

UK Symposium

2023

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**International Association of
Avian Trainers and Educators**

2023 Symposium Speakers

In order of presentation

Recognizing the Signs of Cardiovascular Disease in Aging Raptors

Kit Lacy, Bird Curator, Cascades Raptor Center and IAATE President

Raptors in human care typically live two to three times longer than their wild counterparts. Due to the extension of their lifespans, raptors may develop geriatric-driven illnesses such as cardiovascular disease. Falcon species are particularly susceptible to these vascular diseases due to their physiology. This presentation will discuss how to recognize the signs of cardiovascular disease in raptors, which may assist caretakers in an earlier diagnosis of disease and allow additional time for treatments. Additionally, modifications in housing and husbandry can assist the geriatric raptor with more comfort and confidence as their aging bodies change. Finally, assessing the welfare of the aging raptor and the decision-making process surrounding compassionate euthanasia will be discussed.

Speaker Bio: Kit completed a master's degree in biology from the University of Oregon, publishing papers on social behavior and communication in Caribbean Iguanas. For many years, Kit taught college biology before a major career shift to work with raptors in both rehabilitation and ambassador settings. Currently, Kit oversees a diverse collection of



ambassador raptors at Cascades Raptor Center. Having decades of experience caring for raptors from a variety of circumstances, Kit is passionate about improving the quality of life for all raptors in human care through positive reinforcement training. She has been a board member of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE) since 2013 and is currently President. She

has presented papers on training and raptor wellness programs, lead workshops and webinars, acts as a mentor to other trainers, and presented on Cascades' criteria for selection of non-releasable raptors for ambassadors.

Let's Put the Word 'Cast' in the Past!

Mike Simmons, A World of Wings

It's always been a problem for me to see such statements from Falconry related training claiming to be a harmonious relationship between man and bird, when most birds are subject to manhandling and invasive husbandry techniques. I started in a role with birds more than twenty years ago that led me to doubt many practices and in more recent years I've been able to find better ways that suit my birds and now implement them into the daily routines.

I'd like to share some techniques that have been able to free my birds from being physically restrained and introduce you to Lola who is maybe the only falcon I know of that was picked by human hands at two weeks old and has never been restrained by hands for the entirety of her life to this day. Five years have past and she is not only free from the trauma and stress of being "cast" but also free of foot problems, beak problems and lives what I hope to be an enjoyable and fulfilling life under my respectful care.

Speaker Bio: I'm the owner of a small training company that has been operating now for ten plus years. In that time I've worked on all kinds of amazing projects . Currently I work exclusively on tv documentaries and filling in the gaps flying my hawks and falcons for pest control. It gives me a great mix of excitement and some work local and some far away" History For twenty two years Mike has worked exclusively with birds in



a professional capacity. The adventure has traveled him through Zoos, castles , pet companies and more with a much loved flock of birds that reside at the family home.

The Horstmann Trust

Holly Cale (BSc Zoology), Curator and Head of Research, Manfred Horstmann Vulture Conservation Trust

The Horstmann Trust is a collection of vultures based in South Wales – you may have heard rumours about a collection of vultures in Wales. The collection was established by a passionate but very private guy – a place that you’re never quite sure if the rumours are true....well, there’s no smoke without fire! In the 1980s, before anyone knew how threatened vultures would become, our founders set about establishing a collection of vultures driven by a personal passion for these magnificent species.

Quietly over the coming years they built up an impressive site and achieved landmark breeding achievements with their birds. All these years later we know how significant this collection is so working with one of the founders we have transformed it into a charitable trust, a site for conservation, research, training and experience opportunities for everyone in the bird of prey community.

Our work at the trust includes research into health and husbandry best practices, behaviour and training for conservation benefits and improving breeding outcomes for endangered vulture species.

In this session I will give an overview of the work we do at the trust and how we can work with other organisations which house vultures to maximise the impact we can all have on the conservation of these species. I will talk about how important training and behavioural understanding has become in the way we work with our vultures at the Horstmann trust and give some insight into how IAATE is helping make some of our research goals achievable.

