

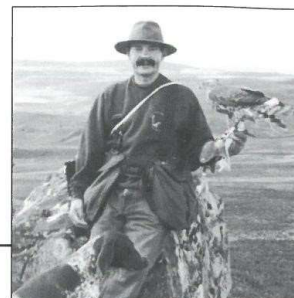


The Austringer

NEWS JOURNAL
No 29 1997



Letter from the Editor



David Jones

I would like to welcome all our new members, avid readers of the Austringer worldwide, and also our two new honorary members Ian Blantern and Terry Large.

With gun at head I have been appointed as the new editor of this collectable Journal and I shall do my utmost to give you, our members and readers, a Magazine of quality.

I have just read several back issues of this journal and I would like to thank our previous editor, Ian Blantern, for the years of informative reading and professionalism he gave to us all. I hope that Ian will continue to write the odd article, maybe when his bird is in moult and his dog is asleep.

As you can see, our new edition of the Austringer is in full colour giving our Journal a fresh look and naturalistic photographs, so please send in your photos and slides along with your Falconry experiences and odd related stories.

I was born in South Wales, a son of a farmer who from a young age had a great interest in wildlife and was fascinated with birds of prey. At the age of 17 I hacked my first two Hawks (Common Buzzards) back to the wild (or should I say they flew away). At that time I was living in beautiful Cardiganshire (West Wales). My new-found life suddenly changed due to financial problems and I moved to Weston-super-Mare where I started my business career but had no time to fly Hawks - only to watch the Common Buzzards soaring high above the town and gliding home to the countryside where one day I would hope to live.

My fortunes changed and I built a house 5 miles outside Weston overlooking the village of Hutton surrounded by countryside with Common Buzzards

nesting nearby. I felt a lot happier but still something was missing.

Many years passed by. One Spring day I called in to see a friend of mine who owned a pet shop. I wanted to purchase a beanbag to keep my dog off the furniture. I came out of the shop with the beanbag and a Barn Owl that someone ordered by mistake. At that time I also kept chickens and had a surplus of cockerels, so I advertised them in the local rag and a tall slim man turned up to purchase a cockerel for a pound. His name was Chris Lock from Banwell who was flying a Kestrel at the time. He spotted my Barn Owl and with a flash of lightening two Great Falconers were born.

Falconry absorbed my life and changed it in many ways. I have learnt as much about myself as I have my Hawks. The field crafts I have gathered over the years now play a big part in the cunning to catch. When my Hawk flies a part of my soul flies with her and the rest of the world is blinkered off into a haze of blurred trees, grasses and vivid landscapes. Only the winged predator and the fleeing quarry is magnified in my sight. Only then do I become a privileged observer of nature in action and a spiritual moment is captured on a frame in my mind.

I can see why this sport has survived for thousands of years and I hope that the human race will share this relationship with Hawks for many years to come, so please be responsible with the gift that we have been given and treasure it. Don't let our sport fall from the respectability it has gained over the millenniums.

David Jones, *Editor*

P.S. This year I'll be flying a Peregrine.

Message to all Falconers: Please Support All Fieldsports!

The Activists Cometh

First they came for the Staghounds,
But I didn't speak out as I don't go stag hunting.
Then they came for the terriers,
But I didn't speak out as I don't work terriers.
Then they came for the foxhounds,
But I didn't speak out as I don't go foxhunting.
Then they came for the longdogs,
But I didn't speak out as I don't go coursing.
Finally they came for me (Falconry),
And guess what - there was no one left to speak out for me.

Please send all articles and photos relating to Hawking including Dogs, Ferrets, Book reviews, innovations etc. and please keep a copy as we cannot return items.

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Designed and printed by T L Visuals Ltd, Rainbow Court,
Armstrong Way, Yate, Bristol BS17 5NG Tel 01454 319555



The Austringer

The Official Journal of the Welsh Hawking Club
Clwb Hebogwr Cymru No. 29 1997

WELSH HAWKING CLUB MEMBER IAF, HAWK BOARD AFFILIATED TO BFSS BASC

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Donated by: Thys Walters, Cape Falconry Club

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The opinions expressed in this Magazine are not necessarily the opinions of The Welsh Hawking Club or it's advertisers.

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Rules Of The Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objects:

1. The name of the club shall be The Welsh Hawking Club.
2. The objectives of the club shall be:-
 - a. The promotion of Falconry.
 - b. The provision of advice and information for members and other interested parties.
 - c. The promotion and maintenance of the club code of conduct amongst members.

Constitution:

The club shall consist of a President, Vice Presidents, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Assistant Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Editor, Press and Publicity Officer, Conservation Officer, Breeding Project Officer, Legislative Officer and a Field Officer. Each of these is entitled to attend the committee meetings and to one vote, except for the Chairman who does not have a vote. However, in the event of a vote resulting in a tie the Chairman shall then have the casting vote. Proxy votes and postal votes shall not be allowed at committee meetings. Only Full members are eligible for election to office. The business of the club will be conducted by the Officers and Committee (hereafter referred to simply as the Committee) which will meet at such times as it thinks fit. A quorum for a meeting shall be three members. No one with convictions for offences involving Birds of Prey shall hold office within the Welsh Hawking Club.

Elections:

1. All members of the Committee will be elected or re-elected individually, annually at the AGM. Prior to the election the attendance record at committee meetings for the last year shall be given.
2. During the year should any committee member fail to attend committee meetings regularly then he or she may be asked to give an explanation. If the reason is of insufficient justification the committee may co-opt a member to fill the position. They may also co-opt any person to the committee if considered desirable.

Membership:

1. Members of the club will be elected by the committee.
2. No person will be elected without application to the Secretary.
3. The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.
4. Any member whose subscription is unpaid by March of any year shall cease to be a member, but shall be eligible for election as for new members.
5. Should the committee have reason to believe that a member has acted in a manner injurious to Falconry or the club or both then the member may be required to furnish a written explanation to the Secretary for the consideration of the committee or to appear in person before the committee. The member can claim a personal hearing if preferred. The Secretary must give the member at least 14 days notice of the committees requirements. Should the member refuse to comply the committee may terminate the membership. They may also terminate the membership should they decide that the member has acted in a way harmful to Falconry or the club or both.
6. No member must give talks, interviews or material relating to Falconry, domestic breeding etc to the media i.e. T.V., Radio, Press etc, without advice from the committee and/or the Press and Publicity Officer. Any member giving such talks must make every effort to ensure their accuracy.
7. Any member wishing to dispose of a Hawk obtained through the club must offer the Hawk back into the club.
8. Only Full members are eligible to vote on club affairs.
9. Proxy votes and postal votes are not allowed.
10. Associate members wishing to obtain full membership may apply in writing to the Secretary, for the consideration of the committee. Prior to applying the applicant should normally have completed at least 12 months membership. The application must give full details of Hawk related experience and should be countersigned by a full member.

Meetings:

1. The Annual General Meeting shall be held in February of each year.
2. Meetings shall be presided over by the President, Chairman or one of the Officers as appropriate.
3. General meetings will normally be held monthly. Informal meetings will be held as required.

Alteration of Rules:

Rules may only be altered by a vote taken at the AGM or at an EGM. Notices of motion for the AGM or EGM shall be sent to the Secretary in writing in order to arrive at least six weeks prior to those meetings. Any member wishing to call an EGM shall inform the Secretary in writing stating the reasons for such meeting. The application must be countersigned by twenty full members.

Code of Conduct

1. The wellbeing of all Birds of Prey both domestic and wild together with the continuation of Falconry must be the aim of all members.
2. Falconry is the flying of trained Birds of Prey and Owls at suitable quarry found in the natural state. No action must bring this into disrepute.
3. Every Hawk must be properly manned and equipped. Every Hawk trained must be properly manned.
4. Every endeavour must be made to recover a lost Hawk.
5. All Hawks flown free should be equipped with field jesses, at least one bell and if possible a transmitter and the name and address of the owner. In the case of unentered Hawks, aggressive Hawks, Eagles, Hybrids, Exotics, etc special care must be taken to prevent loss.
6. Permission must be obtained before entering upon ground and it must be ascertained whether another Falconer already has permission in which case his/her permission must also be sought. Due respect must be given to landowners and their property.
7. Indigenous Hawks that are no longer wanted must either be returned to the wild state in suitable country or passed on to someone who will treat them in accordance with this code of conduct. Before a Hawk is released the Falconer must ensure that it is in good feather, in the highest possible condition, that it can kill for itself and is suitable for release. If there is any doubt that it is able to do so it should be hacked back.

Don't Forget Our Roots

I HAVE JUST READ a Falconry report of The Lower Austrian International meeting at Marchegg that was held in **October 1965** this report was kindly sent to me by one of our founders John Buckner (J.B.). It reads of flying Golden Eagles, Benellis Hawk Eagles, Sakers, Peregrines, Luggar Falcons and of course our beloved Goshawks. It also reads of the hospitality shown by our International Falconer friends for the Welsh Hawking Club.

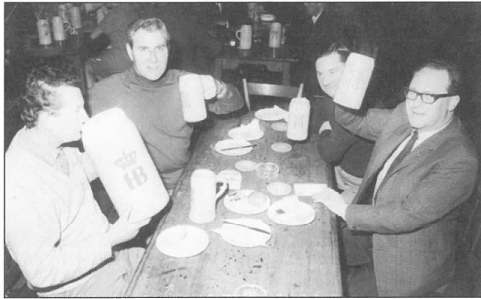
The day's Falconry was superb with Hare and Pheasant taken, and at night we drank wine and ate Wild Boar with Viennese music playing in the background. All of this was within the setting of a powerful Castle, like many Falconry meetings on the continent.

The game caught on the day was ceremoniously laid out each evening and the appropriate hunting calls were blown for each species, flaming torches were held by one Austrian and

one Welsh Falconer, in front of a large crowd.

The comradeship with Falconers and respect for the quarry was superb, just as we Falconers in our club must always strive for.

We must always make great efforts to keep in touch with our International friends as our tree grew from these roots and we remain an International club with a worldwide membership. Here are some more pictures showing our heritage.



The Founding of The Welsh Hawking Club taken at the first Committee Meeting.



Worky, Lorant, Austrian Hosy, Morgans, Austrian Host Wife, J.B., and Guest "M" 1965 Picking up the W.I.C. Golden Eagle (Tara) that's what's in the cardboard box at the back of the car. It was exchanged with a Czech Falconer for a Luggar Falcon.



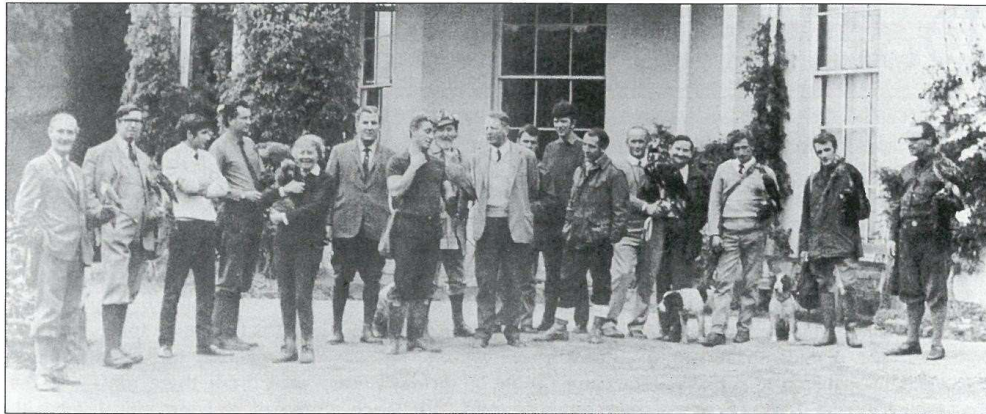
Sir Douglas Morgan with Tara, The Welsh Hawking Club's Golden Eagle ready for action.



The Old Motto is still in good shape.



The Gos Boys at Woodhall Spar 1969.



Falconry meeting at Woodhall Spar. Photograph kindly loaned by Mrs Nancy de Bastyai



Sir Douglas Morgan getting a brush up to meet the Queen.



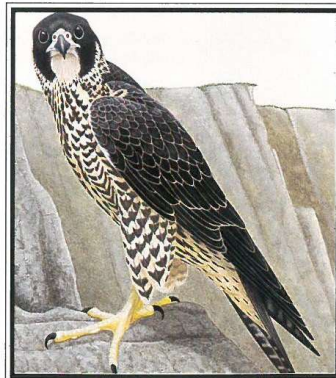
They can still be seen at European Falconry Meets. Photo taken in '96. Photograph provided by Jean Diamond



Lorant, Morgans, J.B. and Worky at The Glan Usk C.L.A. The Glove on Lorant's hip was later presented to The Prince of Wales.

Peregrine Falcon

By Glenn Baldock



A Watercolour Print of an immature
Peregrine Falcon unframed 16 1/2 x 11 1/2
£30.00 Inc. P+P Send Name, Address,
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Deutscher Falkenorden Field Meet



Bryan Paterson

Schwetzingen 1996

WITH THE LIFTING OF barriers between many of the European countries over recent years, the opportunity has arisen for members of The Welsh Hawking Club to travel to field meetings as guests of many of the leading European hawking clubs. 1996 was no exception with invitations coming from Hungary, The Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Holland. Travel to these countries has become easier and cheaper with the opening of the channel tunnel, and ferry fares dropping to their lowest level for many years.

On 23rd of October Terry Large, Dave Jones and I set out on an eleven hour journey which took us to Dover through the tunnel into France and then into Belgium and Germany finally reaching our destination in Schwetzingen as guests of the Deutscher Falkenorden, Germany's largest falconry club.

The meet headquarters was based in one of the royal summer palaces. What a fabulous place - it was worth going just to see this beautiful building and to imagine the way things would have been in its heyday.

