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with three
falcons





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I don't know about you, but I have had a rotten flying season with the awful weather we have experienced. You have got to feel for the poor souls whose homes have been flooded and their possessions ruined.

It didn't help that I nearly lost my Harris Hawk, Pasha, to a blood parasite and I have to say a big thank you to vet John Chitty and his staff for all they have done to get my hawk back to full fitness.

Still, I did get to be invited on a day with three falconers in February this year and you can read my report in this issue. My thanks go to Colin Thomas, Ray Prior and Jim Chick for making me feel so welcome.

Earlier this year saw a symposium which was organised by the Hawk Board and what an enjoyable and informative day it was. Another symposium is planned for next year so if you missed this year's I hope you will try to attend the next one. You can read more on what happened in this issue and my thanks go to Dr. David Glynne Fox for his article about what he thought about the symposium.

Lastly, don't forget the Falconers Fair 5-6 May back at Chetwynd Park, Shropshire. If you are planning to attend, please come and say hello at The Falconers Magazine stand.

In the meantime, have a good read.

editorial



news & products

a review of what's new in our sport

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Nick Fox receives his OBE

Dr. Nick Fox received his OBE award at Buckingham Palace on 4 April 2014 from Prince Charles. The award was for 'Services to Falconry and Conservation of Raptors'. Nick was accompanied by his wife Barbro, his son Benjamin and general manager Jo Oliver.

Following the ceremony Nick and guests paid a visit to the College of Arms which is the official heraldic authority for England, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as most of the Commonwealth. The college houses registers of arms, tomes of pedigrees, genealogies, flags etc. It is also responsible for the granting of new coats of arms.

Many congratulations, Nick, on your wonderful achievement.



The Hawk Board Election 19th August 2014

Applications are invited for candidates to contest the forthcoming Hawk Board Election for six specialist members who will serve on the Board for a period not exceeding three years. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by members of a Club or other Association affiliated to the Hawk Board, although the candidates themselves need not be members of an affiliated Club.

A nomination paper may be obtained from Rachelle Upton, at the address shown below, for completion or can be requested by e-mail at: rachelle@markupton.com. Each candidate must provide a CV of not more than 100 words to cover his/her background and to outline why he/she would be an asset to the Hawk Board. CVs will be circulated with the voting papers.

Candidates will be expected to have an understanding of National and International legislation, policy from DEFRA & Animal Health, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), relating to birds of prey, and an awareness of the threats against falconry and hawk keeping.

Candidates must not be subject to, nor have been convicted of, any criminal charge in any country for offences concerning birds of prey.

Completed nomination forms and CVs should be sent as soon as possible to:

Rachelle Upton
The Hawk Board
Plough End
Bath Road
Manton
Marlborough
Wiltshire
SN8 1PT

CLOSING DATE 13th June 2014

Forms received after this date will not be accepted.

Scottish Environment Minister announces new measures to tackle raptor persecution

Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) Paul Wheelhouse has said it is time to halt the illegal persecution of Scottish birds of prey.

The MSP issued a statement following a number of articles in the media which highlighted the ongoing problem of bird of prey crime in Scotland. He said: "A number of recent reports, some of which are in the public domain and some of which are still subject to police enquiries, suggest that there is an ongoing problem with the use of poison, as well as cases involving illegal trapping and shooting.

"I have decided that the time is right to bring forward some further measures which I hope will deter those involved in illegal activities." Among the measures he announced were that the Lord Advocate had "instructed the specialist prosecutors in the Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit

to work with Police Scotland to ensure that law enforcement utilises all investigative tools at their disposal in the fight against wildlife crime."

He also announced an intention "to establish a group to carry out a review and report to me on how wildlife crime is treated within the criminal justice system, including examining whether the penalties available for wildlife crime properly reflect the seriousness of the damage caused to vulnerable wildlife and fragile habitats and ecosystems."

He stated that he will ask Scottish Natural Heritage to examine how and in what circumstances they can restrict the use of General Licenses to trap and shoot wild birds on land where they have good reason to believe that crimes against wild birds have taken place.

Reacting to this announcement, Duncan

Orr-Ewing, Head of Species and Land Management at RSPB Scotland, said: "It is firmly established that the prevailing levels of human killing are having a devastating effect on the populations of some of our native bird of prey species, including golden eagle, hen harrier and red kite. Recent incidents involving the killing of golden eagles and other iconic bird of prey species have rightly caused public outrage. We welcome the clear leadership shown today by the Scottish Government indicating that these crimes will not be tolerated in modern Scotland. We support further sanctions to act as a deterrent, and to make it easier for the authorities to convict those involved. We hope that these measures will be implemented soon, and are well targeted to bear down on the organised crime behind much of this activity".

Calls for drug lethal to vultures to be banned

The anti-inflammatory drug diclofenac, which is highly toxic to vultures, has been authorised for veterinary use within the European Union. This represents a grave threat to Europe's vulture populations, many of which have only recently recovered from historic lows.

Diclofenac represents a clear and present danger to vultures in Europe, as the birds will be poisoned if they feed on carcasses of animals that have been treated with the drug.

Dr Campbell Murn, Head of Conservation and Research at the Hawk Conservancy Trust was astounded: "An immediate ban on diclofenac for veterinary use throughout the EU is required to avert a species crisis, the waste of millions of Euros in conservation funding and direct contravention of primary EU legislation.

"It beggars belief that diclofenac has been authorised for veterinary use in some countries of the EU. This drug has been shown clearly to be responsible for the near-extinction of at least three vulture species in South Asia. There are vulture-safe alternative drugs, such as meloxicam, that are available. And besides, authorising the use of diclofenac in Europe directly contravenes the EU Birds Directive, under which Member States have a legal obligation to conserve vultures – an ecologically vital group of birds.

"As core members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Vulture Specialist Group, and also the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria (BIAZA), we are working with our partners towards facilitating a complete ban of diclofenac in countries where vultures occur. We are linking these efforts with the existing work of the Vulture Conservation Foundation and Birdlife International on this issue."

The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine 100th Edition

Next year will see the publication of the 100th issue of *The Falconers & Raptor Conservation Magazine* and we want to make it a special one.

The first issue of the magazine came out in Winter 1989 and we are interested to hear from anyone who was interested in falconry at that time – or, indeed, you may have actually featured in that first magazine. You may have been just starting in falconry, have already been involved in falconry for some time, or just beginning to discover an interest that would develop. Have you any stories from then or observations on how falconry and/or your involvement has developed over the years? Do you have any photos from back then to show how things have changed, or indeed may not have changed at all? Some "then and now" photos would also be good. We will then publish these in a special anniversary section to mark this 100th milestone.

Please send any contributions to The Editor – details on page 3 (any original photos will be returned after publication).

The Eagles Have Landed Life at the Hawk Conservancy Trust

Reviewed by Marian Eldrett

This DVD was filmed throughout 2013 and gives us a look at all of the work that goes on behind the scenes at the Hawk Conservancy Trust.

It starts with a look at the Bird of Prey Hospital and the work that goes into giving each bird the best chance of a successful release back into the wild. The breeding season is a busy time for all and we see how the staff at the Trust give nature a “helping hand” to ensure breeding success.

We are also given an insight into the work required to train a bird so that it will be able to fly in one of the flying demonstrations which are a highlight for the many visitors.

Conservation and research is central to the work of the Hawk Conservancy and we see how they are helping kestrels and vultures, both in this country and overseas in South Asia and Southern Africa.

We are also shown how important education is at the Hawk Conservancy and how they strive to inspire children who visit and instill in them a long-lasting appreciation of birds of prey. To this end they have set up an after-school club for 10 to 14 year olds, which involves the children taking part in various activities including building nest boxes and flying birds. They have also introduced an apprenticeship scheme for young people who wish to follow a career involving birds of prey. Experience days are also held throughout the year where the staff are only too keen to pass on their knowledge of raptors.

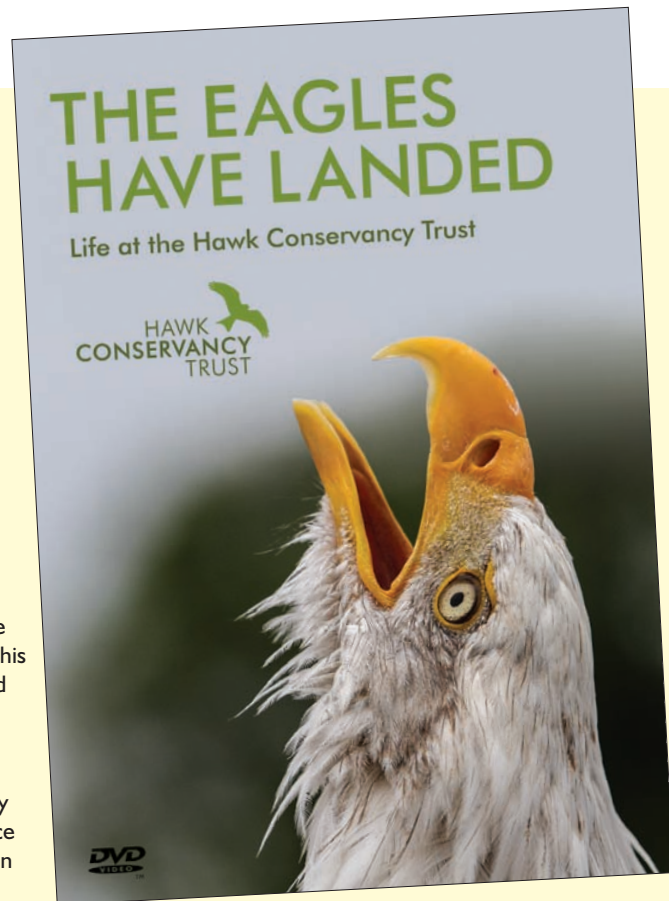
The DVD describes the three different flying demonstrations put on each day. The World of Birds of Prey demonstration features mainly lowland birds which are flown at close quarters to the public. The Valley of the Eagles display features, amongst others, vultures and kites which are flown over the heads of the audience and culminates in two Bald Eagles returning home across the valley after being released over 1.5 miles away. In the summer months this display starts with “The Sarson Falconer”, a reconstruction of a medieval rural scene which demonstrates the skills of mounted falconry. The

final display is Woodland Owls and this is unique in that the birds are flown in a woodland setting.

The 7-acre meadow was an important acquisition for the Conservancy, purchased just before the death of founder of the Conservancy, Reg Smith, and seeded with wild flowers in his memory. The flora and fauna of this area are monitored for research purposes and it is the home of the Hawk Conservancy bees which produce the honey on sale in the shop. It is here that the public can witness the daily feed of wild birds, including herons, which has gone on for almost 50 years. It is also used to stage various corporate events and forms a great backdrop for wedding photos – yes, you can even get married at the Hawk Conservancy!

It is clear that the Trust has a dedicated team of falconers who are supported by many volunteers who give up their time throughout the year. Some of the falconers recount beginning their time at the Conservancy as volunteers, others remember visiting as a child and their interest developing from then. Be they staff, volunteers or visiting public, all are clearly very important to the Hawk Conservancy – as Ashley Smith, Executive Life President says, “We are really passionate about all of the work that we do here at the Trust and without your support none of it would happen.”

This DVD is a great insight into the



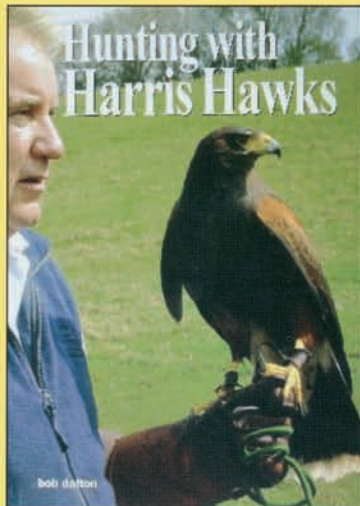
work of the Hawk Conservancy, and there is also the bonus of a montage of some beautiful photographs. If you've never visited before it will give you a good idea of what goes on and I am sure you will want to go and see for yourself. If you've just completed your first visit it will serve as a reminder of the day, featuring many of the characters (both bird and human) that you will have seen during your time there. If you are a frequent visitor, it will remind you of why you return so often – the passion is infectious. Well done to all involved in the production of this excellent DVD.

The Eagles have Landed – Life at the Hawk Conservancy Trust can be obtained via www.hawkconservancy.org, or by calling 01264 773850. It is priced at £10.00 (plus £5 postage).



