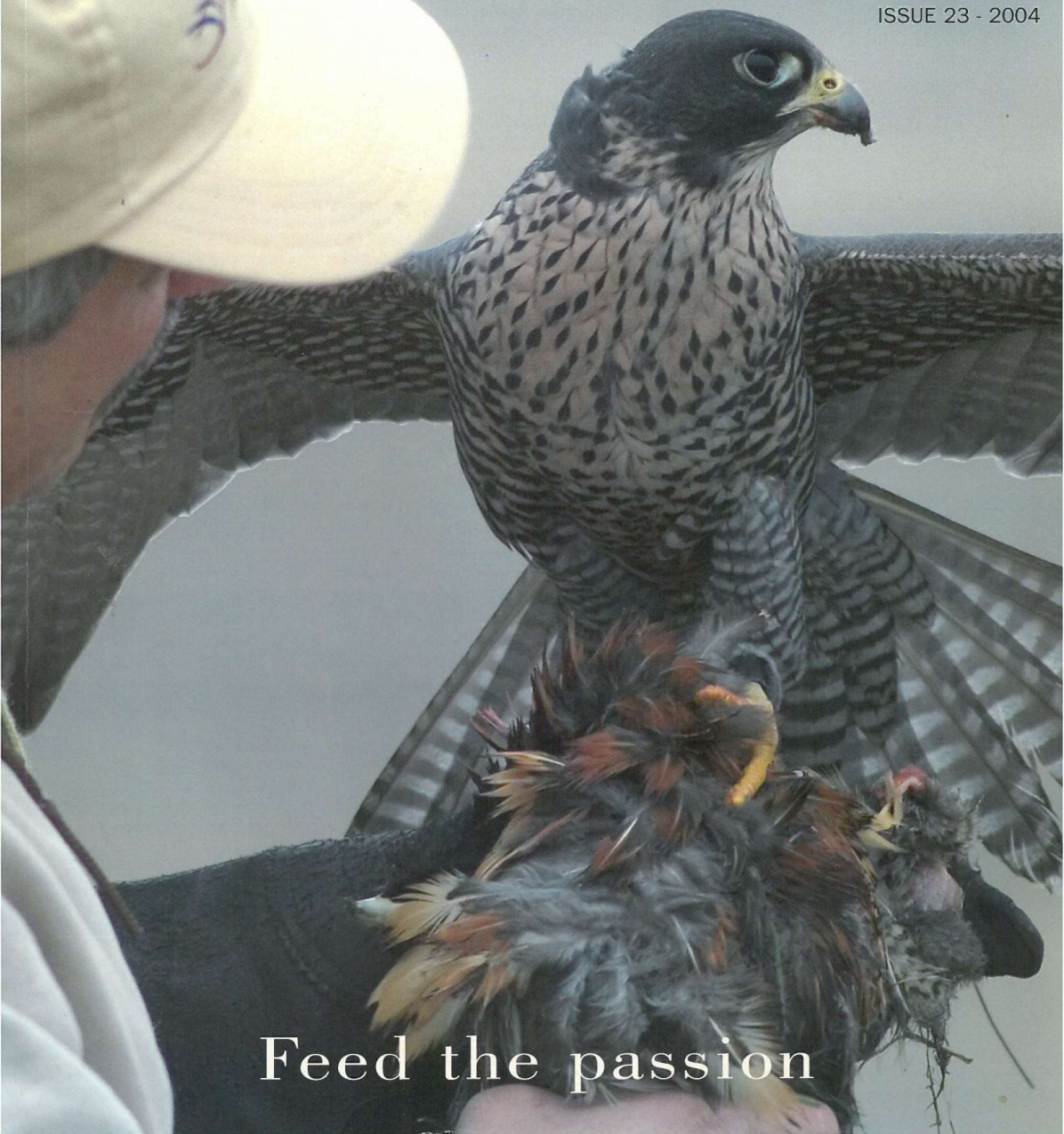


INTERNATIONAL FALCONER

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Feed the passion

INTERNATIONAL FALCONER

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Cover photo: Michael Garcia with tiercel gyrfalcon at the 2004 NAFA meet, Garden City, Kansas.

Photo by Seth Anthony

EDITORIAL

Another rather late issue – sorry, but your Editor has just been on a long-overdue visit to the US for a couple of weeks or so to attend the NAFA meet, sample some hawking in the magnificent intermountain west state of Idaho and also visit the Archives of Falconry to cover the photography for the feature in this issue. It set our schedule back a little but I hope you agree it was worth the wait – it's a



The Editor and Danny Ertsgaard at the NAFA meet, Kansas.

very full issue and we've had to add some pages to get it all in!

The trip was nothing short of fantastic. Amazingly this was my first 'hawking' visit to the US and thanks to some incredibly helpful and friendly people, I managed to cram a lot of experiences into a very short period of time. It was great to finally put faces to names and also meet falconers with whom I'd been in email contact with for several years. I'll be putting together a small portfolio from the several hundred images taken during the trip for the next issue and this will hopefully give you a flavour of a very eventful couple of weeks.

As I said, there are lots of people to thank: Dave Moran for offering me his guestroom on the first night in Denver – all the falconers at the NAFA meet who let me tag along with them, particularly Danny Ertsgaard, Jorgene Eastman and Keith Hix who showed me the subtleties of prairie-chicken hawking and just what a F350 Super Duty can do when the daylight is fading! – Charles and Marty Schwartz for hosting me for 5 days in their amazing mountain retreat and showing me some fantastic hawking and dog-work in incredible surroundings – Jack Oar, and Hubert Quade for introducing me to the wonderful passage gyrfalcon and more great dog-work – and finally, but by no means least, Kent Carnie for his help at the Archives and for showing me a little of the delightful Boise City. It was a great trip guys and you were all great company.

Enjoy the issue,

Seth

IMPORTANT - NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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

International Falconer welcomes contributions for articles both written and photographic. Please send for a copy of our Writer's and Photographer's Guidelines before sending material.

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INTERNATIONAL FALCONER



INTERNATIONAL FALCONER HAS MOVED!

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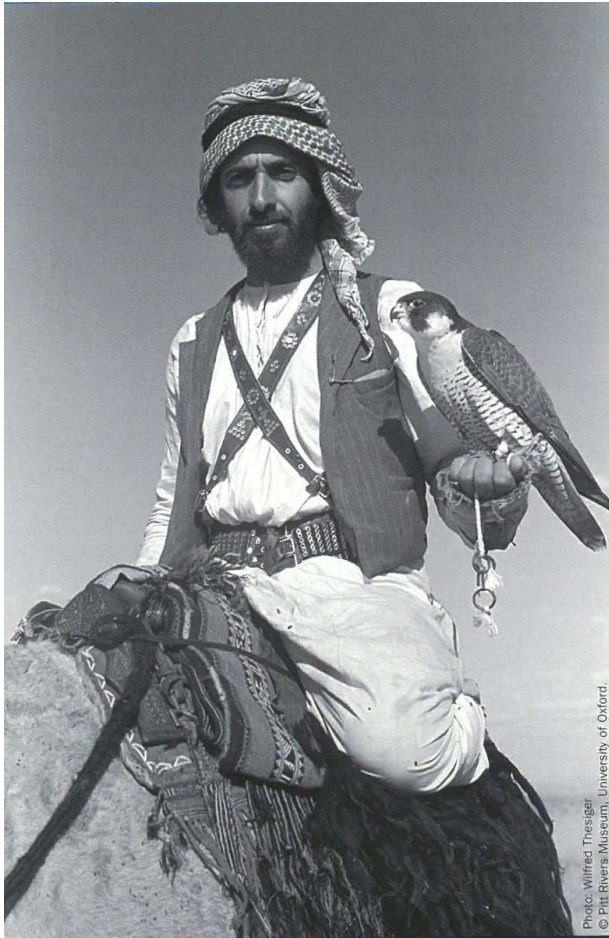


Photo: Wilfred Thesiger
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Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

Falconer and conservationist par excellence

With the death on 2nd November 2004 of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President and founding father of the United Arab Emirates, the world has lost arguably one of the greatest conservationists of this century whose forthright vision for falconry and conservation long preceded the present-day global conservationists' movement.

Dubbed across the world as the fore-runner of contemporary falconers and conservationists, Sheikh Zayed was born a conservationist. His rise to prominence marked the beginning of an era. Although he was born into a harshly inhospitable environment of the Arabian deserts where the Bedouins eked out a living through hunting, young Zayed foresaw the need to strike a balance between preservation of the ancestral heritage of falconry and hunting on the one hand, and ensuring the long-term survival of falcons and of their prey on the other.

By any stretch of imagination, his vision constituted a far-sighted view that came to be known to modern conservationists as "sustainable hunting". Clearly, Sheikh Zayed was not only ahead of his own generation but also far ahead of the entire worldwide conservationist movement. By the mid-1930s, Sheikh Zayed became both falconer and conservationist with a fully blossomed vision in which he envisioned a transformed conservation-friendly society. In the social arena, Zayed was undisputedly the epitome of Arab falconry; for he exhibited an enormous ontological and intuitive knowledge of Mother Nature, thus enabling him to capture the imagination of his Bedouin society. He also introduced a humane face into the concept of falconry which he considered to be an invaluable heritage. As he pursued his passion for falconry, his skills were chronicled by the great British desert explorer, Sir Wilfred Thesiger, who hunted with him over half a century ago.

In a nutshell, Zayed stood for conservationists' values as a matter of conviction and necessity. He loved nature and wildlife as never before. In the words of renowned British journalist Patrick Seale, who met him in 1965 in his hometown of Al Ain where he was governor, Sheikh Zayed knew every stone, every tree, and every bird of his domain. Above all, he understood the importance of preserving every drop of water and putting it to productive use. Tree-planting was his passion. (He oversaw the planting of over 150 million in his lifetime.)

With respect to his social milieu, Zayed perceived falconry not just as a sport in itself, but as a companionship. Unlike elsewhere in the world, falconry in Arabia is a communal pursuit. And because he was a master of falconry in his own right, he became closer to the hearts and minds of his people. This intimacy with his people was one of the reasons why he remained such a beloved and popular leader.

What was uniquely fascinating about Sheikh Zayed – the man and the conservationist – was his ability to remain focused on his convictions and values. Even when he became President of the seven-member federation of the United Arab Emirates, which was established in 1971 after the British withdrew from the Arabian Gulf, he was neither swayed by the affluence of modern life nor by the many responsibilities that he had to shoulder. Indeed, the emergence of the federation marked the era when he was able to ensure that his concern for conservation took on a nationwide approach, and a raft of legislation followed.

In the early 1960s, prior to the federation, Zayed had sharpened an advanced view on conservation. He arranged, just in time, for the capture of two breeding pairs of the Arabian oryx for the nucleus of a captive-breeding programme. Today, 40 years on, there are well over 2,000 Arabian oryx in captivity in the UAE, many on his own private nature reserve island of Sir Bani Yas, along with hundreds of other endangered species like the Arabian gazelle and the scimitar-horned oryx. In the late 1960s he created the Association for Animal Welfare, a group of rangers who patrolled the deserts to ensure that there was no uncontrolled hunting of wildlife. The gazelle population was an immediate beneficiary.

Sheikh Zayed's efforts in falconry and conservation continued unabated, not just as a participant but as a source of numerous initiatives that were to have far-reaching effect. Of particular significance was his initiative in 1976 to organise the first World Conference on Falconry and Conservation in Abu Dhabi, which, for the first time, brought falconers from North America, Europe and the Far East together with falconers from Arabia. The conference acted as a launching pad for a strategy devised by Sheikh Zayed to bring falconers into the mainstream of emerging conservation efforts. At this time captive-bred falcons from Europe first began to appear in Arabia, launching a trend that today sees most Arab falconers choosing captive-bred birds for preference, thus reducing the take from wild stocks.

In the early 1980s, Sheikh Zayed established a falcon hospital at Al Khazna, outside Abu Dhabi, this later being followed by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, part of Abu Dhabi's Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, (ERWDA).

In the sphere of species protection, Sheikh Zayed was the first to discern the threats posed to bird and animal species. He set in motion a wide variety of projects designed to protect them. In Morocco he set up the Emirates Centre for Wildlife Propagation in 1995 to breed houbara for release into the wild. Increasing success over the years saw 5,000 birds being raised in 2004. In Pakistan, support was given for the formation of Houbara Foundation

International. This collaborates closely with the Pakistani Government to stamp out illegal trapping, and also rehabilitates trapped birds for release.

The Houbara Breeding Programme started in Al Ain Zoo (UAE) in 1977 and the National Avian Research Centre, NARC, part of ERWDA, has also launched a breeding programme for the Asian houbara, which, after a slow start, produced over 200 birds in 2004. The first hatch was announced in 1982. The long-term objective, determined by Sheikh Zayed himself, is to produce 10,000 birds a year, most to be released to supplement wild stocks.

Like most Arab falconers, Sheikh Zayed traditionally released many of his birds back into the wild at the end of the season. In 1995 recognising that this provided an opportunity for detailed scientific research, he launched the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Programme. Since then, nearly 1,000 wild-caught sakers and peregrines have been released in the spring along migration routes in Pakistan and Central Asia. Sheikh Zayed actively encouraged his fellow falconers to make greater use of captive-bred birds, and introduced a strict licensing system for the trade in wild-caught birds in the Emirates. Coupled with the introduction of a "falcon passport" approved by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) this has already had a dramatic effect on reducing trapping pressure in neighbouring countries.

As can be discerned from the massive efforts exerted over the years by Sheikh Zayed, it is only fair to assert that his success story is almost unparalleled anywhere in the world. This explains why his endeavours have received international accolades, notably the Panda Gold Award from the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the FAO trophy, the UNESCO Environment Chair, Ain Shams University Award, and many others. All are a well-deserved recognition of the efforts of a man whose monumental work will leave an enduring effect for many generations to come.

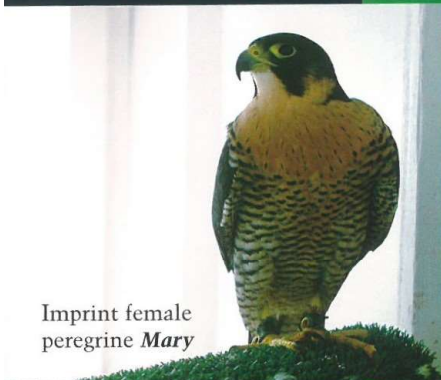
Sheikh Zayed lived and died with the values of conservation at his heart. In his own words he said: "Conservation of nature is our sacred duty and obligation. The ecological balance should not be disturbed, for our survival is dependent upon it. We should play a positive role in leaving this earth a 'greener' place for the generations to come."

Since his death, he has received plaudits and praise from around the world for his statesmanship and for his achievements in building a modern, developed and harmonious society in the United Arab Emirates. Falconers worldwide owe him thanks too, for his far-reaching contributions to the sport – or indeed art – that he loved so much. ■

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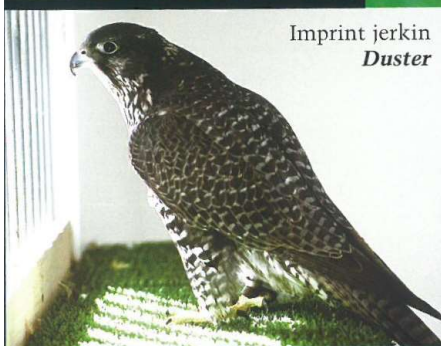
Imprint jerkin
Henry



Imprint female
peregrine *Mary*



2004 imprint female peregrine *Helen*



Imprint jerkin
Duster



2004 female
gyr/peregrine

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2004 IAF General Meeting – Abu Dhabi

The 2004 Annual General Meeting of IAF was held from 14-19 September in Abu Dhabi, hosted by the Emirates Falconers' Club. Delegates attended from 29 of the 40 IAF member nations and observers from a further 7 non-IAF countries.

