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& Raptor Conservation Magazine



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Hospital**

**The Hawk Conservancy Trust**



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**T**he long summer is just about over and we have now started getting our hawks flying again after a long moult. I hope the months to come will be much more favourable this year than last.

Earlier this year the voting forms to elect a new Hawk Board went out and I was disappointed to see the low number of people who actually took the time and trouble to mark their forms and send them off. The Hawk Board is there to represent all of you so that we can all enjoy our sport in a safe and legal way. The Board works very, very hard for all of us and I really hope you will support the newly elected members.

This year sees the return of the Festival of Falconry which is to be held once again in United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, 7-14 December. It doesn't seem that long ago when the last one was held and many nations have already booked their places to go to the festival. The actual venue will be Al Forsan Sports Club just south of Abu Dhabi. For more information visit the website [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)

## The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine Next issue - 100th Edition

**N**ext year will see the publication of the 100<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine* and will be a special one so don't miss it.

The first issue of the magazine came out in Winter 1989 and we are interested to hear from anyone who was interested in falconry at that time – or, indeed, you may have actually featured in that first magazine. You may have been just starting in falconry, have already been involved in falconry for some time, or just beginning to discover an interest that would develop. Have you any stories from then or observations on how falconry and/or your involvement has developed over the years? Do you have any photos from back then to show how things have changed, or indeed may not have changed at all? Some “then and now” photos would also be good. We will then publish these in a special anniversary section to mark this 100<sup>th</sup> milestone.

Please send any contributions to The Editor – details on page 3 (any original photos will be returned after publication).

A DVD with searchable PDF files of the first 100 issues will be available soon, full details will appear in issue 100.



## Short Toed Eagle makes a rare visit

**E**arly in June 2014 a rare avian visitor made it to the UK, initially the New Forest in Hampshire, and then it moved on to the Ashown Forest in Sussex. Once identified and posted on various web sites, many bird watchers came from all over the UK to see the Short Toed Eagle, also known as a Short Toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*).

Yvonne Taylor spent many hours waiting for a glimpse of this raptor, but it would often eat three snakes in the morning and then just go and sit it out in a conifer or pine tree avoiding the crows and local buzzards. On four occasions a picnic lunch sustained Yvonne and the patience was rewarded with great views of the soaring and hunting eagle. It even came close enough for a few decent pictures, although it was often late in the evening with fading light by then.

It left the UK in late June on the northerly winds to return to Spain, where it come from on the early summer southerly winds.

## Hawk Board Election – Results 2014

The result of the triennial election for the six specialist members of the Board is as follows:

Derek Stotton  
Gordon Mellor  
Graham Irving

Jemima Parry-Jones  
Mark Upton  
Martyn Standley

The new Board will begin at the meeting in October 2014 and will run for three years.

They should all be congratulated and thanked for being prepared to give up their time to ensure that falconry continues in the United Kingdom and that all bird of prey keepers are not burdened by unnecessary legislation.

# Book Review

## Sparrowhawks

A Falconer's Guide

by Ben Crane

Reviewed by Peter Eldrett

The author has a passion for Sparrowhawks and it shows in this book. For many years he has been flying these wonderful little raptors not only in the UK but also in many other countries around the world.

The book is aimed at the beginner who wishes to fly imprint spars and is very well laid out with an easy going text, although the experienced falconer who already flies these wonderful little raptors would enjoy it as well. It is not too technical and has been written comparing modern techniques with ancient ones including how best to imprint the bird, trapping in Eastern Europe and beyond, and keeping the bird healthy.

This publication is set out in six chapters with sub-chapters within them. Chapter one deals with equipment, preparation and imprinting and includes building a mews, heating, food and collecting the chick.

Chapter two is titled Basic Training and Behaviours Prior to Entering. Within this chapter we read about checking the bird's weight, carriage, bating and there is a section entitled Low Weight and Metabolism in Small Accipiters written by Karl Jennings (BVS MRCVS).

The next chapter, Entering Behaviour, Quarry and the Field not only tells us about fieldwork with a spar but also with a Musket on both small and large kills on various quarry. Other topics include hawking from a vehicle, aggression, mantling, single and multiple kills and also quotes from the author's own diary.

Chapter four is A Croation Perspective written by Viktor Segrt who is the International Association

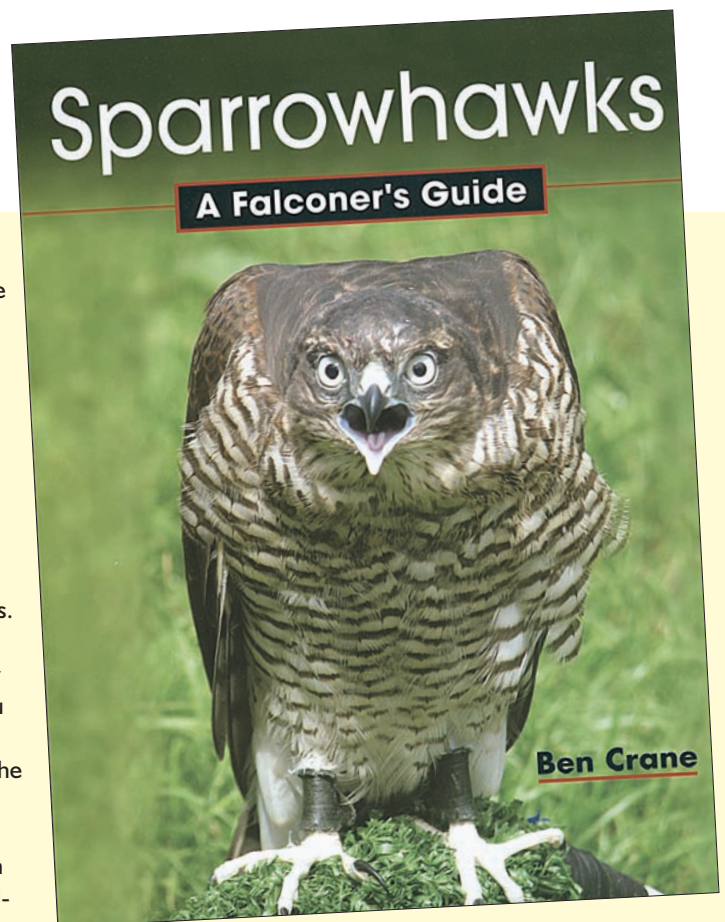
of Falconry representative for Croatia. This is his experience of trapping and flying spars in his homeland and includes a section on working the spar with dogs. As he says, "... like a finger and a nail. You cannot have one without the other ..."

Chapter five deals with Licensed Wild-take, Trapping, Captive Breeding and Passage Rehabilitation. This chapter must be read like a legal document. We cannot trap or wild-take here in the UK without applying for a licence from Wildlife Licensing and Registration Service in Bristol. The chapter is the longest one in the book and it also explains trapping in Turkey as well as in Britain.

The final chapter is all about health and welfare. This chapter is broken down into sections that include feather damage, parasites, foot issues, aspergillosis and frounce.

Finally, the book ends with a glossary of a few of the many words and terms we use in falconry.

As editor of this magazine I receive many books for review and some are not that good, especially ones of a 'how to do' nature. Sparrowhawks – A



Falconers Guide is an exception. I really enjoyed reading it because it is an easy read and the book is laid out in such a way that you can read a whole chapter or sub-chapter and put the book down at any time and then pick it up again. Ben Crane must be congratulated on writing the book and producing the many photographs of which there are about 200.

But I must leave you with this quote from the end of the introduction by Ben. "We have put into this book as much of our shared knowledge as possible in the hope that between all of these collective voices, you the reader, will be able to unlock your own experiences and have as much fun and as much excitement as we do when flying a sparrowhawk. Good luck!"

Published by The Crowood Press  
£19.95

## THE MIRROR OF FALCONRY

by Pierre Harmont

and THE FALCONRY of Francois de Sainte Aulaire

Translated by John Loft

Reviewed by: Paul Manning – Amews Falconry

Contained within one book, these are two French falconry manuals first published in 1634 and 1619 respectively as translated by John Loft. Because this is a translation of an old text and because with the translation comes a large amount of additional notes, this review inevitably looks at both elements. The original work and the translator's success or otherwise in making the text relevant and engaging to a 21c reader.

The combined book begins with the translator's preface, which outlines his approach when translating the original text. Here he points out that, when attempting to render the work understandable to a modern English reader, inevitably the "less close, or literal his version will be."

I can happily say, at the outset, that to me his approach has been a total success and has produced a translation which is both very easy to read, and to understand. Where uncertainty is thrown up by the original text, or more detailed information is required, Mr Loft provides detailed "Translators comments and notes" after each section. These are very interesting, add greatly to the enjoyment and understanding of the work, and offer a charming insight into the Translators thoughts when reading/translating the text, as well as his meticulous research and knowledge.

The first book "The MIRROR OF FALCONRY by Pierre Harmont is relatively short (39 pages). Covering just four chapters it covers; How to recognise and choose Hawks and Falcons; Manning, training, flying, and keeping in good health; In and out of the Mews; and Health. This in places is very interesting. Especially for me, when describing the falcons which are deemed suitable for hunting the variety of available quarry species, Magpie, Rooks, Partridge etc.

And how they should be selected and trained. Together with the way in which the hunt should be managed in the field.

The obvious thrill of reading this book and The Falconry of Francois de Sainte Aulaire is the Historical context, the passages where you are able to hear a 17c falconer describe or reference notable flights or, for example when mentioning, what became of two lovely Gyr falcons sent to him whilst at the siege of Rouen in 1592.

For a 21c falconer, the most difficult chapter in this book and even more so in many chapters in The Falconry of Francois de Sainte Aulaire is the section on Health. Many of the ailments that seem to have afflicted their birds, and especially the proposed cures, make for a difficult read, and apart from an academic interest I found them hard to wade through. This **was** my opinion as I read through each chapter. However, at the end of The Falconry of Francois de Sainte Aulaire, there is a fantastic modern-day analysis of their healthcare understanding, which greatly helps to put these sections into context and gives a much better appreciation for their knowledge and skill. Time permitting I would have liked to go back and re-read these sections in the light of this information.

The second book is "THE FALCONRY of Francois de Sainte Aulaire" written in 1619 by a well connected "gentleman" falconer. This is such a meticulous and scholarly work that reviewing it is quite daunting. However the factors that matter to most readers now, as when the text was first written, remain. Is it engaging and interesting to read, and does it add to a Falconer/would be falconers knowledge. In all these areas the answer is a resounding yes. As a complete work it is very interesting,

engaging, very direct and precise, and whilst imparting a huge amount of information it was obviously written with a great passion for the sport and a love for his birds.

In some chapters the interest is purely in the historical content, and again that insight into the different world and mindset of a 17c falconer. In other sections it is in the opposite, the joy of discovering *our* similarities, especially in the emotions that falconry evokes.

The chapter that deals with the common vices that can develop in hunting birds will resonate with every falconer in any age. And the chapter "About the kind of hawking-establishment needed for each type of flight". Which concludes with a warning about allowing "a single pleasure to bring in extreme and excessive expense which can cause the decay or ruin of a fine household and the comfort of the home". Today the cost may be less in financial terms, but we would all still recognise the cost of our obsession to our relationships and priorities.

As well as the detailed instruction on choosing, training conditioning and hunting with birds of prey we also get the author's strong opinions on acceptable behaviour, a gentleman's, duty to his wider community, and an insight into his views on society, faith etc.

Monsieur de Sainte Aulaire begins by describing the character of a person that will make a good falconer: "He/she should be sober and abstinent; in his bearing, gestures, words, and actions; that he should be gentle, honest, and polite to everyone; that his face should be pleasant and gracious, or at least that his looks should be friendly to everyone". A good job description, should you need to employ a falconer. And the virtues that the practice of falconry establishes and instils in the falconer: "Falconry is the enemy of vice

and the friend of virtue". I'm sure we'd all agree.

The book finishes with a discourse in praise of the Chase, which, whilst interesting to read, is probably the part where we see the greatest gulf between the opinions and attitudes of a 17c French falconer to our own.

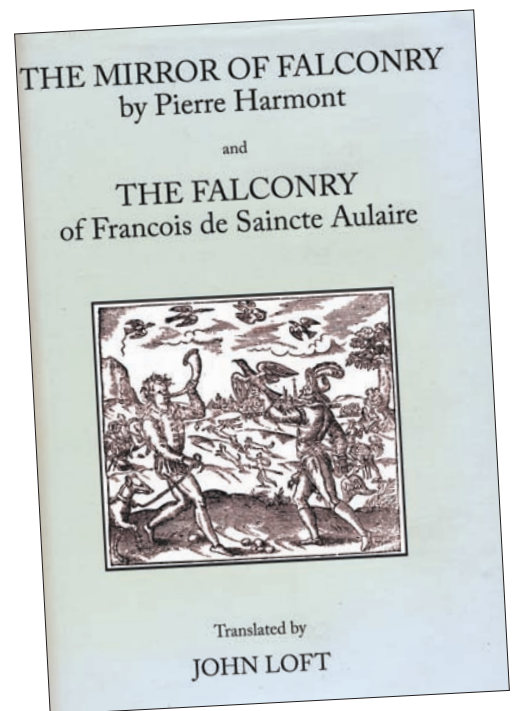
Again the chapters that didn't hold my attention were the ones on injuries, ailments and diseases. As an historical record on the pills, potions and operations undertaken by a 17c falconer they make a fantastic reference piece. But as an engaging read, obviously they are not. As a layman with little detailed knowledge of medicine and medical practice one soon becomes lost in the sheer volume of the descriptions of the content of pills and potions, and how to administer them and worse still the horrific operations conducted by falconers on their birds. However, as already mentioned, John Loft's notes conclude with **"A 21st Century Veterinarians Reflections"** by Richard Jones BVSc, MSc, MRCVS. This is fantastic, and a master stroke by Mr Loft,

as Richard Jones analyses these sections in the light of 21st Century knowledge and understanding. And his scrutiny regarding the likely effectiveness of their interventions and remedies. With some surprising conclusions.

I have no way of knowing if this translation is true to the original text or if it fully conveys Francois de Sainte Aulaires intentions when first published. However, given the amount of research and care that has obviously been undertaken. I suspect that Monsieur Sainte Aulaire would be very happy with the result.

