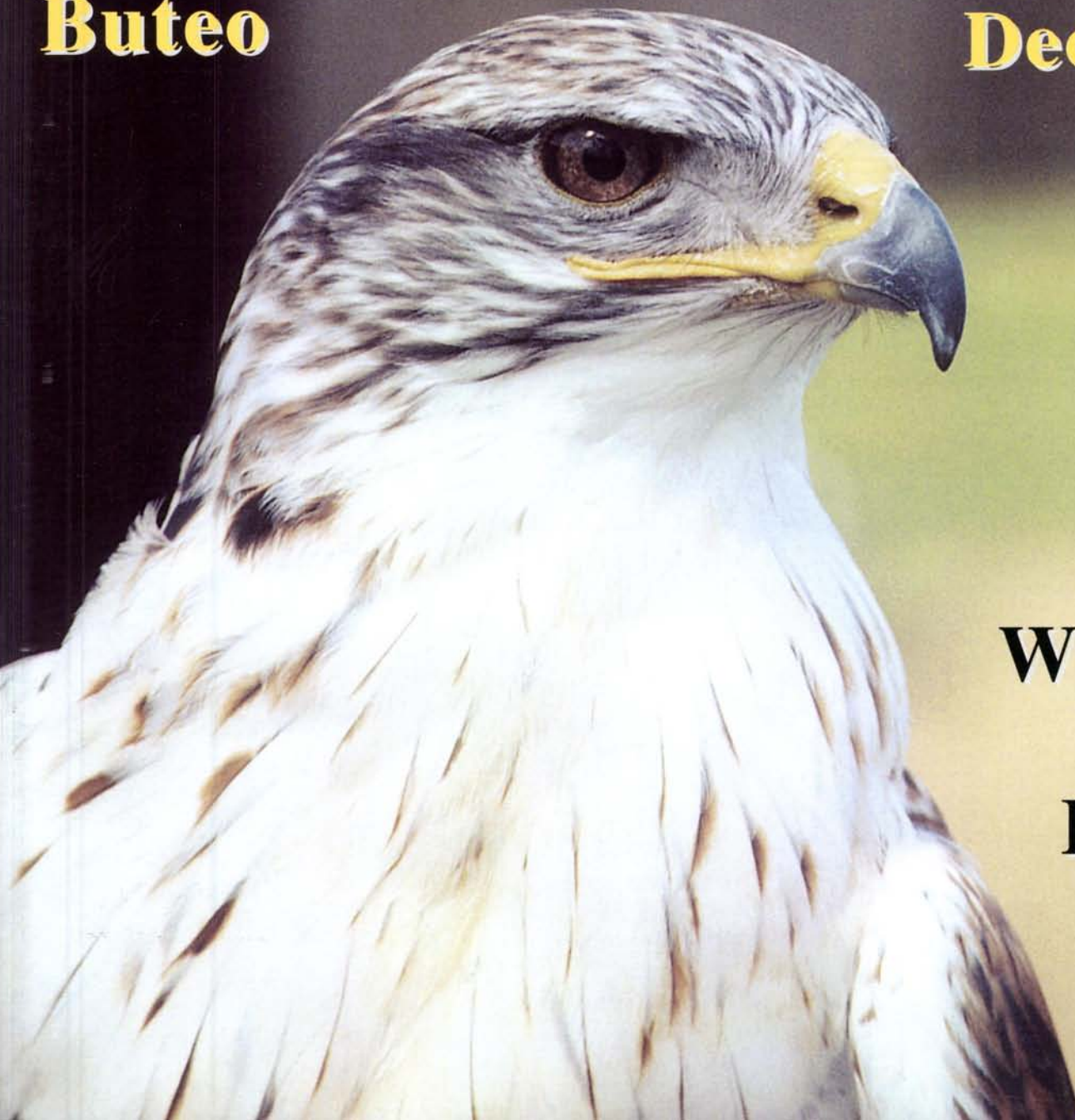


*The* **Falcons**  
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Autumn 2000 £3.50

**Big  
Bad  
Buteo**

**Tropical  
Species  
Decline**



**For  
Whom  
the  
Bells  
Toll**

2ND PRINTING

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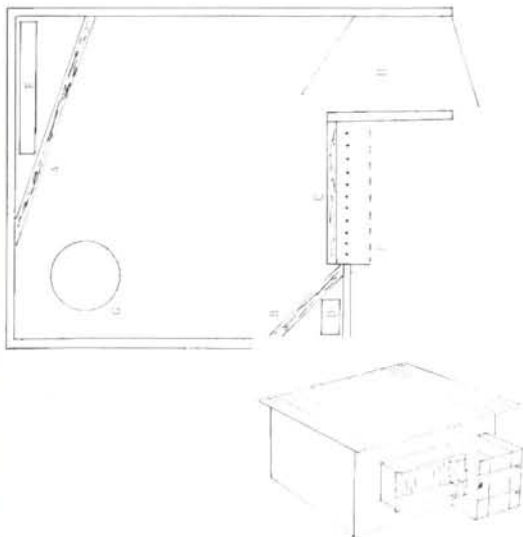
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## COMMENT

Hi Folks,

Another season started. Hope yours got off to a good one. In this issue we have two articles about Wedgetailed Eagles, both inspired by Martin Hollinshead's article in the last issue. One about Wedgetails in the UK and one about the Wedgetail in Australia.

We have a tribute to Phillip Glasier from Dick Treleaven, who sadly, died on 11th September. Cantankerous though he may have been, this man's contribution to Falconry, particularly in respect of beginners and educating the the public about falconry and birds of prey, both through the Centre and through film is something that should never be forgotten. For those of you not acquainted read his books 'As the Falconer Her Bells' and 'A Hawk in the Hand' to give you an insight.

We have reports about Vultures in India, Eagles in New Guinea, a warning from Neil Forbes about two cases of Falcon Herpesvirus, and the minutes from the recent Hawk Board Forum.

Plus the usual news etc.  
Good Hawking Everybody & Keep Falconry Safe.

David & Lyn

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**COVER: Female Ferruginous Buzzard. Photograph. D. Wilson**

## CONVICTIONS

Bird of prey keeper Garry Job, 41, of Llanwrda, near Lampeter, Powys, has been convicted on a charge of 'selling' a wild goshawk in exchange for a saker falcon. Garry Job pleaded guilty to the charge under Regulation 8 of COTES 1997 at Swansea Crown Court on 11 July 2000.

This prosecution arose following the conviction of bird of prey keeper Gerald Chester at Peterborough Magistrates Court on 5 October 1998 for purchasing a wild disabled goshawk. That case was significant because it was the first time that the offence of 'purchasing an Annex A species' had been brought before a court following the introduction of the 1997 COTES regulations. In fact the goshawk had been swapped for a saker owned by Chester at a motorway services near the Severn road bridge in February 1998. Under the EU CITES regulation an 'exchange' constitutes a sale and Chester was able to supply a witness statement which identified the probable seller of the goshawk as Garry Job. Sure enough when the Dyfed Powys Police and RSPB visited Job's house they discovered the saker sitting in an aviary. The bird was seized as evidence.

Garry Job received a conditional discharge from Judge Hugh Williams who said that he had to give this sentence in the interests of parity since this was the penalty that Gerald Chester had received for his part in the exchange. However he warned Job that he might well go to prison if he was caught again. No costs orders were made against Job because he still had £1,730 to pay in outstanding penalties for previous convictions for possession of wild peregrines.

After the trial RSPB Investigations Officer Duncan McNiven said: 'The fact that these offences are non-arrestable and the lack of any compulsion for key suspects to be interviewed were not helpful. The Countryside and Rights of Way Bill which is before Parliament at the moment contains provisions to make these offences arrestable which should help address these issues.'

A Norfolk Gamekeeper, Martin Joyce has been convicted at Fakenham Magistrates Court in March of this year for illegally poisoning a Kestrel. He pleaded guilty to 17 charges under the WLCA 1981 and the Food & Environment Act 1985. He was fined £850.00 plus £100.00 costs.

At Ayr Sherrif Court on 14th March, Matthew Morrison of Belmont, Ayr, was

found guilty of six offences relating to attempting to trap a Peregrine.

Morrison was fined £2,700 and had his care and all his other equipment forfeited. The conviction was a result of irrefutable video and eyewitness evidence collected by the RSPB and Ayr Police. The Sherrif in summing up said, "People who undertake these sorts of crimes do so for profit using vehicles to get to remote areas, and must face severe punishment."

## Birds of Prey shot and poisoned

A dead Hen Harrier found near Geltsdale Nature Reserve on the Cumbria/Northumberland border is believed to have been shot. Two men were seen carrying firearms and shots were heard prior to the Harrier being found.

A red Kite has been found poisoned in North Yorkshire. It was one of 23 released near Harrogate last year. Wales has suffered multiple raptor poisonings this year. Five Peregrines and a Buzzard have been poisoned in South Wales and a further two Peregrines and two Buzzards are suspected of being poisoned.

## NEW FALCONRY CENTRE

A new falconry centre opened at Notcutts Garden Centre, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxford on Tuesday, 1st August when Stoops and Swoops Falconry make the garden centre their permanent display home. The falconry centre will be open from Tuesday to Sunday during the summer time, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, with last admissions at 3.30 p.m. The centre will also be open most weekends throughout the winter. There will be flying demonstrations every day that the centre is open, weather permitting.

Experienced falconer, Andy Stokes (33), has been seeking a permanent centre for his birds of prey for many years and after demonstrating his skills at most Notcutts Garden Centres, found an area for a display centre at the Oxford branch. Andy has devoted his life to the care and understanding of birds of prey and has been a practising falconer since the age of 12. He has worked in falconry centres most of his life and his experience covers all aspects of falconry, including flying, both for pleasure and in displays in

major country shows, such as the British and International Falconry Fayre, equipment making and talks.

Born in Hampshire, Andy comes from a background of countrymen learning a lot about the countryside from his father who was a gamekeeper in Hampshire. His skills include field crafts and the balance of nature and food chains.

Joining Andy in his new adventure will be his partner Dee. The new falconry centre at Notcutts is their first such enterprise. Visitors to the centre will be able to enjoy seeing and experiencing owls, falcons and hawks in a relaxing environment. There will also be a series of talks and demonstrations. Falconry equipment will also be available.

Brian Patterson, a friend of Andy Stokes and a well known and experienced falconer will be opening the centre and flying one of his birds. Andy first met Brian Patterson in Hampshire at a show when he was just 14 and since then, they have become good friends combining their experiences at many country shows and game fayres.

## EAST ANGLIAN GAME FAIR.

Once again this Game Fair was held at the British Birds of Prey Centre, Stonham Barns in Suffolk. Initially it was due to take place on Sept 17th due to the fuel crisis it was postponed to October 1st.

A variety of stall holders attended, including the IBR, South East Falconry Group, Falconry Originals, Double R Products, Falconers Magazine, The International Falconer, and the BFC.

There were 3 displays throughout

the day, each containing a variety of birds, who all performed well, the displays were both lively and informative.

The Fair is held every year, at the BBPC. It is usually well attended, especially by falconers from Norfolk, Suffolk and the south east.

Thanks must go to Robbie and Chris for their hard work in organising this event.



Top:  
Steppes  
Eagle.  
Left:  
African  
Fish Owl.

"List of lost, found, reunited & stolen birds from the IBR" 1 July 2000 to 29 September 2000

**Found (39)**

ABYSSINIAN EAGLE OWL  
xx  
BARN OWL  
x18  
COMMON BUZZARD  
17xxW  
67xxDOEW  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
14xxCZ  
HARRIS HAWK  
IBxx944W  
UKxx915  
None  
KESTREL  
ESxx499/IBxx1103S  
13xx0SBC  
UKxx0X  
11xx5DOES/7Mxx  
None  
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID  
20xx8W 10xx9V  
RED-TAILED HAWK  
28xxHC97X  
SAKER FALCON  
3CxxY99W  
None  
5Dxx00W  
00xx  
SNOWY OWL  
None  
SPARROWHAWK  
CLxxR7  
None

**Lost (74)**

BALD EAGLE  
IBR0011ZA  
BARN OWL  
IBR2215U  
Chip  
Chip  
IBR2608U  
IBR5245U  
IBR9211U  
IBR12082U  
BC94U  
7734BCU  
4551OA91U  
5HKO  
None  
1192BC00U  
15MC99U  
BENGAL EAGLE OWL  
012BC00-011  
CARA CARA  
None  
COMMON BUZZARD  
3297RR97W/IBR3451W  
10773W  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
9GC99Z  
SDH5/1FCH99Z  
None  
GOSHAWK  
UK87803 474  
OVKEV99P004  
GYR/PEREGRINE FALCON

22472W DOE4347X  
GYR/SAKER FALCON  
20934W  
IBR13311W  
14314W  
22417W  
HARRIS HAWK  
IBR2957W  
IBR7596W  
IBR10025W  
YELLOW RING IBR10072W  
10AMJ97V  
12RAH00W/IBR13758W  
5GA98W  
3FWP95W/IBR11232V  
148BL98W/IBR13832W  
13071DOEW  
XXDOEW  
YES  
6DST  
YES  
146BL98W  
JACKDAW  
IBR8816S  
KESTREL  
IBR1748S  
IBR6046S  
9882S IBR8815S  
None  
2-00-S  
LANNER FALCON  
IBR980W  
IBR2347W  
11127W  
IBR10324W  
IBR6158V  
3RPRS99  
XXXXDOEW  
1JSEN96W  
MERLIN  
10336R  
PEREGRINE FALCON  
8450W  
22331W 10640V  
11259V 21191W  
PEREGRINE/GYR HYBRID  
UK87766/BY27100267  
PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID  
10569V 22061W  
RED-TAILED HAWK  
1597X 0997Y  
SAKER FALCON  
IBR3003W  
5COEY  
IBR12892W  
1700W IBR13420W  
25DAM99W  
NBOPC  
3AMG99W  
XXSFC99W  
28RJT96W  
SPARROWHAWK  
IBR8749R  
IBR4220R

**Reunited (67)**

BARN OWL x11  
COMMON BUZZARD  
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL  
FERRUGINOUS HAWK  
GOSHAWK  
GYR/LANNER FALCON  
GYR/PEREGRINE/SAKER

GYR/SAKER FALCON x2  
HARRIS HAWK x14  
KESTREL x7  
LANNER FALCON x7  
LUGGER FALCON x2  
MARTIAL EAGLE  
PEREGRINE FALCON  
PEREGRINE/MERLIN HYBRID  
PEREGRINE/SAKER x3  
PERLIN  
SAKER FALCON x8  
SPARROWHAWK x2  
STEPPE EAGLE

**Stolen (5)**

BARN OWL  
IBR6697U  
GOSHAWK  
DOE19724W  
HARRIS HAWK  
12860W  
None  
17NATBIRDPREYW

**CHRISTMAS OWL  
EVENINGS**

**SATURDAY 2nd, 9th, 16th & 23rd  
December 2000**

Special torchlit evenings, focusing on the 27 different species of owls that live at the Centre - some of which are extremely rare. The evening includes a torchlit tour of the owl aviaries and courtyard, an owl 'Meet & Greet' in the education room, hog roast and a torchlit flying demonstration with several different species of owl.