The assembly was addressed by His Excellency Mohammed Al Bowardi who reminded delegates that falconry: "is close to our hearts – handed down by our forefathers over thousands of years. It is a constant reminder of the balance of nature itself, and also of our relationship with it. Falconry in the Emirates remains, as it always has been, a sport of great nobility – not because of its practitioners, but because of the way it reflects the noblest aspects of the interaction between man and nature."

"This sport of ours, however, cannot survive unless falconers – and others – recognise the need for effective conservation, both of falcons and their prey. As far back as 1976, long before 'conservation' became a fashionable word, our most prominent UAE falconer, President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, sponsored the holding in Abu Dhabi of the first International Conference on Falconry and Conservation. This meeting is a direct descendant of that event."

He went on to outline some of the initiatives that are being taken to conserve Arab falconry.

"Among the most popular birds of falconry are peregrines and sakers. In much of Europe and Central Asia, the numbers of both are now declining rapidly, often for reasons not associated with falconry. In response, we in the UAE have launched a large-scale programme of captive breeding, hoping thereby to reduce the number of wild birds trapped for falconry. At

the same time, since 1995, the Zayed Falcon Release Programme, created by the President, has seen around 1,000 sakers and peregrines – all wild-caught – released back into the wild at the end of the hunting season, to replenish native stocks.

"Falconry, of course, cannot continue unless there are healthy populations of the prey species, both in their breeding territories and their wintering grounds. For Arab falconers, that means the houbara, in particular the Asian houbara. In the UAE, our wintering houbara are migrants. Their numbers are in severe and rapid decline, as they are throughout the range countries, including their breeding grounds. Our initiative in 1989 to establish the National Avian Research Centre, NARC, was intended to achieve two objectives: 1) To undertake research to improve our knowledge of the species. 2) To commence a captive breeding programme that can be used, eventually, to supplement wild stocks through carefully planned releases."

Mohammed al Bowardi concluded his introduction by stressing that falconers have an obligation to devote their efforts to conservation, as well as to falconry.

President Patrick Morel reported on problems in Slovenia where falconry was not included in the new hunting law at the very last moment; it is nevertheless still not illegal in Slovenia, but continues to be permitted under a licensing system as it was before. The IAF also received requests for help from Finland, Denmark, Slovenia, UK and Germany and in Asia from Japan and Kazakhstan.

He reported the IAF had to face problems of organised anti-falconry campaigns. An 'anti-falconry' campaign was launched in Slovenia



QUOD TOTUM PROCEEDIT EX AMORE

under the banner of the "Eurogroup Against Birdcrime". This campaign was extended to Belgium and Germany.

Vice President for the Americas, Frank Bond welcomed delegates from Mexico, El Salvador and Brazil and described moves to form falconry clubs in Peru (approx 144 falconers) and Chile (around 17 known falconers). Argentina's 130 falconers are already federated into the Asociación Bonarensis and the Club de Cetrería Argentina.

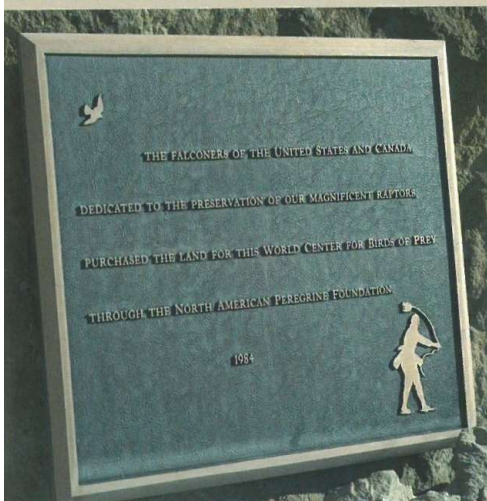
Vice President for Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania, José Manuel Rodríguez-Villa outlined the position in this vast geographical region:

"In European Union countries the status of falconry varies a lot, as does the political environment towards falconry. It is 'stable' in most countries but faces growing restriction and over-regulation. Germany faces the threat of total ban due to pressure by influential 'anti' groups which would be a huge loss in itself but also would have very negative repercussions throughout the world."

He also stressed the need to forge contacts with falconers in China in order to enrich IAF's wealth and representation. In Japan a legislative threat against falconry is currently being addressed by the falconers of that country. ■

Preserving our

Words by Nick Kester Photos by Seth Anthony



It is an undeniable fact that Americans have two characteristics often lacking in us Europeans. The first is an extraordinary philanthropy manifested in a desire to protect their past; the second is a will to succeed once the decision is made. And in May this year I was privileged to meet the personification of these characteristics.

Kent Carnie's knowledge and enthusiasm of American falconry history is boundless although he freely acknowledges that saving it is less of a task because it is barely 200 years old, and cannot compare with us Europeans who claim at least fifteen centuries. ▶

heritage



TOP LEFT: The Herrick Collections Building which houses The Archives of Falconry.

BOTTOM LEFT: Plaque at the entrance to the Herrick Collections Building. The plaque commemorates the fact that the funds donated to purchase the original tract of land on which the World Center for Birds of Prey was built in Boise Idaho in 1984 were provided by the North American Peregrine Foundation, representing the falconry community of the US and Canada.

ABOVE: Curator of The Archives of Falconry, Kent Carnie.

Preserving our heritage

Despite a commonly held belief that US falconry started with Luff Meredith and the Craighead twins, it is now known that in 1622 an Englishman arrived with his bells and 'howds' (hoods) and trapped a passage tundra peregrine tiercel. A century later, a minister, who 'on Sundays sounded the silver trumpet of the Lord' spent the rest of the week riding with his hounds and hawks.

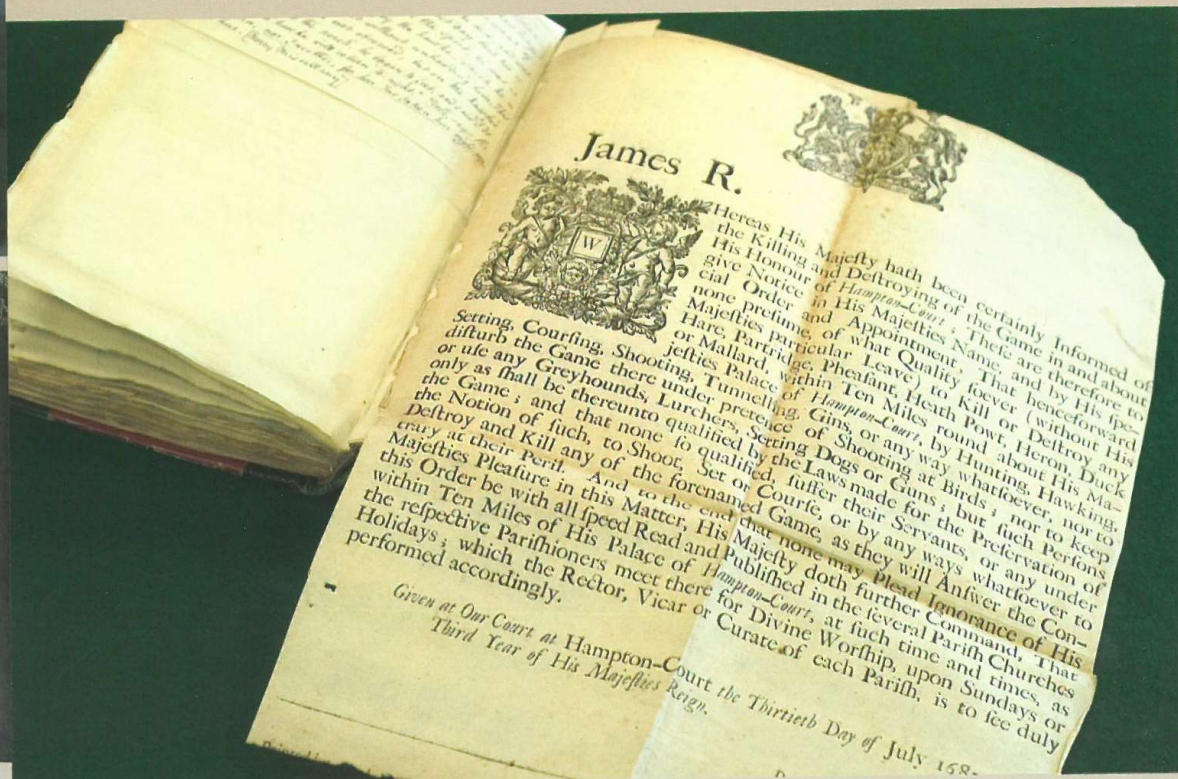
The sport really got national in the 1930s; although as Kent Carnie reminds us, it was more 'having than hawking' for the early falconers took peregrines and lived in the east which was unsuitable for longwings. The first US falconry book was published in 1940 with Bill Russell's *Falconry - a handbook for hunters* although it was pre-dated by Meredith's book written in the 30s but which lay as a manuscript in Montreal's McGill University until the arrival of the Archives publishing programme.



The real trigger for most budding American falconers came not from expensive imports of British titles but a *National Geographic* article in December 1920 called *Falconry, the Sport of Kings*. This magazine could be found in every school library and

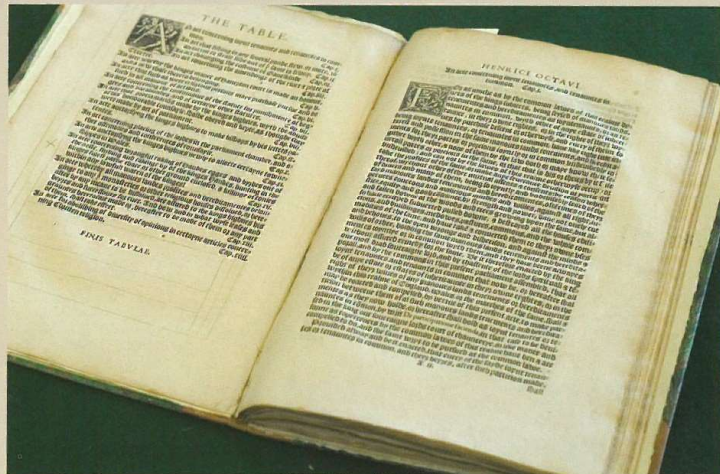
copies purchased for 50 cents.

Noting the demise of the American peregrine and rise of its saviour, The Peregrine Fund, Carnie realised that some of the early falconers were also in demise and no-one was protecting their past. For example,





RIGHT: A rare collection of acts of law from the 31st year of the reign of Henry VIII (1540 – but not produced in printed form until 1575). Included in this collection is “An acte concerning wrongful taking of haukes egges and byrdes out of the neste, and takinge up of the kinges haukes, hunting in the kinges forest parke chace or other ground enclosed, and killinge of conies within any lawfull warden of the kinges.” Such activities were declared felonies, and their perpetrators “being thereof lawflullye convicted and attaynted by and accordinge to the lawes of this realme” among other additional punishments were to “suffer such peynes of death...” Clearly, Henry’s severe disposition was not focused solely upon his wives. This item, was donated by Archives Curator of Books and Manuscripts, John Swift.



LEFT: An original royal proclamation tipped into the working notebook (now in the Archives) of Joseph Haslewood. This notebook was used by Haslewood in preparation of his extended essay introducing his 1810 reprinting of *The Boke of St. Albans*. This proclamation expresses the concerns of James II at poaching in the vicinity of Hampton Court and prohibits all unauthorised forms of hunting in the area, to be read and published in the several parish churches within ten miles of Hampton Court and charging the rectors, vicars or curates of each parish “to see duly performed accordingly.” Dated the 30th day of July, 1687.

all of Meredith’s correspondence, journals and photographs have been sold in garage sales for a few cents a copy. Even Kent Carnie, who had experienced a ‘matrimonial explosion’, was forced to sell his library. Similar events had to be prevented.

Floating the idea past the North American Falconers’ Association (NAFA), Carnie gained much support, but their lack of location and not having tax-deductible status made it unfeasible. However in 1984 The Peregrine Fund had a base and in

1986 a no-rent deal (with the recovery of overheads) was struck for these archival collections.

Financing such a venture was a challenge. As Kent Carnie puts it: “We begged a lot. In the first year I drew a \$1 salary and over the first five years we went into a hole to the tune of \$25,000 which the Fund wrote off”. The future had to be better secured.

It is agreed in the Deed of Gift that book duplicates may be sold by silent auction offered each year to the benefactor list. Carnie explains that a duplicate is only so if it exactly mirrors one already in the collection. ▶

Preserving our heritage

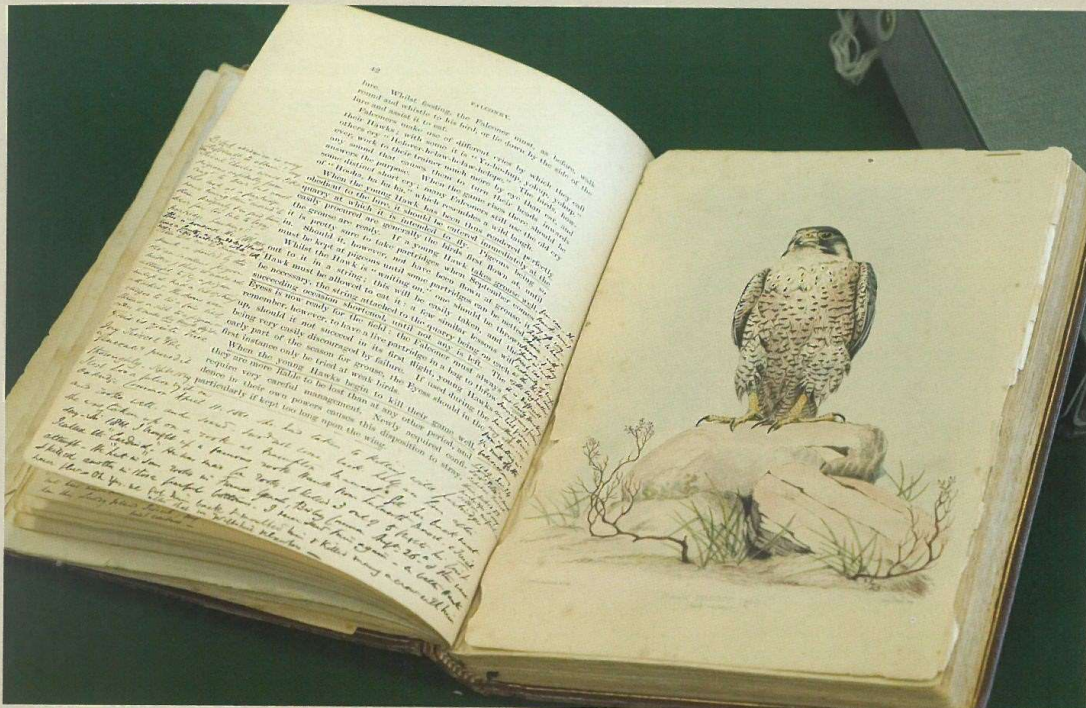


For example, the Archive holds Major Charles Hawkins Fisher's edition of Salvin and Broderick's *Falconry in the British Isles*. Being heavily annotated (which Carnie believes is a publication in its own right) and therefore unique it would never be offered for sale.

