

# The World of Falconry

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January 2012  
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The Magazine for Austringers and Falconers





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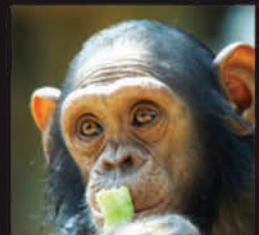
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# The World of Falconry

Edition 9  
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## Editorial

Firstly would like to wish all of our readership a Happy and Prosperous New Year for 2013. Last year was certainly a very interesting one from the magazines' point of view what with the Falconers Fair in May, Falcon Expo in October and of course the Falconry Festival in December. This was in addition to attending various field meets in the UK as well as in Texas and Belgium. We also enjoyed a wide variety of articles from contributors around the globe.

This New Year edition of the magazine gets us off to a flying start with articles from Pakistan, Abu Dhabi and Germany as well as our usual excellent contribution from Neil Forbes and an article from part of our falconry heritage. We are already working on the next issue and in the interim will be attending the annual Texas hawking Association field meet in Abilene as well as various hawking days here in the UK and Europe.

We are always happy to hear from our readership and welcome any articles or photos for inclusion. Also we are always happy to hear from you if you have any suggestions as to articles and topics you would like to see included in future editions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Dalton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Editor

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Front Cover Photograph: Malik Awan

# News

## British Falconry and Raptor Fair 2012

Absolutely fantastic news regarding the British Falconry Fair in that it is at last returning to, what so many falconers here consider to be, its spiritual home. Althorp House in Northamptonshire, the family home of the Spencer family, will once again play host to the event. The Falconry Fair enjoyed seven glorious years at Althorp and only the tragic death of Princess Diana curtailed it and other public events being staged there. But

with the passing of time events have started to be held there once again and now comes the wonderful news that The Falconry Fair, as the event is more affectionately known, will once again be hosted by the Althorp Estate.

The May bank holiday weekend of Sunday the 6th and Monday the 7th of May are the dates for your diary and once again the principal spon-

sors will be our dear friends Kiezebrink UK Ltd. For full details of the event check out the web site [www.countryfairsinfo.com](http://www.countryfairsinfo.com) there is also a facebook page relating to the event.

The response from the falcon community that the Fair is returning to Althorp has so far been simply overwhelming and it is hoped that exhibitors and visitors alike will thoroughly enjoy themselves at the event.



*Althorp House*

## Unique Opportunity

The George Edward Lodge Trust will be attending The British Falconry and Raptor Fair and will once again be putting on a superb display of artwork and personal memorabilia of this world famous artist, naturalist and falconer. The Trust was founded in 2007 with the aim of furthering awareness of this unique man as well as building up a directory of artwork and artefacts relating to him with a view to making available these items to those wishing to gain a greater understanding of him, his artwork and techniques.

Those attending the Falconry Fair will, providing they act quickly, have a chance of obtaining a relatively unique George Edward Lodge of their own, or at least an absolutely stunning reproduction. The Trust has decided to have a superb Grouse Hawking scene, known as "The Falcon's Strike" reproduced on canvas and tastefully framed. This beautiful picture will then be the subject of a prize draw where only one hundred tickets are available.

The tickets will be priced at just £5 each and the draw will take place as soon as the last ticket is sold, which shouldn't take very long at all. So for a meagre £5 the chance to own a stunning Lodge reproduction will be something a great many falconers and those who appreciate fine art will grab with both hands. Make sure you get your ticket or tickets as quickly as possible, I can't see them being on sale for very long.



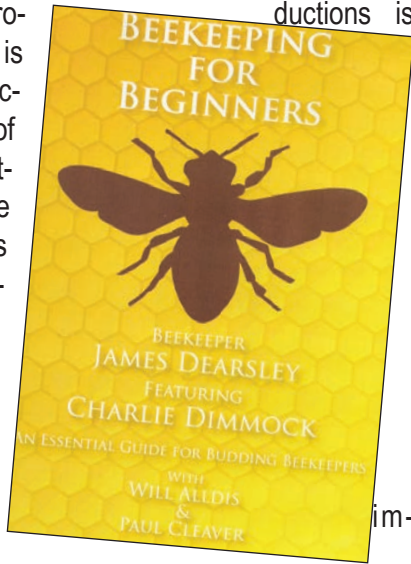
*GEL Peregrine & Grouse*

© George Edward Lodge Trust



## New Range of Countryside DVDs

Stitchcombe Productions is a company that is currently producing a range of countryside related DVD's and the first in the series has recently become available. Entitled "Beekeeping for Beginners" the program, as the name implies, takes the viewer through the entire gamut of taking up beekeeping. Lasting two hours the film is of exceptionally high quality and we watch the clear and straight forward approach adopted by the apiarist James Dearsley as he guides and instructs his pupil, Charlie Dimmock, in the art of successful beekeeping.



Other titles are in the pipeline with Clay Pigeon Shooting destined to be the next release. Several other titles are planned including Falconry. For full details go to [www.stitchcombe.com](http://www.stitchcombe.com)

## Custom Screen Perches

The young Dutch falconer Bart van Dooren has made several custom screen perches for friends and due to an increase in demand has decided to commercially produce a small number each year. The perches are made from the very finest high quality oak and leather and take into account the requirements of the individual falconer it is being made for. Price is dependent on style and size and Bart can be contacted initially by e-mail at [bvdooren@gmail.com](mailto:bvdooren@gmail.com)



*Single Hawk Screen Perch*

## Texas Hawking Association Field Meet

Abilene will once again play host to the field meet organised by The Texas Hawking Association under the guidance of their new president Mr. Chris Davis. The four day meet looks

like being very well attended as usual but for those who have been undecided it is still not too late to attend. The dates are January 13th through to 16th and for more details go to the association web site which will give full details of the meet, timing, ac-

commodation etc as well as the contact details for the secretary/treasurer James Coody.

February 18th is the tentative date allocated to the THA sky trials but again for full details take a look at the association web site.





# A Lost Hawk – February 1881



Sir, the following, I think, will interest some of your readers. On February 28th I received a letter from a farmer of my acquaintance in a village on the Rhine, half an hour from here by rail, to say that the forester on an estate close by, where pheasants are preserved, had caught in one of his goshawk traps a fine hawk, which he did not like to destroy. So I went down the next day with a friend, and found as I expected, a peregrine falcon, an adult female about three years old. She was in an empty room, with a grating before the window. The forester said he had had her about a week, supplying her well, as was pretty evident from the remains about the room, with jays, magpies and other birds; that he had written to his master for instructions, and the count had replied that perhaps the best thing to do was kill her, and have her stuffed and put in the hall; but that he might do just as he liked; so being still unwilling to kill her, he had asked farmer Schneider to come across the Rhine and look at her; and that I might have her if I chose to keep her alive.

I took hold of her, and put a hood and jesses on, and at once found that I was handling a trained hawk. She had evidently been many months at liberty, and was, of course, very wild; but the way she immediately sat bolt upright on the fist without sulking, lowering her head, or setting up her feathers, and I carried her home across the Rhine in a boat and by rail without her being scared. Twenty four hours in the hood acted – as in the case of a Shaheen which I know to have been at liberty from February 1862 to July 1866 – as a wonderful reminder of old times. She is now simply perfect to the hood, and I



should say, from her manners generally, was trained by a first rate hand. She is quite clean moulted, has no broken feather, is still very fat, and her feet and cere very deep yellow – presenting all the appearances of a perfectly wild falcon, rather a small one. The forester told us that he had seen her several days before her capture flying at ducks on their way to and from the Rhine.

Peregrines come there every year in spring and autumn; but, of course, are scarcely ever captured in the goshawk traps. The number of birds of prey which visit this island on the Rhine is surprising. Peregrines come after the wildfowl and goshawks after the pheasants. This last autumn and up to now – the spring flights just commencing – they have caught forty-two goshawks. We saw the feet tied up in pairs. The count, who owns the island which adjoins the land over which I shoot, pays a trifling to his man for each pair.




