

Welsh Hawking Club

Welsh Journal 1983



M. J. Donnelly 83.

the
AUSTRINGER

THE AUSTRINGER

The Official Journal Of The Welsh Hawking Club



Clwb Hebogwr Cymru

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The editor gratefully acknowledges the kind assistance of Mike Donnelly in allowing his work to be used yet again on the cover of "The Austringer". Mike is a wildlife artist who specialises in falconry commissions. He undertakes to render your hawks or dogs accurately in the medium of your choice - pencil, watercolour, oils, etc. Enquiries should be made to Mike at 38, Grange Mount, Oxton, Wirral, Birkenhead.

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EDITORIAL

For the seventh year in succession I am faced with the task of writing a suitable editorial as the "last ditch" in completing another "Austringer". To say I do so with a feeling of relief is putting it rather mildly, for only a matter of weeks ago I was still unsure as to what format I should use for its production. The problem, purely and simply, was - and still is for the future - the cost. Thank Goodness, Jim Skaer, John Buckner and myself were able to arrive at a mutually acceptable price for this edition, although it has meant that in addition to the usual laying-out of the material that I have typed, it has been necessary for me (with the much appreciated help of my husband) to put in the headings for the articles and number the pages to cut down the reproduction time and cost still further. A very responsible and time-consuming job when taken as a whole. However, I would like to put on record my very sincere and grateful thanks to both Jim and John who have done everything in their power to assist, and also to John Buckland, whose friendly and active support I value. What the position will be for the next edition I just do not know at present, for the all-round expense of running the club's affairs has increased considerably in recent years, and "The Austringer" is only one item amongst others, important though it may be as a reflection of the club's activities.

On a more cheerful note, prominence has been given in this year's magazine to the developments within the breeding project. The new aviaries, the generous sponsorship of "The Shooting Times" and the recent trip to France by W.H.C. officials all bode well for the future. Since its inception the project has, at times, seemed something of a half-hearted effort. Now, given careful management and willing co-operation, it can become a very worthwhile enterprise.

Perhaps, as has been commented on, the Welsh Hawking Club (the second largest hawking organisation in the country) has not been sufficiently politically aware, being primarily known as a "hunting club", for which basic reason it would seem to have been formed almost 25 years ago. However, at the invitation of the Hawk Board, an observer from the club (at present the Hon. Secretary) has recently been attending their meetings. This, together with the continued valuable guidance in such matters given by Ceri Griffiths, should help ensure that the deficiency, if one exists, will be adequately made up.

Finally, after giving my thanks to all those who have made this edition possible, I will let the magazine speak for itself of the way that our club is moving along. I hope that you will find it of interest, and don't forget it is only as good as the material that you, the members, supply.

Sincerely,
The Editor.

Welsh Hawking Club A.G.M.

BY JOHN BUCKLAND.

Reproduced for "The Austringer" by courtesy of
"The Shooting Times".

Each year we endeavour to attend the AGM of this club - one reason is the membership is both keen and friendly, and the other is that this club is primarily a "hunting" club, so there is a chance of hearing first-hand of the practical problems of the sport as it is conducted nowadays.

Falconry has to be numerically one of the smaller fieldsport activities, yet it seems to be in the forefront of legislative pressure. When the Wildlife & Countryside Act was formulated, it was clear that it was going to be an extremely involved Act to implement. When the Bill became law the first practical problems started to intrude. The Department of the Environment officials entrusted with the functioning of the various provisions were in the main new to the sport. Not only they, but also falconers, were having to learn a new code and its implementation.

Then another problem: the workload of the DOE was assessable; but the initial concept of the number of staff was too low, and then governmental pressure was on all elements of the public service to keep costs down. No further staff could be employed to meet already an excess workload.

It does not appear to us that the DOE is against falconry; it is just overwhelmed by a badly drafted act, and struggles on as best it can. Reports from falconers are more in despair at the complications than at the officials or how the officials go about their business.

The main enemies of falconry at the moment are a pitifully badly drafted act and a pressure group which totally dislikes falconry in every aspect - however responsible any captive breeding scheme - and which is spending its time in looking intently at the law and in trying to establish restrictive case law.

Because falconry's health is under such stress there is nearly always a good turn-out of members. This year the Holly Bush at Draethen, Gwent, hosted the meeting, and we filled its capacious dining-room. The day-to-day internal club business passed uneventfully but the political pressures seem to increase day by day, and members just are not aware how restrictive some of the interpretations can be.

Take the case of an "escaped" trained hunting hawk. Any method other than recall to the fist in the usual manner out hunting is now forbidden. Any other form of taking the bird is illegal, and ownership of such traps makes the owner liable to prosecution. And that includes museums. Cock-



The Hon. Sec. (left) and the President during the meeting.
Background- Joe Deen (left) and Roger James.



Hawking party receiving hospitality from the hosts.
Photographs by courtesy of "The Shooting Times".

fighting is about the only erstwhile sport in which its one-time legal constituents in ownership or possession are grounds for prosecution - again utterly irrespective of intent. Again all museums be warned!

Breeding birds is the falconers' answer to the uninformed, or deliberately misinforming, public's worry about taking stock from diminishing numbers of birds in the wild, yet the onus of proof appears now that every breeder/owner is guilty of malpractice unless he can prove conclusively he is not. If some definitions of proof are taken too far in law we will all be questioning whether we can prove we exist!

But the gloom from news about the politics was not lifted initially the following morning when an array of redtails and Harris's hawks was assembled to head off for the hunting areas kindly allowed us for the field meet. The police had telephoned; sheep-rustling had taken place over-night on the prime ground and while they sleuthed for clues we were denied access.

Vice-Chairman Lawrence Workman is nothing if not resourceful. Not only did he find us fresh ground on the strength of one telephone call, but we shared a lawn meet with the Tredegar Farmers' Foxhounds. Our kind hosts Hywel and Rosemary Williams provided liberal stirrup-cups and refreshment for both sets of sportsmen, and when the hawkers returned to the farm later in the morning, they did so again. It was a wonderfully warm welcome - true Welsh hospitality, and we hope the Williams are aware of our gratitude for their kindness.

Just as not all the sport of shooting is the firing of the shot, so it is, appropriately rephrased, with hawking. The dogwork was an object lesson in pertinacious, close industry; although Lawrence's old bitch Gypsy accompanies him out shooting, it is as a hunting dog serving a hawk that its talents are so obvious. There is a lot more to hawking than owning a hawk of a power great enough to hunt successfully. Probably it is better to have a good dog, and then get the hawk! Certainly giving tongue out shooting is frowned on, but an advisory yelp alerts both hawk and handler to their advantage.

We had the enjoyment of seeing Mark Evans with his male Harris's, Adrian Williams with a female redtail and Ian Blanter with his female Harris's.

Sponsorship from Shooting Times

On behalf of the members of the Welsh Hawking Club, the committee wish to express their sincere gratitude to "The Shooting Times and Country Magazine" for its generous sponsorship of our breeding project.

A cheque for £400.00 has been received by our Hon. Treasurer J.M. Buckner, with which to supply a pair of goshawks to go into one of the new aviaries which are being built for the project this year.

Breeding Project News

By the time that members receive their copies of "The Austrainger", the construction of a block of aviaries for the breeding project should be well under way.

The suggestion that they should be built was made at the A.G.M. in order to cater for the requirements of club members, some of whom are unable to afford the high prices that captive bred birds command.

Shortly afterwards a meeting was called of club officers and the breeding project committee members to discuss the matter in some depth. This resulted in the decision being taken to go ahead and erect the aviaries on land that had kindly been offered for the purpose by Stuart Wilkinson, who is the present chairman of the project's committee. It was also suggested that he should, if he was agreeable and it could be arranged, go over to France as the project's representative to receive further instruction on A.I. techniques from M. Jacques Renaud, an expert in this field, for the benefit of the club. Our President, Lorant de Bastyai, shortly afterwards got in touch with M. Renaud, who kindly agreed to the visit taking place almost immediately - a full account of this, written by Stuart, follows at the end of this piece.

At the time of writing it is not possible to go into detail about the exact use that these aviaries will be put to, nor is it possible to say at present how any offspring which hopefully will be bred in them will be disposed of until further careful discussion has taken place - naturally members will be kept fully informed. Finally, any members who have an imprinted bird (not kestrels) that they wish to dispose of, and who are willing to allow the bird to be used for intensive A.I. work should please contact a member of the committee.

A.I. work in France

BY J.S. WILKINSON.

As representative of the W.H.C. breeding project committee I was fortunate during March to be invited, along with Lorant de Bastyai, to the home of Jacques Renaud on the France/Germany border to study artificial insemination techniques. The information gleaned from this visit is hopefully going to be of great benefit to the club's breeding project.

Jacques Renaud is essentially a breeder of longwings, both pure breeds and also a lot of hybrids. It seems that in France they have a similar problem to Britain in that the French equivalent of our D.O.E and R.S.P.B. just don't seem to believe that anyone breeds falcons, so Jacques breeds a lot of hybrids just to prove them wrong.

The peregrines were represented by pairs of F.P. Brookeii, Pealii and Barbary. There were also a few pairs of luggers, a lot of sakers and white gyrfalcons, and also one or two of the black gyrfalcons.

At another site Jacques had breeding pairs of eagles, vultures and condors. A fair number of these birds had been bred for a couple of years, especially golden eagles and Andean condors.

All artificial inseminations are carried out at night, beginning at about 9.00 p.m. and continuing through until 3 or 4 a.m. the following morning depending on the number of birds being handled.

Most of the inseminations taking place during our visit were for hybrid production. Tiercel peregrines were donating semen for use in sakers and white gyrfalcons, and a white gyr tiercel was donating semen for use in female peregrines. I was amazed to learn that all these hybrids were fertile. One of the most active semen donors was a very large tiercel which was a mixture of white gyr, saker and peregrine and he was being used to inseminate peregrines.

Closed circuit television and sound were used to monitor the breeding pens in order to reduce disturbance.

The incubators favoured by Jacques Renaud are Marsh Roll X conversions, in fact they are converted to such an extent that it was a while before I realised they were Roll X machines. These machines were far more sophisticated than any other Roll X conversion I have ever seen.

Four of these incubators were in one of the incubator rooms and each was full of falcon eggs, some close to pipping and so must have been laid late February/early March. In another room was a "western" type incubator, again full of falcon eggs and also 3 fertile condor eggs. An additional section

had been built on top of this incubator to house quail eggs - quail being 30% of the food given to the falcons, 70% being day old chicks.

Brooders were all home-made and were of various types. Some were overhead lamp types and others warm water systems, all worked equally well. One brooder which took my eye was a large clear plastic unit that instead of having a heating unit was fitted with a small freeze plant - this being for the rearing of young gyrs. Jacques had experienced problems keeping even very young gyrs cool and so used this special brooder to help cool the chicks off. Chicks about a week old would spend up to two hours per day in this unit.

Jacques Renaud told us that for hunting purposes he preferred to use hybrids of peregrine X gyr. These birds have the speed of a gyr and the natural aggression and also waiting on habits of the peregrine. He did not like the gyr as a hunting bird at all, saying that they flew too fast and low to get quality flights.

A bonus of the visit was that Jacques has promised to present the club with a number of breeding pairs of falcons for the breeding project, an offer which was most gratefully accepted, and as soon as fowl pest restrictions are lifted we shall be going back to France to collect them.

The hospitality that Lorant and I received was second to none and it is through this journal that we would like to thank Jacques and Francoise Renaud and also Jacques's brother Jean Claude Renaud for making this visit a worthwhile and memorable occasion.

Jacques Renaud's method of A.I.

Starting at about 9 p.m. in the evening all the semen-donor tiercels are taken to the laboratory. Each of them had been netted in the aviaries and all are hooded up and placed on blocks which are attached to a table in the corner of the room. The thick downy feathers from around the area of the vent are removed with scissors prior to the breeding season, doing this helps the operator when the actual semen stripping is taking place as it is all too easy to lose valuable semen if feathers get in the way.

Each tiercel in turn is then fitted with a specially stitched cloth which fits over the wings and which effectively brailles the bird.

Finally, what can only be described as a plastic pop bottle with the bottom cut out and the screw top removed is placed over the birds head and shoulders. This device prevents the tiercel from nibbling the wrists of the person holding him.

The tiercel is then laid on his back with his head to the assistant holding him. This assistant closes the bird's talons and holds each foot in his hands, this way the tiercel is

completely immobilised.

