

## **CHAPTER 9**

# **INVENTORY OF FALCONRY ACTIVITIES IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**

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## 9. INVENTORY OF FALCONRY ACTIVITIES IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

### Summary of Main Survey Findings

This inventory of falconry activities in the Scottish Borders was undertaken with **the assistance of two main organisations: the British Falconers Club Scottish Group (BFC) and the Scottish Hawking Club (SHC).**

Falconry was found to be a **minority countryside sport**, organised by the owners of the birds of prey. Essentially these owners have been both the main providers and participants.

A **survey of 80 members of the BFC and 10 members of the SHC, resident within Borders Region**, was conducted in 2000. This generated a **21% response** and formed the basis of the following estimates, all of which related to 1999:

### Scale of Recreational Activities

- ❑ **Birds of prey were flown on between 4,400 and 4,500 occasions** by local falconers (i.e. excluding falconers from outside the Borders)

### Expenditure Levels

- ❑ The **total annual expenditure** incurred by participating falconers was between **£85,000 and £135,000**

### Allied Activities – Spectator Attractions & Impacts

Falconry, as well as involving those who flew birds of prey, attracted **spectators who attended displays organised by two Regional Falconry Centres** located within the Region. Liaison with these two Centres established that:

- ❑ **Annually between 30 and 40 displays** have been organised at shows and galas throughout Scotland, to which the Centres contributed
- ❑ **Visitor numbers to the Centres** themselves have been relatively modest: **30-40 per year**
- ❑ The **turnover of these two niche tourist enterprises** have likewise been modest, ranging between **£130,000 and £180,000**
- ❑ Apart from catering for student trainees, **no employment** was generated either by falconry participants or the Centres.

Falconry has not been a countryside sporting activity, which offers either landowners or farmers any potential for diversification.

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## **9. INVENTORY OF FALCONRY ACTIVITIES IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**

### **Introduction**

- 9.1** To-date, falconry has been a specialist, ‘minority’ sport which has attracted a growing number of participants and spectators. Unlike the other countryside sports covered by the Study, there has been no clear distinction between the ‘Providers’ and the ‘Participants’. This has stemmed from the fact that the owners of the birds have almost always been the people who have flown the birds i.e. it has been the owners who have presented their birds over live quarry. In that sense they were also the participants. It has been necessary to distinguish them clearly from the spectators who came to watch the birds of prey in flight. As described by the Chairman of the Scottish Hawking Club, ‘such falconers participate in the sport in a totally non-commercial way. It is their hobby’.
- 9.2** The resident population of Borders’ falconers was known to have specific hawking grounds. These were usually organised through mutual agreement between the Participants and local landowners. Thus usually the ownership of land was not a pre-requisite for Participation. Unlike other countryside sports, falconry has not directly involved habitat creation and management.
- 9.3** The consultants were informed that little or no money was paid by Participants for rabbit hawking. Rabbits have been much the most common form of quarry hunted and caught.
- 9.4** Falconer Participants from outside the Region were known to have visited the Borders for hunting, as well as for some of the field meetings organised by Falconry Clubs.
- 9.5** The provision of facilities for spectators was primarily confined to Falconry Centres, which presented falconry displays and were visitor attractions in their own right. Visitors mainly came from outside of the Borders Region. Tourists, corporate visitors, school parties etc paid an entrance fee in order to watch the falconry displays at Country and other Shows. All other forms of spectating tended to be informal and were a by-product of the activities of Participants.

### **Survey Approach & Methodology**

- 9.6** As part of the Study, it was decided to collect information about the numbers of Participants and the frequencies of their activities, as well as the levels of expenditure that they incurred.
- 9.7** Enquiries to national Falconry organisations, with which liaison had taken place on previous Countryside Sports Surveys undertaken throughout Great Britain, quickly revealed that in the Borders Region there were two main groups of Participants. These were members of:

- the British Falconry Club ((Scottish Group); and
- the Scottish Hawking Club

**9.8** Contact was made with the Secretaries of these two organisations, in order to enlist help in surveying their members in the most appropriate ways.

**9.9** Draft questionnaires were designed and sent to the Secretaries for comment. This consultation resulted in the preparation of a single questionnaire, since Providers and Participants were usually synonymous. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in **Appendix 9.1**.

