Caught by the River
presents

On Nature

Unexpected Ramblings on the British Countryside

Stuart Maconie • Chris Yates
Bill Drummond • Charles Rangeley-Wilson
Colin Elford • Martin Noble • Ceri Levy
Tracey Thorn • John Wright
And Others

Литагент HarperCollins

On Nature: Unexpected Ramblings on the British Countryside

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A diverse and entertaining collection of writing examining and celebrating the British Countryside, from falconry to foraging and from the musings of a nighttime angler to tips for seasonal drinking.LANDStuart Maconie (Radio 2) on hill walking / Wainwright walksNick Small (CAUGHT BY THE RIVER regular) how to get nature into your garden, no matter how urban it isRichard King (Loops magazine editor) on the Winter Solstice and on the Summer SolsticeJohn Wright (www.wild-food.net/ on the basics of getting started in foragingBill Drummond (Damsons in Distress)Dan Kieran (Crap Towns/I Fought The Law) on falconryRIVER / INLAND WATERSJohn Andrews (CAUGHT BY THE RIVER regular) on winter pike fishingJon Berry (CAUGHT BY THE RIVER regular) writing about the night from a fishermen's perspective, the sounds, shadows, the hallucinatory effects of sleep deprivation when the sun risesCOASTLINEIan Vince (The Lie of the Land) on the Jurassic coast and fossilsMartin Noble (British Sea Power) the Exmoor to Dartmoor coastal walkNick Hand (http://www.slowcoast.co.uk/) on what you see when cycling the entire coastline of the UKMichael Smith (BBC4 Drivetime) on the coastline in the north of EnglandISLAND LIFESarah Boden (The Observer) on fleeing London to move and become a sheep farmer on Eigg

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How can you get the most out of Britain? Although a strange question, it was one we at Caught by the River found ourselves asking. We wondered – after having immersed ourselves in the great modern chroniclers of the countryside such as Deakin, Yates, Macfarlane and Mabey – how you could apply the subtle magic of their books to your life. You might love great angling writing but how do you actually read water? You know the blue tit from the blackbird in your back garden but what's the best way to start birding? What's edible and growing freely in your local area? And how on earth do you do the Wainwright Walk?

With those questions in mind, we were inspired to answer them in a book. On Nature – the follow-up to our previous collection, Words on Water – would be a 'How To' guide to the British Isles, written by the people who understood the landscape the best. We asked a list of Caught by the River contributors (and a fair few people whose work we admired but had never met before) if they were interested in writing about their particular field of interest. The book would be a beautifully written user's guide to our country. From foraging to fly fishing, birding to brewing, On Nature would offer pointers, primers and pertinent lessons from those in the know, passing knowledge to those willing to learn.

Well, that's how we thought it would end up.

When Bill Drummond wrote to us and pledged to write a piece on the importance of damsons, we knew that our original brief was being abandoned. In the hands of people like Bill, our 'How To' guide soon became something very, very different. Before long we were looking at a kaleidoscopic vision of Britain, one where writers talked about their connection to the land in a series of stories that would hopefully inspire action. Here, life on remote islands was not only possible, it was desirable. Watching the seasons change through a Welsh kitchen window took on the elemental lyrical ebb and flow of an R.S. Thomas poem. Angling stories became boy's own adventures; falconry an obvious pastime for day-dreaming urban naturalists.

Looking at the finished article, On Nature is a collection of stories highlighting the kind of uncontrollable driving forces that get people up at 4 a.m. to cast off in the half-light, or to go mushroom hunting in dewy meadows. It's about watching and listening, digging in, taking part. It's about people's passions for the countryside – the kind that start out as hobbies before turning into unshakable obsessions.

Charles Rangeley-Wilson summed it up perfectly in his contribution on trout fishing. To quote him, 'I wonder then if the best way of describing the how is to start at the beginning with the why: if at the beginning of the how there is a passion – encompassing all the associated meanings of that

word: desire, compulsion, infatuation – once found it will guide the rest of the discovery. With passion in your tackle bag the how will ultimately take care of itself.'