I found it to be a fantastic read. I was warned at the start that this was more of a reference book and best read in small sections. I disagree. With the exception of the many chapters on health care as previously explained, I found the book to be a great read. I loved the translators notes which were far more than just the usual academic clarification points and all of the additional information.

I commend Mr Loft for this work, As a 21st Century falconer it makes me very happy to know that our sport



is populated with and represented by people of such quality. I fully intend to read this again soon, and I would highly recommend this book to any falconer as a must have addition to their collection.

## H is for Hawk

by Helen Macdonald

Published by Jonathan Cape

Reviewed by Lesley Prickett



This book is the story of a woman and her Goshawk. After the death of her much loved father, Helen Macdonald (an experienced falconer – who has been obsessed with falcons since childhood) started to dream of Goshawks and in a rather rash decision she orders one from a chap in Northern Ireland. The moment she collects the bird on a Scottish Quay is vividly described. As they opened the box "her" goshawk "...came out like a Victorian Melodrama; a sort of mad woman in the attack".

The training of her goshawk, the pain (sometimes physical) and joy this brings, is vividly recounted. This book is not a "how to" guide, but it also isn't just a story. It is littered with interesting facts and observations, some general historical and some falconry based.

It tells how, as Helen bonds with her bird, she sees the world more and more through the eyes of the hawk, "As the days passed and I put myself in the hawks wild mind to tame her, my humanity was burning away"; she begins to shun company and gradually she withdraws herself from society. All this was part of her grieving process.

We also get a disturbing insight into the mind of T.H. White writer of *The Goshawk* (which Helen read as a child). White emerges as a tortured, fearful soul with rather sadistic tendencies. White was scarred by his parents (a pawn in their violent marriage) and then subjected to the brutal public school system of the time. His notebooks tell of his (often unsuccessful) attempts to train his first Goshawk and explore how hunting was possibly a way of displacing his own "bloodthirsty" feelings.

This book is full of wonderful descriptions. For example "In real life goshawks resemble sparrowhawks the way leopards resemble housecats, Bigger yes, but bulkier, bloodier, deadlier, scarier and much, much harder to see. Birds of deep woodland, not gardens, they're the birdwatchers' dark Grail." The prose is beautifully and precisely constructed. It made me laugh and it made me cry.

Although this book is not an instruction manual I found at the end (but I must say I am not a falconer) that I had actually, without really realising, learnt quite a lot about falconry and goshawks.

# All in a Day's Work

I was asked by your editor to write an article for *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation magazine* and provide you with a little snippet of what my job entails. However, firstly, you are probably all wondering who on earth I am. My name is Kim and I work at the Hawk Conservancy Trust, in Andover. As a child I always knew I wanted to work with animals of some description, so at the age of 16 I went to Sparsholt College and studied for my Diploma in Animal Management. During this time I had to undergo a work placement, which due to the location of the Trust (close to home), this was my first option – 10 years later, I have never looked back.

For those of you who do not know much about the Hawk Conservancy Trust, it is an award-winning centre of excellence specialising in birds of prey. The Trust holds three world class demonstrations daily, amongst many other activities – I may be biased, but it is WELL worth a visit!

My role at the Trust, as bird staff,

is to fly birds in demonstrations and to commentate on the displays. I also train birds for demonstration, working with numerous birds over the years including kites, hawks and owls (to name but a few); this year I have one of the Trust's newest additions, a cutie of a Little Owl. The Trust tries, wherever possible, to maintain the British aspect by including the indigenous species in



Albino Tawny owl

demonstrations. This allows members of the public to witness for themselves species which can be found in the UK. Each year the Trust has a theme which dictates what the birds are named. Recently the Trust lost a very dear friend, and in memory of him the theme chosen for this year was 'sweeties'. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, I introduce to you Bertie Bassett! He is proving to be a real character and has already taken to playing games with the spider population inside the hospital. Bertie should be in demonstration later on in the year.

## Hospital role

I am also head of section for the National Bird of Prey Hospital. The hospital was built in 2002 and can receive anything up to two hundred injured wild birds of prey each year. The main role of the hospital is to look after and care for any park birds which may require veterinary attention. However, the vast majority are in fact wild raptors which have been picked up by members of the public, police and other centres to name but a few.

The volume of admissions tends to vary during the year, with spring and summer being the 'peak' and often busiest time due to young birds fledging and coming into difficulty through one reason or another. Wild birds are admitted with wide-ranging injuries including broken wings, concussion and youngsters falling from nests. The Trust makes a point of stressing that all birds are given a fair chance for release back into the wild, with a release rate averaging 45%; however, any injury deemed too severe to be treated (such as open and protruding fractures) sadly results in a trip down to the vets. The Trust works closely with our vet, John Chitty (BVetMed, CertZooMed, CBiol, MSB, MRCVS), who makes regular visits, checking on both park and wild birds too.

The work of the hospital is extremely valuable to the Trust working with other rehabilitation centres and organisations. The hospital has the ability to provide excellent welfare and care to the numerous birds seen entering through



Albino Tawny owl as a chick



the doors. The rehabilitation techniques we use are constantly being reviewed and the erection of seven new rehabilitation aviaries (including a further eight new recovery bays) has allowed for the steady increase in admissions seen each year. The hospital facility offers an ideal environment in which to conduct research that improves the nursing care and husbandry of these vulnerable raptors. These projects include:

- Post-release survival of rehabilitated raptors
- Effects of human presence or absence on rehabilitating raptors
- Parasite burdens of raptors admitted to the hospital
- Analysis and distribution of raptor mortality factors
- Tawny Owl post-release monitoring
- A retrospective study of morbidity and mortality of raptors in southern England

The aim of these projects is to increase our knowledge in order to continuously improve the methods of care and rehabilitation we use.

### Rehabilitation

For me, personally, the best part of my job (when it comes to rehabilitating wild birds of prey) is to be able to take part in releasing a bird, which has been successfully rehabilitated back into the wild. All of the birds released are provided with a BTO ring, by Dr Matt Stevens, our Conservation officer, who is a qualified ringer. Placing rings on the birds allows us to be provided with ring recoveries or controls if the birds are ever retrieved in the future. Sadly, due to my other work commitments, I often cannot be present when the birds are released, but on the odd occasion (especially if the birds are released on site) I am able to be there. Also, from time to time, we all have those long hard day days when we just want our spirits lifted a little – well, for me, having the chance to release a bird gets me hook, line and sinker!

During the year I deal with a variety of different species and injuries. However, some often stand out more than others. Some of the more interesting cases I have had the opportunity to deal with include a Honey Buzzard in 2010, which became exhausted on its migration to England and ditched in the Solent and a Marsh Harrier, which became a new tick on the species admissions list in 2011



Kim Kilbride with European Buzzard prior to release

(the hospital has now had 14 different British species admitted over the last 15 years). 2014 has also seen a few interesting cases which include an Osprey which was admitted at the beginning of the year after fishing at a trout farm in Wiltshire and unfortunately broke her wing (coracoid) after hitting a section of netting. This bird required a period of six weeks rest and recuperation, although to everyone's dismay (especially the bank man!) she would only eat fresh-caught trout (nothing older than a day!) ironically purchased from the farm she initially fished from when she sustained the injury. Now that's karma!

### Rare albino owl

Finally, most recently something extremely rare was admitted – a completely albino Tawny Owl chick. The bird was picked up by a member of the public as it had branched from the tree too early. Wild albino animals are extremely rare to see and come across, so this was a highlight I don't think will ever be witnessed by myself again.

However, not only does the hospital look after wild raptors, but also during the spring/summer period any artificial incubation taking place also occurs in one of the rooms linked to the hospital which then requires me to turn from hospital carer to baby tender, as well. Any youngsters who are being reared (either hand-reared or crèche-reared) also fall under the hospital's to do list! Everyone at this point thinks I have the best job in the world. But you can have a day when eight different species of wild raptor are admitted and you also have eight baby park birds to look after and feed four times a day, of which the vast majority are Black Kites. After eight weeks of continually clearing up kite mess (most of you can imagine what mess is made!), I am more than happy to hand them over to be trained by other members of staff when the time comes along and then put my feet up and take a breather before it all starts again next year!

However, please don't get me wrong; my job is AMAZING! No doubt about it, I am always going to be a #raptorgeek!



# askchitty

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

## Enteritis in Birds of Prey

Fortunately, enteritis is not particularly common in birds of prey – fortunate because it is extremely serious and often life-threatening.

The name of the condition simply refers to inflammation of the bowel. It has many causes- these may be due to toxins; bacterial or viral infections; or parasitic infections. The severity of the condition depends on various factors - the underlying health/immunity/body condition of the bird; the part of the gut affected (in general, the closer to the back end the better!); the acuteness (rapidity) of the condition; and, of course, the actual cause.

The main clinical sign is of loose mutes. Being bowel based, this is obviously an effect on the faecal portion with the urinary part usually unaffected (though secondary hepatitis may cause greening of mutes later in disease). This faecal part may be extremely loose and is frequently

unpleasant in appearance and smell. Mucus may be present in some cases. Some birds will vomit (especially if the stomach is affected). The bird will usually become weaker and may well be fluffed, hunched and oval-eyed. In some cases there may also be blood:

- Black tarry blood - showing some degree of digestion and that the blood originates from the stomach and/or first part of the small intestine.
- Fresh red blood showing bleeding from vent, large bowel or the very end of the small intestine.

If severe, this blood loss can result in anaemia and further weakness. Clinical signs (and death) relate to two major effects-

- Inflammation of the bowel results in failure to absorb nutrients and also loss of fluids and electrolytes. In acute generalised enteritis this fluid loss can be extremely rapid and loss of potassium, in particular, makes the bird very weak.

- “leaky” intestinal walls result in entry of bowel bacteria into the bloodstream and septicaemia or hepatitis.

In more chronic cases, signs relate more to maldigestion with birds losing or failing to gain weight. However, the mutes may be not that different to normal!

Diagnosis is usually fairly simple in acute cases with the rapid onset; appearance of the bird; and appearance of the mutes.

*In these cases it is vital to get immediate veterinary attention; it is an emergency!*

As well as a basic clinical examination, it is important to perform a mute examination as early as possible. Initially this will be for parasites, but some should also be submitted for bacterial culture. It is therefore very important to bring a mute sample with the bird! It is appreciated that the faeces in these cases is very liquid and may be difficult to collect. However, even a tiny amount can be very useful for microscopic examination.

Most cases will need hospitalisation for fluids. In severe cases these will be required by intra-venous or intra-osseous (with a needle passed into the bone) drip. In less severe cases, subcutaneous fluids are sufficient. We will usually take a blood sample prior to giving fluids as this allows assessment of the degree of dehydration and the extent and type of electrolyte loss - this way we can replace accurately.

For more chronic cases, bloods enable assessment of digestive ability; effects on other body organs; and the nature (and quality) of the bird's immune response.

Xrays can also be useful in some cases as they will allow assessment of internal organ size; presence of food/foreign bodies in the stomach; and pockets of gas that may identify site of infection.

Antibiotics are vital in these cases. Ideally these are based on culture of organisms from the faeces. However, this takes several days so we normally have to start with an



antibiotic choice based on likelihood of effect and experience! This can be assisted by performing a microscopic examination of fresh mite - as well as assessing the presence of parasites (which should be treated if seen) the shape and number of bacteria can be seen, which enables a better estimation of antibiotic choice. In acute cases, antibiotics are often given intra-venous or intra-osseous with the fluids before switching to oral or intra-muscular routes.

Some believe probiotics can assist recovery though there is little evidence for this. Certainly they will do no harm and may be useful in the recovery period.

If treated promptly and aggressively, these cases can do very well. However, it must be remembered that, just as in people, severe enteritis can result in permanent gut damage and reduced ability to digest food. In the falconry bird this can severely impact flying ability.

Prevention, therefore, is the key. There is no specific cause, therefore there is no one simple preventive measure. However, the following may help:

- Regular mite checks and appropriate parasite treatments
- Good hygiene practice - especially in



terms of food storage, preparation and feeding method; spoiled food is a very good cause of enteritis!

- Maintaining birds in good health and condition - a healthy immune system will overcome many potential problems
- Avoid sudden diet changes, both in terms of feeding amount and type of food. All dietary changes should be made gradually. Just as in people sudden dietary changes can have severe effects

on the bowel (Friday Night Vindaloo Syndrome!)

- Always give good quality food from a reputable source and that has been stored and defrosted properly.

Enteritis is a condition that needs immediate and appropriate action. Good vigilance and knowledge of your bird enables this condition to be picked up as early as possible and therefore improves chances of success.

## The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine

The next edition of The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine reaches number 100.

and to help us celebrate this milestone, do you have a story to tell or a letter you wish to write? Please send in your contribution by 19 December 2014 to the editor, Peter Eldrett, at the address on page three of this issue.

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# The Raptor Fair

Duncombe Park, Helmsley, North Yorkshire

14-15 June 2014



Charlie Heap enthralls the crowd with his magnificent Steller's Sea Eagle

**E**arly on Saturday 14 June, my son David and I set off for The Raptor Fair, held for the first time at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, North Yorkshire.

This is the site for Jemima Parry-Jones' northern wing of the International Centre for Birds of Prey and is managed by Charlie Heap, a well-known falconer in his own right. We had never been to this venue before and we were looking forward to our first trip there. The centre is well signposted and we had no problems locating the site. Through the main gateway, we headed up a picturesque driveway through stunning parkland, grazed by sheep on either side of the track. The mansion house at Duncombe is something to see and was within sight of the fair ground. After a

few hundred yards, we arrived at our destination and were guided in to a large field where we were to park the car. This field alone would hold hundreds of cars and we duly followed the instructions of the car park attendants to position my car amongst a number already parked up. One of those on duty was Linda Wright who I had met a few times when she was running raptor photography days at Jemima's other centre at Newent in Gloucestershire. After a good old chat, David and I wended our way towards the centre, receiving our wristbands upon payment of the admission fee, which at £10 each, was much cheaper than many of the game fairs that I attend.

