

THE AUSTRINGER



THE JOURNAL OF THE
WELSH HAWKING CLUB

N° 34 2002

Llythur gan y
Golygydd

STEVE GOULDTHORPE



Fel rydym yn ysgrifennu y golygyddol yma, blwyddyn ymlaen ers y diwethaf, yn wir rydym yn byw mewn amseroedd cyffrous. Ein rhyddid dal o dan bygythiad gan Lywodraeth Llafur sydd yn edrych yn anfodlon i ystyriad testiolaeth ffeithiol sydd yn angulchu y ddadl ar hela.

Mae clwy'r traed ar gennau yn edrych fel ei fod wedi ei ddifodi, ond am pa bris? A heb ymholiad cyhoeddys i ganolbwyntio y camgymerion gafodd ei gwneud wrth ei ddifodi, a rhoi atebion clir a sut gaeth ei gysylltu? Pa mor hir fyddym yn rhydd ohono.

Edrych yn gyfartal anaddas mae Senedd Ysgotaidd. Wrth bledleisio am fesur seneddol ffugiol mae ei gwleidyddwyr mewn peryg o diethrio gwelwyr hela syn cefnogi yn drwm diwidiant twristiaid. Mae pob cyfla fe fyddant wei ei gwneud i edrych fel ffyliaid pan fydd y mesur seneddol yn cael sialens yn llys Europaedd. Yn y cyfanser pan hela yn yr Alban, fyddym o dan beryg o gael ein troseddu gan beth mae llawer yn dweud, sydd yn fesur seneddol anweithgar ac yn sarhad i rhyddiad gwladol.

Maen ardal gwledig yn dal i gael ei dresio wrth rhoi cymorh dal i gynllunio garffosiaeth dir, ffermydd gwynt a datblygiad anfarth ar fasnacha gwaith amaethyddol. Pam mor hir fydd y cyfrwng sydd newydd ei greu (DEFRA) yn cymryd i dadorchuddio y gwir tu ol i fywyd gwledig, ar eiddo gwerthfawr sydd o fewn amaethyddwyr a cymdeithasau bach a chefn gwlad. Wrth feirniadu ymdrechion y ffair helwriaeth 2001 mae yna dipin o ffordd i fynd. Eu stondin ddiffirwydd ddur di staen, gyda dynion mewn siwtiau, yn hollol allan o gam a chymdeithas gwledig Brydain.

Diwrnod o blaen cafodd un golau gwan o obaith ei chwalu, pan oedd son fod y llywydd Blair am gael hebog. Fel droeodd pethau allan roedd yr hebog mewn cwestiwn oedd awyren jet *yw helpu ei ymchwil* i ddominyddu y byd. *Ymfodddhan a adewodd y dyn ymw i bwer, beth am wneud yn siwr fod hyn ddim yn digwydd eto.* Fe fedrai fynd ymlaen ond fe na i orffen wrth awgrymu fod pob person sydd yn cymeryd rhan mewn chwaraeon gwladol yn cefnogi ymdrech ein brif amddiffyniadwyr Cyngrhair Ardal Gwledig, hebddyn nhw fe fyan mewn llawer gwaeth sefyllfa.

OK rwyf nawr wedi cael hun a allan o ffordd well i mi nawr gyflwyno yr Austringer 2002. Rwyf wedi dod adau nodwedd newydd blwyddyn yma, y gynta sydd i'r beirdd yn eich mys, rydych yn tueddol o alw Tudalen -Y- Beirdd. Yr ail yw'r Deffro, (llawer mwy clyfar o deitl) newyddion wedi ei ysgwyd allan ai deffro, barn a chyfarfodydd cae o gwmpas yr ardaloedd.

Mewn cwmpeini ein eulodion sydd wedi travelio dipyn rydym yn cael ein atgoffa pam mor hawdd ac o fewn gyraedd mar byd wedi mynd. I'r Caneris gynta ac yn erbyn y cefndisgyn yr ynysoedd volcanic yma ymweld a Parque Las Aquilas a gweld arddangosfa hebogyddiaeth gyda gwahaniath. Wedyn ymlaen ar siwrna o dir ychal a ynysoedd ein cefnderoedd Celtaidd yn yr Alban, cyn mynd i gyfarfod cae yr SAFA yn Ne Africa. Maen teithio ddim ond yn dechrau fel rydym yn symud ymlaen i Ganada, Nepal a Mongolia.

Digwyddiadau yn agosach i adref sydd heb cael ei anghofio chwaith a diolch i Foto Fire mae gennym lynnua ardderchog o gyfarfod cae WHC 2001. Os rydych erioed wedi meddwl am fagu patrisen yw ollwng, neu sofliar gwyn i hyfforddi ci fellu mae yna dirnadaeth i'r ddau. Yr ydym yn cymeryd i'r awyr uwch ochrau y Myrsi i edrych a'r cydyll glas trefnol. Cymerodd arbenigwr adar Ewrop Neil Forbes amser allan o'i waith prysur i roi goleuni i ni ar ei waith o ddiwrnod i ddiwrnod fel milfeddig. Ac ymlaen gyda esboniad gwleidyddiol, hanes, anwiredd a storiau o'r cae ddyliach gael hyd i ddigon o ddiddordeb, ymysg y tudalennau enwog o'r Austringer leni.

Yn ddiweddol ga i ddiolch i bawb sydd wedi cyfranu; mae wedi bod yn bleser i gael taro tsgwydd gyda unigolion mor angerddol.

Steve

Translated by WHC member Glyn Roberts and his wife Sheila

Cyfarfod Cae Rhyngwladol 2002 Clwb Hebogwyr Cymru
yn cael ei gynnal ar y 6fed 7fed ar 8fed o Dachwedd yn Gwestu
Y Wild Pheasant Llangollen Gogledd Gymru

Letter from the
Editor

STEVE GOULDTHORPE



We do indeed live in turbulent times; as I write this editorial, a year on from my last, our liberty is still under threat by an inept Labour government, who seem unwilling to consider the factual evidence that surrounds the hunting debate.

Foot and mouth disease seems to have been eradicated, but at what cost? And without a public enquiry to highlight the errors made during it's eradication, and clear answers as to how we contracted it, for how long will we remain free?

The Scottish parliament seems equally inept. In voting for a shambolic hunting bill its politicians risk alienating hunting visitors, who heavily support the tourism industry. There is every chance that they will be made to look like the fools that they are, when the bill is challenged in the European courts. In the mean time when hunting in Scotland, we risk being criminalised by what many are saying, is an unworkable bill and an insult to our civil liberties.

Our countryside continues to be raped by subsidised land drainage schemes, wind farms and massive commercial development of the farming industry. How long will the newly formed DEFRA agency take, to uncover the truths behind rural life, and the valuable assets this country has within its small-scale farmers and rural communities. Judging by their appearance at the 2001 CLA game fair they have a long way to go. Their stainless steel, sterile stand, manned by suits, was totally out of step with the approachable rural community of Britain.

One glimmer of hope the other day was dashed, when rumour had it that 'president' Blair was getting a falcon. It turned out that the falcon in question was in fact a jet plane to assist him in his quest for world dominance. Complacency allowed this guy into power, lets make sure it doesn't happen again. I could go on, but I'll round off by suggesting that every person who participates in country pursuits should support the efforts of our main lobbyists, the Countryside Alliance, without whom we would be in a far worse position.

OK, so now I've got that of my chest I'd better introduce the 2002 Austringer. I've brought in two new features this year, the first of which is for the poets amongst you, aptly named The Poets Page. The second is The Rouse, (a much cleverer title) which is a shakeout of the news, views and field-meets around the regions.

In the company of our well-travelled members we are reminded how accessible the world has become. First we're off to the Canaries, and against a backdrop of these volcanic islands visit the Parque Las Aquilas, and a falconry display with a difference. Then it's on to a tour of the highland and islands of our Celtic cousins in Scotland, before visiting the SAFA field meet in South Africa. Our travels however, have only just started as we move on to Canada, Nepal and Mongolia.

Events closer to home have not been forgotten either, and thanks to foto-fire we have some excellent photos of the 2001 WHC field meet. If you've ever thought of rearing partridge for release, or bob white quail for dog training, then there are insights into both and we take to the skies above Merseyside for a look at urban peregrines. European avian veterinary specialist Neil Forbes takes time out of a very busy schedule to enlighten us on the day to day duties of a vet, and along with political comment, history, fiction and stories from the field you should find plenty of interest, amongst the illustrious pages of this year's Austringer.

Finally I would like to thank all that have contributed; it has been a pleasure to have rubbed shoulders with such passionate individuals.

Steve

The Welsh Hawking Club 2002 Field Meet
will take place on the 6th, 7th and 8th of November
at the Wild Pheasant Hotel, Llangollen, North Wales

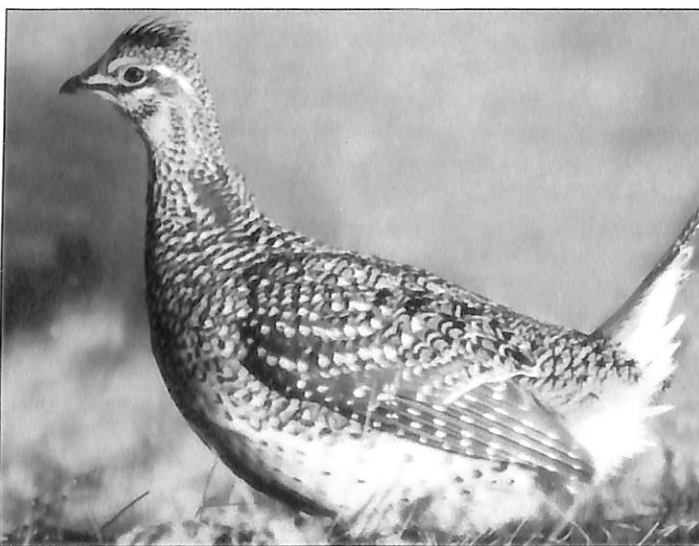




Welsh Hawking Club Field Meet 2001. Page 11



Bigfoot. Page 19



Canadian Sharp-tail Hawking. Page 43

CONTENTS

THE MYSTERIOUS BASTARDE David Horobin uncovers the truth about a bastarde	4
STYLE WITHOUT PURPOSE Diana Durman-Walters visits the most prestigious dog show in the world, before taking us to the archipelago of the Canaries, and the Parque Las Aquilas, and asks what's the point of style without purpose	6
THE POETRY PAGE The art of falconry explored through poetry	10
WHC FIELD MEET 2001 Stephen Gouldthorpe reviews the 2001 Welsh Hawking Club field meet	11
A SPORTING TOUR Scotland beckons, as Roy Bebbington takes us on a tour of the highlands and visits the Isle of Coll	14
BIGFOOT David Scott explores South Africa's world of falconry	19
THE ROUSE A shakeout of the news, views and fieldmeets around the regions	21
BONEHEADS AND BRAVEHEARTS Political correspondent Mark Hinge takes a look at the Scottish hunting bill	24
PROFILE Artist and fellow WHC member David Scott is profiled by Stephen Gouldthorpe	25
PAM'S PARTRIDGE PASSION Shavington Partridge entrepreneur Pam Eaton enlightens us on the trials and tribulations of rearing the UK's most endearing game bird	26
THE OFFICE A typical working day in the life of Veterinary, Neil Forbes	28
SASKATCHEWAN SKIES Jean Dimond	32
FIELD MEAT Woodcock and wines on the menu with Angela Gouldthorpe	35
TEXT IT KD on GP, good ST! M.C. explains	35
A NOBLE PAST-TIME A spine chilling tale from the pen of David Horobin	36
BEECHINS Morsels of news from home and abroad	40

PROFILE A profile of Snowdonia artist Colin Woolf by Stephen Gouldthorpe	41
PERE ACROSS THE MERSEY The aerial displays of the Birkenhead peregrines go relatively unnoticed by the crowds below, bird-watcher Graham Maggs highlights their existence	42
CANADIAN SHARPTAIL HAWKING Mark Williams	43
MISTAKEN IDENTITY It could happen to anyone, 'possibly' by Andy Phillips	49
THE BOB WHITE Dale Davis	50
THE PARAHAWKERS Discover the Kingdom of Nepal and ride the thermals to cloudbase, in the company of Graham Saunders-Griffiths.	52
DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOODNIGHT Mike Gambold recounts his brush with the grim reaper	58
A GATHERING OF EAGLE HUNTERS Alan Gates enjoys the hospitality of the Mongolian Kazakh Eagle-hunters	60
GULL-HAWKING Self confessed obsessive falconer Neil Hunter, discovers the often overlooked sport of gull-hawking	64
OFFICERS AND RULES OF THE WELSH HAWKING CLUB	66
THE CREANCE Stephen Gouldthorpe reviews some sites of interest on the net	68



Mistaken Identity. Page 49



The Parahawkers. Page 52



A gathering of Eaglehunters. Page 60

EDITOR *Steve Gouldthorpe*
 DESIGN AND LAYOUT *Jon Ward-Allen and Steve Gouldthorpe*
 PRINTING *WPG Printers Welshpool*

The views expressed on the pages of this magazine are not necessarily those of the editor or the W.H.C. committee.

Front cover photo by Alan Gates.
 Back cover photo by Graham Saunders-Griffiths.
 Inside back cover by Andy Stockwell.
 Thanks to Glyn and Sheila Roberts for translation.

Please send all photos for possible inclusion in the next Austringer Magazine to:
 Steve Gouldthorpe, Henrwt Smithy, Higher Wych, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 7JR
 Tel 01948 780 379
 E-mail theaustringer@hotmail.com

Articles and photos will be accepted throughout the year and will be returned if requested.

The Mysterious Bastarde

DAVID HOROBIN



THE ABOVE title is not meant to cause offence (though I'll bet it grabbed your attention!) but relates to a piece of our sporting history which anyone with an interest in falconry will have come across.

The 15th century *Boke of St. Albans* contained a now famous list allocating different species of raptor to different levels of society. This has had a major impact on our perceptions of falconry in the past, and it is my view that it has, indeed, given us a pretty unrealistic picture of the sport as practiced in the Middle Ages. This formed the basis of my undergraduate dissertation on Falconry in Literature, 'from which this article was adapted, and has led to subsequent study of how social imagery has distorted historical accuracy where hawking is concerned.

The *Boke of St. Albans* was a guide to hawking, hunting, heraldry and fishing, ascribed to Dame Juliana Berners, supposedly Abbess of Sopwell. It contained the list which, in part, follows, allocating each species of raptor to a certain rank of society:

*First an Egle, a Bawtere, a Melowne . . .
theis iii by ther nature belong to an Emproure.*

*Ther is a Gerfawken. A Tercell of a gerfawken.
And theys belong to a Kyng.*

*Ther is a Fawken gentill, and a Tercell gentill,
and theys be for a prynce.*

*Ther is a Fawken of the rock.
And that is for a duke.*

*Ther is a Fawken peregryne.
And that is for an Erle.*

*Also ther is a Bastarde and that
hauke is for a Baron.*

*Ther is a Sacre and a Sacret.
And theis be for a Knyght.*

*Ther is a Lanare and Lanrett.
And theys belong to a Squyer.*

*Ther is a Merlyon.
And that hauke is for a lady.*

*Ther is an Hoby. And that hauke is for a yong man.
And theys be hawkes of the toure. . .*

The *Boke* goes on to list and allocate the shortwings, though, interestingly, nowhere includes (in the earlier editions at least) the kestrel - interesting as the alternative title of the well-known novel *Kes* was derived from this source - 'A Kestrel for a Knave'. The list has prompted all manner of comment and research from scholars/falconers, though perhaps the listed bird that has caused most confusion is the 'Bastarde'. Almost every author has a different theory as to what this is, and I am sure that every falconer has, at some stage, had recourse to call birds of varying species by such a name! Phillip Glasier's version of this list in *Falconry and Hawking* has 'Bustard', which is, as he says, not a raptor. He claims that it could be a mis-spelling of buzzard, or the French for harrier; 'Busard', but says; "it would still appear that the barons were rather poorly served". Allan Oswald suggests in *The History and Practice of Falconry* that 'Bastarde' is a term for the goshawk, as it is a "temperamental and bloody-minded bird" - though most mediaeval and Renaissance falconers who have bequeathed to us their opinions in printed or manuscript form generally disagree with this assessment of the gos.

As the 'Bastarde' is with the 'hawkes of the toure', it is a reasonable assumption that it is one, therefore discounting the goshawk and the buzzard. Evidence which may go some way towards substantiating that the 'Bastarde' is actually a hitherto unrecognised longwing is found in the Oxford English Dictionary, which does not link the term to a bird of prey, but mentions that a form of cannon was known as such. This in itself seems irrelevant, but as that most scholarly member of our brotherhood J. E. Harting stated in *The Ornithology of Shakespeare* other items of contemporary ordnance "the falcon, falconet and saker have derived their names from . . . birds of prey". Consider also that a certain ubiquitous small-arm, until well into the 18th century, was known as a 'musket'. Despite this, our question remains unanswered, as all of the major species of longwing one is likely to have encountered in a mews are already on the list. It can only be an 'Old World' longwing, as Columbus had not set sail when the list was

published. I believe that I have solved the riddle by a curious mix of knowledge of modern falconry and mediaeval literary conventions!

We might safely assume that the mystery bird is a large longwing, and one of practical use in contemporary falconry, judging by the species which precede and follow it in the list. In *Falconry in Mews and Field*, Emma Ford suggests that the enigmatic 'Bastarde' is some kind of cross-bred falcon. Hybrids have only very recently been made a viable option for the falconer through artificial insemination, though there is evidence to show that some species or subspecies of wild falcons interbreed. Given a little lateral thinking, however, in my opinion this explains the placing of the 'Bastarde', which appears after three distinctions of the peregrine, in the list.

The Barbary falcon (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*) is now recognised as the smallest of many sub-species of peregrine and in colour and size resembles what could have been looked upon as a hybrid of the lanner and the peregrine in an era when physical characteristics were seen as reflecting character. The then science of physiognomy stated that, for example, large nostrils, as displayed by Chaucer's eponymous antihero in *The Miller's Tale*, were symbolic of the lustful lecher. It is quite likely that similar concepts were applied to raptors - indeed Frederick II's *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* compares the primaries of certain species of longwing to the slender fingers of the aristocrat, and those of lesser species to the coarse hanfids of the lower orders. Perhaps looking even more strikingly like a hybrid between the peregrine and lanner in terms of appearance is the red shaheen, *Falco peregrinus babylonicus*. I am very fortunate to own two breathtaking paintings of red shaheens by Andrew Ellis. If I am honest, I purchased one of these as it looked uncannily like my lanner! Whilst the red shaheen could be said to look more like a 'bastarde' falcon, it has to be said that the Barbary (as the name suggests) is found in areas much more accessible to Europeans prior to the production of *The Boke of St. Albans* than

"babylonicus [which] occurs in the central deserts and steppes of Asia, from Iraq and eastern Iran, east to Mongolia" (Emma Ford, *Peregrine*, 1993)

and winters in India. Despite this, contemporary English falconers, certainly familiar with imported gyrs and sakers, could have quite feasibly known either of these subspecies of the peregrine.

The list in *The Boke of St. Albans* was not really meant as a set of rules relating to ownership, but was a piece of social imagery, possibly of a satirical nature. For a more detailed exposition of this theory, on which I expand in my dissertation, read Dr. John Cummins' excellent *The Hound and the Hawk*, which deals with the importance of hunting and hawking in the Middle Ages. Given the mediaeval preoccupation with physical appearance, a bird which resembled a contemporarily unnatural cross-breed, in appearance as in taxonomic actuality a 'lesser gentill', but one with some of the higher species' noble qualities, would have been symbolic of the Baron's place between major and minor nobility.

Interesting, you may be thinking, though of no practical value. However, the next time you get footed or bitten, think twice about using the name of the 'bastarde' in vain - you may, if you follow *The Boke of St. Albans* literally, either be doing your peregrine a gross injustice, or elevating your short/broadwing way above its status! 🦅



Style without Purpose

DIANA DURMAN-WALTERS

President of the German Wirehaired Pointer Club and highly acclaimed falconer, Diana Durman-Walters, casts her eye over the dog and falconry 'display' world and asks; what's the point of style without purpose?

NORMALLY found lounging around on the sofa or sprawled over the floor, often hunting round fields getting wet and muddy, occasionally just 'checking out' the district; no, not your husband, your dog, your ordinary every day dog. Take that dog to the great halls of the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) for Crufts and your every day dog can become a super dog.

This is the canine Star Wars. The stars are the dogs that have qualified to compete in the worlds glitziest dog show, and the war is on to see just which ones have the catwalk quality to make them stand out from the crowd.

Crufts, to many seems the anathema of dog life, but rest assured that any event that draws over 20,000 dogs over a four day period is an experience to be savoured. Considering that most puppies will cost around £400 or more, then the collective value of dogs gathered is in excess of £8 million. It becomes apparent very quickly that decorative whimsy they may be, but they're also a serious business.

Sunday this year was gundog day. Like most other spectators and exhibitors I staggered around at 5.00am, getting myself into some semblance of order to make the car journey to Birmingham. First I had to drop off my own wirehaired bitch at my friends house, who was accompanying me on my day out at townsville. I got out of the car to be greeted by 'Burt', an exuberant German wire-haired pointer (GWP) (who doesn't

reckon much to the showing scene), just full of life at any hour. Those affirmative words 'get in your bed' didn't have the ring of authority at that early hour, particularly when both dogs gave a good impression of the Waterloo Cup on the next door neighbours cat (in the pitch dark), just to start their day.

On arrival at the NEC car parks, dogs and spectators poured out into a windblown melee that jostled for the entry doors of the great halls. Canines with coats on, to stop the slightest hint of rain dampening their groomed locks, and a brace of golden retrievers that looked as if they'd had flannelette sheets made into a jumper, that was supposed to stop them having a bad hair day. It was easy to imagine them at their peg on a shooting day, tripping over their jumpers on a marked retrieve.

Once inside, Crufts it was a spectacle of gundogs everywhere. There's no getting away from it; the sheer scale of all the various breeds together, was breathtaking. Trade stands filled every remaining avenue where people might attempt to walk. If it was about dogs, someone was selling it.

From a hunting and shooting perspective it was difficult to see any stand that was selling or advocating what gundogs do best, hunting and fieldwork. Strange that the very dogs whose creation had been for the hawk and the gun were not visibly associated with either.

We made our way through the halls to 'Discover

Dogs'. This is a comprehensive 'village' of all the breeds represented in the UK. Managing a path to any particular breed down here is a fait accompli. It was packed. Seeing the German wirehaired pointer stand was something of an oasis, and time to gather a head of steam before venturing on the next part of the orienteering course. Many of the stand photos which covered the walls were in fact showing the breed working. Rather worryingly though, Kennel Club representatives had, in the previous year, asked the stand to remove photos of a hawk on the kill and a wirehair retrieving a pheasant as these would, they said, 'have an adverse affect on the public, who wouldn't like them'!

There was some reassurance to be taken in the knowledge that all breeds had field trial classes and that there was a section devoted entirely to gamekeepers who were showing their dogs.

The vast crowds packed into every available space. It was very noticeable that women numerically far out numbered men in the show rings. It was interesting to speculate that women gain greater satisfaction and achievement from showing and although there are women who work their dogs in field trials and working tests at Crufts, they are far out numbered by the vast majority that do not. This category of work is dominated by men. Here men are achieving personal bests with their dogs. The numbers of entrants in trials or tests remains fairly constant. Although all breeds have an avid following and entry, particularly in the retriever stakes, few of these dogs would be eligible for the show bench. Years of selective breeding for the perfect working genes have created an animal that is structurally designed to do the job that it was bred for. In many breeds it doesn't look anything like it's show counterpart.

I talked at the ringside with the President of the GWP Club of North America for some time on differences between our attitudes to showing and working our dogs. Both countries have remained focused on the need to breed a good looking gun dog. In the USA they have over half of their members who field trial their dogs. Although their trials are run differently from ours, this does not get away from the fact that owners have not been allowed to pander to cosmetic looks alone, and take great pleasure in working them. As it should be. Allowing breeds to specialise purely for show chooses to ignore the amazing person/dog

relationship that exists as a partnership in the field.

It's easy to see the appeal of dogs that are bred for the show-ring. They are such eye catching examples of cosmetic breeding. They are like wonderfully polished ornaments as they stand motionless, in perfect profile. Not for them (the owner) a need to go out hunting to excite the senses, the dog itself is the excitement. It would be indeed be a strange world if we were to let hawking take that divisive step and become nothing more than glamorous entertainment, but subtle changes are taking place.

In late January whilst in Tenerife, I visited a falconry centre, that was a purpose built tourist attraction in the southern part of the island. Parque Las Aquilas. Park of the Eagles chose it's site very well. Situated half way between the sea and Spain's highest mountain, Pico del Tiede; it's high elevation gives it the superb updrafts that are needed when large vultures and eagles are on the soar. Although the park is situated over a large area and has many animal attractions, it's the two eagle shows per day that pull in the crowds.

The Canaries archipelago is made up of seven volcanic islands which lie directly off the north west coast of Africa. Tenerife is the largest of the islands, producing mainly bananas and tomatoes. It also has a very high tourist input with a climate that is hot all year round. It's a fact that one in ten British holidays will be spent on this island. If getting tanned, good wines, an easy pace of life, and just lounging around in shorts and a T-

shirt all day is your forte, whilst it's freezing cold back home, then the attraction of all this is obvious. Although the island has a variety of flora and fauna that are endemic, it is not a bird watchers paradise. But there are compensations. Loro Parque, famous for it's parrots, attracts visitors from around the world just to see this eminent collection. But when it comes to seeing birds fly then raptors have suspense, size and magnificence written into their immense pulling power.

Parque Las Aquilas have a collection of vultures and eagles that simply excel in this climate and location. There are two displays which are designed to let the gathered throng see as many birds of prey airborne, in 30 minutes, as is possible. Andean condors, griffons, black vultures, turkey vultures and king vultures, along with African fish eagles, white tailed sea eagles and bald eagles, all leave the arena at once. With ease they glide

From a hunting and shooting perspective it was difficult to see any stand that was selling or advocating what gundogs do best, hunting and fieldwork.

Strange that the very dogs whose creation had been for the hawk and the gun were not visibly associated with either.

We Invite All Falconers

TO THE SECOND FALCON MEWS SALES WEEKEND



After the great success of last seasons Falcon Mews Sales Weekend, we are, as promised going ahead with the event again this year.

The format will be almost the same as last year, but in addition we shall have more Clubs, Sales Tents and Artists in attendance.

We expect to have at least 100 falcons for you to select from, and they will all once again be displayed under cover in the large Marquee.

If you are not sure of exactly the falcon you want to fly this season, then this is the event for you!

Alternatively you can order your falcon in advance and collect it on the day, just give us a call.

**This Seasons Event is on the
3rd and 4th of August
A date to put in your diary, Today!**



Our 2002 price list is now out; please contact us and we will send it to you by return post.

Our 2002 prospectus of falcons available at the Sales Weekend should be ready in early July.

Can You Afford To Miss It!

Tel/Fax
01709 548125
Ask For
Peter or Richard

Falcon Mews
FALCON BREEDERS

e-mail
sales@falconmews.com
web-site
www.falconmews.com

out over the perimeter wall, and seem to disappear in a horizontal flight somewhere between where we are sitting, and the sea cliffs in the distance. Twin towers on either side of the arena have spotters whose job it is to let the falcons know when any of these giants appear back overhead.

Leaving them to gain height they unleash a wave, of kites into the arena. Whilst these effortlessly stay aloft waiting for pieces of meat thrown for them to catch, they are joined by falcons flying harris hawks, caracara, and eagle owls. Just in case you are the sort of spectator whose eyes are capable of more than 180 degree vision these are joined by ibis and cranes. Then, it seemed as if the ornamental pond just by the flying arena decided to get in on the act, and waterfowl of various descriptions flew into the arena, whilst lanners put in some impressive flying above them.

Suddenly one of the falconers on the tower shouted that some of the vultures were directly overhead and in their midst was the African fish eagle. They were by now just dots soaring effortlessly, drifting in that imaginary cone of airspace right above. If they had been falcons they would have been at sensational pitch. Straining to keep them in sight, the head falconer came into the middle of the arena where there was a small pond. The vultures began to drift away but he signalled to the eagle that he wanted it to stoop by holding up his glove garnished with food. For several seconds the eagle seemed in suspended animation, as if weighing up the prospect. There was total hush round the arena. Suddenly it tipped into descent. Closing it's wings it became momentarily teardrop in shape. I felt the same heightened sense of excitement, experienced so often when watching my own falcons perform this daring breathtaking feat. As the gap closed within sec-



onds, it changed out of the vertical and began to chancelleer downwards. This seemed a cop out, until you realised that food had been thrown onto the pond to which the eagle had to make adjustments to get a high pitched 'attack' at the water, and not end up looking like Donald Campbell's speed boat. It performed this with ease, and along with the rest of the crowd I was left once again, in total admiration of their awesome aerial power.

