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The **Falcons**
& Raptor Conservation Magazine



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Celebrations

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Falconiformes

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editorial

Falconers

news and products

Send all your news and product information to peter.eldrett@tiscali.co.uk

Hunting with Harris Hawks



bob dalton



Hunting with Harris Hawks

Bob Dalton

Reviewed by Diana Durman-Walters

The author needs little introduction as one of our most prolific and well known media writers in modern times, commenting on all aspects of

hawking and hawk ownership. There are 14 chapters dealing with all the necessary information that the falconer will need to ensure he has a very detailed and grounded understanding of the type of hawk he/she is about start with. The authors very matter of fact approach is evident throughout and this method is just what is required when trying to absorb all the various pitfalls and positive points that accompany the day to day handling and training. The Harris Hawk may seem to the onlooker to be a trouble-free hawk, but as the chapters unfold it shows the versatility and intelligence of them and how quickly things can go wrong simply by not knowing what you could have done.

hawking and hawk ownership.

I have had the pleasure of watching the book take shape, whilst proof reading the chapters then reviewing the finished product.

This new and exciting publication is not just another book on the Harris Hawk. It is filled with the wealth of experience that has been gleaned and put into practice over the past 35 years.

Every page is alive with full colour photography illustrating the text and is a handsome volume that will be a must for falconers who are new to Harris Hawks or those who would like a lot more detail about ownership of this versatile hawk.

The writer has spent many years of pleasurable observation and involvement with these hawks in their natural environment and has been fortunate to have spent time trapping and subsequently hawking with them in very different terrain and at different quarry. Such experiences give a qualified edge to the chapters that follow as they are filled with sound hawk keeping principles and good hawking practice.

My particular preference is the chapter on hunting which gives the reader a great deal of opportunity to see the various adaptations and styles of hawking which can be achieved with these hawks. The use of dogs plays a major part in the hawking partnership which is a refreshing reminder that our days spent out in the field can be so much more productive with the use of dogs. Although Harris Hawks are quick to find fault with having a dog around them the author shows that the hawks adapt very quickly once they can see the benefit of a very handy hunting companion, sometimes even to the point of making the falconer redundant.

Hunting With Harris Hawks has put into plain and simple language the layout for producing good management in the mews and quality hawking in the field and the rewards this will bring. This book is to be highly recommended as it is written with authority for everyone who owns and flies a Harris Hawk.

ISBN 1-874110-32-8

Musings of an Afghan Falconer

Reviewed by Peter Eldrett

Sirdar Mohamed Osman

Let me start by saying how much I enjoyed reading this book. It not only covers the individual species that are found in Afghanistan but also gives a brief insight to the country, its falconers and the different regions where various species of birds can be found. This book is a follow-on from Osman's previous publication *Falconry in the Land of the Sun: the Memoirs of an Afghan Falconer*. Each edition of this new title has been individually numbered including the paperback reviewed.

Each chapter is preceded by quotes from various journals throughout the history of falconry by eminent falconers and writers from ages past, describing the birds and the country that are found within Afghanistan.

The book is split into four main sections starting with Gulab Chashim – The Yellow-Eyed division. This covers species such as Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Serpant Eagle and an excellent chapter on the Sparrowhawk. Kites, Harriers and Eagle Owl are also covered in detail as well as quarry that the birds are flown to such as Quail, Hoobara and even other raptors.

The second section, Sayar Chashim: The Dark-eyed division, covers Gyrfalcon, Laggar Falcon, Peregrine with an excellent chapter on the Saker falcon. Again, various quarry flown at are described in detail and the chapter concerning the Saker falcon flying at Antelope (yes, I did say Antelope). You will have to read it and admire the description that has been penned by the author.

Section three titled Practical and Historical, is taken up by describing the various ways a bird used by falconers is cared for when it gets an injury or illness sets in and the emphasis is very much put forward on homeopathic treatments for the birds. The chapter is broken up into paragraphs where both injury and treatments are described. Afghans do not have the luxury of taking their injured bird to the vet, as we do, but rely on medicine and knowledge handed down by generations of falconers. Other subjects covered are bells, history and the foundation of falconry in Afghanistan and a there's a chapter on what clothing the Afghans wear.

The final section (Appendices) is taken up with spices and oils used in treating sick birds and explains how to use items such as Garlic, Cloves, Linseed and Turmeric. There is also a chapter on general ornithology, gamebirds and quarry found in the different regions of Afghanistan including Cranes, Storks, Sandpipers and Curlew.

The book contains black and white illustrations as well as tipped-in plates, one in colour, and drawings by Mark Upton and Capt. Robert A. Widmeier. Published by The Eyr Press, this is a book that I can highly recommend and one should be on any falconers library shelf, well worth buying. To get a copy I would suggest that you visit the Coch-Y-Bonddu Books website www.anglebooks.com



This editorial I'm going to get on my hobby horse: Earlier this year I attended a game fair where a well respected professional was exhibiting his birds of prey and giving displays. There was also a stand at this event which consisted of a 3m x 3m gazebo under which were approximately eight birds, mainly owls. One of these, a juvenile European Eagle Owl, was tethered to a log at the front of the stand. Plastic netting was stretched across the front of the stand, presumably to keep the public away from the birds and the birds away from the public – but this was not so. I saw the owl flying over the netting towards the onlooking public, coming to a halt at the end of its leash and landing on the ground outside the stand. At the time, there was only one lady manning the stand and she proceeded to unceremoniously drag the bird back onto its perch, was not wearing a glove and seemed to find the whole incident vaguely amusing. How lucky that a small child, dog or indeed any member of the public was not standing any nearer. Later, on closer inspection of the stand, I found to my dismay that none of the birds had access to water, they were far too close to each other, far too close to the public, had no identification labels to say what species they were and one bird, a barn owl, was tied to the back of a canvas chair. Did I question any of this? You bet I did. When I spoke to the gentleman who was now on the stand, he said the birds did have access to water (but none was apparent). I asked if he let members of the public stroke (or more correctly wipe their hands on) his birds, to which he replied in the affirmative and he had been doing this for 12 years. My gripe is this; do we want to see birds kept and displayed in such a manner? Are the people involved in such an activity doing so for the right reasons? Are they doing it to educate people or to make a fast buck? I leave it up to you to decide. If you do see anyone displaying birds at shows or, somewhere where it is becoming increasingly prevalent, outside shopping centres, may I suggest you have a word with the people involved. Oh, and yes, I did do something about the stand mentioned earlier; I had a word with the organiser's office. I shall wait for next year's event with interest to see whether this particular stand is re-booked. There you go, I'll get off my hobby horse now – until the next time. In the meantime, have a good read!



editorial

Letters to the editor

Dear Sir

I am writing to express my disappointment after attending the recent Falconers Fair at Chetwynd Park. I have been attending the annual Falconers Fair for several years now, from Althorp, to Offchurch and now to its latest venue. Over the years, work permitting, I have endeavoured to attend for both days in order to get the most out of the show. However, for the last couple of years I have questioned the benefits of this and, indeed, this year I decided there was no point in attending for the second day and returned home early.

One reason for this was the entry price – the main attraction of the fair is the number of trade stands and I think it counter-productive to charge a high entry price. This must now put many people off attending at all, particularly the general public.

With the notable exception of the Falconiformes tent, this year's fair was very disappointing – and this is a view which was shared unanimously by everyone I talked to. The number of trade stands was definitely less and the overall size of the fair was much smaller. Also, I feel sorry for any of the general public who came along expecting a Country Fair – they surely must have been very disappointed.

The demonstrations, it has to be said, were a great improvement on last year but I do still feel there is room for more improvement. I know it must be a thankless task to perform at the fair with so many "professional critics" in attendance but there must be people who would be only too pleased to be asked.

I am sure that all the above contributed to the attendance which, from my untrained eye, was definitely down on previous years. Speaking to friends, this was also true on the second day. Our view is that the time is now right for a change of venue and, possibly, change of date. It has always been argued that the timing of the fair is bad for breeders and professional falconers, so perhaps now would be a good time to switch it to a more convenient slot in the calendar so that they could attend.

Also, a change of venue would definitely attract new people and this could only be for the long-term good of the fair. Such changes would breathe new life into what has now become a rather "tired" affair.

I know it is all too easy to criticise and do appreciate that it is not easy to organise an event of this kind. However, I also feel that organisers should be made aware of the views of their target audience.

I have spoken to fellow falconers and, without exception, they share my view that a serious "shake up" is required if the Falconers Fair is to continue long-term. We do hope that some changes will be made.

Ian Robertson, North Devon

Dear Peter

In the past five years since the Wessex Bird of Prey Rescue was formed we have had treated and released back into their natural environment over 390 wild Raptors. We have always had a very good reputation with everybody we have dealt with and our name spread fast with Veterinaries all over the counties of Dorset and Hants.

A few years ago another group started a rescue in Dorset using a name very similar to ourselves. We have had to date 127 complaints ranging from council officials to respected Falconers about the condition of the birds on display at various country shows all over the country. We did not show our birds at any of these events. After investigation we found that it was the other similarly named organisation that had attended these shows and even the show organizers were under the impression it was us. We only realized this when applying to attend shows to be told we were not welcome due to condition of the birds and furniture.

Every penny we raise at shows goes directly to injured Raptors we pay no wages or expenses and the volunteer Falconers all give their time freely, we display our birds under the strict guidelines set out by the Hawk Board. We do not allow members of the public to handle the birds or charge for photographs of a bird being held (a particular pet hate of mine) the birds are well spaced , under cover with shade and fresh water available at all times. The block and bow perches are clean and regularly sprayed.

I for one anticipate the time when compulsory regulation by a knowledgeable body will be most welcome. Any person that owns a Raptor has nothing to fear from this if they care about their birds.

Its far to easy to set up as a rescue and lets face it you can get six to eight show birds for under a thousand pounds and 'collect for injured birds' a nice little earner if you have no morals or scruples which I am afraid is happening, unless you are a registered charity then the only person to complain to is the local Trading Standards. We are all getting tarred with the same brush and unless we tighten up I can foresee a time when Falconry will once again come under the eye of animal rights / anti-hunt campaigners. I have no opposition to bona fide display teams whom over the past five years I have met and enjoyed their company but displays of Raptors under improper conditions does Falconry more harm than good and bad publicity is easier to print that good. **Jonathan Hall, Wessex Bird of Prey Rescue**



askchitty

Do you have any veterinary questions relating to your bird? If so, send them to the editor (see address on page four) and they will be passed on to John Chitty - BVetMed CertZooMed CBiol MIBiol MRCVS

Will harm come to a bird if using household disinfectant as opposed to the commercial products that are available such as F10 or Virkon.

Many myths exist about different disinfectant compounds and failure to understand how disinfectants work has often lead to apparent failure of the compound and the appearance of disease, or to direct harm to the bird.

Essentially, commercial and household disinfectants can be very similar – it is their use in terms of concentration and application that may vary. So, how can a disinfectant harm the bird?

Direct harm

If used at too high a concentration and left in place (ie. not washed away) after application, the bird can receive caustic burns to skin or to the mouth/gut if accidentally ingested. Some compounds give off gas, eg. hypochlorite gives off chlorine, so using strong concentrations in enclosed spaces with the bird present may give rise to direct toxicity. It should also be considered that some compounds may damage aviary materials and the damaged components may affect the bird.

Failure to work

Ineffective disinfection will not remove the target disease-forming organisms – this is probably the major cause for concern.

Table1.