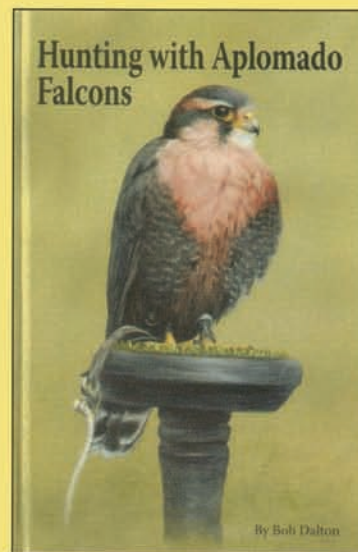
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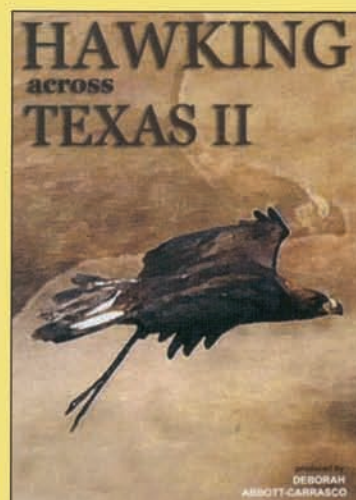
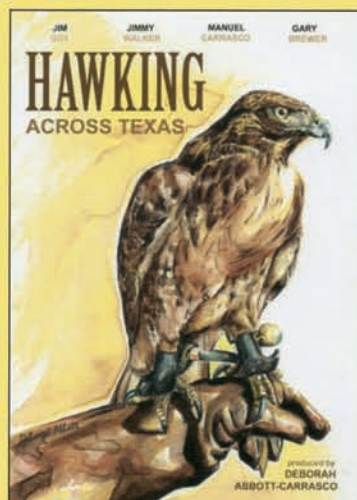
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by Peter Eldrett

A Day With Three Falconers



Colin with Musket waiting for a bolting rabbit

I count myself very lucky being the editor of this publication because I have been invited to cover various fieldmeets not only here in the UK but also overseas. Being a spectator at these events has been very enjoyable and I have made many new friends and acquaintances as a result.

But it was one day in mid January that I received an invitation to attend a fieldmeet that has been an annual event for the last 15 years which takes place, usually in January or February, with just three falconers who have 113 flying seasons between them. They are Jim Chick, Ray Prior and Colin Thomas. I have known Jim and Ray for quite a few years and it was Ray who sold me my first lot of falconry equipment when I obtained my first bird a Harris Hawk called Pepper. Jim I have also known through the Hawk Board as I am my club's representative. However, I did not know Colin who was the one who organizes this annual meet and who was the one who invited me to go along.

We had arranged to meet up at a service station just off the A34 in late January and from there go on to the first flying ground of the day. When we arrived it was unfortunately very foggy and that was the way it stayed all day. The flying ground is very hilly, to say the least, and in some places a mountain goat would not have been out of place.

Featheredge

First to fly was Colin with his Redtail, Featheredge and his dog Musket which is a German Wirehaired Pointer. Jim took along a couple of his ferrets which behaved impeccably all day and it was a pleasure to see such creatures working so hard.

Musket was running the ground to mark a suitable warren where there were rabbits and you had to watch where you were going because of the number of bolt holes. They were all over the place! A ferret was put down a suitable hole and it wasn't long before a rabbit bolted. Featheredge chased but the quarry made its escape and the Redtail flew up into a tree. Colin immediately recalled his hawk back to the fist ready for the next rabbit.

Ferret back in the box, we carried on and Musket was still marking a suitable site. Nothing at home at this one and then we climbed higher where Colin knew there were more warrens to investigate. Jim put a ferret down and Musket was told to sit while we waited for any action. A rabbit bolted downhill and the Redtail was

on its heels. Success – first one in the bag.

Featheredge was back on the fist and another rabbit bolted but this time it went off to the left in parallel to the contours of the hill and disappeared round the corner with the Redtail giving chase. Both rabbit and hawk disappeared in the gloom and Colin had to walk a little way to locate his hawk, but all was well. We then decided to try our luck back down the hill.

After a short while the Redtail got to chase another couple of rabbits but with no luck and so we walked back to the vehicles to put Featheredge, who by this time was very wet due to the weather, back in his box. That was his day finished.

Poppy

Next up was Jim Chick with his Goshawk, Poppy. We quickly found a bury near the base of the hill and Colin volunteered to be on ferret duty. In what seemed no time at all, a rabbit bolted and Poppy left Jim's fist like a bullet. The rabbit didn't get to run very far and Poppy was straight on it. An easy flight for the Goshawk with no real drama.

Hawk back on the fist it was on to the next bury. We walked upwards to find more rabbit holes but unfortunately nothing appeared. On we walked until we found ourselves in a large bowl and this time expectations were high. Ray and I were the 'front stop' if anything appeared and we waited for quite some time while the ferret did her work. Nothing. What a disappointment.

On we went and time was getting on towards lunchtime. Another warren was soon found near some woods and the ferret was put to work. Suddenly a rabbit bolted toward the wood and Poppy was homing in on it. My heart was in my mouth for a split second because there was a wire fence in the way of the hawk but she cleared it without any mishap. The rabbit managed to make its escape and Poppy was found on the ground in the wood behind a fallen tree. Colin was the one who climbed over the fence to retrieve the hawk and Jim invited him to fly Poppy next. We found a couple more buries but there were no more slips to be had.

Muggy

Now it was off to the pub for a pleasant lunch (ham, egg and chips all round), before we went to another flying ground and this time the countryside was of rolling hills and woods and not as steep as the ground we were at earlier in the day.



Colin giving Featheredge a helping hand after a successful flight



Ray Prior and his Harris Hawk Muggy

Ray Prior got out his Harris Hawk, Muggy and his Cocker Spaniel, Milly. We left the vehicles and walked past an area where there were pigs and an electric fence. We now found ourselves in a very wooded area and Ray put Muggy up into a tree and walked on. Now we were going to see a different style of hawking from what we had seen in the morning – hawk following on and spaniel quartering trying to flush the game.

As we walked on, Milly flushed a couple of hen pheasants but Muggy was nowhere near to give chase which was a shame. Then, after moving through thick undergrowth and over a wire fence, we found ourselves in more open country. Muggy was up in a tree and Milly was running through a patch of thorn bushes. Milly flushed a rabbit and all of a sudden Muggy dropped out of the tree and slammed onto the rabbit which no-one had seen or heard. Another one in the bag.

On we went to find some more quarry and came across an area where there was a warren and the ferrets were put to work once more. The warren was in an elevated position and Muggy was again up in a tree. Out came a rabbit and ran in a downhill direction with Muggy on the chase but, unfortunately, she was not close enough for any success.

Ray then called the Harris back onto his fist because we came across a large patch of kale. Milly quartered the area looking for feathered game as Ray also walked through but nothing appeared. Time was getting on and as we walked back to the vehicles we came across a couple more holes and Colin put a ferret down but no quarry was seen.

End of the day

The light was now fading and we headed back to the vehicles. Ray, Colin and Jim all had their hawks out to feed up on the fist and they also had to get their dogs cleaned and dried as much as possible.

Despite the mist and fog it was a very good day and I really enjoyed watching the hawks, ferrets and dogs working. One lesson to be learned is to watch where you walk – Jim found a bolt hole in which to fall over! It was unfortunate that one style of falconry that we didn't see was dog on point, but maybe next time.

I would like to thank Colin, Ray and Jim for inviting me out with them. I thoroughly enjoyed watching three "old hands" practising the sport of falconry and it was a pleasure to join in the banter with them.



Jim Chick with his Goshawk Poppy



The three falconers at the end of the day



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Open Meeting with the Hawk Board

This was held on February 8th at LANTRA House Stoneleigh Park, Coventry, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG

The open meeting with the Hawk Board (HB) was very well attended. The only downside being that many people left it to the last minute to book and the places were limited to only 70 in the LANTRA Building. So some people missed out.

The meeting opened at 10:00am with a short Introduction as to when, why and whom by the HB was formed by Jim Chick.

This was followed by a 20 minutes presentation by Jemima Parry-Jones on

what the Hawk Board had achieved both in the past and recently, what the HB is actually able to do and what it can't do. There were no questions as most people wanted to wait until the open session in the afternoon.

Mark Parker then gave an excellent presentation on how to deal with announced and unannounced inspections by police, AHVLA or the RSPCA. This presentation in the form of an advisory document will be posted on the HB website in the near future. Others such as *The Falconers Magazine & Raptor Conservation Magazine* and the IBR were also interested in publishing it. There were a few helpful comments from the floor.

Graham Irving then went through some of the regulations surrounding the keeping, flying, displaying, travelling and hunting with birds of prey. He put the AHVLA website up on the display and showed people how to find the information and forms that they needed.

Just before lunch Martyn Standley spoke to the attendees about how we could increase the affiliation to the Hawk Board. This was not a new topic to the HB, however it is strongly felt by the HB that we do not truly represent the many people keeping birds of prey and owls, because only the clubs are a part of the HB. Others who benefit from the work the HB does in keeping falconry and the owning and flying of birds of prey as a legal viable pastime actually don't support the HB financially. Also many of those on the HB have already done a great deal of work in the past and have indeed reached their prime already, so more young people need to understand the work and get involved.

Martyn had done a paper for the HB outlining various suggestions and plans. He put these ideas to the floor and after some



very useful discussion, it was agreed that he would go back to his paper, review it in the light of the various comments, add in another group – the rehabilitators, and the HB would publish this widely to gain a response from all bird of prey and owl keepers. Generally the HB was heartened by the positive response to some of the suggestions.

The meeting then broke for a very good sandwich lunch and we would like to thank LANTRA and particularly Lisa for organising the facility and the lunch.

After lunch Lisa Jarvis gave an excellent talk on the LANTRA awards in falconry. She mentioned that she did not think she needed the time allotted, however there were many questions and comments and she was able to field all of them. One outcome was that the floor asked the HB to revisit the methods that people can gain Unit 4 of the award - the hunting. The HB agreed to put this on the next agenda for their meeting in April. One member of the audience said that unless you were in a club or a centre it was easy to feel isolated as a LANTRA Assessor. The HB agreed to make a LANTRA page available on the new website and make sure that all LANTRA updates were posted as soon as they were known.

Martyn Standley then gave a very brief comment on the good and bad of Falconry Forums, pointing out that all of these were monitored by anti- groups, the police, Natural England, the RSPB, RSPCA, AHVLA and other groups as well as interested people from all over the world. There is no need for unpleasantness or rudeness on these sites. People need to be very careful about what they say and what photographs they put up. Forums can be very helpful, they can also be very unpleasant, put us

all in a very bad light if people are not careful about their comments, and be very dangerous.

The meeting was then opened up to the floor. There was much discussion about how to control some of the very poor standards of public display that are now beginning to appear. Owls tethered in shopping malls with no protection, being used to raise money, tethered too close. Birds in poor condition, birds being put on children's and adults' heads, being flown to children with no gloves and so on. All this was roundly condemned by the participants and discussion was on-going about how to improve standards using the HB and potential affiliation, and codes of practise.

Steve Williams came forward and read out a statement that he had prepared about his feeling on the Hawk Board. The participants then strongly questioned him and most felt that his objections to the HB were not valid. The members of the British Falconers Club (BFC) council pointed out that his views were most definitely not the views of the BFC.

There was much discussion from the floor, someone wanted to know what the status was and what was happening with all those birds who were not covered by any licensing regulation such as Harris Hawks. The HB answered that it really did not know because there was no traceability. There were questions as to whether or not falconers should be licensed, but it was pointed out that the government was trying to reduce legislation and it was highly unlikely that this would happen.

Lisa mentioned that there were possibilities of the LANTRA Award being upgraded to a more recognised qualification, and that by doing LANTRA eventually we all hoped that this would

improve the standards of bird of prey keeping and husbandry.

There was a question asked that could there be another element to the LANTRA award that covered first aid for birds and rehabilitation - that is going to be looked at.

The Independent Bird Register (IBR) went through the figures of birds lost and found which was interesting to the audience and answered a few questions. Barbara asked that even if birds were not registered on the IBR, please always let her know if one is lost.

It was asked how the Hawk Board could have a stronger regulatory role. The HB agreed to look into this and perhaps run it by government departments in the future.

