

THE Austringer



THE JOURNAL OF THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB

N° 32 2000

Am Eiddo 05 ©



Letter from the
Editor

DAVID JONES



Well I have survived another hawking season without losing a hawk, drowning or breaking a bone. My only tragedy was the removal of my dog's front leg, a bang on the leg caused cancer, followed by the leg dying hence the removal to save her life. The good news is she has made a complete recovery and is back working and jumping three bar gates on three legs.

I have also bought a black GSP bitch pup that shows great hunting ability, 'but don't they all'. The club's hawking season was very busy with several good field meets. Our International meet at Ruthin Castle was deemed a huge success with very few moans. You see from the quality of this bumper millennium edition, that we have further improved your journal. I would like to thank all of you that have contributed to this journal with advertisements and articles. A big thanks to my good friends

and Steve Gouldthorpe from North Wales who has assisted me with this edition.

What Falconers Say

Talking to many members of our club and other falconers, it seems to me that we are all screaming out for an apprenticeship scheme. This Disneyfied Government could take our hawks away and like handguns and Pit Bulls it could happen overnight. We must be aware of the future. We have the knowledge to license ourselves before Eagle Owls, Redtails and Harris hawks are £50 each and flown by kids in Town High Streets.

European Hawking

I've had my dogs vaccinated against rabies for the passport to Europe. I hope to go hunting with my dogs and hawks at European meets this coming season. Another advantage of the passport is having the opportunity to mate your bitch with a European field champion.

Our Club and Web Page

Yes, I have to mention the Committee. We have made well-balanced decisions throughout the year and are still modernising the club. We have a new web page address www.welshhawkingclub.com and a new look membership application form. The club's finances are strong and membership is growing at a steady rate. There are many things that we discuss at Committee meetings that you, our members, have direct knowledge of. Elected representatives of all our 5 regions are at these meetings. If not they have the minutes of the meeting within days. They in turn report back to you of any decisions made at these meetings. We are open-minded and do not forget, that you the members, elected us.

News Letter

This is my chance to thank Ian Blantern for our informative newsletters that's second to none. So keep sending information to Ian, on field meets, short stories, Dogs, Hawks, Ferrets, sales, etc. and any other relevant information.

I hope many of you will travel to see how other falconers fly their hawks and work their dogs this coming season. If you want any information on international meets keep reading our newsletters or go to our Web Page.

Hawking in Summertime

Yes you can do it! For those of you that are really keen there is always the opportunity of flying down to South Africa (approx. £500 return) as its winter time there. You can join in with our affiliated friends 'The Cape Falconry Club' at their meet on 12-16 July Also the SAFA meet on 5-11 June in Bloemfontein, where you are most welcome.

The Welsh Hawking Club 2000 Field Meet
will take place on the 15TH to 17TH November at the
Hanmer Arms Hotel on the Welsh / Shropshire borders.



Embercombe pointers. Page 16



Welsh Hawking Club Field Meet 1999. Page 28



Terry Pickford recalls Harry Macpherson. Page 18

EDITOR David Jones
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR Steve Gouldthorpe
 DESIGN AND LAYOUT Jon Ward-Allen and Steve Gouldthorpe
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The views expressed on the pages of this magazine are not necessarily those of the editor or the W.H.C. committee.

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Andrew Ellis. Page 41



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Front cover illustration by Andrew Ellis. Back cover photo by Mike Coupe. Thanks to Paul Walters, Mike Coupe and Jon Ward-Allen for other photo's and Paul Cook for Illustrations.

Please send all articles and photos for possible inclusion in the next Austringer Magazine to:
 David Jones, Southern-Lights, Windmill Hill, Hutton,
 Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS24 9UP
 Tel 01934 811300 Fax 01934 811400
 E-mail hawking@southern-lights.net

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I WASN'T going to fly a game hawk (not enough time or quarry), but with temptation being what it is, I couldn't resist the eyes peregrine tiercel in Martin Hargreave's breeding aviary. I had been flying a lanneret for the previous two seasons and had become hooked on longwings after many years flying Goshawks. I even had some success at a W.H.C. field meet when, much to everyone's surprise, the little fellow knocked down a partridge in excellent style, the seed, as they say, had been set. I recall when I said I'd have the tiercel how I tried to justify my decision, in so much as, the flying of longwings would prove to be more relaxing than the frantic shortwings - little did I know!

At field meets the longwingers seemed so in control. Whilst their falcons weathered on the lawn they would sit around drinking coffee and chatting before a leisurely drive to the days venue. Always immaculately dressed they would walk around and then return clean and unstressed for the evening meal. In contrast the shortwingers seemed to feel they would run out of daylight if they had not started flying by 9 am. They often came back late looking like they had been dragged through the hedge backwards, blood, mud and sweat were their companions and bulging hawk bags their reward.

Anyway the decision made and 'Tao' the tiercel peregrine was 6 weeks old in July 1990 when I brought him home. He was almost hard penned but I decided to leave him free for another week to settle into his new surroundings. We did a fair amount of manning and handling but he never became very tame and even 10 years on, is a one man bird, only allowing me to pick him up on the fist. Unlike most peregrines when away from home he will not settle on the weathering lawn and just bates and bates. Even 6 seasons in Scotland has made little difference, although I think last year he was a little more settled (age does that to us all!). Training started in the usual way and we soon had him free, following us over the fields and starting to gain a little height.

I had joined a small partridge syndicate so had some game to fly at the weekends and as the autumn progressed started to take some quarry. Although quantity is nothing to go by, I kept a game book and listed all the kills and flying weights, as I had done with my Goshawks. The kills with the peregrine were far fewer but the quality of the flights was far superior.

During the first 2 or 3 seasons, I found it difficult to get consistent flying, although sometimes he would wait on very well he was very prone to chase pigeons etc. We did however have a try at rook hawking in his 3rd season. 'Tao'

showed a natural inclination to chase rooks so I reduced his weight a little to give him the keenness to tackle this quarry. I would unhood him so he could see the rooks in the distance, he would leave the fist at right angles to me flying fast and gaining height, turn and appear about 100ft over the rooks, stoop, knock a rook to the ground and fight with it on the field. Then every rook in the area would attack him on the ground. He was very good at catching rooks like that and I caught 2 rooks and 2 crows in quick succession, however, I felt that he would soon be killed or injured, so fed him up and went back to the waiting on I never did get the ringing flights at rooks that I have read about in falconry books but even to this day, he catches the occasional rook with the low level attack method, when he's a little too hungry.

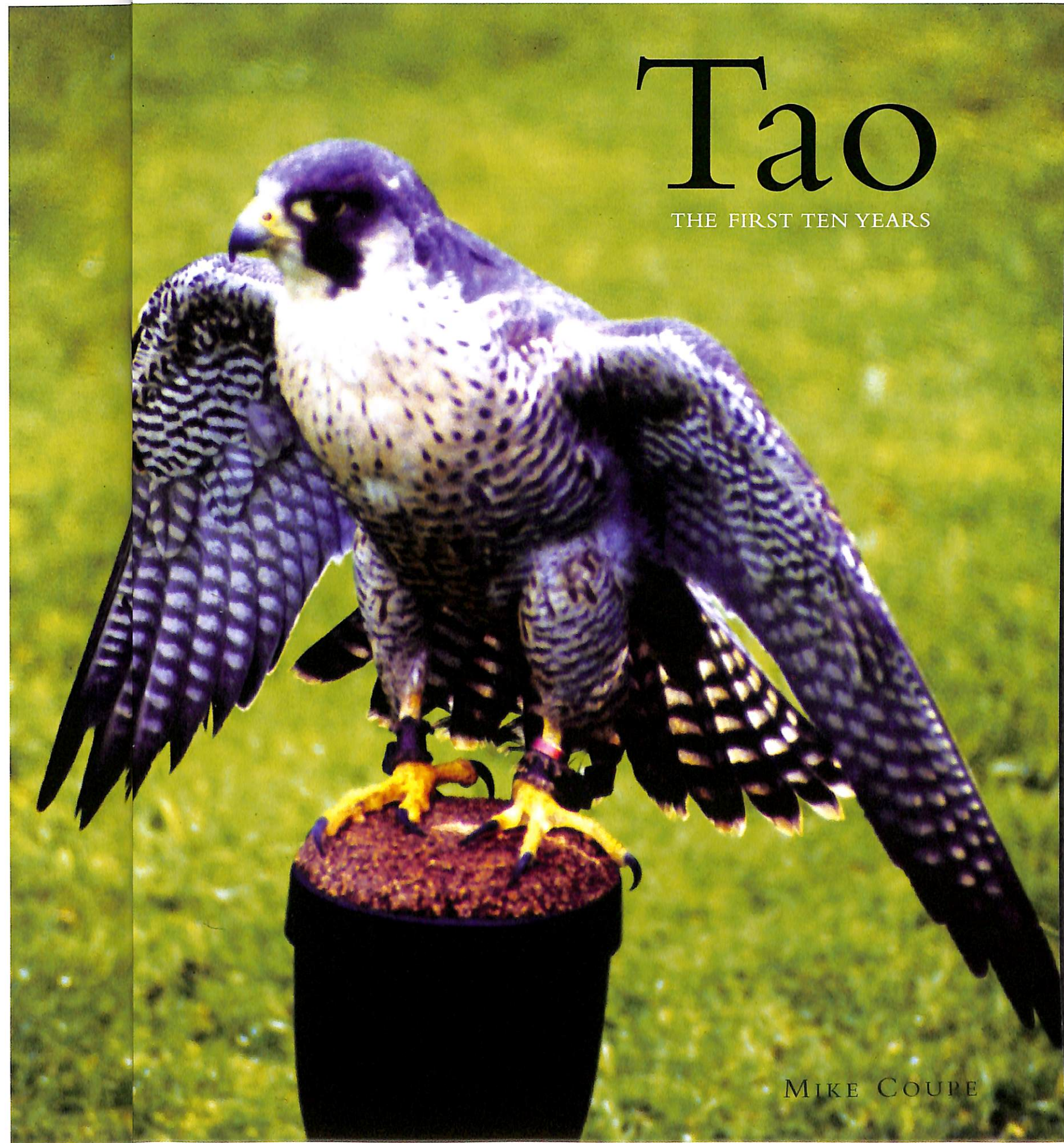
As the seasons progressed the waiting on style became more consistent and 'Tao' went higher in expectation of a flushed partridge although he would still be drawn away by a passing pigeon. One of the problems aiming for waiting on flights is that the falcon has to be flown at a very high weight, he may perform magnificently at home but when away and out of routine at a field meet can prove an embarrassment. However, other longwingers realise the difficulties.

I took 'Tao' grouse hawking in Scotland during his 4th season and he proved very able to take grouse when flown over a pointer. It is such an advantage flying in wide open spaces without trees, pylons and pigeons. One lesson more obvious in Scotland than my normal hunting grounds was the importance of flying in the correct wind conditions. Flying in a downdraught is absolutely useless but fly where there is lift and you are in for an exhilarating flight.

Over the years 'Tao' has taken partridge spotted on stubble, pointed in hedges and thick cover, flushed from game strips and hedges. I have found that the best flights have been over a pointer, especially a well trained dog like Harry Robinson's bitch 'Penny'. There is nothing like knowing exactly where the quarry is located, the falcon can then be brought overhead and a little upwind and the quarry flushed at exactly the right moment. Flying at partridge spotted on stubble can produce some very good results but it takes a great deal of care to get a good mark on the quarry as they become almost invisible when the falcon is in the air. This method works well with greys but red legs tend to run and are away as soon as you open the car door. I have also had some good flights at duck, especially teal, but these tend to be speculative (put the bird up and hope). Sometimes it works if you surprise some

Tao

THE FIRST TEN YEARS



MIKE COUPE

teal on a small pond but beware you can soon ruin a good game hawk if you have him waiting on and nothing is flushed.

We often speculate as to how high our falcons wait on - thinking back I don't think 'Tao' waited on very high in the first couple of seasons, maybe about 200ft. However, as he became more successful his pitch increased. He would miss a partridge from a low pitch and catch one from a high one and learn the advantage of height. Nowadays we have access to a range finder and can obtain an accurate measurement of height and this has revised many of our estimates. 'Tao' has been recorded waiting on at 425 feet, believe me that looks high and this season I have an unbiased estimate of 650 feet but unfortunately without the back up of the range finder to

confirm that on the day.

In 10 years 'Tao' has spent only two nights out, one very memorable Christmas when he ruined several families Christmas festivities. Finally being captured by Martin Hargreave late Christmas day afternoon. I have since been banned from flying Christmas Eve just in case the same thing happens again.

Would I go back to Goshawks now? I don't think so. I'm in love with the longwings. They can be very frustrating at times but you see so much more flying. Nothing can compare with the thrill of seeing my tiercel close up in a vertical stoop from a speck in the sky. ☒



Game record - Tao

Seasons	Flying Weights	Quarry	Totals	
1990 - 1991	595 - 609grms	5 partridges, 2 wood pigeon, 1 feral pigeon, 2 moorhen, 1 snipe	11	(11)
1991 - 1992	595 - 652grms	7 partridges, 1 pheasant, 1 crow, 1 moorhen, 1 wood pigeon, 1 rook	12	(23)
1992 - 1993	595 - 623grms	11 partridges, 1 wood pigeon, 1 feral pigeon, 2 rooks, 2 crows, 1 teal	18	(41)
1993 - 1994	602 - 630grms	2 grouse, 11 partridges, 1 red leg partridge, 1 wood pigeon, 1 crow, 2 moorhens	18	(59)
1994 - 1995	615 - 640grms	2 grouse, 17 partridges, 1 red leg partridge, 1 moorhen, 1 rook, 1 mallard	23	(82)
1995 - 1996	625 - 645grms	3 grouse, 12 partridges, 1 pheasant, 1 feral pigeon, 2 moorhen, 2 teal	21	(103)
1996 - 1997	650 - 670grms	17 partridges, 2 moorhen, 1 various, 1 teal	21	(124)
1997 - 1998	630 - 640grms	23 partridges, 1 teal, 1 grouse, 1 crow, 1 various, 1 mallard	28	(152)
1998 - 1999	635 - 660grms	29 partridges, 1 red leg partridge, 3 wood pigeon, 1 teal, 2 moorhen, 3 various.	39	(191)
1999 - 2000	630 - 675grms	28 partridges, 1 red leg partridge, 1 moorhen, 1 teal, 1 rook, 1 grouse.	33	(224)

AI

WITH GOSHAWKS

MICK KANE

I received a phone call requesting an article on my own personal experiences with imprint Gos's. Now we all know how good, if the job is done right, a social imprint Goshawk can be, so this article is about taking it one step further, breeding Goshawks with the use of Artificial insemination.

Before I start I would just like to state that I'm no expert on imprints and definitely no expert on the use of AI, this is just my own personal views and experiences.

Rosie the female I used in this project was a Finnish imprint hatched in 96.

At that time I was in the market for this type of hawk. To buy a Finnish bird then was very difficult, and to get an imprint was almost impossible. I then received a phone call from a very large friend of mine (sorry Andy) saying that, due to a friend's work commitments, a Finnish female imprint he knew of was for sale. It was November 1996 that I acquired the bird, she was a beautiful imprint, and her keeper had done his job well. I put her on the scales to calculate her fat weight, 3lb 14oz some bird, without hesitation she was mine.

Rosie was flown till the end of the 96 season and her bag count was modest mainly due to the fact she was a late starter and still a baby. Most of her quarry was to fit for her at this late stage. Over the next few years Rosie blossomed into one of the best Goshawks I have ever flown. Rabbits were far too easy for her and pheasants became her main quarry, which although challenging, she took with ease.

One flight, which sticks in my memory, was on a cold day in January. We had a point with the G.S.P. and I stood well back to give the pheasant time to get going, (if I stood on top of the point she usually just pulls them out the air) in went the dog up came a big cock pheasant which flew almost vertical into the sky. Rosie flew well, keeping low under the pheasant until they went out of sight. That is the difference between hawking rabbits and pheasants.

Telemetry sprung out (typical pheasant hawking) and she was found almost 1/4 mile away, in the middle of a field, with a full crop and the remains of a January cock bird.

At the end of February 98 she was placed in an open aviary and weighed 3lb. Over the next month her weight was gradually increased. She was calling, nest building, and showing coverts but would not let me place my hand on her back. Her hormone level wasn't high enough yet! to respond to my advances (typical female).

In mid April Rosie changed her mood towards me and

spoke the same language. She was ready for breeding and now standing for insemination. When my hand was placed on her back she would wail in typical Goshawk fashion. Her cloacae was also opening and closing she was ready for insemination, all I need now is some semen, which I hadn't got. After numerous enquiries I finally found a source. Unfortunately all semen had been taken for that breeding season but I was to contact him next year.

Rosie laid 3 eggs and at her age I did not expect more. I let her incubate for a few weeks then gave her a young gos chick to rear from one of my natural pairs. Which she did very well.

By February 99 Rosie had flown well and caught a larger bag than the previous season. She was then placed into her last years breeding aviary. I then went through the same routine as before and by April 2nd she was standing for insemination. This time I managed to obtain semen that was sent to me overnight by Amtrak. The quality of the semen was very good considering the travelling time of 36 hours.

Inseminations took place every day with some days not so good as others. She laid her first egg on April 8th and then laid another 6. They were laid at intervals of 72hrs then pulled (taken away) at the time of laying. Rosie was left with 3 eggs to incubate and the rest were placed in an incubator. After 7 days egg No1 was candled and was found to be infertile (clear). Out of the six eggs left each were candled at the 7-day period and to my amazement five were fertile.

Incubation was 34 days to pip and out of the 5 fertile eggs 4 hatched successfully, one dying in the shell. Rearing was straightforward and all the chicks went as imprints to close friends of mine. Rosie again was given a Gos chick to rear, of which she made an excellent job.

As stated earlier I am not an expert on A.I., just an average falconer who got lucky with Rosie a wonderful imprint. I would like to thank Chris Pagget who made such a great job of imprinting Rosie. Also the semen donor and his owner Angelo without whom, none of this would have ever been possible, thanks.

My thanks also go to Andy Hollinshead who located the bird in the first place. Andy probably knows more about Gosses than anybody I have spoke to, by the way how's the diet working out? ☒

Derek Stotton

<p>FALCONS GYR. GYR HYBRID. PEREGRINE. SAKER. LANNER.</p>		<p>HAWKS FINNISH GOSHAWKS. EUROPEAN GOSHAWKS. HARRIS SUPERIOR SONORAN FROM ORIGINAL WILD TAKEN IMPORTS. LINE BRED FOR GOOD HUNTING CHARACTER, AND SIZE.</p>
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two gulps

JONATHAN RUNDLE



It was late January and the weather did not look good; misty with that continuous grey drizzle that seems to seep its way into everything including the birds' plumage.

This was very disappointing, as my friend Steve Bennett had travelled up from Cornwall to see us hawking pheasants. No matter which forecast I tried (and I tried them all, Internet, radio, newspaper and television, desperate to believe the best one!) the outlook was grim.

After much discussion and the obligatory cooked breakfast we decided to go anyway, but I chose to leave the video camera at home. I had intended on getting some good footage of solid points followed by clean and maybe even successful slips, but there seemed no point in carting another piece of equipment around with us just for it to get wet.

We met up with my regular hawking partner Dave Scott, the wildlife artist, who was actually flying a female Harris that Steve had once owned. When Steve had mentioned last year that he was considering packing in falconry, due to family commitments, I had told Dave to snap the bird up immediately. I knew the bird was good, with impeccable manners and an excellent hunter. Unfortunately this season (her fourth) has seen a complete change in the bird. She had imprinted herself on Dave and would not tolerate anyone getting close to him. Hopefully this situation will be resolved by putting her into a seclusion aviary with another falconer's male during the moult.

We are hearing more and more stories about problem

Harris hawks. All too often they are dismissed as nothing more than an easy choice for the novice falconer, whereas in truth they are a very complex, intelligent, gregarious hawk. A lot of thought needs to be given not only to their rearing, initial training and entering but also as to how they regard their keeper. Relationship problems may not become apparent until the bird reaches maturity. For this reason I strongly believe that these hawks should be parent reared, then regularly flown with, and definitely moulted out with, others of their own kind.

Fortune must surely have been smiling upon us this day, as just as we arrived at the chosen wood the rain started to ease off. We geared up and Sika, my G.S.P. was sent off.

To start with the birds spotted pheasants in the distance and were trying a little self hunting. This is the only disadvantage of hawking in a game rich area... are you feeling sorry for me yet? Before you get too jealous, I must point out, that the reason we are allowed to fly on this estate is because it has been hard earned. Dave puts in a lot of hours helping the gamekeeper. You don't get something for nothing.

Having been unsuccessful by themselves, they returned to follow the dog. Now that the hawks had made their presence known, any pheasants in the wood would have secreted themselves in the available cover and would hopefully provide a point later on.

When the first point came, Steve was mystified, "What's that noise? It sounds like something reversing". The repeat-

ing bleep every two seconds was in fact the pointer's new locator collar* which is activated six seconds after she stops. It is precisely this sort of ground that proves the collars worth. Last year if Sika failed to return we knew she would be on point, but couldn't tell where. She is coloured solid liver and sometimes, when frozen motionless by an intoxicating scent, could not be seen even when only a matter of yards away. The collar, being American, is coloured bright orange and this property alone would have made her easier to locate. As well as the point only mode you can also select a running mode which gives two shorter bleeps every seven seconds enabling you to pinpoint the area of cover she is working. The noise can become very irritating. I never use it when the dog can be seen working but in woodland or dense reeds it really has proved a tremendous asset.

Both Harris's had already taken up position in trees above the point, which was a good solid one, no tail wagging or moving the head. I checked Dave was happy with the set up then paused, just savouring the moment. When the flush came my hawk was the first to launch her attack, the rising cock bird just managed to evade her but was not so lucky with Dave's hawk who slammed into it, binding and crashing to the brambles below.

The next point was right on the corner of the wood. We had just seen a hen slip out and suspected Sika was interested in old scent but then I spotted the tail feathers of a cock bird sticking out from underneath a fallen holly tree. Dave's bird was close and high but mine was thirty yards further down the wood. The flush was perfect.

Sika, as usual when told to 'ged-em-up', ran to the other side and pushed the pheasant out into the open. My bird rapidly made up the lost ground and hit the quarry in the air but failed to hold. This however slowed the pheasant's escape and once again Dave's brute of a bird was there to thump it into the grass. Mine landed alongside then suddenly jumped into the air, only to come down hard a couple of feet away, her prize, held in a tightly clenched foot amidst a bunch of dried grass, was a large short-tailed field vole which promptly disappeared in two gulps.

We methodically worked our way through the wood, there were more pheasants in there but they were safe in their fortress of dense laurel and rhododendron, so we made our way to the field at the edge of the wood hoping for another clear slip.

As soon as we had left the trees Sika froze on point

beside some dense reeds. This time it was my hawk's turn to intercept the cock bird as it erupted from its hiding place. No sooner had I cast my bird into the trees than she plunged back into the edge of the reeds, not onto another vole as we thought but onto yet another cock pheasant trying to slink away.

I was rewarding one hunting partner, when Sika, once again came on point by the hedge which was at right angles to the wood. Dave clambered on top of the hedge and immediately a hen pheasant flushed. Both birds set off in hot pursuit, but both lost sight of it in those dense evergreens. The hedge still held more quarry and we had another three points on pheasants and one on a rabbit within a ten-yard stretch, none of these resulted in a clean slip and all four made good their escape. One hen was so well hidden that I was convinced it was a false point, only to be proved wrong once again as we practically dismantled the hedge to supposedly show Sika it had 'gone on!'

The next chase took the birds to another small wood two fields away where we had one worrying moment as the thin field jesses on my bird wrapped around a branch at the very top of a tall pine tree. I suspect the reason for this was that I had put in two tiny eyelets at the end of the jesses. This extra weight, although slight, was enough to make the leather strips 'end heavy' and cause them to whip around the thin branch with extra force (a lesson to be

learned). I was attempting to scale the tree without much success, when fortunately the hawk freed herself. After this narrow escape, I vowed to kit out the van with a saw, ropes, etc. in future.

