

# Irish hawking Club Journal 2015

The Irish Hawking Club is a member  
of F.A.C.E. and the International  
Association for Falconry and  
Conservation of Birds of Prey.





# IRISH HAWKING CLUB

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## IRISH HAWKING CLUB

### POLICY AND OBJECTIVES STATEMENTS

The Irish Hawking Club is dedicated to the sport and practice of falconry and to the conservation and dissemination of knowledge of birds of prey. Membership is open to those, who support or practice the pursuit of Falconry to the highest standards and traditions. Objectives of the Club are;

To represent Falconry throughout Ireland and to foster International co-operation in order to maintain the sport, art and practice of taking quarry in its natural state.

To preserve and encourage Falconry within the context of sustainable and judicious use of wildlife.

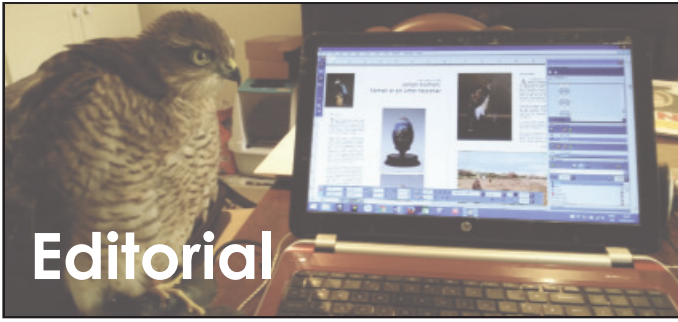
To foster good relations and co-operation with all National hunting organisations with like objectives.

To encourage conservation, the ecological and veterinary research of birds of prey and to promote, under scientific guidance, native propagation for Falconry and the rehabilitation of injured birds of prey.

To monitor National laws in order to permit the pursuit and perpetuation of falconry.

To require the observation of all laws and regulations relating to falconry, hunting, conservation and culture with regard to the taking, import, and keeping of birds of prey, the hunting of quarry species and the right of access to land.

To promote and uphold a positive image of falconry with specialist organisations or statutory bodies which regulate or otherwise affect falconry.



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It's all hotting up. In a matter of months, the Irish falconry community will be inviting the world into its sitting room to sample both our sport and our hospitality. No pressure!

The hospitality we can guarantee at this point in time, but only with your help. There will some 150-200 guests jetting in from around the world for the 47th IAF Council of Delegates and AGM. The IHC will hold a fieldmeet throughout the week as well as an international conference on sustainable use. We need you the club member to come on board and be part of this huge event and help make it something that we will talk about for years and years to come.

As IAF Delegate, I have attended a few of these meetings and I can tell you they're huge fun. After the business of IAF is taken care of, sport is enjoyed, bread is broken and much, much laughter is had as new friendships are forged with people from the other side of the planet.

So much work is going into this. It is a week that will mark the culmination of Irish falconry's golden era. Why would anyone *not* want to be involved!

Finally, I hope you all enjoy this edition. Thanks again to all the contributors. My final IHC Journal will be the 2016 edition which will be ready to accompany the event in November. The plan is to go out with a bang so please get writing and send me what you produce as soon as possible!

*Hilary White, IHC Journal Editor*

All copy and pictures to be sent to the Journal Editor at [hylwhite@gmail.com](mailto:hylwhite@gmail.com).

Material is subject to scrutiny by the committee.

All news items, notices, short stories, tall tales, pictures, ads, comments etc to the editor at the above email address.

Members who are interested in helping in the production and distribution of the Newsletter and Journal please contact a committee member.

## Cover Image

### "Hedgerow Assassin"

by  
John Moore  
[johnrmooreart.com](http://johnrmooreart.com)

Manipulated by  
Aaron Leavy

We are continually look for striking, memorable art images of raptors for our covers. If you have any, please forward to the editor.

The Newsletter and Journal are published and distributed by the IHC to members. The views expressed therein are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily the official policies or views of the IHC. International articles may feature different wildlife laws to Ireland.

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# News and Updates

We always welcome pieces of info  
– sightings, lost hawks, conservation matters etc – from members.

## RAPTORWELFARE.ORG

A NEW website has been launched that provides detailed advice and information on universal guidelines for the care and welfare of raptors.

Raptorwelfare.org is hugely important for falconers everywhere from a public relations point of view as it cements the fact that falconers not only take great responsibility for the welfare of their own birds and injured wild birds of prey, but are also hugely knowledgeable about this as well.

Please take a moment to visit the website, especially if you are keeping a number of birds. If you know of any one starting out in Falconry, it is vital that you put them in touch with the website and ask them to familiarise themselves with its content.

## HEN HARRIER DECLINE

Hen Harrier populations in several Special Protected Areas (SPAs) have fallen by 26.6 per cent since 2005, to 108-157 breeding pairs, according to last year's National Survey of Hen Harriers show.

John Lusby, Survey Coordinator with Bird-Watch Ireland, said these SPAs hold 44 per cent of known pairs in the country, which shows just how important they are.

The survey suggests the decline may be linked with declines in availability of preferred habitat, changes in habitat quality and associated effects on food availability. It could also hint that land-use changes over the past 50 years, which may have resulted in an increasingly fragmented and/or unsuitable landscape for upland breeding birds, may be to blame.

IHC members are asked to be vigilant for sightings of Hen Harriers and to report them as soon as possible to the Irish Raptor Study Group.

## IAF NEWSLETTER

THE Spring 2016 edition of the IAF Newsletter is now available to download or view as a PDF from the website, [iaf.org](http://iaf.org).

This digital edition has a huge reach and is arguably the widest-distributed falconry publication on the planet. It is interactive, meaning that there are many links that make it a portal to find out about what is going on in every corner of the global falconry community.

The Editor might be a bit of a chancer but the pictures and articles are of a very high quality, indeed...

## The Sportsman's Cup

JANUARY 13-14, 2017, IRELAND

Inspired by the life time contribution of two of the finest field sportsmen – John Nash and Steven Frank – this sky and field trial aims to promote and celebrate the highest standards of game hawking and sportsmanship.

This event is not a competition – all those taking part will receive a specially commissioned medal, and although a scoring system and qualified judges will award points to the performance of both dog and falcon, it will be for the participants to decide who is to be awarded the trophy. Entries will be strictly limited to ten of the finest falcons and falconers from around Europe. There will be no entry fee and competitors will be selected on the basis of their application.

For falconers with exceptional falcons who don't currently own a pointing dog, one will be made available on the day. The quarry at this first event will be snipe and permission has already been granted for this event to be run on a UK grouse moor in 2018. Spectators will be strictly limited but a high-quality film will record the event and be made available.

A copy of the rules and scoring system will be made available to selected participants.

To apply, contact Robert Hutchinson on [Roberthutchinson2004@eircom.net](mailto:Roberthutchinson2004@eircom.net) or by mail to Violet Bank, Derrygarran, Clonbulloge, Co Offaly, Ireland. Tel: 00 353 (0)86 2354875.

Closing date for entries September 30, 2016





## John R Moore

Irish Wildlife and Sporting Artist

Commissions welcome

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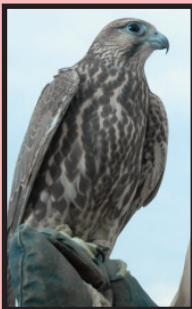
## \* GLOBAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE SAKER \*

Falconers care about the conservation of raptors and it is a goal we are all proud to work towards.

In recent years, the population of saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) has dropped by 50%, yet the reason for this decline is unknown. Without this knowledge it is impossible to implement targeted conservation programmes and therefore it is important that IAF carries out research into this decline.

IAF is sharing the cost of satellite tags to

track the migration of saker falcons to determine the main causes of mortality. However, it cannot afford the cost alone and are partly relying on donations.



We need the help of falconers and bird lovers from around the world.

Please donate and share the campaign on the link below on social media.

*Hugo Palejowski*  
IAF Conservation Researcher

PLEASE DONATE NOW

[chuffed.org/project/action-for-the-saker-falcon](http://chuffed.org/project/action-for-the-saker-falcon)



## 47th IAF Council of Delegates Meeting, 2016



**The Biggest Falconry event to ever come to Ireland takes place this November 13-20 in Co Kerry and Co Westmeath**

**Hosted by the IHC, the 47th IAF AGM and Council of Delegates November will see some 200 visitors attending from around the world. Already we have had delegates register from such far-flung locations as Namibia, Qatar and Uzbekistan.**

**The IAF Meetings will be held in Sneem, Co Kerry in the early part of the week, where hawking will take place everyday. The latter part of the week we will all move to Co Westmeath in the Midlands for more hawking and an International conference on the Sustainable Use of Wildlife attended by the world's leading conservationists and raptor scientists.**

**We are urging as many IHC members as possible to register for this event and be part of what is sure to be an unforgettable chapter in Irish falconry.**

**For details and to register, go to:**

**[internationalfalconrymeetireland.com](http://internationalfalconrymeetireland.com)**

**After registering, we would encourage you to book all travel and accommodation as soon as is convenient.**

**For those planning to bring hunting hawks, you will need a falconry licence from the Irish National Parks and Wildlife Service. For more details, see the 'Programme' page of the website.**

**This website will be updated in the coming months so please check back every now and again.**

**The registration fee for IHC Members, IAF delegates, Official IAF Member Club Representatives and any Member of a National Falconry Club affiliated to the IAF, is €80.**

**For all others not affiliated to the IAF or members of a Falconry club not affiliated to the IAF, the registration fee is €120.**

**Once registered, you will be contacted by one of our sub-committee and given payment details.**





# Jacques Godard

## (1926-2016)

Robert Hutchinson, Co Offaly

As I tap out this obituary, in front of me lie three diary pages listing key dates and referencing 37 events relating to Jacques' lifelong passion for falconry and field sports. This is just a taste, however.

*1946 - Met Capt Blaine in France. He came by car with JEM Mellor and his mother she could speak French. Obtained a permit to take two peregrines from Andelys (Seine Valley.) Flew from Toussu le Noble to England in RAF plane with some peregrines for RAF.*

*1948 - Captured and took some Red Deer from France to Tazzeke National Park in Morocco. Decided to stay on, got a job as a game warden. Flew peregrines at sand grouse with little success, with the falcon waiting on they proved difficult to flush on my own, without a dog they ran and once the falcon moves out of position fly like bullets. Spent a lot time in the forests and highlands tracking leopard which fed on the wild pigs.*

*1954 - Joined Ronald Stevens as his falconer.*

*1959 - Ronald sent me to Scotland to net Red Grouse for release on his Irish estate. I netted over a 100 but*

*the project was a failure; ground too wet with heather poor.*

*1960 - Got a job as a river warden on Screbbe Estate.*

*1966 - House burnt down by salmon poachers, lost everything. Returned to France, got a job as a technician specialising in salmon conservation.*

*1967 - Opened the first wildlife sanctuary and clinic to care for injured birds of prey and other wildlife. Over 2500 birds cared for.*

*1988-1991 - Awarded Silver Medal for services by Meteorologie Nationale, St Pee sur Nivelles medal and Agricultural Merit knighthood for good and loyal services.*

Jacques Goddard, a colourful, youthful and magnetic personality whose lifelong association with falconry showed all the hallmarks of a true sportsman, died without pain at the age of 89.

He trained his first falcon, a Hobby, aged 12 using an article on falconry by A Boyer as his guide. For the next 60 years, he was never without a trained falcon on his fist for long. From an Irish point of view, it will be for his long association with Ronald Stevens in Shropshire and Ireland that

he will be best remembered.

Born in France in 1926, Jacques had a profound need for freedom and it was his immense energy and courage coupled with his great sense of humour that enabled him to live a long life full of adventure. From the earliest age, he was a fearless adventurer. He once told me how during the Second World War he would often hide in ditches and shoot at the German planes with his father's small bore rifle. He was well aware that if caught he and his family would have certainly been shot.

He had many adventures. Here's one which may make you laugh out loud, something Jacques always approved of.

Walter Joynson had invited Ronald Stevens to go deer stalking. Ronald declined but sent Jacques instead.

'I had never met Walter but I knew it was him... he turned up like an apparition – a real Scot; tall and large, dressed in a traditional tartan kilt, a Scottish cap with a pom-pom and a kind of sheepskin waistcoat, which was letting a hairy chest protrude, matching his hairy face. He was red haired – just like Rob Roy and his one eye gave him a corsair look. He was accompanied by a black Labrador

named Susie.

‘Walter took me to his bothy, a real buccaneers den. After a frugal breakfast (a bowl of milk) we set off for the hills, with an old black powder rifle into the mist. It was getting dark so at four o’clock we headed back down the hill. The prospect of a dirty bed, a flickering candle and a well-seasoned bedpan did not fill me with enthusiasm after such a hard unsuccessful day. Suddenly, a female deer appeared about 150m away. We were hoping for a male deer and then there he was. I aimed at the heart, the target that Walter had shown me through multiple drawings. When I pulled the trigger, the bullet shot off. What a noise! A thick blue smoke was hiding my view from my endeavour before a breeze dispersed the cloud in front of my face and at last I could see the deer was lying there dead, shot through the heart. I ran to get my camera and took a photo. Walter arrived, and his buccaneer eye showed excitement. He pulled out his knife from his sock, drained the deer and gutted it. He had glee in his one eye, and he was covered in blood but seemed to take pleasure in the task. Suddenly he asked me to look to the left in the distance. I looked through the binoculars but I could not see a thing. Then, in an instant, he jumped

on me and rubbed his bloody hands all over me. He was going hard at it. I was convinced he had become mad in this moment; hunger and blood must have triggered a bestial instinct in him. I struggled, tried to shake him off me, tore his shirt. It was impossible to move this monster and shake him off me. I looked for a stone but there was none. He then let go saying: “Don’t fret, this is called bleeding.” I was totally unaware of this rite and was covered in blood. It was late when we arrived back, the little candle, a single gas stove and a well seasoned/dirty bedpan was waiting for us, we cooked some deer liver but it was hard. We were so hungry that it was a feast.

‘Still smelling of blood, I had to leave the next day. Same bus, same day-long train journey as up, accompanied by Walter’s numerous drawings of where to shoot a deer. Thank you, Walter.’

**B**y the time I had tracked down Jacques, he was in his eighties but still open to adventure. As our guest of honour, he attended the first Irish International Snipe Hawking meet I organised, and during his annual visits over we travelled together to the wild places where as a young man he had flown

falcons, shot woodcock and caught salmon, visiting old friends and Ronald’s grave.

During one of our trips, I asked him why he insisted on calling me his brother. ‘We are part of the same community, that makes you my brother,’ came his reply.

On the February 17, 2016 we all lost a brother.

## VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED for IAF International Meeting 2016

Ireland is to host the AGM of the International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey in Nov, 2016.

This prestigious event will showcase Irish Falconry to visitors from all over the world and is set to be the biggest falconry event the country will have ever seen.

The Committee is calling for volunteers to come forward for the many tasks that week - field masters, weathering stewards, information desk help etc,

Please contact a member of the Committee if you can help, even just for a few hours. Thank you!







# Dr Douglas Butler

An appreciation by John Bourke

*He shall not hear the Bittern cry  
In the wild sky, where he is lain,  
Nor voices of the sweeter birds  
Above the wailing of the rain.*

Perhaps the words of Francis Ledwidge, the young Irish poet who lost his life at Passchendaele, best capture the sad news of the passing of Douglas Butler on September 25, 2015. The death of one of the country's foremost biologists and game shooters was greeted with shock throughout the entire fieldsports community in Ireland and indeed further afield.

Cambridge-educated, he never once lost sight of his roots which were deeply embedded in those wild places of his beloved South Tipperary. During his formative years following graduation, he spent a short stint in England where, as well as teaching, he indulged his other passion – playing rugby with Blackheath in London. But the call of home soon beckoned, and before long he had moved back to Ireland and began his teaching career at the famous Glenstal Abbey in Murroe, Co Limerick. A couple of years later he accepted a teaching post as Professor of Biology at Rockwell College near Cashel where he eventually settled down. By sheer coincidence, it also happened to boast a thriving rugby academy.

