

We are delighted to announce that the Emirates Falconers' Club, Abu Dhabi is hosting the

Third International Festival of Falconry

at Al Ain Jahili Fort, United Arab Emirates

Public Festival days
15th, 16th & 17th December 2011

Free admission
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For more information on conferences, short breaks and how to contribute to the festival please contact:
info@falconryfestival.com

Saturday 10th December Meet and greet Abu Dhabi @ Dubai Airport

Sunday 11th, Monday 12th, Tuesday 13th & Wednesday 14th December Falconry Conference at Al Ain Jahili Fort
Overnight Hawking Parties at Desert Camp
Safari Racing at Desert Camp
Sand Dune Cinema @ Evening Socials
Falcon Hfing Events at Desert Camp
Training for Festival Arena Events

Wednesday 14th December Additional events
Excursions to Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital @ Grand Mosque
Falconers come to Town - Falconers parade in Abu Dhabi

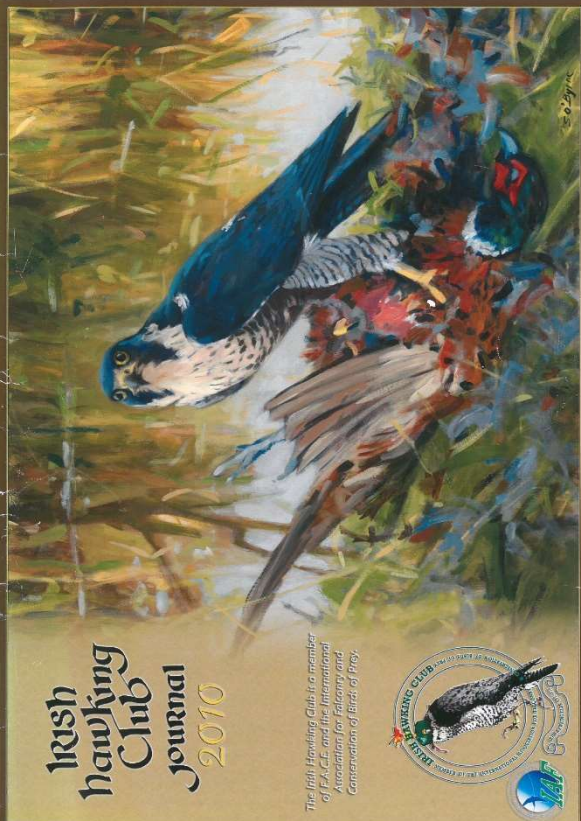
Thursday 15th December Schools Day
Arena Events
Award Ceremony for Art and Photograph Competition
Social Events

Friday 16th December - Free admission
International Festival of Falconry
Arena Events
Grand Parade
Falconers Feast and Social Evening

Saturday 17th December - Free admission
International Festival of Falconry
Arena Events
Grand Parade
93P Gala Dinner
UNESCO Celebration and Concert


Sunday 18th December Depart

Support of Falconry

Irish Hawking Club Journal 2010

The Irish Hawking Club is a member of F.A.C.F. and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey.



IRISH HAWKING CLUB

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
Eoghan Ryan
087 2395302
coghanyan500@gmail.com

DIRECTOR
Vacant

HON SECRETARY
Neal Carroll
The Bungalow, Ashtown,
Roundwood
Co Wicklow
087 2495113

HON TREASURER
Malcolm Edgar
22 Irvington Park,
Kilkeel, Co Down, BT34 4LX;
(+44) 02847163431

FIELDMEET CO-ORDINATOR
Terry Turkington
19 Kells Ave, Suffolk,
Belfast BT11 9LB
02890 623936/07742 798588 (NI)
From R.O.1 +44 2890 623936
terryturk@hotmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Mick Docherty
7 Drinaghmore court, Carrick-
mines, Dublin 18
01 2946971 / 087 6405724
mickshawki@yahoo.ie

DEPARTMENT LIAISON
Eoghan Ryan
087 2395302 or eryan@nba.ie

EDITORIAL

JOURNAL EDITOR
Hilary White
085 1340476
hylwhite@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Sean Woods
seanmartinwoods@yahoo.com

COVER DESIGN
Aaron Leavy
087-9194225
aaronleavy@hotmail.com

IAF DELEGATE
Hilary White

HONORARY VICE PRESIDENTS
Liam McGarry
Rowland Eustace

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Eamon McCabe
Carrick-on-Suir

June Jordan
Carrickfergus

Liam McGarry
Dublin

Christian de Coune
Belgium

Dr. Nick Fox
Wales

Rowland Eustace
Dublin

Liam O'Broin
Meath

IRISH HAWKING CLUB

POLICY AND OBJECTIVES STATEMENTS

The Irish Hawking Club is dedicated to the sport and practice of falconry and to the conservation and dissemination of knowledge of birds of prey. Membership is open to those who support or practice the pursuit of Falconry to the highest standards and traditions. Objectives of the Club are:

To represent Falconry throughout Ireland and to foster International co-operation in order to maintain the sport, art and practice of taking quarry in its natural state.

To preserve and encourage Falconry within the context of sustainable and judicious use of wildlife.

To foster good relations and co-operation with all National hunting organisations with like objectives.

To encourage conservation, the ecological and veterinary research of birds of prey and to promote, under scientific guidance, native propagation for Falconry and the rehabilitation of injured birds of prey.

To monitor National laws in order to permit the pursuit and perpetuation of falconry.

To require the observation of all laws and regulations relating to falconry, hunting, conservation and culture with regard to the taking, import, and keeping of birds of prey, the hunting of quarry species and the right of access to land.

To promote and uphold a positive image of falconry with specialist organisations or statutory bodies which regulate or otherwise affect falconry.

Editorial

Greetings from your addled and underfed Journal Editor! I make the distinction because as of this year's well-attended AGM in Killeel, the IHC has a Newsletter Editor post on the Editorial committee. Sean Woods valiantly stepped up to take on the role, and I am grateful to him for doing so.

Simply put, I was no longer able to devote enough time to producing the newsletters and Journal – the lateness of this edition is testament to this – and decided to step away from the post. I did decide however to stay on to produce the Journal as that is a once-a-year affair that requires a certain amount of expertise to maintain the standard. So you're stuck with me, I'm afraid!

The good news is that the long wait I endured over the past year for articles (some slothful contributors were met with actual threats!) has been worth it. Had we went ahead and printed after the New Year, it would have been a very slim fifth IHC Journal you would have been getting from me so we held out.

The only issue now is that I only have six months to get the next one together, and this edition is yet another hard act to follow. Goshawk men James Knight and Keith Barker have great stories in, while Gary Timbrell delivers two articles, one on Slovakia and another on Falconry's recent triumph with UNESCO. Alexander Prinz provides an introduction to falconry in Germany, and the humble sparrowhawk is celebrated by a selection of enthusiasts. And there's plenty more too.

As I said, only six months until the next edition, so be inspired and get scribbling!

Hilary White
Editor

All copy and pictures to be sent to the Journal Editor at hywhite@gmail.com.

Material is subject to scrutiny by the committee.

All news items, notices, short stories, tall tales, pictures, ads, comments etc. to the editor at the above email address.

Members who are interested in helping in the production and distribution of the Newsletter and Journal please contact a committee member.

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Cover Image

"Surprise Encounter"
(Peregrine on cock pheasant)
by
Shay O'Byrne

Manipulated by
Aaron Leavy

We are continually look for striking, memorable art images of raptors for our covers. If you have any, please forward to the editor.

The Newsletter and Journal are published and distributed by the Irish Hawking Club to members. The views expressed therein are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily, and unless otherwise stated, the official policies or views of the Irish Hawking Club.

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News and Updates

The Editorial always welcome pieces of info – sightings, lost hawks, conservation matters etc - from members.

FEATHERED COCAINE

The following is a letter written to the IAF Committee by Irish delegate Hilary White.

Dear IAF Committee and AC

In December, the Moncrieff show, an afternoon radio programme on the Irish station Newstalk, ran an interview segment with a man called Alan Howell Parnoo who is the subject of a documentary called 'Feathered Cocaine' (see featheredcocaine.org for details).

He speaks about the illegal trade in gyrfalcons, describing how before the break-up of the USSR, Arabs used biology as a 'Trojan horse' to acquire 'million-dollar falcons'. These were often given as political gifts in Emirate states, he claimed, and that the trade 'mushroomed' after the USSR dismantled. Someone called Mohammed Al Boudi is mentioned as infiltrating Cites officials and facilitating this. Parnoo goes on to say that the 'primary biologists for the UAE' is a guy called Dr Nick Fox', and that he along with UN Cites officials have facilitated the demand for gyrf.

Most worryingly, he says that a sheikh may spend 'well over a million dollars' for a gyrf but that most are dead within three months of being relocated to the hot Middle-Eastern region. They 'are now injected with steroids and derivatives' to counter this, he states.

He goes on to talk about a Saudi Ambassador being caught smuggling falcons out of Saudi Arabia and collusion by the French government in this. He claims too that a Saudi ambassador threatened restrictions to oil access for the US if any action was taken over the smuggling. Nick Fox is mentioned again as the provider of a symbolic falcon to Prince Andrew and the person who organised for the Prince to go

on a houbara hunt with the family of Sheikh Tahnoon, the ruling family in the UAE. He equates this trip as being like 'we need to do business with Japan so we need to go on a whaling expedition with the Japanese Prime Minister'.

He said the worst offenders were the UAE, who 'use science to get in and an array of Western biologists to falsify research and licensing protocols'. Saudi Arabia was more known for using 'bribery', he believed. Qatar and Kuwait are also mentioned as offenders.

Finally, the interview turns towards Osama Bin Laden, with whom one of his contacts has apparently had 'multiple meetings in Iran' and gone hawking with since Nov 2004, he claims. He adds that this information has been ignored or obstructed by US authorities.

This is an important issue for IAF to be aware of, and if the claims are to be disputed then much needs to be done to confirm the facts. This man says that he has documentation to back up these claims.

The IHC contacted Nick Fox straight after it had gone to air so he is aware of the piece and the documentary itself, but we do not know of any follow-up actions he may have taken.

Yours etc

NEWSLETTER EDITOR APPOINTED

AS OF this year, the IHC Editorial team will now include a Newsletter Editor to manage the production of this important part of Club communication.

Sean Woods accepted the role at the AGM in early February, and all members are asked to make his transition into the job as easy as possible by contributing material

to him to be included in the newsletters. Sean can be contacted by email on seanmartinwoods@yahoo.com and any articles, ads, announcements, reports or images are to be sent to this address from now on. Feature style stories – the kind that usually feature in the Journal – can still be sent to Journal editor Hilary White at hywhite@gmail.com. If either editor gets an item which they feel is more appropriate in the other's publication, they will be passed over in the interests of consistency.

The decision came about following Hilary White's agreement to stay on to produce the journal only provided someone else take on the responsibility of the newsletters. This was due to his increasing work commitments.

FALCONRY FESTIVAL

The Third International Festival of Falconry takes place in Abu Dhabi from December 10 to 18. The IHC intends to have a presence at the event. For full details, go to www.falconryfestival.com

ECKART SCHORMAIR

IT IS with great sadness that we learned of the news of Eckart Schormair's death in early May.

Eckart was one of European falconry's most-liked characters, and a longtime servant of both his club Deutscher Falkenorden (DFO) as well as the IAF.

A friendly and sincere character who was devoid of ego or pretentiousness, he was a keen and active falconer, travelling to Scotland and Spain regularly to fly his falcons.

The IHC extends its sympathies to his family, his friends and the DFO.

