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— & Raptor Conservation Magazine —

Summer 1996

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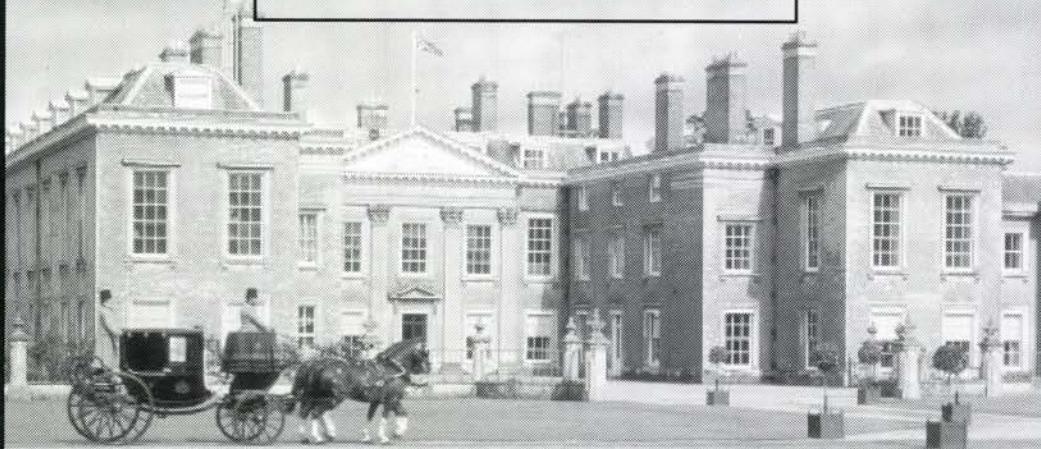
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THE NATIONAL FALCONRY EVENT

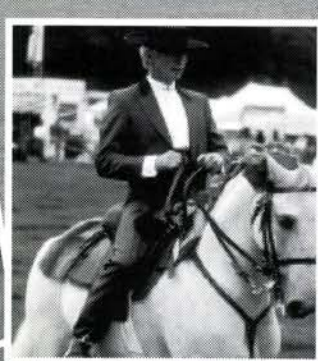
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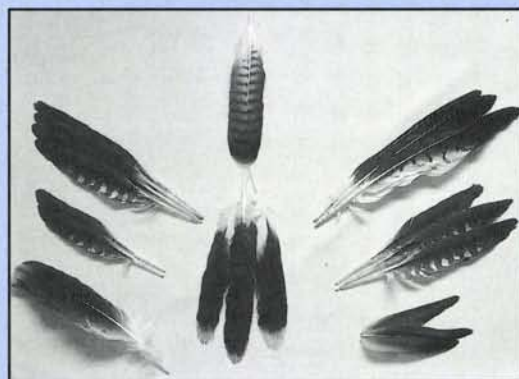
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COMMENT

Hello Everybody,

It's nice to be here again. Lots of stuff in this issue, with Harris Hawks taking the lead, catching, missing and going missing. Andrew Knowles-Brown has brought us something different with his article about filming in the Cairngorms and David Wadsworth from California has written to us about their field meet. Come all you overseas readers, (Natalie tells me there are more of you every day) please write for us.

We have letters calling for unity within the Falconry world, about time too! It is such a shame that we can't all get together in a common (or uncommon) cause.

We have ten competition winners and we will be sending their tickets as soon as we get them. Hope you all come and say hello at the Fair, which as I type is a mere six weeks away.

By the way Mike Faircloth we thought your article "Golden Hampster" was extremely funny but then I have a warped sense of humour, unfortunately we feel we can't publish it, but please try again.

Keep Falconry Safe. Have a good Summer.

David & Lyn

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COVER: JACK MERLIN. Photo Andrew Knowles-Brown

STOLEN BIRDS

- 1) Stolen from Scotland December 1995
 - a.) Lanner Falcon Ring no: 0241V
 - b.) Lanner Falcon Ring no: UK60757
- 2) Stolen from Notts January 1996
 - a.) Harris Hawk Ring no: 11063W
- 3) Stolen from Notts February 1996
 - a.) Bonnellis Eagle
- 4) Stolen from Notts March 1996
 - a.) Harris Hawk 10604W
- 5) Stolen from Newcastle upon Tyne March 1996
 - a.) Harris Hawk Ring no UK77757
 - b.) Harris Hawk Ring no 7RJ195W
- 6) Stolen from Norfolk March 1996
 - a.) Harris Hawk Ring no UK78366
 - b.) Harris Hawk Ring no UK75299
 - c.) Redtail Ring no 1454X
 - d.) Redtail Ring no 0627Y

It is strongly believed that during the course of this theft that the Female Redtail (c) was killed. Blood and entrails of one of the birds was found outside the aviary together with what has been identified as part of the crop of a Redtail. It is thought that the bird probably locked onto someone with its talons and was killed by the thief in an effort to get it off.

This is the second theft where a bird has been killed. Someone, somewhere must know something. If you do please contact me and help trace the persons responsible, bring them before a court and let everybody know who they are. All information will be treated with confidence.

FOUND BIRDS.

1. Longwing Doe Ring no 30???
2. Shortwing Doe Ring no 43???
3. Kestrel British Bird Council Ring of 1995
4. Redtail - no part of this ring no is being released. Found in Wiltshire. If you have lost one then give me a call.
Tel Paul Beecroft 01734 536257.

CENTRE OWNER FOUND GUILTY OF CRUELTY

David Hopson, the owner of a Norfolk tourist attraction was found guilty of cruelty and illegal possession by magistrates, earlier this year. Hopson, 62 was found guilty of ill treating a Kestrel and a Buzzard. The birds had repeatedly flown at the wire mesh inside their aviaries and damaged their ceres. Neil Forbes the said the mesh was totally unsuitable for the birds and the Kestrel been suffering from the wounds for about a month and the Buzzard about three months. He said the scab above the Buzzards beak had blocked its nostrils causing severe difficulty in breathing. He was also found guilty of keeping a wild Kestrel in captivity despite the fact that it as fit for release.

Hopson was ordered to pay £150 for each case of cruelty and £50 for illegal possession, and £100 costs.

Clare Montgomery, for Hopson Said, "this will almost certainly mean the loss of his zoo licence and the closure of the centre."

NATIONAL WILDLIFE CARVING EXHIBITION.

**The Courtyard Gallery
Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park
Nr Fakenham, Norfolk.
30th August - 8th September 1996**

The popularity of this annual woodcarving exhibition grows. More top professionals join in each year and more visitors come to admire and buy the art. Due to many requests from enthusiastic visitors, carvers and sponsors, the theme this year will be all wildlife carvings. (Previously known as the National Exhibition of Carved Birds)

The exhibition will follow its now traditional pattern and will display over 300 carvings by both professional and hobby carvers from the UK. All the visitors are invited to vote for their favourite carving and their voting slips will be entered into a raffle for which the prize is the framed original of the wildlife drawing by Jane Brewer.

Well-known carvers will demonstrate different styles throughout the show, and for the first week-end there will be a marquee with retail and trade stands for those interested in wildlife art, woodwork and associated publications.

the wildlife park makes a wonderful day out for the whole family with over 200 acres to wander in, one of the largest collections of exotic wildfowl in the world, a specially extended restaurant, an excellent gift shop and an adventure playground for the children. A ticket to the park includes the exhibition, or the Gallery can be seen alone for £2.50. Adults £4.45, Children £1.60, OAP's £3.95 Families (2+2)£10.50, Parties of 15 £3.75 each.

This exhibition is organised by carvers for carvers and the visitors each year express their enjoyment of meeting the enthusiastic artists.

Wild Animals Bill Passes Third Reading

On Tuesday 27th February 1996 the Wild Animals Bill passed its third reading in the House of Lords. The bill now only needs Royal Assent before it can become law - possibly late spring.

Alan Meales bill makes it an offence to "mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate" any wild animal - providing Britains wildlife with legal protection for the first time ever.

Alan Meal, Labour MP for Mansfield, said "I am delighted that because of this bill, wild animals will now be protected from the horrendous acts which have been witnessed by RSPCA Inspectors."

THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FALCONRY & RAPTOR CONSERVATION CENTRE

is due to open early this Summer. There will be approximately 30-40 birds, more as the centre becomes established. The existing birds include Lanners, Sakers, Harris Hawks, Redtails, Snowy, Barn & Boobook Owls. Also some hybrids.

Set in 30 acres, with approx 20 aviaries, there will be three displays a day. Also a Hawk walk, picnic area and ample parking.

Future plans include a Nature Trail, larger shop and coffee shop.

Partner Chris Miller says they also do hunting days etc, in season.

He can be contacted on 0802 156525

THEME SALES AT CHRISTIES

This year Christies will be holding more picture theme sales.

The first is Wildlife Art, 31st May 1996 and Sporting and Dog Sale 17th October 1996.

For more details or to include an item please contact Gregory Page-Turner on (0171) 3213292

IMPRINTING ACCIPITERS INVITATION WITHDRAWN

The invitation by the Welsh Hawking Club to Mike McDermott to speak at its meetings during the Summer has been withdrawn. The invitation to speak on the subject at the Falconry Fair and at other clubs has also been withdrawn.

WHC Press and Publicity Officer.

Please could the owner of Barn Owl, Ring no 248268V get in touch with the N.C.A on: 01483 776801.



THE 1996 BRITISH FALCONRY & RAPTOR FAIR.

BY RON MORRIS

Once again, The Falconers Fair is rapidly approaching. Since January of this year, myself, my wife Cheryl and Major Peter Wainwright seem to have been working flat out getting things organised.

As has become the norm, the fair this year will be a bigger and better event than ever. Due to some hard work by those that assist us the fair could well be re-titled the International Falconry Fair. The list of foreign visitors that we know are coming continues to grow at a rapid rate, but so are the number of foreign exhibitors. There will be at least three American trade stands this year and two international clubs will be taking stands. It is also hoped that trade exhibitors will be coming from Belgium, Holland, Spain and Italy.

The actual structure of the fair will follow its tried and tested pattern, with even more going into the main ring this year. As organisers we try and ensure that the strong points are built upon and the weak ones eradicated. We listen to what the visitors tell us, and make every effort to move forward in a positive manner.

The setting for the event will again be Althorp House, Northampton. This is thanks, once again, to the kindness and enthusiasm of The Earl of Spencer. Those of you that visited last year will remember that we moved venues within the grounds and the new site was universally agreed to be a better one. This year will see us retain this site, although we will have to expand to accommodate everyone.

It is very satisfying for us, the organisers, that the falconry world has taken this event to

heart. Through the services of those who help us here, the word is spreading far and wide. We get correspondence from, quite literally, all over the world. But then there really is nothing else to compare with anywhere else in the world.

As well as the usual flying displays and the weathering ground, which may well contain a couple of very unusual items this year, the art marquee will, again be a major attraction. Chris Christoforou does a magnificent job and manages to gather together an exhibition that really is second to none. I cannot think of any other venue where you can see such a wealth of talent gathered together. We know of several visitors that are coming from abroad purely for this item in the event.

El Caballo de Espana will again be thrilling the crowds with their display of disciplined horsemanship. This item has proved so successful with the visitors that we dare not think of replacing it. We had always hoped that their performance would prove an acceptable alternative to the falconry and we were totally justified in our thinking.

Our friends from Raptor Rescue will be in attendance as usual. They will put on their normal, first class, static display and will be on hand to answer any queries from the public. I know from conversations with many falconers that Raptor Rescue do a difficult job and do it very well indeed. It is to be hoped that falconers and public alike will show their appreciation and do their bit when the collection buckets come round. Every penny that goes to

Raptor Rescue goes to helping the countryside we all enjoy.

Major Peter Wainwright will again be presenting the parade of hounds and the parade of sight hounds. This is another feature which has proved to be so popular with the visitors. Peter's knowledge and expertise is second to none and his commentary is interesting and packed with personal experience.

The falconers dog will also be well catered for with demonstrations on basic training in the main arena. It is also hoped to do some simulated hunting with both hawk and dog in the ring, as we did last year.

The seminars will be of a very high quality this year and should not be missed if at all possible. Some of the worlds leading experts on raptor health, breeding and management are on hand to impart information to those that would take advantage of it.

An assortment of clubs, international, national and local will be represented and there to offer help and advice to those that seek it. People who think that we have strict legislation here regarding falconry should talk to some of the foreign club members. Then they would realise just how easy it is for us here in Britain.

Needless to say, there will be a massive array of trade stands of falconry equipment and related products. A unique opportunity to see all the various products side by side before purchasing.

Also, of course, the fair presents the opportunity to meet friends and have a good day out together. So we look forward to seeing you at Althorp this year on May 26th & 27th. Within easy reach of junction 16 or 18 of the M1, car parking is free and the event opens at 10am each day.

Hope to see you there.

BRITISH BIRDS OF PREY CENTRE

Situated approx. five miles from the A14, The British Birds of Prey Centre couldn't be easier to get to. Stonham Barns, just outside Stonham Aspal, is group of shops and craft centre covering all sorts of things; wood turning, pine furniture, Bonsai's, gifts and gardens, there is also a restaurant and of course the Falconry Centre.

You enter through the gift shop which is well stocked for both gifts and falconry.

The centre is well laid out with large aviaries housing contented birds with ample walkways. There are two rows of weatherings housing 26 birds, both facing the same way so the birds can't see each other.

There is a large flying area where Micheal Raphael flew a four year old and an eight year old lanner in a cast, (you could have heard a pin drop), They then flew a pair of Barn Owls and a pair of Harris hawks.

The commentary is very informative explaining the origins of each bird, their habitat and requirements.

All in all the centre is well laid out and with an imprint Goshawk on the weathering ground, well worth a visit.

STONHAM BARNES



The Falconers Magazine will be at the Fair, as usual, and this year we will have Guy Wallace on the stand, Nick Fox's book will be available from us and he will also be there at times (to be arranged) throughout the day for book signing. Also Paul Beecroft will be on the stand for you to come and see about lost/stolen/found birds or anything else you feel he can help with. Come and say Hello. We look forward to seeing you all.

YORKSHIRE FALCONRY CLUB



The Yorkshire Falconry Club came into being officially in September 1995. At the first A.G.M. a committee was elected and our first job was to ratify the Constitution and Code of Conduct. The club has affiliated itself to the B.F.S.S. and the British Hawk Board.

We obviously filled a gap in the network of Falconry Clubs as 6 months later we have a membership of 47, covering the whole spectrum of those interested in falconry.

The club held five broadwing field meets, arranged by the meet master, these have been highly successful and the last meeting, held two weeks ago, (Mid Feb) had a bag of 16 rabbits, one Harris Hawk being responsible for five of them. Our thanks to all the landowners who have given the club permission to fly on their land. We have arranged a number of guest speakers for our members, they have included Paul Clewes from the B.F.S.S., Asaad Raoof, the artist, natu-

ralist (responsible for the front cover of the Winter '95 Falconers Magazine), and the breeder Peter Gill, whose talk on incubation was packed with useful information. As an agent for incubators he was able to show us the latest equipment.

In January 1996 the club held an auction of members surplus falconry equipment. The evening was a great success in part due to the auctioneer and the rivalry between a number of members.

Forthcoming events include a quiz night, a talk from Mike McDermott from the USA, the man behind the 'recipe', who will be with us in May, and Libby Harrison, an avian vet who is head of technical services for a large practice.

Anyone wanting further details of our meeting please send an S.A.E. to K F Myers, 8 Belford Drive, Bramley, S Yorks. S66 0YW. We look forward to hearing from you.

CENTRAL FALCONRY & RAPTOR CLUB

Since the last article many happenings have come and gone, mainly that of the new division we formed in Gloucestershire in March '95. This has been extremely successful, with attendance of over 50 at some meetings. The CFRC as a whole now covers the majority of the Western Midlands, from Shropshire to Northants, the Central Midlands area, and from Leicestershire to Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. We believe that a 'varied diet' is the best way to run a club, in this sense we mean to try

and please all members. To do this we try to engage a speaker for most meetings at both club venues. Speakers come out from many walks of life, some falconry, some hunting and some out of the ordinary. In the last year we have engaged people such as Paul Beecroft, Neil Forbes, John Crookes and Mark (forgive me I can never remember his surname) from the National birds of Prey Centre. Help and advice are also what clubs should stand for and we at the CFRC pride ourselves on this factor. The CFRC was granted a place on the Hawk Board in 1995,

so we now have a representative who attends the Hawk Board meetings in London on behalf of the club. The hunting season has come and gone, with the club arranging 15 field meetings between both groups. All meetings were well attended, with mainly Harris Hawks, Redtails and Goshawks being flown at quarry. Some of the flights had to be seen to be believed, with some birds putting 150% effort into the chase and coming out totally empty taloned, but this is falconry. A wide variety of land is available to the club, some stocked, but all with plenty of quarry available.

