

Hacking of Falconry Birds

Hacking is a time-honoured technique used by falconers to allow young birds of prey to develop physiologically prior to being taken up for training. It involves a defined period of controlled liberty, centred around a secure release site situated in suitable country. It is predominantly used with longwings (the falcons) where it has been shown to benefit the development of their flying skills even in comparatively short periods at hack.

Hacking is generally undertaken with small groups of like-aged, young falcons starting at the point of fledging. It requires careful planning and management including daily feeding at the hack site, observation and monitoring. It is strongly recommended that all birds intended for hack, are fitted with long-life transmitters preferably using a GPS system. Wearing of transmitters is mandatory for Falconry Clubs affiliated to the Hawk Board. If individual birds wander away from the hack-site it is important to search for and recover them as a priority. Extended periods of hack should be avoided.

It is good practice to inform neighbouring landowners and residents where and when falcons are being hacked, explaining the purpose of such liberty, the likely time scale and period of hack. Falconers must at all times have the welfare of the falcons in their keeping, as their utmost concern.

In parts of the UK, some licensing restrictions may apply to hacking large numbers of non-native and hybrid falcons (although this practise is only usually carried out by commercial breeders or large private breeders) and small-scale hacking of native species in close proximity to protected sites. Please check with the relevant authorities if you are to hack more than five birds at one time.