I was not alone in finding the whole show entertaining. The flying group of raptors and other bird varieties were housed and presented to a very high standard, yet not one of these birds was native to the island. They were all imported to provide a spectacle. Raptors are used more and more on all continents exactly the same way. Entertaining it may be, but here there was no opportunity for anyone to become involved in taking a day or part of a day out with hawks to watch them in a hunting environment. There was no follow up to allow more to be learned about raptor behaviour and practical falconry. They have become purely an item of splendid entertainment.

Here lies the rub. Exposing the glamorous appearance of a raptor or a gundog and saying this is their most important aspect is the blind leading the blind. The quest for beauty alone is probably more a reflection on modern society, than it is about the need to extol the genuine virtues of the animals we choose to exemplify. Next time I am out hawking I can take great comfort in the fact that my dog and hawk are blinding examples of all things bright and beautiful. But there is more to it than that. I am about to have a great day out in the company of two performers who excel at what they were really bred for. And that is true beauty. 🦅

THE LOVER COMPARETH HIMSELF
TO THE PAINFUL FALCONER

Anonymous (mid 16th century)

The soaring hawk from fist that flies,
Her Falconer doth constrain
Sometime to range the ground unknown
To find her out again:

And if by sight or sound of bell,
His falcon he may see,
Wo ho ho, he cries with cheerful voice,
The gladdest man is he.

By lure then in finest sort,
He seeks to bring her in,
But if that she full gorg'd be,
He can not so her win:

Although her becks and bending eyes,
She many proffers makes,
Wo ho ho, he cries, away she flies,
And so her leave she takes.

This woeful man with weary limbs
Runs wand'ring round about:
At length by noise of chattering pies,
His hawk again found out.

His heart was glad his eyes had seen
His falcon swift of flight:
Wo ho ho, he cries, she empty gorged,
Upon his lure doth light.

How glad was then the falconer there,
No pen nor tongue can tell:
He swam in bliss that lately felt
Like pains of cruel hell.

His hand sometime upon her train,
Sometime upon her breast,
Wo ho ho, he cries with cheerful voice,
His heart was now at rest.

My dear, likewise behold thy love,
What pains he doth endure:
And now at length let pity move
To stoop unto his lure.

A hood of silk and silver bells,
New gifts I promise thee:
Wo ho ho, I cry, I come then say,
Make me as glad as he.

HER FINEST FLIGHT

David Horobin

The dog held point, as did the bitch;
We waited till she'd gained her pitch
Then into heather thick and lush
The springer sprang - the perfect flush.

From afar we watched, and saw
A wond'rous sight upon the moor:
As panicked grouse took to the sky
The falcon saw them from on high.

Of chosen target she was sure,
That falling shape from the azure:
She'd singled out a crafty cock,
Heading for the nearest rock.

She guessed his ruse and in a trice
Turned in her stoop two times nay thrice;
Resumed her earthward dive but then
The cunning grouse dodged her again.

We stood amazed - we dared not blink
To miss the flight; we saw him jink,
Bank hard left, cross babbling burn,
Thus causing her to widely turn.

She carried on in fierce pursuit:
He cleared a fence - she followed suit.
Behind a bank the grouse climbed right -
Hunter and hunted lost to sight.

Ev'ry woman, each dog, each man
In that direction swiftly ran.
Each member hoped that sight to catch:
Conclusion of this earnest match.

Of vanquished grouse, victorious queen,
Of neither bird was nothing seen;
Which one had won no-one was sure;
The anxious falc'ner swung his lure.

"She may be down upon a kill",
"I saw her fly behind that hill".

He heard them not. He tried to calm
His troubled mind; "She'll meet no harm".

She hunted well, could kill, would live,
But ne'er again to men would give
Such joy; her loss did not seem right,
Though surely 'twas her finest flight.

Then someone heard a bell's faint sound:
She took her lure upon the ground.
The falconer, trembling with relief,
Garnished his glove with finest beef.

He gorged her full upon his fist
To take her mind from that she'd missed.
His soul returned, her crop crammed fat,
Content upon the moor both sat.

WHC Field Meet 2001



The Welsh Hawking Club field meet of 2001 was yet again heralded as 'the best ever'. Ten groups of falconers and austringers left the meet HQ at the Hammer Arms each day, to fly various Estates throughout Wales, Cheshire and Shropshire.

The organisation for this event gets better each year and although Roger James is no longer the field meet officer, the club would like to thank him for his contribution, wish him the best, and endeavour to build on his successes. To collect the information in order to write this article I contacted the field leaders of each group.

My request for a short summary of events over the three days within each group, to put it plainly, fell on deaf ears. The only exception to this was Chris Lock of the longwing A group, whose summary follows.

We were however, fortunate and very privileged to obtain the services of the CLA game fair official photographer Phil Jackson of Fotofire. Phil followed several groups out into the field and has supplied us with most of the photos for this, now mainly pictorial, article.

LONGWING GROUP A:
Chris Lock

THE GROUP: Chris Lock (field leader, for my sins), peregrine; Rob Rowe, peregrine; Steve Dickinson, gyr peregrine; Mike Coupe, peregrine prairie; Richard Newton, gyr peregrine; Paul Mckaniow, peregrine saker; and for one day only Steve Gouldthorpe, peregrine saker; Ellis Phythian, gyr peregrine; Roger and June James, peregrine and saker.

THE DOG HANDLERS: Ian Blanter with his German Shorthaired Pointers (GSP); Paul Mckaniow's lady, Loraine, with a GSP; Richard Newton GSP; Roger and June James, English setters.

THE FOLLOWERS: Several loyal spectators accompanied us on all three days, but flying a falcon and keeping notes is not easy and their names escape me. The time spent in their company however, was very rewarding and enjoyable.

This year without doubt was the most dramatic longwing falconry I have witnessed on a fieldmeet for many years. Birds were flown in all weather conditions over ponds, woods, cover crop and open fields with relish. Multiple stoops & pursuits were the order of the day against various quarry. Teal, mallard, pigeon, partridge & pheasant, not forgetting Steve Dickinson's gyr pere rabbit lifting capabilities!

All the birds flown this year were exceptional, however two birds deserve special recognition. The first is Steve Dickinson's hybrid, 'Sky'. This falcon flew a partridge straight through the field, with falconers and spectators seriously concerned for their health, as several pounds of falcon bottomed out of an awesome stoop and burst through the crowd at warp speed.

The sheer raw power of this flight stunned us for several minutes; a glance around at every ones faces said it all.

A dot in the sky on every flight it wowed onlookers yet again, by stooping and almost lifting a fully grown rabbit, flushed by Ian's dog clean off the ground, before taking a fine partridge. I have personally witnessed this falcon grow from a falcons first flap to the glove, to the bird as it is today, well done Steve.

Paul Mckaniow's hybrid, was another bird that dominated the sky and severely put pressure on any thing that dared flush underneath it. Paul's bird unfortunately went AWOL but returned on its own accord an hour later, minus transmitter. First to spot the bird returning was Steve Dickenson who may have a half decent falcon, but whose eyesight is appalling. 'Look Out', it's a harris Steve shouted!!! Still, we all have our cross to bear. Paul's hybrid is yet another wonderful falcon and apart from that one incident a credit to him.

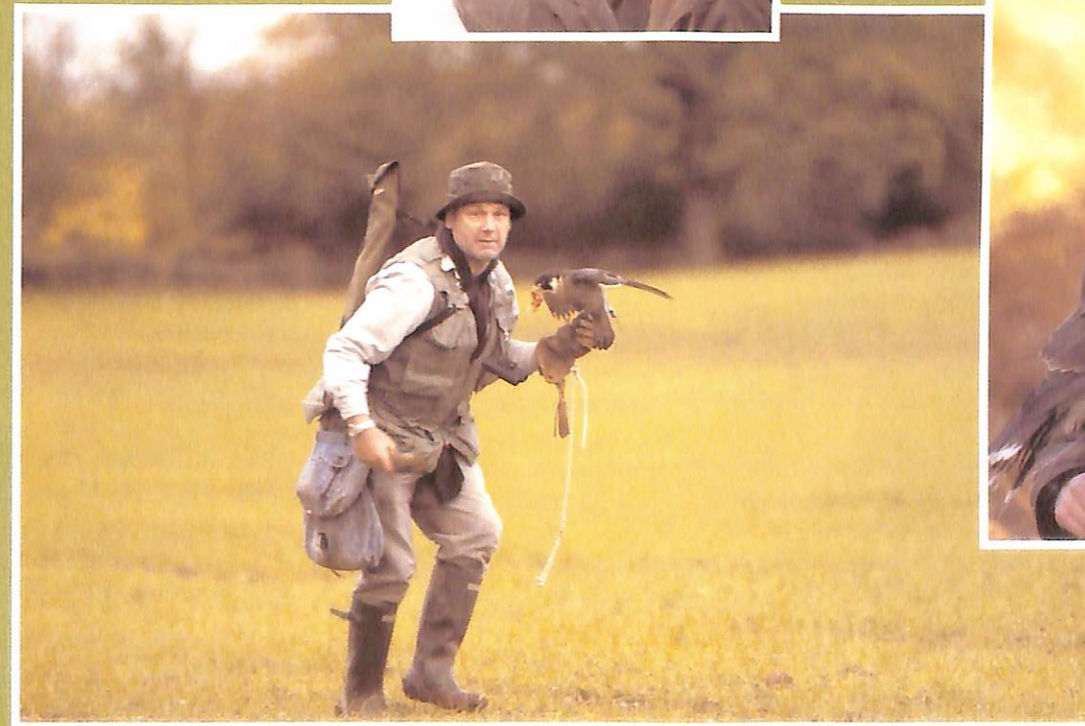
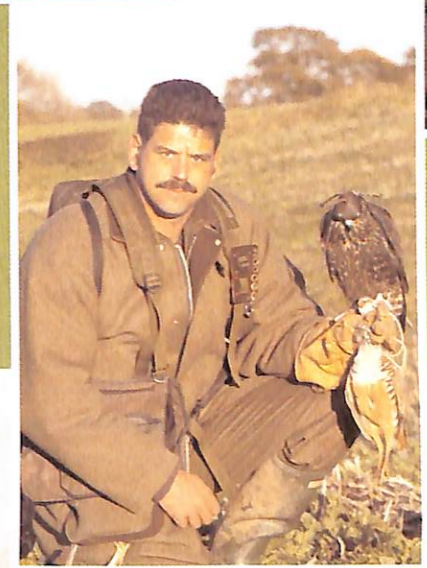
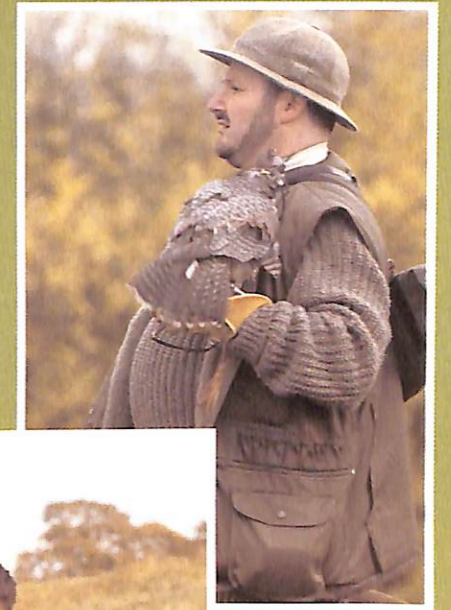
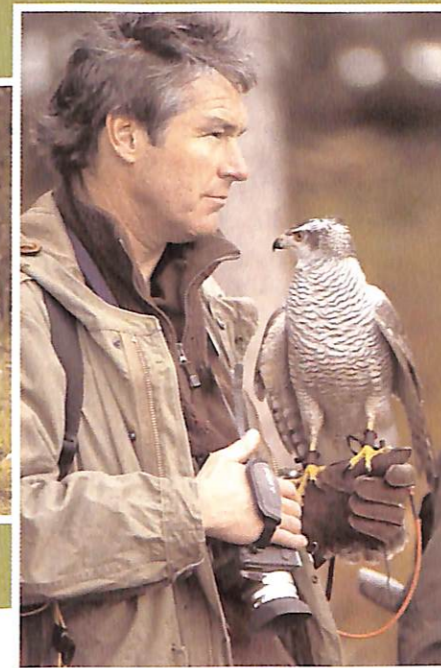
As I said at the beginning, all the birds flown, on a normal day, would draw praise and satisfaction, its just that these two birds deserved a special mention.

I can't sign off without mentioning the funniest moment. It was undoubtedly poor old Richard attempting to beat the North Wales bog snorkelling record with his musical dog, no offence Richard, it could have happened to anyone. We were all just glad that the pair of you were not drowned, it was one of those moments; you just had to be there.

Well, all good things must come to an end and that was the field meet of the year without doubt. Next year's will have to pull all the stops out to better that one.

Unfortunately, myself and Steve will not be there, as we'll be in bonny Scotland for our sins, but I look forward to reading about it in the Austringer. Have a good one! Chris. 🦅





A SPORTING TOUR

THROUGH THE NORTHERN PARTS OF ENGLAND
AND PARTS OF THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND

ROY BEBBINGTON



ARATHER grandiose title I know, but for four weeks during the course of the winter I set off on my very own sporting tour.

As things stood at this time, the county in which I live was still held within the grip of foot and mouth restrictions. It was not in fact until the 1st December 2001 that I was finally allowed back upon my favoured local grounds and the 1st January 2002 that the whole of the county was finally declared foot and mouth free.

So with the majority of my hawking grounds off limit I was squeezed into a very limited area upon which I could fly. I decided to try and salvage something from what then appeared to be a hopeless situation.

Due to the generosity of a number of fellow Scottish falconers, I was to experience four weeks of the very finest hospitality and sport. All this set amidst some of that country's finest and most varied landscape. According to Roger Upton's well known and much admired book 'A bird in the hand', when Colonel Thornton set off on his sporting tour, he did so with no less than two loaded boats. His entourage consisted of; servants, guns, dogs and nets, a captain, two mariners, falconer, waggoner groom and boy.

For my sporting tour I set off with a Daewoo estate packed to the roof with all the paraphernalia required, plus two dogs and one hawk - an intermewed female harris. My dogs were in fact my youngest least experienced. At the time of our departure I felt that they needed the time and experiences I hoped the tour was going to provide. It did in fact prove to be the right decision, for they excelled themselves.

As I live in Northern England I started the tour by having a days sport on home ground. This is in fact close by Stainton moor, upon which Colonel Thornton himself is known to have flown his own hawks.

I set off the next day for my first port of call,

Peebleshire in the Scottish borders. I must admit that until this visit I had previously never given the border region much attention. It had simply been an area I passed through on my way up to the highlands. I now know just what I've been missing. What glorious scenery, lovely small market towns and a seemingly abundance of quarry. My contact whilst visiting the area was Dougie McKenna, who was not only supplying me with ground upon which I could fly my hawk, but who also sorted all of my accommodation, and very well he did that too. You would be hard pressed not to like Dougie, for he is a very easygoing type of guy. A keen field sportsman with an interest in many different types of sport. After initial introductions I loaded the dogs into the rear of his 4x4 and got into the front with the hawk on fist. Dougie then took the vehicle over some rough terrain and up a number of very steep hills until we finally reached the very summit of the last. On reaching this summit I was to be treated to a stunning vista. Below us lay a vast area of heather, white grass and bracken, all surrounded on three sides by the Meldon hills. It was stirring stuff.

"There you go" said Dougie, "enjoy yourself". He even apologised for not being able to accompany me due to prior commitments. What I had in fact been given was so much ground that as a single person flying one hawk, I would have had difficulty getting around the whole of it in a fortnight, never mind the limited amount of time that I did have.

During the course of my stay I was to discover, due to the hard work and good noses of the dogs, that the ground held a cross section of quarry and plenty of it. If it's at all possible for one hawk to have too much sport, then my hawk did just that. Looking back through my diary, we averaged total of between 14-20 points and subsequent flights each morning! I only flew the hawk

over a point from the dogs, so this does not included the innumerable rabbits which spontaneously flushed. Primarily flights were to rabbits, but also pheasant and woodcock, we even came across the odd covey of grouse. It proved to be the ideal start to the holiday and especially so for the dogs. Suffice to say, superb sport was had and with the weather playing ball for a change, we didn't miss a single day a field.

Dougie invited me to accompany him stalking the locally common, and the very elusive Sika deer, whose habits and whereabouts he is very well versed in. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

On the final morning of our stay I took along Roger Nash, a keen shooting man, who had never before experienced our sport. My diary for that morning reads:

What a fitting way to end what has been a superb week. We worked what was basically the basin of three hills. The weather conditions were perfect. Again excellent dog work. The hawk was on top form. The second of today's rabbits was a real beauty. Both dogs were side by side on point. I asked Roger to walk the 30 yards to the dogs and get them to flush whatever it was that they were pointing. A rabbit bolted and the hawk was off in pursuit. By Rogers's estimation, she came to terms with the rabbit 150 yards on. Superb flight, another great day.

From Peebleshire I then rendezvoused with Terry Fitzgerald and we made the long drive, through some spectacular country, to Terry's home near Lochgilphead on the West Coast. Terry flies his hawk, an intermewed female harris under some pretty difficult conditions and he has my up most respect. Much of the surrounding country is heavily forested with open ground at a premium, further more, there appears to be a low game base locally at which to hunt. These were very similar conditions to those, which I had experienced when I

too used to live on the Scottish West Coast. In typical West Coast tradition, it rains incessantly on the very afternoon we were to go afield. Thankfully no midges!

I left Terry's in the early hours of an extremely dark and wet morning to drive up the coast to Oban. It was from here that I was catching the ferry to the isle of Coll. I was going to the isle of Coll by kind invitation of Rob and Romaine Wainright. Those of you who read his regular features within the Shooting times will know Rob. He is also the former captain of the Scottish international rugby union team and a former British lion's member. As a keen English rugby union fan I suppose I can forgive him of the former (only joking).

Thankfully the two and a half-hour ferry crossing from the mainland, around the sound of Mull was made upon calm waters and was uneventful. Here's a couple of tips for you, don't bother trying to watch the television on a Calmac ferry and certainly don't bother eating the porridge, unless that is, you have a fondness for salt! Rather arrogantly I had already conjured up an image of the Isle of Coll, that I felt sure it was going to match. I should have known better. For after a number of years of living close to and flying my hawks upon the Isle of Skye, I had imagined all of the Hebridean isles to be similar. How wrong I was. Now after having visited the isles of Lewis, Harris, Eigg, Rhum and Muck I can testify to their individuality. Each has it's own unique features and the isle of Coll was as individual as the rest. Looking back upon the time I spent upon this wonderful little island, I find it hard to find enough superlatives





to describe what I experienced and how I feel about the island.

It is in many respects a falconer/Austringers paradise. A small island surrounded by water, wide open with precious few trees and a wide diversity of game. For the longwing/shortwing enthusiast who has a passion for waterfowl then the choice is endless. Geese are everywhere and are amazingly approachable. Ducks in all shapes sizes and types are found throughout the island. I could certainly imagine this to be a great and very suitable place to fly a gyr. Soon after leaving the island I was to learn that Rob's female ferruginous had taken a greylag goose!

Due in no small part to Rob's hard work, both pheasant and partridge can be found, although as of yet, they are not in sufficient numbers to make them your sole choice of quarry. Snipe are present in good numbers.

Photographs by David A. Gardner

Up until the untimely death of his tiercel peregrine, Rob had been trying to perfect waiting on flights at them. From reading through his daily journal he appeared to have had some exhilarating flights. He was ably assisted by his two smooth vizsla's, which are past masters on this quarry, providing no end of sport for both hawk and gun. Ground game, which was my first choice, consisted of rabbit and hare. The rabbit numbers were good and what's more, they inhabit almost all dry areas of the island, the greater part of which consists of miles of golden coloured sand dunes. Just try and imagine standing there, hawk on fist with the ocean lapping against deserted golden beaches, your dogs before you working through the tall thin marran grasses which cover the dunes in which rabbits hide. Well that's the reality, not the dream!

I should imagine if you wanted to maximise your opportunities then the use of ferrets could be handy. The seeming inevitable digging that goes hand in hand when ferreting would probably be the easiest you are ever likely to experience, within the dunes. The rabbits were also present on the heather covered hill and probably sat better here to a pointing dog than they did within the dunes. There was some first class sport and a couple of entries in my diary read:

The rain held off just long enough for us to step out and manage a number of flights. The dogs began to draw upon something invisible to the eye, even upon the short grass. Up shot a hare, crouched, as it was only yards before us. The hawk only put a token effort in and it easily made good its escape. We went into an area of sand dunes, which rabbits seem to love in these parts. A large rabbit bolted from within the grasses and the hawk took off after, in a more determined fashion. She quickly came to terms with it and after re-adjusting her footing she had it subdued.

It was late afternoon before we set out. The winds had eased and with the sun shinning it made things as pretty as a picture. Had 8 points, the hawk took the first and the last rabbit. She did in fact have a foot to another, which struggled free. She did well to take the first as it shot through a fence and she had to carry out a sharp wingover to catch it.

My stay upon Coll was all too brief and I was very sad to say good bye. I was, however, leaving with some golden memories and a promise to return. My wish to have become stranded on this Isle, was not granted and it was a rather gentle, uneventful boat trip that returned me to the mainland.

My journey now took me through the winding highland roads, with a brief stay in Fort William, my destination was the Cairngorm region. It is here that a group of us have a rented cottage with land upon which we can hunt. What we basically have is an area of an estate, which due to its terrain and quarry base, is of little commercial value. Maybe not to other sporting interests,

but, for six austringers in search of ground quarry, it's perfection itself.

The Cairngorm region in winter? Well yes! It is surprising to learn that we have so far never had to miss a days hawking due to the weather. We've come close, but have never yet missed.

My harris, was one of two. The other was an immature female, as of yet un-entered. The other hawks were two intermewed female goshawks and one intermewed male goshawk.

My diary read:

It seems hard to believe that it's exactly one whole year since we were all together. Time has certainly flown. A good mornings hawking with sport for all. My hawk took a rabbit from her first slip, after picking herself up off the ground on no less than three occasions, before finally binding to her rabbit. Other members remarked upon how fit she was looking. She had a total of five flights and took three rabbits. On leaving the hill we were treated to the wonderful sight of a double rainbow spanning the entire glen.

Day three and we awoke to find glorious weather conditions. Sport galore today! Took a rabbit from our very first slip. From one small area of cover we had no less than five good points and subsequent flights. Once out on the hill we had a flight at a pheasant. This was soon followed by a flight at a rabbit, which the hawk bound too but lost in the resultant struggle. Ever wonder how on earth they some times manage to lose them? After an extended point from the dogs, whilst somebody else retrieved their hawk I duly made my way over to them. Once sent into flush a rabbit ran a good 70-100 yards and was taken by the hawk. Glad about this as I felt it was just deserts for the patience the dog had shown.

The very next day, as if to highlight the changeable nature of the Scottish weather, we awoke to find up to three inches of snow! The remainder of the week followed a similar pattern - and as for the nights, well! Now that's another story.

I would like to finish by thanking some very special people, Dougie McKenna, Terry and Kath Fitzgerald, Rob and Romaine Wainright and finally my five fellow austringers with whom I have spent many happy hours over a number of years. To you all, I raise a glass! 🍷

Rob is hoping to be able to accommodate visiting Falconers/Austringers commencing the 2002/2003 season. Should you care to contact him his telephone number is 01879-230208.



J.R. Best
B.V.Sc. M.R.C.V.S.
VETERINARY SURGEON
Portishead Veterinary Centre

32 West Hill, Portishead,
N. Somerset BS20 6LN

Tel: 01275 847400
Fax: 01275 847027

PAC 

Solving Problems
at any distance

The Advanced PAC Remote Trainer enables control of wayward dogs. Suitable for all types of behavioural problems. Immediately the dog misbehaves, he receives corrective impulses through his collar that are commensurate with the level of his misdemeanour.

You have control of all activity from the handset. The system is effective up to one mile and gives four days of continuous use from rechargeable batteries. Two or more dogs can be controlled individually from the same handset.



Remote trainers and electronic fences.

For advice & guidance from UK agent call Alan Butcher on 01769 560040
E-mail: culveralan@aol.com

Ben Long



THE CLASSIC RANGE OF FALCONRY PRODUCTS FROM THE MASTER OF THE ART. ABSOLUTELY UNRIVALLED FOR QUALITY, STYLE AND SERVICE, AND SURPRISINGLY AFFORDABLE

PO BOX 164, EXETER EX4 7WB
TEL: 01392 257424 FAX: 01392 460173
E-mail: benlongfalconry@aol.com
www.benlongfalconry.com

Equipment Clothing Telemetry Books/Videos Falconry Tuition

**THORNTON'S
TRAVEL
SERVICE**



THORNTON'S TRAVEL SERVICE
ABTA 97646

YOUR FIRST CHOICE

**TRAVEL AGENT
FOR INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS
WORLDWIDE**

**FOR DEPARTURE DATES/VENUES
CONTACT**

JEANETTE FORD (WHC MEMBER)

TEL 012753 95700 FAX 012753 94365
E-MAIL ginf@thorntonstvl.co.uk

**INDEPENDENT
BIRD REGISTER**

THE SUCCESSFUL LOST AND FOUND AGENCY
OVER 1,100 BIRDS REUNITED

900+ BIRDS UNCLAIMED

NEW IBR DIRECTORY VOLUME 5
2002-2003. £6.00 + £1 postage



Closed Breeders Rings

Split Rings

Microchipping

Registration - £10 for 3 years Cover

Documents & Certificates of Captive Breeding

Lost, Found & Stolen Database

Tel: 0870 608 8500

Email: jenny@ibr.org.uk
www.ibr.org.uk

What have you got to lose?

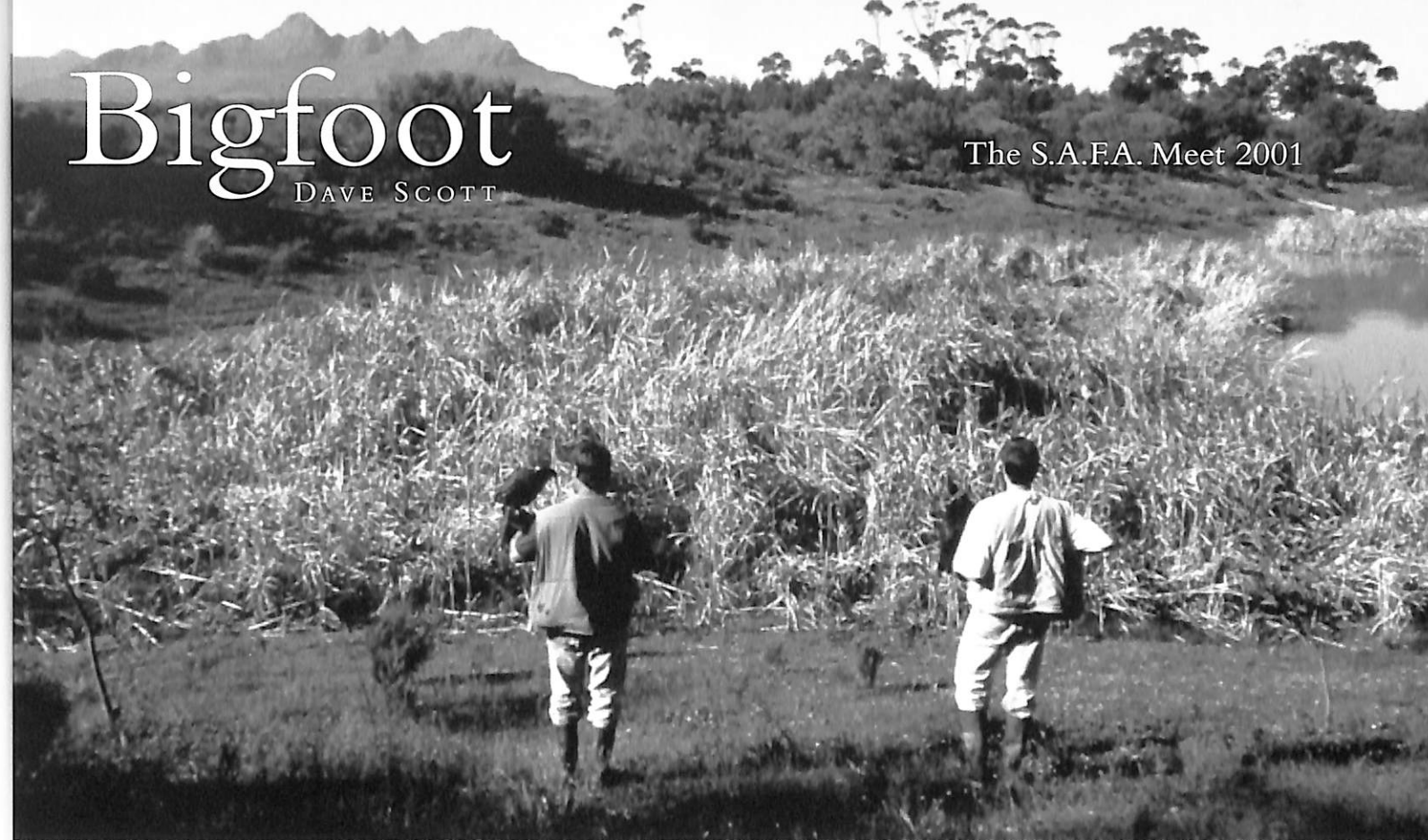
It costs nothing to report a lost bird.

