

The World of Falconry

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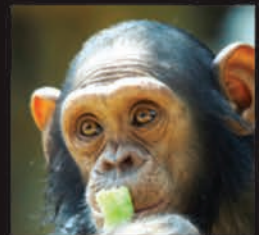
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Editorial

How quickly the seasons change. Here we are again with our hawks beginning to undergo another moult and the season of Game Fairs upon us once again. The premier event of the year on the Falconers' calendar is probably The British Falconry and Raptor Fair, more often referred to as The Falconry Fair. This annual event is now well into its twenties and this year sees its return to its spiritual home of Althorp House in Northampton. Although the event itself started out life at the Royal Agricultural Showground, Stoneleigh in Warwickshire it is the superb natural setting of the Northamptonshire venue that the falconry community as a whole seemed to take to its heart. I know firsthand that a great deal of very hard work on the part of the organisers has gone into bringing The Falconry Fair back home and accordingly wish the event every success.

Later in the season we have a couple more falconry orientated events to look forward to in the form of The UK Falconry and Hawking event being staged at Norton, near Evesham in Worcestershire on August 11th and 12th. We will also be able to return to the ICBP at Newent in Gloucestershire for "The Falconry Weekend" being hosted by Jemima Parry-Jones and her staff. This event proved extremely successful last year and it is hoped that this coming Septembers gathering will be bigger and better, building on the positive side of its initial outing.

Raptor breeding is well underway by now and it is to be hoped everyone has a successful season. Always that little bit extra special to fly one of your own eyasses.

As always, good hawking,

The Editor

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Front Cover Photograph: Lee O'Dwyer

News

Bill and Lesley Prickett

Good news is that Bill and Lesley Prickett will once again be having a stand at the Falconers Fair this year and hopefully Bill will be displaying his new Falconry related figure. The limited edition bronze resin figure of a Harris Hawk on the glove is all but sold out now and it is hoped its replacement will have an airing at the Fair. Bill's bronze figure of a preen-

ing Peregrine was the overall winner of the sculpture competition at the Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi last December. Also his large work "Diving Otter" has been selected for the Jubilee Sculpture Festival to be held in Guernsey this year.

For more information and to take a look at some of Bill's recent work go to his web site www.billprickett.co.uk



Preening Peregrine

The Falconry Weekend

Due to the unqualified success of its debut outing the "Falconry Weekend" will take place again on Saturday and Sunday the 1st and 2nd of September at the ICBP at Newent in Gloucestershire, or that is in layman's terms Jemima's Place. Last year's event was run in conjunction with the UK Falconry Club but for various reasons both parties have decided amicably to stage their own events and in their own styles. Therefore the UK Falconry Club will be hosting their event at Norton near Evesham, Worcestershire on August 11th and 12th.

What helps to make the event at Newent just that little bit special is that the centre itself will be celebrating its forty-fifth anniversary year commemorating its founding and opening by Jemima's father, the late and extremely well respected falconer and conservationist Phillip Glasier.

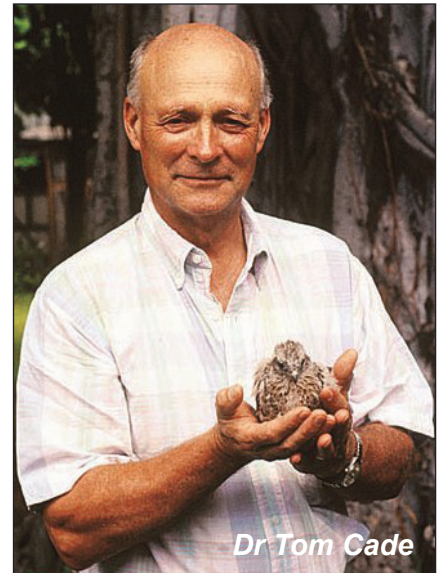
The Falconry Weekend at Newent will pretty much follow the extremely successful formula employed last year and will see the successful items expanded upon. There will be the normal array of flying displays from the staff and residents of the



*Bob Dalton, Kent Carnie,
Diana Durman-Walters,
Jim Ince*

centre augmented by a series of guests who will make cameo appearances. Amongst these will be Gary Biddis and Nigel King, both of whom put on superb displays last year and were applauded enthusiastically at the end of the respective stints.

There will be a series of brief talks each day and these will be given by Neil Forbes, Diana Durman-Walters, Dr. David Fox and Bob Dalton to name but a few. It is also hoped to have a couple of very well respected senior figures from the world of both Falconry and Conservation. All being well Dr. Tom Cade and Kent Carnie will be at the event, Tom Cade needs no introductions to falconers due to



Dr Tom Cade

the outstanding work he carried out at the Peregrine Fund. Kent Carnie is equally well respected and was the driving force behind the creation and establishment of the American Archives of Falconry which later became The Archives of Falconry.

For more information you can contact the centre by phone 01531-820286 or visit the web site www.icbp.org or you can e-mail at jjp@icbp.org. For those wishing to take a trade stand at the event there is an exhibitors pack available just phone or e-mail for your copy. You can also keep up to date with the latest developments by going the facebook page for The Falconry Weekend.

David Fox – New Book

A new book by Dr. David Fox will be on sale at the Falconry Fair, entitled "Eagle Falconry - A Personal Perspective". The book fills a niche that is currently lacking in falconry literature, particularly with regard to Britain and Europe. David is a recognised expert in the field of eagle falconry and has set out to record and chart the growth of this particular branch of the sport. The last forty years or so have seen a growth in the use of eagles in falconry and this has no doubt been aided by the availability of domestically produced eagles. But there has not been a great deal of worthwhile literature, gleaned from personal experience, available to those wishing to read up on the subject, that is until now.

The author was instrumental in forming the British Falconers Club Eagle Group and has always made a point of making himself available to others to help with advice that is based upon over forty years of practical experience in the field.

David will be signing copies of his book at the Fair and it should be noted that the book has a print run of just 500, so obviously it won't be too long before all the copies are snapped up and is bound to become something of a collector's piece. The book is over 230 pages with 32 of these crammed with colour photographs. Priced at a very reasonable £35 plus post and packing this is certainly



one for the falconer's bookshelf. You can pick up a copy at the Fair or order direct from David via his e-mail at davidfox78@hotmail.com



Masters of the Mews

A new range of Fan Tail Perches have recently been developed and launched by Masters of the Mews, the well known falconry equipment company based in Kidderminster, Worcestershire. These innovative perches range from £40 through to £55 depending on size. All prices are plus post and packing. For more details contact Del Shaylor of Masters of the Mews on 07811-463097 or you can e-mail mastersofthemews@yahoo.co.uk and of course there is always their web site www.mastersofthemews.co.uk

Lee O'Dwyer photographer

Whilst attending the Falconry Festival in Al Ain last December I was fortunate enough to meet up with Lee O'Dwyer the gifted wildlife photographer. On our return to England Lee very kindly offered the use of some of his superb photos, not only to illustrate the article on the Festival itself but Lee also furnished us with the superb shot that graces the front cover.

For those interested in taking a closer look at some of the dramatic and highly varied images Lee has captured, including a number from the festival, they can be seen on his web site www.wildgallery.co.uk

2012 NAFA Field Meet

The annual NAFA Field Meet for 2012 will be held at popular venue of Kearney, Nebraska and the dates are November 18th through to and including November 23rd. The reason for the popularity of this particular venue is the relative abundance of game and access to it by falconers. There are good populations of Grouse, Rabbits, Jack rabbits and Quail.

Kearney is considered a family friendly meet location and there will be an active program for spouses. The meet hotel has an indoor water slide/park for children. Added to this in Kearney itself there is a Cabelas store, surely one of the most famous hunting shops in the world.

For more information take a look at the website www.n-a-f-a.com

At the time of going to press it has been stated on UK members membership renewal forms that NAFA will not have a presence this year at the British Falconry Fair despite the large number of members based in the UK.

Dutch Falconry Fair

The Falconcrest Falconry Centre and Bird of Prey Park, which is situated in Eindhoven, Holland, will be hosting their own Falconry Fair on Saturday the 30th of June and Sunday the 1st of July. The centre and the park is owned and run by the lenders family who will be very familiar to those who have attended the British falconry Fair in recent years. We have tried several times to get more details from the organisers of the event but, as of time of going to press, nothing has been forthcoming. Eindhoven is within three hours of the Channel Tunnel and the route from tunnel to Eindhoven a very direct and simple one. For those hoping to get more information on the event the phone number of the park is 0031-40212-0111 or you can visit their website at www.falconcrest.eu



New line of Bells

Calvin Crossman from **UB Falconry UK** has started to produce, along with many other new and exciting products, a new range of bells that follow the traditional methods of bell making but with modern materials. The new bells have a very good tone and come in a wide range of sizes. Priced at £18 a pair they are very competitive and their tone puts them up there with the finest bells that can currently be found on the market. For more information visit the web site www.ubfalconryuk.com



The UK Falconry and Hawking Event

The UK Falconry Club is pleased to announce the second UK Falconry & Hawking Event which is being held at a brand new venue for 2012.

This year's event is kindly sponsored by **Honeybrook Animal Foods** and will take place at the new venue which is at Norton, Nr Evesham, Worcestershire. The organisers invite all falconers to attend this year's event which will take place on the 11th and 12th of August. Dogs and hawks are welcome at the event but please note all relevant paperwork must be in order and please ensure that dogs and hawks are tethered at all times.

"The Event" is not about commercial enterprise or profit but about safeguarding all of our collective futures. It will hopefully provide a place that serious falconers and their families can attend, put factions aside and share and build bridges for the greater good. As such, the single most important aspect of "The Event" will be the participation of UK and overseas falconry club members. The membership of any such club is the backbone of successful falconry and attending clubs will be gathered in the special Falconry Club marquee which is sponsored by **Gamehawker**. It is hoped to encourage communication and discussion between members.