The person who is stripping the tiercel then wets the area around the vent with a cloth to damp any down which remains around the vent, drying the area with another cloth.

Preliminaries over, the operator then begins a gentle stimulation of the lower abdomen of the tiercel with his left hand and with the middle finger of his left hand makes periodic pressing movements to the area between the vent and the sternum, this action exposes the papilla which appears as a red "pimple".

Stimulation is then concentrated on the papilla, gentle squeezing and pulling motions are applied and within a few seconds a few drops of semen will appear. The semen is drawn off with the aid of a capillary tube which is fitted to a 1 m.m. syringe. This syringe has already been sterilised and a few drops of diluent drawn in. This helps to dilute even small drops of semen which would otherwise be lost. Each drop of semen is collected in a separate syringe until the tiercel is completely "stripped". Each capillary tube is then put under the microscope to determine viability and motility. It seems that tiercels fed on quail give a good quality semen.

When all tiercels have been stripped and semen evaluated, the tiercels are returned to their respective pens.

Semen that has a low sperm count is then mixed with semen from another tiercel with a low count to maximise the chances of fertilising an egg.

Each female is netted, hooded and brought into the room and lightly anaesthetised using "Halothane". She is laid on her back and the operator then introduces a wonderful little device into her cloaca. This device consists of two small flat plastic spatulas linked at one end with a screw device which allows them to open and close. A small light is fitted to one of the spatulas. When the device is inserted and opened up the light comes on, so helping the operator to locate the oviduct which is lying fairly deeply inside the cloaca.

Using a converted fish tank pump with a fine tube fitted, the operator then sucks out of the cloaca any faeces (there is normally quite a lot).

Using the same syringe and capillary tube the operator then inserts the capillary tube directly into the oviduct to a depth of about 2 c.m. The plunger is then depressed to release the semen. The tube and spatula device is then removed and the female allowed to recover. From start to finish, including anaesthetising and recovery, takes about three minutes and during this time the female is closely monitored - Jacques has never yet lost a female.

By anaesthetising the female Jacques reckons that because of her relaxed condition there is more chance of fertilising an egg than if she was inseminated by more conventional methods.

In most of the inseminations that I saw whilst in France the following day's egg could be felt and even seen as it journeyed down the oviduct.

All females were inseminated once each day, unlike Cornell who inseminate 2 or 3 times daily.

It is unlikely in Great Britain that anyone not possessing veterinary qualifications would be allowed to anaesthetise a hawk in this way, but I am modifying this system in order to do away with the need for anaesthesia.

Seminar at Newent

BY J.S. WILKINSON.

In March of this year (1984) Joe Deen, Ken Jones, Gary Parker and myself, acting as Welsh Hawking Club representatives, attended an A.I. seminar held at the George Hotel, Newent, in response to the invitation that the club had received from Jemima Parry-Jones of the Falconry Centre.

The speaker was the well known Jim Weaver of the Cornell University Peregrine Breeding Fund, and I think that everyone who attended the seminar would agree that the talk was of immense value to those people who are interested in captive breeding.

The evening began with a film about the peregrine falcon in captivity and also in the wild. Some of the film work was incredible, especially when you saw a wild female peregrine at her eyrie rearing young captive bred eyasses, and as the camera moved away one could appreciate the terrific height and sheer inaccessibility of the site. How those men got the chicks and cameras up there one could only guess. A short section of film showed nesting prairie falcons and young.

After the film Jim Weaver talked of the aims of the peregrine fund, and in particular the A.I. techniques used at Cornell which, unlike the methods I saw in France, were mainly carried out with imprints. In France all the birds were very wild, with the exception of one or two peregrine tiercels which when in the aviary were very wild indeed, but when removed from the pens each night showed great excitement for what was to come. Jim Weaver finally ended his talk with a demonstration of A.I. using chickens kindly donated by Martin Jones.

The whole evening was most enjoyable, and I am sure that all those who attended went away enlightened.

Comparisons

Having been fortunate enough to visit Jacques Renaud in France and also to attend the talk by Jim Weaver a week

later, I feel qualified to compare the techniques used in France with those used at Cornell.

I must admit that I am in favour of the French method, primarily because the success rate seemed much better and also because I was so impressed with the way that Jacques Renaud was deeply involved with his birds.

Where feeding of captive pairs is concerned, Cornell use 70% quail and 30% 5 week old chickens. Whilst Jacques Renaud used 30% quail and 70% day old chicks. Both methods of feeding gave equally good results and were classed as a good diet for breeding longwings.

As far as the age at which birds will breed is concerned, Cornell have a fair percentage of 2 year old breeders, but most birds do not breed until their 3rd or 4th year. Jacques Renaud had a large number of large falcons breeding in immature plumage, and any that failed to breed by their second year were weeded out. Jacques Renaud's method of getting birds to breed whilst still in immature plumage was so simple that I am surprised that no-one else had thought of it long ago.

As far as the club breeding project is concerned I shall be using the French method of inseminating birds, as I feel that this technique offers the best advantages and is less time consuming as far as the actual stripping and insemination is concerned, but obviously with any imprints that we have I shall use the Cornell method.



Jacques Renaud with his female and tiercel white Gyrfalcons and also a tiercel gyrfalcon and saker hybrid. Note that the hybrid is not as broad in the chest as the Gyrs, and his shape is rather sakerish.

Photograph by courtesy of Lorant de Bastyai.

News And Comment From Overseas

The first three pieces, all from Hungary, were translated into English for the magazine by Lorant de Bastyai.

GOSHAWK CATCHES GOSHAWK.

On a silent winter's afternoon I went out hunting with my goshawk. The hawking ground concerned is agricultural land with patches of reeds and rushes. I occasionally find pheasants there, not too many, but enough for an austringer who enjoys his sport alone. My goshawk is a medium sized passage female, she was "in yarak" and was looking around excitedly. We went along by the reeds making a noise to flush the pheasants. My bird's habit is to attack even the reeds that are moving, perhaps thinking that where they are moving there has to be a pheasant which will fly up at any minute. She flies along the reeds and if a pheasant fails to get up she hovers above those that are moving.

As I walked along a large grey bird got up from a half dry willow tree and also flew along the reeds, although not in any great hurry. At once my goshawk went in to attack it, and as it left the cover of the reeds and flew off over the agricultural land I realised what kind of bird it was, it was a young (that year's) tiercel goshawk. My goshawk overtook the wild one and in about 100 meters she had caught it in the air from below. The male goshawk also caught the female with his talons and they fell together to the snowy ground. I took my female off her "quarry", put the male goshawk into my falconer's bag and went home. I put my goshawk on to her perch and examined the captured young male very carefully. Luckily he had only been shocked and had suffered no damage, so I took the little "cavalier" back to where he had been caught and released him on his way.

Laszlo Szabo,
state hunting warden, in Tsaszeg.

BIRDS OF PREY OBSERVATIONS.

I went out on two occasions to the great plains of the Hortobagy. (This is the place where from the autumn to the beginning of summer there occurs a various number of all the birds of prey, with thousands of Siberian whitefronted geese redbreasted geese and all kinds of waders - de Bastyai.) Unfortunately, because of fog I was unable to see for more than 200 meters. However, on the first day I succeeded in seeing two white-tailed sea eagles and an imperial eagle. The next day I saw an old peregrine fly across the reeds quite near to where I was standing. I could see all of the

markings on her belly and she had quite a large white-coloured crop. She was in no hurry as she flew on her way.

In January of 1984 I went out to some agricultural land near Budapest which is quite good territory for falcons. On a harvested maize field hundreds of pigeons would gather, and on this land I saw sakers and a lot of goshawks. I once saw four sakers, two of them adults, male and female, and two young sakrets. It was interesting to watch how unskilled the young birds were at hunting, but the adult male had quite a crafty method. He was standing on top of a high voltage electricity mast when a wild female goshawk came out from the acacia woods nearby and killed a pigeon in the field. She started to fly back to the woods with her kill, but the sakret stooped down from the mast and flew after her, taking the pigeon from the goshawk which was at least twice his size. The goshawk did not defend her quarry, but with a shocked zirr-zirr-zirr cry gave up the pigeon to the sakret and flew into the woods. This sort of "hunting" by the sakret went on for some days until the stubble field had been ploughed under by the farm management and the pigeons left, followed in turn by the birds of prey. Unfortunately I did not see any peregrines on this land.

Sometime ago I spoke to a hunting inspector, and he said that the gamekeepers shoot every kind of bird of prey with no regard to the fact that they are supposed to be protected. According to him up to 2,000 of every kind are shot as vermin. The gamekeepers cut the legs off the birds and are paid a premium for them. He, the hunting inspector, said that the legs were mostly those belonging to goshawks and buzzards, but he had also seen peregrine and saker legs. Naturally this shooting of birds of prey occurs mostly in the big pheasant rearing areas.

Andras Kalo, Budakalasz.

INTERNATIONAL HAWKING MEETING IN HUNGARY.

The very first official hawking meeting was organised by Mavad, the Hungarian Corporation for Shooting, Hunting and Game Import and Export, from October 20th to 28th 1983.

Falconers came from Switzerland, the German Federal Republic (West Germany), Austria and France. There were goshawks and peregrines, amongst them a peregrine of Norwegian origin.

The hunting grounds were provided by the Petofi Agricultural Corporation on the great plains near the village of Tiszaors by the river Tisza.

Horses were available for those who wished to hawk on horseback and there were three horse-drawn carts. Gundogs were also provided. Accommodation was on the premises of the Farm Corporation, rooms with bathrooms.

Most of the hawks were equipt with telemetry, therefore all birds that were lost were found, with or without their quarry.

The end result of the week-long meeting was: 82 pheasants, 10 rooks, 1 mallard, 16 wild hamsters and one other. The record for pheasants was that of Herr Raithel Elmar, who took 7 in four hours. A Swiss with his 14 years old goshawk took three rooks in a day. This is a passage bird who in its 14 years has killed 1,650 rooks and crows. It has specialised in these two kinds of quarry and has never taken anything else.

My own goshawk killed 8 pheasants, 8 hamsters and a stray cat. According to the hunting and shooting laws it is the duty of a gamekeeper on a well-run shoot to shoot all dogs and cats if they are found 300 meters beyond the last building of a farm or village.

This year (1984) another international falconry meeting will be organised in the Tiszaors district of the great plains, from October 16th. We would be glad to see falconers from Great Britain taking part in the meeting this time.

George Lelovich, Fegyvernek.

FROM THE APRIL (1984) NEWSLETTER OF THE D.F.O.

The Deutscher Falken Orden (German Falcon Order) will hold its 1984 field meeting (their field meetings are held every two years) at the hunting castle of Sogel Clemenswerth near the town of Oldenberg in Lower Saxony from the 24th to 28th of October. Herr Dr. Professor Linder will give a festival lecture.

The hawking grounds are so large that ten hawking parties will be able to go out. The management of the D.F.O. are very happy that they are able to provide such a good area for the meeting, and they hope that those taking part will enjoy success with their hawks. They also hope that the guests and visitors, among them Government Ministers and officials, will be given a good impression of falconers and falconry.

At the meeting it will be possible for members of the D.F.O. to exhibit and sell their work, such as paintings, drawings, statues and falconry equipment of every kind.

If anyone is interested they should please write to the President of the D.F.O. Eckart Schermair, No. 7 2816 Otersen, Telephone 04238/11.

Lorant de Bastyai.

PEREGRINE CHICKS HATCH ON A
BALTIMORE WINDOW LEDGE.

From a piece in "The Sun" Baltimore, U.S.A. 7/4/84.
Sent to "The Austringer" by John M. Buckner.

Hopes for the survival of peregrines in Baltimore were given a boost by the news that chicks had hatched from eggs laid in a nest on a ledge on the 33rd floor of the city's tallest building.

They were the first peregrine chicks known to have hatched in the wild in eastern North America since the early 1950s when the use of D.D.T. had brought the species near to extinction on the East Coast of America. The peregrine population is now increasing in numbers, aided by the intervention of The Peregrine Falcon Fund at Cornell University, and is now estimated at fewer than 1,000 east of the Mississippi River.

Scarlett, the female peregrine who laid the eggs, has become famous since she chose the nesting site in 1978, although her career has had somewhat tragic overtones. Five males have been introduced to her by human matchmakers. The last of these, named Ashley, was killed in a road accident on the Key Bridge last year after being nursed back to health following a gunshot wound, and the two chicks that Scarlett adopted after they were put into her nest by scientists had fatal collisions with buildings.