Independent Bird Register

The White House Business Centre
Hatton Green, Warwick. CV35 7LA

Bigfoot
DAVE SCOTT

The S.A.F.A. Meet 2001



MID JULY and Dave Jones, Mark Neale and I are boarding a plane for Cape Town, for the South African Falconers Association's 2001 field meet. Ten hours later finds us in Cape Town airport and making our way through customs into a waiting truck. Not any old truck though, this one has two pointers, a female black spar and their owner Dr. Adrian Lombard on board. The luggage is loaded and Adrian says "ok lets go hunt!" Any fatigue and jetlag instantly disappears with that one magic sentence and we're off under the shadow of Table Mountain.

Adrian has arranged to meet Thys Walters and Hank Chalmers en route, as Hank also has a female spar to fly. We meet up, say our hellos and thirty minutes after landing we're hunting cape francolin with black spars; my sort of welcoming committee! Dave and Adrian are old friends so Dave's flying Ade's bird Bigfoot, with Tessa and Megan, Ade's pointers, working the cover. This consists of scrub interspersed with reed beds in which the francolins like to hide. The dogs soon go on point and a francolin is flushed. Bigfoot powers off after it, but the francolin bales out into reed bed, the dogs get the re-flush and this time Bigfoot nails it before it makes cover again! Our first kill of the trip and we've only been on the ground an hour. Hank's bird is also on form and several blistering flights later, a second francolin is in the bag!

After an excellent meal and an early night back at Ade's, it was up the next day at four a.m. Dogs, birds and enough provisions to last us for the meet were all crammed into truck and trailer. With a 1000 km drive

ahead of us, we set off under the cover of darkness. First light revealed an incredible landscape of distant mountains and vast expanses of grassland. The road stretched ahead of us as straight as an arrow, and quickly lost its crisp-ness, as the heat of the day shimmered over its surface. Raptors of all kinds adorned the fences and power poles en route and we all have our necks craned out the windows, as we try and out do one another, in typical bird spotting fashion. Pale chanting goshawks, kestrels, harriers and both martial and black eagles, are just some of the species we observe.

It was late afternoon as we rolled up at Steven Squires farm, he'd invited us to see his tiercel peregrine fly at laughing doves. The tiercel is the survivor of a cast; a wild cat sadly killed its brother after a night out. There are lots of predators in Africa that will make a meal of your bird should it not return on command. We lost no time on ceremony as we picked up the tiercel and went looking for doves. We drove to where some had congregated in an acacia thicket and Steven un-hooded his little tiercel which quickly left the fist and climbed into a beautiful evening sky. Once at his pitch we begin to flush the doves, whereupon they flew hell for leather towards the nearest tree. The tiercel folded and put in a series of fantastic stoops and sprints at the fleeing doves. After some 20 minutes of hot sweaty fun, which entailed running and yelling at trees whilst trying not to fall down aardvark holes, a puff of feathers signalled success. Another excellent day's hunting and it was rounded off with an exquisite meal of springbok and plenty of excellent South African wine back at Steven's farm.



over the next ridgeline. By now I'm realising how nice a ploughed muddy field would be to run over, instead of the boulder and cactus strewn landscape of South Africa, that I was currently stumbling across. Once again we catch up to the bird and guinea feathers show a battle, but no kill. Guineas are known to put their heads under their wings when captured by a hawk, so robbing the hawk of that vital foothold. The guineas had vanished, so admitting defeat it was back to camp for lunch.

Afternoons were taken up with long winging either on ducks or francolin, of which swainsons and orange river were the species endemic to the area. One memorable afternoon was with Alan Harvey, who flies a cast of female peregrines. We'd driven around looking for a duck slip and having spotted some yellow-billed ducks the birds were readied. Both birds climbed up quickly and took their pitches over the pond as we made our way in behind a dyke. On Alan's signal we flushed the pond and up went the ducks. Both birds stooped simultaneously and cut into the trio of ducks splitting them up, one of the falcons then lined up a strike on a panicking duck trying to get back to the pond. A last minute jink by the duck and the falcon missed her mark, however, the second bird was there covering and bound to the duck on her run in. Falcon and duck spiralled earthwards with the other falcon binding to the duck on the ground. What an excellent team these two birds were, and deadly on most hunts.

After an excellent week of hunting with falcons and hawks to numerous to mention in an article this size, the meet finale was sky trials. Having drawn lots the previous night we all drove out onto the plains, on a bitterly cold but clear morning.

Falcons readied their birds depending on the time lot they'd drawn, and chose the pigeon they wished to use. The pigeons had been specially trained for the purpose of sky trials and were good and fit. Most of the falcons used spend time at hack, and as a result are super fit, which showed in the performances of the birds. Kenny, a young falconer, flew a lanner that put on an excellent display with a nice spiral stoop. His efforts were rewarded later in the day, with a first, as the falconers' choice.

Each bird is marked according to pitch, position etc. and is given 10 minutes to complete the flight. The judge's choice of winner was Grant Neale's female peregrine, which put in the highest stoop I've ever seen. She was a dot in my 12x binoculars and put in a vertical stoop that seemed to last forever. Everyone cheered as she bound to her pigeon; it was one of those magical flights that etch into your memory. This bird had been wild trapped several years ago and after this meet Grant was returning her back to the wild; judging by her performance she wasn't going to starve!

Having said goodbye to new friends we began our homeward journey. Alan Harvey had invited us to see

his birds fly grey wing francolin back at his farm, in the Stormberg Mountains on the way back. Alan's farm consists of 500 hectares of mountain plateau, on which he grazes stock and where coveys of grey wing are to be found. The scenery was truly spectacular and with everything bathed in the orange glow of the evening, the dogs were sent ahead to get a point. Only one of the cast was flying and with dogs on point she was unhooded and off she went into the clear sky. The dogs had a point on a rocky slope, below where we stood on top of the plateau. As the bird came over for the flush it was a strange perspective looking down on a stooping falcon. The falcon powered up behind and below the fleeing grey-wing and with a thud, bound to a tail ender, landing with it amongst the boulder-strewn slope. Alan climbed down to retrieve his bird and her prize, as we sat absorbed into the African sunset.

It had been a fantastic way to end an excellent adventure into Africa's world of falconry. I must thank Dr. Adrian Lombard who made all this possible; it was both an education and the realisation of a dream. A truly memorable experience made all the more possible by the welcoming nature, of the members of the South African Falconers Association, whose hospitality and hunting were exemplary. 🇿🇦



The Rouse

A shakeout of the news,
views and field-meets
around the regions

Under the auspices of your committee, the WHC has been gently directed towards a regional structure. The need therefore, to inform you of the passion and success of each of the seven regions has arisen. The rouse gives you such a chance, and the rules of the club have been altered to accommodate this new direction. As part of the now clarified regional structure, it has become obligatory for the secretary to send in a written report to the editor of the austringer. This is the first year of those changes, and as ever, not everybody has grasped the nettle. Consequently not all regions have sent in a report; but it is a start and as we're all in the club to share our experiences I'm sure next year we'll see all the regions covered.

SOUTH WALES

Meetings held on the second Monday of each month at Casey's Court Pub, Usk. Contact Dave Dimond 0117 932 4845

BATH

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

SOUTH WEST

Meetings held on the third Monday of each month at the Ley Arms in Kenn, nr. Exeter. Contact Dave Scott 01752 830 382

ESSEX

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, nr. Colchester. Contact Mick Young 01206 513 179

MIDLAND

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

COTSWOLD

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Beckford Hotel between Evesham and Tewkesbury. Contact Shaun Healey 01386 832 812

NORTH WALES

Meetings held on the first Monday of each month at the Goshawk Pub, Mouldsworth, nr. Chester. Contact Neil McCann 0151 293 0364

YORKSHIRE

Proposed new region



NORTH WALES REGION

Neil McCann

The past twelve months have been very active, with plenty of new and old faces coming along to the Goshawk pub at Mouldsworth. The same committee have been re-elected, Terry Finnegan as chairman, Neil McCann as secretary, and Bob Antonio as treasurer.

We've held an array of field meets over the season, and have had various guest speakers entertain and inform us throughout the year. On one occasion local vet Mike Stanford, sold out of first aid kits after his talk. Other guests have included Martin Holinshead, Ben Long and Terry Pickford as well as the infamous, Bryan Paterson and 'friends'.

The field meetings have consisted of two on Bryn-A-Pys, three on Arley hall and one on the Hanmer estate. Game bags included, rabbits, ducks, partridge, pheasants and moorhens.

Those present have seen some excellent flights, with Les and Jenny Hewitt's harris hawks taking plenty of pheasants. Les's bird however caught more than game this season, with a bout of asper laying it low for a while. It did however recover to complete the season. Ellis Phythian's gyr x pere took three mallards from high pitch stoops on the Bryn-A-Pys estate, and two on Arley hall. All were taken in view of the keepers who were in awe of such fine displays. The goshawk group, which gets bigger every season, has seen some excellent hawking over well-stocked ground. We watched, at times, dogs hold point for twenty minutes or more, whilst waiting for the previous bird to be collected off another kill.

One of the meetings held this season with three goshawks three harris hawks, two long wings and a red tail took 18 pheasants, 8 mallard, 1 teal, and a rabbit. The first eight slips had five pheasants and one rabbit in the bag. Not a bad days hawking, and a credit to the birds and falconers of the day. Roly Evans' Finnish female gos, took two hen pheasants in one flight, one after a good 150-yard chase.

We continue to build on our success and have already booked nine days over pheasant for next season. In travel agent jargon 'you'll need to book early to avoid disappointment'.

STOP PRESS: Honorary WHC veterinary Richard Jones has taken up residency at the Birch Heath veterinary clinic in Tarporley, Cheshire, alongside veterinary Mike Stanford. Richard has just returned from The Raptor Centre, at the University of Minnesota, USA and brings with him a wealth

of experience on raptor medicine and surgery. Whilst we don't look forward to seeing him at the practice, the North Wales members will sleep better knowing that an already excellent veterinary clinic, has added to its knowledge base. We wish him the best and look forward to seeing him at The Goshawk.



ESSEX REGION

Andy Hulme

DECEMBER 29th

Eight members of the region attended the first field-meeting held at Haughley Green, by kind invitation of Mr. Martin Freeman. Seven harris hawks, along with Terry Singleton with his male goshawk, took to the field splitting into two groups. There was plenty of game and some terrific flights notably by Pete Smith's female harris and Simon Cole's female harris. Terry's goshawk flew a pheasant which made cover and the gos threw up into a tree then dived into a strip of maize where he caught a rook feeding on a woodpigeon. A great day was had by all with a modest bag of Pheasant, Duck, Moorhen and Rook.

JANUARY 12th

We returned to Haughley Green on the 12th of January for our second field-meeting with seven members in attendance, all with harris hawks. We split into two groups and Mr. Freeman's wife and young daughter Emma came for a walk with one group before going to watch Ipswich Town win in the afternoon.

Dave Martin's home-bred female harris opened the day, taking a terrific rabbit which bolted across the field from the hedge we were working. As we moved around the estate five roe deer came out of the cover and made their way across the stubble field at a leisurely pace, occasionally looking back at us. By lunch the bag was three pheasants, two rabbits and three moorhens.

After lunch the estate's new gamekeeper Carl joined us and worked one of his springer spaniels, again we had some great flights with Chris Pearce's male harris taking a cock pheasant and was unlucky not to put two cock birds in the bag, losing a second on the floor. Members had a great day with a bag of five pheasants, two rabbits and three moorhens.

A big thank you goes to Mr Martin Freeman for allowing us access to this wonderful estate, and members will be pleased to know that next season Martin has agreed to let the Essex region hold field-meetings from September.

JANUARY 19th

Seven members of the region attended the last of our regional field-meetings at Boxted, by kind invitation of Mr. & Mrs Bircham and their gamekeeper Andy Waterhouse former member of the W.H.C. Thanks to Andy's keeping skills we ended the day with nine hen and three cock pheasants, a rabbit and a moorhen.

Before I go I would like to comment on the impeccable manners and dress code I have witnessed over the year by the members of the WHC, it does you all credit.



THE COTSWOLD REGION

Shaun Healey

Covering Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire the Cotswold region is a recent addition to the folds of the WHC. Our inaugural meeting was held in August 2001 with 20 members being in

attendance. We've continued to grow as a region since then and although still relatively small, we have an enormous depth of falconry experience within the group. Both newcomers and regulars are assured of a very warm welcome.

November saw our first fieldmeet at the Ragley Estate nr Alcester. We had a field of four goshawks, two harris's and a pere-saker, from which we caught five pheasants. The goshawks had the lion's share, but Mark Belmonte's little falcon took an excellent hen bird on the remount, after striking a cock bird in full stoop from about 500ft. It was a great start to our field meet calendar. The flights of the falcon in particular, made the keepers day!

Our next meet was on the 13th of December, this time with a field of three goshawks, two harris's and Mark's pere-saker. The first pheasant went to Mike West's imprint gos within 5 minutes of setting out. He did state that 'one will do', but he then thought about it, after much mocking from the group. Within the space of a few minutes, the next pheasant went to Jim French's gos. Terry Peplow's harris took the next, a hen bird, then Mike again, with a good long flight on a cock bird. This time he decided that enough was enough, as he'd be flying the next day! A good point from Terry's GWP produced an excellent long flight for Jim's goshawk, and yet more success. We then moved on to an area of open cover crop and Mark put up his falcon. It

took up a nice pitch, the dog flushed and the falcon put in a tremendous stoop on a cock bird, which it struck hard, but couldn't hold. The falcon remounted, and this time a hen bird was taken cleanly. The head keeper joined us for a while and witnessed Mark's falcon strike another pheasant but alas couldn't hold, and Pat James's little male goshawk struck a hen bird from below after a dramatic little chase, but it got away minus a few feathers.

In early January we held a small field meet just for harris hawks, on the hills just outside Broadway, nr Evesham. Mike West and Terry Peplow and I undertook to do the ferreting and Lee Featherstone, Mike Wynn and his son, along with Keith and Sandra Jones provided the hawks. A field of four hawks, three males and one female were in attendance, and it was a fine mild day with a bit of a breeze, just about perfect for hillside hawking. It was one of those days where the hawks were certainly put to the test by the rabbits. Being hillside the rabbits generally bolted out and down the hill, but some turned uphill once they realised a team of harris hawks was chasing them. This gave rise to some interesting flights, all on to a losing battle, these Cotswold rabbits were fit and knew the game, I wonder why?

We did have some downhill flights with all four hawks in pursuit, the rabbits made for the thick grassy reed beds that were spread about the hillside, and once there, they stopped, turned and turned again before making for the safety of the warrens. At the end of the day we'd taken eight rabbits, seen some spectacular flights and took home a bag full of memories.

At the time of writing this article, we're planning another harris day, and this meet will round off our calendar for the season.

Falconry furniture, bird and dog health issues and a myriad of questions, along with the field craft necessary to hunt successfully, makes you very aware of the benefit of sharing the experience with fellow falconers. Clubs have a vital role to play in this, to inform, advise and educate. Any club or region is only as strong as its members, who give their support, and this must be continued now and for future generations.

There are many stories I could tell but it would take an age to write, so I'll leave that to the spoken word at club meetings. We've been planning ahead for the 2002 season and by the time you read this the hawking season will be over for yet another year. We will reflect on our successes and failures and wonder; will we do better next time? The members of the Cotswold region wish those of you involved in breeding a successful year and those of you that are looking forward to the new season a successful moult.

As a footnote end this article I would like to congratulate Mike West and his greyhound bitch 'Lily' on winning the Cotswolds Coursing Club Trafford Trophy, it was very well deserved. I believe the drinks are on Mike at the next meeting!

Boneheads & Bravehearts

Mark Hinge, a former Welsh Hawking Club Committee member and Political Director for the Countryside Alliance in Wales takes a look at the Protection of Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 and its future implications

In the last Austringer I wrote about the threat to falconry, the (then) Hunting Bill was to be quashed in Parliament, it's saving grace was the 2001 General Election, touted and called against a backdrop of Foot & Mouth. Eventually we were all able to get our birds out to hunt and hardly anyone gave hunting another thought - except that is for Scotland; the new Parliament was set on a course to stop 'mounted hunting, coursing and terrier work', the latter changed to read the hitherto unknown practice of fox-baiting.

Well which reader(s) breathed a sigh of relief? Who out there thought 'well, following all the evidence that the Rural Affairs Committee took, that there would be exemptions for falconry . . . we'll be OK'. Relax fellow falconers, there is an exception for falconry. How lucky we are! But do read on . . . provided of course that you do indeed have a dog that doesn't catch quarry itself, or as now laid down in statute, a bird that does actually 'kill' its prey. I will repeat that last sentence, because it is the fundamentals of what I write about;

A dog that doesn't catch quarry itself and a bird that actually kills its prey.

I have no doubt that in its own twisted mind, the Scottish Parliament set out to vilify a sector of society. It set out with a purpose and that purpose was to publicly flog those who dare chose to go hunting. Indeed long ago any aspects of 'animal welfare' were thrown out, during the passage of the Bill. Many groups gave their own perspective and offered evidence to the Rural Affairs Committee, and the Scottish Hawk Board (a most fine body), did likewise. The unfolding debate and denial of any amendments to make the Bill more acceptable was a beleaguered sight to behold, I watched aghast and cynically with a wry grin, to see what was an already ridiculed democracy, dig a hole deeper than



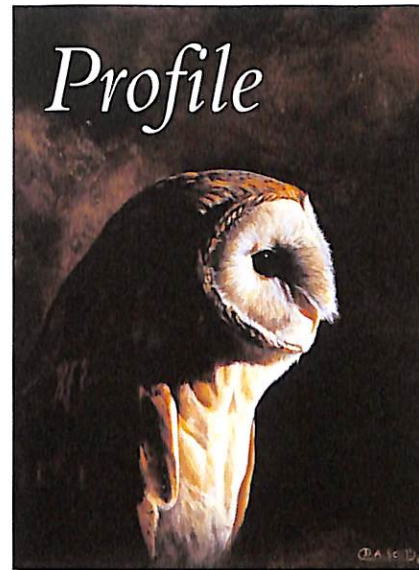
The Scottish Parliament

Loch Ness. And then watched parliamentarians willingly throw themselves into the abyss, thinking that that would be the end of hunting. Wrong!

If you get a chance, do surf the internet, or get a friend to do it for you; take a look at the Scottish newspapers and see the scorn that has been poured on Holyrood a now discredited Parliament, see what the Scottish Police say of the Bill 'unworkable and unenforceable', see how even the Justice's Minister voted against the Bill, and lastly see how the saddest day for democracy will unfurl, as a Government is taken to court on the fundamental principle of human rights. In the meantime, when you make that annual trip up to Scotland, being watched and video recorded by the Hunt Saboteurs Association who now have self elected themselves as 'hunt monitors' for quote: 'all quarry itself and more importantly your hawk does actually 'kill its quarry' immediately it catches it. A remote chance of being 'caught' you may have, but sadly we are now enshrined in law as criminals and this is whether you like it or not, by default or design.

The Act will be challenged, your basic human right to hunt with hawks and falcons, ably assisted by your trusted, borrowed or hired HPR (whose owners are also legally liable by the way), will be legally stripped bare and importantly your freedom will be upheld, in order that you may once again go out hunting, without having to look over your shoulder. The Boneheads of Parliament were certainly not Bravehearts when it came to democracy and falconry.

The Act will be challenged, your basic human right to hunt with hawks and falcons, ably assisted by your trusted HPR, will be legally stripped bare, and importantly your freedom will be upheld, in order that you may once again go out hunting, without having to look over your shoulder.



From as early as he can remember, David Scott has had a special affinity with the countryside and its wildlife.

Born in 1967 in Plymouth, Devon, his early years were full of adventure, mischief and mayhem, you could say a regular Huck Finn. If anyone found an injured bird or animal it would be David who got the call.

Those early years of studying wildlife at close quarters, gave David an insight into the fragile yet strong anatomies of his charges. His knowledge of form and movement and the study of anatomy in fine detail, enables him to accurately capture his subjects appeal on canvas.



Photography by Eric Thompson Plymouth

David's natural talent for art was never in question, and after leaving school he attended Plymouth Art College, where he took up an apprenticeship to become a sign writer, specialising in graining, marbling and gold leaf work. Later, David started his own sign writing business, where his traditional skills were in great demand.

Sadly, cheaper vinyl cut lettering and plastics gradually replaced David's traditional skills. After nine years, disillusioned with the demise of his trade, he closed his business and started on the rocky path of the professional artist. Supported by his friends and family he began painting full time.

His love of the countryside, and birds in particular had steered him towards the world of falconry and the Welsh Hawking Club. His open and approachable manner made him a soft target for raptor rehab work and along with his own birds, his garden, on occasions resembled a falconry centre. Having the opportunity to study raptors at such close quarters however, has given David's paintings a lifelike realism, that's helped establish his reputation around the world.

With falconry and raptor rehab now very much a part of his life, new opportunities began to appear, through which he could further develop as a professional artist. His first major exhibit was at the

Falconers Fair in the UK and international commissions soon followed. He now travels extensively, attending field meets throughout the world, and in doing so has had the opportunity to view many raptors, within their natural environment.

The inspiration that's followed from these visits is evident in his work, a point that's not gone unnoticed by the leading falconry association in America. The North American Falconers Association has approached him with the offer of becoming the official artist for the forthcoming N.A.F.A. field meet.

David is currently flying an imprint male goshawk and likes to think his time is equally shared between falconry and painting. In practice his work life balance is no different than the rest of us, with the all-consuming art of falconry demanding more than the artwork.

Now in his tenth year as a professional artist he is firmly established amongst the top echelons of the raptor art world. His work is keenly sought after and finds its way into both private and gallery collections. The Welsh Hawking Club is proud to have him as a member, and wishes him well for the future.

Steve Gouldthorpe

If you would like to know more about his work contact him on (01752) 830382

Pam's Partridge Passion

PAM EATON

actually doing a bloody good job.

Partridge rearing, although very time consuming wasn't a big part of the Estate's programme and so in 1996 they made the decision to concentrate solely on rearing pheasants.

I'd come a long way from office pen pusher to partridge-pen fusser and notwithstanding all the hard work and worry involved, I'd actually started to enjoy rearing the 'little darlings'. So starting with 108 pairs of partridge and reading what I could about the job, I set too and made a go of it. Oh boy! What did I let myself in for?

Now, the editor of this fine publication knows me well enough to know that what follows is only a part of the trials and tribulations of rearing my darling partridge. I wish you the very best, should you want to try and rear some yourself, and given enough notice I can even supply the day old chicks for you to start. But, funny as the situations seem now on reflection, do not underestimate the time and effort you will need to be successful.

I started by over-wintering my cherished breeding stock for the coming year. Christmas Eve arrived, and after making sure Santa was going to visit my grand daughters, we arrived home to be met by 60 grey partridge coming down the drive to wish us a happy Christmas; in a force 9 gale. My heart sank, but not being ones to

stand around and look adversity in the face, both Peter and I jumped out of the car and attempted to make the best of my disaster. We quickly discovered the problem. The brooder houses had tipped over and the roofs had blown off, with half the partridges still sitting inside. Right, first task, how to get them to stay inside? Can't get the roof back on in a force 9 gale, so just a frantic search for nets. Crouching on hands and knees crawling under the sections of the brooders and trying desperately to catch the stock, and me all dressed up too! Hands full of partridge, pockets full of partridge, bags, feed bins and anything else we could find to keep them safe, until exhaustion took over. And after all that, do you think we deserved a cup of tea? Dam right we did, well hard luck we had no power.

So up early the next day, and not to open Christmas presents either, we were out accounting for lost birds, which actually turned out not as bad as we first thought. Only one immediate problem then, still no power and no hot Christmas dinner - oh well! Looking on the bright side, it'll be good for the diet!

The learning curve for this game continued to be steep. What appeared to be a simple task of pairing up a cock and hen turned out to be a matchmaking minefield. If a female didn't like the cock you offered her she would fight him off, no

different than our world then, but here's the difference, one female I had, killed the first eight cocks she was offered - I can't say what happened to her! What this meant, was that I needed to watch constantly to see who was fighting whom, and had to shuffle them all into matched pairs by the middle of February. Ah! I've just realised why the family were calling me Cilla for two months.

The first eggs start to appear between the middle and the end of March. In the first year I numbered the pairs and the eggs to see who was fertile, but you can imagine how much work that was! Of course, that was yet another lesson learned, and the logbook became a colouring book for the grand children.

So far my new enterprise had needed little more than damned hard work. However time was moving on and if Shavington partridge was to develop, some serious planning and investment was in order. Now what will I need? Incubator, hatcher, rearing equipment, brooder houses, gas heaters, night shelter pens, pen sections, nets, water drinkers, feeders, and . . . blimey, expensive little blighters these partridge.

It's just as well I'm so adaptable. Most women have knitting and sewing skills but not me. Over the last five years I've become more used to tools such as hammers, nail guns, saws and screwdrivers, making things when I could afford the materials and slowly building up 'proper' game rearing kit.

I've been lucky to have a good friend who is a dietician in animal feeds, who has helped me to understand the necessary diet, nutrition and when needed the complexities of veterinary drugs. Nutrition plays an enormous part in the development of your stock. You will need to change their intake at three critical phases; conditioning (for breeding), laying and growth. The growth stage has three phases in itself, but if you want the best sporting partridge you can get from an artificial rearing environment, then you have to feed the best diet.

Selection of eggs, washing, cleaning, disinfecting and an extremely high standard of hygiene are all important steps during the egg collecting, incubating and hatching stages. Pass all these tests and you might stand at least some chance of reasonable egg fertility and hatch-ability.

At 25 days the greys will hatch and being no bigger than your thumbnail, you'd better have done your homework well: your next moves will be critical.

If your looking at the back of your

thumb right now to see how small that is, believe me it's damn small. The redlegs will hatch a day sooner and be twice the size of the greys, but no less vulnerable. It's paramount to get them off to a good start. The food has to be fine textured, but not dusty and the heating has to be just right. I use gas heaters because at 2am on the coldest, wettest and windiest nights, when you need the heat most, you will undoubtedly have a power cut. Gas heaters may safeguard you against power cuts when rearing, but it doesn't apply to the electric incubator and hatcher, and that's another story.

Partridges love water; the little darlings thoroughly enjoy playing and swimming about in the drinkers. The only problem is, they can't - swim that is, so they drown! It's a full time job keeping the drinkers full, but safe.

I'm only glad I don't rear like they did years ago with a broody hen, with anything up to 20 chicks under her, nice romantic idea I know and Peter, the romantic softy that he is, says he would like to go back to those days, but can you imagine how many broody hens I would need!

I rear in 2.4m X 2.4m brooder houses, in which I have gas heating, food and water. I find that by keeping down the numbers of chicks per brooder and giving them more room, it helps to produce better quality birds. As the chicks get older the next problem is 'feather pecking', which is when the 'little darlings' start pulling at feathers on the wings and back until blood appears; marvellous friendly little things these partridge! To stop this occurrence, I'd better tell you about the immeasurable fun and pleasure you can have when inserting a plastic bit between the beak, to stop it fully closing and thus being able to peck. First catch your bird, oh! And mind the sick and excretion, oops! to late, and don't forget your facemask, you'd like to be breathing later on wouldn't you. And did I mention where you had to perform this procedure, no . . . well it all takes place in that 2.4m X 2.4m brooder house. Tickets for the next performance will be on sale shortly, facemasks are extra, volunteers are free!

The next step is their introduction to the big outside world, this is called hardening off. My rearing unit is sited in the natural environment of an old Victorian walled garden, with a 3.6m high wall. Winged predators do upset the partridge and we suffer a few losses as a result, but the wall keeps the fox out; if one ever got

in I would be devastated.

Rearing this far has not been without its problems and you might think you're over the worst, however this is definitely not the time to be complacent; clever life has a way of bringing you down to earth, with a bang.