Building on the success from last year there will be a comprehensive seminar programme each day with talks

and discussions from leading experts covering a wide ranging series of topics. There will also be ample opportunity before the start of the season to pick up last minute bargains and much needed pieces of furniture and equipment. "The Event" has a variety of the UK and Europe's best and most reliable falconry equipment and food retailers.

In the main arena and throughout each day there will be displays aimed at the general public and which show display falconry in an informative and positive light. There will also be a Falconry Dog exhibit where there will be a variety of Falconry dogs on display and experts to answer any questions.

"The Event" will be raising funds for the Campaign for Falconry, The Hawk Conservancy Trust, Falconry Heritage Trust and Macmillan Cancer support and we hope that all visitors will support these important causes and charities.

The organisers look forward to welcoming you to The 2012 UK Falconry and Hawking Event sponsored by Honeybrook Animal Foods. For further information please contact the organisers' office; Tommy Miles, The 2012 UK Falconry and Hawking Event, 2A Isis Drive, Cranham, Upminster, Essex, RM14 1LJ. Telephone 44 (0) 7956-972063, or you can visit the web site at www.falconryhawking.co.uk

Behaviour – grumpy territorial hormonal birds

Neil A Forbes BVetMed DipECZM(avian) FRCVS
Great Western Exotic Vets www.gwexotics.com

Putting the record straight before we get going – no we are not taking about the wife!

We have all come across the odd bird, both male and female, who are not entirely trust worthy. Such birds are at best frustrating and worst dangerous. It all goes back to imprinting, and the serious side effects which can arise. We all know that birds reared by humans or in close contact with humans, become 'imprinted'. A young bird may of course imprint on a nest site, a food type or on a 'parent'. Different species are imprintable up until a different age (most species are limited to 2-5 weeks of age), with Harris hawks taking the prize for the species which will most readily imprint at a later age.

What are the suggested benefits of imprinting?

Traditional falconry training requires a young bird to tolerate proximity to humans, which it initially finds stressful. Weight reduction being required to encourage a bird to feed from the person that they initially perceive as a threat. We encourage birds to come back to us for food, which of course by definition means we need to keep them hungry. Keeping a bird at less than their ideal weight, whilst also stressed by proximity to someone they perceive as a threat is of course bad for them. Stress causes the release of glucocorticosteroids within the body. A little stress is good for us all, but constant or prolonged stress, even if just for a few weeks, will result in the release of glucocor-

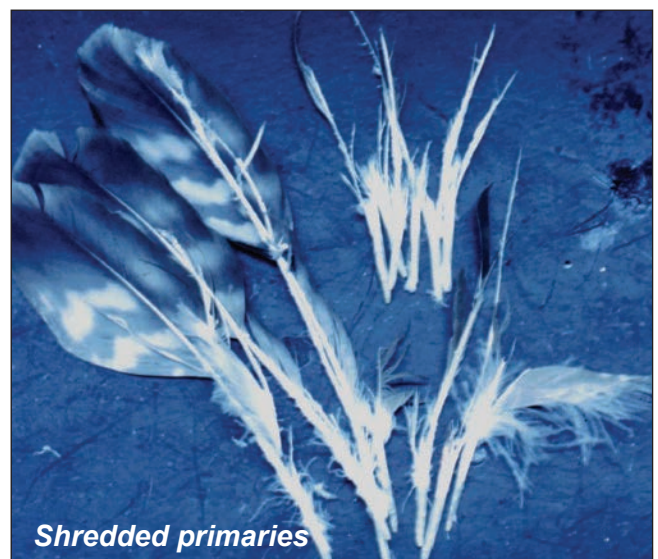
ticosteroids suppressing the immune system, thereby rendering the bird more susceptible to infection.

In certain species, e.g. goshawk and gyrfalcon, which are more sensitive to the immune suppressive effects of stress, we recognise that first year birds have a significantly higher morbidity and mortality rate, compared with adult birds. Conversely if one can get them through the first season, with the stress of initial training, then life expectancy thereafter increases markedly. With goshawks, we now know that the use of a high perch during initial 'humanisation' (training), allows them to get used to us, in a manner which does not stress them and hence is very beneficial.

So if we imprint a bird, such that it is not frightened of us and we do not have to reduce their weight so much during initial training, we will significantly reduce the initial stress and associated risk of disease. This young bird will train at a higher weight, be stronger, fly at a higher weight and be less susceptible to disease. However beware, as imprinting brings with it, a different set of problems. Whilst an imprint bird may not be stressed by proximity to us, it is instead extremely stressed if we desert it (i.e. go away for the

weekend) or have to manhandle it to perhaps put on furniture etc.. A social imprint (i.e. one that is happy to be with us, but has still been reared past an imprintable age, with others of its own kind), is in many senses ideal, as this bird still believes it is a bird, but is equally not frightened of us.

In cases where a falconer creates a 'full imprint', by rearing the bird in the close company of the falconer, and away from other birds, a very strong bond develops between bird and falconer. In such cases the new keeper rears the bird from an early age. There is no doubt, that irrespective of how experienced this falconer is, the risks of hand rearing such a bird, is greater than if it were still being reared by an experienced parent. Certainly such a bird is likely to be fully imprinted, in all senses believing it is a human itself. Such a bird, when it reaches sexual maturity and thinking of rearing a family itself, will naturally desire to form a breeding relationship with the owner.



Shredded primaries

At this time the bird may become territorial and on occasions aggressive, not just to other humans in the vicinity, but even towards the desired breeding partner.

Whilst courtship and breeding is a totally natural cycle, when a bird desires and believes it can and should have such a relationship and yet the intended partner does not play ball, frustration can readily overflow into aggression. Whilst many keepers may consider the psychological aspects of 'breeder frustration', few will perhaps imagine the metabolic effects on a female bird. The initial rise in oestrogen, stimulates fat mobilisation for egg yolk production, as well

as calcium mobilisation and storage in the long bones for egg shell production. Persistently high oestrogen levels (as the cycle is blocked and the bird remains in a stage of preparedness), will often result in excessive fat build up in the liver and major blood vessels (atherosclerosis) together with abdominal distension due to oviduct enlargement. Whilst a normal breeding cycle is good and healthy, a breeding cycle blocked or locked part way through is psychologically and metabolically damaging.

In a research study recently carried out by this author, a range of species (psittacines and raptors), with clinical

signs which were consistent with sex hormone status, were implanted with the gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH) implant Suprelorin. Owners were required to assess and score their bird's behaviours on a fortnightly basis, immediately before and following implantation. Birds were also reassessed on a regular basis by the investigator. All birds involved were partial or complete imprint birds. The behavioural traits under investigation in raptors included, territorial aggression, unreliable temperament towards their handler, or other residents in the household. The trial results indicate that this treatment appears highly effective in these situations

Descriptors

		5	4	3	2	1
1	Territorial aggression	Constant	>1 a day	>1 every 3d	>1 a week	None
2	Aggression against keeper or family member	Constant	>1 a day	>1 every 3d	>1 a week	None
3	Regurgitation	Constant	>1 a day	>1 every 3d	>1 a week	None
4	Masturbation or cloacal prolapse	Constant	>1 a day	>1 every 3d	>1 a week	None
5	Argumentative or grumpy behaviour	Constant	>1 a day	>1 every 3d	>1 a week	None
6	Response to training	Impossible to train	Difficult >1 a day	Difficult >1 every 3d	Difficult >1 a week	No difficulties

Results

Patient			Descriptors											
			1		2		3		4		5		6	
			'0' relates to score at start, '2m' to score at 2 months											
Spp	Sex	Age(y)	0	2m	0	2m	0	2m	0	2m	0	2m	0	2m
Harris' hawk	F	13	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Harris' hawk	M	5	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1
Harris' hawk	F	6	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	3	1
Harris' hawk	F	9	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	3	1
Harris' hawk	F	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1
European eagle owl	F	5	5	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mexican striped owl	F	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tawny eagle	F	6	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1
Verreaux eagle	F	9	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Average	8F,1M	6.89	13.56	1.11	1.67	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.67	1.11	2.00	1.00

Percentage Changes

Territorial aggression	69 % reduction
Aggression against keeper or family member	40% reduction
Regurgitation	Not relevant
Masturbation or cloacal prolapse	Not relevant
Argumentative or grumpy behaviour	68% reduction
Response to training	50% improvement
Feather destructive behaviour	52% reduction
Overall change	50%



Discussion

It is important for the reader to appreciate that this was not a controlled trial (due to legal restraints placebo were not able to be used), the assessments were done predominantly by the owners (hence may not have been objective) and the number of birds involved in the trial was very small. Hormone changes are typically seasonal (less so in Harris' hawk), some reduction of signs might have been associated with the passing season, rather than therapy administered. Having said which, the over whelming response of the owners was that there was a noted behavioural change in the majority of birds which they found surprising and pleasing. Many birds who were previously reported to have been ill mannered and badly behaved (let alone the aggressive ones), were then a joy to live with. The trial re-enforces the dangers and potential ill effects of poorly imprinted birds. Whilst these results are purely anecdotal, they do add weight to the concept that the hand rearing of birds does in some birds result in deleterious psychological effects (in the birds), which may be related to hormone changes and 'breeder frustration'. This work reinforces the need for further detailed analytical and hormone assessment of such cases.

Side effects – no birds demonstrated any adverse side effects or illness within the 2 month period following implant insertion.