The field meetings arranged by the CFRC are free to members, also members are encouraged to bring wives, husbands, dogs, ferrets and children. We do encourage children as these are our future falconers and what better way to learn, than in a controlled environment with experienced adults on hand.

The CFRC has just held its' AGM. The committee had just two changes, that being a new

field secretary for the Coventry group and a new junior representative. We also voted on two non-office holding committee members. I hope Geoff and Naomi have got plenty of coffee and biscuits ready for our regular take-overs of their home! The club has been polishing up its image of late, with new membership cards, club logo, sweatshirts and literature all being developed for the 1996 year. We have organised a Raptor first aid course with Neil Forbes and Greg Simpson to take place in May, an essential course for any raptor keeper.

The club will be attending the Falconers Fair at Northampton and we will also attend the Oxfordshire Game Fair, Ragley Hall, and the Midland Game Fair, during the course of the year, so please come and visit us, you will be sure of a warm welcome.

For more information please contact Kim Oakeshott (Cov Group) 01604 414155 or Shaun Healey (Tewks Group) 01684 274591.

Welsh Hawking Club News

At the Clubs' AGM held in February the election of officers took place with the usual old faithfuls being returned to office! Several rule changes took place and discussions were held on several matters, including the clubs breeding project and the annual field meet. The number of hawks involved in the breeding project has reduced recently and it has been decided to allow the project to exhaust itself naturally, although clearly it may take several years before the project is finally closed. This is partly because breeding success has increased dramatically over the years, both by clubs and more so by individuals. Consequently the necessity for clubs to provide hawks has decreased. In fact DoE figures show that a healthy increase in breeding success continues despite erroneous claims of some protectionists that less hawks are bred because breeders are in fear of DNA tests. The WHC hopes to have another successful breeding season this year. Plans are already under way for this years annual field meet in the

Midlands area and our field officer, Roger James, has the cooperation of several landowners and keepers. The club has published a Signed, Limited Edition Print of the Andrew Ellis portrait of a Falcon flying Grouse entitled "Nowhere to Go", which featured on the cover of our last Austringer magazine. The print is limited to 300 copies and will be on general sale after April. The sale is restricted to members prior to that. The cost is £40.00 (collected) which includes mount, although it is possible to order prints by post without the mount at £30.00. the club will be attending the Falconry Fair at Althorp House, Northampton on the 26th & 27th May and we look forward to meeting up with friends old and new, members and non-members. See you there! Monthly club meetings continue at Usk, with regional groups meeting at Chester, Banbury and Plymouth. For further details or application forms contact our Secretary Adrian Williams on 01443 206333.

SCOTTISH HAWKING CLUB NEWS



Once again another season comes to an end and once again the clubs' year has been a successful one. We finished with two meetings in 1996. January saw us at Braco, a venue we were at last year. This was a last chance at the pheasants, and once again our host did us proud with plenty of back end long-tails, they certainly gave the hawks the run around, or should I say fly around. Everyone had plenty of flights and we even managed to get a few in the bag, as well as some rabbits and hares. We look forward to this venue next year.

In February we were at West Linton, courtesy of Graham McKay, although Graham very

kindly hosts meets for us each year this venue was new to us and although the weather was forecast as being very poor those that attended had a great time. We had the shelter of some nice open woods which, with the hawks sitting up the trees, produced some great flights when the rabbits bolted. We were able to get plenty of hawking in before the snow finally arrived.

We shall once again be attending the Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace in Perth, on the 6th/7th July, so should any of you be on holiday over this weekend do come and see us on our stand.

Have a good moult, roll on August.

BEDFORDSHIRE HAWKING CLUB

The Bedfordshire Hawking Club was formed by a group of falconers in the Bedfordshire area who are totally committed to the sport and seek to uphold the traditional values, customs and practices associated with the sport.

Regular monthly meetings are held at a venue in Beds, on the second Wednesday of each month. Field meets are held during the season, where active member participation is

encouraged.

At present we are a small friendly club with varying experience, ranging from long-standing to novice.

New members and novices willing to give commitment to the sport are warmly welcomed. Constitution, Code of Conduct and an application form are available on request. Further details please contact Malcolm Forrest-Hazell. Phone/fax 01582 619883. Mobile 0956 625322.

As you can see the Clubs page is becoming more and more popular with new Clubs sending information about themselves each issue.

If you would like your Club featured on this page please send your article (no more than 350 words please) and a photo if applicable to: The Falconers Magazine, 20 Bridle Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants. NN15 5QP or Fax on 01536 722794. Deadline for the next issue is 30th June.

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PHEASANT

A W K I N G

believed I was like many falconers in upholding the view that the Pheasant was not as sporting a gamebird, for a variety of reasons, as the Grey Partridge or Red Grouse, when being hawked with longwings. He drew breath and nodded his head in acknowledgement of my opinion before replying that perhaps the Pheasants I had encountered had been flown too early in the season and in locations preventing quality flights to develop. He continued, that for him the optimum time to test a falcon against the likes of a Pheasant was

years to provide quality hunting ground - especially for falcons.

The weather conditions on the day in question could not have been more perfect, which created a feeling of excitement within me as I approached my destination. Upon my arrival I was warmly greeted by Adrian and his assistant falconer, David Cooney, and asked if I would like to weather my falcons for a short time, allowing them to settle after the journey: I had brought along an intermewed Peregrine Falcon and intermewed Peregrine tiercel, and

Shahin/Saker hybrid tiercel and, though both were unsuccessful in bringing a Partridge to the bag, that fact meant little to us. And so it was with great excitement that we headed in search of the Pheasant.

Upon reaching another location, Adrian and David discussed tactics before unleashing 'Brett' a well-schooled English Pointer, who quickly and methodically worked a stubble field before progressing onto an adjacent game crop. Just as I was beginning to think that the wind conditions were not ideal for scent-

Returning home with some fellow falconers after a day's grouse hawking, we started to exchange longwing stories, some from the present season and some from previous seasons. During this exchange I was somewhat surprised when one of the group, a new comer to our mini-meet group, started to enthusiastically describe Pheasant hawking experiences. Though I had flown Peregrines (falcons and tiercels) at game for almost ten years, Pheasant hawking experiences during that time had been extremely limited, generally occurring at the beginning of the Pheasant game season, when flying my falcons on sporting ground belonging to friends. The flights witnessed had been disappointing in my opinion, when compared to the likes of flights at Grey Partridge or Red Grouse and so I struggled to understand why this experienced falconer found Pheasant hawking so attractive to the point of being almost magical. When a lull in the conversation occurred, I offered my impressions of Pheasant hawking, stating that I



Mara, female peregrine, on strong flying Cock Pheasant.

from November onwards and, if I so desired I should perhaps join him in the field along with my falcons, for a days Pheasant hawking at that time.

I accepted the invitation which had been kindly offered by Adrian Hallgarth who is the professional falconer at the Lands of Finderlie. Because of the variety of birds flown, the Lands of Finderlie use a number of different locations for their hunting days, however the establishment does own an estate, situated in the picturesque countryside of Perthshire in Scotland, which has been architected over the

set them down adjacent to the two game falcons Adrian intended flying that day; these were and intermewed Peregrine falcon and an eyass Saker/Shahin hybrid falcon.

After a tour of the most impressive establishment, we loaded the falcons and pointers into one of the four-wheel drive vehicles and set off. Though the objective of the day was to hunt pheasants I obviously preferred to fly my Peregrine tiercel at Partridge and so it was that Adrian initially drove to an area of the estate rich in Red and Grey Partridge. There we enjoyed some fine sport with my peregrine tiercel and Adrian's

ing, Brett locked up on point and with that signal Adrian duly removed 'Alchemy', the intermewed Peregrine falcon from the cage. After rousing she took off to mount quickly and in tight circles over the group, her long, narrow wings - part of her Barbary heritage - helping to ease her ever higher into the sky. She was all business and continued to climb higher, though always holding position over the ground scene. When it was deemed that the falcon was at her pitch, the command was given whereupon the pointer ran forward to expertly flush a cock Pheasant. The Pheasant rock-

BRIAN MORRIS

eted away to head for a nearby wood, while high above the peregrine had begun her stoop and was making rapid headway as she fell earthwards. Bottoming out the falcon came in to try and take her quarry from the side but as she was about to make contact the big game bird rolled to one side. The Peregrine had been outwitted but quickly stabilised herself and continued forward, pumping her wings to try and speed up her approach from the rear. Her efforts were rewarded, as in seconds she was again in position to push home another attack. Flying inches behind her quarry she appeared to be drawn in, as if in a slip-stream, to bind to its large body. They fell to the ground and Pheasant feathers flew up to drift in the light wind as they both rolled a number of times on the ground before coming to a halt. But whether the falcon lost some footing during the tumble or whether the approach of an inquisitive Common Buzzard made her lose concentration, the Pheasant managed to break loose and take refuge in a nearby hedgerow. The falcon didn't hang around, but made her way back to her falconer, gaining height as she did so in expectation of another flight. However, Adrian decided to bring her down, to fly her again later in the day. I felt the falcon had deserved success, I was informed though that such situations were commonplace, especial-

ly when pitting likes of a small falcon against a large and weighty, seasoned cock Pheasant.

Driving a short distance we entered a field after spotting a group of Pheasants feeding at the edge of a cover strip that ran down the centre of the field. 'Mara', my small inter-mewed Peregrine falcon was then removed from the cage and soon in the air. She quickly rose above the ground crew and her flying style informed me that she was ready for action. The weather conditions were ideal for flying and conducive for a lofty pitch, I held off joining the others to look and wonder as she powered skywards. When I deemed she was approaching her pitch I joined the others to line up at the beginning of the cover strip. However, as I was approaching my position at the far end of the line up a hen pheasant was disturbed and took to the air. The falcon had been at the edge of her circuit, covering the other end of the line, but stooped hard and fast upon seeing the Pheasant, who was intent on reaching some destination obscured from my view by a slight rise in the ground. The flight angle was acute but the falcon made excellent headway and soon, both falcon and Pheasant disappeared from view. Just as I was about to go off to track down a possibly successful falcon, we saw Mara reappear and head back towards us, mounting steadily as she

approached. We waited, though anxiety crept in as I noted the dark shape of my German Wire-haired Pointer locked up on point about 50 yards away. Nonetheless, we held off, allowing the falcon time to gain her composure and get back up there and control the cover strip. When she set her wings and held station above us we began to move forward towards the dog. Checking the falcon's position, the command was then given and another hen Pheasant, who had held so well for the dog, broke to curl over our line and head for the wood behind us. I turned my attention skyward to see the falcon fold up a plummet earthwards. The falcon fell out of the sky and as she did so she occasionally adjusted the angle of her descent, intent on optimising her point of intersection with the Pheasant. The seconds passed and somehow I turned my attention to the Pheasant to see that it was almost in reach of the wood. At that moment the fleeting shape of the falcon came into view and in true family tradition was intent on striking as opposed to binding to her quarry and so 'drove' into the side of the speeding Pheasant, sending it earthwards. Though the small falcon had delivered a powerful strike, the target area hit did little to damage the pheasant, which upon landing quickly gathered itself and made good its escape. The falcon remounted but I decided to bring her down, reward

her for her efforts and replace her on the cage to rethink her flight strategies for the next time. Given that we had not worked the strip to any great extent it was then decided to run Brett to see whether any more pheasants were still holding within the cover. On release the pointer started to work the light cover in search of quarry and before long was, again, on point. Alchemy, with her hood removed surveyed the scene and took to the air, her powerful wing beats taking her quickly to a point in the sky where she could assist the pointer in holding the game. After a few minutes Adrian moved towards the pointer and instructed the flush. A cock Pheasant rose to turn round and head in the direction of some distant thicket. The Peregrine, ever alert, had already commenced her descent and was heading in a near-vertical stoop.

The sight of a falcon in such a manoeuvre never ceases to amaze and thrill me and I stood, rooted to the spot, as I watched the falcon continue to fall and fall, her wings held tight to her sides. Then, all of a sudden, the Pheasant appeared at the bottom of my field of vision and a split second later the falcon, with incredible precision, hit the Pheasant squarely on the head. The Pheasant fell heavily to the ground while the falcon threw up, stalled her engines, before gracefully landing on her quarry, with which she was duly rewarded.

So ended my day: A day that demonstrated to me how sporting the Pheasant can be when hawked with falcons at the appropriate time in the game season and in locations that allow quality flights to develop. The experience has provided me (and my falcon) with a different understanding of this branch of gamehawking, prompting the arrangement of more Pheasant hawking outings at the Lands of Finderlie, before the season draws to a close.

Footnote: Since this article was written my falcon Mara lost her life while in pursuit of a pheasant. This article is not only my experience of pheasant hawking but also a record of the field achievement of this fine, young gamehawk.



Adrian Hallgarth with Alchemy.

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Our aims, much like other clubs, are to promote all aspects of Falconry, including keeping, breeding and hunting Birds of Prey.

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Gary Biddiss: 0245 226057
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or write The Tilbury Community Ass.
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The cast of Players, Randomly: Richard Ringer (Mangle), Ian Sutton (Sooty), Chris Hinds (Quiver), Peter Flavel (Boris), John Hill (HillyBilly), Geoff Dalton (Dolly), Mike Williams (Willy), Alan Bick (Urco). Holding the birds are Diana & Leonard Durman-Walters.

A VISIT TO THE SCOTTISH ACADEMY OF FALCONRY

The idea for this adventure came from Mangle (Richard) who thought it to be a good idea at the time. The plan was to spend two days on the grouse moors of the Borders, being looked after by our hosts Diana and Leonard Durman Walters.

The club sent eight members on the expedition, split into two groups. Mangle taking one car with Sooty, Boris and Quiver accompanying him. The other team was led by Hillybilly with Dolly, Urco and Willy in attendance. The journey took four hours without a wrong turn being made. When we arrived at the centre on Thursday evening we found we were too early for dinner, so we reluctantly had to find the local pub for an hour to refresh some parts that needed refreshing. Leonard came to fetch us when dinner was ready, and on the way back he showed Mangle and his merry men where the cottage was situated and they were impressed with the log fire burning in the lounge which would be there waiting for them on their return.

When we arrived back at the Academy, Urco & Dolly shared one room while Hillybilly and Willy shared the other. At the dinner table we were presented with very large

portions of Lasagne which went down well with everybody except Sooty who informed us he preferred plain cooking. He was served egg and chips, this was alright until Dolly had finished his dinner and wanted to finish Sooty's chips as well.

On the Friday morning we woke up to find we could see about 20 yards outside, because of the mist. After breakfast a search party was sent out to see if we had come to the right place and to look at the scenery. We could not see anything until about mid-day.

Our discussion with Leonard on our return about the rest of the day led us to understand that because of the weather they had been having ('til we arrived) it had lengthened the season for the shooting and if we wanted to go on a grouse moor it would be a 3 hour drive. Because of the weather and the distance we all decided that if the weather improved we would travel somewhere local. At 2 o'clock we set off for some land that was owned by the Durman-Walters'. We took with us two falcons, one called Edmund who was a Gyr/peregrine and Norma-Jean a Gyr/saker, plus Lily who was a very energetic German Wirehaired Pointer. When we

arrived Diana and Leonard both equipped themselves with two way radios and Leonard set off, with Lily bounding over the countryside. Leonard and the dog worked a small valley area where we could watch from up above. After a short while Leonard informed us that Lily was on point and asked Diana to release Edmund. He climbed to a pitch of about 300 feet and a pheasant appeared. Edmund stooped and struck it, but it landed in a stream. Next it was Norma-Jean's turn. She didn't seem so keen to fly, but while she was up Lily found another pheasant, she trapped the bird and killed it. For some reason Leonard started getting into the mood and calling us by our nicknames from years ago. Lily became 'You Basket'. A short while later Edmund was sent up again, this time he chased and caught a pheasant in some bushes. Hillybilly was sent down a steep bank to photograph the trophy with Edmund and everyone found it amusing to see him sliding up and down in the mud, but it deter not deter him from getting the shots before it got dark and we had to get torches out. We had a good two hours of watching a longwing working with a pointer, which is what we

came to Scotland for. When we arrived back we prepared ourselves for dinner, which went down very well and afterwards Leonard brought out the bourbon. Quiver obviously had difficulty in believing the taste because he could not stop sampling it. The hospitality was excellent and Leonard sat with us telling about life on the moors. On the Saturday morning the weather was again foul, we discussed what to do for the day. It was too far to the grouse moors if we had to travel home that evening so we said we would play it by ear and see what lunchtime would bring. Diana split us into two groups and gave us a thorough talk on how she conducts her incubation side of the business. We were then told to help ourselves to an extensive range of falconry videos she had and we spent til lunchtime watching them. After lunch we made the decision to abort the rest of the day because the rain was so heavy. We said our goodbyes, after a team photo was taken, and thanked our hosts for looking after us so well. We left with thoughts of might have been if only the weather had not changed for the worse as soon as we arrived.