Speaker Bio: Holly Cale is a vulture conservationist with a wealth of knowledge in training, care of captive birds and breeding of threatened species of raptors. She began her career with a BSc in Zoology and in 2009 joined the team at the ICBP. Serving over a decade as curator and aviculturist at the centre she and was involved in everything from training both birds and staff, to aviculture, wild bird rehabilitation and leadership. To date she has hatched upwards of 400 chicks from over 50 species of raptor. In 2022 Holly went on to become a founding director/trustee of the Horstmann Trust; a vulture conservation charity formed around a well-established collection of birds in South Wales. Combining her broad range of skills in this most recent role Holly is passionate about improving all aspects of bird welfare and conservation breeding, and teaching and sharing that knowledge far and wide.



How do Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust Work Together?

David Woolcock, Curator at Paradise Park, Cornwall and a founding Trustee of the World Parrot Trust.

So how do Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust interact with each other? What is the symbiotic relationship that makes good things happen? These two questions and many others will be answered in the presentation.

A brief history of the organisations will show how they have evolved together in so many ways with benefits not only to each other but more significantly to the conservation and welfare of birds and mammals across the globe.

From winning awards for conservation education campaigns in the Caribbean to successfully pioneering the captive breeding

of Red billed Choughs in order to supply reintroduction projects around the UK and Europe; we will spill the beans...

How can Cockatoos help Vultures?

How do you rehome 200 macaws in one fail swoop?

How does husbandry training in Cornwall aid Red Pandas in Nepal?

What are the Fifty Shady Greys?

How do you get the stripes in toothpaste?

David will attempt to answer some, but not all of these questions...

Speaker Bio: Having kept birds since the age of eleven David has been fortunate enough to have spent his entire career in the company of birds – his wife still looks forward to the day he will get a “proper job!”



Paradise Park has always strived to help those species most in need. To that end, David has been involved with conservation, welfare and reintroduction projects in many countries around the world. He is a professional member of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators and as such endeavours to promote positive ways to interact with zoo and pet birds.

His children now having fledged the nest into careers of their own, David lives with his wife Vicki and Mabel the Irish Wolfhound and Poppy the Labrador.

Transitioning from Tethered to Freelofted in a Zoo Licensed Environment

Paul Ryder, Head Falconer, Eagle Heights Wildlife Foundation

How do you move a collection of birds who have been tethered

for 25 years + to a freelofted environment successfully? Are some birds more suited to this than others? What challenges do we need to overcome? Who can we turn to for help? Paul will be talking about the process involved in transitioning this historic collection of eagles, vultures and owls, the issues he faced and the way he overcame them in order to still do the daily shows required, but also give birds more choices in their environment.

Speaker Bio: After 35 years working in IT, and with a lifelong interest in ornithology, Paul made a huge change and started volunteering at Eagle Heights, working his way up to his current position. In this role he has changed the way the birds are housed, moving away from tethering, and is now flying a team of eagles, owls and vultures from their aviaries in daily shows.



Training Boe, an Egyptian Vulture: It's a Flying Boris Johnson

Gary Benton, Head of Living Collection, The Hawk Conservancy Trust

As a keen bird trainer, Gary has had the pleasure of working with many species over the years and had particular enjoyment in training some of the soaring species to show this natural way of flying. These birds take part in shows which are set to engage and inspire the public to care and protect birds of prey in the wild through conservation.

One particular bird arrived at the Trust just over 7 years ago as a chick of just a few weeks old. Her name is 'Boe' and she is an Egyptian Vulture. Her role within one of the main shows at the Trust (Masters of the Sky) is to show natural soaring flight over some beautiful open countryside whilst the presenter talks about the Asian vulture projects which the Trust is involved with. Having an Egyptian Vulture who fly's high above the arena sends a strong

message to an audience about the capabilities of this species flight and backed up with information, it shows how hard it can be to monitor and research a wild bird like this when they are suffering from threats which are causing a decline of the Species.

Gary explains the journey he has taken with Boe from rearing her as a chick to training her for free flight and now manages her daily high flying routine where she regularly reaches altitudes of 1000's of feet. Boe fly's above an audience whilst a team of around 20 other birds take part in this spectacle of the Masters of the Sky. The final move of her flight plan is to finish by stooping from way up high back down into the arena and landing safely with Gary for the closing of the show.

Speaker Bio: Gary has been around Birds of Prey all of his life having grown up with a father as a Falconer and having the pleasure to learn from him. He has now worked with Birds on a professional level for the last 25 years. After gaining the job of 'Junior Falconer' at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in 1999, he has worked his way through the organisation taking on different roles which have enabled him to work with some incredible species of birds over the years. As Head of Living Collection today, Gary is responsible for over 150 birds and managing a team of people which are key to creating the magic of the Hawk Conservancy Trust.



