush looking for the rabbit. When she saw the other hawk was in pursuit of something she leapt back into the air and went up about thirty feet. From this relatively low vantage point she could see the rabbit and took off after it again.

The male had managed to close on the rabbit and as it went in for the kill the rabbit changed direction at the last possible second and evaded capture for the moment. However Maud was now back up to full steam again and closed rapidly on the rabbit, she finely anticipated the last minute jink and the rabbit was taken just before it could reach the safety of a large patch of gorse. Later I paced out the length of the flight at it was approximately four hundred and twenty yards from start to finish.

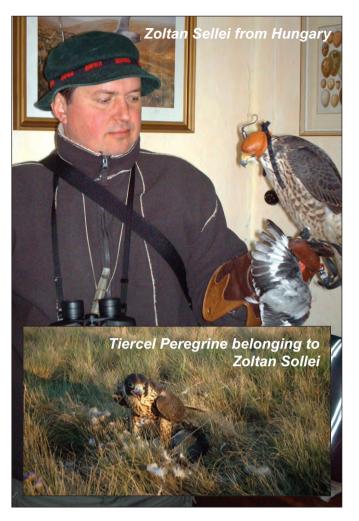


The other kill that stands out in my mind was again in Scotland, right up north in Caithness. The ground my friends and I were hawking was some fourteen thousand acres of perfect rabbit hunting country that was quite liberally inhabited by a healthy rabbit population. A falconers dream come true. The particular day in guestion saw us out with Maud and another female Harris Hawk, a male and a female Goshawk and a spectacular male Black Eagle. We also had a pointer, a Brittany and several ferrets to aid us in our quest for rabbits. When it came to my turn for a slip we were ferreting the side of an extremely steep grassy bank that led down to guite a large loch. Just before the loch itself there was ridge that had a twenty foot drop to a narrow strip of land, full of rabbit holes, that was the shore of the loch. Despite the close proximity of the water it was obvious, by means of all the normal signs, that the rabbit holes beside the water were indeed occupied.

The ferrets managed to bolt a rabbit and Maud was off after it instantly. The rabbit ran directly down the steep bank and Maud managed to get a foot to it just as it hit the ridge. The momentum of the take ensured that both hawk and rabbit went over the ridge. As rabbit and hawk plummeted over I momentarily feared the worst but well before impact Maud released her grip on the rabbit and once it had slammed into the ground came back down on it again. An excellent and well deserved kill, although probably not from the rabbit's point of view.

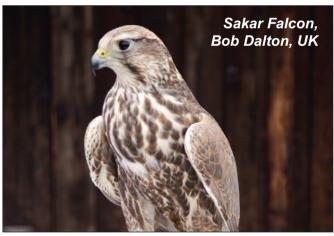
So as can be imagined I really am looking forward to another season working in co-operation with Maud and no doubt we will have plenty of good hawking together along with the other member of the team Freda the pointer. Someone asked me the other day "will you be flying that ugly old Harris Hawk again this season?" I have to say I am ever so glad to report that the answer is an emphatic and extremely enthusiastic yes.

Readers from Around the World













Woodhall Spa B.F.C. International Field Meeting 5th-9th October 2010 Diana Durman-Walters



Longwings, hawks and eagles gathered together in any number is not only a feast for the eye it is a prelude of what might be some truly impressive hawking when out in the field. The British Falconers Club International Meet, held once every 4 yrs lived up to its expectations.

The lawn contained 103 longwings, more than 60 hawks, mainly goshawks and 5 eagles weathered out on the spacious and glorious 30 acres of lawns of the Petwood Hotel. This is the showcase of the British Falconers Club who first came to Woodhall Spa in 1969. At that time the impressive falconry meets were to be experienced in Germany and Austria. Dr Ridley McPhail who was editor of "The Falconer" impressed by the field meets on the continent, knew that this could be achieved in this country. With club members they

looked at Lincolnshire as the optimum hawking county. It was a very good choice. The vast expansive fields of wheat or root crop, which support pheasant, partridge and hare, provide an abundance of opportunity to see hawking to a very high standard.

This is with the full co-operation of 85 landowners who generously donate a day on their estates in order that such a large gathering of Falconers, Austringers and Eagle flyers will benefit from their hawking experience in Lincolnshire and the Wolds.

On the first morning of the meet the opening ceremony was conducted by the Duke of Rutland. His good humoured address, plus the weather looking more than favourable put into context the thoughts of the next 4 days hawking.

There were 25 groups each day and these were divided strictly into either longwings, shortwings, or eagles. Spectators would sign into the group they wished to attend each day allowing for the maximum that each venue could feasibly handle. Making a choice was difficult, as all groups had a line up that would be fascinating to watch. Over the ensuing 4 days they would take 90+ head of quarry.