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For further information please call Sarah-Jane Rumble on 0870 990 1992.  
Or checkout the website on [www.nbpc.co.uk](http://www.nbpc.co.uk)



# CLA Game Fair Blenheim Palace.

This years CLA Game Fair was held at Blenheim Palace. Falconry was well represented with a large marquee for the falconry stands, sponsored by Honey Brook Farm. All proceeds from the stands for their pitches went to the CFF.

Outside the Falconry marquee was a large weathering ground and mini arena sponsored by Mitsubishi. Something was going on in the mini arena nearly all day.

There was a good selection of birds on the weathering ground, including Andrew Knowles-Brown's Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle. Jim Chick's African Fish Eagle, an imprint Sparrowhawk, Peregrines, Lanners, 2 female imprint Goshawks, Saker, and various hybrids.

The flying displays proper were given in the main arena set against the backdrop of the Palace, unfortunately this was a good 20 mins walk from the falconry area, however this problem was solved by Mitsubishi who provided vehicles all weekend to ferry the birds and their keepers back and forth.

Displays were given by Jemima Parry-

Jones, Bryan Patterson, Jim Chick and Andy Stokes. All the birds performed well, particularly Jims Lanner, Megan, and Jemima's perexsaker, Kilbreck. This little bird flew well on the Saturday and the general feeling was if he performed as well on the Sunday all would be happy, on the Sunday however, he decided to show his true colours, ranging out and gaining height, using the trees and warm weather to its fullest advantage and putting in the most wonderful stoop. All were extremely impressed and Jemima, I know was chuffed to bits.

Derek Starkey was presented with a glass tankard in the Mini arena by Marie Louise Lachallas, then Chair person of the Campaign for Falconry in recognition of 20 years as Secretary of the Hawk Board, and thanks on his retirement.

Thanks must also go to John Hill and



others who did a brilliant job in organising the marquee. John works very hard on behalf of both the Campaign and the Hawk Board organising various events.

All in all we had a good weekend, and a positive response for falconry from the general public and other field sports enthusiasts.

*Above: Jim Chick's lanner - Megan.*

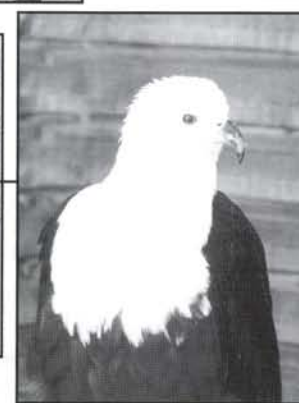
*Far left: Imprint female goshawk. One of two on display at the Game Fair.*

*Centre top: Marie Louise Lachallas making the presentation to Derek Starkie.*

*Centre Bottom: Brian Paterson & Buzz the Ferruginous Hawk.*

*Left: Jemima Parry-Jones entertains the audience in the mini arena*

*Below & Below left: Jim Chick's female African Fish Eagle.*



*Below: Male Golden Eagle belonging to Andrew Knowles-Brown.*



*Blenheim Palace, a wonderful backdrop for the flying displays. Thanks to Lord Blandford for letting us use his estate.*



# FALCONRY TERMS - AN ALTERNATIVE (Pt II)

By Malcolm Allison

<u>LEG MOUNT</u>	MANOEUVRE PERFORMED BY AMOROUS DOG USUALLY ON THE LEG OF LANDOWNERS WIFE/CHILDREN.
<u>LUGGER</u>	TERM FOR CARRYING, AS IN, B*****KS I HAVE TO LUGGER ALL THE WAY UP THIS F*****G HILL.
<u>MAN</u>	PERSON WHO DOES FLY A HAWK (SEE JESSE)
<u>MARK DOWN</u>	ANOTHER WELSH FALCONER.
<u>MAR-HAWK</u>	HAWK BELONGING TO ME.
<u>MEWS</u>	SOUND YOUR NEIGHBOURS CAT MAKES WHEN SHE DISCOVERS YOUR EAGLES NEW LEASH IS 2 FEET LONGER THAN HER OLD ONE.
<u>MUSKET</u>	GENERAL TERM IE. MUSKET HER WEIGHT DOWN. MUSKET SOME NEW BATTERIES FOR THIS B*****Y RECEIVER.
<u>MUTES</u>	WHAT MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TURN INTO WHEN ASKED IF THEY HAVE SEEN A LARGE BIRD WEARING BELLS.
<u>NEST</u>	AREA OF AVIARY FOR STORING INFERTILE EGGS.
<u>NEST LEDGE</u>	AREA OF AVIARY WHERE BIRD SLEEPS, FEEDS, S**TS. IN FACT DOES EVERYTHING BUT BREED.
<u>PASSAGE</u>	WALKWAY BETWEEN FRONT AND BACK (USUALLY MUDDY) DOWN WHICH HAWKS ARE CARRIED.
<u>PERCH</u>	FRESHWATER FISH WHICH YOU WOULD BE CATCHING, IF ONLY YOU HAD CHOSEN A SENSIBLE HOBBY.
<u>PETTY SINGLE</u>	ONE HIT WONDER.
<u>PITCH, THE</u>	RECREATIONAL GRASSLAND COVERED IN SHORT GRASS, IDEAL FOR FLYING BIRDS ON CREANCE, BUT NOT DURING A GAME OF FOOTBALL.
<u>PREY</u>	REQUEST FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION TO RETRIEVE YOUR BIRD.
<u>QUARRY</u>	SEE GORGE
<u>RABBIT</u>	TALK OF HAWKS CONQUESTS (SEE HAWKING DIARY).
<u>RANGLE</u>	DISPUTE BETWEEN FALCONERS AND GAMEKEEPER OF LAND ADJACENT TO FLYING AREA.
<u>RECEIVER</u>	LONG RANGE DEVICE FOR FINDING OUT BATTERIES ARE FLAT. (SEE TRANSMITTER)
<u>RING UP</u>	GENERAL METHOD OF NOTIFYING FRIENDS OF LOST HAWK.
<u>ROBIN</u>	MOTOR VEHICLE. NOT SUITABLE TO HAWKING.
<u>ROUSE.(PRON. RUSE)</u>	EXCUSE GIVEN TO SPOUSE FOR BEING LATE, YET AGAIN.
<u>ROUSE. (PRON. ROWS)</u>	DOMESTIC DISPUTES WHICH FOLLOW WHEN SPOUSE DOES NOT BELIEVE ABOVE.
<u>SEMEN</u>	MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL NAVY.
<u>SEMEN COLLECTOR</u>	LADY OF ILL REPUTE.
<u>SLICE</u>	PORTION OF PORK PIE (SEE BATE)
<u>SLIP</u>	UNGRACEFUL ACTION CARRIED OUT BY FALCONER USUALLY PERFORMED WHEN BIRD IS NOT SECURED AND FOLLOWED BY THE TRADITIONAL CRY OF S**T OR B*****KS.
<u>SLIP UP WIND</u>	WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO IN FRONT OF THE LANDOWNERS WIFE FOLLOWING 8 PINTS OF GUINNESS AND A CURRY.
<u>SOAR</u>	CONDITION DESCRIBING FALCONERS LEGS AFTER RETRIEVING GOSHAWK FROM BRAMBLES.

# BIG BAD UTEO

**Martin  
Hollinshead**

Over the years, the North American ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) has received both good and bad press, and still the debate continues. The fact is, this bird's value divides just like the discussion. To those who know it and can meet its requirements, it's a wonderful hawk, to those who don't and can't, it's near useless. To understand the ferruginous hawk we have to grasp the true nature of the bird. This is not just any broadwing, this is the most specialised bird employed in falconry. This is frequently not recognised. So often the ferruginous is seen as just a heavier version of the Redtail and is asked to behave in the same manner. It is asked to follow on in trees, hunt through cover, be a take-what-comes general purpose hawk - and it fails miserably.

As two falconry buteos, it's easy to see how the redtail and ferruginous might be lumped together. But the redtail is everything the ferruginous is not, the redtail has a massive range, as many as 14 sub-species, is versatile, flexible, compatible with all types of terrain and will live on anything it can find. From gentle farmland to northern wildness, the redtail can scratch a living just about anywhere. What a contrast the ferruginous makes. Forget massive range. Forget flexibility, this bird has evolved for a special environment, the vast plains and desert of western north America. Here it spends its entire life, for there is no migration. The matter of sub-species is equally focussed, there are none. And with its feeding habits, *regalis* bolsters the specialist

theme still further; this big, powerful buteo is heavily dependent on small colonial rodents. Just at a glance the ferruginous is something different. The huge rodent-swallowing mouth, the small rodent-grabbing feet, the bulldog chest and the relatively narrow wings, come together to give *regalis* a truly conspicuous appearance. Visualise this bird sitting on the rim of some escarpment, perhaps atop a huge ground nest - the biggest nest built by any North American raptor - imagine it stretching tall scanning the vast treeless terrain ready to react to the slightest movement. No, a redtail, the ferruginous is not.

From a falconers point of view, the areas that need consideration are obvious; terrain and foot size. Hawking

country needs to be very open. No matter how much this raptor is encouraged, it will not, cannot become a 'hawk for the bush'. This is a bird that covers vast distances in an effortless fashion - and deliberately seeks to do so. This is a bird that comes into its own on the really long flights.

When others have given their best, the ferruginous is just getting into its stride. That narrow wing and powerhouse body create a force that carries the bird through the air with a quality that is pure ferruginous. The hunting ferruginous appears unstoppable.

The small feet appear to be the bird's weakness. They seem to indicate a bird that is only geared to small prey. Even if we provide the ferruginous with open terrain, is it capable of catching anything worthwhile? Well, let me answer the question with another comparison.

Anyone who knows their *Aquila* eagles will see similarities between the ferruginous hawk and steppe eagle of eastern Europe and Central Asia. Both will ground nest. Both rely heavily during the summer months on small rodents, and both have that big mouth and those worryingly small feet. However, before we pencil the ferruginous in as North America's answer to steppe eagle - a bird with no real falconry value - there's a bit more information to consider. The eagle is migratory and when it reaches its wintering grounds it continues to feed on weak and helpless prey. As noted, the ferruginous does not migrate, it stays put, and when the ground squirrels it utilised





so heavily all summer hibernate, it does something the ponderous eagle would never consider - it hunts hares and game birds. The ferruginous isn't just worthwhile, it's a bird with staggering potential.

In view of its requirement, it's not surprising that the falconry ferruginous has been most successful when flown over its native soil in the western half of the United States. The main quarry has been the sagebrush hare - the lagomorph so well known to the wild ferruginous - and the flying has been varied and dramatic. Some falconers have looked to direct pursuit hawking, testing the bird's ability to chase a hare clean into the next state! Others have gone for the soaring option and asked the ferruginous to show another of its special traits - a lust to 'go up' and 'stay up'! Regalis isn't only a flat terrain record breaker, it's a soaring machine with few equals. For normal hill soaring it excels, and even on flat ground it will power-fly up falcon-like to go into a searching scan. For some US falconers, this is the ultimate hawk for sagebrush hares; and some ferruginous have even mastered the mighty prairie hare.

In Britain finding just the right landscape-quarry combination has not been too easy. For a long time, falconers looked to the rabbit; like the redtail-type flying it seemed to make sense. But for a bird that uses trees reluctantly, much preferring to sit on the ground, and needing space to get going when flown from the

glove, a dash-and-go rabbit is infuriating. Rabbits can be caught with ferruginous and in open hill country they are particularly vulnerable; they can be taken from the soar, they can be walked up and flown at from the glove - they can even be ferreted. But the fact remains that the long-range regalis and the short-dash rabbit make a poor combination. The obvious move is to emulate the Americans and use the ferruginous for open country hare hunting; a nice visible target that's going to use speed and open ground to save it, what could be better?

But which hare? In Britain we have tended to assume that if rabbits aren't right than brown hares must be. Well, nearly, but not quite. The problem is the small foot, while female ferruginous can take brown hares, just as they do the prairie hares, this mammoth super-muscular quarry is far from ideal. The ferruginous can catch it, but when contact is made, the small foot lets this bird down when it comes to controlling the victim - or even getting hold of it properly in the first place. No, we need a hare a bit more like the North American sagebrush hare, a less punishing one. And in the north we have one - the Scottish mountain hare, and if we squint just a little, the sweeping moors this hare inhabits make a passable substitute for natural ferruginous country. Imagine the scene: a shout rings out, 'Hare!' and far left of the falconer a hare has been flushed by one of the beaters. Panicked, the animal is heading still fur-

ther left and at a vast distance. Most of the beaters consider the hare safe. Most of the beaters are in for a shock. Past their line, the big bird almost clips two as she powers across the heather. Open mouth witness the unbelievable performance as the gap between hawk and hare rapidly shrinks. But there's a gully ahead - what now? Over the rim goes the hare and throwing up high goes the ferruginous. Her climb turns into a stoop but for just a second she is flat against the sky and become a big white gyrfalcon. Then she plummets and is gone. One mountain hare has run its last race.

Slowly we are starting to see a very effective hunting bird, and perhaps its talents don't stop at rabbits and hares. What about winged quarries? 'Feather' is the most neglected aspect of ferruginous falconry, but, like the wild-living bird, the trained ferruginous is not shy of feathered targets; in Scotland, greylag geese and even grouse have been taken! To date most of the feathered game taken by ferruginous hawks has been chance encounter stuff, with the bird simply showing a willingness to make an attempt. Few ferruginous have been trained specifically for this aspect of the sport. However, at the falconers fair I fell into conversation with an American who, after many years of flying longwings, was going to channel all his efforts into soarhawking game birds with a female ferruginous. All in all I'd say *Buteo regalis* is one pretty serious customer.

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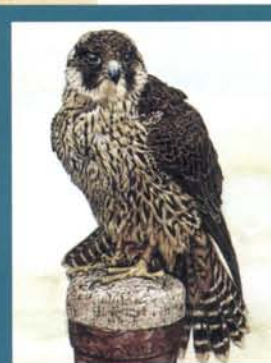
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## Scottish Hawking Club Report - Autumn 2000

The seasons here again and the rabbits have been breeding like, well rabbits. I'm sure myxy has hit some of the rabbits, but the colonies of rabbits I know of haven't been hit by this horrible disease for a few years now and numbers are soaring. Not good perhaps for the beleaguered farmers, but for falconers its great. Our first field meet in September went very well, loads of slips, chases, points, catches and misses. Multiple catches were had by many, and the weather stayed fine, hopefully a good omen for the rest of the season. Our next meet at Pebbles looks to remain dry, let's hope the quarry obliges us with its presence. The main meeting of the season along with our AGM is again on the Isle of

Skye, by popular demand after last year's success, we have about 50 coming this year which will be a record attendance. It should be a good bash, if it remains dry, but if not, the hotel bar certainly wont be dry!!

