

The

Austringer



The Journal of the Welsh Hawking Club

No. 49 2017





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Front cover photograph: Golden Saker, photograph by Mark Williams. See Mark's article on page 13.

Back cover photograph: Peregrine on Snipe, photograph by Tony Adams. See Tony's article on page 18.

Centre spread photograph: Star returns to the glove © Peter Moonlight

President's Preamble

Welcome to the 49th edition of The Austringer. I am now in my third year as your president. I have still not been able to visit the north Wales region something I must try harder to correct this year. I have been able to meet members at Usk and at the field meeting in Llangollen.

This has been a much better hawking season, weather wise. I have not been able to do as much hawking as I would like. I was very fortunate to be invited out to Wyoming by Steve Chingren for the last week of the sage grouse season. A fantastic place 7million acres of public land and hundreds of sage grouse. I am very grateful to Steve for the opportunity to visit and watch his fine gyr x peregrine tiercels taking grouse. Hopefully next season I will be able to stop working and get back to some serious flying of falcons.

I hope all members have finished the season with hawks in good health and wish everyone a quick clean moult.

Your management committee still needs volunteers, at the last AGM we struggled to get the required number to fill the vacancies. Many thanks and a warm welcome to James Mason our new secretary. The same small number keep on doing the work to keep the club going and we all owe them. Subs have increased this year but still represent great value. There are monthly meetings at both Usk and Frodsham, both regions hold field meetings which are open to any member and the annual Field Meet is held in Llangollen.

The WHC Facebook page is up and running. We have 247 followers but only around 110 members of the club. The page is obviously proving popular and is a useful way of keeping members in touch. The admin team of Gareth Owen, Howard Thompson, June James, Katie Thompson and Kim Humphrey are doing a great job. The page is a credit to them and the



members. It is a reflection of the spirit of the club that the postings all show best practice and the true face of falconry in Wales.

This year's Falconers Fair will be held at NCBP, Duncombe Park, Helmsley, N. Yorks, YO62 5EB, on the 30th April and 1st May. The club will not be having a stand. However any members wishing to pay subs and collecting their Austringer will be able to do so at the Honeybrook stand. The club will also be attending the Falconry Weekend held at ICBP Newent in September. As usual we are looking for members to help on the stand, if you are able to help please make contact via Facebook.

This year there will be a Festival of Falconry in Abu Dhabi on 4th to 9th December. This festival will be based entirely on the Desert Camp format, which has been used in previous festivals. It will be centred around Remah and the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Falconry Academy

where there are also designated hunting grounds nearby for falconers on foot and on camels. Youths sponsored will be fully funded; flight tickets, accommodation in the desert camp for the duration of the festival and all meals and visa costs, if applicable. ALL sponsored people will be expected to take part fully in the Festival and they MUST do a job. They could be expected to make a speaking contribution in the majlis. These can be long and informative speeches or brief descriptions of what they do at home, just something to contribute and explain how the

Chairman's Chatter

The first thing I have to say is that I apologise for not being on the ball as much as I usually am, but I've spent some time recuperating from a heart operation.

Despite having some changes of committee, we have survived and we are carrying on regardless! Many thanks to those members who have stepped into the breach.

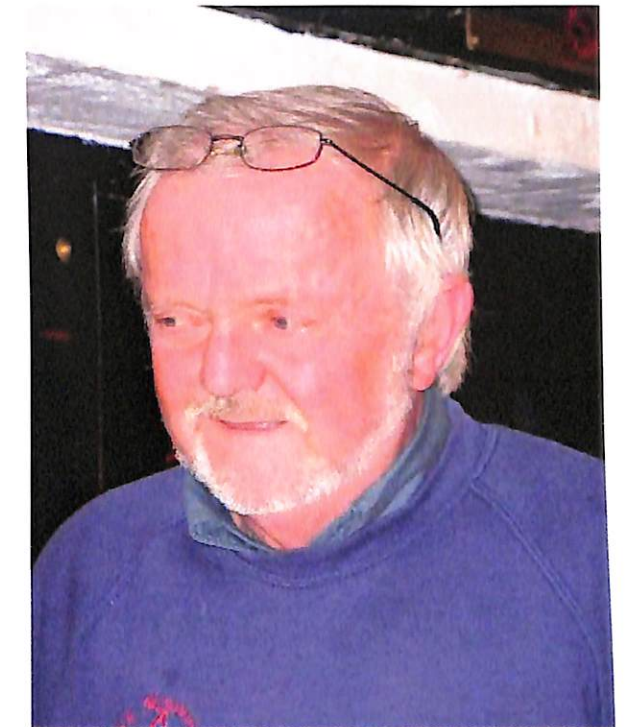
The public open day held at the Olway Inn was a great success, and we had a few new members join as a result of the Club being presented to many locals from the Usk area. Members brought a good mixture of birds along and were really friendly and communicative with the visitors. It is planned to repeat the evening this year with perhaps some demonstrations and videos to stimulate even more interest in our sport.

It is great to see that Anthony Roberts has put so much effort into organising so many field meets up North, (thanks Anthony), and we Southerners will keep an eye out for the dates, and hopefully attend some of these. With this in mind it is hoped that members living down South will try their best to provide some meets in our locality, but it does require some physical effort on our part.

element of falconry is being passed on to them. The club will have one sponsored place available to a falconer under 25 who is willing and able to contribute to the Festival.

Next year will be the 50th edition of the Austringer it would be fantastic to celebrate with an International Field Meet, any ideas, offers of help or land welcomed.

Nick Havemann-Mart



As far as the monthly meetings are concerned, we still need members to put their thinking caps on and help to organise some guests to come and entertain us!

We now have a new Club Vet with a practice in Ross-on-Wye. He is a falconer himself and is Simon Lyddon. His number is: 01989-564687.

Before the start of the next hunting season it is hoped that he will come to one of our monthly meets and supply us with micro-chipping some of our birds and dogs.

The Club's Facebook page has been a great success, and thanks to Gareth Owen and Howard Thompson for setting it up, and overseeing any posts that are received.

From the Editors



Another year goes by and another magazine needs to be printed.

For some reason, it gets more difficult to get articles from members each year. It's a shame that we have to rely on the usual contributors for things to put into the magazine.....YOUR magazine.

Don't get me wrong, we both enjoy producing the magazine for you each year but as you will see that the two main articles this year are from non-members. We are extremely grateful to 'outsiders' for giving their time to send us a contribution.

Next year will be the 50th Edition of the Austringer and we would very much like to

I hope to be attending more field meets this coming year and meeting some old friends. Good Hawking!

Roger James.

make that magazine one that will stand out and possibly become a collector's item. So, I've given you all plenty of notice to get your articles ready for when we ask in November.

It would be nice for an article or two on Hawk/Falcon breeding, especially with some good photographs of the chicks as they rear. Dog training would also be of interest I'm sure.

Meanwhile enjoy your close season, your moult and most of all those jobs that 'er indoors' has been waiting for you to do for the last 6 months.



Mick Cordell and David Ridpath

South Wales Region Report, March 2017

The South Wales region has had a strong year of attendance, averaging around 30 to 35 each meeting. A great variety of birds have been flown this season by our members, the usual Goshawks and Harris hawks, Redtails and plenty of falcons, Huw and Martin with their eagles and two Black Sparrow Hawks. There's always a friendly atmosphere of chat between members and a warm welcome to newcomers.

To this end, we held an open day in August held on the garden at the front of the Olway Inn. Various members brought along birds and displays of equipment, telemetry, etc. The idea was to push the club in a public area and it went well, a lot more people turned up than was expected and we gained new members and some hawking ground.

We haven't had as many speakers this year as we would have liked but we managed to gain a South Wales region club vet after Simon Lyddon and his colleague from Vine Tree Vets gave a very informative talk one night. I'm sure we can keep him busy with more talks and health checks.

The annual field meet was a massive success, great hawking with great people



and a few more from our region attending than last year. Next season one of the south regions main aims is to organise some dedicated field meets of its own as this has been missing in recent years.

Unfortunately, the bird flu has raised its ugly head and cut many peoples' seasons short. Let's hope the situation is different for the next season.

Wishing everyone a successful moult and a great season ahead

Kim Humphrey, SW Region Secretary

North Wales Region Report, March 2017

Well it's been an eventful but successful season, not only for me but for most of us in the region. It certainly has been a huge improvement on last year with the awful weather ruining many hawking days and constant rain having a major impact on rabbit populations on flooded ground.

I started the season with my faithful cast of Harris Hawks which have been the main part of my hunting team now for a few years. Seeing a bonded cast work together truly is spectacular when hunted consistently in challenging terrain. I have completed this season without any injuries or illnesses thankfully and my freezer's full from many a day's hawking on several of my own ground and many Field Meetings with the club.

It didn't go without hiccups though!. Yes, my cast took an increased liking to CHICKENS!!!!. This I have found really frustrating as this year alone my cast (mainly my female Harris' hawk but now also my male Harris' hawk) have taken eight chickens from different ground, one on a club organised field meet. I've spent as much paying for dam chickens as I have for field meetings. However, luckily, all chicken owners were understanding and I've had to adjust the areas I fly and how I fly to account for chicken pens.



My female Red-tail really has come on this year and for the first time in three years she's not given me any worries at all. In fact she has hit the ground running and has been an absolute pleasure to fly. It just goes to show that if you put the effort in, the rewards are well worth waiting for.

Other than the Welsh Three Day Field Meeting which was a huge success, the region also had many successful field meetings at Llandegla. With an increase in new members to the region, we are being asked if we can have an increase in Field Meetings next season which is a positive for the club. Anthony Roberts has done a fantastic job in organising Field Meetings this season for which the rest of us are hugely grateful.



North Wales Region Members on a regional meet

Great news is that Anthony has already secured Field Meeting dates for next season so get your names down everyone!

A pleasure as always to fly with other members from the club, this season consistently with Brian Dooley who has had a decent season with his male Harris' hawk - the duck slayer! Ian Walker and his eyass female Harris' hawk which was entered at Llandegla. Jacob who's hawk works fantastically with my female Harris' hawk, Frank Whitley and his female Harris' hawk and lastly father and son team, Andrew and Joe Mayers. It is a pleasure to see the next generation getting involved in our sport and hope to see you both on meets next season too.

Anthony Roberts had many successful field meets for the goshawks, seeing the consistent gos-hawkers in attendance as well as newcomers to bring yet a further positive for the club.

All in all, it seems we have all enjoyed a good season and with new members and field meetings booked for 2017 / 2018, next season is already looking bright.

Our belated Christmas party and auction was well turned out and as well as being a great night had by all, it was also a success with a tidy sum being raised for club funds.

Another date is to be set for our knowledgeable member Steve Lloyd to give another talk on hood making with his previous talk having been a huge success.

I guess all that's left for me to say is that I hope everyone has a good moult, breeders have a lot of success and bring on the new season.

Peter Houghton,

North Wales Region Secretary

Dates for Your Diary

The Club Field Meet will be held at the Bryn Howel Hotel, Llangollen, on 24th, 25th and 26th October 2017.

The Club AGM will be held at the hotel on 25th October 2017. (see WHC website and Facebook page for further details in due course).

The WHC will run a stand at the Falconry Weekend at ICBP, Newent, Gloucestershire, 2nd/3rd September 2017. Volunteers to man the stands please make yourselves known to the Club Secretary.

Other events that you may be interested in are:

British Falconry Fair, 31st April and 1st May 2017 at the National Centre for Birds of Prey, Duncombe Park, Helmsley, N. Yorks, YO62 5EB. Note that we shall not have a Club stand at this event, but any members wishing to pay their subscription and collect their Austringer at the event can do so at the Honeybrook stand.

Midland Game Fair, Weston Park, Telford, Shropshire, 16th/17th September 2017
Usk Show, Usk Monmouthshire, 9th September 2017
Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells, Powys, 24th to 27th July 2017

SW Region Open Evening by Mick Cordell

At one of last year's committee meetings it was suggested that we might hold an open evening during the summer months. The object was to invite the public to our usual monthly meeting at The Olway Inn, Usk, to see what we do and to show them some of the birds we use in Falconry.

We decided to hold the event at our August meeting and suitable posters and notifications were put out around the locality. The local press was also informed.

The weather on the evening was fine and dry and Matt and Nicola, who own the pub, kindly let us perch the birds out on the front lawn.



Thanks to our fantastic members, we had a wide variety of birds including peregrine and gyrfalcons, red-tails, goshawks and Harris's. We also had an African tawny eagle, a kestrel and quite a few owls which, although not used for falconry, it gave the public a good idea of all aspects of Bird of Prey keeping.