On the first morning I chose to watch a goshawk group. It had two male goshawks and one female. The ground was ideally suited to the close dog work required for a goshawk and the three were not to disappoint. The boundaries of each large field were made up of thick hedgerow, or small stands of trees in where pheasant would be the main source of quarry. On this particular farm, no shooting took place hence the pheasant were

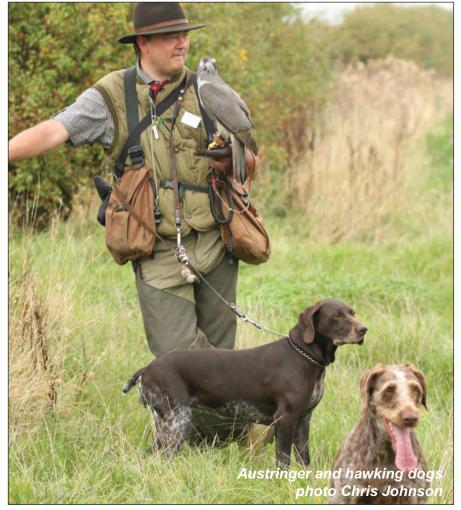


haired Viszla's bitch, whose steady approach and pointing ability was to be the perfect combination for the tiercel gosses.

"Mocha" (the cocker) was a seasoned campaigner of 11yrs of age. Still with the vigour of a much younger dog and with a vast amount of experience in serving the goshawk, he rooted through thick heavy cover and quickly relayed to the handler and to the gallery that guarry, fur or feather was about to be flushed. His quickening low key bark indicated that he was on very hot scent. The gos brought up to the front of the action was also keenly aware that the dog she worked with was onto something. As the cocker flushed, the fast departing pheasant had the gos in equally fast pursuit as they travelled at breakneck speed along the river bed. The gos realising that this might be an abortive attempt quickly took stand in a nearby tree and simply

truly wild and required a hard going goshawk to be in contention. Much of the well covered hedgerows or stream beds had rabbit as well, which made the flush far more exciting for the hawk as the Austringer couldn't be sure which quarry species was going to exit.

In the world of goshawks, if it's a mixed bag you're after; little can be achieved without the use of highly productive dogs who can serve the hawk. They need to be able to work at close quarter and flush on command. It is usual to see HPR breeds employed for this type of hawking. In this group we had a superb cocker spaniel, whose different style and technique made the hawking entertaining and one where you had to be alert all the time as these little flushing dogs might give tongue when on hot scent, but you couldn't be sure when it was going to break out of cover. Showing entirely different style and approach was a Hungarian Wire-





waited for the next piece of action to unfold. Within seconds a rabbit had been bolted from cover and was now in a position for the gos to handle it with consummate ease. An experienced gos makes it look so easy.

Male goshawks make the flight of a gos look spectacularly fast. They have manoeuvrability and speed written into their method. When they tackle difficult quarry such as cock pheasant, or buck rabbits, this makes their achievements seem even more spectacular. Even more so, considering that males may well be flying at up to 1lb or even more, less than the females and will need every ounce of energy and skill to conquer the same quarry. Males perform at such a stylish pace that a flight and kill at grey partridge, which all of gosses in this group achieved, looks dramatic and exciting, especially when it is taken from the point and flush of an HPR.

The following day I journeyed out with the longwing group. This was an entirely different approach to hawking. A considerable number of the falcons gathered had spent time on

grouse moors prior to attending the field meet. They were fit and each and everyone showed that they were capable of attaining good, to stunningly good pitch. The day was very warm and had all the elements that tempt a longwing into thermals, from which any form of discipline is one of a matter of chance. The ground was vast open fields of wheat stubble. punctuated by occasional hedgerows and small stands of trees, mainly in the distance. Partridge sitting out in the stubble can be very tricky to find and in the past they had been located by the use of pointers and setters running over these vast partridge manors. The use of vehicles has for some time been used on stubble to locate a covey, mark them carefully, and then retire to a good distance away before casting off the falcon. As the falcon begins the ascent, the partridge will have clamped down tight to the spot in order to focus all their innate instincts on a departure in which they will attempt to out fly the falcon. There is a dichotomy here .The falcons that had been on the moor for the past 3-4 weeks had been totally focussed on watching where the dog was on point, knowing that this was the area in which the quarry might be. Now they were asked to take a commanding pitch without such assistance. In fact the falconer was the only familiar object. To me there is something missing when you cannot make very good use of the pointing dog in partridge hawking. Once the falcon had taken a pitch which looked as if it was at a constant height and was in a commanding position, the falconer would then begin the run in to where the partridge were spotted. There is no doubt that the stoop of a falcon from a great height is breathtaking and never fails to leave an image of phenomenal speed and accuracy on the kill, with every spectator.