THE CALIFORNIA HAWKING FIELD MEET, 1995-96



Above: Art Tawatari's peregrine & pheasant.

Below : David Wadsworth & Gyr-peregrine with drake Widgeon duck

Bottom: John Nevaisers Ornate Hawk Eagle on Jack Rabbit.

It was a brisk and clear morning on February 1st, 1996. The air was still, and my good friend Dr Art Tawatari had just unhooded his 12-year old female peregrine, "The Terminator". She was off the fist and in a few minutes she was at a 1200 - 1500 foot pitch. Art's German Shorthair "Moose", was holding point on a pheasant. When the falcon was in position, the flush was made.

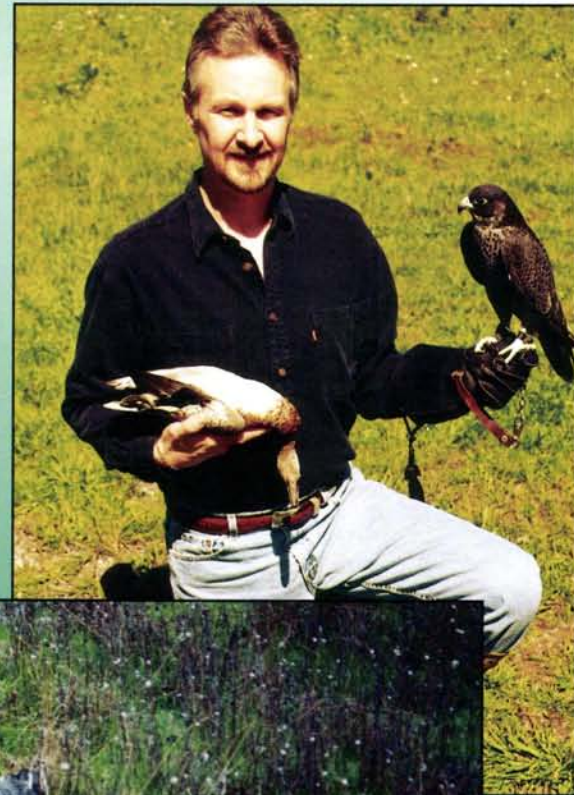
A hen burst up and out, over the wet rice field. High above us a small dot reflecting in the sun began her stoop. At her height, it seemed forever as she plummeted down. She pumped her wings a few times at the top of the stoop, then tucked in close for a good 900 feet. The pheasant was now moving fast and had covered about 75 yards when the falcon closed the gap. Both pheasant and falcon shot around behind an old farmhouse and dropped out of sight for a few seconds. We then saw the falcon throw up 20 feet over the roof of the house after the hit. What an incredible flight! Art ran a couple of hundred yards out into the field. After a few minutes he returned with his falcon and her hen pheasant. It was a classic flight from start to finish, and I had been lucky enough to capture it on video.

This was the morning of the 25th annual California Hawking Club Field Meet. Held in Yuba City, California, the area plays home to several million ducks during the fall and winter. Pheasants are also present in large numbers. There are thousands of acres of rice fields along with other agricultural crops. In the fall, many of these rice fields are flooded with water to provide for duck habitat and hunting. By the time our field meet is held in late January, the conditions are excellent for falconry.

Earlier that morning, before Arts flight, I flew one of my falcons. The sun was coming up as my tiercel gyr-peregrine left the fist. "Schwatz", 3/4 peales and 1/4 black gyr, was to fly a group of ducks. It was very cold out and our breath could be seen as we made our

way toward the pond. Schwatz took pitch quickly and soon levelled out at around 1000 feet. He came in over the pond in anticipation of the usual flush.

I had sneaked a look over the dike prior to the flight and had seen at least three Mallards and what looked like a handful of small ducks, maybe ring-necks. When Schwatz was facing the proper direction, we came up over the edge of the pond. There were six of us spread out along one side. Cries of "Ho!...Ho!" were let out in unison. To my surprise the group of ring-necks numbered close to fifty. As they rose up off the water, Schwatz was coming down in a sizzler of a stoop, tracking the flock as it moved out far below him. His silhouette formed a perfect teardrop as he approached the ducks. He hit a drake, killing it instantly. Schwatz was lucky in that the duck was over the water but fell on the edge of the



bank. For our group, the 1995-96 meet was off to a fine start.

Over the years our California field meets have been very popular. People have attended from all over the world. The representation of raptors has been quite impressive. This year there were Redtail Hawks, Coopers Hawks, Sharpshinned Hawks, Goshawks, Merlins, and Gyrfalcons. The vast majority of raptors were the longwings. There were many types of peregrines and all of the hybrids you can imagine. There was even a Coopers - Harris Hawk cross. Though for all the world I can't figure out why. My friend John Neviasser brought his two Ornate Hawk Eagles from Boise, Idaho. Talk about exotics.

Few people have seen an Ornate fly at quarry. When John agreed to go hawking with us, we jumped at the opportunity. Dale Filmore, a local falconer and friend, knew of a good field to fly jack rabbits. We loaded up and headed out. When we arrived at the area, it began to lightly mist.

As we walked the fields John's six year old female Ornate, Angel, appeared calm but very attentive. After a few minutes, we flushed our first jack rabbit. She chased it for about 25 yards but the jack zigged when Angel zagged and each went separate ways. John picked her up and we were off again.

Another rabbit flushed and ran out behind us. The Ornate was off the fist before I even saw the jack. She quickly overtook it within 20 yards. Once she bound to it, there was no letting go. Her feet have a grip like vice pliers. John let her pluck the rabbit for five minutes to release her aggression. We were all impressed with John's handling of this huge bird. His moves were smooth and his voice calm and low. He kept a close eye on her feet. If he were to be footed it could be very serious. Ornates can move their eagle sized talons with accipiter quickness.

We walked the fields for about an hour and a half. In that time, I think we had five or six flushes. One of them was a long slip of about 80 yards. The jack got up a good 20 yards in front of us. After about 50 yards the Ornate closed the gap. The rabbit did a sharp left turn into some brush and Angel shot over the top missing the jack. Her speed in full flight seems to be similar to a female Goshawk. Seeing this orange, black and white eagle flying in the arid, open fields looked rather surrealistic. This next season I will get the chance to see her fly again when I go hawking with John in Idaho.

The next day my six-year old tiercel peregrine "Buddy", caught a Buffle-head duck after a flight on Mallards failed. He has been an excellent gamehawk, having caught a couple of hundred ducks over the years. About 100 of these have been Mallards.

On the third day of the meet we saw a small group of pheasant fly over by a pond that held Mallards. Buddy was going to be given a shot at the ducks. We decided to put him up and if we could get a point on a pheasant while heading to the pond we would flush it. As luck would have it, Arts dog, Moose, went on point. We flushed the pheasant, a hen, and Buddy came down hitting her. He bound to her for a



Above David Wadsworth & Schwatz with ring-neck duck.

Below: John Nevaisers Ornate Hawk Eagle, Angel.

Bottom: Art Tawatari & female peregrine & rooster pheasant

short time, but she broke loose and flew across the field. Buddy tailed her, and as she crashed into some bushes he followed her in. By the time we got to them one of us startled Buddy, bumping him off the hen. My friend Paul Hutcheson was able to pick the pheasant up. She was in good shape given the circumstances and we were able to release her.

During the four days of this field meet I saw quite a few excellent flights on a variety of quarry. The yearly meet comes at the close of our falconry season, when both falcons and game are in their top condition. This makes for challenging hawking. The pheasant are especially toughened up.

It is always pleasant to gather with my old hawking pals and to meet a few new ones as well. The flights and socialising add up to a wonderful time. Given the huge variety of raptors flown today, and the availability of quarry in California, we truly are living the 2nd "Golden Age" of falconry. Over the years, our field meets have been attended by quite a few falconers from other countries. Some of these include England, Scotland, Mexico and Canada. We have also had guests from the middle eastern countries. Taking into consideration the state of our global society today, it's nice to think that thousands of people of different cultures and backgrounds share a common interest in our very uncommon sport. A smile, a nod, or a thumbs-up after watching a breathtaking stoop at wild quarry is universally the same in any language.



David Wadsworth

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On this particular occasion we were 'pot filling' with an unentered female Harris Hawk. Ambitious we are. Successful...well - let me explain!

David travelled the hills with Kia tethered to the back seat of his Capri. Mark, ferret and myself were to bounce along behind in that great British rust bucket...the Austin Mini.

The burrow I had in mind for Kia's maiden kill was one of those magical bunny homes situated at the base of a sparse hedge. It had four doors, no garden, no complications, and time after time would put out three or four healthy rabbits. these rabbits would, without fail, and never ceasing to amaze me, run straight across the field to the opposite hedge. god only knows why, but whatever the reason it was ideal.

Upon arrival at this idyllic site, David and Harris hawk strategically placed themselves about eight yards from the first hole on the field side. Mark and myself, buried up to our calves in mud and water, took up our positions as "beaters" in the track opposite. With all this done the ferret, a white, highly efficient jill was entered. there was absolute silence for about five minutes, the kind where you dare not breath lest you should miss something. then came the first rumbles. another

thirty seconds saw the first explosion, it was out, track side. Mark and myself leaped into immediate action, both of us swinging our sticks and yelling uncontrollably at the fleeing rabbit. The rabbit immediately skidded to a halt, about turned and wait for it...yes, it headed straight back into the burrow. Now, as I have already said, these rabbits are missing a bit in the skull region, for no sooner had it disappeared in to the hedge base, the mad-man screaming had started again, only this time it was David on the opposite side of the hedge shouting encouragement to Kia. The very same rabbit was now out field side with the hawk hot on its pants. It had obviously thought better of returning to base, for it was now making a no nonsense bee-line to the sanctuary of the brambles on the far side of the field.

Mark and myself, not wanting to miss any of the action, had scrambled and splashed our way to the hedge with a total disregard for any further bolts, present or future, only to see the cotton bud tail disappearing into thick bramble. Kia was left swinging incongruously on

STUART GOLLEDGE



The intrepid hunters

the briars above.

Of course the end of the action had not seen the end to the noise, for that continued in a most unsavoury manner for many minutes afterwards.

During this cursory period the hawk had winged its way back for a shred of something lovely and was once again settled back on the glove.

No time at all had passed before a second bunny had exited its home. If I were wearing a hat I would have been forced to raise it at that point to my ferret, for any ferret more frightening to a rabbit than the three lunatics shouting and leaping around outside is, without doubt one hell of a scary ferret.

Rabbit number two, not wanting to muddy its shoes in the lane, headed straight out across the field, taking exactly the same path as he who had already gone before and one again his evasive actions were followed by a barrage of verbal violence. One would have expected this to have reduced the bolting success even further, but three and even four rabbits still vacated their home.

One of the rabbits that bravely faced Mark and myself somehow managed to pass between us, a shame really for this one

unfortunately left poor David wailing painfully in a near state of tears. The fourth one gave us the final flight at that burrow.

Any onlookers could have been forgiven for thinking they were watching an action replay on video, for each and every flight was "as near as damn it", identical, right down to the path the rabbits took, to the tunnel in the briars they entered, and almost to the briar the Harris sulked on.

Frustrated and of course "rabbit stew" less, we waited for our valiant little partner to exit. It took about five minutes before she finally decided each and every tenant had been evicted. A couple of chirrups brought her instantly to hand and with her warm in bed we dragged ourselves back through the mud to the cars.

In retrospect, hawk and handler should really have stayed on the far side of the field, against the brambles and we, as beaters, should have been positioned so as to refuse the bolted rabbit re-entry on its inevitable about turn.

Hunting rabbits successfully requires forethought and planning for hell hath no fury to match that which steams from the very gristles of a bolted rabbit.

I should like to dedicate this article to my little white jill who died mysteriously overnight along with her two poley stablemates.



Kia



HARRIS AWK EAVEN

After the death of my much loved Harris Hawk, Dusty, it was time to move on to my next dream - to fly a male and female Harris together.

I set about building large new aviaries to house them. Clyde, the male, was collected on the Friday. Bonny, the female, was collected the next day. She was a large, superior Harris, wild, bad tempered and scared. They both sat in the new aviary for the next four weeks whilst I sat and admired them - itching to pick them up. I could hardly believe my luck.

The weekend finally arrived! Martin, a fellow falconer, came to help me fit furniture to two very unimpressed hawks. We spent the rest of the weekend holding two bats! Back to work on Monday all fired up, ready to begin manning. This did not last long as by Thursday the bubble had burst. That evening my son came running in saying, "Dad, Bonny is sat on the fence". She gave me one last smug look and took off.

Local children and falconers rallied round to help me. We chased her from rooftop to rooftop until she came to rest in a large tree on the main road. I thought she was caught up as she sat for ages - hope reigned eternal! The local Fire Brigade were brilliant. They came to help, calling for a second wagon with a Simon Snorkel on. We brought Reddish Road to a standstill! I donned my yellow safety helmet and was lifted slowly up towards her, I was within inches when she flew off. Stuck up ladders in the middle of a tree, it was impossible to follow her and she was lost. All hopes dashed, I was reduced to pounding the streets looking for signs and listening for bells - I heard them everywhere. I phoned the Police, Fire Brigade, Game Wardens, falconers, friends, enemies - anyone who would listen. Large posters with a picture and details on where plastered everywhere. Then to my horror, I noticed that the phone number had been wrongly printed. I revisited all the ones I could find and changed the number. The first call came four days later - it felt longer. The Greater Manchester Police rang to say a large eagle had been seen near Piccadilly Station. I nearly broke the land speed record getting there. I did not dare hope too much.

But, there she was, sitting under the passenger walkway, quite happy with a huge crop.

BBC employees told me they had seen her catch a water rat. It had been several days since I had seen her and I hoped she would be hungry and easy to catch - was I ever wrong? At nightfall, with the help of two policemen, I had planned to creep up with a large net on a pole - catch her - home for breakfast Ha Ha! Trying to creep over broken bottles, cans brambles and various other rubbish was not easy but we did it and were within inches, she looked me in the eye and took off over the Mancunian Way - bruised and birdless, I went home.

Three days later she was sighted on a derelict Church opposite the University Building in Manchester. The Church was held up by scaffolding with a small outbuilding used by the Islamic Community who fed the local pigeons. Bonny must have thought she had died and gone to Harris hawk heaven! She was surrounded by the fattest, laziest pigeons in the world. During the sleepless nights that followed, I hatched a million and one cunning plans.

The first was a large bow trap baited with a dead pigeon. Martin and I climbed the scaffold to install the trap and waited hours. Later she appeared with a full crop, totally uninterested. Up the scaffold again, to remove the bait. This incidentally was no mean feat. You all know how high churches are. The next morning, 6.30am, back up again to bait the trap. Several fags and fingernails later she appeared. I never could figure out where she came from. She jumped onto the scaffold next to the trap, we all held our breath. She very gingerly stepped one foot onto the pigeon then she grabbed it. The trap came over and - flash, she was gone, along with my hopes.

During the next few visits she seemed to recognise me and my car too. On occasions she called to me. We decided to operate the trap manually. Back up the flaming scaffold. After several weeks of being there, before work, after work, late at night and weekends, it was beginning to take over my life. We had tried various baits - pigeon, pheasant, hare and rabbit. She never went near the trap again.

The phone rang constantly. With dastardly plans from Martin, we became friendly with the University Security Guards. In fact, we spent that much time there we were almost

on their Christmas Card list. They agreed to let us put the trap on a flat roof she sat on. They also offered to fix a security camera on it so it could be left baited for twenty-four hours. We exchanged phone numbers and left, once again full of hope!

Another waste of time. She never looked at it. On her constant visits she was mobbed by magpies, crows and the resident sparrowhawk and kestrel population. She was not bothered, flying for fun, chasing leaves, as fit as a fiddle and obviously a competent hunter. Her main hunting area was about two miles centred around the Church. The University car park is very well lit and I assumed she could hunt at night. This was confirmed as I walked one night - a sparrowhawk killed a starling just feet away from me.

The next plan was to take the male and let him feed near where she was perched, with a large net ready to drop over both of them. She sat with her foot tucked up, looking down as if to say "Is that the best you can do?"

We searched for the roost. The University was a great help but would not allow us to lower the car park lights. Once again Blue Watch came to the rescue. We put a drugged pigeon breast on a light. It was very quick acting, dangerous, but we were desperate. Martin waited all day. Her favourite light was ignored. I arrived as it was getting dark. She flew over towards the light. We held our breaths as she drew near the car park lights. Triggered by sensors, they came on and she veered off. You can imagine the feeling, foiled again!

