

# Welsh Hawking Club

*Rebus Journal 1985*



the  
**AUSTRINGER**

**THE AUSTRINGER**  
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*Clwb Hebogwr Cymru*

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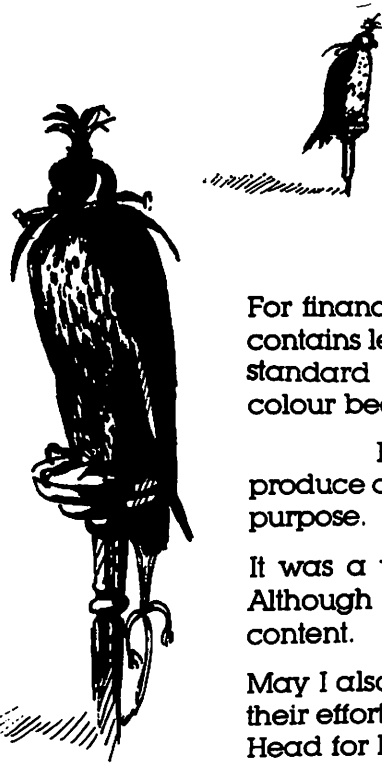
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### EDITORIAL

For financial reasons this years issue of the 'Austringer' is only forty pages long and contains less half-tone illustrations than the previous issue. I have tried to maintain the standard of the cover design. However, as you will have noticed, this is not in full colour because of our financial restrictions.

Next year sees the Welsh Hawking Clubs 25th anniversary and we plan to produce a special edition. Therefore it is the committee's plan to conserve funds for this purpose.

It was a welcome change to receive articles of a more unusual nature this year. Although they are fewer in number, they do, however, have plenty of 'meat' in their content.

May I also take this opportunity to thank the members involved with fund raising, for their efforts and valued assistance in helping the club breeding project. Also to Cyndy Head for her work as co-ordinator and promoter.

Remember. Be **active** and united in the Welsh Hawking Club, by getting **involved** and by submitting as much material as possible for your magazine next year.

Good Hawking

Editor

### CLUB BREEDING REPORT

Due to the inclement weather of recent months, our club breeding programme has suffered some set-backs.

After showing promising signs, the goshawks ceased courtship resulting in the lack of off-spring. Likewise the buzzards have been fruitless.

However, on a more positive note, Ken Jones (a committee member) reports the successful hatching of a club lugger falcon.

Stuart Wilkinson is having some difficulty in locating a suitable nest site to take a peregrine (licenced) for the breeding project, and continues his search for permission at various locations. The eyass peregrines abound, unfortunately the permission does not. It is also the intention of the breeding committee to purchase an egg-laying falcon. This transaction being in process at the present.



## EXTRACTS FROM A HOLIDAY DIARY 1985

### A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A HARRIS HAWK by Clive Palmer

Friday  
23rd August.

'Well we're off at last! Off on 'holiday', at least, that's what THEY call it. I've been hearing nothing but 'holiday' - 'Scotland' - how good I've got to be - I'll ring your bloody neck if you don't catch anything' - for the past month. 'HE' says my weight is right and that I'm in good yarrack, still, it should be a change I suppose.'

We left Newbury at 10.00 hrs this morning and arrived at Newton Moor at 19.30 hrs and went for a gentle flight down the Spey Valley. 'THEY' had a good bed for the night while I had to sleep in the car.'

Saturday  
24th August.

'Before we left in the morning I was shown off to the hotel staff and 'THEY' seemed quite taken. And so on to Thrumpter. We arrived in Wick at 13.00 hrs - it's been raining on and off all day and 'HE' says that if it stays like this we might as well pack it in now.'

'Had a pleasant surprise on arriving at Thrumpter, met a few old chums - C.J. and Emu - together with three falcons I had met on previous field meetings. No sooner had 'THEY' downed a cup of coffee then we were all off again to Lean Moor House.'

'Not bad here, but where have all the trees gone? Nothing but open moors and derelict buildings! And I can't get over all the rabbits there are about - nearly fell off my cadge a couple of times when 'HE' drove over two!

There are seven of us, four dogs and twelve of 'THEM' including two from Germany - 'International Guests' - 'very interesting'!!

Sunday  
25th August.

'All quiet today, weather fair. 'THEY' had to do things to a couple of the motors - exhausts droppin off or something? 'HE' took me out in the afternoon for a reconnoitre and I took a young starling.'

Monday  
26th August.

'Woke up to a good day - sun shining - wind fair and we're all off on the moor, all seven of us. Day starts well with C.J. in top form taking six rabbits in just one hour! He was flown by Siepe, one of the Germans in the party.'

'HE' was well pleased with me as I took a rabbit that the dog had pegged. During the hunt we put up about six short-eared owls and a peregrine.'

'HE' went down to Thrumpter to collect a spar that the falconers had found - now I suppose I'll have to catch something for her to eat! Gave a few skylarks and pipets a fright this evening, but they were too quick for me.'

**Tuesday**  
**27th August.**

'All went down to Thrumpster this morning and out along the old railway track. Had the first catch of the day and my first blackbird. 'HE' was over the moon. This was a good day, sunny and windy. Again had two rabbits the dogs had pegged and later on had a good flight at a leveret. During the afternoon it turned to rain so all had a good feed up on the way home.'

**Wednesday**  
**28th August.**

'You call this a 'holiday'?! - cold and wet with a force 12 gale outside - no way can we go out in this weather, we would all be in Norway before you could say 'jessey'! - so 'THEY' left to go sight seeing to Thurso and John-O-Groats.'

'Later in the afternoon 'THEY' took us out as the wind level had moderated some what. Had a good flight at some rabbits then took another starling to feed the spar.'

**Thursday**  
**29th August.**

'All do your own thing today. Just the three of us go out to the West Moor - warm and windy. Had another starling, then a rabbit at the fourth attempt. Had some more sport around some ruins, then up the Hill, the long way home.'

'As it was windy I thought that I might put on an aerial display which was well received by 'THEM' both. On the way home I chased a meadow pipet down a rabbit hole.'

**Friday**  
**30th August.**

'Wet and windy again today so we did not start until after lunch, had a good go at another black rabbit and then three or four goes at some more but they all gave me the slip. Towards evening I took three starlings after some good chases.'

'We all came home well pleased, looking forward to a 'Burns night Haggis supper' accompanied by a Piper from Wick and of course the 'Golden Stuff'.

**Saturday**  
**31st August.**

'Well we go home today - all in all it's been a good week and I've learned alot. We started home about 10.00 hrs and arrived back in the Mews about 23.00 hrs. Here's to the next years 'holiday', maybe it'll be two weeks this time. Good hunting to my kith and kin this season.'

Bomber Harris

## **HAWKING FISH WITH NEPTUNE**

### **EXPERIENCES WITH AN OSPREY**

**Authors note:** This lively account reflects post-World War II attitudes towards Ospreys (*Pandion Haliaeetus*) in Western Germany. It contains biological information, and most important, it should help those rehabilitation centres that deal with Ospreys.

This paper was originally published in *Wild Und Hund* 70 (23), 559-560. 1968 and *Deutscher Falkenorden, Jahrbuch* 1969, S. 73.75.

In the thirties, shortly before my graduation, my grandfather was an official in the Forest Service in Thuringen. We had a number of fish ponds stocked with carp. Ospreys were both resident and breeding nearby. I read in an old book once that this species had been trained for fishing, but nowhere could I find out HOW to do it.

By chance I watched an osprey fishing. He misjudged his capabilities and, together with the fish got lodged in a large weir from which neither could extricate itself. I hurried over with my net and rescued them from their prison. The fish was already dead, and the osprey struggled to get out of the net, but could not. I let him thrash about and brought him home and put him in a empty goat shed so that he would quiet down. He flew to the edge of a feed trough, where he sat anxiously.

In order to tame him, or, as falconers say, 'man' him, I used the techniques well described by the old master falconer Renz Waller, for the training of goshawks and wild-caught falcons, except it was a live fish, just caught in the pond, that I held out to him every day. I let him take a full crop. The first day he danced about on a pole, eyed the flopping fish, but did not care to come nearer. I stood as still as an oil painting. I spoke softly to soothe him, but he did not take the fish, although I stood by him for half an hour. I did the same the next day. He must have been hungry because he snatched the fish from my hand and retreated along the pole to eat it a little way from me.

In the meantime, I had built a mews with the help of my grandfather, who, however, laughed at me pityingly when I explained what I planned to accomplish with the osprey. He let me carry on, figuring that I would have to find out for myself. Grandpa felt that I should put a hood on the osprey. I refused, saying that ospreys do not wear hoods in the wild.

Besides, Goshawks and Golden Eagles trained for falconry are not hooded. My reasoning was that as ospreys specialize solely in catching fish, they would not be diverted or made uneasy by other types of quarry while being carried around in the area. I was right. 'Neptune', as I had named him, maintained the bearing of a noble eagle, an eagle who could be disturbed by nothing - nothing but fish.

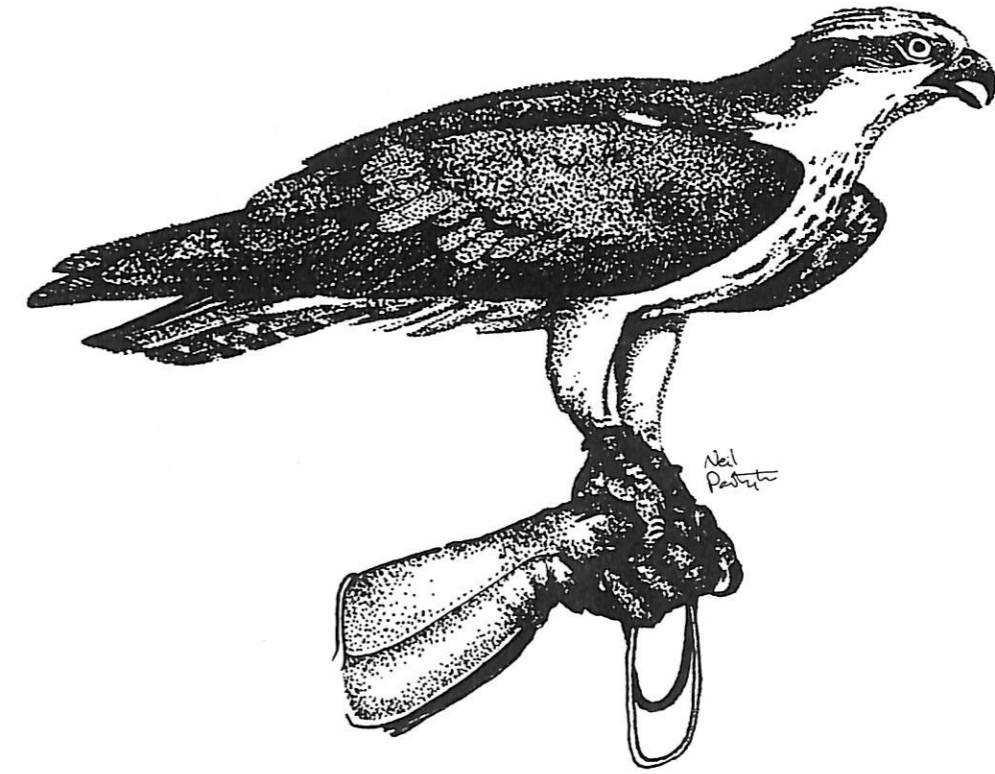
So it was that Neptune was not hooded. With good food and tender care, the osprey grew handsome. I weighed him daily; his weight remained between 1.8 and 2.1 kg. This weight and plumage in first rate condition are essential for successful hunting. (Let it be noted that HE was a SHE).

