

The Austringer

The Journal of the Welsh Hawking Club

No.45 2013



In this Issue

El Salvador Hawk Adventure

South African Falconry & its Practice

Thoughts on Living a Life with Birds

Bird Photography from a Falconer's Perspective

PRESIDENT'S PREAMBLE

Welcome to this edition of **The Austringer**.

I have to thank all members of the club for their support in what has been a difficult year for all of us. The bad weather throughout the year meant that we lost all revenue we would have gained through the sale of goods at the Game Fairs and also the opportunity to sell raffle tickets for the Grand Draw we had arranged. With your help and generosity we did manage to break even on the raffle.

On a lighter note I wish to thank retiring officers of the committee for all the work they have done for the club and to welcome the new members i.e. Dave Jones as editor, Ceri Griffiths Jnr as Lantra co-ordinator and Tony

France as committee co-ordinator. I am sure they will all help the club to move forward in the coming year.

Because of the lack of events there is not much to report on this year except for the Field Meet at Llangollen. This was quite well attended and at least the weather stayed kind for us. The hotel had been recently taken over and the new owners were keen to show their support for our sport, even wanting to get involved. The event was marred by 1 incident, which I will not go into now as it is noted in another article.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible at the Falconry Fair and at the CLA game fair at Ragley Hall 19-21 July where the club

will once again have a stand. Lastly I would like to thank you, the reader of this magazine for your support of the club and to hope it continues for many more years.

Kindest Regards ■

Dave Dimond



CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Hello Members,

Welcome to another Austringer, and as you can see we have a new Editor in Dave Jones. It is a job not for the faint-hearted so our thanks must go to Dave for taking on the task.

Last year was a mixed bag really,



the least said about the weather the better. I have never known so many Game fairs and events cancelled

because of the wet conditions. Even as I write this Chairman's Chatter in the first week of April I have snow almost 2" deep on my patio. I do hope it hasn't had a detrimental effect on those of you that are breeding birds.

As some of you will know we held a very successful club Field meet and AGM last October and along with that a 50th Anniversary Grand Draw. Again because of the cancelled game fairs we lost a great opportunity to sell more tickets. The members attending the Field meet and AGM responded valiantly and bought tickets over the three days which really boosted the sales, Thank you to those members.

So we must now look forward and I do believe the WHC is in a healthy state. Both North and South Wales regions are in the process of putting

their members through the Lantra scheme with the help and guidance of the more experienced amongst us. I remember a few years ago when Lantra was first mentioned many of the more 'mature' members said they would never do it. This has turned out not to be the case and almost all members are taking part. In my region of South Wales not only are we hearing of other members' experiences it also creates a very healthy debate.

We have (hopefully) a full programme of events this year which the WHC will be attending with the club stand. Come along and spend a few minutes for a chat. You are always welcome.

Best Wishes for a great year ■

Mick Cordell

FROM THE EDITOR



I am pleased to be back editing and researching stories for our well-loved and respected journal, **The Austringer**. Most of us nowadays are on the Internet reading articles and watching video clips of falconry on YouTube. But there is something about a club that has a 50-year history rooted in falconry, and a journal that provides information, photographs and innovation to our members and followers, started by enthusiasts 50 years ago. The camaraderie, which exists within the Welsh Hawking

Club, cannot be found on the Internet. Past editors Andy, Mike and Julie have all experienced this when asking for articles and photos. It's not always members who provide these, but falconers who respect our annual journal, **The Austringer**.

I would like to thank the authors, photographer and advertisers who have supported **The Austringer** and helped to put it together.

Members Articles

I was disappointed in the low number

of articles and photos (non of Goshawks or Sparrow Hawks) sent in by members.

Welsh Hawking Club Web Page

There's a lot of unseen work that goes into creating and maintaining our Web Page. I would like to thank Roger James for managing this task. Roger has kept us and many falconers informed of what the Welsh Hawking Club is doing.

Importance of a Historic Club

The Welsh Hawking Club (now being 50 plus) has the respect of falconers around the world and being a member of this historic club has given me the opportunity to meet and stay with some of these falconers. There is nothing better than sitting down with a brother of falconry and telling stories of past and present outings with **The Welsh Hawking Club** and its fondness for alcohol.

May we go on for another 50 years ■

Dave Jones

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Meetings for 2013

Welsh Hawking Club Annual Field Meet 2013 will be held at Bryn Howel Hotel Llangollen North Wales on October 15th to 18th.

C.L.A. Game Fair: July 19th, 20th, 21st. will be held at Ragley Hall Warwickshire.

Falconry Weekend at Jemima's on August 31st/September 1st at the International Centre for Birds of Prey, Newent, Gloucestershire.



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Front cover picture: *Imprint Goshawk at Hack* by David Jones



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By Julian Godfrey
Murray Simmons
and Julian Frost

Marsha is a female Martial Eagle, 15 years old, that I've had for 12 years. Her flying weight is around 10lb 8oz and she's well mannered.

I have also flown Golden Eagles but Marsha is so adaptable in woods and fields that she is by far my favourite Eagle to fly.

You need big land to fly Eagles, well away from suburbia, so I travel long distances and join up with my regular Eagle flying team: Julian Frost who flies a 6 year old male called Rooney whose flying weight is 7lb 4oz and fat weight 9lb, and Murray Simmons who flies an 8 year old female imprint

called Axle whose flying weight is 9lb 8oz and fat weight 11lb 8oz. Both of these Golden Eagles have caught many species of prey and were bred by George Mussered, a well-known Eagle breeder in the UK.

Today we are lucky to be invited to fly on the stubble fields and woodlands of an estate in Berkshire where the owner's friends and family often join us to hunt their land. There are lots of Brown Hare and some Muntjacs.

The day's hunting pattern begins with Murray flying his female Goldie, Axle. Murray flies Axle on the soar as Julian Frost and I beat the land. As Axle climbs to find her pitch a hare gets up. Then, out of the sky, Axle stoops but

misses her prey and goes off in the opposite direction. Murray retrieves her and she re-mounts and waits on for another hare to be flushed. This time it's a better flight as she stoops again from a good height and narrowly misses her prey.

It's not all kills with these large birds. Rabbits, hares, foxes and deer can all manoeuvre quickly and slip away into their familiar surroundings.

We walk back to the vehicles for refreshments and put Axle into her travelling box.

Flying one Eagle at a time takes time and beating these big muddy stubble fields can take the energy out of your legs so a small break is needed.



Julian Godfrey with Marsha



Julian Frost with Rooney

Next, Julian Frost flies Rooney off the fist, as this is the style he's chosen.

We walk to a field with a downhill slope that's covered in kale crop, a good place to be harbouring game. The wind is right and sure enough, as we get closer we flush a hare, which goes through a hedge and Rooney narrowly misses it as it escapes into cover. Rooney flies up into a tree and, as we walk towards him he "power-flies" down the hill and out of sight. We give chase thinking "Here we go, this will be an all-nighter trying to find an errant Eagle" but no – we find him quite happily sitting on a Hare gorging himself. Whether it's the same hare we flushed originally or not, we'll never know, but at least he is one happy bird.

Back to the vehicles we go but with no time for a break as the day is closing in. Now it's Marsha, the Martial Eagle's turn; she likes to hunt by

following on through the woods where she feels at home. Strange really, as she has a 7ft wing span but flies like a Goshawk, folding her wings to get through small gaps then twisting and turning through the tree cover. She is very fast. I think she is faster than a Goshawk with a small turning circle for an Eagle. Long powerful legs and feet the size of a large man's hands mean that not much gets away. When flying through woods she tends to find a high point in a tree and follows-on as we beat. If she hangs back I'll give a quick whistle or shout and she comes closer or flies to the fist if needed. Occasionally we will hide if she stays back and then she'll come looking for us!

If we flush any game in the woods (This normally happens when I'm on the phone - my outside office - and my friends are doing all the beating!! That's their story anyway) She'll take off, weaving through trees trunks,

thick cover and other obstacles. If she catches her prey she kills it with one grasp of her huge talons.

When I track her down she is mantling over her prey and looking around to make sure there is no other animal that's going to steal it from her, as would happen in the wild. I let her have a good feed on what she wants from her catch and pick her up with a defrosted day old chick. She happily leaves her catch and jumps back to the glove with no aggression towards me.

The following week we were out again bashing the cover/brambles in a large wooded area and Marsha, as always, was high above with a good vantage point. We had moved through the area covering every bit of cover and had moved off to do the next section when I thought, "Where's Marsha?" We looked around but there was no sign (This usually means that

something got up behind us which she spotted and is now sitting on top of, very happily.) This time, as we traced our way back, there she was, on a large branch looking down, leaning forward and not moving a muscle. We assumed that she had her eye on something so we went back and forth in the area bashing cover, as you do, and making lots of noise. Nothing got up and Marsha was still transfixed to the spot. Around we went again, hitting everything in sight but still flushed nothing. I thought there must be something wrong with her so I tried to get her back but after 2 or 3 minutes waving a rabbit leg and calling and moving about in her eye line Marsha was still rock-solid on "Eagle point". I started to get impatient, thrashing the cover and saying "What's Up with You?" then, as the stick fell for the last time, out popped a hare and with lighting speed, Bosh! Marsha secured it with one foot - stone dead. It goes to show, her un-wavering resolve to get that hare means that very few get away from a quick-footed Eagle

Now, on the odd occasion that she does miss her prey she will sulk and get moody. Then I might be in trouble, as she likes to keep going until she catches something. Luckily I've always managed to get her back but sometimes it's taken a long time and I use any number of ingenious ploys to coax her out of a tree!

Once she caught a Muntjac but it squealed and she let it go, probably thinking it was our old pointer Molly, who used to sunbathe with her in the garden. She has always been good with dogs so I am able to fly her almost anywhere. She can also fly from the fist and quickly overhaul

a hare making a Goldie look like it's standing still.

Marsha is very well behaved and obedient (More like a Harris Hawk) and has never shown aggression to me. She does warn off people if they come too close when she is on the fist but I suppose she thinks she is protecting me. She did foot me once accidentally puncturing my arm but as soon as I squealed she realized her mistake and let me go.

Conclusion of the three Eagles' flight performance

The difference in wing loading between the Goldie and the Martial: with the Martial the relatively short

wing, long tail and huge leg length means the ability to turn and strike is better than that of the Goldie but the Goldie is a wind-rider who is far better coming in from height. The difference between a male and female Goldie's flight also has huge differences. The male is faster off the mark and can also turn better on low-level flights but large quarry flights belong to the female.

Therefore, when we go hawking we have three different styles of flying with our eagles all excelling in their own way.

Eagles are a challenge but we three can't live without them. ■



Murray Simmons with Axle

Some of the Main Region members enjoyed a day's gundog training at the Black Mountains Falconry Hunting Lodge, with Hugh Kirby running the demos and helping with some young dogs. Hugh explained the need for "steadiness" in all dogs used in the field, and how to achieve it. Although

we may never have the use of a retrieving dog in Falconry, this was also taught, and I can say from experience that a dog which will retrieve can be a great asset. In fact, when out duck-hawking with my peregrines and they have killed a duck over the water, it saves you, and perhaps the falcon, a

soaking if your dog will fetch the prey! Everyone who came on the day really enjoyed it, a few souls who became lost in the wilderness were disappointed that they missed it, but there is another one due this autumn at the same venue! ■
Roger James



"Dave Sharman's GSP dog making a fine retrieve at the Training Day at Black Mountains Falconry."