People pointed out that there were too many birds being bred and so that they got into the hands of people who should not have them. The breeders there pointed out that once a bird left their premises they could not control the outcome, but that all of them in the room asked for qualification and housing before allowing birds to leave them.

There was a general feeling that was extremely positive. Feed back forms were filled in.

Jim Chick said that we as a country (including Scotland!) were extremely lucky in comparison to the restrictions that other EU countries had to comply with and that Self Regulation comes at a price and a responsibility to behave in a fashion that is accountable to all.

The Hawk Board thanked LANTRA and all those who had made the effort to attend the meeting. Those there then asked for the meeting to become an annual one and the Hawk Board agreed.

Everyone left at about 4:00pm to drive home.

The Objects of The Hawk Board

(hereinafter referred to as the 'Hawk Board') are:-

To liaise between keepers of all Falconiformes, (diurnal birds of prey) and Strigiformes, (all Owls) hereinafter referred to as 'Hawks', the Government and other bodies, in the best long term interests of the 'hawks' and the keepers.

To encourage those who keep 'hawks' for any purpose to adhere to appropriate and approved Guidelines and Codes

of Conduct, and to seek to promote increasingly high standards of husbandry and conservation.

To collate scientific evidence to safeguard and promote falconry and the keeping of 'hawks'.

Where do most problems for falconers and raptor keepers

come from? What are the problems that we face?

- Increasing amounts of legislation from both the UK and even more from Europe
- Poor paperwork design and constant changes to the paperwork
- A lack of understanding by those making the legislation

- A lack of understanding from those dealing with the legislation
- A bias from those enforcing the legislation
- A lack of science based reason for legislation
- Poor access to information, the DEFRA website is not good or user friendly
- Frustration at not being listened to when we have problems in complying with the laws, or being asked for information that we consider to be unnecessary

Other Problems

Failure to comply with requirements from raptor keepers

- Illegal taking of wild birds of prey
- Poor Practices by a small minority of raptor keepers thus letting the rest down

What the Hawk Board Can't Do

- Anything that requires powers:-
Such as making sure that falconry practices are a good standard
That people are not putting birds on the heads of the general public
That people are flying eagles sensibly
Change regulations or the law, other than advise and complain
- Force government departments to put forward changes or suggestions to CITES
- Force changes in regulations
- Force changes in Statutory laws
- Force raptor keepers to follow guidelines or advice

What the Hawk Board Can Do as an Advisory Body

- Liaise between bird of prey keepers and AHVLA to highlight problems
- Push to have regulations that are not working changed - note that is regulations, not legal statutes, that needs an Act to be changed in parliament
- Speak to the various government departments and advisors with the voice of raptor keepers, if raptor keepers let us know what they need discussing
- Follow up meetings with written examples of problems
- Keep a watching brief on potential and pending legislation that may affect

bird of prey keeping and falconry – of which there is a huge and increasing amount, particularly from Europe

- Read, understand and answer consultation documents that are released prior to changes in the law or regulations that affect birds of prey keepers and falconers
- Speak to Ministers about problems and how to resolve them
- Liaise with other Groups such as S.U.N. and I.A.F. to give raptor keepers a larger representative stake holder group and therefore more power to change policies and be listened to.

What sort of things has the Hawk Board achieved in the past

- Deregulation of non-indigenous birds of prey under the WCA, followed by deregulation of a number of indigenous species. This was done by a combination of suggestions such as the use of CITES A20 documents to form the basis of paper tracing.
- This deregulation has reduced costs to raptor keepers by a substantial amount, although some may not agree with this, just imagine the constantly rising cost of keeping all those birds that are now not regulated.
- Facilitated the system allowing free movement of birds within the EU
- Fought the rising costs of paperwork for birds of prey and are still doing it. We have recently pointed out that as AHVLA has reduced staffing numbers, then the review on costs needs to be revisited, and indeed that is happening.
- Followed up on questions asked to government departments on a regular basis
- Supported scientific research in grants for veterinary research into illnesses in falconry birds.
- Supported the BFC for Leversham project
- Safeguarded food supplies for birds of prey
- Supported the Grey Partridge project
- Supported BIAZA in the vulture project
- Worked in Conjunction with the IWCO for intangible cultural heritage and this is continuing
- Involved in Invasive Species legislation

and Hybrid legislation

- Work with FACE, IAF and the Countryside Alliance
- Designed and wrote the modules for Lantra Award Scheme
- Has for many years up until now organised the Game Fair to present falconry to the general public to make it the acceptable face of falconry
- Using the vehicle of the CFF which is under the auspices of the Hawk Board, fund-raised for the protection of falconry and raptor keeping
- Represented falconry at schools, shows, fairs and so on all around the country
- Various members of the Hawk Board have visited clubs and spoken to them on what the Hawk Board is doing, updating them on the current threats, the legal and political situation.
- Responded to the media when adverse publicity has come to the fore
- Countered incorrect and slanderous claims from the media
- Offered written examples of conflicts between various bits of legislation that affect falconers to government departments
- Queried AHVLA and DEFRA on the potential Buzzard Cull and its justification, we were told there was not going to be one!
- Put forward people's individual problems with AHVLA to see if we can help. A Paperwork trail is crucial in this.
- Discuss quarry licensing problems with Natural England – recent one being Herring Gulls on Land fill.
- Advising and training on the use of mouth swabbing for DNA testing of birds, rather than more invasive methods.

What has the Hawk Board done in the last couple of years

- Had meetings with the Law Commission and subsequently put forward changes that are needed in wildlife legislation to the Law Society Review (these documents are usually between 50 and 100 pages to go through). On-going
- Put forward suggested changes in the Red Tape Challenge
- Attended numerous meetings with

- police (PAW), AHVLA, DEFRA, JNCC, SUN, JGL and more
- Funded Sun to go to European Meetings as our representative
- Attended Chester Forensic Science Conference . The conference has asked for a liaison from the different groups , Hawk Board is now represented
- Worked through Hawk Board members on improving quarry licensing with Natural England
- Fought AHVLA on the changes in granting AIO's for Wild Disabled Birds of Prey and got them to agree to be more reasonable. HB has produced guidelines for AHVLA to utilise.
- Have been working on redesigning and upgrading the Hawk Board Website
- Have invited observers on a regular basis to come to Hawk Board meetings to gain a greater understanding of how it works and perhaps find potential new members for the Hawk Board.
- Still arguing the use of the term commercial with birds of prey
- Still arguing the reasons for establishing a Domestic Bred Category to fit in with CITES
- Still fighting the bans on importing birds of prey from outside the EU due to Avian Influenza
- Have recently pointed out that we believe JNCC is outside its remit – in no uncertain terms.
- Querying the reasons for species being chosen to only be granted Transition AIO's rather than Specimen specific – still awaiting an answer
- Questioned AHVLA on announced inspections re the return of unused semi complete AIO's. Pointed out that two of the establishments visited with a significant number of officials had in fact returned the said documents by recorded delivery six months previously. Because of this query that practice ceased.
- HB has been pushing for paperwork offences with captive bred birds to become a fixed penalty civil offence
- Still discussing how the membership of the Hawk Board could be opened up to other groups
- IAF – New president, who is much more forward looking, HB is now significantly assisting with the costs of the Dods Service which oversee **all** potential legislation going through Brussels and can pull out all information relating to birds of prey and falconry to act as an early warning system to IAF, FACE and HB.
- Enormous amounts of information are coming through with threats to falconry through invasive species lists, the banning of keeping non domestic animals in captivity by individuals, travel of livestock which includes birds of prey, travel of dogs, hunting and many other aspects that are very worrying and have much bigger lobbies than us in Europe.
- The Lantra figures and new modules are frequently discussed
- Conducted interviews for the new coordinators position
- Discussed the Eagle Guidelines that the BFC Eagle Group adhere to, as the HB had been contacted with concerns about some eagle flying.
- AHVLA: We have gone through a difficult period in our relationship with AHVLA, we suspect due to the secondment of police to the department, which we felt severely tainted attitudes within not only the Department, but also within their advisors. Meetings were not attended, relationships strained and generally the HB did not have the good working relationship that it had previously and which Stakeholders should have with any government department that is serving them.
- We are pleased to say that this has been addressed by AHVLA and the working relationship between Hawk Board has improved enormously with both sides able to listen and work together to solve problems where possible.

Hawk Board affiliation scheme

The Hawk Board are said to represent all bird of prey keepers (estimated at 25,000) and yet there are only around 1,800 people (falconers) that are actually affiliated to the Hawk Board.

The Hawk Board have discussed the possibility of introducing additional categories of affiliation to the HB other than through affiliated Falconry Clubs.

These proposals are all designed to help raise standards and awareness within the Falconry and Bird of Prey Community and to bring more people together under one umbrella organisation.

Please contact the Hawk Board if you would be interested in joining one of these schemes.

Our outline proposal encompasses five categories

1. Display “falconers”, including BoP Centres and Experience providers
2. Breeders
3. Landfill Sites/bird control
4. Individual Falconers
5. Rehabilitators

1. Display Falconers, Bird of Prey Centres, etc

Develop a BoP Display Team Membership Scheme. First of all we produce a Mandate/ Declaration/Code of practise. Items covered within the declaration would include basic, but very necessary topics. For example; Welfare; are the birds tethered at a suitable distance from each other. Do the birds have access to water. Are

the birds protected from dogs. Are the transport boxes cleaned out daily and so on. Mandatory use of Telemetry. Then we could move onto the display itself which should not be “gimmicky” or involve manoeuvres that are likely to endanger the bird. The narrative accompanying the display, although it should be entertaining, should largely be educational and so on. When we have developed a satisfactory document, we then ask BoP display teams to sign up to the declaration and agree to be audited. For a nominal signing on fee followed by an annual fee of £xxx, the BoP team then become affiliated to the HB and are permitted to use the HB logo on their websites etc for promotional purposes.

A list of affiliated BoP display teams to be posted on the HB website with a

full page colour advert for each with links to google/other search engines etc to be established.

We then write to as many Game Fair/Country Fair organisers as we can, informing them of the accreditation scheme and urge them to employ BoP display teams that have signed up to our scheme, rather than risk employing others that may not be of the required standard.

When we have established a Bop display team list, the members of said list would get to vote in one of their members to be their HB Rep and take a seat on the board, thereby giving them a chance to get involved in decision making as well as being able to bring their concerns or ideas to the table.

This group would also include BoP centres and providers of experience days or similar and the declaration/code of practise mentioned above would be adapted to include these. BoP display teams and BoP Centres are, to the public, the face of falconry. We should be attempting to raise the standards.

2. Breeders

In a similar fashion to the display "falconers" scheme, we set up a breeders category of membership, again with affiliation to the HB and again with their names being listed on the HB website accompanied by a full page colour advert and being linked to search engines. We ask HB affiliated club members to direct prospective customers to the list of breeders in the scheme and with over 1800 club falconers being affiliated to the HB, there is a good chance of increasing business opportunities.

We develop a declaration in conjunction with breeders and that the breeders sign onto which would contain a set of criteria that should be met by the prospective purchaser before he is sold a hawk. Standard questions would be asked, such as, what experience do you have, if none, who is your mentor (name and contact details required). Is your accommodation suitable, have you undertaken the LANTRA Assessment, do you own Telemetry etc, etc.

The breeders themselves would have to declare exactly how any given hawk was reared, its lineage and what diet it was fed on. They would have to agree not to pass hawks onto purchasers without the relevant documentation being in place. We

charge the breeder a nominal signing on fee of £xx, followed by £xx annual subscription. From one of their number, they elect a HB Rep who can bring concerns to the table and vote on future HB policy. If by operating this scheme it stops a hawk falling into the wrong hands and being lost or kept in sub-standard conditions, then it will have been a worthwhile exercise.

3. Pest Control/Landfill

In a similar fashion to the above, in conjunction with Pest Control companies, we create a declaration/code of conduct for landfill/pest control operators. Content to cover welfare issues, transportation, off site accommodation, training and experience of their employees, mandatory use of Telemetry etc, etc. Following an audit, they are accepted as an affiliated member and pay their annual fee. Again, we list their company details on the HB website accompanied by an advert and links to search engines.

They would be permitted to use the HB logo on their websites and could use their HB accreditation to demonstrate competence and compliance to potential clients.

