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The **Falcons**  
& Raptor Conservation Magazine



# Sparrowhawks

Part 3





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# contents

4 News & New Products

8 Sparrowhawks part 3

The final part of these wonderful articles from Ben Crane

12 Guidelines for Birds of Prey keepers in the UK concerning inspections, searches and home visits by law enforcement agencies

Mark Parker give his advice on powers of entry by various agencies

16 The British Falconers Fair 2014

A report on the fair which was held in May this year

19 Yet More Technology?

Yvonne Taylor tells us about the use of a Quad-Copter in falconry

22 We Were Falconers

Part 1 of the story of Esmond Pennington Knight

26 The Poet Was Wrong

Another excellent article from Nick Kester

30 LANTRA - One Falconer's Experience

Ian Henshaw gives us his thoughts concerning the LANTRA course

32 Our Winter of Discontent

Dianne and Chris Spittle tell of their hair-raising experience

34 Club Directory

36 IBR Lost & Found

It's that time again! The Hawk Board elections are upon us once again and this year there are 10 candidates. It will be interesting to see their CV's to see what they can bring to the HB who represent over 25,000 falconers and bird of prey keepers in this country. Look out for the results in the next issue.

In this issue there are a variety of articles from many different authors but I must thank Ben Crane for his fascinating series of articles on Sparrowhawks – a raptor he obviously loves very much.

As I write this my new puppy, Pippa, who is a Sprocker Spaniel, is at my feet and this prompts me to think of all you other falconers who have new dogs to train and also those who have birds on order to be collected very soon.

The International Centre for Birds of Prey is holding another Falconry Weekend on 30-31 August. This is the third year in which they have held the event and I would recommend you pay a visit if possible. More details on their web-site [www.icbp.org](http://www.icbp.org)

Also this year sees The 2014 International Festival Of Falconry which once again will be held in Abu Dhabi.

The dates for the event are 7-14 December and for more information visit the festival web-site

[www.falconryfestival.com](http://www.falconryfestival.com)

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](mailto:peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk)

## Patron Saint for Spanish falconers

The Vatican has recognized San Francisco de Borja as Patron Saint of Spanish falconers. This is due to the efforts of Real Gremio de Halconeros, the Spanish Royal Guild of Falconers, led by D. Antonio de Castro García de Tejada. Francisco was a great falconer and a companion of the Emperor Charles V, who was the emperor who received two white gyrfalcons from the French King François in exchange for releasing the king's two sons he had been holding hostage. Here is the official declaration: "Congregatio pro Culto Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, vigore facultatum a Summo Pontífice FRANCISCO tributarium, attentis expositis, cum electionem et aprobatorem ad iuris praescripta peractas esse constet, dictis precibus pro indulto annuit atque: SANCTUM FRANCISCUM DE BORJA, PRESBYTERUM PATRONUM APUD DEUM CCETUS CETRERÍA ESPAÑOLA Y REAL GREMIO DE HALCONEROS. Confirmat,

omnibus com iuribus et privilegicis iuxta rubricas consequentibus..."

Francisco joins more than a few other patron saints and holy men associated with falconry across several major world religions. In the 2009 IAF Journal is a learned article by the late former IAF President Christian de Coune on this subject.

The Guild is a group of falconers linked to the Spanish monarchy for a thousand years. The Spanish Kings always distinguished the work of the Royal Falconers who were chosen from the noble families of the ancient kingdoms. Before joining the royal service they had to demonstrate their mastership of the art of falconry and swear their allegiance to the King. From the 17th century belonging to the Guild of Falconers was so coveted a distinction that the kings granted up to 50 titles of Honorary Falconer to honour families they particularly wanted to distinguish.

Today the restored Real Gremio de



Halconeros is under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Juan Carlos and forms the world's oldest hunting group. Its objectives are the dissemination and retrieval of traditions that bound falconry with the Royal House of Spain and the City of Madrid, to emulate the service provided by ancient falconers who loyally and faithfully served their monarchs and to reinstate closer historical ties that united the ancient Arab cultures with the Spanish culture through the art of falconry. It numbers among its members distinguished active falconers and academics and plays an important part in the UNESCO recognition.



## Barn Owl from Bill Prickett

This Barn Owl is the latest creation of sculptor Bill Prickett. Bill (2012 winner of the David Shepherd Wildlife Artist of the Year - Wildlife in 3D Award and the Art Prize at the 2011 Festival of Falconry in Abu Dhabi) creates many of his "originals" in wood, which are then cast in bronze. The original model for this bronze was carved from a single piece of holly wood. The tree, which was felled in a local church yard, was the biggest holly tree Bill had seen having a diameter of around 2.5 feet and an estimated age of over 300 years.

By carving his models in wood (rather than producing the model in clay or wax for example) Bill can achieve very crisp feather detail. This bronze is 35cm tall, is a limited edition of 30 and has an introductory price of £1800.

Contact: Tel: +44 (0) 1795 892039 or 07786 424288.

E-mail: [info@billprickett.co.uk](mailto:info@billprickett.co.uk) Website: [www.billprickett.co.uk](http://www.billprickett.co.uk)



# Roger Upton receives two honours



In March of 2014 Abu Dhabi honored Roger Upton with their highest civilian award. Roger was one of seven people honored for their life long achievement in their fields out of thirty thousand nominees. For many months following his original nomination by HE Mohammad al Bowardi, his Arab friends, well known members of the falconry community, conservationists, hunting groups and his family had been interviewed by a research committee to determine whether he should be honored.

Roger had first travelled to Abu Dhabi in the early 1960's following meeting a Sheikh from Abu Dhabi in the UK whom he had taken hawking. This was the first of many trips to Abu Dhabi and the rest of the middle east where he experienced their sport, photographing, recording, filming and writing about it. On his first trip to Abu Dhabi he made friends with Sheikh Zayid bin Sultan al Nahayan and over the years they spent much time together talking and hawking. They were both interested in the heritage of the sport, conservation issues and preserving the sport for future generations. Sheikh Zayid asked Roger to help organize the 1976 International Conference on Falconry and Conservation held in Abu Dhabi. This initiated many of the conservation and breeding programs which Abu Dhabi later got involved in and in many ways, along with the later Festivals of Falconry helped with the idea of the UNESCO ICH bid. The success of which is helping falconry in so many different ways.

Roger loved Arabia, it's people and falconry and he spent many years recording falconry, its stories and culture and put it together in Arab Falconry, *History of a Way of Life*, his book of 2001, which illustrates the techniques, history, falcons, quarry and equipment used in the Arab sport.

Roger has also written much on the history of the sport and has been a huge



Roger Upton getting ready for some grouse hawking

influence on the archiving and recording of our sport here in the west. He has worked hard on behalf of falconers internationally and done much to maintain the image of the sport.

All these attributes were recognized in the Arab world and Abu Dhabi wanted to honor him for his life long work. The Abu Dhabi honors is a huge event in the country, attended by many dignitaries and shown on national and middle eastern television.

Mark Upton (far left) receives the award on Roger's behalf

## Roger Upton MBE

It was with great surprise that my father, Roger Upton, following his Abu Dhabi Award in March, was awarded a MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honors in June.

Roger had absolutely no idea that this honor might be awarded and the letter came completely out of the blue. When he showed it to me I knew exactly what it was, as some time before, Robert Hutchenson had contacted me to see what my views were on him nominating my father for an honor.

I was delighted that he thought my father worthy and helped Robert with the nomination along with many others. David Horobin wrote a great application, supported by letters from many clubs and individual falconers from around the globe. Of course the process takes a long time and I had nearly forgotten about it as the months passed by. Then there was the excitement of him being awarded the Abu Dhabi Award, which rather took our minds off the chance of him being awarded an honor here, as well.

While it is a great honor for my father to be bestowed these awards as an individual, I think it a great accolade to falconry as a whole. This is the third British honor to be awarded in the falconry world. Jemima Parry-Jones, MBE some years ago, and then Dr Nick Fox, OBE and Roger Upton, MBE within a year. These awards were for falconry and conservation. What other field sport has been honored in this way? I think it a great tribute to all of the falconers, who are showing such high quality falconry and working hard to protect the sport for future generations, should be proud of what is being achieved. Long may it continue.

## An unusual visitor

**B**oris, a Steppe Eagle, flew through an open door into a Bournemouth home while the occupant was watching the French Open tennis championship on the TV.

The Steppe Eagle swooped through an open door of Wendy Morrell's Poole home while she was watching tennis and she described it as, "stunning to look at, but quite scary".

Members of the Wessex Bird of Prey Rescue captured the eagle which been reported missing two days earlier.

Ms Morrell said she the eagle swooped in as she watched Rafael Nadal play Novak Djokovic.

"This huge black thing flew into the room and did a low swoop," she said.

Wessex Bird of Prey Rescue, which carried out the collection, said the eagle was being trained to scare seagulls away from a landfill site in Corfe Mullen. He had broken away from his bow perch where he was tethered after being spooked by a lorry.



# Book Review

## Memories of a Master Falconer

by Lorant de Bastyai

Published by The British Archives of Falconry

Reviewed by Marian Eldrett

This is an interesting book which gives us an insight into the life of this great falconer. The typed manuscript of the book was discovered by Lorant's nephew and niece, Richard and Julie de Bastion, after the death of Lorant's widow, Nancy, and they were keen that the work should live on in some way. It was subsequently acquired on behalf of the British Archives of Falconry and was brought to publication by Paul Beecroft, Mark Upton and David Horobin.

The language used in the book is simple, probably due to the fact that English was not Lorant de Bastyai's mother tongue, but rather than detract this makes the book very easy to read. There is a slight anomaly in that the title is *Memories of a Master Falconer* whereas within the pages it is referred to as *Memoirs of a Master Falconer*. The definition of 'memoir' is "biography or historical account based on personal knowledge" and I do not think that this book can truly be described as that. Rather it is a collection of memories from different times throughout the author's life, so in my opinion 'memories' is the correct title. It is not an autobiography as such, nor is it a falconry manual. As John Buckner says in the foreword – "It is not a manual of falconry but his own life story, humorous stories and reminiscences of happenings in the field to both himself and his friends."

Lorant recounts experiences from his childhood in Hungary which first ignited his interest in birds in general, and birds of prey in particular. He describes how chance encounters and career opportunities helped develop this initial passion into a way of life, which he managed to maintain throughout national service and the war years. He came to Britain in 1957 after the national uprising in Hungary and he then developed another of his passions – taxidermy. He became very skilled and respected as a taxidermist and this helped him secure a job at Slimbridge Wildfowl Reserve in Gloucestershire.

Subsequently he moved to the London taxidermy company, Rowland Ward, and later set up his own taxidermy business.

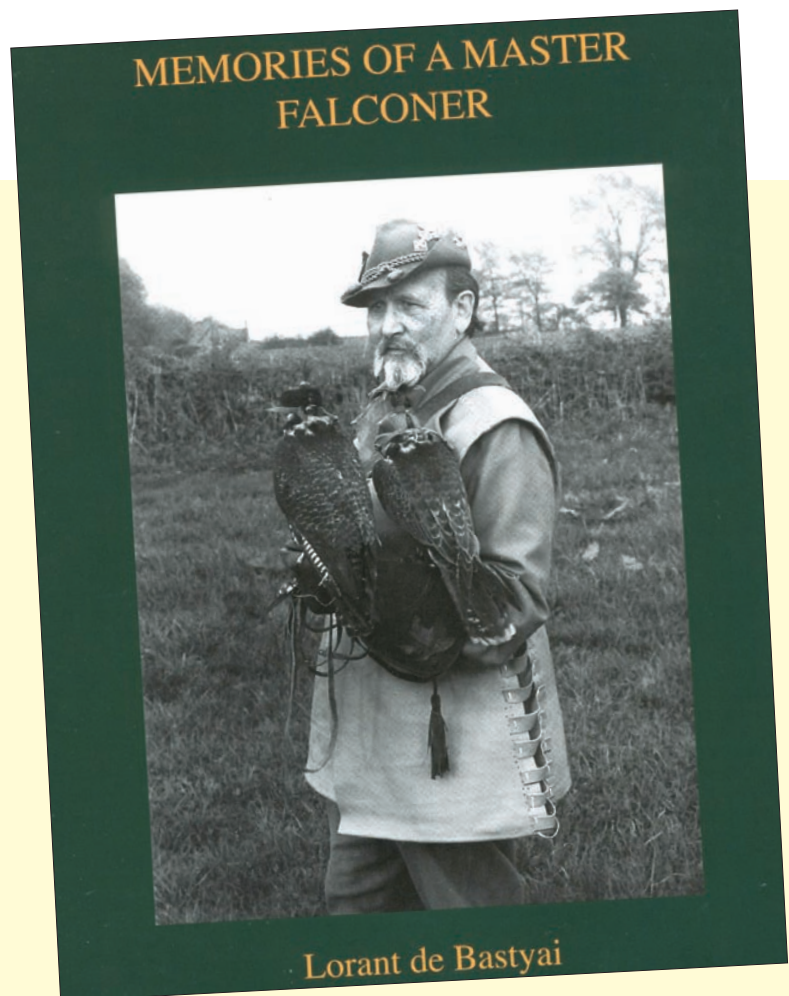
He was a contemporary of and associated with many names who will be familiar to anyone with a knowledge of falconry's 'elite' – Renz Waller, Jack Mavrogordato, Guy Alymer and Gilbert Blaine to name but a few. Along with two friends, he established the very first Hungarian Falconry Association and in 1962 he was responsible for forming the Welsh Hawking Club of which he remained president until his death in 1993, aged 82. He was also a member of the British Falconry Club. He contributed a number of articles on his experiences and research into wild birds of prey to various publications, including both the Welsh Hawking Club's *Austringer* magazine and the British Falconry Club's *The Falconer* magazine. He also wrote several books,

including the English titles *Hunting Bird from a Wild Bird* in 1968 and *All My Life with Hunting Birds* in 1982. As he got older he became less able to fly hawks at quarry, but he continued to attend field meetings and gave demonstrations at game fairs.