Resistance to Disinfection	Organism	Acids	Alcohols	Aldehydes	Biguanides	Chlorines	Iodine	Quaternary Ammonium
Susceptible	Mycoplasma	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
	Gram positive bacteria	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
	Gram negative bacteria	++	++	++	+	++	+	+
	Enveloped viruses	+	+	++	+/-	++	+	+/-
Resistant	Chlamydia	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	-
	Fungal spores	+/-	+/-	+	+	+	+	+/-
	Non-enveloped viruses	+/-	-	+	-	+	+/-	-
Very Resistant	Mycobacterium (TB)	-	+	+	-	+	+	-
	Coccidial oocysts	-	-	-	-	-	+/-	-

Key: - = no activity +/- = limited activity + = effective ++ = very effective

When using a disinfectant properly, the following must be borne in mind:

1. What does it kill? Not all disinfectants kill all bugs. This information must be taken into account when you are considering what you want to kill! **Table 1** shows some of the activity of different types of micro-organisms. So, a clean with spirit will be pretty effective against many bacteria but will not have much effect against Aspergillus spores.

Resistance to disinfection

As can be seen in Table 1 different organisms are sensitive to different compounds. This is partly due to the method of action of the disinfection and partly due to differences in the structure of the organism to allow the chemical to kill it. Therefore, as well as needing to consider which agent to use you must also consider the concentration of disinfectant to use and the contact time, ie. the amount of time the disinfectant must contact the bug to kill it. These factors vary widely between organisms, agents and formulations so you must read the information on the packet before deciding on the dilution of disinfectant and the amount of time before you wash it away. Organisms can become resistant to disinfectants if:

- You do not vary the compound that is being used
- They are exposed to disinfectants at sub-lethal doses and/or for inadequate periods of time.

Inactivation of the disinfectant

Many of the agents may be de-activated by various factors:

- Sunlight
- Acid/ alkaline conditions
- Low temperature can make the agent less active
- Organic Matter; dirt, faeces, whatever you want to call it! This is the main reason (in my experience) that disinfectants 'fail'.

Unless you clean thoroughly first the disinfectant stands no chance! Often, I have seen conditions that have been thoroughly disinfected but are caked in 'organic material' and the bacteria are thriving!

Failure to penetrate

Materials such as wood or leather are, essentially impossible to thoroughly disinfect as the chemicals cannot penetrate adequately into all the cracks and crevices.

Methods such as fogging may aid penetration of wood especially if it has been sealed. Leather equipment (including gloves) should be discarded after an infectious illness and should never be transferred between birds if infection is suspected.

For general use, it doesn't often matter whether you use a 'general' or 'falconry' disinfectant. However, it is probably worth considering that compounds such as F10, Virkon and Trigene have been used extensively around birds so there is probably a greater safety margin for these, both in terms of toxicity and in terms of the organisms they kill.

Whenever you disinfect make sure that the bird is not present so the compounds will not contact it and that the disinfectant is thoroughly washed away at the end of its contact period.

Where there is a specific disease concern, eg. avian influenza, then all biosecurity measures should be targeted towards this. Specialist veterinary advice should be obtained regarding choice of compound and method of use.

Simple disinfection is no substitute for 'biosecurity' – if in doubt keep the bug out! Quarantine, food hygiene, and common sense are all vital in excluding disease from your birds – slushing around some disinfectant will not be totally protective.

The Wow Factor

For those that visited the Falconry Fair this year the stand that represented the Dutch company Falconiformes will have certainly made an impression – both in terms of sheer size and product range on offer. Visitors who take the time and trouble to visit the home base and breeding establishment in Holland will have this impression doubly imprinted on their minds. The sheer scale of the operation almost defies belief. Not that big necessarily means better. In fact all too often it can mean the exact reverse and the facilities suffer in terms of cleanliness and maintenance due to the large numbers of raptors needed to be attended to.

But Falconiformes sets and maintains very high standards indeed and all the raptors on their premises are looked after exceedingly well. I have had the pleasure of visiting the establishment four times in the last couple of months and have been shown around the entire site, including all the areas not open to the public. Nothing was out of bounds to me and I was free to look at whatever I wanted. The overall and lasting feeling I got was one of total commitment and dedication from the management and the staff alike.

The raptors housed at the site have very good aviaries, which are light and clean; they are fed top quality food and have the very best of veterinary attention on hand should it be required. The facilities really are of the very highest quality and the medical, incubation and brooder rooms reflect the fact that excellence, not cost, dictates the equipment that is purchased.

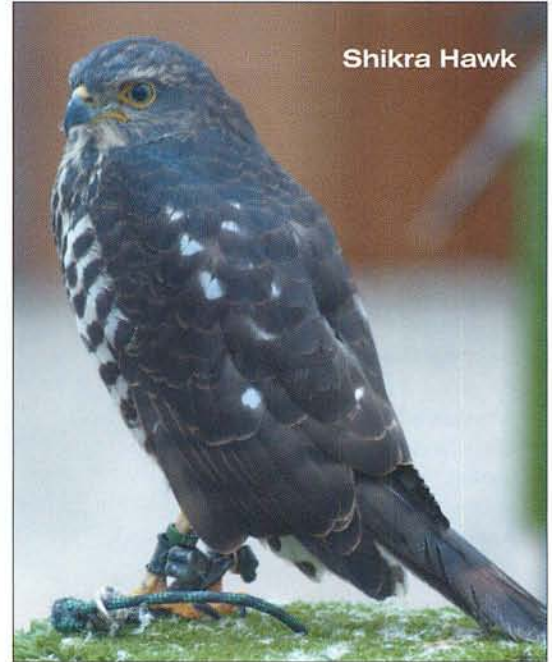
It is only when you are shown around the aviaries that are generally behind the scenes that you begin to

realise what a totally unique set up Falconiformes is. There are more than 350 breeding pairs made up of some 95 different species. As well as the naturally breeding pairs there are also many imprints that are used for artificial insemination and there are always an assortment of eagles, hawks, falcons, vultures and owls that are for sale. At any one time the establishment usually has in excess of 1000 birds on the premises.

The list of occupants of the breeding aviaries is truly mouth watering to any falconer or raptor enthusiast alike. The list of falcons is mind boggling and it would be quicker to list the falconry orientated falcons they don't have. The only gaps I can think of at the moment are Merlins and Black Shaheens, but no doubt these will be added in time. Just about everything else is there, ranging from Hobbies, Red Footed and Aplomado Falcons through to Prairies, Red Shaheens, Barbaries, Luggers and Gyr Falcons of all sizes and colours.

Eagles and hawks are equally well represented with 12 different species of eagle and some simply stunning hawks. These include the white Goshawks, African Goshawks, Chanting Goshawks and examples of the diminutive Shikra hawk. The selection of vultures is also highly impressive and the centre has already achieved some notable successes when it comes to breeding them.

For those that love Owls then Falconiformes must be as close to paradise as it is possible to get. The collection is truly comprehensive and even includes two species of Fishing Owls. The centre is enjoying tremendous results with its owl breeding programme and is justifiably proud of



what they are achieving. It must be remembered that the centre has only been established for three years this September and was started completely from scratch and the owner, Jan Wooning, has always been enthusiastic about wildlife in general and birds in particular. When he set up Falconiformes he employed the highly respected falconer and raptor breeder, Adriaan Koster, as manager. Under Adriaan's guiding hand the whole project is being taken forward in a measured and workman like way.

This year the centre will be holding a Falcon Fair from the 23 to 27 August. The fair is more a grand sale of raptors than a fair as we would tend to think of it, although there will be equipment and other raptor related items on sale there. But these will be the normal stock items from the shop that is on site and therefore the same as that which was on offer at the Falconiformes stand at the Falconers Fair here earlier in the year.

But it should be borne in mind that the centre is open to the public each Friday and Saturday from 10am till 5pm. The breeding aviaries are not generally for public viewing but the coffee area, equipment shop, raptor sales area and weathering areas are. The trip is well worth the effort and really couldn't be simpler. If you take the ferry or tunnel across the channel then Falconiformes is approximately three hours from Calais. If you cross to the Hook of Holland then the centre is less than 20 minutes away.



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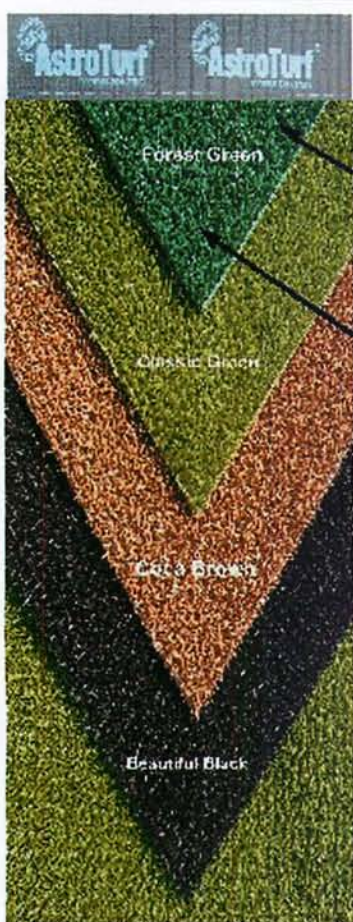
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Falcon Project Takes Off

The Falcons for Grapes Project has now successfully completed its first season in Marlborough, New

Zealand. The four man team, with the assistance of volunteers, surveyed old and new falcon sites in the Wairau, Waihopai and Awatere catchments. They have followed the fortunes of some of these sites since 1974. Signs of falcons were seen at 40 sites and of these 18 sites had pairs attempting to breed. But only 10 of these pairs successfully raised young and productivity was low.

Dr Nick Fox, Project Leader, said "Ground predators, such as cats, ferrets and possums, are still a major issue for our native falcon. To some extent they are managing to adapt by nesting in hollows on the bluffs and 46% of falcons did this. Of the 54% that nested on the ground, only 43% successfully reared young and averaged 0.7 chicks, whereas 100% of the cliff nesters succeeded and averaged 2.0 chicks. A noticeable exception was a successful ground-nesting pair on an island in the Sounds where all ground predators had been removed. Another problem this year has been the hot dry spring which seemed to knock back the first broods of the small birds such as yellow-hammers and chaffinches which the



New Zealand Falcon chicks

falcons prey on. As a result, many falcon pairs only succeeded in rearing one or two chicks. Very few had three chicks and none raised four. Of the chicks that survived, females (which are larger) outnumbered males 4.3 to one"

Now that predated occupied sites have been identified, the project is moving onto its winter schedule: erecting predator-proof nest barrels on bluffs or trees so that the falcons have a chance to nest off the ground. Land-owners or volunteers interested in supporting falcons in this way are welcome to contact the team.

Four young falcons have been reared in artificial nests in the vineyards in the western end of the Wairau wine region.

These have been flying now since early December and are monitored by radio-tracking.