"Over the years people ran screaming clutching their wallets whenever I came on the scene," says Carnie, whose persuasiveness is a powerful characteristic of this retired military man. So he decided that a strong endowment fund was the only solution to secure the future and leading by example he declared he would put \$6,000 each year towards running costs. If two others would do the same for five years, then all fund raising would go into an income generating endowment to be managed by The Peregrine Fund. NAFA plus a second individual falconer offered to join Carnie and \$435,000 was raised.

Today the value of the collection is \$1.5 million. Add in the endowment, plus \$372,000 for the new building, \$283,000 in general donations, and \$42,000 for special publishing, one realises that over \$2.5 million of product and cash has come from some 1,200 falconers (mostly, but not exclusively Americans). A stupendous achievement which more than confirms my opening paragraph; although it is not altogether altruistic as the following example explains. Carnie owned a *Traité de Fauconnerie* which he had paid Luff Meredith \$500. As part of his library it fetched \$600. That same person donated the copy to the Archive and gained \$56,000 in tax relief.

What is central to the collection? Well, of course, the 1,700 single editions are highly valuable, including the two copies of the *Traité*, one uncut in its original box. There is also the silver-gilt tea urn given to Colonel Thomas Thornton on his retirement as president of the Confederate Hawks of Great Britain, more commonly known



ABOVE: A first edition copy of Salvin and Brodrick's *Falconry in the British Isles* (1855). This copy in the Archives collections was purchased by Major C. Hawkins Fisher in 1856, making it one of the first in his hawking library. Over the years he crammed into its margins and blank areas innumerable finely-penned comments and accounts of flights successful and otherwise, two of the more spectacular attested to by witness John Pells. Additionally tipped into this copy is an original letter to Fisher from Peter Ballantyne (dated Feb 6, 1881), several sheets enumerating his scores gamehawking over the years and a number of published articles both of his own authorship and that of others. Formerly the property of V. Cassone, from the library of Robert B. Stabler.

LEFT: The goshawk presented to Luff Meredith by the Nazi Herman Goering now mounted and in the Archives collection.

BELOW: An exhibition gallery. One end of the gallery, shown here, is dedicated to a permanent display featuring the historic British falconer/field-sportsman Thomas Thornton. This display is centered about the famed silver-gilt tea urn presented to Col. Thornton in 1781 by the members of the Confederate Hawks of Great Britain when he stepped down as president of that club. The presence of the tea urn in the Archive collections is courtesy of American falconer Robert B. Berry.



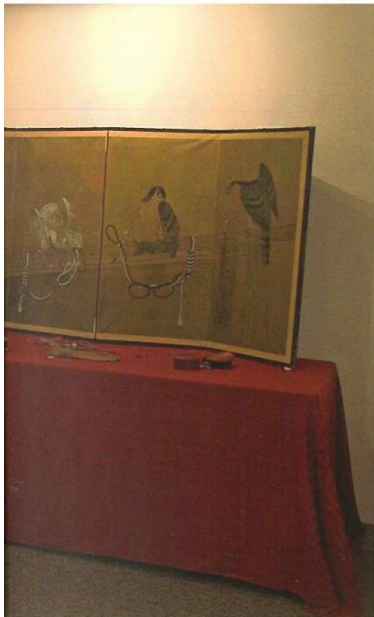
Preserving our heritage

as the Falconers' Club. There are Japanese and Arabic art and artefacts; paintings by Renz Waller of Herman Goering and of Luff Meredith, who was presented a goshawk by the Nazi: now stuffed and in the collection. A countless collection of hoods and hawking bags including Waller's last bag that contained a pigeon wing, which proves I am not the only person who finds last year's day-old chick in the bottom of his bag at the beginning of the next season.

Yet it is not the commercially produced items that Carnie treasures. It is the hawking journals which he really covets. He mourns the fact that few today keep such records. Yet the output of 'expert' books flourishes. As he puts it: "A hawk today, a computer tomorrow, and an author the day after." This is evidenced by the fact that between 1486 (*Boke of St. Albans*) and 1891 (Harting's *Bibliotheca*) there were 82 recorded falconry titles, (copies of almost all of these are in the Archives collection); between then and 2000 there were an additional 400; and in the last four years a further 100 books have been published.

Sometimes the task seems overwhelming. A gift of 38,000 colour slides needs examining and the non-falconry photos removed to be placed elsewhere. An entire Arab tent needs housing. The 70 years of journals by Frank Beebe need properly storing. Thankfully, the Archive has increased available space with a purpose built annex to The Peregrine Fund of 4,000 square feet. Acknowledging the global scale of its content a name change was needed. So with 'American' dropped from the title in 2004 we are now all a part of The Archives of Falconry. ■





TOP: Another of the exhibition galleries, shown here with a current (temporary) display of original art depicting goshawks in Japanese falconry and various implements of Japanese falconry equipment.

MIDDLE: In 1618 James I published a small tract providing for the legal practice of sports on Sundays in response to Puritan efforts to ban such. In 1633, faced with increased religious pressures to the contrary, his son Charles I was forced to restate that royal position, reprinting his father's earlier declaration. In 1643 Parliament upheld the Puritan position and ordered that Charles' booklet "should be burnt by the common hangman". The Archives includes in its collections this original copy of Charles' declaration which somehow escaped the common hangman.

BOTTOM: In contrast to the stylish "Display Room", the more mundane appearance of the Archives "Collections Room" belies the fact that it contains the backbone of its historical records. Shown here in acid neutral folders contained in special archival boxes on the shelves of one of forty steel cabinets are notebooks, diaries and other falconry notes of Canadian falconer/artist/author Frank Beebe, covering the years 1932-2002. An unmatched collection of first-hand observations over the years of the development of modern North American falconry.



ABOVE: Lifesize bronze gyrfalcon *Perfect in Petra* in which falconer/sculptor Ross Matteson, himself the son of a falconer, depicts the results of a lifetime among these birds in capturing the essence of this the largest of falcons. Ross and his wife Genny's contribution made it possible for the Archives to adorn its display room with this stunning sculpture.

Travels with BOOMER

A TIERCEL COOPER'S HAWK

By David T. Moran

This morning, mired in the tedium of mundane chores, my energy level was low. As I lumbered about the kitchen, putting things back where they belonged, my efforts at generating order out of chaos were not quite up to the mark. Then, all of a sudden, Whooooosh! I heard the unmistakable sound of whirring wings as fifty sparrows exploded from my back-yard feeder. Looking up, I caught a glimpse of a sleek brown missile shooting through the flock of terror-stricken sparrows. In a flash I was all excitement, racing to the window to follow the flight. Heart racing and hands shaking, my whole physiology and state of consciousness was immediately transformed by the sudden appearance of that amazing accipiter.

What a mood-swing! From sheer boredom to complete enthusiasm, from ennui to passion for life, all in a heartbeat. How can this happen? The answer is simple: Cooper's hawks are exciting! The sheer force of their vitality makes me come completely alive. These fiery little accipiters' energy, athletic ability, boundless courage in the hunt, and maniacal temperament get to us at a very basic fundamental, animal level. The epitome of wildness resides in a Cooper's hawk's eyes. When a Cooper's hawk fixes its gaze on you, with those intense, crazy, velociraptor-like yellow orbs, they call up from deep within you a gut-level primitive response, plugging you into the life-force that interconnects all living beings in the Universe.

In (and through) the eyes of the Cooper's hawk, you see the Universe. You see God. You see yourself. Your real self.

As falconers, we're blessed to be



Above: Dave Moran with Boomer.

Photo: courtesy of Dave Moran

able to experience this feeling of connectedness first-hand by becoming a partner with a hawk. The hawk – an animal envoy of the unseen – takes you back to your beginnings. Down into those great painted caves where Shamans of old used to journey to visit the Spirit World. The unique partnership of man and hawk allows us to transcend the enormous claims put upon us by the artificial environment of the “civilised” world and re-enter the real world of nature where animals are what they (and we) are, and not what someone wants them (and us) to be. Where we become part of the sum and substance of the very

Mother Earth from whom we were all born and to whom we shall all return. As the Lakota Indians of the Northern plains say, “Mitake Oyasin” – we are all related.

It's really fun going out into the field with a Cooper's hawk on your fist. You never know what's going to happen. But you know something IS going to happen! Some of the most action-packed days I've had in the field were in the company of a small tiercel Cooper's hawk named Boomer. Here are some of the peak experiences we enjoyed with this little “Accipiter with Attitude”:

Raising Boomer

Boomer came into our lives on July 4 as a tiny four-ounce downy. A few days before, he'd pipped and crawled out of his egg in a nest in a tall pine tree at the base of the Rocky Mountains near our home in Boulder, Colorado. My son, Dave Jr. and I had long wished to fly a tiercel Cooper's hawk. We'd read all the editions of Harry McElroy's *Desert Hawking* from cover to cover many times, and finally had the time and space to try our hand at raising, training, and flying an imprinted Cooper's hawk. Having flown mostly passage birds, neither Dave nor I had prior experience with imprints. Armed with the writings of Harry McElroy and Mike McDermott, a modicum of common sense, and a freshly-taken fuzzy little white bird, we entered the very different world of the imprinted tiercel Cooper's hawk with great hopes and enthusiasm.

To reduce future screaming and/or aggression, we never fed Boomer by hand, letting him take all his food from the lure placed in his homemade eyrie. Although we were in his company constantly, we left the area when he ate to avoid any food-association. Boomer grew fast, was a joy to live with, and soon showed great interest in the birds at the feeder outside the window. When he was on the verge of taking flight, young Boomer enjoyed charging about on the ground under the evergreens in the yard trying to catch sparrows on foot. Once, sporting a two-inch stub of a tail and still covered with down, he actually managed to grab a young, naive sparrow lurking under a bush. The hawklet held it in his foot, stood up straight, and let out a Kek-Kek-Kek-Kek victory cry! It took Boomer a long time to realise he could (and should) eat his catch. But eat it and enjoy it he did, for hunting was programmed into his hard drive.

Now that the hunting gene had kicked in, as soon as Boomer could



Photo: Dave Moran

The adventure begins! Here are two downy tiercel Cooper's hawks Boomer and his brother Mavro, both fresh out of the nest, enjoying a repast of fresh quail in their new home.

fly, we took him out to the field to see what would happen when we flushed game for him. This turned out to be a lot of fun. He was a quick study.

Boomer and Starlings: Love at First Bite

Starlings abound in Colorado. Once foreign to this continent, starlings have reproduced so fast they've earned the official designation of "pests", and can be legally hunted any time of the year. Dave Jr. and I started each new day by picking up Boomer from his block, weighing him, placing him in the truck, and driving to nearby fields in search of slips at starlings. Boomer was extremely enthusiastic, chasing anything that moved, and grew in strength and skill daily. He was a joy to fly – completely tame, he would come any distance to the lure, and hardly bated at all. After missing many starlings, Boomer began to get frustrated, angry, and started to fly with real purpose. Long before he was hard-penned, he was catching starlings and sparrows in fair flight. For us, this was great fun, for when you have unlimited quarry available the hawk learns very fast indeed and gets into excellent condition in short order!

One morning, when Dave was

otherwise occupied, I spied a flock of starlings in our back yard on the other side of a hog-wire fence. I picked up Boomer, walked to the side of the house, and held him out where he could see the noisy black birds squabbling at each other and fighting over seed in the yard. Boomer was off in a flash. The starlings, knowing they were protected by the fence and having quickly sized up the incoming hawk as a "rookie", stayed put. Boomer made straight for them at top speed. I heard a "sproing" sound as Boomer bounced off the fence like a trampoline and landed awkwardly on the grass. The starlings made off, squawking in derision at the shamed, hapless predator.

As I approached, Boomer, seeming embarrassed and angry, gathered himself up, hopped right into the fence itself, and sat on one of the horizontal fence-wires. I could literally see the wheels turning in Boomer's head as he studied the fence that had kept him from his quarry. Using his on-board computer, the hawk was taking the measure of the squares of wire. I had a feeling that fence would not foil him again.

Confirmation of my suspicions arrived the next day. The same starlings were in the same place at the

same time. Repeating our procedure of the previous day, I took up Boomer on the fist, snuck along the edge of the house, and reached around the corner so he could see the starlings. His crest went up, and the little Coops took off and flew straight at the fence. Just before slamming into the fence, he tucked his wings tight, shot through one of the squares like a dart, and charged after one very surprised flock of starlings! Boomer had, on the basis of one experience, solved the fence problem.

Before long, Boomer was overtaking and catching starlings that flushed fifty yards ahead of him. He was becoming fast, determined, and fully aerobic. On occasion he'd overtake a flock of fleeing starlings, fly through the flock, throw up above it, and stoop down vertically looking for all the world like a merlin, knocking one of the black birds to the ground and binding to it. Boomer was fast. He eventually learned to overtake starlings on passage! But more of that later.

Boomer's Strategies on House Sparrows

I'd love to tell/brag about Boomer's bravado in bringing huge quarry to bag. Although he did catch and kill one large cock chukar partridge, the most fun we experienced was watching him chase house sparrows (also defined as pests and legally huntable any time of the year). Where starlings often take to the sky and try to outfly hawks, sparrows hurl themselves into dense cover at the slightest provocation. This they did at their own peril with Boomer, for he was lizard-quick in cover and could run full-throttle through brambles that seemed impenetrable. We soon learned we had to fly him with no bells, field jesses, or telemetry, for these accoutrements inevitably got caught up and cramped his style in dense cover.

In a typical flight at sparrows,



Above: Dave Jr. with a young Boomer.

Photo: courtesy of Dave Moran

Boomer would spot his prey from far away and fly at it. The sparrow, seeing the oncoming hawk, would bury itself deep in a bush and hide. It was then up to us to make in and attempt to flush it. When the sparrow flushed, and Boomer took off after it, he would accelerate very fast and overtake it in a very short distance, at which point the sparrow would make a series of tight level turns. Boomer, right on its tail, would match each of the sparrows' moves with incredibly fast twists and turns and snap-rolls. During these aerobic chases, Boomer often flew on his side with wings and tail at right angles to the horizon. The bold stripes on the undersides of his wings and long tail flashing in the sun presented a

magnificent image of absolute wildness that never failed to give me goose-bumps. These flights often occurred within a ten-yard radius, predator and prey inscribing circles around us. We could see everything so clearly! When the sparrow realised there was no way it could shake the plucky Coops and bailed out into cover, Boomer crashed in right behind it, and if he didn't grab it right then – which he often did – the sparrow would take off again, this time going vertically skyward as if shot out of a cannon. Going vertical is an accipiter's forte, and Boomer would immediately go straight up after the sparrow and overtake it. The hapless sparrow, knowing it was all up, would then fold up its wings and drop

straight down into the brush. Boomer would pump straight down after it. When he caught it, all was silent. When he didn't, we would know right away, for Boomer would vent his spleen by screaming with rage and charging about in the bushes like a demon possessed.

When Boomer got good at catching sparrows, the birds in the field sensed this, and would vanish the moment we stepped out into the field. The accipiter in yarak projects such a fearsome presence that all the prey hunkers down, stays still and silent, and is almost impossible to locate and/or flush without a dog. Not wanting to deploy my English setter on sparrows, I tried something a little different, which once again demonstrated the incredible intelligence and learning capacity of the Cooper's hawk. I made a modified bow-perch on the roof-rack of my hawking truck, placed Boomer on top of it, and started driving out through our hawking fields on the narrow two-track roads that traverse them.