Scotland's parliament is still trying to do its damndest to harm our sport, the Watson Bill is still progressing, although the Scottish Countryside Alliance is doing its utmost the quash it.

The Scottish Hawk Board should be giving oral evidence in November, so lets hope we will be able to help stop the Bill before Christmas.

During the summer the SHC had a joint BBQ with the BFC Scottish Group, this was to help raise funds for the

Scottish Hawk Board, it was held at the home of Adrian Hallgarth of Perthshire Falconry Services at Braco, it wasn't brilliantly attended due to the forecasted rain that didn't materialise. But despite that, the amount raised for the SHB was £141.00, a very good amount in the circum-

stances, if anyone feels like making a donation please feel free to do so.

The venues for the beginning of year 2001 haven't been finalised yet, but we should be able to fit in 3 or 4 before the end of the season in March, so I hope you all have a good seasons hawking.



### CENTRAL FALCONRY & RAPTOR CLUB

As from the 12th November the Central Falconry & Raptor Club will be meeting at a new venue. The Warks,

Oxford and Glos regions are amalgamating into one.

It will be at the Stoneythorpe Hotel, Warwick Road, Southam, Nr Leamington Spa.

The club has had a lot of unrest with not being able to find a settled venue for

various reasons and we are hoping the Stoneythorpe will give us an opportunity to settle things down.

We look forward to seeing old and new members at 8pm on 12th November.

Any queries please ring John Hill on: 07973 224609

## The Role Of Education Within Bird Of Prey Centers

By

Martin Foulds

Education Officer

The National Birds Of Prey Centre

As Education Officer for the National Birds Of Prey Centre I believe it is our duty to try and educate everyone that makes a visit to the center be it through our excellent flying displays or our guided tours or through our educational material that we offer. Even now we are re-developing our educational packs for schools coming up with new ideas for key stages 1 through to 4 and working with teachers in trying to bring the national curriculum to life. We continue to make sure that the information that we present to the public is correct, up to date and all bird staff at the NBPC are committed to this.

The National Birds Of Prey Center is recognized throughout the world, and it is our duty to promote Birds Of Prey, using them when and where ever possi-

ble as a educational tool, to emphasise the important role that they play and in particular as a indicator to whether the environment is a healthy one or not.

Foulds and Rubin [1999] in a survey into the role of flying displays, conservation and the views of the general public showed an overwhelming response from the public that a visit to a Bird of Prey center would be a learning experience for them, and I feel with the comments from Parry-Jones [1994] that with the ever increasing rate of Bird Of Prey centers opening all over the UK, that there is still a lack of correct information being put forward to the public and as an Education Officer this is very concerning.

Many so called falconry centers seem only concerned about explaining about the sport of falconry to the general pub-

lic, and that not always correctly. Instead they should be utilising the birds as educational tools like we do at the NBPC.

Nicholls [1999] explained after carrying out a survey on the role of Birds Of Prey Centers that the attitude of many poorer centers seemed to be that educating the public is something anyone can do, sadly this is not the case.

I believe that all Bird of Prey centers should have a Education Officer and should be fully up to date with the national curriculum and know the correct way of putting information, over to the public. If centers do not comply and do everything in there power to make sure this is done I believe those centers and staff will do more harm then good and should seriously consider whether they should be open to the public.

# PHILLIP GLASIER 1915 - 2000

By  
Dick Treleaven

I first met Phillip Glasier in 1950, when would-be falconer's only means of gaining instruction in the noble art of falconry was through the perusal of borrowed copies of Michell or Blaine. He put a swift end to all our worries with the magnanimous offer of a weekend's hawking. He was already an extremely knowledgeable and accomplished falconer, and was ever ready to pass on his skills to we youngsters, still wet behind the ears. On one occasion when a young man turned up with a hawk which was a smidgen over weight, "What did you give it for its last meal? A cow?" bellowed Phillip. We soon learnt our lesson and studiously weighed our hawks before taking them into the field. It was Phillip's use of the weighing machine which changed the concept of training hawks; one no longer needed shy tidbits in the air to see if the bird was keen. "Weigh it man, weigh it" was his most often given advice.

His flamboyant manner did not always go down well with some of his contemporaries, as he was prone to parody 'Unk' his illustrious uncle, Captain Charles Knight of 'Mr Ramshaw the eagle' fame.

Like many falconers he was a loner, self opinionated and inclined to garrulous arguments about trifles when in the mood took him. But those who knew him better, knew it was all a front. No-one could have been more generous with his time. He would spend countless hours writing aspir-

*Below: Phillip Glasier flying, his first falcon.*

*Below Right: An example of Phillip Glasier's considerable talent in the field of photography.*



ing falconers long typewritten letters, explaining in minute detail, exactly why their hawks refused to come to the lure or fist and offer them helpful solutions. We all welcomed him as our unpaid guru and suffered his acerbic wit joyfully.

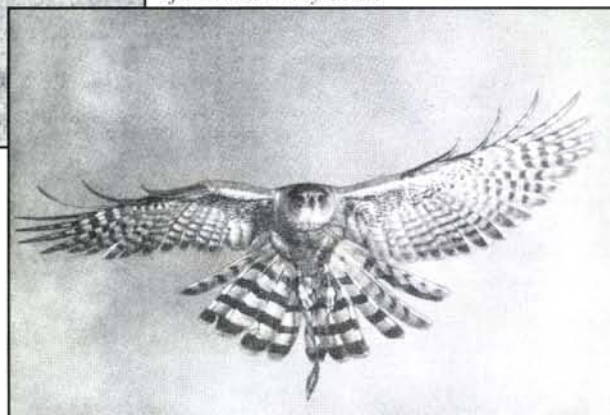
In addition to his falconry skills, Phillip was a professional photographer and pioneered the art of taking pictures of bird in



flight using a flash. His superb studies of Geoffrey Ivon-Jones Goshawk, Medusa were acclaimed in journals all over the world and still adorn many a mews. Those who visited his studio at 4b Endless Street, Salisbury seldom went home without a handful of free photos, which he moaned were either too light or too dark. He was a perfectionist when using his camera.

He was always a busy man and took part in several films, including one with his old friend James Robertson Justice. He travelled abroad: photographing in Afghanistan: wrote at least three successful books, the best known being, *As the Falcon her Bells*, which became a Book Society choice. On one occasion he flew his hawks for the Royal Family at Sandringham and was invited in to tea afterwards; sadly his conversations with the Royal

*Photographs reproduced by kind permission of Jemima Parry-Jones*



Family have been lost to posterity.

He devoted his entire life to falconry and was instrumental in forming the Hawk & Owl Trust, a fact that is often overlooked. In 1967 he opened the Falconry Centre at Newent, Glos, which was another landmark in his career. It is now renamed the national Birds of Prey Centre and thrives under his daughter Jemima's energetic management and is recognised as the foremost raptor centre in the UK. Phillip also helped organise a system in airfield clearance as the RN airfield at Lossiemouth using trained falcons as a counter measure to prevent bird strikes on aircraft, then a highly revolutionary idea.

However, he will be best remembered by those who he helped to put a foot on the ladder to becoming successful falconers. He was greatly misunderstood by those who did not really know him. At heart he was a kindly man, who was extremely sensitive to the misfortunes of others, so much so he frequently hid his true feelings under a mask of gruff, irascible behaviour and eccentric, boyish pranks. He had an almost unrivalled expertise in the art of falconry which he freely passed on so that future generations might benefit (and they did). As one of his early pupils I salute him.....Phillip Glasier: falconer, photographer, author and friend.

Born December 22nd  
1915 - Died September  
11th 2000, aged 84.

# FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL.

David Wilson

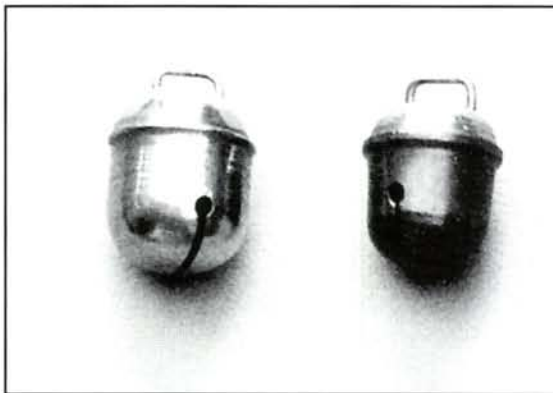
## Why do we put Bells on our birds?

The most obvious reason is to help locate you hawk when out flying, but there are many other reasons for Bells. When in the garden they are a good indication of what the bird is doing. Scratching, warbling or bating, you will be able to tell exactly what she is doing just by listening. If boxed in night or travelling boxes you will hear her movement when driving round corners, braking or accelerating.

A Bell should be light and ring with as little movement as possible, as in most cases your bird will be sitting up a tree and the only thing they move unconsciously is their tail, this will be a slight side to side waggle. On quite a few occasions we have had to track the bird with telemetry to thick cover but not been able to find them until that tell-tale jingle gives them away.

There are three ways to make a Bell.

(1) **SPUN.** This is where discs are held between two forms on a lathe and spun on high speed and then pushed into shape. The top half has the clasp attached and the bottom half will have a slit cut into it. The size of the slit is very important to the end result so this is usually cut in when the Bell and the clasp have all been soldered together.



Above: Spun bells; these are the least effective of all three types.

(2) **PRESSED.** This is probably the quickest way of making Bells. Round discs, the exact size of one half of the Bell are placed in a mould and then under considerable pressure are pressed into shape. Each half is formed like this, one being slightly smaller than the other so they will slot together ready for soldering. For added security/strength two holes are drilled into the top of the Bell for the keeper to be inserted into and folded under then soldered. But some are just soldered directly onto the top of the Bell.

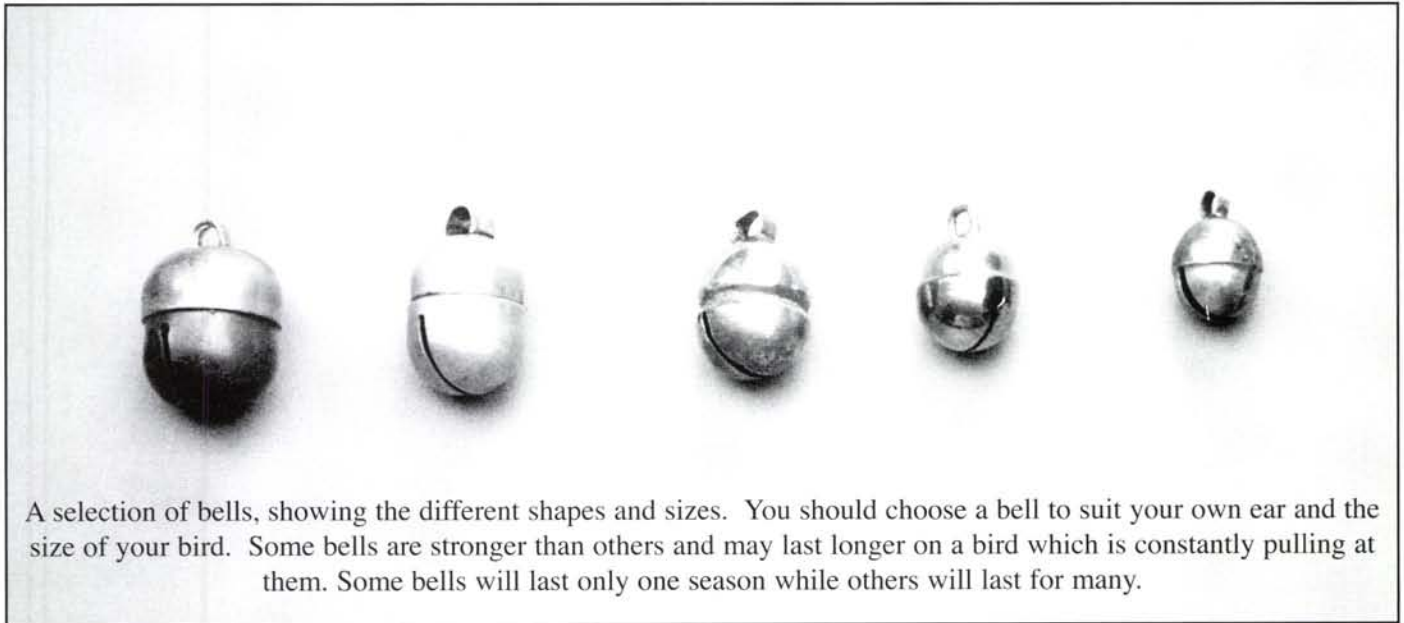


(3) **HANDMADE.** These are made using a block which has cups in. The metal is beaten into shape by hand, using a special hammer. The best way to tell if a Bell has been hand-beaten is by the numerous tiny indents covering the surface. The keeper and slot are put in as before. There are only a few people making Bells in this way professionally. Each one of these Bells has a unique sound. The problem with hand made Bells is producing large quantities.

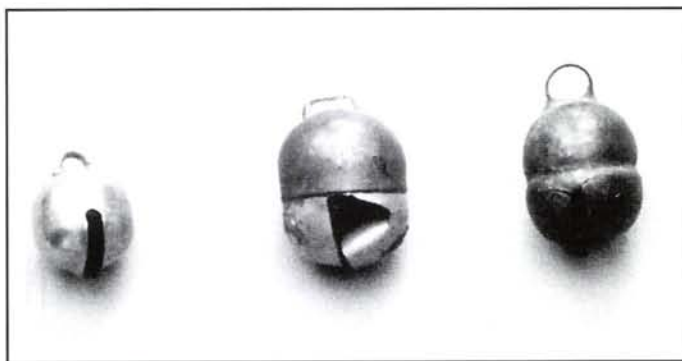


Above: This Goshawk is fitted with a one piece, plastic tail mount with telemetry clip holder, and a hand-made bell. The bell is held with the same piece of leather that is attached to the feathers. The bell is not held tightly and will ring at the slightest movement of the birds' tail. All bells should hang down to give the best results.

Left: Pressed bells; these are the most popular and this is the method used by most good bell makers today. Bells are usually sold in matched pairs, one has a higher tone than the other. When buying bells you must ring them individually, not holding the bell but threading a piece of leather or similar material through the keeper and ringing them. You should aim for maximum noise for minimum movement. Any bell will ring when shaken vigorously.



