

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RAPTOR CLUB

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Newsletter Date—March 2007

NEWS FROM NORTHANTS FALCONRY & HAWKING

Welcome to the NRC Monthly Newsletter—March '07

We have been running as a club for just over 1 year now, what started very small (6 members) has now grown dramatically, far in excess of what the original members dreamed it would.

The club has established itself at the Pavilion and a number of successful social events have taken place both there and other locations not least the autumn BBQ and the Christmas Dinner Dance (took some recovering from the free bar).

John Tyas has been working endlessly on keeping the Club Website as up to date as possible.

Field meets this first season have been successful and I

know that our land Coordinator Tom is working hard with plans for next season already.

Kate has worked throughout the year as Secretary and Treasurer she has been the organiser of all the social events that took place including the unenviable task of chasing around collecting money.

Marvin is at this time in the process of taking over as Treasurer, which will lift a lot of work from Kate, He is also continuing as Club Fundraiser as well.

John Elliott originally took on the roll as owl rep but has now expanded his role to include diary coordinator for our regular Thursday club meets, he will be organising what is happening on these evenings.

Mike Hewlett is gearing up for the forth coming shows that the Club will be represented at and helping out Tom with the Field meets.

As Chairman I would like to thank all of the above named members of the committee for their past and continuing efforts in running the club, ensuring that all events and meetings run smoothly for our members.

I would also like to thank all the members, for making it a pleasure to Chair a club that is so friendly and enjoyable to attend no matter what the occasion. I believe, the reason that we have been so successful, is due to the helpful and social nature of all members in

“I believe the reason that we have been so successful is the helpful and social nature of the members”

the club. Over the next year I sincerely hope that this will continue as we develop and continue to grow.

Thanks all

**Glynne Malkin
Chairman**

March 2007

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



RAPTOR CLUB



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- Bob Dalton—Aplomado Falcons



"The auction night was a great success, and another is planned for 2007"



" I like to think of the website as an introduction... the viewer can browse the pages and find out who we are.."



"If anyone has ideas for a club meeting event, please contact me, and I'll follow it up...tell me what you want to see!"

John Elliott 2007

The Treasurer Writes..

Dear Members,

We had a very successful year in 2006 in our fund raising and we hope to do better in 2007.

This year we are organising some events all through the year, and we do hope you will be able to participate.

Just a brief outline of some of the events we are organising through

the year, these are as follows; Barbeque Pig Roast in the summer and an auction night again as we did enjoy the previous one we had in 2006.

Graham, the chef who catered for us when we had our pie and chips night in 2006, will be cooking a curry for us during the year.

I am also looking to do a Christmas Raffle this year with many prizes.

Don't forget that all donations to our monthly raffle are greatly appreciated. I will keep informed of any other fund raising events we hold throughout the year.

I look forward to seeing you at our next monthly meeting.

Marvin Moore.
Treasurer

March 2007

A year past...your club website.



Your Club website is now a year old. We've tried to keep it as up to date with relevant information as possible, as well as documenting and publishing the so-

cial aspects, such as field meets, Christmas do etc.

I like to think of the website as an introduction to the viewer, who can browse the pages and find out who we are and what we're about.

The site would benefit from some new features that bring it closer to the members, so I will be targeting a few of you to begin with, and putting

you in the spotlight! Just a sort of "get to know you" feature which I think will help the social side, especially for new members.

Also hope to push the classified section, birds and equipment for sale etc...sort of NRC ebay if you like!

John Tyas
Webmaster



March 2007

Barn Owls in Northants—John Elliott

I recently liaised with an old acquaintance of mine, Paddy Jackson, who is involved with Barn Owl conservation in the county. Paddy kindly supplied me with the following information.

"The Barn Owl population had a difficult and late breeding season in 2006. There were 28 breeding attempts by 26 pairs monitored in 168 nest boxes throughout the county, and a further three natural sites. A further 12 pairs were

present at monitored sites, but failed to breed.

74 owlets fledged, an average of 2.4 per attempt. 7 attempts failed at clutch stage, due probably to the cold late spring. The average laying date was 17th May. 6 pairs that failed went on to rear second broods. Mean brood depletion was 11% for all attempts. 19 other breeding attempts were recorded by other observers, and a further 11 pairs probably bred. We estimate the

total population in the county for 2006 was 65—70 pairs compared with 87—92 in 2005. Overall, there has been a significant upward trend since 2000, peaking at an 80% increase in 2005."

