



# THE INDEPENDENT BIRD REGISTER

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## IDIOTS GUIDE TO FALCONRY (HOW NOT TO LOSE YOUR BIRD)

I have put together this advice sheet to try and help you think about safety when flying or handling your bird with the hope that you are not put in the position of losing him/her. My advice is based on the many ways in which people have reported losing their birds to The Independent Bird Register and I just hope that it will help save some heartache if a bird goes missing.

1. **TELEMETRY:** Whenever you fly your bird free, always use telemetry even if you think your bird is 'bomb proof'. Things can change in a second and your bird can get spooked by circumstances that even you cannot predict.
2. **AVIARIES:** Most birds that get reported escape from the aviary and so if it is practicable, a simple secondary door system would solve this problem provided that you remember to shut the first door before going through the second door! Locks and bolts should be robust and constantly checked. The aviary itself should be regularly checked for holes and weaknesses. If a safety door is not an option, then before going into the aviary, make sure you can see where your bird is before going in, shut the door behind you and secure it and make sure that when you are going out, do not turn your back on your bird. Keep it in sight at all times and so it can't sneak past you. Another option is to restrict the gap in the doorway by using a net or curtain used for keeping out flies.
3. **JESSES:** The general advice is that when you are flying your bird free, flying jesses should be used or some people fly their birds with no jesses at all. People who are lazy and fly their birds with mews jesses risk their birds getting caught up in branches or on wire fences and if not found quickly, they eventually die a slow death. Bullet jesses are designed for quick release whilst the bird is on the glove, but some people do tether birds using bullet jesses and if they are not designed to lock the bullet, they can slip out of the eyelet and a bird can go missing from the block or perch.
4. **FALCONERS KNOT:** It does help to learn how to tie a falconer's knot and you can find out how to do this on YouTube. Making sure that your bird is securely fastened to the glove or the perch is obviously extremely important.
5. **FULL EQUIPMENT:** I have many birds escape wearing their full equipment – swivel and leash - and unfortunately some of them end their days hung up in trees or off TV aerials. To avoid a bird slipping a leash when tying it to or untying from a perch, make sure you are in safety position first by locking the swivel between your fingers. I do know that some birds are able to untie knots. Make sure you use locking knots or cable tie the end to the main part of the leash and so it can't be pulled through. When moving your bird around make sure it is always tied to the glove no matter how short the distance you are walking in case you trip and fall.
6. **EQUIPMENT:** It is important to check your equipment on a regular basis to make sure it isn't flawed and if you use leather, make sure it is regular greased to keep it supple. Many birds escape when their jesses, leash or creance line snap, especially when a bird has just come out of the moult and equipment isn't changed first before putting it on a perch or block. Rings attached to perches should also be checked as I have instances of rings snapping.
7. **CHANGING EQUIPMENT:** I have had occasions where birds escape whilst their equipment is being changed. To avoid this, change your equipment inside where it is secure and so if the bird does bate away, it has nowhere to go.



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8. **WEATHERING:** If you weather your bird outside it is best not to leave it unattended for long periods of time. If you do have to leave your bird, an idea would be to construct a net-covered frame around it and so if it does manage to get free, it can't go anywhere. It will also protect it from predators. Another risk is getting your bird stolen and so CCTV and security lights could also be considered, especially at night, as I have had instances of aviaries being broken in to and birds either stolen or maliciously released.
9. **TRAVEL BOXES:** Some birds will try and fly out of travel boxes. Many boxes are designed so the leash can be pulled through the door and tied off. This enables you to hold the leash first before opening the door. The other option is to box your bird inside and so if it does try to fly off, again, it has nowhere to go.
10. **IBR:** If after all this advice you do end up losing your bird, please contact The Independent Bird Register as soon as you can and so it can be put on the database. This makes it easier to reunite birds as and when there are recovered.

**ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT CARELESSNESS AND COMPLACENCY HAVE CONSEQUENCES AND WE HAVE A DUTY OF CARE TOWARDS OUR BIRDS.**