As David Horobin says in the last section of the book "... Lorant was not only a link to the great days of our sport's past, but also a force for its continued practice and high standards in recent times. He was truly an inspiration to three generations of falconers in his native Hungary, in Britain and beyond."

This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in falconry, as well as to anyone interested in the life of a truly great sporting character.

*Memories of a Master Falconer* costs £25.00 and is available from [www.britisharchivesoffalconry.org](http://www.britisharchivesoffalconry.org)

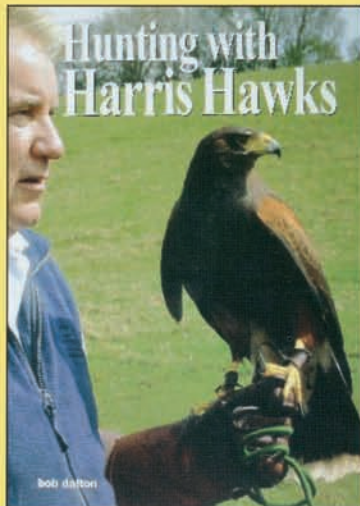






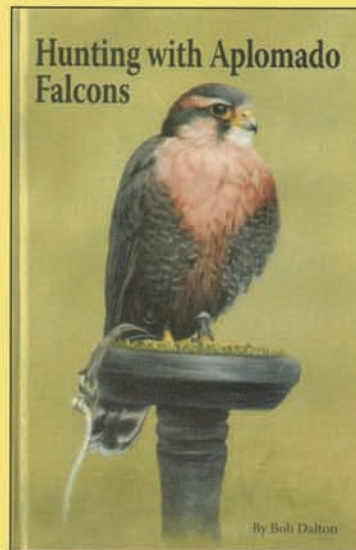
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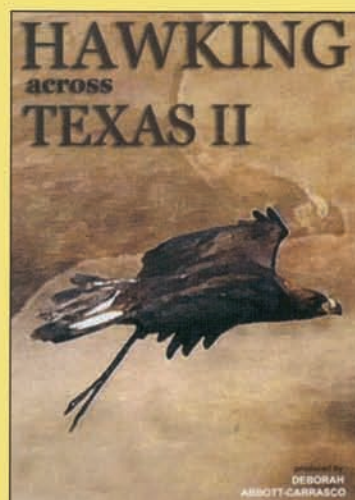
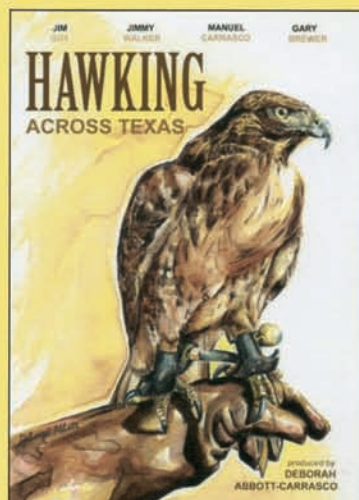
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# Sparrowhawks

## Part 3 Notes on the field and other behaviours

### Health, Welfare, Licensing and Moral Issues

In parts one and two I gave a brief overview of the processes and problems I have experienced with imprint sparrowhawks. But perhaps the most important aspects of owning a sparrowhawk are often an afterthought to purchase; these are flying and killing quarry legally, and keeping them in fine feather and healthy for the whole of their natural lives.

I am of the firm belief that a sparrowhawk is no more or less likely to perish than any other bird of prey. Due

to their slight size and a large percentage of inexperienced falconers the myth that sparrowhawks die easily needs to be completely eradicated. Unfortunately weight loss precipitating death is the primary discussion that inevitably follows when a beginner suggests to friends they are planning on purchase. Accurate weight management is absolutely fundamental to sparrowhawks, but flying them so tightly that they have fits and die in the field should never happen if you are properly prepared. With either spars or muskets it is simply a case of weighing them up to four or

five times a day and keeping accurate records as the weight decreases during training. Once environmental factors have been considered (weather and temperature) then the **rate** of weight loss can be ascertained. Once the falconer has a fairly concrete understanding of the sparrowhawk's metabolism and therefore the rate of loss over a given hour, then the hawk should never be in a position of being too low. With Max in stable weather conditions he lost roughly a gram every hour when not flying. When hunting and with a complete understanding of the specific



In the afternoon sunshine





**Blackthorn injury**

hawk's metabolism, I still tend to weigh them two or three times a day. If the correct weight in the morning does not correspond with my time frame for flying in the afternoon, then I will feed up accordingly and fly the following day. Sudden weight loss overnight can further be avoided by purchasing a heat lamp and installing it in the mews if you are unable to accurately ascertain metabolism during the very cold winter nights.

### Checking for tail damage

The number one welfare problem for all newcomers will be feather damage. The tail and outer tips of any spar or musket are extremely delicate, once bent or broken the rest will fall like dominoes if the correct measures are not taken. It may seem an obvious observation, but the correct perches are fundamental. Loop perches, rotating ring perches and up and over bow-perches are best. A correctly constructed bow perch (many are too thin or have an acute arch) can be used, but only when the hawk is completely stable or during the initial imprinting and hard penning stages. Once hawking, any spar should only ever be on a high shelved loop perch thus avoiding feather damage in and around the mews.

When in the field and in order to condition the hawk not to carry, it is

advisable to feed for a period on the ground. This is the situation where tail and wing feather damage will occur most frequently. Unless field conditions are suitable (soft grass for example) then an aggressive, mantling hawk will invariably break feathers. Always carry a feather straightener in the field or in extreme cases a small flask of hot water. Any feather that is bent or broken needs to be impeded **immediately** once at home. This season Max broke two tail feathers and bent several other outer tips, all feathers were impeded straight away and by the end of the season he was in fine fettle and had not suffered any illness or extreme feather damage.

Thankfully there are very few cases of experienced sparviter who have had sparrowhawks die without any indication of illness. It is a fact that in the wild many sparrowhawks from any given clutch will perish from natural causes. It could well be argued that domesticated breeding circumvents this issue and by selling all stock, at least one or more of any given offspring will be smaller, weaker, sickly and prone to suffer injury and death. It is therefore paramount that prior to any purchase the beginner makes all the right enquiries, talks to other sparviter who have flown any offspring and at worst cancel the season and book a

reputable sparrowhawk from proven lines. If sudden death does occur then it is imperative that the sparviter carry out an autopsy. It is all too easy to 'blame' the genetic stock of a hawk on death. All avenues need to be explored and data collated in order to prevent repeated mistakes and to alleviate the heavy weight of guilt if a sparrowhawk dies when in your care.

Other minor health issues likely to be encountered include foot infections from blackthorn, broken bones, damaged beaks, insect infestations, bruised feet and any number of other field related damage. The prevention of these ailments is difficult and any would be sparviter is wise to insure their hawk from the moment of purchase, locate an experienced avian vet and be proactive and considerate when flying either a musket or spar.

Falconry history has placed a heavy burden on the slight shoulder of the sparrowhawk. They have rightly been given a place in the upper echelons of falconry practise. To many, flying a sparrowhawk has become a status symbol over and above a genuine passion and respect for the species. When any falconer mentions they have flown or are flying a sparrowhawk there is a discernable interest and any number of





Preparing for flight

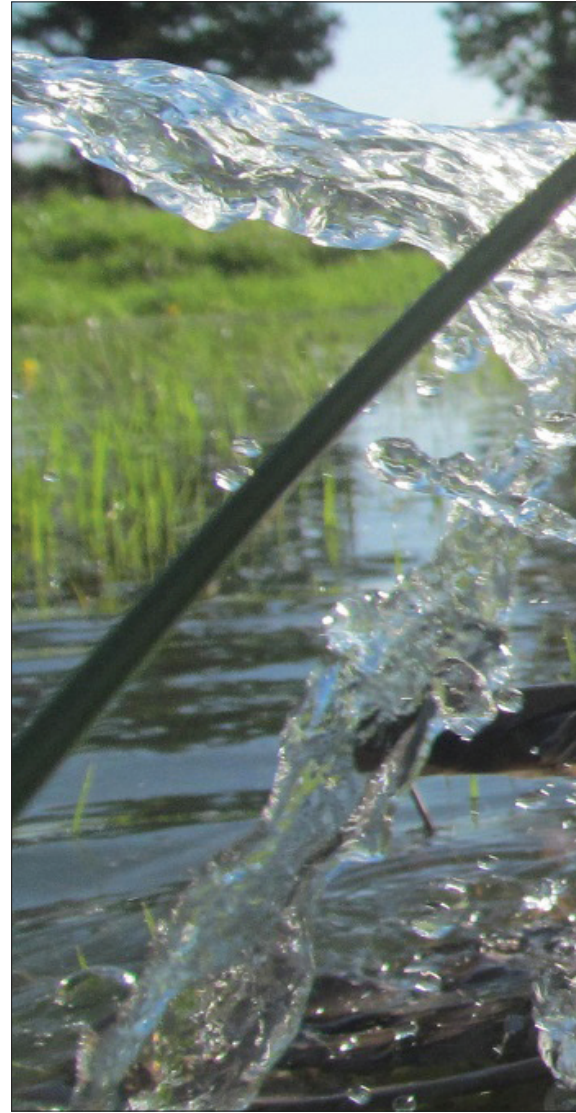
questions asked. The focus is invariably on the hawk and its prowess (and by extension the sparrowhawk) rather than the implications and responsibilities of conduct.

### Ethics and flying at songbirds

One of the key components when flying a sparrowhawk is a complete understanding of the underlying moral complexity of walking into the land and killing songbirds. I will state categorically that every time I step into the field I am confronted with the moral and ethical issues surrounding a sport which on the surface destroys some of our most stunning indigenous garden birds for pleasure. Owning a sparrowhawk for the wrong reasons or simply because they are highly technical and will give the falconer more 'respect' is wrong. Improving your 'notoriety' should never come at the cost of the life of a blackbird, thrush, pipit or lark. The only real reasons for owning a sparrowhawk should come from a deep desire to understand an indigenous raptor, its natural history, the landscape of its origin, its quarry base and to live vicariously through its flight style in order to become completely immersed in the falconry heritage of the European Union.

I would advise anyone considering sparrowhawking as a way to kill magpies and jackdaw for half a season from a car to seriously reconsider their motivations. The best sparrowhawking is always on foot and always after blackbirds. Car hawking is great fun and helps to sharpen the skills of a young imprint, but this process should never be at the expense of truly worthy quarry. The hawking of any songbird can be a tricky subject and provides a very different type of satisfaction compared to killing things to eat. There are specific legal requirements and moral questions that need to be contemplated if the falconer is to fully satisfy the natural requirements of a sparrowhawk.

Firstly if you have applied for the correct license from Natural England, then you will be hawking well within the law and so perhaps should not even worry about the implications of sparrowhawking. So long as you are not breaking any laws it is perfectly feasible not to contemplate what you are doing. If the law allows it then no justification is needed. In the United Kingdom if you wish to hawk blackbirds or other legal quarry then first and foremost you should contact; *Senior Licensing Officer, Wildlife Licensing Unit, Natural England, First*



*Floor, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6EB. T: 0300 060 1827 ( www.naturalengland.org.uk ).* You can ask for a license and once the details have been filled in, this can be renewed each season in order to hawk legally and safely.

If on the other hand you have as much respect for the land and quarry as you do for your hawk, then a discussion of what you are doing needs to be considered. It is important that the beginner sparrowhawk has a full and knowledgeable understanding of how and why the sparrowhawk has evolved and how and why any passerine behave. It is hugely important that any sparrowhawk be aware of the impact their sport has on natural populations and can argue coherently and knowledgeably if and when questions are asked by the non-hunting fraternity or anti-hunting commentators.

### At the peak of a Sparrowhawk's powers

Put in very simplistic terms and given the number of blackbirds resident





**Max takes a bath**

and on migration, then taking up to 50 blackbirds over a season has zero impact on wild populations. In fact by flying a sparrowhawk at the peak of its powers and as close to its wild cousin as possible, the sparrowhawk is in fact thinning out the slowest and the weakest of the hawk's natural quarry. In this sense sparrowhawking can be seen as an inherently conservational activity. As any songbirds left to survive represent the strongest genetic pool continuing the species as a whole. More importantly, notions of animal cruelty have only recently become popular because we no longer have to hunt to survive. By compromising and not continuing falconry in all of its forms would lessen the shared knowledge of countless cultures the world over. It matters not what we hunt, but that we continue to domesticate hawks to hunt whatever quarry we choose. By so doing we are questioning the way in which the modern world

represents nature and therefore itself. Balancing a sparrowhawk against the blackbird provides a complete account of how the natural world has evolved. It delineates clearly the way in which nature truly works when humans step back and spectate on the process rather

than forcing their will on the world through industrialised farming processes. Sparrowhawking in specific terms and falconry in general is an honest and transparent relationship with nature, both enlightening and freeing for those who choose to practise the sport.

*Sparrowhawks: A falconer's guide* by Ben Crane is published by Crowood Press and will be released around June 2014. Excerpts of which will be available and published in this magazine. The book features contributions from IAF representatives in Ireland, the UK, Croatia and Turkey. His book is a no nonsense approach to imprinting, training, trapping, breeding and flying the European sparrowhawk.