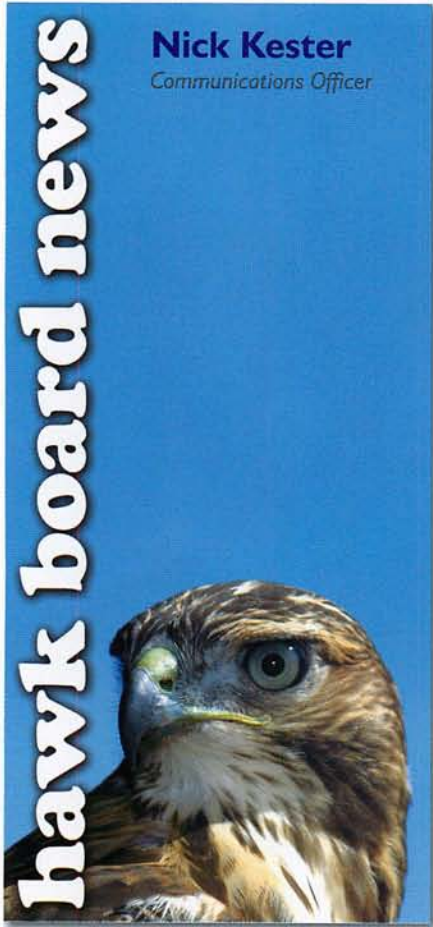
Colin Wynn, Project Manager, said "We feed the young falcons daily and they stay within about 2km of their release sites. They can fly flat out across the rows below the vines and are very playful. We are not encouraging them to hunt this year because our first priority is their survival and welfare. We have also seen wild falcons here with our youngsters. We tagged one wild youngster near Tuamarina but we have not had contact with him now since the end of December. About two thirds of the young falcons die in their first year, mainly through starvation, so we want to ensure that our birds have everything they need."

The project team would like to thank the many land-owners who have shown interest in the project and allowed their land to be surveyed. The vineyard owners too have been very supportive, one even providing a smoko room on wheels for the team doing 24/7 radio monitoring. Talks are now underway to enable local conservation volunteers and bird-enthusiasts to participate in the programme. A 25 minute film is being made of the project and should be available in a few months time.

For more information visit:
www.falconsforgrapes.org



In flight



interest from the many falconers who crowded the stands. The current Hawk Board newsletter (download it from www.hawkboard-cff.org.uk) explains how the award is structured and why new falconers should aim to obtain the qualification before buying a first hawk or falcon. Hawk Board co-ordinator, Mike Clowes said: "We distributed 2,000 newsletters amongst the club and trade stalls and were delighted when stand holders came begging for extra copies. The interest from visitors to our stand showed how positively people view our initiative and we look forward to future growth. Hopefully, the next generation of falconers will consider that obtaining an award is the normal and best route into falconry."

One of the requests made through the newsletter and various falconry magazines was for people to come forward to become assessors who would administer the award locally. Lantra Awards reported that calls were running at six a day immediately after the fair, which Derek Hartshorne from Lantra reported as being "exceptional".

Nick Fox and his team at International Wildlife Consultants, including Nick Kester, Diana Durman-Walters and Martyn Paterson, all intend to sit the Lantra Award at the end of June. They will be joined by Hawk Board chairman, Jim Chick. Nick Fox, who is

also HB vice-chairman, has made it clear that you cannot promote such a project without experiencing it. Nick Kester confessed to being somewhat nervous. "I sat my driving test over 40 years ago and I doubt I would pass it today, so I am checking all those bad habits that it is so easy to fall into before exposing myself to an external and probably very critical Lantra assessor."

Bird of Prey videos in DVD

Nick Fox's massively popular Bird of Prey Management Series of films was launched in DVD at the Falconry Fair. Covering all aspects of raptor keeping and captive breeding the 10 films provide foundation knowledge from basic training to nutrition and health care, much of which underpins the Hawk Board/Lantra award. The DVDs, which have a choice of English or Spanish soundtracks, are available through International Wildlife Consultants website (www.falcons.co.uk) and discounts are available for online buyers ordering full sets. Each film has an accompanying booklet providing more information. Nick Fox commented: "With falconry you never stop learning, and much of the basic knowledge can be gained from these books and films before you become hands on."

Hawk Board and Lantra Awards

Launched at the Falconry Fair on 30 April of this year, this first-ever falconry award attracted immediate

Yet more legislation...

The Animal Welfare Act has been passed but much of the detail will be included in a variety of codes of conduct yet to be agreed. Hot on this Act's heels we find a consultative document on the whole issue of animal transport all of which needs careful examination. Whilst it is unlikely that any of the clauses will directly affect the transport of birds of prey to and from hunting grounds, no one wants to be quizzed by the authorities and pulled up under a technicality. Once again the Hawk Board is giving it the once over and responding to government as needed.



Lantra launch. Left to right; Derek Hartshorne from LANTRA, Dr Nick Fox (Hawk Board, deputy chairman), Jim Chick (Hawk Board, chairman) and George Roach (founder British Hawking Association).

If you have areas of concern about falconry, remember this is your Hawk Board and you can raise issues with us by contacting me or any other member of the board. My E-mail is: nk.quattro@zetnet.co.uk.



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The Hawk Conservancy Trust hits the big 4-0



2006 sees the 40th anniversary of the then Weyhill Wildlife Park, and we thought that this would be a great opportunity to look back at the history of the park and some of the characters that have been here over the years.

The park's earliest days began when butcher's son Reg Smith took an interest in farming and purchased Sunnymead farm in Weyhill, Hampshire, in the early 1950s. The farmhouse already had an interesting history having been an army field hospital in the Boer War before being shipped back to its current position by an army major. It was lived in by a variety of people, the most notable being Colonel Barker DCM who was in fact a woman. (Details of the remarkable life of this person can be found in a book entitled *Colonel Barker's Monstrous Regiment*).

Reg had the dubious honour of being the youngest person in Andover to have a mortgage when he moved in, and was later joined by his wife Hilary who was the secretary of the Young Farmers' club he attended. They ran a mixed farm producing vegetables for a market stall in Andover to turkeys for Christmas, but with a young family of two boys, Martin and Ashley, it was often a struggle to survive. In order to supplement his income Reg also used to do interviews for local radio featuring characters from the local countryside that he had met. In his free time Reg had a great passion for wildlife, and often took in and rehabilitated injured wildlife; he then spoke about these animals on his radio programmes. His fame started to spread and he was asked to appear on television programmes, reaching the dizzy heights of *How and Blue Peter*. On the latter, a chance remark by the presenter inviting viewers to visit Reg and his animals at Sarson Farm led to over 600 people turning up at the farm the following weekend. Can you imagine 600 people turning up at your front door and the chaos this would cause? When this continued over the

following weeks the police became involved due to the traffic congestion on Sarson Lane, and a local constable suggested that rather than struggling to make a living at farming why didn't Reg think about farming the visitors.

Wildlife park formed

With that the seeds were sown, and in the spring of 1966 Weyhill Wildlife Park was formed. In order to fund the building of the first aviaries and facilities, Reg had to sell off some of his land, something he always regretted as he always said, "A man that has land has wealth". Things were very different in those days. The park was open farmland with no trees in sight. The entrance was through a shed and refreshments were served by Hilary through her kitchen window. The collection specialised in European wildlife and many of the early stock included

difficult animals that had been passed on from other collections. Everyone in the family had to help out, and much of the boys' childhood was spent doing donkey rides, or helping with the day to day work around the grounds. Still it did have its benefits like swimming with the seals, taking a baby brown bear for walks, and having a multitude of young animals living with them in the house. Although I don't think that Ashley's Grandmother ever recovered from the snake that was lost in the house and found several weeks later behind a packet of cornflakes. As time went on though the family became more disillusioned with what they called the "Ain't you got no elephants" brigade who no matter what you showed them always wanted to see something bigger and better.

In 1980, following a family meeting, it was decided to specialize in one species, birds of prey, and to give this three years; if it did not work out they would return to farming and move to the West Country. This was the start of the Hawk Conservancy, and Ashley started to take on a bigger role through his passion for raptors. Martin did not like the general public and had moved onto his other passion, books, by becoming an antiquarian book dealer, and became the family's third generation to run a stall on Andover market.



**Hilary
Smith**

The Hawk Conservancy in the early days



Early days

In the early days the park was a busy place to be with four flying displays a day. As numbers increased more facilities had to be provided. An old milking parlour that had also served as aviary space in the zoo days was converted into what is now Duffy's Coffee Shop. Funding was also found for two new buildings: the study centre and Gift Shop/reception. The latter also provided accommodation for many of the falconry staff that have worked here over the years. Over the years a tree-planting scheme was set up, and each year a new batch of trees was planted around the grounds, making them into the woodland setting they are today. Reg had become very influential in the zoo world and was instrumental in setting up some of the first zoo regulations that came into force in this country. He was also renowned for saying what he thought, and although loved for this by many visitors, many solicitors' and apologies letters were passed around. Many visitors enjoyed the special family feel that the Trust had then, and still continues to this day, and kept coming back to offer their services as volunteers. Both Reg and Hilary did not like taking admission fees from these people and in 1990 our membership scheme began and has continued to prosper ever since.

Sadly, Reg's health began to deteriorate, and over the years he began to take a back seat role in the running of the Conservancy, with Ashley then taking on a full time partnership role. Reg died in 1995 and is sadly missed by all those who had the fortune to know him. He had a great passion for the British Countryside and everything it, and enjoyed nothing more than sharing his love with anyone, especially young people, who also shared his passion. Just before his death the Conservancy had managed to buy back some of the original land that had been sold at the start of the zoo days, and as a tribute to Reg it was planted out as a chalkdownland wildflower meadow. This is now the setting for many of our release programmes and the background for our Valley of the Eagles display.

Time to change

The Conservancy began to grow in size, and it became

apparent that in order to survive it would need to change from a falconry centre into a visitor attraction providing entertainment for the whole family. Soon it became recognized not only by the tourist industry, but as a major influence in the world of conservation. Awards for both sectors began pouring in, and it became increasingly obvious that a base was needed for both this work and future research that the Conservancy wanted to carry out. So fundraising began to build the first purpose-built bird of prey hospital, with money being raised by donations, raffles and many ferret races. The hospital was officially opened by the Duke of Gloucester in July 2002, and it is now recognised as a centre of excellence throughout the country for its work with raptors. 2002 also saw the launch of the Hawk Conservancy Trust, a charitable organization to help raise funds for all the vital conservation and rehabilitation work the Conservancy was carrying out. The board of Trustees was originally made up of a dedicated band of members that had supported the Trust for many years, but who also had expertise in many other fields.

This board has grown over the years, but all the Trustees are dedicated to the ongoing and growing future of the Trust. In 2004 it became apparent the Trust had gone as far as it could being run by one man; there were just too many balls being juggled at one time. Therefore in order for the Conservancy to grow and continue into the future, it was decided to turn the whole of the Conservancy into a charitable trust. The family still own the land, which is leased to the trust to carry on its good work. The board of Trustees is responsible for deciding the future direction of the Trust and setting financial budgets, which are run on a day to day basis by the management team. The Trust is now making a name for itself on the international stage with its work in Africa, and with its Oriental White Backed Vulture programme.

The Trust can never rest on its laurels and must constantly grow and evolve in order to maintain its current status. With a committed band of Trustees, dedicated, enthusiastic staff and a loyal band of members who have supported us through thick and thin, we hope that we can go on to celebrate for many years into the future.



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A Scottish Field Meet



Ben and Cody

On a rather damp Friday afternoon 15 or so expectant falconers arrived safely in the village of Comrie, just outside Braco Castle Moor. We fed and watered our charges, secured them and then made our way to the local pub. Once suitably refreshed, we returned to base and readied the hawks for the next day.

Having spent the first year with my charge hunting alone, I felt it was time to branch out and perhaps attend a field meet or two. The first was less a meet and more of a meet-up for members of The Falconry and Hawking web-site. We arranged a traditional opening ceremony with a town crier, a fine talk from Martin Hollinshead, hood making display by Ben Long and raised a few hundred pounds for the Campaign for Falconry.

Two of the falconers attending graciously offered to fly their birds on the Friday and Saturday afternoons. Those who made the short drive from Shropshire into Wales witnessed some fantastic hunting from Pete Smith's Perlin and Grant Hagger's Merlin of the year. In fact, some members of the hawking party had the superlative pleasure of watching Grant's Merlin entered on quarry. One experienced member claimed that watching such a fine display was easily the highlight of his 30-odd years of hunting with birds of prey.