I was beginning to get used to the idea that I would never get her back. Blue Watch came back to remove the pigeon. I had now trained the male Harris with the help of my son who manned him when I was not around. He turned out to be a cracking little hunter, admired by all.

Bonfire Night came and went - seven weeks of freedom and life goes on around her. She enjoyed a bonfire not twenty feet away, a lively firework display, the wail of police cars en-route to Manchester - nothing seemed to scare her. She had settled there and was showing no signs of moving on. I was lost for what to do next. We had tried just about everything. It was obvious we could not second guess her. Her fitness and flying ability

were unbelievable, soaring hundreds of feet, chasing pigeons. It was brilliant to watch. It was nearly Christmas. I was busy at work - an emotional and physical wreck, I needed a rest. I had hit an all time low when Paul from the C.H.C. and the W.H.C. rang to offer his traps and his help. I welcomed him with open arms. Paul gave me the phone number of Phil from the W.H.C. who had caught Harris Hawks before. We talked and he said he would come down with his pal and check it out. It was Sunday when he first saw her. His first words were, "We'll have her in two weeks". Thank God, I thought, somebody can do it. We talked for hours, days even and everything he said came to pass. I had complete faith in him. "Okay" I said "You do it, I can't do anymore". I had planned to stay away but she drew me like a magnet. Then came a remarkable series of events. Early one morning we sat freezing, Phil and I, waiting for her to show, eyes on the church roof. Then, I tell you, Paul Daniels could not have done it better - puff, like magic, there she was from nowhere. She yawned and roused. "She's come out of the Church". We had finally found the roost. I must say at this point, we had been in the church thanks to Manchester City Housing, to whom the church belongs, and we had not been able to see any evidence of her and God knows we had looked. She then flew off on her daily hunting rou-

time. We ran like Linford Christie to the church. After a painstaking search we found a Harris Hawk feather amongst the rubble. We searched for the roost up the scaffold onto the choir area. Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson could not have done a better job. Nothing and then as if in slow motion a feather came floating down. Phil caught it. As God it my judge, it's true - all we needed was the celestial music! Then we realised that there must be another area up above somewhere. I climbed the scaffold outside right to the top and I looked into the darkness through the round window. I managed to see what looked like a maintenance walkway and old ladders. We then climbed up inside to look for a trap door or some access to this area that is unseen from the inside. We found a small trapdoor and managed to open it. Behind it was a solid wall of pigeon droppings. We smashed through these to find a small opening. We just managed to squeeze through and there it was, her roosting area. The place was full of pigeons, young and old. It was obvious that she did not kill outside but that she did it here. There were kills everywhere. We set the trap. The plan was that once she flew in, we would pull a cord sixty feet below, which would drop a curtain, cutting her exit. Simple! Several days passed, rain, wind, gale's, cold - the worst winter in history since I didn't know when, and she sits out in it. Whilst we

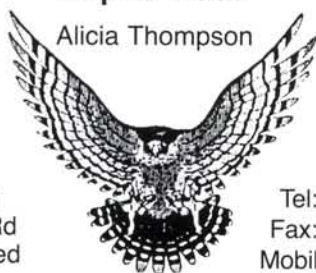
watched, she did her disappearing act. She's in, we thought. Congratulations all round, up in the loft and nothing! She had simply jumped very tightly to a part of the roof, unseen from below. Quietly, we set the trap again. She never went in. Phil had an idea he wanted to try. I thought it would never work but Phil said it would, and it did! Phil spent all the next day freezing in the loft area. She never showed. The next day Phil was stuck at home due to freezing snow. I had neglected my business enough and had to work. Paul and Martin offered to go. They also spent hours in the loft unable to move in case she heard any noise and cleared off. A simple snare on a dead pigeon, one talon caught and she was ours. Seventeen weeks and many more hours and time than I can express, we had done it! I say we, as it was the huge efforts from a few local falconry friends - sadly Phil and I missed the main event. For the next few weeks I was paranoid and kept checking she was still there. She is now trained and entered. They have since flown and hunted together - Bonny and Clyde - what a team! I could go on forever, there is so much I have not included that there is probably a book in here somewhere. This is not just my story but belongs to all five of us. A huge thanks to all who made this possible.

STEVE CLARKE

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Her crest held high
We walk the field,
She glares at the bushes
What will they yield?

Her feathers then tighten
Her amber eyes scan,
Hidden in bramble
Invisible to man,

Then low down she crouches
The moment I love,
Unwinding her jesses
She's off the glove,

Her wingtips are skimming
The meadow so green,
Makes fast her approach
Low and unseen.

With just seconds to spare
Her bell gives her away,
She goes over the top
Into the affray.

The Fieldfares, they scatter
And loud in their verse
They take to the sky
Down at her they curse.

Despite hours of training
Flights in all weathers
She mantles her prize,
A footful of feathers.

Ne'er mind eyas spar
Don't be full of sorrow,
The sun's going down
But there's always tomorrow.

Anon.

HER FINEST HOUR

*The banks hung steep, the cover deep,
That secreted the rivers creep,
Two whistling Teal sprang, beating air,
Our Sparviter with hawk stood near.
His charge exploding from his glove,
Plied wing to merge with Teal above.
The binding to its quarry so,
Fell back into the rivers flow.
Triumphantly the man gave vent,
And plunging to the river went,
Snatching clear his precious hawk,
From the turgid rivers torque.
The heroine, his eyas spar,
Revelling in its finest hour.
The one, his adrenalin pumping high,
the other, wild eyed, wondering why.
Plumed her prize beneath her feet,
And calmy stooped to eat*

*To Joe & "The Girl"
Ron Billingsley*

THE SPARROWHAWK (Glimpsed)

Through the woodlands sombre light
I glimpsed the spirit often sought,
Silent as death her flight,
Swift as fleeting thought.

Born of the forests ancient,
Child of demonic chase
Times dark, archaeons reticent,
Honed this valiant race.

Her mettle tempered to aerial pursuit
Over hedge, ditch, thro' tree,
Pilot of the hunt, absolute,
Stealthy, silent, free.

Dark flicker 'cross the forest ride,
Bolt through woodland hush,
Down the ditch a sudden glide
Cruising the covert and brush.

With a pitch and yaw and weave and jink,
Threading the larch trees solemn maze
Coursing to outfly, out think,
Her prey along his frantic ways.

However swift his dive or twist
However rapid the rate,
However hard he doth resist
Her pounce will be his fate.

Slanting rays of light serene
Thro' the pines penetrate,
Illuminating the final scene
Of his mortal fate.

The sentinel pines have witnessed
The tiny tempests' might
And all the main that she possessed
Unseen to other sight.

Balanced on an edge so fine
Peerless in courage and zeal
Executed by perfect design
Is she imagined or real.

Searing fury burns within her eye
Hell must drive her wing
For her life many die
And cries of death must ring

Only the Chaffinch sings from the bough
That I once spied her upon
His shrill song mocks somehow
Now that she is gone.

Anon.

Dedicated To Bramble

A tribute indeed to the Sparrowhawk.
Does any other bird inspire writers to
such passion as this wonderful little bird?

RAPTORS OF MALLORCA

Text & Illustrations by Philip Snow

Mallorca is well established as a popular bird-watching haunt, largely because of the spectacular Eleonora's Falcon, in one of its mediterranean strongholds here. The north and east of the island has superb mountainous scenery, with tremendous cliffs, beaches & wetlands; in addition to the well publicised sun/beach/bar culture, better exemplified by Palma & the other side of the island.

The Balearics do not have the huge numbers of raptors which we associate with both ends of the mediterranean; but you can enjoy them, and many other birds, on easy walks amongst beautiful scenery.

Conservation work has burgeoned in recent years, with the Black Vulture reintroduction scheme starting to bear fruit; and establishment of, for instance, the Albufera marsh reserve thanks to groups like GOB (Grup Balear d, Ornitologica i Defensa de la Naturaleza) and SECONE (Seccion para la Conservacion de la Naturaleza)

With a good bus service, & reasonably priced car & cycle hire, it is relatively easy to get around the favourite birdwatching sites, most of which are near northeast holiday centres like Porto Pollensa, Cala san Vicenza & Alcudia.

Spring or early autumn are the best times, with the greening of spring, wild flowers & breeding birds finely offset by the advantage of a September visit, when the Eleonora's Falcons are breeding on the northern cliffs and islets.

There are currently about 32 diurnal and 6 nocturnal raptors, on the records, although some birds are declining, and others not well enough studied to properly assess. Starting with the HONEY BUZZARD (*pernis apivorus*), this familiar migrant is represented by moderate numbers; with a high of 308 heading north over Casa Vegas, in May '92. COMMON BUZZARDS (*Buteo buteo*) are not at all common here, with only a handful of yearly records of which some are thought to be eastern 'Steppe' buzzards; and rare accidentals like LONG LEGGED (*Buteo rufinus*) and ROUGH LEGGED BUZZARDS (*Buteo lagopus*) are known.

The normally ubiquitous BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*) is similarly, not a common migrant here with only singles, or two or three at a time recorded in April/May or September. The handsome RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) is largely sedentary here, but generally declining, with perhaps 30 birds at their winter roost. It is most regularly seen at the Cuber dam, below mighty Puig Major (c 1443 metres), a good raptor spot.

There are two resident breeding vultures, now that the escaped african WHITE BACKED VULTURES (*Gyps bengalensis*) have presumably gone home! The aforementioned BLACK VULTURES (*Aegypius monachus*) tremendous 3 metre wingspan dominates the northern sierras, from Soller to Pollensa, as the reintroduced birds have doubled their numbers to about 50. This conservation success also seems to have rubbed off on the smaller black & white EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*), both migrant and resident, although numbers are very low. GRIFFON VULTURES (*Gyps fulvus*) are even more uncommon, just the odd wanderer or resident seen, but with more public awareness and pride (in the Black Vultures), much less shooting & poisoning of raptors is recorded now.

The usual three palearctic harriers are observed, with only the resident MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aereginosus*) breeding, and migrating through. This is largely due to the islands' other conservation success, the S'Albufera marsh reserve, by Alcudia. A maximum of 10 were seen there in winter 1992. There is only one recent breeding record for the elegant MONTAGUS HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*), which pass through in 'moderate numbers', in April/May; and a couple of HEN HARRIERS (*Circus cyaneus*) winter here, most usually being observed around the Albufera. The slender wraith-like PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) is naturally only a rare vagrant at this end of the mediterranean. Only odd sightings of that normally widespread & fairly common mediterranean raptor,

the SHORT TOED EAGLE (*Circus gallicus*) are on record, and the mountainous habitat appears, superficially, to be suitable...? the only reasonably common eagle is the resident and migratory BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pannatus*), regularly seen in both light and dark forms at places like the Arfa mountains and Cuber dam. The larger black and white BONELLIS EAGLE (*hieraaetus fasciatus*) is now, alas, extinct as a breeding bird, although we regularly used to see them around Ternelles, and the GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) also no longer breeds, but is also seen fairly regularly, and both are reasonably common on the mainland. The rarest eagle is probably the IMPERIAL EAGLE (*Aquila heliaca adalberti*), with just one sighting in the 70's, although it appears to be doing fairly well in nearby S.W. Spain, its last stronghold, and has recently bred again in Morocco.

About four lesser spotted or Spotted Eagles were observed, on passage, a few years ago, their only records. Resident OSPREYS (*Pandion haliaetus*) frequently fish alongside the road in Pollensa Bay, the Albufera & Albuferia marshes and at the cuber dam, but are scarce breeders. SPARROWHAWKS (*Accipiter nisus*) are supposedly rare, although friends have just seen two in March, '96, and I was delighted to watch a large female GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) mobbing (with a Booted Eagle), a black Vulture over the Cuber dam, one recent spring. Breeding of the Gos is simply not known, but the mountainous terrain is well wooded and apparently well supplied with suitable prey like wood pigeon and Red legged partridge, etc?

Falcons are well represented, with the dashing ELEONORA'S FALCON (*Falco eleonora*) dominating from May to October. Initially, they hawk dragonflies, over the marshes, in flocks up to 100 strong (June '92), and then move to the spectacular northern cliffs in large breeding colonies. From Cape Formentor, through Cala Figuera, The Boquer Valley, Castel del Rei, along the north coast to the Isle Dragonera

(north of Palma); these gloriously agile raptors stoop, sometimes 3 or 4 at a time, at (unfortunate) tired migrants like Redstarts or Hoopoes, down the dizzying 300 metre cliffs towards the dark blue-green sea; a dazzling display of aerial virtuosity.

A rough estimate of 350 (increasing) pairs makes Mallorca the second most important breeding site, after the Aegean area, for these specialised migrants, one of the first raptors to be 'conserved' by Princess Eleonora of Arborea in the 14th Century, which mainly winter in Madagascar. The small population of resident breeding PEREGRINES (*Falco peregrinus brookei*) can look amazingly squat when seen alongside Eleonora's, as at Cala Figuera, and their number appear fairly stable. At least one record of the north african BARBARY FALCON (*Falco peligimoides*) exists, and occasional SAKERS (*Falco cherrug*), LANNERS (*Falco biarmicus*) and winter MERLINS (*Falco columbarus*) are also seen.

Probably because the dainty LESSER KESTREL (*Falco naumanni*) is declining over all its range, it is only a 'sporadic breeder' on the island, with a few recent migratory sightings. The KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) is, as usual, an 'abundant resident', but the HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*), is somewhat amazingly, merely a rare migrant in very small numbers. This leaves the beautiful insectivorous RED-FOOTED FALCON (*Falco vespertinus*), and generally, spring migration numbers seem to be increasing in recent years. The north east marshes are good places to see up to 35 birds (May '92), but depending upon easterly winds, though!

There are many birds to be enjoyed on Mallorca, and its easy accessibility and excellent facilities continue to ensure its popularity, and perhaps, also, help to safeguard the birds essential habitat. Watching the breathtaking aerial manoeuvres of Eleonora's Falcons over the warm evening lit cliffs is one of the greatest bird and landscape spectacles on earth and Mallorca is one of the best places to see it.

TEXT & PICTURES by PHILIP SNOW

RAPTORS of MALLORCA

♀ GOSHAWK



♀ & 2nd yr ♂ (month)
• RED FOOTED FALCONS

• OSPREY, *Albufera*

• ELEONORAS FALCONS.
pale, & bottom,
dark phase birds.



• ♂ MONTAGU
& ♀



The massive BLACK VULTURE (w/ span = 270cm) dominates the mountains of N. Mallorca. Here it is being



mobbed by a pale BOOED EAGLE.



• RED KITE



Ciberdarr.



Puig major, nr Soller. 1443 mtrs.



♀

♂ Marsh Harrier, Albufera.



• BLACK KITE

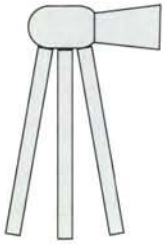


HARRIER

• BLACK VULTURE over the Castel del Rei; Ternelles Valley with the Eleanoras Falcons. (Looking east)

© P. Snow 1996





FILMING IN THE CAIRNGORMS

Andrew Knowles-Brown



Filming the Peregrine on a rocky Crag.

Being an advocate of the Martini school of hawking (any time, any place, anywhere) I was more than a little interested when asked if I would like to do a bit of filming work with my eagle in the Cairngorms. To me the filming was secondary to the estate on which the filming would take place, moving with blue hares! was one of the descriptions, utopia to my ears. That was late 1993 and it was not until a year later that I got a call asking if I recalled the earlier conversation (did I just), and could I be ready in late January 1995. So, during the last week in January I headed north to meet Peter Kirk, also a falconer, in Perth. He was to fly his Peregrine falcon for the program, he also brought along his female Goshawk "just in case", so we both set off for the Cairngorms.

Probably like most field sports enthusiasts, I like watching all wildlife programmes and always took them at face value in their expertise of filming, until that is, some years ago, when I saw a programme by Simon King showing how he made some of his films and specifically, how he faked the shot of the Dormouse eating a blackberry, illuminated and silhouetted by the rising full moon. This really shattered my illusions of film makers, but I suppose if you think about it, and I never had, how on earth could they get such spectacular shots without a little help? So it was to be with this wildlife programme about

the high tops of the Cairngorms. Peter and I would find out some of the tricks of the trade first hand.