#### **Clean and tidy centre**

The centre itself was well set out with

spacious aviaries and a large weathering area. The centre was very clean and tidy and is a credit to Charlie and his small team. In my previous articles concerning falconry fairs, one of the greatest attractions for me is meeting up with old friends and hopefully making new ones. This fair was to be no exception. Right from the very start, we bumped into a number of friends and acquaintances, some of whom I had not seen in ages. My son remarked that we had been there an hour and had barely covered twenty yards in all that time, due to all the conversations.

We had a brief look around some of the spacious aviaries and the weathering ground before venturing onto the main flying area where the fair itself was positioned. It was not a large fair by any

means and consisted of probably less than twenty or so stalls, but even so, there was a good mixture to be found. Many of the stallholders were of course familiar to me, but it is always a great pleasure to meet up again to chew the fat. Amongst those present was Dave Aldred of Predator Logistics, Calvin Crossman of Ugly Bear Falconry, Steve Halsall with his excellent hoods, Keith and Barbara Royle of the Independent Bird Register, Bob Dalton with his magazine "The World of Falconry," the superb wildlife artist Carl Bass who was sharing a stall with another excellent hood maker and falconer, John Mease, the Hawk and Owl Trust, the Yorkshire Falconers Club, the British Falconers Club and a number of other fascinating stalls. Additionally, the catering side had also not been neglected and we had a choice of burgers, chips and a load of other stomach filling niceties. I believe the food stalls did a pretty good level of business throughout the duration of the two-day fair. I, unfortunately, was only present for the first day although the BFC Eagle Group lads were staying for the entire event and were camped close by. None of our eagles were present because Charlie thought we would not wish to bring them whilst they were deep in the moult, so we arranged for the group to be officially present at the next fair and hopefully, this will be the case.

Nigel King was also present and gave some excellent flying displays to his usual standard. A Chilean Eagle was also flown well by Annabelle, who also works at the centre and she also flew a Lanner Falcon later on. She was very knowledgeable for a young lady of her age and I mean that most sincerely. We could do with many more female falconers amongst our ranks. The bird I was waiting to see flown was the magnificent Steller's Sea Eagle, one of the largest eagles in the world. These Sea Eagles are renowned for using their bills on their owners and I well remember flying a Pallas's Sea Eagle during the early 1960's. This eagle gave me many a savage tweak with her massive beak, but even her armament was nothing when compared to the massive yellow battleaxe that is the lot of the Steller's. The latter also possesses a very long neck and in flight, she looked somewhat swan-like, which I was not expecting. With such a long neck and powerful beak, it could well be difficult to keep one's face sufficiently out of reach and I noticed that instead of flying



Duncombe Park



Annabelle feeding up a Lanner falcon

her to the fist, she was flown to several posts where a small reward was placed for her effort. Many of Charlie's raptors were flown like this, except the falcons of course, which were flown to a lure as normal. The displays went well and the crowd seemed well content. There were not as many visitors as I expected, although later Charlie told me that he was more than pleased with the numbers coming through the gate. Whether more came through on the Sunday I have no idea, although the eagle lads told me the numbers were more or less the same, but as I was not there, I cannot report further regarding the Sunday. I would

have loved to have stayed overnight with the eagle group and joined in the BBQ and other festivities, but I had to be elsewhere on the Sunday.

#### **Peregrine bred by Glasier**

I have a passion for falconry history and am always on the lookout for anything connected to this largely neglected area of falconry. The Yorkshire group showed me a stuffed Peregrine Falcon, which was very nice, but it was the inscription beneath the base, which arrested my attention. Apparently, this falcon was one bred by Phillip Glasier, who of course, was Jemima Parry-Jones' father.

Additionally, also inscribed on the base was the signature of Sir Peter Scott, founder of the Severn Wildfowl Trust, a site I visit annually with MSc degree students from the Biological Imaging course at Nottingham University, where I lecture on species identification and marine biology. Although nothing is recorded on the base, Peter Scott and Phillip Glasier knew each other well and in point of fact, Peter Scott gave another well-known falconer a job at the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge. This falconer was none other than my old friend Lorant De Bastyai. So for me, viewing this specimen was somewhat special and I took the opportunity of photographing it for the British Archives of Falconry and I later sent these images to Paul Beecroft who is a director of the Archives.

This was an excellent little fair and I enjoyed it thoroughly but the day passed far too quickly and before I knew it, we were heading for home. I did hear one or two unfavourable comments such as it was a small fair for the distance covered and it was lacking in other stalls which might have appealed to falconers wives and families, such as clothing etc. Charlie tried to get some of these to appear but they seem to be suffering from a problem that is pervading other fairs, particularly those that specialise in falconry. Fewer and fewer people are attending these fairs and as such, the stallholders are not selling sufficient stock to make it worthwhile attending. The end result of course is that less and less of these traders now bother to attend and sell online instead. Many falconers keep moaning that these fairs are "same old, same old," but directly because of this attitude, the fairs are suffering. Unfortunately, as a result of this, I would not be surprised if falconry fairs as we know them will have had their day over the next year or two. In order to attract greater custom, falconry fairs may well have to include other country sports in order to survive and obtain better gate fees.

### Falconry village at Midland Game Fair

Take for example, the Midland Game Fair at Weston Park. This has a reasonably sized falconry village but also includes fishing, shooting and a host of other interesting exhibits and as a direct result, despite the rather high entrance fees, the huge car parks are brimming and the



Keith Royle on the IBR stand



Charlie Heap with a Lanner falcon

stalls are often 10 deep. If indeed falconry fairs have had their day, it is purely the fault of falconers themselves through non-attendance. Without sufficient gate numbers, no stall holder can really hope to make their stay worthwhile and so each year we lose more and more. Yes, new stallholders do come forth, but even they will soon find that attendance levels will not be lucrative enough and bow out. I remember the days when falconry fairs were heaving, but those heady days are long gone and I for one lament their loss. If this downward trend continues, then our bank holidays will be much the poorer, and basically, it will be our own fault. I have asked many who moan about the state of the fairs and have asked what indeed would THEY do to

improve matters, because it seems to me that virtually everything a falconer could possibly need could be found at these fairs. I have never received a satisfactory answer to this question, because there isn't one. I hope I am wrong, but I fear that pure falconry fairs cannot survive at current visitor levels. I hope Charlie's fair at Duncombe Park and Jemima's Falconry Weekend at Newent, together with the British Falconry Fair can reverse this downward spiral.

The Raptor Centre at Duncombe Park is well worth a visit with many raptors on show. The café is excellent and serves wonderful food, I know, because a fortnight after the fair, I returned with my wife Gill for a second visit and we made full use of the catering facilities.

# Owls

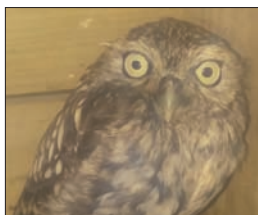
## A brief look species by species

**T**his issue I thought we could look further at some of the owls that we can find here in the U.K. In the last article that I wrote we looked at the Barn Owl, the Tawny Owl and the Snowy Owl. This time we can look at three other species, the Little Owl, the Long Eared Owl and the European Eagle Owl. I know that a lot of readers will immediately state that the European Eagle Owl is not a native owl to the U.K, however if you agree or disagree with whether this species ever lived here as a native species the fact still remains that this species can be widely found in and around the U.K. Also, you never hear the same argument about any other species being true natives, as we will find out when we look at this issue's three species. So let's now take a closer look at some of our well known and not so well known owls of the U.K.

### The Little Owl – *Athene Noctua*

This species is the smallest of the owls to be seen here in the U.K. Often seen sitting perched on a gate post or fence post standing only a few inches in height. Passing motorists will often not give a second glance due to its size and probably mistake it for a garden bird. Its brown plumage also gives great camouflage when sitting in trees or bushes. This owl is often stated as being a native species, however, there are two stories that I have read and heard with regards to this little bird's reason for being here.

The first was that all Little Owls in the U.K stem from a single pair introduced by naturalist Thomas Powys some many moons ago. The other, which is the one that makes more sense and reality to me, is the one that states Little Owls were brought over to the U.K by sailors who used the birds on their ships to control cockroach numbers, and then once they arrived in the U.K they were then sold on to the aristocracy and released to control



the cockroach numbers on the estates.

This species of owl also aids to the term "Wise Old Owl". Athene, who among other things was known as the Goddess of Wisdom, was said to have had the Little Owl and Burrowing Owl (*Athene Cunicularia*, meaning to dig) frequent her place of residence and follow her around, so hence the Latin names beginning Athene! If you look at some of the old Greek coins and drawings etc of Athene you will more than likely see the Little Owl and Burrowing Owl near or around her.

### The Long Eared Owl – *Asio Otus*

This owl species is also found in and around most of the U.K and is around the size of a pigeon. The most obvious visual feature on this owl, and as its name suggests, is its protruding, long ears. The ears are not there to aid with hearing and have no connection to the actual ears, but to help to camouflage the bird and break up the silhouette when roosting in trees, but are also used for the display purposes and the mood of the bird. This owl is very secretive and rarely seen. The male of this species has been observed in flight above the proposed breeding ground, wing clapping above the tree that the female is sat in, trying to invite her to join in and confirm the partnership.

His call is said to sound a lot like the noise produced when blowing across the top of a bottle, and the female is said to sound like a lamb. These owls are very rarely found in the same areas as our most populated owl, the Tawny Owl, although the habitat and prey are relatively the same. The Tawny Owl is a bigger, heavier and more aggressive species and will defend and drive Long Eared Owls away, hence if you travel across to Ireland where there are reportedly no Tawnies, the Long Eared Owls thrive.



### The European Eagle Owl – *Bubo Bubo*

The European Eagle Owl is the most powerful and largest of all the owls and it may surprise you to know, but these giants of the bird world can be found in pretty reasonable numbers around the U.K and breeding very successfully, and in captivity they have been known to live in excess of sixty years of age.

Displaying the Eagle Owl's trademark ear tufts, showing the bird's mood or state, but extremely striking to see along with the bold orange eyes, this bird is in my opinion the most beautiful and majestic of all the owls. The females of this species can weigh in at as much as 9lb. The European Eagle Owl is a crepuscular species (hunting mostly late evening and early morning). Along with its enormous size, this owl can produce in excess of 350lb per square inch of pressure in its enormous feet.

The feet are heavily feathered to aid with temperature control but this also helps protect the feet from some of the prey that the European Eagle Owl may catch. Prey can vary from worms and beetles to rabbits and hares which make up the majority of its diet. However the species will also take hedgehogs and strip the spines off first, as well as prey up to the size of roe deer, and suggestions are that 5% of its diet is made up of other owl species. Displaying a wingspan of around 5 to 6 feet, this owl, along with the Blackstons Fish Owl, is the largest of all the world's owls. There are disputes as to whether the species is or has ever been a true native U.K resident, but like it or not, the European Eagle Owl is here in the U.K and doing well with a protected status.



*Pictures courtesy of :- European Eagle Owl, the author (Lee Hall), Little Owl and Long Eared Owl, York Bird Of Prey Centre.*

# Modern Heron Hawking

**T**he season before last I spent some time in Germany with a friend flying Gyr Falcons and Peregrine Falcons at Pheasant and although I saw some first class sport I must be honest and say hawking pheasants doesn't really do a great deal for me. That doesn't mean that I in anyway wish to imply it isn't anything other than good falconry by those that do it well. I can none the less, despite my own lack of enthusiasm, appreciate the quality of the dog work, the obedience and precision of the falcons and the ability of the falconer to read the situation in the field and flush accordingly. However as a branch of falconry it still doesn't fire me with enthusiasm and the desire to do it myself just isn't there. I am equally as sure a great many falconers that came to watch me fly Aplomado Falcons would feel the same way. Different strokes for different folks.

However, my host is fortunate enough to be able to indulge himself in another branch of falconry that I was very keen to see. My timing was out somewhat during my previous visit, however this year I made sure I was able to take up his invitation to join him for a short while on his annual campaign against Grey Herons. My host has an extended licence from the local government in his area to hawk Herons to help reduce the damage they do to fish farms which are a large part of the local economy where he lives. When first told of the work he did, through a third party, I have to admit I wasn't overly keen to see what he did as twice before I had seen Herons hawked and both were nothing less than travesty's and bore no resemblance what so ever to anything akin to sport. On the first occasion it was a screaming eyas Goshawk that was launched from the fist, out of a car window, at Herons as they stood at siege. The second occasion was no less unsporting in that a falcon, again a screaming imprint, was more hurled than cast off at herons as they literally scabbled to get into the air. They were either grabbed before they were truly in



Bind in mid-air

flight or they were not flown at all.

I was assured by my host that he took a different attitude and although employed to clear the Herons he was not on any form of head count and flew them because he enjoyed the flight and the many varied forms it could take. Over the years he had flown Peregrines and Gyrs at Herons but this season has settled on what he considers the best falcon he has ever flown in terms of heart and persistence. This is an eyas Feldeggi Lanner Falcon that flies at some 720 grams or, for those that like me this is meaningless, to 11lb 9 1/2 ounces. I have to say I was somewhat sceptical that such a small falcon, single handedly, could tackle such a large and powerful quarry. Although I myself took Grouse regularly with a Tiercel Red Naped Shaheen, so perhaps I of all people should have had more faith. Flights over the next few days certainly put paid to any doubts I may have had.

## Parent reared falcon

The falcon in question is parent reared and was taken from the aviary at 12 weeks old and then trained in a straight forward manner including being stooped to a lure. The luring lessons would end however with a Heron lure being thrown out as opposed to the normal sized and weighted lure. The Lanner was always fed on the heron lure with its meal being

tied to the dummy head of the lure. The last few days before entering a dead Heron was thrown out and the young falcon fed on that. Apparently throughout its whole training the Lanner never reacted badly to either the Heron lure or the dead Heron. Once the falcon would come around a hundred metres to the Heron lure itself it was considered ready to enter. Entering was directly at wild Herons marauding the fish farms. The eyas took the third Heron it was flown at and then went on to take fifty three more by the time I got to see some of this modern style Heron hawking.