A selection of bells, showing the different shapes and sizes. You should choose a bell to suit your own ear and the size of your bird. Some bells are stronger than others and may last longer on a bird which is constantly pulling at them. Some bells will last only one season while others will last for many.



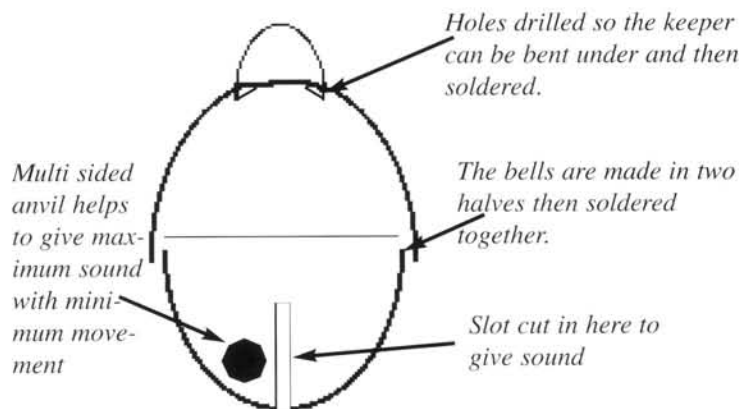
Bells do not last for ever, the bells above are suffering from various forms of damage, first the bell has been opened (by a sparrowhawk) and the dropper has fallen out, next the bell has been crushed by a prairie falcon, and lastly a Lahore bell which has cracks appearing above the opening, which will impair the sound. Make sure you check your bells regularly.



This bewit has both a bell and telemetry mount attached. The leather has passed through the bell and telemetry holder and back through itself, ensuring the only thing that comes into contact with the birds' leg is the leather. A bewit should not be too long as it will cause problems, getting caught round talons, wire or brambles and also the bell will bruise the back toe. If the bewit is too tight it will cause friction and swelling or even restrict the blood supply to the foot. The leather should be treated regularly with a proprietry leather grease or oil, as should the aylmeri and jesses.



This Cooper's Hawk has a bell attached using a button bewit, this enables quick and easy removal- should you want to fly your bird silently.



**ANVIL.** This is a multi sided piece of steel or brass, it is insert into the Bell before soldering the two halves together. If this was round it would roll as opposed to ringing, and if it was square it would not move freely enough.



Methods of attaching bells; Left: Traditional bewit, which will be leg-mounted and is permanent.

Top right: Bell attached to a tail-mount, with telemetry holder, the two strips of leather, or braided terylene, will be glued and bound, one to each of the two centre deck feathers, about an 1" - 1.5" from the top of the feathers.

Bottom Right: Button bewit. The button bewit can also be used for attaching telemetry to the leg.

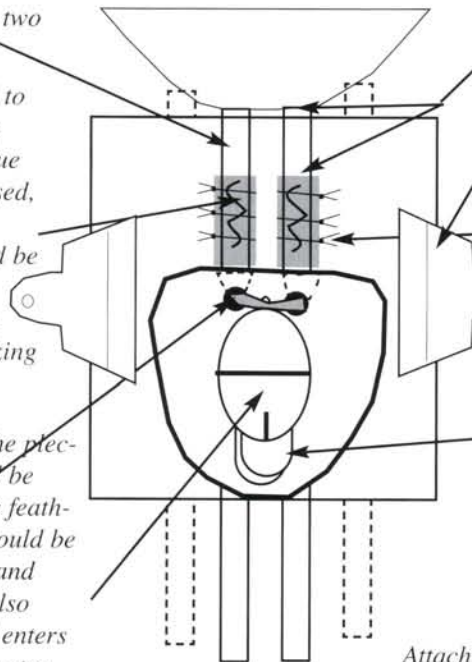
**CABLE TIES USE THESE AT YOUR BIRDS' PERIL.** I once asked a falconer who had used a cable tie to attach a bell to his birds leg why? He replied "It's quick". Quick it may be but birds have had legs amputated due to cable ties pulling tight and restricting blood flow. One bird got its beak caught in a cable tie whilst preening in the bath, could not pull free and consequently drowned. To help stop this people have used plastic sheaths to stop the tie pulling tight but these can cause sores on the leg. Leather has been used for centuries to attach bells etc to birds, with no ill effects, why change now? Cable ties have their place but it is not here.

Centre Deck Feathers are the most commonly used but you can attach it to the two either side of these.

If the area of the feather to be attached to can be rough slightly with emery paper, this will give a better surface for the glue to bond to. Super Glue should not be used, it leaves no room for mistakes. Epoxy Resin (eg. Araldite), or Evostick, should be used.

A sprinkle of talcum powder after glueing prevents any surplus glue from sticking feathers together.

One piece of leather is used to attach the plectrum and hold on the bell. There should be enough slack so the bird can spread the feathers in flight. A reasonably small bell should be used, so as not to put too much weight and strain on the feathers. A larger bell is also more likely to get caught when the bird enters cover. The purpose of the plectrum is to stop the bell falling through the tail feathers, since the introduction of telemetry the plectrum is now used for the transmitter as well.



The top of the leather should be approximately 1" - 1.5" from the seat of the feather.

A piece of card or thin plastic should be slid underneath the feathers you are attaching the mount to and held in place with either bulldog clips or clothes pegs, this will make the job easier and cleaner.

The best way to get your waxed thread round the back of the feathers is with a bent darning needle. Wrapping the thread round and tying it off separately at least two or three times.

The telemetry holder is designed to accept a spring clip. The telemetry is better to be held high on the tail than the leg, this keeps it away from water, or wet grass which can reduce the signal.

Some birds with very fine tail feathers will benefit from a leg mounted transmitter.

Attaching a tail mount is a two man job, make sure you have all your equipment, glue etc to ready, one person will have to cast the bird while the other attaches the mount. It is a good idea to practice using drinking straws as it is quite a fiddly, frustrating job.



## NECK MOUNTED BELLS AND TRANSMITTERS

Left: This female peregrine falcon has a neck mounted transmitter which is put on just before she is flown then removed at the end of the flying session it is attached to a rubber band. The rubber band is then placed over the birds head, going round the neck loosely, sitting under the feathers.

Right: Female sparrowhawk with a neck mounted bell this will stay on all the time. When putting on a neck bell you must ensure that the elastic band is thin enough that it would snap should the bird get caught up on something.





**RAPTOR  
RESCUE**

Registered Charity No. 283733

## To Help or not to Help? That is the Question

George Duncalf is a Trustee of Raptor Rescue and has been involved with the Charity for a number of years. In this article George gives his personal response to some of the questions which are frequently asked by falconers and other members of the public.

As well as being a rehabilitator for Raptor Rescue, I am also a falconer and I often encounter other falconers who have reservations about the work I do with sick and injured wild birds.

The Charity takes in over 500 wild birds a year and although this is only a minute proportion of the total population in the wild, we still hope we are helping in a small way. Several subjects regularly crop up when I am talking to falconers, and I would like to address some of these questions.

### 1. Should nature take its course?

I would be all for nature taking its course if man had no influence on the situation, but unfortunately, in a small country such as ours this is very rarely the case, as most casualties have a man-made cause. I feel that if help to redress the imbalance is not forthcoming the more sensitive species, such as Merlins and Hobbys may be the first to disappear and then who knows! Remember - if no one had decided to help in the 60's we would probably not have a bird of prey population to worry about today. One thing I am sure of; I could never leave an injured bird to starve to death, as euthanasia is a much more humane option.

### 2. Should young birds evicted from the nest be helped?

If the sole reason for a chick being thrown out of the nest was a shortage of food then yes, you may have a point for not touching it, but what if one of the parent birds has been killed in a road traffic accident and the remaining parent is unable to feed the whole brood? Then surely all I am doing is standing in for the parent killed by a human's car. Remember, the mortality rate in young birds of prey in the first year may be as high as 70 to 80% in some species.

### 3. Should only the rarer species be helped?

As for only treating the rarer species, who should decide? I wonder how many practising falconers would pick any of the Owls for instance. I personally could not turn any away, as one is as important as the next in my eyes. Other points must be considered, such as, in the summer to ignore an injured adult bird means you are probably ignoring its chicks as well.

### 4. How much should be spent on a casualty?

As a charity we would spend as much money on trying to help a Kestrel as we

would a Red Kite, that is, whatever it takes, because to put a maximum cost on treating a particular species is the same as picking which ones to treat.

### 5. Can long term casualties really survive?

As for the long term sick, yes it is true, the longer it takes a bird to recover the less chance it has of being released, but we always try, even if euthanasia is the end result.

### 6. Is the effort of hacking a bird back to the wild worthwhile?

I know to hack a bird back to the wild can be a time-consuming job and the results cannot be guaranteed, but don't all jobs you do for someone or something else seem to take twice as long. It doesn't mean it's not worth the effort. That is why we are always grateful when other falconers come along and offer to hack a bird back for us, as it frees the rehabilitator to concentrate on his other casualties.

Some of you will always think we should leave nature alone, but I think that it is too often the case, no matter how much we have messed with nature, we as a species have sat back and done nothing to redress the damage we've done until it is too late. I will never convince everyone but the next time you find an injured bird please give it a chance and pass it to one of our volunteers. That's right, none of our rehabilitators or helpers (over 200 people at present and rising) get paid for their time and effort, they just feel that what they are doing is right. Perhaps the 80 or so birds a year I personally take in is not a lot, but at least I try. Hindsight is fine if you're happy to say, "Perhaps we should have done something," but I want to say, "I DID do something."

**For more information phone  
our National Help and Advice  
Line on 0870 2410609  
(all calls are charged at the  
national rate).**

## Hints and Tips

### PICTURE THIS

Many beginners (and some not such beginners) have major difficulties when and if it becomes necessary to cope with their bird. Most people realise that the beak has gradually become overgrown and that it requires attention, but few of them can recall the correct shape and exact proportions needed to restore it to normal. May I suggest that when you first receive your new eyass you take a few close-up photographs of the head from all angles. This will provide you with a perfect reference if you should ever need to cope in the future. P.S. more tiring and less day old chicks = less coping.

### IN PROFILE

If you have a bird which bates quite a lot and in so doing damages its tail, try turning the bow perch sideways on in the weathering, the bird you will notice tends to bate either backwards or forwards, by turning the perch you will lessen the chances of the leash going up between the tail feathers. Try it, it works.

### NON-SLIP

Having made your leather bewits for bells or telemetry mounts, do not grease until after fitting, as you will find they are easier to manage, and you will reduce the chances of slipping and knocking your bird.

### BUNGEE JUMPING

For an instant bungee leash attach a piece of thin rubber or a strong elastic band to the leash as illustrated below, mine is attached with thread wound round and round. For small birds it works really well. Bungee leashes are available from furniture manufacturers but in the meantime!

rubber/elastic

band

leash



# A WEDGE TAILED EAGLE IN AUSTRALIA

**Richard Naisbitt.**

Just the other day I was sitting in my kitchen watching a group of ravens feeding on my back lawn when a mature male wedge tailed eagle came silently over the back wall, grabbed one of the ravens and kept going over the roof of a house, into a thermal and over a far hill. I had a cup of coffee half way to my mouth when it happened and never even had time to put it down before it was all over. As a child I had dreamt of one day seeing a wedge tailed eagle but not in my back garden and certainly not everyday. The wedge-tailed eagle is perhaps one of the least understood of all the true eagles, it has been shot, trapped, poisoned, stoned and generally much maligned but it has survived in good numbers on the mainland of Australia. The story is not so good in Tasmania where the sub species is classified as being endangered through loss of habitat and persecution and some fear that the new millennium will see the end of this subspecies.

Prey selection is far from random and one pair of eagles that nest close to my house make a habit of hunting foxes, the pair will work co-operatively and I have witnessed 58 superb hunts over the last 3 years. Another interesting trait of this wonderful eagle is its ability to hunt in dense woodland. Only yesterday I saw a mature female flying through tall closed canopy woodland. As I watched she slowed and grabbed a ring tailed possum nest from the upper branches of a eucalypt and just carried on flying stopping eventually to pull the very dead possum

from the tangled mass of leaves and branches. I saw this bird again the next day but this time she was perched near a large tree hollow listening intently. The brush-tailed possum inside the hollow was obviously very aware of the eagle's presence and managed to squeeze itself further into the hollow. The eagle tried to pry the possum out for 20 minutes before giving up and flying off.

I work with two wedge-tailed eagles (we have four in our demonstrations), Gabrielle is 11 years old and weighs about 5000 grams, Jess is 30 years old and weighs about 3000 grams. Both birds have carried out 10000 demonstrations each and in terms of measuring their value - it is impossible, but back to the eagle as a species in Australia. It is our only large eagle and as a result it plays a vital role. It behaves like a vulture and regularly feeds upon carrion, it is also a powerful predator and some pairs specialise in hunting and killing large mammals like kangaroos and dingos. It is also an adept pirate and quite recently I watched a male eagle chase a peregrine

who was carrying a parrot, the eagle forced the falcon into a woodland then managed to pirate the falcons kill. The display of aerial mobility on the eagle's part was truly astounding.