We arrived at the remote cottage late afternoon and were warmly welcomed by our host and film maker. After settling in the birds and dog we retired to the holiday cottage to find out what was wanted from us. The programme was to be about the high tops of Scotland above 2000ft and was to include all animals, birds, insects and plants. The programme would last for 50 minutes and the birds of prey would take up about 5 minutes of the time, not long you would think, but from reading the script it would be action packed. Those that have been involved in filming will know that days of filming will be needed to get the few precious seconds of film. Peter's falcon was needed for some close-up flying shots as well as take-offs and landings from a pretend eyrie. This was later expanded to include a ptarmigan hunting sequence with the stoop, bind, carry and lastly pluming scene. I was to get the eagle to fly close by for general flying shots, some stooping

towards the camera, with a blue hare chase and kill. Some sitting on rocks, landings, take-offs, and coming into a deer carcass, all sounds easy when written down doesn't it, but then the laws of sod and Murphy hadn't been taken into account, or the fact that the film was budgeted for 150 days of filming and was due to over-run to at least 300 days. Oh well let's see

what the morning brings! Up at 7.30 a.m. Anticipating what the day would throw at us made me forget how cold it was. My sleeping bag and double duvet had kept the frost on the inside of the windows at bay. I wasn't used to this, clothes thrown on quickly and down to a nice hot cup of coffee. The birds were put on a temporary weathering and the dog fed, then back in for a leisurely breakfast and plan of action meeting. The filming and flying ground was in the next glen, about 20 minutes drive away and we got there about 10.30 to check the lie of the land. Peter elected to fly first as we were on a hill with some down draught which would, hopefully, keep his bird close in for the camera. As it happened we were too far down the glen and the camera kept picking up trees, fences and

other things not seen over 2.000ft, so we headed up the hill to fly the eagle. Over the first ridge the strong wind gave some lift from the small gully below, this was as good a place to start as any. So, with jesses off and telemetry hidden in his tail, off he sailed. I worked the dog in the gully below. A roe deer broke cover and headed up the other side, as did two hares, he took no notice of them, great I thought, what a start. Nothing else flushed and after about fifteen minutes of quartering the hill he raked off and flew straight downwind to a large hill (at 2200ft where does a hill become a mountain?) I scrambled down the gully to the glen bottom, rock hopping across the wide burn without getting too wet and headed up the hill towards where I last saw him. The wind wasn't good for lift so I didn't expect him to be too high up. On this side of the hill the glen bottom and lower slope was covered in juniper bushes, not something I was used to seeing, and I was soon aware why Gorby had headed this way. It was full of blue hares, at least 30 of them were moving up hill, ahead of me. I found Gorby at about 300ft above the glen bottom, mantling over a hare. I retrieved him and headed back to the others, with the help of the keeper who had kindly come over with his Argocat, to give me a lift back. We went further away from where he had killed, to a small where he waited on



Peters Gos on her first Blue Hare.



Filming the Ptarmigan kill.

well. Three hares flushed together from the bottom and ran up the far hillside, he headed for them but lost wind and they beat him to the top. He headed back over to us, the camera had got a few shots, but there hadn't been much sun to make the bird stand out. Once again Gorby raked off, heading back down the gully, past our first flying attempts, back to the big hill. It took me twenty minutes to walk back down to the burn in the glen bottom and by this time Gorby had moved around the hill to get lift. He was flying a good 750ft above me, playing at getting the hares that had flushed earlier. Fortunately they knew all the tricks and eluded his attempts. I crossed the burn about 300 yards upstream from before and the dog began flushing loads more hares from out of the juniper. Another 20 headed up hill once more, I shouted and waved, the eagle spotted these and stooped won, the first two jinxed out of his way, then he raked around and took one about 50ft above me, thankfully not far to walk. It was mid-afternoon by this time so when the Argocat came over I suggested we call it a day as the light wasn't going to improve. We retired to the head keepers cottage for a well-earned coffee and a chat about tomorrow.

Day two saw a lot of snow having melted, which caused problems with burning patches in the heather showing up in the background. Also, there wasn't much sun around. We tried slipping the eagles from the fist on the big hill where he'd wanted to be the previous day, but each time a hare was flushed up hill it either kept out of shot or, the two that did run the right way stayed in a dip between the camera and myself, so I couldn't slip him. As things weren't going our

way, we moved up the glen to a gully off at right angles with some wind to give him lift. He was soon over 2000ft but we were only able to flush one hare, which he took little notice of. The rest of the hares were all over the other side of the glen in the lee of the wind. He was soon out of my sights but Peter and the camera man saw two dots appear, the local eagles had come to have a look at this interloper, soon he was speeding back to me with two wild eagles in hot pursuit. At times you couldn't see which bird was which. There was some great stooping and talon claspings done by all, they came to within 200 ft of us, but the wild birds soon spotted the camera high on the hill and as quickly as they came, they flipped over the ridge to disappear. I brought the eagle down and Peter flew his falcon for some more flying shots, she also found good lift here and was flying well but the sun started to set and with poor lighting he brought her down. We decided to recce further up the glen for tomorrow and, with the deepening snow, got Peters vehicle stuck in a snow drift. While I drove back to get a rope and spade, Peter took his gos out to try for a hare, he walked up the snowbound track while the camera-man very kindly kicked the juniper bushes, soon the Gos was alert, she'd seen something. It flushed and she was off in hot pursuit, a quick flip-over, and she had it, the only rabbit we saw in the four days we were up there. Peter was disappointed it wasn't a hare, but we still had time. As we walked back to the car, Peter was higher up on the hill and he flushed two hares but both went straight up the hill and the gos couldn't get them, we soon had the pick-up dug out and we headed back to the cot-

tage. Day three. Even more snow had melted over night which made positioning of the birds even more critical for filming. We were to try the peregrine at binding and carrying the ptarmigan, which had been conveniently defrosted overnight. I was posted high up the hill to spot the falcon

should she carry out of sight of Peter in the glen bottom. She wasn't wearing any telemetry due to the difficulty of hiding it. As things turned out at all went perfectly, a bind, a couple of carrying shots and a pluming session all took place with snow in the background, the only problem was if there was enough sun to get that extra

the hare sped past me, Gos in overdrive, catching up fast. They both disappeared around a steep shale embankment, the hare did a quick about turn and shot up the banking. Fortunately the wind was a perfect aid for the Gos, she flared her wings, the wind took her fast up to meet the hare. She bound to its back end only a foot from the top of the bank, she very quickly moved a foot to its head and immobilised it. A fabulous flight which I had a grandstand view of, Peter on the other hand hadn't seen a thing but was ecstatic when he saw her prize. She was given a small feed and then back to the cottage.

Day four. We decided this was to be our last day due to all the snow going and very little sun forecast. Peter went off in the morning with his Gos to try for some more hares, while I took the eagle out for a last chance at some hare stooping shots. We started off at yesterdays venue as a slight wind change would, we hoped, make it easier for him



Andrew Knowles-Brown & Peter Kirk after a great hawking trip.

special shot. I tried to fly the eagle here as well but the wind was such that he went on to a non snowy ridge and played around for half an hour, had another sparring match with the local eagles and only came down when he was ready, so no film in the can. On the way home we had to pass the juniper bushes of the first day so Peter got the Gos out and went to stand at a nice vantage point. I worked the dog so that any hares came his way. Two hares flushed before he was in position and both out-maneuvred the Gos, but as I got to the last clump a hare made its exit, a perfect slip,

to stay on the side of the hill we wanted him on. Once again conditions were not perfect and the only hare caught was one deep in some juniper bushes, this the camera couldn't see and the dog was in the frame also. We then drove, or more or less scrambled up in the Landrover to a big whale back hill which was over 2000ft. This was where Gorby had played previously, the terrain was bleak, with short heather, lichens and peat hags. The only life to be seen were a few snow buntings by a small cairn which, it turned out, were being baited to encourage them to stay for the filming. I

cast the eagle off and he soon made height in the strong wind, the views were spectacular, I could see for miles, with snow capped mountains all around me. I worked the dog through peat hags, but it was that raw up there I didn't expect much to be around. After about 40 minutes I was getting to the end of the hags with nothing flushed. I hadn't been in radio contact with the camera-man and he had got a few good soaring shots so was quite happy with what he'd got. Then I saw some movement, a hare was sneaking around ahead of me, I called the dog over and shouted as the hare broke cover. The eagle had spotted the hare and was soon overhead, a quick flip over and he nailed it. Again, this happened in a dip and all the camera got was a leg and ear appearing, then disappearing, another missed opportunity. A horrendous snow storm arrived and produced a near white-out, so I called the eagle down for the camera. I fed him up on the hare and some good shots were had showing the bleak, raw nature of the high tops, with snow whistling around, while the eagle ate. During the filming Peter arrived, having had a successful time catching two or more hares with his Gos. I



Gorby on Blue Hare.

wished I was with him in the warmth of the landrover. We soon finished and headed off the hill, back to the cottage. Before leaving the next day the head keeper very kindly offered to show us where the resident capercaillie lived. An opportunity we couldn't miss. This was in a large scots pine plantation that had been correctly thinned to produce a good forest floor of blaeberry. The big cocks were

just starting to lek, so it was hoped we might see one, as it happened we were lucky to see three. It is amazing how big these birds are, strutting around like turkeys, their tails fanned and necks upright, white breath in the cold morning billowing out of their huge, horny beaks. It was a privilege to see them. The estate is exceptionally well kept and congratulations must go to the head keeper and

landowners for their sympathetic-to-nature style of management. All four species of grouse reside here as well as the eagles, peregrines, merlins, harriers, buzzards etc., even goshawks have been spotted on the low ground. All live in comparative harmony and good stocks of grouse are available each year for shooting. It would be nice if more estates were as enlightened.

AGREEMENT SIGNED ON FALCON CONSERVATION IN PAKISTAN.

An agreement has been signed between the Falcon Foundation International Pakistan and the National Avian Research Centre, Abu Dhabi for a research and conservation programme on the Lugger Falcon (*Falco jugger*) in Pakistan.

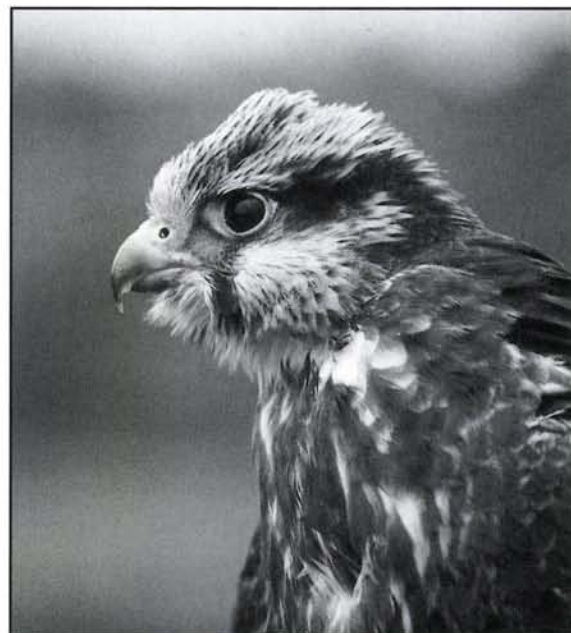
The Lugger is medium sized falcon which breeds in the Indian Sub-continent. Once widespread, its numbers are now considerably reduced and it has been placed on Appendix I of CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) because of increasing concern over its status.

Although of no interest to Arab Falconers, Pakistani trappers catch many Luggers each year to use as decoys to trap larger the Saker falcons which migrate through Pakistan. Also, Luggers may be suffering from additional pressures such as pesticides or disturbance. The study sets out to investigate the distribution and numbers of Lugger and the factors involved in its decline. Once these are clear, ways to reverse the downward trend will be proposed. Initial surveys will concentrate on parts of Punjab and Sind.

The project co-ordinator in Pakistan is Brigadier Mukhtar Ahmed. Members of the team include Mr Ift Khar Ahmed MSc of the Zoological Survey in Karachi, Mr Mehmood-ul-Hassan Khan MSc, Mr Faisal

Adil MSc and Mr Orazi Javed MSc, all from Government College, Lahore, and Mr Shahid Iqbal, an experienced falcon trapper. The project co-ordinator for the National Avian Research Center in Abu Dhabi is the Director of Falcon Management and Research, Dr Nick Fox. The role of NARC is to provide technical and financial support. The National Avian Research Center itself is funded by concerned Arab falconer conservationists and already has parallel programmes in the Middle East, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The aim, wherever possible, is to support teams of local biologists in long-term programmes. The Lugger project is part of the NARC's wider programme on the conservation of birds of prey throughout Asia, Pakistan and the Middle East, to ensure a sustainable resource for falconry, and is also allied to its programme to conserve breeding stocks and habitats of houbara bustards as a hunting resource. About 1.5 million Pakistani people rely for income on some aspect of Arab falconry, such as

working in the hunting areas, or trapping falcons. Therefore the programmes have to conserve not just the falcons, the houbara and their habitats, but also must consider the many people whose livelihoods depend on the hunting being managed on a proper sustainable basis.





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STRANGE...BUT TRUE

by Ray Turner

It ought to be explained that whilst this is a true story - it is rather strange! (As a young man at school I remember that a very popular booklet at the time was entitled "Strange but True". This contained all manner of very strange stories, the author of whom was a man called Ripley.

As a long time member of Raptor Rescue I am in touch with all the local veterinary surgeons in the area, as well as a local Animal Rescue Centre. This means that if a bird of prey arrives that is in need of care and attention, I am contacted.

Some time ago, the Animal Rescue centre telephoned me to say that they had a Buzzard and could I help? On arrival I was introduced to this bird and I gave it the usual initial examination. Eyes bright and clear, very alert and no damage. It felt very plump, so had been feeding well. Nice strong grip with the feet; no broken legs. Felt each wing in turn carefully and no sign at all of any broken bones. Vent nice and clean. Eye pupils were not dilated - which means (to me) that there were no obvious signs of poisoning. Not a thing wrong with it!

In the course of conversation it transpired that a gentleman was driving along when he came upon this Buzzard just standing in the centre of the road. Being a caring chap he stopped the car, got out, took a blanket from the boot and threw it over the bird. Gathering up this bundle, he put it into the back of his car and took it to the Animal Rescue Centre. Surprised?

The following morning I took this Buzzard to my local veterinary surgeon, Mr. Parsons at Crewkerne, who is very learned in the matter of birds and their

ailments. After a very professional examination he pronounced the bird to be in A1 health. As for the Buzzard himself, I came to the conclusion that he was a male 1995 bred bird - and had a very 'laid back' attitude to life in general! Many wild caught birds of prey are quite aggrieved, upset and naturally, are as "wild as hawks". This one had a quiet and docile nature. Furthermore, as far as I could see, there was no evidence at all to suggest that this was either a captive bred bird, or that it had been a "trained" hawk.

What to do? We kept him in a large aviary on his own. Feeding on day old chicks, rabbit and quail showed that he had a healthy appetite. After three weeks of being in confinement it was decided that he could be released. It is our policy that the bird should be fed as much as it can eat and then released very early in the morning. In this way they are not immediately preoccupied by the search for food.

In point of fact, the chances are they do not need to eat for some days. Also, by releasing early in the day, it does give the bird plenty of time to adjust to the new environment whilst digestion is taking place in some peaceful repose.

So, he was taken to what we term our 'release field' and given his freedom. Launched into the sky, he only flew about 40 yards and then landed on the grass. For several minutes we eyed each other - and at long last he took to the air to fly across the field, to land in some beech trees on the edge of the wood.

Over the years we have taken quite few Buzzards into care but never, never, have we come across one that had such a Cavalier attitude to life!

COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to last issues competition was PEREGRINE. We have Ten Winners, each getting a free ticket to the Falconers Fair.

They are:

Tizi Hodson, Scotland.

Mr P Purdy, Kent

Lyndon Brazier, Shrops.

R J Newton, Peterborough.

Mik Standing, Gwynned

Alan Bell, Southampton.

Dr Brian McBride, Wilts

T Abbott, Northants.

B Marriott, Notts.

Miss J Cooper, Devon

CONGRATULATIONS

STOP PRESS.

We have just been informed that the Red Kite featured in last issues Raptor Rescue article was found poisoned on 13th April. Mick Robins, who rang and told me said it was especially upsetting as it was evident that the bird was doing well as it had been eight months since its release. This is the fifth Red Kite in this area of Berkshire to have been found poisoned. Police are investigating the matter and we hope to have some more news for you in the next issue.

FOOTNOTE

A pair of Lanners have been stolen in the last week. Once again one of the birds was killed. We can't decide if this is someone setting a trend or if it is just total incompetence. Let's hope it is the latter. Somebody out there must know something so please get in touch with Paul or even ourselves. These people must be stopped for the sake of the birds if nothing else. If you love birds of prey then speak up.

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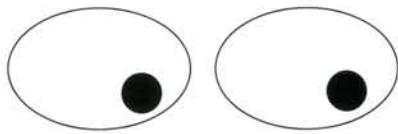
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A VIEW TO A KILL



Having been interested in hawking for about a year, I decided to join the BFC. Since my baptism into the sport I have spent many days in the field with my sister or Vaughn (Sargent), always with nothing to show for my frantic efforts through brambles etc. Vaughn would always be apologetic for "another days' classic hawking!" Meanwhile I'd continually hear my sisters stories of how well Storm had taken another Bunny. Time after time I would wonder when I would see my first flight ending in a reward other than an annoyed Redtail, it got to the stage when I was considering hypnosis to end my jinx.