Next I put jesses on Neptune and tethered her to a bow perch by day on the meadow in front of the shed. The jesses need to be adapted to the particular hunting method of this species. As it always goes into the water feet first, foreign bodies on the tarsi are a detriment. Also one does not have to put bells on an osprey, as they fill up with water and become useless.

After many attempts to devise jesses that one could release with a single pull, I gave up. In the meantime, Neptune had become so well manned that she remained on the fist without jesses and showed no inclination to regain her freedom. When she was supposed to fly, she flew free from tree to tree - toward the pond - and waited there for me. I had problems training her to the lure. - The kind of lures our grandfathers used for goshawks and falcons did not interest her at all. She plucked off bits of fish fastened to a lure, and that was the end of a kill for her. Finally I got her to understand that she must let her human hunting companion take her quarry away from her, but she was allowed to feed to her hearts content on the lure. After much pondering I made her a lure using a two-year old stuffed carp. It left her cold. When I tied bits of fish onto the carp, she plucked them off and left the lure; sometimes she was off to a tree, and sometimes she came to the fist.

It was clear, and it took some time to recognise it, that the osprey had no interest in, and could not react to, anything that crawled on the ground or flew in the air. Her quarry was in the water. As one would release bagged pigeons to goshawks or falcons. I placed many two-year old carp in a cask arranged so that I could shove them out and plop them into the pond. After a few practise runs I got the quirks out of this system, and the fish played the game with evident pleasure.

By now I was serious. The cask was set upright in the pond with a release hole just above water level. By means of a rope and pulley attached to a pusher, the fish were shoved out. I stood about 10 metres away with Neptune on my fist. I gave my cousin Robert, who was helping me, the signal. The pusher moved, and with a rush of water the first carp shot out and splashed into the pond. Neptune became alert on my fist and viewed the cask with interest. Soon the second carp shot out. Neptune began to dance, and as the third carp came out of its prison into the pond, the osprey left the fist, made a short manoeuvre, and plunged feet first into the water, sending up a good spray above both herself and the fish. After about two seconds she emerged again carrying the fish, already dead as a result of her dagger-sharp talons.



Book-learning had convinced me that the osprey consumes its prey on the ground, so I waited for her to carry it somewhere so that I could take it away from her. She failed to oblige me by doing anything of the sort. Instead she circled me a couple of times, called, and then landed on my right shoulder with her prey. This style was dead wrong. I extended my arm, and she stepped onto my fist. Now the 'fish lure' played its part. My cousin displayed it to her and simultaneously covered the fish she had just caught. Neptune shook her head, but stepped up onto the lure after all and took the tiny pieces of fish flesh from it while Robert took the fish from her and let it disappear in the creel.

The first success was simultaneously the first failure: success because Neptune had finally taken quarry, failure because she had retrieved. Birds flown in falconry are not supposed to retrieve. How could I keep her from doing anything so unorthodox? I wished to be correct and to take her quarry from her. I reasoned that ospreys sometimes eat their quarry on the ground but sometimes carry it to a tree to feast. Suitable perch on trees were scarce along the shore; I had become a suitable tree. I recalled that we had once erected a perch tree for an Eagle Owl decoy when we were shooting crows from a blind. I procured an old stub about my size and erected it on the shore.

The following day we tried the 'bagged' fish again. Neptune circled me a couple of times with a fish again and then flew to the tree and perched. I rushed over to her and got her quarry away from her as on the previous day.

A few days later - a warm summer day when fish are wont to jump - we went again to the ponds, this time without the cask and 'bagged' fish. I wandered along the shore with her. She was scot-free on my fist. Neptune viewed the unrippled water with interest. Suddenly she shifted and began to dance in the typical manner. She shot off, and feet first she plunged into the water. The surface of the water was disturbed for a short time, and then the osprey emerged with the fish that she had caught in the wild. She gave what seemed to be a triumphant call and perched on 'her' tree. I took the fish from her there and let her come to my fist.

Many hunting days followed - rich in experience with osprey and fish. I can now summarize my observations and experiences as follows: The osprey cannot be trained like a falcon or goshawk. Its quarry is simply fish, and it does not distinguish between species, taking carp, tench (*tinca vulgaris*), pike and pike-perch.

A wild caught goshawk, on the other hand, does distinguish between quarry species. If it has been entered on (taught to pursue) rabbits, the bird must be reconditioned if one wishes it to take pheasants. The osprey is carried unhooded as it is not disturbed by flushing quarry, people or vehicles. One can equip it with normal jesses when carrying it about in the area. If it becomes particularly tame, one does not need jesses as it rides free on the fist or on a perch fastened onto the baggage carrier of a bicycle.

The osprey does not always take its quarry to the ground to feed upon it; it prefers a tree near the shore. If no such tree is near, it accepts its human hunting companion as a 'tree' and perches on his hat or on his shoulder. Therefore the falconer erects an artificial tree near the shore - about the size of a person - and takes the quarry from the osprey without difficulty. It is best to train the bird by releasing fish for it to catch. The fish are released from a cask into the water of the pond. All other methods of entering ospreys with lures garnished with feathers or fur are futile as they have no interest in birds or mammals as quarry. A stuffed fish or a fish lure is recommended to get the bird to step onto the fist. After it is well trained, one can take its quarry away without using a fish lure. One covers the fish with one's gloved hand and pulls it away with the left hand.

The trained osprey is kept in a mew on a high screen perch just like a goshawk or falcon. A bow perch and a bath pen should be placed near the mew in the shade. The osprey likes to bathe more frequently than any other raptor.

It is ecologically interesting that the osprey is the only (diurnal) raptor that can reverse its outside toe to grasp. It always carries its prey headfirst and never crosswise. In captivity it must be fed fresh fish: these are handed to it whole so that the osprey can pull them apart itself. It will disgorge the indigestible parts, such as scales and bones, in pellets.

For the most part the osprey is flown from the fist and returns to the fist with its prey. In other words it 'retrieves'. This comes from its habit of consuming food on a high perch where it is safe from herons that often try to chase it away from its perch in the wild. Now and again the osprey waits on high over the pond and plunges into the water from the air, it always dives feet first.

An osprey may misjudge the strength of its quarry. Then the falconer must go into the water with his big net and bring back both the osprey and fish if he does not wish to lose his bird. The osprey cannot remain under water long, or it will drown.

Experiences with nestlings or branchers are not available. It would be harder to train them for hunting. One just cannot follow an osprey over its fishing territory; instead it must return to the falconer after a successful hunt. This fundamental difference between hawking fish and hawking game justifies carrying. (It is bad form for a falconer to let his bird carry prey).

The war interrupted my experiments with the osprey, and after the war I could not resume them again.

One should explain to the owner of a pond and to fishermen that the damage incurred to fish is slight, when only one bird is involved. The situation would be different in the case of a breeding pair, but ospreys are not known to breed in West Germany. Besides, ospreys hunt only for survival. Many a day their crops are empty. Those who view nature only from the standpoint of usefulness and materialism will never grasp the greatness and beauty of creation. They will consider my experiences, and the trouble I took with an osprey, useless and senseless as they did not result in 'production'.

The observations and the experiences with the osprey are experiences in the beauty of nature. Its splendid fishing flights and its steep plunges, with water splashing high, enrich knowledge of nature and teach us to mind the ecological and biological balance and to restore natural conditions where thoughtless and selfish people have damaged them.

The osprey belongs to the natural landscape as do the fish, the goshawk, the rabbit, and the fox. Man needs to regulate, where is advantageous, with consideration of biological forces and with respect for creation, or he will become PRIMUS INTER PARES and nothing more.

**by Dr Hugo Richter**



# MERLIN ON THE MOORS

The opportunities today of obtaining an eyas Merlin from the wild are indeed slim due to this little falcons' critical population status. Therefore today's Lark-Hawker must look to captive bred progeny in order to pursue the art, but it seems that their more general availability is not directly proportional to the number of successful lark-hawking participants.

One of the factors that could be attributed to the small percentage increase is that people do not realise fully what the demands of successfully flying a Merlin at Larks are. Without labouring on this point and repeating the words of more knowledgeable enthusiasts like Bill Rutledge and Robbie Wilson (*The Falconer* 1979) I shall summarise a few of the prerequisites associated with this branch of falconry.

The FIRST must be to have access to suitable country, devoid of cover. Therefore your flying ground must either be open grassland, close cropped moorland or open stubbled fields. In years past I tried to fly in semi-enclosed country, but the quality of the flight (which is the primary aim) was poor. Nevertheless I did gain an appreciation of the Merlins' capabilities and soon operated in far more open areas, where the beauty of the flight could then be admired as ringing flights were no longer spoiled by the proximity of tempting refuge places for the Lark. Also the likelihood of losing sight of a downwind stoop after a ringing flight was significantly reduced as the ground afforded a better all round visibility.

The SECOND is to have your Merlin fit, prior to the customary season of mid-August to mid-September. This may seem like common sense but it never surprises me when I hear of someone stating that their Merlin will be flying free by the time the open-day arrives; consequently the bird puts on a poor show at the easier slips and soon ends up a not too reliable performer. The season is a short one so why not avoid one of the major pitfalls by preparing early and enjoy the season to the full.

The THIRD is to have an enthusiastic party of beaters and downwind markers. These people are an essential element to the success of the outings and I find their presence provides me with an element of safety when the going gets tough.

The FOURTH is a possible option of utilising the use of a dog, either pointer or spaniel. I certainly derive much pleasure in working a dog whether it be with a falcon or hawk, as I have found that their use can mean the difference between a good days sport or not. This is definitely the case with Merlins when the season enters its second half in September. At this time larks are not at all easy to find or flush. Yet a good dog will eagerly do both for you enabling you to position yourself and Merlin for the optimum slip. The Merlins certainly pick up on the dogs use and often interpret their behaviour before me. This sometimes leads to premature bating, but as I never restrain my birds once they are in the field I just 'stand back' and see what develops.