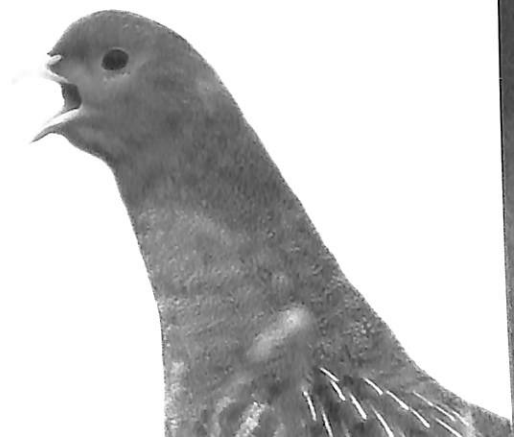
Disease can be a real problem when the ground gets wet and muddy. Localised thunderstorms, especially at night, washing everything away; do you get up, put on wet weather gear and have a look, or do you hope and pray things are all right? Will I ever get a sound night's sleep?

We can't even go out without I have to go and check on the birds. On more than one occasion I've checked, only to find 4" of water gushing out of the shed because the birds had been flying at the automatic drinkers and taken one apart.

Standing in my best clothes and shoes, plus false nails! Amidst dozens of 'active' partridge fixing the problem, I often wonder why I bother. I get home later than expected and meet up with friends at our arranged destination to Peters remarks "Sorry we're late, it's the fault of the wife's partridge" that's ripe from a gamekeeper who I've put up with for years, in anything but a nine to five job. How times have changed!

So my little enterprise has now turned into a business; Shavington partridge is slowly establishing itself amongst the game rearing fraternity, along with a reputation for supplying quality birds. It's still only small, but it's one that the whole family can get involved in. My daughter, son in law and granddaughters enjoy delivering the birds, (although I have to supply dinner money) and we all have a better understanding of Peter's job as a gamekeeper. All in all I feel a great sense of achievement, which, without the encouragement of my husband and the facilities afforded to me by the Estate, I would not have been able to achieve a fraction of. My thanks to both, I am indebted and grateful for the opportunity and although it's been hard work I am now a country girl through and through and wouldn't have it any other way. 🐦

For informal, friendly advice, general information or to place orders, Call Shavington Partridge on 01948 890 655



The Office

SPECIALIST AVIAN VETERINARY, NEIL FORBES OFFERS US AN INSIGHT INTO HIS WORKING DAY.

SO WHAT is an avian veterinary specialist anyway, and what does being one involve?

Just as you may go to your doctor (GP), who will deal with common and the more straight forward ailments, if a serious or complex illness (for example heart failure or cancer) is effecting you, he may refer you to a specialist. Such a specialist will have undergone a period of several years of specialist training, passed various exams to ensure his proficiency, and is obliged to continue to study on an annual basis as well as being re-assessed for specialist status, on a regular basis (e.g. every five years). Veterinary medicine has moved in a similar direction, although it remains at a more primitive stage of metamorphosis. There are now veterinary specialists in many disciplines, who have undergone specialist training, passed examinations and are subject to periodic re-credentialing.

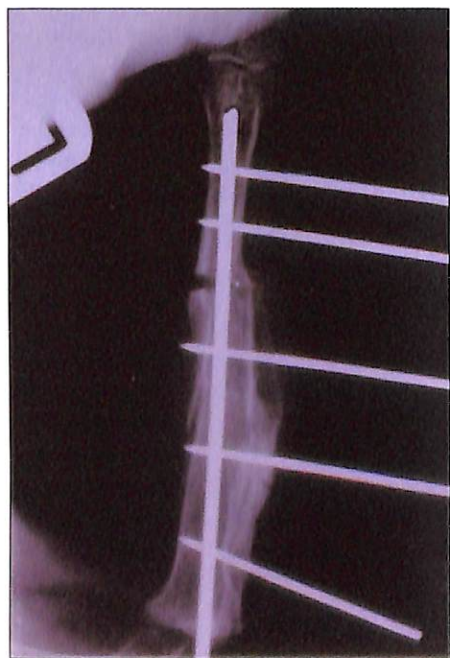
No one is suggesting that there are not many local vets who are not also highly skilled and competent within their own field, e.g. treating birds, but the difference is, they have not subjected themselves to examination and are not required to maintain on going training in that discipline. Lists of certificate holders (the first step towards specialisation) in zoological medicine (which covers birds) are available on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Web site, www.rcvs.org and European Veterinary Specialists in Avian Medicine and Surgery are available from the Federation of European Vets, <http://www.fve.org/index.html> or from the author at drhawk@Lansdown-vets.co.uk.

Apart from being a RCVS and European Specialist, the author also runs one of only two European

College of Avian Medicine and Surgery recognised residency training programs, for vets wishing to become avian specialists within Europe. The training programme consists of a structured four year training programme. The majority of the training is supervised on a daily basis by the Diplomat (the author), whilst other compulsory sections are supervised by European Specialists in other disciplines e.g. radiography, surgery, pathology and anaesthesia (who in this case are all based at Bristol University).

So having given you an indication of the level of commitment and dedication needed to get this far, let me now offer you an insight into today's avian veterinary medicine, and surgery, as you follow me on a 'typical' day at the office.

8am So the day starts at 8am, with a one hour clinical training seminar when one of the residents



X-ray of tibia tarsus repair of eagle leg

or the diplomat, will deliver a pre prepared presentation on a given subject. These sessions are conducted weekly and form an invaluable part of the resident training and helps to ensure that all the avian veterinary staff are constantly upgrading their knowledge and training. The residents and other avian veterinary staff are all experienced qualified vets who are working towards additional post graduate qualifications.

9am The treatment of the first clinical case commences. This is a black eagle which was admitted the previous day by one of the residents, having suffered a broken leg. Experience has shown that when treating birds with broken bones, it is important to control shock (by intra venous fluid therapy, and a dark and quite environment), provide antibiotics and pain relief, stabilise the fracture by use of a splint, but to delay surgery on the leg until the next day. Radiographs were taken the previous day and are studied prior to commencing surgery. Although it may be obvious that one leg is broken, it's important to study a good quality radiograph very carefully to ensure that there's no crack present in the opposite leg, in this case none is present. The fracture is at the normal site (the junction of the first and second third of the tibio tarsus - the middle long bone of the leg). Once all the equipment and staff that are required are made ready, the bird is collected from the night quarters in the bird ward and is brought to the preparation area, where the bird is cast and anaesthesia is induced using isoflurane anaesthesia. Once the bird is asleep, an endotracheal tube is placed into the birds trachea (wind

pipe), to safely maintain the air way during surgery. A catheter had been sewn in place in the basilic vein on the underside of the elbow the previous day (at the time shock therapy was commenced). This catheter is used to give the bird further intravenous fluid therapy, prior to surgery commencing, to assist in controlling surgical shock and stress. The feathers on the affected leg are removed from the bottom of the leg, to a level one inch above the stifle (knee) joint. The bird is then transferred into the operating theatre. Anaesthesia is maintained with isoflurane and monitored by either an experienced veterinary nurse under the direction of the surgeon or by another avian vet. Whilst the surgeon applies face mask, head cap and scrubs his hands and arms, the nurse prepares the injured leg for sterile surgery. The normal technique we use for this fracture is termed a 'hybrid' or 'tie in' fixator. This involves a single pin being inserted into the broken bone, passed up the centre of the bone, out of the top of the tibiotarsus and exiting at the front of the bone so that no damage is caused to the knee joint. Where the pin emerges from the bone, it is bent through 90 degrees. Two further pins are inserted into the bone at 90 degrees to the longitudinal axis of the bone above the fracture, and a further two pins below the fracture. These four pins are then joined together with the bent ended intra medullary pin (see illustration below), using a joining steel rod which runs parallel with the repaired bone.

Once the surgery is completed a further radiograph is taken to ensure that all pins have been perfectly placed, before the bird is allowed to wake up from the anaesthetic. With surgery completed, the bird is wrapped up in a towel, whilst it recovers from the anaesthetic (usually just 3-5 minutes), before being placed back in it's night quarter in the ward.

10.30am Time to check avian in-

patients, asses progress and take blood samples from two avian medical in-patients. These birds have both been in the hospital for several days and are apparently responding well after antibiotic and nutritional support therapy. These samples are processed immediately by our technician in our hospital laboratory.

10.50am A call from a local falconer, he is concerned about his peregrine, which has been a little off colour for the last 24 hours. Whenever he puts the hood on, it sinks down to the ground and is unhappy to stand. Once the hood is removed it stands back up. We quickly book the bird in for a consultation later in the morning.

11.00am The next patient, a 5 month old black gyrfalcon, which has just been 'a bit off colour' for the previous 36 hours. The birds clinical signs and history are discussed with the owner. The bird had brought up its crop the previous day and had not responded to the keeper in an expected manner. The bird is taken down stairs into the hospital, whilst the keeper sits nervously drinking coffee. Many of our clients travel long distances, often arriving tired after the long journey. Although it's flattering that falconers travel from the other side of the country, it's a double-edged sword. With the 'modern day' grid lock which often affects our motorways, many clients arrive late, or on occasions not at all. On arriving late they still expect to be seen and their birds treated immediately, without stopping to consider they have now run into another client's allotted time.

The bird is anaesthetised, an intra venous catheter is placed into the birds basilic vein under the elbow, a blood sample is collected and sent up stairs to the laboratory. The catheter is plugged, sewn in place and the bird is given intra venous fluid therapy. An anaesthetic machine is also prepared in the xray and ultrasound room. Two X-rays are taken at right angles which



Eagle leg post operative (Steppes not Black)

show a large increased density in the air sacs on the birds left side. This finding was anticipated and is consistent with the dreaded 'aspergillosis', however a specific diagnosis is yet to be confirmed. The bird is transferred back into the procedures room where the endoscope and video camera are set up in preparation for endoscopic examination of the air sacs. Whilst preparing for this, the blood results



Grade 3 Bumblefoot

return. Not surprisingly the bird has a massively elevated white blood cell count, indicating a serious bacterial or fungal infection. Tragically the picture is looking worse by the minute. The bird (still fast asleep), oblivious to our concerns, is prepared for endoscopy. Lying on its side, with both wings up over its back and the top leg pulled back, a small 3mm hole is created between the last and penultimate rib. A sterile endoscope is inserted. The endoscope is attached via a video camera to a television screen. As predicted the air sac is filled with a large disseminated fungal (aspergillosis) lesion. Although minor lesions can be effectively treated, such a case carries a hopeless prognosis. It is often a difficult diagnosis and consequence for an owner to grasp. From experience I have found that it is easiest for the owner to actually see inside the air sacs, which is easily achieved with the video endoscope image showing up on the television screen. So the client is invited down to the surgical area and the reality of the desperate situation is explained. Having spent some time talking the whole situation through, we jointly take the decision that the kind and rational action in this case is to put the bird down. Not only is the outlook for the bird hopeless, but if treatment in this case is attempted one will only be throwing good money after bad.

If ever given an opportunity, I always advise clients not to buy gyrs. All too often they suffer from either aspergillosis or bumblefoot, either of which can often be life threatening. Gyrs are particularly susceptible to aspergillosis, our advice is to treat any such bird with prophylactic antifungal therapy prior to any anticipated stressful event (e.g. training, quarantine, transport).

Although the outcome of this case has been a total disaster for the client, I can at least relax in the knowledge that from the time of first arrival at our hospital, we have made a complex and specific diagnosis and treated the bird correctly, in little over an hour.

12.15pm The peregrine kept locally arrives. The bird has recently returned from Scotland, has been flying well, killing a number of pheasants. On questioning the owner, it is apparent that the bird has been fed regularly on 'hawk caught' pheasant, but nothing that has been shot. Despite the fact they are hawk caught, I am still concerned about lead poisoning and admit the bird for blood tests and X-rays. The client sits and sips his coffee.



X-ray of gyr, showing an *Aspergilloma* in the air sac

The bird is anaesthetised, a catheter placed, blood samples collected and the bird is radiographed. Sure enough one piece of lead shot is clearly present in the proventriculus (stomach), and that is all it would take to kill that bird if not treated effectively. Whilst still anaesthetised we suspend the bird from its feet, on a tray set at 45 degrees to the level. A plastic tube is passed via the mouth, crop and oesophagus down into the stomach. The stomach is very gently flushed with warm saline. Normally this will immediately result in food and pellet being flushed out of the mouth. In this case however, the pellet is not forth

coming. Rather than persevering and risking rupturing the stomach, the bird is given fluid therapy via the catheter (to help protect the kidneys from the toxic effect of the lead). The antidote for lead poisoning is administered and the bird is allowed to wake up from the anaesthetic. This bird will remain hospitalised for 5 days, whilst antidote is given twice daily by injection, and be carefully observed for the production of the lead pellet in either casting or mute (the pellet was returned the following day in the casting and the bird made an uneventful recovery).

1pm Lunchtime. This is a time to catch up with laboratory reports on previous blood and mute samples (several arriving in the post for testing each day), as well as munching through a packed lunch.

2pm Although an avian specialist, as the senior partner in the eleven vet practice, I have a management role in relation to the younger vets. Several days a week I do an hour of cat and dog consulting, to keep my hand in. The avian department consists four vets, all of whom also do some small animal work, (it is the cat and dog work which pays the bills at the end of the day). Although avian bills may seem steep to clients, birds take considerably longer to deal with than the traditional cats, dogs and rabbits. Vets need to be treating cats and dogs as well as birds, if they are to expect to make a living.

3pm The next patient is a harris hawk with an unpleasant wound on the back of its leg following a suspected squirrel bite. The bird is anaesthetised, the wound cleaned and investigated. These wounds often take time to heal and although this has been on going for two weeks, it is now responding well and should heal over of its own accord without further treatment. The leg is re-dressed, further antibiotics are administered and the bird sent on its way with a relieved owner.

3.20pm As this case took less time than anticipated, I have a few minutes to spare before the next client arrives. Time to catch up with e-mails and responses to vets in other areas of the country, who have phoned earlier in the day for advice on their own patients birds.

3.45pm Next is Charlie a young African grey parrot, whose leg I had pinned three weeks earlier. Charlie has come for an xray to check that his leg is well healed. Under anaesthetic, the leg is x-rayed and the bone is looking really good. The pins are cut and removed. A light dressing is applied, a little analgesic (pain relief) injection is given and the bird sent home with happy owners.

4.15pm Each day we try to set aside a little time to discuss cases with other avian vets, to allow them to benefit from my experience and specialist knowledge. Avian medicine is a difficult speciality to work in. My diary can be empty at the beginning of the day and yet full 30 minutes later. When a bird is sick, it has to be seen straight away, so as a practice we have to have the capacity of experienced avian staff to deal with the peaks of case load, but other work to do if we are quiet so that we can make a realistic income. Many pet owners are unaware that of each bill paid only 20-25% goes to the vet themselves, the remainder of the cost being made up of the charges incurred in running a practice (and being available 24 hours a day, every day of the year), such as staff salaries, drugs, laboratory fees, equipment etc.

4.45pm Next is a buzzard with bumblefoot in one foot, subsequent to a puncture wound. The bird is anaesthetised, the foot cleaned and surgery carried out to remove a large bead of dried pus (which was forming a swelling) from the ball of the foot. A microbiology swab is collected at the time of surgery to ensure that the antibiotic we prescribe is effective against the

individual bacteria present. The foot is dressed (as is the opposite foot to prevent excessive weight being born on that foot which might in turn lead to bumblefoot), pain relief and antibiotics are administered and the bird is sent home. No one antibiotic is effective against all bacteria, so the owner is requested to phone in 48 hours for the results of the microbiology and sensitivity testing. An alternative antibiotic will be administered if necessary.

5.30pm Inevitably, over the course of the day a number of further letters, phone calls and e-mails will have arrived many of which will be urgent and need to be dealt with before going home. The last job of the day is a last ward round of my in patients. Before leaving I also need to prepare my treatment case for the next day as I shall be consulting and or operating at my bird clinic at Bristol University (Langford House, Churchill, Nr Weston Super Mare). This clinic is a great opportunity for me to have access to some of the larger more expensive cutting edge equipment, to discuss difficult cases with specialists of other disciplines as well as to assist in educating the up and coming generation of new vets.

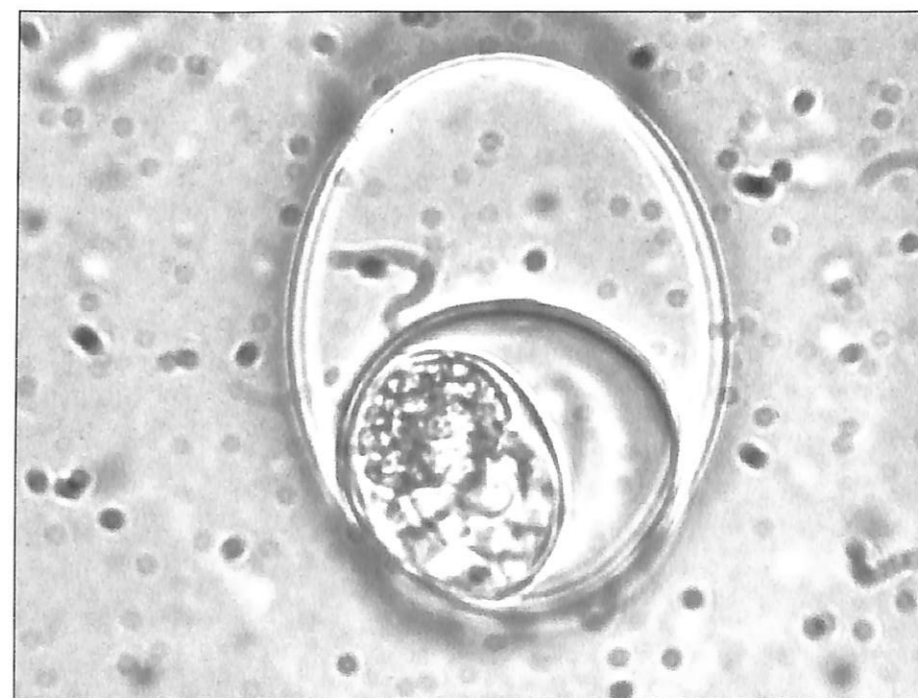
6.30pm Leave for home, although remaining on call (just for bird emergencies) until arriving back for work the following day at 8am. In view of our bird case load, we have two vets on duty each night, weekends etc. one deals with cats and dogs whilst the other deals with birds and any more exotic species.

Thankfully the evening is quiet from a clinical point of view, with no emergencies. Avian medicine is a young science and is developing fast. To keep really up to date one needs to attend conferences (usually over seas), read journals, text books and participate in international e-mail groups. As a specialist, one is required to give lectures, contribute to books and write scientific papers. This is good for ones level of knowledge, but finding time to fit it in is often difficult and normally only happens after the end of what is often a busy day.



The editor would like to thank Neil on behalf of the WHC for taking time out of an obviously busy schedule, and allowing us an insight into his working life.

Caryospora (coccidia) oocyst (egg) from falcon mute.



SASKATCHEWAN

JEAN DIMOND

It is not very often that I can combine both of my hobbies, photography and falconry, but in October 2000 this became possible when we went to the Canadian field meet, in Weyburn, Saskatchewan - land of the living skies.

As there were four of us, Mike and Julie Clowes, Dave and myself, we were able to hire a large vehicle. The four wheel drive Ford explorer was to prove a godsend when following the team leaders across the Canadian countryside.

Mike had assured both Julie and I that there'd be no early morning starts, as 'falcons fly better, later in the day', but he'd failed to inform the Canadian falcons of this! When we arrived at the hotel at about 11.30am, we found that they'd already been out that morning and had just come back for breakfast before waiting for the weather to cool down and going out again. Anxious not to miss anything we quickly threw our belongings into our rooms and set off for the weathering ground. This was about a quarter of a mile down the road, where some of the falconers were camping in their trailers. After quick introductions all round we had a look at the birds, mainly falcons, and then sorted out who we could follow that afternoon. We were told a short drive would be required to get to the hunting grounds, but short to the Canadians meant about 80miles!



Dale Guthormsen with Pucky

Each day we were up early, breakfast at 7 o'clock and then a tail chase across Canadian roads, which are mainly good until you turn off onto a side road. These usually consist of large gravel and brown dust, which doesn't exactly help with visibility when you're trying to follow the car in front, especially when it suddenly stops dead in its tracks. As one of the cars we were following had no brake lights getting too close was not advisable, but neither was getting lost in the middle of nowhere!

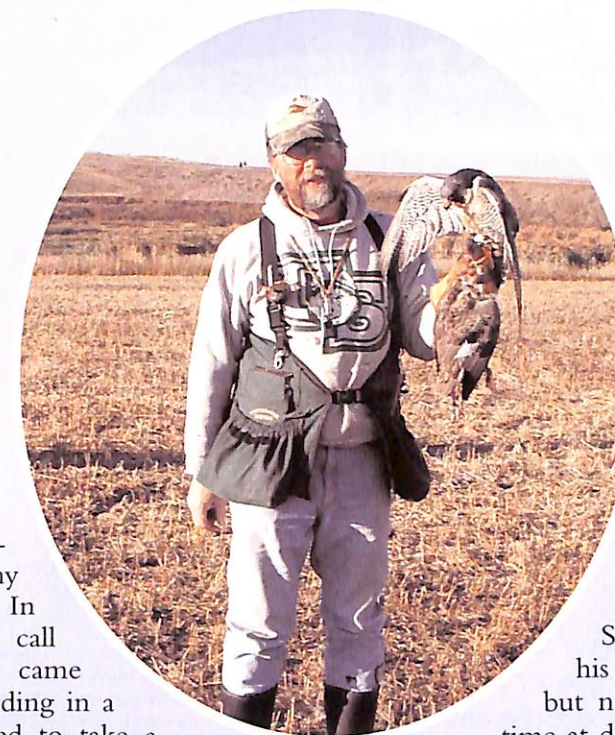
Having driven along such a track looking for a possible flight pond, the convoy of cars would drive past, pull onto the verge and park quietly. The falcon would be put up and work into a pitch and position the falconer was happy with. We would then all run hell for leather, shouting and yelling like a bunch of maniacs at the pond to put up the ducks. This usually did the trick, and as the ducks lifted and split under the stoop of the falcon, we became mere observers of the unfolding scene. If successful, I would wait until the falconer made into the falcon and quarry before approaching and taking the photographs shown. Most flights ended in a spectacular stoop or short tail chase.

The other method of finding quarry was the one Dave enjoyed the most. This was when we were looking for sharp-tailed grouse or huns (Hungarian partridge). The convoy of cars would pull off the road



Terry Spring with 'Lucky' on his first duck

SKIES



Bob Rafuse with male anatum peregrine

onto a stubble field, line up across the edge and just drive, as a line of beaters would, looking for a sight of the quarry. As the stubble was quite long in places you were never sure of the ground conditions underneath, sometimes rather stony and certainly very bumpy! In one such field (if you can call these vast areas fields) we came across a pair of mule deer hiding in a patch of rubble and managed to take a quick picture of them before they ran off.

It was on one of these drives that we saw a spectacular stoop that looked like a certain kill. As the falcon closed on the sharp-tail it appeared to pull off at the point of impact. It wasn't until later back at the hotel, watching video footage of the chase, that the reason the grouse had evaded the falcon so successfully became clear. Just as the falcon was about to hit the sharp-tail it turned over and put its feet up, causing the falcon to veer away. The sharp-tail then completed the roll and went on without any apparent loss of speed. This had been impossible to see with the naked eye, but was quite a sight to see on video!

The hunting continued late on into the days, the last flights were a race against the light to get just one more in before having to return to the hotel. On one occasion Doug Bush was so determined to get a flight for his bird that when we found a pond and followed the usual routine, instead of stopping at the edge of the pond, he ran fully clothed straight into it! He then stayed in the pond to stop the ducks circling and landing back in the water. Needless to say his bird did get a kill. We then followed the taillights of the car in front, clouded by dust and hoping not to hit potholes, as we made our way back to the main road. Some of the drivers were using GPS navigation systems to find their way back, so we stood no chance on our own! Once back at

the hotel the talk as usual was of the one that got away, the quality of flights and comparing the day with other groups.

As always on these field meets there's one flight that stays in your mind. For me, it was a bird called Lucky, a $\frac{3}{4}$ gyr x $\frac{1}{4}$ saker, owned by Terry Spring. He was named Lucky as his foster mother ate all his sisters, but not him! This was to be his first time at duck and we were all keeping our fingers crossed. Having driven around to find a

small pond with only a few ducks on, we pulled onto the verge as usual. Terry put Lucky up and to our dismay he circled and then sat on a nearby silo! You can imagine the falconers frustration, with being unable to shout encouragement at the falcon for fear of putting up the ducks and not getting the right kind of flight. Terry stood frantically waving his glove to encourage Lucky to get going whilst we waited and hoped it would work out for him. It's bad enough when you're on your own, but with people watching it must have seemed ten times worse. Lucky finally got the message and took off over the pond, circling to get height. When Terry decided he was in the right position we all ran into the pond as before. I didn't see much of the flight, it was all over so quickly, but Lucky had his duck and that was all that mattered. Since then I've heard from Terry that Lucky has gone on to be the best game hawk he's ever flown, taking 32 ducks, two sharp-tail grouse, two grey partridge, and one sage grouse in this last season. I feel privileged to have been there at the start of his hunting career.

If any one is thinking of going to the Canadian field-meet this year, it's at Hanna, Alberta (about two hours out of Calgary) on October the 8th to 13th. I'm sure that you would be made as welcome as we were, and have an experience to remember for years to come. 🍀



The Midland Game Fair is the premier event of its type in the country. It is a must for anyone interested in traditional country pursuits and a great day out for all the family.

There's something for everyone from clay pigeon shooting, world fishing champions and gun dog competitions to falconry displays, ferret racing, antiques, fine arts and rural crafts.

Set in the beautiful grounds of Weston Park Shropshire, this year there will be over 450 stands for you to enjoy... and as much fresh air as you can breathe.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE...

- ANTIQUE AND CRAFTS FAIRS
- FINE ARTS AND RURAL CRAFTS
- FALCONRY VILLAGE & ARENA – plus fabulous Ye Olde Redtail Falconry Display
- FERRETS SHOW AND RACING
- STICKMAKERS' – competitions, shows and sales
- COOKING DEMONSTRATION – Fine Food Pavilion
- GAME KEEPERS' ROW
- PET TENT AND SHOW – show/exhibition, rabbits, pigeons, poultry and guinea pigs
- 'HAVE A GO' AT SHOOTING AND FISHING WITH SAFE EXPERT TUTORS
- ACTION PACKED MAIN ARENA featuring The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, Rev. Graeme Sims and his 9 sheep-dogs, heavy horses, and Katy Cropper (*the only woman to have won One Man and his Dog*), John and Sandra Halstead Gundog Arena and Display.



FOR SHOOTING ENTHUSIASTS...

- SHOOTING – largest clay pigeon layout in Europe
- GUNMAKERS' ROW SST – the biggest and best display of Sporting Guns, Rifles and Accessories in Great Britain.
- AIR RIFLES AND PISTOLS – the best sporting layout in the world

FOR ANGLERS...

- WORLD CHAMPION IAN HEAPS' TWO DAY 'ANGLING CLINIC'
- THE COUNTRYSIDE AND FISHING VILLAGE – thousands of tackle bargains
- FLY TYING AND PRO-AM CASTING COMPETITIONS FOR ALL AGES
- CASTING DEMONSTRATION BY WORLD CHAMPION HYWELL MORGAN

FOR DOG LOVERS...

- GUN DOGS – The largest BASC Gun Dogs events in the country
- TERRIERS & LURCHERS – from all over the British Isles

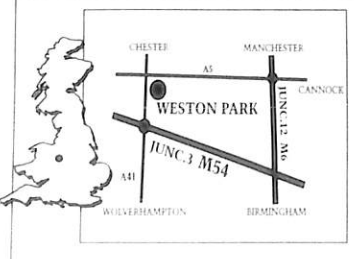
- FUN FAMILY DOG SHOW – All dogs are welcome to the show, enter on the day.
- BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOGS – carting display
- WORKING GUN DOG ARENA – and Clinic with John and Sandra Halstead

FOR THE CHILDREN...

- ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND
- MINIATURE RAILWAY
- OLD TIME FUNFAIR • PETS CORNER • PUNCH & JUDY • ONE MAN BAND • MINI FARM • FRESH AIR AND REAL COUNTRY ENJOYMENT!



A GAME FAIR THE WAY THEY USED TO BE



SATURDAY 14TH & SUNDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2002
WESTON PARK, WESTON UNDER LIZARD, SHROPSHIRE
 Open 9.00am - 5.30pm both days For further information Tel: 01952 852100
 Admission: £10.00 Saturday and Sunday, Children under 14 £2.00, Infants free
£2 discount on advance pre show tickets
Telephone: 01902 552121 Credit cards accepted
www.midlandgamefair.co.uk

T E X T
I T

Hi there all you texties, it's your old friend M.C. to give you the low down on all the latest trends. No need to spend loads of dosh phoning round all your friends to boast about your latest hawking exploits. Just pick up your mobile, scroll to text, save your message and send to all your friends, it's cheap, fast, instant, easy and fun. Ask your friends to pass the message to two friends and the pyramid will soon grow and cover the entire hawking world! No need to ask for replies, but you will get some. Please remember it is not in the spirit of texties to send obscene messages.

