

THE AUSTRINGER

THE JOURNAL OF THE
WELSH HAWKING CLUB

Nº 35 2003



Chairman's Chatter

DAVID DIMOND

It is now five years since I was elected to be the chairman of The Welsh Hawking Club. At that time the club was going through a troubled period and unsure of the future. I am glad to say that we have gone from strength to strength! When I came into office we had three regions and about 150-200 members, now despite the rise in the number of new clubs we have 8 regions and at this moment nearly 400 members.

The club has seen many changes in that time, one of which is the annual field meet which used to be held on the Llyn peninsula. This was moved due to the lack of reliable quarry, but I am sure many of the members who hawked there in the past will recall with pleasure the times spent on Kim point, the fantastic views and evenings in the local pubs!

Now due to the cost of time and travel most regions hold their own field meetings, mainly on keepered shoots to ensure adequate flights for all that attend. This year's annual meeting will be held at The Chainbridge Hotel, Llangollen, and already plans are in force to ensure a good meeting will be had by all.

Another noticeable change has been in the number of game fairs held around the country, most of which have some kind of falconry display or at least a static display. Previously the CLA was the main meeting point of falconers and many a good evening's entertainment was had at the falconry section.

Now we have the Falconry Fair covering all aspects of falconry, from complete beginners to the more experienced falconers looking for the latest equipment on the market, all happy to tell the tale of their birds' best flight of the year! This has become a premier event for the club. Members can relax and enjoy the liquid refreshment provided, in the company of friends they may not have seen since the last fair. Many of the committee are present to answer questions from members and prospective members alike.

This year the club's summer fair will be hosted jointly by the Cotswold & Midland regions and I am sure this will be the best yet! More information of this will follow in the *Mews Letter* and on the club's web page www.thewelshhawkingclub.com. Hopefully this will be as well supported by all regions as it has been in the past.

The "March on London" was well supported by WHC members from all over the country, including several members from abroad who had flown in especially for this purpose.

Before I ramble on to long, I would like to say a big thank you to all members of the committee, past and present, who have helped to make the club what it is today. It is good to see that we have a good foundation of members, with new faces coming forward onto the committee bringing with them new ideas for the future. We all believe that there is a future for falconry, although we will all have to work long and hard with all like-minded people to protect our sport.



WHC members at the vigil outside parliament.

Editorial

MIKE CLOWES

It's a pleasure to welcome you all to the 35th edition of the *Austringer*, your magazine. This year is quite unique in that it is the first time in 35 years that we do not have an editor to put it all together.

Steve Gouldthorpe has unfortunately had to retire after 2 years, due to pressure of work and it has proved very difficult to try to maintain his high level of expertise. A big 'thank you' must be expressed to Steve for leaving the Club with one of the best falconry magazines on the market.

What do you do when no one volunteers to be elected into this position at the A.G.M.? Editor of the *Austringer* is not an easy position to fill. It is time consuming, stressful and primarily reliant upon others to contribute articles. This is, after all, your magazine, produced for your benefit and enjoyment and should contain for the most part your experiences, thoughts and amusing anecdotes, which we all know take place frequently when out flying your birds. A good example is Mick Kane's pictorial adventure that only just got through the censor.

On a more serious note, once again falconry has spent the last year fighting for its right to continue as a sport. Labour Government legislation is continuing to threaten the rights of individuals to practise falconry, so much so that it is likely that your grand children will only be able to read about the art that used to give their grand parents so much pleasure. Falconry cannot be allowed to become a sport of the past, and your representatives on the Hawk Board, ably assisted by the Campaign for Falconry and the Countryside Alliance, will continue to fight to ensure that it doesn't happen. Most of you will be aware of the threat posed by the Hunting Bill, but less well known is the pending Animal Welfare Bill, the Protection of Animals Review and the European Convention on Pet Animals. Any of these Bills, although not deliberately aimed at falconry, contain passages that could affect your sport.

What I am saying is, do not become complacent and sit back hoping that any threat will go away, it won't.

Enough preaching! At the A.G.M. it became apparent that a majority of members wanted the *Austringer* to contain more articles written by members about their own experiences. This year I have tried to do this. I hope you enjoy it.

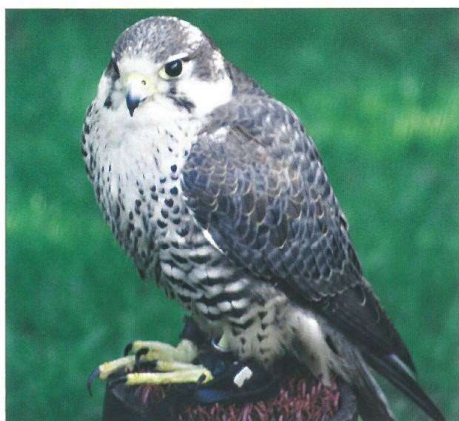
Mike



The Welsh Hawking Club 2003 Field Meet
will take place on the 29-31st October
at The Chainbridge Hotel, Llangollen, North Wales



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That's the Prairie in Him. Page 16



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Falconry is Special. Page 35



The 10% Rule - Fact or Fiction. Page 42

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Articles and photographs will be accepted throughout the year and will be returned as requested.

The views expressed on the pages of this magazine are not necessarily those of the editor or the W.H.C. committee.

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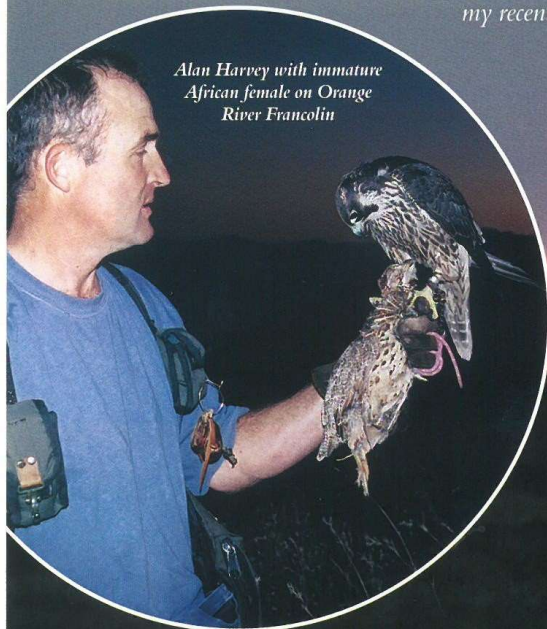


Duck Hawking with Mick Kane & Co. Page 43

An African Adventure

MARK WILLIAMS

As is the case in most major trips or adventures far away from home, it initially starts with some small seed of aspiration and hope. With a little time, nurturing and commitment, it germinates into a growing desire that eventually comes to fruition. This was the case with my recent trip to South Africa.



Alan Harvey with immature African female on Orange River Francolin

About 2 years ago I decided to visit my friend Mark Holder in South Africa, where he operates a bird of prey center. Although we grew up together in Britain, I immigrated to Canada about 11 years ago with my family and Mark recently moved to South Africa. Over the years, he has made several trips to Canada, usually around the time of our hawking meets! We both felt, however, it was high time that I visit him.

South Africa was nothing like I had imagined. Johannesburg, for example, is very modern and is as

cosmopolitan as any other large city in the world. I expected South Africa to be similar to the Serengeti Plains of Tanzania, with wild animals behind every bush. I was also surprised that, unlike many African countries, most property in South Africa is privately owned. Startling too, was that much of South Africa reminded me of Alberta. Although, the northeastern region is semi-tropical, where citrus fruits and bananas are grown, much of the south-central region is grasslands much like the Canadian prairies.

Initially, I stayed close to Mark's new home in Dullstroom and spent much of my time catching-up with Mark and fly-fishing. Dullstroom is considered to be South Africa's trout fishing capital and is close enough to Johannesburg that many anglers spend countless weekends taking advantage of the beautiful rivers and streams around Dullstroom.

We soon contacted Tim Wagner, an old acquaintance who has also visited Canada on at least two occasions. He had organized a ride to Johannesburg for a day of hawking. From there, we

rented a car and drove to Bloomfontaine to visit Francois Breedt and his fiancée, Haley.

Francois, like many of the folks I met over there, was very hospitable and keen to entertain us. That afternoon, Francois and his friend Angelo took us hawking. I saw my first orange-river francolin (similar to a Hungarian partridge) and a Bustard; a large bird that I believe would make good quarry for a gyr hybrid. In addition, however, to enjoying protected status, I understand that they have the annoying habit of dumping just as the falcon closes in. The Hadeda (a member of the Ibis family) is also potential quarry. It gets its name from its call and, in flight, looks like a pterodactyl.

Francois flies a very nice, recently imported white gyr/prairie tiercel, in addition to an inter-mewed (seven seasons) African peregrine named Penny. Angelo flies an inexperienced inter-mewed female African peregrine, his first longwing after flying a male immature black spar. I have heard a lot about this particular bird and the species in general. They have excellent stamina and the ability to pursue pigeons directly up and out of sight into the sky. Unfortunately, a week prior to my arrival Angelo had conditioned this bird for release and I did not get an opportunity to see it hunt.

Although I had a fantastic outing, I have to admit to a little initial pre-occupation with stepping on one of the many venomous species of snake I had heard about. I received a great deal of "leg pulling" over that, I can tell you! That said when you learn of the various types of venom and the way it works on your system, taking into consideration that not every town has a hospital, it gives your mind something to play on! Fortunately most snakes had gone into hibernation a week or so earlier for the winter and even then all but the puff adder tend to slither off at the vibration of your footsteps long before you reach them. We capped a fine day as Francois' guests at his favorite pizzeria.

We left our rental vehicle (car hire is quite expensive in SA) in Bloomfontaine and Francois drove us to Aliwal North, (the venue for their field meet) to meet Alan Harvey. After viewing their meet accommodation facilities, we flew both birds and each caught an orange-river francolin. We left for Alan's farm near the town of Dordrecht, in the eastern cape. Dordrecht is a beautiful region and Alan has a picturesque farm settled in the hills which are ideal for hawking grey-wing francolin and ducks. He and his wife Ingrid are superb hosts and made Mark Holder and me feel very welcome during our three-day visit. I was very surprised how cold the nights are in Dordrecht and each morning the grass was covered with a heavy frost. By 9.30 a.m., however, the "winter" sun has long since melted the frost and warmed the air to average

daily highs of 25 centigrade. Definitely not the winter weather I have become accustomed to!

Alan currently flies two birds; a young captive-bred female African peregrine and an older peregrine that was just beginning its hunting season. I was struck by the compact size of the African peregrines; they seem shorter and more thickset with large feet compared to some of the

North American sub-species that I am familiar with. Flying weight for females tends to be between 700-740 grams and is between 480-520 grams for tiercels. Alan's birds, originally from the northwestern cape, were paler and generally larger birds than Tim's, which came from the northernmost ranges in South Africa near the Southpansburg Mountains. The northern race appeared to be slightly smaller and darker, with markings not un-similar to *F.p. anatum*. Alan's birds flew very well and with the assistance of his well-trained English pointers caught a few grey-wing francolins (very similar to the grey partridge) in fine style. He showed us his very clever kite design which he should market. It is designed to collapse when a raptor strikes the lure resulting in both hawk and kite descending safely to the ground.

That evening Alan suggested we shoot some spring hares with a rifle and a powerful spot light. My curiosity was peaked by his description of these strange animals. They look like a cross between a rabbit, possum and a small kangaroo. We shot a few and gave them to the laborers who work and live on his farm. Apparently, they are excellent quarry for many of the indigenous hawk eagles but because of their nocturnal nature must be hawked at night by lamplight.

The next day Alan took Mark Holder and myself to a nearby farm to bow-hunt various plains game including Blesbok, Springbok and mountain reedbeek. Animals adapted to survival on the plains are extremely vigilant and have excellent vision. On numerous occasions I was outwitted by one group of animals because a second group bolted at my presence and took the group I was stalking with it. Unfortunately, in my excitement, I missed both springbok at which I shot. Still, it was great fun and a very novel bow-hunting experience for me. Alan



Goshawk hunting, just off the roadside



Orange River Francolin

kindly offered use of his .260 Remington, however, preferring the challenge of hunting with a bow, I declined.

Alan Stephenson, another falconer, joined us after a few days at Alan Harvey's. Alan is a great guy and I was eager to meet him having heard so much about him from others. He came up with another falconer, Arnie, who shares my interest in big-game and bow-hunting. After a fantastic evening Alan Harvey and Alan Stephenson drove us back to Aliwal North where Francois was waiting with his charming fiancée, Haley. Francois was disappointed that I had not managed to harvest a blesbok, bontebok or springbok and offered to organize a hunt on a nearby ranch. This type of hospitality is typical of South African's; they were all, it seemed, committed to ensuring that I had a memorable visit.

True to his word, Francois managed to organize a blesbok hunt. I was determined this time to harvest an animal despite the heat (27°C) and their ability to avoid predation. By 10:30, I had managed to shoot a blesbok and returned to the farmhouse for refreshments, and at the insistence of our host Sias, I left a group of laborers to skin and gut my trophy. Unfortunately, in spite of specific direction from their employer, the laborers decapitated the carcass at the throat rendering it unsuitable for mounting. Things got pretty heated between the employer and his 4 laborers and I tried to calm things down. As a result, and to save face for the host, I was directed to go back out to harvest a second animal. This is no mean feat to do with a bow on command, but as a result of a team effort, four hours later I managed to take a second trophy, which I field dressed myself and took directly to a taxidermist rather than risking another error.

That evening after another great day of hawking

with Francois and Angelo, we laughed at the comedy of errors while sampling several Castle's and Windhoek (some of the local cold beers), and enjoying some marinated butterfly blesbok backstraps in a typical South African Braai (BBQ). I was sorry to leave Francois and we made plans to have him and maybe both Alan Harvey and Stephenson, come over to Canada this fall to our National Meet here in Alberta where I could reciprocate the hospitality. We picked up our rental car and headed up to Jo-berg to meet up with Tim Wagner.

We arrived at Jo-berg and met up with Tim to go hawking with him, his friend Grant and an old acquaintance from the past, Gary Warren, who had also previously come over to Canada to attend the National Meet in Saskatchewan a few years ago. The birds flew well but unfortunately we had trouble in finding quarry. That night Tim took us out to Monte Casino, which is a huge entertainment complex in Jo-Berg, for a fine meal with friends. The next day Mark Holder and I set off back to Dullstroom for the night, before we went on up north to visit the Kruger national park.

Our rental car was clocking up the mileage and we drove the 2½ hour scenic route to the park. What a place Kruger park is and one stop anyone visiting South Africa must make. We only had Thursday and Friday for the trip before I departed for home but during that time driving around this game reserve which is the size of a small country we saw countless game animals, birds and raptors. A word of warning though, this is no zoo. You do not step outside of your vehicle as there are no fences etc, between you and the many critters that will eat you for lunch! We saw lions, elephants, giraffe, zebra, impala, warthog, wildebeast, cape buffalo, rhino to name a few.

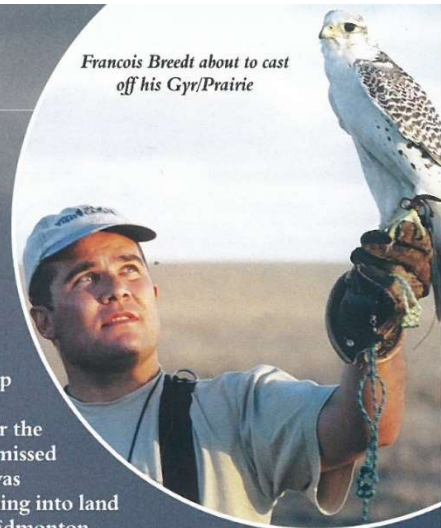
Raptors were of particular interest of course and we saw countless wild vultures, Batleur eagles, snake eagles, a martial eagle and a few of the several goshawks and owl species native to South Africa.

On the way home from Kruger we were to pass through a town called Nelspruit where falconer Willem Breytenbach lived. Mark called ahead on his cell phone and we arranged to meet him later that afternoon. Unfortunately he had just lost his female peregrine the night before and had spent most of the day looking for it up in a light aircraft. We met up with Willem and several of the local guys late in the afternoon and we arrived just in time to see them lure flying their Lanners and African peregrines. Due to the somewhat enclosed and mountainous terrain they lived in, I left with the impression that they would all be better off flying short-wings which were more conducive to the conditions. I am told that there is an abundance of Black spars in the area and one was seen moments before our arrival close to where we were. As the light faded we bode our farewells and headed back to Dullstroom some 150kms away. We made it back in time for me to take Mark Holder and his girlfriend Michelle and her family out for a farewell meal.