The public turnout was better than expected with around 60 people turning up. They were surprised to find how close they could get to the birds (and their handlers) and it didn't take long for conversations between the public and members to get going. Many enquiring questions were being asked and our members were only too pleased to answer them from their vast knowledge. Some were even fortunate to hold and photograph the birds under the expert tuition of the members.

I would like to thank the club members for making it a successful evening, especially those who brought birds along on the day and those who made the public feel welcome to our world of Falconry.

It has already been decided that we will repeat the open evening this year, perhaps even showing the public a little more of what we do.

The pictures show a couple of the birds that were on display, photographed by Vicki of Paul Brooksbank photography.



South Wales Members in Scotland, October 2016

contributed by Steve Richards and Rudy and William Edwards and Eddie Jones
Two Parties of South Wales Region members have reported on their trips to Scotland in October 2016.

The first group consisted of Steve Richards, Chris Drew and Alan Evans (now living in Scotland), dogs Mitzi and Casey and four ferrets with birds, female Harris' hawk, Lady, female Harris' hawk, Sky, and male red-tail, Sisco.



There was no problem with the birds on the way up this year because we put fans in the travel boxes.

On Friday, 14th October, we got the rental van at 09:30. Chris came to pick me up. We loaded the van and left at 11:30, arriving at the cottage 23:45. It was rainy and windy.

On Saturday, 15th it was still wet and very windy, so no flying. We just got the birds out and settled the dogs.

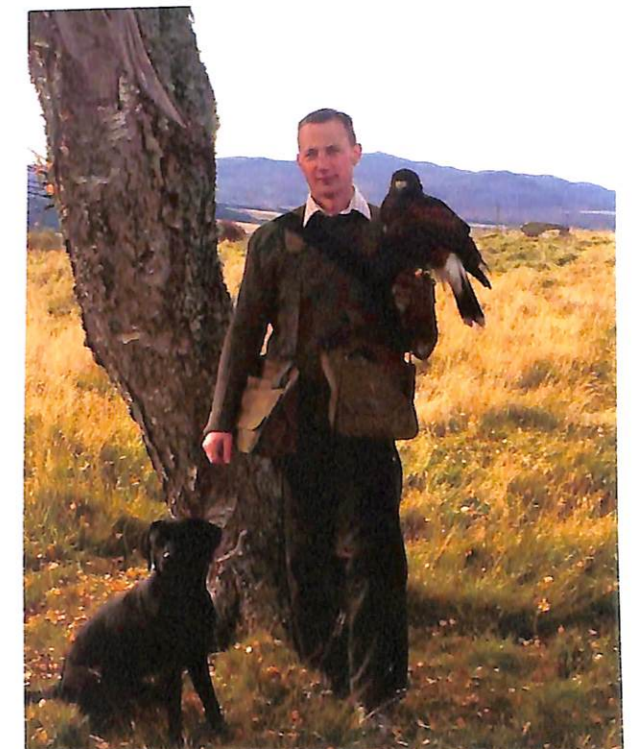
Sunday 16th was sunny and mild. Here we go! We walked 20 yards up the road and onto the moors. Ten feet in and Sky was slipped and nailed the first rabbit of the week. We had a cracking day. The dogs worked well and the birds had three each.

Monday 17th was sunny and breezy. Another good day: the birds had two rabbits each.

It was overcast and breezy on Tuesday 18th. We did a lot of walking and only ended up with two rabbits for Lady.

It was overcast again on Wednesday 19th. Alan had come out with us a few times but today he took us to a place on the moors that he saved for us. It was out in the middle of nowhere! There was a load of earths and rabbits everywhere: the dogs were going nuts. Mitzi went lame on the back leg so I put her back in the truck. We had a cracking day: Sky took four, Lady took three and the dog ran in on three more. She caught and let them go: not amused with dogs.

Although it was sunny on Thursday 20th, we had a quiet day with Sky getting one, as we were all knackered from the previous day.



It was sunny for our last day on Friday 21st! We went over by our nearest village and worked a side of the mountain and finished

off with Sky taking three and Lady three. What a great week. This year I took my male red-tail. He was still in training and at the end of each day I took him out, and by Thursday he was flying free and he nailed a "mixey" rabbit. His first entered of the season and I was well pleased. A big thanks to my hawking mate, Chris Drew, for a cracking week, to Joan for putting us up and a special thanks to Alan for taking us out and his good lady Diane for the cracking Sunday lunch and the going-home meal.

The trip home was long: road works, accidents and just tired. We left Scotland on Friday at 21:00 and got home Saturday 11:45. KNACKERED BUT WHAT A TRIP. COME ON NEXT YEAR.

The second group, consisted of Rudy Edwards, William Edwards and Eddie Jones.

We set off early morning on 21st October arriving in Dalwhinnie at 3 p.m. By half past, having flown three birds with myself having two rabbits with Scruff, my male goshawk; Eddie having a rabbit with his female goshawk, Gretchen, and another rabbit with his male goshawk, Mick; William having one rabbit with Merida, his red-tail x ferruginous hawk. William also had one with his English wire-haired pointer, Molly.



Having fed our birds, we made our way to the hotel.

On 22nd we made our way to our accommodation for the week and put our birds out to catch the morning sun. We set off at 12 to meet our Scottish friend Oz, as it was his ground we were flying on.

After a good day's flying with Scruff bringing the count to 4 rabbits, Merida having 2 more, Gretchen having one brown hare and Mike one rabbit we agreed it was a successful day.

Day 3, 23rd October was the first official day of hunting blue hares on the moor. Myself and Scruff, head out focussed on the task ahead. After walking for forty minutes to an hour, I get an indication off my young GSP, Lady, that something was close. After a minute or so of anticipation, a blue hare broke cover and Scruff was off. After sixty yards flying uphill and a rough and tumble that seemed to go on forever, the first blue hare was in the bag.

After some photos and a drink of whisky, we head back down the mountain working the dogs as we go. By the end of the day Merida with 1 blue hare, Gretchen with 2 blue hare, Scruff with two blue hares.



If this was an indication of the week we had to come, we were in for an exciting one.

24th October: We leave to a new moor with everyone's morale high from the day before. We ascend to certain heights and start to work back down, as it worked the day before. After bagging our first hare of the day, William's pointer, Molly, came on point with it being Scruff's turn to fly. I get into position for the flush when a covey of three grouse breaks cover and within a meter from me, Scruff was away and a second grouse. It seemed to myself

and Eddie that we had won the lottery that week and after many more flights at grouse and many more track downs ... we could not catch any more.

With still Mick, the male goshawk to fly, we go up on a second moor. We go roughly half way up the moor running my young German short-haired pointer, Lady. She comes on point and we both not knowing what it could be. With Eddie and Mike getting in position to call a flush, a covey of grouse broke. With Mike being already on his way, one unlucky grouse met his end with a male goshawk. After a lot of celebration and whisky, we call an end to the day.

With 29th October coming sooner than we thought, we end the trip with Meratha with 8 hares and 9 rabbits, Gretchen with



8 blue hares and 11 rabbits, Mike with 1 grouse and 10 rabbits and myself and Scruff with 7 blue hares, 1 grouse and 16 rabbits.

We're looking forward to going back: October 2017 can't come fast enough.



Festival of Falconry, 2017 from Gary Timbrell, IAF

The next International Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi will be held 4-9th December 2017. IAF is playing a much bigger role than previously. This festival will be based entirely on the Desert Camp format, which has been used in previous festivals. It will be centred around Remah and the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Falconry Academy where there are also designated hunting grounds nearby for falconers on foot and on camels.

The overall theme is "Youth" and the idea is to be able to demonstrate and promote the transmission of the falconry element to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, by using the festival, which is the only way we can assemble falconers from almost all the countries where there is any. It will be a very much smaller festival than previous ones.

The Emirates Falconers' Club has generously offered to continue sponsoring visiting falconers and an allocation of places has been agreed according to the number of falconers in each country and how they encourage youth. Sponsored delegates will be officially limited to youth and countries will be offered between 1 up to 3 youth places.

Youths sponsored will be fully funded, flight tickets, accommodation in the desert camp for the duration of the festival and all meals and visa costs, if applicable.

If there are several IAF member clubs in your country, you must decide between yourselves which young people you wish to send. IAF only wants their names and email addresses and we will send them the official invitation.

Sponsorship will only be considered for youths who are members of an IAF member club, unless there is no member club in that country, in which case we will look at cases on their individual merit.

Youth is defined as finishing at 25 years old. If a place is to be taken up by someone under 16 years old, they must be accompanied. If younger than 14 then they must travel with a parent, however the parent or person accompanying them must pay their own flight.

We will have many workshops and discussions based around the traditional majlis situations and proposed/managed by IAF. There will be less emphasis on parades and tents full of posters and more on debating and interaction between Young and Old falconers. At the end of the week the Festival will be open to the public with events centred on the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed school and Heritage Village, a short distance from the desert camp. There will also be an academic conference, run separately by the New York University Abu Dhabi.

ALL sponsored people will be expected to take part fully in the Festival and they MUST do a job. They could be expected to make a speaking contribution in the majlis. These can be long and informative speeches or brief descriptions of what they do at home, just something to contribute and explain how the element of falconry is being passed on to them. They could act as marshals or assistances in administration or something of their own suggestion.

A website is in preparation and all other information will appear there, including registration forms and details for non-sponsored people who wish to attend at their own expense. In the meantime, please select your young people according to the wishes of your club and the number of places your country has been offered.

Of course, you can still come at your own expense.

For the UK up to 4 Youths can be Sponsored.

The Golden Saker by Mark Williams

Like anywhere in the world spending time in a new culture you are inevitably exposed to and experience many new and interesting things however nowhere can quite compare to the Arabian gulf in regards to falconry. The relatively new found wealth is inescapable here and as a result all the very best of offerings seem to be present from Bugatti sports cars costing the price of a homestead in the USA or yachts that are worth more than the annual GDP of some small countries.

Falconry is no exception in both the scale and magnitude. Indeed, it is woven into the very fabric of the Arabic culture and the immense wealth here has served to facilitated some incredible opportunities and funded some amazing falcon breeding and falconry related projects.

The Arabian Gulf continues to be the ultimate destination for the very best falcons that breeders can produce from around the world as their customers are willing to pay top dollar for them. Hacked birds are always a preference and gyrs and gyr x peregrine hybrids seems the most prevalent although that too is regional specific within the Gulf. To this day, it seems Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the biggest consumers of the wild saker and wild peregrine (Shaheen). There is also still a strong traditional following of the use of wild (Whahesh) passage falcons, most of whom are released at the end of the season.

Inevitably in my role working here in the GCC (Gulf Co-operative Countries). I get to meet many interesting, varied people and therefore come across many unique and expensive falcons. One falcon that stands out is the golden saker, a bird that I only started to hear about when I relocated to Dubai in early 2013. Personally, the Saker would not be my first choice of falcon, however as mentioned they are the traditional bird in the Arabian gulf along

with the peregrine that is up until the past 15-20 years when they lost ground with the introduction of gyrs and gyr hybrids. The saker in particular has the advantage of being very adapt to the hot desert climate and while not as fast as a gyr, they seem to have that diesel motor that just keeps on going ...following their quarry at a steady pace for miles until it puts in and they close the deal on the ground. Ironically gyr x sakers are not popular or held in as high esteem and in previous years were often passed off as pure gyrs. Now customers are more astute and particular with their choice and with so many breeders producing birds it seems high quality genetics will always be popular.



There is no denying that these golden saker's are not hard to look at. It is basically a genetic mutation of the common saker and were supposedly first discovered in Mongolia and brought to Dubai to sell to the royal family members many years ago.

I'm no geneticist but it is caused by one "Dilute" gene, a Z chromosome which is one of two sex chromosomes found in birds (Z and W). Because it's a sex chromosome it dictates the sex of the bird and the female has one Z and one W sex chromosome whereas the male only has two Z chromosomes. Sex linked genes follow different pattern of inheritance in

males and females. It was first said that only the females have this coloration however I have since seen photos of two males that had golden plumage.

Ultimately these birds got into the hands of a few breeders and then selective breeding produced the birds we see today.



Golden Saker with houbara quarry

New Vet for South Wales Region by Mick Cordell.