"Hugh Kirby giving a few 'pointers' (ha ha) to some of the members at the Training Day."

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Well here is something I do not do very often, Dave Jones rang and asked if I would like to do an article for the magazine, and having only ever done one article before, I was initially apprehensive, but then thought hey why not give it a go.

Having spent the past twenty three years of my life flying birds of varying species for all manner of film work, but mostly nature documentaries, my wife Rose and I have certainly had some interesting times, spending our life with our birds through good times and bad, like anyone reading who runs their own small business will know.

I was fascinated with birds from an early age, and have the late Frank Keens, Steve & Emma Ford, my wife Rose and the legend that is Sir David Attenborough to thank for my inspiration to make a career from flying them.

We describe ourselves as bird trainers and handlers, but I always think trainer is the wrong word, I believe we never really train them to do anything, we build up a close bond over time with them, and work with their natural behaviour, but in unusual ways, to be able to achieve the end results required for each filming project.

Bird behaviorist would be more suitable, but for business purposes, trainer is what works in the media world.

This is my own personal view based on having kept birds since I was 8 years old but Rose and I have been fortunate enough to enjoy rearing and flying many birds, from waterfowl to owls, falcons, eagles, accipiter, corvids, pigeons, starlings, woodpeckers & more.

I am sat here typing this in the middle of a field, with Rose and her seven

lovely imprinted greylag geese, two peregrines and a kestrel. This is a part of our normal daily routine, and we have been doing this for so long now, it just seems ordinary!

But for us, this is the most important part of the job, spending time with the birds, building up our relationship with them.

Something that fascinates me about birds, are the differences in character amongst individual birds of the same species. Even more surprising, is the differences in character of our starlings, being a small bird with a tiny brain, you would never think they could differ so much, but after spending an enormous amount of time flying our little team of them over the past five years, you realise that they are as different in character as we are.

Much more controversially, I firmly believe that some of the larger birds



that I have kept over the years, eagles and especially ravens experience basic emotions. Try as we might to play devils advocate on this subject, and giving much thought to whether we are just seeing human traits that are not there, Rose and I always come to same conclusion, yes they do.

Brann our raven is probably the most challenging, but rewarding of all the

birds to fly, his enquiring mind and cheeky character always keeps you on your toes!

When a raven looks at you, you know they are not just looking, but studying you, their level of intelligence is just astounding.

I think that all birds have differences of character, some are more moody than

others, some more determined, some more aloof, others more confident and so on.

But with time and patience, quietly watching what they do, whether when out flying or sat at home on their perches, you will start to see subtle differences in their daily behaviour, and by adapting your methods to





these small changes, you will get the most from them, as you are treating them as an individual, not just a particular breed.

I often compare the intelligence of our golden eagle Tilly to a large dog, and one thing that she and probably other types of eagle are very good at, is judging peoples character, she has never been wrong so far!

I place huge importance on Tillys' reaction to different people she meets for the first time. If she takes a dislike to someone, it is always for a very good reason, which may not become apparent for some time, but she sees it from the start.

But that shouldn't be surprising, being a full social imprint, I think she has learnt to read human body language as well as she can read another eagle, and reacts accordingly.

To her I suppose it is vital, she needs to know if she can trust someone who

enters her territory, so does a basic evaluation of their character, and applies like, dislike, not so sure, fight or flight behavior.

It should be obvious really, eagles are supreme observers, in order to survive in the diverse and extreme environments they are found in, reading humans is probably easy for them. If they have been hand raised.

I can only see these differences in her because we have such a close bond. I did not get her until she was ten months old, but we just clicked from the start. She is that once in a lifetime bird for me, and she also can read my moods superbly.

If I am fed up or down about something, she will pick up on it instantly. She obviously has no idea why I feel like I do, but can read that emotion in me, and will be a bit more distant from me when out flying. Likewise, when I am in a good mood, which is fortunately

most of the time, she will mirror that, and be her usual relaxed, happy self.

Spending time manning your birds, is something that so often tends to get skipped over quickly these days, but it is something that Steve and Emma Ford taught me the importance of many years ago, on my first falconry courses with them, and it is something I now feel is the most important part of the training process.

Also, just because something works for someone else, does not mean doing it in the same way will work for you. You have to tweak things to suit your character.

When you think about it, most raptors spend a lot of their lives doing nothing but quietly sat observing, learning about the territory around them, adapting what they do to survive. So by taking the time to quietly sit and observe the birds you look after and



get to know their individual ways, you forge a rewarding, lasting bond.

What drives me on these days, is to continue breaking new ground filming with our birds, discovering different ways to fly them to achieve maximum enjoyment for the viewer, to inspire people about the wonders of nature.

We are currently working on a new way to fly and film imprinted geese for a 3D project, and have also been developing HD on board minicams to a whole new level with our good friend and cameraman Jonathan Watts.

Pushing the boundaries of what is possible to achieve on camera with

birds is a great challenge. There is always something to learn, and a different approach to take.

If I look back at what we have done over the years, nothing will ever be as huge a challenge or as difficult as flying the peregrines with skydivers.

The pressure to pull the stunt off was huge in the original BBC sequence, including six months training, three weeks in Spain, with a crew of fifteen people.

Martin the director risked his whole budget for the programme on that one sequence, but we did it, or I should say Lady our female peregrine did it.

She hunted them down from the hot air balloon at sixteen thousand feet, she was an awesome falcon, with relentless determination.

We have a new immature peregrine tiercel we are bringing on, and he very much reminds me of lady, he has the same dogged determination, ability and enjoyment of flying that she had and we have some exciting plans for him.

I hope you have found my thoughts interesting, and I wish you all good flying. ■

Cheers! Lloyd



Last year I trained a young Harris that I had been given at 3 days old. I reared it with foster parents in my garden. I had been led to believe that the parents were massive birds so when it looked smaller than the other females in the aviary I was convinced that it was a large male. After so many doubts I had a DNA test done and to my embarrassment Hercules was renamed Tinkerbell. I wanted the bird for future breeding but she no longer fitted the bill. I passed her on to Steve Faulkner and this is a short story of a great catch whilst out with the Welsh Hawking Club, after renaming her Maude.

Bob Watkins

The ambush happened on the 19th January at Brightlingsea during a field meet with the Welsh Hawking Club. It was a mixed day with Goshawks in the morning and then Harris hawks in the afternoon. I had been having a few slips with my Harris at rabbits and a hare with the help of beaters and a Brittany spaniel, but having no joy. At around 3.30pm, getting near to that last slip of the day, Maude decided to clear off. I was pointed in her general direction by a couple of the other austringers. The telemetry was pulled out of its bag and after what felt longer than ten minutes, two fields and a back garden later (and after putting up a couple of pheasants, a rabbit and a woodcock without the bird there to see them), I noticed her perched on top of a telegraph pole. She was about thirty feet away from me; her head was bobbing, looking down at some cover by a short rabbit fence separating a field from a wooded area. I pulled out a chick leg and waved it at her to no avail. I pulled out a chick and still

nothing. Finally I swung the lure and she came to the fist. I took about two or three steps back while wrestling the lure pad from her when she stretched to look over my shoulder and in a flash she jumped off the fist and over my shoulder. I turned around 180 degrees and about six feet away she had both feet on the head of a muntjac lying down concealed in the long grass. There was a scream from the muntjac and I immediately jumped on the back legs. It was caught, but the next problem was the dispatch. Maude leaned straight away into the mouth of the quarry and started pulling at the tongue. One quick incision into the back of the head dispatched the muntjac and then I was faced with picking up a hungry hawk off a very big warm meal. I fumbled around in my bag and pulled out a small, cold rabbit leg. I managed to cover the beast



with some tent canvas (glad I bought it 4' X 4'). Maude was eventually on the fist clipped on and I made my way to the farm car park with the kill mostly covered up. Ten minutes later I presented the trophy to the boys and girls of the club and moved away to feed and hood-up Maude. The others looked the muntjac over for bullet holes in disbelief. The farmer, a keen deerstalker acknowledged it was a healthy animal. It weighed in at 20lbs. Not bad for a 2lb 1oz bird!

Steve Faulkner

Most of the Muntjac is in the freezer and I intend to treat Maude to a small reward. The rest I will consume with red wine. ■

Editors note: 4' x 4' tent canvas would cover a small cow, keep hawking Steve

By Dave Jones

For the last 12 years I've been flying my longwings out of their aviaries i.e. I don't keep them tied to a block when picking them up to fly at home.

I find this method of management easier and safer and the hawks are fitter and healthier. (I'll refer to the longwings as Hawks in this article.)

A normal day's hawking would start with me walking into the aviary with a tit-bit on my glove. My hawk would then fly to it. I would secure him and walk him on the fist, to be flown or placed in his box to travel.

My aviaries get plenty of sun and an abundance of fresh air for my hawks to stay healthy and weathered. Previously I kept my hawks on various types of perch or block but the possibility of them suffering from short or long-term problems was always there.

Feather damage, bumble foot, leg strains and other accidents can occur throughout your hawk's life, caused by tying your hawk down for long periods of time. These risks were always in the forefront of my mind until I decided to fly my hawks from their aviaries.

Most of us travel daily or weekly to a suitable flying area to hunt with or exercise our hawks but the practice of picking them up from a block for convenience is not necessary. The only time I tie my hawk down to a block is: when I'm away from home, cleaning the aviaries, training a new hawk, or when my experienced hawk has finished the moult and starts his new season on a block for a couple of days.

When manning and training a new hawk I will keep him on a block and go through the normal falconry manning process until he has confidence and jumps to my fist to be fed. Then the

lure is introduced with the same amount of food tied to it as the food on my glove, so the two are equal.

I don't use a creance but I always test my hawk's eagerness to the lure by swinging it slowly like a pendulum before throwing it down in front of him to gorge on the block.

If he's eager to grab the lure for two days on the trot I will pick him up with a tit-bit, take him to a nearby field, sit him on a post and fly him to a slow pendulum-swung lure.

You may think this is too short a time to let your hawk go but judging his reaction to you and his food is the key. I don't like the creance and if I can avoid it I will. I know this is controversial but it works for me and my young hawks don't get a jerk at the end of their first flight or get tangled up. Your seasoned hawk knows his flying ground year after year but with an eyass this is the start of his new territory where he will be trained so a little more care is taken

Now three quarters of his food is fed on the lure and the rest fed on the fist. This makes the lure more attractive later on. I repeat this method for 7 to 14 days according to weather conditions but the lure is swung faster as he gets smarter and fitter. You must always let him catch the lure eventually and feed well on it.

Flying from the aviary is great for judging the hawk's mood and this can be ascertained quickly by his eagerness to fly or not to fly to your fist. You can then adjust his food intake more easily to achieve his flying weight. I also find a better connection between my hawk and me.

When not flying because of weather conditions or work I will feed the hawk in his aviary; half of his food on my fist and the rest on his feeding platform. This can also be done throughout the

moult but is not necessary.

After the moult your hawk will remember this routine. The advantage of flying out of his aviary is that you can take his weight down in the aviary until he flies to his food on your fist, then after a couple of days pick him up, secure him, then block him out. At this stage I keep him secured to a block for a few days only until flown.

I do this every year with all my hawks and my Gyr/Peregrine flies free within two days of coming out of the aviary.