So, whether using tackle bag or train ticket, a pair of binoculars or just a pair of ears, On Nature maps Britain in sights, sounds and subtle memories, offering jumping-in points and inspirations for eager urban naturalists everywhere.

Just remember to pack an open mind.

Jeff, Andrew and Robin

Caught by the River, Spring 2011

A Chain of Ponds

Chris Yates

In the 1950s the old village of Burgh Heath, which was my childhood home, used to be a hotchpotch of unremarkable 18th- and 19th-century cottages, with two pubs, a cobbler's, corn stores, stables, sweet shop and tea gardens. Surrounding the village was an area of heathland – perfect ground for every kind of childhood game – and lapping the tea gardens was the pond, an acre of greenish water that, by the time I was five, was the centre of my universe.

No normal child can resist water, and because post-war parents did not live in constant fear for their children's lives I could spend countless summer days either on my own or with friends playing on the bankside. In the beginning I was ignorant of anything that might possibly have lived beneath the surface; I only wanted to throw stones and make as big a splash as possible. I soon learnt, though, that if there was an angler on the bank it was best not to throw anything; anglers could get quite cross if I even splashed my feet near them. This was understandable once they explained the necessity for quiet. Their stories intrigued me and added a completely new dimension to the world, but did the fabulous-sounding creatures they described truly exist? In those early days I never saw a fisherman catch anything, and when I began to creep around the margins, peering expectantly into the green depths, I spotted nothing more exciting than watersnails, tadpoles and leeches. Perhaps fishing was just an adult form of make-believe, though at least it gave a person an excuse to sit happily by the waterside for hours on end, doing nothing.

My three best friends, Billy, Colin and Dennis, were just as enthusiastic about the pond as I was, yet all they ever wanted to do was sail their model boats. I would, of course, accompany them on regatta days, launching various craft that in former times had only plied across the bath at home. My pals had yachts with proper cotton sails while I had a wooden canoe with two Apache Indians and – my pride and joy – a clockwork rowing boat with a man who rocked back and forth as he pulled on the oars. One memorable day, when the motor was fully wound, he rowed as far as the island in the pond's centre, but, as we were waiting for the breeze to waft him back to shore, a stone came whistling out of the sky and almost capsized him.

On the opposite bank a gang of unknown boys maybe twice our age were collecting pebbles prior to the destruction of our fleet by catapults. Of my friends, only Dennis possessed such a weapon, and on that day it was not in his pocket. However, had we all been armed we would not have been so daft as to return fire against such murderously superior opposition. Our only hope lay in the fact that we were on the heathland side where there was plenty of cover, if only we could gather the drifting fleet in time. We swamped our boots, there were a few more near misses, yet we retrieved our craft and escaped without serious injury. Following a narrow twisting path that led through man-high bracken, we ran towards a distant wood. The sound of our fleeing was like the sound of cavalry

galloping across a shallow ford; even when we reached the trees our boots were still half filled with pondwater. The enemy had pursued us, but we had been quick enough, vanishing into the ferns before they had even circuited the pond. Now we pushed deeper into the wood until we found a quiet place to sit a moment, draw breath and drain our wellingtons.

It seemed sensible that we should circle round, keeping under the trees as far as the Reigate Road which would lead us safely home. However, after just a few yards we saw the unexpected glitter of water through the shadows and, turning from our intended path, came upon another pond. It was a quarter the size of the village pond, saucer-shaped and surrounded by tall reeds. The water looked deep and crystal clear and it was obvious we had made an important, magical discovery. Not wanting to linger too long, we turned again and followed a track leading between thickets of blackthorn to the new pond's almost identical twin. Once more, we dared not pause and savour it for long, but made sure we'd remember the way back for a future exploration. Continuing along the path we stumbled on yet another tiny reed-encircled pool. It lay just beyond the last line of trees on the edge of a wide grassy field, and because it seemed so far from the known world, so impossible for anyone else to discover, we felt safe enough to crawl under a wire fence, step out into the sunlight and sit by the water.