As part of Gary's career he has been lucky enough to travel the world on various consulting projects or being part of a team on conservation programmes in Africa. Creating shows and engaging experiences which inspire the general public to care about the natural world is one of Gary's strong points and this has been achieved in many shows and events at the Trust along with spreading that knowledge to a wider audience as part of consulting projects. Training birds is one of his biggest passions

and the base of which he built his career. Over the years, he has been lucky enough to train a diverse range of species to show natural free flight.

IATCB – History and the Certification Process

Sid Price CPBT-KA, CPAT-KA, Avian Ambassadors

The International Avian Trainers Certification Board (IATCB) grew out of work done by the IAATE Professional Development Committee. This presentation gives a little history of IATCB's creation and growth, how the certification examination test items are written and reviewed, and how the examinations are assembled, reviewed, and published.



Learning on the Fly- Lessons Learnt from Spotty Ducks and Monochromatic Geese.

Nikki Stakesby-Lewis, Training and Demonstrations Supervisor, WWT Slimbridge

WWTs free-flight bird demonstration launched in 2021 and is operated out of a specialised zoological collection situated within a large wetland reserve. It focuses on educating its broad visitor demographic about different wetland species found across the globe, curating inspiring engagement opportunities, and raising awareness of the need for Wetland Conservation. Working with flighted birds in this environment poses multiple challenges.

The specific theming of the display resulted in the use of several species which are less conventionally trained within the

national zoo industry. Therefore, a smaller network of related knowledge and expertise was available to draw from and predict species-specific challenges before they arose, leaving plenty of opportunities for trial-and-error learning.

The training program revolves predominantly around positive reinforcement, utilising trust relationships built between all birds and trainers. Reinforcers vary among species and individuals, but usually incorporate a mixture of foods, attention, tactile, and sensory opportunities. Due to the natural foraging tendencies of most species within the team, maintenance diets are provided ad lib., although some food management is employed for specific reinforcers. Birds are trained for both display and co-operative management behaviours.

Working with niche species in a challenging and restrictive environment leaves a lot to be learned. Through the adaptation of standard training principles and the consideration of species and individual history, suitable solutions can be found! Continued communication is needed throughout the community working with novel or unusual species. This will help support others looking to expand their ambassador programs into uncommonly trained species, and ultimately increase collective output for educational opportunities.

Speaker Bio: Nikki was first introduced to the idea of co-operative, welfare-oriented animal training whilst at college, and since then it has been a focus throughout her career. She went on to complete two zoo placements, learning from marine mammal and bird training teams, before graduating from Nottingham Trent University in 2020 with a BSC in Zoo Biology. She joined the Presentations team at WWT Slimbridge as they prepared to launch their free-flight wetland bird display. Nikki enjoys the challenge of adapting her



training practices to suit each individuals' personality and natural history. She is passionate about creating an experience where animals are given the choice to participate and the autonomy to display natural behaviour; empowering them to be themselves! A growing love for waterfowl took her by surprise and she now oversees the training of the unique ambassador flock.

Training and Research on Gentoo Penguins (*Pygoscelis papua papua*)

Cristina Sala Viciano, Oceanografic, Spain

A considerable number of zoological institutions and aquariums around the world house within their facilities different species of penguins. The development of scientific knowledge is one of the functions of these centres. The Oceanografic in Valencia has 34 Gentoo Penguins (*Pygoscelis papua papua*) and 3 King Penguins (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*). There is currently an advancing progress in scientific studies with bird species. This has resulted in modifications to the handling and management of our animals. In order to collaborate on these projects, the Department of Birds has implemented from the year 2019 until the present day, a process of continual training for all involved with the penguin colony. This has led to us being able to be part of multiple studies in collaboration with an array of universities and researchers. As a result of these changes and collaborations with, it has been possible to develop advances in scientific studies that can serve to enhance the knowledge and conservation status of these species.

Speaker Bio: My name is Cristina Sala Viciano. I was born in Dénia, a little town in Alicante (Spain). I have loved birds since I was a child thanks to my father. Nowadays, we go to the mountain to take pictures of birds, one of my favourite hobbies. I have studied biology and I've been working at Oceanografic of Valencia since 2018 as an animal keeper. My work team is at the Bird and Reptile Department. We are working with a very interesting collection of animals. We have some species reintroduction projects, thanks to breeding in our facilities. Then we release them into their natural

environment. Also, nowadays we are collaborating with some researchers and universities for research. I really like my job; it brings to me beautiful memories and experiences in which I have learned a lot of things. Also, I think that zoos and aquariums have an important role in conservation and education, and we work very hard to make it happen.