1985 was to be my first year of trying the captive bred Merlin, daughter of my licenced Merlin of 1981; a Merlin who instilled in me an appreciation of long-winged aerial pursuit.

Early summer temperatures soared and all indications were pointing towards another long, dry period. I was ecstatic at the prospect of an early harvest and longed to be hawking over the stubbled fields again.

I had applied in plenty of time to the Scottish Home and Health Department for a licence to kill skylarks and meadow pipits in the course of falconry in my home country and was pleasantly surprised that my applied-for quotas had not been cut. So all that was required was to get the bird fit and discover if she had inherited any of her mothers qualities.....

As we all know the summer and autumn of 85 turned out to be one of the wettest and windiest on record and this posed me a severe problem as my lowland hawking ground consists of large farms concentrating primarily on the production of cereal crops. It looked like a late harvest and I was just beginning to show signs of frustration when my friends Robert and John offered me their hawking ground in the south of the country. This was indeed a welcome offer, even though it entailed extra journeying time, as the ground contains a large acreage of rough pasture land and a fairly large grouse moor.

By the beginning of August, Amy, the female merlin was showing more than a passing interest in the wildlife that 'Tara' the English springer spaniel flushed while we were involved in lure stooping exercises.

By the time the open day for the lark season arrived, Amy had notched up several starlings to her credit. So I was more than interested to see what she would do when a skylark or meadow-pipit was flushed. I need not have worried and she took to both quarries like 'a duck to water'. In fact there's more than a bit of truth in that saying as on her first outing on the moor....It was getting late and the merlin although she was flying well, could not overcome the agility of her quarries. However just as I was about to feed her up for the night, a skylark was flushed and was immediately pursued by the merlin. The lark mounted up to perhaps 50' before the merlin managed to get above it. As she did so the lark fell in a steep downward stoop to the ground. The merlin this time matched the larks' every move as it tried to divert its flight path to the right and to the left. However as they approached the ground they both disappeared simultaneously. I felt jubilation as I approached the area in the receding light of day. I then came across a hollow with a small amount of rain water in the catchment area and there on outstretched wings to support herself was Amy clinging onto her drowned quarry.

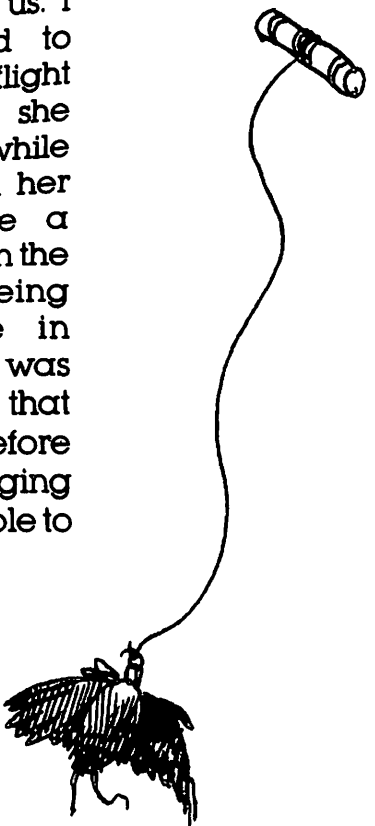
The very next night she started taking on the ringing larks, but it was all too obvious to the ground crew that she still had a lot of learning to do. She 'clumsily' strived to gain height on the lark, but her determined hard effort could not match the ease with which these larks were ringing up. Nevertheless she tried and learned and learned fast.

Within a matter of days the ringers were no longer being pursued by a clumsy winged predator, but one that was beginning to show signs of being a no-nonsense flier. She was now flying up to 60-80' before attempting to ring. The number of good larks I saw beaten in the air, being snatched almost casually out of the air at this range by this 'novice' was too many for my liking. I had waited years to be able to fly my own captive bred merlin at larks on classically styled ground. That moment was now, but this merlin was proving to be too good and it started occurring to me that our days on the moor were being numbered as her tally grew closer to the SHHD quota. It also got embarrassing when taking family friends out, who were non-falconers, to hear them say that 'she caught that one rather easily'. So I decided to utilise the moors quarry availability and try to match Amy at Snipe.

I had read Bill Ruttledges' articles (see Falconer 1949, 1951) and although realising the risk I was taking I was justified in giving Amy the harder quarry. She had taken two young snipe rather prematurely in the season and although they were far from easy

flights (in fact they covered some considerable distances), flights at adult snipe were going to be a lot different. I did not possess a small transmitter, but she deserved to be flown at the harder quarry and I for one certainly was not going to stop her.

At first she would follow really well but just could not come to grips with the terrific acceleration properties of the snipe. Then one night the spaniel flushed an adult bird from a reed bed. It took off, across wind, at a terrific speed with Amy a good 15 yards behind its tail. They both went up and up, like two fighter planes tagging one another, then (according to one of the binocular field party) the merlin managed to rise above the snipe as they both approached a hillside - 2 miles away. They both seemed to rise up and gave the impression of going over the horizon; however the merlin managed to put in at least one stoop before we all lost sight of both birds. I whistled and swung my lure as one of the field party thought he could detect movement coming towards us. I was more than delighted to discover it was Amy. This flight gave her the confidence she required and from that day, while waiting on the dog to flush her quarry, she behaved like a shortwing, tensing up while on the fist in expectation of being delivered. We all were in agreement that this bird was quick and agile enough and that it was only a matter of time before she would succeed. My nagging doubt was would I then be able to find her?





We interspersed her larking with the flights at snipe in order to prolong her season, but very few larks ever got away. This was not because they were poorly feathered larks, but due to Amy's hard flying and good footing abilities. We saw larks misstime their jinks and stoops to 'plough' into grazing sheep and fly down rabbit holes in an effort to shake off this highly efficient predator.

Interestingly enough I had expected her enthusiasm to wane on certain quarries as previously I found that once they latched onto larks, they were reluctant to fly anything else thereafter. Amy took on absolutely anything, in spite of her weight increasing daily due to my then ad-lib feeding. One evening just as we were approaching our favourite sniper location, she bated and was off. She flew up and away, hard and fast and so definitely not a bird just doing wing exercises. Robert shouted 'look about 200 yards in front of her'. Amy was already about 300 yards out and when I looked all I saw was a speck that suddenly was starting to move faster. Both merged and came flying downwind towards us. Then as both started using us as obstacles, I could see that her quarry this time was a stonechat. Both buzzed around us, whizzing past our heads and flying between our legs till the stonechat dropped into a pile of boulders, merlin dropping in after it. 'She's got it!' But on further investigation she had not and held only a couple of feathers from a stonechat's rump and that's all she got. I picked her up and continued to the reed bed. The night was young and at this all time heavy weight she still showed a lot of promise.

A half hour later, we gathered round a reed bed in strategic positions in an effort to give Amy as good a start as possible. In went the spaniel to work and in no time at all, out came an adult snipe. It beat its way into the wind with Amy right on its tail. Up, up and up with wings powering away as they climbed and flew off into the distance. Amy forced an attack that pushed the snipe into a now across wind flight path. I ran trying to keep the flight in view, as the rest of the party took up more elevated positions to watch the flight through binoculars. As the snipe weaved its way across the sky, the merlin managed to put in occasional stoops. However, none of us seem to remember whether such actions lost her any ground. The snipe also tried tactics of its own to outwit the merlin, but Amy hung in there, dog tailing and shadowing the snipe's every move. Then the snipe changed course, to fly down wind and possibly to head for a tempting refuge. As it turned and lowered its height, Amy pressed home an attack. A fifth gear had been found and as she flew past its back we all saw the snipe fall as she made a connection. 'She hit it' came the shouts of the party and everyone started running towards the spot. Amy meanwhile turned round, her speed making her 'over-run' the point where the snipe fell. She came round, her wings flailing furiously in an effort to reduce the turning circle and her head moving from side to side, obviously trying to locate her snipe. All of a sudden she dropped and on my arrival at the scene, she was busily depluming her well earned meal.

The snipe flight took on a completely new dimension now, Amy trying to use every land rise and wind movement to her advantage; however the snipe always seemed to interpret her moves, find a bit more energy, head upwind and pull away from her. She seemed to be waning on her enthusiasm as success was not coming her way in the same way the larks did and so I decided, foolishly enough, to fly her at a different location. Here the all round visibility was hampered due to the undulating nature of the countryside and it was here I temporarily lost her. While we all searched for her it made me think that I should continue the season at larks, if I ever got her back.

After about half an hour of searching, one of the party saw her winging her way towards us. I threw the lure out, but she was apprehensive about landing; however after a few passes at the lure she came down, totally exhausted. However, I still often wonder - had she been flying the snipe for that time duration? Nevertheless Amy had returned and I was going to content myself by finishing the season flying skylarks and meadow-pipits.

Maybe I will try her again at snipe, but she will have a transmitter on then I will feel slightly more comfortable when seeing her disappear over a land rise. However attempts this season have certainly convinced me that a merlin is a suitable candidate for snipe-hawking, but that the demands are even greater than those in lark hawking.

Amy has certainly proved to be far more successful than either of her parents. However this was my first year operating on a moorland landscape; whether the same quality of flights and the corresponding figures could have been achieved on open stubbled fields does pose a question. Hopefully it will be answered next year, providing we have drier weather prior to the harvesting of the fields. Or will this year's efforts lure us back next season to fly merlin on the moors.

It would not be fair to end this article without mentioning some of the regulars who accompanied me on the moor and who unselfishly acted as bearers and downwind markers especially on some of the less favourable evenings. My thanks go to John, Robert and Robin.

Brian Morris  
December 1985.





## CZECHOSLOVAKIA '85 A SHORT REPORT

Towards the end of September '85 we attended our first falconry meeting of the season at the tiny village of Choltice in the CSSR. It was a relatively small get together, almost a 'warm up' for Opocno a few weeks later, with approximately 23 raptors being flown. Hawk numbers were made up of a good many Goshawks, 4 Sakers and 1 Gyrfalcon. In addition we took along 4 Golden Eagles (2 male, 2 female) and friends from Austria brought 2 males.

An old chateau lying in ancient and rambling grounds made not only a beautiful setting for the meeting but also provided excellent accomodation for falconers and hawks. The weather over the four days was dry and hot, so very hot! At times this made hawking over the vast open country surrounding Choltice hard going for man and bird.

The most abundant quarry was found to be hares. Abundant is perhaps an understatement as at times their numbers seem to reach 'plague' proportions! Consequently the eagles who, except for one female, were in excellent hunting form had a field day. Some of the goshawks were also taking hares in truly amazing style along with a number of pheasants and one or two various. The longwings, as far as I am aware, had no success at all, and were really a little out of place. From a quarry and landscape point of view it was simply 'hare hawkers heaven'.