For a few minutes we kept hold of our model boats, but the complete quiet reassured us and we put them down, though no one was bold enough to refloat them, nor, I think, did we even consider this: it was enough simply to have escaped persecution and fled into this foreign and enchanted field. It stretched down a long gentle incline towards an incredibly distant horizon of blueish pine trees. Over to our left a derelict barn leaned out of a clump of trees, beyond which a group of cows were lying in the shade of a solitary elm. Dennis, who was not looking at the view, suddenly shouted 'Newt!' very loudly and made me jump. He pointed down into the pond where a golden finger-length creature was hanging motionless in the water with its nose poking up through the surface. Its feet were spread like tiny hands and the dark crest along the length of its back and tail gave it the appearance of a miniature dinosaur. It blew a single bubble, turned slowly and with a flick vanished into the glassy depth.

Unlike Dennis, I had never seen a newt before, yet even he seemed excited. All four of us crept round the spongy bank, looking for another, hoping to capture it and maybe bring it home in a wet sock. Though the water was perfectly transparent – so different from the cloudy village pond – and though I spotted a monster water beetle (which I only later discovered was a dragonfly larva), there were no more amphibians on display. Perhaps if we returned for a whole day with one of the little nets they sold in the corn stores we might be more successful, but only Dennis and I wanted the hunt to become more serious.

Safely back home, I looked through all my picture books for an illustration of a newt. Naturally there were dragons and sea monsters and dinosaurs, but I could not find any newts until my helpful elder sister, Helen, tracked one down in her Children's Encyclopedia. It was not quite as impressive as the real thing, yet it kept me happy and inspired until the day came when Dennis and I journeyed back to the field pond. We did not call in at the corn stores on the way and buy a net: there was no need as Dennis's big brother had described an alternative and far more effective method of newting. All we needed, he said, was a long thin stick, two yards of button thread and some worms. Apparently, this had been a long-held elder brother's secret, but now he was taken up with other passions he could finally reveal it.