An active and passionate shooting man his entire life, Douglas managed to ably combine those rare attributes of being an academic and conservationist who understood only too well that the delicate balance of nature, so susceptible to man's influence today, could so easily be tilted to the detriment of many species without necessary intervention in the form of predator control. Indeed, many a time I heard him astutely argue his case on this very topic as only he could and, such was his prowess that when he spoke people listened. As a case in point, a mere five years ago, he bravely took on 'the establishment' on the issue of Grouse stocks in Ireland by ably demonstrating through scientific know-how that birds were far more widely distributed throughout the country than figures quoted by officialdom. In fact, one of his oft-quoted lines was: 'In fifty years of Grouse shooting in Ireland I have never once encountered anyone counting Grouse.'

It is also a solid testament to the man that he was instrumental with others in setting up The Irish Red Grouse Association which has also gone from strength to strength in the few short years since its inception. He was also a founder member of the NARGC Game Hunting Compensation Fund and served

as Chairman on a number of occasions. One of the ventures closest to his heart though was leading his local club in a grouse restoration project on the Knockmealdown Mountains, which through his efforts doubled numbers in a few short years. Even right up to his untimely death, he was preparing a project study on woodcock that would determine the numbers of native birds versus winter migrants as a means of establishing the general health of the population. An accomplished author of several titles and scientific papers, as well as numerous magazine articles, Douglas Butler will long be remembered for his unstinting work in the defence of traditional rural Irish pursuits and he is a man whom it has been my privilege to have known. To his wife Margaret, sons Owen, Rupert and Paul and beloved daughter Susan, sincerest sympathies are extended.

*Editor's Note: Dr Butler was due to give a talk on Snipe at our International Snipe meet in October, a talk we sadly regretted not hearing. He will be deeply missed throughout Ireland's field-sports community*

# Inlay Imping

Thys Walters, South Africa

Years ago at a falconry meet, I was preparing to show an imping method of my design when one falconer exclaimed: 'We don't break feathers.' Well, I did not show it then, though I have shown it to a few people, even abroad on a visit to British Columbia.

When a feather bends badly, the spongy material inside gets damaged, while the outer, stronger layer keeps it from breaking off completely. It only breaks off when it continuously bends from side to side till the outer shaft layer breaks.

As the saying goes, 'prevention is better than cure'. When a feather bends, the falconer should, as soon as possible, secure the bird by hand and hold that feather above a boiling kettle's spout. Hold the feather at a 45-degree angle, with the bird lower than the spout, to enable the steam to rise safely away from the bird. Always keep your hand in between the bird's body and the steam, to rather burn yourself before the bird does. The steam repairs the spongy material at the centre of the shaft, and when done after the slightest bend, can be so effective as to never bend there again.

The second stage is where the shaft continuously bends from side to side and will break off completely. The old method was to cut the feather off at that area and insert a needle into each shaft and push them together with glue in between. This usually creates a problem when the feather does not line up, but is twisted at an angle. This will affect the bird's appearance and flight.

When a feather needs to be cut off as it hangs only by a thread, take care to not cut through the whole feather, but use the scissor point only at the shaft. A V shape is then created by the veins of each side of the central shaft, which should line up when impinged. I prefer to use Super Glue sparingly and sprinkle cement or plaster of Paris powder there on, while wet, to stop flow and build up the affected area. This is where my proposal comes in useful, to repair the feather before it gets damaged even further.

Secure the bird and steam the feather, as described above, to get the shaft as straight as possible. Give the bird time to rest and the feather to dry before the bird is held again. An assistant would hold the bird in position, wrapped in a thin cloth with only that wing or tail exposed. Use masking tape to wrap around its extended toes and also combine both legs to prevent damage to the feet or yourself. Hood the bird if possible, and if necessary put a bit of tape around the falcons slightly open beak, to prevent biting.



Make sure the bird can breathe easily and will not overheat. During the procedures, the bird will lay on its back. A piece of paper can be woven through the feathers, to expose only the damaged feather. Make an incision at the central groove, along the length of the shaft, of approximately 13mm with the damaged area halfway in between. Use the point of a thin-bladed knife to cut only two thirds into the shaft. With the back of the knife, push one to three metal brush pins, cut to size into the groove. Let a bit of super glue run into the groove and sprinkle cement powder on it to suck up the glue, giving it strength while it dries fast to prevent other feathers from getting stuck.

This method works so well that the impinged feather would slide back into place without a trace. A good idea would be to practice the procedure on a detached feather. The falconer should keep in mind to discover the cause if a number of feathers break at a specific area.

The steam repairs the spongy material at the centre of the shaft, and when done after the slightest bend, can be so effective as to never bend there again



# IHC Snipe Meet, Oct 2015

Bob Dalton, UK



Late October saw my good friend and hawking companion Diana Durman-Walters and myself heading to Ireland to visit various falconry friends and also to attend the International Snipe Hawking meet hosted by The Irish hawking Club. We flew from Exeter to Dublin in very unseasonal sunshine and collected our hire car and set off to make the journey south towards Ennis to meet up with Darren and Sharron Reddington of West Coast Falcons. The lack of traffic means that Irish motorways are a sheer joy to drive on, even on a Sunday afternoon. Soon Dublin was very far behind us and the miles to Ennis seemed to roll by very quickly. Then I realised the reason for the apparent speed, I had forgotten Ireland marks its roads in Kilometres not miles.

Whatever the means of measurement, progress was good and after a while we decided to pull off the motorway and use the facilities and get a bite to eat. As we pulled into the car park a hearse pulled in behind us,

complete with incumbent, and the driver and his companion joined the queue for take away pizza. Absolutely no one batted an eye lid at this and apparently such behaviour must be considered the norm. In fact, when relaying the story to a close Irish friend a couple of days later his reaction was "sure the man in the coffin wouldn't mind".

By early evening we had reached our first destination and having settled our luggage into our accommodation for the next couple of nights, went on to spend the evening with the Reddingtons. A very pleasant evening it was as well with Darren and Sharron being first-rate company and hosts. At the end of a highly enjoyable evening arrangements were made for the next day, however the weather that was forecast promised to call short any hopes of hawking if it proved to be true. Sure enough the following morning did indeed turn out to be one of very heavy rain and extremely limited visibility.

The Reddingtons were keen to show Diana their breeding facility and also its residents and there was little else that could happen, particularly on the hawking front, due to the weather conditions. However this did not affect the plan to quickly drive the twenty minutes or so and visit the house where the TV series Father Ted was filmed. For an Englishman driving in Ireland I should perhaps quickly explain the system there of explaining distances and times to others. "Less than 20 minutes" actually translates as anything up to an hour. "Twenty minutes or more" means closer to two hours and "Oh, it's a little way off" means the best part of a morning. However the trip to Father Ted's house was certainly worthwhile as we drove through part of the wonderful Burren to get there and saw a haggard falcon cross the road as we did so. Also directly behind the house is an eyrie which was active this year and the cliff clearly shows the tell-tale whitewash patch.

The Burren is worth mention-

ing in that it is a National Park set aside to show the natural landscape of the area as it has been for thousands of years. When you first see it you immediately think it has had swathes of peat and earth hacked away by large and heavy machinery and left looking pretty desolate. But this erosion on such a grand scale is in actual fact totally natural and is very strange to behold and comprehend. It had a very eerie quality about it and I must definitely go back one day with more time to spare and have a good look around.

The intermittent heavy rain meant that there simply wasn't an opportunity to see Sharron fly her male Barbary Falcon 'Sparticus' or Darren, his diminutive male Gyr/Peregrine hybrid. However we did get to enjoy a superb dinner of wild Irish duck cooked by their son Connor. All too soon it was time to make our goodbyes and head back to our accommodation and get ready for our trip northwards in the morning. With no post codes in Ireland and Sat Nav systems simply refusing in many cases to recognise addresses, albeit somewhat vague ones, a little time spent in prior planning the old-fashioned way with map, pen and notepad, certainly does not go amiss. We would be heading to Ballina to the Mount Falcon Country House Hotel to meet up with Jason Deasy who is the resident falconer there.

The following morning we drove northwards in no particular rush and took time to take in the superb scenery and enjoy the lack of traffic on the roads. We saw plenty of bird life on the way and it was a refreshing change to see such a large number of Kestrels, particularly so for me as where I live in the South of England they

are very plainly in quite serious decline. Could it be just a coincidence that during the whole eight days in Ireland we only saw three Buzzards, yet kestrel numbers were clearly very strong? We arrived at The Mount Falcon Estate and could be nothing other than impressed with the sweeping driveway and superb grounds. The Hotel itself is a magnificent example of a grand old country house that externally has obviously changed very little since its inception. Inside is a calm space that quietly exudes quality in a somehow understated way and it warmly wraps itself around you as opposed to brashly putting itself in your face. The hotel is also decorated and furnished as befits a house of its age and grandeur. For anyone staying here I would imagine it would be an ideal opportunity to unwind and de-stress whether or not the many facilities on offer, such as spa's pool and massages, were used. On our arrival we were greeted by Jason who had just in fact finished a hawk walk with a group of the hotel clients. As we stood chatting to him a gentleman joined us who turned out to be Alan Maloney, who is the proprietor/manager of the Mount Falcon, and he graciously extended to us the hospitality of his hotel for that evening and also the hotel restaurant. To say I was taken aback at such an act of kindness would be an understatement, it goes without saying that the invitation was gratefully accepted.

Diana and myself stood and chatted with Alan as Jason exercised his male Lanner/Peregrine hybrid to the lure, an extremely fast falcon that gave Jason a thorough workout and tested his lure-swinging ability to the full. As Alan took his leave of us, Diana and myself were then shown round the small centre where the

hawks, falcons and owls, used for the experience and hunting days for clients of the hotel, are housed. The set up was very impressive and clearly been well designed and thought-out so as to enable one person to be able to keep everything neat and tidy with the minimum of fuss. It was so nice to see that Jason hadn't fallen into the usual trap of allowing himself to become over hawked as so often happens with smaller establishments. After the tour, it was time for a quick lunch then off out onto the hill, a matter of some genuine 20 minutes or so away, for some snipe hawking. We would be taking Jason's Vizla 'Chilli', a new Setter he has just acquired and "Sultan", the male Gyr/Merlin hybrid. The Vizla is an old hand at snipe hawking but the Setter, although from superb working lines and sold as a trained dog, was still getting used to Jason and vice versa. So she would only be run when the Vizla already had a point.

The area we were hawking is at the base of the Ox Mountains and the views were simply stunning, with sweeping hills on one side and the estuary reaching out into the Atlantic on the other. A very dramatic setting and even in the drizzly autumnal weather looked simply beautiful. The ground was very wet underfoot, which would help the dogs with scenting their quarry, and apparently the snipe were here to overwinter and had come in very good numbers. As we got boots, coats etc on and were still in the process of preparing to go out onto the hill, "Chilli" came on point quite literally within five or six yards of the car. This would have not been a safe place to fly and she was encouraged to get on and flush the snipe which she duly did. Would have been hard to predict a better start to our



venture and hopefully this would turn out to be an encouraging omen. Once people and falcon were ready and we had made our way out onto the hill, the Vizla was sent on an almost immediately came on a very strong point. 'Sultan' was allowed to take to the air in his own time and was soon climbing rapidly in relatively tight circles above the dog. Just a quick word about this particular type of hybrid falcon. I have seen several flown before and they always appear to me to have too much sail in comparison to their bodies when considered against other falcons. Accordingly, although certainly swift and powerful, their flight always reminds me of that of a Eurasian Kestrel. Not that this distracts from their effectiveness as a hunting falcon in anyway whatsoever.

'Sultan' was very soon at a decent height and in the right position regarding the dog and wind direction and accordingly the Vizla was sent in to flush. The snipe jumped literally just inches in front of the dog's nose and set off at a staggering rate. Snipe must surely rate as one of the fastest game birds there are. The small falcon rolled over and stooped and so nearly made contact with his intended victim but a last minute jink insured the snipe would be around the hill for a little longer yet. After the throw-up, the small falcon knew the game was over and so went for a little rest on the top of a tree on the edge of some adjacent forestry. He was allowed to take a rest for a few minutes, then he decided it was time to get on with the serious proceedings of the day and flew back to Jason when he produced the lure. Once safely back on the fist and hooded, the Vizla was encouraged to run on and within a matter of a few min-

utes had another solid point. This time the Setter was allowed to run, and having cast around a little suddenly, spotted the Vizla on point and moved just a little closer and then backed her superbly. A lovely sight with both dogs staunchly pointing. The older I get, the more I love the dog work involved with falconry. Whether it be a Spaniel working root crops, a Brittany a hedgerow or Pointers and Setters out on the hill the dog work to me is an integral part of my sport and wouldn't be without it for any price. As a result of the point, 'Sultan' was put back on the wing and soon was climbing in anticipation of being served. Quite quickly he was in position and the dogs were encouraged to flush the snipe. The falcon immediately stooped and appeared to momentarily merge with the snipe but then they parted again. However the snipe dropped to the ground and stood with what looked like one wing out of position. It was a devilish trick on the part of the snipe. As the falcon winged over and greatly reduced speed in order to come down on his prize the snipe took to the air again at full speed and left the falcon trailing in its wake. Sneaky little devil, but full marks for ingenuity and begrudging admiration from all present, except perhaps the falcon.

Our trip to the hill had been a short but action-packed one and all too soon it was time to return to the hotel and enjoy the fabulous facilities and the superb restaurant courtesy of our host. The next morning we took our leave of the hotel and Jason and headed to Edenderry to meet up with Mike Nicholls, Xavier Morel and Martin Brereton for some more hawking out on the peat bogs. On our arrival, I was told we

would be joined by several falconers from Belgium and France and was very pleased to see that I knew most of them and had hawked in their company on previous occasions. Our party would be hawking on a bog I had hawked on the previous year and so I knew what to expect in terms of both terrain and sport. The afternoon was a sheer joy with nine falcons being flown, several of them twice. The falcons were mainly Peregrine tiercels with a male Red-Naped Shaheen, a Gyr/Peregrine hybrid falcon and a white Jerkin. Running beneath them were some truly excellent dogs. In the main, these were Pointers although there was an English Setter in their number as well. Joe Kennedy had joined us with his Pointer to help with the proceedings and his sense of humour as well as intimate knowledge of this branch of falconry certainly helped the flow of the afternoon.

The male Red-Nape flew superbly well and was so unlucky not to take a snipe on the first flight of the afternoon. I myself took Red Grouse in Scotland many seasons ago with a male Red Nape that flew at just over 11lb in weight. In my opinion they are gutsy falcons and very underrated by many falconers who still cling to the premise that big is best. Also worth a mention was Xavier's white Jerkin which flew in an impressively disciplined style and stooped at his snipe but failed (not by much though) to take it. The Jerkin then went off for a short while to see if he could find something a little larger and then gave the local rooks and crows a bit of a rough time before eventually coming back into the lure. The day ended up with kill when Martin Brereton's older dog held a very staunch point and when the tiercel was in position, three separate snipe

broke. The tiercel turned over and took the middle one of the three firmly in its foot and promptly sailed off to a peat hag to eat it in peace. It always does this apparently and when finished its meal will come back to the falconer instantly. But should Martin try and pick him up either with or from the kill the tiercel will invariably carry.

The following day, the vast majority of those attending the meet gather on the front lawns of The Hodson Bay Hotel on the shores of the beautiful Lough Ree. The hotel would be the base for the meet over the next three days and the main front lawn was to be the weathering ground. On a purely personal note and speaking as someone who attended the previous year's meet which had been based at the Moyvalley Hotel, I was singularly unimpressed with

the hotel itself and its facilities. I felt far more that I was in a holiday camp as opposed to a decent quality hotel. As I understand things, the meet hotel next year will revert to the Moyvalley which means I shall attend. Would I stay a second time in the Hodson Bay? That would most certainly be an emphatic 'no'. Mid morning, we set off to the hunting grounds and before the start of the serious matter of hawking the group photographs were taken. Our party was large, some 12 or so falcons, an assortment of dogs and around 30 spectators. However most were experienced in the ways of small game hawking and things progressed very nicely indeed with flights coming from a spectator point of view there was nearly always something happening.