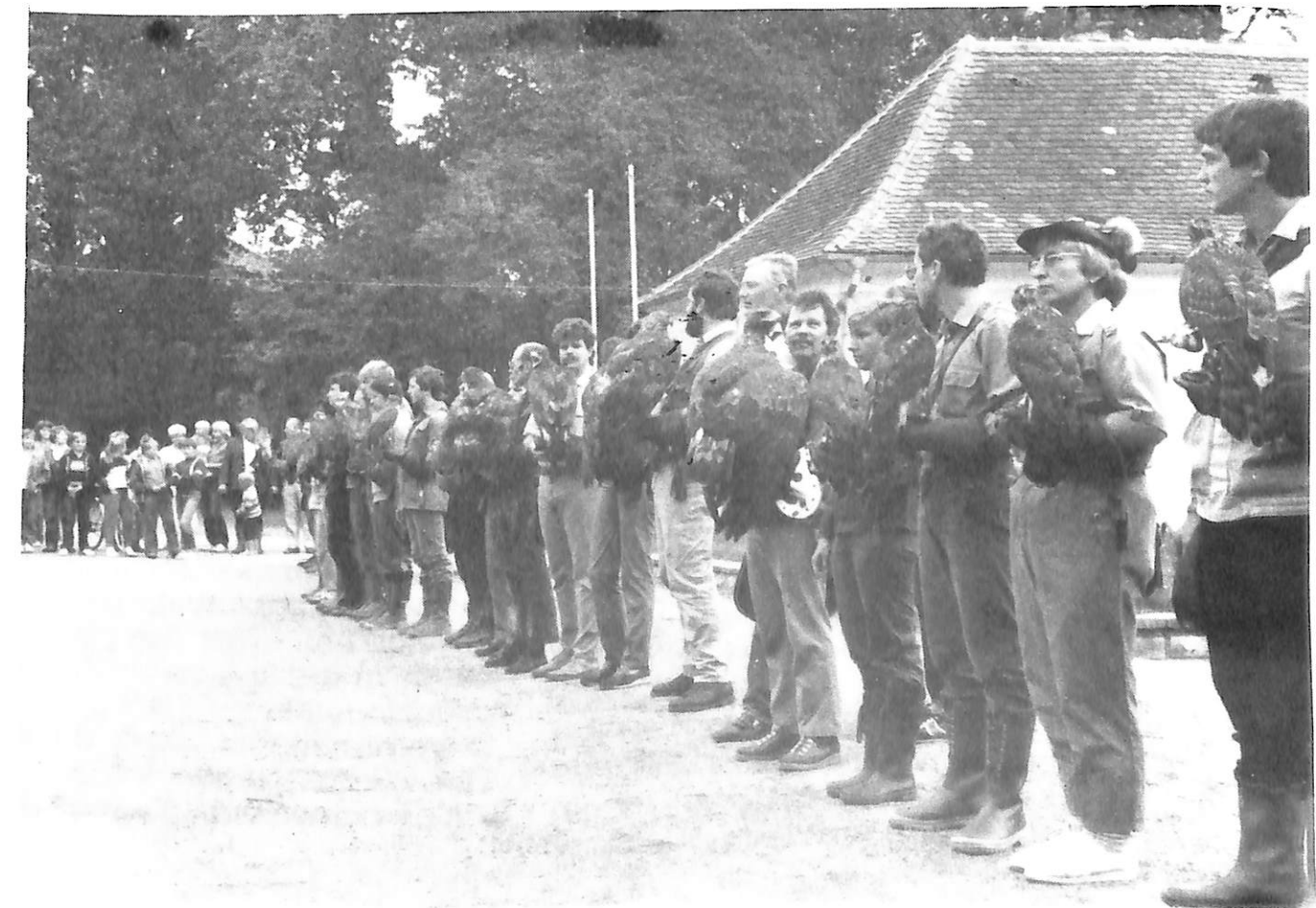
Meeting officials headed by Dr. Oblhidal had planned and organised everything superbly. A horse drawn carriage followed falconers in the field (as close as dirt tracks would allow) to transport the taken quarry. One need only carry a rucksack containing two or three hares a short time in the hot sun to realise how welcome the carriage was. Also at mid-day a tractor pulled lunch wagon came out to meet the falconers, - how on earth did they find us? As it appeared on the horizon it was at first dismissed as a mirage!

These are just two examples of the thought that went into the meeting. I think everyone who attended would agree that it was a tremendous success and equally important - great fun

Martin Hollinshead  
West-Germany, Feb 1986.



*Action with a golden eagle  
at Czechoslovakia meet.*



*The morning line-up*

# REMINISCENCES OF MINNESOTA USA

I was asked to talk about our trip to the USA at the northern area meeting held at the aptly named pub, The Goshawk, at Mouldsworth just over the Welsh border in Cheshire. Was it really that long ago as October 1983 that we were invited for a trip of a lifetime by Frank Taylor, Chairman of the Minnesota Falconers? Hence, this article for those who couldn't make it to my talk.

Frank Taylor's home is in the outer suburbs of Minneapolis, which proved an ideal staging post for our hawk trapping, visits to nature reserves and falconry meets. The entire state of Minnesota is extensively wooded, with thousands of large lakes and some tracts of farmland. The climate is extremely cold in winter and hot in summer, so there is a considerable amount of bird migration including large numbers of birds of prey.

We set off for Frank's hawk trapping area, a drive of about 150 miles to the north, passing through endless pine forests en route. About 10 miles past Duluth at the edge of Lake Superior, we pulled on to a rough track and parked in a gateway. Dawn was just breaking as we carried our nets, decoy pigeons and other equipment across a marshy field. (Frank was keen to set up before the hawks started moving). The hide consisted of a plywood structure about the size of a piano, with a lookout slit at the front. A mist net was set up

alongside backing on the woodland and our decoy pigeon was equipped with a leather jacket and attached on a line behind the mist net (it is legal to use live decoys in the USA). In addition a large rubber decoy owl was placed on a post. The three of us sat on make shift seats inside the hide waiting for the first birds to appear in the distance. The temperature was close to freezing point but the sun came up bright and clear and birds of prey started to circle on the thermals. As a bird approached our hide Frank became very excited, pulling at the pigeon line so the bird would flutter its wings, and shrieking on his dying rabbit call. Our first capture was a diminutive sharp-shinned hawk, much smaller than our sparrowhawk, which was ringed and released. Bigger and better things were to follow and as the morning progressed more and more birds were seen and a marsh hawk (hen harrier) came and dive bombed our owl decoy but refused the pigeon. Next moment a red-tail was inspecting the pigeon, it perched in a tree for a while and then hit the mist net full force. Frank lept from the hide to take the red-tail out of the net. It was very thin indeed and its legs were covered in scars from hunting squirrels. Normally only immature red-tails are captured, the adults are very wary, but we went on to capture another adult and an immature. The goshawks started arriving a little later, stooping at the pigeon from several hundred feet and hitting the net full tilt. We caught, and ringed adult and immature birds

and when we released them they sat and preened for a few moments and then set off south again. That particular day we caught 13 birds including an immature peregrine falcon, an extremely rare bird in that area. The following morning a bald eagle flew past the window as we were having breakfast, nobody else in the restaurant even bothered to look up as we rushed over for a closer look at America's national bird.

The reason that there are such large concentrations of migrating birds is that they are reluctant to cross the wide expanse of Lake Superior, so follow the coastline on their journey south from the breeding grounds in Canada. At Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, birds of prey are counted on migration, numbers of birds recorded being absolutely phenomenal. The highest autumn count of red-tails being 7279 and for goshawk 5819, but September 15th 1978 was really exceptional with 33,588 hawks of various species counted on the one day.

The laws relating to falconry are rather different in the USA and vary from state to state. If you are an approved falconer you can set up your hide and trap your own bird and in fact, the immature Red-tail we trapped, we took back for Sandy Rose, Frank's girlfriend. To call yourself a falconer in Minnesota you have to study and pass a written test (not the sort of test to see if you have a command of the English language but to make sure you know about falconry and hawks). Then your premises are inspected to make sure the accommodation is

suitable and that you have all the equipment. You are then apprenticed to a qualified falconer for 2 years and after that become a regular and finally a master falconer. This system seems to work well where there are vast numbers of birds and comparatively few falconers. In Minnesota you couldn't buy or sell hawks (although I believe laws are changing) and the theft of a bird is virtually unknown, security hardly thought of and all the falconers names and addresses were published on a readily available list.

With regard to hunting, the thing that stands out in my mind is the ease of access and the vast amount of game in the most unlikely places. We found that fire arms were banned within Minneapolis city limits, a vast area including tracts of land for future development and rural areas. Allied to this there were no loose dogs and cats, so pheasants were plentiful even in urban and industrial areas, along railway tracks and scrubland surrounding factories. Cotton-tails, similar to our rabbit, were plentiful everywhere and not prone to myxomatosis and the jack rabbit, a long legged hare inhabited more open areas. Jack rabbits were said by the Americans to reach the size of a kangaroo, but 9lbs seems the maximum although they look bigger than our hare as they have such long legs and ears. The snowshoe hare lives in forest areas and turns pure white in winter. They are halfway between hare and rabbit in size but have huge legs and feet.



In general the birds are flown in much the same way as ours. We saw the Peregrine X Prairie hybrid flown at pheasants flushed with the aid of a pointer. Ken Wagner was most successful with this species having taken over 100 head of pheasants in a season. The American Goshawk, in adult plumage, looks completely different from European birds. They are blue-grey on wings, tail and back, the horizontal markings underneath are finer and the eye a distinct brownish-red colour. Rick Duponts' fine male goshawk took pheasant and cotton-tails in fine style but still retained the temperament of ours! Mike Gabriels' male red-tail was most impressive. He started off by catching a Garter Snake, then a starling, moving onto to cotton-tails and we believe quail and jack-rabbit. Harris Hawks were flown with great success notably by Sandy Rose and Terri Wagner. We were informed of one problem with Harris's; they cannot be flown during the arctic cold of the Minnesota winter when snow is on the ground for a good three months. Billy Favraeu flew his red-tail in a completely different way to the others. He went out on his own, used a small beagle to flush jack-rabbits, then flew his red-tail straight out of the hood. This system was treated with great derision by the other falconers but he did catch the only jack-rabbit of our visit! Bruce Gilbertsons' red-tail caught a fine Snowshoe when we visited a forest reserve about 200 miles north of Minneapolis.