My Thanks to Paddy for this information.

Please e-mail Paddy with any sightings, dead or alive.

paddy@paddyjackson.co.uk

Bob Dalton—Aplomado Falcons in Peru

The Aplomado Falcon of Central and South America is a species that I have had a great deal to do with in Mexico, Brazil and Peru. I have been fortunate enough to have hunted with several myself and also accompanied many others in the field when being flown by friends. I am now an avid fan of these dashing little falcons and their power and tenacity for such a small falcon never ceases to amaze me. But this has not always been the case.

My first introduction to this particular species was some years ago now in Mexico. I was in this haven for falconry for several weeks flying mainly passage Peregrine Falcons at ducks. Friends had asked me prior to the trip if I would like to see some other hawking whilst there and had laid on several diversions for me. These included Harris Hawks, Coopers Hawks, a Merlin and several Aplomado Falcons. I managed to see several examples flown whilst on my extended hawking trip and have to say that at the end of it was less than impressed. Certainly the furthest thing from my mind would be to actually put myself to the trouble of importing one to England and giving it a try here. The flights I witnessed in the early days were all by eyass falcons that had been mal imprinted. That is they were food imprints and spent the vast majority of their time screaming and mantling. Due to their dreadful manners when eating their chest feathers were food stained and their tail feathers were in a mess owing to the habit of constantly sitting back on their tails and mantling over their food.

The main quarry being hunted on this trip with the Aplomado Falcons was Quail. Both Scaled and Bob White were easily found in good numbers and we did have the services of an excellent German Short Haired Pointer. He found us covey after covey of Quail and was steadfast on point. But despite seeing perhaps more than a hundred slips during the trip I never saw a single Quail caught by the imprinted falcons, or even realistically put under any serious threat. The falcons were being flown either from the fist or from a T-perch held aloft over the pointing dog. Whenever the Quail were flushed the falcon would give chase but would either break off because the Quail was pulling away from it or, worse still in my opinion, drop down onto a large grasshopper. These I did see caught literally by the score. Butterflies were another favourite and the largest thing I saw any of these imprints catch was a Mouse.

Consequently at the end of my trip I came away with a very negative view of Aplomado Falcons. But I did wonder if they could really be as bad as I had just seen as I knew Harry McElroy was a great fan of the species and had spent many years hunting with them. If such a talented falconer as this found them worth the trouble of flying then surely there must be better examples for me to see being flown.

On my return to England I wrote to a Mexican Falconer I knew and mentioned that I had been extremely disappointed in what I had seen and that I didn't think too much of Aplomados. He wrote and told me that he was flying a passage male himself at the moment and that the next time I was over to be sure and spend some time with him and see it hunt. He felt sure I would be impressed and have my negative opinion turned around. It was very nearly a year before I got back to that part of Mexico again and I made sure that my trip allowed for me to spend a week with this falconer watching his Aplomado Falcon hunt. The week was a revelation. The little male falcon flew at just about anything that got up relatively close to it. It was occasionally hunted from the fist but the primary method of hunting was from a T-perch.



“I managed to see several examples flown whilst on my extended hawking trip and have to say that at the end of it was less than impressed.”



Bob's quality Falcon Leisure furniture and equipment is on sale via the club at a 10% discount to members, call John Tyas on 07957 173486, or pick up what you need at monthly meetings.





A pointing dog was used and when it came on point the Aplomado would be put on the T-perch and the perch held aloft. The falconer would then walk in to the point and when the Quail burst the falcon would react instantly and often grab one before it had gone fifteen feet. But if it missed with

with completely black plumage, were another prey species that this particular Aplomado loved. He would catch them and then struggle to hold on and eventually subdue them as they were bigger than he was.

This little falcon opened my eyes to just how rewarding hunting with them could be and I was

see the trained falcons at their very best as they would be extremely fit after a season long campaign. I was to spend several weeks with two falconers who flew five Aplomado Falcons between them. This being made up of two cast and a single male. In both cases the cast was made up of a male and a female. All the falcons

“The flying I was privileged enough to see over the next few weeks was without doubt some of the best falconry I have ever witnessed. “



the initial drop from the T-perch then the little falcon would give stern chase. It would pressure the Quail into baling out into the grass or some other cover and then circle above the spot waiting for us to come up and re-flush his intended victim.