As the 2005 season began to open up properly, one of the moderating team suggested a less social field meet, one with hunting for all the members' hawks. The venue was to be Scotland and Adrian Hallgarth had graciously invited us to work his land with two different parties, one with pointers, the other without. As this was to be my first official meet I set about an intense fitness regime. Like the previous season, this entailed flying my Harris Hawk at least two hours a day, everyday, regardless of work commitments and other such distractions. Ironically I came down with a dose of chicken pox and so was able to take three weeks off work, thus in my less than healthy state, Cody was flown hard for the few weeks leading up to the meet.

Arrival

On a rather damp Friday afternoon 15 or so expectant falconers arrived safely in the village of Comrie, just outside Braco Castle Moor. We fed and watered our charges, secured them and then made our way to the local pub. Once suitably refreshed, we returned to base and readied the hawks for the next day. The field was mixed, so along with five Harris Hawks (two of the year, one of which, Cosmo, was un-entered), there was participation from those with a taste for speed in the form of two imprint Goshawks (a male, Trigger and female, Rosalind). There was also a suitably impressive Red Tail Hawk, all three species adding variety and a different style to the ranks. It was clear all hawks were in mint condition and reflected the care and dedication of their owners.

On Saturday morning we assembled at Touch House, weathered the hawks and were given instructions by Adrian as to what groups we should be in. The first group had dogs in the form of a beautiful Vizla bitch called Hope and Adrian's energetic German shorthaired pointer, Spencer. The second party would be using ferrets and hunting walked up quarry. The right balance between hawk and quarry is essential, so along with the fact that

Cody had not yet worked with dogs, meant we chose the rabbiting group.

Good partnership

By lunchtime the bag for our party was two rabbits from three slips and a small amount of free flight from the field master's un-entered males, Jade, a superb 16 year old Harris and Fern had been working well together prior to the meet and so the first bolted rabbit was for them. It took off down a slight incline and turned left between a tree and small rock face. From my position I could see that Jade made first contact with Fern pummelling in to help out seconds later. The flight was a good one and from the fist, an estimated distance of around 50 yards.

The next slip was Cody's and it was short and sweet. Up popped a rabbit looking as if it had been through a very hot wash. It was a tiny little thing and was probably the first encounter this Cony had ever had with day light. I was stood about 15 feet from the entrance, Cody was off in a second and the slip complete. The brief celebration swiftly changed to hilarity when our group saw the prize. None the less it was Cody's first meet, his first contact with other hawks and his first performance in front of more than one person. He had shot from the glove at a good speed and had caught the quarry, so complaining or harsh judgement in this context was not an option.

After lunch session

After a good lunch with the owners of Touch House we took the obligatory and traditional stiffener and headed back out onto the land. The afternoon was to be a display of the Red Tail's legendary might and focus. And although Jade caught another rabbit, the flight of the day went to Mike's Red Tail. It was clear that the morning's frustration and waiting had pushed the Red toward Yarak, as she intently pursued hare and rabbit with fervour. Finally, we settled on a steep bank with a small warren and a fallen tree about 60 yards in front of us. In went the ferrets and out came a rabbit, the flight was crisp and focused. The Red Tail not pulling up or deviating, even when the rabbit made under the roots of the dead tree. The clatter and smash of the hawk as it went through the dead branches sounded out around the valley, drowning the intake of breath from our group. This Red Tail was a true brute force battler reflecting Mike's training.

The next day

On the Saturday evening and after an exquisite meal at a very classy restaurant the celebrations went on through the night. However, next morning, our group was joined by the Gos men. Sunday was rabbit only, and we had the option of walking and ferreting the most amazing landscape imaginable. Scotland is stunning and has not lost its wilderness edge to a modern world.



From the top of the first escarpment we scanned out over thousands of acres, all of which were turning brown and orange, touched with an autumnal glow of a low winter sun.

By early afternoon the slips were appearing regularly, however the wily Scottish rabbits were fit and fast, as were the much larger Brown Hare. Cody's first real

flight was good and he took on the bolted rabbit with ease. They covered the ground well Cody clipping its rear end at around 40 yards, only to land distraught on the ground. I leapt over the fence expecting the rabbit to have made her bury, but as I approach it appeared up out of the grass and started to run up the mountain side. Cody got to it from a standing start but it cleverly jinked back down the hill. Once again he landed, looked around, then set off for a third time just missing the Cony as it hit a warren a further 30 or 40 yards away. My fitness regime had worked in front of an expectant crowd and although he had missed it was a determined chase. I was even congratulated by the Gos men, which is high praise indeed!

An hour or so later every hawk had made some super flights and had performed well. Taking a nip of whisky the group exclaimed how much fun they were having and any thoughts of a lunch break were put to the back of our minds.

Near miss

Next up was Anthony with his un-entered hawk, Cosmo. For such a young hawk the next flight was easily the best of the day. So far Cosmo had shown tenacity and verve in the field, reflecting the training and quality of mentoring Anthony had so far received. Our group was stood on an old dry stone wall waiting, when Cosmo was slipped into the wind. The little hawk folded his wings and shot down the hillside for about 200 yards. In the distance, the tell tale flash of white alerted us to a rabbit sitting out in the open. Unfortunately, it was a millisecond quicker and after a consolation slap on the back, it was agreed that Cosmo was destined for great things.

On the return to the meeting point we exchanged stories and flight details, as well as congratulating Francois on the quality of sport his land provided. As a mark of respect and thanks we presented Adrian with a framed Bob Morely print of a Harris Hawk in flight. All in all it had been a great weekend filled with superb surroundings and quality friends. We had soaked up the atmosphere, shared the Scottish countryside and seen outstanding falconry. As we headed home we felt proud that we had been part of and up-held an ancient sporting tradition on very special soil. We only hoped that the freedom to continue our chosen pursuit remains for the future and for generations to come.

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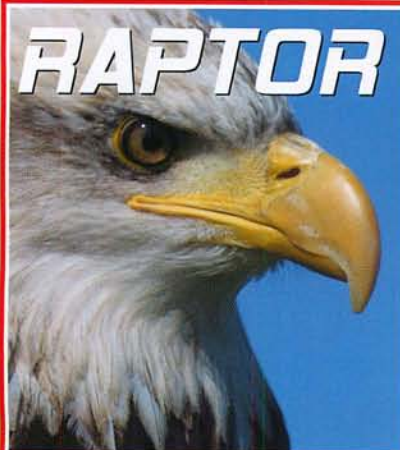
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My name is Carl Church and I am a specialist bird taxidermist. I have won several major awards for my taxidermy at world show level. Over the years I have mounted several birds from falconers and breeders and as this is an unusual article I hope I do not offend anybody. There is an alternative to burying or incinerating your fallen stock. I am interested to hear from bird keepers and breeders who wish to part with their dead birds. Below, I have put together a small process for storing your dead bird correctly in a way so that the bird can be kept for several years safely.

Lay the bird on its back, close the wings and straighten any feathers that may be damaged (Pic. 1). If there is any body heat left in the bird, leave it to cool in a safe place.

Once cool, put the bird in a freezer bag trying to keep the bird as straight as possible. Remove as much air as possible then tape or tie up the bag (Pic 2).

If the bird has a long tail, a piece of cardboard should be taped around the bird for support and protection in the freezer. Make some notes on the card, ie. name of specimen, age, condition, licence or article 10 number (Pic 3). Put your bird into a freezer and now is the time for you to choose your taxidermist in your own time.

Remember, the law is as important in selling live birds as it is dead ones. I can only give guidelines but for more information on this matter follow the links on my website.

I am often asked how much are dead birds worth, but this will vary between taxidermists. As falconers and breeders you will be asked the condition of the bird, ie. its age, whether it is a juvenile or adult bird, its feather condition, full adult or in moult or with a brood patch.

Also, are its tail and primary wing feathers damaged – this will determine the value of the bird.

Please remember to get permission from who you share your freezer with – wives, girlfriends and mothers are not always understanding when it comes to foreign bodies in their freezer.

Please contact me with your comments at www.birdtaxidermy.co.uk or telephone 01751 472019.



Pic 1



Pic 2



Pic 3

The illness with no name

Killem, my six year old female Harris Hawk, came out after moulting on the 21 September 2005, looking very healthy and in tip-top condition. Her back was glistening with the 'bloom' that told me that she had benefited from months of top quality food. The two deep squirrel bites that she had got at the end of the season had healed cleanly and all her toes were working. Her broken rear talons that had been the cause of an early finish the previous year had grown again so she was re-equipped and tail mounted. Her training went apace and within a day or two she was flying strong and keen.



Dianne and Watergate.

This was to be our sixth season together and she, out of all the birds I'd flown over the years, had left me with a whole raft of happy and exciting memories. Good times by the truckload, a few sad times, hilarious times, scintillating times – she was the very best of hunting partners. She did have certain flaws. When frustrated she would take out her feelings on the Brittany dog often dealing him a hefty clunk on the back of the head when no rabbits had been found, not to mention the many times she had nicked people's hats and dropped them miles away. I was on a high and as the season stretched before me I too was in bloom.

Diary reading

My day book tells me that even though the autumn weather was not kind to us, between the 29 September and the 27 October she had taken more than her usual head of quarry. One particular

farmer who'd come out with us was over the moon when she took a good number of rabbits in a couple of hours. He'd been overrun with them and as he would not allow guns near his stock this was the perfect answer. Having given us a map of the farm, we then broke it into several sections and went back every day for a fortnight and never touched the same section twice.

The season bounced along at a rapid pace. Killem was excelling herself, the dogs were working their socks off, the ferrets were thorough and efficient and Chris (my husband) was not half bad too. Maybe it was all going too well. Several things happened, small and at the time unremarkable, events that may have all lead to the eventual outcome.

About mid-October Chris and I accepted an invitation to hunt on some of our old stomping grounds in Berkshire. The thought of having some pheasants to fly was very exciting. I knew this particular estate in Marlow well and the break would

do us all good. Her first flight in Marlow started on a pheasant, fast and furious as the cock bird, cackling, pumped like fury into the distance. When we'd last seen her she had been closing it down fast. We followed as fast as we could but got hampered by bogs, ditches, brambles, etc. and she was soon out of sight. Half an hour later we picked up a signal on the telemetry telling us she was not far away. Ah! there it was and we could even hear the bell now. She was somewhere in a massive reed bed. Listen again, a loud splash, then silence, tantalisingly close yet still not visible. She was in the middle of a huge almost impenetrable stand of reeds/brambles.

Eventually after an unequal fight with the undergrowth I could see her on the edge of a filthy, slimy ex-pond which clearly showed a Killem sized imprint in the top layer of sludge, she was hung out to dry but with only a footful of pheasant feathers to show for her trouble. Having got her on the glove it then took a fair fight to get back to where Chris and the keeper were waiting. She was all but dry albeit a tad smelly, so off we went again and it was almost dusk when she eventually secured herself a rabbit

Home again

Back in Wales a few days after this, Killem followed a rabbit into a really gross ditch full of thick water and what appeared to be the remnants of a dead sheep. We finished then as she was soaked and the weather had turned cold and we ran nearly a mile to the car with her inside my coat to keep her warm. On arrival home I sprayed off the worst of the goo, dried her thoroughly and put her on the heated half round for the night.

The following day was sunny and bright and so the car was loaded and off we went. We decided to stay local in case the weather changed and so picked on our only flat piece of land bordered by the River Teifi which twists and turns in the valley like a snake. We forded the shallows and made our way across the billiard table field – what a treat. The Brittany dog, Kevin, found a rabbit above ground and the slip of about 200 yards ended in success. The wind had got up and there were one or two sharp showers but we managed to keep dry by sheltering in the lea of a hedge.