A former Smithsonian Institution ornithologist who works in the building said that her latest mate (the other parent bird) is a wild falcon that arrived in Baltimore last May and decided to stay. This male was not wearing the leg bands of a falcon bred in captivity. The pair were observed in courtship rituals and mating several times this year, and Scarlett began laying eggs, one each on February 26th and 28th, and March 2nd and 4th. Mr. Barber (the ornithologist) said there was no way of knowing whether the male was fertile until the eggs began to hatch. Pipping began on April 5th and the chicks emerged on the following day. Pecking action was apparent from another of the four eggs. Mr. Barber said that the chicks were in some danger due to severe weather and cold temperatures, but he added that the relationship between the adult birds bodes well for the future.

Before her fifth mate's traffic accident two of the males that had been introduced to Scarlett flew (or were chased) away, and the other two were found poisoned. However, she has achieved a reputation as a first-class single parent. Scientists from Cornell took four infertile eggs from her nest last year in exchange for the two chicks that afterwards met with the fatal collisions, and she has successfully raised fifteen chicks placed on the ledge in a similar way in previous years.

Scarlett was originally released by Cornell scientists at Carroll Island in Harford County, but she immediately flew away and made her home on the ledge of the United States Fidelity and Guaranty building, evidently believing it to be the biggest cliff in Baltimore. The Mayor and the President of the Company watched through the window as Scarlett fed the chicks their first meal - tiny pieces of pigeon.



Hearty congratulations and all good wishes to our dear friend Count Frederick Mensdorff Pouilly of Austria, who has reached his 88th year and is still going strong, riding his bicycle and painting beautiful pictures, both in oils and in water colours.

Perhaps some of our members will remember when he accepted our invitation and came to our Lichfield meeting. This was about ten or twelve years ago, and when I went to meet the Count in the chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce which had kindly been lent for the occasion by our dear friend John Fairclough, I thought that he would need assistance to get down the steps from the aircraft, but I was very happy to see him run down the steps with his suitcase in his hand just like a young student - he must then have been 75 or 76 years old. He greatly enjoyed his time with us, as he always mentioned in his letters.

Count Frederick Mensdorff Pouilly, along with the late Renz Waller, is one of the fathers of modern falconry in Europe, indeed Renz Waller's famous goshawk "Medusa" came from the forests on his estate.

Nancy, my wife, enjoys reading old copies of magazines, and in a "Country Life" dated October 14th 1982 she came across a small article which mentioned that Albrecht, Count Mensdorff Pouilly, had been the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London. I photo-copied this article and sent it to our friend. I received a reply from him saying that the Ambassador was his grandfather. Count Albrecht Mensdorff Pouilly used to visit Queen Victoria in Windsor Castle. The Queen had written letters to him and he had been photographed with her and the other members of the royal family of that time.

We all hope that our dear friend Count Frederick Mensdorff Pouilly will for many years to come enjoy good health and happiness.

Lorant de Bastyai.

Hungarian Trip

BY JOHN M. BUCKNER AND DENISE COOPER.

After many months of waiting, dozens of 'phone calls, and quite a few trips to Bristol we were eventually granted 10 licences to import goshawks from Hungary.

I had heard as early as July that 10 branchers had been caught up for us and were then ready for us to collect. It was now the middle of September and I felt a great guilt at being forced to make my Hungarian friends look after and feed 10 hungry goshawks for such a length of time.

We set off from my home in Abercarn on Thursday morning, took the ferry from Dover to Ostende and our journey took us through parts of Belgium, Holland, Germany and Austria, eventually arriving in Budapest on Saturday night.

We had desperate trouble in finding our friend's apartment, and it was near midnight before we rang the doorbell. Although we had never actually met these people before we were immediately taken into their home and given a terrific welcome, a hot meal and rather too much schnapps for our good. Luckily Lorant de Bastyai our President was with us and he did a marvellous job as an interpreter as our knowledge of the Hungarian language was virtually nil.

The following morning Janos, who is the son of the family with whom we were staying and the falconer who was responsible for taking our 10 gosses, arrived. He had just come from inspecting his traps on the outskirts of Budapest and had in his hand a beautiful haggard female gos just freshly trapped that morning. Janos is a State ringer of birds of prey and said we would keep this one for the moment in case of mishap with one of the other ten. We spent a happy couple of hours talking hawks and again sampling the schnapps made by Janos' aunt and the local beer.

In the afternoon Lorant took us to Budapest Zoo where at one time he was the Curator of Birds of Prey. We thoroughly enjoyed this visit and I am sure it brought back many happy memories for Lorant. Outside the Zoo is a beautiful square with statues of the early tribal leaders of Hungary, we were very impressed by their grandeur and Lorant told us a lot about the history of Hungary during the times of these fierce looking warriors.

On Monday we went to visit another falconer, Kalo Andras, who had kept the 10 gosses in his garden for us after collecting them from various other falconers in different parts of Hungary. We were so thrilled to see these 10 beautiful young goshawks all in perfect feather, and were full of praise and appreciation for all the work put in by these dedicated falconers. Again in Andras' house we met his



Tribal leaders - note goshawk.

charming wife and family and were warmly plied with good Hungarian wine and Russian champagne. We stayed well into the afternoon talking and reminiscing about various birds flown by Andras and Janos in their past.

On the Tuesday we took a trip down into the heartland of the Hungarian plains to meet a very old friend of Lorant's, George Lelovich, and while Lorant stayed talking with George the rest of us went off to do a little hawking with Janos' tiercel and a female gos. The young lady in our party, Denise Cooper, was asked by Janos if she would like to fly his tiercel, and she certainly kept the Welsh Hawking Club flag flying by taking two very good pheasants, with the second flight lasting almost a mile. Many good flights were had by both birds and all agreed it had been a lovely day's sport. Because of the open flat plains the flights were much further than we can expect in Britain and we all found it a very exciting way of hawking.

On Wednesday we spent the morning shopping in Budapest and in the evening met a group of the Hungarian Falconers Club for dinner. I was delighted to see again my dear old friends Dekany Peter and Bogyai Frici after so many years. We had a super evening with gypsy music, good food and wine and the company of a very nice group of people. We were all sad to say goodbye.

Thursday morning and time to pick up the gosses and really say goodbye to our hosts Rosica Bagyura and her husband who had been so kind to us. We again went to Andras' house and tails were taped and birds boxed and loaded. After eating an early lunch we were off towards the Hungarian border.

Twenty seven hours later, during which time Richard Howard insisted that he do all the driving, we arrived again in



Left to right- Kalo Andras, John Buckner, and Bagyura Janos.



J.M. Buckner seated in front of the statue which once appeared on the cover of "The Austringer".

Ostende ready to catch the Dover Ferry. The trip through Customs in Dover was rather traumatic as we had to unload all the birds and show them all to the Customs officer, but eventually we got away. On arrival in Abercarn the birds were taken from their boxes none the worse for their journey and put on screen perches in my quarantine quarters where they stayed for the next 35 days.

Everyone who had one of these gosses was delighted with it and I am getting many reports back on their progress and hunting ability.

It was a tiring but wonderful trip and I would not have missed it for worlds, the hospitality that we received was the best.

The Siberian Tundra Peregrine

FALCO PEREGRINUS LEUCOGENYS OR FALCO PEREGRINUS CALIDUS.

BY LORANT DE BASTYAI.

Taken from his book "ALL MY LIFE WITH HUNTING BIRDS"
which was published in 1982.

The Tundra, Eastern or White-faced Peregrine Falcon was first described by Brehm, the great German ornithologist, in 1854, from a mounted specimen in a private collection. At that time Brehm did not think that he was examining an unusual northern sub-species: he thought that he was looking at an old example, with light-coloured feathering, of the common peregrine falcon. He described this bird as follows: "The head is dark ash-grey, the nape and the neck are variegated with white, the back, the upper surface of the wings and the tail feathers are ashy-grey. The moustache is narrow and bluish-grey. The rest of the face over the ears, almost extending to the nape, is white. The forehead is greyish-white. The throat, and almost down to the centre of the breast, is white with some lengthwise spots. The belly area is light grey over a white base and is decorated with a round or angular blue-grey pattern which crosses it to form widely separated stripes. The tips of the closed wings lie even with the ends of the tail feathers". Some years later Brehm was able to take exact measurements of a freshly shot specimen and he then recognised the bird as a distinct sub-species.

So far as I am aware only four of these falcons, all adults, had been taken in Hungary up to 1945. In September 1951 a strangely coloured peregrine falcon was caught by my friend George Lelovich on White Lake, a nature reserve for water fowl, near Szeged. This bird reminded me of an adult saker falcon. The exact description is:

Colour: The top of the head is reddish-tabby-brown. The feathers on the forehead are brownish-white, those on the nape whitish-brown. The colour of the back is a light reddish-brown and the covert feathers have a light beige edge. The tail feathers are brown shading into grey with



The author with a female tundra peregrine in juvenile plumage (F.P. Leucogenys - white faced peregrine).

This bird is the one referred to in the article, which was trapped by George Lelovich near Szeged.

beige spots and are 3-5 cm. longer than the ends of the closed wings. The colour of the cere and of the bare skin around the eyes is whitish-yellow, and of the feet greenish-yellow. The moustache is very narrow. The white part by the moustache is so large that it extends almost to the nape. The throat and breast are dirty-white patterned with narrow, vertical brown lines. Towards the legs the pattern gets wider and heart-shaped. The feet, although not short, are shorter than in the common peregrine falcon.

On the 20th March, 1952, I saw a peregrine falcon circling over the White Lake reserve. I saw the bird again the next day, stooping on something in the reeds. The attack was unsuccessful and he came towards me. With field-glasses the narrow moustache and light breast were unmistakable. A few days later, in the early afternoon, I watched him again. A group of teal flew towards the canal from the southern part of the reserve. Suddenly, like falling rocks, they dived for the protection of the water. A second later the falcon appeared, stooping at the last member of the group. At the last moment the duck dived into the water so that the spray cov-

ered its pursuer. After this cold shower the falcon flew up and then made several low circles, so that I could well observe that its size and shape agreed with the measurements of the bird taken the year before.

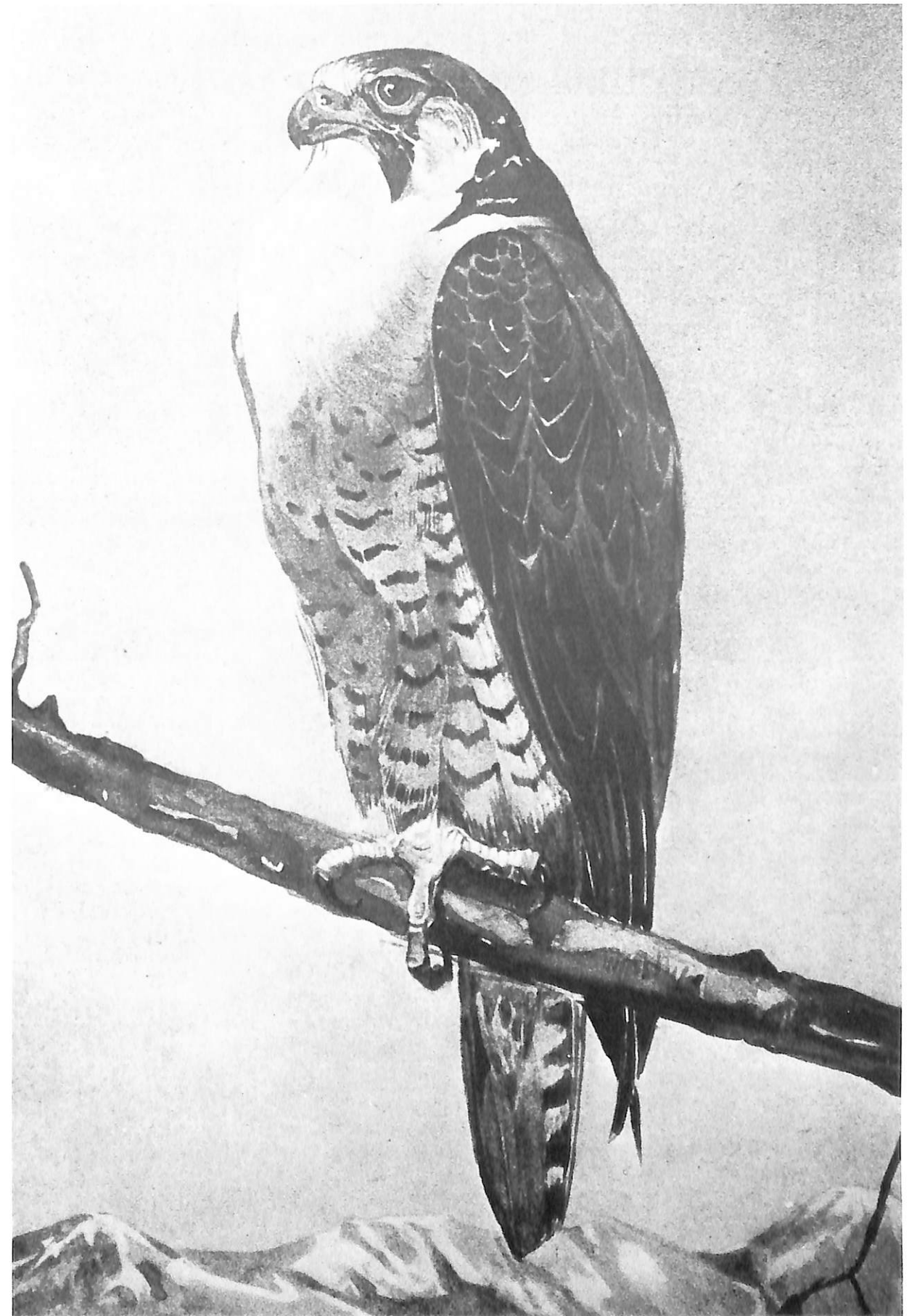
The same year Dr. Patkay of the Hungarian Ornithological Institute watched an immature, rather pale, peregrine falcon settle on the soda soil at the edge of the White Lake and run about like a chicken. Janos Toth, warden of the nature reserve, told me that the falcons at White Lake like to spend some time on the ground. In October 1952 I watched one feeding on a teal alight on the soda soil. His white breast shone against the grey background and it was hard to see the narrow moustache. After the feast it did not fly up into a tree or on to some high point, as a Central and East European peregrine falcon would have done, but stepped off the remains of its prey and, standing on one leg, prepared to digest its meal.