But sometimes we would flush Meadow Larks as we walked the fields and the falcon would chase these hard with a very good degree of success. Meadow Larks are not like their European counterparts and do not ring up to try and escape the attention of a raptor. They fly hard and fast and try and make cover before the falcon can get on terms with them. Boat Tailed Grackles, a bird similar in shape to our Magpie although somewhat larger and

determined to make an effort and see more of them flown at different quarry species. I also made my mind up I would like to see them in the wild hunting naturally. To this end I got in touch with falconers I knew in Brazil and Peru and started to sort out visits to both countries. The people I knew were very kind and planning for future trips started to take shape. Brazil was first on the agenda and I was to spend a week or so watching Aplomados in the wild and then spend several weeks hunting with them.

The timing of my trip coincided with almost the end of the hunting season and was a little way off from the onset of the breeding season. This meant I would

we would be hunting with were passage falcons and therefore highly unlikely to crab with one another. But even so just as a precaution beaks and talons had been coped back hard to minimise any damage that could result in a tussle over quarry.

The flying I was privileged enough to see over the next few weeks was without doubt some of the best falconry I have ever witnessed. Supremely fit falcons flown against a truly worthy quarry in awe inspiring countryside. Not only that but the sun shone everyday and the cost of living was such that the hotel bill for a week was only slightly more than a decent evening meal out in England. The wildlife was colourful and abundant and to

“This little falcon opened my eyes to just how rewarding hunting with them could be..”

Bob Dalton - Aplomado Falcons in Peru

see Rhea's, Macaws and Crested Sereama's on a daily basis was excellent. Also Hawk Owls, White Tailed Hawks, Caracaras and Harriers were common sights. Black and Turkey vultures were quite literally everywhere. It would be nothing to see a hundred or so gathered round a dead horse in a field. One of the fal-

coners I was with could not seem to comprehend why we had no need of Vultures in England. He couldn't grasp who cleared up the dead farm animals and road kills if there were not any vultures. It seemed impolite to point out the different standards of living between out two coun-

The Grackle does not panic when being pursued and will use every trick in the book to evade the falcon.

evenly matched. The Grackle does not panic when being pursued and will use every trick in the book to evade the falcon. We would catch about fifty per cent that we flew and every flight was really good fun. Finding a Grackle sufficiently away from cover to make a slip worthwhile was not always easy but certainly repaid the effort

involved when we did manage to. If the Grackle made decent cover then the little falcon would circle overhead, not very high, ten metres or so, marking the spot for us and waiting for the re-flush. But if the Grackle took refuge in a tree, even a well foliated one, then the falcon would crash

not too distant future and give this flight a try.

But for the absolute cream of sporting flights with these tenacious little falcons the Spur Winged Plover has no equal. These birds are approximately twice the size of an Aplomado and get their name from the horny protrusion on their main wing



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tries and why we had no need of Vultures.

We hunted two main quarry species over the next few weeks. Pied Grackles were sought for the solitary male Aplomado Falcon and Spur Winged Plovers for the others. The Pied Grackle is a very sporting flight and falcon and quarry are

straight in after it. Quite a number of flights ended in this manner. I often thought, whilst watching these flights, how ideally suited the Aplomado Falcon would be to our European Magpie. By the end of my first stay in Brazil I was convinced that I would make an effort to obtain one in the

joint. They are tough birds and will quite literally stand their ground and fight if a single falcon is slipped against them. More than capable of giving a good account of themselves they can normally see off a single falcon without too much bother. It is when a cast is slipped at them that they take to the air and ring up in an effort to thwart the attentions of their pursuers. This is when the falconer usually gets to enjoy a truly memorable flight.

