

THE AUSTRINGER



**The Journal of the
Welsh Hawking Club**

No 37 2005

Chairman's Chatter

DAVE DIMOND

Once again it's time for me to put pen to paper, I must say the last year has flown by quicker than ever, or so it seems!

The AGM in 2004 saw a few changes of position on the committee with Kevin Simcox standing down as Membership Secretary and Tony France taking over from him. David Horobin took the vacated position of Mewsletter Editor. My thanks to Kevin for the time he spent on committee; I am only sorry it was so short. I must also say thank you to Dave Jones who has stood down from committee work after several years. Unfortunately not long after the AGM Lee Featherston had to stand down from his position as Breeding Officer due to personal commitment's although he will still be responsible for the club goshawk "Isabel". My thanks to Lee for the effort he has put in over the past few years. The position has been taken over by Rob Cole who volunteered to help us at short notice and he has been co-opted onto the committee.

Whilst on the subject of thanking people, a big thank you must go to Neil MaCann for organizing the field meet which was in many peoples opinion the best we have ever had, even the weather was kind to us! The only mishap was Jean fracturing her ankle on the Friday and spending the rest of the day getting plastered in Wrexham hospital!

The committee has listened to the views of those attending the field meets and has decided to move the venue from the Chainbridge Hotel due to the lack of car parking and weathering area for birds. The 2005 field meet will now be based at Ruthin Castle, Denbigh where we know the parking and weathering facilities are much better.

This year will be the last "Chairman's Chatter" by myself as Jean and I are retiring from committee work and returning to being non-working members of the club. This decision has not been taken lightly by either of us, but after the many years spent by us both we feel it is time to step down to leave the way open for new faces and ideas. The time spent on committee has seen many changes, mostly for the better and we hope to see the club go forward and prosper as it should.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Falconers Fair again this year and hope you will continue to support the club for many years to come, it only remains for me to say "Good Hawking" for the next season.



Front and back cover photographs: Leigh Tovey

From the Editor

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

It is always a time for reflection when members of the committee retire and in particular the fact that Dave and Jean Dimond will be stepping down from their positions as Chairman and Treasurer respectively after more than 10 years service to the Club. Their dedication and representation at club and outside events have given stability and focus over the years. I'm sure that all of our members will miss them in that capacity and would like to say a very big thank you for their unstinting work during that time. We are also losing Jan and Tony France who have accepted a posting in Eire. Jan has been a tireless Secretary and kept everyone on their toes with meticulous detail whilst Tony has recently been our Mewsletter editor and kept us abreast of current affairs. Our united thanks to them both. But as they say every cloud has a silver lining and we do welcome David Horobin (author of *Falconry in Literature*) into the position of Secretary and Mewsletter editor.

This year is our Presidents 80th birthday. We have two excellent dedications to him in our Journal written by two falconers that know him so well and we all raise a glass to wish him many more prosperous hawking years to come.

As we are all aware there is no room for complacency in the constant struggles of pro and anti-hunting lobbies. It is to our advantage that we have the Hawk Board. They are behind the scenes dedicated workers who as a united body have given falconry a powerful voice. We must be vigilant and maintain our very high standards and codes of practice, whilst at some point in our falconry lives endeavour to give something back either on our committee, or regional groups, or serving on the Hawk Board itself.

Once again the Field Meeting held in Llangollen was a resounding success, with plenty of inspiring hawking. These achievements are as a result of the very hard work put into organising this main event by Neil McCann, who co-ordinates this on behalf of the Club. The Meet was covered by Leigh Tovey whose camera work we are all familiar with now and some truly eye-catching images. See www.leightovey.com Leigh is also our webpage designer which has all our current and topical information. View this on www.welshhawkingclub.com

Our Journal has many interesting articles this year from all quarters. It goes without saying that falconry is vibrant, alive and constantly evolving and has a diverse selection of artistic men and women from all strata's of life who are all driven by the same hawking passion. This is very apparent in the articles that contribute to this year's content.

For those of us who are in the middle of breeding falcons and hawks it is to be hoped that we have succeeded in hatching the best one yet as the new season is just around the corner. Good hawking!



Field Meet

25th–29th October

Venue: Ruthin Castle, Ruthin,
Denbighshire

Tel: 01824 702664

Special Rate of £50
Dinner, Bed & Breakfast
per person per night.

£50 deposit required with booking.

STOP PRESS

At the time of going to press we received the sad news of the death of Douglas Morgans, who passed away after a short illness in his 79th year.



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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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In Remembrance

Douglas Morgans

WHC Club President

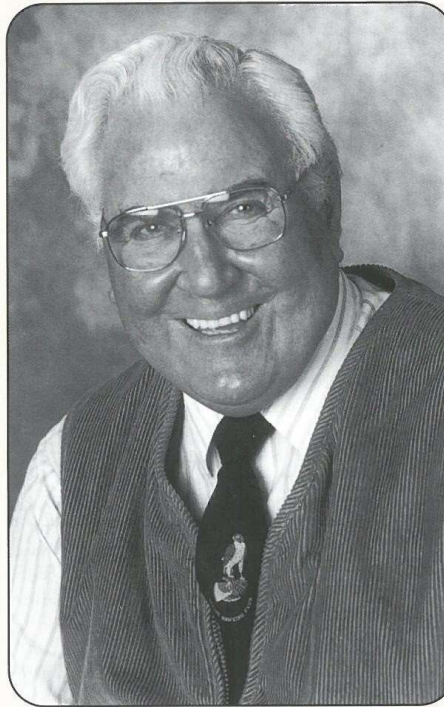
IAN BLANTERN

Douglas or 'Dougy' as he is better known is easily the longest serving member of the WHC and still one of our most active members and supporters of the club, attending committee meetings now as our Club President. He is regularly to be seen at our South Wales monthly meetings, Game Fairs and Field Meetings which are never the same if he is not present . . .

He is one of the founding members of the WHC joining up with John Buckner, our late President Kenneth Macleure and Lawrence Workman soon after the club's formation. They were all members of the local Wild Fowlers Club and through a chance meeting with Lorant de Bastyai were introduced to falconry and were all immediately hooked.

Douglas, along with the other members knew little of falconry although they all had vast experience in Field Sports but under Lorant's expert tuition and help soon learnt the finer arts.

These were the early days of falconry in the 60's when falconry restrictions were non existent and the movement of birds between falconers in Europe unrestricted. Things were easy in those days, no licences were required to take birds out or bring them back into the country. No such things as quarantine and at the end of these overseas meetings trappers would be present to sell wild caught goshawks. The top price for females was about £4 and often males would be given free. Dougy still regularly attends some of these International Field meetings in the company of Mike Clowes, Gary Morris, Bryan



Paterson and other members of the club. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany, and Austria are all on the list of visits where Dougy is held in very high regard.

He regularly joined John Buckner's annual pilgrimage to Thrupster in Caithness along with many other WHC members, staying at Keepers Cottage on Lady Harnsworth's Estate. One year, on the occasion of Lady Harnsworth's birthday, Dougy, John and Lawrence were invited to her tea party and were privileged to meet and talk at length with her old school friend, The Queen Mother who was resident at nearby Castle of Mey. We other mortals there at the time could only envy their opportunity.

Dougy served with the Welsh Guards and saw service in Germany and Palestine. After demobilisation he became a maintenance engineer at Tredomen Engineering Works, associated with the National Coal Board with whom he stayed until his retirement. I am told that many a good hawk perch was engineered from the Tredomen works. He is renowned for an unquenchable thirst and snuff blending capabilities which he has now sadly had to give up (such a pity, as my main source of supply for his superior blend has now dried up) Always immaculately groomed and dressed his admiration for the opposite sex is legendary.

Dougy is a great servant and supporter of the club and I doubt he has been off the committee since he joined all those years ago in the early 1960s.

A Tribute to WHC President Douglas Morgans

JOHN FAIRCLOUGH

It was 1974 when I first met Douglas Morgan, I believe it was in the top room of the Newport (South Glam) Conservative Club. Alcohol was allowed and I was invited by my BFC Mentor Dr Henry Clamp, who was already a member of the WHC.

The committee had already met and accepted my request for membership and we all sat down to discuss falconry business at great haste to enable the intake of alcohol not to be too rudely impeded. The meeting was presided over by the President Laurent de Bastai, Ken McClure was Chairman. Others included John Buckner, Doug Morgan, Laurie Workman, Brian Lewis, Terry Jenkins, Ceri Griffiths, Roy Lees, Gordon Baston, Roy and Gus Saunders, and a few others.

I cannot remember too much of the meeting apart from some wretched member responsible for bringing the entire Club Library for attendees to borrow and return. Fortunately, for him the loans had exceeded the returns by some 40/50 books which lightened his load somewhat.

Discussions at the bar later revealed that Morgans, Worky and Buckner were short of quarry in South Wales and as my middle name is Rhys, gave me little option but to invite this trio, plus two or three others for a days hawking at Home Farm in Staffordshire. I was concerned not about quarry but whether these very serious types would accept my delight in excesses but I was soon to learn that I came a poor fourth compared to the riotous trio. At this stage I honestly thought they were Banker, Accountant types and very reserved.

The appointed day came. We met at Home Farm. A cup of tea was offered and quickly rejected and to my amazement a small port and brandy was accepted followed by at least four or five more. Well loosened, Doug's snuff machine appeared and before long we were all sporting small brown moustaches and runny eyes. Someone remembered why we had gathered and we all took up hawks (Laurie had Jabberwok) and off to the field. Laurie and Buck chased a rabbit and a pheasant and to my amazement declared them excellent flights and fed up. Doug

was flying well but this was due to the contents of his flask, as hawks he has never kept, preferring to appreciate the skills of others (both on and off the field).

Lunch came at 12.00 a.m. and we retired to the 'Tame Otter' at Hopwas. In due time the reason for feeding up before 12.00 a.m. came home to roost and I was left to take the other falconers back for more sport, catching up with our tremendous trio at about 5.00 p.m. After a swift pint or two we all retired to Home Farm for further refreshment followed by a, not to be recommended, swim. Rather predictably Doug mistook the shallow end for the deep end and his intended swim was soon interrupted with slight concussion of the head but thankfully the day's anesthetic took away most of the pain.

Doug had arranged a lift on this day as had Worky and Buck, so, after a hot pot, we shovelled them into cars and away they went. So much for my initial thoughts about these reserved gentlemen.

Doug Morgan rarely arrives anywhere; . . . it's funny; I had to change this sentence as I had originally written "Doug Morgan *would* rarely arrive anywhere" as though it is an obituary. I can assure you readers that whilst Doug and I realize we are both on borrowed time we are alive and kicking and neither of us has been known to refuse a tincture, whether we like the person or not . . . To continue . . . Doug Morgan rarely arrives at Home Farm without Welsh scones, Welsh butter and cured bacon. His late beloved wife Barbara gave me the recipe and I can remember the scones can only be a success if you grease the griddle well. Generous to a fault there are not many of his falconry pals without one of his Black Welsh Dragons, meticulously created with his welding gear.

Although Doug has never owned a hawk, or, even more oddly, a dog, he has loved and understood the intricacies of both. His circumstances have not enabled him to do justice to either, and, perhaps being cautious has preferred to watch the travels of others.

Our journeys together have taken us hawking to Ochtrup in Westphalia (Germany) where many



a happy day was spent with the D.F.O. Hours were spent in the field after being fortified in Leo's Evil Kitchen (liquor store) and later back for more fortification. Our popularity was such that Doug and Co. were all invited to the Rauthauss (Town Hall). Incomprehensible speeches were made by the Germans and we felt inclined to respond in a similar fashion, unfortunately it was about the time of Cleese's "don't mention the war" so we were all up goose stepping and giving the salute and moustache bit. Thankfully they all found it hilarious and we got an extra stein full of beer.

Doug was a regular guest at the Meynell & South Staffordshire Point to Point. Our imbibing required frequent visits to the urinal, but on one occasion the distance was not practicable and he found the ladies toilet a safer bet but was not believed by the lady jockeys that he was in

disguise riding an outsider. Back in the hospitality tent I as always introduced Doug as the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Gwent, a title he rose to well, even if not deserved. I have been Secretary of the Point to Point many years and people still ask after the Deputy Lord Lieutenant.

The trio, Doug, Laurie and Buck were regular visitors to Home Farm, either on their own, or on several occasions when I hosted the Welsh International Field Meetings, this was when wild grey partridge were plentiful, rabbits everywhere and pheasants were flown as a stop-gap.

I don't remember whether Doug had come to visit for hawking or shooting (he has a good eye for a pheasant) but we were all yarning in the dining room and towards the end of the evening I mentioned that I had employed a pretty little groom, who was without close friends but appeared to want a change of fortune. I remember she was helping my wife at table that evening and I could not help but notice Doug and particularly Workey show a rather obvious interest and later, much later, I explained she was without a man. I casually mentioned the location of her flat and that access could be achieved round the back of the garage with the aid of a small ladder I had placed near the garage. Buckner and I left these gallants well after midnight and bid them good hunting.

After stable work had been done I was confronted at 9.00 a.m. by my groom, tendering her resignation.

"What is the problem my pretty little thing, you looked so happy yesterday?"

"Yesterday I was," said she, "but I was rudely awoken at 2.00 a.m. by one of your friends knocking on the window."

"I cannot believe it," said I, "What did he want?"

"That is exactly what I asked him and he had the impertinence to say 'Don't worry my love, I've come to read the meter'."

I am pleased to say all ended well and I have removed the small ladder!

My two daughters remember Douglas (Black Doug) well. I don't think they had ever, seen anyone asleep in the rose bed before. They referred to our hero, who against all predictions, has attained the ripe old age of 80, as looking like a stranded whale. His florid complexion and grand size caused him to be known in our household as the Midland Red Bus.

We all love him, but above all, he will be known to me and perhaps others, for his generous nature and humour, Barbara's scones and his snuff machine!