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"Surprise Encounter"
(Peregrine on cock pheasant)

As seen on journal cover

Limited Edition Fine Art Giclee Print of original oil painting by artist Shay O'Byrne
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TERRY'S JOKE CORNER

BY TERRY TURKINGTON

Q Whats the difference between a goshawk on a Harris hawk?
A. A Harris hawk is hatched half trained and a goshawk dies half trained!

TWO Irish duck hunters where in their hide waiting for the ducks to come in when a fellow flew across the lake in a hang glider. One of the shooters gave it both barrels. Afterwards, the other one said: "What sort of bird was that?" The first man replied: "I havent got a clue but it dropped that fellow it was carrying back to its nest to feed its young!"

FIVE falconers and a springer spaniel were all playing poker when a stranger came in and commented on how intelligent the dog was to be playing poker. One of the falconers replied: "He's not that smart - every time he gets a good hand he wags his tail!"

ADVERTISING

Any members wishing to place an ad in the Journal must contact Editor Hilary White on 085 1340476 or hywhite@gmail.com
To place an ad in the Newsletters, contact Sean Woods at seanmartinwoods@yahoo.com

IHC Yahoo Group

irishfalconers-subscribe@yahogroups.com

For the promotion and improvement of falconry and hawking in Ireland. This is a group for Irish Hawking Club members. This group allows us to bring together members through a website and email group. It is a convenient way to connect with others who share the same interests and ideas as ourselves and allows us to meet each other online as often as we want, instead of having to travel miles. It is especially useful for new members needing information and advice.

This is a communication tool for use by members only – non members cannot access the information contained. Within the group you can post messages that will be sent to each members email address. Photographs can be placed in albums and a database of contacts can be compiled. Remember that all members will instantly receive your post so be civil at all times and think about what you are saying. It is like talking in a room – everyone can hear and everyone can respond. What you say will be written down and may be used in evidence.

Members can access the group from anywhere in the world with an internet connection, and even from bed with your laptop, or if you are really up to date, receive it on your mobile phone while hunting.

To Access:

1. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/irishfalconers/>
2. If you have a yahoo ID then click "Join this group".

If you do not then click "Sign up" and follow the instructions. You will then have your own yahoo ID and password. Available to you now are hundreds of falconry groups that are open to anyone without approval. However you cannot get into the IHC site without approval.

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The Successful Inscription of Falconry as Part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

by Gary Timbrell, Co Cork

Some 400 representatives of States Parties to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and of civil society as well as observers attended the annual Meeting of the Parties in Nairobi in mid-November of this year. They officially inscribed 'Falconry: a living human heritage' on the global list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The UNESCO Lists

Today's modern lifestyle, globalisation and rapid urbanisation have restricted opportunities to practise many traditional cultural activities, particularly those that are difficult to record, ways of life passed from generation to generation in an intangible manner. Adopted in 2003 and ratified by 132 States, the UNESCO Convention recommends the protection of elements such as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and know-how related to traditional handicrafts (falconry fits into all of these groupings). It considers these elements as a Living Heritage, which, when transmitted from generation to generation, gives communities a feeling of

identity and continuity.

Items must meet the definition of "intangible cultural heritage" and be compatible with the objectives of the Representative List. The national government is obliged to take measures to ensure safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage located on its territory, in other words it is not enough for a club of enthusiasts to submit it. It must be the national government who has already put in place protective measures. Any submission must seek to ensure the widest possible participation of those involved and involve them directly in the management of their heritage. Governments signatory to the Convention must have presented a list of one or more categories of intangible cultural heritage located on its territory, with the inclusion of the items to be recorded in the short list.

The Representative List already had 166 elements from 77 countries. On this latest occasion, the Committee examined 47 new nominations from 29 States. In order to be inscribed, the new elements had to comply with a series of stringent criteria, including contributing to spreading the knowledge of intangible cultural heritage and promoting awareness of its importance. Nominees

for the inscription also had to justify the protective measures their governments had taken to ensure the viability of the element.

The History of the Submission

The original idea that Falconry might qualify to gain the status of World Cultural Heritage came in the late '90s and was formally proposed at the CIC (International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation), 2000 General Assembly in Berlin. CIC people have been involved throughout the project. Subsequent discussions with IAF saw the formation of a UNESCO Working Group that sought out academics from inside and outside falconry and falcons from all over the planet to decide how to go about this.

It was soon recognised in the initial discussions that Falconry might satisfy all the requirements of the Convention and that UNESCO recognition might grant full legitimacy to falconry in countries where falcons had to constantly fight bureaucracies influenced by negative people. It could even encourage countries to adopt clear strategies and sound action plans to safeguard their Falconry heritage and could change received opinion in countries whose laws were prohibiting falconry altogether.

In September 2005 Abu Dhabi hosted a symposium 'Falconry: a world heritage'. Here experts on many aspects of falconry, falconers, scientists and academics met, heard and presented papers and listened to the advice of UNESCO people as to how we might proceed. After two days of presentations and another of workshops the project began to take direction. We began to understand the wealth of cultural material available and how to go about preserving it. We also learned that, even though the vast majority of submis-

Until that moment the project had been run purely by amateurs – IAF's motto is "Quod tatum pro credit ex amore" – "Everything comes from the love of it", but the size of the project demanded professional input and that was facilitated by the UAE and provided by UK based International Wildlife Consultants who, with the Hawk Board, were also influential in the UK Falconry Festivals and the Falconry Heritage Trust, both of which played a large part in the international promotion of falconry during the project.

menal Committee, a position they would hold until October 2009. Then IAF joined the Committee of Experts, along with five other world countries (Turkey, Estonia, Kenya, Mexico, and South Korea). Thus the UAE found itself in a position where it had much better communication with other countries and was able to better promote falconry. In this way it was also able to gain a more accurate knowledge of the conditions of registration.

To persuade countries to join, the following were contacted and vis-



sions are made by single countries, for Falconry to gain most advocacy from any UNESCO recognition it would have to be a joint submission by as many countries as possible. It soon became apparent that the involvement of a favourable national government would be crucial and the UAE offered its support at highest levels.

The Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Agency made great efforts to use diplomatic avenues to advance the submission and in Paris in 2006 the UAE was elected to UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage for a period of two years. In Turkey in 2008, UAE won the post of Chairman of the Intergovern-

ment Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage for a period of two years. In Turkey in 2008, UAE won the post of Chairman of the Intergovern-

lectively, were carried out in Paris, and in international conferences and seminars in Turkey, Mongolia, Spain, Slovakia, Jordan, South Korea, etc. Other countries were urged to participate in the international file, finally reaching the total of eleven.

In order to meet the stringent requirements a comprehensive file was set up and translated into various languages including English and French and sent to various states. This was then discussed in specialist workshops in Abu Dhabi in March 2009 and with countries participating in the United Kingdom at the International Falconry Festival in July. The final format was discussed with all states in August 2009 in Abu Dhabi and a short list of the elements of intangible heritage in each country was made, promoting the inclusion of falconry and a legal framework for the protection of intangible heritage was set up in each country.

Documentary films about falconry were prepared and the final selection of an international film (Spanish made) was approved by the countries at the Abu Dhabi meeting in August 2009, organised to include cultural officials and experts from each country participating in

the international file. Procedures were formulated for maintaining falconry as a heritage (countries must constantly update these even though inscription has been achieved). Other documents and films were also collected for use in the final submission. To support the submission and promote falconry as an ongoing cultural heritage information centres on falconry and conservation programs were supported and publicised e.g., the Sheikh Zayed wing of the Archives of Falconry, Boise, USA, the Falconry Heritage Trust, UK and many exhibitions, conferences and lectures organised locally and internationally with as extensive a media coverage as could be obtained. Events in Turkey and Japan were particularly appreciated. The rules of the convention insist on active participation of the local community and of the Ministry of Culture in each country.

It can be clearly seen from all this that the main initiative for the Falconry submission was taken up by the United Arab Emirates who spearheaded what became a truly international project leading the team with their Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Agency to put together the most significant Joint Submission ever presented to UN-

ESCO. The ADACH funded and managed the most significant portion of the effort under the driving force of HE Mohamed Al Bowardi and HE Majid Al Mansouri, the Director of the Environment Agency in Abu Dhabi, the most significant conservation agency and force in the Middle East. The final joint submission was made on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Throughout the six year long project the IAF provided support to the involved countries and cooperated directly with the international project leadership in Abu Dhabi, coordinating workshops, forming working groups and encouraging member countries to join the project either as participants or in the background. Besides the 11 states ADACH has formally acknowledged "...the sincere and constructive cooperation of falconers and officials of the heritage, culture and environment from the following friendly states: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Turkey. If it would not have been possible for the Department of Intangible Heritage at ADACH to accomplish all of this without the sincere and constructive cooperation of the EFC, and the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, the National Commission for UNESCO – Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, and some non-governmental organizations, the IAF and those concerned with falconry and heritage locally and globally; even falconers from countries who not signatories to the Convention

for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage were able to help.

In its evaluation which began in September of this year, the UNESCO Committee declared that Falconry, recognised by its community members as part of their cultural heritage, is a social tradition respecting nature and the environment, passed on from generation to generation, and providing them with a sense of belonging, continuity and identity. This defines falconry as heritage and is a crucial condition to acceptance by the Convention which has stringent criteria for judging candidates. The rules of this convention state that candidates must first be inscribed on the national lists, supported by the national government. This was obviously not a huge problem in the Arab countries where falconry is a large part of the everyday lives of citizens, or in Korea and Mongolia where it was until quite recently of great importance in rural communities. In countries where falconers are relatively few the huge efforts they made must also be acknowledged and lauded: France, the Czech Republic, Spain and Belgium were among the earliest to get their governments' approval. Despite a very vociferous anti-falconry campaign threatening to sabotage their efforts, both Belgian communities successfully inscribed falconry on their national lists. Slovakia had falconry inscribed nationally and was ready to be part of a 12 country submission, but a last minute change in government days before submitting to the UNESCO committee allowed a sudden veto by the Slovak bureaucracy and it pulled out. Three more countries (Austria, Croatia and Hungary) had already inscribed falconry on their national

ITCH UNESCO inventory lists, missing the final date for the joint submission because of delays in their respective country's bureaucracies. It is hoped all of these will succeed in the next round of listings.

The submission, the largest multi-national submission ever made under this Convention, was singled out for special praise by UNESCO as 'an outstanding example of cooperation between States and the exemplary nature of the information provided was underlined'.

Comments of HE Mohammed Khalid Al Mazrouei, Advisor for Culture and Heritage of the Court of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and Director General of ADACH
"The UAE has played a key role in the preparation of the international file on falconry, and has worked to encourage global cooperation with regard to this tradition. The efforts made by the UAE leadership have contributed to the protection of this human heritage and have encouraged cooperation between different peoples and civilizations. This is a source of pride to Abu Dhabi and the Arab World in general". He highlighted that one of the first objectives of the registration of falconry at UNESCO was to increase awareness of falconry at local, regional and global level. It promotes the value of falconry as a global heritage, and encourages other countries to adopt clear strategies and sound action plans to safeguard the traditions of mankind. The move has granted falconry a fresh legitimacy according to the principles of sustainable hunting. During his speech at the meeting in Nairobi he stressed that, "The UAE, under the guidance of our honourable leadership, has spared no efforts in supporting conservation projects

concerned with heritage. Particular attention has been given to falconry, which is an important part of our culture and our ancient history. The UAE continues its tireless efforts to support UNESCO's plans and programs, which aim to preserve the cultural and modern day heritage of mankind. We have enjoyed the honour of co-ordinating the efforts of those compiling the international file on falconry. Eleven countries from three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe, have participated in this project. We in the United Arab Emirates appreciate the efforts of participating countries. We have worked together as one team and have felt the spirit of the 2003 Convention on the Conservation of World Heritage. We look forward to working with all the countries of the world, and we are pleased to welcome each of the sixty-three countries where falconry is now practised. Addressing delegations from 128 countries, Mr. Al Mazrouei said: "We are all aware of the importance of recording elements of cultural heritage, in particular those heritage elements that are shared between countries, and whose roots extend across borders. The preservation of this far-reaching heritage promotes dialogue and communication between countries and opens channels which will lead to greater cooperation, stability and peace." He renewed the commitment of the United Arab Emirates in supporting the activities of UNESCO, which aims to safeguard intangible heritage, while expressing gratitude to the Director General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, for her support of intangible cultural heritage.