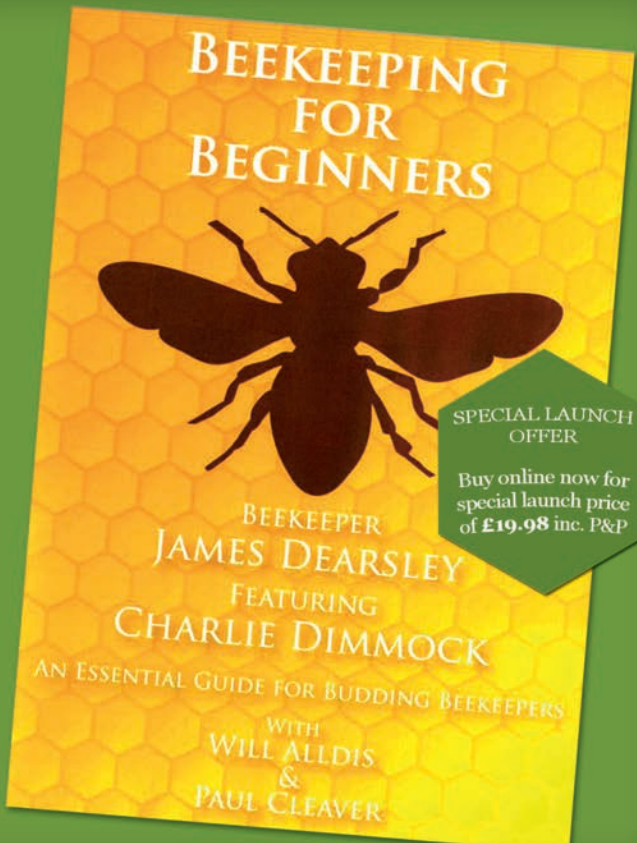
Darmstadt February 1881  
 E. Delme Radcliffe, Lieut-Colonel  
 Once again we are indebted to Mr. Brian Bird of The George Edward

Lodge Trust for the opportunity to peruse the hawking diary of a Mr. H. Willmont and the random falconry related clippings it contained.

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# Falcon-Expo Bad Sackingen Germany

Bob Dalton

“The World of Falconry” recently had the good fortune to be invited to participate in the 3rd Falcon-Expo to be held in Bad Sackingen which is in Southern Germany. The venue was right in a little pocket on the map where Germany, France and Switzerland all come together. Mobile phones have an awful job of working out where they are and what network they should be on and accordingly spent most of the duration of the visit to the event switched off. The organiser, Richard Senft, kindly invited “The World of Falconry” to attend and allowed the magazine to have a stand, free of charge, in a very prominent position for which we are extremely grateful. The Falcon-Expo is a three day affair along the lines of The Falconry Fair in Britain but obviously on a smaller scale, although this particular celebration of falconry is apparently growing in both participant and visitor numbers year by year. The event is held within the grounds of a Wildlife Museum and Golf complex which at first, on paper at least, perhaps seems a very strange setting. In actual fact the event site works well as the museum and clubhouse give excellent toilet and showering facilities for the participants as well as the normal temporary toilets for the visitors you would expect at such an event.

The date, the first weekend in October, seems to me to be a good one as most hawk breeders’ seasons have finished and falconers have actually started to hunt with their hawks and falcons. Certainly there was a proliferation of trade stands from across Europe with telemetry makers certainly taking a very prominent



*Immature Goshawk*

role. There were no less than five conventional telemetry makers represented and also a global positioning satellite version of a telemetry system on show. There were also equipment makers and sellers as well as various connected trade stands such as knives, incubators etc. It goes without saying that being

Germany, food and beer stalls proliferated and were very reasonably priced.

Rather disappointingly for me there was only one of the major German Falconry clubs present but it has to be said their stand was first class and had been very well thought out. Over the three days of the show a





*Immature White Tailed Sea Eagle*



*Jerkin*

different hawk or falcon graced a high perch that was positioned in the middle of their stand. Day one saw an absolutely rock steady immature female Goshawk take pride of place. Day two saw a tiercel Peregrine of the year and on the final day it was the turn of an immature female Harris Hawk to take centre stage. Although it would be fair to say the stand, despite being exceptionally well presented, was somewhat eclipsed by its next door neighbour. This was occupied by the very experienced German falconer Leo Mandlsperger and his company, Falcons-World. Leo had brought five superb falcons with him and not one had so much as a frayed feather, they were in simply perfect condition. They remained this way despite being amid the hustle and bustle of the show for three solid days. The falcons were manned to a superb level and spoke volumes about those that trained and handled them on a daily basis. The falcons were two beautiful white Jerkins, one male three quarter Gyr by quarter Red Naped Shaheen, one immature female Peregrine Falcon and one four year old Saker Falcon.

All the falcons were flown at various times during the several excellent flying displays that took place each day. The displays were given by three different teams each day and each adopted a different approach to its display and this meant a nice variety of raptors and flying styles. Although it would be fair to say the German idea of a flying display is somewhat different to what the average British falconer would expect. The first display of each day was given by Leo Mandlsperger, assisted by his daughter Johanna and a couple of his employ-

ees. The Gyr/Red Shaheen was pole lured between Leo and Johanna who were positioned approximately three hundred metres apart. The falcon would attack one lure which would then be hidden and the other falconer would then call the falcon and produce their lure. The falcon went backwards and forwards between the two falconers a great many times and was obviously an extremely fit falcon. When Leo considered the falcon had done sufficient work he gave the very large hybrid a number of passes to his lure in a far more con-



*Bob Dalton with Leo Mandlsperger and two of his assistants*





*Saker attacking motorised hare lure*

ventional manner before eventually calling it down.

Next up was a Saker Falcon flown at a motorised Hare lure. This is something that has been seen in Britain occasionally but the normal hawk used to chase the lure would either be a Harris Hawk or, as I did myself almost thirty years ago, a large eagle of some description. I used both a Tawny and a Bald Eagle when I did it but the eagles would very soon destroy the lure and also I felt after a while that perhaps it wasn't quite so sensible to have a large eagle so fired up to hunt when in such close proximity to a crowd of onlookers. For a falcon to chase such a lure may seem strange but then of course such flights are a part of everyday falconry in Arabia and Leo breeds and trains a number of falcons each year for his Clientele there. The display was a great success with the falcon reacting immediately to the lure and certainly attacking it with a great deal of vigour. For the actual flight the spectators were parted to

give a clear path between them and the hare sent on a line than ran directly between the two ranks of onlookers. The falcon totally ignored the people and chased and attacked the lure with tremendous zeal. This section of the display went down particularly well with the crowd.

This could well be because the majority of the spectators at this event, in my opinion, were not actually falconers but hunters and their families. Seeing falcons exercised is no doubt entertaining but not anywhere near as entertaining as a simulated hunt with a successful outcome. This was probably further illustrated by the fact that the next display giver flew a cast of Peregrine Tiersels to the lure and they were both extremely intent on catching the lure and subsequently made the falconer work very hard to keep the lure out of their combined clutches. For a falconer to watch it was sheer poetry in motion with the tiersels almost seeming to flow as they went about their work. However when both tiersels were eventually

brought down, after a stunning and full on display, the falconer was greeted with respectful rather than enthusiastic applause.

The next section of the display was given by staff from the very famous Hellenthal Bird of Prey Station, which is based in the Ardennes close to the Belgium border. They had made their way south with a selection of large eagles and some of these are what they flew in their part of the display. Four falconers placed themselves amongst the crowd and two eagles were flown backwards and forwards to the fist across the heads of the public. Pretty standard stuff as far as eagles in displays goes and of very little interest to a serious falconer. But the crowd loved it, especially when the eagles came close to someone or actually brushed heads with their wings. At the end of this part of the display, which it is fair to say was executed perfectly by the staff and eagles of Hellenthal, the applause was rapturous. This further convinced me the crowd was made up far more of general public and hunters than actual falconers. But then of course this is to be expected at a show of this nature.

The third element of the daily displays was a far more conventional flying display with various falcons being flown to the conventional swung lure. The highlight of this section of the day's entertainment was a cast of Peregrine Tiersels being stooped together. To say the lure swinger was kept on his toes would be an understatement as both tiersels were extremely fit and really wanted the lure. The action got very hectic at times and hats off to the falconer who never faltered and managed to keep the whole demonstration flowing smoothly.

The organisation had taken a great deal of trouble to ensure that there were education packs on birds of





*Gyr Hybrid in flight*

prey and falconry for visiting children and there was even a young falconer's competition. I had the honour of signing the certificates and awarding them to the winners.

However genuine practising falconers were present in sufficient numbers to ensure that several of those trading in falconry related items did a very brisk trade. My own personal feelings were that the whole event had a friendly atmosphere and appeared to be enjoyed by one and all. The event was a three day affair and by the second day people were asking about what arrangements had been made for next year. If the event is held again next year, and I see no reason why it shouldn't and certainly brief discussions with Richard Senft lead me to believe it will, then the magazine will certainly be there. My only criticism of the event would be the weathering of the hawks, falcons and eagles. Unlike any event in the UK there was no shelter provided for the occupants of the weathering and merely a rope strung round to separate the hawks from the visitors. The event may well have been staged in October but the weather was very hot and there was absolutely no shade what so ever for the various raptors out on their perches. Leo had moved his falcons either inside onto

his stand or under a large hedge that gave shade all day long. It would have taken very little effort to re-locate the weathering to this hedged area and ensure the hawks were not sitting out in the full sun.