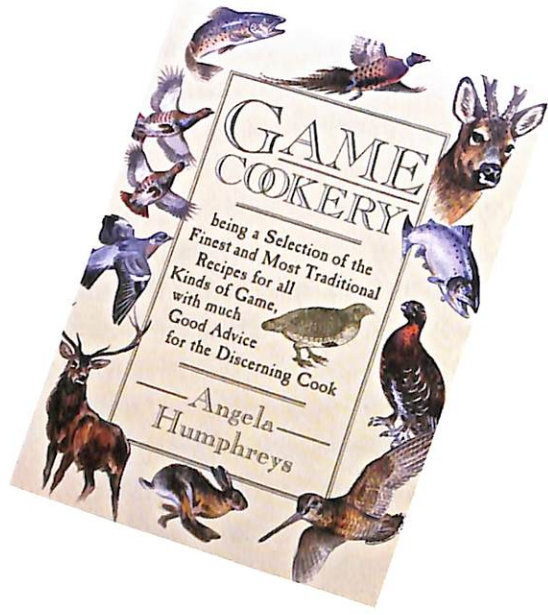
I also use the same principle of management for my goshawks with a small adjustment on manning, as they are imprints.

One of my pet hates is travelling with my hawk in a box for any distance. I've had feathers broken, hoods off and tangles with hawk equipment. My imagination runs wild when I hear bells clanging around in the box and one time I had to stop on the motorway verge to check my hawk's well-being.

One of my best moves was to have a custom-made hawk and dog box built which has made my eight-hour journey to Scotland easier and safer, with two stops on the way for the dogs to have a run and to check my hawks.

I further improved the box by fitting three small electric fans, one for each Hawk and one for the dogs. This has made a huge difference in ventilating the stuffiness of the box and keeping my team healthy. Since the fans were installed I hardly hear a sound from the hawks when travelling, they are much happier with the comfort of fresh ventilation.

Innovation in hawk management and equipment keeps evolving and I for one thrive on new ideas that allow my hawks and dogs to live healthier and safer lives. ■



Game Cookery
by Angela Humphreys
Publisher David & Charles.
ISBN 0 71530721 5

This book is written for the sportsman or woman who lives off the land. Even if you can't cook you will cook after reading this superb book on Game cookery. Many of us go out and catch our own food. I hate wasting Game that has given up its life for my sport. My family, friends, hawks and dogs consume all that I catch. Only the intestine is binned. Just think how privileged we are to be able to eat a meal that is truly organic and doesn't come in a plastic bag. This little gem of a book will take you through the stages of how to pluck a bird or skin a rabbit, and what companions i.e. sauces, stuffing's, jellies, or salads will go with the

game that you are cooking. There are recipes for every occasion. Angela Humphreys has written for the Sporting Gun's 'Sportsman's Kitchen' for many years. The preparation of Game is explained in layman's terms so that it is fit to be eaten. Each species is given a chapter with the dates of the season written under the chapter heading. Interesting sketches show how to age a grouse and how to truss a woodcock using the beak as a skewer etc. It's a mouth-watering extravaganza. I bought it.

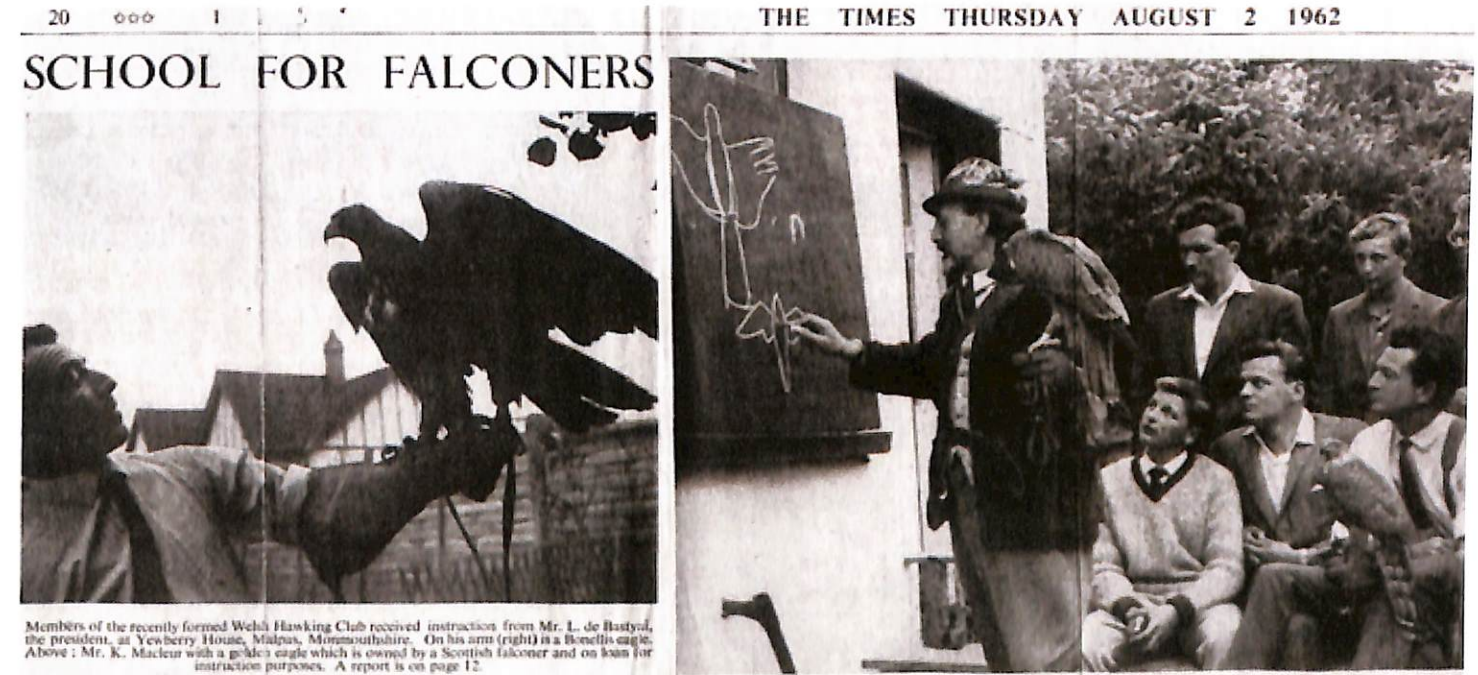
Price £9.99 by Dave Jones



Lawrence was noted in the field for his fitness and sportsmanship. He was a member of the Wildfowler's Club at Newport. Lawrence is a true

Goshawking man who rarely went home without a Pheasant or a Rabbit in his bag. Lawrence was also one of the foundation members of The

Welsh Hawking Club. These days I am sure he is still good for advice, as those founding principles remain the same. ■



Members of the recently formed Welsh Hawking Club received instruction from Mr. L. de Bastoy, the president, at Yewberry House, Malpas, Mornansouthshire. On his arm (right) is a Bonellis eagle. Above: Mr. K. Macleir with a golden eagle which is owned by a Scottish falconer and on loan for instruction purposes. A report is on page 12.

Snippet from The Times Newspaper August 1962 (Lawrence Workman Bottom Right)

GROUSE RECIPE IN RED WINE SERVES 4



This is a classic method of cooking either young or more mature birds and an ideal way to serve grouse when entertaining as it can be prepared in advance, giving you more time to

spend with your guests. In this recipe the birds are cut in half before cooking; this is most easily done using a pair of game shears—a good investment if you frequently cook game or poultry.

- 2-3 grouse, halved
- 300ml (1/2pt) red wine
- 50g (2oz) butter
- 300ml (1/2pt) stock
- 2 small onions, peeled and chopped
- 225g (8oz) button mushrooms
- chopped, Fresh parsley to garnish
- 40g (1 1/2oz) flour

Melt the butter in a flameproof casserole and fry the onions and grouse until slightly browned. Remove and set to one side. Stir the flour into the melted butter and gradually add the wine and stock, stirring all the time until the sauce thickens. Add the grouse, onions, mushrooms and a little salt and pepper if necessary. Cover and simmer slowly for 1-1 1/2 hours, depending on the age of the grouse.

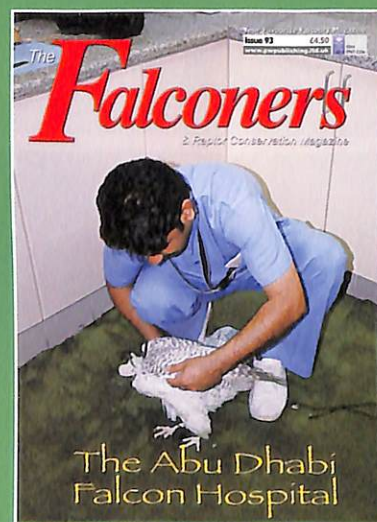
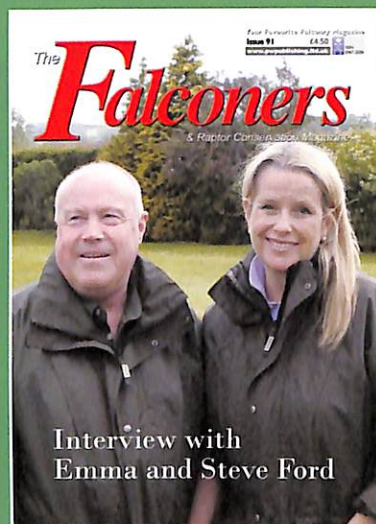
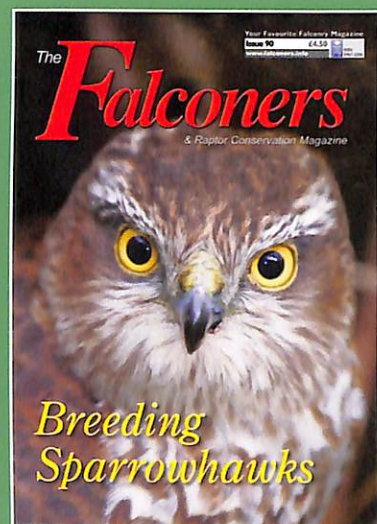
This can be reheated just before serving, then transferred to a hot serving dish and decorated with fresh parsley. ■



Lyn Palmer, Lawrence Workman and Brian Press catching up on the WHC's history

The *Falconers*

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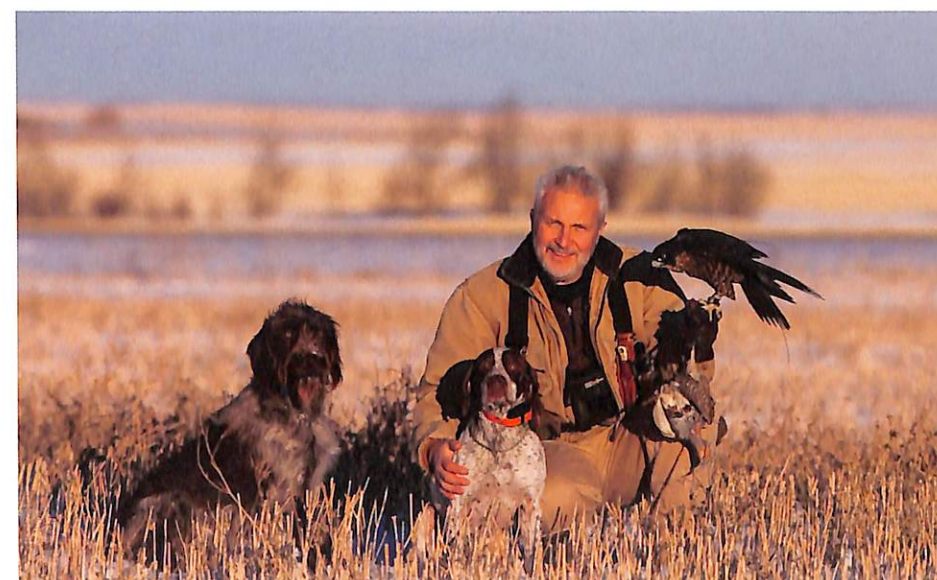
BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY FROM A FALCONER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Mark Williams

Although I have always had a fascination with wildlife, I guess you could say my introduction and interest in wildlife photography really came about more from my lifelong interest in hunting and of course falconry and not the other way around. I have been passively interested in photography since my early years as a teenager but it was not until recent years that it was re-kindled through my falconry. The sights and scenes we witness

this now includes trips to warmer climates with my wife and that keeps her happy!