We had one last moment of excitement as Sika flushed a pheasant and a rabbit simultaneously. Both birds chose the easier option and Dave's caught up with it just as it was about to gain the sanctuary of its warren.

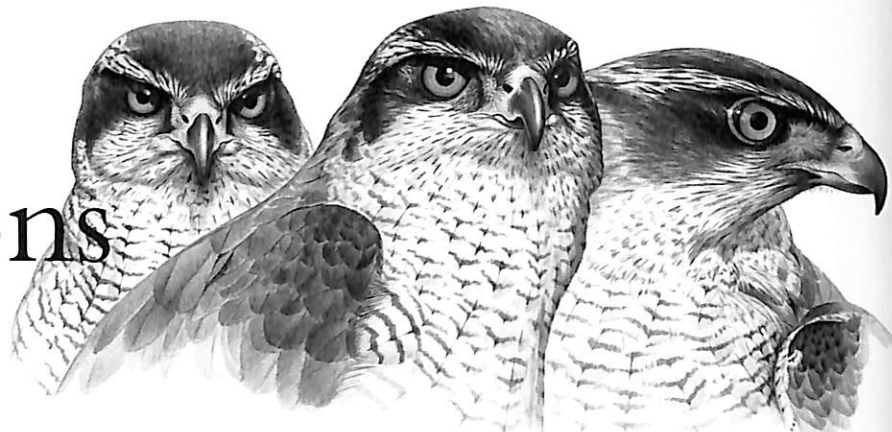
Four cock pheasants, one rabbit and one enormous vole! We had to tell Steve that not every trip was as productive. Indeed, the next time we went out the sun was shining and the forecast was good, so I took along the video camera and sure enough, we came home empty handed. ☒

*For more information on the locator collar contact Jonathan at jon.rundle@tesco.net



Imprint Observations

MIKE WEST



Having only ever flown parent reared goshawks, my only experience of imprint goshawks years ago was seeing what were basically out and out food imprints, which were on the whole vile tempered, noisy, aggressive and over all not very nice to fly.

Over the last three or four years, imprinting has changed completely as we gain a better understanding of what is involved and it is being taken to a higher level by a handful of dedicated and talented enthusiasts who are at the cutting edge of this branch of falconry. As we gain a greater understanding of what is involved these hawks just seem to get better. The imprints that they are working with are turning out to be perfectly mannered birds with an even temper, less mood swings and a sweeter nature, but capable of producing stunning displays of their flying abilities.

Over the last few seasons I have had the pleasure to see what I think are some of the best imprints flown as eyass' there didn't appear to be any difference between parent reared and imprint and both have all the drive and gungho attitude associated with first year birds. As time goes on the bond with the imprint seems to strengthen, whereas to achieve anything like this with a parent reared, one has to have continuous carriage and manning. If I had to find fault it would be that they could be somewhat picky at times, in that they sometimes refused flights at cock pheasants but would fly at hens all day. This never seemed an issue with parent reared, so maybe it could be due to flying the imprint at a higher weight.

Certainly you couldn't fly a parent reared at the same weight - well you could, but you would probably lose the bird. The imprint, by the nature of its calmer and more even temper could lull you into a false sense of security of the need to find out the proper hunting weight.

Of the imprint goshawks I saw flown in their second season, most had evolved into hawks capable of giving a good account for themselves. Some of the flights I witnessed were some of the most spectacular and longest flights I have ever seen. Parent reared can be brought to this stage but it requires a great deal of time and patience and access to plenty of hunting. Even with this, the older they get, they can become increasingly difficult to fly, requiring more and more attention to detail as they become less forgiving. Whereas the imprint seems to go from strength to strength. Without a doubt imprint

goshawks are now taking a greater head count of game as opposed to being thought of being, on the whole, a rabbit hawk. It used to be thought that only the very best were capable of taking pheasants, but now we have goshawks taking over 130 pheasants plus other game - these are obviously far more superior hawks than were flown years ago. This is probably the only branch of falconry which is continuing to improve. I wonder what the likes of Harting Blaine and others of their ilk, would think if they could come back and see some of these hawks flown. I take my cap off to you that are flying these hawks, as in my opinion, you are breaking new ground and taking us into the new millennium with a far easier and more pleasurable goshawk which has proved that they are more than capable of out performing anything that has gone before. ☒

Three Gosses picture by Josef Niederlechner



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FALCONRY & ETHICS

DAVID HORRIBIN

There is no dispute that falconry is a form of hunting, an activity which most people, if questioned, would claim to oppose. In a democratic society, it is important to consider the facts before making decisions, though where the 'hunting debate' is concerned, it often seems that emotional responses are given priority.

The most important consideration with any form of hunting is, naturally, if it involves cruelty. We may define cruelty as 'unnecessary suffering', which begs the question, what is necessary suffering? Most people accept that humans are carnivores and use practices to obtain food which undoubtedly cause distress and suffering to animals. As we eat the animals, their suffering is deemed necessary. We may consider that the instant death of a grouse killed by a falcon involves less suffering than a battery hen spending all of her life in a cramped cage.

To try and classify a quarry and its relationship with in a field sport is difficult, as reasons for its pursuit often overlap. Broadly speaking however, they are vermin control, fit for the table and conservation measures.

Where falconry is concerned, the hawk eats some or all of the quarry, and any surplus may be eaten by the falconer.

Field sports supporters generally live much more closely with animals than most of their opponents, and as such have a healthy regard for the sanctity of life, nothing is killed without valid reasons.

Hunting is a natural process, conveying the principle of the pursuit of a wild creature by a natural predator. There is little difference between a pack of wolves hunting deer in Alaska, and a pack of hounds hunting deer on Exmoor, save for the fact that the "wolves" on Exmoor are followed by people on horseback who wish to watch them hunting. Such people are no more turned on by a kill than those who watch the same spectacle on wildlife

documentaries. There is no difference between a wild or trained goshawk killing a rabbit, except the trained bird is likely to be less successful as the falconer is not as stealthy as a wild hawk. A wild bird would behave in exactly the same way to survive, and we may speculate that a trained hawk, which lives as a wild bird, but with the comfort of shelter, protection and regular food, has a better quality of life than a caged Amazon parrot many miles from its natural environment.

Hawks, like all predators, are adapted to kill efficiently, and thus humanely. A bird reliant on speed and strength to survive cannot risk injury through a struggle with a

potential meal. It therefore kills quickly to avoid this. Falcons have a 'tooth' on their beak which fits into the

vertebrae of their quarry, enabling the instant despatching of prey. Birds struck down in flight by falcons travelling at speed are generally killed outright. To a pigeon, a falcon moving at over 100mph is rather like a car at the same speed to a human.

Shortwings, it must be said, do not kill as quickly, as their principal weapons are their feet. A hawk's foot has a ratchet system which tightens convulsively and locks, when a hawk grips. It takes a time for this system to release, as most falconers can attest, and until this happens, the grip does not weaken. The strength of this grip is such that it actually numbs whatever is being gripped, whether it be a rabbit's head or a falconer's hand, the hawk therefore employs a natural anaesthetic. Despite this, it is considered imperative that a falconer, flying shortwings, despatches any quarry the hawk has caught straight away, if it is not already dead.

The above may give the impression that hawks are highly effective 'killing machines' which is far from the truth. Wild birds generally only kill once in every four attempts and trained birds are less effective. If one wishes to kill quarry, a gun is the 'weapon' of choice. Hawking is not about killing, but a combination of companionship, of what is essentially a wild creature; a fascination with the attributes of both predator and prey, love of the countryside, and the excitement of watching the hawk in action. The falconer is really only a spectator, there is nothing which he or she can do to help a hawk which may be a thousand feet above or three miles away. ☒

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SCOTLAND
AND THE CURSE OF THE

Wolfman

DAVID JONES

This is truly what happened to me at Lochindorb, Granton-on-Spey in the Highlands of Scotland after reading the history of the Wolf of Badenoch and the curse that then followed me.

Lindsay (my partner) and I arrived at Lochindorb to fly our Hawks and Longwing. Lindsay would stay for one week and I for two. After a long journey we were glad to off-load our somewhat tardis-like Jeep that contained my G.S.P. bitch, male and

female Finnish Goshawks, Gyr/Peregrine tiercel and just for the ride my 17 year old lurcher 'Lucy' (now deceased). I was confident that this trip would produce my first Grouse with my new longwing and Lindsay would catch her first rabbit with our new male Gos. 'Our sights were set high'.

That evening as the mist drew in around the doors of our lodge and the cries and whispers of creatures of the night eerily swept its way

through the darkness, I read of the legend of the Wolf of Badenoch. An evil man that once lived on an island in the middle of the loch and of whom, it is said, even to this day curses those who challenge his existence or dare to set foot on his land. An unnerving start to what was to be an eventful holiday.

The next morning, as the mist lifted from the loch, it slowly revealed the outline of a ruined castle on an island some way out. The

air was still and as I stood on the shore recalling the legend a cold chill passed through me.

I returned back to the lodge to find that my old lurcher, Lucy had emptied her bowls into my new falconers hat. This was to be the start of a spiral of bad luck, but at this stage I decided to keep this incident private for fear of being ribbed about it all day by my fellow falconers.

After cleaning up the mess and aerating my Jeep we set off to fly

the Goshawks.

It wasn't long before we caught our first rabbit with the young male. 'Excellent' I thought, we are off to a good start.

Grouse hawking in the afternoon was on, so we drove to the moor to fly my new tiercel. We met up with our fellow falconers Mark Gardener, Pete Bowyer and Nick Farrant also my good friend Ian Blantern who was flying his hybrid tiercel. The dogs went on point and

Ian's tiercel was sent up, it then stooped and punched out the feathers of an old cock Grouse. The tiercel gave chase and Ian brought out his telemetry to get a reading. As Ian and I shared the same frequency I turned off my transmitter and detached it from my hawk. I then walked 50 yards and lost it in the heather. 'Bugger,' it's gone for good - state of the art technology and only two weeks old.

We drove back to the lodge and

sat down to a relaxed meal and a couple of drinks to relieve my stress before an early night. At 10pm I went out to give the dogs a run then heard a huge splash like a giant salmon, followed by a haunting moan that came from the mist off the loch. I called the dogs, but only the pointer came back. Rapid investigation with my flashlight found that old Lucy had fallen off the wall of the boathouse and into the loch (deaf and daft). Disoriented, she started to swim out to deep water. I quickly ran to the end of the wall and as she was passing I grabbed her by the scruff, yanking her out like a drowned rat. She looked like death as the temperature fell but improved after a spell in front of our welcoming fire.

The next day I let the dogs out for their morning run and Lucy had a heart attack and fell over in the yard. She had recovered within the hour but this was to become a saddening daily event.

Although distracted by Lucy's declining health our hawking actually improved. With the three hawks settling in to their new surroundings and the young male Gos, killing rabbits like a pro.

Lindsay's week was up and she decided to take the offer of a lift back to Somerset.

Mick Thomas arrived with his well-mannered eyass female Finish Goshawk and a young GSP bitch - and being a Gos man myself we quickly became friends. Then a day of bliss when every thing went well. This is more like it, I thought- but it was not to last! My telemetry transmitter fell off the tail mount of my Goshawk in pursuit of a cock pheasant and I lost her for over an hour. I eventually found her fed-up on a pheasant and looking wild, only to then discover I had also lost my leash and jesses while looking for her in the woods. With typical Welsh creativity I managed to pick her up safely.

On the way back to the lodge for lunch my thoughts drifted over the events of the last week and towards the legend and curse of the wolf

man. Could there be something in this legend, 'Nah!', I shrugged my shoulders in disbelief.

Lunch over and an afternoon of falconry beckoned. "Right," I said, lets go and fly the longwing and we headed on up to the grouse moor. After 4 or 5 miles off road driving Mick informed me that my pointer bitch had vanished from the back of the jeep! "****" She had jumped out of the window and had been spotted trailing the jeep over the hills! "Bugger," does this ever end?

The following day Mick and I decided to do a spot of Gos-hawking alongside the river Spey. A place that haunts me from a previous year as 'Morag', my last Goshawk was lost for over 2 hours on the opposite side of the river. My new found friend Mick had caught a couple of rabbits in style with his female Gos and I had bagged a couple with mine. We were just about to call it a day when a cock pheasant burst out of the long grass right in front of me. With instant reaction I cast 'Sheigra' my female. As she left my fist I shouted "**** . . . oh no!" She'd flown the cock bird over the river and forced it into a small wooded area. I reassessed my reaction and said to Mick that it didn't look so bad after all, as I knew how to drive round there in the jeep. Mick looked somewhat bewildered by my comment and pointed out that the bird was not the other side of the river but on an island in the middle. My face went blank and every cell in my now blurred brain was working overtime on ways to collect my hawk from this long wooded Island. We drove back towards Grantown and over a bridge, then onto a fisherman's track, to the other side of the Island. I pointed my telemetry in the direction of my nightmare and yes it beeped so loud that there was no mistake, my Hawk was there feeding her face on that cock bird she had flown down. The river was wide and fast but I decided to wade across nonetheless and bare the cold waters. My thoughts were of being dragged down with my clothes

heavy and acting as underwater sails, so I decided to strip off. Being a person who has never worn underwear I asked my newly found (now good friend) Mick for a loan of his underpants, to offer some protection at least, to my dangly bits. Mick instantly stripped off (he seemed to be used to this!) and handed me his pants "what a sight", two men in winter, no trousers, on the banks of the river Spey. I left on my tee-shirt and cap and put on Mick's pants along with an old pair of driving daps, slung the telemetry on my back and set off for the river.

The Island was about 8 acres of woodland and thick cover. I asked Mick can you swim? A little he said but before you cross you had better take this long staff with you, I'll go down stream and try and grab you if you get pushed under. Mick's words were very reassuring (not) and he suggested he take some photos of me just in case he needed some evidence of the last time I was seen! I then began my fearful journey, the nearer I got to the Island the stronger the river became. I was inching my way through the heavy waters and several times I thought my footing was lost but the staff saved me. I climbed onto the Island with relief to place my feet on firm and dry land. I'd soon tracked down my Hawk, that by now had eaten half a cock pheasant and was supporting a huge crop. How can I return with my Hawk and pheasant? I needed two hands on the staff to hold me up. I decided to throw the pheasant as far as I could across the river and maybe it would drift towards Mick. 'It didn't' and was caught in a swell and washed down stream. Lets hope I have better luck with my Gos.

It was time to make some decisions, Should I send Mick for help or should I try and make my way across. This time I would be burdened with my Goshawk, hopefully, clinging to my staff. If she baited I would surely lose my balance, then all would be left to the mercy of the deep waters. I must face my fears. As a young child I nearly drowned and

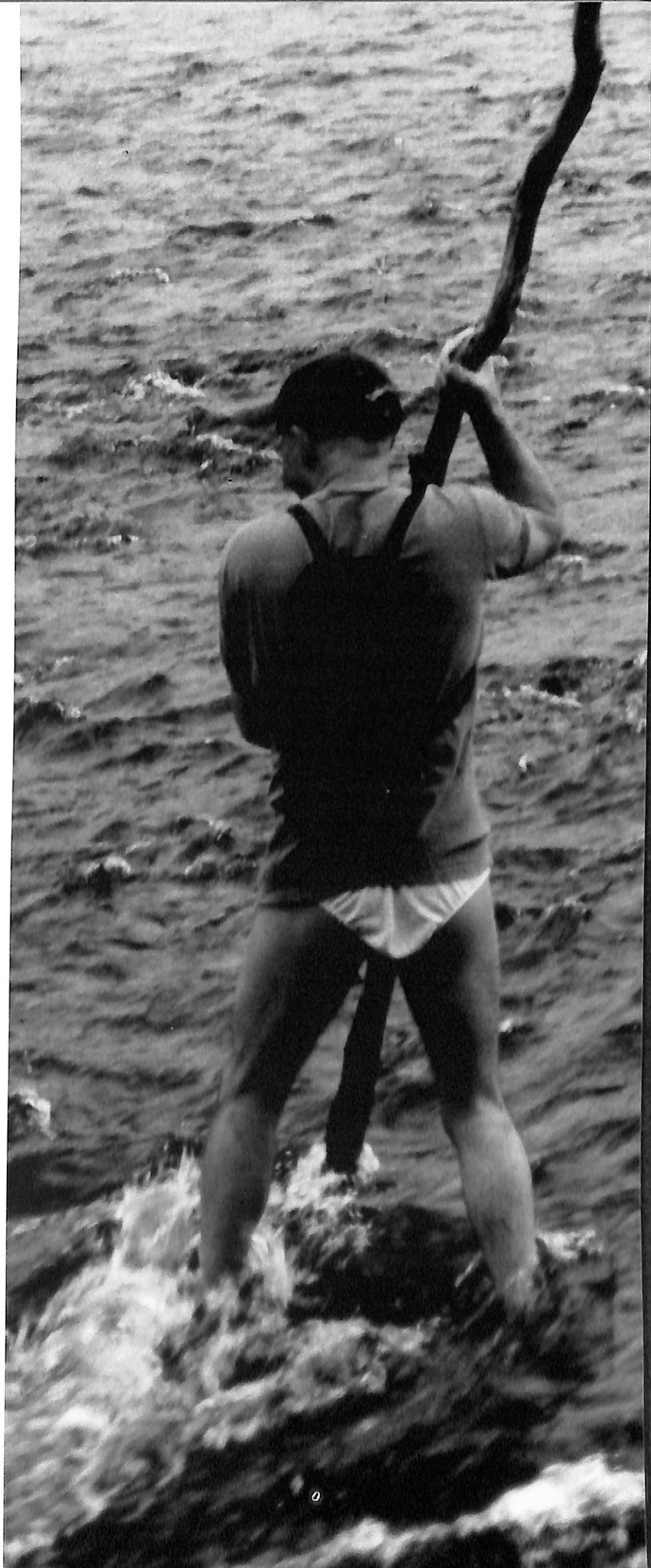
only learnt to swim a few years ago, at the age of 21. Knowing my somewhat limited swimming ability, I needed full confidence in the steadiness of my bird to make this next decision. It was with a certain trepidation that I started the long and treacherous wade back through the icy river, with the current trying it's best to drag me under. My positive thinking was the only thing that kept me standing at times and I was relieved to reach the safety of dry land. I had been concentrating so hard on my efforts not to slip I had hardly noticed how steady the Gos was, it had clung on to the staff and hadn't bated at all.

By now Mick had walked back to my starting point with camera in hand and a huge smile on his face. He then announced that he was a swimming instructor and a military trained survivalist but didn't like to get wet when on holiday (did I say we were friends?) I was now starting to feel the cold and my bits had shrunk into my body. Mick's underpants had bagged out with the force of the river and resembled a tesco's carrier bag.

"I'll ring your pants out." "Don't bother," said Mick, "I've gone off them." Back to Lochindorb with Mick laughing and ribbing me every second.

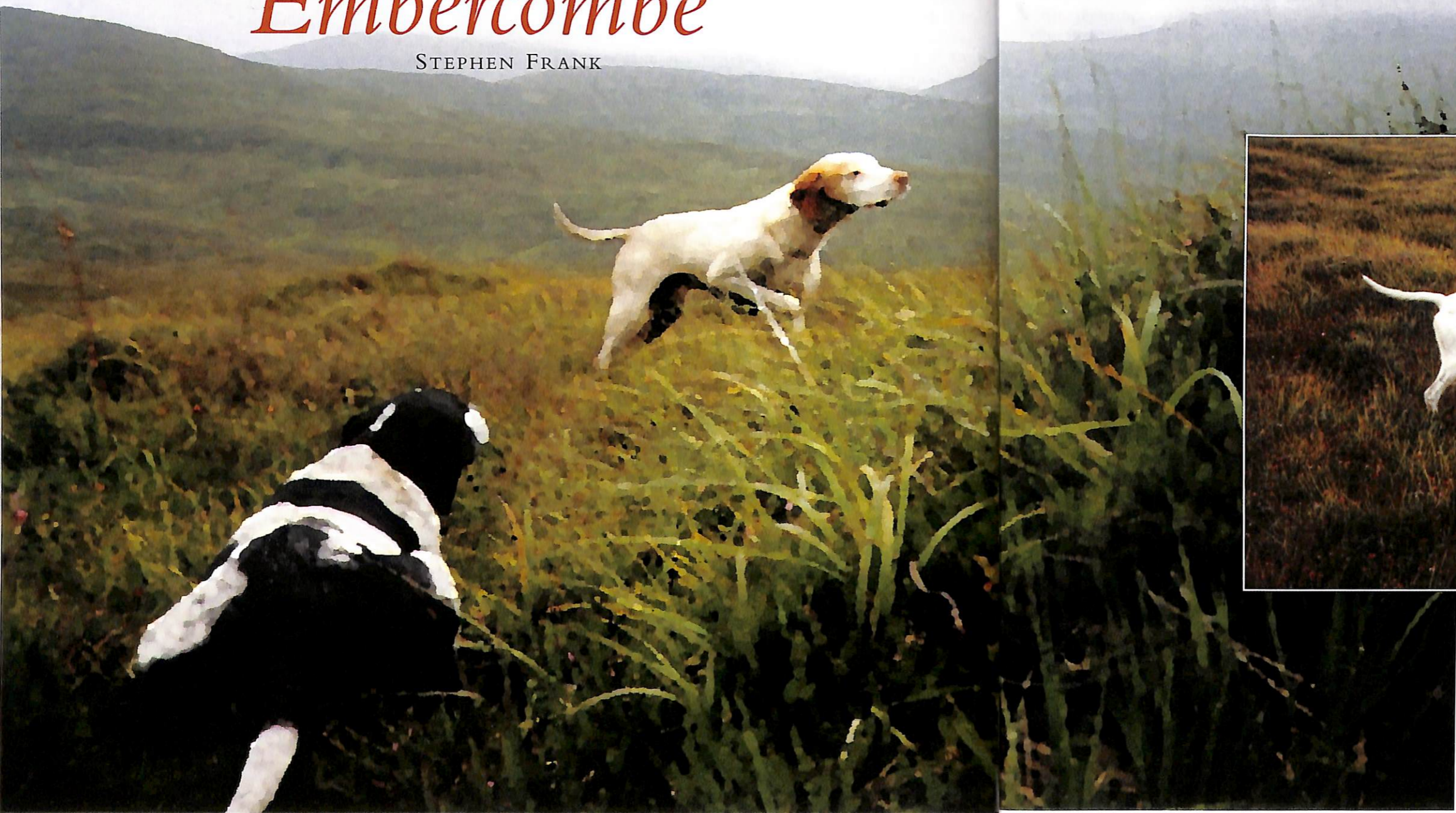
Things had not been running so smoothly lately and thoughts returned once more to the curse of the Wolf man. My fellow falconers were starting to wonder whether there might be something in this, not from the point of believing it but from the position of winding me up about it!

On the last day I thought I'd give Mick a break and went out with my good friend Bryan Paterson to the grouse moor. After a gentle start, Briar, my GSP went on point and my tiercel started to climb into position. I ran through the heather to try and head the point, calling my tiercel over. The grouse flushed before my tiercel was in position so I called him down to the lure. I then went to pick him up only to find I had lost my glove. F*** it! I shouted when picking up my tiercel on my bare fist and admiring his sharp talons with tears in my eyes. Bryan was left wondering why the hell I do this sport and how I manage to get through the day. "He's cursed, he's cursed!" he muttered. I wandered around the heather zig-zagging up and down the hill and then shouted to Bryan "Ureka, I've found my glove." The curse was broken and my fortunes changed for the better from that moment on. In future, I shall not mention, not even in jest, the curse of the Wolf of Badenoch at Lochindorb. ☒



Embercombe

STEPHEN FRANK



I HAVE been asked to write a few words on my pointers. Having been honoured by special membership of the Welsh Hawking club and having never done anything to contribute to the success of the great institution, I feel honour bound to try.