The beginner should remember that there are an infinite number of characteristics and reactions of the sparrowhawk and that no single book or article could ever completely cover them. If you are keen to learn more then I advise purchasing Jack Mavrogadato's; *A Hawk for the Bush*, Edmund Berts; *The Training of the Short Winged Hawk*, Liam O'Broin's; *The Sparrowhawk: A Manual for Hawking* and my own book, *Sparrowhawks: A Guide for Falconers*. Between the overlap of these books perhaps lies a way forward for you to unlock your own approach and do justice to the most incredible of all indigenous short winged hawks, *Accipiter Nisus*.



# Guidelines for Birds of Prey

## Concerning inspections, searches and home visits by

**W**ith specific regard to captive bred and wild injured birds of prey in captivity there are many differing

circumstances when an individual or premises, both residential and commercial, may receive a visit from representatives of various law enforcement agencies such as the Police and DEFRA Wildlife inspectors or officers from animal welfare charitable organisations (NGO's) such as the RSPCA.

Whatever the circumstances it is appreciated that, for most, any such visit can be very distressing and overwhelming. The average person may have little or no understanding of the relevant Laws involved and what they can or cannot do in such circumstances. These guidelines have been designed to help all keepers prepare for the possibility of such a visit and to give some kind of framework in which they may conduct themselves with a view to protecting the interests of themselves and, most importantly the welfare of the birds that they are responsible for.

### **IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE:**

With regard to the following guidelines, please remember that the information and advice contained within are only suggestions for the owner/keeper to CONSIDER. They are NOT designed to tell you what you must do. It is up to the individual to make sure they understand the requirements of the various laws, and to comply with them. It is their own choice at the time of any such visit or inspection, etc. as to what course of action they should take.

### **POWERS OF ENTRY**

There are various powers of entry on to premises that bird of prey keepers should be aware of. The primary Statutes that are relevant and which permit entry under certain conditions are contained within the following Acts:

- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Performing Animals Act 1925

Keepers should take time to research these Acts and identify relevant laws relating to powers of entry. Keepers should be aware that with certain laws detailing powers of entry there is a clear distinction between powers to enter premises and powers to enter dwelling houses.

Legal jargon, terminology, documents and Acts of Law are not always easy to interpret or fully understand, but the more you read and research then the more you will be aware of your legal rights and what the people who represent the Law of the Land can or cannot do.

### **Keepers should be aware of the following:**

Unless named in a Police search warrant, or at the request of Police exercising their powers under The Animal Welfare Act, the RSPCA do NOT have any powers to enter your premises. The RSPCA is not a crown Agency and their officers are individuals who work for a charitable organisation which is an NGO – a Non-Government Organisation. The fact that they choose to wear a uniform gives them no authority or recognition in Law. Please note that the term 'Inspector' used in the Animal Health Act does not refer to an 'inspector' from the RSPCA.

It should also be NOTED that Legislation in Scotland can be different from similar laws in England and Wales, even though the relevant legal powers are recorded under the same Statute. An example of this would be where officers from the Scottish SPCA ( the equivalent of the RSPCA in England and Wales) do have Powers of entry under the Animal Welfare Act (Scotland 2006). Please be aware that the SSPCA and RSPCA are two independent organisations.

### **PAPERWORK, ring numbers, microchips and Human error!**

The very first thing that you should do NOW is check that all relevant documents and certificates, etc, that you

hold accurately reflect all the birds in your possession.

### **You should consider the following:**

Are the microchip or ring numbers on your birds the same as recorded on your A10 or bird registration certificate? Is the ring number full and complete on the ring, phone numbers included? Are there any mistakes, errors or omissions that you are not sure about? For example the sex of the bird. If not known, put unknown.

Can you provide a chain of evidence as to where the bird in your possession, and on your premises, originally came from, and if it was captive bred?

Without doubt people can, and do, make mistakes. A breeder or keeper could unwittingly, without any intention to deceive, record the incorrect number on any relevant application or correspondence. The same could be said for personnel from DEFRA who could possibly record the wrong details on legal documentation, such as Article 10 certificates, then subsequently issue them to a Keeper or Breeder as apparently correct.

The most important and essential point here is to make sure that you have checked all your relevant documentation and established that the details recorded are correct and accurately refer to the bird or birds in your possession. IF THEY DO NOT THEN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT NOW. Remember to keep copies of all correspondence with everyone.

It is good practice to keep a separate copy of all documents, emails, letters, and certificates, in a different place from the originals.

### **IDENTIFICATION/ AUTHORISATION**

If you receive a visit from a Law enforcement agency always try and establish that the person you speak to is actually who they say they are. Beware of strangers using false identities or just



# Prey keepers in the UK

## law enforcement agencies.

trying their luck. If there are uniformed police officers in attendance with official police vehicles nearby then it is relatively easy to establish the identity and legal standing of the people or person at your door. You can ask for identification and which police station they come from, you can even phone the relevant police station to check up on this information.

However if they are not in uniform it is not always so easy. You should always consider: do they have any form of identification or a telephone number of their relevant department that you can call to clarify that they are who they say they are? All police officers, and other enforcement agencies, carry a warrant card or some form of identification which they should produce when asked. But, it is fair to say that most of us have no idea or knowledge as to what these should and do look like. So, if in any doubt as to the identity of someone trying to gain access to your premises decline permission to enter and politely ask them to wait while you ask for local police to attend, in conjunction with telephoning the individual's departmental office in an attempt to prove identity. Always try and establish the identity of the person visiting your premises and make a record of their details and who they represent together with date/time of visit. You can always take photos with your phone.

### SEARCH WARRANTS

The Police could attend your premises with a view to searching your house or garden or land and outbuildings under the authority of a search warrant. There are many different circumstances when this scenario may apply and could be conducted in different ways depending on the suspected offence, the individual or premises involved and whether evidence could be lost or destroyed.

If a Search Warrant is executed at your premises or address, your options may be limited and you will probably be panicked, angry and distressed. Remember that whatever protests you

make and whatever you do, if they have a warrant they WILL be entering your house or premises. It is important that you try and stay calm, do not be aggressive, be polite and accommodate their entry onto your property. Do not be obstructive and where reasonably possible be of assistance, for example supplying keys to locked doors etc., or producing relevant paperwork if required.

It is appreciated that in such circumstances that you as an individual may not be thinking clearly but if possible consider the following:

Have you seen the search warrant? Have you been given a copy? If not ask for one, read and retain it. The people who enter your property should be named on the warrant. If there are additional individuals not named on the warrant but who have also entered the property, who are they? By what authority are they there?

If you are suspected of an offence and someone tries to question or interview you they should caution you first. Do NOT answer any questions relating to a suspected offence until you have taken legal advice.

What about contacting a friend, relative, neighbour or even a solicitor or vet to immediately attend the address in order to act as a witness to the proceedings. Make a written record of events and conversations, consider using a camera, mobile phone or video to record what happens.

### WITNESSES

On any occasion that your premises are visited by the 'authorities' always try and get an independent witness to the proceedings. This could be anyone who is willing to observe what happens and give witness as to how the search or visit to premises is conducted.

They may be a neighbour or friend or as mentioned in the Search Warrant section, a vet or solicitor. Perhaps they could take photographs for you or even record and video the proceedings and

make a record of conversations and any questions and answers that may be appropriate at the time.

Ask whoever is in charge at the time that you be given an opportunity to find an appropriate witness. If this is refused make a note of the fact and ask why not?

If visited by anyone other than a Police officer why not consider calling the local police and asking if they will attend. Apart from establishing the identities of individuals and making sure that legal guidelines are followed, they could act as your witness.

Having an independent witness to events is important and should not be underestimated, especially if criminal or civil proceedings are instigated as a result of the search or visit. Please note that any such witness should take care not to obstruct anyone in a legal capacity at the time. They are there to witness and make a record of events and not to argue with people acting in an official capacity.

NOTE: On any inspection it could be extremely advantageous if you have the opportunity to have your own vet in attendance. This could be very important, especially in cases where the welfare of your birds is questioned, and even more so if the catching up in aviaries is of great concern to you.

### WILDLIFE INSPECTORS

Wildlife Inspectors, as designated by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, are individuals who work on behalf of DEFRA/AHVLA and operate under the guidance of the Compliance team at their HQ in Bristol. Their role as far as Bird of Prey keepers are concerned is to undertake inspections at premises of keepers of schedule 4 birds and individuals involved commercially with CITES species.

They have legal powers to enter premises. In doing so their main objective will be to ensure that where legally required birds are properly registered and that appropriate legislation is being followed. Primarily



this will involve checking ring and / or microchip numbers on birds and clarifying that they correspond accurately to the relevant paperwork (see Paperwork above). They also have the power to require the taking of a sample from a bird which may be required to prove or disprove origin/ancestry. For this purpose they may on occasion be accompanied by a vet.

Keepers should make themselves aware of which species of birds are listed under schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as well as researching which species are affected by European legislation and CITES regulations. Much of this information is available on DEFRA's website as is the Wildlife Inspectors Code of Practice.

Please Note: There may be circumstances where an inspection takes place and uniformed police officers are also in attendance. This in most cases will be quite intimidating. Try not to panic and remember that wildlife inspectors are governed by Health and Safety regulations just like most of us. Police are normally only there to ensure that there is no breach of the peace and that the inspectors' welfare is not threatened.

In our experience and on information received, it appears that it is general practice that Wildlife Inspectors will not catch up birds for examination in aviaries. In most cases they will ask the keeper to do so or in certain circumstances they may bring with them someone who has the apparent ability and experience to do so. Issues involving injury to birds during the process of catching them up for examination, and subsequent liability is discussed in the next section.

Please note keepers should be aware that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act the following applies:

Under Section 18 a Wildlife inspector may require any person who has the relevant specimen (i.e. bird) in his possession or control to make it available for examination by the inspector or veterinary surgeon. That they can require the taking of a sample which could be a blood sample or a swab for DNA analysis.

In addition to the above under this Act a person who has the bird in his possession or control must give assistance as is reasonably required for that purpose.

What, in Law is an exact definition of 'assistance' as opposed to 'obstruction' is unclear and may be for a subsequent court to determine as individual cases vary.

There can be many situations where a keeper is reluctant to catch up a bird or birds that are loose in an aviary. If this is the case they should be clear in explaining the reasons why. They should detail clearly their concerns and not be afraid to stand up for the welfare of the birds in their possession or health and safety issues concerning people entering an aviary.

NOTE: The Wildlife Inspectors Code of Practice are detailed on the AHVLA website. All keepers should have read and understood the information contained within. Reference is made to letters of authority and photo identity cards. Keepers will be invited to inspect this ID and to read and sign copies of this letter, one of which should be retained. Please make sure you read carefully any documentation, and make sure you understand it before you sign it.

### CATCHING UP BIRDS

This particular subject, where a request has been made to examine a bird, is for most keepers one of the most worrying aspects of any visit to their premises. If the bird or birds in question are tethered or at a point where they are responsive to their handler then the process of examining close rings or gaining a microchip reading is pretty straight forward. But, if the birds are free lofted and cannot be easily handled in an aviary then the whole procedure of catching them up can be a time of great stress to both keeper and bird.

There may be any number of reasons why a keeper is unwilling and refuses to catch up birds in aviaries. For example:

- It could be that the birds are breeding and have or are about to lay eggs
- They may have babies or youngsters that could be injured
- The birds have just come into breeding condition. Could the process of catching the birds up affect the possibility of breeding
- They could be heavily in moult and have numerous feathers 'in the blood' which could be damaged
- The birds may be ill or have recently received treatment for an illness or injury and the process may be too

stressful for them, this would need to be provable

- As could catching them up again if they had recently been caught up to clean an aviary for example
- The age of the birds may be relevant as could the time of year and time of day. What if it is a hot summer's afternoon?

Whatever the reason, a keeper should ask themselves if chasing a bird around an aviary trying to catch it is going to be detrimental to the bird's health and welfare. As far as breeding is concerned, is it going to affect the bird or birds in a negative way and will it subsequently be the cause of breeding failure? In addition to this, one should always consider the dangers of catching up birds - could someone be injured in the process? Health and safety issues need to be considered for all parties concerned.

It is IMPORTANT that you express your concerns to the individual in charge. Be prepared to refuse to catch up birds if you feel that it is reasonable to do so. Remember that you are legally responsible for the welfare of the birds in your possession, be prepared to protect their interests and explain your objections in a reasonable and calm manner.

Do not obstruct people on your premises in these circumstances and offer to unlock doors etc., but give the 'officer' or 'inspector' concerned the responsibility of catching up the birds. Where possible make a record of the conversation or record it and always ask who is responsible should any birds be injured in the process.

In cases when a visit to premises occurs, the keeper is going to be the person likely to be asked to catch up birds for examination if required. But, there may also be times when visits to premises are made and the relevant Law enforcement agency involved brings with them an individual who is an apparent expert in handling birds of prey. If this is the case, ask who they are, what experience they have, have they handled this type of bird before and how do they plan to catch up the birds in question. Ask if they have brought the relevant equipment to do so. Additionally, you should ask as to how will they stop birds escaping from the aviary once the door has been opened. Not every keeper has a double door system to their aviaries. With only a single door straight into an aviary and no safety or access corridor

birds can easily escape when persons enter.

### LIABILITY

The next issue regarding examination of birds is Liability. It needs considering as it is an important aspect of the process that a keeper should attempt to clarify before any birds are handled or caught up. The important question is: Who is responsible and therefore liable should any injury to a bird or person occur. In addition who is liable to compensate an owner/keeper if breeding fails as a possible direct result of catching birds up for examination, and equally who will compensate the owner or keeper in the event of birds escaping whilst being caught up or examined.

In any event where a keeper or owner feels that as a direct result of an inspection or search they have cause to seek compensation for an injury or loss suffered they are advised to seek Legal advice with a solicitor as soon as possible. It would also be of assistance if details of such an event and outcome were passed on to members of the Hawk Board for their reference and potentially advising other keepers in the future.