As with all events of this nature there were those that came to visit the show to be seen rather than to see. Several people wandered around with hawks on the fist, all of which seemed in poor feather and far from happy in the environment in which they had been placed. On chatting with these people it was obvious their knowledge on falconry was exceedingly limited and, as always in such situations, it is the hawks or falcons you feel sorry for. To be fair though every country seems to suffer from the "look at me syndrome". I well remember attending a sky trial in Mexico many years ago when I saw someone carrying a Peregrine Falcon on the fist and the falcon was wearing a European style Dutch hood. Emanating from this hood was the biggest plume I have ever seen and over the course of the three days I never once saw the falcon without its hood on. What I did notice however was that the falcon's wing tips were missing and its tail smashed to pieces but still the owner was happy to parade his prized possession.

Getting back to the show it had several highlights for me in that I met the assistant to Herman Goering's falconer and through a third party had an interesting conversation with him. It would appear that Goering was pretty much a falconer in name only and merely liked to pose with a falcon, particularly white Gyr Falcons, on his fist. I was also asked by the organisers of Falcon-Expo to give an interview to a local TV station and also speak with journalists from local and state newspapers. The thought behind this being that a visiting falconer from abroad would be of more interest to viewers and readers and therefore hold people's attention more. I don't know if this was right or wrong but I was happy to help promote falconry in general and the event in particular in any way I could.

In the meantime I have received an invitation to visit with Leo Mandlperger and go hawking with him. This is one invitation amongst the many received at Falcon-Expo that I fully intend to take up. The man is a falconer of the old school who is passionate about what he does and quite simply lives, eats and breathes falconry.



*Immature Blue Buzzard Eagle*

# Manny Carrasco

## An interview with the artist/falconer

**WoF.** Is your artistic talent something that manifested itself naturally at an early stage or was your potential spotted by someone else, such as a teacher at school, and then nurtured from there?

**MC.** My artistic ability did manifest at a very early age, my very first drawing I have from when I was 2 years old. I have always been attracted art. My parents and all of my teachers throughout my education were very supportive. I taught myself how to draw cartoon characters from colouring books my mom would buy me. I wasn't interested in actually colouring the illustrations but rather to copy and draw. I was drawing Popeye the Sailor and Bugs Bunny by the time I was 5 years old. I still own one of those books and I have a drawing my grandmother saved for me all these years. I drew a couple of small drawing in a little address book she kept. I was 2 years old at the time, pretty incredible to have those.

**WoF.** Did you go to art school or are you self taught?

**MC.** I really wish I would have gone to art school! I am completely self-taught. Passion and enthusiasm are my motivating factors. I have had some great mentoring throughout my career but it was all hard work and it continues to be. I'm always learning something new, it's unbelievable and I love it. Through hard work I apprenticed with some wonderful people after I graduated high school to learn animation and storyboarding. I never realized how much hard work cartooning was! I moved to Los Angeles very young and was exposed to the reality of the animation business.

**WoF.** At what point in your life did fal-

conry come to your attention?

**MC.** I discovered falconry when I was about 8 years old. I was read "My Side of the Mountain," by my third grade teacher. I had a tremendous impact at a very early age. Hunting with a falcon sounded like something I wanted to do. To this day I can't believe how much of an impact that story had on me. I've reread that book several times and I hold it dear to my heart.

**WoF.** What was your first intentional falconry experience and who or what was your greatest influence early in your hawking career?

**MC.** My first experience with falconry

that actually led me down the hawking road was watching a medieval festival falconry show. I went to the festival with several other animators at the time and I sat down at the birds of prey show. I never stopped researching the sport and animals in general. I love wildlife and love being a naturalist. As he started flying Harris Hawks and falcons that flame inside me just reignited and I had to continue my journey of falconry. I became very good friends with falconer, John Karger, who runs a bird of prey facility called Last Chance Forever, the bird of prey conservancy. He really was my first influential person that I credit. I learned quite a







*Manny with Dakota*

ships, dragons, sci fi and monsters are my main subject. I love wildlife and recently started painting more and more as a way to get away from everyday work. I was honored when asked by the Texas Hawking Association and NAFA to do art prints and with my love of raptors, naturally it has come easy and was super enjoyable. I now have several painting and I'm planning to have a falconry and raptor art gallery showing soon, that's exciting.

**WoF.** Now that you are an established and well recognised artist do you tend to produce works from that you want to from within yourself or do you tend to work mainly on commissions?

**MC.** I say it is still about 70% to 30%. 30% being subjects that I want to do. I do occasionally have the luck of turning things down, but that's usually due to the amount of work I cur-

bit of hawk keeping, rehabbing and first aid from him and a wonderful falconry veterinarian named Melissa Hill. I had a great falconry sponsor who was very supportive and allowed me to join him thru 2 or 3 of his seasons flying a tiercel peregrine. The huge most impactful moment and greatest mentor in my type of hawking was the well known squirrel hawker, Gary Brewer. He introduced me to the squirrel as a quarry and was there every step of the way. Do's and don'ts and life experiences. I consider him my mentor and one of my dearest friends.

**WoF.** When it comes to your art has hawking and hawks always been your predominant subject or do we tend to see that side of your work more because of Falconry meets and the like?

**MC.** The falconry art is actually a small subject that has grown in the last couple of years. I actually work as a concept artist where space-



*Aplomado*





*Dakota returning to the fist*



*Dakota*



*Diana Durman-Walters and Manny in Austin, Texas*



rently have stacked. I still battle deadlines everyday and I love them and hate them, a very strange relationship. I feel that they pressure me challenge me and usually make me produce great work. I have to say that I am pretty good under pressure but that gets tough as we get older.

**WoF.** What, up until this point, is your favourite work produced by yourself?

**MC.** Favorite body of work I would have to say was on a now “dead” video game. It’s the sad truth of the entertainment business. It was a game called “Omega.” It was so much work by a dedicated team and I was very proud of what I was able to produce. I am working on a per-



*Red Tailed Hawk*



*Manny with Dakota. Self Portrait*





Dean Cornwell, NC Wyeth and Howard Pyle. Animator Glen Keane, another one of my heroes. My fellow Steambot studio mate and brother in arms, David Levy, he pushes me and shows me how to pursue dreams. These are people that come to mind. As for raptor art I love Andrew Ellis's work. He is my English brother. For being far away our love for raptors and art keep us close. I have a feeling if we lived close together we would invite too much trouble. Hans Peeters is another falconry painter I enjoy. He's also a friend and great falconer.

**WoF.** How do you tend to view the falconry market when it comes to selling your work? Are falconers generally as reluctant to spend their money on art as they seem to be on good falconry equipment?

**MC.** I think falconers are very passionate about the sport. I think the market is small but the market that is there is of pure quality. To be truthful I have not tried to pursue it. Most of the pieces that I have sold have been commissions and requests. I think the market of birds of prey as non falconry subject have a higher chance of being a good market, but that's just an opinion and I am speaking with little experience in this particular market. The market of wildlife art is something I am leaning to pursuing because of the love I have for the subject.

**WoF.** The freedom, in relation to time, of being a self employed artist obviously allows you to pursue your chosen field sport. What branch of falconry do you currently practice and does it fulfil your early hopes and expectations as a falconer? By that I mean I know several falconers that fly Harris Hawks but would fly a Goshawk or an Eagle if their circumstances were different. Same thing with some longwingers who fly Sakers or large hybrids but would pre-

sonal project that has everything I love. It has adventure, animals, exploration! It's my dream project and it has been going really well and super excited to present soon. I am part of a concept studio that I share with not only super talented artist but very dear friends, called Steambot Studios. We have had great success in being part of great projects in video games, movies and publishing. As a studio we have some great projects coming out soon and sharing the same passion with likeminded folk is always beautiful whether falconry or art. As for my latest favorite art piece it has to be the portrait of the late "Crocodile Hunter", Steve Irwin. I sent it to his widow Terri Irwin and she and her family loved it, it was very endearing to me. I loved Steve

because of his love for wildlife but most importantly he always spoke with passion and enthusiasm. Those two words have gotten me where I am today. I actually wear a bracelet with those words on it.

**WoF.** Which other artists, not necessarily falconry or raptor based, do you most admire?

**MC.** This question is tough because of the amount of influences growing up. I loved the comic book illustration of the late master John Buscema. He taught me to draw with his work. My uncle and MAD magazine cartoonist Sergio Aragones. His guidance, wisdom and love have been a blessing. I love him. Frank Frazetta, the fantasy painter. Bob Khun American wildlife painter. Norman Rockwell. The Brandywine artists like



fer, given the ideal circumstances, to fly pure Peregrines or Gyrs.