Giving a helping hand.

Out in the open again Killem suddenly marked something and off she went making towards the river. She appeared to be mid-channel when she winged over and disappeared, then a group of ducks flew up. I ran to the bank and there in the middle of a now angry river and being swept away fast, was Killem. As she got to an S-bend where the furious water swirled in all directions she disappeared under the water for a few seconds. As she reappeared I followed on the bank calling and encouraging her with voice and food and after what seemed a lifetime she flogged her way into calmer water and managed to scramble out. Apparently undaunted she scooped down her food in typical Killem fashion and we beat a hasty retreat.

When we got back to our crossing place by the bridge, we realised that further up the valley there must have been some very serious rain and the river was angry and deep. Chris got across OK followed by Kevin and I nearly got washed down stream but eventually we all arrived safely back at the Jeep and we were pleased to get home in one piece albeit a tad damp. Fully dried and fed, Killem

appeared none the worse for wear and settled down happily for a snooze.

The following day was warm with a light wind and she flew extremely well and all her flights were brought to a successful conclusion. The next two days were misty and wet so the next flyable day was the 6 November when after a very long chase she secured a huge buck rabbit but when I eventually caught up with her I noticed a slight breathlessness. She recovered quickly enough so I didn't give it another thought. On the 7 November she flew well enough, although in hindsight, not with her usual degree of enthusiasm and she missed a slip, which, had she been up to strength, she could have taken with a blindfold on. Now, we were well and truly worried.

A trip to the vets

On arrival home, a call to Mark Evans, our 'local' avian vet in Cardiff had us driving the two hours to his surgery with what we now knew to be a very sick hawk. An X-ray showed lungs which were full of just about every type of debris imaginable and a course of anti-biotics were recommended.

She seemed bright enough over the next few days and whatever was wrong had not dulled her appetite. We decided to keep her indoors at a constant temperature as the weather was turning really nasty and the nights were freezing. After a week of anti-b's her condition was worsening day by day. The blood test had shown a slightly high white blood cell count and due to her worsening condition it was decided to try a stronger anti-b and add Sporonox to the treatment. My as yet underused nebuliser (a Christmas present from Chris the previous year) was looking very like an oasis in a desert as a thrice daily neb of F10 was added to the treatment list.

Another visit to Mark Evans at Valley Vets for a session with the endoscope showed lesions on her lungs and we upped all the treatments in an effort to fight off further infection. My days seemed to melt one into another. Twice daily I had

disguising this in all sorts of ways. Then there was the F10 to measure out with so many parts of sterile water and the neb kept blocking up and had to be washed out and sterilised each time.

By now, her breathing could only be described as horrendous, beak wide open, wings dropped, utterly exhausted, the inside of her mouth was almost white and her previously bloomed feathers were dull and lifeless.

Very sick bird

All sorts of other problems occurred like not casting regularly and as most of her medication was being given in food I obviously couldn't treat her until she had cast, and so the whole treatment programme became very erratic. Mark was being updated daily (sometimes, two-hourly). I cannot praise this dedicated vet too highly – he made himself available at all hours when his

breath such an effort that her whole body was heaving with the effort. At about 2 a.m. she tried to sleep but fell off her bow onto the floor where she stood heaving. Suddenly she threw her head back, her train cocked up over her head and each breath threatened to choke her. This is it, I thought, stay calm, and on my knees next to her I thanked her for the years of enjoyment she had so generously given us all.

This bird even had her own fan club and the thought of a Killlem-free future was hard to face. Suddenly, with one massive cough she disgorged the contents of her crop and still she laboured on. I wanted it all to end. I must have fallen asleep as I woke still on the floor next to her at about 8.30am hoping she had gone, but she was still alive. She was still eating and so the daily round started with medicine laden food.

Time off

I left a trusted friend in charge and Chris and I had a few hours off at a Christmas Fair and this is where fate took a hand. It was a beautiful day and the copious glasses of mulled wine on offer made it all seem so Christmassy and I met a friend there and was telling her about Killlem. She said that one of their hunt horses had picked up a virus that had made breathing very hard for him and that it had been treated successfully with Steroids. Steroids, eh? I felt another phone call to Mark coming on and couldn't wait to get home.

Chris telephoned Mark for me and I heard things like "oh, right, daily injections" (two hours each way, oh boy)! Then, "it could be given via the nebuliser". A sigh of relief from us both. Right, we were in business. Chris made a note of all the instructions, amounts, timings etc., so the daily routine would now involve 4x10 mins. of Dex (steroid) neb. 3x10 mins. F10 neb. 2x75 caplets Sporonox and half Synulox twice daily. We worked out a timetable when it seemed that every minute of every day for the next week was taken up with furious activity.

After the very first treatment of Dex in the nebuliser her breathing eased. We couldn't afford to get excited at this stage. The second Dex neb saw a tremendous improvement and after the 3rd lot of Dex she tucked her head under her wing and



Jason and his Gos.

to count out 75 miniscule Sporonox beads (if you so much as breathed whilst doing this they just disappeared and I became an expert at holding my breath). These then had to be posted down a straw into a chicks beak, closely followed by a powdered half Synulox tablet. She became an expert at eating everything and then cleverly spitting out most of the anti-b and I experimented endlessly on

calm manner and knowledge, imparted so generously, would set me back on the road again. Even though she had been hit with the whole armoury of medicines available she was failing rapidly, although her appetite waned only once and this was when I became convinced that it heralded her end.

One night I stayed up with her as I was convinced that she was on the brink of expiring. She was totally exhausted now, her head thrown back, each rasping

slept for the first time since mid November (it was now nearly Christmas). Things improved rapidly from there on. Daily calls to Mark to update him on the improvements were met with joy and gradually the treatments were dropped off one by one. She was casting regularly now and literally gobbled all the food on offer. The colour returned to her mouth and her feathers started to look glossy again. Wow! what a fight.

Personal crusade

Mark Evans and all his staff had literally made it a personal crusade to overcome Killlem's problems. Modestly he says that Chris and I did most of the work. Suffice to say that it was a joint effort with a joyous outcome. Right at the start of this, I had nagged Mark to give 'it' a name, but he couldn't, and so it became known as "the illness with no name".

as he caught it on the quarters and received a kicking for his trouble, undaunted he soon took his opportunity to grab the head. As I moved in slowly to finish the good fight, he gave me a "keep off" sort of look and mantled so I moved away and, comfortably ensconced on a tussock, lit up a coffin nail. He plumed like fury and beakfuls of fluff wafted away on the breeze. He looked at me a couple of times and eventually folded his wings and stopped glaring at me. I put out my glove and low and behold, he left his kill and hopped aboard. A good start for a novice bird.

A visit from a friend

Earlier in the year my good buddy Jason Willmore had arranged to bring his female Goshawk Elkie up for a few days and Chris and I were delighted to see them both and have a chance to introduce them

and as the rabbit burst into the open she was away like a bullet, going right-handed she disappeared from sight but the sound of a caught rabbit told it's own story.

The second flush was not easy to find, but Kevin eventually marked a bury and once again we withdrew as the ferret was entered. This rabbit left the bury but turned almost immediately back on itself and straight back down the bury it had left seconds before when it saw the hawk. Elkie had left the fist in anticipation and somewhat disgruntled by now flew off to take stand in some evergreens. The daylight was going fast so we decided to call it a day. We had a pleasant end to the day as the farmer invited us all in for a well earned cuppa.

Two birds

The following day we took Tiny and Elkie to some woods where there are just hundreds of buries and some good sport was had with both birds. Elkie was impressive off the fist, but out of trees she was pure dynamite and it took a super-charged rabbit to evade her eager talons – suffice it to say that the one that got away deserved to. Jason's last day with us was spent on some gentle uphill land, again lots of different types of cover and rabbits by the dozen. Chris and Kevin the dog were well on form and offered us plenty of quarry, most of which ended up in the bag. The degree of fitness shown by this superb female Goshawk is testament indeed to the falconer's art.

Over the next few weeks, my respect for Tiny grew and he just improved day by day. But maybe things were going too well. After an excellent twisting slip Tiny ripped out his deck feathers on a fence, telemetry mount, bell and all, so that was the end of that. Then, bless her heart, my good friend Liz came to the rescue and offered me her male Harris' Stanley who flew extremely well for the three weeks that took me to the end of the season.

All in all, we'd had a pretty good few months hunting and many thanks go to Chris my husband for all his help and for working Dixie and Kevin the Britannies so well, Liz for her many hours of assistance and for the loan of Stanley and Sean (a local lad and would-be falconer) for working Beano and Bluey the ferrets, not forgetting Jason and Elkie who gave us the pleasure of seeing a well-trained Goshawk at her best.



The group waiting patiently.

As soon as I knew Killlem was on the mend, I had no intention of letting the grass grow under my feet and proceeded to buy a first year male Harris' called Tyson. Due to his diminutive size (probably only when compared to the bulk of a female) I renamed him Tiny. He had only been flown on the creance but he soon got the hang of things and after his fourth day was ready to go and took the dummy rabbit with tremendous enthusiasm.

The day after this he took the one and only rabbit we saw, again with great style and determination which was just as well

to some of our chubby Welsh rabbits. It was a real treat to be reminded of how dynamic these birds are off the fist and she put in some stunning flights. One of our trips took us way up into the hills at Devils Bridge where there is miles of open blue misted hills intersected with tumbling brooks, waterfalls and hardly a tree in sight. I don't think Elkie could believe her eyes as she certainly was not used to such an open landscape.

Kevin and Dixie put up a rabbit from a reed-bed which ran a short distance to a bury and we stood silently waiting as the ferret worked. A rumble from deep underground told us that things were about to happen and the tension grew. Elkie's stance was now completely alert

News from Dullstroom

An update from Mark Holder in South Africa who wrote an article in issue 62 of *The Falconers Magazine*

It has all been a bit hectic here at the moment and that's why I've escaped inside to write this report. I hope you enjoy it.

Can you believe it, the sun is shining there are people in the park and the restaurant is open, what more could we ask for? Thankfully it has been an incredibly busy ten days and it all started at Easter, but, wow, did we have a hectic build-up to that particular weekend. The Monday before Easter the restaurant was still looking like a building site and we were having all kinds of trouble with the tradesmen concerned but by some miracle the restaurant opened for business on Good Friday and it was all systems go.

Jenna and Mackena, the mother and daughter dream team, coped wonderfully well and the smell of home cooking wafted all around the bird of prey centre.

Unfortunately, for both of us Marks (Mark Holder and Mark Bett) the food is delicious and I can only imagine our waistlines growing in the not too distant future. What's worse is that our wardrobe contents will be growing with new clothes to fit. News from the centre itself includes, as normal good and bad

The good news

We have some rather large new arrivals in the form of two rather aggressive captive bred Cape Vultures who have been christened Brutus and Joker. These birds have settled in and are quite literally biting chunks out of us. (I bet a vulture has never bitten you? It hurts like crazy I can assure you, and you bleed a

heck of a lot). Both of these birds are destined for the shows and Jason and Nikole, two of our handlers, have been working incredibly hard attempting to get them ready.

Unfortunately for both of us Marks, is the fact that Jason and Nikole's contracts come to an end at the end of the month and they are off to pastures new. So we have to face the music and end the vultures, training. We have ordered huge boxes of Elastoplast and are bracing ourselves for injuries! And Jason and Nikole just can't stop laughing! That wimp Mark Bett (little Mark) can't stop screaming!