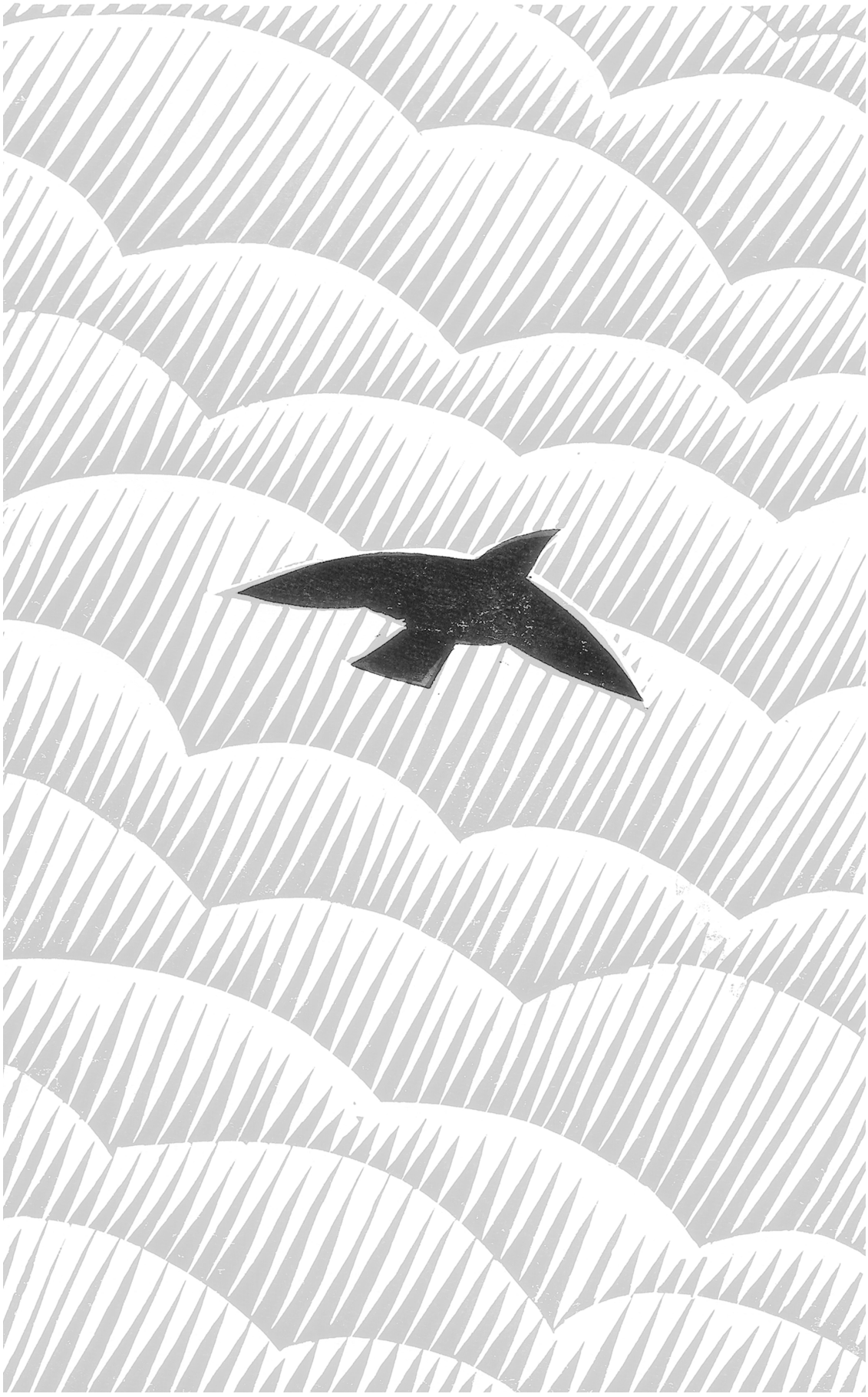
With our newt rods and our lines baited with a knotted-on worm we looked like a couple of genuine anglers. It was so thrilling I could hardly speak, though I was not certain, despite what Dennis's brother had told us, what would happen if a newt actually grabbed the bait. Would I be able to tell? Would it hang on long enough to be swung ashore? Maybe five or twenty-five long minutes passed before Dennis pointed nervously at his twitching line. I probably gasped as he snatched it up – but there was nothing there – not even the worm. Something had stolen it all. As Dennis rebaited, my line quivered where it slanted through the surface. I immediately flicked it into the air where, like a

miracle, a fantastic creature suddenly appeared, hands spread out, swinging towards me. Only when it was on the grass next to me did it let go of the worm.

Reverently, I picked it up and held it in the palm of my hand. Its quiet eyes and slow careful movements helped calm me down a little, but my heart kept pounding because, at that moment, my newt – olive green with webbed hind claws, a palmate newt – was the most wondrous thing I had ever seen. And with it swimming in a jam-jar I could take it home and say I had caught more than the fishermen.

The Falconer's Tale

Dan Kieran



For most of us the countryside is a realm of escape; a living postcard that runs in real time through your brain, somewhere to dream of when you are immersed in the mania of a city. A walk in this landscape loosens your shoulders and draws out your breath in soft gasps. Waves 'dance', flowers 'flutter' and the promise of lusty milkmaids is only ever the next valley away. This is nature in soft focus, the Wordsworthian idyll of our imagination where we carelessly love to play.