I have ordered my first Redtail and with that in mind, I went to my sisters house for some more hands on experience. She still couldn't believe that my jinx remained. "You just wait and see 'Storm' tomorrow, she'll end it." Well she wasn't kidding either. We stopped at the first warren we came to and I put Tiddler (one of her friendly ferrets) down the hole. Within 2 minutes, BANG! a rabbit bolted and 2 seconds later Storm was in, only to be dragged down an adjacent hole a further 2 seconds later. The ensuing melee involved Amanda trying to pry Storm from the hole whilst still attached to a determined bunny. Although this resulted in my first on scene kill it wasn't how I Mr Glasier had described his exploits.

So in my mind, I still hadn't seen my first text-book kill! "Never mind, you'll be able to fly Ians Harris on Sunday. Harry' took a moorhen over a 40 yard slip and killed it in cover. Typical, of my luck. Still it was a joy to fly Harry and I achieved a lot, even though I missed the kill.

Thursday, the day I was due to leave for home. I was to fly Storm during the morning as a sort of practical exam. 2lb 13oz. We should be in for an interesting morning. With

that in mind we drove to the intended flying ground. "Okay, she's all yours, let's go." After being messed around by Tiddler and Riddler down the hole, Amanda said 'Let's fly her out of those trees and she will follow on.' I cast Storm into the tree and walked past, with not too much encouragement she flew to the next tree where she roused so vigorously, I don't know how she didn't fall down to earth with a bump! Then, as of by magic, a rabbit appeared. About 30 yards ahead, along the hedgerow and closing. "Please see the bunny Storm," I tried in vain to telepathically tell her. "I think she's clocked it" Amanda informed me just as the rabbit turned tail and ran for it, just the flash of the tail was all she needed for enticement, and with that she dropped from the branch in such a way that you would have thought her tail feathers were on fire! The rabbit had at least 40-45 yards on her but she got closer with every twist and turn. To shouts of "Go on Storm," in stereo, she forced it from getting into the sanctuary of cover, instead the rabbit went 90 degrees left with Storm a few inches behind, along another hedge and it darted up to go into the next field, but Storm had anticipated this and was there to strike it cleanly and precisely as I could ever have imagined. Eat your heart out Mr Glasier.

With a titanic "YES", we hightailed it over the best part of 100 yards with Amandas cries of "I don't believe it" in true Mr Meldrew fashion. We came across Storm stood on the rabbit with hackles raised and wings open, displaying her justified reward. I don't know who was the most proud, me for flying her at the time, (to Amandas disgust), Storm, for the magnificent way in which she conquered her prey, or Amanda, for owning a superb bird. But I know that I had finally seen my first real kill, the question is are they all this good?



BUTEOS AND BUSHYTAILS. GARY L BREWER.

Squirrel Hawking with Redtails and Harris Hawks in the East Texas Forests. "Squirrels", I hear you cry, "I won't fly my bird at them, they can take a toe off or, at the very least, give a nasty bite.

After hunting for many years with different hawks and falcons Gary decided he would hawk the quarry he had an abundance of, squirrels. There are three types, the cat, the fox and the flying squirrel, the latter being very small, about the size of a large mouse and nocturnal. The cat squirrel weighs about one and a half pounds, the fox squirrel about two and a half pounds.

After hunting squirrel for over twenty years Gary has not had one fatal bite or digit lost. He has a passion for everything connected with falconry, the countryside, birds and quarry. Ask his wife of 20 years, Debbie.

The birds flown are mainly passage trapped (taken under permit in the USA). He gives details of what to look for, ie weights, condition etc and whether to go for male or female, devoting a chapter to both Redtails and Harris Hawks. When the bird is home Gary goes into great detail about manning, handling and housing, followed by initial training and eventually entering your bird on squirrel. Explaining the best places to hunt and how to help your bird catch them, some of the flights can take up to two hours. All the chapters are very easy to follow.

There is a nice selection of both colour and black & white photo's, with black and white sketches throughout the book.

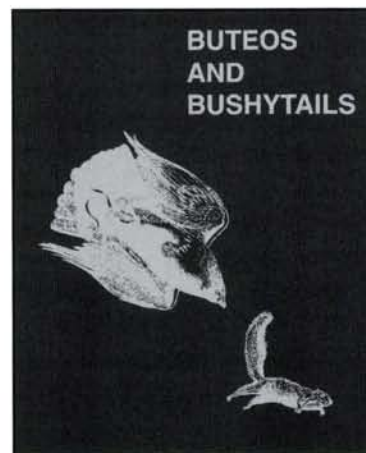
For those of you that have always looked at squirrels as being an unsuitable quarry, this book will change your mind.

Available from GLB Publications, P.O. Box 761, Chandler, Texas 75785 or

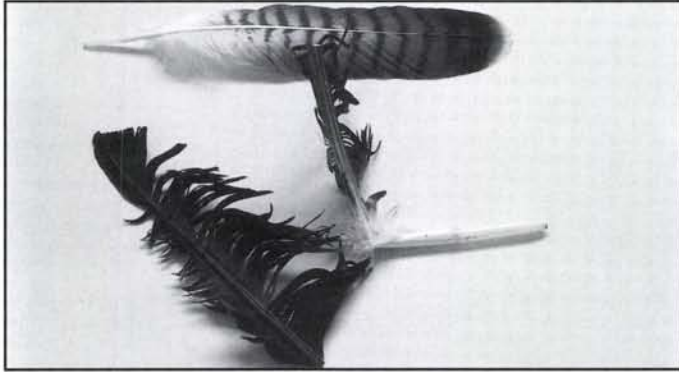
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IMPING



This is the feather we are going to repair

Well, I am still here, amazing as it may seem I was not banished to the outer limits of a seclusion aviary after my last editions damning of those purveyors of Barn Owls.

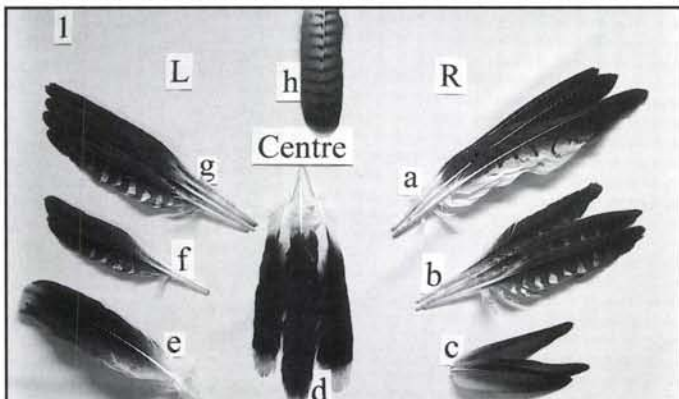
And so for my next trick! 'IMPING', a technique for the repairing of broken feathers.

First a little bit of rusty history. Imping pins were probably, originally made of bamboo, which had been cut and shaped while green, then left to dry hard and springy, however this is an art that has sadly been lost. As you will discover 'imping pins' can be a real bone of contention between impers. The original pins in England were made of iron. Triangular along the length, with a point at each end. Keeping in mind that Falconry has been around for approximately four thousand years and super glue for about ten. The iron pins being slightly oversize and having been dipped in brine before insertion to the feather, would then rapidly rust and make an almost perfect joint.

(Whoops, the penny has just dropped & I have realised why no one has wanted to write about imping before, at this rate we could be here till next winter and it could get very boring. Oh well, here goes.)

Before all the very experienced Falconers start screaming at the top of their voices down my telephone, may we please assume that I am writing this general explanation for a person who is just beginning and knows nothing at all about imping and it is only an article of reference or advice. That said I may survive until the Autumn issue.

Imping is the ancient art of repairing a broken feather, a feather that is rarely broken by the birds natural activity of hunting for food, (how often have you seen a healthy, wild bird with a gaping hole in the base of its tail?), but quite often broken while bating from its perch or block, with its tail entangled in the leash, jesses or swivel. Correct lengths of leash and jesses, and correct perching of your bird will prevent a large majority of



A: Common Buzzard RH primary wing feathers. **B:** Lanner RH primary wing feathers. **C:** Mallard duck RH primary wing feather tips (ideal for repairing tips of most mid sized birds). **D:** Harris Hawk tail feathers (Notice the LH, Dock, & RH shape). **E:** Peacock LH secondary feather, (trimmed down carefully with scissors, I have used these to repair a Harris's tail. From five yards you could not tell the difference). **F:** Lanner, LH secondary wing feathers. **G:** Lanner, LH primary flight feathers. **H:** Common Buzzard RH Central/Deck feather.

feather damage.

OK! Let's assume that your fifty pound Ferruginous has broken both deck feathers (the two central tail feathers, largest and usually strongest, this is why we attach telemetry to them), while having this monumental battle with a six-ounce rabbit. What next?

Stage one:

You will need the following pieces of equipment.

- 1, A very sharp pair of round tipped scissors, a suitable sized drill bit, a small saw and a small file.
- 2, A large collection of feathers that you will have saved from previous moults or pinched from a mates collection, which are stored in an airtight tin, complete with mothball.
- 3, Glue (5 min Araldite, some use SuperGlue but it falls apart when wet and it's dangerous).
- 4, A varied collection of Imping pins (Bamboo, Sewing needles with the eyes and ends cut off and the shaft roughened with a pair of pliers, Spring steel piano wires, Fibre glass, Wooden or plastic tooth picks, even the plastic shaft of a cotton bud and, if you can afford it, Carbon fibre rods cut and filed.) All of these materials have been used and of course the most difficult to obtain, carbon fibre, or the most difficult to prepare, hardened bamboo are, by general consensus, the best to use. All of them have their down sides, e.g....wooden toothpicks break too easily, plastic toothpicks bend too easily, sewing needles can bend permanently and may leave a very nasty object to preen, however used on an older, wiser bird can prove successful. Only Carbon Fibre came out of my little survey of materials as King & Jemima uses it, that can't be bad.

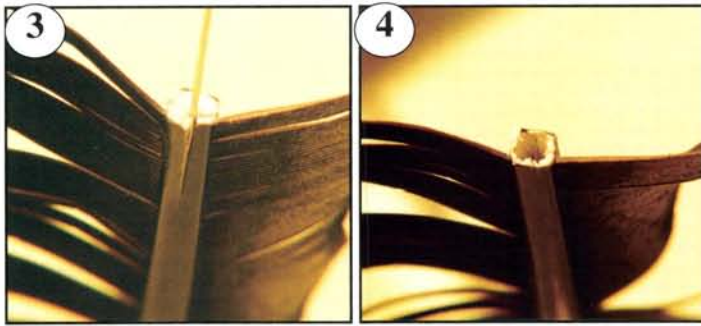
STOP PRESS. As I promised in the last issue, I would seek out new information so that we could learn together. News; Fibre glass fishing rod quiver tips are, according to a manufacturer of both carbon fibre and fibre glass, the better of the two, for the following reason: Carbon fibre is, in layman's terms, 'a soft material roasted in an oven until black (carbonised) and coated in resin'. This means that its structure is of very fine molecules locked together by the resin. In short lengths it is very brittle. When a short piece breaks, fine particles of resin coated carbon explode in all directions, the resin coat gives the particles very sharp edges, rubbed against an eye or the skin they are a very effective irritant and almost invisible. Fibre glass however is made of long strands of glass bonded, again with resin, yet the reverse is seen when tested, ie. a long piece of glass fibre rod is not as strong and does not spread the load as well as carbon fibre, but a short length retains the structural properties of a long length by remaining flexible and less likely to break, and if it does the broken particles are larger and less likely to become a permanent irritant. It is also a lot cheaper.

Warning: Both materials are irritants to a degree, therefore imping pins should be prepared away from your birds environment and carefully cleaned before being placed into your imping box. Based on this new knowledge the examples in the photographs have been impinged using glass fibre rod.

Stage two:

First identify the feather you wish to repair. Remember all feathers are unique to the position at which they are grown on the bird ie., feathers are left or right-handed shaped to do a specific job. Therefore to repair them you will need the exact same or very near equivalent shaped feather as a substitute. The feather need not always be from the same species of bird, but the colour can be important. As an emergency measure I have even used rook or duck feathers. However do not attempt to use feathers from a bird that may be associated with your hawk's quarry, this can just lead to an inferiority complex in your bird and it is not amusing after all is said and done. You're supposed to laugh at that little quip. Having found the ideal feather, and before rushing onto stage three check the condition of the remaining section of feather still attached to the bird.

a) is the follicle or root still clean and intact? Note: If a feather has been broken in a violent manner, the follicle may also be damaged and therefore the weight of an impeded feather, imping pin and glue will cause further damage. This bird must be seen by a VET, to prevent infection, which may cause a failure in the growth of a normal replacement feather in the next



natural moult and any further medical complications.

b) If the end of the feather is split (3) and not too close to the follicle it must be prepared as in (4). If it is a clean break the original section or substitute may be replaced directly.

Stage three:

The substitute feather must now be trimmed to the correct length so that it matches exactly the length of the feather it is replacing (which is not necessarily the length of the feather next door). If more than one feather is missing a small degree of common sense and perhaps artistic skill (not licence) may be required at this point. When thinking about this remember that all the feathers in a wing or tail work together as a team, sharing both the workload of flight and stresses placed upon them whilst tackling quarry. If replacing more than one feather, trim the follicle ends at different lengths so this helps spread out the load when any force is placed upon the tail. It is important to replace or repair feathers quickly to avoid neighbouring feathers being damaged, as the entire tail is weakened by the absence of one of its' members.

Once the length has been identified, cut to length and prepare as in (4). All this so far assumes that your bird has sat quietly on its perch while you have wandered around it in ever decreasing circles trying to look at all these things. You may, of course, need to cast your bird. If you do, don't worry we'll come on to casting in a future issue. The Editor and I had discussed including it in this article, however we felt the importance of handling a bird correctly in this manner would be too great and that it would be irresponsible to attempt a written description in the same article. My advice for now is to gain the assistance of an experienced falconer.



Stage four:

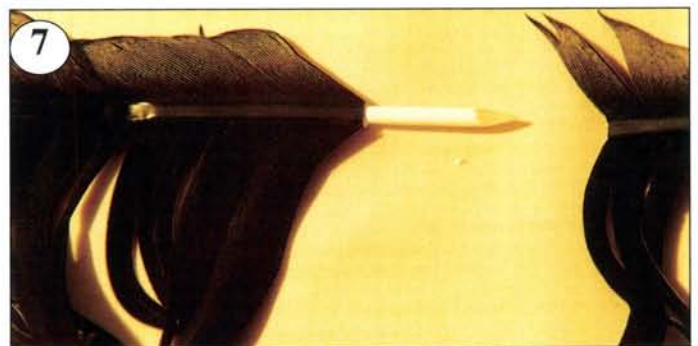
Now select an imping pin, or make one to fit inside the replacement feather. (5 & 6). If we were repairing the deck feathers of our infamous ferruginous, it would need to be at least an inch and a half long, for a Harris about an inch. The pin should also be slightly oversized across the diameter to ensure a firm fit. Prepare a small batch of glue and coat one half of the pin. Carefully, and in line with the shaft of the feather, insert the pin into the centre of the shaft of the replacement feather about halfway, remove any

PEREGRINE (TIERCEL)

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excess glue and leave to dry for a few minutes. (7). In fact this is a good time to have a cup of tea, clear up any mess from your work surface and have a good think about what you have just done. Believe me this is the moment you will have wished you took a break, just to check you've got every last detail just right. Last year a student of mine, while showing off his imping skills to another student, and not paying attention to what he was doing, glued two identical ends to each other. I hasten to add while practising, and not on the bird. To do that you need to have an IQ of 0.5.

Stage five.

Cover the remaining visible section of the imping pin with the now tacky glue, and then insert into the shaft of the birds' broken feather, ensuring that



the alignment is correct. By gently brushing the imp with another feather the barbs (zips) will lock together leaving an almost invisible join. If you have used the correct amount of glue a tiny surplus will be seen at the joint, this can simply be smoothed over the joint.

If this is an imp being performed on the bird and not a practice session, I would highly recommend keeping the bird on the fist and going for a walk while the glue sets hard. This of course keeps the bird otherwise occupied instead of preening out your imp.

Notes to remember:

Never throw away a dirty feather, washed in warm water and a little non-aggressive detergent, left to dry naturally and brushed with another feather, it could be like new.

