

THE STORY OF YANG

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY CANDY GALLANT

"Hello?"

"Yes, it is...."

"Yes, I promise I won't laugh or think you are strange."

You have an orphaned hawk looking for a 'foster mother'?

"Say no more; I'd love to adopt him."

That is how my relationship with 'Yang' began. Apparently he had fallen from his nest in the eaves of a cottage in the Bedeque area. His finders, a family from Ontario, first tried several times to replace him in his nest without success. Then they placed him in a box up near the eaves with the hopes the mother hawk would come back and care for him in his artificial nest. After two days they gave up hope and called the local humane society - me!



American Kestrel
July 17, 84.
3½ weeks old

He arrived in a beer box - a tennis ball sized pom-pom of white with huge eyes, feet and beak. He was cold, damp and moved only slightly. I was disappointed to see his poor condition and fully expected him to die within hours. I placed him under a brooder bulb and within five minutes he was sitting on his bottom, feet in the air, head outstretched, eyes sparkling and 'killing' his little heart out. I happily offered him beefheart strips dipped in egg yolk and he wolfed down enough to fill his crop tightly, cuddled into his basket-nest, began to 'purr' and went to sleep. That was how it went for the next three weeks - eating, sleeping and eating some more - every fifteen to twenty minutes.

By the time he have lived with us a week, he had enough feathers to identify him as a kestrel (my nestling book described him as being five days old when he came to my place). Upon learning about his predominantly insect diet, I began trying to feed him some insects as well as his growing beefheart meals.

Yang was absolutely terrified of bugs and remained frightened of them for the next three weeks. Then one day I offered him a semi-alive fly. That changed everything! Once he found he was tough enough to eat a fly, he was ready to conquer small crickets (preferably maimed ones) and he slowly progressed up to the flying grasshoppers he dearly loves now. My biggest food problem was how to get enough calcium into his system to allow proper bone growth. No matter how sneaky I was putting a supplement on his beefheart, he would refuse the 'contaminated' food. I only hoped he was getting enough granules in his mouth to keep him healthy.

When he was a week old he began to practice the art of walking on the feet instead of the knees as he had done previously. He acted very much like a human baby at this time, often sitting quietly on his back studying (or chewing on) his feet, as though he didn't realize they belonged to him. He also began to practice 'attacking'. This consisted of laying as though he were asleep until something moved close to him, at which time he would throw himself feet-first at the victim, 'killing' over his capture. At times his attack would fail and he'd land on his back, feet clawing the air, which turned blue with the outraged screams only a baby kestrel can produce.

At three weeks he began to practice the art of wing flapping and the sport of long-distance leaping. This was his downfall (no pun intended). He didn't seem to realize that leaping and flapping would go together to