Recommendations

It is suggested that this implant may be useful in birds which, having been imprinted, then develop season territorial, or 'pair aggression' signs. It is interesting but not necessarily significant that the vast majority of effected birds placed on trial were female., No deleterious signs have been seen, nor was hunting performance effected. If you believe your bird might benefit, please discuss this in detail with your avian vet.



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The British Falconry and Raptor Fair

Sometimes time itself just seems to fly by and it is genuinely hard to believe that it's almost a year since the last Falconry Fair, which was held at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire, under the sponsorship of Kiezebrink UK Ltd. Everyone agreed that the change of venue was an unqualified success, but no matter where the Fair is held it is always compared to the days when it was staged at what has come to be considered its spiritual home, that is Althorp House in Northamptonshire. Well in December of last year the organisational team behind the staging of the Fair got the best possible news when they received the go ahead to bring the event back to Althorp. The unqualified enthusiastic reception of those either planning to exhibit at the event or attend the fair as customers speaks volumes regarding the decision to try and return to Althorp, where the Fair spent seven extremely happy years.

The organisers, under the umbrella of the event's generous sponsors, Kiezebrink UK Ltd, have pulled out all the stops to try and ensure that the return is a memorable one for all the right reasons. The flying displays in the main arena, which after all are the principal entertainment of the event, are going to be as many

and as varied as there has ever been at the Fair. Friends old and new will be putting on stunning displays and flying a real mixture of raptors for everyone to enjoy. The organisers have invited individuals and hawking clubs to participate as well as the almost mandatory appearance of the indomitable lady from Newent.

Jemima will be giving two displays each day and I am sure that, as always, her displays will be not only highly educational regarding raptors of all descriptions but also extremely entertaining. Other stalwarts of the event making an appearance in the arena each day will be members of The South East Falconry group under the chairmanship of Gary Biddis. The South East team always put that little bit extra into their displays and as often as not manage to come up with something a little different and a little out of the ordinary. Who can forget the Perlins stooping to the lure or the amazing little male Kestrel going up to the kite then stooping into the arena as the lure is rereleased electronically.

Others making a welcome return to the hub of the entertainment are Johnny Ames and his team from Eagle Heights. Last year they were a very big hit with the crowd and the combination of different raptors be-

ing flown together went down exceedingly well with the spectators, who are after all an extremely knowledgeable crowd when it comes to training and flying birds of prey. Eagle Heights used some species of raptors that are not often seen in displays and it has to be said all participants flew exceptionally well. Another group making a very welcome return are The Yorkshire Hawking Club under the leadership of their ever enthusiastic chairman Dale Johnson. The lads from Yorkshire will be giving their excellent demonstration on simulated rabbit hawking in the main arena and also a series of much smaller demos in the mini area throughout the day.

Also giving displays that are bound to go down well will be Nigel King from The Imperial Bird of Prey Academy in Essex and also Mike Hewlett from the locally based Icarus Falconry. Nigel has been a trainer of many different avian species for a very large number of years and is very well respected within the industry. Mike is something of a specialist at hunting with Eagles, particularly Black eagles and Bonelli's but at the Fair will probably be flying one or two of his self bred Barbary Falcons.

As well as seeing various hawks, falcons and eagles flying in the main





Kiezebrink UK Ltd Sponsors of the Fair

arena there will also be two weatherings at the Fair. One will be the normal weathering with a very varied selection of hawks and falcons on view and the second weathering will be purely for eagles. This particular weathering will have been organised and put together by well know eagle exponent Dr. David Fox. The weatherings themselves, with their valuable content, will be under the close scrutiny of The Northampton raptor Club. Members of the club will be on hand to assist with photographs where possible, help with questions but primarily look after the health and welfare of the raptors. This job has been carried out for the last few years by members of The Central raptor Club but with the move of venue back to Northampton it was felt it was a time for a change. The organisers would like to thank members of The Central Raptor Club for the su-

perb support and hard work they have willingly put in over the years.

The fair itself is well known for having a really good selection of falconry related trade stands as well as various clubs being in attendance. This year will be no exception and as well as our home grown exhibitors we expect quite a number from across the channel. Very popular amongst the various exhibits dotted around the arena and in the various avenues leading off of it are the artists portraying the falconry and wildlife works. Names such as Martyn Brook and Carl Bass as well as the sculptor Bill Prickett will once again have a mouth watering selection of original works for sale. Images of another kind will be displayed by wildlife photographer and long time friend of the Fair Steve Magennis.

The Falconry fair should have something for just about everyone that is

interested in Falconry and or birds of prey. But it shouldn't be forgotten that the event also has all the things you would expect to find at a Game and Country Fair. Main arena events in addition to the falconry displays will be Hounds with world expert Michael Sagar. Four legged canines of another description will be in the ring twice daily as Graham Watkins from Game Goer Gundogs gives displays of basic training with various breeds. The Northamptonshire Police Pipe band will be putting in an appearance each day and the swirl of the pipes is almost guaranteed to stir the blood.

There will also be an Antiques Fair, an Arts and Crafts marquee, a myriad of stall relating to country clothing and the like. There will be a shooting school, archery, sporting clay shoot, black powder shooting and air gunning. BASC will be running gundog events and there will also be dog agility trials. Add in Terriers and Lurchers, Plummer Terriers, Beagles, Ferrets and novelty dog shows and it is to be hoped our four legged friends are also well catered for.

Talking of catering the spectator and exhibitor alike will be well catered for with a tremendous selection of food and drink stands that should see most tastes amply cared for.

Children are not forgotten either with quad bikes, amusements, funfair and pony rides. There really will be something for everyone and ensure it is a real family day out and not just for the falconer. As in previous years parking is still completely free and admission is a modest £12.50 for adults and 5 for children with accompanied under 5's free. The show runs from 10am till 6pm each day with arena events starting at 11am. Dogs on leads are welcome. For more information visit the web site www.countryfairs.info or ring the show office on 01588-672708.



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The Falconry Festival, Al Ain (Part Two)

Bob Dalton



For those who were attending the festival and not working the whole time there were also several excursions that could be taken. These included The Falcon Hospital, a Houbara breeding centre and of course the Grand Mosque. Places were fairly limited on each of the trips but I think most of those who wanted to participate managed to do so to at least one of the destinations. Some of us working with the falcons at the festival were fortunate enough to have seen such things before and so missing them this time round was no hardship.

Far more important from a falconer's point of view was to be given one of the extremely limited and precious places on one of the hunting forays that had been organised. These were to be carried out in the tradi-

tional manner, which is from the back of a Camel accompanied by several outriders as opposed to hunting from four wheel drive vehicles. The horseman acted as scouts and trackers for the quarry, which was to be Desert Hare and Houbara Bustard. The hunting would take place in a relatively small area of what was a vast private preserve belonging to the ruling family. This preserve, of some twenty-five thousand acres, had been fenced off and for the last quarter of a century the population of Hare and Houbara, and more importantly the vegetation that offers food and shade, had been left to increase and find a natural level.

Now for a period of four days small parties, limited in numbers and kept to highly restricted but accessible areas, would see just how falconry

used to be carried out in what was previously known as the Trucial States. The point of the exercise, to me at least, seemed to be twofold. Firstly it showed the modern falconer just how things used to be done but, perhaps more importantly; it showed how even in this day and age a form of sustainable hawking is not only highly enjoyable but totally practical. Superb hawking without numbers of quarry being killed reaching unacceptable numbers and causing unnecessary pressure on the wild populations.

My own particular experience of traditional hunting took place in the late afternoon of my first full day at desert camp. I joined a small select group at the stables where both Camels and Horses were housed. We were all mounted relatively quickly and then



we set off in single file following our three horse mounted outriders. Once away from the bustle of desert camp the horse riders fanned out and started looking for tracks. Several times signs were spotted and the excitement level grew but each time it ended in the anti climax of nothing being found. The falconer himself was mounted on a Camel and his Peregrine Falcon sat hooded on the back of the Camel. It was purely a case of good fortune for me that our falcon was indeed a pure Peregrine. I was hoping to see hawking as it used to be and consequently wanted if possible to witness flights with either Saker or Peregrine, not one of the myriad of hybrids that were so blatantly abundant. As we traversed the gently undulating dunes on our Camels it was easy to see why so many great travel writers over the years have fallen in love with the solitude and cleanliness of the pure desert. With the vast shifting dunes spread out all around you it became quite easy to lose any sense of time and, to a certain degree, direction.

I was awoken from my deep contemplation regarding the desert by another bout of extremely animated excitement. Hare tracks had been spotted leading into a very small

patch of scrub and no tracks could be found leading back out again. Consequently the falconer readied his falcon, a pure female Peregrine, and one of the riders moved forward to flush the Hare from its hiding place. Within seconds a Hare did indeed break cover and was off over the dunes like a scalded cat. The falcon reacted instantly and was off the fist and in pursuit instantly. Let me state categorically that the Desert hare is a puny creature when compared to a European Hare or an American Jack Rabbit. It is far more in keeping with what most would consider a rabbit just that it comes equipped with large ears to dissipate the heat and long back legs like a hare to give grip and power when

running over the sand. The Hare quickly opened up quite a large gap between itself and the pursuing Peregrine Falcon but the open nature of the surrounding environment was always going to favour the falcon and gradually she reeled the Hare back in again.

This was a straight pursuit flight and the Peregrine struck the Hare an extremely forceful blow when she had eventually overhauled him. I was some hundred and thirty yards or so away and I could very clearly hear the blow. The falcon threw up and dived again and repeated the tactic and struck the Hare again. The Hare then made the temporary safety of a small patch of scrub but was very soon evicted again by one of the out-





riders. The Falcon meanwhile had gone up to around eighty feet or so and was watching intently obviously anticipating the re-flush. When the Hare broke from cover again the falcon stooped and struck him again and indeed twice more before deeming him sufficiently knocked about and weakened to make it worthwhile binding to him.