Given the right conditions the wedge tailed eagle is an awesome predator and this is partly because it is Australia's only large eagle and has evolved to fill a variety of environmental niches and it must be noted that Australia wasn't



*A young Wedge-tailed Eagle.*



*Richard with Gabrielle*

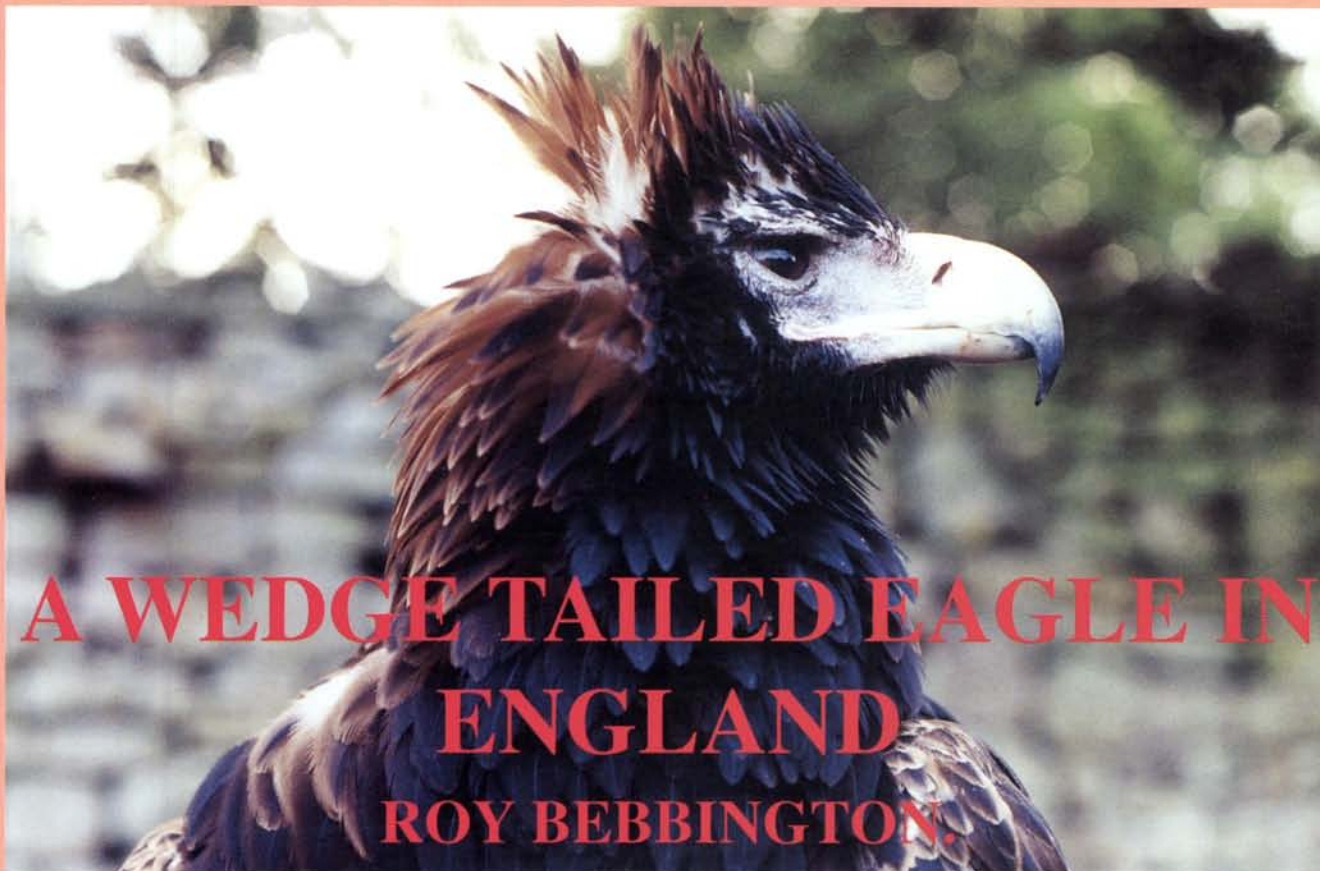
always a mosaic of open pastureland and wooded habitats. 300 years ago much of Eastern Australia was heavily wooded and this in itself begs the question 'How did these large eagles hunt if there were no open or cleared areas'. The eagles long tail might offer some answers and indeed its manoeuvrability can be attributed to that long tail. In that sense a wooded habitat posed no problem!

Falconers in the 40's and 50's hunted European brown hares with male wedge tailed eagles and had good success and a few managed to take black ducks with eagles from a stoop. Whilst this may be hard to believe I have seen male eagles stoop from incredible heights and take Australian shelducks! So far I have recorded an incredible 98 prey species (mammal, reptile and bird) with the largest being the Eastern grey Kangaroo.

In the 50's Healesville Sanctuary in Victoria had the only flight demonstration in Australia, this was an ad-hoc affair and the only bird they had was Horatio, a wedge tailed eagle (who later laid eggs!), this bird died only a few years ago at the age of 55.

For those who are addicted to the large raptors, I would suggest the wedge tailed eagle as a hunting partner but sadly this is an impossible dream as there are so few of them outside of Australia.





# A WEDGE TAILED EAGLE IN ENGLAND

ROY BEBBINGTON

Martin Hollinshead's favourable description of the Wedge tailed eagle within his article 'A TASTE FOR THE EXOTIC' is well justified. I had the very good fortune to have owned, flown and hunted with a female of the species for two seasons here in North Yorkshire. If personal circumstances hadn't dictated otherwise I would still be in partnership with this remarkable species.

A native of Australia, the Wedge tailed eagle is that country's largest raptor. In times past, it has suffered greatly due to extensive shooting and trapping. For almost a hundred years it was considered vermin, and bonuses were paid for proof of its slaughter on the production of either the birds beak, talons or eggs. In just two states, at least one hundred and twenty thousand birds were eliminated during the decade of 1950 to 1960.

As I obtained my bird as an adult I cannot offer any first hand details of the bird in immature plumage. From research material that I did obtain, the bird is not too dissimilar from our Golden Eagle. In its mature plumage and when viewed from a distance, it appears solid black with some buff patches on the outer wing. On the back of the head and very apparent when the birds crown is fully erect, there is a burnt orange patch with a further patch on the coverts. One of my first recollections of her was her large sickle shaped beak, which appeared similar to a Fish Eagles. Her feet and cere never obtained that brilliant colour, but remained a diluted, almost white colour which I now know to be their natural state. The tail, as the birds name suggests, is wedged in shape and extremely long. It could only be fully appreciated when viewed from below with the eagle

aloft. The length of the centre deck feather, when clean moulted was extraordinary. Thankfully her plumage proved to be extremely resilient and survived the season intact. However, it proved to be less than waterproof as one would expect from a raptor from an arid native environment.

From various literature I have read on the species, the Wedge tails from the Northern states of Australia tend to be larger than those from the Southern states, with the Tasmanian birds being the smallest. My eagles' initial weight at the commencement of her training was ten pounds, but her introductory flying weight was nine pounds.

Accommodation for an eagle has obvi-

ously to be of the appropriate size, I was able to free loft the eagle in a large stone outbuilding. In the initial stages of training, she was tethered to a large block, but was soon completely free to fly and perch where and whenever she wished. In the case of this remarkable eagle, she was so biddable that jesses were unnecessary whilst she was loose in the mews.

One trait most note worthy with this eagle was her apparent pleasure in the company of Homosapiens. Far from being the solitary, territorial type, she always seemed most at ease when in the company of others. Within his book 'BIRDS OF PREY' Dr. Ian Newton mentions an almost Harris Hawk like attribute commonly found in Wedge



*The author and eagle.*

*This picture shows the eagle in typical yarak. It also shows her incredible length of neck which she used when interested in something.*

Tailed Eagles. Seemingly when in pursuit of, more difficult quarry, and by this he refers to such things as Dingo's and Kangaroo's the Wedge tails will bond together in pairs or groups in cooperative hunting, with group members, taking it in turns to stoop and harass prey until it tires, after which they would normally share their spoils. I personally feel that my bird transferred this characteristic to me as it definitely appeared that she considered me and the dog as hunting companions.

In the field the eagle would display an almost accipiter like stance when in hunting condition ( Yarak ), but a little less pronounced - feathers loose, her stance upright, wings held slightly drooped and totally silent. She again displayed in this manner after having been picked up off a



*A training session photo which nicely shows her large wingspan of approx 7-8 foot, and her distinctive wedge shaped tail.*



*Armed with a formidably sized pair of extremely powerful feet.*

kill and a brief period had to be allowed for her to compose herself prior to hooding and recommencing the hunt.

Without doubt the most spectacular method to fly and hunt with her was to have her waiting on, which in my particular part of the country proves to be no problem, when the wind conditions are right. Waiting on may look spectacular, but if I flew her by this method only, she would never have obtained any real degree of fitness. The hunting pattern of the Wedge Tailed Eagle is described by

ment which initially stimulates them to commence the chase. In the eagles case, she did not appear to need that movement for she excelled in spotting rabbits and flying them while they were sat tight, she accounted for a great many in this manner.

Our principle quarry in the two seasons was the rabbit, and at the time of her being entered they abounded in almost epidemic proportions.

The only draw back to this was that no matter where she was being flown, there

Philip Burton in his book ' BIRDS OF PREY OF THE WORLD ' as 'often done in low level flight'. Consequently still, windless days never meant the end of the days hawking, and never did it stop her from waiting on when conditions were favourable.

The eagle would never allow me to cast her off the fist, she took to the air when she felt the time was right. Should I attempt to break this rule, then she would always simply pitch on the ground beside me. It is my considered opinion that this eagles eyesight was superior to any other raptor that I had previously flown. It is well know that most predators respond to move-

would always be a certain percentage that were suffering from the effects of myxomatosis. Of course the eagle would more often than not select these easy options, a perfectly natural instinct she would have possessed had she been hunting in the wild. At times when she was aloft with a good number of rabbits beneath her, she appeared to select and take the weakest member. Within the space of just six weeks she had accounted for almost sixty, the majority of which were impaired to some degree or other. She was also quite content to alight upon carcasses and devour them no matter what state of decomposition they were in. What we must be aware of is that not only is the wedge tail Australia's largest raptor, but it is also its largest scavenger, filling the void left by the absence of any native vultures..

To counter this behaviour I began to actually fly her over areas that were largely devoid of quarry and await the harder winter months to thin out the rabbit numbers. On returning to our usual hunting grounds the rabbit numbers were lower, but what remained were fit and began to tax the best out of her. On one or two occasions she was presented with favourable opportunities to add the occasional feathered game to the bag. Unfortunately she showed no interest at all.

Should this eagle ever be bred in sufficient numbers to become readily available, then I for one would literally walk over hot coals to have another one. Unfortunately I was never in the position to fly my wedge tail at hare, but armed with such a formidably sized pair of extremely powerful feet I am convinced that she would have been more than a match for them.

Finally if you ever get hold of a copy of a book entitled ' BIRDS OF PREY ' by Alan Richards, then turn to page 178. There you will find the most beautiful photo of any wedge tailed eagle that I have ever seen.

# A USE FOR ALOE VERA

Juli Hewins

I often struggle to find treatments to use on my birds, most are for humans and I wonder how safe they are, given the difference in size and proportion, yet alone species.

At last I have found a product I can use on all my animals (and the family). It's a natural plant, organic and non-toxic, full of ingredients to aid and increase healing, fight infection and soothe pain with no side effects.

I started taking it for lack of energy and found it also helped a sinus problem I'd had for years, also aches and pains from old injuries lessened or went. I started training after a few months break and as well as increasing my energy levels, the pain of strained muscles was minimal. I've always suffered with dry, sensitive skin that has also improved immensely. Several of my family, including my 7 year old Rotty bitch have found it helps painful, inflamed joints and my niece has started taking it for digestive problems. We have all benefited from this extraordinary plant and most of these conditions can affect birds and other animals.

I used it on 'Ishea' a Pere x Saker that had been electrocuted, she had a very bad burn on the carpus joint on the left wing. After initial treatment by the vet, we treated the burn topically with Aloe Vera gel and also added it to her food. The wing has healed with very little scar tissue (which is apparently a typical occurrence with Aloe) and obviously with a wing injury scarring could result in a restriction of movement and so the end of a successful hunting bird. She has made a complete recovery and is back at 'work'. It is said that wounds and burns treated with Aloe heal 1/3 quicker. I can see considerable benefit if treating a wild, nervous or top-weight bird if healing is accelerated.

We also used it on Zak, an Alsatian with a chronic digestive problem, which resulted in some of his intestine being removed. The dog was very poorly and also developed a skin problem linked to his condition. Aloe was given in his food and a propolis cream applied topically, within two weeks the dog showed a big improvement. The skin condition cleared and the hair started growing back straight away and he is now back to his normal bouncy self.

Another pere x saker that my friend flew kept having fits, the cause remained a mystery and the bird was not flown for six months until Aloe Vera was suggested. Again it was given in its food. The fits stopped and the bird was flown again, and was reported to have performed with more stamina and strength than it previously had.

I read up about the plant and it's properties and it is claimed to be anti-inflammatory,

anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal (one of them listed is *Aspergillus Fumigatus*). It is said to work on the epithelial tissue - a layer of cells covering the body (skin) or lining a cavity connecting with it. And also said to balance the immune system. I have spoken to a vet with a lot of experience in using Aloe Vera and he explained that; used as a preventive measure, in boosting the immune system, birds would be more able to fight infection from some bacterial, fungal and viral conditions that are quite common and sometime fatal.

I use the spray can to clean my gloves and the birds' feet as well as a first aid spray on cuts, bites, burns, stings, and grazes for all my 'brood' and have had very good results with it. My five-year old male Harris is taking it on his food as I bring his weight down for hunting. Another of my 'brood' a two year old working cocker gets a spray after a day thrashing through brambles etc. I comb her with a flea comb to remove any thorns then spray her all over. And the latest to get Aloe'd is Sooty, an excellent Brittany, who belongs to my ex-husband, she gashed her front leg very near to the knee joint so she was sprayed and gel'd.

It is used a lot in the equine world and a lot of vets are now prescribing it. It's not a new discovery by any means, it was used by the ancient Egyptians, among other, though history. And it's actually pictured on the Royal School of Veterinary Medicines coat of arms, which was designed in the very early 1800's. Apparently then it was considered to be one of the most valuable medicinal plants. After years of overuse of antibiotics and steroids, with all the side effects, I think we should look more to the origins of many of these modern synthetic drugs and I certainly prefer to use a natural product with no side effects. I'm not saying so away with all synthetic drugs, in fact it is said that aloe can accentuate some drugs' performance, and of course before deciding on what kind of treatment of action a professional diagnosis should always be sought.

There are different processes to extract the gel; the one I have had good results with is a cold, stabilised gel produced by filleting out the gel from the rind of the leaf.

All the technical details have been explained to me about how it works, but as the old saying goes "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" and the results I have had and have seen are proof enough for me.

Happy Hunting!

If anyone wants more information you can contact Juli Hewins on Tel 01789 772547 or Email [jmhew@supanet.com](mailto:jmhew@supanet.com)

## Do you want to kiss it goodbye? - Jenny Wray

A couple of weeks ago I had a phone call from Essex asking if there was an eagle loose? I confirmed four possible birds that it could be and after several calls the sightings were variously confirmed as a Bald Eagle, a Fish Eagle, an Osprey with jesses and a Gold Eagle but not goldy colour. These were confirmed sightings by falconers! No one was able to get very close, but they all confirmed that the bird was not wearing a ring.

A Bald Eagle was missing again from Yorkshire, (we helped recover it a few weeks previously from Holy Island) so we got the owner to come down to Essex, fairly certain it was his. He showed photographs to witnesses who confirmed it wasn't his bird so he returned home. The eagle, over the following 4 days, meandered down through Essex and into Kent. We had regular daily sightings and a falconer, used to eagles, was in pursuit every time, but it was the owner we needed. Eventually I had phone call from a falconer asking if we had reported a lost Common Buzzard in Kent? His local vet had one handed in. It had been shot. A member of the public had picked it up and taken it into the surgery in a sack. The coincidence, timing, and same town made me ask the falconer to go and confirm species, equipment and identifying marks so we could trace an owner. Also the vet had little avian experience - so was the Buzzard a Buzzard?