Can We Give our Animals More Choice Whilst Participating in Co-operative Care?

Kelli Inglis, Winging It Bird Training

When I started out working with animals, I worked with birds of prey in a traditional setting. Giving birds very little choice over their interactions with people, participating in training, and health care. Since then I learnt about choice and control, using start buttons and sessions such as the bucket game to give animals a choice to opt in or out. But is this enough? Recently I started exploring new ideas and concepts, giving my parrots choice over the behaviours they participate in, and choice over which reinforcement they get. It has got me contemplating... do we really give animals enough choice? Is the desire for food overriding the option to opt out? Is opting out punishing?

It can be hard to give any degrees of freedom with co-operative care, as training needs to progress for an end goal, but can we give our animals more control over their progression whilst still moving towards the end goal? I have been working on giving the animals in my care progression options, using concept markers, giving higher value for harder behaviours, and lower for easier, whilst also giving them an option of reinforcement for opting out. Through doing this I have received valuable feedback from them about what behaviours they're comfortable with, have gained

even more trust and also experienced huge progression from a bird that previously wouldn't even participate in training.

Speaker Bio: Since a kid I have always been fascinated with birds. My dad dragged me hiking and bird watching from a young age, I started ticking off bird species I'd seen in my bird book and loved putting out feeders in the garden, counting how many would visit. I always wanted to work with animals and started my zoo career in 2012. Obviously I went down



the bird route and started out working with birds of prey. I found it interesting, but often felt uncomfortable with the ways the birds were sometimes handled. Later in my career I learnt about positive reinforcement training and cooperative care, and from then on improving the lives of birds became my passion. I rescued four parrots myself and decided I wanted to help other parrot owners live happy, harmonious lives with their birds. This is where Winging It Bird Training began.

Winter Woodland Lights: Owls After Dark

Tom Morath, Deputy Head of Living Collection, The Hawk Conservancy Trust

As a zoological community, it's important that we develop innovative ways to engage with our visitors and share our message with as diverse an audience as possible. Where we can, we must encourage the development of emotional connections between humans and the species we are trying to protect. In January 2022 (and subsequently in 2023), the Trust presented something unique and magical. A never-before-seen event spanning 17 nights throughout the month and offering over 3500 visitors the chance to step into our woodlands and be immersed in a place of natural magic and mystery. The aim for this new event was to

merge nature and technology to create an evening that would leave anyone who experienced it feeling uplifted and inspired by the natural world.

There is a careful craft involved in the development of an event like this from the concept development to husbandry considerations and the birds involved are the very foremost priority. Making sure they are comfortable with flying in novel circumstances with lighting and sound meant developing new flying routines with them. It also involved training staff to work with them in unusual conditions. Learn how this event was put together and how the birds were set up for success in pursuit of an event that would engage and inspire new visitors to the Trust.

Speaker Bio: Tom worked as a member of the Bird Team and Events Manager at the Hawk Conservancy Trust for four years before becoming the Deputy Head of Living Collection earlier this year. His career with birds of prey spans over 15 years and has included the training of a range of species, managing teams of animal staff and leading on the



creative development of engaging visitor experiences. Tom was the Lead Falconer, working with the Trust as consultants, when establishing the Hawk and Owl Centre at Muncaster Castle in the Lake District in 2015 and has previously operated his own Bird of Prey Centre in Northamptonshire, specialising in hands-on experiences. He established the Trust's podcast, Nature's a Hoot, in 2020 and recently took the lead on the development of the Trust's new flying display - Masters of the Sky.

Connecting with our Bird Display Audiences (Four of my Favourite Behaviours)

Andy Hallsworth, Head of Visitor Engagement and Experience,

Zoological Society of East Anglia

I will tell a bit about my career since 1987 as in the bio, moving to Banham zoo and developing the Birds of the World display and the Amazing Animals display. I will briefly talk about how we as presenters can connect with our audience following some simple ideas and guidelines. I will then talk about bird show behaviours and try to put them into categories. I will then choose four of the behaviours I really like from my career. Two will be strong natural behaviour and two will have good strong audience participation. I'll talk about the processes and training involved.