### VETS/BLOOD CONTAMINATION

In certain circumstances, a blood sample or swab may be required from a specific bird or birds. This in most cases will be to establish parentage or if a bird is truly related to another. There are legal powers in place enabling this to be done, but taking blood can only be undertaken by a vet. There may be provisions at the time of an inspection for the keeper to have his or her own vet in attendance in order that they can obtain the sample.

In all cases where blood is taken from a bird, it is recommended that keepers ask for and obtain a sample for themselves in order that, if allegations are made against them, they have an opportunity to have their own sample independently examined. This sample will have to be kept in the appropriate manner.

### COMPLAINTS

Every Police Constabulary in the UK, and DEFRA, have procedures in place to record and examine any complaint made regarding the conduct of their officers. If Keepers/owners feel that they have

been treated unfairly or inappropriately, they are fully entitled to make an official complaint to the relevant authority. They should also consider seeking legal advice on the details of the incident.

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Keepers should also consider, after a search or inspection has been made, whether or not they would like to see any information that has been recorded about them or the incident by the relevant authority. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 they have an opportunity to do so and can make a request for this information. It is understood that this is referred to as a Data Subject Access Request. Again, if this is something that you wish to do but are unsure of the process then why not seek Legal advice with a solicitor or contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau? In most cases a simple letter to the relevant authority requesting the information will suffice.

### COMMON SENSE

Though we have a right to protect our own interests and the welfare of our birds, we also have an obligation to falconry to promote good practice and to abide by the regulations and respective laws that exist today. The overwhelming majority of people who keep/fly/ breed or use commercially birds of prey do so legally and with good intentions, working within a legal framework that they may not agree with on all counts, but one which they respect.

With this in mind it is important to point out that if you receive a visit from the police or DEFRA or even an officer of the RSPCA, there is nothing to be gained from being rude and obstructive. Be helpful, be polite, be prepared to question the procedure involved, the legality and the actions of individuals present but do so in a calm and non-aggressive manner. Help them understand your concerns. Try and educate rather than give them ammunition to discriminate against us. Effectively, use common sense and if you can resolve a situation by making a bird available for examination, and you feel that you can do this easily without too much trouble then why not do it?

If you know that you have all relevant documentation, etc., then in the vast majority of cases you have no need to

worry about any such visit or inspection. But, remember, ignorance of the Law is not an excuse and will still get you convicted or cautioned for an offence.

### SUMMARY OF ADVICE

1. **LEGISLATION:** Make an effort to research the Legislation that concerns and governs Keeping birds of prey especially; commercial use, registration, welfare issues and powers of entry.
2. **PAPERWORK:** Check that all birds in your possession now have the correct paperwork, that this paperwork/certification etc., accurately relates to the ring and/or microchip numbers on your birds.
3. **IDENTITY:** Confirm the true identity of any individual requesting access to your birds before you grant them entry.
4. **SEARCH WARRANTS:** Read them properly and retain a copy, be polite and do not be obstructive, be careful when answering questions and do not allow yourself to be interviewed without first seeking legal advice.
5. **WITNESS:** On any occasion when your premises are visited whether it be by warrant or wildlife inspector always try and obtain an independent witness to the proceedings. Consider recording or filming events.
6. **WILDLIFE INSPECTORS:** Be polite and helpful, do not obstruct them. Be prepared where appropriate to question a request to catch birds up in aviaries.
7. **LIABILITY:** Where birds are to be caught up always question liability and ask who is responsible should a bird be injured etc.
8. **VETS:** A blood sample, in certain situations, may be required from one or more birds. A vet will be required to do this, consider obtaining an independent sample taken by your own vet.
9. **COMPLAINTS:** Consider an official complaint if you feel you have legal grounds for making one.
10. **INFORMATION:** Consider making an official request for information relating to records held and the search/inspection in question.



# The British Falconry F

**T**his year saw the return of the British Falconry and Raptor Fair to Chetwynd Park, Newport in Shropshire. Now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, this annual event took place on Sunday and Monday, 4 and 5 May.

The fair was officially opened by Johnny Gebruers and his son Jamie. They are both members of the Belgian club Studiegroep Behoud Valkerij.

The familiar layout of the event made it easy to see that there were fewer trade stands, both falconry related and general, than on previous occasions at this venue. However, it was pleasing to see some new traders who had not had a presence at previous fairs and also to meet up with those regulars who have attended the event over many years. The weather was kind and this probably helped with the numbers attending. As in previous years, it seemed busier on the Sunday than the Monday and most traders I spoke

to seemed reasonably happy with their takings – at least on the first day.

As usual there were varied demonstrations in the main arena. Jemima Parry Jones MBE gave two excellent demonstrations each day, drawing the crowds every time. As well as some superb flying, particularly from her Saker on the second day, her commentary was, as ever, colourful and informative! Nigel King from Imperial Birds of Prey also had two stints in the main arena each day and put on great displays, despite a somewhat wayward Bald Eagle! Gary Biddiss and the South East Falconry Group also presented each day. This year they introduced the use of a quadcopter which is used to get the lure to a great height and when released can result in a magnificent stoop from a falcon – in this demonstration a Kestrel was flown. On the first day this worked well and we were treated to a spectacular stoop by the kestrel back into the arena. This was

not as successful on day two, probably due to the stonger winds, with the kestrel landing away from the main arena. (Thankfully it was soon safely recovered). I was impressed that the quadcopter returned automatically (by use of GPS) to the exact spot from which it took off – if only we could train our birds to do this! Gary also flew his Peregrine x Merlin (Perlin), a cracking little falcon which I never tire of seeing and whose stoops can be truly spectacular. Well done Gary and team.

Graham Watkins from Gamegoer Gundogs gave two excellent displays on both days, with particular emphasis on training dogs to work in the field with hawks. He always gives a good show and makes it look so easy – the true sign of an expert.

Other displays in the main arena were Simulated Coursing by the National Lurcher Racing Club (always guaranteed to create a frenzy in spectators' dogs), a



Johnny Gebruers (right) who opened the fair with his son Jamie and Bob Dalton

# air 2014

display of vintage Landrovers (for some reason accompanied by the Thunderbirds theme music!) and a display of Beagle hounds which always seems to end in a party political broadcast! On the second day, instead of the Beagles we were treated to a Security Dog Demonstration with Ian Griffiths – probably equally controversial but nonetheless an interesting display of how a dog's natural aggression can be used in a controlled manner to protect people and property.

Displays and talks took place both afternoons in the mini arena, organized by the Yorkshire Hawking Club, and Kevin Ryan co-ordinated a display of eagles nearby. However, it was disappointing that, due to circumstances outside of his control, there were not as many eagles on display as in previous years. Similarly, it seemed to me that the number of raptors in the falconry mews was also less than at previous fairs and this must have been disappointing to many of the public.



Graham Watkins of Gamegoer Gundogs demonstrating dogs with hawks



Jemima Parry-Jones who gave the main flying demonstrations





Members of the South East Falconry Group preparing the Quad-Copter

The Hawk Board and LANTRA was represented at the fair and displays and discussions were held in their marquee throughout the event. Unfortunately I was unable to attend any of the sessions but I did hear that the sessions by Mark Parker (how to deal with announced and unannounced inspections) and Derek Stotton (hawk food preparation) were

particularly well supported. I also heard that some sessions were poorly attended and feel that this may have been partly due to the positioning of the marquee, which was away from the main arena area.

As ever, what makes the fair special is the opportunity it presents to meet up with fellow traders and falconers, both

from this country and abroad – it's always great to meet old friends and to make new ones from the falconry world. From my point of view, it's also great to be able to meet so many of our readers and contributors, and to put faces to names. The general feeling was that it had been a good weekend and I am sure (or hope) that a good time was had by all.



Some of the spectators that attended the fair watching a flying demonstration

# Yet More Technology?

**W**hen introducing Falconry to the general public, we describe it as an “ancient” sport (art) that has hardly changed in centuries. But just as the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought changes for the better, it is likely that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will do so too. If we were purists and did not adopt some of these changes, how many birds would be lost (without telemetry) or perished (without veterinary intervention) in our care? One of the processes devised over the last 20+ years to develop fitness in falcons, has been the method of flying them up to a lure suspended several hundred feet off the ground. The falcon then grabs hold of the garnished lure, it is released from a clip and both bird and lure are able to come to the ground safely. The lure slides down the kite’s wire on a ring so that the bird cannot fly off with it (an undesirable ending!). This process usually requires one person to raise, control and lower the kite, and the falconer takes care of the bird. This method can be used for both newly trained falcons, and those coming out the moult required to become fit in as short a period as possible ready for the start of the game-bird season.

With the advent of GPS locators, it seems that people are now looking to all sorts of modern micro-technology and how it can be used in Falconry. The latest is the Quad-copter, an alternative to the delta kite in raising a lure hundreds of feet into the air to which a falcon is then flown. So what is wrong with the Delta Kite (or balloon, etc)? To some degree you are always at the mercy of the weather, particularly the wind. At the time of year when training a new game hawk, there is often little wind to raise a kite (unless you live near a coastal region where there is always a breeze!). Another issue with a kite or balloon is drift – you raise the kite 200 or 300 feet or more and find that it drifts 10 to 40 degrees from vertical. Depending on your location



Falcon flies to the kite

this may or may not be a problem when you wish to bring the kite back down, or when the bird slides down the line with the lure. We can’t all find several tens of acres of wide open mown grass for this purpose!

So the first advantages are that this Quad-copter gets the lure in the air very quickly, straight up and in most wind conditions (up to about 30 knots tested). Particularly suitable when there is little or no wind for a kite. Then once in position it stays there: the GPS locator system built in will self-correct for any small wind adjustments, and so the lure hangs where you want it.

## PHANTOM FEATURES

It comprises 4 arms each with a controllable 2-blade rotor. The large “D” shaped pieces on the end of each arm are blade guards. The Front, for directional purposes, is denoted by the two coloured bands above 2 arms, and red LEDs below

those arms so that they can be seen from below. The rear arms have green LEDs below them. The two hanging struts are landing struts, and the round object between them is the on-board 14mp camera for stills or video. The radio control frequency is 2.4Ghz, and is effective up to 300 meters (although we managed to go further than that!). 4 x AA rechargeable batteries drive the quad-copter.

## PHANTOMS’ USES

This device is now being used by ground surveyors, building surveyors and even Amazon UK considered it for delivery of light packages to customers (according to their marketing material!). Farmers can inspect crops without walking over them, check livestock on hills without driving over hazardous tracks – all good time saving reasons. Hazardous buildings or structures could be inspected provided there is space, and flooded





### The Quad-Copter

areas inspected from a safe distance. On the local news last week, it was even demonstrated being used for airport perimeter surveillance! Falconry wasn't on the list.

The handset controls the flight of the Quad-Copter, and it has a wi-fi link to a laptop/iPad to show the real-time camera feed. Flying time averages 25 minutes (depending on how much self-correcting it needs to perform) with rechargeable batteries. There is no risk of it losing it in some distant location when the power gets low though – it's GPS guidance system will bring it back to the "home" position it started at when power gets down to 10%.

It only takes a few hours of test flying to get used to the controls, and in fact sometimes it seems to fly itself (self-correction). Ascent to 500 ft takes about ten seconds as it climbs straight up, sounding rather like a giant bumble bee.

### LURE RELEASES

So far we have experimented with lures weighing about 4 ounces, and this doesn't impede the performance of the Quad-copter. The next stage is perfecting the adaptation of a lure-release mechanism as used on the kite. This doesn't seem to present too much of a problem. Both the peg-release and a magnet (shown in detail) seem to work reliably (well at least



Quad-Copter control

with a human enacting the part of the bird bringing the lure to ground). The final stage in the adaptation from using the kite method, is getting the bird and the lure down to the ground without the bird carrying the lure to some other (distant

place. With the kite system, the lure slides down the line which is flying the kite. This will be our first trial method – simply replacing the kite with the Quad-Copter as a lifting mechanism. From what we see of other people's

experiences so far in using a Quad-Copter in this way, a parachute mechanism has been attached to the end of the lure line, such that it deploys (opens) when the line is released. As soon as the lure is released, the Quad-Copter can return to base, or be left hanging there if the falconer is operating it alone as well as handling the bird.

I hope people will continue to be creative and use what appear to be non-falconry based items in our sport, but of course always with the birds' welfare in mind. The birds seemed to be able to adapt to kite training quite readily, so we shouldn't be surprised at their ability to adapt to other things. More often than not it is the human who is less accepting of change.