The weather was particularly unseasonal in that it was a

bright and sunny afternoon with accompanying clear blue skies. Scouting conditions were far from ideal for the dogs and it would be fair to say that as many Snipe were bumped as were actually pointed. However they were present in sufficient numbers that everyone got a flight and those that wanted to had additional ones. The only potential downside of the day was when one of the French falconers was flying an eyass tiercel of the year. No sooner had the tiercel started to make some height than a wild haggard falcon came across and made very serious attempts to curtail not only his activities but also his life. The falcon made repeated rushes at the tiercel and tried many times to foot him. You know when the pursued feels it is in real trouble because it starts to chatter in fear and the tiercel did precisely that on no less than four separate occasions. However when the falcon







was at her closest and looked like it might be the end for the tiercel she seemed to suddenly realise she was directly over a group of people and suddenly broke off and went off almost as quickly as she had arrived. A massive sigh of relief from one and all, and it can only be imagined how the tiercel must have felt. Whether or not it was because of the wild peregrine incident or not, who knows, but the afternoon did turn into one for tracking down errant falcons. Three in all had to be recovered, fortunately in each case quite quickly. As an aside, Xavier Morel was using the new Spanish GPS falcon recovery system and when one of his falcons went temporarily astray we were able to find out how far away it had been, speed, height and time of movements. It was a very impressive piece of equipment and there is nothing like a real-time demon-

stration to show just how effective the system is. Most of the field were highly impressed.

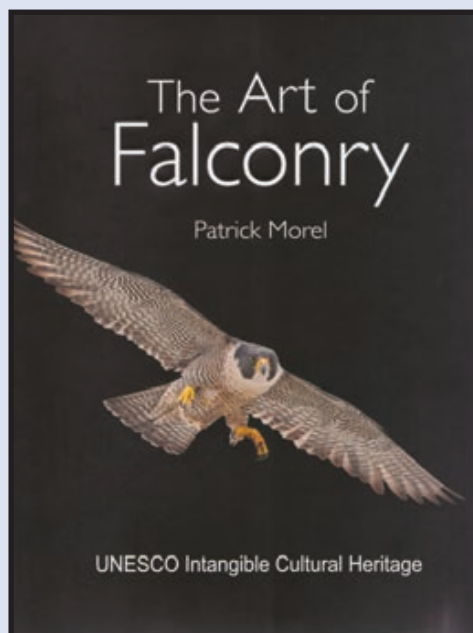
Despite the traumatic interlude, the hawking continued and some fabulous flights ensued with a tiercel belonging to Eric Witkowski making a stunning kill. Eric has worked hard over a period of years to refine his falconry and he is taking snipe hawking, as a branch of game hawking, to new heights. His disciplined approach and attention to detail with his slips means he undoubtedly rates alongside Martin Brereton and Kevin Marron when it comes to successful Snipe Hawkers. To be fair to Eric though, this success has been earned in that when he first decided he wanted to fly Snipe he shadowed Martin Brereton, the undisputed master of the craft, for three solid months on a daily basis watching and absorbing as much as he could. Now some ten years

later, he is no longer the apprentice but stands shoulder to shoulder on an equal footing with the masters.

That evening back at the hotel, there were a series of talks for those interested in attending. Firstly, Mike Nichols spoke on the return of the Peregrine Falcon as a breeding inhabitant of the Sussex coastline and put forward theories as to their how their complete disappearance and then eventual subsequent return came about, looking at various possibilities as to how this occurrence had happened and why. The next speaker was Martin Brereton, with an impromptu talk as the scheduled speaker had something of a family crisis to attend to. Martin spoke about how it was that snipe hawking came about in Ireland and then a lively questions-and-answers session followed. There is probably no one more suited than Martin to

# THE ART OF FALCONRY

BY PATRICK MOREL



**THE ART OF FALCONRY** represents a milestone in titles on the sport, quite unique in scope, style and content. It presents falconry in theory and in practice, celebrating it as both an art form and a living cultural heritage. Far from being merely another 'how-to' book, however, it takes the reader into the field with contributions from experts in all branches of the sport, and is lavishly illustrated with stunning photographs and artwork.

The first new practical falconry treatise in the French language since the 1940s, this English edition brings a fresh perspective to the English-speaking falconer and is further enhanced through contributions from a number of internationally renowned authorities, including UK, US and South African falconers and austringers, and even a chapter on Irish snipe hawking by Robert Hutchinson.

The author's vast falconry experience, combined with that of his fellow contributors, make this volume heavy yet light and entertaining in style. It covers all aspects of modern falconry, from the traditions that shaped the sport we know today to its underpinning ethics and philosophy as it continues to evolve in the 21st

century. It takes the reader around the globe in search of ultimate quarry species, relating methods and motives through the hawking experiences of those who seek the most challenging flights in their art. Scottish red grouse and Belgian crows; wood pigeon hawking with peregrines and goshawks; sand grouse, snipe and sage grouse with high-flying falcons: this book gives the falconer pride in the sport's traditions and enthusiasm for the future development and evolution of this living heritage.

*Patrick is a consummate master falconer and a wonderful servant to world falconry. Patrick supported Christian de Coune through his Presidency of the IAF as Executive Secretary and went on to be the President himself. Few others have this depth of insight into both the practice of 'hunting falconry' as well as the political work needed to ensure that falconers can continue to take the field. The Art of Falconry is a beautiful book which feasts the eye. It is a modern treatise on the principles and philosophy which underlie the practice of falconry. It is exquisite; the product of a life spent pursuing that dream of all falconers: to attain the perfect flight. This book, in its beauty and wisdom, will help the reader along that path.*

**Adrian Lombard, IAF President**

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discussing this topic, and his personal knowledge on this branch of falconry, obtained by practical application in the field, is certainly second to none. It was a first-rate and extremely interesting session. Last, but hopefully no means least, was a talk given by myself on 'The Passage Falcon'. This talk was aimed at outlining the historical place the passage holds within falconry and also brings things up to date with its more modern usage where legal to do so. The talk was in the form of a Power-Point presentation and again the discussion and questions-and-answers session after the talk were highly animated and interesting. Always nice to hear the views of others with practical experience on a subject that fascinates you personally.

The following day saw us return to a bog that on the previous year had held snipe in considerable numbers. This

year proved to be no different and the snipe were joined by several Irish hares. This was the first time I had ever seen one of these creatures and they did appear to differ considerably from the native UK hare. To my untrained eye they appeared almost to be a cross between a Blue Hare and a Brown Hare. Fortunately one literally ran within 20 yards or so of me so I was able to get some photos which I could study closer later on at my leisure. The afternoon's sport unfolded before us with some stunning flying, and again Eric Witkowski was the falconer to come off of the bog with a snipe in his bag. As always though, do not let the number of kills in any way reflect the degree of sport enjoyed. Although only one snipe was brought to bag that day, the quality of the flying was second to none. One falcon wandered a little in the early part of the proceedings but was soon re-

covered and another in the latter part of the afternoon gave his owner's telemetry set a little work out. The important thing is that all returned safely home.

In the evening, Don Ryan, who acted as host and principal organiser on behalf of the Irish Hawking Club, had arranged a boat trip across the Lough into the town of Athlone to visit Europe's oldest pub. A group of us joined the willing throng and subsequent boat trip but once in Athlone we opted instead on arrival at the proposed venue to enjoy some Indian cuisine as opposed to being crushed in an over-flowing, loud pub. However, still an excellent evening in superb company.

The final day of the meet soon came round. The morning saw us gathering on the weathering ground outside the hotel, and after a great deal of discussion on a wide

range of topics, eventually heading off to do some hawking. The bog we went to was a very good one in that it was open and relatively flat, allowing good viewing for the field. The weather insisted on being completely non-seasonal and accordingly the sun shone down on everyone making things feel more like spring than autumn. Some first-class hawking ensued, with Eric again demonstrating how things should be done. There were many other hawks that flew well and one or two that decided they would prefer to indulge in some play rather than serious hawking. But all ended well, with hawks back on the fists of their owners and a visitation by a fine wild falcon (that lasted several minutes whilst she checked us out) added to the pleasure of the day.

For Eoghan Ryan, it was a day he would have cause to remember as he ably demonstrated how a falconer's luck can go from really bad to really good in a matter of a few moments. His Brittany found a point and Eoghan cast off his tiercel in anticipation of a flight. The tiercel decided it was time to have a good look at the local countryside and ascended to a decent height in order to do so. It then leisurely cruised the sky taking in the sights and ignoring the lure being swung below. At one stage the meanderings of the tiercel took it almost out of sight to the naked eye and it was decided to check that the all was well with the transmitter just in case a track down was going to be required later. To his horror, Eoghan found his receiver had fallen from its case and lay out somewhere in the bog. So now he was faced with a disappearing tiercel and no receiver to track it with. Fortunately one of the falconers in the field had decided to check where

Eoghan had jumped a ditch and sure enough there was the receiver laying on the bank beside it. As this news was being relayed to a very relieved Eoghan, the tiercel decided it had enjoyed its sojourn around the countryside and came back into the lure as if this had never ever been an issue that should have raised any concern.

The hawk ing continued until all the falcons had been flown, in some instances twice, and all too soon the day was drawing to a close and it was time to return to the hotel and make preparations for the gala dinner that evening. A very good meal, but more importantly an excellent social gathering, ensued. Don Ryan said a few words and myself and Claude Rigo Gavrilloff gave our heartfelt thanks on behalf of the overseas visitors that had joined the meet and thoroughly enjoyed the sport and company so readily offered. After the meal, Eric Witkowski was persuaded to say a few words which earned him a tremendous round of applause. Then Xavier Morel gave a brief talk on the GPS falcon retrieval system he is helping to market and this attracted a very great deal of interest.

**O**n a personal note I would like to express my gratitude to all those that made the meeting the success that it most certainly was. The IHC, the foreign guests and friends such as the Darren and Sharron Reddington and Jason Deasy and his partner. However special mention must be made of Don Ryan, without whose enthusiasm and tireless efforts the meeting just wouldn't be what it is and of course all those that provide the sport, such as the irreplaceable Vincent Flannelly.

The meeting was a huge suc-

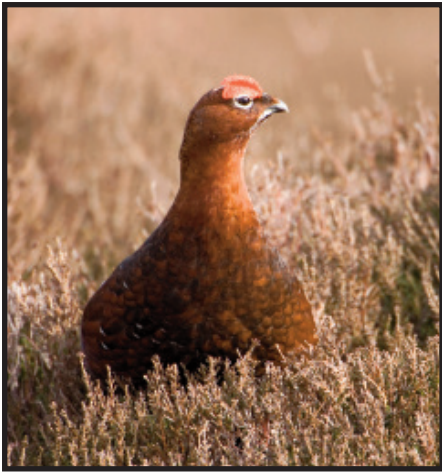
cess in terms of forging links between falconers of several nations and showing some excellent sport. As with any branch of falconry, it is not the size of the bag that denotes the level and degree of sport enjoyed. I for one will be back again next year.

## **TELEMETRY**

**The IHC strongly recommends the use of telemetry by all members when flying their birds of prey.**

**Not to do so, especially in the case of non-native species and hybrids, could jeopardise the good will that exists between responsible falconers and other non-government organisations concerned with conservation and wildlife and with wildlife authorities themselves.**





# Moorland Management and the Irish Red Grouse Association

by Merlin Becker, Co Wicklow

**H**eather moorlands are unique and stunningly diverse landscapes. They support a range of different land uses including upland hill farming, forestry and, in the UK context, the grouse-shooting industry. Ireland and the UK support approximately 80 per cent of the planet's moorland ecosystems, which are in fact more finite than tropical rainforests. They are extremely effective in carbon sequestration, conserving globally important ground-nesting bird species such as waders, supporting sustainable agricultural in less favourable areas and can act as long-term flood alleviation services through water retention.

However in Ireland heather moorland habitats have faced a catastrophic decline over the past 100 years. The main drivers behind this decline are land-use changes from the traditional sporting estate to the unmanaged over/under-grazed moors as well as amplified levels of afforestation. Scrub and bracken encroachment is another contributing factor with a potential link to a

slight temperature increase in the last century due to climate change.

The Irish Red Grouse Association was formed in 2010 following a directive from the Executive Board of Countryside Alliance Ireland. The association formally came into being in 2011 with representatives from Countryside Alliance Ireland, IFA Countryside, National Parks & Wildlife Services and the pointer and setter field-trial clubs in Ireland.

The Irish Red Grouse Association (IRGA) is here to assist and support any group or person wishing to become actively involved in the betterment of grouse across the island of Ireland. The association also takes the view that the interests of grouse are best served by those people who are prepared to get actively involved at local level and to do whatever work is necessary in the matter of habitat management and vitally important legal predator control. This is a partnership process and the IRGA's objectives can only be achieved through active engagement with govern-

ment departments, other conservation organisations, local communities and land managers who wish to see red grouse return to our bogs and uplands in Ireland. The IRGA is also a member of the Wicklow Uplands Council and a member of the UK's Heather Trust and their Moorland Council.

The IRGA is currently involved with over 40 conservation sites across the Irish state. They vary from well-established projects with established management plans and very active teams of individuals for the day-to-day running of things to projects that are just getting off the ground. It is enabling local project teams through seminars, demonstrations as well as providing expert advice on moorland management and reducing the level of predation. Grouse populations are monitored in both springtime and during the summer with the use of pointing dogs. One very important fact to remember is that a high proportion of the fantastic work carried out on such projects is all on a volunteer basis. Without such passion and resilience, Irish

Red Grouse would certainly be following the catastrophic downward trend that a lot of our other upland breeding birds are facing. One example of a tremendously successful IRGA project is the Peterswell & Kilchreest Grouse Conservation Project run by Kilchreest Gun Club in Co Galway. Here, the men on the ground are working closely with the upland hill farmers of the area (one of the key stakeholders in any upland management project). This working relationship has been built up over time and a concrete foundation of trust is one of the keys to success at Kilchreest. Another vital factor adopted at Kilchreest is routine legal predator control. Hooded crows are controlled via Larsen and ladder-style traps. As well as this the project managers and local gun club predator controllers are removing foxes, the top predator of ground-nesting fauna.

The IRGA also organises several moorland management day events every year at different sites that they are actively involved with. Last year in 2015, one such event was held in Galway. There were a number of guest speakers from across in the UK. Steve Smith (British Falconers Club) gave a brilliant practical presentation on 'How to Manage and Enhance Grouse Numbers on a Budget' from his experience from moorland management in the North of England. Another great presentation was given on 'Grouse Conserva-

tion on the Isle of Man' by Alan Jackson and one closer to home by a gentleman called Noel Leahy (Tribes Beekeepers Galway) on 'Sustaining Our Bee Populations', highlighting how moorland management for grouse also benefits the heather quality therefore boosting an important autumnal food source for our native bee colonies. Several demonstrations were also carried out when we ventured up to the moor. These included a falconry display by Don Ryan (Director of the Irish Hawking Club) with his female Peregrine falcon, Lady Broderick. Jim Sheridan (Chairman of the Irish Kennel Club) worked his majestic Irish Red and White Setter across the moorland revealing the breeds' true resilient attributes of finding game across an Irish bog. And finally, Kevin Kyne (Irish Natura Hill Farmers Association) gave a very informative heather management demonstration, which they are using on the Peterswell & Kilchreest Grouse Conservation Project.

For all of us involved with red grouse conservation in Ireland, be it on the ground carrying out predator control and habitat management or working closely with state agencies and other NGOs for the national Species Action Plan for example, we realise we will never reach the game bags the likes of Scotland and Northern England achieve. We feel that a sustainable moorland management approach is the best way forward into the future

with a multitude of stakeholders involved in a mosaic of interlinked land uses in our uplands.