I have never seen a Tundra peregrine falcon preparing its attack on swimming waterfowl. Presumably it leaves as little as possible to chance, for there can be no doubt that the waterfowl know all about evasive action. If they are attacked over the water, those nearest the point of attack dive at once: those further away fly up. The falcon immediately gives chase. When he gets close these ducks dive and those which have dived fly up. The falcon then chases them and the process is repeated. More often than not the falcon is defeated.

I found it strange that, in the middle of April, when our and the Central European peregrine falcon are nesting, I could watch peregrines over White Lake. According to Peter Beretzka, Professor of Ornithology at Szeged, these falcons arrived in September with the waterfowl migrating from the north. Professor Dementiev, Professor of Ornithology at Moscow, in his "The Birds of Soviet Russia", says that the Tundra falcon leaves with the waterfowl on the southward migration in autumn and returns to breed about the middle of May. Professor Thienemann, writing of the immigration through East Prussia, is of the same opinion. And there can be no doubt that immature falcons of White Lake are identical with the young of leucogenys as described by Professor Dementiev.

Nor can there be any doubt that the White Lake falcons are specialists in waterfowl. After nearly a year in captivity, my Tundra falcon, captured on White Lake in 1951, escaped. I had never fed her on waterfowl; only on pigeons, pheasants and partridges. Although there were plenty of these in the neighbourhood, she was found about a mile away feasting upon mallard on the shore of the Lake Mill (Malomto) near Godollo.

Next page - An adult female Siberian Tundra peregrine. Note the large white patches on the face, the thin side moustache, the white front of the head above the cere, the snow-white crop and the thin rare horizontal stripes on the front. Painted by Dahlem.



The plight of the Barn Owl

BY COLIN SHAWYER.

(SCIENTIFIC OFFICER HAWK TRUST).

As our diurnal birds are heading back at the end of the day to the safety of their nocturnal roosts, our native raptors, the owls, are preparing themselves for their twilight forays. The daylight fades, the kestrel is leaving his favoured haunts and the barn owl is moving out to exploit the same vole rich hunting grounds. Our other more secretive raptor the sparrowhawk is also returning from his hedge-hopping woodland rampages and his nocturnal counterpart the tawny owl is blinking, waiting for the darkness, before he too leaves his ivy-clad roost to silently strike at anything that moves on the woodland floor.

The barn owl and the kestrel rarely conflict when they cross paths in the early evening, but I have on occasions seen the kestrel harrying the white owl on the wing for his hard won prey, twisting and turning in the air until the catch is dropped and the prize won. When the winters are hard, the days short, and the competition for food becomes greater, then both the barn owl and the kestrel are not entirely safe from the very aggressive tawny, the largest of our owls, for he will sometimes kill them as food when territories are violated. It is however rare to see the tawny away from his daytime roost, for he is truly an owl of the night, but the barn owl does not depend so heavily on the cover of darkness and can often be seen quartering the water meadows and pastures by day especially when the first considerations are for his young owlets and their insatiable demands for food.

The traditional habitat of the tawny and the barn owl were once quite different, the former preferring the broad-leaved woodland and the barn owl the more open farmlands and rough hedge-lined pasture. Now, however, in our own counties as in many others, the highly adaptable tawny can be found in areas once only associated with its cousin and I have knowledge of the 'brown owl' living contentedly for most of the year in warehouses and farm buildings preying heavily upon the large numbers of rodents and sparrows which seek refuge there, only returning to the woodland margins to nest and raise young.

It is interesting to compare the kestrel and the barn owl for their requirements are very similar. They hunt over the same countryside for the same prey and in the early months of the year they are competing for suitable buildings and trees in which to nest. The kestrel, like his falconiforme brothers, has magnificent vision far in excess of our own. He is able to resolve fine detail in his surroundings so that when hovering high in the skies he can clearly pinpoint a small vole or beetle scurrying between the grass

blades far below him. Once sighted, a vertical stoop with closed wings brings the falcon onto his unfortunate quarry.

The barn owl, however, needs to possess senses of a different kind. He must hunt on the darkest of nights when even the moon is fully eclipsed by the clouds. For this, his auditory powers are exceptional. He is so finely tuned to the sounds of the night that any movement through the undergrowth beneath can be pin-pointed with deadly precision. He must, however, still be able to avoid the immovable obstacles of the night which impart no sound and for this he must possess a keen eyesight. Unlike the kestrel who has the ability to discern minute detail by day, the barn owl has instead developed magnificent night-time vision so that what to us would appear the darkest of nights to the barn owl merely represents an overcast evening. However, in poor light, the ability to detect fine detail is lost and he must therefore rely on his powers of hearing for the final strike at prey. I have known of barn owls to alight on someone standing still near their roost. The owl appears to have clearly perceived the shape in the almost total darkness of the barn but the details of this shape were lost to his vision, he merely chose my accomplice as another safe perch on which to land.

The barn owl's diet comprises mainly the short-tailed vole, which prefers to live in the coarser grasslands and water meadows, a habitat which is now fast disappearing from our countryside. It will also take shrews in large numbers, a mammal most other raptors will shun because of its disagreeable scent glands. The kestrel, as with many of our other native birds of prey, relies heavily on the unfortunate vole but unlike the barn owl will also take numbers of insects and small birds. He has adapted well to our modern ways of living and indeed the kestrel has increased in number this century as motorway embankments have provided pesticide-free hunting grounds where the vole population can reach plague proportions. He is lucky, for his high flying hunting methods make him much less prone to becoming another road victim. The barn owl is less fortunate. His low level, slow flapping flight makes him especially vulnerable to collision on our highways and railways and is perhaps well illustrated by the road casualty records of bird rescue centres where the barn owl can outnumber the much commoner kestrel by ten to one. Although the vole population is high on these man-made reserves, traffic noise must disturb the hearing pattern of the owl so necessary for hunting by night. In such circumstances it may be turning the motor car to its advantage, using the luminous reflection of the car headlights in the rodents' eyes to indicate the animal's presence rather as we use 'cats' eyes' to guide us on our nightly excursions.

The barn owl is especially vulnerable to hard winters for it is essentially a tropical species inhabiting countries from Australia, Africa to South America as well as many other more temperate zones. Those birds which exist on our islands represent the most northern out-post of this

species in the world. Even relatively short periods of snow cover can be a cause of high mortality, for unlike the kestrel who can supplement his diet with small birds, the barn owl still relies on the small ground-dwelling mammals and I have been happily surprised to hear that some well-informed farmers actually feed barn owls at their roosts with the mice caught in their spring traps when snow cover is prolonged.

Although this owl is traditionally associated with farming man, it does not tolerate excessive human disturbance and its chosen nest site, which has often been used continually for generations, is usually a derelict or little used barn or outbuilding or an isolated old tree. In Hertfordshire, as in many other counties, the replacement of the enclosed wooden barn by the steel structures of today has induced the barn owl to nest between the hay bales for she needs a secluded site in which to lay her detectable white eggs. She can be found nesting at almost any month of the year from February to September and the long incubation period followed by an equally long fledging period means that the inevitable movement of hay bales or other disturbance during the season can cause a high rate of nest failure. The sites are often evil-smelling places for the barn owl does not construct a nest but builds around her own shiny black castings, the indigestible pellets which are regurgitated by all of the raptors. The owlets hatch at daily intervals which means that when the last of the four or five eggs are laid the oldest owlet is many times the size of the youngest and on leaving the nest can mistakenly appear to have been hatched from a former brood. Their appetite is enormous and it is at this time that the rat population around such places can be decimated. The owl usually swallows its prey whole and unlike its diurnal counterparts who are able to digest the bones of their victims, the owl casts pellets containing intact bones which when examined can provide a reliable guide to both the number and type of prey items consumed.

The barn owl in Hertfordshire and Middlesex is virtually extinct as a breeding species with a population crash seeming to have occurred over the last ten years. It is to be hoped that this may represent a short term decline. However, the wider concerns which are currently being expressed for its future in Britain, and in much of Europe, may indicate a more sinister reason for its present demise. The barn owl appears more vulnerable and less tolerant of increasing human pressure than the tawny owl or its daytime cousin, the kestrel. It is killed in large numbers on our roads, its traditional haunts are vanishing, yet where they remain they are now often unused. The removal of hedgerows and permanent pastures are making way for the year long cereal crops and when the demand for food increases before nesting and after egg hatching, the risks of picking up rats already weakened from rodenticide poisoning are high with the prospect of possible death for the adults or young.

The Hawk Trust, an organisation involved with the protection and conservation of birds of prey in the wild, is assessing the present distribution and status of the barn owl in

Britain and Ireland. If areas can be identified where the species is especially at risk, then moves can perhaps be taken to arrest the present decline. We already know it will take to nesting in suitably constructed and sited nest boxes and captive breeding and release projects have increased local populations. It is thriving in lowland areas of Scotland where young conifer plantations are providing vole rich hunting grounds and a profusion of derelict stone bothies in which to nest.

Particular emphasis is being given to obtaining barn owl data from the farming community through publicity of our work in the national press, television and radio. The Trust has facilities to conduct extensive post mortem analyses on barn owl carcasses which is another aspect of the project which is providing first hand data about barn owl mortality in Britain.

If you think you can help us in any way by providing data or offering further publicity to this census the Trust would be delighted to hear from you. Questionnaires or further information about this work can be obtained from The Hawk Trust, Freepost, Beckenham, Kent or by phoning Wheathampstead (058283) 2182.



Season's End

BY RON MOORE.

There comes a time when we all have to decide when to call it a day for the season. I usually finish flying the eagle about the third week in March, well before the onset of our lambing season - for obvious reasons. Like every other falconer I like to finish the season on a high note. It does not always work out that way, but this article is an account of my last weekend's flying of the 1982/83 season.

I was looking forward to this as it was to be in Scotland and at blue hares, and as the eagle had not seen one for twelve months I was interested to see how she would cope with them.

I travelled up to Scotland on the Friday afternoon, and after a good night's drinking I set off on Saturday morning to meet Colin, the head keeper of the grouse moor I was to fly on.