As a hunter / falconer I find myself suspended between the paradoxical situation of respecting, understanding and conserving wildlife, while at the same time hunting and killing (using/eating) that wildlife. A concept that most none hunters have a hard time understanding. As our conduct, ethics and behavior in the field sheds a spotlight on hunting in



while practicing our sport often remains etched in our minds forever, particularly if it is of one of our own birds in action. Eventually I decided to try capture some of those moments while hawking and it subsequently it naturally manifested itself to a pursuit of all wildlife photography both during and outside of hawking season. The result is that now not only does my wife complain about not seeing much of me during the 7 month long hawking season that we enjoy here, but now the remaining 5 months of the year is devoted to my all consuming and obsessive commitment to wildlife photography in general. Fortunately

general and how the public perceives it, this phenomenon also applies to wildlife photographers. It was not until the past few years when I really began to immerse myself into wildlife photography that I began to learn of the negative press some photographers are drawing due to their actions in the field both in disrespect for private property and in they're disturbance or stressing their subjects in their natural habitat. I have to remind myself of this at times when filled with the excitement and tenacity in trying to capture that perfect image. The welfare of the animal comes before that of the photographer.

In recent years I find myself choosing to take my camera into the field instead of my bow or rifle, yet I do still carry a camera while out hawking. Some of my fellow falconers think I am crazy trying to do both things at once but it is possible, more so for a long-winger than a short-winger to photograph your own falconry birds in action. In order to do so you have to get your falconry to a level of autonomy that can accommodate this. Not really practical for early season hawking when there is a high element of Murphy's law present with wayward younger birds that are full of youthful enthusiasm and flying on a knife edge of control therefore demanding total focus on the sport. However, I can usually photograph my own birds a few weeks into the season when both my bird and dogs are steadier and "in the groove" with several kills under their belt. The quality of falconry is usually much higher by then. Of course this is impracticable when trying to fly your own short-wing from the fist but like I said for flying long-wings it is do-able.

Picture your dogs go on point in a huge stubble field, you release the falcon that starts to go up into the ozone and you then try not to lose sight of the bird while you grab your camera while softly but firmly offering words of encouragement to your dogs to hold steady. Then while you wait for the falcon to take a commanding pitch and good position, you yourself go position yourself to a spot where you "think" the game will head to, based upon your knowledge and understanding of the set up and prey species. (which is usually in line with nearest cover) Then you try position yourself at a distance that not only the dogs hear the command to break point and flush



but that you anticipate the falcon will intercept the quarry so both quarry and hawk are in the same frame big enough to be distinguishable. You think orchestrating a great game bird flight is hard, try putting that all together to get on your camera at the same time! This being said, it sure is sweet when it all comes together and you get the shot. The trouble is that it is like playing golf and getting a hole in one, it rarely happens. Even when photographing other peoples birds in action with no distractions of your own, it is still very hard to put all together, more so for long-wing flights which have a much larger arena to work within.

Of course some of the easier shots are the hero shots of a bird with game. If your quick you can get the bird on quarry and dogs in the picture before the bird renders the prey to a pile of bloody feathers. I prefer the bird hooded pose when you can take a bit of time to set the scene.

In this day and age of digital photography everyone is able to get good pictures even if they only rely on the green "auto mode" function of their camera. The wait and cost for image processing is no longer an issue and instant confirmation and gratification of the shot is a great appeal to us all. This being said what sorts the men from the boys with wildlife photography is not only knowing how to use your equipment but knowing your subject. This is where as falconers and hunters we have the advantage. Most falconers I know have a good understanding of all wildlife and animal behavior. Being self taught as a photographer, I'd have to say my success in capturing a good

image comes more about from my skills as a hunter / falconer than my technical expertise as a photographer. You don't have to go to Alaska or Africa to find wildlife to photograph and many great images can be obtained from around your home area, although granted not many places in the UK can you find wild Hippos or big mean grizzly bears ...unless your thinking of your mother-in-law. Seriously though, for true "wildlife photography" you sort of have to be a wildlife detective of sorts in order to find the wildlife in your



locality or other areas you may travel to. Learning about your subject, their behavioral traits, where they eat, sleep, breed etc., all adds to the challenge and enjoyment and frankly is what distinguishes the ordinary from the great photographers and ultimately reflects in their results.

Some of the equipment for good bird photography is what we already use for falconry. I recommend a good pair of binoculars and/or a spotting scope for locating and identifying birds or other wildlife. Digi-scoping, (using a digital camera to take photos through a spotting scope is a popular way to

get close-up shots of birds etc., but is best for static shots. My preference is for a good quality digital SLR, with the faster the frame shooting rate the better. When matched with a good 300mm focal length lens I find it is a perfect combination for getting those exciting action shots.

At times, such as sitting at a grouse lek, I use a camo blind to observe and photograph an animal's undisturbed natural behavior but for some subjects there is little or no time to set up and you must act quickly to

seize an opportunity but yet move slowly, so as to get close enough without disturbing them. In spite of this it is often possible to get close to your subject when done the right way and minimizing any pressure you put upon the subject. These tactics include subtle actions like no sudden movements, not looking directly at the subject and avoid making eye contact (which can be interpreted as a threat), and also taking periodical pauses to gauge the subject's reactions to your approach and proximity. If I sense tension I wait and let the subject relax before I move again. The trick is learning when you've reached the



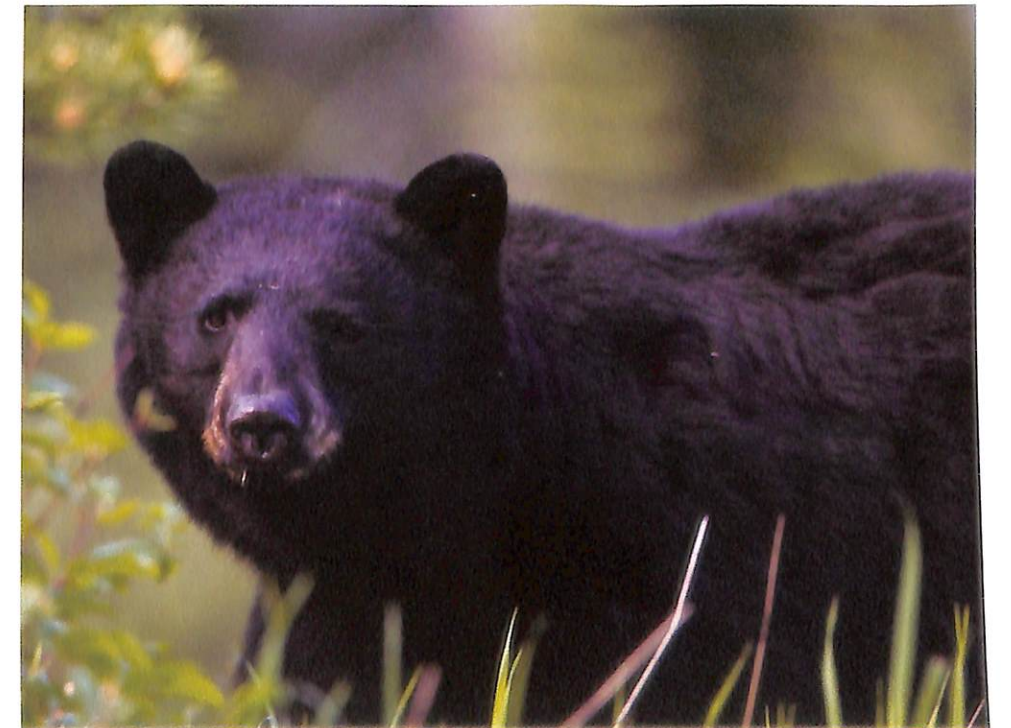
limit. Often "just one more step" is the difference between getting the face on or arse end perspective of your wildlife subject.

I relish all wildlife photography but it is widely accepted that birds in flight is a particular skill unto itself. Tracking a fast moving small object like birds in flight pushes the limits of both photographer and camera in equal measures. All cameras require contrast to work and grab focus. Even with the very best of equipment, in certain light conditions it is virtually impossible and your "keeper rate" will drop significantly. I prefer to use a fast 300mm F2.8 lens for birds in flight, although I have used both wide angle and super-telephoto lenses for different desired effects. As a tip, go to a city park or public place where pigeons, gulls or ducks can be found flying about and practice there.

Our wildlife has to endure everything mother natures throws at it and likewise some days our harsh Canadian winter weather presents conditions that keep all but the die-hard photographers at home. In order to get some unique yet very natural images you just have to roll with the punches and I have taken some of my more unique images crawling on my belly in bitter frigid -25c temperatures combined with 60km per hour blowing snow that I would not have got if at home sitting on the sofa. Of course I would not have got frostbite either! Photographing various subjects in their natural environment often requires taking extreme measures as can be seen in the photo of me opposite photographing waterfowl.

Another element as a wildlife

photographer is not only the weather elements of Mother Nature but also some of the subjects themselves. Where I live I am fortunate to be within a 40-minute drive of the rocky mountains of Canada with bears, cougars, wolves and other interesting animals that are tempting to photograph. One has not only to be aware of your surroundings and respectful of the more dangerous critters out there, but learn to recognize certain behaviors and when the animal is likely to take flight or fight. Sometimes being too focused on the subject through the telephoto lens you can overlook the close proximity you have gotten to the subject itself. As shown with the image below, this black bear approached to within a mere 30ft from me, ... a distance it could cover in a couple of strides. Fortunately I had a truck between us to run around for some protection but it is not recommended for those folks at home! If you insist on trying it, best to take someone with you whom you know you can outrun!



I enjoy all wildlife and am particularly fascinated with birds of prey which have captured my attention from the first time I saw them as a kid and what eventually got me into falconry some 36 years ago. Today I count myself fortunate to now be able to view and photograph them in their natural environment and to share some of the results with others to help motivate a greater appreciation of them and many other magnificent creatures through the art of photography. I'd encourage you to try it out for yourself. ■

Editors note:

Mark Williams has supported The Welsh Hawking Club for many years with interesting articles and stunning Photographs. More of Mark's remarkable photos are on his webpage below. All Photographs are copyright. markwilliamsphotographer.com





By Dr. Adrian Lombard

President - International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey

Falconry in South Africa has been practiced since the late 1930s. Falconry can be seen as part of the cultural heritage of South Africa with its roots in Western Europe. As such the style of Falconry practiced in South Africa follows that of Western Europe and North America but there are some unique modifications to the art, which have developed here.

Falconry "Ethic".

The term "sport" implies a competitive and possibly frivolous pastime. For this reason, Falconers prefer to term their activity an "Art". Falconry is an all-consuming pastime that requires passion and intuitive ability. Without this, any aspirant practitioner must fail. Hence its practice more closely resembles classical artistic activities like Music & Art and utilizes a high degree of craftsmanship, rather than sporting activities, such as shooting or playing rugby.