4. Individual Falconers

By individual falconers, I mean falconers

that are not members of a falconry club, perhaps because they prefer to hawk alone, or perhaps because they have tried club membership and decided it is not for them. A code of conduct to be drawn up and signed onto which will cover welfare, mandatory use of telemetry etc. The fee to join would be the same as an affiliated club member at £5.00 per year. What you would be doing by signing up as an individual falconer, is to show your support for better welfare standards, better falconry practices and you would also be helping to fund an organisation that is in place to protect our sport. As in the other previously mentioned categories, the group of individual falconers get to elect one of their number to represent them at HB meetings.

5. Rehabilitators

Similarly to our other proposals, we create a Rehabilitators Scheme. Members to write a code of practise for dealing with injured or sick Raptors. Items to be included could be general welfare, housing, seeking vets advice, administering drugs, general first aid and aftercare, rehoming or releasing back to the wild.

Once again this group would elect a representative to attend Hawk Board meetings to share their experiences or concerns.

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Getting to Grips with UHF Telemetry

I'm a recent convert to UHF telemetry having spent many years with 173 and 216MHz. My conversion to the higher frequency of 434MHz didn't go exactly as planned and the first few days of playing around with the new instrument left me quite puzzled. Perhaps I was expecting the UHF receiver to be a supercharged version of my trusty 173 but in reality, they are as different as chalk and cheese. There was no doubting that whilst my hands were fiddling around with 434, my brain was still locked into 173 and my poor old ears were suspended somewhere in the middle.

Right from the mid 1990's, my use of telemetry was at best shaky and I admit freely that in the early days I considered the concept to be something of a joke. Here I was with this primitive instrument, tracking not the hawk itself but always searching for the detached transmitter. I only purchased my first set so as not to be deemed politically incorrect at field meets and never once used it to track any wayward hawks. Although I'd owned a set for over 10 years, I didn't really think much about telemetry until I got a Goshawk.

I remembered that one of my friends lost his Goshawk and we searched for it long and hard. It was to no avail though and the un-tagged bird was never sighted again. This set me thinking that perhaps my approach to telemetry was a little cavalier and that maybe I should buckle down and finally get to grips with it. My ancient 216 set was replaced with a good quality 173 and I felt well prepared for any tracking situation that may arise. As things turned out though, this Goshawk had absolutely no intention of leaving home and was as loyal and predictable as any of my other hawks had been. So in the end it was never the telemetry challenge I thought

it might be and as a result, my tracking skills did not develop.

Telemetry changed my way of hawking

A male Gyr/Saker changed all that though . . . and in grand style. So from being very low key, my use of telemetry suddenly got very high key and things would never be the same again. This crow-hunting pursuit falcon took me on many guided tours and the limitations of this 173 frequency set were becoming very apparent. Several times I felt I working too close to the limits of its capabilities and with the volume inevitably turned up high in an attempt to get a signal, the level of background noise was a real nuisance. So although the 173 set had proved more than adequate for my needs as an austringer, it could not live up to my aspirations as a falconer.

Another aspect of the 173 set that constantly rubbed me up the wrong way, was its sheer size. It attracted far too much curiosity from the general public and this tended to make me feel self conscious about using it in populated areas. So a compact construction was easily number one on my list of desirable features, followed closely by the ability to deploy quickly and put away without too much fuss. I was determined this time, to make telemetry my 'first line of defence' rather than the more usual 'avenue of last resort.'

A few UHF units fitted the bill in my quest for easy operation but the combination of Marshall UHF100 receiver and RT-UHF transmitter ticked more boxes than any other and almost before I knew it, the postman was handing me a padded envelope. The package was so small I couldn't believe that all the things I had ordered would be in it. They were though and I was

soon admiring the neat assembly of the half-size yagi. My first impressions were very favourable.

The six individual aerial rods that form the three elements of the yagi on this receiver are spring loaded which makes deploying and collapsing them very simple. The front antenna slides forwards and backwards along a boom and this device also acts as the trigger for four of the six spring-loaded aerials, which flip out in the blink of an eyelid. The two remaining aerials just need the tips lifting out of their retaining cups so that they too can spring into action. So well done to Marshall as they have obviously put a lot of thought into the ergonomics of their UHF receiver.

With all three elements of the yagi deployed, the footprint is slightly more than an A4 sheet of paper but gets even smaller when the sliding boom is fully retracted. This is a nice touch that makes it easier to stow in the car without disturbing the aerials if it will be needed again later. The Marshall UHF100 setup has two other features that appealed to me: the ability to switch between near/medium/far, and the short antenna length (7" or 178mm) of the RT UHF transmitter.

Comparing the old with the new

I arranged some static tests to compare the new system with the old but this revealed nothing conclusive. To get anything meaningful, the transmitters needed to be moving around and one day later, Eddie the Lanneret was standing on his digital scales, wondering why he had a 173 transmitter attached to one jess and a 434 attached to the other. Unlike the static tests, this shootout would be under our normal day-to-day conditions of flying, which for Eddie, is not hunting.

Eddie soon got into his act and sped off in search of some decent lift by first checking out one barn then relocating to a better one. I followed Eddie's progress with the new 434 and was surprised how the tone and pitch of the signal changed as he flew back and forth between the various obstacles. This was so different to the 173, which when turned on for the sake of comparison, gave a signal you could almost describe as monotone. At this relatively short distance to the two transmitters, the signals received from both were very good and at this early stage I could not say that one was any better than the other. This puzzled me as I was fully expecting the 434 to have delivered a decisive knockout blow.

Slightly disappointed at this result and because I was not yet totally convinced by the 434, I continued running both frequencies together. As time went on though, it dawned on me that the 434 was trying its best to tell me about Eddie's progress but I just wasn't listening. If I was going to get anywhere with the 434, the 173 had to be ignored unless really needed and after that, I concentrated solely on the UHF. The instruction booklet was picked up again but this time, I read all the words and not just the 'get you started' page. Oops!

Little by little, I began to understand the sound picture that the equipment was creating for me and at last I could visualise Eddie's path around the radio obstacles, even when he and the terrain could not be seen. Things were moving in the right direction now and quite by chance, an opportunity arose to settle the battle of the airwaves once and for all. Due to some local activity, I switched our usual flying ground in favour of some land 2 miles away. Eddie god bless him, decided otherwise and something in the way he left the glove, told me he was preferring a different piece of land.

This didn't worry me unduly as he'd never been out of transmitter range, even with the old 173 and in any case, tracking a falcon that wants to be found is a world apart from tracking one that doesn't. And of course, I had two independent systems to play with as well. I followed him visually by



Half size yagi folded away

monocular until he was out of sight, then got the Field Marshall out of its holster and immediately set the range switch to 'far.' Knowing the terrain very well, I followed Eddie's assumed progress across the fields for what I guessed was about 1.5 miles, then he did a right turn behind a small hill and if I had read the signal correctly, passed it by and continued on his way.

By this time, I had guessed his most likely destination and the ups and downs of the signal sort-of confirmed this. When the direction of the signal eventually became steady, I could picture the little rascal riding the westerly breeze over one of his favourite lift sites. At this moment, the signal tone of the 434 was changing all the time suggesting to me that Eddie was still airborne but flying in a confused and random pattern, which for him, is quite normal.

Now that Eddie's position was relatively static, I switched to the 173 to see what it made of the situation. I got a reasonable signal given the supposed straight line distance of 3 miles but with a lot of irritating background noise and no way could I get an inkling of where he was or what he was up to. In this particular circumstance, the best the 173 could do was to indicate that Eddie was generally towards the South. The 434 however, was giving me a much clearer signal and a direction that indicated

Eddie was probably over a group of farm buildings that I knew very well.

Deciding which system to use

During the four mile drive by road to this new location, I felt I already knew which of the two systems had the best eyesight and right on cue, there was Eddie in the middle of his routine as I approached the farm. I stepped out of the car and just like he always does, he galloped over for a feed, totally unaware that the battle of the airwaves had been settled, or that the boss was feeling abandoned.

Since that time, which is not really all that long ago, I have gained a lot more confidence in using the UHF and I no longer use the old set. With time I will get better at interpreting the changing tones of the signal and as I do, my enjoyment of it will grow also. I would love to get to the point where my understanding of the sound picture becomes automatic and without the need to concentrate so much. If it's possible for old dogs to learn new tricks, I'll get there in the end!

Looking back over the short time of my switch to UHF, it is clear to me that I brought far too much baggage of the 173 with me and this gave me difficulties I did not anticipate. There is something warm and reassuring about the old 173 unit because it always gave me a signal when I needed it the most and I have



Ready to go

much to thank it for. However, what it cannot do is lead me to the transmitter in anything like a straight line and when you are burning daylight, this can be a darned nuisance.

A fact of life I did not know at the beginning of this exercise, is that the 173 MHz frequency signals are quite bendy so they tend to flow around the radio obstacles. This is ok in one sense because you are likely to get a signal most of the time but its direction pointing ability can be confusingly poor. By comparison, the 434 MHz signal is quite stiff and only bends very slightly around the radio obstacles. This is the phenomenon that causes the signal to vary in tone and pitch so much but with the advantage of superior direction pointing and range estimating.

I find that if the volume of the 434 receiver is set to the absolute minimum, I get a faint beep that points towards the transmitter, plus or minus let's say, about 20°. It's not always 100% reliable but it does give a good workable guide that sets you off in the right direction. So all these issues, coupled with the limited range of the 173 unit, make it significantly inferior to the new and much more powerful 434. So in my mind now, the matter is settled beyond question.

It cannot be overstated also, how much more convenient the shorter antennae of the UHF transmitters are in

practice. The antenna of the RT UHF is still wonderfully straight and this is a far cry from the 173 antenna, which is 75mm longer than the 434 and soon gets kinked and twisted. To some extent I consider transmitter antennae to be a consumable item, so it's not the end of the world when they eventually get trashed. You always need a spare of course and when I checked the prices of different manufacturers replacements, I was surprised at the large variations in cost. So some are good value while others seem a bit steep to me. Fortunately, antenna replacements for my chosen transmitter are very reasonably priced.

To get the best out of this new equipment though, I will need to purchase one more item. Living so close to the high water mark of Morecambe Bay, strong winds are a fact of life that I and my birds must live with. I rarely shield my birds from the onshore winds that can blast this part of Lancashire for days and weeks at a time. The shriek of high wind spoils the telemetry experience, so I realised pretty quickly that pair of headphones will enhance what is already good.

Telemetry user is very important

This wonder frequency cannot do everything though and I still feel that the determination of the telemetry

user is just as important as anything else. In the past, I haven't always been as diligent as I should have been and reaped the frustration that brings. My aim nowadays when tracking a misplaced hawk, is to get the job done on 'day one' no matter how inconvenient or tricky that might be. I practice using the new telemetry at every opportunity, even when the falcon is in clear view or the weather bad. This must be the best insurance we falconers can possibly have.

Something that is really fun with new telemetry set is when Eddie gets into a combat situation with the local 'black stuff.' It's a rollercoaster of a ride and the speakers on the receiver get really excited. As well as being a good exercise for Eddie's flying skills, it's a good exercise for me as I listen to signals going up and down the scale and relate this to what is happening in the air. This bit of fun has taught me lots about interpreting the ups and downs of the signal.

Hard work paying off

So what started out to be something of a chore in my early days of using telemetry, has now become quite enjoyable. I know much more about Eddie's private life now and the kind of places he sneaks off to when he thinks I can't see him. It's great to know from which bit of scenery he will finally emerge and with this advanced warning, there is ample time to douse the receiver before welcoming him to a garnished glove. How cool is that?

It's the last day of 2013 as I put the finishing touches to this article. Eddie has just had his after-session bath to get mud off of the tips of his wings and tail and we look forward to the end of the shooting season when we can walk all over the land without restriction. He is more mature now and I know from past experience that this doesn't always mean easier. I've got a funny feeling that to stay one jump ahead in 2014, I'll have to be a little smarter than I was in 2013, but, with my new electronic toy . . . perhaps I will be!

Kayla our Bald Eagle

Kayla hatched, along with her sister, in April 1990 somewhere in the wilds of Canada. The information received about her and her sister when they were offered to Eagle Heights, is that they were illegally taken from their nest at an early age. By doing this and hand feeding them, those concerned created two birds that grew up believing themselves to be more human than bird. When this came to the attention of the authorities and the birds were confiscated, attempts were then made to release them back into the wild. Unfortunately, due to the fact that they now had a strong association with humans as providers of food, and lacked the knowledge of how to act as wild eagles, as soon as times got tough they would terrorise the local townspeople hoping to get fed. This of course didn't run well with the locals. Although they didn't want anything negative to happen to the pair, there was a high demand for their capture and talk of re-homing/relocating the two.