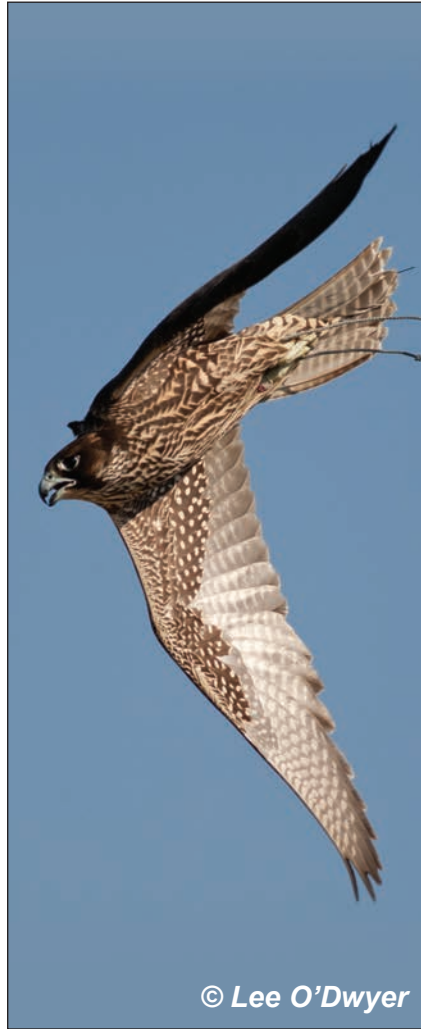
The falconer who had slipped the Peregrine was quickly down from his Camel and applied the coup de grace to the Hare. The falcon was rewarded with warm blood from her kill and just a little meat as she would be flown again if we came across suitable quarry on our journey back to desert camp. As she feed her Arab style leash and swivel system were

re-fitted to her jesses and she was then tied to the Mangala. Once safely secured the Hare was slowly but surely covered over with sand by the falconer so as to make the Peregrine think her quarry had gone and accordingly she could be taken back up again without any fuss or bother. Once back on the Mangala and hooded up then the Hare was recov-



ered from the sand and placed into the falconer's bag. The flight, from a European perspective, had been a very interesting one and certainly one that those in our party who have never been hawking in the desert before were glad to have witnessed first hand.

Each culture has its own set of values and styles when it comes to hawking and hunting ground game with a longwing is not, it has to be said, what I would ever deliberately undertake. I did have a large Peregrine Falcon that many years ago used to account for quite a number of Blue Hares whilst out hawking on the Scottish moors. But these flights were initiated by her not me. I would have a point on Grouse and whilst walking round to head the point would accidentally put up a Blue Hare which she would then fly with gusto. This same falcon also took a small number of Brown Hares when flown back down south but again the



flights were always accidental, not deliberate slips on my part.

I know that a couple of people in the hunting party I was with in the desert felt that when the Hare had made the safety of a patch of cover the sporting thing to do would have been to leave it be and look for something else. But it should be remembered that quarry in Arabia tends to be relatively scarce and in the case of this particular Hare the first two blows from the falcon had probably inflicted quite serious damage upon it and was kinder to finish the hunt than leave the Hare to its injuries.

After a successful conclusion to our hunt we slowly made our way back to desert camp arriving well after dark. From a purely personal point of view I have to say I have never been so glad to get down from an animal in all my life. All my previous excursions on a Camel had been on animals equipped with a rudimentary saddle. On this occasion we had a



blanket of dubious hygiene and a rope around the animal's girth to hang onto. My groin area had been battered for the entire duration of the trip and I am sure I ended the journey with my testicles back up inside me like a pre-pubescent teenager. I got onto the Camel a man and got off unsure. The next day one of the options for lunch just happened to be Camel with rice. I opted for this selection and sincerely hoped I was eating the animal that had acted as my hunting companion the day previously.

The rest of the early part of the festival I was working on the falcon

falconers from such diverse places as Spain, France, and Belgium, right through to Argentina, Afghanistan, Uruguay and Namibia. The list of countries seemed endless, but one thing all the nation representatives had in common was their sense of commitment to the event and their joy at being able to participate.

Several things about the desert camp experience were relatively unique and, for me at least, something really rather special. The sense of camaraderie and being of one purpose amongst not only those working at the camp but also those visiting it was a very real and tangible

aged to meet up with the likes of Paul Willcock from Australia, who I have chatted to on e-mail and is a falconer I have a very high regard for and bumped into Steve Chindgren again, a falconer whom I haven't seen face to face for almost twenty years. It was almost like "This is your falconry Life" in a highly compressed and specialised form. Overall it was a wonderful experience and one to be savoured and remembered forever.

On the Wednesday, which was the fourth day of the official event, it was time for the desert camp and all its inhabitants, both avian and human,



weathering manning and feeding falcons and answering questions from the myriad of visitors that descended on the camp daily. The difference here to most occasions when you man a weathering that comes into contact with the public is that everyone that stopped to talk was either a falconer or someone with a very good working knowledge of falconry. Different languages didn't seem to present much of a barrier with gestures seeming to make up for the short fall in linguistics. I spoke with

thing. Every single person that I had the pleasure of working alongside or just talking to about hawks and hawking gave off an air of being in something of a special place at a special time. We all seemed to feel we were part of a truly memorable occasion, which even if repeated, will remain a unique experience. It was so nice to renew acquaintanceships with friends old and new and to be able to put faces to names that have only been seen in books and articles or in e-mails. I finally man-

to be moved to the site of the Jahili Fort in Al Ain. It was here that the general public would get to see and participate in the Festival over the following three days. The move was theoretically quite straight forward but in actual fact proved anything but. Also once on site at the fort it was soon realised that there was a very real and dangerous threat to the tethered falcons and small hawks in the form of feral cats which simply teemed in numbers around the site. They had absolutely no fear of hu-

mans and almost immediately, despite the presence of quite a large number of falconers, launched an attack on the Shikra and Merlins as they sat on their perches. In fact only the lightning quick reactions of one individual falconer saved the Shikra from being a cat snack. There was nothing for it but to put all the small hawks into a couple of the Tepees that had been proved for the North American and Canadian delegations and for these to be guarded till everyone gathered again the following morning.

It has to be said that those responsible for the day to day organisation and running of the event acted quickly with cat proof fencing being erected around all three of the weatherings before nightfall descended the following evening. In spite of this it was decided that in the case of the falcon weathering at least safety would be better served by having a watch made up of three falconers keeping an eye on things during the hours of darkness. With three people on watch it was possible for one of the party to take a turn at sleeping whilst two remained awake and vigilante. At least now the falcons were safe at night from the attentions of the local feral cat population.

However the cat problem was soon replaced by another equally unwelcome form of local pest, children. It seems it is common practice for small children to be up and around until the early hours of the morning and from around eight in the evening till perhaps as late as one in the morning the unwanted attentions of delightful children armed with sticks and stones were the main cause of concern amongst those whose duty it was to keep the falcons safe. I don't think the children meant any particular harm to the falcons it is just that as the falcons were hooded they didn't tend to move much. They



Ben Stevens © Lee O'Dwyer



Carlos Rojo from Mexico



Emirates delegation



Noel Hyde from New Zealand

could probably be persuaded to move more if you prodded them with a stick or hit them with a stone. The parents of these delightful little treasures just looked on with amusement as the watchers did their best to dissuade the children from hitting the falcons without being responsible for a major incident.

The Thursday was really for the local school children to enjoy all the sights and sounds of the event without the mass crush of the expected crowds that would surely descend on Friday and Saturday. Plenty of extra activities had been laid on for their benefit and judging by the smiling faces I saw they certainly enjoyed themselves. Thursday was also dress rehearsal day for all those giving flying displays in the main arena. Which also meant that those of us manning the falcon weathering also got a dry run for our task of handing out and taking back in again all the falcons to be used in the arena displays by the different nations. I don't really think that any of us had a true idea of just how hectic and full on this task was

going to be and if rehearsal day was anything to go the following two days were going to be busier than any of us had anticipated to say the least.

The two days of public displays went exceedingly well with no major incidents to report and the watching crowds being enthralled more or less all day each day. For most of us falconers watching from the weathering

the highlight for us, certainly for me, was a Prairie falcon being stooped to the lure by American Falconer Oscar Pack. This was quite early on in the day and the story behind the Prairie is quite interesting. She was bred in Scotland and sent down to IWC in Wales where she was manned and trained by Diana Durman-Walters. From Wales, "Wicked" as the Prairie had been named by Diana was shipped to Abu Dhabi where she subsequently exercised by Oscar as they got to know each other in readiness for their joint arena appearance.

On rehearsal day the prairie flew in copy book style chasing the lure, turning when called, and eventually coming in to the lure instantly when the signal was given. On the first day of the event proper, in front of the crowd and very important Arabian dignitaries, the Prairie Falcon decided it was better suited to chasing and stooping at pigeons that had gathered around the cooling tower of a nearby hospital. The good thing was that the hospital cooling was in full view of everyone and so all were treated to some real falconry for a while. Time and time again we would see the Prairie put in a short stop



George Bristol from California



Korean delegation



Sang Hyun Park seems to have enjoyed himself

followed by a powerful throw up. Eventually she tired of the game and, as if nothing at all out of the ordinary had happened, returned obediently to the proffered lure. To be fair and give full credit to Oscar he never wavered from quietly swinging the lure and convincing everyone around him that the falcon would most definitely come back given time.