Falconry is not a "competitive sport". It is not a competition between falconers or even of falconer versus quarry. What allures the falconer is the challenge of establishing a working relationship with an independent creature that is both a supreme athlete and an apex predator. The falconer strives to attain excellence within the relationship, with the knowledge of what can be done and a dream to achieve beyond that. So, it is that one flight in a thousand, those transient seconds, when the efforts of the falconer and the hawk combine to produce a moment of heart stopping

excitement, that is the *raison d'être* of Falconry. This is the essence of what falconers dream to achieve through years of daily involvement.

The practice of Falconry fulfils the requirements for recognition as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage" as the skills and knowledge required to perform the Art, must be learned in the process of Master to Apprentice, and cannot adequately be developed from books or film. In recognition of this, South African Falconers represented by the South African Falconry

Association and the 9 Provincial Clubs that form its membership, have established an Apprenticeship and Grading system. The consequence is that the Hawk Husbandry and Falconry skills seen in South African Falconers are exemplary. One result of this is that, in 2008, South Africa, with less than 150 active Falconers, hosted the International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) Annual Assembly of Delegates. This is a privilege normally enjoyed by larger Falconry nations such as the USA with 3500



Harvesting a Wild Black Sparrow Hawk



falconers, Britain with 2500 falconers or the Czech Republic with 2500 falconers. Further recognition of South African Falconry has been the election of a South African Falconer to the post of President of the IAF, itself a full member of the IUCN. Thus South African Falconers are represented at the highest levels of Falconry and Conservation.

The South African Falconers are cognizant of the importance of Animal Welfare and good animal husbandry, which must be the foundation of good falconry. The Code of Conduct for Falconry has been lodged with the Dept. of Agriculture. Provincial Falconry Clubs have established the requirements for good hawk husbandry and include mews inspections in their activities. SAFA has a number of qualified Veterinarian members and also have a number of members qualified as Animal Welfare Inspectors. Falconers are required to sign an Ethical Hunting Form at the annual SAFA Field Meet. This is a declaration, which incorporates animal welfare aspects including the principle of "five freedoms".

South African falconers are concerned with the Conservation of birds of prey, quarry species and of the natural environment. Falconry is clearly a sustainable use activity as envisaged in the Convention on Biological Diversity. As such, the very practice of Falconry can be seen as promoting the cause of conservation. Falconers as a group, have a disproportionate value in the conservation effort. This is exemplified by the variety of additional conservation activities in which they are involved. These can

be classified as follows:

- a) Scientific Studies of wild raptor populations.
 - b) Population surveys of wild raptors – counts, surveys, nest records, bird ringing.
 - c) Sentinel function.
 - d) Captive breeding – with or without release programs.
 - e) Wild Raptor Management Programs
 - f) Veterinary aspects of Raptors and Rehabilitation.
 - g) Involvement in Legislative and Conservation Policy processes.
 - h) Involvement in land and prey-species management
 - i) Education and outreach – influence on the public, other resource users and land managers.
- The recognition of the falconers' role in raptor conservation is shown in their involvement in the Bird of Prey Working Group of The Endangered Wildlife Trust, with whom they have a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Source of Falconry Birds.

There are in essence 3 sources of birds that may be used in Falconry. All 3 sources have particular "pros and cons". It is our belief that all 3 sources are legitimate and acceptable and it is reasonable to require that all three sources remain accessible to falconers.

These would include:

- 1) Birds harvested from the wild.
- 2) Birds bred in captivity.
- 3) Birds obtained for rehabilitation.

In order to understand the rationale for this it is useful to consider a brief history of the art of Falconry. Falconry has existed for at least 4000 years and has its origins in the plains of

central Eurasia. It is uncertain what birds were first used for falconry but it is reasonable to suggest that they were probably the Saker Falcon and the Northern Goshawk. Thus these birds have a very long history of domestication by man, almost as long as the hound and probably as long as the horse. A variety of other species have also been found to adapt readily to falconry conditions. Falconry is only possible because those species suitable for the practice accept domestication well and readily associate with man, seeing him as an asset to their hunting and they accept the association as long as there is profit in that relationship. Any falconer knows that when he cannot provide a hunting "edge" for the hawk, the relationship breaks down and the hawk is free to fend for itself.

So, falconry hawks must be seen as animals with a long history of domestication. They differ from other domestic animals in that they were not bred in any numbers, in captivity until captive breeding became a necessity due to the ravages of DDT in the late 1950s. This is not because the technology for captive breeding did not exist. Indeed the first historical record of captive breeding occurred in Japan in the 1500s and this was a Northern Goshawk, believed a difficult bird to breed. Not only was it not necessary to breed falconry birds in captivity prior to the latter part of the last century, but falconers have long realized that "Passage birds" are ideal candidates for falconry. Passage hawks are first year birds that have left their natal territory and are starting to fend for themselves. They have developed flying and hunting skills and yet are not set in their ways and readily adapt to falconry training. They have



the additional advantage of being releasable at any point should they no longer be required by their falconer. A good example of this practice in South Africa is the use of Passage Lanner Falcons. These birds are commonly hunting in the field with the falconer within 2 to 3 weeks of capture. They are readily releasable and are usually completely wild within 3 to 4 days of release. They are usually released after 1 to 2 seasons. Never-the-less the advent of captive breeding has opened new doors for falconry, and, along with other technological advances such as the use of radio-telemetry, have issued in a new Golden Age of Falconry. The standards of Falconry, worldwide, have never been higher. An estimated 60,000 to 100,000 falconers worldwide in well over 80 countries practice falconry.

Apprentice

Aspirant Falconers must spend one season with a B or A Grade Falconer as an Apprentice before they are allowed to fly their own hawk. They must nominate an A or B Grade Falconer to act as their Mentor. At the end of the season, with the approval of the Mentor, the Apprentice must undergo an oral and written exam. He must also present his Mews and equipment for inspection by his Provincial Club Grading Committee. Once accepted, he becomes a D Grade or Apprentice Falconer and remains in the responsibility of his (or her) Mentor. Each subsequent grading test (D to C, C to B and B to A) is done with at least 2 members of the Grading Committee under hunting conditions in the field. The Grading from B to A is done at the annual SAFA Field Meet, with the SAFA Grading Committee. At the B to A Grading, the

falconer will be expected to run his own dog in the field as this is seen as part of the required skill.

Birds Harvested from the Wild.

The wild harvest, required by falconers, is very small and entirely sustainable. It encourages the involvement of falconers in conservation and is certainly in keeping with the concepts of the Convention on Biological Diversity. There are other real advantages to this source of falconry birds that may not be immediately apparent:

- 1) Birds harvested from the wild are usually readily releasable back to the wild when no longer required for falconry. This reduces the number of birds held in captivity and further lessens any impact of the activity on the wild populations.
- 2) It discourages the trading in birds as wild-taken birds are not saleable and it keeps the practice



Black Sparrow Hawk Chick down from the tree



of falconry within the reach of less affluent members of society and particularly young people whom we wish to encourage.

3) The access to a wild take is seen as a considerable privilege and encourages compliance with the law and good practice.

4) Wild taken birds are not private property and remain the property of the state. Thus they can readily be confiscated from someone who is failing to adequately care for them or who is found to be breaking the laws and rules that govern falconry. South African falconers have a good record of policing their own membership for this reason.

5) The access to a harvest of wild raptors undoubtedly encourages the involvement of Falconers' involvement in Raptor Conservation. The converse is also true. Were the harvest be withdrawn, falconers would be discouraged from monitoring raptor nests as this may lay them open to allegations of nest-robbing.

6) The principle of a harvest of wild raptors is one that is accepted widely internationally. It is permitted in all North American countries, several Central and South American countries, and several European countries and is accepted under the Bern Convention with proviso, by several middle-Eastern, central Asian and Asian nations as well as several African nations. Countries that do not permit a wild harvest may do so for reasons of revolutionary politics, conservation concerns or that no "falconry ethic" exists within the country.

The principle of a sustainable harvest of a natural resource is not unusual as many natural resources are

harvested. What is unusual is that the harvest of Raptors required by falconers does not result in the killing of the resource and that the resource is often returned back to the wild.

The harvest required by falconers is very small. Good studies on raptor populations from around the world exist to show the very high attrition rate amongst immature raptors, the pool from which falconers will source their birds. Similarly an excellent Environmental Impact Study has recently been produced examining the impact of harvesting wild Peregrines in the USA. This shows that a 5% harvest is entirely acceptable and that

a 10% harvest would probably have no significant impact. South African Falconers do not require anything even approaching these numbers.

Birds Produced Through Captive Breeding Projects.

Captive breeding has been encouraged to supply birds that may not be readily available from the wild. The Peregrine Falcon was believed to be rare and endangered so the access of Falconers to these birds was severely limited. There are a number of breeding projects for African Peregrines around the country that provide a supply of these



Harvested Black Sparrow Hawk chick now relaxed in Falconers Home



birds for falconers. The surplus birds produced are released, by means of "hacking" to the wild.

It has been established that there is, indeed, a strong peregrine population in South Africa and a small sustainable harvest should be acceptable. Another incentive to captive breeding is the fear that the supply of birds from the wild may be prevented and this remains a considerable incentive to this practice. It is also true that it is easier to obtain a bird from a breeder than to go through the often arduous process of obtaining one from the wild. Captive breeding raises the specter of trading in raptors. This is a serious concern to the Falconry community, but one which we have managed to avoid, as the breeder is currently remunerated at a level which compensates him for the expenses incurred in the breeding project. Other down sides of this practice include the fact that Breeding Projects require additional birds to be held in captivity and that captive bred birds may not be always readily releasable. There remain good reasons to retain captive breeding as the source of some falconry birds:

1) The experience in captive breeding has been invaluable in restoration projects worldwide. Falconers have been involved in the restoration of the North American Peregrine, the Mauritius Kestrel and the Red Kite to name a few. Whilst there is currently no need for restoration projects here, South African Falconers are currently involved in a project to gain experience in breeding the endangered Taita falcon. We currently have experience in the breeding of at least 10 indigenous raptor species.

2) Captive breeding provides

a source of birds that may not be available for harvest in a particular province or where it is deemed that the wild population may not sustain a harvest.

3) Not all falconers are able to source the bird they require from the wild for practical reasons. Similarly a captive bred bird may be as acceptable or possibly preferable to a wild-taken bird depending on the training techniques that may be employed.

Birds obtained for Rehabilitation and Damage Causing Birds.

These sources do provide some of the birds used in Falconry and, indeed, Falconers are very active in the rehabilitation of injured and displaced raptors. Falconers also assist with the removal of Damage Causing Birds where there is conflict with Pigeon racers and Poultry keepers.

There is a serious problem with the reliance on such birds as a source of Falconry birds. Firstly there is the element of serendipity, where there is no real certainty that a suitable bird will be available, or that sufficient numbers will be available. As already discussed a Falconer needs to select the appropriate bird for his circumstances as well as the style of falconry that he wishes to practice. Falconry requires the investment of an enormous amount of time and effort, spread over years, to achieve the excellence that is the objective of the art. It is not reasonable to limit falconers to inappropriate and probably damaged birds.

This having been said, rehabilitation and damage-causing birds are a potential source of birds, and, as such, are utilized by Falconers. Many rehabilitation birds are released after

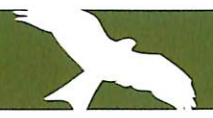
the application of falconry techniques to help them regain fitness and enable them to hunt.