It will be pointless to give a day by day account of the flights enjoyed with this falcon so I shall merely recount the first flight I witnessed as it was a very good example of the sport I had the pleasure of enjoying. Despite assurances to the contrary my big doubt was that it wasn't going to be real sport but merely a falcon, albeit a brave one, grabbing a Heron before it was up and flying properly. Even in the part of Germany we were in there was nowhere open enough to even contemplate trying to fly herons on passage and so thereby recreate probably one of the most classic falconry flights there is. The first flight I was to witness reassured me on many counts, including its sporting and ethical nature, and certainly fired me up sufficiently that I would be making plans to come back for longer the following season. A Heron was spotted fishing in a very small brook and with care we positioned ourselves approximately two hundred yards downwind. We were still in our vehicle and quickly readied the falcon for the flight. Then stepping from the vehicle we walked towards the Heron yelling and with me waving my arms in order to get the Heron to take to the air. Once it did then we waited until it was well and truly into its stride and flying strongly away from us having gained a height of well over a hundred feet. Only then was the falcon unhooded and held aloft. She spotted the Heron immediately, had a quick look round and roused a couple of times and then set off in pursuit. I was





Lost on the ground

especially glad to see my host allowed the falcon to take to the air in her own time and not launch her at what he considered the right moment.

### Deceptive flight

The Heron was by now going quite quickly despite the deceptively slow appearance of its wing beat. The falcon worked hard to fetch the Heron and in fact once the heron realised it was being pursued it started to ring. The falcon got a little closer and started to ring up itself. The aerial struggle continued for several minutes until the falcon had almost attained the same height as the Heron. At this point the Heron's nerve broke and it made off in a straight line again. The falcon flew directly after it but continued to climb as it did so. I was fully expecting to see the falcon get above the Heron and put in a series of stoops at it. This was not the case and as the falcon fetched the Heron it bound to it from the underside and the two of them tumbled earthwards in a whirl of legs and feathers. On coming to ground a massive struggle ensued and unfortunately for the falcon a deep and wide water filled ditch had to be negotiated by us mere humans and we lost vital time getting around it. Just as we reached the struggle the Heron broke free and took to the wing, the falcon gave chase and they tussled again and again before the Heron



Success as the day closes

broke free and took to the air. This time the falcon gave chase again but not with quite the same gusto and the Heron made the safety of a distant stand of trees. The falcon appeared okay and we can only assume it had been bumped on the ground with some force or been kicked hard.

A decent rest of around a couple of hours and the falcon was flown again and this time was successful. This modern version of Heron hawking may not be on a par with what went on in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but in the world in which we now find ourselves I thought it was tremendous sport.

# We were Falconers

## Esmond Pennington Knight 1906 – 1987

Part 2

Still thinking of the tragic loss of Bess it was just two days later when Esmond was flying over that same marshland in a Junkers aeroplane on his way to Berlin. He was to star in a film called *Schwarze Rosen (Black Roses)* alongside the British actress Lillian Harvey. Esmond played the part of a patriot in Finland who organises a rebellion against the Russians. The film was quite unique as three versions were made at the same time in English, German and French. The film was not released in England until two years later with the title of *Did I Betray*. During his stay in Berlin one of the things that struck Esmond was the roar of aircraft all night long landing and taking off. Often he would see Heinkels flashing over the rooftops and many changes that were occurring throughout the whole of Germany.

During 1936 he appeared in both plays and a film called *Pagliacci*. The film opened on the 11<sup>th</sup> December on the same day that Edward VIII broadcast his abdication speech. In early 1937 he joined the cast of *Wise Tomorrow* where he met and fell in love with the actress Nora Swinburne. Their affair, which started in secret, eventually became known to Fran. She herself liked Nora, valued her friendship and felt that Esmond was in safe hands with her. After *Wise Tomorrow* came to an end he was invited to appear in a new musical show called *The Laughing Cavalier*. He was to play Franz Hals the artist whose famous painting gave the show its name. Esmond was not particularly impressed with the treatment given to his character and soon pulled out. Instead, ironically, he

played an even more famous artist namely Vincent Van Gogh. Due to insufficient finance the play did not appear in the West End and in fact there were only four performances before it closed at the Arts Theatre Club. Film work was also difficult for Esmond to find and during 1937 he only appeared in one which was *The Vicar of Bray*.

In 1938 he appeared in the film *What Men Live By*, a story of a disgraced angel sent down to earth as punishment. Esmond played the angel who arrives on earth stark naked. This scene was filmed with some personal discomfort to him as it was done in a Sussex wood during mid winter. July of 1938 saw Esmond taking part in one of Captain Knight's films, *Leopard of the Air*. The film involved the flying of three eagles at the same time, Mr. Ramshaw the Golden Eagle, Coronation a Crowned Eagle and James a Martial Eagle. Ramshaw was the first to be cast off followed by James and then Coronation. Ramshaw in no time at all spots a Rabbit and is away. All eyes and camera were on him but he missed the Rabbit. Meanwhile James and Coronation are missing until suddenly the shout goes up, "Look out Esmond". James is spotted flying full pelt



Esmond Knight learning to type

at Esmond. In a flash Esmond's arm is up and James lands with an audible WHOP. Coronation is later found sitting on a corrugated iron hut where she has put a Rabbit to ground. They manage to flush the Rabbit which she takes in fine style.

### First televised repertory company

January 1939 saw Esmond form his own company with Scottish actor Wilson Barrett. They presented many plays, one of which was *First Stop North*. It was this play that gave the company the distinction of being the first ever repertory company to make a televised broadcast. The BBC broadcast the play in its entirety. In the summer of 1939 Captain Knight made another film in which Esmond took part *Monarchs of the Air*. Miss America, the Bald Eagle was also involved in this film and over the following weeks they filmed all four eagles in action.

As the summer of 1939 wore on the news in Europe loomed blacker and blacker. Esmond had just finished filming *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery* in which he played football with genuine Arsenal players mixed with actors. After filming finished he went straight to Edinburgh and arrived in time for the opening night of a play called *Love from a Stranger* which was then followed by *The Middle Watch* a comedy about the Royal Navy. On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September whilst visiting an antique shop he heard the news that Germany had invaded Poland. *The Middle Watch* closed the following day and Esmond returned to London. It was two days later, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, that Esmond and Fran were stood

overlooking London from their flat in St. John's Wood when they listened to the radio broadcast given by Neville Chamberlain declaring war with Germany.

During the last months of 1939 the general feeling in the theatre world was that it was finished and done with for the duration. At first it was the same for the film world although he did appear in one called *Contraband*.

By May 1940, Germany had invaded France and the Low Countries. The British Army was in rapid retreat and the danger of invasion of Great Britain seemed all too real. Esmond had already applied for a commission in the Royal Navy Voluntary Reserve and whilst waiting for his call up letter he went and stayed with Captain Knight. He joined the Local Defence Volunteers (later called the Home Guard) and helped train the locals in map reading and how to use improvised weapons which included the longbow. He also made a particular contribution for target practice when he made life sized cardboard cut outs of German soldiers.

### Speaking part answered prayers

It was in late 1940, Esmond was in a film called *This England*, which was about past attempts in history to invade Britain. One of his lines was "I wish before heaven that Master Francis Drake would send me aboard and into battle!" Esmond recalls that since this happened to be exactly what he wanted and how he was feeling at the time he got it off his chest with gusto and his prayers were answered, for on that day, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> September the call up letter arrived. Just six days later Esmond reported for duty at HMS King Alfred, the newly commissioned shore establishment in Hove, Sussex where he underwent basic training. He had hoped to go on to M.T.B's but he was too old to withstand the violent jolting of an M.T.B. He therefore transferred to a gunnery course at HMS Drake in Plymouth and then finally completing his training at HMS Excellent, Whale Island, Hampshire. Training in wartime is often short and this was certainly the case for Esmond. In a little over 3 months, Lieutenant Esmond Knight, RNVR, Gunnery Officer travelled to Birkenhead near Liverpool and stepped aboard the brand new battleship HMS Prince of Wales. The Prince of Wales was not yet fully seaworthy and civilian



Front cover of Illustrated Magazine

workers were still onboard hurrying to prepare her for readiness. It was not until the last day of March that she sailed for the first time round the coast of Scotland for a series of sea trials which included the 'Action Stations' training.

Finally, on a warm spring day in May the entire ship's company paraded on the quarter deck to hear the Captain Leach address them. His speech commenced with the words "I have called you all here today to tell you that on Sunday I went to the C. in C. and informed him that I considered the Prince of Wales was ready to take her place in the Home Fleet as a fighting ship". Just two hours later word spread around the ship that they had been ordered to sea. Rumours spread quickly that they were after the Bismarck. As the light faded and the first faint stars began to glitter in the pale sky the Prince of Wales together with HMS Hood which had been anchored just a mile away they sailed into the darkness.

*I was lying on a bed with my clothes on, sticky and hot, with rough bandages around my face. "Open your eyes" said the Medical Officer. I did so with difficulty but I could not see him... then a deep sleep, with fantastic dreams of horror and obscenity, then consciousness again. It was quite impossible to judge how long had passed since one had witnessed those unbelievable things from the bridge. Another period of sleep, with dreams again of blood and murder, and I was awakened to hear a hysterical voice shouting down the ladder, "Bismarck's been sunk".*

Following the action with the Bismarck the Prince of Wales dropped anchor

off Hvalfjörður, Iceland. Esmond was transferred first of all to the destroyer HMS Echo and then to a hospital where he underwent an operation to remove his left eye. His right eye was saved but so badly damaged it was deemed to be useless. Esmond remained in Iceland until August, gradually recuperating and coming to terms with his blindness. He began to walk about in the hospital garden, and then further afield with the help of Nurse Dorothy Thorday who he had nicknamed 'Sister Toby'.

On his return to England he was admitted to St. Dunstan's Hospital in Church Stretton, Shropshire. Without doubt this was a distressing time especially when he was informed that he would never see again. Esmond showed great courage throughout his life and he would not give up now. He learnt to touch type and read Braille. He went for walks and bike rides on the back of a tandem and with a gradual realisation he came to the conclusion it really wasn't so intolerable as he had expected. Following further operations to remove pieces of shrapnel in his face by November he was well enough to travel to London and helped to lay a wreath in front of the Cenotaph. By chance he ran into an old friend and ended up that night at an actors club. He found himself immersed again in the atmosphere of his acting past. It had an enormous effect on him and he knew he wanted to return to that life. The following month he received an offer from the BBC to do a radio broadcast about his pre-war career. However the broadcast did not go well for he had just heard that the Prince of Wales, along with the Repulse had been sunk in the South China Sea. The year ended though on a more positive note when he appeared on stage for the first time since he was injured in a play called *Shivering Shocks* with other wounded service men from St. Dunstan's.

In January 1942, his fellow actors showed their depth of affection for him by putting on a testimonial matinee in his honour at the London Palladium. President and Chairman of the Show Committee was none other than Noel Coward and the performers included Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh and many others. During the interval a book called *Enemy in Sight* was auctioned. Esmond had written this in longhand and it was his account of the action between the Prince of Wales,

Hood and Bismarck. It was described by a critic as one of the finest narratives of the war. The book fetched an incredible 650 guineas. A short time after that he appeared on the front cover of the *Illustrated Magazine* with an article he had written entitled 'Blind Sailor-Actor Comes Home' and he made it clear that he was coming to terms with his blindness.

Although blind, Esmond still went hawking with Captain Knight. In the fields of Kent, Captain Knight would often let Esmond drive the hawking car, roaring with laughter as he tried to give Esmond directions.

### Autobiography published

For Esmond, returning to film work was far easier than returning to the stage. Mistakes on the stage cannot be corrected. Falling off the stage was catastrophic and this did occur on one occasion. In filming, scenes could be edited out or even reshot. In 1943 he only appeared in one film *The Silver Fleet* which was a war drama. It was during this quiet period that he dictated his autobiography *Seeking the Bubble* to his secretary and it was published by Hutchinson & Co. in 1943. It was a fascinating account of his life up to 1942.

Regaining his sight, even partially, would be something. He saw Doctors in Harley Street, none of whom could help him. Then he was introduced to Dr. Vincent Nesfield. Nesfield had been an army doctor in the Indian Medical Service and had pioneered the sterilisation of water using chlorine. His medical interests included deafness and blindness. His techniques however had proved troublesome to the General Medical Council and following a paper he had written that appeared in a national newspaper he was struck off. He continued to work however and was known as Dr. Anonymous. In a book written about the Doctor by Patience Strong in 1967, Esmond wrote the foreword for it and part of that sums up what happened next.

*He saw me in his consulting room in Harley Street. He told me to sit in the armchair and look up. I did so and he shone an ordinary electric torch into my eye. Then he said, 'Well—your pupil reacts instantly and that means there's life in your retina. That makes sense, doesn't it?' I readily agreed that it seemed to. 'What are the chances then?' I asked. 'I'd like you to lose some weight, old chap, replied Doctor.*



Knight with Marshall Eagle James

*'That's to reduce pressure all round. Cut out red meat to thin the blood and reduce the risk of clotting. No alcohol, but plenty of exercise. I'll operate in two months and give you some sight in that eye.' I then asked about the cataract which had formed as a result of the injury. 'They told me you had to wait at least a year for a cataract to ripen,' I argued, 'Never mind what they told you,' chuckled Doctor. I walked down Harley Street after that interview tingling with hope. To get even a glimmer of vision back! It seemed too good to be true. Was this man buoying me up with false hope? Was he right, while the 'top brass' was wrong, and if so, how could this be? Doctor operated at Ellenden in 1942 and performed a needling in the following March. By the end of April I had good light perception and by the end of the year, after a course of Doctor's injections, regained useful vision. There were some who were openly sceptical about the success of the operation and who were only convinced after I had submitted to a voluntary examination. I marvel at my good fortune and at the strange chance that led me to Doctor Anonymous. Although I lack accurate central vision I have thought myself as being normally sighted for over twenty-three years now, and every time I find myself learning lines for a new play, looking out for the right bus number or riding down a country lane on my bicycle, I count my particular blessing very lovingly indeed.*

The doors then opened for Esmond. 1944 saw him appear in three films, *Canterbury Tales*, *The Halfway House* and following a personal invitation from Laurence Olivier he appeared in *Henry V* which was a huge success and is regarded by many as one of the finest British films

ever made. Olivier was so impressed with Esmond that he went on to appear in later years in both of his other Shakespearian films *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. 1944 also saw him return to the stage in a production of *Crisis in Heaven* in which he aptly played a character called Courage, an English Soldier.