Speaker Bio: I have been in the zoo profession since 1987 and spent the first 15 years of my career at ZSL London Zoo. I began as a weekend volunteer and was soon employed as a keeper on the hoofstock section, working closely with giraffes, okapi, Arabian oryx, zebras and other ungulates. In 1992, I was chosen to head a new Animal Events Department at London Zoo, devoted to connecting visitors to the natural world through educational talks and presentations.



I developed a pioneering display called "Animals in Action," which was unique at the time in the UK. I headed the team and trained animals as species ambassadors using positive reinforcement techniques, which demonstrated their natural behaviours. During this time, I also developed a free-flying bird display at London Zoo called Predatory Birds. Since joining Banham Zoological Gardens in 2002, I have developed its birds of prey display into the wider-ranging Birds of the World presentation, featuring a broader range of species to inspire our visitors in regular outdoor arena displays. With my team, I designed and created the "Amazing Animals" presentations in our specially developed indoor theatre. This display features birds and mammals, demonstrating natural behaviours.

At the same time, I developed more intimate animal events and presentations at our sister park, the Africa Alive Zoological Reserve. I am an EEP committee member for African white-backed vultures and Ruppell's griffon vultures and have visited South Africa to help conduct a nesting study of these amazing birds. In my spare time, I like to walk in the beautiful Norfolk countryside, spend time on the local river in my kayak and enthusiastically support Norwich City football club.

I have been attending and putting the "I" in IAATE conferences for many years, my first in St Louis in 1996. I'm proud to see how this organisation has evolved from its fledgling state back then to a powerful advocate for excellence in husbandry, training, conservation and education in the avian field. It's an amazing organisation, sharing information with like minded people from around the world. I'm very proud to see it finally here in the UK and am honoured to speak at this Landmark event in the IAATE evolution.

I have been sharing the natural world with our zoo guests for over thirty years. Inspiring people of all ages and connecting with our visitors through showcasing the amazing animal life with which we share this planet, remains one of the joys of my life.

Feathers and Friendships: Building Zoo Connections for Parrot Conservation

Charlotte Foxhall MSc, Special Projects Manager, Indonesia Manager, World Parrot Trust

In this captivating talk, we delve into the world of bird trainers, zoo connections and their impact on parrot conservation. Join us as we explore the unique relationships forged between individuals, zoological parks and conservation projects, shedding light on how these connections can play a pivotal role in safeguarding parrot species. Through compelling anecdotes and inspiring case studies, we take a peak at the synergy between zoos and conservation efforts. Discover how the alliance between the

two worlds nurtures conservation initiatives, bolsters species preservation, and paves the way for a brighter, feather-filled future. Join us on this journey as we celebrate how a dedicated commitment to parrot conservation and some extraordinary partnerships can play a crucial role in addressing conservation challenges.

Speaker Bio: Charlotte Foxhall is a conservationist with an Honours and Master's degree in Conservation Ecology from Oxford Brookes University. Her passion for conservation stems from witnessing the impacts on wildlife during her travels and upbringing in Cornwall. She has volunteered for various wildlife projects and causes, gaining practical and ecological experience in species protection and habitat management.



Currently, Charlotte is dedicated to managing the Indonesia program at WPT (World Parrot Trust). In this role, she collaborates with forestry departments, rescue centres, and law enforcement to combat illegal wildlife trade and develop conservation initiatives. Her main focus is to understand the ecological balance in conservation management to effectively address species loss. She also works with several colleagues and partners across the globe to implement special conservation projects. When she's not working, she is an avid year-round wild swimmer, a marine mammal medic and enjoys hiking with her dog and partner around the Cornish cliffs.

Wader Go WWT!

Kerry Hill, Conservation Team, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Two case studies will be presented, exploring how training and

behaviour management is currently being utilised at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's Conservation Breeding Unit: the Eurasian curlew recovery project, and the ex-situ spoon-billed sandpiper ark.

The world's only captive population of spoon-billed sandpipers resides at the Wildfowl and Wetland's Trust conservation unit in Gloucestershire – an unlikely Hobbiton for a migratory shorebird hailing from remote northern Russia. Twelve years since this ex-situ ark was established, what training and behaviour management techniques have been used to improve their quality of life, and what can be done going forwards now that the Conservation unit has had an enthusiastic trainer infiltrate their ranks?