The next day I set off early down to Jo-Berg to meet up with Tim Wagner, Grant and Gary Warren again for one last afternoon of hawking before I caught my plane back home at 10pm that night. We went out to a different area than before and came up on some orange-river francolin. Unfortunately disaster struck when Grant's little tiercel took off and didn't look back. We didn't think much of it and continued hawking while Grant tracked his bird. A little further on we had a nice point over a team of pointers and Tim's bird went up nice and high but he had problems in getting her to come overhead. The flight turned sour and we called it a day in the failing light. Thanks to cell phones (which it seems everyone has over there), we discovered that Grant had still not got his bird back and was following a strong signal off into the dark. Now we had a problem, time was getting on, my luggage was back at Gary's house, Grant was way off in the distance, location uncertain, and he had the keys to his truck in his pocket. Since we had no idea where Grant was (and probably neither did he in the dark), we decided to leave Tim with the truck to wait for Grant's return. Much to my concern for both Tim and Grant, Gary drove me back to his place for a quick shower and off to the airport to catch my plane. I later learned that both Grant and Tim made it home very late that night and that the bird was later picked up in the area the following morning by Gary.

Thanks to Gary, I caught my plane and after changing planes at Amsterdam, Detroit and an

Francois Breedt about to cast off his Gyr/Prairie



impromptu stop over in Minneapolis for the night due to a missed connection, I was eventually coming into land back home at Edmonton international airport in Alberta, Canada.

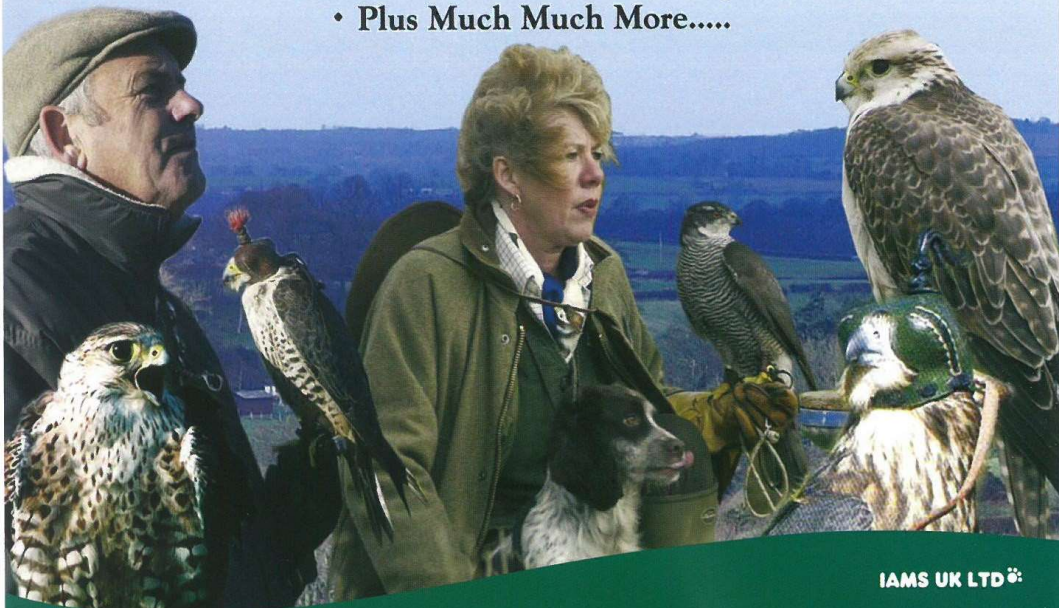
My weary body was uplifted by the absence of snow since my departure three weeks before and the abundance of ducks that had returned en-mass from wintering down south. The spring run off from the late spring snow falls left many new ponds and re-filled the old sloughs from the previous few years of drought. It will be a good year I thought to myself, and only a matter of weeks before I start my new bird.

South Africa is a wonderful place to visit, rich in wildlife and you can be assured of a warm welcome from the numerous falconers there. I felt great kinship with Francois, Tim and the two Alan's to name a few, due to the passion and commitment they all showed to our sport. The standard of falconry I experienced there was as good as I have seen anywhere in Europe or North America. However, I would caution anyone travelling alone to that country, to contact and meet up with someone local if possible. As beautiful as it is there, serious crime and concern for one's personal safety is a frequent and real issue, particular for white non-residents who may not realize what potentially awkward situation they may be getting into. The culture of the people may be difficult for some westerners to understand and there is a huge gap between the wealth and poverty in that country. Common sense prevails and always lock the doors to your motel or vehicle even when you are in either. Also be sure to visit your local health clinic for advice on inoculations several weeks prior to your intended visit. Oh, and watch out for those snakes! "VBG" That all said, Africa is the sort of place that once you've been there it becomes a part of your soul and it forever touches the furthest recesses of your mind and inner thoughts. You simply can't wait to return there. I intend to make another trip back there in the next couple of years to visit my new found friends in the sport and experience more of what it has to offer.



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Club goshawks Breeding & Hunting

LEE FEATHERSTONE, BREEDING PROJECT OFFICER

I have always loved the goshawk but until three years ago I could not devote the time needed to justify training and hunting these amazing birds. It was after my first male that every thing clicked and I was hooked on these marvels. My way of thinking and approach to training these birds was at first hard and advice from other goshawk flyers was valued along with books from here and there. But after a while mistakes made were noted and my first Finnish male was much of a guinea pig but he turned out well in the end and took 80 head of game in his first season.

The next season was different for I wanted to try a female but the price of a Finnish was out of the question and I purchased a WHC female Hungarian goshawk. I was advised that these birds were hard to do anything with and not many had succeeded with them. My first thoughts were, well, if I'm imprinting a bird from eight days old then why would it know any difference? I took the chance and my friend picked up the female which we decided that he would imprint until the bird reached penning and I would take over from there (mainly hoping to stop any screaming). I had imprinted a sister bird for him as well. This plan sort of worked as the screaming didn't really get very far and she was quieter than my male was the year before which had been imprinted at home, so that was great.

I had decided that this female would be fed on the lure from day one and the lure would be in the imprint tub with her all the time, which, at the end of the day was a good move. I felt she would return from miles away to the lure and would be on the way as soon as it came out my pocket which would save me leg work!

She was given easy flights and many kills from an early age and her confidence in mastering her prey was sky high. Different quarry was used with her and in the first few outings she wanted to try anything that moved including things that she hadn't seen before like seagulls and crows. I didn't really want her to take these, I wanted her on pheasant and rabbit and hopefully the odd hare. She hasn't taken one yet but flies above and punches them on the head with closed talons. I think the size of the hare puts her off as I hadn't introduced her to leveret's at an early stage. This was the error I made but it wasn't the end of the world.



My Hungarian eyass on a hen pheasant that she pursued for over 600 yards.

My bird's first 10 kills were one time kills and she was gorged on the kill. After a good few she was never taken from a kill without a full gorge and then I would use a chick to step her off. This prevented any potential aggression from her.

Whilst out on another trip to the field I bolted rabbits for her with the use of the ferret. At first she wanted to kill it but eventually she ignored the ferret altogether, even catching a rabbit that bolted with the ferret attached. I ran to grab the two but the rabbit escaped from the ferret and bolted across the field. Peggy (the gos) took it ten feet from the hole it was heading for.

Getting her out on early pheasant's was my main aim and I decided that I would go on as many meets as possible. Thinking about it, it must have cost me a fortune over the season. I attended about 25-30 meets and spent three weeks and a weekend in Scotland. What with all the fuel and time off work, I dread to calculate the cost but I had promised myself that if I ever had the chance then this is what I would do. The confidence that she already had was amazing and first slip on field meets was my usual position, hardly ever did I turn up to a meet and get her out the car to find that she was not ready for action. She gave me hours of pleasure flying her and the company that I was in also enjoyed watching her flights. She held ranks with some of the top goshawks in the country and I would say outflew a lot of other Finnish cyasses that were on the same meets. (No disrespect to any other falconer intended).

I was told by another member just before the end of the season that 'she had done me proud' which I could honestly say she had well and truly.

So there is your proof that the club goshawks are very capable birds and excellent

value for money. I am hoping that she will stand for AI work as a brown bird and early indications are looking good but most of all I hope that I can fly her next season as well as this one.

The club breeding scheme was discussed at the AGM 2002 and all members present supported what I wanted to do. I feel that my intentions as Club Breeding Project Officer should be explained to every member. Firstly, I wanted to keep back the female (that I bought after it being voted out), to imprint and to AI with Finnish semen to produce some bigger birds, and again repeat this with an offspring from her. This way it would cost the club the price of the first female and then the price of an offspring female at a later date. I am fairly new to imprinting goshawks and haven't done any AI work before, but, with help from club members like Mick Kane, I was sure that I could achieve it. I will mention here that nobody sought any offspring or payment for this.



Peggy at the Welsh meet 2002

The committee, as I see it, were justly concerned that by giving me an open run on Club money that I could demand money to purchase birds for the scheme and not producing any return. At the end of the day all they want is to protect the clubs financial position and that is what they are there for.

Eventually I hope that we can have a breeding project committee so that the responsibility can be shared instead of carrying it all on my shoulders, after all, two heads are better than one.

Until then a lot of hard work needs to be done. Myself and Mick Wynn have a couple of club goshawks that are parent reared and hopefully they will produce some young this year along with John Simcox's pair that have been the sole producers up until now. I will also be looking into boosting the Harris hawk breeding if the demand for them proves good this year, but that is down to you, the members in requesting young from us and supporting the project.

I hope that this explains my plans for the club breeding project and I thank you all for giving me your valued support.

Pointer Madness

DAVID JONES

Lindsay and I were asked to join Kevin Riach in the making of a documentary film called A Falconers Tale by Stewart Mackay.

Kevin was to be the subject of the documentary looking at unusual ways to make a living. We were a party of five falconers, Kevin Riach, Mark Gardener, Dave Staley, Lindsay Graham, and myself. We represented a day in the life of a falconer out hunting with friends.

On arrival we got out of our vehicles and made ourselves known to the gamekeeper, Laurie, and his assistant, Colin. A well-known BBC photographer, Bill Osborn (who commented on the good condition of our

hawks and dogs), then joined us. I looked around at my fellow falconers and noticed that we had all made an effort to be smartly dressed that day.

Heading out onto open land where the keeper had spotted a covey of Partridge, Kevin cast off his renowned Partridge slayer 'Drummond'. Stewart Mackay, the documentary producer, tried to film Kevin's Gyr/Peregrine tiercel stooping but was always in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Our party did well on the day, Kevin's tiercel killed a



Partridge and Mark's Peregrine Falcon killed a Duck. Lindsay, Dave and I flew at Pheasant, Teal and Partridge and had some good sport but couldn't get anything in the bag.

The day went well and Stewart was soon ready to take the closing shots of us reminiscing about the flights we'd had throughout the day. The sun was setting and dusk was creeping in when I heard a shout, "There they go, rats!" Kevin had found a rat infested pile of farm junk.

This was when the madness began with Pointers diving in like Gannets and a spaniel zipping in and out as it showed its master how it could crunch rats. The insanity grew as we ripped up corrugated sheets and worn-out car tyres to expose large rat families.

The madness grabbed Kevin, Mark, Laurie, Colin and me. The only sane composed people left standing were Lindsay, Stewart, Bill and Dave (who had a relative die of Weil's disease.)

All logic and etiquette went out of the window and we were transported back to our youth, 'rat hunters'. The excitement was raised by words like "I never thought my pointer would do that - I have now ruined a good dog!" "Did you see that monster? It was a veteran, look at my dog strangling it." "Christ, that bloody rat has got hold of my dog's nose, quick kick the bugger! No, not the dog".

We were now at full throttle with tyres and zinc sheets flying everywhere, our voices got louder and louder, screaming "Go on, it's over there, well done that dog, another giant rat hits the dust".


I then tried to calm myself down after looking at Stewart's face and briefly thinking of his documentary. What will the hierarchy of falconry think? Will we all be



shunned? It also crossed my mind that Kevin's Ancient Falconry logo might have to be replaced with Ancient Rat-catcher (what a comedown!).

I soon came to my senses and shouted "The rats are piling up, lets collect them and make a count." We had killed 25 rats with pointers and a spaniel. "God, what a good day out" back to our roots as hunters.

Stewart was kind enough not to film the madness and the day in the life of Kevin with fellow falconers was portrayed as a gentle sport.



No two people are the same. They have different tastes, different likes and dislikes, people have different fashion sense, some, like me have no fashion sense at all. Indeed it would be a very boring world if we all enjoyed the same things in life. Falconry is no different. Falconers like, or should that be love, different aspects of the sport, long-wings, short-wings, broadwings, game hawking, rook hawking, rabbit hawking, gull hawking, all have their followers and dedicated enthusiasts. Falconers also have their different views and opinions. If a novice asks three falconers for advice on a certain problem he or she will almost certainly get three different solutions, none of them will necessarily be wrong, in fact all will probably be right. Falconers are resourceful and find their own solutions to their own problems and being a helpful breed as most falconers are they are only too willing to pass this information on.

Many articles I have read on the subject of this most noble of sports have been by falconers who sing the praises of their bird or birds prowess and are full of self praise and ego boosting stating what a marvellous falconer they are. They give little or no credit for the evolutionary masterpiece they hold on their fist. Whilst writing this I am conscious of this fact and intend to stay away from this self-flattery. I take no credit for my birds performance, I have merely trained her to return to me, not always on command I might add, and allow me to approach her when on a kill. I am merely a spectator, whose job it is to convey my hawk safely to and from the hawking ground.

My passion, or according to my long-suffering wife, obsession, is accipiters in general and goshawks in particular. They are, to many others and me, the ultimate falconry bird. I love their fiery eyes, their remarkable speed and their apparent greater than thou attitude. I love the adrenalin rush when the bird leaves the fist and I love the relief when they return. I love the way they always keep you on your toes, always keep you vigilant and most of all always keep you respectful of their feelings. I love that inexplicable link between hawk and man, although with Goshawks that link can at times be very tenuous. Hawking with goshawks is true 'seat of the pants' flying, you have to be totally focused, no matter what problems you may have in your personal life. Or whatever stresses you endure in your working life you can, and must, forget them all when you are flying a Gos. There are some that will say life is stressful enough without having to worry about a bad tempered sulky Goshawk. There's no reason why Gosses need to be bad tempered or for that matter sulky. When flying Goshawks everything has to be right. It goes without saying that their weight must be correct but other things must also be 'just so'. No one wearing bright clothes, sunglasses, baseball caps, noisy kids etc. etc. You have to think twice about everything, you have to be 'focused', and whilst you are thinking about that you are not thinking about mortgages, electric bills, sales figures, order books or any of the thousands of things that are so much a part of our daily lives. When hawking with Goshawks you are living on the edge and as my good friend and fellow falconer John Naylor would say, "If you are not living on the edge you are taking up too much room".

Hawking is to me not just about catching large numbers of quarry it is

being There

MALCOLM ALLISON

about being in their presence whilst they attempt to fulfil their natural instincts. Don't get me wrong, I like to see my hawk catch something as much as the next man, after all it is what nature intended. It is, at the end of the day, what they have evolved for. But it is not the be all and end all. What I love is the pursuit, watching wild quarry try to out smart and out manoeuvre its natural enemy and boy can they do that. Some of my best days hawking have not resulted in kills, however I have seen some truly breathtaking flights from both hawk and prey.

One particular flight I remember will stay with me forever, not because it ended in a kill but because it showed how persistent both hawk and quarry can be. The land in question was a pig farm adjacent to the A64 in North Yorkshire, which included a very large piece of woodland along with open fields and hedgerows. The land was bordered on two sides by a shooting estate so there was always a fair number of pheasants around. The morning had been spent hawking with my friend, Keith Pearce, who had just got his first Harris Hawk and was in the process of entering it. On returning to the vehicles just after lunch we saw three pheasants walking along a hedgerow. We boxed up the harris hawk and I readied myself to get the Goshawk out. I put on my bag which held my collection of lures, checked the transmitter picked up the Gos and away we went.

As I don't work a dog the plan was to walk up hedge and hopefully flush a pheasant as it broke cover at the end of the hedge. We had walked approx 50 yards when a cock bird broke cover and flew parallel with the hedge. Jem, my Gos, immediately left the fist with that burst of speed only Goshawks possess and was in hot pursuit. She was closing rapidly when the pheasant decided he was not in the mood to be chased and

put into the hedge bottom. Jem crashed in behind him just as he squeezed through the sheep wire.

As we approached her on the ground we could see her grasping tightly onto a clump of grass and nettles as her victim was making good his escape. As I got a to about 15 yards from her I could see that look of determination and that magical fiery look in her eye. I reached into my bag to retrieve a lure and called her, as she looked round at me another cock pheasant broke cover from approximately 10 feet further along the hedge. I believe it had been waiting for the hawk's attention to be drawn away before it decided to make a break for it. This would give it that slight advantage which could mean the difference between life and death. The pheasant proceeded across the field at break-neck speed. It was 30 or 40 yards away before Jem decided this one was not getting away without a fight, she let go of her clump of salad and had decided on her main course. As she set off from a standing start I said to Keith, "she's got no chance of catching that".