Whilst mentioning displays the British contingent conducted themselves well and the Yorkshire Hawking Club in particular approached the whole event with unbridled enthusiasm which was contagious to anyone with a pulse. Special mention needs to be made of Ben Stevens who was an absolute credit not only to his club and country as well as the Festival itself but also to the future of falconry. Here is a young man who eats breathes and lives falconry but is only interested in doing things exactly as they should be done. His enthusiasm is boundless and he conducts himself in a way which is a true credit to his parents.

Whilst on the subject of plaudits mention should be made of Welsh Hawking Club stalwarts Dave and Jean Dimond who are enjoying the other end of life's spectrum when compared to young Ben. Despite, and I hope they won't mind me saying this, their advancing years they embraced every available facet of the festival and even were out hawk-

ing from the back of a Camel along with those far younger than themselves. Their attitude and general good will to all and sundry does them proud and The Welsh Hawking Club should be honoured, in my opinion, to have such well respected ambassadors.

Whilst the two public days of the Festival were on with displays at the fort as well as all the different country tents and other attractions there were also a series of conferences at a major hotel just across the road. Here there were three different halls all hosting a series of seminars all day. The problem with such a packed itinerary is that for someone like me it just wasn't possible to get to see anything like I would have chosen to. In fact of all the mass of talks and seminars being held the one I wanted to see most of all was being given

at exactly the same time as I was giving mine in the hall next door.

The festival holds many exceptionally good memories for me. Meeting Dr. Ken Riddle and being given a copy of his magnificent book in which he was kind enough to write a very personal and meaningful inscription. Meeting up with old friends Steve Duffy and Steve Sherrod from the States, Carlos Rojo from Mexico, Roger Upton and Dale Johnson from England as well as new friends and putting a face to people known only through e-mail or face book. The likes of Malik Usman Sarwar Awan the talented falconer and photographer from Pakistan. But perhaps the final word is best left to Paul Willcock the Australian falconer. He thought the event was wonderful because "After all we are all brothers under the Hood".



Turkmenistan delegation



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Affordable Quality

I recently had reason to purchase some new hawk travelling boxes and to that end spoke to several friends to find out what make they were using, if they were satisfied with them and if so where they had obtained them. The same name repeatedly came to the fore, that of Falcon Fabrication run by Martin Underwood. According to my friends his products were well constructed from quality materials and yet still remained very reasonably priced. The clincher for me was that the four people I spoke with regarding the products all stated how good the service had been when placing an order. Consequently I got on the phone to Martin and ordered a large triple box that would comfortably house a female Harris Hawk, a Jerkin and a Peregrine Falcon in complete and utter safety when travelling to and from the flying grounds.

Two working days later my securely packaged box was delivered. So without doubt the quality of service was there but what about the box itself. When viewing a product on the internet it can, on occasion, be difficult to get an accurate assessment of just how good, or not, a product may be. The first thing that struck me, on having unwrapped my new box, was the very positive overall appearance. Then on closer examination I began to appreciate the sturdiness of the build and the quality of materials used. The hinges, catches and carrying handles are all of durable material and construction and will obviously give years of service, as well as this they are aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The main body of the box itself is made from black plastic and accordingly is easy to wipe down and keep clean. Such is the quality of the product that the body of the box comes with a life time guarantee.



Single box



Double box

The particular box I ordered, a large triple, came in at 25 inches tall, 42 inches wide and 21 inches deep with an overall weight of 16 kilograms. Light enough to easily move around when required but sturdy enough to give peace of mind. It also includes all the refinements that have been added through customer feedback and personal experience. These include a solid moulded rubber perch, covered front and rear vents, lay flat carrying handle, recessed floor for stability and a drain plug to aid cleaning. One particularly nice touch is the fact that the internal surfaces of the box are now matt black to reduce reflection. It is this sort of attention to detail that makes these boxes such a user friendly product, not just to the falconer but also to the hawk or falcon being transported in them.

Probably the single most important factor relating to these boxes is that they are made of plastic and not wood. Wooden travelling boxes are potential time bombs when it comes to the health of the falcon or hawk being transported in them. Aspergillosis is a killer of hawks and falcons and is basically a fungal spore which attacks the Trachea and air sacks. The spores themselves can be produced by decaying wood and wooden travelling boxes are the perfect host for harbouring the spores. Ironically the more you wash and scrub a wooden box in the hopes of getting it clean the damper you are making it and thereby helping to accelerate the production of spores. No matter many coats of varnish the wood is subjected to it will by its very nature gradually decay and scratches in the surface will allow water to start to decay process. Plastic is the safest material from which to construct travelling boxes and wooden ones should quite simply be burnt.

Falcon Fabrication make a very wide range of travelling boxes, additional-

ly they also make cages and shelf perches from the same material as well. Whether you require a box for a Kestrel or a Golden Eagle they are able and willing to help. They also produce combination boxes for hawks and dogs in a range of sizes. It goes without saying that they also can produce more or less any combination of size or specification to special order.

My own personal experience in dealing with Falcon Fabrication and the product I received from them is that I would whole heartedly recommend both without any hesitation. I brought quality and peace of mind at a very affordable price. For more information on their range of products you can visit their web site at www.falconfabrication.co.uk or phone 01782-396054.



Triple box



Removable shelf

Texas Hawking Association Field Meet 2012 (Part One)

Bob Dalton

Early January saw me heading off once again to the airport to catch a flight to Houston with my eventual destination being the city of Abilene Texas for the field meeting held there each year by my good friends of The Texas Hawking association. The meet is a four day affair but falconers normally start to gather there a day or two before hand and there is generally some good hawking to be seen. I like to go even earlier than that and slowly wind my way across Texas taking in various places where I can either visit with falconer friends and hawk with them or go to places that are good for spotting wild birds of prey. I can say unreservedly that this particular annual meet is an exceptionally friendly one and welcomes newcomers and repeated visitors with open arms.

Without doubt number one amongst the places for watching wild hawks is the Attwater Prairie Chicken Reserve some ten miles out of Sealy. Now I say Prairie Chicken Reserve and that indeed is what the place is listed as in the tour guides and the local government list of visitor attractions. However I have been there ten times now and spotted all manner of birds of prey as well as various ducks, waders, passerines, even a small herd of Bison. In all my visits I have not had so much as a momentary glimpse of an incredibly elusive Prairie Chicken. To be fair, according to the rangers at the reserve the severe draught this year had a catastrophic affect on the breeding of Prairie Chickens on the site this season and only one youngster was raised in comparison with fifty seven the year before.

This year when I touched down in Houston I was immediately struck by the intense heat and very high humidity. Having found a motel I decided to visit the Attwater Reserve the following day. As it happens plans for the following day were thrown into something of a mess by the intense heat and humidity being followed through the night by the tail end of a severe tropical storm. I have never experienced rain like it and it obviously the weather conditions took this particular part of Texas by surprise as well with things coming practically to a standstill. By lunch-time conditions had lightened a little and I decided to head out to Attwater anyway and see if there were any hawks around. The roads through the reserve are dirt roads and so I knew it was unlikely that the reserve itself would be open but the sur-



Caracars at Attwater



Attwater

rounding area was still a very good one for spotting raptors.

The relatively short drive, at least by American standards, confirmed my thoughts that the reserve itself was closed to traffic. But close to the entrance I saw a White Tailed Hawk and a Red Tailed Hawk engaged in a little territorial battle and their tussle was being overseen by an immature Bald Eagle. Within the next couple of hours I had seen Caracaras, more White and Red Tailed Hawks, a Zone Hawk, American Kestrels, an Anatum Peregrine Falcon, Marsh Harriers, Black and Turkey Vultures as well as a Ferruginous Hawk. So for raptor spotting it was a very good afternoon, which is more than can be said for photographic opportunities. With the tail end effects of the storm still present the light was very poor and headlights were needed for driving the whole time, so decent photography was simply out of the question.



Joe Philabaum, Diana Durman-Walters and Chuck Redding with Cisco

Glorious passage Tundra Falcon belonging to Dave Whitton



The following day, which dawned bright and sunny, plans had been made to meet up with my good friend Chuck Redding and go hawking with him and his intermewed male passage Red Tailed Hawk "Cisco". But Chucks work interfered with these plans and so I switched to going back to Attwater in the morning and heading off to Waco in the afternoon. Apparently on the road to Waco were many wildlife spotting opportunities. The drainage on the road system at Attwater is excellent and having called in at the Rangers post to ensure all was in order I set off round the reserve. There really is a wide variety of wildlife to be seen on the reserve but you do have to look for it. It isn't in your face and screaming to be observed. You have to drive round slowly, constantly stopping to check out likely spots and take your time before moving on again.

Driving round slowly and carefully looking for wildlife always reminds me of when I was in a park in South Africa many years ago and was watching a lioness that had just killed a Zebra foal and was dragging it under a tree to eat. As she struggled to get the foal into the shade the vultures and Tawny Eagles were already gathering in the tree above her. As my companion and I watched her a group of European tourists pulled up alongside us in a VW camper bus and asked us if we had seen anything as they had been driving around all morning and seen nothing yet, However less than thirty yards from them a typical African drama was unfolding in front of their eyes and they were totally unaware of it. Rather unkindly my companion and I answered in the negative and they roared off again at full speed still looking for their little piece of genuine African wildlife drama. If you want to see nature you have to look for it, it doesn't normally come knocking and looking for you.



