



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Landscape Advice Note: Falconry Displays on Historic Properties



www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/parks-and-gardens/

Falconry, hunting using trained birds of prey, was introduced to Britain in the early Middle Ages, and was widely practised both for obtaining food and as a sport. It is likely to have been carried out on many historic properties and therefore has a long history of association with historic sites. This Landscape Advice note examines the nature conservation and bird welfare issues related to falconry displays on historic sites.

INTRODUCTION

Falconry is essentially unchanged from the Middle Ages, but falconry displays are now more common than actual hunting. These displays allow the public to see birds at close quarter, and to watch them flying and stooping as if catching prey items.

Falconry displays can be popular, educational and historically appropriate on many sites. The considerable knowledge and skills involved in falconry is also of historic interest.

Properly conducted displays do not involve the use of live prey and do not harm the birds of prey so animal welfare regulations should not be infringed.

Property owners or managers have a responsibility to ensure that, while there may be considerable benefits from hosting falconry displays, they are carried out legally and do not conflict with other objectives for the site, for example nature conservation.

NATURE CONSERVATION CONCERNS

For many years, birds of prey were taken from the wild as eggs or chicks. This was prohibited by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. The act now requires all diurnal raptors in captivity to be registered with the Wildlife Licensing and Registration Service which is part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Act has since been amended to include only the species listed in Table 1.

Any falconer keeping unregistered birds of these species, or birds of other species that were taken from the wild without a licence (unless injured) would be guilty of an offence.

Another relevant nature conservation issue is the possible disturbance to wild birds of prey caused

by captive display animals nearby. Birds of prey are relatively solitary animals and particularly during the breeding season may be seriously disturbed by the presence of captive birds within their home range, even for short periods.

WELFARE CONCERNS

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) also sets standards for the keeping of captive birds. Under this Act, birds remain the responsibility of their owners at all times, including during displays. Members of recognised falconry clubs will be familiar with the legislation. It is essential to ensure that these standards of welfare for the birds are maintained when on site for a display.

Organisers of falconry display events should ensure that all falconers participating are members of a Defra recognised falconry club.

NATURE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

All captive birds of the species listed in Table 1 should have Defra registration documents, and will usually wear a ring issued by the department. Display falconers may also need an Article 10 certificate which allows the use of birds commercially and this can be checked with the Wildlife Licensing and Registration Service. Falconers bringing birds of these species or planning to bring them on to historic properties should be able to show the appropriate registration documents when requested to do so.

Falconry displays should not be held on sites known to support wild birds of prey during the breeding season, although falconry displays could be held on these sites at other times of year.

English Heritage sites known to support birds of prey are shown in Table 2, although it should be noted that there has been little systematic survey of birds of prey, so this list should not be considered definitive and sites which do not appear should be surveyed before arranging displays.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Defra - Bird Registration
www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/imports-exports/cites/bird-registration/

Defra - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/imports-exports/cites/

| 1 | Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Buzzard, Honey | <i>Pernis apivorus</i> |
| | Eagle, Golden | <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> |
| | Eagle, White-tailed | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> |
| | Falcon, Peregrine | <i>Falco peregrinus</i> |
| | Goshawk | <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> |
| | Harrier, Marsh | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> |
| | Harrier, Montagu's | <i>Circus pygargus</i> |
| | Merlin | <i>Falco columbarius</i> |
| | Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> |

| 2 | English Heritage Property | County |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| | South East Region | |
| | Dover Castle | Kent |
| | Osborne House | Isle of Wight |
| | Titchfield Abbey | Hampshire |
| | Southwest Region | |
| | Chysauster Ancient Village | Cornwall |
| | Daws Castle | Somerset |
| | Farleigh Hungerford Castle | Somerset |
| | London Region | |
| | Eltham Palace | Greater London |
| | West Midlands Region | |
| | Kenilworth Castle | Warwickshire |
| | Old Oswestry Hillfort | Shropshire |
| | Wroxeter Roman City | Shropshire |
| | East Midlands Region | |
| | Sutton Scarsdale Hall | Derbyshire |
| | East of England Region | |
| | Grimes Graves | Norfolk |
| | Yorkshire and the Humber Region | |
| | Brodsworth Hall | South Yorkshire |
| | Monk Bretton Priory | South Yorkshire |
| | Whitby Abbey | North Yorkshire |
| | North West Region | |
| | Beeston Castle | Cheshire |
| | North East Region | |
| | Derwentcote Steel Furnace | Co. Durham |
| | Hylton Castle | Tyne & Wear |

TABLE 1
Birds of Prey which should be registered with Defra -
Alphabetical by Common Name

TABLE 2
English Heritage Properties known to support wild birds of
prey

ENGLISH HERITAGE OFFICES

North East
Bessie Surtees House
41-44 Sandhill
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 3JF
Tel: 01912 691200
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Brooklands
24 Brooklands Avenue
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English Heritage is the Government's adviser on the historic environment with responsibility for all aspects of protecting and promoting the historic environment in England.

The role of English Heritage's Curatorial Department is to help everyone to be inspired and engaged by the Story of England through sites, artefacts and archives.

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FRONT COVER

Falconry display at Audley End House
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