1945 was very mixed for Esmond. His career as an actor was now firmly established. In April the play *Three Waltzes* opened with Esmond playing the leading role and achieving what he had always intended by returning to the West End theatre. His personal life though was in turmoil. Whilst *Three Waltzes* was running he made the decision to leave Fran and live with Nora Swinburne. They had been lovers for 8 years. This was not an easy decision for Esmond and indeed he felt so guilty about leaving Fran and Rosalind that he returned home. For some months after there was no contact between Nora and Esmond but on hearing the news that Nora had received a marriage proposal he begged her to meet him and as a result Esmond made the break from Fran permanent. They married on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

Throughout 1946 to 1948 he starred in a number of films including *Black Narcissus* alongside Jean Simmons and *Hamlet* with Laurence Olivier which won four Oscars.

Apart from hawking, Esmond had another passion. At the suggestion of a friend he took up painting. His paintings were impressionistic, partly due to his miserable eyesight, but they are full of life, emotion, and colour and are most engaging. They were varied but included one of HMS Hood and another Hawking on Salisbury Plain.

In 1950 he starred in the film *Gone to Earth* which turned into a bit of a family affair. Jean Knight, his cousin, daughter of Captain Knight, trained and supplied animals, Fran also was part of the cast and Rosalind appeared as an extra in some scenes.

Offers of work over the coming years poured in for both films and the stage. On stage productions included *The Merchant of Venice*, *The taming of the Shrew*, *The Life and Death of King John*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Films included *The River*, *Helen of Troy*, *Richard III* starring once again with Laurence Olivier, *The Prince and the Showgirl* in which is starred alongside Marilyn Monroe. It was also during the 50's that Esmond was also appearing in

television programmes and in 1957 he was the subject of a TV programme himself. Eamon Andrews, the man with the Red Book said those famous words, "Esmond Knight, this is your life". In a 30 minute programme Esmond's life was recounted. Guests included friends and colleagues including an old school friend, his nurse who looked after him in Iceland, actors and a shipmate from the Prince of Wales. Captain Knight was by this time living in Kenya and was not well enough to travel, and in fact died later in the year. He did however send a recorded message. There was one other guest who was ill and could not attend and that was Baron von Muellenheim-Rechberg who had been the third gunnery officer on the battleship Bismarck. When the Bismarck was sunk only 107 from a crew of 2000 survived and Muellenheim-Rechberg was the senior surviving officer. Esmond referred to him as 'the man who blew me to blazes'. They had been corresponding for a number of years. Some six months later in a Flashback programme Muellenheim-Rechberg was able to attend and Esmond met him for the first time. They remained friends for the rest of their lives.

Two years later another event occurred that would bring back more memories of his past. Twentieth Century Fox made the decision to make a film called *Sink the Bismarck*. Many thoughts and soul searching must have gone through Esmond's mind for he was invited to play the part of John Leach, the Captain of the Prince of Wales. He soon found himself at Pinewood Studios re-enacting moments from his own life. He broadcast the same message to the crew that he had heard Captain Leach deliver when he was a member of the crew, warning them that they would soon be moving to action stations. As Captain Leach he watched the Hood blow up and sink, just as he had done in real life. Then as Leach he was once again surrounded by the dead and wounded as he stumbled around the bridge when the shell from the Bismarck tore through it, knowing that in reality it was he himself that lay on the deck wounded. The film was described as reasonably accurate and well reconstructed. It was released in 1960.

### Not a good start to the 1960s

The 60's however did not start well for Esmond. He appeared in a film call *Peeping Tom*, which was about a person



Returning from Iceland



Flying the eagles

who sadistically murders women with a sharpened tripod and films their terrified faces as they die. By today's standards it was fairly tame but in the 60's the critics described it as 'the sickest and filthiest film I can remember seeing' and thoroughly 'nasty'. Ironically it is now hailed as a masterpiece and supreme achievement in British horror cinema. Esmond's film work then became scarce for a number of years but he was kept busy with television. He appeared in a very successful TV series *A for Andromeda* a sci-fi story, also *Danger Man*, *Z Cars*, *The Troubleshooters* and *The Champions*.

As the 60's progressed Esmond's eyesight got worse. He again consulted Dr. Anonymous who put it down to his age. Sadly this was not the case and it was in fact glaucoma. It was not until the early 70's this was identified and he was able to take pills and eye drops to help, or as Esmond put it, "to hang on to the vision I do have". Also, in 1966, he had a mild heart attack, which, coupled with his eyesight slowed him down. Film work did finally return for Esmond. In 1969 he appeared in *Where's Jack?* with Stanley Baker and *Anne of a Thousand Days* with Richard Burton.

The 70's saw Esmond feature in a number of highly acclaimed television productions. He appeared with Ralph Richardson in *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* with Glenda Jackson and he also appeared in *Elizabeth R*. In

1976 he appeared in a spectacular period production of *I Claudius* with the BBC and in the same year appeared in the film *Robin and Marian* with Sean Connery and Richard Harris and then *The Man in The Iron Mask* with Richard Chamberlain.

By 1980, Esmond was in his 75<sup>th</sup> year but he continued working. His enthusiasm had not dwindled with age. He appeared in television episodes *The Borgias*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and he also continued with the theatre. 1983 saw him appearing in *King Lear*, again with Laurence Olivier, which for Olivier was to be his last great role. It was a production for television and was filmed at Granada Studios in Manchester. 1983 also saw Esmond at The Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester in a production of *Moby Dick*. He played two roles one of which was Captain Peleg and an enthusiastic Esmond had to be stopped from climbing up the rigging of the stage ship.

1986 saw him appear in his last film which was *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* in which he played one of the elders. Towards the end of 1986 he was approached to appear in a televised version of Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* novels, retitled *The Fortunes of War* for television. Filming was to take place in Egypt and he left on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1987. Filming was hot and tiring for Esmond. He completed most of his work and then returned to England on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. By now Esmond was 80 and it was very strenuous for him. The following morning, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February he was in his study. Nora called out to him "Would you like a cup of coffee? Esmond replied "Yes please". In the short space of time that it took Nora to make the coffee Esmond passed away.

His funeral took place the following Friday at St. Simon Zelot's Church in Chelsea which was then followed by a private cremation. Nora and Fran, who had always remained friends both attended the funeral united together in Esmond's death as they had been during his life.

Nora received over 200 letters of sympathy from friends, relatives and the general public and she insisted on replying to all of them personally.

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With thanks to:- Rosalind Knight and John Gareth Hughes

# Isle of Mull – 'Eagle Island'

**F**or many years the Isle of Mull has been known as 'Eagle Island' because, even before the White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) chose to set up the first territories in Britain in the early 1980's after 70 years of extinction as a breeding species, the island had (and retains) one of the highest densities of breeding Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) in Europe. But it is not only the eagles that make Mull so attractive for bird of prey watchers as there are a wide range of other species that are normally present in good numbers.

The Isle of Mull is the second largest island in the Inner Hebrides, being around 25 miles north to south and 25 miles across, with an area of 88ha (217 acres) and a spectacularly indented coastline of over 300 miles. It has a very varied landscape and geology and thus there are a multitude of species-rich habitats ranging from the rocky coasts and beaches, through the shell-sand grassland of the machair, onto the moorland and up to the hills and mountains where alpine plants and animals occur. Ben More is the highest mountain at 3,162 feet.

Our smallest bird of prey at 25-30cm, the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), breeds in small numbers in the suitable areas of heather moorland on the island, where they hunt their main prey, meadow pipits, with their low flight of rapid wingbeats and short glides. Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) also occur throughout Mull, and appear to be doing reasonably well - trending against the general decline in Britain in recent years. In some places there appears to be an impact on this species of the larger numbers of the bigger birds of prey such as the Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*).

## Buzzards in abundance

Buzzards are very numerous on Mull (on

some days every other telegraph pole seems to have one perched at the top), but along with many other raptor and owl species it is impacted by the population explosions and crashes of small prey species, especially Short-tailed Field Voles (*Arvicola terrestris*). In 2007, when I first moved to Mull, there was a lemming-like population explosion of voles, and the local Buzzard pair managed to fledge five young successfully: normally on Mull they only manage to raise one or two. There are occasional records of Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*) as vagrants, while Honey Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*) is a rare passage migrant to Argyll.

The nearest breeding Red Kites (*Milvus milvus*) to Mull are currently at Callander so it probably won't be too long before they begin to nest on Mull. I had a wonderful sighting of a Red Kite above



White Tailed Eagle

the spectacular cliffs at Carsaig when I first moved to the island, but none since, although other people have had one or two other sightings in recent years. There are increasing records of Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) on Mull too, especially in the conifer forests, although I do not think breeding has ever been confirmed, and I have never seen their fabulous 'sky-dance' breeding display flight on the island. The lack of numbers of larger woodland birds such as woodpigeon and jay, and the absence of squirrels on the island will probably inhibit their breeding success.

One of the iconic Scottish bird of prey species, the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), does not breed on Mull, although I understand there was one attempt at nesting by a pair at Loch Frisa in the past. Every year we have records of migrant birds at Loch Don, Loch Frisa and other places, and occasionally one stays for the summer, but in recent years none have paired up and nested. There is known to be antipathy between Ospreys and eagles, so perhaps the high density of eagles deters them from nesting. In 2013, an Osprey flew within 20 yards of the White-tailed Eagle nest at Mull Eagle Watch. The female, who was on eggs, called frantically and the male flew down and chased the intruder away.

The cliffs around Mull support a small breeding population of Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*). Their numbers do not appear to live up to the amount of prey that is available in the form of Rock Doves (*Columba livia*) and seabirds, however. The pair that once nested on the church spire in Tobermory, are sadly no longer present. Unfortunately, the attractive Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) does not occur as a breeding species, despite the abundance of dragonflies on the island in the summer, and is only



Hen Harrier

recorded as a rare passage migrant.

Mull usually supports a relatively large Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) population and the island is regarded as a stronghold for this species that suffers persecution in so many parts of its range. (We don't have any organised red grouse shoots on Mull and no record of persecution of any of the bird of prey species in recent years.) At the end of August this year I watched three ring-tailed harriers (presumably a female and two of this year's young) dive-bombing our juvenile White-tailed Eagle as it sat on moorland above the forest where it had fledged. Despite the close attention the juvenile was unmoved, and eventually the harriers gave up and headed off to continue their hunt for prey. Many of our breeding Hen Harriers will migrate off the island in winter, although when conditions on the mainland are harsh and the relatively mild climate of Mull prevents snow and ice on the lower ground, I have known quite large influxes of this species before their normal return date for breeding. There are a few records of Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) as a passage migrant, while a Pallid Harrier was recorded at Pennyghael in September 2011.

#### Four owls species on the island

Owls are represented by four species on Mull. Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) are greatly aided by a number of nest box schemes around the island, and there are thought to be around 20 to 30 pairs nesting in some years, although all of the Forestry Commission nesting-barrels were deserted this year. Their mortality rate must be quite high on Mull in winter, however, when there are several days of rain and high winds: conditions that prevent these birds from hunting successfully. Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco*) are relatively numerous in wooded habitats despite a lack of larger trees with cavities. Both Tawny and Barn Owls are known to nest in cliff crevices or on more sheltered rock ledges in places on the island.

Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) have only been present on Mull in small numbers in recent years, and breeding success has been low. On one occasion when I first moved to the island, I was travelling back in the car after dark from Tobermory in the north, to my home near Bunessan in the south. A sharp shower of rain had brought 1,000's of

frogs and toads out onto the road and, as we slalomed the car in an effort to avoid the amphibians, I counted 15 different pairs of short-eared owls hunting along the verges during the journey. Their breeding success normally depends on the supply of Short-tailed Field Voles, however, and after recent wet winters these small mammal numbers have been low. Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) are a secretive resident breeding species and are probably under-recorded. Unfortunately I have only ever seen one on Mull as a road casualty.

The high density of Golden Eagle pairs on the island, makes them relatively easy to spot, soaring high over the moorland and mountains and sometimes along the coast, where they also nest on sea cliff ledges. Some people were concerned when the White-tailed Eagles were reintroduced that these bigger birds of prey would have a detrimental impact on the Golden Eagle population, but territories on Mull have been constant since well before the main White-tailed Eagle reintroduction programme began on Rhum in 1975. At Mull Eagle Watch this year we have watched a non-breeding pair of Golden Eagles has



Juvenile Kestrel on the nest

regularly harassed our resident White-tailed Eagles in their own territory.

In 2014, we know of around twenty territorial pairs of White-tailed Eagles on Mull, with a few others on the adjacent mainland and smaller islands such as Ulva. Fifteen of these pairs raised young successfully this year, most with only one chick, however, as opposed to the normal mix of ones and twos. There are thought to be around 80 territorial pairs along the West coast of Scotland with successful breeding now occurring along the East coast around Fife and in Ireland where there has been a reintroduction of both White-tailed and Golden Eagles. One of the White-tailed Eagle nests in Ireland is on a tree on an island in a freshwater loch. There the male regularly catches huge pike to take back to the nest as prey – one predator feeding on another.

One of our nesting pairs now comprises a Mull-fledged bird with one released on the East coast of Scotland as part of the most recent reintroduction programme. This nest with one chick, featured not only on BBC Springwatch, but on a live webcam where, after the BBC cameras had gone, there was a major drama. One day we awoke to

pictures of an empty nest, well before the youngster was due to fledge. On reviewing the earlier footage, a sub-adult White-tailed Eagle was seen to fly onto the nest attracted by the range of prey items that had been brought in by the adult pair to feed the chick. At first the chick held back, but then after a while attacked the much larger intruder and was seen to be knocked out of the nest. Eventually the adult male bird returned, but was unable to evict the intruder, until the female also returned and there was a concerted effort by the pair to chase the invader away. In the meantime, we had rushed up to the nest site to find the chick uninjured on the ground. A climber was despatched up the tree to replace the chick in the nest, and after a very short time the adults recommenced feeding as though nothing had happened. A few weeks later the chick fledged successfully.