Principal Vet, Simon Lyddon, of *Vine Tree Vets, Ross-on-Wye*, very kindly came to give a talk to the South Wales club members in October last year. Assisted by vet nurse Ali he gave a general talk about Bird of Prey keeping and what his practice has to offer our members. Being a falconer himself makes for a good bridge between vets and club members. Ali also gave a talk and demonstration on first aid in the field for our dogs. Simon has also given his time to write a short article on Bumblefoot for the Austringer, which is an interesting read.

At the following month's club meeting it was decided to invite Simon to become our South Wales regional club Vet which he gratefully accepted. He was also invited to our Christmas meal and it was nice to see Simon and his wife Mel at the function.

As you will see from his article he will come to speak to us again on any subject members feel require an in depth discussion.

It's nice to know we have an avian vet reasonably close to our area of South Wales, whether for routine mute testing or the emergency which may arise.

The females are not large and perhaps about the size of an average gyrfalcon (1050 grams) and yet when introduced properly seem ready to tackle large traditional quarry like houbara. The two different birds I saw hunt both in Kuwait and Dubai were very switched on to the houbara they were flown at. In the Gulf, many falcons are initially given bagged poultry like large domestic chickens and turkeys to build confidence to tackle wild houbara.

Like all things, the economy scale of supply and demand dictates the prices of these rare unusual falcons. It is frankly a vanity purchase and while their plumage is striking, the feathers appear very fine, delicate if not brittle, certainly in their first year and while coloration does moult out paler in subsequent years, I'm told by owners that the feather quality doesn't seem to improve. I suspect the feathers

are not very tolerant to UV light and lose colour over the season, which is considered desirable in some cases. At the beginning, we saw prices of around \$225,000 US for a nice colour / marked specimen although with the advent of additional breeders now, those prices will inevitably come down significantly as the novelty also wears off. However, since it's a short window of good times for the few breeders combined with the costs of obtaining their stock, perhaps for the foreseeable future these birds will likely remain beyond the reach of most ...certainly outside of the Gulf.

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- unlikely in the UK as most birds are fed a good quantity of day old chicks which are high in vitamin A
- Poor hygiene on blocks/perches, allowing a build-up of bacteria which may then work through the skin on the foot and cause infection
- Pressure necrosis, resulting in focal areas of damage to the foot



Typical bumblefoot sore

In the main the condition is brought about by a combination of the last two factors. Prolonged perching time on uniform surfaces results in areas of necrosis/damage to the skin, therefore softening the natural barrier defence of the skin surface which allows bacteria to penetrate up into the foot. This will establish a mild corn-like lesion which, if not identified and treated early, may progress to deeper tissues eventually involving tendons and possibly the joints. Once the infection is into these deeper tissues the prognosis becomes much worse.

Lesions are most commonly treated surgically to remove the damaged tissue and repair the foot. The birds are then typically put on a course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

Two important factors for treatment and prevention are:

1. Birds excessively weight bearing on one foot, either following treatment of one foot or through other forms of injury, must be given protection for the 'good' foot. Without this the bird is almost guaranteed to develop bumblefoot on the 'good' foot.
2. Once a bird has received treatment the husbandry for that bird must be reviewed and improved, without this the condition will almost certainly recur.



Dressing applied to lesion

As presented in the club meeting back in November, a daily check over of all birds is vital. This must include a check of how the bird is standing as well as a visual look at the skin on the underside of both feet. In addition, birds, especially falcons, should be given a range of perch options to prevent areas of pressure damage, all of which must be kept clean and regularly disinfected.

We are looking to do another presentation at an up-coming Club meeting. Please let us or Mick Cordell know of any topic areas you would be interested in discussing.

Bumblefoot by Simon Lyddon

Pododermatitis, to give it its fancy name, is a common bacterial condition which

affects the feet of captive raptors, especially falcons. Interestingly it is not seen in free living birds of prey.

Common associated factors:

- Penetration wounds, usually from rough abrasive surfaces on perches or branches
- Hypovitaminosis A (insufficient vitamin A), argued by some to be a linking factor but



More Snipe Hawking by Tony Adams

At the beginning of the season, Gwen, my reliable German wire-haired pointer, suffered a minor injury to her leg whilst jumping a fence, nothing serious, but I decided to rest her for a week to help her recover.



Tony and Chris

Meanwhile, my hunting partner, Chris, offered to work his 4-year-old Visla bitch, Vixen, just to keep the two tiercels going. The tiercels, had only 'flown' with Gwen in the past, and had never flown over another dog before, but I thought if I flew

them a bit keener it would keep them focused.

The first morning flying without the trusty German wire-haired pointer was an odd experience as she hadn't missed a day in seven seasons snipe hawking. I wasn't sure how things were going to go that day but things got off to a good start. Vixen came on point and with Llew, the older tiercel, going first. Straight away he acknowledged the dog on point and began mounting, I was pleasantly surprised. A good flush and a short chase and the snipe was well on his way to freedom and out of sight in no time. The only thing.... Llew didn't seem to have any loyalty to Vixen while she was searching for another snipe and decided to go wandering. After a 45 minute walk back to the car, roof mount on and off we went chasing the bleep. Cutting a long story short, we picked him up at the coast 20 miles away, (at one point we thought he was on the Irish Ferry which was departing).



Chris's Visla

No flying for Dewi that day but he was first to go the following morning.

The following day was almost a carbon copy of the day before, with Dewi loyal whilst Vixen was on point but refusing to wait on while the dog was locating quarry and he too cleared off. Again, it was a day of bouncing signals in and out of the car, up and down the valleys and over the mountains. It's very difficult tracking a moving target as I'm sure some of you know. One minute signal was strong and 'on near', the next it was weak and 'on far'. We had a good signal at one point 'on near', so I thought I'd jump out of the car and leg it across the fields leaving Chris in the car. I kept adjusting my direction whilst I was walk/running, swinging the lure the same time when the signal just got weaker. I turned around and made my way back to the car, only problem I couldn't remember which direction I'd come from, and spent a frustrating 45 minutes looking - old age I guess.... I eventually found a road and flagged a car down and very embarrassingly asked the driver, if there was a car in the lay-by along the road which he had driven up, thankfully he said yes and Chris and I were soon back on the case tracking Dewi down. With the light fading, Dewi was staying in the same area and eventually in the evening light he came in to the lure.

I drove home at the end of a pretty stressful weekend, thankfully, having 2 birds still on the cage. Two lessons were learnt that weekend - 1- don't take the dog for granted, 2 - it was time to order GPS telemetry. Whilst I resisted ordering the early systems, (I was happy with the Marshall Turbo transmitter), the time was right to bite the bullet and purchase the GPS supplied by Micro-sensory. It was a long 3 weeks waiting for the delivery, but it was well worth waiting for.

It took a little while to get the hang of using the new kit, but eventually I could see it was going to be a huge asset to

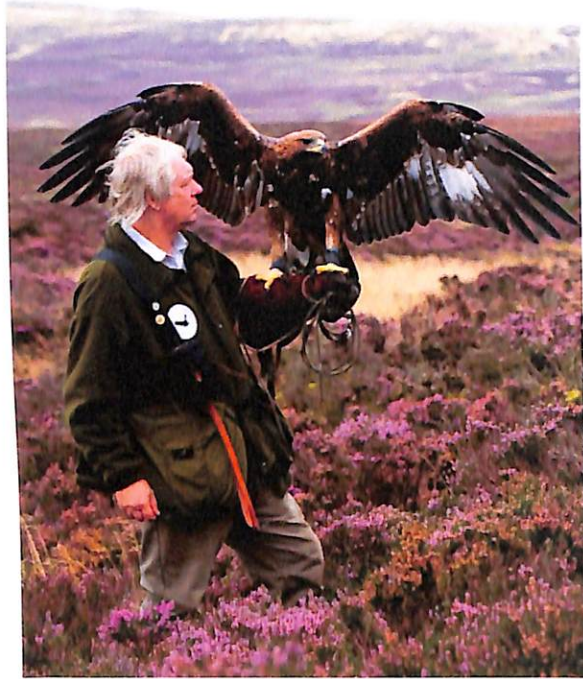
flying birds. Here's a few examples of how the kit comes in handy.

One day I put Dewi, the young one, up over a point and a wild peregrine came in and ruined the set up. A chase ensued and although out of sight I was able to follow the proceedings on the hand set for a few kilometres. The rest of the tracking was done by sending a text (to the bird), and getting a location within mins, and the satnav directing us almost to the tree he was sitting in.

Another example of the technology, whilst flying in Mid Wales. This time with Llew, the older tiercel, flying over a point, which was in a down draught on the leeward side of the long sloping hill. On casting Llew off, he did his usual couple of passes over the dog, went straight down the mountain and out of sight. Glancing down at the hand set it showed he was going away from me over to the other side of the valley. Obviously, looking for natural lift, he was 2 km away, although out of sight I knew where he was. At one point, he was 4 km away and 200 metres altitude. I probably would have made my way back to the car at this point, but knowing he was ringing up. I stayed put and watched the data coming in. Eventually the falcon symbol on the screen started heading back and soon Llew was in a high position over the dog, Gwen had held the point lovely. A perfect flush and stoop saw Llew eating a warm snipe that day.

Another added feature of the GPS was the whole flight was recorded from start to finish and could be kept as a record stating pitch, stoop, speed etc. There's probably more to learn from the Micro-sensory but for now I'm getting by. I highly recommend this system, it takes the stress out of flying; falcons especially. I'd like to thank Chris for the use of his dog Vixen and his patience whilst tracking the falcons down this season also to Les up in Mid Wales.

The Golden Eagle and Falconry by Dr David Glynne Fox



© Alex Hyde

Ever since I took up falconry during the late 1950's and early 1960's, I have pondered over the origins of falconry. Where did it actually originate and who was the first person to even think that it could be possible to train such birds for man's benefit? The answer of course is that we shall never know, for these origins have all been lost in the mists of time. However, every single account that I have read has always presumed that the first raptor to be trained for falconry was usually a peregrine or goshawk, and perhaps with good reason, for these two have long been the mainstay preferred by falconers the world over. Let us look at this aspect for a moment. Of course, I could well be wide of the mark and probably am, but considering where the art is considered to have begun, the steppes of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, China and possibly even Japan, there is every reason to believe that the first raptor ever trained

may not have been one of the aforementioned at all. When one considers this region and its falconry history, it is just conceivable that the first raptor ever trained could perhaps have been a Golden Eagle! Golden Eagles have been trained, flown and used for hawking purposes in this region for hundreds, if not thousands of years, as indeed they are today and in some parts, such as Mongolia and Kazakhstan, they are the preferred choice, due to the available quarry, such as foxes and wolves. You may scoff, but it is entirely feasible, so why not?

As we will never know the who, why and where, it is purely academic, but one aspect is for sure, it has taken an amazingly long time for eagles to become popular in the western hemisphere, despite the fact that it has been known for a great many years that Golden Eagles have been flown successfully for millennia at wild quarry in Mongolia, Kazakhstan and neighbouring regions. They were a great favourite of Genghis Khan and ancient travellers regaled their contemporaries with fantastic tales of these magnificent birds taking out wolves, foxes, deer and hares and yet, the wheels were extraordinarily slow to grind as far as Europe was concerned, with the United Kingdom taking even longer to recognise the prowess of this powerful raptor. The burden of carrying such a heavy raptor in the field for extended periods is probably one of the main reasons as to why eagle falconry never took off until recently. The weight, size and power of Golden Eagles is certainly something to consider very deeply when thinking of taking up this exacting and exciting branch of falconry.

The first recorded European falconer to train and fly Golden Eagles appears to be Friederich Remmler, a Finnish falconer, and it was he who basically introduced eagles to the falconers of Europe. Others

were experimenting with them for sure and experienced falconers such as the German falconer, Fritz Loges was beginning to have some success at this time but he, like the author, met with some opposition and not a little derision from his fellow falconers, most of whom believed eagles were a complete waste of time and not worth the bother of training. Falconry authors during the 1960's did little to encourage eagle falconry and in fact, they downright considered them to be worse than useless. Humphrey Ap Evans went so far as to state that the only use for eagles was as fist ornaments in a pageant. My later research demonstrated that none of these authors had ever trained a Golden Eagle for long enough or even trained one at all, and some had never even seen a properly trained eagle put through its paces, yet their writings were taken as gospel, for after all, they were very well-known experienced falconers, where they not? Yes, this is very true but only in their own chosen field of falconry interest, which seldom, if ever, included eagles. Personally, I was having a fair amount of success with eagles during my early falconry career, which is why I persevered with them and at the time, could not understand for the life of me why these authors should be so full of condemnation. I only realised much later that so little was known about the flying of eagles for

falconry purposes and this is of course why, when one consults earlier written works, that eagles were given such short shrift, a paragraph at most, or not even mentioned at all.