On Thursday morning everyone assembled on the lawns for the opening ceremony. The hunting birds were out early weathering on their perches. These included Goshawks, Harris Hawks, Peregrine Falcons and a male Bonelli's Eagle. We were all surprised that there were no Golden Eagles present as German field meets are famous for them. Apparently there was a decline in suitable quarry for Eagles in the areas where we would be hunting. The number of hunting birds was also low compared to previous years. Apparently club politics was the reason for this. The club has put a

voluntary ban on flying Hybrids. During the opening meet we met others who had travelled from the UK including Adrian Williams, Doug Morgan and Craig Millard. It was also a pleasure to meet Cyril Morley and his son who I had not seen for some time. Cyril was a member of the WHC for many years. There were also members of other UK Falconry Clubs.

Our first day's hawking took place in an industrial area between a river and canal on a strip of land about 200 yards wide (different). In the group were several Goshawks and the Bonelli's Eagle. One of the Goshawks was flown by a young lady; Dave Jones quickly took charge of her ferrets and they became inseparable - Dave and the ferrets I mean! With Dave in charge rabbits were soon bolting and some good flights followed with each of the hunting birds making several kills. We were particularly impressed with the Eagle, especially its obedience and the relationship it had with Eric its handler. A public footpath ran through the flying area with seats spread along its length. Doug Morgan spent most of the day following the flights from a seated vantage point whilst carrying on conversations with policemen, cyclists and a young mother with her children. We think he was explaining the finer points of ferreting to her. On the second day we went out with a group of falcons. Although we were again close to a built up area we saw some very good flights of partridges which ended with a few in the bag. Better control of the dogs would probably have accounted for a few more.

On the final day we went out with the Goshawks and Eagle again. This time we were miles from anywhere

and hunting over what we thought was good hawking ground. We marched in line across the fields in true European style with Eric giving the orders as to when we should left- or right-wheel. Unfortunately not much quarry was seen. However we did see quite a few brown hares which we thought would have been good slips for the Eagle; unfortunately the Bonelli's Eagle was not interested, much to Eric's annoyance.

On the final evening we all attended the field meet dinner. This was a splendid occasion - the food was superb. We had the opportunity to talk to falconers who had travelled from many different countries.

We met Tom Smylie from America who agreed to give a talk at our club meeting in South Wales. Tom was one of the founder members of NAFA. Our Club donated an Andrew Ellis print which was excepted - thanks were sent to members for their kind gift.

For those of you who have not been to a Continental field meet, it's great. The hawking might not be much different but the opportunity to mix with and talk to foreign falconers is a great experience. And when it's so cheap for a small group to go these days you should give it a try.

Over the years Welsh Hawking Club members have become well respected by European falconers. Let's hope this continues and that when invitations arrive there will always be a few who will represent our club as our founder members did in the early days, in the finest possible style.

My First Goshawk

Steven Vaughan (Colchester)



AFTER FOUR SEASONS hunting a good female Harris followed by two seasons experiencing the devastating ability of a female Sparrowhawk, I decided to get myself a Goshawk. Being from a part of the country with mainly rabbits it had to be a female. Countless good males do take them but I needed certainty. With telemetry ordered (I had been lucky and foolish up until now) my Goshawk arrived. She had come to me early as she was terrorizing the adult female and her brother which to me was a good sign from the start. She was turned loose into an aviary 16x8x10 for a further three weeks until hard penned. On observing her through the feeding flap she would fly to the nearest perch and seem as inquisitive of me as I of her.

She, Astrid as I have named her, had the makings of a special bird. Bold and eager to learn, not at all shy or nervous. The big day arrived - no blood in the quills -

so, furniture fitted, she was immediately hooded. This to me was a turning point; all my hawks have taken the hood but it was usually introduced a little later on.

The hawk stayed hooded constantly for four days being handed a great deal of the time at a friend's house with at least four people and three dogs, always plenty going on. Anyone who has read old literature of especially Indian or Arabian falconry will know about sealing the eyes of a falcon immediately on capture. It is kept like this for the first few days of initial training. The bird gets used to the sound of voices and everyday bustle of life and gets used to being handled without the visual terror. This is what the hood seemed to have achieved for when unhooded the expected bating and anxiety did not arise. She merely stared like the devil and slightly lifted her wings.

The next day being the fifth

she fed on the fist with three adults, a Springer Spaniel, Jack Russell and Amsel, Andy's all black GSP bitch who was to be Astrid's hunting partner, all in attendance. Basic training followed the same pattern as for my Redtail and Harris except for the use of lures of any kind.

One lovely summer evening after she had flown full length of the creance immediately, she then bated and there was a

*"I was amazed
at the style and
dexterity of
such a novice"*

rabbit out in the open. Being of an impulsive nature I removed the furniture, slipped her, whereupon she pumped down the hill rapidly making ground. She turned above the rabbit and just missed it; off went the rabbit with Astrid in hot pursuit - she missed again and promptly returned to the fist.

This hunting from instinct is obviously more pronounced in true hawks as my Redtail and Harris hawks have always taken some time to catch on what the lure or quarry are all about. This



could also be due to what the young hawks are fed on. In my bird's case this had been whole carcasses from day one - rabbits, moorhens, squirrels and pigeons.

The following day at the same venue she chased and killed a rabbit after an uphill flight of nearly five hundred yards. I was amazed at the style and dexterity of such a novice after only three weeks and three days out of the aviary. One more subject which has helped me greatly and which a lot of people overlook is the use of tiring. I started using these as soon as the Goshawk was feeding on the fist. The tiring I use consist of either pigeon, pheasant or moorhen wings which will keep the bird occupied



for fifteen to twenty minutes at a time. She is so contented pulling on a tiring it's almost as effective as hooding. At the first sign of fear or frustration out comes the tiring. It also saves the bird bating at someone else's slip. Care must obviously be taken to hide the feeding bird from the loose hawk. My first Goshawk

trained and conditioned with the use of tirings and hooding has caused me no problems and is a sheer joy to fly. Her weight has risen from 2lb 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ozs to 2lb 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. during the season, and her tally stands at 26 rabbits, 4 pheasants, 4 moorhens and 2 partridges. I have caught a lot more with a Harris but all these kills have been made in full view and in a very stylish manner.

Anyone who has hunted hawks and is thinking of a Goshawk - do it. This has been the best of my nine seasons so far.

I would just like to add what a great time I had at the field meeting and hope to see everyone next year.



Take a Year Off

Andy Waterhouse



TWO YEARS AGO, after a few years flying mainly Sparrowhawks over my ageing Springer, I purchased a solid black GSP bitch puppy and decided to stop flying birds in order to devote all of my time in training her. I also made the promise not to pick up another bird until the dog was totally reliable.

Steve Vaughan, however, is too keen on his birds to consider such a drastic course and with the prospect of the future use of a pointer, Steve placed an order for a Goshawk.

Several months later with my dog progressing through her basic training, Steve picked up a 14 week old, parent reared female Goshawk. As the Gos was unhooded for the first time, we

stood back and waited for the worst bate of all time, which fortunately never came, with the bird being unexpectedly calm and composed. This attitude continued and after 3 weeks, she caught her first rabbit aided by the young dog.

With Steve concentrating totally on the bird, and myself on the training of the dog, I feel we have both benefited greatly. Our season together has, after a slow start, progressed rapidly with the dog and the Gos gaining experience and confidence together.

Looking back, the season has been rewarding and exciting and the majority of quarry taken has been after a point and flush by the dog. We both eagerly await

next season with, hopefully, a more grown up dog and bird, and I recommend taking a year off in order to train your dog - the rewards are well worth the wait.



Feeding Raptors



Neil Forbes FRCVS

General Aims - To feed a diet as similar to the consumers natural prey species that the bird would enjoy in the wild, whilst at the same time ensuring the correct food quantity, quality, wholesomeness and storage methods.

As most keepers will appreciate, the feeding of neonates, involves a whole set of different problems, so in order to keep things simple, we will consider feeding adult birds only.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH FEEDING ADULT BIRDS

Source of Food - Irrespective of the food type, it is obviously essential that one is as far as possible 100% certain as to the quality, source, method of killing, freezing and storage of the food.

Any ex-wild source of food eg. pigeon, game, etc. must be considered. We always have to ask the question, why did the animal / bird get run over in the first place? Was it simply bad luck, or was it unwell that day? Whatever the reason, it failed the test of life that day and should be considered as being potentially unwholesome. Such birds can carry bacterial infections such as **Tuberculosis**, **Salmonella** or virus infections such as **Paramyxovirus**, **Adenovirus** or **Rotavirus**, or be contaminated with a poison eg. alpha-chloralose. Any wild sourced food should be in good body condition, have been caught and killed by physical means, and on examination of the carcass should look in all respects to be thoroughly wholesome and free of disease. It is crucial that the abdomen of such birds is always opened and the surface of the liver checked. If any small white spots are present on or in the liver, (often indicative of avian tuberculosis) the whole carcass must be rejected.

Rifle shot, ferreted or trapped rabbit, pigeon or other should not be assumed to be free of pathogens or indeed lead. Recently Richard Jones, my falconer colleague, acquired some rifle 'head shot' rabbits for his Harris hawk. For interest we X-rayed these rabbits, prior to feeding. In each case, as the rifle shot had penetrated the base of the skull, it had left a myriad of lead fragments, any of which would have been plenty large enough to cause disease and death of the bird. Ferreted or trapped rabbits are the cause of lead poisoning cases every year. Often it is the time that a rabbit has been 'pricked' by some poor shot on a previous occasion, only to carry on running around the countryside, with a few pieces of lead on board. We are not suggesting not to feed such material, but simply to be aware of and quantify the risks. Most importantly to be aware of the signs of lead poisoning, so that if they arise, you get the bird to an experienced avian vet immediately so that the situation can be saved.

SIGNS OF LEAD POISONING - ANY NERVOUS SIGNS - WEAKNESS OF LEGS IN PARTICULAR OR WINGS.

Any food such as rats, mice, squirrels or foxes, are less likely to cause any infectious disease to your birds. The reason for this is that most pathogens will only affect one family of animals, ie. a rodent virus is highly unlikely to affect birds. Conversely **feeding any avian derived foodstuff is a potential risk**.

In recent years we have encountered several outbreaks, in particular of virus disease, (eg. Adenovirus and Rotavirus), where perfectly healthy commercially sourced quail, day olds, turkey poults etc., have been fed to healthy raptors which have then succumbed to disease and in several cases died. The problem here is that many pathogens including viruses can be harboured by one species (eg. day old chicks), without causing it any harm, ie the chick looks and is healthy, but when the chick is eaten, the raptor is infected. Sadly although the virus did not harm the chick it may conversely be deadly for the raptor. There is no way of predicting or avoiding this albeit rare problem except by avoiding feeding any avian derived food.

Pigeons form a special risk to raptors on account of their high incidence of **Trichomoniasis** (frounce). Many falconers believe that if they only feed the breast there is no risk. Sadly this is not true. Stressed, old, young or ill birds will be most susceptible. Birds in perfect health may avoid the infection, otherwise most wild peregrines would suffer badly. However no risks should be taken, all pigeon which is fed should be frozen completely and thawed before feeding. The duration of freezing is unimportant.

Rabbit - Just occasionally when feeding larger species on rabbit or hare a problem can arise. If the bird is sufficiently greedy it may take the whole thigh (femur) bone of the rabbit. On many occasions the bird will cope with this, however sometimes it will wedge sideways in the crop or proventriculus. This may cause a perforation of the gut lining or an obstruction. The recommendation for such sized birds is to break the femur before feeding the carcass; if the bone is taken in two sections no problem will arise

Storage of Food - One has to accept that any food will have a number of bacteria in it. Any delay which occurs between the death of the food, and its freezing (or feeding), will allow that number of bacteria to increase. Any excessive food storage (ie. freezing for more than 3 months), will lead to a deterioration in food quality, in particular the vitamin content. Any delay between thawing the food and its ingestion by the bird, will again allow the numbers of bacteria to increase. Whilst any bird is designed to, and is capable of, safely eating food with a certain bacterial load, if this load is excessive, the bird will not cope, and become ill.

Feeding the Bird which is low in Condition - Many falconers have an obsession about giving casting each and every day. As all keepers should be aware it is important not to feed a bird again until it has brought up the casting from the previous day. If you have a bird which is low in condition, you do not want to have to wait a full day before you give a further meal. In this situation it is quite permissible, if not essential, that you do not give any casting. Instead you give a small meal of finely chopped meat, perhaps with a little added saline. As soon as, and not before, the bird has put its crop over it should be given a further small meal.

Sour Crop - I would hope that all falconers would be aware of the condition of 'sour crop'. If food has passed from the crop into the proventriculus (stomach), stomach acids will act upon it, aiding the digestion as well as preventing any bacterial action on the food. If conversely the food stays in the crop, it is no longer in your fridge being kept nice and cold. Instead it is at body temperature (40-41°C), and yet has no acid acting on it to prevent bacterial decay. In short the food goes off very rapidly, causing the production of toxins (poisons) which very rapidly kill the bird. If your bird is slow to put its crop over, then a small volume (0.5% of the bird's body weight, ie. 5ml for a 1 Kg bird), of saline should be given by mouth. This will usually quickly result in the crop being put over. If it does not, and the bird does not through the crop back of its own accord, then the food must be removed by milking it back up from the crop. This can be a risky procedure as any fluid present in the crop will return as the meat is brought back up and the fluid may go down the windpipe causing a fatal pneumonia. Whatever the outcome the bird will need veterinary care and antibiotics.

Sour Crop Prevention - There are certain times when sour crop is particularly common. Any bird which is off colour, stressed, underweight, cold, chilled or which has an over full crop is less likely to put its crop over. In particular this often occurs when a bird is first entered. The keeper has had to drop the weight, perhaps a little too low for comfort, in order to encourage the bird to enter. Having made

its first kill, he is so chuffed he rewards her by letting her have a full crop. However the bird being underweight, is very hungry, the bird is pleased, so is the falconer, so he lets her have a really good fill. The only trouble is, all too often, too full. The consequence is 'SOUR CROP'. So never let a bird over fill the crop. It is not healthy.