Just like the many variables of successful moorland management, our future challenges are just as complex. Past and present upland environmental policies have failed all those who work, live and love the wild hill countryside. The three main challenges we face can represent three legs of the 'sustainable stool':

### **Habitat**

Correct stocking densities of livestock units per specific area (adapted to the different habitat types: upland blanket bog, lowland blanket bog, wet heath and dry heath). Carrying out heather burning following the 'Muirburn Code: Prescribed Burning on Moorland'. Mowing or swiping by mechanical operations is another useful tool when burning is not an option and is also helpful for creating firebreaks. Spraying to control bracken, which has become a significant problem encroaching and taking over areas once dominated by heather and other moorland vegetation species. Gorse is another major problem for some sites.

### **Predator Control**

The adoption of legal routine predator control has been scientifically proven to increase productivity of upland ground-nesting birds. The main species in question here in Ireland are fox, hooded crow and mink. This is not a pretty side to wildlife



conservation but it is an essential one, without which a multitude of species will continue to decline, both lowland and upland.

### **Stakeholder Co-Operation**

This aspect of wildlife conservation can be the most challenging to administer. If people/organisations cannot work together on any of the issues related to moorland management, the long-term sustainability aspect of a project/initiative would be in jeopardy. Knowledge exchange is a key part to this leg of the stool and also the art of trustful compromise.

The IRGA is currently involved with the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Birdwatch Ireland, Irish Grey Partridge Conservation Trust, National Association of Regional Gun Clubs, Irish Hawking Club and The Irish Kennel Club to put in an EU INTERREG funding bid to help address the challenges mentioned above. This is in

conjunction with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust with potential links to project partnerships with other uplands environments in Wales, France, Spain and Portugal.

As the Irish Red Grouse Association grows, so do our challenges. The IRGA is hoping to expand its interests across the country and to keep supporting the individuals on the ground by any means necessary. Active moorland management does not just benefit grouse but also helps other species of conservation concern such as the Irish brown hare, curlew, golden plover, dunlin, snipe and lapwing, to name but a few. Furthermore, it can work in symbiosis with upland livestock breeds of sheep and cattle. The association also aspires to continue to build up historic scientific data and important anecdotal evidence from project sites highlighting to government and other conservation bodies that sustain-

able success is soon to follow grouse moor management. This can only be achieved through a combination of predator control, habitat management and local stakeholder involvement.

**N**ew-targeted incentives and flexible agri-environmental schemes are needed to address the times we now live in and most importantly to help work towards landscape scale habitat and multi-species recovery. The ingredients of upland sustainability remain elusive, but fresh shoots of honesty are emerging from the undergrowth. Landowners, farmers, foresters, hunters, local communities, government agencies and wildlife conservation bodies all need to work together using international best practice management tools to meet these future sustainability challenges.

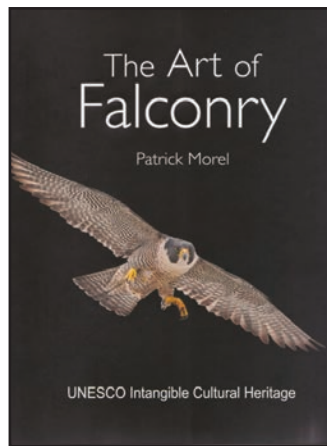


# The Art of Falconry

by Patrick Morel

(Medina, 2016)

Reviewed by Bob Dalton



Having been a practising falconer myself for more than 47 years, I have seen a great many new falconry books – some genuine and some supposedly relating to the sport – come onto the market. In the main, the majority are well written by people who are enthusiastic about the sport, particularly so in relation to the particular branch they have chosen to concentrate on. Either that or they openly embrace the sport as a whole and do their best to share the joy it gives them and the enthusiasm with which it fills them.

Unfortunately there have been, particularly in this last decade or so, books that can only be described as either attempted ego boosters or hopeful bank-account fillers. I would hazard a guess and say that both of these reasons would have produced books that leave themselves and their authors open to ridicule and derision at best. Amongst the wealth of written word on the sport, one or two books have stood out head-and-shoulders above the rest. A couple have become classics within the sport such as MH Woodford's *A Manual of Falconry* and Phillip Glasier's *Falconry and Hawking*.

In the humble opinion of this writer, the somewhat short and very exclusive list of what constitutes a modern falconry classic has just been added to and added to very emphatically. Patrick Morel is a name

very well known within the hawking fraternity and his name is synonymous with falconry of a very high standard. Patrick has finally put down in print some of the knowledge he has gained over the years and now shares it with a wider audience than just his circle of falconry acquaintances.

*The Art of Falconry* was originally published some time back in French and was rightly hailed as a masterpiece on the sport. The demand is such that now there is an English version and it is that book we are discussing here.

The book itself is a large work – A4 size, 496 pages and weighing in at some 6lb. The foreword is by long-time friend and fellow falconer Roger Upton, himself a respected, almost-revered, figure within the sport. There are eight chapters, each with several sub-divisions, and in excess of 220 full-colour photographs illustrating this truly sumptuous work. Chapter headings range from 'The Hunting Hawk' and 'Longwings; the High Flight', 'Shortwings; the Low Flight' through to 'Falconry Around The World' and 'Ultimate Quarry'. There is so much knowledge and practical experience contained within the pages of this excellent book and quite literally a myriad of quality colour photos to illustrate the subject. As well as his own thoughts, we as readers are also treated to those of such falconers as Henri Desmots and Frans Bolinches

Gomez-Torres. I have been fortunate in that I have hawked Sand Grouse in Morocco many years ago with passage Barbary Falcons and reading this book brought many happy memories flooding back.

Priced very competitively at just €54.32, this book is surely a must for every serious falconer. Personally I am convinced that in a few years' time it will rank alongside works such as *Der Wilde Falke ist mien Gessel* by Renz Waller and *El Arte de Ceteria* by Dr Felix Rodriguez De La Fuente. In short, this is a book that is both ahead of its time and yet already a classic of its specialist genre. I genuinely cannot recommend this book too highly to anyone who really loves falconry and shares the passion for it that so obviously shines through from the author.

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## Review a book

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# Advent

Don Ryan, Dublin

I could have gone to the Christmas party.

God knows, I haven't been to many in recent years.

Having promised my colleagues I wouldn't excuse myself this year, I hadn't given it much thought thereafter. But sitting in the office as the clock turned 1pm with blatant excitement mounting as staff hurried to finish their work, I had serious reservations. Set to kick off at 2pm with pre-dinner drinks, it was sure to continue late into the festive December night.

From the 5th floor window of the city office, I could judge the wind from flags on nearby masts to be a gentle south-westerly. I could also make out the hazy silhouette of the

distant hills in the south where I fly my falcons. Conditions were perfect.

By 1.15pm, I confirmed with the computer on my desk that I really did want to shut it down and grabbing my jacket from the back of the chair, I swiftly passed my colleagues on the way to the stairwell. By 1.30pm I was driving along the canal towards home considering the afternoon ahead. I had given extra rations to all the hawks the day before as I wasn't expecting them to fly but with a healthy flying weight, I suspected Lady Broderick, a second-season imprint falcon, would be up for a flight.

At 3pm, the party in the restaurant would be well under way with inhibitions waning as drink was con-

sumed. No doubt the din of voices and laughter would become louder as the spirit of Christmas spread like an embarrassing blush. But here at the bottom of this heather-clad hill, apart from the distant call of a raven, all was welcomingly quiet. Being late in the day, the best I could do was to take them to the top of the hill and like the grand old Duke, march them back down into the light wind to lend her ladyship a comfortable up-draft to follow the pack. The sky was clear and it was unseasonably mild for December although the coolness in the breeze would normally have me wearing more than a fleece if I knew I didn't have an uphill walk. The spaniels ran in all directions as usual but never too far from the whistle and the hooded lady falcon sat on my fist waiting for me to

reveal the afternoon.

It's a mild ascent and at a casual pace with a gentle wind at your back, you can reach the summit in under 30 minutes. It was no different this day. At the top of the hill I stopped to take in the view and catch my breath. There is no cover here to spoil the view of a falcon's flight. The sky is closer, the air more pure and the solitude lets you appreciate all these things. The valley below is split by a road that leads into national parks and the uplands of Wicklow. Apart from the offensive afforestation creeping up the Dublin slopes, all around is fine heather moorland. The remains of old stone grouse butts strategically placed below the hill are still visible despite the heavy growth that surrounds them. They provide welcome shelter when a sudden squall passes which is common up here particularly at this time of year.

Lady Broderick's hooded head turned slowly sideways; like the carriage on an old typewriter that typed its way to one side then returned to start all over again. It's as if she were listening; computing; and writing sentences in the air. Some say this is the sign of an ill-fitting hood as light seeps in. With the lack of an alternative suggestion, maybe they're right.

Beyond the hill to the east, I could see the Dublin city port and the 3 o'clock ferry already leaving the quay forging its way to old England. I used that boat myself many

times in a different life and time; a time of youth and innocence; a time of hard work and hard play. I can still see the faces of the men I worked with. I remember them most at this time of year. Many have passed on now; died well before their time. Every now and then I unexpectedly bump into one of the living who tell me of more names who've passed. We never stay in touch and perhaps it's better that way as we'd only remind ourselves of wasted days. We drank through our drunken youth seeking answers to the cold oblivion of sobriety until no wonder could make it through the chink.

She never looked at me as the hood came off – she rarely does. She gave a brief glance at the dogs; then stared at the distant hills, her head bobbing; focusing like an electronic lens, then ever so slightly adjusting the orientation of her gaze. Content with her surroundings, she gave a rouse, then a warble, then another rouse. Gazing upwards, she folded her wings in and out with a crispness that sounded like the drawing back of starched sheets in a posh hotel then dropped with careless abandon into the gentle wind that carried her effortlessly into the waiting sky.

Deep wing beats lifted her upwards until she found the wind like a surfer finds a wave, then dipping sharply down, she singled out a spaniel passing inches above her head. Hazel slowed her pace and stopped as the falcon drifted over; conscious of the impending

threat. She looked to me for guidance and took my wave as the falcon past harmlessly over as an assuring sign to make her merry way to catch up with the others. Her ladyship was in a playful mood.

I pondered on whether I had made the right decision coming to the hills rather than in celebrating with the work crowd. They were a good bunch. Hardworking and considerate but I've always avoided crowds and the well-worn paths. Two roads diverged in a wood and I followed the dogs on the path with the undergrowth; returning not long afterwards, torn and disorientated, wishing I'd taken the other route. Being a non-conformist isn't easy sometimes. My life would have been a lot easier if I had followed the more travelled paths. I guess you're just born this way. I've always found deep comfort on my own with Mother Nature. My thoughts are more lucid. I strain to hear the silence and if I slow my breathing and empty my head, I almost feel something special may happen. It never does of course but I still leave in a euphoric mood. I never get this feeling in crowds or the workplace or in my younger days at school. School for me was a place that filled my head with answers to questions I never asked. The quiet corners of the nearby park or the new-found wonder of the hills away from prying eyes were more to my liking. These traits of dissent are flaws you don't wish to see in a peregrine – at least not one destined for falconry.



Thankfully Lady Broderick was displaying none of these characteristics so far this season. Of course, bringing her flying on a less than empty tank is certainly not the wisest advice the learned falconry sages offer to keep it that way.

As we descended the hill, she drifted back and forth over the dogs at pitches of several hundred feet to inches above a spaniel's head. No sooner had she reached a lofty pitch with an ease that many game hawkers would envy, she'd drop to skim the surface or feint fly at pipits that erupted from the heather. She had no task to perform today. She flew for the love of the flight. On one flight, she turned and ripped back up over the brow of the hill out of sight.

As minutes passed with no return, I called to the dogs so we could go find her. Back at the top she was nowhere to be seen. I spent a few anxious moments scanning the area until my eyes were drawn suddenly upwards by the call of a raven that flew towards me and as I looked directly above, I found Lady Broderick. She was in pursuit of another raven. I estimated they must be 700ft up. She would rise above it to make a stoop then allow the raven to perform a similar move. Like a dance off. I became worried as the other raven moved in to gain an unfair advantage but they behaved in a sporting manner and only engaged one at a time. I watched helplessly knowing no lure would call her down. Her cries ripped through the

sky like the staccato fire of a spitfire engaging the invading enemy.

At a flying weight of just over 2lb, she was no small falcon but beside these broad-winged spectres, she seemed slight. From the ground, looking up into their world of air and space, she didn't appear to be phased by the size difference. Two distinctly different species evolved to exist in a harsh and remote environment; together yet defiantly apart with a mutual respect borne out of circumstance and necessity. I was less than comfortable with this situation as I had lost all control and had to let the scene play out, anxious for a harmless conclusion. Thankfully, after a short period, the ravens seemed to lose interest and drifted over a forest. She followed them briefly until she was sure they were moving on, then turned back with a buoyant air, no doubt pleased with her dominance of the skies. She was now the perfect height for a gamehawk and for a moment I wished I had a pride of pointers on point instead of a clatter of cockers on chaos. She kept flying and passed in front of the dogs. As she got out of range, one of the spaniels broke off as he picked up scent. No sooner had he gone 30yds, than a snipe erupted with its distinctive alarming cry, ricocheting into the sky. I looked to Lady Broderick to see if she'd react but being out of position with too much ground to make up, she gave no more than a tip of her wing.

The flying antics with the

ravens must have drawn attention from some way off as a wild tiercel Peregrine appeared out of nowhere covering the sky effortlessly with barely a wingbeat. He mirrored her flight intently from 200ft above and I was unsure if she had seen him as she gave no indication of his presence. He playfully stooped towards her and she suddenly flipped over to face him, scolding him with a series of cries that made him pull away. The cries were different to those aimed at the ravens; less accusing, less urgent. He rose higher and circled above but she completely ignored him. I felt sorry for this blue prince of the skies. He must have felt really miffed with the attention she gave the ravens as he wasn't given a moment's notice. We continued the descent downhill and when I next looked, he was nowhere to be seen. Gone as quickly as he arrived – a spurned suitor.

Half way down the hill, the dogs bumped and proceeded to give chase to a sika hind that was resting in deep heather. A sharp whistle turned them lazily back but at this stage, Lady Broderick was in keen pursuit. All I could make out was the white tail on the rear of the hind springing over the rough ground with unnatural ease. The falcon had to pump to keep up and at one point I thought she was going to take hold but up she rose at the last moment leaving the deer to disappear into the safety of the forest. She turned to come over the dogs again, clearly knowing it was more fun flying

# I estimated they must be 700ft up. She would rise above it to make a stoop then allow the raven to perform a similar move. Like a dance off

above these busy spaniels that make creatures appear out of nowhere. Having been in the air for nearly 30 minutes, she remained at a good pitch as we came close to the bottom of the hill and rather than let her lose further height, I took out the lure garnished with a half quail and swung it once to let it drop on the heather in front of me.

She circled lazily knowing her flight was at an end and gave a series of stepped stoops before fluttering down to land beside it; then ever so gently and cautiously stepped on top. There was no urgency about her. She merely wished to claim the lure. I sat down beside her on the heather being careful to give her space. She stared upwards into the empty sky as if trying to remember something and as her focus deepened, like crossing swords, her folded wings slid down and off her back. She repositioned them only for it to recur a moment later causing her to snap out of her trance and focus on the quail. She puffed her feathers out and lifted a talon to rapidly scratch the side of her beak. She finished this with a rouse; then remembering I was there, turned her back on me to pluck the limp feathers from the quail.

The evening shadow had

begun to creep into the sky and it brought a cooler air. The cheekier spaniels rubbed against me hoping for an offering of quail and the busier ones kept busy running around. Below in the city, traffic would be building with car horns sounding the frustration of impatient drivers. The Christmas lights would soon be clearly seen as darkness fell and shoppers would take advantage of the late opening. The Christmas party would be in full swing with many others about to start. The city would be full of raw emotion. For all the noise and activity below, not a sound disturbed this peaceful slope.