**9.10** Through discussion with the two Secretaries, it was established that the majority of the population of Participants, actively engaged in falconry in the Region, would be covered by sending the questionnaire and a stamped addressed return envelope, together with an explanatory letter from the Chairman of the BFRS, to:

- 80 members of the British Falconry Club (Scottish Groups) [BFC];
- 10 members of the Scottish Hawking Club [SHC], resident within the Region.

## **Survey Results**

### **Response Rate**

**9.11** In total 19 responses were received. This represented a 21% response rate. However, of these, only 9 (47%) related to falconry undertaken in the Borders Region.

**9.12** The composition of the responses in terms of organisational memberships was as follows:

- 4 BFC members
- 2 SHC members
- 3 members of both organisations

### **The Nature & Levels of Participation**

**9.13** Between them the 9 Participants owned 32 birds, the range being between 1 and 8 birds. The species of bird varied and included: Peregrine Falcons, Harris Hawks, Red Tailed Buzzards, Sakers, Gyrs and Barbary Hybrids, Goshawks, Lanners, Barn Owls and European Eagle Owls.

**9.14** On average, the 9 Participants flew their birds on approximately 100 occasions per year. This varied between 60 and 210 times.

- 9.15** All but one of the 9 Participants were involved in some form of Agreement with landowners to enable their birds to be flown. One Participant was a landowner and another leased land specifically for falconry purposes.

### Levels of Direct Expenditure

- 9.16** Collectively, the Participants reported total annual expenditure, incurred on falconry in the Borders that amounted to over £28,000 per annum. The average level of expenditure was £3,150, with a range of between £120 and £10,050. The gross and net expenditures were identical, since none of the Participants received any revenues from their sport.
- 9.17** The composition of the expenditure incurred by the 9 Participants is summarised in **Box 9.1**.

**BOX 9.1: SURVEY RESULTS - PROFILE OF ANNUAL EXPENDITURE ON FALCONRY IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS BY PARTICIPANTS**

Item	Expenditures by the Total of 9 Participants			
	Total	Average	Range	Range
	£	£	£	£
Purchase of Birds	2,000	222	0-1,500	7.1
Housing (Aviaries)	2,380	264	0-1,000	8.4
Clothing	950	106	0-400	3.4
Equipment (Hawks & Falcons)	1,015	113	0-500	3.6
Telemetry (Radio Tracking)	2,540	282	0-900	9.0
Food for Birds	2,620	291	0-750	9.3
Breeding New Birds	400	44	0-400	1.4
Dog Food	2,910	323	0-700	10.3
Vets Fees & Medications: Birds & Dogs	2,430	270	0-500	8.5
Land Rental	1,500	167	0-1,000	5.3
Travel: Vehicle Fuel & Maintenance	4,940	549	20-2,500	17.4
Accommodation, Food & Drink	2,950	328	0-1,000	10.4
Gifts to Landowners	580	65	0-300	2.0
Fees to Professional Falconers & Trainers	0	0	0	0
Other*	1,130	126	0-500	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,345</b>	<b>3,150</b>	<b>120-10,050</b>	<b>100</b>

Footnote \* The main items were the care of wild birds, aviaries, insurance, feed supplements and Vets fees

### Grossed-Up Participation & Expenditure Estimates

- 9.18** As in the case of the other countryside sports activities surveyed, two assumptions regarding the behaviour of non-respondents were made for grossing-up purposes:

- ❑ the average expenditure and numbers of times the birds were flown were the same as for the respondents;
- ❑ the average levels of expenditure and participation frequencies were only half those reported by the respondents.

**9.19** Based on these assumptions, the grossed-up annual expenditure by Participants was estimated to be between £82,000 and £135,000. It must be appreciated though that these are likely to be conservative estimates, as they exclude falconers who come from elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and overseas to participate in the Borders. Unfortunately there is no means of accurately estimating expenditures by these 'external visitors'.