We were lucky enough to have a personally conducted tour of Bob Andersons' fantastic breeding

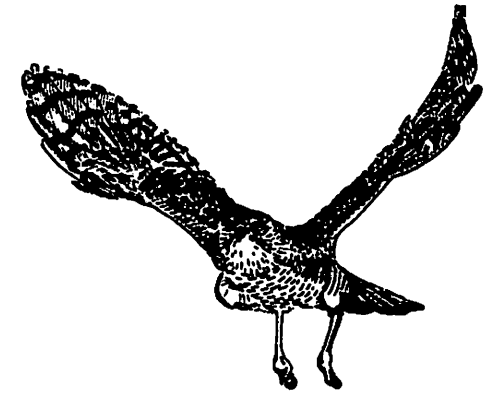
establishment on the lines of the Cornell system but all privately funded. He had produced all the Peregrine X Prairie hybrids which had proved such able birds. Bob flew his Tiercel Peregrine for us which waited on like a speck in the sky.

Another day was spent at the Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Centre at the University of Minnesota. Dr Pat Redig was kind enough to show us around the marvellous facilities and whilst we were there a Bald Eagle was brought in for treatment. Birds are sent to the centre from all over the United States and we saw large numbers of Peregrines, Red-tails and Bald Eagles, which were receiving treatment for injuries. Unfortunately, gin traps are still legal in many parts of the USA, so most of the birds were suffering after being caught by their legs. The centre is mainly staffed by volunteers, many of them local falconers. The premises are provided by the university and the equipment paid for by donations and grants.

We made many friends in the States and their hospitality was most generous. Frank made a flying visit over here in 1984 and we managed to get up to date on all the news. However, he is a typical American and had to do the rest of Europe the following week!

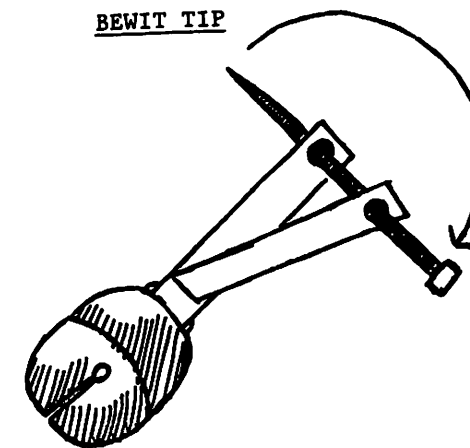
As for my own 1985-1986 season things have gone well after a disastrous previous season when my goshawk, imported from Czechoslovakia, sustained a leg and eye injury. Anyway he was fully recovered and flying at 11b-

9½ ozs after completing his moult for September 1985. Apart from the usual moorhens, he took 2 wood pigeons, 1 teal, 1 mallard, 1 pheasant and 1 partridge. I was especially pleased with the partridge as these seem to be his favourite quarry and I had many many flights without success. However, right at the end of the season he caught one after a terrific flight, when he flew the partridge to cover twice before the final capture. Needless to say I fed him right up to his kill and hope that he remembers, when it comes to easier ones at the beginning of the 1986 season!



by Mike & Ann Coupe

## BEWIT TIP



In the 83' edition of the Austringer, I mentioned using cable ties for closing the slits in traditional jessies. Another use I have for these versatile little things is for attaching bells. Some falconers use the cable tie itself as a things is for attaching bells. Some falconers use the cable tie itself as a things is for attaching bells. Some falconers use the cable tie itself as a things is for attaching bells. I simply punch a hole in both ends of a traditional leather bewit then thread a small tie through pull together and snip off the excess. With this method one can very quickly attach an extremely secure, tidy looking and well fitting bell.

Martin Hollinshead  
W. Germany 1985

## DISEASES OF HAWKS

Loss of weight, peculiar food behaviour, rejection of food and semi-digested food in castings are always a good guide to bad health in a bird. It is advisable when acquiring a new hawk to have mite samples analysed for the following:-

Capillaria, Roundworms, Tapeworms, Gapeworms, Coccidiosis and Enteritis.

Apart from ones' vet a suggested address for cheap and accurate samples is:

Ministry of Agriculture  
Veterinary Investigation Centre  
The Elms,  
College Road,  
Sutton Road,  
Sutton Bonington  
Loughborough,  
Leicestershire  
LE12 5RB

Remedial measures for any undue quantity of the worms and parasites found in birds mutes are mentioned below. It should be stressed that a veterinary surgeon should at all times be called to interpret worm counts and attend to an ailing bird. Some diseases are mentioned below but any treatment suggested should only be used as a life saving measure and not as a money saving measure, by not consulting a vet.

Much caution should be used before the tetracycline group of drugs are administered as there is an inherent build up of this drug in the hawk which could prove fatal but apart from this a few birds have been found to have certain side effects, and diarrhoea and vomiting have been caused, and in one case when a bird was injected with tetracycline into a leg which, had it not been noticed in the early stages could have proved extremely damaging. Although the majority of birds do not respond adversely to the tetracycline group, as a general rule, it is thought wiser to try the penicillin or erythromycin type of drugs before the tetracycline groups.

Whenever this is possible it is strongly recommended that the administration of an antibiotic is preceded by a sensitivity test. Procaine penicillin, streptomycin, neomycin and kanamycin should never be given by injection to a hawk, but many other antibiotics are suitable and safe.

The following antibiotics and antibacterials have been used for treating diseases in hawks. The dosage rates and the route of administration are reproduced as being typical:

	Oral	By Injection
Tylosin	Up to 200 mg daily	I.M up to 15 mg/kg daily
Tetracyclines	50-500 mg daily	I.V up to 15 mg/kg daily
Spiramycin	50-250 mg daily	I.M up to 20 mg/kg daily
Lincomycin	Up to 50 mg daily	I.M up to 50 mg/kg daily
Ampicillin	50-250 mg daily	I.M up to 250 mg/kg daily
Cloxacillin	50-250 mg daily	
Neomycin	15 mg/kg daily	
Crystalline penicillin		I.M or I.V up to 100,000 units daily
Sulphonamides	Up to 500 mg daily	

### Parasites

#### 1. Mites

These are usually seen around the eyes and cere, burrowing into the skin, causing bird to scratch unduly. May be observed crawling over feather. Seen in the nares are mite excreta, look under tail coverts.

Sign — Continual preening

Treatment — Johnsons Anti Mite aerosol form, sprayed over bird especially nape, under wings, under tail. Shield birds eyes when using.

#### 2. Feather Mites

Recognised by webbing of feathers being eaten.

Treatment — Johnsons Anti Mite, or 0.15% solution of Trichlorphon (Neguvon-Bayer).

#### 3. Lice

Usually blood sucking. Unless present in large numbers do not cause much trouble. In numbers cause anaemia.

Treatment — Johnsons Anti Mite spray under tail, wing and back of head.

Lice are flat looking, approximately 1 mm in length and when they become very obvious, especially around the neck they are probably responding to a more deep seated ailment. They are a symptom rather than a cause of a condition and do not usually become obvious until a bird is very sick, so a vet ought to be consulted to diagnose the original illness

#### 4. All External Parasites

Respond to Johnsons Anti Mite or Alugan (Hoescht) also pyrethrum or Derris powder. Vital to disinfect all areas. Check for anaemia by looking for white colour on tongue. SA37 and Cytacron (3 drops daily for 7 days) will usually check this problem but if it doesn't, inject the breast with vitamin B12 Neo Cytamen 250 (Glaxo) 3 microgram/kg every month for 3 months normally enough, and feed liver to increase iron content.

### Internal Worms

#### 1. Capillaria

Bird off colour, watery discoloured mutes, sometimes blood stained (intestine worm) throws crop up like wire (Oesophagael worms). Lesions resembling frounce in the mouth. In terminal stages food refused entirely, eyes part open, bird sits on ground. Check with torch inside the mouth for worms at back of throat.

Treatment — Spartakon (do not overdose) sold as pigeon wormer, dose 1 pill per 1lb body weight, give once only. As general precaution 1 dose every 6 months. An alternative treatment is methyridine orally or subcutaneously injected (0.15 ml/kg) or Tetramisole orally (100 mg/kg) repeat after 7-10 days

#### 2. Round Worms

Birds usually alert and lively unless infection very severe. Worms sometimes seen in mutes. Worms are reddish-brown, approximately 2 inches long and may be coiled like thin wire. Bird eats well, fails to gain weight, tends to lose it quickly.

Treatment — Spartakon as for capillaria or piperazine (100 mg/kg) or Thiabendazole (250 mg/kg) or Levamisole (Nemicide) orally 14 mg/kg. Repeat after 10 days.

#### 3. Tape Worms

Symptoms same as round worms, gradual loss in weight. Mute test advisable, tapeworms segments in faeces are whitish and flattened and when fresh crawl about.

Treatment — Niclosamide (Yomesan, Bayer Chemicals) tablet per kg body weight (150 mg/kg) or Bunamide Hydrochloride (Scoloban) one sixth of a tablet/kg (30 mg/kg). For both repeat once only after 10 days.  
Obtainable only from a vet.

#### 4. Gape Worms

Look down windpipe, small red worm. Respiratory disease. Bird willing to eat but difficulty in doing so. Terminal stages breathes with mouth open all the time due to worm in trachea.

Treatment — Zanil is no longer recommended. Spartakon (as above) or Thibenzole in powder form, dampen to pill form, crop empty when given, either 250 mg/kg once a day for 2 days or 100-150 mg/kg body weight for 7-10 days, repeat after 3 weeks if necessary.

#### 5. Coccidiosis

Bird dull of food or will just pick at it. Mutes usually bloodstained.

Treatment — Sulphamezathine in tablet form (dosage 250 mg/kg) or Sulphadimidine (500 mg/kg) either for 3 days, repeat after break of 2 days.

**Caution** It is essential to provide adequate fluid to a bird being treated with sulphonamide.

## 6. *Frounce (Trichomoniasis)*

Difficulty in eating. Sometimes respiratory distress. Unpleasant smell and froth in mouth. Yellowing scab like masses inside mouth and on tongue.

Treatment — a gentian violet solution dripped onto the area will usually sort out the problem but if not Dimetridazole (Emtryl — May and Baker) 100 mg/kg daily for up to 3 days. It can be dangerous to give Emtryl to small birds weighing less than 1 kilo and as a general precaution it is wiser to dissolve Emtryl powder in water until the maximum saturation point has been reached and then administer 3 or 4 drops with a pipette directly down the hawk's throat, allow the solution to settle and paint the white sediment directly onto the yellow scabs which can be seen inside the mouth. Treat daily for 2-3 days after which the scabs should drop off. Similar symptoms are caused by the fungus *Candida* (Candidiasis).

Treatment — Amphotericin B

## Respiratory Diseases

### 1. *Pneumonia*

Bird dull and listless, may eat at first but loss of appetite usually complete in terminal stages. Respiratory distress increasing daily. Fluid often dribbles from mouth.