**MC.** I currently fly female Red Tailed Hawks at squirrels in Austin, Texas. I enjoy this type of falconry as much as when I started. The chases are three dimensional and so exciting. Here in Austin I have so many squirrels that it is a no brainer. At this moment in time I am so satisfied with this type of hawking. I squirrel hawk but the incidentals where I fly are swamp rabbits, cottontails and ducks! So it's very exciting and I am very blessed to have such a place to hunt. I would love to fly a Golden Eagle one day and I love the passage tundra peregrine. I am not picky with my hawks thou, given the quarry I'm finding the right hawk for the job. I'm just in love with falconry. All of it!

**WoF.** Is there any one flight with your own hawks that stands out in your memory.?

**MC.** So many flights with so many memories so I will tell of a couple. As an apprentice my first year with my first passage Red Tail I was out trying to catch some cottontails. I still did not know how to find the right field and this place was a bit thick and hard to fly. My first time out alone she had several chases but no luck. She flew to a tall live oak and I could see she was seeing something under her. I tried to get to the base of the oak but it was super thick briar and brush. As I was moving toward her she stoops straight down the tree and the bells then disappeared. I stopped to listen and could hear them but they sounded far away! I was puzzled and searched through the thick brush to find her about 7 meters down a cave! I climbed down the rocks and saw her fighting a snake. I wasn't sure what kind it was and it was a bit dark, so I let her get control of the situation before I got her out of there. It wasn't a rattler but a rat snake that was swallowing a

baby cottontail! I sat next to her clipped her jesses and watched as she pulled the half grown bunny out of the dead snake's mouth. Exciting time as an apprentice. Another memorable moment was when Dakota, my Red Tail Hawk was chasing a squirrel down a giant oak. The squirrel was racing toward a giant hole that the oak had at the main trunk. The squirrel made it to the hole almost at the same time as the hawk but pulled out a big male Raccoon! That was quite a fight and an experience that I never want to go through again. All I can say is thank God for Carhart jackets. That raccoon was whipping both the hawk and I till I finally got control of the situation and dispatched the Raccoon.

Gotta love hawking!

**WoF.** Do you find that meets such as the NAFA annual gathering or the

THA meet in Abilene serve as a worthwhile shop window for your work or do you think the audience is too narrow in its outlook?

**MC.** Its tough to say, I have never really tried to sell artwork other than sign the prints that were part of the show. I think there is art for everyone and it is something that I will eventually try out. What I do like to get is feedback and constructive critiques.

Editors Note; I have had the pleasure on more than one occasion of accompanying Manny, Dakota the Red Tail and TJ the dog on squirrel forays both in Abilene and Austin and it has been excellent sport but most of all good company with a true sportsman. Genuinely looking forward to many more such outings although unfortunately TJ will no longer be part of them.



*Golden Eagle*



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# “I do this all to warm my blood”

Malik Usman Sarwar Awan

“All the falconers should now get and register their birds”. This was the announcement being made in a field of Athara Hazari a small town in the desert of Thal. It was the end of winter and chick pea crop has been harvested and small heaps upon the sands could be witnessed ever where. In Thal, it is always beautiful no matter what the season. It was in this beautiful region of Jhang that a falconry contest was organized. This was neither a traditional contest steeped in local lore nor was there any example of this type of contest within local falconry in the recent past that anybody was aware of. It was merely that some local falconers had come together and between them agreed to organize this contest. Tradition supposedly has it that the sport of falconry is the hobby of kings and landlords. However, those people not given to noble birth or great wealth that spend their lives living near to nature have also interest in this game.











*An interloper at the event in the form of a Peregrine Falcon*

Although many different species of birds of prey are found in Pakistan, some of which such as Peregrine Falcons, Shikra Hawks, Red Headed Merlins are also kept and trained for hunting, it is the magnificent Goshawk that has its prominent place among all of them. It takes a lot of hard work, care and love to not only tame but also to train a hawk. Traditionally in Pakistan the Goshawk is mainly used to hunt Partridges but they are also used to a lesser Degree to hunt wild Quail which can provide interesting and noteworthy flights. Quail are very fast and well known for their rapid maneuvers when being pursued by a hawk. Due to their flying prowess and abundance Quail were selected as the principal quarry for the hawking contest. The contest itself would have two categories, one for female Goshawks and one for the smaller males. In the end more than 25 hawks were registered for the final contest and this was made up of 20 females and 8 males. The turnout of interested spectators was exceptionally good with large numbers of people of all ages coming from far flung areas as well as locally to see for themselves the flying and the contest.

On the day of the contest the excite-

ment mounted as all the falconers prepared their hawks for the flying to come. Seats for the judges were placed in a prominent position to the left hand side of the launching point. All of these judges were themselves very experienced falconers.

The scoring system takes into account the release of the quail and the launching from the fist of the hawk. The actual process of throwing the hawk from the hand is known locally as "Batoola" and is nowhere as easy as it looks. Points are also awarded for flight and catch. The falconers whose hawks that ended the day at the top of the lists were awarded with prizes consisting of shields and cash.

Although this event was primarily a contest between falconers as to the prowess of their hawks many participants felt events such as these help to keep the culture and tradition of

falconry alive in Pakistan. The purpose of organizing such an event is not purely just to have fun but to help revive the centuries old tradition of falconry as practiced by our forefathers and to educate the ordinary working man as to what it involves. The support of the government, both at national and local level, in this regard is very important so that this art can be transferred to the next generation through the few falconers that are still practicing falconry in Pakistan today.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Poet of the East) said...

*"Swooping, shocking, then retiring, pouncing on the prey"*

*I do this all to warm my blood, to keep my spirits in shape"*

Editors Note; Please note what is legal in Pakistan with regard to the above type of contest does not mean it is legal elsewhere in the world.





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# 2<sup>nd</sup> International Field Meet – Westmalle, Belgium

Bob Dalton



*Goshawk*

I was fortunate enough to attend the 1st International Field Meet organised by the Sint Bavo group in November of last year and commented at the time that it was probably one of the most friendly meets I have ever had the pleasure of attending. Accordingly when I was kindly forwarded an invitation to this year's event I confirmed my intention to attend immediately. The format of the meeting would more or less follow that of the previous year with registration being on the Wednesday, hunting on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. A farewell banquet and evening's entertainment would be held

on Saturday night and on the Sunday morning a farewell breakfast for all of those fit enough to participate after the previous evenings celebrations. For those having to pay to attend the cost for the entire meet was a mere two hundred and fifty Euros, which included accommodation and all food for humans, dogs, hawks and ferrets, as well as evening entertainment and all hunting fees. In this day and age it represented superb value for money.

On arrival in Westmalle it was good to see so many familiar faces and to enjoy renewing acquaintances from last year. According to the organisers the numbers of active hunters attending would be very slightly down on the previous year but this was probably to be expected due to the current financial predicament Europe as a whole finds itself in. As it turned out a sudden influx of falconers at the last minute meant that numbers overall were more or less what they

had been in 2010. The only group that was slightly down on numbers initially were the longwingers but on the second day of the meet three more falconers with Peregrine Falcons arrived. There were less game hawks attending which was something of a shame as the organisers had gone out of their way to ensure there were better grounds for the longwing parties to hunt on. This was true for not only those that wanted to fly falcons at game but also for those who preferred to hunt the sable quarry with their falcons.

The Eagle groups had the same hawking grounds as the previous year and everyone who was flying an eagle seemed more than happy with the ground and the quarry available, which was principally European Brown Hare. For the short and broad wings there was plenty of good ground holding Pheasants, Rabbits and Hares. There had even been provision made for one young, par-



*Goshawk that was injured*





*Red Tailed Hawk*

ticularly dedicated, falconer who excels at flying an intermewed male Harris Hawk at Crows and Rooks.

What was particularly good for those actually hunting with their hawks, eagles or falcons is that the organisers had managed to obtain the hunting rights to a great deal more good quality land and accordingly no single party was large and cumbersome. The groups that I hunted with consisted of between three and six hawks in each party so finding sufficient slips just wasn't a problem. There were excellent weathering arrangements for all the hawks gathered and first class housing had also been sorted for the not insignificant number of ferrets that had been brought along.

I have to say that you really do have to take your hats off to the organisers of this meet in that they appear

to think of just about everything. If there is a slight hiccup in the arrangements then it is quickly and efficiently dealt with as opposed to making a drama out of a minor snag.

The first afternoon and evening saw registration for the meet and then all

those present taking an evening meal together. This was a traditional hunter's meal with pheasant pate for starters followed by partridge and then finally a local speciality desert. Everyone seemed to enjoy both the evening and the food and after the meal hunting groups were allocated their areas for the following day.