Even though matched against two falcons the Plover does not panic and circles up calling as it does so. In fact it is usual for

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Bob Dalton - Aplomado Falcons in Peru

the Plover to continue calling throughout the flight, only ceasing if the falcons get to the stage where they are putting him under severe pressure. For most falconers the true sport is in the quality of the flight and it is not necessary for it to end in a kill to be both enjoyable and memorable. I have had the pleasure of witnessing literally

then the real sport begins. An experienced cast will stoop alternately like a hammer striking an anvil. When this happens then a kill is much more likely to be the eventual outcome. Each time the Plover moves to evade the attentions of one falcon another is making its attack. The Plover is constantly shifting and the falcons defi-

learn that they are a team and can be of use to each other. But this process is no doubt hastened by the fact that pairs tend to stay together and hunt together in the wild. When they do function as a cast then the resulting falconry is nothing less than superb. With two falcons taking turns to stoop the Plover is forced ever lower and has les



“When they do function as a cast then the resulting falconry is nothing less than superb.”

dozens of flights with casts of Aplomado Falcons at Spur Wings and rate it up there with some of the best falconry I have ever seen and enjoyed. The way in which the two falcons have to work so hard to get on terms with the Plover and then alternately stoop at it is a joy to watch. There are

ninely have the upper hand if this stage is reached. But it takes falcons with a great deal of field craft and experience to work in such disciplined harmony. What happens far more frequently is that although being flown as a cast the two falcons act as individuals and don't work with any form of

and less room in which to manoeuvre. But don't feel unnecessarily sorry for it, it will still have a trick or two up its sleeve. More often than not the Plover eventually ends up getting the better of the falcons and flies off calling in defiance. But even so the falconer would have enjoyed seeing

“More often than not the Plover eventually ends up getting the better of the falcons ..”

times when the Plover is just too strong or too canny and the falcons are unable to get above it. Then the flight will go up out of sight in a clear blue sky and eventually the two falcons will reappear as they make their way back to the falconer. But if the falcons can get above the Plover

co-ordination. Quite often the male will shadow the female and as she stoops he will follow her down. That means that if they both miss the Plover has plenty of time between the pass of the falcons and the end of their throw up to re-position itself for the next onslaught. It takes time for a cast to

the falcons get on terms with their quarry, shepherd it into a position to attack it and then stoop at it repeatedly. I have seen flights where over thirty stoops had to be avoided by the Plover. Only the most blood thirsty of hunters would begrudge a bird that had provided so much sport getting



Bob Dalton - Aplomado Falcons in Peru

away. The falconers I was with in Brazil would quite literally raise their caps to any Plover that out flew their falcons. As the season drew to a close I spent more and more time going out and watching Aplomado Falcons in the wild. In the area of Brazil that I was in they were fairly common and unlike many of the

the normal clutch size is four or five and the survival rate is the same as with most raptors, that is around seventy per cent of young reach one year old.

All too soon my initial trip to Brazil was at an end and it was time to head back to the UK. Such was the quality of the sport that I had enjoyed that I made a return trip to Brazil in

times as much as she did. Not only did she fly them with gusto she actually caught and held on to quite a few during my visit. I have to say when I was first told of this little falcon and her prowess in the field I took what I was being told with a pinch of salt. But time and time again she did prove she was capable of tackling such a large



“I spent more and more time going out and watching Aplomado Falcons in the wild. “

larger raptors they are very approachable. I was able to get some good photographic shots of them and also visited several nest sites that were being renovated for the coming breeding season. Aplomado Falcons tend to nest in Joshua trees, either scraping together a very rough nest themselves or

time for the start of the following season so that I could make a film about hunting with these splendid little falcons. On return visits I was able to extend my stay and train a couple of passage Aplomado Falcons myself and then hunt with them. On my return to the UK they would be fed up on

prey, her only problem was subduing it once she had forced it to the ground. I saw her get shaken off of a couple, but the rest she held until help, in the shape of the falconer, arrived. The first time you see a Cock Pheasant rocket up from the ground and a tiny little Aplomado give chase you



“By the end of my first stay in Brazil I was convinced that I would make an effort to obtain one..”

preferably taking over the nest of a corvid. The choice of favourite nesting tree is a very good one for me as it meant that by carrying a small fold up ladder with me I could easily inspect each nest. Normally the nest itself was no more than three or four metres from the ground. Apparently

their last kill and then all equipment removed and then cast off down wind to fend for themselves again. My next encounter with these impressive little falcons was in Peru where I saw a female Aplomado, with a flying weight of 350 grams, flown at Cock Pheasants that weighed almost five

would be forgiven for thinking one is powerless to stop the other, but you would be very wrong. Being much too small to put in an effective stoop the Aplomado gives chase and then binds to the Pheasant gradually bring it down to the ground. Then there is a whirling blur of wings and tails as the



Bob Dalton - Aplomado Falcons in Peru

falcon and pheasant go about their life and death struggle.