The cairn on top of the far mountain beyond the valley of Glenasmole could still be seen despite the dimming light. It's said this valley was one of the Fiannas' favourite hunting grounds and from up here, you could understand why. There is an indescribable aura in high places that just can't be found in the lowlands. You see the world from a different perspective. You see the wood above the trees.

Assuring herself there was no further quail hidden under the lure or in the surrounding heather, she turned and looked for an offering on the glove and it was there exactly

where it always is. Stepping up, she wasted no time to finish off the last morsel – time enough for me to fit her jesses and swivel. With the leash tied off, she allowed me to clean her beak between thumb and finger and gladly took the remnant I offered on a fingertip.

Feaking her beak on the fingers of my glove and allowing the hood to be easily placed on her bonny head was all the reassurance needed that I had made the right choice by coming to the hills.

It wasn't too late to go to the party when I got home but I had a hawk and falcon to fly the following day and hangovers and falconry are not a good mix.

Being a falconer brings certain responsibilities – not least of these is to fly your hawk at every opportunity within the short season granted us. Living on a small island on the edge of the north Atlantic; being the first landfall for low pressure anticyclones, a falconer must take every fine day they can, for tomorrow could bring driving wind and rain that may not stop till season's end.

Maybe next year's Christmas party would fall on a wet and windy day.





# Communications, Falconers and IAF

By Gary Timbrell, Co Cork

It is with huge pleasure that I write this in response to numerous requests from Don and Hilary. It was IHC that first pushed me towards IAF when Liam O'Broin was unable to attend an important IAF Meeting in 2000, in Amarillo, Texas and he sent me to deputise for him (together with a bundle of notes on how to vote and who to vote for). I had thought my only passion was for falconry, but my contact with falconers from all over the world has shown me I am also passionate about falconers. I have brothers in Uzbekistan, cousins in Mongolia and in every falconry country. We all speak the same language. Your community is what you have in common with its members.

IAF now represents 110 hunting falconers' organisations in 80 countries including all of the EU's 28 countries. This is why IAF, although being a global organisation, needs a European office. Europe (the EU) block votes in all international conventions so that in most law where the drafts originate with international NGOs, one side already has up to a fifth of all votes. So IAF has opened its first professional office in Brussels, the centre of European Government. There is currently one full-time professional, myself, who was formerly Advisory Council Chair and Secretary. I'm in charge of day-to-day operations. IAF also uses professional part-time researchers and specialists in EU machinations.

IAF is using professionals but remains essentially an amateur organisation, with an amateur board, an amateur AC and am-

ateur National Delegates. Here 'amateur' is used in the French sense of the word, which is 'lover'. IAF's Latin motto is borrowed from the Emperor Frederick – 'QUOD TOTUM PROCEDIT EX AMORE' – 'Because it all comes from love'. So much came from love for so many years that it restricted IAF officials to those rich enough to afford that love. Now there is a professional office to back them up.

Here is the new IAF team for 2016-2018:

#### **The Executive**

- President: A Lombard (South Africa)
- VP Americas: Ralph Rogers (USA)
- VP Europe: Janusz Sielicki (Poland) – Also Conservation Officer
- VP Asia: Keiya Nakajima (Japan) – Also Officer for Rehabilitation and Conservation
- VP MENA: HE Majid al Mansouri (UAE)
- Executive Treasurer: António Carapuço (Portugal)
- Executive Secretary: Adrian Reuter (Mexico) (& Officer for CITES)

#### **The Voting AC**

- Chairman: Bohumil Straka (Czech Rep.) – UNESCO and ICH
- Véronique Blontrock (Belgium) – Representative for Belgium, PRO
- Bakyt Karnakbeye (Kazakhstan) – Representative for Central Asia
- Patricia Cimberio (Italy) – Officer for Communications and Events
- Thomas Richter (Germany) – Officer for Animal Welfare
- Zayed al Maadeed (Qatar)

- Mark Upton (UK)
  - Dan Cecchini (USA) – IAF Data Base, also Special responsibility for Electrocution of Raptors
  - Fernando Feás (Spain) – Officer for Ex-Situ Conservation
  - Frits Kleyn (The Netherlands) – Officer for Culture
- The Executive and the Advisory Committee constitute IAF's Board

#### **Extended AC:**

- Karl Heinz Gersmann (Germany) – CIC Liaison.
- Matt Gage (UK) – Special Advisor, Science
- Laco Molnar (Slovakia) – Veterinary Liaison
- Dick Ten Bosch (The Netherlands) – Fund-raising.
- Yukio Asaoka (Japan) – Eastern Asia.
- Willem Vrijenhoek (The Netherlands) – Interpol Liaison
- Henrique Rezende – Representative for Latin America
- Philippe König (The Netherlands) – IAF General Counsel
- Stephan Wunderlich (Germany) – Biodiversity Working Group and Perdix Portal
- Kamran Khan (Pakistan) – Officer for the Indian Subcontinent
- Javier Ceballos (Spain) – Officer for Falconry Ethics and WFD
- Tony Crosswell (UK) – Editorial Committee
- Hilary White (Ireland) – Editorial Committee
- Jevgeni Shergalin (Estonia) – Officer for Northern Eurasia. FHT Liaison
- Patrick Morel (Belgium)

#### **Additional Advisors:**

- Robert Kenward (UK) – IUCN/CMS
- Elisabeth Leix (Germany) – 2018

What is happening in Europe is that Europe is now recognising the importance of falconry. The physical building of IAF's European office is on the ground floor of la Maison European de la Chasse, the headquarters of FACE. We used our gala office opening to invite MEPs, commission officials and other NGOs to come to us and we publicly signed a MoU with FACE. This physical situation and alliance gives falconry direct access to people that count in Europe, including the MEPs' Intergroup for Hunting and Biodiversity, who had invited us (IAF) to organise the Great Falconry Exhibition inside the Brussels Parliament Building in 2012 to celebrate UNESCO recognition. We are also very near the IUCN European offices on Bvd Louis Schmidt, which also gives us access to one of the most important conservation organisations which affect falconry laws. FACE and CIC, the main shooting organisations, and IUCN, the main conservation organisation are all actively courting the falconers now they see the success UNESCO has brought to us.

IAF's most important professional service is the Dods Agency, both as a communication system for stuff coming in, alerts on Invasive Alien Species legislation, Biodiversity, trafficking, useful conferences, MEP opinions etc. Many European clubs, including IHC, contribute to the expenses incurred by the contract and receive the information by email. We also use the Dods service for press releases favourable to falconry and are regularly contacted by the press to comment on falconry-related matters.

Under the presidency of Adrian Lombard, IAF thinking is like a tripod – Falconry (Hunting) is supported by *Conservation*, *Culture* and *Welfare through Education*. The IAF has been

able to establish its standing as a significant conservation organisation by taking part in various projects in Europe – the tree-nesting Peregrines, Saker nests in Hungary and, outside of Europe, the funding and management of the first of the Saker Global Action Plan Flagship Projects. We are in direct joint partnership with the IUCN, CMS and BirdLife International. This project is of huge importance to falconers, particularly those in the Saker Range States. It promotes the concept of sustainable use as a conservation tool. It is essential that we win the support of Falconers in those countries that utilise wild-taken Sakers. This is a significant step and, although not seeming to have direct impact on European falconers, the credibility that it has already given to the falconry community in our contacts with all the international, law-making NGOs (all those initials!) has skyrocketed. Now, instead of us begging for seats at the CBD (Convention on Biodiversity), the CMS (Conference on Migratory Species), CITES (you all know this one), they are asking us to give the speeches and make the presentations.

Everyone is familiar with promoting Falconry Culture from seeing all the ongoing UNESCO related stuff, World Falconry Day etc. But *Culture* is also *Education* and last year there were academic conferences in Bialystok (Poland) and in Lisbon, both very favourable to falconry, and there is a cross-over exhibition in the Spanish National Science Museum in Madrid (well worth seeing). Last March, we spoke about how falconry is depicted to the general public, at Museum Curators' Conference in Paris.

This inspired the idea for a European Cultural Routes Project. IAF has an obligation as an Official Advisory NGO to UNESCO to develop and promote the culture of falconry. The vision of developing a Falconry Route which celebrates both the active living culture of falconry as

well as the historical culture is inspired. This culture of falconry is particularly rich all over Europe, but also in countries which border the European Union and which encircle the Mediterranean Sea and extend to the Persian Gulf and beyond. We are aware of the significance of falconry during the Middle Ages as it bridged the gulf between enemies in the conflicts of the Crusades and allowed a sharing of knowledge, literature and culture even in those troubled times. We can foresee and even see now falconry providing common links in today's areas of conflict. Thus the IAF, as the coordinating partner organisation in this Cultural Routes Project, can seek to enhance the concept of a common European identity as well as extending the hand of friendship beyond the confines of Europe. This project will enable us to promote the cultural aspects of falconry, specifically encouraging those with an interest in falconry, history and natural sciences to visit places of interest, but will also allow us to publicise events, such as conferences, festivals and fieldmeets and enhance attendance.

More on *Education*: The Establishing of Falconers as the experts on Animal Welfare relating to Falconry Raptors. Our IAF Guidelines for the General Welfare of Falconry Raptors (approved at the 2014 Council of Delegates Meeting in Doha) are available on [raptorwelfare.org](http://raptorwelfare.org) and have already been used (at the request of national clubs) to develop welfare regulations in Flemish Belgium and, most recently, in Malta, where the government mentioned them by name in National Law.

We are moving forward with an online Welfare Self-audit (a project whose development was approved in Argentina last year). Self-audit principles will be available, (though not compulsory) for any hunting falconers, pest control operators,



# IAF communicates the needs of the individual falconer to the agencies who make the laws that affect us all. We do this so you can spend more time in the field, the mountain, the forest and the desert

rehabilitators and breeders. We are an international body and recognise that in different countries, traditions and methods are quite different, but there are some principles that are universal to all.

There are several sections in the self-audit: General requirements, Legal requirements (these may be very different around the world), Veterinary requirements, Housing requirements etc, even special requirements for the keeping and managing of living food animals (if kept). Particularly important is the request for back-up photos and document uploads to back up the information given.

There are three important things to remember when looking at this online form:

1. It will still show the authorities that we, the falconers, have responsibility and expertise; if they decide to make welfare laws, then they can use this, the falconers' set of criteria, rather than a set given by someone with no knowledge of birds of prey.

2. If someone fills it in and registers (free for a trial period) they get a certificate so if an SPCA inspector comes they can show it (of course, if they have lied it is invalid). Even if they do lie through their teeth, it is still educational because they learn what they should really have in place.

3. If they don't lie and are still going to be prosecuted, then IAF can link them up with an expert witness to dispute if the case is unjustified.

This service is available free to members of IAF Member Organisations and to IAF Subscribers.

There is also proposed an online course, *IAF Animal Welfare for Falconers*. Animal welfare is especially dangerous because there is neither a clear definition of what 'welfare' means, nor clear knowledge even among the falconry community. This proposed course is online based, entirely fee-paying and is two flagships in one: to educate falconers and to take control of the political discussion.

The final big IAF project is a Breeders Forum, Pedigree System and DNA Banking: responsible falconers want to be able to prove they deserve freedoms through registration; responsible falconers want to be able to move between national boundaries more freely with their birds; discerning falconers want to know what they are buying / getting. It's becoming increasingly evident that 'lines' exist that are predisposed to certain types within falconry, and some breeders are producing 'known' lines which are sought, as well as having rearing conditions that are sought.

Banks are proposed through DNA storage. Biotechnology is

constantly improving so we now need less DNA, can store more efficiently, and have more cost-effective methods to ID individual / species parentage. We are aiming for a guaranteed DNA bank, with long-term contractual obligations and a similarly guaranteed database acceptable to CITES enforcers. A system of species-level identification is being developed. This is a bit tricky and new for some species (but wanted by the Arab and related markets for proving 'pure' gyrs etc.) and very useful in forensic cases where a legitimate breeder of a key species may be under pressure by authorities to definitively prove parentage.

A system of individual-level identification that can allow parentage tracing will be a bit sparse to start with, but will build up through the generations as the bank grows; in the meantime, it will allow registered breeders to lodge their own breeding stock in the bank, mark it, and start creating their own accredited pedigrees and Stud Book. Small backyard breeders, who produce for themselves and friends are already volunteering to use this scheme.

So what is the Brussels Leviathan doing? We have seen that Welfare is the biggest issue, with a new Parliamentary Inter-group on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals. This is a reasonable group, which includes many members of the

Hunting Intergroup as well. Unfortunately, it is backed up by a much more radical group that includes both MEPs and radical outsider organisations – the Eurogroup for Animals. This doubles the press release capacity and slews it back to the hardcore. These people are the advocates of the 'Positive lists', proposed lists of animals that may be kept, that is restricting pet keeping to a few species like dogs, cats and rabbits. IAF is closely monitoring this issue.

The most important of the European Conventions that channel legislation is the Berne Convention, which has most recently accepted the IAF Guidelines with Regard to Invasive Alien Species and Falconry (see IAF website).

Expert groups in Bern Convention also cover the Illegal killing of Birds, for example extensive netting along the southern Mediterranean coastline and spring hunting. This all links on

with Trafficking and Illegal trade in Wildlife, which we are all against, but we must be vigilant we do not lose the baby with the bathwater. For example, a blanket ban on spring hunting would stop spring rook hawking, and a blanket ban on netting would stop the traditional Tunisian and Black Sea falconers from catching their passage spars. We have therefore attended many workshops and seminars on this in the past months to make small interventions where we can 'sow seeds' and put things in perspective. For example, Facebook pictures of the seizure of 16 smuggled sakers in Iran were being lauded as a major win in conservation, yet this 16 is only the equivalent of 20miles worth of electrocuted sakers on Mongolian power lines. To make these distinctions, we have to be present and use examples from outside Europe as well as from inside it. With the Birds and Habitats Directives, the key words are *Biodiversity, stake-*

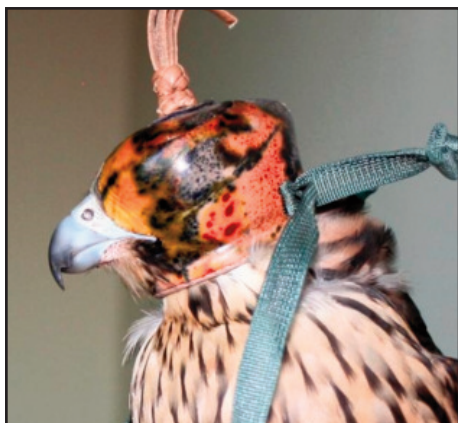
*holder interest and Community stewardship.* We use them as often as we can.

IAF is about Communication; we communicate the needs of the individual falconers, via their clubs and individual involvement in IAF, to the International Agencies who make the laws that affect us all. We do this so that you don't have to and so that you can spend more time in the field, the mountain, the forest and the desert.

I hope the rest of the IHC gets as internationally enthusiastic as I am as we prepare to host falconers from right around the planet in November in what promises to be the best IAF Meeting ever.

[www.iaf.org](http://www.iaf.org)





## My hoods

Ian Trevarth, UK

I made my first hood some time in the early 1980s. An Anglo-Indian hood from Philip Glasier's book *Falconry & Hawking*. I used book-binding leather, a saddler's awl and thread and needle purchased together on a card as being for leather sewing.

Things were different then – no internet resource, very little in the library and nothing on hood making. It seemed obvious to me that all the equipment would have to be made by myself. So I made jesses, leash, gloves and a double-sided bag all out of leather and then began my first hood.

I knew straight away that I was unhappy about the three-pointed look of it and could see no reason why those points couldn't be turned into nice curves that followed the shape of a bird's head better.

So by my second hood I was already using a pattern modified by myself.