The falconer phoned from the vet's practice with his voice two octaves higher. It was a Martial Eagle, not a Common Buzzard. The bird had no visible identification and hadn't been scanned. The vet scanned the bird, but no chip was found. It was the falconer who picked up the scanner and did a better job of finding a chip. The vet was only scanning the legs. This didn't give us the owner immediately, but it meant the owner could be traced. The Martial Eagle had a shot wing and a damaged eye which was causing great anxiety all around. The bird needed the owner to decide that an avian vet was needed quickly. Luckily the owner phoned to report that he had lost this bird the previous week. I was able to tell him the bird had been found and immediately give him the vet's telephone number. The bird was x-rayed and the next day then taken to a specialist avian vet in Harrogate. The bird unfortunately died a few days later, there were 5 pellets, one of which was lodged behind the eye having entered through the neck.

If the owner had rung me when he had lost the bird, he may have been able to get it back before it was shot. I certainly spent a lot of time trying to find an owner and many falconers were involved in tracking this massive bird over two counties. A lot of time, effort, petrol and goodwill were used following this bird for days.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AUSTRALIAN PEREGRINE.

*Richard Naisbitt*

I have tried to write this several times but time as we all know can be short, aside from dealing with the daily rigours of life I also deal with 28 trained raptors and then try and monitor birds that have been released. Life is too short, the days are too short and rules are all wrong - too much work makes jack a dull boy but the adage 'work hard and play hard' is never an option when one has a two year old that is an domestic terrorist and a seven year old that's trying to re-write Tolstoy.

'Dad! Piers is kicking the cat'

'Dad what is sex

I nearly died at that question but I had the falcon nearby and it was raining, not the strong solid wall of water but the intermittent drizzle and shower. I dashed out when the word sex had just left Camille's mouth and when Piers had managed to pull out the television cable.

Tiggywinkle (yeah I know, a bad name for a peregrine) had been out for 37 days and in that time I had watched her attempt 228 hunts and succeed 89 times (39% success rate). This is a fairly impressive success rate but the total kill weight was miserable and she was barely sustaining herself and with each day that passed her hunts became more and more desperate with the duration between hunts shortening until she was chasing anything within view. The rain didn't help, the constant drizzle wet her feathers and made the days totally miserable for me and for the falcon. It was tempting to get her back and give her a warm room and it was tempting to leave her to her own devices and write in my diary that she failed but both options were a short cut to denial so I watched her in the rain over the next three weeks.

The day she caught the wood duck was a blessing and how she caught it was promising. Forget about the wonderful

stoops, forget about the glory of the wind rushing through wings - practicality is the name of the survival game. Tiggy caught the duck like a goshawk would, a stationary position and short hard sprint. I left her to kill it in the mud and one part of me wanted to help her as it dragged her across the water logged paddock but I resisted and finally the duck lay still and she plucked the kill with a wet exhausted expression.

The duck weighed 700 grams and she ate 230 grams of it - it was still raining when I left her in a tree, she had a full crop - for once. One afternoon I sat in my vehicle and watched the three dams that bordered mixed woodland. A few long dead



trees protruded from the canopy like bony fingers and on one of the spindly branches a peregrine sat with her back to fine rain that just kept falling. It was 17:45 and the sun was an orb dulled by the low clouds. I waited and watched the dams. A few black ducks came winging in, low and silently

over the fields, they slipped into the dam quickly and the falcon didn't move, she sat hunched and looked as though she had grafted herself to the dead wood. A few more ducks came in, one teal and two wood ducks and the falcon sat.

The sun had almost gone and the temperature dropped from 13 to 9 degrees Celsius when the falcon leaned forward quite visibly, I couldn't see a thing through my fogged windscreen but as I opened the door and peered out I saw three black ducks coming in quite high and then the falcon left her vantage point and vanished. A sudden dark flash emerged from the gloom and swung up underneath the ducks. The falcon bound to one and dropped out of view again. I left the falcon to her devices and the rain. I found her the next morning. Muddy and bloody but with a full crop.

If anything taught this bird how to hunt it was experimentation and a bit of luck. The next few weeks saw her killing another 7 ducks and all from a perch (bringing her total to 235 kills). I trapped her, weighed her and changed her transmitter batteries just after her 7th kill, she weighed in at 900 grams but had serious cuts on her feet and tarsus - 'parrots?' I asked myself.

I had seen her chasing sulphur crested cockatoos but had never seen a kill. The bites were from parrots and she learned from the experience, the next time she struck a parrot she hit it on the ground many times until it stopped moving and then she did one low fly over and then landed nearby, watching it - it took three minutes before she went in and broke the dead birds neck.

Then she was gone - I lost contact with her for a full 9 weeks before seeing her briefly one afternoon. Her tiercel was offering her food and she had dropped her last primary, a bit late in the year for breeding but the tiercel was adamant -

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# Falcon Herpesvirus in the UK

Neil A Forbes CBiol MIBiol Dip ECAMS FRCVS

Falcon herpes virus is only considered to occur occasionally in the UK, with three published cases in the last 18 years. In this practice despite a large raptor case load, no cases have been experienced until recently.

During August and September 2000, two separate unrelated outbreaks were confirmed on histology and virus isolation, there are similarities between the two cases which we believe should be brought to colleagues attention.

Herpes viral hepatitis has been reported in USA in owls (Green and Shillinger, 1935) and falcons (Mare and Graham, 1973), in Europe (Burtscher, 1965) and the UK (Greenwood and Cooper, 1982) and (Gough et al. 1993). The owl and falcon strains respectively, are antigenically similar and are both members of the avian Herpesviridae. Naturally occurring Falcon herpesvirus has been described in the Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), European kestrel, Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Red-necked Falcon (*Falco chicquera*), Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) as well as experimental infection in Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*), Screech Owl (*Otus asio*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) (Mare and Graham, 1973) and a Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) (Morishita et al. 1994). Falcon, owl and eagle herpes viruses do not affect hawks (accipiters). The gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), is considered to be particularly susceptible (Remple, 1995). Herpesvirus isolates from falcons, pigeons and psittacines have been compared by restriction endonuclease analysis (Aini et al. 1993), finding that falcon and pigeon herpesvirus are similar but distinct from psittacine herpesvirus. Gough (1997) using the same test showed that some, but not all pigeon herpes isolates were similar to falcon herpes isolates. This finding supports the field observations that infection is thought to occur by ingestion, of infected prey species (Graham, 1978), in particular pigeons (Redig, 1992, Aini et al. 1993, Morishita, 1994, Remple, 1995).

In both of the recent cases investigated by this practice, pigeon had been fed some 5 days prior to clinical signs commencing. In the first case the keeper fed spent racing pigeons. The latter pigeons were frequently transported to and returned from

Europe. Lierz (2000) has shown that 35% of wild injured raptors tested in his survey in Germany were seropositive for falcon herpes virus. This is a surprising finding, indicating a high prevalence amongst free flying European birds. In view of this it is perhaps not surprising that pigeons flying from Europe might have been exposed to the virus and hence become carriers. In the second case the affected bird had caught and eaten a feral pigeon in the SE England 5 days prior to the development of clinical signs. The catching and eating of feral pigeons by falcons has been recognised as a significant disease risk (in relation to falcon herpes virus) in the USA and Middle East for many years, but has not until now been considered a risk in the UK.

The disease in falcons is usually peracute and rapidly fatal, with mortality approaching 100% (Graham, 1978). Clinical signs if seen are non specific with lethargy, weakness, malaise, lime green staining of the urates and anorexia. A consistent haematological finding is leucopenia.

In fatal cases the liver and spleen are grossly swollen, with small punctate lesions on the liver. Calvary inclusions are seen on histopathology.

Histological examination shows acute multi-focal coagulative necrosis in the liver and spleen. Small mainly eosinophilic intranuclear inclusion bodies can usually be observed in degenerate hepatocytes at the periphery of these necrotic lesions. Virus probably enters via the oral route and is subsequently excreted in body discharges. Some birds may become carriers and remain latently infected.

Herpesviruses are sensitive to acyclovir (Zovirax. Burroughs Wellcome) (80mg/kg tid po for 5 days) and Baypamun (1ml/kg i/m 3x in 48 hours). In the case described above affecting the gyrfalcon, 5 in contact falcons (peregrine, peregrine hybrids and merlin) were treated with acyclovir with the hoping of preventing further clinical disease. No clinical disease developed in the in contact birds.

**The authors believe that these two cases indicate that the feeding of spent racing pigeons (especially those flying in central Europe) as well as the ingestion of feral pigeons by falcons in the UK may**

**now present an unacceptable risk and should be discouraged.**

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## EDITORS NOTE:

I emailed Neil and asked if I was right in saying that Falcon Herpes virus did not affect hawks is reply was as follows:

Yes it does not affect hawks, moreover owl and eagle herpes viruses are also different.

However technically it is likely that a hawk could eat the food, not be effected by it, but then pass it on to a falcon.

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**CHESTER** The Goshawk,

Mouldsworth. 1st Wednesday

**PLYMOUTH** The Woodpecker, A38.

3rd Monday

The Welsh Hawking Club is Internationally recognised and has members throughout the UK.

For further information ring Secretary:  
Mike Clowes on 01529 240443

# New Report on the International Seminar on the Indian Vulture Situation Sept 2000

Jemima Parry-Jones

On September 18th 2000 a workshop held at WWF Delhi for invited guests was called by the Bombay Natural History Society, in conjunction with the RSPB, BirdLife International and the Indian Department of Natural Resources to discuss the increasing fears that something drastic was happening to the Indian White-backed Vulture and the, now two, species of Long-billed Vultures. About seventy one participants attended the workshop, mainly from India, but with a sprinkling of internationals, who had either been working in India recently on the problems, or with the BNHS, or had recent experience in vultures, either wild or captive.

The first morning was taken up with three main papers.

The initial paper was given by Dr Vihbu Prakash who was the principle investigator in a recent survey done on the populations of White-backed and Long-billed Vultures. This was instigated because of the population crash that was becoming apparent on these two species of vultures. The surveys were made in 17 protected areas, areas adjoining the protected areas, known carcass dumps, and highway surveys covering 7236 km. The road transects that were made followed as much as possible the previous highway raptor survey done in 1990 - 1993, and where possible at the same time of day.

All vulture species were surveyed, although the emphasis was on the griffon (*Gyps*) vultures. At the same time habitat changes and availability were monitored and the numbers of available carcasses were counted. In one area over 100 carcasses

were counted with vultures being present on only three of them.

The results of the survey pointed to a 90% population drop in both the Indian White-backed Vulture and the Long-billed Vultures in all the areas surveyed, and in some areas the birds were not seen to be present at all, leading to presumption of local extinction's. In areas such as the Bapne Carcasses Processing Plant, where vultures should normally have been plentiful, none were seen.

The 'neck drooping syndrome' which was observed in birds at Keoladeo National Park and appears to precede the birds dying, was seen in both species of vultures in all areas of the survey where vultures were located.

1920 responses to a questionnaire sent out by BNHS resulted in 90% of the respondents saying that the vultures had declined over the last ten years. Over 60% felt that the vultures had declined drastically and 28% said that the vultures had gone from their areas completely.

This paper was followed by Dr Risebrough sadly had no visual data, then discussed the findings from samples given to him by BNHS and others so he could look for potential poisoning and

pesticides as the possible cause for the decline. The upshot of his presentation was that although there were traces of toxins, none were at lethal doses, or could explain the dramatic decline in the vultures populations.

However, further investigations needed to be carried out to rule out toxins of any description. But although there had been records of poisoning of vultures in India, there has been no sign of any increase in this practise, or any major increase in the use of pesticides.

Nor was there any evidence given to support suggestions made later in the conference that drowning in cattle troughs or electrocution (both important factors in vultures populations in S Africa and Israel) or shooting, or lack of food might be having an effect on the Indian vulture populations.

The final paper was given by Dr Andrew Cunningham a pathologist vet at the Zoological Society of London. After some considerable effort nice freshly dead vultures were examined. With slides, overheads and powerpoint Dr Cunningham described the post mortems and the results. All nine vultures had died of an Infectious Disease Agent, possibly a virus. The final cause of death was dehydration. He stated that much work still needed to be done, more fresh carcasses needed to be examined. Sadly the Indian government would not allow any samples to be sent to laboratories outside India at this point. However the Poultry Laboratory at Puna, who had done some of the initial work, since the conference, have put even more resources available towards a major effort to identify the cause of death in the vultures.



# TROPICAL SPECIES DECLINE

Kris Grootaert & Philippe Hoyois



for Raptors' rapid decline.

A few opportunistic species do cope with human development, such as the Brahminy- and Black-Winged Kites. But endemics once found locally common are now dramatically scarce. A terrible tragedy

Asian "Bird Markets"... More than just one in a town. No fundamental problem with that, but the decaying national economy now means that whatever the species, it is still worth a deal for a seller. Natural richness furtherance is mostly a concern on paper: the understaffed forestry services remain highly ineffective and have little control on a huge domestic birds market, while foreigners, easy targets, get lavishly accused for smuggling Indonesian wildlife abroad. But on the inside, public centers recently launched in order to control the spread of contagious animal diseases are now closed up. Basics of proper animal husbandry have never been promoted, resulting in a dramatic

If biodiversity preservation is a tremendous concern in the western world, Raptors are still far from enjoying the same attention in developing countries.

The last year spent by the junior author in Indonesia verifies that this cultural gap is not being filled whatsoever, despite conservationists' tiresome efforts to create awareness and local involvement.

As everywhere, habitat loss, ignorance and poaching account

Above: Male Changeable Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus cirrhatus ad "floris"*)  
Right: Male Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*)

Below: Immature male Gurney's Eagle (*Aquila gurneyi*) (& Mr Kris Grootaert)



long-since foreseen by demographers, Java island is now entirely covered with monotonous rice paddies, tea or coffee plantations. Once famous wetlands are now gone for ever, and a mere 5% of mountain forest remnants seems very precariously spared. No regulation can keep impoverished farmers out of fragile conservation areas.

Zoologists can already wonder whether the still preserved, but already poorly representative patches of forest with their limited food resources, can still uphold a viable gene pool. To make things more hopeless, the teeming rural population is now a huge reservoir of poultry diseases often contaminating wild bird populations with respiratory and Newcastle viruses.

ignorance among bird keepers. Coccidiosis, Trichomoniasis and viruses immediately contaminate stressed birds entering the markets, killing many.

Here, a large Bird of Prey in a parrot cage or chained is still valued as high social status evidence, before the beast dies from lack of food, water and space. Kidney failure is a frequent accident caused by the strong belief among Raptors' proud owners that these birds eat but never drink!

This country obviously cannot indulge itself by asserting that claws and feathers remain important items for traditional dressing purpose or odd but supposedly effective medications.

Of the beautiful endemic Javan Hawk-Eagle, eagerly collected as a national symbol, only 50-60 breeding couples still nest in the wild (last survey in 1990) and no effort has been undertaken to breed it so far.

Whoever you address in Indonesia, recommendations about population monitoring, captive breeding and basic care to be provided to Raptors mostly receives a





bewildered gaze.