A Lanner Called Geoff

PAUL VENTER

Geoff, a tiny lanner tiercel, was born in September 1995 in Nylstroom, Limpopo. Of the three eggs laid his was the only one that hatched. The parents Dusty and Arak were transferred to the Nylstroom breeding project and did not really have enough time to establish themselves in their new environment. The pair produced 28 chicks during the period 1990 to 1997. In one year Dusty laid two clutches of eggs and the pair raised three plus two chicks. The tiercel Arak was very aggressive and was blessed with feet almost the size of that of a peregrine tiercel's feet. Geoff was named after my falconer friend in the UK, Geoffrey Pollard. I have some memorable hunting experiences with Geoffrey Pollard hunting grouse with falcons on his moor in Caithness, Scotland.

Raised by the parents, Geoff was now hard pennaed, on the glove and ready to go for the feathered stuff. Because he was a small Tiercel, Pierre and I started flying him at 380 grams. Pierre trained Geoff but he was hunted with by either of us depending on time availability. He showed early signs of great flying. From cast off he would head directly into the wind and keep on pumping his wings until he was at a great height. Normally a circle would follow and then he was heading into the wind and going higher and higher. On his sixth flight Geoff went into the blue sky during an early midday hunt in Rustenberg with Kobus Bezuidenhout. We flushed sand grouse for him at this tremendous pitch and we witnessed a beautiful swoop at the quarry as these master flyers yet again outmanoeuvred a deadly well aimed stoop. A few feathers drifting slowly in the wind told the sad story.

Geoff was used mainly for dove hawking. Here he absolutely proved his mettle and really gave us, on many an occasion, excellent quality flights and kills. A lanner will perform well when the conditions are good for the flight. Therefore

timing is very important when hunting with the lanner. Midday and early afternoon, when it is hot with ample warm updrafts, is in favour of the lanner for a good performance. Wet weather and cold winds normally do not suit the lanner or flying very late afternoon.

A day hunting doves in Rustenberg will be in our memories for many years to come. Pierre and I saw doves in an acacia tree and we both got very excited as it was in very open country and it looked like easy quarry.

Pierre cast Geoff off and the doves stayed motionless in the tree whilst the tiercel was heading into the wind and upwards away from them. We stood frozen with one eye on the doves and the other on the tiercel.

Eventually came the turn and Geoff was coming over at about four hundred feet high. At this stage breathing stops.

Now . . . now . . .
yes . . . yes . . .

HAAAA . . . And we ran forward to flush the doves. My goodness, the next moment Pierre and I fell into a ditch about four feet deep and overgrown with grass and bushes.

I was very disappointed as the doves were gone and we missed the flight. We laughed whilst assisting one another out of the old mine-prospecting type of hole. Out with the assistant falconer and soon the welcome, nice bleep sound had Pierre in Geoff's direction. When we arrived there we both burst out laughing again because Geoff did not care about the world, he was sitting plucking his trophy. A memory that will have a very special place in my diary forever.

Other outstanding kills worth mentioning were three doves taken head-on. Pierre had an experience where Geoff hit the dove so hard but he did not bind to it. The dove fell directly to earth and landed nearby. Geoff turned and landed on the dove with the dove's head still in one foot.

During the period 1996 to 2002 Geoff accounted for 874 doves and 6 young francolin.



Goshawk: What a Challenge

NEIL McCANN

After flying various goshawks over numerous seasons, you tend to see how they individually take on and select the quarry they want to catch, although the pursuit (what you see of it) can be brief, or continue for some distance. I have had a female chase pheasant over a point then change direction to take on the easier option of a rabbit.

The first goshawk I flew was a parent reared German x Finnish female. Her flying weight was 2lb 6ozs. She would tackle anything. The variety of game she caught was immense from small birds to a goose in a back garden. She excelled beyond belief. Although she always finished the

season early from some sort of injury or mishap.

The next hawk I took on was a wild trapped German male and what a challenge. He refused nearly every type of game unless you went near a ditch or stream or pond. He would instantly change as if you had put new batteries in a toy. He had eyes for only one quarry; moorhen. I tried to get him to chase pheasants over the point. He half-heartedly pursued hens but flew away from cock birds. The same with rabbits. He would chase hard, then fly over them and wait for them to reach cover before flying to the nearest tree no matter how far away that might be.

He never once returned to the fist, only to



the lure and most of the time it was a dead rabbit. I took the male to Cumbria to attempt some rabbit hawking with him. In one particular area there is a large open sheep grazed field with plenty of warrens, with cover a fair distance away. Gordon Curry and Lee Featherston had already caught a couple each, whilst my male had yet to bate off the fist. I waited near a warren. Lewis placed the ferrets in the hole. Two rabbits bolted, but the male didn't flinch, just watched them make for cover. Then three young rabbits bolted immediately going down a hole 4ft. away. The male bated towards one straight away. Things were looking up. Lewis placed another ferret in and seconds later two young rabbits left the warren which the male promptly chased and caught the smallest of the two within 30 yds.

I was really pleased and fed him up. He continued to tackle rabbits, only being successful on a few, but one of these was a buck rabbit nearly 4lb. in weight. Not bad for a male that flew at 11lb. 5½ ozs.

This season I took on a parent reared female (after another mishap). Kevin Simcox found me a goshawk on the Internet from Ivan Martin. I drove to Coventry and met Lee Featherston, gave him my yet again injured female so that he could put her in a

breeding chamber. I collected the new female from Ivan almost feather perfect, but it was November and she was in high condition. It took me nearly 4 weeks to reduce her weight and train her.

The first time I flew her free was at a field meet. She was not keen on chasing pheasant. She wasn't a large hawk and I was flying her at 2lb. 3ozs. She was unlucky not to take a hen pheasant though on her first flight. The very next day I took her hare hawking. Within fifteen minutes I had a point. I walked the hare up and she took it within fifty yds in fine style, both feet locked onto the mask. She was allowed to gorge fully on her kill.

I have taken plenty of hares and rabbits with her this season but pheasants she only wants to take on the ground from a vantage point out of a tree. I will persevere with her and hopefully next season she will be keener. This female is the most aggressive goshawk I have ever flown. I put that down to the fact I have only taken one head of game on most hawking trips and always feed her up on the kill. This year I have ordered a female Finnish hawk from Gordon. His parent reared female took over 100 head of game last season and flew at 2lb. 14ozs. That's a season I am aiming for and my new challenge.

How Much?

RICHARD JONES BVSc MSc MRCVS

Vet fees have always been a bone of contention with the general public and I have to admit if it wasn't for the fact that I patch up my own hawks in times of crisis I would probably be moaning myself!

I think at least part of the reason is that having a National Health Service, unlike our friends in the US for example, we rarely see a medical bill from a hospital and so have nothing with which to make a direct comparison.

When faced with the bill at the end of treatment a common reaction is "bloody hell I could have two new hawks for that!" At today's knockdown prices that may in fact be true but we all know the time and effort put into a quality hawk and surely that is something we cannot put a price on. In this article I will therefore try and explain some of the costs involved and attempt to provide an insight into the way we deal with the sick or injured raptor and the process involved in diagnosis and treatment.

I think one of the most important aspects of our job is good communication from the outset to ensure that the client has a reasonable understanding of the problem, diagnostic procedures required, treatment involved, the likelihood of recovery to full function and a rough cost. If this is made as clear as possible during the first appointment it enables the client with our guidance to weigh up all the factors involved and make an informed decision on how to proceed with the hawk in question.

When dealing with the avian patient we need to get an accurate diagnosis as early as possible in the proceedings so a specific treatment regime can be instigated. It is also extremely important to know when to quit as there is nothing worse for the welfare of a bird, the bank account or the falconry communities perception of the veterinary profession than putting it through countless surgeries and long term treatments/hospitalization only to have the poor bird euthanased at the end of it all. With a background in falconry and aviculture together with our relatively large raptor caseload I feel in most cases we are in a good position to help the client make the right decision for their bird.

The actual cost of medications administered to birds usually account for a small percentage of the bill due to the relatively small doses given compared to the dogs and cats. The bulk of the

cost comes in the diagnostics, labour and finances specialist equipment and hospitalization facilities the majority of which are purchased solely for their use in birds.

Examples with rough purchase cost to the practice include – video endoscopy equipment (£20,000), avian anaesthesia, ventilation and monitoring equipment (£4000), avian surgical instrumentation (£3000), fine detail X-ray facilities (£20,000), and raptor hospitalization unit + CCTV (£6000) (see Figure 1.)

Another factor that is difficult to put a price on but should probably be valued above all else is staff experienced in dealing with the raptor patient.

Whilst at vet school the extent of my avian education was an hour each on chickens and budgies! Things have improved somewhat but the reality is at present there is next to nothing taught in the field of avian medicine. The ever expanding field of veterinary science means that it is literally impossible to keep abreast of every development in every species. As such the way the profession has gone is that most will qualify as the veterinary equivalent of a GP but then pursue a special interest and gain further qualifications in that chosen subject. These certificates, diplomas or residencies (funded either by the individual or the practice) are basically apprenticeships and although provide

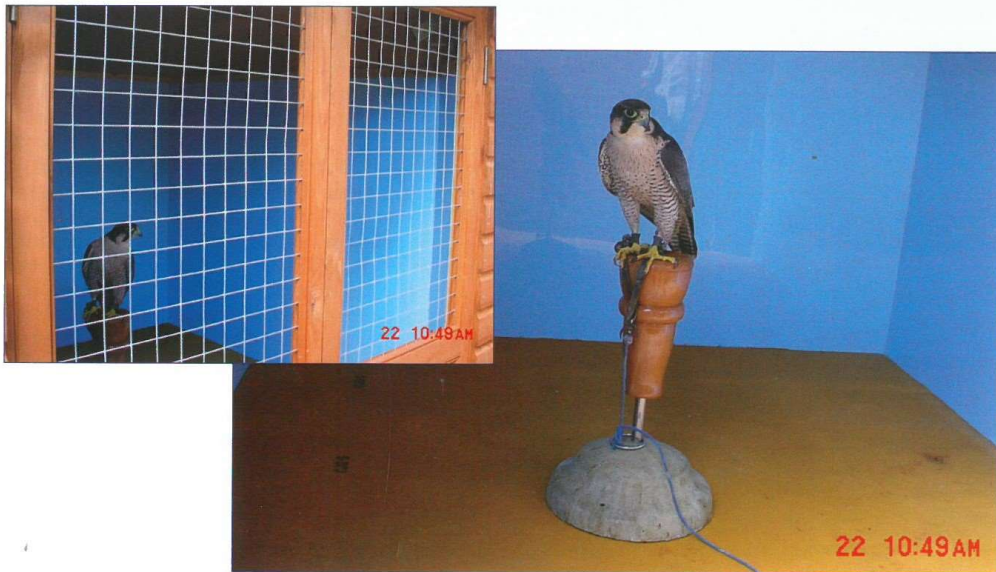


Figure 1. Raptor hospitalization unit with CCTV.

extra letters to stick on your CV the hands on experience they provide is priceless. The majority of practicing avian vets and vet nurses will also regularly participate in continuing education in the form of lectures and conferences to enable them to keep up to date with recent advances and latest treatments. Such further qualifications are a good indicator of how much time and money a practice has invested in a certain discipline and therefore maybe something worth looking at when choosing your vet. As in anything, with experience comes confidence and hopefully this is in turn conveyed to the client. Like your doctor you have to trust your vet and in this regard whilst still at college in Liverpool I thought nothing of driving to Stroud with a sick hawk and paying a few quid extra to see Neil Forbes and Greg Simpson at the time because I had complete faith in their team and facilities and I knew they would do the best for my bird whatever the outcome.

Anyway enough of me droning on about cost and onto what you actually get for your hard earned cash.

As discussed, early recognition and diagnosis of disease is crucial in the avian patient. A number of anatomical and behavioural factors make this sometimes quite difficult for falconer and vet alike. Even in a position relatively high up in the food chain the majority of raptors as in other avian species have an in built mechanism to disguise illness in an attempt to deter predators who are able to detect the slightest

weakness. This innate ability combined with their anatomy makes physical examination also relatively unrewarding in all but the most obvious cases. In birds unlike their mammalian counterparts, who are also usually slightly more willing patients, the internal organs are all but concealed behind a large keel bone and pectoral muscle mass. This makes palpation of internal structures almost impossible and by the time an abnormality is detected it may well be beyond treatment. With the avian patient we therefore have to rely much more heavily on ancillary aids such as blood testing, X-rays and endoscopy (see later). We also need to get as much information as quick as possible so we can act swiftly and appropriately. As such when dealing with the obviously sick hawk the approach of the modern day avian veterinarian tends to be quite aggressive in terms of diagnostics from the outset. No drugs are benign so randomly medicating a hawk in a hit and hope fashion may at best be ineffective or worse exacerbate a condition, even causing disease in a previously healthy hawk. An example and something that has come to light recently is a problem with the once widely used wormer *Panacur*. In most cases an otherwise healthy hawk, following administration of the drug presents anorexia and regurgitating with blood samples showing a marked toxic insult. With intensive supportive therapy most will recover but a few birds have actually died as a result. To my knowledge the majority of the problems have been with the 10% suspension and

following its use over a number of days (the 10% preparation being more concentrated is easier to overdose and being a suspension unless mixed thoroughly tends to settle so the actual drug can be in very high concentrations at the bottom of the bottle). The larger birds (eagles and vultures in particular) seem to be more sensitive. There is still no one drug that deals with all parasites and so before administering any form of wormer it is advisable to get a mite sample checked so we can target our therapy specifically at any offending organisms and if clear avoid treatment altogether. It is also very important, as in all drugs including vitamin supplements that you stick to the doses recommended by your vet.

I feel it is beneficial that the falconer has a reasonable understanding of the various procedures undertaken on his/her hawk so I will now describe briefly what they actually involve and what information they can provide.