Feeding the Vomiting Bird - Vomiting may arise in raptors as a consequence of a whole range of different conditions. The whole situation will almost inevitably require veterinary care, although a few general points are mentioned here. A bird which is vomiting should not be immediately offered more food, even if it is losing weight fast. If more food is given the vomiting will continue. Instead the bird should be allowed to settle for an hour then a small volume (0.5% of its body weight ie. 5ml per 1 Kg bird), of slightly warm (hand temperature) saline (eg. lactade) should be given by crop tube. The bird should be placed in a warm dark quiet area and allowed to settle. If the fluid is kept down, it should be repeated once more two hours later. If that is retained then a further two hours later, a feed with the same volume of a liquidised food should be given by crop tube. Most standard cat and dog vets will stock suitable liquidised convalescent diets, examples are Hills a/d or Liquivite. The liquid food is repeated every 2 hours on 3-4 occasions, before the first meal of finely chopped beef (or similar). If the bird is not keen to take the meat, it is not yet ready for it. As stated previously a bird may vomit for many reasons, from simple matters such as travel sickness, to more serious situations such as Aspergillosis. So unless the situation is truly straightforward, and the bird immediately responds, veterinary care should always be sought.

Feeding the Inappetent Bird - Frequently one is faced with a bird which is low in condition, which you know should be eating, which is however not wanting to feed. Many conditions can cause this. Any mouth (eg. frounce, Capillaria, Candida), oesophagus/crop (eg. local irritant, bacterial infection, sour crop, pox virus), stomach (eg. impaction, infection) or air sac (eg. aspergillous, air sacculitis, egg peritonitis) or septicaemia (eg. blood poisoning) condition will lead to a depressed appetite. Sometimes the bird will simply not eat, on other occasions the bird attempts to eat, but then flicks its head all the time and brings the food back. Any such bird will need to be seen by a vet, an accurate and specific diagnosis made and the condition treated.

Bird which is Low in Weight, or not Putting Weight on in Relation to it's Food Intake - This situation is common. Either a bird may be taken out of an aviary after a moult and not be as heavy as it should be bearing in mind its ad libitum feeding, or the weight loss may be noticed as a consequence of daily weighing. Again a range of conditions may be responsible. The immediate reaction on the part of many keepers is to assume the bird is suffering a parasitic condition. Even if this is so, the keeper will probably then worm the bird with a standard wormer, such as Fenbendazole (Panacur). The problem is that such a wormer only treats one form of parasite (ie. roundworms), so even if the problem is parasitic, the situation may go on unchecked. It is far more sensible to have a mute (faeces) sample checked, to see if it is a parasitic problem, and if so what is the correct medication to use. Furthermore if it is not parasitic one knows straight away, and can then take other action to find the real cause.

Weight loss may be caused by any illness. If it is gradual loss over a period of time the most likely causes will be parasites, bacterial gut infection, aspergillosis (even in the absence of any respiratory signed) or tuberculosis. Expert veterinary care is required, to differentiate and treat accordingly.

Feeding Birds and Travelling - Birds should not be fed directly before travelling, in particular if they are not used to travelling. If one is talking about an experienced flying bird, who is used to travelling, known not to suffer from travel sickness, then fair enough he may be fed up after a kill and allowed to travel home.

For a bird such as a Peregrine, we would advise giving a cast free meal 8-12 hours before travelling. The danger is that any bird with a stomach or crop full of food or casting, may regurgitate during the journey. This is particularly dangerous if the bird is hooded. However even without a hood, the bird can choke and die in a matter of a few

seconds. Conversely a bird should not be starved for a long period before travelling. The smaller the bird, the less time they can manage without food. Many of the essential nutrients are not stored to any extent, or are unable to be rapidly mobilised, by the bird. Examples are glucose and calcium. Nervous birds, who are particularly sensitive to stress are prone to calcium deficient fits if food has been withheld and the bird is then stressed. In particular if goshawks are to be transported long distances (or undergo any other major stress), it is advised that they should be given additional calcium supplementation beforehand. In the author's experience the most effective product for this situation is 'Nutrobal' (Vetark). Even a single dose of this powder by mouth prior to such a situation is likely to be effective.

Casting in Adult Birds - This is a particular problem with chicks, but can present difficulties even in adult birds. If birds are tethered in mews, whose substrate is peat, wood shavings, or sawdust, then as the bird eats food, if the food has fallen on the ground, peat, wood shavings etc may also be ingested, leading to an impaction. Some adult birds will have difficulty in casting normal casting material, when it is fed to excess. Remember that in the wild, a bird will pluck much of its kill before ingestion. In captivity there may be more competition for food as birds in an aviary are obliged to eat in close proximity to other birds. The result may be a bird which 'pigs' its food down, ingesting excessive amounts of casting at the same time. In particular, breeding female birds should not have excessive casting. The reason being that their abdomen is currently unusually full of developing eggs as well as an enlarged oviduct. In either situation, having eaten the casting, birds may not be able to cast it. The consequence is that they continue to eat more casting, the pellet stuck in the stomach gets larger and larger, eventually forming a blockage.

Water - As previously stated, although raptors under normal daily conditions usually do not drink, when ill, stressed, in hot weather etc. they will often need to drink. With this in mind water should be available for birds on a daily basis. Care should be taken in choosing a suitable water vessel as birds are able to drown themselves in even the shallowest container.

Hawks, Hygiene and Eating - As previously stated, the hygiene of the food supply during its preparation, and the way and manner in which it is given is very important. However many falconers are blasé about their own hygiene when in the presence of their bird. We must accept that infections such as Salmonella enteridis are rife in the poultry industry, and hence will also be in day-old chicks. Likewise avian tuberculosis is common in feral birds. Either infection can be a serious pathogen to ourselves, so care should be taken. We are all prone, when short of a hand, to pull a gauntlet off with our teeth, temporarily forgetting who just got eaten on the fist, or who muted on it. Furthermore knives used in good preparation, as well as the occasional footing of your hand by your bird can introduce tetanus, which we all know is a dangerous and potentially fatal disease. Needless to say all falconers must have an up-to-date tetanus injection. Consult your own GP, most advise a booster every ten years.

Calcium Deficiency in Adult Birds - As previously mentioned a diet should be varied and mixed, comprising of whole carcasses. However in display birds who are flying daily in front of the public and being fed up afterwards, whilst the spectators questions are being answered, this can be a problem. Understandably the public find a lump of meat far more acceptable than a fluffy chick or a rate. In this situation it is best to give just half a crop then feed up on rat etc. later. If meat is fed for any significant part of the daily food intake, they must also offset this deficiency by adding a calcium supplement such as 'Nutrobal' (Vetark).

Conclusion - There are risks involved in feeding almost any food to your birds. The main point is to be aware of the risks. Above all feed a varied diet, do not rely exclusively on 'day old' chicks, the diet must approximate as close as possible to the bird's diet in the wild. No bird in the wild feeds exclusively on chicks. Feed a hygienic, wholesome and varied diet, in that way you are more likely to keep a fit and healthy bird.



Breeding: from the Cradle to the Grave

Diana Durman-Walters

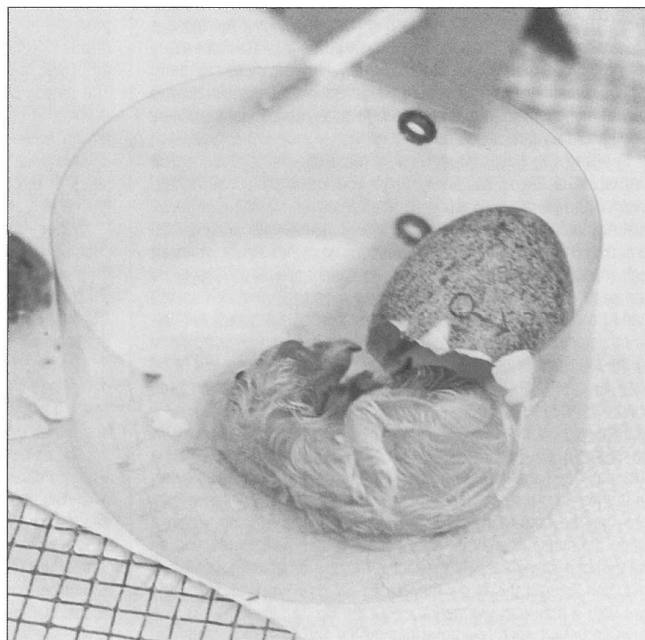
FOR THE MAJORITY OF people who breed birds of prey this time of the year can be one of the most frustrating, demanding and often rewarding experiences.

It matters little that so many breeders repeat this year-in, year-out wishing that they could enter some other kind of occupation that didn't have so many stresses attached to it. Yet when all is over the young falcons and hawks are living testimony to the hard work involved and are to become a pleasure to those that will purchase them to hawk with.

For the projects that have been established for twelve years or more then another problem which occurs is that of aged populations. These will be hawks and falcons that have previously been the staple force within the breeding seasons and as time has passed, age has made them non productive.

One of our oldest breeding birds is now 26 yrs. and last year was his swansong. His mate had also reached her dotage and at the age of 17 yrs. didn't lay at all this season.

Their future has to be one of geriatric care. Their dietary requirements and housing should be foremost in any breeders mind in that these birds will have given so much of themselves over the years in both



the field and the breeding programmes. Euthanasia is not a consideration for me. Were I a farmer then perhaps there would be no second thought for cattle or sheep that are past their reproductive usefulness. Whether one considers multiple production of any animal as farming may be simply a generic convenience, but there the comparison ends with the falconer/breeder, inasmuch as the falcons and hawks have engraved a special niche in our psyche and like an emotional tattoo would be very difficult

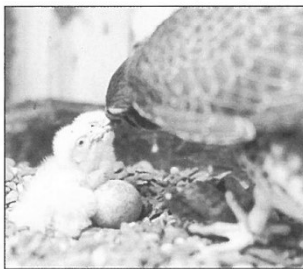
to remove.

In the past three years a proportion of the falcons here have become too old to breed and/or rear families. They occupy valuable aviary space, yet I am compelled to provide them with stability by letting them remain as they were. It would be tempting to rehouse them in smaller aviaries, but the prospects of establishing buildings specially for old birds would not be a practical solution. Where would it all end?

It is now May and I am on nursery assignment. That is what

it amounts to. Brooder boxes containing tiny young on an ever perpetual cycle of sleeping and eating. Their every move watched carefully so that they should be comfortable at all times, and develop in a stress free environment.

Within the brooders are some of the young falcons that will create the new wave for me this year. They will be flown for several seasons and when of a mature age will enter the breeding project, back into similar aviaries that they were fledged in.



In the interim years the aged population will of course decline through death by old age. Here is the opening for the new young stock that is important to allow a natural infusion of potential young breeders.

The fact that our falcons and

hawks live to very old age makes them not unlike an extended family. Their daughters, granddaughters, cousins and relatives will be on the premises as satisfying reminders to the brilliance of breeding and the option to fly the hawks of ones choice.

For the old ladies and gentlemen who are in their twilight years in the aviaries now, they have flown through quite remarkable times in the past 15 years. Where once they were the experimental birds in the programme, (as no-one knew whether they could breed or not) now they are surrounded by successful pairs of an infinite variety of species.

One thing that I'm sure they would relate to us if they could would be the dramatic change in the weather that is starting to shape the coming of spring each year. The change from winter to spring is ill defined, and the minutiae of change that the falcons and hawks responded to is not so easy to recognise. Observation of the behaviour of first time laying females now requires plenty more man hours. Scotland still seems to be able to have fairly predictable winters, or

all the seasons in one day, which is more common. Yet for all that the weather is definitely by and large becoming hotter. In most



years the heat is at the later part of our falcons breeding cycle unlike hapless breeders in the south who more frequently experience early hot mediterranean weather followed by devastating freezing cold.

In the longevity of one's hawk or falcon is the whole interchange of our own lives. I have only to recall a moment hawking with one of the old birds to slip back in time so many years and realise that quite simply we are growing old together. Sobering thought! Yet for all that, their lives from the cradle to the grave are filled with promise and anticipation and remain one of the complex components that nurture falconers.



Merlins Require Your Help

It has previously been shown that Coccidiosis is the single largest cause of death of captive Merlins. Young birds are generally affected and die between 28-42 days of age. Young birds are affected as a consequence of contamination of their environment, by their parents. Before we can properly control this awkward disease we do need more data on times of year that the coccidial oocysts are excreted by adult birds, and the effectiveness of different treatments. For the last we have been accepting routine monthly mute samples from a number of Merlin keepers, but due to a fall off of sampling, we do require more keepers who would be willing to

send a sample at the beginning of each month throughout the year. We will provide sampling pots. Furthermore we will test each sample free of charge and inform you of the result. This service has proved a major benefit to owners in the last year, with over 30% of all samples showing parasitic infestation.

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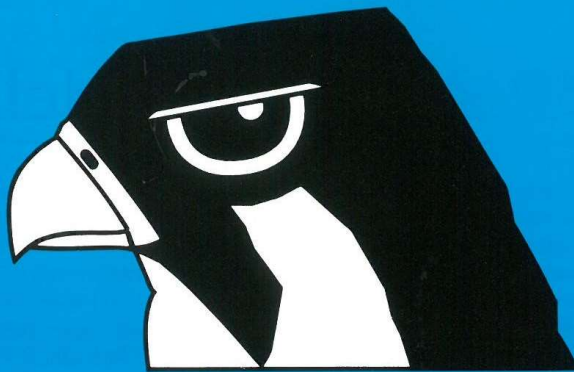
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The Harris Falcons of Yorkshire

Jeff McKnight

I HEAR STORIES FROM Armchair Falconers who say you must only go out when the weather is dry with a slight wind and not too cold to fly a Hawk. If that was the case I would only fly 3 weeks a year as I live alongside the beautiful Yorkshire Moors and I fly a cast of Harris Hawks in all weathers with very few exceptions.

As juveniles I fly my HARRIS off cliffs 3 to 4 hundred feet high on windy days to teach them to use the wind variations to their advantage and to build up their confidence.

My good friends Terry Large and Roger James have seen these Hawks in action, as we have flown the moors together, but with this terrain and weather conditions my style of Harris Hawking is quite different from the norm (maybe it's a reflection on myself); I fly my Hawks like Falcons - they wait and follow on at around 400 feet for up to two hours when hunting with my dog and ferrets.