In the Western Cape apprentice falconers are required to start with an appropriate rehabilitation bird before qualifying to obtain a wild-taken bird.

Conclusion.

The concepts of Conservation, Animal welfare and Animal Husbandry are not new to Falconers. These are areas where we have a long history of involvement. Similarly we have a history of positive engagement with conservation authorities and conservation Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The practice of Falconry is difficult, demanding and time-consuming. The standards achieved by the small number of South African falconers are exemplary and recognized internationally. South African falconers have a very reasonable expectation to have their Art supported and encouraged by Conservation Authorities, Conservation NGOs and Animal welfare NGOs. ■

Dr. Adrian Lombard



South Wales

(Main Region)

Roger James (Regional Chairman)

2012-2013 has been a very active and successful period for the Region, with an increase of 5 new members to date, and with an increase of 50% attendance, and now this Region is once again the most active one, as there has been a great deal of work put in by the committee.

The Lantra Award modules have been covered at every monthly meeting by Ceri Griffiths (Griff), his son Griff (honestly), and his stepson, Jamie, and they have been presented in a professional way from a theoretical and practical way. Around 40 members have enrolled on this and it is hoped that they will all achieve passes.

We held a "Question & Answer" night, with a small panel of experienced Falconers who offered advice and information for some of the newer members, and this prompted lots of thoughts and discussion, but proved to be very popular.

The annual Field Meet at Llangollen was a great success due in the main to Neil McCann, who I know from personal experience had to put in a lot of work to get it right!

June and I offered the use of our Hunting Lodge for any local activities and this was taken up by Hugh Kirby who organised a dog training day which was great fun, and those who attended said that they and their dogs had learned a lot from it. There were a few members who missed-out as they got "lost in the wilderness"! It is hoped in September this year we will

repeat this day when we combine it with an informal Family Day at the same venue, and direction letters will be sent out.

The monthly meetings were all well-attended, and speakers such as Neil Forbes, Nick Kester, and others were well received with interest and respect by the members. Members themselves also contributed to the evenings by giving talks, organising raffles and auctions, and also quizzes.

During the coming months we hope to attract more new members as we have a full programme of events, such as: Game Cookery demo by June James, Ferret Handling and Husbandry by Ian Warren, a Talk by a local Vet, Mouse and/or Horse Racing, a Micro-chipping night, another Quiz night and another Auction, as well as other speakers.

Following on from last year's successful Photography Competition, we are having a Calendar Competition (similar to the CountryFile one), where members can submit some shots for an 18 month calendar.

On the Field Meet side we are to organise some small local days on various shoots in the area, and it is hoped that more members from the Main Region will attend the annual Meet in North Wales next season.

Although we missed out on attending some of the local shows last year, we should be at more of them this year and it would be great if members attend to give their support to promote the club which I hope will have a great year in all it's Regions.

Roger James

Northern Region

Neil McCann

The northern region has remained static with the same loyal members attending regularly, supporting the raffle and turning up on field meets. Although some meetings were a little sparse due to the large amount of rain we had, but the brave showed up.

We managed 4 rabbit days and 4 pheasant days and our group made the best of it with most putting a few rabbits and the odd pheasant in the bag.

This season we decided to put some of the money raised through raffles etc. towards field meets and new venues, so only a few guest speakers were invited at our monthly meetings, (special thanks to Richard Jones, Mike Coupe, Terry Large, Alan Gates and thanks to Nigel for putting Alan up for the night).

In March we held our belated Xmas party, which raised over £200.00 thanks to our members bringing a few items along to be auctioned on the night. We pushed hard to raise the funds with Jeff Cockle (many thanks) at the helm as auctioneer.

For this coming season our region will be attending another new venue with plenty of game to fly, so lets hope the weather holds out, and the rabbits bolt and the spades stay in the cars!!!

Neil McCann



Essex Region

Pete Dawson

A reduced number of 'Essex boys', all flying Goshawks, attended the three day meet in Wales and once again enjoyed the sport and venues sorted out by Neil McCann.

The Essex region has attended field meetings this year at popular venues in Essex. Those attending have been fortunate to enjoy practising their sport at outstanding venues with the continued support of the landowners and keepers. Of particular note was the unusual quarry that was bagged by Steve Faulkener's female Harris Hawk during a field meet at Brightlingsea, Essex. It is not every day that you can add a Muntjac deer to your list of species caught.

The thanks of the region go out to the landowners and keepers for their continued support of field sports. Ady Watson has taken over the responsibility of organising regional field meets from Stuart Byers and I am sure the region would like to thank Stuart for his past efforts and also say thanks to Ady for taking on this role.

During the past year a long time member of the region, Steve Vaughan, unexpectedly lost his four legged hawking companions and has brought on a new charge to enable him to 'serve' his bird with the quarry it needs.

Likewise Ady Watson has introduced a new four-legged companion to his team in order to allow his long time hawking companion 'Pip' to enjoy a well-earned retirement! I am certain

that both new 'members' will serve their masters well.

The birds of choice for region members continue to be Harris hawks and Goshawks with some members also choosing to have a Sparrow hawk for alternative sport.

Our regions club nights still are being held at the popular venue 'Straws' in Colchester and our thanks go to our host, ex WHC member, Mick Young for allowing us to hold our meetings there. Our meetings are usually well attended and are always held on an informal basis with the mix of good advice and friendly banter. Mick, for those of you who know him, continues to fly a bird and has also kindly hosted field meets on land that he has permission on which has provided members with good sport.

The region has lost a stalwart member in Andy Hulme who for personal reasons decided to give up the treasurer's role at regional level but has also left the WHC. He has recently moved home and I am sure that the regions members wish him well in his new home and future endeavours.

Stuart Byers has taken over as the regions treasurer and will be responsible for spending the club's money wisely and making the sums add up.

New members have joined the region and they are most welcome as are any newcomers to our sport.

I would like to wish all of those members breeding birds this year every success and hope that the birds moult out well and remain healthy.

I am writing this as the outgoing secretary of the Essex region and as I have stepped down the situation will become vacant.

Ps. I apologise in advance for any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors in this or previous regional reports. I am of course, like everyone else, only human!

Pete Dawson



Obituary

To John Fairclough a great falconer and character

John Fairclough was loved by many, and many have partied with him till daybreak. His love for life and good times was legendary. To me he was generous, hospitable and knowledgeable of his great passion falconry.

Every year he made the pilgrimage to the moors of Scotland accompanied by friends and family.

If I was stuck for a day's Grouse hawking in Scotland John would oblige.

John phoned me one day and said, "Do you want to rent a Grouse moor in Rannoch as there are few mountain roads and my legs are not up to it?" John introduced me to the owner and I hawked there for two seasons.

Although John was a true BFC Committee member for many years, he never turned his back on any falconer in any club and that is one of the reasons so many falconers respected him.

I remember when he came to Dougie Morgan's funeral (our esteemed past President) in respect for Dougie and for our club. John will be remembered in falconry for his love of good times. He "Led the life".

Dave Jones, Committee, members and friends of The Welsh Hawking Club

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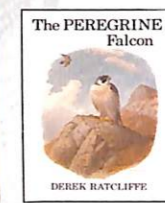
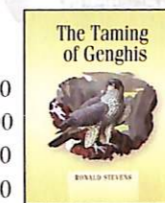
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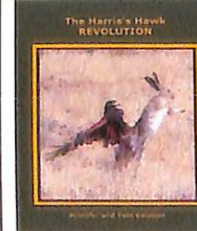
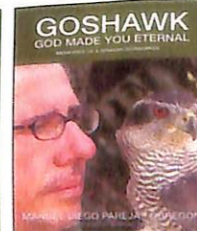
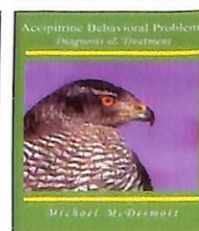
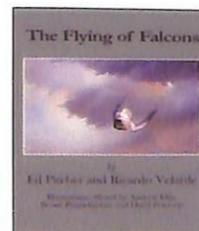
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By Bryan Paterson

Falconry Displays, love um or hate um.

After speaking to and listening to "falconers" it would seem that most are not particularly keen on commercial displays. However, their first introduction to falconry was probably watching a Falconry Display at their local show.

Falconry Displays of course fall into the good and the bad. The good, some may say, portraying falconry as an age-old method of supplying food for the table. However, that takes a bit of justifying these days to the general public, as we do not need to hunt for our food so they see falconry as a sport where a predator is matched against its prey, (a bit like bear baiting some might say,) the bad showing falconry as a gimmicky method of making money.

I can remember (just about) being taken by my father, a gamekeeper, and his boss to the CLA Game Fair at Harewood House. I would have been about ten years old. I can remember the car having to be stopped on the way because I was travelsick. I can also remember being taken into the falconry area. There were Hawks and Falcons outside under the trees on the weathering and inside the tent there was a television screen with *The Falcon Gentle* being shown; a film I have seen many times since. There were people inside the tent talking. If only I had known who they were, probably some of the people who I would one day have the privilege to meet, hear stories about, read their books, hold in high esteem and today be able to say that some of them became my friends.

So what makes a good Falconry

Display for me?

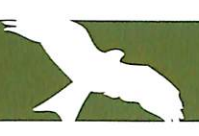
Firstly remember the old saying, "You don't get a second chance to make a good first impression." which is so true. When I approach the weathering area at a show (which I must admit I don't do very often) I want to see the birds protected from the elements. After all they have no choice where they are sitting. Then I want to see them on appropriate perches for the particular species but I also realise that occasionally that may not be possible so I know if that happens I will be asking someone on the stand a question. I want to see someone on the stand watching the birds and being prepared to answer questions; that's what they are there for. I want to see the birds in good feather, or again I will ask the question and not expect to be told that they are clumsy and that the feathers will be replaced when they moult. I want to see that the birds have the opportunity to drink if they want to or alternatively I want to see a sign explaining why there is no water available. I want to see signs that tell me what I am looking at and I want to see the people representing the display not necessarily in breeks or plus fours but dressed appropriately. I also realise that the general public (who the display is there to entertain) would not ask the same questions. They would be more concerned about the bird's welfare, and that they are tethered.

As for the flying itself; I want to see the birds perform as I know they are able to, not sitting on a convenient perch ignoring their handler who is trying to make some excuse for their behaviour when I, and others know it's down to bad management. After saying that, timings at some shows do get changed at the last minute, which

can make it difficult to get the bird's appetite right at just the right time

A show program usually says Falconry Display. This seems to wind up the "purists". Perhaps it would be more acceptable if it was referred to as a Birds of Prey display but most of us presenting displays fly and talk about Owls, which are technically not a BOP, so where do we go from there? I, and many other members have represented the WHC at many country fairs including the CLA (the largest, which the WHC have displayed at for many years and still do today.) My first being at Tatton Park in Cheshire in 1981. The falconry display was sponsored by Peter Dominic who some of you may remember as wine merchants. They were introducing a new drink called Malibu. What they did not know was that most of the drink on the stand would be consumed by members of the WHC who were welcomed onto their exhibition stand - bad move. I could mention a few (a lot) of those members but being the gentleman that I am, I will not. Sadly some of them are no longer with us.

This article has been written over several late nights and following the consumption of copious quantities of the amber nectar but it has pleasantly revived many memories which have not been forgotten but stored in my memory, only now to be recalled following a request from a friend. ■



The picture shows a young boy enjoying an experience at a falconry display which will probably stay with him for the rest of his life and who knows, perhaps he will become a falconer and help to take the sport forward into the future.