BLOOD SAMPLES – Blood samples alone in the vast majority of cases are unable to give a specific diagnosis. Their value lies in assessing degree of damage to any particular organ system, and monitoring the bird's response to disease thus providing invaluable information on prognosis or likelihood of recovery. Blood samples are further divided into the disciplines of haematology which is the study of the cellular component of blood and may indicate changes in relative numbers of cells in certain disease processes. Anaemia's identified on the basis of low red blood cell counts can point to blood loss or malnutrition whilst changes in white blood cell numbers can indicate the presence of inflammatory conditions including bacterial, viral or fungal infections. They can also demonstrate the presence of certain blood parasites, malaria for example (see Figure 2) The fluid component of blood is the serum. When cells of a particular

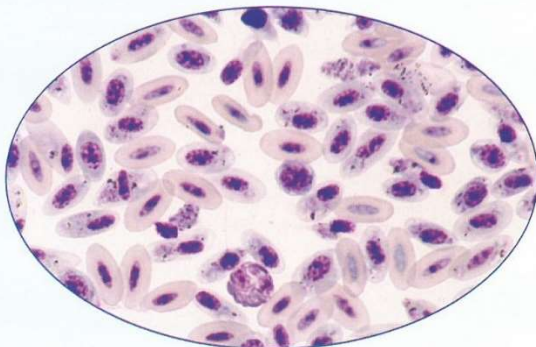


Figure 2. This blood smear shows avian red blood cells being invaded by the parasite responsible for malaria in falcons.

organ are damaged, various chemicals are released into the circulation where they can be measured. Increased levels of such markers in the serum can therefore indicate organ damage and sometimes to what degree. The serum can also be checked for antibodies to certain infectious organisms and for the presence of certain toxic agents e.g. lead. From the above it can be seen that on its own a single blood sample can rarely give a specific diagnosis in itself but together with a detailed clinical history and used as part of the diagnostic jigsaw can yield valuable information. In addition due to the vast number of avian species that we deal with there are no specific normal values available as there is in the human field so where blood samples are at their most useful is in serial samples to assess changes in that particular birds clinical picture

PARASITOLOGY AND MICROBIOLOGY –

Samples may be obtained from mites or certain lesions (e.g. wounds, bumblefoot, respiratory secretions) and using a variety of laboratory techniques pathogenic organisms can be identified and specific treatment instigated to combat them.

RADIOGRAPHY –

X rays are at their most valuable in assessing changes in the bony structures e.g. fractures, dislocations and bone infections (see Figure 3) they are also useful in confirming the presence of metallic fragments in the gut following ingestion of lead. Changes in the internal organs can also be seen radiographically but in this regard X-rays are somewhat non specific and by the time such abnormalities are actually detected on X-ray the disease is generally in an advanced state thus less likely to respond to treatment. This is where endoscopy comes into its own.



Figure 3. This X-ray shows a normal foot on the left and an advanced case of bumblefoot on the right with the bone in the ball of the foot being eaten away by infection.

ENDOSCOPY – The development of modern endoscopy equipment has revolutionized the field

of avian medicine. Using a tiny camera and fibre optic light source designed to look into human joints we are able to obtain direct visualization with magnification of almost every part of the bird's anatomy (see Figure 4).

Birds lend themselves perfectly to this process for a number of reasons. Their unique system of air sacs (basically transparent bags of inspired air surrounding all the major organs) in effect separates the body wall from the internal organs allowing excellent visualization of structures. Also the lack of a diaphragm-separating abdomen from chest cavity enables access to all internal organs from heart and lungs to intestine and reproductive tract through one 2–3 mm incision in the flank. Via this method we are not only able to visualize such structures but via the scope can take cultures or even tiny biopsies from any suspicious material to aid in our diagnostic work up.

From the above it can be seen that each specific discipline of itself is unlikely in the vast majority of cases to provide a definitive diagnosis but used together in conjunction with a detailed clinical history hopefully can provide a diagnosis, a treatment regime, a realistic prognosis and hopefully information on how to minimize the chances of recurrence.



Figure 4. A peregrine undergoing an endoscopic examination.

then a tube is passed into its airway and the bird's normal respiration over ridden by a mechanical ventilator. The bird's respiratory gasses are monitored electronically throughout the procedure so we know the bird is fully oxygenated at all times. Once asleep a blood sample is obtained from a vein in the wing an X-ray is taken. Finally the endoscope passed between the last two ribs into the body cavity to investigate internal organs and then down the wind pipe. Both X-rays and scoping of body cavity are normal but gapeworms are found almost obstructing the windpipe. The worms are removed with fine grasping forceps and appropriate wormer administered. The bird is recovered and hospitalized in a custom built raptor block well away from the cats and dogs but closely monitored by CCTV. The above has taken about 20 mins and from start to finish a trained veterinary nurse with further qualifications in the nursing and anaesthesia of avian species has monitored every step of the anaesthetic process. As such for every single anaesthesia two professionals are involved at all times. The actual cost of medication in this case has been a matter of pence but the bill would have been roughly broken down as follows. Initial veterinary consult and examination £25.00, cost of general anaesthetic £45.00, endoscopy procedure £60.00 , X-ray £25.00, the blood sample was not run as we had the diagnosis based on the above but would cost £75.00 if submitted to the lab. One night

What actually happens to my bird when I leave it at the vets?

It is quite often the case that a hawk is presented to the practice in the morning and following a discussion with the falconer the bird may be whisked away only to be presented at a later date along with a bill for sometimes a few hundred pounds with seemingly nothing more to show for the outlay than its health, a few tablets and maybe the odd dressing. I will therefore at this stage to try and provide an insight in what actually goes on 'behind the scenes', and probably the best way is via a couple of actual cases treated at the clinic.

CASE 1 . A goshawk is presented with a history of exercise intolerance, increased respiratory noise and voice change. Any bird with respiratory compromise is treated as an emergency. The bird is admitted that morning and anaesthetized using sevoflurane (the safest anaesthetic gas currently available) administered initially via face mask and

hospitalization £15.00. A grand total of £170 (Labour for both vet and nurse is worked into the above costings).The bird made a full recovery but if I had gone with my gut instinct and blindly started to treat for aspergillosis (a particularly nasty fungal infection) without the benefit of the describes diagnostics I could easily have run up a large treatment bill barking up the wrong tree and ending up with a dead bird in the process.

CASE 2 . A tiercel peregrine is presented after colliding with a wire fence. He is non weight bearing on one leg and the foot hangs limp. The bird is admitted and anaesthetized as above. An X-ray reveals a fractured tibiotarsus or shin bone. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatory and fluid therapy are administered prior to surgery. The fracture is realigned, a pin is placed in the hollow bone and further stabilization is achieved by means of an external fixator (as shown) which is basically a scaffold of threaded pins screwed into the bone and held together by means of bars and clamps. This technique can be applied to most avian bones and it has the advantage that it keeps the fracture absolutely stable in all planes but does not interfere with the joint above or below. This allows controlled use of the affected leg/wing within a few days of surgery so the bird does its own physiotherapy throughout the



Figure 5. This series shows X-rays of a fractured tibiotarsus before and after fixation and shows the fixator in place on the bird in question.

healing process. This helps to avoid problems associated with long term immobilization i.e. bumblefoot in leg fractures or in the case of wings permanent damage to tendons/ligaments essential for flight.

Such a procedure takes 1-2 hours and as well as the surgeon an anaesthetist is involved throughout monitoring every heart beat. X-rays are taken intra-operatively to ensure proper pin placement. The metal work is left in place for about 3-4 weeks but gradually disassembled with the pin taken out of the middle of the bone at week 3 and the remaining framework at about week 4. This gradual process eases the healing bone back into action by gradually increasing the load on it.

Again this bird made a full recovery but as can be seen even with everything going to plan it usually involves a number of consultations, 2-3 hours surgical time (including fixator removal) at least four X-rays, medications, pins and dressings. As a result our fees for a fracture generally approach or exceed £500.

A medical article on falconry would not be complete without a mention of bumblefoot so here goes:

BUMBLEFOOT being essentially an infected bed sore sounds like it should be relatively easy to sort out, but the reality however is it remains the bane of the falconer. The late Jack Mavrogordato in *A hawk for the bush* when referring to avian disease states that not only is prevention better than cure, in most cases it is the sole alternative to death. With current advances in avian medicine this may seem a bit extreme but not too far off the mark as far as bumblefoot is concerned. Early cases can be sorted out simply by husbandry/perching changes but in advanced cases where the foot is swollen, hot and painful multiple surgeries, X-rays and dressing changes are usually required as the infected tissue needs to be treated more like a tumour and surgically removed. As such cost usually equates roughly to that of a fracture. There are no guarantees as far as bumblefoot is concerned and as I have said I see it as more of a cancer certainly as far as falcons are concerned. This is a classic example of the importance of knowing when to stop. In my opinion if the bone in the ball of the foot has been eroded and distorted by infection despite all the drugs in the world and endless surgeries the chance of recovery is hopeless and it is not in the interest of the bird or the falconer to proceed. Fortunately due to advances in husbandry techniques and falconry practices as a whole the number of these advanced cases are nowhere near what they were 10 years ago and the

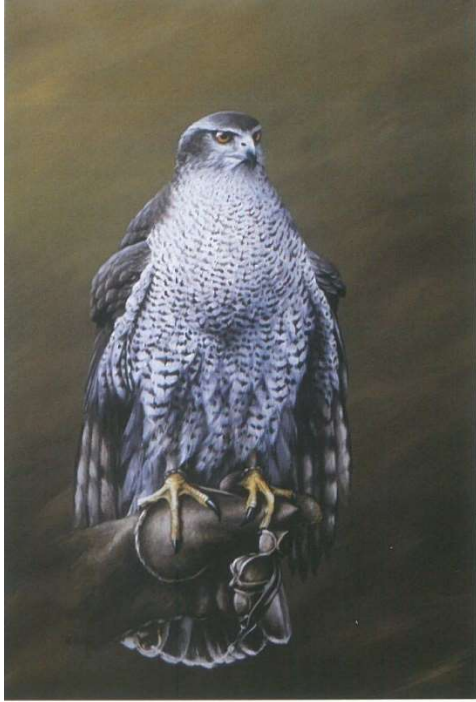
majority can be nipped in the bud before surgery is required.

Despite the best care and attention, however, given the nature of the sport, accidents can and do happen and following an injury being suddenly faced with a bill of £500 is going to be a drain on anyone.

One way round this is and can give you peace of mind is to have your bird insured. As far as the hawks go this, in my opinion, is still very worthwhile as they don't as yet seem to be subject to the same exclusion clauses that some of the dogs and cats tend to be. Two companies which provide this sort of cover are Exotic Direct and Golden Valley. The policies depend on the replacement cost of the bird but to cover for death, theft and vet fees up to £5,000 the annual premium for the average hawk is about £120 (£35 excess per claim on vet fees). The advantage to us is that when faced with a sick or injured hawk we can do exactly what the patient requires without having to sacrifice certain procedures medications to try and work within a budget especially when time is of the essence. One case that always springs to mind in this regard was a parrot presented vomiting. Due to financial constraints we had to select a bit of a hit and hope regime of medical management based on a blood sample which indicated an infectious cause. The bird did not respond and actually despite treatment deteriorated over 3-4 days with the vomiting continuing unabated. We again discussed options and were at this point able to scope the bird which revealed a severely inflamed stomach. It wasn't until we got a gut X-ray which gave us the answer - a large screw present in the stomach which was about to rupture through the stomach wall. Fortunately the screw was removed surgically and the bird recovered uneventfully but any further delay would most certainly have resulted in death. It just again emphasized the importance of a rapid and accurate diagnosis which from experience we have found impossible without the procedures discussed.

I really hope I haven't just scared you off veterinary care completely I just felt it important to try and explain what we do, why we do it and what it costs.

Fortunately with the increase in popularity of both birds kept for falconry and as companion birds you should never be too far away from a competent avian veterinarian. Probably the best way of finding one is approach fellow falconers and get a personal recommendation but as in all other services the bottom line is you pay your money and you take your choice!



Martyn Brook

Martyn was born in 1964 in West Bridgeford, Nottingham. His enthusiasm for the natural world started at an early age and his understanding of natural history is extensive. As a child much of his time was spent in the fields from which his love for ferreting, shooting and falconry developed.

He has been a keen falconer for many years flying mainly shortwings. The male goshawk being Martyn's favourite as he considers him the by far and away the most exciting.

He had always been good at art and initially was influenced by George Lodge and Archibald Thorburn. He began to paint falconry and wildlife when he moved into his first house, mainly to fill his own wall space, but friends soon asked him to paint pictures for them and this is when he got his first commission.

Martyn has always enjoyed drawing and painting, especially birds. Combining this with his love for falconry and raptors he has captured these images in his paintings. Although self taught he has progressed to producing fine standards of work which has enabled him to sell to clients all over Europe.

Martyn has exhibited at the British Falconry and Raptor Fair since 1998 and has sold to many prominent figures in the falconry world.

Visit the artist's marquee at this years 2005 fair and see some of Martyn's work on display.

He can also be seen exhibiting at:

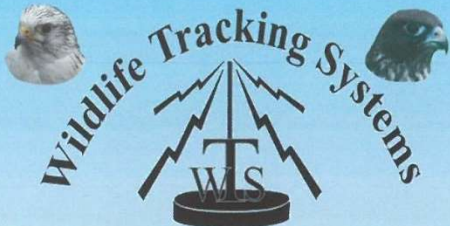
CLA Gamefair, Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire
in the Campaign for Falconry Marquee 22-24th July

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Derbyshire 3-4th Sept

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An Austringer's Lament

GERRY SIMPSON

The bloody wind, the bloody rain
The dogs are such a bloody pain.
The bloody mud, the bloody snow,
Why I do it, I don't know!

I hate the bird – the bird hates me,
She's sitting up a bloody tree.
I look up and she looks down,
If it rains much more, I'll bloody drown.

The bloody ferrets killed again,
He's nine feet down a bloody drain.
He's warm and dry and snug and fat
And I'm out here – a bloody prat!



Raised Game Pie

MICHELLE BRISENDEN

provided by Jan France

450g mixed cooked game, finely chopped
225g minced pork or turkey etc.
100g sausage meat
100g cooked ham
2-3 rashers streaky bacon, diced
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 tsp redcurrant jelly
1 pinch ground allspice
1 pinch ground bay leaves
salt and pepper
275 ml reduced game stock
12g gelatine
1 tbs Madeira

For the hot water crust pastry

350g plain flour
1 tsp salt
100g lard
150 ml water
1 egg beaten

Fry the game meats slowly with butter. Dry fry the sausage meat, ham, minced turkey, bacon and shallots then drain off the fat. Mix the game meat, allspice, bay leaves, redcurrant jelly, salt and pepper and 2 tbs of stock and add to the sausage meat and mix it all up.

