



**The
NATIONAL FALCONRY SCHOOL**



FALCONRY DISPLAYS

The National Falconry School

INTRODUCTION

Falconry, or hawking, is defined as the taking of live quarry using trained birds of prey, and was first recorded in China in 244 AD. Throughout the centuries since, the sport has continued to elicit a feeling of tradition, excitement, splendour and pageantry. Although today falconry is arguably as popular as it has ever been, it is still true to say that most members of the public know little about this ancient sport, and even fewer have had first-hand experience of what, to some of us, is a way of life.

While we certainly do not wish to encourage everyone to take up the sport, we understand the fascination that raptors (birds of prey and owls) hold for many people. In today's "green" society, many people realise that raptors are a barometer for conservation, and would dearly love to be able to get up close to real, living eagles, falcons, owls and other raptors.

We also understand the fascination with the historical aspects of this ancient tradition, and are extremely keen to ensure that these traditions are maintained, and passed on to the next generation. During our demonstrations, we use traditional methods and language, explaining their meaning and origins to our audience. These include the falconry origins of many everyday phrases, such as "fed up", "boozed", "cadge", "apprentice" and many more.

In our displays, we simulate the sport of falconry, using live raptors in conjunction with inanimate dummies (lures), while still conveying the spirit, excitement and glory of this ancient sport, and understanding and empathising with people's sensibilities. This enables guests to see the spectacle and get as close as humanly possible to a wide range of tame raptors, and also have the opportunity to have their questions answered by knowledgeable and professional enthusiasts.

Through our displays, visitors can see the way in which the modern falconer trains birds, and assure themselves of the well-being of all concerned. At the same time, through experiential learning, visitors have the opportunity to see a wide range of well-behaved raptors, under strictly controlled conditions that will safeguard the health and safety of all concerned.

The National Falconry School

THE SERVICE

In our regular displays throughout the UK, we feature ferrets, hawks, eagles, buzzards, falcons and owls. If a client wishes, we can put on displays featuring just one or any combination of these animals. Whichever service we supply, clients can rest assured that the displays – both static and active – will be presented in the most professional manner, and be entertaining, educational and strictly in step with the ethos of the organisation and the event.

A typical day may see a display featuring some of our owls, including the beautiful and highly endangered barn owl, and one of the largest and most spectacular species of owl on earth – the Verreaux's eagle owl, with a wingspan of almost 2 metres. The next display may include our ferrets, hawking dogs and hawks all working together. In another display, we may fly our eagle or one of our falcons, capable of flying at speeds of over 150 mph. Whatever species we are flying, the methods used are all steeped in the rich traditions of the sport.

We give a thoroughly professional service, tailored to meet the demands of your organisation and its publics, reflecting the very best in entertainment, conservation, and education. Our service is designed to give your customers the very best experience, with lots of audience participation where appropriate.

In addition to the flying, we also stage a static display of the birds, along with an educational interpretative display, using display boards and professionally produced material. Our static display is fully self-contained, with barriers, shelters, cages etc. for all the animals that we bring. This display is manned throughout the event, and our experienced and trained staff are happy to chat to visitors and answer their questions.

You can rest assured that we will never do anything to put in danger visitors or the birds themselves. All of the birds that we use are properly habituated, and have been bred and trained for the job. Guests will delight in seeing the small owls fly, marvel at the size of the eagle owls, and be astounded at the speed of the falcons (which can reach speeds of over 150 mph). All-in-all, we will give your guests an experience to remember.

We always give a highly personalised service, as we are small enough to care, while still being big enough to cope. Due to the fact that we have such a large and varied collection of raptors at our disposal, we can always ensure that we have sufficient suitable individuals for all of our commitments.

The National Falconry School

CORPORATE & TEAM-BUILDING SERVICES

Leaders in our field, we travel throughout the UK for corporate events, team building and away days, taking a selection of our raptors – eagles, hawks, falcons, buzzards and owls – to entertain, educate and thrill our audiences.

One of the oldest country sports, everyone finds falconry totally fascinating.

Thoroughly professional at all times, we present tailor-made, interactive sessions for groups of all sizes and all ages, allowing your team to experience up-close our magnificent birds, whether inside or outdoors.

We can run the day purely for fun, or involve team-building or competitive aspects to ensure we meet your objectives for the day.

From a simple display to have-a-go session for everyone; team-building events which really do call for co-operation between team members to a highly competitive session for all concerned – we can do it all.

Whatever we do, you can be assured that your client/team will be thrilled and see all their expectations surpassed during the event.

And when they learn that we supplied owls used in the Harry Potter series of films

All our birds are captive-bred and carefully selected and trained for their often exacting work. We take care to transport them safely in purpose-build carry boxes, transported in a modified vehicle to ensure good ventilation and thermal comfort.