Studied at veterinary college

They were eventually captured and taken back into captivity where they were brought to a veterinary college where the students studied them as part of their course work. Although they were well cared for, they were handled by inexperienced people and as Bald Eagles are notoriously stropky they soon discovered that they were the boss! Once they knew this, and most were very wary of them, they got more and more aggressive until nobody would go near them, especially Kayla's sister.

The dilemma now was what to do with two out of control Eagles. Fortunately Eagle Heights has a good relationship with Canadian Zoos who knew of our captive breeding success, and how well our other trained Bald Eagle flew in our public educational displays. Thanks to this, we received a call from Metro Toronto Zoo and our director, Alan Ames, was asked if he "was prepared to take on two psychotic Bald Eagles." At which Alan jumped at the



Kayla the Bald Eagle

chance and replied "No problem, we'll sort them out".

The Canadian export permits were duly issued and the import permits applied for. Now came the problems, anyone who has had to deal with the bone headed administrators of the EU regulations will understand. The process took so long that Kayla's sister was put to sleep! When Alan Ames was told of the news that Kayla was due to suffer the same fate as her sister if the UK wildlife authorities didn't get their act together, Alan hit the roof. After a very angry telephone call and threatening to go to the newspapers, the import permit was issued the next day!

Alan then jumped on a plane to Canada, collected Kayla and brought her back four days later. Once her 30 day quarantine was completed the fun began.

Apprentice to Crystal Palace professional

It took a whole year to train Kayla, using reward only positive behaviour training,

to be the Eagle she is today and after a tremendous amount of hard work she was finally ready to face an audience and be flown in our educational shows. Over the years Kayla has been flown in demonstrations and shows all over the country.

But country shows and fetes aren't the only elements to Kayla. She's definitely no stranger to the odd bit of film and studio work from movie sets to photo shoots.

One of her biggest moments was having the gratification (mainly for the handlers) of being the Eagle on the cover of the Kings of Leon Album, which we all like to boast about now and again.

Apart from being an international super star Kayla has her own occupation. For those of you that don't know Kayla is actually the live mascot for Crystal Palace Football Club.

We were approached in 2010 by the club whose team are known as "The Eagles" and asked if we had a suitable eagle to fly up and down the pitch as a grand entrance for the team. We

of course jumped at the chance and introduced them to Kayla who performed tremendously and has now proceeded to open for the team at every home game since then.

The "Crystals" (the clubs cheerleaders) were then introduced to the performance and now both Eagle and Cheerleaders work together in creating an even grander entrance for the Team in which Kayla flies over (and even sometimes through) the dance routine.

Kayla is adored by the many fans of the Team and they all rise to the chance of having their photo taken with the bird before and after the games and even, if they've got the muscle, having a go at holding her

Female Bald Eagles weigh in at around 10 to 12 pounds. They have a powerful two metre set of wings which they take great pleasure in beating you round the head with.

Along with their wings they have a large serrated beak and feet the size of a human hand with needle sharp talons, all of which Kayla uses daily to keep her keepers and handlers in check.



Kayla the mascot at Crystal Palace Football Club

Around the grounds of Eagle Heights, in which she now resides, Kayla is known for being a bit of a madame. She doesn't hesitate to give you a bite or a whack with her talons to keep you on your toes but all these traits make Kayla who she is and we wouldn't want it any other way.

When flying or handling her, the


keepers at Eagle Heights must always make sure she doesn't know she has got the better of them (even if you are bleeding from multiple wounds). Once she takes an inch she mustn't know she can take a mile so they have to hold back the pain and put on a smile and deal with her antics (in the end she is a female!).



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Sparrowhawks

Part 2 **Notes on the Field and Other Behaviours**

Despite taking Max from a second clutch and hoping for a slight reduction in cover, entering still proved fairly complicated. It took around 10 days before we were successful, thankfully throughout this time he remained biddable and showed little in the way of frustration. His weight was roughly 140 grams (finally settling at a top weight of 170 to 175 grams in November) and we were having up to a dozen quality flights at legal quarry on nearly every outing. Although it is preferable to get a sparrowhawk entered

as soon as possible, these 10 days were not wasted as it piqued his devotion to the glove, solidifying recall and allowed me to finish our sessions with him on the ground and feeding on the lure. All of this instilled a routine and a general level of obedience which is required with any sparrowhawk.

Despite careful handling during imprinting and continued anti-carrying when in the field, his first kill was hair-raising as he took it in a drainage ditch. This in and of itself would not normally be a problem as the hawk can be easily retrieved. In this instance and out of

extreme anger/excitement he decided to fly a short distance and land at the entrance of a 20 foot tunnel running under five feet of clay. It was wide enough for him to easily fly into and at worst become stuck and at best feed up for an hour only to fly away and be lost. Fortunately I had a long flushing stick, so instead of jumping into the ditch I slowly lowered the end pinning down one of his jesses while partially blocking his path into the pipe. I was then able to lower myself into the ditch, make in, place Max and his prize onto the glove and feed him his full rations at the kill site.



Max being alert looking for his quarry



Hawking companions waiting to go



Conditions limit Max

Over the entirety of the season and with any further success Max only carried twice. This was simply due to his speed and field conditions. The first case was over low cover where he mid-aired his prize and flew approximately 150 yards to a hedge and sat under the cover of the hawthorn pluming his quarry. My approach was slow and considered and he was happy to be secured and then step up onto the glove with his kill. The second instance saw him take his prize (once again in mid-air) over a pond before splashing down into the water. The freezing plunge startled Max and he took off for the bankside cover only to be bumped by the dog running in to investigate. From the reeds he once again took flight and landed in the top of a tree with the kill in one foot. He was so stable I was able to climb the tree, inch out onto the branch and secure him to the glove and climb down. In these examples carrying was not in any way connected to fear and was therefore entirely forgivable.

With regard to flight style of the sparrowhawk family, the musket only really differs from the spar over the first 100 yards. I am adamant that with all things equal, the musket is far faster over these shorter distances.

Max's aggression and tenacity was such that throughout the 2013/14 season I remember only ever having a handful of flights that resulted in Max setting his wings and pulling off the chase. The best flights rarely resulted in a kill and on several occasions in both windy and still conditions he pursued both blackbird and thrush with tremendous style, determination and characteristic speed. One flight he intently followed a cleanly flushed bird and put it to some grass cover 70 yards from the point of slip. As it dumped he went vertical, folded over, stooped and struck out like a miniature goshawk. Unfortunately he missed, naturally re-flushing the passerine. As the bird exited the grass tuft, Max took to the wing a second time following it at stunning speed before hitting the cover barely a second behind it. The total length of flight was between 100 to 150 yards in full view and over clear ground. On another occasion Max pursued his quarry to a hedge, missed his target and looped up into the sky. He then briefly soared overhead only to stoop like a falcon from about 30 or 40ft when the songbird was re-flushed.

During the early season we also had astonishingly quick flights on lowland lark. All larks were pursued with intent



Max in very cold pond water

in a straight line with Max following them into the sky before being beaten at various heights. He came close on many occasions until around November when unfortunately they became far too strong and clever. With flights of this calibre and in order to maintain his behaviour, focus and flight style he was fed full rations and the day called to an end.

Of the 20 plus flights that resulted in a kill, they always happened quickly and over a short distance (50 to 60 yards). The quarry was generally caught mid-air and mopped up with ease. In each case Max was always secured and allowed to feed on the ground before being transferred with the kill onto the glove and fed both the wild quarry and minced quail until fully sated. Rewarding heavily from kills and for outstanding effort maintained his focus, deflected innate aggression away from me and out towards all quarry.

For the newcomer and for those

who have never imprinted small accipiters then it may be of interest to briefly discuss behaviours likely to be encountered while hunting. I have regularly experienced mantling, aggressive footing and other various imprint foibles when in the field. The most common problem discussed by those contemplating the imprint route is noise. Calling is a primary behaviour unlocked by the process of imprinting so no matter how perfect you are at this stage and no matter how well you have broken a food association as a chick, you will absolutely experience consistent calling during the first few months. As Nigel King quite rightly put it to me; *“if wild parents cannot stop them calling, then what hope have we got?”*

Stopping the screaming

The key component in preventing natural noise from becoming incessant, mal-adjusted screaming is to kill regularly

and consistently. Once killing, the hawk will begin to look outwards and slowly develop an independence of mind. If it does not kill consistently it will become highly frustrated at failure as well as learning that no matter how poorly it flies it will always be fed by you. Success breeds success and most issues in the first few months can be eradicated with accurate weight control and killing consistently.

One interesting observation regarding the behaviour of the immature imprint sparrowhawk is their inclination to severely spook and become lost mid to halfway through the season. As has happened to me with both spars and muskets the hawking can be excellent up until November or December. Then suddenly an incident will occur in the field that creates a highly ‘scatty’ hawk that will often spend a night at hack or even worse (if the sparrowhawk is foolish enough to fly without telemetry) be lost



completely. If in the first few months of the imprint's life they stay out overnight or refuse to recall it is often a simple case of their weight being fractionally too high. However both myself and several other respected members of *Spavitters Facebook* (a dedicated sparrowhawk forum) have noticed that 'spookiness' of this type relates directly to a first year spar or musket developing in maturity as the season progresses. There seems to be a point as they grow and become more and more proficient in killing when they use any excuse to suddenly become highly fearful and lack obedience. I personally believe this type of behaviour finds a parallel with that of the wild sparrowhawk. At a certain point in their natural development, sparrowhawks need to be free from their parents and push out into the wild on their own. This is no doubt triggered by environmental factors, a high quality diet and a sudden (perhaps hormonal) burst of fear.

Just after the Christmas break Max was on weight and I slipped him at a cleanly flushed cock blackbird. He pursued it with vigour over a hedge, through a graveyard, before being beaten and looping up onto a church tower. Suddenly the bells let out a huge and wondrous peel, spooking Max over a barn and across a severely flooded River Severn. I tracked him down and got a fixed point in some willows 200 yards away across the heavily flowing river.

After calling and swinging a lure for roughly 40 minutes (with no response), I did the only thing I knew had worked in the past. I walked back to the car and went home for an hour. Just on dusk I returned and received a new, far more powerful signal from further down the bank. Max had done exactly what I thought he would do and had come looking for me. He had flown back over the river and was now in a tree in the middle of a huge flood plain. As he was on weight I felt sure he would return to the lure, so wading up to my waist I slowly made my way towards him. I inched closer to his position with a lure string wrapping round my feet and telemetry above my head trying not to slip into the flowing current. I was about 6 feet from him before he screamed and flew off to a small coppice a few hundred yards away. It was now nearly dark so I felt confident in leaving him out overnight as it was cold and I knew he would be more responsive in the morning. I returned before dawn, got a clear signal and then wasted a few hours spooking him and watching him tree hop in a huge circle. He was more or less acting like a wild hawk and viewed me as a strange lumbering idiot which he needed to avoid. Despite being fully imprinted and having notched up a dozen kills Max was deeply suspicious of me. It was a long time before he settled in the perfect position and I was able to hide behind a bush and throw out the lure prompting a positive response.

Once on the ground Max 'snapped out' of his wild and wondrous trance, but it did take a couple of days before I felt confident to return to the field. It has to be noted that with a second, third and fourth season spar, this type of 'spookiness' and loss is highly unlikely. With mature sparrowhawks of either gender I have not experienced it or even noted such a high level physiological fear. Fear and loss in a mature sparrowhawk can be singularly attributed to high weight and lack of kills.

Regular flying is needed

Another likely scenario that will precipitate bad behaviour and poor manners is a prolonged break or blank patch when flying. What should be at the forefront of any newcomer's mind is that they are walking around with a highly attuned killing machine on their fist. If you cannot regularly serve your hawk and reward accordingly or if you have a week off due to work or other commitments, then expect your charge to become problematic and 'switch off'. A young sparrowhawk will become very bored very quickly if not given the opportunity to consistently realize instinctual drive and psychological independence.

Due to inclement weather Max was grounded for around five days. On returning to the field he gripped the glove, puffed up his feathers, bated frequently or wing flapped in my direction. On the walk up to any quarry he would lean extremely far forward off the glove and when any slip occurred he was so fist bound that he was too slow to catch the quarry. This of course compounded the problem and it was only after thinking laterally and using less than sporting set-ups that I was able to turn him around. It only took one or two 'muggings' from behind a barn door to 'cure' these frustrations, but without the time and dedication to iron them out, Max would have potentially become more unmanageable as the days passed.