From this high vantage point, partially concealed by the profile of the huge truck, Boomer could see sparrows flitting through the sage hundreds of yards away and take off after them. When a few eluded him, he developed a wonderfully effective strategy. Boomer would spy his intended quarry from far away, drop off his roof-top perch, and fly low and slow right next to the truck (often two feet away from me on the driver's side), using the truck as a moving blind! When we were close to the prey, Boomer would accelerate, fly right in front of the grille of the truck, and make a beeline for the sparrow, which always seemed quite surprised by his sudden appearance.

At this point I should mention we always let Boomer feed up on every kill. He never showed any inclination to carry. Quite the opposite, really – he'd often catch a sparrow, look around for me or Dave Jr., and carry

his kill over to us and eat it right next to us. Boomer felt safe with his human partners. Since he took a long time to eat – much longer than any passage bird we'd flown – it offered us a good chance to sit and enjoy the great outdoors. Oddly enough, feeding him up did not seem to effect his desire to hunt, for often I'd pick Boomer up with a full gorge and he would immediately launch himself off the fist after anything that moved.

On one such day, while walking back to the truck, Boomer hurled himself at a mud-bank, grabbed something I couldn't identify, and got quite possessive. Close inspection showed he'd caught a small toad! He'd take a bite, spit it out, look at it, squeeze it, and repeat the process. Although it obviously tasted horrible, Boomer simply would not let go of his prize. A brief attempt to entice him to part with it was met with considerable opposition. As a result, Boomer got toad slime all over his face, and his left eye swelled up terribly, which put him out of action for a few days. Which leads to our next adventure...

Boomer Goes Quail Hawking

When Boomer's eye was functional (albeit still swollen), I decided to let him try his hand at quail. I was very optimistic for two reasons: 1) My English setter, Lark, had a wonderful nose, loved upland game, and I knew we could locate coveys of quail; and 2) Boomer was so fast I was quite sure he'd outfly them. I put all my hawking gear into the well-worn Chevy Suburban, gathered up Boomer and Lark, and headed south toward La Junta, Colorado – some four hours south of home – where I'd seen coveys of quail in past years. I was particularly excited, for although I'd flown goshawks and large falcons at pheasants and grouse for years, I'd never hunted quail with a hawk. And Harry McElroy's classic book, *Desert Hawking*, got my juices flowing every

time I picked it up. As I drove south toward the desert, I missed having Dave Jr. with me. He'd returned to his home in California, and so we'd have to share adventures with Boomer vicariously over the phone during our evening "Coop Report".

Once in Southern Colorado, we started driving along rural roads through the desert. The game-rich area near the Picketwire River seemed to be a good place to start, and, once in that country, I was soon greeted by a wondrous sight: A beautiful, slate-blue cock scaled quail sitting right atop a fence post. I drove some distance past the quail, parked off the road, and got Boomer and Lark out of the truck.

As soon as he spied Boomer, the sentry quail took off, and a covey of quail feeding nearby headed for the hills. Although he'd never seen a quail in his two months on Earth, Boomer immediately set off in hot pursuit and was gaining on them fast when the covey put in to a bunch of cholla cactus. Now, I don't know if you've ever encountered a cholla cactus before, but let me tell you it is one mean plant. A tall, waist-high desert species, its long, outstretched arms are covered with millions of sharp needles that, it is said, shoot out at you as you pass by, break off in your skin, and leave the tips of the tiny spines embedded deep in your dermis. How quail – or Cooper's hawks – can survive running around in those cacti defies explanation. But run they do.

Lark and I followed Boomer's flight-path, and found him a quarter-mile away racing around inside the base of a cholla cactus like a lunatic. Ahead of him in interstices of the same plant was the sentry cock quail, running full-speed, staying diametrically opposed to the hawk. The pair looked like two birds in a blender. "How can they survive those spines?", I wondered. Although young Boomer knew nothing of quail, the plucky game bird knew everything ▶



Above: Boomer on first starling.

Photo: Dave Moran

about Cooper's hawks. At precisely the right time for the quail (and the wrong time for the hawk), Boomer's attention shifted to me. The quail blasted out the backside of the cactus and headed for the wild, blue yonder. When it was about twenty yards away, Boomer sensed what was going on and took off, flying harder and faster than I'd ever seen him go. Within a football field's length the little brown pocket rocket flew right up the quail's tail, and it folded up its wings and dropped like a stone straight into cover – yet another even bigger, meaner, cholla cactus.

I scrambled over as fast as I could, and found Boomer inserted into the lower reaches of the cactus, wings outspread and stretched behind him, long legs stretched to an impossible length before him. Tightly clutched in both feet was...a beautiful blue male scaled quail! He caught it! Fortunately, having heard about these cacti, I'd worn two long leather gauntlets, and was able to reach into the cholla, get a firm grip on the quail, and lift it out onto the ground where

Boomer could eat it.

Boomer footed the quail and plucked it with a ferocity I hadn't witnessed before. As I watched him eat, what had just happened so very fast sunk in. My novice Cooper's hawk had just caught the first quail he'd ever seen! In a great flight! I was ecstatic. This was one of the high points of falconry – living absolutely in the present; becoming so absorbed in the hunt, the flight, and the victory of the catch that everything else seems to fall away. I felt absolutely at one with the real, natural world.

As I've mentioned before, Boomer was a slow eater, and took over an hour to take his fill of fresh quail. As he ate, I noticed that his toad-poisoned left eye was still swollen and partially shut. Even worse, his good right eye was closing, showing he'd been injured by a cactus spine. A glance at his legs showed they were covered with a mat of cholla spines. But Boomer didn't seem to mind. He just kept on eating.

When the hawk had a full gorge, I picked him up, replaced his field

jesses through the tiny grommets of his Aylmeri bracelets, and hiked back toward the truck. Normally poised on the fist like a dancer, Boomer now wobbled awkwardly, unbalanced by the weight of his gorge. Without warning he bated, regained the fist, and bated again. "What's going on?!", I wondered. "He never bates!" Looking way ahead, I saw a covey of quail flying off into the distance that Lark, who'd gone hunting on her own, had got up. Boomer was bating at them! I released the jesses and off he went, surprisingly fast despite his substantial payload. I watched in the binoculars as he overtook the covey and put one of the quail in. When Lark and I arrived at the scene, he was racing around a lone cholla cactus in high dudgeon. The quail was nowhere to be found. Close inspection of the situation revealed a rabbit-hole bored through the base of the tangle of cactus roots. So – quail do hide in rabbit-holes, just as Harry said! ■

To be continued.



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The falcon that flew with man

PART TWO

Words by Leo Dickinson

Photos courtesy of Adventure Archive

Just looking down Arco is enough to give you vertigo. Andy and I were wearing Birdman or Wing Suits which slowed down our vertical speed to about 60mph but increased our horizontal speed to about 80mph. When combining the two vectors we would fly away from the cliff at about 100mph. Remember your hypotenuse triangle back at school? This would make it safer for us as we could fly away from the cliff before opening our parachutes but also give the peregrines a better trajectory to chase us. Rarely do they stoop vertically – it's more like the 40 degrees that we could achieve.

Andy did a test jump with his wing suit and with a spectacular display of confidence, back-looped off the edge before swooping down and away. Show off – I doubt if it impressed the falcons – they probably thought he tripped! However when it was time to open his parachute he had a problem – twists – and lots of them. Ironically, this was just after he'd explained to my camera, how safe cliff jumping was when using a wing suit and how he would distance himself from the dangers of the cliff.

At 7am the valley had an inversion layer carpeting the lower hills with a transparent sheen. Insects bounced off the denser layer of air unable to penetrate the lower.

Now came the moment we had all

been waiting for. Andy shuffled to the edge. Below him was nothing for 3,000ft. Behind him, making sure he would go, was Sage – the fastest creature that ever lived. Lloyd started his countdown. Andy waved the lure to tempt her. Then he stepped off. She went and made a half-hearted stoop and pulled out. He had escaped. She knew what to do next time – and she could tell – there would be a next time.

A helmet-mounted camera aimed backwards caught her every movement. Twenty-five seconds later we heard Andy's chute crack open. He was safe for the moment.

Now it was my turn. I had worried about my age and asked Andy bluntly if he thought I was too old to start Base Jumping. His reply was to the point, "Leo you are never too old to jump off a cliff". Mmmm...Not quite sure what he meant by that. I walked to the edge and peered over. What I saw was so far away I wasn't sure if I liked it or not. "Ready, set, goooooo". Suddenly I was in freefall and it was sheer exhilaration. In four seconds my wings kicked in and I was flying away from that terrible cliff. Lucy chased me for a few seconds then gave up. Lloyd had always told me that peregrines were the laziest of birds. This was going to be a long learning curve.

We landed at the bottom, had an Italian coffee and croissant in the café ▶

Left: Sage chases Andy down Arco, Italy.



and drove back up for another go. Some days we managed two jumps each, others only one before the valley winds kicked in that would push our chutes away from our landing area.

Over the next several jumps the birds got better and chased us further. We were all learning. From a peregrine's point of view everything had to be just right. She knew she could fly over 200mph – she could get to this speed in seconds – she had no interest in how she got to this incredible speed – only that she did. She also knew that a long chase tired her and she'd need to recover. Perhaps that's why they don't chase every bird that crosses their sights. It might be a wasted flight.

Then a breakthrough. Lucy landed on my wrist as I was doing 100mph. She was so gentle I didn't realise she was there. She was using her wings to slipstream. You can imagine my surprise when I spotted her sat on my left glove. Just as quickly, she was gone. I later timed the film and it had lasted for 7 seconds. She had avoided the burble created immediately behind me that results in turbulent air and gracefully slid onto the lure.

She was so relaxed and she appeared to be eating but was probably just trying to dislodge her meal. I was an aircraft carrier that offered the opportunity of in-flight meals. No peregrine in the wild had ever had this luxury!

So much progress had happened since the original balloon jumps in Spain with the BBC presenter and we wondered if a double jump would be possible. Me first, holding the lure filming backwards – then Lucy followed by Andy filming forwards.

Andy was sceptical but Lloyd wanted to try it. Back to the top. The countdown seemed to take forever. As Lloyd points out in the film, "There were 12 pairs of eyes focused on that one point where Andy and Leo now

stood. This included Fudge our Labrador who was always keen on seeing where the beef was going and tried to help tidy up any dropped tidbits.

After what seemed an age, Lloyd said "goooooow" and I dropped off – followed immediately by Lucy from the side and Andy just to my right. All cameras were whirring fast and the sense of flight and chase between prey and predator was captured beautifully. She stayed between us for 600 metres – totally ignoring Andy coming up behind. We were rewarded with a beautiful sequence of a peregrine dancing in the sky around two juggernauts that were trying their best to impersonate a bird.

It was at this stage that we started to work out how they get to their tremendous speeds. First she flaps her wings 3 or 4 times. These are long powerful strokes with her wing tips touching beneath her to grab as much air as possible. Between each stroke her body position changes as she streamlines herself to limit the drag. Then another beat and into the perfect teardrop position. At this stage if she did nothing else she would continue to increase her speed but not her acceleration, until she reached her terminal velocity. A skydiver normally falls at 120mph in the spread-eagle face-to-earth position. Diving on his head he reduces the drag factor and has reached speeds of over 300mph. This only utilises the force of gravity – we have no external propulsion.

It is impressive but it does take us over 15 seconds to build up to this speed. Peregrines are different. They have external force – their wing beats – and perhaps something else. Analysing my high-speed film aimed behind me, a peregrine seems to flick its tail. This reminded me of a dolphin speeding through the water. It was its tail that gave it its burst of speed. Let us not forget that birds came from fish

– so maybe from the dim and distant past peregrines have retained a skill from their underwater ancestors.

And finally there is the profile that falconers and bird naturalists have enjoyed over the centuries. When a peregrine puts on this burst of acceleration it cuts through the air with almost no resistance. If a man – a skydiver – can get to 300mph then its not difficult to imagine that a peregrine could go faster still – after all she is several times more streamlined than a human. It's not impossible that the terminal velocity of a peregrine could be 350 or even 400mph if they wanted. That's the key – if they wanted. Going those speeds makes it easy to catch up with their prey but terribly hard to grab it. Extending a talon at this speed would radically change the flight direction and result in a miss. Nature is all to do with compromises. There is no point going that fast unless you can use the advantages. Hitting prey at that speed would probably kill the peregrine but getting there is what makes peregrines so unique.

Lloyd had always wondered how a peregrine catches its prey. We were going to find out – a miniature camera was attached to Lucy's waistcoat. It weighed 40 grams and transmitted a TV image over a 50-metre range. Considering how close she was getting to me the range was hardly an issue, as I would be wearing the microwave receiver and recorder. The first jump was a disaster. The signal broke up and the shot was unusable. It was a faulty plug on my recorder. Try again. Pack parachute and back to the top.

This time it worked and we got some unique video pictures. The lens was very wide and even took in Lucy's head and eye as she trained her attention onto catching me.

Being hit by a falcon that is itself videoing you is simply unbelievable. What a feast of visual memories. The ►

Left: Andy jumps as Lloyd releases.



THE FALCON THAT FLEW WITH MAN



Above: The team in Italy. Left: Dave and Willow.

shot showed her tilting down over the edge then me in the middle of her frame as I dropped away down the cliff at an ever-increasing rate of knots and Lucy all the time gaining on me. You can almost feel – if not see – the turbulence created in my wake that she has to contend with – and then she had me.

Again she sat on my arm for some seconds but then started to struggle with the beef. I quickly let go and gave her what she deserved then flew further away from the cliff before opening my parachute and gliding down to the café.

Now the birds were in the habit of finding a thermal and flying back up the cliff face to Lloyd which saved us lots of time doing difficult retrieves. It was almost as if the birds wanted more and more. As a filmmaker this was

fine by me – more shots the better!

Meanwhile Lloyd had devised another method for releasing Sage. He noticed that she didn't like going from his fist as much as circling before diving. So ever obliging to the birds' whims and wishes he flew her 100 metres above Andy. Andy was perched on the tiny ledge with the lure and as Sage stooped in to grab it, he would whisk it away in time-honoured fashion. Up until now most falconers haven't performed this act stood on the edge of a 1,000-metre drop. Three times she swooped before Lloyd thought she was ready.

Then a quick countdown just as she reached the apex of her flight and Andy fell away. Sage had to accelerate at a tremendous rate to have any chance of catching her prey and accelerate she did. The highest our

computer recorded was 7g. Being fair-minded and not wishing to be accused of exaggeration we subtracted 1g – the force of earth's gravity – from the calculation leaving 6g as pure energy. Any object that accelerates at 6g for 2 seconds will be doing well over 200mph and that was the way they went. A burst – a dive – a strike – and it's over. Game set and match. No contest.

My turn again. Now we were getting confident that we had a good film in the can – perhaps too confident...

I stood on the edge as I had done 15 times before. Gone were my worries about my ability to fly away and open my chute. Suddenly she hit me hard – dug in a talon and held fast.

My speed was still sub-terminal that is to say less than my terminal ▶

THE FALCON THAT FLEW WITH MAN

velocity when Lucy hit me. At slow speed I was vulnerable and her momentum pivoted me round like a compass needle through 90 degrees. Now instead of seeing the valley floor I was seeing cliff face up close.