Don't be in such a hurry to cut off a bent feather just to practice your imping skills. Apply some hot water (not boiling, this will render the feather brittle) to the feather. The air that is trapped inside the feather will expand and straighten it, the heat will soften the feather, then as it cools in a straightened position the feather hardens again. This can also be done with a pair of heated feather tongs. I use a tea bag squeezer heated with a Bic lighter. Very useful in the field. Simply heat tongs and transfer the heat by pinching the feather with the tongs at the point of the bend. Practice this on a loose feather, give it a good bending and then straighten it with the hot tongs. It's just like magic.

Everything you have read in this article takes experience to perform correctly, it would be irresponsible of me to think that from this article you have become qualified to imp feathers into a bird.

The article is written so that you may have a better understanding of how and why it is done, in the hope that you will go away with a collection of loose feathers, to a quiet room and practice these ancient skills until you are confident that a demonstration of your skills would impress even the most experienced falconer, before you attempt to do it on a real bird. In time you will achieve your goals and pass on your experiences, your col-




lection of imping materials will expand well beyond those we have mentioned and hopefully then you will be as skilled as the falconers who have advised and commented on the methods and materials they use. They have all, at some stage as falconers, been required to imp the finest of wing tips to the smallest of wings. They all know who they are and I thank them.

Warning!!

Imping should not be used in the rehabilitation of any bird that is expected to survive in the wild. A Bird without Feathers is a DEAD Bird!!


I hope you will continue to write to me with your questions so that we may continue to learn together.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by ALAN GATES.

'We are what we eat' is an old adage which applies to every living organism on this planet. We are if we absorb the vast amount of data the media spews out, instructed as to the healthy life style to be obtained from consuming a well-balanced diet.

Good food equals a healthy life, junk food equals a short life.

Strangely the more informed we humans become the more confused we seem to be as to what is, or is not, good food. If we have difficulty in knowing what a correct diet is for ourselves, then it is not surprising that some falconers do not understand the advantages of a good diet for their hawk.

Sadly far too many falconers and breeders rely too heavily on the highly over-rated day old chick. It is after all nothing more than an egg in another form. High in cholesterol and phosphorus, low in calcium, and because it itself has not eaten, it is woefully low in those vital minerals and trace elements that can be obtained from an adult carcass.

Would you really expect a human child, if a fed a diet of nothing but eggs from the day it was born until adulthood, to then

perform with any style and stamina as an athlete?

The fact a hawk does manage quite well on such a diet, hides the potential improvement in performance and well-being if fed a well balanced, natural diet. Now as a simple rule, a natural diet for your hawk is to feed animal and/or bird species, that your hawk would normally catch in the wild.

A well trained hawk in hunting condition should easily sustain itself with a natural variety of food throughout the season, but it takes an exceptional hawk to supply enough food to sustain itself through the out of season months as well. This shortfall can be further aggravated if the falconer, quite rightly, enjoys some of the game for the table.

The making up of this balance of the annual food supply becomes the responsibility of the falconer and he/she has a number of options open to him/her.

A lot now will depend on the individuals circumstances, for instance, a sparrow-trap on a roof or balcony could well supply enough out of season food for a Sparrowhawk or small falcon.

To feed a large bird with this method

might push the local sparrow population a bit hard, in this case we would need access to open land with permission to shoot, ferret or the use of long dogs. The two latter methods procure clean game, unlike the first method which contaminates the food with lead. To reduce the risk of ingestion of lead, firstly never feed hawks food killed with a shotgun, only use game shot with a rifle, having first checked a bullet exit hole exists, if not dig out the bullet before feeding it to your hawk. There are also other methods of trapping game, but they all take a good deal of time and skill.

The next best option is to pay a professional shooting man to obtain exactly what you require. This will generally mean that you will need ample freezer space, as a good shooting man will fill your order in a couple of outings. If obtaining wild hawk food presents you with some problems, there is now quite a professional market supplying captive bred food. Quail, laboratory rats and mice, day old cockerel chicks, turkey poults and rabbits.

There are good and bad suppliers of captive bred food, so don't be put off, just be

careful. In fact one of the best Bird of Prey breeding centres in the world, namely what was known as East Berlin Zoo, feeds all of its raptors on in-house, captive bred food, but with one important difference, they grow all the food which is fed to the animals which are reared as food species. These animals are provided with only fresh food, such as green plants, fruits, vegetables and seeds. In this way they believe that their birds of prey and owls receive food of a high nutritional standard and that vitamin and mineral supplements are unnecessary. Few of us can provide captive reared food to that high standard, the alternative is usually reject stock from intensive rearing units. It is highly unlikely that any of these animals have ever seen the light of day, receiving all its required vitamins and minerals, together with antibiotics, from the intensive, high protein feed. Here again the importance of variety and quality comes to the fore, if you become reliant on one or two suppliers of captive reared food, it is imperative that you seek a good relationship with the proprietor, explaining why you need the very best of his product. Should he use, for any reason, medication on his stock, then you should know and have the right to refuse that particular batch. For what may be a harmless dose for one individual is going to multiply day by day in your hawk. Intensively reared rodents commonly carry insecticides and other chemicals, to which they themselves are tolerant, but will have disastrous results to your more susceptible hawk.

Vitamin, mineral and calcium supplements can be dangerous, essential or a waste of money. It all depends on the diet your hawk receives, here again we would do well to study the wild diet. You may think that because I have a medium sized hawk that preys on rabbit in the wild, if I feed rabbit every day then I am providing the best for my bird. Well yes and no, admittedly your hawk won't come to a lot of harm, but it is unlikely to do as well as its wild cousin on the same diet. For unlike the wild bird we do not allow our hawks just to eat the choice bits, leaving the rest of the carcass to the lower order scavengers. A wild rabbit catching hawk will first break through the rib cage

and eat vital organs, some flesh, bone, intestinal organs and a little fur. It will rarely need a full crop, finding this a little debilitating in flight. This balance of choice meats will be repeated at each feed, unlike its captive cousin, who because of economics is required to eat the whole rabbit over a number of feeds. Thus reducing its ratio of the choice meats to about 25% of its total intake of food. The other 75% being solely flesh, bone and fur.

Although this will contain sufficient levels of protein, fat and carbohydrate, it will have lower levels of essential vitamins

Vitamin, mineral and calcium supplements can be dangerous, essential or a waste of money

and trace elements than the choice 25% that the wild bird lives on. This can be corrected by the addition of a small quantity of vitamin and mineral supplement. As already mentioned, the worst end of the scale is the over used 'day old chick'. They contain large amounts of phosphorus and cholesterol and very small amounts of calcium. The cholesterol level can be reduced by squeezing out the yolk sac before feeding. The calcium to phosphorus ratio required by birds from their diets is 1.5:1, unfortunately a diet of 'day old chicks' provides 1.4:3 and so as calcium and phosphorus compete within the body this low level of calcium to phosphorus means that the calcium is poorly absorbed.

This calcium deficient diet requires supplementation with a concentrated calcium powder, otherwise the amounts required would overpower the food and make it unpalatable. In this type of diet the addition of bone (calcium phosphate) or SA37, which are both high in phosphate would only exaggerate the deficiency. Two new mineral rich, concentrated vitamin supplements are now available; VYDEX MVS-30 with a Ca:P ratio of 2.5:1 and ARKVITS with a Ca:P ratio of

2:1. It is easy to understand what deficiencies there are in the diet your hawk receives and to redress them if necessary, with the right supplement. It is a total waste of money adding them to a correct diet, just because it sounds like a good idea. Also one must be very careful not to be taken in by all the promotional literature offered by all the different products, and become hooked on the notion that a larger dose will do twice as much good. Or mixing a cocktail of all the brands because you cannot make up your mind which is the best one. An overdose of vitamins can be just as fatal as vitamin deficiency.

Stick to one product, and follow strictly, the manufacturers recommended dosage, if unsure err on the lower side and contact the manufacturer to discuss the diet you are feeding and ask their advice.

One product which has recently come to my attention and has impressed me by the amount of research carried out on it throughout the world, is ENTRODEX, manufactured by Vydex Animal Health.

It is probiotic-electrolyte preparation which contains beneficial and non-pathogenic micro organisms. In other words this preparation contains beneficial bacteria known as "good bugs". The gastrointestinal tract of animals and birds contains a delicate balance of "good bugs" and "bad bugs" (E.Coli, Salmonella, etc.) These "bad bugs" can result in infectious disease when the body's natural defences are disturbed. Stress, for example, can result in a change in the gut environment to favour the pathogenic species, ie, "bad bugs". Left unchecked diarrhoea would lead to dehydration and subsequent death. There are many times during the life of a trained hawk when a situation can become stressful, during initial training, or handling to carry out essential maintenance, ie, coping the beak, imping etc. A regular addition of ENTRODEX probiotic to your hawks diet helps maintain a balanced gut environment. Which in turn improves the nutrient breakdown and absorption of that now excellent diet you are feeding your hawk.

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POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Dear David & Lyn,

It is about time somebody had something positive to say about the Hawk Board. As far as I am concerned they do a magnificent job and all voluntary, we should be glad that somebody is prepared to fight for our sport. Some might say that the majority of the experts on the board are 'professionals' and only have their own interests at heart. So what if they do, they are still prepared to help the falconer/raptor keeper and look after the well-being of raptor keeping and the sport of falconry now and for future generations. I have heard it said that the Hawk Board is "still the same old faces", well we all had a chance to say otherwise didn't we? It is these same old faces who are protecting those who criticise them. We also hear the phrase "what have they done for me?" A lot of the what the Hawk Board does is quite technical in a sense of paperwork, looking over directives from the EC, which could directly affect raptor keeping.

How many of us would be prepared to attend meetings in London, during the week, not many as most of us have full time jobs which do not give us the flexibility to be able to visit London four times a year.

You may be thinking I am on the Hawk Board because of what I write, well I am one of these so called 'weekend' falconers, one who has to make the most of the daylight whenever possible.

Talking of positive attitudes I tend to find that Falconers don't seem to have a good word to say about other falconers, not just on a personal level but on a club level as well. Yes, we are all human, we all have likes and dislikes, people upset other people for many reasons and we all have a competitive streak in us or one-upmanship, but I find it distressing when I hear a comment from a club member in the west of England talking of another club in the same area and stating of any of their members visit the other club they won't be welcome back. What sort of club attitude is this? I have also been told that a certain well known club told a prospective new member on his first visit, "if you have a Harris Hawk you might as well get a bus pass". The person who said this flies a Goshawk, incidentally.

We must accept that everyone

has a different way of keeping their birds and as long as the birds or other animals are well looked after, we can only advise if we see something we dislike. Clubs seem to be the best way of educating each other. Learning from other peoples ideas, people in the same situation as yourself. Horror stories concerning raptors are unfortunately all too common within the falconry world but can they be stopped? Well it is up to us, if you hear or see anything which you find distressing report it. Either to the police or someone on a club committee or the Hawk Board. This way things can, and will, get done. It's little use going headstrong into an argument with someone, this could end up with someone being hurt and does your reputation no good whatsoever.

It would be nice to think that all raptor keepers could 'live together in harmony' but we all know this is very unlikely, but we can, and should, work together. Clubs should interact with each other. All we need is a POSITIVE ATTITUDE. Without we could lose our beloved pastime.

Yours sincerely
Shaun Healey

ONE STEP FURTHER

Dear David & Lyn,

I am writing with reference to the article in the Spring issue concerning how safe Aylmeri jesses are. I would like to take the statement "Use Aylmeri, the safer jess" one step further and say "Use *leather* aylmeri, the safer jess". This is due to RHANI, my female Common buzzard coming close to seriously damaging her leg during one of our outings. I do use aylmeri jesses, leather for her mews jesses and the flat, woven terylene straps for her field jesses, until the accident that is. I now use leather for both field and mews jesses.

I was out flying Rhani over land she's flown many times before. I entered the field and put Rhani in her usual tree and started to walk along the hedge as she followed on. After about 200 yards she landed on the fence and started to bob her head up and down and then took off flying low to the ground, as I looked down the fence I could see a rabbit feeding on the opposite side, about 100 yards from where I was standing, the rabbit was totally unaware of who was on her way to it.

About 20 yards from where the

rabbit was feeding Rhani raised her line of flight and started to go over the fence, at this point Rhani came to a sudden stop half way over. With my heart in my mouth I ran over to where Rhani was hanging by one leg. The terylene strap had caught on one of the barbs on the barbed wire that ran along the top of the fence. After a thorough checkover Rhani was found to be okay, Thank God, due more to her leisurely flight than anything else. I doubt that a Goshawk or a Harris, flat out, would have been so lucky, and I am sure a falcon pulling out of a stoop would have done irreparable damage to its leg if the same was to happen.

I am convinced that due to the way that the terylene straps are made, ie, braided, this allowed the barb to pass through the strap. I am sure this would not have happened to a leather strap due to its smoothness and lack of small holes, or at the very least greatly reduce the chances of this happening to other birds.

Happy hawking and I hope this letter will help keep our partners safer when out hunting together, take care and have a good moult!!

Yours sincerely
K Williamson
Greater Manchester.

HAWK-TALK BACK

Dear John,

Having read and re-read your article 'Hawk Talk' in the last edition, I must say how very much I agree with your sentiments regarding the barn owl story, not to mention the many people who continue to breed these birds with only profit in mind and no thought for their future welfare.

On the other hand I must say how much I disagree with your sentiments when you say 'how long have I been a falconer? How much do I know? These questions are irrelevant.'

These questions are far from irrelevant John, when you are partly responsible for the education of the next generation of falconers. This is a great responsibility, not to be taken lightly. What you teach, and indeed how you teach, is most likely to end up being passed on to future generations of falconers. Where does that leave falconry in 20 years time if you lack experience? 'The birds come first', is all very well but it is the people owning and handling them who

need educating, for the sake of the birds very existence.

With respect John, you do come across as setting yourself up as something of an expert who's pool of knowledge can be tapped by all and sundry. A sort of Marge Proops of the falconry world perhaps? Is this the case or am I being a sceptic, reading between the lines where only blank paper exists?

That said, I cannot disagree with many of your opinions and I wish you well in your venture.

Regards

Brian J Smith

P.S. A good article on dehydration and something that hopefully falconers have known for years?

WHAT A SHOWER

Dear David & Lyn

Congratulations on your article about dehydration. We have been to many places and seen birds without water dishes and when we question it we are always told that birds of prey and owls don't drink. It has always made us angry that some people show no regard for their birds need for water both to drink and bathe in. As you know all our birds have their own baths, both at home and when out at displays and hopefully your article will educate other raptor keepers who up to now have not bothered.

Julian & Ali.
Huxleys Experience.

COMMON SENSE

Dear Falconers Magazine,

Can I just say two things? First re the article on dehydration in Raptors. Personally I always dip food in water before offering it. Cold water in hot weather - hot water in cold weather. To me it is common sense that the bird would find it more pleasant than a beakful full of super-dry fluff.

Secondly, the world of falconry seems to be more than usually full of bickering, back-biting and general cattiness. If you would all swallow your egos and stifle your attitude, unite behind the fabulous birds you're lucky enough to know, it would be much more impressive and useful - for the birds and for you!

Yours sincerely
Mary Reynolds.

WHY BREED HYBRIDS?

Dear David & Lyn,

My understanding of the sport of falconry is the unparalleled pleasure obtained from training an essentially wild bird to cooperate with man/dog/ferret to hunt and catch its natural quarry in as close to natural conditions as possible.

I am constantly reading in this magazine, Falconers rightly saying that the size of the bag is unimportant and that it is far better to witness the wonderful sight of an exciting chase than to judge success by head count; and that our noble sport is based on the fine balance between prey and predator and not the benile pleasure of killing wild animals. The hereditary balance between predator and prey is so fine that even with mans help/hindrance success is far from assured. Evolution has ensured that only the fittest of each species survives. In this finely balanced and natural contest, I believe lies much of the appeal of falconry as a sport.

So, given this, what motives drive some breeders/falconers to produce hybrids? If the reason is to produce a stronger, faster or more aggressive bird for the

falconer then the whole justification for a sport must be in question, it is no longer about fair contest and respect for prey, but about making killing easier.

If its purpose is to produce more manageable birds, surely again it ceases to be falconry, - "training the untameable wild and noble spirit."

One could argue that we already fly non-indigenous birds, like the Harris Hawk, which are obviously not hunting natural prey in natural conditions. I don't believe that the two issues are comparable, although there maybe some merit to this argument.

Could it be that they are bred because they are a living demonstration of how good breeders have become at captive breeding? is this a good enough motive? Just because we can, does that mean we should?

Some of the most respected Breeders/Falconers in this country do actively breed hybrids and I know that their commitment and love of the sport is totally beyond question. Therefore, maybe there are other, more altruistic reasons for breeding hybrids of which I am unaware.

However, it is hard for me to see how the breeding of these birds can benefit our sport. Surely it is important that

everything we do should be consistent with the things which we say. I would be interested to hear other peoples views on this.

P.M.