As they approached the far side of the field approx 150 yards away I could see Jem was making ground on her victim. I said "if it puts into that hedge she might follow it in and catch it on the ground". The pheasant was obviously not thinking the same way as I was. He flipped over the hedge top and then turned sharply left closely followed by Jem. We could see both pursued and pursuer as they flashed by gaps in the hedge. They were heading towards a farm house which was another 150 yards or so from where they turned. The house was surrounded by a small fence of the now familiar sheep netting and a leylandi hedge that stood at least 30 feet high. I said to Keith, "if the pheasant goes over the top of that she will either follow it to the wood or give up". I was hoping for the latter. I have never liked her going into THAT wood since the day I lost her

(or should that be the day she lost me) for four hours. We waited with bated breath as they approached the boundary of the garden. Neither pheasant nor hawk appeared over the lush greenery of the leylandi. "She's on it" I shouted as we both set off to see the outcome of this memorable event. Sure enough as we arrived we could see Jem pluming her prized possession, she allowed me to make in just as I had trained her to do. I changed her jesses fitted the swivel and leash tied her to my bag and allowed her to gorge herself whilst Keith and I enthused over the preceding flight. Now that is what I call 'in flight entertainment'. I take no credit for Jem's performance, I neither aided nor abetted her, I merely witnessed her remarkable powers of flight and determination.

Many people would be happy to say that is what hawking is about, that is how it should be, and they would be right but there is more to this wonderful sport than just flying birds and catching things. It is the being out in the countryside, having privileged access to land that the members of the public rarely, if ever, get to. The walking along hedgerows and watching stoats and weasels hunting in their own special determined way. We are both doing the same thing, we both have the same goals, but we won't die if we are unsuccessful. It is looking up in awe and admiration at a wild Peregrine tiercel as he drifts across the sky and playfully stoops a flock of crows and jackdaws just seconds after you have decided to stop flying because it is too windy. It is the beautifully coloured cock pheasant who blends perfectly into the drab colours of the hedge bottom. It is the wild Sparrowhawk who appears as if by magic from behind a hedge and disappears just as quickly with her hapless victim. It is the witnessing of nature's many facets. Nature is indeed raw in tooth and claw. It is quite simply just being there.

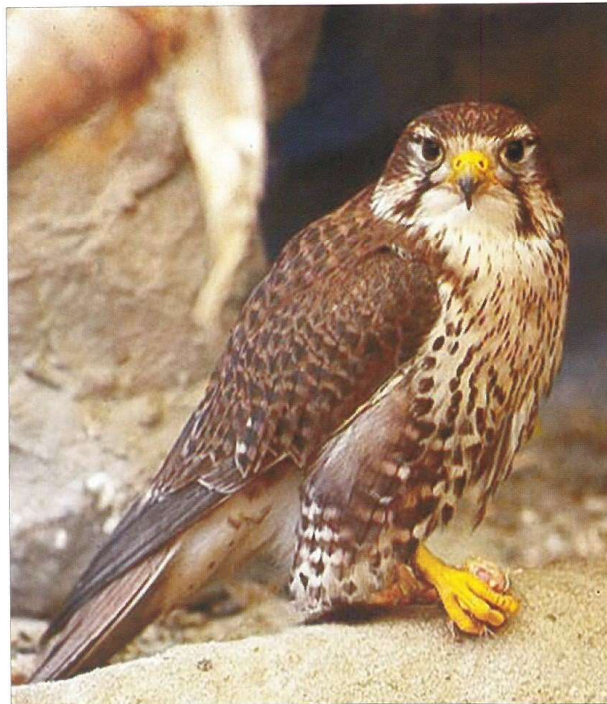


That's the prairie In Him!

MIKE COUPE

As I attempted to change the field jesses on my bird at lightning speed, a sharp, strong beak descended on to my fingers. "That's the Prairie in him", I was informed by a knowing member of the crowd, who then went on to say how vicious they were and about one bird that couldn't be hooded as it bit the owner's chin. This was a phrase I would have repeated to me on a weekly basis during the flying season and I must admit I have learnt to love the idiosyncratic nature of this falcon after more than 10 years of regimented Peregrine flying.

To be fair, I knew Tasley was a good bird when I saw Pete Bowyer flying him at Arley Hall - loads of energy waiting on, stooping and then up again for the next



partridge. "He's a Peregrine/Prairie hybrid and I think he must be a social imprint" Pete told me. "He's very well behaved and reliable except for his tendency to bite".

I tried to find out more about the rearing but failed, I even thought he may be a pure bred Prairie as the only sign of

Peregrine was a slight greyness of the head and back. So, I spoke to Chris Lock, who has the brother of my bird and asked, "Do you think they could be pure bred Prairies?"

"Haven't got a clue", said Chris. "All I know is mine flies down pigeon in level flight". (Not very Peregrine like!)

I went to the Falconers Fair and saw a Peregrine x

Prairie tiercel, a good 40% smaller and boasting a lovely Peregrine colour on head, wings and tail. Anyway, my tiercel has very few, if any, Peregrine characteristics and for all intent and purposes, I consider him a Prairie.

I began to hear all the Prairie stories - vicious, untrainable, suicidal, sit around on posts and fly down ground squirrels, etc., etc. Then I bought a copy of *The Hunting Falcon* by Bruce Hack and found out the truth.

The wild Prairie is as aerial and fast as the Peregrine, it does hunt ground squirrels in the breeding season but reverts to birds in the winter and is incredibly hardy, living year round in areas of North America, which are very hot in summer but well below zero for months in the winter.

I decided to spend some time stopping the biting habit by some manning and handling. It wasn't a hardship for me to spend an hour sitting in my favourite armchair, falcon on fist, whilst looking at a nature programme on the television.

Well, it worked, I can now touch his feet and breast feathers with no reaction at all. So with a perfect moult I had a well behaved falcon to start the season in September but the dreaded foot and mouth had closed off some of my more local flying grounds and it became a case of 'have bird will travel'.

Flying took me regularly to Little Budworth with Robin Jeffs, Malps with Steve and Angela Gouldthorpe, Overton with Steve Barton, Mickle Trafford with Malcolm Kerry, as well as my own partridge ground at Stapelford and later in the season at Brimstage. In addition we booked days at local estates and had three days at the WHC field meet. Flying at different venues is good for a falcon, they don't become too set in their ways if every time the hood comes off they are in a different place.

Flying Tasley

I knew Tasley would be completely different to fly than a Peregrine but I wasn't completely prepared for his

opportunistic streak - I often said, "I don't know why I am swinging this glove around, he seems to make his own mind up where to wait on". I think I got the first hint of his intelligence when calling him to the lure. He took the lure from one side, just turned it over and took the food from the other. I decided to stoop him to the lure to get him fit (not normally recommended for game hawks) and he excelled at this but it didn't stop him waiting-on soon afterwards.

The first flights at quarry were near our partridge release pens and September birds were easy for him to catch from a pitch of about 200 feet. He soon became imprinted on release pens so I had to take all my flights away from pens and his pitch improved considerably and the partridge became fitter and more difficult to catch. When flying Peregrines I had always put the falcon up a good way from the point, the tiercel would circle the field

low twice and then start to mount in circles and needed some time to gain its pitch.

Prairies just fly to pitch-in at about 100 yards - they might circle on a calm day but always attain their pitch very quickly indeed. If I tried to fly Tasley like a Peregrine he would either lose interest and find his own prey or more likely, just lose pitch and wonder what the delay was about.

Tasley's weight control proved very easy. It was almost as if I had painted the magic 575g on the front of my scales! With a good crop each day his weight remained absolutely constant and weighing just became a check with no need to alter food requirements to attain the balance.

I had some very memorable flights, his speciality seemed to be stooping at full speed through branches and thick cover to bind to a partridge which thinks it has escaped the attention of any normal falcon. That's the Prairie in him! Another speciality is the parallel hedge manoeuvre. If a partridge escapes the initial stoop, they often try to make their escape flying parallel and close to a hedge. Tasley flies the other side of the hedge only to



Prairie x Peregrin hybrid.



flip over the obstacle and take the partridge completely by surprise. That's the Prairie in him!

Persistent - you bet! Any quarry not taken in the initial stoop is chased to the nearest cover. 100 yards or half mile makes no difference and he often returns high just looking for the next flush.

Teal flights have been very rewarding. This particular day he simply bound to a teal when it had left the pond and was flying at full speed 30 feet above the field, one that he killed in a stoop the far side of the river at Mickle Trafford. (Malcolm hadn't told me the farmer had removed all the planking from the bridge and I had to cross on a four inch wide metal rail).

Tasley hates magpies. His method of attack is a short hard stoop and he will take a magpie out of a tree or hedge or flying in the open - is that the Prairie in him? It seems like more a spar habit.

Fly once

Many game hawkers only fly their falcons once, the idea is to get them to fly very high and always be rewarded by the perfect flush to the game. It might be the Prairie in him but I don't do that any more. Three flights in quick succession is not unusual and each individual flight can consist of several stoops and Tasley still goes up again to his highest pitch. To be fair, when flying in company or at field

meets, there is often a considerable gap between opportunities to fly but again it might be just a Prairie characteristic, but he seems to fly just as well at 11 o'clock in the morning or 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

At first I was a little wary and was feeding Tasley too much between flights but I have found this makes little difference. "I've only fed him two chicks so I will put him up again", is often heard in our hawking field. I still follow the old game hawking rule of feeding up when the falcon has killed.

I did deviate though after a particularly easy kill, Tasley flew very high the next flight but the partridge had run from the point and I had to bring him down to the lure. This disappointment did not bother him at all and he flew just as well the next day.

Well, I've certainly had a fair season and brought a smile to the faces of numerous spectators who have seen the antics of my plucky, hard-hitting Prairie. It's certainly been a whole new learning curve for me, with a bird like this I have been able to disregard many of the more regimented game hawking practices.

To sum up, I would say versatile, opportunistic and persistent. That's the Prairie in him!

This is the end of term report, a full season and an evaluation of one particular Prairie x Peregrine tiercel of unknown rearing.



Prairie x Peregrin hybrid on partridge kill.

Don't mess with "Shreck"

BRYAN PATERSON

"Shrek", as she is to be called, is a female Peregrine falcon (*Falco Peregrinus*) she came to us from the National Birds of Prey Centre. Shrek was socially imprinted by Kathy Blakey and I must say has turned out to be one of the nicest social imprints that I have seen. Martyn, my son, works with Dr. Nick Fox and he has a lot of contact with imprint falcons in their breeding programme and agrees that Shrek is a stunning falcon, she is very dark. Shrek was imprinted so that eventually she will be part of Martyn's own falcon breeding project.

Shrek came to me here in Shropshire at about ten weeks of age. We had decided that I would hunt with her for the first year. She was tame hatched from my garden, coming in to be fed on the lure at varying times of the day. What a great experience this is. If either Debbie or I were working in the garden Shrek would be there sitting on the fence watching what was going on or walking around playing with twigs and old feathers that were laying about on the lawn. On several occasions we were having a barbecue with friends when she would suddenly take off from the Oak tree by the garden and head off in the direction of something that she had spotted. We would all jump up and watch as she coursed a local Corvid or Pigeon until it managed to find refuge in a group of trees, then she would be back on the fence to see what we were doing. Sometimes while she was out of sight I would put some food on the fence so that she could find it on her return. Eventually she began wandering and



not returning in the evening, I tracked her with the telemetry on a couple of occasions, (she was wearing a neck mounted transmitter). While she was at hack she was wearing anklets and bells, some times when she came in to feed on the lure I would put in the bullet jesses, I use these on all of my birds, I think they are a great idea. I could then pick her up and carry her around without causing her any stress. I weighed her on several occasions, she was usually around 2lb 6ozs. She was also being hooded regularly. Eventually I decided that the time had come to get her under control. I had been putting her garnished lure by the side of a block on the lawn so it was very easy to put in the bullet jesses and attach her to the block without any fuss.

I began cutting Shreks' weight during the following weeks until eventually she would respond to the lure and follow me with enthusiasm at 2lb 3ozs. She was given the opportunity to fly a couple of inexperienced partridge poults, it's surprising how well they can fly when the pressure is on.

On the 29th September I took

Shrek to Scotland for our annual hunting holiday. During the morning, the hawks which are to be flown during the afternoon are weathered on their blocks under a group of fir trees by the side of the lodge. On one particular morning I had taken the dogs for a walk and when I got back to the lodge I made a cup of coffee and decided to sit outside close to where the hawks were weathering. A movement in the trees caught my attention and suddenly a Buzzard came through the trees at speed and tried to grab

Shrek as she was sitting on her block. The other hawks were going frantic, I ran towards Shrek thinking the worst only to find that Shrek was a bit faster than the Buzzard, she had grabbed one of the Buzzards' legs with one foot and it's chest with the other, luckily the Buzzard was trying to pull away to escape, its other foot was holding onto the grass. By the time I got to help, only a few seconds, Shrek was already plucking the feathers from the Buzzard. I have no doubt that if I had not been there she would have killed him and taken a meal which would have put her out of hunting condition for days.

The reason for writing this article is to bring your attention to the dangers which you and I probably don't think about to often. This could have been a bad situation for Shrek, thankfully it turned out OK for both birds.

You can see from the photograph, taken by Jean Dimond, that the Buzzard was released - shocked but otherwise unharmed. The other reason for writing this article is to warn any Buzzards who may read it, that you don't mess with Shrek.

the Catalyst

DAVID HOROBIN

September 22nd was a memorable date for me, as it should have been for all field sports supporters, being the date of the Liberty and Livelihood March. A large group of friends from the Shropshire Hawking Club, many of whom are also WHC members, attended and just after arrival in London, I was asked a question that eventually came to turn around what had been a pretty bad year. It came from Adrian Downes, who mentioned that he wished to concentrate on his tiercel gos for the coming season, and wondered if I would take on his female. My initial reaction was dubious as my lifestyle and geographical area are not really conducive to hawking, though on contemplation, it seemed that with a little extra effort, it might be possible to

take the gos to Scotland with me. By the time I had hollered myself hoarse, and traded roars with the pitifully small anti presence at the finish of the march, I think my mind was made up.

I was in a pretty strange situation at the time where work was concerned. As a part time lecturer in F.E., much of my work over the last few years has concentrated on "disaffected youth" (educational euphemism for little b*****s!) which, as you may imagine, is pretty tiring as thirteen hour days became the norm at the end of last year. I had thus intended to switch colleges, and had a full week's work lined up in a more rural area which included some outdoor education on local estates. I had a vision of moving



to a nice little estate cottage closer to the college, and flying permission following suit. Oh well!

Having decided that, at the end of the last academic year, I needed a proper break, I decided to be somewhat extravagant and turn my usual two weeks' hawking in Scotland to four, and to hell with the consequences. Initially, this was taken into account at my new place of employment, but things deteriorated to the point where I was offered a straight choice between a full week's work for the rest of the year or four weeks in Scotland - "which is more important?", I was asked. Well, by this time, I could not (or rather would not) back out anyway, having already faced homelessness (having been told no more animals after my 18 year-old, long-retired lanner was put down in May) when I casually announced to my parents that a goshawk would be coming to stay. I was going to have my break, and enjoy it at any cost.

As teaching hours and income took a nose-dive, the magical date drew nearer. I was still fairly busy until I was due to leave for Scotland, and would worry about the future when I got to it. Two weeks before the great day, a stunning female goshawk, only a few days out of the aviary from her moult, arrived. If I said that I did not suddenly wonder if my decision had been too hasty as Adrian drove away, I would be lying. Here I was with a large hawk which bated like mad each time I so much as looked out of the window. Picking her up for the first time was interesting, to say the least, notably as I found out my new glove was woefully inadequate. I had bought it expecting to be flying a friend's tiercel peregrine in Scotland!

As the bird had been flown previously I suppose I did not really get a full flavour of manning a goshawk from scratch. Nonetheless, the first time she fed from my fist, I was elated. With hindsight, she must have been quite nervous as she did not attempt to grab my hand for the food as I had been warned she would. One of Adrian's last comforting phrases to me was that she had been formerly known as "Miss Hand-Shake", for the obvious reason! That said, the first couple of days went well, though I was confused to find she would sit steadily on the fist in the garden, but reverted to a bating lunatic when I came indoors. This improved a little when she came to anticipate being weighed, but as I had been absolutely forbidden to bring her in for any other purpose, there was little I could do about this (at least, not while anyone else was in).

The difficult bit came next. It was not so much the early morning manning walk itself that bothered me, but more getting it done to a satisfactory standard before too many people were about - not easy as there is a primary school over the road, to which I soon found out children start arriving by 8.15! The first morning went well. She was a little hesitant with the pigeon wing tiring and was not helped by passing traffic.

Traffic aside, the gos was quite steady on the fist as we passed into a more sparsely populated area - at least until the tiring was all gone! The second day, I got back just a little too late and the first children had just arrived at the school. I am always public relations conscious where field sports are concerned, so felt obliged, having been cornered, to tell the two little children and their parents what the bird was, what I was doing and all the usual stuff. Until this point I had got as far as playing with the goshawk's feet when I fed her, trying to accustom her to my hands steadily in hopeful anticipation of the day I might have to despatch a rabbit clutched in her grasp. Feeling her keel was still making me somewhat nervous, so you may imagine my absolute terror as the little boy proceeded to stroke the gos on the back! "Don't do that", said the boy's mother, it's got a very sharp beak, this almost as an afterthought, prompted by her realisation that all the blood had drained from my face. It was a little too late by this stage to mention that the feet are much more dangerous! Fortunately, the gos never batted a nictating membrane, but I still have nightmares about what might have been.