Passage Tundra



Kirk Williams

With our slow drive around Attwater we saw many birds of prey, ducks, waders, herons, egrets, terrapins, snakes even a group of Sandhill Cranes and a lone Coyote stalking them, unsuccessfully it should be added. I don't know enough about snakes to tell what species they were but certainly both snakes were very different to each other so my companion and I assumed they were two different types. Having thoroughly enjoyed our wildlife spotting and a little photography due to the improved light it was time to head on out to Waco. The Waco trip was indeed excellent and amongst the many birds of prey we saw we could also add an adult female Prairie Falcon to our list. These really are one of my all time favourite falcons and if I lived in the States I would certainly fly one. They are tenacious hard hitting falcons that generally have no fear and will tackle almost anything. Those that I have flown in the UK, generally at rooks, have proved to be very successful hunting falcons.

After an overnight stay in Waco it was time for the final push to Abilene

and the THA field meet. Having checked in at the Whitten Inn Motel, the base for the meet, I was fortunate enough to bump into Kirk Williams, a falconer from Chicago who had driven down in one hit for the meet. I had been fortunate enough to have had the privilege of going out hawking with Kirk the previous year and had thoroughly enjoyed his company and the flight he had with his intermewed anatum Peregrine. He was chatting to another falconer who was weathering his falcon on a small patch of grass. It was immediately obvious from her demeanour and colouration that this falcon was a passage Tundra and it had to be one of the ten that had been allocated under licence to falconers in Texas.

Kirk introduced me to the falconer with the Tundra, Dave Whitton, and my companion and I were invited to tag along as they went to try and find some ducks to fly the falcon at. The invitation was eagerly accepted and we drove off in search of a suitable slip for the falcon. A splash of water literally right beside the road held a small party of ducks, some six or

seven in number. Despite the proximity of limited traffic Dave decided it was flyable and readied his passage falcon. Soon she was in the air and whilst Dave watched his falcon climb and fight the very strong winds to get back overhead he himself moved round so as to be in the right position when the flush was required. Kirk, my companion and I stayed where we were so as not to prematurely flush the ducks by accident. Anyway from where we stood we had a grandstand seat to the whole drama as it unfolded before us. The falcon eventually got into a position where a flush was acceptable and Dave rushed forward to get the ducks to rise from the small splash of water. The ducks lifted on cue but then one thought it was better to be in the water than off of it and splashed back down. The falcon came powering in and grabbed the duck. In the ensuing melee somehow the duck managed to shake off the falcon and made off low and fast. The falcon picked itself up and was off in pursuit in a matter of seconds. There were a few heart in the mouth moments as the falcon and duck crossed three separate roads with traffic on before the duck eventually made the safety of a large area of water. The falcon, despite losing her quarry and having to fight tremendously strong winds made her way back obediently to the lure. It had been a slip that only someone extremely confident in their falcon's obedience and capabilities would have undertaken.

The following day we were again invited to Join Dave and Kirk as they went out in search of flights for their falcons. Dave just had his passage Tundra Falcon but Kirk had an intermewed eyass anatum Falcon and also an intermewed Gyr/Peregrine hybrid tiercel. We had to stop at the sporting section of the local Wal-Mart store so as Kirk could buy an out of state hunting licence. Whilst in the

store we seemed to acquire another falconer who also had a passage Tundra Falcon along with another unidentified falcon in his car. We never got to see what it was a neither falcon came out of the car during the course of our days hunting. Having left the store we drove for around an hour to reach an area that was well populated with duck ponds that we were allowed to hunt but in the course of the drive the wind had become really strong with some exceptionally fierce gusts at times.

We found several ponds, on which we would expect to fly ducks; unfortunately however all were for some reason or other devoid of any bird life. The ponds we did find with ducks on tended to be those with vegetation around them, presumably offering a little protection from the driving wind that had now reached a very strong level. Some of these ponds were adjacent to wire fences which made them out of the question from a safety point of view. If the fences had been clearly out in the open then you could reasonably expect that the falcon would see them and deal with them accordingly. But some of the fence line ran through the bushes and scrub that surrounded some of the ponds. It would just be too risky to sensibly fly a falcon in such circumstances. It took a considerable amount of searching to find a pond, or stock tank as they are known locally, that had some ducks on it and was in a flyable place.

Dave was first up with his passage Tundra. The wind by now seemed even stronger and as the falcon was unhooded and allowed to take to the air it made you realise just how confident Dave must have been in the obedience of his falcon. Relatively newly taken passage falcons are not exactly known for their loyalty, especially when weather conditions are actually making it difficult for them to

come back over the head of the falconer. However the falcon did manage to mount and, despite struggling a little with the conditions, came back overhead. The falcon certainly intimidated the ducks and they would simply not lift and go from the protection of the water. On attempting to flush them the ducks would simply lift, go to the other side of the pond and splash back down again. This was repeated several times until a point was reached where the falcon had drifted quite a way out of position and at this opportune moment the ducks decided that now was a good time to depart. The passage falcon hacked across the sky in an attempt to get on terms with them but realistically it was very much a lost cause. The falcon was taken down to the lure and we moved on in search of another flight, this time for Kirk's intermewed anatum falcon.

We drove on and after what seemed like an age, but in reality probably only around forty minutes, we found

another set up that could be flown. It was very far from ideal and there were a couple of fences that ran a little too close for comfort to the pond but Kirk decided to fly it anyway. His anatum is a very strong and exceedingly experienced falcon and I had enjoyed the pleasure of seeing her hunt the previous season. She was very switched on to duck hunting and had her own style of pinning the ducks down. When she left the fist she would deliberately go off down wind and mount quite quickly in relatively tight circles. She would not come back across the pond until her height was sufficient to stop the ducks from flushing prematurely.

The wind was now at such a pitch that even an experienced falcon like this was getting buffeted around and she was finding it difficult to maintain station without losing either height or position. Attempts to flush the ducks on cue were failing miserably and they were either lifting and then dropping straight back in or the odd



lone duck would make good its escape when the falcon was out of position. The falcon would see the unsporting ducks depart and try hard to get on terms with them but it was an impossible task. Eventually one duck did lift when the falcon was almost in the right position and she put in a fabulous stoop in an effort to get it. But a clump of small bushes acted as saviour for the duck. As the falcon threw up into the wind and then was buffeted accordingly, the duck made off low over the ground as fast as it could. So once again another flight ended with the falcon being taken down to the lure. In both cases disappointment from the point of view of the falconer as to the outcome, but I should imagine immense pride in how well they flew. As the falcon was being put away in the truck some Quail were spotted a couple of hundred yards away crossing a dirt road into an area of small trees and scrub. As a group we immediately repositioned ourselves and Kirk readied his intermewed male Gyr/Peregrine hybrid. Once ready the hybrid was unhooded and allowed to take to the wing in his own time. Once the falcon was airborne Kirk ran his Pointer and pretty soon the dog had found and pointed the Quail. The wind was as

strong as ever and the hybrid struggled to maintain a position overhead. The Quail were creeping and the Pointer was staying with them but it was obvious that they were going to burst at the most appropriate moment for their own preservation. This is precisely what happened when the hybrid was blown slightly out of position. The Quail literally burst like a star shot with individual members of the covey going every which way. Despite being out of position the hybrid stooped and closed the gap on one of the fleeing Quail at such a rate it seemed it was a done deal and the first positive result of the day was about to happen. But just as the falcon seemed to merge with the Quail the game bird dropped to the ground, bounced and scrambled to cover before the falcon could throw up and reposition itself.

The good thing was that the Quail had been accurately marked down by the rest of the party and whilst the hybrid circled looking for its lost dinner we were able to tell Kirk exactly where Quail was. The patch of cover it had managed to take refuge in stood alone and if the Quail were to leave it then it would not be possible for it to do so without one of us seeing it. Unfortunately none of us had

allowed for the extra person we seemed to have picked up at Wal-Mart. This person had a Pointer pup with him and for some unknown reason, despite the fact we were in the middle of a flight, decided now was a good time and opportunity to do some training with him. With the eager pup on a lead he approached the Quail from totally the wrong direction, with regard to the wind, and accordingly the Quail broke almost instantly. It goes without saying that at this moment in time the hybrid male was out of position and facing away from the action. The hybrid was somewhat reluctantly taken down to the lure having been robbed of the opportunity to take quarry by the thoughtless actions of another individual. Once back on the fist the hybrid male was fed up for the day. What a shame and wasted opportunity. It has to be said Kirk Williams showed great restraint and merely moved on with the day. Personally I would have been very tempted to see if the gentleman concerned could float when introduced first hand to the water of a stock pond.

Next up was Dave Whitton again with is passage Tundra. After much searching of the back roads we eventually found a decent stock tank



Gyr x Peregrine Hybrid Tiercel

with around twenty ducks on it. The pond was almost ideally situated and there was not a fence to be seen for quite a distance. Initially things were looking good and perhaps now we would get a decent flush and see what the passage falcon could do. The falcon was allowed to take off in her own time and went off a little way and started to gain height. The only cover for a good distance in any direction was a small tree, devoid of any leaves, about two hundred yards from the pond. As the falcon was making her pitch a pigeon came from nowhere and landed in the tree. Needless to say this instantly attracted the attention of the falcon and she started putting in passes at the tree in an effort to get it to move.