**9.20** The equivalent estimates for the numbers of occasions (days) on which birds of prey were flown by falconers locally resident in the Borders ranged between 4,400 and 4,500

### **Falconry As A Spectator Activity**

**9.21** The survey was extended, in the interests of completeness, to include the two falconry centres located in the Borders. A questionnaire was designed to identify:

- ❑ the nature of the services provided by the Centre
- ❑ a profile of visitors in 1999
- ❑ the home locations of the visitors
- ❑ the main characteristics of the visitor season
- ❑ the profile of entry charges per visitor
- ❑ the revenues from sales items
- ❑ the employment provided
- ❑ the levels of expenditure on recurrent items
- ❑ the levels of expenditure on capital items
- ❑ the levels of trade purchases made from local and external firms

A copy of the questionnaire is presented in **Appendix 9.2**.

**9.22** Due to the confidential nature and extent of the information requested, a written response was not obtained from the owners/managers of the principal Falconry Centres located in Borders Region. However, telephone interviews supplemented by the subsequent provision of financial information, provided

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helpful insights into the size and structure of this aspect of the overall Falconry activity.

- 9.23** Two other Centres were known to exist nearby, respectively to the north and south of the Borders. These have had an impact upon the turnovers of both of the local Centres. The market for falconry displays was both small and largely confined to those visitors interested in countryside-based tourism.
- 9.24** A wide variety of services was provided by the local Centres. They included the provision of displays both locally and at a variety of Game Fairs, Shows, Village Galas throughout Scotland, the breeding of birds for sale, the training of young falconers under the Youth Training Scheme, the organisation of residential training courses, as well as the production and sale of books, videos, T-shirts etc. Although time-consuming and costly, the care and rehabilitation of disabled birds was also undertaken.
- 9.25** Visitor numbers to the Centres themselves were relatively modest at less than about 200 per year. In the main, visitors came by appointment and included school parties. The principal customers were the audiences that watch the displays at both shows and corporate entertainments. The number of displays has tended to be between 30 and 40 per year.
- 9.26** Most (75%) of the visitors to the Centres came from within the UK. The origins of the remaining 25% were geographically widespread, including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia and Ireland. The promotional activities of the Scottish Tourist Board were said to influence strongly the origins of foreign visitors, reflecting the particular advertising targets selected for the previous 6-9 months.
- 9.27** The tasks involved in providing the services outlined above were primarily undertaken by the owners/managers of the Centres. Other than resident trainees, supplemented with additional help in the busy May – August period, no formal employment was provided.
- 9.28** In terms of purchases, the majority of equipment items (gloves, helmets and bells) were purchased from within the UK. It tended only to be the sophisticated tracking (telemetry) equipment that was brought from abroad (USA).
- 9.29** Like most seasonal niche tourist enterprises, Falconry Centres as run in the Borders have not been great sources of profit. However, they have yielded a positive return and a livelihood for those involved. Overall, the total annual turnover of the businesses involved was between £130,000 and £180,000.
- 9.30** The composition of the main expenses was as shown in **Box 9.2**.

**BOX 9.2 COMPOSITION OF THE MAIN COSTS INCURRED IN MANAGING FALCONRY CENTRES IN BORDERS REGION**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE (4 Year Average)</b>
Training: Student Meals, Cleaning & Laundry	<b>24.6</b>
Vehicle Running & Travelling Expenses	<b>14.2</b>
Repairs & Renewals	<b>8.6</b>
Salaries & Wages	<b>7.0</b>
Birds	<b>6.9</b>
Hawk Food	<b>6.8</b>
Heating & Lighting	<b>4.9</b>
Veterinary & Registration	<b>4.3</b>
Postage	<b>4.3</b>
Advertising, Printing & Stationery	<b>4.1</b>
Overheads: Rent & Rates, Subscriptions, Telephone, Depreciation, Accounting	<b>14.3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Concluding Comment**

- 9.31** In catering for an essentially niche tourist market, the Centres have provided a useful, albeit small, part of the Region's 'tourism product'. However, it was clear that the potential for further development would be limited.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Scott Wilson is very grateful to all of the Falconers who, as members of the British Falconry Club (Scottish Group) and the Scottish Hawking Club, completed the questionnaires.

Thanks are also due to the Owners and Managers of local Falconry Centres, who received questionnaires and agreed to be interviewed.

The inputs of all of these people proved invaluable in compiling the Inventory.

**Consultees**

Mr P. Kirk, The Deer Commission for Scotland

Mr A. Knowles-Brown, Chairman of the Scottish Hawking Club

Marion Sherwood, Secretary of the British Falconers Club (Scottish Group)