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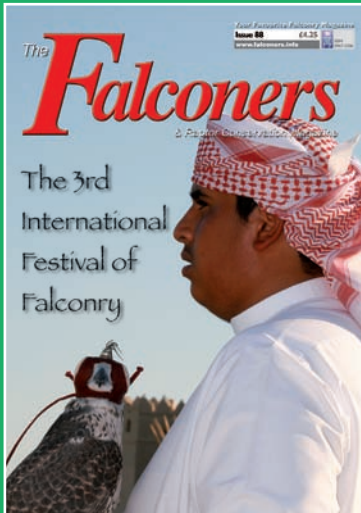
The **Falcons**
ers
& Raptor Conservation Magazine



Interview with
Emma and Steve Ford

The *Falconers*

& Raptor Conservation Magazine



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We are now well into the flying season which I hope everyone is enjoying and having many successful flights.

I was lucky enough to attend the Welsh Hawking Club's annual fieldmeet in Llangollen in October and they have been celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. I will be publishing a report on this in the next issue but in the meantime I would like to congratulate the club on reaching this milestone.

In this issue, there is part one of an interview I had with Emma and Steve Ford earlier in the year and I would like to thank both Emma and Steve for giving up part of their valuable time to spend with myself and my wife, Marian.

Finally, let's hope the weather next year will be more kind to us so that we can attend events such as the British Falconer's Fair and CLA Game Fair. This year has been a complete wash-out, so it's fingers crossed all will be well in 2013.

In the meantime, have a good read.

editorial



news & products

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

Nest Box Challenge

Over the weekend of the 13th & 14th October 2012, the Hawk Conservancy Trust, Andover took on a challenge of Olympic proportions. They attempted to install 106 nest boxes in a single weekend, as part of an on-going conservation project at the Trust.

Kestrels have suffered a serious decline in Great Britain over recent years, and in some areas up to a 50% reduction in numbers. The species has been amber listed by the British Trust for Ornithology. The Trust is currently conducting a conservation project called "Caring For Kestrels" which is trying to establish the reasons for their decline, and instigate positive conservation measures to try and help the species. One reason for the decline could be the lack of suitable nest sites, and this is where the Nest Box Challenge weekend will play an important part.

Two areas were identified for the project, located in North East Hampshire and West Sussex borders, and each of those were divided into two sections: one the experimental area, the other the control. In the experimental area suitable nest site locations were identified, and this area was to be saturated with nest boxes. Over the next four years the area will be monitored to record not only Kestrel numbers, but other raptors in the area, number of nest boxes used and chicks fledged. In the control area no nest boxes will be installed, but

the same monitoring process will be carried out to establish if the provision of nesting sites affects population numbers.

To fund this project the Trust needed to raise £50,000, and the call went out to volunteers and local companies to each raise £500 to secure a place on the team for the weekend. Support came from many different areas :

staff from NBC Bird and Pest Solutions were sponsored to cycle 210 miles from their head office in Norfolk to the Trust, members of the Hogsback Harley Davison group held a fundraising BBQ, and Scottish and Southern Electric agreed to supply 10 four wheeled drive vehicles each day. Over the weekend all participants met at the Trust for a bacon roll and a briefing from Conservation Officer Dr. Matt Stevens on the project and the day's task. Everyone was assigned their team leaders and the vehicles were loaded with nest boxes and all the equipment needed to install them. Each team had been given the GPS positions of the selected trees, and soon vehicles were heading off all over the countryside. Everyone in the team had a job: from using the GPS to locate the tree, fitting sponsor's



Duncan Jones, Steve Dale and John Dickson of NBC

plaques, to filling the box with nesting material. It was a long hard day, with many miles travelled but participants were welcomed back by Trust president TV Naturalist Chris Packham, and presented with a certificate to show their support of this important conservation project.

Of course this is only the beginning and there will be many hours of monitoring and recording data over the next four years, but it is hoped that this weekend will help to reduce the current decline.

We are still looking for funding towards the on-going costs of the project and any donations will be gratefully received. For more information please contact Ashley Smith on 07966 500513 or

E-mail ashley@hawkconservancy.org



The nest box team

Book Review

EAGLE FALCONRY A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Dr. David Glynne Fox

Reviewed by Peter Eldrett

Published by Falcon Leisure Publishing

ISBN: 978-0-9572213-0-7

First, the negatives.

For any reader who doesn't know, there is a big difference between designing a book and a magazine. Unfortunately the publisher and designer don't seem to know this.

First of all, the main text throughout the book is in a 'sans serif' typeface. This makes it difficult to read for any long period of time - the reader gets tired and it puts a strain on the eyes. This is why if you look at most books they have a 'serif' font which does the job of making the eye flow from one word to the next very easily and does not tire the reader quite so readily.

Next, is the number of split or hyphenated words. These are – in the main – mostly unnecessary. Even on the dust jacket there are 12 hyphenated words, including the splitting of words such as "falconry", "raptors" and even "others".

Now, the positives.

Once you have got to terms with the above comments, the written words by David Fox are of a high quality and you are drawn into the narrative. The book is set out in seven sections: Acknowledgements, Forward (which has been penned by Jemima Parry-Jones, MBE), *Introduction* and then three parts entitled *Eagle Falconers Past and Present*, *The Training of Skye and Star*, and *Hunting with Eagles*. Finally there is a Postscript – *Eagle Falconry, the future?*

As stated, part one concerns many well known falconers from around the world in a short biographical format. This section I found very interesting and learned about many of the forerunners of eagle falconry including Ronnie

Moore, Philip Glasier, Captain Charles Knight, Friedrich Wilhelm Remmler, Fritz Loges, Joseph Hiebeler and many more.

One section is by the well renowned American falconer Joe Atkinson. Joe has a part called *Training the Passage Golden Eagle the Joe Atkinson Way* which is very informative and probably not to everyone's way of training an eagle but it works for him.

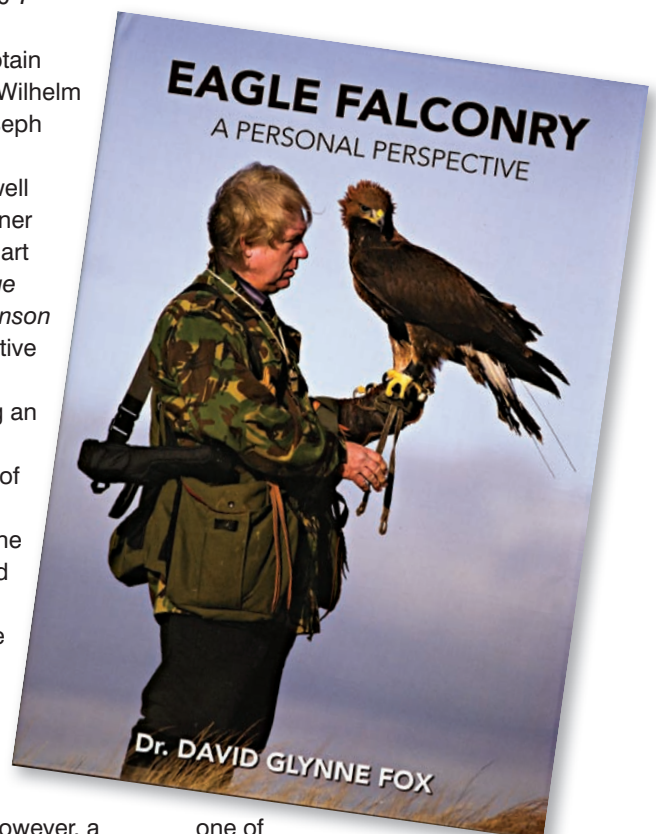
Part two concerns two of David Fox's eagles, Skye and Star. This describes the way the author has trained his eagles and has been written in a very easy style – just like the rest of the book.

As indicated by the author, the book is not intended to be a how-

to-fly-eagles guide. It is, however, a description of the way David Fox trains his birds and his relationship with both eagles and fellow falconers. There are many anecdotes told, some of which I expect some of you will relate to.

Part three concerns Hunting with Eagles. The use of ferrets was something that David Fox practised until his Imperial Eagle ate his last one, but he was then contacted by a ferreter who helped him solve the problem. As stated, if you are hawking on your own, it is difficult to hunt with an eagle on your arm whilst at the same time worrying about the ferret.

Again, there are many anecdotes about the many friends the author has made over the years, many of whom he is still in contact with. David Fox was



one of the instigators of the Eagle arm of The British Falconers' Club and he has also, with the help of his friend Chris Miller, organised fieldmeets for the eagle falconers.

Finally, the postscript concerns the future of eagle falconry here in the UK and he has given a special mention of the Eagle Group of the British Falconers' Club and the hopes and aspirations of eagle falconers for the future.

In conclusion, I very much enjoyed this book and the colour plates are of a high quality (except one). Anybody who enjoys reading falconry related books should have no hesitation in buying this one.

You can buy this book from Coch-Y-Bonddu Books price £35.00.

Book Review

Peregrine Falcon

by Patrick Stirling-Aird

Published by New Holland Publishers
ISBN 978-1-84773-769-4

Reviewed by Marian Eldrett

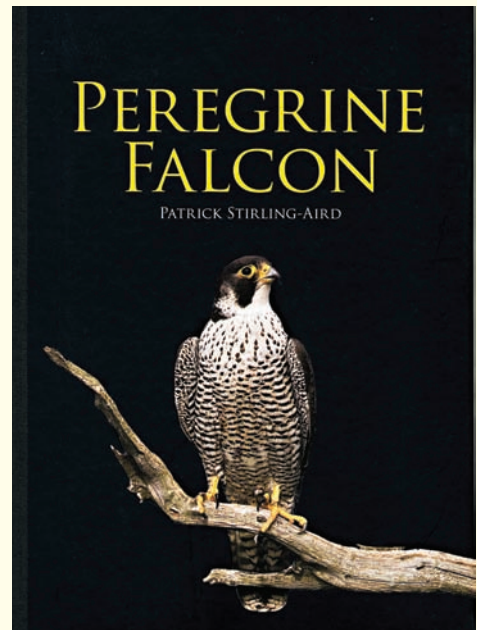
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This is a comprehensive study of the Peregrine Falcon in the wild – a book for the Peregrine enthusiast rather than the falconer. It describes in great detail the origins, distribution, feeding habits, reproduction and environmental issues encountered by this top predator. It also looks at the threats posed by humans, both intentionally and simply by their proximity to the Peregrine's habitats.

Falconry is mentioned several times throughout the book, but not in any detail, and I was disappointed that the author did not state more strongly that trapping of wild Peregrines is something which modern-day, responsible falconers would never condone or practise.

If you are into birds of prey and you are one for facts and figures (and Latin names) you will surely enjoy this book. Even if you're not too keen on facts, you can enjoy the many good photos throughout the book, all of which are relevant to the text and clearly annotated.