Benefits

The International Association for

The IAF holds it as a huge source of pride that falconry has been globally recognised. It is seen as essential by IAF and has enabled us to move forward from a defensive to a very proactive position.

Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) holds it as a huge source of pride that falconry has been globally recognised. It is seen as essential by IAF and has enabled us to move forward from a defensive to a very proactive position. After all, it represents a heritage that dates back for more than 4000 years and is only now recognised as an important element in the heritage of countries, even those which may have never seen falconry in this way till now.

The high honour in which UNESCO is held by governments and civil servants can never be underestimated. Such is the prestige of UNESCO, the respect in which it is held internationally and the rigour of its selection process for listings that all countries could benefit.

1. The governments of the eleven submission countries had already inscribed falconry on their national lists that is they not only said "this is part of our culture", they have actually promised to protect falconry and to put in place a plan and procedures for doing so. Even a political change in the governments of those countries would find it hard to attack their falconry now.
2. These 11 will be joined by more countries now the mechanics are understood by falconers and by UNESCO itself. Several countries are preparing dossiers.
3. In countries where traditional falconry is in danger of disappearing, or where it exists perilously on the outskirts of unfair laws, falconers are being encouraged to cite the UNESCO inscription to support their cases for recognition by governments. Remember it is also prestigious for a national government to have its culture recognised internationally. It is now patriotic to support falconry.
4. This is a powerful tool that may 10

even be cited in efforts to change national laws in countries where falconry has fallen off the legal lists and in prospective EU countries where we have often seen bureaucrats assume that falconry is not accepted in the EU and then make no provision for it.

5. Other falconry nations, even if not signatories to the UNESCO convention, can and should use the fact at all their meetings with officials and members of parliament that falconry is inscribed by UNESCO as part of the global cultural heritage of mankind.

The Future

We are using the experience gained over the past six years to encourage falconry communities in states that are signatories to the Convention to add falconry to their own national lists and formulate plans for its protection. In June of this year IAF was itself accredited by UNESCO as a Non-Governmental Organization Accredited to Provide Advisory Services to the Committee and this will be very useful when future submissions are made. With an expected 15 countries listed by 2015 that makes a quarter of all falconry countries will have in put in place measures to protect and support their falconers. There are many countries where falconry is not recognised in law and it only hangs on by a very small number of traditional falconers - India, Pakistan, China. We now have a powerful weapon towards legislation and support.

This UNESCO recognition changes the mindset of officials and the general public from "hunting is bad" or "killing things for pleasure is indefensible" to "hunting is not only good for society, but it should be preserved and encouraged". Falconry is the first form of hunting to have achieved recognition as being culturally important to the community it represents. Representatives of other traditional forms of hunting, now they have seen that it is possible, are tentatively working on similar projects. In January 2011 FACE, the European hunters union, is hosting a seminar in the European Parliament and IAF will attend to make presentations to FACE delegates, MEPs and cultural officials on Falconry and how the UNESCO project was achieved.

On a material level two celebratory events will take place. Work has started on the Zayed National Museum on Saadiyat Island, UAE. Expected to be opened in 2014 plans were unveiled at ceremony last week by Queen Elizabeth II and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, falconer and conservationist. Designed by the British firm Foster and Partners, the building is meant to resemble the wingtips of falcons, symbolic of UAE heritage and culture. Five towers, made of lightweight steel and made to look like feathers, will rise out of a man-made hill that will house a public lobby. The tallest of the five wings will measure 124 metres.

The Emirates Falconers Club is hosting the Third International Festival of Falconry 16th and 17th December 2011 in Abu Dhabi.

Three o'clock came and we were on the boat. Arriving late on the island a short time later, we were eager to get out and get hunting, and the ferrets were also scratching like mad. We dropped off our belongings and set off. There were strong winds and we found it hard to get a rabbit out, and when they came out, the birds found it hard to catch them. So after a few hours

Fieldmeet Report Bird Overboard and The Lost Ferret: A short story on the Inish Boffin Meet September 25, 2010

Aochan Brown, Co Dublin



I was asked to write a bit about Inish Boffin (more like pressured to write). So this is my version of events.

It was the morning Friday 24th September and we were to meet at Mahorarity peer for 2.30pm too sail at 3pm. Seam Woods and myself were travelling together. So we met at his home at 11am and went for some supply's and were on the road for 11.30am giving us plenty of time.

The day got off to a good start until we were stopped by the guards and kept waiting almost 45 minutes. Therefore we missed the 3 o'clock ferry, but we could catch one at dawn. So with a few hours to kill we went to a nearby bar for a few Guinness and some pool, while Sean brushed up his Irish skills with the bar lady. The craic was good.

Three o'clock came and we were on the boat. Arriving late on the island a short time later, we were eager to get out and get hunting, and the ferrets were also scratching like mad. We dropped off our belongings and set off. There were strong winds and we found it hard to get a rabbit out, and when they came out, the birds found it hard to catch them. So after a few hours

and dig's we decided to head back to base and return later that night for some lamping.

We decided to head lamping around 11.30pm-ish. Meanwhile, we were getting fed and getting to know each other over a few beers, or for some pints of white wine! The time came to set out lamping with a crowd of 11 or 12 slightly drunk spectators. The most important thing was to be silent but we knew it would be hard to achieve.

The first rabbit we came across, my Harris Gypsy took off in hot pursuit. The rabbit slipped through an unexpected fence and Sean's bird Rolf hammered it. The joke was that they were flying in a cast as Gypsy tired the rabbit out and Rolf finished it. Thinking mostly about elephants in a china shop, we finished the night with some great sport and a few rabbits each, returning to base.

On Saturday morning, we split into groups of about three or four and set off. The group I was in consisted of Sean Woods, Stephen Devlin, Adam McCann and myself. We had a great morning's sport with only two birds. One

catch of a rabbit in particular stuck in mind; we were close to the shore where there was a cliff-like grass bank about 25 feet high. A rabbit bolted and I slipped Gypsy. With a chase of about 20 yards, she caught it at the top of the bank. With the rabbit struggling so much, both it and the bird took a tumble over the side and out of site. We ran over too see the bird at the bottom still on the rabbit happily starting to pluck.

We hunted on catching a few more rabbits returning back that evening for some top-notch rabbit stew, which was well appreciated by all. Got the fire going and talked about each of the groups' days hunting over a few more beers.

On the Sunday, our last day on the island, I was woken by Curtis Brown (aka Daisy) to be informed that my best and only working ferret had escaped. As some took off getting their last hunt in, I was kicking about neighbouring sheds and bushes, looking for it and thinking I had no hope at all.

After about 30 minutes looking, I was behind base walking through some nettle beds, when I saw a rabbit walk slowly out of a burrow a few feet away. 11

jumped nervously back into the burrow with my presence. I wasn't sure whether it was coincidence or not so I decided to wait it out. After about five minutes, another rabbit bolted hard about ten feet away, shortly followed by some rustling in the cover. I ran over and seen Tinkerbell the jill. I fell like I had found a needle in a haystack!

When I returned back to base, Mick Doherty, Sean Woods and Adam McCann were setting off on their last hunt. I joined them and we had some great sport. One slip in particular - I won't say whose bird - saw Tinkerbell bolt a field mouse. It came out of the hole lifting about ten inches into the air and ran frantically downhill. The Harris hawk took to the wing on pursuit turning the mouse and eventually catching it.

We returned back to base to clean up and get packed and to leave the island. With some stiff personal competition, sport and plenty of the craic, a great time had been had by all.

Book Reviews

Dirt Hawking: A Rabbit & Hare Hawker's Guide by Joe Roy III

Reviewed by
Neal Carroll, Co Wicklow

Book reviews would not really be anything and I am no great reader of books, but when it comes to falconry related material, I'll give it a go, especially if my arm is twisted hard enough.

For a start, this book is a substantial read with 298 pages, but it is not the type of book that has to be read non-stop to get the most out of it, however - it can be read at your own pace.

It is based on the American style of hunting, with comparisons throughout to the European style. The book outlines in depth every aspect of hawking, from the particular taxonomy of the prey species to field dressing, methods of dispatching quarry and finally telemetry.

It has some great action photos of hawks and dogs in pursuit of the common rabbit and gives the reader some awareness of the dangers to birds while being flown.

The most unusual and attention grabbing section of this book is the use of sight hounds and falcons to hunt rabbit and hare. As for some genres of falconry, dogs are essential for locating and flushing game birds and are the basis for the hawk to catch the prey. In this instance, both dog and falcon fly and hunt together in a team or pack as it would be, with the handler being the observer as dog flushes the cooey for the flying falcon but also taking part in the hunt itself.

What follows is a fast ranging flight with falcon powering in behind the fleeing victim, followed up by the carnie. As the cooey evids every stoop of the falcon, the dog twists the prey around the hunting ground awaiting his chance to make a grab when the falcon misses.

I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed this book; it goes into depth in many areas as I mentioned in the beginning but it also gives you a good overview of the prey species description, distribution, habitat, behaviour and reproduction.

The author has a great sense of humour and includes plenty of hunting stories and describes these, outlining both the positive and negatives to any situation he has been faced with. It made me laugh, reminiscences of my own past experiences just proving that what happens in the field happens to us all at some stage. Dirt Hawking is a book which I would keep on my shelf as there is plenty to learn from in this read. Highly recommended.

A Young Falconer's Walkabout - Hitchhiking through Europe and Africa in the Sixties by Lawrence Crowley

Reviewed by
Eoghan Ryan, Co Dublin

This book records the travel diaries of a young American falconer who, following three years of military service in Germany, decided to hitchhike through Europe and Africa. The year was 1963 and he was 26 years old. With no responsibilities or commitments, he set off without a care in the world, trying to

see and experience as much as he could and combine it with as much falconry as possible.

The book is divided into three sections - Discovering Europe, Africa and Culmination. Within each of these sections he records his daily life. He begins in Germany, where he refers to meetings, visits and overnight stays with an American falconer friend, Dr John Burchard, who flies a male Goshawk at partridge and 'one of Germany's top falconers', and August 'Gust' Eutermeiser, with whom he goes crow hawking. He visits more falconers in Austria too and makes passing references to various fieldmeets, references to the DFO (Deutscher Falkenorden - the German Falconry Club) and the various falcon personalities of the day.

As a falconer, I was most interested in the author's falconry experiences. I have to say that because of this, and after what I thought was a promising start, I thought the book dipped as Lawrence's travels took him away from the falconry scene (Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain, etc) and there was much about what one might expect from any typical travelogue (personal encounters, cities, landmarks, historic and tourist sites), though this was enlivened somewhat by his passion and successful exploits with the opposite sex, and other areas of his interest such (ie, finding rare cave paintings from the Paleolithic era - some as old as 35,000-22,000 years old).

The book did pick up again when Lawrence returns to Germany to Gust Eutermeiser, whose birds included Lanners, Prairies, Sakers, a Goshawk and Sparrowhawks. His time is spent crow hawking with the Falcons and he was given a Musket to fly. The Spar caught four starlings and three sparrows in one day! He then travels to England where, for example, he met with the acclaimed Jack Mavorogato, Author of 'A Hawk for the Bush' and 'A Falcon in the Field' (Crowley read the first draft of it before it had even been typed) and he attended the

Welsh Hawking Club's Fieldmeet.