If we don't put any quarry up within 20 minutes or so the female Harris will go self hunting so I would call her in, but not the male - he would come down and land by my side.

If I sit down with the dog and take a break the two birds will come in to land as they recognise

this is titbit time. I can also call them in by name. The male comes first onto the fist and the female lands on the back of the glove but she has to be fed by my right hand. She has longer flying jesses than the male so I can also hold her on the glove. In the first year my female Harris caught near on 300 mixed head including 7 brown hares and pheasant but mainly rabbit. I hunted her through the moult (as she would in the wild). Her flying weight is 2lb 3oz and all muscle.

The male harris is three years younger than the female and has taught himself to soar 50 or 60 foot below the female in the same style, following on and using the wind, as all hunters with dogs walk into the wind this becomes a normal day out. When quarry is flushed or bolted the advantage the Hawks have is far greater and more spectacular than flying out of a tree or off the fist, as they stoop in true fashion. My male Harris has caught 160 mixed kills in his first year, (flying weight 1lb 7oz not flown through the moult) and some of our members of The Welsh Hawking Club witnessed the male catching a cock pheasant in flight in North Wales.

On another occasion a cock pheasant was reflashed with the



Editors note: Three mountain hares caught by Male Hawk, one by Female.

Hawk on his back and flew 20 yds. before the male Harris finally brought him down, then he was joined by other Harris Hawks in our party.

One very rainy day Roger James and I were flying our Hawks on the Yorkshire Moors. The rain was so intense that we had to call it a day. We decided to take a quick visit to the mens toilet, not to have a leak, but to dry our birds off under the hand-dryers. I am glad Terry Large was not flying an Eagle that day as there were only two hand-dryers and not much room!

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Fair Weather Falcon

Chris Lock

IN EARLY SPRING '96 I had just finished flying a male Redtail and had turned him loose in his aviary to allow him to moult unrestricted.

I am fortunate to have a job that also allows me to fly most days of the week and have land nearby to fly and hunt on (but most of all an understanding wife, so I guess I am very fortunate).

A few days after I had finished flying, the 'phone rang and a friend of mine asked if I would look after his Tiercel Lanner for a few months as he had to work away. I explained that I had no aviary space available but if I could fly him I could block him on the lawn and bring him in every night. My friend said that would be fine for the bird as he is a social imprint and 16 years old and was only ever used as a demonstration bird at a falconry centre. Now pensioned off, his name was "Slate" and he's a happy little bird.

Slate was a beautiful bird, 11lb 5oz in weight, feather perfect with manners to match, no mantling, no screaming and very very tame. I know very little of social imprinting, but if this was it, then I was very impressed. He would jump from his block to mine or my daughter's lap, lay down and go to sleep (he would also start up a relationship with my shoe or head - very worrying).

I was advised not to fly him too hard because of his age, so with this in mind off we went to our flying grounds and flew most days from then on. I was amazed at his agility as he whistled past me turning into the wind and called back to the fist. I flew a Kestrel before, but this was something else. On sunny and windy days his speed was awesome as was the sound of venting air as he tore past me downwind. My lure swinging was hopeless and he was catching me out nearly all of the time.

One embarrassing afternoon viewed by some neighbours, I was flying slate, swinging my lure which slipped out of my hand and as I quickly picked it up Slate turned immediately and flew upwind dropping his speed and undercarriage, then came into land on my head. I raised my gloved fist and he jumped directly onto it, "a change had occurred" and from

then on Slate would land on nearby trees or fence posts when cast off and only make 5 or 6 passes when called in to the lure. After that he would land in his favourite tree or even on the ground by my feet. I had to remind myself that Slate was 16 and that would equate to ? in human terms, so I disposed of the lure and flew him from the fist. This was what he was trying to tell me - when called down he would pass on by, turn back upwind to land on my fist - he did not like damp or overcast days and would not fly.

Dry, sunny, windy days were the order of the week, but rarely would he fly above 30 feet, skipping hedges and skimming fields was his joy, and my reward was his utter obedience and perfect manners.

To watch this little pensioner fly was the highlight of the week, following me across the fields on his sunny days out, taking his time.

Then it happened. A friend of mine, Andy from the South Glos. and West Wilts Raptor Club, came down to see Slate fly. So off we went across the fields with Slate showing off once more in public looking very fit for his age. Andy was impressed (it made a change from my other embarrassing moments) then all of a sudden Slate spotted a Green Woodpecker which flew across his path. We didn't know if it was territorial or food-related but Slate changed gear and direction and was on it. We watched as the chase went straight past us, the Woodpecker was jinking and sliding through the air with my Slate magnetised to its back-end. I gulped and tear filled my eyes with pride. Both birds disappeared through the trees and seconds later Slate came back and pitched on a branch nearby. I looked at Andy who was grinning like a Cheshire cat. "What a flight" he said, as I called in my old boy who had now become a Peregrine.

I then decided that in the Autumn of his life I would fulfil his ambitions, so we set out to look for his natural quarry - Collared Doves or birds of that size.

The next day a good friend of mine, Dave Jones from The Welsh Hawking Club, called in, so I told him our story, and yes, it was a fine day, so I said to Dave "let's go and fly Slate". I

quickly got kitted up and we were in the fields within minutes. I decided to put Slate up a tree and we would spread out. Dave quietly walked around the outside edge of the field and was heading for a field that was opposite mine. As soon as he climbed over the gate a Magpie spotted him and took flight away from Dave but towards Slate. Yes, I thought, as Slate powered out of his vantage point - throwing his body and soul into a shallow stoop with his talons clenched in anticipation and heading straight towards the fleeing Magpie. A burst of feathers was seen as the Magpie was struck to the ground, Slate threw up and turned to come in on his catch but the Magpie took off again and attempted to make it to a thicket. Slate stooped again with another strike, but the Magpie was lost in the thorns and brambles. My little Falcon was furious at not catching his first kill, and was flat out on the floor panting and his plumage was waterlogged as the long grass hadn't dried from a previous shower. It was the first time I had heard him vocalise, whatever he said I know not, but it was very probably very insulting to the Magpie.

The Magpie had shown its true colours, it had beaten the tercel by sheer trickery and shown what devious adversaries Magpies can be. A week later Slate took his first kill, a Collared Dove flown from the fist down a long track between two high sided hedgerows, a good flight and commitment by my little Lanner who kept his grip and completed his life long ambition, to fly free at natural quarry. I sat down beside him and watched him gorge on his prize.

Time passed and his owner came to collect him, but not before he had caught another Collared Dove and a Starling. I offered to buy Slate but was not successful, it was a real wrench to give him back.

I consider myself fortunate and very lucky to have had the chance to share the latter part of Slate's life, a little Lanner with his great ambition completed.

Slate died last month of natural causes, aged 17. I would like to dedicate this article to my first class "Fair Weather Falcon", Slate.



Another Falconer's Tale

W. Mitty



I READ WITH great interest the article by Mike Clowes in the 1996 Austringer, entitled "Would you believe it", about the Harris Hawks catching a fox. May I take this opportunity to reply with perhaps an even more extraordinary story of a most unusual catch.

Now I am sure that nobody will doubt Mike's word as he is not only a very experienced falconer, but also a policeman and we all know that the boys in blue would never tell a tall tale (would they?). I just hope that my story will be given the benefit of the doubt as I am sure that I would have been most sceptical had it not happened to me.

It was the middle of January 1996 in the flow country of Sutherland. Most of the country was in the icy grip of one of the coldest winters of recent times. The Scottish highlands in particular had suffered badly with many of the remoter areas being cut off by the deep snow, which had drifted once the icy winds began to blow.

My companions and I were approaching the end of a week's holiday hunting rabbits which were in almost plague numbers

over most of the Highlands. We were hunting along the edge of some parkland bordered by forestry on one side and moorland on the other sides. I slipped my Red Tailed Hawk at a rabbit which the ferret had bolted, but as he closed with it the rabbit popped down another burrow. The red tailed threw up into a tree on the edge of the forestry. I tried to call the hawk back down to me but he seemed to be interested in something in amongst the dense conifers. As I began to walk over towards him he took off into the trees in hot pursuit.

It was getting on towards dusk and little flurries of snow were blowing in on the steadily increasing wind. As I got the telemetry receiver out our host's words as we left a few hours earlier came back to me - "Red sky in the morning, shepherds warning". The light was rapidly fading as we finally picked up a signal of the missing bird. We had lost a few precious minutes disarming the transmitters on the other hawks. Snow was now beginning to fall heavily, reducing visibility to about twenty yards. I was now picking

up a strong signal from an almost impenetrable thicket of young conifers. Was that a bell I could hear or was it the wind playing tricks?

I parted some conifer branches and there was the Red Tail, sitting proud, crest erect, gripping his prey by the head and neck. I heard the voices of the others behind me. "Quick, over here." I yelled. "I have found him." I could hear someone asking what he had caught. "It's a Roe Deer." I gasped. The reply was unprintable and I guessed that they didn't believe me. Within minutes though I was surrounded by envious falconers admiring the dead but still warm female Roe Deer. We posed for some photographs in the near darkness and then began the long walk back to the vehicles.

A tall tale you may ask? Well I had to carry the beast back in the snow and it was certainly real and I swear that it got heavier with every step. I do not want to out-do Mike's tale of the fox and the Harris Hawk but I have always said that Red Tails are far superior, so I now rest my case.



The Cape Falconry Club and the Half Falconer

David Jones

AFTER CORRESPONDING WITH ADRIAN Lombard, who is the secretary of The Cape Falconry Club in South Africa, I decided to visit Cape Town to see what exotic birds our friends in the far South are flying.

An 11 hour trip from Heathrow to sunny Cape Town was soon over with no jet-lag, as there's only one hours time difference between our country and theirs - excellent I thought!

I was met at the airport by a non Falconer friend of mine, Mark, who has just bought a house in Cape Town. The only thing he has in common with Falconry is Beer, Whiskey and Wine, so a good start was made in a pub overlooking the South Atlantic Ocean and watching the sun and beer go down.

The next day I contacted Adrian Lombard and he made arrangements to take me and my half Falconer friend to see Edmond Oettle, the Chairman of The Cape Falconry Club, who owned a Vineyard near Wellington in the Wine region. Edmond and his wife were fascinating and slightly eccentric people whom I loved.

Before we sat down to chat, Edmond's wife told us the saga of the day. She said, "As I was travelling home with Edmond on the tractor transporting a barrel of our best quality brandy, I got off the tractor to open the gate into the yard. I was greeted by our dogs, chickens, guineafowl etc. as usual. I then shouted to Edmond to stop the tractor as I spotted a leak in the brandy barrel. I quickly thought that if I



▲ Adrian Lombard, Secretary of the Cape Falconry Club

lick off the brandy I will be able to see where the leak is coming from and plug it. So I proceeded to do this but the taste was grim and bitter and pungent. I spat it out. There was no leak - a farm dog had cocked his leg up and peed on our best barrel. I swilled my mouth out with good wine and stared the dog in the face - he knew what he had done!" she said. We all fell about laughing and got down to a good meal, a good drink and the main talk of Falconry. "What's new?" I said. Peregrine/Gyr hybrid, European Goshawk? No, I should have



▲ Edmond Oettle, Chairman of the Cape Falconry Club

asked what African Hawks and Falcons do the members of the club fly! Edmond told us that African Goshawks, Greater Kestrels, Pale Chanting Goshawks, African Peregrine, Lanners and, of course, the Black Sparrow Hawk, were all flown here. All of these birds intrigued me, so I kept asking the questions.

Q. What's the African Gos like

to fly (it's a bit bigger than our Sparrow Hawk)?

A. Marvellous little Hawk will take anything from Sparrows to Guineafowl. On one occasion the Afro Gos misses a Laughing Dove and bound onto an Ostrich's belly that the dove had flown under. I don't think the Ostrich was bothered but the Laughing Dove went off laughing! We fly Afro Gos's like you fly Spars-out of car windows.

Q. and the Greater Kestrel?

A. They are a novices bird and frequently lost.

Q. Pale Chanting Goshawk?

A. It's about twice the size of the African Gos and an intelligent Hawk. It follows on well and will respond to hand signals. Main quarry Guineafowl, Francolin (looks like a Partridge) and even Egyptian Geese. These Hawks are hard to train and suffer from health problems (maybe social imprinting would help).

Q. What about the Dark Chanting Goshawk?

A. This Hawk is about the same size as the Pale Chanting Gos (1lb 8oz f.w.) and, as the name implies, it's a darker version but we think the Pale Chanting Gos is better.

Q. African Peregrine; I haven't seen one?

A. They are smaller than your northern types, and once thought to be in danger of extinction but was found to be secretive and numerous. We have a club pair that are four years old which we hope to breed with.

Q. The Lanner Falcon?

A. Why do you only use these birds for display work in the U.K.

as in Africa we fly them on anything from a Sparrow to a Guinea Fowl; we also fly them in pairs.

Q. *The Black Sparrowhawk?*

A. As you know the Black Spar is like a black missile and will have a go at most things from a Francolin to Helmeted Guineafowl and even snakes. They are spectacular hawks with fire in their eyes.



▲ Thys Walters, with Lanner Falcon

The Lanner was the one that made me think, as I have one myself, and am guilty of flying her to the lure. I thought to myself, I must try and enter her if possible, but we will see.

I asked some more questions about the Lanner, so Adrian said one of our members, Thys Walters, has flown two Lanners this season,

go and have a chat to him. My half Falconer friend, Mark, was getting well into the sit-down glass of wine in hand "Hawk Talk" and was more than impressed with the passion and sometimes fanatical (including myself) people in this sport.

We drove up 'yes, once again' to the Wine region where we met Thys Walters a very interesting person and at the moment employed by a film company training Harris Hawks for the film *Sinbad the Sailor*. He is also a taxidermist with an unusual collection that would frighten the most gothic girl. I asked him what sort of technique he used in training his Lanners. Thys said the kite method to make them climb just like a Peregrine. He said he had been rewarded with twelve quarry with the Tiercel including Cape Francolin and Guineafowl (a large Poult) and fourteen quarry with the Falcon, mostly Francolin. The Tiercel was lost to the wild and the Falcon was ringed and released at the end of the season. This is commonly done in South Africa

as club members can capture birds on licence or take them from the nest.