I joined a small mixed group consisting of two female Goshawks and a male and female Red Tailed Hawk. One of the Goshawks was an eyass of the year but the other was an older, extremely experienced, hawk which I had the pleasure of seeing hunt the previous year. The weather was very kind to us considering it was November and we started to look for quarry in exceedingly good scenting conditions for the dogs. It had been raining but was now still and relatively warm, ideal conditions for the ground to hold scent. The dogs consisted of an ever active Springer Spaniel and a really first rate German Wire Haired Pointer that had an incredible nose and was; unlike most of the examples of this breed I have ever seen work, not particularly headstrong.

Our first port of call was some open workings from which sand had previously been extracted. The area covered about two acres but had been







*Kleiner Munsterlander*

left to regenerate itself for a couple of years now. The banks surrounding it were thick with cover and the whole place looked ideal for finding a pheasant or covey of partridges. In fact as we crested the first bank to begin a sweep with the dogs a large covey of Red Legged Partridge rose and disappeared over the far bank and out of sight. The party had made far too much noise in readying itself for the mornings sport and this had been the price paid. As we took our first few steps down into the workings a Hare got up and ran off. Instantly the old experienced Goshawk was in pursuit and rapidly closed the gap on the hare. In no time at all it was on terms with it and made a grab for it. Hawk and Hare tumbled and somersaulted repeatedly until eventually the hare broke away from the grip of the hawk and made good its escape. The hawk gave chase but the hare made the safety of thick cover before the hawk could close the gap once more. At least it seemed there was plenty of quarry and we moved on looking for more slips. Next up was the young Goshawk and eventually we found a slip for her at a Cock Pheasant which ended very badly indeed for the hawk. The GWH Pointer had come on a staunch point on a quite large clump of bushes. When sent in, with the aid of the

Spaniel, to flush the pheasant we realised just how big the clump of bushes was with the pheasant giving us humans as well as the dogs the run around and simply refusing to flush.

More out of frustration than anything else the young Goshawk bated and took stand in a tree some twenty metres away. The minute it did this of course the Pheasant flushed from

the opposite side of the bushes and flew off at top speed. The Goshawk gave chase but simply ran out of room to fly the Pheasant down before it got to the safety of some deep cover. The Goshawk was extremely obedient though and made to return to the fist instantly. Unfortunately an old post with some barbed wire hanging from it was protruding out of the ground and the Goshawk collided with a strand of the wire and ended up tearing her flesh quite badly. She was rushed to a local vet who cleaned her wound and stitched her up but she would obviously be taking no further part in the proceedings of the meeting.

Both the male and the female Red Tailed hawks had a couple of flights a piece at pheasants in some woodland but to be honest it was not really the right environment for them and they never really got on terms with the quarry put out under them. The older experienced Goshawk was in her element however and in the next three flights she brought two pheas-



*Superb Goshawk*



ants, a cock and a hen, to the bag. The pheasant she failed to take was undoubtedly one of the best flights of the day. She was unsuspected as a cock pheasant was accidentally flushed by one of the spectators behind the hawk. The pheasant broke from the wood and took off across a large grass field. The Goshawk was off in pursuit and just before the pheasant made the cover of another wood the hawk pulled the pheasant out of the air. A rough and tumble on the ground ensued with the pheasant eventually managing to break free. As it did so it took to the air in another attempt to get to the safety of the woods. Again the hawk took off in pursuit and again overhauled the pheasant and pulled it down. But as they landed in an undignified bundle on the ground they inadvertently landed on two more cock pheasants that were in the process of sneaking away. This time three cock pheasants burst into the air and left a very bemused Goshawk behind sitting on the ground with a foot full of pheasant tail.

The Red Tails were flown principally out of trees, having been put up into them once the Pointer had indicated she had found something. This tactic certainly paid off with the male Red Tail and it resulted in him getting a cock pheasant. The female Red Tail managed to catch a really good sized Brown Hare but not as the result of dogs. She had been put up a tree as we beat through a wood in the hopes of flushing either a rabbit or pheasant beneath her. As we, the human party, progressed the hawk duly followed on with her bells constantly letting us know her approximate location. Suddenly the bells told us that she was flying hard away from us. From her lofty perch she had spotted a Hare out in the grass field beside the wood and was making for him. The Hare had obviously seen the hawk and made off at top speed



*Stunning Eyass  
Peregrine Falcon*

as the hawk approached. However the hawk managed to get in position above the Hare and at the crucial moment folded over and crashed down on her intended victim. The struggle was a mighty one but relatively short with the experienced Red Tailed Hawk most certainly victorious.

Other than the injury to the young Goshawk it had been quite an enjoyable day with a respectable amount of quarry brought to bag. For me the day held slightly more interest than perhaps it did for my companions in that we were hunting the estate of a count which surrounded his exceedingly picturesque castle. The count had come out to greet us and engaged me in conversation regarding field sports back in Britain. The end of the day saw him reappear and invite me to join him and a few close friends in a duck shooting party the



*Red Tail*





day after the hawking meet finished. Shooting isn't my thing and as tactfully as I could, using existing travel plans I think, I declined the very generous offer.

That evening saw everyone return to the meet venue for a simply superb meal and the sorting of the hawking parties and the areas they would be allocated for the following day. I would be joining a party of three Peregrine Falcons that would be making the short hop across the border to Holland to enjoy some flights at pheasants on what was supposedly a particularly good piece of ground. With laws relating to hawking differing so greatly between Holland and Belgium care has to be taken to make sure no laws are unintentionally broken. For example we could hunt in Holland with pure Peregrines but not with hybrid falcons of any description. We also could not stay the night as we did not have licences to house the Peregrines we took with us in Holland.

The drive to our destination, which was between Aachen and Maastricht, was right on the Dutch German border and took a little over an hour and a quarter. The area did not, on first impressions, look like the ideal terrain in which to fly longwings. However the area over which we

would hunt was situated on gently rolling farmland and had a large acreage turned over to Winter Kale. The crop was still relatively low, certainly low enough to walk easily through it without causing damage, but high enough to offer decent cover for holding pheasants. These would be wild pheasants that had braved and survived the elements so should prove to be very sporting when flown by the falcons.

The falcons in our party consisted of three Peregrines all of which were falcons, one of which was three times intermewed, the other two being eyasses of the year. In our quest to find pheasants we had at our disposal an English Setter bitch that turned out to be one of the best working dogs I have ever had the pleasure of watching. She worked absolutely tirelessly and never false pointed or attempted to run in or put pressure on the birds she found. Without her the day would certainly have been very hard going. Someone else did come along with his supposedly superb working dog, some sort of French HPR not unlike a Kleiner Munsterlander, but this just raced around like a lunatic and chased any and every pheasant it got the remotest hint of. Fortunately the owner of this hooligan decided

he had to be somewhere else after a relatively short time and we were then left to get on with the business of hawking in earnest.

As soon as the Setter was left to run unimpeded by the French interloper we started to get points almost immediately. In relatively short succession we managed to get sufficient workable points that each falcon had two flights before we stopped for lunch. From six flights no pheasants were brought to bag and to be brutally honest not one of the pheasants flown was ever in any serious danger of being caught. I do not want to criticise other falconers and we all have our own way of doing things but having being schooled in the traditional English style of game hawking I was a little puzzled by the procedure we followed. But then, to be fair, this was not my ground and nor were the falcons mine so any decision regarding slips and flushing were, as they should be, totally in the hands of those doing the actual flying.







*German Wire Haired Pointer*

The party worked into the wind with the falconer whose slip it was walking slightly ahead of the line as the dog worked in front of him. When the dog came on point the falcon was unhooded and held aloft and allowed to take to the air in her own time. Once she had left the fist and started to mount everyone remained where they were and no attempt was made by the falconer or anyone else to head the point. The falcon went up really very well indeed and quite quickly but she was quite a distance downwind. As soon as she set her wings, indicating that she wasn't going to go any higher, the pheasant was flushed by means of sending the Setter in. The pheasant obliged by flushing immediately and barrelling into the wind. The falcon was high but quite a long way behind when it started to stoop. The outcome was that the pheasant had plenty of time to find a suitable refuge and then run off before the falcon could possibly get on terms with it. The falcon was then taken down to the lure.

The second flight pretty much followed the pattern of the first and the result had an equally disappointing ending for all except the pheasant. Again the falcon mounted nicely and quite quickly but did so downwind. No one headed the point and at the

moment of flush the falcon was definitely a considerable distance out of position which meant that it put in a long shallow stoop instead of a commanding vertical one. The pheasant, on being flushed, had sufficient time to pick and choose its next place of refuge.

The third flight followed exactly the same pattern and I could contain myself no longer. With what I hoped was a great deal of tact I asked why we didn't head the point and why we flushed when the falcons were so obviously out of position. I had wondered if perhaps the ground was

shot a great deal and therefore the pheasants were prone to jumping in front of the point out of nervousness and this is why the point wasn't headed. Perhaps the flush took place when the falcons were out of position because all three were prone to drifting off and flying at check, although I thought this highly unlikely to be the case with all three. Unfortunately I never got a clear definite answer and things just seemed to get muddled in translation.