For me, the book went up a gear in the second section as he travels through Africa, but it is his time in South Africa and Sudan that stand out. In South Africa, the falconers (back in 1963) are struggling to have falconry recognised and legalised and they are trying to promote a club. But one of the gems of the book is his time in Sudan with Jack Mavorogato, when they are trapping passage Barbary Falcons, Peregrines, Lanners and Sakers. They trap ten Falcons, two of which were destined for the USA and four to England for crow hawking. The rest were set free. Although Crowley had trapped hawks back in the US, he admits that he 'learned a good bit from the old master' and he describes the techniques used and their woes in training and development for falconry. This was fresh and intriguing writing. The author travels alone north through Egypt and Europe and meets Jack Mavorogato back in England. The third section of the book is devoted almost entirely to crow hawking with Mavorogato on the Wiltshire Downs (in the days before telemetry was used). Crowley records their daily exploits and in doing so reveals a significant range of snippets of information that would be of great assistance to any would-be longwing crow hawker.

The book is interesting in that it records correspondence from some of the top falconers in Europe and the USA (at the time) and other connections between falconers and others across the world - men like Conrad Lorenz, George Lodge, Gilbert Blaine, Roger Upton, Lorant D'Basnyai, etc. The book could nearly be seen as a catalogue of name dropping, but the truth is clear; this was a young man that obviously sought out these well-known falconers so as to enrich his knowledge and experience - much of which is shared with the reader through diary and anecdote. You have the sense of an affable young man who was able to strike up a rapport with these men, and in so doing he has captured a unique and interwoven mesh of falconry history, connection and

experience.

The book ends (or nearly ends) with his final destination in Europe - a trip to Iceland - where he heads (alone) to the northern parts of the country to find the nest sites of Gyrfalcons. He finds several sites and describes a succession of spectacular stoops of one of these wild Gyrs on a pair of ravens up in an isolated valley (and includes photos of the young from one of the nest sites).

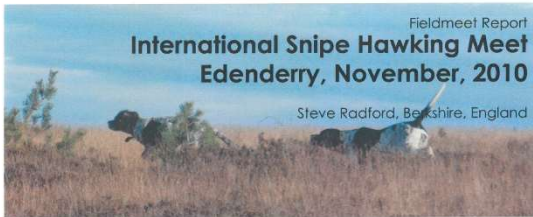
The book includes a falconry glossary which contains a wonderful array of terms, some of which I had not even heard of before. Overall I am delighted to have this book grace my shelves!

Review a book

Has your day been saved by a trusty piece of text, or do you find some are not worthy of the hype they get?

Tell the rest of your club your verdict on a falconry book, old or new, and why you think it does or doesn't deserve to live in every member's bookcase.

hylwhite@gmail.com



Steve Williams called me on the Sunday morning: did I want to go snipe hawking in Ireland? "Yes please. When?" I answered. "Wednesday, leaving early - let me know by 7 o'clock," he said.

So I left my house 12.30am on Wednesday and we left Steve's at 2am heading for the ferry at Holyhead, about a five-hour drive.

The ferry was late - bad weather, and something about having to use the anchor to get into the dock... I think they said anchor anyway.

We had a rough crossing - just managed to grab our breakfast plates as everything else slid off the table and smashed on to the floor. Later, having used the facilities, I was going to wash my hands when I was greeted by a pale greenish

complexion burst through the door and vomited from half way across the room, filling the stainless steel trough that served as a sink with his breakfast. Hmm.

Late into Dublin port but the weather was good - sunshine even! The ferry bucked and lurched and churned up mud - I was guessing they had the same 'anchor' problems trying to berth it - then an announcement was made: the front cowl wouldn't open because of damage caused on the crossing. We were stuck on the ferry. Chances of a flight that afternoon were frustratingly slipping away.

Half an hour later, we were heading for Edenderry. The SatNav didn't know Ireland existed so we had to navigate by phone calls to Martin Brereton who, along with

Robert Hutchinson, had arranged this first international snipe-hawking field meet of the West of Ireland Hawking Association.

Finally we arrived, and with the sun low over the bog, Steve cast off his eyass Peregrine falcon, Stanley, as Martin's pointers found snipe. Steve preferred to stand still and let the hawk mount over the point, which was different to Martin's style of casting off his very experienced hawk while the dogs were searching. Martin's hawk could wait on for half an hour and keep stooping until he killed, but Stanley was new to this game. He was very high when the snipe flushed, but he refused them, perhaps not surprisingly as he'd only ever flown partridge and pheasant. Nonetheless it was disappointing - it would've been an incredible flight.

The next day we had good sport,

These migratory snipe are certainly a worthy quarry - they just fly up and away and hawks need a good pitch and accurate footwork to knock one down. Martin's team showed how it was done, killing his snipe with a vertical stoop - would've been a text book flight if there was a text book on snipe hawking



stoop but missed. Then the hawk drifted away until the dogs went on point again. He returned in a purposeful straight line and this time killed his snipe. He was put off by the dogs running in but Grant relieved it and brought the hawk down safely. Grant's grin said it all as we gathered around to admire the snipe and hawk together.

Proceedings were temporarily held up by a box van literally squeezing itself through the tunnel under the Grand Canal, then we moved on for more flying followed by another great evening and yet another day of excellent sport.

Steve's falcon continued to fly high but refused the snipe. Dogs pointed, snipe flushed and we all struggled across the bog - one or two falling prey to the 'Bog Monster'; no more snipe were killed. The day finished on a surreal note with Greg stooping his cast of Barbary falcons (falcon and falcon together) to the lure, just as the moon rose over a flat desert that was once a peat bog, and the lights came on at the distant power station that had consumed it.



TELEMETRY

IHC strongly recommends the use of radio telemetry by all members when flying their birds of prey.

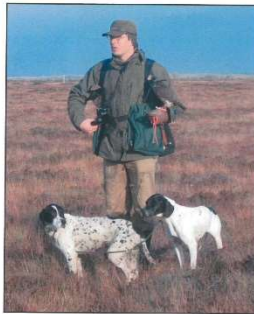
Not to do so, especially in the case of non-native species and hybrids, could jeopardise the good will that exists between the responsible falconers in IHC, with the other non-government organisations concerned with conservation and wildlife and with the wildlife authorities themselves.

Such was my first visit to Ireland and my first view of snipe hawking.

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The local wild peregrines caused a lot of problems then. Grant Haggard's hawk was flying well until they attacked him and drove him away, at some stage maybe hitting his transmitter as it had stopped working. Eric Wilkowski's hawk suffered in the same way after putting a snipe into some birch trees. Then flying was stopped while the hawks were tracked, and the rest of us went to look at Robert's hounds and fenners. Lots of dogs ran out into the road as we travelled the country lanes, apparently trying to bite the car tyres! A dangerous game and one poor dog came to grief when it ran out in front of Nick's car - he missed it but the car overtaking him didn't! I saw the wheels go right over the dog's

head and there was a loud crack - yes! I saw the dog get up yelping afterwards! The vehicle that hit it did stop, so we carried on. I've read a couple of Robert's articles about the 'Wild West' - now I see what he means, never a dull moment!



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We finished the day at the bog back at Martin's. There was a large field watching, and lots of banter about an 'easy' jack snipe and a hawk that seemed to want to walk

up and mug it rather than fly it. Whilst Maurice Nicholson's hawk was flying, another Peregrine came in and stooped at it. At first we thought it was a wild one again but it turned out to be Grant's hawk - now that was a bit of luck! The telemetry had failed and Martin said we were six or seven miles away from where he was lost! Both hawks were brought down safely and Eric had got his back too.

An excellent evening followed at the hotel, with a good meal and music - the legendary Irish hospitality; also a chance to talk with characters like Liam O'Brain, Jacques Goudard and John Morris, who I consider to be part of living falconry history (meant in a complimentary way, John!) with links back to Ronald Stevens and the starting of the Irish Hawking Club. Too many people to mention names, but with everyone so friendly and no politics involved, we had such a laugh!

On the Friday, Martin's hawk put on an epic performance, stooping three times at one snipe from a great pitch, then mounting again to repeat it only this time finishing with a

kill. I believe this was his eighth consecutive kill. We moved on whilst Martin's hawk was fed up and retrieved in his unique way. Then Grant had a flight, an excellent

STALKING INTO THE ZONE!

James Knight, Co Mayo



Baby Doll steps out of her travel crate as graciously as a well-to-do lady offers her hand to a suitor in those old films. She is fluffy, relaxed and beautiful. I can't resist a kiss - well, it's an alternative kiss - I pull her in close so I can bend my head down and push my lips into the back of her neck and I blow. My wife and son always frown and say 'she doesn't like it, you can't see how cross she looks - we can'. But I don't think she minds, I know she doesn't!

With the essential morning kiss over I sit back in the Land Rover and change her jesses. It's not easy, so relaxed and fluffy is she, that her anklets are well and truly hidden under her voluminous grey and white petticoats. It's not easy sliding the mews jesses out and the flying jesses in without trapping or pulling any feathers, but I'm careful. Then on with the transmitters and cut the cable ties. When I finally stop meddling, at her fluffy white undergarments are still in fact. Test the transmitters with Marshalls excellent telemetry tester and we are ready for the off. The Land rover chugs into life and I steer the stately old ship towards the tip head of Newport landfill site.

Baby Doll rides the glove as if she is sat around it, not on it. Some hawks feel like they are being asked to stand on hot coals or lumps of ice,

they jiggle, twitch or slip and slide on the glove doing their best to fight the enforced connection of the jesses. They stand on their talons keeping the distance between glove and their body as far as possible and when walked they wobble about on long legs. Not Baby Doll, she sucks herself down on to the glove like a lamprey. Every contour of her feet clomps gently around the glove, her body and feathers sink down and she becomes a dense immovable object. It's as if she has become glued to the fal. It's a joyous connection. It's not that she doesn't bate ever, of course she does. She has her 'Goshawk moments', her bad days like I do. And I'm not claiming she is the perfectly trained Goshawk, there are times when she can bate with the best of them. But when we are in the zone, in these moments, the very idea of a bate just doesn't exist. It's harmony.