Thys showed me some photographs of him climbing up a tree to a Vultures nest and a photo shot from the nest showing an English friend of his who was holding the rope at the bottom of the tree - I couldn't believe it - it was Martyn Patterson (Bryan's son) who had met Thys, Adrian and Edmond the year before. So I was not the only Welsh Hawking Club member to visit these great people. As you know we are an International Club and from Welsh traditions we welcome people from all over the world and it was nice to receive the same warm welcome from our Falconer friends in Cape Town.

I returned home after two weeks of education in the Sunshine Country of South Africa and my friend, Mark the half Falconer, was well taught in the etiquette of Falconry "it's my round" have you a good red wine or a cold beer and my bird's flying weight is 8 stone.

Was This True?

I WAS TOLD THAT a wildlife sanctuary called WORLD OF BIRDS, Hout Bay, Cape Town had the largest bird park in Africa and an interesting variety of Raptors kept in walk-through free-flying aviaries. This I had to investigate.

After a casual scenic drive along the coast from Cape Town I came into Hout Bay and followed the sign to World of Birds and introduced myself (I now have a title, EDITOR), it was "hey you" before!

The man I met was Walter Mangold who owns the sanctuary and Martin Odd, one of Walter's Management team, who showed me around. The first thing I saw was six different species of Raptors free flying in

aviaries that we walked through. In one of four mixed aviaries I counted 1 Forest Buzzard, 2 Jackal Buzzards, 1 Step Buzzard, 3 Pale Chanting Goshawks, 1 African Goshawk and 3 Lanner Falcons, also different species of Eagles mixed in another aviary followed by mixed Owl aviaries, and many more.

I asked Martin and Walter "don't they kill each other?", no, they are well fed and even nest close to the public path. "Were they all brought up together?", no, some are brought in from road accidents or found ill. The birds seemed stress free and in good feather - an amazing sight.

I asked Walter if he had any photographs for the Welsh

Hawking Club Journal. The answer was, "You have one hour to look through 7,000 slides, some that I took in the Kalahari Desert." Off I rushed and came back with our centre page donated by Walter Mangold, an ace photographer, who said he would welcome any Welsh Hawking Club member. Walter's 25 years of keeping and rehabilitating all types of birds shows us, with knowledge, what can be achieved.

If I hadn't seen this with my own eyes, I would have wondered "was this true"

Thank you Walter.



African Exotics

Photographs courtesy of Walter Mangold World of Birds, Cape Town, South Africa

Martial Eagle



Food, Gamebirds, waterfowl, storks, owls, goats, small antelopes, mongooses, hares and the monitor lizards.

Brown Snake Eagle:



Food, Snakes up to 3m long, including cobras, adders and mambas; also Nile Monitor and smaller lizards.

Booted Eagle:



Food, 75% birds mainly Francolins and Guinea-fowls also Mammals (Mongooses) and Reptiles.

African Hawk Eagle



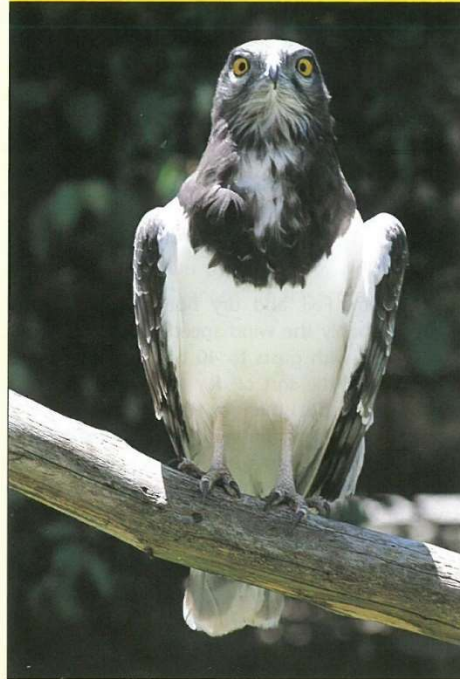
Food, 75% birds mainly Francolins and Guinea-fowls also Mammals (Mongooses) and Reptiles.

African Goshawk



Food, 66% birds up to dove size, small mammals 30%, snakes, frogs, crabs, lizards and bats caught after sunset.

Blackbreasted Snake Eagle



Food, Snakes of all kinds, up to 2m long; also lizards, rodents, frogs, insects and fish (caught from the surface of the water).

Redbreasted Sparrowhawk



Food, Birds up to the size of large Doves; rarely mice, bats or insects.

Pale Chanting Goshawk



Food, Mammals (up to the size of hare), lizards, snakes, small birds and carrion (road kills).



The Austringer

Pigs do not Fly but...

A.J. Womack

IT WAS WINDY. FINE and dry but windy. Probably the wind speed was 30mph with gusts to 40 or 45mph. NOT the sort of day to go Hawking, but then it was Saturday, one of my hunting days and I was never one to miss a day hunting whether it be flying my Hawks or working my GWP bitch, Splash, or watching the local Foxhounds - four days each week come hell or high water!!

So, where could we go? Ah yes what about that little piece of woodland we tried in November? It was under the lee of the hill, quite small, and had plenty of bunnies in it. The cover had been too thick last time; a lot of hard work amongst the brambles by dog and Austringer had produced the desired result eventually. Some 60 minutes of trying to persuade the local rabbit population to forsake the cover of the mat of brambles, that covered the woodland floor, for a sufficient period to allow my female Harris Hawk, Harriet, to lay hold of one of their number, had produced a very hot and bothered falconer and a dog whose every look said "Wot you prattin about at Dad? This is a bummer!!" However, nil desperandum as they say, patience was its own reward in the end as Harriet plunged out of one of the 80 to 100 foot tall trees like a stone with jet propulsion and grabbed a 4lb 14oz rabbit by the head and killed it outright. The rabbit had showed himself for just a few seconds too long!

Yes, that was the place to go, now in January the cover would be down, and we should have

some good flights. Off we go to the Mews, pick up Harriet, weigh her, and put her in the travelling box. Now we cut up the betchins to call her to the fist, the larger rewards or pick up pieces for taking her off a kill, and the bit we hope not to need - the feeding up portion if we have to come home without a kill. Check all the kit, Lure (suitably garnished), transmitter, Telemetry receiver and yagi, knife, dog whistle, etc. etc. Down to the kennels, let Splash out, give her a quick run to relieve herself, then into the van and off we do go! Half an hour later we arrive. YES, it IS windy. Never mind, we are here now, might as well have a go. We walk down the windward side of a thick hedgerow that leads into the woodland I intend to hunt, which is 100 yards away, and is quite sheltered. Splash comes on point after 30 yards.

I hold the Hawk up on my fist and tell the dog to PUT HIM UP THEN. Crash! In goes the dog, Bang! Out comes a pheasant at about 100mph straight for the woodland. Harriet flies the pheasant but is never on terms, as soon as the pheasant disappears into the woodland she throws up into the nearest tree right on the edge of the wood, about 90 feet up.

I call the dog to heel, and we both go to look for a reflush under the Hawk. As we get to the edge of the wood, Harriet takes off down wind as only a fit Hawk with game in her sights and a 40mph breeze up her behind can. I follow as best I can, but am somewhat hampered by only

having two legs, and having to negotiate several thick hedges and stock fences. No sign of Hawk, no rooks mobbing, no sound of bells. Oh Dear!

Out comes the telemetry set. A faint signal, must be over that next rise. Over the next rise is a lovely sheltered hollow with a 16th century Welsh Longhouse type of farmhouse nestling in it. I now have a good signal, and am confident the bird is in a shelter belt about 100 years from the farm - probably on a kill. One hour later I still have a good signal but the Hawk is NOT in the shelter belt! I am getting worried, and the dog is bored witless, we have gone round and round this little valley, getting strong signals from all directions!

Finally I decide Harriet must be in the farm buildings below, and the signal is bouncing off the walls. This can only mean that she has topped some poor unsuspecting farmyard fowl. Oh Dear!

I go down to the farm buildings. I shout "Hallo there." A very LARGE farmer appears. I say "Have you seen my Hawk?" He points to a dustbin against the barn wall, and goes back to feeding his sheep. I approach the dustbin from which there are emanating strange noises. Inside is a strange black object which is grasping another strange black object by one foot, and giving out sounds which sound like a very pissed off Harris Hawk, and the whole ensemble stinks of Pig S**t.

Sometime later, somewhat lighter in the wallet, redder in the face, and definitely not smelling

of roses, but relieved to have the Hawk back, I take my leave of the large farmer, who is suitably mollified by my open wallet, profuse apologies, and the promise that never again will my unprincipled Hawk fly into his farmyard and kill one of his prize bantam hens in the middle of his pig slurry pit, thus causing him to have to wade in there and remove the offending Hawk and its prize to a convenient dustbin!

As I go out of the farmyard, I close the gate behind me and start up the short steep incline to the shelter belt above the farm. It is then that I spot a gap in the shelter belt trees which coincides with a cleft in the hill, and through this opening, about a mile away I can just see the top of the tree that Harriet threw up in when she flew that first pheasant. It has taken three months to remove the fragrance from

Harriet (I still think I get a whiff when she is wet), and the lessons will stay a little longer. The morals of this story are:

When it is windy Leave Your Hawk At Home;

Make sure that you know what is over the hill (i.e. Check Your Ground Out Before You Hunt It).

On the plus side, we did add a "various" to the score that day!!



The Harris Hawk Flown in Mexico

Virgilio Dominguez

THE HARRIS HAWK is a beginner's and an experienced hawk's bird of choice in Mexico. They are used to hunt just about EVERYTHING. Really, I can't imagine a bird or mammal which has not been taken with this Hawk. Hares, rabbits, ducks on the rise, a wide variety of waterfowl, "Fence jumpers", like sparrows and such, pigeons on the rise, road runners, quail, etc. Some species, which I won't mention, are not regular prey but that's another story. They are flown in open country, deserts and forests. With my hen Harris I have caught rabbits, pigeons, boat tailed grackles, ducks and big grackles. My favourite quarry are ducks. We would creep up to a ditch or canal then fly my Harris from the fist and she would bind to a duck in mid air and try to make it to the bank. If she catches the duck in the water she

would then swim to the bank with the duck in her talons.

Pigeons (suburban), we close in with the Hawk hooded, then about 10 meters from our quarry I would unhood my Harris and "throw" her off with two hands in a straight movement, holding one hand on her back so that she wouldn't lose momentum, I REALLY recommend this technique, which works with small buteos as well, to the point that they will wait until you lay your hand on their back for the "push". Of course it works when you know where the prey is, like ducks, grackles and pigeons, otherwise you wouldn't have enough time to prepare yourself. It would also be impossible to walk in this position for more than 5 minutes. When flying in this style, I wear a silk glove on my right hand to protect the Hawk's feathers.

For big grackles it's not necessary to "push" the Hawk, but it is essential that they don't recognize you, or the next time they see you, you are recognized as the man with the Hawk and they will take off before you reach the field. There is ALWAYS the screamer that will alert the rest of the flock; although they are not very fast, they can easily outmanoeuvre the inexperienced Hawk. For these intelligent birds I've gone to some extremes of disguising myself with hat and glasses, and even used an umbrella or overcoat to cover the Hawk. Hunting in and around the suburbs of Mexico with these cunning methods will always put food on the table for me and my Hawk, but I do get some funny looks even in Mexico.

Researched from the
Internet by A.J. Womack



I could Die for a Starling

Angie and Dave

THIS LITTLE PLUMP FEMALE Sparrow hawk was brought to my house by Angie Gibbs who runs "Bird Line" a voluntary lost or found bird information hot line in Weston-super-Mare.

Angie was contacted by the local Police to go and investigate a bird crash? I said, "what is a bird crash?" "A typical call out," she said, "take this little bugger, a Sparrowhawk, I've brought you. Could you check if it has broken any bones." I checked her over (after my first aid course on Raptors with Neil Forbes I felt quite confident). "Sound as a bell," I said, "what happened to her?" Angie then pulled a dead Starling from her pocket and



said, "She killed it." "That's normal." I said. "Not the way this lunatic done the deed; she flew the Starling through a pane of glass making a 2 foot hole in a bewildered gentleman's conservatory. The Starling went first with no option and broke its neck," (as Angie swivelled the Starling's head round and round) "and this little bugger knocked herself out, then the kind gentleman picked her up thinking that she was dead and

phoned the police asking if anyone had lost a Hawk."

"When I arrived there was blood all over the gentleman's hands." "She must have cut herself." I said. "No, it's my blood," he said, as the Spar dug her skinny little talons into his hand. "But she looked bright enough so I gently peeled her talons from his hand and drove up to you for a second opinion." I said, "I had better take a mug shot before we let this vandal loose, have you taken her particulars down?" "Yes," said Angie, "shall we report her to the D.O.E.?" "No, I think she's in enough trouble for one day." and off she flew.



A True Family of Ferrets

As you see in these photographs, two litters of Ferret pups with a difference. One litter is two weeks older than the other, but shared by mother and daughter.



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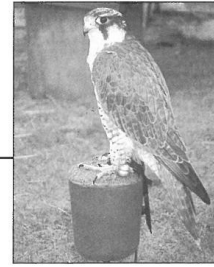
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He Who Dares

Jon Rundle



MY COUSIN RUNS TWO shoots in Somerset near Minehead. One is situated in ordinary farmland with the normal mixture of small woods, mixed fields, hedgerows and a smattering of cover crops. We've held Gos and Harris meets there before and both have been successful but you could have been anywhere else in England. The other shoot, which this article is about, is in a completely different situation. Based on the edge of Exmoor you're just as likely to disturb a resting group of Red Deer as a dozing fox. Incidentally I once saw a stag with straight horns like an antelope, running with a normal herd, this animal is apparently referred to as a "switch". Now imagine seeing one of these sideways on, especially a light individual, could you possibly have the origins of the Unicorn?