She had attached herself to my wrist and I started to flip over. Not releasing the lure immediately caused her to open her wings. Whether this was on purpose or just a natural instinct I'll never know but the additional drag of her open wings lifted me over onto my side like a scythe slicing through the air.

I was hurtling towards the cliff and almost out of control. I gave her the lure and immediately kicked my right leg down and left one up acting as a rudder that should turn me back on heading away from the danger. Almost in slow motion I came round and missed the ridge by perhaps 10 metres before flying into clear air space. It all happened in an instant

and my reactions had been entirely automatic. Even at 56 my survival skills were still functioning. My chute opened and I floated down to the valley in a very pensive mood. Lloyd had seen all this and yelled into my earpiece, "You know what she was trying to do...she was trying to kill you". Thanks pal for that nugget of observation. Being on the receiving end I could do nothing but agree.

Until that moment Lucy had not realised the power she had over man. It was a game – he had lost – she had won – that was the way it was – on her terms.

So what had we achieved? We had taught peregrines to fly with skydivers or was it the other way round? We had achieved one milestone of 200mph but perhaps opened up a few more questions than we had answers. Certainly our film is very exciting, adrenalin pumps through every frame and its fun to watch by anyone

interested in high action adventure and wildlife thrown into one.

We had two final comments on the film – one from Andy the other from Lloyd.

"Leo has always regarded himself as a world class cameraman but I think he's made a silly mistake – he's found the best flier in the world – put a camera on her and the way I see it, that's effectively put him out of a job."

"Leo – I've got a new idea.....I'm going to get a pet tortoise.....and call it Schumacher."

Footnote: If a comparison were set up she would beat Michael Schumacher's Ferrari to 200mph by slightly better than 13x quicker! The figures are simply mind numbing. ■

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PURSUIITS OF POWER

By Stephen Bodio

Japanese Falconry Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**Above: *Falconer* Edo period,
18th century. Hanging scroll;
ink and colour on paper.**

**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Gift of Robert Treat Paine, Jr.
48.43 Photograph copyright
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**

Thirty-some years ago, as a very young man living in Boston (and already a falconer), I often haunted the precincts of the Museum of Fine Arts on Huntington Avenue. My father had been a student there before his service in World War II convinced him to do something more “practical”. The collection was and is one of the best I know – Impressionists, a famous Gauguin, and above all (to me) a world class gallery of Asian art. It was there that I saw something that I have coveted ever since: a screen with six panels depicting life-sized goshawks.

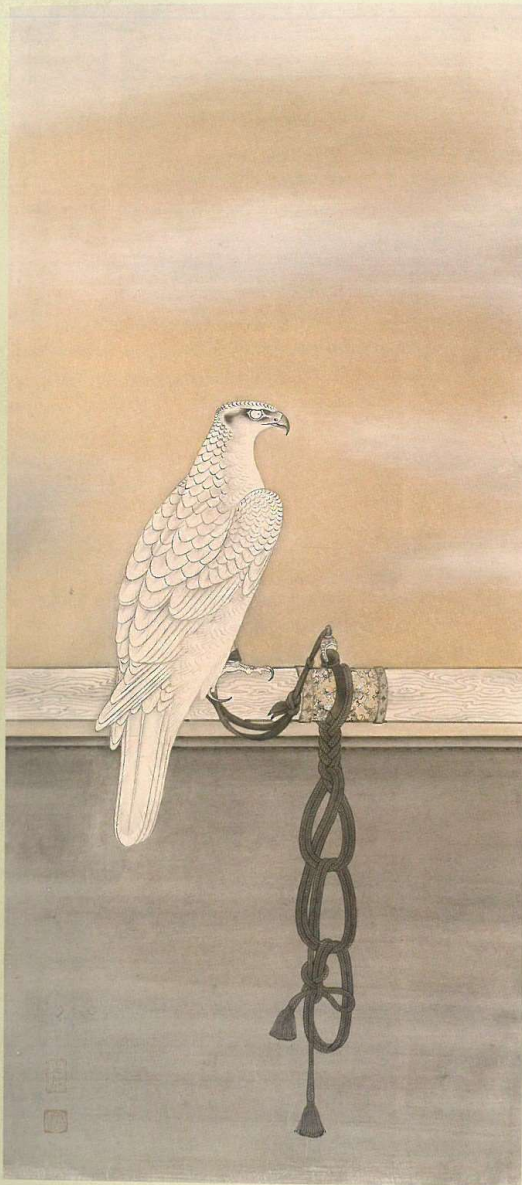
I was flying a gos at that time, and marveled at how the artist had captured the essence of birds. Their furniture was ornate, the knots that tethered them to their screen perches works of art themselves. And here, for the first time, I saw a depiction of the legendary “North-of-the-Waste-White”, as the Chinese called it: the *albidus* of Siberia.

Who knows if the power of that image was one of the things that

pointed me at “Asian” falconry? A kindly staffer printed me a black-and-white version (from an ancient glass negative) and I still have it; a version I drew myself, inspired by it, is one of my letterheads.

But the Asian collection is so vast that it rotates, and who knows whether I ever would have seen it again? Now you can have a chance to see it, and a chance to see many other examples of falconry art as well. The MFA is hosting an exhibition called *Pursuits of Power: Falconry an Samurai, 1600-1900* from December 17, 2004, to June 13, 2005. Any falconer or just plain animal art lover within a day’s drive should plan a visit. Money permitting, I may fly there from New Mexico!

According to the bible on the subject, E.W. Jameson’s *The Hawking of Japan*, there may have been some kind of falconry there very early. But we know true falconry dates back to 355 AD. A clay statuette from that time depicts a helmeted man with a hawk that sports an obvious tail bell,



Above: *Tethered Hawks* Japan, Edo period, early 19th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, colour, and gold on paper. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

and tail bells are still used today in Japanese falconry.

Japanese falconry seems to have started by borrowing the methods of Korean falconry. By using images and dates it is possible to construct a plausible evolution and spread of

falconry from its origin with the nomads of Central Asia through China, at least as early as 400 AD, and on to Korea and Japan. (Of course, it also spread west through the Silk Road, north from there to Russia, south through the Middle East

to Europe.)

Along the way, it picked up some unique trappings – the food box rather than the lure, for instance. Like most Asian hawkers, the Japanese manned their birds to tameness rather than using the hood. And all their ►

“furniture” was made beautiful as well as practical – silk screen perches, those knots, bell mounts adorned with feathers. Much of this can be seen in the 19th century *Mirror of Hawks* (Echon Taka Kagami), a wonderful manual of goshawk training in the form of a series of ink drawings, some of which will be shown at *Pursuits of Power*.

The title is not an attempt to portray falconry romantically, nor is it meant as a putdown; it is a statement of historical fact. As curator Rachel Saunders, the research assistant for

Japanese art, writes: “Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Japan was in a state of almost perpetual warfare, as regional overlords (daimyo) competed for land and brutal Samurai warriors fought in a number of contested provinces. Just a century later, Japan was a unified country at peace, ruled by law and bureaucracy in the name of the shogun, a supreme military ruler.”

And the sport of choice for the shoguns was falconry, with goshawks. The first shogun, Tokugawa Iyasa (1543-1616, and probably the

inspiration for Toronaga in the *Shogun* book and film) was both the man who brought stability to Japan and a passionate hawker, as was his dynasty for two hundred years. He followed his birds until he was forced to take to bed at 75, just before he died. It was said that on one day his party captured twenty-five cranes, eight swans, and many ducks. Much as in Europe, only lords who received more than 100,000 *koku* of rice were allowed to keep the most desirable birds, in this case goshawks (mountain peasants and trappers still trained the practical but



difficult mountain hawk-eagle, *Spizaetus nipalensis*, which they called *kumataka*, or “bear hawk.”)

The Tokugawas not only flew hawks; they commissioned art about them. Fierce goshawks were fitting symbols for the “Way of the Warrior”, always ready to do battle. As Tokugawa himself said: “A Samurai who observes the Way of the Warrior only at critical moments is like a rat sinking its fangs into the fingers of a captor...the Way of the Warrior is fully achieved only when it is followed in times of peace as well as

in times of conflict.”

The great importance of falconry to the Tokugawas persisted through the ensuing Edo period. Falconry images pervaded the culture like no other on earth. Eventually they left the realm of hunting altogether. What might be the origin of the belief that the three luckiest things to dream of on New Year’s are a goshawk, an eggplant, and Mount Fuji? And what does one make of the migration of hawking images to women’s clothes, or their simplification to near-caricature? ▶



Left: *Inside and out the capital* (detail)
Edo period, 1624 - 1673
Artist unknown, Japanese. One of a pair of six-panel folding screens; ink and colour on gold-leafed paper.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
William Sturgis Bigelow Collection 11.7284 Photo copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Above: *Eagle on a Rock* (detail)
Edo period, 1624 - 1644
Soga Nichokuan, Japanese; active early-mid 17th century.
Six-panel folding screen; ink on paper.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection 11.6912
Photo copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Left and Far Right:
Fuji, Falcon and Egg-plants Edo period, about 1775
Isoda Koryusai, Japanese, 1735-1790.
Woodblock print; ink and colour on paper.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Denman Waldo Ross Collection 06.974 and 06.975
Photos copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Even in the fading years of actual falconry and power politics in the 19th century, falconry images remain. The great Hokusai made the centrepiece of his *100 Views of Mount Fuji* a goshawk tangled in a deadly embrace with pheasant, surrounded by eggplant leaves, with Mount Fuji in the background. Rachel Saunders aptly calls such images “Virtual Falconry”, as they were adopted by people with no desire or ability to hunt with hawks.

All types of images, from pre-Tokugawa to “Virtual” 19th century, appear in this show. The earliest image is of two nestlings, from the Muramachi period (16th century). They are realistic, but more like nature painting, as is one from the early Edo of what appears to be a golden eagle on a rock. A portrait of a *kumataka* (hawk-eagle) on a screen from the same period is an excellent

depiction of the backwoodsman’s favourite bird in its natural habitat.

The most striking picture of falconry in action is also from this period, a folding screen depicting in this manner of hawking going on, called *Inside and Outside the Capital*. Anyone who has flown shortwings can relate to the hullabaloo, as two falconers follow a gos who is chasing a pheasant into a tree, others search the distance, and a spaniel strains at its leash. Three seated figures who look on may represent the *daimyo* and his retainers. All about them peasants go stolidly about their tasks. Certainly the falconers appear to be having all the fun.

There is a lot of “virtual falconry” too. One surprising image is composed of two wood block prints, from about 1775, depicting two women, an eggplant, and Mount Fuji. One of the women carries a realistic



Above: Hawk-eagle in a Pine Tree
Edo period, 1624 - 1644

Soga Nichokuan, Japanese; active early-mid 17th century.

Six-panel folding screen; ink on paper. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fenollosa-Weld Collection 11.4809 Photo copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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goshawk, quite naturally. Is this "virtual", or were some women really falconers, as in Central Asia? Another from the same period, titled simply *Falconer* approaches clever caricature, but shows the pervasiveness of falconry images. So does the blood-red kimono featured in the show. I doubt the wearer of this piece of clothing was a falconer, but it doesn't just depict hawks; they fly trailing jesses (complete with those knots!) as cranes look up from below.

The most amusing virtual image is by Hokusai, who had demonstrated that he knew the real thing in *100 Views of Mount Fuji: Returning from the Festival*, where a child's kite, realistically (again) made in the image of a goshawk, is caught in a tree.

But my favourite – and not just for reasons of nostalgia – remains those magnificent portraits on the screen. From the early 19th century, they

depict real falconers' birds in all their grim goshawk glory. The shoguns would have doubtless liked the fierce stoicism of the California poet Robinson Jeffers, who penned the lines "What but fear winged the birds, and hunger/Jeweled with such eyes the great goshawk's head?" These birds are the real things, as well as potent symbols of power. I would happily untie those knots, step that *albidus* to my fist, and ride out into the dawn, looking for cranes and herons in the river's mists.

If you can possibly do it, see this exhibit. If you are a falconer, certainly you will enjoy it; also if you love Asian art. If you are both a hawker and a lover of Asian art, you may find yourself contemplating a 1,500 mile flight. ■



Leopard of the air

The African Crowned Eagle

Words and Photos by Ron Hartley

Lundi and Cilla had each taken one scrub hare, but had missed another twelve in some great pursuits over the Norton Country Club golf course. It was my slip with Cilla, a 12-year-old female African hawk-eagle. She dropped off the fist and quickly closed with a hare. Suddenly I heard a shout of alarm before spotting the unmistakable form of Lundi, a four-year-old female crowned eagle, slipped in error and heading straight for my eagle. Cilla missed and fortunately turned towards the spotlight, immediately sighting the great eagle bearing down on her. "Turn off the light" I screamed as I jumped off the truck and sprinted to the scene. Lundi landed and hesitated for a moment at the facing hawk-eagle whose wings were outstretched, giving me the instant needed I clutched Cilla like a farmyard chicken, tucking her under my arm! While the African hawk-eagle is a formidable predator



for its size, the African crowned eagle far eclipses it (Cilla 1.4kg; Lundi 3.7kg) and out-guns it in power-to-weight ratio.

The following day a small crowd of onlookers gathered around Lundi, perched behind a small fence and monitored by an assistant, ensuring that nobody went too close. She is inclined to bate for small children and at Norton even bated at some teenage golf caddies. Raised and trained by Andre Groenewald in 1989/90 Lundi has become part of the Zimbabwe falconry scene, despite the fact that the African crowned eagle is not permitted on the normal falconry licence. In Zimbabwe the only eagle permitted on the falconry licence is the African hawk-eagle. However, it is possible to get a Special Permit for any of the other Specially Protected eagles (crowned, black, martial, tawny and Ayres') provided that suitable justification is provided and that the



Above: Andre Groenewald with Lundi.
Left: Lundi mantling over vervet monkey kill.

applicant is a suitably qualified falconer.

The aim of this article is to give an insight into the hunting capabilities and behaviour of both the captive and wild African crowned eagle and demonstrate the imperative of understanding the biology and ecology of a raptor before taking it into captivity. This takes on greater significance with such large and potentially dangerous raptors that have been used sparingly in falconry. I know of just five falconers that have hunted the African crowned eagle with any success: David Reid-Henry, Chris Heidenreich (USA), Simon Thomsett, Kevin Wilson and Andre Groenewald. Over the past 40 years I know of only five African crowned eagles that have been handled for falconry in Zimbabwe.

The first was David Reid-Henry's Tiara (5.4 kg), which he took as a brancher from a nest near Lion's Den in February 1961. He took her to the UK and kept her for many years, entering her to hares. She also killed an Alsatian dog and inflicted a few nasty injuries to David on a couple of occasions. Rudi Giesswein was given a confiscated juvenile male (2.6kg)

from Shamva in 1976. He trained it and did some rudimentary hunting at night. It chased some scrub hares, but was not entered. Kevin Wilson trained and hunted a male (2.6kg) successfully in Zimbabwe for one season before it was electrocuted. It took many scrub hares and springhares at night, while it also dispatched two steenbok (13kg). Quarry was taken in a tail-chase and it handled well. Barnett Moyo's imprint eyas female was destined to sit on a perch for its life.