Now the bad news

On Easter Sunday a gentleman with his four sons turned up at the centre with a highly traumatized young Grass owl. This poor bird had been taken out of its nest in the veldt by some of this gentleman's workers; the gentleman concerned had then confiscated the owl from them. On inspection I found that they had strapped its legs together with twine to stop the bird grabbing them and the poor owl had only broken tail feathers, all 12 of them and I can only assume that they had broken all the tail feathers as they were holding him. As I took the bird in my hands it was trembling like a leaf and I could tell immediately it was in severe shock. I rushed it over to our hospital block and treated it accordingly and left it to convalesce in one of our darkened heated cubicles. Over the next few days, thankfully, it got stronger and stronger and then started eating us out of house and home. Once it was strong enough we put it in an aviary.

We would love to release it now but

that is unfortunately impossible due to the fact that it has no tail and it would not be able to fly properly and, therefore, it would be unable to hunt. What we have to do now is to wait for the tail to completely re-grow. Once this has happened then he can go through the process of our release schedule and be hacked back into the wild successfully.

The second bit of bad news is all about a poor juvenile female African goshawk that was brought into us by an employee of the Parks Board. This bird had been hit by a car and was scrambling around on the road in a state of shock, desperately trying to make it into cover. A very brave member of the public – bless his cotton socks – seeing the plight of this poor bird got out of his car and risked life and limb as he single-handedly stopped the traffic on the busy road so that his colleague could rescue this poor bird.

On arrival at the centre the Goshawk was still in shock and was treated accordingly. On inspection, we discovered that she had a compound fracture in one of her wings. This left us in a bit of a dilemma as our normal vet was on holiday, so with the commandeered help of a good friend and local resident, Norman Durant, a hero in the making, she was ferried down to Johannesburg where she was successfully operated on and is now on a way to a speedy recovery.

Now we don't need any more sad stories for a while but what we are all hoping for is a very busy long weekend with plenty of human visitors all fit and able and glorious sunshine to boot. Hope to see you soon! I have got to go, I've got work to do.

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Making the Dutch Hood

Part 1



Given that this publication reaches such a qualified readership, it seems appropriate to begin with an apology to those who already know how to suck eggs, so to speak... This article owes much to an earlier piece by R. Stanley that appeared in the 1977 edition of *The Falconer*, and to the advice given by John Mease, the finest hood-maker in the country. Much of what appears beneath will also be familiar to those who have seen the video by Ron Rollins, though I hope there will be useful tips for all but the most accomplished of hood-makers.

Tools

There are only a few basic items that one absolutely cannot do without, which are as follows: a very sharp knife, ruler, needles, thread, hood block, patterns, small-nosed pliers and tweezers. To make a decent, neat job, a stitch-marker, beeswax, pin vice, burnishing rod, set of compasses, hole-punch and narrow chisel are invaluable. A good cutting board saves the French polish.

Leather

The aforementioned video recommends kangaroo hide; I prefer vegetable-tanned tooling calf, between 1.2 and 1.6mm thick, as do a large number of commercial hood-makers. There are many suppliers countrywide, including some in London. The Identity Store (distributors for Pearce Tandy) in



Figure 1: Cutting the seams at an angle.



Figure 2: Marking the stitch tracks with a set of compasses.

Northants (01629 581403) will send leather and certain other products via post, and may be able to point out a supplier closer to you. Kangaroo will certainly do the job and you may find it easier to use than tooling calf due to its suppleness (though this means that the hood is more susceptible to being squashed); it is perhaps advisable to make one's first hood from this if you have a square piece too small for jesses.

Hood braces are traditionally made from leather, and thin kangaroo (1-1.2mm) is ideal. It does tend to loosen during a flying season, and suffers from the usual leather brace problem of sticking fast in wet weather. Goretex is the modern alternative, and though not exactly aesthetically pleasing, will not jam in the rain and is less prone to becoming loose quite so quickly. Goretex braces have the added advantage of being easily cleaned once removed. The leather edging at the bottom of the hood can be made from any sort of thin, flexible leather. I used to use rock lizard, but it is not always readily available – Leon Mulholland used to be the person to contact.

Blocks and patterns

Hood blocks are rather easy to find these days, whereas 30 years ago one was probably left with the task of making one from wood. I have never done so, though it would be far more satisfying than buying one. With a hand-made wooden block one can cut on it whilst shaping the bottom of the hood and making holes for the plume, something that is best avoided on a synthetic block.

It is difficult to describe what a good

block looks like – other than a lot like a good hood - they should be fat at the neck (since the hood is blocked in the open position) and bulbous enough to give the eyes ample clearance – an obvious remark but I have seen some very narrow ones at the Falconers' Fair.

In my experience the patterns supplied do not necessarily fit the block. This probably has nothing to do with the incompetence of the vendor, but is merely because the thickness of the leather one is using is not the same as that for which the pattern was designed. Thin leather needs a smaller pattern than thick leather on any given block. In any case, it is a good idea to experiment with scrap leather of the same thickness as that which one intends to use. It may require several attempts to satisfactorily marry the pattern to the block, so do not be disheartened if at first the hood is large enough to turn around on the block or too small to go on at all. Cut the pattern out in scrap leather first and use a few pins along the seams to gauge the approximate fit to the block. Photocopiers with the percentage increase/decrease facility are useful, though as often as not only part of the pattern will need to be altered.

Making the hood

When marking the leather for cutting out, it is best to score on the skin (smooth outer) side rather than draw onto the rough suede side of the leather. Use a pin vice with a reasonably blunt needle. This tool has a chuck (or collet) like that of a drill, allowing needles of a range of widths to be held. It is invaluable for pre-punching holes and marking

stitches. (They are easily found on the internet, including eBay. Collet size 0-2mm is the most suitable). Alternatively one can select a few pencil-sized shafts of wood and sink a needle of different width into the end of each, held with Araldite or similar. The wood must be reasonably hard so that the needles do not simply sink further in when used for making holes. Cut the pattern out using a sharp craft knife or scalpel, taking care to angle the blade inwards (roughly 30° from vertical) when cutting sides which will become the seams, such that the skin surface is slightly larger than the suede (see figure 1). Do not cut the beak opening out completely – simply slice it half way through the depth of the leather with the knife.

The pieces must now be coloured with a suitable dye. Bear in mind that the colour will darken after polishing so choose a shade slightly lighter than that which is required (though please note that the photographs feature two different hoods, one before and one after blocking – the colours don't change *that* much!). I use Fiebing's dyes (available from The Identity Store) though Tandy's ProDye is also fine, if you can find it. There is no need to soak the leather with dye; simply dab it on to both sides (including seams) using the applicators provided. If you buy dye without an applicator, a wad of cotton wool held in tweezers will suffice. Lay the dyed leather skin-side-up on newspaper and allow to dry (it will take somewhere between 3 and 8 hours, depending on temperature etc.).

When they are dry, lay the pieces **skin-side-down** on your cutting board.

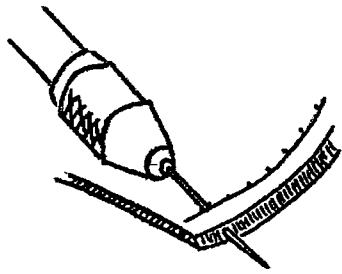


Figure 3: Making holes with the pin vice.

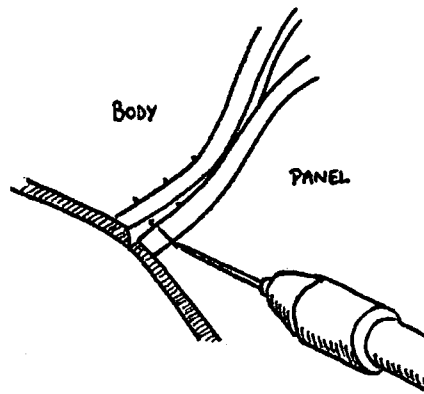


Figure 4: Scoring the panel holes with the pin vice.

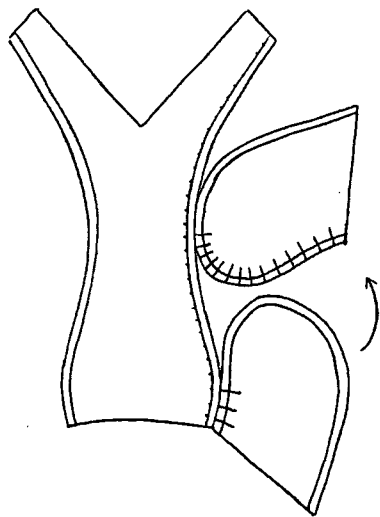


Figure 5: Marking holes in the panel from holes in the body.

Using a set of compasses or dividers, score a line parallel to the edge along the seams of all three pieces (see figure 2). The line should be 2-3mm from the edges. Whilst narrow stitches are best (i.e. close to the edge), care must be taken that they are not placed so close that they rip through when tightened. Use a stitch-marker to mark stitching points along the lines you have just scored on the main body of the hood (**not** the panels). For most hoods (perlin-jerkin) I prefer stitches roughly 4mm apart. This size stitch-marker is usually referred to as '7 holes per inch', and can be found in most leathercraft stores. Alternatively, one can buy a much cheaper, though slightly flimsier model

from any haberdashery. These usually come in the '14 per inch' size, but alternate spokes are easily snapped off using needle-nosed pliers.

Pre-punch the holes in the hood body using the pin vice, with a needle of similar width to that which you intend to use for stitching. The stitching goes through the thickness of the leather, so that the needle emerges through the angled cut in the edge, slightly deeper than midway through (i.e. closer to the skin than suede side; see figure 3). Next, line up each panel with the appropriate side of the body so that they are flush at the base of the hood, and using the pin vice, score a line in the panel, adjacent to the first hole in the body (see figure 4). Continue to score lines along the edge of the panel, marking across from the holes, turning it so that its curve follows that of the body (see figure 5). Where these new, short lines intersect the line made by the dividers, punch holes with the pin vice as you have with the body. You should now have well-aligned holes punched in all three pieces.

The choice of needle is less important than the choice of thread; I use 'Sharps', between the sizes of 6 and 9. Many people advocate the use of dental floss as thread for hood-making, and it does at least have the advantage of availability. However, I find it prone to opening up into its component fibres and then fraying. The best material seems to be beading thread (size 'D'), which again can be easily obtained via mail order

from The Identity Store. Cut a length of between 60 and 90cm, depending on the size of the hood, and thoroughly coat it in wax from a lump of beeswax. Wax keeps the thread from splitting and lends it 'bite', meaning that it grips the leather when tightened, and stays tight. In a cold room the lump of wax will be quite hard and may damage the thread, so heat a corner for a couple of seconds with a cigarette lighter to soften it before running it along the entire length of thread at least 4 times.

The video by Ron Rollins shows an excellent knot for starting the stitching whereby both the body of the knot and the live end of the thread are hidden within the leather. I saw this a couple of times but was far too inept to remember how to do it; instead I simply tie a few overhand knots on top of one another at the end of the thread before starting. The rolled edge at the base of the hood renders the knot invisible, so there is in fact no need for anything more sophisticated. Before making the first stitch, it is necessary to flatten the angled edges of the seams, since otherwise they will not lie flat against one another (see figure 6). This is facilitated by dampening the edges – dip a finger in a glass of water and run it along each edge before pushing the edge flat with your thumb. This will throw up a ridge on the other side – it will be flattened later during blocking. I should clarify at this point, at the risk of stating the boringly obvious, that the hood is sewn *inside-out*, with no stitching whatsoever showing on the outside.