There are many more observations and comments regarding sparrowhawk behaviour that could and should be written, unfortunately word space is limited. In part three of this series I will discuss the tricky subject of ethics and license issues, as well as some of the health and welfare ailments which are common to those who fly sparrowhawks.

Sparrowhawks: A falconer's guide by Ben Crane is published by Crowood Press and will be released around June 2014. Excerpts of which will be available and published in this magazine. The book features contributions from IAF representatives in Ireland, The UK, Croatia and Turkey. His book is a no nonsense approach to imprinting, training, trapping, breeding and flying the European sparrowhawk.

The Hawk Board Symposium 2104

When I first took up the hood, leash and lure in the very early 1960's, I soon became aware that there were serious threats to the sport of falconry in the UK. I was only dimly aware of these threats however, because word of such hardly ever crept back to those, like myself, who were not members of a falconry club. However, I did manage to borrow a few magazines, mostly the journals of the British Falconers Club, and in these journals was printed the odd reference to meetings, mostly held abroad, where stalwarts of the British falconry scene such as Jack Mavrogordato and Anthony Jack were fighting our corner for us, against some serious odds I might tell you. There were many who were anti falconry in those days, and indeed these threats still exist today. Despite these threats, there are still some today who believe that such threats are an item of the past and no longer anything to worry about. I can tell such people with all honesty, that our sport is under constant scrutiny and bombardment from many factions both at home and abroad. Many of us, myself included, merely carried on hawking and buried our heads in the sand and went off hawking as if there was no tomorrow. Back in the early 1960's, I knew no other falconers personally and was a complete unknown in the falconry world with no influence whatsoever, so I contented myself with the knowledge that there were others out there, at the forefront of the sport who were fighting our cause for the rest of us.

As the years progressed, I slowly realised that without these unsung heroes representing the rest of us, the sport of falconry could so easily have been banned at any time. To use an old cliché,



Dr. David Glynn Fox (right) with his son, David.

much pending legislation was “headed off at the pass” and we should all have been extremely grateful for the efforts of these falconers, who, often at their own expense, lobbied our case for all. Most falconers at the time were blissfully unaware of all this and many even today do not realise that these threats have not gone away, far from it, we have to be very careful about how we conduct ourselves both in the field and out.

Hawk Board formed

It was not until the late 1970's that the Hawk Board was formed as a body to help protect raptor enthusiasts from those who would see us extinct. Now, there are those who have no time for the Hawk Board, in fact, there are many who have no time for clubs either, but again, I can tell these people, with some authority, that without the Hawk Board, not a single one of us would be keeping

or flying raptors today. I thought I knew a bit about the Hawk Board and what it did for us, but it was only in 2013, when I was co-opted onto the Board as an eagle specialist, that I came to fully realise how much the Hawk Board does for us all. I was staggered at the volume of proposed legislation, mostly from the European Union, that threatened our sport on many levels. I receive many emails per week, sometimes several in a day, from the Hawk Board, who attach ever increasing numbers of EU documentation for the perusal of all Board members and these documents contain reams of legal jargon, often running to over seventy pages and believe me, they take some reading. Often, there might be just a single sentence, such as when the ban on using hounds for hunting was proposed. Had the small print not been spotted, game hawking would have been finished in one fell swoop, as would all falconry

where a dog is used to find and flush quarry. This was spotted just in time and an amendment was made in order that falconers could continue their sport using a dog. I don't use dogs personally, so it would have made no difference to me, but how many of you out there would have been seriously affected had some sharp-eyed person not spotted this dilemma? Of course, there are a few out there who don't give a toss one way or another and who maintain they will carry on hawking no matter what! Yes, you will, for a time, but sooner or later, you will be caught and have to pay the consequences, and it is this type of person that worries not only me, but the rest of the legitimate falconry bodies too, and this includes the Hawk Board.

There are many who still say, "What has the Hawk Board done for me?" If these people could be bothered to read the reports that Nick Kester used to so ably write for the falconry press, they might have some inkling of what is going on in the falconry world, but as aforementioned, I doubt if they even care. This prevailing attitude is precisely why the Hawk Board bravely decided to hold an open symposium to get across this very message to all who could, or more accurately, would attend. When one considers that there are around 25,000 raptor keepers in the United Kingdom, one would expect that the Board would have been inundated with interest and have had to hire Wembley Stadium to provide for this number and it really demonstrates the apathy amongst us all that a total of eighty places was mooted. I have to state that I was not only devastated, but also livid at the poor response.

LANTRA House as the venue

The venue chosen for the event was to be Lantra House and it was Lantra who kindly provided all delegates with free hot drinks throughout the day and provided the lunch and I thank Lantra on behalf of all who attended for their kindness and generosity. You can perhaps imagine my surprise, and dismay, when a few weeks after the announcement of this symposium, I paid for myself and my son to attend and found that only one person had actually paid up before us. We are not talking here of a vast sum of money, we are talking a mere six pounds, which included lunch and all the tea and coffee one could consume. One would

have a job getting a pizza for that price! As the weeks progressed, only a few had paid up and it was beginning to appear as though the event would have to be cancelled. We needed a minimum of fifty delegates, otherwise, it would not be worth staging the event and up to almost the eleventh hour the result would be almost a certain cancellation. I could not believe it! I was furious and disappointed at the same time. Here was the Hawk Board, prepared to open its heart to all and sundry to explain its role and nobody could be bothered to even make an effort! Some even asked if they could forego the meal, not pay the six pounds but attend the seminars! This of course quite rightly received short shrift, for apart from anything else the Board would have had to instigate some form of hand stamping so that they knew who had paid and who hadn't, in so far as the lunch was concerned. The room that Lantra so kindly provided had a holding capacity of eighty people, which in the end was the number who eventually booked the event. Oddly, there were many who left it too late, for the Board had to have a cut-off point, otherwise the room would not have been large enough and indeed, a larger room is being looked at for the next symposium. I was not expecting to write an article on this event, so I took no notes, so all that follows is from my ever-dimming memory, but I hope it is fairly accurate nevertheless.

Obviously, with an event of this sort, a programme of seminars etc. had to be worked out well in advance and one of these seminars was to include a presentation by an avian veterinary surgeon. However, those approached were unavailable, so this aspect had to be eliminated from the day. As a Hawk Board member, I had received the itinerary some time before the event and it was something I was looking forward to, with the slight reservation that the open forum section planned for the afternoon would turn into a free for all, become personal and abusive and defeat the whole object of the exercise. Fortunately, although some heated argument did take place, the event flowed with commendable decorum.

The date set was Saturday, 8th February 2014, a date when many would have been out hawking no doubt. The weather forecast had been miserable, but despite some strong wind, most of the day was bright and

sunny, some no doubt wishing they had gone hawking instead! However, the day arrived and my son David and I set off for Lantra House, which is situated at the Royal Showground at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, site of the first ever British Falconry Fair. After an hour's drive, we pulled up on the car park to be joined by well-known raptor breeder, Hawk Board member, long time friend and fellow falconer Derek Stotton, together with Barbara Royle from the Independent Bird Register. The day was to be a who's who of falconers with many well-known enthusiasts present. Mark Montgomery and Mark Hodgson, treasurer and secretary respectively of the Midland BFC were also present and we all sat down for a pre-meeting coffee while awaiting the event to begin. At 10.00am, Jemima Parry-Jones MBE asked us all to make our way to the allotted room to begin the day's proceedings, while Rachelle Upton remained in reception to cater for late arrivals. The event began with a short presentation by Jim Chick, a long-standing falconer and Chairman of the Hawk Board, as to when, why and by whom the Hawk Board was formed and this was extended by Jemima in her usual witty and comical mode of presentation, which was appreciated by all, for it turned out to be a great ice-breaker. Mirth and laughter are always welcome at such events and Jemima was in great form, conveying to the delegates just exactly what the Hawk Board can, and perhaps more importantly, what the Hawk Board cannot do for us. No questions followed as it was decided that these would be better left to the afternoon open forum.

The speakers

Mark Parker of the International Centre for Birds of Prey, then gave an excellent presentation on how to deal with announced, or unannounced inspections by the police, AHVLA, the RSPB or the RSPCA. This was very well received and Mark, who is himself an ex police inspector, gave sage advice and warned restraint about becoming confrontational in such situations. I am sure many found this seminar very useful as was determined by the number of questions and comments from the audience.

Next up was Graham Irving who put the AHVLA website up on the screen for visual information and how to work one's way around this website and then went through various aspects of legislation

affecting the keeping, display, flying, travelling and hunting with raptors. Many were surprised that such documentation as performing animal licences and travel certificates are actually required by all who give public demonstrations for a living. He also touched on future needs for possible zoo licensing for such enterprises.

Finally, before lunch, BFC Director Martyn Standley gave a stimulating talk about increasing affiliation to the Hawk Board, as currently, only recognised clubs are part of the Hawk Board, but all raptor keepers, falconers or not, benefit from the work of the Board but pay nothing towards costs etc. and comments from the floor on this topic were warmly received by the Hawk Board. Martyn produced an interesting paper, from which he read abstracts and took on board helpful comments from the floor, which in due course, the Hawk Board intend to publish on a wider basis to gain responses from the wider hawk keeping fraternity. After Martyn's discourse, it was time for lunch, which was greatly appreciated by all present and consisted of a variety of tasty sandwiches, fruit, cake and beverages.

After lunch, it was the turn of Lisa Jarvis, an employee of Lantra, who gave an excellent presentation on the Lantra falconry award system. Personally, I am a great fan of the Lantra awards because it is all we have to present to various authorities that we are attempting to keep our house in order and provide documentation which demonstrates that we are making great efforts to provide the maximum welfare for our birds. The problem here arises with those who cannot, or will not co-operate in this venture and in the long distant past, when I used to visit the public falconry forums, I could not believe the stupidity with which some ridiculed the Lantra awards. What are these people frightened of? Whether we like it or not, we are increasingly under scrutiny from many corners and to produce a system whereby we can demonstrate, on paper, just how deeply we are involved in educating newcomers to the sport and ensuring that they know how to properly

care for the birds in their charge, via documentation, can surely only be a good thing for the sport of falconry? What else is there? I just wish that those who choose to denigrate Lantra, or other aspects governing our sport would offer up a better system instead of giving out constant negative vibes. My response to these people is either put up, or shut up! Lisa's presentation was well received and she answered well the many questions that were put to her from the



Barbara Royal of the IBR

floor, one of which was the section four which concerns hunting with hawks. One question that I remember came from a delegate who stated that unless one was a club member, it was easy to feel isolated as a Lantra Assessor. The outcome of which was that the Hawk Board agreed to produce a Lantra page on the Board's website and to ensure that all updates were posted as soon as they were available.

Following on from Lisa's presentation was a second one by BFC Director Martyn Standley concerning the good and bad of public, or open falconry forums

and he was careful to point out that such sites were being constantly monitored by the police, the RSPCA, the RSPB, Natural England, AHVLA and also other groups who seem to be anti everything. Again, my own view is that while some of these sites began commendably with a useful diatribe by which all could participate for the benefit of everyone, they rapidly descended into what I would describe as the biggest threat to falconry since Oliver Cromwell. Many newcomers now feel afraid to enter these sites because of the rudeness and abuse they receive and therefore feel unable to communicate further. This is a shame, for forums could be very helpful if properly controlled and it is simply the few, many who no doubt have never seen a hawk flown in anger and who always spoil it for everyone else. A simple analogy would be that not all football fans are hooligans, but for the actions of these few, the remainder become tarnished just the same. Sadly, these few seem unaware, or incapable of grasping the harm they are doing, not only to the sport in general, but also, ultimately, to themselves. Martyn's presentation highlighted this serious issue very well.

Concerns did not materialise

Next came the part that I was personally most concerned about, opening the debate to the floor. I was concerned because I suspected that some with hidden agenda's and a hatred of the Hawk Board would ruin what had otherwise been an excellent and productive day. Fortunately, as it turned out, my fears were largely allayed and some good dialogue resulted from the audience.