Sift flour and salt, melt lard, add water and bring to the boil. Add the water to the flour and mix well. Once flour and water are mixed, knead until smooth. Roll out two-thirds of pastry to make base for the pie and line a tin and add meat filling. Roll out rest of the pastry to make a lid for the pie. Brush edges of the pastry base with beaten egg so that the lid will stick. Lay lid on the pie and squeeze edges together. Cut a hole in the centre to allow steam to escape when cooking. Glaze pie with beaten egg. Cook until golden brown at 200 degrees. Allow pie to cool slightly, heat up game stock (which needs to be hot) add gelatine and Madeira. As stock starts to thicken add to pie then chill overnight. Remove from fridge 1-2 hours before serving.

Taz defies Veterinary Science - and escapes a near fatal death flight

MIKE COUPE

I had been having some wonderful flights with my Peregrine x Prairie tiercel 'Taz' and he was starting to wait on high above our young working Cocker spaniel. In previous seasons we had spotted partridge, flushed teal ourselves or friends had used their dogs but we had finally decided to take the plunge and train our own dog. Everything was going so well but we all this would change in January 2004 when I noticed that Taz had one foot that had turned orange in colour. Bruising we thought; could have been caused by the dramatic knockdown of grey partridge, a fantastic flight at stock dove or even the aerial flight with a wild peregrine. He was soon back to normal but a little while later I noticed a slight swelling to the lower leg and this swelling quickly spread along the hind toe. I contacted our local bird vet experts at Bird Health Veterinary Clinic in Tarperley, thinking that I had a minor problem as the swelling was not hot at all. How wrong would I be!

TAZ was left for an X-ray and treatment and I called back later in the day when vet Mike Stanford took me to see the X-rays and informed me it was bad news. Taz had a nasty bone infection in the hind toe. Normally the toe would be amputated to stop the infection spreading to the centre of the entire leg. Obviously this was not an option with a hunting falcon, so antibiotics were prescribed. I was told to think about a new falcon for the next season as the likelihood of successful treatment was 'in the hands of the gods'.

I was advised to fly Taz as much as possible whilst he was under treatment and much to my amazement he flew very well under all sorts of weather conditions. For the first two weeks he was treated with 5mg Marbocyl daily and a drop of Metacam to reduce the swelling. There was no improvement. In fact the entire hind toes were a mass of boil-like swellings. An initial three week course of 25mg Antirobe was then prescribed. I was informed that Antirobe was not very palatable and I might have difficulty getting Taz to swallow this antibiotic. I devised a method to get him to take his medicine – skinned gutted chick. By opening the capsule I then sprinkled the contents inside the chick. Taz was then

flown, brought back to the lure and then onto the fist top swallow the chick containing the medication with no problem. In all he spent six weeks on Antirobe with a daily dose of 25mg and by the end of March the sores had dried up and a subsequent X-ray revealed no further spread but it looked likely he would lose the hind talon. No further treatment was prescribed, just moult and rest. In April I noticed the hind talon was black and the hind toe near the talon was double its size but hard and bony.

I still didn't know if Taz would be any use as a hunting bird and thought I would rest him until Christmas. Fortunately Ellis Pythian came to my rescue with the loan of his Gyr x Prairie hybrid and I took both birds to Auchnafree in August. Until I told him about the foot problems Dave Jones couldn't believe Taz was the same falcon that had flown so high over the Perthshire moors the previous season. Indeed Taz was a shadow of his former self. He had hardly moulted and just about managed a circuit around the lodge to the lure.

At the end of September I took the two falcons to our first game hawking Saturday at Little Budworth. Richard Jones was back with the Birch Heath Practice and would take a look at Taz before flying his own tiercel Peregrine.

Richard announced that "if he were mine, I would fly him" (I don't think he meant there and then!) I hadn't flown Taz for over a month or kept a check on his weight and thought he would just sit in a tree and return to the lure. Much to my amazement he went up straight into the wind and waited on. A partridge flushed. I heard the thud as he hit it down and found him plumping his kill. Business as usual. Although Taz was almost back to his old self, his moult had been much delayed. In fact he wasn't fully summed until the end of November, but this did not prevent him from putting in some fine flying.

On Friday 10th December I decided to try just a quick teal flight on some local ponds. It's fatal

a million to one chance but somehow the band had caught on a very thin twig at the top of the tree and Taz was hanging from the stretched and twisted band unable to get his footing.

We phoned the fire brigade (well it works for Rolf Harris) and they arrived in a few minutes and carried their ladders a ¼ of a mile over the maize stubbles, but were unable to reach as they estimated Taz was at least 60 ft. up. Shaun the gamekeeper arrived. He is used to helping me out of awkward situations but this one had him scratching his head. We both looked at the falcon and decided he was dead. What an end to a magnificent bird, when he gave one last flap, broke free to lie spread-eagled in the top of the



to say quick, but we all do it! Taz went up over the pools but started chasing the wood pigeons. He singled one out, chased it around the field and into the distance. Not a problem. Taking out the telemetry I had a good signal and began tracking him over fields, ditches, fences, gardens, two roads, maize stubbles and into private woodland surrounded by security fencing. Climb fence, fall to ground with minor abrasions, keep on tracking and finally hear bell but still could not see falcon. Eventually locate him hanging in the top of a very tall tree. With all the foot problems I had used a very thin band as a neck mount for the bell. Like many falconers I have used neck mounts for bell and transmitter in the past. Several times the bands have snapped but have never caused a problem. It must have been

tree. My wife Ann swung the lure from the stubble field and Taz was back on the fist. Maybe a million to one chance but I won't be using a neck mount ever again! Taz was given a light feed, taken to the fire station and then rested on the cage in the house. Would he ever fly again after being suspended by the neck in a tree for over two hours?

The next day he was preening his feathers and we decided to go partridge hawking in the afternoon. Although he was clearly not on top form but much to my relief he waited on and even had a touch on two partridges. A week later he took an absolutely dramatic pitch, closed up in a vertical stoop to demolish a partridge in front of spectators. Indeed we were back in business again.



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Field Meet Groups 2004



The Field Meet was held at the Chainbridge Hotel, Llangollen, North Wales. All the venues were on kept estates. As you can see from the game count, each hawking group caught and there were plenty of flights. The weather forecast was not the best, but the wind and the rain stayed away. I would like to thank all the members who attended, the American members who came over, the keepers and landowners who made this event possible and the Welsh Hawking Club members who helped me to pull off this Field Meet. I hope all the members enjoyed themselves as much as I did.

Falcon Group 1

N. Havenmart,
L. Havenmart, A. Hulme,
K. Birisendon.
Game caught: 1 pheasant.

Falcon Group 2

K. Whittle, A. Whittle, E.
Phythian, D. McLoughlin,
M. Fagan. Game caught:
1 pheasant, 1 partridge.

Goshawk Group 1

N. McCann, J. Simcox,
K. Simcox, L. Featherston,
M. Kane, R. Smith.
Game caught: 1 duck,
1 rabbit, 15 pheasants.

Goshawk Group 2

M. Tucker, D. Jones,
J. Thomas, T. Webster,
M. Simmons. Game caught:
1 partridge, 2 rabbits,
18 pheasants.

Goshawk Group 3

J. Murray, P. Murray,
C. Frearson, A. Derek,
M. Crompton.
Game caught: 3 pheasants,
1 duck, 1 rabbit, 1 hare.

Goshawk Group 4

T. Singleton, G. Sercome,
D. Fielder. Game caught:
19 pheasants, 1 partridge.

Harris Hawk Group 1

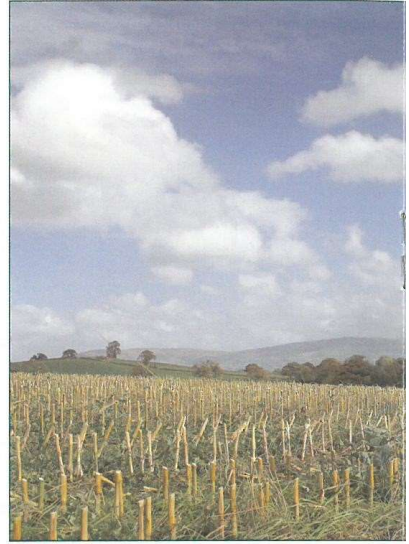
R. Hooper, S. Vaughan,
R. Norton, A. Watson,
S. Byers, T. Peplow.
Game caught: 19 pheasants,
1 duck, 1 rabbit.

Harris Hawk Group 2

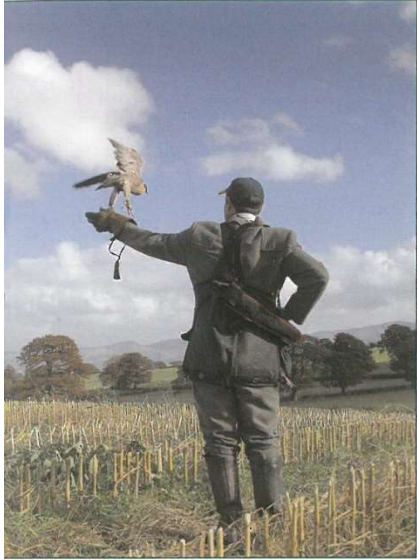
M. Wynn, P. Dooley,
J. Birchmore, D. Birchmore.
Game caught: 10 pheasants,
2 ducks, 1 rabbit.

Harris Hawk Group 3

T. Large, B. Tofts, G.
Anderson, M. Anderson.
Game caught: 7 pheasants,
1 duck, 1 partridge,
3 rabbits.



Photographs 1



y Leigh Tovey





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The Imprint Goshawk

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- Lure training
- The first flight

- Tame Hacking a Goshawk
- Tail Mount without casting
- Following-on through woods
- Flying a cast of Goshawks
- Waiting-on and Hunting in Mountains
- Hunting and flying your Goshawk off the fist

AUCHNAFREE

A Dramatic Hawking Venue

MIKE COUPE

It's always the highlight of the falconry season to be able to fly grouse in the wild dramatic scenery of Auchnafree in Perthshire.

Perhaps it is the challenge of such a wild and demanding quarry or the breathtaking scenery or just the sheer enjoyment of being away from it all in our own falconry heaven. Dave Jones is an ardent devotee of grouse hawking and spends many weeks at Auchnafree and the surrounding moors. The sheer camaraderie of a group of falconers aiming at the high ideals of grouse hawking has to be experienced to be believed. Everyone helps each other and muscles in however mundane the task. To be successful you need first rate falcons and pointing dogs but also a knowledge of

wind currents and turbulence almost akin to that of a glider pilot and of course a slice of luck.



This season Dave and Lindsay were joined for the first week of the season by Steve and Angela Gouldthorpe and myself. I was more of an onlooker this time as my peregrine x prairie was injured and I had borrowed a gyr x prairie from Ellis Phythion. I did fly each day but with little success and a lot of tracking! Dave as usual had some magnificent flights with his gyr x peregrine but it would be Steve who had the broadest grin on his

face (see photo).



Steve has been flying 'Bok' a peregrine x saker for several years now and although very proficient on partridge had never taken a grouse. Well 'Bok' proved he was a top falcon and caught a brace in the most demanding of conditions, the first grouse of the season and we certainly had plenty to drink with our evening meal. Angela's more experienced gyr x peregrine grouse hawk 'Cater' also took a brace. It's tradition to buy Champagne to celebrate. It is true you don't get a hangover with the best Champagne, but you may wake up bankrupt with the cost!



Hawking the Scottish Highlands

Neil McCann

The annual long trip north, starts at 5am packing a vast array of clothes, waterproofs, ferrets and last but not least goshawks. There are no dogs taken as we rely on walking or ferreting the rabbits. We hope there are as many as last season when we took over 250 in a week.

This year John Simcox is travelling with me; the journey goes quicker with someone who has the same interests as you. I have travelled a few times on my own and the A9 never seems to end.

We try to meet on the A9 near the junction to the cottage, as this gives you time to stretch your legs and get some fresh air.

Although we travel from South Wales, Doncaster, Midlands and the North West, we all arrive within ten to fifteen minutes of each other.

As we arrive at the cottage we collect the keys

out of the gutter, weather the birds, place our bags in the rooms, get our hawking gear on, weigh the birds, put them back in their boxes, put locaters on ferrets and we're off. It's just a short drive of 10 minutes to the flat moor. As we park the cars we spot the rabbits, there are plenty of them. This year there are five female goshawks and one male, and last but not least, ten ferrets. There would not be much sport without these.

After the first day we had over twenty rabbits between us, all cleaned and left to cool back at the cottage on the sheep fence under the tree out of the rain.

This season Lee had been invited by

Nick and Lynn Havermann-Mart to take us blue hare hawking on the grouse moor. This we were looking forward to as some of us had not been blue hare hawking before.



We met Lynn at their house, after a mistake when we parked the car up the wrong drive (and one broken driveway light later!) We managed to park in the right place when Lynn came out to tell us she lived next door. A quick warm cuppa and we made our way to the grouse moor. When Lynn said it was steep, she was right. This was no place for a car; you needed a four wheel drive but Lee and Gordon got the jeeps to the top. What a view – but a little breezy. Lynn said there were plenty hare starting to change into their winter white coats. We got the hawks out, got tackled up and stood in a straight line about 4 metres from each other, then started to walk. The heather was high and consequently you soon got warmed up. I could not believe it when Lee

you nearly stood on to make them break cover. Although they are fast they can turn hard and stop dead in heather that is at least 18" tall, the higher you walk up the moor, the more blue hares you disturb.

Gordon and John were determined to put one in their hawking vest, when Gordon's female parent reared goshawk, flying at 2lb 13oz caught one and held it fast. He ran over, stepped in the burn which was about three foot wide and looked shallow and found himself in swim mode. He told us it was cold and didn't look that deep!

All the females caught blue hares that week and plenty of rabbits. A special thanks to Nick and Lynn for the invitation as it was the highlight of the week as three of us had not caught a blue



put one up within 20 metres of the track were we parked the cars. It was not small – a good 6lb in weight. Lee was flying the home-bred female, a 2lb 2oz imprint and she liked catching these hares as she proceeded to catch four in a few hours. Some of the larger goshawks were not so keen on the first day taking mountain hare. They would fly over them or snatch large amounts of fur out of them or half heartedly tussle with them on the floor. For such a large mammal they concealed themselves so well in the heather and for all the walking and the many miles we covered in the two days on the moor, I never saw one blue hare squatting or tucked away near a burn (the usual haunt) but the couple I caught had got up right under my feet. Most of them

hare before. Especially thanks to Lynn who took time out and gave us two fantastic days on their moor.