Treatment — Consult vet for Engermycin ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cc/kg reducing by 50% daily).

### 2. *Aspergillosis*

Symptoms as above. Bird usually eats or attempts to eat right to the end. Treatment is possible if diagnosed early enough. Amphotericin B (Fungizone) can be used (0.75 mg/kg) daily intravenously until recovery seems apparent. The drug is also available as an aerosol which can be sprayed into a container with the bird for an hour daily.

### 3. *Mycoplasmosis or Air Sacculitis*

Respiratory distress. In some cases invariably throws crop up after retaining for some time. Complete loss of appetite and ejection of all food. Nasal discharge, swelling of eyelids.

Treatment — Consult vet, Tylan 50 by injection (15 mg/kg) for 5 days or Rovamycin by injection (20 mg/kg) for 5 days.

### 4. *Croaks*

Changes in voice, difficult breathing exertion, run down condition and lack of appetite. Usually caused by bacteria in upper respiratory tract.

Treatment — Ampicillin (50 mg/kg) 3 doses per day for 5 days given orally or injected, failing that chlortetracycline or oxytetracycline (250 mg/kg) for 5 days.

## Deficiency Diseases

### 1. *Fits*

Periodic complete loss of co-ordination, cannot stand, convulsions wings fluttering, head and neck twisted at odd angle. Mainly caused by deficiency of Thiamine, low blood sugar and low blood calciums.

Treatment — Calcium Bonagluconate (5 ml/kg) followed by vitamin B (0.5 ml/kg) by injection, consult vet. Control fits with Medomin (Geigy) given orally 1 tablet/kg per day. More recent thinking suggests control by Valium or Librium has less chance of side effects. Valium syrup (2 mg/5 ml) given in 2 ml/kg doses every six hours or Librium syrup (3 mg/5ml) given in similar doses.

### 2. *Cramp*

In young birds taken from nest too early. Contraction of muscles of limbs at first, later whole body. Usually in conjunction with rickets so fracture of limbs can occur.

Treatment — Rarely successful must be undertaken as soon as possible.

Calcium and Vitamin D by injection every 48 hours. Collo-cal D contains calcium and vitamin D, 0.5 cc every 3 days. Consult vet.

### 3. *Rickets*

Unable to stand properly, joints swollen, limb bones distorted in later stages. Similar to cramp.

Treatment — Calcium lactate and Vitamin D3 preferable by injection. As alternative use Collo-cal D as directed above but increase natural bone intake.

## Other Diseases

### 1. *Enteritis (Diarrhoea)*

Watery, smelly discoloured mutes. Possible regurgitation of food.

Treat with ampicillin (50 mg/kg) 3 times a day for 5 days but if no response chlortetracycline or oxytetracycline (250 mg/kg) for 5 days plus glucose saline if severe loss of weight. Diarrhoea can be controlled by Kaopectate (5 ml/kg) 3 times a day. Quite often the diarrhoea can be controlled without the use of the above drugs and it is perhaps better to start off with Septrin ( $\frac{1}{2}$  tablet/kg every day) and if after 3 days no improvement revert to the above measures.

### 2. *Bumblefoot*

Bacterial infection of the sole of foot, bird favours one foot, affected one being rested, will be swollen and hot. Open head of infection under sole and expel pus.

Treatment — Lincomycin (50 ml/kg) once a day for 5 days. Can be given orally together with Fucidin ointment rubbed into affected area. Lincomycin given orally (50 ml/kg/per day) given 3 days prior to operating to localise and then after operation Clamoxyl given orally (10 mg/per kg/per day) for 5 days.

Alternative antibiotics are cloxacillin 250 mg/kg for 5 days plus Vitamin A (1 ml/kg) by injection. Chloromycetin and Chorbion locally. During treatment keep all perches and surrounding areas spotlessly clean. Fresh elastoplast on perch every day. Lightly scrub infected area with toothbrush, 50:50 dettol. Bird better kept on grass rather than sand, peat, etc. If possible send swab from wound to vet lab for specificity test to determine most effective antibiotic. It has proved in certain cases that the bumblefoot will retreat if the protein content of the food is decreased. Bumblefoot has been noted where a bird's protein content has been increased (pigeon, red meat, etc). On returning the bird to leaner diet of washed meat, rabbit and even washed rabbit the swelling has retracted within 7 days — it is worth trying before surgery if treated at an early stage.

### 3. *Inflammation of Crop*

Bird listless usually take food but throws up crop. Mutes discoloured.

Treatment — Erythromycin 50 ml 3 times a day for 5 days or failing that oxytetracycline (250 mg/kg) for 5 days plus if possible mix charcoal and kaolin in food, approximately 10-15% total food intake or Forgastrin, mix with food.

### 4. *Pox*

Scab like lesions on feet and head, can be very severe and cause loss of appetite. A virus infection possibly caused by mosquitoes. Treat locally with herpid lotion 4 times per day but if after 7 days there is no improvement give oxytetracycline (250 mg/kg) for 5 days plus vitamin A injections weekly (1.0 ml).

## Limb Fractures

### 1. *Wings*

Can be immobilised by strapping wings in figure eight to keep them in higher than normal position. Unless humerus is fractured avoid strapping round body. A body stocking (nylon stockings with holes for legs) is a useful immobiliser (see vet).

### 2. *Leg*

Make splint from polythene tubing, split along one side and fix with elastoplast. See vet.

## General Notes

### 1. *Dehydration*

Most birds who have a major disease usually combine their ailment with vastly reduced food intake. This results in dehydration and should be countered by oral administration of 10% glucose saline which most vets supply with capillary tubes, size suitable for putting down hawk's throat.

**Caution** - The injection of hypertonic solutions, such as 10% glucose saline into a dehydrated hawk could prove fatal. Only physiologically suitable solutions should be injected and professional advice on these should be sought.

### 2. *Spartakon*

2 pills/kg body weight. It is usually advisable to give on an empty crop and not feed for 12 hours.

### 3. *Glucose Saline*

Daily dosage (at 90 degrees F) to equal approximately 4% body weight or 30 ml/kg should counter dehydration. Solution can be obtained from vet or temporarily made (10% glucose 90% boiled water) orally administered.

### 4. *Forced Feeding*

Although this is often the beginning of the end every falconer makes every effort and fresh meat dipped into 5% glucose or egg yolk is usual, sloppy baby foods can be used. If constant regurgitation occurs moistened with egg yolk mixed with charcoal and kaolin helps bird keep crop down. Glucose saline intake also assists or orally administered essence of beef, but all liquids must be given slowly. When giving glucose saline or essence of beef orally a small plastic flexible capillary tube preferably with an on-off valve should be used and this should be inserted down the throat (oesophagus) and in no circumstances down the windpipe (larynx). The windpipe is the aperture immediately behind the tongue and the throat is at the back of the head nearest the neck. For obvious reasons, a teaspoon or beaker should not be used to administer liquids but if water inadvertently goes down the windpipe the hawk should be inverted as per drowning man.

### 5. *Vitamin Supplement - General Feeding Tips*

- i) SA37 which contains most vitamins and trace elements is a useful additive once a week to a hawk's diet. This should be mixed with the food and approximately 1 teaspoonful per kg body weight is sufficient per week.
- ii) Calcium in the form of bone meal is a good additive once a week for the hawk's diet, same dosage as SA37, or best of all to ensure that there are adequate bones in diet.
- iii) Make every attempt to remove lead shot prior to feeding, or better still do not feed any meat suspected of having been shot.
- iv) Neck, head and crop of any birds fed the hawk should be removed to avoid passing on disease.
- v) Avoid feeding on blocks, perches, etc., that have had creosote on them as this is extremely toxic. Sand is also bad as it cannot easily be cleaned.
- vi) Vary the food as much as possible particularly during the moult. rabbit is a poor quality food if fed continuously and chicks are not a complete food.
- vii) Recent research has proved that certain problems inherent with feeding pigeons can be eliminated by deep freezing the pigeon for 48 hours.

### 6. *Wet Hawks*

If hawks are subjected to involuntary wetting in low conditions a hair dryer is often useful, then feed up well.

### 7. *Shock*

Hawks subject to shock due to accident, crabbing, cuts, feed up well — a lost day's hunting is better than lost hawks.

### 8. *Change of Owner*

If the hawk has a change of owner or environment or is taken as a passage or haggard, the sudden change may upset the bird and lower his feeding and it is in a low state that several latent worms or diseases can take over. If these changed conditions are subjected to a hawk it is of the utmost importance not to fly the bird for 3-4 weeks or longer if possible but feed well until hawk acclimatizes to the change.

### 9. *Sick Hawks*

Sick hawks should be isolated and kept warm (NOT HOT). Separate glove and high standard of hygiene essential. Clean paper put daily under perches can assist in examination of crops and mutes.

### 10. *Eyasses*

To avoid psychological defects, ie. imprinting, it is recommended that eyasses be hand-penned in a group and not in isolation.

### 11. *Passage/Haggards*

Always mute test on arrival. Keep well fed for at least three weeks before reducing weight, prior to training.

12. Fly your bird as high as possible, it will give a stronger and longer hunt and resist disease. A hawk lost flying quarry is better than a dead hawk.

## SOMETHING 'FROM THE FALCONERS' BAG

I can still very well recall back in Hungary, receiving a call from my publisher some days after I had taken in the material for one of my books. He said that he would like to see me, so a couple of days later I left my secretary to take care of my office in the Bird Section of Budapest Zoo and went along to see him.

There he was sitting behind his desk, with all the material for my book in front of him. I sat in the chair he offered me, feeling a little nervous because I thought that he was about to make some excuse for rejecting my manuscript, but after lighting a cigarette he told me that he liked the book. There was just one thing, he would like to have more of the colourful falconry stories. He felt that these would appeal more to the general public than would the drier technical details etc., thus making the book a better seller.

I told the publisher I had written all the stories that I could remember from the years that I had trained and flown hawks, falcons and eagles, and that at the moment I did not think I could write anymore. He smiled at me from behind his second cigarette and said 'I do not believe you. After all, you have spent almost all of your life with birds of prey, training them and observing the wild ones. Just open your falconer's bag, look into it, put your hand deep inside and you will see that you will find some interesting stories' He was right, so once again I have opened my old and ragged falconer's bag and here is the story that I found.

One fine morning when I was in charge of the bird section of the Budapest Zoo, I came into the main office building to find a man standing there by a huge covered wicker basket. He told me he had a bird of prey, and asked whether I was interested in having it. I was in no particular hurry to see it, as many buzzards were brought in by people during the winter months, but a few minutes later, as I cautiously drew back the basket covering, I was surprised to see, not the usual common or rough-legged buzzard, but a huge eagle staring at me. The head was coffee coloured. I covered the basket, and told the bird section to make ready for the imperial eagle (*aquila heliaca*) in young plumage.