By the end of the 80s, I was running a falconry centre with many birds – five Peregrines, three Lanners, two Luggers, two Redtails, three Harris hawks, three Ferruginous, a Bald and a Tawny Eagle all needing hoods. So off I went, making my modified pattern and blowing it up on a photocopier to fit all these birds. I used quite poor leather a lot of the time but an Anglo-Indian hood is very forgiving, and they looked

pretty good and fitted and worked well on all these birds. Sadly, I have no clear images of them as I regarded them simply as tools so usually unhooded any bird I took pictures of and, in any case, with pre-digital photography the quality of what I did have was very poor.

I lost the hood I used on my Peregrine tiercel, Byron, in the field whilst running after him following a lovely successful flight at partridge over my setter and, on the way home, was determined to make him a blocked hood. I had collected a couple of resin casts of Mollen blocks from Griff at the Welsh Hawking centre as a gift when picking up the Tawny Eagle he sold me. Glasier's book had his falconry centre pattern in it for both falcon and tiercel so I was good to go.

Mark Richards came up a few weeks later for his regular hawking trip and brought some red snake skin for me so that obviously had to be put onto the eye panels.

The hood worked out pretty well, that is it hanging out of my mouth [PIC]. It was at this time I realised all the patterns available had very poor or, in some cases, no beak opening, and having seen a few birds develop a rub over the soft gape I knew I preferred a fit that didn't cross it. So encouraged by the success of Byron's new bonnet, I made a couple more

falconry centre hoods and a Dutch hood with my own beak opening. Largely, however, stuck to the super-easy and forgiving Anglo-Indian pattern that by now I had made my own with rolled edge, nice curves on the top, improved beak opening and always suede side out for no reason other than I liked it.

By the end of the 1990s, I had moved on and was now employed and flying just the one bird (a Finnish Gos bred by Mark Richards) back in Cornwall. Having been a seven-days-a-week falconer with huge amounts of land and a variety of birds to fly, I found weekend hawking increasingly difficult to reconcile. I couldn't do it to the standard I wanted so gradually slipped out of it all together. I made no more hoods.

Fast forward to 2010. After spending some time living in France, I returned again to Cornwall. On my first birthday back in Cornwall, Mark gave me a couple of blocks, a few square feet of vegetable-tanned leather and challenged me to make a Dutch hood.

The whole thing was light-hearted and I treated it as fun. I wondered how could I make a hood that would be completely unexpected. So I came up with the idea of a boded-wood hood, and painted the leather with dyes to look like wood.





I thought it hilarious, but when I showed it to Mark (who makes the best hoods I have ever seen and is a font of knowledge on the history and development of the craft), he didn't laugh. He really liked it and thought it the most original design work he had seen for some time. He also suggested I post it on to the Falconry Forum to see what the wider community made of it. To my surprise, a chap called George Duncalf asked to buy it.

So now I needed to make another.

I am a fool for always doing things the hard way, but my reasoning was that it was the originality of the hood that had sold it. Yes of course it had to be a functioning and fitting hood but in reality, unlike the 1990s, there were now dozens of people making really good hoods that were not expensive and, with the internet, were readily available. How could I hope someone would buy my work when Steve Tait, Martin Jones and many others were all making top stuff available at very fair prices? It seemed unlikely knowing how good these hoods were. Too many people make excellent traditional-looking hoods for there to be much room for me. So I needed to continue to be surprising in the designs I put on my hoods but also I felt, other than Nick Fox and Ken Hooke, not many new hood patterns had emerged. Yes people had tailored various patterns to make them fit

well but they were still recognisable as Dutch or blocked Anglo-Indian or Arab etc. I needed to make a brand new pattern.

So I made another Dutch hood, stretched it onto the block and then drew a line where the new seams would be and with a scalpel cut it off the block. I then pressed it flat and traced a line around it. That was the first incarnation of the 'Trevarth Pattern'. I cut one out, put some art work on it and stitched it up. I put a small beak opening on it knowing it could be enlarged to fit and posted a pic on the internet. It wasn't perfect but it was different, appealed to collectors and sold. By this means, I realised that I could fund my research-and-development phase with this pattern by trying hard to make each one practical and collectable. I made some horrors that actually offended people because they thought I was being disrespectful to falconry. But I thought them funny and kept going. Halfway through making a hood, an idea for the next would pop into my head – popular culture, native arts, ceramics, all were potential for hood design. Nothing was too out there. I loved *Breaking Bad* for example so made this one.



Fit was always my first consideration so getting feedback from knowledgeable customers was vital. It took a while but I started getting

the fit I wanted and my pattern began to work really well. People even began to say: 'I really like the fit of your hoods, but do you make brown ones?'

If you look at the corner of the soft gape in the pic below you can see that there is a little too much leather cut away. It works perfectly well (this one is in Abu Dhabi) but to my eye it can be improved. So that little adjustment was made to the pattern and then off you go and make another.



About this time, I came up with the idea of marbling the hoods. As far as I could tell, it had never been done to a hood before and my early experiments looked amazing. So along with the fit, my hoods became recognisable as a new product made by me and not in any way a rip-off of anyone else.

# Falconry & Raptors in Idaho

by Bruce Haak, US



Idaho was one of the first states in the nation to recognize falconry as a legal field sport and develop a licensing system for participants. In 1976, when falconry permits became a joint venture between state wildlife management agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Idaho quickly became a partner in the program.

At the time, there was speculation in certain circles that falconry might become a potentially popular outdoor pastime, and that falconers might be negatively impacting wild raptor populations. Since then, however, the close scrutiny of the sport has led to some interesting revelations. Studies now show that the capture of wild birds of prey for falconry have no effect on wild raptor populations; that falconry has no impact on small game, upland game and waterfowl populations; and that instead of being a rapidly growing 'fad' sport, participant numbers have remained relatively constant over the past four decades. While Idaho's wild raptor populations remain healthy, the demand for these birds over the years has remained at a uniformly low level.

The sport of falconry is currently managed by one of the most demanding sets of regulations imposed on any group of outdoor sportsman in this country.

Under the joint system, FWS required all falconers to be tested about raptor knowledge, falconry techniques and state laws; that their facilities be inspected to ensure compliance with all equipment requirements; and that all newcomers to the sport would serve a two-year apprenticeship under an experienced licensed falconer. Put in fishing terms, this is the equivalent of an apprentice passing Ichthyology 101, constructing a line, a rod and a reel from scratch, and building his own drift boat before being allowed to fish.

## Permit Categories

To qualify as Apprentices, would-be falconers must pass a general raptor knowledge test with a minimum 70% score, have facilities inspected, and must be sponsored by a Master falconer for two years. The Apprentice is limited to possession of one wild-caught raptor per year.

Once the person has successfully served an apprenticeship, he or she may advance to the General level. The General-class falconer is permitted to possess two raptors per year, to take nestlings for training, and to acquire captive-bred raptors for training. After five years as a General, the person may qualify as a Master-class falconer. The Master may possess three raptors and take special-status

raptors from the wild, such as peregrine falcons and golden eagles, under permit.

## Facilities Inspections

Before a falconer can be licensed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), his/her facilities must pass inspection. The mode for inspections varies from state to state, but the goals are uniformity and compliance. In some places, members of the state falconry association are designated as official inspectors by their wildlife management agency. In Idaho, conservation officers or regional office staff conduct these inspections. The purpose of these inspections is to verify that any acquired raptor will be housed in facilities that exclude potential predators, are safe for the bird, and are protected from the elements. During inspections, falconers must demonstrate that they have all of the proper gear on hand: perches, bath pans, scales, hoods, jesses, swivels, leashes, etc. They must also show proper documentation for any raptor(s) held in possession. The standard 3186A form serves as proper documentation. Copies of this form are held in triplicate by the individual falconer, the regional IDFG office, and the FWS office in Portland, Oregon.

## Birds of Prey Used in Falconry

Raptors used for falconry fit into three categories: falcons,



hawks and eagles. Falcons are fast, long-distance pursuit predators. Commonly used species include American kestrels, merlins, prairie falcons, peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons. Often, these falcons are taught to circle at great heights in the sky and pursue their prey in high-speed dives called 'stoops'. In this manner, large falcons can be fairly matched in the field against ducks, partridge, pheasants and prairie grouse. Smaller falcons may be used to chase house sparrows, starlings, quail and doves.

Popular hawks include buteos (red-tailed hawks and ferruginous hawks), accipiters (sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks and goshawks), and one parabuteo, the Harris' hawk. These are close-order hunters that fly from the glove or follow the falconer through the brush, waiting for game to flush, in much the same manner as shotgun hunting. Most red-tailed hawks, Harris hawks and goshawks are trained to hunt rabbits. Under ideal conditions, they can take ducks and upland game. The smaller and more delicate sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks are well-matched with quarry the size of house sparrows and quail.

Because eagles require special permits, large facilities, careful handling, and great spaces for flight, few falconers wish to have them. They are most often flown at jack rabbits.

In Idaho, licensed falconers may take young hawks and falcons of specific species from nests. During trapping season (September to mid-February) they may also capture free-flying juvenile raptors. Falconers have five days to report the age, sex, and species of each raptor taken for falconry on a standard 3186A form. In addition, state and federal laws mandate that wild-taken gyrfalcons, peregrines and Harris' hawks be identified with a numbered black-plastic leg band provided by the FWS.

In addition to providing falconers pure stocks of hawks and falcons for training, private breeders also produce exotic species and hybrid raptors of various combinations for the falconry market. To be eligible for sale, captive-bred raptors must be fitted with an individually numbered, seamless metal band when they are approximately 10 days of age. Only licensed falconers may purchase or receive these raptors for sport hunting.

### **Non-resident Falconers**

Non-resident falconers are permitted to attend falconry meets in Idaho and to hunt with their raptors during designated seasons. Any falconer licensed in another state need only purchase the proper non-resident hunting license, along with the appropriate upland game and waterfowl tags and stamps, to hunt with their raptor while in Idaho. Falconers from other states may also apply for an Idaho non-resident falconry capture permit from regional offices. Most of the raptor species commonly used in the sport are allowed under permit. Although modest quotas have been set for individual species, the demand has never exceeded the supply. A successful applicant must present the newly captured bird for inspection at the designated regional office in order to validate the permit.

### **Captive Breeding Permits**

The captive breeding of raptors falls under a separate permit category. However, only qualified falconers may apply for such a permit and, as stated previously, only licensed falconers may purchase or receive captive-bred raptors for falconry.

### **Change is Coming**

After several decades, the FWS has opted to return the management of the falconry program to the states. All states with falconry programs now have until 2014 to develop independent regulations which

conform to a newly revised set of federal guidelines. Being proactive, the Idaho Falconers Association (IFA) drafted a revised set of rules and presented them to the Department. In a meeting last spring, IFA representatives and Department staff agreed upon a revised set of regulations that were later approved by the Commission. Approval of these revisions by the legislature, anticipated within a year, is still pending.

### **Peregrine Falcons**

The quintessential representative of falconry from Medieval Europe to present is the peregrine falcon. Recognized as the 'fastest bird in the world', peregrines have been clocked at over 220mph in their high-speed stoops. The last wild nestling peregrine of the DDT era was banded in Idaho in the mid-1970s by Frank and John Craighead, internationally famous wildlife biologists. This occurred as the continental population of peregrines was crashing, and prior to the development of the captive-breeding technology that restored the species nationally. While mankind has employed raptors to hunt for food for approximately 4,000 years, it was not until the early 1970s that a captive-breeding technology was developed for birds of prey. Prior to this time, all of the raptors used in falconry were taken from nests or trapped in the wild. The necessity to breed peregrine falcons in captivity to recover wild populations devastated by DDT was the driving force that galvanized falconers, biologists, conservationists, state and federal agencies and the general public to pursue and support the captive breeding of raptors in this country and abroad.

The recovery of the peregrine falcon population in the contiguous United States is regarded as the most successful restoration of a species by modern wildlife management. It should be noted that all of the initial breeding stocks of peregrines were donated to Cornell



University (where The Peregrine Fund, Inc. was founded) by falconers. In addition, it was falconer-biologists who pioneered all of the captive breeding and release techniques that facilitated this remarkable success story. For three decades, The Peregrine Fund staff raised and released thousands of peregrine falcons back into the wild. Falconers with private raptor-breeding facilities created artificial insemination techniques and advanced incubation techniques, in addition to contributing great numbers of peregrines to the restoration effort. In 1999, the peregrine falcon was removed from the federal list of Endangered Species. It is now legal for falconers to harvest wild peregrines for falconry under permits from various western states. As of 2009, limited numbers of capture permits for juvenile migrant peregrine falcons, known as tundra peregrines, were also issued to falconers. Because these falcons migrate down the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico during autumn, Idaho falconers must travel thousands of miles, and make a serious investment in time and resources, to capture one of these birds for falconry. To date, a few Idaho falconers have been applying for, and receiving, non-resident capture permits for both nesting and migrant peregrines.

Since the legal status of Idaho peregrine falcons was downgraded in August of 2009, it is likely that a capture permit for a nestling peregrine could be issued in the near future. The number of harvestable young per state is set as a percentage of production from known breeding pairs. Based on available data, only one nestling peregrine might be captured in Idaho.

### **Conservation and Education**

In the 1940s and 1950s, a fascination with falconry brought likeminded people together to stop the wholesale slaughter of raptors, institute laws protecting birds of prey, and establish fal-

conry as a legal field sport in the US. At the time, thousands of migrating raptors were shot during autumn at concentration points along mountain ridges and coastlines in the East, and on the margins of the Great Lakes. A small group, falconer-biologists were largely unsuccessful until they brought world-wide attention to the effects of DDT on peregrine falcons and other birds. In part, this helped launch the environmental movement of the 1970s.

Early on, falconers encouraged and supported the development of commercially available radio-telemetry equipment for tracking their birds. Since then, miniaturised radio-transmitters have found many applications in the study of free-roaming wildlife. In addition, falconer-biologists pioneered the use of compact satellite tracking systems by studying the intercontinental migration of Arctic peregrines.

The annual Dubois Grouse Days event was the brainchild of the late Kent Christopher. An avid falconer and dog-trainer, Kent's goal was to highlight the unique biology of sage grouse and encourage public understanding of, and appreciation for, Idaho's shrub-steppe ecosystem. Kent, along with falconers and biologists from around the country, formed the North American Grouse Partnership to further the conservation of dwindling prairie grouse populations. Today, Idaho falconers actively participate in many local sage grouse working groups.

### **The Icons of Idaho**

As is often the case, the hard work and dedication of one truly innovative individual is enshrined over time. In the case of Idaho, the legacy of Morley Nelson lives on. Beyond his history as a decorated soldier with the 10th Mountain Division during World War II, and his profession as a hydrologist with the Soil Conservation Service, Morley was a crusader against the wholesale slaughter of raptors nationally, an innovator in

wildlife photography working with Walt Disney, and a lifelong conservationist. But first and foremost, he was a falconer.

It was Morley who recognised the unique features of the Snake River Canyon as a breeding ground for large numbers of falcons, hawks and eagles. Through his tireless efforts to protect this place, and through the strong support of his friend, then Governor Cecil Andrus, this piece of public land, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, was set aside for raptor conservation for all time.

In his 'spare' time, Morley worked with Idaho Power to develop non-lethal perch structures for raptors that would prevent conflict with power delivery. Years ago, an eagle landed on an unprotected power pole and crossed the lines with its wings. This resulted in the eagle being killed instantly and power being knocked out over a huge area. Ignited into flames by electricity, the eagle carcass fell to earth where it started a range fire. The perch systems and nesting platforms Morley developed for power poles, especially high-tension power lines, are now used internationally.

Morley championed eagles, fighting the extermination campaign waged upon them by western livestock growers. At the time, thousands of eagles were being trapped, poisoned and gunned down from aircraft. At critical political times in the past, Morley and his eagle flew back to Washington DC to lobby Congress against the destruction of raptors, including our national symbol, which resulted in the passage of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Morley was also a founding member of the North American Falconers Association (Nafa), and a pioneer in early captive raptor propagation. In the 1950s, he joined then PhD candidate Tom Cade in the Arctic

learning about gyrfalcons and peregrines. In later years, while teaching at Cornell University, Dr Cade and others founded The Peregrine Fund, Inc. When this non-profit organisation needed to consolidate its satellite facilities in 1985, Morley and Tom orchestrated its relocation to Boise. They also were instrumental in establishing a graduate programme in Raptor Biology at Boise State University.