When we drove up the moor we stopped and checked the direction of the wind, what bit there was was blowing into the side of the hill we were on, so we decided to drive up to the top of the hill and try there. As I unhooded the eagle I spotted a blue hare about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile below us, and as the hood was removed I noticed that the eagle had spotted it too. She lifted off my fist and started to look for lift. She went about a mile away and began to weave backwards and forwards until she had enough lift to climb into the wind and then she started to head back towards us. I was so intent on watching the eagle that I had lost my mark on the hare, so I began to walk in the general direction of where I had last seen it. All the time the eagle was overhead, her golden head scanning the heather below, waiting for a movement. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a movement a long way to my left; I looked up, the eagle had already seen it and was away after it. As I watched her I marvelled at the way she used every updraft and air current to keep her height until she was ready to make her attack. I had lost sight of the hare, so I just watched the eagle and waited. She was going higher and higher but still in the direction of the hare. Suddenly she stooped, wings tucked right back into her body, her head pointing straight down. It was a fabulous sight, she was silhouetted against a clear blue sky. Down she came, I did not realise just how high she had gone, she seemed to be stooping for minutes when all of a sudden she disappeared from my sight over a hill. We set off as fast as we could in her direction and seemed to have been walking for ages until over the heather came wisps of white fur, signs of a blue hare kill. As I approached her she started to mantle over her hare. I removed it, rewarded her, and lifted her up. I cleaned her beak with my hand and off she went again.



Ailsa on a blue hare.

We started to beat for her as she swept over our heads. Backwards and forwards she went, all the time trying to climb higher in the very light breeze that was blowing. As we walked and beat for her I kept glancing up. There she was, hanging there, watching and waiting. Almost an hour went by and nothing had moved, I was just about to suggest to the keeper that we try another part of the moor when the cry went up "Hare, Hare!" A blue hare had erupted from just behind us. The eagle was on its trail immediately, wings back, down she came. The sound of the wind whistling through her primaries was incredible. I watched as she went in for the final attack, tail down and wings out. At the last minute the hare jinked and flattened and the eagle overshot, but undeterred she turned into the wind and started to climb very steeply. Away the hare went, down the hill it ran, away from us and the eagle. I looked up just in time to see her ease her wings back and set off in a 45 degree stoop. Down the hill she went, her speed increasing all the time, this time there was no mistake, she took the hare at full speed and rolled over and over with it. As we walked towards the eagle, the keeper told me that he would go and bring the Land Rover as he had to be back at home fairly soon. He said that he was sorry to cut the day short, but if I wanted to fly again tomorrow then that would be fine with him. After I had removed the hare and rewarded the eagle I sat there waiting for the Land Rover and wondered what the next day would bring.

After another good night's drinking I again drove up to the moors and met the head keeper. Off we went again, the wind was once more fairly light, but to make matters worse it was funnelling up the valley, so we set off and tried to make the best of it.

I cast the eagle off and watched as she went down the valley looking for lift. When she was about 300 yards away I put a blue hare up and called to her. She spotted it and turned to come back, but the hare had disappeared before she could get to grips with it. She circled us for a minute or two and then went away down the valley trying to find some lift.

As we beat for her I could see that she was struggling to keep airbourne, the wind had almost died completely but she still kept trying to climb and get some height. After about a quarter of an hour I saw her start to thermal, wings outstretched and tail fanned up she went. I was beginning to get a bit worried to say the least as she went higher and higher, then just as I was about to try and bring her down I saw that she was pulling out of the thermal and starting to hunt again, this time from a terrific pitch. About ten minutes later I saw her check and then lose height slowly. She stopped and hovered for a second or two and then rolled over into a very dramatic vertical stoop. As we ran to where we thought that she was, the tell-tale white fur came rolling over the heather once again. At our approach she started to call and mantle over her hare, so I removed the hare, rewarded her and put her up again. She swept backwards and forwards over the heather until she had gained enough height



Ailsa breaks into another blue hare.

to hunt and off we went again, this time heading back towards the Land Rover.

For the next hour or so nothing much happened - apart from a pair of peregrines that kept mobbing her, much to her annoyance. We came over the hill and down in the valley below was the Land Rover. I said to Colin, the keeper, that I would walk over the next hill, throw the hare to the eagle, and that was it for the season.

We had not gone 50 yards when a hare broke from under our feet. The eagle had just passed us going the other way, I called to her and then we just watched and waited. The eagle spotted the hare and turned out over the valley, starting to climb and gain height. The hare was away, running for all it was worth up a sheep track in between the heather. The eagle came over our heads, wings back, head forward, at tremendous speed. The hare was half way up the hill when the eagle struck, she seemed to take it amidships, roll over with it, and with a quick shuffle of her feet she killed it.

What a finish to the season. The bird flew magnificently in what were not the best of conditions, and her footing was really first-class. The added bonus was that I only had to carry her about 200 yards back to the Land Rover. It is days like these that really set falconry apart from other field sports for me. To go out and hunt with what really is still a wild creature, in its own environment and in its own way, and be privileged to witness one of nature's most spectacular fliers and hunters in action - the golden eagle.



Ailsa nest building.

Spit & Spike

BY DAVID BAKER.

This article is about my first real hunting bird, 'Spitfire', a female sparrowhawk, and my old plodder 'Spike', a male Swainson's hawk. I got Spit at about one week old and imprinted her. Spike was watching intently all the goings on with the new charge as he was moulting and having a break.

All went smoothly with Spitfire's training and she was flying free within a fortnight, and soon the great day arrived when I decided to let her go if she bated at anything. We went across the fields and she bated at a crow, but I held her back. Next was a bate at a kingfisher - again I held her back. Finally it happened as we rounded a hedge we both saw it at the same time, Spitfire was off and before the wood-pigeon was 5 feet off the ground she had it. Fantastic, and I went home rejoicing.

During her early hunting days Spit would fly at anything that moved, including all sorts of unsuitable quarry such as rabbits, squirrels, house martins and swallows. She soon learned that she couldn't catch these. Mallard also provided a few flights, but proved a bit too large and quick for her, although she always tried when a chance occurred. We had a few flights at snipe as well and although she never caught one I would be treated to a real long chase high above the tree tops. If we were lucky enough to find magpies in open places, and were able to creep up on them, we could also get long high chases. Jays always stuck too near to cover and would refuse to budge, and Spit would fly around and around a tree containing a jay with me standing underneath shouting and leaping about trying to flush it. Once, when walking with Spit, she leapt off the fist and plunged into some long grass only 2 yards away. I couldn't think what she had caught, but presumed a mouse. To my horror I smelt a musky stink - a weasel. My mind flashed back to an old "Austri-ger" article where someone had lost a spar when it had tackled a weasel. I managed to grab the weasel and pry Spit's talons from around its writhing body. I was left holding a very angry weasel, luckily in my gloved hand. Then just like a bar of soap it popped through my fingers and was gone. I checked Spitfire over and she was none the worse for her squabble.

While Spitfire and I were having all the fun, my hawking companion and friend, Martin Cray, was getting Spike fit again for me. Spike is very good at baffling you by his behaviour. One minute he'll chase something and then another time he'll be frightened of it! Anyway, we decided to go after moorhens on some really good land here in deepest Surrey with both of them. Spitfire soon had one in the bag while Spike seemed to take no notice, but I was wrong

because the next flush resulted in Spike and Spitfire both leaping off the fist instantaneously in hot pursuit. That one got away, but we had some good fun also at pheasants which Spit would grab on the rise and bring crashing down, only to get beaten up before we could help her. We also had a few close shaves when Spitfire had caught a moorhen (she always caught them about 25 yards ahead of Spike) in getting to her before Spike did and did her any damage, unintentionally or otherwise.

We had many good hawking days with always something different happening, like the time we were standing under an old oak tree talking with birds on fists, when suddenly what we took for a dove rocketed out above us and headed off at a great rate of knots. Spit took her time then decided to pursue and we thought she'd have no chance, as the 'dove' was about 200 yards away by then, but Spit kept going and going and going. Martin eventually found her tusseling with a little owl about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away in someone's garden. We released it unharmed - much to her disgust.

Later in the year Martin took Spitfire under his wing because I had a change of job doing airfield bird control at



Martin and Spitfire.



David, Spike and Spit having a break.

RAF Fairford, and it was a bit awesome for my little sparrow-hawk to have all that space and huge KC135's strato tankers roaring up and down the runway. So I took Spike to the airfield and he loved it. I think he thought he was a peregrine, which my workmate Adam would fly at the rooks etc on the runway.

In the new year I had a move of site to an Industrial Waste Disposal site on the end of RAF Bensons' flight path, where they are having trouble with seagulls and starlings. Martin started work there with me and Spitfire loved her first 'working day' chasing partridge and starlings. She caught another moorhen and we fed her up on it. The next day was rainy and we couldn't fly, so they were fed a small amount on the fist. She was back down to flying weight the day after (9 $\frac{1}{4}$ ozs) when she flew into some trees after an unsuccessful flight. I walked on a bit and then proceeded to call her down. She usually came straight away, but she seemed to have vanished. Although I searched for hours and had numerous calls of her whereabouts, I never saw her alive again.

Two weeks later I received a letter from the D.O.E. saying she had been found dead eight miles away having apparently flown into a church and broken her neck. We went to pick up the body. She'd been eating well and was quite fat. Her neck was broken.

She'd been great fun, taking all sorts of quarry including two more woodpigeons, a stock dove, a magpie, lots of moorhens, a weasel and quite a few miscellaneous. Hopefully a tiercel goshawk is on the cards for the future, but for now old Spike soars over the quarry on his own. I wonder if he misses her as well.

Some Bible Comments

Regarding Hunting

BY K.A. PERKIN.

The W.H.C. journal of 1979 contained a photograph of a priest blessing the birds at the E.F.U. meeting in Germany, and today's (12/5/84) statement by Prince Philip in defence of hunting, shooting and fishing indicates that the church and royalty find such sporting activities quite acceptable.

However, very many of us have friends and acquaintances whose outlook may not be the same but falls short of those of the anti-blood sports campaigners. Because of these opposing views I wondered where I could read an unemotional account about hunting and conservation generally, and so decided to do some research into the Good Book to see what it had to say or what principles it contained to guide us in this subject. It is surprising just how much is written there which could, perhaps, influence our thinking.

Firstly, assuming the Genesis account of creation to be accurate, Genesis 1:29/30 shows that "every flying creature of the heavens" was to enjoy eating the vegetation, seeds and fruit, along with man who was to have dominion over such creatures. They were all vegetarians and thus there was no need for hunting. (4000 BC)

It wasn't until very much later (2300 BC) that Noah and seven others, along with the flying creatures, came out of the Ark into a waterlogged earth that man was permitted to eat flesh from which the blood had been drained. Genesis 9:2/5 states that from that time forward "every flying creature of the heavens would have a fear and a terror of man." This statement can't be denied.

If we now move forward about two or three hundred years, we find the first mention of hunting. Reference is made in Genesis 10:9 to an early rebel against God, Nimrod, who evidently hunted for sport, perhaps killing both animals and humans. He is described in the N.W.T. Bible translation as "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah" and his kingdom stretched out from the fertile lands of Shinar into Assyria. This was not many hundreds of miles from Mount Ararat where the Ark had settled after the Flood, and was between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, the cradle of civilization where falconry might well have had its beginning. Also, there is mention of a bas-relief at Khorsbad representing a falcon or hawk on the fist of a man, dated at around 1700 BC.

At about this period (2000 BC) the people became scattered (Genesis 11:9) and no doubt took with them what early knowledge they had of hunting with hawks and falcons. These people, according to their language groups, would have travelled to China, Russia, India and Egypt where the falcon was

revered as a god.

From this time forward the Bible reveals that the Creator did not oppose the idea of killing an animal or bird for food because as Genesis 9:3/4 says "every moving animal (creature) that is alive may serve as food for you". Accordingly God did not forbid the Israelites to hunt and fish but stipulated, for animals killed, the blood had to be poured out (Leviticus 17:3/4). This would help hunters to have a regard for the sanctity of life. They were also encouraged to have a respect for life by the law which forbade taking the life of a mother bird along with her eggs or offspring. The mother, who would be easier to catch because of her attachment to her young, was to be let escape in order to have more young and so prevent any danger of wiping out the species (Deuteronomy 22:6/7). Later Jesus spoke of two sparrows which sell for a coin of very small value and then went on to say "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge", (Matthew 10:29) which indicates the interest the Creator takes in His flying creatures.

There are many Biblical references to hunting, and the word or like words are mentioned some 30 times. Isaac, who was a revered patriarch, sent his son Esau out hunting with his bow for some venison (Genesis 27:3). Then there are many references to the catching of birds and fish in nets, showing that this was quite an acceptable profession. Also, several of the apostles were fishermen and this would probably upset the League against cruel sports, the anti-blood sports campaigners who are about to disrupt angling matches throughout this country.

There is only one recorded instance of where a man was kept alive by birds, and that was Elijah the prophet. He was east of the Jordan when some ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and the evening (1 Kings 17:1/6) for some days.