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*The Quad-Copter was used and demonstrated at the British Falconers Fair 2014 by the South East Falconry Group.*

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Quad-Copter lure



Quad-Copter magnetic release



# We were Falconers

Esmond Pennington  
Knight 1906 – 1987  
Part I

**T**he momentum of the British Warship steaming at full speed for the Atlantic made sleeping difficult. The bows of the warship lifted, nearly clearing the cold waters before crashing back down again. The Lieutenant tried to read and draw, anything, to take his mind off of what was to come. Wrapped in warm clothes, in readiness for the call to Action Stations, and the inevitable battle

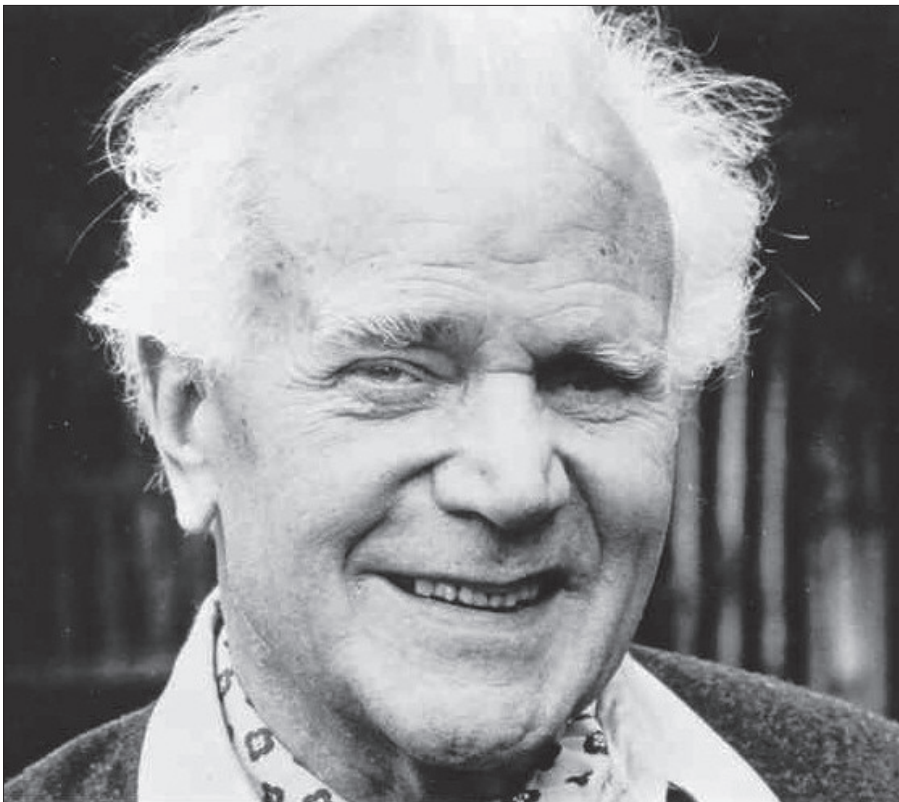
that was to come he tried to block out all thoughts but there was a persistent little voice crying out from every nook and cranny in the ship that he was to be in action in just a few hours and that nothing could avoid it. Lieutenant Esmond Knight was onboard HMS Prince of Wales and was accompanied by HMS Hood. Both warships were headed on a collision course with the German battleship Bismarck and the heavy cruiser Prinz

Eugen. The mission for the British ships was 'Intercept and stop at all cost'. On the 18 May 1941 the Bismarck and Prinz Eugen had been reported heading for the Denmark Strait and the open waters of the Atlantic. At midnight on the 22 May the British ships set course to intercept.

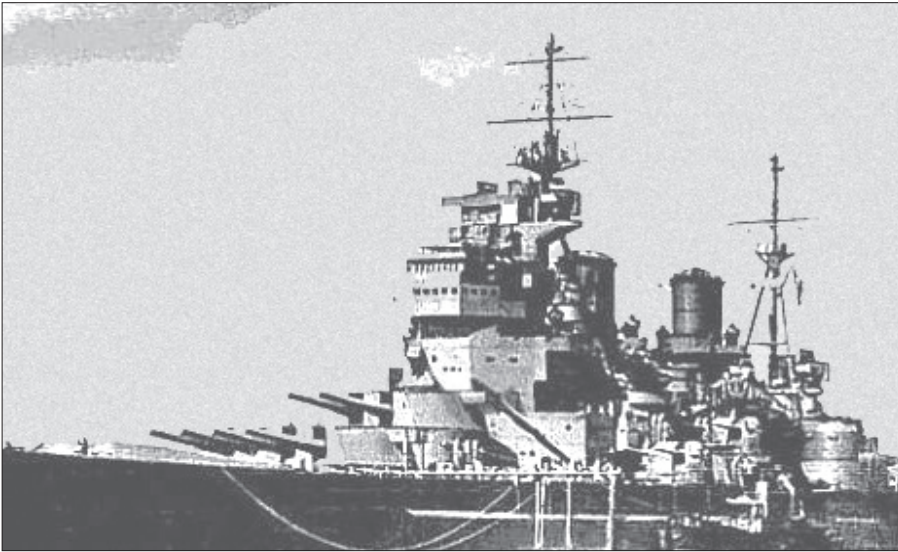
### Hood sends a signal

For two days the Prince of Wales and the Hood travelled at full steam. Hood led the way with Prince of Wales slightly astern and to starboard. The weather was awful with sleet, then snow and gales forcing them to slacken off their speed for a time. As dawn broke on the 24<sup>th</sup> May the weather conditions had changed and visibility was clear to the horizon. At 5.00 am they received a signal from the Hood, 'Instant readiness for action'. 45 minutes later, the thin voice of an 18 year old boy, barely audible above the wind yelled 'Enemy in sight' and pointed northwards. For long minutes those on deck stared at the horizon, and then, into sight came the two enemy warships. In Knight's words, "Suddenly – and one could scarcely believe one's eyes – there appeared the topmasts of two ships!.....There they were in dead sharp silhouette on the horizon – Bismarck and Prinz Eugen – steaming in smokeless line ahead, unperturbed and sinister".

They were still 17 miles apart but closing on each other at a combined speed of 60 mph and closing rapidly. At 5.52 am the signal came from the Hood, 'Open fire'. Almost immediately the guns of the Hood opened fire with her first



Esmond Knight



British warship Prince of Wales

salvo. Just seconds later the guns of the Prince of Wales followed suit and Knight felt the pulverising crashing roar as the first salvo was fired followed by the clouds of black smoke. In a short space of time all four ships were exchanging fire. The Germans were firing on the Hood and the British on the Bismarck. The Bismarck quickly found the range. What happened next was recalled vividly by Knight. Something so unexpected, so incredible, that he could never forget. "Suddenly one became conscious of that unmistakable noise, which produced a horrible sinking feeling inside one – a noise growing in a gradual crescendo – something like the approach of an underground train, getting louder and louder and filling the air, suddenly to cease as the first great spouts of water rose just astern of the Hood. Then again that horrible rushing noise, and suddenly an enormous geyser of sea-water rising on our starboard side as a shell from the Bismarck fell just short. This seemed to hang in the air for a second or two, then fell in a soaking cascade across the bridge. At intervals there was an ear-splitting crash as H.E. shells from Prinz Eugen, exploding practically overhead, rained showers of shrapnel on to the decks and into the sea around. We were racing on, on the same course, and tearing my eyes from the great form of Bismarck which now appeared in clear detail in my glasses, I ran to the other side of the ship, where, to my horror, I saw a great fire on the boat-deck of the Hood.....and then, as I looked, a great sprouting explosion burst from the centre of the Hood, enormous tongues of pale red

*flame shot into the air, while dense clouds of whitish-yellow smoke burst upwards, and gigantic pieces of brightly burning debris were hurled hundreds of feet into the air. I just did not believe what I saw – the Hood had literally been blown to pieces and just before she was totally enveloped in that ghastly pall of smoke, I saw her fire her last salvo. I felt quite sick inside and turned away...I turned back and looked again, with a weak feeling in my knees – the smoke had cleared, and the Hood was no more.*

The loss of the Hood occurred at exactly 6.00 am and the Bismarck had scored a direct hit on the Hood's aft magazines. She broke into two pieces and was lost forever. She sank within three minutes. Of the 1,420 crew only three survived.

It was the last thing that Knight saw for at 6.02 am a shell from the Bismarck went straight through the compass platform of the Prince of Wales and out the other side where it exploded. Of the 13 men on the compass platform only four survived, the Captain, the Chief Yeoman of Signals, the navigating officer and Knight but his injuries would change his life forever. He recalls, "From that moment on everything seems hazy, except that I remember again hearing that great rushing noise, like the approach of a cyclone, and having a quite irrelevant dream about listening to the band in Hyde Park, and then being conscious of a high ringing noise in my head and slowly coming to. I had the sensation that I was dying. It was a strange feeling, and one that made me feel rather sad – no more. There was a lot of

*water swishing about. I was lying on my side with a great weight on top of me. What on earth had happened".*

Knight then felt the deck shuddering under him with another salvo being fired. He heard the shouts of men calling for stretcher bearers, the noise that men make when they are dying and the awful stench of blood from bodies lying on top of him. Strong hands then lifted the dead from him and he was taken below decks to the sick bay.

At 6.09 am just seven minutes later the Prince of Wales turned away. Her guns virtually useless and taking hits from both the Bismarck and Prinz Eugen, Captain Leach, one of the survivors from the compass platform had no choice and covered the withdrawal with a smokescreen. The battle had lasted under 20 minutes during which close to 1500 men lost their lives. Many were injured and for them the war was over, including Knight, for he was now blind.

### Son of a Cuban cigar importer

Esmond Pennington Knight was born on 4 May 1906 in East Sheen, Surrey. He was the second youngest of four children, all of whom were boys. His father was Frank Knight who worked in the family business 'Knight Brothers' who had been importing and selling Cuban cigars in their shop in London since 1868. His mother Bertha had been a singer and musician. Her grandmother was Sarah Pennington, a famous singer in the concert halls of London who had been summoned to sing in the Chorus at Queen Victoria's Coronation.

When Esmond was only two years old the family moved to Putney and it was here that Esmond started his education at Willington Preparatory School just a short walk from his home. He did not enjoy his early schooldays and did not do very well. It took two attempts for Esmond to pass the entry exam to Westminster School and following in his brothers' footsteps. Although he did not excel academically he did as an athlete. He was an excellent oarsman and was a member of Westminster's eight and competed several times at the Henley Regatta. It was at Westminster School, during his first year, that after watching the school stage production of *Phormio* he then and there resolved that by hook



or by crook he was going to be an actor.

Esmond also had one other passion, Falconry. His Uncle Chas was none other than Captain C.W.R Knight a well known falconer and naturalist. He is best remembered with Mr Ramshaw, his golden eagle, a partnership that lasted many years. During weekends and holidays Esmond would often join his Uncle in the Kent countryside flying and hunting with his Uncle's birds. In 1924 he took part in the Pageant of the Empire at Wembley Stadium, dressed in Elizabethan costume. He flew Peregrines and Merlins to the lure with Captain Knight to the bewilderment of most of the huge crowd who had never seen anything like it. The theatre and spectacle of this event had a marked impression on him, and by the great Ball that marked the end of the Pageant he again determined that he must be an actor.

It was in 1925, during his last term at Westminster that his chance came. His mother took him to the Old Vic where he watched a performance of *A Winter's Tale*. He was convinced that the Old Vic was the place to start and after plucking up the courage he spoke with the theatre's manager. He was given an audition and after two nervous

lines from *Henry V* he was accepted and told to report for rehearsals for *The Merchant of Venice*. It was a modest part but his career in acting was commenced. A number of acting roles came his way which included roles in *Richard III*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. After the 1926/27 season at the Old Vic came to an end he went on tour with the Birmingham Repertory Company. The play was called *Yellow Sands*. He played opposite a very attractive actress name Frances 'Fran' Clare who he fell in love with. Esmond was to write later, "I had to make love to her. It was fun sitting on the upturned boat in a scene that we had together, plastered with a bronze make-up and having to say all those things to her which I hadn't quite the courage to say offstage". Their feelings for each other though were mutual. They became engaged and on Saturday 19 January 1929 they were married at St. Martins in the Fields, Trafalgar Square. There was no time for a honeymoon as they were both on stage that night in different theatres.

Work as an actor was unpredictable and often he would find himself out of work. It was during these times that he would escape to the countryside and

join his Uncle Chas flying the hawks in the Kent countryside and on Salisbury Plain. Like his uncle he was also a good climber and would assist in removing eyasses from the cliffs in Cornwall. It was also during one of the times he was out of work or 'resting' as actors say, that he hit on the idea of some publicity photos that might boost his career. He called a press photographer friend and they drove to the home of his Uncle Chas who at the time was away in America. There he borrowed Thunderbolt, his Uncle's Goshawk and a number of photos were taken. As a result a number of articles were printed. Headlines included, *Falconry as a Hobby, No Sport like Hawking and This Actor's Hobby is 4,000 years old*". However they did nothing to improve his career.

### First film appearance

In 1929 Esmond appeared in his first film called *The Blue Peter*. It was a very small part as a radio operator but for Esmond it was a milestone. His second film in 1931, this time a talking picture, *Romany Love* was much better and he played the lead role. Other films followed which included *The Private Life of Henry VIII* but for this film he was not credited. He in fact played the part of a Falconer along with his Uncle. Captain Knight had been approached to provide some hawks for the falconry sequence. Although initially he had declined he later changed his mind and enlisted Esmond to assist him. They aimed for authenticity as far as they could with the birds fitted with furniture of the Tudor times.

Captain Knight himself was also producing his own films and in 1932 he produced *Falconry in Old England* which was filmed at Knole House in Sevenoaks, Kent. Relations were called in to take part which included Esmond and his wife Fran and Phillip Glasier. Two well known Falconers also assisted namely Jack Mavrogordato and Clinton Manson-Bahr.

Another film by Captain Knight, *Sweeper of the Skies* followed shortly after with Esmond playing the lead role and was the hero who saves the little girl (seven year old Jean Knight, Captain Knight's daughter) from the eagle's eyrie (Mr Ramshaw).

In yet another film by Captain Knight, Esmond played the part of the man who supposedly was the person responsible for taking the last clutch of eggs from the



Esmond in 'Sink the Bismark'

nest of the Ospreys on Loch Arkaig.

Esmond's sporting interests also included fishing and shooting. A friend of the family recalled an occasion when Esmond and Captain Knight were out shooting in the woods one morning and ended up in the grounds of a convent. When an irate nun confronted them in the woods Esmond went straight into acting mode and managed to convince her that they were doing an enormous favour by shooting squirrels which were a huge pest. In reality there were shooting all kinds of wildlife but his performance managed to placate the nun and she then left them.