There are a number of eagles that can be used successfully for falconry, the Bonelli's comes to mind, for one, but in my humble opinion, the Golden Eagle is the preferred choice of most serious eagle falconers. It is no coincidence that if one scrutinises the photographs taken on the Continental eagle field meets, such as Opocno, where many eagle falconers gather, with often up to thirty in number, all the eagles are invariably Golden's, and with good reason. Firstly, they are hardy enough to withstand all the harsh weather that nature throws at them, cutting through cold, biting winds, because they live naturally in this environment in the northern hemisphere, where cold temperatures and blinding snowstorms are commonplace. I have been out hawking where the snow is literally blowing horizontally. Tropical eagles tend to suffer in such an environment and their feathering, being not so compact, tends to allow the moisture in more rapidly than that of a Golden Eagle and therefore quickly become sodden and therefore grounded. Secondly, they are highly raptorial and readily chase a variety of quarry under falconry field conditions.



Star returns to the fist after a moorland flight © Peter Moonlight

Many falconers have asked me which is the preferred eagle for serious falconry? This of course depends on a number of factors, but I have trained and flown a number of eagle species over the years and have been out in the field with others, and I have to say that, even on performance alone, I would choose a Golden Eagle every time, especially in most of the northern hemisphere. I would love to try a Harpy or a Crowned Eagle, but given the choice, and for serious falconry purposes, I would always forsake these for the Golden, and so would most of the eagle falconers known to me personally, not least because they are tried and tested and have been for millennia. I am also often asked, would I choose a parent reared or an imprint eagle. If I was looking for eagles to breed from, I may well choose imprints, simply because they are so bonded with humans that artificial insemination is rendered much easier, if artificial insemination was the route opted for. However, if purely for falconry reasons, I would always choose a parent-reared bird. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly is one of noise. Unless one lives a good distance from other human habitation, I would strongly avoid taking on an imprint. They are usually very, very vocal and can scream all day long, whether one is present or not and if one has close neighbours, I can guarantee one will sooner, rather than later, receive major complaints. This problem is not to be taken lightly, for their high-pitched calls carry for long distances and as aforementioned, it can be continuous, all day long. It will drive one mad and of course, so it will with one's neighbours and with possible legal action being threatened. So, if one is considering flying a Golden Eagle, from this standpoint alone, avoid any eagle that is imprinted, even a dual imprint, which for those who are unfamiliar with the term, simply means a bird that has been hand-reared but is also in the constant presence of another eagle, whether that eagle be a sibling or a

foster parent. Crèche-reared eagles that are hand fed by humans in plain sight are also imprints and best avoided and I am speaking here of eagles specifically. This is only one reason for not choosing an imprint. Having said this, it is possible to prevent an imprint from screaming and that is to get it flying on game, a lot of game, as soon and as often as possible. Screaming birds associate the falconer with food and so consider him or her as the food source. Basically, screaming is usually associated with food begging and the best way to eliminate this trait, in my limited opinion, is to ensure one has a plentiful supply of wild game in order that the eagle can transfer its food allegiance away from the falconer. It is surprising how many would-be falconers purchase a hawk without any consideration for the type of game suitable for the species and whether or not they have access to such game, if not, then screaming will be much more difficult to eliminate.

The second reason why I would not choose an imprint is one of aggression. Both parent-reared and imprints may exhibit varying degrees of aggression, because every eagle, like every human, has its own characteristics, but it has been my experience that imprints generally are far more aggressive than parent-reared eagles. Aggression in smaller raptors can be very annoying, but with eagles, due to the size, power and weight, this takes on a whole new meaning. Aggression in eagles is something to avoid at all costs if possible. There are some who state that a Golden Eagle is merely a large Harris's Hawk! This is a wildly inaccurate and dangerous statement to make, and invariably comes from those whose knowledge of eagles is generally non-existent. An imprint eagle is already used to humans, or certain humans and so this does tend to cut down the training time somewhat, but the eagle also has no fear of humans and as such, is very likely to begin the training sessions by snatching at

food, or the falconer, and generally being irritatingly aggressive. These imprints need very careful handling indeed. By acquiring an imprint, only a very small amount of training time is saved, a week or two at most, simply because eagles rapidly bond with their handlers anyway and parent-reared eagles soon catch up with their imprint counterparts in training. If an imprint does become aggressive, as most do, then the eagle falconer has a problem, and if said falconer has just upgraded from a smaller hawk, then usually the first inclination is one of extreme shock. I have lost count of how many would-be eagle falconers have been frightened out of their wits by the sudden onslaught of an aggressive eagle upon their person. The aggression that can arise from large eagles is to be taken very seriously indeed and to be truthful one can seldom fully trust one hundred per cent, even one's own bird. My eagle, Star, a dual imprint which I have flown for eight seasons at the time of writing, gave me a hard time for the first two years he was with me. I had read beforehand that male eagles were far less aggressive than females. I can tell you from first-hand experience that this is absolute nonsense. A male Golden Eagle is still a very large bird and is capable of inflicting considerable damage to the falconer who fails to observe his bird's body language. After Star's first two years, something switched in his psyche and he became a joy to handle and fly and never once attempted to launch an attack upon me, that is, until 2016. I had been flying him every season for eight years with no problems, and then, after putting him down to moult after his eighth season, he attacked me. I always free-loft my eagles, so when I went to change his bath water, he was free in the flight, as he always is. I didn't even pay him a second glance, why should I, he had been no bother to me for six full years? Yet on this day in question, for reasons known only to himself, he launched an all-out attack upon me, grabbing my right shoulder with stabbing motions from both feet. He left several

gaping holes in my flesh and ruined a perfectly good shirt. After that, I took my gauntlet in with me and kept a wary eye on what he was doing. He tried twice more to attack me in the weeks that followed and the only reason I can think of for this out of character behaviour would be a rise in testosterone, the male sex hormone. This was at the precise time of year he would normally be breeding, so this could be a distinct possibility and is my main prognosis for these assaults. He was not hungry either for he was up in weight due to the moult. He had been put down to moult earlier than normal that year due to the atrocious weather conditions that affected most falconers hawking season. I mention this specifically for anyone considering taking on an eagle, because as I hope I have demonstrated, one need to keep an eye open at all times and would highly recommend any such person to seriously consult experienced eagle falconers for help and advice, preferably BEFORE acquiring said eagle. So, how does one go about reducing aggression or eliminating it as far as is possible? The answer is the same as for screaming. One needs to channel this aggression into hunting wild quarry as often as possible. This usually works well, but I guess there are a few problem eagles that need more work, but hawking at wild quarry on a very regular basis can and does usually work wonders. Remember, regular hawking at wild quarry is the golden rule for falconry. It keeps the bird stimulated and can also prevent undesired problems occurring. There is still a lot we do not know about Golden Eagles, but we are learning.

I mentioned body language earlier. It never fails to astound me how few falconers ever learn this important aspect of bird behaviour. It is not just about aggression, for birds display certain characteristics when they are ill and for other reasons. One should always learn to read the signs, which is very important, for it could even mean the life or death of the bird. Recognising signs of illness for example,



should be paramount in any falconer, but alas, this is not always so. Reading an eagle for signs of aggression is equally paramount. Here are a few signs with which one needs to become familiar:

1. The eagle drops one wing and lowers her head. This is often a signal that the bird is about to launch an attack.
2. The raising of the nape hackles in a certain manner can also mean an attack is imminent.



Hackles raised, need not necessarily mean aggression. Here the eagle is simply rousing.



An eagle with its head in a bowed position and glancing over a dropped wing – BEWARE.

3. Stamping of the feet upon the perch can also be a sign of aggression and subsequent attack.
4. An eagle on a kill, or lure, will throw back its hackle-raised head, press its wings and tail into the ground and generally seem threatening. This is when caution is required when making in.
5. Never openly rob an eagle of its food. Always be as surreptitious as possible when switching the kill or lure for a substitute pick-up piece. Failure in this aspect will almost certainly bring resentment on the part of the eagle, and

they never forget it. I always use a fairly large pick-up piece, such as a rabbit's hind leg because I can easily remove this, without risking resentment from the eagle once the latter is hooded, hence one good reason for hooding one's bird.

Failure to observe such simple, yet highly important signs may well result in a full on attack and if the falconer hasn't spotted the signs, he or she is likely to have a problem to contend with. Remember, these eagles are not toys and can hospitalise one in split seconds.

I have thought long and hard about writing the above, simply because it could possibly prove detrimental to future eagle falconry. However, this aspect is minimised out of all proportion when one considers the stupid comments constantly placed on social media sites. What do these "falconers" think they are doing? Such sites are closely monitored by numerous "anti" societies and suchlike and one can rest assured, the day will come when these ridiculous postings are used against us all, and there will be little we can say in our defence. These people know who they are, yet still persist in writing such garbage. Threats from the EU are serious enough, yet the threats from these keyboard warriors are far more damaging and will, I am sure, provide the death knell for falconry in the UK. They don't even seem to realise that such postings will also destroy their own raptor activities. I refuse to call them falconers.

Something else I have heard very frequently of late is the advice given to inexperienced eagle falconers about not flying eagles to the fist. Only fly to the lure they say, as this prevents attacks. I dispute this entirely. By all means, fly eagles to the lure, I do it all the time, but I also fly my eagles regularly to the fist. On much of the land at my disposal for hawking, there are large stands of heather and other vegetation that do not lend themselves to the use of the lure because it cannot be seen by the eagle. Often I have to recall my

eagle to the fist because of the knee-high plant growth, for it would be impractical to do anything else. Also I have heard some say that eagles are not aggressive on the lure and cannot hurt the falconer by its constant use. If one is using a whole dead rabbit as a lure, then there is some truth in this, for generally, there is enough food present to keep the eagle occupied. However, using dummy lures is very different. Once the piece of food has been consumed, many eagles look around for more and upon viewing the falconer, may well leave the lure and launch an attack, because they still see the falconer as the food provider. I have seen this happen on many occasions, to the point of witnessing one falconer being grabbed in both kneecaps. Not a pleasant experience I can assure you. I always use a full rabbit for a lure and also long field jesses for flying to the fist. For the latter method, I hold my gloved hand high up so that the incoming eagle cannot foot me and then grab the long jesses, so giving me instant control, you have no control whatsoever when an eagle is free and on a lure. Each to their own of course, but I sometimes wonder if those who advocate sole use of the lure and not fist-flying and often throw tid-bits down on the ground when recalling their eagle, are not just a little intimidated by their charge. For a great many years, there were a mere handful of falconers who regularly flew eagles in the UK, now it appears just about everyone is suddenly an eagle expert! It takes many years to understand eagles and I have to say that after more than fifty years flying these incredible birds, I am still learning on an annual basis. Every eagle is different in so many ways and as such I feel it will be a very long time before the last word is written on this subject.

One major problem we are now facing is that eagles have never been so easy to acquire and if one has the money, anyone can, unfortunately, own a Golden Eagle. There are several breeders in the UK and many more on the Continent of Europe

who regularly sell their eagle progeny to falconers. And this is fine. However, I have come to the disturbing conclusion that not all of these breeders check the credentials of the would-be purchasers of their stock, merely seeing the flash of currency being waved about. I know this is true because such beginners often contact me for help, often AFTER they have purchased the eagle. On two of these occasions known to me personally, the new owners had never owned a hawk of any description before! When I asked why they wanted a Golden Eagle, the invariable reply was, "Because it was a challenge!" My instant response being, "A tiger is a challenge, but you wouldn't go out and buy one of those would you?" I have even had one state that, "Well, a Golden Eagle isn't a tiger so that's not a fair comparison," to which my immediate response is: "Try telling me that when you are grabbed full on in the face by the powerful feet of the eagle!" And this has actually happened. It would be easy to put the phone down on such people, but that doesn't solve anything. The chances are, they already have the eagle and rightly or wrongly, they are going to attempt to fly it, heaven forbid. They, at this stage anyway, are not going to pass the bird on to someone with more experience and plan to continue, so I have a choice, ignore them altogether, or try to help them. These people have often tried to obtain help elsewhere before coming to me and have been given a right royal earful before having the phone slammed down upon them, and of course, this is quite understandable, but it doesn't help the situation. I feel I have to see this scenario in a different light. They need help and have asked for it, which at least shows a modicum of common sense and thus I feel it is my duty to try and pass on any help I can give. Whether or not this advice is acted upon is another matter, and indeed I have a couple of instances where my advice was ignored in favour of someone else's, with little eagle experience as it turned out, and the beginner paid the price.