The author is obviously very knowledgeable on his subject, and whilst I did not detect any real passion in his book, it came across as a well-researched, analytical study of the Peregrine. It claims to offer "a window into the rarely seen habits and behaviour of the Peregrine Falcon thanks to a combination of high quality images and beautifully written text" and I have to say it does exactly this.



Glazing to save birds' lives

An award winning glass specialist has launched a unique glazing in the UK which will save birds lives. The glass has seen its first use in a lookout tower in Lindisfarne, opened by the Prince of Wales.

Each migration season millions of birds die by crashing into glazed buildings, but Germany's Arnold Glas have developed a glass more visible to our feathered friends. Called Ornilux, the glass has been installed in the lookout tower and visitors centre on Holy Island at Lindisfarne.

Birds unlike humans have the ability to see light in the ultra-violet spectrum and in nature Orb Weaver spiders incorporate UV reflective strands of silk in their webs, so birds will not fly

through and destroy them. Like the Orb Weaver web the Ornilux glazing has a web of lines coated onto the glass which are barely discernible to humans but reflect the UV light, alerting birds to the presence of glass.

Dave Wyatt, Head of the Arnold Group's UK operations said: "The project at Lindisfarne is our first use of the bird saving or Ornilux glass in the UK. It's a system which has been in development for years and through extensive testing we have seen the glazing significantly reduce bird strikes.

"Ornilux has already seen considerable success in the US, being used in a number of high profile buildings and winning a number of international awards."

PW Publishing Ltd. are on the move

The publishers of *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine* will be moving offices in November 2012 and the new address is:-

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askchitty

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

Problems when manning a bird of prey.

Manning is a stressful time both for falconer and bird . . . and plenty can go wrong – just read TH White's *The Goshawk*.

The big problem is that the bird's immune system is unlikely to be fully functioning at this time. It will be in a state of great stress which will induce large quantities of the stress hormone corticosterone. One of this hormone's actions is to reduce immune responses and so reduce the ability to combat infection.

The bird will also be in a state of compromised nutrition for at least a short period. Again this will cause stress and reduce ability to combat infection. As well as reducing energy and nutrient stores.

The stress of the whole process can be reduced by using hand-reared imprinted birds. However, these can have their own psychological problems instead so many will prefer to man a parent-reared bird.

There are four main considerations to reduce the chances of health problems during manning.

Start with a healthy bird! If there are any underlying problems before the immune system crashes then there will be even worse problems occurring. In particular get a mute sample checked for parasites before manning – the last thing the bird will need is another drain on the body's resources so even a small parasite burden may become significant. Similarly external parasites can become more significant – it is worth a thorough check of the plumage too. It is not a bad idea to get a health check before manning.

Monitor the bird's demeanour and health throughout the manning period. Any sign of problems should prompt

the need for immediate attention. Pay particular attention to any breathing problems, eye or nose discharge, head shaking or the bird becoming very quiet, fluffed and oval-eyed. Check keel condition and weight twice daily and if the bird loses condition too fast (or excessively) then seek help.

Feeding

When food is given it should be of good quality. Wild-sourced food is not suitable as a recent case of frounce in a manned Goshawk illustrates. This was contracted from pigeon breast meat that had been frozen and defrosted before feeding, which just shows what a low infective dose is required in these stressed birds. Attention should definitely be paid to food hygiene with extremely clean conditions for defrosting food- these can easily succumb to food spoilage that would not normally affect them.

Keep the environment clean. The major problem in this period is, of course, aspergillosis. This is contracted from spores in the environment produced by fungus growing on organic matter.

Obviously all perching and boxes should be cleaned and sterilised and, importantly, dried before use in this period. This should remove organic material that may harbour fungus – even a small dose of spores can be important in these immunosuppressed birds so extra care must be taken. For very susceptible species – i.e. Goshawk, Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl, eagles – more precautions may also be required. Some recommend using a daily fogging with F10SC during this time in order to reduce environmental spore load. Alternatively, for highly susceptible birds prophylactic medications may be given. In particular itraconazole is used daily though this should be started five to seven days before the manning period to allow build up of drug levels in the tissues.

The normal course is that there will be no problems during manning. However, it is a very hard time for the bird and there is a much higher likelihood of disease. Taking a few simple sensible precautions will greatly reduce the risks and reduce stress on the bird and worry for the falconer.



An interview with

Emma and Steve Ford

Part 1



The Gleneagles hotel

Earlier this year I was lucky enough to visit Steve and Emma Ford at the British School of Falconry based at Gleneagles.

I asked them about the school and their lives together and I also asked Emma about her writing. Here's what they said.

CAN YOU TELL ME THE BACKGROUND OF THE FALCONRY SCHOOL?

Steve: In 1979 we were based at Chillham Castle doing public displays – there were probably four or five commercial falconers in the country doing displays, no more than that. At this point we decided it would be better

to set up a falconry school as there was nowhere in the world actually teaching people falconry. So it was in 1982 that we opened the British School of Falconry at Stelling Minnis down in Kent and started teaching. It actually worked very well for us, as it coincided with Emma's book coming out – *Falconry Mews and Field* - we were very lucky to get some



Entrance to the falconry school

fantastic publicity and in the first year we managed to put through around 100 students..

Emma: My mother bought us the bungalow in Stelling Minnis which was absolutely fantastic and we built the accommodation for the school ourselves.

I remember the night before the school opened, I said to Steve “We’ve got £70 and that’s all we have - this has to work.” And what did it for us really was the press – bless them. Because in Kent we had the proximity to London, journalists would come down and take photos and

put them in the nationals. Suddenly we had students coming in from as far afield as Australia saying “We’ve always had a passion for hawks and want to learn, so we’ve come over to learn from you” (falconry is illegal in Australia). We had them from all over, as well as many from



Falconry school reception



The weighing room

the UK. We were doing week-long residential courses and I suppose we were charging not very much at all in those days. The economy was good then so people could afford to stay and were taking a second or third holiday. Then it grew because people wanted to come back and we had to develop more and more advanced courses. We started off doing a beginners course and an advanced course, then before long we were also doing more advanced courses – advanced shortwings, advanced longwings, eagles, owls, breeding - those were the principal ones. People would want to do all of them and would come back year after year – it was actually rather nice. It was like a sort of club of people that we would see throughout the year and people would book to come back with other people that they had met on an earlier course and got on well with.

Steve: When Emma and I were up in

Scotland hawking ourselves, we would arrange with our students that we would do week-long hunting courses. We would come up to Scotland grouse hawking with our senior instructor and leave our other instructors back at the school teaching normal lessons. The senior instructor would take out up to about six guests (they'd all be staying in local hotels and B&B's) and they'd do week-long hunting courses – working ferrets, working fieldcraft and that sort of thing – and those people built themselves into another club.

Emma: So they'd go out with Harris' hawks in the morning and then come on the hill in the afternoon with working pointers – it was good fun.

Steve: And that was really how the school developed. Through the development we managed to be allocated the name "British". To get this you have to be proven by the Department of

Trade and Industry to have pre-eminence in your sport. If you can do this, then you're granted permission to use the word "British". We were doing a lot of media work at that time and came to the attention of Guinness, who owned Gleneagles. They asked if we would come up to Gleneagles in the winter time, when it was always very quiet, stay in the hotel and have Gleneagles clients come and fly hawks for a week on a course. So we'd live in the hotel for up to two weeks and our senior instructor and the hawks would be transported up.

Emma: So we had a fresh intake of people who we'd never met before and who had seen the Gleneagles' publicity. We'd have a mix of those students who could afford to stay at Gleneagles for the week, and then our existing students who thought it sounded like fun.

Steve: It worked very well. In 1984/85 Emma and I were doing a lot of corporate

work, long before other people were doing corporate stuff. We were doing a lot of work at Leeds Castle and working with BMW. In fact we were doing 24 stately homes in a season – we just lived out of the car, with the hawks, just travelling around the whole country. Then with our hawking season we spent seven months in Scotland working and we said “What are we living in Kent for – we might as well move to Scotland”.

Emma: In Stelling Minnis we had the proximity of the Channel tunnel and the road and rail links and Kent seemed to be going under concrete at that stage, so we said “Let’s try and relocate to Scotland” – which was quite a brave move because obviously up here you’re much further away from your main population bases and also from corporate hospitality work and film work/studios. We used to do

a lot of commercials and that sort of thing which gave us good money which helped in those days, but the corporate hospitality and film studio work in London evaporated when we came up here. We also used to do a lot of filming for the Natural History Unit – and that continued when we came up here because we were actually in the setting that they needed us to be in. So again we were taking a chance and saying “Hope it works out in Scotland” and that’s when we got a call from Gleneagles.

Steve: They were pleased because they said it was getting expensive to keep shipping us up from Kent. We were very lucky because the hotel was in the process of developing a brand new golf course, which is now called the PGA Centenary golf course (this is the course which is going to host the Ryder Cup in

2014), being designed by Jack Nicklaus. During a meeting we were informed that all golf was being moved to the front of the hotel and the old driving range with approximately 20 acres at the rear of the hotel was going vacant and would we think about putting a falconry school in there. We had to seriously think about it because at the time of looking at it everywhere was completely covered in snow, but of course we agreed. We then had to make a decision on what we were going to do and how we were going to work it to keep up to the standards for the guests at the hotel. At that time we were running two British Schools of Falconry – we had the British School of Falconry which was teaching people on pre-booked courses, and we had the British School of Falconry Limited which was based out of Gleneagles. We got so



Emma at home in the Gyr Falcon room



The rear of the main building

busy at the hotel that Emma and I made a corporate decision that we couldn't keep running week-long residential courses to teach people falconry, with the amount of staff we had, when they could go to other places for the weekend and pay just £15.

Emma: We had to produce a product which wasn't a week-long course but was a brief hands-on experience and I think we were pretty much the first to produce such a thing and guests loved it. We started off making it much too complicated and then discovered that guests were actually very happy just to hold a hawk and fly a hawk, and it became greatly simplified. Then of course we were very lucky to have the good hunting ground up here so we were able to offer guests the chance to go out for a day or a half day hawking. It then became perpetual – people would take a lesson and then go hawking again and again and again – every time they visited Gleneagles. So it worked really well.

Steve: We set up the school at Gleneagles in 1992 and we now average about 4,000 hotel guests per year, of which we take about 1500 – 2000 people a year hunting. From our side that's

very important because it shows people it's not just a hawk on the hand and flying from a tree, we actually get them in the hunting field and they learn what falconry is. We have seven full-time staff at Gleneagles – five falconers (Phil, Will, Steve, Duncan, and Stewart), a Gundog School instructor (Deanne) and one administrator (Ann). We're very lucky in the way the business has progressed – we've got an excellent team and we can offer a really fantastic service with really good standards.