We thus settled into a routine of early morning walks (without tiring after three days), a frantic dash to work, muddling through teaching with only the thought of the gos on my mind, and racing back to get her fed. As work was sparse, I was able to get back early on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and so managed additional excursions combined with a little exercise on the creance. One cataclysmic event occurred mid-way through our first week together. I was happy that the gos was now bating to me, not away, but as she did one morning, she managed to bend a tail feather. I think my mother thought I had lost the bird, or had a terrible accident at the torrent of blue language that filled the air.

I felt so guilty that her pristine tail was no longer perfect that I phoned work to say there had been an unforeseen family crisis and that I would be late getting in. Fortunately, the hot water trick worked, but I wonder what my boss would have thought had he known the crisis was a bent tail feather! I was still working towards the weight at which Adrian said I should aim to fly her free, though I was waiting to get to Scotland with other falconers for this. However, at the end of the first week, she was high-jumping eagerly to the fist for her daily rations, and I had successfully fed her, and more importantly taken her up from, a dragged rabbit carcass after "despatching" it and playing with her feet whilst she fed. The next scary moment was now gone.

It was an exhausting process. If only I did not have to work! However, as our walks became extended to pass some local pools, the bird's interest in the local ducks and moorhens became increasingly apparent. I now knew not only what a shortwing in yarak looked like, but more

importantly, what one felt like. I suppose it was very disappointing having to hold her back the first time she bated at a rising duck, but at the same time, it gave me a warm glow all over . . .! She was surely ready to go, though was still above the weight I was supposed to fly her free at. Whilst I attempted to avoid people, particularly after the episode with the schoolchildren which had unnerved me, it is hard to do so, particularly when someone is genuinely interested and wants to ask intelligent questions. I encountered no hostility, and was encouraged by many people's responses, though I tried as far as possible to be invisible.

Whilst I would have preferred to spend more time in local fields, I had to pass through semi-built-up areas to get there, and with hindsight, I think the occasional cyclist and early morning dog-walker/horse rider helped to an extent with settling the gos down. What did amuse me was the complete lack of reaction, save for an acknowledgement as I moved aside for them to pass, on the part of a Pakistani family, I figured, perhaps, that in many parts of Pakistan, the sight of someone manning a goshawk is an everyday occurrence, as it once must have been in Britain. However, I must confess to a sigh of relief each time I got the bird home safe and sound!

My parents had grown accustomed to the gos by now, so the really difficult manning process was complete! I thus employed my father's services when I wished to test her reactions from a tree. We have a suitable tree in our garden which, after a little modification with a bow saw, proved adequate for perching the bird in, bearing in mind she was still on a creance. I did not want to take unnecessary chances, dreading her laddering up higher, and so instructed my father to let her hop up from his fist onto the suitably prepared low branch when I had gone a distance away and said I was ready. Unfortunately, he put her into the tree as I was walking away, and she was in no mood to wait for food. I only realised she was behind me at the last second, which was lucky - had I turned earlier she would have hit me full in the face, but as it was, she merely caught me a glancing blow on the back of the neck (interestingly, with closed feet) before throwing up, longwing style, and clamping onto my by now upheld glove. I think my father was more shocked than I was, but despite the very real pain, I could not help but laugh. However, I realised at that point she was too low, and fed her up a little, having entered "caught human but did not hold" on the weight chart.

Two days later, it was time to go, and early on Saturday 19th October, I set out for the Highlands having stopped the night at Bryan Paterson's house. Bryan was in the process of building new weatherings, and as it turned out, was delayed for a few days, so I travelled up with his partner Debbie, after exchanging the goshawk's travelling box for one which fitted into her car! I was nervous about the long

journey, having memories of my old lanner who was travel sick, but the gos was fine on arrival at Gretna Green services which is approximately half-way for us. It has a wonderful grassed area at the rear, well away from the general public and main car park which facilitates running of dogs and enables us to put the hawks out on perches for a breather. This year was no exception, and we met up with our good friend Mike Thomas, who flies a female gos, and his son Kevin who was flying Mike's old female Harris'. The rest of the journey was uneventful and to lightly falling snow, we arrived at Crubenmore Lodge.

Sunday being a day of rest for all concerned, I merely spent the morning walking around with the gos, then watching her sit content upon her perch whilst I was partaking of the odd dram of Scotland's finest before jumping her to the fist. Monday dawned bright and pleasant, and I was keen to get the gos entered, so we travelled to a favourite spot known as "Bunny City"/"Rabbit Valley" depending on who one talks to. It was not long before a "myxy" rabbit was spotted, and off she went. I only started to panic when the rabbit ducked and she sat on the floor, realising that this was the first time I'd had her off the creance. As I moved towards her, I unwittingly kicked up another rabbit, a healthy one, and she was off again. This found cover, so she sat on a fence post, but not for long. The dogs had located the original rabbit in some reeds, which was quickly taken by the head. I was thus content as she fed up on her first kill of the season.

The next day she was a little too high (I thought!), but on the Wednesday, we were out again, and enjoyed some good flights, though without a positive outcome for the gos. Mike suggested I needed to put her weight up a little, and over the next few days, we worked on building her up to give her more strength - her obedience never faltered, though there were a few nervy moments. It was to be Saturday before she killed again, but already we could see the difference, as she powered after her quarry, this time a very fit bunny, and I was over the moon when she caught it. Not the first kill, but a good flight that deserved success. A second rabbit was caught that day, and from this point on, she went from strength to strength. Her optimum weight turned out to be around 2lb 6 oz, before she started to get a bit too independent for my liking, which I later learned was a little higher than last season. I was also learning about the sharpness of the keel - the difference when muscle started to appear on it was amazing.

As the first week was very wet, we often had recourse to bringing the birds in to dry out, by which means I began to see progress in the goshawk's behaviour indoors. I wish I could say that it was down to my efforts, but I just think I was fortunate to be handling a bird with a superb temperament - she just needed the opportunity to prove it!

However, there must have been some improvement in steadiness as Adrian, who came up during our third week, mentioned that he had tried to get some photographs of the bird as she sat on her perch one morning. Unfortunately, he was foiled in this as she was so relaxed, he suggested that she looked too tame - "you've over-manned her", he complained! Even in the photos I have of her on kills she has a certain laid back look about her, unlike Mike's female which was very fit, very deadly and looked like aggression incarnate either in earnest pursuit flight or just sat on the fist. However, the ultimate accolade for me came on the Thursday of the last week, when we both came in soaked to the skin. I sat the gos on the back of a chair in front of a fan heater on a low setting, and she sat contentedly preening while all about her people were making cups of tea and generally relaxing. We had enjoyed some tremendous flights over dogs, using ferrets and, on one occasion (because the group I was supposed to meet up with were not where I was supposed to meet them!) just "one man and a hawk" - walking up rabbits which resulted in some long slips, a bit of stalking in the manner described by the 15th century "Boke of St. Albans", two kills and a great deal of fun! I think that last week in Scotland was one of the happiest I have ever known - certainly during 2002! I had just about everything anyone could want in the shape of great scenery, superb food and drink, excellent companions and above all, a wonderful hawk and the opportunity to do her justice.

All good things must come to an end, they say, and they soon did just that. Despite Adrian's generous offer to let me fly the gos for the rest of the season it was just not practical. Whilst I had desperately wanted to fly her at feathered quarry in Scotland, and had plenty of duck locally, it would have been hawking of a dubious nature which I did not want to do. Otherwise, the opportunities for flights were limited, and I knew I could no longer do her justice. Far better to remember the time we had together when I could fly her every day, and with the exception of two or three days when the weather was foul, managed to do so - some friends may recall days when the weather was abysmal and we flew anyway! It was time to face the real world (on my return, I had a call to say that most of my work at the new college has been taken over in my absence, save for one hour!) and start picking up work elsewhere - how else will I be able to afford four weeks in Scotland next year?

I have gained such a great deal from our all too brief six



weeks of association, most notably the chance to fly the species I have always wished to work alongside. My previous articles in *The Austringer* have hinted at my historical research into falconry, research which I hope to extend into an examination of the use of shortwings in early English hawking. I have long held the theory that more was done with goshawks than popular views of the past would have us believe, and that the gos has been done a disservice by nineteenth century authors who were more interested in longwings. Seventeenth century

texts, notably Bert's *An Approved Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking*, seem to be almost dealing with a different species to the goshawk as dealt with by later authors, but I feel even more strongly now that, handled well, there is nothing to match this "hawk for all seasons". She may lack what seems to be almost an affinity with man on the part of peregrines, and her flights may lack the same spectacular nature, but in her own way, the gos is a fantastic creature: an enigmatic daughter of the deep forests, with mystery in her fiery eyes; a phenomenal hunter who shares the nervous tension as she sits in yarak with her human partner, a partner who feels the same rush as, with a burst of bells and adrenaline, she throws herself in pursuit of quarry; a gentle and amazing bird it is a pleasure to share one's life with. It must be a dull person indeed who can fly such a hawk without in some way taking on some of her character.

Whilst I did not get the full experience of manning and training, as the bird was quite experienced and just needed a little refresher course of manning and flying to the fist, I now feel much more confident in my own ability to achieve my ambition. I had always fancied flying a male gos at various feathered quarry - magpie, rook, pheasant and partridge, etc, but now I'm not so sure...! What I do know is that I can't go on much longer in my present job, or without a hawk. I suppose I could amend my lifestyle somewhat to enable me to fly a hawk at weekends and occasional days during the week, but this will never be enough. I have been very fortunate, albeit at a cost to my professional reputation and bank balance, to have had the very best. Having seen Mike's goshawk, which was tremendously fit through daily flying, in action, and bringing one to a similar level of fitness, a "weekend bird" will never make me happy. Maybe one day I will look back at my time with Adrian's goshawk as a turning point in my life, and see her as the catalyst which stopped me living to work, and made me work to live.

One Rabbit too Many!

JEAN DIMOND

Sunday morning, 10 o'clock at the Craven Arms was the start of a brilliant day out with friends. The weather was bright, cold clear skies all around. We (Bryan Paterson, Roy Wellings, myself and Zoë with hawks) were to be helped by Kevin Wellings with his ferrets, Dave Hughes with the ferret duo of Bonnie and Clyde and Dave Dimond to carry anything caught! All the birds had flown together in the past with no problems except Zoë's, but she had only just obtained the bird and was not going to fly it that day, just see its reaction to the sport.

It was a slow start, the rabbits weren't coming out to play but it was just good to be out on such a fine day. Eventually we arrived at an area with signs of plenty of rabbit activity and the ferrets were to put to good use.

The first chase ended up with Tia (my bird) and Tara (Roy's bird) on the same rabbit, so I was sent with shouts of 'run Jean run' to ensure there was no problem whilst Roy took a leisurely walk to the scene.

This set the scene for the rest of the day, good chases and all birds taking their fair share of quarry, so much so that it wasn't till the last one Tia caught that there was any sign of the coming problem. Normally on a day's hunting on our own land we would be hard pressed to catch two or three rabbits if we even saw that many in the first place, but we were having such sport that I lost track of how many she had chased and caught.

On the last rabbit she was very



COR! I BET HE DRINKS CARLING BLACK LABEL!

reluctant to come off the kill, but it wasn't until she was on the fist that I realised the problem. She would have normally been fed up on the second or third rabbit, but so far all I had given her each time was a tit-bit to get her of the kill. She didn't have her reward as usual and we had six in the bag! The next rabbit would be the last and I would feed up, but as always with this sport things don't go to plan.

When the next rabbit bolted Tia and Tara both gave chase but the rabbit got the better of them both and made a clean escape, and then the trouble started!

Tia decided she was not going to play this game any more, in fact she didn't want anyone else around either

and tried to chase Tara away. After a short aerial battle Tara was returned to Roy with just her feathers ruffled, but Tia was not going to come down out of the tree, no amount of enticement was enough, even a dragged rabbit was refused, she just sat in the tree with a sulk on.

Visions of having to leave her out quickly flashed through my mind, not helped by the fact that Bryan had told us earlier that a Harris was still out from the last meeting over a week ago!

While I was having a minor panic attack (or as Dave would say a "head fit") Kevin was busy chopping down a sapling about 10 ft tall and started to tie a rabbit to the top.

He then lifted the rabbit into the air to within her reach but it was swaying about so much it seemed it would knock her out of the tree, but instead she sat and watched this strange sight. It seemed forever before she took an interest in the rabbit, but she eventually stretched out a foot to investigate, and then finally nature took over and she could not resist it, she just had to have it.

Once both feet were firmly on the rabbit Kevin carefully lowered her to the ground, where I even more carefully made in to secure her, and also to let her feed up.

We were a very tired but happy group as we made our way back to the cars, but all I could think about was 'how did Kevin think of that' and what must Tia have thought seeing a rabbit up a tree!



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International Field Meet, 20

NEIL M



Is it a bird? Is it a plane...?

After many months, travelling hundreds of miles with Steve Barton, holding evening meetings with Terry Large in North Wales, trying to arrange some good rabbit hawking land and to book high profile pheasant shoots for those who preferred pheasant, the Meet arrangements were finally complete.

Thanks must go to the game keepers and landowners who bent over backwards to ensure that the members had a wide variety of game to fly. Special thanks to Steve Webb of Arley Hall who took time off work to take



Clarissa and Johnny being entertained at the banquet.



What's that photographer wearing?

ational Llangollen 02

CANN




Duck on the menu tonight!



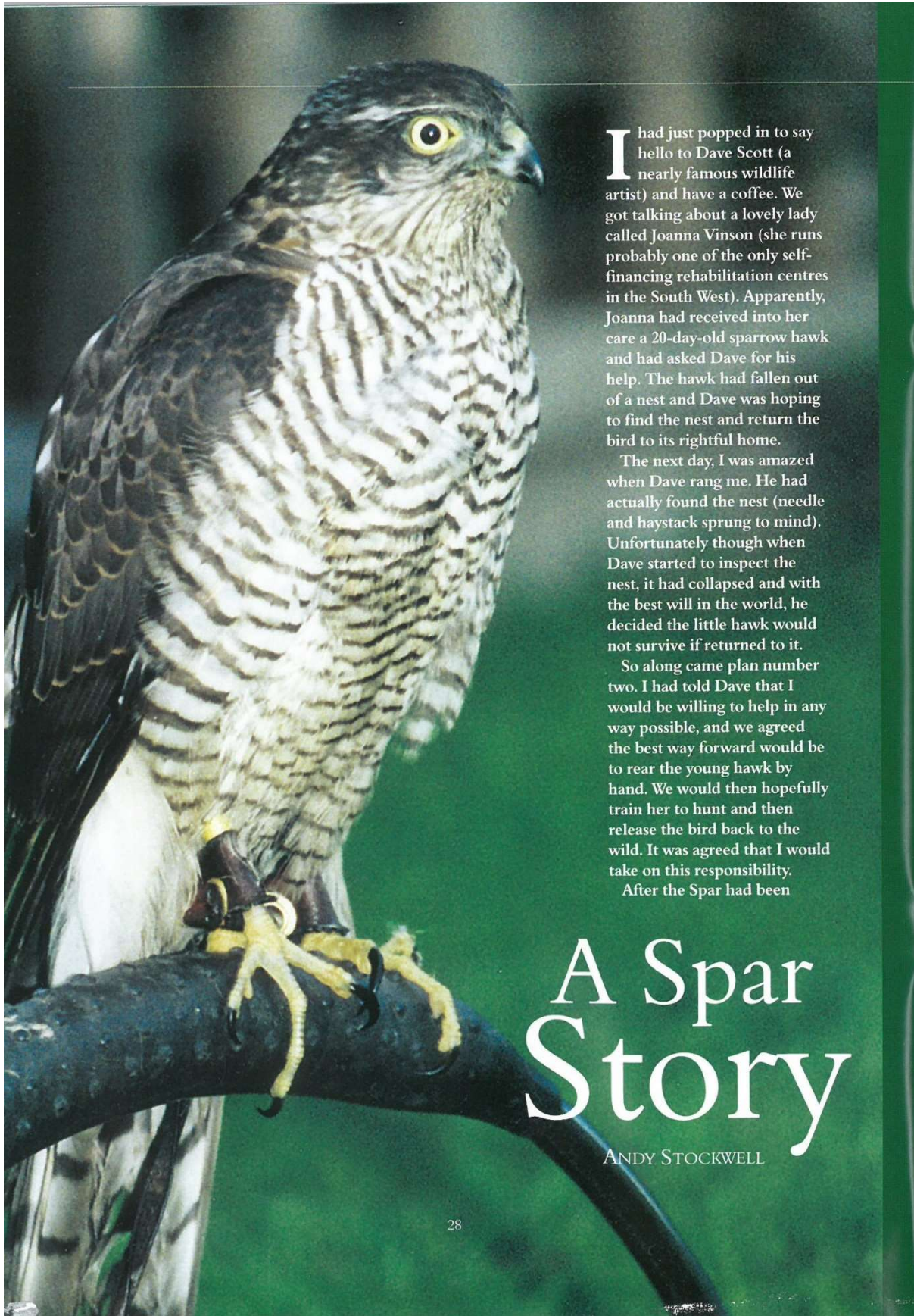
a group out. Also to Ray Smith who printed the group letters and Kevin Simcox for assistance with auto-route maps.