This same falcon when flown against Quail or even Partridges made the whole thing look too easy. In fact you would be forgiven for thinking the flight was a little one sided. If the quarry could be flushed away from cover then a kill was more or less a guaran-

teeed outcome. The Aplomado would be carried on the fist whilst a pointer was being run. If a small bird flushed as we walked then the little falcon would be off the fist and after it in a flash. If the dog came on point then the falcon would be cast off and allowed to circle us. It never went up

from behind and as the falconer, facing the dog, walked towards it. Like all good theoretical plans things rarely worked out exactly to schedule but usually near enough to ensure we had some good flights.

I returned from Peru more determined than ever to fly an Aplomado Falcon myself here in the UK. There

such an active and tenacious little falcon for purely lure work is a terrible waste in my opinion. But then it has to be said they are strange little falcons to train initially. They are far more like an accipiter in their behaviour than a falcon. They also appear to have a slightly lower metabolic rate than our own small species of native fal-



“Like all good theoretical plans things rarely worked out exactly to schedule...”

were a very limited number being bred here apparently but the prices being asked were extremely high. So I more or less resigned myself to having to make do with going out to Brazil for several weeks if I wanted to fly one. But fate has a strange way of turning things around and I have

cons. That is Hobbies, Kestrels and Merlins. Consequently their dietary needs take a little more understanding than perhaps the majority of falconers are used to here. All in all I would say that if the experienced falconer finds him or herself in the position to give one of these superb little falcons a

try then jump at the chance. But don't condemn it to a life of nothing but lure work.



“The flush had to be very controlled so as to give the falcon a decent chance at her quarry. ..”

like a traditional game hawk but merely cruised round at a height of about five metres.

The flush had to be very controlled so as to give the falcon a decent chance at her quarry. The wind was very slight and so the ideal flush would be as the falcon approached the falconer

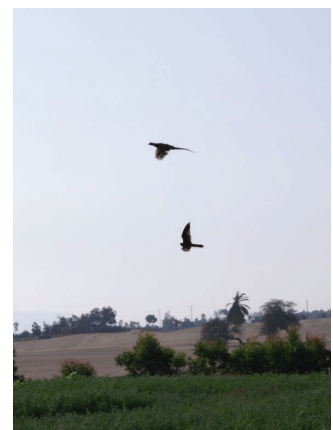
recently ended up with a stunning male Aplomado that will get flown at Magpies and small birds.

It would appear to be an unfortunate fact that the majority of Aplomado Falcons here in the UK are either aviary birds or are intended for display purposes. To use

try then jump at the chance. But don't condemn it to a life of nothing but lure work.



**Bob Dalton
March 2007**



Mike Hewlett—Events Co-Ordinator

Summer Events

The Hawking season is now over and most of us earn a few brownie points this time of year with the family, whilst hawks and falcons alike take time out to rest and moult.

It is a busy time of year for staff, volunteers and myself at Icarus as the display season gathers pace.

1. To help acquire more land for field meets.
2. To make people aware there is a good local club in Northamptonshire.
3. To raise funds for the club in addition to having a good day out, as some events will pay NRC for attending.

Members who would



that can fly to an acceptable standard. The club needs public liability insurance and someone happy to do a



This year NRC has booked space to provide stands and a static display at the fowling shows and game fairs:

Kimbolton Show
Sunday 15th July

Castle Ashby
Sunday 8th July

“Members who would like to attend these shows, please contact Mike Hewlett...”

like to attend these shows, please contact Mike Hewlett.

Please remember when representing the club at public events that dress code is important, and any birds and / or equipment taken on the day must be in good condition. Club rules will apply. We will have a limited

commentary on the PA system.

Icarus Falconry is providing a flying display and static at the Kimbolton show this July.

Hope to see you all there!

Mike Hewlett
March 2007



Earls Barton
Steam Rally
25th – 27th August

number of people and vehicle passes for each event.

One or two more events may be added to the above list.

These events cannot run without the support and help from club members. The object of attending such events is:

At this moment in time NRC will not be doing any flying displays, this is something the club can look into for future seasons, but will require other members with well trained birds of prey



Tom Carnihan—Land Controller

2007/8 Field Meeting Calendar

A summary of NRC Field Meetings Guidelines are included for your information. A full set of NRC field meeting rules will be available by the time the new Hawking season starts, this will be in the form of a Hawking Diary/ Calendar complete with all the dates for the new season.