Only just published is a dictionary of text message abbreviations but sadly it is rather short on falconry terms, so us texties have had to invent our own. Here are a few examples but no doubt you will be able to add to these.

- WO = wait on,
- BT = Bind To,
- KD = knock down,
- 1 K = 1,000'
- GP = Grey partridge,
- RL = Red-leg Partridge,
- P = Pitch,
- FL = flight,
- FU = Fed up,
- ST = stoop,
- K = kill.

Some texties have even produced their own tags - you may recognise a few:

SPECKMANUPIK,
 MALLETMANHITSHARD,
 ANTELOPEMANSCORES,
 SKYHIBEATSALL,
 COUPERMANSTRIKESAGAIN,
 FOODGIRLUPWITHBEST,
 WOODMANNAILSAGAIN.

People have suggested that texties should 'get a day job' but remember texting is for fun people, e-mails are for DORKS!

Texting off now, your old friend, M.C.

P.S. I hear the B.E.C. are producing a booklet entitled, Talking by Text - the correct procedures, nomenclature and protocol for falconry. Whatever will the old farts come up with next!

Editor's note: I believe Tony Blair is concerned at the decline in educational standards due to text messaging. That's rich from someone who refers to himself as 'a straight kinda bloke!'

Field Meat

ANGELA GOULDTHORPE



Being the wife of the editor I have managed to retrieve at least half of my article from the cutting room floor. Due to a lack of space within the journal, 'field meat' had been cut out all together. After re-designing half the magazine all over again, Steve managed to squeeze in half a page; it was either that or he didn't get fed! Anyway this is the re-worked version and I hope you have a chance to try out my suggestions. I was told that to justify the title I had to include a recipe, otherwise I would have gone straight to the drink section. So let me talk you through my one and only recipe for this year.

Woodcock / Becasses

There is no sporting bird that evokes the mystique and secrecy that surrounds the woodcock. It's for this reason, that if you're privileged to take one in the field that you must endeavour to respect it's status.

Mrs Beeton describes these birds as most delicious when well cooked. Woodcock is one of the few game birds along with snipe that are not drawn, that is to say, cooked complete with innards. The traditional way of preparing the bird for the oven is to pluck, leaving the head on, but skin the neck and head.

As with all game, the general rule of thumb is never to wash it, but to wipe with a paper towel, and once this is done truss your bird, with the legs close to body and bring the beak around to rest under the wing. Butter and season well, then roast in an open dish for about 20 minutes at gas mark 4, basting well.

Five minutes before the end of cooking, lightly dust with flour then return again to the oven and continue to baste until browned. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 5 minutes before serving whole with the juices, and vegetables of your choice.

Your editor, like many of you I'm sure, comes home rather hungry after a 'leisurely' day out with the falcons, and not unusually a little stressed and in need of a drink with his meal. We only hold a small cellar and certainly don't buy expensive wines, but I thought I would share with you some of my finds from around the supermarkets.

1999 SHIRAZ Peter Lehmann, The Barossa, Australia; Chocolate, Blackberries, Oak and Toast. Immense aftertaste, complex and serious. A wine for grown ups.

2000 MERLOT Oxford Landing, Yalumba, Australia; A full bodied merlot with a good finish and very soft tannins, which according to the label are matched with 'leathery' characters. I drank three bottles and chewed on a glove for an hour in search of a leathery taste, but couldn't find it. I'll try again tomorrow!

2000 CARMENERE Luis Felipe Edwards, Colchagua, Chile; Bucket loads of black cherries and vanilla with chocolate and blackberry undertones.

Just one last thought. Don't try these wines at lunchtime if you are flying in the afternoon. Reading a telemetry signal whilst jumping hedges and running across fields is hard enough as it is, without being drunk!

Enjoy

A Noble Past-Time

DAVID HOROBIN

BOB HAD always been a bit eccentric. At school he had been the 'odd-one-out', having no interest in sport and shunning the parties and discos which we frequented. Many of our classmates thought he had been born a few centuries too late. He wasn't so much a friend, rather a close acquaintance with a shared interest in art, at which he excelled. His great passion however, was for nature, with which he had a true affinity as I found out in an incident which has ever remained firm in my mind, and which revealed him to be as true an observer of humanity as of wildlife.

Our school owned an outdoor activity centre, where our class found itself, one year, walking in a field of growing barley. Not knowing barley from grass, most of the class was widely dispersed over the unfortunate farmer's livelihood. I was walking alongside Bob when he stopped dead.

"What is it?"

He grinned. "Here's your chance to show Jenny what a caring sort of guy you are."

"How the hell did you know...!" I stopped. "What do you mean?"

"Look." He pointed into the distance, and though I stared hard, I could see nothing.

"At what?"

"Never mind. Just walk behind her."

Puzzled, I walked in the wake of the crop damage that the hitherto unapproachable Jenny and her friends were causing, far from the track, and what happened next could have been hardly more startling had she stepped on a landmine.

As she walked a straight course, two tall blades of dark grass I had spotted when Bob had pointed became the black-tipped

ears of a running hare, which exploded into action at Jenny's feet. Like a shot soldier in a war film, she stiffened in shock, stumbling sideways into my arms. As the teachers ran over, and giggling pupils swarmed around, I looked over to Bob in a grateful mix of amazement and amusement, but he stared in the opposite direction, eyes locked onto the fleeing hare.

Bob's love of the countryside must have rubbed off onto me, for now I lease a fair sized farm. Despite this, we had not met since we left school until a chance encounter on an unseasonably hot September day at a Game Fair.

"You find some unlikely people at these shows."

I turned to see two pairs of eyes scrutinising me, one of which, full of innate incandescent fire, belonged to a large hawk, perched on the gloved fist of...

"Bob! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same!"

We began to fill in the events of the last fifteen years, and his eyes lit up when I casually mentioned the rabbit plague that I was suffering and which was partly responsible for my presence at the show.

Over an insipid pint of warm beer under the sticky canvas of the beer tent, he told me about his hawk, clearly the centre of his life, and finally I asked the question I sensed he had been waiting for. "Will she catch rabbits?"

We began to plan the inevitable day's hawking on my land. The weeks passed, and one morning, the dogs announced Bob's arrival. I went out to greet him, and we prepared for the day's flying.

"What were those ruins I saw from the

road?"

"It's an old abbey", I replied. "Henry VIII had it pulled down during the Dissolution".

"He was a fanatical falconer. He was hawking one day when he fell into a ditch and had to be rescued by his colleagues".

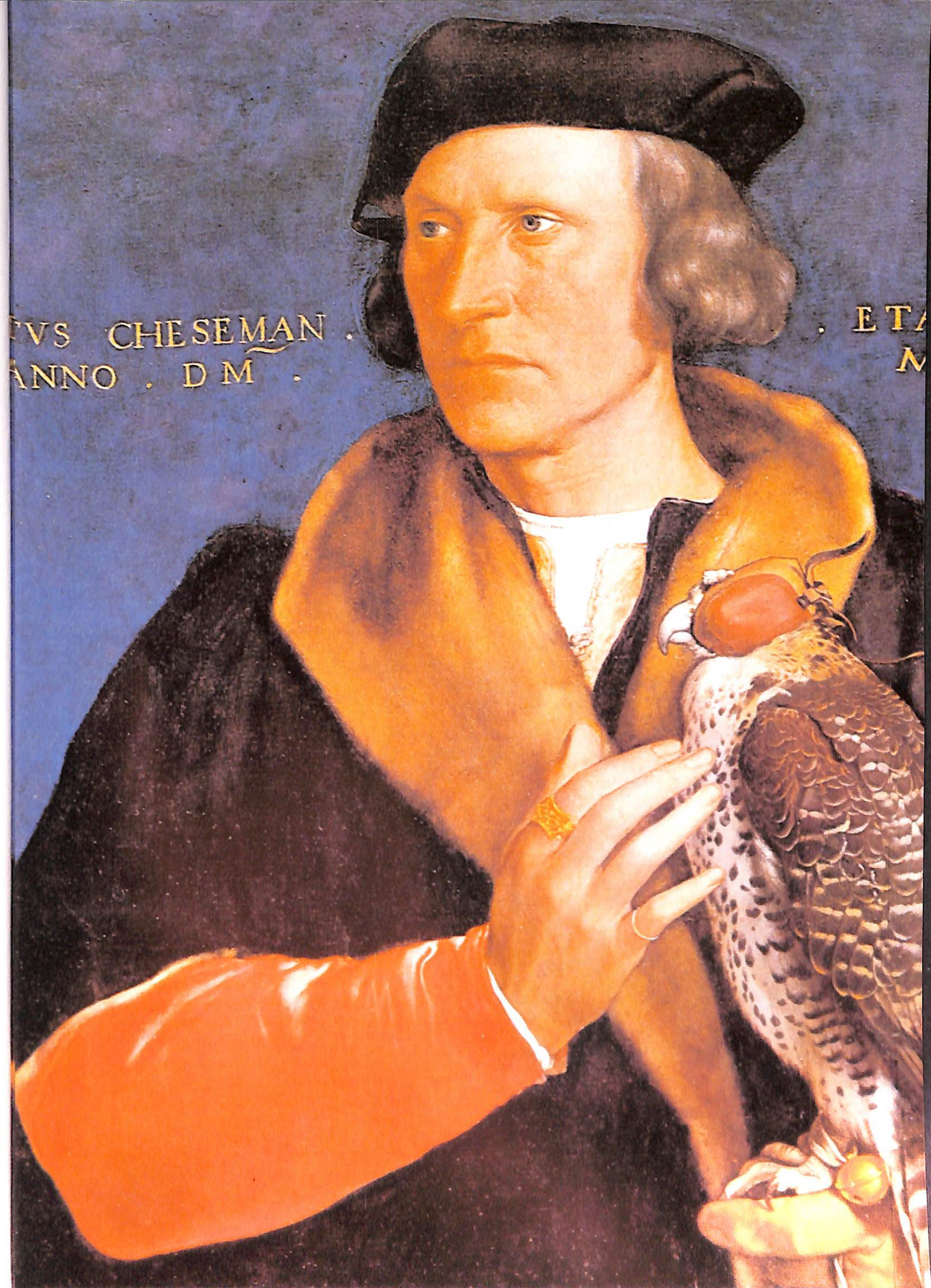
I smirked as I visualised the fat monarch sprawling around with his regalia covered in mud. "I bet that was worth seeing!"

"The hawking would have been. They did it on a grand scale, no expense spared with hawks, horses and hounds, lords and ladies in all their finery. "I'd give anything to have seen that". He spoke at length about the sport which was clearly much more than a sport.

As the day progressed, I began to see how easy it would be to lose the bird. It was clear, as she followed from tree to tree, that he could do little if she decided to fly off. "Surely you could lose the hawk so easily? I can't understand it all "what's the attraction?"

"You're about to see." He nodded towards his dog, which had assumed a stiff-legged pose, nose pointing towards a patch of bramble. The goshawk sat above in a tree, her head bobbing intently towards the same place. At a word, the dog jumped forwards and a rabbit bounded from its thorny shelter.

The hawk burst from the oak, rapid wing-beats propelling her towards her prey with a determination awesome to behold, twisting and banking to follow its every move, closing the distance between them with every fraction of a second. My heart beat fit to burst, the breath lodging in my throat, she was nearly there, and as I saw a yellow foot reach out "YES!" She had it! At the last second, the rabbit ducked flat, and she screamed over the



Special birds, deserve the
best treatment

Lansdown Veterinary Surgeons
Neil Forbes BVetMed
Dip ECAMS FRCVS
RCVS and European
Specialist in Avian Medicine and Surgery.

Together with

Dr. Petra Zsivanovits VetMedDr MRCVS
Debbie Monks BVSc MACVS (Avian Health) MRCVS
Dr. Markus Froembling VetMedDr MRCVS

A specialist and expert service to falconers -
Full hospital facilities
24 hour service from bird vets.

Clockhouse Veterinary Hospital, Stroud, Glos. GL5 3JD. Tel
01453752555.

Fax 01453756065. E mail drhawk@cix.compulink.co.uk

Phone or write for a free brochure -

Easy access from M4 / M5 / Severn Bridge.

Always available for first opinion and second opinion cases,
or free advice to your own local vet.

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.

fotofire
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Specialists in outdoor photography:
Game Shooting, Field Trials, Falconry,
Dog and Horse Shows, etc.

Pictures are viewed and ordered via our website

Tel. 01691 624888

www.fotofire.com

RaptorCare



Going Away?

Who is going to look after your Birds Of Prey?
We will.

Birds are kept in secure surroundings and specialist feeding requirements
can be met. Birds are tethered in weathering during the day and shelf
perched in alarmed building at night. We also have a superb German
Wirehaired Pointer dog available for stud.

For details contact:

Tony Bryant on 01454294258 (Glos.) Mobile 07770 580687
e-mail tonshei@aol.com www.raptorcare.co.uk



FERRETWORLD

THE UK'S LARGEST FERRET PRODUCT
MANUFACTURER AND IMPORTER.
MAIL ORDER AND SECURE
ON-LINE SPECIALISTS

For our full range, visit our award
winning website at: www.ferretworld.co.uk

Or order a copy of our 2002 ferretworld catalogue.
You could also visit the only ferret shop in Great Britain at:

128 High Street, Kinver, Staffordshire, DY7 6HQ

ORDER HOTLINE: 01384 443533

e-mail: enquiries@ferretworld.co.uk

If you would like us at your show call: 01384 878512

Derek Stotton

FALCONS

GYR,
GYR HYBRID,
PEREGRINE,
SAKER,
LANNER.



HAWKS

FINNISH GOSHAWKS,
EUROPEAN GOSHAWKS,
HARRIS SUPERIOR SONORAN
FROM ORIGINAL
WILD TAKEN IMPORTS.
LINE BRED FOR GOOD HUNTING
CHARACTER, AND SIZE.

"QUALITY HAWKS FOR DISCERNING FALCONERS"

Tel: 01942 614338

Fax: 01942 261505

ALSO AVAILABLE QUALITY HAWK FOOD
AT COMPETITIVE PRICES.

email stottonbreedsfalcons@yahoo.com

Martin Jones
Hunting Hawks and Falcons



Gyr
Peregrine
Barbary
Saker
Peregrine/Saker
Gyr/Peregrine
Gyr/Saker
Peregrine/Lanner
Peregrine/Merlin
Harris Hawk
Redtail



A superb
breeding stock
of proven
bloodlines.
Orders being
taken for 2002.
Send for colour
brochure and
price list.

Martin Jones Falconry Equipment

Makers of the very best falconry Equipment. Stockists of falconry
books and videos. Suppliers of 'Falcon Telemetrics' the top British
made telemetry system.

Full mail order service send for colour brochure and lists to:

The Parsonage, Llanrothal, Monmouth, NP25 5QJ

Tel: 01600 750300 Fax: 01600 750450

WWW.falcon-uk.com

top, looking back with disbelief equal to mine. As she braked and hit the floor, the rabbit calmly scuttled to the safety of a bolt-hole.

"Well?" Bob beamed, eyes afire with excitement.

I nodded approval, then frowned; "Not gonna save next year's crops though, is she?"

"Bloody philistine" he laughed. "You won't see a much better flight than that."

By noon, I had started to grasp the attraction of the sport; she missed another rabbit by a talon's grace, and a hare ran for what seemed like miles before she decided to concede, her breath visibly curling up to mingle with the dull sky. Nothing had been caught, but it had been a greatly entertaining morning.

After lunch, the tragedy happened. The dog was on point, the hawk on standby. Bob sent the GSP into the cover and . . . nothing emerged, though the hawk took to the air.

"What the hell is she playing at?" Bob looked totally perplexed as she flew stealthily, using the hedge for cover (from what?), then flipping across, going into overdrive. She was chasing something, but we saw nothing. She hurtled through the air, turning after some invisible target, over the fence that marked the boundary of my land and towards the ruins, in which she was lost from sight.

"I don't know what she's playing at" he repeated, the colour gone from his face, as he climbed the fence to retrieve her.

"You know that's not my land?"

He shrugged. "Can't just leave her". He ran to the ruins, and though I waited an hour, then went to look myself, that was the last that I saw of him.

After two further hours, I reasoned that he had found his hawk then returned to the farm, slipping by unnoticed when I had looked in the ruins or when, seeing no sign of him there, I had been through the wood. It was starting to get dark, so I returned home, half-expecting to see his car gone. It was still there. It was only when I went in, and my wife said she hadn't seen him since morning that I started to worry.

We both searched by lamplight, then informed the police the following morning. Six days later, their sniffer dogs attempted to trace our day's hawking with no success. A further week was spent, digging up the ruins in a way that would make an archaeologist wince, to find a few Tudor sheep bones and little else. Bob was added to the missing persons list, and that was that.

Bob stepped through the remains of a doorway, cursing his evidently faulty telemetry set. He looked around him at what still retained a sacred, sombre dignity despite its desecration. The abbey was clearly not owned by the National Trust, for hay was scattered around the floor and piles of stone from the broken walls lay about. Whoever owned the site was obviously using it as a sheepfold, judging by the copious droppings and the rank smell of lanolin. He noticed a group of hens, sitting tight against a wall.

"She must have been this way then" Bob concluded. A sudden sporadic sound of bells caught his ear, the unmistakable sound of a trained hawk plucking her quarry.

"Thank God!" He turned a corner to see her surrounded by heaps of burnished copper and red feathers, late plumage of a cock pheasant which lay limply at her feet. She had not yet broken into it, so he held out his fist garnished with an easier meal, which she gladly exchanged for her kill. Slipping the pheasant into his bag, he started back towards where he had left his friend waiting. The evening was muggy, and it was hard work moving uphill through the tall wheat. He hadn't noticed, in his anxiety, how high it was.

"Thought he'd have harvested this. Where's that fence?" He assumed he had gone off at a tangent whilst occupied with replacing the jesses, swivel and leash.

"No wonder the woods looked nearer." He turned to the left, rectifying his mistake. Glancing right he noticed a group of riders heading from the woods - after an evening's cubbing with the local hounds, perhaps. It was not until they came closer that he looked again. Two had broken off to the rear and two in front. A fifth was heading right for him. He put the dog's lead on - it was bloody warm for October.

"Stand in the name of the King!". He looked again, noting the horseman's costume.

Scaled nuts! He had refused, on more than one occasion, requests from members of the Civil War re-enactment society to take his hawk to their event, to be gawped at by ice-lolly wielding kids and frightened half to death by fake cannon-fire. Now it seemed they were bent on revenge as the rider cantered up to him, replica sword in hand.

"What are you about on His Majesty's land?"

"I was looking for Cromwell" Bob sneered. "Have you seen him?"

"Lord Thomas Cromwell has not been here since we removed the Abbot. Saw you not the ruins?"

"You've got your history wrong mate, King Henry had that done, and I meant Oliver, actually."

"Oliver?" There was something uncanny about the man's questioning look, "But enough. You have been poaching, I see!"

"The hell I have. I've got permission to be here, which is more than can be said for you lot!"

"We shall see. The King has hunted here today. Let us see if you have his permission. Keep close sir. Try to flee and you shall not poach again!" Bob looked about him at the other horsemen. A creeping mist of unease had permeated his whole being, and he felt it best to humour them. At least they'd show him the way back to a road.

How long he had walked for he could not guess, but they eventually came to a clearing far beyond his friend's wood, a clearing which was full of people. Had they really nothing better to do than to dress up and pretend they were in the past? A group of them suddenly parted, and a portly man in a gold embroidered tunic stepped forward.

"Now sir, we hear you have been poaching with this fine hawk."

He did indeed bear a striking resemblance to the portraits Bob had seen of the oft-married monarch.

I never really got over Bob's disappearance. Even after three years it is always on my mind, but last week something so strange occurred I can hardly believe it myself. My wife had heard that a local art gallery was staging an exhibition of the works of Holbein, on loan from other galleries. We had admired his genius on many famous canvasses, when suddenly my stomach was punched by the fist of shock. With mouth agape, I turned to Jenny who was evidently equally startled. There, in profile, staring, perhaps longingly, across the centuries with a hooded gyrfalcon on his gloved fist, was the man whose intervention had first brought us together as teenagers.

Trembling, I read the white painted words in the artist's own hand, dulled and partially obscured by the passage of four hundred years:

ROBERTUS CHESEMAN
ANNO D. M D XXX III
FALCONER TO HENRY VIII
1533

who, as the brass plaque on the frame informed us, was Henry VIII's falconer when the portrait was painted in 1533.

BECHINS

Morsels from home & abroad

STEVE GOULDTHORPE

IT'S GOOD TO SQUAWK



North Wales member Les Hewitt demonstrated the importance of observation amongst the skills of an austringer, during the early part of last season. Les who flies a female harris tells his story.

It was early in the last flying season and my wife Jenny and I were out flying our harris's. My female was on the wing, when she spotted a moorhen and knocked it out of a tree. As it dived for cover into the pond below, my bird crashed through the branches and followed it in. The scene that unfolded was not unusual, with moorhen and harris smashing onto the pond, what made the scene different was that my harris didn't stop at the water's surface but plunged totally underwater in pursuit of its quarry. Although a big bird, in hitting the water with such force she plunged to quite a depth, and it was some moments later that she emerged from under the water and swam to the edge, covered in a green duckweed. Unfortunately at this moment it started to rain heavily, so the bird was boxed up wet (foolishly) and then had a long journey home. I was to learn later that *these were the ideal conditions for Aspergillosis to breed.*

I carried on hunting my bird for the next four weeks and was perfectly happy with her performance. Now, I don't consider myself any more competent than the next austringer, but I'm very observant of my birds behaviour and always carry out regular health inspections. Up to this part of the season she was a picture of health, and having flown her perfectly well one Sunday, I was alarmed to find her characteristic scream had changed frequency on the Monday. It was a dramatic change and her normal vibrant tones had been replaced by a very deep throated croak which sounded as if she had a bad cough on her chest.

I took her to a local vet who referred me to Avian veterinary specialist Mike Stanford in Tarporley, Cheshire. Mike scoped the bird and informed me that she had a four week

growth of Aspergillosis in her syrinx. Had it been an eight to twelve week growth the chance of recovery would have been very low.

The bird was immediately put on Sporanox medication which was added to her food for three weeks. She also had to have medication administered via a nebulizer three times a day for six weeks.

It was a very worrying two months and the vet's advice was not to take her weight down to quickly before attempting to fly her again, as this could re-introduce the Aspergillosis. These were words I paid attention to and I took her weight down very slowly, eventually flying her 2oz. above her normal flying weight. She seems now to have made a full recovery and hunted well in the latter part of the season.

The moral of this small story is pay attention to behavioural changes of your bird and don't complain when it screams. Sometimes it pays to have a noisy bird!

Honourary Member



Fellow WHC member Alan Gates has become the first western eagle-hunter to become a member of the Mongolian Eagle-hunters Association. He was honoured on a recent trip to Western Mongolia, where he spent four days hunting foxes with the Kazakhs. On his return Alan said, "It had been a privilege to hunt alongside such experienced austringers" and thanked the Kazakh eagle-hunters for their hospitality and sincere invitation to western falconers, to join them at the next Annual Mongolian Eagle-hunters festival.

Moorland Management



Apparently, if we want to help the grouse population, we all need to start eating

highland beef. At least that's what the Highland Cattle Society would like you to do, and given their recent research into moorland stock management and its impact on heather generation, it sounds good advice to me.

Keith Howman runs 100 head of highland cattle on 400 acres of moorland, in Perthshire, Scotland and he can testify as to their usefulness in grouse moor conservation.

Keith has shot grouse over the moor since boyhood, and over the last 50 years has seen the quality of the heather steadily decline. As with any habitat degeneration, the numbers of bird species have declined along with the habitat loss, and the grouse are no exception.

The main cause of this degeneration is unquestionably the over grazing of sheep on the moor. For the past four years Keith has grazed highland cattle on the moor instead of sheep, and the results of this stocking policy have been striking. Part of the moor was fenced off, with no grazing taking place, whilst the cattle were allowed to graze over the remainder. The results for heather re-generation over both areas were identical. Keith says, "While sheep will make straight for new heather growth, the cattle, are far less selective grazers and will eat the ranker vegetation, enabling the heather to regenerate after burning. Already grouse numbers are rising and the state of the heather is now as good as you will get".

Keith's not the only one to discover the advantages of using highland cattle in the management of moorland. Both Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Trust use them on their land. We now only need to get the government to acknowledge these findings and instead of encouraging overgrazing of uplands with grant assisted sheep, pay due regard to the positive environmental benefits of using a native breed.

If you have any news items that may be of interest to our readers please send them to the editor.

Profile

BY STEVE GOULDTHORPE

Living and working amidst the wild mountain scenery of Snowdonia, wildlife artist Colin Woolf draws his inspiration from the ever-changing light and colour of the landscape, as well as the elusive and beautiful birds of prey which live there. Hen harriers and merlins can often be seen above the remote moorlands of gorse and heather, whilst peregrines nest on the craggy outcrops and, further south, red kites wheel above the wooded hillsides. Although he admires all raptors, Colin has a special affinity for owls, red kites, peregrines and golden eagles, and he is lucky that most of these species can be found within easy reach of his studio.

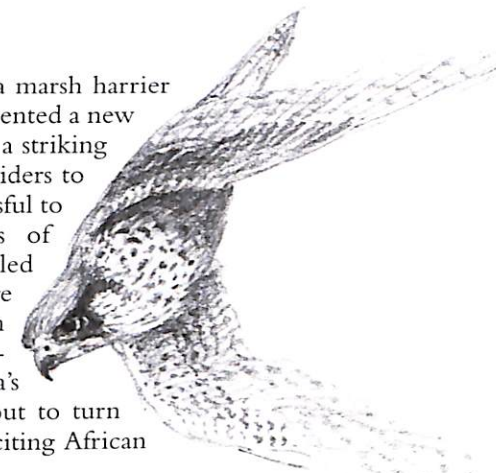
A 'natural artist' who is totally self-taught, Colin's success derives from his own high standards and his uncompromising determination to succeed. His early pictures sold quickly, and his continued belief in his own artistic abilities was the driving force behind his eventual 'leap of faith' to become a professional artist. Fortunately his efforts have been rewarded. His works are on show regularly at major galleries, including the National Exhibition of Wildlife Art in Liverpool; he has staged his own exhibitions at the Mall Galleries in London, throughout the UK and in the Channel Islands; and he has gained widespread admiration for his work, establishing a reputation as one of the UK's leading wildlife artists.

A glance at any of Colin's paintings will reveal that his talent with watercolour is unique. Ignoring the widely accepted rules for this medium, he prefers to experiment with technique and colour until he achieves the desired effect. He is able to capture the incredible softness of plumage - that of a barn owl, for example - which many find so elusive, and the simple but stunning effect of translucent water or powdery snow is created with just a few careful brushstrokes. Shattering the traditional 'weak and watery' image of watercolour paintings, his pictures have life, depth, atmosphere and a strong aesthetic appeal, and are sought by collectors from all over the world.

Colin's long-standing association with the Welsh Kite Trust, combined with regular forays into mid-Wales, has seen the creation of no fewer than nine major paintings of red kites, some of which have been reproduced as highly successful limited edition prints. Friends and contacts in the world of falconry have brought about some enviable encounters with raptors, many of which he has watched in flight over the local grouse moors. In addition, he regularly attends country shows and fairs in the company of falconers who exhibit and fly their birds, allowing him ample time for observation.

A recent commission of a marsh harrier over the Norfolk fens presented a new challenge, and resulted in a striking picture which Colin considers to be among his most successful to date. Majestic paintings of golden eagles, white-tailed eagles and ospreys were inspired by experiences in Scotland; and now, following a safari in Kenya's Masai Mara, Colin is about to turn his attention to some exciting African raptors.

During the spring and summer months Colin exhibits at many shows up and down the country. If you would like to know which shows he will be attending this year, please contact him for more details. A mail order service is available for Colin's wide range of limited edition prints and greetings cards, and he is always ready to discuss individual requirements for special commissions. If you would like to see more of his work, take a look at his website www.wildart.co.uk or request a free colour brochure. Telephone: 01690 760308.



Pere across the Mersey

GRAHAM MAGGS

SO WHERE would the members of the North Wales region go to spend a lazy afternoon watching wild Peregrines? Beeston Castle, Helsby Crag, or some other remote outpost? Well surprisingly your best bet on seeing them close up, screaming stooping above you, is . . . Birkenhead, yes! Birkenhead.