Thanks to the field leaders for volunteering and I hope everyone enjoyed themselves as much as the members in my group.

Although it isn't the final tally that counts but the quality of the flights that made it, the total number of head taken was 173. This was made up of eight rabbits, seven ducks, 125 pheasants, 29 partridge and four various. 



Don't let the orange juice fool you!



I had just popped in to say hello to Dave Scott (a nearly famous wildlife artist) and have a coffee. We got talking about a lovely lady called Joanna Vinson (she runs probably one of the only self-financing rehabilitation centres in the South West). Apparently, Joanna had received into her care a 20-day-old sparrow hawk and had asked Dave for his help. The hawk had fallen out of a nest and Dave was hoping to find the nest and return the bird to its rightful home.

The next day, I was amazed when Dave rang me. He had actually found the nest (needle and haystack sprung to mind). Unfortunately though when Dave started to inspect the nest, it had collapsed and with the best will in the world, he decided the little hawk would not survive if returned to it.

So along came plan number two. I had told Dave that I would be willing to help in any way possible, and we agreed the best way forward would be to rear the young hawk by hand. We would then hopefully train her to hunt and then release the bird back to the wild. It was agreed that I would take on this responsibility.

After the Spar had been

A Spar Story

ANDY STOCKWELL

registered to me, I carefully transported her back to my place. The bird was now 22 days old and it had already done about 50 miles sat in a car, (so I should have no problems transporting her around when hunting).

Everything went according to plan. The hawk was now hard penned and ready to start her training. Unfortunately for my wife, this fell at the same time as our summer holiday. I am sure you will be ahead of me by now. Me, the wife, three children and the sparrowhawk all went to Cornwall for a week in the sun.

After four days of continuous rain, the hawk had become accustomed to its new sleeping quarters - a shower cubicle. As training had already begun, and with the family out doing their thing, I carried on with the training of this lovely little hawk.

On the first day back from our holiday, I decided the time had come for Spar's first free flight and what a flight it was, all of three feet and back. Time passed, and with Dave's help I managed to get the bird entered. This to be honest was the easiest bird I have ever had to get entered (for those who have or do fly Sparrowhawks will probably agree these birds have a lot of natural killing instinct).

I had now got to the stage where every trip out was a pleasure. She was not always successful but she flew like a little rocket. I had read that if you put a lot of time and effort into the training and build up the bird's confidence they were capable of taking on a fair size quarry, and events were to prove I must have been doing something right.

We set off for a trip to my local farm. This farm has some good ground but it also has the

steepest hills I have ever walked, and occasionally have to run up. The hawk (still with no real name) and I were off.

Unfortunately I was struggling, even with my Springer, to flush out any decent quarry. After a while I was about to call it a day, when my dog flushed a rabbit, and for once the dog stopped on the flush. I was pleased with this but then astonished to feel the bird bating to go. The rabbit had decided to make a run for it down the hill (small mountain). I released the hawk thinking she would disappear into a tree, only to find she was in fact in hot pursuit after the bunny. I could not stop laughing that this little hawk was determined to take this quarry on and was doing a good job of catching up fast. The hawk hit the rabbit and clung to its back. I was off running as fast as my legs would go and at one point faster, falling arse over tit into a bush of nettles. With this much adrenaline pumping I felt no pain and was off again. The rabbit being that much bigger than my bird, probably didn't even know my bird was actually attached to it. The rabbit made it to cover and the hawk just sat by a bramble bush waiting for me to finally turn up. Feeling gutted that I could not help my courageous bird, I sat trying to regain my breath.

It was at this time that two things came to mind. Firstly, was a name for this amazing bird. The bird was now called Wow, as this was the word I kept repeating whilst running down this massive hill. Actually there was a choice of two names, but the first was too long and far too blue to record here. This brings me to the second thought, the hill, I had to walk back up it.

Wow had now reached the stage where she was confident and eager to fly at just about anything that moved. I had arranged to show Dave the progress she had made. I arrived at Dave's house to find him drinking coffee with another good friend, Mark Neil, also a keen hunting Austringer. After spending some time re-erecting a partridge pen, we noticed the local farmer ploughing a field near by. It was covered with everything from crows to gulls. We all dived into the Land Rover and headed back for my bird. As usual Wow was spot on weight and ready to do battle, so Dave, Mark, myself and a spectator called Nigel Shard set off in the hope of some fun. As we arrived I sat in the front, and realised that the opportunities were unbelievable. I let Wow see the quarry by holding her out of the window. I thought she could not fail, but for some reason, she declined. This was possibly due to the fact she had not eaten anything white before and she did not associate the gulls as food. Dispirited, we decided to drive around the field. I was feeling low as I had been telling (bragging) to everyone about how brave the small hawk was.

When we drove to the top edge of the field, we came across three hen pheasants and a cock bird just walking along the hedgerow. Dave manoeuvred the Land Rover so as to help me get the bird in the best location to strike an attack. Wow started to bob her head in interest, every inch we drove the more interested she got. Then with a wing beat the cock pheasant was off, and this was the only prompt Wow needed. She left the fist, and we all presumed she would hit one

of the hen birds but no, she passed them all. We all sat there, mouths wide open as Wow bound herself to the underside of this huge cock bird. All of us were shouting, we could not believe our

eyes. Mark and Nigel and I rushed out of the Land Rover only to see Wow disappearing. The cock bird did not show any signs of slowing down and my bird

showed no signs of letting go. The two birds disappeared over a large hedge. As usual, we could not get to the bird quick enough and she had lost her grip.

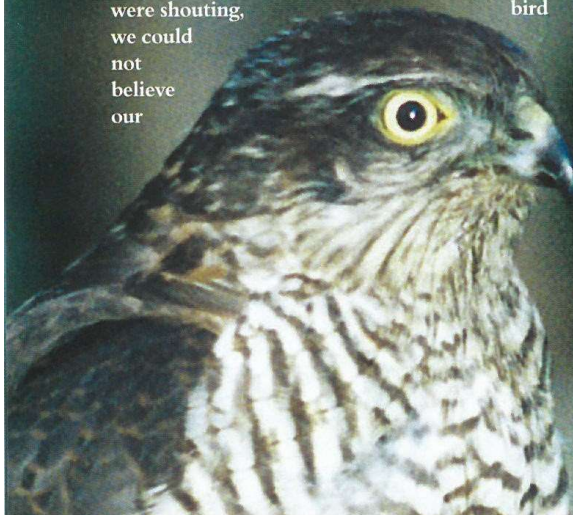
Two days later she was successful and caught a hen pheasant in the same manner.

Like most good things in life, something had to go wrong and unfortunately my little brave sparrowhawk became ill and even with the help of Dave's vet, she died. The autopsy report showed that she died of aspergillosis of the lungs. The worst thing

in the world is not knowing why this happened and if I could have or should have prevented it.

Looking back I feel so privileged to have been given the opportunity to fly this bird, and even with the heartbreak of losing her this way I can honestly say it was worth all the time and effort. I will never forget this courageous bird.

This story is a tribute to all sparrowhawks - small in size but packed full of courage.



the Grey Partridge

ANDREW HULME

The Grey Partridge has been a favourite quarry of Lowland Gamehawkers and Accipiter fanatics for many years. But this once common gamebird is in trouble. In the early 1990s there was an estimated population of 145,000 pairs, the population now is thought to be half that number.

The Game Conservancy is working with landowners, farmers and gamekeepers to upturn this decline and it is hoped 150,000 pairs can be achieved by 2010.

Falconers and Austringers can play their part in several ways. If you have Grey Partridges on your land then encourage the landowner to farm sympathetically by leaving dead grass in the bottom of hedges for the female Grey to nest in and not to

spray headlands so there are enough insects for the chicks to thrive.

A free booklet is available for landowners from The Game Conservancy with a lot more information inside including grants.

Falconers and Austringers can do a spring and autumn count and inform the GCT of numbers on their land.

Predator control is a must. Foxes, magpies and crows are the biggest predators and have to be controlled by all legal methods.

The GCT have given me permission to reproduce the "The Five Golden Rules" which I have changed to four in the text to represent Falconry.

GOLDEN RULES

1. Do not Hawk Wild Grey Partridges if you have fewer than 20 birds per 250 acres (100 hectares) in the autumn. Below this number the population has little ability to compensate for hawking losses.
2. Avoid hawking Grey Partridges after the end of December. Birds pair up in the new year and hawking at this time reduces the breeding stock.
3. Never hawk Grey Partridges that are in pairs.
4. Do not hawk Grey Partridges at all unless you also take steps to conserve them.

If you would like to help in the recovery of the Grey Partridge and for this sporting gamebird to remain on the quarry list then contact the GCT at Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF. Telephone 01425-651021.

www.gct.org.uk/greypartridges

a weekend on the Borders

(wives included)

MIKE WYNN



I was invited to a weekend on the borders with the Harris Hawk syndicate of which I am a member. "You can bring your wife" Dave Chant said. So home I went and told my wife, who upon being told that she would be shopping in the border towns jumped at the chance to get away from the kids and do some retail therapy at the same time, not that she is a big spender but she likes to look around the shops.

We left at 6am on the Friday and arrived at the meeting place at 11-30am. We were flying in the afternoon so we went to the hotel and off-loaded the luggage then we were off. Lesley, my wife, came too as most of the others were arriving later. She tagged along and I felt very guilty as I hadn't bought any wellies for her to wear, so it was a good job that it was dry and she said she enjoyed herself. We had a few flights at some pheasant as we were told that there weren't many rabbits, but 'Colonel Sanders' Steve Webb caught another chicken and it had to be the "best layer" again, remember the last one he caught in another article? He wouldn't dare ask how much it was worth, but he presented the landowner's daughter to whom the chicken belonged, some recompense for her loss. (At least he got to keep this one). The next day, Saturday, we had been invited to fly on Sir Johnny Scott's land. He kindly drove us to the hill and most of the way up it. As we had entered the field we could see some people with dogs, which looked as though they were working the hill, and as Johnny approached them they made off up and over the other side. Johnny was advised not to bring his terrier along as Terry's

hawk was eyeing it up but as Johnny walked him back to the Land Rover one of the other Harris hawks (not mine) decided it was fair game and attached itself to his nose (the dog's nose that is). She was pulled off and the terrier was locked in the Land Rover. We climbed the rest of the hill and put the Harris hawks up and they all used the lift off the hill to wait on above us with Jake, who was being flown by Dave's wife Val, being the highest. He looked like a sparrow and Val was panicking but he came straight down when she called him. Terry Large started to work his springer bitch but she couldn't find any rabbits on the hill due largely to the right to roam walkers flushing them back down their buries.

Out came the ferret and Terry made a comment about paint and drying but this was not to be the case and we had some spectacular flying from the soar and off the hillside.

A little later on Terry took some of the other members of our group to see if he could flush some rabbits with the dog further down the hill while we carried on ferretting.

We had just got to the last bury along the line when a rabbit bolted. We had three Harris hawks after it as it jinked, stopped and used every tactic it had to avoid being caught with much success as it reached and got through a dry stone wall to safety.

Further down the hill Terry and the others had come back up and watched the chase first cheering the hawks on then, appreciating the rabbit's skill in avoiding capture, started cheering the rabbit on. "Wonderful, that's how it should be" Terry said and I agreed with him wholeheartedly.

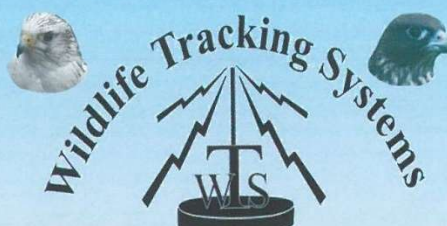
The weather was kind to us, the hawks had flown well and we all enjoyed ourselves.

On the Sunday we had been invited to another estate of over three and a half thousand acres which had recently been taken over. The keeper was keen to see how the hawks flew as he had been informed by another keeper on whose land the other group had been on the previous day that they do not slaughter anything that moves. This is the misconception that most keepers have, as they have problems with wild Goshawks which he said go into a killing frenzy when they get into a pen, with him recording thirty five pheasants killed in one attack on one of his pens on a previous shoot. Needless to say he will not entertain Goshawks in any shape or form. (One up to the Harris's I suppose as we have been invited back next year). There were not many rabbits on the land that we covered but it's another venue and the keeper will have more knowledge of his ground next year, now that he knows what we require. We came away with one cock pheasant which was taken by Terry's female, Sheba, just before the weather turned.

The hotel was good and the food was excellent as was the hosts' hospitality.

Thanks

I would like to thank Dave and Val Chant, Terry Large, Sir Johnny Scott, Mark and everyone else that helped make the weekend so enjoyable, including my wife who enjoyed herself immensely at the shops! Here's looking forward to next years meeting at the same venue.



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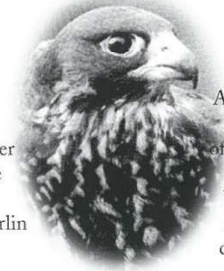
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Field Meet Notes

MIKE COUPE



Some falconers will tell you to go to a field meet as a social event, watch other falconers fly their hawks in unfamiliar surroundings but leave your own bird safe on his perch at home. Certainly field meets are a challenge. I have attended many WHC meets, always flown a hawk, but rarely experienced the sort of success I have had on my home ground.

However, the first day falcon group meet on the Denbigh moors was to prove the exception to the rule. I had met Tom Smith, the landowner, on many past meets and knew what a difficult area this would be in adverse weather conditions.

Wednesday 6th November dawned sunny and with just a very light breeze with almost spring-like temperatures, conditions virtually unheard of in winter in this stunning location.

Falconers flying that day were Chris Brown (Gyr x Barbary), Robert Kelly (Peregrine x Lanner), Donald Moseley (Gyr x Peregrine), Richard Newton (Gyr x Peregrine) and myself with a Prairie x Peregrine. Gary Cooke was also there as a spectator. It would be unfair to pick out any particular falcon as the best, they all flew so well and all waited-on in style. This says much about the abilities of the falconers to maintain their birds in such good condition despite all the travelling and lack of weathering.

Tom Smith had released Grey Partridge at the beginning of the season and these had been topped up in anticipation of our meet, so quarry was plentiful. We ended the day taking five Grey Partridge and all having at least two flights. If I remember correctly, the only falcon that didn't kill had the most exciting flight and flew the highest, which goes to prove something!

All-in-all a day to remember. Our thanks go to Tom Smith who remarked that it was the best days falconry he had ever experienced. 🦅

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Falconry is special! There are few people who would argue with that statement, myself included. At the tender age of 51 and having only recently taken up falconry I am unable to write an article regarding my achievements to date that would be of any interest to falconers. Hopefully, however, I may be able to keep you interested enough to finish reading this missive.

Man and boy I have been involved in most legitimate country pursuits, and maybe a little snaring where I shouldn't have. At the age of eleven I befriended a true countryman who, at the time, I thought of as a nice old man who knew a lot about nature and all its facets. With hindsight I realise that he was probably the age I am now which makes you think doesn't it?

He certainly did know his country lore as most of his working life he'd been a professional warrener and mole catcher. All the spare time that I had was spent with him learning the ways of the country and understanding the kaleidoscope of nature.

During all of my life I've been intrigued by the falconer and I thought during the early years, for reasons of affordability and availability of suitable birds, it would have been very difficult for those other than the privileged few to be involved with falconry. Much has changed recently and I have only now realised that it is possible for me to be included in one of the most fascinating of all country pursuits - and I am not alone.

Falconry is Special

STUART BYERS

I've just finished reading a book entitled *Reflections of a Countryman* by Fred J Taylor. I am sure there are those of you who will recognise the author as a regular contributor to the *Shooting Times* and *Country Magazine*. He is considered by many to be a great countryman and was referred to by Tony Jackson of *Shooting Times* as "that increasingly rare creature, a true countryman, one who takes an interest in every aspect of the rural scene and one who knows it with deep and abiding understanding."

In the final chapter the author refers to himself as never having been involved in the hawking scene and expressing envy for those who were. What followed was an initiation by Walter Pipe to an international field meet organised by the WHC. He later became friends with Lorant de Bastyai, John Buckener, Ceri Griffiths and others of the WHC.

The point here is that, although this was some years ago, this most genuine of all countrymen held the belief that falconry was an activity confined to the more affluent classes and rather cloaked in mystique, definitely not something that was accessible to the working man.

