

The Falconer

August 2017



Message from the chairman:

Hi,

I am sure that I am not the only one that feels that this moult is taking forever, however I hope that everything is going well and that those involved in bird breeding over summer have had a successful season.

The club has moved forward with many of the issues that needed to be resolved and the committee continue to work behind the scenes to assist club members. A number of falconry related social events have taken place over the summer and have been enjoyed by those that were able to attend.

Plans for the forthcoming hunting season have been made and continue to develop. Again, negotiations to obtain more access to land for club field meets are being continued. There are also plans for a number of guest speakers to attend club events.

There have been a number of new members join the club this year. They are of varying levels of falconry experience and hopefully have all been made to feel welcome. There are other applications from prospective members who have been advised to attend club meetings.

Please don't be shy. If any members need help or advice regarding their birds, ask someone. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience across the club that can be accessed.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee members for their input, work and support over the last few months.

Stephen Eastwood

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Sour crop

Sour crop is a condition that occurs when a raptor is unable to put its crop over (this means that the crop is not emptying as it should) and therefore raw meat sits in the crop at body temperature and begins to rot. The crop is only a storage organ that allows the raptor to eat a large amount quickly while on the kill and then move off to a safe place and allow the food to move through the digestive system slowly. No digestion takes place in the crop. Once the food begins to rot it produces toxins which rapidly make the raptor critically ill. Food stays in the crop longer than it should for a number of reasons - obstruction, severe dehydration, disease and, very commonly at this time of year, a young raptor slightly low in condition is given a blow-out crop (very full crop) after entering (making its first kill). There should be a significant visible reduction in size of the crop after 6 hours, if not the crop will need to be emptied and fluid support given. If the raptor is showing any signs of weakness or just not looking right then it is an emergency. Intensive veterinary treatment will be needed.



Trip to Wingbeat Headquarters 17th- 18th June 2017

In June, the club were invited to visit Nick Fox's farm in West Wales. We have had a long-standing relationship with Nick, and members were keen to witness the newly developed Rocrow in action. So on Friday 17th June we took the 200 mile journey to Aberystwyth.

On arriving at the Farm we were greeted by Nick and his staff and shown our lodgings, which were beautiful yurts in the middle of a field. Once we'd de-camped our gear, we were invited for a lesson with the Rocrow. Nick and the team showed us the ropes and Donny Flyers, being our resident RC expert, put the Rocrow to the test. Once Matt had cast the Gyr/Saker off, it pursued the crow with amazing agility. But Donny put on a great show, receiving lots of accolades from Nick and Matt. Needless to say, the rest of the audience didn't quite fly the Rocrow as professionally, with a few crashes and repairs needed. The lesson was extremely enjoyable and entertaining.

In the evening, we made our way to the lakeside, where a barbeque had been arranged for us. A few hardy members of the club took a dip in the lake, and even did a bit of beaver spotting! Nick's wife had prepared the most delicious kebabs, and with copious amounts of alcohol, it was a fantastic end to a lovely day. I have to say, on a more personal note, the setting and hospitality was first class, and the lakeside cabin had to be seen to be believed.

In morning, the most amazing breakfast was had by all and we were prepared for day two. Nick invited us for a tour, firstly to his headquarters where the Rocrows are made, and then to the farm to see the breeding facility.

At the Wingbeat centre, Matt gave us all a tour and showed us how the Robara and Rocrows had been developed, and showed us how to repair damaged wings. We all took turns in gluing and welding cracks which made the models as good as new. Nick joined us during the tour, admittedly nursing a hangover! And then it was on to the breeding facility.

I have to admit, we were blown away by the scale of the set up that Nick and his team manage, from the offices to the breeding chambers, to the hacking aviaries. The sheer scale of the facility is truly amazing. Nick and the team showed us around the whole facility, and we were amazed. The condition of the buildings, the variety of falcons was breath-taking. Even the food freezer was huge!

After lunch, we met up again for another lesson with the Rocrows and falcons, and after some great flights we had to depart for the journey back.

I'm sure I speak for all those that visited, that the weekend was one that we will never forget. The hospitality shown towards us was fantastic. I would like to thank Nick and Barboro, and the Wingbeat team a heartfelt thank you for a wonderful weekend.

Words by Robert Sirr