A pair and of falcons have successfully lived and bred in the city for several years, around the Woodside Ferry Terminal. The pair appear oblivious to all the comings and goings below them. The noise and smoke of the main bus depot, road traffic, daily commuters and tourists, all play their part in the hustle and bustle of city life, not to mention the world famous Ferry across the Mersey. And all of it doesn't seem to bother them one iota.

On a good day the tiercel will be found sat on the imposing 300 foot high monolithic structure, which is the ventilation shaft for the Birkenhead tunnel. High up he sits on a ledge surveying his territory, whilst directly across the water the Liver Birds adopt the same posture. To see him at his best you can walk to the base of the ventilation shaft, adjacent to the ferry terminal and wait. Once airborne he glides out across the Mersey, then angles round and stoops down low. At this point he can pass within feet of you, clearly showing all his facial markings before rising up between the shaft and the Post Office buildings. He then heads for the Birkenhead town centre rooftops, shrieking as he does. All this to the back drop of thousands of shoppers totally unaware that one of nature's wonders is putting on a falconry display for free right over them, showing off all his agility and speed as he manoeuvres between the land marks.

In some ways it is hard to believe that such a predator should choose to inhabit such an inhospitable environment. The question is why have they picked Birkenhead, when only a few miles away are the rolling hills of Cheshire and the craggy open spaces of North Wales? Pigeons, yes this could be our answer, and something Birkenhead has no shortage of, even with our raptors helping themselves daily to them. These feral pigeons can and do reach almost plague proportions within the town centre, causing untold damage, defacing monuments and roosting on any cosy ledge they can find, their droppings covering the floor below. It is not endemic to Birkenhead either, the sky is constantly stirred with the passage of these pigeons across the River Mersey from the Liverpool pier head to the

Woodside landing stage. Indeed, these feral pigeons have become the favourite prey of our peregrines. Sat high on his ledge he selects the exposed traveller and with a quick kick, he accelerates down towards his chosen quarry.

The evidence of how successful he is can be found at the foot of the ventilation shaft, where a grave yard of bones litter the area. Another reason they have picked Birkenhead could be the man made environment. The ventilation shaft, for instance gives them a panoramic view as far as the eye can see, which is probably Wales, given their eyesight. Along with the fact that the shaft is safe from human interruptions. Indeed the sheer walls of the tower must make it safer than anything nature could offer.

As the Peregrine has been so successful in the last decade in re-establishing itself in areas that it's long been barren from, could it be that our Birkenhead pair have been pushed into the town due to over population in the surrounding area? This Birkenhead pair have now reared numerous chicks over the last few seasons as have a few pairs in the Liverpool dock-lands area. These young peregrines must themselves now be looking to get established and breed. The logical conclusion to all this, is that every town in the country might soon be boasting its own pair of peregrine falcons, and judging by the numbers of buzzards I see on my travels they could be taking up residence next! Its a nice thought.

For several years now the pair have nested on the tower of Hamilton square station, close to the town centre, the nest ledge can be clearly seen, as can the pair as they go about their business. If you're lucky you might catch the male passing by the nest calling to his mate with the remains of a pigeon dangling in his talons, before he drops his prey on the rooftop of a nearby building for her to claim later.

This area of the Wirral has suffered a lot from dereliction over the last few years but with all the regeneration taking place within the area, the future looks rosier. A new new roll on, roll off, ferry terminal is being built and the river Mersey clean up campaign is gathering pace. Indeed fish are now back in huge numbers, which just goes to show, that given a foothold, nature will do her best to get re-established just like our falcons. Whatever the reasons are for the falcons choosing to live here, they are certainly a welcome addition to this famous waterfront.

Canadian Sharptail Hawking

MARK WILLIAMS

AS I SIT down at my computer to write this article, it's snowing lightly on this cold late February morning. I am searching for the motivation and inspiration to put words onto paper. Our editor had asked me to submit another article for the *Austranger*, (goodness, he must be desperate). The weather is giving me the motivation, as I will otherwise have to go outside and work in it. As for the inspiration, I said I could not think of anything new or different to write about except my recent grouse hawking adventures, of which I have little previous experience. His response was; you don't have to know much about it to write, just have the passion for it. Well, the passion I do have, (my wife would call it an obsession), particularly for this new-found facet of my sport. So forgive me if I come over not knowing what I'm talking about, it won't be the first or the last time! I do not profess to have learned all about grouse hawking based upon a couple of seasons, what follows are just my experiences to date and some last season flight descriptions, for what is for me, the most challenging of longwing quarry; the Sharptail grouse.

The Incentive

Where I live in northern Alberta our main longwing quarry is ducks. The hawking is as good as it gets but the season is sadly far too short. It starts on September 1st and runs through to December 16th, however most ducks have gone south by the first week of November, as the water has started to freeze up. This leaves the falconer in the north having to put up their falcons for the season, just as they reach the peak of their fitness. Some of us are fortunate to make several trips to the south of the province, where game rich wide-open prairies hold great numbers of Hungarian partridge and sharptail grouse. The hawking season for upland game starts on August 15th and ends on March 31st. Most falconers switch to flying grouse by mid to end of October when the ducks are fewer and far between, and the grouse are all full-grown birds that have been on the wing for a few months, avoiding predators and getting stronger. No free rides here and it only gets tougher! Since immigrating to Canada from Dorset just over a decade ago, I've lived in three Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. Of them all I prefer Alberta, but if I were to



make one more move, it would be to the south of the province near Calgary or Lethbridge areas. Unquestionably the only motivation for such a move would be to extend my hawking season, to take advantage of hawking the huge numbers of upland quarry that reside there all year long. As a bonus, the weather can be a little warmer than up north, thanks to the warm Chinooks that blow through in the winter. This can make for more comfortable hawking compared to the north of the province.

Have Home Will Travel

Some of the best grouse hawking is far from the town's etc. and as a result this often means travelling great distances from base, (usually from a motel at the nearest town). This past fall I purchased a tent trailer, which is like a cross between a caravan and a tent. This saves a small fortune on fuel and accommodation costs. The fridge and furnace, which can run off car batteries or propane, and the gas stove make hawking trips in the bush far more civilised than 'roughing it' in a tent when it's down to -15°C in late fall. Of course my excuse to my wife for buying it was for family camping trips in the summer. This went down well, but she is no fool after 19 years of marriage (or suffering as she would sometimes describe it, particularly mid way through hawking season), and she saw through my scheme. That said it serves both purposes well and was my base camp on the several hawking trips I made south, last fall.

Locating Set Ups

From what I have learned sharp-tail grouse are found in many parts of the province, even as far north as my area

around Edmonton. Unfortunately they're found too close to heavily wooded cover in these parts and their population is significantly lower, which essentially makes them un-hawkable. The best grouse hawking is further south in the open plains where cover equates to small bushes of chokecherry or tall grasses, in dry slough bottoms. Like most quarry species, early mornings and evenings are the best times to locate them. They are either feeding in the morning or moving to grit up on rural country roadsides to aid digestion before roosting. If found sitting up high in small trees or bushes it's best to patiently wait it out and let them drop down below to feed or look for cover. Birds found out in the short stubble where they often feed, are likely to flush wildly as the falcon takes off if not released far enough away, thereby drawing your bird off in a fruitless tail chase. Occasionally bumping them gently with a vehicle to small but taller cover will work, and good flights can arise from that practice. However, unlike huns, grouse can go for a considerable distance if pressured too much too soon. Some attempts you win, some you lose, and if it fails you've lost nothing as the set up was probably wrong anyhow, but in most cases it's worth a try.

Different Set Ups

Last season I really made a conscious effort to fly more upland game. I flew Molly my peregrine and Chase my gyr x pere, at sharp-tails a lot through the latter part of the season, but so far it is only Chase who's made the successful transition to grouse. He caught his first grouse in spectacular style two years ago while out hawking with Rick

Skibstead, who lives and farms in southern Alberta, north east of Calgary. Rick is fortunate to live in prime country and being a crop farmer he has all late fall and winter to hawk. This past year, thanks to Rick and another friend Jonny Groves, I was guided to some of the best sharp-tail hawking you can expect to see anywhere on the continent. I was to learn the difference between hawking sharp-tail in close cover set ups compared to wide-open areas, as well as the dynamics of engineering the flush in different circumstances and gaining an insight into the ways of the sharp-tail grouse.

Chase is the king of remounting; probably from his duck hawking days and the occasional multiple re-flushes over big water. When hawking sharp-tail near cover like chokecherry bushes he quickly learned the best tactics and as a result he slaughtered them. His initial stoop would hit or put them in and they would seek cover in the bushes, which in the wild would mean safety, but thanks to a quick remounting bird and pointing dogs to re-flush, catching grouse this way proved easy, but frankly less sporting. Now, if you find them out in the open with no cover for over a mile, the scenario is a different ball of wax. The grouse knows it has to give it its all to reach cover and when they put on those afterburners, one can truly see what speeds their capable of. Your bird usually only has one clean shot and it must make it count, otherwise a tail chase ensues which is rarely successful. If it is, it can spell disaster for your bird, as eagles thrive in these areas and often prey on unsuspecting hawks on quarry that they've spotted from high up, out of human sight. I believe more trained falcons are lost to avian and

mammalian predators when hawking grouse, than any other game species. I suspect that this is due to a combination of several key factors. The type of flight (usually over greater distances compared to ducks), combined with the remoteness of the terrain along with the abundance of predators and poor access making it slow to get to your bird on a kill quickly.

Initial Success

I have hawked partridge many times on and off since living here and with some success, which is remarkable considering that they're usually taken, as opportunistic flights whilst out duck hawking. My birds are what you would describe as confirmed duck hawks. While our duck season is short, they get to fly twice almost every day, thanks to abundant quarry, an understanding wife and a flexible work schedule. Between my two birds, Molly my eight times inter-mewed female anatum peregrine and Chase my four times inter-mewed tiercel imprint gyr peregrine, we catch over triple digits of ducks in a season. Molly is the queen of swoop and scoop where as Chase has a huge repertoire of tricks and mainly hits them out of the sky with one shot. His added speed and agility has made the successful transition to upland game much easier than for Molly, who has taken many hun's, but has yet to bring a Sharp-tail to bag. I fear she's too set in her ways of duck hawking, which she was almost exclusively flown at for her first six seasons. I've often thought of flying Molly at young early season grouse, for her to get some confidence at, but due to my conscience of a sporting chance, I have as yet not got around to trying it.



Hunting Tactics for Grouse Hawks

It is immediately apparent that flying upland game requires different techniques and skills, from both falcon and falconer, than for ducks, which I am far more familiar with. My limited experience and observations have shown, that for any falcon to be consistently successful on grouse, it's essential for them to take higher pitches, (which they learn fast in open set ups), stoop faster, hit harder and to be able to quickly whip back and around on quarry, both in the air and on the ground. Sharptail in particular, are what I consider the perfect adversary for the falcons and really test the fitness, stamina and footing ability of any falcon flown at them. They're not the kind of quarry you hawk with any degree of success just once or twice a season. They have amazing endurance and are capable of taking a seemingly hard hit from a falcon and just keep on going, leaving a trail of feathers as the only memento to its presence. I feel that in order for most hits to be fatal the falcon has to be going considerably faster than its prey as it shoots through, in order for the hit to be of any consequence. Of course where they hit the grouse is important too. The hard bony back is usually the obvious and largest target area that presents itself, but it's like a coat of armour. After several unsuccessful and seemingly direct hits, my 780 gram tiercel gyr hybrid has developed a style of flying up to the grouse at speed, momentarily swinging out and then slamming into their soft underside. It's not quite as effective as the head shots, but it really immobilises the grouse, if only momentarily, for him to pitch up and slam back into it.

Escape Tactics Of Grouse

Their escape tactics often leave you laughing at your inexperienced falcons perplexed manner. For example, the grouse doing a complete barrel roll a fraction of a second before the falcon connects; or maybe throwing out a wing at the point of impact to avoid body contact; or perhaps the famous 'dump and jump' tactic. This is where the grouse dumps into cover and immediately repositions itself in preparation to initially duck down in case the falcon attempts to strafe it on the ground and then jumps up as the falcon comes in to land on it. At this point the falcon's stalled speed is no match for the fleeing grouse. Several times I've seen my birds winnow down next to what we all thought was a dead grouse, only to see it jump up and fly off into the sunset. Other examples of escape tactics are their use of cover; the close proximity and degree of density often dictate the distance a grouse is prepared to fly, to avoid a pressing falcon. One final observation on this subject is that I have often had distant grouse flush wildly far from my set up. This usually has the effect of drawing the falcon over wide from my set up, and towards the distant flying grouse that it has no chance of catching. I've often wondered if this is some kind of intrinsic or even unselfish survival method for the covey? Much like a mother grouse or duck draws away predators from her brood.

One striking difference between grouse and ducks is how well grouse maintain their composure under pressure from a pursuing falcon. Sharptails are, I'm told, the least

intimidated of the North American grouse species, with exception to maybe the greater prairie chickens. Ducks by comparison will more readily bail under a hard stooping falcon and once hit they most often fall out of the sky like a wet bag, and are easily captured on the ground, being less agile or capable of instant speed for re-take off than a grouse. Flying grouse and then switching back to ducks also shows a marked increase in the intensity of the falcon's hits, along with their desire to quickly whip back around to a downed bird. Their actions are almost reckless at times.

Different Flight Descriptions

I wish that I could describe the many flights of this past season, but of the several trips I had taken last fall most of the flights have turned into a blur, and I can't really recall them all. However, two flights last season were of particular note and are contrastingly different. One was near cover and old farm buildings; the other was way south of the province, out in the wide open on top of the Milk River Ridge, near the border between Alberta and Montana.

Close Cover Flights/Rat Hunts

We had just picked up one of the local landowners and his nephew to take them out hawking and had spotted some sharptail near a fence and by some cover. No one in our party wanted to fly. With experience I now see the futility and danger of such a set up, but at the time, flights were scarce and the cover was surrounded by open stubble. Chase was in fine form and 'wire wise' and my boyish ego was raring to be unleashed! He went up in the wind and waited on directly above me. We flushed the grouse out towards the open fields but as expected, upon seeing the stooping falcon, they turned around and headed for the safety of cover. Chase managed to hit one in and having flown a few by now he had quickly learned to go back up instead of following it into cover; a game he has played and lost many times before. I waited for him to go back up and then sent in the dogs. Down he comes again and pounds the grouse a second time into tall grass. He hovers momentarily and flies off upwind to gain pitch. We run over to prepare to re-flush at the appropriate moment, but in the excitement the grouse is bumped in the tall grass by one of my dogs. Luckily, Chase was positioned directly above us, albeit not as high as we wanted and he pounded it again for a third time about 20 yards or so beside us. He spun around to grab it but my other pointer was right there where it had dropped and also attempted to grab it. By now you can imagine the gong show that had unfolded, rat hawking at its best! The grouse flew into the door of an old dilapidated grain barn, followed by my wheelchair pointer and then my falcon! "Oh no!", I yelled, realising that great horned owls often seek shelter in such places during daylight hours. I could just imagine it seeing my falcon on the ground with a grouse, from its vantage point up in the rafters. As we ran towards the barn we heard a blood curdling cry and howling. I rushed in only to find my falcon hanging onto my pointer's face, with the grouse, wedged in the corner! I expect my dog had run in to grab the

fetch the grouse and my falcon had tried to snatch it out of its mouth. I un-picked my birds talons from the side of my dogs face and it then flew at the grouse to administer the coup de grace. What a fiasco that was. We were lucky the hawk and dog were un-injured. The landowner had a different perspective and was stunned at the tenacity of my bird and commented that he was real keen to get that grouse, even if it meant fighting the dog for it! Upon reflection, for me it was not a great flight by any standard, and the victory felt hollow as a result. Over the season and due to different circumstances, I have flown several set ups near cover and they nearly all end this way. Both predator and quarry deserve better, but granted that is only from a human's perspective and I suppose not one that all would agree on. As for my falcon he got what he was after and had little care or regard, for the human desired qualities of style or finesse.


Open Set Ups

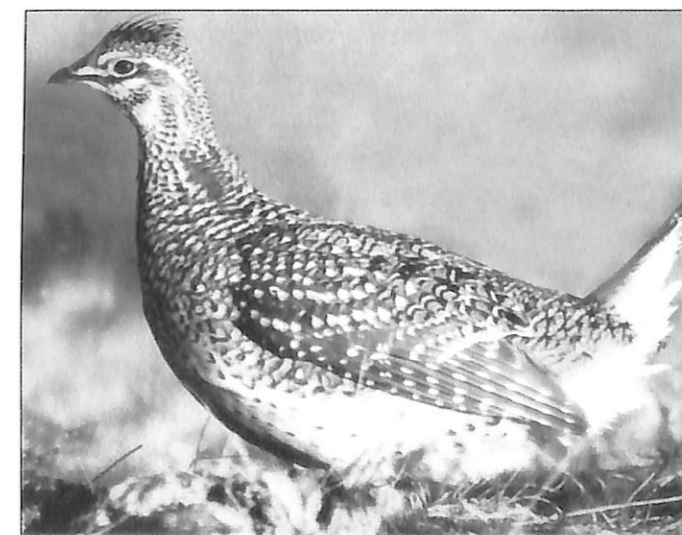
The next flight I'd like to describe, later that same trip, was quite different altogether. This time the quarry were found and flown in wide open set ups, far from cover. This is the kind of grouse hawking I'm sure we would all try to achieve and is by far the most challenging. The Milk River Ridge is a high elevation ridge that runs just north of the border between Alberta and Montana. This one part we go to is farmed for crops on the plateau. By the fall the huge rolling stubble fields offer food and the dry slough bottoms provide cover for game birds. It's a honey spot for sharp-tails, huns and unfortunately dragons (golden eagles). As is often the case in this area the wind is always blowing and on this particular day it was no different. To augment the debates between falconers about wind, Rick had brought along a new toy, which measured wind speed. We got a reading of gusting between 27 and 32 miles per hour at ground level, but suspected it was stronger up high. Trying to push open my truck door, I knew it was howling but Chase had shown his command of the wind numerous times before on other blustery hawking trips and I felt confident in flying him in it. I was however concerned about his chances of catching a grouse with these added variables stacked against him. We had a point in a dry slough bottom with Rick's setter, Ginger. She is a steady old dog and well-seasoned on upland game. The nearest cover was over a mile away to the north, down some draws that fell to the crop fields far down below. I put Chase up and he simply opened his wings and elevated up almost vertically on the spot, pumping hard into the gale. I'd seen this before, but this time it was more striking in the very strong winds. He never turned downwind of the grouse (an opportunity they often take advantage of to escape) and simply continued to mount high and upwind of us all. We stood there stunned at the sight as he went up and up in this fashion. I decided to flush, and the grouse initially, as always, went up into wind, but upon seeing him falling fast decided to curl downwind where at about a mile away the heavy cover was relatively closer. Chase was doing much better when he came in behind the

grouse. Just as he was about to hit one, it momentarily stalled and threw up, leaving Chase swooping by underneath it. What a manoeuvre, but Chase is unbelievably agile and within a split second he too had also pitched up still with great speed and momentum, rolled over on his back and was bearing down again on the unsuspecting grouse. This time it was the turn of the grouse to be surprised, and Chase's manoeuvre was to be the grouse's undoing. He came right in behind it and then with such agility, shot out sideways and slammed through its right side. The falling grouse and trail of feathers from his hit was to signify the end of the flight as they quickly passed by in the strong winds. Some flights remain etched in our minds and that one will hopefully follow me to my grave.

Conclusion

I am only beginning to get a taste of hawking for sharp-tails and like the sport itself, it's addictive. The large cock birds get up to around 42 ounces and live in the harshest of climates in predator rich areas, which in themselves provide added challenges to an otherwise demanding quarry. I've never seen a quarry so well matched or even so hardy as the sharptail. During my numerous annual hawking trips to Thrumpter Moor in Caithness, Scotland, during the eighties and watching peregrines fly the famous red grouse, I never saw red grouse take hits and survive or use their repertoire of escape tactics like the sharptail does. Granted my experience was left to being a mere observer in those days, as I was exclusively a short-winger back then.

Nowadays, each year I try to look for ways to improve my hawking and to challenge both my birds and myself, while broadening my falconry experiences and knowledge. One day I hope to hawk with my own birds, the red grouse back in the UK, as well as the lesser and greater prairie chickens, and sage grouse of the USA, so as to be better informed as to their comparison to each other. As this past season came to a conclusion it has left me full of eager anticipation for the 'perfect grouse flight' next season... and hopefully for many more seasons to come. 



NO ONE GOES TO THE LENGTHS WE DO

Marshall
RADIO TELEMETRY
www.marshallradio.com



CALL GARLANDS
01827-383300

e-mail garland@tdi.d.i.piper.com

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

ANDY PHILLIPS

THE DAY started off typically Welsh; you guessed it, cold, overcast and windy. It was the second day of the annual WHC field meet at Hanmer and after a full Welsh borders breakfast, everyone started to make their way to the car park to congregate in their allocated groups. Judging by the expressions on most peoples faces I think several pints of ale may have been consumed the night before!

Our group field leader, Bob Antonio informed us we were going to Llangedwyn, which I knew was a good estate having hawked there the previous year. Pheasants and rabbits were abundant then, and I was eager to get started on the journey which would take about 40 minutes.

The Keeper duly arrived and we followed in convoy until we reached our destination. There were two groups flying harris hawks and after a group photograph we split up and went in different directions. Our group was to work the valley alongside the river, the other group went further up the hillside. It was a nice surprise to find that Val Chant was acting under-keeper for the day, as having known her for some time I find it very pleasant to be in her company.

After several good flights at pheasant Val informed the field leader that we were approaching a duck pond and asked if anyone would like to fly at duck. Bob Antonio asked if Mick Wyn and I would like to fly, and we readily agreed, as we've flown our birds together many times before without them showing any signs of aggression towards each other.

The pond was quite large and nestled on the side of a hill, it was enclosed by an inner mesh fence topped with barbed wire and an outer electric wire, definitely not hawk friendly. Most of the pond was surrounded by tall trees and gorse bushes with a small stream running out at the bottom end and the fence following the stream down the field.

With Val leading we carefully approached and looking down into the pond from the high bank we noticed about fifty duck in the water. We quickly cast our birds off and they flew into the high branches of the trees. Clapping our hands and shouting we flushed the duck off the water. Suddenly Mick's harris stooped out of the trees and took a duck against the bank where the stream flowed from the pond. The rest of our group had reached the steep bank and from them came cheers of excitement at the sight of Mick's bird taking the duck. Amidst all this excitement I'm looking everywhere for my bird. I looked in the trees around the bank and found no sign of her. Meanwhile, Val had walked to the other end of the pond where there was a gate in the fence, she came through the gate and walked back towards us. As she approached the gorse bushes she shouted to me, "Andy your bird is here under the gorse bushes and she is on a duck". I replied, "Don't make in to here as she has a habit of stepping off any game she takes unless she had a very good grip on it".

I was overcome with excitement as the adrenaline seared through my body with only one thought on my mind 'get across to the bird quickly'. I ran around the pond, climbed


over the fence by the stream and jumped. Blinded by my single objective I did not notice the mud on the other side and sank up to my knees on landing. A frantic struggle ensued before finally freeing myself and moving on. I then approached the electric wire, and in my haste to get over the wire and the fence I straddled both and got caught on the barbed wire. In trying to get free I made matters worse and received electric shocks which were running up both legs and meeting in the middle, very painful I can assure you. I finally broke free and with the initial adrenaline effects now wearing off I decided to run up to the gate rather than adding to the pain I was already in, in my nether regions. The bird was now close by, and the only obstacle between us was the gorse bushes through which I had to navigate (painful as it was), on my stomach, via a small tunnel. Don't you just love gorse!

Exhaustion, pain, frustration, and anguish now melted into the background as I sat at the foot of my bird and her duck. I offered her a chick and transferred the duck to my game bag, which to my surprise I had a bit of a problem with as she was showing a lot of aggression, normally she's very laid back.

When I retrieved myself from the tangle I met Mick. "Did she get it?" he asked. I replied, "She did". Mike then got his hip flask out and we both had a drink, doing a little dance together with excitement.

Later, when we had come away from the pond we saw John Rundle (from the other group), walking towards us with his telemetry. "Has anyone seen my bird?" he asked. We both replied that we hadn't seen any other birds. John said, "I'm picking up a strong signal from this area". He looked at me and I looked at the bird on my glove. Oh God! It wasn't mine. Very similar size and colouration, but different coloured jesses. What an idiot, what an embarrassment, I'd picked up the wrong bird. I gave John his bird and the duck and a load of apologies and then thought where was my bird? We eventually found her right up the side of the hill, in a tree. I called her down to the glove, and she came willingly.

What had happened was that John's bird had left his group and flown down the hill whilst mine had left our group and flown up the hill. When I finally rejoined our group and explained what had happened, everyone fell about laughing. From then on I was taunted unmercifully, they had even seen me caught on the wire but couldn't do anything for laughing so much. Even I saw the funny side of it eventually, and resigned myself to the fact that I was a grade 'A' prat. From then on things went from bad to worse. Returning to the hotel word spread like wild fire with the story retold by everyone and me becoming dafter by the minute. Even our American guests said that it would make a good story for the NAFA journal. International embarrassment, no thanks, it will be embarrassing enough to read about it in *The Austringer*.

On the day we left the hotel I was hailed down by one of the members, "Andy, are you sure you have got the right suitcase with you?" Will this taunting never end? 

WILDLIFE TRACKING SYSTEMS



TRACKING THE WORLDS WILDLIFE
THE LATEST TRACKING TECHNOLOGY
AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE
- UK DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE -

NEW 2002 PRODUCT RANGE

* PIN-POINT ACCURACY * LIGHTWEIGHT * TELESCOPIC AERIAL *

THE LIGHTEST, MOST ACCURATE TRACKING SYSTEM OF IT'S TYPE IN THE WORLD
NOW WITH TELESCOPIC AERIAL FOR CARRYING CONVENIENCE

NEW



WHITE FALCON



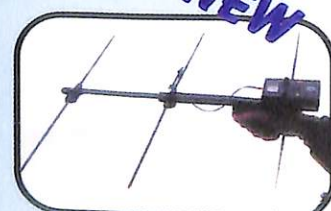
WT603

MOBILE 07860 832349

E-MAIL WILDLIFETRACKING@EASYPNET.CO.UK

WWW.WILDLIFETRACKING.CO.UK

NEW

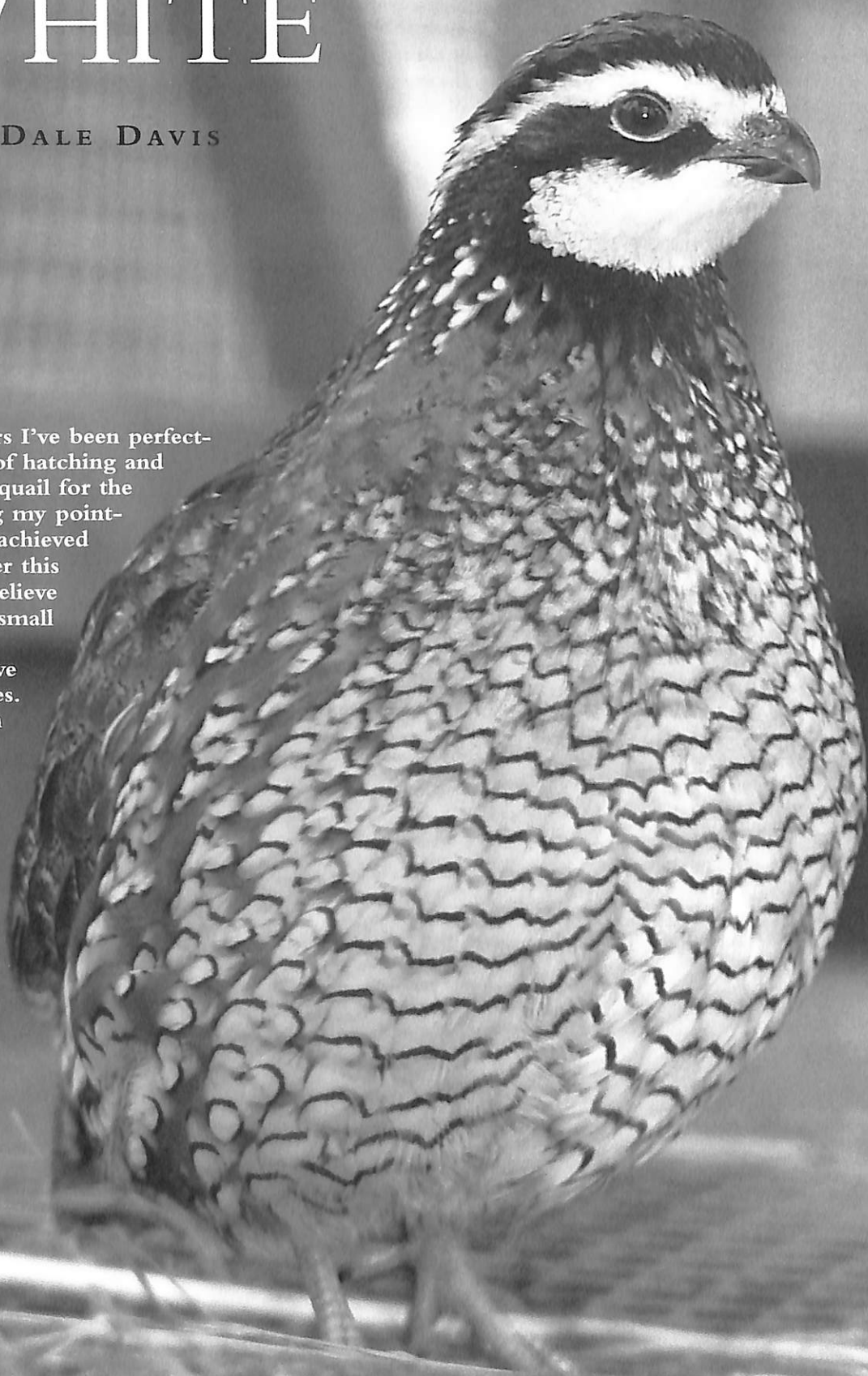


BLACK FALCON

THE BOB WHITE

DALE DAVIS

For the last 20 years I've been perfecting the technique of hatching and rearing bob white quail for the purpose of training my pointers. My dogs have achieved a lot of success over this time and I really believe that it's due in no small part, to the early training they receive with the bob whites. I've spent so much time and energy on developing a successful quail breeding programme, that I jumped at the chance to share my knowledge with fellow bird and dog lovers, on the other side of the Atlantic.