The most experienced and versatile African crowned eagle in captivity is probably Lundi who has been hunted consistently and successfully by day and night for 14 years. I have been fortunate to observe her on a number of occasions over this period, while I have been privy to some intriguing discussions with Andre on her hunting and other behaviour. Andre has built up an excellent relationship with Lundi and she is the consummate operator in any circumstance. She lays eggs in her moult chamber each year and she has fostered a Wahlberg's eagle chick. She has also proved outstanding in film work. However, Andre is very careful ▶

LEOPARD OF THE AIR

with Lundi and understands when she is potentially dangerous – even he can get attacked under certain circumstances. This is probably the case with all species of rapacious eagles.

Getting a large eagle was not on Andre's falconry agenda. At that time he had hunted African goshawk, black sparrowhawk and lanner. His only experience with an eagle was a successful hack of a tawny eagle that came in as a chick. It was a fortuitous event that brought Lundi to her new home and she was acquired by accident and not by design.

In December 1989 I got a call from National Parks Ornithologist Dr Peter Mundy who reported the recovery of a crowned eagle chick found below a nest in a large baobab tree next to the Lundi River in the Chiredzi district. Apparently the chick (30 days old) had been dislodged as a consequence of roadworks below the nest. Either it fell out of the nest, or the adult female knocked it out in panic as she left the nest. A worker picked it up and eventually handed it to a farmer who tended it for over a week before phoning Peter, who in turn contacted me. I suggested that the eagle be taken by Andre Groenewald, a very competent and dedicated falconer, who lived in that area.

Andre returned the chick to its nest, but when the adults did not attend to it he was forced to remove it. As it had been hand-fed by the farmer imprinting had commenced. The degree of imprinting was only manifested when Andre trained Lundi, and it was clear that she would not be suitable for release. Consequently Andre gained a Special Permit to hold her and use her in falconry. There have been several instances where African crowned eagles in the wild have attacked small children and a sharp set, imprint eagle such as Lundi, would clearly represent a threat in this context.

There is evidence that a Taung

child (2.5 million years ago) in North-West Province of South Africa was taken by an African crowned eagle, tell-tale holes in the skull. Although very infrequent, attacks on small children emphasise this. For instance a child weighing 18 kg was taken in a village in Zambia. Colleagues rescued it by beating the eagle to death with a hoe. In January 1983 an African crowned eagle attacked a five-year-old girl (19.6kg) in the Zambezi Valley. She was outside the security fence of her village when she tripped which probably triggered the attack. She held onto the fence whilst the eagle tried to drag her off. Helpers could not pull off the eagle, so one scout beat it on the head with a stick until it was dead.

Lundi started her hunting career at night with the aid of spotlight. She took to this very easily and was soon entered on hares and springhares, while she has taken an adult duiker (9 kg). However, Andre extended her hunting greatly when he made her to vervet monkeys during the day. Daytime kills have included a juvenile female bushbuck of 12.5kg (three times her bodymass) and an oribi (7.68kg). These were dispatched fairly easily, in an impressive display of power. However, the most fascinating hunt is at the monkey, while it is also the most disturbing. Fascinating because the eagle is taking on intelligent quarry, providing unusual insights into predation. For instance male monkeys in particular are frequently aggressive, sometimes deterring the eagle. Being aggressive can also lead to the demise of a male monkey as he is exposed and physically vulnerable. Primates have the added advantage of living in groups so that social behaviour is a vital and significant extra component. A big troop of monkeys (and baboons) has a lot of lookouts, and big groups can confuse the predator. In trying to avoid risk and maximize survival, eagles and primates have had to adapt

their behaviour in a kind of arms race. In the wild monkeys and baboons will harass an eagle chick on the nest when the opportunity presents. This is more likely when both adults are away hunting. Some of the eaglets are dislodged off the nest and are attacked and injured, even fatally.

If one has children, the sight of an eagle on a monkey can appear to be too close for comfort. At a fieldmeet a large gallery invariably accompanies Andre and Lundi. At first the behaviour of the gallery is upbeat and even cocky. After all we are rooting for Africa's most powerful raptor, while vervet monkeys tend to be a pest in many areas. A gallery can prove helpful in flushing the hapless creatures, desperate to remain concealed in cover. Sometimes the alpha male advances on the eagle to defend his troop, but the speed and ease with which Lundi dispatches the largest male vervet (6.5kg) is sobering, so that the capture of a juvenile is facile. There we are, as the most formidable social group, using probably the most feared predator of small to medium-sized primates.

The behavioural responses of eagle and monkeys have led to a variety of results on the hunt, which have been readily observed in Lundi's hunts. In thick tree cover, when she is not focussed exactly on the monkey, Lundi can flare out her cheek and ear coverts with crown up, presenting a round face with yellow eyes, curiously resembling a monkey face. She then bobs her head up and down and from side to side as monkeys do, trying to see what is going on. This bobbing of her head gets a reaction from the monkey, maybe clarifying its position. When eye contact is made then Lundi stops bobbing and the glare seems to increase in intensity: her cheek, eye coverts and crown lie flat against her head. If she is at the same height or slightly higher or lower, she attempts to take the monkey in the branches and foliage of the tree.

Right: Lundi at 13 years old.



Sometimes she makes a very low "peeeep - peeeep - peeeep" (3-5 second delay in between) call. This occurs when there is much activity hunting monkeys in tree tops, where they are not prepared to make a clean break, sensing that it will be fatal. This makes Lundi more intense, but frustrates her too. It has been suggested that such forest-dwelling eagles vocalise to certain prey species under specific circumstances to provoke and assess them. Equally there is evidence that some prey animals target predators with vocal and non-vocal signals to communicate their fitness and thus deter an attack. In turn vervet monkeys vocalised considerably at the crowned eagle, in what appears to be a combination of alarm and defiant calls.

Three adult male monkeys once cornered her in the top of a tree at a distance of no more than 1.5 metres. She defended herself with open wings, slightly back, and crown fully displayed, cheek and ear coverts flared and beak open, uttering a slight hiss each time a monkey advanced on her. This is when she looks at her largest and fiercest. The monkeys were always extremely cautious, keeping a branch as a shield between themselves and the eagle. At this stage, when she was under pressure for some time, she would also call "peeeep - peeeep - peeeep", before moving into a higher or further advantage point to reassess her strategy.

Once she was pulled off one monkey by another that had come to the rescue. When Andre picked her up Lundi was very aggressive and started her "peeeep - peeeep - peeeep" call, clearly in frustration and even anger. That day she attacked Andre's 30kg pointer bitch, which had hunted with her as a team for several years. The dog was unable to move, being held on the head and neck, the eagle clearly having the advantage. Andre managed to save the pointer and has

not been able to take a dog out hunting with her again. There are several records of free-living African crowned eagles taking dogs, including in suburban areas.

When an adult male vervet monkey was caught in the open with no cover for 80-100 metres, and the eagle in pursuit, the monkey realised that he was not going to make cover, and thought the best defence was attack. The monkey stood on its hind legs, looking three times bigger, and ran towards the eagle. In this instance the eagle did not hesitate and struck the monkey which it killed easily.

On another occasion an adult male was defending three juveniles, when the eagle, at a critical moment before impact, hesitated as the monkey turned and faced her, with its neck hair standing erect and teeth bared. At this instant the monkey gave chase and the eagle could not fly fast enough to stay out of reach, before she flew into the ground because she was looking over her wing at the monkey. She instantly raised her wings vertically which made her look much larger, with crown up, cheek and ear coverts flared, mouth open and hissing, as the monkey ran around her twice, out of reach. The monkey successfully defended its young.

Andre has developed an ingenious device for ambushing monkeys. This consists of a box on the roof of his truck, which has a lever for opening. With Lundi waiting expectantly in the box, Andre can open this instantly when monkeys are sighted. The monkeys' worst fears are then realised in a deadly instant!

Simon Thomsett has the most extensive experience with this species in captivity and in 1994 a pair of his trained eagles bred successfully in Kenya. The adult male Rosy was thought to be a female because he was so large (3.4 - 3.8kg). He was obtained as an injured juvenile in 1978 and when used for falconry killed hyrax, cat, dog, duiker (19kg), monitor lizard

(2.5kg), and white-tailed mongoose (4.5kg). His most notable kill was a full-grown female bushbuck (30kg). The female Girl (4.7 - 5.4kg) was obtained in 1978 as an adult as she was alleged to be taking livestock and caused the supposed death and dismemberment of a five-year-old girl. She took dik dik (4kg) and duiker easily. She also displayed an interesting style of hunting, pursuing the fleeing antelope from a position well above, choosing to drop down vertically on the quarry in a zig-zag pattern that appeared to cut off the attempted flight path. The first F1 male from this pair (2.9kg) was easier to handle and took many nocturnal mammals when hunted at night with the aid of a spotlight. Kills included hare (2kg), springhare (3.2kg), white-tailed mongoose, genet, African wild cat (4.6kg), vervet monkey (4.7kg), duiker, Thomson gazelle calves (9kg), guineafowl and yellow-necked spurfowl. To date this pair has produced 11 eggs and seven surviving young, one of which was killed by a honey badger.

Another two released eagles were predated. A male called Totes was released at Mzima Springs in Tsavo National Park and after being harassed by Verreaux's eagle-owls at night was relocated. At the new site while Totes sat eating a vervet monkey on the ground in pouring rain he was killed by a leopard. A released F1 female Emily bound to a full-grown impala female (40kg) that was standing in a herd. She also bound to a full-grown female baboon and was fortunate to be rescued from the advancing troop. About five months later she was killed by a crocodile while she fed on a young bushbuck at the water's edge.

While it is evident that the African crowned eagle can compete directly with mammalian carnivores, sometimes it finds itself victim to creatures higher up the food chain! ■

John Chitty

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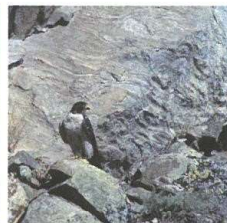
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The Screaming Rabbit

By Todd R. Fry

Falconry has changed my life. Its intoxicating effects have influenced my career, changed where I choose to live, and dictated how I spend most of my free time. It has given me a subject to study that I will never fully learn, and a craft to practice that I could not master in a hundred lifetimes. But most importantly, it has put me in direct contact with nature in a way that I never imagined possible. People come to falconry in many different ways. All of them are unique, and most are profoundly personal. I came to falconry while on a quest to silence a screaming rabbit.

Growing up in Central Pennsylvania, I spent most of my childhood playing outside in the woods and fields behind my home. I loved to be outside. My parents, however, were a different story. My father was a mechanical engineer, and his idea of interacting with nature was to walk briskly to and from his car each day. My mother had a very simple opinion of nature, one that she freely shared with me almost daily.

"Don't touch anything," she would say to me. "you'll get stung/bit/hurt/a terrible rash/killed/maimed/decapitated/eaten/ripped apart/fed-to-its-young if you get too close."

So there I was, playing amidst a paradise filled with what I thought to be killer frogs and homicidal butterflies.

My extended family, however, was filled with hunters of every kind. Deer, duck, turkey, rabbit, pheasant, you name it, and they hunted it. Most of them even travelled to Idaho and Montana every year to hunt elk and other big game. Some of them liked it so much they never came home.

So, despite my distorted view of all things natural, I still wanted to be a hunter like the rest of my family. When I grew up, I determined, I would become a hunter too. I couldn't wait. As soon as I was old enough, I passed the hunter's safety course, picked up my single-barrel shotgun, and off I went to find me a rabbit.

It's all a little hazy, but I think I blew off its right hind foot. The rabbit still managed to jump about 6 feet into the air, and immediately ran down a hole before I could get off another

shot. Then it started screaming.

No one told me about the screaming. I wasn't prepared for the screaming. You know what I'm talking about. The scream a rabbit makes when it's in serious jeopardy, that piercing, pathetic, blood-curdling scream.

I froze, unable to completely process what was happening. Rabbits weren't real things, were they? I thought they were just targets! You mean they actually feel things? They feel pain? I felt a dull pain ripping through my groin. I didn't know how to handle this.

The rabbit continued to scream deep inside that hole for about five minutes. It would get louder at times, but gradually faded away to nothing. I couldn't get to it. I wanted to put it out of its misery. I wanted to put me out of my misery. The rabbit died in that hole, and I caused it.

So here I was at a fork in the road. My first hunt was becoming one of the biggest moments in my young life, but for all the wrong reasons. I needed someone to help me find my way, to help me deal with what just happened. No one stepped to the plate.

As much as my family was populated with hunters, no one ever actually discussed the details of hunting. Instead, there were exaggerated stories of the 36-point buck that got away, debates over which rifle or shotgun could dispatch three charging grizzlies with one shot, and heroic stories of many days in the frigid cold and blinding snow having nothing to eat but a few toes that had succumbed to frostbite. They weren't a very "enlightened" group of hunters.



Photo: Seth Anthony

No one ever shared his thoughts about the higher purpose of the hunt. If my family were to have a 'hunter's motto' it would read something like this: "Sissies show compassion. Real men kill things."

So that day, as I stood at life-changing crossroads with the sound of a screaming rabbit fresh in my mind, I looked to my relatives for guidance. They all just stared back.

After an uncomfortable silence, I was summarily told that the rabbit was stupid for having run down the hole when it should have stayed up here so we could have finished it off. It deserved to suffer. Stupid rabbit.

Well, let me tell you, that didn't help me feel any better. The taunting I received as a result of my concern for the rabbit's suffering didn't help, either. But it certainly made the path I chose crystal clear. I went home, cleaned my gun, put it in its case and threw away my hunting license. I was done. Aside from feeling betrayed by my family, I did not want to be identified with a group of people who were so overtly disrespectful to the very thing that made their sport possible in the first place. So I got out my Commodore 64 and didn't think about hunting (except to ridicule those who did it) for 18 years.

Over the next two decades I pursued many interests. Hunting was not one of them. My childhood fascination with nature gradually faded away as I became more immersed in technology. It was kind of sad. Something was missing. So I went to the big city to find that "something."

I went to college in a big city. I

started my career in a big city. I thrived in the big city. Occasionally, I would reminisce about my childhood, running barefoot and half-naked through fields and forests, but the scream of that rabbit always stopped me short. So I did what many people do – I took solace in the steel and concrete of civilisation. I became a "city boy."

Then one day a strange twist of fate brought me back home to Central Pennsylvania. Not exactly the bustling metropolis that I had grown accustomed to. But it was a great career opportunity, so I swallowed hard and made the move.

One thing led to another, and before I knew it, I was the videographer/editor for a nationally syndicated animal show called *Wild Moments*. The show took me all over the world, and I filmed all kinds of wild animals. The little boy in me was giddy. But that damned rabbit still insisted on screaming every now and then. It kept the little boy quiet.

One day, *Wild Moments* went on assignment to New York City. Ahh! Finally, I would be back in familiar territory! And one of our shoots took us to the top of the Throgs Neck suspension bridge in the Bronx to band peregrine chicks. Can you believe it? We get to go to the top of the Throgs Neck Bridge! Oh yeah, and there were also a couple of peregrines there as well. Sorry, I almost forgot.

We arrived at the bridge and began the ascent. This puppy was big! Rising over 550 feet off the surface of the water, it's not a place for someone with acrophobia. I couldn't wait!

Oh yeah, and the peregrines... right.

After a fifteen-minute elevator ride and then climbing through a seemingly endless series of stairs and portals, we finally opened the overhead hatch to the screaming sounds of: "ACKACKACKACK!!!!!"

Standing on the top of one of the tallest suspension bridges in New York City, hunting was the farthest thing from my mind. But not for long.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was about a quarter of the way across the sky, comfortably muted by a thick haze that was blanketing the water. A warm breeze was drifting in from the east off Long Island Sound, and the buzz of the city hummed from over 400 feet below. A perfect May morning. And that's when I realised that I was being hunted.