One of which concerned just about everyone present and this was the number of poor quality falconry displays and exhibitions currently doing the rounds throughout the country and how we can get some sort of control over this sorry state of affairs. There are a number of people who call themselves something along the lines of Raptor Rescuers or Owl Rescuers and from what I have personally witnessed, the birds they put on public display often are in need of rescue themselves from such

people. I have seen Eurasian Eagle Owls, often in poor feather, tethered next to a Little Owl, the latter showing all signs of mortal fear from the huge and powerful bird next to it. Additionally, seldom are baths present and these birds are often paraded out in some shopping mall with no protection from sun or rain and again, often tethered far too close to each other for comfort, handed out to children with no gloves etc. and all for the purpose of raising money. I often wonder what all this money is being actually used for? I have also seen Harris's flown onto the bare heads of spectators, which beggars belief! What can be done to eliminate this state of affairs, which in fact does little to enhance the good name of falconry in the public eye, which behaviour, I was pleased to observe, was quite rightly roundly condemned by all delegates present. A discussion then ensued as to how we might reduce this problem and generally improve standards all round using Hawk Board affiliation, codes of practice and possibly the acquisition of a zoo licence in order to be able to present hawks and owls for public display. I would also suspect that few such travelling display givers are even aware that they should be in possession of the aforementioned performing animals' licence and a travel permit for the birds in transit.

After this discussion, Steve Williams, an experienced falconer took the floor and read out a statement that he had previously drafted and which basically laid out his personal feelings towards the Hawk Board. This met with some heated debate and early on in this debate, at least one member of the audience rose from his seat, told my son and I and a few others nearby that he had not come to listen to a slanging match and promptly left! This was a shame and put a bit of a damper on the day for me, but had he stayed a trifle longer, he would have seen that the statements made by Mr. Williams were not the views of the British Falconers Club and that his objections towards the Hawk Board were considered invalid. This of course, is what the whole day was about and Mr. Williams was quite right to offer up his views for discussion, for I believe it helped to dispel some of the myths that have surrounded the Hawk Board and its members for so long. If the Hawk Board is guilty of anything, it is that they do not sing their praises high enough when they

are able to turn round pending legislation in our favour, and I stood up and said so. The Hawk Board needs to place its successes in the general falconry domain in order to keep its credibility with those who would otherwise give out negative vibes through ignorance.

Another question concerned those species that were not covered by licencing regulations, such as Red Tails or Harris's Hawks and the Hawk Board quite rightly stated that it did not know because there was no traceability and that the government was trying to reduce such legislation. Nobody knows how many Harris's Hawks for example are to be found in the UK, but some debate ensued re the hybridising status between wild Common Buzzards and Harris's Hawks and whereby the latter could conceivably be viewed as an invasive alien species.

Return of licencing?

A question was raised that has long been a bugbear of mine, and that is the licencing of falconers themselves. I doubt this will now happen, at least, not in the foreseeable future, but I have always felt that the opportunity was missed many years ago, when it was decided to licence the birds instead. Had falconers been licenced back then, we would not be having many of the problems we face today, because for falconers to obtain said licence, would mean proving capability in some form of demonstrating how to care for hawks BEFORE acquiring them and not afterwards. To purchase a hawk, such licence would have to be produced, or no sale could legally take place. But I digress. The way forward, as Lisa Jarvis pointed out, would be to upgrade the Lantra Award to a more recognised qualification in order to improve standards all round and I would also add that this should be made compulsory for ALL who wish keep raptors, whether experienced or not. An addition to the current Lantra system is the possibility of a section concerning first aid and rehabilitation and this is being looked into as a result of this symposium.

Barbara Royle of the Independent Bird Register read out the figures she had compiled of the birds which have been lost and those subsequently recovered. The IBR do a great job and Barbara asked that even those who lose birds which are not registered by the IBR, to let her know if one should be lost, as these are

often recovered by the IBR.

Another question was asked as to how the Hawk Board could have a stronger regulatory role and the latter agreed to look into this aspect.

Some mentioned that too many hawks were being bred and which subsequently had found themselves in the wrong hands, whereby the recipients had no experience whatsoever. Again, a compulsory Lantra award system would go a long way towards preventing this scenario. The breeders present were quick to point out that once a hawk had left their premises, it could change hands several times, which is of course quite true, but if subsequent certification, as mentioned earlier, was in force, the latter would have to be shown at each change of hands, otherwise an offence will have been committed. I say it again, an approved, credited system of certification proving competence will help our cause immeasurably, and for those who still disagree with this, all I can say is, pull your heads out of the sand, otherwise, you may well not be flying hawks for much longer. Think about it, it is not rocket science.

Jim Chick stood and told the congregation that we were very lucky in this country, as we are virtually totally free to do more or less as we liked and were the envy of other EU countries who were bound up by legislation and red tape. Some countries, for example, have banned the flying of hybrids and do not think for one second that this state of affairs could not happen here, because it could, all too easily, due to a perceived risk of lost hybrids breeding with wild raptors. If we do not self regulate, then rest assured, that some organisation or another will come and do it for us, and I believe that nobody wants that scenario, so if we wish to continue to be free and fly our hawks accordingly, then it will come at a price and we will have to behave in a more professional manner and be accountable for it.

This concluded what I view as a highly successful meeting and the Hawk Board thanked all those who made the effort with the added view that it was hoped to make the symposium an annual event. With that, everyone departed around 4.00pm for the journey home. I hope that those who attended will pass on their views to their colleagues and clubs in order that the next event will be even better attended.

Report on the 45th Council of Delegates Meeting of the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey

Quotation from IAF President Adrian Lombard:

“We work hard, often without the recognition of our fellows; the hard work is more than justified every time an ordinary falconer takes to the field with his hawk to practise our art legally in peace and freedom.”

Over the past 20 years and five different presidents, The International Association for Falconry (IAF) has grown from 20 member countries, mostly European, until in 2014 IAF speaks for falconers and falconry (hunting with a bird of prey) of 66 countries. It has moved forward from having to be on the defensive, fending off attacks from anti-falconry lobbies, to being a respected cultural and conservation organization with accredited representation in major international NGOs, like International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and as an accredited NGO advising UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee. In international circles, the falconer's voice is respected as much all the other voices. This was made clear at this meeting by the attendance of Mr. Georges Kremlis, Head of DG ENVDI Unit of the European Commission, who gave a presentation on the proposed new EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species, clarifying a very complex issue (see www.iaf.org for ongoing developments). This is the first time a government official has addressed an IAF meeting.

Biggest conference in IAF history

The 45th IAF Council of Delegates Meeting in Doha was the biggest in the history of IAF, with National Delegates and representatives from 52 countries; 141 people attended the formal meetings. Generous funding from Algannas Falconry



© Elisabeth Leix

The IAF board at the conference

and Hunting Society (IAF member for Qatar) and from Katara Cultural Village Foundation, ensured the attendance of many Asian and North African countries previously unable to send representation to an international falconry meeting.

A considerable amount of work was achieved, including significant changes to the IAF Constitution that will be posted on the IAF website over the coming weeks, as soon as translation and legal publication are done. Three new member countries were voted to Council: Korea, Vietnam and Uruguay. Club Fredericus Rex of Malta and the Pakistan Falconers' Club upgraded to full membership; both organizations had formerly been Corresponding Members, paying no dues and having no vote. After the meeting Indonesia and Thailand also upgraded. Some new applicant countries did not qualify on the rule that a member organization has to have been in existence for at least two years; so in order to encourage these clubs, Council granted Observer Status to Australia, Chile, Ecuador, Taiwan and Armenia. Correspondence and co-operation with all of these countries is therefore assured. IAF supports falconry using three legs of a tripod: Hunting, Conservation and Culture. Falconers' involvement in conservation has been crucial in gaining the confidence of conservationists who rely on scientific evidence rather than on opinion. Culture, too, has been vital

in gaining approval of falconry among groups who were formerly hostile. Discussions and presentations were held on such items as relationships with other hunting organizations, the EU and the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) legislation, the European Union Strategic Report on Raptor Conservation, the Raptors MoU of Conference on Migratory Species, Saker GAP of the STF, illegal trade, conservation by falconers, impact of commercial wind turbines on raptor populations, World Falconry Day and education, UNESCO Submissions, falconry culture and history, European Conference for implementation of the UNESCO joint programme on cultural and biological diversity. Special consideration at this meeting went to the Welfare of Falconry Raptors which is the latest way our opponents are trying to attack us. IAF's organization of the first conference on veterinary medicine for falconry birds and its Animal Welfare Guidelines for Falconry (agreed at the meeting, to be published shortly) and discussions on the new EU Positive lists for Companion Animals addresses this issue with some force.

The Qatari Society of Algannas hosted the meeting

Algannas was founded in 2008 as a cultural association working to support traditional falconry and organizing various falconry events. It represents Arab hunters in regional and global events

and its interests also include salukis and shooting. Part of its mission is to develop methods and laws by providing services, encouraging participation, research and study. Algannas is supported by the Qatari government. It joined IAF in 2011. Algannas organizes youth camps and trips to familiarize them with hunting to cultivate and transfer ancestral heritage. There is a specialized veterinary clinic, early season refresher competitions (training, fitness etc) and prize-givings for the best moulting facility (not an easy time of year in a country where outside temperatures during the moulting season can frequently reach over 40°C). The Qatar International Festival of Falcons and Hunting is one of the largest festivals in the region. It is marked by unlimited support and a mass audience, with falconers from all over the Gulf Region participating in the festival organized annually under royal patronage since 2010. This year's events were held during the week of the IAF Meetings and several trips to the desert stadium and camp were organized for Delegates and guests.

Veterinary Medicine for falconry in the 21st century

A conference dedicated to falconry raptor medicine was held as part of



The prize giving

the events organized through IAF with generous sponsorship and collaboration of Algannas Society and the Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital. It received many accolades. The three day conference included lectures from the world's top raptor veterinarians and was attended by over 90 specialist vets and students from almost 30 countries. Most veterinary conferences cannot include practical sessions, but thanks to the fantastic facilities and help from the Souk Waqif Falcon Hospital, wetlab sessions were held on raptor ophthalmology, orthopaedics and endoscopy, enabling students and interested vets to gain first-hand experience in this state-of-the-art setting. Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital is a

state run facility, composed of a clinic, hospitalization, quarantine and a full range of diagnostic equipment, high end digital radiography and high definition abdominal endoscopy, as well as research laboratories for clinical pathology, microbiology and molecular biology. Veterinary staff see an average of 75-100 falcons per day, making this one of the largest falcon hospitals in the world. IAF is particularly proud to have participated in such a prestigious veterinary event, to have held such a successful and important Council of Delegates Meeting and to have enjoyed the hospitality of Algannas, Doha and the Qatari people at their annual festival events.



Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital waiting room

Club Directory

The South East Falconry Group

AIMS TO SUPPORT FALCONERS IN THE CONTINUATION AND PRACTICE OF FALCONRY.

Drawing its membership from around the South and East of England, the SEFG provides a forum for falconers and would-be falconers to meet, discuss and practice the art. Members benefit from having access to a wealth of experience and knowledge, good facilities and field meeting opportunities throughout the winter months.

Meetings take place on the last Tuesday of the month at North Stifford in Essex.

For members in our Southern region informal meetings take place near Winchester, Hants. (Please contact Dean White on 01489 896504).

For further information or an application form please contact -

Peter Long (secretary) on 07889 438531

E-mail us at enquiry@sefg.org or visit our web site www.sefg.org

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South Eastern Raptors Association (S.E.R.A.)



Established for over 30 years, and now affiliated to the Hawk Board and holding group membership to the Countryside Alliance, the aims of S.E.R.A. are to further and maintain the standards of falconry in the South-East of England.

With a broad band of knowledge and experience within our club, we extend a warm welcome to new members, whether practising falconers or complete novices. Where practicable, novices will be allocated a mentor. Helpful, honest and friendly advice is always available.

**Our meetings are held at 10.30am on the second Sunday of each month throughout the year at
The Village Hall, Station Road, Groombridge, Kent TN3 9QX**

Outings, guest speakers, field meets, (at home and away) videos, quizzes and other special events are ever-present features of our club calendar and may be viewed on our website.



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ALL birds reported lost whether IBR rung or not will be placed on the database but please note that only those birds whose registrations have been paid for will appear on the website. Part of the ring number has been replaced with a '?' for security reasons.

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SPECIES

AFRICAN SPOTTED EAGLE OWL	2
AMERICAN KESTREL	1
BARN OWL	13
BENGAL/INDIAN EAGLE OWL	3
BURROWING OWL	1
BUZZARD	1
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL	4
GOSHAWK	6
GYR/ALTAI	1
GYR FALCON	1
GYR/PEREGRINE	3
GYR/SAKER	9
HARRIS HAWK	33
KESTREL	4
LANNER	3
MACKINDERS EAGLE OWL	1
MILKY EAGLE OWL	1
PEREGRINE	4
PERE/LANNER	1
PERE/SAKER	4
REDTAIL	1
SAKER	2
TAWNY OWL	1
TURKMANIAN EAGLE OWL	1
VERMICULATED EAGLE OWL	1

Out of the 102 birds reunited, 62 were NOT registered.