In the distance, off the site, is a scattering of white, as if a giant hand has tossed down a fistful of quartz rocks. They decorate the large mounds of earth that have been piled there for some future use. I glance across into Baby Doll's yellow eye, she has seen them, but there is no shift of weight, no tightening of feathers, no twitching of talons. The only sign is her head, which has become a little more spiky, a little more animated. The gulls are not on their normal mound, the highest, but on a lower one to the side and it dawns on me that, in the foreground, another smaller mound could perfectly conceal my approach. I pull up alongside the perimeter fence perfectly hidden from the gulls view. The fence is the security type of concrete post that has a sloping top. The bottom is sheep netting and barbed wire, with strand after strand of barbed wire going to the top. Unclipping her leash from my

she is lost, diffused into the grey of the rocks and soil. The lumps of white explode like fireworks, wings flashing in all directions and alarm calls filling the air. Then, shooting up vertically into the blue is Baby Doll. She hangs there, above several of the gulls before picking her target and stooping hard and binding to a gull mid air. It's over.

hawking bag I puff it around two of the strands of wire, thread the leash back through the swivel and cinch it up tight opening up a gap between the strands. Somehow friction somewhere means I don't even have to tie it, it just holds. I feel like a Special Forces commando with the ultimate fence breaking kit! It's only just big enough though. I have to squeeze through the widest gap with yellow safety vest and the falconry bag

it's just up the slope, only 10 or so feet high. As I clamber up, Baby Doll changes, she knows this crouched, sneaking, scrambling. For a moment she opens her wings a little and I fear she will bate, but she pulls back from the brink. We peek over the brow, two heads, two sets of eyes. I keep glancing across at her making sure I am holding her just high enough for her to see, but not enough to blow our cover. The gulls remain, the condors

the ground with a shallow wing beat. I straighten up to try and keep her in view but she is lost, diffused into the grey of the rocks and soil. The lumps of white explode like fireworks, wings flashing in all directions and alarm calls filling the air. I take the final two steps to the top and watch, although I have no idea where she is and can only wait. Then, shooting up vertically into the blue is Baby Doll. She hangs there above several of the



the flights have a suspense and excitement all of their own

mercifully not snagging too badly. Baby Doll has to crouch low to fit through her bill, the narrowest, and looks across at me as if to say 'you ought to try a bit of weight control yourself!' Leaving the leash for the return journey I survey the best route. The gulls are a good 75 metres away, but this first mound is our only cover. First there is a small drainage ditch to cross and then

would have gone instantly, even at this distance, but the gulls remain. We crouch back down a little, just out of sight and then peek over again. This time Baby Doll launches; it's not an explosion of power or energy that greets a flushed pheasant, it's as soft a take off as she can manage. Dropping down and keeping only inches off

gulls before picking her target and stooping hard and binding to a gull mid air. It's over. She steps up and feeds up on the way back. The fence is harder to get through this way, it takes a while to unpick some snags and there is a slight ripping noise from somewhere, but we make it.

This season we have had perhaps



With Eagles In Slovakia

Gary Timbrell, Co Cork

Having been a part of IAF since my first term as delegate in 2000, I was delighted and honoured to represent IHC once again at an AGM. This, its 41st, was held in the Hunting Castle of Polackova in Slovakia on 21st and 22nd October, 2010.

Advisory Committee Meetings were held at the Slovakian Falconers' Eagle Meet in Vrbov on the two days prior to the AGM. Since I take an active role as PRO for IAF I was obliged to attend the AC meetings as well as the AGM itself.

Vrbov is a six hour drive from Vienna airport (five from Bratislava) and nestles under the High Tatras mountain range which continues unbroken into the Transylvanian Carpathians. This is the wildest country I have ever seen. It is com-

pletely different to the neat Czech countryside many IHC members know from international meets in Opocno. Small villages are scattered on the rolling country between the mountains. Each house has a vegetable plot and poultry yard and at the edge of each settlement there is a gypsy encampment, an unromantic one with a standpipe, no electricity, mud and barefoot children. It is not an affluent area. There are strings of garlic around all the doors and windows. The weather is grey; the mountains attract drizzle and mists. There are ruined castles. It's like an old black and white Hollywood film set.

I only managed to see one day's hunting. At the meet there was the usual line up of the eagles (16) and formal speeches from the club chairman and one from the presi-

dent of the local hunters association.

"The reason there are only eagles here is that there is no small game and the reason there is no small game is there are too many foxes and lynx. These have cleaned out the hares, the rabbits, the pheasants and the partridge. Oh, and don't go too far into the woods for a pee, there are wolves there and the bear population in this area is very high this year so we have fewer deer."

I did not go into the woods.

Those of us lucky enough to have visited central Europe have seen the high calibre of the Czech and the Slovak eagle hunters and even the Czechs acknowledge the supremacy of the Slovaks in this. Their eagles are calm, show no aggres-



a wily fox, turned his head and snarled every time the eagle came in for the strike. Three times up, but the third time put in a little link herself causing the fox to turn his head and snap the wrong side. The eagle hit him hard

half a dozen of these stalking attacks on the gulls. The flights have a suspense and excitement all of their own. The quarry is in full view of the start, so there is no uncertainty about whether the ferrets will bait a rabbit or is the dog false pointing etc. The excitement of stalking into position, ears strained to the disaster of hearing the gulls alarm call and knowing you have been rumbled, builds the longer and slower you go.



I expected the sharp pull up and then the set wings and the swing downwind to a post. I got the sharp pull up, but then a sharp stoop and I realised I had forgotten to run. She had a huge gull

Another flight occurred in a very similar way, on the same mounds of earth, except this time a normally padlocked gate was open. I could walk through and up the track keeping mostly hidden, but there were a couple of exposed bits that increased the excitement, but we got past without being affected.

Once in position, still 60 metres away, we peeked around a bank of earth, but Baby Doll wasn't looking too keen and so we ducked slowly back. We were safely hidden so we could take our time. I let her peak again and she looked a little more interested, we ducked back. I got my breath back. It's easy to forget to breathe when you are concentrating so hard on trying to hold her in the perfect position where she can see the gulls but won't be seen herself. Each time we peeped I thought we would be spotted.

I was willing her to go, she was clearly not feeling starving today, probably not even slightly peckish in fact, but surely she loved hunting. She lived for this, surely she would go. The tension was ratcheting up, because I could watch her come into hunting condition right before my eyes. The bobbing head, snaking neck, tightening of feathers, twitch of the tail, focusing

yellow eyes, it became obvious she was going to chase so it was like watching the second hand on a clock ticking down to its chime, or an alarm, or church bells, or a cuckoo coming out or a bomb going off. When she went I watched her race away, all the time thinking she won't grab one, she is way too heavy. She fizzed across the ground as a lighted trail of black powder to an ammunition store and then the gulls blew up in all directions like a burst giants pillow. I expected the sharp pull up and then the set wings and the swing downwind to a post. I got the sharp pull up, but then a sharp stoop and I realised I had forgotten to run. She had a huge gull.

What I love about those flights and others is the shared focus: it's not my falconry dream, I'm on a landfill site for gods' sake. There is rubbish and noisy vehicles, it's the opposite to the pristine wilderness that I dream of. However, in its way, it's

my falconry perfection, the feather-perfect calmness and harmony, no bating, no conflict, no stress. When these moments come, I relish them.

Next weekend, I shall take her to the annual field meet. I do it with trepidation. We will be outside of our comfort zone: things will be unfamiliar for her, people, dogs, terrain, hunting methods. She will bate and fret, I will fret and bate and while we will both cope and perhaps she will chase a pheasant, part of me wonders if it's fair to her. Asking her to perform in public, doing something so far removed from her comfort zone.

We shall see - who knows, perhaps there will be a mound crowned with seagulls and a convenient hedge for us to stalk along ...

Fieldmeet Appeal

Members are being encouraged to organise fieldmeets in their part of the country.

These can be as large or small as you want, and can be invitation only.

Going hawking with two or three pals is still a fieldmeet, and if you have a particularly memorable day on such an excursion, please tell your club about it.

Alternatively, if you think you can hold a larger event, get in touch and we can help with some of the organisation.

Field meets are a great way to socialise with other members, for beginners to learn about falconry, and most importantly, to get out and see some hawking!

sion on the fist and even no aggression when accidentally slipped in an impromptu cast. In discussions with our main guide, Lado, two reasons came out for this constant attention to the extent of almost living with one's eagle and catching something almost every day, at least five days in the week. Note: remember when we did this with sparrowhawks? We used to be good, too.

They carry their eagles mostly hooded, but remove the hoods from time to time, for example if you admire their bird. This seems to help keep them constantly manned and avoids lethargy.

There was a professional team of beaters provided by the hunting association and paid for by the spectators in our fees. We were left fairly free to stand where we wanted during a beat so long as we stayed clear of the falconers who assessed the best dips and took up positions on the higher knolls. We stood in small groups - silent unless we wanted abuse in four languages - while the beat came towards us coming through rough patches in the open fields and sending foxes and roe-deer towards the waiting eagles.

Despite the large predators we saw many, many roe deer, often coming towards us in family groups of three, two parents with their calf of the year, now almost indistinguishable from its mother. As a rule the eagles were slipped individually and they selected one of the deer, usually avoiding the large males with their antlers.

There were as many foxes as roe deer and there provided more interesting slips. With the deer it was

a straight speed chase with a final attempt for height, a strike and hold-on-tight while the falconer runs like the wind to assist. With the foxes it became more of a course with the fox jinking left and right and the eagle having to throw-up and wing-over. Neither quarry is a walkover. Many roe were refused at the last second and some escaped.

Four deer and four foxes were taken on every day of the three day meet, an impressive total of 24 head of quarry. The deer were eaten at the banquet after the AGM, but not the foxes.

Celebrating the Spar

Over the next few pages, we pay tribute to the hawk that for years provided Irish falconers with more than our fair share of sport. She's not gone however – she's still available to take from the wild under licence, can still be hunted with in a huge variety of environments and is still heart-stoppingly exciting to be in the field with.

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you – the Sparrowhawk

Fond Memories of Spars

by Shay O'Byrne, Co Wicklow

Early Days

In 1970, my first hawk was a wild-caught eyass Sparrowhawk – legally I might add, before the 1974 Wildlife Act – trapped down in a forest near Camolin in Co Wexford. I was holidaying with family near Courtown. My younger brother and I cycled the ten miles to Camolin and up a dirt track for a further two miles to the edge of the forest where we heard the haunting sound of young sparrow calling. Although we didn't see them, we took a chance, and set up a noose trap, containing a couple of sparrows, on the forest floor, and retreated for a while.

On our return, I climbed a lookout tree nearby to have a look. I couldn't believe our luck when I looked down to see a brown bird flap on top of the trap, a sparrowhawk! I felt the hairs raise on the back of my neck with excitement, and with a rush of adrenaline, forgetting the height I was up, jumped from the lookout into a pile of brambles hitting the ground running. How I did!

n't kill myself in the process I don't know. We charged across through the trees to find a large female eyass spar. Woo-wee! I was thirteen years of age! What an experience. These were early days and I had a lot to learn. I spent many hours, and weeks (too long) in the morning process. Using Woodford's Manual of Falconry as my bible, I flew her free, eventually losing her after three months. Although I always had a keen interest in nature, this was the beginning of a love of falconry, birds of prey, and all things wild – a tremendous influence on my life.

Later Days – Flying an Imprint

I was to be near thirty years later before I got my next eyass spar, and first time to fly an imprint. My friend Rob Ashly and I took two eyasses from the wild under licence and imprinted them. What fun we had hunting with those birds, named Indie and Anna, cruising the back roads and lanes of West

Wicklow in search of corvids. Both birds were like 9oz heat-seeking missiles: once they saw a flicker of wings they were off (there were strict rules of who was to slip). When Rob's bird missed a kill, she would return to his fist in the car as we continued on for the next slip.

My bird (Indie) was a croaker, although her first kill was a sparrow of one of Tommy Byrne's famous fieldmeets, which much to my embarrassment she duly carried to the top of a monkey puzzle tree. With the help of 'amused' friends, using ladders, long poles, and a lot of ingenuity we eventually got her back.

After this episode, I decided to introduce her to larger, harder to carry, prey. She proceeded to take 13 magpies, 33 rooks, and five others in her first season. Her hunting escapades led to her tail feathers being 'slightly' damaged, resulting in a few imping procedures and finally culminating in a complete tail transplant performed in the capable hands of surgeon Hilary White. Yes, you guessed it, her new tail was a rook's, and there is much to recommend them as they are more flexible and less brittle than the originals.

One of the most memorable days hunting with her was the last day of

her first season. I took her for a drive one afternoon and in just two hours she had caught three rooks and a magpie. The flight on the magpie was quite spectacular as she bound to it after a long flight down a hillside. I fed her up on the magpie, deservedly so. It was time to set her down for her moult after an exhilarating season.