Name and address supplied

If you wish to address the above or any other issue please write to us at:

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We reserve the right to refuse publication of any letter or article Editors decision is final.

OBITUARY BILL SINCLAIR 1963 - 1996 Paul Barham

Bill Sinclair died suddenly in February from a blood clot. He was only 32.

He had served in the Royal Navy for 12 years, been in the Falklands war, where he was blown up on board ship while he was a fire officer. He was lucky to survive.

He went on to become a submarine and Navy Intelligence Decoder, before leaving the Navy to work for the Department of Health & Social Security and finally for a Ferry Service.

Bill had been a member of the London Hawking & Owl Club for the last four years, in that time he had been secretary for two years and had been a great help in drawing up a new constitution for the club and club inspection scheme. He had been our Club representative on the New Hawk Board.

Bill was always very helpful in Club matters, be it putting on a show or display, he was very keen to help out in any way he could.

His great love at all times was for the birds and his main concern, their welfare. I know that Bill went over to the Hawk Conservancy a lot and did work for them be it building aviaries or shifting pile of rock. It is hoped that a plaque to Bills memory will be put up there.

Some of my best memories of Bill are when he had his male Kestrel and it chased and caught a magpie on two or three occasions.

The other was when I was helping him with his falconry and he came over to my house one day. I told him that I was busy so I wanted him to fly my male Harris Hawk on his own. Initially he thought I was joking and then shocked when he realised I was serious. He soon got over it and not only did he come back to say he had done OK but he caught two rats with it as well.

I know that Bill will be greatly missed by all the members of our Club and our sympathy goes to Bills family.

Falconry

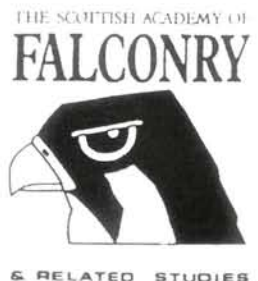
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SPANISH ADVENTURES



Myself and Lucanor

It was on a cold March day in 1994 when I left England for Madrid, in the heart of Spain. I was 23 years old and it was to be my first real experience working with birds of prey abroad. I was extremely fortunate to acquire a position connected with raptors, for whom I have an enormous amount of respect and love, which started from early childhood experiences in the Scottish Borders. There are not many people in this day and age who can work at something they love on a daily basis. I was considerably excited and looked forward to the new challenge which awaited me.

The gentleman employer, whose name was Antonio, could not speak a great deal of English which made things difficult to begin with, but it wasn't long before I got to grips with the Spanish language. Antonio was a very dedicated and experienced falconer, and extremely passionate about his unusual collection of falcons and hawks, especially his white gyrfalcons, which he had managed to breed successfully the previous year.

First of all I was to spend one month living in a small village called Carmarma with Antonio's family, so I could get acquainted with his falcons and the way they did everything. I found out their training methods were more on Arabian lines than European, for example they used some of the sakers hybrids of these species for straight line flying out of the hood. This meant

the falcons' training differed as there was no need to stoop them to the lure. It was a simple case of flying either straight to the fist from any given distance or, with an assistant, the falcons are flown from his fist to the lure which was swung out and offered to the falcon on the ground. In Spanish they call this hand to hand training. Every day the distance would become greater. This method of training was good to build up the muscles and strength of the young developing falcons.

After this first month in Carmarma, learning the getting to know all the aspects of training the falcons, and finding out exactly what my job consisted of, I was to leave for the south east of Spain near a beautiful village called Lo Pagan. Close to this village was San Javier, a Spanish airforce base. The only one in Spain for training fighter pilots. Here, I was going to spend the next few months working to assist in the control of bird populations, which were becoming a dangerous hazard for the pilots. I arrived with an array of falcons, which included two peregrines, "Harrca", the female and "Lanzote", a beautiful three year old tiercel. I also had three other longwings who were a mixture of hybrids. There were two Gyr/Lanner/Peregrine hybrids with the names of "Muddara" and "Lucanor" and a large female Saker/Peregrine called "Pusta". It would be my first experience of flying these types of hybrids. I was looking forward to see-

ing how they would perform in the field.

The air base was an area of about 150-200 acres consisting mainly of long grasses, small patches of dry, dense vegetation and sand dunes which were scattered around the base on the near side of the runway. On the other side lay the spectacular crystal blue Mediterranean Sea, which stretched along the perimeter of the base.

Most of the area was like a scorched desert, gripped in an intense heat, which I could hardly bear at times. I really could not believe any species of animal or plantlife could survive here.

My main task was to travel out on three separate sorties to the the runway to make sure all was clear and safe for the first daily flights to commence. I started around 6am, just before the sun rose above this dry, arid land. This was the most pleasant time of the day, before the heat took over. Having lived in Scotland for most of my life I was certainly pleased to enjoy the cool morning temperatures. I flew three different falcons each day, while I left the other two relaxing in the morning sunshine on blocks. I was always aware of the intense temperatures of the late afternoon which could prove fatal for any of the falcons.

The mews were very cool inside, which was good, and very well equipped. There was a fridge-freezer for the food, scales, weights and materials for repairing and making equipment. Also a diary in which to chart all the daily weights of the falcons and note down all the birds or wildlife I had seen. I was given a chauffeur-driven jeep to convey me around the base. Having spent all the time I needed preparing and training the falcons I was ready to go.

I flew Lucanor first, the young male hybrid. As we arrived at the runway a few common gulls rose and quickly vanished into the morning fog. I quietly asked the driver, in my poor Spanish, to stop. I slowly climbed down and moved away from the jeep. Placing the transmitter on Lucanor I gently unhooded him, he thoroughly surveyed the surrounding area, bobbing his head up and down and then, giving a sharp, quick rouse, took off at high speed into the oncoming wind. He started to mount up slowly gaining a good pitch above me. I also had with me my faithful friend "Nelly", and pointer cross Irish Setter. When she realised we were stationary she shot from the back of the

PAUL DEELEY



L - R: Male Peregrine, Female Saker, Gyr/peregrine, Gyr/Lanner/Peregrine, Nelly.

jeep in excitement and began searching the nearby patches of vegetation with great enthusiasm.

Suddenly, to my surprise, a small flock of young stone curlew rose up from a nearby clump of grasses. I turned and watched Lucanors' reaction, who by this time was circling three or four hundred feet above me. Lucanor responded quickly, dropped into a classic stoop, wings folded back and fell like a bullet. He pinpointed his bird perfectly and struck it with an almighty punch, he then turned and landed on his quarry. I was overwhelmed with pleasure for him. He had dispatched the bird with his initial strike so I made in slowly and sat quietly with Nelly by my side. I decided to let him gorge. After a short while I picked him up with what was left of his quarry and made my way back to the vehicle. There were to be many more memorable times with this little falcon.

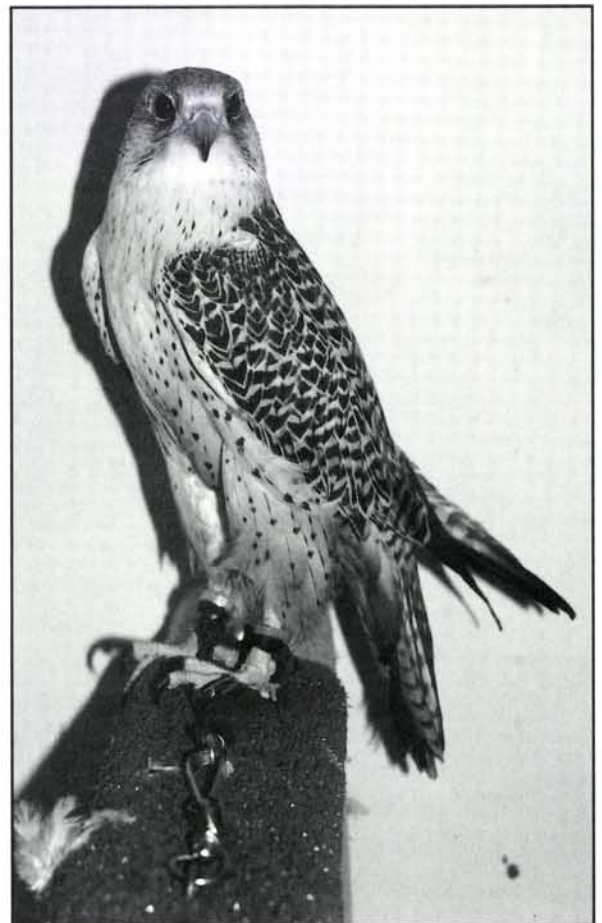
There was a considerable variety of different species of birds and animals inhabiting this part of Spain, including some birds I had never seen before, such as the remarkable Hoopoe, with its impressive orange and black crest and the small white Egrets, which were extremely common in this area. I also managed to see some wild raptors such as Bonnellis Eagles, Black Kites and the Imperial Eagles of the high mountains. Whilst I was here I was given a book as a present from my boss, which was wonderful to read. It was called *The Art of Falconry*, by Mr Felix Rodriguez De La Fuente, who I later discovered was the country's top naturalist and animal expert. He was known by everyone, just like our own Sir David Attenborough. He was a very keen falconer and travelled the world to

gain knowledge of all aspects of falconry and birds of prey. Another of the authors passions was studying the behaviour of wolves in Spain and abroad which was also a great interest of mine. Sadly he was the victim of a flying accident during a bad storm above the high mountains of Alaska, where he was filming and studying Timber Wolves. A man who had such respect and knowledge for the environment and falconry will be greatly missed by everyone in Spain and abroad. Dusk was drawing in, the light above the hills was brightening towards sunset. The sky was a blaze of orange and red. I loaded up my vehicle and set out towards the far end of the base. I had Nelly and Pusta, the peregrine/saker hybrid with me. I was headed to a small patch of water which I hoped would contain some moorhens and small duck. The evening was beautifully warm, it was idyllic just being there at this time of day. I stopped the car about 100 yards away and crawled quietly out with Pusta hooded and Nelly beside me. We edged our way up the bank overlooking the stretch of water, which was by now swarming with insects of all kinds. The faint call of moorhens sounded con-

stantly over the still water. Flocks of wild pigeons flew quietly down to roost in the pines which lay on the far side. I rose slowly with Pusta, now unhooded and looking keen. There was an explosion of birds, like a spray from the barrels of a shotgun, which pierced the sky. Pusta had pinpointed a lone moorhen, making its way into the cover of the reeds on the far side. She took up the challenge with great speed; before I could blink she had plunged her brown body into the side of the reedbed and grasped her quarry in a loud splash of water. I made my way over to where she was plucking her now dead victim. I carefully made in, glove held towards her garnished with a piece of fresh beef to which she immediately responded, jumping onto my

glove with a flap of damp wings. I placed the moorhen in my bag, watched eagerly by Nelly, and made my way back to the car. It finished a very dramatic and exciting evening and an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. I would like to leave you all with this thought:

"until he extends his circle of compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace."



Maddara

WHO NEEDS A GOSHAWK?

GARY COOK

The day had begun like any other hawking day. My turn to drive, late up so late start. In the van, besides myself, were Chris Brown, Rob Kelly, Nigel Manning, one Brittany, one ferret and three Harris Hawks. The female I am flying is home bred by one of mine and Chris' pairs. This particular morning she weighed 2lb 41/2 oz.

On our first visit to the ground we flushed some ten, very big, brown hares. The first one the bird tackled got up about ten yards to my right, ran up hill and out of sight. The bird bated vigorously so I slipped her and off she flew, up the hill and out of sight. Off I ran, doing my Linford Christie impression, as I do every time I can't see her. When I reached the hedge at the top of the hill, I glanced over to see my bird in the middle of the field. I walked over to pick her up and she was surrounded by fur. Shortly after this we were walking a stubble field and we disturbed another hare in a form. It ran up hill, towards Rob who slipped his bird, but the hare was well on its' way so Rob called back his very obedient bird.

A hare got up some twenty feet in front of me with the bird bating. I slipped her but she was upside down so the hare had a very good start. She soon made up ground and struck the hare on the back. A tremendous tussle followed, with the hare jumping a small stream with a hedge, resulting in the hare running off, minus the bird.

While we stood and had a chitchat about what might have been a hare broke cover some two fields down below us, Robs bird bated and so did mine, for some reason Robs bird headed for some trees close by but my bird started to climb to the right with the hare running left. I was thinking she had lost interest. She flipped left and off she went, she soon caught up and bound to the hare, resulting in the two being some two to three feet in the air and the bird letting go. As I walked down to the bird three more hares got up but the bird showed no interest. I

picked her up and returned to the lads and off we walked towards a long bank with some thick cover. Chris sent in Kelly, the Brittany, and she soon went on point, flushing a pheasant on command. Nigels male, a brother to my female was off like a bullet but pheasants being what they are, it was soon out of sight and the male returned. After flushing some more pheasants we started to walk back along the bottom. I cast my bird into some trees and off we walked. After some distance I called the bird and she came but passed over our heads and was obviously after another hare, striking it out of sight, as

jumped on so many times she was still chasing. By now we were in sight of the van and we were walking in a straight line through a stubble field. We were half way across when I spotted a hare some twenty feet to my right, I gave a soft whistle and they all stopped walking. As I moved forward a little the hare got up and leapt straight for the gateway, luckily for the bird it was open. My female was hot on its' trail, followed by Nigels male, everything happened so fast but both birds struck it and it was jumping about like mad. At one stage the hare was running with the bird riding it like a jock-



I was about to do my Linford impression again I saw the hare running away. A few minutes after the bird ran along the ground and flew about fifteen feet, hitting a hare, sat in a form, full in the head. The pair started to jump and leap about but after a short time (seconds) the hare lay fully stretched out. I started to run over first, looking for somewhere to get through, keeping one eye on the hare. By the time I got over the adrenaline was going and I was thinking about my first hare, but as I got close I fell over and as I looked up the hare was leaping in the air with the bird hanging on. As I tried to get up the bird let go and off went the hare. I was shaking like a leaf and my legs were like jelly. Not for one minute did I feel disappointed, I was happy that after being kicked up in the air and

ey, during which time Nigels bird let go, leaving my bird to grab it in the head.

It was still bucking and leaping in the air. I was first on the scene after falling around, getting up, falling down again, I managed to grab one of its back legs. When I had both back legs firmly in my grip I dispatched the hare and fed her what I had in my bag. After a long chat we made our way to the van and off to the pub to celebrate. When I finally got home, I got a 4lb leveret, that she had caught in November, out of the freezer, and when it was thawed let her have a good gorge.

The hare is now being stuffed by John Jones and weighed 71/2 lbs. But looking back to the beginning I could never envisaged a day like this and it will stay in my memory forever.

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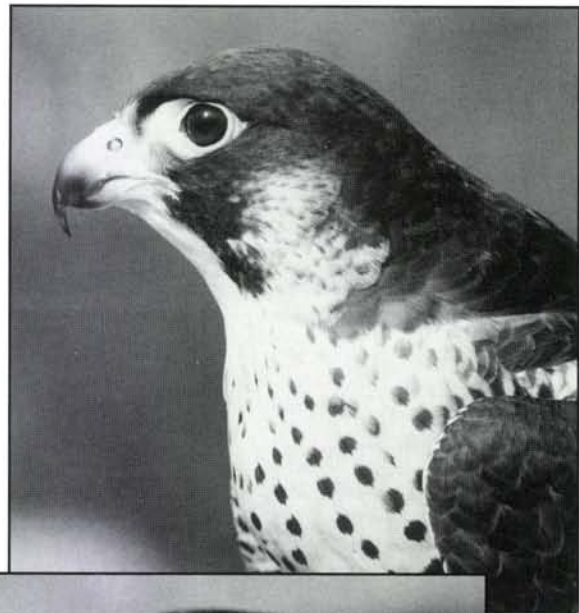
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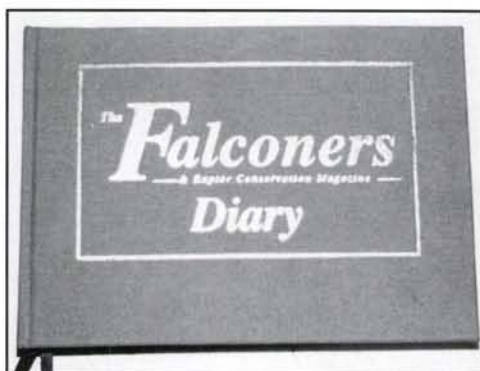
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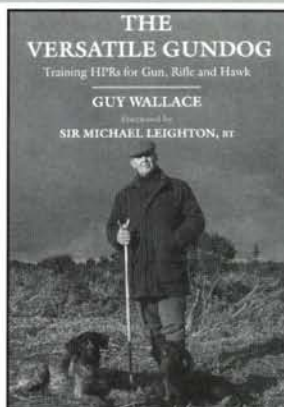
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