My 'Quail Programme' evolves as the year progresses. The first stage is the placing of an order for 1,000 eggs. I choose to order my eggs as opposed to collecting eggs from my old stock, because you can't mix different aged chicks together without problems. If I gathered the eggs my old birds laid I would have to have several different brooders to keep them all separated; which as there are lots of other things to take care of, is too much work. My incubator is the best I could afford, and I keep it maintained to a very high standard. It offers me peace of mind, knowing that the automated incubator will hold a steady temperature and humidity, as well as keeping the eggs turned regularly. The eggs arrive in two foam filled cardboard boxes, each egg in its own foam pocket. Once in the incubator it takes 23 days for the chicks to hatch.

In the mean time I'm preparing my brooder house. It's 12 ft. x 14 ft and has electricity for lights and heaters, as well as the brooders. The walls and ceiling are insulated so that I can maintain a warm temperature when it's cold outside. At 23 days, after the chicks hatch, I leave them in the hatcher or incubator for about 8 hrs, so they get nice and fluffy; you don't want to move them while they're damp. While this is going on I set up my brooder to between 95 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit and let it stabilise for a while to make sure it's correct. When the chicks are dry I move them under the brooder. The food, which is turkey starter, along with the water, is left out away from under the brooder; the day old chicks will come to it. To help them get started eating I generally put paper towels on the floor of the brooder, and scatter food on the towels; they will start eating right away.

The room should be about 80-90 degrees and almost dark. I use a 15 watt bulb for background light, and the brooder has a small red light under it. That's all the light you will want, or need. White lights trigger cannibalism, and once it starts you're in trouble. I use shavings on the floor, but anything that absorbs moisture would most likely work. The temperature needs to be reduced by five degrees each week until the chicks are six weeks old. Now they're feathered well enough to take care of themselves, as long as the weather's not cold and damp. If it is, then keep them where it's warm: around 70 degrees. Their feathers are their house, and since they don't mature for sixteen weeks, it takes time for them to be able to withstand extreme temperatures.

At six to seven weeks I move them to my outside pen. This pen is 20 ft. x 30 ft. It has a dirt floor, wire sides, and a roof. Your pen needs a roof because if it rains when these birds are young, they will get sick and die. Always err on the side of the birds, every time you make a change.

The birds stay in the pen for a week or two and then I start letting a third to half of the birds out. I close the door and leave them to figure out how to get back in through the recall cones. My pen has four cones, located near the bottom of the pen, eye high to a quail, so that as they walk by it's a fairly obvious route for them to travel. It takes some longer than others, but finally they figure it out. Some of the birds I let out tomorrow will be the same ones

I let out today and some won't. Just keep doing it, because sooner or later they will all be trained to know the routine.

As you let them out you will notice that as time goes by they fly better and farther. They will fly like wild quail and start acting like wild quail. Here comes the best part. I generally have a litter of pups about this time of year, pointers mainly. I try to time it so the pups are about 12 weeks old and the birds are about 7-10. I turn 100 or so quail out of the pen and get them to fly to cover. I then I turn a litter of pups loose and we go chase quail. The pups can't catch the quail and the quail won't fly very far, so you have a great start for your pups. You can see almost immediately the pointing instinct start working, as the pups really get into this. They become more and more 'birdy' as you progress from day to day. You can see the differences between the pups, both good and bad. This helps in selecting pups for field trials and or hunting. It tells you how you've done as a breeder and if you might want to have a repeat breeding.

As the pups and quail mature together they both get smarter and smarter. By the time the quail are mature both your dogs and quail will be the best you've ever seen. Dogs that aren't trained on these quail will find it very difficult to work them, the birds are too smart. By fall and hunting season you will have the finest young hunting dogs you've ever had, and you won't believe their ability. The following year will be even better. As fall appears and goes into winter I continue to free flight my birds. Some return faithfully to the pen whilst others prefer to go 'wild', and I only see them when they return to mingle with the others. Occasionally some will recall, I can tell those because they're much wilder for a few days, then settle down some. As long as I have enough birds in my pen to train on, I don't care how many stay out. Those birds have 'gone wild' and that's really the best part of my whole 'Quail Programme', putting the birds back into the country where they belong.

Come spring the programme starts all over again and any old birds in the pen get released and locked out; so they will pair up and reproduce as the others are doing. Come summer I will see pairs of my pen raised quail, with clutches of chicks numbering between 8 and 23 of those little brown peepers. What for me started out as just the means for giving my pups the best start in life, has now become an integral part of my year. The breeding and releasing of bob white quail and the enjoyment I get from watching them from my house window, is more than I ever imagined. Try it, and as I said earlier, you will have the best bird dog you ever trained. 🐾

I welcome any comments or questions.
dQuailsmith@aol.com

Editor's Note: In the UK, the release of a non indigenous species into the wild is against the law. Bob white quail however, have an extremely strong covey instinct and will return to the bery in the holding pen. It then becomes debatable as to whether you are releasing the quail into the wild or merely letting some out for exercise. The boy is out, and you have been warned.

The Parahawkers

GRAHAM SAUNDERS-GRIFFITHS



I NEVER grew up wanting to fly. I never once gave thought to owning a bird of prey, let alone hunting one, or more to the point, jumping off a mountain with enthusiastic abandonment. But then I never anticipated Nepal, and the magic that it could weave.

Nepal is a country of immense contrast, diversity, warmth and wonderful, refreshing simplicity. From the epic proportions of the Himalayan peaks to the lush valley lowlands, the Kingdom of Nepal offers a whole range of opportunities and experiences for the adventurous soul.

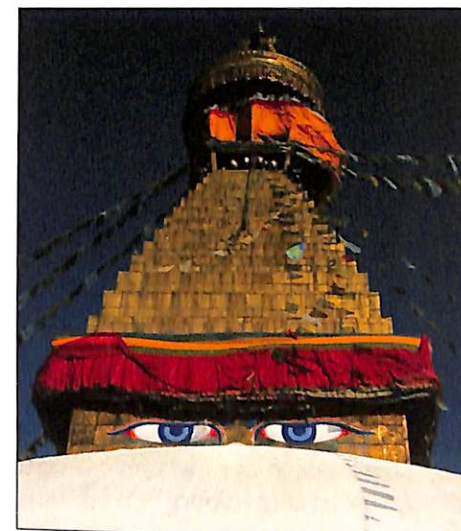
This is the story of one special adventure which began seven years ago in Nepal's Annapurna region, when an old school friend, Adam Hill, went on holiday to Nepal with his wife Jennifer. Whilst visiting the tranquil town of Pokhara on the outskirts of the Annapurna Conservation Area, Adam discovered the sport of paragliding, and in a life changing moment of clarity, he decided to dedicate himself to developing a business offering paragliding holidays in Nepal.

Paragliding is a relatively new sport. The early days of unstable, dangerous gliders which had sent many pioneers of the sport to an early grave has now been replaced with a vastly improved technology - one which allows pilots to fly hundreds of kilometres in a day at anything up to 15,000 feet, and above all carry their equipment in a rucksack weighing only 15 kilos. The potential is limitless.

Most modern gliders are made from rip-stop nylon, a light and durable material with minimal porosity allowing excellent glide ratios of up to 10:1. Utilising the same forces of nature which raptors have used for millions of years, paragliding pilots seek out thermals to take them to cloudbase and into a new world. Once experienced in finding and utilising this lift, pilots can hop from thermal to thermal and cover enormous distances without ever getting near to the ground. The holy grail of cross-country flight is the pinnacle of paragliding achievement, and in a country of outstanding beauty like Nepal, it is without doubt one of the most awe-inspiring experiences life has to offer.

And so it came to pass that Sunrise Paragliding was born. In six years, Nepal has become a paragliding Mecca. Adam's flying skills rapidly improved as he spent more and more time in the air exploring the remote reaches of Pokhara's surrounding valleys. Soon he was realising the awesome potential of cross country flight, and in doing so became aware of a fascinating diversity of raptors, spotting numerous species of vulture, eagle, buzzard, kite, hawk, and falcon whilst in flight.

I hadn't heard from Adam since leaving school eight years previously, yet once I learned of his exploits in Nepal through the grapevine, I couldn't resist the temptation to go out there myself and take a closer look. I got hooked on Nepal and paragliding the moment I arrived, and I have been going back there every year since.



The most common species we encounter while paragliding in Nepal are vultures. There are vast numbers from several species of vulture in the densely populated foothills of the Himalayas. The immense Himalayan griffon vulture (aptly named the 'HGV') is our most common companion. These large soaring birds enjoy riding the pressure waves formed on the top surface of the paraglider, and cruise along above us rather like a dolphin riding the bow wave of a ship. It can be a bit intimidating looking up and seeing a 3m wide HGV with talons extended to increase his descent rate to match our own, and then come and set himself up for a free ride. These magnificent creatures are supreme masters of their element. This becomes abundantly clear when you are locked in a thermal together, wingtip to wingtip and you see the vulture with his head under a wing preening himself. All the time we are totally focussed on the demanding skills of flight, and this guy is washing!

The interactions are sometimes a little bizarre, and have often prompted

earnest debate into the small hours of the morning. A recent development is "the vulture dance", in which a mature vulture tucks in its talons and rubs its belly and chest along the top surface of the glider. Some view this an overtly sexual act, whilst others consider it a simple inquisitive gesture. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the vultures enjoy the experience as they always come back for more.

The resident cinereous vultures are a regular inspiration. Always so confident to come in close and cast a lingering inquisitive eye over our equipment and us. Yet they are so slow to react sometimes that we have to wonder whether they have seen us at all! Imagine the startled reactions of a 2.5m cinereous vulture and a paragliding pilot three metres from impact, as both raptor and pilot stall their wings to avoid an ugly collision.

The pharjah kites are in a totally different league. Eager for company, they regularly dart in and out of the canopy lines, incredibly close - often to within touching distance - for a closer look. The most common eagles we encounter are the steppe, the mountain hawk and the crested serpent eagle. As you would imagine, the eagles react to the gliders in a very different way to the chilled out vultures. They are much more aggressive and we have to keep a close eye on them all the time. During the spring months in Nepal, from February to April, the eagles become extremely territorial and will make many attack runs at our gliders forcing us out of their airspace. Exhilarating though this is, we now avoid the hot spots during the mating season.

And from time to time, we have the honour of witnessing fascinating behaviour at incredibly close quarters. A memory that I will always cherish is of catching a difficult thermal out of a narrow gully, and as I crested the hill, I flew straight into a squadron of six steppe eagles putting on an incredible display, grappling and tumbling out of the sky, and missing the leading edge of my wing by a matter of inches. Close to the ground they released their grip on each other and climbed back up to meet me once again in the



thermal. When they turned their attentions onto me and started grabbing my glider with their talons, I took the view that this was a private affair, and bid my farewells.

Predictable patterns have emerged as some of the resident species have become accustomed to the gliders. Rules of engagement have evolved with each interaction. In the morning, the birds wait for the gliders to take off and test the air conditions before they commit themselves to the skies. Rising smoothly in crisp morning air, the first thermal would draw raptors from every corner of the valley. Pilots would turn in the same direction as the birds, and climb in a vertical column spanning several hundred metres.

On more occasions than I can remember, I found myself covering 30 or 40 kilometres in the company of one or more close friends. It is hard to describe the moving experience of exchanging long glances with a wild bird, meeting a wild creature in all its splendour on an even footing. I imagine it must be comparable to swimming with dolphins. Only 15 kilometres away, dominating the skyline, holy Fishtail mountain stands proud like the guardian of the skies, and here am I – flying totally free towards it with an immense vulture for a companion.

A Fusion of Interests

As our interest in the birds deepened, it was inevitable that we crossed paths with the ancient sport of falconry. Before long we had planned to raise and look after our own birds, so that we could experience the magic of engaging with a wild animal in its element and in one of the most dramatic landscapes in the world.

Fate then carved out an inspired sequence of events. It was an uncanny coincidence when an experienced falconer arrived on holiday in Pokhara, and asked Adam's Nepalese partner, Rajesh, for a tandem paragliding flight. In March 2001, soaring 4,000 feet above the earth, Scott Mason was knocked into orbit. The interaction with so many raptors at such close quarters had utterly shocked him. He had been a falconer for 16 years, and in all that time he had never experienced anything quite like this. We believed every falconer dreamt of being able to soar with a raptor, and Scott couldn't quite believe the experience when he landed after an hour's flight.

The merest suggestion that we wanted to rear and train our own birds was enough to ruin Scott's travel plans for the next four months. Over a lunchtime beer, a plan was hatched. In return for Scott's instruction on falconry, we would teach him

to paraglide. We could only imagine the potential of the experiment at this stage – to fly together as a group with our birds for company.

Our first dilemma was the choice of raptor. We knew that eagles were too difficult a first bird, and the vultures, although friendly, were simply too big. What we wanted was a social, non-hunter species. The pharaoh kite (*Milvus migrans*) was our ideal choice, being a manageable 60 cm tip to tail with a flying weight of around 800 grams. Being gregarious birds, they soar in large groups in the Himalayan foothills and are truly gifted pilots with exceptional manoeuvrability.

There happened to be a large population of these raptors in the valley, so it was unlikely that we would have difficulty in finding some chicks. Yet the last thing we wanted to do was raid a nest. Fortunately, the Hindu Gods were on our side, as within 24 hours of deciding on the project, we received a phone call alerting us to a possible source. A local farmer had cut down a tree to capture a pair of nesting kites.

We rushed over to find a mother and two chicks in a terrible state. The mother was chamed up and wedged into a bamboo basket, utterly depressed as her chicks lay starving and out of her reach. From negotia-

tions ensued to purchase the birds. The farmer didn't want to let them go, as he had gastronomic designs on a kite stew, which according to folklore would prevent some certain diseases. Scott was ready to explode. In all his years of falconry, he had never seen birds in such a terrible condition and so close to death. By the end of the afternoon, after a great deal of effort, a price was agreed to purchase the mother and her two chicks. And there was no turning back.

After we had arranged temporary hotel accommodation for the birds, we turned our attentions to establishing a reliable food supply, and the construction of three aviaries. Unfortunately a month of round the clock care could not save the mother and she died. For the next seven weeks, we ate, slept, drank, and thought nothing but these birds. If we weren't running about like lunatics attending to their each and every whim, we were out on the hill instructing Scott in the art of paragliding or inventing parahawking gadgets. We had launched ourselves headlong into a project blissfully unaware of how much dedication and time was needed.

The chicks grew at a staggering rate. We placed them in the Sunrise Paragliding office in Pokhara where they would have plenty of contact with people, and visitors couldn't quite comprehend the daily change in their size and appearance.

We quickly appreciated that our relationship with the birds was not going to be based on affection. Whilst they rapidly grasped the notion that quality playtime meant lots of juicy beef, fish or chicken, as soon as there was even the slightest sniff of food, the chicks would stumble over to their feeding trays, shriek at fever pitch and then gorge themselves with abandon. Once their crops were full, the caring onlookers just weren't important any more and were often ejected from the nest area with a carefully aimed spray from their hostile backsides.

The days tumbled by, and before we knew where we were, the aviaries were finished – a miracle in itself considering B&Q have yet to make

their mark in Nepal. Fortunately our timing had been spot on. Both Shadoko and Sapana, as they had now been named, were fully fledged. It was time to transfer them to their new home, where there was plenty of room to stretch out their wings, take a bath and mooch about inquisitively on a variety of perches.

We had all agreed that a two-week rest was in order, both for the birds and ourselves. The fortnight break was a perfect opportunity to allow the birds to get used to their new surroundings and to allow some essential falconry kit to arrive from the UK. It was also time to reduce the birds weight, to ensure that, upon our return, there was going to be plenty of keen behaviour and no nonsense.

Training

Our first training objective had been achieved in the very early days of the project, with the introduction of bicycle bells that accompanied the falconer's usual two-tone whistle, to grab the attention of the bird. It is very difficult to whistle when you are paragliding, grinning ear to ear makes it impossible, but a bicycle bell is just as effective. By week three, they were acutely aware that ringing bells meant food was in the offing, and this was to prove crucial in the weeks to follow. It was an integral part of the scheme we had devised to lure the birds to join us in flight. We had also begun manning them at week five, so that by the time they were transferred to the aviaries, Shadoko and Sapana were as comfortable on the fist as they were on the perch.

A combination of expertise, good luck, hard work and superb weather conditions conspired to see the first ten days of training go without a hitch. We all remember the very first day of training – it was a momentous occasion for all of us. Suddenly, we were getting to the bit we had waited for and worked towards for so long. With bicycle bells ringing, three or four paragliding passing overhead, and a succulent morsel of beef protruding from Scott's glove, Shadoko and Sapana tentatively made that first leap and were handsomely rewarded and applauded.

Their daily progress left all of us in awe, mastering the basics of flight with instinctual perfection. After ten days of steady calculated progress, we held our hearts in our mouths as the creance was removed. With so many wild Pharaoh Kites hanging around the training field, we were all petrified that they would just disappear without a trace. So we all erupted both in relief and delight when Shadoko and Sapana cruised 70 metres to the glove without a hint of desertion.

Throughout those first few weeks of training, we took each and every opportunity to familiarise the birds with the paragliding. At first, they were distracted by the noise and sheer size of the material, but over time, the gliders came to be accepted as a normal part of the landscape. As the birds flew from perch to fist, two or three pilots would be kiting their gliders in the background and flying overhead.

Thus far, everything had run really smoothly. With an experienced falconer at the helm, and three avid students learning fast, the first stage of training had been predictable and uncomplicated. When we finished training for the day and the birds were settled back into the aviaries, we would remove the falconry kit and replace it with paragliding equipment. And head up the mountain for Scott's next lesson.

Every day was filled to the brim with activity as we tried to synchronise Scott's progress with that of the birds. Imagine for a moment an eyes on her first day in the air, jittering about getting used to the feeling of flight, and then crash landing downwind. Now imagine a novice paragliding pilot jittering about trying to get accustomed to his equipment, also getting the approach to landing all wrong. Both learned quickly of course – out of necessity. The whole project was connected in an obscure, charming way.

Teaching Scott and the birds how to fly, however, was just the beginning. Somehow, we were going to persuade the birds to fly with the paragliding, and if all of us were honest, we didn't have a clue about the next bit.



that the actions, colours, noises and size of the canopies no longer bothered them, so we pressed on to the next stage, which was 1500 feet above at the glider launch area.

We are still debating whose idea it was to fly tandem with Shadoko feeding in mid air on Scott's fist, but that is what we decided to do. The idea of course was to get him accustomed to being airborne with us and in very close proximity to the glider – it seemed harmless enough in theory. Regretfully, from the moment we got out of the taxi at the launch area, it was very clear that nothing was going to go according to plan. Shadoko was immediately clocked by a resident pair of phariah Kites, and as soon as he let out one of his piercing shrieks, that was it. Within ten minutes, the sky was teeming with raptors, as more than 40 raptors of varying species swarmed around the launch area to check out this strange new sight.

None of us had seen anything like it before. There were over 25 phariahs alone, swooping above our heads and out in front of the launch; they were clearly interested in our relationship with Shadoko and weren't too worried about coming in and having a closer look. It was a truly magical moment for all of us.

Scott thought that it would be an appropriate moment to introduce Shadoko to his kind, and cast him into the fray. "Are you F!%*&! Mad?", we screamed, expecting the worst. We watched heart in mouth as Shadoko tore up the skies, weaving in and out of trees and dodging the playful advances of the other birds. He was clearly capable of handling himself quite competently, and soon returned to Scott, only Scott cast him back into the melee once again. He peeled around the back of the launch and caught his first proper thermal. We all whooped and hollered at his first taste of a thermal, only Shadoko thought we were calling him back in as he rushed back to Scott with a dreadful downwind landing.

Five minutes later, two tandem gliders, two pilots, two passengers and a bird stood expectantly in readiness for launch. In comical style, Shadoko fell

off Scott's fist as Adam launched the tandem glider. Meanwhile, Scott was hanging from his harness desperately trying to rectify the drama, all the while delirious with pain from an over tightened harness trapping his family jewels. Eventually, the drama passed and Shadoko happily settled and fed on Scott's fist as the gliders soared with 30 raptors 1500 ft above the tranquil shores of Pokhara Lake.

Then one morning, we got up to grey skies, and the party was over. The monsoon had arrived and with it the end of the flying season. It had suddenly become rather depressing. Despondent, Scott left for Thailand and some scuba diving. Then, out of the blue, almost the entire Royal Family of Nepal were obliterated in a palace massacre and the country descended into a state of emergency. All of us suddenly had to leave. It was a terrible disappointment after having come so far.

That was June 2001. Now, nine months later, the country has done its grieving and the project is once again in full swing. We have come a long way since the early days of training.

Many milestones have been reached – the first thermal with the glider, the first air to paraglider landing in flight. A year down the road, we are on the verge of realising the dream – to fly cross-country together as a team with the birds. Shadoko in particular has exceeded all of our expectations, and is now totally at home soaring with the paragliding and marking out the thermals with instinctual ease.

The project has been a remarkable success, and goes from strength to strength every day. We are still very much in the early stages of the experiment – just one year down the road. But we have already achieved our goal to fly with the birds, and that has been an immensely satisfying experience. It is now only a question of increasing the airtime to encourage the birds to travel longer and longer distances at our sides.

The experience of interacting with a raptor in their natural domain yet in an otherwise traditional manner is an exciting development. The potential of Parahawking is limitless, and with each and every day that passes, we learn something new. Only a year ago,

the pipe dream to raise our own raptors and train them to fly alongside us in our paragliding was little more than a hopeful quest. Thanks to Scott Mason, and the dedication of a team of parahawkers, flying in this beautiful country has taken on a whole new meaning.

A Cautionary Tail

Sadly, many species of vulture and eagle are in serious decline in the Himalayas, some suffering from unknown and deadly diseases. Ten percent of the world's bird species are either resident or visit Nepal, an astonishing statistic considering the country covers just 0.4% of the world's land mass. With over 80 species of raptor alone, Nepal is crying out for research and conservation efforts.

Sunrise Paragliding are seeking ways to promote the conservation of Nepal's raptors. Of course, in a country where poverty is both extremely severe and widespread, the protection of wild birds takes second place. The population is also exploding in this part of Asia, exacerbating the environmental pressures.

With so many factors weighing against conservation in Nepal, the importance of education has become all too clear. The process has already begun with the introduction of falconry courses, falconry holidays, and the assistance of the national media in highlighting the environmental dangers facing raptors in this corner of the Himalayas. Plans are already underway to establish a Himalayan Raptor Conservation & Education Centre, but of course a project of this scale takes a great deal of time and money. Through education and investment in research, we may perhaps make a difference in the struggle. Perhaps that would make Shadoko and Sapana's mother proud, and ourselves worthy foster parents in her absence. 🇳🇵

*Sunrise Paragliding is a British-Nepali partnership with over six years flying experience in the Nepalese Himalayas. To experience adventure travel in the stunning Kingdom of Nepal contact Graham in the UK on 01273 748032 or Adam in Nepal on (+977) 6121174
Web site: www.nepal-paragliding.com
E-mail: sunrise@nepal-paragliding.com*

The Blind Leading the Blind

There were only a few weeks left before the monsoon season kicked in, and we wanted to progress the project as far as possible before the heavens opened and the project flooded to a halt. Looking back at this fortnight, all of us agree that this was probably the most hilarious time of our lives.

Each day was another adventure in lunacy. However, through a sequence of failures, we discovered what areas needed the most work, and through a process of elimination, we began to focus on the most pressing tasks.

It quickly dawned on us that it was going to take time to gain the bird's confidence, and they needed time to hone their skills and build up their stamina. To begin with, the gliders were moved into closer and closer proximity, and it wasn't long before the birds were feeding on a specially constructed boom attached to the paragliding harness under an inflated canopy. We were soon comfortable



"DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT"

MIKE GAMBOLD

I REGARD myself as being very fortunate, in that I can walk out of my back gate into the fields and be immediately on hawking ground. It was on such a day that this story eludes, a fine sunny autumn day as I recall, as I threw on my hawking bag and shouted to my wife Cynthia, as I'd done a thousand times before, "I'm off with the bird".

In the thirty two years I've endeavoured to practice the mad atavistic alchemy we call falconry, I have, through various types of farm work, machinery repairs and visits to licensed premises, built up friendships and rapport with local farmers and landowners to a degree that I can literally go almost anywhere I please in this corner of south-east Gwent, crossing and re-crossing boundaries wherever the nose of a pointing dog takes me. This vague, haphazard approach to an afternoon's sport proved in my case, on this day, to have near-fatal consequences.

Within about three quarters of an hour, my wanderings had taken me around the edge of the local golf course to a small farm on the outskirts of a large estate. It was a place I'd been familiar with since a small boy and finding the owner and his wife out, I walked to a piece of deciduous woodland where I thought there might be pheasants - overspill from the kept-land nearby. The weather was very warm for the time of year and I was soon perspiring as I forced my way through the undergrowth of brambles and nettles, which were still in vigorous growth. Fairly soon my GWP held steady on point and along with some interest from my semi-retired spaniel (she only usually came for the blackberrying), I had the con-

fidence to cast the hawk into a tree to give her a better look at things as myself and the dogs moved in for the flush.

My memory of what happened next is a little cloudy, for even after all these years when I'm hunting I'm oblivious to everything but the chase; I'm as focused as a spar on a songbird. I was vaguely aware of two sharp pricks through the shirtsleeve of my right arm; followed by two more through the trouser of my right leg, and thinking it to be thorns brushed them away. At that very moment a cock pheasant got up and went clattering away down through the wood, with the hawk in pursuit. I ran after them, vaulting the sheep netting fence and then a gate and suddenly, it seemed like I was wading through deep snow or a heavy sea, my heart began pounding, ears and temples throbbled, my lips tingled like they were touched by fire and I couldn't catch my breath. I collapsed to the ground; this, I felt sure, was a heart attack. Realising there was no pain and my heart was banging away like a drum I deduced it must be some kind of severe asthma bout and reached into my bag for an inhaler, but half a dozen puffs on this brought no relief at all, my strength was draining. Breathing was now extremely difficult and I was becoming very afraid, but strangely enough, remained calm.

Over the years, when in hot pursuit, I have often looked back at a high fence or a seemingly impenetrable hedge and wondered how on earth did I get over or through it, but now the situation was reversed. After struggling to my feet I was unable to open an ordinary farm gate, let alone climb over it, and in my desperation to find

help I fell bodily into the hedge, rolling off the barbed wire on the far side and ending up on my back, with the dogs licking my face and whining; they knew something was wrong. I cannot recall being concerned about birds of prey or game species at that moment of time.

I managed somehow to stand up, and knowing of a neighbouring farmhouse just over half a mile away something told me to make for there. With every breath I tried to take in, my neck squeezed tighter like there was a snake around it. I resolved to try and walk for five steps and then rest for five seconds, but realised very soon that it was not rest I needed but immediate assistance. It occurred to me that I might be dying, and I confess that I despaired. I looked up at a clear azure sky and remember thinking that if I did die, there were worse places than this to do it in.