THE JOYS OF BEING A FIELD OFFICER BY NELL MCCANN



Over the past fifteen years or more I have been organising field meets for the Welsh Hawking Club's Northern Region, and, for the last few years, the annual Welsh Hawking Club three-day field meet. This has had its high and low points, with many hours spent driving hundreds of miles across North Wales to meet various landowners and gamekeepers, some pleasant and some aggressive or

downright rude!

On the field meet.

On the first day I was asked why couldn't I have booked a hawking day when it was not so windy, or raining? Another day a group called me and said there was not much game about and they had walked the estate for hours and hardly had a slip! (The group had no dog!) They were complaining bitterly so I put my hawk

back in its travel box and drove over to the other side of the estate to meet them.

I decided to bring my dog out and walk with them but they said could I keep the dog in the car. I said "No, just keep a little distance from me". We walked back over the ground they had just covered, and within a hundred yards I got a point not on one pheasant but two hen birds at the

base of a fallen tree. I pulled the dog away and they got their first kill. While I waited for the bird to be retrieved, the dog also flushed a rabbit! I stayed with the group for over two hours and apart from one person whose hawk was overweight everyone killed a pheasant!

The same day a falconer who had come to his first field meeting and caught his first pheasant in a group bought me a beer, Hooray! He was well pleased. But the next morning he weighed his hawk and it was well overweight. He had fed it too much on the kill, and said I should have told him the night before that it would be overweight and could I give him his money back for the next two days of the meet!

The hunting venues are booked by the end of May and it's a gamble how many venues to book: too many and the club has a big shortfall on cash, too few venues means bigger groups and not as many slips each, resulting in more moans.

A few seasons ago all our hunting venues were booked, or so I thought. I was in Scotland catching a few bunnies with some friends, when I got a call from a keeper to say he had cancelled our booking for next week! He said the money for a two-day shoot (£ 3500 a day from some merchant *ankers) could not be turned away! So, I had six days to find another venue and I was 400 miles away. Thankfully a good mate, who I looked after with a very expensive bottle of alcohol and a free night out, got me out of the s***e and the three-day meet was back on track.

Over the last few years as money has become tighter, the shooting fraternity has become a little less negative towards falconry and gamekeepers

will listen to our requirements, so we don't travel as far to our hunting venues as in previous years.

The Welsh Hawking Club has hawked on many hunting and shooting estates throughout its history. I, as field officer, have hawked with many different people in the club who have caught many different types of quarry, some for the first time.

Some keepers show our falconry group plenty of game and others will walk us around on the outer boundaries, dogging-in and seeing very little game for hours – with a sudden rush of quarry towards the end of the day when most people will get a kill or two.

There can also be a falconer's hawk that has gone into the keeper's inner sanctum (the pheasant pen) following a pheasant. Then when I get home my phone rings and I get an ear-bashing from the keeper who has found pheasant feathers against the pen fence.

A few seasons ago two long-wing falconers and a few spectators joined our goshawk group, as there weren't enough of them to form their own group. The falconer's did not want to fly before noon so we agreed to fly the goshawks first. All went well, then came the falconers turn to fly. With his dog on point the falconer then wanted another dog to back-up the point. He then looked at his watch and said perhaps it was a bit early to fly. After a few well-chosen words from the group he decided he *would* fly so he held the falcon up, walked towards the two dogs, spooked the pheasant and the falcon chased the quarry like a hawk! The group watched all this in amazement as the falcon landed in a tree two hundred yards away. The falconer got his telemetry out to look for

his lost bird. He was told the bird was in the tree but he was adamant it was in the opposite direction. He went off to retrieve his falcon and as he walked out over the cover crop he stopped to say he had dropped his glove; so we all got in a line and walked through the cover to find it. After we had searched for fifteen minutes and flushed out all of the game, he came back with his falcon and his glove (which he had put in his hawking bag and then forgotten to radio the group to tell them to stop looking). The keeper was not amused as this was where we were supposed to spend the rest of the day hawking! Over the years hawking venues have come and gone but not many members realise how difficult it is, not just to find a venue, but a local venue with enough game to cater for falcons, Harris hawks and goshawks. We need hedgerows, ponds, copses, woods and enough land to sustain the group for the day at a price we're prepared to pay (as the shooting fraternity pays a lot more than us!)

I was once told, when I'd had a bad day out hawking, it's a good day when you come back with your hawk and dog, its a bonus if you catch something!!!!!! Happy hawking. ■

Neil McCann



By David Sharman

Day two of the 2012 annual field meet started with high hopes despite having nothing in the bag from the first day. The day was to be spent rabbit hawking near Denbigh with fellow South Wales Region member David Barber. With only two of us in our group that day we were both hoping to see some good flights and maybe just catch something.

Cesha, my 4-year-old female Harris, was sulking a bit that morning. I think the 4-hour drive on the previous day and her numerous missed opportunities had taken their toll.

As we walked to the hunting ground with the keeper I asked my usual questions: Are there any electricity masts and are there any chicken close by? The overhead cables were pointed out as we walked past and I was told that there were chickens up in the far corner but not to worry, they were all safely under cover.

We made our way down to the far end of the hunting ground and the keeper began working the ferrets. In no time rabbits were bolting across the open field to the parallel hedge line on the other side of the field. David and I were taking it in turns to fly from the fist.

Cesha just sat there! I knew she was thinking, "If you think I'm chasing that, this time of the morning, you've got another thing coming!" About 3 slips later the gamekeeper said politely, "I'm sure she will warm up this afternoon." As we moved up the hedge we came to a large tree; so I put Cesha in the tree to see if she would prefer to hunt from there. She decided to fly towards the corner where I knew the chickens were. Knowing that she had most likely spotted the chickens from the

height of the tree, I made after her and quickly got her back on the fist. Noticing, on my way, that the chickens were all well fenced and covered.

As time passed and the morning moved on, Cesha switched on. I could see she was now ready for her lunch, or maybe she just wanted some of the action after watching David's male Harris all morning.

After two rabbits had outwitted Cesha with fantastic brakes and a natural knack for acute handbrake turns, I knew that the next flight had to be the one.

A rabbit bolted from my side of the hedge and it was my slip. Cesha was hot on its tail as the rabbit threw a U-turn and headed back to the hedge from where it came. At this point I thought the flight was over, but Cesha made the turn and was hot on its tail again. I expected the rabbit to go to ground back in the same hedge, but the ferret must have had that escape route covered so the rabbit ran straight through the hedge and Cesha followed into the next field. She really wanted this one. The rabbit made another acute turn but she kept with it, then another but still she was hot on its tail. As the rabbit went to ground in the next parallel hedge, Cesha pulled up onto the top of the hedge. Although she had missed the rabbit, it was an excellent flight and she had really tried hard.

I let her sit there on the top of the hedge for a while, believing that as soon as she caught her breath she would make her way back. However, all of a sudden she headed off into the corner towards the chicken coop. Knowing that the chickens were safe under cover I began to follow her, but she didn't stop there. After the first few hundred yards she continued

and headed into the large garden of a house in the very far corner of the field, and as she did crows went everywhere.

Now, Cesha had caught sitting crows in the past, so I thought that must be what she had spotted. I made my way to the garden. I couldn't see her anywhere but I could hear her bells. The crows were still squawking and there was another alarm call mixed in as well. It was chickens! I thought, "Oh hell there are chickens loose in this garden!"

I saw a man in the garden and approached him to ask if he had seen my hawk. As I did he started shouting and telling me that he had warned me the day before what he would do if I came near his house again. I tried to explain that I had never been there before. Then I noticed he had a stick in his hand and was waving it about and swiping at a bush behind a galvanised steel bin. I just knew Cesha was behind that bin and I asked if I could come and pick her up. He refused, and ranted about how he had warned me before, waving the stick in my direction.

As I was getting nowhere, and didn't particularly want a punch on the nose, I called to him, "Leave her there and I will go around the other side and call her out of your garden. Just leave her there!"

I headed off around to the other side of the garden and started to whistle and call Cesha - nothing, no bells, nothing! At this point the telemetry was already out. I had a strong signal but I just couldn't see her. I search for what seemed an age completely dumfounded why I had such a strong signal but could not find her. All the time the man was in the garden behind the trees. I called to him asking if he

had seen the bird. He ignored me and I carried on my search. I moved away from the house and worked my way back again. The signal told me she was there.

Maybe she had caught something and dragged it into the undergrowth? I started pulling the undergrowth apart. I found what looked like a compost heap in the hedge and I pulled it apart. The telemetry signal was now as strong as it could get.

There she was, under the compost heap. I picked her up, her head flopped to the side and immediately I knew she was dead.

At this point I think I went into shock, I cradled her and walked back to the Car. I knew the man in the house must have killed her, and assumed he had killed her with the stick he had been waving about.

The police were called and the incident was reported.

The following day the police updated

me that they had spoken to the man and he confirmed that he had deliberately killed the bird by shooting it with an air rifle. This was later confirmed by the vet as the cause of death.

The police told me that no further action would be taken, as no crime had been committed. The man was entitled to shoot the bird as it was attacking his chickens. Despite explaining to the police that the man had every chance to allow me to pick up Cesha before she had a chance to kill his chickens and that there was no need for him to go and get a gun and shoot her, they still wouldn't take any action. In the days and weeks following this I made a complaint to the police. They stuck with their decision and to date North Wales Police have refused to do anything about the incident.

In short, the police are saying that the man had "lawful excuse", and as there were no independent witnesses to the

detail of the incident, I can't prove that he did not have "lawful excuse", so they will not take the matter any further.

I did consider taking further action via the civil courts, or privately, taking it to the magistrate's court, but on balance I just wanted to put things behind me and move on.

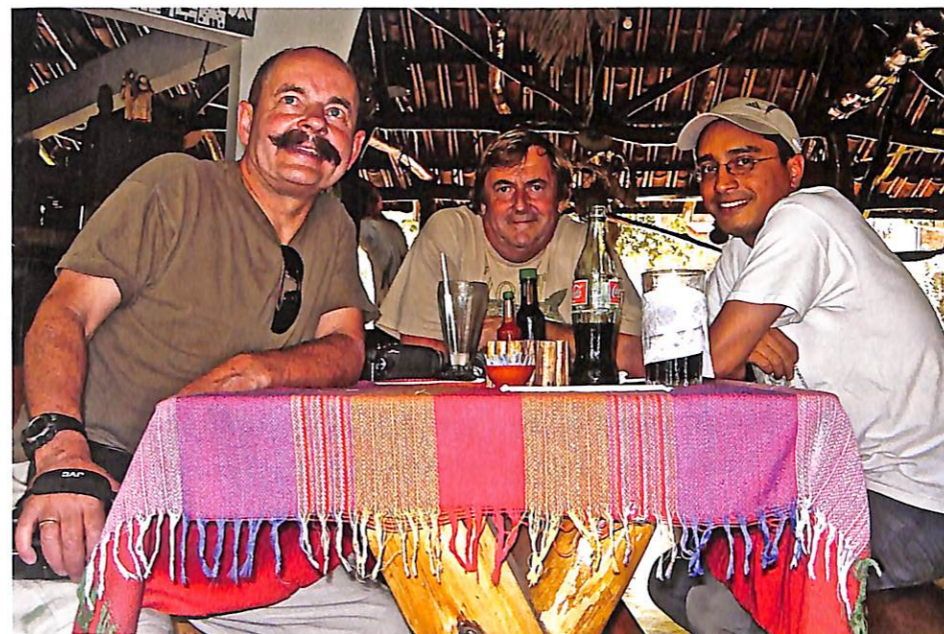
My biggest regret is that I should have risked a punch on the nose from the guy and just walked into his garden and picked up Cesha before he decided to go back into his house, collect the air rifle and shoot her.