My first pointer was an old liver and white bitch with the famous prefix of the late Mr. Roberts; *Segontium Flash*. A gift from Gordon Jolly, she was well-trained and did great work for a few years from 1959. Going for several years to Lochdhu, in Caithness, Grouse hawking with Jeffrey Pollard and pointing the odd partridge at Quelfurlong in North Wiltshire. I tried hard to get puppies from her but failed and so, with a need for reinforcements to back up James Robertson-Justice's English x German pointer, I bought *Monruad Flare*

(Queenie) in Eire from the famous late John Nash. She was three years old, well-trained and by *Patsaan Earl* out of Int. F.T. Ch. *Queen of Glencar Patsaan Earl* was imported from Finland by Gordon Jolly and Phillip Wayne with the expert advice of John Nash. This dog did much to put pointer standards up after the war. Queenie proved to be a great success and, using dogs recommended by John Nash, had a number of puppies which put my prefix, 'Embercombe' on the map. All my pointers go back to Queenie through the female line, and there have been many good working dogs among them.

The two dogs in the main picture are F.T. Ch. *Embercombe lucky* and F.T. Ch. *Wishy Washy of Spinningloch*. Litter brothers, and grandsons of Queenie;

they have been a great influence on most present day working pointers. Lucky was the greatest shooting dog I ever had and was responsible for 115 puppies! He would always leave a point to find the guns and once came back three times, in fog, before the guns, who had complete faith in him, arrived at the point. On another occasion I was left behind when lucky had a point in front of the Guns. They tried to make him flush but he refused to walk in until I arrived. It was so obvious, by the way he was trying to communicate to the guns, that there was only one thought in his mind "where's Stephen"

The two bitches (inset picture), both by lucky, I still have. Handled by Peter O'Driscoll F.T. Ch. *Embercombe Wizzer*, in the foreground, won the Champion stake in

1990 and F.T. Ch. *Snuff of Embercombe* was third. Snuff was a top field trialer for a number of years and still covers thousands of acres for the hawks. The difference between Wiz and Snuff, under my management, is that Wiz will re-flush if there is a put-in and Snuff just goes in for the kill!!! She waits for ever on the first flush but after that it has to die: though, of course, she helps many to escape. I have seen mad Harry my peregrine teircel land on Wizzers back, at a put-in, and look down her neck for the grouse. Sadly I have never been fast enough to get a photo of this.

In passing how many people would agree with me that the two tails in the picture are perfect? We will never convert our American friends from their vertical tails but if my dogs have to work in long cover I will buy an American transmitting dog collar!

I hope I have not bored you too much. It was grouse hawking which created my need for pointing dogs and I admit to being completely addicted to the pointer. They contribute at least 50% of my pleasure to a days hawking and are wonderful company the whole year round. ☞

HARRY Macpherson

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1906 AND 1913, HARRY MACPHERSON LABOURED LONG AND HARD IN THE GRAMPIAN HIGHLANDS TO CREATE THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF BREEDING GOLDEN EAGLES. NOW NEARLY 90 YEARS LATER TERRY PICKFORD EMULATES THE UNSUNG HERO OF A PAST ERA.



'In a wild deer-forest in the very heart of the Grampian range, there lies a dark, gloomy corrie, where the sun penetrates for but a few short hours during the long summer's day. At the head of the gorge, where rocks rise almost perpendicular from the banks of a brawling burn, a pair of Golden Eagles had made their eyrie in by-gone days.'

Written nearly a century ago by the Scottish naturalist H.B. Macpherson these words, appeared as an introductory text in the first photographic study of the Golden Eagle to be published in Britain.

The book was titled *The Home-Life of The Golden Eagle* and contained within its 78 pages, 32 individually hand-mounted black and white plates. Harry Macpherson's endeavors established a testimony to one man's pioneering photographic abilities within the Highlands of Scotland.

Without doubt Macpherson's early work with eagles,

undertaken during the heydays of the British Raj in India, recorded for future posterity a period of significant importance in Scottish heritage. His tireless labours and photographic capabilities set an initiative then, fostering trends in eagle photography for many others of the same ilk to admire and follow in the years that followed.

The standard of Macpherson's fieldwork, carried out under extreme difficulties over nine decades ago, was a most extraordinary undertaking. Traveling by bicycle and on foot, he transported heavy wooden plate cameras to those remote-nesting corries.

Each expedition undertaken involved a daily round trip from his home of 50 miles, demonstrating the level of Macpherson's dedication. When one considers that Macpherson used old drovers tracks in those days, to make his journeys, traveling more than 1500 miles cycling alone, his achievement was nothing less than remarkable. These laborious field trips, often resulting in soakings and many long hours in photographic hides, contributed to an illness and Macpherson's subsequent death in 1947.

From the pages of *The Home-Life of The Golden Eagle* the reader is reminded of the many logistical and technological handicaps faced by Macpherson. The laborious transportation by

cycle of bulky and heavy camera equipment and accessories hide materials and food, were all fundamental difficulties that he so successfully surmounted. Such a daunting challenge would have defeated lesser mortals faced with similar circumstances. Macpherson's eagle portraits, whilst lacking the crisp sharpness made possible today by modern optics and fine grain film, convey a strong sense of atmosphere and nostalgia. By reading his book and viewing the many mounted plates, they transport the imagination backwards in time to an era of which we were never a part.

Regrettably few intact copies of *The Home-Life of The Golden Eagle* have survived. Private individuals have preserved several copies of this now extremely rare manuscript. Unfortunately the only copy available to the public (in very poor condition), is retained by Inverness public library. Anyone wishing to read the book can now only do so under supervision by arrangement with the librarian there.

From the limited technical information recorded in Macpherson's book, typical daylight exposures varied between 1/12 th and 1/45 sec. at f8. This factor above any other limited his photographic scope at the eyrie.

Traditionally most Golden Eagle eyries face north, so sunlight upon the eyrie can never be guaranteed. Just after dawn when feeding activity within the eyrie is prominent, or during periods of harsh and inclement weather, exposures of 10 seconds at f8 were made by Macpherson.

Speaking from personal experience, poor light remains a fundamental problem encountered by most eagle photographers, though modern photographic technology has overcome most of the problems encountered by Macpherson. Action photography and the use of a fast lens, electronic flash and fast film, were options not available to Harry Macpherson, the bulk of his exposures being obtained during periods when he knew the nesting birds were standing motionless or had fallen asleep.

In his early pioneering experiments to secure photographic portraits of nesting Golden Eagles, Macpherson would simply secure his large wooden plate camera positioned to overlook the nest. Firmly secured beneath boulders and camouflaged with heather, the lens poking out towards the large stick structure would be pre-focused upon the eyrie.

A length of rubber tube connected to an air bulb was attached to the camera's shutter release. The tube was draped around the nesting ledge corner with the bulb laid out of sight from the eyrie. Utilizing a good telescope, positioned at a suitable vantage position often a mile or more away from the eyrie, Macpherson would then await the eventual reappearance of the Golden Eagle on the eyrie, before returning stealthily out of sight towards the eyrie to press the bulb.

To his personal credit, the safety and well being of an eyrie was an important criterion. Photography only proceeding after the eggs within the eyrie had hatched. During the lengthy 48 days of egg incubation, nesting eagles subjected the frequent human disturbance are prone to desertion.

In order to reduce disturbance even more, Macpherson concluded that he would only take a single exposure each day using this method. As his experience progressed, along with the location of more accessible eyries to photograph, several hides were built in co-operation with the estate's head stalker.

By using two cameras fitted with lens of varied focal length within the hide, he was able to secure many more useful exposures per day.

Several years ago, the stalker on the same deer forest frequented by Macpherson at the turn of the century, discovered by chance the remains of one of the photographer's old canvas hides. The debris had been blown from the nesting cliff into the corrie bottom by countless winter storms that had occurred within the nesting glen since that period.

In 1990 at the invitation of the estate, I was most fortunate and privileged to have been invited to visit this lonely forest to retrace those early steps taken by Macpherson.

An exciting aspect of the visit into this wild and rugged Highland glen, was a discovery that those eyries visited and photographed by Macpherson so very long ago (before I was even born) were still tenanted by Golden Eagles. Just as important, occupied eyries upon the forest were afforded full protection by the estate owner together with his stalking staff. During my two visits into the glen, two young were successfully fledged in both the 1991 and 1992 season.

As I traversed the breeding glen for my last visit in the late summer of 1992, two large eaglets could clearly be seen standing sentinel on the very edge of their now flattened eyrie. Aided by a strong updraft from the corrie below, both young eagles flexed their outstretched wings as a prelude to fledging from their lofty abode situated in the rocks high above the brawling burn. Sitting for a few moments amongst the rank heather that fine July evening, I couldn't help but wonder how many eaglets had fledged successfully from this site in the intermediate years since Macpherson departed from the glen on his last visit? ☒

The writer and researcher for this article, Terry Pickford, is available for some quite remarkable lectures on the peregrine falcon and golden eagle respectively. He can be contacted on 07977 890116

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On reflection !

NEIL MCCANN

WITH my female goshawk Megan safe in her aviary it's nice to reflect on what has been a very successful season.

Megan was 2lb 12oz when I picked her up after the moult and after three weeks she was flying free at 2lb 3oz, catching rabbits and pheasants. Her weight didn't stay at this level for long though and I was soon able to fly her with confidence at 2lb 6 oz.

There is always a story to tell behind a successful season and this year the jigsaw fell into place, due, in no small part to the latest edition to our team, my newly trained Brittany, Ben. It could however have ended so very differently, if Ben had not been the focus of my attention on one particular flush, of which I will tell you later.

Ben had come to me in the spring, with a lot of hard work on his training already completed by Terry Finnegan, who was giving up the dog due to the loss of his bird. He was bred by John Simcox, who under the original agreement between Terry and himself wanted a say in it's future if Terry ever gave the dog up. Bowing gracefully with cap in hand (and a bottle of cognac in the other) I managed to convince John I could give it a good home.

There are some falconers that think the Brittany is highly strung and erratic, but that's not an opinion I agree with. The Brittany, for me, works well and is an integral part, of a great working team.

Once in the field, I find it takes the first 10 minutes or so for him to settle down and to burn off excess energy, after which he is responsive and hard working. He will work with any type of bird, go into any type of cover and has held a point for over 20 minutes. We have had our good and bad times, some of which I recall with fondness others despair.



On two occasions I have lost Megan on pheasant kills in reed ditches and before I've managed to take the telemetry out of the bag, Ben has gone on point over her.

As I recall the events of the season one incident stands out as a particularly close call.

It was in October, clear, bright and sunny; we were working a large farm, come market garden, on which there are several large greenhouses. The sun was just starting to set behind us when Ben came on point in the middle of a fallow field. Ben was a little unsure of the point, not surprisingly in hindsight, as he had never come across partridges before.

With the sun behind us and the greenhouses some way in front, I walked up slowly, not knowing as to whether there was game there or not, when a covey of partridges suddenly broke cover.

For some reason, I did not slip Megan, (which was just as well as it turned out) and was more intent on

stopping and dropping Ben, who was as surprised as me, at the sudden explosion under foot.

Once under control I looked up to see a mirror image of the field, myself, bird, dog and covey of partridge in the reflection of the greenhouse glass. The covey of 9 grey partridge flew in a straight line directly into the greenhouse 'mirror' and I was unable to avert the tragedy that was about to take place as I saw and heard each individual bird hit the greenhouse hard.

As I walked over and picked up each bird, that had broken it's neck, I wondered what would have happened if Ben's point had been steady and I had slipped Megan. My stomach turned at the realisation of such a scenario. I could have been picking up 10 dead birds.

I never thought I would witness such a strange event as this again, but less than a month latter Ben was again involved in a similar incident.

It was at the W.H.C. International Field Meet and Ben was on a very steady point. It had not been my turn to slip so we set it up for another austringer who slipped his male Gos. A chase ensued and the pheasant flew towards a farm workers house. The Gos followed and somehow managed to smash right through the house window, dropping unconscious on the hearth in front of the fire. Several rather worrying minutes later, the Gos was retrieved and to everyone's amazement survived.

Both incidents have made me more observant of the potential dangers whilst out in the field, although as we all know, we are but observers once the slip has been made. I for one can only wish for many years of enjoyment as part of the team along with Megan and Ben and wish the same to all austringers and their companions everywhere. ☒

Mic

THYS WALTERS

WORKING with an eagle is about five times more difficult that any other bird I have worked with before. Like Jemima Parry Jones said in her video: "If you want an eagle you should be very rich or have no job." Well, I qualify, I have no job!

Mic is an 18 months old male Black Eagle and has an average weight of 3.5 kg. Although big, his metabolism is slow and he spends more time thinking than reacting. He was taken out of a nest with two chicks and started to fly four months later.

Flying for Mic was a freak out and did not come naturally. After a few months of every day flying he got better at it and did not try to land with the wind behind him, or sit on a thin branch (hanging there like a bat) or fall right through the trees, which was a particularly inelegant trick he often performed.

My first plan was to use the kite method to teach him to go up and later to stoop down on Egyptian geese which would be his intended quarry. Unfortunately things did not go as planned and after weeks of trying, Mic still would not get the hang of it. He became discouraged and I became frustrated, to the point that I decided to give it up. His huge wing span almost got entangled in the kite line a few times and he used to see the kite above as a bird of prey which made him mantle aggressively over his reward.

Since then I've tried a lot of different methods to get him fit and learn to soar in a wind. The problem is that the geese fly off as soon as Mic leaves my glove and then he turns away to land somewhere. For the plan to work I would have to get him high above me like a falcon and then flush the geese from under him.

One magnificent day I was driving alongside a dam with Mic sitting on the roof of my kombi when he suddenly flew up in the direction of the dam and dived

to the left. Out of the corner of my eye I saw three Egyptian geese sitting by the dam with Mic on them like a flash. I could not believe my eyes when he slammed into one just as it reached the safety of the water. I ran like hell, knowing that Mic would not be able to hold on for much longer being deep into the water already. Just as I arrived to give assistance

the fighting ceased and the goose swam away under the water leaving Mic behind. Without hesitation I dived in and managed to get hold of the right wing of the goose.

I walked out, soaked and happy to give Mic back his prize, making sure not to be close to the water.

I yelled to Michelle to bring the video camera and get this memorable occasion on film. As I sat beside Mic I leaned over to pull open the goose wing when Mic tried to drag it away and in a split second the goose slipped free and hit the water with us standing rooted to the spot.

The next day we were at the same location with Mic sitting on the roof to check if the goose survived.

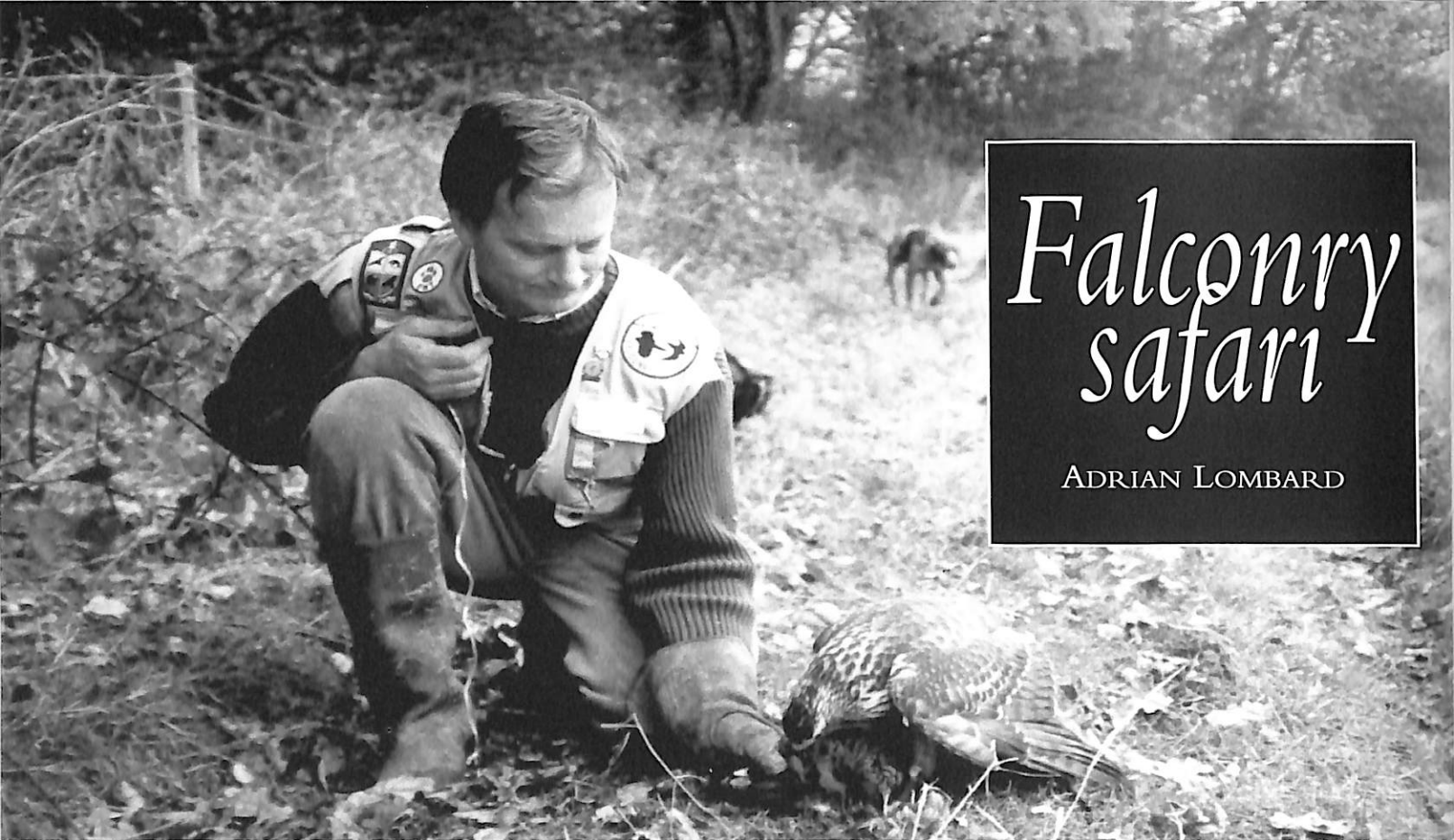
To my amazement it lay dead against a tree stump a few meters from the water. Mic did not waste time to lock on his sights and go in like a fighter plane to hit his stiff target for the third time.

Unfortunately he also once locked on his sights towards a huge farm goose and got it with both feet by the head. Luckily for us the farmer found it more interesting than a loss and we went home with food for a week.

Working with Mic also had its downside, especially his teen stage when he used to bite at my arm and face. These love bites together with a few puncture marks made me sometimes look like a bit of a bleeder.

I still hope to make a good hunter out of him although it's taken a little longer than I ever expected. ☀





Falconry safari

ADRIAN LOMBARD

These, being some observations on British falconry by a visitor from the Cape of Good Hope. On his travels he meets sundry friendly and hospitable natives including the fearsome inhabitants of Yorkshire! Enjoys the flying of numerous exciting hawks on plentiful and sporting quarry. He travels from Somerset to Scotland and thence to Wales in pursuit of his sport at great hazard to his liver, meeting with diverse new experiences and sights.

I MUST beg for my readers indulgence for the tongue-in-cheek heading to this article. If one has grown up in southern Africa and cut ones teeth on the writings of the great nineteenth century hunters and explorers like Selous and Speke, one must be excused for believing that southern Africa is a hunter's Mecca. The concept of going from there to Britain for the purpose of hunting, may, at first glance, appear slightly bizarre. As I was soon to discover it proved to be a highly satisfactory and enlightening experience. I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts and observations.

I travelled with my wife, Sylvia,

having left hawks, children and dogs looking after each other in Cape Town. We spent a few days in London doing the tourist thing and sampling British beer (a very pleasant occupation) then took the train to Weston-Super-Mare where we met up with Dave Jones and Lindsay. Our first stop from the station was a quarry in Weston, where Dave pointed out a Peregrine nest. Pay back time for all the occasions I had bored him silly by pointing out the peregrine nest, round the corner from my home, in Cape Town. One of our observations in Britain was the apparent health of the raptor populations which seem to have recovered from the depredations of game keepers and DDT. Not without, one realises, the help of their enthusiasts including falconers. During the course of our trip we managed to see most of the indigenous raptors, sadly just missing a Merlin on the Scottish grouse moors.

We went to Dave's home where I was introduced to his superb eyes musket Finish Gos imprint, Nomad. It was to be my privilege to fly this bird for the next two weeks and I could not have wished for a better

hawk. We wasted no time in getting into our hunting gear and off to the pheasant woods. I managed to bag two cock pheasants that afternoon and I returned to Dave and Lindsay's in seventh heaven.

After two days of enjoying Dave's home hunting it was time to set off, in convoy, for Scotland in a hire car courtesy of our British friends. With Dave and Lindsey in front, complete with hawks, dogs and a spade to bury his ancient lurcher should she die en route. It was dark, cold and windy by the time we reached Lochindorb and I have an abiding impression of bundling through the door into the warmth and having a whisky thrust into my hands; what a marvellous welcome!

Lochindorb was to be our home for the next week, along with old friends Brian and Martyn Paterson and a group of other falconers, including some very hazardous denizens of Yorkshire. This was a very special experience for me, flying goshawks on rabbit and pheasant in the mornings and grouse with Dave's Gyr/Peregrine tiercel in the afternoon. My own bag included the only quail in Scotland and I was ribbed for

coming out and exterminating a species.

The grouse moors were a completely new experience. What really impressed me was the tremendous effort that goes into maintaining the grouse population. Driving through Scotland I realised what a significant industry this is. No similar effort is made in southern Africa and although Greywing Francolin in the Eastern Cape may give similar sport and are exploited commercially, we have a long way to go to match this management standard. The grouse themselves proved to be wily and exciting quarry. The falcon managed to knock out tail feathers a few times but we didn't succeed in putting one in the bag.

As we have no rabbits in South Africa, I have never seen hunting with ferrets so I spent a day out with the Yorkshire lads and their Harris Hawks. The ferret that proved to be the most obliging of little animals fascinated me. It tolerated any amount of handling and only really 'loosing it' when one of the Harris's grabbed it by mistake. I am glad that Scottish soil is softer than that of the karroo as we had to dig the ferret out on a number of occasions. Hunting with the Harris Hawks was great fun and we finally retired to the Strathspey Arms to sample the local bitter and the real hazard began. I was treated to Yorkshire hospitality and was soon finding myself plied with pints accompanied by whisky chasers. I realised that desperate measures were required if I was to survive the night and took to pouring the whiskeys into my Wellie. As the evening progressed I watched Sara, a Swedish lass working for Nick Fox, thrash all the men in a 'down-down' competition and then had the dubious pleasure of being mooned by the Yorkshire contingent, (my memory remains hazy and I am grateful for that). Finally we had to go home. Dimly I realised a similarity between Yorkshire and the Free State province back home so I marched off towards the vehicles shouting 'Yorkshire' and soon found myself at

the head of a small procession behaving similarly. (Vrystaat! would work as well back home). With one sober driver we managed to get home and then I had to take off my wellies! Fortunately no one noticed I squelched every time I put my left foot down. By the way, it was hell putting the wellies back on the next morning!

Lochindorb itself, was the most wonderful setting for our Scottish "safari". The lodge stands on a small headland protruding into the loch and had a rather dramatic atmosphere in the sombre autumn weather. Out on an island stands the ruins of a castle, reputedly occupied in the thirteenth century by the Wolf of Badenoch. The legend goes that he tossed out his wife for a young belle thus offending the Bishop of Perth who excommunicated him. Enraged, the Wolf and his henchmen set off for Perth. They sacked all the churches on the way, then sacked Perth cathedral and went home. Unfortunately the Thane of Cawdor took exception to this and he came down from the north and sorted out the Wolf who later died, according to the legend, a converted man. One morning, while we were there, a flock of geese arrived and flew across the loch giving their haunting calls; an evocative sound in this spectacular setting.