There are two stitches suitable for blocked hoods – the X-stitch and N-stitch (figure 7). I find the N-stitch easier since each perpendicular stitch tightens the diagonal that precedes it, making it simple to maintain tension all the way up the seam. The X-stitch either requires one to sew in one direction and then back the other (which is not advisable as the stitches quickly become slack), or to use two needles at once, which is tedious. When using the N-stitch it matters little from which side one starts, but make sure you do both sides the same or the stitching will be asymmetrical.

Whichever stitch you choose, sew all the way along the seam, bending the

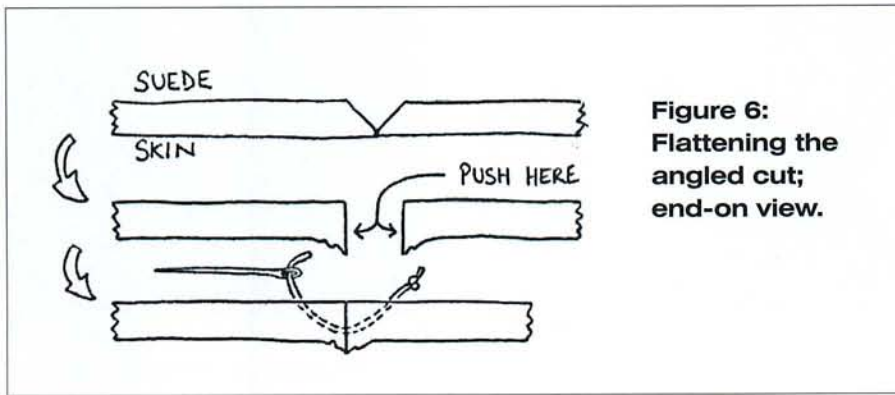


Figure 6:
Flattening the
angled cut;
end-on view.

pieces into the correct orientation as you go. Start the first stitch no closer than 4mm from the bottom edge to allow room for possible trimming later. You will almost certainly need to use narrow-nosed pliers to pull the needle through the leather, and sometimes it will be necessary to re-open the holes using the pin vice. It is near impossible to explain on paper how to hold a hood such that the edges of the two pieces to be joined are in the correct position for sewing, but see figure 8. You will need to re-wax the thread at least twice during sewing – do this whenever a stitch slips back after having been pulled tight.

Ideally all of the stitches will line up perfectly all along the seam, but sometimes things will begin to go awry somewhere past the halfway mark. This probably happens if the two edges have been cut at slightly different angles, leading to a difference in the relative lengths of inside and outside edges (since the holes are marked by aligning the outside edge, whereas when sewing, the inside edges are lined up together). Whatever the reason, don't worry, just carry on, following the stitch markings on one side and making corresponding new holes in the other. At the end of the seam, go over the last stitch a couple of extra times and tie off with a knot as close to the leather as possible. Do not sew all the way to the bottom edge, since you will want to trim the back of the hood after blocking and it would be fairly irritating to cut through the stitching. If at the end of the seam the two pieces do not align there should not necessarily be any cause for concern, as long as neither piece is too short, leading to a shallow hood which tightens on the back of the hawk's skull. It is perhaps advisable to make the patterns slightly



Figure 8: Holding the hood
while sewing.

over-long at the back since one can always trim off the excess.

Sew up the opposite side in the same manner, remembering to stitch from the same side (i.e. either body or panel) if using an N-stitch. Hopefully if there was non-alignment on the first side, there will be the same non-alignment on the other. Again, and I cannot stress this enough, if it doesn't seem to have worked out, don't worry. Hoods stretch on the block and it is usually possible to stretch one side a little more than the other to make up for any asymmetry. If you have cut the hood too long at the back it will be all the easier to counteract mistakes made whilst sewing by simply cutting more from one side than the other after blocking. Do not cut the hood at all before blocking.

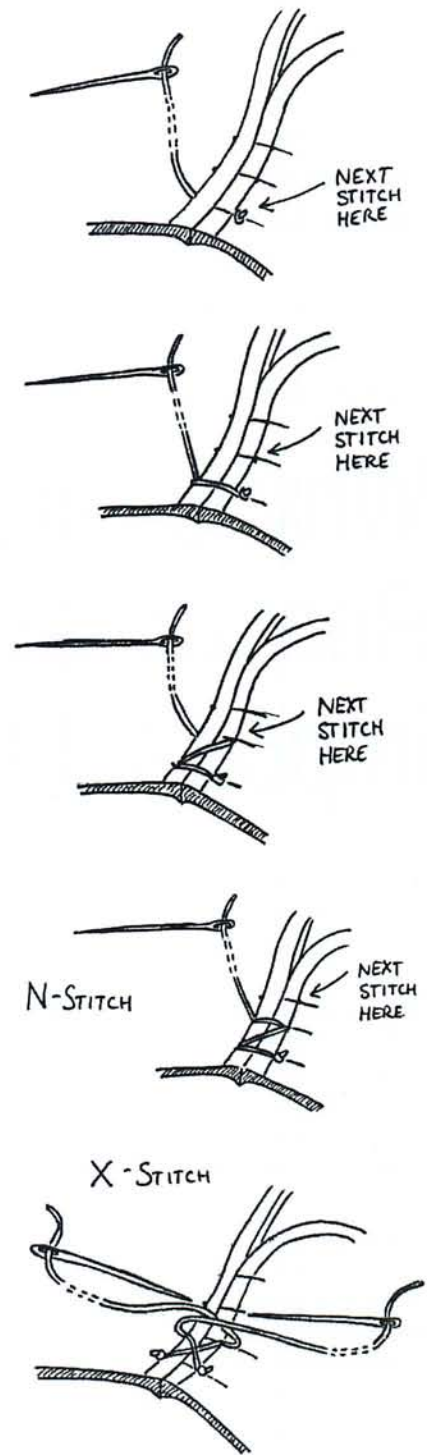


Figure 7: N-stitch and
X-stitch.

Next issue, part two completes the job!

This article was first published in *The Falconer* the journal of the British Falconers Club 2005.

For many years many falconers have taken into care and rehabilitated birds of prey, as best they could, nursing many sick or injured birds of prey, with variable results. Excellent organisations such as Raptor Rescue have also championed this cause. So is it not time we sat back and asked ourselves why - what is the great rationale behind this activity.



Osprey - After release before she flew off.



Kestrel - Parasitic infection of the sinuses causing head tilt. Release impossible.

Why is Bird of Prey Rehabilitation so important to Falconry?

Saving injured birds of prey

It is argued that the vast majority of injured wildlife suffers through conflict with man, vehicles we drive and structures we create, from fence posts and French Glass windows to wind turbines. As a consequence of which we have a responsibility to resolve such problems for these injured birds. Many readers will be aware of the author's forthright views on rehabilitation. My belief is that rehabilitation centres are created with a determination to save and rehabilitate wild injured birds, as opposed to create a convalescent or retirement home for crippled birds to suffer in. As such the space, resources, finances, staff and time should, in my opinion, be conserved for that purpose. As soon as any centre starts to save and provide a long term home for wild permanently crippled birds, birds which were once used to flying free wherever their spirit took them, are confined in a restricted aviary with other wing, leg or sight crippled birds. The result being that hygiene standards deteriorate, time, space and finances run short and those with a real chance of rehabilitation are deprived of it. So is the saving and releasing back to the wild of injured wild raptors justified - of course it is.

Conservational value, release or captive breeding

The next question we must ask ourselves is whether the release of the odd ex-wild injured BOP has a positive conservational effect. Sadly, one has to answer probably not. Firstly, we must consider what percentage of wild raptors make it past the first year - it varies between species and regions, but let us say 30%. So the 70% failing to survive will include the fraction who end up in rehabilitation. Will the saving of a few of these birds make a significant contribution to that population? In general terms the answer is certainly NO - although in some populations, (perhaps osprey, honey buzzard, hobby, red kite), the answer may be yes.

Research and training in the care and management of sick birds of prey

There is no doubt that many rehabilitators and vets gain considerable experience and knowledge as a consequence of rehabilitating raptors. Such experience can then be applied to captive, rare or endangered species. Such knowledge relates not only to the care and treatment of specific injuries, but also captive husbandry and breeding. Where would

species like the Mauritius kestrel, Cape Verde Kite, etc. now be, if we had not learned how to maintain them safely, let alone on occasions breed them in captivity.

Aid to monitoring wildlife populations/as a sensor of what we are doing to our environment

As naturalists we are all well aware that since raptors are at the top of the feed chain, problems or conflicts within the natural ecosystems are often manifest first in raptors. This may present as reduced longevity, poor breeding, loss of habitat and breeding range or reduced survival rates to one year of age.

The submission of injured or diseased raptors into wildlife rehabilitation facilities provides an excellent screening service for our ecosystem. So long as the abnormal is investigated, then as problems occur the experts will be informed of problems as soon as they arise, such that they can be investigated and the cause addressed.

Teaching the public to care for our wildlife

Falconry centres and raptor rehabilitation organisations can serve an invaluable service in teaching 'Joe public' about our ecosystem and the beauties of it, whilst sharing with them the necessity for us to appreciate and look after our world - let's face it, we only have one and we are messing it up pretty quickly just now. Most members of the public have little opportunity to appreciate, respect or care for wildlife. Bringing them close to images of, or victims of it, is an effective way of helping to educate them as to the importance of looking after our environment.

Raising awareness of ways in which birds of prey become diseased or injured through conflicts with man

As stated above, many wild raptors become injured as a consequence of conflicts with man or structures created by man. It is only by the admission and recording of these that specific risks may be appreciated, e.g. electricity pylons, possibly wind farms, game shooting or deer stalking with lead based ballistics or the agricultural use of rodenticides. Non of these hazards would have been recognised and the risks minimised if it had not been for rehabilitation centres and wildlife incident investigations.

Fulfilling the carer's ego or 'need to care for something'

It is a well recognised fact that certain individuals, when they find themselves childless for one reason or another, feel a need to care for some unprotected individual or group. Many 'rehabbers' fall into this category. For them rehabilitation can readily become a crusade, with the carer often going to quite ridiculous (sometimes psychopathological) ends to 'fulfill their mission'. Whilst such persons may be in need of support, one should at the same time appreciate that they are providing a caring voluntary service which others have no appetite for – and yes, they are doing lots of good.

Lining the pocket of those who are supposedly doing the caring

It's a sad reflection on humanity that there are those who use wildlife rehabilitation and the public's sympathy for injured wildlife which cannot care for itself, as a root to personal profiteering and money generation. Some will shake money cans at country fairs or outside supermarkets, creating the belief that the public's generous donations are being directly applied to 'save poor injured wild birds', when in fact it is simply lining the pockets of those who spin the deceptive image. It is true today that these are very much the exceptions, but they do exist and it's important that those genuine organisations do recognise them and bring them to the attention of the Charities Board, Police, RSPCA and other appropriate organisations.

So lots of reasons, good and bad, to justify rehabilitation, but what is the single most significant justification for rehabilitation, or should we say for falconry?

Using falconry in rehabilitation is an excellent justification for falconry

Many of us, for many years, have recognised that a post injured bird of prey can only be released back to the wild if the conditions (weather; location, time of day and year, food availability) are appropriate and furthermore that the released bird can fly well enough, see well enough, hunt and kill well enough, as well as eating well enough to survive in the wild, at the same time as living in harmony with others of its own species and without creating a hazard to man.