All our birds are fitted with state-of-the-art radio telemetry to help us retrieve them if they fail to return on time, and our handlers are fully trained and equipped for all eventualities. It's what we call **professionalism**.

The National Falconry School

THE SAFEGUARDS

All our birds are legally held and covered by all the appropriate licenses, e.g. EU Article 10, the UK Wildlife & Countryside Act etc. We hold full public liability insurance (£5M) and we are registered under the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act, 1925.

All of the birds that we use are born to the job, being bred in captivity from legally held parents, and prepared and trained for their future role from five days of age. While the training of the birds uses traditional methods, these are tempered with the latest scientific research. The birds' training includes conditioning the birds to fully accept close proximity to humans, animals, machinery and just about every other item with which humans are associated. In this way, the birds come to accept as "normal" such things as tractors, flapping flags, noisy children etc., without being stressed in any way whatsoever. This leads to relaxed birds, and audiences who have no reason to doubt the wellbeing of the birds and animals used in our displays.

The training of the birds for flying displays, and consequent handling by inexperienced members of the public, also starts at a very early age, and continues throughout the life of the bird. All our birds are conditioned to accept being handled, and suffer no stress or distress from this.

While still adhering to traditional methods, the best and most modern thinking regarding husbandry and training is utilised to ensure best practice at all times. All of our birds are flown daily and, along with our other animals, are subjected to regular veterinary checks; all relevant vaccinations, medication and prophylactics are given as and when required.

We will never do anything to put in danger guests or the birds themselves. All of the birds that we use are habituated, having been specifically bred, chosen and trained for the job.

All of our work is carried out in line with our own strict Code of Practice, which is available on request.

The National Falconry School

WHO ARE WE?

The National Falconry School is an organisation that exists to promote the conservation, through education, of raptors (i.e. birds of prey and owls). We have an enviable reputation among those in the know, and have **supplied owls for the Harry Potter films**, having been recommended to Warner Brothers. Our birds are often seen in many films and TV shows, and on many BBC documentary programmes.

The School runs courses and encounter days for those who share our fascination and passion for owls, falcons, hawks and other raptors. In order to reach as wide an audience as possible, we take our Roadshow throughout the UK, giving displays at events from Hampshire to Perthshire, and many places in between. These displays are renowned for their sheer professionalism, and the passion that the team has for their subject. It is this passion, coupled with a breath-taking display, that makes the National Falconry School's display team stand head and shoulders above the crowd.

In addition to this very public work, staff at the School spend much time on real conservation work, including the breeding of several endangered species, including the barn owl (*Tyto alba*).

Another very important role fulfilled by staff at the School is caring for injured raptors. These birds, very often the innocent victims of a road traffic accident, are brought to us by organisations such as the RSPCA, the police, vets and even members of the public. It's amazing how our fame and reputation have spread, and we seem to get an almost constant stream of visitors, clutching cardboard boxes containing injured wildlife, at our door.

Our success rate on these endeavours is high, and the vast majority of injured birds are released back into the wild, to live out the rest of their days. Money we raise from our displays goes towards meeting our aim of educating people in the ways of nature, and saving wildlife. We are currently exploring the possibility of converting a building at the School, to form a dedicated raptor hospital.

The National Falconry School

THE MAN

The man behind the National Falconry School is our director, James McKay, former C.E.O. of the UK's National Federation of Zoos, a zoologist and a qualified, professional lecturer. James is also a regular presenter on TV, including the BBC TV programmes **Live 'n' Deadly** and **Deadly Days Out**, with **Steve Backshall**, and an author of over 20 animal-related books. A scientific fellow of the Zoological Society of London, James is the author of a book on falconry, and has also written many other books on animal-related subjects, as well as being a published photographer.

James has been giving falconry demonstrations around the UK for over 20 years, and has kept and flown raptors since the tender age of eleven. All of James' staff are also competent and experienced falconers/animal handlers, and hold relevant qualifications.

Always open to the latest research findings on the training and husbandry of raptors, James is particularly interested in the traditions of the ancient sport of falconry, and sees it as a duty to ensure that all of these traditions are passed on to the next generation. James is well known for his understanding and explanations of the origins of many everyday expressions that have their origins deeply rooted in the sport and traditions of falconry.

The National Falconry School

WHERE ARE WE BASED?

The National Falconry School is based on the outskirts of Ashover, in the heart of the Derbyshire Peaks, a short distance from the famous Chatsworth Estate, home of the Duke & Duchess of Devonshire, just ten miles from Junction 28 of the M1.

This location puts all parts of the UK within easy reach, while still allowing us to operate in beautiful countryside. The whole of the School is operated on an environmentally-friendly basis, encouraging wildlife as well as giving our own animals (and guests) a superbly tranquil environment.