Sadly our stay at Lochindorb drew to an end. We had enjoyed the best of company; food and hawking so it was with some regret that we said the first of our goodbyes and set off to do the tourist thing once more. Our route took us across Scotland to Skye, then down the west coast and finally, via the Lake District to North Wales and Ruthin, for the Welsh International Hawking Meet. By this stage all the nations represented were in mourning over the World Cup and I was grateful my passion is falconry not rugby!

Once again we were treated to the most wonderful setting. We stayed in Ruthin Castle, originally built in the 13th century, in a room complete with four poster bed and resident ghost (or noisy pipes). Once again

we were subjected to tremendous hospitality and superb beer. The hunting was all on kept lands and was first class, with more than adequate quarry. Once again I found the game bird management of great interest. Certainly the high quality of your hunting comes at a price but with increasing numbers of hunters in my country this may be the route of the future. I have started setting up feeders on some of my hunting grounds and look forward to reaping the benefits with my Gos this season. I was impressed by the high standard of hawking furniture and the obvious good hawk management. This is perhaps in contrast to some of the birds at my own club field meet where we walk the tightrope between insisting on a good display of hawks and discouraging the very people who need to attend these events to learn.

The hawking was most enjoyable with some top class hawks being flown. I found it particularly interesting as I am one of the few falconers in southern Africa who have had the opportunity to fly a European Gos and I relished the chance to see others flown and to see how problems that I had experienced were dealt with. It also gave me a yardstick for comparison with the Black Spars, which are my real love. I found the one European sparrowhawk that was being flown, most interesting. She was only marginally bigger than our Red breasted sparrowhawk but had a huge heart, tackling everything that flew, including mallards, and actually holding a hen pheasant. The management of a small accipiter like this in the British climate must be fairly exacting. I spent one day out with the longwings. Once again we had excellent country and plenty of quarry but the weather conditions were not conducive to good flying and none of the birds performed in the heavy air. Well, one can't have everything and I know that this was not a reflection of the birds or their falconers.

On the final night of the field meet I was invited to make a brief

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speech at the strakenlechan (a laying out of the game) in praise of the quarry. In this I made mention of the wonderful brotherhood of falconry which unites falconers around the world. After the hospitality and friendship we had enjoyed this speech came right from the heart and I was grateful for this opportunity to try to express myself to all the wonderful folk who had contributed to the memorable few days that Sylvia and I had been given. Afterwards we returned indoors for the banquet, which was a suitably festive event, followed by an auction at which David Jones made a most entertaining auctioneer. The following morning, with mild hangovers, it was time to say farewell to new friends once again. Hopefully we will be able to extend South African hospitality to you in the years to come.

We travelled with Martyn Paterson to Visit Nick Fox's establishment in south Wales. Unfortunately I was

unable to meet Nick, who was away, but found his set up a real eye-opener. Once again there was a lot to see and learn and some of the tips have already been useful back home. One of my abiding impressions will be the outpouring of lust when Martyn walked into the courtyard in view of all the imprint falcons. With that number of passionate suitors, no wonder he has subsequently fled to Morocco. The sheer scale of the work entailed in managing this number of breeding birds successfully is breathtaking. I was particularly interested in steps taken to satisfy the authorities on the paternity of progeny, as this is one of the thorny issues that I have to tackle back home.

The final leg of our journey was upon us and it was a quick trip back to Weston-Super-Mare and farewell to Martyn, Dave and Lindsay, and to Nomad who had given me so much pleasure in the field. It was with heavy hearts, we set out for London

and the long trip home. Back home we found all well, although the male Black Spar I had taken for breeding had turned into an imprint and a female, but that's another story. Once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those in Britain, falconers or otherwise who contributed to making our trip so successful and enjoyable. We would particularly like to thank the President, Chairman and members of the Welsh Hawking Club for their friendship and hospitality, without whom this wonderful experience could not have happened.

I must make a final mention of Brian Paterson who taught me how to pop a rabbit and informed me that real men can pop hares. I recalled this to friend in the Free State. He looked up from his pap and wors, downed his Castle lager and said "Ag man, yust tell him, in the Karroo, real men pop Springbok, but watch out for the horns." ☒

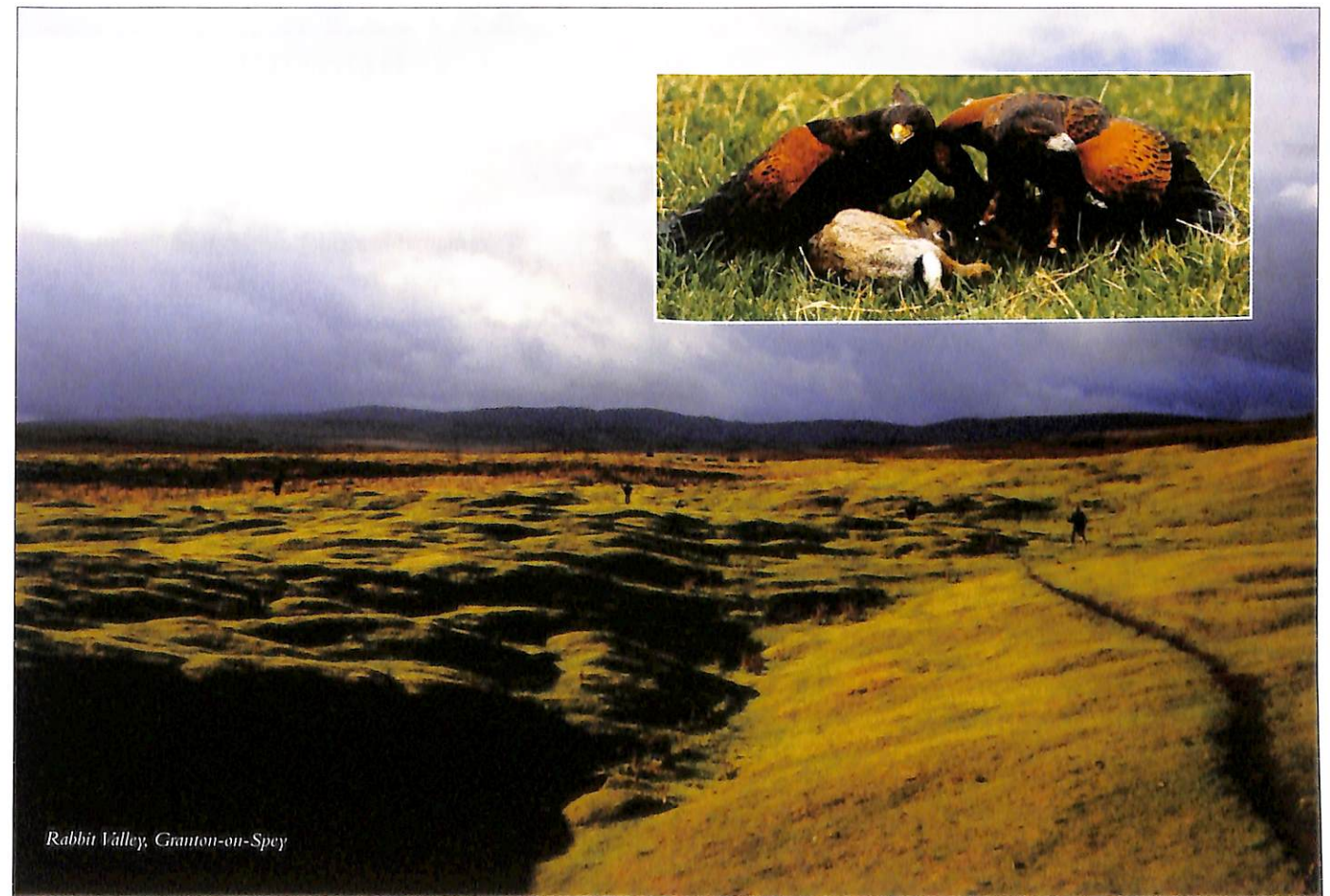
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THROUGHOUT the year there are many shows that Dave and I attend manning the stand for the Welsh Hawking Club, to promote our club and falconry. This is just a glimpse into running a two day event at 'The Midland Game Fair'. We drove up the day before towing the formidable caravan after asking our trusted friend 'Lisa' to feed the Hawks and Owls that we left at home. Now Dave and I must make every effort to get to grips with the up-to-date rules and regulations of the time, that's where our monthly club meetings come in, 'Information for all'. Have we remembered all our items for display, for sale, forms etc., as these are some of the things that fund our club and sport?

It's early morning and the stand is ready for action, but it's never early enough it seems, as there are always people on the showground as soon, if not before the official opening time. After several hours of selling merchandise, chatting to members, potential members and old friends. Dave and I are ready for a break. We are pleased to see the well-known faces of the volunteer members arriving and offering to man the stand. This is most welcome by Dave as he has all the knife stands to visit, and only two days to do it in! After Dave has bought 'yet another knife' we head back to the stand to find lots of people gathering around the small arena in front of us. Our Vice Chairman Bryan Paterson has organised a talk on one of our endangered field sports, 'falconry'. The talk is well received by the public. We are now back at the stand converting non-believers and Gamekeepers to look once again at our sport.

Food is in our thoughts as the end of the day is nearing and Dave is getting restless for a tot of Grouse Whisky with friends. Securing the stand first, then sitting down to a cooked meal outside (if weather permitting) or in the caravan, followed by the obligatory trip to the beer tent! During this time we all put the world to rights before we retire for the night.

The next day is almost a repeat of Saturday, only this time there are other volunteer members who can help us with the promotion of falconry. Without the Welsh Hawking club and other falconry clubs having stands at these events the general public would think that falconry was only for the rich and Royal. ☐

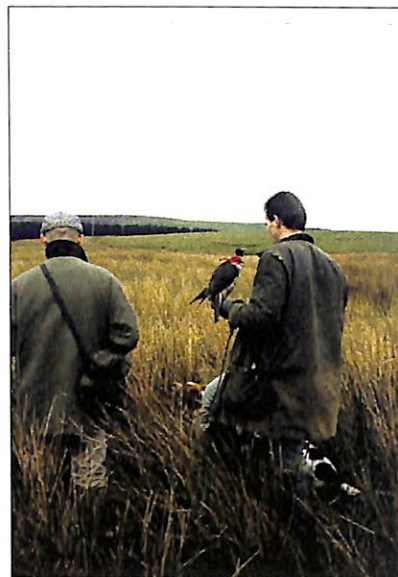
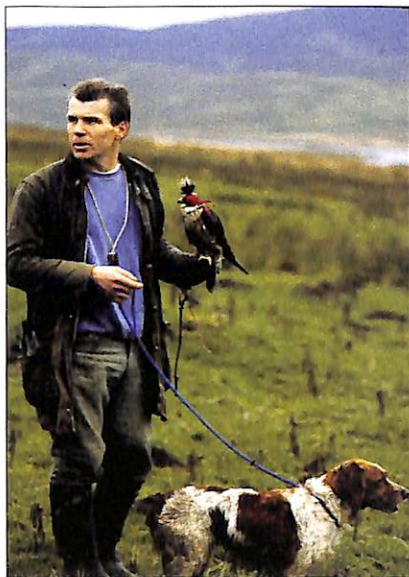
*Foot note from the editor and members:
Thanks for your good work.*

Two Days at the Stand

JEAN DIMOND



*Showground or hunting ground,
Jean has the touch.*



WELSH HAWKING CLUB INTERNATIONAL FIELD MEET 1999

ROGER JAMES
Field Officer

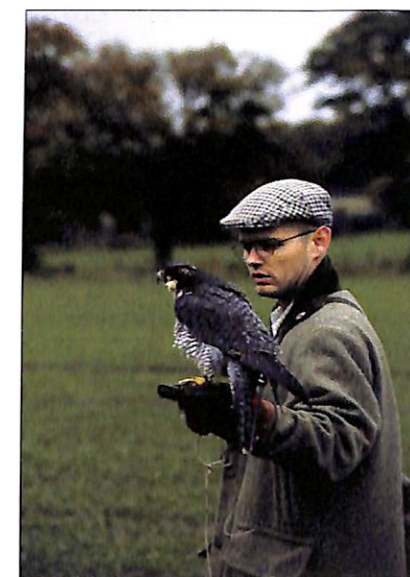
In true European style, the club held its last meet of the century, in a castle. To be precise, Ruthin Castle in Denbighshire, North Wales. This venue provided the perfect backdrop for such an auspicious occasion. The weathering ground was excellent, the rooms spacious and once the staff had realised how much falconers ate during 24 hours, the meals were very good. One major drawback was that the bar staff had no stamina and constantly refused to be as accommodating as we would have wished. No return visit here I fear.

Due to the inconsistency of rabbit populations in Wales, the only way to guarantee sport was to make pheasant hawking available each day for each party - and with only a few hiccups this worked well. But even then there were complaints from one or two, that their hawks could not catch the pheasants; I'm still working on a polite reply to them.

With the help of Terry Large and my wife June, we managed over the preceding months to secure enough ground on commercial shoots to provide some great sport and our thanks are extended to the land owners and keepers for their help and enthusiasm.

The meet was opened by Sir William Gladstone and his comments and observations on country sports were well received. Being an international club we were fortunate to have with us some eminent falconers such as: Adrian Lombard with his wife Sylvia, from the Cape Falconry Club; Hugo Clerens and his son, Ben, from Belgium; Lubor and his wife Myrka, from Czechoslovakia and a large Irish contingent.

One of the stars of the meet was a female spar, who behaved like a female gos, chasing rabbits and pheasants with the best of them! The main tally, of course, was provided by the gosses and harris's,....rabbit, pheasant, moorhen, duck and squirrel. Due to the circumstances of field meets, the long wings



never achieve a high score, this however must be the first one where they didn't catch a thing!

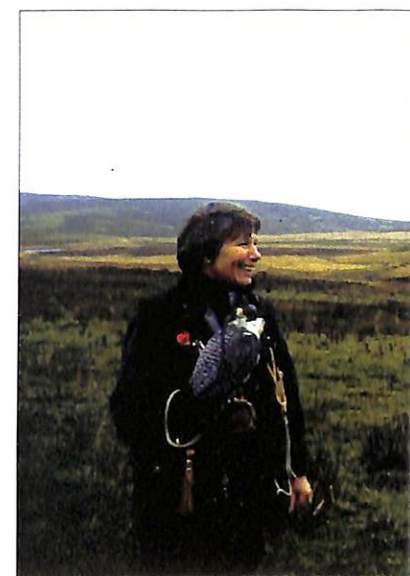
A great deal of fun was had at the banquet on the last night with a large raffle and generous auction. I think I speak for the whole club when I say we owe many thanks to those who so generously offered prizes, in particular Brian Paterson our chairman of Vice. Thanks must also go to those who parted with their cash, I'm still not sure whether our Irish contingent had enough money left to get them back home. Finally, to those who say treasurers are tight fisted, I'd like to draw your attention to Jean Dimond, who won the telemetry set and graciously returned it to be auctioned.

One falcon was unfortunately lost and a female gos flew through a cottage window. The latter was lucky to escape with nothing more than a head

ache and the club was generous enough to compensate the cottage owner.

Arthur Newborne, an ex falconer, was our host on one of the days and understood what everyone wanted, providing good sport for all. Not only that but he offered to help with the next field meet and because of this we've decided to base the 2000 meet at the Hanmer arms hotel, near Arthur's shoot.

Although this was a large and fairly high profile meet, we seemed to judge the costs about right, the club only having to pay out £34 of funds. With this in mind the cost to members for our forthcoming meet will be considerably less, but still every hawking party will be hunting over commercial shoots. Let's hope the falcons have better luck this time! ☒



...other uses!

KEVIN RIACH

Write an article for the Austringer - well that sounds easy enough! As a professional falconer, I get to do a lot of flying and I regularly face various challenges in pursuit of this noble art. Literally dozens of things spring to mind, but where to start . . . hey, this is not so easy after all!

Professional falconers occasionally come in for some flack (believe it or not). Directed not so much at them, but more for the types of birds we fly. We've all heard comments such as, get the thing hunting, what a waste and if only it was a proper falconer's bird! (good one that). So I've decided then to face up to the hecklers and offer a little food for thought on demonstration birds and their other uses.

The nature of my business involves displays at hotels, country houses and corporate entertainment. My birds tend to be around large numbers of people and consequently I use nearly all socially imprinted birds. The falcons are very relaxed and fly superbly to the lure even after lengthy periods of free flying.

I am lucky enough to be quite busy in the winter, taking guests hawking, so I get to use the imprints here as well. How can you use an imprinted demonstration bird to aid hawking you're asking? well here's how.

During the Partridge season I fly at least five days a week, one to three falcons at any one time. Last season I flew a very good Pere/Lanner hybrid male called Blaine. He finished the season with 39 grey partridges under his belt, not to mention dozens of knock-downs. I do put a lot of greys down so I am nearly always guaranteed to find a couple of coveys with the dog each time I go out, until later on in the year.

I find, after 3 months of being flown fairly regularly, they get to know what's coming. They will clamp very well while there is a falcon on the wing, but will run as quick as a redleg given the slightest chance of evasion. Last season, by November, partridges could be seen running into the distance at the first glimpse of my red van.

I needed a way to keep the partridge down while I could get into a position that would give my hunting bird the best chance and knowing how tight they sit while a falcon is on the wing I decided to try an experiment.

This is where my demonstration bird got the chance to prove his worth as part of a hunting team. Frost, as he is called is my hand reared, tame hacked and socially

imprinted lanneret and with his help I was about to dispel all thoughts as to the uselessness of demonstration birds out hunting.

I approached the hunting ground as usual, in my red van, only this time as soon as I'd parked, I put Frost on the wing. Then out with the binoculars. I could see seven birds in the distance run for about ten yards then squat to the ground, completely out of sight of me and the hawk. I kept Frost up for about five minutes, while I walked closer onto the ground, then tossed out the lure to bring him back. So far so good. Now, speedily, I swapped birds and it was now all up to Blaine the game hawk. He always mounts well, refusing to check at any distraction until he reaches his pitch at about two hundred and fifty feet. With him looking for easy lift and setting sails every thirty seconds or so, this took him about five minutes to achieve.

Now he was over to where I last saw the partridge. The dogs get some scent and it looks promising, a few more yards and the dogs are pointing. A quick flick of the glove and Blaine is right overhead, I run in and up get about nine partridges, Blaine flicks over, stoops and binds neatly to the head of the covey. Another partridge in the bag but thanks to who, Blaine or Frost?

The only way to assess the advantage and true worth of Frost as part of the hunting team, was to repeat the days hunting as soon as possible. So without Frost's participation, the following day it was all left up to the dogs and Blaine.

On arrival I spot the covey about one hundred yards away from the feeder. Blaine was put on the wing swiftly and as normal starts mounting. I can't see the partridge, but presume they've squatted down, so I march in with the dog. Blaine is overhead, a little bit higher than yesterday and holding well. The dogs run on and on, with Blaine directly overhead about three hundred feet and no game, a game hawker's nightmare! Blaine follows, but still no partridges. I continue to run the dogs along the hedgerow and they get a scent. At last just as Blaine is thinking of bailing out onto a pylon - he's been up for twenty five minutes - I wave the glove to bring him into position. I looked around only to find the dogs running on again, all the way to the bottom of the hedge and into a small wood. Sanctuary for partridges. The next ten minutes were spent bringing down a falcon to the lure that had remounted twice, while I kicked up great sods of earth. We've all been there! Was this due to Frost's exclusion? I needed more evidence.

The following day we all had a break, but the next day we were there again. Same as usual but this time Frost in hand. A small covey were located, but a little too close to the road. Another covey was spotted only about one hundred yards from cover. I put up Frost for about ten minutes and the partridges squatted tight before I brought him back down to the lure. Then it was up to Blaine, he mounted well and five minutes later with dogs on a scent I walk up and wave the glove. With Blaine nicely overhead eight partridges get up and he

puts in a nice stoop. The covey splits and Blaine switches target. Falcons rarely succeed when they do this and Blaine was no exception, oh well nice stoop anyway.

So can demonstration birds play a role as part of a hunting team? Well I think so. Putting up an imprinted demonstration falcon over my hawking ground, prior to flying a parent reared game falcon, definitely clamped the game down and consequently I had some great late season flying on game that would otherwise have run on. I would not expect all keen game hawkers to rush out and imprint a falcon this summer purely for this purpose. I am just stressing what worked for me on my ground.

We all fly birds for different reasons but whether hawks or falcons we all share the same passion, along with a constant quest for knowledge, that brings with it, the enjoyment of flying a predatory bird. It's nice to pass on that knowledge and I am privileged to be able to do that through my profession. By the time you read this the imprints for this year will be well on their way, including my own, but this season with another job to do! ☒



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a First Year Goshawk for an Apprentice

DAVID JONES

I won't bore you with the social imprinting methods that were used on our male Finnish Goshawk 'Nomad', only to say thanks to Mike Tucker for his help whilst I was on holiday.

The first season of this brave, handsome hawk was filled with wonder and determination. In the initial training and manning of Nomad I used my partner Lindsay Graham who had never flown a hawk before. I said to Lindsay "You'll have to learn to fly him or he will spend his life in an aviary." He was just a small downy chick at the time, and my emotional blackmail worked! (ha)

This was a good way to introduce Lindsay to fly a Goshawk, then she could hang out with me, 'good plan' and do some driving after I have a few drinks at the end of a day's hawking. With my supervision and her patience she became my apprentice and has earned the respect of other falconers that have seen her fly.

Nomad's first flight was on Partridge that he took in the air, then flew into a wood and chased a roe deer holding his Partridge in clenched talons, hmmm! 'This hawk has attitude.'

After we'd got over the renowned teenage tantrums that lasted for 2-3 weeks, he settled down and got to grips with Pheasant. This was to become his main quarry. Lindsay read all the books and had countless discussions with me, along the lines of, 'don't make the mistakes that I made.' Her training of this Hawk was more methodical than mine, as being a hunter I can be drawn away from the main plan a little to readily. The steadiness of Nomad was remarkable and he is the most amenable Goshawk I have ever seen. On several occasions we decided to share this hawk with other Austringers as Lindsay had commitments on certain days. Nomad, an eyass social imprint, had to be flown on a daily basis. In all, eight Austringers flew him and all caught Pheasant, Rabbit and Quail.

The roll of honour was:

*Adrian Lombard (Cape Falconry Club) 7 Pheasants 3 Rabbits and 1 wild Quail.
Mick Cane 1 hen Pheasant,
Mark Gardener 1 cock Pheasant,
Bryan Paterson 2 cock Pheasants,
Julian Godfrey 1 hen Pheasant,
Jean Dimond 2 cock Pheasants and then myself 4 cock Pheasants.*

Lindsay made up the rest of his 49 kills he also bagged a few Magpies from our Jeep window.

His flying weight was 820g (1lb 13oz) in the last 3 months of his season and cock Pheasants were his favourite quarry. At the Welsh International meet he was found sharing a cock pheasant with Mike West's (parent reared) female Goshawk.

A month later he was sharing another cock pheasant with my (social imprint) female Gos. No life threatening aggression was shown at the time of these events. Nomad jumped off the cock Pheasant that he shared with my hawk, straight to Lindsay's glove.

You can see from this article, just how effective a really good apprenticeship could be. This beautiful imprint has no known vices and Lindsay now has the confidence and hawk management skills, to fly a Goshawk solo or in the company of other falconers. An outstanding achievement for just one year and along with a continued quest for knowledge and the support from myself as mentor, she has already indicated that this year she wishes to fly a Peregrine. ☒



Blind Date

An international 'blind date' organised between the UK and Spain has led to the first Red Kite to be hatched in captivity in the UK.

The baby, the offspring of a male Welsh Red Kite and a female Spanish Red Kite, was hatched on Sunday 30 April and set a new world record for the Gloucestershire-based National Birds of Prey Centre, where the parent birds are living.