Whilst birds can be assessed to an extent in an aviary with respect to short distance flight capability, assessment of sight, flight and killing ability can only be achieved by the application of traditional falconry techniques. We now know that 21% of injured raptor trauma cases will have long term visual impairment, which should preclude their release. Moreover, damage such as in the back of the eye is not so apparent to any rehabilitator or vet viewing with the naked eye. The most obvious cases are those which come into rehabilitation, thin and weak with no obvious injuries, which gain weight and condition rapidly, simply with the provision of food. It sounds obvious but the rehabilitator must ask themselves – why had that individual failed the 'fitness for life test' and what is there to say the same will not happen when the bird is released.

Here in the UK, we live in an age where field sports are in danger of being targeted one by one by those opposed to a 'country way of life', where for the moment at least falconry remains a legal and legitimate sport.

Yet, in other countries, falconry is already illegal. From one such country comes the long time awaited evidence which we need to defend our sport. In Australia where falconry is illegal, rehabilitators have had to try and prove why they should be permitted to apply falconry techniques to rehabilitation and what the positive effects are. Holz, Naisbitt and Mansell have shown quite conclusively, that rehabilitation involving the use of traditional falconry techniques results in a significantly improved post release survival rate. Their research involved the rehabilitation of peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) (15) and Brown Goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) (12). Birds were divided into two groups, those which received significant falconry based flight training (group one), as



Bald Eagle – Beak damage following shooting. Cannot be released.

opposed to those who were simply exercised in an aviary (group two). What the authors demonstrated was that those which had been trained using falconry training did much better, with none of them dying subsequent to release. Some group two birds did die, others were taken back into captivity. These birds were subjected to falconry flight training and were then released. Such birds then had a much improved survival rate. It is interesting to note that peregrines had a greater requirement for pre-release falconry flight training than the goshawks – this of course comes as no surprise to any falconer.

This soundly based scientific paper concludes "In conclusion, this study presents compelling data demonstrating that falconry-based exercise training is far superior to cage-based exercise protocols for conditioning rehabilitated peregrine falcons and brown goshawks prior to release. Without falconry-based training, mortality because of reduced ability to capture prey will be high in released raptors".

So, before any suggestion that falconry should be banned, we should all embrace the importance and significance of the sport. We should herald the benefits in relation to saving all those 'cuddly but tragically injured wild raptors' and partake of falconry in order to succeed in rehabilitation. It would perhaps be prudent to create a national data base of numbers of rehabilitated raptors, in particular those who have been rehabilitated with the benefit of falconry. We should prime our ammunition with such scientifically based evidence, prior to such time as it may be required, rather than waiting for another crisis and then expecting the Hawk Board, BFSS or BFC to pull the proverbial rabbit out of the hat.

Reference

Holz P H, Naisbitt R, Mansell P (2006) Fitness level as determining factor in the survival of rehabilitated Peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) and Brown Goshawks (*Accipiter fasciatus*) released back into the wild. *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery*. 20(1): 15-20.

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John Hill 07973 224609
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South Wales Region 2nd Monday of the month at The Rat Trap Hotel, Usk.
Further details from Dave Dimond Tel: 01179 324845

North Wales Region 1st Tuesday of every month at The Robin Hood Pub, Helsby.
Regional Secretary: Neil McCann - 0151 929 3402.

Bath Region First Wednesday of the month at The Bull Inn, Hinton, Nr. Bath.
Regional Chairman: Bob Martini, Tel: 01934 862446

Central Region 1st Monday of the month at 7.30 at The Plough, The Green, Shustoke, Coleshill. Regional Chairman: Lee Featherstone - 0121 384 6102
Regional Secretary: Mick Wynn - 0121 7481794

Cotswold Region 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Beckford Hotel on the A46 between Evesham and Tewkesbury, approx 3 miles off Junc. 9 on the M5
Regional Chairman and Secretary: Mike Hope - 07944 447517

Essex Region 2nd Tuesday in each month at The Whalebone Inn, Fingeringhoe, near Colchester. Regional Secretary: Ray Hooper - 01206 251765

South West Region 3rd Monday of the month at The Ley Arms, Kenn, nr. Exeter.
Regional Secretary: Kevin Mosedale - 01392 833681

Yorkshire Region Meetings take place at The George & Dragon, 81 Main St, Wentworth, Barnsley Regional Chairman: Glyn Treloar - 01709 326865

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Club Directory



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Part of the ring number has been replaced with an X for security reasons

The IBR would like to thank all of those people that helped to reunite and look after found birds.

The web site now has a list of unclaimed birds of prey which have been recovered. They are being looked after by falconers on our behalf until we are able to trace the rightful owner. If you think one of these birds is yours or you think you may know the owner, - please contact us. If you have reported losing a bird it is LOGGED on the database and REMAINS on the LOST LIST until WE are told differently.

STOLEN x 5

40505	BARN OWL	1493BC97
50884	GYR/SAKER FALCON	17075W
22574	HARRIS HAWK	IBR20949W
26175	HARRIS HAWK	IBR24618W
34206	HARRIS HAWK	IBR29726W

REUNITED x 114

BARN OWL	11
BLACK KITE	1
COMMON BUZZARD	1
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	6
GREAT HORNED OWL	1
GYR HYBRID FALCON	15
HARRIS HAWK	20
KESTREL	6
LANNER FALCON	12
LITTLE OWL	1
LUGGER FALCON	4
PEREGRINE FALCON	2
PEREGRINE HYBRID	7
RED-TAILED HAWK	14
SAKER HYBRID	3
SAKER FALCON	9
WHITE BACKED VULTURE	1

LOST x 50

48627	ASIAN BROWN WOOD OWL	XXJ80XX
24365	BARN OWL	XX3398XX
28141	BARN OWL	XX617XX
46944	BARN OWL	XX572XX
49886	BARN OWL	XX24BC0XX
50508	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	XX3BC0XX
50903	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	XXJ05XX
26577	GOSHAWK	XX6239XX
48605	GOSHAWK	XX768XX
48929	GOSHAWK	XX0359XX
49142	GOSHAWK	XX208XX
43646	GOSHAWK FINNISH	XX970XX
47167	GREAT HORNED OWL	XX327XX
40927	GYR/PEREGRINE HYBRID	XXI49XX
38670	GYR/SAKER FALCON	XX180XX
48481	GYR/SAKER FALCON	XX628XX
51847	GYR/SAKER FALCON	XXRFALCOXX
50427	GYR x GYR/SAKER	XX707XX
4434	HARRIS HAWK	XX963XX
10403	HARRIS HAWK	XX005XX
17558	HARRIS HAWK	XX762XX
21979	HARRIS HAWK	XX922XX
24241	HARRIS HAWK	XX409XX
31076	HARRIS HAWK	XX871XX
32673	HARRIS HAWK	XX950XX
32843	HARRIS HAWK	XXV00XX
33273	HARRIS HAWK	XX547XX
38858	HARRIS HAWK	XX591XX
45627	HARRIS HAWK	XX212XX
48115	HARRIS HAWK	XX676XX
48797	HARRIS HAWK	XXD5T9XX
51609	HARRIS HAWK	XX8005XX
51955	HARRIS HAWK	XXDY0XX
48966	INDIAN EAGLE OWL	XXFAK0XX
22105	KESTREL	XX852XX

29184

50904	KESTREL	XX963XX
47259	KESTREL	XXTA0XX
48852	LANNER FALCON	XXWB0XX
	LANNER FALCON	XXONEEK2XX
48633	PEREGRINE FALCON	XX406XX
49824	PEREGRINE FALCON	XX517XX
51850	PEREGRINE FALCON	XX672XX
19950	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID	XX031XX
49297	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID	XX858XX
50885	PEREGRINE/LANNER HYBRID	XX774XX
39523	PEREGRINE/MERLIN	XX92XX
51340	PEREGRINE/SAKER HYBRID	XX376XX
10936	SAKER FALCON	XX024XX
23440	SAKER FALCON	XX133XX
32368	SAKER FALCON	XX960XX

FOUND x 16

12752	BARN OWL	XX944XX
50422	BARN OWL	XX41BC9XX
50886	BARN OWL	XX91BC9XX
51432	BARN OWL	XXC94XX
51851	BARN OWL	XX22BC9XX
22485	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	XX216XX
51365	EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	XXMCD0XX
30345	HARRIS HAWK	XX926XX
48618	HARRIS HAWK	XXDBM9XX
50036	HARRIS HAWK	XXW95XX
50786	HARRIS HAWK	XXORR9XX
51065	KESTREL	XX2RBAXX
49165	RED-TAILED BUZZARD	XX066XX
19995	RED-TAILED HAWK	XXFRC9XX
50137	RED-TAILED HAWK	XXRAHXX
43648	SAKER FALCON	XX0908XX

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Raptor DNA profiling



determines the length of each amplified region and records them altogether as the 'DNA profile'. A record of the DNA profile can be presented on a certificate and stored permanently to be retrieved when required.

This new advance will be of interest to raptor breeders and owners. It is currently available for Golden Eagle, Gyr, Saker, Goshawk and Peregrine. Breeders can confirm bloodlines, while owners will seek the re-assurance of a bloodline certificate and find the data useful should the bird ever be lost and recovered. Raptor profiling is supported by the Independent Bird Register. In addition the results from different individuals can be compared and the degree of similarity determined.

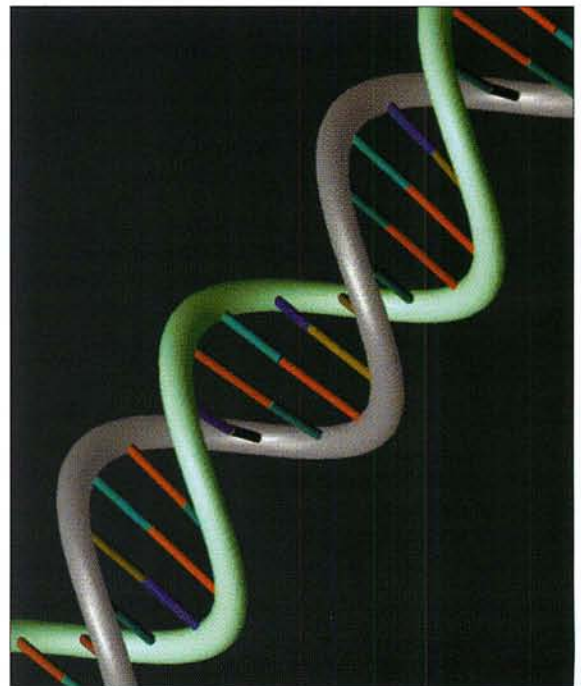
Using new advances in laboratory techniques it is now possible to develop unique DNA profiles for the key raptor breeds. A

bird's DNA profile is a permanent characteristic as it remains the same throughout life. DNA makes up the genetic material contained in the cells of all living things. The genetic material is equally contributed to by mother and father, consequently siblings and other related birds have closer DNA profiles than unrelated birds.

The initial stage in DNA profiling involves taking an appropriate sample from which DNA can be extracted. As DNA is contained within cells, the sample must contain cellular material. Suitable sample materials include blood, feathers, egg membrane material and cheek swabs. Care must be taken that no extraneous material such as food is included as it may contain contaminating DNA.

Once the sample arrives in the laboratory, the DNA is extracted using a method that disrupts the cells and allows collection of the DNA. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is used to amplify parts of DNA, called microsatellite regions, which are known to vary considerably in length between individuals. Around 10 microsatellite regions in each DNA sample are amplified and labelled with differently coloured markers to allow identification. The PCR products are measured by a process known as electrophoresis - the amplified DNA strands migrate at different rates in an electric current, according to their length. Electrophoresis is carried out by a specially designed instrument, which

Images of DNA profiles



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