It is surprising to learn how often the eagle, eagle owl, falcon and birds of prey are referred to. They occur some forty times in a variety of ways, describing their farsightedness, their intelligence, and the training of their young (Deuteronomy 32:11). The Hebrew word for the falcon is "nets", which some think derives from a root word meaning "to shine or sparkle". No falconer would disagree with this definition.

There is an interesting reference in the Book of Job 39:26 to the falcon "soaring up and spreading its wings to the south wind". This is understood by some to refer to the southward migration or, as the Jerusalem Bible puts it, "spreads his wings to travel south", which certainly takes place. Others, however, believe that the text describes the bird as turning into the on-coming wind, and by the power of its wings flying into it, ascending higher and higher.

The warning the Good Book appears to give us is that if a person is to hunt with a gun, hounds, cheetah, fishing rod, hawks or whatever, he needs to exercise care that he does not gradually develop a "lust for killing". There have been

those who began by hunting for food and later came to delight in the "joy of the kill", thus showing a wanton disregard for animal and bird life. Colonel Charles Askins, a big game hunter, put it well when he said "Hunting is a glorious sort of vice working its narcotic with all the efficacy of the ubiquitous poppy (opium)." It is only some ten years ago that a report from Rome related that approximately 200 million birds were killed each year by hunters in that country and, in Czechoslovakia, just six hunters killed 2200 birds in a week. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground unnoticed, saturation killing on that scale will not do so either.

In conclusion, a final Scripture to be found in the Letter of James at chapter 3:7 reads in the following way, "For every species of wild beast as well as bird and creeping thing and sea creature is to be tamed and has been tamed by humankind". (It goes on to say that the only thing that cannot be tamed is the human tongue!) This, and other points to which attention has been drawn, would seem to suggest that there is nothing wrong with taming, training or using flying creatures in the hunt for food, either for them or ourselves, providing it is done in a reasonable manner and not for wanton killing. Nor would one want to keep them as "magnificent captives", but exercising and letting them use their natural instincts in the flight and chase for which they were created, and for man's great pleasure and enjoyment.

13th May, 1984.



Hearty greetings to our new member, wartime R.A.F. Squadron Leader Kenneth A. Perkins, who has recently signed-on to become a member of the Welsh Hawking Club. He lives here in Leamington, and it is a wonder that we have not met before, which shows the world is not always as small a place as we sometimes say it is.

Kenneth Perkins began hawking before the war when he was

stationed in Northern Ireland. He was also stationed in Yorkshire. He has had almost all of the species of hunting birds that this country can provide. In Northern Ireland he knew most of the peregrine eyries and observed these birds with interest. In Yorkshire he successfully hunted with merlins. He has kept buzzards and also obtained for himself a golden eagle from Austria.

During the war he flew with the R.A.F. in North and East Africa, and also in Burma where he was shot down by a Japanese plane, but luckily did not fall into Japanese hands

He is not able to practise falconry in his present situation, but he has told me that he wishes to join us and attend meetings of our club. On the behalf of our members I offer our new friend a warm and comradely welcome.

Lorant de Bastyai.

Lost hawk-Happy ending

BY HARRY ROBINSON.

Saturday April 28th. Received a report of a hawk with bells on flying around a small village called Spurstow, which is near to Beeston Castle, Cheshire. I went to investigate but didn't see anything that day.

Monday April 30th. My friend Terry had a 'phone call to say the bird was again at a farm at Spurstow. I picked Terry up and this time we were lucky, it was still there. It turned out to be a kestrel, complete with transmitter. I caught it by the winding up method on a pegged down dead chick. She was in good feather, but a little thin. Took her home and put button jesses through her false almeri anklets: She had on an aviary bred ring and the D.O.E. ring. Terry informed the D.O.E. on Tuesday May 1st.

Thursday morning, May 10th. A man 'phoned to say he had received a letter from the D.O.E. about the lost kestrel which belonged to his son. They were overjoyed to hear that it was safe and sound. He said their house had been a gloomy place since its loss. I replied that I knew how he felt, like most falconers I too have had my losses.

They had lost the kestrel while flying over the Easter holiday when it went on the soar, no doubt due to the lovely weather we had.

They came to pick it up that afternoon and took their little kestrel, "Bow", home rejoicing, so for them the registration proved to be well worth while.

The kestrel was found approximately sixty miles from where it was released.

Donna - a love story

BY JOE DEEN.



Donna - note missing toe.

Photograph by Tim Williams.

After the ban on all birds imported into this country due to the French turkey business was lifted in March '83, John Buckner went to Germany to collect three female goshawks. One of the three, "Donna", was a gift to me from a very good friend Sieglinde Kohler.

I was on pins and needles the whole of the time that she was in quarantine, then when the release day came I had a 'phone call from John to come and pick my bird up. I must have broken all records as I dashed up the motorway to John's home. The feelings I had when I saw Donna were a mixture of excitement and dismay because when I looked at her feet I could see that she was missing half of her middle toe on her left foot. I thought that this handicap could affect her

footing powers - I was never more wrong in my life.

It was too late that season to try her out because the moult was upon us. I moulted her out on a screen perch in my garage and all during that time I couldn't get over her tameness. She never seemed to want to bate and as soon as I put her food at her feet she would snatch it straight away, even at the peak of the moult when she was as high as she could possibly get. The moult seemed to be over very quickly and the time came to pick her up and train her.

At first she behaved in the usual way, her wings and beak would open and she would bate a few times, then after the first night of carriage (I always man my hawks at night) she seemed to give up and succumb to training. Only four days later she was flying free, incredible but true. I invited John Buckner and Lawrence Workman out for a day's hawking so that we could get her entered. It was only about fifteen minutes after we had started hawking that she flew the very first rabbit she had seen in Britain. She was just beaten by cover and five minutes later she took her first rabbit in fine style laying to rest any fears of her missing toe causing any problems. In fact she seemed to grip better with that foot than with the other.

That first season I had such an exceptional time hawking that I was permanently on cloud nine. Donna's total bag for the '82-'83 season was 186 head. This large bag was due to the marvellous holiday in Scotland organised by John Buckner where rabbits were very plentiful, and also because I was off work for four months and hawked quarry at least four days a week. Luckily too the rabbit population was very good in my own area - Thank Goodness.

I had to stop flying her in December because she got bitten by a squirrel and her foot turned septic. Once again the moult came and went quickly and the '83-'84 season was upon us. The highlight of the season, Scotland, was only a fortnight away. I had such a hard job getting weight off her this time because we had a bit of a heatwave in South Wales and of course she would not bate so it took me ten days this time to fly her free.

The first season she flew at 2lbs 4ozs, this season she flew at 2lbs 6½ozs, very heavy for a German goshawk. Her obedience is remarkable, distance is no object and her sighting powers are exceptional. One flight that comes to mind was when we were up in Scotland. Lawrence Workman and I were walking alongside a moor when Donna's head went up like a periscope: Workie said "She's seen something, let her go", hoping that it would be a grouse. I obeyed his request and off she went, flying low just clipping the heather with her wings. She kept going until she was almost out of sight when suddenly she raked up and dropped like a stone. "She's got the bugger!" came the shout from Workie, I ran across the moor wondering what the hell she had got now. When I made in I was very surprised to see she had clobbered a rabbit.

Donna's total bag for the '83-'84 season is 73 head. I have had lots of great fun and also a lot of heart attacks with this wonderful bird, and can only thank from the bottom of my heart my very good friend John Buckner for collecting her for me. Special thanks are also due to Sieglinde Kohler for giving her to me. I often get accused by my wife of thinking more of Donna than I do of her, but I always tell her that I love them both equally - besides I would like to see my missus catching rabbits!

I hope next season that Donna's accident rate goes down though. This season she was crabbed by another hawk in November and had her chest pierced by it. I had to put her down for a month because she had her air-sac infected. I flew her after the month was up and she was none the worse for wear. The next accident was another squirrel bite, but this time I had a bottle of iodine in my pocket which I applied immediately, this time stopping all infection. Then came the chase of a pheasant in which she flew straight into the only overhanging branch in a hedgerow and knocked herself out - a million to one shot. You can imagine how I felt when I approached her, I thought she was dead then she suddenly jumped up, shook her head and jumped onto the fist apparently unmoved by this episode, bating at the very next rabbit that came into view. The last accident came as she flew towards a hedgerow in pursuit of a rabbit when she got caught up on a barbed wire fence, ripping her wing. This final accident happened about a month before I usually put her down to moult, so I will now wait to see what next season brings. Our club vet Malcolm Morris must be pleased to hear this news, I think he got a bit sick of seeing me last season.

All I hope is that I have the pleasure of seeing Donna hunting for many years to come. She does not need me when she is hunting - I am just a spectator. She has taught me a lot about goshawks, but I must not make the mistake of being over-confident with her because as we all know we should not take our hawks for granted. Long live Donna!

Donna's Quarry Tally.

56 Rabbits	1 Squirrel
4 Pheasants	1 Stoat
4 Waterhens	1 Fieldmouse
1 Gull	4 Various
1 Teal	Total = 73 head.

My First Hare

BY MIKE CLOWES.

I have been hawking now for fifteen years. I have flown tiercel Goshawks, one female Goshawk which came to an untimely end, Spars, Muskets, but nothing large enough to take a hare except a Hawk Eagle which would never try one. At the end of August 1983 I bought an aviary bred female Red-Tailed Hawk. I collected her the very day she came out of a seclusion aviary after a long train journey to the south of England. I took her out of the box in the British Rail parcels office to check her over and it was love at first sight. She was what I think is called a light phased hawk and she looked beautiful. She was not quite as large as I had expected, in fact when I weighed her the following day she was 2lbs 12ozs. Now I have always wanted a Redtail, and I am of the opinion that if a hawk flies at much over 2lbs then it can catch hares if its got what it takes psychologically. I spent a lot of time with the Redtail, I called her Daisy by the way because I thought maybe the softer the name the harder the hawk. Before long she was flying to me and she eventually flew free at 2lbs 6ozs.

Her first rabbit was at a nearby airfield where a rabbit bolted in the long grass and disappeared around the corner of a large rhododendron patch. Daisy was off the fist in a flash and rapidly vanished after the rabbit behind the bush. I couldn't see her being able to catch the bunny before it reached cover, but there was a sudden crash followed by a squeal and when I ran round the corner she had a firm grip on the rabbit just inside the bush where she'd piled in. After that she had more rabbits and some moorhen and after several attempts at squirrels, which she messed up by going for the bushy tail instead of the other end, she caught a full grown grey which managed to get in a crafty bite on her head before she killed it. This was my first squirrel and although she's had several more excellent squirrel flights since we haven't yet caught another.

Two weeks later I was out at a local farm when I saw a large hare go into a field some distance away. I walked across and when Daisy bated I thought she'd seen something so I let her go. She hadn't and she went up a large tree in a hedge. I decided to walk the hedge with the dog and I had just reached a point where I was considering calling her down when, with a bob of her head, she set off across the field. I looked in the direction she was heading and saw the hare 100 yards away going strong. Daisy caught up with the hare about 200 yards away and after three attempts to bind to it she landed on the ground some way ahead of the hare. The hare, which had been jinking around like a star rugby forward, obviously lost sight of her and ran straight at her. When it was about 5

yards away Daisy made a mad dash and grab but the hare saw her just in time and jinked aside and she missed, landing again. The hare headed for the hedge which was about 25 yards away and on reaching it stopped and sat up, looking around as though it was very pleased with itself for fooling the hawk. As soon as it stopped Daisy was off again, and the hare, deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, dived through the hedge closely followed by the hawk. I was running across the field while all this was going on, and when neither hawk nor hare appeared on the far side of the hedge I put on a spurt. I had about 20 yards to go when I heard the hoarse cough of a hare coming from the far side of the hedge. I suddenly became bionic. I cleared the remaining yards in a couple of seconds and dived through the hedge at the point where the hawk and hare had vanished. On the other side was a deep ditch half full of water. They were both in the ditch. The hawk had one foot firmly embedded in the hare's back and with the other she was holding onto the side of the bank to prevent sliding into the water. The hare was yelling and kicking and they were both wet through. Daisy seemed relieved to see me, and after I had quickly despatched the hare she was rewarded with the biggest crop she's ever had of warm hare meat.

This was in December and Daisy's weight when she took the hare was 2lbs 8ozs. We've only seen one hare since and she was kicked of it, but I'm hoping that this hare will be one of many with 'Daisy'.