In the easternmost Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, we got the rare chance to meet several local executives with a genuine concern for Raptors. Mostly oriented

towards tourism development, they also are very enthusiastic about discovering Falconry, as this tradition has never existed in this part of the world.

We rapidly came to an agreement for the implementation of a Falconry and Raptor Conservation and rehabilitation project, encompassing comprehensive breeding for the most endangered species on a sustained base. The profit gained from hunting parties is expected to partly cover the breeding costs. This idea was a true premiere and has

received strong support from the province government.

Our main goals are to start teaching people some basic respect for their Raptors, and help the country in preserving its most threatened species. Rural New-Guineans are unlikely to trade their bows and air-guns for a hawk in a near future to go hunting. But the outstanding richness of their country in so far untested and tremendously attractive species should allow them to turn Falconry into a valuable tourism attraction and a new source of employment.

Our greatest hope is that this

venture can become an example of positive, sustainable utilization of widely ignored natural resources which deserve more attention and active management. From now on, interested readers should watch out for our next forest hunting accounts with several amazing New Guinean species tested here for the very first time!

*Left: Immature male Javan Hawk Eagle (Spizaetus bartelsi)*

*Below: Female Snake-Eagle (Spilornis cheela pallidus)*



## Mongolia in Second Gear

### Dr Nick Fox



*L - R: Dr Eugene Potapov, Gantigmaa, Dr Nick Fox*

Our Mongolian landlady took a sharp breath. She'd just spotted the maggots in her new fridge! One was waving at her in a leisurely manner from a cracked Saker egg. Some bolder ones were already making a trek towards the butter. We tried some diversionary tac-

tics, pointing out to the sceptical landlady just how well we'd cleaned the cooker. The flat was just a pied-a-terre for storing our gear while we were away on fieldwork.

In the hall Gombobaatar was gathering up assorted bags containing parts of

a Black Vulture (killed by power lines), wings of a Steppe Eagle, two Bactrian Camel heads and a large plastic decoy owl. He would store all the eggs and specimens at the University while we



*Gombobaatar releasing saker with satellite back pack.*

arranged the CITES papers.

We were just packing all our gear ready to return to the UK. The field season has gone well. The radio-tracking study in southern Mongolia is now complete after two breeding seasons work. We have plotted the home ranges of 11 adult breeding Sakers using triangulation radio-telemetry. Apart from their immediate nest areas which are exclusive, they share their hunting areas. The adults stay on site throughout the winter in northern Gobi, even though temperatures drop sometimes to - 40 C. Tough birds.

We also tagged five Sakers using solar powered satellite tags which can last up to three years. We need to see how the birds move so we trapped falcons in different parts of Mongolia. Part of the project includes monitoring annual production of young. It is important to

know how many of these are Mongolian birds and how many have drifted south from Siberia. Our previous tags have shown birds leaving Siberia in the autumn, crossing Mongolia, and wintering in Xinjiang in western China, before returning in the spring.

Our efforts to tag a sixth female were temporarily thwarted by 'Percy', our final surviving noose pigeon. He saw off 12 Sakers, 2 Uppland Buzzards, and 3 Black Kites before being ceremoniously released in Ulaanbaatar unscathed, to breed a master race of pigeons. Gombobaatar will get a weedier pigeon and trap the 6th female next week. There are plenty of Sakers about on the vole plague areas but you have to catch them early before they have a crop on.

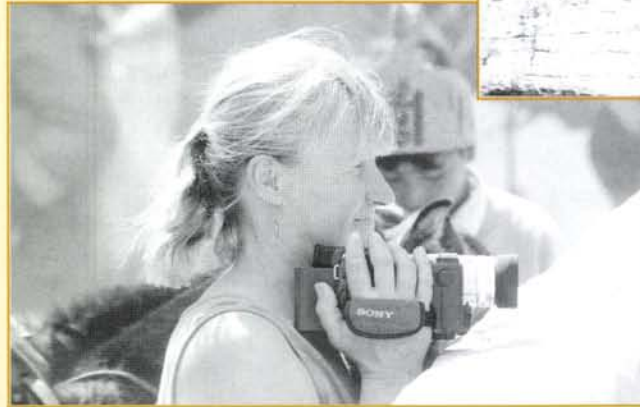
Our efforts were also hampered by one of our Russian YAZ trucks which about 200km still from home lost its third and fourth gears. Our progress was even slower than usual but alleviated by singing between the two cars over the walkie talkies:

We've been driving all day long in second gear

We've been driving all day long in

Right: Female saker at the nest.

Below: Barbro Fox filming



second gear

If we don't go any faster

If we don't go any faster

We won't get to Ulaanbaatar in a year (sung to the tune 'She'll be coming round the mountain', lyrics by the Barton and Bailley Singers). Subsequent verses were less polite. The Mongolians thought we were nuts.

This year we also co-hosted the Second International Conference of the Middle East Falcon Research Group with the Mongolian Ministry of Nature and Environment. (see <http://www.falcons.co.uk/mefrg/>) We decided to hold it in gers (circular Mongolia

tents) a few miles outside town. The dining ger was magnificent, the roof lined with 60 confiscated Snow Leopard skins and the walls hung with Wolf skins. In the woods 300 metres away on the side of the valley were two nests of Amur or Eastern red-footed Falcons, *Falco amurensis*. Behind the hill was a Berkut nest with two well-grown eaglets. On the second day my wife came in from riding with my son Benjamin and said she'd heard young Sakers. So the next morning we rode out before the conference session and found a family of four. Great was the public humiliation of the Saker biologists to find that they'd missed a brood only a kilometre away, and to have their eyes wiped by a 'mere housewife'. Lyn Wilson would have appreciated it.

Delegates came from China, Mongolia, Siberia, Western Russia, Ukraine, Transbaikalia, Altai Republic, Kazakhstan, Kyrgistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. The situation for the Saker west of the Altai is not very good, but further east they are doing very well. The supply of captive-bred birds is gradually flooding the market for wild Sakers.

Our filming progressed well, with about 30 hours of film in the can. Some fly-on-the-wall shots of Saker nests using miniature cameras are nice. We will be using some of the material in the Raptor Management Series. Next year our efforts will be concentrated on western China and

the Altai Republic and Mongolaltai.

Now we're on our way back to UK. Aeroflot has improved in recent years. You don't have to bring sandwiches and they don't clap any more if you land safely. We take the first of the falcons out from the moult tomorrow, ready for hawking in two weeks time.



Kicking up a dust.



# Hawk Board Open Meeting

## October 21st 2000.

Hawk Board members attending: Jim Chick, Jemima Parry-Jones, Nick Fox, Richard Hill, Bill Pearson, Anne Beckett-Bradshaw, Geoff Dalton, John Hill, Vin Flemming, Tony Crosswell, John Fairclough, Gordon Mellor, John Hounslow DETR, Andrew Knowles Brown, Martin Jones

Apologies from: Iain Timmins, Sue Dewar, Carol Scott

### Opening introduction

The meeting opened with an Introduction by Jim Chick, the Hawk Board Chair. He told everyone that the symposium run previously by the HB had been changed for the year 2000 to have an open meeting of the Hawk Board. This was to give people the chance to see how the HB worked at a meeting and give a few pertinent presentations, plus have a question and answer sessions.

He firstly made a presentation of a watch to Derek Starkie for his long service to the Hawk Board and falconry in general.

Everyone then introduced themselves to the people who were in the audience.

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising from the meeting:

Mention was made on the comment that the club membership figures seemed to stay pretty static, although this was not usually the case, and should we check up a little more. Andrew pointed out that he would like it noted that the Scottish Falconry Club were very careful on the numbers of club members being correct when paying the HB.

TC asked if David Morgan had been contacted re CITES - no, not as yet.  
Action JC

JPJ had written to Raptor Rescue to apologise as instructed at the last meeting

It appears that IT had not yet written to the Shropshire Hawk Club about affiliating  
Action JC

### RSPCA Amendments

Terry Large was unavoidably late and so the next item on the agenda was the amendments to the Cruelty to Animals Act. This was discussed in detail, as the amendment will allow courts to detail NGO's to confiscate livestock from commercial premises where a cruelty case is in process. This potential amendment could directly affect raptor and owl keeper, kennels, stables and so on. There was long debate on this topic, partly because we only found out about the amendment late in the day and partly because the amendment is very acceptable to all parties and by pushing for amendments we could stop the amendment from going through. So there was the fact that this could be a bad thing as we could be seen to

be the bad guys. However if MAFF was not prepared to help with a needed amendment to define commercial premises, it looked like we might have to join others in pushing for an amendment. JH said that he felt that Commercial was liable to be defined in the Glossary. A subcommittee was put together to check on the Regulatory Impacts Assessment document and the Certificate of Compliance, and liaise with the group from the CA who is working on the amendment. It was suggested that we should write to MAFF for a written guarantee as to our input on written guidelines and a possible approved list of NGO's. There were questions as to whether or not we should have a list of people who would be suitable for taking confiscated birds, this was a tricky question which the subcommittee would also look at. The committee would consist of Anne Beckett - Bradshaw who is going to liaise with I Timmins, R Hill, Gordon Mellor and JPJ. Much would have to be done through email and contact with Mark Hinge of the Countryside Alliance. Richard Burge added that a similar problem came up on the Rights of Way Bill and that NGO's were removed from policing the Bill. This should be done with this amendment.

Action ABB to contact the Subcommittee through email, First Contact CA to see if MAFF have replied.

### Campaign for Falconry

Campaign for Falconry. By this time Terry Large had managed to get to the meeting. It was announced that Marie-Louise Lachallas had retired as Chair due to pressure of work. Terry Large took over as Chair by agreement of the CFF, the Hawk Board and the Countryside Alliance, so everyone was happy. Terry stood up and reiterated what he felt was the Aims and Objectives of the CFF it was started solely to help raise funds for the Hawk Board for the work that it does, he gave the example of sending TC to CITES Standing Committee. Also probably more importantly to fund the HB Co-ordinator along with the CA and to make sure that the HB through the CFF and itself could fund the HB Co-ordinator without the assistance of the CA within three years of the start of the CFF - that had been achieved.

He asked to have a potential budget from the HB as to possible costs in the coming year, in travel, 50% of the Co-ordinator fees and so on. He also wanted to have some finances in reserve as emergency funds.

He said that Fund raising was the CFF first priority and second can PR for the HB and all the work it does. So many people have misconceptions of the HB and what it does. But he also stated that all PR material must be cleared by HB before use. The Shooting Times wants to run an article on the CFF and the HB.

Terry also stated that he felt there had been a breakdown of communication between HB, CFF and the CA, which needed to be redressed very quickly - all agreed on this. He finished by stressing that the CFF is the fund raising and PR arm of the HB but that HB is the body dealing with problems, policy and politics.

NF pointed out that we needed a clear line of command and asked if Terry would be a full member of the HB - he was assured on this point that indeed Terry would be.

JC mentioned that at the recent CFF meeting the CFF had discussed communication and both parties had said that it was vital that ALL correspondence must be copied to CFF Chair and Vice Chair and HB Chair and Vice Chair. Again all present agreed.

It was minuted by the meeting who were high in the praise of all she had done to get the CFF to the position it was, that we are all very grateful to Marie Louis Lachellas for the enormous work she put in to the starting and running of the CFF.

Action JC to give CFF HB known budget for 2000-2001. Both Chairs to make sure that correspondence is passed to all listed. Please make sure you have email group addresses up to date.

### RSPCA Amendment Update

At this point Richard Burge who had been on the phone to Mark Hinge was able to report that one of the problems with the amendment to the Cruelty to Animals Act, and the reason that we all got caught rather short was that the initial Bill put forward in January was not a problem. It was only when the Bill came forward that the content had changed.

The meeting six weeks ago with MAFF, HB, CA the Welsh Office and the Federation of Zoos, had focused on classification of the term commercial. It was pointed out that other Acts defined and covered commercial premises and so these should be taken into consideration. MAFF did not agree. RB said that the CA at the meeting had the impression that MAFF half expected the Bill to fail.

It was decided that if MAFF done come back with a Government Amendment to the Amendment to clarify the definition of commercial, we have to decide to put forward our own amendment as the government has failed to do so. This should be a group effort involving the CA, Falconers and the Federation of Zoos if possible.

Action - Subcommittee to contact Nick Jackson - director of Federation of Zoos.

### Fiscal Study

As there was still time before the first speaker giving a presentation we moved onto Gordon Mellor who was reporting on the Fiscal Survey. He gave the background of the study being the need identified by the HB for good up to date information on the financial side of falconry and raptor keeping - what funds it brought to the country from outside, from within, how many people made a living in the field and so on.

He originally got quotes from Academia of £15k - £20k, he then discussed with his own college the idea of doing the study using his facility and knowledge of the field and students to assist. He stated that ALL information was totally confidential and indeed all the information sent in had now been put into the survey just as figures and the original information had been shredded.

He thanked DETR, Honeybrook Farm, the Falconry Club Secretaries, the Independent Bird Register, the CFF and all those who had been kind enough to fill in the survey forms.

They did a sample phone survey of 5000 ran-

dom numbers which should have brought up a few people who either kept birds of prey, or knew someone who did - none did!!

Out 14500 survey forms sent out 6422 were returned, 213 were blank!! The percentage of response was 44% which is good, however in a show of hands many of the audience had received more than one form, so the percentage was probably even better than that.

In the interests of these minutes not getting to book proportions I am not going to include figures of the survey. The HB members all have a copy of this as a document on email, if you would like a copy please contact either the Chair or your representative.

Gordon ended up by saying that the main problem with the survey is that it did not get to the many people who are not members of clubs or groups, or known to anyone. And really it is important to be able to get to these people for many reasons.

The Hawk Board thanked Gordon for the tremendous amount of work that he did on this study.

### **Lunch**

As it was now nearly time for Lunch the meeting took a break for the buffet which had been laid on by the Little Barrow Hotel and very good it was too.

### **Robert Kenward - IAF**

After Lunch there was a presentation on IAF and the work that it does.

This was introduced by Tony Crosswell the secretary of IAF, who apologised that the president of IAF had just resigned and so the two people from Europe who had been supposed to come were unable to do so. However Robert Kenward who was scientific advisor to IAF would speak on the group instead. He also talked about the up and coming elections for IAF to be held at the next meeting which was at the NAFA meeting in the US in November. Robert gave a short history of IAF, its starting point with Mavrogodato, how Christian de Coune carried on representing IAF alone for years. He then mentioned the excellent change in direction, when NAFA came back on board and the HB was allowed to become affiliated to the IAF advisory committee, this seat is a named person who happens to be Martin Jones at the time of writing. Following the changes and reshuffle, IAF membership doubled to 28 countries represented and 8 - 10 thousand falconers, which was impressive. IAF covers a broad Church with very differing sort of falconry organisations. Some very broad like the HB, some much more defined falconry clubs, because of the diversity there were still some tensions within the group

The structure has changed with two Vice Presidents one Old World and one New World. The President is advised by the advisory committee and the ultimate arbiter is the Council which is made up of one member from each member club from Belgium France, Italy, the UK and the US.