Stalking through the woods with a hawk on your gloved fist strips nature of such romance but keeps its authenticity vividly intact. The memory of something more agile and real about the living, wild world begins to seep out of your bones and your focus razors. His head moves slowly and methodically, the wings stretch out as he rebalances with his yellow taloned feet and the eyes flit and twitch. No longer passively consuming the landscape from the audience, he pulls you onto the stage. The breeze flattens. Birdsong scatters. Silence. The sound of the wild food chain. You begin to feel the pressure of every living thing in the earth on the back of your neck as you pace beyond the gorse, but even in this heightened state you are ponderous. Remaining sure-footed, his head plunges towards the ground, anticipating a vole's movement, but by the time your gaze lands with his you are lucky to glimpse a shoelace tail vanish into the grass. Your shoulders broaden with anticipation and you untie the falconer's knot that binds him to your glove with your right hand and lightly hold the jesses – the soft leather straps attached to his ankles – between the fingers and palm of your left. Hawks and falcons calculate unconsciously whether the energy required to catch potential quarry is worth the effort. You think of the astonishing triangulation these instincts perform when a flurry of feathers brushes your face. You instinctively open your hand, extend your arm and reel slightly. He's off – coursing through the light.

This sensation of closeness between tamed man and wild bird has a lineage that goes back millennia. According to the written, or more often drawn, archive that we use to trace the route of history, hawks and falcons were first used to hunt for food in China and Mesopotamia around 700 bc. From the training to the equipment it requires, the essential elements of falconry are unchanged since that time. Practised by emperors, soldiers, commoners and men and women, falconry, or hawking, crossed the deserts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa before conquering the disparate realms of Europe and the New World. The practice graces the oral poetry and written pages of ancient texts in every culture it has touched along the way, popping up in the writings and stories of kings and emperors (most notably Emperor Frederick II, 1194–1250), a Tsar (Alexei Romanov, 1629–76), an Arabic astronomer (The Book of Moamyn, c.1200), Saxon poetry ('The Battle of Maldon', 991), our own Knights of the Round Table (Sir Tristan is a renowned harpist and falconer), monks (The Boke of St Albans, 1486) and, perhaps most exotically for a Western mind, in those of the warriors of the Samurai (Nihon Shoki, the Chronicles of Japan, 720). To learn that the feeling of setting out with a hawk on your fist in the hunt for food, partnering with a bird's natural wild behaviour, is something that has been experienced by such varied ancestors adds a glint of substance to the myth of their forgotten lives. I like to think their shadows drift with you in the woods – the echo of a collective experience ingrained in our very species.

What the Samurai or the Knights of the Round Table would have made of my initial experience of falconry is harder to imagine. The first time a Harris hawk landed on my fist I was standing in the rain in the middle of a pine forest surrounded by wooden lodges in the dystopian eco-habitat of Center Parcs in Somerset as part of a group of seven people clad in bright waterproofs with arms outstretched, as a hawk did its duty and flew from the falconer to each of us in turn. But despite my location and the formulaic atmosphere, experiencing a wild bird fly towards me for the first time – so I could see exactly how the tail feathers push the air to slow the hawk to the point that it can literally step from flight onto my fist – was surely little different to the sensation it must have evoked for the first time in a squire in medieval England or a warrior in Jomon Japan. This was a spectacle, biology, sport, instinct, a privileged insight into wild behaviour and a philosophy of life all merged into one. In the ten years since that experience I have become an avid fan of hawks and falcons. I've gone on

falconry experience days and holidays and read every obscure book on the subject I can trace. I've had barn owls, eagle owls, kestrels, lanner and peregrine falcons, all kinds of hybrids, a merlin and even a golden eagle perched on my fist. I drove for six hours one Saturday morning to the edge of Cornwall from Sussex with my friend Kev once – just on the off chance we might glimpse a snowy owl that had got lost on migration.