As you may know, there are no national parks in Idaho. The closest we come to land in that category are Craters of the Moon National Monument, jointly operated by the National Park Service and State of Idaho, and the newly designated Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area. The latter area, locally referred to as 'the NCA', includes 80 miles of Snake River Canyon running between Celebration Park near Melba in the west and Hammett to the east. Here, nearly half a million acres of public land have been set aside for the largest concentration of nesting raptors known in North America.

Boise is now known as the Mecca for the study of raptors throughout the world. It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that, per capita, there are more falconers and raptor biologists in southwest Idaho than anywhere else in the world. This is largely the result of three separate entities: the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area, the World Center for Birds of Prey, and Boise State University's Master's degree program in Raptor Biology.

**World Centre for Birds of Prey**  
 Located at the terminus of south Cole Road in Boise, The

Peregrine Fund's World Centre For Birds of Prey is a combination captive breeding facility and education centre. The Velma Morrison Interpretive Centre attracts people from around the world who are curious about birds, specifically birds of prey. Located in a separate building across the parking lot is their world-class ornithological library. It meets the needs of global researchers by supplying scientific literature, in hard copy and electronic



The recovery of the peregrine in the US is regarded as the most successful restoration of a species by modern wildlife management

form, and with sophisticated literature search capabilities.

Adjacent to the library is the singularly unique Archives of Falconry. Here, the history, art and accoutrements of the sport of falconry, along with artefacts from multiple cultures dating back hundreds of years, are assembled under one roof. This museum displays over 40 original paintings, boasts over 1,500 books on falconry, hunting, and raptors, and contains the most extensive collection of falconry equipment in the world. It is truly a one-of-a-kind facility. Tours are by appointment only.

Cordoned off from the public view are captive populations of California condors, aplomado falcons and other rare and sen-

sitive raptor species that are bred for release in other states, as well as other parts of the world. Security at these facilities is critical as the birds must be quarantined to avoid epizootics and other health risks. In many cases, these specimens truly are irreplaceable.

In addition, however, many varieties of raptors, from tropical to Arctic, are on display at the Visitor Centre. During spring and summer, visitors may also experience flight demonstrations that showcase the extraordinary powers of flight that raptors possess.

Sculptures, plaques and displays pay homage to numerous falconers, including Morley Nelson, who furthered the cause of falconry and raptor conservation throughout the world. By recognizing the accomplishments of the past, we can best understand the importance of protecting what we have for the future.

*Bruce Haak is a Regional Wildlife Biologist studying nongame species in the Southwest Region since 1995. Bruce started falconry at age 12 and later conducted research on prairie falcons for his master's degree at Oregon State University. He has written books on falconry (The Hunting Falcon) and the natural history of the prairie falcon (Pirate of the Plains). He also bred peregrine falcons in captivity for 20 years. Bruce currently conducts research on autumn raptor migration via satellite telemetry, monitors merlins wintering in the Treasure Valley and proctors the two pairs of urban-nesting peregrine falcons in Boise and Nampa.*



# Raptor Nutrition: What we feed them, what goes wrong and how we deal with it

by Neil Forbes BVetMed RFP DipECAMS FRCVS, England

*At the Fifth Qatar International Falcon and Hunting Festival in 2014, a series of talks were given at a conference for 'Veterinary Medicine for Falconry into the 21st Century'. A collaboration between the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey and The Qatari Society of Alghanas, the four day conference featured a number of top speakers. Here we present the 'Falcon Nutrition Masterclass' from this event written by Dr Neil Forbes.*

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to review the available scientific and practical falconry text on raptor nutrition in order that vets can advise falconers on feeding regimes, as far as possible based on proven scientific research, assisted by practical information.

## Introduction

The argument, that in the absence of detailed nutritional data the dietary needs of any individual species are most likely to be met by feeding a diet closely approximating to that which would be taken in the wild under ideal conditions (Kirkwood 1981), can be contested. Firstly, without detailed nutritional data, how can 'ideal' conditions be identified? Even a relatively accurate analysis of 90% of a wild birds intake may not be truly reflective of the nutrient profile of the diet (Brue 1994). In the wild most raptors are opportunistic

eaters i.e. they eat anything which is available e.g. feathered and furred quarry also insects, reptiles and carrion. Whilst some species have adapted over many thousands of years to a certain food intake, in many others the environment in which they live and hence the food availability will have altered, often at a rate faster than the birds' metabolism has been able to adapt (Brue 1994). A totally natural diet is impossible to replicate in captivity regimes (Dierenfeld et al. 1994), particularly because a wild bird has the option of choice (even if availability determines this), (indeed choice may vary with season and breeding activity), whilst a captive bird does not. In addition, captive birds may have different inherent nutritional requirements on account of their unnatural life style (Brue 1994). Wild birds often live short lives and death due to malnutrition is the most common cause of mortality in wild populations (Keymer et al. 1980; Hiron et al. 1979; Brue 1994). In essence, the modern falconer needs to develop feeding regimes based on the requirements of captive bred, raised and maintained birds as opposed to trying to replicate the, less than perfect, feeding patterns of wild raptors. Falconers bemoan the lack of scientific research into raptor nutrition for domesticated raptors. The primary reason to study nutrition, for the falconer, should be to improve the wellbeing of the raptors in our

care. There are many factors that can influence both the quantity of food required by a raptor and its' requirements for specific vitamins. Life style, husbandry, geographical area, different stages of the life cycle, for example the stage of development, growth rate, health status and production level of our birds can all affect their nutritional requirements. Our aim should be to achieve/maintain optimal health: greater longevity (achieving the full potential [flight and breeding] life span of your raptor) may be possible by optimising the diet as some dietary components may have protective effects, for example, antioxidants are known to help reduce cholesterol levels. Promote disease avoidance: nutritionally related disease can occur, which with knowledge can usually be avoided, for example:

- **DIRECT**, because of inappropriate diet content or quantity:
  - Starvation;
  - Malnutrition / sub optimal nutrition;
  - Metabolic Bone Disease (Ca:P:D3 in balance) (i.e. rickets);
  - Obesity (leading most commonly to cardiovascular or liver disease);
  - Toxicities (e.g. excessive fat soluble vitamin supplementation, or mineral poisoning);
  - Competition for food between birds in the same aviary.
- **INDIRECT**, as a consequence of altered requirements due to other conditions:



Management techniques and housing;  
 Rapid levels of neonatal growth;  
 Fledging;  
 Moulting;  
 Reduced or ineffective plumage leading to increased heat loss;  
 Breeding, egg laying and rearing;  
 Old age;  
 Increased or decreased exercise;  
 Following medical treatment e.g. antibiotics altering the gut flora;  
 During recovery after illness or treatment;  
 Altered ambient temperatures;  
 During periods of high stress e.g.:  
 Adverse weather reaction;  
 Weight reduction prior to entering;  
 Injury, change of aviary / husbandry or other conditions leading to sudden increases in metabolic rate.

- **DISEASE**, leading to:  
 Reduction in appetite;  
 Reduction in availability of food (e.g. parasitism);  
 Diarrhoea — decreased absorption of nutrients and electrolytes in view of increased transit rates;  
 Reduced ability to store or mobilise nutrients, especially in liver disease.

- **GENERAL ILL-HEALTH**, for example:  
 Metabolic disorders, e.g. liver disease, thyroid disorders, diabetes;  
 Neoplasia (i.e. cancers);  
 Senility

- **FOOD QUALITY**, for example:  
 Excessive storage times reducing nutritional value;  
 Excessive storage times reducing water content;  
 Restricted food source / type, leading to limiting factors e.g. essential amino acids;  
 Poor hygiene precautions resulting in bacterial contamination;  
 Reduced quality food e.g. rancidity (excessive storage) which reduces vitamin E levels;

Usage of incorrectly balanced food supplements;  
 Excessive or inappropriate usage of food supplements.

## HOW ARE NUTRIENT REQUIREMENTS QUANTIFIED?

In establishing dietary requirements the goal is to determine what amount of food or particular nutrient is sufficient, if ingested routinely, to prevent impairment of health even if intake becomes inadequate for a short period, for the life stage and life style intended.

1. Maximum growth in the young  
 This is a common criterion used for commercial animals. However: whilst maximum growth is advantageous in birds destined for meat production, very rapid growth rates are often contra indicated in raptors (Forbes and Rees Davies 2000)

2. Maximum breeding production (to fledging)  
 This is also a common yardstick, although excessive production of young can harm the parents and result in poor quality off spring.

3. Prevention/cure of deficiency diseases  
 This depends on the observational endpoint chosen. (E.g., 5-10 mg of vitamin A per day prevents growth defects, but skin tissue becomes discoloured at this intake level). Seemingly this criterion could on occasion, therefore, be considered inappropriate in the light of the current concern for levels that promote optimal health as opposed to disease prevention.

4. Saturation of tissue  
 Determines the amount that will not cause any further increases in concentration of the nutrient in the tissues. Problem: some nutrients

(e.g., fat-soluble vitamins) dissolve in adipose tissue, and will accumulate to toxic levels, leading to potentially life threatening diseases.

5. Balance studies  
 Method — measure input and output; when they are equal, assume the body is saturated. Assumes that the size of the body pool of the nutrient is appropriate and is not changed by the experiment. Assumes that higher levels of intake would do no good (clearly not true of water — hardly anyone would recommend just enough water to maintain balance). Such results are only relevant to the bird in that controlled environment, at that life stage.

6. Changes in a secondary variable  
 Changes in some secondary variable in response to the nutrient may be measured, e.g., changes in copulation frequency in tiercels in response to Vitamin E supplementation.

7. Amounts in typical diets  
 Sometimes it is difficult or impossible to determine the amount of a nutrient that is required. In such cases the amounts that seemingly healthy raptors in a wild population take in may be accepted as the norm. These levels, however, may be limited by population levels, prey availability, seasonal factors, lifestyle or geography (raptors in the wild may not need vitamin D in their diets, however, those kept in poorly designed, dark aviaries may).

## WHAT IS AN ESSENTIAL NUTRIENT?

The classical definitions are:

- **Essential nutrient:** substance that must be obtained from the diet because an animal cannot make it in sufficient quantities to meet its

needs. Biotin is necessary in metabolism, but raptors normally produce sufficient quantities within their bodies. In contrast, pantothenic acid is equally necessary, but it is not produced internally. Hence, pantothenic acid is an essential nutrient.

1. **Macronutrient:** nutrient needed in large amounts (many grams daily).

2. **Micronutrient:** nutrient needed in small amounts (typically milligrams daily).

• **Conditional requirements:** some substances are not generally considered essential to life, but might become so under specific circumstances (that is, conditional deficiencies are possible). The existence of conditional deficiency states may give rise to exaggerated claims of the importance of certain substances in normal diets, leading to the recommendation of unnecessary routine supplementation. For example the supplementation of a raptors diet with thiamine may be recommended for fish eating birds. These may improve in condition and cease flitting if the supplement is given. The additional thiamine, however, is only required, because of the naturally occurring 'thiaminase' (an enzyme which digests thiamine) in the fish, which is destroying the normally available levels of thiamine.

## OUTLINING THE BASICS OF A FEEDING REGIME

As a basic principle, it is important to remember that each raptor species has evolved over millennia to fill a very specific ecological niche (Brue 1994). The consumption of a prey animal by a raptor involves the bird eating casting (fur & feather), muscle, bone, viscera and the prey's gut content. In supplying food to captive birds, all these elements should be consid-

ered. Any alteration to the birds diet, even from one prey species to another, in either captive or free living individuals can result in a change in the relative proportions of these materials consumed. It has been established that a raptors food requirement varies with body size. Buzzards, kites and eagles require approximately <10% wet weight, in food, of their body-mass per day, large falcons and Accipiter species 10-15%, whilst small falcons and accipiters 20-25% (Kirkwood 1980 & 1985). Total food requirement, therefore, can be seen as a correlation between an individual birds digestive efficiency and its metabolic rate.

## COMMONLY USED RAPTOR FOOD

• **Day-old chicks:** are often, mistakenly, considered to have the equivalent nutritional value of a single hen's egg. This is not the case. The formation of an embryo within an egg and the development and subsequent hatching of a chick dramatically changes the chemical and nutritional value of yolk and albumen (Table 3). Day-olds are used as the basis of a staple diet for the majority of species of birds of prey. Offering a high protein, low fat diet with good levels of vitamins and calcium. In a recent study, the body composition of young American kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) fed on a diet of either day-old cockerels or mice were compared. This comprehensive study (Lavigne et al. 1994a & 1994b) provides ample evidence as to the nutritional adequacy of day-old cockerels as a food source for American kestrels. It should of course always be remembered that not all chicks, mice etc are equal, the nutrient value will in turn be governed by what they were fed on. The calcium levels, which are required by growing birds of

prey, would be met by any of the whole prey outlined in Table 3 (Dierenfeld et al. 1994). Calcium levels, however, also need to be evaluated in relation to both dietary phosphorus (P) and vitamin D3. Ca:P ratios of 1:1 — 2:1 have been reported for indeterminate egg layers (poultry) with determinate egg layers i.e. those birds which lay eggs during a specific breeding season e.g. raptors, requiring lower levels (Bird & Ho 1976; Dierenfeld et al. 1994). Day-old chicks have the correct Ca: P ratio (the most important single factor) as well as good overall levels of calcium. The conclusion, is that day-old chicks are the ideal staple diet for most species of birds of prey, being nutritionally sound, with high ME/GE ratios, as well as being economically priced, readily available and convenient to use. As previously discussed, however, it would be most unwise to feed exclusively one type of food, therefore, a varied diet is always indicated.

• **Quail:** At six weeks old there appear to be no nutritional differences between male and female quail, however, at 16-weeks of age marked differences appear: the nutritional quality of males remains unchanged yet the fat levels in female quail have almost doubled (Clum et al. 1997).

Age and sex differences in quail leads us to classify the main types that are available as follows:

5 week old male culls, 6 — 8 week old prime birds, 8 month old ex-layer birds, Vitamin E enhanced quail. Quail become sexually mature at 6 weeks of age, therefore, the most readily available quail are surplus males that are culled at 5 weeks old, i.e. those birds not required for breeding programmes. 6 — 8 week old birds are generally

considered to be the best quail readily available and are suitable for most raptors. 8 month old layer birds are the by-product of egg production, frequently yolk and fat filled and often carrying significant levels of pathogens and disease. These birds can represent a bio-security risk to captive raptors. Vitamin E enhancement of quail fed to falcons, at the Peregrine Fund facility Boise Idaho has seen:

Improved libido effects in adults (increased copulation frequency);  
Increased hatchability of eggs (59% to 83%);  
Increased activity in chicks with, for example, food begging occurring between 4 & 10 hours earlier than in previous years (although one accepts this was not a controlled trial). It should be remembered that in the same way as our birds are as good as what we feed them, so in turn the food we feed our birds is only as good as what they, in turn, were fed.

- **Rats:** notwithstanding the above comments regarding vitamin E enhanced quail, rats are naturally high in vitamin E, therefore, a strong argument exists for using both rat and quail as part of a feeding regime. Rats appear to be almost opposite to the quail in that the younger the rat the higher the vitamin content (Dierenfeld 1994).

- **Hamsters:** nutritionally equivalent to rats, hamsters may be a good substitute for those falconers who do not wish to prepare rats. The thin skin and fur combined with their smaller size, means that hamsters do not require evisceration and can be fed whole.

- **Guinea pigs:** are herbivores and so have long digestive tracts and require evisceration prior to feeding. Guinea pigs have very loose fur, which can quickly fill a falcon's crop and should be totally skinned

before feeding.