It is hard now to relate what went through my head, time seemed to slow down; sand turned to honey; I remembered picking stones that grew like mushrooms in the field I now stood in, for ten shillings a day, over there was the bank where I netted my first rabbit; yonder was the fence post where my first passage goshawk - price £30 - undid two falconers knots on his creance and flew into the wood, only to turn right back and land on my raised fist. I thought of my wife, my children, the book I was threatening to write. I've seen wildlife documentaries in which there is that moment when a wildebeest stops struggling with the lions, it's brain releases chemicals to ease it's last moments and it assumes a certain serenity and dies, this I believe was happening to me. But I was not going to let it

With a great effort I tried to expand my chest, my heart still hammering, my head feeling like it would burst. It's incredulous to think of it now, but my mind all of a sudden became clear and lucid, my hand went to my knife, I was considering a tracheotomy. I'd been stumbling in a crouched position for what must have been minutes, so I tried to get on my feet. On standing I saw my dogs amongst the sheep, but was unable to blow the whistle or shout, all my concentration and willpower was directed towards the taking in of air.

Now, by a stroke of luck, the farmer, Kevin Rhys-Davies, who normally worked at a second job during the daytime, was at home in his yard. Recognising my dogs in his flock he guessed that something was wrong with me and came running into the field, saw me staggering and shouted to his wife to call an ambulance. He was on me in an instant, reassuring me that he was a first-aider and was trained to deal with heart attacks. I was still unable to talk but thankfully managed to convince him that it would not be helpful for him to start bashing me on the chest - I've had broken ribs in the past and didn't need a couple more just then. I did not now appear to be getting any worse and by taking big concentrated gulps was able to take in some air. I conveyed to Kevin that the worst seemed over and he concentrated his effort on what was most important to him, i.e. getting the dogs out of the sheep, which he soon did and locked them into a trailer. I believe I then became slightly delirious. I could hear the ambulance siren all around the lanes but they couldn't seem to find the right one. My wife had been called but not knowing my exact whereabouts, took some time to arrive, getting there at about the same moment as the paramedics.

I lay on the ground in the prone position from which I found it easier to breathe and with the crisis seemingly over, felt somewhat relieved. It was not however, for long, as I became aware of another possible dilemma approaching rapidly. The medics, who had been told I'd had a heart seizure,


were now running at me with the jump leads. I hope and pray that none of my readers will ever experience something like this, but take my word for it; the last thing you desire when starting to recover is two large men coming at you with some high voltage kick start equipment. I believe once more my hand went to my knife. When all was explained I found myself strapped in the back of an ambulance, a pipe with a valve in it inserted into my arm and half a dozen monitoring devices stuck onto my chest and shoulders. I was given an injection and my next memory was of travelling along the A48 seeing Grey Hill through the window, as the paramedic sat by me holding my hand, saying, to my utter astonishment, "But of course, if the Good Lord had wanted you to go then, there is nothing we could have done to prevent it!" Now wait on. How do these kind of people get these kind of jobs? I muttered something like I was far too young and far too good-looking to be snatched away just yet, whatever any deity of any religious persuasion might think. The next thing I knew I was in the Royal Gwent Hospital being given a full examination.

It transpired that I had experienced an anaphylactic seizure - whereby ones body reacts to a substance (in some cases it can be peanuts), by releasing huge amounts of histamine to a degree that it causes the symptoms described above. Now over the years I've been bitten and stung by most species of British wildlife, but on this day my immune system crashed and over - reacted in this way to the stings on my arm and leg. It has occurred to me since, that had this happened on previous occasions when in remote parts of Scotland, where I have been the main source of protein for a million midges, I could in all probability have ended up as fox food. I was unable to say what had stung me, and months later it was suggested I get myself desensitised to insect stings, to prevent a recurrence. As a result I was referred to a professor of immunology at the University Hospital of Wales, who deduced that I had been bitten by the woodlouse

eating spider *Dysdera*, whose jaws leave puncture wounds 2 mm apart. The fact that I'd always stressed that I felt I'd been stung and not bitten and that the punctures were about 2 cms apart was ignored. What I did learn was that this allergic reaction can be countered in some cases, by a rapidly administered injection of adrenaline into the thigh muscle, and I now carry two such injections at all times.

Anyway back to the day in question, and they wanted to keep me in hospital for the night, as there's very often an aftershock, but as Cynthia promised to watch me I was allowed to discharge myself, and in any case, I had a hawk and dogs to reclaim.

It turned out that the hawk had been caught and shut in a woodshed but when I arrived there after dark the place was deserted, and not knowing where my glove or other gear was I entered in complete darkness and grabbed the bird with my good hand. I was footed quite badly on the hand and forearm and it was a very sore and dejected austringer who put his beasts to bed that night. Around midnight I was sat, albeit in some discomfort, in my chair in the conservatory, my right arm looked like a leg, my right leg looked like a gatepost. My left arm and hand was swollen and throbbing. I regarded my good leg and considered myself lucky. I poured myself three fingers of Laphroaig (using the fingers of the more swollen hand as a measure) and looked back on an eventful day in a mood getting mellower by the minute.

I'm convinced my determination got me through; much fitter and younger people have died. My heart and other organs were severely tested and proved up to the job, for I'm told liver and kidney functions would have shut down as the brain demanded oxygenated blood. If a moral is to be found in this tale, which I'm sure some people will say has no business in a hawking journal, it is this, it has made me adopt the practice of always telling someone exactly where I am going, and in retrospect has encouraged me to reassess my life and where I want that to go. 

A Gathering of Eaglehunters

ALAN GATES

IMAGINE my disappointment on setting foot in Mongolia and being told that I'd missed a gathering of eagle-hunters by just four weeks. I promised myself there and then to find out as much as I possibly could about the event, with the intention of one day attending. Extracting information from Mongolia can be a long slow laborious process, but as the months past, a picture, although somewhat vague, started to emerge. Normadic Expeditions and Altai-Tour Ulgii were to sponsor the second annual Golden Eagle Festival. It was to be run by the Burkut Association, which incorporates the Community Association for the Preservation of Kazakh Traditions and Conservation of Golden Eagles. The event was to take place in early October and all participants were members of the Mongolian Eagle-hunters Association. It was now July and although it would mean my second trip to Mongolia within twelve months, I decided to make the trip. So along with my good friend John Green we set about making the necessary arrangements, which as you would imagine required a lot of planning.

John, as an employee of United airlines was able to obtain concessionary airline tickets, which is an excellent occupational bonus. The only slight snag was that United's flight routes meant he would have to fly the long way round the planet, to get to Mongolia. In other words, across the Atlantic, across America, and across the Pacific to Seoul in Korea, where I planned to meet him. I took a shorter route across Europe, Russia, Mongolia, China and the Yellow Sea to Seoul, then together we flew across the Yellow Sea, over China and landed in Ulaan Baatar Mongolia. We had three days in Ulaan Baatar before our flight across Mongolia to Olgii, where the Festival was to be held. Sight seeing and shopping was the order of the first two days; with the Gobi Kashmir factory shop a big must, to purchase gifts for the ladies back home. Ulaan Baata's black market is an amazing sight with many Western pirated goods mingled with Mongolian traditional items. It was a place both John and I could have spent a lot more time perusing, but for the fact that we were chivvied along by our guides for fear of being targeted by pickpockets.

I'd arranged a visit to the Hustai National Park and so on day three we travelled about 95 kilometres west. It

was a fine bright sunny day and we were thrilled to see a good number of wild golden eagles close to the road, along which we were travelling, we also spotted a few pole perched, very light coloured, saker falcons, big ones.

Hustai National Park is mostly famous for its wild horses, called takhi, which were discovered at the end of the 19th century, and are being reintroduced to Mongolia in Hustai. Also known as Przewalski's horse, 84 takhi have been introduced over the last ten years and the number has now grown through management and breeding, to 120.

Anyway I digress, we were here for the festival and we now needed to fly across Mongolia to the western province of Bayaan Olgii; four hours of cramped low level flying in a small propeller powered aircraft, believe me, I was well pleased to set foot on terra firma again. It's a tough place to get too; it had taken us the best part of a week of travelling and overnight stops to arrive. John and I were the only outside falconers to attend the Festival, and we were given honoured guest status by Medeukhan, head of the Eagle-hunters Association. Also in attendance were a German film crew, a Canadian freelance camera team, two freelance Hungarian cameramen and a few Americans who lived and worked on long term projects in Mongolia.

The first day of the festival was held in the town's stadium and by eleven o'clock there were over forty-five mounted eagle-hunters in the arena. All of the eagle-hunters had journeyed from the countryside, some riding for two or three days to get to Olgii. What a sight these wild looking Kazakhs made, traditionally dressed in all their finery. Their horses bridles and saddles were heavily decorated in silver, so too were the eagles jesses and hoods. Many of the hunters had foxes tied to the back of their saddles, which they'd caught on their journey to Olgii. For the duration of the event prizes were offered for various classes and today's event was for presentation. The eagle-hunters were awarded points for their attire; his horse for colour, style and tack, and his eagle for size, plumage and furniture. A panel of judges held aloft scorecards and the points were accumulative for each event.



GOLDEN VALLEY INSURANCE



BIRDCOVER

Vet fees,
theft, fire, storm, tempest, malicious
damage, vermin attack, death and more.
Public liability also available.

We can also offer non-working dogs policies

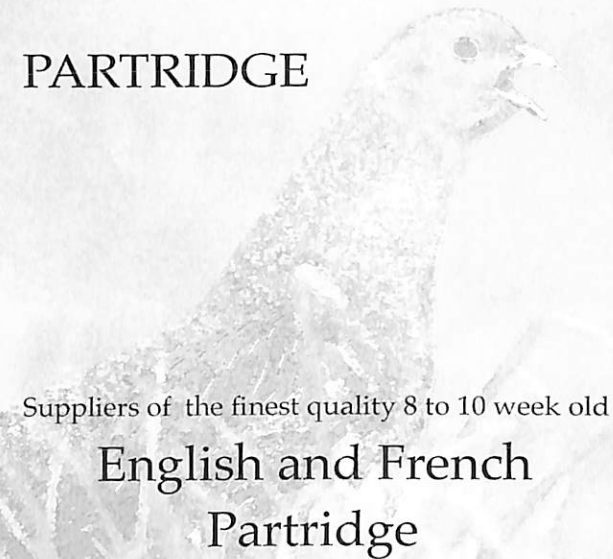
Call today for our free information pack

Freephone 0800 015 4484 Fax 01981 240 451

e-mail: birdcover@aol.com

GOLDEN VALLEY INSURANCE
The Old Shoppe, Ewyas Harold,
Herefordshire, HR2 0ES

SHAVINGTON PARTRIDGE



Suppliers of the finest quality 8 to 10 week old

English and French Partridge

Contact

Pam or Peter Eaton on:

Office 01948 890 655

Mobile 07803 744 948

or

e-mail pol.davies@btinternet.com

GONEGOS

HUNGARIAN WIREHAISED VIZSLAS

August grouse - September partridge - October pheasants - November Mountain hare. Our wirehaired vizslas are out working up to 9 months of the year, and are experienced on almost all native game types.

We are always happy to receive genuine enquiries, and welcome prospective clients to accompany us out in the field to see our dogs working.



We produce one litter a year and also produce a limited number of part trained wirehaired vizslas.

For further details please telephone:
01748-85-0918

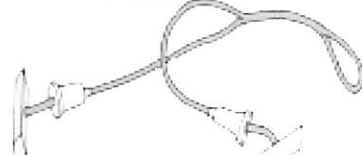
E-mail: gonegoswirehairs@btinternet.com

Or please pay our web site a visit on:
gonegoswirehairedvizslas.moonfruit.com

Falcon Fayre

Home of the
STEALTH JESS

SUPPLIERS
OF
QUALITY
FALCONRY
ACCESSORIES



41 FAIRFIELD LANE,

WOLVERLY, KIDDERMINSTER DY11 5QJ

FREE PHONE 0800 026 6521 FAX: 01562 861410

Peregrine Falcons · Barbary Falcons · Gyr Falcons
Lanner Falcons · Saker Falcons · Prairie Falcons · Merlins
and hybrids from the above

Bald Eagles · Harris Hawks · Sparrowhawks
Redtails · Ferruginous Hawks · Steppe Eagles

All birds chamber raised but imprints can be provided but only as special order

Ian Garland

Phone 01827 383300 Eve 01283 512446

Fax 01827 383360


email: gyr@dial.pipex.com

Day two and three were both held in the mountains and whereas day one had seen a cloudy sky along with cold winds and small flurries of snow, we now had a bright and sunny sky, although a little cold. On each of these days a set task was performed and points were awarded for speed of response and style of flight. About as high tech as it got were the use of stopwatches for response times. Tradition and ancient skills were at the heart of the festival's ethos. Nowhere else in the world would you see such a spectacle and we were overwhelmed by the skills, exuberance and style of the austringers.

The first of the mountain tasks saw each eagle flown from the mountainside, where it had to fly after its galloping master and land on his arm. It still sends a shiver through me as I relive the scene. Words cannot do justice to the power, speed and agility of this task, let alone the risk involved with a fully-grown female eagle.

The next task was no less impressive, and on this occasion the eagles were flown from the very top of the mountain, to a dragged fox lure. As the eagle-hunter galloped across the steppe, the dragged lure kicked up a cloud of dust and some of the eagles were reluctant to commit, maybe because of the dust or possibly the on-looking crowd. However there were some that showed none of this shyness and ploughed straight in. Dust, stones, hooves, speed; the cries of the austringer and the thrill of the chase, heady stuff indeed. No half measures here, just fully trained, focussed and aggressive eagles that saw nothing other than a selected quarry on the run. All the eagles were hardened fox killers and none were kept as pets or for displays, and it was another magnificent showing from the eagle-hunters.

The fourth day was for presentations, and the outright winner of the festival, with more than double the number of points than his second placed rival was

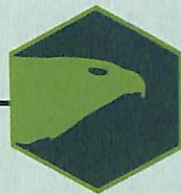
Mana. He had been easily recognisable during the event for not only his outstanding skill, but also his rather fabulous chestnut horse coat. It had been a truly remarkable experience and Aralbai, who had been placed fourth in the festival, had invited us to his home to accompany him on a hunt. We were to ride into the mountains of Bayaan Nuur for four days hunting, and would sleep on the hill with herders along the way. What a way to end our trip. The festival had been illuminating the hunt would prove exhilarating and yet another story. 

Should anyone wish to experience a Golden Eagle Festival or hunting with the Mongolian Kazakh Eagle-hunters useful contacts are:

Canat Cheryazdaa,
KAZTOUR,
Mongolia,
Bayan-Ulgii aimag
Ulgii
e-mail: canat_c@yahoo.com

Kent Madin,
BOOJUM EXPEDITIONS,
14543 Kelly Canyon Road,
BOZEMAN,
MT 59715 USA
email: boojum@boojum.com





honeybrook farm

ANIMAL FOODS

The UK's leading hawk food supplier!

Established ten years
family owned.

Run by falconers for falconers.

Suppliers to major breeders,
zoos and collections.

Top **quality** British chicks,
quail and rodents.

All our products are carefully
selected, packed and blast frozen
here at Honeybrook Farm.

Major sponsors for the
Campaign for Falconry
tirelessly working on behalf of EU
falconers and raptor keepers.

Raptor Return
FREE registration,
FREE rings,
FREE ID tags,
freephone for lost and found.

Honeybrook Farm
for all your raptors needs.

For any feeding or dietary advice
'call the people who know'

www.honeybrookfarm.com

FREephone – 0800 1971777



Gull Hawking

NEIL HUNTER

WHATEVER type of hawking I practice I tend to be a tad obsessive. Doing it half heartedly is just not good enough, so as always, my latest endeavour had my full attention and enthusiasm. And so it was that I became passionate about a form of falconry and a quarry that I had paid little attention to in the past. Gull Hawking.

I initially drifted into this area of our sport by accident, whilst out flying a female peregrine in her second season. She had shown considerable promise as quite a decent game hawk and it was whilst in pursuit of partridge that she introduced me to the potential of gull hawking. I'd marked a covey of partridges down; put the falcon up and watched her climb to about 400 ft before making my way towards the covey with her directly above. All of a sudden she began a very shallow stoop. I thought the partridges had run on and been bumped. However, the next I saw of her was on the tail of an adult herring gull. What followed was a classic ringing flight, real text book stuff. It seemed to last forever, but in reality only probably lasted a couple of minutes. The falcon put in about 15-20 stoops ending in a dogfight at about 500 ft. Ultimately, as the gull tried to evade the falcon by diving, the falcon stooped and cut across the gull as it levelled out, striking it on the side of the head and killing it instantly. As the gull spiralled down, the falcon bound to it and laboured down, landing two fields away. When I got there she was plucking it and I was in two minds whether to take it from her or not, thinking that with no reward she wouldn't do it again, but as the flight had been so spectacular I decided to reward her for such a display.

She seemed to really enjoy the meat and as I sat down beside her I decided to fly her at gulls from then on. You'll all be familiar with the phrase 'the best laid plans of mice and men' and to my surprise and I must say a little disappointment, regardless of the opportunities she was given over the next few weeks she never chased another seagull.

That particular falcon was eventually returned to the

breeder and I forgot about gull hawking until about two years ago when I was asked to do some landfill work. There was no way I was going to wander about a landfill site with a harris hawk, primarily because I wouldn't anyway (no offence intended) and secondly because harris hawks do not work very well on landfill sites.

So with an almost explosive excitement and my usual exuberant childlike enthusiasm, I bought a female peregrine, a female peregrine x saker and a white gyr x peregrine tiercel, (I did say I don't do things by half!).

All three were trained, stooped to the lure and attempts made to enter them at gulls. Fortunately it was the right time to enter a falcon at gulls, as the juveniles had arrived in large numbers at the site. The peregrine proved disappointing and although it took rooks and crows it lacked the perseverance on gulls and would give up after two or three stoops. Both hybrids were a different kettle of fish, and although they didn't take to flying gulls straight away, after some perseverance on my part both became very good.

The tiercel gyr x peregrine initially took two rooks, a jackdaw and a carrion crow. It took me 20 minutes to track him on the carrion crow and when I found him, although the crow was dead, he had taken a real beating from the flock. He was badly cut around the eyes, cere and feet, as well as a gouge out of his chest. He was put on antibiotics and was out of action for ten days. From then on he has not chased another crow but switched to gulls with the same enthusiasm as I show. In two seasons to date he has killed 102 assorted gulls. Some of the flights have not been very pretty, but others have been truly outstanding. The most important thing is picking the correct flight and I've found that water will ruin a gull flight in the same way as trees will ruin a flight at rooks, so I avoid water when possible. The best results are achieved if the gulls are 200-300 yds away and obviously into the wind.

What he tends to do from that distance is fly at full pace, aggressively climbing all the way and before the gulls know what is happening he is 400 or 500 ft above


them and really commands them from that height, putting in a succession of stoops, usually ending in him binding to the gull as it levels out after the stoop. Several kills have been tail chases at 700-800 ft where the falcon has bound to the gull at that height. That I find quite frightening as you see both birds tumbling from the sky. The biggest worry being, where the hell are they going to land? Perhaps on the road in front of a ten ton truck, fortunately not so far!

Other flights have ended when the gull has been killed on the initial stoop. Which isn't bad for a tiercel flying at 11b 11 1/2 oz. The down side of his weight is the feather damage he sustains, especially as he does take the occasional black backed gull weighing in at 3-4lbs.

His first season ended on his 53rd gull which, incidentally, was a black back. He struck it three times and then tail chased it out of sight. I found him wrestling with it in a back garden. When the gull was dead I turned it over and let him feed from the breast.

His feathers had been shredded and were actually beyond even the best imping job. I don't know what the owners of the house thought when they returned home and saw their garden. This year he has killed 45 gulls and is desperately in need of a moult. He alone has secured the contracts on two landfill sites, killing gulls in quite some style, right in front of the site managers.

The female pere x saker would have been a great gull hawk. She flew at 2lb 3 oz and caught 19 gulls in three weeks, without damaging a feather. Unfortunately the art of falconry is not without it's upsets and she was killed in an accident.

If this article has inspired you into thinking you might give gull hawking a try then I wish you all the best. I would however, like to point out that unlike the relatively sedate practice of game hawking (I jest my good friends), you will need to be pretty fit for this activity. If you're not to fit when you start the season, you sure as hell will be when you finish. The furthest I've tracked the white tiercel was 7.5 miles ... on foot! Have fun. 



Officers 2002

President

Douglas Morgans

Vice - Presidents

Nancy de Bastyai

Ian Blantern

John Fairclough

Jemima Parry-Jones

Chairman

Dave Dimond

Vice-Chairman

Brian Paterson

Treasurer

Jean Dimond

Secretary

Mike Clowes

Editor of the Austringer

Steve Gouldthorpe

Field Officer

Neil McCann

Breeding Project Officer

Lee Featherstone

Press & Publicity Officer

Dave Jones

News Editor

Ian Blantern

Region 1 Representative

Bob Antonio

Region 2 Representative

Andy Cotton

Region 3 Representative

Mick Young

Region 4 Representative

Dave Jones

Club Co-ordinator and Conservation Officer

Mick Young

Assistant Secretary

Janice France

Legal Officer

Tom Jones

Honorary Members

Dr Nick Fox, Andy Barnes,

Christian de Coime, James Toth,

Stephen Frank, Dieter Horvath,

Terry Large, Gary Morris,

Miklós Kiss de Nemesker,

Graham Rossiter,

Mick & Ann Shuttleworth,

Diana Durman-Walters,

Hal Webster

The secretary of the Californian Hawking

Club, N. America

The secretary of the Cape Falconry Club,

S. Africa

Honorary Club Vets

Dick Best, Richard Jones

All advertisements have been accepted in good faith. No responsibility can be taken for the quality of products or services offered. The Welsh Hawking Club magazine is copyrighted and may not be used in any form without the written permission of the publisher or its authors.

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 wishes to thank you all for your contribution, give apologies for any omissions.

Rules of the Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objectives

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

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

Membership

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

Meetings

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

Regions

Purpose of the Regions

- 1 To provide social meetings for members and potential members living locally, although any member will be welcome to attend.
- 2 To arrange local field meets which will be governed by the main Club field meet rules.
- 3 To arrange fund raising to assist with paying for speakers and field meets.
- 4 To promote falconry and the Welsh Hawking Club.

Rules

- 1 No new region will be formed by members unless it has been agreed by the Club committee at a committee meeting.
- 2 All regions MUST open a bank or building society account in the name of The Welsh Hawking Club. It is recommended that an account has 2 signatories.
- 3 Any non-members attending, other than wives, partners or children of members will be made welcome for 3 meetings. After this time they will be given the opportunity to complete an application form to join the Club. If they decline they will no longer be allowed to attend the meetings, even as a guest of another member.
- 4 A register of attendees will be kept at all meetings, primarily to enforce rule 3.
- 5 A written report will be forwarded each year, by the regional Secretary, to the Editor of *The Austringer*, to reach him no later than the end of February, for inclusion in the Austringer.
- 6 A report must be sent by the regional Treasurer to the Club Treasurer showing the state of the finances, to reach her no later than the end of September, for inclusion in the Treasurer's report at the AGM.
- 7 Each region will hold an election at its next meeting following the AGM. It will elect from its Full members a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to run the meetings. One of these may also be elected as a member from the region to attend the main committee meetings. This representative will have full voting rights.

Code of Conduct

- 1 The well-being of all birds of prey, both domestic and wild, together with the continuation of Falconry, must be the aim of all members.
- 2 Falconry is the flying of trained birds of prey and owls at suitable quarry found in the natural state. No action must bring this into disrepute.
- 3 Every hawk must be properly manned and equipped.
- 4 Every endeavour must be made to recover a lost hawk.
- 5 All hawks flown free should be equipped with field jesses, at least one bell and, if possible, a transmitter and the name and address of the owner. In the case of unentered or aggressive hawks, eagles, hybrids, exotics etc., special care must be taken to prevent loss.
- 6 Permission must be obtained before entering upon ground and it must be ascertained whether another falconer already has permission, in which case his/her permission must also be sought. Due respect must be given to landowners and their property.
- 7 Indigenous hawks that are no longer wanted must either be returned to the wild state in suitable country or passed 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.

The Peregrine Fund
www.peregrinefund.org

Since 1970 the peregrine fund have been the driving force behind raptor propagation and conservation. A visit to their web site will show you just how far they've progressed since those early pioneering days.



From bald eagles to the Mauritius kestrel, there's a lot more than just peregrines on this site. Click on conservation projects to get a choice of 27 different locations throughout the world, where the fund hopes to make a difference.

From the New Guinea harpy eagle project, to the high Arctic institute programme in Greenland, you'll find a wealth of interesting and informative articles. Alternatively you could read 'notes from the field' and discover the day-to-day traumas and excitement of research and conservation, in places as far apart as Mongolia and Hawaii.

Finally, if you need to know what to do if a Californian condor approaches you, then this site has the answers. Standing at almost five feet tall, weighing 23lb with a wingspan of 3 meters, it may well be information worth reading before your next trip to the USA.

The Alibi Agency
www.alibi.co.uk

If the only thing that's stopping you from having a week away with your bird is a good alibi, then look no further: this site has the perfect set-up. Whether it's the wife, husband, girlfriend or boyfriend that needs convincing of your whereabouts alibi.co.uk can sort you out. As you'll be taking your bird with you, you won't need reminding to take along your telemetry. There's been more than one falconer tracked by their other half's ingenuity, you've been warned.

Sunrise Paragliding

Sunrise Paragliding
www.nepal-paragliding.com

On this site I've probably found the ultimate falconry holiday. OK so a little lateral thinking in order, but this could be the site of your holiday of a lifetime.

Sunrise paragliding offers paragliding holidays in the Annapurna region of Nepal. All levels of experience are catered for, from complete novice to practising paraglider. So how's this got anything to do with falconry, I hear you ask. Well if you've ever wondered what it would be like to literally fly with the birds, then this is your chance.

Your flights can be accompanied by a trained kite, which when called, will even land on your specially adapted flying harness, before flying off again to find more lift - with you along-side. In such a magnificent Himalayan setting, it's unlikely that you will ever want to land and judging by the pictures on the site, you'll probably not want to leave either.

Nepal is home to over 80 species of raptor, including eagles, falcons, vultures and hawks, so there'll be always something to keep an eye open for amongst some fabulous scenery. For the novice falconer, falconry courses are available, where you will learn the basics against a stunning backdrop, in the company of birds such as the phariah kite.

With mountain biking, climbing, white water rafting, trekking and jungle safaris on offer as well, it seems more than likely that I'll not be alone in visiting this web site when planning my next holiday.

The Fitness Jumpsite
www.primusweb.com/fitnesspartner

The trouble with falconry is that no matter how much running around in the field you do, the celebrations afterwards always put more weight on than you loose. And then there's the closed season. Pottering around waiting for it to start all over again, long hot summers, cold beers by the dozen, lazy Sunday afternoons, the pounds just fly on. Time to dig out that tracksuit I think, and get yourself across to the fitness jumpsite.

In 'getting and staying active' you'll find a ton of facts under body basics; for instance; Did you know, that for every 1lb of muscle you gain, your body burns an extra 50 calories a day? If you can turn at least 5lbs of extra 'fat' into muscle, you'll automatically burn an additional 250 calories per day. Or, that if you're 25lbs overweight, you have nearly 5,000 extra miles of blood vessels through which your heart must pump blood. You can

check out fitness on the go, Tae-Bo basics, motivation techniques and start up routines, all you need really - to get fit.

If you want to know how much effort you'll have to put in to lose those spare tyres, then there's a rather neat activity calorie calculator to play with. Just put in your weight and duration of exercise, to find out how many calories you're burning doing various activities. There is also a life style focus and if you need to know more you can relax and read about it all with the help of some book reviews.

The best telemetry in the world will do you no good if you can't keep up. You owe it to your birds. Keep fit.

The National Ferret Welfare Society
<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/ferreter>

With titles such as 'The Ballad of the Wakeham Woozles', 'Dicks Mustelid Mixture', and 'Eric the stowaway French ferret' to keep your attention, there's plenty to amuse and inform on this site.

Don't be fooled however, by the simplistic, almost childlike quality of the pages. It's actually very well put together, and covers issues and topics on various levels, sometimes surreal, sometimes serious. From veterinary advice on alopecia and abscesses, to a very useful list of ferret friendly vets, most health issues are covered.



Working with dogs, hunting with ferrets, ferret facts and how to make a purse net: enough to keep you out of mischief for hours. If you look under their PR informal rules of conduct, you'll discover the truth behind angelic children, sporting anoraks, pooper scoopers, TV personalities, ten foot ferrets and the logical end to the story of the flopsy bunnies. A veritable feast of ferrets then and a site most definitely worth a visit.

Oh! and don't forget to check out the show dates, it would be bordering on insanity to miss the Otley show!

Remember, if you know of any interesting web sites for inclusion in the next Creance then please e-mail Steve at

theaustringer@hotmail.com