Aggression apart, another aspect has to be taken into consideration Golden Eagles cannot be flown just anywhere, even where such species as Tawny and Bald Eagles for example can be flown safely, such as public displays. Golden Eagles are an entirely different proposition and are totally unsuitable for public flying demonstrations, which is why one only sees Golden Eagles and not other species being flown at controlled field meets, because Golden Eagles are the ones that do the business of serious hawking. Because of their very nature, Golden Eagles should never be considered for flying demonstrations. Huge Steller's Sea Eagles, virtually useless for hawking purposes, despite their impressive size and weaponry, can however be flown safely on public displays and are doing so now on a regular basis, such as at Warwick Castle,

but these massive eagles are nothing like as raptorial as the Golden Eagle and are unlikely to cause problems in the same way that Golden Eagles could do. It takes a certain attitude to keep on terms with a Golden Eagle and one must be absolutely dedicated to flying this species to realise success. It has to be said that not everyone possesses this attitude and so failure is a given, with the bird eventually being passed on. This does nothing for the eagle at all, but there are those macho types who seem to think that owning a Golden Eagle would be fun. This merely makes for an unhappy eagle and an even more unhappy, would-be falconer. My advice is simply this: if you haven't got the time, the land, the quarry and the aptitude, leave eagles well alone and save the sport from future embarrassment.



Classic leap – the hare evades the eagle © Peter Moonlight

Despite the foregoing, most falconers are highly responsible and as with other pursuits, it is merely a handful of brain-dead idiots who cause problems for the rest of us. There are many excellent falconers in the UK and that includes eagle falconers, who strive to keep the sport clean, legal and safe and I am grateful to them for this. We have a long and fascinating history and heritage of falconry

in the UK and it must be preserved at all costs. I have been flying eagles in the UK for over half a century with no problems whatsoever. True, I have been whacked a few times, due to my own carelessness or being inattentive at the wrong moment, but I am only human and it is only me that gets hurt, but we have to be careful with our sport and prove to be good ambassadors, for there are some out there

simply looking for an excuse to put the lid on us. By flying a Golden Eagle in the wrong place, such as a public park, piece of waste ground or a country fair, one is asking for trouble. One needs to have a good all round field of view, free from people and domestic pets in order to fly one's eagle safely. One never knows what is around the corner or on the other side of a hill, so great care has to be exercised. This is why soaring flights are out of the question, particularly in England. If a soaring eagle locks onto a previously unseen dog walker with a little dog, all the whistle blowing and shouting will be of no use. An eagle that is used to taking large hares will have no problem subduing a small dog and this is a scenario we cannot afford. The backlash from such an event would be considerable, so we need to take every step possible to avoid such conflict. And it is easy to do this, with common sense. We have a good relationship with many conservation bodies who use falconers, or falconry techniques in their work as conservationists and it would be a crying shame if the senseless activities of a few should spoil this liaison. The British Falconers' Club Eagle Group was formed, not to provide eagle field meets for all and sundry, as some believed, but was formed as an educational platform to help those in need of advice with eagles, and there have been many who have received our help. We give our advice freely and generously where needed, whether they are members of the BFC or not, because we feel that without such available advice, the stage would be set for unimaginable problems and adverse publicity. All one has to do to obtain such advice is to consult the British Falconer's Club headquarters who will pass on any requests to the relevant people within the group.

To those in the past who criticised anyone who even thought of flying an eagle, I can feel justly vindicated, for eagle falconry today is now a recognised, bona vide branch of mainstream falconry and this has come about through the careful and hard

work of a number of falconers worldwide and in my own lifetime. The problem is, there are now too many people wishing to become involved and this at a time when suitable hawking land is at a premium. Most quite rightly jealously guard the locations of their hawking rights, for there are some who will poach on land without a second thought, which is why the BFC Eagle Group is very careful when organising field meets as to who is attending. The Eagle Group has put on many highly successful field meets and when I think back, to when I first began eagle falconry in the early 1960's, this is incredible. It would not be too difficult today, although rather pointless, to put thirty eagles in the field at any one time. This was unheard of even a decade ago, demonstrating the popularity that eagle falconry is now enjoying. Let us hope that this will not become a double-edged sword and return to harm us. Whilst everyone has their own favourite raptor, for me personally, watching a well-trained Golden Eagle hurtling across wide-open fields in full pursuit of a brown hare, and watching the latter perform its miraculous high flying leap over the eagle to escape scot free, is a sight given to few. Over the years, I have enjoyed some amazing hawking exploits with Golden Eagles and I hope I retain the physical ability to continue doing so for many more. In my lifetime, the Golden Eagle has, at last, come of age regarding falconry in the UK. It would be an absolute disaster, if eagle falconry halted, in the very decade that it began to take off due to stupidity on the part of just a few mindless morons. I sincerely hope that, despite the antics of some of the aforementioned, eagle falconry will continue to flourish, albeit safely, for the foreseeable future. I hope the sport will still be a viable proposition for when my grandson decides he would like to try his hand at this fascinating, age-old sport. Please, keep it safe.

David Glynne Fox
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Telemetry a Must by Steve Richards

This is a must: for the first time, in 3 years of having his female Harris' Hawk, my hunting partner and good mate, Chris Drew had to make use of it.

Sunday Morning, 22nd January 2017 - a sunny day. Chris, his daughter Emily, my grandson Llewelyn and I, were flying our birds and ferreting through a big wood near our home. On the edge of the wood, we ferreted a small earth of four holes. Out came a rabbit and Chris slipped his hawk, Sky. The rabbit ran the fence in the fields. The chase went down over two fields.

Chris gave chase through the woods and, fifteen minutes later came back without Sky. He said he called her but there was no sign of her.

We all went down the wood line calling and looking for her. After about 250 yards, we came across and passed an old disused badger set of about fifteen holes. We carried on down the wood: still nothing. Then, on our way back, by which time, Chris had his Marshall receiver out - without a bleep. As we walked past the badger holes again, the receiver beeped once. We looked at each other and said "Oh No!". It was "Oh Yes!". Chris pointed his receiver down the hole and it went bonkers.



Extricating the rabbit

I phoned my wife, Deb, to bring us some shovels and we started to dig. There was another hole about ten feet away from where we got the signal. So, we started to dig between the holes. Chris dug the entrance wider so he could have a look in. About ten minutes later, as I broke through into the tube we heard a bell. We stopped and then heard the bell again. Chris ran over to the other hole and there was his hawk trying to drag out the rabbit she had killed in the hole.



..and then the bird!

What a sigh of relief all round and Chris was over the moon that he got her back safely.

So, as Chris and I were always told when we started falconry by loads of our mates in the WHC, that no matter how much your telemetry costs - and you may only use it once - it is worth every penny to get back your bird that you have trained and that is your hunting partner.

Sky was back safe.

IAF Field Meet, Ireland, 2016 by Nick Havemann-Mart



Following our recent decision to re-join IAF I attended the 47th Council of Delegates Meeting which was held in Sneem, Co Kerry, Ireland during November 2016. The main meeting in Sneem was attended by falconers from all over Europe either as delegates or as falconers participating in the field meet. Hawking was either snipe for longwings or pheasants and ground game for the short and broad-wings. All the hawks in attendance were in excellent condition and some fine sport was shown. I am happy to report that no hawks were lost and all returned home with their owners. We were represented by a group of austringers who reported success and great days hawking. The longwing groups were very large and accompanied by up to 50 spectators, luckily there were plenty of snipe and some fine flying was shown. Falconers from across Europe succeeded in catching snipe as well as the local falconers.

The delegates meetings took place in the mornings with hawking in the afternoon. At the delegates' meeting, there were reports and presentations on the conferences attended and the work carried out by the IAF in the previous year. A full breakdown of the work carried out

by IAF can be found on their website: www.IAF.org

At the delegates' meeting, new members were admitted from Bahrain, Greece, Malta, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and a new club from the UK Yorkshire Hawking Club. This brings the number of countries represented in IAF to 86 making it one of the largest conservation NGO's in the world. Ralph Rogers stood down as vice-president for the Americas and Dan Cecchini was elected into the post.

The meeting in Sneem was followed by an International Conference on the "Stewardship of Biodiversity and Sustainable Use" which was organised by the Irish Hawking Club and the IAF as an important international discussion and review on the subject of Wild Take and Sustainable Use of raptors for the purpose of falconry. This was held in Moy Valley in the midlands of Ireland, an area of famous Irish bog lands. The snipe hawking now moved up a gear and many more snipe were found and flown.

Talks were given by international guest speakers with credentials in Raptor Biology, Raptor Monitoring, Conservation Management and Science. The conference relied heavily on research, science and the facts of existing wild take schemes. A

document will be published containing the papers presented to record this event. In the evening talks were given on Falconry Archives in the USA and UK, the work of the Falconry Heritage Trust, the re-introduction of peregrines into the USA and other falconry subjects.

Professors Tom Cade, Christian Saar and Carl Jones were presented with the IAF Presidential Award by Adrian Lombard. They are three of the world's foremost raptor conservationists and all are falconers.

Photo and assistance from Rachelle and Mark Upton

New Kid on the Block with Silver Hair! by Mark

Parker

Many years ago, when I was about 10 years of age I used to cut up my Mum's leather handbags to make jesses, bewits and leashes from various patterns that I had seen in different falconry books. I did not really know what I was doing and certainly did not have the correct tools to do things properly, also got the wrong bag on some occasions which led to all things birds of prey being banished or revoked by my parents. But in all honesty, I had a lot of fun trying to produce my own equipment, did in fact use some of it on my first ever falcon. It was not perfect but it did the job. What is bizarre about this situation is that I do not ever recall seeing myself as a person that one day would be making falconry equipment as part of my own business.

I've been very lucky to have worked professionally within the falconry and bird of prey sector for many, many years. This has been mainly teaching falconry courses, working with a large collection of birds of prey and taking part in flying demonstrations, etc. In this time, I have always made a variety of equipment items for many different species and to many different designs primarily for the birds used at the centre (ICBP) where I worked at the time and secondly for friends and colleagues where I had received special requests for something specific that was unavailable elsewhere or they just liked the way I made it. Most I gave away as gifts, I just enjoyed seeing people use it.

Then one day a work colleague suggested to me that I should be making this equipment for myself and selling it as part of my own business, that I was wasting an opportunity by doing it for someone else.

I was not really sure about this at first but as time went on and things began to change at ICBP and go in different directions I began to consider it a possible option. Over time I tried out some of my designs and products by selling some of the items in the shop at ICBP and at the Falconry Weekend. This was, to my complete surprise, very successful, which really threw me. I really did not think that the interest would be there, that perhaps my products were not even good enough. Also, my Equipment is quite expensive in comparison to many other suppliers so I was not sure much of it would sell.

Apparently, that was not the case, which was backed up by a number of people who did advise me that 'Quality products will always sell themselves. One Arab Falconer who I was teaching on a course at the time explained to me that they had a saying in the Middle East, namely: "expensive is cheap". He explained that good quality will last much longer than cheap quality and therefore over time will actually save you money. It was the success of these trial runs that effectively gave me the confidence that maybe perhaps this could work and that I should consider giving it a try.

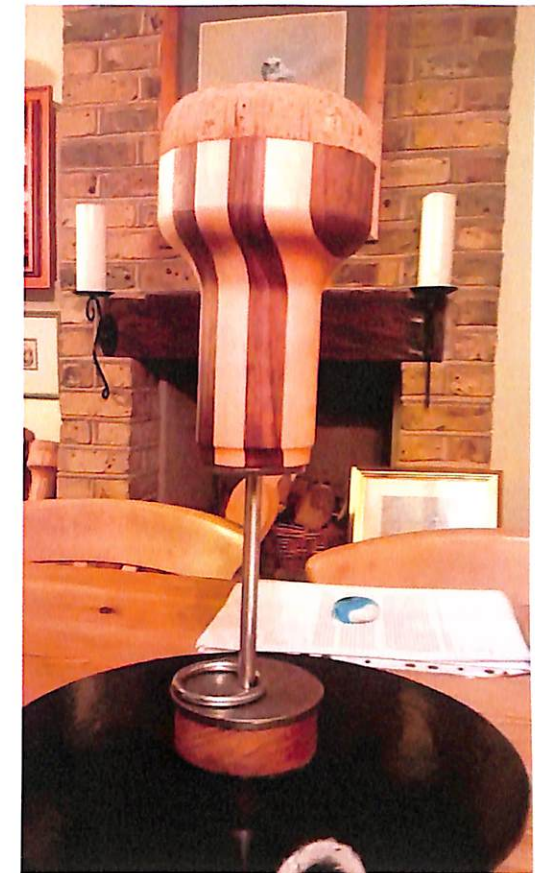
Subsequently to all of this my decision to leave ICBP came along sooner rather than later and I left the centre in January this year. A sad time but definitely the right choice to move on. This gave me the opportunity to dive full on into my Falconry Equipment business and in the same month SILVER FOX FALCONRY was born.