Probably this is not a bad thing and for that reason I believe it is most important for all of us to keep falconry special.

My thanks to all those of the WHC Essex Division who have helped me during my short membership thus far, and in particular Ray Hooper. 🐦

There's No Hawk in my mew today

GRANT ANDERSON



I released my Red-Tailed Hawk "Morgan" yesterday. It went just as I had planned it in my head. I cut off the federal bird band and her leather bracelets. Then, I tossed her up in a tree the way we've hunted a hundred times before. We (my sponsor, John, and myself) began beating the brush for her. She followed on, and had a couple of "swoops" at rabbit. Then, we lost her for a moment, but kept heading in the direction that she went (it's tough to keep track of a bird with no bells on!).

Just when I was about to come to terms with the fact I might not see her ever again, John got a rabbit running and she appeared again, out of a tree, hot on it's tail and caught it after some manoeuvring through some small saplings. I was right there to witness the whole thing. Unlike all the other times, I stayed back and let her take control of the rabbit, this one she'd have to kill herself. John had to leave to "go feed his birds", but I think he knew I needed to be alone. I just watched her from a distance as I leaned up against a tree (an innocent bystander witnessing the circle of life and the transfer of energy that's been going on for thousands of years). I took some pictures of her, thanked her for sharing her life with me, wished her good luck, and left her there to gorge.

Beginnings

In the U.S. (and more specifically in my case, Minnesota) an apprentice falconer must trap his or her bird from the wild. An apprentice can only trap a passage Red-tailed Hawk or a Kestrel Falcon (both very common birds in the U.S.). Before you can trap a bird an apprentice must first pass a 100 question State administered test (passing is 80% or better).

The test covers natural history of raptors, care and management of raptors, hunting, and ethics. After passing this test, the aspiring apprentice must find a sponsor who is a "general" or "master" falconer who will sponsor them for two years. After obtaining a sponsor, facilities and equipment need to be built, bought and made. Then, a conservation officer must inspect your facilities and equipment. If you pass all of that, you then wait for your paperwork to go to the appropriate state and federal agencies before they will issue your permit and a federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bird band.

Trapping

I trapped Morgan a year and a half ago. It was September 29, 2001. I had just received my falconry permit to trap a bird the previous day. We got an early start on

this overcast and foggy day. We were on a farm NE of Minneapolis/St. Paul where some immature Red-tails had been spotted a couple of weeks earlier. As we approached a small wood lot on the edge of a pond, I spotted something out of the corner of my eye fly from the ground up into a tree. I wasn't positive, but I thought it was a hawk.

So, we drove a little closer and opened the passenger side door and tossed out a bal-chatri trap (BC). The BC was about 14" by 12" by 3" high constructed of 1/2" wire mesh and covered in nooses made of fishing line (see "Building a Better BC", American Falconry magazine, June 2001, Vol. 23). Inside, we put two mice and a sparrow. We turned the truck around and drove away, keeping our eye back on the trap lying on the ground.

After a few minutes with no action, we decided to drive around to see if we could see if there was a hawk in the tree. We couldn't see anything (too many leaves on the trees yet) and drove back to where we could see the trap. As we approached, I saw that the hawk was caught in the trap! (at this point I must say that you should never leave a BC unattended and we did so only for a minute or two).

I rapidly approached in the truck, threw on some welding gloves on and

then cautiously approached the bird. I got a hold of the legs, folded in the wings, cut the nooses and cradled her like a baby. Her trapping weight was 1100 grams. I refer to my bird as "she", but I don't know her gender for sure. She is what we call a "tweener". She is in-between weights of a male and female Red-tail.

Training

After attaching the federal bird band, bracelets, jesses, and leash she was put in a darkened mew and left alone for a while. That evening, the moon was full and I walked around the yard in the moonlight with the hawk on my fist. I can still remember looking at the moonshadow cast on the ground of this wild hawk perched on my fist.

It was truly an amazing feeling. It took two days before she would accept food on the fist. Initially this was accomplished by sitting in a dark room with only a flashlight shining on the food on my fist. Once she was accepting food from me, training could begin. I won't go into too much detail but the progression went like this: stepping up for food, jumping short distances for food, jumping longer distances for food, eventually flying on a creance to the glove for food.

We proceeded from training inside to outside and also included training to the lure. My lure training consisted of one big food reward and that was it. The bird need only to fly to it once and it will get a good-sized crop reward. I know that others train with the lure differently, but my feeling is that it should reserved as a "last resort" to get your bird back and the bird had better know that it will get a good crop. At this point I was getting good response from the bird around 970 grams.

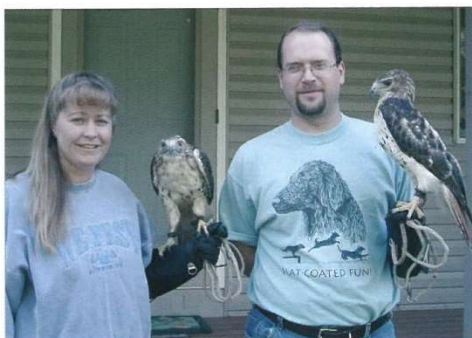
Flying

I flew the hawk "free" at home for the first time 19 days after trapping her. From there it was a matter of flying her in different areas and exposing her to different sights and sounds all the while watching her response.

First Kill

Our first kill did not come until November 30 (two months after trapping). We did have a couple weeks of "off time" due to a bruised wing. But eventually we got it. It was a grey squirrel.

I had been beating brush in this wood lot for her looking for rabbits (cottontails). As I was beating the brush underneath a large cottonwood tree, I saw something move about 30 feet above me; it was a squirrel. I had heard horror stories of squirrel bites and decided not to make a fuss over it and just kept on kicking the brush for rabbits. But Morgan could not resist. She made a bee-line for that tree, chased the squirrel all the way around the circumference of the tree, and eventually grabbed it just as it made it to it's hole. This all happened 30 to 35 feet above my head. So as I looked



Grant & Michelle with Morgan & Jaeger.

Photo Credit: Henry Vienna

up, Morgan had her feet jammed into the "Y" of this tree where the hole was, with her wings spread wide. I can hear the squirrel screaming. What do I do now? Will my bird stay up there eat a full crop and be done with me? Has she been bit? After what seemed to be a long time (probably was all of one minute), Morgan rips the squirrel from the hole and does a beautiful long swoop to the ground with it locked in her talons. At this point I'm still worried about her getting bit so I run over to her and put "the squeeze" on the squirrel. My adrenaline was pumping and I was sweating. I transferred her to the food that was in my pocket and put the squirrel in the game bag. In the end, she was bit on the upper tarsus, but it healed over time. During our two hunting seasons, Morgan would receive many more "minor" squirrel bites, all of which healed with no problems.

Most Memorable Moments

I remember the first time I saw Morgan sleeping. There is nothing more tranquil than seeing a wild raptor sleep with its head tucked under a wing. One day

Morgan had an awesome flight on what I think was a vole. She was perched high in a big old oak tree and I was walking through some tall grass/weeds trying to kick up a rabbit. All of a sudden Morgan takes to the air: flap, flap, flap, does one hover flap, and then plummets to the ground all the while "corkscrewing" 360 degrees in her dive. She didn't catch it, but it was an unforgettable flight.

Morgan really likes squirrels and in hindsight, I wish I had hunted them more (I concentrated mostly on rabbits). I really enjoyed watching her hunt squirrels. You can see the wheels turning in her head. Sometimes she would "ladder" up a tree in which the squirrel was located to gain a height advantage. Other times she would swoop at the squirrel to get it to move, go land in a near by tree, swoop at it again eventually causing it to make a fatal mistake. One time she was hunting this way. She had made maybe three swoops at this one squirrel in a tree. I was at the base of the tree, so the squirrel could not come down. But, if you know

squirrels, they will use the branches of trees that almost connect as a sort of "sky highway" to get from one tree to the next. That was this particular squirrel's fatal mistake. The squirrel made a run for it out a long branch and leaped for the extended branch of a nearby tree. Morgan had timed her approach perfectly and nabbed the squirrel out of mid-air just as it was jumping from tree to tree.

One lasting memory I will have is that of Morgan sitting on my fist with no equipment on just prior to her release. She looked different. She was no longer "Morgan". She was just another Red-tailed Hawk in the woods.

What next

As any falconer can attest to, there is a very strong bond between falconer and bird. I think it is even more so with a wild-trapped bird, because you really work hard to earn the trust of this "wild" bird. So, it was not an easy decision to release Morgan. But, I wanted to experience the full circle of trapping, training, hunting, and eventual release of my bird. In addition, I wanted gain more experience as a falconer by training another Red-tailed Hawk. So, let me clarify. There is no hawk in my mew this summer, but there will be another one this fall. 🦅

5th Canadian National Meet

BY MEET CHAIRPERSON - MARK WILLIAMS

October 8th 2002 saw the beginning of the 5th Canadian national meet since its inception in 1994. For the first time ever it was held outside of Saskatchewan and the Alberta Falconry Association had the privilege of hosting it in Milk River, Alberta.

The initial venue of choice was Hanna, since it is where the Alberta Falconry Association has recently started holding their provincial meets. However, central Alberta has suffered some of the worst drought conditions in over 100 years that have led to significant reductions in the abundance and size of ponds in the region. The town of Hanna is located within the southern part of this region. Although paradoxical, the Milk River region and much of southern Alberta experienced early season floods, which spared the southern region from drought conditions. Pre-season scouting in July confirmed Milk River to have ample water and ducks, (the bread and butter of any North American field meet), together with the usual high hun and good grouse population. There were also more suitable areas to find rabbits. Hence the decision to move the venue at the 11th hour.

During the event we had some challenging weather conditions. Strong winds, for which the area is renowned for, proved a challenge for most birds. However, once they learned to handle the winds it sure did offer a new dynamic to the hawking. Driving sleet, snow and even hail came on the Friday providing some pretty extreme conditions that tested both falconer and bird. The snow proved to be a godsend the following days when the abundance of game became even more evident.

Visitors attending came from Utah, Oregon, North

Dakota, Washington and Montana not to mention Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and of course the hosting province of Alberta. Unfortunately no falconers from eastern Canada were able to attend. A special mention goes to Carl Cheshire who made it all the way from the UK. Each year I usually have some friends come over for our meet, especially the national ones. Carl had heard about the 5th Canadian National Meet from a mutual friend back

in the UK and decided to take a look for himself. Anyone interested in attending in the future is welcome to contact me via The Welsh Hawking Club for more information.

Hungarian partridge and ducks proved particularly abundant but some pheasants and sharptails started to

show once we found where they were hiding. Due to the unseasonable weather many of the crops were still standing or laying as swath so much of the intended hawking grounds were inaccessible. Rabbits were there but again took some searching for. Ken Hooke from Manitoba with his bald eagle and Bob Smirfitt with his red-tail from B.C. together with Alberta's Jo Turley and her red-tail put some pressure on the local lagomorph population.

Head Count

Although 57 guests attended the banquet there were 22 falconers (with birds) registered with 35 birds of which one was not flown. In total 21 raptors took 78 head of quarry during the meet or an average of 3.7 quarry per raptor over the 6 days. Three hawks took their first wild quarry at the meet. The quarry consisted of 27 huns, one sharptail, six pheasants, three voles and 41 ducks. The standard of game hawking was excellent. This was indeed a good hunting



meet and on the Saturday night we had a "celebration of the hunt" courtesy of "super chef" Dave Knutson. We enjoyed untold amounts of shish kebabs made from a combination of several different marinated meats including pheasant, partridge and duck (no one admitted to cooking or eating the voles). It truly was a team effort, from the falconers and their birds who caught the game, to the helpers who plucked and butchered the game, to the cooks who baked those delicacies in the hospitality suite kitchen. This should become a tradition.

As with the highs and lows that all who practise this noble art have or will come to experience, the meet was no exception. Alistair Franke's female anatum went AWOL for a few days prior to the meet and was found 4 days later safe and sound, much to everybody's delight on the official first day. Sadly our celebration was dampened later that same day by Terry Spring's tragic and unnecessary loss to electrocution of his beloved white 3/4 gyr x 1/4 Saker hybrid Lucky. Terry put on a brave face and soldiered through the rest of the meet with Lucky's younger brother.

The rest of the meet went very well and somewhat uneventful by comparison except for some pretty amazing hawking. Of particular note was Dave Knutson's eyes of the year peale's tiercel he bred named "Lil Nicky". What a consistently high flying and effective game hawk it is turning out to be. Mike McMann from British Columbia was there as a freelance cameraman filming the meet for a video he intends producing for sale. Some of the footage he shot was as good as it gets and we are eagerly looking forward to see the final result.

Tuesday night was the first night of the meet and the evening get together started with cheese and wine in the Southgate Motel hospitality suite which acted as the meet HQ. The following Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings were organized so that there was food supplied, followed by a small raffle draw and a guest speaker to give a talk and slide show. Wednesday evening's theme was "Loonie Night" and was held at the town's Heritage Hall. We hosted all you can eat pizza for a loonie followed by a great talk by Alberta Falconry Association's very own Dr Wayne Nelson who did a talk and slide show on Langara Island Peales Peregrine. Dr. Nelson has studied these peregrine populations for over 30 years and has a very detailed and interesting amount of data to present. The Thursday evening theme was "Toonie Night" and a great spread of chilli on a bun, salad and cake was to be had for just a toonie. This again was followed by a talk given by Cam Aldridge from Alberta University on Sage grouse

management and conservation and then a small raffle. Friday night was the banquet and main raffle night. Dr Gordon Court from the Alberta Wildlife Department, also treated us to a great slide show and talk on the Rankin Inlet peregrines.

Last night

The raffle that followed the banquet and talk was the best ever seen at a Canadian National Meet and it was not over until after midnight. Such a variety of raffle prizes ranging from a pointer and a setter, a peregrine, radio telemetry from the big three manufacturers, Marshall, Louksander and Merlin Systems, limited edition Beebe prints, two original paintings done by Lori Larsen and Colin Trefry both of B.C. Then there were the numerous hoods, bells, books and other great products generously donated by so many suppliers and private donators. The Alberta Falconry Association Field meet organizers want to publicly thank all those contributors to the raffle. Unfortunately there are too many to mention but you know who you are and we offer our sincere appreciation. All profits generated from the meet and raffles are being donated to Dr. Pat Redig's West Nile Virus research project and The North American Grouse Foundation.



There were several high-lights to the meet. Some would argue it was the moment where Dale Guthormsen's gyr peregrine hybrid was out flown by a "super gadwall" leaving us all worried that this super duck will now live to breed! However, in spite of enjoying some great flights at the meet

by my own and other peoples' birds, the highlight for this author was the look on the face of the new young apprentice who won Beebe & Webster's latest book, *North American Falconry & Hawking*. The book was personally donated by Hal Webster at the meet. It could have not have gone to a more appropriate and deserving youngster who in years to come, I am sure will cherish this great book.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow field meet organizers, Jonny Groves, Alistair Franke and Rick Skibstead and the many others who helped during the meet. The camaraderie demonstrated by all participants throughout the meet made me proud to be amongst these fine people and great falconers. Canadian field meets are renowned for their friendly, hospitable atmosphere and this meet was no exception. It has been decided that Alberta shall host the next Canadian meet in 2004, a privilege we shall endeavor to once again fulfill to the best of our ability. We hope to see you there!



A UK First?

MICK KANE

Can it be done? “No never, impossible to do, do not bother to try”, was the reaction to my first enquiry about producing young with a first year bird, a first year bird still in immature plumage. Now, I have heard of wild birds producing in their first year but never in captivity.

My passion is flying Goshawks, in particular imprinted Finnish birds, also breeding Goshawks with the use of artificial insemination. Quite probably I have been the most successful breeder in the UK over the last few years with this technique. However, I always wanted to push the boundaries of our sport out a little bit more just to make it more of a challenge and more interesting.

Maggie was hatched in May 2000 and was produced out of Rosie my old flying bird, with Ai. She was a very large Finnish Female Goshawk, one of the biggest I have had and when she was rung at the age of seven days, along with Mike Clowes who did the ringing inspection, we just got the rings on. She went on to be an excellent game hawk and was flown on all WHC meets. Her best weight was 53oz but she would fly higher on her own ground at home without all the disturbance of large field meets. She was flown hard most days which helped her attitude, being an imprinted bird.

She stopped flying at the beginning of February 2001 and her weight was increased gradually over the next weeks until she reached her top weight of around 68oz fat. At this stage she started to call to me constantly during the early sunny days of March. She also showed the typical white under coverts and plucking of toes and basically showing off. She was then placed into an open fronted imprint breeding pen and to be honest I never pushed her hard with the breeding but put her a nest in one corner just in case she decided to lay eggs. She turned aggressive with me when I entered the pen and when a 4lb Gos says go away you do it quickly.

Towards the end of March I noticed that she had taken some nest material to the nesting platform so I entered the pen and helped her build the nest. She passed sticks to me and visa versa, also I food passed with her and she passed it back, she had accepted me as a potential breeding partner. The next stage was to try to place my hand on her back to stimulate copulation and I paid the penalty a number of times with lovely talon prints over my hands. This was going to be the major stumbling block and at that time I never thought she would lay eggs. In the first week in April I was very busy taking semen from males and inseminating other Females along with Maggie’s mother who was in the pen next door.