Key Dates



October 2007

I am currently negotiating prices and numbers for a Hawking weekend in the Border Country for early October. Hopefully more news on this next month.

As soon as I have sorted a price then we can all start paying an agreed amount each month towards the trip. Monies to be paid to Marvin the new club Treasurer.

Regarding rabbit's it's a lot more promising than Malham although we all had a great time.

Quarry Licences & Game Licences

“Regarding rabbit's it's a lot more promising than Malham although we all had a great time...”

Don't forget that if you are hunting feathered quarry, whether it's a pheasant, rook or a lark, you need a licence either a Game or Quarry Licence.

The only exception to this is in case of pest species and for these you must have written authorisation from the LANDOWNER proving you are undertaking vermin control on their behalf.

Quarry licences are available from the wildlife section at DEFRA. If you intend to hunt game of any description you need a Game Licence. These are available from your local post office for about £5.

I will need to see everybody's Licence at the start of the Hawking Season. Finally, if anyone is seriously considering hunting feathered quarry from motor vehicles then don't, as it's an offence under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and is likely to bring Falconry and the club into disrepute.

Section 5 (1) (e) Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (Prohibition of certain methods of killing or

“Quarry licences are available from the wildlife section at DEFRA. If you intend to hunt game of any description you need a Game Licence. ...”

taking wild birds) states;

“If any person uses any mechanically propelled vehicle in immediate pursuit of a wild bird for the purpose of killing or taking that bird, he shall be guilty of an offence...”

Other Hawking Meets

We anticipate holding Club field meets every couple of weeks or so right up to the end of the season, end of January for falcons and the end of February for short-wings and Eagles. Don't forget we are a young club and acquiring land for field meets is a priority. We are always looking for more land and we shall be more than grateful if any members would be able to put on a field meet for the club. All enquires regarding land ect please contact me directly. We have already secured a number of field meets for Falcons, Short-Wings and Eagles for the coming season.

“If any person uses any mechanically propelled vehicle in immediate pursuit of a wild bird for the purpose of killing or taking that bird, he shall be guilty of an offence...”

Last Seasons Field Meets

For a young club we had a good turnout of members and spectators who attended field meets. Most field meets were over subscribed. Including Malham we had over nine field meets, two Eagle meets and the rest were for short-wings. Mike Hewlett has promised to get a couple of good falcons going for the end of the season, as I have secured a couple of falcon meetings. I for one will be putting my name down as a spectator for these events. The Eagle meets that we had were well attended. We invited Travis from the SEFG club to attend the Holcot Eagle Meet with his female Goldie. We had a fantastic day with over seventy slips with six eagles, which included four Goldie's, one Black Eagle and one Steppes Eagle. Although we didn't catch any hares mine did hang on to one for a short. While to see the eagles chasing there quarry was quite an awesome sight (since the Holcot meet my male Goldie the Kaiser has taken his first hare at a recent SEFG field meet, something I have been trying to do for over 25 years with a golden eagle I hope the next one doesn't take so long). Regarding the other short-wing meets, there was a mixed bag of quarry taken including a munjak deer by Martin who upon checking it out to make

“For a young club we had a good turnout of members and spectators who attended field meets...”

sure it could be released, quickly let it go so it could grow up to be a big munjak. Nice one Martin. Most of the short-wings were either male or female Harris Hawks although Glynne, the Chairman of the NRC, did bring at the start of the season, his newly acquired Redtail which did show great promise. Tragically it had to be put down after having it's leg amputated in a accident within it's aviary. Try to keep cat's and other animals off the roof of your aviaries as the birds inside the aviaries will always try to catch them, in this case quite a tragic ending .

We are also looking into secure methods of clipping on at field meets. We have sadly had two incidences of owners slipping there birds out of turn, thankfully at this moment in time without problems. However, it is only a matter of time before somebody's bird is going to get killed if this is allowed to go on.

We will be discussing this with members at a future date, before the start of season . Anybody with any thoughts or good ideas speak to me or any of the other committee members.

Regards

Tom Carnihan

(Field Captain , NRC)

March 2007