The name originated from a nick name that some of the staff at ICBP used to call me, also I had watched a well-known TV program concerning people starting a business where they were discussing brand names and the general advice was that it should be catchy, easy to spell, one word should be a colour and the other an animal. A friend suggested I use my nick name, so that was that.

Though it has always been my dream and intention to own and run a dedicated Falconry School, do the odd lecture and some specialised courses the main objective at this point in time is to develop the Equipment side of things.

As soon as my situation went live, so to speak, on Facebook and a business page organised, to my complete amazement things went crazy and the orders came flooding in. It really surprised me as I'm not really an FB person, but as an advertising medium its very good. The website is on its way and hopefully I will still be solvent at the end of the year. It's a scary thing running your own business but it's also exciting and very rewarding doing something that you are passionate about and really enjoy. It's also a refreshing thing to be free of all the restrictions and politics of the past and being able to set my own agenda.

My aims regarding the Equipment that I make is to produce all items to the best quality and design that I can. I've tried to use my experience gained in the past to understand what does or does not work. If I cannot produce an item to an acceptable standard, then I do not sell it or make it available. I always try to look at an



equipment item and then try and develop it in such a way that I believe it works, is durable and will be enjoyed by Falconers, Keepers and trainers alike. And with all items produced where appropriate the welfare factors of how it may affect the birds they are for is a very important consideration. I like tradition but I am certainly open to new ideas and designs. Though it's safe to say that I will not be attempting to reinvent the wheel.

There are many different items of Falconry Equipment that I do produce, many are bespoke and made specifically for an individual or a bird. This is especially so when it comes to Lure sticks, which are custom made from various hardwoods to suit hand size and desired weight. There are number of designs that I am always playing about with, the most popular at the moment are the ones with steel bands which are very tricky to do, but very different and hopefully pleasing to the eye.

Blocks again made from a single hardwood or a mixture in various patterns, colour and sizes with predominantly cork tops

are also in big demand and great fun to make, I have recently invested in a brand-new lathe which is an absolute joy to use. It's the difference between driving a Porsche or using my old lathe a rather clapped out Ford Transit.

Also very popular are the solid stainless steel bow perches with padded leather tops. I've kept to a traditional design with this one which I really like.

One of my favourite products are the stainless-steel swivels, these are specially made by hand by a very clever and industrious friend. In my opinion they are the best swivels available.

There is lots of other stuff available too; bags and gloves are certainly in the pipeline. If you are looking at possibly changing your style of anklets then why not consider a traditional design of false aylmeri anklet that only has one brass eyelet on each anklet as opposed to two

that many of the modern designs incorporate. Easy to put on and take off without having to cut through them. They are basically a mixture of the true aylmeri anklet and the traditional Jesses of old.

I think it's fair to say that I am very OCD when it comes to my equipment and though it is advantageous to make money I would rather make little profit and have someone happy with a product as opposed to making a big profit and someone not being very happy with it. I know that you cannot make everybody happy all of the time, but I am certainly going to try. Falconers are certainly hard to please and they all have very different opinions on how things should be done so it's going to be tough for sure. I will never be rich but if I can survive this first year I will be very happy.

A selection of my products are shown below.



The Moulnt by Lyn Palmer

What does the Austringer do when the hunting season comes to an end? After a long hectic time battling against the cold wind and rain I tend to welcome this period as a time to recharge my fading batteries.



I give my bird full rations; she is rarely handled and never flown. She is given the opportunity of dropping old feathers and in their place newer healthier ones grow.

During this time, I turn to my other hobby of making Walking Sticks. I live in a part of Wales which is one of the best places to find good wood from which to fashion sticks. The surrounding countryside is full of woodland, mountains, rivers and streams. All ideal locations and conditions for the trees and bushes I need which provide me with the raw material at little or no cost.

Whenever I am out hawking I'm always on the lookout for something that will make a thumb stick, shank, or interesting handle. I rarely come home without having cut a stick or marking one or two for cutting later.

Having cut some suitable sticks, any side shoots are trimmed and they are left to season for about 12 months. To do this they are tied up in bundles of 5 or 6 and they are put in an airy shed or open sided lean-to. A heated workshop is too warm and can lead to splits or bending of sticks.

What types of wood makes a good stick? These are some I have used in the past:

sycamore, birch, chestnut, hazel, hawthorn, ash, holly, honeysuckle, blackthorn, willow and rowan (mountain ash).

I have made one-piece walking sticks but also added stag antlers, ram's horns, and buffalo horn. Some sticks have been carved with hawk's heads, pheasants' heads and dogs' heads. You can carve whatever you want to put on the sticks. A fancy stick is one that has been decorated. To create an eye-catching stick, it is painted then dolls' eyes are added to create a life-like bird or animal. I then use yacht varnish to finish the stick off.

I have sold some sticks to Welsh Hawking Club members and given some away as prizes at field meetings for best long-wing and short-wing kills. The sticks had a peregrine and goshawk on respectively. Most of the sticks are hung on walls as trophies rather than used, as they are so decorative.

I have also given some to the local farmer for Christmas as a thank you for letting me use his land. It makes a change from a bottle of whiskey.

I know this article is not about hawking but it shows what one particular Austringer does during the moulnt.



Some of Lyn's stick heads

Intangible Cultural Heritage by Chris Ulens



Every falconer will remember the date, 16th of November 2010. This is the date Falconry got listed by UNESCO as "Intangible Cultural heritage" – twelve countries joined forces. I was responsible for Belgium and was one of the representatives for the general submission to UNESCO. So, I'm very pleased to share my journey.

The story of falconry wasn't created yesterday. Falconry is one of the oldest relationships between man and a bird. Some sources are dating back more than 3000 years, some even 4000. Originally falconry was a way to obtain food but it quickly acquired other values, and became integrated into culture as a social recreational practice and a means of connecting with nature. It also became identified with expressions of freedom and chivalry. Although the principle is universal, constraints of terrain and available quarry have led to a fascinating diversity of approaches and falconry cultural traditions.

The heritage of falconry is all around us in art, literature (e.g. Shakespeare often used falconry metaphors) and in our language. For example, the common term gentleman is thought to be derived from a

man who could fly a female peregrine (falcon gentle) which requires a close bond, mutual understanding and respect. Falconry is an important cultural symbol in many countries, and has also inspired artistic creativity, with a rich heritage of books, manuscripts, poetry and painting. It is transmitted from generation to generation as a cultural legacy by a variety of means.

This has brought us to the important question, how can we safeguard our rich history and make sure our children will also be able to be part of this uninterrupted story of more than 4000 years.

After the Second World War, the UN (United Nations) initiated UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural. The best-known activity and convention of UNESCO is "World Heritage". Everywhere in the world, buildings and monuments are safeguarded. But World Heritage doesn't cover the cultural aspects of communities. Therefore, in 2003, UNESCO initiated a

new convention: "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" (ICH). Currently 158 countries have ratified the convention. The UK hasn't ratified the convention yet, but work is in process.

ICH is all about safeguarding, keeping the tradition alive and can let it evolve for future generations. While buildings and monuments will be "frozen" and kept as is by the World Heritage convention for future generations, ICH will let tradition evolve for its future needs. And this fits perfectly with the question how we can safeguard falconry!

In 2005/2006 countries worldwide started to ratify the new UNESCO-convention for intangible cultural heritage. This was the ideal moment to start thinking about submitting falconry to UNESCO. But individuals nor clubs or communities can submit a file to UNESCO directly. First of all, the communities need to initiate a submission to the country. Once the country has accepted the tradition as intangible cultural heritage, the country itself will forward the submission to UNESCO.

Under the supervision of Dr Nick Fox, a request was launched during the first Falconry Festival in 2007 in Reading to motivate as many countries as possible to support the submission to get falconry listed as intangible cultural heritage.

I took up the challenge to make the Belgian government aware to list falconry. But for the government it's important to see that the whole community, including clubs and individuals, supports the submission. Belgium counts six falconry clubs. We brought all the clubs to the table to join forces and this was the start of the umbrella platform the "Belgische Valkerij Federatie" (Belgian Federation for Falconry), comparable to the Hawk Board. I initiated a file and in 2009, our minister for culture approved our submission and listed falconry as ICH for Belgium.

By 2009, 12 countries (including Belgium) have listed falconry as intangible cultural

heritage: United Arab Emirates, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain and Syria. The first condition was fulfilled. The second step was to mobilize the countries to submit falconry to UNESCO. The United Arab Emirates took the initiative to facilitate meetings to prepare the multinational submission as a joint effort of those 12 countries. We had a meeting as official representatives for our countries in Abu Dhabi in August and December 2009. The result was a nomination file, signed by 12 countries. This file has been approved by UNESCO on the 16th of November 2010.

Is this the end? Of course not. The multinational submission in 2010 was the first time for UNESCO to receive a nomination supported by so many countries. We have received the feedback that this was a very strong file and a good example how communities worldwide are sharing a passion regardless religion, believes and ethical background, an example to the world. This nomination was just a start to motivate other countries to join too. Meanwhile, in 2016 six countries joined the submission, resulting in 18 countries to support falconry as ICH: United Arab Emirates, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Syrian Arab Republic.

I am very grateful to be part of this project. I would like to thank Dr Nick Fox and his team for all their efforts, the United Arab Emirates as a supporter and host for the submission, the IAF as an NGO supporting the submission and all the people that made contributions to the project. But the most important message for all of us: keeping falconry alive!

Reference. UNESCO:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/falconry-a-living-human-heritage-01209>

The Urban Peregrine by Wayne Davis

Iconic: One of the superlatives often used to describe the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is an apt and well deserved accolade. The name *Falco peregrinus* was first used in the binomial Linnaean system of classification by Marmaduke Tunstall, a naturalist residing in Northamptonshire in the 17th century. Also known as the Pilgrim falcon in the early medieval period due to its wandering nature and infrequent sightings! Indeed, the word "peregrination" in an etymological sense, means to journey or travel widely.

Ever since I was a boy, I have been transfixed by these noble falcons, re-reading Gilbert Blaine's classic tract "Falconry" repeatedly. Borrowing it again and again, much to the consternation of my local library! Continually trying to emulate (quite tricky with the humble kestrel) the nuances of this most ancient of arts, "Falconry". With my first hawk, Finnegan, a European kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*. Especially since the literature of this time seemed to only deal with the unattainable (to myself circa 1975) and mystical higher orders of falcons and hawks.

Indeed, the first time I witnessed wild peregrines was in North Devon, while holidaying with my parents. It still remains vividly etched in my memory to this day!

While exploring the remote Countsbury cliffs to the east of Lynton and Lynmouth. As I lay down on the sodden turf among the sea pinks and wild campion, peering over the edge at the jagged rocks and sea below, out of the dank sea mist a female peregrine sailed into view, and then returned as quickly as it appeared, into the ethereal sea mists.

Ecstatic was an understatement!

This, considering wild falcons were scarce in the United Kingdom in the 1970s, due to the ravages of the indiscriminate use of

the organochloride pesticides (DDT), resulting in the breeding failure of many species of predator, due to the subsequent effects of egg shell thinning.

This was a profound moment, and pathed the way for a lifetime of working and flying these enigmatic birds. Working in many diverse environments including airfields and historical sites. The first urban Peregrines I observed were at a cement works in Lincolnshire in 1989, followed by discovering a pair breeding on the Millennium Dome and Docklands in 2002.

The Lincolnshire site where the peregrines have nested in the quarry for several decades. Have subsequently used the nest box installed on one of the cement silos. The cement works site was observable from an industrial site, where I first flew my tiercel peregrine to deter feral pigeons, *Columba livia*, from the site. a flour mill in Northamptonshire.

In fact the river Thames in London is the urban equivalent of a natural river canyon, with the riverside buildings forming "surrogate cliffs" with the river flowing through, providing a perfect hunting environment. The peregrine's subsequent urbanisation is a significant environmental success story.