The pigeon kept its nerve for a while and then suddenly decided to make a break for it. The falcon reacted immediately and gave chase and then continued to course that pigeon across the sky for what seemed like an age. Eventually the falcon broke off and started to return to the area of the pond. In all the fun she hadn't lost much of her pitch and so we looked on again for a decent flight. But the pigeon obviously felt a close infinity with the ducks, and despite being safe and completely in the clear, decided to follow the falcon back and sit in the tree again. The falcon spotted this and started to make passes at the tree again. Once more the pigeon chose its moment to make a break for it and the aerial battle resumed. The chase went backwards and forwards across the sky until eventually both participants were lost from sight. We waited several minutes to see if the falcon would return and then it was out with the telemetry and off we go in search of her. It turned out she wasn't too far away, just a couple of miles as the crow flies, but considerably longer when you are going round by road. We found the falcon, sitting on the



Turkey Vulture



Diana with John Graham, ex president THA

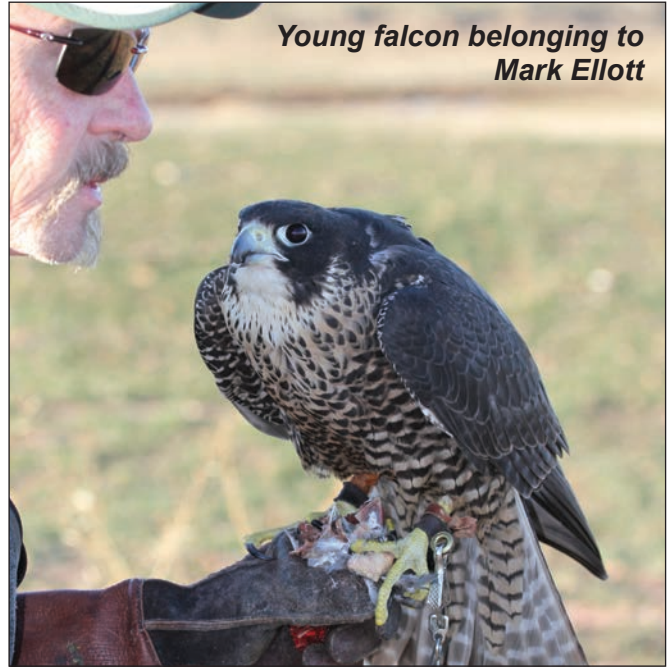
ground, and she obediently came into the lure on its production. Sitting on the ground is, of course, not unusual for a Tundra Peregrine, but seems so strange and almost alien to the eye of a falconer. Dave decid-

ed to feed her up at that point and ensure she was ready for flying again the following morning.

It was decided to go and try somewhere else and see if was possible to get a decent slip for Kirk's anatum,



Mark Elliott with Tiercel



Young falcon belonging to Mark Elliott

the other side of Abilene was the option chosen, and accordingly our small convoy headed off in that direction. I had some hire car issues that needed to be resolved and so would have to miss out on the afternoons sport. But if anything the wind actually got stronger so I don't even know if further flying would have been possible that afternoon.

The following day my companion and I were standing by the weathering area chatting to different falconers and Mark Elliott, who had kindly taken us out on least one day on each of our previous years visits to THA field meets, invited us to join him for the afternoon. He had a falcon and a tiercel that were both originally other people's problem falcons that he was endeavouring to straighten out. The falcons were both Peregrines but of mixed parentage. The tiercel was a Peregrine Anatum crossed with a Peales' and the falcon was a Peregrine Anatum crossed with a Macropus. For someone like me that considers the Peregrine Falcon the ultimate predator all this crossing and hybridising, even within species, seems such a waste and so totally unnecessary dilution of the real thing. Why water down what is as near perfect as you can get. But

that is just my personal opinion and if others think differently, which I am sure the majority do, then so be it.

Ducks would again be the intended quarry for the afternoon and at least the strength of the wind was nowhere near as fierce as it had been the day before. It was still strong but perfectly flyable, in fact it was at a strength I would find positively advantageous when flying my own falcons back home. The problem we had was that finding ducks in good set ups was getting difficult; the more so now that additional falconers had arrived at the meet. So many more people chasing so little quarry on a limited number of stock ponds was always going to be difficult. The perennial problem for the organisers of any large scale field meet I suppose. Especially one were falconers go off and hunt primarily as individuals as opposed to small organised parties.

We duly set off with Mark after lunch and drove for just over an hour to reach the first of a series of stock tanks he thought likely to hold quarry. Whilst still spying the pond with binoculars another vehicle approached from the distance and it turned out to be the falconer from yesterday that had latched onto our



A resident looks on

small party, ruined one flight and not actually flown anything himself. The basic civilities were exchanged during the course of which it was established he had already checked out several of the ponds we intended to move onto as the afternoon progressed. Accordingly, once he had departed, we had a rethink as to where we were going and made a couple of phone calls to affirm that our intended destination was probably going to be a worthwhile one. With a positive reaction received the GPS was brought into play and we drove for around another forty minutes and eventually came across a series of ponds.

To be continued..

The Return of Pure Wild Blood from Finland

Dave and Andy Margereson

We first started to fly Goshawks from the beginning to the mid nineteen eighties, previous to that we had flown a range of different raptors including Sparrowhawks, Merlins, Kestrels and Buzzards. This was until we met the late Eric Furniss from Derbyshire who invited us to go hunting with him and his Finnish Goshawk. We were utterly amazed at this male hawk, the size, temperament and hunting ability made us decide we wanted for ourselves.

Eric advised us to buy one from John Shaw in Derbyshire who bred Finnish Goshawks; accordingly we purchased a female from him. We then had many years of happy hunting with this hawk and decided to purchase a male Finnish Goshawk from Cliff Bramall of Northampton to pair up with our female and hopefully breed with them. We successfully bred with this pair for several years until one unfortunate day where the female killed the male.

After several attempts the male was replaced with a so called "Finnish" hawk from a reputable breeder. However the off spring were of no comparison in either size or temperament to the original pair, which we knew were of pure Finnish origin. After a lot of disappointment, and a discussion with friends over a few beers, we decided to try and obtain pure Finnish birds directly from Finland. We contacted the Finnish embassy in London, who gave us the telephone number of the Finnish Environment Institute in Helsinki, and this is the point at which our journey began.

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

Our next step was to enquire if we could get any injured birds, which was also not possible as they were not kept if they were too injured to possibly return to the wild in the future. This went on from 1997 with constant letters and telephone calls trying to get through an extremely difficult language barrier until we met a Finnish gentleman, who later became a very good friend, and was working for an oil treatment company which we were testing oil for. After discussing the situation with him he offered to try and help with the com-

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY		CERTIFICATE		No.
1. Issuer Andrew Margereson [REDACTED] GREAT BRITAIN		Not for use outside the European Community		FI 02-167
2. Authorized location for the wild-taken specimens of Annex A species		Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1806/2001 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein		
ORIGINAL	3. Issuing Management Authority Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) Nature Division P.O. Box 140 Helsinki, FINLAND Telephone +358 9 4030 00 Telefax +358 9 4030 0791 E-mail: CITES@ymparisto.fi		5. Net mass (g)	
	4. Description of specimens (incl. marks, sex/date of birth for live animals) Live birds / Elävää lintua LIV		6. Quantity 10	
7. CITES Appendix II		8. EC Annex A		9. Source W
10. Country of origin Finland / Suomi		11. Permit No.		12. Date of issue
13. Scientific name of species Accipiter gentilis		13. Member State of import		
14. Common name of species Goshawk / Kanahaukka		14. Document No.		15. Date of issue
16. It is hereby certified that the specimens described above:				
1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> were taken from the wild in accordance with the legislation in force in the issuing Member State				
2. <input type="checkbox"/> are abandoned or escaped specimens that were recovered in accordance with the legislation in force in the issuing Member State				
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4. <input type="checkbox"/> were acquired in or introduced into the Community in compliance with the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97				
5. <input type="checkbox"/> were acquired in or introduced into the Community before 1 June 1987 in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No 3626/83				
6. <input type="checkbox"/> were acquired in or introduced into the Community before 1 January 1984 in compliance with the provisions of CITES				
7. <input type="checkbox"/> were acquired in or introduced into the issuing Member State before the provisions of the Regulations under 4 and 5 or of CITES became applicable in this territory				
8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are to be used for the advancement of science/breeding or propagation/research or education or other non-commercial purposes				
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20. Special conditions Only for reintroduction to nature				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> certificate valid only if accompanied by a permit issued in box 1 (issued under Article 20.3 (a) or Article 30 of Regulation 1806/2001)				
		Helsinki 8.10.2002 Place and date		
		Guy Söderman, Division Manager Signature and stamp		

munication barrier and took on the project for us with regards to the Finnish Environment Institute. He discovered that they were still trapping Goshawks on a movement license in Finland on certain estates, but were not allowed to kill them. We persisted in trying to establish how wide the scope was on this movement order, and if it would be as far as the UK. Our friend was in constant contact with the Finnish authorities i.e. The National History Museum who had to do a survey on the Goshawk population. Then in October 2001 we received a very important phone call from our friend to say that the Finnish authorities were going to grant him with the **cites** permit when he was granted the trapping license, which never occurred because the British authorities would not agree to it.

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



After researching through the services of our friend and Finnish bird-watchers (twitchers), we discovered the best place to trap the Goshawks was on the North West coast of Finland. First of all we flew out to Helsinki via Sweden in October 2002 where we were met by our friend who took us the three hours north to meet the keepers on an estate where they had permission to trap Goshawks. Over a period of time we managed to trap a considerable amount of birds, which we weighed and measured eventually picking five males and one female which we returned to the UK with. As we had **cites** for ten birds we flew out again in December 2002 and repeated the same procedure on a different estate in the North West region and then returned to the

UK with two males and two females. All the birds had been micro chipped in Finland and went straight into quarantine for 30 days in the UK.

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

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

Andy and Dave Margereson of Derbyshire would like to thank you for taking a moment of your time to read, and hopefully, enjoy their story of how they restored pure Finnish blood lines to their Goshawk breeding project.

For more information on their superb Goshawks please contact either Andy on 07720-518989 or Dave on 07774-945192.





New Books and DVDs

Just recently there seems to have been somewhat of a spate of Falconry books, some very worthwhile and must haves for the falconers bookshelf and others not so desirable with one in particular, in the opinion of this reviewer, merely an overpriced article stretched into book form, and a highly priced article at that.