DO YOU SEE THE SAME CLIENTS RETURNING?

Steve: Yes – they request the hawks by name and they request the instructors by name. When we're hawking we catch around 1,000 head a year with guests and the "with guests" is the clever bit. Because if you're out flying your own hawk you are going to be in the right place at the right time and release the hawk at the right moment. With guests, it's not necessarily so.

Emma: We all shout "Rabbit" and they hold on to the jesses!

Steve: But it really progressed from

there and the Falconry School grew to other things, driving people out and about in Landrovers, and taking them hunting. Emma and I got hauled in for another of those executive meetings and it was "How come you're operating year round in all weathers" and we said we were going out hunting in Landrovers. They then said "What other activities do you think you could do which could possibly help the hotel?" And my wife from somewhere just said "Oh, we'll open an off-road driving school for you"!

Then we had one white Landrover, which was our hunting Landrover. We went and got it hard polished and put some decent tyres on it – and then hooked up with an ex Landrover employee who used to teach on the off-road side. I went down to Landrover and trained up – and we got a team trained and gradually got more vehicles and started the driving school. And it really took off because of course it did give the hotel an outdoors weather-proof activity pretty much all year round.

Steve: The hardship is having to keep vehicles in quite up to date spec – you can't go out in an old banger, you have to go out in nice vehicles. So at that

stage— we had the off-roading and we were doing falconry, and our instructors were dual trained so that they could work on both sides. Guinness were also part owners of a hotel in America and they set up a golf course over there – it was the Gleneagles golf course at the Equinox Hotel and Resort in Manchester in Vermont, and all the board meetings were held at the Gleneagles hotel. So the General Manager from the Equinox in Manchester had to come to Gleneagles to attend the board meetings. He was a real outdoors person – shoots, hunts, a Landrover fanatic - and he said he wanted all these activities in his hotel in America. So Guinness asked us to replicate our activities at their hotel in Vermont. It took us two and a half years to get permits to actually get into America to get the school operating. The permits were the first of their kind because in the States you can have guests to watch but they can't handle the hawks, which wasn't what we wanted. So we managed to get the educational permits we needed, which nobody we knew in the falconry world thought we would ever, ever get – and I must admit we had a pretty mixed reception to put it mildly from people over there in the falconry community. America has so many rules for falconry - we have a set of educational permits but we still have to conform to falconry regs as well as Federal regs and State regs. So it's four lots of regulations we have to comply with – it's very highly regulated. So we set up the British School of Falconry at the Equinox in Manchester, Vermont over there in 1996.

DO YOU TAKE CLIENTS OUT YOURSELVES IN VERMONT?

Steve: We can't - our instructors take them out. Emma and I don't have falconry permits in America – I can't go to my school and take my hawk out and fly it – I'm exactly the same as a client. If my staff are there, I can go out and join them hunting and I can fly my own Harris' hawks because I'm with my staff, but I can't release my hawks on game in America myself. But we've got a couple of eagles over there and we can fly those because they're exotics – and exotics we can fly. The American system is a good system – it's unlike this country where anybody who has the money can persuade somebody to sell

them a hawk. It is a better system but on the other hand there are some parts of the regulations that don't make total sense, but isn't that always the case with anything.

SO HOW MANY STAFF DO YOU HAVE OVER THERE?

Steve: We have our manager, Rob Waite, Dawn who's our senior falconry instructor and Jay – three, plus we have two other sub contract falconers who come in and help us as well. There's also a very big archery school over there which is busy.

After we'd set up the driving school at Gleneagles, we got approached by Landrover UK. They asked if they could copy our Gleneagles staff uniform (which was green sweaters) because it was the standard they wanted for their driving instructors – they wanted a country feel. And when they heard we were going into America, they asked whether we would consider setting up a Landrover Driving School in North America for them, because of the standard that we taught people and the quality – this was quite an accolade for us. So we set up what was the first manufacturers driving school for any vehicle in America and we did that for ten years. The Americans had a different attitude to their vehicles – to us an off-road vehicle is a tool to cross a wet piece of ground to access your shooting or your fishing or whatever, whereas in America the culture was changing and it was becoming a sport in its own right (a bit like "The Dukes Of Hazzard") and at that point we decided it wasn't for us and we dropped it.

We were also asked by other hotels to set up falconry schools all across America, and driving schools. But it got to the stage where we were looking at each other and saying do we really want this – and the answer was "No".

Emma: There was a time when we first opened the falconry school at Stelling Minnis when I thought I would have more time to fly my own hawks if I was somebody else's secretary – because I would start a day and finish a day, and I would have no holidays. But you have to go through that phase when you're setting up a business. When we started to get the opportunities to really spread out in America, we were working to the point of getting pretty stressed with it

and finding it very hard work and being away from home – sometimes for six months a year – we had to remember why we started this and decide what we wanted to do. We wanted to be on the hill with our hawks, with our dogs, doing what we love – that's what we work for. And I think if you lose sight of that, then you've lost the plot. I remember my mother saying to me "you can only sleep in one bed at night and you can only eat one plate of food in the evening – why do you need to keep doing more?" And she was right, it was timely.

DO YOU STILL ENJOY GOING OVER TO AMERICA AND HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO?

Emma: We love it because we've got the balance right. We've got a very good British manager over there who is fantastic for us. So we can go over and enjoy life at a different school with different hawks and dogs and friends.

Steve: We go over twice a year for about a month each time. Our relationship with the hotel is that we have a very nice cottage, supplied by the hotel, which looks down the main golf course, looking up into the green mountains of Vermont – it's a bit like Scotland with more trees. So that's lovely and we do look forward to it. The important thing from our side is that we like to keep it on a personal basis with our staff and the managers in the hotel – both at Gleneagles and Vermont. You've got to come back again to what you started for – we wanted to share our passion for falconry with other people – that's why we started the schools – and we're still able to do that. I think if you spread yourself too thin you don't just lose the contact but you lose the essence of being able to keep your standards really high and to make sure that the quality is exactly what you want to offer to show the sport at it's best.

My thanks go to Emma and Steve on giving their time to do the interview and for their excellent hospitality. Part 2 of this interview will appear in issue 92.

2011/2012

A Very Good Season

In 2010 I had mixed fortunes – Lara the female Harris Hawk sustained a very nasty bite from a squirrel on her hallux which took weeks of treatment with antibiotics, and eventually, looking better but still very swollen I put her in her moult chamber in early December.

A friend very kindly gave me his small imprinted male Goshawk – work took too much of his time to do the bird justice and so Eddie joined us. To say he was tatty and underweight is an understatement – he sported only one whole tail feather, the primaries were scuffed off and his talons were blunt and when weighed, he came in at only 1 lb. 5 ozs. This makes me sound very ungrateful – he was a gift after all, but knowing Ken as I do, I was very surprised at the state of the bird.

Eddie was like a short-range boomerang

However, I set about manning and training Eddie with the notion that I would get him as right as possible before the end of the season. I had no feathers to imp his tail, he would have to manage with what he had. He was a tyrant on the creance and try as I might I couldn't get more than two feet away before he was on me. So I went to stage two and took him off the creance.

It was quite obvious that he had arrived extremely underweight, and gradually as his weight increased he started to settle down and behave less like a short-range boomerang.

My aim to get him entered was a bit of a hit and miss affair as rabbit after rabbit escaped his clutches, but he never gave up and then one day, after the snow had

cleared our efforts were rewarded.

This first successful slip marked him as an extremely determined bird. He attempted five times to get onto terms with this fast, ferreted rabbit which ran through some extremely sharp gorse re-growth and we saw him wing-over and miss several times before making into a tree and diving out again. We heard the rabbit scream and then Ed climbed to get a better view and with this final wing-over claimed his prize. It took a good 15 minutes to find him as I battled my way through bracken and there he was, only recognisable by the sound of the bell coming from under a thick mat of dead bracken. A slip of probably 400 yards – and rightly so, this mind-blowing action bought it's rewards as he then ate until he couldn't pack in another morsel.

Towards the end of his first brief season



Chris entering the ferret into a bury



My young apprentice, Ben, with Lara

with us Eddie was now flying at 1 lb. 8 ozs.

Lara's toe improved no end – it was no longer buckling under, she'd regained the use of it and the pyramid of scab and proud flesh was gradually reducing and although the end of the season normally drives me into a rapid decline, I couldn't wait to see how good Eddie looked in all his new finery and how Lara would be if her toe completely healed.

The summer ground by – but weeks turned into months and then seemingly, quite suddenly I started the usual pre-season checks of the assorted equipment – batteries in ferret collars and finders, transmitter and receiver, Kevin the Brit's pointing collar, not forgetting the electronic scales.

A new season brings renewed hope

Both Lara and Eddie came out at only just over their best weights – Lara's bite was now completely healed and Eddie sported his full compliment of new feathers plus

a full set of long talons. They both looked amazing.

Over the following week each bird was cast and re-equipped and my new design tail-mounts worked out well for carrying the bell and transmitter. After a tad of coping, each bird looked fit and ready to go. I took advantage of the lull to power-clean the moulting areas – a job, if left too long makes you regret being tardy – and then set about re-manning both hawks.

I had had the whole summer to wonder how I would manage two such different birds. Lara had always had an independent streak – wanting to be off, either running around on the ground peering under bushes or down warrens – I have a film of wild Harris' doing exactly that in Arizona so I always try to meet her halfway. I need not have worried – after two or three successful slips from the glove she soon started to treat me as a handy perch – a useful little stunted tree in a landscape with not a tree for miles.

After six days and during her first free

flight she entered on a rabbit cleverly moved out of cover by Kevin. Lara and Kev have a very good relationship and when the cover is low we don't bother with the pointing collar as we know where he is because she's generally overhead or bobbing about on the gorse above his position.

Eddie is a quite different character – he loves the glove and is quite happy to sit, slicked down watching everything with intense yellow eyes. As the season advances I'm finding the differences in temperament and attitudes quite fascinating.

In November we took out two very keen friends, longing to see the interaction between human, bird, dog and ferret. It often happens that when trying to show people how this all comes together, things go awry. But there is the odd occasion when things go to plan and it all comes together and this was one such occasion.

We went to our quarry which has lots of gorse gullies, reed beds and a healthy



Ed's last hunt of 2012

sprinkling of warrens and Lara was the first to go. The side of the hill here is quite dense gorse. Kevin pointed several times and Lara took advantage of the near galeforce conditions to make height over him. Several times the collar beeped and she would stoop in and climb again. She darted into cover several more times and then suddenly Kevin managed to move one out of cover. Laras' accurate downhill stoop had been successful and as she had been flying hard for an hour or two she was fully rewarded and boxed up.