The Red Kite suffered a serious decline and almost became extinct in the last century, with only a small pocket of around 20 individuals in mid-Wales. However with the help of conservation projects and release programmes by groups such as the Welsh Kite Trust and English Nature, the Red Kite is now making a slow return to areas in Wales, England and Scotland.

Currently only three inches long and weighing 55 grams, the new baby will eventually have a 5 foot wing-span and will sport the beautiful, red, brown and grey-blue adult plumage, together with the famous forked tail.

The young Red Kite was in a special incubator, along with several other species of baby raptors, looked after by Chief Incubation Technician, Martyn Paterson, a WHC member.

It is planned that this Kite will be paired up and used for further breeding. The Centre would like to release Red Kites in the area long term and it would be very special if they were bred at the Centre for this purpose. However enough have to be bred to make it a viable project.

The young bird will be trained and flown at the Centre for its first year, with another Red Kite before starting its maternal career.

For further details, please call the National Birds of Prey Centre on 01531 80286.

MUD, MATES & MEMORIES

PAUL DOOLEY

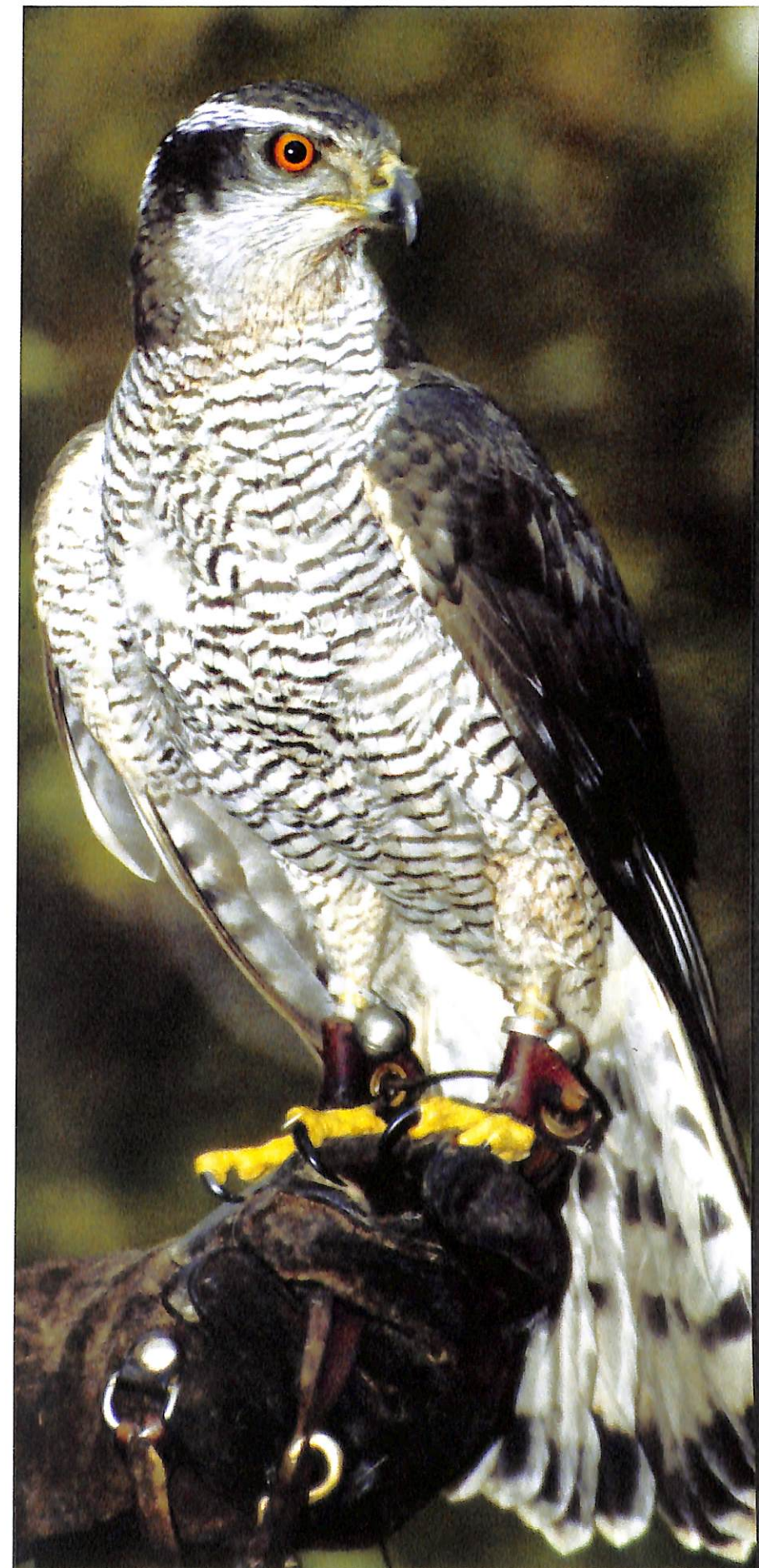
I ENJOYED the article by my friend Neil McCann in last years edition of the Austringer, but his comments about my Gos were perhaps a little flattering. True enough she did fly rather well, when Neil came up to visit my gamekeeper/stalker friend in Sutherland, with whom I was staying at the time, but she didn't always fly like that back home on Merseyside.

Perhaps I had better start at the beginning and tell the tale, of this, my first Goshawk.

She was about 11 years old when I came by her. Lots of 'careful' previous owners is what the advert would have read. I later wondered if some of these previous owners were talking about the same bird or if any of them, had actually ever flown her. Their scales must have certainly been calibrated vastly different to mine if their flying weights were to be believed. Prior to me getting her she had been in a breeding aviary for the past couple of years but had a greater desire to eat her mate than breed with him! So with breeding plans shelved she came to me as a hunting hawk.

I manned and re-trained her, flying her at mainly rabbits. She did take the odd pheasant but was definitely more tuned to rabbits.

In October '97 I lost her for three weeks, due to a transmitter failing when she was on a kill in very dense cover. Luckily up in the northern regions of the club we have some members who are rather good at apprehending stray hawks. To these fellow members I was greatly indebted when we finely got her back. I don't need to name the lads who gave up their time and shared their skill, they know who they are. To me, when other members rally round and help when hawks are lost like



this and disaster is turned to triumph, epitomises the true spirit of this club.

She was never quite the same bird again after her little spell at liberty. When I set about re-training her again, for she had gone completely wild. It was as though a little part of her was still out there in the woods. She was originally an imported passage bird so perhaps her spell of freedom had rekindled some memories from her youth. I often struggled with her from this point on. If she missed her slip and threw up into a tree she would now be looking for something else to chase in preference to returning to my fist or the lure.

On my regular pilgrimages up the far north of Sutherland things were always better - perhaps her finest hours. No trees up there you see. I had some good sport up north with her on those highland bunnies and she always behaved impeccably.

Disaster struck days before Christmas '98, whilst hawking on a north Wales shoot. I accidentally slipped her, or rather her jesses slipped from my glove in a fierce gust of wind that carried her away. It was then a case of chase the Goshawk for about half an hour as she went self hunting. She flew at a rabbit, missed it and then threw up into a tree. As I was racing over towards her she spotted another rabbit and away she went again. She missed this rabbit as well and then switched her attention to a cock pheasant. She crossed the river Dee which was in heavy flood and disappeared into a wood.

Unfortunately the river was the march/boundary and we were not allowed on the other side, in any case the nearest bridge was a few miles down stream. After fruitlessly swinging the lure for about half an hour (precious time wasted as we were latter to find out) it was decided to risk it, boundary or not and go to the wood on the other side. Terry Finnegan and Mick Fagan held the fort whilst myself and Neil McCann drove off looking for the bridge. We duly found it, crossed the raging

river and headed back upstream along a meandering, muddy and heavily rutted dirt track. We got stuck more times than I care to remember, despite having a four wheel drive vehicle. Time was running out and the shadows were beginning to lengthen. At which point bad turned to worse and the vehicle got really bogged down. So much so in fact, that we decided, with failing light, to run the last half mile or so, telemetries drawn!

We were both getting really strong telemetry signals, we were close to her. It was Neil who actually pinpointed her and I got within about one yard of her as she stepped off the remains of a cock pheasant. It had been well over an hour by now and she had gorged herself.

My breathing was heavy and laboured, it had been a difficult hour and the tension was mounting. As she stared at me with those wild Gos eyes I slowly crept towards her, glove outstretched. With the failing light the situation took on a serene, almost dreamlike ambience. The only sound I could hear was the pounding of my heart, as I edged ever closer.

She was like a coiled spring that could release any moment. Then, in instant, it was over. She sprung off the ground into a tree and started to ladder upwards. She had evaded me, I was so near yet so far. She was soon high up in the tall trees, on a treacherously steep and muddy bank, above the raging river.

It was dark now, very dark and we had to reluctantly return to the bogged in vehicle. It took us about another hour to get out of that marshy field and back onto the dirt track. Our troubles though, were only just beginning. We were then, quite 'enthusiastically' apprehended by a forester who accused us of stealing Christmas trees. It took quite a while to convince him of our true business.

We met back up with the others and spirits were very low as we drove home. Only people who have lost a hawk themselves know that feeling, it can not be described. The

next morning, in the time honoured fashion Mick Fagan and I were back as the dawn was breaking, armed to the hilt with all of the usual kit for retrieving a Gos. I think that we may have been successful to, had the friendly forester from the day before not turned up again at a crucial moment and frightened her away.

At four o'clock that afternoon, as darkness fell, we lost telemetry contact. We got stuck in the mud again to. I had to get Mick to push me out. His face was bright red and he was shouting loudly, all manner of strange words that I had never heard before as the spinning wheels of the vehicle sprayed him with mud. We eventually got out after a lengthy detour across several sheep fields and up a very steep and slippery bank. Oh the joys of off roading, in the dark, in the middle of nowhere on someone else's land!

We were actually granted permission to go onto the land, over the boundary that morning and word was spreading fast amongst the local keepers that a Gos was on the loose. One keeper actually blamed us and our Goshawks for the decline of the grouse population in Wales!

I'm afraid that there is no happy ending to this tale for we never did get the bird back despite every effort being made over the following weeks. I have thanked all of the lads privately many times for their help. I would now like to conclude by thanking them all publicly in our club magazine. Not just the lads (and lady) who were directly involved, but also the many members who offered to help and the members who live in the area where she was lost, who smoothed things over with the local keepers. Some members even turned out on boxing day with me. Thank you all. I hope all members had a good season with no losses. ☺

CAGE SIZES FOR RAPTORS

NEIL FORBES FRCVS

Ever since 1981, legislation has been in place which makes it an absolute offence for any one to confine any bird (of any species) in a container such that it cannot freely stretch its wings in length, width or breadth. The exact definition has been often argued in court, but in essence the common understanding is that the birds cage must be no smaller in any of the three dimensions, than the birds wing span from wing tip to wing tip.

There are three exemptions, namely when birds are in transit, whilst on display at commercial exhibitions (for a period not exceeding 72 hours), or when under veterinary care.

One difficulty, which has always existed, is the meaning of 'confine', in relation to time. Technically once a bird is shut in such a container even for 5 seconds an absolute offence has been committed, on the other hand this would be ridiculous and it would be highly unlikely that such a case would ever be taken to court. But the question remains 'where is that dividing line?' One can imagine a situation where a pair of aviary birds are caught up and placed in boxes for a couple of hours whilst the aviary is cleaned or repaired, would such an act be a breach of the law?

Many laws relating to birds are ambiguous, difficult to interpret or implement. An example is in relation to legislation affecting welfare in transit. Consider the transit of goats, sheep, calves etc where animals must be fed, watered and rested every 8 hours. However, in relation to the transit of birds, they should be fed, watered and rested as required. In many respects this is understandable, as no single piece of legislation could be relevant or correct when dealing with over 9000 species of birds.

Returning to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, technically it is an offence to confine a bird, for any period of time (e.g. over night), in a cage of size smaller than its full wing span from wing tip to wing tip. It is also true that no prosecuting authority is likely to take a case against any keeper for a minor breach (i.e. 10 minutes in such a box). However keepers should be aware that if for any reason (genuine or as a consequence of a malicious information) the Police, RSPCA, RSPB should be obliged to investigate your bird keeping, once time and money have been expended in investigating a situation, it may be considered that they have to justify that investigation by seeking to serve a summons for some offence. In such a situation what may seem a minor offence in your eyes, may be considered worthy of action in theirs.

This subject comes to the fore at this, following the conviction of Daniel Keeber (formerly of Shire Falconry) of one count of cruelty to a Barn Owl (by leaving it in a

dirty box without a perch, such that its feathers became soiled), 2 charges of displaying birds to the public without Article 10 licences and 30 charges under 'Section 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act' for keeping birds over night (for periods of up to 16 hours) in sub sized boxes. As a consequence of these charges Daniel is automatically banned from keeping or controlling schedule 4 birds for a 5 year period, he was given an unconditional discharge and ordered to pay costs of £2000.

Whilst it is well known that many Falconry Centres (in particular those with no resident staff) as well as private keepers do often box birds over night and at other times for reasons of security or convenience, it is now abundantly clear that such action may not be tolerated.

Keepers should remember that the 'Wildlife and Countryside Act', along with the 'Cruelty to Animals Act' and other animal or wildlife related legislation, is on statute for the laudable purpose of protection of individual or groups of animals. Whilst such legislation may seem to be inconvenient to keepers, one should realise that they are for the benefit of the animals in our care, who are not in a position to look after their own interests.

Some keepers will inevitably continue to breach the law of the land and many will get away with it. I would sincerely request that all keepers do abide by these standards, considering them to be the basic minimum welfare standards for the benefit of the birds in our care, as well as for the public perception of our sport. ☺

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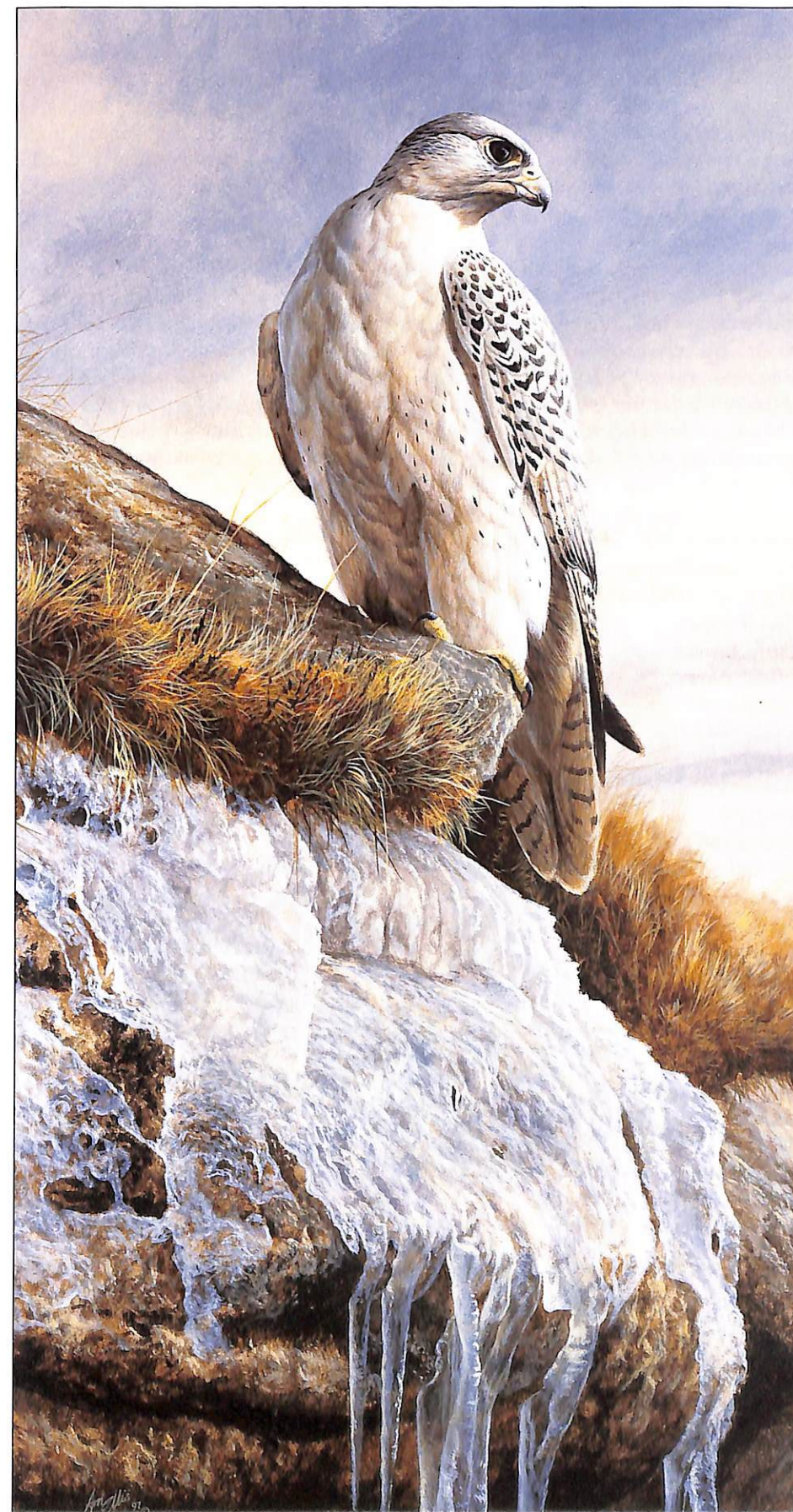
Please note we cannot comment on cases which are already under the care of another vet,
unless they come to us for a second opinion consultation.



Goshawk taking rabbit in snow - Andrew Ellis



Goshawks at nest - Andrew Ellis



White Gyr Falcon - Andrew Ellis

The African Goshawk

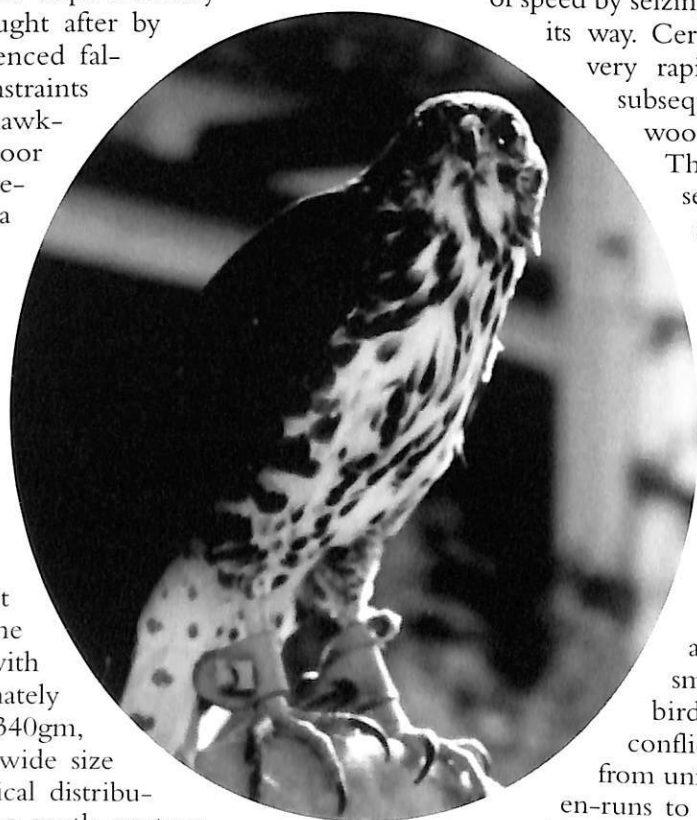
Falconry's forgotten gem

ADRIAN LOMBARD

Ex africa aequae semper novis so it is said, but the African Goshawk is not entirely new and is, indeed mentioned by Jack Mavrogordato in his classic book *A Hawk for the Bush*. His comments are none the less, somewhat disparaging and he fails to recognise this little hawk's virtues.

The African Goshawk has long been a popular beginner's bird in southern Africa and is the recommended first bird for novices in the Cape Falconry Club. This bird is also sought after by some of the more experienced falconers who have time constraints or limited access to game hawk-ing. I suspect that it's poor press is partly due to its relegation to the position of a beginners bird whereas it should more properly be seen as the ideal suburban hawker's bird and many may envy beginners having the chance to fly such an aggressive little hunter.

The African Goshawk (or Af-Gos to its friends) goes under the scientific name of *Accipiter tachiro*. It is somewhat larger than the European sparrowhawk, with males hunting at approximately 220gm and females at 340gm, although there is a fairly wide size range within its geographical distribution. This extends from the south western Cape along the eastern part of southern Africa to Mozambique, Zimbabwe, northern Botswana, northern Namibia, to the Congo in the west and Ethiopia in the east. They are attractive birds; the immature individuals being brown on the back, with white to buff under-parts that have large vertical black streaks, while mature birds are a dark bluish slate with horizontal brown barring on the breast. Immature birds have a greenish eye that changes to yellow with maturity. They have relatively thick legs and a heavy beak for an accipitor, hence earning them the appellation of Goshawk. It has several salient virtues which make it an interesting falconry bird. It is an amazingly level tempered hawk, particularly for an accipitor, and quickly learns to tolerate all sorts of



disturbance and even fairly rough handling. It is not unusual for a wild bird to feed off the glove, in the sitting room with dogs and children about, one day after capture. They are seldom made to the hood simply because there is little point in it. Possibly the reason for this apparent good nature lies in the bird's hunting behaviour. It is a great opportunist, making up for its lack

of speed by seizing every advantage that comes its way. Certainly they appear to adapt very rapidly to new situations and subsequently are thriving in the wooded suburbs of Cape Town.

They are, however, somewhat secretive and so not frequently seen, even when nesting in the garden and so are sometimes considered uncommon by the ill-informed. Their nests are notoriously difficult to find as they are small and well hidden in bushy trees, but we have several records of these nests in built up suburbs. The young fledge relatively late, in mid-summer and we are annually confronted with a small flood of young passage birds which have come into conflict with man. These range from uninjured birds caught in chicken-runs to the mutilated victims of car accidents and the healthier specimens provide

a good source of falconry birds.

Their opportunistic nature and aggression make them very suitable for falconry but they are somewhat slow compared to other accipitors such as the Red-breasted and European sparrowhawks. Hunting methods must thus be adapted to suit them. There are two popular methods of hunting these birds. Most falconers start by slipping their Af-Gos out of a moving car window at roadside birds in the same fashion that the American Kestrel is flown. This gives the bird the advantage of both surprise and speed and some fairly dashing chases can result. Such hunting requires some caution as birds can be injured or killed in traffic. It can also result in some fairly startled spectators.

Early one Sunday morning a friend of mine flew his hawk at a shrike sitting on a gatepost and the subsequent kill was made on the front porch of the house. He scuttled up to collect his bird and, while doing so, he looked up to see a couple sitting up in bed, eyeing him with amazement. Being a quick thinker, he raised his hat, sang out "good morning" and fled with his Hawk, leaving them gaping. Suburban dogs can also be a problem and one sometimes has to be fairly slick at scrambling over fences and hedges. The other method involves simply walking and looking for set ups and opportunities, in other words trying to think like an Af-Gos and get him into the situations where he performs best. This method is time consuming but highly satisfying and lends itself to the more talented youngsters with time and ability. Some falconers have trained their hawks to lie in the palm of their hand while creeping up on quarry then throw the bird like a dart.

The Af-Gos will hunt a wide range of quarry. The males are small bird specialists and appear more agile than the larger females. The females are capable of taking larger quarry including feral pigeon, stone curlew and even female Cape francolin which can weigh 700gm. The francolin can be flown over a pointer but are then never taken on first phase and seldom on the second, although the hawk will mark the francolin in tightly. More satisfactory hunts come from trying to creep up on francolin without a dog and ambush them. Inevitably one has a fairly low success rate but this does not appear to deter the hawk, which, with correct management, will maintain its enthusiasm and seize opportunities when they arise. We have an abundance of introduced problem-bird species including European starlings and feral pigeons in the western Cape and Indian Mynah birds elsewhere in the country. These are readily found in suburban situations and we even earn Brownie points with the conservationists for catching them!