In 1933 he was cast for a part in a film made at the Warner Brothers Studios, *The Bermondsey Kid*. It was a boxing film. All of the thugs and bruisers from the East End of London were recruited for this film which was the old story of the young boy who rises from the gutter, battles his way through hardships, and wins the major boxing title and also the heart of the girl. However with only a slight knowledge of boxing and tips only being given during free moments in filming Esmond took some punishment. He later recalled, "*Harry Mason, who I believe, was still the unbeaten middleweight champion of England, and against whom I had my last stupendous battle, was told to "pull" his punches – that is, it was impressed upon him that if the picture were to reach its proper conclusion he must fake his punches a little! Harry, a good fellow at heart, agreed, but when we came to shoot the scene he forgot the cameras, and hearing the wild yells of the crowd could only think of his stainless reputation as a boxing champ and how best to put me out. Some of the shots in that last sequence were peculiarly realistic, for he did in fact knock me out on two occasions, and my knees sagged and I sprawled on the floor in the best possible style*". At the time Esmond was also appearing nightly at the theatre and that evening appeared with his eyes half closed, swollen lips and a bulbous nose spread half way across his face.

### Birth of Rosalind

On 3 December, 1933, Fran gave birth to their daughter Rosalind. She was named after the heroine of Shakespeare's *As you like It* which was the favourite play of both Fran and Esmond. In later years Rosalind would follow in her parent's



Esmond with Philip Glasier and baby Rosalind

footsteps and become a well known actress in theatre, film and television.

More theatre and film work followed. 1934 was quite busy for Esmond and he appeared in a total of six films. In one he played Captain Carlo Banti in *The Blue Squadron* and Pat Doyle Jnr in *Lest We Forget* which offered a different perspective on WWI.

1935 was slightly quieter and Esmond spent time hawking with his Uncle. One August morning, Esmond and Captain Knight, together with Bess a blue falcon, headed for the marshes. The afternoon was uneventful and they headed for home as they had to be back for an early supper. Esmond was to write years later,

"We were half way across a wide field, where we had found plover's eggs in the spring, we saw an old solitary rook strutting about in the next field, quite close in. Feverishly the Captain freed the falcon's jesses, and loosening her hood once more, crept stealthily nearer and nearer. Suddenly the rook was away and immediately started to climb, flying strongly and swiftly, down wind. In a flash Bess's hood was off and she zipped away in pursuit with those quick, stabbing wing strokes. As in modern aerial combat, height is the all important factor when a hawk is flying its quarry, and that

old rook knew all the tricks of the trade. As he lapped away, keeping height and distance, I began to run in pursuit. Bess and the old rook grew smaller, till they were tiny specks in the distance, and I could no longer keep them in sight. Occasionally I would look back at the Captain, who, balancing on the top of a five bar gate. kept them in view with powerful field glasses, directing me by arm movements to indicate whether I was right or left of the line. The light was beginning to go as I sagged against a broken down gate, gasping for breath. The great silence of the marsh was about me and there was that familiar feeling of peace and serenity which is peculiar to this part of the world. It was quite still and then I heard what I was listening for, the faint tinkling of Bess's bells. I ran in the direction from which the sound came, and then I saw her with her legs widely planted across her kill, one of the rook's black wings stuck at an angle into the air, the other lying flat along the grass; a few dark breast feathers drifted slowly away in the soft breeze. When I came near I saw to my amazement that it was in fact a crow she had killed. She must have given up the chase after the rook and sheered off after a different quarry.

I went in quietly, and as I did so Bess looked towards me, defiantly arrogant. I knelt beside her to help in plucking the kill, and then to my horror I saw that her breast feathers were hanging quite loose, her crop almost severed from her body. If a peregrine is daring enough to tackle a crow and succeeds in getting it down on the ground, another crow will sometimes dash in and attack its friend's assailant; this had obviously happened here. And then I remembered that as I approached the field I had seen another bird fly away, which in the heat of the moment I had thought was another rook. I picked her up and ran back to meet the Captain. I met him at the base of the hill. He said he thought there was just a chance she might recover. In the cold light of the next morning she was dead.

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With thanks to:- Rosalind Knight and John Gareth Hughes



# The poet was wrong... if you are a Falconer



Nick Kester

**R**obert Browning, in his poem *Home thoughts from abroad*, wrote: 'O, to be in England now that April's there'. Not for me. Replace the first month of spring with that of autumn and I would agree wholeheartedly. Currently the first September gale is ripping up the valley obscuring the view from my study window but that does not depress me one jot. Its impact will do nothing but good as it commences to denude the trees whose leaves are beginning to change from impenetrable green to gold and brown. By October many will have fallen. The fantastic blackberry harvest, one of the best for years, is gathered in and frozen for that finest of winter feasts – blackberry and apple crumble. Now all I need is some game to precede it. Yes, for the falconer, Keats beats Browning every day.

This is not to knock our month on month variety. It is critical to my lifestyle, providing the change and contrast that keeps me sane. No way could I live in the tropics with its ceaseless sameness. Nor could I be a human migrant always chasing the summer. I am a man of routine and that routine must include changing seasons. I mean, without the weather what would we have to talk about?

## **Baldrick is coming home**

Baldrick my goshawk has been away but will be back with me very soon. Last February, when the season ended, we were minded to move house. So my good friend Steve Forrest offered to house him for the moult and if possible garner some of his semen for his breeding project. The hawk has enjoyed his summer; I have not. The move was a failure thanks to the Welsh housing market falling whilst the rest of the country – if the media is to be believed – has exploded. Moving is very stressful and we have given up on the idea, for this winter at least.

The last clutch of swallows has fledged and they are starting to line up for the



off, and next weekend I will fetch the goshawk. Every year the anticipation of a new hawking season is triggered by a series of events that start with the Game Fair. This mix of shopping, chat and party sits perfectly only a couple of weeks before the Glorious Twelfth: there is much to anticipate. Then there is the round of keepers and farmers to visit and shoot dates to put in the diary so that conflict is avoided and help can be offered. Dogs need to be sharpened up: first with rabbits on the open hill then, once the poults are out and fledged, on feather. Telemetry is checked and new jesses prepared.

Every year Baldrick drops his final two deck feathers during the last week of July and is hard pennaed by mid-September. He is entering his ninth season and training takes no more than fourteen days – subject to weight. Ninety percent is manning, ten percent obedience. Once he comes the full length of a creance for a couple of days and his weight is a whisker under rather than over the norm, then it is into the field. Any more creance work is counter-productive. He will still have a fair amount of internal fat that can render him disobedient when taking stand, but a well-garnished lure usually overcomes any reluctance to return.

Game is plentiful and an enter should be relatively simple but nothing is guaranteed, and certainly should never be taken for granted. I try and find a spot where a slip will not end up in an in-leaf tree or take him over one of those dense, deep Welsh valleys which remain thick with cover well into the winter. Why does bramble take so long to die back? It is usually with us until January. Was this always the case? Perhaps the frosts are less savage than in yesteryear.

### Looking forward to the rest of the year

By the end of October he should be going well. November is the British Falconers' Club AGM which follows a week in Scotland with friends. We rent



Nick and Baldrick after a successful flight

a cottage and indulge ourselves with sport and relaxation – which can mean a drink or two. The only imponderable is the weather but the modern Met Office rarely gets it wrong and when you are on holiday it takes a lot to keep you indoors. Last year snow was an issue but thankfully we were wind and rain free, which can be a real showstopper. By December things are really hotting up, although the rabbits will be much reduced and ferrets must be used. The woodcock will have arrived all the way from Russia and if the weather holds we should try and put a couple in the bag. They are my absolute favourite quarry. Woodcock fly in the most deceptive way and look simple to catch, but any that are taken are done so with a huge effort by dog, hawk and falconer. What we need is a cold snap to drive them into the valley bottoms where the dog can find them relatively easily. But their cunning flush is what really enables their escape. Too often they make a small or half flight, dropping in within a few paces. The goshawk will misjudge

the trajectory and have to recalculate by which time their safety is secured.

January arrives suddenly with increased access to game as the shooting decreases. But the weather can cause problems. Nothing can be so bad as last season which brought with it wind, rain and then blizzards. My journal tells me that I gave up at the end of the second week when I was snowed in. Then it is all over for another year. I might do a couple of weeks of February rabbits and then it's off with the bells and into the aviary.

To go longer is a false economy and I have little time for falconers who persist too long into the New Year. By March wildlife is pairing up, there are buds on the trees as the sap starts to rise, and Browning's month is just around the corner. It is time for a holiday to say thank you to my family for all that time I have left them alone. Perhaps we shall go to Italy for some early sun, where Browning pined for England and penned his poem?

(This article was written in October 2013. Ed)



# Telescopic aids and the falconer

“Is that my buzzard sitting on yonder fence post, or is it just some pesky crow taking five?”

**D**eftly swinging up a pair of large and cumbersome 10x50 binoculars that any tank commander would be proud to own, I see that it is indeed *Corvus corone*. When I look back on my first optically aided forays into the field, I cannot believe that I pounded my rib cage with this grotesque instrument for as long as I did. Fortunately, it's not the case today though because I own what is surely the finest and most fitting optical falconry aid ever used in connection with our sport. More about this later.

When the 10x50 Behemoth was at last recycled into a door stop, I purchased a smaller pair of 10x25 binoculars which turned out to be both practical and lightweight. By comparison to the old fashioned 'porro prism' pair, this new pair which featured the more modern 'roof prism', almost seemed like cheating. I got good use out of them with various broadwings and a Goshawk, mainly for spotting quarry, but by the time I made the switch to longwings they were looking a bit tired and if I'm honest not really good enough for birds that appear as just a speck in the sky. The time had come to go 'up market' and there would be no more fooling around with cheap glass. "Gimme something really special!" I said to the man in the shop.

## Money well spent

Well I purchased a top quality pair of miniature 8x25 binoculars, the type with two hinges that fold up into almost nothing. They could be slipped into a



My 20 year telescopic journey

pocket or just left hanging around the neck and were everything I hoped they would be, and considering that I used them nearly every day for six years, the cost of purchase was reduced to just a few pence per day. They worked perfectly throughout but I noticed that one of the two hinges had become quite floppy, so I asked the man in the shop if this could be fixed. I didn't know it at the time but this would turn out to be my lucky day.

I explained that with a messy gauntlet on my left hand, I could only use my right hand to hold the binoculars and by the time I had fiddled around with the loose hinge and got the thing focused, my 'Houdini' falcon had vanished into

thin air. "Ah, I see your problem now," he said. "It's not binoculars you should be using mate. You need a good quality monocular with a fairly wide field of view." He plonked two of the said items down on the counter, then looked at me for some reaction.

"Oh no-no," said I quickly. "I've looked at these in the past and found them cheap and nasty." "What you mean like this?" he said handing me an 8x32 monocular to try. I went outside and got a sighting on the Town Hall clock, then went back inside, "Yeah, exactly like this," and I quickly handed them back. Not at all fazed by this rejection, the man continued with his selling pitch. "OK, let me explain

something. The monocular you just tried is little more than half a binocular with a few simple changes to make it work." Then picking up the other monocular, he continued. "This 8x42 however, has been designed right from the start as a 'stand alone' monocular for anyone that needs ultrafast targeting of the object and owes almost nothing to any existing binocular design. Try it!"

I went outside and took another look at the clock tower. After a few seconds, I lowered it and got a fix on a flying pigeon. I lowered it several times more bringing it up onto different moving objects, including the number plate of a Japanese superbike, and each time the subject was positioned almost dead centre and required no fiddling around. Oh dear, I would have to eat my words and full of contrition, I crept back in to the shop. "Well?" he said looking me squarely in the eyes.

### Easy spotting with a Monocular scope

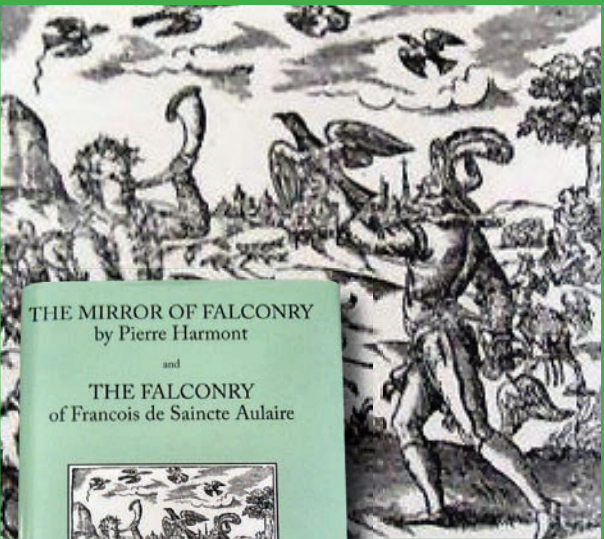
Of course, I had to admit that he was right all along and that 'Norman know-

all' had got it wrong. He went on to explain that a good monocular is designed to work with the dominant eye, so if the instrument is gripped like throwing a javelin and brought up to the eye in a natural arc simply by flexing the elbow joint, the subject will be automatically centred every time. In addition to the easy spotting, this monocular had a large bright image and was pin sharp right to the outer edge of the object lens. Another feature I liked, was the facility to convert the eyepiece for wearers of glasses, without the need for those rubber cups that eventually crack and break.

This gave me much to think about as walked back to the car park. My footsteps were getting slower and before long I did a perfect U-turn and headed back towards the shop. I dealt him down from £149 to £140 and was now the proud owner of an 8x42 Opticron monocular. Wow, I couldn't wait to show Houdini what I had bought him for Christmas. On reaching home I went straight to his chamber. "You won't sneak away from this little beauty," I said

wagging the monocular in front of him. Two weeks down the line, I viewed the monocular as an essential part of my falconry and optically speaking, believed I had raised my game by several notches. For the sake of convenience, I preset the focus to somewhere into the middle distance and because the monocular is not focus sensitive, this covers all aspects of Houdini's getaway without the need to adjust anything. I got quite excited by all this and thought that maybe I should be spreading the word.