After a brief lunch break Eddie came out and off we went again. This time we walked over the top of the mountain planning on walking the lower slopes back into the wind which had dropped slightly by then. He had several slips, each time returning eagerly to the glove. Kev worked superbly and eventually marked a bury.

Eddie is quite happy to wait on the glove whilst the ferret works and it was only a minute or two before a rabbit exploded from underground. Eddie

blurred as he shot off in pursuit. As he made in the rabbit leaped in the air and that is where he caught it – about four feet off the ground – they then rolled down the hill together.

As the afternoon had progressed we'd all noticed the amount of interest the locals were taking. At the start of the day one or two Red Kites had been loafing about not to be outdone by the Buzzards. More and more had appeared during the afternoon and by the time we had finished one of our party counted 40 or so. Our quarry was divided up and left out for these beautiful birds as a small 'thank you' from us for letting us use their hill.

A mixture of success and failure keep one going

I have to admit that as I near my three score years and ten, I wonder how much longer I will be able to hunt with the birds. A session a few weeks ago had me pondering this question as Lara and Kev had been running amock around some

local woodlands, totally ignoring us and just rampaging off together. At the top of this wood is what's known as "the biggest bramble patch in Wales" – it must be 50ft. in circumference and all of 10ft deep. Needless to say, it's a good place for rabbits to hide – they know they're safe.

It's always a struggle to circumnavigate this area but we'd always been quite successful in the past. However, today was the day when our plans fell out of bed and Chris and I looked at one another with dread when we realised that the collar beeping was coming from the middle of this horrible patch. As we approached, Lara stood on her head out of a tree into the centre but just bounced off – we tried vainly to gain control – but reverse thrust shot her back into the top of the tree for another try. This time her dart shape was good and she went through like a hot knife through butter.

People often ask why I carry secotours with me – well, now they know. An hour or so of cutting, hacking and swearing in equal measure lead me to a very happy

hawk. Extricating her and her rabbit in good order took another half hour, suffice to say that she was a deal happier than me.

Eddie came out looking for action. Kevin found two potential targets fairly soon but a rabbit that can outrun my speedy little Goshawk really deserves to live another day. Suddenly, Ed slicked down and was off the glove in a flash only to crash into thick ivy, a squirrel, and the hunt was on. He raced crazily round and round the tree, he went up and toppled seemingly out of control down the bole, his feet darting this way and that but canny Cyril evaded his attempts at capture.

Eddie had tunnel vision and completely ignored my attempts to recall him. We were in a part of the farm by now that we didn't know so I didn't see the black pool in front of me as anything dire – oh – how wrong was I. Kevin had run over it with no problem and so I stepped forward and plunged in. My second step sucked me in – like someone had lined my boots with lead. The more I struggled the deeper I went.

Suffice to say that when Chris could stop laughing for long enough he managed to unplug me, although the smell that belched forth was unbelievable. Personally, I had had enough for one day and as the light was going fast Eddie, who by now had lost interest in the squirrel, couldn't wait to get to the glove, previously spurned, for a good reward.

Lara gets wound up

Another day, bright enough but very cold saw us out with Lara on a gorse clad hill surrounded by cascading waterfalls and fast running streams. This quite beautiful site is a hard place to hunt, thick gorse holds rabbits by the ton but getting them out is another thing. Within minutes Kev and Lara were away and the action was non-stop for an hour.

She missed again and again and eventually she came back to the glove with a 'cob' on, quite upset that her efforts had met with not one jot of success. Kev had marked a bury and I insisted that she stay with me while the ferret did her work (I didn't want any accidents!)

As luck would have it the rabbit appeared in the middle of yet more impenetrable gorse and she missed yet again. She returned just then ready to

kill anything that moved and, refusing the glove, landed in a tree right over the bury. This tree was jutting out from a high bank, Chris to the left, me to the right. The ferret had not reappeared at this stage and we were praying for another bolt, but who should appear, right under an angry hawk but Lilly the ferret.

Chris dived off the bank but slipped on take-off and crash landed, closely followed by me. I also slipped and we landed in a tangle of arms and legs, the air was blue as we jostled in our haste to untangle ourselves. In those few seconds the hawk had dived on the ferret who was screaming her head off as the hawk started her inbuilt reaction to start pluming her 'quarry'. Lilly did not submit without a fight and fortunately locked her teeth into the eyelet of the hawk's anklet.

I calmed myself down – and got hold of Lara's legs and covered the ferret with my hawking vest. It has to be said here that the hawk obviously acted out of frustration as once we'd prized Lilly's jaws open she had not got a mark on her and although not best pleased at being treated so unceremoniously went on to work and produce a successful outcome for Lara. Just then, the heavens opened and once in the car we laughed about it all as we headed home.

Winding down for the finish

As the end of the season approaches I plan to continue hunting, weather permitting, until the end of February. I have a trip to Somerset planned to hopefully get one or two pheasants under Lara as we have very few of this worthy quarry in this part of Wales. Checking back in my gamebook for this season the hawks have accounted for 50 rabbits – one of which that Eddie took weighed in excess of 4 lbs. All game taken was healthy (no signs of myxy) and Lara took a big jet black rabbit on a gorse-clad hill in the middle of nowhere and also accounted for a squirrel – successfully this time.

Hoping to finish with a flourish, we made a dedicated trip to a far flung 'honeypot' where copious amounts of rabbits can be found both above and below ground regardless of weather conditions. It was a beautiful, sunny day with light winds. Kevin immediately found and Lara went on the soar round the valley. As the rabbit ran she shot out of

the sky but missed as the rabbit found a handy bolt-hole.

Lara saw something in the distance and flew off to take stand on a barn roof about 600 yards away. Suddenly she dropped straight down and we heard a lot of banging. By the time we got there we couldn't see or hear a thing. Round the barn was a complex of small gates and sheep pens. Silence. We peered over walls, climbed six or so narrow gates and peered under everything, Still nothing. I concluded that she must have been dragged into the barn and from the banging about the occupants were not that happy. On checking round we discovered the barn was locked up tight. The receiver confirmed she was close.

Using the receiver

I replayed that 'drop' in my mind – she had to be right in front of me. Right, working on that theory backed up by the receiver I started to carefully move sheets of metal that had obviously been put down to stop up a rat-run into the barn, behind these sheets was a railway sleeper right up tight to the wall and as I moved this I saw her. Her legs were in the barn, her open wings had stopped her being dragged right in. On my hands and knees I could see the rabbit in her feet but as I started to carefully extricate her she had to let it go.

She hunted hard for the next two hours taking slip after slip but just missing by inches each time. Then Kev marked a bury and we all moved into position.

This is a huge warren, maybe 50 or 60 holes on the side of a hill and the slip when in came would be fast, downhill and right in the open, but I wanted to hang-fire until the rabbit had committed to the open and passed all its potential bolt-holes. We heard a scuffle under our feet and out it came – I gave it a 200 yard headstart and released the hawk. The rabbit disappeared over an outcrop, Lara climbed well above it and then winged over and dived and all went quiet and we found her hackles up, feet pulsing on her last kill of the season.

All praise must go to Kevin the Brit, Lilly and Vera the ferrets and my tireless husband Chris without whose dedicated help none of our hunting would be possible.

Here's hoping all your birds have a good moult – and roll on winter.

Eagle-Man's Vision

Part 2

Sary is known at the Salburun Festival as “the bird evaluator.” He identifies Ak Jol Toy as the Kanchachar or black-splashing type. “This eagle has black splatters on the white background color of the tail feathers. The splashing marks are large and small intermixed. This type of eagle has more speed with a lighter body and longer tail than the other twelve types. Kanchachar is one of the most agile and maneuverable of all eagles,” Sary pauses to light a cigarette and pat the Burkut’s chest as he stands on my fist, “This one can catch wolves; this is one of the very best of eagle types.”

Enlightening days pass, and Salburun Festival begins tomorrow. Sary’s traps have caught the hare for tonight’s final chyrgar practice. I’ve suggested we begin on level ground after grasping that Burkutchulor don’t have height benefits at chyrgar competition, but honored-elder Sary won’t alter age-old methods. I take my customary spot atop the dirt hill beside the community bathhouse, Ak Jol Toy poised on my right fist. Far outfield the rider is signaled. Whisking the eagle’s hood off, I extend that arm high.

“Kytu! Kytu!” I shriek, throwing gloved



At the Salburun Festival with other Burkutchulor. Ruslan far right, Talgar 3rd from right next to the author

arm toward the bobbing hare’s distant carcass. Decked-out with a foxtail it trails a forward-thrusting horse. Before the arc of my arm completes, Ak Jol Toy presses talons into the glove, then pushes off. Primary wing feathers graze my face. My piercing “Kytu! Kytu!” follows the Burkut’s purposeful flight, which powers him over fields in no more than several blinks of an eye. Talons swing forward and bind him to what is an almost airborne chyrgar. Dust sprays like the wake of a boat as the horse slows to stop.

Out of breath

Piston legs rocket me across potato-furrowed ground. When finally obtaining the pasture where Ak Joy Toy is mantled, I’m gasping for breath. Some dozen panting villagers rush after me, coughing and blowing noses, to circle around while I prepare for picking up the edgy eagle, whose feeding must be kindly curtailed. Hackles blaze brilliant gold in evening sun, wings fan around the foxtail-adorned hare. Audacious eyes focus on my glove inching toward talons. Lightning-fast feet strike at the advancing glove, but settle





Ak Jol Toy rouses on a rock

back onto the hare's body. Eagles can crush bones with their gripping strength of approximately 750 pounds per square inch. I change positions, offer a small piece of meat; Ak Jol Toy steps up onto my gloved fist where he receives another mouthful before his hood.

Under Sary Satilganov's leadership and honored-elder status, I will be the first female Burkutchu to fly an

eagle in the Kyrgyz Republic's National Salburun Festival. Sary generously shared experiences from his decades flying eagles that first evening after our introduction last year. Hours of conversation led to Sary's observation that our spirits were similar, but I realize now that his vision had gone far beyond my own.

I'm among early arrivals the next day at the festival site, a small valley

outside the more modern village of Bokonbaevo, considered the largest town on Lake Issyk-Kul's southern shore with population of 11,000. We've traveled perhaps ninety minutes by car from Sary's home. After brief orientation on the knoll that was bulldozed into a parking lot, I'm alerted that we're signed up second-to-start in the "chyrgar" competition. Attracted by advertisements or hearsay

Sary holds a Golden Eagle while Nurlan repairs the eagle trap





Sary mans a new Golden Eagle with a stick

to experience the Salburun Festival, several English-speaking travelers, and ex-pats living in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, stop and chat as I arrange Ak Jol Toy's jesses and remove his hood. I'd held the eagle on my lap during what felt like a lengthy trip, containing wings with my arm, wedged into a stuffed vehicle, two people on either side of me.