The Af-Gos is no paragon and does have its down sides. I have already noted that it is not particularly fast and this was recognised by Mavrogordato. He also mentions its fragile train and this is a significant

headache. It has a long tail and the feathers are soft and brittle. Young birds tend to mantle and, as it is a bird that normally inhabits wooded terrain, this trait is exacerbated when kills are made in the open. Attempts to mount a tail bell may result in the deck feather dropping out. Attempts to hang a tail guard on a bell mounted on two decks inevitably results in the loss of both feathers. Meticulous attention to tail care and free mewing are the only solutions I have been able to come up with. One of our members has developed a method of imping bent feathers with a stiff wire bristle and I hope that this will become more widely practised with the principle that a stitch in time saves nine. The other fault of this little hawk is probably related to its intelligence, as it will rapidly become fist bound if flown by an inexperienced falconer who fails to get it hunting quickly or to provide it with situations where it can be successful.

The Af-Gos is a small accipitor and thus is not as robust as the usual beginner's birds such as the Harris Hawk or Red Tailed Hawk. This must be recognised by the falconer and careful attention to weight is essential. This becomes particularly critical if the weather is variable or the hawk is flown hard in wet and cold conditions. Similarly this is not a bird that will tolerate infrequent or spur of the moment hunting and it does require a constant commitment from its handler.

This hawk would be a good option for the enthusiastic and conscientious falconer, who lives in the suburbs and does not have ready access to game or rabbits. In fact I suspect that Londoners would be awarded medals for cleaning up the flying rats. Granted that the mind boggles at the prospect of trying to recover a somewhat overweight hawk that has taken a stand on Nelsons column. Its range of quarry could well include sparrows, starlings, magpies, rooks and crows. Squirrels are taken in the Cape but are a dangerous prey and young rabbits may well be within the capability of the females although their trains may not stand the rough usage.

We have been spoilt by ready access to wild taken birds and thus breeding of these hawks is only in its infancy. Indications are that they will breed relatively easily in captivity so a source of these hawks for export may well develop in the future. ☒

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The gamekeeper's daughters

DAVID JONES

A SMALL group of WHC members were invited to a paid day's hawking at the famous Bowden shoot in Devon. We arrived after a 3-hour journey and were greeted by the landowner Mr George Heywood, whose 3,000 acre shoot is renowned for both its quality and quantity of game. We followed Martin Shute, the gamekeeper of the estate, into cover crops that were bursting with flights. Even at this late stage in the shooting season, pheasant and partridge were abundant and this was only 50 of the 3000 acres.

Martin's good lady Denise, brought along two of their young daughters Kelsey age 10 (top) and Chloe aged 7 to see the hawks fly. Throughout the day these young girls bombarded us with questions on falconry. It reminded me how keen I was at that age. The girls were being brought up the right way, to see and experience reality. Their views were countrified and not polluted with misinformation, where Mr Fox and Mr Rabbit walk hand in hand singing zip-a-de-do-da into the sunset.

When the hawks flew, Kelsey's face lit up with excitement. She witnessed some really long flights and the rewards when both falconer and hawk returned with a bulging game bag.

She was the keener of the two girls and had bought a falconer's glove, from Martin Jones by mail order, which she wore with pride. This glove became highly visible during the day and was yearning for some kind falconer to say, "would you like to hold my bird".

Our bags were full of game and with crops bulging the birds were content, when the moment arrived to christen the glove. Kelsey made a fist and a Game hawk was placed on her outstretched arm. Kelsey's concentration was such, that if we had all left, it would have taken her 30 minutes to realise that we'd gone (and she wouldn't have minded at all). Mum quickly captured the moment on camera, while we set up a similar opportunity for Chloe.

A well managed shoot, good company and at least one new falconer in the making, the last day of the season had become the best thanks in part to the gamekeeper's daughters. ☀



The Game Hawk . . .

I'd always longed to own

ANDREW ELLIS



IN AUGUST 1998, Leonard Hurrell, a falconry companion, came into to the possession of an attractive wild tiercel of that year. The bird, not long out of the eyrie, was picked up badly infested with worms, very low and in all probability with little hunting experience.

Being an accomplished falconer and knowing the demands made on ones resources in the rehabilitation of such a bird, Leonard carefully considered the best plan of action. He decided to address the main issue of condition, along with physical and mental development.

It took the best part of the season to achieve these results and the birds condition improved immeasurably as quality food, controlled flying and careful handling offered their rewards. Leonard once again then had to decide what was best for the bird. Quarry was difficult to take this late in the season and would prove difficult for a young inexperienced bird, so it was decided to call it a day for the time being and to

put him into an aviary to see out his moult.

I'd followed the progress of this tiercel, during his first stage of rehabilitation, quite closely and Bravo as he was now named always managed to find his way into conversations between Leonard and myself.

Until this time I had been flying a three times intermewed Barbary tiercel at partridge, but I had to stop flying him because of a recurring injury. This had left me without a bird for the 1999/2000 season. So when Leonard suggested I take Bravo for his next and most exciting rehab stage I jumped at the chance. Our aim was to fly him mainly at partridge, but balanced with other quarry, to give him as much a rounded education as possible. Our overall objective was to release him in spring 2000.

Leonard had previously achieved this with many birds including a lovely female merlin. She was fitted with a long-term radio transmitter, provided by Dr Robert Kenward

from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and hacked. The transmitters are placed on the back of the falcon using a very lightweight harness. It's working life of about two years (luck prevailing) allows the long term hacking of an individual bird.

We hoped to follow the same procedure with Bravo, in an attempt to expand our understanding of what happens to rehab birds, that are flown as falconry birds, prior to subsequent release. Dr. Kenward had previous experience of doing this with a number of different species including Goshawks, Buzzards, Sakers and Merlins. Bravo was to be his third Peregrine.

So in late October 1999, having had terrific fun flying a jack merlin, I took charge of the rescued Bravo. He came out of the moulting pen kicking and screaming at about 11lb 6ozs and looking terrific after his first moult. He started flying at about 11lb 4ozs and after a short period stooping to the lure I decided

to introduce him to waiting on. I always use the thrown lure method as described in Dr Nick Fox's book, teaching him to mount into the wind and only producing the lure for down wind passes. Bravo learned quickly and progress was steady and swift.

On November 12th I decided he was ready to try for a partridge. I had released some birds on my own ground and also had permission from a friend, to fly on his shoot where he had released about 200 partridge and 100 pheasant.

I decided to try one of the partridge pens on the shoot. Situated on a slope with a nice updraft coming in to give him as much lift as possible, I walked to the top edge of the cover strip where the pen was situated and put him up out of sight. After initially playing around a little with some crows, Bravo started to climb nicely over the slope. I started towards the pen but he had drifted a little wide when they flushed. It wasn't over yet though and due to his pitch being so good he managed to gain on them quickly, chasing them out of sight over the rise. Unfortunately he didn't kill, but it was a start!

Bravo progressed well from that point, always mounting well and stooping hard at anything that was flushed, even small birds. Not good traits in a pure falconry bird but excellent virtues in a rehab. He also started remounting after any unsuccessful stoop.

In early December, with the help of fellow falconer Dave Scott, I worked a strip of cover crop, with the aim of flushing some partridges across a small valley. Bravo mounted nicely to a fine pitch, in excess to 600 feet I guessed and the highest I had ever seen him go. As Bravo positioned himself over the valley, Dave worked the top of the cover whilst I worked the bottom. We planned to meet at the pen in the middle of the cover. The first birds flushed near to me, at a quarter distance up the cover, and headed out to another pen across the valley. The stoop was breathtaking, but turned into an

unsuccessful tail chase. He came back, just as high, to wait on again. Dave flushed some next, near to the top of the cover, but Bravo pulled out of the stoop just as they reached the cover on the other side. I ran around frantically, as you do in situations like this, as he waited on yet again and succeeded in flushing a single partridge that struck out across the open valley. After another fine stoop, he bound to it half way across and I rewarded him for the day.



This valley has since provided many good flights in which he has caught several more partridges and a pigeon.

In early January 2000, I was kindly invited by the Campaign for Falconry, to join a number of fellow falconers, for a longwing meet at Lambourne. This would be Bravo's first field meet.

I had the first flight of the afternoon, which went entirely to plan, with him first perching and then stooping at something in the hedgerow, all in all just the usual embarrassing field meet antics. This, of course, was just to put the other falconers at ease before he took a partridge in splendid style and

notched up his first field meet kill.

I've had many terrific flights with him since, at Duck, Snipe, Starlings and even a Golden Plover. With his confidence high, Bravo continued to go from strength to strength, not always catching, but flying consistently and always giving his all.

Those of you that have trained a rehab bird will know what's coming next and even those that haven't can guess.

The plan was to complete the second phase of a rehab programme, started by my friend Leonard, giving Bravo the necessary skills to survive on release. Trouble was I'd almost forgotten the release bit and had become strongly attached. The bird that was meant to be a stopgap had turned into the game hawk I'd always longed to own.

However, letting him have his chance back in the wild was our overriding goal, even though I had become slightly side-tracked with enjoying myself. There is a high possibility of him not making it and many would argue that he should never have been picked up at all. But I like to think, that as skilled falconers, we have the ability to help birds like Bravo have a fuller life, either in captivity or released back to the wild.

Dr Kenward has now fitted Bravo with one of his transmitters, which it is hoped, will run for at least two years. It sits neatly on his back and is weatherproof. His release will be carefully done on a tame hack basis and hopefully, with the help of fellow falconers, we will be able to track his progress. It has been a pleasure to have assisted in the rehabilitation of this fine tiercel and I'll be sad to lose him. But on the other hand, it feels good to be putting something back, lets hope he does well.

Around the world, falconers are increasingly being viewed as leading conservationists, through their involvement in projects such as this and the members of the W.H.C. are playing an active part in establishing this reputation, lets hope Bravo becomes one of our successes. ☒

Profile

By STEVE GOULDTHORPE

Alan Glasby OBE GM was born in Derbyshire and educated at Chesterfield Grammar School for boys. On leaving school he began a career as an explosives engineer that spanned 35 years and resulted in the award of the George Medal in 1974 and the OBE in 1991.

A keen competitive sportsman his main interest was target rifle shooting; major achievements in this field were the winning of two national championships, a world championship team gold medal and Her Majesty the Queens medal for champion shot in the British Army.

Although interested in wildlife and art from an early age, it was not until 1988 that Alan decided to 'have a go' at carving after an inspiring conversation with a colleague who had served in America and who had been bitten by the carving bug.

With no formal artistic or carving training he has developed his own style and methods and believes that each piece should display its own unique presence and character, his work exhibits a 'life' not often seen in modern sculptural pieces. All his current work is life size.

Although fond of all birds, future work will concentrate on life size birds of prey and game birds. Alan has now started to work in clay and mixed media to produce new original works which, along with other selected pieces, are showcased in a brochure soon to be circulated to all falconry clubs.

The Goshawk featured in the top photograph is produced in simulated bronze and is a limited edition of 250. The original carving took 18 months, but the majority of this time was spent waiting for inspiration. The bird started out to be a very large Harris hawk but reference material was inadequate for the task and when he acquired some fantastic Goshawk reference photographs and videos then the Harris hawk just had to go. The piece is entitled 'Contact' and depicts the bird having identified its next meal. The Goshawk is the largest piece in the new collection, which also features the Merlin, Peregrine (pictured), Kestrel, Tawny Owl, Little Owl and Saker falcon.

Alan is now a full time carver and sculptor and works out of Derbyshire.

Alan Glasby, The Old School House
Matlock Road, Walton Chesterfield S42 7LG
Tel: 01246 567359 E-mail: alanglasby@hotmail.com

Photographs by Jamie Collier



Puddle Ducks and Divers

MARK WILLIAMS ON DUCK HAWKING IN CANADA

UNLIKE most parts of the UK, the terrain and conditions in many parts of North America is very conducive to duck hawking. As a result, in North America, it is widely practised and they have it down to a fine art. Here in northern Alberta, Canada, we have very little in the way of upland game flying so ducks are the mainstay of our long-wing hawking. The season starts on Sept 1st and officially goes until Dec 15th. However, the freeze up comes well before and all the ducks fly south except for a few flocks of mallards that winter here on the large open water, near the warm water run-off, from the local power stations. While the season is relatively short, the abundance of ducks, suitable land to fly and ease of access to

fly, all contribute to some pretty awesome and intense duck hawking.

Species of ducks

Most of the hawking I practised in the UK was with goshawks and to try some duck hawking was a rare treat usually only to be found at a field meet or such. Water birds such as coots and moorhens were common goshawk prey but not really that challenging. Except for the mallard, I never really studied the different species of ducks we had in the UK so I am unable to make comparisons. Here in Canada we classify the ducks into two main

categories, these being puddle ducks and divers.

Each of the different species of ducks have their own behavioural characteristics that make for a variety of flights even under the same conditions and terrain. The best types of ducks to fly are the bigger "puddle" ducks such as the mallards, gadwalls, pintail, widgeon and the slightly smaller shoveller. Of all these, the gadwall seems to be the most fearless and clean flushing ducks. Either that or they are just

plain stupid! Once they leave a body of water they don't re-enter but keep on going in an attempt to find another body of water. Because of this trait they are ideal for a young bird to fly since they give the inexperienced bird a clean shot at catching it. Mallards are in my experience the strongest and fastest flyers. They do occasionally turn back to water if hard pressed and only rarely bail out under a falcon. The pintail is a duck I have never caught. They are usually seen passing through my area in

return migration during springtime but rarely breed here, choosing to go further north instead. They are seldom caught because they are usually the last duck to flush, allowing the other ducks to go first and draw the falcon, while they pop out the back door so to speak.

The three species of teal (green-wing, blue-wing and cinnamon teal) are the smallest puddle ducks. They can be exasperating to fly since they are often difficult to flush in the first place and once airborne are prone to 'bailing out' under a stooping falcon. In the past I have had to wade into water past my knees in an

attempt to serve my falcon and sometimes one's dog can grab a reluctant duck in the water that won't flush under the falcon. Contrary to many falconers perception, a teal's flight is quite slow even though those wings are flapping like crazy.

The diving ducks (ruddy-duck and bufflehead etc.), are the most difficult to flush and in my opinion the least sporting to catch. The only time I have caught these diving ducks is when they flush with the main flocks in the initial flush and then they are 'dead in the air'. Their powers of flight are not as good as the bigger ducks, much like the coots or 'mudhens' as they are often referred to here. The joke amongst local falconers is that if you catch

one, it counts as a negative head count on your quarry list!

Hawks used

The most commonly used birds for duck hawking here are the peregrine (falcon and tiercel), prairie falcon, gyr hybrids and least of all the pure gyr. The big birds like female gyr's and female hybrids thereof, tend to intimidate even the big ducks and flushing can be a problem. Contrary to some perceptions, some of the best duck hawks I

much easier. While I do not condone flying big ducks with small tiercels, these little birds have big hearts and even though there may be smaller ducks in the fleeing flock, their confidence level is so high at times that sometimes they just 'go for it!' Sadly this also can be their undoing as was in GB's case. A bad leg injury from a high-speed impact with quarry resulted in an early retirement for this courageous little bird.

have 30 locations to choose from instead of 60! To any visitor from the UK or Europe, the abundance of game and space to fly is always a topic of conversation. Trying to fly large rivers or marshes is futile, as the ducks are nearly always able to put back in. The best set ups are small dug outs or sloughs. Large bodies of water consisting of several acres are fine providing the ducks are in sufficient numbers to encourage a flush. It is often over the big water that you see your falcon go real high since they need a good pitch to cover their 'killing cone.' Flying field ducks is another option and can make for some pretty spectacular flights.

Approach

Compared to hawking grouse, duck hawking is almost an armchair sport. We drive around looking for suitable set ups and when we find such a flight we simply pull over careful not to park in view of the ducks. It is advisable to seek landowner's permission in advance if possible. I have never had a problem gaining permission and in the area that I live I am fortunate to have numerous areas covering several thousand acres that I am able to fly. Once the telemetry is checked, the falcon is unhooded and cast off. At this point we unload the dogs from the truck and gather a few good throwing rocks while the bird takes a pitch.

It is often wise to have a dog or two to help flush or at the very least a few medium sized rocks in your pocket to throw if needed. Once the hawk is over the water and gaining altitude the ducks are very reluctant to flush. That said, some ducks get 'jumpy' if hunted a lot and flush easily. As with any set up wind direction is a big consideration. The ducks will nearly always flush into wind although often will turn downwind if the flush is orchestrated well. After a few duck flights an inexperienced bird will learn to wait on above the water and slightly up wind.

The Set Ups

The great thing about duck hawking here is that it is very much a spectator's sport. The flight starts and usually ends very close to the falconer. If one has an experienced bird flying ducks it can make for some great flying that a non-falconer can come and witness (e.g. landowners). Most of our set ups, as we refer to them, are sloughs or large ponds that are dispersed around the countryside in any good year. Occasionally we get dry years that can make for difficult duck hawking but it is still very good by European standards. It means you

Flushing

While the falcon is climbing we discretely walk into position to flush the ducks, remaining out of their sight if possible. The dogs are held back until the appropriate moment when the hawk is in position and then we send them in to make for a clean flush. I use a German Wire-haired and a German Shorthaired Pointer for this purpose. They are very adaptable for flushing and pointing as the situation demands. It is always important to get the ducks to flush cleanly, otherwise the falcon pulls out of the stoop as the straggler ducks get up and put back into water. More often than not, while the hawk is low and in the process of regaining its pitch the odd duck will panic and make a run for it and then the flight turns into a tail chase or rat hunt etc. Although often successful, the aesthetics of the flight is soured as a result. At this point I think it is appropriate to mention pitch. I find this varies depending upon the individual bird, the size of water and type of set up. Most hawks can kill ducks from anything over 150-200ft. Of course we all want to see the blistering teardrop from the heavens and a nice knock down. In reality I find the falcon decides the pitch based upon previous experience, terrain and the circumstances, much like they decide to bind or hit on any given duck flight. My birds take different pitches on different set-ups. Sometimes they are too high and by the time they get down the ducks have left the country or worse still made it to another body of water. I tend to recognise when my bird has reached its pitch for any given flight set up. Usually they set their wings and that's my signal to get the show going.

Hazards

Due to ever increasing populations in the countryside and livestock farming practices, fences and wires are the most common hazards falconers have to be concerned with. Many of us have had the misfortune to have experienced, or know of

someone who has experienced, the often-fatal consequence that a run in with a power line or fence can have. Even when you go to lengths to avoid fences the flight can go wrong and a subsequent tail chase ends in tragedy. Even as I write this article, a close friend recently lost his peregrine to a barbed wire fence and another friend his prairie falcon to a high voltage power pole. Other natural hazards we have to consider in these parts are coyotes, horned and snowy owls, redtails and

Falconry to me is a real life drama. It is about living on the edge, particularly for our birds. The best birds are confident and bold and push it to the limit. That is why they are so successful. They fly 'on the edge' all the time and sadly, this is also why if flown often and long enough, it increases the chances of them meeting with a violent and sudden demise. When I slip my falcon I never know what is store for her however I try to prepare for it. If I was not, I would not fly her and to



Gyr X Peregrine Tiercel

have seen have been the smaller peregrine tiercel. The ducks seem less intimidated by them and flush nicely under them. Again generalising here, most tiercels are naturally high flyers and so the combination makes for some spectacular flights. My tiercel anatum peregrine GB flew at 550grams (1lb.3oz) and he caught as many mallards as he did teal and gadwalls. He was probably the best bird I have flown to date. In his second season he caught 31 head in 43 days of hunting! Admittedly one has to be prepared to get in quickly and help them out where as the bigger females subdue big ducks



Gyr X Peregrine Tiercel

eagles. All are opportunists and have caused the death of many a bird, particularly when on the kill. I have had a coyote run in on my falcon while she is trying to dispatch a duck that she had just caught. Being used to any dogs proved near fatal for her. Luckily I was there just in time. Last year another friend John Campbell had his bird (which was the brother to my gyr peregrine) killed by a golden eagle. The dogs were on point over some sharp-tail and his bird was taking a pitch. He looked around prior to flushing to check its position and saw a golden eagle sweep in and fly it down.

own a hawk and not fly it for fear of losing it, is a travesty. All we can do as partners in this natural drama is to try our best to exercise good judgement and balance the risks to reduce the opportunity for Murphy's law to raise it ugly head.

In closing, let me describe one of the many great flights I had this season. We were at the Alberta Falconry Association Annual Field meet held at Stettler this past fall. Accompanying me, were some fellow club members together with three Japanese falconer guests who had come to Canada just to see some duck hawking with falcons. I put up



Molly - Anatum Peregrine Falcon

my gyr/peregrine Chase and we were to fly a large body of water. We had a sudden cold snap of weather during the night and it was sufficient to temporarily freeze some parts of this particular slough we were to fly. It was covered with big ducks so we approached with a sense of building excitement for what was to come. Chase went off some distance and came over at a great pitch. He was in top condition with over two dozen head so far this season and had caught several ducks at this meet already. As we crested the hill that separated us from the

ducks they flushed cleanly a few hundred yards below. It was a somewhat relaxed affair with no yelling and rock throwing for a change. We simply looked up and saw him come down in a blistering stoop. He flew into the flock and knocked a duck down with a whack that we could hear up the hill. The duck bounced on to the ice and Chase continued his outrun and bound to another, taking it down to the ground where he quickly subdued it. We all looked at each other and smiled. Nothing really had to be said at that point. We silently acknowl-

edged what we had witnessed and there seemed little that mere words could elaborate upon. He has since repeated double kill flights on two other occasions.

Like many falconers here, I find duck hawking great fun.

In my area, the opportunities for duck flights are far more numerable than for other quarry such as sharp-tail grouse, although the latter are somewhat more challenging.

But for sheer fun, enjoyment and close quarter flying you can't beat a good day's duck hawking, in my humble opinion. ☒



Opposite - 3/4 Gyr X 1/4 Prairie Falcon

JIM'S FIRST DOG

DERRY ARGUE

JAMES is a keen falconer but more importantly a very good friend. If ever I need a hand at building a kennel or working with the sheep, Jim is there at the end of the phone. I have only to call and he is over at the first opportunity. So when he asked my advice about getting a dog for his sport I was delighted.

Jim usually flies a goshawk and my part in the sport is to work a cocker or a springer spaniel or to handle the ferrets. Occasionally, I take out one of the old experienced pointers to see if we can get a pheasant or a partridge but mostly it will be one of the spaniels for the rabbits. So if Jim got himself an English Springer spaniel and taught it to point, I advised that he'd have a damned useful hunting companion and a breed he knew something about too.

I stressed to Jim that I didn't really think the choice of breed was important, so long as the pup came from good working stock. Even a crossbred, from two working parents, would do a good job if properly trained. But, asked Jim, wouldn't it be difficult to teach a non-pointing breed to point? I didn't think so and told him the important thing was not to let the pup learn bad habits. Most dog owners happily progress with their dogs until they suddenly realise they have problems and then it is often too late. The experienced professional trainer would never have got into that situation in the first place!

Soon after Jim decided he needed a dog (and had persuaded his wife that it would be good for the children to have a dog about the place) he became a bit of a pest! Every few hours he would phone, 'Hey, Derry, what do you know about these Navarese Partridge dogs? There's only six of the breed in the country and I really do like the look of them!' Then, later, 'Sorry to bother you again, mate, but I just read about these Curly Haired Spiggliones which once belonged exclusively to the Kings of Portugal. They were hawking dogs, you know.'

Fortunately, Jim is not a fool. I would not tolerate him for too long as a friend if he was. He finally settled for a German Wirehaired pointer. It didn't think I would, but I actually like the dog! I mean, I am both a purist

and a traditionalist . . . but I can always wear dark glasses when we are seen together and I don't suppose anyone will actually notice if I keep my cap pulled down over my eyes . . . !