If you want to see birds of prey in the wild, the Isle of Mull is one of the best locations in Britain to visit. With its compact range of habitats you are bound to see at least one species every time you step outside the door. Even while writing this article I've been watching a buzzard sat in a tree at the end of my garden,

and yesterday, as I got out of the car on my return from work, a screaming call attracted my attention and there, over adjacent moorland, was a juvenile golden eagle chasing after one of its parents, calling for food. Mull is also one of the best places in the UK for watching other wildlife too.

John Clare is RSPB Isle of Mull Community Information & Tourism Officer leading trips at Mull Eagle Watch. He moved to Mull 8 years ago after holidaying on the island for many years. He also runs a wildlife advisory service and writes and illustrates books about Mull's wildlife, landscape and history – [www.johnclaremull.com](http://www.johnclaremull.com).

Mull Eagle Watch, a partnership between RSPB, Forestry Commission Scotland, Mull and Iona Community Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and Police Scotland has had another very successful year showing visitors nesting white-tailed eagles and raising money for local good causes (£60,000 so far). For more information on Mull Eagle Watch check out [www.rspb.org.uk/datewithnature/mulleagles](http://www.rspb.org.uk/datewithnature/mulleagles) and look at our Mull Eagle Watch facebook page. We hope to have live webcams on White-tailed Eagle nests next year too.

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As John says Mull is a wonderful place to watch birds of prey, I have a one-bedroom holiday cottage on the island which you could rent. For more information contact me or visit [www.craigmorecottage.co.uk](http://www.craigmorecottage.co.uk)

(ed).



# New Bird

**H**ere are some images of my new bird fresh out of chamber, previously un-flown but is a wild trapped shaheen from last year, (often referred to as Black Shaheen), probably came from Turkey or India, I have no clue and hard to say as they come in so many colour variations but the red fronts are pretty consistent by all accounts, just some are bigger than others and have less barring on their chest. She's a pretty bird and hog fat at 900 grams. Should fly at around 720 grams.

I've been after one for ages and they occasionally come up in the souq but are 8,000-12,000 dirhams. This bird was kindly loaned to me from my good friend Alan Harvey of South Africa. Apparently these species are more forest falcons and hunt birds high above the tree canopy. I plan to try train this bird to wait on as we do in North America. Sure is different here though due to the heat and early morning and late day training schedules and lack of abundant legal wild quarry locally. The hobby meanwhile is coming along nicely.





# Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 9 July 2014

## The Old Town Hall, Kennington Road, London.

Present: Jim Chick (JC); Andrew Knowles-Brown (AKB); Rachele Upton (RU); Graham Irving (GI); Mark Upton (MU); Mike Hope (MH); Steve Eastwood (SE); Doreen Page (DP); Nick Fox (NF); Derek Stotton (DS); Graham Bennett (GB); Paul Worby

### Matters Arising:

MH wanted to know what was happening with regard to the Symposium – RU to organise a room at/via Lantra; finalise date (may change depending on the new board).

MH asked what is happening with the Guidelines leaflets.

DS explained that he had planned to store and deliver the leaflets when it was being done by MW – JP-J then took the printing in hand and still has the majority of leaflets she is too busy to deliver them.

DP Picked up 5 boxes from JP-J.

Honeybrook have offered to divert a lorry to collect 1000 leaflets to distribute with invoices.

BFC & SHC are sending it out with their newsletter.

JC to contact JP-J to find out how many she has and to arrange to get them to DS.

RU to find out from club reps who has/hasn't ad the Guidelines yet and how many they need.

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.

**Treasurers Report:** Mike Clowes sent in the following report:

At the moment we have £7,032.03 in the current account and £70,102.64 in the bonus

saver. Although in a weeks time due to expenses this will reduce to approx £4,700.

As for the bonus saver the bank have decided to close all deposit accounts providing a reasonable return and put them all into a business saver with a very low interest rate and no bonus. I will be looking around different banks to see if I can improve on it.

AK-B recommends the Bank Of Scotland Treasurers Account.

### CFF:

This was put on the agenda at Mike Clowes request for the following reason:

The CFF was formed to support the HB financially to aid in the coordinators fees. Certain professional people such as Ben Long and Nick at Honeybrook paid £250 per year towards this. More joined as attendance at the CLA became possible until we had approx 14 supporters. They were given a spot on the HB/CFF website to advertise.

Since we lost the CLA no one has paid this annual amount. I have contacted them all on e-mail and only Colin Woolf has agreed to continue. No one else has replied. I suggest that Doreen, as the CFF Secretary, sends out another request. Once the results are known then we need a decision from the Board as to whether to keep all the members on our website free of charge or delete them.

Board agreed to remove non contributors from the website.

At the falconry fair DP went round asking for money/donations to no avail.

NF asked if it was possible for the CFF to raise decent money nowadays.

DP said there only option at the moment is the begging bowls at the game fairs.

JC said that it is hard work raising money as the CFF only really had Doreen and Malcolm.

RU - The Alikers have offered to raise money for the CFF/HB at the CLA by way of sealed boxes and a collection during their displays.

AK-B – the Hills have offered to have the begging bowls/collections at the CLA in the mini arena.

The board voted and it was decided to turn down the Alikers – it was felt their displays don't conform to the Hawk Board Guidance for Show Givers.

The Hills offer was approved.

RU to write/email both.

DP's laptop has died and she needs one for the shows and Lantra work – Board approved her request.

**Falconry Festival:** The website is now up to date.

This is to be held at the Al Forsan Sports Club south of Abu Dhabi City.

First 3 days will be in the desert camp (1 hour from the city centre).

Wednesday the festival moves into town.

England; Scotland; Wales; Northern Ireland & Southern Ireland are being counted as separate nations so can either have 5 small tents or go for 1 large tent representing all the nations. Hawk Board is also entitled to a tent.

The Zoo had said they would supply all the birds – 160 are needed and they have come up with 16

Idea now is to source and train the birds here and then ship them out and leave them out there

Don't need to be hunting birds – but do need to be trained to display standard.

Advance party will go out 2 weeks ahead to arrange collecting and settling the birds as they arrive.

Conference – Matt Gage is the only UK speaker so far; still space for other speakers.

Music and dance groups still required for the Gala Dinner.

Game Fair: There will be a CFF/HB stand – given free by the CLA.

**Website:** MH had contacted the previous webmaster who had promised to pass over the .co.org website – nothing has been heard since.

All club reps can now use Hawk Board email addresses.

The website can be prettied up, but this might cost as using a standard template at the moment.

CFF members to be removed; as are the clubs that are no longer members of the board.

**Lantra Part 4:** SE – YHC assessor approached SE regarding Lantra workbooks saying they contain poor grammar and spelling mistakes; there is also no indication of the cost to do the course.

RU to ask Lantra to inform us of when the current print run is coming to an end and have the grammatical and spelling errors corrected before the next print run.

JC explained that the costs are down to the clubs; Lantra have a charge and it is up to the clubs whether they also charge.

DP said that the workbook/course paperwork is £25 (£27.50 or overseas) and it is £150 + VAT to attend the assessor training.

JC suggested side workshop during the Symposium for and assessor meeting with Lantra.

To become a level 4 assessor you must have completed levels 1-3.

The clubs nominate their assessor.

RU to obtain a list of club assessors and put their names on the website.

AHVLA/DEFRA/Natural England:

### General licences consultation (England)

This consultation has now closed but the main sections that will impact on falconry are:

- **Summary:** We are inviting views on the creation of two new Class Licences covering the killing and taking of **herring gulls** and **lesser black-backed gulls** for the purposes of preserving public health and public safety, and conservation of flora and fauna (including wild birds).
- The introduction of such Class Licences would harmonise the licensing of the two gull species, which is currently split between General Licences (all lesser black-backed control plus control of nests and eggs belonging to herring gulls for health and safety purposes) and individual licences (all other herring gull control).
- Licensed control for the purposes of preventing agricultural damage would be authorised via individual licence for both species (currently, control of lesser black-backed gulls is authorised by a General Licence).
- **Great black-backed gulls** are also routinely controlled under licence. Since 2010, all control has been authorised under individual licences. We intend to continue to regulate the control of this species via individual licence since the number reported to have been shot under General Licence prior to 2010 represented a very large proportion of the recorded population in England. This position may be revisited in future if we can be more confident about the national population of this species and the significance of licensed control.
- Moving to a Class Licence for conservation and health and safety purposes for both herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls would simplify the current situation for licence users. Currently each species is licensed differently (lesser black-backed via General Licence, and herring gull via a combination of individual and General Licence depending on the purpose and activity). Class Licences would provide information on licensed activities that are currently covered by General Licence (and hence not reported on), but under a more streamlined licensing system than individual licences.
- The requirement to register prior to use will bring this licence in line with other Class Licences. There is already an annual reporting requirement but no requirement to register. Currently, however the number of reports received annually is low despite the fact that evidence suggests that the licence is widely relied upon. A registration requirement and a requirement to make an annual report of licence use (including if the licence has not been used) will encourage compliance with reporting requirements and allow Natural England to undertake compliance checks. Compliance with reporting requirements is important as airports and aerodromes are allowed to control a number of species not normally covered by Class or General Licences and the impact on these species needs to be monitored. The information

is also required for annual reports to the European Commission.

- Killing and capturing wild birds – bringing the rules into line with EU obligations
- Wildlife crime – extending criminal liability to the ultimate beneficiaries
- Sanctions – increasing the availability of penalties for wildlife crime but allowing for a more proportionate response by extending the possibility for civil sanctions
- Invasive, non-native species – increasing powers to allow public bodies to gain access to land to control invasive, non-native species
- Keeping the law up to date – requiring the Government to keep wildlife legislation under regular review

A positive part of the consultation covers the extension of the time period that golden and white tailed eagles can be kept unringed prior to an application to register them being submitted. The time before an application has to be submitted for these two species has been extended to 30 days.

### NATIONAL WILDLIFE CRIME UNIT

Nevin Hunter retired from his post as head of unit on June 19th; his replacement has not yet been confirmed.

### MODERNISING WILDLIFE LAW

The Law Commission has set out its proposed principles for a new regulatory regime for wildlife.

The Law Commission and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have agreed that the Commission should continue its review of the law relating to wildlife, and make recommendations for its reform. In an interim statement published today, the Commission outlines its initial thinking on the scope and content of the new regime.

The current law regulating the conservation, control, protection and exploitation of wildlife is spread over a collection of Acts dating back to 1829. The principal piece of legislation, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, functions alongside EU Directives on wild birds and habitats.

The result is a legal landscape that is out of date, confused and often contradictory.

The aim of the Law Commission's review is to develop clear, modern and coherent wildlife law, set within a single statute. Following wide consultation, the Commission has identified a number of reforms:

Sir David Lloyd Jones, Chairman of the Law Commission, said: "We are pleased that the Government agrees this complex area of law is in need of reform. The benefits of our proposals are clear: reduced burdens on licensing authorities and those seeking and holding licences, ensuring that our EU obligations are met and making the law effective, proportionate and easier to use.

"Our paper sets out what we believe the law should do. We will now turn our attention to refining our thinking and drafting a Bill that would achieve these much-needed reforms."

The Law Commission expects to publish its final recommendations for the reform of wildlife law and a draft Bill in summer 2014.

**Election:** All forms have now been sent out. CHC refused to give their membership details citing Data Protection – there is no DP problem as they are an affiliated club - JC confirmed that Data Protection rules had been checked and no there is no DP problem or breach.

DS went to the CHC meeting where he then notified the membership of the Hawk Board election, as their committee had made a unilateral decision regarding DP and not informed them of it. DS then handed an envelope to all members present and so if they chose they could write their address on it for DS to give to RU at the Hawk Board meeting.

Although this isn't the correct way of doing things it was decided by the Board that this time we would accept those CHC members envelopes.

MH pointed out that if taking the constitution literally then the clubs should send the Hawk Board a current membership list each year at renewal.

SE mentioned that the YHC has updated their renewal forms with a box to give consent to pass on members details.

DS said that the CHC would also be putting a tick box on their renewal forms.

### A.O.B.:

RU – an email has been received from Malcom Robbins saying:

I, together with other Raptor Rescue Trustees, left the Symposium fairly optimistic that the HB had taken on board our comments about the Rescue and Rehabilitation aspects of BOP and Owls; and at least two members had indicated further contact in the fairly near future.

However since then we have heard nothing further - it may be that there has been no further HB meetings or that the HB has nothing further to say to the Rescue and Rehabilitation field at present.

As a charity we are not members of the HB and certainly our constitution and membership base is such that we could not join on the same basis as a Club but we could have an association on a different level and at least provide our views, knowledge and concerns, together as appropriate, with our support to the HB.

If the HB want to take this forward, please let me know.

RU to write back to Malcolm thanking him for his email and informing him that the current Board is in the process of being dissolved and a new one being appointed. And although a lot of what we do and discuss wouldn't be suitable for them we would like to invite them to join in one of our meetings – probably January. We will discuss this with the new board in October.

MH – Would like to see some form of structure to ensure items raised are properly assigned and reported on within agreed timescales if possible. That way all Hawk Board members can see progress and keep track of issues.

NF – Regarding the consultation from Natural England – did the Hawk Board submit any replies, the BFC did.



# Problem Hawks Part 1

Zero settling in

**T**here's always an element of risk when you take on a new hawk. You can never be exactly sure how the breeder raised the bird and if you are not the bird's first owner, you can never be certain as to what kind of training it received. If you're lucky, you might get a run down on the hawk's previous history but it's fairly obvious that there are going to be an unspecified number of blank spaces. One thing we can be certain of though, is that every once in a while, somebody is going to create a hawk that has very real problems.

It may have arisen from a start that has not been properly researched but this is by no means the only reason. Just as easily, it could be someone making the switch from one category of hawk to another and underestimating the scale of what is needed. There are a multitude of reasons why things go wrong and although this concerns me, I am thinking more about how we as falconers, can resurrect the hawk after it has become a problem; maybe long after.

Your understanding of problem hawks may be different to mine but I work on the principle that the troubles relate mainly to the difficulties of handling and keeping at home. It goes without saying though, that troubles at home will eventually lead to troubles in the field. No one sets out with the intention of failing but for one reason or another, it happens.

In 2009, I got the opportunity to put a little back into a sport that has given me so much enjoyment. I heard about a problem Goshawk that needed a new owner and when I learned about the facts, I felt that not only could I help, but also that I should. And as late as early spring in this year, 2014, I got wind of another suitable case for treatment and the whole process started again.