I had no bird on the day in question but was looking forward to working my young G.S.P. bitch Sika with other more experienced pointers. We didn't get off to the early start we wanted due to traffic problems in the lanes for some of those attending. This meant a very cold hour stomping around in the pre-arranged meeting place but at last everyone had arrived and we set off in convoy for the hunting grounds. The birds to be flown were a male and female Gos and four Falcons.

We started off with the Goshawks, working our way down through a large but empty deciduous wood. Once we'd reached the valley floor then it was uphill working the hedgerows and low cover crops. I was at the front of the party

when Sika came on point by a gorse hedge. We could actually see the cock pheasant crouching down trying its best to become invisible. This is a clear example of the reason why I'd finally got a pointer. If I'd been "working" my other dog, a Jack Russell, then had it survived the first rush the pheasant would have been airborne when we were still five hundred yards away! As it was we were able to call to Nick Farrant who came up with his young female imprint Kali and got in position. When the cock bird flushed the Gos was coming from underneath and behind but quickly threw up quite high and stooped like a Falcon then chased its target hard and just missed it in a nearby copse. The Gos landed in the trees and from its high vantage point espied and nailed a hen bird. We then worked our way through the copse getting quite a few points but none of the slips were clear. Peter Bowyer was flying his gutsy male Gos and once again I was impressed with the speed with which this little imprint would return after each slip. Then suddenly its attitude changed and it seemed to slow down. It was decided the bitter cold was having its effect and Pete sensibly erred on the side of caution and fed his bird up.

The dogs were a pleasure to watch especially at one patch of brambles where Sika came on point then was followed by Roger James' beautifully steady G.W.P. and finally Ian Blantern's G.S.P.

Nick's Gos caught one more hen bird which it chased down across the hill and caught in the river. After being pulled out its

tail froze solid so that was the end of the Goshawk session.

We climbed back up through the woods to the cars, disturbing some Roe Deer on the way, and we were warmed by some soup and sloe gin.

Now it was the Falcons turn and so we set off picking our way carefully and very slowly along the steep frozen hillside, pausing to watch and admire a wild Peregrine and then a fox who, somehow knowing it was safe, kept turning to look at us as he left the valley.

We knew there were Red Legs about but initially we couldn't find them and I began to worry whether the Falcons were going to see any sport. The hillside bent around like a horseshoe and when we reached the 'bend' of the horseshoe we came across an area of thorny scrub. I could see a Woodcock flitting about within the scrub and, not knowing a lot about Falcons, naively thought we had a chance of a flight and told the following group. I was categorically informed that Woodcock would NEVER flush underneath a Falcon. I must admit to feeling a little deflated until someone shouted that Nick, who was right at the bottom of the valley, was climbing up with his Pere/lanner hybrid 'Maia' and would be willing to have a go as he had "nothing to lose". He put his bird up and just before she was in position the Woodcock flushed and sure enough, with the Falcon close behind, it dumped itself right into some thick bracken. The Falcon returned and took up an ideal position over the scrub. Nick shouted for us to rush through

the cover in case something else was in hiding and indeed there was another Woodcock, but this one had a higher opinion of its flying ability and made off strongly as if to fly right out of the valley and over the ridge.

We were then treated to a breathtaking display of what quality falconry is all about. The hybrid stooped and chased, then stooped again and again and again. Because of the steepness of the valley sides the two birds would one moment be two or three hundred feet up and then be a matter of twenty or thirty feet from those lucky spectators high on the hillside.

After what seemed ages the Woodcock, which had been clouted a couple of times, now decided enough was enough and made for cover. Both birds disappeared from my view but there were shouts of "she's gone in after it!" and I fully expected the Woodcock to have made good its escape but no, after slipping and sliding to the valley floor Nick emerged from the thorns beaming and holding his Falcon plucking the dead Woodcock. Everyone assembled around the proud falconer, and those who had said such a flight was an impossibility were loudest in their congratulations saying it

rated as one of the best flights they had ever seen.

We went on to fly other Falcons at Partridge but they were pretty few and far between and deteriorating wind conditions made flying difficult so we called it a day.

Some people got lost on the way to the pub but those of us who made it drank their share in toasting Nick who dared to have a go, his Falcon for performing and persisting so well and of course to that overly optimistic Woodcock who made a memory that will stay with me for ever.



The Islamic Respect For The Falcon In Arabia

Permission to Publish given by Ian Winter Creative Director of ArabNet
<http://www.arab.net/falconry/>

Hunting with birds of prey probably originated with the nomadic peoples of the Asiatic plains. The nomads used their tame falcons to help procure the food necessary for survival, in perhaps one of the first methods of hunting ever used by man. Later, falconry developed into a sport, and this fascinating co-operation between man and bird is one of the oldest of all open-air pastimes. Falconry has long been regarded as a noble art.

The falconer was seen as a figure of authority - mounted on his horse, surrounded by his hunting companions and with his falcon descending from the sky to rest on his hand. As he controlled his falcon, so he controlled his territory. Throughout history, the falcon has been the symbol of high birth and luxury, and its care and training have always been given particular importance. It is known as a superlative hunter, and is particularly valuable in the desert, where climatic conditions are extreme and no protection from the elements is available. Here, the falcon can pursue its prey from a great distance, and with a speed and accuracy second to none. It is no wonder that the desert nomads have always appreciated the stamina and hunting instincts of the falcon. The Bedouin people in

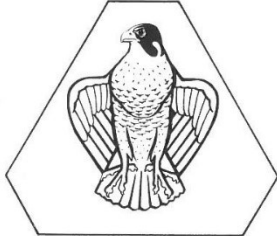
particular used this bird to hunt game, which provided an important and nutritious addition to an otherwise monotonous diet. Today, the Arabian Peninsula is one of the last places in the world where falconry remains an important sporting activity. Although falconry clubs do exist in America and in almost all European countries, it is in the Gulf region that the sport is held in truly high regard and commands the greatest interest. The people of the Gulf have a strong personal commitment to falconry and ensure that it is practised in the correct manner, with the proper respect due to Islamic customs. The chief falconer is highly respected, as he is responsible for the birds' daily training and care. The falcon requires much human contact and careful attention on a daily basis, or it will quickly grow wild and therefore unreliable. When hunting, an experienced falconer drives his bird ahead to pursue the prey, following at speed to ensure that he is on the spot within a few seconds of the falcon's landing of the game. It is essential that the falcon's talons are well placed in the prey before it lands. The falconer also needs to ensure that there is no fighting between the falcon and its prey, to avoid injury to his bird. The falcon is

less skilful on the ground than it is in flight and may lose its courage when confronted with a larger bird. Finally, the falconer must be present to ensure that the game is killed according to Islamic custom. The Houbara Bustard is the falcon's chief prey. This is a large, fast-flying desert bird about the size of a heron, and it is hunted for its delicious meat. Great skill is needed by the falcon in tracking down a bird of this size and speed, as it is often required to cover distances of four or five kilometres before finally capturing its prey. In falconry, the splendid gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) is much prized for its size and the handsome appearance of its grey-white plumage. The peregrine falcon has darker, brown-and-cream plumage, and can pursue its prey at a tremendous rate, often achieving speeds of over 200km/h, making it the fastest of all living creatures. The peregrine falcon has been threatened with extinction, but as a result of intensive research by falconers, it is now being successfully bred in captivity, and its numbers in the wild are increasing. The conservation of these noble birds ensures that the sight of a falcon soaring upward from his master's hand will always be a breathtaking and unforgettable experience.



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Neil Forbes, FRCVS

As falconers we should be constantly making every effort to improve the quality of the birds which we are breeding and flying. Moreover we should be making increasing efforts to look after our birds better and reduce the risk of them becoming ill, and improving the care they receive if they become ill.

Stress - what is it and why is it bad for our birds

When a bird is frightened, the brain reacts by telling the adrenal gland to release adrenaline and cortisol (ie. steroid). Cortisol travels to the liver and mobilises glucose, to provide energy to fly away from the frightening situation. As many people will be aware, steroid although useful on occasions, can have unpleasant side effects, even when it is steroid of a natural origin (ie. from within the bird's own body).

Our concern in this situation is that steroid reduces the birds 'immune system' ie. the bird's ability to react against and fight off infection.

In a natural situation, a bird meets a frightening situation, it's body reacts to that, it flies away and everything returns to normal. The short peak in cortisol has no significant effect on the bird's immune system. However when a bird is in training, typically the bird cannot fly away from the frightening situation, so the fear continues. The bodies response is to continue to produce cortisol, the outcome is a prolonged depressive effect on the bird's ability to fight against disease.

Every day we and our birds are surrounded by potential infection, and all the time we are defending ourselves against it, and fighting it off. If our bird's immune system is compromised, it cannot fight off infection, and the bird may well succumb to a common, perhaps ubiquitous organism such as *Aspergillus fumigatus*, the fungus which comes from rotting vegetable matter, and is in the environment all the time.

So what can we do about this. The simple answer is to minimise stress to our birds. It is true for most birds, in

particular the Accipiters, that the most stressful event in a falconers bird's life is training. Other potential stressful times may arise during the moult, breeding, transport, or if they get lost whilst out flying, and spend a few days out loose.

So what makes training stressful. Untamed birds are not accustomed to being close to humans, and perceive us as a threat. Reduction in weight is in itself a stressor, the more the weight is reduced the worse it is.

So during training the key improvements can be:-

Allow the bird to become accustomed to your presence, prior to starting training.

Train the bird very gradually, do not force yourself on it too quickly.

Reduce weight only slowly, and minimise the total weight loss required as much as possible.

Such advice is easily applied to a Falcon or Harris Hawk, but no so easy with an Accipiter.

There is of course another option. Why not fly an imprint. Imprinting a bird correctly is not necessarily easy, it is very time consuming, and can go wrong. But if you get it right, that Gos wants to be close to you, on your fist. It is not frightened out of it's skin and trying to bait away from you all the time. As the bird is responsive, you do not need to reduce the weight to any significant extent.

So to conclude. End result, a healthy bird, which is less stressed in training, is less likely to get ill as it is not stressed. It will fly at a higher weight, fly stronger and catch more quarry.

Side effect – it is less stressful for the falconer to train and keep the bird. You will be happy, more relaxed and less likely to end up with a divorce, coronary or depression during the training, illness and subsequent death of your over stressed immune compromised Goshawk.



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Another Sad Story!

Mark Williams

ONLY THE GOOD ONES die young!... A wise old falconer once said that to me although it was to be many years later that the true meaning of those words became fully understood. We have all had a bird or dog that for some reason or another, usually the falconers fault, is no good. Don't they seem to stick around just to spite you and remind you of what you did wrong? The following story is about the events leading up to and during my trip to the 2nd National Canadian Falconry Meet held in Weyburn, Saskatchewan last year.

Another job promotion in January '95 moved me from Edmonton, Alberta to Kelowna, British Columbia. This was to be my 3rd province since emigrating in the spring of '91. I had just completed one of my best falconry seasons ever with "Molly" my 2nd year female Anatumn Peregrine. Since first emigrating to Saskatchewan, I have enjoyed some of the best falconry of my entire life. However each time I moved west, the terrain has been less suited to longwing flying. Kelowna, B.C. was no exception! Being more expensive to live in than the prairie provinces we also had to give up living in the country on an acreage. The '95 season was the first time in over 15 years that I had not flown a bird. So unsuitable was the terrain for longwings, that I decided to leave my peregrine with my friend, Mike Persons in Alberta, where she was

being temporarily looked after while I moved. During the spring of '95 I had taken a late passage Coopers Hawk but due to it being in such heavy moult and general poor feather condition, (which is why she was trapped in someone's pigeon coup), I did not fly the bird and ended up releasing her later in the fall. Instead my efforts were focused on bowhunting big game animals for the remainder of the '95 season. I was beginning to doubt the wisdom of accepting the job promotion.

Kelowna is situated in the Okanagan Valley, a rift between high mountains. There were lots of gambrels quail and a few pheasants and ducks but none were suitable for flying longwings due to the heavy cover and abundance of wire fences and power lines. So for the '96 season I had acquired a capture permit for a gos or coopers. This year was to be the date for the 2nd National Canadian field meeting in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Although I was committed to go again, this time I had an additional 1100 kilometers and another province to cross! Since I had to drive through Alberta, I decided to stop off at the Alberta falconry meeting held in Stettler. I made arrangements to meet up with my friends, Mike Person and John Campbell, and we would travel onto Saskatchewan together in convoy after the Alberta meet. Mike and John were going to stay and hunt for



another couple of weeks after the national meet and I was to return alone.

As the summer passed and no sign of any gos's or coopers, I decided to get "Molly" back from Mike's and get her going for the big meeting. She had been put in a breeding chamber with an older male for the two years I left her there and even in her 2nd year she laid two clutch's of albeit infertile eggs! Her 3rd year was even more successful thanks to A.I. but unfortunately the one chick died before hatch.

While I let her finish her moult, I tried desperately to find suitable terrain to fly her. Of the hundreds of times I have asked for flying permission in Alberta and Saskatchewan I have only been refused once and in one day here in B.C. I was refused 8 out of 8 times! Eventually I managed to find some big ponds (read small lakes!) to fly her over. I shared one of them with duck and goose gunhunters and it would often turn out that they would be there before I got to the set up! One other pond was beside a busy road paralleling a power line which made flushing difficult to say the least! I needed to get "Molly" fit and the big water did much to improve her pitch after 2 years of inactivity. Despite hitting several ducks down into the water, we never caught a duck in the 2 weeks leading up to the trip.

My two young German pointers Coco and Pepper were doing fine on upland game. Pepper in particular, was showing great promise... in spite of me! I often think just how good she could have been if I had not bought two puppies at the same time and over burdened myself. She was a very wide ranging dog for a GSP and a very, very instinctive bird dog. She knew the routine when we were hunting and never did she let me down in flushing ducks, no matter how cold that water was! I only wanted to take Pepper to Saskatchewan but I was outvoted by "the wife". Much to Coco's delight she too was to come along.