At the end of the week we took 175 rabbits and 17 blue hares. My thanks to Colin Asquith for my invitation.

HAWKING PARTY:
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BILLY FEATHERSTON
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Mixed Bag

ANDY PHILLIPS

It all started at the Falconers Fair 2004 whilst talking to Mike Wynn. He told me he was going to Scotland in September. Inquiring a little further he told me that he would be going to a place called Newtonmore in Speyside. Mark Belmonte rents the moor for a couple of months and invites falconers to go hawking with him.

I asked if it would be possible if I could go and Mike told me the simplest thing would be to ask Mark myself. Mark was very accommodating and agreed saying that if we came up we would be staying in a local guest house as the cottage the falconers normally rented wouldn't be available. He also said if we were bringing dogs then we would have to keep them in the car overnight as there were no kennels, but there was plenty of weathering for the hawks. Having stayed in guest houses before with all the do's and don'ts I had my doubts, but I was to be pleasantly surprised.

The summer seemed to drag on doing all the long overdue jobs in the house and waiting for Sian, my Harris Hawk to moult out. As it happened she had a very slow moult and still had several tail feathers to grow out.

In August whilst coming home from work I was passing a wagon which pulled out and

hit me, rolling me down the motorway several times. I thought my time had come with my life passing before my eyes. I was lucky to only have badly bruised ribs and slight cuts and abrasions. I was in a 4x4 and was reliably informed by the police that if I had been driving a normal car I would not be alive, as the 4x4 was completely wrecked with the roof flattened and the tail gate folded in. All I kept thinking was will I be fit enough to go to Scotland, as anyone who has had bruised ribs will tell you the pain is excruciating, even with painkillers. It seemed as if the Fates were conspiring against me. I was determined to go and three weeks later with the pain easing off somewhat I was on the road to Scotland.

I met Mike on the M6 and together with hawks and dogs on board we began the long journey north. Several fuel and food stops later, and a lot of driving, we arrived at the guest house in the late afternoon to be greeted by Jean the owner. She informed us that Mark and the others were on the moor flying their hawks and would be back later on. We let the dogs out and put the hawks on the lawn to weather. Mike was going to fly two hawks. A female Harris Hawk and a Finnish Goshawk called 'Pussy'. We then went indoors for a delicious bowl of

homemade soup. Jean explained that she and her husband Adie ran the place, but Adie worked in Manchester and commuted up at weekends.

We decided to go out on the moor that afternoon. I was flying Sian and Mike was working my dog. We were only on the lower slopes but we must have put up at least 50-60 grouse. Mark said he hadn't seen that amount all day and they had been right across the moor. We were after hares but we only saw one which ran into the wind outpacing Sian. Every day that we went out it was either windy or raining. On several days we went out with the falcons. There was Dave flying a cast of tiercel peregrines. Mark and Dick both flying hybrids. Watching the falcons fighting to gain height in the wind, reaching their pitch then stooping to hit grouse was exhilarating. The odd part about this was that every time Dave flew his peregrines the sun would come out. The first time we thought it was coincidence but it happened on two other occasions. We all looked at each other and exclaimed that he "must have a hot line to God". Dave just gave us an enigmatic smile and looked at us as though it was an everyday occurrence.

When Dave's dogs, both GSP's came on point, he called them off, unhooded the tiercels and when they reached the right pitch he sent the dogs in to flush. He told us that over the years he had learnt, especially in very windy conditions that as it took the falcon a long time to gain height, the grouse knew the dogs were there and tended to move away. By calling the dogs off they stayed in the same place until he sent them in to flush. A lesson we will remember in the future.

On one of our hawking days Mike and I went out with the Harris Hawks and had them both soaring. Mike's hawk went up first then mine followed until they were tiny specks in the sky. Kev Pickering worked his wirehaired Vizsla bitch but couldn't put anything up. His dog worked very well but there wasn't anything there for her to find. Eventually the hawks came down, but they must have been soaring for 10-15 minutes. Classic stuff.

The following day Kev's dog flushed a hare. Sian was off the fist, chased the hare down and bound to it in a depression with water in it. All I could see was spray. I was glued to the spot. Mike shouted "come on Andy, move it!" Adie who was with me and

I ran over and despatched the hare. We weighed it later on and at 6½ lbs. it was too big to fit in my bag.

In the afternoon Kev's dog flushed a covey of grouse. We were on a slight rise and Sian left the fist chasing after them but was quickly out flown. I whistled her to come back and as she turned another grouse got up. Mike's hawks went for it and as it did so the grouse turned and veered away straight in Sian's direction. She stooped and hit the grouse in mid-air. I thought she had missed it but as we ran over we could see that she had caught it. A grouse with a Harris Hawk, we couldn't believe it.

That night back at the guest house Mark enquired if we had caught anything. "Only a grouse," I replied tongue in cheek, "can't see what all the fuss is in catching grouse." Mark looked disbelievingly at the grouse and was equally amazed as we recounted the flight.

The next day we were out with the Goshawks watching Kev's and Mike's hawks fly down hares and rabbits with the wind howling around us. The Goshawks seemed to make light work of it, even when the hares turned into the wind. I think Mike wished his bird was not so successful when we ended up walking across the moor. It must have been 3 miles back to the cars and he was finding it hard going with a bag full of hares. I was finding it equally difficult with bruised ribs but Kev just took it all in his stride as if he was walking in the park. When we eventually made it back to the cars we were worn out.

On the last night, because it was so mild we left the hawks out. When we woke in the morning I went to check them and saw that Sian was eating something. I had given her a hare leg that night; she couldn't still be eating that? When I approached her I saw that she was eating a hedgehog. She had picked it clean. Only the skin remaining. Talk about mixed bag. Hare, grouse and a hedgehog!

Although there was a shortage of rabbits in the area we had good fun flying even though the weather was atrocious. It is not for the faint hearted and it is hard going all the time, but the scenery is stunning. I hope to be fitter next time.

My thanks go to Jean and Adie for their hospitality. Their kindness and the superb meals Jean and Polly cooked for us. Also to Mark Belmonte for the invitation.

Success - What a Great Feeling

KEVIN MOSEDALE

Three years ago I was introduced to a 20 year old lad at my wife Sue's Christmas dinner. Sue had mentioned before that a guy at work was very interested in falconry and that he would love to come out hunting with me one day. Like all austringers once we get talking about our birds we can't stop - the difference this time was that he did not want me to stop talking. It transpired that Ben had completed a job placement as a 16 year old at a local falconry centre, so he had a bit of background knowledge on the subject already. Now working in retail sales he had lost contact with falconry.

He came out with me a couple of times and his enthusiasm was clear to see. I suggested that if he was serious about falconry he should join the W.H.C., talk to other austringers / falconers, not just me, to get a full picture of what it is all about. This he duly did and of course, it was not long before he was champing at the bit to acquire a bird.

He would be the first to admit that at this time he was not in the best position to do so, living in digs in a city centre. I must admit that I was thinking that this was going to be a passing fad with him and he would soon find something new to move on to, how wrong I was. Ben started to pick up bits of equipment here and there, I obviously helped where I could, as did other members in the region, then it came to the bird.

I would have preferred it if Ben had waited and got an eyass but a male Redtail became available, 3 years old with little success at fur or feather and I believed it to have some mal-imprinting. Still Ben was not put off by my concerns and took it on. I have been flying a female Redtail for the past eight years and so it made sense for Ben to go for the same species, although from the start this was his preferred choice.

The bird arrived and we put it down to moult. Fortunately a local farmer had a secure building that we could use. We thoroughly cleaned it and installed perches, bath etc. and released him into his new surroundings. He settled in very well over the next few months and looked quite at home. As I have said before, Ben lived in the centre of the city and with no transport of his own he had to rely on me and public transport to get in and see Zulu. As we all know buses out to villages are none too frequent but Ben always came out on his days off. He would

then spend hours sitting up in the stable with Zulu.

The time came to pick him up; I suggested that I should do this so that Zulu would hold grudges against me and not Ben. He did hold a grudge and later that season took the opportunity to get his own back whacking me so hard on the back of my head that I thought I was back on the rugby field. Training was going O.K. and the time came to fly free. It did not go well; during Ben's first season we just could not seem to get him going, adjusting his weight, changing times of day to fly etc. It was getting quite frustrating and my initial fears about Zulu appeared to be right. I honestly felt that Ben was wasting his time on this hawk and that he should cut his losses but he wanted to persevere and did not want to give up on him.

We put Zulu on a regime of as much manning as possible, when not flying free. Ben had him doing high jumps, always having to work for his rations. Ben is now at the end of his second season with Zulu and to his credit, he has turned this bird around. He now has his own aviary at home, and has a hawk that is regularly catching fur and feather.

It hasn't all gone well with Zulu this year, he took a four day holiday in our local wood, obviously enjoyed himself as when he decided to come back he was slightly heavier, so he had plainly been able to look after himself. Mind you, Ben will freely admit that this was his mistake, not the bird's fault at all. However, since then he has got Zulu following on really well, hunting with real aggression, vertically diving into brambles and taking on long glide attacks, each time he goes out now the hawk is doing something different as its confidence increases.

At last, Ben is getting something back for all the time and effort he has put in with Zulu. This Red tail is now settling down into a well-rounded hawk. He has even left the back of my head alone. Now this is all down to Ben's patience, commitment and dedication and he deserves a lot of credit.

I guess my reasons for writing this piece are to say how much I personally have got out of it. Yes it has been time consuming, my own flying time with 'Dutch' was much reduced, but when you see the results of your help, mentoring or what ever you like to call it, it makes it all worth while and lets face it I have learnt a lot more too.



What I Love About Falconry

Translated from the *Hawking Diaries of Henri Desmonts* by John Loft

Spanish gamekeepers are not always appreciative of finer things. However, faced with a rabbit trussed in its first leap out of the burrow by a goshawk faster than the flicker of the quickest of shots, they use the compliment, "You could not do better with a gun." When they see a falcon, high in the sky and controlling the land and the questing of the dogs in order to stoop on a partridge that springs from several gun-shots away, they use the same admiring expression: "Your hawk does for you what you could not do with a shot-gun."

My favourite lines from the books of that great falconer Jack Mavrogordato come from his autobiography, *Behind the Scenes*, where, in the chapter on falconry, he tells how he made a wager with himself to start a day with nothing in his hands and to finish it with a passage saker on the fist. He constructed a trap that he baited with millet taken from the fields and caught a sparrow alive. With the sparrow he captured a kestrel which, in its turn, served as a noose-ball carrier to ensnare a passage saker. Starting off with empty hands, and a certain amount of skill and intelligence – and a great deal of know-how – he achieved an enviable result that accepted experts might take some weeks to achieve.

Many aspects of falconry delight me: the trust and co-operation between falcons and dogs; my heart-felt appreciation of the falcon which, from out of sight, has tight control over the area stretching five or a thousand yards to right and left and covered by the setters' questing; the particular quality of the terrain selected for our hawking; the observation that with a truly high-mounting falcon the majority of partridges or grouse taken are old cocks, which is beneficial for future breeding; and the fact that in training as in flying what takes the falconer longest to learn is to wait patiently for that moment which culminates in profitable action . . . and a new view of the world and of the life that flows from it.

There are few moments that leave me as brimful with a sense of mingled serenity and fulfilment as the moments when the participation of dogs and falcon has led to the taking in style of a late-season partridge – something which is hard enough to

achieve with a gun. It also makes it feel just right to have been able, thanks to exercising a certain amount

of care – in the breeding, management, and training of both falcon and setters – to go out in the morning with empty hands and to come back one winter's evening with a partridge in the bag, feeling in harmony with the whole world. It is reward for a few pains taken, for skill, for a feeling for the terrain and the quarry, for occasional physical exertion, and often for the expenditure of some nervous energy.

At least twice this season my eyass Brookei falcon, Urgande, and the setters have made me live such moments.

DECEMBER 22nd – LE GRAND MOUTET

Urgande. Takes on some redlegs which find refuge in a hedge, then others that reach a spinney in front of her, and again some more . . . The flight lasts a good quarter of an hour. The falcon grows tired and I bring her down to the lure. While she is tiring on a leg I put back the jesses. Mouette and Scolopax are missing at the recall and Bernard goes off to try to recover them. He makes signs to me that there is a point a long way off. Indeed, scarcely visible to the naked eye, there are two white dots, truly a long way away, in a field of spring corn.

The binoculars confirm: Scolopax is on point, backed by Mouette. Will the partridges hold? It's a risk. I move off, remove the jesses, and put Urgande back on the wing. She is a long time taking a proper pitch, seeming to need to recover and settle a little. We take advantage of this by walking to a spot well ahead of the bitches, in an effort to direct the flight taken by the partridges. At this moment the falcon sets herself to mount with serious intent and attain an excellent pitch. She also is far away: a shout to bring her back overhead. Just before she would have arrived centrally overhead I give at long range – at two or three hundred metres – the order to the bitches to flush: "Allez!" Both rush forward into the scent and flush a covey of greys. A long, slanting stoop, a short chase, and an old cock is trussed far away.



JANUARY 6th – SERRUELLES

Two speculative flights over great fields of drilled maize of more than a hundred hectares, any one of which represents a right “foot-breaker” for the setters. It will take much courage from them to extend their quest and much skill to find partridges in this near-desert and to hold them, completely in the open, to good purpose.

Ugolin cannot be served, the dogs’ quest having been a little to the side of the partridges which Mouette will point on the way back.

Urgande takes a very high pitch, centred and maintained over the setters, which work over a considerable area of land for what seems to me like a long time: in fact, they quest for twenty minutes without anything showing. Will the falcon tire, rake far away after check, or, worse, lose her pitch? At last Scolopax comes on point,

very soon backed by Mouette, and then by Usti. The youngster breaks away to resume questing in the distance. The falcon is still very high and well-placed. I give the order to run in. Three partridges flush, skimming the ground towards distant woods. Stoop – Chase – Bind to an old cock. The flight stays in the memory as the most pure and classic one of the season. Less splendid for difficulties overcome than that of December 22nd but very pure: all the negatives were by good luck averted.