If you like your waders on the larger side ... WWT has successfully headstarted Eurasian curlews in-situ since 2019, but in 2023 the Conservation team trialled rearing chicks for release at the organisation's Gloucestershire headquarters instead. In- or ex-situ, birds are crèche reared with fairly indiscriminate exposure to humans. Enjoy (informed) thoughts on how and why this works when rearing Europe's largest wading bird for rerelease; and slides on how the Conservation team cleverly manages the species' behavioural tendencies to address husbandry challenges.

Speaker Bio: After a student internship at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust's bird department and a graduate thesis recognised by the Association for The Study of Animal Behaviour for outstanding work, Kerry joined the formative three-woman team that launched the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's ambassador bird programme. She worked there as an animal trainer for four years and during this time completed a postgraduate research degree investigating welfare assessments in UK zoos. In 2023 she was encouraged to join the Trust's Conservation directorate as a Conservation Breeding Aviculturist



by one Nigel Jarrett, who has since taken on her mentorship. Kerry now also teaches animal biology and conservation at the land-based college Hartpury and can safely say that she prefers ducks as students.

Bald Eagle: Protected Contact Training

James Knight, Bird Team and Head of Section, Hawk Conservancy Trust

The highest standards of animal care are constantly being improved and bettered by large zoological collections and private keepers, to ensure the best possible quality of life for animals in human care. An element of this which is becoming more and more prevalent is retirement plans and the continued care of animals who require specialist husbandry in one form or another. Over the past year the Hawk conservancy trust has been working closely with one such individual, a female bald eagle who no longer flies in a demonstrations. For a large species of eagle who is not only highly intelligent but is also as an individual a completely hand reared and imprinted bird, she requires frequent interaction and large amounts of enrichment.

As a result of these factors this bird was the perfect candidate to work alongside staff as they attempted to train new behaviours which would lead to a higher standard of care while also offering much more choice. With medical procedures such as coping of the talons and beak being an optional part of training sessions that the individual has control over taking part in. negating the need for physical restraint which previously was the only way to undergo such procedures, with this individual.

While these particular practices and behaviours are not revolutionary, learn how staff adapted to a myriad of factors throughout the year while working with this individual and the; overall positive effect close proximity training has had on this individual and the changes/ adaptations they would make if training these behaviours again.

Speaker Bio: James has worked with birds of prey and small carnivores in a professional and voluntary capacity for close to ten years. Starting his career doing voluntary work at a small local zoo which he worked at every weekend until he started college and was hired part time. While this was ongoing he spent much of his free time volunteering at many



bird of prey specific establishments gaining broad understanding of numerous ways of undertaking many different tasks. Finishing college he was hired full time at the zoo he was working at and acted as head of training and deputy zoo manager, until he was hired by the hawk conservancy in 2021. Since being at the Hawk conservancy trust James has delighted in working alongside many new species he never before has such as the large vultures. Recently James has completed the BIAZA Animal training accreditation, giving an even wider understanding to animal behaviour and training principles.

Seasonal Nutrition Based on Natural History

Kat Nicola, Marwell Zoo

This presentation on seasonal feeding covers how we define this for captive birds, the importance of this as well as how better to identify what can be offered, why we offer the items we do and the additional benefits we see for a variety of species in single and mixed species exhibits. This includes discussing how we aim to ensure this correlates with seasonal changes according to each species, which include but are not limited to climate, behavioural changes and life stage.

Various case studies within our collection will be explored where we will delve into how we manage and have managed seasonal feeding, which include sourcing these food items sensibly and

sustainably, record keeping and organisation, differences in presentation, uses in training plans as well as safely and correctly identifying suitable food items and availability of these. All of these factors are also incorporated into various process of staff guidance and training and even public education.

We will cover challenges we have faced, previous and current successes well as how we allocate, measure and assess dietary changes and success. There are many other influencing factors on seasonal feeding such as enclosure design - which in turn impacts planting, presentation methods and public perception - and impacts on and uses within training, which will be discussed in our future aspirations to develop the process of seasonal feeding.

Speaker Bio: My career began in the field of education as an Animal Studies and Zoology lecturer, where a passion for conservation through education flourished and developed into my zoo career journey beginning as an intern at Paradise Wildlife Park. I then went on to work at Birdworld, with heavy involvement in all aspects of education, husbandry,



conservation efforts and bird training. This led me on to a penguin/bird keeper role at Oceanarium Bournemouth, becoming Aquatics supervisor here. My previous education includes a postgraduate degree in Animal Welfare, which links to my passion of achieving the highest standards as possible, therefore I enjoyed contributing towards developing the department. I also co-ordinated research and conservation project support (which subsequently led to jumping out of a plane in a penguin costume!). I have now ventured back towards working with an array of avian species at Marwell Wildlife, where I can develop my knowledge and skills further in contribution to the conservation work of an incredible zoological collection.