Making an arc over my head was one of the peregrines. The screaming hadn't stopped since we opened the door to the roof. ACKACKACK ACKACKACKACK! She circled around from behind, and then flew across the sun, blinding me for an instant. But I could still hear the screaming. ACKACKACKACKACK! Suddenly, she stopped for a split second, almost like she had to swallow, or was catching her breath. Then she started up again, this time much louder. And closer. She was PISSED.

Since I was the photographer you'd think at this point I would start filming, right? Wrong. Before I knew what was happening, she dove at my head. She was faster than anything I had ever seen before in my life. I instinctively recoiled and crouched ►

down. She seemed to stretch over me like a spaceship entering warp drive. All my hair stood on end and my scalp pulled so tight it actually hurt my head. I felt a wave of adrenaline dump into my bloodstream, and I was wide-awake. Time... slowed... down.

I wasn't so impressed with the bridge anymore. It didn't matter. I could have been standing on the surface of the moon, for all I cared. At that moment, I was completely alone with this miniature jet. She was screaming through the air, rage emanating from her like an inferno, sliding through the skies with the ease of a missile. And she had her sights set on me. The second time she passed I had the presence of mind to roll tape...barely. I got the last bit of the arc, and then a flyby that made my heart freeze.

By now, the bridge top was being overtaken by a bunch of biologists and various other spectators like ants on a picnic basket. This flurry of activity was a bit much for the falcons to stomach, so the angry parents fell back to a 50-yard perimeter. They never went very far. They kept close watch on the pack of humans that were huddled around their babies.

Whew, that was close. I almost got my 195-pound ass kicked by a pair of two-pound birds. That would have been embarrassing.

After we finished filming on the bridge, we headed over to Queens, where four more peregrine chicks needed bands as well. I was talking the whole drive over about the bridge, the shots, and oddly enough, about the peregrines.

"Did you see that thing attacking us?" I asked excitedly "holy crap, I've never seen anything like that!"

Somewhere deep inside me, the rabbit started screaming. For the first time in almost two decades, I barely heard it.

We arrived at the ten-story building in Queens about an hour later. This location was not nearly as

spectacular as the bridge we had just come from. Nonetheless, there were peregrines here, and we were on a mission to band them.

We arrived at the trapdoor where the eyrie was, and before the biologist even touched the door, the commotion outside had reached a feverish pitch. ACKACKACKACKACK! It was now becoming a pleasantly familiar sound.

**She was screaming
through the air, rage
emanating from her
like an inferno,
sliding through the
skies with the ease
of a missile.**

The biologist grabbed the four young peregrines and brought them inside. He headed to a table about 50 feet away to band them. I stayed at the door to get some nice close-up shots of the adult birds.

Let me just say here that there are very few times when you can recall the exact moment when your life changes. I can think of a few, like my first kiss. Or the moment my son was born. Or listening to the sound of a screaming rabbit dying at the bottom of a hole. What happened next was, without a shadow of a doubt, one of those moments for me.

One of the peregrines landed in front of the nest. The hair on my neck stood up again. I started filming. She was staring at me with all the seething rage that only a wild raptor can display. My scalp started tightening again. Those huge dark eyes shot into me with anger, fear, and hatred. My adrenal glands dumped round two into my bloodstream. I must have looked very odd to her, with my big head and

it's huge glass eye. She stayed there for several minutes, posing furiously. I had never seen anything so beautiful in my life. There was still some blood on her face from a kill earlier that day. And then it hit me. I was in love.

I had no idea why, but I was so overwhelmed with the immense power that emanated from this small bird's body, that I knew at that moment, at that instant, my life had changed, and changed dramatically. I had no idea where this passion was coming from, where it would take me, or even why I was feeling this way. All I knew is that a flame had been lit somewhere deep in my soul. A flame that I knew would never go out. Just as I had witnessed the birth of my son and felt the unconditional love that came with him, I had witnessed the birth of my passion for the peregrine falcon and all birds of prey.

I left New York City a much different person than when I arrived just a few days before.

Luckily for me, the host of *Wild Moments*, Jack Hubley, was a master falconer. So in the following months I started to ask Jack a lot of questions. He answered them all, politely and completely, expecting me to eventually stop. I didn't.

They were questions not only about peregrines, but about all birds of prey. And I asked a lot of questions about hunting. For the first time in my life, someone explained hunting in a way that made sense to me. Not as the kill'em and grill'em-till-they're-all-dead mentality that I grew up with, but the respect for both hunted and hunter, and the inter-dependence of every living thing on earth. I felt like a kid again. I felt like I was getting a second chance to choose my path. Second chances don't come around all that often, so I was very attentive to this one.

He also introduced me to falconry. He told me about the working partnership between falconer and hawk, and all the joy and heartache

that comes with it. I was beginning to see my path.

Later that year, Jack invited me to come hawking with him and some of the other falconers in the area. I accepted immediately. On a crisp November morning, I met five more extraordinary people. Mike Long, Jim Miller, Vaughn Good, John Kump and Tom Beaver. Combined, they have had more of an effect on my life than just about anyone or anything I can think of.

I was about to go on my first rabbit hunt in over 18 years. I was nervous. The rabbit in my head had reached a feverish level of screaming that I had never heard before. Should I be doing this? What have I gotten myself into?

Mike got out his goshawk first, and I walked beside him as he told me all sorts of things about falconry. He will never know how much that short walk meant to me.

We were walking along a tree line, and everyone was beating the brush. Then suddenly, everything happened so fast I could barely comprehend it. A rabbit shot out from a pile of brush, and the goshawk flew off Mike's fist at an impossible speed. They both zipped over a little ridge, goshawk closing in fast. And then I heard something that I hadn't heard for a long time. The scream.

It was the exact same scream I had heard almost 20 years before. But this time, it sounded very different to me. It still curdled my blood, it still sounded pathetic. But it was different. I heard life, not death.

The rabbit had served its ultimate purpose – to prolong the life of the hawk. If not for the rabbit and its sacrifice, the hawk could not survive. The rabbit lives on through the hawk and the memory of the scream. Life continues beyond death. I was beginning to understand.

Since that day almost four years ago, I have taken my falconry test, built a mews, and bled off a lot of discretionary income on various



Photo: Jack Hubley

Above: Author with first red-tailed hawk, a 32oz male, on its first cottontail kill.

falconry items. Jack was gracious enough to be my sponsor, and frankly, I would not have wanted to apprentice with anyone else. He has had a profound effect on my life, and revived a side of me that I had long since forgotten. I will be forever indebted to him for that. I've completed my first successful season hunting with a red tail, and I eagerly look forward to my second season with a new hawk.

Jack has expressed to me on more than one occasion how he is absolutely

dumbfounded as to why I latched onto this sport. Not me. This is a part of me that took twenty years to find. I will never let that go. And I have so much more to learn. Thanks to falconry, I've re-connected with that scared little boy I left behind in a field so many years ago.

And as for the screaming rabbit... well, he's not screaming anymore.

May he rest in peace. ■

Falconry meets in whatever part of the world have an irresistible draw as they offer a great opportunity to observe the sport from another perspective away from the familiarity of one's own hawking.

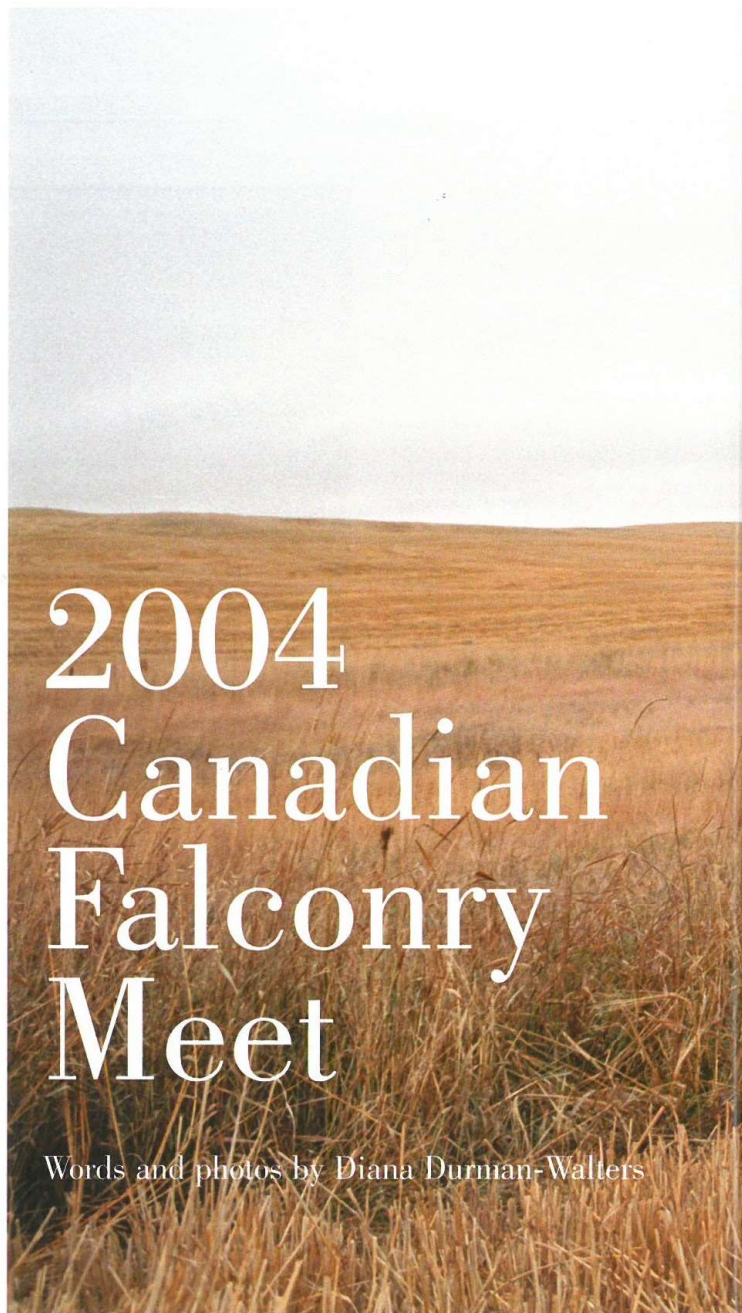
The meet held from 12th October to 17th at Milk River, Alberta, Canada was to provide some exceptional hawking for all those who were either participating or spectating.

Alberta is a large province with a total area of 255,000 square-miles. A major characteristic of the province is its diverse topography, ranging from the flat, sometimes featureless plains to the high mountains of the west. These differences help create a variety of environments, from the prairie steppe in the southeast corner of the province to the mixed-wood, boreal forest of the north and the treeless alpine of the Rocky Mountains. This range of environments provides a rich and diverse animal and plant life that make it visually breathtaking, providing a whole host of new experiences.

Without doubt the Canadian Rocky Mountains are spectacular simply because they contain some of the most dramatic scenery in the world. The foothills of the mountain zone quickly spread out into the prairie country in the south, which harbours a rich assortment of gamebirds and for those who were flying at the meet, were to prove testing quarry for their falcons.

The quarry, which ignites the senses, has to be the sharp-tailed grouse. From my own perspective, grouse hawking provides the element of precision flying with a falcon that has all its senses finely honed, whilst providing spectacular speed and stooping to outwit a gamebird of equal calibre. Universally the grouse family truly test any falcon.

Sharptails are found on the prairie heights usually in and around



traditional lek sites. They are inclined to remain on the alert at all times and can be tricky to get to hold in one spot. Like all gamebirds they will take the advantage when seeing a falcon concentrating on pumping up to a good pitch, to run on and secrete themselves in cover further away than you thought they were. They can also flush with the same alacrity as our own red grouse and be as if jet propelled within seconds, making them difficult

to catch for any falcon out of position.

For most of the falconers in these parts "Huns" i.e grey partridge and ducks are the staple flying quarry. The Milk River zone is liberally appointed with duck ponds. They seem to be everywhere. Many of them no bigger than 150ft long with gadwall, widgeon and mallard being most commonly found on them. It wouldn't be long before these ponds were unusable as the winter freeze would push the



ducks towards larger stretches of water, but at this time of the year they are bountiful.

The day's hawking would begin well before daylight. All falconers would gather in the camper park where many of the falconers had based themselves. In the hour before first light it is very dark and very cold. Falcons would be loaded up into the 4x4s frequently still fast asleep on the cadge. These falcons are used to

travelling long distances to the hawking grounds and this sort of rude awakening is all part of their hawking day.

As in most of the North America continent there is a strong hunting culture, which allows incredible freedom to enter onto land for quarry. Most of the landowners in the area, having been approached for permission to fly on their ground are only too keen to allow the falconers to

Above: Dave Knutson after a successful flight.

have full use.

There were a small group of falconers from the UK as well as Hal Webster from the US who attended as visitors. In the early morning light small parties of three vehicles would head off to pond locations. This pre-dawn start would ensure that duck were on the water and hadn't left to ▶



Above: Mark Williams with gyrfalcon.

feed elsewhere. By the time it took to reach the ponds it would be light. Suitable ponds were quickly 'gassed' over with binoculars to see how many and what type of duck were on it. Most of the falcons were experienced in duck hawking. There were of course some more experienced than others and this was very evident once the falcon was unhooded and cast off. Many of the flights were memorable but there are always those that leave an indelible mark and one such was Dave Knutson's passage jerkin.

Dave explained that this was not an easy relationship as the jerkin had always been reluctant in bonding with his falconer and this had made him tricky to deal with if he didn't respond

to the quarry quickly enough or when making in on the kill. Dave has flown many gyrs, but as he had said, this one just had to be handled with care, as there was always the risk of losing him.

On this particular morning we came upon a sizeable high plateau pond. It was in a slight depression of the hill making it difficult to see what (if anything) was on it. Leaving the vehicle Dave edged up to the rim carefully to spy the possibilities and crept back saying excitedly that it was brim full with mallard, widgeon and gadwall and there were more duck than he'd ever seen on one spot. It presented a dilemma. This was the type of set-up that the jerkin might

just take off on. Infinitely capable of taking any of the quarry, his irascible mood swings could have him veer off and go and locate something easier and quieter. Dave looked at the anticipation in all the accompanying falconers' faces and decided to fly him.

Walking out onto the surrounding stubble he quickly struck the braces and waited for him to leave the fist. As he did so it was noticeable the silence of the immediate surroundings. The jerkin looked business-like and began to mount with ease into the airspace above Dave. We watched for any indication that he would change his mind and begin to wander off course. He looked down onto the water and made a mental note of the huge flock below him but didn't alter his wing beat as he continued climbing. He manoeuvred himself to the lower end of the pond and had a dominating pitch but was just a tad off where Dave wanted him to be. Suddenly Dave had given the signal for the flush. Almost as if one living body, a flock of more than 300-400 duck rose in a cacophony of deafening sound of beating wings with water thrashing to the energy of movement from this massive turbulence of waterfowl.

The jerkin slipped immediately into a vertical stoop but checked at the immense movement below. His passenger skills and knowledge came to the fore and he let the main body rise and clear away from the water knowing that not all would form a tight pattern. Sure enough several of the mallard had decided to make their exit away from the main flock and one of these was struck a deadly blow well out in the stubble field. Telemetry was needed to find him as he had taken his quarry into the rough edges of the field and wasn't giving the game away. Now Dave had to crawl carefully toward him. We watched from a distance as the jerkin seeing Dave's approach took hold of the duck with just one foot looking anxiously around.