Fergie, as the GWP pup was called, began to turn into a thoroughly nice character. He was bold but not too bold. And he was definitely birdy. I warned Jim that these Continental dogs are sometimes bred to tackle big game - perhaps a wounded roe or wild boar - and he must instill obedience from an early age. These are the European gamekeeper's general purpose dogs, of as much value in warning off poachers as in tracking and killing vermin up to the size of a fox (or a North Country Cheviot ewe!). But by six months Jim had the pup under good control and I needn't have worried. The pup would walk to heel, sit and stay, and come instantly to call from any distance. On my advice, and with the farmer's permission, he had walked him amongst farm livestock from an early age and checked him with the lead if he showed any inclination to be more than casually interested.

But to my mind the most important item on the itinerary would be game handling. Most of the problems owners experience with young dogs chasing sheep is because the dogs don't know what they ought to be hunting, so, like all youngsters, they experiment. I felt Jim ought to get the pup onto game in a controlled situation before the pup was eight months old. There are critical periods in a dog's life when learning is very rapid and other times when learning specific behaviour patterns slows right down.

On my advice, Jim had taught the pup to sit from about eight weeks of age, as one would train a spaniel. There's nothing new about this and it's in all the books and most of the videos. The pup is taught to sit and then must do so before being permitted to do anything it enjoys. So sit is required before meal times, before being allowed out of the kennel for exercise, and so on. Sitting exercises become the prelude to something which is fun to do so the dog actually looks forward to being told to sit.

But I wanted to see Jim's pup starting work on game before it was ten months old at the latest. Jim was a bit apprehensive. Work the dog on the grouse moor at that age? Not a bit of it, I explained. We would be working with planted and liberated game so long as pup was too naive to know the difference! Old experienced dogs are seldom fooled with 'artificial' game and only work to their full potential on wild game so this training has to be done while the dog is still young.

Almost any breed of dog can be taught to point using the line of pigeons technique. About six or seven pigeons are dizzied and laid out about three metres apart in a line running parallel to the wind. There ought to be cover enough so that the pigeons can be concealed in long grass. A pigeon is easily hypnotised by putting its heads under one wing and gently rocking the bird. Placed gently on the ground, the bird will lie like that for a few minutes before waking up and flying off! But it is important that the bird is hidden from sight so that the dog has to use its nose to locate it.

I wasn't a bit surprised that Fergie learnt to point after just three pigeons. Once he had learnt to associate the scent of the bird with the presence of another pigeon up wind, Fergie pointed stylishly in anticipation! A couple more steady points on the lead and he was allowed to hunt freely to find two more birds hidden up wind in the long grass. The technique is demonstrated in my video, *Bird Dog Basics*, and it works with nine out of ten dogs. It is not a 'trick' but a means of explaining to the dog in terms it can understand, what scent and locating game is all about.

The next step was to introduce Fergie to rabbits. This is where the help of a professional dog trainer with a big rabbit pen is so valuable. It may cost a small fee but it is well worth it. Jim would be paying in kind for my help come next clipping time! It wasn't difficult to find Fergie a rabbit in a seat and bring him up to it, on the lead, from down wind. After his experience with the pigeons he froze onto point. He was now finding both birds and rabbits by scent. As he had been taught to sit at the sight of a rolling tennis ball as a young pup, he was easily restrained and gently encouraged to sit as the bunny loped off. Two more points like this and it was enough. Never overdo the training. Keep that pup innocent so you can continue to be one move ahead.

The next step was to teach Fergie to hunt. Jim, fired with the easy success of our sessions on the pigeons and rabbits, was eager to try his pup in the fields around my farm but I warned against it. Training a dog is like building a house. Make sure the foundations are dug deep and wide. That's the dog's breeding. Note breeding, not pedigree. I don't give a hoot what it says on the piece of paper. It's what the dog has inherited that's important to me, not the opinion of someone who has seen the dog's ancestors for ten minutes at a trial. Then lay a good concrete base on which to build the walls. That concrete is the basic training. If that's wrong, the walls will fall, no

matter how good the bricklayer or how well they are constructed.

I told Jim to continue with the lessons in basic obedience and to stay away from game until I next called him. If he wanted to do some work on hunting, the best thing he could do was to cut up the meat he fed to his pup into small pieces. Then to scatter these over the two acre field he exercised the pup on daily. Learning to use his nose to find his food would teach the pup a lot and if Jim occasionally called the pup to show him where a piece of meat lay, it would create a bond of trust between them which would last a lifetime.

Two weeks later I found what I wanted. A gamekeeper friend had volunteered the information that he had a field of seeds (grass under sown to a crop of barley) which held a few pairs of partridges. The grass growing through the stubble was about six inches high and the partridges were paired up and territorial. In other words, they would lie to a point. He could tell me where each pair would be, within twenty yards in each direction. And if that wasn't good enough, he added, he had rabbits along a fringe of the moorland and there would be plenty lying out in the heather and amongst the dry beds of rushes as his lads had been ferreting them all winter. It sounded perfect and I phoned Jim at once, making a mental note to pack a joint of lamb to take over for the keeper.

Next day had us in the grass field with the gamekeeper. Fergie wondered what all the fuss was about and thought it all a game. But I had brought old Don, my eight year old pointer, and he had not run for more than a couple of minutes before slamming onto point. Fergie was brought up, on the lead, where he would get the scent that so transfixed Don and in a moment, he too was pointing! This time Don was leashed up and I nodded to Jim to take his protige forward. The pair walked forward as Fergie got more and more intense with the sweet smell of warm partridges. Then the partridges flushed and Fergie gave a start. Jim gently pressed him down, telling him softly 'Sit. sit, lad', as we watched the birds curl away over the hawthorn hedge.

I could say that Fergie's career progressed without the slightest hitch - but that would be a lie. All young dogs learn by making mistakes and Fergie was no exception. He bumped birds, ran in to point and chased, coursed rabbits and hares with the best of them. But with Jim's perversereance and patience I think there will be some good sport next winter. And we haven't even introduced the gos and the dog to each other yet, have we? Ah, but we have! Jim made sure Fergie's kennel is within sight and sound of the mews and hawk lawn so by the time we start serious training the gos will be well used to the dog. But that's where a lot go wrong. It's easy enough to get a dog to point and to congratulate yourself that the dog is trained, but unless the handler has control the job is only half done and the next thing is a dog totally out of control and a ruined hawk to boot. But you knew that without me telling you, didn't you? ☒

THE Canadian Peregrine

It's 1995 downtown Toronto: city population 3.5 million, on the 20th floor of an office tower in the midst of this concrete jungle an event was about to take place that was forever to change the life of one of its occupants, Mark Nash.

THE DAY was like any other early spring day mad rush to get to work, coffee and bagels to go from Starbucks, full diary of things to do, not enough time in the day, and it's only 8.30, you know just an average day in the city. I'd worked hard to get this office, big corner window looking south and west comfortable and spacious, all in all I was pretty content, and then!!! Guess what happens. A pair of peregrines arrive outside of my office window and over the next few weeks, courts, nests, lays two eggs and raises a family. The first time in Toronto's history and the first time in over seventy years in southern Ontario! Unbelievable outside my office

window. Wowwwwwww! It must have been fate. To this day - five years later - their are only 23 known pairs of peregrine falcons in the entire province of Ontario, and we have a very large province.

The pair make National news headlines that last more than six months - radio, TV, and newsprint.

The reason for such euphoria; well, since 1975 the Canadian federal and provincial governments had set up a captive breeding and release programme in the hope of arresting, the then newly discovered, dramatic decline in the anatum peregrine. 20 years on over 1800 peregrines had been released, some 520 in Ontario alone, and to that date in 1995 they had seen *no results*, no results at all. The programme (due to finish in 1996) was out of money, budget, time, and patience so when the pair nested in the middle of Toronto it made the news, big style.

During the following weeks I

watch them courting, copulating, moulting, feeding, hunting, and the entire caring of the young. We organised street watches/patrols during the fledgling period, seven days per week - for two weeks, 5am to 9.30pm. We had hundreds of volunteers who would come out throughout the day to rescue baby falcon chicks from the side walks and help return them back to the roof tops.

With local media and TV support we had name the chicks contests. Thousands of entries each year still come in at fledgling time and 5 years on the same pair still nest on the same ledge.

We ran falcon watch centres, installed cameras on the nest ledge and brought the live camera signals to the street, displaying them on large colour TVs, free to the public. We staffed it with summer time students and our first year, from early April egg laying right through to

Foundation

MARK NASH

after fledging time we had over 30,000 people come in to sign our visitors log book.

Bus loads of school children came out during the school week, families came out before, during and after the work day and on the weekends. Politicians came, bosses came, employees came, office workers came - before work, during work, after work, smoke breaks, lunch breaks, coffee breaks - *it was a zoo* - most of the time! We started out with 10 chairs, and ended up having to put 50 chairs for all of the people to sit and watch the live colour camera images. It turned into a cult following. We took donations to help us raise the money to pay for all the equipment - the cameras, the colour TVs, the cabling, the insurance etc. We were not the foundation at this time just a group of people interested in the peregrines. We got a lot of things donated but had to pay for most of

the stuff we needed.

After the initial euphoria with everybody and their aunt cashing in on the press frenzy, the Gov't after a 20 year project, seemed to increasingly take a back seat role and with baby peregrines flopping around in the street their timing could have been better. I needed little encouragement however to pick up the mantle and drive forward with fresh volunteers and new ideas.

Enthusiasm and frustration were my partners at this time (something I seem to have excess of) and I spun off equal amounts to anybody who would listen. Resolved to the fact that this was my fate in life I thought I'd better put some detail on the project and with the help of a few equally passionate friends we started to look at things more closely.

Now these birds (our downtown pair) are banded. I start digging for their origins. Their American banded and hacked released birds (from

Ohio USA), not Canadian released birds. HmMMMM

Where are all the Canadian hacked-released birds? No one knows - or is willing to tell. I dig further - a lot further! I find out that our nesting pair in Toronto, and now several other nesting pairs that arrived over the next few years in southern Ontario are also USA birds and none of them (including ours here in Toronto) are 'anatum's' HmMMMM, I really start to dig.

Calls to Ohio, Penn., New York, Mich., USA and speak to many people involved in their hack release programs. I speak to breeders, wildlife authorities, all levels of Gov't., and get the details, which if they were to be believed made interesting and somewhat alarming reading. Many of the peregrines released in the USA release programs were not 'anatum subs'. They were cross breeds, hybrids, mixes and such. Yet, its the anatum sub





Paul Cook

Illustrator

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species that's on the endangered species list. What's going on? How can we (Canadians, and the USA) even consider removing/de-listing/down grading the bird from the endangered species lists if we don't have any to begin with?

Enthusiasm and frustration to the fore again I decided to get serious. I realised that if we were to make an impact we have to get organised, so we applied to revenue Canada for charitable status and the result was the birth of The Canadian Peregrine Foundation. We set up a structured research programme with strong achievable objectives that would push us to the limits. The time had come to make a difference.

Last year 1999 saw 7.2 million hits/visitors on the CPF web site; from over 117 countries. We installed our 4th peregrine nest cam on the urban nests, and two others at hack release sites (with infrared cameras) - releasing six young pure 'anatum' chicks back to the wild and fostered five additional chicks into failed urban peregrine nest sites. Opened four falcon watch centres, at street level and staffed them, free to the public, displaying live colour camera images from the nest sites on 58 inch colour TVs.

Over 100,000 visitors came in person to visit the watch centres this past nesting season.

We ran co-ordinated three falcon watch (street patrols) each running a min. of 14 days straight, 17 hours per day, rescuing nine peregrine juveniles/fledglings that came to the street.

The 11 peregrine chicks that we purchased have all come from the original breeding stock 'anatum' that our Canadian Gov't used for their breeding and release program. Although all of these breeders were sold off to private individuals when the project closed in 1996, we located some of the pairs, and purchased only the pure anatum chicks.

We put satellite transmitters on and guess where three of the four tagged juveniles have ended up this winter? South America. To countries that are still using DDT's and

other far more harmful pesticides and chemicals. Hmmmmm

I wonder if that's what happened to some (if not most) of the 1800 peregrines that our recovery program released over the past 20 years?? Thousands of people are now asking the very same questions. With the help of the Internet, web cameras and our urban peregrines, we have been able to bring a little attention to the birds 'new plight' and intend to keep it going!

People and Gov'ts, are now starting to take notice of our research and are watching very closely. Three years ago, when I wanted to tag and satellite track juveniles, I had PhDs running from me like politicians going down in a bad poll. Our wildlife authorities would not give me the time of day, told me I was crazy, couldn't be done, and they would never allow it! Never! Well, a couple of thousand people later, a popular web site, global reviews and interest, lots of press and the same question being asked - we attached/tagged Ontario's first ever peregrines, and Canada's first ever juveniles. The catch was, they wouldn't let us do wild birds. We were forced to do what they called the surplus birds. These were our privately owned/purchased hacked peregrines.

The results were well worth all the effort. The juveniles can easily carry the transmitters and it does not affect their flying or hunting skills at all. The technology works and is proving so successful that we now have PhDs, wanting in on the program for this year, Hmmmmm

Providing we can attract the money from corporate and residential sector donations, we now have permission to tag ten peregrines this year - any combination of wild urban adults or juveniles - as well as hack release an additional ten peregrines.

The purchase of pure anatum peregrine chicks including shipping, delivery, project manager, vet, hack box material, food, etc. cost us approx. \$3000 Canadian each. The transmitters cost us approx. \$10,000

each this includes the satellite time and hard and soft copy data retrieval for the following 12 months while the transmitters are sending signals. The cameras, PCs, software, Internet hook ups, telephone lines, data transfer, TVs, VCRs, cabling, installation and set up for each site costs us approx. \$18,000. Last year our budget for everything we did was \$368,000. We hope to operate at least 4 street level falcon watch centres and have one more camera installed on one more urban nest this year.

Last but not least - we have applied to revenue Canada to expand our charitable mandate to include all raptor species at risk and intend to get involved with additional endangered raptor species including the barn owl and the burrowing owl. Both have just gone on the endangered species list and are in serious trouble.

On a personal level since the arrival of the peregrines on my window ledge in 95 my life has been consumed entirely by the project. I have lost track of reality and my social life is non existent. I have lost/misplaced most of my friends and family and have no idea what is going on in world affairs. I'm waiting for feathers to start growing from my body, and find myself preening, rather than bathing. Raw quail, pigeons and local populations of native wild birds are starting to look tasty! But you know what, I love it! It took 42 years of my life to finally understand what I really love and like to do! I am for the birds! As I finish this note its almost 11pm and I'm still at the office. My wife is here waiting for me to take her home and we have our educational peregrine (a new juvenile male) out in our truck that has not eaten today, come to think of it neither have I! We may just end up fighting over who gets to eat the quail on the way home. It would appear that it was the only thing that we remembered to get out of the freezer this morning. Hmmmmmmm. ☹

Opocno 99

THOMAS DOLLMAN



AT THE end of the millennium falconers once again met at the old castle of Opocno, in Czechoslovakia. Guests came from all over Europe with strong representation from the W.H.C. led by their president Douglas Morgans, (pictured right, in the centre) along with Terry Large, 'highlander' Jeff MacKnight and 'tattoo' Mick Young. It's always good to meet up with friends and we talked for many hours in the evenings, whilst sampling the local beer and wine.

Watching Eagles flown at hares was, for me, the most exciting part of the meet and we were privileged to witness some excellent flights.

I was once in the enviable position of being invited, along with the highly regarded German falconer Josef Hiebeler, to spend a month living with the Berkutschis (eagle-men) of Kazakhstan.

My stories of hunting wolves and living with the Berkutschis enthralled my guests and I enjoyed sharing with them my experiences.

I wish all Welsh Hawking Club members the very best of sport and look forward to meeting with some of you around Europe. ☒



Text and photographs courtesy of Thomas Dollman

Field Meat

ANGELA GOULDTHORPE



If a clear understanding of your goals, patience, care and attention to detail sound familiar terms, then you're probably a good falconer - and by following those same fundamentals you could easily become, a good cook. It's a shame therefore, that most falconry books should be so obvious in their lack of teaching beyond the game bag.

Let me tell you then about *Perdix perdix*, *Phasianus colchicus* and *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. All three cunning, swift and agile; worthy contenders for our sport and more than deserving of considerable respect.

This respect should continue right through to the dinner table where you can show a true regard for such fine adversaries.

In this article I've put together four recipes to get you started but don't be afraid to experiment with all manner of different fruits, herbs or whatever. Treat your quarry as the guest of honour, it deserves no less.

Served alongside good company and a good wine it will extend the enjoyment of our noble art well into the night.

PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) and BLACKCURRANT CASSEROLE

- 1 pheasant (portioned in 4)
- seasoned flour
- 4 bay leaves
- 1/2 pint red wine
- 1/2 pint stock
- 1 tblsp redcurrant jelly
- 1 oz butter
- 8 oz blackcurrants

Marinate the pheasant pieces for 24 hours in the red wine/bayleaves and leave covered in the fridge. Use a good wine as you shouldn't cook with wine you wouldn't be prepared to drink.

Remove the pheasant from the marinade. Do not throw this away as this will be your cooking liquid. Add a knob of butter to a frying pan and turn on the heat. Brown each piece to seal in the juices and once browned transfer to a casserole dish. Add the marinade and stock to the browning pan and stir, so you can scrape up all those lovely meat juices. Once this comes to simmering pour over the pheasant and add the blackcurrants. Add a good pinch of salt, put on the lid and place in the middle of the oven. Cook for two hours on mark three or 325°F. Once cooked remove the pheasant from the cooking liquor and keep warm on one side. At this point you should remove the bayleaves as they do not cook well and are only there for flavour (count them in and count them out). Next thicken the sauce with 1oz of butter mixed with one tsp of flour and add this to the slightly cooled liquid along with the redcurrant jelly. Don't use jam - it really doesn't work. Put on a low heat and keep stirring until the jelly has dissolved and butter melted. Adjust the seasoning to taste. Return the pheasant pieces to the dish and put back in the oven for ten minutes to reheat. This gives you time to turn out your chosen vegetables. The sauce on this is so good you simply must have mashed potatoes to soak it up.

FRICASSEE of RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Before becoming so prolific in this country, the rabbit was a delicacy to be found gracing the dining tables of many fine houses. So take the opportunity to revisit a forgotten favourite.

- 1 rabbit (skinned and jointed)
- 1 onions (chopped)
- 1 Welsh leek (chopped)
- 4 oz bacon rashers
- 1 oz butter
- mixed chopped herbs (parsley, sage, thyme)
- large pinch ground mace
- salt & pepper
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/4 pint double cream

A wonderful balance of Game and fruit with a truly outstanding sauce, for which you will need:

- 1 glass white wine
- grated rind of lemon
- juice of same

Melt the butter in a large saucepan and add the chopped bacon, onion and leek, sauté gently until cooked and with a slotted spoon, remove and put to one side.

Next add the rabbit pieces and brown. Return the bacon, onion and leek to the pan together with 1/2 pint of water and then add the herbs, mace, salt and pepper. Bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for one hour.

Now add the wine and lemon rind and cook for a further 10 minutes to reduce the liquor. Remove rabbit pieces and keep warm on one side, then mix the egg yolks with the double cream and add to the slightly cooled liquid stirring all the time. Do not allow to boil but simmer gently to allow the egg yolks to thicken the sauce.

Finally taste and season with lemon juice, salt and pepper. Return the rabbit pieces to the pan, spoon over the sauce and serve.

PIGEON BREASTS with CHOCOLATE SAUCE

Not your first choice of quarry for your favourite falcon, but nonetheless, an occasional incumbent of the game bag. Make the most of it then with this somewhat indulgent recipe.

- 4 pigeons
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- stick of celery
- 1 bulb fennel
- parsley
- 5 peppercorns
- 4 bay leaves
- salt
- 1/4 pint red wine
- 3/4 pint water
- butter for frying
- pepper
- 2 tsp grated bitter chocolate

Cut the breasts away from the bone, skin and slightly flatten/tenderise them with a meat mallet. Place in a shallow dish and cover with red wine. Add two bay leaves, all the peppercorns and leave cling-filmed overnight in the fridge.

Meanwhile add a knob of butter to a large saucepan, break up the carcasses, place in the pan and brown. Remove the carcasses with a slotted spoon, now add the chopped onion and carrot. Sauté for three minutes then return the carcasses to the pan along with 1/4 pint water,

the chopped celery, fennel, bay leaves and any other herbs you may have hanging around the kitchen. The idea is to get as much flavour into the stock as possible. Cover and simmer gently for one hour.

Strain the stock, discarding the vegetables and carcasses, into a clean pan. Reduce to 1/2 pint by boiling. This can all be done the day before for ease.

Remove the pigeon from the wine and discard the bay leaves and peppercorns. Add the wine to the stock and reduce again to 1/3 of a pint. Keep to one side. Heat a knob of butter in a frying pan and fry the breasts for approx. Three to four minutes each side. When cooked remove and allow to rest.

Add the stock to the pan juices and stir in the chocolate with a small knob of butter, until melted. Taste and season as required.

Return the pigeon to the pan, spoon over the sauce and serve.

Slow roasted PARTRIDGE (*Perdix perdix*) with MUSTARD and BEER

Guinness, brown ale or a full flavoured bitter are all fine for this dish, but whatever you use, buy some extra to toast to one of Britain's finest sporting birds.

- 2 partridge
- 1 oz butter
- 4 tsp whole grain mustard
- salt and pepper
- 1 bottle dark beer
- 1 tblsp dark brown sugar

Soften the butter and rub over the breast and legs of the partridges - ensuring they are well covered. Next spread half the mustard over the buttered birds, season and place them in a roasting dish along with the bottle of beer. Roast uncovered for 30 minutes, gas mark five or 375°F, basting occasionally. Turn oven down to mark two or 300°F and cook for a further 30 to 40 minutes, basting frequently.

Remove from oven and spread the remaining mustard over the birds. Sprinkle with brown sugar and baste gently. Return to a hot oven for a further 10 minutes. Finally baste once again and serve. Use the liquor as the gravy. ☒

Before you all write in saying how unfair these recipes are to Osprey and Fish Eagle austringers, next year we will be covering fish dishes! Enjoy.

Buster

I JUST knew that day was going to be something special. I had spent the previous four weeks or so cocooned in a nice warm egg. I was getting a little cramped but nobody was taking any notice of my tapping to get out. There was only one thing for it, one last effort and I was sure that I could crack this escape attempt. Was I relieved that my creator had obviously put a lot of thought into my development. The piping tool on top of my beak worked superbly well. One last try and WOW!!!

The light was really dazzling. I just laid real quiet for a while, enjoying a hard earned rest. Not that it lasted long - what a racket, a cacophony of cheeping and chirping. I felt that I might as well join in, follow suit, be a part of it all and what a reward I got. Every time I opened my beak it

was filled with food. I soon caught on to that idea. Squawk a lot and you get fed!

I grew quite quickly and soon developed a nice warm coat of feathers. They took a bit of looking after, but I had nothing else to do, so I preened myself to while away the time. There were several of us little ones and we played quite a bit, stretching our wings and flapping about - it was more fun than walking anyway. We occasionally had a visit from a different species who raided our home and removed one of my brothers or sisters, never to be seen again. Where they went or what happened to them we never knew, they were probably eaten!

Then came the day it was my turn. I was grabbed from behind and bundled into a coat. I'll tell you one thing I wasn't too pleased and I

certainly let them know how scared I was. I squawked and screamed, thought my time had come, tragedy, I had only had a short life, but that was just the start. I was then held down while leather strips were attached to my legs, boy, was I relieved they weren't too tight! They then put me into a dark box and everything was quiet and peaceful once more. The next few hours were a mystery. I went on a kind of roller coaster ride and found it really difficult to keep my balance. I kept falling from one side to the other and seemed to be moving at speed. I felt that I would be lucky to survive this latest adventure.

Eventually, everything stopped moving and I was taken out of the box and put in what was to become my new home. Quite nice really, plenty of space and lots of activity to watch outside.



Author with food provider Julie Clowes.