Indeed, I had become accustomed to thinking like a falcon!! Viewed from 170 feet up on the flour mill, the cement site could be seen 15 miles to the north east, thus providing a potential nest site at the Corby site.

Frequent sightings of the Peregrines on the adjacent power station, which they utilise as a base for hunting sorties, increased my enthusiasm to encourage them to establish a local territory.

This allowed me to fulfil a lifetime's ambition of encouraging Peregrines to establish locally. So providing an artificial nesting location for the falcons on one of

milling towers of the flour mill was both a logical and ultimately successful project.

The location provided ideal "Peregrine nesting criteria".

1. A natural hunting vantage point and roosting site on the adjacent power station.
2. Adequate food supply in the form of the ubiquitous urban feral pigeon population as well as other favoured wetland quarry over the Eyebrook reservoir and the local agricultural land.
3. The location of a suitable and secure nest site on the flour mill.
4. No locally breeding Peregrines.

Particular attention was paid to the location of the nest box. As observing urban and coastal Peregrines over the years, and also embracing the old falconry term of "brancher". The behaviour of the eyasses while fledging. We ascertained it would be beneficial to have areas similar to natural cliff ledges, to exercise and make initial flights.

Therefore, the box was installed facing into the parapet, allowing the eyasses time to exercise this branching behaviour.

This, as opposed to externally mounted nest boxes where the falcons first flights can be so precarious and often fatal.

We located the nest box in 2010 with the generous support of the Flour mill, on the milling tower to the eastern side of the site. The box faced south east to catch the early morning sun, and also to provide a shaded environment for the young falcons later in the day. The site was approximately 170 feet above ground level.

A substrate of pea gravel and peat was used in the nest box and surrounding ledges, which helped initiate the ledge displays and scraping behaviour from the tiercel at the nest site. This culminated in the successful breeding of the falcons.

This year with the help of a local BTO ringer. Three young falcons were

successfully fitted with BTO rings. There was one falcon (female), and two tiercels (males) this year. All the young falcons fledged and left the nest site. Learning to fly and hunt with the guidance of the adult falcons.

The Falcons are being monitored all year and will be rung by the BTO ringer in future years. A further development of this project may be to install a Webcam to view the falcons.

The urban Peregrine population is set to increase, as the subsequent generations of young falcons adapt to the new challenges they face, bringing them into closer contact with the urban environment which they are inhabiting. In future the possibility of conflicts arising between the interactions of falcons and humans seems inevitable and warrants further study.

London has a healthy population of peregrines. While we are engaged in our work in London, it gives us a unique opportunity to monitor them. There is not a day travelling through the metropolis that we do not witness their presence. Indeed, one of the finest sightings was a tiercel hunting a small flock of starlings, *sturnus vulgaris*, high above Battersea bridge, its coruscating stoops continuing, till barely visible to the naked eye. A breath-taking sight. Other regular sightings are made of the pairs at Vauxhall, Westminster, the Docklands, Sutton and Croydon. Who would have believed thirty years ago there would be such a resurgence?

An unexpected revelation was the falcons predilection for woodcock, *Scolopax rusticola*, and other waders, whose carcasses have been found at their food caches and litter the nest sites. The conjecture being they are hunting in the ambient light at night which is so pervasive in these urban areas! The ambient urban light illuminates the silvery underside of the woodcock. Thus making it particularly vulnerable

Other quarry were the ubiquitous feral pigeon, *Columba livia*, wood pigeons, *Columba palumbus*, various species of wildfowl, coots, *Fulica atra*, and the odd parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*!

Observing these enigmatic falcons hunting over Corby, my home town, about two miles from where I was brought up is a remarkable and deeply satisfying experience. I feel extremely privileged to watch the young falcons' behaviour, and exercising on the ledges of the eyrie site, while still reflecting on my childhood memories and sightings of these wonderful falcons.

Wayne Davis has been a passionate falconer and ornithologist since childhood and is the senior avian consultant for Avian Environmental Consultants

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Peregrine nestlings

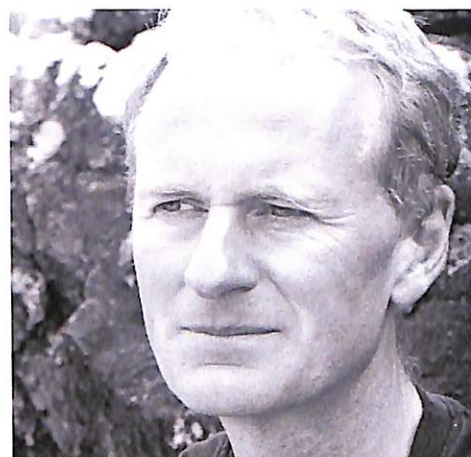
Book Review: *Raptor: A Journey Through Birds*

by James Macdonald Lockhart
reviewed by David Ridpath

published by Fourth Estate, London. ISBN: 978-0-00-745987-2.
Cover price: Hardback, £16.99; Paperback, £9.99
(from Amazon, £13.49, £7.49 respectively and Kindle edition, £5.49)

Cover illustration and author photograph (at left) by kind permission of the publishers.

I found this book difficult to put down as it was so enjoyable to read. Lockhart writes very well, painting beautiful verbal pictures of the wild raptors, the landscapes in which he finds them and the people who occupy those, often bleak, districts, to say nothing of sometimes

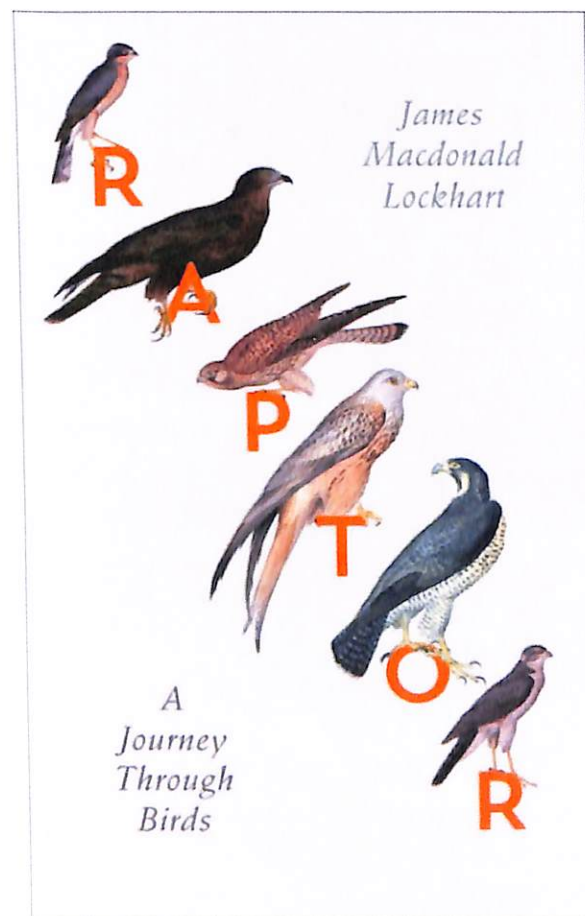


He digresses easily into fascinating stories of the exploits of other naturalists as well as his own.

The book is structured into fifteen chapters, one for each of the indigenous British diurnal birds of prey. He travels roughly north to south, beginning in Orkney observing hen harriers and works his way south eventually observing sparrow hawks near his home in Warwickshire, via ospreys in the Moray Firth, kestrels in Bolton and buzzards in Devon.

Throughout the book, he quotes the journals of William Macgillivray, the eminent nineteenth century Scottish naturalist. Some of Lockhart's locations mirror those of Macgillivray as he walked, yes, walked, some 838 miles from Aberdeen to London in six weeks in 1819. Unfortunately, the parallel journeys of Lockhart and Macgillivray do not entirely coincide. So, by the last chapter, the Macgillivray story does not touch on the sparrow hawks which are the subject of the chapter.

Raptor has rightly been compared with Helen Macdonald's *H is for Hawk*, in which similarly she digresses into *The Goshawk* by T.H. White in much the same way that Lockhart uses Macgillivray's journals.



atrocious weather that he encounters. He occasionally uses colloquial words, especially Scottish ones, without explanation, which threw me somewhat but which add to the feeling of remoteness of some of the locations. His enthusiasm for raptors comes through clearly.



William Macgillivray

Today's readers may find descriptions of how 19th century naturalists such as Macgillivray studied birds – often by shooting them and studying the remains – difficult to palate.

I found it difficult to stomach the description of luring a sea eagle and shooting it at close range but that is how things were done in those days. I myself have a Victorian 'naturalist' in my family history, one George Swaysland, who discovered that in many migratory bird species, the males arrive in Britain before the females.

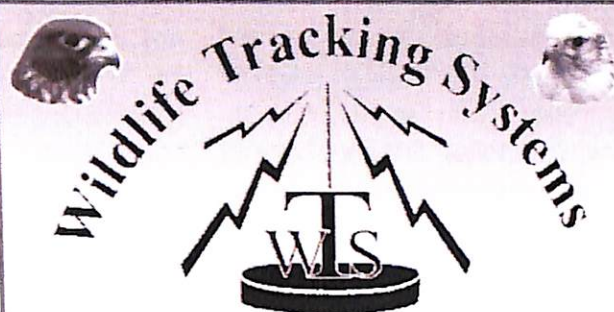
Charles Darwin reports, in *The Descent of Man*, correspondence with Swaysland in which Swaysland says that, one year, he shot thirty-nine males of one species of wagtail before he saw a single female! That's how it was done. We must not judge those early naturalists by today's standards.

There is an extensive 18-page bibliography at the end of the book, listing, chapter by chapter, books and academic papers relevant to each of the fifteen birds.

The only illustrations are portrait drawings of each bird taken from Macgillivray's *A History of British Birds, Vol III*. The book might have benefitted from pictures of, perhaps, some of the locations described.

As the book describes the birds in their various geographical settings, in the form of a journey, I would have liked some maps to place Lockhart's observations, and Macgillivray's, in the British landscape. However, these are minor niggles. The book is eminently readable and informative.

I recommend it.



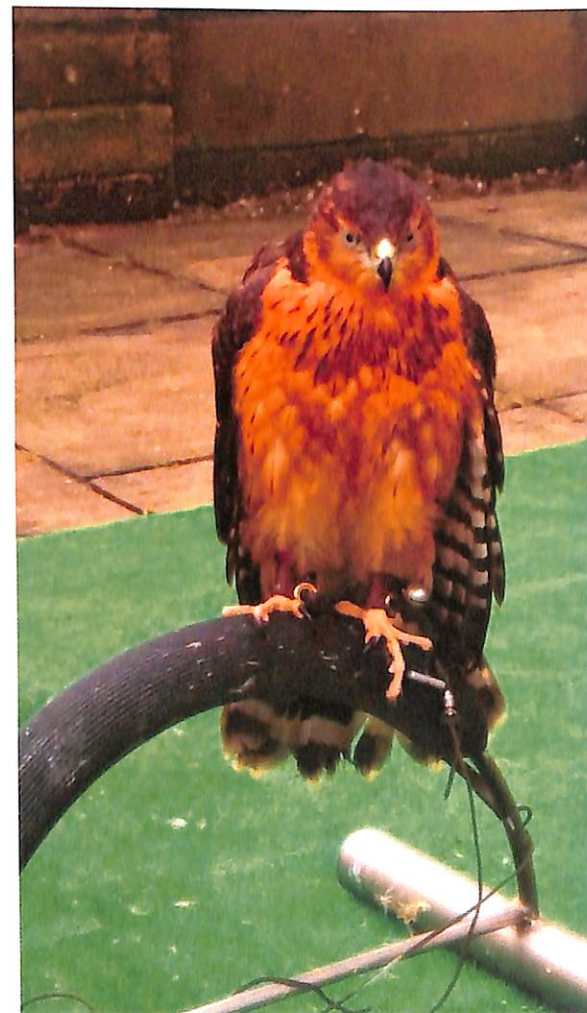
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Ian Warren's Black Spar

Austringer 2018

is being planned as a **bumper** edition as it will be the 50th edition.

We shall be accepting contributions from May 2017 until the end of February 2018.

We would like to have contributions from as many members as possible, including all the Club's officers and honorary members.

So, put your thinking hats on and come up with some interesting articles, which need only be loosely related to our sport. Take some relevant pictures to illustrate your contribution.

We can accept articles as electronic documents (e.g. word) or hard copy, typed or otherwise, but please remember that hand-written copy makes for more work for the editors. Please help us by checking your contributions as far as possible for spelling and punctuation before submission.