The new optical instrument compliments my UHF telemetry, though I am not so silly as to think that I can't lose a bird. However, I feel I have done everything possible to make that less likely. My love affair with binoculars is well and truly over and although I may still use them for casual bird-watching, I doubt if I will ever use them again in combination with any hard-flying falcon. So if you're still fooling around with cheap glass, or even no glass at all, maybe you should be dropping strong hints to those around you regarding your next birthday present.



**THE MIRROR OF FALCONRY**  
by Pierre Harmont  
and  
**THE FALCONRY**  
of Francois de Sainte Aulaire

Translated by  
**JOHN LOFT**

**THE MIRROR OF FALCONRY**  
by PIERRE HARMONT  
and  
**FALCONRY**  
by SAINTE-AULAIRE

The book, as reviewed in this issue, is available for the price of £40.00, plus £7.00 for first class p&p, from:  
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# LANTRA

## One Falconers' Experience

Since its inception in 2009 the LANTRA "Beginning Falconry" award has provoked much debate and argument over its worth, and so as someone who has recently been successful in gaining the award I thought it might be helpful to share my experiences.

I think the first thing to clarify is that the LANTRA award is just that, an award, it is not a course in itself. In other words it is up to the individual to decide how they want to acquire the knowledge they need to gain the award. To draw a comparison with learning to drive a car, you can choose to go to a driving school or learn from a friend. So it is with the LANTRA award, you can either learn from a mentor/friend or via a commercially available course. The requirement being that the candidate completes a workbook and submits the book to an "Administration Point" where it is assessed.

### Family present

My own route to gaining the award was to make use of a commercial course (kindly paid for me by my family as a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday present!) and that course was at The Raptor Foundation in Cambridgeshire and at this point I must say thank you to them for the welcome they gave me and for the quality of the training they provided. I would also like to thank Tom McInally who was the Falconer allocated to me for the week, a young man clearly with the patience of a Saint!

I have had an interest in Birds of Prey for as long as I can remember, I think it is the excitement of seeing a powerful predator species do what they do best. My interest in BOP's was fuelled further through watching some "falconry" displays. Yes, I am using the word "falconry" advisedly as I am aware of people's concerns around miss-use of the term but at the time I knew no different and, let's be honest, they can still be



Attaching the swivel

excellent entertainment when done well.

Over the next few years I was fortunate enough to be able to go out on a few hunts with Harris Hawks, again usually on a commercial basis and it was those sessions that really fired my love of BOP's. To be able to witness the predator in action from such close quarters was not only a joy but an honour and I became determined to learn as much as I could about the sport.

So, as someone who was a novice and not being lucky enough to have a knowledgeable friend to mentor me, it was the commercial course route that I took.

The course took place over five days and could certainly be described as intensive. As I took the opportunity of staying in the Foundation's own B&B for the week, it meant that with no travelling time I was able to start each day at 8am when the staff arrived and also had the evenings in which I was able to study the books and DVD's that owner Liz McQuillan kindly loaned to me without the distractions of normal family matters.

### Workbook issues

I did have an issue with the workbook, as

after each question there were just two or three lines for you to put your answer. I decided to ignore that completely because if you submit short three line answers to most of the questions, your assessor would probably not be best pleased. I looked at the workbook as just a series of questions and wrote my answers on separate sheets of A4 paper, which along with supplementary material such as drawings, suppliers catalogues, pieces of legislation etc. were all cross referenced and placed in plastic pockets in a loose leaf folder.

The workbook is split into two units, the first deals with management and husbandry, and the second called "Falconry Basics" concerns the physical handling and training of the bird. There is also a voluntary third unit to the workbook that covers preparing a bird for flying free and entering it to artificial prey, but I have not heard of a commercially available course that covers this unit and I suspect that the take up rate by candidates is low.

The majority of my knowledge was gained through practical "hands on" work. This meant getting to do the everyday tasks that a keeper of Birds of Prey must do such as cleaning and disinfecting, weighing, food preparation,

picking up and carrying etc. Along with these daily tasks I was also instructed in the skills you use less frequently, for instance, making the leather fittings, coping and trimming of talons and so on. All of the tasks were demonstrated to me by my instructor before I performed them myself under his supervision. At the end of the day I would write up notes on what I had done, these notes were later expanded on and submitted in conjunction with the workbook along with verification from the observer and photographs of me carrying out the work.

As you would expect, I found some of the tasks harder than others. For instance I find tying knots difficult, I always have and so it took me longer than expected to learn the Falconer's Knot. To be honest I still have moments when my mind goes blank and I have to stop and think it through but it is quite easy to build time into the schedule to deal with these issues.

All of the tasks were carried out "authentically". By that I mean that if for instance I was making anklets or jesses then they had to be of a suitable quality to be fitted and used on a bird. The only activity that was "staged" was learning how to use the telemetry. For this a transmitter was hidden somewhere within the grounds of the centre and I had to locate it. There is an interesting footnote to this in that a few months after completing the course I was spending the day volunteering at The Raptor Foundation and the previous day a Kestrel had gone missing whilst being flown on a public display. Naturally the Foundation's staff had spent the previous



Handling a Harris Hawk

evening searching for the bird but had no success and so myself and Liz McQuillan tried again. I was "in charge" of the radio receiver and we were able to locate and capture the Kestrel in less than two hours. Not only did that provide me with a fantastic "feel good" experience but proved that the training I had received had worked.

After completing the practical elements of the course I returned home to spend quite a lot of hours researching and writing up my workbook answers

in a folder. This was then submitted for assessment and duly returned to me for some minor additions and alterations before being re-submitted. After this I received the news that I had been granted the LANTRA Award.

### LANTRA and self regulation

I am aware that a large percentage of falconers have misgivings about the LANTRA awards in regards to their validity and usefulness but I believe they were designed as a form of self regulation for the sport and as such I would have thought they served a useful purpose. Surely self regulation is better than forced regulation?

LANTRA themselves are confident that they deliver a consistent and quality controlled service as all new assessors must have their first five submissions verified by LANTRA and are randomly sampled after that. Another often heard comment is that the take up rate is low, the latest figure is that 585 people have been successful in gaining the award which sounds low. Dr David Glynn-Fox estimates that there are only 25,000 or so engaged in falconry so the figure is around 4% which still appears low but hopefully it is growing.

My own feelings are that I certainly have a greater knowledge now than before I completed the award and I am confident that I have the knowledge to keep a bird and look after its needs etc. Perhaps more importantly though, it has made me realise how much I don't know and it is now up to me to go away and further my knowledge. I don't think that is a bad thing!



Getting to grips with telemetry





Dianne Spittle with her Goshawk waiting for a bolting rabbit

# Our Winter of Discontent

**T**rying to get Eddie my Goshawk fit and ready for our annual pilgrimage to Scotland was a trial indeed – day after day of rain and gale force winds had us biting our nails to the quick and we found ourselves continually gazing at the weather forecasts trying to find enough dry slots in which to get him out. We did get there in the end as by the time we hit the Highlands he was fit and ready to address the local wildlife.

For the first time in years we were rained off for three days of our seven in Scotland but he did fly well and had several successes from the soar, a technique he has improved upon over the last couple of seasons.

It was only the fact that I could recall every nuance of every flight of his, successful or not, that kept me sane as we crawled for 11 hours down the M6 towards home. It seemed as if every car in Britain was on the M6 that day, all determined to drive into one another and cause as much mayhem as possible and we were never gladder to see the hills of home.

We took the next couple of days to get sorted out and back on track but by now the weather was truly atrocious. Days turned into weeks and the rain, driven by gale force winds, never stopped. Fields where the grass was literally floating, water tearing down the drive here like a waterfall, sheep sodden to the skin, slates blown off roofs and roofs blown off barns. It felt like an alien planet, not a pleasant place to be.

To add to the gloom, a very good friend of ours with whom we had shared many happy hunting trips with our Goshawks had decided to move to the other side of the country. He was one of those rare people who has the ability to pass on his knowledge with such ease - every trip was a learning curve if you were prepared to watch and listen to a master at work. His unfailing courtesy and old world charm will be sorely missed.

## **We were tantalisingly close**

Then at last – a break in the weather on a memorable day in December – sun and light winds – too good to miss. Loading the car with all that we needed normally took half an hour, today was the exception, it took two minutes and we were away.

We decided to celebrate by going to

one of our furthest but best pieces of land – a real honeypot offering plenty of quarry and potential for quality flights.

An hour into our trip and tantalizingly close to our destination my dual-fuel Jeep (petrol/LPG) cut out on a steep hill. We had taken the sharp bend wide so were only too aware that we were not in a good position for any following vehicles. Chris pulled the bonnet catch and did a quick check of the engine but could see nothing adrift – she started fine and off we went.

Half a mile further on, the engine cut out again. This time we managed to get off the lane into a passing place. Suddenly we were aware of smoke pouring out from under the bonnet and a final pull on the bonnet catch sealed the deal – it broke – and left us no option but to abandon ship. I was so glad that I always carry my hawk in a box as I know he would not have been happy about the ensuing panic. He was first out closely followed by the dog and ferrets, then the telemetry and then just

anything we could grab. By the time we had done that, probably no more than thirty seconds of controlled panic, the flames were 20ft. high and the smoke black and choking. We moved everything as far away as we could as we were more than aware that when the LPG tank blew we didn't want to be in the near vicinity.

I had just got emergency services when my four brand new tyres exploded, four horrible crumps like bombs going off, we all jumped including the now gathering crowd of drivers, all wisely not prepared to pass the inferno. All except one. Seconds after he rammed his way past, the gas tank blew a thirty yard ball of flame across the road. He was not only stupid but very lucky.

By now we could hear the fire engine, bells going. They had to come from Tregaron, a long way on single track lanes and by the time they arrived my once lovely Jeep was a smouldering carcass. To make their trip worthwhile they got the

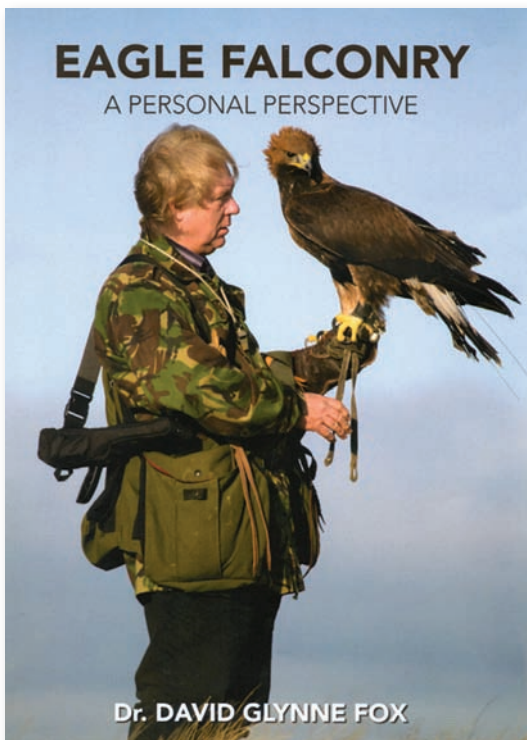
hoses out and damped down the wreck plus the trees and fences that had also been alight.

### There we were, in the middle of nowhere

When all the hoo-ha had died down and the onlookers had departed we sat at the side of the road – maybe a tad shocked. One of the things we had rescued was a bag of jam doughnuts so we munched on those for a while – then we phoned our daughters just to say you'll never guess what your parents are doing. Needless to say, they were not surprised as they think we're nuts anyway. Right, so here we were in the middle of nowhere sat at the side of the road with a boxed hawk, two irate ferrets and a very relaxed dog asleep on his rug.

Then our luck changed – along came a lovely chap who loaded us and all our clobber into his car and ran us home. One of the many things we love about Wales is that people have time for one another.

## Eagle Falconry A Personal Perspective



This new work covers a relatively new branch of falconry, at least, so far as the UK, Europe and America is concerned and fills a long-awaited niche regarding eagle falconry. The author has been flying eagles for half a century with varying degrees of success, but is mostly concerned with the Golden Eagle. This book covers the history of eagle falconry in these islands and more importantly perhaps, takes the reader on a journey into the not too distant past to discover those early falconers who saw merit in this stunning bird despite all the bad press the species received back then. The book also gives short biographies on those eagle falconers who are still with us today, giving insights into the achievements of Ronnie Moore, Alan Gates, Andrew Knowles-Brown, Geoff Clayton, George Mussared, Joe Atkinson and many more.

With the upsurge of interest in eagle falconry, the author, together with Alan Walker, formed the British Falconers Club Eagle Group, a small but passionate and successful group who regularly fly their eagles at organised meets throughout the country. The author has brought together his experiences, and those of others, in a highly readable format to help newcomers to eagle falconry. Although the book is not, and was never intended to be, a "How to," fly eagles monograph, there is a wealth of information within its pages to enable any tyro to get a feeling for the sport of eagle falconry. The author stresses the point that these birds are not toys and can be frightening to those unfamiliar with eagles. He warns that great dedication is required to take on these fascinating raptors and takes the reader through his own trials and tribulations whilst training his own eagles, highlighting the problems that can be associated with eagle falconry.

The book contains over 230 pages of text and 32 pages of stunning full colour photographs, many taken especially for this work and is reasonably priced at **£35.00**. The author will be signing copies of this work at the UK Hawking Event near Evesham on 11th and 12th August and again at the ICBP Falconry Weekend on 1st & 2nd September. Alternatively, copies can be purchased directly from the author by e-mailing [davidfox78@hotmail.com](mailto:davidfox78@hotmail.com)



# Club Directory

## 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 North Stifford in Essex.

For members in our Southern region informal meetings take place near Winchester, Hants. (Please contact Dean White on 01489 896504).