On the way to the bird compounds I asked the man where he had found the eagle, or, perhaps, had he taken the bird from the nest and reared it, now not wanting it any longer. He replied that eagles did not rest in the area from which he came, which was in the great Hungarian Plains. He said that until now he did not believe that anyone could catch an eagle with their bare hands, and that eagles usually migrated and were not around during the winter. I did not quite believe the man, in that he had just 'picked up' this bird.

The man assured me that the capture of the eagle had been quite easy. He had noticed the bird sleeping for many nights on a mound of maize straw in a stubble field, and he decided to try to capture it. He had seen the eagle hunting hares during the day-time which seemed to me to be an unlikely thing for a small imperial eagle to do, as they usually take smaller quarry. The man went with two friends to the heap of maize straw before the eagle came to rest that night. Two of them hid in a dried out ditch about two yards away from the heap. The third man covered them with a horse blanket, throwing earth and dried grass over it, and went home.

It was exceedingly cold, but the two men waited until it was nearly dark. Then they heard the great wings of the eagle swishing through the air as it circled and landed on the mound. They had to wait a little longer as it was not yet quite dark, then they peeped cautiously out of their hiding place. They saw, with one quick flash from their torch that the bird was there. One more quick flash right in the birds' eyes from only three feet away, then they threw the blanket over the eagle. It fought back fiercely, but the two men managed to hold it down.

Getting the large bird from under the blanket turned out to be an even harder job. During this manoeuvre they did not have quite as much luck. The eagles talons caught one of the men in the hand, and he had to run off immediately to find a doctor. In the end they managed to get the huge bird into the basket, and a little while later they were on their way by train to the zoo.

As the eagle was let out of the basket, in one of the great bird cages, I noticed the tail feathers of this bird and I at once knew why this 'imperial eagle' had been hunting the large hares of the plain. It was, in fact, a young golden eagle (*aquila chrysaetus*).

During all my years of training birds of prey I had trained many eagles, but so far only nestlings. Never a wild-caught eagle, and never a rare coloured bird such as this.

The man took his empty basket and while he was being paid a reward for the eagle, mentioned that a Russian soldier whom he had met on the train had wanted to buy the eagle. He was a Kirgis soldier who evidently hoped to have the bird for hunting, as they are used a lot in that part of Russia.

We put leather straps, or jess es, on the eagles feet, and during this operation the bird fought so much that we named him 'Harcos' which is Hungarian for 'fighter'.

The first part of training is to carry the bird on the fist for the greater part of the day. Every time Harcos bated, that is, flapped off the fist and hung downwards, he had to be put back on the fist. Every time he was standing on the thick leather glove, he flew off again and hung flapping with all his eleven pounds head downwards.

I had, as head of the bird section, a lot of work to do, so I let two young but strong falconers carry Harcos about that day. Luckily it was winter time, and fairly cold. Had it been warm the eagle might have had a heart attack with his continual exertions.

After many weeks of carrying, Harcos had to fly to the fist when called from a distance. He learned this very quickly, and seven weeks after his capture he was flying free - no strings attached to his jessies. We had permission to hunt during the winter on some ground nearby, but this eagle was not sufficiently trained yet.

The winter passed and the spring. During the moult, in summer, Harcos was carried continuously. In order to accustom him to everything he was carried in the main street of the town. He also sat on the back of the front seat of my car, looking out of the windows interestedly as we drove along.

One day in late summer we took Harcos out into the fields. We had permission to try hawking hares on an estate. Two young falconers circled around about 150 yards away in an open area, in all about 400 yards long by 100 yards wide. I stood at one end with Harcos while the beaters came towards us, making a noise to spring the quarry. Nothing seemed to move except a heron.

Not until the beaters were only a few yards away did one of them shout, 'Mark! Hare on the right!' The hare circled however, and disappeared into some scrub. This happened a second time.

We were beginning to think all the quarry must have gone, then Harcos looked sharply at something far away. Through the field glasses I could see a reddish-brown animal lying close to the ground. I was very excited when I recognised it to be a young fox, but quite well grown. Harcos was still watching but seemed uncertain whether to attack. I would have given my arm a swing, throwing off the eagle, but my muscles had gone numb with the heavy weight of the bird, and I could not move my arm at all.

The beaters walked towards the fox, which waited until they were 30 or 40 yards away before it sprang up and made for cover about 90 yards away. Harcos remained still, wondering what to do. The fox was now 40 yards away and the eagle just stared at it with his neck stretched out.

Suddenly my arm came to life and I threw the eagle with all my might towards the disappearing fox. Harcos also decided he must do something, and flew with mighty wing-flaps after the quarry.

The first attack failed. The fox turned very suddenly at the last minute and the eagles talons buried themselves in the earth. A second later the eagle was in pursuit again and just before the fox reached cover, Harcos got up to him and bound to with a mighty grip, one foot on the head and the other on the shoulders of the quarry.

'He's got him' shouted the young falconers, running towards Harcos. We stood there admiring the eagle who sat proudly on his quarry. Harcos had now flown for us, and made his first kill as a trained bird.

**by Lorant de Bastyai**

*Harcos with his fox*



# QUIZ by K.A. Perkin

Many members of the Welsh Hawking Club and others interested in falconry have quite extensive libraries on the subject of this sport. Can you recognise the following statements taken from the books by various authorities down through the ages? In the main, they concern Sparrowhawks.

- A. 'No one therefore should be tempted to try a musket of any description, until he has achieved some noteworthy successes with the female, and feels anxious and able to round off his education by tackling the tricky little male.'
- B. 'In Hungary we never bothered with the musket.'
- C. 'The sparrowhawk is the last bird a beginner should attempt to man and train.'
- D. 'I would advise all beginners in falconry to begin their practice on this hawk (sparrowhawk) for thereby they may learn to manage others.'
- E. 'As far as my experience goes, the musket has a better temper and is more easily reclaimed than his bigger sister.'
- F. 'The sparrowhawk is extremely delicate and the most difficult of all hawks and falcons to train. Especially is the female temperamental.'
- G. 'The female only of this species is worth training. The male or musket is very small and nervous.'
- H. 'Now the male or musket is seldom trained though I really do not see why he should not be flown at blackbirds, he would be quicker than the female and less likely to carry.'
- I. 'Sparrows and similar birds may be taken by the male or musket but, upon the whole, he is not worth training.'
- J. 'With such a list of capabilities, they should be the most sought-after birds of the chase. Yet they are not, for so often the degree of patience required to train and hunt with these birds touches the limits of human forbearance.'
- K. 'There is, unfortunately very little information on the handling of sparrowhawks, but the female has had a place in ..... hawking for many centuries. In the past they were netted by falconers, and today professional hunters catch them incidental to the capture of small song birds for the home pet trade.'

**Answers on Page 40**

# WHAT A MENACE

In the right hands, one of the most courageous little hawks one could ever own and fly successfully at quarry, in my mind, is the sparrow hawk. Although small in size, they have the heart of an eagle.

'Menace' my 1982 aviary bred female has given me many hours of fun, flights and speed I could ever hope to see. She would tackle anything from mice to rabbits and sparrows to ducks, although never holding these larger quarry. When I first took her up hard penned from the aviary, she was 10½ ozs top weight. I trained her at 9 ozs, but needed to drop her down another ½ oz to make her obedient to the fist, and after a few weeks I was able to put her weight up again once she was going she went from strength to strength.

I was walking through some weeds close to where I live, after water hens which she loved flying and could catch quite easy, but were also cunning and gave her one hell of a flight. I had covered most of the area and had two moorhen in the bag. I was making my way back on the far side of the reeds when up got a mallard. Menace was off in a shot, hit it and brought it down. I think it was shock more than anything, but there she was, this little hawk, showing nothing but contempt for this huge quarry. I ran in to assist her, waist deep in mud and water, hoping she was alright, as I thought the duck would drown her. As I got to her she was on top of the reeds and the duck was gone! She was alright though looking like a drowned rat. I picked her up and called it a day.

A few weeks later after taking more moorhens and various other quarry, I went out with Gordon, a friend of mine who also flies a spar. We go out most days together and hunt the hedgerows one on each side, and took it in turns to fly. It needs two especially when the hedges are high and thick. After a few flights each, we were walking across a field to some more hedgerows, when about twenty yards away, up got a covey of partridge. We had put them up on several occasions but never managing to catch any. In fact I had never caught a partridge. In an instant this little hawk was away. Her weight on this particular day was 9½ ozs. The speed of these hawks is fantastic, flying low to the ground, five hundred yards or more down the field. I could see the partridge rising to go over a row of houses. Incidentally this hawk would fly two or three fields after this quarry until they put down.

As I watched her tear off after them I thought no chance, when in the next second she suddenly shot straight up about forty feet and hit one with a tremendous thud which I could hear very clearly at the top of the field, and pulled it down. I ran as fast as I could and claimed my prize. My very first partridge. From that day on, her flights at this quarry improved tremendously, always taking them from below.

At the end of the season her flying weight was 10½ ozs, just ½ oz off her top weight. In her second season she was even more deadly. But not all spars take the same quarry. A friend of mine had one and was

taking moorhens until she had a ducking in ice cold water . After that she would not take anymore. Even after the moult she remembered and still would not take any, and yet it did not seem to bother mine which went through the same experience. So individual are these little birds.

She gave me more pleasure by laying two eggs in the aviary, and a full clutch of five in her second year. A musket was with her, but the eggs proved to be infertile. She is again due to lay eggs this season. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to fly another spar that lives up to her mother's name.

So for those of you out there who are itching to get your hands on a gos, harris or redtail, if you haven't already flown a spar with success, heed the words of that legendary falconer

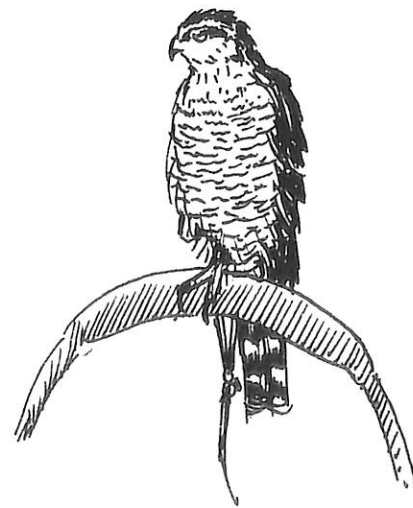
T.J. Mavrogordato, (the flights available for sparrow hawks are more varied and more easily obtained. There is no type of country which they cannot be flown with success, and the individual flights are faster, last longer and are fuller of thrills and surprises, and demand more skill and intelligence from both hawk and falconer than any kind of flight of which the goshawk is capable).