It was never easy and I certainly had my moments of doubt but we muddled through somehow. The stories of 'Zero' the Finnish Goshawk and 'Gyronimo' the Gyr/Saker are quite interesting because both had disappointed their owners and both had been the subjects of aborted programmes. Zero came first so here is his story:

### Reclaiming Zero

Zero had been the cause of a spat between the breeder and his first owner. Each accused the other of spoiling the

bird and as neither of them would give an inch on this matter, the situation quickly heated up then settled into something of an angry stalemate. What should have been a 'dream bird' became a nightmare and seeking to cut his losses and start all over again, the problem Goshawk was put up for sale.

I got a frank assessment of what had gone wrong, warts and all, and almost before I had time to draw breath, 'Zero' as I later named him, was sat on my weathering lawn and wondering how he came to have two owners in just less than one month. I won't go into the minutia of what caused the spat but the net result as far as the first owner was concerned, was that the Goshawk would not respond to any form of 'manning' and was as wild on day 28, as he was on the day of purchase. And as Zero was not his first Goshawk, I had to take his claims seriously.

When I managed to get my first look at Zero, he appeared fine superficially, his feathers were in good order, he was wearing a nice tail guard and all the furniture looked neat and well fitted. If I hadn't known anything about his very recent history, I would have thought that I had just been gifted the perfect Goshawk. If I could have seen inside the bird's head though, the picture would have looked very different.

Strenuous efforts had been made to man him down, including 'waking' sessions but as none of it had worked, I wondered if there was a medical reason that could explain the lack of progress. There was no point in me doing anything until this vital question had been answered, so I headed off in the direction of my avian vet.

The result came back 'clear' but noticing a small area of broken skin and some reddening on the soles of the feet, the vet advised spraying each day with the diluted veterinary antiseptic, F10SC. I didn't know it at the time but this advice would not only fix Zero's slight foot problem but also his predilection for bating off the glove. The instruction, 'let him bate, then spray the soles of both feet with the F10 while he's upside down,' was an act of pure serendipity.

After experiencing the first spray treatment with the F10, he would not bate off the glove at any price, even by rolling the fist, and I finished up having to impregnate a towel which I wrapped around his bow perch. This worked on his feet just as well but I had stumbled on

a neat way of keeping him upright and steady on the glove. I found that as long as I held the spray bottle in my free hand, he could be held or walked bare-headed with no worries. This was a lucky break and as a result, he accepted the new order in his life much faster than I dared hope.

There was still the ongoing problem of why he tended to behave so strangely though and this was discussed at length before leaving the vet's surgery. Under physical examination, he had appeared perfectly normal but a question mark remained over his mental state. It was possible that he was mentally retarded or that for reasons unknown, he had suffered slight brain damage. It was only a theory based on 'gut feeling' and there was no way the vet could test this out in the time-scale of one visit, so the only option was for me to get on with it and see what happens.

Too much of Zero's early life had already been lost so as soon as he was jumping up to the glove for food, I went straight to the creance stage. A huge shock was waiting for me there because Zero seemed to lack the basic skills of flight. He left my training perch from a few feet away but crashed directly into the glove and finished up in an untidy heap on the ground. Thinking that he might have misjudged this first short flight to the glove, I tried it a second time but with the same result.

He could step up and jump up to the glove but no way could he make a landing on it if it involved any flying. His wings were still flapping as he hit the glove and his feet were all over the place. The vet's 'gut feeling' that some mental defect may be present was looking very likely at this moment. There was no point in doing anything further with the glove, so I dropped the lure about 3mtrs away to see how he would cope with that. Some of you will guess what happened next: he jumped straight down onto the ground and ran to it.

By extending the distances, he did eventually incorporate some flying but it was still a 'skip and jump' routine. It seemed like the bits of his brain that controlled balance and the coordination of flight were either missing or not working very well. To cut a long story short, I spent a heap of time trying to make things easier for him. A 2mtr high ring perch was purchased and this made a big difference. At first, I had to help him



The carry hood

back up to the ring but in the end I just left him to get on with it.

### Flying free

Because everything about our association

had been unconventional, it was hard to know if he was really ready for flying free or not but as he had not shown any interest in heading for the hills, I could see no reason to delay. In the event

though, it was all very straight forward but his approach to flying was still very clumsy. He could catch the lure in mid air and in some ways this seemed easier for him than taking it on the ground. It had taken quite a while to get to this stage but I viewed this as a big step in the right direction.

Something I noticed right from the start of working with Zero, was that he was totally riveted to the spot where I placed him and would not move an inch unless encouraged. I thought this very strange behaviour for a hawk that could not be manned. It was fortunate though because without it, I doubt if much progress would have been possible at all. In fact, this robotic behaviour was so pronounced it caused me to wonder if he even realised that he was free.

Eventually, this reached the state where I could step him onto a fence post then walk away almost to the limit of my vision, knowing full well that he would not move until I swung the lure. This was great from an exercise standpoint but it



Zero opens his account

didn't seem to be leading us anywhere. Something would have to change if any more progress was to be made.

### Following-on flights?

I'd heard that some Goshawks are capable of following-on from trees without going 'walk-about,' so in view of Zero's limited repertoire, I decided to give it a try. In order to do anything new though, he first had to master the simple art of landing on things without toppling over. Living on a farm, I was able to drive a few spare fence posts into one of the fields knowing that with the absence of barbed wire, he would come to no harm. We went back and forth with me leaving titbits on the posts and he did eventually figure out how to make the 'stall landing.' There were many tumbles in the process though.

Up to this point, he had never landed in a tree so that was obviously his next lesson. I made a start by dropping the lure underneath what I thought was an ideal tree and sure enough, he started looking up at the branches with interest. An enticement was placed on the lowest branch and using his new found skills on the high ring perch, he flew up to get it. Before long, he was laddering up to the higher branches but would not leave the tree unless he saw the lure.

This was very encouraging but he still had no idea how to handle trees from level flight. To address this, I would stand close to a tree then let him think I was reaching for the lure to get him into the air. When he arrived and did not see the lure, he would land on the ground near the tree first, then fly vertically up through the branches to get to somewhere near the top. One day though, he had his 'eureka' moment and went straight into the tree without landing on the ground first, but it still involved a vertical upward swoop from near the base of the trunk.

Due to his very static attitude when perched, I could safely turn my back on him and just walk off into the distance. I was doing my thing as usual one day, when I heard a rush of wings and something whizzed past me and landed in a dead Ash tree, some 50mtrs ahead. The mentally challenged Goshawk had just executed his first following-on flight. This wouldn't have been anything special for a Harris Hawk but for Zero, it was a quantum leap.

Following-on flights became our

normal way of life and the new dimension it added to our morning walk was very welcome. I was still using the swing lure as Zero was never called to the glove but at this stage, I would finish some of our sessions by swinging and throwing out a full Quail on the end of a 20mtr line. This was just to remind him that he was still a Goshawk and that those hooked claws were there for a purpose. And of course, he started chasing.

### Hunting with Zero

I'm not sure if Zero's first owner did any hooding work with him but my attempts at 'late stage hooding' didn't work at all well. I could see that this was making him distraught so rather than start each day off with an argument, I stopped trying to hood him except on the few occasions when he was cast. This had great implications for hunting and even though our following-on flights had been working well, I felt I needed a lot more control over his actions.

Crows were also becoming a nuisance. The air could be filled with their raucous 'kraa-kraa' calls, warning everything within earshot that a 'major league' predator had been spotted. To get him to the point of release without the obvious distractions, I tried carrying him inside the Gamehawker travel box but that proved cumbersome and far too heavy.

This caused me to design and build something that was extremely lightweight and perfect for the purpose. I called it the 'carry hood.' It was constructed from 3mm polyethylene (HDPE) instead of the heavier but more usual, 4.5 or 5mm polypropylene (PP).

It was practical to walk for up to one mile carrying this device so starting out from the car, this gave me a hunting area that was large enough to be workable. You can see from the picture that it is designed as a 'straight through' system which always ensured that Zero was pointing in the right direction. The two doors are hinged so that they drop vertically downwards to form runways for entry and exit.

In practice, Zero soon got the hang of running in to get a food enticement, then blasting out later when we had the right setup. So in effect, it was not a great deal different from flying out of a conventional leather hood. I had to be careful not to place the carry hood

on the ground before we had the right setup though. He associated this with the door dropping down and I could feel and hear him revving-up his twin engines.

He opened his account in December with a Moorhen, which was not the intended target, but at least it got us going. The new year started well and he took his first mallard which was 'tail-end Charlie' of a group of six. Before the month was out, he had taken a further two mallards and two cock pheasants, all taken in the air I think, but I missed one of the pheasant takes. Not a great tally for a full season I suppose but in terms of quality, I rated it very highly indeed. There was one failure to report though. He couldn't hold on to the one and only chance he had at Brown Hare.

So what started out to be a difficult and puzzling project, ended up surprisingly well and with a flourish. Looking after him at home gradually got easier as I got better at coping with his unconventional nature. He seemed happiest on his high ring perch though he would still bate every time if approached too closely. Despite his dislike of any direct contact with me, he was amazingly loyal in the field and I never had the slightest concerns about him disappearing.

Although Zero was still limited to some extent by his crash-bang-wallop style of flying, this did not seem to affect his ability to hunt. It had been a very slow process and it was fortunate that I had the time available to see it through to the end. It was worth all the extra effort though because Zero gave me some of my best flying memories. However, there was a decision to be taken as I could see difficulties looming ahead.

I didn't have a suitable moulting chamber for Zero so the question was: do I build an exclusion aviary well away from the noisy farmyard or pass him onto one of my friends? After a few days of 'soul searching,' it was decided that Zero would be taken-over by one of my Goshawk-flying acquaintances. It was sad to say goodbye but I had achieved all I set out to do, which of course was to give him a brighter future.

In part two of this article, I tell the story of a problem Gyr/Saker called Gyronimo. This Apache Chief should really have been called Double Trouble because he was a far harder test than Zero ever was.

# Wings in the wind

It was a day that could only be early spring, that particular feel only comes in early March, with life preparing to unfold for the new natural year. Everything felt new, clean, crisp. The air smelt fresh, clearing the mind. The sky was stark blue and the wind was biting cold, numbing my cheeks despite the tingling warmth of sunlight. Making use of an old picnic bench I stared up at that seemingly empty sky, patiently waiting. The breeze was good, perfect to give rise and lift, and give lift it did. Using the windy updraft four eagles rose from behind the crumbly mountain ridge, breaking the skyline. Shadows scrolled across the hillside below with the sun beating from above. Three of the birds showing an almost 7ft wingspan and a shining nape of molten gold were in battle. These were golden eagles, a renowned raptor found right across the northern hemisphere. The fourth bird hung in the sky, intimidating, dominating and altogether looking like it was in the wrong place. White feathers and yellow iris glinting in the sunlight, the white-tailed eagle looked on. Deigning the dispute to be unimportant, the bird rose up on the thermal, disappearing at a height too great for my eyesight.

## Reintroduction and recovery

For many, the white-tailed eagle would be a bird they'd never get to see in the United Kingdom. Maybe with luck they'd catch up with a lone bird from Europe before it made off with haste back to safer lands. Now though, almost 40 years after the pioneering reintroduction programme began we can see the World's fourth largest eagle in our skies once more. We have around 80 breeding pairs, although the majority are confined to West Scotland they are back, balancing at the top of our food chain alongside the secretive golden eagle. They cling to our highlands and islands, pushing to increase numbers and survive among man once more.

## The Eagle Isle

I'm exceptionally lucky to live among



White Tailed Eagle

these birds on the Isle of Mull, a large Hebridean island on the Scottish coast. Often referred to as "Eagle Island" Mull is a raptor stronghold, without the ongoing threat of illegal persecution, birds of prey can make the most of the plentiful prey in a variety of habitats. Not only can you see our two eagle species, but hen harriers quarter over the rough ground feeding on pipits and voles, buzzards scan lazily from telegraph poles and the blazon sparrowhawk makes regular meals of everything from a chaffinch to a rock dove. Mull is a birdwatchers paradise, not even considering the bountiful marine life or mammals like the mountain hare.

## Hillside conflicts

Unfortunately not all of our raptors around the UK are faring so well and when they do, it seems not everyone is happy about it. Already we've heard calls for the white-tailed eagle to be controlled or culled altogether. This often comes from a minority of farmers across Scotland who still hold eagles responsible for loss of many lambs. The species is very capable of taking a few, although they're lazy birds, preferring to minimise energy expenditure. Often road kill, deer ticks, poor winters, and predatory species like hooded crows and gulls are the original culprits, eagles coming in to

steal away the remains of a now non-viable lamb. Hill farming only continues thanks to government subsidies and so the many benefits from the presence of eagles are enormous to the island of Mull, let alone the rest of Scotland. Studies in 2009 found the species generated £5 million per year for the isle - a vastly valuable income for a rural area historically limited to fishing and farming. Farming can continue with eagles in the air, often working alongside tourism for extra income, culling and control is not the answer.

## Tough times

Despite the comeback of some, our once most common raptor, the kestrel is vanishing. The windhover could once be seen from car windows up and down every UK motorway, this is now a less common sight. They've declined by large figures, in Scotland by 67%. Showing a declining trend across the whole of Europe the kestrel is an amber listed species here in the UK. Many factors seem to be pushing this trend, from lack of nest sites, increased predation rate from recovering species like the goshawk and increased use of rodenticide. Another species, the hen harrier is facing extinction in England primarily due to ongoing illegal persecution, often tied



with intensive moorland management for grouse despite having had legal protection since 1954.

### **Culling: not the answer to success**

On the other hand our common buzzard and the sparrowhawk have both gone through a rapid increase over the last 30-40 years. Much of this will be down to less persecution than in previous years, although we all know it still happens! Again, in similarity with the recovering white-tailed eagle the buzzard has had to face calls for control, culling and lack of support from governing bodies. In 2012 DEFRA had been about to offer £400,000 to research the control of buzzard nest and egg destruction purely for the benefit of shooting estates but this was met with public outcry. Then, in 2013 Natural England secretly licensed this method of control to go ahead in order to protect a pheasant shoot.