The next three flights followed the pattern of the preceding three and one of the young falcons did manage



*Red Tail which took hare in style*



to get a foot to a hen pheasant but lost it on the ground. On this somewhat disappointing note we broke for lunch at the house of our day's host. A truly excellent lunch had been laid on and it was almost reluctantly that we finished it and returned to our quest of bringing a pheasant to bag.

Three more flights followed and one of which actually proved successful and a hen pheasant joined the list of quarry taken overall at the meet. But it would be fair to say she was taken by a large element of luck. The point, slip and flush had followed the previous procedure and the falcon put in a long shallow stoop at the pheasant with, what seemed like, no realistic chance of getting onto terms with it. But then something curious happened and instead of dropping into cover the pheasant suddenly veered and made its way out across a huge open and recently ploughed field. The falcon had all the time in the world to close the gap and then bind to the suicidal pheasant. All too soon the day was over and it was time to thank our host then make our way back to Westmalle for the evening meal.

The following day say me rook hawking with two different falconers and two completely different styles. The first was with a male Harris Hawk out of the car window. Not my style of hawking at all and something that is hardly legal in the UK. But I was curious to see it first hand and so accompanied falconer and hawk on a drive round the local countryside. Having watched some really frantic action in a relatively short space of time I have to say that any doubts I had about this type of hawking were very soon confirmed. Crows or rooks would be spotted feeding in a field and then the car would be manoeuvred so as we approached them with the driver's side window nearest to them. Our intrepid falconer drove as well as hav-



*Editor with two of the meets hosts*

ing the hawk on his fist ready to slip. When the driver/falconer considered we were in the right position the hawk was quite literally launched out of the open window. The hawk knew and understood the game well and it would be fair to say he was as eager to get out of the window and after the rooks as the falconer was to launch him. In the space of less than an hour I witnessed twelve to fifteen slips but despite grabbing a rook on two separate occasions the hawk failed to hang onto one. It did appear that he needed to be a little sharper

as he didn't seem really committed when going in on the rooks. But then it is always easy to judge from the outside and I am sure the falconer concerned knew the condition of his hawk better than us onlookers.

Next up was rook hawking of a far more recognisable form to me with Peregrine Falcons being slipped out of the hood and rooks feeding on the ground. Two different falcons were flown, one eyass and one inter-mewed falcon, and each caught a rook although it did take the eyass two attempts. The flights were not





classic flights of the type still found on the plains but they were good honest falconry with the rooks being caught because they had been out flown by the falcons.

This being the final full day of the meet the evening would see the ceremony were all the game taken at the meet is honoured. It is a fantastic piece of tradition carried out all over the continent. The game is laid out by species within a fir branch enclave and torches are lit to throw light on the proceedings. The musicians with hunting horns play a short tune specifically designed to honour each species killed at the meet. Then there are the normal thank you speeches from the organisers and

then everybody adjourned inside for the final banquet. This really was quite something with the main course consisting of two wild boars that our hosts had shot earlier in the week. The crowning glory to the meal was a huge cake that had a picture of all the falconers attending the meet as its centre piece. A really nice touch which came as a total surprise to one and all.

The whole meal was simply fabulous and when plates etc had been cleared away it was time for the raffle. There were some sumptuous falconry related prizes to be had and people had been extremely generous both in terms of donations and the purchase of tickets to make sure



the event did not run at a loss. Probably the most sought after prize was the Golden Ticket. The person that won this had their meet registration money returned in full.

But before the raffle got under way, and with everyone's focus on those about to draw the raffle, a small presentation was made to someone attending the meet. A young lad who had come along, at his own expense, with a group of falconers was celebrating his thirteenth birthday. This young man, Nicolas Staelens, had been untiring during the meet and his enthusiasm was such that it put many older participants to shame. Nicolas was unaware that we all knew it was his birthday and it had been arranged that his family would attend the banquet as guests of the meet. Also the falconers at the meet had contributed to purchasing some gifts for the young man and he was then duly presented with a range of falconry equipment and I gave him a copy of my Harris Hawk book and Diana Durman-Walters gave him a glove. Then as would luck would have it I won a hawking Jacket in the raffle, size small. Needless to say I happily passed it on to Nicolas.

The banquet then continued unabashed until the very early hours of the morning with a blues band doing its very best to permanently damage peoples hearing. I must confess to slipping away around midnight and taking solace in the peace and quiet of my hotel. In the morning, once more back at the meet venue, it was the farewell breakfast. It was more than obvious to see from the faces around the table who had stayed and enjoyed the evening to the end. There were some very sore heads. Goodbyes were made and talk of holding the event again next year. If they do then I for one will be there.



# Leg Problems in Young Raptors

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Other than traumatic injuries (broken legs etc), the vast majority of leg problems in falconry birds relate to developmental abnormalities. The latter are various, including bends, twists, rotations and tend to arise due to sub optimal management of young growing birds.

To rear captive bred raptors successfully, one should attempt to mirror wild bird: nutrition, management and behaviour as closely as possible. In simple terms the 'bone to meat ratio' in the food (offered and consumed) should be as close to the species natural diet as possible. The nest and chick management (in terms of nest substrate, numbers of chicks in a nest, what age the chicks are able to stand and walk about) should be as close to normal as possible and the rate of growth should be as close to natural as possible.

There is no doubt that whilst calcium metabolism is vital for all raptors, it is during growth (and egg laying), that the levels of calcium intake are most critical.

Taking an extreme example, a secretary bird, nesting naturally under the African sun, in the top of a tree, eating a predominantly snake based diet, is very different to a similar bird growing up in a UK falconry centre. A snake carcass, has a higher bone to meat ratio than any commercial raptor diet in the UK. Moreover the local sunshine, with its high ultra violet content, is superior in converting vitamin D to activated vitamin D<sub>3</sub>, which then catalyses calcium ab-



*Brahminy Kite chick*

sorption from the gut, metabolism in the body and reduces excretion from the kidneys. All in all the chick growing in Africa has a far more efficient calcium metabolism compared with the UK reared youngster. It may (although not necessarily) also be that the captive reared youngster, is provided with more food and hence is growing slightly faster than the wild chick, where the parents have to hunt for their food. There is also no doubt that the faster a chick is growing, so the calcium intake and blood

calcium level is more critical, whilst a slower growing chick will better tolerate a sub optimal bone:meat ratio in the diet.

This point was brought home to me some years ago, when a 'breeder client' of mine bred a clutch of great grey owls. Two went to a top notch falconry centre and two to a somewhat more rough and ready establishment. The two former birds were fed extremely well and never went hungry. In contrast the other two youngsters were fed 'as and when',





*X-ray Goshawk with deformed wing rads*

and grew considerably slower. Needless to say the two well fed birds grew up with bent and distorted wings, whilst the slower growing birds grew slower, but ended up fit, healthy and strong, with fully functional limbs. A young bird's legs do not grow along their whole length, rather they grow from an area at either end of the bone close to the joint. The bone increases in length by a cartilaginous extension of the bone, calcium crystals then develop in the cartilage and it gradually becomes hard and solid. If however the bones is growing longer – too fast, then the cartilage does not have sufficient time to calcify, thereby remaining soft. If a young bird with soft bone ends tries to stand up and walk around, the soft bone ends bend, before they become solid, resulting in the bent bone ends which we see.

Coming to behaviour – young birds are designed to remain in a nest (at times perhaps on a branch) until fledging, whilst some young chicks, especially those taken for imprinting, are permitted to walk around, at a much earlier age, than they naturally would. Taking weight on their limbs at any earlier age than intended, will

commonly result in long bone deviations. There is no doubt that the earlier one takes a bird (e.g. for imprinting), the greater the chance that you will get things wrong. Indeed it is interesting that some breeders have now learnt not to let chicks go early, as the new owner often believes the problems have arisen prior to their ownership, this maybe the case sometimes, but all too often, it is down to marginal deficiencies in



*Goshawk wing deformity*

youngster care with the new owners. Even if you are an experienced raptor rearer and have never had a problem previously, even a very subtle change in dietary intake by a chick (note – not what you offer, but instead what the bird consumes), can make a life changing difference.

So what can go wrong:

Most commonly a bend will arise at the bottom end of the tibio-tarsus (just above what you might think of as the hock joint). In milder cases the tibio-tarsus may remain straight, but as it grows a rotation develops along its length. In both such cases, the gastrocnemius tendon (just like the one running down the back of your calf to your ankle), is pulled, typically off the inside of the ankle joint. Once this happens the bird is unable to stand up.