It is not my desire or intention to tell people what kind of bird to have, in this article. It's just to tell you of some of my experiences and the fun you can have with one of Britains true hawks.

by C. Baxter



*Menace with a moorhen*



## SO YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS ?

Anyone who knows Gibraltar knows that it's about one and a half miles wide by about three miles long and about 1,800 feet high. It consists mainly of rock and scrub with the majority of the population living on the western side. Gibraltar is connected to Spain by a narrow strip of land across which is the frontier. Gibraltar is surrounded on three sides by water and its southern tip is only twelve miles from the North African coast. Bird spotters will already be familiar with the rock as it is one of the worlds best locations for watching the thousands of different species of birds that gather there to cross the narrow strip of water that separates Europe from Africa.

Through my relatives out there I learned of a couple of young falconers who wanted to meet me the next time I was out there. I managed to get away for a week in February of this year and so I was able to visit the rock and meet them. For reasons that we are all too familiar with I won't use their real names and so I will call them John and Tim.

When John invited me to go out hunting with a Goshawk, of course I jumped at the chance, but at the same time I wondered where we were going to hunt. I know the rock quite well and the only place that had any trees or grass was on

the western side, but that was the populated side and strictly controlled by the authorities so no hunting there.

Finally it stopped raining and the wind dropped so I was able to meet John at his house. When I got there he told me that we would have to wait for the other young falconer, Tim, to finish work, but meanwhile would I like to see some wild peregrines nearby. When he said nearby, he wasn't joking. We came out of his house and walked a hundred yards down the road to sit on a wall. On the other side of the road were sheer cliffs about 1,000 feet. John looked up at the cliff for a few seconds and said 'Yes, there they are, a mature breeding pair'. I used my binoculars to scan the cliffs in the direction that John had pointed and there they were, about eight hundred feet above us. The female was sitting in a small bush that grew out of a crack in the cliff face. The male was holding a steady position head into wind and making the occasional stoop at small passing birds. From time to time there came the unmistakable call of the peregrine falcon. I couldn't believe it, all this was happening just above our heads while we sat beside a main road with tourists walking past wondering what on earth we were staring at so intently.

John told me that there were three nesting pairs all within the length of the rock but each pair had its own defined hunting area stretching out to sea. To John this was an every day event as he could see them from the flat roof of his own house. For me it was one of the most exciting moments of my life as it was the closest that I had ever been to wild peregrines. When my neck couldn't take the strain of looking straight up the sheer cliffs any more, John suggested that we go back for tea where he had something else of interest to show me.

While we were having tea, John put on some videos. These were videos of films made by the famous Spanish falconer Felix Rodriguez De La Fuente who died in a helicopter crash some years ago. They were fantastic and included shots of Spanish Imperial eagles stooping at mountain goats and carrying them away, as well as eagles being used to catch foxes. There were also some great shots of wild goshawks both on the nest and hunting with some of the best slips at rabbit, hare and duck that I had ever seen.

I was very reluctant to leave when John said that it was time to go and meet Tim so that we could go out with the gos. Tim lived a few hundred yards away and proved to be every bit as keen a falconer as John. The gos was a large female eyass. I was told that she was a full imprint but all the time that I was with them she never made a single scream, she was very well behaved.

When I asked them where they were going to hunt they looked at each other and smiled then beckoned for me to follow. We left Tim's house, crossed the road and looked up. I thought that they were joking and waited for the laugh, it never came. Ahead of us reaching up to the skyline was a vertical cliff about 1,000 feet high. This stretched away to the left and right for about half a mile in each direction. From the base of the cliff, about three to five hundred feet above and sloping down towards us was a rough rock strewn slope dotted here and there with huge boulders that looked as though they could come tumbling down at the slightest touch. All this was at about forty five degrees with the odd ledge jutting out here and there.

Just to climb up to the base of the cliff using both my hands and feet without falling or creating a landslide, for me would have been a terrific achievement in itself, but to go hunting over it with a gos perched on your left fist, that could bate at any moment seemed to me, absolute suicide.

It must have been the sound of my jaw hitting the floor that woke me up in time to see my two young Gibraltarian falconer friends setting off at a pace that would do credit to an alpine goat. I was determined not to let the side down so off I went trying hard not to look down and stepping where they stepped. How they managed to scan the ground ahead of them for game and at the same time pick a safe path among the rocks I'll never know.

Lady luck was not with us and we saw no game for the gos to be slipped at that afternoon, unless you count a Boeing 707 and a couple of VC 10's which flew past below us. Yes, I did say below us, because at times we were above the Gibraltar runway. If anyone had said to me that I would be hunting with a gos above a VC 10, I wouldn't have believed them.

At one time John asked me to wait on a ledge while he and Tim scouted ahead to look over the edge of a steep ravine to see if there were any rabbits below. While I was perched there trying to act like a nonchalant Chris Bonnington, with my white knuckles clinging to any little crack that I could find, I heard the unmistakable cry of a peregrine. I looked above me and there was a pair of peregrines stooping and flying about completely oblivious to our antics beneath them. I didn't know where to look, at the gos who was starting to bob her head showing signs of having seen something at last, or, at the pair of falcons playing above my head. The quarry turned out to be a couple of partridges above us, but Tim decided not to slip the gos as it would have been impossible to retrieve her from that position. What a day, and it hadn't finished yet.

After clambering over the rocks for a couple of hours with no slips, and the gos bating at the ever present gulls we decided to call it a day. The sun was starting to set and I didn't like the idea of climbing down the cliffs in the dark. When we eventually got

back down to ground level I did my impression of the pope and knelt down to kiss the ground. I found it difficult to walk at first as I had to tie my knees together to stop them from knocking. Seriously though, John and Tim told me that they have no choice if they want to hunt with their birds as it is the only ground available with any game. Not only that but they often come down then go back up again with another bird, can you imagine that? What I haven't mentioned is the fact that both John and Tim breed, train and fly their birds all on the flat roof of their house, and with great success.

I vowed that the next time someone complained to me about lack of game, or hunting conditions I would remember these two lads in Gibraltar and say, 'So you think that you have got problems?'

Geoff Pearson



## BOOK REVIEW

### The Biography of Renz Waller review by L. de Bastyai

I reported the death of Renz Waller in the 1979 issue of 'The Austringer'.

Perhaps I do not need to tell you who Renz Waller was as most falconers in Europe and the USA knew of him.

A contemporary of Renz Waller, and still going strong at 90 years of age, is Count Frederick Menssdorff Poully of Austria. The two founding fathers of modern falconry in Europe.

Besides being a great falconer, Renz Waller was also an accomplished artist. During the war he lived in a log cabin 'somewhere in Germany' and looked after his falcons, and painted the natural history around him.

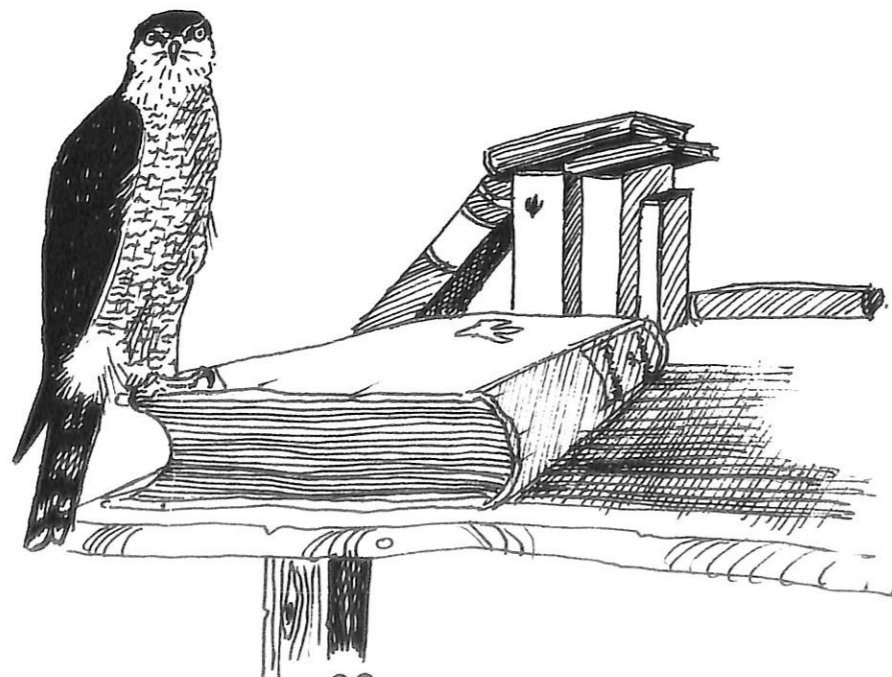
On one occasion, he heard that a friend, a catholic priest, had been arrested by the Gestapo for speaking out against Hitler's regime, and was sentenced to death by hanging. With false papers he saved the priest from prison and gave him a secure sanctuary until the allied forces arrived. Besides being a falconer and painter, he proved to be a life-saver as well.

The biography of the famous falconer was published in Germany by Zollhaus Verlag in Dusseldorf; author is Dr. phil. Hugo Richter. The book is about 172 pages long and contains the whole life history of this man and his family. It is a very good book for those who are interested in the life story of someone who has done so much for falconry. There are some minor mistakes in the book however. For example, it mentions that I was a professional falconer in the service of the Old Hawking Club many years ago. I think these small mistakes can be very much forgiven as the author of this book has put a great deal of work into it.

There are very interesting chapters on the paintings Renz Waller produced of humans, animals and flowers, all in full colour. I would recommend this book be in every falconer's bookshelf.

At the moment it is in the German language, but I have heard of an American publisher planning to print it in English. If anybody is interested in the life story of Renz Waller, please write direct to the author:

Dr. phil. Hugo Richter, Hochweg 2.D-8444, Irlbach, West Germany.



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## ANSWERS:

- A. A Hawk for the Bush (page 9) by Jack Mavrogordato.
- B. All My Life With Hunting Birds (page 118) by Laurant de Bastyai.
- C. Falconry and Hawking (page 109) by Philip Glasier.
- D. Hawking and Falconry (page 41) by R. Blome.
- E. The Art and Practice of Hawking (page 160) by E.B. Michell.
- F. Falcons and Falconry (page 101) by Frank Illingworth.
- G. A Manual of Falconry (page 119) by M.H. Woodford.
- H. Falconry (page 246) by Freeman and Salvin.
- I. The Art of Falconry (page 113) by Hon G. Lascelles.
- J. Hawks, Falcons and Falconry (page 256) by F. Beebee.
- K. The Hawking of Japan (page 61) by E.W. Jameson Jr.