Hearing English words is relaxing; tones are incredulous: "A Westerner?" "A woman?" "A woman with an eagle?"

"Are you doing a project for someone?" "You're traveling alone?" "You're not funded?"

"Yes," I say, pressing Ak Jol Toy's feathery chest with my left palm as he settles, "I'm traveling alone. I'm not funded. I'm living my dream."

Overloaded vehicles pull in with other participants; sometimes four occupy the front seats and six or seven the rear. At least two raptors, often more, disembark with their falconer; other birds are

frequently plucked from trunks. One man brings out a gigantic eagle wrapped sausage-style in a grain sack, body and feet trussed with rope, followed by two more similarly wrapped. Numerous raptors are clutched against chests by one arm while the opposite hand renders feet immobile.

A good supply of alcohol

Grandstand bleachers begin to fill up. Several tables laden with household wares are open for business and alcohol is selling well. Horse racers warm up in the distance or come pacing by the bleacher seats. Taigan hunters run pairs of hounds up to two caged wolves kept behind the stage, in preparation for setting the Taigans against them. Dozens of eagles, hawks and falcons mill about, on and off gloved fists. News media groups and other film or photography crews wander; some set up interviews. Honored-elder Sary is often a subject when he can be pulled away from his surrounding flock of Burkutchulor, who ask for appraisal of their eagles.

I recognize several eagle-men from my visit last year, trading a nod or wave. Three ride up on horseback; one, a twenty-four-year-old who became Burkutchu through Almaz's counsel, is



Talgar's falconry furniture and Tumara, female Burkut

Ruslan, here with his family's support. He's been quite successful with eagle shows for tourists around his hometown of Bokonbaevo; at an altitude of 6,000 feet, it's a base for tourism ventures into higher mountains to the south. His first two eagles were taken from the nest when he began six years ago at age eighteen, and were traded this past year for a huge female Burkut, which rides his fist as he maneuvers his horse through an increasing throng.

Ruslan comes directly to say hello, right after dismounting, and depositing his remarkable Burkut on a rock. Surprised at the eagle I stand with, Ruslan's face composes into a genuine smile as he offers his wonderfully welcoming handshake. Then he's off to sign up for the competition.

Last year I'd asked Ruslan, who is not much taller, nor larger in physique than my 5'4" height and 115 pounds, if he knew why eagle falconry was exclusively a male tradition. "Don't know! It's just been that way," Ruslan had answered - similar to what Sary said when I arrived: "Apparently Kyrgyz women have more jobs around the home and men have more free time."

I had asked others about gender roles. Many voiced their opinions that Kyrgyz were more flexible than other Asian cultures on what roles women had in life. "A female Burkutchu," however, was considered "extremely avant-garde; almost unthinkable."

Meeting Talgar again

Talgar, a prominent Burkutchu I'd also met last year in Bokonbaevo, ambles over. Wearing his Tebetei, a hat of eagle-caught fox pelts, along with the symbol-embroidered Kyrgyz national hunting attire, his female eagle Tumara, meaning amulet, rides his fist. She took the wolf at last year's Salburun Festival, but was bitten and lost one talon that is still re-growing. "My first three eagles weren't so good," Talgar had confessed between bites of bread and attempts to drink steamy tea served by his wife during my previous visit. "But Tumara, from her first year when I began hunting after I caught and trained her, has taken fox with no hesitation. She's also taken several of the wolves at the festivals!" Talgar's Festival wins have translated into electronics equipment and other prizes for his family.

Later, I join Talgar, Ruslan, and other

Burkutchulor in a long line behind the stage; I tally about forty competitors. We begin parading by the grandstands when Almaz singles me out and ushers me on stage before a crowd of several hundred. I take this opportunity to thank Sary and his family for the privilege of learning with him and working with Ak Jol Toy. I rejoin the Burkutchulor when an eagle is on the wing, pumping furiously to catch the fox-skin trailing behind a galloping horse.

I had expected that, as happened during an earlier practice session, Talgar would hand me a piece of meat with which to trade off the chyrGAR just before my turn. When I ask, Talgar answers, "Yes, that is a problem!" He gives me a peek at the tiny, half pigeon leg he will employ. How would I trade-off the chyrGAR with nothing to offer?

I might have tried what I see Ruslan doing now. He's bending his eagle's toes back in a valiant effort to pry open her fierce grip on the fox-skin chyrGAR. Screaming, flailing, his female foots back onto the skin. The waiting chyrGAR rider leans across his saddle to speak and point. Ruslan steps on the fox skin, managing to rip his birds' feet loose while wrestling her stiff-legged onto his glove.



Walking with Golden Eagle week one

Young Falconers' Club

I first had the idea back in June last year. I sat in the sunshine before a flying demonstration watching visitors peer into the aviaries of our flying team from Icarus Falconry. Wonderful as it sounds, I couldn't help feeling slightly irate about the fact that nine out of ten youngsters with their families could not tell the difference between my 7oz Kestrel that sits at one end of the weathering lawn and the Harris' Hawk that sits at the other – even with clear information boards!

And why should they know the difference? And its the same old argument I know, but this time its true – its because the kids have nothing to do, nowhere to go and no way of knowing. In a world full of 3D films and the web, what young person would want to be outside, in the cold and dark of the middle of December, waiting for the doors to a falconry centre Classroom to open? Well, there's quite a few of them, actually.

Back in September, The Northamptonshire Young Falconers' Club had its first meeting and since, we

have had the most dedicated and loyal members any club could hope for! It was born out of my desire to give young people in the local area the chance to get close to birds of prey and my own memories of how hard it could be for a young person to get into the sport of Falconry. Along side Dave Sharpe of Raptor Xotics, I have been able to create a safe and exciting environment for young people to learn about the natural world. Every one of them can tie a falconer's knot, each of them can tell you where to find an eagle's Hallux, and don't get them started on how to gut a chick!

And its not just about birds. We already have moth talks and bat finding evenings planned in the near future. Dave's specialism in reptiles meant that the members could get up close with snakes and stick insects back in December – not what you might expect from a falconry club. In March, our Local Wildlife Liaison Officer will be coming in from Northamptonshire Police to talk about their role in maintaining the environment.

The message is a simple one. To our members, it is to respect and treasure our natural world, because it is beautiful and wonderful. To the rest of the world we want to show people just how keen youngsters are to learn about our heritage and our environment through one passion: falconry.

Our motto is simple, but it is at the heart of everything we teach at the NYFC.

"...Conservation through Education..."

Two members comments

Kieran Vass

My name is Kieran and I am 12 years old. I have been attending my local falconry club at Holdenby since the beginning of October which is when it was formed. I've been interested in nature ever since I can remember and the idea of being able to get so close to these wonderful birds of prey excites me! All of us in the group are inexperienced, but go to the club to expand our knowledge about the birds and how to look after them. Through attending this session we have already learnt how to prepare the birds' dinner, tie a falconer's knot and handle the birds a little. I really look forward to every fortnight to find out what's next!

James Hopkins

I decided to join the Falconry club to learn more about birds of prey. They are one of my favourite type of animals. I enjoy learning more about how to take care of the birds – from how to feed them and how to make them happy! One day, maybe I can fly my own bird of prey.



Female Sparrowhawk

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IAF has normalized falconry and has played a key role in making it acceptable to the international organisations



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Al Ain, Abu Dhabi Emirate, 16 December 2011 the International Association for Falconry (IAF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. The ceremony took place at the close of the Raptor Conservation sessions at the 3rd International Falconry Conference. IAF is only the second collaborating partner organisation (the other being Birdlife) to join the 38 countries that have signed the Raptor Memorandum of Understanding.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) acts under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 116 countries, which works for the conservation of endangered migratory animals worldwide, through the negotiation and implementation of practical action plans. In other words Raptor MoU is a UN organisation concerned with improving the conservation of endangered migratory

raptors, with the overall aim being to return and maintain the populations to Favourable Conservation Status – practical conservation rather than blind preservation.

While only signatory governments may vote on issues and agreements in CMS, IAF's new status affords it the right to be consulted and to advise. Furthermore its presence is significant in that it can lobby hard and correct misleading statements made by other organisations that oppose falconry. For example in the 2007–8 Convention on Migratory Species the IAF fought very hard to get a proposed clause forbidding wildtake excluded "...unless there is no other satisfactory solution" and replaced it with "...authorized by a competent body where the action is sustainable and not detrimental to the conservation status of the species". This action preserved the rights of many nations to continue with a sustainable wildtake for falconry purposes. If IAF had not been there a significant part of world falconry would have been banned.

This signing of the MoU means that IAF takes a much more active role in the CMS and it will be much less likely that clauses detrimental to falconry and raptor conservation can slip in on the strength of incorrect information.

In addition to CMS, IAF is a member of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and an advisory Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It also takes part in deliberations at the Conference of Biodiversity and anywhere else that falconry and falconry related issues may be discussed. By communicating the contributions made to conservation by falconers to the international bodies, IAF has normalized falconry and played a key role in making it acceptable to those international organisations. Falconers have now become their internationally respected partners

The Conference of Migratory Species.

CMS Resolution on the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), Bergen, Norway

In 2004 the IAF, at its AGM, formulated a Saker Resolution. Until that time the saker had been regarded as one of the most widespread and least threatened

of all falcon species. IAF Delegates were made aware of worries about sudden saker decline and a number of reliable scientific sources were cited. The Council of Delegates worked on an IAF resolution and agreed to take part in positive measures towards saker conservation. Later that year IAF had representation at a dedicated Saker Conference held in Abu Dhabi that resulted in the creation of a CMS Working Group.

Since that conference saker populations have plummeted. In 2011 the CMS considered a proposal made by the EU Member States to list the Saker *Falco Cherrug* in CMS Appendix I, the most endangered conservation status. Acceptance of the original text would have disallowed any use of wild birds and strictly controlled the use of captive bred birds, their sale and movement etc. It also cited falconry as a major cause of the saker's decline. Due to intervention by IAF and its partners, all references to falconry were omitted from the final document. The real causes for the saker's decline have yet to be determined.

In the lead up to the conference date the IAF lobbied all voting countries and put facts before the delegates to convince them that it would not be sufficient to merely put negative measures in place, a blanket ban on saker use would only put a full-stop after the saker story. A joint statement from IAF, Central Information Commission (CIC) and the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) reinforced the message before the conference itself: it is much more important to encourage positive conservation measures towards saker conservation by recognising the contributions made by falconry nations and other stake-holders and by encouraging their continued participation.

The final resolution noted, "IAF, together with FACE and CIC, has successfully prevented a disaster at the Conference of Migratory Species. If the original resolution wording had been adopted falconry would have been blamed for all the problems causing the decline of this genuinely endangered and iconic species. Even worse there would have been no measures at all put in place to ensure its survival and to return it to favourable conservation status". This has been a very good result for falconry and for raptor conservation worldwide.