* * *

To go out with empty hands in the morning, to have a heart full of thankfulness by the evening that we have made the most of dogs, partridges, and falcons: it is for feelings such as these that we live.

Dylan – an insight to Canine Epilepsy

JAN FRANCE

We brought our second GSP, Dylan home as an 8 week old puppy hoping to have a good hunting dog as he came from a falconry background.

During his first year we seemed to have difficulty with his training as he didn’t seem to listen – we were assured that this was the norm with pointers and to just be patient. Unlike our other pointer Gelert, if Dylan managed to get out of the house, you went to the next county to find him. But, we persevered!

Soon after his 2nd birthday, we were woken by a thrashing noise and found him lying on the floor paddling and frothing at the mouth – he came out of this and we took him to the vet, who said that it was likely that he had suffered an epileptic fit. She gave us a couple of phenobarbatone tablets in case he had another in close proximity. He didn’t suffer another until several weeks later when he had two together. He was put on phenobarbatone daily but his fits grew closer together and formed ‘cluster fits’ whereby he would have upwards of 12–16 seizures in a 24–36 hour period. Eventually he was put onto Epelese as well as the phenobarb. We tried desperately to find help and advice, but it seems there isn’t really a wide knowledge of canine epilepsy. Dylan’s penultimate fit was the worst up to then where he had 16 over a 24 hour period, he was going into one fit, coming out and then straight into another. When this happens you have to get them to the vet for a valium injection as this is the only thing you can do to break the cluster. We had been told by the vet that each time he had these clusters the chances of brain damage was inevitable. Dylan was impossible to train and the thought of using an electric collar as a training aide was out of the question. So, we had a pointer who would never work and was just a pet – we didn’t mind, we loved him and only had thoughts for his welfare and health.

The last set of fits Dylan had were on the 17th of May 2004 – the day began as usual with Dylan pawing at the

bed at 6 am for Tony to get up and take him out. He had his usual walk and came in to have his breakfast and tablets – nothing any different and no warning as there had been with previous fits. Tony went to the bathroom to shave etc and as usual Dylan went to sit in the bathroom and wait for his ‘second walk’, then without notice he stared into space and leaned against Tony, Tony gently put him on his side which by this time he had begun convulsing, frothing at the mouth and paddling. He got up and began pacing, which is something he always did after a fit, but soon he went into another fit, this was the one we had been warned about, it is called a ‘Statis Epilepticus, which means the dog fits continuously – the fit lasting in excess of 30 mins or longer. This one went on for over an hour until we could get him to the vet.

He must have suffered in the region of 20 fits in this period of time and in the middle of the actual seizure he was not recovering but kept on ‘paddling’. On arrival at the vet we were told that because of his history and the fact that this was a Statis fit, should they give him valium and if he did come out of it then it was almost 100% sure to have left him severely brain damaged – we had to make the one decision any loving dog owner does not want to make – he was only three and it wasn’t fair.

We had Dylan cremated and took him home to Wales to be scattered at our home (we live work away from home and live in a tied cottage) where he loved. It didn’t matter that he had never worked, he gave us immense pleasure in his company and character, the breeder gave him a kennel name of Golden Moments – we had a lot of golden moments with him. We miss him dreadfully in our lives and for those of you who think a dog is just a dog, to some of us they are our family, our work mates, our best friend, willing to give and expecting nothing in return.

Anyone wishing any further information into canine epilepsy can contact: The Phylis Croft Foundation, 77 Upland Rd., Billericay., Essex.



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RAGLEY HALL FIELD MEETING

December 29th 2004 by Regional Chairman Paul Dillon

Due to the hard work by Mike Tucker the Welsh Region held its first proper field meet for a number of years. Even though a couple of people didn't turn up it was a successful meeting.

The Austringers were: Mike Tucker (Goshawk); Mike West (Goshawk); Steve Prider (Goshawk); Andy Walsh (Goshawk); Paul Davies (Harris Hawk, male); Martin (Harris Hawk, female); Mick (Redtail, male).

After meeting Norman the keeper at the 'Little Chef' at Alcester and upsetting the waitress (as we all paid our teas and coffees separately and there were about 15 of us!) we moved on to the estate and made ready.

It was here that we discovered that we would all be in one group due to Norman's mate being ill. We all agreed that as long as everybody was careful there should be no problems.

We agreed that the first hawk to be flown would be Paul's little male Harris Hawk which flew at 11b 30zs. Norman took Paul into a small wooded area so that the hawk could fly safely. Paul's spaniel was set to work and the end result was the first cock pheasant in the bag. It was also the first pheasant that Paul's Harris had ever flown!

Next up was Martin with his female Harris Hawk. Another young hawk with little experience and she added a rabbit to the bag.

Mick was next with his Redtail. It was a touch nervous of the dogs working for it and failed to perform.

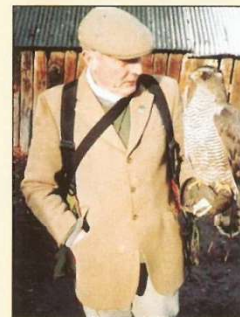
Mike West flew his female Gos next after a staunch point from his GSP and a good flight was had but nothing added to the bag on this occasion. Mike went on and caught two pheasants also trying to fly a fallow Deer . . . (try a Golden eagle next Mike!)

Mike Tucker had some excellent flights with his female Gos taking three out of four pheasants; at one point getting mislaid and having to track us by telemetry.

Steve's Gos did not like dogs but he did get a flight at a pheasant but was unsuccessful as too was Andy's Gos.

The total bag was 1 rabbit and 6 pheasants. Also seen on the day were Red legged partridge, hare and three species of deer; Muntjac Roe and Fallow.

Again we would like to thank Mike and Norman for an excellent field meet and especially from all the Austringers and spectators a very big thank you to Mike.



The 4th Option

An Alternative Transmitter Mounting Method

MARK WILLIAMS

For many years now falconers have been using radio telemetry to locate their hawks in the event that things don't go according to plan or simply as a means of quickly locating them down on game.

Practicing falconry in various parts of the globe have different environmental factors that require us to get to our hawks as quickly as possible. For example, flying wide-ranging passage birds like "high octane" gyrs here in North America requires that you get to your falcon as quickly as possible when they are down on quarry if you are to try and keep onto this bird as they will crop up quickly and get moving again much like they did before they were trapped.

Other issues arise from other predators, both avian and mammalian, that can cause harm or death to our birds and are serious, frequent concerns, particularly while hawking here in North America. My observations and opinions are based upon my experiences for more than two decades using the various telemetry mounting methods and their effects upon signal transmission.

Your decision as to what method of mounting transmitter is no easy matter. Therefore, first and foremost it should be with the bird's safety in mind, secondly performance and lastly your convenience that we choose how to attach the transmitter to our bird.

Furthermore, the various attachment methods can also vary the effect upon the transmitter performance. Each of these three main groups i.e. leg mount, neck mount and tail mount users have very strong opinions as to why they choose one method over the other and no doubt like this article, discussion about it will evoke strong emotions in their defence by their proponents.

In the 35 years since radio telemetry was first invented we have seen some amazing advances in its design, convenience of use, range and reliability. However, the three main attachment methods have not evolved at quite the same pace and it was not until fairly recently that other viable options have been explored. A handful of falconers have adopted a *fourth option* – the backpack – as a method and means to mount falconry radio transmitters.

I am one of those relatively few practitioners. First of all let me say I do not claim to have invented this idea and during my initial research several years ago I became aware of, but have since lost contact with, a couple of falconers in the UK and southern Ireland using this method a few years before I did. Indeed Dr. Nick Fox made reference

to this method in his great book *Understanding Birds of Prey* published in 1995. Fortunately I knew a few folks in the Canadian Wildlife Service based here in Alberta, Canada, who used this method to mount the larger satellite transmitters onto wild Peregrines and Gyrs in their research studies. It was not until learning the finer details and techniques of the concept from first hand practitioners like Geoff Holroyd of the CWS that I finally adapted and adopted this method that had intrigued me for so long. Shortly afterwards, a leading reputable radio telemetry manufacturer solicited ideas from several of the falconry internet groups for alternative mounting methods and after using the method for most of a season by then, I subsequently shared my findings and experiences with that company as well as a few local falconry friends. From that point on it seems to have really started to take off particularly here in North America.

This quest all started several years ago when I was motivated to start using a second transmitter on my birds. It was not until after a succession of close calls with either the transmitter itself or the multitude of scenarios that came into play in their use that I finally succumbed to the wisdom of using two transmitters on a bird for added insurance.

My initial inclination was to leg mount the second transmitter just like I did when I first started flying short-wings, but subsequently dropped in favour of the tail mount. However, aesthetics are important to me and aside from detesting the idea of cluttering my bird's feet with ID tags, bells, flying jesses and long dangling antennas, there are always the inherent increased dangers associated with using this method, including electrocution from contact with power poles etc.

Furthermore, the recent studies about the effects of "G" forces on a bird during fast stoops/pull ups etc. and my discovery of the poorer signal transmission from leg mounted transmitters, particularly when a bird is down on the ground in deep snow, vegetation or water, added to my concern. Combined with my





numerous experiences of minor injuries and bruising to my bird's feet, frequent antenna damage (pig-tailing) and in one instance, total transmitter failure due to a broken crystal caused by violent impact on quarry, I have never grown comfortable in using this method on a consistent basis. As a result I was even more determined to find an alternative, safer method as a means for consistently mounting a second transmitter to compliment my use of the tail mount method that I have been using for the past 23 years.

Let me acknowledge that I realize that there are many falconers who have never had problems with leg and neck mounts and yet some who have had tail mounted transmitters pull deck feathers out. Therefore I have no doubt that there will be others who will be highly skeptical and critical of putting a "straight jacket" on a bird, as I have heard the backpack occasionally referred to (of course the last thing the backpack is intended to be, is restrictive to the birds movement).

I have used tail mounts for over 23 years now and have never had a deck feather lost, yet I know of others who had as many as two of their birds lose a deck feather in one season. Why is this I ask myself, luck maybe? I tend to think not. I have come to the conclusion based upon over two decades of using the various methods, that the real causes are more often as a result of factors such as attachment techniques, the materials used, their subjectivity to repetitive stress, together with various transmitters weights, styles and designs. The techniques and materials used, being matched to the type and size of hawk rather than the methods themselves, often dictate the greater degree of risk involved. This in part, might explain why some folks never have a problem with a particular method.

To illustrate this point, the system I use for tail mounting is with a plectrum (usually made from pliable leather) that I mount as high up as possible on the shafts under the preen gland, (thereby reducing the pendulum effect) and attached to **both** deck feathers using cable ties securely and tightly pulled into place. This provides additional support as opposed to placing all the pressure and stress on one deck feather.

Putting it all into perspective, in the rare instances over the many years and thousands of

flights on game, I have only had about four problems that I can recall with the tail mount, none of which resulted in a lost deck feather. On two counts, it was the mount itself sliding down both shafts as opposed to the feathers being pulled out. I attributed this to simply not tightening the cable ties sufficiently. However in the two other instances, I have pinpointed and attributed the exact causes to specific flights when a violent impact on quarry by my bird has caused this to happen, no doubt by the inertia generated and probably contact to the transmitter itself. In one instance it even caused the short stiff antenna of the tail mounted transmitter to bend sharply upon contact. I am convinced that had this been a single deck feather used to mount on my bird, as is popular and convenient right now, or a longer antenna transmitter version, that I too would have a falcon lose a tail feather. It goes back to what I am saying about the degree of risk influenced by the materials, techniques and designs used for the species and size of hawk. There will always be some risk, regardless of method as it is just unnatural to have some foreign object attached to ones bird.

Neck mounts are a good alternative that I have tried, enabling high mounting and better signal transmission. However once again, I discontinued the practice as I personally disliked the putting on and cutting off process and it's somewhat ease of removal by some birds when with it on. Not to mention the fact it gets in the way of them eating whilst on a kill. I am also not convinced that an antenna dangling from it's throat in a fast hard stoop is not going to effect your bird somewhat, particularly the "G" force factor in the bottom end of the stoop and throw up (reportedly 28G's). Here in lies the attraction of the backpack mounting method as an alternative, safer, secure means of attaching a transmitter with minimal displacement and interference while providing optimum weight distribution.

Like all things in life, fitting the backpack is easy to do once you know how. Some of you will be put off the backpack concept from hearing the stories of some research bird's fatalities due to backpacks. Based upon my personal experience with backpacks over the past 3 seasons I suspect that rather than the method used, that these incidents were probably more attributed to an improperly fitted harness's during a hurried 20 minute struggle with a fresh





wild trapped bird that is then set free moments later.

Unlike the avian research technicians fleeing encounter with a wild raptor, let us not forget that a falconer's bird is watched constantly and closely and if there are any issues with fit at all, just like an ill fitting hood that the bird will demonstrate within seconds, he can step in, cut it off and try again. The research technicians however have little or no opportunity to check for fit etc, once they release the bird and unlike the falconer, they tolerate a certain level of mortality in their research for such factors. One of the most common fears about the backpack is a hawk getting hung up. Once you see a backpack fitted and preened in you will realize that this is highly unlikely. In fact if something were to be able to penetrate the feathers in such a manner during flight, the bird will have bigger worries than being hung up. My good friend Harry McElroy who has since adopted the backpack mounting method on his hawks and in spite of them going into thick prickly cover after the quail he hunts in the dessert, he tells me that his birds have never had a problem.