He mentioned some of the work that is done, such as going to the Berne Convention meeting and dealing with falconry related topics there, such as introduction of exotic species and hybrids for example. They would also be dealing with other tensions such as Middle Eastern falconry and Across Europe Regulations that affect falconry.

He pointed out that in the past falconry was looked upon with feelings of distaste, but over the years IAF and other groups have managed to get management authorities to look very much more kindly at falconers and falconry and realise they have a place and a valuable contribution to make.

Tony stressed the IAF is the voice of International Falconry, not there to set standards or make judgements.

### **Hawk Board Co-ordinator**

After this paper the business returned to the HB Open Meeting agenda moving onto the Hawk Board Co-ordinator job.

At the last meeting a sub committee had met at NBPC to discuss and agree the job description of the co-ordinator. The meeting did this and a Job Description had been circulated to the HB members prior to the meeting. They agreed the description and the advert and JPJ said the ad would be placed in the next edition of Cage and Aviary Birds. In fact it will come out on Oct 30th with CV's to be sent to NBPC as the postal address. These will be sent onto the Chair and Interviews will take place in December.

### **The Website**

The Website which had been a Co-ordinator responsibility was to be taken over by a Webmaster. John Leith, who runs NBPC Website has offered to run the HB Website free. However we badly need information to set this up. So requests were made for information from Derek Starkie - a history, plus a second view from JC. All affiliated club reps were asked to send information. Also Martin Jones and Nick Fox. IT to send the summaries that he has brought to HB meetings of all the work done since he started. This is all to be sent as Word Documents to JPJ Please

Action ALL HB to Send Information for Website to JPJ ASAP

### **Speaker - CA**

Richard Burge - Director of the Countryside Alliance then gave a talk to the assembled group. Firstly he apologised for a break down in communication between the Hawk Board and the CA and said that he would make sure the lines of communication were better understood by all. He felt that it was not a purposely achieved lack, but just lack of attention at a time when everyone was busy, but that that was not an excuse.

He said don't worry about criticism aimed at the Hawk Board, that you can never please everyone all of the time and that the way to treat attacks is to listen, judge the validity of the criticism and act if needs be.

He welcomed Terry Large as the new Chair of the CFF and said that as the world changes, we have to change with it. He felt that the CA has one purpose and that was to find the common ground between countryside and rural issues, and support those and campaign for them. He felt it is not possible for one group to campaign an issue, run them and deal with the politics. That the CA was there as an umbrella group - who 'Knew a man who does'.

He said it was important to be able to pick out the political issues that might affect falconry and the keeping of birds of prey in general, but that where politics and policy was concerned he felt the HB were the group to deal with

them.

However the politicking that is achieved in the House of Common and Lords is the job of the Ca with Back up from the knowledgeable groups within the CA. Ca has excellent contacts with good people on the ground in Brussels and the EU in general.

Information and Education is vital to the CA. The Grass Routes email is an activist group and they are now setting up the Rural Net, which will keep all parishes in touch with the CA and one another, dealing with all issues to do with the countryside including hunting, falconry, the other field sports, but not limited to those. It was aimed to have someone in all 17000 parishes by the end of 2001.

The second area which interested Richard in his job as Director of the CA is the need to address and get the interest of new, young people in country issues, and not just as spectators, but participants. At this time the only increase in youngsters in a field sport is hunting with hounds, on horseback. The CA wants to be able to push youngsters interested to the right people in Hawking.

This does lead to a little of a dilemma in falconry as we are often discouraging people from starting too young as they often don't have the dedication or time to care for a bird and may lose interest, which is to the detriment of the bird.

There were a couple of questions, which were answered and the HB thanked Richard for coming.

### **Hawk Board Elections**

There was then a quick discussion on the Hawk Board Elections next year and how we could get new blood interested in coming on and learning the ropes so the older members of the HB could retire gracefully and without worry. Shadowing was mentioned and discussed with some for and some worried that you then limited the choice to the people who had been shadowing, which seemed hardly fair. It was suggested that a couple of open places for observing should be offered for most HB meetings. It was decided to put this topic on the next agenda.

Action - IT to put on next agenda - Dec 20th Meeting

### **AOB**

Nick Fox asked what was happening about emails being collected by the HB and being answered, this brought some heated and interesting discussion. The upshot of it was that although a number of members of the HB do not subscribe to any of the falconry email groups, JPJ offered to answer complaints and queries CONCERNING the HB (only) until the Website is up and running. However members who are subscribers to these rings will have to forward the relevant queries to jppj@nbpc.demon.co.uk as she does not want to have all the irrelevant stuff coming in as well. Action - All UK falconry subscribers to pass on emails to JPJ who will expedite if she can

Tony Crosswell asked John Hounslow of DETR a number of questions, he replied as follows:

On the question of consultation Mr Hounslow explained that he did not necessarily view consultation as agreement. It was quite open to the Department to take a contrary view to the

Hawk Board and to present that view to the Minister. What should be paramount however, in any consultation exercise, is that the Hawk Board must have confidence that :-

\* The Department approach the Hawk Board and allow them the opportunity to comment on proposals at an early stage. i.e. in sufficient time to allow changes to the proposals before final submission to the Minister.

\* Should there still be areas of disagreement after consultation that DETR officials present those disagreements in a fair and open way to Ministers and properly reflect who and what the Hawk Board represents i.e. that it is not passed off as "one" objection.

It was obvious from discussion that the Hawk Board did not feel that these principles had been adhered to in previous consultations and Mr Hounslow apologised that this impression had been given. He would do his best to ensure that the above principles were properly adhered to in future.

On the specific questions regarding fees Mr Hounslow confirmed that it was still the intention of the Department to proceed with their

proposals and that he anticipated a Statutory Instrument being placed in the House in time for the fee proposals to come into effect by Jan 2001. He undertook to write to certain individuals about their specific problems and copy that correspondence to the Committee. Mr Hounslow accepted that the "20% rule" did involve an element of rough justice and could not be defended on the grounds of it being cheaper to process applications for low price specimens. It would therefore involve an element of cross subsidy.

Mr Hounslow informed members of the Hawk Board that he had taken over responsibility for the Bird Registration Review from Bob Ford. The first question that would need to be resolved was whether the review should extend wider than a domestic review of our own bird registration legislation and include proposals for an EU wide review of registration controls. He undertook to prepare a paper for the December meeting of the Hawk Board.

Finally Mr Hounslow agreed to host the meeting of the Hawk Board at Tollgate House, Bristol scheduled for Wednesday 20 December.

As a footnote to this, JPJ had a meeting as Zoo Forum Chair recently with DETR and as a part of the discussions was assured that new rulings now means that ALL government departments have to consult with User groups before recommendations go before the Secretary of State. I.E. outside users, such as falconers and raptor keepers - including owls, get the chance to have some input on the Internal Consultation Papers. This is new and very good news for everyone. Can I stress here to anyone that is not a member of a club or in contact with bodies such as the HB - unless DETR or HB know who and where you are - you don't have a voice so you don't get asked - the ball is in your court.

There was sadly only a very little time left for questions from the floor, a few were taken, but it is to be hoped that those who came to see 'what the HB does' realised that we get through an immense amount of work in a meeting. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day and find it valuable.

## Reminiscences of Rook Hawking

### Jim Chick

It is rather more years ago than I care to remember since I first witnessed rook hawking on Salisbury Plain. The falcon was a passage peregrine and the flight, which was very workman like and not particularly spectacular, etched itself indelibly on my mind. It is probably true to say that flying rooks has always been a difficult and risky business, one of the reasons for the demise of the Old Hawking Club in 1927, was that some of the members felt that the problems had become almost insurmountable.

Two weeks ago I received Sophie, a gift from a good friend, Sophie is an eyass peregrine falcon. She has made good progress and is sitting quietly in the sun having taken her morning bath. This coming week I expect her to fly free and soon she will join the rest of the team for it is important to enter young rook hawks quickly while the natural urge to chase is still strong. At this stage the eyass is able to accept the inevitable disappointments which occur, much more readily than later in their lives.

Rook hawking has always held a fascination, the endless variety of flights compared with the much more stereotyped style of game hawking and the degree of difficulty and risk appeal to me.

The Salisbury Plain still offers perhaps the best opportunity in the south of England to practise the most traditional form of spring rook hawking. For this type of flight in open country the peregrine falcon is ideal, she has the necessary ability to make into the strong headwinds we always experience on the Plain in springtime. This is a practical aspect particular to this branch of the sport and one which is often overlooked when accessing a species or selecting a bird, it is vital that the falcon should be able to make better progress into a strong wind

than the intended quarry. This simple principal gives the falconer some measure of control over the progression of the flight and eventually the rook will have to turn downwind to evade the falcon. Provided the original slip was into the wind the result should bring both hawk and quarry back toward the falconer and the field. Traditional rook hawking relies heavily on this principal and it is fundamental to the success of the whole venture.

Given the difficulties and problems that were being voiced in the 1920s what chance then has the modern falconer of success against such odds? Well, its not all bad, we have now got the advantage of telemetry systems which dramatically reduce the risk of permanently losing your falcon and landrovers which unlike horses generally remain where you leave them whilst you lift your falcon from her kill. For many falconers however, the chance to try their birds at the traditional flight is out of the question and they will have to settle for something more modest if living in close country. Some find that the hybrid falcon or tiercel is better suited to this style of hunting. The short sharp dash in fields surrounded with hedgerows is unlikely to produce any classic flights nevertheless, if that is all that is available to you it can still be rewarding and account for a good score of crows. Most hybrids, unlike peregrines will be happy to continue the flight

into the hedgerow or cover and this tenacity gives them and edge in this situation, although I have yet to see a hybrid that outperforms a peregrine in the traditional style.

To successfully fly corvids demands a far greater knowledge of your flying ground and the surrounding countryside than is needed for game hawking, your falcon may go a very long way and having put the intended rook into some distant cover may start at yet another over your horizon. Being able to anticipate the likely direction that the flight might take and knowledge of the rookeries in the locality, is a great advantage which comes with experience gained over successive seasons.

If you do have the chance to try this sport with it's elusive and worthy quarry, I can thoroughly recommend it and even if that is not possible, try to get an invite to witness the thrills, I promise you won't regret it.



*Sophie - on a rook.*

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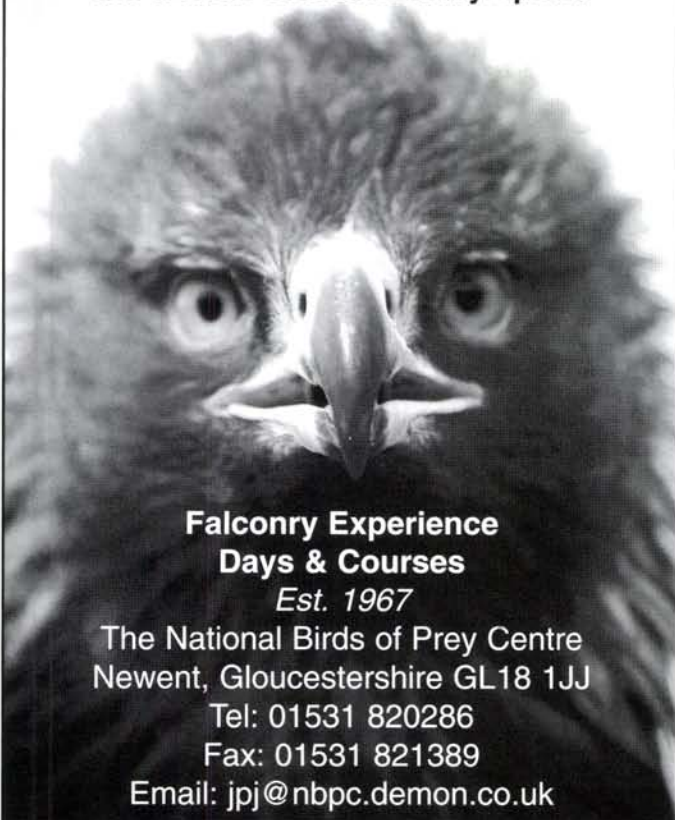
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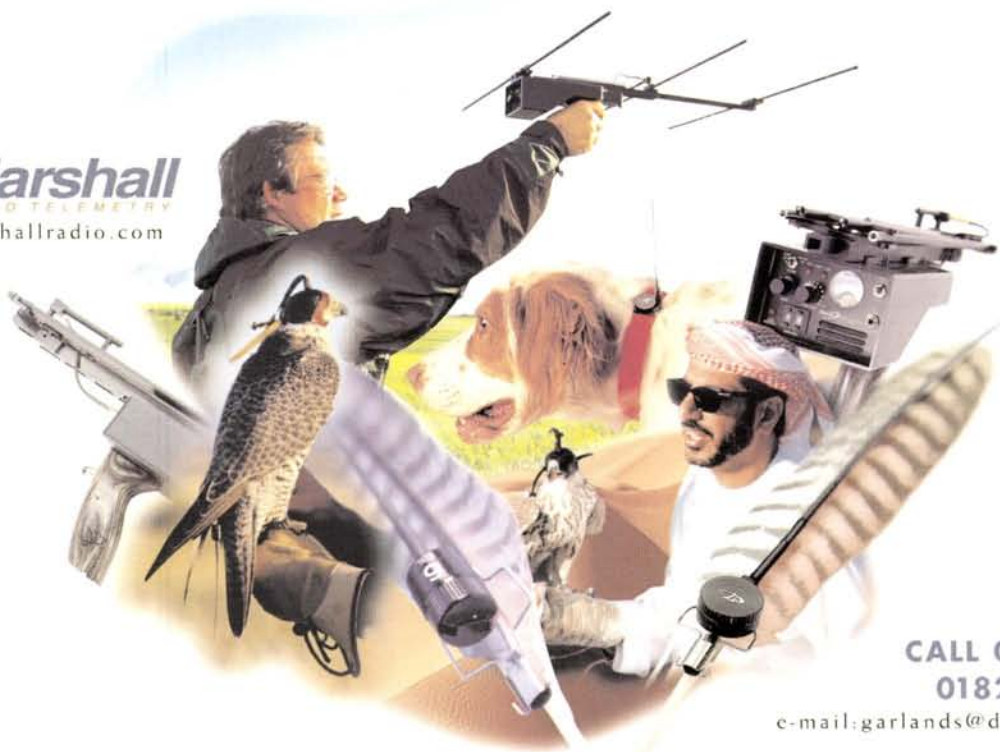
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