There were a few in the club flying spars then, and by all accounts, once entered and killing on a regular basis. It was the making of them. And imprinting, if done properly, I would highly recommend; they are less highly strung, easier to locate if she misses due to her gentle calling, and usually return to the fist or lure quite promptly.

Best Flight

Having moulted out, the beautiful intermixed Indie, with her new darker horizontal barred plumage, new tail, and those deeper yellowing eyes, was a sight to behold.



One intriguing aspect of dealing with Sparrowhawks was observing the difference in personalities, or should I say 'hawk-analities'. Ouch!

The first spar that trained me came from songbird trappers who normally killed any hawk that took their decoy bird. This was in the years before permission had been

Now in her second season, I decided to dispense with transport and work with her on foot in the surrounding fields in the locality, by stalking along ditches, hedgerows and up to field gaps in search of prey, with some success.

One Sunday in October, a lovely fresh clear afternoon, we approached this stubble field. Creeping up to the edge of a ditch, I peered over and there was a lone rook feeding in the middle of the field about 100yds away. I unhooked her jesses and lifted my glove high for her to see. Off like a bullet she went, flying low above the ground towards the rook, hugging the ground as usual. However the rook took off and began to climb steeply with Indie pumping up after it. They must have went up at least 60ft, when Indie bound to it and both came lumbering down. Wow! It was spectacular – they seemed to lumber in slow motion. This bird just had no fear, and didn't let go, with me charging across the field to greet and help my partner. Having picked her up

and while feeding her as we walked home, I remember feeling pretty chuffed and looking forward to our new season together.

Also, it was not to be, as I lost my little partner pretty soon after. I was out trying her on snipe, walking them up and trying to catch one on the rise. It was near dusk and she missed and dropped into cover over a small hill. Despite many efforts and help from friends, our search for her for days on end came to no avail. I didn't use telemetry then as her gentle calling and bell were usually enough to locate her; another lesson learnt – always use telemetry.

I've since flown a hybrid falcon at rooks and often quietly compared some flights to that magic one with Indie. However, suffice to say she was little hummingbird. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't always plain sailing; we did have our moments, or she wouldn't have been a spar! But what a spar.

Sparrowhawks: Hunting Partners

Rowland Eustace, Co Dublin

given to legally take a young hawk from the nest.

She was comparatively easy to man and very well behaved. When I finally picked up the courage to fly her free I quickly discovered her preference for quarry – wren!

She took her first flight at a black-

bird but abruptly changed course and plunged into undergrowth so thick that I could not see her. To my amazement, she re-appeared from a hollow log covered in cobwebs and hopping on one foot with a wren in the other. I had no difficulty in approaching her cautiously and she made no attempt to carry. Hunting after that was fun and she was quite happy with a

Driving north along the crisp clear coastal line, we spied a plied beauty looking very comfortable hidden away in a black thorn. We hid an old empty house the black thorn was the back garden of the old house about 20 yds down the garden. I knew we could take him.

Slightly he slipped out of my grasp in one fluid motion, not even a flicker of a bell, hugging the house's walls, edging close, and working the light out in my head – you see you can't look at a magpie or he will fly off. Even if you had a cat! And now, as we sit right at one end, you will know your game and be gone. So I had only seen our quarry for a split second, taking at 30mph, which was by far the fastest, how big was the bush and will the bracketing boy, wren?

To the left of the house was one very big field with light hedges, nowhere to go. Coming around the corner and readying Buffy, I took a direct route for the magpie (probably only two or three metres before his break), but it was enough to send him to the left and hawks away! He had an easy 25 foot lead on the Spar and powered high and right across the big field. Buffy knows magpies and the Rickett through the grass and grass the distance in time, each wing beat patting the monochromatic beak under pressure. He responded by climbing higher, she chased some more, and within a few seconds bound to the magpie about 30 feet up. I guided the flight back to the car with a well-matched spar feeding happily. 150m. A great flight.

James Irons, Co Clare



The very best insights into the world around us were for me, those days in the field with Alice, to see her hunting techniques in action, not just the Sparrowhawk's amazing speed and agility of the straight forward snatch-and-grab flights, but the indirect, pre-planned (this pre-planning took all of a second) flights that look her away from the quarry to make the most of the wind or some hedgerow or building or just about anything that could give her an advantage before the lightning fast and fearless strike.

One flight that sticks in my memory was many years ago, out on the hill behind my house. The dog had flushed and re-flushed a pheasant but Alice had only acquired feathers in the strikes as it was an old strong bird. After the second pit in there was no sign of it as the dog searched the area under where Alice had taken stand in a large beech tree. As I was arching myself from the undergrowth I heard a blackbird cluck to my left and simultane-

ously the gentle sound of a hawk bell high up the tree to my right. I looked up to see Alice in a direct glide down to where she had spied the blackbird. This path took her right past my face and just before her wingtip brushed my skin I stared into her eyes. Literally stored into my eyes as she came past, visually locked onto her prey. In those seconds she was totally oblivious to me and the rest of the world around her. She was going to rain but her prey had there no other way to see her. Her eyes were passed mine with only inches between. I was not until she had chased, snatched and missed her intended prey that I remembered to breathe again.

Alice was just a normal Sparrowhawk. They are all beautiful and fearless with an inherent curiosity to amaze, to chase, to once, twice or no other falconry bird to rival them in bravery and excitement!

Tommy Byrne, Co Carlow

dog working close but would not fly larger quarry. I lost her then and the original trappers picked her up in the same area about ten miles from home. I had imposed in a kestrel tail feather that helped to identify her. I lost her again (no telemetry available then for small birds of prey) only to learn that rival trappers had killed her. Trapping was already illegal but still practiced so I decided to break all contacts.

I imprinted most of my Spars when it became legal to take from the nest and I was surprised at the variation in appearance and behaviour of each hawk. This change usually took place shortly after the eyes had changed colour. The easiest to handle were those that had been crèche-reared by co-operating with other members.

My third hawk stayed with me for seven years when I finally had to practice euthanasia on her as she developed bad arthritis in both legs. Needless to say, we had a great relationship and very many successful hunts of a variety of quarry. We were hunting with the club in the Ox Mountains when she started taking wrens from the heather and gorse. Not what I had planned. When a member shouted 'not another wren!', I had to explain that it was an unusually large wren and would be kindly flush something more interesting.

We still had no telemetry so this involved plenty of footwork when a hawk was lost, along with very early rises, watching for reactions of other birds and listening for the tiny bells. I am unable to remember how many times with the help of others we found 'that needle in a haystack'!

The spar was, of course, very keen on blackbirds but not always successful and I queried my methods until I saw a wild Spar flying unsuccessfully to catch a blackbird in almost similar circumstances to those I had experienced on many occasions. They are very evenly matched and give the greatest thrills when hunting.

Some of the imprints, although reared in a similar way, were quite aggressive. I had a feisty musket that would dive bomb me from a high tree, knocking my glasses off or removing my hat. This he would do if he failed to connect with quarry. I also had a female who would fly to my glove and at the very last second rake to the left side of my face and remove glasses or cap and leave me with minor scars. I was also attacked by Paul Donahue's spar from a tree. This time I was gripped by one foot, one talon in the corner of my eyelid and the other in the corner of my lip. My eyes were closed and I was trying to figure out where the other set of talons were. This was scary but no damage done. I did however keep my distance after that, as we often hunted together.

I enjoyed hunting on my own but also enjoyed those occasions when we had the luxury of beaters. They 'upped the ante' and adrenaline and it was surprising how quickly the hawk became used to the use of beating sticks and the excited shouting. If we were working a hedge and the hawk unsuccessfully chased to the other side it could usually be called to another member's glove and flown again from that side.

The Muskets could be great fun and would take on anything. I generally flew them without jesses or bells but was quite prepared to

lose them as they were more inclined to carry than the females and would do so into very thick cover. I would say 'good luck' and make my way home.

When the spars were available and larger raptors were not readily available, we had some great meets. One meet based at Liam O'Brain's fielded seven well-manned spars which were successfully flown in high winds. You could of course fly them in any terrain except woods and at any available quarry; all they needed was movement and they were off.

I had another spar that was very laid back from the start. Hunting was not great but we had our moments. Later in the season I discovered an egg in the mews under shredded newspaper that I used to line the walls. I put her with a young Musket which she chased a few times and then relaxed. They settled down and reared youngsters for a few years until I passed the breeding pair on to another club member. I had rigged up a camera in the second year and only then realised that the nest making was a very important ritual in their courtship and I supplied many more suitable sticks. She had nested in a nest box which I had previously used for the Martins and the base consisted of small pebbles. She laid six eggs in the nest in her first year and one on the ground. All but one were fertile.

The last spar I hunted with was slightly aggressive and very strong. I built up her muscles by calling her from the ground as I stood on the top step of a ladder. It is always difficult to exercise a spar when unable to hunt. I started her on magpies in our local business park using the car as a blind. I

also had access to a large complex of allotments. She used the cover better than any of my other hawks and took quite a fancy to wood pigeons. She rarely failed but in the eventually took to the nearest tree. I learned not to call her down and she would wait until a woodie or magpie was passing and take it down. She took a passing wood-pigeon in a heavy shower as Edward Mulligan and myself sheltered under a bush. This sparrow changed tactics after her first season and instead of grabbing a quary she would strike them hard first and then bind to them as they hit the ground.



He responded by climbing higher, she closed some more, and within a few seconds bound to the magpie about 30 feet up. I paced the flight back to the car with a well-matched sparrow feeding happily; 150m

She surprised me on one occasion by flying at ground zero the length of a football pitch and taking out an oystercatcher having flown right through the flock. She had subdued it by the time I reached her, close to the goal posts of course.

The oystercatcher weighed 1lb 11oz. She took another oystercatcher at a later date but it was on its own and I don't think in the best of health. This sparrow was also adept at taking blackhead gulls and on one occasion she flew

three gulls that were feeding on ants and working line abreast. They backed her as she came in but she did a very abrupt turn over their heads and took the one in the middle.

Edward and myself were getting conflicting signals from the talons and really getting worried when I spotted rings emanating from under the pond's bank. When I looked under the overhang, the sparrow was sitting on a partially submerged rock clutching the remains of a magpie and boasting a very full crop. I retrieved her and found that both were soaking wet, as indeed were we by now. You may have seen the shot of a Sparrowhawk on Autumn Wasten where it was filmed dragging a very reluctant magpie to a pool and drowning it.

It was several weeks later that I lost her when I was out on my own. I traced a signal all the way to a tall large and impenetrable bush, replaced now by the Lus line. I contacted ever-helpful Edward, who was well-trained in impenetrable bushes, and after a difficult climb he relieved the hesitantly but no hawk. That was the last I saw of her but later got three to four sightings within a five-mile radius, identified by the two bells she wore. On each sighting, she was either on or near a woodpigeon kill. She had moved on of course by the time I arrived so good luck to her.

She flew another height of a small church spire, took it underneath and brought it down at my feet. I was about to dispatch the unfortunate when it opened its beak wide and screamed in defiance. The sparrow removed its tongue in a split second so I was glad that I could give it the coup de grace promptly.

On one occasion we searched for hours for her without success. She was in a wood with a large pond.

ble, had moments of lucidness when all would come together. And therein lies the problem with flying spars; those moments when all is right with the world, you and the sparrow are on the same wavelength, the quarry flutters at the right moment, the great twisting flight and the kill. Understand that this will happen when there is no one around to witness it and you will spend years retelling the story to all who will listen or happened to be trapped in lifts with you.

