



The Goshawk

I am the most versatile hunter you will find and I am flown by most falconers. My prey consists of nearly anything from small-medium sized birds from crows, ducks, and partridge to pheasants to smaller mammals like rabbits and even hares. In the Middle Ages, they called me the “chef de cuisine” which means the chef of the kitchen. If my prey notices me, it is almost too late- I am a very fast hunter and can accelerate easily due to my short, mellow wings and I also hide and hunt in dense bushes and woods. Mainly hunters also know me as the “Phantom of the woods” as they hardly ever see me. Nonetheless, you will find me in different subspecies all over the world – from North America to Europe, Russia, Japan and Australia!

The Harris Hawk



I live in Southwest America, Mexico up to Patagonia. I am unique- I hunt in groups. Therefore, I am a very social, relaxed and very curious bird. Falconers love me for my reliability. My prey consists mainly out of mammals like rabbits, but sometimes I manage to catch birds like crows and pheasants as well. I am not as fast as the goshawk but I am great at soaring as well which gives me other hunting opportunities.

The Peregrine Falcon



I am well known as the fastest animal on earth- when I fold my wings, shaped like a teardrop, I can reach up to 360 km/h in free fall- any F1 car is slow compared to me! My preferred prey is exclusively feathered quarry and I need to hunt from a high pitch. Once I see a suitable bird (Crows, Pheasants, Partridge or Pigeon) flying beneath me, I stoop down and try to catch it- one hit with my feet may make it unconscious. My technique is unique and only found among falcons but if I don't hit it the first time, my chance is gone as I need verve to catch my prey successfully. Second to the goshawk I am one of the most used birds in Falconry!

The Golden Eagle



I am the King of the skies! With a wingspan of up to 2,40m, I am an impressive hunter which requires an experienced falconer to hunt with me. I have very powerful feet and people who hunted first with me worldwide, the Berkutchi from Kazakhstan and other Asian steppes, even hunt wolves with me! I prey on mammals like hares, foxes, marmots and sometimes even young roe deer or chamois solely. If you ever see me, please don't just run to me and try to touch me- I am a very strong bird and could harm you if I am not used to anyone else than my falconer!

I hunt from the soar and surprise my prey. Falconers usually hunt hares, foxes and sometimes roe deer with me which I will happily catch on the ground.

Gamehawking

To hawk this way, a pointer is necessary. The pointer will find and point the prey, usually pheasants, partridges, grouse and ducks. By pointing we say he basically shows us the prey which is hidden in cover. They have a fantastic nose and can smell the slightest signs of game. If the dog is on point, the



falcon will be unhooded and released. He will wait on above the dog and carefully watch its movements. It is like a symbiosis between dog and falcon- they work together incredibly well. If the

falcon is on the right pitch, the dog will get a sign from the falconer to flush the game. Once flushed, the falcon will single one out and burst down in a sharp drop with high speed, trying to bind and catch the quarry. If he was successful, he will end the life of its game with a quick nod to the neck. It will be dead immediately.



Hunting with Goshawks and Golden Eagles

Goshawks can be flown without a hood, others than falcons. Golden Eagles are usually flown out of the hood. Nonetheless, both catch their quarry preferably on the ground whereas the goshawk can also catch quarry in a mid-air bind. To find quarry, falconers use dogs to help pointing where it is or the little helper when it comes to hunting rabbits- the ferret. Hawking is not just simple sitting and waiting till some suitable quarry may pass the falconer's way- it can be hard work when you have to walk for a whole day across fields, especially when it is muddy. Once found a hare, pheasant or whatever you intend to hunt, the goshawk bursts off the fist with a fast and strong wing beat. Goshawks are fantastic on a short distance as their body is built for short distance acceleration whereas they lack power on long flights. Once bound to the intended quarry, the falconer comes in to help and to trade off the bird with a reward which is always a small piece of meat as an exchange, or he directly feeds the bird off on the fresh quarry. Other than falcons, goshawks kill their quarry with their strong feet and needle-sharp talons- falcons kill with a quick bite through the neck.

As mentioned before, Golden Eagles are usually flown out of the hood, same as falcons. They cannot recover as quickly from a quick jump off the fist as goshawks and therefore maintain calm and concentrated. Once you flushed a hare, you take off the hood immediately and the eagle knows what's up- he will follow immediately and try to reach his prey. They can follow on long distances as well and can handle high winds pretty well if used to them due to their large wingspan. As Eagles are too plump to catch pheasants and other birds successfully, Falconers use them to hunt foxes, hares and roe deer.



Pursuit Hawking with the Falcon



This method is used mainly for crows. The Falcon sits still, hooded until the actual hawking starts. Falconers look for crows by car. Please note that hunting law is different in each country! In Germany, you need a special license and approval from each hunter to hawk in their districts. If you have such an approval, the falconer will drive around on the pathways of the fields in search of crows. One big group of crows is usually enough but it must be in a suitable range and area. If it seems suitable, the falcon will be unhooded and let go behind a hedge or other hide-away. As soon as the falcon is up in the air, crows will head for cover in order to hide and get away as they know that falcons will only be successful in air space. Here the falconer comes to help: He will try to flush the crows out of the cover. The falcon will wait on and carefully take his chance to catch one.

Manning

Manning can be best described to gain the trust of the intended bird you'd like to fly through the training process. A fresh bird is usually afraid and untrained. Through manning, which means you get him used to yourself and the fist/glove, you gain the birds trust so that he basically becomes your friend and hunting partner. It is a step by step process, but once the bird learns that you provide good food and hunting chances, he will gain your trust and fly to you without hesitation.



Tethering equipment

Falconers can choose between many types of perches for their birds. The most common ones are the following:

Block perch

A falcon block (block perch) is a round-shaped wooden block with a suitable material on top for the bird to sit on. The wooden part is attached onto a metal pole. To tether the bird, the falconer has to tie the falconers knot onto the free rotating ring at the pole. The block is available in different sizes for falcons and eagles and the bird will happily preen and bath at his new outside seat.

Bow perch

The bow perch is usually used for goshawks and other hawks. It is a bent metal pole in the shape of a very wide U. To make sure the bird can sit comfortable, the upper part will be wrapped around with leather or other suitable material such as manila rope or rubber. Again a ring will run free around the pole in order to tie the bird. It is a great way to weather hawks outside for a while.

The Lure

The lure is used as a dummy to simulate prey such as pheasants, crows or ducks. It is usually a leather corpus in the shape of a bird and the falconer can attach wings of the focused prey. It is mainly used to train falcons and will be swung in the air on a line but is also used to call back goshawks or other hawks. It is important that food is attached to the lure as it serves as a motivator for the bird to "catch" it and to return to it easily.