The eleven hour, 1100 kilometer trip to Edmonton was to go by quickly. It was dark by the time I arrived at Mike's house to spend the night and I was introduced to Mike's friend Stan Marcus who had just flown in from Michigan to join us for the next few weeks. Stan was a past president of NAFA and a great character. The unusual thing about Stan was that for a man who over the years has devoted an immense amount of his time to better the sport of falconry, was in fact not a falconer!

The next morning we made the 3 hour drive south to Stettler. On the way I stopped off to visit my old stomping grounds where I used to live. I saw ducks on a postage stamp size piece of water that I always used to start a new bird off or in this case a bird fresh out of the mews with a lot of determination but lack of good opportunities and potentially diminishing confidence. She went up 150 feet and I sent the dogs in to flush the half dozen teal. Up they went down she came and bingo she hit a teal dead in a stoop but instead of pitching up she continued on after the rest. I guess she took it for granted that the duck made it to water like so many others earlier on! She put the others in a pond a few hundred yards on. I picked up the

teal and ran towards the next pond where Molly was circling but Pepper my pointer beat me to it and flushed the ducks again. Down came Molly and a tail chase ensued to yet another pond some 200 yards further on. Again Pepper was an old hand at this and Molly was up high above the pond. Someone forgot to tell the dog that I give the command to flush around here! The year or so of not being hunted with Molly was showing up in Peppers enthusiasm to



get the job done. Up got a great many other ducks and Molly took a Gadwall. Not a bad first flight in Alberta and 2 ducks in the bag! On the walk back to the truck I thought I could hear someone whistling trying to attract my attention. I looked around and saw no one and continued towards my truck. It was then I realized it was my lungs wheezing! Was I out of condition or what? Upon reflection it was great to watch the two of them work together but my pride says hey I'm meant to be in control here. I was beginning to get nightmares that I would be left at home and the bloody dog and bird will go off hunting on their own!

I stopped at my Head Office while I was in Edmonton so it was late afternoon by the time I arrived in Stettler. The next few days were a blast, spending good times with old hawking buddies and watching good birds fly. We had almost taken over the motel we were staying at and the

weathering ground had drawn a lot of attention from the press and locals of this small town. Several days were spent taking out the locals to see the birds fly.

Sadly the last day of the meet ended in tragedy for me. A particularly large convoy of cars were out with me on this occasion since no one else was flying in the morning. As for myself, I don't get my bird too worked into any routine because of my job demands. I fly when I get time! We had a special guest on this day. An old time hunter who had just turned 104 years old! He was a dedicated hunter all of his life and wanted to see this strange method of hunting he had heard had come to town. We found a good set up close to the road. It's bad enough picking a suitable set up for your bird let alone the spectators! Luckily Alberta does not have a shortage of game or opportunities. I got everyone to stand behind a small hill and I took a few falconers and Pepper my best dog with me to help flush.

Coco was relegated to the truck. If things were going to go wrong they were going to go wrong in front of a lot of witnesses! By reducing the variables I stood a better chance of showing a good flight and saving some face!

Molly went up well and then she checked onto a wild redtail. She put it into a small wood and harassed it for a few minutes. Then she decided to go after a flock of crows. It must have been 10 minutes that she kept dive bombing them in the trees. Every now and then one would break loose and she tail chased it back to cover. After that fiasco she was heading back and then checked on a flock of starlings feeding in a field. To see her split the huge flock in mid air like a knife cutting through a black cloud was spectacular. By now I was looking for somewhere to hide as I could feel humiliation catching up to me! She had been up for a least 15 minutes flying hard every second of those minutes. I thought she would

be Knackered by the time she came over. Eventually she came over and I checked to see that the spectators had not gone to sleep or gone home! Her pitch was only a couple of hundred feet but I was glad she was not sitting on the ground! I let Pepper go. Up got the ducks and flew towards the spectators who were starting to come over the crest of the hill to watch. Down came Molly and smacked a duck right before them. She pitched up and the duck hit the ground by the waters edge. Pepper was on it in a flash and held it on the ground preventing it from getting to water. Molly winnowed down and sat next to Pepper who let go of the duck for Molly to administer the coup de grâce and claim her prize. Talk about team work it's almost scary!

The next few moments were to haunt me for ever. Pepper saw that the remainder of the ducks had put back into water from the stoop. She passed me going in the opposite direction as I ran to assist Molly. Pepper was running around the edge of the slough looking at the ducks in the water and intending to run in where the ducks were closest to the shore. I heard a blood curdling yelp and I looked round. Pepper had run into the only piece of wood sticking up out of the ground within miles. It was the size of my wrist and pointing 45 degrees out of the mud. She staggered towards me as if seeking comfort from the pain. She collapsed before she could reach me. I didn't even get to Molly before I turned and ran to Pepper's side. The post had not pierced her chest, but succeeded in crushing her trachea and collapsing her lungs. I tried to resuscitate her mouth to nose for several minutes but she never regained consciousness. My breath was filling her stomach not her lungs. What a freak tragedy! What a loss! People were upset and crying. I turned away a father and his two young daughters who ran to look and assist. This was not something I needed them to see. Kindly, the father of the girls returned and offered to take Pepper's body for me and bury it on his farm. I picked

Molly up who by now had gorged herself on this duck and returned to the truck. Coco could sense something was amiss and wondered why her kennel mate had not returned as usual.

That drive back to the motel was the quietest ever. Everyone in my truck sat speechless all the way back. I broke the silence by adding that at least she died doing what she loved doing and not by being hit by a truck on the highway or something. Back at the meet venue everyone was very kind and consoling. You so often hear of someone's bird that meets an untimely demise but this freak tragedy served as a reminder to all of us what risks we expose both our dogs and birds every time we go hunting. It is a sad loss any time one loses a hunting partner, let alone one that showed such potential. I was dreading breaking the sad news to the family back home.

The next day we flew in the morning and Molly caught another Gadwall. Her fifth duck in 4 days. She did not fly as strong though and it stood out a mile. I suspected she was still holding a bit of food from the gorge from the morning before not to mention that I was trying to fit 4 months of falconry into 2 weeks and probably burning the poor girl out! We headed off to Saskatchewan in convoy. Mike and Stan in one truck, John Campbell in his and me in mine. We arrived in time to buy our Saskatchewan game license and find a flight before dark. I flew Molly but she flew off and landed on a farmers barn a mile away, (no trees in Saskatchewan). She behaved very strange when I went to pick her up. There were farm cats everywhere. It was getting to the point it was so dark I thought I was going to have to stay behind and leave her overnight. She straffed the lure many times before eventually landing in the half light. I put her odd behaviour down to the cats.

We finally reached our destination, Webburn, Saskat-

chewan by the early hours of the morning. Dale Guthormsen was still up and he and I shot the breeze for an hour or so catching up on our 2 years apart. The next day Molly was "looking off". None of the rowing on her perch waiting to be picked up and flown. I tried to fly her late that day but she went and landed before



she made a pass towards the ducks. She was making respiratory noises as she flew. I knew this was serious. Mike Person is a vet and has had much experience with birds, not least his own extensive breeding pairs and their offspring. He could not find anything obviously wrong and suggested that I may have pushed her too hard. Molly's appetite and weight was good, her mutes healthy but her eyes were not as bright. A falconer instinctively knows when his bird is off and despite the lack of obvious signs I knew she was unwell. To be safe, we treated her for frounce, rested her and kept an eye on her. I spent the remainder of the meet watching everyone else's birds fly. What a sight! Doug Bush, Bob Rafuse, Dale Guthormsen, John Hitchmough and Kent Carny all flew good birds to name a few. There were many more flights I did not get the privilege to witness.

The end of the meet was celebrated with a banquet and humungus raffle. There were over seventy people present for the meal. Dale had donated one of his Elhew English pointer puppies to the raffle. I was drawn to the dog the minute I laid eyes on it sat pegged out near the weathering yard. Not just because of its puppy charm but because although it was a male English pointer, if it were not the un-

docked tail, he was a spitting image of my Pepper with almost identical markings and build. The dog and a beautifully framed picture of Andrew Ellis's limited edition Peregrine print, titled "Nowhere to Go" that I had donated, were amongst the top 3 prizes. There were hundreds of tickets in each entry box. Bob Rafuse wanted that print in a big way and bought over \$60.00 in tickets to guarantee himself a fair chance of being drawn. Being on a limited budget because of the travel and accommodation for this trip. I put in five tickets for the custom ordered original portrait of your bird by a famous American artist (whose name I can't recall!). The remaining ticket I put into Dales draw for the pointer puppy. Everyone at the meet had heard about the tragedy at the end of the previous week with my pointer and encouraged me to put in for it. The puppy and the print were left last to be raffled off. You can imagine my and everyone else's surprise and delight when I was drawn for the puppy! How was I going to explain this to the wife and kids! The other good news was that Bob won my Ellis print, mind you I teased him that he practically paid for it!

To make a long story longer! I ended up selling the puppy for half its value to a friend who wanted him more than I did. After all I had a bitch German pointer and this could cause

problems down the road. Furthermore because of my lack of suitable falconry terrain where I lived, I had little use at that time for a German pointer let alone a wide ranging English. It was a difficult decision because I could not ignore the huge degree of fate that had gone into me winning this fine dog. Before I could get attached to it any further I let my friend take it away. The next day I set off for the long 2000 km drive back home.

When I got home I took Molly to the local vet and had a blood test done. We X-rayed her to check for lead pellets in the crop or stomach. None were present. I still suspected lead poisoning but was unsure because the symptoms were not textbook. My article in a previous Austringer relates a story of how I tragically lost a prairie and a gyr to lead poisoning within a month of each other. Not wanting to take any risks I asked for the sample to be sent to Saskatoon veterinary hospital which is also where the Peregrine falcon breeding and release project is based and where Molly was bred. A couple of days later the test came back reporting heavy deposits of lead in the blood. An immediate course of calcium EDTA was administered. After 5 days of Ruth, my wife, casting Molly and my carefully injecting twice daily into her breast muscle (not Ruth's!), she recovered. I guess

the duck she gorged the day Pepper died must have had high levels of lead in it. It could have been injured by lead pellets or it may have eaten lead shot. Here in B.C. it is illegal to use lead shot in shotgun cartridges because of this-being attributed to waterfowl deaths. I check and screen for gunshot wounds and signs of disease in everything I feed my birds because of the bad experience I once had with donated meat.

This pretty much accounts for my short but eventful '96 season. At the time of my writing this in February '97 I am once again shortly to be on the move! This time I requested a transfer to return to the prairies at the risk of jeopardizing my career with the company I work for. I miss my falconry and realized that bowhunting, while rewarding, cannot replace my love of falconry. I count myself fortunate to have a supporting wife who is prepared to give up her good professional job to follow me back. (I'd sure miss here if she didn't!). Luckily she does not find it too difficult to find employment in her paramedical profession. We will be going back to Edmonton this spring and to the same area we used to live. We will once again be able to afford to buy an acreage and live in the country. Hopefully next season will not be so traumatic!



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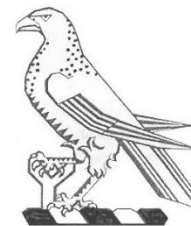
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Fortune Smiles

Adrian Williams

MOVE ON ABOUT 10 YEARS (yes, OK, my hair fell out in the meantime) to my story of me losing a rook hawk - a Peregrine called Lucy. So, here goes. I took Lucy out one afternoon to a local high spot called Eglwysilan in search of a slippable crow or rook. I drove around the narrow road a few times before spotting 3 crows feeding some 400 yards away in a field. Lucy was as usual on the portable block ready to slip once the hood was off. I stopped the car in the next passing point, locked up, put my bins around my neck and opened the tailgate. After checking the transmitter signal one last time I removed the hood and held Lucy up. As usual she bobbed, and was off, straightlining to the crows who were into the air and away as soon as they saw movement. I had no doubt as I raised the bins that she would soon close the gap and I hoped she would take one in the air. I also hoped that it would be within my sight and not over the hill. Rook hawking in my limited experience is often frustrating because you so often find the hawk plucking or even worse not plucking but you only saw the initial flight and none of the aerial antics.

With Lucy she would mostly take her crow by straightlining it and binding to in the air within sight so was if you like a falconer's falcon, a real joy to fly. The downside was that if she failed to kill she was reluctant to return to a lure. She would carry on until she did kill. With hindsight it's easy to say I should have lowered her and improved her obedience and I accept that I should have, but put yourself in my position. You find quarry, you slip, 9 times out of 10 she takes her crow and kills it. Would you lower her in case you have to bring her down to a lure? I was fortunate to have this Peregrine fully trained and having a lot of quarry under her head from Dougie Collins of Fochabers. All the credit for this hawk must go to Dougie. Back to the flight. She did unfortunately go over the hill and so I hurried down toward

her fully expecting when I cleared the last stone wall that I would find Lucy plucking a crow, possibly with the head already severed. But no, when I climbed the last wall, no Lucy. I set the tracking gear up and had a signal dead ahead toward a golf course. Down I ran to the course before trying again. Further on. Tearing past some golfers I shouted the usual questions, but 'no, they had not seen her'. Then as I ran on a few crows pass over me high up. She was behind them. I hoped to see her take one out but she was too far behind. Over my head they all went and off into the hills they disappeared. So back up the hill I tramped. When I reached the flatter hill top I could see nothing but now more than ever I imagined she was eating. When I had a signal it was toward Eglwysilan village. On I went past the farmhouse and the pub. This was now some 40 minutes after I had slipped her. I reached a high vantage point. I took another signal which pointed deep into the valley. I contemplated for a moment whether to go instead to the car in order to drive down. I decided that was the best plan. So turning away from the signal I went up the hill reaching the car in another 10 minutes. Throwing everything in I spun the car around and on down the hill for a quarter of a mile before jumping out to take a reading. Nothing. Oh no. Back in the car and down the hill further. Try again. Still nothing. Spin around back up the hill to the highest point. Nothing. Luckily she had two transmitters, so I tuned into the second one. Nothing. Now my heart was pounding, coming out of my shirt. Back down the hill. Nothing. Trying both transmitters. Nothing. In fact I never ever had another signal out of either. I drove around taking a reading at every high point I could, covering many miles.