Addendum.

Since writing about the hare Daisy has taken another first for me. At the end of January she flew very hard after a partridge, following it out of sight. I found her 250 yards away in a hedge bottom where I presume she grabbed it when it put in.

Just a thought

Sometimes one acquires a hawk that, no matter how carefully handled, objects to its legs and feet being touched.

If this is the case, obviously Aylmeri are out and regretfully traditional jesses must be used.

An idea I had while flying a bird that was a bit free with its feet, was to close the jess slits with small cable ties. This works well and can be done with one hand if the ties have been half closed already. The protruding length is then quickly snipped off, as is the whole cable tie at the end of the day.

MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD.

Out for a duck!

BY MICHAEL WALSBY.

It was a fine evening in mid-October. The setting sun cast a golden glow as I headed across pasture towards the last remaining stubble field, hoping for a chance at partridge before dark. There were very few partridge about this year and they were usually hiding in a large and inconveniently situated field of sugar beet, so I would be lucky even to see one. On my first sat Swoopypops, my intermewed eyass female sparrow.

As we made our way across the field a large flight of mallard descended steeply from the sky in order to feed in the stubble about 300 yards away. Swoopypops watched them keenly as they alighted and I could see she was interested. As she had recently made a couple of good flights at mallard I decided to let her go, though not seriously expecting to catch one.

Darting from the fist with that straight, purposeful flight they have when they mean business she flew low over the ground, gliding most of the way to conserve energy. As she rose to clear the barbed wire fence her bell, though far beyond my hearing, alerted the flock 50 yards further out in the stubble, and she put on a spurt to dash right into the middle of them as they took off.

Because of distance I could not follow details among the whirling mass of panic stricken birds, but as the air cleared it became apparent that something had happened. Instead of clearing off, most of the ducks and a few crows circled and hovered about 50 feet over the spot, quacking and cawing anxiously, and I could faintly make out some movement in the stubble. I ran towards them, and the crows began to dive at the movement, which by now had resolved itself into flapping wings and rolling bodies. The struggling birds became more apparent as I drew closer and the hovering mass of crows and ducks retreated, much to my relief.

As I climbed the fence I could clearly see the hawk gripping her prey in the stubble and apparently well in control. There had been anxious moments when I feared the crows would drive her off but now, as I made in cautiously, I could see with some surprise that the quarry was a huge drake. I had thought it more likely that she would choose a duck. A few seconds later my hand fastened on the mallard and after I had administered the coup de grace it was all over. The hawk stood triumphantly pluming its quarry and we were alone in the field. Bent feathers bore testimony to the ferocity of the struggle. The kill was a fine healthy drake mallard which, although the crop was empty, still turned the scales at a hefty 2lbs 9oz!

Owing to difficult conditions caused by intensive agriculture over the last few years this bird Swoopypops has bagged only a modest score, but the quality of the flights has been high. Although only of average weight (8½ ozs) she is very strong and draws blood (mine!) more easily than any of my other spars. Unlike most spars, which have difficulty in breaking into a pigeon's skull, she just tears it up almost as easily as a redhead. I once lost her for six days and when I found her got her back quite easily - weighing ½ more than when she was lost. Not only that but she was as tame as if I had just picked her up from her perch (she is tamer than average), thus disproving the theory that accipiters go wild in only a few days.

I have a star system for my kills, and the mallard is down in my book as my only double star kill (the flight at partridge described in E.B. Mitchells "Art and Practice of Hawking" is not quite good enough to rate one star). Details of all kills are made as they happen, with conscious effort to avoid exaggeration and obtain maximum accuracy. A tail feather from each kill is stuck in the book as a trophy. I recommend the system to other falconers: memory can be very misleading when recounting details years later.

Spars have been very underestimated in the past but now that other birds are hard to come by they may be coming into their own and will be more appreciated. They are sufficiently common now that there is no sensible reason why they should not be available for the asking to falconers competent to handle them. I hope the club will make representations to this effect to the appropriate authorities. It is annoying to think that the number shot every year would suffice to supply British falconers a hundred times over.

So here's to Swoopypops, the pint which not only thinks its a quart but has proved it!

Emphasis On Eagles

BY MARTIN HOLLINSHEAD.

The wind was blowing hard as the three eagles were cast off out over the steep-sided valley. All three went with the wind and were quickly out of sight round the hillside. Fifteen minutes or so later they came into view, a great distance away at about 3,000 feet.

The eagles, a Greater Spotted and male and female White-tailed Sea Eagles, were moving slowly back to the area where they were released. At this point the female Sea Eagle broke away and started to gain height. Higher and higher she went until she could no longer be seen. How high she went is impossible to say.



Female White Tailed Sea Eagle.
Photograph by Martin Hollinshead.

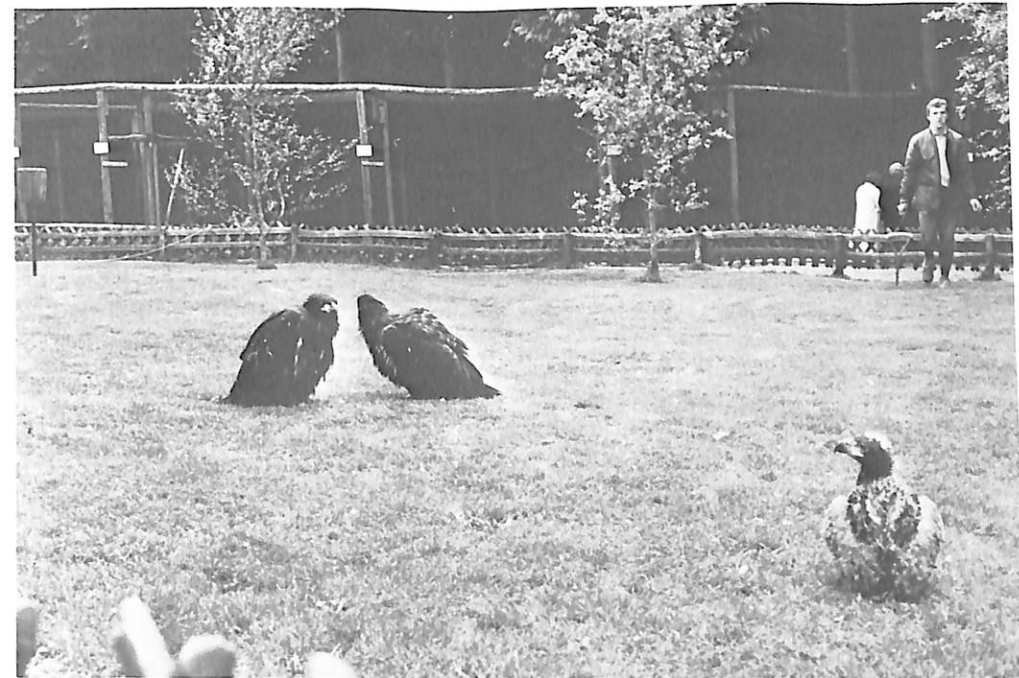
Eventually the birds were called down by three falconers, directly to the fist. Last in was the big female who seemed to appear from nowhere. Down she came, steep and incredibly fast, at the last moment dropping her legs and fully spreading those huge wings as she hit the arm of her young trainer.

This was the last demonstration of the day at the "Wildfreigehege Hellenthal", a German falconry centre set in a beautiful area called "The Eifel". The centre has a large and varied collection of raptors but the emphasis is clearly on eagles. Bald Eagles were first bred at the Wildfreigehege in 1981, later a pair was presented to President Reagan for an American breeding project. Also being bred at the centre are Steppe Eagles, these are the Eastern race and are therefore large birds. The adult female weighs about 9 lbs and is very dark in colour. Steppe Eagles are quite often mistaken for Tawny Eagles. With the Eastern Steppe there should be no mistake, I once had a male of 7 lbs.

There are a number of displays at the centre throughout the day. This gives some of the other birds such as the Golden Eagle and the Grey Eagle Buzzard (*Geranoaetus Melanoleucus*) a chance to "stretch their wings". Obviously flying so many birds in this type of terrain day after day, now and again things go wrong. I was told on one particular occasion a Sea Eagle went astray while being flown. This bird was eventually traced to someone's home. This person refused to give the bird back until the police were called.

The director of the centre, Herr Neisters, has been a

falconer for many years and was friend to the late Renz Waller. On the wall in his study hangs a picture taken of himself with the famous German falconer.



Two photographs of young Bald Eagles taken at the "Wildfreigehege Hellenthal" by Martin Hollinshead.

Raptor Eggs & Broody Hens

BY STUART WILKINSON.

When I first started breeding falcons and hawks eight years ago, incubators were large and expensive and cash was short so I decided to use broody chickens to sit the eggs that the falcons and hawks were laying. Nowadays everyone it seems is into the artificial incubation of raptor eggs using various types of incubators, not always with satisfactory results.

To my mind a good broody hen will beat an incubator every time. How many club members each year put their valuable lanner or Harris eggs into their expensive incubator and then spend the next four weeks or so worrying themselves sick about temperatures, humidity, weight loss, and in my own case power failures? Then a few days before hatching the eggs are moving about and they are waiting for the first 'pip' to appear and suddenly everything stops, the chicks die in their shells either before or just after pipping. A number of those that do hatch are 'mushy' or have unretracted yolk sacs or lack vitality. The whole thing is heart-breaking but every year I hear these same problems.

Undoubtedly, in the right hands a good incubator is a boon, but for those people who cannot afford to buy an incubator or who lack the knowledge to operate one properly, I would say try broody hens.

I myself have a number of superb incubators, but the only time I ever use them is when an egg has pipped under a broody and I put it into the incubator to hatch.

A good broody cuts out all the hassle normally associated with incubators and as a rule all the aforementioned problems are eradicated. Ensure that hens to be used as broodies should be exceptionally tame, some species of game bantam are very highly strung and should never be used.

When setting Harris's eggs under a broody the following method should be used. A locking box 15" square is well lined with straw (not hay) and a handful of blue indicator silica gel is added through the straw. The silica gel ensures that the eggs are kept as dry as possible. The broody which has been incubating chicken eggs in another box is then placed in the prepared locking box and the Harris eggs are slipped under her one by one. The box is then closed up for twenty four hours, after which the box should be opened, each egg removed, and the hen lifted carefully off and allowed to feed, drink and defecate, which will take from ten minutes to half an hour.

When the hen is showing clearly that she wants to return to the box, lift her gently back into the box and replace each egg. Never lift a hen off the nest without first removing the eggs, very often an egg will be tucked under the wing

and if you don't know it's there, you soon will when it falls onto the floor of the broody house.

At about the seventeenth day of incubation I always remove the eggs and float each of them for about fifteen seconds in lukewarm water. Harris's eggs are almost impossible to candle so I prefer to float them as this allows the egg to absorb enough moisture to carry it through the second half of the incubation period.

Nothing further is done to the eggs until they pip, when they are then removed to the hatcher.

When the last of the clutch has pipped, give the broody one chicken egg that has been incubated for about ten days. The broody will 'feel' movement in this egg and will remain broody until the next clutch of Harris's eggs is ready to go under her. Using this method we can keep a broody going for about twelve weeks, normally incubating three clutches of eggs in this time. Also, by using this method you need not let the female Harris sit on the completed clutch, just take them away as soon as the last egg is laid.

Hatchability is 100% with no problem chicks. Obviously you should never allow the broody to hatch the eggs herself as she will almost invariably squash the chicks as they hatch - young hawks are not active as are young chickens which can move out of the way of those large feet.

Below is a list of some of the chickens suitable for brooding raptor eggs.

Large falcons -	<u>Bantam</u>	<u>Full size chicken</u>
	Cochin	_____
	Light Sussex	_____
	Rhode Island	_____
	Andalusian	_____
<hr/>		
Small Falcons		
Small Hawks	Andalusian	_____
<hr/>		
Harris's	Light Sussex	Maran
Gosses	Cochin	Light Sussex
Redtails	Rhode Island	
Buzzards	Silkie	Silkie
Etc.	Sumatra Game	Sumatra Game.

Sam The Buzzard

BY JOHN POYNER.

Buzzards are by reputation lazy birds, in fact in most literature on birds of prey they are referred to as being "slack metalled". Even so, members who have flown them with some success will tell you that with a lot of patience and a little bit of luck they can be worthwhile hunting birds.

My experience with a buzzard began with "Sam" a male, dark brown in colour with a white ruff. His training began as soon as his feathers became hard panned. Jesses were put on and many hours were spent manning him. His weight was reduced and he was flown to the fist on a creance. Soon he was flying free.