IAF has a new Working Group for Women

At the IAF Annual General Meeting in Al Ain, IAF President Frank Bond showed enthusiastic support for the formation of an IAF Women's Working Group.

On the last weekend in October 2011 Véronique Blontrok, secretary of the Belgian Falconers' "Club Marie de Bourgogne", hosted a meet for women falconers from different countries. This idea originated in 2010 at the IAF meeting in the Slovak Republic where Véronique and Tula Stapert from Holland developed an idea and desire to organize something for women falconers.

Shortly before this, Dianne Moller, an active falconer in Wisconsin, USA, had published a report in the NAFA Journal on female falconers in the US, Canada and Europe. The group was joined by Christine Basset, board member of the Swiss falconer's union and long-term friend of IAF, Elisabeth Leix vice-president of Deutscher Falkenorden (DFO, Germany) and by Lauren McGough (USA) who had realised a dream to trap and hunt with a Berkutschi eagle by heading off to live for 11 months with a falconer's family in Mongolia.

At the IAF Council Meeting in Al Ain, Dianne gave a presentation on the aims of the group and H.E. Majuid Al Mansouri (UAE), Zayed Al Madeed (Qatar) and Ladislav Molnar (Slovakia) all spoke in support of the project. The whole IAF Council enthusiastically expressed interest.

The Women's Falconry Network (WFN) is currently preparing a mission statement and a work plan for joint review to see how IAF might help achieve WFN's desired goals, working informally at the moment to develop the initial draft plan, and then announcing a formal Women's WG within a few months. Dianne Moller was appointed chairwoman of the informal WG.

President Bond, whose daughter practiced falconry when she was a teenager, stated he is hopeful that the entire falconry world will be very supportive of the WFN's efforts and thanked its members for their interest in kicking off this program. "You honour us by undertaking this great effort under the IAF umbrella", he said. "In my opinion the greatest opportunity for growth in falconry today is among women".

A New Eagle Arm Brace

Increasingly over the last few years, there has been a steady flow of new equipment, or falconry furniture, most of which many of us have not been reticent to embrace. However, because so few people practice eagle falconry in the UK, equipment for eagles has been much slower to infiltrate the market, so when new products do eventually find their way into eagle falconry circles, they are generally given full field trials with much excitement. This was exactly the scenario when Dave Aldred, the membership secretary for the British Falconer's Club telephoned to inform me that Jim Moss of Crown Falconry was interested in producing an eagle arm brace and would I be interested in field testing it for the latter and ironing out any flaws. As everyone knows, eagles are large and heavy birds to carry for long periods, so anything that relieves this burden would be most welcome. Of course, there are those who disdain such implements, but such machoism will only result in strained back, arm and shoulder muscles in the long run, so why take the risk?

Over the years, a number of methods have been employed to ease the burden of eagle carriage, ranging from iron rings sewn onto garments or bag straps, to the use of various sticks thrust through the shoulder straps of hawking vests, the latter of which has been my preferred method for a few years now. I had even toyed with using a heavy-duty plastic shark rod rest, purchased from a sea angling shop in Looe, Cornwall. Some also use a fixed, curved bracket, attached to a belt or hawking back with which to rest the gloved arm. All work to varying degrees. With the stick method however, both hands are required, one to hold the eagle and the other to counterbalance



Arm brace in action

the weight on the opposing end of the stick. In cold weather, this necessitates a glove on the latter to prevent frostbite. Additionally, using this arm as a counter lever by constantly pressing downwards eventually causes backache around the base of the spine and this manifests itself painfully later after resting. It could of course be my age, but others younger than me have also mentioned it. This cannot be good for future health reasons, so when Dave mentioned this new system, I jumped at the opportunity to try it out.

Prototype received

True to his word, Jim posted the prototype to me by return of post and I was immediately impressed with the quality of engineering. The metal base plate was encased in leather and very well crafted. To this, a stainless steel right angled bar was added, fitted to the base plate by a wing nut screw and this was surmounted by a curved stainless steel platform, which formed the actual armrest. I attached a belt through the belt loop on the base plate and fixed it round my waist, so far so good. Then I went to



Close-up of the arm brace

collect my male Golden Eagle, Star, and tested the brace forthwith. It worked, to a degree, but needed further support, for the weight of the eagle moved the whole piece of apparatus away from the body and I found that I had to keep on pulling my gloved arm towards me. Something was missing.

There was a welded ring on one of the right angles and I said to my son, David, who was visiting me at the time, that it needed a shoulder strap which could be attached to the welded ring and so prevent the whole item from pulling away from the body. David suggested that a strap with a movable clamping device might work and that B&Q sell something of the sort. A quick trip to B&Q found us testing the latter on the arm brace and once we found the required length, we cut off the surplus nylon webbing and again tried it, using Star. Bingo! It worked a treat, except that the belt loop needed to be as high up the plate as possible, as it was causing problems when fixed centrally. I mentioned this to Jim and he said that he supplied a shoulder strap and

posted one to me, along with another right angle which was adjustable, in as much as it could be attached at either end, one being longer than the other, and another base plate with the belt loop positioned at the top end of the plate. I had also suggested that if we turned the plate horizontal, instead of vertical, this would sit better on the body whilst being worn. All of these items worked as expected. Jim also sent me another right angle with the belt loop welded at the apex and this proved superior to the first system. So now we were on prototype number three. Dave in the meantime had gone over to the International Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi with prototype number one, in order to demonstrate it to interested parties at this prestigious event, completely unaware of the ongoing findings.

Tested on a field meet

The only way to properly try out the system would be to use it in the field on a full-blown eagle field meet and this I did in December 2011. I had organised a

meet on an airfield and took the device along for the duration. The meet was a resounding success, and so was the arm brace. I could also keep my right hand nice and warm in my jacket pocket. The free hand was also useful when my turn came to fly because I could more easily remove Star's hood because it was now not clamped to the aforementioned stick. The only drawback that surfaced was the actual shape of the base plate itself. Thinking back to the shark rod support that I owned, I remembered that this was curved to fit the contours of the human body and suggested to Jim that if we could emulate this, the plate should more or less remain in place when being worn, whereas the straight plate was apt to move about a bit. Not only did Jim send me another base plate, this time curved as requested, he also added a second belt loop for stability. We were almost there. I again took the field with the eagle and found that all that was now lacking was some sort of padding on the shoulder strap to ease the pressure from the weight of the eagle on the right shoulder. This was also duly supplied and so, with all the field-testing complete, I feel that Jim has produced an excellent product for use in the eagle falconry equipment arsenal and I have no hesitation in recommending the arm brace wholeheartedly and I use it whenever I take the field with my eagle. My personal thanks go to Jim Moss of Crown Falconry and Dave Aldred of Predator Logistics who will also be stocking the item, for allowing me to test this most useful piece of equipment. Thanks are also due to Alan Robertson of Scotland, whose brainchild the arm brace was in the first place. Thanks to these gentlemen, I now no longer suffer the aching back as with previous methods and find carriage of my eagle much more comfortable than has hitherto been the case.

For further information, please contact:

Jim Moss,
Crown Falconry
www.crownfalconry.co.uk

Dave Aldred,
Predator Logistics
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Helping Injured Wildlife

The Mission of Eagle Valley Raptor Center

Eagle Valley Raptor Center is a compact and safe haven for birds of prey. It is not on a huge, sprawling campus. It does not have a long, winding driveway, nor does it take a hike to get to the heart of the project. Many of these

birds have previously seen the worst of what people have to offer. Some of them left for dead, the raptors housed here can recuperate in peace and solitude.

Recently, doctors at Kansas State University performed rare cataract surgery on Hannah, a Harris Hawk in

residence at the Eagle Valley Raptor Center. Hannah had deep cataracts in both eyes that impeded her vision so much she could not get to her food, water or perches without help. After the successful surgery, Ken Lockwood, Eagle Valley Raptor Center's founder, is ecstatic to perform post-operative care for up to 4 to 6 weeks for Hannah. "She gets drops 3 times a day and after picking her up and holding her so we can get the drops in her eyes, she doesn't struggle anymore, almost like she realizes we are helping her and not trying to hurt her," Lockwood related. He is extremely grateful to KSU for taking the time and having the expertise to operate on Hannah.

Lockwood is passionate about saving raptors. It is clear in speaking with him that his first thought in the morning is about the care of his current birds, and his last thought prior to sleep is how he can care for the new ones the center has taken in. One of Eagle Valley Raptor Center's missions is to work with other rehabilitation centers both state and nation wide so that many different species of raptors that need care can survive trauma and be released back to the wild.

Two Bald Eagles

The pride of EVRC is their two bald eagles; WaSu, a male that has been there



Cessa the Bald Eagle

for 10 years and Cessna, a female they have had for six years. WaSu is trained to a perch for photos. Avatar, a Spectacled Owl from South America, is a recent addition to the flock. Avatar received his name after a spirited “name contest” on Lockwood’s Facebook page (Ken Lockwood).

Eagle Valley Raptor Center takes in an average of 130 birds a year. About 60% of the birds come in from the public because of auto collisions. Other common injuries to raptors are due to poison, traps, and barbed wire fences. Gunshot wounds or eating carcasses that have lead shot in them both result in lead poisoning to some of the raptors the Center takes in. The center also takes in babies that have been abandoned or knocked out of the nest during storms. He was excited to go to pick up some baby vultures, even though the car ride back involved the babies puking and pooping. “It’s their main defense mechanism. The smell will peel paint it’s so strong,” Lockwood said.

It is important to see the birds eating, because that means they are feeling safe, and that they are healthy, and on their way to recovery. It does not matter that feeding them means carrying around a



American Kestrel, Turnpike

container full of dead mice. That tub of disappearing mice means the birds are readying themselves for re-release into the wild.

Soft release for Kestrels

Two American Kestrels, the diminutive bird formerly called the Sparrow Hawk, rescued as babies, still resided at the center. Lockwood used a technique called soft release for them. This technique involves feeding them only some of their daily diet needs, which encourages them to hunt on their own to satisfy their hunger. As they get stronger and more confident, Lockwood feeds them less and less until they are finding all their food. At the time of publication, these two Kestrels have left the Center for the wild. “Re-release into the wild is one of the main purposes for our Center,” said Lockwood.

As important as rehabilitation is, educating the public in general about how valuable these birds are is just as critical. His main educational focus is young people. He teaches them to understand these birds not only as a natural resource, but also as a thing of beauty in a world that can too often be only drudgery. “When a child remembers what you’ve taught them, you know the lesson is effective,” he relates.