For the past 3 years I have been liaising with Marshall Radio Telemetry on the backpack method and credit, where credits due, I know of no other manufacturer who has taken such a pro-active approach to perfecting this concept. Since they have become involved, they have produced a more durable backpack to the leather ones I used in early "Alpha test trials". The modern plastic "Trackpack" as Marshall named it, are made from a smooth UV resistant material called Delrin that is built to last longer and be even more lightweight and better ergonomically designed, thereby minimizing potential for discomfort or mishap caused by the integrity of the material changing in use. Leather was prone to curl up at the edges when subjected to bathing and the weather elements etc. The new "Trackpack" is the best design specifically for falconry purposes that I have seen to date. Biologists and research agency's previously used materials such as neoprene or in some cases satellite transmitters encapsulated into a one piece resin backpack with a long life battery that lasted for over a year or if lucky, until the bird was re-trapped. The falconry backpack system lends itself to the new flatter designed, short antenna, tap on/off magnetic switched falconry transmitters that we have available today. I have left my early design backpacks on two individual birds for 2 seasons with no adverse wear and I only removed them recently for examination. At the time of writing the "Trackpack" is still in BETA testing stage but by all accounts it is working out very well in the field not only on my falcons but numerous other falconers who we have since fitted it to their own birds. It should be available for sale from Marshall in spring of 2005.

I cannot stress enough the importance of fit with this mounting method. I use the cross stitched

method that essentially holds the backpack unrestricted yet securely, in place. Teflon ribbon is the material of choice and it essentially loops over the head from the top two corners of the backpack and then crosses above the birds sternum where a stitch is made to hold both pieces of ribbon in place (and preventing displacement) and then by running the ribbon back up under the wings to connect with the two corners at the base of the backpack. There are other methods but the cross stitched method is the most proven and safest method to date and minimizes any opportunity for displacement. It is essential to use Teflon ribbon so as not to cause chaffing etc. Some of the horror stories I have heard are because falconers are taking shortcuts and using friction rich materials such as bootlaces etc. You owe it to your bird to provide the best materials available.

I recommend those interested in adopting this method, to look up a comprehensive account of the process on the Marshall web site or alternatively contact me personally through the editor and I will be glad to help you through it and give you helpful tips etc. I have used this method in conjunction with the tail mount for over 3 seasons now and have never had a problem. Some folks have experienced some period of adjustment and acceptability, particularly with their older inter-mewed birds using it for the first time. However it has also worked well on fresh taken passage birds so I think individual birds will react differently to others. I have yet to hear of a first year bird rejecting it and even the most stubborn bird is usually over it within a week. No different to conditioning birds in initial manning and training I suppose. In the past 3 seasons I have fitted the backpack to small falcons and hawks such as Merlins and Coopers hawks and it works well regardless of species or size. After all the backpack only weighs 4-6 grams and adding a 10 gram transmitter still keeps it well under the researchers rule of thumb of transmitter to birds bodyweight ratio's of under 3%.

I am confident that in time and with more widespread use, we will see more improvements by the numerous new adopters of this concept.

By now the reader will have realized that I am not only an advocate of the wisdom of using two transmitters but also of this "4th option". Maybe based upon my observations and findings, the reader might also have cause to review their current transmitter mounting methods and techniques and perhaps might even be encouraged to try the 4th option. If you do, I don't think you will regret it. Over time I foresee that this method will be more widely adopted for telemetry mounting . . . and who knows, as one prominent falconer who now uses this method commented to me recently, "maybe the day will come when we will all look back and collectively sigh, how did our poor birds even hunt with all that stuff on their feet"!

I know one thing; I will never go back and will continue to use it in conjunction with the tail mount method. The pictures speak for themselves.

Book Reviews

CLASSICAL FALCONRY: THE CORVIDS

by Dr. Nick Fox

DUCK HAWKING AND THE ART OF FALCONRY

by Joe Roy III

These two new offerings published by Hancock House in many ways bring the traditional western flights for longwings full circle. As I am currently working on a commentary of Latham's influential seventeenth century treatises, it has been interesting to look at both of these books given that Latham was writing in an era in which the "High Flights" at kite and heron were the norm and when the waiting on flight at waterfowl was becoming increasingly popular as a form of flying falcons which newcomers to the sport could indulge in without recourse to horses, professional falconers and stable hands and vast areas of terrain. It may be argued that both the "High Flights" and duck hawking have since been long neglected due to a combination of the popularity of more controlled gamehawking over dogs and the difficulties inherent in producing quality flights out of the hood. These two books, respectively, may well lead to a renaissance of more traditional flights, albeit adapted to modern conditions.

Dr. Nick Fox needs little introduction as a leading wildlife biologist and raptor breeder, and one who has been at the forefront of the battle to save British field sports. His general work on falconry, *Understanding the Bird of Prey* (also published by Hancock House) is an in-depth look at biological, practical and ethical considerations relevant to the sport and should be considered essential reading for anyone with an interest in falconry – novice or more experienced practitioner. In contrast, *Classical Falconry* deals purely with flights "out of the hood" – specifically the employment of larger longwings to bring corvids to bag in a style which harks back to the great flights of old.

Dr. Fox looks in great detail

at all aspects of mounted corvid hawking based on his extensive experience as Master of the Northumberland Crow Falcons, from the various quarry species available to British and overseas falconers to aspects of the land requirements for such flights. His use of relevant literary sources to illustrate and embellish the work shows not only a deep founded love of all aspects of hawking history and practice, but was a delight for me particularly given my own research into falconry in literature. Contributions from well-respected international falconers give due consideration to the potential for such flights worldwide.

Having read of the flights

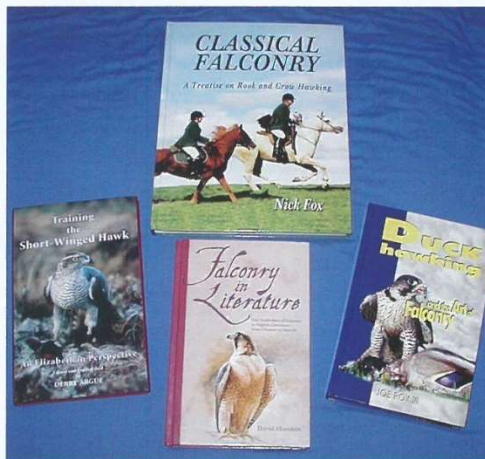
more pedestrian versions of the sport. For the rest of us, we may do better to dream of such flights and merely enjoy this stunning treatise for its own sake. However, the perhaps unexplored potential of areas of the Americas for le haut vol is a prospect which must fill any falconers of a pioneering spirit with optimism and excitement, and it will be interesting in the future to see whether this treatise will be the catalyst to bring about a new form of the most traditional longwing flights, as Ray Turner hinted at the end of his classic *Gamehawk*.

Written with the authority that comes of experience, and with the intention that the

treatise on mounted pursuit flights since Frederick II's *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus*. If one should think that the gravitas of such a work makes it heavy going, the book is nonetheless written in a light, easy to follow style and the author's sense of humour is evident throughout. Couple this to stunning illustrations of the falcons, landscapes and quarry species which it describes, and this title will surely become a modern classic worthy of a place on every serious field sports follower's bookshelves. With its emphasis squarely on the fact that falconry is as much the pursuit of enjoyment as of quarry, for those of us who may never be fortunate enough to witness hawking of this calibre *Classical Falconry* is our very own horse on which to follow our flights of fancy.

Changing to an entirely different kind of hawking, Joe Roy III's *Duck Hawking and the Art of Falconry* has interesting parallels with *Classical Falconry* in that it too emphasises that our sport should be the pursuit of pleasure. It is similarly a treatise which is evidently based on a wealth of experience and one which also thoroughly deserves to become a classic on the sport. My interest in the title was piqued through my research into Symon Latham, and comparisons between ancient and modern wisdom on the flight at waterfowl with longwings were perhaps as inevitable as they were interesting.

Every aspect of the management of falcons for this somewhat neglected branch of the sport is covered in detail, from quarry species and dogs to the sustainable use of both land (or more precisely water) and quarry. From a British perspective, of course, a great deal of what is written will need adapting to our own conditions, and it need hardly be said that the use of pigeons is illegal here, thus rendering sections of the work irrelevant. That said, were one to read that most classic of treatises on falconry, Symon Latham's *The Falcon's Lure, and Cure*, the



enjoyed by Dr. Fox and his mounted field, one cannot help but feel that it would be a bastardisation for the average falconer to dabble with such an exacting flight, as to pursue this branch of falconry to the standards maintained by the Northumberland Crow Falcons would be immensely difficult, if only due to the availability of suitable land, in Britain at least. Whilst the quarry species may not have the kudos/gourmet appeal of grouse or partridge, hunting it in this manner must remain the preserve of those with the ability and dedication to do it full justice, though for anyone in a position to do so the book will be the ultimate reference source, containing much that could be adapted to

reader may share his passion to maintain the very highest standards of our sport, Dr. Fox's work is in many ways to corvid hawking what Latham's *The Falcon's Lure, and Cure* was (and is) to the management of the peregrine for an altogether different flight. It seems that our predecessors did not think to write down their experiences of the "High Flights" and indeed our most respected historical sources deal with different forms of the sport. In English hawking literature, at least, we encounter little of any practical use on the management of this type of flight, and so in many ways *Classical Falconry* is a ground breaking treatise – perhaps the best practical

modern falconer would need to similarly discount this. Interestingly, Roy refers to Latham on weight management, though the two authors are not in total accord where it comes to the use of washed meat and stones ("rangle"). Roy suggests that he has "not found it necessary to resort to the distasteful (literally) washed meats with the eyas" and I would be inclined to agree, though my own feeling on this is that perhaps, like too many authors, he has interpreted Latham's washed meat to be "hard washed meat." My own experience, based upon Ray Turner's recommendations, is that lightly rinsed meat allows one to bring down condition very gradually after the moult with no decrease in the amount of food offered. However, this is not the place for such an argument and I digress . . .!

One of the most pleasing aspects of this book is its overall style. One gets the impression that the author is a man very much in love with, and indeed in tune with, his hawks, his environment and nature as a whole. The chapter on shortwings amply illustrates this for me on a personal level, but then my limited experience has been predominantly with shortwings, so I can readily identify with his thoughts: "I am no longer a vicarious onlooker; I become a predator – the hawk and I hunting as one." Steve Bodio's foreword picks up on this, quoting from Roy: "as an artist, I'm constantly trying to perfect my art form" – and it is no exaggeration to say that this book in itself is a work of art. *Duck Hawking* is so much more than an instructional manual, combining the author's experience with a lyrical style that one may justly compare in places to a work such as Ronald Stevens' *Laggard*. This is a book which is not content with telling how, but one which explains why – why we engage in falconry and how it affects us.

Whilst we might have to discount advice on entering/pigeons, and those of a squeamish nature might shudder at one of the dispatching techniques recommended, make no mistake about it, this is a book by a true environmentalist, for whom love of the quarry is as much a feature of his sport as

love of his hawks. There is even a chapter on "catch and release techniques" where one might feel that one's hunting is placing pressure on the quarry species. Whilst somewhat unorthodox in many ways, when compared to more traditional British works, there is nonetheless a wealth of knowledge here from which any falconer/ austringer could benefit, and this is a truly magnificent work that sets falconry in its wider context. My only gripe is that such a treatise would have benefited from a nicer binding style than laminated boards. For a work like this, a more conventional cloth and dust jacket combination, such as the publisher used for Bruce Haak's *The Hunting Falcon* (with a beautiful embossed motif which it seemed a shame to cover up with the dust jacket) would have made a very intellectually attractive book a more physically attractive one. Whilst I am aware that Dr. Fox's title also has the same binding style, I understand that a limited number of copies with a leather binding as befits a quality work. That said, beautifully illustrated and penned in the best traditions of the sportsman/naturalist genre which has produced some of the finest writings on the natural world; this is one not to be missed.

David Horobin

TRAINING THE SHORT-WINGED HAWK: AN ELIZABETHAN PERSPECTIVE

Edited and Transcribed by Derry Argue

Here is another little gem of a bygone age in falconry which has been painstakingly transcribed from the Elizabethan style into a more readable form which will have little difficulty understanding today. It contains the work of two authors notably Edmund Bert's *An Approved Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking* and an unknown author who penned *The Perfect Booke for Keping of Sparhawkes or Goshawkes*. Edmund Bert was undoubtedly thinking mans Austringer. His Treatise looks

at three main issues. First: How to make a good shortwing hawk. Second: How to reclaim her from bad habits. Third: Disease How to prevent it and Cures .He wrote from his own personal experience after a lifetime indulged in the sport. He preferred to obtain his goshawks from the wild in their first year wanting them trapped as late as possible so that they were very experienced in hunting for themselves and these he would purchase from a dealer or cadger. What seems extraordinary is the price that supposedly changed hands for hawks of merit, having sold a tiercel and female goshawk for 100 marks which is the equivalent to over £10,000 sterling. He flew only Haggard and Passage hawks but he admits that his favourite was the Rammish hawk (i.e. a sore hawk, Passage hawk or red hawk) trapped between fledging and attaining mature plumage. He considered the eyass taken straight from the nest so lacking in experience as to be a waste of time. His training; detailed and meticulous, was fully conversant with the demanding personality of the goshawk being used almost exclusively on partridge.

Like many hawks today they were subject to a wide variety of ailments. By contrast modern veterinary science has given our hawks a much improved life expectancy. Edmund Bert used all known treatments available at the time for the many afflictions they encountered. One has to wonder whether these were kill or cure remedies, but that aside he genuinely cared deeply about his hawk's welfare and went to great lengths to ensure their well-being, whilst they in turn provided him with excellent sport in the field.

By contrast the second anonymous author has dedicated his work to the training and management of the Sparrowhawk. He may have intended to add a second part to the book dealing with the training of the goshawk or he may have assumed that the reader who could train a sparrowhawk could also train a goshawk It is not a book that explains the training of the sparrowhawk merely as a prompt and guide to the well being or particularly when

things go wrong. There are of course little pearls of wisdom in there which hold good to this day.i.e always wash your hands before feeding her. Never let your hawk perch or stand where another sick hawk has been. If you do not gorge your hawk with her taken prey she will never fly lustily because lack of good serving spoils all. Derry Argue, the well known author of *Painters and Setters* has brought to life the writings of a vibrant falconry era by transcribing into modern text and has made this a book to be highly recommended.

FALCONRY IN LITERATURE


By David Horobin

Here is a book that is written by an author who is in love with the beauty of the English language and his all consuming passion for falconry. An exploration through the symbolism of falconry in literature from Chaucer to Marvell. David Horobin is a talented author who shares with us his all pervasive love of falconry combined with the writings during the Late Medieval Renaissance era of falconry imagery, which makes fascinating reading.