But while I love raptors in all their forms Harris hawks have always been my favourite. Known as the 'wolves of the air' because of their habit of hunting in packs of up to six, they are highly social, have the ideal temperament for falconry and a hunting style most accommodating to human beings. Their natural habitat is desert where one of them will scout ahead, others will walk along the ground in the hope of scaring something into movement, while those that remain wait above – preparing to strike. The group then share whatever is caught. Going hunting with Harris hawks is certainly the most self-contained, dramatic, inspiring and shocking thing I have ever done.

It's important to appreciate that a trained hawk or falcon of any kind bears absolutely no relation to a domesticated pet. Birds of prey only remain with the falconer as long as he or she remains a more efficient food source than the bird could achieve out in the wild. It's a relationship but by no means a friendship. Even if a hawk or falcon consented to remain with you for twenty years their wild instincts would remain intact. This is why the jesses are made from leather, or sometimes kangaroo skin, because eventually they will rot and fall off should the falcon one day decide it has had enough of you. Everything about the husbandry involved in taking care of a hawk is based with transience in mind. This is as true for a falconry enthusiast in the UK as it is for those who still rely on birds of prey for food and animal skins in the mountains of Kazakhstan. Go there today and you'll still find men and their sons hawking on horseback with golden eagles on the fist. Sixteen-year-old boys are sent down a cliff face with simple rope to take a juvenile eagle from its eyrie. They train them for six months under the watchful eye of their fathers and then hunt with them for nine years. After that they release them, grateful for the work they have done (golden eagles can live over thirty years in the wild and up to eighty in captivity).

Despite often being bundled up with other country sports, falconry is also far more awesome and has little in common with fox hunting, or shooting pheasants or deer.

Instead of stacking the odds in your favour with technology or superior numbers you participate in natural behaviour to catch your prey. It might seem a little blood curdling, but I'd rather be a wild rabbit and take my chances with a Harris hawk than a chicken in a battery farm. As for enjoying the act of death? Well, to be honest, that's my least favourite part but I'm of the view that if you can't bring yourself to kill an animal then you have no right to eat it. Not that the food argument is relevant from a human perspective anyway. Whenever I've been hunting with Harris hawks they've been catching their own dinner.

Back in the woods he's gone. Blending through a thicket of trees. The possibility of a squirrel or a resting bird perhaps. You hear the bell on his ankle tinkling and follow the sound, jogging and ducking through the branches. Cautious, you feel the eyes around you as the bracken folds under your feet. Then through the damp, newly fallen leaves suddenly the bell is louder. You spot him standing atop a tree, looking around with feathers rousing about his neck. His vision is tunnelled, seeking prey. You try and call yourself into his mind, tapping a scrap of meat on your left thumb with your right hand. He spots it instantly and embraces the air. His wings are flat but his head tilts, almost with curiosity, and he glides towards you. Minimum effort, maximum effect. From that vantage point he swoops below the line of your fist before adjusting and rising up again. The wings open, his powerful feet thrust forward and tail feathers break the air. Feet on flesh but with barely any sensation of impact. You grin broadly. His beak immediately pulls at the food on your hand and you tuck the jesses between your thumb and finger. Finished, he opens his wings to adjust and looks ahead. Concentrating. Still hungry. Looking for something else.

Becoming a falconer is not something to attempt on a whim. The training and hard work required is seldom appreciated by the hawk, but the most important factor is time. That's why, for most serious falconers to do it properly, they have to be absurdly rich, unmarried and have no children, or they have to make falconry earn them a living. Being in the company of a falconer who has made it their career is always inspiring. It is hard work, with astonishingly long hours, but certainly not a mundane job. They enthuse and cajole newcomers by sharing their birds and their enthusiasm but offer plenty of stories of warning and danger too. They have no time for people who embark on the process of having a wild bird if they are not prepared to show the bird the respect required by learning how to care for it properly. In the UK today you don't need a licence to have a bird of prey and no one comes to check if you're housing it properly – even though these are wild and dangerous birds. A warm and gentle falconer I spent a few days with in Scotland once told me a story about a novice who took it upon himself to get a golden eagle as his first bird. This man was as mild a soul as I have ever met but he almost delighted in telling me how the novice failed to show the eagle the necessary respect and the precise details of how he was consequently attacked, losing the sight in one eye in the process. People are normally uneasy about having a bird of prey on their fist because they're afraid of the bird's beak, but it's little more than a knife and fork. The taloned feet are what you have to watch out for. Only an arrogant fool or a respectful master of falconry would dare to offer a home to a golden eagle.