It was a tense moment as Dave edged close to him, took hold of the duck in his glove and waited for the falcon to step up. He did, and proceeded to carry on eating in a more relaxed frame of mind. A really spectacular flight with a passage hawk.

In big country such as this the extravagance of huge gatherings of waterfowl are to be seen in every shape and hue. It isn't usual for a falcon to want to tackle ducks in large numbers because they are formidable and intimidating and most often sitting on very big water. Falcons have a natural sense of self preservation and won't take on the impossible.....that is of course unless you are a prairie falcon.

Barry Roubottom flew two very accomplished prairie falcons at the meet. On this particular afternoon we had been to several ponds to check out the possibility of a duck flight. He was flying a 10-year-old female, which had been successful earlier in the day and had taken a duck skilfully on one of the smaller ponds. We stopped at a likely water hole that had a small amount of cover round it and Barry couldn't quite see what was tucked into the bank but guessed there had to be duck on there. Casting the prairie off she began to mount into the strong wind and immediately became distracted from her mission. It was a case of the usual suspects, wild prairie falcons. They seem to come out of the blue and then begin to harass the intruder on their patch mercilessly, often quite oblivious to the close proximity of people around them. This 10-year-old had plenty of experience in dealing with her wild cousin and parried and deflected her attacks until the wild one, disinterested with the contest, flew off. Unknown to her falconer the skirmish had allowed the ducks to depart from the pond, unfortunate, as by now she was in a really superb commanding pitch.

Calling her down to the lure we all

decided to make it back to base. As we drove out along the dirt road Barry stopped and looked out into a field which was filled with snow geese. Some standing, most of them lying down. In the foreground were a large flock of mallard, which had joined them. Sometimes for a falconer there are moments of 'devil may care'. Here was one of them. He unhooded the prairie and let her take stock of the situation. She spotted the mallard and like a stealth machine slipped over the vehicle using it as a blind. She took off in straight pursuit hugging the ground to lower her profile and not give the game away. She had 300 yards to fly and just as she was almost upon them the geese spotted her and rose in a vast cloud of whiteness honking and whirling around so that falcon, mallard and geese were enveloped in one mass. The noise of their honking was ear-splitting. Suddenly she was completely lost to sight. Most falconers would have been on the run over to the spot to check what was happening, but the prairie was far too experienced and gritty to let a few hundred geese dissuade her. She didn't manage to bag her mallard in all the confusion and chaos but she wasn't one little bit deterred by the prospect either and returned cool and unruffled to the truck, alighting on the tail gate as if it was all in an evening's work!

The vast prairie lands south of Calgary stretching to the American border are rich feeding grounds for Huns, as they are known there. They are in abundance everywhere usually in large coveys. The ubiquitous 4x4 vehicles are used to cover vast acreages of land putting up coveys then marking them down. Pointers and setters or German wirehaired and shorthairs are used to pinpoint the covey. The majority of the falcons have had a great deal of experience over Huns and will take a good pitch over the dogs putting in classical vertical stoops at them.

Watching much of the dog work I felt that they were under-achieving and were being used primarily for flushing. In many of the vast cornfields there were areas of undulation and pockets of cover, which invariably had Huns in, which would have been ideal for dogs to work. It wouldn't be practical over very short, flat, stubble as the dogs would be busting more coveys than they could hold, but in the taller stubble they would have been a greater asset as many of these coveys put up by the vehicles without warning, quickly lifted and went completely out of sight. Dogs would have given a very clear indication that the partridge were in front allowing many more really good flights.

Mark Williams who was one of the main co-ordinators of the meet showed great sport with his two gyr/peregrine tiercels – one very experienced older tiercel and a 2004 black gyr/peregrine (gyr x Australian peregrine). The black falcon seemed to the naked eye to stand out a great deal easier in the very bright sunlight. With the abundance of opportunity on Huns this youngster really was shaping up and was exciting to watch. Mark used his German wirehaired and shorthaired pointer to excellent advantage in the cover, which was often wide, and overgrown bordering the perimeter of the large expanse of wheat fields. Both dogs were good game-finders and exceptionally steady on point giving plenty of time to get the falcon into position above. However it was the very experienced older tiercel that really set the pace in Marks team as he could command his quarry by taking a high pitch and put himself into a dominating position.

On one of the many successful flights this tiercel climbed to a really good pitch of 700-800ft above the staunch and steady point of the German shorthaired pointer bitch. The flush produced a covey of eight Huns that broke in two small groups, ▶



Above: Steve Swartze with Richardson's merlin.

quickly accelerating to a great speed from the now stooping falcon. This falcon knew exactly how to tackle the changing patterns of escape from the partridge and chose his one without varying or deflecting to another. The rush as he came into earshot and the closing speed of attack left one breathless with the excitement of the skill involved. He struck his partridge a fatal blow and the impetus of the shot carried him into the deeper cover on the edge of the stubble.

This style of exciting flying with experienced falcons along with Dale Guthormson and Jon Groves who also had exhilarating, very experienced tiercels, set the pace for the next few days.

But as with every experienced rank of falconer there are those that are coming up fast in the rear. Especially so Steve Swartze. He flew a Richardson's merlin as well as a riveting gyr/barbary tiercel. On one

very large stretch of water, the tiercel, having been cast off a long distance from the lake, had started taking pitch above Steve who promptly jumped into the 4x4 and drove the next 500 yards with the tiercel following on, still at an excellent pitch way above the vehicle. As we neared the lake there were already mallard trying a quick exit. The tiercel went into a high velocity stoop just out of sight. The vehicle quickly made up the lost ground and he was located on the stubble with a very large mallard well and truly mastered.

Finally the winter snows came onto the prairie just as we were about to leave and the northerly front that brought the snow also brought a greater influx of duck, with sharptails also more accessible. The last days hawking was a bonanza for the falcons with a total of 18 head of quarry in the bag. It doesn't get better than that! ■

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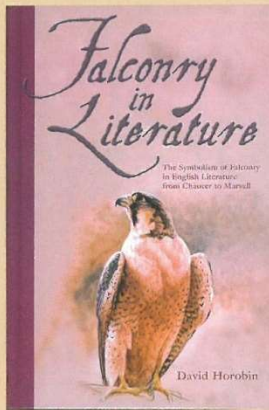


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Reviewed by John Loft

It was high time that this book appeared. Before now, several writers on falconry have included for our benefit some of the significant references to the sport that appear in old books, and many of us, I expect, have had our own favourite quotations. Yet no-one had made a significant collection of them and no-one had devotedly trawled great literature for the remaining hidden treasures. Now, along comes David Horobin, steeped to saturation-point in his subject, fully qualified for the task of opening the store-house, and eager to satisfy our wants. What's more, he has explained away the difficulties presented by their archaic language and has interpreted the quotations for us in the light of their unfamiliar contexts.

After the customary preambles, he examines at great length the well-known list from *The Boke of St Albans*

that has been believed, by some people, to lay down a rule that governed which species of hawk each man could fly depending on his rank in society – a falcon gentle for a prince, and so on – and he concludes that it was not a rule and its precepts were not observed. He maintains instead that the list was intended to serve merely as an analogy of the feudal system, a kind of social imagery, and from that starting-point he builds up his whole thesis on the imaginative connections that are made between almost any aspect of the lives of men and birds. Dame Juliana's list naturally leads Horobin on to a consideration of the attributes man and hawk shared – Nobility and Baseness, Royalty and Power – but in the following chapter Love is his title (although its subject includes strife between the sexes as well as more tender feelings) and the way is open for his study of the much more subtle and effective imagery which the poets perceived and felt when they contemplated the most fascinating of birds and her, or his, influence on earth-bound Man.

The themes of the book provide the framework upon which the grand exhibition of quotations can be hung. The space here does not allow me to give samples of them, only to recommend them to you. Nearly all of them are from poets, the most stirring of them come from the dramatists (not only good old Shakespeare), and probably all of them come from non-falconers, except Gage Earl Freeman's supreme lines, ending with the thrice-quoted:

Then were we friends, and when
the drousy night

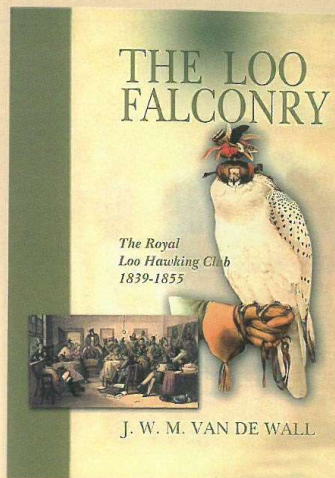
Talked to the world of stars in its
bright dreams,

I loved to deem she jouketh well in
it.

Contrary to some prejudice against them, not all ancient woodcuts are

grotesque. Of the illustrations here the worst of them are late 17th century, while the vignettes of the Emperor Frederick's 13th century falconers are delightfully true to life, and for the detail of hawking in the Elizabethan period there is nothing to beat the pictures of hawking parties from Turberville and Tardif. In studying them I made these discoveries: The austringer in doublet and trunk hose ("Let me not in vanity delight, etc.") from the front of *The Perfect Booke* can be seen to have been copied, skilfully, from Turberville, while his merlin was copied from the (earlier) d'Arcussia, as were also, but not quite as obviously, John Ray's peregrine and gyr (1678). All these pictures were, however, as good as ruined by the publisher's choosing to print them all in varying shades of garish pink. (His desire to be new-fangled – by, for instance, putting page-numbers halfway up the page and using double line-spacing for all quotations, even the verse, does not favourably impress me, although I heartily applaud his decision not to convert UK spelling to US). The cover bears one of Andy Ellis's loveliest falcon portraits. Enough said.

When writing for publication an author needs to keep his prospective readers in mind. If our author had been more aware of us falconers over his shoulder (for non-falconer readers will not be numerous) he might have spared us from being taken all through the basics again, and, though it is cruel to say so, he might have left out the set of perfectly good, modern photographs, four to a page, that appear in front of the Index. But he was, of course, so brimful of enthusiasm and knowledge that it all burst from him for our stimulation and enjoyment – whether we like being educated, or not.



**The Loo Falconry:
The Royal Loo Hawking Club
1839-1855**

By J.W.M. Van De Wall

Published by Hancock House
ISBN: 0-88839-576-0
[http://www.hancockhouse.com/
products/loofal.htm](http://www.hancockhouse.com/products/loofal.htm)

Reviewed by Gordon T. Mellor

This book adds to the Hancock House portfolio of falconry publications and whilst the English translation is new (2004), the original text was actually published in Dutch in 1986.

Many of us will have read the British rendering of the Royal Loo club through the works of Salvin initially with Broderick and then Freeman, Lascelles, and in passing Harting and Blaine. In addition to these, the translated Schlegel & Wulverhorst provides a greater yet still modest detail of the brief flowering of the club devoted to the 'Haut Vol'. Van De Wall's work develops and elaborates on the previously available history with some original research.

Hawking heron was one of the great flights of medieval falconry in Britain and Europe; however it had declined along with the sport itself and by the latter years of the 18th century had become comparatively

rarely undertaken. The Confederate Hawks of Great Britain that became known as the Falconer's club, did under the patronage of Lord Berners fly heron at High Ash near Diddington in Norfolk. However the heronry there was in decline and the surrounding countryside was being increasingly cultivated and enclosed. By the 1830s heron hawking was to all intents and purposes, finished in the British Isles.

Edward Clough Newcome and Godolphin, the Duke of Leeds, sought to continue the *haut vol* and travelled to the Low Countries. Here auspicious circumstances together with an enthusiasm amongst a small number of falconers from France, the Low Countries and the German states, combined to form the Loo club. Royal patronage both enabled and supported a decade and a half of ambitious and classical falconry.

Where Van De Wall's text really works well is in the provision of a few detailed accounts of the art of the *haut vol* as practiced by the Loo club. This, together with the intricacies of the relationship with the House of Nassau and the employment of the professionals, is illuminating. Some records of how the participants passed their time waiting for the late afternoon or early evening start of the hawking, provide insight into the sporting classes of the mid-19th century.

For those who have looked in any depth at the British manifestation of falconry around this period, it will be clear that the author makes some gross generalisations that undermine some of the points he pursues. Whilst this work is not a history of the British practice, the unfortunate consequence of these short-comings is that one is left wondering about some of the other material as well. This is a pity because Van De Wall has undertaken a good deal of valuable research.

Whatever these reservations, the text is full of observations that both inform upon and bring to life one of the most important European clubs of the 19th century. For a brief period one of the great spectacles of falconry

was re-enacted with a mounted field, in open countryside and, at a plentiful and demanding quarry. It was to be unsustainable and the last manifestation of traditional Western European falconry carried out on a grand scale with Royal patronage.

The Loo Falconry: The Royal Loo Hawking Club 1839-1855 is a beautifully produced book with numerous illustrations in both colour and black & white, some of which are not often reproduced. Van De Wall is to be applauded on putting into print this work, and ultimately making it available in the English language. I am no doubt that the Loo Falconry and the *haut vol* deserves more attention from scholars and this text will in the fullness of time, be accompanied by further research that will explore and explain this rich part of falconry's history.

VIDEO REVIEW

The Imprint Goshawk Part I

Produced by Morgan Jones Film
Productions

Reviewed by Nick Kester

Never dismiss something because it is home produced – look hard behind the harsh editing and the read-through script and you will find pure gold. Watching this video I am constantly in awe of one man's skill and dedication, something that is in horribly stark contrast with one's own half-witted attempts.

Dave Jones is a man with considerable attention to detail and infinite patience; otherwise how could he achieve what he does? If there were two complaints I would raise (and one is really an opportunity) they are this. Firstly, I wish he had put a time log on his activities. Many people will see this video, think they can make an ▶

imprint, and then foul it up because they are unable to devote sufficient time to the process, resulting in a problem hawk rather than the wonderful hunting companions that Dave can produce. Secondly, write your acquired knowledge down in detail. We only have an American work on the subject, much of which is unacceptable in the UK, so a book would be wonderful. (I will happily edit it!)

Key to good falconry is acute observation. Would you have noticed that starlings take rosemary twigs to their nest and that it provides a good anti-bacterial agent? Would you put an electric mesh fence round your weathering lawn to keep away stray dogs and urban foxes, before the accident occurs?

The interaction between man and hawk in this film is incredible, and to think his female goshawk is flying free

and hunting only seven days after removal from the aviary. Proof indeed of the dividends paid for all those hours given up in the first season. But too often we are left with questions unanswered. The lure is an underestimated tool and should be used more frequently. Explain please. Hypothesising that hiding food is not really that much of an issue when rearing an imprint. I wish we knew why he thinks this. Small points but ones beginners would love to know.

Then he goes and leaves us wanting more. This man has flown goshawks in a caste, had them waiting on at 1,000 feet, and following on through woodland like the ubiquitous Harris' hawk. But best of all he has tame hacked his young goshawks. What does that do for their hunting skills? Can't wait for *The Imprint Goshawk Part II*. ■

The Imprint Goshawk
Part One



By Dave Jones

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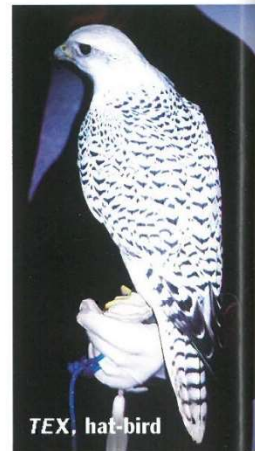


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