At the School, we keep our display birds, ferrets and dogs, as well as our breeding birds. One of the most important facilities at the National Falconry School is the incubation room, where we ensure that eggs laid by our birds are given optimum conditions in which to hatch. After hatching, the young birds are moved to our crèche, where they are given round-the-clock care and attention, being monitored constantly by CCTV.

By breeding our birds, we help to conserve species in the wild, and have thus developed our own self-sustaining breeding populations of several species. Breeding our own birds also ensures that we have fit, healthy and suitable stock for training. It is essential that the parents of such birds are selected carefully for temperament, flying ability and general suitability for the lifestyle that their offspring will encounter. It is also necessary for birds used for displays to be conditioned at a very early stage in their life, if they are to take to the general lifestyle to which their career will lead.

We carefully select suitable birds to produce our display stock, and even hybridise some species to ensure that our clients see birds which can fly spectacularly, and yet have the impeccable manners essential in birds carrying out such a role.

The National Falconry School

SHARE OUR PASSION & VISION

We strive to help raptors, and those who share our enthusiasm for these magnificent creatures. Our passion for our subject is palpable, and will certainly infect your customers and clients. By being associated with our "green" credentials, client companies will also be seen in a good light by their own customer base.

You can be assured that we will give you a thoroughly professional service, tailored to meet the demands of your organisation and its publics, reflecting the very best in conservation, education and entertainment.

Due to our deep passion, knowledge, experience and understanding of falconry and our birds, we are able to offer specialised "themes" for events, such as medieval displays, "hands-on" encounters, and many others.

The National Falconry School

OUR CLIENTS

Clients for our displays have included the following;

Chatsworth Horse Trials
Bentley Motors
De Vere Hotels
The Rotary Club
BBC
The Round Table
The British Association for Shooting & Conservation
The Countryside Alliance
The Game Conservancy Trust
Royal Norfolk Agricultural Society
Lincolnshire Agricultural Society
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
The Royal Bank of Scotland
HBOS
HSBC
BT
Boots plc
First National Bank
Royal Agricultural Society of England
Country Landowners' Association
Three Counties Agricultural Society
Great Yorkshire Agricultural Society
The Post Office
Warner Brothers (we have owls in the Harry Potter movies)
The British Army
The Royal Navy & Royal Marines

We are, of course, happy to supply a more comprehensive list if required.

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WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT US

"The most professional display team we have used"

"A stunning display"

"Breath-taking"

"The pleasure of the child when a real, live barn owl flew across the arena and landed on her gloved fist, is something that will remain with her – and myself – until our dying day."

"The spectacle is something that excited the audience, and will undoubtedly remain with them."

"We have never known such an all-encompassing display before – fantastic!"

"Everyone was entertained throughout the display, and I believe everyone must have learned something - I know I did!"

"It was wonderful to see such beautiful birds at such close quarters."

"The birds behaved impeccably, and were handled with care and respect."

"For the children to be able to handle such beautiful creatures was a joy to behold. The pictures they later produced in class show what a lasting and positive effect the experience has had on them."

"Never fails to impress"

The National Falconry School

THE BIRDS

Below is a list of some of the birds that we currently fly, but we add to and change the collection, year-on-year. We cannot, of course, guarantee the presence of any particular bird at any of our appearances, although we will do our best to accommodate any specific requests from clients.

LONGWINGS ("falcons")

European kestrel (*Falco tinniculus*)
American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)
Saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*)
Lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*)
Lugger falcon (*Falco jugger*)
Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
Gyr/lugger hybrid
Gyr/saker hybrid
Peregrine/lanner hybrid
Peregrine/lugger hybrid
Peregrine/saker hybrid

BROADWINGS ("buzzards" and "hawks")

European buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)
Ferruginous buzzard (*Buteo regalis*)
Harris' hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)
Red-tailed buzzard (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

OWLS

Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)
Tawny owl (*Strix aluco*)
Little owl (*Athene noctua*)
Bengal eagle owl (*Bubo bengalensis*)
Eurasian eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*)
Great grey (or Lapland) owl (*Strix nebulosa*)
Great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*)
Snowy owl (*Nictea scandiaca*)
Verreaux's giant African (or milky) eagle owl (*Bubo lacteus*)

EAGLES

Tawny eagle (*Aquila rapax*)
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

We would normally bring 6 to 8 birds on a display, but this figure can be adjusted to suit specific requirements and/or circumstances. Because we have such a large and varied collection of raptors, we can always ensure that we have sufficient suitable birds for all our commitments.

The National Falconry School

CONTACTS

For further information, and/or a no-obligation quote for your event,
please contact our director,
James McKay.

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OTHER SERVICES

We offer many other animal-based services, including

The Ferret Roadshow^{©®}

The Owl Roadshow^{©®}

Flat Caps and Ferrets^{©®}
(ferret racing)

Ferret Roulette

The Animal Roadshow^{©®}

....and more!!

Please contact us for further information and/or a no-obligation quote.

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