Smooth nest substrate: the opposite can occur, where young chicks are reared on a smooth nest substrate, on occasions compounded by a reduced number of chicks in the nest. The consequence is that instead of the chicks legs remaining under the body, they go out to each side and in the process the tibio-tarsus on each leg twists in an outward rotation, resulting in the gastrocnemius tendon being displaced to the outside of the (hock) inter-tarsal joint.

Sadly, all too often, the breeder is unaware that there is a problem until the damage is done, the result being an active healthy young chick, but with crippled legs.

Trauma and accidents: many breeders believe that a bone grows along its whole length, this is not the case. The bone extends from a growth area, located close to each end of the bones length. If this area of bone suffers trauma, then one side of the bone can grow faster than the other, resulting in a banana shaped bone. The other 'accident' which can



occasionally arise, is where a young chick with an adult sized closed ring on its leg, ends up with a twig from the nest, working its way up between the ring and the leg. In time as the leg grows, the presence of the twig between it and the ring causes a constriction and the leg grows twisted around the twig.

Aspects to ensure you get right:

- Feed a diet approximating to what that chick would eat in the wild – always a whole carcass diet, even 10% red meat will upset the balance and result in a disaster
- Ensure that any bone or particles of bone, are small enough for that chick to eat, and swallow, at a young age (the most critical period is 5-22 days of age) – so mince up the whole carcass
- Ensure the chick does not weight bear or walk around at a younger age than would be normal
- Ensure the nest bowl is concave and gives purchase for the feet and talons, so that the legs do not go out sideways
- Do your best to ensure that you can observe chicks whilst still in the nest, so that you know immediately, in the event that a problem should arise
- Seek early advice if there is any standing, walking or leg abnormality



What can new owners do:

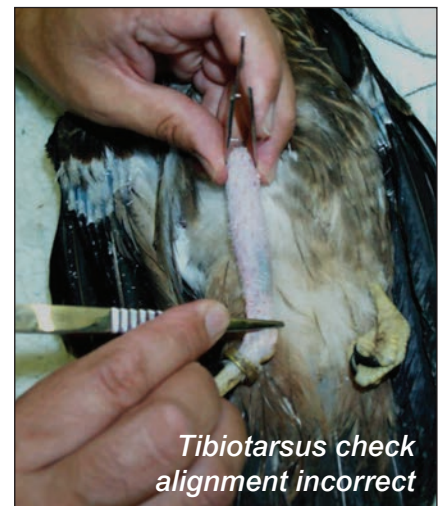
Certainly it is advisable to have a 'new bird check', with a suitably experienced and qualified avian vet. This should always include a faecal (mote) parasite check (before the new bird has had a chance to contaminate your nice clean aviary, a physical check and preferably a blood test.

In the event that a problem arises, the costs of correction and repair can be significant. It is tragic when a young bird is put down, not because the problem is not fixable, but rather because it will cost more than the value of the bird. For this reason we would always advise insuring new birds. Even if you believe the cost of insurance is not justified, remember that there is a greater chance of illness or injury in the first year, so at

least have cover for this period.

Repairing problems:

When tragically things have gone wrong, the most vital aspect is to correct them as soon as possible. Bends in bones can be corrected by experienced avian vets, but once tendons are out of place (because attachments which kept them in place have ruptured), or joints are dislocated or developed abnormal angulations, due to incorrect pressures put upon them during growth and development, then correction becomes very difficult, if not impossible. The first challenge is for the 'experienced vet' to make a correct assessment as to what the actual anatomical problem is, with that knowledge a decision as to whether it is correctible, can be made.





# The Falconry Festival, Ai Ain (Part One)

Bob Dalton

The Third International Festival of Falconry took place from the 10th to the 18th of December in and around Al Ain which is situated in Abu Dhabi. Many people had expressed doubt that the monumental task of moving such a large event from one country to another could ever be achieved with any degree of success. Doubters openly expressed negative views and the forecast from this extremely

vocal minority was that the whole thing would degenerate into a fiasco and undoubtedly end in tears.

As it turned out, due to enormous amounts of hard work and dedication from a very large number of people, nothing could have been further from the truth. The event, as a whole, was a major triumph and both participants and visitors alike en-

joyed an experience they are unlikely ever to forget. For those that did the organising they can only be admired for getting the logistics of such a massive undertaking at such a distance right first time. Certainly it goes without saying that there were one or two hiccups but these were soon dealt with and things ran very smoothly all things considered. There will always be room for improvement and no doubt the next festival will be an even slicker affair. One thing that isn't in doubt is that the next festival in two years time will once again be in Al Ain in Abu Dhabi. This announcement was made by Dr. Nick Fox at the end of the grand parade of nations on the final day. The reason for the last minute announcement was that it had just quite literally only been confirmed to Dr. Fox a few minutes earlier.

The only minor piece of confusion regarding the festival concerned its title. In the UK, Europe and the USA the event was billed as The Third International Festival of Falconry, with the previous two having been held in England. But in the gulf itself the event was advertised as the second Falconry Festival. This was because of the very famous first truly international conference on falconry hosted by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in December 1976. Accordingly our Arab hosts consider this the second such event.

Towards the end of November hawks and handlers and some of the organising team started to arrive in Abu Dhabi and begin the long and involved process of getting things ready for the Festival itself. Hawks and falcons had been shipped across



*Falcon in the desert*





Falconer

from the United Kingdom, loaned by private individuals and a number of eagles and other raptors were loaned by Al Ain Zoo. All in all there was going to be a magnificent presence of trained raptors for visitors to the festival to enjoy and admire.

The actual festival was held in two parts with the first consisting of the desert camp, which was approximately a one hour drive from Al Ain, from the 10th to the 14th of December and then at the end of the day on the 14th everything moved to the festival site proper which was to be based at the dramatic setting of Al Jahili Fort, Al Ain. For many visitors the desert camp was extremely interesting. Here the raptors that were to be used for the displays were being trained and their performances honed. For those not directly involved in the mechanics of running the event there was plenty to see and do at desert camp.

For a lucky few there was the opportunity to go into the desert on a camel with falconers looking for the opportunity to slip a falcon at either Houbara or Hare. The area used for this exercise was a vast expanse of ground belonging to the ruling family and was a preserve not normally hunted. It was also, despite its simply



Gyr Falcon at the desert camp

vast acreage, fenced off to prevent unlicensed hunting and more importantly keep grazing camels out. The little vegetation there would have quickly been destroyed if camels had been able to find a way into the preserve.

There was also falcon racing and Saluki racing for those wishing to see them. The falcon racing was interesting in the fact that quite a number of the falcons flying over the timed course suddenly veered off and flew wild pigeons at check. The idea of the racing was to time the fastest flying falcon in a straight line over a half kilometre distance. The falcon being timed was cast off from a handler's

fist and called to another falconer swinging a lure at the far end of a long straight piece of ground. Shortly after leaving the handler's fist the falcon would break an electronic beam and then do the same the other end of the course shortly before reaching the falconer. The speed achieved by the falcon would be flashed up immediately on a huge plasma screen. The competition was extremely keen but then this was not really surprising as the first prize was a brand new four wheel drive vehicle. As I say several of the falcons broke off from the straight line dash and pursued pigeons that flew in and out of the area. But then this was not to be un-







expected as these were hunting falcons in the absolute peak of condition. I must admit the whole concept was not one that appealed to me but the Arab falconers were very keen on it.

The Saluki racing was something that I have long wanted to see for myself. The Saluki has long been a hunting companion of Arab sportsmen both as a coursing dog in its own right and as an aid to a Saker Falcon that is flown at hare and occasionally gazelle. When used as a coursing dog the Saluki is run in a brace and it is the dog's stamina as opposed to its straight line speed that sees it being such a successful hunter. When run in conjunction with a falcon the Saluki is used to keep the hare moving as well as distracted. Normally an older Saluki would

be used for this type of hunting. Sometimes an exceptional Saker or Gyr will prove itself in the field by taking a gazelle and when these are flown a pair of Salukis is normally run to help the falcon in her efforts.

I was a little surprised to find that the race was run over a straight course of one kilometre and around twenty Salukis were under starter's orders at each event. Instead of chasing a dummy Hare as Greyhounds would do in Britain the salukis were encouraged to chase a life sized glass fibre Gazelle which was taken up the track by means of a four wheel drive car. The spectacle of so many Salukis chasing the artificial Gazelle in the heat and the dust would have been entertainment enough. But this was far outweighed by the behaviour of the owners and supporters of the

various Salukis involved in the race; this really did have to be seen to be believed. The track over which the Salukis chased their lure ran close to and parallel with a tarmac road. All the spectating Arabs would get in their vehicles and as the starter sent the Salukis on their way the whole disorganised and chaotic convoy would follow on alongside tooting their horns and shouting encouragement. How there wasn't a very major accident I really have no idea.

