



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Landscape Advice Note: Falconry Displays on Historic Properties



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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Defra - Bird Registration  
[www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/imports-exports/cites/bird-registration/](http://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/](http://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

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North East  
Bessie Surtees House  
41-44 Sandhill  
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## FRONT COVER

Falconry display at Audley End House  
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