One particular sunny day Maggie looked different to her normal self, her wings were held high and she was bowing to me and chupping very silently. Was this the time for sex? I entered her

pen and chupped her which she obligingly returned. Not forgetting all the previous times she had left her talon prints on me I was very cautious but I knew there was something different with her. I placed my hand the back of her neck first just to test the water and ran it down to her rump. I was amazed to see her tail come up and all her cloaca was there to see, the trouble was I had no semen. However, I went through with the copulation and she stood looking at me between her legs, (sorry if this sounds a bit crude) wondering what the hell I was doing to her.

I was nearly there and the next day I went in armed with a good shot of pure Goshawk semen. She accepted the semen well and I inseminated her twice a day for the next five days.

On April 12th 2001 I went down to Maggie’s pen and was astonished to find her lay in her nest. I lifted her up and behold, she has laid her first egg. I was overjoyed for her and me of course. I continued with the inseminations till she stopped accepting them, she had laid a total of four eggs at intervals of 72 hours which were placed in an incubator and Maggie was given chicken eggs to sit as replacements.

Now the next step was fertility, did the inseminations work? Did she draw the semen up? And the most important question, was she old enough to produce fertile eggs at the age of 11 months. Well I candled the eggs at ten days and the answers to all my questions were YES, all four eggs were fertile, all I had to do was hatch the eggs. This was too good to be true, I could not believe it along with a few more sceptical people.

Unfortunately, 36 days later the first egg failed, along with the second, the embryos had stopped developing at around 20 days. The next two eggs where not due for three days and I was like a father waiting in the hospital room for the first baby. Day 36, third egg, nothing showing. I placed the egg on a mirror to see if it was moving. My wife and I stood ages looking at this egg and as it cooled a little movement was seen . . . great still alive. Day 37 the third and fourth egg pipped, brilliant they hatched 48 hrs later, I had done it. I had, to my knowledge, been the first person to produce with an imprinted first year Goshawk with artificial insemination. If anybody else has then please correct me.

Both birds from Maggie turned out to be males, both went to close friends and turned out super birds with one male producing semen at 11 months old.

In 2002, I went through the same process with another 11 month old Finnish Female Goshawk and got the same results but this time I produced three chicks. At the moment I have a Female from Maggie bred from 2002, 11 months old again and she is showing all the good signs for breeding.

So you never know, it could be a hat trick.



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the 10% Rule *fact or fiction*

FRANK ALLEN

When attending club meetings we all hear the endless discussions about the weights and the weight reduction of our hawks and falcons. Many newcomers to falconry talk about the 10 per cent rule. "I'm going to reduce my bird's weight by 10 per cent and that should do the trick". If only things were that simple! The more birds we fly the more we begin to understand the differences and the difficulties.

So, is the 10 per cent rule an urban myth or is it valid for today's falconers? As it is such an easy concept to understand it spreads from person to person with amazing speed.

As far as I know the 10% rule was invented by the late, great, Jack Mavrogordato, and he mentions it in his book *A Hawk in the Bush - A Treatise on the training of the Sparrowhawk* first published in 1960. "This, the 10 per cent rule, works surprisingly well with all sorts of hawks and falcons and may be adopted as a standard". In his later book, *A Falcon in the Field* he states, "every falcon in fact has its own flying weight, which must be discovered by trial and error. The 10 per cent rule is a useful starting point, i.e. every falcon (assuming that it was in robust condition when captured) should at first be reduced to at least 10 per cent below its weight on capture".

These two statements are taken out of context from books which provide much more information about condition and weight reduction than most of us can easily assimilate.

However, I think the key statement is: "assuming that it was in robust condition when captured". The 10 per cent rule should only be applied to a newly captured falcon in that condition and what constitutes robust should be left to the experts. Obviously in these days of captive bred hawks we are not allowed to take adults or even young hawks from the wild so the 10 per cent rule does not really apply to modern falconry.

Mavrogordato goes on to write about eyas sparrowhawks stating that "for hawks appear to continue growing, at least in weight, for some considerable time after leaving the nest". I think that statement should give us a clue on how we handle our eyases.

We can all learn from the old masters of falconry but very often we have to read between the lines to fully understand all the implications when training captive bred birds, which can be reared in various ways and are seldom hacked.

Thinking about the handling of eyas falcons, a good friend of mine and experienced falconer always feeds-up a newly taken eyas on rich food for several weeks. The stress factor and the fact that the eyas is still putting on weight can easily mean that a young bird can inadvertently be underfed by a falconer who cannot read the signs. Certainly a 10 per cent reduction at this stage could at best mean a screaming mad falcon or at worst a dead one!

For some years now I have been keeping records of flying and moulting weights for all of my falcons. Obviously birds vary from individual to individual and from species to species. Lanners seem to moult at, or below, their flying weight even when fed irregularly but other species can put on considerable amounts of fat if over-fed.

Generally speaking, a tiercel would start the flying season at 640g in September then gradually increase to approximately 655g during the flying season, then to 700g in February when fed-up for the moult, then gradually reduced again to an average weight of 675g during the moult. I think that the time of the heaviest weight (700g) would correspond with Mavrogordato's 'robust when captured weight'. This would be a very fit, muscled, falcon fed to capacity for a week but as the moult starts, muscle quality declines and the average weight decreases to 675g.



My falcons are moulted on the block but fed irregularly at all times.

There are many new and innovative ways of training our falcons - kites, balloons, free flight awareness for the eyas, etc., etc., but the key still seems to be the weight and how we interpret that weight.

Every day wind and weather conditions are different so it is very difficult to interpret a slight difference in behaviour to a particular weight and even the old master, Mavrogordato, states "every falcon in fact has its own flying weight, which must be discovered by trial and error".

Thinking of different ways of interpreting weight, I know an experienced falconer who works on the reversed weight method - not reducing weight but increasing it. When a new falcon arrives he feeds it up on the sort of quarry he wants to fly, makes sure it will return to a lure

of dead bird, takes it out and flies it in all weather conditions and adjusts the weight slightly as the falcon becomes stronger on the wing. And no, they don't just fly off, but they may spend a long time in the air.

This method is more akin to extended hack, you do end up with a superbly fit, well adjusted, falcon, however this method is not recommended to the inexperienced or falconers of a nervous disposition.

Well, all this brings me back to the 10 per cent rule. It isn't an urban myth, its origins can be traced back to one of our most illustrious falconers, but is it relevant to modern falconry? Only if you intend to fly an eyas that has been hacked for some time, otherwise forget all about it and concentrate on the condition and reaction of your falcon.



Duck Hawking

with Mick Kane & Co.

Photo 1 I know what my dog (Brit) is thinking, there's still some ducks on the pond and he's going to show me how to flush them off.



Photo 2 I don't know what they're laughing at, it's not that deep. Who needs a hat and coat anyway? Where's that dog going, I don't look that bad? Ray, who's got the towel?

Photo 3 A bridge too far. Oh no, I forgot my glove and look at all of them nettles. Anyway, the water's lovely!



Photo 4 Look at the smile on my face. I always new the bird loved me!! I'll go to the middle of any pond to retrieve that duck. Who's slip is it next? There are still some ducks on the other side.



Ah well, all in a days hawking with the Welsh Hawking Club.



One for the Pot

JULIE CLOWES

There has to be another reason for keeping raptors apart from the sheer joy of hunting. When the weather changes, the days become shorter and the leaves begin to change to their golden hues before falling and providing the glorious carpet of reds and soft browns beneath our feet, all falconers begin to dream of the season ahead.

Imaginations run riot about the hunting of the previous season, the highs and the lows. Some go for pure numbers of kills whilst others are satisfied with a few spectacular flights and almost inevitable misses which for many provides the greatest of adrenalin rushes and open admiration for the quarry that has escaped.

The Lincolnshire fens provide a vista that is clear, endless and enviable. You can track your bird without the interruption of hedges, hills or woods. Just the occasional wide dyke or drain to challenge your athleticism or sheer willpower to reach your bird, struggling with quarry which is reluctant to give up the ghost. None more so than when the bird in question is a much loved and respected female Harris hawk called Beauty, now well into her fourth season.

Beauty has decided that at 2lb 4oz she is ideally suited to catching Hares of up to 9lb, catch being the operative word. Many miles have been covered over undulating plough, through fields of sprouts and cabbages, over deep, water filled dykes and half frozen flooded fields, to the accompaniment of Mike shouting "hold on Beaut, I'm coming". He invariably arrives in time to help her with her struggle with a quarry over three times her weight.

Have I ever arrived before him? Only once, when I had loped off in the opposite direction around a large and very wet field of brassicas only to flush a large Hare. Unknowingly it ran in the wrong direction, that is towards Beauty, who at the time was perched precariously on top of a stick of sprouts. Suicide! At least I was close enough to assist in preventing her from receiving too many kicks from the hares powerful back legs until Mike arrived on the scene in double quick time. He was still shouting but this time it was, "hold on Ju, hold on, don't let go". It's good to know I have my uses other than the obvious . . . that is preparing the delicious dishes which our birds provide the main ingredients for; ie. Hare, Rabbit, Pheasant and the occasional Duck.

Beauty certainly seems to see hare as her main quarry. She often ignores a far easier pheasant for a long and often tough flight at a distant hare. Only once have I seen her back off. This was a short sharp dash at a hare which erupted from very close quarters. As she approached the hare stood up on its' hind legs, put its' front



feet into a boxing stance and stared straight at her. Beauty landed a few feet away and stared right back. It loped away as Mike approached and Beauty ignored it. Mike told me afterwards that it was wearing a black belt around its' waist, that was why she hadn't gone for it. This was a typical example of survival of the fittest. Hopefully that hare will go on to father more fit hares

for future hunts in the years to come.

I seem to have digressed. I started by mentioning another reason for keeping raptors and that is the plentiful supply of game delivered to our table. Why don't you try the following recipe, delicious.

Jugged Hare

Take one Hare, preferably taken by a Harris Hawk, they taste better.

- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 1 handful of shallots
- 2 large cloves of garlic
- 3 large carrots – sliced roughly
- 8ozs button mushrooms/field mushrooms
- 4 rashers of lean bacon cut roughly
- 1 sprig each of thyme and rosemary
- 2 bay leaves
- salt & pepper
- 2 bottles of good red wine or 1 bottle and 750mls of good stock
- 125mls of olive oil
- 10oz of butter

Skin, gut and joint the Hare keeping the blood and liver. Place the Hare, liver and blood in a large bowl. Add the vinegar, shallots, garlic, carrots, bacon, herbs, salt and pepper. Pour on the wine and finally the olive oil. Cover and refrigerate for 48hrs.

Heat the butter in a large casserole. Remove the shallots from the marinade and gently fry until lightly browned. Add all other ingredients from the marinade, strain the liquid and pour over. Cook in a preheated oven at gas mark 5, 375°F (190°C) for 90 minutes. Add the mushrooms after 75 minutes.

Serve with garlic mashed potatoes, - enjoy! 🍷

The Rouse

A shakeout of the news, views and field-meets around the regions

Under the auspices of your committee, the WHC had been gently directed towards a regional structure. The need therefore, to inform you of the passion and success of each of the eight regions has arisen. The rouse gives you such a chance, and the rules of the club have been altered to accommodate this new direction. As part of the now clarified regional structure, it has become obligatory for the secretary to send in a written report to the editor of the Austringer. This is the second year of those changes and as ever, not everybody has grasped the nettle. Consequently not all regions have sent in a report, but it is a start and as we're all in the club to share our experiences, I'm sure next year we'll see all the regions covered.

SOUTH WALES

Meetings held on the second Monday of each month at Casey's Court Pub, Usk. Contact Helen Scourse 01600 860458

BATH

Meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Bull Inn, Hinton, Nr. Bath. Contact Dave Jones 01934 811 300

SOUTH WEST

Meetings held on the third Monday of each month at The Seven Stars, Kennford, Nr. Exeter. Contact Dave Scott 01752 830 382

ESSEX

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, Nr. Colchester. Contact Andy Hulme 01206 729 363

MIDLAND

Meetings held on the last Monday of each month at The Plough Inn, Normington-on-Sour, Loughborough. Contact Mick Kane 01773 811 491

COTSWOLD

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Beckford Hotel between Evesham and Tewkesbury. Contact Shaun Healy 01386 832 812

NORTH WALES

Meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month at The Robin Hood Pub, Helsby. Contact Neil McCann 0151 293 0364

YORKSHIRE

Meetings held on the last Wednesday of each month at the New Eastwick Sports Club, Whiterose Ave, Nr. Eastwick, York. Contact Malcolm Allison 01944 738 369



Regional Reports



BATH REGION

Dave Jones

I would like to thank the members of our region for voting me back in as chairman. Our region has maintained its high attendance figures again with many new faces joining as members.

Being such a large and mixed region our field meets have been made up of individual groups which make their own hunting arrangements. The club has been the hub for their communications.

Many members, including myself, would like to thank Julian Godfrey for his hospitality and generosity with continuous invitations to fly game on his land. Julian has also made it possible for overseas members to see Goshawks and Longwings catching Redleg Partridges, Pheasants and Gulls.

Roy and Kevin Wellings of Falcon Faye have been a great asset to our region for turning up each month and providing us with top quality falconry furniture.

Keeping our expenses down as falconers is a must and thanks to Honeybrook Farm as we do not pay the delivery costs of hawk food. We all order in advance and collect our hawk food once a month on club nights. Many thanks to Nick and Lynn Haverman-Mart.

We have a dedicated group of Longwings who travel miles to find Partridge, Duck and Grouse. This small but growing group has come through the ranks of Harris Hawks, Goshawks and now longwings with great success.

As for speakers we have had an interesting and educating season and to end our hunting season we have the two greats Roger Upton followed by Nick Fox.

MIDLANDS REGION

Lee Featherstone

Well, the hawking season has started full steam ahead this year with masses of field meets. Some chaps from the region

have hawked in Scotland, Wales and different locations all over the UK. My suitcase has never seen so much daylight and has not been unpacked yet. Members around the region are doing well this season and it's good too see so many dedicated falconers willing to put themselves out for field meets. As you know we have quite a few Gos lads in our region and everyone that has flown on meets have performed excellently. New eyass this year are Glyn Thompson who is flying a home bred Finnish female which he has imprinted to a very high standard and is taking some good slips with her. Also, Jack Morris has a new imprinted Finnish male bred from Rosie, my own hawk, and did very well in Scotland on the bunnies. Without doubt probably one of the best hawks I have seen fly this year is a club female imprinted and flown by Lee Featherstone.

These birds are on the small side and have not been to popular over the last several years with club members who

have flown them but credit to Lee he has done a terrific job with the Gos and should make 100 head by Christmas. Other Gos lads doing well are Trevor Webster flying imprinted female, Simon Armstrong imprinted male Finnish, Andy white who is flying a intermewed Finnish female which is imprinted. Andy has turned this bird from a screaming aggressive lunatic to a wonderful hunting bird. It was a bird that the previous owner could not do a thing with, well done Andy.

Synbad, our esteemed treasurer is doing well with his once intermewed Finnish female and is taking scrumpys by the case. Ray (don't mention buy it all) Smith is flying a intermewed imprinted Finnish male and is taking some good slips when we can wake Ray up and tell him its his slip. Seriously he doesn't do bad for a man of 39. I myself started the season with a cyass imprinted Finnish female that I bred out of Maggie, but to be honest, I could not get along with the bird although she took some good pheasants. I

have put her down for a short while and I am now flying her mother.

Harris hawks; I must say that although we do not have many Harris hawk flyers in our region it has been very difficult to arrange field meets with one or two flyers and I feel a little disappointed in some lads not making a better effort. We need at least 5 HH to make a group, if not then we cannot arrange meets. I would like someone to come forward and be the HH field meet organiser which will make things a lot easier. Any takers? We have the ground for you to hawk on - we only need the hawks. We have got some new members who are flying HH so hopefully we can get them hawking.

The AGM field meet was excellent as usual with every field meet on shooting estates. Many thanks must go to our committee [who can be a pain sometimes] also Neil McCann and Roy Wood, alias Steve Barton along with Terry Large sorted all the hawking ground out.

We had the privilege of having Clarrisa and Johnny from the BBC who came out hawking with the chaps along with a film crew for her new series. She was a great personality and Lee Featherstone took a bit of a shine to her.(BG)

Field meets

Firstly I would like to thank Mick Kane who has put on field meets throughout the season and there have been plenty of them. Co-ordinated with Neil McCann and others, I don't think that people realise the effort that is put into organising the meets and trying to satisfy every one is pretty much a big task so thanks for a good seasons hawking Mick.

NORTH WALES REGION

Neil McCann

It has been a busy year for our region trying to find a new venue to replace the Goshawk pub in which we had met for many years.