For further information or an application form please contact -

**Peter Long (secretary) on 07889 438531**

E-mail us at [enquiry@sefg.org](mailto:enquiry@sefg.org) or visit our web site [www.sefg.org](http://www.sefg.org)



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Hawk  
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Affiliation

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Or visit our website for details [www.britishfalconersclub.co.uk](http://www.britishfalconersclub.co.uk)

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Further details from:

**Alan Rothery**

E-mail: [info@scottishhawkingclub.co.uk](mailto:info@scottishhawkingclub.co.uk)

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## The Welsh Hawking Club



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

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For all general enquiries please contact:

**David Barber on 07785 762373**

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



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If you think one of the following 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.

**ALL** birds that have been found will be placed on the found section of the website if the owner cannot be traced.

**ALL** birds reported lost whether **IBR rung** or **not** will be placed on the database but please note that only those birds whose registrations have been paid for will appear on the website. Part of the ring number has been replaced with a '?' for security reasons.

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

### REUNITED x 84

SPECIES	
AMERICAN KESTREL	2
BARN OWL	13
BUZZARD	1
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	2
FERRUGINOUS BUZZARD	1
GOSHAWK	9
GYR/PEREGRINE	1
GYR/SAKER	9
GYR/SAKER x PEREGRINE	1
HARRIS HAWK	18
KESTREL	8
LANNER	4
PEREGRINE	4
PERE/LANNER	2
PEREGRINE x PERE/SAKER	1
PERE/SAKER	4
REDTAIL	3
SNOWY OWL	1

Out of the 84 birds reunited, 52 were **NOT** registered.

### STOLEN x 1

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
95611	?117?	BARN OWL	WHITBY, YO22

### LOST x 29

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
52891	?269?	HARRIS HAWK	CULCHETH
88393	?27Y?	PERE/GYR/SAKER	SEABURN
98901	?ORN?	GOSHAWK	CAEPHILLY
19738	?122?	PERE/SAKER	SEABURN
83216	?966?	BARN OWL	NEWHALL, DE11
98061	?398?	HARRIS HAWK	BATHEASTON, BA1
06365	?561?	SAKER	AYLSHAM, NR11
88594	?499?	BARN OWL	ASTLEY, M29
80263	?527?	KESTREL	PRESTON, PR5
99636	?220?	HARRIS HAWK	SALTNEY, CH4
49167	?4AJ?	HARRIS HAWK	NEWMARKET, CB8
92165	?925?	BARN OWL	SWADLINCOTE
84721	?196?	GYR/SAKER	WALLSEND
94252	?2MY?	GYR/SAKER	LEEDS, LS15
58486	?396?	KESTREL	DALRY
89070	?517?	BARN OWL	DOVER, CT16
93764	?000?	HARRIS HAWK	HOLT, NR25
88377	?557?	GYR/SAKER	RUNCORN, WA7
69282	?517?	HARRIS HAWK	NEWCHURCH, DE13
99062	?409?	TAWNY OWL	RIPON, HG4
06930	?46??	TAWNY OWL	GLENFIELD, LE3
01361	????	YELLOW BILLED KITE	LONGLEAT, BA12
92823	?369?	PEREGRINE	ANDOVER, SP11
84694	?469?	BARN OWL	TELFORD, TF3
100628	?YAN?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	FAKENHAM, NR21
96138	?214?	BARN OWL	HAREFIELD, HERTS
99264	?301?	LITTLE OWL	CHURCH CROOKHAM
93840	?037?	LANNER	BARNLEY
98396	?189?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	EAST MALLING, ME19

### FOUND x 21

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA FOUND
98821	????	HARRIS HAWK	ASHLEY, HALE
98899	????	HARRIS HAWK	BARNLEY, S75
98917	?687?	PERE/SAKER	LIVERPOOL
83267	?106?	HARRIS HAWK	LIVERPOOL
91679	?768?	BARN OWL	DERBY, DE22
99038	????	HARRIS HAWK	RUNCORN
57049	?229?	KESTREL	TAVISTOCK
99064	?472?	GYR/SAKER	CALDICOT
99242	?GWA?	HARRIS HAWK	SWANSEA
99328	?MAK?	KESTREL	BUDBY, NG22
99334	????	HARRIS HAWK	TIMPERLEY, WA15
99481	?3MJ?	BARN OWL	KINGS LANGLEY
99768	?ACK?	LANNER	MARKET HARBOROUGH
84968	?204?	GYR/SAKER	NORTH HYKEHAM
64553	?151?	BARN OWL	ALDRIDGE, WS9
35188	?993?	HARRIS HAWK	BIDFORD, EVESHAM
100326	?J09?	HARRIS HAWK	HAPTON, LANCASHIRE
44723	?292?	HARRIS HAWK	NEWPORT
92866	?910?	BARN OWL	SEAHAM, SR7
100567	?50B?	BOOBOOK OWL	DONCASTER, DH9
90936	?427?	LITTLE OWL	WARRINGTON

### FOUND DEAD x 18

BARN OWL x 3	LANNER x 2
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 1	PERE/LANNER x 1
GOSHAWK x 3	PERE/SAKER x 1
HARRIS HAWK x 4	RED NAPED SHAHEEN/SAKER x 1
KESTREL x 1	SPARROWHAWK x 1

### LOST UNREGISTERED BIRDS x 52

AMERICAN KESTREL x 2	KESTREL x 6
BARN OWL x 6	LANNER x 1
CARACARA x 1	PEREGRINE x 3
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 4	PERE/GYR/SAKER x 1
GOSHAWK x 2	PERE/LANNER x 2
GYR/BARBARY x 1	PERE/SAKER x 3
GYR/PEREGRINE x 1	REDTAIL x 1
GYR/PERE/SAKER x 1	SAKER x 1
GYR/SAKER x 2	STEPPE EAGLE x 1
HARRIS HAWK x 11	TAWNY OWL x 1
	TURKEY VULTURE x 1

I would just like to make everyone aware of a couple of issues that have come to my notice during the last few months. Firstly, there have been several cases of birds being let out of aviaries or taken from/ released from perches whilst out on the lawn. It may be worth considering having CCTV cameras installed if you think you may be at risk.

Secondly, there are a few unscrupulous people out there who are luring birds in whilst they are being flown, especially on landfills and either removing transmitters and letting the birds go, or just keeping the birds for themselves. Just to back up this statement, I have had an instance where a bird was found dead by a member of the public who contacted the IBR. The bird was wearing a transmitter, which was sent to me, and I found that the identifying logo and numbers had been obliterated. So please be extra vigilant when flying your birds.



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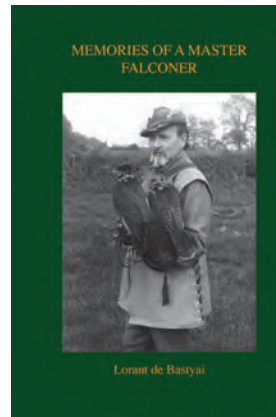
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by Lorant de Bastyai

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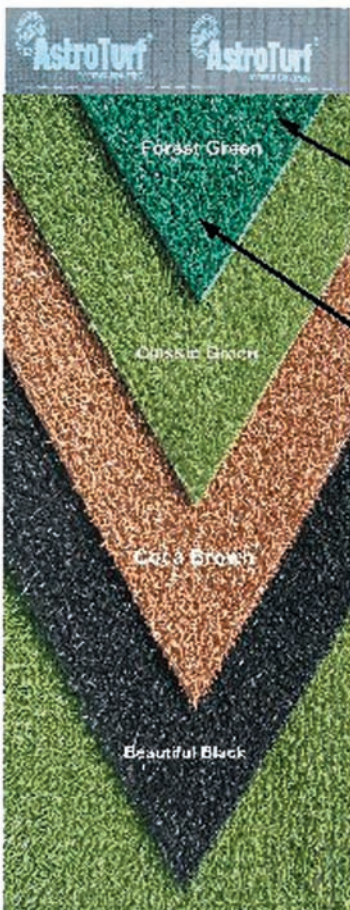
Produced from a unprinted and charming manuscript by Lorant de Bastyai, recounting his life story from early childhood in Hungary, living through the Second World War, the Hungarian Uprising and emigrating to the UK. Falconry features all the way through the book, starting with his first interest in birds of prey, as a child on his uncles farm.

Help with material was given by his nephew and niece Richard and Julie de Bastion, who wrote a foreword along with a second foreword by John Buckner and a précis of his later life in England and Wales by David Horobin.

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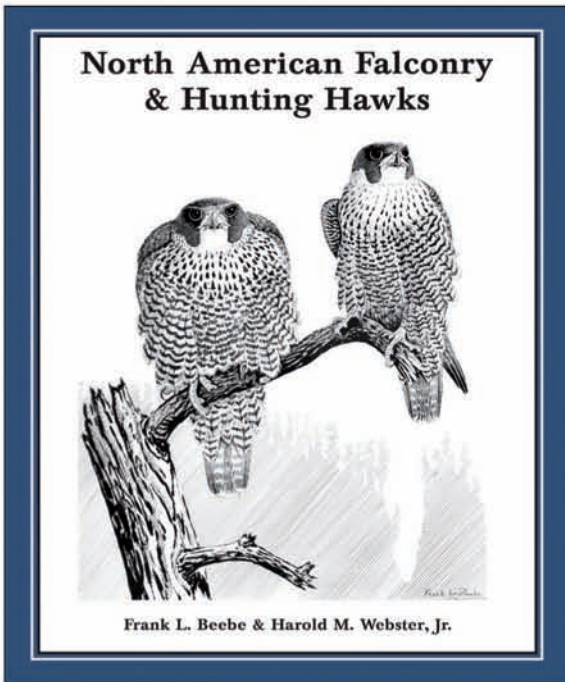
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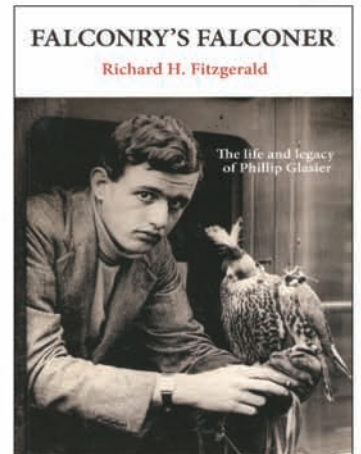
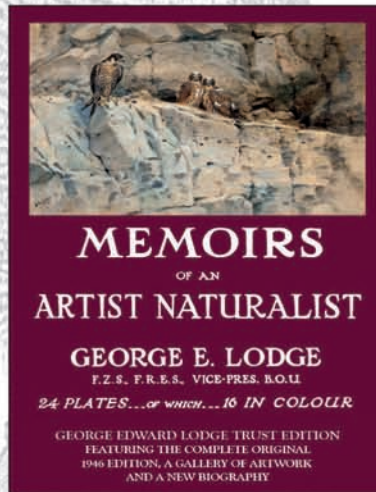
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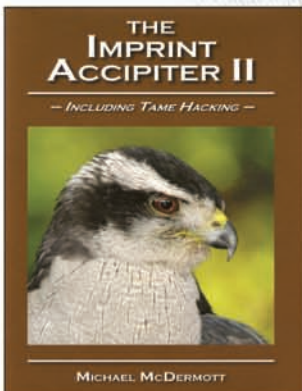


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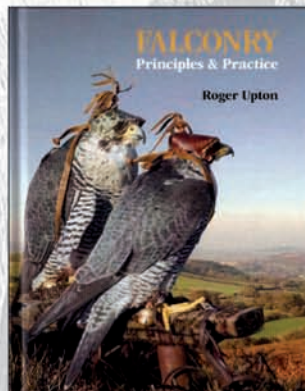
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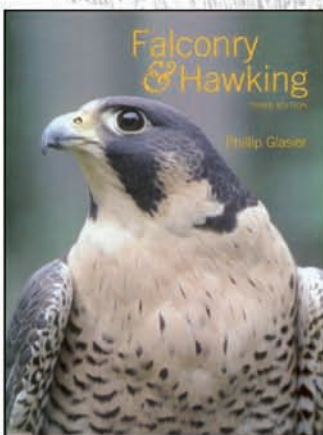
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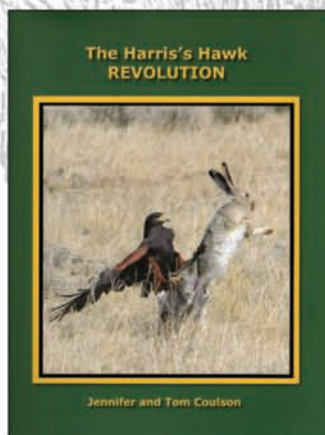
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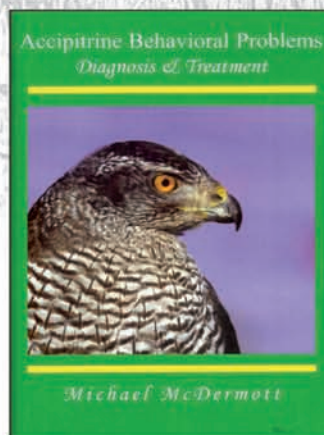
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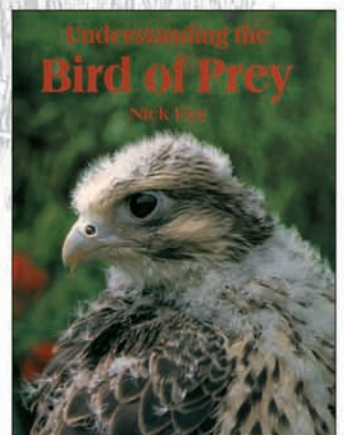
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