The three books that all receive exceedingly favourable reviews consist of two concerning longwings, trained and flown in very different circumstances it must be said, and the third a historical work on the practice of falconry by one particular family during the renaissance period in a specific region of Italy.

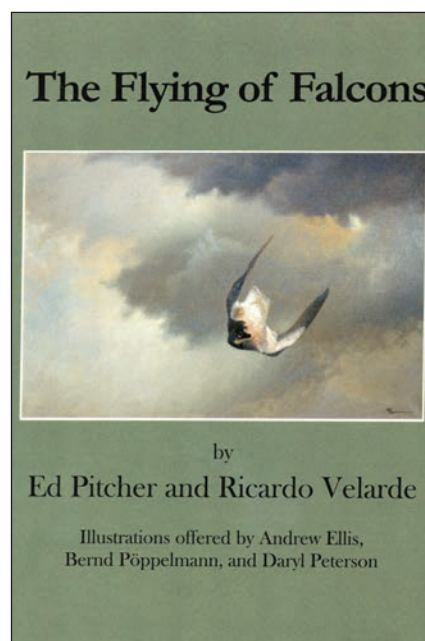
The historical work is "Lords of the Sky" written by Giancarlo Malacarne with the sub title of "Falconry in Mantua at the time of the Gonzagas". The first thing that strikes you about the book, other than its size which is slightly bigger than A4, is the lavish illustrations contained within. The book has been printed in full colour and is over 280 pages in content. The Gonzaga family were the reigning dynasty of the Mantuan region of Italy from 1338ad until 1707 ad. According to historical archives the family practised falconry on a lavish scale and in accordance with ancient tradition. Gyrfalcons, Peregrines, Sakers, Lanners as well as Goshawks and Sparrowhawks were all employed for the chase. The family built several important mews, the foremost of these being at Reverse, Marmirolo and Gonzaga. The extremely lavish hunting lodge of Bosco della Fontana in Marmirolo can still be seen in all its glory.

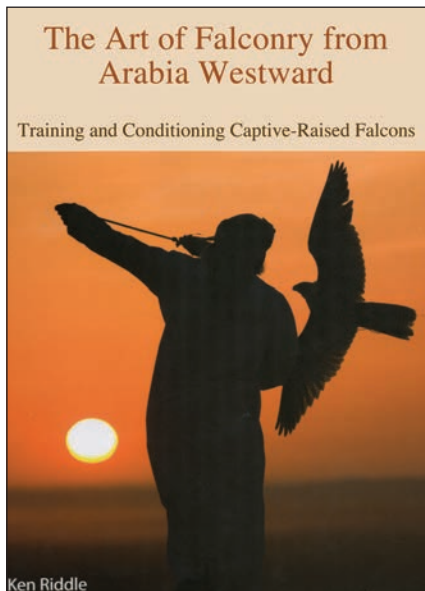
As well as various large studs of hawks and the required falconers to

tend to their needs the family also had a large number of hunting dogs and a superb line of horses which were bred by themselves. All of this and a great deal more is recorded in this excellent book which was launched at the Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi to celebrate the recognition of falconry as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. It represents great value for money at just 55 Euros. For further information on this publication go to the web site www.lordsofthesky.info or you can e-mail p.cimberio@gmail.com

Another book which I found truly absorbing is "The Flying of Falcons" by Ed Pitcher and Ricardo Velarde. Ed is a falconer with a great many years practical experience under his belt and is a man that has never been afraid to try something different in his approach to training and hunting with falcons. Over the decades he has honed and refined his thinking and consequent practical application and gone on to fly some truly exceptional falcons. I have been fortunate enough to have hawked Sage Grouse in his company in the Arco Desert in Idaho and seen some breath taking stoops from his falcons. Time spent in Ed's company is certainly memorable not just for the falconry but also for the endless stream of jokes and amusing anecdotes that Ed comes up with.

The book offers some very interesting insights into Ed's methods of raising and training falcons and, for me personally, the chapters on Black and Red Naped Shaheens were of great interest. As with any book that treads a new path to reach a previously well documented destination it can be very thought provoking, and

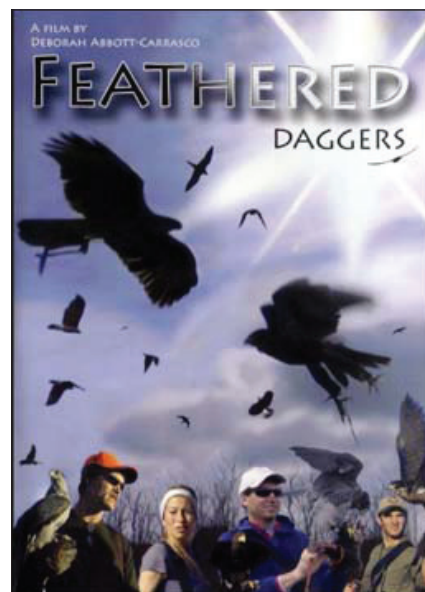




at times, just a little controversial. But it is undoubtedly stimulating and is based on personal experience gained by the application of his own training methods. I would certainly recommend the work whole heartedly even if it does come in at a weighty £85.

The book itself is a large work consisting of some 396 pages and has 16 full colour plate illustrations by Andrew Ellis, Bernd Popplemann and one by the late German Master Falconer Renz Waller. There are also numerous line drawings throughout the book. Available from our own Coch-y-Bonddu books further details can be gained from their website www.falconrybooks.co.uk

The last, but by no means least, of the three books mentioned in this short review is "The Art of Falconry from Arabia Westwards" by Ken Riddle. It is a big book, slightly larger than A4 size, to go with its equally large title and has been written by one of the world's most respected vets that specialises in raptors. Ken has been working in the Gulf for more than 24 years and in his own words "more recently have focused on conditioning captive raised falcons, via fitness training, to excel in hunting through power flights from the fist on Houbara Bustard". The



book is over 250 pages and is split into twelve sections which range from "The New Falcon-Considerations" through to "conditioning" and "Final Preparations-The Hunt". To say it is well illustrated would be something of an understatement as the book contains over 200 full colour photographs.

Again it is a very thought provoking book and some of the authors methods may well raise a few eyebrows. Also it should be borne in mind that it is written to pertain to falconry as it is practised in a part of the world that has very different laws relating to wildlife and treatment of animals and birds than here.

I found it a fascinating book and one that you can keep returning to little bits of it again and again. Some of the points raised in the book I disagreed with and others provoked the reaction "that I must give that a try". I have to confess to being unable to quote a price or retailer for this book as mine was given to me by the author when I was in Abu Dhabi. However I suspect our good friends at Coch-y-Bonddu books, details above, should be able to help.

Finally there are two new DVD's on the market here in the UK, both relate to falconry in the United States, or Texas to be more precise. The first is "Squirrel Hawking" and the second is "Feathered Daggers". The first is literally what is says in the title and is film of a trained Red Tailed Hawk hunting and catching Squirrels. The second is a much better film than its somewhat theatrical title suggests and shows trained Red Tails, Harris Hawks, Goshawks, large Falcons and a Golden Eagle all being flown at quarry. Both films are just over forty minutes long and are priced at £12 inclusive of post and packing. They are exclusively available in the UK from Falcon Leisure who can be contacted on 07774-267790.

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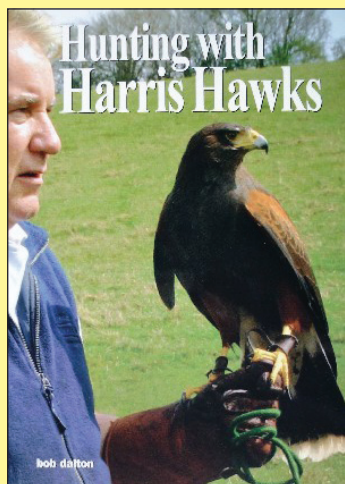
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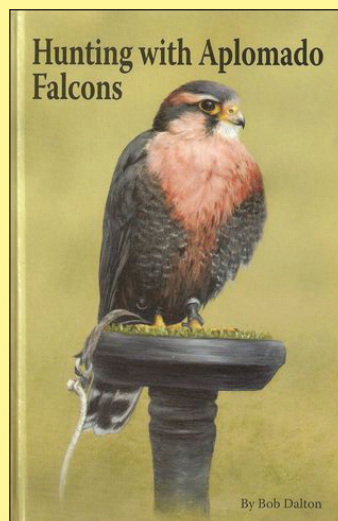
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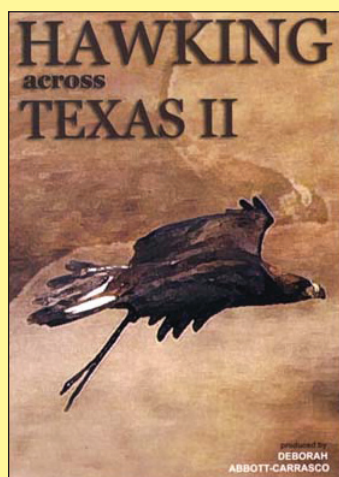
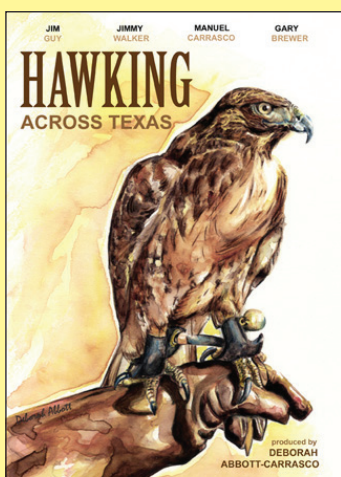
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