### **Predator V Prey**

As the sparrowhawk increased, becoming a familiar visitor to garden bird tables and a whoosh of air by your side

when walking through local woodlands, many bird lovers rejoiced. Not all though; many people who profess to love wildlife and birds are often the nemesis of the bold raptor. I regularly hear stories of people rushing to chase away the sparrowhawk in their garden, disgruntled that the predator mistook the bird table for its own takeout. But, that's just what it is; you're providing healthy stocks of prey. Plenty of small birds mean plenty of bigger birds. We seem to think the sparrowhawk is going to eat everything, every last cute little robin. It won't, because then it won't have anything to eat. Without robins, blue tits, and chaffinches the sparrowhawk wouldn't survive. So, often I find myself attempting to explain this, that culling hawks will not improve overall numbers of our garden and woodland birds. That really, we need to conserve their habitat, control overgrazing to support woodland undergrowth, improve insect habitat in our over tidy gardens and leave those dead leaves behind in the autumn. We'll have even more cute little robins and even more bird table robbers.

### **Tainted success**

Never could anyone tire of seeing the 8ft plus wingspan of a white-tailed eagle soar overhead, and maybe further into the future the species will take back more of its age old range across the UK. Hopefully it does, reclaiming southern coastlines, Norfolk broads and the Cumbrian Solway. Without doubt when it does, it will meet negative outcries, calls for management, control, killing and culling. It seems to be a reflex, an immediate reaction for so many of us now. Conservation success stories are forever met with disregard, outrage and a general lack of understanding. Red kites, buzzards, beavers and otters are all battling with this. After successfully returning to our land, some after hundreds of years of absence there will always be those who would happily throw them out again. Hopefully, education will continue to improve things, so many of our younger generations are learning to love our wild areas and understand the environment - those against will soon be more of a minority.



Sparrowhawk

Picture by Ben Crane

# 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)



Approved  
LANTRA  
Assessors

Hawk  
Board  
Affiliation

Meetings held the first Wednesday of the month at 8pm at the Newton Arms Public House DN5 8BP. We are a family oriented club with members of all ages.

For more information visit our web page [www.yorkshirehawkingclub.org.uk](http://www.yorkshirehawkingclub.org.uk)

## British Falconers' Club

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Email Sue on [membershipsecretary@britishfalconersclub.co.uk](mailto:membershipsecretary@britishfalconersclub.co.uk)

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

THE BRITISH FALCONERS CLUB (F.M.)

## THE SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB

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Further details from:

**Alan Rothery**

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

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

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## The Welsh Hawking Club



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

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

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

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

For all general enquiries please contact:

**David Barber on 07785 762373**

or

e-mail: [secretary@thewelshhawkingclub.com](mailto:secretary@thewelshhawkingclub.com)

# THE BRITISH HAWKING ASSOCIATION

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[www.thebha.co.uk](http://www.thebha.co.uk)

or e-mail to [secretary@thebha.co.uk](mailto:secretary@thebha.co.uk)

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



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

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

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

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



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IBR web-site  
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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.

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**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.

The IBR has helped to reunite the following **108** birds with their owners.

### SPECIES

AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL	1
AMERICAN KESTREL	2
BARBARY FALCON	1
BARN OWL	16
BENGAL EAGLE OWL	3
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	5
GOLDEN EAGLE	1
GOSHAWK	5
GYR/ALTAI SAKER	1
GYR/SAKER	13
GYR/SAKER X PERE/SAKER	1
HARRIS HAWK	26
KESTREL	7
LANNER	6
LITTLE OWL	2
PEREGRINE	5
PERE/LANNER	1
PERE/PRAIRIE	1
PERE/SAKER	3
REDTAIL	1
SAKER	3
TAWNY OWL	3
TURKEY VULTURE	1

Out of the 108 birds reunited, 75 were not registered.

### STOLEN x 1

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
100201	?501?	AMERICAN KESTREL	PEWSEY, SN9

### LOST REGISTERED BIRDS x 33

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
97460	?337?	BARN OWL	Orpington, BR5
30324	?077?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	York, YO43
39963	?665?	PERE/LANNER	Thetford, IP25
75480	?340?	HARRIS HAWK	Long Stratton, NR15
94147	?047?	BARN OWL	Lee On Solent
97869	?391?	HARRIS HAWK	Fingringhoe, CO5
94147	?071?	HARRIS HAWK	Stroud, GL5
96810	?278?	BARN OWL	Mansfield
98448	?374?	BARN OWL	Stourport, DY13
78899	?639?	HARRIS HAWK	Calderbank, ML1
101051	?1TP?	AFRICAN GREY PARROT	Romford, RM3
90490	?796?	HARRIS HAWK	Willington, MK4
64013	?254?	LITTLE OWL	Rochford, SS4
86859	?257?	BARN OWL	Harlow, CM20
75652	?346?	HARRIS HAWK	Barnstaple, EX34
97814	?341?	BARN OWL	Silchester, RG7

87612	?067?	KESTREL	Southdene, L32
101228	?ARD?	BARN OWL	Kirk Hallam, DE7
101157	?675?	PERE/SAKER	Blaydon, NE21
98881	?406	BARN OWL	Pontefract, WF7
100143	?491?	AMERICAN KESTREL	Scunthorpe, DN17
101312	?DUK?	HARRIS HAWK	Swanley, Kent
101160	?396?	RED FOOTED FALCON	Maidstone, ME17
98289	?391?	HARRIS HAWK	Sheffield, S20
82338	?978?	HARRIS HAWK	Hemlington, TS8
99268	?408?	BARN OWL	Pickenham, BS21
76274	?378?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	Shirebrook, NG20
89535	?708?	HARRIS HAWK	Gornal, DY3
81986	?926?	HARRIS HAWK	Loughborough, LE11
99038	?551?	HARRIS HAWK	Kirkby in Ashfield
16584	????	GYR/SAKER	Telford
84342	?180?	HARRIS HAWK	Sutton in Ashfield
39667	????	TAWNY OWL	Kegworth, DE74

### FOUND x 15

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA FOUND
101243	????	GYR/SAKER	Werrington, ST9
101214	????	KESTREL	Cheadle, SK3
82137	?889?	BARN OWL	Long Sandall, DN2
14052	?143?	HARRIS HAWK	Dumbarton
101277	?2BC?	AFRICAN SPOTTED OWL	Treowen, NP25
101296	?6RG?	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	Treorchy, CF41
95220	?118?	BARN OWL	Brunswick, M1
101329	?KJH?	HARRIS HAWK	Denton, M34
80762	?677?	BARN OWL	Walsall, WS2
70604	?725?	BARN OWL	Danbury, CM3
81427	?915?	HARRIS HAWK	Pontypridd
42794	?208?	HARRIS HAWK	Flagg, SK17
101400	????	HARRIS HAWK	St. Blazey, PL24
101434	????	HARRIS HAWK	Winwick, WA2
101438	?030?	GOSHAWK	Redruth, TR16

### FOUND DEAD x 11

BARN OWL	2	KESTREL	2
GOSHAWK	1	LANNER	2
GYR/SAKER	1	PEREGRINE	3
HARRIS HAWK	1	PERE/SAKER	2
KESTREL	2	SAKER	6
LANNER	1	SHAHEEN	1
PEREGRINE	2	URAL OWL	1
SAKER	1		

### LOST UNREGISTERED BIRDS x 54

AMERICAN KESTREL	2	KESTREL	2
BARN OWL	11	LANNER	2
BLACK BARN OWL	1	PEREGRINE	3
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	1	PERE/SAKER	2
GOSHAWK	5	SAKER	6
GYR/SAKER	6	SHAHEEN	1
HARRIS HAWK	11	URAL OWL	1



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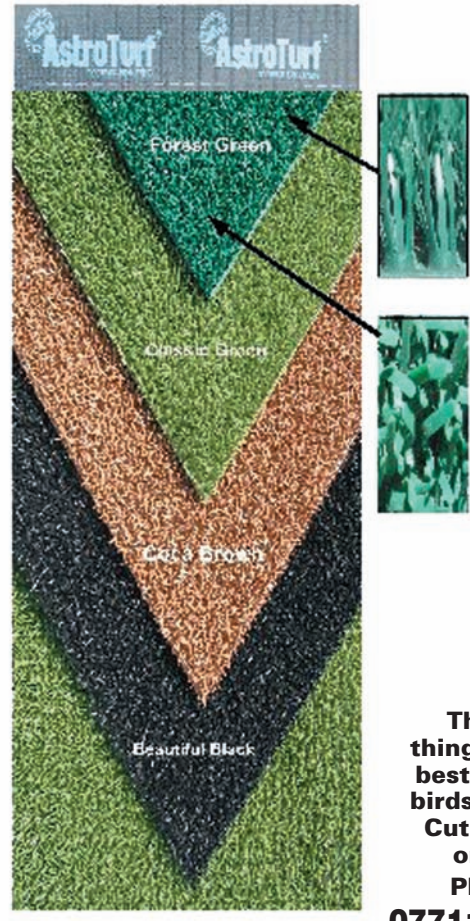
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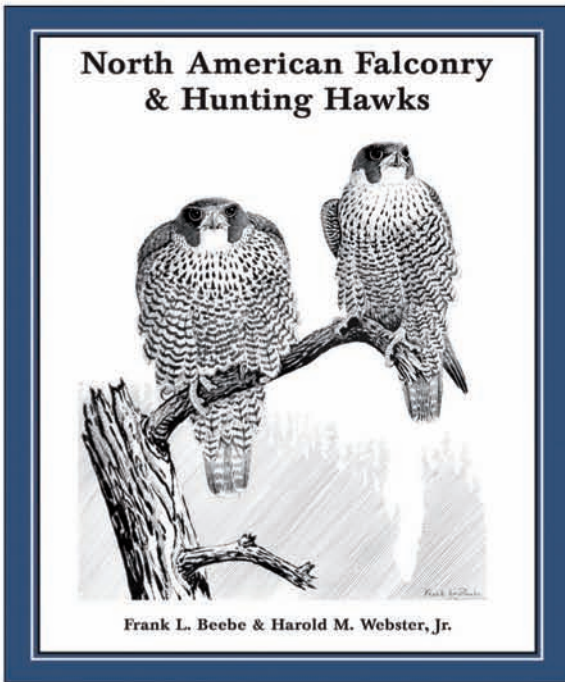
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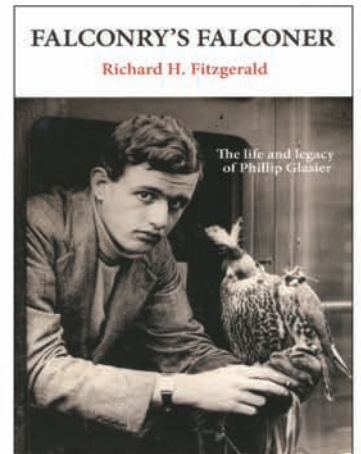
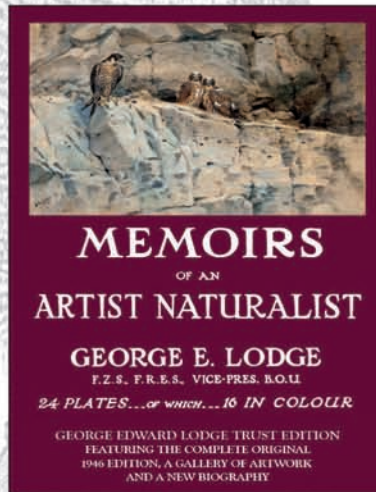
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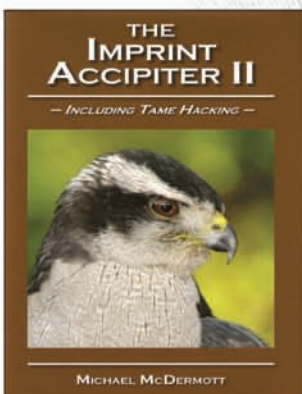


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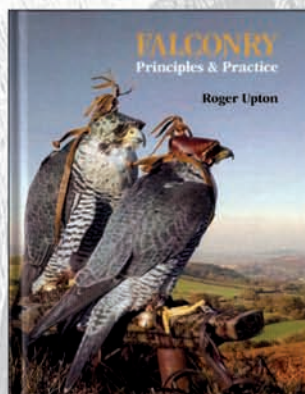
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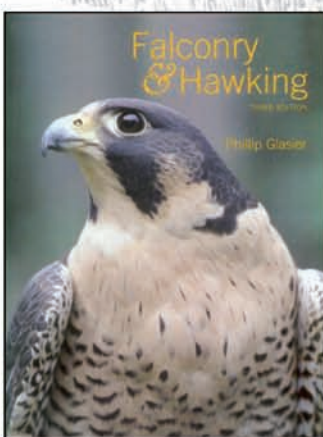
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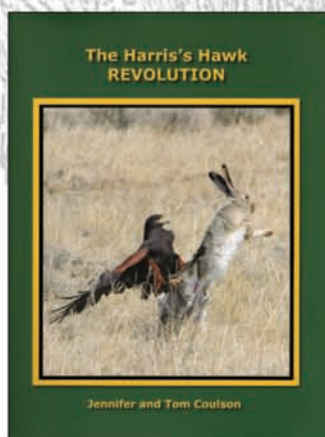
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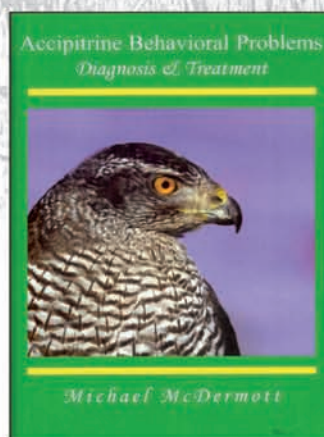
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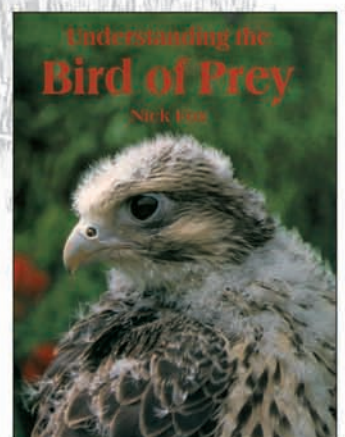
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