The woods clear and you climb a small hill, where the tufts and clumps of grass shelter rabbit holes. As you reach the top a long shallow valley falls away towards a derelict barn and a lonely telegraph pole. He bates, feathers wildly flapping, and fights to be free of your fist. With the height you've gained he wants to claim the roof of the barn. Now. Then you'll walk towards him and scare the quarry as you come. He can sit, wait and pounce. Simple. You want him to work a little harder than that. You scoop him up and back on to your fist. He screams violence in your face, but any eye contact is unconscious. You walk gingerly through the holes along the ridge, heading further on.

The annals of falconry offer a variety of methods for training your bird, a process that begins with 'manning'. You have to grind down the bird's natural instincts to flee from you by keeping him on your fist for as long as possible. Eventually he will accept you, and when he is hungry enough will drop his eyes and eat from your fist. This is the first step in training the bird. Feeding from the fist opens up the possibilities of more advanced training as he begins to associate you with food. In The Goshawk, T.H. White struggles with the tempestuous Gos, who is delivered from Germany in a basket, only a few weeks old and still never having seen another living thing:

. . . he was tumultuous and frightening . . . born to fly, sloping sideways, free among the verdure of that Teutonic upland, to murder with his fierce feet and to consume with that curved Persian beak, who now hopped up and down in a clothes basket with a kind of imperious precocity, the impatience of a spoiled but noble heir-apparent to the Holy Roman Empire.

White introduces himself to Gos in a barn, and what follows is a battle of patience and instinct as White attempts to force Gos to accept him. Endlessly placing him on his fist only for Gos to 'bate' and end up suspended by his jesses until White again puts him on his fist, and on it goes.

I was to stay awake if necessary for three days and nights, during which, I hoped, the tyrant would learn to stop his bating and to accept my hand as a perch, would consent to eat there, and would become a little accustomed to the strange life of human beings.

Eventually Gos accepts White, suffering to sit on his fist while he walks around his farm, into town and even on a visit to the local pub.

Happily these days the best method of training birds of prey is more widely agreed on and much less stressful for both bird and man. For one thing eggs are no longer taken from nests but laid in captivity, and chicks are fed from the glove from the moment they hatch. This 'imprints' the person doing the feeding as the parent and means the bird will accept food from anyone from that moment on – as long as it is offered from a glove. This process makes the hawk or falcon think that

you and they are the same species. While this has obvious benefits when it comes to training, it also means that they have no fear of you and if cornered will attack. Falconers also introduce the 'lure' earlier in the training process these days too. Feeding a bird of prey from a small leather pouch at the end of a long string familiarises the bird with the lure as a food source. You can then drag the lure, with food and/or animal fur attached, to 'remind' the bird of its natural behaviour when the bird is more mature. Because they tend to hunt prey that lives on the ground, hawks and eagles are taught to go for a dragged lure to simulate chasing rabbits and small animals. Falcons will hunt other birds on the wing (in mid air). In this instance the bird, familiar with the lure as a food source, will attempt to catch the lure when the falconer swings it around his head. Expert lure practitioners strengthen their falcons and improve their hunting ability by sweeping the lure away at the last minute in a cross between a choreographed dance and a martial art. (I've tried my hand at lure swinging, but was no match for the saker falcon I found myself pitted against. She mugged me for it on her first attempt.) The falcon needs this kind of training so it can cope with hunting in the wild – I saw a hobby hunting bats at dusk on the River Avon once, which was stupefying. Falcons have an instinctive agility that the human eye can barely match, but as the falconer is aiming to push the falcon into discovering its innate ability rather than teach it everything from scratch, it doesn't take long for the bird to 'get it' and successfully hunt on its own.