He gives several programs every week to various school, church, senior and family groups about raptors and what the Eagle Valley Raptor Center does. In addition, Eagle Valley works with Sedgwick County Comcare, Wichita Children’s Home Bridges Program and teens that the courts have appointed to perform community service. “It is a chance for young people to get out of the city and into the country and nature,” Lockwood said.

Raptor myth

The belief that birds of prey are harmful to livestock herds is actually a myth and, in fact, raptors help control skunks, rats, mice, possums, raccoons, snakes and other predators of chickens and eggs better than most human-involved control methods do. The average field mouse eats or destroys 8 lbs of grain a year. “If a person were to multiply the daily nutritional needs of even one Barn Owl, a farmer would be free of at least 3,000 mice a year, and, if a family of owls were

present, upwards of 40,000 mice would be consumed over the course of that year,” Lockwood said. One breeding pair of field mice can multiply to 500,000 in one year. As more and more farmers and ranchers realize this news, they now offer the center a place to relocate injured and juvenile Barn Owls. “I have a waiting list of barns for Barn Owls,” he said.

The Center’s guided tours take about an hour and a half and work well with classes led by teachers or parents. The Center has a covered pavilion for groups to use for lunch, picnics or snacks. A walking trail leads to a campsite next to a creek with resident beavers. The campsite has a fire pit for Native American storytelling in the fall. Tours are designed for a minimum of eight and a maximum of 45 people. Children 3 and under are free. Eagle Valley also has a traveling program that goes to schools, Eagle Scout Ceremonies, and many other interested organizations. Eagle Valley has done programs throughout the State of Kansas for County Soil and Conservation Districts.

Hidden nature

The tours are a chance to enjoy the outdoors, listen to a raptor expert and see a slice of nature normally hidden from view. The Center is a perfect destination for mystery tours; specialized group tours (like the Goldwing club or the PT Cruiser club), Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or 4H groups. Several badge requirements can be completed during a tour. A number of Eagle Scout candidates have completed their Eagle Scout Projects at the Center.

There is also a Lovebird Tour designed specifically for couples that want to enjoy the full attention of the birds during a behind-the-scenes tour of the facility. A \$50.00 donation for the Lovebird Tour includes photo opportunities and a DVD of the Birds at Eagle Valley set to music. The Raptor Center is a non-profit organization so donations are tax-deductible.

The Eagle Valley Raptor Center has been featured on KSN television station’s *Walk on the Wild Side* segment. The KSN website has a *Walk on the Wild Side* page, on which you can still see the stories that feature the Raptor Center. There is also a series of YouTube videos featuring his owls; search by entering Eagle Valley Raptor Center.

Why oh Why?

by Alan Gates

Sadly for quite some time now I have found myself repeating these sentiments. In most cases it is pointed towards some publicity photograph or a real life idiot in the field who's hawk is wearing mews jesses in aylmeri anklets. It is over forty years since I had the misfortune to experience the dangers of slit jesses. In those days most falconers used what is now termed the traditional jess, but after that incident I fashioned the first eagle aylmeri jesses using a pair of pliers to fasten the sail eyelets closed.

So taken was I with this improvement, that I produced a couple of rubber inking stamps with slogans to postmark all my letters to other falconers. I also wrote an article in the BFC journal in 1971.

This was at a time when the Hawking Club of Great Britain and the British Falconers Club were amalgamating into one club and Dr. Robert Kenward put forward into the club rules my idea that all members should furnish their hawks and falcons with aylmeri flying jesses.

Flying with mews jesses

These days all raptors that are flown seem to be fitted with aylmeri anklets but sadly far too many people seem to be so lazy or just plain stupid and fail to change from mews to slit-less flying jesses (or no jesses) when flying their hawk.

I have heard all the lame excuses, believe me, and none of them stack up. It takes a few seconds to change from one set to the other, so why are we surrounded by so many numb-skulls?

Even worse, I have often seen images in books, publicity posters or on the internet of falconers in the field, at falconry centres and/or falconry flying display teams flying falcons and hawks with mews jesses.

How the heck are novice falconers going to understand the importance of the safety factor when their so-called peers are so negligent themselves?

The day your hawk snags a jess in an



What could happen when being lazy and not changing the jesses

impossible high tree is the moment you know what a dim-wit you really are, but to do the same thing in front of an audience is the moment you become a legendary idiot.

I have rescued or had falcons handed to me by country folk who have rescued them with more junk hanging from their legs, which would not be out of place securing a bull dog.

Reluctantly you have to hand back this raptor to their rightful owner, knowing full well he is a complete Neanderthal and will never heed what you tell him.

Harsh words?

My words might seem harsh but we are talking about the safety of your hawk in flight or forbid the thought that you lose them in fair flight. Imagine the thrill of picking up a signal after days of searching for a lost hawk only to come across a battered, feather-ripped mess with broken legs, hanging stone dead from a tree branch.

At that moment as you stand looking up and thinking of the terrible slow death that your magnificent hawk incurred, and wishing you had got there sooner, instead

you should be thinking "If only I had changed the jesses, this would not have happened".

Forget all the modified versions of aylmeri anklets, false or what ever. There is only one design and if the right leather is used they work. Hells bells, I have had anklets on female eagles that have lasted years, only to be removed because the leather may start to become a little hard after years of use, and no, the feathers on the legs were perfect.

Overlong jesses can be as dangerous as they can whip around a branch or pylon strut and snag your hawk. I have seen images of falconers with their hawks jesses hanging half way down the falconers knees. WHY? . . . leather cut right does not stretch that much, if at all, so why are you making jesses the length of leashes. It beggars belief.

One only has to enter "hawk stuck in tree" into any internet search engine to see how common the sad truth of what I am talking about really is.

So forget all the excuses and use the proper equipment, it could just save your hawk's life. Oh, and you will no longer be regarded as a complete idiot.

Nick Kester
Communications Officer



At last the season is with us, and the weather seems to be on the up, at least in certain parts of the country. My son, based in Suffolk, is always binding on about how wonderful it is so I went and hawked up there for a couple of days. Not that it went that smoothly but I managed a great day with friends and put my first pheasant in the bag.

Balanced view?

The RSPB has issued its routine broadside against raptor crime. When will they offer a more balanced view and include other species? The figures for 2011 are interesting. We can see that there were no reports of illegal imports or exports, and the theft, sale and possession of birds of prey shows the following trend: 41 (2006), 25 (2007), 49 (2008), 74 (2009), 37 (2010), 26 (2011). So last year was the lowest year since 2007. Remember this is reported not prosecuted. Also there were no, that's absolutely none, confirmed nest robberies of raptors, although they have managed to squeeze a probable 5 peregrine nest robberies out of their reported incidents.

Of course there are always idiots who

decide they are above the law, and three were prosecuted successfully, each one described as 'falconer' in the listing. Why do they do it when there are plenty of breeders out there?

The Bird Crime report also lists some of the areas in which the RSPB is lobbying the Law Commission to strengthen wildlife law. Rather than list them, I recommend you read them on-line and make up your own mind as to their value. http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Birdcrime_2011_edit_tcm9-324819.pdf

We are working on our submission to the Commission and as such have met with the Countryside Alliance and their lawyers who will provide valuable input. This is a legal minefield and without legal assistance we would be floundering. With the Sustainable User Network we are having a meeting with the Commission after the next Hawk Board meeting.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Having read the Wildlife and Countryside Act and all attendant wildlife law, some of which dates back over one hundred years, I confess to being somewhat boggle eyed! Then we add in the EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive and you will see what we have to deal with. So why do we need to do this? Because if we didn't some lobby group that views falconry in a less than sympathetic light could slip in a suggestion that may lead to a ban or at the least a curtailment of the sport we all hold dear. I am reminded of the late Christian de Coune who headed the International Association for Falconry when the Birds Directive was drafted. Single-handedly he added a pro-falconry clause that remains to this day and is binding on the UK (in as much as it is possible). We should remember his selfless efforts and be grateful. Similarly, if we succeed in our efforts we will also be appreciated, but if we fail . . . ? We will remain accursed.

This is the biggest thing we have faced in my current ten-year tenure as a paid-for member of the board and I would like to thank all those who have taken the trouble to submit constructive suggestions for all their help. The more the merrier, I say, more in hope than expectation! But we have not finished yet and it will take a new parliament (post 2015) to bring this to fruition, by

which time others will have picked up the baton. But be warned, once it becomes a bill, we will have to rely on our MPs, whilst at this stage we actually have some direct influence.

Support your Hawk Board

And if you find all this too much, then please help fund our work by sending some cash to the Hawk Board so that others can keep your sport safe, and next time you are feeding up at the end of the day, remember we are fighting for your right but with very inadequate funding. Here is one comparison that puts it into perspective: RSPB annual income about £100 million, Hawk Board club membership income £8,000, bolstered by the Campaign for Falconry, Game Fair, etc to some £20,000 – not a lot of money to spend, especially when netted out against our routine expenditure!



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

Out with a Whimper or a Bang?

Well that's it for this year and for me it ended a bit like a damp squib. I really look to my final day for a kill and a gorge so I can sit by Baldrick, my five times intermewed goshawk and watch him feed to his heart's content, open the hip flask and review the season. The game season finished on 1 February, but despite my best efforts nothing was brought to book, I decided to go onto rabbits to bring matters to a conclusion. With that the weather stepped in and messed everything up. Rain and gales were the order of the day, and for the week ahead. So rather than struggle on, I plonked him on the lawn, gave him a rabbit back from the freezer and pretended he had just caught it.

The moulting chamber was all clean and ready so it was just a case of cutting off his tail bell and telemetry mount, removing his jesses, and wishing him a successful moult. This act of cutting off the tail mount is very final and always brings a slight pang of regret, but once done there is no going back. My wife is always relieved when the season ends as we have a good month's hunting still to go, then it is Cheltenham, Badminton, and other matters equine. The lawn is hawk free, the game is in the freezer and I have spare time to attend to matters agricultural.

Good start

So how did the season go? Initially with a bang. I had three superb field meets starting with a real favourite – the British Falconers' Club four yearly gathering at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire. This has to be four of the best falconry days available anywhere in the world. But you have to get your hawk ready, and that



Nick Kester with Baldrick

means praying the moult is over quickly, that he comes out at a good weight (not too much internal fat), and that you can man him up and enter him before the first week of October. This is always a struggle for imprints because – and I may be the exception here – my goshawk spends valuable time displaying to me when he should be putting his energies into feathers. But we achieved it and took a rabbit on 2 October, three days before travelling across the country to our rented cottage in Lincolnshire.