Falconry, practised by a large proportion of the population at that time inevitably led to contemporary literature being steeped in the cultural symbolism of raptors and this has been reviewed and explained in depth in the book. As we read the chosen examples of poetry and prose they mirror many of our own feelings and aspirations which provide us with the tangible links that span the centuries for all falconers. For example from Braithwaite's *The English Gentleman* (1630): 'Hawking is a pleasure for high mounting spirits; such as will not stoop to inferior lures'

Throughout the chapters the text is given thoughtful and skilled interpretation which allows the reader to appreciate the brilliance of the times in which they were composed and the fervour with which hawking was followed. This should be a book to be in any falconer's library and is to be highly recommended.

Diana Durman-Walters



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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 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.

SOUTH WALES
Meetings held on the second Monday of each month at Casey's Court Pub, Usk.
Contact to be elected.

SOUTH WEST
Meetings held on the third Monday of each month at The Seven Stars, Kennford, Nr. Exeter.
Contact Kevin Mosedal
01392 8333681

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

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

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

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

COTSWOLD
Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Beckford Hotel between Evesham and Tewkesbury. Contact Mike Hope 01216 894358



Regional Reports



Essex Region

By Ray Hooper

The Essex region of the Welsh Hawking Club started with six members in 1999. Membership has now risen to over 20 members. Many attending monthly meetings at The Whalebone, Fingeringhoe from Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

Our field officer Andy Hulme has once again organised nine great field meets this year both in Essex and Suffolk. All have been well attended and all the birds have flown exceptionally well, which is a credit to all members. The landowners, game keepers and spectators who have been out with us have witnessed some terrific flights.

Towards the end of the season the club was invited to a new venue at St. Osyth. The Harris

Hawks were flown in the woods before lunch, moving onto more open farmland in the afternoon, where Andy and Paul flew their falcons. Our host and friends witnessed some spectacular flights at pheasant and partridge. Everyone had an enjoyable day and we have an invitation for a couple of meets there next year.

Several members travelled to the Welsh meet and AGM at the Chainbridge Hotel in October. We all owe our thanks to the committee and especially Neil McCann for co-ordinating an excellent field meet. The Essex group had 3 brilliant hawking days and I am already looking forward to the next annual meet.

Our March end of season meal at The Whalebone was again well supported. Local gamekeeper Mr Gunfield and his wife came along

as our guests and enjoyed our company. Special thanks to the owners Sam and Vicky who served up a lovely meal and has supported us throughout the year.

We will be supporting the Stonham Barns Falconers Day and displaying birds at the Manningtree High School Fair, Tendring Show. Also we will be helping to raise money for local charities at Danbury later this year. Thanks to all members for helping and supplying birds for these events. I look forward to the falconers fair and meeting up with old friends and new, and the forthcoming season.

Secretary:
Ray Hooper
Treasurer:
Andy Hulme
Regional Rep:
Position vacant

Midlands Group

By Mick Kane

Well the Midland Region has been very quiet this season, the social meetings have been suspended due to relocation.

I have recently moved to Lincolnshire and I am unable to fulfill my duties as secretary of this region, so we desperately need a new secretary. Chairman, Lee Featherston has work commitments and he also is unable to attend meetings. We have stood in these positions now since we formed the Midland Region five years ago and it would be nice for a change of committee. If you think you can put something back into your club then give me or Lee a ring and let's get this Region moving again. Lee has put loads of work into the

summer fair over the last few years which raised funds for the members to have subsidised field meets; so come on surely their must be someone willing help their club. Jack Morris has stepped in as treasurer, thanks for that Jack.

We have had a few field meets with little interest. Of the members who attended, Lee has been flying a home bred female Goshawk 'Farah', Mick Wynn flying a once intermewed female Gos 'Pussy', nice names lads. Trev Webster with his excellent imprint male gos, this bird is a joy to see fly. Trev should be at the AGM with him so if members wish to see what a good imprint can do then get yourself in Trevs group. Ray (take it easy) Smith has once again been flying 'Richard' a Finnish male gos whose also one my semen donors. This coming season Ray will be taking on a new male Gos, with the retirement of 'Richard' who will be happily filling Goshawk eggs for the rest of his life. Jack Morris took on a new Gos Finnish female imprint which was bred by myself, and it was going well up in Scotland on the rabbits. Whilst I have been flying an imprint eyass female gos. I finished the season flying Maggie, my large Finnish gos, she again performed to her usual standard. She really is a good feather bird and I hope to have a full season with her this year.

Quite a few members have been imprinting new gosses this season. Synbad (Mark Symonds) has had his hands full with a Finnish female, who was more than a little aggressive with him. I'm sure she will be different this coming season once she's grown up a little, which gives time for Synbads right hand to heal up a little.

Both Murrays are also imprinting new Finnish females. Paul and his dad John took on two sister

birds to imprint and have been having some good sport with them, Rip (Paul Rippon) has had some bad luck losing his 10 month old imprint gos to aspergillosis. She had just produced two chicks with the use of AI and succumbed to this awful disease. Rip also lost his male Harris Hawk for over 5 weeks but for once he had some good luck getting his bird back having as it had been feeding on pheasants on a local shoot.

The AGM meet in Wales was excellent as usual and was well attended by Midland Group members. A big thanks must go to Neil McCann who organized all the venues for the meet, each one on keepered shoots, which no other club can compete with. This meet has got to be the best and this years venue looks likes another good 'un.

So if you think you can help out in getting this Region back on track then please contact me or Lee. Too much hard work has been put into the Midland Region to just let it fade away,

Acting Secretary:
Mick Kane
01427 848146
Acting Chairman:
Lee Featherston
Treasurer: Jack Morris

Northern Region

By Bob Antonio

November 2003: Nick from Honeybrook Farm came to deliver the hawk food for the members. A special thanks to Nick for all he does for the club! He gave a talk on the nutritional content in the Raptor food he supplies. Followed by the A.G.M.

December: Bryan Patterson came to give a talk on telemetry. The region had a field meet on Dyserth in which I lost

a goshawk for 4 hours – chasing it up hill and down dale!

January 2004: We had a social meet. We had one of the best field meets ever on Woore thanks to Ivor the keeper. Plenty of game to fly, even this late in the season. Jeff, Ellis, Mick and Danny had some fantastic flights with their game hawks. The Harris hawk did well in the woods.

February: Mike Coupe gave a slide show on a trip to America trapping falcons and hawks.

March: The regional belated Xmas party! We raised over £200 on the night. There was plenty of banter. A special thanks to the members who brought along items to auction off on the night. Followed by a hot buffet.

April: A social meet.

May: We had the latest video by Bob Dolton which was raffled at the end of the evening.

June: We had a home made video of hawking in the Scottish Highlands and Cumbria with members and friends from all over the country.

July: Social meet.

August: Terry Large came along to show his video of hawking in the Czech Republic.

September and October: Social meets.

Chairman:
Terry Finnigan
Secretary:
Neil McCann
Treasurer:
Bob Antonio

Southern Region

By Helen Scourse

The meetings of the South Wales branch of the WHC have been well attended this year attracting quite a few new members. This is in spite of the some difficulties.

The first being rendered suddenly homeless.

Casey's Court under new management became the Olway In Hotel, all set to attract a new up market clientele who might object to field sports and the transfer of animal food in the car park!

We were fortunate in that, thanks to the generosity of Mike Cordell we were able to secure for the winter six months a temporary meeting place at Usk Conservative Club. We have now been invited back to the Olway Inn, which is once again under new management. Thank heavens the big bouncy castle in front has gone!

Notwithstanding these attacks we have some interesting speakers notably Jemima Parry-Jones (to whom we all send our best wishes in her new venture delayed from last year). Also Mr A Crawford from DEFRA and a local M.F.H on the finer points of fox hunting. We have also enjoyed some most instructive videos. Much to be recommended are Nick Fox's films on the care, nutrition and health problems of hawks published by Faraway Films of Carmarthen. Well worth £28 of anyone's money even if you *think* you know it all!

An urgent problem is arising in that the South Wales branch needs new assistant treasurer and a new secretary. The former is suffering from the pressure of business and the latter from *anno domini* – getting too old! Surely there must be someone younger who will help? Preferably two people computer literate who can send e-mail instead of writing reports and letters in longhand or sending them by snail mail as this one is!

Editor's note: This report by Helen is from the previous season. The secretary's position is still vacant and consequently there is not a current year report available.

South West Region

By Kevin Mosedale

Another year passes, new members join, and some leave, but as with all clubs the nucleus of hardened members is reassuringly constant. In this region, I believe we are fortunate to have a variety of expertise and members of some notoriety in their fields. As secretary it is sometimes difficult to get speakers etc, so to have guys like Dave Scott, Andy Ellis and others to call on, either to bring in their superb artwork or a talk on their recent forays to foreign parts makes my job a lot easier.

This year we have had speakers giving talks on subjects such as bird anatomy, nutrition and

recently Jim Chick of the Hawk Board came down and updated us on the present position with regard to proposed legislation. We must all be alive to the issues that the new draft of the animal welfare bill could cause us within falconry if we take no action. We are indeed fortunate to have the Hawk Board keeping a beady eye on all matters falconry related. Look at the draft bill; some of the proposals are frightening.

So to round off we have had a good year with plenty of laughs and interesting discussions and I see no reason for that to change.

We in the South West Region wish to thank Dave and Jean Dimond for their many years of service to the Welsh Hawking Club. We have enjoyed their support over the years and their company at our Christmas dinners. Thank you.

Cotswold Regional Group

By Mike Hope

Like most regions the Cotswold Group has had a lean time on the membership front as everyone seems to be so busy!

We have seen four field meets this season held at Ragley Hall Estate with the largest group being Goshawks, supplemented by three or four Harris Hawks and Mark Belmonte's Falcon. All have seen good sport.

The efficient use of telemetry to track hawks in thick cover once again proved the ability that to use the equipment correctly improves the chances of everyone getting a shot at multiple slips and a good day's

hawking. But when the transmitter is found in the undergrowth and you know the Hawk has made off with a good sized pheasant, nothing can beat local knowledge of the hawking ground and the likelihood of where a hawk is most likely to be found. This and good comrades quickly recovered a potentially lost Goshawk for one happy Austringer.

The summer barbecue held as a joint venture between the Midland and Cotswold groups was a hit once again and those who supported the event expressed their gratitude to the organisers who gave up their time to stage the two day get together. Again thanks must go to Lyn and Nick and all at Honeybrook Farm Animal Foods for their continuing support for all aspects of falconry. Happy Hawking.

RON HARTLEY – Southern Africa's Falconry Ambassador

There cannot be a single person, with an interest in raptors in Southern Africa, who has not been shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Ron Hartley. The loss of his vibrant personality has left a hole in the lives of all privileged to call themselves his friend. Ron was a man who lived and breathed falconry. His enormous enthusiasm and energy allowed him to cross the divides between falconers, ornithologists and conservators, bringing together the whole raptorophile community and leaving a legacy of unity that we currently enjoy in Southern Africa.

Ron was born in Livingston, Northern Rhodesia in 1950 and was brought up in small mining towns around Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). He excelled academically and was a natural sportsman. Ironically, Plumtree was a major sporting rival of Falcon College where Ron later spent much of his teaching career. It was at Plumtree that Ron started falconry. This, as many of us did in that era, by finding a bird in the bush and trying to train it according to information that he may have heard or read, with very little guidance. His father tried to discourage this "fad" by releasing the initial birds that were brought home in the holidays. He failed to damp Ron's enthusiasm and had to accept his son's passion.

He took up a teaching post at Umtali Boys' High School, in Zimbabwe's eastern districts in 1973. During the years of the Bush War, Ron played his part. He later moved to Falcon College in the Matebeleland province of Zimbabwe in 1983 where he was to stay until 2004 when he moved to South Africa. His teaching career progressed and he was made House Master of Chubb House at Falcon College.

He married Deirdre in 1983 and they were blessed with a daughter, Emma born in 1991.

With time, his falconry developed; a brief interlude with Lanners preceded a succession of stunning peregrines, flown singly and in casts. He was the President of the Zimbabwe Falconry Club from 1984 to 1998. Ron was a perfectionist with meticulous attention to detail. He had the innate ability to interpret and interact with his birds. This is the recipe

for success in falconry, when coupled with absolute dedication.

He was an outstanding teacher. He loved literature and could share and transmit this to others. I recall, as a student, sitting spell-bound, while Ron read the story of the great hunt from Tolstoy's "War and Peace", and being stimulated to go on and read the rest of the book. He started the Falconry Club at Falcon College that has won acclaim around the world. This allowed boys, who had demonstrated a real enthusiasm for the sport, to learn the ropes under a true master of the art. Ron loved this interaction. He was a strict taskmaster who did not settle for "second best" but maintained the enthusiasm of his pupils. As a result some excellent falconers were produced who continue to practice his art.

Ron's enthusiasm and love for raptors extended beyond hunting with them. He continued the raptor observations started at Falcon College by Peter Steyn, and became involved field research with broad interests. His involvement with the Taita Falcons, in association with the Peregrine Fund, made him the acknowledged expert on this species. More recently he extended his research efforts to Crowned Eagles. He has left an impressive list of over 100 publications. Under his leadership, the Zimbabwean falconers became involved in a number of raptor research and conservation projects. He continued this research work, in association with the Peregrine Fund, on relocating to South Africa and his involvement was eagerly sought in local issues.

Ron leaves his wife and daughter, his sister, and innumerable friends. We, who are left, struggle to understand our loss. Peter Steyn aptly quoted John Donne's famous sermon, at Ron's memorial service:

*... any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind;
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.*

Ron's death has diminished us all. He has left shoes that are too big to wear, but his work and efforts must continue.

Adrian Lombard



Officers 2005

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Douglas Morgans

Vice-Presidents

Nancy de Bastyai

Ian Blantern

Jemima Parry-Jones

Chairman

David Dimond

Vice Chairman

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Stephen Frank, Dieter Horvath,
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Diana Durman-Walters,
Hal Webster, Mike Clowes,
The Secretary of the California
Hawking Club North 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 Objects

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

Constitution

The club shall consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Membership 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 committee's 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 6 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 2 signatories.
3. Any non-members attending, other than wives, partners or children of members will be made welcome for 3 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.