The guest speakers for this year were Ronnie Moore giving an excellent talk and slide show on flying his golden

eagle at various quarry, Bryan Paterson gave an educational demonstration on his new improved telemetry system and Martin Hollinshead gave a slide show and talk on flying Harris' Hawks out of the hood and signed copies of his new book.

Terry Large came to encourage as many members to march yet again on London. He showed his latest video on his many trips abroad flying eagles at hare and roe deer.

A belated Christmas party raised plenty of funds to pay for our buffet, an auction with a variety of items (where did those videos come from?) which were very popular.

We had camcorder video footage of the region's hawking over the last six seasons. Mick Kane with streaked hair and Steve Barton with more hair than he needs - I think he got my share!

We had Richard Jones from Birch Heath Veterinary Clinic who gave an excellent slide show on his experience working in America.

Four field meets were held at Arley Hall this season with plenty of game to fly at. Many spaces were being taken by the Midland region. There were a few late starts on some occasions because of terrible traffic on the M6.

The game keepers at Arley Hall arranged three groups of birds (Goshawks, Harris hawks and falcons) to fly on the estate at a safe distance from each other. The Harris hawks were flown in the woods where there was plenty of game to be had. Les and Jenny Hewitt's birds caught at least three quarry at each meeting. Paul Ince and Rob Irvine taking pheasants on the rise as we were blessed with good weather on every day. Paul Jonsons new eyass was flying hard, a job well done by Paul as it is his first bird.

The Goshawk group, of which I was in, had at least one kill. John and Kevin Simcox were flying male and female parent reared Finnish birds which flew hard, John's taking birds in flight and Kevin, who likes jumping into ditches to keep cool, always returns with a smile on his face after a flight.

The imprints which Lee Featherstone, Mick Kane, Glyn Thompson, Ray Smith, Kevin

Whittle and Simon Armstrong flew, all took game birds in flight while Simon and myself, on one morning, had a flight and kill on cock pheasants in the first three flights of the day.

A job well done as Lee showed the club Goshawks are up to the job. A big thank you go to Steve Webb at Arley to make sure it's only the weather that can make things go wrong. Lastly, thanks to my wife who puts on a fantastic hamper for all to tuck into.

The longwing group consisted of Ellis Phythian, Richard Newton and R Williams. Ducks were flushed and chased off the many flight ponds at Arley.

This season I will be organising more regional meets on shoots and hopefully the Sunday rabbiting venues will be back. Watch this region!

YORKSHIRE REGION

Malcolm Allison

The region is now officially up and running and meeting on the last Wednesday of every month at New Earswick Sports Club, White Rose Ave, New Earswick, York. The meetings are attended by a regular group of hard-core members and the occasional new face but more members are always required and novices are encouraged to attend to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge available. Any existing WHC members in the region who have not attended in the past, we would like to see you there - remember that the region can only go from strength to strength if it has support from its members.

The region held its first 'official' field meeting in November/December. This was a four day meet (Thursday-Sunday) at Ladies Walk Farm, Kirkcudbright, Scotland. It was attended by 12 members, seven of whom were flying Harris hawks and myself flying a male and female Goshawk (not together I might add).

After an early start we arrived at the pre-booked cottage shortly after lunch, the birds were put out to weather, bags were unpacked and after

fighting over beds we had a quick drink (coffee and tea) and set off to commence hawking.

We were not put off by the fact that Kirkcudbright Wildlife Park had lost a full grown European Lynx just two days before, despite the fact that there was only a single track road separating the park from our hawking ground.

The weather was wet, although the rain was only light so we continued undeterred. The ground was wet underfoot following the typical Scottish weather of the previous few days.

Entertainment was laid on by Alan, who gave us an exhibition of 'solo mud wrestling' as he struggled to negotiate the muddy patches with a box full of ferrets - losing his wellies on more than one occasion. The ferrets quickly got to work and rabbits started appearing. They were all pursued by the harris hawks and some excellent flights were had and three rabbits were in the bag.

I left the main party in order to get a flight for my female Gos. Prior to this meeting she had not been flown loose thus far this season but her weight was right and she was baiting at the rabbits that were being chased by the Harris hawks. I headed off to one of the small ponds in the hope of a moorhen which I thought would be a nice easy flight to enter her on.

Carl beat a small patch of reeds and a moorhen left the safety of the cover and proceeded down the stream. I saw Jem put in as it disappeared into thin air, then she flew into the lower branches of a tree overlooking the stream staring intently beneath her. The moorhen was spotted crouched behind a tree stump and Jem took it on the reflush against a fence. Satisfied with her performance on her maiden flight of the season I allowed her to feed up on a freshly caught rabbit.

Friday was much the same weather-wise and a further three rabbits were caught, including one caught by Bracken, Garry's male Harris which was being flown by my 11 year old son, Ryan. My day consisted of two flights at pheasant, neither of which

resulted in a kill. Scottish pheasants are fitter than English ones, (that's my excuse and I am sticking to it).

On Saturday we were invited onto an estate near Castle Douglas in exchange for providing a couple of beaters the day before. Unfortunately the weather was appalling and we were unable to fly.

Commiserations must go to Andy and his wife who travelled up from Catterick just for the day. The only high point of the day was seeing a pair of Red Kites soaring above a hillside as we left. We retired to the cottage for coffee and most of the party decided to head for home on Saturday evening having seen the weather forecast. Myself, Ryan and Steve were the only ones daft enough to stay. We took advantage of a few hours of sunshine on Sunday morning. We went and chased a few rabbits before packing up and heading home. And all this for just £25.00 per person (including food!). Thanks to Steve for organising the weekend and Paul for providing the excellent cuisine.

Further impromptu field meets were held throughout the season with many rabbits and the odd pheasant and moorhen being accounted for.

In the coming year it is hoped that we will be able to have some guest speakers attend our meetings and share their knowledge and anecdotes, but this can only be done if we have regular attendance at our gatherings.

Good luck to all for the breeding season and the coming hawking season.

SOUTH WALES REGION

Helen Scourse

Although it has not been possible for various reasons to organise a field meeting this year, the monthly meetings at Casey's Court near Usk have been lively and well attended. A number of entertaining and instructive speakers have attended, perhaps most notably Roger Upton on Arab falconry, Jenny Wray from the IBR and Nick Havemann-Mart from Honeybrook Farm on

nutrition and feeding for results.

However, we have also enjoyed talks from non-falconers - for example, Jeffery Boswall, the well known BBC broadcaster on ornithology, and Andrew Anderson, the widely travelled cameraman with Life of Birds, spoke of his experiences filming African Eagles. Other speakers have been PC Ian Guilford on wildlife liaison, Simon Bishop from Ferret World on ferrets, their role and their health problems and a very interesting film on Chinese hawking with Goshawks. We have just had Mark Hinge on the public perception of our sport.

This year we plan to have a talk on display falconry, a stage-by-stage account of a hawk sculpture and some information on raptor research by an authority from the Game Conservancy. We may also have a veterinary speaker and another on hawks and the law.

There is always something new to be learned, even by the oldest of us. Let us not be too modest to share our experiences publicly. Finally there are a couple of unfilled committee places just waiting for young enthusiastic volunteers. Please don't be backward at coming forward.

ESSEX REGION

Ray Hooper

The Essex Region of the Welsh Hawking Club was started in August 1999. Initially we had around six members since then our membership has increased and we have sixteen members who attend our monthly meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at The Whalebone Inn. I remember having just three field meets in the first year which has now increased dramatically with the help of our field officer, Andy, and of course our many landowners to whom we are very grateful.

This year I have attended eight field meetings and have enjoyed every one. It is noticeable the amount of quarry caught this year and the fitness of the hawks is a credit to all of the members. The Club was invited back to Boxted, which has become a

regular favourite venue.

We were also invited to two new estates this year, Coggeshall and Brightlingsea. These estates are very different from each other. Coggeshall is one of the largest pheasant breeders in the area and, as you can imagine, there were plenty of game birds around even towards the end of the season. On the day of our meeting there the gamekeepers myth that hawks will kill or frighten away anything in sight was laid to rest. Our hosts joined the two parties of Harris hawks and were amazed at their general temperament as well as their hunting capabilities. The morning soon passed and we all had good flights, some of the birds were successful. At lunchtime we were invited to eat in the shooting lodge which had heating, hot and cold running water and toilets, etc. What more could one ask for? Something to drink perhaps and yes our prayers were answered - the owner offered every one a choice of falling down water from the wicker basket. Home-made sloe gin was my tippie and very nice it was too.

A while later we were back outside and the hawks were soon in pursuit of their quarry. We had a few spectators which consisted of the land-owner, his two sons, grand daughter and a couple of the shoot beaters. They all appeared to have a great time watching the birds and dogs working. Later in the afternoon I asked if anyone would like to fly my bird and to my surprise our very young lady spectator was the first to don the gauntlet.

She and her father had great fun flying my hawk through woodland. They managed to catch a partridge between them and I was to hear this tale for the remainder of the afternoon. I am sure that we shall be hawking there again next season and I hope it becomes a regular field meet.

The other new venue at Brightlingsea, as I said previously, differs quite a bit. It has around 750 acres of mixed farmland, woodland, set aside, large hedgerows, sand pits, lakes and moor. The gamekeeper puts game birds down on this varied farmland which, however, is not a

commercial shoot. This estate is used to train field trial dogs at the beginning of the season and only a few birds are shot for retrieving purposes.

Six members with Harris hawks attended a field meet there and again our spectators on the day enjoyed the long slips at rabbits in particular. Although pheasants were not in great numbers the amount of points and flights we had appeared to be just right. This will be another regular field meeting I'm sure.

Sadly at the Boxted meeting Carl's Harris hawk was lost. We have had no reported sightings in the region and can only assume the worst.

The Essex Region had a couple of guest speakers at our meetings last year. Ian Hunt from DEFRA was invited to Colchester in June of 2002, we discussed certain aspects of quarry licences, etc.

Following on from that meeting we asked Bryan Paterson to attend the August meeting and answer questions and talk about The Hawk Board. We also had the opportunity to see and try Bryan's Wildlife tracking telemetry.

Summer time was Bar-B-Que time and last year as usual us "Essex boys" went on tour to Garlands to help out the Midland group with cooking and our noticeable talent "Karaoke."

My own Tubbs towers at Gt. Bentley was host to the annual local Bar-B-Que. The 'what the hell is this drink?' competition was run by Mick. Did anyone win? Nobody can remember so it must have been a good night.

Special events, such as the Tendring Show and end of season meal has kept everyone within the club busy. The summer moult will be over soon and before you know it we will all be on tour again meeting up at The Chainbridge Hotel. Of course we still believe Essex should be an independent state and Terry will voice our opinion.

I would like to thank all Essex Region members who have made our club a success, I am looking forward to the next season which I believe will be more eventful with even more field meets than last year.



Officers 2003

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Douglas Morgans

Vice-Presidents

Nancy de Bastyai

Ian Blantern

Jemima Parry-Jones

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Dave Dimond

Vice-Chairman

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Mike Cloues

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Breeding Project Officer

Lee Featherstone

Press and Publicity Officer

Dave Jones

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Stephen Frank, Dieter Horvath,*

Terry Large, Gary Morris,

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Graham Rossiter, Mike &

Ann Shuttleworth,

Diana Durman-Walters,

Hal Webster,

The Secretary of the Californian

Hawking Club, N. America,

The Secretary of the Cape Falconry

Club, South Africa.

Honorary Club Vets

Dick Best, Richard Jones

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Rules of the Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objectives

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, Club Co-ordinator & Conservation Officer, Breeding Project Officer, Legal Officer, Mewsletter Editor, Field Officer and a Webmaster. Each of these is entitled to attend the committee meetings and to one vote, except 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 and Postal votes will 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 five 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 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 in writing.
3. The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.
4. Any member whose subscription is unpaid by the end of May 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 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.
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 first offer the hawk back into the club.
8. Only Full members are eligible to vote on club affairs.
9. Proxy 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 at the main Field Meeting each year.
2. Meetings shall be presided over by the Chairman, Vice Chairman or in their absence one of the other Officers as appropriate.
3. A summer meeting shall be held annually at which reports of the affairs of the Club can be given. General meetings will normally be held monthly. Informal meetings will be held as required.

Alteration to Rules

Rules may only be altered by a vote taken at the AGM or at an EGM. Notices of motions for the AGM or EGM shall be sent to the Secretary in writing to arrive at least six weeks prior to these meetings. Any member wishing to call an EGM shall inform the Secretary in writing stating the reason for such a meeting. The application must be countersigned by 20 Full members.

Code of Conduct

1. The well being 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.
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 or 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.


Regions

Purpose of the Regions.


1. To provide social meetings for members and potential members living locally, although any member will be welcome to attend.
2. To arrange local field meets which will be governed by the main Club field meet rules.
3. To arrange fund raising to assist with paying for speakers and field meets.
4. To promote falconry and the Welsh Hawking Club.

Rules

1. No new region will be formed by members unless it has been agreed by the Club committee at a committee meeting.
2. All regions MUST open a bank or building society account in the name of The Welsh Hawking Club. It is recommended that an account has two signatories.
3. Any non-members attending, other than wives, partners or children of members will be made welcome for three meetings. After this time they will be given the opportunity to complete an application form to join the Club. If they decline they will no longer be allowed to attend the meetings, even as a guest of another member.
4. A register of attendees will be kept at all meetings, primarily to enforce rule 3.
5. A written report will be forwarded each year by the regional Secretary to the Editor of the *Austringer*, to reach him no later than the end of February, for inclusion in the *Austringer*.
6. A report must be sent by the regional Treasurer to the Club Treasurer showing the state of the finances, to reach her no later than the end of September, for inclusion in the Treasurers report at the AGM.
7. Each region will hold an election at its next meeting following the AGM. It will elect from its Full members a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to run the meetings. One of these may also be elected as a member from the region to attend the main committee meetings. This representative will have full voting rights.



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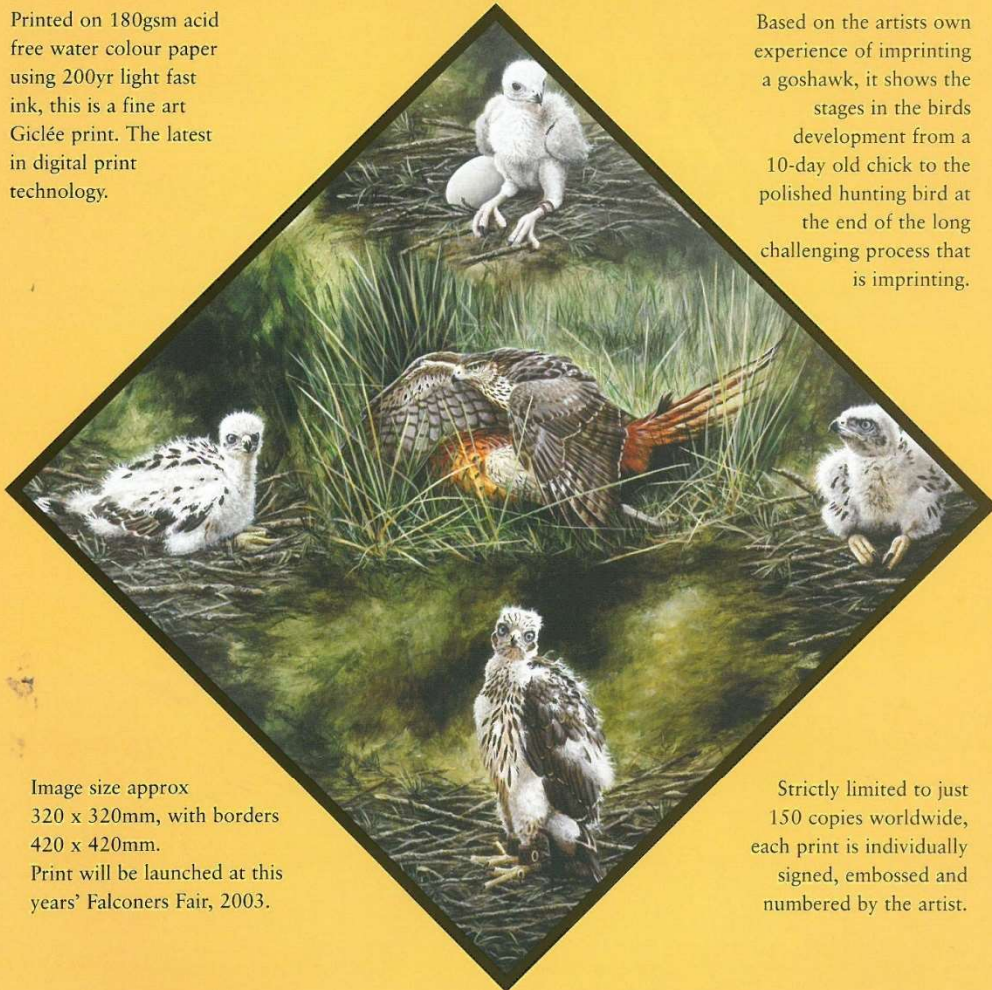


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