Finally I went home to tell my wife the news and to say I would be carrying on. This was quite late, around 8.30pm. I had been out since

around 4pm. Diane told me that a friend, Don Humphreys, had phoned. Had I lost a hawk? He watched a hawk trying to force a crow down at about 7pm on the Black Road. She had flown about 6 miles from me and probably over the top of my house! Then on about 2 miles. So I shoot over to the spot but still no signal. At Don's house he tells me what he saw and it was almost certainly her. I carried on searching until very late then came home.

First thing next morning I was up and away before dawn. You know the score no doubt. Most Falconers have been there. I concentrated my search on where she had been seen the night before but of course I could not understand the lack of a signal from two transmitters. From the high points on Eglwysilan I should have had a signal from where she was on Black Road as it was much lower but visible. I returned home to eat and to make the calls to alert as many as possible. If you lose a hawk make 'phone calls to everyone you can think of as soon as possible. It can save you a lot of running around in the wrong direction. Don't wait in case you find her first, get as much help as possible. Then back out, luring, calling, trying for a signal. Nothing. I walked myself to a standstill until it was too dark to go on before returning home. Next day I extended the circle of travel in the hope of picking up a faint signal, but periodically returning to the place I lost her and to the place where she had been seen on Black Road. Falcons more often than not are picked up near where they were lost. For the next few days I concentrated on searching for Lucy most of the day covering a great mileage, helped by several falconers some of whom came a long way to help but with ne'er a sighting despite our calls at every farm, pub, police station etc. Leaving cards did result in some calls but unfortunately of course you get lots of false alarms. Most calls are common buzzard sightings and you

have to ask lots of questions and make a judgement before tearing off. By chance one morning I had a call from a chap who wanted me to jess his eagle owl and in the course of the conversation he casually remarked that he had seen a Peregrine on a post near a local pub. I asked him to describe it again - to be sure it was a Peregrine. This was 2 miles from my house. But of course when I got there there was no sign of her. On the following day I had a call from a member of the local hunt from a farm where a hawk wearing bells had come over them. One of them had tried to lure her down but she would not come down. Again I arrived just a little too late to find her. On the next day I was again out looking and called at a local trout fishing pool and found that a belled hawk had been seen flying around the ponds. Too late again. Next day I had a call from Lawn Farm. Lucy had been seen low in the valley. It was pouring with rain when I tramped around the farm and I saw nothing. Why is it always windy and raining when you have a lost hawk to chase? After 10 days without seeing her I thought well that's it, she's gone. I am not going to get her back now. After all she was very efficient, she took a crow almost every time I was out. At least I could be content in the knowledge that she would surely make it on her own.

On the following day I did not look for her. I tried to get back to other things. At around 5pm in the evening I had a call from a chap who had been directed to me by the local police as he had found a crow on the floor. I asked him to describe it, he described a crow, all black. He told me that he had found the crow on the mountainside an hour before and thought it might be a pet belonging to someone. He had left it there as he was not sure what to do about it. I naturally asked why he thought a crow might belong to someone. He said because it was wearing a bell!!!!!! I asked him to describe the crow again. He described it as dark almost black all over, but added this time that it had a pretty bib above a white breast. Ye Gods. He lived only 3 miles away (as the crow with a pretty bib flies) but 7 miles by road and I was there in minutes. Could he take me to where he had seen her? It took some 20 minutes to find the spot along a hedgerow where he had seen her, by now at least an hour and half before. I called and lured and tried the tracking gear hoping against hope for a signal after all this time but nothing. Nothing. Nothing. We walked on, around, back and fro for an hour. At last I told the fellow that he must return home but I would continue until it was dark and of

course thanked him for his help. I walked a little way back along the hedgerow with him, then stopped for a moment, still swinging the lure, to explain that she might easily be only yards away but if on quarry would probably freeze. Then whilst still luring, from behind a tree came Lucy, running to me and taking the lure as I dropped it to the floor. I picked her up, dumbstruck, unbelieving almost that it was her. She was in good condition featherwise, but quickly I felt her expecting that she would be round breasted. Yet she was not round, she was thin, as thin as the proverbial hatchet. I thanked again my new found friend, but told him I must run, she was cold, damp but so thin. She needed warmth, liquid and food quickly. So I flung her up my jumper and with my arms around her I ran to the car. On reaching the car I put the heater on and made for home. There I fed her a little and made her comfortable for the night. She had in fact lost 5oz. I have been involved with rehabilitation of lots of hawks and it is worth considering in the light of this kind of experience how many of our releases make it successfully. Is it in fact worth the effort? Of course it may well just be that rook hawks get mobbed. She still wore one transmitter but it had no batteries. The other transmitter was absent.

Anyway after a few days of recovery I noticed that Lucy was in fact favouring one foot and so although there was no heat or swelling, took her to the vet. On X ray it was found that she had fractured a bone in her foot but as we had no idea when the injury had occurred it could have been the day she was lost or yesterday. This may have caused her some difficulty and gave another possible reason for her thinness. My vet felt it unwise to do anything taking account of the fact that opening her foot might allow infection to enter. So it was left alone. I was worried that the favouring of one foot would lead to bumble foot in the other and this was what did happen shortly after. Over the next few months she then developed it in both feet and has had recurring bumblefoot ever since. She has not been flown since.

So, fortune still smiles but it was not an ideal conclusion.



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The Story of the Headless Chickens

A Day Out With Bryan Patterson

ROSY WAS IN SCOTLAND flying Jasper, her Sakeret, when Jasper decided to fly into the clouds to play with a falcon with dubious intentions.

After half an hour of whistling, shouting, lure swinging and jumping up and down the telemetry receiver was brought into action. Khula Matata (no problems, no worries) YET. A good strong signal but getting weaker and the wind getting stronger, until the inevitable. No signal. But there are lots of big hills in Scotland, and he's only popped over the nearest one to have a look at the next Glen.

After many miles of aimless searching and the threat of Debbie throwing up all over us if we didn't stop every mile, depression starts to get in. More whistling, shouting, lure swinging and jumping in the air until all hope has gone. Jasper

has been missing for a couple of hours, he will never be seen again, he is lost forever. Depression.

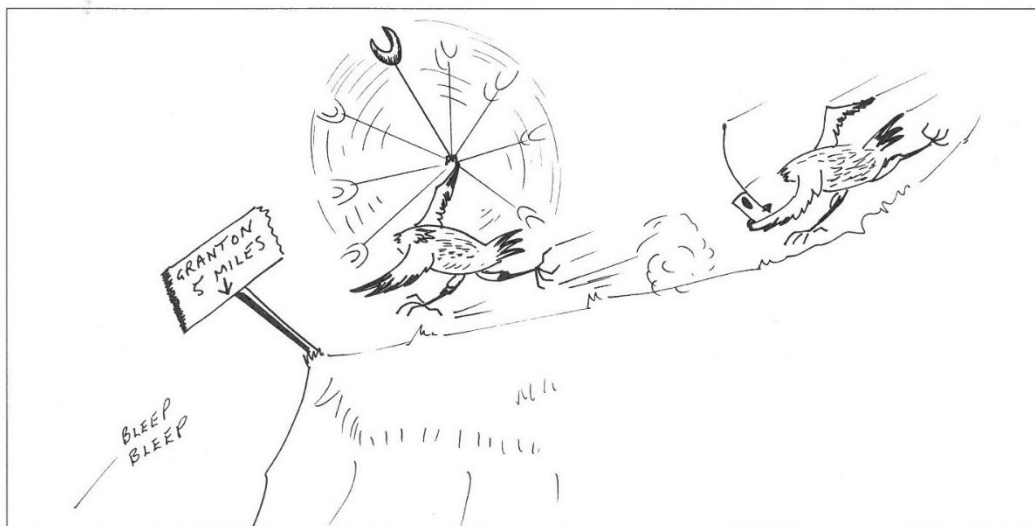
But Wait, faint but getting stronger a signal from the receiver, all is not lost. Could it be a signal from another transmitter? No, there isn't one working. Jubilation. Jasper is returning, but where is he. Rosy you stay with Debbie on the hill whistling, shouting, swinging the lure and jumping up and down, like you do, and we'll go and track him down with the telemetry. We'll keep in touch with the walkie-talkies.

After 10 minutes Rosy is told that Jasper is close to us at the bottom of the hill and to everyone's amazement WHAT HAPPENED WAS, Rosy and Debbie took off down the hill at breakneck speed and you've probably already guessed,

whistling, shouting, lure swinging and jumping up and down. Not knowing where we were, where Jasper was and probably not knowing where they were. However they were eventually found with expressions on their faces which said "WHY DID WE DO THAT".

After a long night with Jasper sitting in a tree, us stumbling around for hours in a wood with no street lights and Rosy trying to flatten the batteries on the receiver, Jasper was reunited with Rosy within 10 minutes of sunrise and us leaving the cottage. Rosy spent the next two hours peering through the window with adoring eyes at Jasper who must have wondered what all the fuss was about.

The moral to this story is DON'T PANIC AND RUN AROUND LIKE HEADLESS CHICKENS.



The Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla

R. Bebbington

THE WIREHAISED VIZSLA IS a recognised breed, separate from it's smooth haired relative in many countries including the U.K. They are highly regarded on the continent.

The breed originated in it's native Hungary, around the 1930's, when in an attempt to produce a Vizsla with a more protected weatherproof coat for work in water and rough conditions on land, the G.W.P. was crossed with the Hungarian Vizsla. The result of this breeding produced the H.W.V., stronger and more robust than the smooth, this attribute coming from the G.W.P. Later according to our contacts in Holland, a little Irish Setter blood was introduced and to attain a better hunting instinct a Hertha Pointer and a Pudel Pointer were used.

In it's native Hungary, wildfowling on the great plains is a popular and lucrative past time with sportsmen from all over the continent travelling to this region to shoot.

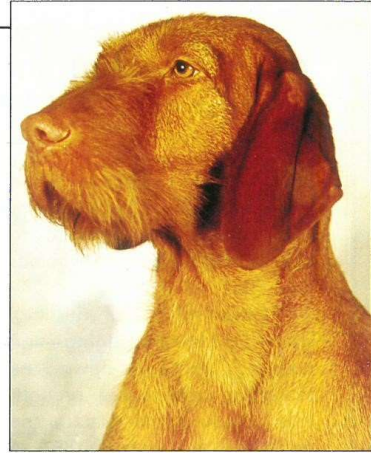
It is essential therefore to have a dog suited to their requirements, and with it's thick wirehaired coat, this breed has definite advantages over it's smooth haired relative.

In general the Wirehaired Vizsla is a robust dog with a much stronger bone structure and slightly larger frame than the short haired.

The Wirehaired shares many of the smooth haired attributes; intelligence, devotion, an even temperament with excellent scenting abilities. They love water and have a strong retrieving instinct. In style, action and pointing they are the equal of all the other well known H.P.R. breeds.

So what does this breed offer the practising austringer? People will always obviously have a bias towards a particular breed that they have a certain amount of success with in the field.

The working ability of this breed has been recognised. Mrs Jean Robertson from Norfolk who



had two of the original litter born in this country in 1992, has the distinction of being the first H.W.V. owner to gain an award in the field. Her bitch gained a first place at a novice field trial in 1995, the bitch's daughter being well placed in her first field trail at the age of eighteen months. Jean and her dogs 'pick up' regularly during the season.

The photos show 'Lady', full name Lanspar Monika of Gavic belonging to a Mr Paul Robinson. She epitomises just what fine dual purpose dogs this breed can be.



She regularly works in the field with hawks and went on to become Best Bitch at this year's Crufts.

However, I feel this breed is not suited to everyone! If you act with your hands more than your head or you operate on a short fuse, then leave well alone. Psychology plays a large part in this breed's development. They stimulate the grey cells (as I said not for everyone). Praise not punishment is the key to progress.

From my own limited experience and from what I have learnt

from others, this breed's hunting instincts can easily become suppressed, if too much discipline is administered at too early an age.

This breed tends not to be as wide ranging as some H.P.R.s, which for the average austringer is not such a problem. They are methodical and if quarry is there they will find it.

It's coat is a definite advantage over it's smooth haired relative, especially for the austringer who works a lot of cover and water. At the moment however, due in part to the relatively small gene pool, there is a wide variation in

the standard of coat.

The breed is still in it's infancy here in the U.K.; they have a great deal to offer the practising austringer, and I for one would love to see more of them out in the field in partnership with our hawks.

Further and more extensive details about this breed can be obtained by contacting the secretary of the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association, 16 Front Street, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 2AY. Tel: 01388 517521.



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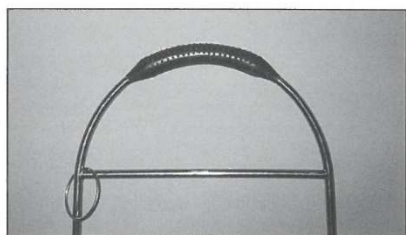
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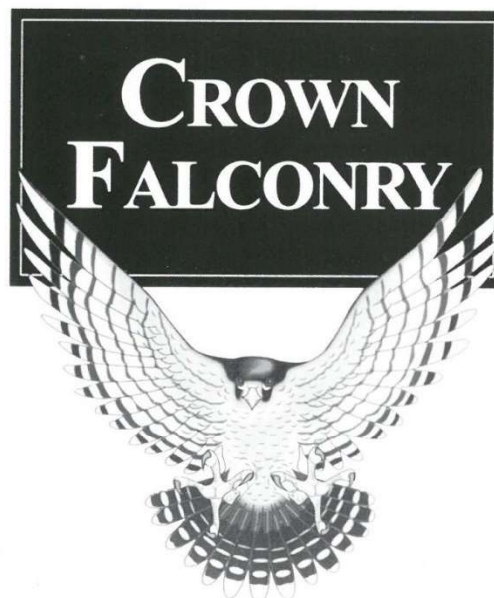
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