I was regularly visited by my new food provider who tried to persuade me to stand on her arm to eat my food. Stupid really, I was far happier on my perch. She talked to me a lot and I soon found that if I cheeped and behaved myself, I would get even more attention and a few tit-bits besides. Trying to eat my food on her fist was a nightmare at first, I just could not get the hang of sitting balancing and gripping my food at the same time.

It was about this time that I realised I was being referred to as "Buster", what sort of a name is that for a born killing machine, I ask you? Why couldn't I have been called - Demon, Satan or Bandit. They would have been far more apt, but it seems I'm stuck with Buster.

The other day I was taken out into a field and dumped on a post. Great open spaces, flat fields as far as the eye could see, then she just walked away from me. It seemed like a long time before she called me for a tit-bit. I thought that I was then able to make the choice between fleeing or responding to the offered food. Wrong again! I was still attached by a long line. I wasn't going anywhere anyway, I know

when I'm onto a good thing. We practised this flying bit, with me attached to a line for a few more days, until she got the message that I wasn't going anywhere without her.

She took me out regularly and another bird came with us with another food provider. He did quite a bit of ordering about, "beat that bush", "walk that ditch", I just wish they would get a dog. I did a fair bit of flushing myself, through the hedges, along the ditches, even checked out the rabbit holes and bramble patches. What we were looking for I had no idea but they seemed happy with my efforts.

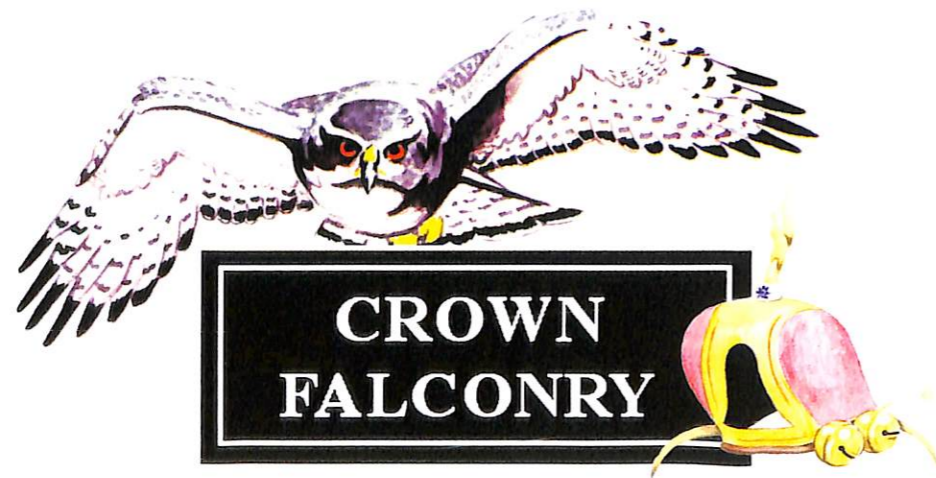
Then came the day that was to change my life forever. We were heading down the hedgerow towards a wood when a black feathered thing burst out of a thicket. I took the chase, it reached the wood before me and headed up towards the top of the tree. I made one last effort and grabbed it in the air. We both tumbled to the ground and you should have heard the shouts, not from the Moorhen but from my food provider, she made such a fuss, whooping and shouting. I was eventually given a hand to kill it and then allowed to feed to my hearts

content. That was really worth it!

I realised at that point that if I chased things and caught them I was well rewarded. I've tried my luck at plenty of things since that day with varying successes. Some of those pheasants really are quick, but I have an idea that if I follow them until they duck in somewhere then I can try my luck again. The rabbits are much easier but I need a little help sometimes to avoid being pulled down into their burrows, especially if I grab a really big one by it's bum. I never let go you know!

My other problem is keeping tabs on my food provider. On a sunny day she just goes walkabout, she forgets to bang the bushes, and spends her time admiring the scenery acting as though she's just out for a stroll. I frequently have to buzz her to wake her up, a wing tip on her ear normally works. I really hope that this novice that feeds me bucks up her ideas. I frequently have to fly around looking for her, perhaps I could arrange for her to have a bell fitted, then I would always know where about in the wood or field she was.

I really can't risk losing the hand that feeds me. ☒



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The Cape Falconry Club

BRYAN PATERSON AT THE 99 FIELD MEET

AGAINST a bright orange sky the mountain peaks rose ominously from the earth's floor, as dusk descended on the mountains of Ceres.

Along with fellow W.H.C. companions, I had gratefully accepted the invitation of the Cape Falconry Club to attend their 1999 field meet in South Africa.

It was their winter, but early summer here and June was a difficult time for me to take a week off from a busy show season, however a few bribes offered to my assistant Debbie and she was more than happy to take our business empire on her shoulders, in truth, I think she was glad to see the back of me.

So it was that we found ourselves travelling up into the Mountains from Cape Town, with Adrian Lombard secretary of the Cape Falconry Club. Adrian had arranged a hire car for us to use for the week; but if we were to see the week out, we would need our wits about us. Right of way at road junctions (of which there were many), was a case of bravest-first!

Along the route we discovered the secret that lay behind the bravest-first mentality of road driving in South Africa - biltong. These were pieces of dried, cured something or other, which were chewed rigorously, producing copious amounts of dark brown juice that you then spat out, all of which required such concentration that you were oblivious to other road users. We were told on several occasions what biltong actually was, but its origins differed with each person's description and we could never quite believe them. This became a little disconcerting as we progressed through the week, as I found myself quite fond of it, to the extent of eating several bags a day! My driving technique however improved immeasurably and it was with a renewed confidence that I tackled the roads over the following days.

In an atmosphere full of excitement and optimism we travelled higher into the mountain range, steaming with exotic birds normally only seen in zoos, some of which would be the quarry we were to hunt.

On reaching the plateau, we turned off the main tarmac road and travelled for several miles along dusty stone roads. Occasionally we passed people standing at the

side of the road but we saw no vehicles and had no idea where they had come from. Perhaps this was where they caught the elusive biltong?

We eventually arrived at the meet HQ and were introduced to fellow austringers who had arrived early. We then spent a couple of pleasant hours getting to know everyone, along with their hawks. Thys Walters had brought along a stunning black Eagle called Mic. Adrian had his European Goshawk as well as a Black Sparrowhawk and Dr Edmond Oettle had a Gyr hybrid. There were several African Goshawks, a couple of Peregrines, a kestrel, a Jackal Buzzard and a Black Shouldered Kite someone had picked up injured on the way to the meet.

Most of the group were staying at the H.Q. and some were sleeping with their hawks, anchored to bows, next to their sleeping bags. We were to stay close by, at a very nice fruit farm where some of the buildings had been converted into holiday apartments. The restaurant and bar were above our rooms, which was to prove very convenient as we only needed to fall down the stairs to land comfortably into bed.

The opening day of the meet was a very laid back sort of affair. More people had now arrived and we were duly introduced. We discussed the prospective quarry, which were to be, Franklin and Guinea Fowl for the larger hawks, ducks for the falcons and whatever small birds could be found for the remainder. There was no mention of biltong, so to the sound of comments from the locals of, rehabilitation centres and addiction, I stocked up on a few more bags in case we failed to catch any.

During the meet we got the chance to go out with each of the different groups all of whom made us feel very welcome.

Of the quarry species that we flew, the guinea fowl proved the most surprising. It may well have had something to do with being chased by a hawk, which did not exactly have their best interest at heart, but they were very fast and agile, unlike the guinea fowl we're used to seeing around farm yards. The Cape Francolin provided equally good sport, as did some of the small birds, which

occasionally would take cover in buildings, pursued by hawk and austringer, along with a very bemused audience of farm workers. The African Goshawk put up a great flight, pursuing a shrike through a farm yard into a heap of farm debris, closely followed by the Austringer and crew in a hunting frenzy. These little hawks are most forgiving and could be of use in the UK for car slips on magpie or such.

There were some tense moments when we spotted a few Houbara but our stalking technique proved somewhat inept, or maybe it was my constant chewing and slurping, either way we were unable to get close enough to get a good slip.

Edmonds Hybrid had a few successful flights at Shoveller duck as did the Peregrines at Francolin.

The prize for the best effort however, must go to a young lad, who when told, ran into a large mass of water to flush a duck which was being hard pressed by Edmond's Hybrid. The area of water had been surrounded by lots of people who watched this spectacle, to their great amusement. Don't forget this was the middle of winter and even my dogs would have turned their nose up at such a request.

During our stay we were invited to attend the Cape Falconry Club AGM and it was interesting to hear how their members worked closely with the local conservation group, the conservationists had even sent along a representative.

At an evening, not unlike our own AGM, Dave, Lindsay, Roy and I, decided to give a prize, on behalf of the WHC, to the person who in our opinion had made the most outstanding contribution to the meet and who had gone further than could have been expected of anyone, in the pursuit of quarry. It was awarded to the lad who had entered the water 'on command'; apparently it's part of their apprenticeship duties. The club members had a whip round and they have booked me into a biltong rehab centre should I become depressed and refuse to leave at the end of the week. I of course thanked them for their concern, but told them it was quite unnecessary as I had thrown out all my clothes and would be taking two suitcases full of biltong back to the UK. with me, not that I'm addicted of course!

After saying our farewells we travelled back to Cape Town as guests of Adrian and Sylvia and the next morning were up early as Sylvia had arranged for Preston, a friend of theirs, to take us on a guided tour. Preston picked us up in his mini bus and took us to the base of table mountain. It was about 8.30am, a beautiful clear sunny morning with an atmosphere that was unique to Africa. We went up the mountain in a cable car and strolled around its plateau admiring the views.

It's at times like these that one thinks deeper as to the reasons why we pursue the art of falconry and for me it's the closeness to nature, that we somehow, are able to share with our birds. The freedom, yet constraints of the world about us and the part we play on the road we

decide to travel. Thoughts that take over for a moment as I look out over Robin Island where Nelson Mandella was held prisoner for many years for the road he chose to travel.

While we were walking around we found a paw print in the damp sand, I didn't know what had made it but was glad that I hadn't met it in the dark. Then the thought crossed my mind that perhaps this is where the biltong live, I asked Preston, but all he did was smile and I was no closer to finding the truth. We sat at the cafe on the top of the mountain and enjoyed a cup of coffee. With such wonderful scenery around us it was something, which we all agreed, we would never forget. On the way down in the cable car we saw a pair of Black Eagles beginning to circle around looking for lift on the thermals. They are not in fact black, as their name might suggest, but have some beautiful colours along with iridescent and reflective blacks. We were above them and quite close, so their majestic appearance was all the more spectacular.

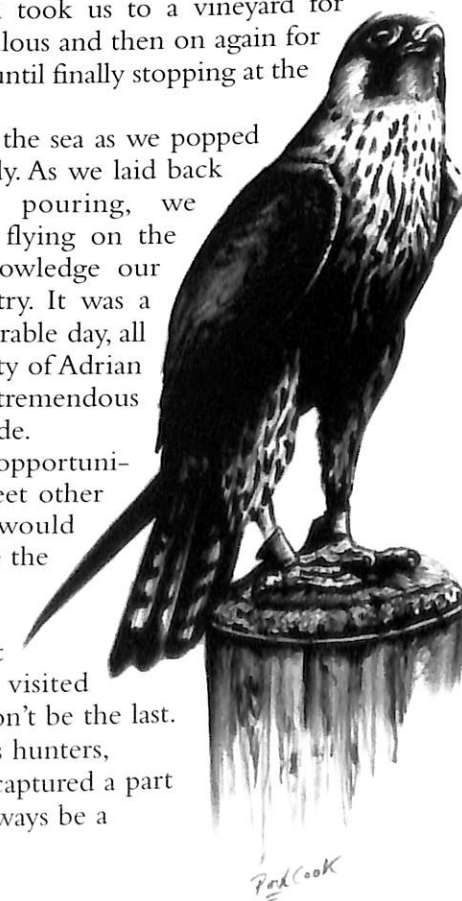
From there we travelled along the cliff roads and down to a beach where penguins gather to breed in large numbers each year. Not a bird you would immediately associate with Africa, but very at home here all the same. Preston told us that they were somewhat of an annoyance to the local house owners, who often found penguins in their gardens and even their houses, on eggs! Not all of the locals were anti penguin however and we spent a bit of time bartering for some of their hand carved African crafts,

From there Preston took us to a vineyard for lunch, which was fabulous and then on again for a bit more site seeing until finally stopping at the very edge of a cliff.

We looked out over the sea as we popped open a bottle of bubbly. As we laid back and with Preston pouring, we watched a peregrine flying on the breeze, as if to acknowledge our presence in his country. It was a fitting end to a memorable day, all thanks to the generosity of Adrian and Sylvia and the tremendous knowledge of our guide.

If you ever get the opportunity to go abroad to meet other falconers then I would recommend you make the effort, I can honestly say I have never been disappointed. It's not the first time I've visited South Africa and it won't be the last.

We travelled there as hunters, but it was Africa that captured a part of us and there will always be a longing to return. ☒



Boadicea

ANDY WATERHOUSE

In AD61 Boadicea led a massive revolt against the Romans, giving them a real hard time and winning a series of victories in Colchester, London and St Albans. In 1999 Boadicea was again in action, this time her attention was turned to fur and feather, a little further north at Ruthin North Wales.

This was where I came across Andy Waterhouse and his incredible 4 year old female Sparrowhawk called, you guessed it, Boadicea. I asked Andy to tell the Austringer about this little spar that thinks it's a goshawk.

PHILIP Glasier makes reference to the sparrowhawk in his book falconry and hawking, with the observation, that they will often tackle quarry much larger than themselves.

To put this in context however he emphasises that this is only possible due to training and a reliance on the falconer, wild spars soon learn their limitations.

Teamwork is undoubtedly the key to the courage and audacity shown by my female spar who will tackle absolutely anything, whilst relying on me to help her dispatch the larger quarry promptly. You can't criticise her sheer spirit but I often wonder where it will end and

if I should start carrying a gun to despatch foxes and roe deer should her ambition get the better of her.

I have hunted with her on 90 days this season and the final tally was; 18 hen pheasants, 1 cock pheasant, 10 French partridge, 1 English partridge, 12 moorhens, 7 rabbits, 2 blackbirds, 1 Short eared owl, 1 little owl, 1 F.Spar and 4 kestrels.

A total of 58 head and 35 impeded feathers!

Such a tally for a goshawk would be respectable but for a sparrowhawk, you would have to agree, it's rather exceptional. To say I'm well pleased with her would be a little understated.

All the raptors taken were released, most of them footing and biting me in the process. The spar was caught whilst mobbing her in the garden. I had tied her on a longer leash whilst she was bathing and she caught it as it passed overhead.

It's obviously not standard practice to fly spars at rabbits and I can honestly say that it was not my intention to do so, I was just fed up with her bating every time she saw one. I thought that if she flew a couple and realised their size she would pull off and ignore them in the future. I soon came upon some in a grassy field and slipped her from about 20 yards, she covered the ground in a flash and bound to one with both feet on its head. I covered the ground in about the same time and frantically tried to grab the furry bit of the blur in front of me. After what seemed forever, but was probably only a few seconds, I managed to get the rabbit and despatched it. She was given a good feed, which in hindsight was probably the wrong thing to do (a lesson learned and all that) and then picked up. After this her confidence grew and she caught a few more in spectacular style, but I stopped flying them early on as her tail feathers were getting badly broken.

Most quarry was caught from a point, either on the rise or in the air, anything up to a mile away. Towards the end of the season she was regularly flying pheasants out of sight and the telemetry came in handy many times.

To finish the season we attended a WHC field meet on a nearby estate. The first flight was at a partridge which she caught in the air a 1/4 of a mile away, but lost on the ground as I made in to pick her up. During the day she had several good flights at pheasants, one on the rise and one in flight 30 yards on, the latter weighed 3 1/2 pounds which seemed a suitable end to an extraordinary season. She started the season at 8 1/4 ounces and finished flying at 8 3/4 ounces and is now, after her fourth season, in an enclosed aviary for a well deserved break and a much needed moult.



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ALAN J BUTCHER

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Every effort is made to include all articles and photos sent in by our members. However limits on space will occasionally prevail and the editor, whilst thanking you all for your contributions, gives apologies for any omissions.

Rules of the Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objects

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

Constitution

The club shall consist of a President, Vice - Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Assistant Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Editor, Press and Publicity Officer, Inspections Co-ordinator, Breeding Project Officer, Legislative Officer and a Field Officer. Each of these is entitled to attend the committee meetings and to one vote, except the Chairman, who does not have a vote. However, in the event of a vote resulting in a tie the Chairman shall then have the casting vote. Proxy and Postal votes will not be allowed at committee meetings. Only Full members are eligible for election to office. The business of the club will be conducted by the officers and committee (hereafter referred to simply as the committee), which will meet at such times as it thinks fit. A quorum for a meeting shall be five members. No one with convictions for offences involving birds of prey shall hold office within the Welsh Hawking Club.

Elections

- All members of the committee will be elected individually, annually at the AGM. Prior to the election the attendance record at committee meetings for the past year shall be given.
- During the year should any committee member fail to attend committee meetings regularly then he or she may be asked to give an explanation. If the reason is of insufficient justification the committee may co-opt a member to fill the position. They may also co-opt any person to the committee if considered desirable.

Membership

- Members of the club will be elected by the committee.
- No person will be elected without application to the Secretary in writing.
- The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.
- Any member whose subscription is unpaid by March of any year shall cease to be a member, but shall be eligible for election as for new members.
- Should the committee have reason to believe that a member has acted in a manner injurious to Falconry or the club then the member may be required to furnish a written explanation to the Secretary for the consideration of the committee or to appear in person before the committee. The member can claim a personal hearing if preferred. The Secretary must give the member at least 14 days notice of the committee's requirements. Should the member refuse to comply the committee may terminate the membership. They may also terminate the membership should they decide that the member has acted in a way harmful to Falconry or the club.
- No member must give talks, interviews or material relating to Falconry, domestic breeding etc. to the media, i.e. TV, radio, press etc., without advice from the committee and/or the Press and Publicity Officer. Any member giving such talks must make every effort to ensure their accuracy.
- Any member wishing to dispose of a hawk obtained through the club must first offer the hawk back into the club.
- Only Full members are eligible to vote on club affairs.
- Proxy and Postal votes are not allowed.
- Associate members wishing to obtain Full membership may apply in writing to the Secretary for the consideration of the committee. Prior to applying the applicant should normally have completed at least 12 months' membership. The application must give full details of hawk-related experience and should be countersigned by a Full member.

Meetings

- The Annual General Meeting shall be held at the main Field Meeting each year.
- Meetings shall be presided over by the President, Chairman or one of the other Officers as appropriate.
- General meetings will normally be held monthly. Informal meetings will be held as required.

Alteration to Rules

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

Code of Conduct

- The well-being of all birds of prey, both domestic and wild, together with the continuation of Falconry, must be the aim of all members.
- Falconry is the flying of trained birds of prey and owls at suitable quarry found in the natural state. No action must bring this into disrepute.
- Every hawk must be properly manned and equipped.
- Every endeavour must be made to recover a lost hawk.
- All hawks flown free should be equipped with field jesses, at least one bell and, if possible, a transmitter and the name and address of the owner. In the case of unentered or aggressive hawks, eagles, hybrids, exotics etc., special care must be taken to prevent loss.
- Permission must be obtained before entering upon ground and it must be ascertained whether another falconer already has permission, in which case his/her permission must also be sought. Due respect must be given to landowners and their property.
- Indigenous hawks that are no longer wanted must either be returned to the wild state in suitable country or passed to someone who will treat them in accordance with this code of conduct. Before a hawk is released the falconer must ensure that it is in good feather, in the highest possible condition, that it can kill for itself and is suitable for release. If there is any doubt that it is able to do so it should be hacked back.

The Creance ... on line

Steve Gouldthorpe

The biggest library and communication network in the world; There's no subject you can not find on the net. A source of information and mis-information, love it or loath it the Internet is a part of falconry.

With so much information and tempting distractions an hour or two will have flown by and you may well miss the really interesting sites.

In this new regular feature we have put together some of those sites that have caught our attention over the last year and look forward to receiving your favourite sites to share with our members for the next issue.

Advie Gundogs

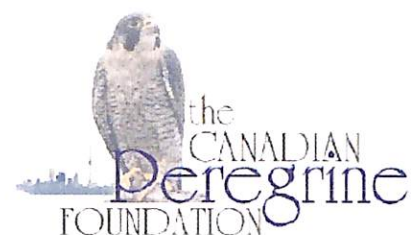
<http://members.aol.com/dgargue>

You don't just buy a dog from Derry Argue, you obtain a degree of competence and pass a psychoanalyst test, then and only then may you apply to purchase one of his dogs.

If you've not come across the ebullient Mr Argue before then this site is a treat. A breeder of English pointers and Llewelin setters, author, film producer, falconer and a serious thorn in the paw of the Kennel Club of Great Britain. He has over 40 years of hunting, hawking, gundog breeding and estate management experience to call upon and he's not shy at coming forward.

Derry seems to have found in the Internet yet another medium to expatiate about a subject that is more than a passion, with strong opinions and sound observations. The pointing breeds form the basis for most of the advice but there worthy comments that are relevant to all gundogs scattered throughout the site, from the purchase of a puppy to field trial exhibitions and the proper use of electric collars!

Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.



The Canadian Peregrine Foundation

www.peregrine-foundation.ca

If you were thinking that the Internet was of no interest to falconers then click on this site and prepare to be converted. Since 1997 the Canadian Peregrine Foundation has been active in the protection, monitoring and documentation of Peregrine Falcons in southern Ontario.

There are live web cams at several peregrine nests and following the success of project Track-em in 1999 (the ultimate hack) you should be able to follow the exploits of four eyas peregrines through their development and eventual migration, via state of the art satellite transmitters.

If your new to the site then check out the exploits of Nate, Lincoln, Eco and Rouge, four eyas peregrines released in 1999 and tracked across thousands of miles; background, maps and diary, (tab to the bottom of the page and read up when you've read the intro.).

Identification, habitat and natural history are just three of the topics under peregrine biology which are well worth a look and if at this stage your still engrossed then you may well want to visit project adoption where for as little as \$14 you could adopt a peregrine.

With nearly 100 links to follow from the site you could spend your life here, so enjoy what you can when you can of this first class site from a well run foundation.

Coch-Y-Bonddu Books

www.users.zetnet.co.uk/omorgan/books

Based in Wales the biblioplist Paul Morgan has built up a huge collection of books at his shop in Machynlleth.

A regular around the country shows and judging by the number of Coch-Y-Bonddu carrier bags I see you all carrying around at the falconry fair, no stranger to most of you. You can now visit his web site and browse through a mountain of sporting books, new, used, rare or recondite, in an easy to navigate site which will have you reaching for your credit cards.



Gigrin Farm

www.gigrin.ndirect.co.uk

With breathtaking feats of aerial piracy red kites compete with buzzards and ravens for choice pickings.

A cacophony of sights and sounds awaits the visitor to Gigrin farm, the home of the official Welsh kite feeding station. You can find out about it and the red kite in Wales on this well presented and informative site.

With views across the Wye and Elan valleys its not actually the web site you should be on; it's the farm.

Brains

www.sabrain.co.uk

It's almost to obvious, but this is the site you need to visit if you need brains!!!

Honeybrook Farm

www.honeybrookfarm.com

A useful and very informative site, packed with nutritional value analysis of frozen raptor food. Whatever your requirements, from day old chicks to llygoden fawr, Colin will have an opinion on it. All the usual contact numbers are on the site, including snail mail, but I presume the latter is subject to stock!



Welsh Hawking Club

www.welshhawkingclub.com

Croeso I'r clwb hebogaeth Cymru ar y we....our new W.H.C. home site.

Stories, information and innovation; health, dates and debates, there's no hard and fast rules about this site, so if you have an opinion on how it should look or what it should contain, then let us know, your committee welcomes your views.

Remember, if you know of any interesting web sites for inclusion in the next Creance then please e-mail Dave on: hawking@southern-lights.net