The ridge softens and you stop in front of a bramble bush that shelters you from the field, slowly untying the falconer's knot and releasing the jesses with your right hand. Closer to the barn now, you raise your arm and push him into the air. You must not let him get too far away. He glides down towards the roof, and lands on its highest point. You are 100 metres or so away when you begin to walk towards the barn. The brown fur of a rabbit lollops near you, but he just sits – it's not worth it. He looks behind the barn, spots something and vanishes. Damn! But you don't run. There's no point. You twinge in panic – could this be the day he decides to leave? It's always possible, but no. You remember his hunting weight. It's just hunger driving instinct. Then he reappears on the roof. You relax with relief. You start to move again. The wave of impact from your footsteps begins to interest him, he spots something but there's no movement. Then he beats his wings and dives down. The rabbit that you can't see has a fifty-fifty chance. You imagine it darting left and right, heading for a hole. The hawk seems to be going too slowly. He's barely moving his wings, then he arcs one way and then another. You see it! The rabbit's back legs force him into a high leap over something, towards a bush. Then he stoops, wings raised and feet falling, covering, and then there's no sound. You run now, forgetting the holes. You charge and find them both. He turns to you and squawks mercilessly. The rabbit is alive, one eye fixed in terror and the heart juddering under its fur. He mantles with his wings, talons gripping the rabbit's face and back. Not sharing, not yet. You offer something else from the bag, a whole chick that's dead – easier to eat and no risk of injury. Your left hand now firmly presses down on the rabbit's back. He jumps for the chick and eats it in one go, cocking his neck to swallow. Your right hand reaches for the rabbit's neck. You pause, registering the soft fur, and then you pull hard. The rabbit's neck breaks and the fight is gone. You feel exhilarated and shocked. The quarry goes into your bag.

You sit in the wet grass. Breathless. He stands on the floor. There is no pleasure in death but also no regret. His eyes flit and twitch. You are tame. He is wild. This is the world. A glimpse of the truth that lies behind every breath becomes clearer in the cold autumn light. Whether you would have it or not, this is the world. Climbing to your feet you hold out your fist. He flaps his wings impatiently and is up. His feet tangle with the jesses. You unravel them and hold them between the fingers and palm of your left hand. He's still concentrating. Still hungry. Always looking for something else.

Recommended reading:

The Goshawk by T.H. White

Falconry by Emma Ford

A Manual of Falconry by M.H. Woodford

England Have My Bones by T.H. White

Selection of falconry terms (reprinted from Harting's Bibliotheca Accipitraria):

AYRE and EYRIE, nesting place. 'Our aiery buildeth in the cedar's top.' – Shakespeare.

BATE, BATING, fluttering or flying off the fist. 'It is calde batyng for she batith with hirselfe, most oftyn causeless.' – Boke of St Albans, 1486.

BOWSE, to drink; variously spelt 'bouse', 'boose', 'bouze' and 'booze'.

CADGER, the person who carries the hawk; hence the abbreviated form 'cad', a person fit for no other occupation.

LURE, technically a bunch of feathers or couple of wings tied together on a piece of leather and weighted.

MANNING, making a hawk tame by accustoming her to man's presence.

MEWS, the place where hawks are set down to moult.

QUARRY, the game flown at.

ROUSE, when 'a hawk lifteth herself up and shaketh herself' – Boke of St Albans, 1486.

STOOP, the swift descent of a falcon on the quarry from a height.

Recommended falconry courses:

British School of Falconry, Gleneagles, Scotland: www.gleneagles.com.

Frontline Falconry, Auchen Castle, Scotland: www. auchencastle.net; www.frontlinefalconry.co.uk.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.