You will at some point decide to go on a field-meet with your bird. There, you will be surrounded by well-respected falconers who you look up to, with their leather perfect spars, who will have heard the story of your wonderful flight and are waiting to see your little demon in action. Your turn will come up for a slip, you will step forward, the quarry will flush perfectly. At that very moment, your bird, which up to that point has been behaving perfectly, will then decide that at no time was it ever trained, has never seen you before and is terrified of all quarry. It will then take up residence in a tree and sit there for many hours while the meet goes on around you. All those on the meet will ask 'has the bird returned' and pass and look up into the tree where the miscreant sits and offer encouragement. They may even call from the local hostelry and tell you how good the

beer is. You may now take this opportunity to see the sun go down and reconsider your choice of birds to fly and what it was you were on when you decided that a sparrow was the bird for you.

All of the above has happened to me while flying my sparrow but I felt it

best plan of attack was to drive around the countryside looking for potential victims for 9oz of hell and fury. That way I could cover a lot of ground quickly, save on shoe leather and the impossible task of sneaking up on crows and magpies in an SAS style which you will try.

There is nothing worse than spending considerable time planning a route of attack on a potential victim in vain. To crawl through thorns, slinging nettles, cow turds and the owners of the aforementioned turds, only to look up and see the quarry has long since left the county, and an late landowner heading in your direction at speed with a look of 'this is going to have to be a spectacularly good excuse in order for you to leave their land with your manhood still intact', all while your bird looks at you with those big yellow eyes which say this relationship could be short lived if you don't get your act together.



Painting by Bryan Eustace

only right to describe a flight I had with her. I believe there were no witnesses as is the way, but it did happen - you'll just have to trust me on this.

I had decided that crows and magpies were to be the chosen targets for her wrath. If my memory serves me right, she flew at around 9oz, so a crow or magpie were no small target for her. Still, I knew it had and was still being done, so off we went. I had decided that the

We did eventually spot a couple of targets, crows in some reeds just off the road. So parked up a couple of hundred yards away and made our way back down the road towards them, keeping the hedge between us and them. This hedge got us to within 15 yards or so of them, so all I had to do was step on the hedge, hold her up and, all being well, she would spot them and do her work. I feel that in hindsight and knowing what I know now I should have guessed this was

Most of my spars would also take rocks but discouraged this as I was afraid of injury. They took the odd jackdaw, which although small were harder to subdue and were well supported by their relatives. I did try to avoid hunting jackdaws as they foraged in pairs and I felt we were breaking up a good relationship. Did you know I was so soft-hearted?

Every Spar I had seemed quite different; some were slow but clever at keeping concealed, others fast

but not so clever and most would not pursue quarry to any great height. Tammy Byrne had a sparrow fast that it managed to catch a swallow, which we were able to release unharmed as the talons had wrapped around rather than penetrated. His hawk was also adept at taking rooks and grey crows.

Sparrowhawk for at least one season. It will improve your handling of any other Hawk or Falcon and provide plenty of excitement. Good luck with whatever you are flying it is a most rewarding Spar and now qualifies as 'heritage' - so dress accordingly!

Whatever you will gather that I am very keen on Spars and I do think that whatever you are flying you should try a

whatever you are flying you should try a Sparrowhawk for at least one season. It will improve your handling of any other Hawk or Falcon and provide plenty of excitement

Why Fly a Spar?

Rob Ashley, Cornwall, UK

When I was asked if I would like to write an article on my memories of flying spars, the heart beat rose. I came out in a cold sweat and had to go and lay down for a while in a darkened room. I used to think that in order to fly spars you had to have your brain removed at an early age, maybe smoke something illegal and be on medication only available on prescription. How right that was when I was persuaded to have a go at flying one.

Flying spars is a series of massive highs and lows with brief forays into total depression but for some reason those highs are so high you

have to go back for more. A drug, totally, and not one that can be brought on some street corner. In fact one that when you go for your fix there was no guarantee you would get it.

I was privileged to fly a wild-taken (under license) female sparrow, which I imprinted. Should you wish to go down the route of imprinting, and if you want to avoid a nervous breakdown, then this is the way I would go. Put your life on hold during imprinting, that is any form of social gathering, work, friends other than other falconers who will understand but be unsympathetic, and hope you have a very understand-

standing partner. Your residence will be full of down, feathers and sparrow poop. The range that a young sparrow has when evacuating their bowels has to be seen to be believed, but will always be three inches further than the paper or other protection you laid out to protect you house.

Not wishing to bore you with all the training that both the sparrow and I went through, there are people for whom I have immense respect for, and are far more qualified to speak on this than I ever be. But I did manage to train her and ended up with a sparrow that while still being somewhat mentally unsta-

with spars, you're never quite sure which one is going to turn up on which day, and stay awake because it could change at any moment. They're not easy and the margin for error is very small and will focus your mind. But it's worth the effort

never going to happen; why, this was my first sparrow - what could go wrong? The future was bright, the crows were there, bring it on.

Undeterred I held her up for a couple of seconds, if that, of looking around and she was gone. I scrambled up the hedge to look in the direction of the crows. Somewhat surprised, I looked at the two potential victims moaning their way, in an unconcerned manner, across the reeds towards the horizon. More worryingly, I could see no sparrow in hot pursuit. Looking around, I saw a magpie beating a hasty retreat from the hedge with a blur of sparrow-in-hot-pursuit. The magpie bundled through the hedge with my sparrow very close behind but she passed through the same hedge with incredible agility and ploughing straight into the magpie clearly with no thought for her own health or safety.

I leapt over the hedge, legged it across the field and through the other one in a time that would have qualified me for the Olympic sport of hedge-jumping and reed-turning while chasing a sparrow event. There she was, wrapped up in the magpie. The coup de grace was administered to the magpie and she was allowed to feed up. In

those few moments there was that high I had heard about. It was not by far, the best flight she would have, but I was now, sadly, an addict.

I continued to fly her with success until I had to return to the UK and had to pass her on. In our time together, I stood under trees, wondering what I'd done to upset her so much that she'd got a face on and would not return to me. And other times I thought we were so unbeatable that no winged quarry was safe. She once took it into her head that all was fair game and went after a heron. Fortunately, that single brain cell did finally spark into life and point out that this may not be such a good idea. Much to my relief she bailed out, although I think the heron did leave with a surprised look on its face.

heart, ruin your day, upset the peace and harmony in your house and probably steal your wallet if you're not careful. Yet when it all comes together all that heartache is a distant memory.

If you've never flown one, then you really should. They're not easy and the margin for error is very small and will focus your mind. But it's worth the effort; speak to anyone who's been there. You'll spot them, at some way off, with their greying hair, wide open eyes staring into the middle distance, a nervous twitch and, if it's a really bad day, blood leaking from various parts of their body. There are those falconers out there who have done incredible things with these feathered maniacs. As for me, time and family prevented me from flying at the moment...

Wait! What am I saying? WIFE! WHO DO WE KNOW WHO BREEDS SPARROWS? Owl Get off me! Stop!!! No, not the face, not the face!



Falconry in Germany

Alexander Prinz, Germany

Having grown up in a rural area in the South of Germany, my education started in a little village school with only two classrooms. The pupils' first reading attempts were supported by a magazine called *Animal Lover* that mainly consisted of stories about animals and nature. One day I turned over my new issue of *Animal Lover*, and I looked at a picture of two peregrines at a nest ledge. The picture was beautifully drawn, with the falcon facing the fiercel. The latter had a little bird in one foot, obviously just about to pass it to the female. I was immediately struck by the elegant and powerful figures of the two animals. It was a picture of sheer beauty. My grandfather, who was a keen field-sports man and working dog breeder, told me everything he knew about peregrines, including the fact that there are people who keep these birds at home and fly them at quarry. This was the moment that changed my life forever. From this moment I knew: one day, I would be a falconer!

Bird of prey husbandry in Germany is highly restricted. Falconers-to-be have to pass two exams before they are allowed to practice falconry; a hunting exam as well as a falconry exam. Despite all the support my grandfather gave me, I

had no choice but to grow older. For eleven years, I studied as much falconry literature as I could get hold of, until I was seventeen.

I then managed to get in contact with a falconer who lived not too far away and who took me to my very first field meet. This was 1987. After all these years of reading and dreaming, I now had the opportunity to experience some real falconry for the first time in my life. I remember that I could not sleep for two nights before the event. My new friend Albert flew a very fit male golden eagle at the time, while his falconer friends all flew female goshawks. On one occasion, a rabbit went into a horse paddock. The eagle flew straight through the wooden bars of the paddock and killed the rabbit on the other side.

All of the goshawks flown were either passage birds or wild-taken eyesses. In Germany, it is still possible to take goshawks from the wild. Falconers can apply for a permit to take an eyess from a nest. Also, authorities grant trapping licences in the case of wild goshawks causing damage to live stock, e.g. chickens. These licences are granted on condition of the goshawks being given to falconers after trapping. Passage goshawks are very good hunters, but can be quite difficult to handle. The earlier in the season

the hawks are trapped, the tamer they get and the better they are to handle. On the other hand, late trapped birds have many more kills under their belt and are very efficient hunters.

Albert took me to some more field meets and he soon realised that I was rather well-read in regard to falconry and so he decided that it was about time to put all this theory into practice. He owned a passage goshawk which had been caught by hand in Nuremberg Zoo. The bird had killed a duck in a pond in the middle of the winter and its plumage had frozen solid while it had eaten the duck under a bush. Soon after Albert acquired the gos, it developed some frost bite on one leg and thinking that this was the end of it, he bought the eagle. However, the goshawk recovered and because he did not have the time to fly two hawks, Albert asked me whether I was interested in flying the goshawk under his guidance. I was completely over the moon and every evening I cycled to Albert's house on my bicycle and flew the goshawk to the fist and to the lure. She came along well, but the first actual hawking attempts showed that she entirely disregarded rabbits. It seemed that she did not know rabbits at all, but showed great interest in birds. However, rabbits were the main quarry avail-

Instead of attacking the crows directly, he overtook the flock and cut off their way to the wood. It was great to see the fiercel work the flock and use a cunning tactic



able at the time and I was determined to catch some with her. I got myself some dead rabbits, opened the skin of one of them to expose the meat and gave her a good crop on it. Some days later I put her into a tree and pulled another dead rabbit on a piece of string. Sure enough, she came down and bound to it, which resulted in another full crop. I repeated this procedure for a few more days until Albert had arranged for a fieldmeet. It was a cold snowy day and our group of falconers walked through some wasteland in a line. Suddenly a rabbit bolted in front of me and the goshawk was off the fist. She chased it as it went in a circle and she bound to it when the rabbit was just about to run past me. I was ever so happy about this success. There is a tradition in Germany whereby a bird gets its name on its first kill. From this day, my goshawk was called Medusa.

In Germany, there are a few falconers who fly their goshawks at pheasants and ducks, but the main quarry for shortwings is the rabbit. Due to the decrease of the wild game population in the 70s and 80s, crows became increasingly interesting as quarry. There

are some specialists who fly goshawks exclusively at crows and rooks. Big daily bags can be achieved and the more crows are caught, the happier the landowners. A friend of mine caught more than 1,500 crows with one male goshawk. When flying at crows, male goshawks are usually first choice. The falconers drive by car with the hawk on the fist until they come across a decent chance. The average flying distance is approximately 30-40 yards. However, there are some people who put quality over quantity and prefer long, testing slips for their goshawks. They reward their fawks well when successful and try to increase the level of difficulty from time to time and thus push the limit. This can result in very spectacular flights with the goshawks attacking the crows over 100+ yards and putting in several stoops at their quarry.