The next step had to be some form of training so that he would fly at quarry, this soon proved to be quite a problem. He would catch and kill mice but as for anything else, such as moorhens or rabbits, he showed no interest at all.

A dead rabbit was used and the buzzard was allowed to feed on it. He was then put into a tree and the dead rabbit, attached to a line, was pulled back and forth beneath the tree until Sam dropped onto it. This sort of training went on for several weeks until I thought that he was ready to fly at live quarry.

By this time we were halfway through the season and although he started to fly after rabbits they always disappeared into cover before he could catch them, except for the one memorable time when he did manage to catch something. We followed a stream through a small group of trees with Sam keeping up the rear flying from tree to tree, when all of a sudden there was a rustling noise as if something was running through the grass. Being unable to see what it was I started to beat the rushes and tall grass when a moorhen flew up out of the grass only to be caught in mid-air by Sam. It all happened so quickly that by the time I got to the spot where they had landed in the tall grass Sam was already mantling over his first kill. I think this proves one thing, that with perseverance and luck buzzards can be useful hunting birds.

Flying birds at Game Fairs

BY LYN PALMER.

The two birds in question are Jodie, a female kestrel in its first year, and Barri, a lanneret also in its first year. Both birds were purchased from Griff at the Welsh Hawking Centre, Barry.

Both of them were flying quite well before the first Game Fair that the Welsh Hawking Club attended, which was at Tredegar House and Country Park, Newport.

To fly a bird on your own land or on a particular field is entirely different to flying a bird in front of thousands of spectators. For a start there are all sorts of hazards to disturb the bird, i.e. clay shooting, balloons being let loose, fair ground amusements and all sorts of different sounds which a bird hasn't encountered before.

There was a good turn out of birds on the weathering ground, arranged in the shade of one of the most magnificent oak trees in the park. The flying demonstration started at about 4.30p.m. and I was the first to go on with Jodie the kestrel. I had an assistant with me to show to the public a bird in its first stages of training, being flown from fist to fist on a creance. She flew very well for me, moving further away with each flight. Then Ken Macleaur, who was doing the commentary, asked me to fly Jodie free, so I took off the creance, called her off the fist and introduced the lure to her. She stooped several times at the lure then gave up and flew up into an oak tree. This is one of those moments which a falconer tries to forget. There you are out in the arena in front of thousands of spectators and your bird goes and lands in a tree. Luckily for me there came a slight wind and Jodie rose up and hovered right over the arena then started to wait on. The spectators loved it, I introduced the lure straight away and Jodie completed her flight.

The next to fly was John Binding, who had a female lanner which Griff had kindly lent him to fly. She was going great guns to the lure, but then John is used to flying a bird in front of the public as he flies birds for Griff down at the Centre.

The next Game Fair was at Builth Wells. When we arrived John Buckner was already there with a static display and a marquee weathering ground for the birds. The main attraction of the day was a jousting exhibition with knights in armour. Ken Macleaur again did the commentary and I first flew Jodie then I flew Barri, my lanneret. It was the first time that I had flown Barri in front of the public, and I didn't know how he would react to all those spectators. I cast him off the fist, he circled the arena a few times to get his bearings, then I introduced the lure and he stooped down immedi-



ately. I still had a lump in my throat as I hadn't known how he would react in front of all those people. It was a beautiful day at Builth Wells, and the members sold a good many raffle tickets for the clubs' benefit.

The next event was held at Clytha House, Raglan. This time one of the main attractions on the programme was Red Rum, the famous Grand National winner. The day was very hot, too hot really for a flying demonstration, but that is what the public want to see.

There was a good selection of hunting birds on the weathering ground, and John Buckner and Joe Deen were on hand selling prints and ties. They also organised a raffle for the club. Once again I flew Jodie first, then John Binding flew a Harris's hawk, kindly lent to him again by Griff. He let some of the children from the crowd fly it to their fists, giving an added attraction to the flying display. I went on next with Barri. He didn't put in many stoops as it really was too hot to fly that day.

The following occasion was really an Agricultural Show, held at St. Mellons just outside of Cardiff. This was a big show with many trade stands, but one of the main attractions proved to be the Welsh Hawking Club stand which had been put on by Joe Deen. He had made a board which displayed hawking furniture for both long and short wings and this beautiful collection attracted considerable attention throughout the day.

There was a good turn out of birds on the weathering ground, one that drew particular attention was a barn owl which had been bred in captivity by Joe. Unfortunately the organisers had not allowed us enough time to put on a flying demonstration as there were so many events to cover during the afternoon.

This has been a short account of some of the events that I have attended which have been covered by the Welsh Hawking Club.

On the previous page.

Barri, my lanneret.

Jodie, my kestrel, stooping down to the lure at one of the Game Fairs.

Photographs by Lyn Palmer.

Chasing Bunnies

BY GEOFF PEARSON.

We were fortunate enough to have been given permission to fly our birds at rabbits over hitherto un hunted farmland. So early one cold, grey, miserable morning we parked the Landrover and made our way to the nearest likely looking hedges. There were three of us in the party, my wife, who is also a keen falconer but on this occasion she was acting as head ferret handler, John, a farmer friend, with his '82 eyass female Redtail and myself with my '83 eyass female Redtail.

Both birds were keen and we were looking forward to some good slips but we had been going for an hour with few holes and no chance of any. The hedges were difficult, as one side had sheep netting and barbed wire on top of this made it awkward to retrieve the ferret at times. My wife had just got it back and was standing on top of the hedge, ferret in hand, ready to leap over the top of the barbed wire. I have seen the Fosberry flop and the scissors but what followed was something new to me. Starting with a Nureyev leap, ferret held in right hand, she caught her toe under the top strand of barbed wire and describing a perfect arc she nose-dived, arms outstretched, face down into the sticky brown mud of a ploughed field.

It is difficult to applaud with a bird on your fist but John and I did our best, shouting "encore, encore". Before we could get the third encore out we were witness to an amazing sight. Our head ferreter slowly raised her head to look in our direction, meanwhile the ferret (who was most upset at being pushed head first into the mud) saw this horrible apparition with bulging eyes and covered in mud within inches of its own face, decided that the best form of defence is attack and so sank its teeth into that muddy monster - who could blame it really?

John and I were then given a performance of levitation as our head ferreter rose into the air and commenced to do a pagan fertility dance around the field, complete with ferret as adornment hanging from her cheek, chanting some Anglo-Saxon song full of unprintable adjectives. Needless to say, both John and I were most concerned and dashed across to see if any damage had been done. All was well in the end, we cleaned her up, smoothed her down, said how sorry we were that this had happened and that it wouldn't happen again. After reassuring her and giving her a drink we then turned to my wife to see if she was alright.

Half an hour later another incident occurred when a bunny decided to bolt on my side of the hedge - a slip at last. The rabbit was at least 30 feet out when it saw my Redtail

winging its way towards it, it then decided that there was no place like home after all, so with a typical Bugs Bunny cartoon turn headed back for the hole. He just made it in time to meet the ferret head-on and so with another turn raced back to the entrance where it met the Redtail who quickly grabbed it with both feet and hung on.

Meanwhile the ferret had caught up with the back end of the rabbit which was still halfway down the hole, so it took a bite and hung on. Stalemate, now we had a rabbit half out of its hole with a Redtail on the front and a ferret on the back. After some seconds the ferret decided to see what was stopping the rabbit from getting right out of the hole so he popped his head up beside the rabbit. This was not the best thing to do, as the startled Redtail quickly planted one of her feet onto the ferrets head. Now we had a Redtail with a bunny in one foot and an upset ferret in the other.

The ferret, feeling a little put out by the unfriendly attitude of someone he had been working his little tail of for, gave the Redtail's foot a good nip. Wrong, definitely wrong! This made the Redtail even madder and so she planted her other foot onto the ferret who now had three pounds of raging Redtail and eight talons in his head and not an aspro in sight.

Meanwhile the rabbit decided that this wasn't his quarrel and as he couldn't help in any way left, exit one bunny with a giant headache and the worst haemorrhoids in history.

It wasn't easy to separate the Redtail and the ferret, but we managed it in the end without further damage to either. The only problem now is that the Redtail and the ferret are not speaking to each other, and as soon as one sees the other they turn about and go in opposite directions.

What a day, but I am sure that there are lots of falconers who have had similar experiences and like us are not put off. After all incidents like these although they seem bad at the time add to our experience and our memories - Good Hunting.

FALCONRY TREATISE IN ART SALE.

A copy of a copy of a treatise on falconry fetched £29,000 during an oriental manuscript and miniature auction at Sotheby's in London.

The treatise was reproduced at a fairly contemporary date from a copy done in 1223 of a work by the 8th Century Byzantine court falconer, Adham Ibn Muhriz Al Bahili. It could be the earliest surviving manuscript on the subject.

Report on visit of Chief Wildlife Inspector

BY M.J. SHUTTLEWORTH.

The monthly meeting of the Welsh Hawking Club held on April 9th 1984 was attended by Mr. J.T. Eley, the Chief Wildlife Inspector. Mr. Eley gave a talk, accompanied by slides, on the sections relevant to falconers of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Import and Export Act.

He said that he and his inspectors were not out to persecute falconers, but that it was in all of our interests to make the Act work. For our own protection we should be aware of the sections of the Act that are concerned with all aspects of falconry and captive breeding.

To cover every issue that the talk raised would be a very difficult task, but this report contains a few of the topics that were covered.

Concerning the point that was raised at the A.G.M. regarding the illegality of catching up our own hawks by any other means than calling them to the fist should they be lost for any reason - by nets, traps, etc. Mr. Eley confirmed that this was breaking the law. Questioned on the problems this could raise during the hacking of young birds, e.g. would it be considered as trapping to shut the door on young birds that had returned at night, Mr. Eley was, perhaps understandably, unable to give a conclusive answer. To possess any of these nets or traps in working order is also illegal. He added that he had heard that some falconers are seriously considering applying for licences to trap their hawks with bow nets should the need arise.

He emphasized that the only persons to have powers of entry to conduct inspections are those appointed by the Department of the Environment, and that they possess identification which they should show to the keeper - falconers should insist on seeing this.

The sharing of any offspring from captive breeding on a loan - shares basis between colleagues is considered as a sale, so application for an individual licence must be made to the D.O.E. for birds not covered by the general licence. The birds must be rung with the correct size of closed ring, and it is recommended when in doubt to ring the young bird on both legs and then cut off the inappropriate one. It seems that the keeper who is in possession of the adult birds is deemed to have possession of any offspring. Of course, both of the adult birds must be legally in captivity before the offspring are considered as captive bred.

As stated, registration ceases to have effect when a hawk is moved from the address given when it was registered unless the Department have been notified. The question of holiday

arrangements was raised and Mr. Eley said that it was hoped that guidelines to cover this eventuality would soon be available.

He said that the licensing structure was to undergo changes, as were the registration fees. Apparently some registered keepers would be pleasantly surprised when this came into force - others would not. Quarry licences would also probably be charged for in the future. The Department would seem to be considering charging fees for import and export licences, as was allowed for by section 1 (5) of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act of 1976, but which have so far not been imposed. This would be to recoup the cost of administration. The members of "recognised" organisations will continue to be granted concessionary rates, however, anyone leaving such an organisation after paying on the lower scale would be obliged to pay the full rate. Questioned on the "self-financing" aspect which had been mentioned at the time of the introduction of the new regulations, Mr. Eley said he did not wish to comment on this at this time.

Once again it was made clear that members should keep records and documentation regarding their hawks. Files are kept by the Department, although their contents are not available to the people concerned. Mr. Eley said that now a computer was in use at the Department things should run more efficiently.

On hybrids - Mr. Eley said that for all intents and purposes these would be regarded as Schedule 4 birds.

He also advised that, should the removal of a ring become necessary, the keeper should ask for the presence of a D.O.E. inspector, a vet, or some other such person to witness this.

Several times during the talk when objections were raised to rulings that had been made, Mr. Eley said that such matters should be made known to the Hawk Board, the members of which were elected by the registered hawk keepers to represent their interests.

Mr. Eley was thanked by the Chairman, K.C. Macleure, for attending the meeting and talking to the members.

Summing up: The impression received from the talk was that whilst those in authority are willing to listen and advise, the regulations governing the keeping of Schedule 4 birds will be strictly applied.

(The editor wishes to thank Mr. Eley for reading through and modifying this article before its inclusion in the magazine)



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