Alternatively, if I had thought to take out my mobile phone and film the guy, I would, at least, have had some evidence of the man's actions to show the police.

I'd like to thank all the club members that supported me during this time.

Thank you ■

David Sharman



David Jones, Craig Hendee and Ricardo Perez

By Craig Hendee

President, Great Lakes Falconers Association

My trip to Central America started out as several conversations with Roy Beers, the IAF delegate from El Salvador. We were talking about the Peregrine migration in Illinois and elsewhere, and Roy added that he had seen large numbers of Peregrines in the tidal estuaries of El Salvador and the mangroves, as well as on the beaches near the estuaries and rivers from October thru March. In addition, he noted that several birds were wearing the wide silver band that would indicate that they had been banded somewhere in the United States. Any information such as this always perks up my ears, and I asked Roy if he had passed this information on to the IAF or the Peregrine Fund. He said that he had, and had also told a number of people about these wintering birds at the recent NAFA meets, but no one seemed to pay much attention to him, or thought that he had to be mistaken. I thought the

fact that we had a chance to identify the migration destination of some of our American birds should be of great importance, and a plan was devised with Roy, and Dave Jones, of the Welsh Hawking Club to go to El Salvador and take a look.

Dave and I managed to get on the same flight from Houston to San Salvador, even though Dave's flight from Gatwick was very late. As usual, the flight going to El Salvador was also conveniently late, and Dave was the last passenger to board, although as we later discovered, his bags weren't as lucky. Arriving very late at night, we headed for the Pacific coastal area of Costa del Sol to start looking for birds the next morning.

We didn't have to go far to see birds as we viewed a Roadside Hawk in the front of our house the next morning and later saw a few more while driving. Black and Turkey Vultures seemed to be always present no matter where we went, and we saw flocks of several hundred moving north accompanied by Swainson's hawks. As we traveled by boat out of the inhabited area of

the estuary, and into the mangroves, we immediately started to see Osprey, a variety of Kites, and both immature and mature Black Hawks. Again, Roadside hawks were abundant, and we were surprised at the number of raptors that were seen just cruising the river. Before we had traveled even a mile up the river, we saw the first Peregrine; an adult female perched in a tree with her foot up. We went in for a closer look, and the bird just sat there turning her head upside down for a better look. As we backed the boat away she looked toward a group of Orange browed Parakeets crossing the river, but showed little interest, as she appeared to have a full crop. We encountered Peregrines for the rest of the day, all of them much less than a mile apart, and sometimes two birds roosting together. All of the birds in the mangrove area were adults and the lack of immature birds in that area seemed to indicate that the adults did not allow the first year birds on the river. This feeling was further reinforced for the next three days as we constantly saw the immatures on the main tidal estuary where there were more people, but also a good prey base. We saw the same immature Tundra female on three consecutive days between 10 and 10:30 am in the same spot, and observed her knock down a medium sized unidentified shorebird, pick it up out of the water and then fly heavily (skimming the water several times) to the other side of the main basin finally losing sight of her about 3/4 of a mile across the water. Later in the day, while heading to a small market, we saw a Peregrine flying across the road, and watched it land on a cell phone tower next to the parking lot that was our destination.



A.B. INCUBATORS

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This bird was an obvious female, but was very light in color, not really very large and faintly barred on a white breast. It was the only bird in that area that we saw off of the river, but it was within a few hundred yards of the coast. The coast was not accessible in that area, so we could do no further exploring, but I feel confident that there were birds concentrated all the way up and down the coast between the estuaries, because when we were able to get back to the beach an hour

south, the birds were spaced out up and down the beach in about the same concentration or spaced a bit tighter than before. Again, the immatures were not holding these prey-rich territories and we saw only haggards on the ocean. In this area, the wind was perfect for some soaring by the Peregrines, and at times, as many as three were seen together. In addition, we saw Black Hawks, and Swainson's soaring with the Peregrines, although they were mostly ignored.

The tide controlled the amount of time that we could spend driving the beach, and after we had cleared the tide line, we had time to look for the Harris Hawks. This area was identified as having a small resident population from a sighting in 2007, and we were lucky to soon see an immature and two adults. They were in the general vicinity of several Black Hawks, and although the Black Hawks attempted to intimidate the Harris Hawks, they held their ground and the Blacks



Roy Beers at work



eventually left them alone. The Blacks were very tame, and I was able to approach one adult, close enough to see that they are well armed with a fairly large foot, and I was told that they will take large prey. They would be a nice falconry bird if we had access to them.

We were to return to this area two days later as the tide was going out so that we could potentially drive the whole wooded beach area for Peregrines, and hoped to see more of the Harris Hawks after the tide came back in. On this second trip, Peregrines were again in abundance, with more of the light colored birds, and some of the males appearing to be extremely small. The area was shared by hundreds of vultures walking the beach, and feeding on the numerous fish that had washed ashore, and now were easily secured as the tide ebbed. Black Hawks and Osprey were abundant, and several times we were fooled by roadside hawks, thinking that they were falcons because of their posture at perch in the strong offshore wind. Driving on the beach, we were many times almost directly under the falcons, and usually no more than 150 feet from them. None of the birds took flight, but rather exhibited mild interest in our presence, but never put down the second foot. At rest, three birds were observed to be wearing the wide silver band used by our US raptor banders, and one was wearing a blue band, indicating that it was probably banded somewhere in the Arctic or Greenland. We did manage to drive the whole length of the wooded beach, but barely made it back before the tide stranded us. It was difficult to leave the falcons on the beach, but we decided to go searching for

the Harris Hawks again and left the ocean for the ranchland that had been carved out of the coastal jungle. Turning down a previously ignored two track, we quickly found ourselves removed from settled land, and in cattle country. Shortly, an adult male Harris was seen flying, and as I trained my binoculars forward in my usual manner, I was surprised to see that he was flying toward a large nest with a female standing on it. As we watched excitedly, the female spent about fifteen minutes feeding babies, and then flew from the nest with the remains of the meal. Exiting the truck, Roy pointed out a Crested Cara Cara on the other side of the road. Again I spotted the bird, looked ahead, and observed him fly to the nest and begin to feed what I thought was a young bird. We marked that nest, and proceeded to walk to the Harris nest. The nest was about 70-80 feet up in a Ceiba tree. Roy said that it was a young Ceiba, as the trunk was still

armored with the 2 inch long spikes that grow all over the tree. This tree would be very dangerous to climb on the low levels, but through the glasses, it was evident that most of the branches were covered with the spikes, and I really would have not wanted the job of climbing it. Both parents returned to scream at us, as well as to attack the vultures that immediately showed up as soon as the mother left the tree. The hawks soared at great altitude, but kept coming back down to threaten us. As we left the area and headed for the Cara Cara nest, the pair settled down and the female returned to the nest with the male sitting in a nearby tree. The two nests were about 400 yards apart, and as we approached, the male made an attempt to change our course by luring us away from the nest. When we got close, we were surprised to see the female stand up and then leave the nest. What we had thought was a young bird being



Harris Hawk nest



fed by the male was actually the female, and she had held very tight, indicating eggs or very young birds. We spent little time there to minimize nest disturbance, but the male came back and again wanted to lead us away from the nest as the female went back to incubate or brood. As we followed, he let us get very close to him for some good video and photo opportunities.

The close proximity of these two nests is not consistent with large raptor species, but the fact that their feeding habits are quite different probably accounts for the lack of competition for food and territorial disputes. While we were present, both pairs were active, in the air, and vocal with no interference from the other pair.

The two track quickly ended as it reached the jungle, and as we retraced our steps, we commented on the fact that if we had visited this area one month later, we would not have found either nest due to leaf cover. Roy had been in this general area before, and was the first to find the birds, but had seen no nests. As we left the area, we stopped to watch a male Kestrel have a tussle with a large lizard, and a short way down the track, Roy saw what he thought was a female Kestrel that proved to be a first ever sighting of a Merlin. We were close enough to identify it right down to those long Merlin toes, and again, it calmly sat still watching us as we marveled at the fact that there was a Merlin in El Salvador.

The affirmation of the Peregrines in the mangrove areas, and on the coast hopefully is enough to get the attention of some of the world raptor conservation people. This is now

a known destination for our North American Peregrines, and maybe there will be some opportunities to help the raptor people from El Salvador to protect their diminishing forests and estuaries. There is also good reason to believe that this area is a destination for birds migrating north from South America, as many of the birds that we observed were not Tundra falcons. The importance of which cannot be overstated, and of which little is known at this time. We found out the next day from Ricardo Perez, El Salvador's premier raptor biologist that the Harris Hawk nest that we found was only the second ever recorded in El Salvador. The Crested Cara Cara nest was the first ever found in El Salvador, and the Merlin was one of the first ever recorded sightings in the country. To be a part of these discoveries gives an awesome feeling of pride, but is also humbling because if Roy and Ricardo had the resources that are available here in the US, they would have probably already made these observations themselves. I am just very happy to

have had the opportunity to work with Roy and Dave as falconers on this part of the research.

As we left the area, thrilled, but very tired, I looked forward to the next day when we would head toward one of the volcanic crater lakes to enter the realm of the Black Hawk Eagle, the Solitary Eagle, and the Bicolored Hawk. That evening, Ricardo mercilessly questioned us on the finds of the day recounting over and over the Peregrines, the Harris Hawks, the Merlin, and especially the Cara Cara. I went to sleep knowing that tomorrow would bring not only a difficult day, but also a chance to work in the El Imposible Parque Nacionale. You are correct if you assumed that imposible means impossible. The road to get to the park (the good road) is made up of small boulders, and the terrain is exhilarating, but well, El Imposible, but that is another story in this adventure. ■



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Roger James

RULES & CONSTITUTION



Rules & Constitutions of the Welsh Hawking Club

Name and Objectives

1. The name of the club shall be: The Welsh Hawking Club.
2. The objective 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 amongst members.

Constitution

The club shall consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Membership Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Austringer Editor, Press and Publicity Officer, Education Officer, Breeding Project Officer, Legal Officer, Mewsletter Editor, Field Officer, Events Co-ordinator and a Webmaster. 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. 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 last 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 Membership Secretary in writing.
3. The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.
4. Any member whose subscription is unpaid by the end of 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 any 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. T.V. 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 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 Chairman, Vice Chairman or in their absence one of the other Officers as appropriate.
3. A summer meeting shall be held annually at which reports of the affairs of the Club can be given. General meetings will normally be held monthly. Informal meetings will be held as required.
- Alteration to Rules
Rules may only be altered by a vote taken at the AGM or at an EGM. Notices of motions for the AGM or EGM shall be sent to the Secretary in writing to arrive at least 6 weeks prior to these meetings. Any member wishing to call an EGM shall inform the Secretary in writing stating the reason for such a meeting. The application must be countersigned by 20 Full Members.

Code of Conduct

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 a 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 a suitable country or passed on 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.

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 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 to attend the main committee meetings. This representative will have full voting rights.

Jan France
Honorary Secretary
2013





Wild North American Goshawk courtesy of Mark Williams
For all up to date information throughout the year go to:
www.thewelshhawkingclub.co.uk