Although in early October the game is not at its most challenging, Baldrick was not at his fittest. Despite this he killed once every day, and in satisfying style, so we came home content and ready for the year. The 2010-11 season was off with a bang. In November the BFC had its AGM and a two-day field meet was on the calendar. By now the goshawks were fit and the game was wary, having been shot at several times. The club works hard to make such events a success and the venues were a credit. By now everyone was in high spirits and it is a real privilege to be amongst some of the best austringers in the country. Well-manned hawks, each capable of taking slip after slip is a pleasure. Although Baldrick failed on the first day, he more than made up for it on Saturday by putting two excellent cock pheasants in the bag. The rocket was now going into orbit.

At this field meet the weather was positively Baltic: still, dry and overnight minus 12° centigrade and it was a herald for the rest of the year. We got back from the Midlands just in time and down came the snow. All this is fine if you live on a bus route, which we do. The gritting

lorries made regular passes through the village and neighbours assured us that the roads were passable. Trouble is, we don't live on the road. Our farm is ¾ mile down a track dropping down into the valley. Fine whilst the snow was soft but impassable when it then rained and froze like a skating rink. We were locked in. So feed up and sit it out was the order of the day. The water froze, the heating oil did the same (thankfully only for one day) and the 4x4 broke down in the yard. And hawking was put on hold. Actually the wildlife was struggling and despite my passion for falconry I really found it hard to go looking for game.

But thaws come and with them rain and wind; no matter, we could get out. And the final field meet of the season was on the cards. The BFC national goshawk meet was a first and hopefully will not be the last. The days were longer and we could take matters a bit more leisurely. Baldrick was back on song and again acquitted himself with his usual panache – which has nothing to do with his owner. He does what he does; I am just the audience, the vehicle to transport him. But the partridge and the duck were great to have. Duck are challenging for goshawks but not if you are owned by John Callaghan. Baldrick's was somewhat smash and grab and resulted in him ending in the brook, so that was a short and very damp day. John's goshawk excelled. When twenty mallard erupted from a pond the hawk climbed effortlessly into the bunch, focused on one and started to dive as it headed back for water. Realising this was a hopeless flight, instead of taking stand, she climbed again and snatched a second from the


sky as they cleared the tree tops. This was her second of the day, and she had never even seen mallard before so two-ducks John was as high as a kite on the experience.

A story to tell

Post hawking dinners are always great fun. There is banter and storytelling. A room full of austringers is a pretty mixed bunch but they are joined together by a mutual passion. Wine and beer flowed and the organisers were congratulated, and pressed to repeat the meet every year. I hope they do because good field meets give you a chance to meet, compare, and learn, but you must never, ever compete.

From that weekend, the penultimate of the season, we never really got back into our stride but there are moments to remember. Baldrick's best flight of the year? A covey of eight partridge erupting from a covert strip into which he flew with terrifying commitment. As he got into contention I could see his head moving to single one out, and within a blink he had chosen his hapless quarry. The redleg crossed two hedgelines before baling out and being taken as it dropped. There are those who prefer to concentrate on one quarry species, but goshawks are the most versatile of hawks and I will fly anything – this year's game book contains rabbit, pheasant, partridge and duck. Not many but enough.

So he is now aviary bound for the next six months, and almost as though he agreed with me that the season was over, with a full crop he jumped into the bath for a good soaking. I am already counting the days until September. Are you?




I might be a bit early here but Becci and I would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a HAPPY CHRISTMAS and to thank all my customers for their custom and their loyalty throughout the year.

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Club Directory



The Welsh Hawking Club



www.thewelshhawkingclub.com

The Welsh Hawking Club has four regional groups throughout the United Kingdom meeting in:-

**South Wales, North Wales,
the South West and Essex**

For more details please visit our website and click on Regions.

For all general enquiries please contact:

Jan France on 01993 822906

or

e-mail: secretary@thewelshhawkingclub.com

THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

FOR THE DEDICATED FALCONER

The largest club in Scotland protecting the needs of falconers.

AFFILIATED TO:- Countryside Alliance - Hawk Board - Scottish Hawk Board - Zimbabwe Falconers Club - North American Falconers Association - International Association for Falconry

Further details from:

Jim Coyle

E-mail: info@scottishhawkingclub.co.uk

★ We are a D.E.F.R.A. recognised club ★

The South East Falconry Group

AIMS TO SUPPORT FALCONERS IN THE CONTINUATION AND PRACTICE OF FALCONRY.

Drawing its membership from around the South and East of England, the SEFG provides a forum for falconers and would-be falconers to meet, discuss and practice the art. Members benefit from having access to a wealth of experience and knowledge, good facilities and field meeting opportunities throughout the winter months.

Meetings take place on the last Tuesday of the month at Tilbury in Essex.

For members in our Southern region informal meetings take place nr Winchester, Hants.

For further information or an application form please contact -

Dean White (secretary) on 01489 896504

E-mail us at enquiry@sefg.org or

visit our web site www.sefg.org

Join and support your local club today!

THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

Regional field meetings held regularly. A family association that welcomes both the experienced falconer and the novice.

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Contact the BHA via its website:-

www.thebha.co.uk

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Please send A5 SAE + 50p stamps to:-

Dave - Membership Secretary

THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB (F.M.)

01253 859062 (evenings)

South Eastern Raptors Association (S.E.R.A.)



Established for over 30 years, and now affiliated to the Hawk Board and holding group membership to the Countryside Alliance, the aims of S.E.R.A. are to further and maintain the standards of falconry in the South-East of England.

With a broad band of knowledge and experience within our club, we extend a warm welcome to new members, whether practising falconers or complete novices. Where practicable, novices will be allocated a mentor. Helpful, honest and friendly advice is always available.

Our meetings are held at 10.30am on the second Sunday of each month throughout the year at
The Village Hall, Station Road, Groombridge, Kent TN3 9QX

Outings, guest speakers, field meets, (at home and away) videos, quizzes and other special events are ever-present features of our club calendar and may be viewed on our website.



Please visit our **NEW** website at: www.seraonline.co.uk

or telephone Alan for information on: **07973 733110**



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Independent Bird Register

Telephone 0844 700 8500

IBR Lost, Found, Reunited & Stolen birds of prey from 10 July 2012 to 15 October 2012

The IBR would like to thank all of those people that helped to reunite and look after found birds.

If you think one of these birds is yours or you think you may know the owner, - please contact us.

If you have reported losing a bird it is **LOGGED** on the database and **REMAINS** on the **LOST LIST** until **WE** are told differently.

Our web site now has a rolling 2 month lost IBR registered list and a found list.

Part of the ring number has been replaced with a ? for security reasons

REMEMBER! We offer a service don't abuse it.

STOLEN x 1

7913	?647?HARRIS HAWK
81960	?718? GYR/SAKER
?????	????? GYR/PEREGRINE
?????	 2 X BARN OWL CHICKS

REUNITED x 134

SPECIES		
LANNNER.....	2	
PEREGRINE HYBRID.....	8	
GYR/SAKER.....	10	
INDIAN EAGLE OWL.....	1	
PIED CROW.....	1	
LONG EARED OWL.....	1	
AMERICAN KESTREL.....	1	
KESTREL.....	6	
HARRIS HAWK.....	17	
BARN OWL.....	3	
PEREGRINE.....	1	
MERLIN.....	1	
CARRION CROW.....	1	
REDTAIL.....	2	
GOSHAWK.....	1	
AFRICAN GREY.....	1	
KAKARIKIE.....	1	
SAKER.....	1	
RAVEN.....	1	
BURROWING OWL.....	1	
GYR FALCON.....	1	
GOLDEN STEPPE.....	1	
GOSHAWK.....	1	
AMERICAN BARN OWL.....	1	

LOST x 25

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
61773	?083?	HARRIS HAWK.....	S70
66550	?536?	SPARROWHAWK.....	WA8
85312	?026?	HARRIS HAWK.....	RG4
93115	?303?	BARBARY FALCON.....	SG5
93114	?00N?	PERE/LANNER.....	SG5
73737	?212?	HARRIS HAWK.....	BA14
93209	?3JM?	LANNER FALCON.....	SO20
83220	?966?	BARN OWL.....	DE14
73325	?895?	KESTREL.....	TQ4
88374	?496?	BARN OWL.....	DN17
6592	?242?	BARN OWL.....	PE6

63052	?169?	HARRIS HAWK.....	GL52
55970	?583?	HARRIS HAWK.....	IP21
89735	?716?	GYR/SAKER.....	RG6
93200	?989?	LANNER FALCON.....	WA12
86821	?082?	MERLIN.....	TQ12
88837	?604?	HARRIS HAWK.....	S12
63020	?966?	HARRIS HAWK.....	CT13
82647	?710?	GOSHAWK.....	TN16
64379	?2DPG?	HARRIS HAWK.....	B31
93646	?392?	PEREGRINE.....	KW1
86711	?470?	HARRIS HAWK.....	DH7
82102	?932?	HARRIS HAWK.....	DN36
93726	?1SHI?	PERE/SAKER.....	WS11
64214	?310?	PERE/SAKER.....	WR3

FOUND x 5

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA FOUND
93268	??RM?	SPARROWHAWK.....	B36
74498	?ION?	SNOWY OWL.....	BL8
93798	?HCM?	BARN OWL.....	B37
93725	?469?	SAKER FALCON.....	WA3
93270	?????	SPARROWHAWK.....	WA9

LOST UNREGISTERED BIRDS X 39

HARRIS HAWK.....	7
GOSHAWK.....	4
GYR/PEREGRINE.....	4
SAKER FALCON.....	3
AFRICAN GREY.....	3
SPARROWHAWK.....	1
PEREGRINE.....	3
PERE/SAKER.....	2
REDTAIL.....	1
PEALES.....	1
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL.....	3
TAWNY OWL.....	1
BARN OWL.....	1
VULTURE.....	1
GYR/SAKER.....	2
LANNER.....	1
LONG EARED OWL.....	1

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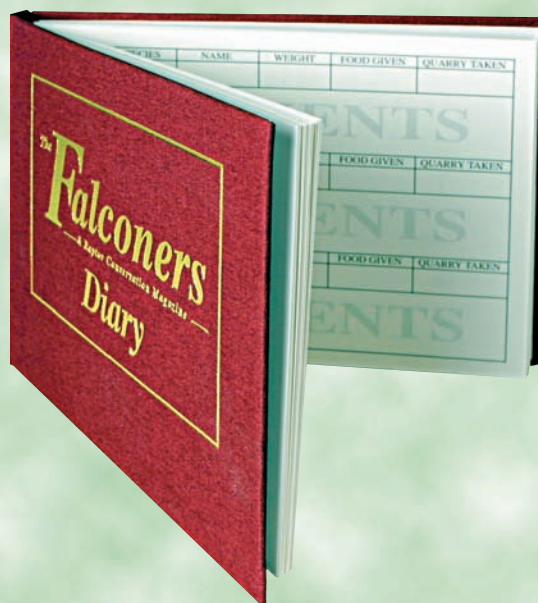
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