The police stopped traffic whilst the races were being run and actually joined in the mad dash from the start to the finish line. But don't think that this was to keep order. The police cars were swamped almost immediately by the horde of rampaging spectators and in fact the only accident I saw whilst watching three races was a police car side swiped by a spectator. The Saluki is of course held in very high esteem by Arabs as it is one of the five holy creatures mentioned in the Koran. The other holy life forms being the Arab Horse and Camel with which we are all familiar. The Desert Wolf which has unfortunately now all but disappeared in the wild and, of course, the Falcon.

Back in the camp it was possible almost throughout the day to see various falcons being flown to the lure in a variety of ways. Some were stooped to the lure in the conventional fashion. Some were sent up after a lure that had been attached to a helium balloon but without doubt the most interesting of all, from a spectator's point of view, involved a quite large model aircraft. The model in question had a wingspan of approximately five feet and was very powerful, no child's toy but a purpose built robust replica of a small aeroplane. Trailing behind the plane was a line to which was attached a small parachute that would deploy on separa-



tion, some more line and then a lure made up of Houbara wings.

To see a falcon chase after this really was quite something. The plane would take off and depending how far advanced the falcon was with its training would determine as to when it was unhooded and released. The real skill in presenting the falcon with this type of chase opportunity lay with the pilot of the plane. The man at the controls during our time in desert camp was extremely talented at tempting the falcons to chase the lure and was very obviously a skilled falconer himself. He knew just when to allow the falcon to gain on the lure and when to push the falcon into chasing harder. We were lucky enough to see falcons at all levels of fitness being exercised to the plane



*Bob Dalton with peregrine tiercel at desert camp*

lure. These ranged from a falcon that was allowed to take the lure when it had flown less than one hundred yards to a falcon that chased the plane across the sky and made stoop after stoop at the lure in an effort to

take it.

My enthusiasm for watching falcons fly to the lure that was being whizzed around the sky by a remote controlled plane was tempered by the thought of what would happen to the falcon if something went wrong. It seemed to me that it would be all too easy for there to be quite a serious accident if something was to go wrong. A powerful plane flying at considerable speed did not allow any margin for error and of course it is inevitable that, sooner or later, something will go wrong. I hate to think about the repercussions of such a scenario.

The balloon is something that we are far more used to seeing along with the kite. At the desert camp things didn't go too well initially with the balloon flying. The first helium balloon to be put up was a massive affair and rose to a tremendous height in no time at all. The falcon chosen to fly to the lure was unhooded and allowed to take to the air in its own time. The falcon in question was a very large pale hybrid and flew very powerfully. As a result of which it soon reached the lure and snatched it. What should have happened at this point is that the lure, at the end of some ten metres of line with a parachute attached to the end nearest the balloon, should have detached and as the



*Falcon on Mangala*



parachute deployed the falcon would gently come down to the ground. Instead the lure itself detached completely and the falcon drifted off with it. The Balloon detached itself from its securing line and disappeared into the far blue yonder at a very rapid rate. The falcon was eventually recovered but the balloon, apparently, was not.

The loss of the balloon did not interrupt proceedings with another much

on the fist, but without securing the leash properly. The large falcon suddenly appeared in very earnest pursuit of the smaller falcon complete with leash arrangement hanging down behind it. The handler of the errant falcon called and produced a lure and fortunately the bigger hybrid broke off its pursuit and returned to the proffered easy meal.

The other balloon incident was almost a replica of the first. It differed in

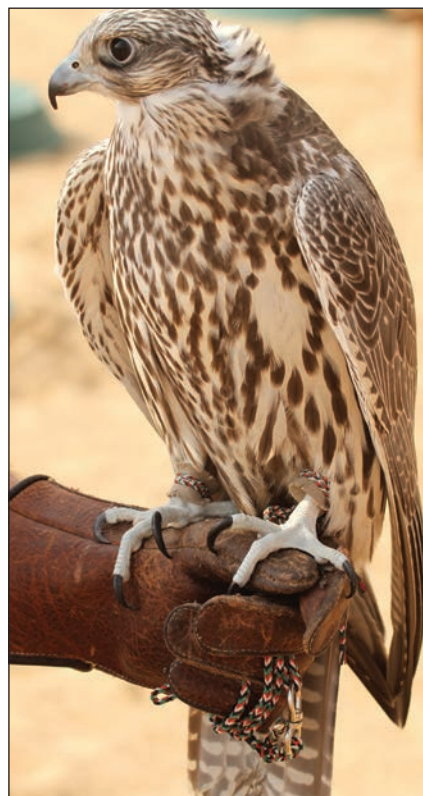
that a falcon was making its way up to the lure when someone else decided to fly their falcon to the lure in the more conventional manner but did so without checking to see if anything else was being flown. Again a short pursuit of one falcon after another ensued but this time with a great deal more intent on the part of the pursuer. The first falcon broke off and started to gain height rapidly in an effort to throw off the aggressor. As it broke away the pursuer decided to chase the lure dangling from the balloon instead and soon took it and was safely back on the ground. The falcon that had gained height to escape the attentions of the interloper took some considerable time to respond to a conventional lure and come back down again. But then you could hardly blame it for being nervous.

It was fortunate that neither incident resulted in a hawk being harmed and when you consider the total number of hawks based at desert camp and the tremendous number of free flights carried out each day it is hardly surprising there was the odd scare. Not that the sheer numbers in anyway excuse careless acts when it comes to handling hawks.

The weathering tents, especially that of the larger falcons, were very impressive and crammed full of all manner of eagles and falcons. One of the most impressive falcons sitting in the weathering was a Prairie Falcon that had been bred in Scotland, trained in England and now found itself in Arabia due to be flown in the displays each day by an American falconer. Sadly only one hawk was present and this was a superb female Shikra Hawk. It had been hoped that the contingent of Pakistani falconers would be bringing thirty trained Goshawks with them but apparently a last minute hitch with their paperwork meant that this was just not going to happen.



smaller balloon being employed. But this too had one or two initial hiccups and the lure detached itself completely the first couple of times I saw it used. Both times the falcon sailed off with the lure for some considerable distance being at a very good height when the lure was taken. Once the lure line problem was rectified there were unfortunately a couple of more incidents that have could have turned out quite nasty but as it happened resolved themselves very quickly. A small gyr/peregrine hybrid was cast off at the lure dangling from the balloon and had started to make height. Which was very fortunate indeed as someone else had somehow managed to put a big gyr hybrid back on its block, having fed it a small meal







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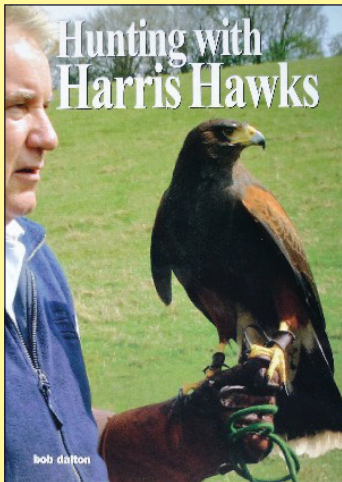
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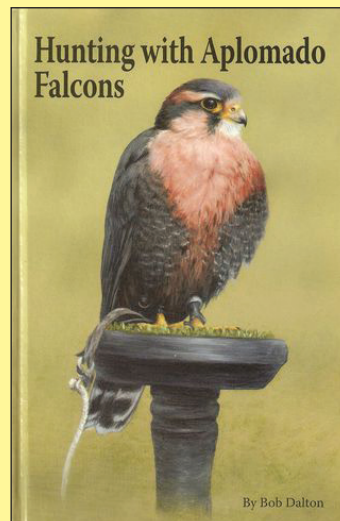
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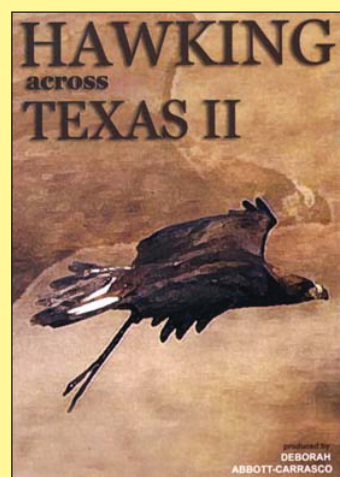
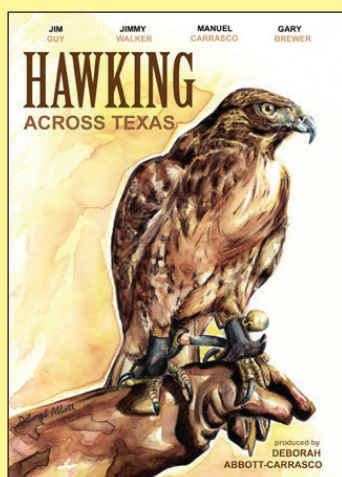
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