Antecedent Arrangement is EVERYTHING!

Nicky Plaskitt BSc (hons) CPBT-KA CPAT-KA, Director, Shaping Behaviour

In my current role as a consultant, I am fortunate to work with many collections, and therefore a huge range of experience levels, all with the same question – ‘how can we do better for our animals?’

As such, when I am working with experienced trainers, I feel very comfortable setting them training plans with multiple steps and points to evaluate, however when working with those less experienced, or on a time crunch, I need to find an alternate way for them to be successful. For me, a successful animal is one that can access reinforcers quickly during a training session and can make choices to access those reinforcers – it’s the same for the people I am training.

Antecedent arrangement is at the heart of this – how can I make it as easy as possible for the learner to do the behaviour I want to see? With overstretched and understaffed people, the first step can sometimes be as simple as asking them to change the area they feed their learner in. This technique uses reinforcement as communication across species and helps build relationships where learners feel safe to ask questions and try new things.

Speaker Bio: Nicky has worked in the field of animal care since 2000, spending many years working with birds and other animals as a zookeeper, animal trainer, presenter and team leader. In her last UK zoo position she took steps to revolutionize the care and management of a large number of free flight birds under her care using science based positive reinforcement training. In 2021 Nicky set up her own business and now works as a Zoological Behaviour Consultant across the



UK and overseas for Shaping Behaviour. The goal of the business is to improve animal welfare by empowering animal caregivers with knowledge to boost their skills. Nicky is passionate about helping animals and their humans achieve their goals using the most positive methods. Nicky has been a member of IAATE since 2012 and on the International and Conservation Committees since then. She joined the Board of Directors in 2022, taking part in writing our recent Position Statements. She is a Certified Professional Bird Trainer and Animal Trainer through the IATCB and sits on their Board of Directors also.

The Application of Avian Training on the Re-introduction of the Red-billed Cough to Kent

Mark Habben, Director, Wildwood Trust

Speaker Bio: I have worked in zoological field as Zoological manager to London and Whipsnade Zoo's whilst retaining my firm interest in passion for avian training and specifically birds of prey.



My work and interests having taken me around the World, helping to draw blood from Californian condors for lead sampling in Arizona to monitoring Harpy eagles for 5 months in the Ecuadorian Amazon. More recently I was contributing to the long term management plan for European vultures which we completed in Spain. This was a great opportunity to see the feeding stations for Griffon vultures but also managed to see Bonelli's eagle and Egyptian vultures on the same trip.

I have presented on various topics at IAATE in the States and Portugal as well as for the EAZA Raptor and owl TAG which I chaired for EAZA for nearly 9 years. During this time I published the management guidelines for demonstration birds which will

be soon up for review. I was appointed alongside Jemima and Campbell by Defra to write and review the updated standards for birds of prey for the Secretary of States Standards of Modern Zoo Practice. I am now Director of the Wildwood Trust focusing on the breeding and release of a number of species including White storks and red-billed croug. I remain an avid falconer.

The Art of Training Birds

Steve Martin, President/CEO Natural Encounters

Speaker Bio: Steve Martin began his professional animal training career when he set up the first of its kind, free-flight bird show at the San Diego Wild Animal Park in 1976. The show gained world acclaim for its unique ability to combine the entertainment of birds performing natural behaviors with inspiring conservation messages. Since then he has produced free-flight bird programs, or consulted on programs, at over 140 facilities in more than 25 countries. As a founding member of IAATE, Steve has helped lead the organization since its inception. He is President of Natural Encounters, Inc. (NEI), a company of over 50 full-time employees and trainers who assist with the production and presentation of free-flight programs. He, and other trainers on staff, consult at zoological facilities around the world teaching keepers to use positive reinforcement to teach exhibit animals to voluntarily participate in their own husbandry and medical procedures. Steve is also President of Natural Encounters Conservation Fund, Inc. (NECF), which is a non-profit company established specifically to raise money for conservation projects. NECF has now raised and donated over \$1.5 million to in situ conservation programs.