With some of the falcon groups they were on ground that had vast stubble fields bordered by thick tall hedges and tree windbreaks. This needed a slightly different approach from the falconer as well as the falcon. This called for serious dog power. Pointers were used to locate pheasant or partridge that were in the bottom of this cover and hold the game steadily on point. The falcon didn't require being a dot in the sky but to bring her down to around 400-500ft. and stay over the trees to be in the most dominating position. Whilst she maintained this height the falconer would stay on close to the cover and two or three people would beat the bottoms out to flush. Experienced dogs knew



how to keep in contention with running gamebirds in the gully bottoms of such cover. By putting a 'stop' or a person 100vds away from the point tapping the hedge bottom with a stick or quietly clapping hands so that there was some noise, would in effect cause the pheasant to hold to the point and the flush could be better engineered for the falcon. On this occasion a peregrine falcon was up and waiting, she knew this style of hawking very well and had the patience to keep the cover belt under tight surveillance. As the dog ran on then stopped, then ran on even further and stopped the falcon didn't commit herself but waited for the flush. This time the pointer was locked on, every bit of her taut frame said, "Here it is". Beaters got into the gully bottom and as they walked towards the dog, a cock pheasant broke out with the speed that seemed to accelerate every second that it was crossing the open field. The falcon who hadn't been in the optimum position was in descent and pursuit. Her fitness and sheer power as she bound to her quarry just before it reached the other line of windbreak trees, left one in no doubt that she made this look so easy, when in fact it had been quite a difficult set-up. As she despatched her pheasant, with her falconer having to run over the



400yds of stubble to get to her, she began to pluck and break into the warm flesh that would be her rightful reward.

There was a strong preference for peregrines at the meet as against hybrids. Having said that the hybrids that were in attendance, were stunning in shape and form .One of the gyr peregrine tiercels that I was watching did what peregrines just don't do. As he was cast out over the

dog who had located quarry in very heavy cover he automatically began his climb over the pointer who was close to a stand of trees. Without a second thought he stood on his tail and vertically pumped himself into the higher levels in a seamless move. This is typical gyr behaviour and style of flight. Their enormous power gives them the ability to climb vertically gaining impressive height in a very short space of time and in a very tight cone over the falconer. He gained superb height and the dog was called to flush. The partridge had by now run further along and this dense cover was proving a little tricky for the Pointer who was more familiar with open terrain or moorland. As the gamebirds flushed, the tiercel stooped with such speed it was to be hoped he would pull out before he came close to ground level. The partridge gained the upper hand and made the thicker cover before the gyr peregrine could deliver his attack. Not every point and flush was a forgone conclusion and hawking over this type of country requires the fal-







con and falconer to adapt and hone their skills to suit.

Meetings such as this one are great social events and a time to catch up with falconers that you haven't seen for some time. The Petwood Hotel lawns filled each morning with an eclectic array of longwings, broadwings and shortwings is in itself a breathtaking panorama of top class hunting hawks. Goshawks on tall ring perches have become a familiar

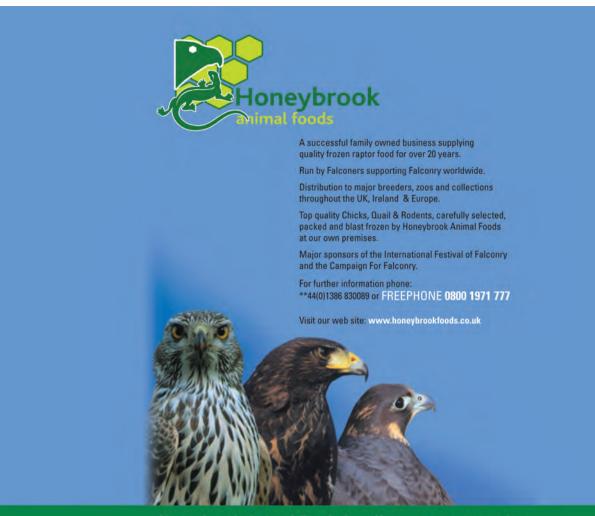
sight, yet curiously I didn't see any falcons blocked in this way. A Siberian white goshawk stood out amongst her grey coated cousins, looking totally magnificent, whilst at the opposite end of the lawn a female sparrowhawk in her pristine plumage was equally beautiful to see.

Out on the far edge of the lawns sat the eagles. Golden's, Ornate x Golden hybrid and Crowned eagle. This is what makes this event stand out, in that it is able to provide the ground for this wide diversity of hawks (generically speaking) and eagles and to have the opportunity to hunt on well stocked ground.

Four years may sound like a very long wait for such an event. It is no wonder it is eagerly awaited by the members of the British Falconers Club as 40 years on it is still one of the world's greatest falconry field meetings.







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