Pictures are best submitted as jpg files, separate from the text of the articles, though we can scan printed pictures if required.

Perhaps your business would like to submit an advertisement for inclusion.

Contact the editors for details:-

David Ridpath, 01594 543827, david@drybrookridpath.plus.com

Mick Cordell, 07774 472702, michael@cordellnet.co.uk

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Constitution and Rules Of the Welsh Hawking Club

(Revised 2014)

Name and Objectives

The name of the club shall be **The Welsh Hawking Club**

The objective of the club shall be: -

The promotion of Falconry.

The provision of advice and information for members and other interested parties.

The promotion and maintenance of the club 'Code of Conduct' amongst its members.

Constitution

The club shall consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and other committee members as agreed and elected at an AGM. Each of these members are 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.

A President may only hold post for a maximum of five years. On retiring from that office, they will become Honorary Members of the Club.

Only full members are eligible for election to office. The officers and the committee will conduct the business of the club (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.

Anyone who holds a current conviction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, The Animal Welfare Act, Cotes or any other offences to a living animal will not be accepted for membership until any ban enforced by a court of law has been spent. They will then be accepted at the discretion of the committee.

Elections

All members of the committee will be elected individually, annually at the AGM.

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 member may be asked to stand down from their post and another member co-opted to fill the position.

Membership

Members of the club will be approved by the committee.

No person will be accepted for membership without completing a membership application form declaring if he or she has had any convictions under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, Cotes or The Animal Welfare Act. The membership form will state that if an applicant declares a past conviction then a committee member will contact them to discuss the offence and conviction, the committee member will then report back to the main committee for a decision if the application would be approved or not.

The annual subscription rate shall be determined at the AGM each year.

Any member whose subscription is more than eight weeks overdue after the end of May shall cease to be a member, but will be eligible for approval as an associate member and will pay the full joining fee as appropriate.

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 and/or the WHC.

Any member wishing to dispose of a bird obtained through the clubs' breeding project must first offer the bird back to the club at the purchase price.

Only full members are eligible to vote on club affairs.

Proxy and postal votes are not permitted, however email votes are permitted within the committee to ensure the smooth running of the club.

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 applicant must normally have successfully trained and hunted with a bird of prey witnessed by a full member.

All members will be strongly encouraged to complete the LANTRA award beginning with the falconry award during the first 12 months of membership. The WHC will assist with training at regional level.

The WHC will offer junior membership to those in full time education. Junior members will be entitled to attend social and field meetings but not vote on club matters or stand for office. This membership will be offered without subscription charge for those up to 16 years of age and at 50% discount of full club membership for older juniors in full-time education.

The WHC will offer supporter membership to anyone who does not keep or fly a bird of prey. Supporter members will be entitled to attend social and field meetings but not vote on club matters or stand for office. This membership will be offered at 50% discount of full club membership.

Meetings

The Annual General Meeting shall be held at the main Field Meeting each year.

Meetings shall be presided over by the Chairman, Vice Chairman or in their absence one of the other officers as appropriate.

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. 20 full members must countersign the application.

Code of Conduct

The well-being of all birds of prey both domestic and wild together with the continuation of Falconry must be the aim of all members.

Falconry is the flying of trained birds of prey and owls at suitable quarry found in a natural state. No action must bring this into disrepute.

Every hawk must be properly manned and equipped.

Every endeavour must be made to recover a lost bird.

All birds flown free must have mews jesses removed. All birds must wear a working transmitter and it is strongly advised that it is wearing at least one bell. In the case of un-entered or aggressive hawks, eagles, hybrids, exotics etc., special care must be taken when flown free.

Relevant quarry licences must be obtained where applicable.

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.

The club considers that fox, deer and mink are unsuitable quarry for hunting with birds in particularly with more than two hounds. (In Scotland it is illegal to kill deer by any other means than shooting).

Regions

To provide social and educational meetings for members living locally, although any club member will be welcome to attend.

- To arrange local field meetings which the main club field meeting rules will govern. To be made open to all club members.
- To arrange fund raising to assist with paying for speakers and field meets.
- To promote falconry and the WHC.

Rules

Members will form no new region unless the committee at a committee meeting has agreed it.

All regions must open a bank or building society account in the name of the WHC. It is recommended that the account have two signatories.

Any non-members attending will be made welcome for 3 meetings after this time they will be given the opportunity to complete an application form to join the club. If they decline they will no longer be allowed to attend the meetings, even as a guest of another member.

A register of attendees will be kept at all meetings, primarily to enforce rule 3.

The regional secretary will forward a written report each year to the Editor of the *Austringer*, to reach him no later than the end of February for inclusion in the *Austringer* for that year.

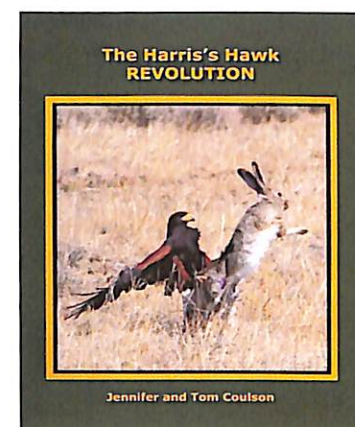
A report must be sent by the regional Treasurer to the club Treasurer showing the state of the region's finances, to reach her no later than the end of September for inclusion in the Treasurer's report at the AGM.

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 meetings. This representative will have full voting rights.

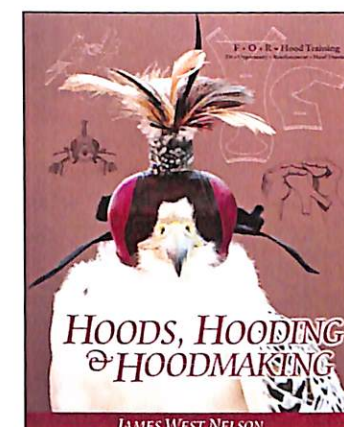
In the event that the Club is wound up either voluntarily by a resolution of the membership or by order of the Court then any surplus assets after discharge of any residual liabilities shall be paid or given to the British Archives of Falconry.

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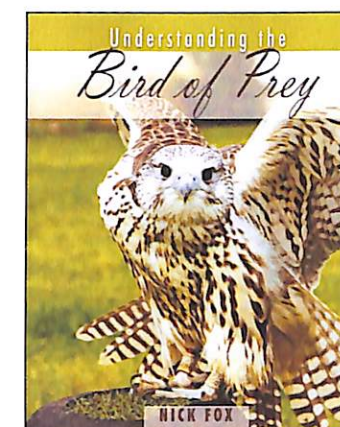
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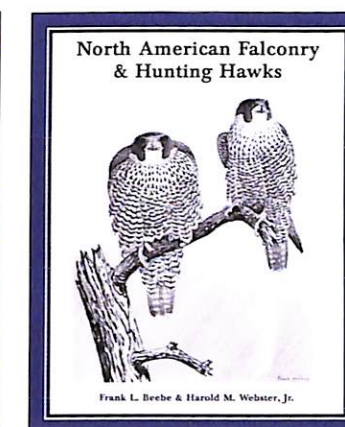
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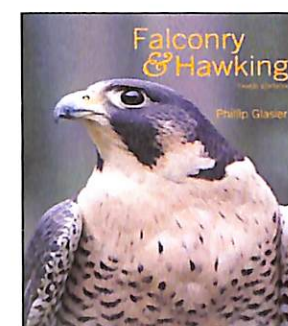
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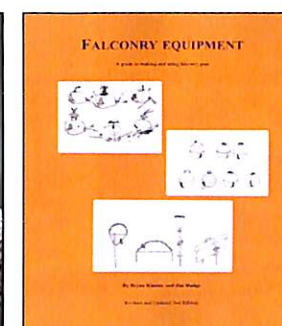
Pbk £56.50



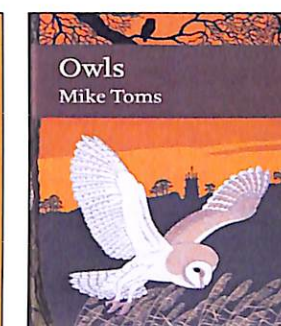
Two volumes in slip-case. £95.00



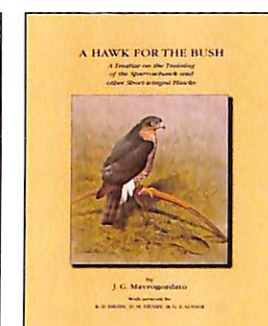
Hbk £35.00- £19.95



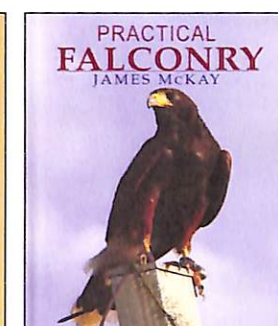
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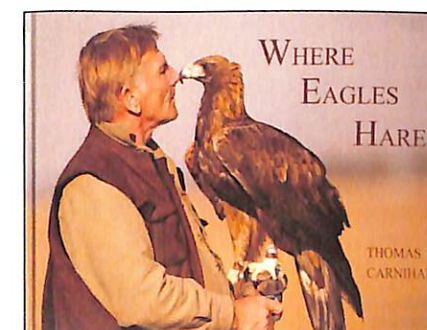
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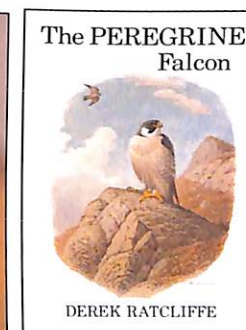
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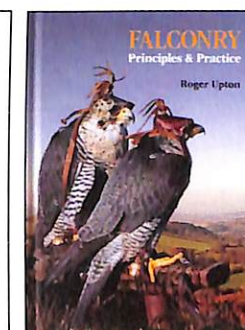
Hbk £19.95- £7.95



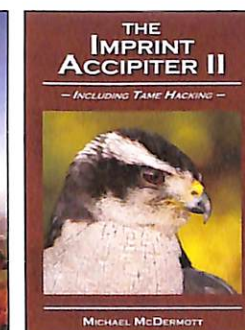
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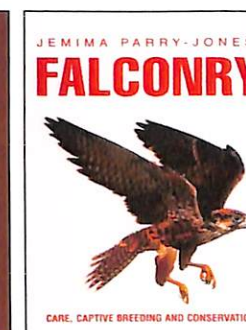
Hbk £45.00- £9.95



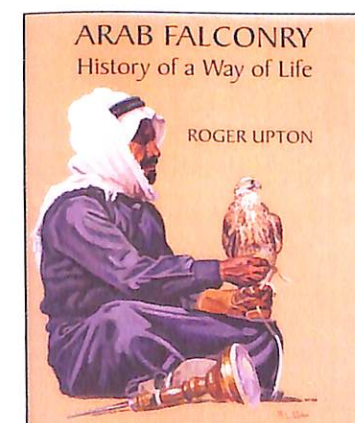
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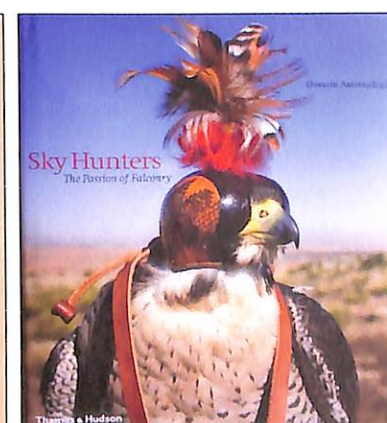
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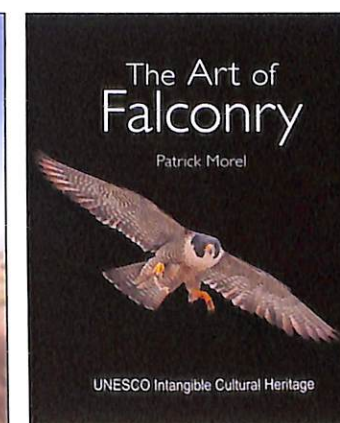
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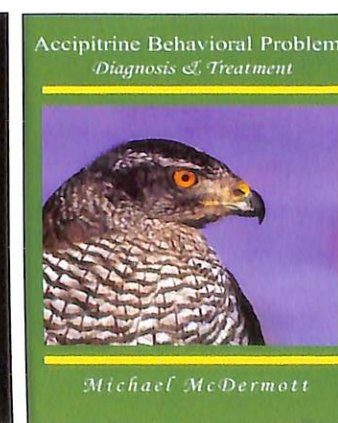
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