Crow hawking became increasingly popular in Germany in the last twenty years. The majority of falconers who choose crows as their quarry fly peregrine falcons. There are not many areas in Germany where the country is open enough for classic ringing flights, as crows usually manage to reach some sort of cover before the falcon is able

to put in enough stoops. Therefore most falconers fly their falcons at big flocks of crows and allow the hawk to chase the crows into cover, preferably into few or single trees. Once the crows are in the trees, the falcon waits on above and stoops when the falconer approaches to flush. The more crows in the trees, the easier they are to flush. Few or single crows can be quite sticky and may not leave the cover of all, regardless of the various actions the falconer may take. Usually the falcon has to stoop several times before she is able to bind to a crow or knock one down. Crows can be tough customers on the ground and therefore most German crow hawkers fly medium sized to large peregrine falcons. However, there are a handful of people who prefer fiercels, as they are more stylish and the stoops look faster and more elegant. Also, fiercels seem to be able to stoop more precisely. Due to their physical disadvantage, the majority of successful fiercels flown at crows bind to their quarry by the head and thus prevent the crow from pecking or fooling them.

After having flown Medusa for a few seasons, I saw a peregrine being flown at

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crows. I was immediately inspired to try a longwing myself. A young falconer friend of mine, whom I had met at the training course for my falconry exam, was interested in flying a goshawk. Thus, I gave him my gos under the condition that he flew it at quarry and released it back into the wild. If he ever wanted to get rid of it, I bought a very dark and aggressive peregrine falcon and successfully entered her at crows. The falcon was named Lisa and she killed an average of 50 crows per season until she was shot after four years.

In 1996, I flew a very brave peregrine fiercel at crows and I still remember one flight which started off as a walling-on flight over cover, but then turned into a spectacular ringing flight. I drove along some country lanes with the fiercel on the fist. I had the braces of his hood struck and the car window open, as I expected to find a nice flock of crows in this area. The fiercel was at his best flying weight, and with his wings slightly opened and his neck craned he was keen to go. Sure enough we found the flock at a good spot and as soon as they saw my car, they were off

and headed towards a wood.

I cast off the fiercel, who started his attack with quick and powerful wing beats. Instead of attacking the crows directly, he overtook the flock and cut off their way to the wood. With the fiercel between themselves and the woodland, the crows had no choice but take cover in a few trees to their left. The fiercel now came back and waited on above the trees. It was great to see the fiercel work the flock and use a cunning tactic. I now approached the cover and with the fiercel walling on high above, I clapped my hands and flushed four or five crows. The fiercel stooped while the crows went back into the cover before he was able to get close to one. He threw up and climbed back to his previous pitch.

I went for another flush and the fiercel came pumping down. This time, he was able to clip one of the crows and it slightly tumbled in the air, but it was able to reach the safety of a small bush just before the fiercel could put in another stoop and bind to it. He now disregarded the rest of the flock, but

concentrated on the single bird in the bush. I ran to the cover and flushed the crow, but the fiercel missed with his stoop.

The crow used this opportunity by leaving the bush and tried to escape this tricky situation by climbing as fast as he could. However, the fiercel showed no intention of letting his quarry go and climbed after the crow in hot pursuit. Both birds went higher and higher. The crow climbed fast, but the fiercel pumped his wings hard after it, obviously inspired by his first contact to his quarry. Both birds must have been several hundred feet high when the fiercel caught up with the crow. He put in a stoop and the crow dived back down towards the trees where the flight had started off with the fiercel at its tail. However, I shouted as loud as I could and waved my arms to prevent the crow from pulling in again. The trick worked but well, as the crow was forced to throw up and the fiercel came in from behind and bound to it in the air. What a flight! Needless to say that the fiercel was rewarded with a good crop that day.

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Waking the Goshawks

Keith Barker, Co Waterford

After reading about the benefits of waking goshawks through the British Falconers Club (BFC) newsletter, I'd heard about a parent-reared, waked goshawk at the last BFC International Fieldmeet at Woodhall Spa that was so steady on the weathering ground, onlookers swore it must have been an imprint. The interest was sparked to see what all the fuss was about.

Chris Fearson had read a translation by Dery Argue from 'old' English to plain text taken from Bert's Treatise of Hawks and Hawking regarding the 'waking of hawks'. This entailed a traditional method of taking up a wild-trapped eyass, passage or haggard and keeping the hawk awake for 48 hours, day and night, with as much exposure to the outside world as possible to create a steady, almost bomb-proof hawk

in a short period of time. In short this was the hawk on the weathering ground at Woodhall Spa.

We had bred three goshawks this season - two males and a female. All three were being parent-reared in seclusion in preparation for their new owners. Irish Hawking Club member Ross Ricken had a mate on order, his first hawk, Frank Duffy from Sunderland, UK had his name on the female and the second male was being shipped to France to Emmanuel de Halleaux.

After some consideration and deliberation at the Festival of Falconry in Reading with Frank it was agreed that Frank would come to Ireland stay for a week's holiday. In this time, his goshawk would be taken from the pen and from that moment the waking process would begin. A shift rota would be implemented to enable us to get a bit of rest when tiredness set in. At this stage we thought two of us doing the manning would be sufficient. How wrong we were!



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the hawks on the Thursday morning. We had quite a gathering here; myself, Frank, Ross, who was collecting his hawk and young Ryan who is on school holidays and shares a keen interest in falconry although has not got a bird yet.

The first hawk to be pulled from the pen was Frank's female goshawk Bridie (the hawk decided on the name as she was hatched and reared in the Bride Valley of Co Waterford), a daughter of Frank's old female Goosey who was an efficient hunting partner before being put into our breeding programme.

Frank had the honour of pulling her from the chamber. She was immediately hooded and placed into a comfortable casting jacket whilst the furniture was fitted; anklets jesses and swivel had been prepared along with tail bell and telemetry tail mount.

When this work had been done the curtains were closed in the living room and the hawk was unhooded on the fist in the darkened room. Her waking had begun at 10am on the dot.

At first the hawk was a little nervous at her new surroundings with four strangers looking on. She bated a few times and was given a helping hand to regain herself back on the



The author before and after a night waking goshawks. Cans of Red Bull just out of shot! Ed

glove. She had not been fed the day before, unlike her brother who was due to come out of his chamber a little later in the day.

Bridie soon settled to a level where one of the curtains could be drawn back to let more light into the room. This unsettled her for a time, then the second pair were opened until she was steady enough to venture out into the garden.

We're talking about an hour before Frank was sat on a chair in the front garden with his hawk on the fist. We were amazed how in such a short space of time the hawk had settled; we live in a rural location, on a country lane with light traffic passing once in a while, the odd farm vehicle and perhaps a few HGVs - nothing over the top.

Frank's hawk was taking it all in; she was surprisingly calm with the red bote of two but nothing excessive.

Ross was taking this all in too, I guess he liked what he saw and made up his mind this is what he wanted to do with his hawk too. I had loaned him the article that myself and Frank had read and

there-and-then he decided his would be waked too.

Ross got on the telephone to his brother Adam who was had carrying on a building site and summoned to the waking camp. His boss was off to the Galway races. The following day and had given Adam a couple of days rest - or so he thought!

And so we caught hawk number two from the pen to be hooded and fitted with the furniture; again anklets, tail bell and telemetry tail mount.

The living room was darkened again and the hawk released onto the fist. This one was a different kettle of fish, a real screwy lot of fire. He settled for a while but transpired and would not regain himself. He had to be helped back into position to be bated again to be helped up again.

Ross was in the deep end here. His first hawk, a goshawk fresh from the pen and as wild as they come, was bating at the slightest movement in the darkened room from any of the three of us, only to be

lifted back up for a while before being spooked again. Ross was shown how to carefully handle him back up again, the safety leash fastened to the glove so the hawk could not bate free. Ross had a crash course in handling the wild one in the hour or so before he set fed enough to open up one side of one pair of drapes to let a little light into the room.

About another hour passed before the room was illuminated with natural light without the hawk bating to excess. He was now free to join Frank still in the garden and take a well-earned sit down.

Twelve hours into the waking saw the hawks taking everything in from the view of the front garden; my neighbour, harvesting his potatoes, all manner of farm machinery - passing - by throughout the day. Ross's hawk was not as steady as the female and still had to be lifted back at the fist every time he bated. The female was the steadier of the two and was taken on the fist for a short walk up the lane by the house.

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Later, Ross went home to Cork to collect his brother Adam, freshen up a bit and return later in the evening while I took over the manning duties.

At the time, I was feeding a few bullocks in the field opposite the house just before dark, a great opportunity to let the hawks see a bit of livestock. The cattle were steady enough and the hawks took it all in. Perhaps the twilight helped soften the experience but by this time they were getting so steady it was incredible.

That night, I hit my bed at 12 midnight. I woke by the alarm at 4am. The lads had retired into a stable, so I made strong cups of tea and coffee and joined them. Frank's hawk had been on one leg roused and Ross's was falling asleep, closing fist the membrane and fighting to keep the lid open.

It was their turn to get some rest but Adam had guzzled a bottle of red wine in the evening and was snoring with the pigs. Frank retired to bed and I took over. Ross was shattered at 5.30am when Adam appeared. It was coming light by this time so we went for a good walk with the two hawks.

We met a horse and foal at our first stop - no problems, no bating. Ross's hawk bated at a blackbird out of the hedge that shot across the lane in front of us. We walked as far as the River Blackwater at Villierstown and sheltered by the river when we got caught in a good rainstorm. The male was the most unsettled of the two on the way out. On the way back home we met cars with lights on, a jogger in her fluorescent top, a large lorry and a motorcyclist, all passing on a narrow country road. The male bated twice and the female

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never. The manning continued throughout the second day with mine and Adam's shifts being taken over by Frank and Ross.

I packed my wife off to work with a cuppa and some light breakfast asking her to call off at our butchers on the way home for fresh meat dinner to keeps the lads awake!

Myself and Adam got some well-earned rest. While we were away, Frank's hawk fed off the fist; a whole chicken neck. Ross's hawk was feeling most tired now - he was closing the membrane on the eye and then the lid would start to come down. At this point, the hawk was racked steadily on the glove back and forth to wake him up. We were winning the battle.

We had planned to take the hawks out walking on the second day but the weather turned bad with torrential rain so we were confined to a stable in the yard. We brought a couple of dogs into the room to add a bit of interest to the equation. The hawks were unsure at first but soon accepted the situation.

Ross's hawk fed off the fist at 30 hours from being taken from the pen, taking a full chicken neck looked on by four people and two dogs. The hawk weighed 1lb 6 and 3/4oz.

We were joined by Ryan Povey, who helped with some manning and making cups of tea for the lads. He stayed overnight with us as there was no school the following day. After a good steak dinner taken in shifts, myself and Adam took our rest period while Frank and Ross carried on with help from Ryan. In the early hours of the

morning, the rain stopped. There was no stirring Adam from his bed so Ross ended up doing a double shift with his hawk. We decided to set off for a long walk.

We donned hi-viz vests and Petzl headlamps and walked the lanes until daylight arrived. The hawks were dropping off to sleep by this time as we walked them on the fist, all the while racking the glove to keep them awake.

We made our way back to the house and awoke Adam and Frank to take over the last shift of waking. At around 10.30 on the Saturday morning the hawks were put down in the garden on bow perches and offered a clean bath of water. The sight was incredible; both hawks asleep in the daylight, as four chaps could walk around them as close as you like without a stir from the pair.

The foundations had been set for the training of both the hawks. The pair took different routes in their training regime; Frank took his hawk back to the UK a few days later and continued with the manning and recalling well into late August before entering and hunting throughout the season.

Ross on the other hand took his hawk into the training field almost immediately. He was flying free in no time and killing every day until an untimely injury in early November saw the end to his first season, with an impressive bag of over 110 head of mixed quarry taken in this short space of time.

An enjoyable experience for all who took part in the waking of the goshawks at Cappoquin, Co Waterford in the summer of 2009.