STOLEN x 3

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
98361	????	INDIAN EAGLE OWL	Maryport
98363	?OTO?	AFRICAN SPOTTED E.O.	Bittaford
94282	?051?	BARN OWL	Swadlincote

LOST x 18

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA LOST
97491	?021?	SAKER	Watton, IP25
88277	?354?	INDIAN EAGLE OWL	North Shields, NE29
41695	?174?	HARRIS HAWK	Up Holland
73488	?203?	HARRIS HAWK	Higher Broughton
83725	?123?	GYR/PEREGRINE	Mold
98288	?3DB?	GYR/SAKER	Isle of Sheppey
85738	?475?	GYR/SAKER	Grappenhall
97968	?243?	GYR/SAKER	Blaydon, Newcastle
60653	?402?	KESTREL	Fife
47446	?258?	GOSHAWK	Wallasey
65235	?301?	PERE/SAKER	Chesham, Buckinghamshire
93889	?038?	HARRIS HAWK	Puckeridge, SG11

98571	?WLE?	PEREGRINE	Ryton, NE40
97467	?327?	GYR/SAKER x PEREGRINE	Wrexham, LL12
81990	?927?	HARRIS HAWK	Market Bosworth
98701	?140?	GOSHAWK	Mulbarton, NR14
47400	?731?	HARRIS HAWK	Harleston, IP20
98221	?896?	KESTREL	Melton Mowbray

LOST UNREGISTERED BIRDS x 50

BARN OWL x 4
BENGAL/INDIAN EAGLE OWL x 3
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 3
GOSHAWK x 5
GYR/SAKER x 4
HARRIS HAWK x 15
HOODED VULTURE x 1
KESTREL x 2
LANNER x 1
NEW ZEALAND FALCON x 1
PEREGRINE x 2
PERE/SAKER x 2
RAVEN x 2
RED NAPED SHAHEEN x 1
REDTAIL x 1
SAKER FALCON x 1
TAWNY OWL x 2

FOUND x 14

BREF	RING	SPECIES	AREA FOUND
60980	?956?	HARRIS HAWK	Newhey, Rochdale
98274	????	HARRIS HAWK	Horsmonden
98272	????	HARRIS HAWK	Fornett St. Mary
98254	?7SL?	BARN OWL	Leicester
94380	?011?	AMERICAN KESTREL	Croftfoot, G44
98320	?1DP?	HARRIS HAWK	Liverpool, L6
98477	?348?	HARRIS HAWK	Cornwall, TR19
22001	?917?	HARRIS HAWK	Doncaster, DN7
98528	?253?	BARN OWL	Looe, EX20
98542	?54B?	COMMON BUZZARD	Penn, WV4
61362	?966?	HARRIS HAWK	Puckeridge
98702	?3FA?	SAKER FALCON	Birmingham, B18
98726	????	HARRIS HAWK	Colnbrook, SL3
70613	?955?	HARRIS HAWK	Shildon

FOUND DEAD x 22

BARN OWL x 3	GYR/SAKER x 3
BURROWING OWL x 1	HARRIS HAWK x 7
EUROPEAN EAGLE OWL x 1	PEREGRINE x 1
GOSHAWK x 2	PEREGRINE/SAKER x 3
GYR/ALTAI x 1	

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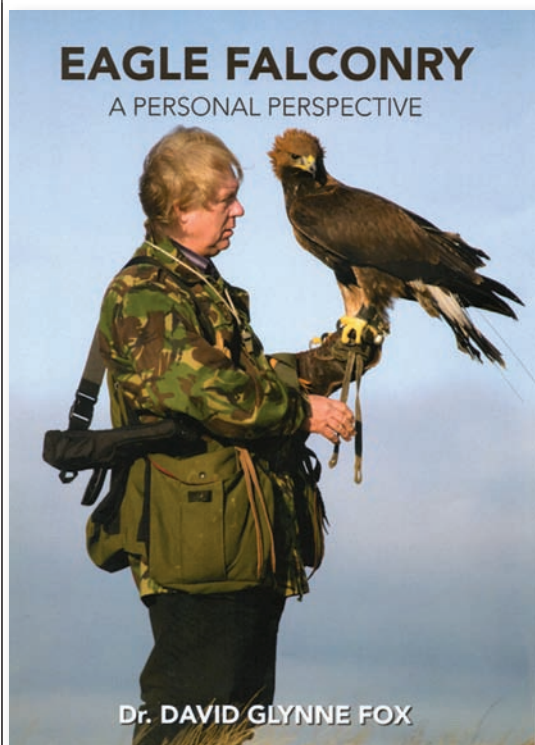
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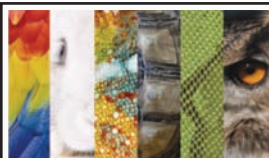
Eagle Falconry A Personal Perspective



This new work covers a relatively new branch of falconry, at least, so far as the UK, Europe and America is concerned and fills a long-awaited niche regarding eagle falconry. The author has been flying eagles for half a century with varying degrees of success, but is mostly concerned with the Golden Eagle. This book covers the history of eagle falconry in these islands and more importantly perhaps, takes the reader on a journey into the not too distant past to discover those early falconers who saw merit in this stunning bird despite all the bad press the species received back then. The book also gives short biographies on those eagle falconers who are still with us today, giving insights into the achievements of Ronnie Moore, Alan Gates, Andrew Knowles-Brown, Geoff Clayton, George Mussared, Joe Atkinson and many more.

With the upsurge of interest in eagle falconry, the author, together with Alan Walker, formed the British Falconers Club Eagle Group, a small but passionate and successful group who regularly fly their eagles at organised meets throughout the country. The author has brought together his experiences, and those of others, in a highly readable format to help newcomers to eagle falconry. Although the book is not, and was never intended to be, a "How to," fly eagles monograph, there is a wealth of information within its pages to enable any tyro to get a feeling for the sport of eagle falconry. The author stresses the point that these birds are not toys and can be frightening to those unfamiliar with eagles. He warns that great dedication is required to take on these fascinating raptors and takes the reader through his own trials and tribulations whilst training his own eagles, highlighting the problems that can be associated with eagle falconry.

The book contains over 230 pages of text and 32 pages of stunning full colour photographs, many taken especially for this work and is reasonably priced at **£35.00**. The author will be signing copies of this work at the UK Hawking Event near Evesham on 11th and 12th August and again at the ICBP Falconry Weekend on 1st & 2nd September. Alternatively, copies can be purchased directly from the author by e-mailing davidfox78@hotmail.com



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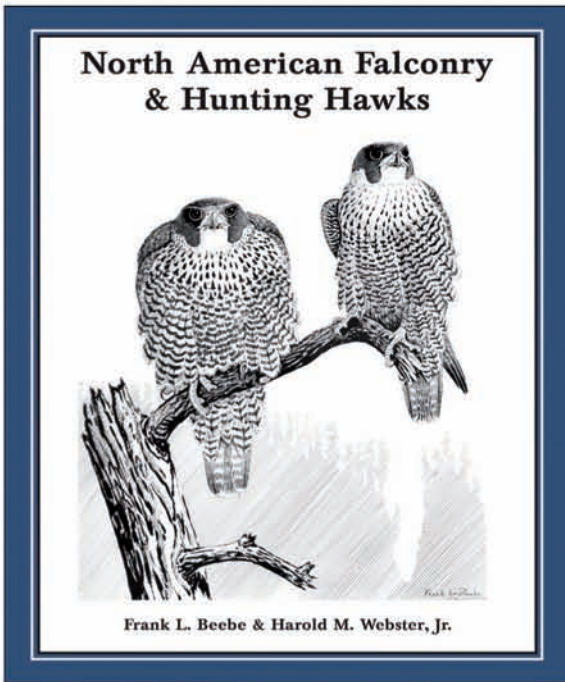
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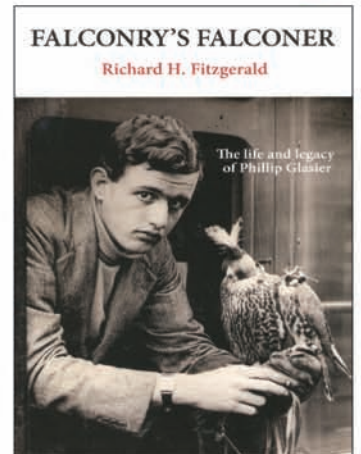
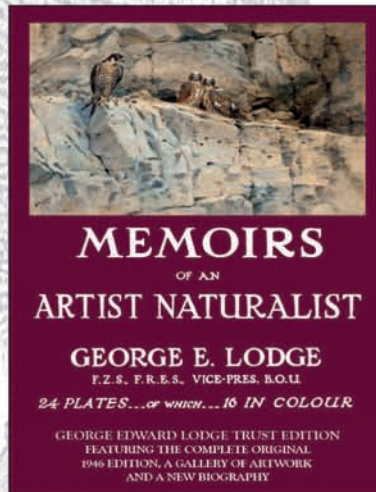
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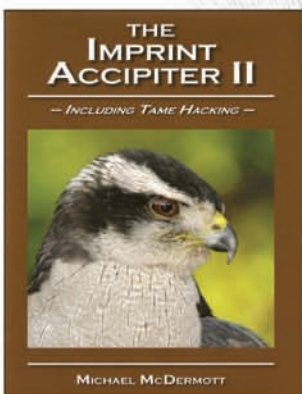


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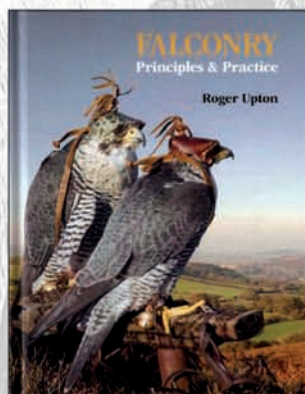
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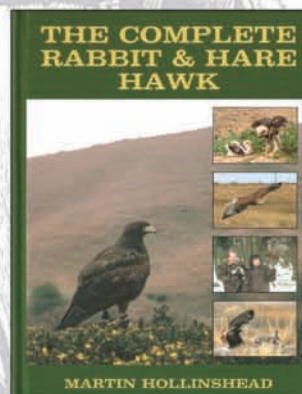
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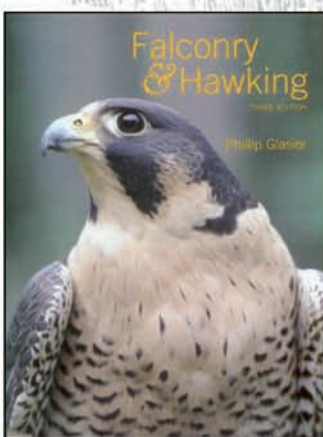
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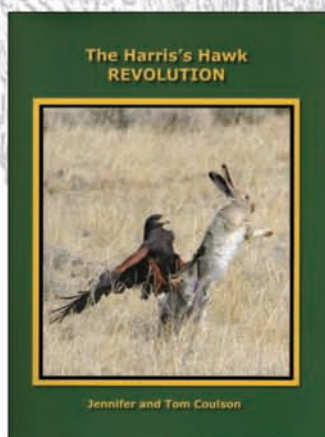
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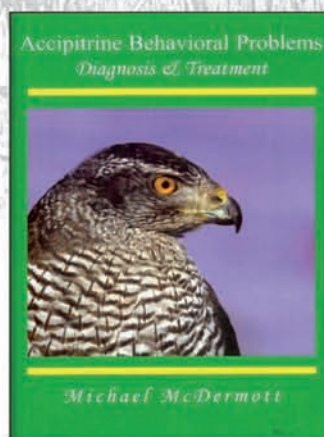
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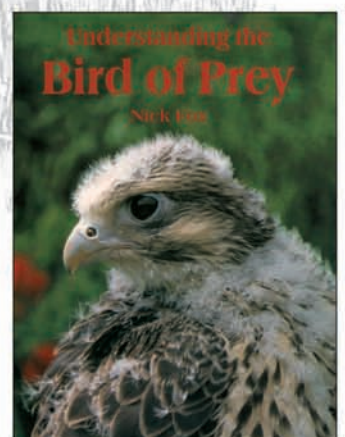
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