- **Mice:** are typically the most expensive food available to smaller hawks and owls in terms of their cost to weight ratio. Clum et al. 1997 expressed concern over their particularly high levels of vitamin A. Additionally, their high fat content and low protein levels (Lavigne et al. 1994a & 1994b) suggests they are less suited to feeding to birds of prey than appreciated.

- **Wild prey species:** any wild source of food (e.g. pigeon, game, road traffic kills) must be considered potentially contaminated. That animal failed the 'fitness for life test' and we do not know why. Such birds may be carrying pathogens, parasites or toxins. Many falconers' feed ferreted, rifled or shotgun shot foods (especially rabbit and pigeon). Shotgun killed quarry should never be fed. Rifle bullets frequently fragment on impact, so even head rifle shot food should be discarded. Ferreted or hawk caught rabbits may contain lead pellets from a previous non-fatal shooting incident. Lead ingestion from the consumption of fallen shooters quarry is a major cause of mortality especially in free living eagles (Saito et al., 2000). Keepers should be aware of the clinical signs of lead poisoning (weakness of legs and wings, inability to stand, often grasping the feet each in the other, inco-ordination, poor appetite, green faeces, and weight loss). It only takes one lead pellet to kill a raptor; any suggestive signs should result in immediate presentation to an avian vet for examination and appropriate life saving therapy.

- **Other foods:** the feeding of muscle (e.g. shin of beef) as a major part of the diet is unsatisfactory without supplementation. Birds fly-

ing on public display, are often fed beef as the public may object to seeing fluffy chicks or mice fed. This can lead to calcium deficiency even in adult birds presenting with central nervous signs or muscle cramps. Dietary composition is more critical in neonates than that of adults. The diet for chicks and growing eyasses must comprise whole carcasses, and not simply muscle (i.e. meat). When considering eyass diet it is important to study the food that is being consumed by the chick, rather than the food which is being offered to the parents, the two may be very different.

In conclusion, no one raptor diet can be ideal for all species. Day old chicks may make up the mainstay of raptor diets, but should be supplemented with variety of other wholesome foods, this is the case for both hunting and breeding birds. Falconers should not neglect the vitamin and other trace element requirements of their birds when limiting food intake in order to control weight for flight training.

## **PROBLEM AREAS TO BE AVOIDED IN FEEDING**

### **1. Ignoring differences between species**

There may be a temptation to feed the same feeding regime for all birds of prey. The nutritional requirements of hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, secretary birds or ospreys, vary between genera, with age, reproductive cycle and whether the bird is being flown, moulted out or free lofted. Wide variances exist between species, for example, European Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) can breed successfully for several generations on an exclusive day old chick diet (Forbes & Cooper 1993). In contrast merlins (*Falco columbarius*) fed on the same diet will not thrive. Free



living merlins consume a predominantly insect-based diet and a high fat diet may be a contributory factor in Fatty Liver Kidney Syndrome of Merlins (Forbes & Cooper 1993). The diet of free living Secretary birds (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) is predominantly snakes, which are lower in energy and higher in Ca:P ratio than most commercial raptor diets. Young fast growing Secretary birds fed on standard raptor diets may suffer a Ca:P:D3 in balance with resultant metabolic bone disease (rickets).

## **2. Unnecessary or excessive vitamin supplementation**

Vitamin supplementation is not a good substitute for good basic nutrition (Sandfort et al. 1991, Forbes & Rees Davies 2000). Furthermore, if raptors are being fed a good diet, supplements will only be required at times of additional stress (e.g. training, moulting, breeding), if at all (Forbes & Rees Davies 2000). The problem is two-fold:

a. Incorrectly balanced supplements, for raptors i.e. a vitamin/mineral supplement based on the nutritional requirements of one species is unlikely to be suitable for another (Angel & Plasse 1997, Forbes & Rees Davies 2000). All fat-soluble vitamins compete with each other for absorption. Hence if any one of the fat-soluble vitamins is available in excess there can be competitive exclusion in the fat micelle. This leads to an antagonistic interaction among the vitamins. A vitamin supplement formulated for one species may well be incorrect for another. Any supplement used should be one prepared professionally specifically for raptors.

b. Inaccurate supplementation, either in an attempt to 'do good' i.e. in the mistaken idea that if one pinch is good, two pinches are better, or simply through lack of

accurate manufacturers guidelines. In a study undertaken at Houston Zoo (Angel & Plasse 1997), wide variations were found amongst individual keepers' interpretation of the quantities of supplements that should be added to avian diets. "A pinch" was found to weigh between 0.1 and 1.9 g. Vitamin supplementation added directly to the food has also not shown any detectable differences in health although food supplementation when provided in the food to prey species, has shown benefits to the secondary consumer (Dierenfeld et al. 1989).

In conclusion, varied, whole animal diets are desirable as they require little or no supplementation (Carpenter et al. 1987, Burnham et al. 1987, Dierenfeld et al. 1994, Bruning et al. 1980, Lavigne et al. 1994a & 1994b, Forbes and Rees Davies 2000).

## **3. Monotypic diets** — (being provided with only of one kind of food)

Despite the adequacy of day-old cockerels as a staple food for many species of raptors, monotypic diets are unlikely to be advisable. Manganese deficiency, for example, has been documented in captive raptors fed a diet containing exclusively rat (Clum et al. 1997).

## **4. Monophagism** — (habitual eating of only one kind of food)

Comparative work on digestive efficiency of birds of prey has shown that the Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), a generalist species, has a greater digestive efficiency on a wider range of prey than the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), a specialist species (Barton & Houston 1993). Such variation in the ability of different species to extract nutrients from their food re-

quires the falconer to consider the dietary suitability for his own species and to ensure that the birds of prey in his care do not become locked into eating a narrow selection of foods. Raptors have no innate nutritional knowledge. Like children who would eat burgers and sweets daily if allowed, raptors may be selective. Only enough food of a single type per day should be fed, with diet variation taking place over a period of time, in order to ensure that large enough portions of each food type are eaten thereby maximising the nutritional advantages of each food consumed.

## **5. Excessive food provision**

Birds eat to satisfy energy demands, so on a diet high in energy e.g. a high fat diet; they will eat less and therefore may not obtain the required micronutrients or trace elements from the food they consume. Although the dietary requirements of a captive raptor are less than that of a wild bird, their micro nutrient and trace element requirements will be the same, i.e. proportionately they require more trace elements. Whilst food energy content control is strict in flying birds (for weight control), it is less certain in aviary birds, such that obesity can arise. Excessive feeding leads to selectivity, potentially deficiencies, obesity and the potential for food decay, ingestion of spoiled food and the attraction of vermin.

## **6. Incomplete diets**

Whole diets comprising flesh, bone, skin and casting materials are preferable to partial diets comprising just lean meat. Bones, for example, found in pellets cast by the gyrfalcon, (*Falco rusticolus*), were heavily modified by digestion, with traces of digestion observed on more than 80% of articular ends,

nearly 100% of broken surfaces and on some shafts. It would appear, therefore, that the digestive tract of falcons are adapted to cope with bone structure and that the high levels of digestion found suggest that bones form an important part of the diet of birds of prey.

### **7. Over enthusiastic evisceration**

The liver of an animal stores over 90% of the vitamin A content of a carcass as well as many other vitamins (Annex B). The evisceration of animals, therefore, beyond the removal of the intestines (where necessary) should be avoided. The routine de-yolking of day-old chicks will also dramatically reduce their vitamin A content and is not recommended except in specific situations, for example when feeding merlins, when yolk once a week is the maximum recommended frequency (Forbes and Cooper 1993).

### **POOR PREPARATION, STORAGE AND HANDLING**

The manner and duration of storage can dramatically affect food quality and nutrient levels. Blast feeding of day-old chicks, for example, produces a significantly higher nutritional quality end product when compared to slow freezing in a domestic chest freezer. If meat products remain at room or body temperature for any period during the euthanasia, freezing, storing, transport, storage, thawing, feeding process, bacterial levels which are bound to be present will be permitted to multiply — rapidly creating a dangerously contaminated diet. Food kept for protracted periods (>3m) in domestic and commercial freezers deteriorates in nutritional quality, particularly in terms of water-soluble vitamins and vitamin E. Freezing is a drying process and long-term storage (unless sealed) can re-

duce the water content of food. As birds of prey obtain the majority of their water intake from their food, moisture depletion caused by long-term storage can cause potential problems during warm weather. Food should always be sourced from reputable suppliers with modern large-scale freezing plant and with sufficient turnover of stock to ensure that the food supplied has been frozen immediately after culling and is supplied as soon afterwards as possible. The temptation of bulk buying to obtain quantity discounts, with subsequent long-term storage in domestic freezers should be avoided. The method of killing should be ascertained and it should be certain that no toxic or noxious substances could be in the food.

Barbiturate poisoning has occurred in both wild and captive raptors after birds have been fed the carcasses of animals euthenased with pentobarbitone. Other possible toxic contaminants include alphachloralose, mercury, mevinphos and other pesticides. Animals or birds fed to raptors must not have been on any form of medication, or medicated withdrawn food prior to their death. The feeding of day old poult hatched from antibiotic treated turkey eggs has led to infertility (Forbes & Rees Davies 2000). The potential risks of zoonotic (diseases transferable to man from animals) infections should always be considered when handling raptors or their food.

### **VETERINARY ASPECT OF RAPTOR NUTRITION**

#### **Common deficiencies and excesses**

Although this is already covered, since this subject is so important the practical aspects of Ca:P:vitamin D3 are also considered, in greater depth, here. Ca:P:D3 in balance,

metabolic bone disease (MBD), also commonly known as rickets is the most important nutritional deficiency of raptors. Birds may present with signs ranging from slight bowing of the legs, longitudinal rotation of the tibio tarsae to major multiple folding fractures of the skeleton and even fits. MBD is most likely to occur in fast growing larger species. Breeders should be advised not to feed such species ad libitum, but rather to restrain the potential growth rate. 'Angel wing' or 'slipped wing' (an outward rotation of the section of the wing from which the primary feathers originate) has been experienced in several fast growing larger raptors, in particular when being imprinted. This is readily controlled if diagnosed early by bandaging the primaries against the body, together with Ca, vitamin D3 supplementation and restriction of the growth rate. The diet must comprise of whole carcasses, i.e. not simply muscle (i.e. meat).

The author has investigated calcium deficiencies in free living Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and European buzzard (*Buteo buteo*). In the former case the young were parent reared in an area with limited ground game (rabbit or hare). The birds were feeding predominantly on fallen sheep and deer carcasses. However, the young were only consuming meat from the carcasses (as sheep and deer bones were too large for young to ingest). The buzzards were rearing young in an area with a significant rabbit die off due to myxomatosis. Food was plentiful and rabbit bones were too large for young buzzard chicks, moreover in view of excessive food availability selectivity of ingestion was encouraged. A similar situation can arise when a breeder feeds a whole carcass diet of rab-

bit and pigeon for the parent rearing say, young Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*). Either the young are unable to consume the larger bones or the parents feed what is easiest. The result is severe MBD. It is always a question of what food is consumed by the birds rather than what is provided. Calcium deficiency may also be encountered in neonates produced by a hen with significant renal pathology, or from one which has laid an excessive number of eggs (due to egg pulling or multiple clutching). Any hen likely to 'multiple clutch' should be supplemented with Ca, D3 as soon as the first clutch is completed. Calcium deficiency due to inadequate D3 levels is less common in raptors in comparison with psittacines as most captive raptors have access to day light, this could change in the event of enforced housing due to avian influenza risk.

### **Obstructions**

**Casting:** is the indigestible parts of the carcass, normally consumed and then regurgitated as a pellet by raptor. This includes hair, feathers and in some cases (e.g. owls) skeletal elements. Casting should not be given to any chicks under 12 days of age, and for some species (e.g. Merlin) not until 20 days of age. This applies in particular to 'hard' casting such as rodent fur, whilst chick down is considerably easier to deal with. Young chicks are typically unable to cast such material; leading to a proventricular obstruction and death. Clinically a firm swelling may be palpable caudal to the edge of the sternum. Standard medical treatment using prokinetics, oral and parenteral fluid therapy, and oral liquid paraffin is typically ineffective. Surgery of such debilitated neonates typically results in the chicks death. If instead the chick is force fed for a few days, so it increases in size, it will then typically be able to pass the casting itself. Breeding females with developing ovarian follicles and a swollen active oviduct may have difficulties with excessive casting due to lack of coeliomic space. Casting should be reduced rather than increased in pre-egg laying females. A normal raptor will produce a casting 8 — 16 hours after a meal. Birds cannot be fed again until they have cast. If feeding occurs prior to casting, a small intestine obstruction can arise. If presented with a thin or a weak bird, where it is desirable to increase the birds condition (weight), then frequent, small, cast free meals of readily di-

gestible food (e.g. skinned day old chicks), should be given. As soon as the crop is empty the bird may be fed again.

**Inadvertent ingestion of indigestible matter:** On occasions organic material may be consumed with food (e.g. peat or vegetable material from nest ledges, wood shavings, which the bird is unable to cast. In such cases an ingluviolith or proventricular impaction may occur. Harris' hawks are considered the most intelligent of the common captive raptor species. They will at times 'play' with materials in their surroundings and can ingest various foreign bodies. One example is that they can learn to untie the knot tethering their leash to the perch. The leash can be pulled free of the swivel and the bird can then swallow the leash necessitating an ingluviotomy, although the bird will often cast it back itself. Large foreign bodies may be safely left 24 hours, in the expectation that the bird will naturally cast them. Owls, both in captivity and in the wild, occasionally eat very long twigs (on occasions 6 — 8 inches long). The bird may appear in appetent, uncomfortable and miserable. Sometimes the twig is 'cast', but on other occasions, it may perforate the crop or proventriculus with a grave prognosis. Endoscopic or surgical removal may be necessary. Another form of obstruction seen especially in the larger owls is the ingestion of pea gravel. The bird is presented with a history of having a good weight but marked loss of body condition. Gastric distension by the gravel reduces the bird's appetite and little or no food is ingested. The condition is often advanced by the time of presentation.

**Ingestion of over size food items:** the feeding of rabbit or hare carcasses with intact femurs can cause problems. The bone may pass directly into the proventriculus and be digested. However, in larger raptors the bone may rotate into a transverse position in the crop or proventriculus. The bone may form an obstruction in the crop or perforate the gut leading to a terminal peritonitis. If the bone is broken (preferably without sharp ends) before feeding the problem does not arise. A similar situation can develop when pheasant or chicken necks are fed whole. The neck usually passes down straight, but occasionally will double over in the crop or distal oesophagus becoming. On occasions, birds will eat uncommon prey items. The most unusual obstruction encountered



by the author was when a female red tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) which had caught and eaten a hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*). Initially the bird was fine, but after 18 hours with no casting, she was presented for examination. Barium contrast radiography confirmed the presence of multiple spines and fur lodged in the proventriculus. The obstruction was successfully removed via abdominal surgery.

**Decreased motility:** 'Sour Crop' is a common and often rapidly fatal crop stasis. Ingested meat is held within the crop being maintained at 38 — 40°C, with no gastric acid or enzymes present to prevent bacterial multiplication. This occurs most commonly in thin or sick birds which are given an excessive crop of food. The most urgent action required is to empty the crop, which will generally require veterinary intervention. The most rapid and atraumatic method is, with the bird anaesthetised and entubated crop, ingluviotomy is performed, the crop lavaged with warm and closed immediately or a day or two later.

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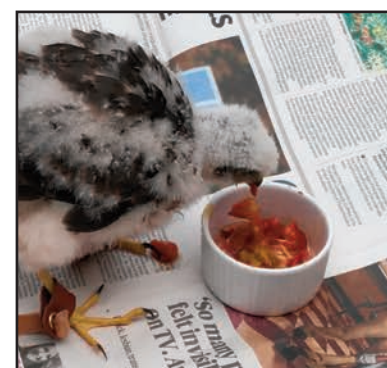
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